

©2019

JOSEPH LYNDON DECKER

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CREATION OF SACRED LANDSCAPE AND LEGENDARY

ORIGINS OF THE SHIKOKU PILGRIMAGE

by

JOSEPH LYNDON DECKER

A thesis submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Religion

Written under the direction of

Tao Jiang

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May, 2019

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Creation of Sacred Landscape and Legendary Origins of the Shikoku

Pilgrimage

by JOSEPH LYNDON DECKER

Thesis Director:

Tao Jiang

This thesis aims to carefully examine the origins of *Daishi shrinkō* 大師信仰, the cult of Kūkai, as it developed on Mt. Kōya, gradually spreading throughout all of the eighty-eight sacred sights of the Shikoku Pilgrimage, assisted in part by the dissemination of a body of literature known as *Kōbō densetsu* 弘法伝説. *Kōbō densetsu* are folk legends that feature the deified Kūkai and his interactions with the laity and pilgrims, appearing as the *bodhisattva Kōbō Daishi* who is the central figure of veneration in a Pure Land branch of Shingon Buddhism known as *Daishi shrinkō*. Specifically, this thesis will dissect two versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*, the founding legend of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. The first of these texts is the temple founding legend of Ishite Temple 石手寺 dating from the late Muromachi era. The second text is a version of the legend as it was recorded by Chōzen 澄禅 in the *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記 (1653) an account of his pilgrimage composed

almost one hundred years later during the Edo era. Examining the development of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* by analyzing its content, it becomes possible to trace the expansion of the cult of Kūkai at Ishite Temple.

This thesis proposes that in the context of medieval Japanese religion, *densetsu* 伝説 (legends) and *setsuwa* 説話 (folk stories) may be viewed as a form of textual technology that, when linked to the physical world through the pilgrimage ritual, transform and assimilate local religious customs, establishing and influencing the way religious practitioners interact with sacred spaces in the physical world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my 2015 walking pilgrimage around the island of Shikoku, I had a great deal of assistance. Making a 1,200-kilometer pilgrimage on foot would not be possible without the aid of numerous people. Likewise, I have received an abundance of guidance from the professors here at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. I am deeply indebted to my advisor Professor Tao Jiang. Thank you kindly for your patience with this project as it developed. Furthermore, thank you for letting me make liberal use of your uncanny ability to deconstruct an argument and then seemingly effortlessly reconstruct it again. Without your guidance this project would have not been completed. Professor Lammerts, your ability to contextualize history, your humor and wit, and scholarly precision have been an inspirational force and a large part of my academic development here at Rutgers. I hope you see some of yourself shine through in this. Professor Wakabayashi, I am truly fortunate to have had you for a guide and deeply grateful for all of the personal attention you gave me as this project developed. Not only did you teach me Japanese, but more importantly, you taught me how to do scholarship in Japanese. This project would not have been possible without you. I am a better student, scholar and teacher because of you.

I also would like to thank Professor Ian Reader, first for his enormous contributions to the academic study of pilgrimage in Japan and secondly, even though enjoying retirement, for always responding to my questions via

email. In addition to Professor Reader, I would like to thank Professor Jacqueline Stone. It was a privilege getting to know you and have the benefit of your scholarly expertise first hand. Your approach to Japanese Buddhism and intellectual history has influenced and shaped my own academic development significantly. Thank you, I am in your debt. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Mami Miyashita, Hiroshi and Fumi Tsutsumi, Haruyo Suzuki, Kazuhiro Nose, Shuichi Hara and David Moreton.

Thank you all for acting as *sendatsu* 先達, guides, on my own academic pilgrimage, none of this would have been possible without your generous assistance. I fully accept all responsibilities for any errors contained within this thesis. All mistakes are a solely my own.

It is also necessary to thank the main character of this narrative, Kōbō Daishi. During the pilgrimage it was my fervent wish that my wife and I would conceive a child and that our child too would one day find themselves climbing up hundreds of steps and announcing their arrival at a temple, by ringing the temple bell. That prayer was answered twice during the composition of this master's thesis.

That being said, no amount of thanks can adequately express the love and gratitude I have for my family and their unquestioning support of my academic pursuits. First and foremost, I thank my parents, Allen and Susan for your love and financial support. But most importantly I'd like to thank my wife Francisca. Your unconditional patience has been a constant source of

strength for me while working on this project. I merely wrote one master's thesis in two years; you gave birth twice. None of this would have been possible without your loving support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

<i>ABSTRACT.....</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>1</i>
 <i>CHAPTER 1 SACRED LANDSCAPES AND PILGRIMAGE PRACTICES IN SHIKOKU</i>	
1.1: THE SHIKOKU PILGRIMAGE.....	8
1.2: RELIGIOUS CONTEXT AND CUSTOMS.....	10
1.3: DŌGYŌNININ 同行二人.....	10
1.4: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.....	12
1.5: PILGRIMAGE STUDIES AND THE PROBLEMATIC APPLICATION OF THE TERM “PILGRIMAGE”....	14
1.6: OFUDA お札.....	16
1.7: THE “CONFLUENCE THEORY”.....	19
1.8: JAPANESE TERMS FOR “PILGRIMAGE”.....	25
1.9: JUNREI 巡礼.....	25
1.10: FROM HENCHI 辺地 TO HENRO 遍路.....	27
1.11: HENDO 辺土.....	29
1.12: HENCHI 辺地.....	31

CHAPTER 2 EXAMINING THE LEGENDARY ELEMENTS OF THE EMON SABURŌ

DENSETSU

2.1: BREAKING A BEGGAR'S BOWL.....	40
2.2: BUDDHAS, BODHISATTVAS AND BEGGARS.....	42
2.3: MIRACULOUS REBIRTHS AND CLENCHED FISTS.....	47
2.4: SETSUWA AS BUDDHIST PROPAGANDA.....	50

CHAPTER 3 THE DEIFICATION OF KŪKAI, SACRALIZATION OF MT. KŌYA AND THE BIRTH OF DAISHI SHINKŌ

3.1: THE HISTORICAL KŪKAI.....	55
3.2: NYŪJYOSETSU: THE LEGEND OF KŪKAI'S PERPETUAL SAMADHI ON MT. KŌYA.....	61
3.3: KŪKAI'S SACRED LANDSCAPE.....	63
3.4: MANDALA.....	68
3.5: THE KŌYA HIJIRI AND THE DEIFICATION OF KŪKAI.....	76
3.6: SITUATING KŪKAI IN JAPAN'S LARGER SACRED LANDSCAPE.....	77

CHAPTER 4 ISHITE TEMPLE AND THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE EMON SABURŌ

DENSETSU

4.1: EARLY PILGRIM DIARIES AND GUIDEBOOKS OF THE EDO ERA.....	80
4.2: ISHITE TEMPLE ENGRAVING OF EMON SABURŌ DENSETSU, LATE MUROMACHI ERA.....	85

4.3: THE EMON SABURŌ DENSETSU AS RECODED BY CHŌZEN IN THE EDO ERA.....	86
4.4: AN ANALYSIS OF BOTH VERSIONS OF THE LEGEND.....	90
4.5: UNITING THE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF ISHITE TEMPLE THROUGH PILGRIMAGE.....	93
4.6: BANGAI TEMPLES: FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE DASHI SHINKŌ.....	96
 CONCLUSION.....	 100
REFERENCES.....	107

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

FIGURE 1: <i>Emaki</i> 絵巻 depiction of Kūkai lecturing on <i>sokushin jōbutsu</i> 即身成仏.....	67
FIGURE 2: <i>Emaki</i> 絵巻 depiction of Kūkai transforming himself into <i>Dainichi</i>	67
FIGURE 3: Map of the religious diversity of Ishite Temple in 1653.....	99
FIGURE 4: A stone monument depicting Emon Saburō and <i>Kōbō Daishi</i>	102

INTRODUCTION:

Emon Saburō was the head of an inhumanly greedy, cruel, and powerful family in Ebara, Iyo Province. One day, a travelling monk stopped in front of Emon's house while performing *takuhatsu*, but rather than donate anything, Emon beat him with a bamboo broom and drove him off.¹ The monk's begging bowl shattered into eight pieces and the pieces scattered all around. From the very next day, Emon's eight sons began dying, one after the other. One night shortly after, Kūkai appeared to Emon in a dream and said, "Because of your stupid sins, your sons have died. If you undertake the pilgrimage to the temples on Shikoku, you can repent for your actions." Realizing that the travelling monk he had beat with the bamboo broom had been Kūkai, he set off on the pilgrimage around Shikoku in order to find him and express his regret—He completed the pilgrimage twenty times, but he was never able to find him. Never meeting Kūkai, it occurred to him to walk his twenty-first, pilgrimage around the island in the counterclockwise direction. Arriving at the foot of the mountain below Shōsan-ji, what is now Temple 12, he was completely worn out, at the point of death, and collapsed. Seeing him there, Kūkai appeared...²

This is an excerpt taken from *Emon Saburō densetsu* (衛門三郎伝説, *The*

Tale of Emon Saburō), the founding myth of the famous Shikoku Pilgrimage.

Shikoku 四国 is the smallest of the four islands that make up Japan. It is the least populated island and is often considered the rural backwater. However, it is the birth place of Kūkai 空海 (774-835), also known as Kōbō Daishi 弘法

¹ *Takuhatsu* 托鉢 is a traditional form of *dāna* or demonstrating the Buddhist virtue of generosity. In Japan Buddhist monks will recite *sūtras* in front of homes or local business to receive alms from the laity.

² Matsushita, Naoyuki. (2016) p.101-102. This version of the Emon Saburō legend comes from a guidebook designed specifically to introduce foreign pilgrims to the history and folklore associated with the Shikoku Pilgrimage. This particular translation was done by David Turkington.

大師, one of the most prominent Buddhist monks in Japanese history and the founder of Japanese Esoteric (*Shingon*) Buddhism.

The physical landscape of Shikoku Pilgrimage is permeated with legends and folklore like this one about Kōbō Daishi. There are over three-thousand legends about Kōbō Daishi. In all four prefectures of Shikoku, nearly every place one visits has some legendary connection to the *bodhisattva* that was born on the island. Legends would have us believe Kōbō Daishi was immaculately conceived and entered into this world with his hands folded in prayer. Appearing all along the pilgrimage route Kōbō Daishi is credited with performing various miracles such as making chestnuts bloom out of season for local children to enjoy, performing rituals to make it rain, casting out demons, chasing away poisonous serpents, making a freshwater spring by stamping his staff into the ground, healing the sick, and punishing the wicked and miserly. This is a pretty standard resume for a divine religious figure. Most notably it is believed that he attained enlightenment in a cave on the Muroto Cape and that he did not die, but in fact is still very much alive, diligently sitting in a deep state of meditation on Mt. Kōya. These sacred stories and narratives have shaped and continue to shape the religious identity of Shikoku.

The prevailing religious faith in modern Shikoku is known as *Dashi shinkō* 大師信仰, or the cult of Kūkai, and its presence dominates the eighty-eight temples of Shikoku's famous pilgrimage route, the *Shikoku henro* 四国遍

路. Modern pilgrims visiting these sacred sites will encounter legends about Kōbō Daishi at every temple along the official pilgrimage route and a great deal of shrines and lesser temples as well. His legendary presence is, in many ways, a constant traveling companion for all pilgrims.

Modern pilgrims react to the legends about Kōbō Daishi in different ways. Many pilgrims consign these legends to brief fictitious histories that accompany a photo of a temple in a guidebook; a simple premodern religious history explaining the mythical origins of a temple they just visited. This is the place where Kōbō Dashi appeared before a miserly fishmonger who refused to give him a shellfish as alms, with a tap of his staff Kōbō Dashi turned all of the fishmonger's shellfish to stone. Then they snap a photo, maybe purchase a charm or a trinket for themselves or a family member and hurry along to the next stop along the pilgrimage circuit. Pilgrimage is busy business, there is a lot to see and a lot of ground to cover each day, especially on foot. At least this was my initial personal experience walking the Shikoku Pilgrimage in its entirety in the spring of 2015.

It wasn't until I completed my pilgrimage, having recited the Heart Sūtra for the last time at Kūkai's mausoleum, that I personally became interested in the academic study of pilgrimage. I found myself staring out at a sea of people streaming down the stone paved path beneath the ancient trees of *Okunoin* 奥の院 on the 1,200-year anniversary of founding of Mt. Kōya. I was awestruck by the long, seemingly endless line of people filing past the

over 200,000 moss covered gravestones in Japan's largest cemetery. These were not only pilgrims but people from all walks of life also making their way to visit the supposed final resting place of Kūkai. From that moment on, I needed to know what the cult of Kūkai actual was and what kept drawing thousands of pilgrims each year to visit Mt. Kōya and to make pilgrimage to the eighty-eight temples of Shikoku. This thesis grew out of my fascination with the human desire to experience the sacred firsthand, moreover, to examine the ways the sacred manifests itself in the physical world by means of sacred narratives and in the case of Shikoku, legends about Kōbō Daishi.

Scholars of pilgrimage dissect these legends to find clues or hints to the origins and development of the Shikoku Pilgrimage, in an attempt to sort out myth from historical fact. Some scholars feel that these legends were just creative ways to solicit the laity for alms. Therefore, the legends serve the larger underlying purpose of securing economic support for the monastic community. I feel that both of these approaches tend to occlude the effect that these legends had on shaping religious pilgrimage practices in Shikoku. The legends about Kōbō Dashi reveal sacred connections to geographic locations in Shikoku, demonstrating how religious meaning is assigned to the mundane world. This process can be intimately experienced by participating in the pilgrimage ritual.

All pilgrims, the ancient ascetic wandering monk, the pious pilgrim, the newly retired salary man, the scholar, the “spiritual but not religious”

foreign trekker, the bus pilgrim and the tourist, all of them cannot avoid interacting with legends about Kōbō Daishi while making the Shikoku Pilgrimage. It was these very legends that linked the religious diversity of Shikoku Pilgrimage route together. One legend in particular, The Legend of Emon Saburō, demonstrates the power of the pilgrimage ritual to unite the religious diversity of Shikoku under one faith, *Daishi shrinkō* centered around one sacred persona, Kōbō Daishi.

Chapter one will begin by defining what is meant by the term “sacred landscape.” It will discuss the historical development of the Shikoku Pilgrimage by focusing on the etymology of several Japanese terms for pilgrimage that appear in Heian era 平安 (794-1185) *setsuwa* 説話 literature. It will also briefly examine several approaches to pilgrimage studies and determine whether or not the definitions and theories proposed therein are applicable to the study of pilgrimage in Japan.

Chapter two introduces and examines the Emon Saburō *densetsu*, the “founding” legend of the Shikoku Pilgrimage, while exploring how the narrative tropes present in Heian era *setsuwa* literature were embodied into the text as it appeared in the late Muromachi 室町(1336-1573) and Edo eras 江戸 (1603-1868).

Chapter three serves as an in-depth examination of life of the Buddhist monk Kūkai, his deification and situation within the pantheon of Japanese gods as the *bodhisattva Kōbō Daishi* 弘法大師. Likewise, it will discuss how

this process contributed to the sacralization of Mt. Kōya and its establishment as a major cultic center and destination for pilgrimage.

The final chapter will reexamine the Emon Saburō *densetsu* text from a historical perspective. Specifically, this chapter will dissect two versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. The first of these texts is the temple founding legend of Ishite Temple 石手寺 dating from the late Muromachi era. The second text is a version of the legend recorded by Chōzen 澄禅 in the *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記 (1653) an account of his Shikoku pilgrimage composed almost one hundred years later during the Edo era. Examining the development of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* by analyzing its content, it becomes possible to trace the expansion of the cult of Kūkai at Ishite Temple.

The sociologist Ian Reader has done a great deal to advance the scholarship on the Shikoku Pilgrimage in the English language. In his book *Making Pilgrimages, Meaning and Practice in Shikoku*, Reader puts forth the idea that pilgrims are connected to the physical world by the things they encounter on their pilgrimage. The temples, the legendary narratives, the things they leave behind at pilgrimage sites are all part of a “sacred landscape” that pilgrims experience through the pilgrimage ritual. The following chapter will explore this idea in further detail while providing some detailed information about the historical development of the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

CHAPTER 1: SACRED LANDSCAPES AND PILGRIMAGE PRACTICES IN SHIKOKU

What exactly constitutes a sacred landscape and how does this term apply to the study of Japanese religions? How and why are sacred landscapes formed and in what ways does the pilgrimage ritual act as a means of experiencing a sacred landscape? James Dobbins explains that medieval Japanese religious practices consisted in the ritual interaction with a system that contained a rich and varied spirit world, populated by *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, Shinto deities, and vengeful spirits, any of which could be manifested in human form.³ Furthermore, Dobbins explains that the most common unit of medieval Japanese religion was that of the cultic center, places like Mt. Hiei or Mt. Kōya. These remote mountain locations were home to foreboding, inspiring and mysterious forces, as Dobbins puts it, they were epicenters of spiritual activity. Pilgrims visited these places to experience the miraculous, and to receive healing, purification and protection from the otherworldly powers that resided there. Therefore, religion in medieval Japan generated a sacral geography where certain places stood out as spiritually charged and as such, could be entered and physically experienced by religious practitioners.⁴

A sacred landscape then, can be thought of as a system of religious ideas and beliefs, iconography, both real and imagined, that are expressed by

³ Dobbins, James. (2004) p.125.

⁴ Dobbins, James. (2004) p.127.

human beings and grafted onto locations, objects or people in the material world through various forms of human activity, such as the creation of texts, images or various ritual practices.

One primary way in which early modern Japanese religious practitioners experienced a sacred landscape was by making pilgrimages to these *reijō* 霊場 sacred sites, or *reichi* 霊地, places where spirits reside.

According to Ian Reader within the context of religious pilgrimage there is an evident correlation between the physical landscape and sacred narratives, in which the sites and settings and locations are richly layered with complex weavings of meaning and textual representation.⁵ Reader affirms that sacred textual narratives contribute to the way people perceive and interact with certain locations in the physical world.

1.1: THE SHIKOKU PILGRIMAGE

The Shikoku Pilgrimage also known as The *Shikoku henro* 四国遍路, *Shikoku junrei* 四国巡礼 or *Shikoku reijo hachijū hakkasho* 四国霊場八十八ヶ所 is a Buddhist pilgrimage that circumnavigates the entire island of Shikoku. There are eighty-eight official temples and twenty *bangai* 番外 temples that comprise the principal sacred locations pilgrims visit on this journey. The term *bangai* 番 delineates temples that are not sanctioned as a part of the official eighty-eight sites but hold religious significance to the cult of Kūkai,

⁵ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 40.

and therefore are important locations of worship. There are also a great deal of Shinto shrines and other locations that pilgrims may visit along the pilgrimage route. According to the tenth edition of *Shikoku henro hitori aruki dōgyōninin* 四国遍路ひとり歩き同行二人, the most reliable guidebook frequently used by pilgrims published in 2015, the modern pilgrimage route is about 1,116 kilometers (693 miles.) This distance does not include visiting all twenty of the *bangai* temples.

All eighty-eight of the pilgrimage sites can be visited in one trip, a practice referred to as *tōshi-uchi* 通し打ち; or in sections, usually divided by prefecture, known as *kugiri uchi* 区切り打ち. Many pilgrims also typically start or finish their pilgrimage by visiting Kūkai's mausoleum in the inner sanctum of Mt. Kōya in Wakayama Prefecture. Followers of the Dashi faith, believe that Kūkai did not die but is actually sitting in an eternal state of mediation, waiting for the coming of *Maitreya*, the future Buddha. Many pilgrims also hold to the religious belief that Kōbō Daishi accompanies them along their pilgrimage, and visiting his mausoleum is a way of offering gratitude for a successful pilgrimage.⁶ Modern pilgrims make pilgrimage by bus, rented car, hired taxi, and bicycle. However, the traditional, and for some, most authentic way, is on foot. The journey on foot takes around forty to sixty days to walk in its entirety.

⁶ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 11.

1.2: RELIGIOUS CONTEXT AND CUSTOMS

The Shikoku Pilgrimage is classified as a *seiseki junrei* 聖蹟巡礼, meaning that it entails visiting various locations with the specific purpose of connecting to the sacred or a holy person.⁷ In the case of Shikoku, this holy figure is *Kōbō Daishi*. *Kōbō Daishi* is the *bodhisattva* pilgrim avatar of Kūkai, the eminent Heian monk who founded Shingon Buddhism. The Shikoku Pilgrimage in its present form is centered around visiting the sites associated with the historical Kūkai's life.

