

Ascesis and Devotion: The Mount Yudono Cult  
in Early Modern Japan

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## Abstract

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This dissertation concerns the cult of Mount Yudono (located in present-day Yamagata Prefecture) during the Edo period (1603–1868).

In the first chapter, I take into account the historical background and religious dynamics that led to the formation of the sacred territory of the Three Dewa Mountains (Dewa Sanzan), namely Mount Haguro, Mount Gassan, and Mount Chōkai, of which Mount Yudono was considered to be the shared *sancta sanctorum*.

The second chapter analyzes the particularities of the religious institutions that administered the territory of Mount Yudono. Specifically, I focus on the pivotal role played by a special group of ascetics that were called “permanent ascetics” (*issei gyōnin*) in shaping the religious identity and tradition of this mountain.

In the third chapter, I study the structures and meanings of the funerary rituals, which were performed in order to mummify the corpses of eminent *issei gyōnin*. This section underlines the symbiotic relationship between *issei gyōnin* and lay devotees, the latter of whom continued venerating the mummified remains of the ascetics and transmitting legends about them to consolidate and expand their religious charisma even after the ascetic’s demise.

The fourth chapter focuses on the foundation stories (*engi*) about Mount Yudono and the rituals that characterized the pilgrimage toward this mountain. I show how the *engi* were

fundamental tools for instilling devotional discourses and mythical memories about Yudono into large groups of social actors, many of whom visited this sacred territory as pilgrims.

The fifth chapter explores the rich material and visual culture that characterized the cult of Mount Yudono. I underlined the importance of semiotic strategies that played a pivotal role in the ritual transfer of Mount Yudono to other numinous sites. These included the process of “intervisuality” (*mitate*) and the creation of stelae and sacred mounds (*tsuka*) in order to expand the devotional discourses associated with this mountain.

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## General Introduction

One moment a great space of snow-covered rock would reveal itself,  
standing out bold and free, though of base or peak nought was to be seen.  
But if one ceased to fix one's gaze upon it, it was gone, in a breath.

Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*<sup>1</sup>

### The Mandalic Space of Yudono

The mountainous area of Dewa Sanzan 出羽三山, which includes Mount Haguro 羽黒, Mount Gassan 月山, and Mount Yudono 湯殿, is located in Yamagata 山形 prefecture and constitutes one of the major cultic centers in the Tōhoku 東北 region (See Fig. 1). The extent and pervasiveness of the Dewa Sanzan cult is comparable only with that of Mount Fuji 富士 in the Kantō 関東 region.<sup>2</sup> This study focuses on the religious, historical, and iconographical aspects of the cult dedicated to Mount Yudono, which was venerated as the Inner Precinct (*oku no in* 奥の院) of Dewa Sanzan (See Fig. 2) during the Edo 江戸 period (1603-1868).

An analysis of the religious discourses associated with Mount Yudono invites a radical rethinking of the relationships between “centers” and “peripheries” in pre-modern Japan (See Fig. 3). Even if Yudono can be spatially considered as a peripheral mountain because of its remoteness from the main centers of political and religious power such as the cities of Edo 江戸 or Kyōto 京都, from a cultic point of view it was always perceived as a charismatic center

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<sup>1</sup>. Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (1924; repr., New York: Vintage Books-Editions, 1969), 1254.

<sup>2</sup>. Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō* (Tōkyō: Iwata shoin, 2003), 14.



and a source of legitimacy for a large number of devotional, ascetic, and institutional practices. As pointed out by Mikael Adolphson and Edward Kamens, *fluidity* rather than immobility is the ultimate characteristic of the symbiosis that constantly takes place between centers and peripheries and works to overcome any clear-cut separation between the two poles.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the case of Yudono, its peripheral nature created a sort of “aura of distance” that boosted the religious power of its divine pantheon and the marvelousness of its mandalic geography among vast strata of devotees who lived far away from the mountain.

