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Fitful Slumbers

Nun Abutsu's *Utatane*

by JOHN R. WALLACE

UTATANE うたたね, 'Fitful Slumbers', is a short prose work written in the Kamakura period by the nun Abutsu 阿仏, d. 1283, best known for her association with the poet Fujiwara Tameie 藤原為家, 1198–1275, and her travel diary *Izayoi Nikki* 十六夜日記, 'Diary of the Waning Moon'. This diary recorded her journey to Kamakura in 1227 to place before the shogunate her case regarding the rightful heirship of Tamesuke 為相, her son, to some of the Mikohidari 御子左 family poetic writings and parts of the Hosokawa 細川 estate.¹

The author was known variously as Ankamon'in Echizen 安嘉門院越前, Ankamon'in Uemon no Suke 安嘉門院右衛門佐, and Ankamon'in Shijō 安嘉門院四条, indicating her position in the service of Ankamon'in, the empress of the Retired Emperor Juntoku, and her gradual rise in court rank, before she received the tonsure and the Buddhist name Abutsu-ni, or 'Nun Abutsu'. She was born early in the thirteenth century, her father being a man of provincial rank probably residing in Kyoto. He died when Abutsu was still young and her mother remarried Taira Norishige 平度繁, governor of Tōtōmi. Norishige adopted the young girl and had her raised in the capital. When her mother died, a wet nurse took care of her. The old woman appearing in the final part of *Utatane* may well be identified with this wet nurse.

For the first part of her life Abutsu served in attendance of Ankamon'in at her residence near Kitayama in what was then the northern residential district of the capital. According to *Utatane*, she had a brief affair with an unnamed high-ranking noble,² and when this came to an end, she fled the imperial

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¹The Mikohidari Fujiwara 御子左藤原 clan was established by one of Fujiwara Michinaga's 藤原道長 sons and subsequently pro-

duced the great poetic tradition founded by Fujiwara Shunzei 藤原俊成, 1114–1204, and advanced by his son Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家, 1162–1241.

The Hosokawa estate was one of Tameie's manors located in Minagi, Harima province, northwest of present-day Kobe.

²That the lover was a noble of high rank can be assumed by the manner in which Abutsu describes him and their relationship in *Utatane*.

residence, temporarily received the tonsure, and lived in a convent. Norishige later took her back to Tōtōmi. This is about all the biographical information that *Utatane* yields. According to *Izayoi Nikki*, she appears to have later had another lover and to have borne three children.

According to *Waka Kuden* 和歌口伝, compiled around 1296 by Tameie's second son Genshō 源承, Abutsu lived for a while at Hokkeji in Nara and at various other places. *Masu Kagami* 増鏡 relates that through the introduction of someone she had known at Hokkeji, Abutsu was employed around 1252 as a copyist of *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語 by one of Tameie's ladies. This may have been the connection that led her to become intimate with Tameie himself. In 1263 Tamesuke, their first recognized son, was born; a second son, Tame-mori 為守, was born two years later. About this time she became recognized as Tameie's primary wife and as a poet in her own right.

In trying to advance the fortunes of her children, Abutsu became involved in a dispute with Tameuji 為氏, the eldest son of Tameie's first wife, a dispute participating in the growing split between the Nijō 二条 and Kyōgoku 京極 branches of Tameie's family. Among other things, Abutsu transferred without permission to Hokurin 北林 of Jimyō'in 持明院, her primary residence, poetic writings of the Mikohidari school, and in the last years of her life she journeyed to Kamakura to plead her case concerning the inheritance before the shogunate there. She died in 1283 without seeing the successful outcome of her suit. But Tamesuke, probably in part owing to the Nijō-Kyōgoku dispute, was eventually able to start a third major family branch, taking the secondary family name of Reizei 冷泉. He won a right to portions of the Tameie inheritance, and established the Reizei poetic tradition that has continued to the present time.³

In addition to *Utatane* and *Izayoi Nikki*, Abutsu wrote a number of other works, including *Abutsu Kana Fūju* 阿仏仮名諷誦, a prayer recited at the memorial services for Tameie; *Yoru no Tsuru* 夜の鶴, on the composition of poetry; and *Menoto no Fumi* 乳母の文 (also an abridged version titled *Niwa no Oshie* 庭の訓), a letter to her daughter on the rule of behavior for a court lady serving in the imperial palace.

