Death opens a chasm between loved ones that compels action to stave off the rawness of grief. By occupying mind and body with memorial practices and objects, mourners come to grips with the fundamental rupture that ushers in a new, frayed reality after loss. In channeling sorrow, the departed can be remembered, honored, and at least temporarily saved from oblivion. Death is the great unifier, and religions confront it in distinctive ways. Medieval Japanese Buddhism offered a host of rituals designed around death, and this article explores manuscripts resulting from a particularly poignant practice known as the copying of letter sutras (shōsokukyō). These manuscripts are the material consequence of a specific subset of transcription in which family and friends wrote Buddhist scriptures on paper containing handwriting from a deceased loved one. This intimate form of ritualized copying sought to unite the original text of the dead with the numinosity of the Buddha.

Letter sutras are poised at the intersection of multiple disciplines, including art history, Buddhist studies, and manuscript studies. Rather than provide a comprehensive report on these manuscripts, which are the subject of my larger, ongoing project on the relationship of medieval epistolary and death 1


rituals, the discussion that follows is intended as a springboard to further reflection on these intriguing artifacts that investigates the notions of written presence, coping with absence in mourning, and the complex lives of these memorial palimpsests. As such, this article centers on the function of handwritten text in the letters and, therefore, revolves around two issues. The first asks why copyists diverged from convention by choosing to use paper bearing the writing of the departed for this commemorative and private ritual. What quality in these lengths of reclaimed paper warranted their reuse?

The telling decision to augment the sutra copying process by including the material legacy of a loved one marks this practice as distinct from more traditional transcription projects. As will be shown, it also holds the key to understanding the meaning and function of letter sutras. At the root of this choice is the memorial palimpsest's ability to embody what has been lost, to provide a visible point of access for the bereaved, and to better target the merit generated by copying the words of the Buddha for the benefit of the deceased. The second issue asks how unraveling the meaning imbedded within the layers of these palimpsests uncovers the function of medieval reuse and recycling in the context of letter sutras.

In order to unpack the religious and visual function of letter sutras, I have chosen to introduce the subject of memorial palimpsests by using an object biographical approach to one particular case study: the early fourteenth-century Lotus Sutra (Hokkyō) copied by the celebrated calligrapher Emperor Fushimi (1265–1317, r. 1287–1298) on the back of an astonishing 171 letters from his father, Emperor GoFukakusa (1243–1304, r. 1246–1259) (figs. 1, 2). This set of eight scrolls—especially well preserved and tied to known historical figures—provides an excellent illustration of the dynamics of mourning and ritual realized through material expression. They also stand as a prime example of what we can learn from treating palimpsests as layered biographies.

GoFukakusa's writings to his son range in date from about 1299 to 1304, the year he died, and while the transcription of the Lotus Sutra is not dated, an entry in Towazugatari, the somewhat fictionalized memoir by Lady Nijō (1258–after 1307), offers a historical foothold for comprehending these manuscripts. Lady Nijō, as she is commonly referred to in scholarship because her given name does not survive, served in the court of GoFukakusa as a sexual companion, although not always a willing one, as she details in her memoir. Because she never rose to one of the formal bureaucratic ranks of imperial consort, she lived a tenuous life controlled by the whims of more powerful figures and was eventually dismissed from service in 1283, at which point she became an itinerant nun. Recording later

As will be addressed in detail in a later section, I use “palimpsest” in a broad sense to indicate three differing formats wherein the layering—visible or otherwise—does not necessarily occur on surfaces facing in the same direction.


In the scrolls depicted here, Fushimi used simple black ink, but he was also known to have chosen gold ink for the transcription of the Lotus Sutra on his father's letters.

For more on the coercive and vulnerable position of women at the court, see Hitomi Tonomura, “Coercive Sex in the Medieval Japanese Court: Lady Nijō’s Memoir,” Monumenta Nipponica 61, no. 3 (2006): 283–338.
in life her experiences at the court, *Towazugatari* recounts Nijō’s version of the ceremony marking GoFukakusa’s one-year memorial.7 Crucial to this study, she witnessed a reading of sutras that Fushimi had written on the backs of GoFukakusa’s letters.8 Such a tantalizing description prompts a tangible association between the manuscripts examined here and the memorial service for the recently deceased emperor. This account, therefore, elucidates a key biographical moment of the letter sutras’ ritualistic performance after their transcription by Fushimi. But more than just describe the memorial, Nijō filters the letter sutras through an emotive prism, writing that this act of transcription on the reverse of letters left behind by the emperor made her realize that she and Fushimi shared “the same feelings of reverence and sadness.”

The calligraphy brushed by GoFukakusa is boldly executed and the ink modulated so that certain lines stand out dark and vivid, gradually to fade into lighter gray characters. The liberality of GoFukakusa’s calligraphy contrasts with that of Fushimi’s, whose transcription conforms to the standardized seventeen-character line populated by legible, delicate writing, which is a product of its function as a sutra copy. Boundary lines between the rows and along the top and bottom lend order and routine to the transcription, as opposed to the fluidity of the manuscript’s original recto. Fushimi began his training in calligraphy in 1276 at the age of twelve in an intimate ceremony gathering together his father and senior court aristocrats, in which Fushimi was initiated into the style of Fujiwara no Yuki-nari (972–1027). His brush writing has been praised and emulated through the centuries, with later calligraphers aligning themselves to his stylistic lineage.10 Using Fushimi’s *Lotus Sutra* as the entry point to memorial palimpsests, we see that these manuscripts oblige reflection on embodiment, presence and containment, and a tension between visibility and invisibility, all wider themes in medieval Japanese Buddhist art and ritual. By extrapolating from the *Lotus Sutra* example to letter sutras in general, I also justify the application of an object biographical approach, clarify the process of production, and connect the manuscripts to their intertextual context of the wider recycling of paper and the culture of copying sacred texts. Furthermore, the article analyzes the shifting functions of the written word over the course of the manuscript’s transformation from missive to letter sutra as well as to question just what is being preserved in these distinctive projects. Doing so reveals that these palimpsests offer a singular opportunity to tie together themes of embodiment, memory, and medieval reuse and recycling within profoundly personal manuscripts steeped in grief and prayers for salvation.

