

PART ONE

# Premodern Period



# Nasty Boys or Obedient Children?

## *Childhood and Relative Autonomy in Medieval Japanese Monasteries*

Or Porath

The aim of this chapter is to explore how children in Buddhist monasteries have been construed and to make sense of the conceptual boundaries of the male child in medieval Japan (twelfth to sixteenth centuries). The *chigo* and *dōji* were representative figures of child monastics. The former is often defined by scholars as a young assistant involved in sexual affairs with older Buddhist priests, while the latter resonated with the broader imaginary role of children as sacred entities. However, there are important caveats to bear in mind. First, we must consider that the notion of a child in medieval Japan was not determined by biological age but by cultural demands, as we see as well in chapters 2 and 3, which deal with the Edo period. Therefore, some of the male acolytes I discuss would not be considered children by today's standards. Also, even though Buddhist monasteries were not confined to male-male social interaction, the focus of my study will be male children due to their distinctive ontological status in the medieval world.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, I contend that the child category in medieval Japan was a fluid one, with boundaries dictated by social, occupational, and religious factors. Although its complexity cannot be fully understood through pedagogical materials, such documents reveal porousness in the child's moral restrictions. Though tempered by institutional imperatives and constraints of the monastic environment, the fluidity allowed the child a certain amount of freedom, or what I call "relative autonomy."

By "relative autonomy," I do not mean that acolytes enjoyed "full liberty" or "rights" in monasteries that would have allowed them to exercise what scholars call "agency." Instead, I argue that there was an opportunity for some acolytes to diverge from behavioral norms and reject cultural expectations within the power relations that the monastery imposed.<sup>2</sup> In my definition of relative autonomy, the

concept does not rule out corporal punishments or sexual abuses inflicted upon children, nor does it imply that children had control over their fate; rather I posit that within the specific medieval historical context, certain situations permitted children to circumvent regulations and behave as they wished.<sup>3</sup>

Few primary sources exist that shed light on the conceptual category of the child or the issue of a child's autonomy. Also rare are sources regarding power relations between monk and disciple. This is because monks produced texts whereas children had little opportunity for textual expression. Therefore, the only way to examine the concept of children in the medieval era is through texts written by adult monks. This in itself indicates that children were not agents, but rather individuals who attempted to negotiate their freedom when possible while constantly subjected to imaginary manipulation by their superiors. Nonetheless, representations of children in monastic texts reveal much about their behavior. I selected the texts analyzed below because they explicitly describe both the idealized and actual behavior of children in medieval monasteries, including disobedience. The texts present didactic attempts to instill compliance and decorum in acolytes, but they also reveal that novices resisted the establishment and created a space to assert relative autonomy. Monks feared that acolytes would further exercise their ability to ignore monastic injunctions and deviate from the Buddhist curriculum by engaging in nonreligious pursuits that challenged the monastic lifestyle.

The following analysis will examine two didactic and pedagogical texts that provide rationalization for accepting monastic rules. The first, *Instructions for Children* (Dōji-kyō), was written within a Buddhist and Confucian epistemological framework and is falsely attributed to the monk Annen (841–?), an important priest in the Tendai tradition. Similar to other didactic texts, it prescribes and proscribes how acolytes should behave and attempts to impose social order in the monastery by employing Buddho-Confucian concepts while also implying a certain codependence between master and acolyte. The Confucian elements of the texts mostly lionize the teacher (Buddhist priest) and contribute to the overall aggrandizement of the authority of monks. The second text, *Education for Acolytes* (Chigo kyōkun) is attributed to the monk-poet Sōgi (1421–1502) and was written much later than *Instructions*, in the Muromachi period. Here, Sōgi laments the bad behavior of monastic children and implies that children should show moral integrity. The first text establishes the boundaries of proper monastic behavior, but posits an impossible ideal for education when measured against the second. The second text reveals the relative autonomy of unruly acolytes through their disobedience. In other words, *Education* is a magnified and negative evaluation of what the first text would consider a “worst-case scenario,” in which children completely ignore monastic injunctions and show their own initiative. Even if this is an overly exaggerated picture of social reality, it exposes a concern that one of the scenarios depicting mischievous boys might come to fruition. Thus, *Education* indicates that some acolytes could, in theory, enjoy a certain amount of freedom.

## CHILDREN IN MEDIEVAL JAPANESE MONASTICISM

Within the socio-historical context of monk-acolyte relations in medieval Japan, textual tradition presents a complex array of children that remain unclassified. The monastic environment contained extensive terminology for children, and each child-category can be read using multiple theoretical lenses. This fluidity of the child is evident in a wide corpus of medieval prose, temple records, ritual manuals, and various treatises. In other words, the figure of the *chigo* or *dōji* is always in flux and his image contested by diverse semiological considerations.

In the Middle Ages, temples were the primary locus of children's education, and sources show that pedagogical relations were accompanied by close social interaction, including various forms of intimacy. For example, in Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*) in both of its Shingon and Tendai varieties, master-disciple relations were a key component in edification, and some religious texts established that intimate affairs, whether sexual or emotional, were conducive to the attainment of rebirth in heaven (Porath 2015). These intimate relations placed the young monastic child in a lower social position vis-à-vis the monk, as the "passive" or "violated" partner (Tanaka 1997: 18–23), but there were certain occasions that required egalitarianism between the two parties, specifically religious initiations. For example, an *abhiṣeka* (Esoteric ritual consecration) in the Tendai tradition, called *kaikanjō* (the Ritual Consecration of Precepts), constituted a rite-of-passage in which student and master achieved union with Śākyamuni Buddha and the cosmic Buddha Many Jewels. In the ritual, master and disciple held hands intimately with the disciple alternating in assuming the role of the teacher (Tanaka 1999: 69). Another *abhiṣeka*, *Chigo kanjō* (the Ritual Consecration of Acolytes), raised children into the altar to be sexually penetrated so that they could be deified as the bodhisattva Kannon and the Mountain King Avatar (Sannō gongen). While the sexual act can be seen as violent and coercive, it is also evident that the child became socially empowered given the ritual's strong symbolical connection with Emperorship and important divine figures such as Shōtoku Taishi, Kannon, and Sannō (Abe 1984a, 1984b; Matsuoka 1991). This coexistence of egalitarianism and mistreatment also existed within the context of the Buddhist educational episteme, which elevated the status of the Buddhist teacher and attempted to shape the child into a well-behaved individual and socially conformed youth who was positioned below his superior, yet cherished as an individual. But where did the acolyte category come from, and what are its conceptual boundaries?