At present all eighty-eight of the sacred sites contain two main worship halls, the *hondō* 本堂 for venerating principle deity of the temple, and the *Daishidō* 大師堂, worship hall dedicated to *Kōbō Daishi*. Virtually all of the principal Buddhist deities can be found being worshiped one of the eighty-eight temples in Shikoku. However, it is the presence of a *Daishidō* at all of these locations that unites the religious diversity of Shikoku together by means of the pilgrimage ritual linked to the worship of *Kōbō Daishi*.⁸

1.3: DŌGYŌNININ 同行二人

One of the central religious tenants of the *Daishi* faith is known as *dōgyōninin* 同行二人, the idea that *Kōbō Daishi* is present with all pilgrims and accompanies them on their journey. *Dōgyōninin* has been translated in

⁷ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 10.

⁸ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 11.

several ways, literally it means “two people, one practice.” I prefer to translate it as “two people united in one practice” as this translation better encapsulates the beliefs of the *Daishi* faith. This core belief of the *Daishi* faith permeates all aspects of the pilgrimage and one often sees it written everywhere on all manner of things along the pilgrimage route.

Most notably *dōgyōninin* appears written on the *kongōsue* 金剛杖 or pilgrim staff. The *kongōsue* viewed as the physical symbolic embodiment of Kōbō Daishi that goes along with the pilgrim on his or her journey.⁹ As it is the embodiment of *dōgyōninin* it is treated with utmost deference. When a pilgrim takes a break, he or she is to make sure the staff is placed in a safe place prior to sitting down. It is also considered bad luck to tap the staff on bridges, as one might awaken Kōbō Daishi, who might be napping under the bridge. The staff also is washed by innkeepers and even offered shelter inside the pilgrimage lodges with the pilgrims themselves instead of being left outside for the night.¹⁰ After walking long distances, the staff also starts to fray at the bottom; under no circumstances is this to be cut off. This would be like physically attacking Kōbō Daishi with a knife and is forbidden. Furthermore, the height of one’s staff becomes a point of pride for some pilgrims, as its shortened length indicated how many times a pilgrim had

⁹ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 12.

¹⁰ The first time I witnessed this practice I was a little surprised. Not all *Minshuku* observe this custom but on our pilgrimage, it was not rare upon arrival to be met by the innkeeper who washed the staff with a bucket of water. The pilgrims we traveled with insisted that if we were not going to wear the pilgrim’s hat, we must buy the staff. The staff proved very useful climbing the steep mountains and I once used it to fend off a rooster attack.

made the circuit using the staff. As we shall see the concept of *dōgyōninin* plays an important role in later versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*.

1.4: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Shikoku pilgrimage is thought to have come into existence in the *Muromachi* era.¹¹ Traditionally it is believed that the historical Kūkai founded the pilgrimage, and at present all of the temples have legendary ties to Kūkai. Many of these temple founding legends claim that Kūkai carved the statue of the *honzon* 本尊 or main deity, enshrining it on the temple grounds. However, scholars can say with a fair degree of certainty, that Kūkai never visited many of the places in Shikoku that are now affiliated with his worship. It would appear that the current structure of the Shikoku Pilgrimage uses the historical founding figure of Kūkai as a device for connecting all of the sacred sites together. However, the historical origins of the pilgrimage can certainly be traced to specific locations associated with the historical Kūkai, namely *Zentsūji* 善通寺, the temple where he was born. Some of the earliest historical evidence comes from *sūtras* that were copied and donated at *Zentsū* Temple in 861 by the imperial prince Takaoka Shinnō 高丘真如 (799–881).¹²

Prince Shinnō was the third son of Emperor Heizei 平城天皇 (773–824). Emperor Heizei would only reign for three years abdicating in favor of his

¹¹ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.276.

¹² Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p. 55.

younger brother Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 (786-823.) After his involvement in a failed rebellion in 810 to restore the Heizei to power, Takaoka Shinnō took the tonsure, becoming a monk and follower of Kūkai. Shinnō eventually requested to go on pilgrimage to Shikoku to venerate locations and relics associated with Kūkai. In addition to donating *sūtras* at *Zentsūji* he is also credited with the commissioning and construction of a two-story pagoda at *Kanjizai* Temple 観自在寺.¹³ This historical evidence demonstrates that seventy-four years after Kūkai's death, his followers were already making pilgrimage to sites associated with his life on Shikoku, beginning with *Zentsūji* 善通寺, his birth place in Sanuki Province. However, the veneration of Kūkai would not become fully established at all eighty-eight temples of the Shikoku Pilgrimage until much later.

It is not until the wandering monk Yūben Shinnen 有辨真念 published the *Shikoku henro michi shirube* 四國邊路道指南 in 1687 that a detailed pilgrimage route dedicated to the worship of *Kōbō Daishi* began to emerge. According to Shinnen the starting point for this journey is Ryōzen temple 靈山寺 in Awa Province, ending at Ōkubo Temple 大窪寺 a day's walk away through the mountains in Sanuki Province.¹⁴ Shinnen's *Shikoku henro michi shirube* is the first historical work to list all eighty-eight sites and is

¹³ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p. 55.

¹⁴ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p. 54.

considered to be the first official guidebook of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. It is almost certain that this book was the prototype for the modern pilgrimage.

The following section will begin by briefly examining some of the English definitions and theories that have been applied by western scholars in the field of pilgrimage studies and determine in what ways they are compatible or incompatible with the study of Japanese pilgrimage.

1.5: PILGRIMAGE STUDIES AND THE PROBLEMATIC APPLICATION OF THE TERM “PILGRIMAGE”

English language definitions of pilgrimage are broad and vary from religious journeys to venerated locations, to the more romantic metaphor of the “journey through life.” Linda Kay Davidson and David Gitlitz offer a definition of pilgrimage as “a journey to a special place, in which both the journey and the destination have spiritual significance for the journeyer.”¹⁵ This definition of pilgrimage is problematic because it hinges on the ambiguity of the word “spiritual,” and does not clearly define what qualifies a “special place.” By this definition a trip to visit Graceland, where the body of Elvis Presley lies interned, is also considered to be a pilgrimage for diehard fans of Elvis. Given the nature of Gitlitz and Davidson’s project of cataloguing the world’s great pilgrimages into one large anthology, it is not surprising that the constraints of such an undertaking forced the authors to settle on such a broad definition of pilgrimage.

¹⁵ Davidson and Gitlitz. (2002) p.xvii.

Linguistically the English term “pilgrimage” comes from the Latin word *peregrinus*. The Latin word *peregrinus* is derived from the word *per-ager*, which means “a person who passes through wild places.” Hence, at least in the context of the English language, the term pilgrimage has its roots in a person who is a “stranger,” or “passing through.”¹⁶ This definition of a pilgrim is characteristic of Victor Turner’s theories on pilgrims and the pilgrimage ritual expressed in his seminal work *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*.

According to Turner, during the *liminal* phase in the ritual of pilgrimage, pilgrims experience a state of transition. Pilgrims become “threshold people” they do not belong to any aspect of society. They exist on the fringe, and in this *liminal* space their individuality dissolves, only to be reformed again when the pilgrimage ritual is completed, and the pilgrim must once again rejoin normal society. For Turner, during this *liminal* phase all pilgrims can be considered equal, free from the constraints of normal social structure. Turner’s *liminal* phase is echoed in the Japanese religious concept of *dōgyōninin* 同行二人 of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. *Dōgyōninin* is a term belonging to *Daishi shinkō*, and the central tenant of the pilgrimage cult of Kōbō Daishi. *Dōgyōninin* is the belief that Kōbō Daishi, the deified form of Kūkai, is actually traveling along with the pilgrim during the pilgrimage. In this way, all of the pilgrims on Shikoku share a similar bond of unity, a *henro*

¹⁶ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.278.

遍路 identity while on pilgrimage. However, through extensive ethnographic work and field interviews with pilgrims, anthropologists and scholars have found that pilgrims do, in fact, have an identity, and in some cases a very pronounced identity marking them out as distinct from one another.

For example, Reader's research shows how the concept of *dōgyōninin* that displays universal equality among pilgrims is more idealistic than it is an actuality. Reader states the presence of Kōbō Daishi and the symbolic meanings inherent in the term *dōgyō* 同行 are the same no matter how pilgrims travel: all pilgrims, whether going on foot and performing austerities, or traveling on comfortable bus tours, or by private car, are together with Kōbō Daishi.¹⁷ This, at least in theory, is similar to Turner's universalizing loss of individual identity to present in the pilgrimage ritual. However, Reader is quick to point out that there are many ways in which pilgrims on Shikoku differentiate themselves from one another, chiefly the use of different colors of *ofuda* お札.

1.6: OFUDA お札

Ofuda お札 are paper talisman that are left at each of the sacred sites of the Shikoku pilgrimage as an offering and serve as a kind of receipt for the merit gained by visiting each location. Some researchers have likened *Ofuda* to a pilgrim's "calling card." An *ofuda* records the address and the names of

¹⁷ Reader, Ian. (2005) p. 59.

the pilgrims and often their reasons for making pilgrimage. The practices of leaving *ofuda* as a form of offering was a common religious custom throughout Japan. Historically *ofuda* were made of copper. Other materials such as paper and wood were used because they could be easily carried by hand. However, during the Edo era most *ofuda* were made of wood, they were usually nailed to the temple pillars, outer wall or ceiling of a temple. It is because of this practice that temples came to be known as *fudasho* 札所.¹⁸

Thus, the eighty-eight temples of the Shikoku Pilgrimage are commonly referred to as *fudasho*, or the place where one leaves *ofuda*. From the analysis of *ofuda* scholars have learned a great deal about the development of Shikoku Pilgrimage, especially in estimating the numbers of pilgrims that made the pilgrimage during the Edo era.

All *ofuda* are not equal however, and they come in many colors, indicating the amount of times one has performed the pilgrimage ritual. For example, on the first four pilgrimages a pilgrim must use white colored *ofuda*. The fifth to seventh pilgrimages the pilgrims use green colored *ofuda*. The eighth through twenty-fourth pilgrimages the pilgrims use red, the twenty-fifth to fourth-ninth they use silver and the fiftieth through ninety-ninth pilgrimages they use gold colored *ofuda*. For those who have done the pilgrimage one-hundred times or more there is a special brocade *ofuda* made

¹⁸ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.14.

from woven cloth.¹⁹ Those who have made the pilgrimage more than five times can become a *sendatsu* 先達, or an officially authorized pilgrimage guide. Reader rightly concludes that the existence of a system of different colors of *ofuda*, indicating levels of experience and times of performance of the Shikoku Pilgrimage, results in the conclusion that the idealized notion that all pilgrims are equal does not always translate into actuality.²⁰

The practice of leaving *ofuda* at temples and shrines in Shikoku was said to originate with Emon Saburō, a legendary pilgrim in the founding myth of the Shikoku Pilgrimage briefly mentioned at the beginning of the introduction. Emon Saburō set out on pilgrimage in search of Kōbō Daishi seeking his forgiveness for having attacked the wandering monk while he was begging alms. As a result of this attack Emon was divinely cursed and all eight of his sons died. After this Emon set out on the Shikoku Pilgrimage searching for Kōbō Daishi. It is said that Saburō left an *ofuda* at each location to inform Kōbō Daishi that he had visited that temple looking for him, while practicing penance for his evil deed. This is most certainly fictitious, however the religious practice of leaving *ofuda* at sacred sites provides a historical window into the religious life of individual pilgrims. For example, a copper *ofuda* found at Enmyō Temple 圓明寺 dating from 1650 contains the term *dōgyōninin* 同行二人, the religious term coined by the cult of Kūkai to imply

¹⁹ Moreton, David. (2009) p.32. My wife and I received two of these special *ofuda* while walking in Tokushima prefecture from *sendatsu*, leading large bus tours.

²⁰ Reader, Ian. (2005) p. 59.

that Kōbō Daishi accompanies all pilgrims on their journey.²¹ This *ofuda* provides definitive evidence of the spread of the cult of Kūkai in Shikoku in the Edo period thirty-seven years prior to the publication of Shinnen's official guidebook.

Despite the criticism of the *liminal* phase and loss of personal identity during the pilgrimage ritual, Turner has provided a firm foundation within pilgrimage studies that many future scholars have built upon. One of Turner's most salient observations is that most pilgrimage have beginnings traceable in historical time. Also many of the pilgrimages of the historical world religions were established on the sites of pilgrimages belonging to earlier religions.²² Furthermore, Turner states that well-established pilgrimage systems cannot die out and are often renewed or revived.²³ Turner's views explain that pilgrimage can be seen as a dynamic force interacting with and influencing sacred spaces in ways that are unique to the dominant culture of a particular historical time period. At least this aspect of Turner's views are indeed applicable to pilgrimage in Japanese religions.

1.7: THE "CONFLUENCE" THEORY

Bonnie Wheeler defines pilgrimage as a movement from an earthly home into sacred space, towards visiting a sacred goal, with the hope, if not

²¹ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.59.

²² Turner, Victor. (1978) p. 7.

²³ Turner, Victor. (1979) p. 26.

expectation, of a return home.²⁴ Wheeler's definition contains three elements, a departure from one's home, a journey towards a sacred space with a religious goal in mind, and the emphasis on returning home from that journey. This is typical of many modern definitions of the pilgrimage ritual found in western scholarship. However, in the context of Japanese pilgrimages, Wheeler's definition is incongruent.

For example, historically many of the pilgrims traveling to Shikoku embarked on the journey with no expectation of ever returning home again. A good majority of pilgrims to Shikoku were destitute, or disease ridden with leprosy and made pilgrimage seeking a cure. Some sought escape from the constraints of the feudal economic system and became *kojiki junrei* 乞食巡礼, alms begging pilgrims.²⁵ Arguably, such people turned pilgrimage into a profession or an alternate way of existing in society.

Death was also an ever-present possibility for medieval Japanese pilgrims. All along the pilgrimage route, in the mountains near temples one comes across the graves of *yukidaore henro* 行き倒れ遍路, pilgrims who had fallen ill and died in route.²⁶ According to Nathalie Kouame's research into the legal literature regulating the Shikoku Pilgrimage during the Edo era, providing the proper burial for these pilgrims was one of the numerous responsibilities of the local authorities.²⁷

²⁴ Wheeler, Bonnie. (1998) p. 5.

²⁵ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.275.

²⁶ Kouame, Nathalie. (1997) p.421.

²⁷ Kouame, Nathalie. (1997) p.421.

Moreover, the clothing that distinguishes pilgrims in Shikoku from other travelers is white, a symbol of purity and death in Japanese culture. The *hakui* 白衣, the pilgrim's white shirt or vest is tied in reverse order, which is only done in the case of a corpse in Buddhist funeral ritual.²⁸ The *hakui* is essentially a burial shroud.²⁹ The *sugegasa* 菅笠, or the conical hat that is an iconic image of pilgrims, is inscribed with a Buddhist poem that is often written on coffins in Japan.³⁰ The *kongōsue*, pilgrim staff is inscribed with the pilgrim's 戒名 *kaimyō* or the posthumous Buddhist ancestral name he or she will be known by after death.³¹ In pre-modern times the staff also served as the pilgrim's gravestone. In this way pilgrims are actually dressed for their own funeral, ready to die if necessary, to complete the pilgrimage ritual. The fact that death was an ever-present possibility for Japanese pilgrims, calls into question the notion that Japanese pilgrims would have been "expecting to return home," rendering Wheeler's definition of pilgrimage partially inadequate, at least in the context of medieval Japanese pilgrimage.

²⁸ Reader, Ian. (2006) p.63.

²⁹ In addition to having their *nōkyōuchō* stamped at each temple along the route, many pilgrims also purchase a second *hakui* and have it stamped with the specific purpose of being worn during their cremation.

³⁰ Reader, Ian. (2006) p.63. Initially on our 2015 walking pilgrimage of Shikoku my wife and I were hesitant about purchasing *sugegasa*. I remember feeling a bit embarrassed about not actually being Buddhist and wearing full pilgrim attire, felt almost touristy. However, after several days of hiking we recanted. The *sugegasa* I purchased along the way was inscribed by a man who was particularly skilled in Japanese calligraphy. Many people we encountered along the route commented on the writing of the Buddhist poem and inquired as to where I bought it and who had done the calligraphy. The hat not only proved tremendously practical as it protected from sunburn and rain, but it was a religious object that connected me to the local people during my pilgrimage.

³¹ Reader, Ian. (2006) p.63.

Though Wheeler's definition of pilgrimage is not completely indictive of Japanese pilgrimage, her theories regarding the function of the pilgrimage ritual can be applied to the way pilgrimage functions in Japanese religions. Wheeler postulates the theory that pilgrimage functions like a "confluence." By confluence she means the convergence of many unique individuals from different countries, cultural backgrounds and religious or secularly held beliefs, with one main thing they share in common: the movement toward a shared sacred space. In contrast to Turner's theory of *liminality* in the pilgrim ritual, in which the pilgrim loses his or her individual identity, Wheeler presents large amounts of evidence that, in fact, the opposite is true. Confluence theory envisions the pilgrimage ritual as the merging of individual tributaries of different cultures, ideals, religious and social identities and backgrounds into one strong current flowing toward a shared sacred space. According to Wheeler, each individual pilgrim has a desire to form a tangible connection with a specific sacred space. That desire for tangible connection with a specific sacred space is both amplified and reflected in the literature, legends and folklore, art, maps and guidebooks featuring a specific location's uniqueness from the rest of the world.

The confluence theory also dovetails nicely with the religious diversity found at many sacred sights, a familiar characteristic of most Japanese pilgrimage destinations. The Shikoku Pilgrimage is a primary example of this aspect of the confluence theory at work.

In medieval Japan many sacred sites were not solely the province of one specific “religion” as they were in the case of the Christian pilgrimages both Turner and Wheeler use in their case studies of pilgrimage. The Japanese scholar Hoshino Eiki explains that many of the sacred sites in Japan were sacred prior to the incursion of a specific religious tradition. It is later with the appearance of a particularly gifted founding figure such as the Buddhist monk Kūkai, that the religious affiliation of specific sites in Shikoku changes in people’s consciousnesses.³²

Japanese scholar Kondo Yoshihiro suggests that there is a possible link between the Shikoku Pilgrimage and the Kumano Pilgrimage in terms of the number of overall sacred sites that comprise the circuit. The Kumano Pilgrimage has ninety-nine sacred sights known as the *Kumano kyūjūkyū ōji* 九十九王子. Kondo’s research reveals that there were actually eighty-eight sites. Kondo argues that this number had been transplanted to Shikoku and adopted as a template for the eighty-eight sites of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. There is evidence of the influence of cult of Kumano on some sacred locations along the Shikoku Pilgrimage. In particular at Ishite Temple in Iyo province and will be discussed later. Though Kondo’s transplant theory is possible and in keeping with confluence theory, the historical evidence to support Kondo’s claim remains tenuous.³³

³² Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.275.

³³ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.278.

Medieval Japanese pilgrimage sites in Shikoku contained worship halls to a wide variety of deities, *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and *kami*. The “religious” affiliation of each site varied depending on the deity that was traditionally propitiated at that location, and generally reflected the religious affiliation of the aristocratic family that were traditional patrons of the sacred site. In the case of Shikoku, originally many of the sacred sites were not affiliated with the worship of Kōbō Daishi. True to Turner’s observations, many of the sacred sites now affiliated with the cult of Kūkai once belonged to other religious cults, such as the cults centered on the *bodhisattva Kannon* 観音 or *Kumano shrinkō* 熊野信仰. However, with the steady growth of the popularity of *Daishi shrinkō*, all of the eighty-eight sacred locations came to contain a *Daishidō* 大師堂 worship hall dedicated to Kōbō Daishi. This did not mean that Kōbō Daishi was the only “deity” being worshiped at each temple. The inclusion of a *Daishi* worship hall at the many temples provided a common religious figure or focal point that threaded all of the religiously diverse sacred sites of Shikoku together by means of the pilgrimage ritual. In this way the confluence theory lends credence to the idea that pilgrimage has the power to carry with it a current to unite religious diversity.

Though Turner, and Wheeler’s theories on the pilgrimage ritual are not without merit, neither one of their approaches is a completely precise fit for approaching pilgrimage studies in Japan. It is perhaps best then to turn to Japanese scholarship, to get a sense of how the pilgrimage ritual functions in

the context of Japanese religions. The most logical point of departure which has received a great deal of discussion in Japanese scholarship is the etymology of the word “pilgrimage” in the Japanese language.