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7 Because Nijō recorded these episodes years later, they are organized into annual periods rather than by specific dates. However, the exact date of the ceremony can be confirmed by an entry in the diary of Saionji Kinhira (1264–1315) as the sixteenth day of the seventh month of 1305. *Kinhira kōki*, Kagen 3/16 (1305) (Shiryō sanshū [Kokiroku hen] [Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1968–], 4:208–212).


THE CURIOUS LIVES OF OBJECTS

The edited volume The Social Life of Things sparked a methodological movement in the fields of anthropology and archaeology, but its impact has also been felt in art history. Igor Kopytoff’s chapter, which deals with the commoditization of objects, argues the important and often overlooked point that scholars must take into account an artifact’s life after production. The exclusive focus on an object’s original purpose at the point of creation, if that is even knowable in the case of many ancient and medieval examples, truncates their rich stories and ever-widening networks. An object accumulates layers of meaning through its interactions with people and associations with important moments in history. As such, an artifact is not bound to a single signification but, rather, embodies a fluidity of meanings, the definition of which changes depending on the inquirer’s point of entry. Therefore, uncovering the biography of an object by asking any number of vital questions—such as who made it, how, and for what purpose? how has its appearance and use changed? and what happens to it after its usefulness ends?—excavates the web of connections between people and the material things they make and shows how meaning is endowed and then altered over time.

The questions asked by this approach do not differ dramatically from those posed by an art historian, who like a detective pieces together an object’s artistic qualities, function, history, and relationship to a network of associations—both material and human—through clues sought in the archives, inscriptions, and on the surface of the work itself. In the present article about manuscripts of this particular kind, the focus on uncovering events and changes in an object’s biography foregrounded by this method proves an effective avenue for interrogating the polysemic letter sutras. Emphasizing not only the letter’s initial production as a missive but the continued existence of the manuscript and its interactions with different people that changed the course of its life tells an intertwined story of death, mourning, and writing.

The history unwoven through this approach does not produce tidy, unilinear narratives for items like a letter sutra and other medieval visual materials, much of whose lineage has been lost. Jody Joy, investigating a British Iron Age mirror, notes that reconstructing a full history of birth, life, and death for such artifacts is not typically possible. However, the biographical approach to objects can yield important conclusions if we allow the record, as it were, to speak where and when it can. Loosening

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11 Arjun Appadurai, ed., The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Rather than object biography, use-life or life histories tend to be the interpretative lens in processual archaeological studies. For an anthropological adoption of use-life, see Ruth Tringham, “Engendered Places in Prehistory,” Gender, Place and Culture 1, no. 2 (1994): 169–203. One of the main differences between the two approaches to the interrogation of objects’ lives is often the scale of the analysis. Use-life tends be conducted on a macro scale, which tells the story of long-term shifts within a classification of artifacts as opposed to a single object.


expectations for a complete narrative “has the advantage of allowing us to pick up on the biography of an object at specific points and in particular contexts where the archaeological evidence will allow us to and not feel that the biography is lacking because we are unable to construct a neat linear life story for it.”\textsuperscript{15} This often means periods of change and reappropriation constitute large sections of our understanding of an object. In her study of rings made from Romano-British bracelets during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Ellen Swift characterizes Jody’s particular interpretation of object biography as “moments of object transformation,” and it is this idea that I apply to letter sutras.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, even if we cannot tie a manuscript’s various stages of life to specific figures and places, reconstructing the biography of letter sutras can highlight broader understandings of the ways of dealing with death and mourning, the ways in which people hoped to affect salvific outcomes, and the notions of memory and embodiment invested in medieval Japanese material and visual culture. In other words, an incomplete story is still valuable for its ability to draw out the intimate links between written word and Buddhist death rituals that inscribe both grief and hope through the manuscript’s memorializing rebirth. Therefore, this article emphasizes moments of transformation that reveal decisions to produce, retain, recycle, or otherwise alter manuscripts on which sacred scriptures were ultimately transcribed.

**THE TANGLED LAYERS OF PALIMPSESTS**

The first recorded example of a letter sutra (no longer extant) comes from the passing of Emperor Seiwa (850–880), when his royal consort, Fujiwara no Tamiko (d. 886), copied the *Lotus Sutra* on paper bearing his handwriting.\textsuperscript{17} In effect, Tamiko created a palimpsest, a term originating from the Greek and meaning “scraped” or “rubbed again.” The label typically refers to ancient Syriac, Greek, and Qur’anic manuscripts and later medieval European examples, whose ghostly reappearance of effaced texts have become the topic of sustained research programs aimed at recovering these lost histories. The oxidation of iron in the ink combined with later chemical and multispectral recovery processes break the long-maintained illusion of a single cohesive surface as the original writing rematerializes. Palimpsests, therefore, paradoxically preserve texts from destruction through effacement.

In the case of the famous Archimedes palimpsest, a thirteenth-century prayer codex was composed from the pages of books whose parchment had been scraped free of its writings and rebound, effectively hiding two lost manuscripts by the third-century BCE Greek polymath Archimedes and other ancient texts (fig. 3). The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore arranged to borrow the codex from its private owner after its controversial auction by Christie’s in 1998, in which representatives of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem unsuccessfully attempted to block the sale of the palimpsest after claiming that

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\textsuperscript{17} *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, Ninna 2/10/29 (886) (Shintei zōho kokushi taikei, 60 vols. [Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1929–1964] [hereafter SZKT], 4:620). The same account is also recorded in *Nihon kiryaku*, Ninna 2/10/29 (886) (SZKT, 10:326).

the object was stolen from a monastery in Jerusalem after World War I. The museum has since been conserving and studying the layered manuscript and has made its pages in their various states of decryption widely available through an open-source digital project. Another large-scale and ongoing study is that of the Sinai palimpsests of St. Catherine’s monastery, which number more than 160 manuscripts. In both cases, the recovery of the primal layer has led to the discovery of new texts that reshape existing scholarship. And of course, the nature of palimpsests means that scholars can trace the circulation of certain texts to particular contexts by their material conflation with other writings.