The etymological origin of *chigo* is *chichigo*, a word that means "an infant who sucks from the breast" (Moriyama and Nakae 2002: 13). Thus, the word *chigo* contains the original meaning of "newborn." The word *chigo* first appears in documents from the tenth century, such as *Tale of the Woodcutter* (Taketori monogatari, tenth century), *Tale of the Hollow Tree* (Utsuho monogatari, tenth century), and *Japanese Names [for things] Classified and Annotated* (Wamyōshō, 938). In

later medieval writings the usage and structure shifted, and infants were clearly seen as preceding the *chigo* category. *Chigo* contains two Chinese characters that denote child, yet the signification was not limited to young children. Instead *Chigo* became a monastic category designating preadult male attendants who performed various chores in temple life. This category included both children and adolescents who attended their superiors and engaged in performances. The *chigo* also partook in important religious activities and the performing arts, and these two fields were not often mutually exclusive. For example, *chigo* sometimes operated as mediators between this world and the other, a kind of a human replacement for the *yorimashi* (a “Shinto” receptacle into which kami descend). In the Child Dancing (*warawa mai*) at Daigoji temple in Kyoto, held as part of the *Sakura-e* ceremony, the *chigo* dancers were possessed by gods and delivered oracles. As noted previously, *chigo* also functioned as sexual partners for adult priests, a point I will expand on shortly. Thus medieval texts attached occupational, religious, and social (including sexual) meanings to the denomination of *chigo*. Rather than simply being biologically determined, the monastic child became a social category and was recognized as a specific rank in the lower stratum of Buddhist society.

However, *chigo* was not the only term used to describe children. As Tsuchiya Megumi demonstrates in her research on social stratification in medieval monastic society, the acolytes were also called *dōji* (child) and *warawa* (child). Tsuchiya conducted a rigorous study on child categories in monastic cloisters (*in* and *bō*) using historical documents in temples such as Daigoji and Ninnaji in Kyoto and elaborates a typology of child monastics as follows: upper-child (*uewarawa*), middle-child (*chūdōji*), and great-child (*daidōji*). The *chūdōji* and *uewarawa* were generally preadult males from the age of twelve to sixteen as Tanaka Takako claims. With regards to *chigo*, the precise boundaries of age are underexplored, but Tanaka concludes (most likely based on Kuroda’s general discussion on the boundaries of childhood) that *chigo* are young boys over the age of seven who correspond roughly to adolescents (Tanaka 2004: 15). Tsuchiya shows that *chigo* were children of the *seigake* ministers (officials who could be promoted to the highest position of chancellor). They were also children of administrators (*bōkan*), bureaucrats who ran the *monzeki* (temples governed by an imperial prince) and came from a noble rank. At the lower echelons, *chigo* were sons of the North Guards (*hokumen*) that served the Retired Emperor (*in*), as well as children of the warrior elites or samurai. Tsuchiya argues that the *chigo* were roughly parallel to the upper-child rank. For example, according to one extant record from Ninnaji temple, although *chigo* of Ninnaji Omuro were children of administrators, they are also mentioned as performing the role of upper-children in processions. Children who came from families with lower social rank such as North Guards or samurai were able to outrank their fathers as *chigo*, as seen by their relatively loftier position in processions (Tsuchiya 2001). The role of the middle-child (also called *warabe*) was to decorate

the processions with his lavish physical appearance (a role that was also shared by *chigo*) and to set the table (*baizen*).

Nonetheless, the third category of great-children who served as attendants and errands differed significantly from the first two. The *daidōji* denoted an adult male who wore the hairstyle and attire of a monastic child, but modern definitions do not recognize him as a child per se (Tanaka 2004: 9–10). This means that an attendant could, theoretically, wear the hairstyle of a child and live in a state of perpetual childhood. The implication is that they were individuals outside normative social progression. Another category for adults who disguised themselves as a child was *dōjisugata*, who are often depicted in medieval illustrated scrolls or *emaki* (Kuroda 1986). Tsuchiya argues that the representative figure of the “adult-child” phenomenon was the *daidōji*, and contests Kuroda’s emphasis on the *dōdōji* (Tsuchiya 2001). The *dōdōji* also served as an attendant and, especially in Buddhist rituals (*daihōe*) and consecrations (*kanjō*), in the role of delivering flower baskets (*keko*) for flower-scattering. Scholars agree that it is more likely that a superior adult determined the acolyte’s fate as an everlasting youth. By becoming a child forever, the *daidōji* could remain in a fixed ontological and social position, but also pay the price of occupying a low social status.

Social background, rank, and age determined an acolyte’s social designation in the monastery. For example, the *chigo/dōji* were normally students sent from noble families and warrior elites. The *chūdōji* and *daidōji* were sometimes synonymous with the attendants of low-ranking families, or *sanjo*. The *uewarawa* possessed the most social prestige and were allowed to both serve adult priests in general and study under an individual monk (Tsuchiya 2001). This situation granted easy access to erotic intimacy with the priest (Tanaka 2004). It goes without saying that the age of these different child members determined their physical appearance. Normally, when acolytes reached a certain age (fifteen, seventeen, or eighteen) they underwent a rite of passage called *genbuku* through which they became adults. In this ceremony, they would replace their unlined robe (*hitoe*) or short-sleeved garment (*kosode*) with adult’s outfit. Also, their juvenile haircut would be cut and braided, and they would usually be bestowed with a cap. Following this initiation, the new adults would leave the monastic precincts and rejoin their aristocratic or samurai families. Alternatively, they could choose to stay in the monastery, shave their pates, and take the tonsure. According to Tanaka, until the *genbuku*, the acolytes embodied a cultural identity of childhood through their aesthetic appearance—putting on makeup, adorning themselves with exquisite attire, and wearing long hair. In artistic depictions, they are recognizable by their plump faces, groomed eyebrows, and extravagant outfits, all reminiscent of women. Although scholars have also noted the acolytes’ alleged androgynous quality and their stylistic proximity to women in the arts (Abe 1998; Tanaka 2004), they were still distinctive in appearance and cannot be simply aligned with femininity. In all

of these different categories, children had a set of embodied practices that differed from those of monks and women.

Beyond the embodiment of “quasi-feminine” characteristics, children also possessed a “nonhuman” quality. Some scholars claim the monastic child held a position outside the boundaries of the human hierarchy (Kuroda 1986: 224). Intellectual historian Kuroda Hideo, through analyzing various textual and pictorial sources, posits that in medieval times children were seen as an ontological category distinct from people (*hito*). According to Kuroda’s formulation, medieval society can be divided into four categories: children (*warawa*), people (*hito*), monks (*sōryo*), and outcastes (*hinin*), which can be distinguished by visual markers. For example, the child usually sports dangling hair, whereas the “person” (adult man) has his hair in a topknot (*motodori*) and wears the *eboshi* cap or *kanmuri* hat common to bureaucrats and other state officials. As mentioned earlier, a child could enter “personhood” by participating in a rite of passage, when his haircut was altered and the *eboshi* placed on top of his head. In fact, a child would undergo several sartorial transformations before becoming an adult.

In some cases, children were thought of as similar to “outcastes,” or defiled people, such as lepers. In the medieval encyclopedia *Chiribukuro*, the young *chigo* (*shōni*) was categorized among beings considered “nonpeople” (*hito naranu mono*), but this does not necessarily mean that he was as inferior as those in the “outcastes” category (Kuroda 1986: 187–88). Historian Amino Yoshiko notes that adults who used children’s names, such as *yase-dōji* (workers who carried palanquins and coffins of aristocrats in Northern Kyoto) were connected with *hinin* due to their association with impurity and alleged descent from demons (Amino 2012: 190–94) and that any adults who used the name or form of children, including cow-herders (*ushikai*), possessed magical powers and were closely related to the world of kami and buddhas (Amino 2005: 94–117). Because of this confusion between the sacred and profane nature of various individuals labeled as a children (*warawa*), it is easy to understand why Kuroda sees them as “either lacking essence or as intermediary beings.” This also has to do with the fact children precede gender differentiation. As Kuroda notes, they are not yet male or female. Abe Yasurō calls them “middle-sex” entities. In other words, one can see the *chigo/dōji* as intermediary beings who are continuous with the divine realm.