As for Abutsu's poetic writings, there are one hundred poems in *Ankamon'in Shijō Hyakushu* 安嘉門院四条百首, a collection based on Teika's *Horikawa Hyakushu* 堀河百首, and 506 poems collected in *Ankamon'in Shijō Gohyakushu* 安嘉門院四条五百首, which represents what remains of the hundred poems composed for each of ten shrines around Kamakura as prayers for a successful outcome of her lawsuit. In addition there are the poems to be found in

³Some of the details of this dispute can be found in Edwin O. Reischauer & Joseph K. Yamagiwa, ed., *Translations from Early Japanese Literature*, Harvard U.P., 1964 reprint, pp. 36-47, and Robert H. Brower, 'The Foremost Style of Poetic Composition',

in MN 42:4 (Winter 1987), pp. 391-92.

A more extensive biographical survey is given in Hisamatsu Sen'ichi 久松潜一, *Nihon Joryū Bungaku Shi: Kodai, Chūsei Hen* 日本女流文学史: 古代, 中世編, Dōbun, 1987, pp. 389-402.

Utatane and *Izayoi Nikki*, as well as those in various anthologies, particularly *Shoku-Kokinshū* 続古今集, the imperial anthology compiled in part by Tameie, and *Fuboku Wakashō* 夫木和歌抄, a large, private anthology. The total number of Abutsu's extant poems exceeds eight hundred.⁴

The Text

Utatane appears to be an autobiographical work and the only example of Abutsu's writing dating from her early life, and as such it is also the only extant work predating her rise in court rank and the growth of her poetic reputation.⁵ Its subject matter is primarily the emotions aroused by the author's disappointed love affair with a noble of higher rank than her own. In the story, she travels twice to temples to escape her feelings of depression, once on an excursion and once to temporarily receive the tonsure. Yet these efforts do not free her from her unhappiness. Later the step-father takes her to his country residence in Tōtōmi, but this too fails to raise her spirits. She hears of the illness of a woman who cared for her when she was young, after her mother had died, and returns to the capital to comfort her. The story ends with the narrator wondering about her own future since her behavior seems almost obsessively changeable and willful, aspects of her character that she depicts with honesty in the narration.

Utatane has been placed within the lineage of self-reflective, women's diaries represented by *Kagerō Nikki* 蜻蛉日記, *Izumi Shikibu Nikki* 和泉式部日記, and *Sarashina Nikki* 更級日記, and indeed it fits well into the *nikki* genre as defined by Japanese tradition.⁶ But despite its traditional heritage, there is a freshness to the text, particularly in its descriptive passages in the travel sections. The related events, too, depart at times from the more traditional Heian diaries. Her flight to a convent and her recuperation in relatively distant Tōtōmi have been described as 'typically medieval' actions.⁷ The nervous tension of the text, created by Abutsu's description of her restless travels and inner struggle with her unhappiness, also seems to reflect something of the insecurity of those medieval times.

⁴All of the above prose works and many of the poems have been collected in Yanase Kazuo 築瀬一雄, ed., *Abutsu-ni Zenshū* 阿仏尼全集, Kazama Shobō, 1984. A descriptive survey of Abutsu's extant writings is given in Hisamatsu, pp. 403-08.

⁵A detailed summary of *Utatane* is given in Donald Keene, 'Diaries of the Kamakura Period', in *Japan Quarterly*, 32:3 (July-September 1985), pp. 286-89.

⁶Although *Utatane* is a medieval work, one interesting measure of its close connection with Heian *kana*-texts can be seen in its vocabulary. Fully 86% of *Utatane*'s words can

be found in *Genji Monogatari*; if other major *kana* works are included, the figure rises to 93%. The remaining 7% are comprised primarily of personal names and meaningless words created by copyists' errors.

