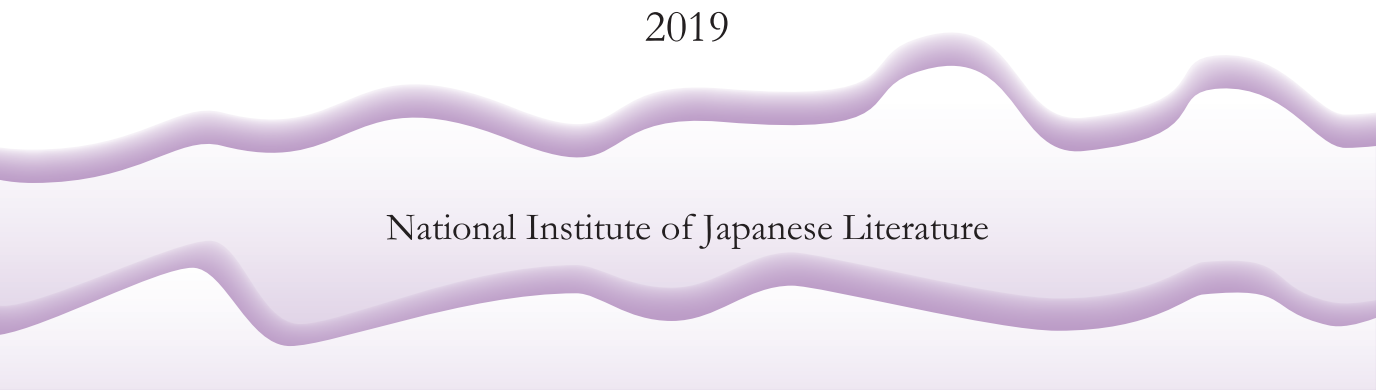


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in  
Japanese  
Literature  
and  
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VOLUME 2: BORDERS

2019



National Institute of Japanese Literature



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# Liminality Reimagined: Tales of Trespassers into Sacred Space and Tainted Sages

ABE Yasurō

Translated by Kristopher REEVES

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of borders or, more broadly, liminality, as it evolved within the world of Japanese culture and literature came to acquire a wide and complicated set of meanings. The challenge of participating, by way of experimental enquiry, in a comprehensive examination of the various stages along this multifaceted evolution is of special interest to scholars in the humanities. My own contribution to this ongoing project rests on a single presupposition, one which necessarily arises from a consideration of the very nature of liminality. It will be admitted that any given border is, in fact, an embodiment, that is, an effort to give a degree of visible reality to something that is otherwise intangible and invisible. That something is a *complex of memories*, both those memories associated with the initial conception of the border in question, as well as those memories latterly associated with the many disputes that arise throughout the history of that border. A border, then, is a symbol the function of which is to vividly bring to mind a complex of associated memories. Like memories, these borders, once established, are far from stable. Rather, borders are continually in flux, so much so that they are bound to be negated and ultimately nullified. This transformation, this appearance and disappearance of borders—a process we might refer to as the dynamism of liminality—deserves special attention. The essential nature of any border, I shall argue, lies not in any supposed stability, but rather in those aspects that are ever changing and unstable. This is the curious paradox of liminality: a border can only be properly grasped when considered as something whose delineations are not at all clear or fixed; liminality has no fixed borders. It is this paradox that I would like to examine here. Approaching the subject from a primarily anthropological perspective, I shall shift the focus from a simple discussion of borders to a more dynamic consideration of border crossings (*ekkyō* 越境), that is, movement between and across liminal spaces.

Examples of border crossings are to be found most manifestly within the world of literary and performative texts. Medieval myths and folktales are especially rich

in this respect. Vernacular tales (*monogatari* 物語), anecdotal literature (*setsuna* 説話), foundational tales of shrines and temples (*engi* 縁起), miraculous accounts of divine beings (*genki* 験記), biographies (*denki* 伝記), and accounts of pilgrimages (*junreiki* 巡礼記), along with religious scriptures and other related texts present include countless instances of movement between and across various borders. Moreover, these and many other scenes of border crossing are reenacted visually through the performative arts. In fact, one very fundamental role of the arts has been to bring these tales of border crossing into the immediate world of experienced, observable reality.

## 1. Women and Sages who Cross Borders<sup>1</sup>

### 1-1. Trespassing into Sacred Space: *Shigisan engi emaki*

*Shigisan engi emaki* 信貴山縁起絵巻, or the *Illustrated Scroll of the Foundation of Mt. Shigi*, composed sometime during the twelfth century, is an illustrated account of the founding, or rather the restoration, of a temple on Mt. Shigi 信貴山, located in the northwest of modern-day Nara. The protagonist of this work, a monk by the name of Myōren 命蓮, is portrayed as possessing a number of supernatural powers, and it is with him that we find one of the most striking examples of border crossing. The actual text of *Shigisan engi emaki* is more-or-less the same as that found in such collections of anecdotes and legends as *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 (*Collected Tales from Uji*, early 13<sup>th</sup> century) and *Kohon setsumashū* 古本説話集 (*Old Book of Anecdotal Tales*, perhaps early 12<sup>th</sup> century). What makes this particular scroll so special, however, is not the text itself, but rather the illustrations. After all, the written word can only do so much to convey scenes of miraculous border crossing. The illustrator of *Shigisan engi emaki* was employed an artist's skill and imagination to visually portray things that might have otherwise remained unexpressed in the textual realm.

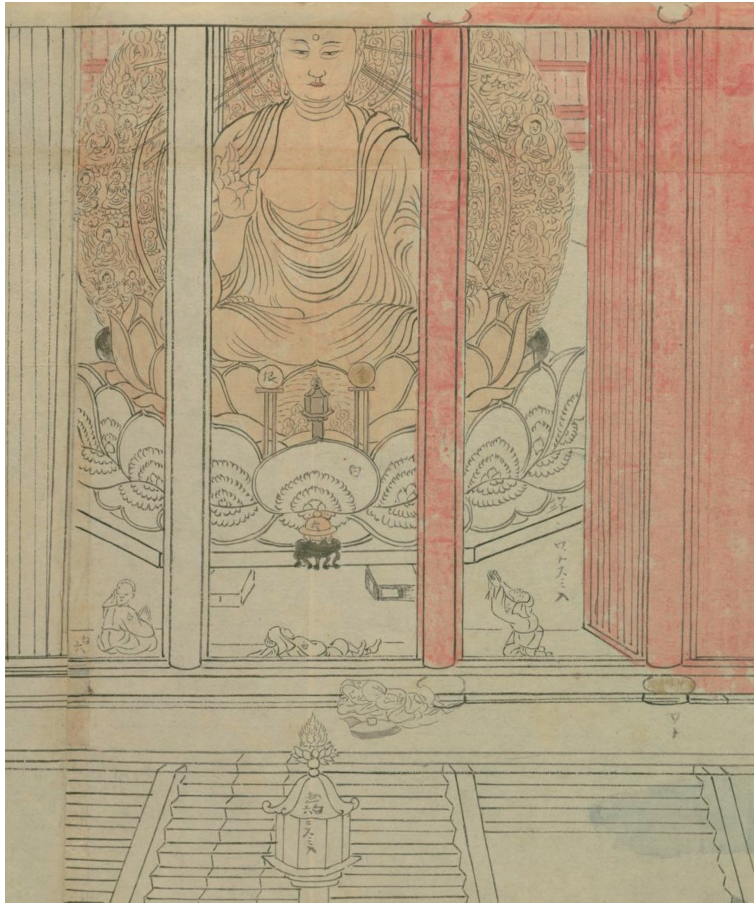
*Shigisan engi emaki* is divided into three main fascicles. The first, which has two alternative entitles, namely, “Tobikura no maki” 飛倉巻 (The Flying Storehouse) or “Yamazaki chōja no maki” 山崎長者巻 (The Wealthy Gentleman of Yamazaki), includes an account of how Myōren astonished everyone by making an entire storehouse full of grain soar through the sky and arrive at Mt. Shiga, all by means of a humble begging bowl. The second fascicle, entitled “Engi kaji no maki” 延喜加持巻 (Divine Protection of the Engi Emperor), shows Tsurugi no gohō dōji 鈿護法童子—one of a band of sword-bearing Buddhist divinities, usually taking the form of youthful boys, who are responsible for protecting faithful devotees—flying straight into the imperial palace in order to guard Emperor

<sup>1</sup> I have used the terms sage and ascetic more or less synonymously to translate the Japanese word *hijiri* 聖. Abe also uses the word *gyōja* 行者, literally, one who cultivates (the Buddhist way), which I have generally rendered as ascetic. The distinction, supposing there is one, between *hijiri* and *gyōja* is not raised in this article, and so I have not made any attempt to differentiate the two terms too rigorously in my own translation. [Translator's note]

Daigo 醍醐天皇 (885–930, r. 897–930). It is here that Myōren’s wondrous power to influence even these Buddhist divinities is visually represented with impressive skill. Finally, with the third fascicle, “Amagimi no maki” 尼公卷 (The Venerable Nun), we are treated to illustrations depicting the long journey of a nun, who happens to be Myōren’s older sister, from their native land of Shinano 信濃 (modern-day Nagano) all the way to Mt. Shigi for the express purpose of seeing her beloved brother once more. One scene in particular finds this faithful nun praying fervently throughout the night before a statue of Buddha within the Hall of the Great Buddha (Daibutsuden 大仏殿) in Tōdaiji Temple 東大寺, located, like Mt. Shigi, in what is now Nara Prefecture. Not knowing where her brother might be living, she had no choice but to seek divine revelation as to his whereabouts.

Now, the way in which this nun conducts her religious supplications within the Hall of the Great Buddha is surely the most remarkable example of a border crossing to be found in this entire scroll. The precincts of this hall designated a sacred space of exceptional sanctity, ritually separated from the surrounding outside world by the strictest prohibitions. Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (701–756, r. 724–749) had commissioned the construction of Tōdaiji Temple in 745. The Hall of the Great Buddha was completed in 751. Not even his primary consort, Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 (701–760), was permitted to step over the threshold into that most sacred hall. Once, according to *Shichi daiji junrei shiki* 七大寺巡礼私記 (*Private Account of a Pilgrimage to the Seven Great Temples*, 1134), when she dared to set her foot within the hall, the earth was rent asunder by a sudden earthquake. Myōren’s sister, however, is permitted not only to step over the threshold of the Hall of the Great Buddha, but to intone supplications before the Buddha, to sleep in front of the hall—for it was through a dream that the Buddha informed the nun of her brother’s whereabouts—and finally to offer up prayers of thanksgiving after receiving this crucial revelation.

All of these actions are depicted by the artist of *Shigisan engi emaki* by means of a technique known as *iji dōzu* 異時同図, literally “different times, one picture,” in which a series of successive events or actions, all performed by the same character, are shown against a single, unchanging background. On the one hand, we see the nun standing in front of the threshold of the hall, and again sleeping just outside the hall, an umbrella for her pillow. These two depictions of her represent actions performed in the real world. On the other hand, still in the same picture, we see three more depictions of the nun, all within the precincts of the sacred hall. These may be understood as representing actions performed in the dream world, when the Buddha was instructing the nun as to her brother’s location (**Figure 1**). The last of these three dream-world depictions shows the nun gazing off in the direction of Mt. Shigi, where, so she has just been informed, her brother is to be found. From here on in, the artist of *Shigisan engi emaki* depicts the nun’s lengthy journey to Mt. Shigi through a series of quick snapshots: Now we see, dispersed over the page here and there, her expressions of happiness



**Figure 1.** Illustration of Tōdaiji Temple, from *Shigisan engi emaki* vol. 3.  
 (National Diet Library, Japan)  
<https://doi.org/10.11501/2574278>

along the way; now we see the nun arriving at the mountain, calling out to her brother, who, understandably surprised, has his head turned around in the direction of his sister's voice. Here the scroll ends, with the emotional reunion of brother and sister.

There is, aside from this nun's remarkable border crossing—out of the mundane world and into the sacred space of the Hall of the Great Buddha—another equally astonishing border crossing that takes place in *Shigisan engi emaki*. In what may be called the epilogue to this tale, we find the nun living with her brother in his mountain abode, where she learns from him the art of reading the scriptures and presenting offerings to the Buddha. While this teacher-disciple relationship shows clear separation of the genders and their assigned roles, and while it is true that these two are siblings, even so, monastic regulations strictly forbade men and women to live together, no matter their

relationship. Here, however, the author unabashedly portrays these two living side by side in a sanctified space, in what appears to be a blatant contradiction of Buddhist law. In the aforementioned *Uji shūi monogatari*, we find a tale entitled “Shinano no kuni no hijiri no koto” 信濃国聖事, or “An Account of the Sage from Shinano Province (fascicle 8, tale 3), the text of which relates directly to the relationship between Myōren, the “sage from Shinano,” and his sister, the nun.

According to this tale, the nun visited her brother for one simple reason, namely, to present him with a sash or bellyband (*fukutai* 腹帯, alternatively written 福衲) that she had woven with her own hands. She insisted, furthermore, on binding this sash about her brother’s waist herself. With the sash bound about his waist, the sage of Shinano was effectively invested with the feminine power of a sister or young woman (*imōto no chikara* 妹の力).<sup>2</sup> After the sage’s death, continues this tale, many people desired to get their hands on fragments of this sash, which had since acquired the status of a holy relic. Since the sash itself was eventually lost, people resorted to the next best thing: One of the decaying pillars was removed from the storehouse at Mt. Shigi, the very storehouse that Myōren was supposed to have made soar through the air atop a begging bowl, and which was believed to have at one time housed the precious sash. Pieces of this pillar were then used to make miniature carvings of Bishamonten 毘沙門天 (Sk: Vaiśravaṇa), the principal deity worshipped at the temple atop Mt. Shigi, which carvings were, in turn, handed out to pilgrims visiting the site. This tale, then, serves as an explanation or foundational account (*engi*) of the then contemporary belief in the miraculous efficacy of Bishamonten at Mt. Shigi to bestow blessings upon faithful pilgrims. This account appeals to a popular belief in contagious magic: the sash was once worn by a great sage, and is therefore the source of blessings; anyone who comes into contact with the sash, or something else—in this case an old pillar—which was once itself in contact with that sash, will likewise be blessed. Considering that the power of this sash is said to have had its origin in the symbolic union of a male sage and a nun, one might interpret this tale as a mythical account of the communion of sacred and secular, as well as male and female.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible to understand the above tale as a foundational account aimed at explaining the formation of a special class of sacred relics, namely those intimately connected with Buddhism. Buddhism, it must be remembered, was a religion that was not originally part of the doctrinal paradigm enshrined within

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted here that the bellyband or *fukutai* was, and still is, generally made for and worn by pregnant women as a charm to assist in easy delivery. That a male monk should receive this sash from a female is a potent symbolic gesture. [Translator’s note]

<sup>3</sup> Kobayashi Taiichirō 小林太一郎, “Shigisan engi no bunseki—hiite sono etoki no kokoromi” 信貴山縁起の分析—ひいてその絵解きの試み, in *Bukekyō geijutsu* 仏教芸術 50:51 (1963); Sakurai Yoshirō 桜井好朗, “Shaji engi no sekai—kyoshiteki ni” 社寺縁起の世界—巨視的に, in *Taikei bukkyō to Nihonjin* 大系仏教と日本人, volume 9 (Shunjūsha, 1986).

Japan's ancient system of governance by codified laws (*ritsuryō kokka* 律令国家).<sup>4</sup> The formation of a class of uniquely Buddhist sacred relics was decisively set in motion by the sort of behavior attributed to the nun in *Shigisan engi emaki* and other closely related tales. Tōdaiji Temple was erected to serve, among other things, as a conspicuous symbol of the Buddhist faith in its then new capacity as the state religion, and, at the same time, as a symbol of imperial power, which was seen as an extension of Buddhist law. Moreover, according to Buddhist doctrine, Tōdaiji Temple was not merely a physical structure, nor simply a symbol of power, but an actual embodiment of the entire cosmos (*bōkai* 法界). When female pilgrims and nuns began showing up at this temple unannounced, flagrantly violating the strict prohibition against women trespassing into this most sanctified of sacred spaces (*nyonin kekikai* 女人結界), something revolutionary was bound to happen.

*Shigisan engi emaki*, far from inciting this doctrinal revolution, merely reflected it in a creative visual form. According to this illustrated scroll, it was only after the nun had openly violated the prohibition against women entering the Great Hall of the Buddha that she was given the divine revelation required to discover the whereabouts of her elusive brother. Only then was she able to make her way to Mt. Shigi and, by binding the sash around her brother's waist, give birth to a sacred relic, the efficacy of which would be praised for generations of pilgrims to come. Therefore, it was only by deliberately violating the prohibition against women—by *violating the sacred*—that is, by crossing over and thereby effectively nullifying the border between the mundane outside world and the sacred space within the hall, that a sacred object could at last be produced. It is this paradox that is so skillfully represented in the illustrations of *Shigisan engi emaki*.

## 1–2. Prohibitions against Women: Tales about Violations of Sacred Space

Instances of border crossings preserved in *Shigisan engi emaki* did not occur in a vacuum; they were not simply products of an artist's imagination. Quite the contrary. Behind every example of border crossing lies, on the one hand, a countless array of legends or tales dealing with women who violated prohibitions against entering sacred spaces, and, on the other, those sacred mountains and other geographical sites whose foundational myths were themselves built up by these same tales. Generally speaking, these tales all have as their protagonist a woman who deliberately violates religious regulations against women in order

<sup>4</sup> For a recent and concise English-language account of what is commonly referred to as the *ritsuryō* state, see Sakaue Yasutoshi, with Kristopher Reeves, "The *ritsuryō* state," in Karl Friday, ed. *Routledge Handbook of Premodern Japanese History* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2017). The period of Japan's *ritsuryō* state is generally regarded as beginning in the year 645 and ending sometime around the middle of the tenth century. While Buddhism is thought to have come to Japan as early as the sixth century, before the establishment of the *ritsuryō* state, its religious doctrines were never incorporated into the framework of this system of governance, the theoretical basis of which was taken over from continental Tang legal codes. [Translator's note.]

to ascend some mountain peak and enter into a sacred space located thereon. At times this woman is none other than the mother of the male founder of a given mountain temple.

Tōdaiji Temple, aside from the tale of the nun just discussed, has its own share of other similar legends. The statue of the Great Buddha at this temple was inaugurated, or, to use the proper Buddhist terminology, its eyes were opened (*kai-gen* 開眼), in the year 752. This same year, a monk by the name of Jicchū 実忠 (726–?)—noted disciple of Master Rōben 良弁僧正 (689–774), founding patriarch of the temple—instituted a religious ceremony commonly known as the Shuni'e 修二会, literally “religious gathering of the second (lunar) month.” This ritual, which takes the form of a mass confession before a statue of Jūichimen kannon 十一面觀世音 (Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara; Sk: Avalokiteśvara-ekadaśamukha), is conducted in Nigatsudō 二月堂, the Second Moon (Month) Hall, one of many halls dedicated to a specific religious ritual found within the Tōdaiji Temple complex. The *Todaiji engi ekotoba* 東大寺縁起絵詞, or *Illustrated Scroll of the Foundation of Tōdaiji Temple*, completed in 1334, contains a foundational tale about this Shuni'e that features a female protagonist referred to as Shōe no nyonin 青衣の女人, literally, the women in the blue surplice. As the story goes, the specter of a deceased woman once took it upon herself to violate the prohibitions against women and enter into the sacred space of Nigatsudō in order to appear before a congregation of monks then engaged in conducting the annual Shuni'e rituals. The specter requested that her name be included in the temple's Register of the Departed (*kakochō* 過去帳) and read aloud at every Shuni'e from thereon in. Intoning the name of a departed soul is, in Buddhist contexts, a form of religious service (*kyō* 供養) aimed at ensuring perpetual repose and heavenly merit for the deceased. Monks, as religious ascetics, are men who have renounced the mundane world and are subject to strict restrictions, men who, furthermore, dedicate their lives to austere and oft times severe practices. By placing such men in charge of ensuring the repose of deceased souls, women included, this tale seeks to legitimate the salvific role of monks once and for all.<sup>5</sup>

Prohibitions against women trespassing on sacred spaces, as detailed in the monastic regulations of ancient Buddhist temples, are indicative of the idea that women are, for one reason or another, essentially incompatible with the framework of these institutions. The reason for these prohibitions is often attributed to an abhorrence for blood, such as that accompanying menstruation and childbirth, and hence something uniquely female. In terms of content, tales about women breaking Buddhist prohibitions are not limited exclusively to the level of popular beliefs. An immensely famous legend about an incident that is said to

<sup>5</sup> Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Yama ni okonau hijiri to nyonin—Shigisan engi emaki to Tōdaiji Zenkōji wo megurite” 山に行く聖と女人—信貴山縁起絵巻と東大寺・善光寺をめぐるて, in *Yuya no kōgō—chūsei no sei to seinaru mono* 湯屋の皇后—中世の性と聖なるもの (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), 246–789.

have occurred at Dōjōji Temple 道成寺, located in modern-day Wakayama Prefecture, features as its protagonist a woman by the name of Kiyohime 清姫 (literally, Pure Princess), who, having fallen madly in love with a certain Buddhist monk named Anchin 安珍, pursues him up a mountain and, trespassing on sacred space, charges into the temple unannounced.<sup>6</sup> Another variation of this motif is found in *Eizan ryakki* 叡山略記 (*Abridged Records of Mt. Hiei*, probably 13<sup>th</sup> century), in which the female protagonist, likewise madly in love with a monk, resorts to defaming her unresponsive darling with false accusations.

On the other hand, there are related versions of this motif in which, to cite one example from *Hikosan ruki* 彦山流記 (*Records of Hikosan Shrine*, 1205), a male ascetic, having in his wanderings through the mountains accidentally stumbled upon a female ascetic, finds himself overcome by carnal desire.<sup>7</sup> Here the male ascetic, having been rescued by a woman, requests to engage in sexual intercourse, claiming that kissing her lips would be a source of pollution to him. Oddly enough, it seems that, so far as the male ascetic was concerned, sexual intercourse was less polluting than kissing.<sup>8</sup> The woman, however, manages to convince the ascetic of the paradoxical nature of his argument. No sooner does he kiss the woman than she transforms, first into a nine-headed dragon, and finally into her true form, the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara.<sup>9</sup> Aside from its sexual content, this tale closely resembles the miraculous account of the Chinese monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (J: Genjō, 602–664) and how he obtained a copy of the *Heart Sutra* 般若波羅蜜多心經 (Sk: *Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya sūtram*, J: *Hannya haramitta shingyō*) while travelling through India.<sup>10</sup> In fact, miraculous tales involving the manifestation of divine beings as a direct result of sexually provocative behavior between a male ascetic and a female can be traced back to Minamoto no Tamemori's 源為憲

<sup>6</sup> This legend appears in a number of premodern sources, including *Dainihon bokke genki* 大日本国法華験記 (*Miraculous Accounts of the Lotus Sutra in the Great Land of Japan*, completed sometime between 1040 and 1044) and *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 今昔物語集 (*A Collection of Tales Old and New*, sometime after 1120), both of which are anthologies of anecdotal tales and legends. The medieval *nō* play “Dōjōji” 道成寺 (“Dojoji Temple”), attributed to the playwright Kanze Nobumitsu 観世信光 (1435/1450–1516), is an adaptation of this same tale into a highly visual performative genre. [Translator's note]

<sup>7</sup> For the text of *Hikosan ruki*, see Gorai Shigeru 五来重, ed., *Shugendō shiryōshū* 修験道史料集, volume 2 (Meicho shuppan, 1984), 466–467.

<sup>8</sup> The word I have rendered here as ‘kiss’ is a loose translation of *kuchi wo su* 口を吸う, literally, sucking of the mouth, or mouth-sucking, the precise mechanics of which sadly remain a mystery. Mouth-sucking was, in all likelihood, something more than just kissing. [Translator's note]

<sup>9</sup> Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正崇, “Kegare to nyonin kinsei” 〈穢れ〉と女人禁制, in *Shūkyō minzoku kenkyū* 宗教民俗研究, 27(2018), 113–116.

<sup>10</sup> The earliest versions of this tale are preserved in *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 今昔物語集, *Uchigikishū* 打聞集 (*A Collection of Tales Just as They Were Told*, 1134), and the Bunpō MS 文保本 of *Shōtoku taishiden* 聖德太子伝 (Biography of Crown Prince Shōtoku, 1317–1318). For more on this subject, see Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Yuya no kōgō—Kōmyō kōgō yuswgyō no monogatari wo megurite” 湯屋の皇后—光明皇后湯施行の物語をめぐりて, in *Yuya no kōgō* 湯屋の皇后 (1998), 30–37, 50–56.



(?–1011) *Kūyarni* 空也誄 (*Eulogy for Kūya*), completed near the end of the tenth century. According to this work, the ascetic Kūya 空也 (903–972) was approached by an elderly woman who, by all appearances, was stricken with a serious illness. Unbeknownst to Kūya, this was no mortal woman but an old shape-shifting fox who lived in the Shinsen Gardens (*Shinsen'en* 神泉苑) within the imperial compound. Kūya tended to the woman with great care, providing her with both clothing and food. When she recovered, this woman then requested that Kūya have sexual intercourse with her, which request the holy man is said to have granted. At this juncture, the fox reveals her true form, expressing sincere gratitude for all the ascetic has done. Incidentally, this same tale can be found in a twelfth-century work entitled *Rokuharamitsuji engi* 六波羅蜜寺縁起, or *Foundational History of Rokuharamitsuji Temple*, by Miyoshi no Tameyasu 三善為康 (1049–1139).

### 1–3. Tales of Border Crossings and Ritual Pollution

All of the tales discussed thus far have been of a predominantly religious character, featuring as they do a sage or ascetic man, and depicting border crossings involving some interplay between sacred and secular, male and female. It was in the world of literary texts that we saw the processes and inevitable climactic moments of these tales depicted; it was through the written word that these tales were brought to life. Literature does not merely gather up and record ancient tales. Literature has the power to stimulate the creative imagination of performers, playwrights, and other artists working in visual media, such that, through them, these tales take on a central role of their own, far beyond their original literary context.