Kuroda argues that children, together with old men and women, were considered sacred precisely because they stood on the fringes of society and were never seen as fully adult (men). They belonged to the order of chaos, rather than that of *nómos* (“the law”). Children in particular carried a significant symbolical weight as sacred entities. The word for children—*dōji*—has a religious origin and some non-Japanese etymological connotations that associate children with sacrality. The term is a translation of the Sanskrit word *kumara*, which alludes to both prince and child. This term has a pre-Buddhist history, originally appearing in Hindu sources. The feminine equivalent is *kumāri*, which designates a virgin in

the Indian Tantric tradition. Although an understanding of purity was maintained in the transition to Japanese culture, the Hindu tradition also speaks of *kumāra* as an epithet for Skandha/Vishakha, the god of war, representing violence, which was also carried to Japan in the form of wrathful youths.

In the Buddhist context, the term still carries a divine connotation. In Japan, the *kumāra* or *dōji* figure is identified with a cohort of boy attendants who often accompany Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhist wisdom kings (*myōō*). For instance, the Wisdom King Fudō Myōō (and sometimes the bodhisattva Monju) is depicted in texts and iconography as being surrounded by eight acolytes who serve him, and in many cases commonly flanked by the duo Kongara-dōji and Seitaka-dōji. Similarly, the goddess Benzaiten has fifteen or sixteen boy attendants as her retinue who function as her disciples. Another type of *dōji* is an avatar in child-form of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, such as Vajra-Kumāra (*kongō-dōji*) and Konpira (*konpira-dōji*). *Dōji* can also stand for child figures of kami and Buddhas, like Hachiman-dōji, the young form of the popular god Hachiman. In addition, there are many cases in which *dōji* refers to divinities who exist solely as “children,” neither an attendant or a child-version of another being. Some are not recognized as children so clearly. These “stand-alone” children are suprahuman beings, for example, Shuten-dōji, Sessen-dōji, and Uhō-dōji (although the last of these is clearly a child and conceived as a Buddhist version of Amaterasu, the sun goddess). Other deities are known as children without the labeling of *dōji*, such as Jūzenji, a placenta deity that is a manifestation of the Mountain King Avatar (Sannō-gongen), who was an important icon in the Sannō Shinto tradition of Mt. Hiei and Hie Shrine. There are also other denominations for sacred children, for example *wakamiya*, the attendants at Kasuga and Hachiman shrines. The “stand-alone” children form a pantheon of heavenly beings with close connection to the acolyte.<sup>4</sup> It is certain that children partook of sacrality because they enjoyed a denomination identical to these lofty beings, and that the two categories overlapped occasionally.

Based on painstaking research, Kuroda uses additional labels for children in monastic settings. For example, Kuroda speaks of *warawa* (“children”) and, as I mentioned before, *dōji-sugata* (“adults who were forced to wear children’s clothes”). *Dōji-sugata* sometimes appears in sources as *dōgyō*. *Warawa* is the Japanese pronunciation for the first Chinese character of *dōji*, essentially meaning children. Unlike *dōji*, which has a Buddhist etymological background, *warawa* is a category devoid of any Buddhist meaning, denoting messiness or laughter. Nevertheless, *warawa* is still commonly used to refer to monastic children, as we have seen earlier with *uewarawa*. The monastic child was not only an attendant and an apprentice, but also served a ritualistic and performative function in the performing arts. The dancing *chigo* were termed *dōbu* or *waramai* and, according to Kuroda and Tsuchiya, became the love objects of monks. Some acolytes joined various thespian performances, such as Noh, Ennen, Fūryū, where they fulfilled

religious roles as mediums that summon kami. . Rather than a unified system of child taxonomy, scholarship generally points to an ontological state of the *chigo/dōji* that was fluctuating, intermediate, and negotiable (Lin 2001).

Although the categorization of children remains indistinct, the sexual configuration of acolytes, that of male-male love, is relatively stable in textual and artistic representations. The *chigo* is mostly known for its association with male-male love from the *chigo monogatari* genre, a corpus of tales that recounts love affairs between *chigo* and other males (and less often, females too). Many of these relations are described as taking place between adult monks and young acolytes, and end with the demise of the *chigo* or his separation from the loved monk, while monks enjoy the fruits of awakening resulting from a sexual encounter with the *chigo*-turned-bodhisattva. Abe Yasurō noted that the trope of the suffering or dying *chigo* is a common thread running through the *chigo monogatari* and *setsuwa* genres (Abe 1998). The sexual construction of male-male sexual relations can also be found outside of this genre, and is also asymmetrical. In sexual relations, the junior partner typically fulfilled the role of insertee in anal intercourse (Hosokawa 2000; Tanaka 2004). The structure is clear in several medieval sources, such as *The Scroll of Acolytes* (*Chigo no sōshi*), *The Solicitation Book of the Way of Youths* (Nyakudō no Kanjinchō, 1482), and the sexual ritual *Chigo kanjō* and its commentaries. Texts that make an appeal to perform these rigid sexual roles suggest that some acolytes were not following the sexual conventions expected of them, so it is possible that there was a certain amount of flexibility in sexual engagements (Porath 2015). This flexibility is also observed in the response to general monastic exhortations. Children were not always obedient to their senior monastic partners, and some of them could enjoy a sense of freedom, even though they were expected to participate in asymmetrical socio-sexual relations. For that reason, this paper points to child disobedience that extends beyond sexuality to general behavior.

#### OBEDIENT CHILDREN: INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN

*Instructions for Children* (Dōji-kyō) is well-known as a part of a primer that includes another text called *The Teaching of the Truthful Words* (Jitsugokyō). Both *Instructions* and *Truthful Words* were taught in the medieval period and they were published together as primers for children throughout the Edo (1603–1868) and Meiji periods (1868–1912). Both were composed in ancient and medieval times, and in monasteries they were taught separately. Tsuji Zennosuke claims that *Instructions* became extremely popular in the Muromachi period (Tsuji 1951: 362), and it is well known that in the Edo period the text was used in homeschooling and in the widespread temple schools (*terakoya*) that catered to commoners, villagers, and townsmen. *Truthful Words* was written around the Heian period (794–1185) and is attributed to Kūkai (Kōbo Daishi, 774–835), though the exact

date and authorship is unknown. *Instructions* was written in 1377. Although tradition identifies the author to be the eminent monk Annen, the lack of an extant manuscript from the ninth century makes this doubtful.