This project uses the term “palimpsest” art historically. It begins from the observation that palimpsests were never simply one type of manuscript. The variety of ancient and medieval examples across Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East reveals a vast range of motivations behind their creation, a diversity of production methods, an array of visual outcomes, and a host of changing functions over the course of their lives. The unifying factors in their categorization as palimpsests are the varying degrees of destruction or eclipsing done to one text in the process of transcribing another and the eventual visual effects of the layered compositions when the ghost text becomes evident again. Therefore, given the centrality of texts’ visible entanglement in letter sutras, it makes sense to use palimpsests as an art historical prism and to decipher their meaning through the visuality of their surfaces.

Although one tends to imagine the complete visible destruction of an original text when contemplating manuscripts of this type, ancient and medieval palimpsests were not always consistent in the methods or effectiveness of the first text’s removal. Whether by design, poor execution, or indifference, the original writing in some manuscripts was never fully erased from the start, particularly because ink was often washed away rather than scraped, leaving behind visible hints of its previous life. Although many letter sutras intentionally retained the script of the first writer, their process of production consistently featured a level of destruction to the primary text and the materiality of its paper and a reframing of its composition, all qualities that we associate with other medieval palimpsests. Whether through physical ruination in the recycling process; the transcription of the sutra on the recto that overlapped, interrupted, and obscured the legibility of the writing; or gluing together missives out of chronological order and excising entire rows of characters from the tops and bottoms of the trimmed paper, letter sutras evince varying degrees of erasure and material destruction and reconstruction. The visuality of letter sutras also accords with the standard appearance of palimpsests, except in the case of the third type (described in the next section), which utterly erased the first text. However, this type still left behind discernible traces of its original life: the recycling process dispersed and embedded the ink across the fibers, creating a gray-toned paper. In this type of letter sutra, the priority was not on the visuality of the intermingling scripts, but on its very invisibility. This is a memorial palimpsest on the edge.


The focus of palimpsest research has largely been on the recovery of the primal layer because doing so reveals unknown histories, texts, and connections. However, Michael Philip Penn proposes that moving beyond this sole concern for the identification and resuscitation of the urtext creates an opportunity to question what manipulations to a manuscript reveal about its movements through the world that physically marked it. He suggests that rather than view the variety of changes that transform the manuscript into a palimpsest as purely destructive and unfortunate errors of erasure that should be reversed, scholars should question why certain texts were targeted for palimpsesting and what meanings the changes themselves carried. In this way, he is able to frame erasures as indications of active reading by medieval Syriac Christians, which blurred lines between consumer and producer. Instead of casting palimpsests as the regrettable ruination of text or mere symptoms of subterfuge or deception, Penn reinterprets these manipulations as overt claims to power by the later owner of the manuscript.

More tellingly, many examples of letter sutras in medieval Japan do not require the removal of the original text. In fact, its very visibility and permanence on the paper is key to the creation and function of these written memorials. Rather than overlap or erase evidence of his father’s hand, Fushimi chose to copy the Lotus Sutra on the back of the paper. In this way, Fushimi’s letter sutras omit the intentional obliteration of script associated with the conventional examples seen in ancient and medieval manuscripts outside Japan. They enter the conceptual realm of the palimpsest at its typical end point, when the erased text is resurrected. Letter sutras and other ancient and medieval palimpsests, therefore, meet in the visual outcome, though they travel considerably different paths to get there.

Most non-Buddhist palimpsests are accidental and only revealed centuries later with the revival of the original effaced text through natural processes or with the aid of modern technologies. Charting a standard biography might look something like this: birth as the original script; death when at least partially erased to make room for the life of a new composition; and then a period when the manuscript is becoming a palimpsest via glimpses of resurfacing ghost text. This marks an unintentional resurrection and afterlife of the first writing to become what it is now: a complex, sometimes multilayered manuscript that hints at an episodic biography, which wrought physical changes and entangled previously unrelated writings. It is not until the original text or texts are resuscitated that the manuscript visibly begins its life as a palimpsest.

However, whereas the unintended birth of the palimpsest has been a common denominator for many other ancient and medieval examples, the letter sutra travels a wholly different trajectory predicated on the intentionality of its creation. It is in examining this trajectory that letter sutras offer a unique perspective on entangled writing. For the majority of letter sutras, the author of the secondary text begins with the explicit goal of achieving the visuality of a palimpsest. Both the Towazugatari and the material evidence of the manuscripts themselves tell us that after GoFukakusa’s death in 1304 and in preparation for the one-year death anniversary, Fushimi gathered the remaining letters from his father with the resolve of creating a layered manuscript and shifting the function of his father’s handwriting.

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from missive to memorial. Therefore, the path for Fushimi’s letter sutra is punctuated by deliberate actions intended to cause calculated visible consequences. The transformation of the missive into a palimpsest is intentional. By exploring the distinctions between letter sutras and standard ancient and medieval palimpsests via the analysis of their critical biographical moments, we can gain a clearer understanding of the importance of material consistency, embodied writing, and the visual and premeditated intermingling of the two scripts. In other words, the purposeful creation of a memorial palimpsest tells us that we should pay careful attention to its visual outcome.

By using palimpsest as a frame for letter sutras, this study prioritizes the visual and material aftermath of ritual transcription in order to concentrate on the function and meaning of the conflated writings and to focus on the narrative of reuse in the manuscript’s biography. Moreover, the juxtaposition of letter sutras with other ancient and medieval palimpsests highlights the importance of this very specific and intentional type of visuality. This article, therefore, further expands the definition and application of “palimpsest” in three ways. It argues that Buddhist examples should be included in the larger scholarly discussion. It brings into the conversation the deliberate layering of text as an intentional choice not to erase the original writing. And it specifically focuses on the conceptual and ritual implications of palimpsesting for those transforming the original manuscript as a memorial act. To do so, I locate this particular type of transcription in a broader interpretative schema that pulls together soteriological ideas of ritual copying with examples of mourning that explicitly combine handwriting and scripture, thereby emphasizing the letters’ continual and persistent materiality as a signification of embodiment and memory.

REUSE AND RECYCLING IN MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

By and large, letter sutras were produced in three formats. The first was the copying of sacred scripture on the face of the original letter, whereby both texts shared the same surface. For example, the thirteenth-century Dainichi Sutra (Dai Birushana jōbutsu jinben kaji kyō) features sprawling calligraphic kana, or Japanese phonetic script, delicately composed in black ink and overlaid by the regularly

23 Fushimi maintained a diary whose yearly entries from 1287–1290, 1292–1293, 1309, and 1311 survive; unfortunately, the years around GoFukakusa’s death are not extant. Fushimi tennō shinki (Zōho shiryō taisei, 48 vols. [Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1965] [hereafter ZST], 3:247–329).

