

# Quot;pure land buddhism" in the tale of genji essay sample

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



## Introduction

In consideration to earlier Chinese writings and the times of Murasaki Shikibu, the extent to which Buddhist influenced fictional writing is undeterminable. It is claimed that, Buddhism had a philosophical provision for the Tale of Genji. The tale has thus been translated by various schools of thoughts from a Buddhist perspective. Shirane, for instance, makes a notification that there existed various interpretations of Genji during the Heian period. " Institutional Buddhism, which had opened the age with a great religious reform, by the middle of the Heian period had assumed as its primary function the task of supplying the aristocracy with the magical and aesthetic means to achieve its goals of power and pleasure" (Shirane 45). These interpretations are both based on a Buddhist perspective. However, at the end of Kamakura period, a Confucian perspective was propagated but Kokugaku scholars such as Moto'ori Norinaga turned it down with the Buddhist view during the Edo period. The argument against this view was on the basis that Genji is a kind of literary work and moral values and different from both the Buddhist and the Confucian models.

It is thus clear that the Tale of Genji translations were universal in their content and every interpreter had his or her stand inconvincible by other translators around him or her, based on association of the tale with Buddhism philosophy. Some Buddhist rejected the account. An argument to conclude that there is Buddhism in the Genji requires both evidence and justification of the same. Just like any other philosophical critic, such claims need to be subjected to evidential inspection before validation of claims (Machida, 34). The available alternatives are also subject to examination in

order to determine the claims challenging the argument perceived to be valid.

Other translators and authors did not view the work in a Buddhist perspective. The neo-Confucians describe the tale as something different all together. An example is the work of Machida, Sōhō, a neo-Confucian. In his writings, the Machida describes Genji as a storeroom for the virtues of Confucius other than the normal Chinese praising of the ancient China. (Machida, 78). He asserts that Murasaki Shikibu did not attempt to demonstrate the four Noble Truths.

The four Noble truths in reference to the Orthodox Buddhism are; first is the conditioned existence that is the ignorance caused flawed routine existence. It further asserts that there are three types of suffering; they are; all pervasive Suffering, Suffering of change and finally Suffering of suffering (Hicks 34). Genji suffers the loss of his mother but he recovers after obtaining the object of desire via Fujitsubo only for temporal satisfaction as long as the object of desire is made available to him. He also rises in exile in Suma but unfortunately his cherished Murasaki gets ill and he ultimately starts to undergo suffering following the seizure of the psychological pleasures object.

Many Buddhists appear in the story but the most important one who appears most is the Amida whose number is twelve. According to Hicks this leads to rise in important pureland beliefs during such a period which may be attributed to well known works. There is also the appearance of other twenty nenbutsu in the story (Hicks, 56). This means that the faiths of both Amida and the nenbutsu was within the mind of Murasaki Shikibu. The author

however did not practice Pure land Buddhism, however out of the authors narration a lot of characters devote to practice nenbutsu through Amida. These characters also devote on behalf of their loved ones who died and for themselves also.

There are many references concerning these teachings and tales. The Vairocana and Danish have two references while Amida has twenty-two references (Hicks, 67). Hicks associate this with the rising of Pureland teachings and the decay of the esoteric teachings. The reason also associated with this rise is the accessibility of the pureland teachings by Murasaki Shikibu. In the story, esoteric teachings were not easily accessible to Musaraki due to the monastic's ordained character.

It is said in the story that the mind, body and speech of a practitioner of esoteric teachings had to merge with the three secrets to be energized though mutual empowerment process. This mutual empowerment makes the union between them real. This according to Murasaki Shikibu could make the curative effective. The presents of many Buddhists influence the practice also (Machida, 158). Other Buddhists apart from Vairocana and Amida are Bodhisattva Maitreya who is believed to be the next Buddha and is believe to come from Heaven according to them called Tusita. A devotion is made to him by a prayer to act as a reference to him.

In the song and rituals accorded to this new Buddha Medicine men attribute is made to him. Stunkel describes this as world's advantages, which were present and strong during the time of Murasaki Shikibu with the faith in Kannon. The song attributed to this Medicine Buddha had some beliefs and rituals, which were believed to be the cure for ailments. On the other hand,

nenbutsu rituals and other rituals performed to please nenbutsu could represent a good fortune for oneself or for his death-loved ones. Faith in Amida was also another aspect which represented strong believe in the medicine men as they give them faith in curing the ailments. This faith in Amida and the nenbutsu rituals also give someone hope and faith that they could be born again the pure land (Stunkel, 59) . The story presents ideas and practices of the Buddhism. It presents how Buddhism was practiced and how the views and ideas about the Buddhism affected its practice and faith in it.

## **Works Cited**

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