According to a study on medieval Japanese education by Sugawara Masako, *Instructions* was taught to monastic children from around the age of thirteen. A retainer of Aki province who served the Mori warrior clan, Tamaki Yoshiyasu (1552–1633), for example, used this text when he was studying at Shōraku-ji (Sugawara 2014: 30–31, Yuki 1977). According to Tamaki's biography, in the first year of study, he was assigned to read the Heart Sutra and the Kannon Sutra in the morning, and in the evening, in addition to Chinese character practice, he would read *Instructions* and *Truthful Words* along other didactic material. The second year entailed the study of the *Analects*, the Confucian classics, and others. The third was comprised of Japanese poetry and literature such as the *Man'yōshū*, the *Tale of Ise*, and the *Tale of Genji*. Yuki Rikurō claims that Tamaki's depiction of the curriculum reflected the general pedagogical structure for *chigo* in temples (Yuki 1977: 162–63), but Yonehara Masayoshi (cited in Sugawara 2014) argues that it was identical to the study program of *sengoku* samurai and mirrored the general education and knowledge that warriors pursued. Whether the curriculum was restricted to children of samurai descent or not, what is certain is that the texts were taught in temples to young children. Another source edited by the Shingon monk Zonsei displays a catalogue of texts that served as necessary tools for learning for late-Muromachi monks. Zonsei highlights texts that children need to study by the age of fifteen. The genres are quite diverse and include *setsuwa* (didactic tales), *denki* (biographies), *gunki* (military tales), *engi* (origins of temples), *emaki* (illustrated scrolls), and others, but among them a group of primers (*ōraimono*) is mentioned, which includes *Instructions* and *Truthful Words*. Similarly, the Tendai-turned-Nichiren-shū monk Nichi'i (1444–1519) classified various texts into a collection of study materials. In the section on “what children should read,” *Instructions* and *Truthful Words* remain part of the core curriculum (Takahashi 2007). As such, *Instructions* and *Truthful Words* became a crucial part of the monastic learning experience for children.

The content of both texts was regarded as complementary to the edification of children. Both are written in classical Chinese and in lines of five characters that are readable in Sino-Japanese or *kanbun*. *Truthful Words* was ostensibly written by Heian-period nobles and directed to aristocratic elites using a Confucian episteme, but it cannot be ruled out that the text might be a copy of an earlier Chinese source. It places an emphasis on the importance of learning, the distinctions between a wise and a foolish man, and includes excerpts from Confucian classics. *Instructions for Children*, on the other hand, was formulated by Buddhist clergy for temple children of varying social backgrounds and it contains rich Buddhist pedagogical elements. *Instructions* is not so systemized and covers a jumbled assortment of theological and pedagogical concerns. It includes passages instructing

proper demeanor and etiquette, but also exhorts children to study and cultivate their motivation for learning. In addition, the text is embedded in a Buddho-Confucian episteme, presenting a unique synthesis of dogmas.

It is precisely the Buddho-Confucian system of knowledge that provided a convenient theoretical frame for instilling proper conduct in children. The two doctrines were employed to position the child in a lower social standing so that he respected the authority of the priesthood. The role of Confucianism in *Instructions* was to impart to children a mode of behavior informed by the five human relationships model (Ch. *wulun*, Jp. *gorin*) that ensures an orderly patriarchal structure. Buddhism, in turn, assured attainment of Buddhahood. Both Confucian and Buddhist norms of obeisance were emphasized so that respect was channeled to the clergy.

The teachers mentioned in the texts undoubtedly refer to Buddhist clerics. Buddhism expanded the five human relationships concept to add a monastic layer as the supreme authority. The Buddhist teaching also served as a warning to children of the punishments they would endure in their next lifetime should they choose not to obey monastic orders. The text manipulates the symbolic significance of the two traditions to inspire awe and fear among disciples.

*Instructions* quickly makes it clear that rank is an important notion in the monastic social landscape. The text establishes correspondence between this-worldly authority and the divine realm, and establishes a hierarchy of ordinary beings vis-à-vis their masters: “Do not speak without being asked. If you are issued a command, listen carefully. When you approach the Three Treasures, bow three times. When facing the divinities, bow twice. When facing an ordinary person, bow once. When seeing masters and gentlemen, bow low in respect” (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 9). The general etiquette between a child/acolyte and his superior restricts the child by prohibiting him from complaining about hardships and urging him to obey instructions. The narrative shifts to divine authority, which imparts that the “Three Treasures” are to be worshipped with the highest respect, the kami close behind. The “Three Treasures” include the Buddha, the Buddhist teachings, and the entire priestly community (Sk. *samgha*). The immediate implication is that the Buddhist symbols and clergy deserve higher respect than autochthonous deities. When the text refers to human relations, the teacher/master stands at the top of the social pyramid with the common people at the bottom. This was reflected in the monk/acolyte relationship in which monks assume the teacher status and acolytes are situated at a level lower along with common people not worthy of receiving homage.

Therefore, if the monastic hierarchy can be read in the deference one earns, it can also be judged from one’s level of authoritative expression:

People have manners; the court necessarily has protocols. People without manners will cause trouble among the *samgha*. If you mingle, you should not use foul language.

When you're done [with your affairs], withdraw immediately. When you handle an affair, do not turn your back to friends. Words should not cause separation. People who talk a lot accomplish little, and are like an old dog that barks at friends. Lazy people who eat in a rush are like a tired monkey that covets fruit. Brave people necessarily encounter danger. They are like a summer insect that enters the flames. Dull people don't meet trouble, like a spring bird playing in the forest. (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 9)

The Buddhist establishment or the *samgha* cannot allow a poorly mannered individual within its cloister, for this can endanger the wholesomeness of the community. In demanding the obeisance of children, *Instructions* wishes to limit their freedom of interaction by forbidding them to use coarse or obscene words. Also, it requires that social interaction be minimal. A child should make an effort to avoid conversation, and the child should leave at once if he meets another person while undertaking a chore. At the same time, in conformity with the five Confucian relations, the child is advised not to hurt his friends. Of course, monastic leaders could not limit all types of social bonding. A good friendship defined in Confucian terms was a desired interaction, to be maintained because it ensured harmonious stability.

Monks established strict boundaries for communication, and they were also interested in controlling movement. Monastics worried that children would engage in risky adventures and neglect their monastic duties. By demonizing bravery and encouraging insipidness, monks could prevent unwarranted behavior. Dullness should be understood as humbleness rather than stupidity. This interpretation is supported elsewhere via yin-yang theory: "People with *yin* virtues will necessarily have *yang* rewards" (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 10). In Chinese philosophy, *yin* is normally equated with humility and modesty, whereas *yang* refers to clear or evident benefits earned in this lifetime. The text also limits students' activities, for it emphasizes the virtues of learning and scholarly life. It bursts with praise of erudition: "Even on a winter night, wearing a thin silk robe, you should withstand the cold and recite throughout the night," and "even on a summer night, suffering from malnourishment, you should study all day regardless of your hunger" (12). Such obedience has an ascetic tinge. There were also physical limitations on movement of children: "A student should be seven feet (*shaku*) away from a master; he must not even step in his shadow" (11). In this way, the hierarchy between children and monks was transmuted into spatial terms. The monk was too exalted to stand near a child, indicating the social prestige of the clergy and the physical boundaries in monasteries.