24 As shorthand, I use “letter” throughout to refer to the original writing because most of the examples analyzed herein fit this description. However, the first text was not always a missive or private correspondence. A range of documents was used, and the most important factor for the second copyist performing this ritualized transcription seems to have been the preservation of the deceased’s handwriting as a base for the augmented manuscript. Relatedly, “letter sutra” is a somewhat inexact term used to categorize these manuscripts, resulting from the English-language translation of the modern Japanese appellation. In primary sources contemporaneous to the production of the letter sutras, no one designation is used. Instead, the language is more descriptive and less concerned with nomenclature.

25 Sometimes a thin sheet of paper was affixed to the top of the letter to serve as a ground for the transcription. Machida, “Mukashi no shōsokukyō,” 32.
transcribed Chinese characters of the scripture (fig. 4). In this case as in many others, neither the original calligrapher nor the second copyist is known for sure.

The second format was the transcription of the sutra on the reverse side of the letter or on a second sheet glued to the letter’s back, leaving the original handwriting somewhat intact. Such is the case with our principal object of analysis. The preliminary production of these first two styles displays points of procedural similarity. With Fushimi’s Lotus Sutra, the original paper was trimmed to a width of roughly twenty-five centimeters, thereby physically altering its size to mimic that of the standard rolls on which sutras were typically copied. He then drew vertical and border lines, a step that signaled the imminent metamorphosis of GoFukakusa’s original manuscript into an enhanced transcription, as these measured and static lines mark a material change in a letter that is overtly no longer pure missive. In other examples of letter sutras of this type, various embellishments were then added to the paper, such as pieces of mica or slivers of gold and silver. These decorative accents are in the same vein as illuminated sutras popular since the eleventh century in Japan, such as the opulent Lotus Sutra fragment attributed to the aristocrat Kujō Kanezane (1149–1207) and composed on paper ornamented with cut and sprinkled gold and silver leaf (fig. 5). The copyist of the letter sutra was then ready to transcribe the scripture, at times writing directly atop the preexisting letter (as in the first format) and at others using the expanse of the original verso, as Fushimi did.

In the third format, the copyist submerged the original letter, dissolving its fibrous bonds, and then spreading the pulp on a bamboo screen to dry. This process disbanded the visual evidence of written word, apart from the gray tone of the reconstructed paper. Occasionally, hairs of the deceased were added during this recycling process to increase the karmic connection. The aristocrat Taira no Tsunetaka (1180–1255) recorded in his diary that when Emperor Juntoku died (1197–1242), he used paper recycled from imperially handwritten documents to transcribe the Lotus Sutra and the Amida Sutra (Amidakyō), another popular scripture at the time. This last format expands the concept of embodiment, containment, and invisibility in material culture.

Palimpsests more broadly are intrinsically constituted by reuse, and their existence is evidence of the post-production repurposing of material artifacts. The reasons behind this practice are multifarious, but common explanations have to do with economics, scarcity, and the laborious process of production for paper, parchment, vellum, and other writing surfaces. Other factors such as damage to the original text or cultural shifts that render certain writings obsolete or even dangerous may also account for a palimpsest’s creation. Furthermore, the abundance of a certain text might cause a scribe to target its

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26 At present, I am unaware of surviving examples, although records of their production exist in primary sources. For a compilation of references to letter sutras in primary documents, see Komatsu, Heike nikkyō no kenkyū, 1:96–97.
surface for reappropriation. In medieval Japan, numerous examples survive that demonstrate official
documents were repurposed as missives, such as the letter by Minamoto no Kaneyuki (mid-eleventh
century) brushed on the reverse of what was likely surplus copies of the *Engishiki*, the regulations of the
rituryō state (standardized administrative and penal codes under a centralized state with the emperor
as its head).²⁹

And of course, not every joining of handwritten text and scripture was associated with the practice
of letter sutras. Sutra copies were sometimes appropriated for temple business; consequently, letters
of diverse purposes were sent out on the back of scripture. For instance, in the thirteenth-century
letter written on the original verso of the *Sutra of Heroic Deed* (*Shuryōgonkyō*), the monk Ninshō (1217–
1302) appealed to another monk to participate in a temple ritual.³⁰ Creating palimpsests through the
reuse of paper was common in medieval Japan, and the requisition of scripture was not always com-
memorative. And while recycling the original letter to make new paper seems to have been one of the
rarer methods of production for letter sutras, the repurposing of paper through this destructive yet
ultimately generative process was commonplace by the early ninth century, when shops exclusively
selling recycled paper began to appear.³¹ This article, therefore, makes a distinction between routine
reuse and recycling of writing materials and those examples explored in this study as intentional,
memorial palimpsests.

Reuse, recycling, or other forms of reclamation place medieval manuscripts firmly in the realm of
object biographical studies. Copying the *Lotus Sutra* as Fushimi did is evidence of reuse and recycling
at the heart of private rituals carried out by friends and family, which could also become part of the
formalized services conducted by priests.³² But why would Fushimi gather these written mementos
and physically alter them by copying sacred text on the letters? What is its intertextual community
that accounts for this novel form of devotion? This transformational moment in the life of the man-
uscript is rooted in the prevalent religious practice of sutra copying.