Ritual pollution (*kegare* 穢) is the stigma imposed upon all women and holy men portrayed in these tales as the subjects of border crossings. The precise nature of this ritual pollution and its relationship to the protagonist is by no means straightforward; this motif can take any number of different forms. While there are certainly very simplistic forms in which the woman is viewed more-or-less as a passive receptacle of ritual pollution, there are many more examples in which the relationship between the female protagonist and ritual pollution is much more nuanced. Among the varied legends surrounding Empress Kōmyō, a figure we have already encountered in relation to the Hall of the Great Buddha, there is one relating to the Buddhist practice known as *yusegyō* 湯施行, or the meritorious practice of personally bathing poor and sick people who happened to come to a given temple. According to *Kenkyū go junreiki* 建久御巡礼記, or *Record of Imperial Pilgrimages during the Kenkyū Era* (completed in 1191), Empress Kōmyō made a religious vow in which she expressed a deep desire to plant the seeds of ultimate goodness before she passed away. In response to this, as a means of testing her devotion, the deities above commanded her to perform meritorious deeds to all without the slightest hint of prejudice (*musu no kudoku* 無差ノ功德). More specifically, she was to bathe with her own hands anyone who came her

way, no matter what sort of person it might chance to be. Before her appeared a beggar of hideous appearance and belonging to a group of social outcasts known as *saka no mono* 坂者, literally, those who dwell upon the slopes.<sup>11</sup> True to her vow, Empress Kōmyō ardently suppresses all feelings of disgust in order to scrape off the poor man's grime encrusted limbs. After she has kindly requested the man to keep this episode a secret, he, in turn, promptly replies by asking her to tell nobody that she has this very day cleansed the body of a buddha. No sooner has he revealed to Empress Kōmyō his true identity than he transforms into a divine being of light and ascends to the heavens before her eyes. Here we have a dramatic tale whose miraculous climax depends upon the simultaneous overturning of two dichotomies, namely, that of purity and pollution, and that of sacred and secular.<sup>12</sup>

As was discussed in the previous section, there are several examples of related tales in which the male ascetic willingly agrees to engage in sexual intercourse with a woman as a means of ensuring the full recovery of his patient, despite the ritual pollution consequent upon such activities. At times, an otherwise celibate sage, while expressing due hesitation at breaking his vows of chastity, nevertheless attempts to convince a woman to assist him in satisfying some newly awakened carnal desires. In these cases, it is when and only when the protagonist willingly and wholeheartedly exposes himself to the pollution of secular concupiscence that he is at last made privy to an epiphany in which the sacred is made known to him. There is something quite profound going on beneath the surface here. *Ippen hijiri'e* 一遍聖絵, or the *Illustrated Life of Master Ippen*, completed in 1298, is a medieval biography of the famous Japanese itinerant monk Ippen 一遍 (1239–1289), founder of the Jishū Society 時衆 of Pure Land Buddhism. Here, too, we are presented with a seeming paradox. Ippen's own epiphany comes in the form of an encounter with one of the avatars worshipped at Kumano Shrine, the so-called Kumano gongen 熊野権現. While sleeping, the avatar appears before Ippen, telling him that the holy gods make no distinction between the pure and the impure, nor do they place any importance whatsoever on the faith or lack thereof. Hearing these words, Ippen finally reaches enlightenment. It would appear that seemingly paradoxical episodes like this might serve as allegorical representations of a deeper Buddhist teaching. Namely, that the only path to salvation is that of abandoning all distinctions between the pure and the impure, and surrendering one's self unconditionally to the providence of Buddha.

<sup>11</sup> The term *saka no mono*, or those who dwell upon the slopes (or hills), refers historically to two large communities of outcasts (*bi'nin* 非人), one based around Kiyomizuzaka 清水坂, the Kiyomizu Slope, in Kyoto, the other around Narazaka 奈良坂, the Nara Slope, in Nara. These outcasts were responsible for dealing with the disposal of corpses, the care of those suffering from leprosy, and the reception of temple donations intended especially for outcasts (*bi'nin segyō* 非人施行).

<sup>12</sup> Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, "Yuya no kōgō—Kōmyō kōgō yusegyō no monogatari wo megurite" 湯屋の皇后—光明皇后湯施行の物語をめぐりて, in *Yuya no kōgō* 湯屋の皇后 (1998), 18–64.

## 2. Gods who Forgive and Praise the Tainted Sage

### 2–1. Medieval Anecdotal Tales about Tainted Sages

I would like to focus here on those medieval anecdotal tales in which a male sage is depicted as transgressing the boundaries of purity and thereby exposing himself to the contaminating effects of ritual pollution.<sup>13</sup> These tales are intimately bound up with the central role of sages in the world of Japanese Buddhism. Such sagely individuals are referred to variously as *shami* 沙弥 (Sk: *śrāmaṇera*), that is, a Buddhist acolyte, *shōnin* 聖人, one who has gained an intimate appreciation of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, or by the homophonous term *shōnin* 上人, literally, one who is above or superior to normal mortals. Throughout the history of Buddhism, sages have earned the reverence of believers in one of two ways. On the one hand, there are those sages who, not satisfied at limiting themselves to meditation within the walls of a cloistered temple, go out into nature, making their way over mountains and rivers, with the express purpose of perfecting the Buddhist practice of *tosō* 斗擻 (Sk: *dhūta*), that is, of completely doing away with all earthly desires for food, raiment, and shelter. These sages, having settled down in some sacred locale—often a secluded mountain—and having, through their high level of cultivation, attained certain miraculous powers, go on to worship the resident buddhas and gods of that locale. In response to the sage’s earnest religious practices, these local divinities then make an appearance, thereby making their existence known once and for all. On the other hand, there are sages who voluntarily make their way into bustling cities and surrounding rural areas, mixing with the local population, intoning the salvific name of Amitābha 阿弥陀 (J: Amida), spreading the Buddhist teachings and leading the fatuous masses to enlightenment. These two categories of sages are by no means mutually exclusive. Kūya, whom we have already met, was a mixture of both.

The evolution of various religious activities carried out by such individuals, still prevalent well into the early modern period, had their roots in ancient society.<sup>14</sup> Let us turn our attention to the intermediate stages of this evolution, that is, to the medieval period, and examine more specifically how sages crossed over borders of purity and impurity in their confrontations with potentially contaminating forces or events. Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (1153/1155–1216), vernacular poet and superintendent of Shimogamo Shrine 下鴨神社 (in Kyoto), voluntarily

<sup>13</sup> The modern Sino-Japanese term for this is *shokue* 触穢, that is, *kegare ni fureru*, which refers to the act of somehow—usually physically—coming into contact with (*fureru* 触れる) something that is deemed impure (*kegare* 穢れ). For the sake of brevity, I have decided to use the term “tainted sage” to refer to sages who have incurred the stigma of pollution. [Translator’s note]

<sup>14</sup> Hori Ichirō 堀一郎, *Kūya* 空也 (Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1963); Gorai Shigeru 五来重, *Kōya hijiri* 高野聖 (Kadokawa shoten, 1975) and *Zōho Kōya hijiri* 増補 高野聖 (Kadokawa shoten, 1985); Itō Yūshin 伊藤唯真, *Seibukkyōshi no kenkyū* 聖仏教史の研究, in *Itō Yūshin chosakushū* 伊藤唯真著作集, volume 1 (Hōzōkan, 1995).

abandoned his career as a courtier and, instead of taking up residence in a monastery, retired to a small hut situated in the backwoods of Kyoto, where he pursued a life of seclusion. It was Chōmei who was the first medieval writer to record tales of the sort just mentioned. His *Hosshinshū* 発心集, or *Tales of Religious Awakening* (completed sometime before 1216) marks the beginning of medieval collections of Buddhist anecdotal tales. While earlier collections amounted to short hagiographies (*ōjōden* 往生伝) of famous monks who had purportedly attained rebirth into the Pure Land, Chōmei's collection went beyond this, including accounts of less known people, ancient and contemporary, who sought to renounce the world as a result of sudden religious awakening.

One such account preserved in *Hosshinshū* features as its protagonist an anonymous monk who makes a vow to pay his respects to the gods at Hie Shrine 日吉大社 (located in modern-day Ōtsu City, Shiga Prefecture) for one-hundred consecutive days. It should be noted here that Hie Shrine, also known as Hie sannō 日吉山王, or "Hie, King of the Mountain," served as an important center, both religious and political, throughout the whole of the medieval period. The monk who vowed to visit this center for one hundred days was required, therefore, to observe the most austere purity and strictest chastity; he was not to come into contact with anything that might contaminate his person. One day in the middle of his one-hundred day routine, as this monk was returning from the shrine, he chanced upon a young girl weeping by the roadside. Upon enquiry, the monk discovered that the poor girl had just recently lost her mother. Due to strict religious prohibitions against coming into contact with death and decay, however, no one in the area had offered to assist with the burial. The corpse of her mother still lay unburied. Thinking the matter over, the monk decided that since the buddhas, feeling such compassion for us mortals, deign to descend to this polluted world and appear before us in the form of myriads gods, so, too, would they forgive his act of compassion towards this poor girl; surely, considering the monk's motives, the merciful buddhas would overlook the pollution of coming into contact with a dead body. Come nightfall, he went ahead and buried the girl's mother.

Not certain whether this potentially contaminating act had technically precluded him from continuing with the remainder of his hundred-day service, the monk, deliberately transgressing conventional prohibitions, made a trip to the shrine in order to enquire of the gods directly. On his way to the shrine, the monk is moved by a profound realization: the stigma of pollution connected with childbirth and death is nothing more than an expedient means employed by the gods in order to incite proper religious reverence. In other words, so long as one remains reverential towards the gods, ritual pollution is not something that can interfere with religious practice. Despite the immediacy of this realization, the monk harbors a lingering doubt as to its authenticity. After reaching the entrance of the shrine, his troubled spirits are at last relieved by the divinely inspired words of a certain medium (*kannagi* 𑖀𑖄) in the service of

Jūzenji 十禪師, one of the seven avatars of Hie sannō: “I observed that which you performed last night. Verily, it was a fine thing you did!” Receiving this last statement of divine approval, the monk became certain of the authenticity of his realization.

This tale was written to elucidate the real significance of prohibitions against ritual pollution, namely, that such prohibitions are expedient means used by the gods in order to cultivate faith in us mortals. It was in light of this teaching that the monk was forgiven. However, warned the god, most people are too ignorant to grasp the principles behind this teaching. If the monk were to share his new realization with laymen, he would only succeed in making them less careful about offending the gods, and hence less faithful towards them. The avatar commands the monk to keep what he has learned a secret. For the enlightened sage, who is no longer in need of expedient means, religious prohibitions are understood for what they really are: nothing more than convenient devices geared at assisting as-of-yet unenlightened humans.

## 2-2. Gods and Sages Brought Together in Medieval Tales of Pollution

Chōmei’s *Hosshinshū* is not the only source for tales in which tainted sages—tainted, at least, in the strictly conventional sense—are unexpectedly praised for their acts of compassion. Rather, this is a motif that runs through many a medieval Japanese anecdotal tale dealing with miraculous legends (*reigentan* 靈驗譚) attributed to divine figures.<sup>15</sup> Another collection of Buddhist anecdotal tales entitled *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (*Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, 1283), compiled by the monk Mujū 無住 (1227–1312), contains in its first fascicle a legend bearing the title “The Deity Offers Praise for An Act of Compassion” (Shinmei jihi wo tattobi tamau koto 神明慈悲を貴び給ふ事). This tale bears striking similarities to the one found in *Hosshinshū* discussed above. The protagonist of this tale is a monk named Jōkanbō 常観房 who hails from the district of Miwa 三輪 in Yamato 大和 (Nara). Jōkanbō was on his way to pay his respects to an avatar known as Zōō (Zōō gongen 蔵王権現) worshipped at Mt. Kinbu 金峯山 in the district of Yoshino 吉野, likewise situated in what is modern-day Nara. Having spied a corpse laying by the roadside, the monk takes it upon himself to see that the body is properly buried somewhere in the wilderness. Fearing that the stain of pollution has disqualified him from visiting the avatar, Jōkanbō decides to turn around and head back home. To his astonishment, however, he is unable to take even a single step in the direction of his hometown in Miwa. On the other hand, when he turns about and tries instead to continue on his way to Yoshino, he finds his steps light and easy, at which point he muses within himself: “Could it be perhaps that the deity is trying to tell me, ‘Onwards! Head straight to my temple?’” As was the case with the anonymous monk in Chōmei’s tale, Jōkanbō

<sup>15</sup> Watanabe Sadamaro 渡邊貞磨, *Bukkyō bungaku no shien* 仏教文学の周縁 (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 1994).

heads towards the temple burdened with an uneasy mind, not sure whether or not the divine sign he has received is, in fact, legitimate. Then, a spirit medium possessed by the avatar Zōō greets the monk, urging him to continue to the temple: “What care I for all these prohibitions against pollution? It is compassion alone that I revere.”

*Shasekishū* contains a number of similar tales in which the gods are described as attributing supreme value to acts of compassion, even when those acts transgress conventional religious prohibitions. Atsutamiya 熱田宮, one of the local deities worshipped in Mujū’s own hometown, is recorded as forgiving those who have incurred the pollution of coming into contact with death or childbirth. It seems safe to say, therefore, that during the medieval period these legends were not limited exclusively to a specific set of deities or famous sages, but were rather attributed more widely to any deity or sage, regardless of their relative fame. The monk Jōkanbō featured in *Shasekishū* corresponds to a historical figure, namely, Keien 慶円 (also read Kyōen, 1140–1223), a famous monk of the Shingon Sect 真言宗, and founder of Miwa Shintō 三輪神道, which attempts to unite the teachings of Shingon Buddhism with certain elements of Shintō. Keien was referred to by the honorific title Miwa shōniō 三輪上人, the Sage of Miwa.

According to Keien’s biography, *Miwa shōnin gyōjō* 三輪上人行狀 (*The Life and Work of the Sage of Miwa*, 1253), the shrine in question was not located on Mt. Kinbu, but Iwashimizu hachimangū Shrine 石清水八幡宮, located in modern-day Yawata City 八幡市, Kyoto Prefecture. Keien, having overseen a burial, and thus deeming himself impure and unworthy of approaching the god, decides instead to make his religious offerings in Baba 馬場, a small region located at the foot of the mountain. As the sage is engaged in worship, a young layman possessed by the god of Iwashimizu hachimangū Shrine approaches, informing the monk that the god, far from condemning his actions, commends his decision to bury an unknown corpse: “You have committed no violation whatsoever.” Keien is then encouraged by the deity to proceed to the shrine as initially planned. Standing before the altar, Keien and the deity transmit to each other secret knowledge of Buddhist *inmyō* 印明, that is, esoteric teachings pertaining to the use of mudras (*insō* 印相) and mantras (*myōju* 明呪, or *shingon* 真言). It is during this process of mutual transmission between man and god that the true identity (*honji* 本地) of the latter is at last revealed.<sup>16</sup> This account, as preserved in *Miwa shōnin gyōjō*,

<sup>16</sup> According to the then prevalent theory of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹, “ultimate reality and temporary manifestation,” Shintō deities were understood to be temporary manifestations or “traces” (*suijaku*) of Buddhist divinities or “fundamental entities” (*honji*). The buddhas, wishing to lead Japanese people to enlightenment, came in the form of more familiar Shintō deities. This is, of course, an extension of the well-known doctrine of expedient means (*hoben* 方便). It was not always clear to which Buddhist divinity a particular Shintō deity corresponded. In these cases, it was necessary for a sage like Keien to somehow incite the Buddhist divinity to reveal his or her true identity. [Translator’s note]

serves as a foundational legend explaining the unique origins of Miwa Shintō as something that took place by way of the mutual transmission of esoteric knowledge between a sage and a deity.

### 2–3. Two Tales of Tainted Sages at Hachimangū Shrine

Miraculous legends centered around the Shintō deity Hachiman 八幡神 and his sacred abode, the aforementioned Iwashimizu hachimangū Shrine, in which a Shintō god reveals his true Buddhist identity as the direct result of some sage who has violated conventional prohibitions against ritual pollution, were in circulation as early as the beginning of the medieval period. *Miyadera junpaiki* 宮寺巡拜記, or *A Record of Pilgrimages to Various Shrines and Temples*, a document compiled sometime around the first half of the thirteenth century, contains an account of a sage by the name of Chūrenbō 仲蓮房, about whom we know next to nothing, save that he was, according to this same document, something of an outsider (*gairai no sō* 外来の僧), the precise meaning of which is unclear. On his way home from the shrine, Chūrenbō comes across an abandoned corpse. Out of compassion for the deceased, the sage hoists the corpse over his shoulders and proceeds to throw it by the riverside, away from the main thoroughfare. Ashamed at the ritual pollution of having come into direct contact with a dead body, and yet unwilling to wholly abandon his pilgrimage to various shrines around the area, Chūrenbō decides to pass the night in the shrine's outer veranda, close enough to worship and far enough away not to offend the gods. The god Hachiman appears to a slumbering Chūrenbō in the form of a Buddhist monk, informing him that his compassionate actions have won the god's praise: "I appear before you now, having been deeply moved by your compassionate act." This miraculous tale ends by informing us that Chūrenbō not only received divine approval for his actions, but was furthermore vouchsafed rebirth into the Pure Land. Here, too, we are told that Hachiman made the following declarations: "My original vow to rescue all sentient beings is one of compassion," and "I do not abhor the polluted and the unclean." The tale of Chūrenbō, then, was included as a means of explaining the initial circumstances surrounding these divine declarations.

The tale of Chūrenbō appears again in a document compiled in the early fourteenth-century entitled *Hachiman gudōkun* 八幡愚童訓, or *Hachiman for Children*.<sup>17</sup> This work contains a chapter called "Impure Things" (*fujō no koto* 不浄事), which is dedicated to demonstrating Hachiman's utter disgust for all things impure. Interestingly, the tale of Chūrenbō is included in this chapter not, as it was in *Miyadera*

<sup>17</sup> This particular work has come down to us through two lineages of manuscripts—the *kōhon* 甲本 lineage, or lineage A, which was completed between 1308–1318, and the *otsuhon* 乙本 lineage, or lineage B, completed sometime between 1299–1302—the contents of which show a number of significant differences. Abe is here referring to a version of *Hachiman gudōkun* belonging to the *kōhon* lineage. [Translator's note]

*junpaiki*, as a way of showing that Hachiman does not take offense to those who have come into contact with conventionally impure things, so long as they have done so out of compassion, but rather as an example of an exception to the rule. What *Miyadera junpaiki* takes as its central message, *Hachiman gudōki* includes as a curious exception. No less interestingly, while *Miyadera junpaiki* makes special note of the fact that Chūrenbō is an outsider, *Hachiman gudōki* includes no such description. For the compiler of this later document, Chūrenbō is just another monk; there is nothing exceptionally special about him. It was in virtue of this sage's compassionate heart, we are told, that he had no need to fear the otherwise deleterious effects of pollution.

This tale of the deity at Iwashimizu Hachimangū Shrine applauding the actions of what would otherwise conventionally be condemned as a tainted sage appears, as has just been shown, in two opposite contexts. The reason for this is not overly complicated: In the medieval period, each powerful religious institution had, as its foundation, a set of prohibitions against ritual pollution—known, when canonized in writing, as *bukeiryō* 物忌令, ordinances pertaining to ritual pollution. It was this set of ordinances that ultimately served to legitimize the unique position of a given religious institution. Considering the importance of prohibitions of this sort, each institution endeavored to present what might pass for a logical explanation regarding the origin of their ordinances. Anecdotal tales, with their mythological motifs and conceptualizations of the world, were recruited as a means of satisfying this demand.

These miraculous tales were used by medieval religious institutions as a vehicle for inculcating in their audiences the perceived nature of their gods. On the one hand, the sage, who is usually portrayed as an outsider in some respect, commits two transgressions: First, moved solely by compassion for the suffering of others, he willingly comes into contact with some form of potentially polluting object. Second, though now in an impure state, he ignores all prohibitions against approaching the divinities, and boldly approaches the altar, trusting wholly in the god's mercy and understanding.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the deity is portrayed as not only refraining from punishing the tainted sage, but as praising him. Medieval Shintō deities are portrayed as Buddhist divinities who have, in virtue of their infinite compassion for mankind, deign to appear in the guise of familiar forms, ready to forgive men for their trespasses so long as these trespasses were made out of compassion. It is possible to see in these tales a focal point through which may be described a fundamental type of liminality, or an approach towards liminal space.

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<sup>18</sup> Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, *Yuya no kōgō: chūsei no sei to seinaru mono* (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), 50–64; Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Kumanokō” 熊野考, in *Seisha no suisan: chūsei no koe to woko naru mono* 聖者の推参—中世の声とヲコなるもの (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2001), 214–220.



### 3. Tainted Sages in Holy Sites: The Socialization of Border Crossing

#### 3-1. The Spread of Tales about Tainted Sages Who Visit Shrines

During the latter half of the medieval period—from the Northern and Southern Courts (1336–1392) to the Muromachi period (1392–1573)—miraculous tales of tainted sages who had nevertheless visited holy sites, where they were consequently praised by the local deity, gradually became to take on a more concrete, more realistic form. Instead of fictional protagonists, these latter tales feature known historical personages, most of whom, significantly, are Buddhist monks. True, examples of tales containing well-known Buddhist monks, such as Keien, were circulated during the first half of the medieval period. However, as with Keien, these monks were generally portrayed as semi-mythical characters and not as strictly historical personages. Examples of tales from the latter half of the medieval period whose protagonists are historical Buddhist monks may be found in the accounts of ascetics belonging to the Zen and the Ritsu Schools, monks of the Jishu Sect 時衆, and various sages associated with the True Pure Land Sect 浄土真宗.

One such example is found in the person of Shigyoku 志玉 (1383–1463), a Zen monk learned in the Vinaya (*ritsu* 律) or monastic regulations, who also lectured on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (Flower Garland Sutra; J: *Kegonkyō* 華嚴經), and who served as the head of the Kaidan'in 戒壇院, or Hall of the Ordination Platform, at Tōdaiji Temple 東大寺, and who, having spent some five years studying in China, was well-versed in the doctrines of the Huayan (J: *Kegon*) School 華嚴宗. It was this same Shigyoku who compiled a religious commentary for *Rokurin ichiro no ki* 六輪一露之記 (*An Account of the Six Wheels and the Single Dewdrop*, c. 1455), a treatise on *nō* performance by the famous playwright Konparu Zenchiku 金春禪竹 (1405–1471). The primary source for biographical information about this monk is found in *Denritsu zugen kaishū* 伝律因源解集 (*Collected Commentaries on the Lineage of the Transmission of the Ritsu Sect*, 1684), compiled by Jūkei 重慶 (n.d.) a monk based in Tōdaiji Kaidan'in 東大寺戒壇院.<sup>19</sup> According to this source, Shigyoku played an active role in religious services conducted at Byakugōji Temple 白毫寺, in Nara, a temple for monks of the Ritsu School that contained a large cemetery. One day, having burnt incense at this temple on behalf the deceased, Shigyoku proceeded to pay his respects to the Shintō deity worshipped at Kasuga Shrine 春日社. Upon arriving at the altar, the heavens suddenly become ominously dark. Then, from out the sanctuary emerges an awe-inspiring apparition: the avatar of the shrine attired in formal court dress. The avatar upbraids Shigyoku for visiting his shrine so soon after having come into contact with the pollution of

<sup>19</sup> Funata Jun'ichi 船田淳一, "Shie to jōbutsu—shingonkei shintōsho ni miru sōsō girei" 死穢と成仏—真言系神道書に見る葬送儀礼, in *Shinbutsu to girei no chūsei* 神仏と儀礼の中世 (Hōzōkan, 2011), 288–289; a printed version of *Denritsu zugen kaishū* is contained in volume 64 of *Dainibon bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1972).

death. Unshaken, Shigyoku replies by intoning a Buddhist verse from *Yuanjuejing* 円覺經 (J: *Engakukyō*, likely late 7<sup>th</sup>-early 8<sup>th</sup> century), the *Sutra of Full Realization*, effectively turning the tables and asking whether it is not the deity who is in the wrong. Is it not the case, retorts Shigyoku, that you, a divine being who has remained so long among us mortals, have forgotten your original vow of compassion towards all mankind? The deity, reminded of his vow, repents at once: “Indeed, it is as you say: I had forgotten the very doctrines [of compassion towards mankind] I myself once preached. I have mingled with the dust of this world for too long.” Here we see a Buddhist monk leading a deity towards enlightenment, castigating him for having forgotten his original vow. The deity, we are made to understand, was in the wrong for accusing the monk of being polluted. In this tale, Shigyoku’s supposed pollution is employed as a foil, by means of which the deity—and by implication readers of this tale—is brought towards a higher understanding.

Another similar account appears in the foundation legend of Iwata enmyōji Temple 岩田円明寺. This temple was founded by Kakujō 覺乘 (1272–1362), a monk of the Ritsu School based in Saidaiji Temple 西大寺. Kakujō was active throughout the region surrounding Ise Shrine 伊勢神宮 (in modern-day Ise City, Mie), and was consequently involved with rituals pertaining to the worship of Shito deities and discussions about Shintō religion in general.<sup>20</sup> As the tale goes, Kakujō, having set his mind on establishing the aforementioned Iwata enmyōji Temple expressly as a family temple (*ujidera* 氏寺) for the priests at Ise Shrine, desired to know the original nature—*honji* 本地 or *shintai* 真躰—of the deity worshipped at that Shrine. That is to say, he wished to know the true identity of the Buddhist divinity who had assumed the disguise of a Shintō god. To this end, Kakujō vowed to pay his respects to the shrine for one-hundred consecutive days, a practice we have already encountered in previous sections. On the one-hundredth day, just as Kakujō was about to fulfil his vow, he was asked to administer the final rites to an unfortunate traveler who had since perished. Despite conventional prohibitions against ritual pollution, he agreed to administer the desired rites. Shortly thereafter, as Kakujō made his way through Miyakawa no hotori 宮川の畔 (in modern-day Ise City), a sacred space associated with local Shintō deities, an elderly man appeared before him, scolding the monk for stepping on holy ground in a tainted state. Kakujō, having responded with “the pure heart knows no taint,” nevertheless turns about and prepares to return the way he came, not wishing to offend the deities. At this point, the deity himself appears before Kakujō in the form of a child, and apologizes for having wrongly accused the monk of violating prohibitions about ritual pollution: “Do not go! It was I, it seems, who forgot [my vows of compassion]. I have mingled in this

<sup>20</sup> This account of Kakujō is preserved in a document entitled *Sanbōin kyūki* 三宝院旧記, or *Old Records of the Hall of Three Treasures* (likely completed sometime around the beginning of the seventeenth century), which is itself found in *Dainihon shiryō* 大日本史料, 6:24.

world of dust for too long.” After reciting a Buddhist verse relating to the purity and unconditional compassion entailed in the deity’s original vow, he announces to Kakujō a new covenant, namely, that all believers who make a pilgrimage to Iwata enmyōji Temple will be freed of all taint.

After receiving this first revelation, Kakujō is blessed with a second, this time in the form of a dream, in which he is commanded to visit the altar once again. Once at the altar, Kakujō is greeted by a snake—actually the divinity in disguise—who emerges from the shrine’s pond. After reverently paying his respects to this serpent, he promptly throws his monk’s robe over its body. Incidentally, according to this tale, the practice of carving serpent seals (*jagyō no ban* 蛇形判), stamps decorated with the image of a snake, first began when Kakujō carved a likeness of this divine snake. While this is not the place to enter into details, suffice it to say that Kakujō, in an effort to uncover the true (Buddhist) identity of the divinity at Ise, travels from Anōtsu 安濃津, or Anō Port, in modern-day Tsu City 津市, Mie, to Futamigaura 二見浦, or Futami Bay, in modern-day Ise City, Mie. It is at a temple located close to Futami Bay that Kakujō at last receives his long-sought revelation: the deity at Ise is none other than Amida 阿弥陀 himself, as worshipped at Kōdera Temple 国府寺, located in modern-day Kōmura 国府村, Suzuka City 鈴鹿市, Mie. When Kakujō eventually makes his way to Kōdera Temple, whereupon the Buddhist statue, usually hidden from view, is brought out for him to inspect, he discovers draped over its shoulders the very robe he cast over the aforementioned snake. This evidence is conclusive. In this manner, then, Kakujō was able to incite the deity at Ise Shrine to reveal his true identity.