Apart from imposing limitations on movement, the text uses "scare tactics." The monks' pedagogical enterprise involved fear and promoted tameness: "If a master does not teach his disciple, this may be called a violation of the precepts. If a master punishes a disciple, this may be called adherence to Buddhist precepts. If [a master] rears a bad student, both master and disciple fall to hell. If you are a

good student, both master and disciple achieve Buddhahood. A student who does not follow the teachings should be quickly sent back to his father and mother” (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 11). Monks not only promise spiritual benefits to obedient students, but they also use intimidation to convince disciples to follow the rules. The violation of precepts (*hakai*) is, at least ideally, a serious transgression for Buddhists (even if they were often contravened in Japan). These violations include committing forbidden sexual acts, stealing, killing a person, and lying. A monk who instructs children poorly commits an offence equal to these transgressive behaviors. A similar reference can be found elsewhere in the text: “The master hits the student, not because he hates [him] but because he wants to cultivate his skills” (11). This passage suggests that monks performed corporal punishment. Punishing a student is not only mandatory for educational purposes, but it is also a Buddhist obligation. That said, corporal punishing was not considered abusive in medieval Japan, nor was it considered abusive anywhere in the world at that time. There is an equal responsibility for both parties to work hard to achieve proper cultivation of a student’s character. The stakes are high. If education fails, then both student and master will end up in hell.

Both the scare tactics and the promise of enlightenment are colored by Confucian and Buddhist ideals. The text cleverly uses religious eclecticism to enhance the authority of adult superiors and to make it easier to elicit obedient behavior on the part of children. This is especially clear in numerous passages where teachers and parents are glorified: “Kannon, out of filiality to her father, had crowned Amida with a Buddha Crown. Seishi, out of filial devotion, put the bones of his father and mother on his head, and placed the [rest of their] bones into a precious vase” (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 11–12).” While these figures are carrying out filial duties, their parents are construed as Buddhist divinities, and the lineage that children worship is the divine lineage of Buddhas rather than ordinary human ancestors. Such amalgamation of Confucianism with Buddhist doctrine is also demonstrated in a passage on the gestative process leading to the birth of a child: “The white bone is the father’s ‘sexual liquid,’ the red flesh is the mother’s ‘sexual liquid.’ The red and white drops being united, the body is realized in five limbs” (13). The text employs the sexual ontology of Esoteric Buddhism in order to explain the rationale behind the Confucian notion of filial piety. In Buddhist Esotericism, the notion of the twin-fluids (*sekibyaku nitai*) constructs the semen and menstrual blood as the Buddhist virtues of male wisdom and female compassion. The seminal and menstrual discharges are seen as the key components that create the mind and its contents, and eventually the human body. The child is created out of these two bodily fluids as red flesh and white bones, and since he embodies in his corporal existence his own parents, filial obligation constitutes loyalty to oneself. This type of reasoning displays an overarching Buddhist vision of the cosmos in which nonduality permeates all physical and mental phenomena, including father and mother. Confucian

notions are thus subsumed within a larger Buddhist ontological system in which priestly authority was deeply embedded.

There are many more occasions in which Buddho-Confucian doctrine is used to legitimize the teacher priest as an authoritative figure. Advising children to respect their masters, the text reads: “Even a teacher for a day should not be shunned, not to mention a teacher who has taught for numerous years. The teacher is a vow of Three Realms. The ancestor is a glance at one realm” (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 11). Therefore, the teacher, a Buddhist priest, “is a vow,” and is coextensive with all temporalities, an ontological condition only rivaled by the cosmic Buddha. The “Three Realms” from a Confucian perspective are the “Three Generations”: father, son, and grandson. If the term is read in Confucian terms, the teacher is already loftier than a parent because he expresses the entire familial lineage in his bodily existence, whereas the ancestor constitutes a glimpse into one generation. It follows that no one else enjoys the teacher’s prestige, and children ought to respect the divine authority of their priestly superiors, even more than that of their parental figures.

If children follow the above-mentioned behavioral protocol, then they will be rewarded. The text ends with important exhortations indicative of Buddhist soteriology:

First, one has to aspire to become Buddha.

Second, one has to reward the Four Benevolences that one receives.

Third, everywhere in the Six Destinies every individual should altogether attain Buddhahood.

In order to guide children, one should inform them on the laws of Karma. These [obligations] come from Buddhist and Non-Buddhist scriptures alike. (Pseudo-Annen 1931: 15)

The most significant goal for a child is to become a Buddha. The access to Buddhahood is premised on obedience to priestly teachers; for disruptive children, there is karmic retribution. For this reason, monks are instructed to edify children on the workings of karma to prevent youth from straying from the Buddhist path. Carrying out idealized behavior will result in karmic fruition for all. Children who exhibit humbleness, learning, and good nature will necessarily benefit all sentient beings. Hence, well-mannered behavior is deemed an expression of Buddhist compassion.

*Instructions* does not stop with connecting good behavior to compassion. Obedience to monks is an act of gratitude to one of the Four Benevolences. Even if the Four Benevolences seem rooted in Confucian ideology, because they are based on a relationship model, by the time the text was written, the concept amalgamated Buddhism with Confucianism. In *The Great Mahayana Sutra of Contemplating the Mind Ground* (Ch. *Dasheng besheng xindi guan jing*), the Four Benevolences are the four objects of compassion—parents, sentient beings, rulers, and the Three

Treasures.<sup>5</sup> The “Three Treasures” include the symbolical authority of the monastic community, as seen above. Another important sutra, *The Sutra of Refuge in the True Dharma* (Sk. *Saddharma-smṛty-upasthāna-sūtra*, Ch. *Zhengfa nianchu jing*) describes obligation to the father, the mother, the Tathāgata (Buddha), and the Dharma teacher.<sup>6</sup> Thus two logics for conforming to priestly authority are operative in *Instructions*: following the principles of Buddhism in order to be rewarded, both for worldly desire and for the attainment of awakening; following the higher authority of Buddhists and parents because they embody sacrality, with obedience intimately tied to the fulfillment of Buddhist goals. The text urges full obeisance, but we would be wrong to construe monastic social structure as an inflexible hierarchy. The text hints at mutual dependence between monks and acolytes and prioritizes the attainment of Buddhahood for both. Further, as we shall see below, another medieval text presents evidence of children challenging priestly authorities in various ways.

#### NASTY BOYS: THE EDUCATION OF ACOLYTES

In *Instructions for Children*, it is evident that monks set clear rules for instilling obedient behavior in children, and that respecting priestly authority was essential for achieving the end of Buddhist practice—Buddhahood. On the other hand, *The Education of Acolytes* sheds light on the reality that departs from this ideal monastic world. *The Education of Acolytes* is a satire on the unruliness of temple novices. It was composed in the form of five-seven *morae* verses (*shichigo-chō*) sometime in the Muromachi period (1337–1573) and functioned as a popular pedagogical poem-essay. It saw a further variant in the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573–1600) under the title of *The Dog Short-Poem* (Inu tanka, Keichō era 1596–1615) and was later republished in the Edo period under the label of *Tales of Youths* (Wakashū monogatari, 1657). The *Education*, in its many iterations, was likely targeted at acolytes from samurai families, and provided moral instruction for young warriors well into the Edo period. It contains a long series of poems in which the narrator lists the misbehavior of acolytes, often complaining about their disobedience to priestly authority. The fact that the children were not conforming to Buddhist constraints and had little desire to participate in monastic activities shows that they could enjoy a relative freedom. The majority of their social activities are described as nonreligious, indicating that their disobedience was even more disturbing to clerical elites.