But before turning to the practice of copying, a few words should be said about one of the most
common contemporary uses of the term “palimpsest” as it relates to reuse. While the term was for
a long time used primarily among paleographers,³³ Thomas De Quincey’s 1845 essay on the “figurative

²⁹ *Sho no shiho: Nihon to chūgoku* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 2006), 201, fig. 98. Similarly, another letter thought
to be in the hand of a woman was written on the back of the *Engishiki*, see ibid., 186, fig. 86. Relatedly, see also the
³⁰ For more on this palimpsest and others made from recycled paper, see *Kamakura Bukkyō: Kōsō to sono bijutsu* (Nara: Nara
³¹ For more on recycled paper in Japan, see Komatsu, *Heike nōkyō no kenkyū*, 1:93–95; and Nagai Susumu, *Kanazawa
Hōjō-shi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 2006), esp. 242–253. Letter sutras are one example of many diverse types of
reappropriated visual and material culture.
³² For more on these services and others, see Gerhart, *The Material Culture of Death in Medieval Japan*.
³³ Elias Avery Lowe presents the traditional take on palimpsests from the paleological perspective. Lowe, “*Codices rescripti:*
A List of the Oldest Latin Palimpsests with Stray Observations on Their Origin,” in *Paleographical Papers, 1907–1965*,
palimpsest” thrust the concept into the domain of metaphors, where it has been avidly accepted. Palimpsest’s physical layering of new texts, meanings, and associations on the same material surface makes the concept readily amenable to a metaphoric application. For instance, understanding architectural monuments that have withstood dynastic upheaval, environmental devastation, and other interferences through the prism of palimpsest can be an effective perspective. Sometimes these monuments are physically transformed to serve a new agenda, and those visual modifications mimic the dynamics of a textual palimpsest as visible changes mark the structure, relocate it, and/or see its fragments reused in a new context, thus pinpointing fundamental events in its biography and linking the past and the present’s claim on that history through an active, material continuity. Finbarr Barry Flood explores the example of the Delhi sultanate’s reuse in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of antique pre-Islamic pillars, monuments that had themselves already been appropriated from their original context through reinscription and relocation by previous rulers. Reading the pillars as palimpsests, Flood examines the sultanate’s declarations of legitimacy and claims to the long legacy of Indian kingship as articulated by the repurposing of these columns.

COPYING SALVIFIC SCRIPTURE

Revered for their inherent power to save, coveted for their social cachet, and possessed for their authentication of political and religious authority, sutra texts enjoyed a central position in rituals popular with both the clergy and the laity of medieval Japan. Correspondingly, transcribing scriptures was a fundamental practice, generating great rewards for the copyist, patron, and designated karmic recipient. For instance, the Lotus Sutra instructs devotees to copy and recite its text, venerate its manuscripts with offerings, and disseminate its teachings, resulting in substantial benefits for the practitioner. These included the direct protection of the Buddha: “O Medicine King, be it known that after the extinction of the Thus Come One [a Buddha], those who can write it, hold it, read and recite it, make offerings to it, or for others preach it the Thus Come One shall cover with garments.” The scripture also promises that those who uphold the sutra will be accorded the honor and gifts of a Buddha:

[1] If a good man or good woman shall receive and keep, read and recite, explain, or copy in writing a single phrase of the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, or otherwise and in a variety of ways make offerings to the scriptural roll […] or join palms in reverent worship, that person is to be looked up to and exalted by all the worlds, showered with offerings fit for a Thus Come One.

34 Sarah Dillon clarifies that while De Quincy certainly ignited a persistent literary trend with his essay, he was not the first writer to use “palimpsest” metaphorically. She points to several authors from Plutarch to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose use predate that of De Quincy. Dillon, The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory (New York: Continuum, 2007), 127n1.
In addition to granting devotees respected status, the miraculous power of the *Lotus Sutra* can cure illness and even offer eternal youth: "If a man has an illness and can hear this scripture, the illness shall immediately vanish. He shall neither grow old nor die." On a more visual note, the scripture also guarantees a mouth never soured by fetid breath, a tongue without disease, and straight, white teeth to complement a healthy, radiant face. Similarly, men "gain incalculable, limitless merit" when they hear the twenty-third chapter, while if a woman "can accept and keep it, she shall put an end to her female body, and shall never again receive one" – a significant promise when a woman's body was often considered a polluted corporeal prison that hindered the journey to salvation. Heather Blair has explored the difficulties women faced when contemplating salvation and how copying the *Sutra on Transforming Women into Buddhas* (Bussetsu tenmyo jibutsukyō) offered salvific benefits, as in the case of a twelfth-century palimpsest now in the Tokyo National Museum. Using letters penned by the deceased woman, her family copied in gold ink the text of this apocryphal scripture, relying on the letter to act as the woman’s “somatic identity.”

Thus, sutra-copying projects during the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura periods (1185–1333) focused on soteriological aims but also on more terrestrial goals. In one of the more unusual examples, the courtier Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1028) presented hand-copied transcriptions of the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Golden Light Sutra* along with an Amida mandala he had drawn as part of a series of lectures over five days to be conducted on the banks of the Uji River in 1023. Supposedly for the benefit of the fish, the performance, as Willa Tanabe points out, was likely staged for the betterment of Michinaga, as such displays of wealth and religious piety increased the patron’s social authority. When illness struck, people often turned to copying projects, and elaborations on the standard paper transcriptions in the form of laborious procedures, quantity, and artistic innovation were common from the eleventh century onward. The combination of sutra text with the pagoda form was a particularly efficacious method of engaging the benefits of the scripture as exemplified by the shogun Minamoto no Yoriie’s (1182–1204) dedication in 1203 of eighty-four thousand small clay pagodas, each emblazoned with a sutra character, at Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura for his recovery from illness.

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42 Blair, “Mothers of the Buddh,” 283.
45 Letter sutras correspond to the innovative period of sutra copying that started around the eleventh century in which copyists experimented with different methods, such as group-copying the entire canon in a single day, the individual copying of the canon over a number of years, and the copying in blood and on a variety of media. Halle O’Neal, *Word Embodied: The Jeweled Pagoda Mandalas in Japanese Buddhist Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 122–167.
Fig. 1 *Lotus Sutra* copied by Emperor Fushimi on the verso of letters by Emperor GoFukakusa, c. 1304. Vol. 1. Ink on paper, 27.6 × 1091.1 cm. Myōrenji, Kyoto. Photo: Kyoto National Museum

Fig. 2 Letters by Emperor GoFukakusa on the verso of which Emperor Fushimi copied the *Lotus Sutra*, c. 1299–1304. Vol. 1. Ink on paper, 27.6 × 1091.1 cm. Myōrenji, Kyoto. Photo: Kyoto National Museum
Fig. 3 Archimedes palimpsest (pseudo-color), fols. 93v–92r, 13th century. Ink on paper. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Photo: Archimedes Palimpsest open-source project.