1.8: JAPANESE TERMS FOR “PILGRIMAGE”

The Japanese language contains a plethora of terms that have been translated as the English word “pilgrimage” such as: *junrei* 巡礼, *junpai* 巡拝, *mairi* 参, *sangū* 参宮, *sankei* 参詣, *henchi* 辺地, *henro* 辺路, *henro* 遍路 and so on. This diversity of linguistic expressions is a testament to the wide variety of pilgrimage practices that were developed in Japan. Therefore, one should remain astutely cognizant of how the term “pilgrimage” is applied. In many cases the use of the English term “pilgrimage” can create a confusion when applied to Japanese religious practices because of the term’s strong association with Christian practices and does not necessarily carry the same cultural context in Japanese. A closer examination of the linguistic development and usage of several of the terms mentioned above not only reveals both the historical and legendary origins of pilgrimage practices on Shikoku, but also how the physicality and geography of Shikoku itself has been sacralized.

1.9: JUNREI 巡礼

Hoshino Eiki notes that the Japanese word *junrei* 巡礼, which is usually translated into English as “pilgrimage,” first came into use by the Tendai

monk Ennin 圓仁(793-864) in his work titled *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐弘法巡礼行記 or “Records of a Pilgrimage to Seek the Law in China”³⁴ Eiki explains that following its introduction by Ennin, the term *junrei* appears with more frequency in text such as the *Dai Nihonkoku hokekyō kenki* 大日本国法華經驗記, the *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 and numerous *ōjōden* 往生伝. *Ōjōden* are Pure Land texts generally detailing the deaths and rebirths of famous monks in a Buddhist Pure Land.³⁵ Eiki concludes that in the early medieval period that the term *junrei* 巡礼 meant going around and visiting various sacred places and performing religious austerities.³⁶ In this way the Shikoku Pilgrimage falls into the category of *junrei* 巡礼, because it involves the going around the island of Shikoku and visiting the sacred sites associated with Kōbō Daishi. However, *junrei* 巡礼 is not the only term that can be translated as “pilgrimage” in Japanese.

Pilgrimages with only one major destination such as the pilgrimage to Ise 伊勢, generally use the terms *mairi* 参 or *sangū* 参宮 and never use the term *junrei* 巡礼.³⁷ The pilgrimage to *Kumano*, typically referred to as *Kumano mōde* 熊野詣, uses the term *mōde* 詣 which means to visit a shrine.³⁸ The Shikoku Pilgrimage is commonly referred to as the *Shikoku henro* 四国遍路,

³⁴ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.276.

³⁵ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.277.

³⁶ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.277.

³⁷ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.278.

³⁸ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.274.

uses the term *henro* 遍路, which carries the context of a walking journey.

These terms all convey the linguistic meaning of visiting a sacred site, but not necessarily in the sense that western scholars apply the English word “pilgrimage.” One particularly useful approach to understanding the historical development of the Shikoku Pilgrimage is to examine the etymology of the Japanese term *henro* 遍路.

1.10: FROM HENCHI 辺地 TO HENRO 遍路

The term *henro* 遍路, often translated into English as “pilgrimage” carries the context of a long walking journey. When the honorific *san* さん is added as a suffix to the term *henro* appearing as *Ohenrosan* お遍路さん, the term means “pilgrim.” Therefore, the term *henro* can both refer to pilgrimage practice in Shikoku and the pilgrims themselves. The Japanese term *henro* 遍路 takes its origins from the term *henchi* 辺地, meaning remote area. The term *henchi* 辺地 was used to describe ascetic religious practices on the island of Shikoku in the Heian era. The term *henchi* 辺地 later evolved into the term *henro* 辺路 which takes on the meaning of wandering in a remote area. This term *henro* 辺路 appears in Eishō era 永正 (1504-1521) as graffiti written on the main temple hall of Sanuki Kokubun Temple 讃岐国分寺. It appears again both on the main temple hall of Jōdo Temple 浄土寺 and a small shrine from the Taiei era 大永 (1521-1527). Similar graffiti has also been found in Tosa

province on a temple wallboard dating to 1571.³⁹ The term *henro* 辺路 finally becomes the more modern term *henro* 遍路 in the Muromachi and Edo eras. The modern term *henro* 遍路 appears as graffiti as early as 1406. In the Ouei era 応永(1394-1428) the term *henro* 遍路 appears in an inscription at a temple dedicated to the *bodhisattva Kannon*.⁴⁰

Though all three terms are used to refer to pilgrimage in Shikoku throughout the Muromachi and Edo eras, *henro* 遍路 eventually became the preferred term, which is still used today. The linguistic evolution of these terms provides a historical timeline for the development of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Their usage also demonstrates how pilgrimage practices evolved from the Heian to the Edo era.

In the case of the Shikoku Pilgrimage an examination of two key terms in particular, i.e., *hendo* 辺土, *henchi* 辺地, and the related literature in which they appear, reveals a great deal about the historical development of pilgrimage practices from the Heian era to the Edo period. More importantly for the purpose of this thesis, the texts that utilize these terms are reflective of the ways in which medieval Japanese situated the geographic island of Shikoku into the ever-changing sacred landscape of Japanese religion.

³⁹ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p. 59.

⁴⁰ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p. 59.

1.11: *HENDO* 辺土

From the early mythopoetic historical founding legends of Japan found in the *Kojiki* 古事記, Shikoku has always been associated with the otherworldly. The *Kojiki* or “Record of Ancient Matters” was commissioned by Emperor Tenmu 天武天皇(672-686) and completed and presented to Empress Genmei 元明天皇(797-715) in 712 by a scribe named Ō no Yasumaro 太安万侶. The *Kojiki* is traditionally viewed by scholars as a mythological history that legitimized the Japanese state’s political authority under the Yamato Emperors, who claimed divine ancestry to the Sun Goddess *Amaterasu-ōmikami* 天照大御神. Though consolidating political authority is clearly one of the chief functions of the *Kojiki*, it also provides a window into the way the cultural elite of the Nara and Heian eras assigned religious meaning to the physical geography of Japan. According to the *Kojiki*, when the gods *Izanagi* 伊邪那岐 and *Izanami* 伊邪冉尊 created the islands of Japan, Shikoku was the first main island of Japan that they created.⁴¹ It has also been suggested that pilgrims walk around Shikoku clockwise, in the fashion that *Izanagi* and *Izanami* circled the pillar of heaven and then gave birth to all of the deities of Japan.⁴²

Shikoku also possesses unique geographical features that, in the minds of early Japanese, would have bolstered its image as a supernatural land. The

⁴¹ Shirane, Haruno. (2012) p.22.

⁴² Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.282.

first being the *Naruto no Uzushio* 鳴門の渦潮, or Naruto's tidal whirlpools which can be observed twice a day by passing ships or viewed from Awaji island. The whirlpools are sometimes called the "Roaring gate of Awa" and have been depicted in Japanese woodblock prints. This natural occurrence, famous for the loud rushing noise it makes, no doubt inspired fear and wonder in the minds of travelers and fishermen crossing from Awa Island to Shikoku further adding to Shikoku's mystic.⁴³ It is possible that the *Naruto no Uzushio* may have evoked images of *Izanagi* dipping his spear into the ocean to create islands of Japan in the minds of medieval Japanese familiar with the creation myths of the *Kojiki*.

The *Ashizuri* cape 足摺岬 is home to *Mikurodo kutsu* 御厨人窟靴 and *Shinmei kutsu* 神明窟 caves, where according to his autobiography, Kūkai had a spiritual awakening as a youth. The strange stone formations of the promontories of the *Ashizuri* cape have historically been viewed by medieval ascetics as mediating spaces between this world and other realms.⁴⁴ It is said that ardent believers can reach *Fudaraku*, the Pure Land of the *bodhisattva Kannon* 観音菩薩 by means of a small boat known as *tokaibune* 渡海船. This is a Buddhist form of ritual suicide known as *Fudaraku tokai* 補陀落渡海, or "crossing over to *Kannon's* Pure Land." In this ritual a monk would be sealed into a small wooden ship and floated off to the Kannon's Pure Land before a

⁴³ See David Moreton's article "The Naruto Whirlpools as Seen Through the Eyes of Westerners."

⁴⁴ Reader, Ian. (2006) p.48.

crowd of believers. The ritual participants would generally depart from *Kumano hama* in Kishu province, what is present day Wakayama Prefecture. According to Ian Reader this ritual was also practiced by the medieval ascetics who visited the *Ashizuri* cape.⁴⁵ Taking these things into consideration, it is no surprise that Shikoku was referred to as *hendo* 辺土, the “other world.”

1.12: *HENCHI* 辺地

The earliest textual references to the Shikoku pilgrimage are found in the *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語集. The *Konjaku monogatari* is a collection of 1039 legends, folklore and anecdotal tales known as *setsuwa*. It was compiled in the late *Heian* period and into the twelfth century.⁴⁶ The author or authors are unknown. The texts contain stories that were intended to provide a deeper understanding of Buddhism as well as be entertaining and engaging to their intended lay audiences. Most scholars contend that these texts were not Buddhist sermons per se, but stories that could be used in sermons to instruct the audience or help reiterate a point about Buddhist doctrine that the monk was trying to teach his audience. The *setsuwa* generally stressed the salvific powers of Buddhism and the importance of practicing *dana*, the Buddhist virtue of generosity. A key narrative trope implemented throughout the *Konjaku monogatari* reflects the medieval

⁴⁵ Reader, Ian. (2006) p.48.

⁴⁶ Shirane, Haruno. (2012) p. 529.

Japanese worldview that the physical world was a place where, *kami*, demons, spirits, *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* could be manifested in human form and directly interact with human beings. Furthermore, many of these tales express that *karmic* punishment for past deeds, good or bad, could be carried out in this very lifetime.

The first textual reference to Shikoku depicts it more as a religious training ground where wandering ascetics tested their “Buddhist mettle” so to speak, against supernatural forces residing in the mountains of Shikoku. The historical records are rather inarticulate about the details of these specific religious practices. The usage of the term *henchi* in literature of the time implies a type of religious training program implemented by monks in the Heian era, rather than what could be considered in modern vernacular a “pilgrimage.” This reference is found in Chapter 31: Tale 14 “How Priests, While Traveling in a Strange Place, in a Remote Area of Shikoku, Were Transformed into Horses” and states the following:

Long ago, three ascetic monks traveled along the remote coastline of Shikoku through the provinces of Iyo, Sanuki, Awa and Tosa.⁴⁷

Hisamistu Sato claims that the significance of this reference is twofold: first, it acts as evidence that monks were performing some kind of

⁴⁷ 今昔、仏ノ道ヲ行ケル僧三人伴ナヒテ、四国ノ辺地ト云ハ伊予、讃岐、阿波、土佐ノ海辺ノ廻也、其ノ僧共 ヲ廻ケルニ。 *Konjaku monogatari* 31:14 (vol. 4, pp. 522) My translation here is based on Yoshiko Dykstra’s English translation of the *Konjaku Monogatarishū*. Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.1083.

religious training along the coast of Shikoku in the late Heian era; and second, it refers to the island of Shikoku using the term *henchi* 「辺地」.⁴⁸ The term *henchi* translates as a place that is “out of the way,” a remote area, a backcountry or backwater. In addition to being seen as otherworldly by religious ascetics, the cultural elite of the Heian court viewed Shikoku as a distant backwater region. Shikoku was far from the pulse of politics, major cultic centers, commerce and cultural stimulation of the capital and surrounding regions being geographically isolated from mainland Japan. This meant that Shikoku was not readily accessible and traveling to and from Shikoku was troublesome and dangerous. Moreover, during the Heian era the infrastructure of the country was not as developed as it was in the Edo era, and traveling was much more arduous process.

Additionally, Shikoku has long been a place of banishment and exile in Japanese history. The most famous case of exile was that of Emperor Sutoku 崇徳天皇 who was banished after his failed attempt to quell the Hōgen rebellion 保元の乱 in 1156. The fact that Shikoku was a suitable place for exile and banishment from mainstream society further reinforces the view that Shikoku was “out of the way.” Viewing Shikoku as a remote place far from the comfort and security of the *Goki* 五畿, the five main provinces of the capital region and in the eyes of the court, civilized Japan, also made Shikoku

⁴⁸ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.13.p.57

appealing to Buddhist monks seeking to renounce society. Thus, Shikoku became an ideal site for *shugyō* 修行, ascetic religious training.

According to Chapter 31, Tale 14 “How Priests, While Traveling in a Strange Place, in a Remote Area of Shikoku, Were Transformed into Horses,” it is clear that there was an established practice of traveling the coastline of the provinces of Shikoku as a form of ascetic training. Through an examination of the content of the legend one can glimpse just how perilous a journey to Shikoku was thought to be in the minds of the religious practitioners of Heian era Japan.

The legend begins with three ascetic monks wandering the coastline of Shikoku taking a wrong turn, finding themselves lost deep within the mountains. Eventually the wandering monks seek help in a strange village where one of the old villagers turns out to be some kind of demon. He orders two of the monks whipped and subsequently after this ritual they are transformed into horses. The third monk eventually escapes the village returning to the capital to pray and make meritorious offerings for his companion’s future rebirths.

The literary trope of animal transformations as a form of karmic retribution are quite common in *setsuwa* literature. According to Haruno Shirane, *setsuwa* such as the ones found in the *Nihon ryōiki* and the *Konjaku monogatarishū* involving animal transformations often indicate a karmic punishment for the sins of cheating or stealing from others, especially in

business transactions. After death the guilty party is often transformed into a cow or a horse in order to work off the debt, sometimes as in the *setsuwa* discussed above, the guilty person receives karmic retribution before their death in this very life time.⁴⁹ However rather than offer an explanation of the evil deeds of the monks that were transformed into horses, this story serves as a cautionary tale to future *shugyōsha* 修行者, ascetic practitioners traveling to remote places. It ends with the following passage:

Considering these happenings, one should not travel to strange places even though one gives up everything to practice the Way.⁵⁰

This legend reflects the perception of Shikoku as *henchi* 辺地, a remote wild region, far from the safety of the capital. It further inflates this image by proclaiming Shikoku is also a dangerous land inhabited by demons.

From this legend and legends like it that reference Shikoku as *henchi*, one can deduce that some sort of religious practice was undertaken by monks along the coastline of Shikoku. Additionally, Shikoku was viewed by these ascetics as *hendo*, the other world, a mediating space between realms, suitable for cultivating one's spiritual power. This type of religious practices may have been similar to those that Kūkai had practiced in his youth at the *Ashizuri* cape. However, these religious practices had nothing to do with Kōbō

⁴⁹ Shirane, Haruno. (2012) p.125.

⁵⁰ 此ヲ思フニ、身ヲ棄テ、行フト云乍モ、無下ニ不知ザラム所ニハ不可行ズ。 *Konjaku monogatari* 31:14 (vol. 4, pp. 529). English Translation: Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.1086.

Daishi as the cult of Kūkai would not come into being until after Kūkai's death. How then, did all of the sacred sites of the modern Shikoku Pilgrimage come to be associated with Kūkai and his *bodhisattva* avatar Kōbō Daishi? To answer this question, one must turn to what most scholars believe to be the “historical” founding legend of Shikoku Pilgrimage, the Emon Saburō *densetsu*.

The following chapter will discuss how similar literature produced during the Heian period reflects the medieval Japanese sacred landscape, and how the narrative tropes present in the *setsuwa* literature of the Heian era were embodied into the Emon Saburō *densetsu* as it appeared in the late Muromachi and Edo eras.

CHAPTER 2: EXAMINING THE LEGENDARY ELEMENTS OF THE EMON SABURŌ DENSETSU 衛門三郎伝説

Undoubtedly the folk story that has left the most discernible footprints on the Shikoku Pilgrimage is the Emon Saburō *densetsu* 衛門三郎伝説 or The Tale of Emon Saburō. The examination of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* as a “founding” legend is a crucial element in many of the studies of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Dissecting the core thematic elements of this *densetsu* shall be the focus of this chapter.

Japanese scholars tend to classify the Emon Saburō *densetsu* as a kind of inauthentic “authentic” founding legend for the pilgrimage. On the one hand, it is inauthentic because there is absolutely no concrete historical evidence that Kūkai founded the Shikoku Pilgrimage. There are also good reasons to believe that the legend itself was a form of Buddhist propaganda used to attract pilgrims to Ishite Temple for economic reasons, therefore, it is inauthentic. On the other hand, however, it is “authentic” because the power and potency of the legend have situated its place firmly within the sacred landscape of the Shikoku Pilgrimage as a “founding” myth. The Emon Saburō *densetsu* is included in nearly all guidebooks and according to the *Kōyasan Shingonshū* 高野山真言宗 official website a form of this legend is cited as an explanation for the “origin” of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. There are indeed many versions of this *densetsu* and though most scholars are astutely aware of this fact, very few provide a detailed comparison of the content of these

legends in their works or pose questions as to what other sources could have influenced its composition. A general combining of the content found in the various versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* is used in modern guidebooks as a mythic explanation of the origins of the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

This chapter will begin by examining the narrative tropes implemented in this late Muromachi era *densetsu* text and trace the Emon Saburō *densetsu's origins* to underlying themes present in *setsuwa* literature composed during the Heian era.

Ian Reader's monumental contributions to the scholarship of Shikoku Pilgrimage has had just as much impact on the study of the pilgrimage in the academic landscape as the Emon Saburō *densetsu* has had on the sacred landscape of Shikoku. As a point of departure for this inquiry let's start with a literary examination of the translation of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* put forth by Reader:

The Tale of Emon Saburō

The story of Emon Saburō comes from the Ukaana area of Iyo Province and is widely reported in Shikoku. Emon was a greedy and irreligious man. When a pilgrim came to his door and held up his begging bowl, Emon struck him with his staff and knocked the begging bowl flying, causing it to break into eight pieces. However, in the next eight days his eight sons died one by one, and thus he was stricken with grief and repentance [because he realized that the pilgrim he had insulted was Kōbō Daishi]. Thus he set out to do the pilgrimage [in search of *Daishi* to seek forgiveness] and did it twenty-one times in reverse order [at this point, some versions of the story say he did it twenty times in the normal, i.e., clockwise, order and, failing to meet the *Daishi*, then went on his twenty-first circuit counterclockwise], before falling down, dying, at the foot of Shōsan Temple in Awa Province. As he did so,

Daishi appeared before him and [absolving him of his sins] granted his request [to be reborn, in his old province, as the son of a good family in a position that would enable him to do good deeds], then he wrote his name on a stone. Emon was reborn as the son of the village headman Kōno; at birth his hand was clenched, and [when it was opened] they found this same stone, with the words “Emon Saburō reborn” written on it, in his hand. He grew up, succeeded to the Kōno family line, and restored the Anraku Temple in Matsuyama, building numerous shrines there, enshrining the stone that had been clenched in his hand, and renaming the temple Ishite [Stone Hand] Temple.⁵¹ The Kōno family flourished for several centuries, and from this event a long story has evolved and become the foundation story [*engi*] of Ishite Temple.⁵²

Taking the viewpoint of a mythological historical narrative, Emon Saburō can be viewed as the “first pilgrim” of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. It also reflects the common folk belief that by doing the pilgrimage in reverse order there was a greater chance that one would encounter Kōbō Daishi. This practice is known as *gyaku uchi* 逆打ち.⁵³ *Gyaku uchi* is thought to be more meritorious because it is more difficult to complete the pilgrimage without getting lost, as the trail is not clearly marked. Today some modern pilgrims still practice *gyaku uchi* every four years during a leap year.⁵⁴ Historically speaking the legend does confirm that in the late Muromachi era the idea of

⁵¹ Reader translates the name of this temple as “Anraku Temple.” It should be noted that in the primary texts used in this thesis the name of the temple is Anyō-ji or Anyō Temple 安養寺(あんようじ).

⁵² Reader, Ian. (1999) p. 369.

⁵³ Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. (1997) p.288.

⁵⁴ While on pilgrimage in the spring of 2015 I met two brothers who were doing the pilgrimage in reverse order. They explained that they were doing this as a means to meet as many other pilgrims as possible because they liked meeting different kinds of people. They could accomplish this goal by traveling in reverse order and thus able to meet everyone along the way. They also remarked that doing the pilgrimage in reverse order was far more difficult and they frequently lost their way. Most notably they said that some people who do the pilgrimage in that fashion hope to erase a sin or an evil deed from their past. This could be a belief that has its roots in the power of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*.

circling the island visiting all of the sacred sites had been an established religious practice.