Not much is known about *The Education of Acolytes*. Although it is said to have been written by the monk-poet Sōgi, it is not found in most of the collected compendia of Sōgi’s writings. However, that absence can be explained by a homophobic tendency on the part of religious and literature scholars of the modern period, who often ignored works that allude to male-male sexual engagements. Indeed, the work is classified as a *nanshoku* (“male-male eros”) text in the authoritative

bibliography of male-male love written by the folklorist Iwata Jun'ichi even though it is difficult to find references to actual male-male erotic intimacy in the text (Iwata 2002: 347). *Sōgi* may play on ambiguity that is found in the work, but there is no conclusive evidence that allows us to claim that *Education* is indeed homoerotic. I will go into detail in my examination of passages that may be construed as homoerotic, but I will also show that there is no clear-cut instance. Instead I will underscore that the obligations stated in *Instructions for Children* are reported in *Education* to be ignored by acolytes. The text problematizes the notion that monks were successful in exerting full control over acolytes.

The title of *The Education of Acolytes* suggests it is pedagogical text explaining how to edify acolytes. Yet, the title does not fit the contents. The tone in this text is not normative in nature but descriptive, and the prose style is more typical of a comical narrative than of didactic literature. Be that as it may, one cannot assume that the content was merely the product of the writer's imagination. The text speaks to issues analogous to those found in *Instructions* and provides readers with a glance at how acolytes deviated from the norms for conduct.

As in many other medieval works, the child category in *The Education* is not coherent. While the title mentions *chigo* or temple acolyte, the opening passage makes it clear that acolytes under discussion are designated differently in the body of the text: "Today, considering carefully in the rain, I am writing here in an idle fashion and in detail about the bad behavior of youths [*wakashu*] in this world. Even a master of brush would sound foolish. To begin with, they dislike the refinement of the Way, they act obstinately, and as they speak they make fun of other people" (Sōgi 1959: 336). The term *wakashu* ("youth") refers to a preadult partner in a male-male sexual relationship. This hints that the young boys under discussion are objects of erotic intimacy. The proximity of the word "Way" to the *wakashu* category might imply that this is the "Way of Youths" (*shudō*), a disciplinary tradition of male-male love that was especially prevalent in the Edo period and had antecedents in medieval times.<sup>7</sup> The labeling of male-male love as a "Way" says something significant about the larger concept, because the term has a rich and complex cultural history. The word *dō* or "Way" as it relates to a doctrine or a discipline bestows a concept with a religious or ethical nuance. This understanding derives from Daoism, Confucianism, and other continental traditions that refer to their own body of knowledge as a "Way" as well. Thus, in medieval Japan, the major religious ideologies of Confucianism (*judō*), Buddhism (*butsudō*), and Shinto (*shintō*) all receive the denomination of a way. Secular activities such as calligraphy (*kadō*) and martial arts (*budō*) would later be associated with spirituality by being labeled as "ways." As the historian Gregory Pflugfelder argues when he discusses the "Way of Youths," it is possible to "conceive of a 'way' as a discipline of mind and body, a set of practices and knowledge expected to bring both spiritual and physical rewards to those who choose to follow its path" (Pflugfelder 1999: 28). In this regard, mention of the term *tashinami*, which stands for "refinement"

or cultivation of physical and spiritual capacities, renders unambiguous the connection to a path of self-cultivation that needs to be perfected. When Sōgi says that acolytes dislike the refinement (*tashinami*) of the “Way,” it is possible that he means novices do not adhere to the general and normative order of male-male love as practiced in monasteries.

Most information on the disciplinary nature of male-male love comes from the Edo period, when the term *wakashu* formed a crucial part of the “Way of Youths.” As described in existing scholarship on male-male sexuality in Japan, the “Way” can be understood as a disciplined sexual relationship between two males who belong to different age groups: the young lover is the “youth” (*wakashu*) and the mature lover the adult (*nenja*). The relationship between the two in various early-modern media was asymmetrical; it was characterized by power relations in which the subject (*nenja*) and the object (*wakashu*) occupied unequal positions. The nature of these relations is expressed in sexual terms: sexual activities are mostly confined to anal penetration in which the *nenja* is the penetrative partner, whereas the *wakashu* is the penetrated (Pflugfelder 1999: 29–44). But did such an understanding exist in medieval times?

Medieval sources such as *The Scroll of Acolytes* (*Chigo no sōshi*, 1321) describe a sexual paradigm that is similar to the Edo understandings of male-male love (see also chapter 2). For example, the medieval scroll shows monks and acolytes engaging in anal intercourse in which the adults are almost always the inserters and acolytes the insertees. In addition, the commentary on the *chigo kanjō* ritual includes a detailed discussion of the varieties of names given to the buttocks of young *chigo*, within which the active role of penetration is mentioned.<sup>8</sup> Further, the connection with a spiritual path is evident in the *Chigo no sōshi* text, for it describes a monk who could not control his desire and was unsuccessful in abandoning the “Way” (Leupp 1995: 44; Dōmoto 1985: 167–88). Another indication for asymmetrical sexual relations between monks and acolytes is found in an oath (*kishōmon*) written by the monk Sōshō (1202–1278), dated 1237. In it, Sōshō writes that he has slept with more than one hundred acolytes, and that he wishes to resist his lascivious desire by not penetrating them in the future. He swears to have only one “love-boy” (*aidō*) and makes an oath not to become a *nenja* of upper-children (*uewartawa*) and middle-children (*chūdō*), the different occupational positions of child acolytes (Matsuo 2008: 75). That the senior monk could have dozens of lovers, and that he occupied the penetrative role as the *nenja*, reveals much about power relations in temples. There are at least two other texts dated from the fifteenth century (and a third that was lost) that are titled *Nyakudō no Kanjinchō* or *Nyake Kanjinchō* and that hint at the penetrative and receptive roles of anal intercourse while also discussing male-male sexuality as a religious path that can lead its adherents to rebirth in paradise (Porath 2015). Already in medieval times one can recognize male-male love as a sacred pursuit, one that advocates asymmetrical

sexual relations between monks and their acolytes and is sometimes framed by phrases later dominant in the Edo period.

By declaring the author to be an adult monk, associating acolytes with a “Way” that is worthy of refinement or cultivation, and addressing acolytes as *wakashu*, *The Education of Acolytes* points to a construction of sexuality prevalent in medieval monasteries that informed later early-modern understandings of sexuality. Sōgi’s criticism of acolytes might be understood as dissatisfaction with children’s behavior on the grounds that they do not adhere to proper conduct associated with the “Way of Youths.” Nonetheless, such a reading can only be carried out by monks who are informed about male-male sexuality as a religious path. One could interpret the “Way” as “the Buddhist Way” (*butsudō*): though *tashinami* is often used in an erotic context, it can refer more generally to the fact that monks do not abide to some behavioral decorum. But the term is suspicious. We cannot conclude with certainty that the text is explicitly about *wakashu* as objects of male-male love, but the possibility exists.