Fig. 4 *Dainichi Sutra* copied on the surface of handwritten letters, 13th century. Vol. 4. Ink on paper, 24.7 × 88.1 cm. Nara National Museum, Nara. Photo: Nara National Museum.
Fig. 5 Kujō Kanezane, *Lotus Sutra* fragment, 12th century. Ink on colored paper decorated with cut and sprinkled gold and silver leaf, 25.4 × 9.1 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig. 6 Detail of Fig. 4. Nara National Museum, Nara. Photo: Nara National Museum
Fig. 7 *Lotus Sutra* printed by Kakukai Enjō on the verso of letters by the priest Daitō Genchi, 14th century. Ink, gold, and silver on paper. National Diet Library, Tokyo. Photo: National Diet Library

Fig. 8 Letters by the priest Daitō Genchi with the *Lotus Sutra* printed on the verso by Kakukai Enjō, 14th century. Ink on paper. National Diet Library, Tokyo. Photo: National Diet Library
Of course, when confronting the inevitability of death, copying allowed for the meritorious benefits to be passed on, as when the celebrated monk Chōgen (1121–1206) described copying the *Lotus Sutra* for the salvation of mothers and fathers in his memoir, *Benevolent Deeds (Namu Amida Butsu sazenshū)*. And appropriately for this study, *Benevolent Deeds* was transcribed on the reverse of used paper recording the details of a Bizen province harvest. The *Clear Mirror (Masukagami)*, a historical chronicle covering the years 1180–1333, records that as a part of the commemoration services marking the third anniversary of Emperor GoSaga’s (1220–1272, r. 1242–1246) death, his son GoFukakusa copied the *Lotus Sutra* using the blood from his fingertips. In this context, Fushimi’s transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* on used paper containing his father’s handwriting is a profound and merit-laden gesture aimed at engendering benefits for both the copyist and the departed, born of an intertextual copying tradition that encouraged personal elaboration and innovation.

**INSCRIBING PRESENCE**

The written word in the medieval period was clearly more than mere reading material. By studying the lives of letter sutras over the course of their transformation and preservation, we can uncover the shifting functions of the text. Conscripted into different services, many of these manuscripts began their lives as personal correspondence. These original words fulfilled dual purposes. First they conveyed linguistic meaning at a time when paper was a commodity and literacy was not widespread. GoFukakusa’s letters to his son occasionally discussed important social and political matters. Such advice during the particularly fractured times of Fushimi’s rule as retired sovereign might have been quite valuable. Fourteenth-century sources like *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns (Jinnō Shōtōki)* by Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354) and *The Clear Mirror* record the tumultuous period. By deposing his first son, GoFukakusa, in favor of his younger son, Kameyama (1249–1305, r. 1259–1274), Emperor GoSaga sparked a rivalry that would eventually fragment the imperial line. With succession unclear when GoSaga died, Hōjō Tokimune (1251–1284), regent and de facto ruler of the Kamakura *bakufu*, sought the counsel of the empress dowager, Ōmiya’in (Fujiwara no Kitsushi, 1225–1292) as to GoSaga’s wishes, whereupon she indicated his preference for Kameyama’s line. However, GoFukakusa repeatedly appealed to the *bakufu* to reconsider, and he was eventually successful in designating Fushimi as crown prince. Eventually, these fraught times resulted in the bifurcation of imperial accession into an

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47 The original manuscript is in the collection of the Tokyo University Historiographical Institute. For a transcription of this short memoir, see Tazawa Yutaka, “Namu Amida Butsu sazenshū (Shiryō Hensanjo) Chōgen,” *Bijutsu kenkyū* 30 (1934): 39–51. The particular entry mentioned here can be found in ibid., 50. Also see John M. Rosenfield, *Portraits of Chōgen: The Transformation of Buddhist Art in Early Medieval Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 229–230.


50 *Jinnō Shōtōki (NKBTT),* 87.

51 *Jinnō Shōtōki (NKBTT),* 87:165–168.
alternating system in which an emperor of the Jimyō-in line of GoFukakusa’s descendants would be followed on the throne by a crown prince from the Daikakuji line of Kameyama’s (1249–1305, r. 1259–1274). This chain of events ultimately set the stage for Emperor GoDaigo’s (1318–1339) insurrection and the establishment of the Northern and Southern courts.

Although the content of the letter can remain important, the second purpose gains prominence after the death of the author, when the letters offered sites of memory and somatic connections. The embodied connotation of the brushed characters, what I call the “somatic signature,” became the most important aspect as the letter’s biography moved from missive to memorial artifact. Death and its attendant grief heightened this purpose. In its new commemorative role, the content of GoFukakusa’s messages faded to the background and the characters became less important for their semantic connections and more for their status as icons of embodiment and the material remains of the now intangible.

This shift in function from missive to letter sutra also manifests visually. As illustrated by the thirteenth-century Dainichi Sutra (fig. 6), the overlay of scripture physically interrupts the letter’s hermeneutic development, visually blocking its legibility. Even when the sutra appears on the back of the original writing, as in the fourteenth-century Lotus Sutra printed by Kakukai Enjō (d. 1345; the wife of Hōjō Sadatoki [1272–1311]) on the reverse of letters by the priest Daitō Genchi (figs. 7, 8), the production process often excised a top or bottom line of characters in order to achieve the standardized sutra scroll format. Moreover, the frequent gluing of missives out of sequence tells us that recapturing the original narrative of the letters was not the goal. The most profound expression of this transition in purpose occurs in the third type of letter sutra, which recycled the deceased’s writing to make a new ground for the sacred transcription.

Thus, the modification from original and independent writing to a layered memorial palimpsest indicates a unique form of preservation. But what exactly is being preserved in these textually conflated compositions? I propose that the nature of embodiment manifests across several components of the letter sutra. In the first two types, the original script peeks out in fleeting interlined glimpses between the rows of sutra, or as a reverse-side transcription, where faint traces of one text penetrate the paper they share to commingle with the other. These two formats often retain the legibility of the original text and the option to reread the letter. They also preserve the loved one’s distinctive handwriting, which announces the letter’s individuality and specificity. Whether particularly beautiful or just familiar and unique, this visible retention of the hand’s labor speaks to a layered embodiment within the letter. In the Lotus Sutra copy by Fushimi, the fluid hand of Emperor GoFukakusa, whose characters betray his signature slant to the upper right, and Fushimi’s own semicursive brushwork are slightly visible in each other, accomplishing an interpenetration of the departed’s writing and the salvific text of the sutra produced by his bereaved son. Just as important, the mingling of the two hands artistically achieves the practically impossible: a point of material contact that allows the copyist to visualize his writing as intimately palimpsested with his loved one’s despite the irrevocable separation.