Sakai Kenji 酒井憲二, '*Utatane Sakuin ni yoru Go-i Kōsatsu*' うたたね索引による語彙考察, in Tsugita Kasumi 次田香澄 & Sakai Kenji, ed., *Utatane Honbun oyobi Sakuin* うたたね本文および索引, Kasama Shoin, 1976, pp. 263-64.

⁷Matsumoto Yasushi 松本寧至, *Chūsei Joryū Nikki Bungaku no Kenkyū* 中世女流日記文学の研究, Meiji Shoin, 1983, p. 139.

Aside from the single-mindedness of theme and occasional liveliness of description, the most striking characteristics of *Utatane* are its frequent use of allusion and the disparity of style between Abutsu's treatment of the emotions surrounding her unhappy love affair and the description of her travels. The former are characterized by stiff language bordering at times on the cliché. But the account of the sights along the way to Tōtōmi, especially the argument among the ferrymen, give the impression of having been recorded on the spot. Syntactically, the sentences dealing with the travel are briefer and less obscure and closer to the style of *Izayoi Nikki*. In the description of the protagonist's emotions, on the other hand, the sentences at times become over-involved and obscure themselves in their effort to evoke a dreamy atmosphere. It is also only in these passages that the author occasionally addresses the narrator in the third person.

Abutsu turns to a dozen or so sources for her allusions. Her favorite texts are *Ise Monogatari* 伊勢物語 and *Genji Monogatari*, from which she draws about equally, and when combined, comprise nearly half of the thirty-plus allusions in the work. The use of *Ise Monogatari* is natural considering the important relationship that the poetic travelogue has as a predecessor for Japanese poetic diaries. *Ise Monogatari* is further appropriate because in *Utatane*'s travel sections some of the famous sites Abutsu describes appear in *Ise* as well. Then, *Genji Monogatari* provides material useful in further romanticizing Abutsu's treatment of the course of her love affair. Other sources alluded to include *Shin-Kokinshū* 新古今集, *Kokinshū*, *Senzaishū* 千載集, *Gosenshū* 後撰集, *Shūishū* 拾遺集, *Yamato Monogatari* 大和物語, *Heike Monogatari* 平家物語, *Kokinrokujō* 古今六帖, the Lotus Sutra, and the poetry of Po Chū-i 白居易.

The allusions are not evenly spaced throughout the text, rather, they tend to cluster around the expression of the narrator's yearning for her lost lover, helping to intensify the emotional level of these scenes. The more vivid portions of the work often deal with descriptions not associated with this theme and are less often supported by techniques of allusion.

There is a certain 'closed-in' feeling to the language in *Utatane*. When compared to the nearly contemporary work *Towazugatari* 問はず語り, this characteristic becomes especially evident. This quality derives in part from *Utatane*'s smallness of scale—the story deals solely with a young woman's emotions about a failed love affair.⁸ In other words, there is little or no attempt to develop other characters during the course of the text, and the reader is effectively held close to the protagonist and her futile struggles to overcome her emotions.

This intensely self-reflective quality is enhanced by the noticeably frequent repetition of certain words. *Omou* appears 77 times; *kokoro*, 66; *hito* ('lover'), 56; *kokochi*, 29; *ushi* and *kokorobososhi*, 18. *Omou* and *kokoro* often appear

⁸Tsugita Kasumi, ed., *Utatane*, Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko 298, 1985, p. 138.

elsewhere in classical literature, of course, but in no major classical text are they the first and second most frequently appearing words.⁹

Authorship

Stylistic differences between *Utatane* and *Izayoi Nikki* are so evident that not all scholars believe that the two works were written by the same person. The sentence structure in *Izayoi Nikki* is less convoluted and the sentences tend to be briefer. Further, there is a certain directness and dryness of tone in contrast to the dreamy quality of *Utatane*.

Most scholars, however, argue that stylistic differences can be attributed to the many years that separated the writing of the two texts, as well as to differences in theme and content. *Utatane* is a lament about lost love; *Izayoi Nikki* is at times a treatise on poetry, at times a poetic travelogue. Further, stylistic similarities between the two works can also be identified.