Kakujō was the author of, *Tenshō daijin kuketsu* 天照太神口決 (*Oral Transmission Pertaining to the Great Goddess Amaterasu*, 1328), a treatise aimed at promoting a then popular doctrine known as *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合, in which Shintō deities were intimately merged with complementary Buddhist divinities. Naturally, Kakujō was especially interested in championing this doctrine insofar as it pertained to Amaterasu 天照, the presiding goddess at Ise Shrine. In this relation, Kakujō also promulgated a foundational legend pertaining to the esoteric ordination rites (*sokuibo* 即位法) used at his temple.<sup>21</sup> As may be seen, Kakujō exerted significant influence over contemporary discussions about the relationship between Shintō and Buddhism. Most obviously, he played a central role in promoting the distribution to all visitors—theoretically monks and sages—at Iwata enmyōji Temple of magical amulets (*gofu* 護符) believed to cleanse their bearers of all ritual pollution. What Kakujō promoted was essentially a system of symbolic transference

<sup>21</sup> Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Iruka no seiritsu” 「入鹿」の成立, in *Geinōshi kenkyū* 芸能史研究, 69 (1980), 1–18. For a discussion of Kakujō’s *Tenshō daijin kuketsu*, see Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Chūsei shūkyō shisō bunken no kenkyū (1): Ninnajibon *Tenshō daijin kuketsu* no honkoku to kaidai” 「中世宗教思想文献の研究 (一) 「仁和寺本『天照太神口決』の翻刻と解題, in Nagoya daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū 名古屋大学文学部研究論集 文学, 43 (1997), 193–205.

whereby the power to purify or cleanse from pollution became enshrined within small, portable artefacts.

### 3–2. The Role of the Sage at Ise Shrine

The tradition of tainted sages visiting Ise Shrine, home of what were then seen as Japan's highest divinities, was inaugurated by the aforementioned Kakujō. It was during the end of the Muromachi period, with the composition of a certain illustrated scroll entitled *Kokua shōnin eden* 国阿上人絵伝, or, the *Illustrated Biography of Master Kokua* (possibly completed between 1573–1600), that this same tradition gained increased social credence.<sup>22</sup> Kokua 国阿 (1314–1405) was the founder of a particular branch of the Jishu Sect known as the Ryōzen School 靈山派, based in Shōhōji Temple 正法寺, Kyoto. Being an itinerant monk, he travelled widely throughout Japan. Kokua paid his respects to Ise Shrine on a number of occasions, eagerly spreading his teachings throughout that particular area. According to the third fascicle (section nos. 17–20) of *Kokua shōnin eden*, Kokua, feeling sympathy for those people whose ritual pollution—especially that of menstrual blood—barred them from visiting Ise Shrine, vowed to visit the shrine every day for one-thousand consecutive days, in hopes that the deities might find it in their hearts to forgive the sin of pollution found in those who paid their respects to the shrine. On the final day of his austerities, Kokua spied the putrefying corpse of a leper victim floating on Mimosuso River 御裳濯河, a river, now known as Isuzu River 五十鈴川, which flows through the Inner Sanctum (Naikū 内宮) of Ise Shrine. Moved by pity, Kokua performs the final rites on behalf of the deceased. No sooner has he completed these rites when the corpse suddenly takes on the appearance of the bodhisattva Kannon 観音, and, soaring into the sky, announces to the sage that his vow has been granted. The leper-turned-divinity motif is one we have already encountered in the tales of the Chinese monk Xuanzang (J: Genjō) and the Japanese empress Kōmyō.

As the story goes, Kokua, upon approaching the precincts of the shrine, is greeted by none other than the great sun goddess Amaterasu herself—albeit not in her native form but through a female medium serving in the shrine—who directs the sage to approach the sacred altar. There, Kokua is further greeted by a divinity known as Uhō dōji 雨宝童子, who presents him with the leaf of a *kashiva* 柏, or Japanese emperor oak, as a sign that the sage's vow has been divinely sanctioned.<sup>23</sup> In the medieval period, a particular species of this leaf, the

<sup>22</sup> Washio Junkyō 鷺尾順敬, *Kokubun tōbō bukkyō sōsho* 国文東方仏教叢書, second series, volume 5, “biographies” 伝記部 (Tōhō Shoin, 1928), 355–357.

<sup>23</sup> Uhō dōji, literally, the youth (*dōji*) of raining or showering treasure (*uhō*), a divinity depicted as holding a staff in his right hand and a rosary in his left, was understood to represent the embodiment of Amaterasu when she first descended to Hyūga 日向, in modern-day northern Miyazaki. Alternately—and this amounts to the same thing in the end—Uhō dōji was taken to be a temporary manifestation of Dainichi nyōrai 大日如来, the Great Sun Buddha (Sk: Mahāvairocana), who was, in turn, thought to be the *honji* or Buddhist reality of Amaterasu. [Translator's note]

tip of which ended in three distinct points, and which was consequently known as the *mitsunagashiva* 三角柏, or triple-tipped emperor oak, served as an esoteric representation of the goddess Amaterasu.<sup>24</sup> Examining the leaf, Kokua discovers the following words stamped upon its upper surface: “The sins of ritual pollution for all those who pay their respects to the shrines along Ise and Kumano shall be forgiven for all eternity.” We are told that Kokua, having copied the image of this divine stamp, had paper copies printed for all those, ecclesiastics and layfolk alike, who visited the shrine. Thereafter, the miraculous efficacy of Ise Shrine was encapsulated in the following proclamation: “All unavoidable ritual pollution accidentally encountered along the way to the shrine shall be forgiven, and one’s wish to visit the shrine shall be duly granted.” Trusting in this proclamation, visitors to the sacred site established by Kokua at Ise Shrine would receive a series of ten invocations along with a copy of the divine stamp (*ofuda* おふた). This invaluable stamp came to serve, in effect, as an indulgence or certificate of religious vindication for pilgrims. According to *Kokua shōnin eden*, these events occurred during the first year of Eiwa 永和, that is, in 1375.

Practically speaking, this biography of Kokua serves as a foundational tale (*engi*) aimed at explaining the miraculous origins of the divine stamp distributed to those pilgrims visiting the Shōhōji Temple in Higashiyama 東山, Kyoto. Incidentally, Shōhōji continues to hand out copies of the “divine stamp of the emperor oak” (*kashimaba no shin’in* 柏葉の神印) to this very day. Kokua’s biography is an encapsulation of the entire process leading up to the creation of salvific artefacts. Through his continued austerities and sincere compassion, Kokua was able to move the goddess Amaterasu to bestow her divine favor on all future pilgrims inadvertently tainted with ritual pollution. This was achieved, first and foremost, by a deliberate transgression of conventional prohibitions against ritual pollution. It was only after Kokua had intoned the final rites on behalf of the leprous corpse, thereby making himself susceptible to the pollution of death and disease, and proceeded to enter the sacred space of the altar—a space where even the faintest taint should not be permitted—that Amaterasu rewarded the sage with blessings and a vision of herself in the form of Uhō dōji. Only then did the goddess relay to Kokua her divine proclamation stating once and for all that pilgrims who visited her altar were to be cleansed of any ritual pollution incurred on the way, and that by means of a divine stamp—essentially a magical talisman. As will be clearly seen from a comparison with the various tales of miraculous events and divine manifestations already discussed throughout this paper, the biography of Kokua has been sewn together out of a number of previously existing motifs.

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<sup>24</sup> Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡, *Chūsei Amaterasu ōmikami shinkō no kenkyū* 中世天照大神信仰の研究 (Hōzōkan 法蔵館, 2011). For the text of *Mitsuna kashimadenki* 三角柏伝記, see *Shinpukuji zenbon sōkan* 真福寺善本叢刊, first series, volume 6, ryōbu shintōshū 両部神道集 (Rinsen Shoten, 1998).

### 3–3. Some Undercurrents in Tales of Tainted Sages at Kumano

The message upon the divine stamp presented to Kokua by Amaterasu, it will be recalled, read as follows: “The sins of ritual pollution for all those who pay their respects to the shrines along Ise and Kumano shall be forgiven for all eternity.” Here we see two holy sites, namely, Ise and Kumano, mentioned side by side. In the beginning of the medieval period, it was believed that the presiding deity worshipped at Kumano was the same deity worshipped at Ise. These two sites were seen as belonging to a single circuit of holy spaces. Itinerant nuns who preached at and around both sites espoused this paradigm. Kumano, even more so than Ise, was championed as a sanctuary par excellence: As has already been seen in *Ippen hijiri'e*, the sage Ippen received a divine proclamation from the avatar of Kumano that effectively eradicated any fundamental distinctions between purity and impurity supposed to have resulted from ritual pollution. Those who visited Kumano were cleansed of any pollution; pilgrims were saved so long as they made their way to the sanctuary that was Kumano. This belief in the salvific power of Kumano is indicative of something deeper, namely, of a transformation during the medieval period in the way in which the nature of deities was envisioned.

The deity at Kumano not only cleansed pilgrims of all previous sin and pollution, but furthermore guaranteed a spiritual rebirth, a new life of renewed purity and sanctity, to all those who placed their unconditional trust unconditionally in the deity’s power. Salvation, therefore, was no longer thought to depend upon the intensity of one’s own faith, but instead came to be seen as a more-or-less vicarious gift of divine grace emanating from the power inherent in the deity’s original vow (*bongan* 本願) of compassion towards all mankind. The salvific function of medieval deities, rooted as it was in the deities themselves, transcended conventional distinctions between faith and unfaith on the part of believers. This is not to say, however, that pilgrims to Kumano, trusting in the divine grace of the presiding deity, could flout prohibitions against ritual pollution with impunity. Pilgrims making their way to Kumano had to observe strict austerities; the trek to the holy site was itself a prolonged ritual, during the whole of which pilgrims strove to avoid all taint of ritual pollution, and thereby preserve religious purity; numerous conventions and proscriptions, established in the hoary past by those who had made the journey before, dictated and circumscribed much of the pilgrim’s behavior while travelling along the road.<sup>25</sup>

Kumano, now popularly regarded as the holiest site in all of Japan (*Nibon daiichi reigenjo* 日本第一大靈驗所), has come to embrace within itself two extremes: On the one hand, the deity at Kumano has guaranteed salvation to all who come,

<sup>25</sup> For a contemporary account of these matters, see the twelfth-century anthology *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起, or *Foundational Tales of Various Holy Mountains*, especially the document found therein entitled *En no goyoja Kumano sankei nikki* 役行者熊野参詣日記, or *Pilgrimage to Kumano: The Diary of En the Ascetic*.

regardless of what pollution they might have incurred on the way. On the other hand, however, these same pilgrims are under the strictest obligations to maintain ritual purity throughout the entire journey. Divine grace comes side by side with severe prohibitions.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, pollution comes side by side with purity. As was the case with Ippen at Kumano and Kokua at Ise, it is the arrival of a tainted sage within the holy precincts that miraculously brings about the creation of a holy relic. Tales of this sort were spread throughout eastern Japan, where belief in the miraculous power of the deity at Kumano was strong, primarily by itinerant monks (*nenbutsu hijiri* 念仏聖) who preached the salvific effects of chanting the name of Amida. For these monks, too, it was not the faith of the individual that saved, but the divine power of Amida's original vow.

### 3–4. Contrasting Perspectives in Tales of Hei Tarō: the True Pure Land Sect

Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), founder of the True Pure Land Sect (Jōdo shinshū 浄土真宗) of Buddhism, had a disciple by the name of Shinbutsu 真仏 (?–1262) who served as a leader in the spread of Shinran's teachings throughout eastern Japan. A religious primer (*dangibon* 談義本), written in a combination of Sinitic characters and *hiragana*, and entitled *Shinran shōnin goinnen* 親鸞聖人御因縁, or *On the Origins of Master Shinran*, was widely circulated among believers during the early phases of Shinran's sect, that is, during the end of the Kamakura period.<sup>27</sup> This primer contains a section, bearing the title “Shinbutsu innen” 真仏因縁, that is, “On the Origins of Shinbutsu,” which states that Shinbutsu originally hailed from a family of farmers based in Yokosone 横曾根, Hitachi 常陸 (modern-day Ibaraki), and that his secular name had been Hei Tarō 平太郎. Hei Tarō learned two things from Shinran: First, the practice of constantly intoning the name of Amida as a means of ensuring salvation; second, the doctrine that the Japanese deities are actually Buddhist divinities who have somehow become spiritually lost, and that, consequently, one who dedicates his life to reciting Amida's holy name ought not pray to such fatuous beings. On one occasion, Hei Tarō was ordered to accompany Lord Satake 佐竹殿, a powerful local proprietor of the domain (*ryōshu* 領主), on a pilgrimage to Kumano, during which journey Tarō was to serve in the capacity of a hired servant. His behavior on the road, however, was less than pleasing to his lord. Not only did Hei Tarō refuse to observe the traditional rules and proscriptions, preferring instead to focus his energies on intoning the name of Amida, he even went so far as to offer a beggar rice that had been cooked over a ritually purified fire (*imibi* 忌火) used exclusively

<sup>26</sup> Maruyama Shizuka 丸山静, *Kumanokō* 熊野考 (Serika shobō, 1984); Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Kumanokō” 熊野考, in *Seisba no suisan: chūsei no koe to woko naru mono* 聖者の推参—中世の声とヲコなるもの (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2001), 214–220.

<sup>27</sup> Miyazaki Enjun 宮崎圓蓮, *Bukkyō bunkashi no kenkyū* 仏教文化史の研究 (Nagata Bunshōdō, 1989), 199–201.

in preparing offerings destined for the gods. Nor did he refrain from eating meat and other otherwise prohibited victuals. Finally, he flouted all convention by hiding—that is, burying with his own hands—a corpse that had been washed up on the beach.

Having at last arrived at the shrine, Lord Satake and his men lay down before the main altar to recover from the arduous trek. Incredibly, all of the men are visited by the same dream, one in which the avatar of the shrine pays his respectful obeisance to none but Hei Tarō. Lord Satake is understandably perplexed. Why, complains he, did the deity not bow to himself? Why would a deity offer his blessings to a man who chose to flout all conventions of ritual purity? In response to these complaints, the deity explains how it was in virtue of the miraculous efficacy of Amida's name, as intoned by Hei Tarō, that this deity was able at long last to find liberation from the three tribulations (*sannetsu* 三熱 or *sankan* 三患) that habitually plague benighted souls.<sup>28</sup> “You men shall know this god's true identity when I reveal my Buddhist origin (*bonji*),” declares the deity, concluding with the following divine verses, in the vernacular: “All men, be they among the lowly or be they among the high-born—now all men alike may become buddhas, so long as they intone the name of Amida!”<sup>29</sup> The men, their eyes now open, immediately pay homage to Hei Tarō, causing him to take the tonsure before the altar, and giving him the Buddhist name Shinbutsu, that is, the True Buddha. On the journey back home, so the story goes, Shinbutsu preached (*kanjin* 勧進) to some twenty-thousand souls, the great majority of whom were moved to donate wealth or labor to various Buddhist-related building projects.

The prohibitions this layman-turned-sage flouted on his way to Kumano were not restricted to coming into contact with the pollution of death, but extended more generally to all the time-honored conventions and proscriptions usually prescribed for pilgrims. The textual style of “Shinbutsu innen,” being a religious primer (*dangibon*) aimed at a popular audience, is characteristically colloquial and straightforward. A complete disregard for, and sometimes even outright mockery of conventional prohibitions on the part of Shinbutsu, acting here as a representative of all who profess to be dedicated intoners of Amida's name, is depicted in a lively manner. In this respect, Shinbutsu is another example of a broader motif found in many medieval tales, where an ostensibly foolish protagonist turns out to be a sage, a genuinely “enlightened fool” (*sei naru gusha* 聖なる愚者). The world of

<sup>28</sup> These three tribulations (*sankan*), or three burning afflictions (*sannetsu*), most commonly described as afflicting, among other things, dragons and snakes, are enumerated as follows: scorching winds (*neppū* 熱風) that burn a creature's flesh and bones; violent gusts (*akufū* 悪風) that blow away a creature's shelter and any vestments he might have; the pain of being eaten alive by a flaming mythical bird known, in Sanskrit, as Garuḍa (J: Konjichō 金翅鳥). [Translator's note]

<sup>29</sup> The original text of this poem reads as follows: *Iyashiki mo / yoki mo ima wa / osbinabate / namuami dabutsu to / iu wa botoke zo* 卑きも良きも今はおしなべて南無阿弥陀仏と云ふは仏ぞ。



Muromachi-period popular vernacular tales (*otogi zōshi* 御伽草子) has no shortage of such enlightened fools: The protagonist of *Kootoko no sōshi* 小男の草子, or the *Tale of the Little Man*, as well as that of *Monokusa Tarō* 物くさ太郎, or *Lazy Tarō*, are both described as country bumpkins whose unexpected wit, especially in the world of vernacular poetry, leads them to unrivalled wealth and success in the capital.<sup>30</sup>

“Shinbutsu innen,” as preserved in *Shinran shōnin goinnen*, is not the only version we have of a tale relating to the origins of Shinbutsu. A monk by the name of Kakunyo 覚如 (1270–1351), recognized as Shinran’s immediate successor, compiled a biography of his master entitled *Zenshin shōnin Shinran denne* 善信聖人親鸞伝絵, or the *Illustrated Biography of Master Zenshin, aka Shinran* (1296), the perspective of which is quite contrary to that found in “Shinbutsu innen.” The story of Hei Tarō, which is woven into the second fascicle of this work, begins in the same manner as “Shinbutsu innen”: Hei Tarō, deeply moved by the teachings of Shinran, pays no heed to the conventional rituals prescribed for pilgrims, and wholly ignores all prohibitions against impurity during his journey to Kumano. It is the next episode that makes the version of Shinbutsu’s life as told in *Zenshin shōnin Shinran denne* that presents us with a most striking contrast. In this version of the tale, Hei Tarō, having fallen asleep in front of the altar, is visited in a dream by the avatar of the shrine, who proceeds to castigate the man for blatantly transgressing all the conventional religious prohibitions. This ought to remind us of the tales of Shigyoku and Kakujō already mentioned. Suddenly, the figure of Shinran appears seated across the avatar, explaining to the latter that Hei Tarō is one of his own disciples, and that he is sincerely following the way of one who dedicates his life to intoning the name of Amida. The avatar, now pacified, bows low towards Hei Tarō. In this version of the tale, Hei Tarō is merely a subsidiary character serving to introduce the teachings of Shinran; being but a passive observer, in the dream world, of a conversation between Shinran and the avatar, Hei Tarō ends up as nothing more than a middle man. Consequently, all traces of the tainted sage who, due to his compassion for mankind, consciously ignores religious prohibitions in order to pay his respects to a given deity are entirely wanting. Rather, what we have with this second version is something akin to a mythical tale about Shinran as founder of a unique sect of Japanese Buddhism. In later ages, such tales, known collectively as *Godenshō* 御伝鈔 (*Episodes from the Life of Our Master*), were regularly read aloud during commemorative ceremonies (*hōonkō* 報恩講) dedicated to Shinran. This shift in perspective is even more drastic than that seen above with regards to the depiction of the sage at Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine and the text of *Hachimangu dokun*.

<sup>30</sup> Satake Akihiro 佐竹昭広, “Nariagari” 成り上り, in *Gekokujō no bungaku* 下剋上の文学 (Chikuma Shobō, 1962).

## Conclusion

The world of medieval Japanese tales and legends is full of dramatic border crossings. As may be seen, for example, from the manner in which artists of illustrated scrolls were able to depict single scenes with vivid detail, these border crossings present readers and viewers with an intense and lasting impression. The feeling of surprise consequent upon looking at such works of art encourages us to visualize anew the nature of borders as depicted in medieval Japanese literature and art. These borders were far from simple or monolithic entities; each border was the product of a complex network of various interrelated elements, including social, cultural, religious, and ethnological factors. Some of these borders were relatively less complicated, such as those holy sites that prohibited women from entering, simply on the grounds that they were women, and potential objects of sexual desire. Tales of women who, disguised as men, dared to trespass into these sacred spaces, along with depictions of these border crossings in the performative arts, may all be seen as varied manifestations of the sort of blurring—which blurring is itself a cultural movement—invoked by any discussion of borders. Let us turn our attention to those male sages who are depicted as both the discoverers and establishers of sacred spaces. When faced with the dilemma of how best to deal with a woman, these sages exhibit a number of varying responses: at times the sage, pursued by an impassioned female, succeeds in escaping; at other times, to the contrary, the sage goes so far as to request sexual intercourse. Whatever the reaction, these sages, insofar as they were religious figures, were responsible for fulfilling a specific role. Medieval tales and legends bear ample witness to this fact.

The sage who, moved solely by pity and compassion for his fellow creatures, deliberately transgressions religious proscriptions is not merely breaking his Buddhist vows of chastity and purity. In every instance, what he is breaking, even more profoundly, is some sort of border, a border that is inherently multifaceted and complex. The most deleterious sort of ritual pollution was that incurred through contact with death, especially by participating in anything relating to the burial of corpses. In Japan, from ancient times up until the present day, it was these male sages, the protagonists of numerous miraculous tales, who came to serve as functionaries of death, insofar as they were seen as mediators of funerals. It is this age-old function of sages that gave rise to the Japanese phenomenon commonly known as *sōshiki bukkekyō* 葬式仏教, that is, the popular conceptualization of Buddhism as something more-or-less exclusively bound up with funerals and death. It is this role, also, that imposes upon sages the stigma of ritual pollution. The continual and inevitable existence of ritual pollution necessitates a sacred space into which such pollution must, at least theoretically, never be permitted to enter. Thus arose the role of the shrine, and of the deities enshrined therein: the shrine is a place charged with maintaining the boundary between the profane and the sacred, the polluted and the pure. Indeed, the entire

system of Shintoistic deities, at the apex of which stands Ise Shrine, is fundamentally incompatible with Buddhism—its monks, its doctrines, and even its terminology—for the simple fact that Buddhism was never directly concerned with those traditional prohibitions against ritual pollution prevailing throughout the archipelago.

Medieval tales and legends, however, blur the boundary between Shintoistic shrines and Buddhist elements. In these tales, the sage is obliged to pay his respects to a shrine. Just when it seems that he will be able to make his way to the shrine in a pure state, however, he is made to come into contact with some form of ritual pollution. Consequently, this sage, as though controlled by some inexorable fate—of the sort most often found in mythical stories—is now forced to enter the shrine in a state of ritual contamination. For this very reason, it is in that climactic, decisive moment, when the deity blesses the tainted sage, that we see a miraculous border crossing, an epiphany characterized by the transformation from a polluted subject into a sacred or sagely subject. The deity, for its part, is no longer a vengeful, merciless judge bent on punishing the sage for some bygone sin, but rather a compassionate friend of mankind. The sage, having moved the deity to pity through his own compassionate actions, at once receives approval for his role as a medium between mankind and the gods, as well as receiving justification for his very existence. A new medieval concept of the sacred was forged from the furnace of tales and legends of this sort. However, as has been seen from the numerous cases discussed in this paper, this development was by no means a smooth and easy one. Rather, this new type of sacred purity is based on an extremely precarious and dubious species of liminality. It is this very precarious nature of the sacred that makes it susceptible to manipulation. The context of medieval tales of the sacred can be (and were) easily altered. We must always keep in mind the fact that texts dedicated to legitimizing a favored regime or sanctifying some charismatic figure were likely to manipulate the sacred as a means of furthering some ideological end.

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# Illness as Depicted in the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*

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## Introduction

Leafing through Buddhist scriptures, one finds not infrequent reference to the view that illness, ultimately, was merely the working out of karmic justice—the result of evil acts perpetrated over the course of one’s present-or past-life existence. For example, in the “Parables” chapter (Hiyu-hon 譬喩品) of the *Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law* (“The Lotus Sutra”, *Myōbō renga kyō* 妙法蓮華經), one encounters the following explanation regarding the karmic relationship between illness and the sin of disrespecting sacred texts:

The sins to be incurred for the act of slandering this scripture are as follows. Even should one successfully attain to humanity, he will be short in stature, prone to seizures, limp-legged, blind, deaf-mute, and hunchbacked. Should he have aught to speak, he will not be given ear by others. His breath will ever stink. He will be possessed by demons. He will be poor and mean of status, and made servant to others’ will. He will suffer many illnesses, grow wasted and wan, and find nothing whereupon to rely. Should he do others a kindness, others will not remember it. Should ever he gain possession of something, he will soon find it lost again. Even should he learn the craft of healing, and cure some disease according to the art, he will only bring on further diseases besides, if not indeed cause death. And should he fall prey to disease himself, none other will there be to save him. Indeed, even should he take an efficacious drug, it will only multiply his pains.<sup>1</sup>

Here it is warned that anyone who has slandered the *Lotus Sutra*, even if he does manage to escape rebirth in Hell or the world of Hungry Ghosts (*gaki* 餓鬼), and somehow returns to life as a human being once more, will find himself short of stature, prone to seizures, limp-legged, blind or deaf-mute, and hunchbacked.

This kind of thinking, with its tendency to inspire discrimination against the ill and the handicapped, may be quite alien to the moral and medical understanding of the present day. In premodern Japan, however, attitudes towards illness were

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<sup>1</sup> *Taishō shinsbū daijōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 9, p. 15c.

predicated to a greater or lesser extent on precisely such religious teachings. Prayer rituals for recovery from sickness, votive scripture-copying, Buddhist statute-casting for the sake of lengthened life—all such activities were carried out in order to dispel the evil karma that caused illness, or to build up deposits of the good.

Inscribed, for example, in the diagrammatic painting *Transformation Scenes from the Lotus Sutra* (*Myōbō renga kyō hensōzu* 妙法蓮華經變相図, Southern Song period, 12<sup>th</sup> c., Seikadō Library 静嘉堂文庫 Archives), we find representations of people suffering from dwarfism and blindness that match the sutra passage quoted above. It is thought that the imagery of illness as a retribution for bad deeds was developed through such religious paintings, and through them also brought eventually to Heian-period Japan. Thus we find in the illustrated scroll *Yamai no sōshi* 病草子 (“Diseases and Deformities”)—a late-Heian work likely produced in the orbit of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa 後白河上皇—not only common everyday ailments like stomach pains and toothaches, but also conditions like dwarfism and hunchbackedness, in a sign of the influence that such religious paintings could have.

Furthermore, episodes of illness and the recovery therefrom are featured frequently in the illustrated scrolls of temple and shrine legends that Medieval Japan produced in such numbers—as signs either of one’s personal sin, or as the most persuasive evidence of a deity’s special favor. In this paper I investigate an early example of this medieval genre, the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* (*Kokawa-dera engi emaki* 粉河寺縁起絵巻, Kamakura-period, 13<sup>th</sup> c., Kokawa-dera Temple Archives). Looking in particular at the way this work depicts illness, I consider the relationship of its imagery to Buddhist concepts of karmic sin, and to ideas about salvation.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa’s Devotion to Kokawa Temple

The *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* has come down to us in the collections of Kokawa Temple itself (Kinokawa City 紀の川, Wakayama Prefecture), a Buddhist temple located in foothills of the Izumi 和泉 mountain range that overlook the Kinokawa 紀の川 river to its south. From the time of its founding, probably as early as the eighth century, the temple’s principal image, a statue of Senju (“Thousand-armed”) Kannon 千手観音, has been the object of particular religious devotion. And especially after the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with its vogue in aristocratic circles for religious pilgrimages to destinations on the edge of the central Kinai, like Mt. Kōya 高野山 and Kumano 熊野, we begin to find scattered references of visits to Kokawa Temple in contemporary documents as well.