52 Kōhakyō: Senraku moji no sekai (Kyoto: Kyoto National Museum, 2004), 333. This particular entry was written by the curator, Hada Satoshi.
And of course, preserving handwriting itself preserves the idea of motion, of the physicality and movement of the body in those moments of writing, much more so than a fragment of bone or strand of hair, although hair could be said to retain the sensory texture of a person. This quality of augmented liveliness visibly recalls motion long after the stillness of death. In a similar way, the unfurling of a scroll physically activates this inherent movement, allowing the scrawl of the brush to flit across the paper once again in cases where the writings are layered on the recto. And when the memorial palimpsest is composed recto/verso as in this case study, the act of unrolling synchronously presents both sides as the scripture spreads open and the original letter is visibly released from the roller held in the left hand to gather again around the outside of the swelling length in the right hand with every expansion and retraction of paper. As lines of the original text reappear on the right and then roll inward, they disappear against the words of the Buddha, rotating and accumulating and ultimately concealing and encasing the sutra within. Simultaneously, the somaticity of the letter is sealed and contained by the stabilizing nature of the sutra. Moreover, with the material handling of a recto/verso letter sutra, it is the writing of a loved one that brushes against the reader’s hands on the outside. And when the funerary rites are conducted using letter sutras of this type, the mourners not only hear the recitation of the sutra but importantly see the brushwork of their loved one. Letter sutras, therefore, require us to break the rigidity of the recto/verso paradigm when considering manuscripts where the very meaning of the binary loses footing and where foreground/background and dominant/periphery are inherently challenged.

Sustaining the elements of the original letter indicates visual understandings of embodiment. By reading these cues, we can better grasp the somaticity underpinning this innovative form of transcription. In part, the letter retains the essence of the departed through its linguistic message, where it is legible – be it a distinctive phrase or construction that epitomizes their thoughts. The quality of the brushed characters speaks to the individual hand that wrote them, imparting a permanent presence on the paper. That the content can be mundane further identifies the handwriting as the key component needed for the letter’s rebirth in a karmically rich memorial.

This identification of a person with their written remains has long-standing roots. The most illustrative comparison is dharma relics, or the written records of the Buddha’s teachings, which were venerated as embodied texts partaking in the essence of the Buddha. The conflation of the letter with its writer shares this understanding of embodiment. Moreover, in much the same way that the Buddha has passed beyond the tangibility of our realm, leaving only relics with which to physically connect, GoFukakusa’s handwritten manuscripts acted as palimpsested relics for his son. This letter sutra,

54 Movement and reading in its various forms are intimately linked in Buddhism. For more on the technology of the scroll and rotating sutra library, see Charlotte D. Eubanks, “Circumambulatory Reading: Revolving Sutra Libraries and Buddhist Scrolls,” Book History 13 (2010): 1–24; and for performative visual reading, see O’Neal, Word Embodied, 41–52.
55 For reasons of space, this line of inquiry will be further developed in my book project on the subject.
therefore, manifests and visually palimpsests three identities simultaneously: that of GoFukakusa and Fushimi via their handwriting and the Buddha through the transcription of the dharma relics.

Sources contemporaneous with Fushimi further reveal that this conflation of the deceased with their letters was seen as a path for channeling grief. Although the letter sutras are no longer extant, Yūgimon’in (1270–1307), daughter of GoFukakusa and consort of Emperor GoUda (1267–1324, r. 1274–1287), also copied scriptures that had been written on the back of her father’s letters for the same one-year anniversary service. And, like Fushimi’s, these were read by a priest at the ceremony. When Yūgimon’in fell ill only a few years later, The Clear Mirror records she was unrivaled in GoUda’s affections and that he went to great lengths to save her, including the commissioning of purifications, prayers, and rituals. But ultimately, nothing worked, and her death compelled GoUda to take Buddhist vows. *The Clear Mirror* describes his great and continued sense of loss. Following in Yūgimon’in’s model, GoUda transcribed passages from the *Lotus Sutra* on the backs of her letters, using a copying ritual involving a triple obeisance to each character for temple dedication after her death. He also wove strands of her hair into Sanskrit letters. GoUda’s incorporation of the traces of Yūgimon’in into ritual projects that united her remains with the soteriologically charged sutra transcription and visualization of Sanskrit letters also had the personal benefit of giving him occupation in grief.

Nijō records several occasions in her memoir where she is driven by sorrow or in moments of desperation to copy scriptures on the backs of meaningful letters. Fleeing from the palace after an upsetting incident in which her rank was challenged, she bitterly decides to give up playing the *biwa* (a stringed instrument) and make an offering of the instrument to Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine along with copies of the *Lotus Sutra* she transcribed on letters from her father, for whom she frequently grieves in the memoir. She bundled the letters and wrote an evocative poem on the wrapper: “Resolved never again / To pluck these strings, / I offer them with sutras / Written over traces of his brush.” In another state of lamenting, she once again copies the *Lotus Sutra* on the back of letters of great personal significance, this time those of her recently deceased love, Ariake no Tsuki (Wan Morning Moon). Rather than for dedication or use in a memorial, this particular letter sutra is fueled by grief, longing, and dread that Ariake will not be reborn in paradise because of a fervent love that compelled him to pray for rebirth as a human so that they might find each other again. Before his death earlier that year, Ariake copied a sutra using fragments of Nijō’s letters, creating a scripture that interspersed her handwriting with the text of the dedicatory colophon. Saying that he would forgo paradise for their reunited love, he does not dedicate the sutras in this life for fear that the karmic merit would cause him to be born in the paradisiacal realm. Instead, he instructs the copies to be fuel for his funeral pyre so that he can take them (and, by extension, her) into the next life with prayers for their rejoining. Only then will they together dedicate the rolls that merge both their brushes with the text of the *Lotus Sutra*.