The set of ritual practices that were performed by religious as well as lay practitioners in order to venerate a numinous mountain are holistically expressed through the compound *sangaku shinkō* 山岳信仰, which can be translated as “cult of the mountain” or “devotion to the mountain.” The English word cult derives from the Latin verb *colēre* that has the double meaning of “cultivating” the soil and “taking care of” or “turning around” (Gr. κύκλος) something. To venerate a sacred mountain makes reference to this sort of constant and painstaking engagement of human actors in cultivating positive relationships with a specific mountain, such as Yudono, to obtain benefits (*riyaku* 利益) for the present and next life. In other words, the term *shinkō* is primarily related with an orthopraxis of ritual procedures that are uniquely related with a single mountain and which assure practitioners through the achievement of satisfactory results. In her study of the cult of Mount Ōyama 大山 in the Edo period, Barbara Ambros points out that the word *shinkō* encompasses a multiplicity of “beliefs, practices, and infrastructures associated with a sacred site or a particular deity.”<sup>4</sup> In the case of Yudono, the ascetic, funerary, iconographical, literary, and oral aspects of the cult

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<sup>3</sup>. Mikael Adolphson and Edward Kamens, “Between and Beyond Centers and Peripheries,” in *Heian Japan: Centers and Peripheries*, eds. Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kames, Stacie Matsumoto (Honolulu: University of Hawai’I Press, 2007), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>. Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 3.

played a pivotal role in shaping all the material, exterior, and public aspects of the formless and interior devotional feelings of the people who venerated Mount Yudono as their elective deity.

Focusing on the religious landscape of Mount Nanyue 南嶽 in medieval China, James Robson emphasizes the importance of “place studies” within the broader category of religious studies. Robson states that until the 1980s the historians of religion were more obsessed with “time” than with “place.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the analysis of sacred mountains shows that both time and space are equally fundamental elements in creating religious meanings, symbols, and traditions. For instance, Mount Yudono can be considered as a spatio-temporal entity or a “chronotope” where heterogeneous strata of real and fictionalized spaces and times interweave in order to create religious narratives that were transmitted among society.<sup>6</sup> The production of foundation stories (*engi* 縁起) associated with the cult of Yudono was specifically based upon this type of semantic and semiotic overlapping of multiple times and spaces over the territory of this mountain so as to exalt its sacrality and religious significance.

It is evident that the research on a specific mountain site should not be limited to its local or micro-historical aspect. The developing modalities of a cult related with a sacred mountain pose serious limitations to a purely local approach and, on the contrary, highlight extra-local and trans-territorial tendencies, which cannot be ignored. For example, in the Kan’ei 寛永 era (1624-1644) the cult of Mount Yudono reached its maturity and started spreading its influence to various other mountain sites and rural villages in the Tōhoku and Kantō regions.

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<sup>5</sup>. James Robson, *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue 南嶽) in Medieval China* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>6</sup>. For the concept of chronotope see Ibid., 8. See also Eugene Y. Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005), 55.

It is possible to define this kinetic aspect of the devotional discourses associated with sacred mountains as a sort of “irradiation effect” that allows us to study the cultic specificities of a place such as Yudono without necessarily confining our research to Dewa Sanzan but taking into account distant areas such as Nikkō 日光 in Kantō or the mountains of Izumi 和泉 in the southern part of Ōsaka 大阪.

Like a maṇḍala, Mount Yudono was characterized by “centrifugal” as well as “centripetal” forces. On the one hand, the cult of Yudono tended to be disseminated in a plurality of geographical and religious contexts to increase its relevance. On the other, however, Yudono always remained the barycenter of the extra-local hypostasis of its cult, which was metaphorically reabsorbed and constantly re-conducted back to its original source, i.e. Yudono itself. The pilgrimage toward Yudono is perhaps the best example of the double movement that characterizes the religious structure of sacred mountains. The historical moments in which the Yudono cult reached its maximum expansion and penetration among various social strata in different territories marked the formation of considerable flows of devotees and pilgrims (centrifugal force) who were subsequently called back to Mount Yudono when making the pilgrimage (centripetal force). This dissemination of the Yudono cult over a broad area allowed the formation of hybridizing processes thanks to which the sacred landscape and divine pantheon of Yudono came in contact with new numinous sites and groups of deities, which enriched and expanded its ritual, devotional and institutional relevance.