The Emon Saburō *densetsu* also confirms the Kōno family as the patrons of Ishite Temple. Furthermore, it suggests that some of the sacred sites such as Ishite and Shōsan Temples were affiliated with *Daishi shrinkō*. Putting aside the specific historical references mentioned in the legend for later discussion, let us address some of the literary tropes implemented in the text itself.

2.1: BREAKING A BEGGAR'S BOWL

The Emon Saburō *densetsu* contains several core thematic elements that appear in Buddhist literature composed during the Heian era that are representative of a medieval Japanese religious worldview. The main theme being that a *buddha* or *bodhisattva* can manifest in human form to interact with ordinary people, unknown to them at the time, and reward or punish them for karmic actions taken in their present life. The first of these themes takes the form of a severe punishment or the infliction of a divine curse for committing violence against a member of the *saṅgha*. In this instance Emon Saburō attacks an unknown wandering monk begging for alms, breaking his begging bowl into eight pieces. As a result of this violent attack, Emon's punishment comes in the form of a divine curse killing all eight of his sons.

A story in the *Konjaku monogatari* has an eerily similar beginning as the one used in the Emon Saburō *densetsu*, which also connects the breaking of a monk's begging bowl with karmic retribution in the form of death. This *setsuwa* is titled “How Imaro of Shiragabe Broke a Beggar's Bowl and Met Retribution During His Lifetime.” This legend is rather short and poignant with its message as the title suggests. It begins by stating:

Long ago, Imaro of Shiragabe in Odano District of Bicchu Province, was an evil man who had neither faith in the Three Treasurers nor the mercy to offer anything to others. At one time when a beggar monk came to his house, Imaro offered nothing but hit and abused the monk by breaking his begging bowl, and chased him away.⁵⁵

After these events, Imaro went away to another village on business. During this journey he was caught in a great downpour and sought shelter in a storehouse. In the ferocity of the storm the rain and the wind collapsed the storehouse and Imaro died instantly. Everyone in his home village criticized Imaro, believing that his death was *karmic* retribution for breaking the begging bowl of the wandering monk.⁵⁶ Like most *setsuwa* of this nature it also ends with a warning:

So, when one sees a beggar monk, one should happily offer things, and never abuse nor beat him. Even begging monks are among the Three

⁵⁵ 今昔、備中ノ国小田ノ郡ニ、白髪部ノ猪曆ト云者有ケリ。心邪見ニシテ、三宝ヲ不信ズ。又人ニ物ヲ与フル心無カリテリ。而ル間、乞食ノ僧有テ、猪曆ガ家ニ至師ヲ乞フ。猪曆物ヲ不施ズシテ、乞食ヲ詈リ打テ、其ノ乞食ノ持タル鉢ヲ打破テ、追ヒ去ケツ。*Konjaku monogatari* 20:26 (vol.3, pp. 105). English Translation: Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.533.

⁵⁶ Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.533.

Treasures, and sometimes one might find incarnated *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* among such monks.⁵⁷

The origin of the literary device at work in this tale are the Buddhist rules for protecting the *saṅgha*, known as *Ānantarika-karma*, or the five heinous crimes. A physical attack on the Buddha, is considered to be one of the five unforgivable offences in the Buddhist tradition and warrants immediate *karmic* punishment in this life or the next. This legend also reinforces that in the minds of medieval Japanese, *buddhas* could appear disguised as beggars in the real world.

2.2: *BUDDHAS, BODHISATTVAS AND BEGGARS*

Carmen Blacker observes that throughout all regions in Japan there are numerous legends where a god disguised as a beggar travels around the countryside interacting with local people. Therefore, the pilgrim, as an unknown “outsider” in the eyes of local villagers as he or she was “passing through,” could very well have been viewed as a god in disguise.⁵⁸ Blacker’s observations bring us to the second motif at work in the Emon Saburō legend, namely, the idea that a begging mendicant might actually be a god, *bodhisattva* or a *buddha* in disguise. In this case it is the *bodhisattva* Kōbō Daishi, disguised as a beggar, who appears to Emon Saburō, divinely cursing

⁵⁷ 何況フヤ、罽罽罰ム事ヲバ、努々可止シ。乙乞食ト云ヘドモ、皆三宝ノ内也。其ノ中ニモ、乞食ノ中ニコン古モ今モ仏菩薩ノ化身ゾ在、ナム語り伝ヘタリトヤ。 *Konjaku monogatari* 20:26 (vol. 3, pp. 106). English Translation: Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.533.

⁵⁸ Blacker, Carmen. (1984) p.602.

him in their first violent encounter, then providing soteriological salvation at their final meeting.

The following tale also refers to Shikoku as a religious training ground, and though it does not mention Kūkai or Kōbō Daishi, some of the themes in this legend are also present in the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. This legend also comes from the *Konjaku monogatarishū* and is titled: Tale 15 “How Priest Chōzō of Mount Hiei Attained Nirvāṇa.”

This legend begins on Mt. Hiei with a Tendai monk named Chōzō 長僧. According to the legend, Chōzō had taken the tonsure and studied the teaching of *Shingon* and *Tendai* under Precept Master Myōyū. During his time on Mt. Hiei, Chōzō increased his faith and hoped to be born in a Pure Land and attain *nirvāṇa* like his master. According to the legend Chōzō evidently grew older and took on students of his own. One day Chōzō left his living quarters to use the toilet and never returned. One of his disciples, the priest Shōjin, went to his room and found only his master’s personal Buddha image, his robes, rosary and collection of Buddhist texts. When Chōzō did not return after several days, Shōjin lamented the loss of his teacher and ordered his belongings put away and Chōzō was never heard from again.

Later in life when Shōjin was sixty years-old, he accompanied Tomoakira of Fujiwara 藤原の知章 to Shikoku.⁵⁹ Tomoakira of Fujiwara had been appointed the governor of Iyo Province in Shikoku and Shōjin served as

⁵⁹ Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.267.

his religious advisor. Shōjin was deeply respected by both the governor and the locals and few people dared to disturb the monk while he was in his living quarters.

One day a dirty old beggar with a black straw hat and tattered straw sandals entered Shōjin's home seeking alms. Dismayed at this, Shōjin's servants attempted to chase the dirty beggar away by throwing sticks at him. When the beggar removed his straw hat Shōjin recognized him as his long-lost old master Chōzō, and immediately knelt before him, inviting him in. When Shōjin questioned Chōzō where he had been all these years Chōzō answered:

I suddenly decided to leave the life there on the mountain (meaning Mt. Hiei) and solely to seek *nirvāṇa* by chanting the *nenbutsu* while begging alms in places where the *Dharma* was unknown (the provinces of Shikoku), hoping to die and be reborn in Amida's Pure Land.⁶⁰

Here this legend also reflects that Shikoku, in the minds of Heian Japanese was a backwater remote region where the Buddhism of the capital was unknown. Chōzō went on to say that he had disguised himself as a beggar and that the local people called him the "Gate-Beggar" because he begged for alms outside the gates of their homes. He told Shōjin that the locals thought he was an ignorant old beggar who didn't even know the *Hannyashinkyō*, the

⁶⁰ 「只、仏法ノ少カラム所ニ行テ、身ヲ棄テ次第乞食ヲシテ命許ヲバ助ケテ、偏ニ念仏ヲ唱ヘテこそ極楽ニハ往生セメ」 *Konjaku monogatari* 15:15 (vol. 2, pp. 58). English translation based on: Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.268.

Heart Sūtra.⁶¹ In a reversal of roles, Shōjin then begged his old master to stay for the night. However, out of fear that the local people would treat him differently now that they knew his true identity, Chōzō departed the province, presumably continuing to practice *henchi* in the other provinces of Shikoku.

After governor Tomoakira's term was up, both he and Shōjin returned to the capital. When they departed, Chōzō returned to Iyo province and died a typical 往生 *ōjō* death, sitting erect, palms in a *mudra* facing Amida's Pure Land in the west.⁶² The legend ends stating that the local people preformed rituals on Chōzō's behalf for five or six years after his passing. They also credit Chōzō with bringing the *Dharma* to the land which had previously not known it. Most significantly the legend ends with the following quote:

The Buddha must have appeared as a beggar to guide the people of these provinces.⁶³

⁶¹ Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.268. This is interesting because in the end of the legend Chōzō is credited with bringing the *Dharma* to Shikoku. That being the case, the local people should have had no previous knowledge of the Heart Sūtra. This seems to suggest that forms of Buddhism were present in Shikoku prior to Chōzō's time.

⁶² Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.268. It should be noted that Dykstra translates the term *ōjō* 往生 as *nirvāṇa*. This is somewhat misleading in that the term *ōjō* generally refers to birth in a Buddhist Pure Land. After rebirth in said Pure Land, the practitioner would then be able to hear the pure untainted *Dharma* directly from the Buddha that resides in that specific Pure Land and not "backslide" into a lower rebirth. It is residing in said Pure Land that the practitioner will be able to attain *nirvāṇa*. Dykstra's translation could be interpreted by those with a less comprehensive understanding of Japanese Buddhism that Chōzō attained *nirvāṇa* and then died.

⁶³ 「此ノ国々ノ人ヲ導ムガ為ニ、仏ノ権リニ乞フ身ト現ジテ来リ給ヘル也」 *Konjaku monogatari* 15:15 (vol. 2, pp. 60). English Translation: Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.268.

In addition to serving as a hagiography for the monk Chōzō, this legend contributes several features to the sacred landscape of Shikoku. First, this legend illustrates that chanting the *nenbutsu* 念仏 with the hope of being born in a Pure Land was among the religious practices of monks who traveled to Shikoku for *henchi* 「辺地」.⁶⁴ It also mentions the recitation of the Heart Sūtra, which is one of the *sūtras* all pilgrims must recite when visiting the *Daishi* worship hall at all temples along the pilgrimage route. Secondly, it affirms the idea that in Shikoku a simple begging monk might actually be a *buddha* or a *bodhisattva* in disguise the very same way Kōbō Daishi appears in the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. In this legend Chōzō too is attacked while begging for alms, when Shōjin's servants throw sticks at him in an attempt to chase him away. This also suggests that the abuse of mendicants and beggars was quite common in the Heian era. The *setsuwa* also seems to imply that the pilgrimage ritual of wandering around Shikoku performing religious austerities, was somehow superior to the years of time scholar monks invested studying on Mt. Hiei.

Moreover, the Chōzō *setsuwa* effectively showcases both the Heian perception of Shikoku as *henchi* 辺地 and *hendo* 辺土. Shikoku is seen as a remote backwater region where the inhabitants are ignorant of Buddhism, and as the “other world” where birth in Amida's Pure Land can be attained. It

⁶⁴ Motohiro, Yoritomi 頼富本宏. (2009) p.104.

links the pilgrimage ritual to Shikoku as a location for soteriological salvation.

2.3: *MIRACULOUS REBIRTHS AND CLENCHED FISTS*

The third literary trope present in the Emon Saburō *densetsu* is that of a miraculous rebirth and the re-founding of Ishite Temple. Before Emon Saburō dies, he falls down at the feet of Kōbō Daishi repenting his evil deeds. Kōbō Daishi then places a small stone inscribed with Emon Saburō's name into his left hand. Some years later a child is born to the Kōno clan with that very stone clenched tightly in its left fist. The stone is then enshrined, and the name of the temple is changed to Ishite Temple to mark the occasion. This very same trope of the left fist of a child clenched tightly at birth also appears in Volume 2, Chapter 31 of the 日本靈異記 *Nihon ryōiki* and is titled “On the Birth of a Girl with *Sari* in Her Hand Owing to Her Parents' Vow to Build a Pagoda.”

This is a tale of a miraculous birth that is associated with the construction of a pagoda on temple grounds. The *setsuwa* tells us that a certain *Niu no atae Otokami*, a man of Iwata district in Tōmōmi Province, had made an earnest vow to build a pagoda and that, unfortunately all his life this vow had gone unfulfilled. Miraculously a daughter was born to Otokami at the ripe old age of 70 and his wife who was 62 at the time. Unfortunately, at

birth the child's left hand was clenched tight and would not open.⁶⁵ The elderly parents lamented the fact that they were born with a crippled child, but none-the-less diligently cared for her, believing that she was sent to them for a purpose. At the age of seven the child opened her fist revealing two small *śarīra*, or Buddha relics.⁶⁶ The young girl showed these relics to her mother who spread the news of this miraculous occurrence throughout the province. The legend states that the local people were rapturous with joy and the local magistrates and governors organized a 'devotees association' to build a seven-story pagoda to enshrine the Buddha relics.⁶⁷ According to the legend this is the pagoda of *Iwata Temple* 磐田寺. After the pagoda was completed and the *śarīra* enshrined there, the young girl mysteriously passed away.

This legend obvious parallels the Emon Saburō *densetsu* in several ways. The most obvious being the miraculous birth of baby girl with its left fist clenched tightly around a sacred object. Both the stone bearing Emon Saburō's name and the *śarīra* found in the girl's fist are enshrined in a sacred structure at a temple complex. Both founding legends serve to amplify the

⁶⁵ Nakamura, Kyoko. (1973) p.203.

⁶⁶ *Busshari* 仏舎利 is the Japanese term for *śarīra*. The term *śarīra* refers to the remains of the Buddha or other spiritual masters, either cremated remains or other pieces, including a finger bone or a preserved body. It can also refer to a pearl or crystal-like bead-shaped objects that are purportedly found among the cremated ashes of Buddhist spiritual masters. These objects are believed to be the embodiment of the pure teachings of the spiritual master and are typically displayed in a glass bowl inside small gold urns or stupas as well as enshrined inside the master's statue.

⁶⁷ Nakamura, Kyoko. (1973) p.203.

sacred image of physical structures on temple grounds and both seem to have been designed to attract pilgrims and solicit donations from the laity.

Curiously, *Sakurahime Azuma Bunshō* 桜姫東文章 or *The Scarlet Princess of Edo*, a *kabuki* play written by Tsuruya Namboku 鶴屋南北 (1755-1829) in 1817, also features the “clenched fist at birth motif” in its exposition. The play begins with two monks Seigen and Shiragikumarū, a young male acolyte from another temple. The two monks fall in love, hoping to become a married couple in a future life, so they agree to abandon monastic life together. The monks then climb a high cliff with the intent of jumping into the ocean and committing joint suicide. As a token of their love and relationship the two monks share an incense box. Shiragikumarū takes the lid of the incense box and Seigen takes the box itself, each is inscribed with the name of the other. The young monk Shiragikumarū jumps into the sea with the lid clenched tightly in his left hand. Seigen, just about to join his lover in a suicidal plunge into the sea below, notices a flash of green light and a strange bird emerging from the water where the young monk’s body was swallowed by the waves. Seigen, overcome with fear and attachment to this world is unable to jump to his death.

Some years later Shiragikumarū is reborn as the beautiful princess Sakura, however her beauty is marred by a strange birth deformity. Her left fist is clenched tightly shut. After her father and brother are murdered by the vile gangster Gonsuke who also rapes her in the dark, she decides to become a

nun. Seigen, who by this time became a high-ranking priest, comes to say a prayer for her and as he does her left fist miraculously opens revealing the incense lid cover bearing Seigen's name. This is uncannily similar to the Emon Saburō *densetsu*, especially because it is also the left hand clenched in a fist at birth, and it is a monk chanting a *mantra* that causes the clenched fist to open. The inclusion of this motif by Tsuruya Namboku two-hundred and fifty years later is a testament to the effectiveness this narrative trope carried with Japanese audiences.

2.4: SETSUWA AS BUDDHIST “PROPAGANDA”

In addition to also featuring the “clenched fist at birth” motif, the “Girl with *Sari* in Her Hand” *setsuwa* demonstrates the gravity and power that making and fulfilling religious vows held in the minds of medieval Japanese. More importantly, it is a prime example of how *setsuwa* texts function as the “origin” stories behind temple structures, such as the seven-story pagoda at Iwata Temple. The text itself states that the story of the miraculous birth was disseminated though out the province and was used by the provincial magistrates and governors to solicit funds to construct the seven-story pagoda. In this way, one can see how *setsuwa* texts are implemented as a form of Buddhist propaganda to raise funds for temple construction projects.

For Reader, the Emon Saburō *densetsu* is a highly manipulative example of Buddhist propaganda designed to encourage donations to support

monastic institutions.⁶⁸ Though Reader makes a very valid point, it is only one aspect of the way the legend functioned. A deeper analysis of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*, while confirming Reader's point, demonstrates how *densetsu* texts can be used as tools for changing the religious affiliation of sacred locations. To fully appreciate this idea, it is necessary to first examine the origins of *Daishi shinkō*, the cult of Kūkai, and understand how it was that the Buddhist monk Kūkai, became the *bodhisattva* Kōbō Daishi, both the source of divine punishment and salvation in the Emon Saburō *densetsu*.

⁶⁸ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 60.

CHAPTER 3: THE DEIFICATION OF KŪKAI, SACRALIZATION OF MT. KŌYA AND THE BIRTH OF DAISHI SHINKŌ 大師信仰.

In a remote cave on the rugged, rocky coastline of *Ashizuri* cape in Tosa province, a young monk sat, clad in a cloth made from arrowroot fiber, lips fervently chanting a *sūtra*.⁶⁹ He had come to this distant place because it was believed to be otherworldly, a mediating space between realms, a gateway to the Pure Land, a suitable place to cultivate his spiritual potential. Disillusioned with the Confucian education he had been receiving in the capital, he decided to leave the city and devoted himself completely to the teachings of Buddhism.⁷⁰ Resolutely determined in his pursuit of the *Dharma* he returned to Shikoku, the island where he was born, for religious training. In Shikoku, far away from the cultural epicenter of Heian Japan, he diligently dedicated himself to the completion of an especially arduous one-hundred day long ritual practice known as the *Kokūzō gumonjihō* 虚空蔵求聞持法.⁷¹

The *gumonjihō* scripture says: "If one recites this mantra properly one million times, one will memorize the lines as well as the meanings of all the scriptures." Trusting the sincere words of the Buddha, I engaged in recitation, constantly and diligently, as if rubbing one branch against another in the hope of producing a spark. At one point, I scaled the cliff of Mount Tairyū in Awa; at another, I meditated intently at

⁶⁹ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 16.

⁷⁰ Abé, Ryūichi. (1999) p.74.

⁷¹ Abé, Ryūichi. (1999) p.74. The *Kokūzō gumonjihō* ritual was a meditation centered around the Bodhisattva *Ākāśagarbha*, who's wisdom was as deep and vast as empty space. The ritual itself, consisted of the construction of an alter and an image of the *Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha*. The practitioner would then offer incense and flowers, and recite various mantras and perform several mudras, or complex hand gestures associated with the *bodhisattva*. The ritual was directed at Venus or the morning star. If completed correctly the practitioner would gain the supernatural ability to memorize all of the Buddhist *sūtras* line for line and their meanings would be revealed.

the Cape of Muroto in Tosa. Valleys echoed sonorously, the morning star brightened.⁷²

While meditating intently in the cave on the *Ashizuri* cape where the sky [Jpn. *kū* 空] meets the sea [Jpn. *kai* 海], the planet Venus descended into the young monk's mouth conferring the *bodhisattva*'s blessing. This was the moment of spiritual awaking for the young ascetic monk who would come to be known as Kūkai 空海 (774-836), taking this Buddhist name in memory of this auspicious occasion.⁷³

The historicity of Kūkai's autobiography is certainly questionable and is without a doubt, embellished by his followers in the subsequent years following his death. This subject has been thoroughly addressed by scholars such as Hakeda and Abé. Indeed, as both scholars have demonstrated, the scholarship surrounding the life and history of Kūkai is as vast and deep as his name suggests and equally as complicated as some of the esoteric rituals and religious doctrines attributed to his name. Dissecting the carefully woven tapestry of history and hagiography of Kūkai's life has been the main focus of a majority of the scholarship on Kūkai and it is not the intended purpose of this chapter. Instead this chapter aims at a careful examination of the function of that history and hagiography, legends and lore. This chapter will attempt not just to find the "historical facts" or "origins" of a religious

⁷² KZ 3:324. *Kōbō daishi zenshū*. 6 vols. Ed. Hase Hōshū. Tokyo, I909-I9II, 1966. This is Abé's translation found on p.74 of *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*.

⁷³ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 16.

practice or Kūkai's specific beliefs or motivations, but also to demonstrate how the texts surrounding these elements work in tandem, contributing to the construction of the sacred landscape of Mt. Kōya.