<sup>2</sup> This paper is based on my Japanese article, “*Kokawa-dera engi emaki* to kyōsetsu: egakareta zaigō, yamai, kyūsai” 「粉河寺縁起絵巻」と経説：描かれた罪業、病、救済, in vol. 8 of *Seikatsu to bunka no rekishigaku: Shizen saigai to shippei* 生活と文化の歴史学：自然災害と疾病. Eds. Yasuda Masahiko 安田政彦 et al. Tokyo: Chikurinsha, 2017.

In the *Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi* 枕草子) of Sei Shōnagon 清少納言, we find the following list: “When it comes to temples: Tsubosaka 壺阪, Kasagi 笠置, Hōrin 法輪. Ryōzen 靈山, as the dwelling of Śākyamuni, is said to be particularly moving. Ishiyama 石山. Kokawa 粉河. Shiga 志賀.” The grouping in which Kokawa here finds itself is one of temples on the periphery of the Kinai region: Tsubosaka-dera, Kasagi-dera, Hōrin-ji, Ryōzen-ji, Ishiyama-dera, Shiga-dera, all of them located at some distance from the capital, in the provinces of Yamato, Ōmi, or Kii—though even among these Kokawa Temple is particularly far. To Sei Shōnagon, it no doubt represented an aspirational list, spiritual places of whose names she perhaps had some rumor, but to which she had little hope of making a visit in person.

When considering the late-Heian rise in religious devotion to Kokawa Temple, one figure stands out for being particularly assiduous in its promotion: Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127-92), the same who during the era of Cloistered Government oversaw the production of so many illustrated scrolls. The beginnings of his devotion to Senju Kannon lay as far back as the first year of the Kyūan 久安 era (1145), when upon the loss of his mother Taikenmon'in 待賢門院 at the age of 19, he received from a monk of Onjō-ji 園城寺 Temple (Miidera 三井寺) a painted image depicting Senju Kannon and the Twenty-Eight Attendants.<sup>3</sup> As he grew, becoming first emperor, then retired emperor, in the course of his many religious endeavors this devotion of Go-Shirakawa's to Senju Kannon would come to leave lasting traces on his environment—most prominently with the foundation, in the Twelfth Month of Chōkan 長寛 2 (1164), of the temple Renge'ō-in 蓮華王院, which enshrined a full thousand-body ensemble of Senju Kannon statues. There is also record of his foundation in Angen 安元 2 (1179) of a small-sized Senju [Kannon] Hall in the hills to the southeast of his Hōjūji 法住寺 Palace, using building materials left-over from the construction of Kokawa Temple's own principal image.<sup>4</sup> In light of such a history, the circle around the Retired Emperor, a man singularly famous for his love of illustrated scrolls, seems eminently possible as background for the production of the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*. Regarding the particular manuscript copy in question here, however, the most plausible characterization yet put forth sees it as something like a replica, or perhaps an initial secondary copy, of the original scroll produced in Go-Shirakawa's orbit, given features like the roughness visible in its lines, or the format that at several points has both narrative text and illustration on the same sheet of paper, in parts even overlapping. Its date of production would probably be set around the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>3</sup> See the passage “Honzon yurai” 本尊由来 [Origins of the Principal Image] in the text *Tempō rinsbō* 転法輪鈔 under the year Bunji 文治 2 (1186).

<sup>4</sup> See Section 21 of the Japanese-language *Legends of Kokawa Temple* text, under the passage “Go-Shirakawa-hōō go-gan Senju-dō chūzon in'en” 後白河法皇御願千手堂中尊因縁 [Origins of the Central Image in the Senju Hall Built by Cloistered Emperor Go-Shirakawa], in *Shoji engi shū* 諸寺縁起集. Kunaichō Shoryōbu, 1970.

Yet though both the narrative text and illustrations in this scroll do seem to make reference to previous temple and shrine legend texts, for example the *Legends of the Construction of the Great Stupa at Kokawa Temple* (*Kokawa-dera dai-sotoba konryū engi* 粉河寺大率塔婆建立縁起)—with a colophon dated to the seventeenth day of the Second Month of Tengi 天喜 2 (1054)<sup>5</sup>—at the same time some of what they contain is in fact unique, and found in no other temple and shrine legend texts. The scroll consists of five sections in total, which divide into a two-episode structure: the first an origin story about how Kokawa Temple was founded by the prayers of a certain hunter (Sections 1 and 2), and the second a miracle story about how a certain rich man's daughter recovered from her illness by the merits of the temple's principal image, the statue of Senju Kannon (Sections 3–5).

Because of the text's exposure to fire at some point in its transmission, in particular Section 1, at the head of the scroll, has suffered heavy damage. The part that concerns this paper's investigation, however, is the story of the rich man's daughter's recovery from illness, located in the second episode and in portions of the scroll untouched by fire. While paying due attention, then, to the physical state of the manuscript, it is possible to proceed with my study as planned.

In the investigation below, with a focus on this tale of recovery in the text's second episode, I attempt to interpret the iconography which the scroll uses for its depictions of sin and salvation. When quotations from the manuscript happen to include instances of textual damage, I supply the missing words in brackets [ ] from another text surviving in Kokawa Temple, the work *Legends of Kokawa Temple in Kii Province* (*Kishū Kokawa-dera engi* 紀州粉河寺縁起), which bears a copy-date of Genroku 元禄 16 (1703).<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The Illness of the Rich Man's Daughter and the Legend of King Ajase

In the scroll's first episode (Sections 1-2), there is a detailed depiction of a scene showing a hunter and his family eating animal flesh. As previous research has repeatedly stressed, the significance of motifs like this meat-eating, or the deerskin visibly depicted at the courtyard's edge, is to emphasize that the lifestyle of the hunter's household violates *fusesshō-kai* 不殺生戒—the Buddhist precept against taking life.

This is one the Five Precepts (*gokai* 五戒) in Buddhism that not only those who have taken vows, but all laypeople must obey: no taking life (*fusesshō-kai* 不殺生戒), no stealing (*fuchūtō-kai* 不偷盜戒), no sexual incontinence (*fiija'in-kai* 不邪淫戒), no lying (*fumōgo-kai* 不妄語戒), and no drinking (*fuonju-kai* 不飲酒戒). The bad karma produced by breaking one of these can lead to rebirth in Hell or the evil realm of Hungry Ghosts. Because the narrative text for Section 1 is missing, there is no way of knowing if it made mention of either the meat-eating or the

<sup>5</sup> In *Shoji engi shū* 諸寺縁起集 (Daigoji-bon 醍醐寺本 text).

<sup>6</sup> In vol. 5 of *Nihon emakimono zenshū* 日本絵巻物全集. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1962.





**Figure 1.** The rich man's daughter stricken with illness. *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*, Section 3. Permission of Kokawa Temple.

deerskin, but considering the case of the scroll's second episode as discussed below, it is highly possible that such motifs connected to an evil karmic fate were expressed only in the illustrations. By adding details like these scenes of meat-eating or deerskins into the illustrated portion of the scroll, the moralistic structure of the legend—how through the merits of Kannon those living with the burden of bad karma came to wisdom, and how they were led at last to the good deed of founding the temple—is communicated visually.

The central theme of the scroll's second episode (Sections 3–5) is the illness of the daughter of a rich man living in the Sasara 讃良 District of Kawachi 河内 Province. This illness is characterized by the narrative text accompanying Section 3 in the following way: “Her body's [insides swelled] like a ripe persimmon, and as her [bodily fluid leak]ed the stench was extraordinary.”

In the illustrated portion of the same Section 3, the body of the bed-ridden daughter is swollen, leaving the skin ruptured in several places, with red pus and blood oozing from the wounds. (**Figure 1**). Her face twisted in pain, her chest, arms, and legs exposed, her hair in disarray, her appearance is thoroughly indecorous. Even the woman servants tasked with caring for her cover their noses with their sleeves and turn their faces away, a pose that conveys visually the unbearable stench pervading the space around the daughter.

That these symptoms exhibited by the daughter seem to be influenced by images of leprosy (Hansen's disease)—a disease once feared to be incurable—has

been pointed out by many scholars in the past. Yet it is also worth noting, I would like to add, that symptoms like a foul-smelling body, or one covered with scabs, also align with diseases that many Buddhist scriptural texts see as punishments for sin. To look again at the *Lotus Sutra*, in the chapter “Exhortations of the Bodhisattva Fugen” (Fugen bosatsu kanbotsu hon 普賢菩薩勸發品) we find the following passage:

(Others ridiculing those who copy out the *Lotus Sutra*) will, for life upon life, have gaps in their fangs and teeth, lips that are ugly, a flattened nose, arms and legs that twist and bend, and eyes that squint. Their bodies will stink and be unclean, with bleeding from the putrefaction of their awful scabs. Their bellies swollen with water, their breath short, many indeed will be the awful illnesses that assail them.<sup>7</sup>

It is explained that those who ridicule the act of copying out the *Lotus Sutra* will suffer from various kinds of illness as recompense. The sentence here underlined lists symptoms reminiscent of those experienced by the rich man’s daughter as they appear in both narrative and illustrations to Section 3 of the *Illustrated Legends of Kokama Temple*: in particular the putrefaction, severe scabbing, and bloody pus.

This understanding of scabs (*kasa* 瘡) and pus (*umi* 膿) that appear on the surface of the body as punishments for sin is delineated with particular clarity in the legend of King Ajase 阿闍世王, who killed his father-king and usurped his kingdom. Included in many Buddhist writings and Buddhist scriptural texts, it is a legend widely known even in Japan, but the version found in the “Upright Conduct” chapter (Bongyō hon 梵行品) of the sutra *Daihatsu nehan kyō* 大般涅槃經 is particularly detailed in its recounting of the process by which King Ajase came to repent of his actions, and at length aspired to enlightenment. It is a narrative that contains the following points of interest on the topic of illness.

Born as a prince in Ōshajō 王舍城, the capital of the country of Magada 摩訶陀, Ajase was a man of superlatively evil character, combining violence, slander, greed, wrath, and ignorance all in a single person. Preoccupied always only with the present and unable to look ahead to the future, so obsessed was he with worldly desires, that he killed his own king and father and usurped control of the country.

Immediately afterwards, however, he began burning up with a feeling of shame, developing scabs all over his body and suffering from a stench so bad it was difficult to approach him. At first, six ministers came to him—the *jaken rokushin* 邪見六臣 (“six ministers of crooked mind”)—and tried to soothe King Ajase by arguing from non-Buddhist principles that in fact he had not incurred any sin. Yet in both mind and body he remained unhealed.

Next, there appeared before him a doctor who followed the Buddhist path named Giba 耆婆, who instead argued that it was in fact his feeling of shame that

<sup>7</sup> *Taishō shinsū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 9, p. 62a.

would lead to his salvation. King Ajase, following Giba's advice, went to visit Śākyamuni. With King Ajase before him, then, Śākyamuni entered a meditative state called *gatsunai zanmai* 月愛三昧 (“the *samādhi* of moon-radiant love”), whereupon the King was enfolded within a great light. Immediately all the scabs on his body were healed, and he conceived a desire to achieve enlightenment himself.

What I want to note here is how on the road to his awakening, King Ajase had developed scabs all over his body, and had fallen seriously ill at least twice. The first occasion was when the King, tortured by shame ever since the death of his father, and suffering scabs all over his body, was being attended in this sickness by the Lady Idaike 韋提希夫人, his mother. As the scene that follows makes clear, however, this in fact only caused his symptoms to worsen:

The fact of having killed his father produced in him a burning regret, and stripping himself of his finery he no longer made recourse to music and dance. (1) The burn of regret in his heart produced scabs all over his body. Because these scabs reeked with pollution, it was impossible to approach him. As a result King Ajase said to himself in his heart: “Now indeed, however splendid the rewards granted my person heretofore, that day is no longer distant when the rewards of Hell shall grow nigh at last.” Subsequently his mother, Idaike by name, had every species of healing ointment applied to him, yet his scabs grew only all the greater, showing no sign of receding or falling away. The king then said to his mother: (2) “Scabs of this nature come not from the body's four elements, but rather from the heart.”<sup>8</sup>

The first underlined passage makes it clear that the reason scabs had broken out on his skin was the heat caused by his feeling of regret. Because moreover such scabbing was only recompense for the sin he had himself committed, King Ajase says that his descent into Hell cannot be too far off, thus admitting how the thought of such a descent into Hell fills him with fear. In the second underlined passage, in the lower half of the paragraph, King Ajase explains to his mother that the reason for the scabbing does not lie with the four great elements—the earth, water, fire, and wind of which bodies are made. It comes rather from his own heart. In other words, as this passage shows, the scabs appearing on King Ajase's body are only the reflection of his own guilty feeling and repentance, and the sign as well of a possible fall into Hell awaiting him not too distantly.

The second occasion is the scene below, where out of thin air he hears the voice of the very king and father he himself had killed.

“It is I, thy father, Himbashara 頻婆娑羅. Be thou now prompt in obedience to the words of the old woman. Heed not the speech of thy six ministers of crooked mind.” But when the king had heard this, in agony he fainted and fell to the ground, the scabs on his body growing now even more severe, their reeking pollution twice what it had been. A chilling ointment was applied to treat

<sup>8</sup> *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 12, p. 7a.

them, but the scabs instead grew hot and their poison burned, only ever increasing with no sign at all they might disappear.<sup>9</sup>

Here the father's voice advises King Ajase not to heed the six ministers whose thoughts are crooked, but instead to follow the advice of Giba, trying thereby to lead to religious awakening the very son who had murdered him. When King Ajase hears such merciful words from his father, however, in the agony of his regret he falls to the ground unconscious, the scabs all over his body growing even worse than before, the stench and the filth twice as bad.

In both of the scenes here examined, King Ajase's experience of his parents' mercy merely sharpened his awareness of the great and irreparable sin he had committed, only deepening his feelings of shame and worsening the seriousness of his symptoms.

In Buddhism, patricide was one of the Five Cardinal Sins (*gogyakuzaï* 五逆罪): killing one's father (*seppu* 殺父), killing one's mother (*setsumo* 殺母), killing an arhat (*setsuarakan* 殺阿羅漢), causing disunity among monks (*hawagōsō* 破和合僧), and wounding the body of a Buddha. (*shutsubusshinketsu* 出仏身血). Commission of one of these was as serious an offense as violating one of the Five Precepts discussed above. The scabbing and the stench had been engraved into King Ajase's body, quite literally, as a "sign of sin." Yet even as the king suffered in his illness, he came additionally to be tortured by the fear of damnation in Hell.

When we look again now at Section 3 of the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* with such religious teachings in mind, it is easy to imagine how contemporary viewers might well have read into the illness of the rich man's daughter the sign of some karmic sin. Yet what indeed was this sin that the daughter had to take upon herself thus? On this point there is no answer given in the scroll's narrative text. Below, therefore, I continue in my attempts to analyze the scroll's pictorial content.

### 3. The Sin of Wealth Accumulation

At the beginning of the text's second episode, spread across Sections 3 and 4 of the scroll, the prosperous state of the rich man's household is shown through the depiction of a number of valuable objects (**Figure 2**). Though each section of the scroll has its accompanying narrative text, there is nowhere in them any concrete discussion of the rich man's wealth, making this plethora of valuables a feature present only in the illustrations.

In the illustrated portion of Section 3, we see being brought in, from outside the rich man's gate to the inner courtyard of his mansion, bundles of tanned pelts, birdcages, boxes containing fish, fruits, and pots (of *sake*?), trunks filled with the delicacies of sea and mountain, quails skewered on branches, and many other items besides. In the courtyard there is a stable, and a space for storing

<sup>9</sup> *Taishō shinsbū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 12, p. 723b.



**Figure 2.** Treasures being carried into the rich man's mansion. *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*, Section 3. Permission of Kokawa Temple.

bales of rice in large quantities, marked off by a wickerwork fence. On the mansion's veranda, there is also what appears to be a steward in the service of the rich man, checking through the inventory list of items being delivered. In the scene within the house that follows, the rich man is meeting with a young ascetic. To the left of this, beyond a single room set with a *sugoroku* board, there runs a hallway leading to yet another room where the man's sick daughter lies. Here the young ascetic is depicted a second time, now offering prayers at the daughter's pillow-side.

Section 4 presents a scene where many valuable objects—in the words of the text *shicchin manpō* 七珍万宝 (Seven Rarities and Myriad Treasures)—are offered up to the young ascetic, through whose prayers the daughter has now been completely cured. With the door to the storehouse opened wide, gold dust and bolts of silk, pots and trunks and various other items are brought forth. Of these gifts, however, the ascetic accepts none, and leaving the mansion, takes with him only the wood-bladed short-sword (*sagesaya* 提鞘) and crimson-dyed pants offered to him by the daughter herself.

In both sections, the assortment of treasures depicted is an eminently natural motif for the setting, and serves primarily to express the sheer wealth of the rich man. Nonetheless, the amount of illustrated space these depictions occupy is extravagantly large for mere purposes of situational exposition. In such a context, it will be useful to recall how the accumulation of wealth, in the iconography of Heian- and Kamakura-era paintings, was in fact frequently cast in a negative light.

An example of this can be seen in the *Illustrated [Tale of] Major Counselor Tomo* (*Ban dainagon emaki* 伴大納言絵巻, Idemitsu Museum Archives), another illustrated

scroll thought to have been produced in the orbit of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa. The work's central characters are Minamoto no Makoto 源信 and Tomo no Yoshio 伴善男, two figures connected with the Burning of the Ōtenmon Gate 応天門 incident: the former because he was indicted for the crime unjustly (though later pardoned), and the latter because he unjustly escaped being indicted, until his guilt in the arson was exposed, and he found himself banished to far-off Izu. The scroll contains depictions of these two men in their respective living quarters. While in Minamoto no Makoto's room the only object depicted is an ink-stone case, in Tomo no Yoshio's room there are detailed depictions of a truly great variety of items: the bed-pillow shared with his wife, a sword placed at the pillow's head, a mirror case, a comb, a container of hair-styling liquid (*yusuru-tsuki* 油坏), dishes on a painted tray, a pedestal tray bearing *sake* vessels and food. Both in the number and kind of their accoutrements, there is a clear, deliberate difference in the way the rooms of the innocent Minamoto no Makoto and the guilty Tomo no Yoshio are depicted, demonstrating that such accoutrements have a role beyond situational explanation alone. In particular, the *sake* vessels in Tomo no Yoshio's room are in conflict with one of the Five Precepts already discussed—that against drinking—and signal moreover the Buddhist character of the concept of sin here in operation.

A related iconography can be found in the motif of *Niga-byakudō zu* 二河白道図, or “White Path Between Two Rivers” paintings, of which ten or more examples survive from the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. *Niga-byakudō zu*, which were used in all sects of Pure-Land Buddhism, were paintings in hanging-scroll format based on the “parable of the white path between the two rivers,” as presented in the *Kanmu ryōju kyōshō* 觀無量壽經疏, a scriptural commentary by Zendo 善導, an early Tang-dynasty systematizer of Pure-Land Buddhist teachings. Here I will consider the pictorial contents of such paintings, using a 13<sup>th</sup>-century example of the genre from the collection of Kōsetsu Museum 香雪美術館 (<http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/heritagebig/127087/0/1>).

The lower portion of such paintings portrays the present world, overflowing in all its suffering and filth, while the upper part portrays the paradise of the Pure Land. Between lower and upper lie two rivers, one of fire and one of water, as well as a single white road straddling them both. The river of fire symbolizes wrath, while the river of water symbolizes desire. The white road in the center between the two symbolizes the wish for rebirth in the Pure Land as the only way to cast the worldly passions of wrath and desire aside, and attain entry thereby into the world of Amida Buddha.

Within the river of fire, there are depictions of people whose anger moves them to fight with others, or even to kill them. Meanwhile, in the river of water there are depictions of men and women and children, and surrounding them all sorts of treasures like bolts of silk, large baskets, bales of rice, swords, and gold dust, among many other things. The motifs drawn in the river of water here mirror those seen in Tomo no Yoshio's house in the *Illustrated [Tale of] Major Counselor*

*Tomō*, and bear a resemblance in structure to the various items depicted in Sections 3 and 4 of the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*.

In the *Kanmu ryōju kyōshō* commentary, the direct source for the *Niga-byakudō zu* paintings, there is no discussion of these rivers of fire and water in their concrete details. As Kasuya Makoto 加須屋誠 has already shown, however, there is a sutra that delineates in detail how wrath leads to fighting between people, and how desire encourages likewise an attachment to one's family and possessions: the *Bussatsu murōjū kyō* 仏説無量壽經. In analyzing the iconography of such paintings, the following passage from this sutra is helpful:

Beguiled by obsession and desire one falls short of the virtue of the right path, wallowing instead in wrath, consumed by the greed of treasure. On this account one fails to achieve the Way. Without exception one reverts to the wretchedness of the evil realms, fated for endless repetition of the cycle of life and death. How tragic! How truly grievous! Within the family, for a short spell, father and son, older and younger brother, husband and wife—though the one dies and the other lives they bear feelings for one another, cherishing and loving, lamenting and worrying even as it entraps them, longing for one another even as they wound each other's hearts.<sup>10</sup>

Religious thinking of this kind that inveighs against attachments to possessions and family can also be found in sutras like the *Daibōshaku kyō* 大宝積經 or the *Daibō daishū kyō* 大方大集經, both of which are quoted in the anthological *Ōjō yōshū* 往生要集. The following from the *Ōjō yōshū* is one such passage where the *Daibōshaku kyō* is quoted:<sup>11</sup>

In a verse passage of the *Hōshaku kyō* 宝積經 it says: Though the treasure you acquired by so many evil deeds be a fund turned to the protection and happiness of your own wife and child, when at length you face life's end, from the suffering that then wracks your body no one, not even the same wife and child, has the power to save you. In the midst of your fear as you cross the Three-Ford River, you can rely neither upon wife and child nor upon any other family. Though cart and horse, wealth and treasure all pass on to others, who can share with you the suffering you then feel? Your father, mother, older brother and younger, wife and child; your friends and servants, your prized treasures; at the departure of death not a single one of them can offer you fellowship on the journey. Only your black deeds follow you ever to the last.<sup>12</sup>

Here it is repeatedly emphasized how any wealth accumulated by immoral or illegal means, even if used to then support one's own wife and child, is of no benefit when facing the hour of one's death, and indeed only produces negative karma. The words “cart and horse” can also be seen here alongside the other

<sup>10</sup> *Taishō shinsū daijōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 12, p. 275a.

<sup>11</sup> See the passage “Sōjite ensō wo musubu” 惣じて厭相を結ぶ in section 7 of Part 1: “Onri edo” 厭離穢土 [Spurning the Polluted World].

<sup>12</sup> *Taishō shinsū daijōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 84, p. 39c.

treasures. This is consistent with the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*, where inside the rich man's mansion we indeed find depiction of a stable.

To judge by the above, it seems that the understanding of wealth as something not only valueless and unworthy of attachment—but indeed as something far worse, a possible source of karmic consequences—had already taken deep root alongside the spread of Pure Land Buddhism itself.

If in this fashion we work from the assumption of such a Buddhist context—particularly of the Pure-Land variety—then taking the illness of the rich man's daughter as depicted in the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* to be but the karmic result of her father's excess wealth, will seem an entirely natural interpretation. This can also be seen in the fact that in the succeeding Section 5, having followed the young ascetic all the way to Kokawa in longing, upon discovering him to have been an incarnation of Senju Kannon, the daughter is not the only one to then take vows immediately before that Kannon's statue. The narrative text makes it clear that vows were then taken by multiple people, with the phrase “Every one of them [in the end] left the world behind.” Likewise the illustration, though centered on the daughter as she cuts her hair before the image of Kannon, shows not only her mother and father, but also other family members doing the same.

In the scene with which the second episode of the scroll concludes, where the entire family takes Buddhist vows, it is not the daughter's recovery from illness *per se* that has brought them to this true salvation. It was her recovery, however, that prompted her rich father to open up his storehouse, and to offer the young ascetic all the wealth accumulated there. It is thus in the entire household's abandonment of attachments to excess wealth, and in their desire to take vows and leave the world behind—guided by the merits of Senju Kannon—that the true concern of this illustrated temple legend scroll lies. Or to advance a somewhat sharper take, using the form of such a legend, this illustrated scroll is arguing for the dogmatic legitimacy of ridding oneself of excess wealth by donating it to religious establishments.

#### 4. The Merits of the Senju *Dhāraṇī* 千手陀羅尼

But let us here consider again the daughter's illness. Though for three years since her falling sick no prayer of any sort had had the slightest effect, with the young ascetic chanting the Senju *dhāraṇī* 千手陀羅尼, by the morning of the seventh day the daughter's illness had been completely cured. The process by which this recovery was effected is recorded as follows in the narrative text of Sections 3 and 4. It begins thus in Section 3: “Here the you[th], sitting at her pillow-side, prays the [entire] Senju *dhāra[ṇī]* without ceasing.” Continuing this in Section 4 we have: “As he prayed, the pus [and blood drained out, while the pain] gradually ceased. By early in the morning on the seventh day the girl was sitting up, feeling herself full of life [as before].”



The Senju *dhāraṇī* chanted here by the young ascetic is an incantatory prayer found in the *Senju sengen Kanze'on bosatsu kōdai enman muge daihishin darani kyō* 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大円滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經, or *Senju kyō* 千手經, a Chinese sutra translation made in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century by Bhagavaddharma (J. Kabon Daruma 伽梵達磨). Indeed, the explication of this *dhāraṇī*'s effective power was the *Senju kyō*'s very purpose as a sutra. Possessed of every sort of merit, the Senju *dhāraṇī* was performed to secure a wide range of ends, from peace and prosperity at the national level to the fulfillment of individual petitions. Believed in particular to hold an unparalleled power for curing sickness, the Senju *dhāraṇī* makes frequent appearance as healing agent in accounts of illness recovery from Buddhist story collections of the Tang and Song eras. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century the sutra had been brought to Japan, where as it proliferated in manuscript across the ancient and medieval periods, it left behind a rich record of literary adaptation: in *waka* poetry and in Buddhist tales, but also in various temple and shrine legends.

The contents of the *Senju kyō* and the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* display several noteworthy points of convergence. First, the *Senju kyō* explains that when chanting the Senju *dhāraṇī*, it is necessary to construct a purified space marked off on all four sides by a barrier drawn in one of the following ways:

Take up a sword, and after chanting (i.e. the *dhāraṇī*) 21 times, draw a line on the ground to mark out a barrier. Or take up purified water, and after chanting 21 times, sprinkle this on all four sides to mark out a barrier. Or take up white mustard seeds, and after chanting 21 times, strew these on all four sides to mark out a barrier. Or mark out a barrier at someplace that comes to mind. Or take up purified ashes, and after chanting 21 times, use these to mark out a barrier. Or take up a length of five-colored thread, and after chanting 21 times, wind it around all four sides to mark out a barrier. Any of these is sufficient.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*, this practice of marking out a barrier on all four sides finds expression in the hermitage the hunter constructs prior to the appearance of the Senju Kannon statue. Called a “square-shaped hermitage room” in the narrative text of Section 2, it is made clear that this room is one divided off on all four sides, and by depicting such a hermitage in the illustrations repeatedly, the scroll impresses upon its viewers the image of a space purified for the appearance of Kannon's statue.