Because Mount Yudono *per se* was conceived of as a natural manifestation of Yudono Daigongen 湯殿大権現, the notion of “sacred space” is a recurrent topic in this study. In *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912) Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) defined “the

sacred” by placing it in binary opposition with “the profane” and stated that the former was generated thanks to its intrinsic otherness in respect of the latter.<sup>7</sup> For Durkheim the extraordinariness of the sacred was a sort of dichotomous reaction against the ordinariness of the profane. Durkheim’s theories about the sacred-profane were later appropriated by Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) who used them to model the category of “sacred space.” For Eliade, sacred space is an ahistorical entity, which is not related with any type of human agency and manifests its presence as a sort of epiphany in which people are allowed to take part as passive spectators, never as active creators.<sup>8</sup> In other words, for Eliade the agency of the place itself creates its own sacredness and numinous aura.

The analysis of the religious, historical, social, and cultural dynamics that brought about the transformation of Mount Yudono into a sacred space completely undermines the theoretical approaches of Durkheim and Eliade. The space of Yudono was socially and historically constructed thanks to a variety of discourses and practices, which were superimposed over a natural landscape by a multiplicity of human actors with different agendas and priorities. The sacredness of Mount Yudono was not transhistorical or intrinsic but contingent and culturally induced. For instance, Allan Grapard points out that all the sacred mountains of the Japanese archipelago are produced and re-produced by the synergetic encounter between the “world,” which corresponds to the natural landscape, and the “word,” which represents the hermeneutical activities performed by humans in order to create the

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<sup>7</sup>. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (1912; repr., New York: Free Press, 1995), 312.

<sup>8</sup>. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (1958; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 109, 368-369.

cultural landscape.<sup>9</sup> Nature and culture are not irreconcilably separated or oppositional elements. On the contrary, they are mutually fertilizing halves of the same discourse.

In the essay *Of Other Spaces* (1986) Michel Foucault (1926-1984) defines as “heterotopias” a special class of sites, which are constantly connected with all other places and, at the same time, have the capacity to “neutralize, [...] invert [...] mirror, or reflect” all relationships.<sup>10</sup> Heterotopias differ from utopias because they are real places, whereas the latter are imaginary or non-places (Gr. οὐ τόπος). Heterotopia works like a mirror. It makes the place of the viewer a “real” place, which communicates with all the other spaces around it, and, at the same time, transforms it into an “unreal” place because in order to perceive it the viewer has to rely on the virtualizing surface of the mirror.<sup>11</sup> Yudono can be considered a heterotopic place that is linked with a plurality of other spaces according to dis-topic or overturning logics.

Foucault summarizes the principal characteristics of heterotopia in six principles, which can be useful to illustrate some peculiar aspects of Japanese sacred mountains in general and Mount Yudono in particular. The first two principles are quite straightforward and concern the fact that heterotopias are a constant in every society and are always generated according to different modalities. The third principle refers to the coexistence of oppositional spaces within a single real place. For instance, the sacred geography of Yudono represented, at the same time, the Pure Land of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 and the realms of hell (*jigokukai* 地獄界) which the spirits of the dead have to transit to be purified after death. This ambivalence

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<sup>9</sup>. See Allan G. Grapard, “The Textualized Mountain - Encounter Text: the Lotus Sūtra in Kunisaki,” in *The Lotus Sūtra in Japanese Culture*, eds. George J. Tanabe, Jr and Willa Jane Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 182, 161.

<sup>10</sup>. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 24.

<sup>11</sup>. *Ibid.*, 24.