It is clear from examples of medieval letter sutras that this transcription form was based in personal reasons and motivations that could be channeled for use in public rituals and for temple dedication at important points of the Buddhist death calendar, but also for personal, emotive moments when one privately confronts grief and inscribes lamentation. They also drive home the realities of absence after death: that one is left with little beyond letters and that these bits of paper come to figure centrally in the ritualistic and personalized transcription of sutra.

Letter sutras are, therefore, also proof of the dead’s existence and connection to a world beyond themselves. GoFukakusa’s letters are a physical creation that challenges his complete absence and bridges the gap left in the wake of his death through an inscribed trace. Embodiment and preservation lay at the heart of the letter sutra’s commemorative transcription style. This somatic undercurrent flows through each of our three types, revealing connections between body and text through the conversion of the original manuscript into letter sutra. The third format’s utter breakdown of the typical textual components of the letter conceptually extends the transcription’s repository of presence. Despite this material reconstruction, the newly fashioned paper still bears witness to the departed. For what other reason would one reuse paper in a way that visually effaces its original life if not for some preserved embedded embodiment? Through their memorializing rebirth, recycled letter sutras decisively transcend their original purpose, moving from legibility into complete invisibility. Text need neither be read nor even seen to manifest somaticity. Clearly no longer reliant on brushed characters, a loved one’s presence is conceived in more abstract terms. And yet at the root of this abstracted presence is paradoxically a very material basis and location within the consistency of the paper – it is in the fibers that we locate presence rather than anything we can see. This marks a particularly extreme link between writing, paper, and essence, reminding us that what is no longer visible is not necessarily gone.

CONCLUSIONS

Letter sutras, then, were not born for their ultimate purpose; they were made in the crucible of loss. In her study on Lapita artifacts of the Pacific Islands, Yvonne Marshall distinguishes between inscribed and lived objects. Inscribed objects are created to be special from the outset. Letter sutras fall into the category of lived objects because they acquired meaning through the uses they were put to, which changed their function and augmented their materiality. This is a useful distinction that highlights the full life of the manuscripts: much of the content of GoFukakusa’s original writing might not have been especially significant, yet with the cataclysm of death and the text’s transformation into a

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62 The slightly later diary, Kannon gyoki by Fushiminomiya Sadafusa (GoSukūn, 1372–1456), records several examples of letter sutra transcription, and given that Sadafusa made overt connections back to Emperor Fushimi, it is possible that he was modeling this practice on his late imperial relative. Kannon gyoki, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1958–1959).

63 For more on the connections of body and text, see Charlotte D. Eubanks, Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

memorial palimpsest, they became ritually and privately quite important to Fushimi. Furthermore, this material dimension of mourning countered the ephemerality of the body in death by mobilizing the substantiality of the letters as a gateway to the intangible. Preserved within the brushstrokes or even the fibers of the original letter was a trace of the now-absent person, a point of access for those bereft. In letter sutras, the material bond between original writer, copyist, and the salvific text of the dharma establishes a tangible, recursive, and permanent link.

This article analyzed the biography of letter sutras as palimpsests, extricating the lives and transitions of the manuscripts through their reuse and physical manipulation. Letter sutras are the material expression of a hope that the transformation of a sometimes ordinary letter into a palimpsest united with sacred and apotropaic text would secure a better position after death for a loved one. But, “the dead do not bury the dead,” and indeed these commemorative manuscripts also benefited the living. Recalibrating the study to include the dimension of mourning allows us to see letter sutras as not just karmically significant manuscripts targeting the deceased but also as material products of the grieving process that help explain the significant role of handwriting in the projects. They are the physical expressions of occupation in mourning, a glimpse into the private outlets for grief and the ways that the living redirected the deceased’s original writings to confront death. Reaching out for some lingering essence of the departed, perhaps mourners like Fushimi created these embodied memorial palimpsests by recasting the writings of the dead as somatic signatures. They rechanneled the original writing into a letter sutra to create a focal point, allowing the manuscript to act as a site of memory and preserved presence. Studying these manuscripts from an object biographical approach and paying attention to transformative moments reveals the intimate role of materiality and text in death. Furthermore, combining this approach with an art historical perspective shows what the visual can tell us about expressions of embodiment in writing. Ultimately, letter sutras provided a material ground for grief and prayers for salvation by invoking the presence of the departed through the novel format of a Buddhist palimpsest.


Katina T. Lillios, “Objects of Memory: The Ethnography and Archaeology of Heirlooms,” Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 6, no. 3 (1999): 241. There are obvious cases to the contrary where the person prepares for their death and scripts the ceremonies that will follow it. However, even in these instances, it is still the living who are entrusted to enact these wishes.
I have many people to thank for their support of this article. I am grateful to the British Academy for funding the article's image subvention as part of my Small Research Grant on the visuality and materiality of reuse and recycling in medieval Japan. I would like to thank Melissa Rinne for her kind assistance in arranging a viewing at Kyoto National Museum and Hada Satoshi and Uesugi Tomofusa for showing me many of the museum's letter sutra scrolls and for sharing their expertise. My dear friend Kaori Oikawa was invaluable in helping me secure permissions. My wonderful colleagues at the University of Edinburgh – Glaire Anderson, Jill Burke, Freya Gowrley, Claudia Hopkins, Catriona Murray, Heather Pulliam, Carol Richardson, Tom Tolley, and Kamini Vellodi – all read an earlier draft of this manuscript and offered invaluable insights. Michael Jamentz was incredibly generous with his time and suggestions for revisions, which greatly helped clarify my thinking. I presented versions of this article at the 2018 annual conference for the Association for Asian Studies and at the 2018 Woodenfish Foundation symposium at Dafosi in Guangzhou. I am grateful for the insightful questions and comments from those audiences, and in particular from Mimi Chusid, Hank Glassman, Ed Kamens, Max Moerman, Rachel Saunders, and Pamela Winfield. As always, Andy Hom talked through the ideas with me, providing important suggestions and encouragement. I would also like to thank the anonymous readers for their astute advice, which has also impacted my larger project on the subject of medieval reuse and recycling in Japan. Finally, I am very grateful to Artibus Asiae's editor, Amy McNair, for her guidance and support.
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