There is other evidence suggesting Abutsu was not the author of *Utatane*. Not a single poem from *Utatane* was anthologized in *Fuboku Wakashō*, a poetry collection compiled by Tamesuke's pupil Fujiwara Nagakiyo 藤原長清.¹¹ In view of Tamesuke's close connection to Abutsu, it could be expected that at least one, if not several, of those poems would appear in the anthology, if in fact Abutsu was the author of *Utatane*.¹² But it is possible to argue, on the other hand, that the poems in *Utatane* did not merit inclusion. Also, when Nagakiyo compiled *Fuboku Wakashō*, *Utatane* might not yet have been in general circulation and was therefore not available for use.¹³

Internal evidence also supports Abutsu's authorship of *Utatane*. There is a headnote and poem in *Shoku-Kokinshū* attributed to Ankamon'in and identical to the passage containing it in *Utatane*, apart from a slight alteration in the poem's first line. If *Utatane* were a spurious work, it would be unlikely that the person writing it would alter the first line of a poem that had already appeared in an imperial anthology.¹⁴

Further, the travel sections of *Utatane* and *Izayoi Nikki* agree in several places. At one point in *Izayoi Nikki*, the narrator notes, 'As far as this mountain [Mt Miyaji], I felt I had seen it all before,' presumably referring to the trip described in *Utatane* where the narrator takes a road identical to that of Abutsu in *Izayoi Nikki* as far as Mt Miyaji, at which point the two routes diverge.

⁹Sakai, pp. 260–61. Elsewhere in this article, Sakai considers eight other lexical aspects of *Utatane* that provide interesting reading concerning the grammatical nature of the text, its historical relationship to shifting grammar of the times, and so on.

¹⁰Tsugita, p. 133.

¹¹Yoshikawa Hideo 吉川秀雄, *Shinshaku Izayoi Nikki* 新釈十六夜日記, Seibunkan, 1931,

quoted in Tsugita, p. 132.

¹²Tsugita, p. 132.

¹³Tamai Kōsuke 玉井幸助, *Nikki Bungaku no Kenkyū* 日記文学の研究, Hanawa, 1965, p. 568.

¹⁴Ikeda Kikan 池田亀鑑, *Kyūtei Joryū Nikki Bungaku* 宮廷女流日記文学, Shibundō, 1981, p. 209.

If someone other than Abutsu authored *Utatane*, then we must view this similarity in routes as merely coincidental, and we must additionally assume that in *Izayoi Nikki* Abutsu is referring to some previous trip that only happens to resemble the route described in *Utatane*. Also, if *Utatane* is a spurious work, we must then assume that the writer carefully noted this offhand comment in *Izayoi Nikki* in order to invent a route that would be confirmed by this later work. Both these possibilities seem less than likely. Based on this and the considerations noted above, it is reasonable to assume that the two works were authored by one and the same person.

Dating

There are various views concerning the dating of the original *Utatane* text.¹⁵ One scholar believes that Abutsu wrote it around 1240–1242 when she would perhaps have been in her late teens and still serving Ankamon'in. According to another view, *Utatane* could not have been written until after Abutsu came to be intimate with Tameie about ten years later. The argument of this latter view is based on the fact that the final poem quoted in *Utatane* is by Nakatsukasa and was included in *Shoku-Gosenshū*, not compiled by Tameie until 1251. It is likely that Abutsu could not have known of this poem except through her connection with Tameie or from *Shoku-Gosenshū* itself. Further, it is possible to interpret Abutsu's final prose line, *mata nari yukan hate ikaga*, so as to read, 'And how might this [new affair] turn out?', and as referring to Abutsu's involvement with Tameie and her concerns regarding it. This is an interesting interpretation but not grammatically required. One can simply read this line as a more general description of the narrator's anxious consideration of her future.

Despite the above disparity of views regarding the dating of the text, most scholars agree that the tone of *Utatane* has a certain immature flavor.¹⁶ Tsugita Kasumi comments:

The author became intimate with Tameie later in her life, and by that time she had already borne three children. In view of the artlessness and nervousness that are apparent here and there in the text, it seems clear that this is not a work written by someone who has had such experiences.¹⁷

A moderate position suggests that there was an original draft written shortly after the difficult affair, while the events were still fresh in the author's mind. This rough draft by a wounded, younger Abutsu was later reworked by her with care taken to preserve the tone of the original text, although on occasion Abutsu's later, more mature style asserts itself. Passages relating to the lost

¹⁵The discussion below is drawn from the analysis of current theories found in Tsugita, pp. 134–36, and Matsumoto, pp. 135–39.