*The Education* complicates further our understanding of the taxonomy of children. There were types of acolytes who wore the attire of children and remained in everlasting childhood without undergoing a rite of passage into adulthood. At one point, the text indicates that these children are older than adolescents. When Sōgi complains about the wild behavior of acolytes, he muses: “If they were youths of the age of twelve, thirteen, or around fourteen and fifteen years old, and had a childish heart, I would have let it pass. But it is far worse, they are adults” (340). The word for adult (*otona*) did not usually refer to an older youth but to a mature man. The passage shows that the acolytes here are not children per se, but rather that they embody childhood via their occupational and social status. In other passages, Sōgi refers to the same acolytes as children (*kodomo*): “Isn’t it shameful that even if you raise many children, if you bring them up in the rice fields, they will carry out mischiefs to themselves and in their homes, and end up being no different than the uncouth people of the mountains?” (344).<sup>9</sup> It is possible these children are “adults” according to modern understanding, but for Sōgi that does not make a difference, and he continues to call them children. The boundaries between adults and children become blurred for today’s readers. Even if acolytes were considered adults by their biological age, they could still constitute part of a monastic continuum of childhood. Sōgi’s conceptualization of children thus echoes the scholarly discussion on the ontology of childhood.

Regardless of his hazy age categories for acolytes, Sōgi unambiguously describes the conduct of children. Throughout the text, he resents the acolytes’ bad behavior. He remarks they cannot be trusted, and that they generally act in an immoderate and insolent manner (336). As mentioned earlier in the analysis of *Instructions for Children*, monks expected children to use verbal communication only when asked and not to use language against their friends. In Sōgi’s treatise, however, children do the opposite.

Sōgi writes that acolytes ridicule other youths (*wakashu*, Sōgi 1959: 336). At the same time, he laments that young novices “criticize the way people dress” and “they gossip about people and laugh at their appearance” (337). Children say pointless things and engage in casual talk and very often burst into laughter (339). As he puts it, “They have no time to answer the questions of others . . . . One cannot describe in written words the unbelievable things they say as they gamble [when playing board games].” Acolytes clearly used their verbal capacity not to sustain harmony in the way priestly monks expected, but to cause dispute and malcontent.

Just as acolytes digressed from proper means of communication, they also ignored the Buddho-Confucian ideal of scholarly dedication. As we saw in *Instructions for Children*, monks wanted to guarantee that children would discipline themselves to hard work and diligence. They especially wanted to prepare acolytes who would later lead a monastic lifestyle, which was challenging and required many years of learning, recitations, and familiarization with scripture. However, Sōgi’s text shows that acolytes did not even complete the designated curriculum: “One should at least spend four or five years in the temple. If one resides in the temple, there should be some indication [of accomplishment], and yet they cannot even pass three years [in the monastery]” (Sōgi 1959: 336–37). Acolytes do not seem to favor scholarly life in general: “They despise that which they learn” (336), and their routine is marked by laziness. For example: “They wake up late, and have an afternoon nap” (336). The text abounds with these accusations of laziness. It seems that children preferred to dedicate their time to leisure instead of to the study of religious doctrines and the performance of ritual practices.

Indeed, most acolytes in these texts seem to prefer a nonreligious, leisurely lifestyle. They are preoccupied with various forms of amusement. There are ample references to children engaging in occupations such as martial arts, banquets, board games, and obscene behavior. At one point, Sōgi criticizes children who “draw the swords of others along with their sword guards, and judge whether the swords can cut well or not” (Sōgi 1959: 339). He does not admire children who cultivate the skills of swordsmanship. To the contrary, he comments that their obsession with unimportant matters goes so far as appreciating the sharpness of their weapons. Familiarity with the art of the sword is often tied to violent behavior: “They draw their long sword and short sword as they barge into the tatami rooms of other people unannounced” (339). Other passages include mention of acolytes drinking as many as three cups of sake in banquets, which suggest they breached monastic rules, and that they were often invited to feasts outside monastic precincts (338).<sup>10</sup> In addition, the acolytes are described as addicted to board games (*go*, *shōgi*, *suguroku*), and Sōgi expresses displeasure with their gambling habits and the unfair techniques they use in competitions (339). He complains that acolytes cuddle close to their masters, which could be an allusion to male-male love (336). Similarly, he critiques acolytes for not showing proper respect when senior monks get up from their tatami

mattresses (338). These complaints can also be interpreted as disrespectful of personal space or just reflective of bad decorum, not necessarily eroticism.

In addition to behavioral mischief, Sōgi measures the acolytes' acts by other less objective factors. When he observes the behavior of children, he reveals a distinctive sensorial aversion to their demeanor. In some cases his unease, sometimes reaching the level of repugnance, is particularly perceptual, emotional, and judgmental. He despises the visual, aural, and, less often, tactile qualities of the acolytes' conduct. His expressive and aesthetic reactions are ones of revulsion. In his mind, children deserve to be criticized because they do not show sensibility and refinement in their daily life.

Among the various sense impressions that evoke Sōgi's unease, visuality occupies a major space. For example, in discussing poor sartorial style, Sōgi complains that acolytes "roll their sidelocks to the back . . . and make them grow like reeds in the summer fields" (Sōgi 1959: 337). He is clearly unsatisfied with their unappealing appearance, claiming that they look like "fourteen-year-old young falcons" (337). He comments on their unaesthetic choice of wardrobe: "They wear paper-garment jackets . . . they cover themselves with layers of vibrantly colored sleeves" (337). This may sound aesthetically appealing to modern readers, but Sōgi may have perceived flashy colors to be distasteful and distracting. The monk-poet also bemoans other uncivilized habits: "They do not use toothpicks [to clean their teeth], nor do they tie their hair, and neither do they cut their fingernails" (337). In addition to deviating from the normative sartorial style of the monastery, acolytes exposed unwanted views of their bodies. For instance, Sōgi writes: "The belts of their *hakama* are loosely tied, which causes the front [of their pants] to fall down" (337). Beholding such acolytes made him uncomfortable. This exposure should not be mistaken as an erotic act. Eroticism on the part of an acolyte would more likely take the form of showing off the buttocks or upper thigh. Exposing a penis is a threat.

In the same way that Sōgi finds the clothing and physical displays of temple pages disagreeable, he considers their style of eating to be repugnant: "They make it a habit to grind their teeth as they please when chewing the bones of fish and chicken . . . when they eat they make loud noises, and this is a painful sight for both old and young" (338). Sōgi adds, in this context: "They shove kelp into their mouth in its entirety, and while chewing they start talking without being asked to do so" (338). The action of grinding one's teeth or swallowing food uninhibitedly grated upon Sōgi. Since acolytes were expected to serve food for many ceremonial events, it was all the more surprising to Sōgi that they did not follow food etiquette.