In addition to playing a principal role in the development of esoteric Buddhism in Japan, Kūkai is inducted into the Japanese pantheon of gods and frequently appears in the folklore of popular religion. The following chapter aims to look at how the sacred landscape of Mt. Kōya was forged from textual narratives, doctrinal ideas, and the ritual practices surrounding the life of its most eminent monk, Kūkai. Moreover, this chapter aims to explore how the deified form of Kūkai, the central savior figure of the *Daishi shinkō* 大師信仰, was also created through texts and images and imbedded into Japan's sacred landscape as the *bodhisattva Kōbō Daishi* 弘法大師.

In order to properly understand this process, it is essential to first examine the figure that *Daishi shinkō* is based on, *Kōbō Daishi*. It is important to note that the historical personage Kūkai should be differentiated from Kōbō Daishi, the honorary title bestowed on him by the Heian court after his death which has an enigmatic persona all of its own. This posthumous title means "The great teacher who widely spread the Buddhist teachings."⁷⁴ Kōbō Daishi is the sacred personality that appears in the myths, founding legends and folklore surrounding the spread *Daishi shinkō* 大師信仰, the cult of Kūkai in Japan. When referring to actual historical events, most scholars use the

⁷⁴ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 1.

name Kūkai; when referring to myths and legends, the honorific name Kōbō Daishi is used. For the purposes of this thesis I have done the same.

Understanding how the historical Kūkai became the deified Kōbō Daishi is imperative to understanding how myths and folklore transformed and shaped the development of the cult of Kūkai as it gradually spread to nearly all of the eighty-eight sacred sites of the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

3.1: THE HISTORICAL KŪKAI

Few figures in Japanese history are as prolific as the Shingon Buddhist monk Kūkai. Kūkai was a cultural juggernaut and his influence extends just as far across Japan geographically as it runs deep within the development of Japanese historical discourse. Kūkai was born into an aristocratic family called the Saeki 佐伯, a branch of the Ōtomo 大伴 clan. History would have us believe that Kūkai's birth took place at Zentsū-ji 善通寺 in Sanuki Province 讃岐国 on the smallest of Japan's four main islands Shikoku.⁷⁵ At birth Kūkai was given the name Saeki Mao 佐伯 眞魚, he would not take the sobriquet Kūkai until much later. At the age of eighteen, Kūkai entered the famous *Daigakuryō* 大学寮 in Heian, an institution dedicated to churning out Confucian scholars to occupy the many opening positions of Heian Japan's growing bureaucratic class.⁷⁶ Scholars generally hold the position that it was during this time that Kūkai was first exposed to Buddhist ideas and that his

⁷⁵ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 13.

⁷⁶ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.135.

fascination with this foreign religion led to his disillusionment with Confucianism and dropping out of school to become a wandering mendicant.⁷⁷ The justification for this view originates from Kūkai's own words in his first work the *Sangō shiiki* 三教指歸 (797).⁷⁸ However, historical context could suggest another possible alternative reason for his abandonment of Confucianism in favor of Buddhism.

The historical climate of the time period that Kūkai was born into was still very much shaped, influenced, and governed by a ruling class that was obsessed with importing all things Chinese.⁷⁹ As a direct result the government was also modeled on the Chinese system of government in which the emperor was stylized as a “Son of Heaven,” ruling by the “Mandate of Heaven” *Tiānmìng* 天命 in Chinese or what is known as the *Ritsuryō* system 律令 in Japanese. Fearing the growing power and influence of the Buddhist establishment in Nara, Emperor Kanmu 桓武天皇(735-806) moved the capital from Nara to Heian, present day Kyoto, where it would be far away from pesky Buddhist monks meddling in his political affairs.⁸⁰ Subsequently he issued many imperial edicts restricting the numbers of monks that could be ordained each year and the number of temples that could be constructed. This being the case, the most suitable path for professional advancement

⁷⁷ Abé, Ryūichi. (1999) p.23.

⁷⁸ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.135.

⁷⁹ Abé, Ryūichi. (1999) p.20.

⁸⁰ Abé, Ryūichi. (1999) p.20.

open to someone of Kūkai's status was to become an advisor to the government, which meant becoming a Confucian scholar. Unfortunately for Kūkai there was a rather scandalous event that had tainted his family name, and likely closed the door for this mode of social advancement.

This smear to the Saeki family name came in the form of an assassin's arrow piercing the chest of Fujiwara no Tanetsugu 藤原種継 on evening of the twenty-third day of the ninth month, 785. Unable to recover from his wounds Fujiwara no Tanetsugu died the following day. Quite literally heads rolled as a result of this incident. Eight of the conspirators were beheaded and one of these men was a one Saeki Takunari 佐伯高成, a relative of Kūkai. Blame for the assignation was placed squarely on Ōtomo clan and both the Ōtomo and the Saeki families suffered significant political and economic losses afterwards. It would be many years before others involved in the incident receive official imperial pardons. At the time young Kūkai would have arrived in the capital to start his Confucian training at the *Daigakuryō*, this assassination scandal would still have been considered a current event and very much a subject of courtly gossip. It is possible, though not certain, that Saeki family's association with the assassination of Fujiwara no Tanetsugu would have kept Kūkai from advancing to a respectable government position via this Confucian career path and this may have influenced his decision to embrace Buddhism. Interestingly and in keeping with the religious worldview of the time, Fujiwara no Tanetsugu was believed to have become a vengeful

ghost, and as such entered into sacred landscape of Japanese religion of the Heian era.

Despite their tarnished name, apparently the Saeki family still held some form of political influence, because somehow young Kūkai found himself a member of a government-sponsored voyage to China in 804. Kūkai had apparently been a last-minute addition to this expedition, since his official ordination as a Buddhist monk at Tōdaiji took place only weeks before departure.⁸¹ It is not known whether or not someone in Kūkai's family had pulled strings to get him aboard the mission or not, but Bowring suggests it may have been Kūkai's proficiency in Classical Chinese that secured his spot as a member of the expedition.⁸² The expedition was led by a thirty-seven-year-old monk from Mt. Hiei, named Saichō 最澄 (767-822.) Incidentally Saichō is just as important to the development of Japanese Buddhism as Kūkai, but he will only make a brief cameo in this narrative concerning Kūkai. Both Saichō and Kūkai would go on to have a rather complicated relationship, over which a great deal of ink has been spilled. Since their relationship is not directly relevant to the purpose of this chapter, it will not be discussed in any detail here.⁸³

⁸¹ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.136.

⁸² Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.136.

⁸³ For a much more detailed account of Saichō and Kūkai's relationship see Ryūichi Abé's "Saichō and Kūkai: A Conflict of Interpretations." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1-2, Jan. 1995.

Seafaring expeditions of this nature were expensive and fraught with danger, in Kūkai's time. Japanese seafaring shipbuilding was not as advanced as the Chinese or the Koreans at the time and many of the ships that attempted to make the journey were lost at sea. Kūkai's own journey was a perfect example of this. Of the four ships that set out, one turned back, one was lost at sea and Kūkai's own ship was blown off course. They ended up landing near the coastal city of Fuzhou 福州 and were denied entrance into the city.⁸⁴ On this occasion Kūkai's mastery of Classical Chinese came in handy, as he was able to write a letter to the Chinese authorities and obtain permission to enter the city. Later the group would make the forty-day trek to Chang'an where Kūkai was permitted to study at Ximing Temple 西明寺.⁸⁵ Here he was finally exposed to studying Sanskrit and thus able to unlock the mysteries of the puzzling Buddhist texts he had come across in Japan.

It was in the cosmopolitan city of Chang'an, some four months later that Kūkai would come under the tutelage of the Chinese master Hui-Kuo 惠果 (746-805).⁸⁶ Hui-Kuo taught a very specific branch of esoteric Buddhism known as *Vajrayāna*, that Kūkai would later label *Mikkyō* 密教, or "secret teachings." According to Kūkai's autobiography, Hui-Kuo had been waiting for a student of Kūkai's caliber to carry on his lineage and the transmission of the esoteric knowledge from Hui-Kuo to Kūkai was like "pouring water into a

⁸⁴ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.136.

⁸⁵ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.136-137.

⁸⁶ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 29.

jar” such that the teachings were passed on from master to student in their pure unadulterated form.⁸⁷ Kūkai then informs us that Hui-Kuo initiated him into the secret rituals of tantric Buddhism and urged him to carry these teachings back to Japan. This account effectively establishes Kūkai’s authority as a master of esoteric Buddhism. Upon Hui-Kuo’s death Kūkai was named the Eighth Patriarch of Hui-Kuo’s school of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism and decided to return to Japan with the mission of spreading these teachings.⁸⁸ There are obvious problems with this account, especially because it is a part of Kūkai’s hagiography, and there are little historical sources to corroborate Kūkai’s own personal account of these events. Regardless, Kūkai’s autobiographical account of his time studying with Hui-Kuo serves as means for Kūkai to amplify his own religious authority and place himself in a historical sacred landscape that would later be cultivated and manipulated by his own disciples, to suit their specific needs. Kūkai would seemingly squeeze a lifetime of study into the incredibly short timeframe of thirty-three months.⁸⁹ Indeed, everything about Kūkai’s voyage to China had been expedient, perhaps it is not a mere coincidence that he would later come to believe that enlightenment, like his experience of becoming a master of esoteric ritual, could also be attained rapidly.

⁸⁷ Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p.55.

⁸⁸ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 32-33.

⁸⁹ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.137.

After returning to Japan, Kūkai would go on to accomplish a great deal. He was a civil engineer, a foreign envoy, a talented poet, a sculptor, a renowned calligrapher, tutor to the crown prince, a gifted linguist and translator of texts, an importer of religious technology and a public educator. His accomplishments are too numerous to list, given the confines and aims of this chapter. On the 21st day of the third month in 835, after a very accomplished, political, cultural and religious career, Kūkai passed away on Mt. Kōya.⁹⁰ It is in the subsequent years after his passing that the first sings of his deification began to emerge. The monks of Mt. Kōya claimed that Kūkai did not actually die but was diligently sitting in eternal *samādhi* on behalf of the nation.⁹¹ Thus with the death of the historical figure Kūkai, the sacred persona *Kōbō Daishi* 弘法大師 was born.

3.2: NYŪJOSETSU: THE LEGEND OF KŪKAI'S PERPETUAL SAMĀDHI ON MT. KŌYA

Kūkai's transformation into Kōbō Daishi was due largely to legends like the one recorded in the *Konjaku monogatari* shū, titled "How Master Kōbō Built the Temple in Mount Kōya for the First Time." This legend contains many miraculous aspects of a typical medieval Japanese sacred landscape, the first being Kūkai's encounter with hunter who turns out to be a guardian deity of the mountain. The second element is Kūkai's super human strength in being able to hurl a three-pronged *vajra* from China to Japan. This entire

⁹⁰ Hakeda, Yoshito S. (1984) p. 60.

⁹¹ Nicoloff, Philip. (2008) p. 83.

legend serves the larger hagiographical function of establishing Kūkai's religious authority over local Shinto deities, who guide Kūkai to the mountain and offer their approval and protection. Furthermore, the legend also showcases the enormous political influence Kūkai had garnered during his life time, culminating with the Emperor officially granting him the land of Mt. Kōya for the establishment of a monastic center. The account of Kūkai's "death" or his "entering into *nirvāṇa*" is one of the more interesting components of this legend contributing to the way Kūkai was deified.

Later the master prepared the place for his last moments, and at about the Hour of Tiger (4 a.m.) on the twenty-first day of the third month in the second year of *Jōwa* (835) he finally entered *nirvana* sitting in meditation with his hands forming the *mudra* of *Dainichi* at the age of sixty-two. As he had willed, his disciples recited the name of the *Bodhisattva Miroku*. Sometime later, they opened the room where the master had entered *nirvana* and shaved his head, and changed his clothing.⁹²

According to the text, a long time passes, and the tomb is visited by Sōjō Kangen, a fourth-generation disciple of Kūkai and assistant to the supervisor of Tōji Temple in Nara.⁹³ Kangen opens the hall where Kūkai's body had been interred to find that Kūkai was still sitting upright as if in mediation. His hair had grown one foot long and his decayed robe flew up with a mysterious mist-like wind. Kangen then rethreads the crystal prayer beads from Kūkai's *juzu* 数珠, that had also decayed and were strewn over the

⁹² Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p. 79.

⁹³ Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p. 80.

floor before the master.⁹⁴ After purifying himself by bathing, Kangen returns to the hall, shaves Kūkai's head with a new blade, places the rosary in his hand and dresses him in a fresh robe. Kangen then reseals the hall and departs weeping in a state of grief as if it was the first time he had heard of his master's death. The fact that Kūkai's hair had grown longer seems to suggest that he had not died, he was "living" in a state of *samādhi*. The literary tropes at work in this legend are indicative of the sacred landscape of Heian Japan and as a result directly reflect how a historical person is incorporated into that landscape through deification. Further examination of some of the details of the historical Kūkai's ideology, the ritual practices he advocated for, and his unique interpretation of Buddhism's traditional worldview will provide a clearer understanding for the reasons his deification took place in such a unique manner. First, we must begin by examining how Kūkai himself envisioned and interpreted the world he lived in.

3.3: KŪKAI'S SACRED LANDSCAPE

Kūkai believed that the entire universe, material things and immaterial things alike, all sights, sounds, smells, images and words were a direct manifestation of the cosmic Buddha *Dainichi*. *Dainichi* was constantly revealing himself in physical, verbal and mental forms, perpetually engaged in expounding the truth of "suchness" simply for his own enjoyment.⁹⁵ This is

⁹⁴ Dykstra, Yoshiko. (2014) p. 80.

⁹⁵ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 66.

known as the *Mikkyō* doctrine of *hosshin seppō* 法身說法 or the *dharmakāya*, the cosmic body of the Buddha, revealing itself or demonstrating the *dharma*. By this logic, Kūkai concluded that we are all extensions of the cosmic Buddha *Dainichi*. Essentially all sentient beings are parts of *Dainichi*'s never-ending monologue of eternal self-expression and by this extension, already enlightened.⁹⁶ To borrow from Bowring, this meant that *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* were identical, indivisible, all things partook of enlightened mind and enlightened mind expressed itself in all forms.⁹⁷ However, Kūkai believed that most people were not spiritually advanced enough to perceive this ultimate truth.

The idea that the *dharmakāya* was the cosmic embodiment of emptiness was upheld by the Buddhist establishment in Nara, although they held the position that it was only the *nirmanakāya* or the historical body of Śākyamuni Buddha that actively preached the *dharma*. What made Kūkai's view unique was that the *dharmakāya*, from his perspective, transcends the distinction between words and silence, the seen and unseen. For Kūkai the *dharmakāya* is the very way it reveals itself in physical, mental and verbal forms.⁹⁸ It is existence. If a person could see this truth, they would understand that they, in their present body, were actually the cosmic *buddha Dainichi*, and as such already enlightened. This teaching effectively trumped

⁹⁶ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 76-77.

⁹⁷ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.143.

⁹⁸ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 74.

the traditional beliefs of the Buddhist establishment, which held the position that it was necessary for one to spend countless lifetimes perfecting themselves along the *bodhisattva* path in order to be reborn in a purified body capable of attaining buddhahood. Kūkai's creative interpretation had significantly shortened the path to becoming a *buddha*.⁹⁹

Kūkai's famous doctrine of *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏 is artistically portrayed in a volume 10 and 11 of a collection *emaki* 絵巻, picture scrolls depicting history of the life of Kōbō Daishi.¹⁰⁰ These images relate a well-known story in which Kūkai demonstrates the superiority of Shingon Buddhism over other forms of Buddhism. In 813 Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇(786-842) held a symposium asking the leaders of various Buddhist sects to present their basic doctrines to him. The general position of the monks gathered was that it would take nearly an infinite amount of life times to attain enlightenment. Kūkai explained that enlightenment was possible to attain in this very body. When the monks gathered there were critical of this position, Kūkai recites a *mantra*, preforms several *mudras* and transforms himself into

⁹⁹ It should be noted that Saichō also taught a doctrine of *sokushin jōbutsu*. There is some scholarly debate as to whether it was Saichō or Kūkai who first espoused the teaching. Credit is traditionally given to Kūkai, by the dates of the publication of his *Sokushin jōbutsu gi* 即身成仏義 in 817. Both men could have indeed been developing the idea at the same time and Kūkai had just been the first to formally publish a work on the subject, but this view errs more on the side of speculation than historical fact. Regardless, the fact that two of the most prominent thinkers of Japanese Buddhism were grappling with this idea at the same time, shows that the idea was not confined to Kūkai alone, but part of the larger sacred landscape of medieval Japanese Buddhism.

¹⁰⁰ These are the images can be found in *Zoku Nihon no emaki* 10 Kōbō Daishi gyōjō ekotobajō 続日本の絵巻 10 弘法大師行状絵詞上, (1990) p. 30-33.

Dainichi right before the eyes of the skeptical monks.¹⁰¹ The first image on the scroll shows Kūkai seated before the other monks, presumably offering a lecture on *sokushin jōbutsu*. In the following image, Kūkai has been transformed into *Dainichi*, and all of the monks bow down in reverence as rays of shimmering light emanate from the ritually transformed Kūkai. Therefore Kūkai had effectively demonstrated that it was possible to become a *buddha* in this very body.¹⁰² These *emaki* are examples of how painted images further aid in the deification process of religious figures in the minds of medieval Japanese, much the same way Kūkai believed the visual imagery of a *mandala* aided in the expedient attainment of enlightenment.

¹⁰¹ Nicoloff, Philip. (2008) p. 56.

¹⁰² Komatsu, Shigemi. ed., *Kōbō Daishi gyōjō ekotoba jō*, in *Zoku Nihon no emaki*, vol. 10. Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1990. (Pp. 30-33)

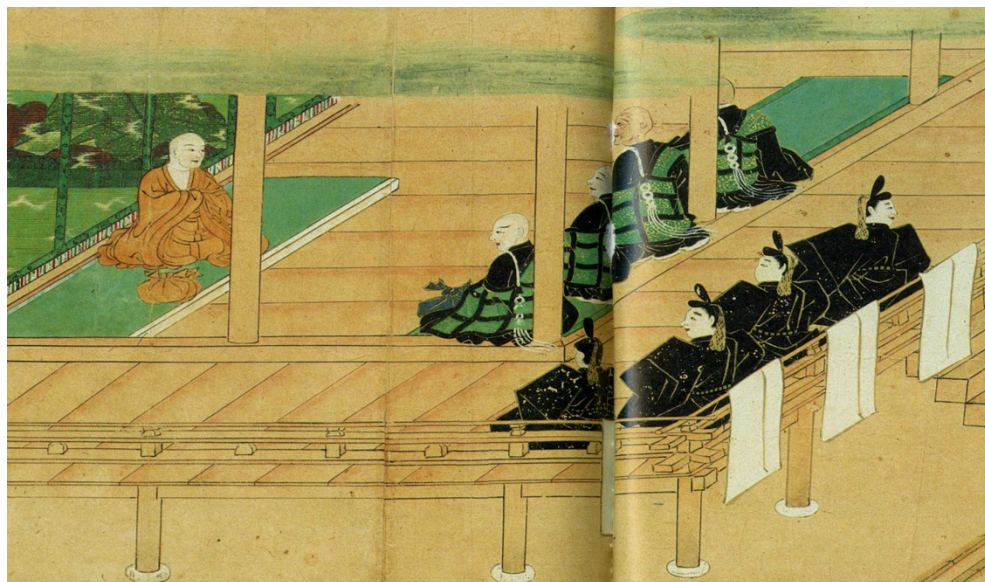


Figure 1: This image portrays Kūkai lecturing on sokushin jōbutsu 即身成佛 before a group of skeptical monks.