Secondly, as seen in the sutra passage here quoted, for the marking out of a barrier, any of the following methods might be employed: swords, purified water, white mustard seeds, thought, purified ashes, or a five-colored thread. Examining this scroll, in the illustration from Section 2 showing the Kannon statue's appearance, we find depicted inside the same hermitage two buckets of cypress wood with a ladle in each, a heating tripod bearing a kettle, and a stack of firewood. In addition, we can see outside the hermitage three bound bundles of plant leaves. Gorai Shigeru has pointed out that one might detect in such motifs a

<sup>13</sup> *Taishō shinsū daijōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 20, p. 109b.

kettle for conducting the *yudate* 湯立 (water-boiling) divination ceremony, together with bundles of cedar leaves (*sugi* 杉) or bamboo grass (*sasa* 笹) prepared for use in the same. Gorai has also raised the possibility of a connection with the incantations and oracles of mountain ascetics, but though the *yudate* ceremony was in its origins a form of divination, it was also employed for purposes of purification and exorcism. In this scene, such motifs should be understood as intended to signal that the hermitage in which the Kannon statue would appear was a space purified, and marked off by a set border, through the use of purified water.

A third point: in the *Senju kyō* there is the following passage explaining the proper method for chanting the *Senju dhāraṇī* itself, after a border has been marked out as detailed above:

When perchance in some country disaster has befallen, should the king of that country be one who govern his land rightly, treating everything and everyone generously, and never abuse the populace, pardoning their trespasses always; if being such a king he will ritually purify himself in body and spirit for seven days and seven nights, chanting aloud this divine incantation of the *dhāraṇī* of the Great Merciful Heart, then shall that land be spared disaster entirely, and its crops see a bountiful harvest, and its people know peace and security.<sup>14</sup>

This explains how in order to attain the merits of the *Senju dhāraṇī*, one must chant it aloud for seven days and seven nights. Indeed, even outside this quote, the same message is stressed elsewhere in the sutra repeatedly: that by chanting aloud the *Senju dhāraṇī* for seven days and seven nights, one can attain its boundless merits in any matter.

Moreover, in the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* too, a period of precisely seven days is invested with special significance, being mentioned in the scroll's narrative portion multiple times. The first of these is in the text of Section 2, after the young ascetic's self-seclusion in a hermitage: "After 7 days, when I went again to that same place and looked about, nothing had changed at all, and nothing had been opened. But when I opened it myself, [standing there] within, gleaming, wa[s] a life-sized statue of *Senju Kannon*." Here it is recorded that the appearance of the *Senju Kannon* statue occurred after his self-confinement of 7 days. There are further such occasions in the scroll's second episode, first of all in the narrative portion of Section 3, where the young ascetic has appeared in the rich man's house, and says: "If that is the case, I will try praying for seven days," thereby suggesting a seven-day period of prayer. Then in the narrative text of Section 4, as promised: "By early in the morning on the seventh day the girl was sitting up, finding herself full of life [as before]." Thus it is that the daughter's illness is cured on the morning of the seventh day.

As we have seen above, the manner in which the merits of *Senju Kannon* appear in the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple* clearly draws upon the teachings of the

<sup>14</sup> *Taishō shinsbū daijōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, vol. 20, p. 109c.

*Senju kyō* 千手經. Indeed, for practices like boundary-marking and the performance of seven-day prayers, a detailed understanding of actual *Senju dhāraṇī* rituals is presumed. The scroll's attitude of devotion towards this sutra is in fact so earnest throughout, that one almost feels it attempting to make manifest—on the site of Kokawa—the world that the *Senju kyō* represents.

## Conclusion

Recently, near Seventh Avenue there is a woman who lends money. The prosperity of her household, and the abundance of her foodstores, have led her to such obesity that the very ampleness of her flesh now makes it difficult to walk. Her maidservants try to help her, but with all her sweating and shortness of breath, there is nothing to end her suffering.

This is the narrative text accompanying the section “An Obese Woman” in the illustrated scroll *Yamai no sōshi*.<sup>15</sup> A collection of portrayals of people suffering from various illnesses and deformities, this *Yamai no sōshi* is yet another work believed to have been produced in the orbit of Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa. It also provides, in this passage above, an additional source for understanding the complex feelings its contemporary viewers had about the accumulation of wealth.

The woman depicted, a money-lender in the area of Seventh Avenue, has become so morbidly obese on all her wealth and food that she can no longer even really walk without assistance. Unlike with the stories in the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*, however, for her there is no divine salvation forthcoming. This points to a great difference between the two scrolls in their attitudes towards illness.

In the *Illustrated Legends of Kokawa Temple*, people living with the burden of karmic sin are able, with the salvation offered by Senju Kannon in his limitless mercy, to once again be reincorporated into the order of religion. By contrast, in the case of the “obese woman,” the reason for her illness is understood through a logic of causality wholly internal to the secular realm. The coolly critical eye cast upon her is thus merely the justified consequence of the obese woman's choice of moneylending as her life's profession.

The structural difference here between tales of illness and wealth as manifested in these two illustrated scrolls, as well as the sheer gap between their respective views on the sick, both indicate a certain fluctuation in the distance between the divine and the human. It is a fluctuation found also in the values of the works' assumed common patron, Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, and even in the value system of society itself, shifting as it was then from an Ancient world to a Medieval one.

Indeed, the two scrolls' different depictions of illness throw into sharp relief the two-sided nature of Go-Shirakawa's style of cloistered rule: for even as he

<sup>15</sup> In the collections of the Fukuoka Art Museum 福岡市美術館.

trusted to the Buddhist Law through so many outbreaks of disease, war, and natural disaster, he also sought to overcome such problems by allying himself with the powers of this world—the newly ascendant warrior class very much included.

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# Between the Mountain and the City – Ikkyū Sōjun and the Blurred Border of Awakening

Didier DAVIN

Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394–1481) is undoubtedly one of the most famous monks in Japan today. In the modern period, he is mainly known as a young boy solving apparently impossible puzzles, often in unexpected and amusing ways. However, this Ikkyū, commonly known as “Ikkyū-san,” is only the final stage of an image that has drastically changed since the Middle Ages. This evolution has often been studied,<sup>1</sup> and it is, indeed, a fascinating story leading to interesting questions about, for instance, the diffusion of Buddhism in Japanese society, the construction of idea of Zen, the relation between Zen and Japanese arts, etc.

However, even if the numerous later images of Ikkyū are a rich and interesting subject of examination, it is not to say that the monk who actually lived in the Muromachi period does not deserve our attention. On the contrary, it is because the “real” Ikkyū managed to be admired by his contemporaries that rumors about him gradually transformed into legends. The downside of this celebrity is that the multiple images of Ikkyū affects the way we perceive the “historical Ikkyū,” and one must be very careful not to see the “real” Ikkyū through legends constructed after his death. Of course, as one may have already noticed, the notion of the “real” Ikkyū is itself highly problematic and deserves further analysis. However, in this article, we will simply consider the Ikkyū that we can know through the texts and other evidence that are widely thought to have been written by him, or reflect direct testimony about him. This is to say, mainly, his two poems collections, the *Kyōun-shū* 狂雲集 and the *Jikai-shū* 自戒集, and the biography written by his disciples soon after his death, the *Ikkyū oshō nenpu* 一休和尚年譜.

Among these, the *Kyōun-shū*, which almost extensively records the poems Ikkyū wrote in classical Chinese during his life, is by far the most important collection for understanding him. It is not easy to read, and its interpretation is even more sensitive, as showed by the fact that a comprehensive explanation of the collec-

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<sup>1</sup> Oka Masahiko 岡雅彦, *Ikkyū banashi Tonchi kōzō no raireki* 一休ばなし—とんち小僧の来歴. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1995. Iijima Takayoshi 飯島孝良, “Ikkyū no chosaku, *Kyōun-shū*, *Jikai-shū* soshite *Kanabogō*” 一休の著作: 『狂雲集』 『自戒集』そして仮名法語, *Bessatsu Taijō Ikkyū* 別冊太陽一休, 2015, pp. 100–105.

tion has yet to be published.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it constitutes the principal and almost exclusive way to access the thought of Ikkyū, and it is only by a close examination of these poems that several aspects of this intriguing monk can be observed. This paper presents one such aspects and, through it, what is certainly the most important themes of the *Kyōun-shū*.

Most of the studies on the *Kyōun-shū* emphasize Ikkyū's image of transgression and skirting the norms of Buddhist monastic life. Indeed, many poems openly claim disrespect for—often interpreted as ‘transcending’—the Buddhist precepts, and for that reason, the consumption of alcohol or sexual intercourse are often considered the main theme of the collection.

These are, undoubtedly, an important theme and should certainly not be neglected, but considering them to be the core of the *Kyōun-shū* in fact obscures what really motives Ikkyū and, ultimately, misleads the reader regarding the overall meaning of the collection. It is the author's position that the transgressive poems are the result of a more fundamental attitude, and, paradoxically, they can be best explained by putting them aside. However, this paper will not focus on this question and the perhaps too famous transgressive poems, but will rather consider the fundamental structure of Ikkyū's thought from one particular angle of view.

More than a taste for wine or the company of courtesans, what is perhaps most conspicuous in the *Kyōun-shū* is the astonishing criticism of the Zen monks of his time. No word seems strong enough when it comes to describing the villainy and the incompetence of his co-religionists, and many poems of the *Kyōun-shū* express one thing clearly: “I, Ikkyū, am the only one who still knows the true Zen, and all the other Zen monks are preaching a false teaching.” One of the most famous stanzas of the collection summarizes this quite clearly:

華叟子孫不知禪／狂雲面前誰說禪／三十年来肩上重／一人荷擔松源禪<sup>3</sup>  
 The descendants of Kasō do not know Zen,  
 In front of me, Kyōun, who would expose Zen,  
 For thirty years, heavy is that which is on my shoulder,  
 The burden that I alone carry, Songyuan's Zen

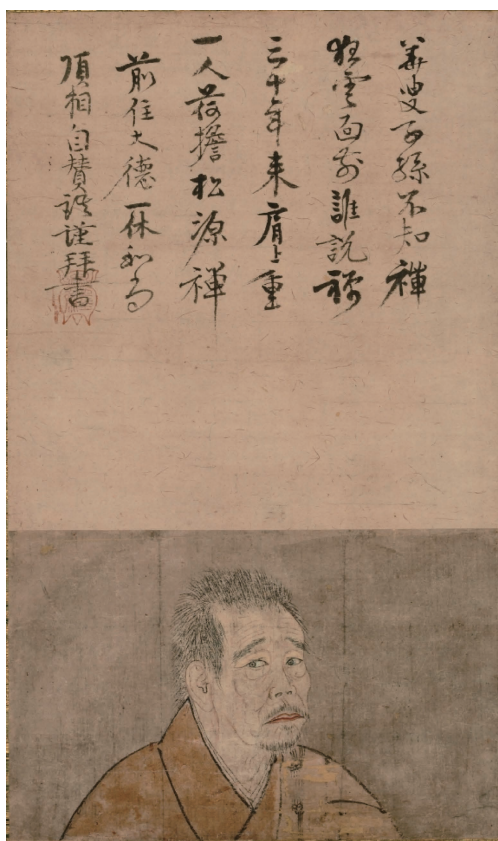
The expression “Songyuan's Zen” may look like a very restrictive part of the

<sup>2</sup> The *Ikkyū ōsho zenshū* 一休和尚全集, (Shunjusha 1997) contains the whole of the *Kyōun-shū* with annotations and translation in modern Japanese, but, in spite of its undeniable value, it is unanimously recognized by specialists that the explanations provided in it are far to be enough to a complete understanding of the collection. Several other editions, including the famous yet problematic edition by Yanagida Seizan, (*Kyōun-shū* 狂雲集, Chūōkōron shinsha, 2001) left many fundamental questions unresolved.

<sup>3</sup> K130. The *Kyōun-shū* quotes and numbering are based on Itō Toshiko 伊藤敏子, “*Kyōun-shū* shohon ni tsuite, fu : kōi *Kyōun-shū*” 狂雲集諸本について 付 : 考異狂雲集, *Yamato bunka* 大和文華, 1964, 41, pp. 10–59.

This stanza is written on one of the most famous portraits of the monk held at the Tokyo National Museum. (Figure 1)

[https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r\\_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=A10137](https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=A10137)



**Figure 1.** Portrait of Ikkyū 一休和尚像, Botsurin Jōtō 没倫紹等, Muromachi period, (Tokyo National Museum)

Zen school, but from Ikkyū's point of view, as a member of the Daitoku-ji branch – a branch that considers itself as the only remaining real Zen – referring to the descendance of Songyuan is none other than the totality of the “real” Zen. On the same principle, the “descendants of Kasō” – Ikkyū being one of them – are looked as the only legitimate part of the Daitoku-ji branch. In this way, mentioning the descendants of Kasō or the Songyuan's Zen does not describe Ikkyū as the only legitimate heir of a specific part of the Zen school, but of all the Zen teachings in the country. Suffice to say, of course, that this does not mean that Ikkyū was the only remaining Zen monk in Japan. On the contrary, during his time the Zen school was still very active and, while his golden age has passed, the so called “Gozan” (Five Mountains) institution was still an influential and powerful part of the political and religious landscape. Furthermore, the Daitoku-ji temple, which did not belong to the Gozan,<sup>4</sup> was growing, extending

<sup>4</sup> This is a simplification. In its history, the Daitoku-ji was included in the Gozan system, but still kept a specific identity. It officially ceased to be one of the Five Mountains in 1431, during Ikkyū's life time, at the request of the abbot of the time, his fellow disciple Yōsō. For details see Tamamura Takeji 玉村竹二, “Daitoku-ji no rekishi” 大徳寺の歴史, *Nihon zenshūshiron* 日本禅宗史論, vol. 2–2. Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1981, p. 311–56.

broadly his influence in society. Thus, Zen monks were present in quite a number, but for Ikkyū they were not worthy to be called real monks. This severe diagnosis applied to all branches of the Rinzai school, but his criticism was aimed particularly at the closest monks, and among them his elder fellow disciple, Yōsō Sōi 養叟宗頤 (1373–1458), who inherited the “Seal of Law” from the same master as Ikkyū, Kasō Sōdon 華叟宗曇 (1352–1428). Ikkyū presents himself as the last real Zen monk, but surrounded by false monks who hold the institutional positions and, by that, the appearance of legitimacy. A very large part of the poems and stanzas collected in the *Kyōun-shū* can be seen as a response, or at least a reaction, to this situation.

In several compositions, the conception of Ikkyū takes the form of an opposition between two places, two realms with both a strong symbolic as well as very concrete existence: the mountain and the city. There is nothing really original in this pair of concepts, nor in the symbolism attached, but there is a specific way by which Ikkyū uses it. He seems to move along a blurry border, puzzling his reader by the unexpected path he takes between these two worlds. By following him in these compositions one should be able to see not only his views on this particular topic, but also the very core of his thought.

### The boring holiness of the mountain

In the biography compiled by his disciples soon after his death, the *Ikkyū oshō nenpu* (below, ‘*Nenpu*’), the following notice can be seen. (Figure 2)

二年壬戌，  
師四十九歲，師初入讓羽山，借民家住，有山居偈，後創尸陀寺徙焉，徒侶慕  
而到者，皆爲法忘軀之流，故拾枯掬澗，岩路盤屈，汲々勿倦，(…)⁵

Second year [of Kakitsu era], *jinjutsu* (1442),  
The master was forty-nine years old. The master entered for the first time the Yuzuriha Mountain. He lived in a rented house. There is a stanza called “Dwelling in the mountain”. Later, he founded the Shida-ji temple and moved in. The disciples that came by affection to him where all of the kind who forget their own body by aspiration for the Law. For that, they gathered dead wood, draw water in the brooks tirelessly through the winding path of the mountain.

Looking only at this passage, one can see a monk leaving the turmoil of the mundane world and his disciples happily following him in a life finally fully devoted to practice. The mountain is a classical place for the retreat, Buddhist monks – among many others – often express the will to move in its protective inhospitality, and there is nothing to be surprised in the fact that, in the biography of a Zen monk,

<sup>5</sup> Imaizumi Yoshio 今泉淑夫 (ed.), *Ikkyū oshō nenpu* 一休和尚年譜. Heibonsha Tōyō bunko, 1998, vol. 2, p. 285.



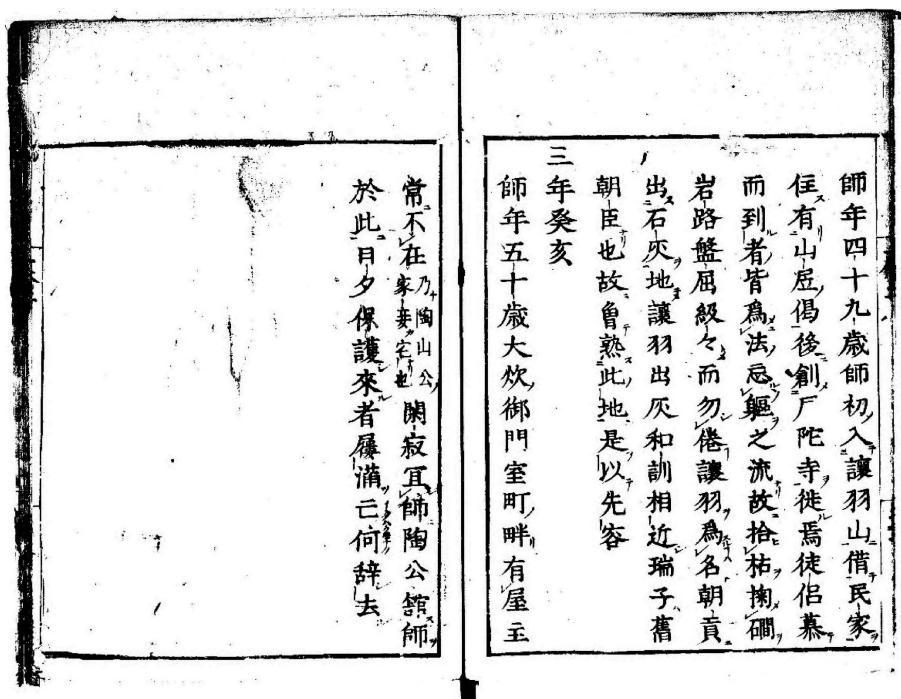


Figure 2. *Ikkyū oshō nenpu* 一休和尚年譜, printed in 1674 (Enpō 延宝2), NIJL collection  
<https://doi.org/10.20730/200007559>

this episode is presented in a positive way.<sup>6</sup> However, the stanza mentioned here has a quite different tone. Three stanzas are in fact entitled “Dwelling in the mountain” (*Sankyō* 山居) in the *Kyōun-shū*, two are in a pair entitled “Dwelling in the mountain, two compositions” and the third one is simply “Dwelling in the mountain”. This last poem reads as follows: (Figure 3)

孤峰頂上出身途／十字街頭向背衢／空聞夜々天涯雁／鄉信卦書一字無<sup>7</sup>  
 The top of the solitary peak is the road to the elevation,  
 The crossroads in the city the way to the disparity.  
 In vain, every night, I listen to the wild goose in the heights of the sky,  
 But of a letter from home, not even a single character.

An examination of all the references used would exceed the scope of this article, but a few comments must be necessary to understand the general meaning of this stanza. The first two verses refer, very likely, to one of the most famous text in the Zen school, the *Record of Linji*, where one can read:

<sup>6</sup> The concrete motivations who pushed Ikkyū to go to the Yuzuriha mountain are unclear and an examination of the different hypothesis would be irrelevant here. See the edition of the *nenpu*, op.cit, vol. 1, pp. 205–222 for a presentation of the various issues on the subject.

<sup>7</sup> K350.

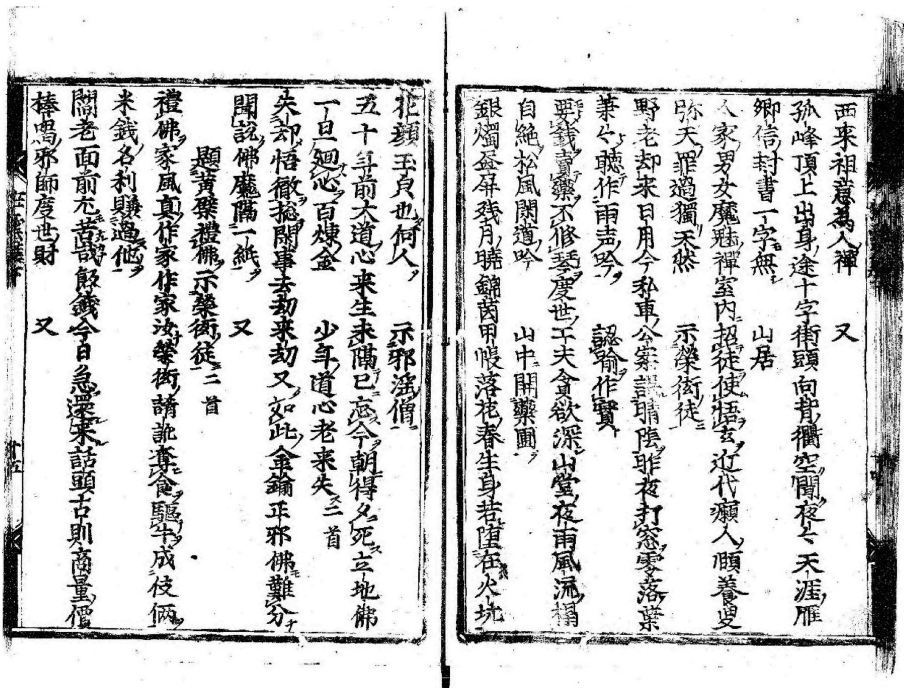


Figure 3. *Kyoun-shū* 狂雲集, printed in 1642 (Kan'ei 寬永19), NIJL collection  
<https://doi.org/10.20730/200006559>

上堂。云，一人在孤峯頂上，無出身之路。一人在十字街頭，亦無向背。那箇在前，那箇在後。不作維摩詰，不作傅大士。珍重。<sup>8</sup>

The master ascended to the hall and said: “One person is on top of a solitary peak and has no path to elevation. One person is at the street and the crossroads and has neither any disparity. Which is ahead, which is behind? (. . .)

The opposition between the solitary peak and the “street and the crossroad,” or to say it more simply between the mountain and the city, is fundamentally the same that in Ikkyū’s stanza. The mountain is the place of the elevation, *shusshin* (Ch. *chushen* 出身) a term that originally means to pass to the civil service examination, but in the specific context of Zen, refers to passing the very last stage of awakening, beyond the distinction between awakening and the mundane. At the opposite, the city is the place of the discriminative mind, where the illusory differentiations are still made. Of course, this distinction itself, between the realm of awakening and the common world, is still a discriminative view, and must be surpassed. That is, conceivably, the purpose of Linji who describe a man in the mountain but without any way reaching to the awakening and another in the city

<sup>8</sup> *Taisbō shinsbū daizōkyō*, vol. 45, p. 497a.

who has no more disparity, that is to say who had reach the state of the awakening. Both cases are paradoxical and the question throw to the audience can be seen as an invitation to surpass this opposition.

Ikkyū, while referring to this passage, describes quite simply both the mountain and the city as the places of awakening and discrimination, and, unlike Linji, does not seem to transcend immediately this opposition. He affirms only that “The top of the solitary peak is the road to the elevation, the crossroads in the city the way to the disparity”, and, by the title of the stanza the reader knows that, while saying that, he is living at the mountain, that is to say, by a superposition of the metaphor and the actual mountain, the Yuzuri Mountain, that he is, actually, in the realm of the awakening. The situation, however, does not seem to be so perfect, looking at the second half of the stanza.

The wild goose is linked with sending messages in Chinese literature since it was said that Su Wu 蘇武 (ca. 140–60 b.c.) used the leg of one of them to send a missive to the emperor. This expression is quite common and it is difficult to see a specific poem that Ikkyū refers here, but in most of the cases it implies a sadness, the missing of the beloved persons or homesick. So, in short, Ikkyū wrote, when he was in the mountain, a stanza telling, explicitly, that it is the place of awakening and, at the same time, that he is sad to be here. To understand this contradiction, or at least this tension, let us consider the pair of stanzas entitled “Dwelling in the mountain, two compositions” whose first one reads as follows:

姪坊十載興難窮／強住空山幽谷中／好境雲遮三万里／長松逆耳屋頭風<sup>9</sup>  
 Ten years in the brothel, the elation is not yet exhausted,  
 I am now constrained to live in empty mountains and deep valleys.  
 The pleasant place is separate by clouds on thirty thousand miles,  
 And in the high pines, rude for my ears is the wind who passed through houses.

The first two verses are easy to understand, and the feeling express in it does not need any explanation. The brothel is, one can say, the ultimate symbol of the worldly pleasures, of the attachment at the common world and, the opposition between the mountain and the city is clearly at work here. The life in a holy place, that is, the mountain, is explicitly said to be constrained, far from the will of retreat that one can expect from a monk, or from the depiction seen in his biography. It is the city far away, that is the “pleasant place” and the sound of the wind in the pine, one of the sounds that the hermit in his retreat is expected to appreciate, remind him of the city which it passed on the way to him, in a complete inversion of the classical *topos*.

To summarize, in this stanza, and in the preceding stanza as well, Ikkyū describes the mountain as a holy but boring place, a place from where he regrets the forbidden pleasures of the city. One may be inclined to see in those verses the reflection of the feelings of Ikkyū and to concluded that the monk is assuming

<sup>9</sup> K89.

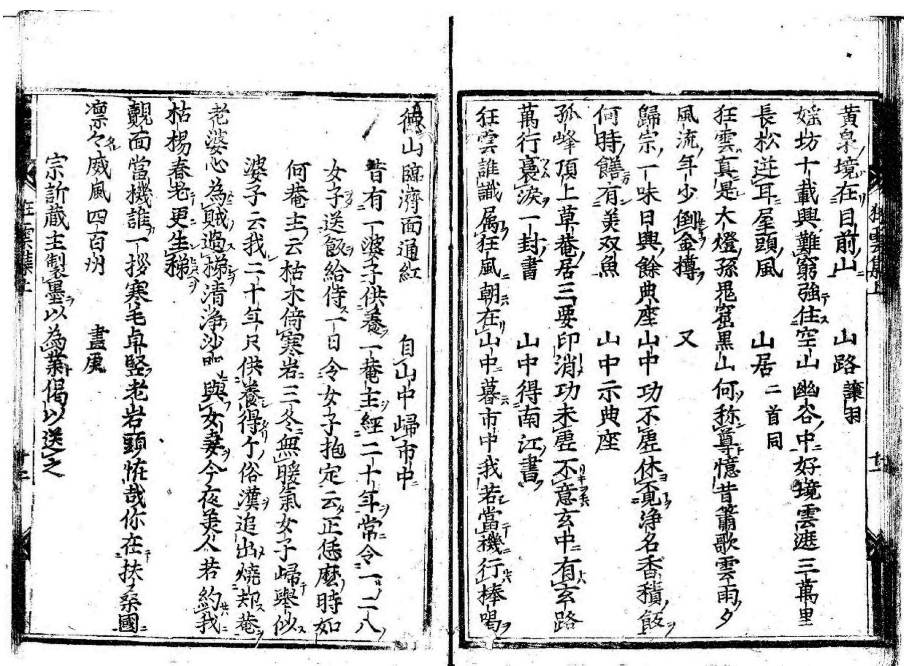


Figure 4. *Kyōun-shū* 狂雲集, printed in 1642 (Kan'ei 寬永19), NIJL collection  
<https://doi.org/10.20730/200006559>

openly a kind of hedonism, and indeed many commentaries are based on this understanding.