The passage above not only betrays Sōgi's visual sensitivity, but also expresses his aural aversion to the sounds of misbehaving children. For example, he announces that "when they speak it's painful to the ears" (338). He bristles when they vocalize "silly" sounds (339). He often repeats his discontent with the tendency of youths to

laugh out loud when they gossip and tease (337, 338, 339). In other words, laughing deserves reproach not merely because it is inconsiderate, but also because the loud sounds that laughter produces betray a lack of refinement. For this reason, the subsequent passages of *The Education of Acolytes* are dedicated to a poetic sophistication that embraces accepted sensory norms and ideals of elegance and pathos (*mono no aware*). The crafting of poetry and admiration of natural imagery could hardly evoke any visual, aural, or tactile aversion on Sōgi's part.

## CONCLUSION

What can *Instructions for Children* and *The Education of Acolytes* reveal about children in medieval Japanese monasteries? The two documents represent different visions of childhood. It would be misguided to read *Instructions* as replicating the actual behavior of children, and it would be wrong to assume that Sōgi's descriptions in *The Education* are an accurate reflection of historical reality. It cannot be discounted that both texts were written by monastics reflecting on their discipline and describing their subalterns, whether seriously or humorously. What we know of the way children acted in medieval Japan is always mediated by the conceptualization of their superiors. The value of these texts lies in their representations of how medieval Japanese conceptualized childhood in Japan.

*Instructions* was taught within the monastic educational system, which aimed at shaping acolytes into mature monks or adult aristocrats/samurai. It was one of many texts that described how paradigmatic acolytes should behave by way of religious and ethical injunctions that, ideally, could infuse a sense of morality that an individual would carry for the rest of his life. Certainly, the text is self-serving for monks; the doctrinal and normative elevation of Buddhism, and the limitations imposed on young acolytes emphasized the authority of the priesthood. However, even though *Instructions* does not ascribe much liberty to child acolytes, it does not reflect attempts to altogether suppress or subjugate children. For example, the text challenges the understanding that the monastic hierarchy was inflexible. Subordinates were subject to behavioral restrictions, to be sure, and perhaps verbal and physical retaliation, but there is also room for codependence between monks and children. They share equal soteriological possibilities, they are made out of the same ontological substance, and they are influenced equally by karmic forces. In fact, the text reflects the structure of medieval Buddhist epistemology and monasticism, in which all members of the system were seen as interconnected parts of an integrated whole.

Interpreting *The Education of Acolytes* is far more difficult. It represents a reverse-image of the exemplary acolytes described in *Instructions*. The majority of the text cannot be said to be prescriptive. It highlights negative behavior and assumes the reader will infer that positive behavior is antithetical to the conduct

of the acolytes described. Furthermore, the style of the text suggests an effort to be funny. Nevertheless, whether humorous or serious, *Education* reflects how older monks conceived of acolytes as unruly, uncouth, and playful individuals who did not follow monastic orders and etiquette—simply put, as nasty boys. Although acolytes were not involved in the production of the text, the setting of the text is realistic. One cannot dismiss the evidence that acolytes could have enjoyed some freedom in their actions.

By reading these texts, it is easier to make sense of the trajectory that the monastic child traveled in the social landscape of medieval Japan. A child is one who is assigned a low social status in the monastery, albeit in some cases a higher one than people with noble pedigree. He has the responsibility to fulfill his institutional obligations by allegiance and conformity to Buddhist and monastic orders. There is an institutional attempt to transform the child into an ideal, adult priest by instilling in him the virtues of learning, politeness, moderation, humbleness and obedience. In addition, the child's role in the larger Buddhist epistemology is instantiated. He is encouraged to act as a Buddhist to contribute to the harmony and wholesomeness of the monastic community. However, the child is sometimes able to transcend his own social limitations when monastic regulations of decorum and discipline are not enforced properly. When enforcement slackens, the child is given leeway, and he is capable of navigating the monastic setting according to his wishes. Ultimately, the limitations on expression, movement, and behavior are futile if the child ignores authority and goes his own way.

Children in monasteries could afford to follow their own initiative if authority was lax, and they could direct attention to secular enjoyment forbidden by Buddhist doctrine. However, the escape from religious obligations was not the acolytes' decision, since the monks themselves introduced nonreligious activities into the monastery. As is evident from Sōgi's descriptions, acolytes were invited to banquets outside temples, they had a variety of board games in the monastery, and those of samurai descent were given the liberty to carry swords. We also know from other sources that sexual relations were institutionalized by adult monks. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that relative autonomy was in some cases reproduced by monks themselves, and not by the sudden impulses of renegade acolytes. What bothered Sōgi (and perhaps many other monks) was not that acolytes had these activities at their disposal, but the manner in which they overindulged in these various forms of amusement. It is one thing to drink a cup of sake, but it is another to drink too much alcohol in a vulgar manner, while ignoring one's responsibility to study. Be that as it may, the monastic child was a fluid mode of being, oscillating between extremes of sacred and profane, occupying multiple social roles and age categories, and preoccupying himself with a variety of joyful yet morally conflicting activities. Given these circumstances, certain children could afford for themselves a relative autonomy.

## NOTES

I thank Devon Cahill for his useful editorial comments on this chapter.

1. This leaves the treatment of female children to a future study.
2. It is unclear whether children consciously resisted monastic ideals, or whether the conditions provided fertile ground for creating a culture that allowed for disobedience. Following Dorothy Ko and Sabah Mahmoud, Lori Meeks studies female nuns in the medieval restoration movement of Hokkeji temple and acknowledges the polyvalence of agency, noting that nuns would sometimes maneuver around patriarchal and androcentric norms but also, at times, cultivated them. The common point of departure in these studies is that scholarship should go beyond notions of resistance and oppression and attempt to bring into focus the cultivation of new cultures that challenged dominant ideologies, whether willfully or unconsciously (Meeks 2010: 10–14).
3. Brecher maintains that child disobedience was a social reality in the Edo period (1600–1868). He premises his argument on the wealth of literary and artistic representations that depict this type of behavior (Brecher 2015). However, I remain unconvinced by Brecher's contention that this behavior was celebrated. Rather, it seems disobedience was used as satire in school settings precisely because it served as an effective pedagogical tool for showing behavior that was antithetical to what was deemed ethical.
4. For a discussion on artistic representations of divine boys and their cultural significance, see Guth 1987: 1–23.
5. *The Great Mahayana Sutra of Contemplating the Mind Ground* (Dasheng bensheng xindi guan jing), in Takakusu and Watanabe 1924–34, 3.297a.
6. *The Sutra of Refuge in the True Dharma* (Zhengfa nianchu jing), in Takakusu and Watanabe 1924–34, 0.0001a.
7. For the historical genealogy of male-male sexual discourse and its production as a discipline in early-modern Japanese history, see Pflugfelder 1999.
8. See my “The Apotheosis of Youths: The Chigo kanjō Consecration of Acolytes and its Ritual Commentaries” (Porath, forthcoming).
9. The poet's mention of “rice fields” suggests that he refers to children in general, since the vast majority of the population at the time lived in farm villages. But judging from the general vocabulary used in the text, the majority of children discussed in the text are acolytes from a samurai background.
10. Although the banquets mentioned in *Education* seem to take place outside of monasteries, during medieval times, banquets were not an unusual occurrence inside as well. See for example Itō, Brisset, and Masuo 2015.

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*Note: Unless noted otherwise the place of publication for Japanese books is Tokyo.*

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