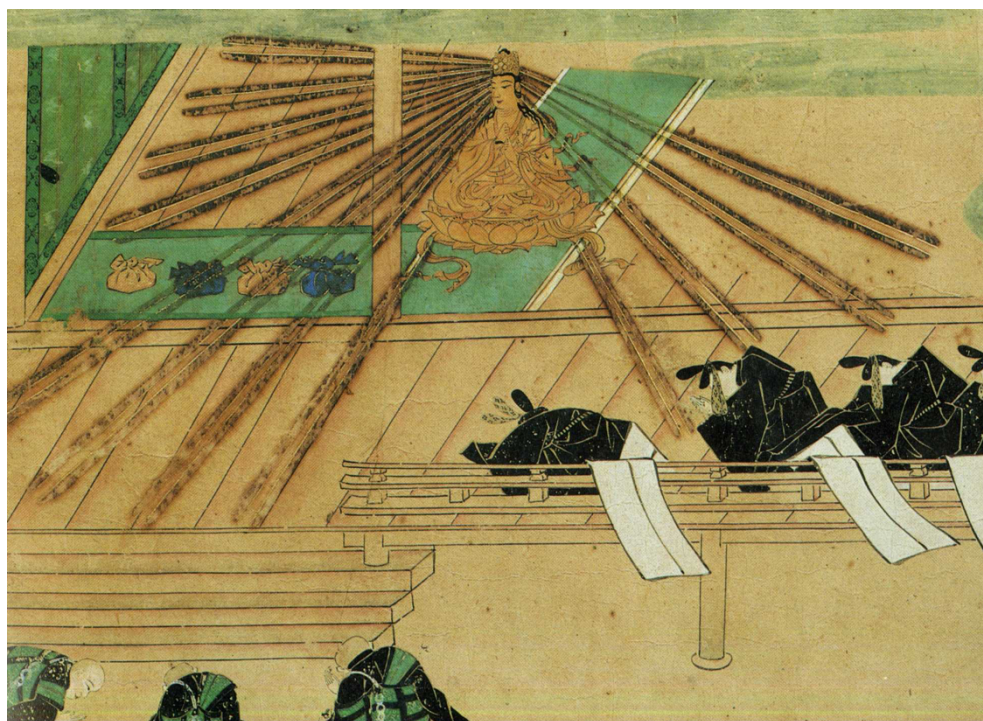


Figure 2: In this image, through an elaborate esoteric ritual involving mudras, Kūkai has transformed himself into Dainichi 大日如来 right before the eyes of the skeptical monks.

3.4: *MANDALA*

There can be no disputing that Kūkai was an intellectual giant whose ideas profoundly influenced the current of Japanese Buddhist thought. This aspect of Kūkai has often been valorized by intellectual historians. In the study of Japanese Buddhism, intellectual history was emphasized at one time but has now become largely subordinated to the study of institutional history, ritual and material culture. Buddhist intellectual historians tend to overlook the fact that the role of philosopher, was only one of many robes Kūkai wore during his lifetime. His official job, which afforded him time to develop his unique brand of Buddhism, was working as a government-sanctioned ritual specialist. He was not just any *yamabushi* 山伏, *hijiri* 聖 or *nembutsu* chanting *gyōja* 行者 either. Kūkai was a scholar monk in possession of advanced ritual technology imported from China, *mandala*. This advanced ritual technology was new to Japan and capable of assisting practitioners in the attaining of enlightenment far more swiftly than written words.

Among the many Buddhist treasures and relics Kūkai returned to Japan with were 142 *sūtras*, 42 Sanskrit texts, 32 commentaries and, most importantly, 5 *mandalas*.¹⁰³ Several of these *mandalas* in Kūkai's possession were visual representations of the Diamond Realm and the Womb Realm. The Diamond Realm *mandala* represents the perfect enlightenment of *Dainichi*

¹⁰³ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.146.

endlessly revealing the *dharma* to itself, whereas the Womb Realm *mandala* is representative of how that *dharma* manifests itself in the material world.

A *mandala* is essentially a ritual device used for summoning a *buddha*, or a door through which a Buddhist Pure Land can be accessed by means of a very elaborate ritual performance. *Mandala* themselves can be seen as sacred spaces that are meant to be entered by an initiate for the purpose of personal interaction with a deity.¹⁰⁴ The basic idea being that the particular *buddha* or deity summoned would fulfill a specific request of the initiate or ritual patron. Some examples would be providing an opportunity for the ritual patron to take a sacred vow in the *buddha*'s presence or for the prosperity and protection of the State.

Kūkai claims to have been instructed by his master Hui-Kuo about how to perform these rituals, before Hui-Kuo's death in 806. For the Heian aristocracy who had the time and money, Shingon Buddhism's elaborate ritual pageantry coupled with the potential to "become a Buddha in this very body" was extremely appealing.¹⁰⁵ Its ability to serve as a means of protection for the State was likewise attractive to the Imperial court. The Buddhist establishment in Nara had already been chanting the *Golden Light Sūtra* in a ritual to secure protection for State. However, Kūkai insisted in a letter to Emperor Ninmyō that he could enhance the effectiveness of this ritual by

¹⁰⁴ Bowring, Richard. (2005) p.145.

¹⁰⁵ Totman, Conrad. (2005) p. 118.

incorporating the use of *mandala*.¹⁰⁶ Kūkai believed that the ritual chanting of a *sūtra* alone was not sufficient. Moreover, the depth of *Mikkyō*'s power could not fully be expressed in written words. Kūkai himself states:

Since the Esoteric Buddhist teachings are so profound as to defy expression in writing, they are revealed through the medium of painting to those who are yet to be enlightened. The various postures and *mudras* [depicted in *mandalas*] are products of the great compassion of the Buddha; the sight of them may well enable one to attain Buddhahood.¹⁰⁷

Pamela Winfield believes Kūkai was arguing here that visual images such as *mandala*, were superior to written language, such as *sūtras*, when it comes to facilitating the ritual realization of enlightenment.¹⁰⁸ Winfield's research has demonstrated the immense power religious iconography and visualization played in the way Kūkai himself perceived the sacred landscape of his own time.

Kūkai so strongly believed in the ritual effectiveness of *mandala* that he designed the very grounds of the temple complex at Mt. Kōya to function as one giant Two-world *mandala*. The geographic location of Mt. Kōya plays a significant role when it is presented as being representative of a lotus blossom. More specifically, the *tahōtō*, the many-jeweled pagoda rising up in

¹⁰⁶ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 86.

¹⁰⁷ Totman, Conrad. (2005) p. 118. There are various translations of this passage, this translation differs slightly from the one Winfield uses, in that it is a bit more concise. The translation Totman uses comes from *Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai*, *The Man'yōshū* (NY: CUP, 1965), p. 3. For another translation, see Ian Hideo Levy, *The Ten Thousand Leaves*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: PUP, 1981), p. 38, and Levy, *Hitomaro and the Birth of Japanese Lyricism* (Princeton: PUP, 1984), p. 25.

¹⁰⁸ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 85.

the center as the seed, and the eight mountain peaks surrounding Mt. Kōya were thought to be the lotus petals.¹⁰⁹ The pagoda represents the seed for perfect enlightenment of the Diamond Realm present in all beings situated in the center of the Womb Realm, the material world where the *dharma* is realized.¹¹⁰ Here we can clearly see Kūkai's own attempt to graft his personal sacred landscape onto a location in the physical world. Jacqueline Stone's recent research points to the ways in which a sacred landscape can be effectively "grounded" in the physical world. Stone states that this "grounding" process was related to the mapping out of geographic *mandalas*, the establishment of pilgrimage routes, and the production and dissemination of temple founding legends, which all serve to promote beneficial powers of specific sacred locations such as Mt. Kōya.¹¹¹ It is not surprising that with the fusion of the visual imagery of *mandala* and the philosophical ideas they represent, placed directly within physical locations both natural and man-made, later Buddhists would come to believe that Mt. Kōya itself was indeed a gateway to a Pure Land here on earth. Thus, *mandala* function as one means of grafting a sacred landscape onto a location in physical world.

Another means of linking a sacred landscape to a location in the physical world is through powerful ideas present in religious doctrine and

¹⁰⁹ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 96-97.

¹¹⁰ Winfield, Pamela D. (2013) p. 96-97.

¹¹¹ Stone, Jacqueline. (2016) p. 86.

ideologies. Kūkai's revolutionary idea that one could become a *buddha* in this very body, espoused in his *Sokushin jōbutsu gi* 即身成仏義 is embodied in the legend of Kūkai's perpetual meditation. Furthermore, the presence on the mountain of Kūkai's uncorrupted body, said to be seated in meditation, helped to construct Mt. Kōya as a sacred site. On a more doctrinal note, it is true that Kūkai had not actually become a *buddha* in his present body, as he himself professed was possible. However, if the *nyūjyosetsu* were to be believed, then Kūkai had not died. He was simply waiting in eternal *samādhi*, only to awaken at the coming of *Maitreya*, the future *buddha*, who can assist him in saving all sentient beings. Therefore, according to the *nyūjyosetsu*, and in keeping with Shingon doctrine, Kūkai would indeed awaken with the “very body” that had been interned on Mt. Kōya, attaining enlightenment as he professed was possible. In this way the *nyūjyosetsu* not only amplifies Kūkai's spiritual prowess, but also reinforces Shingon doctrine by adapting and incorporating the idea of *Sokushin jōbutsu* into the larger changing sacred landscape of medieval Japan. According to Ian Reader, this legend also helped to turn Mt. Kōya into a place where people could encounter a “living” holy figure, who could assist with soteriological salvation.¹¹²

According to Hayami Tasuku, who is the author of *Miroku shinkō: Mō hitotsu no jōdo shinkō* 弥勒信仰—もう一つの浄土信仰, the actual historical records regarding Kūkai's death are often overlooked and the *nyūjyosetsu* 入定

¹¹² Reader, Ian. (2006) p.43

説, the legend of Kūkai's perpetual *samādhi* on Mt. Kōya, is generally regarded as the “historical” account of Kūkai's passing.¹¹³ As Hayami points out, *nyūjyosetsu* did not develop immediately after Kūkai's death and it was a much more gradual process that involved three stages. The first of these was that Kūkai, like all sentient beings, had simply died. This is significant especially because it means that Kūkai was not awaiting the coming of *Maitreya*, diligently sitting in eternal *samādhi* in his mausoleum in the inner sanctum of Mt. Kōya. Actually, in accordance with the Buddhist funerary parlance of the time Kūkai, the great patriarch of Shingon Buddhism, had been cremated.¹¹⁴

Historic records state that Emperor Ninmyō 仁明天皇 (808-850) sent a note to Mt. Kōya regretting that he would not be able to attend the cremation. The contents of this official imperial correspondence have been overlooked by the *nyūjyosetsu*, creating the ahistorical fact that Kūkai was not actually cremated but interred in a mausoleum in the inner sanctum of Mt. Kōya instead. Perhaps this was done intentionally by Shingon scholar monks, to add credence to the *nyūjyosetsu*, or perhaps it was unintentional and gradually developed over time. Regardless the fact remains that Kūkai had been cremated. Hayami cites that in the year following Kūkai's death, one of his followers *Jitsue* 実慧 had sent a letter to *Qīnglóng* Temple 青龍寺 in China,

¹¹³ Hayami, Tasuku 速水侑. (1971) p.96.

¹¹⁴ Hayami, Tasuku 速水侑. (1971) p.96.

where Kūkai had studied, informing the monks there of Kūkai's passing. The note read as follows:

Alas, how sorrowful. In the late spring, in the second year of *Joūwa*, at the age of sixty-two, the great fire of Kūkai's life has been extinguished.¹¹⁵

Hayami explains that the use of the term *maki tsuki hi messu* 薪尽き火滅す in this letter merely meant that Kūkai had died. Later, and especially in the case of Kūkai, this term takes on the more obvious contextual Buddhist meaning of Kūkai's death actually being his entering into *nirvāṇa*. For Hayami this is the second stage of the evolution of the *nyūjyosetsu*. The third and final stage of the legend appears in the *Konjaku monogatari* and the one most believers and scholars are well acquainted with; the legend of Kūkai's perpetual *samādhi* in his mausoleum on Mt. Kōya. Most notably, Hayami points out that a passage found in the *Shoku Nihon kōki* 続日本後紀 clearly states that in year 834 after Kūkai had died, he had been cremated.¹¹⁶ Unlike the clever Buddhist wordplay at work in poetic turn of phrase *maki tsuki hi messu*, the term used here is *dabi* 荼毘 which translates to *kasō* 火葬 in modern Japanese, or cremation in English. So, what then was the reason for the creation and propagation of such a myth? Was this tale invented merely

¹¹⁵ 「承和二年季春、薪尽き火滅す。行年六十二、ああ哀しかな」 Hayami, Tasuku 速水侑. (1971) p.96.

¹¹⁶ Hayami, Tasuku 速水侑. (1971) p.96.

to enhance the image of the famous founding figure of Shingon Buddhism, or were there other more practical forces at work?

According to Conrad Totman, by the *Sekkanke* heyday, the success of *Tendai* and *Shingon* had developed massive temple complexes such as the one on Mt. Hiei and Mt. Kōya. Such success led to the accumulation of vast holdings that in turn contributed to severe rivalries between temple complexes competing for economic resources.¹¹⁷ With little to no economic growth during this time period it meant that temple complexes would have to turn to other means to support themselves. Jacqueline Stone further reinforces this point by arguing that with the decline of centralized state administration and the gradual dispersal of power among rival blocs, temples and shrines had to seek new means of economic survival, and that pilgrimage became a growing source of support.¹¹⁸ Reader reiterates this point, noting that changing economic conditions of the 12th century in Japan greatly affected the Buddhist community, namely the loss of financial support from the land-owning aristocracy.¹¹⁹ This economic crisis led the Buddhist community to develop creative new ways to solicit patrons for its financial survival. According to the research by Stone and Reader, the monastic institutions implemented pilgrimage practice, through the development of popular cults such as the *Daishi shinkō*, as a means to ameliorate their

¹¹⁷ Totman, Conrad. (2005) p. 118-119.

¹¹⁸ Stone, Jacqueline. (2016) p. 87.

¹¹⁹ Reader, Ian. (2015) p. 28.

economic needs.¹²⁰ From this perspective *nyūjyosetsu* can be viewed as a form of Buddhist propaganda that assisted in the establishment and development of pilgrimage circuits. Such legends functioned as a means for *Shingon* Buddhism to consolidate its power and influence, demonstrating its ability to adapt to the changing economic conditions of Japan in the 12th century.

3.5: THE KŌYA-HIJIRI AND THE DEIFICATION OF KŪKAI

Kūkai's deification process was carried out not only by the *Shingon* priests and scholar monks who proselytized traditions like the *nyūjyosetsu*, but by various other religious specialists as well. One of the major players in the myth spreading of Kōbō Daishi were the *Kōya-hijiri* 高野聖. The *hijiri* were a class of wandering monks that were not quite affiliated with any particular sect of Buddhism and had come to settle on Mt. Kōya around 1073.¹²¹ They did not necessary practice or follow the secret doctrines of *Shingon* Buddhism as taught by Kūkai, but instead worshiped Kōbō Daishi as a divine savior figure. They maintained that faith in Kōbō Daishi and pilgrimage to Mt. Kōya guaranteed rebirth with Kōbō Daishi in *Miroku's Tusita* Heaven.¹²² Philip Nicoloff in his study of Mt. Kōya notes:

The general practice of the *Kōya-hijiri* was to alternate periods of retreat at *Kōyasan* with long sojourns into the nation's villages and byways where they performed cures and narrated the legends of *Kōyasan*, most especially the legend of *Kōbō Daishi's* ongoing *samādhi* in behalf of the nation. While in the villages the *hijiri* collected bones

¹²⁰ Reader, Ian. (2015) p. 28.

¹²¹ Nicoloff, Philip. (2008) p. 82.

¹²² Nicoloff, Philip. (2008) p. 83.

and other relics of deceased loved ones, and, in return for an appropriate offering, brought the relics back to *Kōyasan* for burial in the earth near *Daishi's* tomb. They also solicited donations toward the continuing restoration of the mountain.¹²³

The *Kōya hijiri* were wandering religious specialists, selling penance, cures, and funeral plots, all the while promoting pilgrimage to Mt. Kōya as a means of generating merit and gaining salvation or birth in a Buddhist Pure Land.

3.6: SITUATING KŪKAI IN JAPAN'S LARGER SACRED LANDSCAPE

Kūkai's written texts, doctrinal ideas, elaborate visual rituals centered on *mandala*, hagiographies based on his own autobiography, even his own death clearly demonstrate how sacred landscapes were envisioned, created, added to and managed in the minds of the cultural elite of Heian era. Furthermore, Kūkai's own deification as the *bodhisattva* Kōbō Daishi permanently situated him within the pantheon of Japanese gods that populated Heian Japan's sacred landscape. The fact that historical accounts of Kūkai's cremation have been overlooked in favor of the ahistorical idea that he had been interred is a testament to the power and potency legends have in influencing the way modern human beings perceive historical events and historical personages.

To this very day the monks of Mt. Kōya present a change of robes and offer a meal at Kūkai's mausoleum daily, an act echoing devotion of Sōjō Kangen in the *Konjaku monogatari* text. This is a ritual embodiment of a

¹²³ Nicoloff, Philip. (2008) p. 83.

textual reference to the deified Kūkai, a sacred narrative acting itself out in the material world. Moreover, Mt. Kōya is a prime example of a geographic location where a sacred landscape was grafted onto the physical world through religious imagery, both real and imagined, and that sacred identity was further reinforced and solidified through the promotion of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage did provide an effective way to ameliorate economic needs of medieval cultic centers, but it was so effective precisely because it was a tactile ritual enabling practitioners to physically experience a sacred landscape. In medieval Japan pilgrimage provided a means for religious practitioners to literally walk among spirits, gods and ghosts, *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, to come in contact with the divine and touch the sacred.

This was the birth of *nyūjyosetsu* tradition, which developed into *Daishi shinkō*, the pilgrimage cult of Kōbō Daishi. Beginning with the establishment of Mt. Kōya as a major site for pilgrimage for the *Daishi* faith, these pilgrimage practices spread to other locations associated with the historical Kūkai not too far away in his home province of Sanuki on the island of Shikoku.

Having firmly established the origins of *Daishi shinkō*, in the following chapter we will turn to how *Daishi shinkō* spread through the provinces of Shikoku by means of the pilgrimage ritual assisted in part by the dissemination of *Kōbō densetsu*. The next chapter will focus on examining two versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. A side-by-side comparison of the

contents of these legends not only provides interesting clues about the spread of the cult of Kūkai, but also demonstrates precisely the reason why the Emon Saburō *densetsu* was such an effective piece of Buddhist propaganda.

CHAPTER 4: ISHITE TEMPLE AND THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE EMON SABURŌ DENSETSU 衛門三郎伝説

In the one hundred years following Kūkai's death and deification we begin to see evidence that pilgrims, in addition to visiting his mausoleum on Mt. Kōya, had also started making pilgrimages to Shikoku to visit sites associated with Kūkai's life. Pilgrims generally visited Zentsū Temple 善通寺, Kūkai's birth place, and also visited Tairyū 太龍寺 and Hotsumisaki Temples 最御崎寺, places where the historical Kūkai actually visited. Pilgrims also visited other places where he was said to have practice religious austerities like Iwaya Temple 岩屋寺.¹²⁴ These pilgrims were mainly devotees of Kūkai. The historical documentation of this time period remains scant in comparison with Edo era. With the rise in popularity of pilgrimage across all classes of society, the first pilgrim diaries and guidebooks on the Shikoku Pilgrimage were published.

4.1: EARLY PILGRIM DIARIES AND GUIDEBOOKS OF THE EDO ERA

The first of these works was the *Kusho hoshino Shikoku reijo ojungyoki* 空性法親王四国霊場御巡行記 published by the monk Kenmei 賢明 in 1638.

According to this account Kenmei began his pilgrimage at Tennō Temple 天

¹²⁴ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 14.

皇寺 and finished at Meiseki Temple 明石寺.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, Kenmei was not very detailed in his account of his pilgrimage.

The second major work is Chōzen's 澄禅 *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記 published in 1653. The *Shikoku henro niiki* is a much more detailed autobiographical account of the monk Chōzen's pilgrimage in Shikoku. Chōzen provides a bibliographic account of the sacred sites and monks and details the route and some of the hardships he encountered on his journey such as waiting for the waters of flooded rivers to subside enough to make a safe crossing.¹²⁶

The most famous and by far the most detailed, account of pilgrimage in Shikoku is Yūben Shinnen's 宥弁真念 *Shikoku henro michi shirube* 四國邊路道指南 published in 1687. Shinnen's *Shikoku henro michi shirube* lists the principal deity of all of the eighty-eight temples as well as records, pilgrim poetry and songs, and the pilgrimage route. It also provides information regarding the inns and accommodations along the route.¹²⁷

Shinnen was a devotee of Kōbō Daishi and spent much of his time traveling in Shikoku, promoting pilgrimage and raising funds to erect markers to help guide pilgrims along the pilgrimage route. Shinnen himself was reported to have done the pilgrimage as many as twenty times.¹²⁸ To this

¹²⁵ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.62.