Nevertheless, it seems difficult, and a little naïve too, to look at the poems and stanza of Ikkyū as the faithful expression of what he felt. The *Kyōun-shū* is a collection of Chinese compositions, written in different contexts in the constraining style of the classical Chinese poetry. It is, by no mean, a diary and it would be misleading to see it as a kind of confession. Even in compositions that seems to express those impressions – maybe more than ever – one must read not what was felt by Ikkyū, but what he decided to express. This warning is particularly necessary in a poem like the following, entitled “Mountain road, Yuzuriha” (*Sanro. Yuzuriha* 山路 讓羽). (Figure 4)

吞声透過鬼門關／豺虎蹤多古路間／吟杖終無風月興／黃泉境在目前山<sup>10</sup>  
 Holding my breath, I pass the demon's gate,  
 On the old road, many tracks of wolves and tigers.  
 My poem-stick cannot raise for the wind or the moon,  
 The realm of the yellow spring, it is the mountain before my eyes.

Admittedly, one can see in those verses the frank expression of the aversion

<sup>10</sup> K88.

toward an unfamiliar environment. The mountain, once again, is described not as the desired place of a peaceful retreat, but a scary world, compared to the yellow spring –hell –that annihilate even the desire of poetic composition, although it is very strong in the case of Ikkyū. The rejection of the mountain is, obviously, on the same line that the precedents, but that does not mean that it reflects the psychologic state of Ikkyū at one precise moment. Nobody knows what were the real feelings of the monk at the time and what we only see is what he wrote and wanted to be read.<sup>11</sup>

More than a confession which would have to say, “I have to confess that I am feeling uncomfortable in the mountain and missing the pleasures of the city,” Ikkyū is voluntarily claiming his rejection of the realm of the mountain, including all of its associated symbolism. The question is of course, why would he reject the mountain? If there is a clear claim, there must be a clear message. What is Ikkyū telling us in his poetry?

The answer, evidently, must also be sought in the *Kyōun-shū*. The second stanza of the pair “Dwelling in the mountain, two compositions” gives a valuable key.

狂雲真是大燈孫／鬼窟黑山何称尊／憶昔簫歌雲雨夕／風流年少倒金樽<sup>12</sup>

I, Kyōun, am truly the heir of Daitō,

In the demon's nest of the dark mountain, what could be worthy of respect.

I remember once, the melody of the flute, the clouds and the rain in the evening,

And refined youths who brought down barrels of wine.

These verses may seem surprising, or at least a little jarring at first glance. So far, we were speaking about the attractiveness or the repulsiveness of the mountain, or its corollary in the city, and Ikkyū is now talking, in a pair of stanzas also entitled “Dwelling in the Mountain,” about the exclusivity of his legitimacy, what deserve, or not, to be respected and a puzzling nostalgia for bacchanals. By explaining those new elements, the purpose of the mountain theme in his compositions should be seen in a new light.

As said before, Ikkyū considers himself as the only recipient of the true teaching of the Rinzai school, and his contempt is mainly focused on his closest co-religionists. By claiming to be the only heir of Daitō, he repeats what was told many times and in many ways in the *Kyōun-shū*. One example was given in the first quoted stanza where “the descendants of Kasō” or “Songyuan's Zen” refer almost to the same group, the very branch of Zen that Ikkyū himself belonged to. In this branch, those who should have preserved the only real Zen, the monks, had failed their duty and sinking into decadence. There is a very concrete consequence of the diagnosis Ikkyū made: the place where those monks are living, the temple, is no more a place of practice nor the symbol of the awakening, but

<sup>11</sup> The process of the *Kyōun-shū* compilation is complex and not fully understood, but an examination of the various manuscripts shows that, very likely, it starts in the lifetime of Ikkyū.

<sup>12</sup> K90.

a place of hypocrisy and depravation. This is, for example, expressed in the following stanza entitled “Suppress the object, do not suppress the man”:

臨濟兒孫誰の伝／宗風滅却瞎驢辺／芒鞋竹杖風流友／曲棧木床名利禪<sup>13</sup>  
 Among the descendants of Linji, who transmits his legacy?  
 His teaching extinguishes around the blind ass.<sup>14</sup>  
 Straw sandals and bamboo stick are friends of the refinement,<sup>15</sup>  
 And the predication chair is for the Zen of fame and gain.

This stanza is one of four dedicated to a very specific passage of the *Record of Linji*, and it should be understood in the whole context of the way Ikkyū interprets this passage. However, it will be sufficient to consider the issues in this article separately. The meaning of the first two verses does not contain any difficulty, and it is easy to recognize what is repeatedly claimed by Ikkyū: no one – except Ikkyū of course – is truly transmitting the Zen of Linji any longer. The predication chair (Jp. *kyokuroku mokushō* 曲棧木床) is the chair where the abbot sits when he preaches, and it is, in this stanza, the symbol of the teaching given in the temple. Here, it is said to be motivated only by the greed of glory and gain, confirming the Ikkyū’s discrediting of the monks of his time.

It would be an oversimplification to consider the mountain and the temple as equal in Ikkyū’s perspective, but the proximity of the two should certainly not be forgotten. The devaluation of the “demon’s nest of the dark mountain” expressed in the second stanza of the “Dwelling in the Mountain” pair, applies to the mountain, the place Ikkyū actually stands. However, this should also be understood in the global context of his criticism, and therefore also serves as a devaluation of the temple and the ideal preached in it. The expression “demon’s nest of the dark mountain” itself is not an original creation of Ikkyū and refers to a totally dark place, where nothing can be seen, and, by extension, to the state of ignorance where man is still tied by the discriminative mind. It is used here to qualify the mountain, and express, once again, the rejection of it by Ikkyū, but of course, the literal meaning, a place where demons are living, is not far removed from this. The monks, living in the place they say to be holy—the temple or the mountains – are undoubtedly the “demons” and they deserve no respect. In this second stanza, the temple and the monks stand in the shadow of the abhorred mountain. More than the expression of the boredom or the fear of a new environment, this is more presumably the reject of the corrupted Zen school that should be read in the rejection of the mountain by Ikkyū.

<sup>13</sup> K14 「奪境不奪人」.

<sup>14</sup> Reference to the last of Linji as recorded in the *Record of Linji*. On this see Yoshizawa Katsuhirō 芳澤勝弘, “Katsurō no zen,” 瞎驢の禪, *Bessatsu Taiyō Ikkyū*, 2015, pp. 106–108.

<sup>15</sup> The expression *fūryū* 風流 is very difficult to translate, especially in the case of Ikkyū who use it as a central concept. “Refinement” is only one of many possible translations of it. On its meaning for Ikkyū see Yoshizawa Katsuhirō 芳澤勝弘, “Fūkyō to fūryū,” 風狂と風流, *Bessatsu Taiyō Ikkyū*, 2015, pp. 110–112.

### The unavoidable pleasures of the city

If what Ikkyū rejects is less the mountain itself – whether as a place or as a symbol – than the Zen school of his time, if the company of his fellow monks was so unpleasant to him, why then, one may ask, did he not simply applying the true Zen he claims to have inherited alone and just stay away from them? Where is the necessity to claim his inclination for mundane pleasures in his critique of the corruption of the monks? Should a monk go to the brothel to be considered a true monk? Indeed, the core of the specificity of Ikkyū lies in this puzzling attitude, which manifests with several themes and, among them, as seen above, the praise of the city and of its pleasures. However, before considering the meaning of the city for Ikkyū, it is important to keep in mind that the general conception on the mountain, its opposition with the city and even the necessity to surpass this duality was a widely shared commonality of the time. One of the most evident manifestation of this is maybe to be found in the popularity of what was a very fashionable ideal of the time, being “Dwelling in the mountain within the city” (*shichū no sankyō* 市中の山居). As it was pointed out by Yoshizawa Hajime,<sup>16</sup> this idea, expressed in a famous verse of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) saying that “The great hermit lives in the city, and the small hermit lives in the mountain” (大隱住朝市, 小隱入丘樊) spread widely in the society and manifested itself by a general taste for hermitages in, or very near to, cities. No need to say that the idealization of the retreat was an important aspect of the middle age Japan as it can be seen in literature or in the taste for landscapes paintings – very often mountainous – where a small hut is lost in the middle of the scene. But such a retreat is an ideal more often admired than concretely applied. Considering that, by the authority of a great Chinese poet, the real retreat should be in the city was very convenient and was used to praise samurais or monks who built “hermitages” in the city.

Furthermore, this tendency was especially convenient for the Zen monks, since most of their temples were actually in cities. Saying that being able to stay outside the world while being in the very agitation of the city is the mark of the great hermit, and that there is much less merit to do such practice in the mountain where temptations are almost nonexistent, was very welcome by the Zen school.

However, while situated in the same cultural context, the reject of the mountain by Ikkyū cannot be reduced to an adhesion to this fashionable ideal. First, to be “in the mountain within the city” implies a revalorization of the city. To be in it, in this case, does not mean being attracted by the mundane pleasures, but, on the contrary, to be strong enough to stay insensitive to various temptations. The schema is quite different with Ikkyū, and one way to understand it maybe to examine what can be see here as a subcategory of the city: the brothel. Let look

<sup>16</sup> Yoshizawa Hajime 芳澤元, *Chūsei bukai hokoku Muromachi-ki zenshū no shūzoku ka to bukesbakai* 中世・部会報告 室町期禅宗の習俗化と武家社会, *Historia* ヒストリア, 2012, 235, pp. 87–111.

at an example, one of the numerous “Self-Written Tributes” (*Jisan* 自贊) compiled in the *Kyōun-shū*.

八十窮僧大藟苴／姪坊興半尚勇巴／半醒半醉花前酒／臨濟德山何作家<sup>17</sup>  
 The exhausted eighty years old monk I am is a big punk,  
 At half of my elation for the brothel, I add the appetite for boys.<sup>18</sup>  
 Half drank, half sober, the wine in front of the flowers,  
 Linji and Deshan, how can they be accomplished men?

The inclination for sensual pleasures is not here directly oppose with the respectable holiness of the mountain, but there is still a trace of this dualism through the mention of Linji and Deshan. The first half of the Stanza is easy to understand and Ikkyū outbid his transgression by adding his appetite for the boys to his patronization of the brothel. Needless to say, sexual interaction between boys and men were very common at the time and the scope of this “confession” is not to be understood in a modern, let alone an occidental, perspective. It is, nevertheless, a clear expression of an insatiable lust. But the second part seems more puzzling. To be “half drank, half sober,” beside to be a clear reference to a poem of Du Mu 杜牧 (803–853),<sup>19</sup> is an attitude that must be understood through the common metaphor of the sobriety as the awakening. However, Ikkyū does not claim to be plainly sober, that is fully awakened, but he claims also to stay half drunk. In other words, he is not staying only in the level of the awakening, no more than in the level of the vulgar. He stays between them, fully belonging to none of them.

The necessity to transcend the awakening, to not be stuck in it, is indeed a classic question in the Zen school – and in the Buddhism as well – but, what is the point to disqualify Linji and Deshan, who were both of course very well aware of this point and are, moreover, respected by Ikkyū as one can see in other stanzas of the *Kyōun-shū*. What is Ikkyū telling us by disqualifying them? How can a monk claiming to frequent a brothel, in the same stanza, declare himself superior to two of the most eminent monks of the Zen history?

The meaning of the theme of the brothel must be understood in a proper context. A famous episode gives an important key. Here is the version one can see in the *Chanlin leiju* 禪林類聚, a compilation of famous Zen texts:

世尊因自恣日，文殊三處過夏，來至靈山，迦葉問云，仁者今夏何處安居，文殊云，一月在祇園精舍，一月在童子學堂，一月在姪坊酒肆，迦葉云，何得住此不如法處所，遂乃白佛欲擯文殊，佛云，隨意，迦葉即白槌，纔拈槌，乃見

<sup>17</sup> K620.

<sup>18</sup> The characters for *nanshoku* 男色 ‘affection for men,’ are not directly written, but strongly suggested by a play on the graphic composition of the two characters *yūba* 勇巴. By moving the upper part of the first at the top of the second the word *nanshoku* appears.

<sup>19</sup> “Recalling former Travel” (*Nien xiyou* 念昔遊). Murakami Tetsumi 村上哲見 (ed.), *Santaishi* 三体詩, coll. “Chūgoku koten sen” 中国古典選, 29, 1978. Tokyo: Asahi shinbun-sha shuppankyoku, vol. 1, p. 178. For an English translation of it see Angus Charles Graham, *Poems of the Late Tang*, Penguin Classics. 1965: Harmondsworth, p. 137.



百千萬億文殊，迦葉盡其神力，槌不能舉，世尊遂問，汝擬貶那箇文殊，迦葉無對<sup>20</sup>

The Venerable was present at the end of the summer retreat. Mañjuśrī had spent the summer in three places and just came back at the Vulture Peak. Mahākāśyapa asked him: “Vertuous man, where did you stay this summer?” Mañjuśrī answered: “I was a month in the Jetavana temple, a month in a school for children, and a month in brothels and taverns.” Mahākāśyapa said: “How could you stay in places so against the Law?” and asked the Buddha to expel him. The Buddha said “as you wish,” Mahākāśyapa then took the hammer (to call the attention of all). As soon as he took the hammer, he saw one hundred thousand trillion of Mañjuśrī and, even by using all his magical power he could not raise the hammer. The Venerable then asked him: “Which Mañjuśrī do you want to expel?” Mahākāśyapa did not answer.

This episode, which of course illustrates the necessity to surpass the opposition between the vulgar and the awakened, was well known within the Zen school and there is no doubt than an allusion to the brothel (and the tavern) would immediately be linked to this doctrinal point by an educated reader. The originality of Ikkyū is then less in the use of the brothel as a theme, than in his way to use it. By claiming so loudly his taste for the brothel, and moreover by posing it in opposition with the teaching of Linji and Deshan, he attacks not only the Zen school, but its very teaching in the same time. The figures of Linji and Deshan, when coming together, seem to have a special meaning in the *Kyōun-shū*.<sup>21</sup> Because of the tangle in the references at work in the concerned compositions a convincing demonstration of this point will not be possible here, but depreciative verses like “Linji and Deshan are not accomplished men”<sup>22</sup> can be seen in many places of the collection. In Ikkyū’s poetry – as well as in the works of many monks of the time – more than a precise reference to those two famous monks, it is used as a metonym for the teaching of Zen as a whole. So, what is Ikkyū’s purpose here? A stanza may be helpful to answer that. It is entitled “Going back from the mountain to the city” (*Sanchū yori shichū ni kaeru* 自山中歸市中) :

狂雲誰識屬狂風／朝在 山中暮市中／我若當機行棒喝／德山臨濟面通紅<sup>23</sup>  
 Who knows that the Crazy Cloud belongs only to the crazy wind?  
 In the morning I am in the mountain, at nightfall in the city.  
 If at the proper time I used of the stick or the shout,  
 The face of Deshan or Linji would turn red.

The general meaning of this stanza is similar to the previous one. The last two verses are, to say it without going into a detailed explanation, another claim of

<sup>20</sup> *Zenrin ruiju* 禪林類聚 (C. *Chanlin leiju*), Zenbunka kenkyū-jo. Kyoto, 1995, p. 373.

<sup>21</sup> It appears 19 times. *Kyōun-shū* 3, 17, 93, 106, 126, 146, 214, 312, 363, 453, 454, 468, 576, 577, 584, 607, 620, 678, 718.

<sup>22</sup> K363. 臨濟德山非作家

<sup>23</sup> K93.

the superiority of Ikkyū. There is, however, in both stanzas, an important difference in the affirmation of his superiority compare to the others seen before them. Ikkyū is not saying here “I am the only one who is still in possession of the real Zen because no more real monk remains,” but “I am superior even to the famous patriarchs of our school.” Deshan, known for the efficiency of his teaching method that used beating, and Linji whose method often involved sudden shouting. Would it be then that Ikkyū not only prides itself to be the last real Zen monk in Japan at his time, but also to be the best that the school have ever had? Much more likely, Ikkyū considered the teaching of his own school perverted, and no longer worthy of respect. Claiming to prefer the pleasure of the city, or the brothel, is, admittedly, a way to express the actualization of the necessity to transcend the state of the awakening – to go beyond the mountain – but it is in the same time a way to distinguish himself from those who hypocritically pretend to aspiring to the holy sobriety of the mountain while in fact enjoying the very worldly benefits of their status as monks. This vision of the greedy monks can be confirmed, among many others, in a composition entitled “By a stanza on the brothel I shame the masters transmitting the law” (*Inbō no ju wo motte tokubō no chishiki wo hazukashimu* 姪坊頌以辱得法知識)

話頭古則長欺謾／日用折腰空對官／榮衛世上善知識／姪坊兒女着金襴<sup>24</sup>

*Kōan* and old cases increase their hubris,

But every day wantonly they bow in front of the high officials.

Those masters hungry for glory in this world,

Are girls of the brothel wearing golden brocade.

What should be underlined here is not the attack against the monks, very common in Ikkyū’s work, but the one against the use of the *kōan*. It takes place in a specific framework that would need to be fully understood to be concretely contextualized within the evolutions of the practice in the Rinzai school of the time, but what is relevant for the present article is the verification – once again – of the fact that the monks, in their very functions, had declined. Not only the men, or the institution, but worst, the teaching itself. Even the treasured teaching of the Zen – which the practice based on the *kōan* is the core – is no more properly done and became just a tool for the mundane elevation. For Ikkyū who presents himself as the last holder of it, the situation is hopeless.

To understand properly the meaning of the transgressive attitude of Ikkyū, one can have in mind his position against the Zen school and the desperate opinion he had about it. However, many questions remain. What did he choose to do? Why continuing to be a monk? Or, to say it in other words, where can he find a place to be after rejecting so radically the mountain? To answer those general interrogations, an examination of another question raised by the second verse of the quoted stanza must be considered. What does it mean to be the morning in the

<sup>24</sup> K284.

mountain and the evening in the city? Naturally, this is not an information about the daily schedule of Ikkyū, and it is, of course, on the base of the symbolism of the mountain and the city seen before that this claim should be understood.

To be the morning in a place and the evening in another, normally unattainable, is a mark of the magic power obtained by the one who achieves Buddhahood. The expression “Going the morning in Dantaloka and arriving the evening at Luofu,”<sup>25</sup> often seen in Zen texts, is probably the most famous example of this. Dantaloka is a mountain in India where the future Buddha is said to have practiced, and Luofu is a mountain in China. The possession of this ability, and by them the affirmation of his own awakening, is coherent with Ikkyū’s discourse, but is it really only this capacity expressed here? The formulation, of course, cannot not be seen as a reference to this *topos*, however, why talking only about the mountain and the city? Thinking about it, there is no big mystery to be in a mountain the morning and at a city in the evening, it looks rather like the program of a pleasant Sunday hike. Quite probably, to understand properly Ikkyū’s verse one can take in account the context of Ikkyū’s thought. To say it roughly, what Ikkyū is telling us by claiming that he can go freely from the mountain to the city is, likely, meant to be taken at the symbolic level. That is, he can go freely from the realm of awakening to the realm of the common world. However, stopping the comprehension at this level would be considering Ikkyū in the framework of the Zen school, forgetting his strong rejection of it and the specificities it implies in his use of Zen concepts.

For Ikkyū, to be able to go freely from a place to another is not only a mark of his freedom, but also, and paradoxically, a necessity. Because he does not resign his stature as heir of the Zen school, he cannot quit the temple, or totally renounce to the mountain, but because of the corruption of the world, he cannot fully embrace this ideal and must show his disagreement by going to city and, much more importantly, to publicize his behavior. It is the same idea expressed by the expression “half drunk, half sober”. He is not staying only in the level of awakening, no more than in the level of the vulgar. He stays between them, fully belonging to none of them.

### **Conclusion: Between or beyond, but never staying in**

The opposition between the holy mountain and the sinner city is not limited to Ikkyū, nor the Zen school as well, no more than is the necessity to transcend this dualism. The very hard look Ikkyū takes on his school implies a will to stay away from the other monks, or at least to express it in his poetry. To leave the mountain, or to stay drunk, can be seen as a clear metaphor to say avoid the “holy” places where the monks are living. By his actions – or at least by the claim of it,

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<sup>25</sup> 朝遊檀特、暮到羅浮, Koga Hidehiko and Iriya Yoshitaka, *Zengo jiten* 禪語辭典, 1991. Tokyo: Shibunkaku Shuppansha, p. 312.

which is a fundamental nuance – Ikkyū locates himself – symbolically as well as physically – outside the space occupied by his co-religionists. He is seemingly saying that we are not living in the same world. However, the second aspect of the paradoxical superiority repeatedly expressed by Ikkyū should be also found in his rejection of the Zen teaching itself. More precisely, it is found in his refusal of the faulty comprehension of the Zen preached by other monks. All the subtlety, and therefore the difficulty, of the position of Ikkyū resides in the fact that he rejects a teaching precisely because he values it. Praise and criticism are confusingly close in his poetry, but it is because the Zen of Linji and Deshan, the sacredness of the mountain or the aspiration to the awakening are not, per se, negated by Ikkyū. If they are criticized, and in quite violent terms, it is because the time had changed, and because of this, of the decadence of the Zen school, those highly valuable ideals are no longer appropriated. The necessity to transcend the awakening, present in the doctrines of the Zen, must be transcended again. The Zen doctrine is two-fold with the specific view Ikkyū has on his school. Ikkyū stands between two worlds, claiming to desire one – the city – to defend the true meaning of the other – the mountain.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The author wants to thank Tom Newhall for his kind proofreading on this paper.

# Where *Yōkai* Enter and Exit the Human Body:

## From Medieval Picture Scrolls to Modern Folktales in Japan

YASUI Manami

Translated by Kristopher REEVES

### 1. *Yōkai* and the Body<sup>1</sup>

Let us begin by taking a look at **Figure 1**, an image from a thirteenth-century illustrated scroll entitled *Kitano tenjin engi* 北野天神縁起. Here we see an illness-stricken Fujiwara no Tokihira 藤原時平 (871–909) with two snakes crawling out of his ears.

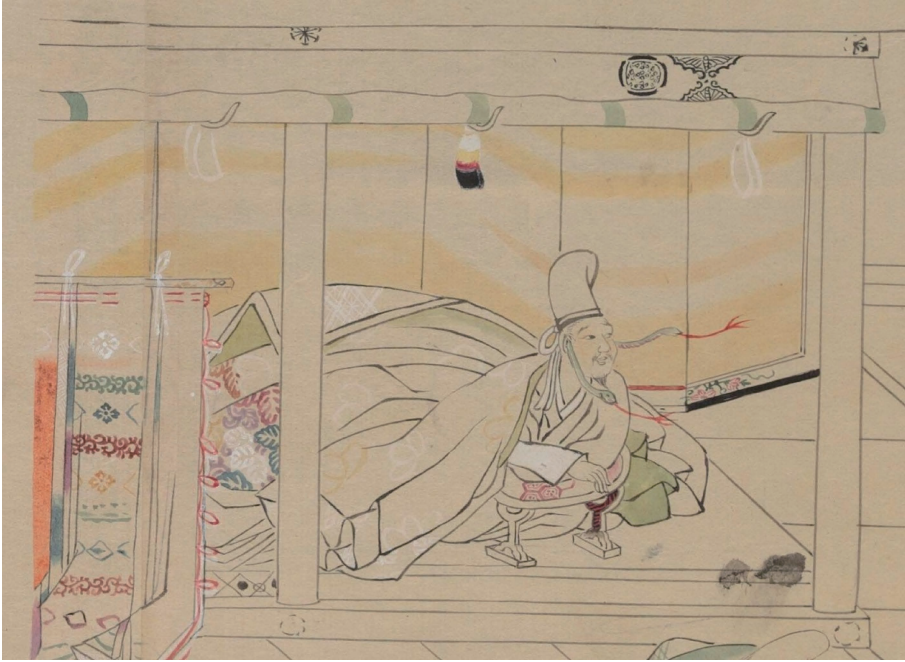
A priest was summoned to pray for the recovery of Tokihira, and during his prayers, two snakes crawled out of his ears. The two snakes were the vengeful spirit of Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903), Tokihira’s former rival, who had died six years prior, after being publicly shamed and exiled. The snakes commanded a certain courtesan to stop the priest from praying. No sooner had the priest halted his prayers and left the room than Tokihira passed away.

It was believed that sicknesses and maladies of all sorts were caused by the intrusion into the body of evil spirits and *yōkai*. According to the historian Kuroda Hideo 黒田日出男 (1943–), a popular belief held throughout the early formative

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<sup>1</sup> Komatsu Kazuhiko, who is arguably Japan’s foremost folklorist and cultural anthropologist, has analyzed the history and culture of *yōkai*, and has constructed a definition, building upon his many articles and books. In *An Introduction to Yōkai Culture; Monsters, Ghosts, and Outsiders in Japanese History* (2017 [originally published in Japanese in 2006]), he points out that “*yōkai* is an ambiguous term among both academics and lay-people. Generally speaking, it means creatures, presences, or phenomena that could be described as mysterious or eerie” (12). Note that the term *yōkai* includes malevolent and unobtrusive entities alike, both corporeal and incorporeal.



**Figure 1.** Illustration from *Kitano tenjin engi*, depicting two snakes emerging from Tokihira's ears. (NIJL, *Kitano seibyō engi* 北野聖廟縁起)  
<https://doi.org/10.20730/200015372>

years of Japan's medieval period saw the pores of the skin as a primary entry-point for sickness.<sup>2</sup> Pores and ears, both of which are perpetually open to the outside world—unlike the eyes and mouth, which may be closed at will—were thought to be easy targets for *yōkai*.

The present paper aims, by looking at medieval illustrated scrolls of the sort just mentioned and modern folktales, at enumerating those specific parts of the body most commonly used by *yōkai* as points of entry into and exit from the human body. In order to carry out this analysis I have taken advantage primarily of two rich sources of information: First, the early twelfth-century *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集, particularly that section dedicated to so-called secular tales (*sezokuben* 世俗編) set in Japan (*honcho* 本朝), hereafter known as “secular Japanese tales”; second, the database of *Folktales of Strange Phenomena and Yōkai* (Spirits, Ghosts, Monsters) (*Kaii yōkai denshō detabēsu* 怪異・妖怪伝承データベース), created and made publicly available on-line by the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā 国際日本文化研究センター), which includes data gleaned mainly by early-modern Japanese scholars of folklore studies.<sup>3</sup> I wish to show the manner in which the illustrations

<sup>2</sup> Kuroda 1986, pp. 251–253.

<sup>3</sup> This database may be accessed via the following link: <http://www.nichibun.ac.jp/youkaidb/>.

from medieval scrolls and various tales of *yōkai* entering and exiting the body were later reinterpreted in similar tales of the supernatural from the early modern period.