¹⁶Matsumoto, pp. 130–33, selects for discus-

sion several key *Utatane* passages that he says 'reveal the pattern of Abutsu's independent attitude' and express her youthfulness.

¹⁷Tsugita, p. 135.

love are more ornate and stereotypical, and therefore could be considered remnants of the first draft. The theory of a later reworking would explain the inclusion of Nakatsukasa's poem, as well as those portions of the text where the primary theme of lost love seems to have been forgotten.

In any event, *Utatane* most likely provides some insight into the mind of a younger Abutsu than the contentious lady of Tameie with the forceful, if not arrogant, personality for which she would later become famous. The narrow focusing on the pain she feels over the loss of her lover can be seen as an effective literary technique designed to force the reader deeply into her private world, or as the reflection of an obsessive, uncontrollable quality of Abutsu herself, or simply as the natural result of a teenager still infatuated with a lover who has not been removed from her life long enough to yet have been forgotten or put into perspective, or, in a more sympathetic reading, as the emotional expressions of a young woman of high sensibility extremely hurt by an inconsiderate noble. One could also simply view *Utatane* as a young woman's effort to master a certain conventional literary style regarding the depiction of an unhappy love.

No matter which conclusion a reader may choose to adopt, it can at least be said that, in the heart of the text, despite the more apparent image of a frail girl overcome with grief, there is clearly visible a strong personality. Already evident is Abutsu's capacity for single-minded pursuit of a goal, a trait that would serve her in later years when she tenaciously brought her inheritance complaints before the shogunate.

Texts

For the present translation, I have relied on the text found in Tsugita Kasumi, ed., *Utatane*; detailed annotation, critical commentary, and a modern Japanese translation are provided in this edition.¹⁸ The work represents a slightly revised version of Tsugita's annotated modern translation and introduction found in *Utatane, Takemuki ga Ki*.¹⁹ I have also consulted Fukuda Hideichi, *Chūsei Joryū Nikki*, but this volume includes only the first 70% of the *Utatane* text.²⁰ I have made additional reference to Yanase Kazuo, *Abutsu-ni Zenshū*, and the interpretation of various passages by Tamai Kōsuke, found in *Nikki Bungaku no Kenkyū*.²¹

There are a number of pre-modern versions of *Utatane*; the textual differences are not considerable, although they go beyond copyists' errors.²²

¹⁸See n. 8, above.

¹⁹Tsugita Kasumi, *Utatane, Takemuki ga Ki* うたたね、竹むきが記, Kasama Shoin, 1984, pp. 1–57.

²⁰Fukuda Hideichi 福田秀一, *Chūsei Joryū Nikki* 中世女流日記, Musashino, 1981, pp. 5–20.

²¹Yanase, pp. 19–43, and Tamai, pp. 564–83.

²²For the origin and relationship of the versions and their differences, see Tsugita, *Utatane*, pp. 145–53, and Tsugita & Sakai, pp. 101–08.

The Higashiyama Gobunko 東山御文庫 manuscript, titled *Utatane* with the name Ankamon'in Shijō following the title, can be considered the earliest and most reliable text; it is believed to date from between 1661 and 1688.²³

Two other versions, although more textually corrupt, appear to have descended from the same text as the Higashiyama text. The first and closer version is found in *Fusōshūyōshū* 扶桑拾葉集, volume 12, and is titled *Utatane* with the author given as 'Abutsu'.²⁴ The other text, and the only version carrying the title *Utatane no Ki*, is found in *Gunsho Ruijū* 群書類従; it too gives the author as Abutsu.²⁵ The two texts are practically the same.

²³Tsugita & Sakai, p. 108.

²⁴A collection of prefaces, diaries, etc., compiled by Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 in

1689.

²⁵*Shinkō Gunsho Ruijū* 新興群書類従, 1939, 15, pp. 58–67.