¹²⁶ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.62.

¹²⁷ Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.62.

¹²⁸ Reader, Ian. (1999) p. 362.

end, Shinnen can be viewed as the exemplar of pilgrimage practice and faith in the *Daishi* cult.

These texts compiled by Shinnen and Chōzen not only provide detailed historical information about the Shikoku pilgrimage, but the things they chose to record, the places they visited and thought other people should also visit, offer valuable insight into how medieval devotees of *Daishi shinkō* interacted with the sacred locations of Shikoku. One of the versions of the Emon Saburō densetsu analyzed in this chapter is found in Chōzen's 澄禪 *Shikoku henro niiki* which also provides detailed clues about the expansion of *Daishi shinkō* in Shikoku.

As a springboard for this final discussion, let us revisit Ian Reader's translation of the Emon Saburō densetsu discussed in chapter two, this time concentrating on the historical context rather than focusing the legendary tropes.

The Tale of Emon Saburō

The story of Emon Saburō comes from the Ukaana area of Iyo Province and is widely reported in Shikoku. Emon was a greedy and irreligious man. When a pilgrim came to his door and held up his begging bowl, Emon struck him with his staff and knocked the begging bowl flying, causing it to break into eight pieces. However, in the next eight days his eight sons died one by one, and thus he was stricken with grief and repentance [because he realized that the pilgrim he had insulted was Kōbō Daishi]. Thus he set out to do the pilgrimage [in search of *Daishi* to seek forgiveness] and did it twenty-one times in reverse order [at this point, some versions of the story say he did it twenty times in the normal, i.e., clockwise, order and, failing to meet the *Daishi*, then went on his twenty-first circuit counterclockwise], before falling down, dying, at the foot of Shōsan Temple in Awa Province. As he did so, *Daishi* appeared before him and [absolving him of his sins] granted his

request [to be reborn, in his old province, as the son of a good family in a position that would enable him to do good deeds], then he wrote his name on a stone. Emon was reborn as the son of the village headman Kōno; at birth his hand was clenched, and [when it was opened] they found this same stone, with the words “Emon Saburō reborn” written on it, in his hand. He grew up, succeeded to the Kōno family line, and restored the Anraku Temple in Matsuyama, building numerous shrines there, enshrining the stone that had been clenched in his hand, and renaming the temple Ishite [Stone Hand] Temple. The Kōno family flourished for several centuries, and from this event a long story has evolved and become the foundation story [*engi*] of Ishite Temple.¹²⁹

What immediately jumps out as suspicious about this legend is the specific mention of a specific clan associated with the designated pilgrimage sites. Shōsan Temple 焼山寺 is the 12th *fudasho* along the Shikoku Pilgrimage, and Anyō Temple 安養寺, later renamed Ishite Temple 石手寺 in the legend, is the 51st *fudasho*. The Kōno 河野 family were the ruling clan in Iyo Province dating from 1279 retaining power throughout the medieval period. It was due to their generous patronage that Ishite Temple thrived.¹³⁰ Reader does not include the names of the members of the Kōno family specifically mentioned in this version of the legend, even though the primary texts state that Emon Saburō is reborn as Kōno Yasukata 河野息方, the son of the ruler of Iyo Province Kōno Okitoshi 河野息利. Both are actual historical figures from the Kōno family lineage.

Here clearly the Emon Saburō densetsu establishes a connection with the most powerful clan in Iyo province. Japanese Scholar Tsutomu Kawaoka

¹²⁹ Reader, Ian. (1999) p. 369.

¹³⁰ Okawa, Eiji. (2009) p.33-34.

has suggested that the Emon Saburō *densetsu* was produced as a genealogical document of the Kōno family and accompanied a list of items that were lost in a fire that destroyed part of the temple complex in 1566.¹³¹ In addition to changing political and economic conditions facing the Kōno family in the Edo period the Kōno family began losing grip on its power. Subsequently their patronage of Ishite Temple declined. This has led Eiji Okawa to conclude that these conditions would have forced the administration of Ishite Temple to turn to lay parishioners for financial support and that the Emon Saburō *densetsu* was a useful “sales pitch” for raising the funds required to restore the temple after the fire.¹³²

Thus, at the very base level *densetsu* function as a means of establishing political relationships between the ruling class and monastic institutions, confirming both the authority of the ruling elite and augmenting religious influence of the temple complex. Furthermore, *densetsu* can be applied in response to a crisis as a form of Buddhist propaganda to address very real economic concerns of temple complexes as they struggle to adapt to the changing historical climate of medieval Japan.

Reader and Okawa present the clear economic motivations that were driving the dissemination of the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. However, what was it about the Emon Saburō *densetsu* that actually made it such a successful piece of Buddhist propaganda? To understand this question, a thorough

¹³¹ Kawaoka, Tsutomu 川岡勉. (2007) p.63.

¹³² Okawa, Eiji. (2009) p.33-34.

examination of the content of two versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* is required, starting with the earliest version, an engraving found at Ishite Temple dated to the tenth year of the Eiroku era (永祿 10 年 : 1567).

4.2: ISHITE TEMPLE ENGRAVING OF EMON SABURŌ DENSETSU, LATE

MUROMACHI ERA

In the eighth year of Tenchō (831), there lived a greedy irreligious man named Emon Saburō. He detested both the *buddhas* and *kami* violating their ways. As a form of divine retribution for leading a wicked life his eight children died. Thereafter he took tonsure and went on *Shikoku henro* (四国辺路). At the foot of the mountain near Shōsan Temple in Awa province, he collapsed. Sick and exhausted, on the verge of death, with his dying breath, Emon Saburō wished for rebirth as a member of the household of the lord of Iyo Province (the Kōno clan 河野氏). Kūkai appeared at the time of his death granting this wish, engraving the name Emon Saburō on a small stone that was 3.5-centimeters long, placing it in Saburō's left hand. Some years later, a boy was born to Okitoshi, the Lord of Iyo (河野息利). They named the child Yasukata (河野息方) and he inherited the headship of the household. The stone (which the boy clenched in his fist at birth) was enshrined in the main hall of Ishite Temple¹³³

The content of this early version of the *densetsu* provides five important pieces of information. First, it explains that because Emon Saburō is a “greedy irreligious man” he is divinely punished and all eight of his children die, not because he attacked Kūkai, breaking his begging bowl. Second, it makes reference to *Shikoku henro* using the characters *henro* 辺路.

¹³³ 淳和天皇天長八辛亥載、浮穴郡江原郷、右衛門三郎、求利欲而富貴、破惡逆而仏神、故八人男子頓死、自爾剃髮捨家順四国辺路、於阿州焼山寺麓、及病死一念言望伊予国司、爰空海和尚一寸八分石切八塚右衛門三郎銘、封左手、經年月、生国司息利男子、継家号息方、件石令置当寺本堂畢。Motohiro, Yoritomi 頼富本宏 and Shiraki, Toshiyuki 白木利幸. (2001).

This usage of the word refers to pilgrimage in terms of a practice that takes place in a distant land. Third, it lists the names of the physical locations associated with Emon Saburō, Ishite Temple in Iyo Province, and the foot of the mountain near Shōsan Temple in Awa Province. Fourth, it provides evidence of a deep connection between the Kōno clan and Ishite Temple. Finally, it states the specific size of the stone that was enshrined at Ishite Temple. Keeping these details in mind, let's turn our attention to how the legend gets fleshed out in much more detail in Chōzen's 澄禪 *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記 published in 1653. Instead of providing a full translation of the text, a detailed summary and translations of some short passages relevant to this discussion will be provided.

4.3: THE EMON SABURŌ DENSETSU AS RECODED BY CHŌZEN IN THE EDO ERA

There was no such person under heaven as lazy, evil, greedy, or stingy as Emon Saburō.¹³⁴ Emon Saburō was hired as a cleaner of the shrine. Every day he worked sweeping the dust away from temple grounds. Seeing that Emon Saburō was a wicked man, *Daishi* decided to use skillful means to teach him the *Dharma* and set him on the path to enlightenment. Thus, *Daishi* transformed himself into a begging monk of the *henro* and appeared to Emon Saburō who was cleaning the *nagatoko*.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Chōzen 澄禪. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.45. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

¹³⁵ 此男ハ天下無双ノ悪人ニテ極貪放逸ノ者也。大師此三郎ヲ方便ヲ教化シテ真ノ道ニ入度思召ケルカ、或時辺路乞食ノ僧ニ化シテ長床ニ居玉フ。Chōzen 澄禪. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.45. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

Daishi first encounters Saburō at the *nagatoko* 長床, a long building typically found in front of the shrines or temples where ascetics gather and stay.¹³⁶ When Emon Saburō first sees *Daishi* he is disgusted by the beggar's filthy outward appearance. He immediately chases *Daishi* out of the temple grounds. However, *Daishi* returns a second time the following day and is once again evicted from the temple grounds by an ill-tempered Emon Saburō. On the third day, while cleaning the temple, Emon Saburō encounters the dirty beggar monk again despite being chased away twice before.¹³⁷ Frustrated and full of rage Emon Saburō attacks the beggar with his broom handle. Shielding his body, the dirty monk pulls out his begging bowl and it is smashed into eight pieces. The forceful blow Emon Saburō delivers to begging bowl emitted radiant light and the broken pieces were lifted into the air and flew off in eight different directions. Naturally Emon Saburō was concerned by this strange event, but he thought little of it and returned home.

Upon returning home Emon Saburō found his oldest son acting crazy as if possessed. His son spoke to him in a strange voice saying, "I am Kūkai! As punishment for your treatment of me, your evil ways and your refusal to follow The Way I will condemn all of your children to death. Your eight sons will all die." Sure enough, one by one, Emon Saburō's children passed away

¹³⁶ The *nagatoko* is a long pavilion like structure found at temples where visitors would come and stay the night purify themselves before worship and most likely solicit alms.

¹³⁷ Chōzen 澄禅. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.45. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

over the next eight days.¹³⁸ All eight children were then interred at Yatsunoka
 ハツノ基 (now known as Yatsuzaka ハツ塚).¹³⁹ Repenting his sins, Emon
 Saburō took the tonsure and set out on the *Shikoku henro* 四国辺路 praying
 for the benefit of his children in the next life.

Daishi transformed himself into various disguises, accompanying
 Emon Saburō on pilgrimage, performing religious austerities together,
 all the while watching to see if Emon Saburō's heart had truly
 changed.¹⁴⁰

According to the legend Emon Saburō completes the pilgrimage circuit
 twenty-one times practicing religious austerities until the ripe old age of
 eighty. The once wicked, evil, selfish heart of Emon Saburō had been
 transformed, and through his years of pilgrimage practices he became a
 paragon of Buddhist piety. Finally observing Emon Saburō's change of heart,
Daishi disguised as a young monk appears to the elderly Emon Saburō while
 he was resting in a hut at the foot of the mountain near Shōsan Temple. Kōbō
 Daishi then asks him why such an old man was practicing such physically
 demanding religious austerities. Emon Saburō then relates his story to Kōbō
 Daishi, unaware that he is speaking with Kūkai in his pilgrim avatar form.
 After listening to Emon Saburō's tale, *Daishi* dramatically reveals his identity

¹³⁸ Chōzen 澄禅. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.45. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

¹³⁹ Chōzen 澄禅. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.46. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

¹⁴⁰ 廿一度ト辺路ヲ修行シケル内、大師モ様々ニ形ヲ替テ同行同修シテ彼力心ヲ鑑玉フ。
 Chōzen 澄禅. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.46. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

saying, “Don’t you know that I *am* Kūkai?” *Daishi* then tells Emon Saburō that since he has changed his heart and evil ways, he will grant him one wish.

Emon Saburō then wishes to be reborn as the son of the Kōno family. Kōbō

Daishi tells him that this can be easily done and gives him a stone with the name Emon Saburō written on it. With that Emon Saburō passes away.¹⁴¹

Daishi then buries Saburō’s body behind the hut and plants two cedar trees to mark his grave.

Shortly after burring Emon Saburō *Daishi*, again disguised as a begging monk, goes to the lord of Iyo Okitoshi’s home and predicts that soon a male heir will be born to the household. *Daishi* also mentions that they should be wary of signs of Emon Saburō. Sometime later the rightful wife of Okitoshi gives birth to a son. Unfortunately, the child’s fist is clenched tightly at birth and refused to open. Three days later the child’s fist opens, and a small stone with Emon’s name written on it pops out.¹⁴² Lord Okitoshi takes the stone to

¹⁴¹ The text here refers to Emon Saburō’s death as *ōjō* 往生. It should be noted that the term *ōjō* does not always mean birth in a Buddhist Pure Land. It often appears in Japanese literature as a colloquialism for “passing away.” I suspect in this context it simply is another way of conveying someone has died or passed away. It should also be noted that the context in which the term is used in the previous legend of Chōzō mentioned earlier, is a clear reference to Pure Land Buddhist practice meant to convey Chōzō attained birth in Amida’s Western Pure Land. If this usage of the term *ōjō* did mean birth in a Buddhist Pure Land, then it would logically follow that Emon Saburō would not be able to be reborn into the Kōno family.

¹⁴² In some versions of the legend the parents bring the child to the temple and priest says a *mantra* or “magic spell” that opens the fist revealing the small stone. This may have something to do with the fact that *Yakushi Nyorai*, the medicine Buddha, is the *honzon* or the main enshrined deity of Ishite Temple. Naturally many people would have visited the temple looking for cures to illness and an infant’s clenched fist at birth would likely have fallen into this category.

the Kōno family temple and places it in the head of the Buddha statue.¹⁴³

Thus, with the enshrinement of the stone found in his infant son's clenched fist, the name of the temple is changed from Anyō Temple to Ishite Temple or "Stonehand Temple."

4.4: AN ANALYSIS OF BOTH VERSIONS OF THE LEGEND

Comparing these two versions of the legend one can clearly observe that in only eighty-six years, the Emon Saburō *densetsu* underwent numerous revisions, appendages and additions to its content. As many scholars point out, this is not at all surprising and typically what one expects to observe with such texts. Why then should the Emon Saburō *densetsu* be looked at any differently? The legend served to bolster the divine reputation of a religious founding figure associated with pilgrimage practice in Shikoku, but it was mainly implemented as a narrative device to attract visitors to a specific temple along the pilgrimage route addressing the economic concerns of the temple administration. As we shall see, in addition to addressing economic concerns of Ishite Temple and establishing connections with the ruling Kōno clan, a comparison of the two versions of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* provides clear evidence for the decline of *Kumano shinkō* 熊野信仰 at Ishite Temple, changing the temple's religious identity to *Daishi shinkō*. This local example demonstrates one way that *Daishi shinkō* spread its influence in Shikoku

¹⁴³ Chōzen 澄禅. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝 ed. p.47. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

eventually becoming a permanent presence at all of the eighty-eight sacred sites of the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

In a recently published article Hiroshi Teruchi points out that in the earliest version of the Emon Saburō densetsu, Kūkai plays a diminished role.¹⁴⁴ Kūkai acts as a supporting character offering Emon Saburō the chance at absolution from his sins. Kūkai only appears at the moment of Saburō's death writing his name on the small stone and presenting it to Emon Saburō. After granting Emon Saburō's wish to be reborn into the Kōno clan he is no longer mentioned in the text. The rest of the legend establishes the connection between the Kōno clan and Ishite Temple complex and provides the reason for its name change.

By sharp contrast, Kūkai takes on a significantly more prominent role in Chōzen's version. Chōzen's version is drastically different beginning with its exposition. It is *Daishi* who, observing that Emon Saburō is a wicked man, decides to use skillful means to set him on the path to enlightenment. It is only after Emon Saburō angrily attacks *Daishi*, breaking his begging bowl into eight pieces, that Emon Saburō receives his divine retribution in the form of a curse resulting in the death of all of his children. It should be noted that in Chōzen's version this divine retribution comes directly from Kūkai, speaking through Saburō's eldest son, whereas in the earlier version, Saburō's children die as a result of him simply being a "greedy, irreligious man who did not

¹⁴⁴ Terauchi, Hiroshi 寺内浩. (2017) p.23-25.

keep the Buddha's ways." Furthermore, the texts states that Emon Saburō completed the pilgrimage circuit 21 times. From the inclusion of this information we can gather that the practice of making multiple pilgrimages was clearly established in Chōzen's time. Hisamitsu Sato mentions that monks and devoted religious ascetics would sometimes combine the Shikoku Pilgrimage with the *Saigoku Sanjūsan-sho* pilgrimage 西国三十三所 dedicated to the goddess *Kannon*, believing the practice to accrue great stores of merit.¹⁴⁵

One detail of primary significance is that the legend tells us that *Daishi* transforms himself with various disguises to "go along and train together" with Emon Saburō. The term used here is *dōgyōdōshū* 同行同修 and this term is closely linked to the term *dōgyōninin* 同行二人 which is a central tenant of the modern *Daishi* faith. The religious ideology that Kōbō Daishi is constantly present with his followers, going along with them on their pilgrimage, may have started with this phrase *dōgyōdōshū* and later became *dōgyōninin*. Further research is needed to ascertain this hypothesis.

Furthermore, in Chōzen's version Kūkai is always referred to as *Daishi* 大師, his posthumous title. The name Kūkai is only mentioned in the legend twice: once when the Kūkai speaks through Saburō's eldest son, divinely cursing Saburō, and again at the end of the legend when *Daishi* reveals his true identity to the elderly Emon Saburō. The title *Daishi* 大師 appears eight

¹⁴⁵ Sato, Hisamitsu 佐藤久光. (2004) p.13.

times in Chōzen's version. The ample usage of this title in the text makes it clear that at this time Kūkai was firmly imbedded into the pantheon of Japanese gods that populate the sacred landscape in the Edo period.

Moreover, in Chōzen's version it is *Daishi* who establishes the connection between Ishite temple and the ruling Kōno clan, by visiting the Lord of Iyo's household in disguise and proselytizing the birth of the future head of the Kōno household. Taking into consideration all of these small details incorporated into Chōzen's narrative, the Emon Saburō *densetsu* can be viewed as a document that illustrates the geographic expansion of the cult of Kūkai in the late Muromachi era and continuing through the Edo period.

4.5: UNITING THE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF ISHITE TEMPLE THROUGH PILGRIMAGE

Originally Ishite Temple was a site controlled by *Kumano shrinkō* 熊野信仰 and the Kōno family was its most influential patron. Terauchi also suspects that the change in the prominence of the role of Kūkai in the legend is evidence for the expansion of the cult of Kūkai.¹⁴⁶ According to Terauchi, in addition to *Kumano shrinkō* and *Daishi shrinkō*, there were a wide variety of competing religions in Shikoku such as Pure Land Buddhism 浄土 and *Sangaku shrinkō* 山岳信仰, a form of mountain asceticism. Indeed, if one looks at the map of Ishite Temple contained in Chōzen's *Shikoku henro niiki* there is

¹⁴⁶ Terauchi, Hiroshi 寺内浩. (2017) p.23-25.

a wealth of religious diversity present in the structures represented on the map in 1653. In addition to the three-tiered pagoda and the *Daishi* hall 大師堂, there are also twelve small *Kumano* shrines 熊野十二所, a hall dedicated to *Amida* Buddha 阿弥陀仏, a hall dedicated to *Miroku Bostasu* 弥勒菩薩, a hall dedicated to the medicine Buddha *Yakushi Nyorai* 薬師如来, a hall dedicated to *Benzaiten* 弁才天, and halls dedicated to the mountain religions of *Hakusan* 白山 and *Atago* 愛宕.¹⁴⁷ The fact that the hall dedicated to *Miroku Bostasu* and the *Daishi* hall are situated in close proximity to is also evidence for the cult of Kūkai's influence on Ishite Temple. According to *Daishi shinkō* the *bodhisattva* Kōbō Daishi would appear at the deathbed of believers and escort them to *Maitreya's* Pure Land.

In Chōzen's time less than half of the eighty-eight sites contained a *Daishi* worship hall, even though subsequently over time with the spread of the cult of Kūkai all of the modern sacred sites have a *Daishi* worship hall.¹⁴⁸ The prominent literary trope of Kōbō Daishi appearing as *Shugyō Daishi*, unbeknown to pilgrims along the pilgrimage route, clearly effected medieval religious practices in Shikoku. Because of these legends, pilgrims believed that Kōbō Daishi could divinely punish their wicked deeds and likewise reward their meritorious actions. Such a worldview influenced locals to treat pilgrims with an air of suspicion and offer them assistance, rather than

¹⁴⁷ See the map of Ishite temple based on the original drawing provided in Chōzen's *Shikoku henro niiki* found on vol. 6: p.356-357.