Komatsu Kazuhiko 小松和彦 (1947–), the leading scholar of *yōkai*, points out that “It seems probable that all those particular spaces and places where *yōkai* are most accustomed to appear and disappear are of a liminal character.”<sup>4</sup> Applying this observation to the human body, those places where *yōkai* are most wont to appear and disappear, that is, enter and exit the body, are likewise liminal spaces (*kyōkai* 境界). Indeed, the pores in our skin, seen in the popular medieval imagination as primary points of entry for supernatural sickness-causing agents, are just such a liminal space, acting as a border between the world inside the body and the environment without. Similarly, according to the compilers of *Histoire du Corps*, “the body as a whole is itself a liminal zone, for which reason it has been placed at the center of a cultural dynamics, ample evidence of which is to be found in the social sciences.”<sup>5</sup> Considering that the human body is a liminal zone, it is no wonder that *yōkai*, being accustomed as they are to appear and disappear in liminal spaces, are continually understood as entering and exiting the body.

In the illustration cited at the beginning of this paper, the two snakes are seen to be emerging not from the pores or the mouth of Tokihira, but from his ears. While we must certainly consider differences in detail between oral tales and illustrated depictions, we may at least presume that there were certain areas or orifices of the human body through which *yōkai* preferred to enter and exit. Furthermore, it should be possible, by focusing our attention on these particular areas or orifices, to gain a clearer picture of how the human body was envisioned throughout the ages. By examining tales about *yōkai* and the human body, and by looking at the human body as a liminal zone, this paper aims at taking a few steps towards research into ways in which the human body has been imagined throughout Japanese history.

## 2. Areas of the Human Body Most Susceptible to *Yōkai* Intrusion

Based on what we have seen in the case of *Kitano tenjin engi*, we might be justified in assuming that, in the corpus of medieval Japanese literature, one may find numerous tales of *yōkai* entering and exiting the human body through orifices, like the ears, that are continually open to the outside world. Is such an assumption correct? In order to find the answer, I have made a search of the aforementioned “secular Japanese tales” section of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, focusing my search on the word “ears”.<sup>6</sup> As it turns out, though the phrase *mimi ni suru* 耳にする, to listen or to hear, appears several times in this collection of tales, not a single instance of *yōkai* entering or exiting through the ears is to be found therein.

<sup>4</sup> Komatsu 2016, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Corbin, Courtine, Vigarello 2010, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Komine 2001.

Following this, I searched the database of *Folktales of Strange Phenomena and Yōkai* for any data pertaining to *yōkai* and the human body. This database, which, at the time of this writing, was last updated in 2014, contains a total of 35,826 entries. While, as already mentioned, most of the items appearing in this database have been gleaned from the works of early-modern and modern Japanese scholars of folklore studies and local histories, some of the items have been gleaned from essays written by scholars active during the end of the Edo period. Consequently, this database includes tales of *yōkai* composed from the latter half of the nineteenth century and onwards.

My first step when using the database was to conduct a search using a list of common terms referring to the body. I referred to the entry for *karada*, or body, in the well-known Japanese dictionary *Daijirin* 大辞林 (Sanseidō 1988), which divides the body into four main sections: *atama* 頭, head; *dō* 胴, torso; *te* 手, hands; and *ashi* 足, feet. I then searched for these four words in the database. I also searched a total of thirty-seven other words related to smaller divisions of the body and facial features.<sup>7</sup> Among the total number of hits for each such term—*te* (hand), for example—I selected only those that related directly to the body, thus giving me what I called my data sets. It was these data sets, and not the total number of hits, that I used in my analysis. The total number of hits as well as their respective reduced data sets are listed in **Figure 2**. As may be seen from Figure 2, in which I have tabulated the top twenty most frequently occurring areas of the body, feet, hands, eyes, head, neck, hair, stomach, and back contain the largest data sets. It would appear that *yōkai* tended to target these areas most frequently when seeking entrance or exit from the human body. The feet and the hands have the largest data sets, something which may be explained by the fact that it is the feet and hands, more than any other part of the body, that are most frequently injured during daily manual labor. People tended to imagine that the frequent injury of hands and feet was caused by malignant *yōkai* interfering in human labor.

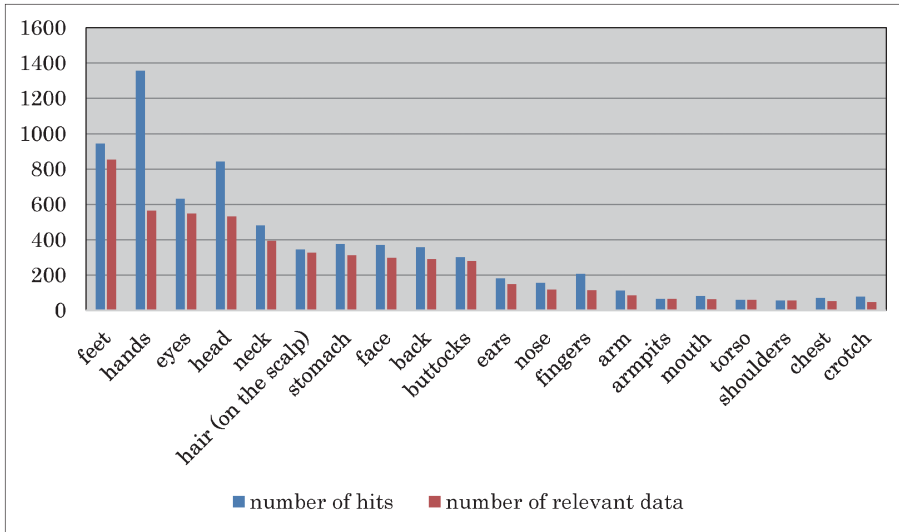
### 3. *Yōkai* Intrusion through Perpetually Open Orifices

My next step was to list all those orifices of the body, such as the ears and nostrils, which are, in virtue of their very anatomical structure, perpetually more-or-less open to the outside world. Having listed these in descending order of frequency, I found that those orifices with the largest data sets were the ears, nose, and mouth, in that order. On the other hand, those orifices with the smallest data sets were the vagina and the anus.

Let us take a look at tales relating to *yōkai* and the ears. Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), in his collection of Japanese stories entitled *Kvaidan* (1904), includes an account of Miminashi Hōichi 耳なし芳一, or Earless Hōichi. According to this tale,

<sup>7</sup> Yasui 2014, pp. 205–229.





**Figure 2.** Total hits and reduced data sets for selected top twenty parts of the human body.

The number of hits is higher than the actual relevant data due to the incidental appearance of target terms in phrases that are actually irrelevant to my purpose. For example: “to lend someone a hand” would come up as a hit, as it includes the target word “hand,” although here the meaning is simply to offer help.

a blind *bina* player by the name of Hōichi is commanded by a deceased spirit of the Taira clan to play him a tune. As a precaution, Hōichi requests a monk to write scriptural verses over his entire body, thereby serving as divine protection against the intrusion of *yōkai*. Here, we see how the skin was understood as a liminal zone separating the inside of the body from the outside environment. Unfortunately, this monk neglected to write verses on Hōichi’s ears. When the vengeful Taira spirit, having listened to Hōichi’s tune, finally decides to depart, it tears off the poor man’s unprotected ears as it goes. Tales of *yōkai* tearing off people’s ears are frequent in folklore accounts from the early-modern and modern period. For example, a report from Naze City, Kagoshima Prefecture, published in 1970, informs us that parents used to warn their crying children that a *yōkai* by the name of Mindon ミンドン would come and take off their ears if they did not stop their weeping. The initial *min* in Mindon is a dialectical variant of the word *mimi*, or ears.<sup>8</sup> A report from Itoman City, Okinawa Prefecture, first published in 1949, tells of Mimikiri bōzu 耳切り坊主, the ear-chopping monk, who went around the town at night with a knife looking for random ears to chop off.<sup>9</sup> These are examples of *yōkai* cutting off ears. There are, however, examples from all over Japan of ears presaging death. For example, it is said that when one hears a ringing in the

<sup>8</sup> Tabata 1974, pp. 31–46.

<sup>9</sup> Miyanaga 1949, pp. 28–31.

ears—the ringing is supposed to sound something like *jinjin*—someone of the same age has recently passed away, or is soon to pass away. The ears were supposed to be able to pick up messages pertaining to border-crossings between this world and the next faster than any other organ of the body.

However, the image from *Kitano tenjin engi* introduced above, in which two snakes are seen emerging from Tokihira's ears, is not something that can be found in any of the ethnographical writings from the early-modern or modern period. The absence, throughout the medieval and early-modern period, of tales about snakes coming out of people's ears might be attributed simply to the general disappearance of such tales over time, or—and this might explain the disappearance—a preference for tales in which snakes emerge from other parts of the body besides the ears. If this latter supposition is true, we ought to ask ourselves from where, if not the ears, snakes were most likely to emerge.

Let us turn our attention to the nose, being the orifice with the second largest data set. There is a particular species of Japanese goblin known as the *tengu* 天狗, the nose of which is conventionally depicted as being extremely prominent. Japanese novels from the early-modern period, such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's 芥川龍之介 (1892–1927) *Hana* 鼻, include vivid depictions of the human nose. What I wish to focus on here, however, is not the nose, as such, but the nostrils, that is, the orifices of the nose. Tachibana Nankei 橋南谿 (1753–1805), a prominent Edo-period essayist, wrote a collection of strange tales entitled *Kōkadō ina* 黄華堂医話, which includes a typical example of a tale centered around the nostrils. This tale is about a certain twelfth-century general by the name of Fujiwara no Hidehira 藤原秀衡 (1122–1187) who was active in northern Japan. When Hidehira had grown quite old, he got word of a famous physician named Kentesei 見底勢, who happened to be a native of Makkatsu 鞆 (Ch: Mohe), a region in northeastern China once inhabited by a tribe of Tungus people.

This doctor was famous for his miraculous ability to cure all manner of illness.<sup>10</sup> According to this tale, in order to save a mother and her child, both of whom died during childbirth, this doctor stuffed a quantity of medicine into the mother's nose, inserted acupuncture needles into her nose, mouth, and back a total of three times, and fumigated her naval. The mother promptly regained consciousness. As for the stillborn baby, the doctor blew powdered medicine into its nostrils, opened its mouth and inserted a dough-like substance called *ryūchichi* 龍乳 and wrapped its body in cloth.<sup>11</sup> The baby, likewise, regained consciousness. That is not all. A certain old man wished to give some of his remaining years to a young man who had recently passed away. Doctor Kentesei produced a tube, one end of which he inserted into the old man's mouth, the

<sup>10</sup> Mori, Kitagawa 1980, p. 238.

<sup>11</sup> The exact nature of the apparently medical substance *ryūchichi* 龍乳, or “dragon's milk,” remains uncertain. The proper reading, likewise, is not known. Possible readings include *ryūchichi* and *ryūnyū*.

other end of which he inserted into the dead man's nostril. After smearing the old man's back with medicine and inserting acupuncture needles into the dead man's back, the former passed away while the latter suddenly came back to life. Doctor Kentesei was able to resurrect the dead by inserting medicine into the nostrils or by means of a tube inserted into the nostrils. His common methods included medicine applied to the nostrils, mouth, and back, as well as acupuncture needles inserted into the back. That the life of one patient should be exchanged for the sake of another through the nostrils seems reasonable when we consider that the nostrils are one of the orifices through which the air of life passes.

Aside from their appearance in medical tales, the nostrils were also seen as convenient points of entry for *yōkai*. In 1932, an eighty-year-old woman living in Tokushima Prefecture gave a first-hand report of an incident that occurred in relation to an individual known as an *inugamisuji* 犬神筋, that is, someone believed to have an intimate connection with and control over *inugami* 犬神, or dog spirits. According to this woman's account, there was a large group of people staying together in the same inn. When most of the people had fallen asleep, this woman noticed a tiny dog no bigger than a bean emerge from the nostril of the *inugamisuji*. The little creature proceeded to run and frolic about the room. This done, it headed back towards the nostril from whence it had first emerged. Unfortunately, the bean-sized canine missed the mark and entered the nostril of another man. The woman claims that this second man was afterwards prone to sudden possessions by dog spirits.<sup>12</sup> It is said that travelers wary of encountering a similar fate were accustomed to erect small folding screens beside their pillows. It should be noted here that the dog spirit in the above account did not emerge or reenter through the open mouths of snoring sleepers, but rather through the nostrils, which are perpetually open, and therefore seen as exceptionally vulnerable, entry points for specters of all sorts. As has already been noted, the nostrils serve as passageways through which life-giving air can pass, and are consequently closely associated with the life of the individual. It is for this same reason that *yōkai* are wont to enter and exit through the nostrils.

Let us next turn our attention to tales involving the mouth. Interestingly, about eighty percent of all tales in the database of *Folktales of Strange Phenomena and Yōkai* involving the mouth feature the notorious Kuchisakeonna 口裂け女, a female *yōkai* sporting a grotesquely large mouth, both corners of which look as though they have been cut nearly up to her ears. In most cases, this modern *yōkai* wears a mask to hide her mouth. The very first report of this specter was published in December 1978, when Kuchisakeonna was apparently sighted somewhere in Gifu Prefecture. Sightings quickly increased; children all over Japan became frightened of this *yōkai*. Aside from accounts of Kuchisakeonna, there are

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<sup>12</sup> Ōta 1936, pp. 54–55.

no other tales of specters or evil spirits concerning the mouth. This may be attributed to the fact that, unlike the ears and the nostrils, the mouth may be closed at will, thereby ensuring that no unwanted *yōkai* will enter.

#### 4. Snakes Entering and Exiting through the Vagina

Next I would like to look at tales relating to the vagina, though this is an area of the human body with a rather small data set. There is a memorable scene in *Kojiki* 古事記, in which Ame-no-uzume bears her genitals and performs a comical dance, making all the gods roar with laughter. This she does expressly in order to lure Amaterasu, Goddess of the Sun, out of a stone cave into which the latter has secluded herself, thereby flooding the world in utter darkness. There are many other tales involving the vagina in Japanese mythology. In the tale of the god of Mt. Miwa 三輪山, a woman is impregnated when an arrow painted all over in red finds its way into her vagina. Similarly, in the tale of Nyogo-ga-shima Island 女護ヶ島, a woman becomes pregnant when a gust of wind blows across her genitals. Despite numerous such tales in Japanese mythology from the ancient period, the database of *Folktales of Strange Phenomena and Yōkai* contains very few examples of this sort. It is likely that modern-day Japanese folklorists and scholars of local history, having been deeply influenced by the conservative tendencies of Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875–1962), were reluctant to report any tales involving the genitals. This, at least, would explain the dearth of tales involving the vagina in early-modern ethnographical reports.

Among the very few tales of this sort is one in which a snake finds its way into the vagina of a woman who happens to be taking an afternoon nap. Once in, the snake cannot be removed.<sup>13</sup> The magazine *Dorumen* ドルメン includes numerous similar reports, all taken between 1933 and 1934, from all over Japan. The snake in this tale can, of course, be interpreted as a male penis, in which case the tale becomes a practical warning to women, urging them not to fall asleep out of doors, where they are bound to be almost utterly defenseless.

The tale of the snake finding its way into a woman's vagina is found as early as the twelfth century, in the “secular Japanese tales” section of the already cited *Konjaku monogatari-shū*.<sup>14</sup> This tale begins with a young woman who climbs a mulberry tree in order to pick leaves for her silkworms. A large snake then coils himself about the base of the tree. No sooner does the young woman jump out of the tree than the snake darts forward and lodges himself within the woman's vagina. No manner of pulling can remove the snake. In fact, the origin of this tale goes back even further, all the way to the early-ninth century Japanese anthology of Buddhist anecdotal tales, *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記.<sup>15</sup> In the *Konjaku monogatari-shū* version of this tale, a doctor pours a medicinal concoction into the woman's vagina,

<sup>13</sup> Nakaichi 1936, pp. 5–6.

<sup>14</sup> Komine 1994, pp. 400–401.

<sup>15</sup> Nakada 1979, pp. 267–274.

whereupon the snake at last decides to make its escape. Moreover, the snake's children, which it had apparently given birth to inside the woman's vagina, and which are still creeping about the poor woman's genitals, are likewise expelled by means of medicinal treatment.

It is interesting to note how a tale first told in *Nihon ryōiki* was later incorporated into the medieval *Konjaku monogatari-shū*, and, many centuries later, retold in similar form in early-modern ethnographical reports. For one reason or another, the motif of a snake entering a woman's vagina remained a set theme in Japanese literature. I would go so far as to argue that the dearth of tales involving snakes emerging out of people's ears might be due to a general preference for tales involving snakes entering women's vaginas.

Like tales involving the vagina, those involving the anus are also extremely rare. Among those that do exist, most are variations on a single theme: a *kappa* 河童, or water imp, inserts his hand into someone's anus in order to pluck out a *shirikodama* 尻子玉, a small jewel believed to be couched somewhere in the anal cavity. Aside from this motif, there are a few examples of *yōkai* entering the body through the anus. The anus, it would seem, is not merely an orifice for the release of bodily waste, but another entry point for *yōkai*.

To summarize what has been said above, tales of *yōkai* from the early-modern and modern period reveal that, among those orifices that are perpetually open to the outside world, the nostrils and the anus were exceptionally vulnerable to spectral intrusion. As I have hoped to make clear, tales of snakes emerging out of the ears, as seen in the illustrated scene from the medieval scroll *Kitano tenjin engi*, are not to be found in early modern ethnographic reports. Instead, what we do find are tales of snakes entering women's vaginas, tales which have appeared in Japanese anthologies of ancient tales as far back as the eighth century.

Oddly enough, according to the database of *Folktales of Strange Phenomena and Yōkai*, evil spirits and specters are not accustomed to enter or exit through the eyes, ears, or mouth, despite the fact that these are prominent orifices on the face. It would seem that specters are not simply aiming indiscriminately at just any opening, but are focusing their efforts on a select few orifices. This preference for one orifice over others is likely due to the inner workings of a rich Japanese imagination as it sought to envision the body in relation to otherworldly entities. We must now ask ourselves, aside from the orifices discussed above, what other part of the human body did *yōkai* employ as points of entry and egress?

## 5. Protecting the Body against Specters

Human beings were not merely the helpless victims of *yōkai* intrusions. Various measures were actively taken to protect the body against such attacks. An examination of these measures will benefit our understanding of how Japanese people envisioned their bodies. For example, in the past, it was customary to sew a



**Figure 3.** A child's *semamori* as depicted in an adapted illustration from *Kasuga gongen genkie*, vol. 16, in the National Diet Library Digital Collections.  
<https://doi.org/10.11501/1287501>

charm into the back seam of two- to three-year-old children's kimonos as a means of fending off *yōkai* that might attempt to enter their bodies from behind. These charms were known as *semamori* 背守り, literally, protection (*mamori*) for the back (*se*), or as *senui* 背縫い, that which is sewn (*nui*) into the back (*se*) of a kimono. Let us take a look at a fourteenth-century illustrated scroll entitled *Kasuga gongen genkie* 春日権現験記絵. A mother leads her barefooted child by the hand (see **Figure 3**). Note the semicircular *semamori* sewn into the back of this child's kimono. The fact that charms of this sort were sewn into the backs of children's kimonos is significant. Japanese people used to believe that the backs of children were easy entry points for *yōkai*.

Another example that further supports what has just been said is to be found on the island of Amami Ōshima 奄美大島, where it is believed that one's spirit may leave the body via the back. To prevent this, the people of Amami Ōshima sew a triangular charm, representative of a butterfly, into the backs of their children's kimonos up until the age of seven, a period when children are thought to be most vulnerable to such things. In Kōchi Prefecture, when a child falls down, it is customary to slightly loosen the collar and back portion of the child's kimono. The child is then carried three times around the house, during which time the child's name is called out aloud. Then, three grains of rice are dropped

into the opening that was created by loosening the back (*semamori*) of the child's kimono. Finally, the child is made to eat these grains of rice.<sup>16</sup> It is thought that these grains of rice represent the child's spirit. We may understand from this that the back is thought by at least some Japanese people to be the entry point for a child's spirit when entering—and reentering—its body. This seems to be the case not only with children but with adults who have become temporarily stunned or who have fallen into a momentary state of stupefaction. It was once common practice to give such adults a brisk strike on the back in order to bring them back to their senses, that is, in order to call back their wandering spirit, which would consequently reenter through the back.<sup>17</sup>

The back, as has been seen, was not simply the place from which a spirit could escape a body. It was also that place to which a child's spirit would return, as well as that place via which *yōkai* were likely to intrude. For this reason, the back had to be protected by charms of the sort discussed above. The back was a gateway between this world and the next; the way to open this gate was by rapping or rubbing the back. Unlike the nostrils, vagina, and anus, all of which are more-or-less open orifices, the back, despite its closed nature, was also seen as a point of entry and exit for specters. The perceived vulnerability of the back was due to the simple fact that human beings cannot see their own backs. Considering that this is true of all human beings, it should not come as a surprise that the back is traditionally seen as a vulnerable entry point for *yōkai* in virtually all cultures throughout the world. In those cultures where the back is not seen as a vulnerable entry point, we can be sure that the reason lies in a unique vision of the body that is different from other cultures. A comparative examination across cultures of the various ways in which people envision the body in relation to *yōkai* is sure to produce fruitful results.

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<sup>16</sup> Katsurai 1973, p. 140.

<sup>17</sup> Katsurai 1973, p. 141.

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# Birth of a Monster Story on the Borderlands: The “Big People” (*Chōjin*) Legend in 8<sup>th</sup>-Century Silla

LEE Sungsi

Translated by Jeffrey KNOTT

The Chinese official historical chronicle *Xintang shu* 新唐書 (compiled c. 1060), includes a section entitled “An Account of Silla” 新羅傳. As a contemporary historical source recording in detail the domestic affairs of the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century Korean kingdom Silla 新羅, it is a document that has attracted a good deal of attention over the years. At the same time, however, it also contains a number of indecipherable passages like the following:

Silla is bordered on the east by the Big People (Ch, *changren*, J. *chōjin* 長人). These giants, 9 meters tall in stature, have teeth like fangs, nails like sickles, and their whole bodies are covered in black hair. They eat the meat of birds and beasts raw without cooking it, and at times even capture men and eat them. Human women they capture and force to mend their clothing. Mountains line the border of that land for thousands of *li*. In a certain valley among these there is a gate of iron to protect against the Big People, called “the barrier gate” (Ch. *guanmen* 關門). Silla always has a crossbow corps of several thousand men stationed there watching over it. (Figure 1)

The meaning of this seems to be that to the east of Silla, on the other side of a barrier gate, there exists a population of “fantastic creatures,” or *igyō* 異形. The same historical document is also found in a more detailed form within the Chinese encyclopedic compendium *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (compiled in the late 10<sup>th</sup> c.),<sup>1</sup> yet both versions likely draw ultimately upon a third (now lost) source, the mid-8<sup>th</sup>-century *Jiven* 紀聞 by Niusu 牛肅. Thus even before 743, when envoy Wei Yao 魏曜 was sent to Silla from the Tang court, this legend of the Big People had already been related in China by some traveler, after which it made its way to Niusu, who put it down in written form.

To the cursory glance, this might seem but another “fantastic creatures” story of little interest. Upon further analysis, however, of various historical documents

<sup>1</sup> *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, vol. 481, entry on “Silla” 新羅.

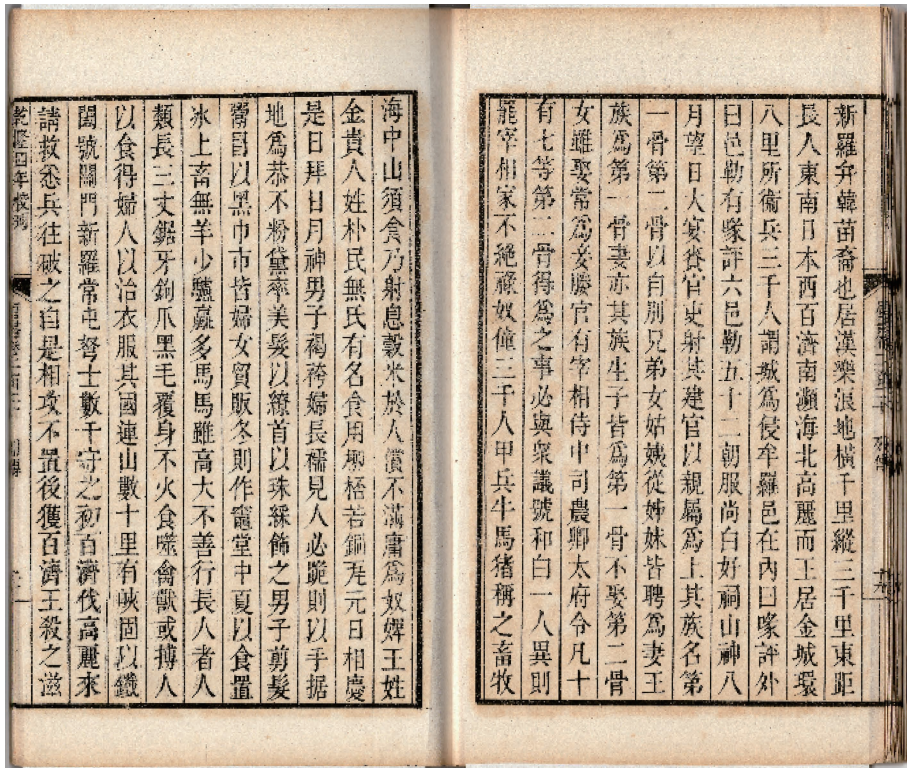


Figure 1. In volume 220 of the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (Bainaben 百衲本 edition), the entry about “Big People” (*chojin* 長人).

surviving on the Silla side, it becomes clear that in the area of Silla’s northeastern border frontier there lived groups of the Mohe 靺鞨 people, inhabitants of the Balhae kingdom 渤海, and that Silla, in the latter half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, had placed on that border some kind of military installation. This was even termed a “barrier gate,” or at times an “iron barrier fort” (Ch. *tianguancheng* 鐵関城). Histories also record that the early half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century saw an increase in military tensions with Balhae, and that Silla accordingly strengthened and repaired those of its military facilities oriented towards this region. In other words, when the Big People legend reached Tang China around the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, on Silla’s northeastern border frontier, there did in fact exist a military installation named after an iron gate, and military tensions between Silla and Balhae were indeed on the rise.

Yet what population did these “Big People” represent? There are surviving records that place this “barrier gate” on Silla’s northeastern frontier, in the Silla-period Jeongcheon district 井泉郡 (modern Tŏkwŏn district 德源郡, Hamgyŏng Namdo province 咸境南道, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). It lay on modern Wŏnsan 元山 Bay, to whose north—northeast of the gate itself—lay

the region of Balhae, whose people were, no doubt, identical with the legend's giants. As such legend had it, these Big People were massive of stature and shaped in the manner of birds and beasts, eaters of men and kidnapers of women: a description that indicates its targets were the objects of fear, possessors of a cosmology beyond the understanding of the legend's intended audience. It is probable that the situation of military tension on the Sillan frontier had much to do with the creation of the Big People legend. A "fantastic creatures"-type legend that painted them as such giants only makes sense if understood as a reflection of how Sillans living on the northeastern Sillan borderlands tended to think about people of the Balhae region.