¹⁴⁸ Terauchi, Hiroshi 寺内浩. (2017) p.23-25.

rebuke them. Monks begging for alms in medieval Japan would have been a common sight, however pilgrims were also expected to engage in this practice as well. This practice of offering gifts to pilgrims is known as *settai* 接待 or charitable alms giving.

The practice of giving alms to pilgrims as a means of accruing merit is a unique feature of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. In this way lay Buddhists practice *dāna* or generosity, by giving or offering support to the *saṅgha*, the Buddhist community. In Shikoku it is thought that by giving a small gift to a pilgrim one will accrue merit. Furthermore, such a contribution allows the layperson to participate in a superior form of merit making, the ritual practice of pilgrimage. Not all Buddhist practitioners are able to undertake the pilgrimage ritual. In early modern Japanese society obligations such as running a farm, supporting a family, looking after one's aging parents prevented people from going on pilgrimages. Still today many modern Japanese pilgrims only have the time to devote to pilgrimage after they retire. However, the layperson that donates to the pilgrim is viewed as participating in the pilgrimage ritual and thus able to share in the merit that is being generated by the individual pilgrims during their pilgrimage. This practice is still observed by the locals of Shikoku today and a unique memorable experience for all pilgrims. The practice of *settai* is directly linked to legends like the Emon Saburō *densetsu* which encouraged such practices. Thus, we

can see how *densetsu* texts, rather than being reflective evidence of historical religious customs, actively influence present religious practices as well.

Furthermore, the construction of a *Daishi* hall at all of the sacred sites of the pilgrimage, even the ones that are not affiliated with Shingon Buddhism, is evidence of how a sacred landscape manifests itself in the physical world. Here again we see that Turner was correct about pilgrimages being established on sites that were already considered sacred by other religious traditions. Moreover, the presence of competing religious diversity converging at Ishite temple in the Edo era also proves Wheeler's confluence theory.

4.6: BANGAI TEMPLES: FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE DASHI SHINKŌ

The case of the Shikoku's *bangai* temples supports the expansion of *Daishi shinkō* as well. Because the *bangai* temples are not officially sanctioned locations, and some are located well out of the way on the modern pilgrimage route, they also were in need of ways to attract pilgrims and Kōbō *densetsu* provided the answer. The most famous case of these temples adapting to capitalize on the popularity of pilgrimage is the case of *Saba Daishi* 鯖大師.

A *saba* 鯖 is a long mackerel fish that is either fried or dried and typically eaten in the fall in Japan. In the founding legend of the *Saba Daishi* temple, Kōbō *Daishi* assumed the identity of a wondering ascetic begging for alms. Kōbō *Daishi*, seeking to teach a lesson to a merchant who was taking a

load of dried *saba* to market but who refused to give him one fish as alms, brought one of the fish back to life right before his eyes. As a result, the merchant, stunned by the miraculous deed, repents all of his sins and becomes a believer.¹⁴⁹ It is from this legend the temple takes the name *Saba Daishi*.

However, this founding myth can actually be historically tied to another founding figure, an itinerant Buddhist priest named Gyōgi. The temple's original name had been *Saba Gyōgi* and it was Gyōgi who performed the miraculous deed that converted the miserly fisherman, not Kōbō Daishi. However, with the spread of the cult of Kōbō Daishi and the solidifying of all of the smaller pilgrimages and sacred locations of Shikoku into one large circular pilgrimage route, the Gyōgi founding myth was assimilated and the temple's affiliation converted to *Daishi shrinkō*.¹⁵⁰ In an effort to establish a connection to the Emon Saburō *densetsu Monjuin* 文殊院, the ninth *bangai* temple, claims to be the place where Emon Saburō started his pilgrimage.

Thus, a detailed analysis of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* provides three important insights about Japanese pilgrimage practices on Shikoku. First, the Emon Saburō *densetsu* demonstrates how legends and folklore act as evidence for the adaptability and spread of *Daishi shrinkō*. Secondly, it showcases the power legends carry to assimilate and or change the religious identity of sacred spaces such as Ishite Temple. Finally, the content of the legend

¹⁴⁹ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 44.

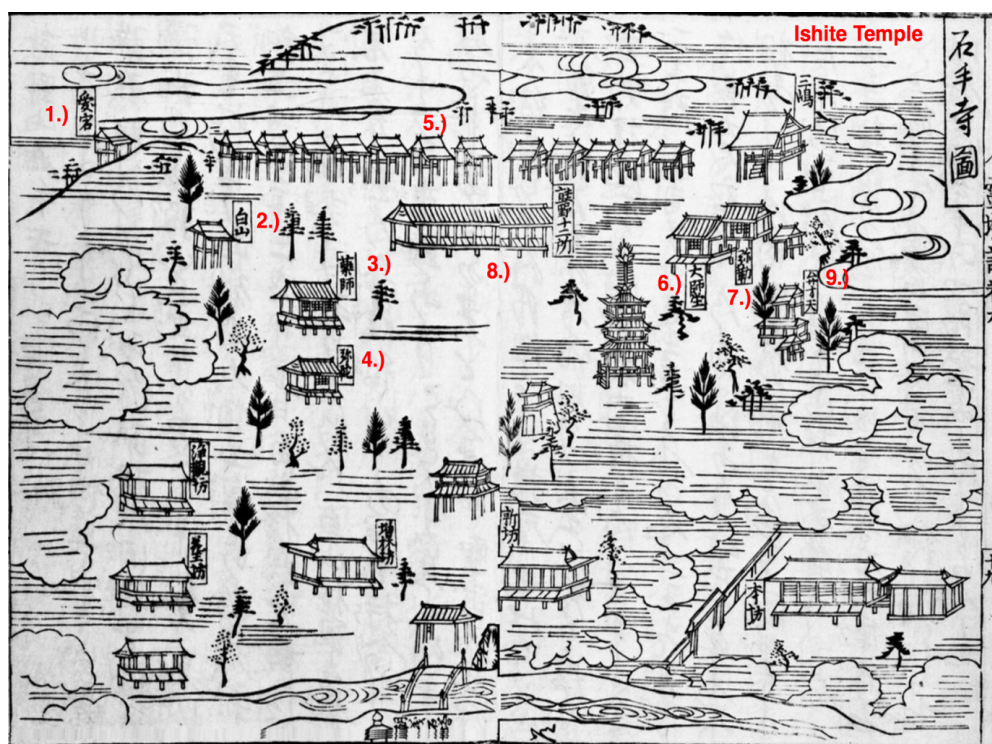
¹⁵⁰ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 44.

influences the religious practices and customs in Shikoku, such as giving *settai* to pilgrims and not abusing them like the greedy Emon Saburō did. Furthermore, the legend establishes the idea that preforming the pilgrimage counterclockwise can erase an evil sin or increase the chance of meeting Kōbō Daishi. In this way pilgrims themselves are actually participants in the living sacred narrative of the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

1653 年の石手寺

MAP OF THE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF ISHITE TEMPLE IN 1653

TEMPLE STRUCTURES:



- 1.) 愛宕 Atago
- 2.) 白山 Hakusan
- 3.) 薬師如来 Yakushi Nyorai
- 4.) 阿弥陀仏 Amida Buddha
- 5.) 熊野十二所 Twelve small Kumano Shrines
- 6.) 大師堂 Daishi hall
- 7.) 弥勒菩薩 Miroku Bostasu
- 8.) 長床 nagatoko *(Possibly the building where Emon Saburō would have encountered Daishi.)
- 9.) 弁才天 Benzaiten

CONCLUSION:

The Emon Saburō *densetsu* is so effective as a form of Buddhist propaganda precisely because it capitalizes on familiar thematic motifs already thriving about the sacred landscape in the late Heian and Edo periods. Texts like the *Konjaku monogatari* and the *Nihon ryōiki* had already firmly established a sacred landscape where *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* can appear disguised as beggars in the real world. Moreover, these texts state that sinful actions such as breaking the begging bowl or attacking a monk will result in immediate divine punishment or death. Furthermore, the texts claim that an infant's fist clenched at birth just might contain a Buddhist relic that is destined to be enshrined at a temple. All of these motifs can be found at work in the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. The authors of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* would have been familiar with these themes and most likely incorporated them in the composition of the legend.

As the Emon Saburō *densetsu* developed over the years taking on new thematic characteristics, one can clearly see that the religious affiliation of Ishite Temple changes from *Kumano shinkō* to *Daishi shinkō*. Likewise, with the popularization of pilgrimage practices across all strata of society during the Edo era, the cult of Kūkai also established itself throughout the various provinces of Shikoku. Moreover, as pilgrimage practices become more central to the legend, the physical setting in the legends plays a much more prominent role.

Chōzen's *Shikoku henro niiki* contains maps of the temple grounds specifically mentioned in the Emon Saburō *densetsu* text. These were places in the physical world pilgrims would have actually visited, like worshipping at the *Daishidō*, staying the night in the *nagatoko* or visiting the seven-story pagoda at Iwata Temple that housed the Buddha relics found in the young girl's fist. In the same way that the *nyūjyosetsu* deified Kūkai and the presence of his uncorrupted body sacralized Mt. Kōya, the Emon Saburō *densetsu* likewise sacralized Ishite Temple. At Mt. Kōya pilgrims could make offerings at Kūkai's mausoleum and actually be in the presence of a "living" *bodhisattva*. At Ishite Temple pilgrims could lay eyes on the 3.5-centimeters stone that was clenched in the infant fist of Emon Saburō "reborn." The presence of these legendary founding figures and artifacts were, and still are, the very reasons pilgrims visited these places. The pilgrimage ritual satisfies the very tactile human desire to come in physical contact with the miraculous elements presented in *densetsu* texts and to worship in these special locations.



Figure 4: A stone monument depicting Emon Saburō collapsing near death at the feet of Kōbō Daishi that has been constructed at Tsuesugi-An 杖杉庵 in Kamiyama-cho, Tokushima Prefecture.

Today a large stone monument depicting Emon Saburō collapsing near death at the feet of Kōbō Daishi has been constructed at *Tsuesugi-An* 杖杉庵. It purportedly marks the place of the final meeting between Kōbō Daishi and Emon Saburō. The sculpture portrays Saburō reaching out to Kūkai, grasping one of his hands containing a *juzu*, or Buddhist rosary. With his other hand Kūkai holds a *vajra* over Saburō's head offering a blessing. This image also invokes elements of Pure Land Buddhism, as it is Kūkai appearing at the moment of death to ferry the faithful to Maitreya's Pure Land.¹⁵¹ The construction of this modern monument is a testament to the power the

¹⁵¹ It is technically true that Emon Saburō does not achieve rebirth in a Pure Land in the Emon Saburō *densetsu*. He is actually reborn into the Kōno clan. Despite this religious inconsistency, the stone image does reflect the modern religious belief that Kūkai will come to aid the faithful at the moment of their death.

legend still possesses in the minds of modern adherents to the *Daishi* faith. Moreover, it serves as another geographic location for pilgrims to participate in the legend, standing on the very ground where miracles were performed.

In the same way the temple complex at Mt. Kōya was designed to reflect the Two World Mandala, Shikoku too, has been depicted as one giant *mandala* with each of the four provinces, representing different stages of the pilgrimage ritual. Reader notes in the pilgrimage literature from the Hōreki era 宝暦 (1751-1762) onward that the Shikoku *henro* is described as a *mandala* encapsulating the *buddhas* of all realms. Moreover, that in Shingon Buddhist sources from the Meiji era (1868-1912) onward, the Shikoku Henro was depicted as representing the *taizōkai* 胎藏界, or womb world *mandala* of Shingon Buddhism.¹⁵² In this way, the pilgrims are traveling through the realms of the *buddhas* and enacting the workings of the cosmos.¹⁵³

The modern guidebooks also divide the pilgrimage route into a *mandala* portraying a fourfold path to enlightenment. This *henro mandala* divides the eighty-eight temples by prefecture assigning a specific stage on the path to enlightenment to the group of temples in one particular prefecture. Temples one to twenty-three in Awa represent *hosshin* 發心, the arousal or awakening of the Buddha mind. Temples twenty-four to thirty-nine in Tosa are referred to as *shugyō* 修行, religious training. In Iyo temples

¹⁵² Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 51.

¹⁵³ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 52.

forty through sixty-five represent *bodai* 菩提, the opening of the Buddhist mind, or the functioning of correct wisdom on *bodhisattva* path. Finally, in Sanuki, Kūkai’s native province, temples sixty-six through eighty-eight are referred to as *nehan* 涅槃, fully realizing enlightenment or *nirvāṇa*.¹⁵⁴

In this way guidebooks, pilgrim diaries and religious iconography, such as stone statues and *mandala*, continue to act as tools for grafting a sacred landscape onto locations in the physical world. *Densetsu*, such as the Tale of Emon Saburō and the *nyūjyosetsu* function both as a product of a sacred landscape and as textual tools that human beings use to cultivate a religious link to objects, locations and even people existing in physical world.

Legends, folklore, *densetsu*, *engi* and other such texts should not be seen solely as byproducts of religious activity, or only as evidence for “origins” of specific religious practices or beliefs; nor should they be dismissed as regional folklore. This approach unintentionally overlooks the fact that “history” itself is a much more fluid, dynamic and unpredictable discourse. The “messy entanglement” of history and hagiography should be studied as a “messy entanglement,” for that is more representative of what history actually is. Rather than examining *densetsu*, *setsuwa* and hagiographical texts just to sort out historical fact from fiction, it is more important to understand how *densetsu* literature—even (or perhaps

¹⁵⁴ Reader, Ian. (2006) p. 52-53.

especially) its legendary elements—shaped the religious life and perceptions of people in premodern Japan.

The Emon Saburō *densetsu* should not be viewed only as a founding legend representative of the mythological or historical “origins” of pilgrimage practices in Shikoku. The Emon Saburō *densetsu* is an example of a complex textual technology working in tandem with the pilgrimage ritual. This synthesis of ritual and text is capable of transferring human meaning to the physical world serving specific human purposes, such as the reconstruction of Ishite Temple complex. Therefore, it is fair to view the Emon Saburō *densetsu* text functioning as a highly effective form of Buddhist propaganda addressing the economic concerns of Ishite Temple. However, taking this reason as the sole purpose of the Emon Saburō text occludes the dynamic power that the religious motifs present in the legend affected the way pilgrims practiced the pilgrimage ritual, interacted with sacred locations and with one another. It is precisely because of the legendary elements that the Emon Saburō *densetsu* became widely accepted as the “founding” legend for the Shikoku Pilgrimage.

Furthermore, by incorporating narrative elements and tropes present in Japan’s larger religious worldview, the authors of the Emon Saburō *densetsu* applied *skillful means* in the management of Shikoku’s sacred landscape to solve real world problems, like the continued economic survival and spread of a religious tradition such as *Daishi shinkō*.

Therefore, *Kōbō densetsu* texts such as the Emon Saburō *densetsu* may be viewed as a form of textual technology that, when linked to the physical geography of Shikoku through the pilgrimage ritual, assimilated and transformed the identity of sacred sites such as Ishite Temple. It is the extraordinary elements of the legends themselves that act as a powerful force for establishing and influencing the way religious practitioners interacted with sacred spaces in medieval Japan and still do so today.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Chōzen 澄禪. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Kondo Yoshihiro 近藤喜博, ed. *Shikoku reijyokishu* 四国霊場記集 Tokyo: Benseisha, 1973.

Chōzen 澄禪. *Shikoku henro niiki* 四国遍路日記. In Miyazaki Ninshō 宮崎忍勝, ed. Tokyo: Tōdai Publishing, 1977.

Konjaku monogatari shū 今昔物語集. 4 vols. In K. Mabuchi 馬淵和夫, F. Kunisaki 国東文麿, T. Inagaki 稲垣泰, ed. *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新篇日本古典文学全集 35-38. Tokyo: 小学館 Shōgakkan, 2001.

REFERENCES

Abé, Ryūichi. *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Bowring, Richard. *The Religious Traditions of Japan, 500-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Davidson, Linda Kay., and David M. Gitlitz. *Pilgrimage: From the Ganges to Graceland: An Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002.

Dobbins, James, & Eshin-ni. *Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004.

Dykstra, Yoshiko Kurata. *Buddhist tales of India, China, and Japan: a complete translation of the Konjaku monogatari shū*. Honolulu: Kanji Press, 2014.

Hakeda, Yoshito S. and De Bary William, Theodore. *Kūkai, Major works: translated, with an account of his life and a study of his thoughts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

Hayami, Tasuku 速水侑. *Miroku shinkō: Mō hitotsu no jōdo shinkō* 弥勒信仰—もう一つの浄土信仰. *Nihonjin no kōdō to shisō* 日本人の行動と思想 12. 評論社 Hyōronsha, Tokyo 1971. (Pp. 95-103.)

Hoshino, Eiki 星野英紀. "Pilgrimage and Peregrination: Contextualizing the *Saikoku Junrei* and the *Shikoku Henro*" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1997: 24/3-4:

Kawaoka, Tsutomu 川岡勉. *Chusei no Ishiteji to Shikoku henro* 中世の石手寺と四国遍路. In *Shikoku henro to sekai no junrei*, 2007.

Komatsu, Shigemi. ed., *Kōbō Daishi gyōjō ekotoba jō*, in *Zoku Nihon no emaki*, vol. 10. Tokyo: Chuuō kōronsha, 1990. (Pp. 30-33)

Kouame, Nathalie. “Shikoku’s Local Authorities and *Henro* during the Golden Age of the Pilgrimage” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1997: 24/3-4: 413-425.

Kyōkai, and Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura. *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: the Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai*. Harvard University Press, 1973.

Matsushita, Naoyuki. (David Turkington, Trans. & Ed.) *Shikoku Pilgrimage: A Guide for Non-Japanese*. Tourism Tokushima, 2016.

Miyazaki, Tateki. Matsushita, Naoyuki. & Moreton, David. *Shikoku Japan 88 Route Guide*. Tokyo: Buyōdō: (2009).

Motohiro, Yoritomi. 頼富本宏. *Shikoku henro to nanika* 四国遍路となにか Kadokawa gakugei shuppan 角川学芸出版, Tokyo: 2009.

Motohiro, Yoritomi 頼富本宏 and Shiraki, Toshiyuki 白木利幸. *Shikoku henro no kenkyū* 四国遍路の研究. Kyoto: Kokusai Nihon bunka kenkyū sentā, 2001.

Nicoloff, Philip. *Sacred Kōyasan: A Pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kōbō Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

Okawa, Eiji. “The Development of Shikoku Henro: The Formation and Dissemination of a Pilgrimage in Pre- Modern Japan: A Case Study of Shikoku.” (Unpublished master’s thesis.) University of British Columbia, 2003.

Reader, Ian. “Japanese Studies of Pilgrimage” in *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps, and Obstacles*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Reader, Ian. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2006.

Reader, Ian. “Legends, Miracles, and Faith in Kōbō Daishi and the Shikoku Pilgrimage” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Sato, Hisamistu 佐藤久光. *Henro to junrei no shakaigaku* 遍路と巡礼の社会学 Kyoto: Jinbun Shoin 人文書院, 2004.

Shirane, Haruno. *Traditional Japanese literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Shultz, John A. “The Way to Gyō. Priestly Asceticism on the Shikoku Henro.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 2016: 43/2: 275–305.

Stone, Jacqueline. *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016.

Terauchi, Hiroshi 寺内浩. “Emon Saburō densetsu to Kumano shrinkō” 衛門三郎伝説と熊野信仰 *Shikoku Henro Publication Magazine* (四国遍路編)掲載誌 四国遍路と世界の巡礼 The Shikoku henro and Pilgrimages of the World / Ehime University Department of Literature 愛媛大学法文学部附属四国遍路・世界の巡礼 研究センター 編 *Pilgrimages of the World Research Center*, 2017:3: p.23-27.

Totman, Conrad. *A History of Japan*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Turner, Victor, and Edith Turner. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Wheeler, Bonnie. “Pilgrimage and the Desire for Meaning.” Maguire Center for Ethics & Public Responsibility, Occasional Papers, online publication, 1998 <https://www.smu.edu/Provost/Ethics/Resources/OccasionalPapers> (accessed 12/05/2017).

Winfield, Pamela D. *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kūkai and Dōgen on the Art of Enlightenment*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.