In addition to such military tensions, part of the reason behind the spread of such monstrous images seems to lay in the peculiar methods of contact employed on this frontier region. In other words, at a fundamental level, there was something in their very way of encountering one another that stoked fears about people on the other side of the border. For example, the ancient Korean historical text *Samguk sagi* 三国史記 preserves mention of an 886 incident in which at Bokchin 北鎭 (a Silla military outpost), people from areas to the north came and hung from a tree a slab of wood bearing the simple message "SEEK TRADE"—whereupon they fled.<sup>2</sup> The attitude towards interaction we glimpse in this act is a preference for "silent trade," a strategy for pursuing mutual commerce even while shunning direct contact. Most likely it was precisely such a situation, and the anxiety and fear it might encourage towards inhabitants on the border's farther side, that led eventually to the latter's portrayal as monstrosities.

Indeed, when set against the customs of this region in the northeastern part of the Korean peninsula, the physical details even of fantastic aspects in descriptions of the Big People become easier to explain. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century gazetteer *Taengnji* 挾里誌 by Yi Jung-hwan 李重煥, we find the following passage about the people dwelling in this region, which had by then been incorporated into the Joseon Kingdom:

The mountains and rivers of this region are steep. The soil is poor, and millet and barley are the only cereals. There is no cotton cloth, and they cover themselves in the pelts of dogs. The customs they have for surviving cold and hunger are like those of the Jurchen (Nüzhen 女真) people to the north.

It is recorded that at the time, the inhabitants of this region would seek cotton cloth from the southern part of the peninsula, acquiring it by bartering for it with specialty products of their own like ginseng and marten pelts. Descriptions in the Big People legend like "covered in black hair" and "human women they capture and force to mend their clothing" seem to have been made to reflect the customs of this region, where even up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century they lacked cotton

<sup>2</sup> *Samguk sagi*, vol. 11, "Silla Chronicle" 新羅本紀, Year 12 of the reign of King Heongang 憲康 [886], "Spring" entry.



**Figure 2.** A Mongolian Yamaraja (Emma 閻魔). Artist unknown, late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Bogd-khaan Palace Museum. <http://www.bogdkhaanpalace.mn/>

It is difficult to find images that match the representations of Big People given in the *Xin Tangshu*. From this picture, however, one can understand that the features ascribed to Big People, from their “mountain-like” straight-standing hair to their “teeth like fangs, and nails like sickles,” find their source in the iconography of such fantastic beings. N. Tsultem. *Mongol zurag*. Ulan-Bator, 1986.

clothing and dressed themselves in dog pelts. It might thus be said that legends about the “Big People,” while based ultimately on the customs of those living in this region, were a product of Sillan imaginations, distilled from the absence of actual interactions with people on the border area, and the simultaneous presence there of real Silla-Balhae military tension. (Figure 2)

One final point worth noting in connection with the origins of the Big People legend concerns the nature of the Silla state during the period from the first half to the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when military tensions with both Balhae and Japan had risen. The era of King Gyeongdök 景德 (742–64), during which the Tang court sent Wei Yao 魏曜 as envoy to Silla, was also an era when policies for the centralization of power were being pursued across a number of fronts. The international tension that continued in East Asia from 720 to 750 had put pressure on Silla to strengthen its political system internally. The Big People legend may thus be seen as a kind of externalizing discourse, spun out by the age’s tendency to strengthen the political core.

# Sacred Spaces in Medieval and Early Modern Shintō Rituals

YONEZAWA Takanori

Translated by Kristopher REEVES

It is customary in Shintō shrines to delineate sacred spaces and other boundaries by means of stylized gates (*torii* 鳥居) and fences (*mizugaki* 瑞垣). These liminal markers of sacred space were in use from before the early modern period. I would like here to investigate the various uses and significance of these particular markers in early modern Shintō rituals, especially insofar as they relate to a certain lineage of syncretic Shintō typically referred to as Shinbutsu shūgō shintō 神仏習合神道—hereafter referred to simply as Shinbutsu Shintō—in which Shintoistic deities (*shin* 神) are understood to be temporary manifestations of Buddhist divinities (*butsu* 仏). In particular, I will focus on the ordination rite called *kanjō* 灌頂, which involves the pouring of water onto an acolyte’s head, of a single sub-branch of this lineage known as Miwa Shintō (Miwaryū shintō 三輪流神道). I hope to show how *torii* gates and *mizugaki* fences were used during this ritual as a means of creating a sacred space. Miwa Shintō was developed out of Ōmiwa Shrine 大神神社, located in Sakurai City 桜井市, Nara. According to the origin account of this sect, an account made famous during the middle of the early modern period, Miwa Shintō was founded at the moment when a Buddhist monk by the name of Keien 慶円 (1140–1223), also known as Miwa shōnin 三輪上人, or the Sage of Miwa, and Miwa myōjin 三輪明神, the god of Mt. Miwa, exchanged vows and esoteric teachings with one another. Fortunately for us, Miwa Shintō has preserved numerous documents relating to ritual conventions, for which reason we know a great deal about the contemporary structure of this sect’s sacred spaces.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of this paper, I have made reference primarily to the following sources: “Miwaryū kanjō shiki, kenyo” 三輪流灌頂私記 憲譽, in Ōmiwa jinja shiryō henshū iinkai 大神神社史料編修委員会, ed., *Omiva jinja shiryō* 大神神社史料, volume 5: *Miwaryū shintō hen: ken* 三輪流神道篇 乾. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1978, pp. 222–234; “Miwaryū shintō kanjō shitaku” 三輪流神道灌頂支度, in *Ibid*, volume 6: *Miwaryū shintō hen: kon* 三輪流神道篇 坤. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1979, pp.524–528.

## The Shintō *Kanjō* Rite and the Sacred Hall

The purpose of the Shintō *kanjō* rite is to transmit central doctrinal teachings (*shintōsetsu* 神道説) of the sect to the one ordained. Based on a similar ritual practiced in esoteric Buddhism, this rite consists of ceremoniously dropping a single flowers (*tōke* 投華) upon the *daidan* 大壇, or Greater Platform, and passing on various secret teachings and other central transmissions of the sect upon the *shōdan* 小壇, or Lesser Platform. This rite takes place within a building known as a *dōjō* 道場, or Sacred Hall, the inner divisions of which are delineated by means of curtains and folding screens. The various partitions of this sort that separate the inside of the Sacred Hall from the outside environment serve also to create a sacred religious space in which statues of Shintoistic deities and Buddhist divinities may be ceremoniously placed.

### Delineating Sacred Spaces within the Sacred Hall

The Sacred Hall (**Figure 1**), when used for conducting the *kanjō* rites, is separated into a number of sacred spaces by means of the following structures:

**1. *Shimenawa* 注連繩 (sacred ropes):** A number of sacred ropes are used to delineate sacred spaces: First, the entire hall itself is ritualistically separated from the outside world by means of a long sacred rope running around the hall's outermost perimeter. Second, the outer chamber (*gejin* 外陣), where the ordinands and the choir (*sanju* 讃衆) are seated before the ceremony is likewise delineated. Third, the inner chamber (*naijin* 内陣), the central location of the ceremony where the platforms are erected, is similarly circumscribed. Here we see the original significance of *shimenawa*, namely, to circumscribe and maintain the ritual purity of sacred spaces. It should be noted here that as one moves from the outer to the inner sacred spaces, in the order just described, the number of paper streamers (*shide* 紙垂) and *sakaki* 榊 (*Cleyera japonica*) branches attached to each respective sacred rope increases, thereby representing a corresponding increase in ritual purity.

Another sub-branch of Shinbutsu Shintō, established first by the Edo-period Shingon monk Jiun Onkō 慈雲飲光 (1718-1805), and known as Uden Shintō 雲伝神道, has transmitted to us records of the structure of its ritual space used for conducting the *kanjō* rite. According to these records, Uden Shintō set up liminal markers, known as Ama no ukihashi 天の浮橋, the Heavenly Floating Bridge, and Ama no yachimata 天の八衢, the Heavenly Eight-Branched Road, to separate the sacred space of the ritual from the outside mundane world.<sup>2</sup> Both of these structures were modelled after mythical topoi supposed to have been situated somewhere between heaven and earth, and, as such, were placed just

<sup>2</sup> “Shintō kanjō seiki” 神道灌頂清軌, in Hase Hōshū 長谷宝秀, ed., *Jiun Sonja zensho* 慈雲尊者全書, volume 10, Kōkiji 高貴寺, 1924, pp. 881-917.

outside the Sacred Hall as a means of signifying that the space within the hall had thereby been transformed into a divine world.

**2. *Torii* (gates) and *Noren* 暖簾 (curtains):** The walkway leading up to the Sacred Hall contains a total of three *torii* gates. According to the teachings of Shinbutsu Shintō, those who pass under these gates are required, at each *torii*, to pay their respects to the Buddhas and intone a secret poem intended to purify the individual after the fashion of traditional Shintoistic rites. The entrance of the Sacred Hall is covered with a curtain, upon which is depicted an image of the sun and the moon, along with the following passage: “The world of demons and the world of Buddhas—both of these are embraced by Dainichi” (*makai bukkai kore mina Dainichi* 魔界仏界皆是大日), where Dainichi is none other than Mahāvairocana, the Great Sun Buddha (Dainichi nyorai 大日如来). This curtain simultaneously conceals the sacred space lying beyond and signifies its sacrality to those about to enter.

**3. *Kaki* 垣 (fences):** The *daidan*, or Greater Platform, the central locus of the *kanjō* rite is surrounded by a fence, the stakes of which sport tips that are tapered to resemble mountain peaks. There is, furthermore, a *torii* gate marking the place where participants are to insert their hands through the fence in order to perform the ceremonial dropping of a flower, thereby giving the impression of a miniature replica of the outer surroundings of the shrine itself. The upper portion of the platform contains a shelf on which is displayed Buddhist scriptures, illustrated wooden plaques (*ema* 絵馬), gilt engravings of floral patterns (*keman* 華鬘), various decorative banners, along with a canopy (*tengai* 天蓋) to which is attached a mirror. These items are meant to signify the amalgamation of Shintoistic deities and Buddhist divinities.

### Conclusion: Special Characteristics of the Sacred Hall for Shintō *Kanjō* Rites

The use of *shimenawa* and *torii*—both of which are strongly associated with Shintoistic and not Buddhist practices—as markers of sacred space in Shinbutsu Shintō rituals indicates that, while creating a purified space for ritual activity, practitioners also sought to emphasize the Shintoistic aspect of the syncretic faith. The sort of sacred space created for Shintō *kanjō* rites is characterized by set of concentric layers of sacred spaces, each marked off by a *shimenawa*, and each for sacred than the previous. The same holds true for the series of three *torii* gates encountered along the walkway towards the Sacred Hall, each gate representing a greater degree of purification. Naturally, the Greater Platform, located as it is at the center of the Hall, signifies the greatest possible degree of ritual purification. This overall structure resembles that of traditional (non-syncretic) Shintō shrines. While Shinbutsu Shintō preached syncretic doctrines that included the amalgamation of Buddhist divinities, the sacred spaces created within

their halls, spaces where the Shintō deities were believed to appear, were characteristically Shintoistic in their structure, as well as in their consistent appeal to ritual purity. That is to say, while the Shintō deities are not overtly represented, their presence was certainly felt in virtue of the characteristically Shintoistic structure of sacred spaces within their Sacred Halls. In this way, sacred spaces associated with Shintō rituals signified not only a fundamental separation from the mundane world, but served simultaneously as a means of drawing attention to the existence of Shintō deities.

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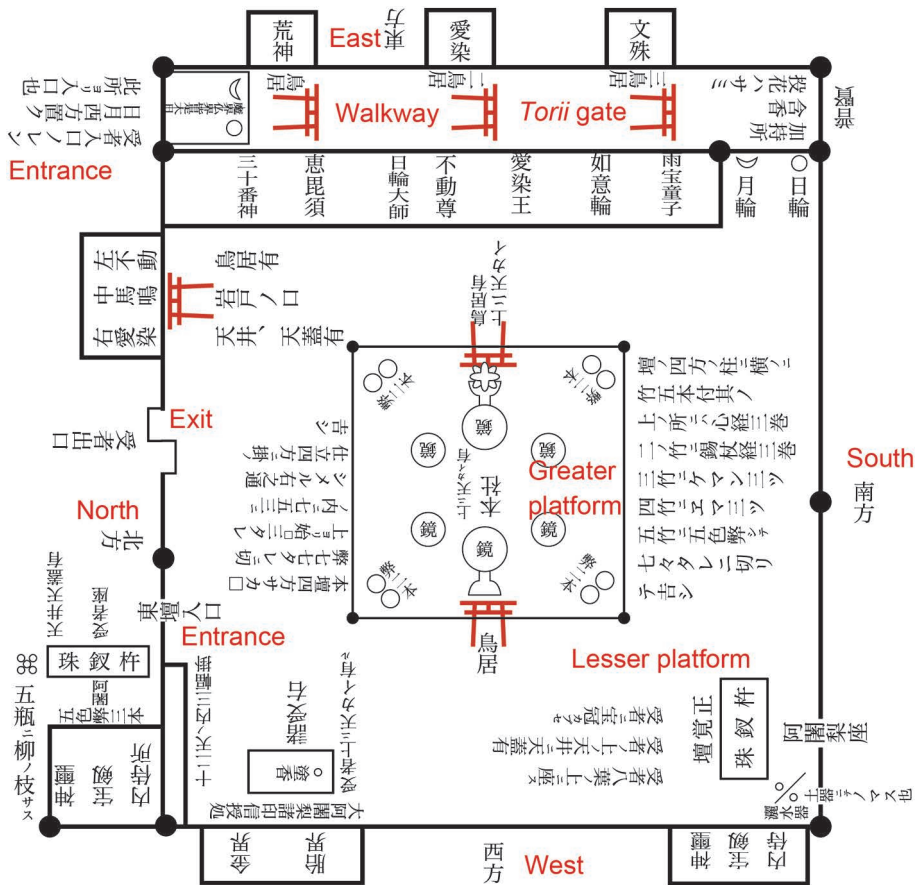


Figure 1. Plan of the Sacred Hall (*dojo* 道場). Note that this diagram is oriented with east at the top. The greater platform (*daidan* 大壇), here listed as the *bondan* 本壇, is located in the center of the Sacred Hall, while a number of lesser platforms (*sbodan* 小壇) are located around this. The walkway running along the eastern side of the Sacred Hall has three *torii* 鳥居 gates, as well as a *noren* 暖簾 curtain hanging over the entrance. “Miwaryū kanjō shiki” (Reproduction and Transcription by YONEZAWA Takanori).



# Oracles and Offerings: The Vernacular Poetry that Binds Gods and Humans

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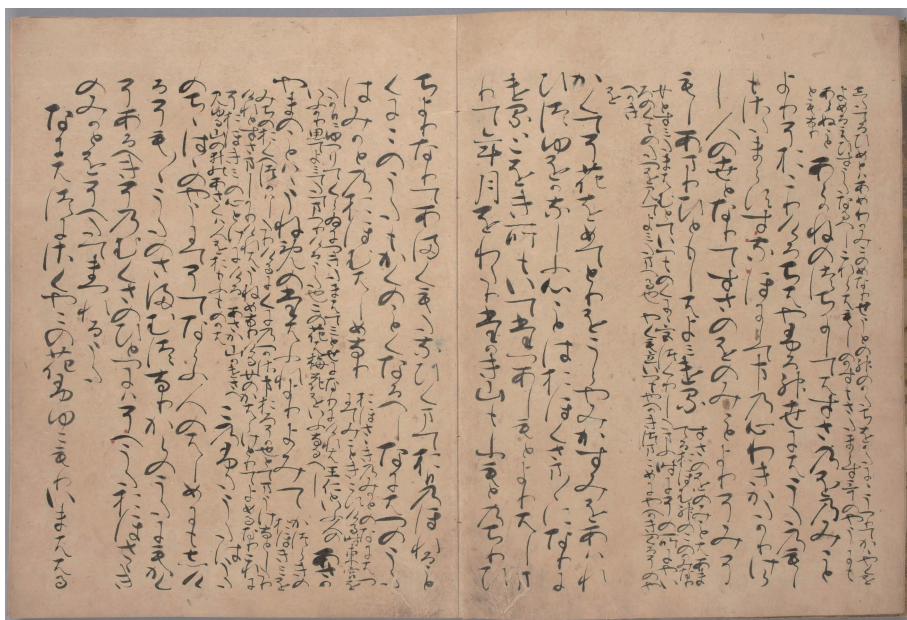
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In the world of premodern Japanese literature, vernacular poetry was depicted as something capable of transcending the established boundaries of social status and nationality, a vehicle for crossing between different worlds. I would like here to briefly examine the role of vernacular poetry as a means of transcending the borders between gods and humans. On the one hand, the gods give messages to humans by means of oracular verses of vernacular poetry; on the other hand, humans seek to please the gods by means of offerings of vernacular poetry. It is through these two special forms of presentation—oracles from the gods and offerings to the gods—that vernacular poetry succeeded in blurring the borders between the mundane and the divine.

Tradition would have it that the first vernacular poem—that is, of the conventional type consisting of thirty-one syllables—was composed by a deity. According to the vernacular preface to *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集 (*Poems ancient and modern*, 905), the first imperially commissioned anthology of vernacular poetry, this was a poem intoned by the god Susanoo スサノヲノミコト when marrying his new bride Kushiinada クシイナダヒメ in the land of Izumo (in modern-day Shimane, see **Figure 1**).

Thus, avers the preface, began the tradition of thirty-one-syllable vernacular poetry. Since that event, it was not uncommon for gods to recite vernacular poetry, and, more especially, to reveal their intentions to us mortals by means of oracles of the same form. Such verses are known collectively as oracular poems. Let us take a look at the history of those oracular poems preserved in imperially commissioned anthologies of vernacular verse, focusing our attention on ways in which such poems allow the gods and humans to communicate with one another.

The first imperially commissioned anthology of vernacular verse to contain oracular poetry was *Shūi wakashū* 拾遺和歌集 (*Gleanings of vernacular verse*, 1005), this being the third such anthology. In fascicle ten we find two oracular poems, one by the god at Sumiyoshi Shrine 住吉社 (Osaka), the other by the god presiding



**Figure 1.** *Kokin wakashū, kana-jo* 古今和歌集 仮名序. (NIJL, item no. 99-2-1)

Eishō 16 (1519), postscript by Reizei Tamehiro 冷泉為広.

Formerly held by Seikei Shooku (Ōshima Masatarō).

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over Kamo Shrine 賀茂社 (Kyoto). Both of these poems appear in a section labelled *kagura uta* 神楽歌, songs performed in divine music. The fourth imperially commissioned anthology, *Goshūi wakashū* 後拾遺和歌集 (*Later gleanings of vernacular verse*, 1086), has a small sub-section entitled *jingi* 神祇, gods of heaven and earth, which is embraced within the more encompassing category of miscellaneous verse (*zōka* 雑下). Within this *jingi* sub-section, the first poem is attributed to the aforementioned Sumiyoshi deity, while the second poem is purported to have been intoned by the god at Kifune Shrine 貴船社 (Kyoto). *Kin'yō wakashū* 金葉和歌集 (*Anthology of golden leaves*, 1125), the fifth imperially commissioned anthology, contains no oracular poetry, while the sixth anthology, *Shika wakashū* 詞花和歌集 (*Anthology of floral verses*, 1151), contains but one oracular poem, attributed to the god of Inari Shrine 稻荷社 (Kyoto), which appears in the second section of miscellaneous poetry (*zōka*).

As can be seen from this cursory survey, the number of oracular poems appearing in imperially commissioned anthologies of vernacular verse is not great. Even so, interest in oracular poetry was clearly on the rise from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. Minamoto no Toshiyori 源俊頼 (1055–1129), sole compiler of the aforementioned *Kin'yō wakashū*, was also the author of a treatise on poetics entitled *Toshiyori zuinō* 俊頼髓脳 (*Toshiyori's poetic essentials*, 1113). In this treatise, he includes a total of five oracular poems, two attributed to the god at Sumiyoshi, one

to the god at Mount Miwa 三輪山 (in Nara), one to the god at Ise Shrine 伊勢社 (Mie), and one to the god at Kifune. Among the numerous treatises on vernacular poetics that had been compiled by the middle of the twelfth century, Fujiwara no Kiyosuke's 藤原清輔 (1104–1177) *Fukuro zōshi* 袋草紙 (*Poetic miscellany*, c. 1159) contains nineteen oracular poems. It would appear from the rich variety of shrine names found in this treatise that Kiyosuke sought to provide readers with a complete list of all those gods to whom oracular poems had been attributed.

Shortly after Kiyosuke completed his *Fukuro zōshi*, he set about compiling what was intended to become the seventh imperially commissioned anthology of vernacular verse, *Shokushika wakashū* 続詞花和歌集 (*Second anthology of floral verses*, 1165). Emperor Nijō 二条天皇 (1143–1165, r. 1158–1165), the man who originally commissioned this anthology, passed away before its completion, thereby technically precluding its inclusion as one of the imperially commissioned anthologies. Whatever the case, in this anthology, Kiyosuke saw fit to expand what had been, in previous anthologies, but a small section of poems attributed to the gods, into an entire fascicle all its own. Interest among courtly poets in oracular verses had reached a peak in the second half of the twelfth century.

On the other hand, *Senzai wakashū* 千載和歌集 (*Verses for a thousand years*, 1188), which became by default the seventh imperially commissioned anthology of vernacular poetry, while containing a section on poems associated with the gods, did not contain a single oracular poem. Instead, we see here many poems composed by humans as offerings to the gods. Here we see, also, poems of petition, praying to the gods for protection, as well as poems composed to commemorate wishes graciously fulfilled by the gods. These latter verses contain explanatory headnotes, the substance of which approaches what would later develop into a genre of anecdotal literature devoted to praising the miraculous efficacy of poetry in gaining divine favor (*katoku setsuma* 歌徳説話). Vernacular poetry, in the form of a pious offering, thus came to serve as a powerful means of procuring the god's protection. This practice had already become quite popular about a decade before *Senzai wakashū* was commissioned. Poetry competitions in which vernacular verses were dedicated as offerings to various gods had been held at Sumiyoshi Shrine (in 1170), at Hirota Shrine 広田社 (Hyōgo, in 1172), twice at the Shinra Shrine in Mii Temple 三井寺新羅社 (Shiga, in 1173 and 1177), and at Kamigamo Shrine 上賀茂社 (Kyoto, in 1178), among others.

At was around this time, too, that the practice of presenting offertory poems to shrine deities took on a further convention: the number of poems offered became set at one hundred (*bōnō hyakushū* 奉納百首). The first such event, hosted by Kamo no Shigeyasu 賀茂重保 (1119–1191), head priest of the Kamo Shrine, and known as the *Juei hyakushū* 寿永百首 (*One hundred poems of the Juei era*, 1182), gathered together a total of thirty-six poets. Shigeyasu took poems offered during

both the *Juei hyakushū* and the aforementioned poetry competition held, likewise, at Kamigamo Shrine in 1178, and arranged these into an anthology entitled *Tsukimōde wakashū* 月詣和歌集 (*Verses offered up during monthly visits to the shrine*, 1182). *Senzai wakashū* was completed in 1187. The man appointed compiler of this imperial anthology was Fujiwara no Toshinari 藤原俊成 (1114–1204). Toshinari had served as an umpire or judge (*hanja* 判者) at those poetry competitions just mentioned held at Sumiyoshi Shrine, Hirota Shrine, and Kamo Shrine. Six of the thirty-four poems contained in the section of *Senzai wakashū* relating to the gods were taken from these poetry competitions.

As though to make up for the fact that *Senzai wakashū* had not contained any oracular poems, the eighth imperially commissioned anthology of vernacular verse, *Shinkokin wakashū* 新古今和歌集 (*A new anthology of poems ancient and modern*, 1205) has thirteen oracular poems. Not only was this amount unprecedented, but the fact that these poems were placed at the very beginning of the section on poems relating to the gods also reveals an unprecedented interest in such verses. Why, we might rightly ask, are there so many oracular poems in *Shinkokin wakashū*? First, it must be noted that most of the thirteen poems were offered at shrines to which Retired Emperor Go-toba 後鳥羽院 (1180–1239, r. 1183–1198), the man who commissioned this anthology, was wont to offer his own vernacular poems. Considering Go-toba presented his offertory poems both prior to and after the compilation of *Shinkokin wakashū*, Asada Tōru 浅田徹 Argues that the retired emperor conceived of vernacular poetry as a form of prayer, and that he saw the compilation of this poetry anthology as a means of asking for peace and prosperity throughout his domain.<sup>1</sup> If this interpretation does indeed approach Go-toba's state of mind at the time of compilation, it is easy to understand why he would have showed exceptional interest in oracular poems, poems which represented the god's replies to his earnest prayers.

As has been shown, *Senzai wakashū* places importance on offertory poems, to human petitions for divine favor, while *Shinkokin wakashū*, on the contrary, shows more concern for oracular poems, that is, to the divine replies of human prayers. In either case, vernacular verse, with its ability to transcend the borders between gods and humans, was used as a means for the emperor to pray for a peaceful reign. Vernacular poetry allowed for the voices of humanity to reach the ears of the gods, and for the gods, in their turn, to have their voices heard amidst mortal ears.

<sup>1</sup> Asada Tōru, "Gotoba-in to kami: *Shinkokinshū* ni taku sareta mono" 後鳥羽院と神—『新古今集』に託されたもの—, in *Kokugakuin zasshi* 国学院雑誌, 114: 8 (August 2013) 29–48.

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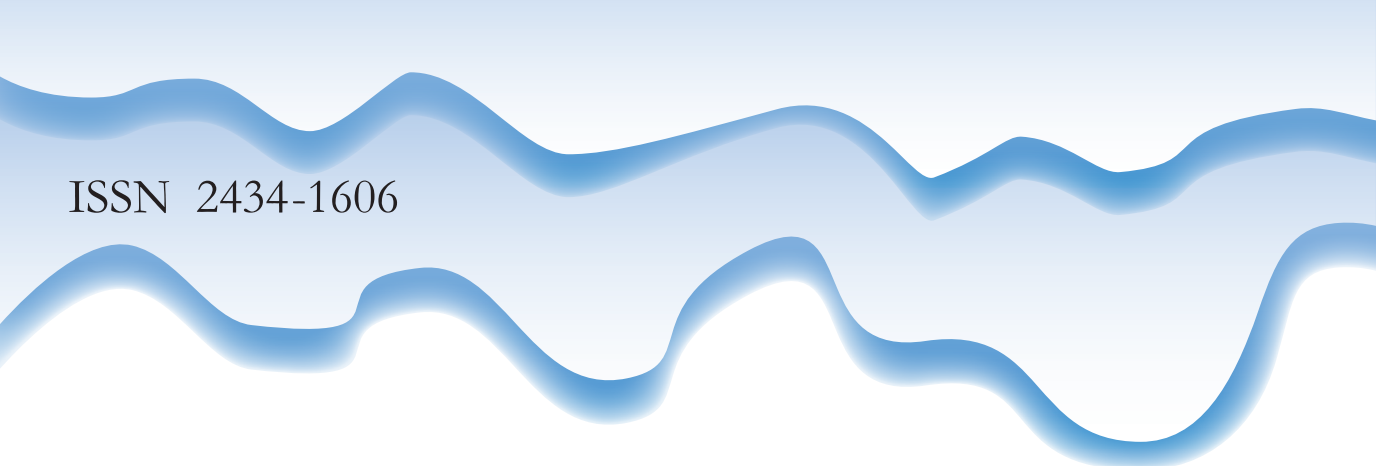
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