between paradisiacal and infernal landscapes, life and death, bliss and suffering added a salvific as well as a lethal character to Yudono, inducing both agape and dread in devotees. The fourth principle states that every heterotopia is constituted of various temporal strata, which diverge one from the other (heterochronies). For examples, the *engi* of Yudono provide a fictionalized construction of the past, merging spurious temporal and spatial elements such as the deity Ninigi no mikoto 瓊瓊杵命, the Shingon 真言 patriarch Kūkai 空海 (774-835), or the waters of the Ganges River in order to add legitimacy and charisma to Yudono's landscape. The fifth principles says that heterotopic places are based on an alternated system of opening and closing. In other words, heterotopias are not always accessible from other places but follow *ad hoc* rules to include or exclude people from outside. Until Meiji 明治 5 (1872) Yudono was off limits for female pilgrims, who had to stop at the foot of the mountain, and even male lay pilgrims could have access to the internal areas only if escorted by guides (*annai sendatsu* 案内先達), usually Shugendō 修験道 followers. Mount Yudono was fundamentally a closed space within which the presence of human beings was forbidden. Special categories of religious professional were permitted to spend prolonged periods inside this space to perform ascetic practices (*shugyō* 修行) but were never allowed to remain forever. All other male pilgrims were admitted to Yudono always limited in time and space, as if the prelude to expulsion. The last principle affirms that all heterotopias are in perennial relation with the other places that surround them, according to contrastive or dis-topic modalities. Heterotopias can work as sorts of paradigmatic places to oppose the chaotic and unruly nature of society, or can contain and confine all the imperfections of reality in order to provide us with a deceiving image of its integrity. Yudono belongs to the first type of heterotopia and corresponds to an idealized natural landscape that is permanently connected

with human society but, at the same time, constitutes an unparalleled model of perfection.

### The literature on Yudono

A reading of the secondary sources about Dewa Sanzan inevitably raises a question: even though until the Meiji period (1868-1911), Haguro and Yudono were the two principal cultic and institutional centers of the three sacred mountains of Dewa, why do we know a great deal about the religious tradition of the former and only a little about the latter? This unbalance is due to the enormous influence that the Haguro scholar-priest Togawa Anshō 戸川安章 (1906-2006) wielded on Dewa Sanzan studies during the twentieth century.

Togawa was the son of Shimazu Dendō 島津伝道 (1885-1947), a resident priest (*jūshoku* 住職) of Shōzen'in 正善院 in Tōge 住職 who consolidated the continuation of the traditions of Haguro Shugendō following the imposition of the edicts separating *kami* and buddhas (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離) in the area in 1870 and the de facto ban on its central ritual, the Autumn-peak (*aki no mine* 秋の峰), in 1874.<sup>12</sup> Togawa practiced the *aki no mine* first as an

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<sup>12</sup>. Togawa had three younger brothers Shimazu Gendō 島津愿道, Jindō 真道, Shūdō 週道 and four younger sisters. His paternal grandfather, Shimazu Yoshinori 島津憲殿 (d. 1889) was a younger brother of Togawa Yasunaro 戸川安愛 who had fought on the side of the *shōgun* 將軍 Tokugawa Yoshinobu 徳川慶喜 (1837-1913) during the restoration period; he inherited the headship of the Togawa household in the first years of the Meiji period. In Meiji 38 (1905) Shimazu Dendō married the daughter of Togawa Eishū 戸川栄秀, the headmaster of the elementary school in Tōge 手向 village at the foot of Haguro, and was adopted into the Togawa family. In Meiji 41 (1908), after the death of Eishū, Dendō transferred the headship of the Togawa household to Anshō and returned to the Shimazu family. Togawa Anshō thus became the formal leader of his household even though he was only two years old. In 1915 Togawa abandoned his lay name Akira 章 and took the Dharma-name (*hōmyō* 法名) Anshō. In 1946 Dendō removed Shōzen'in from the Tendai 天台 School, establishing Haguro-ha Shugen honshū 羽黒派修験本宗. The following year Dendō died and Gendō became its superintendent (*kanchō* 菅長). Gendō's son, Shimazu Jidō 島津慈道, succeeded him as head of Shōzen'in and is the present *daisendatsu* 大先達 of Haguro Shugendō. Togawa's younger brother, Jindō, became the head of Kongōju'in 金剛樹院, also in Tōge, and ceased his affiliation with Haguro Shugendō. I am indebted to Professor Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正崇 for sharing this information with me. For more details see Shimazu Dendō, *Haguro-ha Shugendō teiyō* (1937; repr., Tōkyō: Meicho shuppan, 1985), 173-207.

attendant (*jisha* 侍者) for Shimazu Dendō when he was eleven; he held the position of supervisor of Shōzen'in, and acted as *daisendatsu* at the *aki no mine* for a time. Inevitably Togawa was strongly influenced by the teachings of his father and desired to produce a modern historiography of Dewa Sanzan from the Haguro perspective as demonstrated by his first work, a revised edition of the *Chūkō oboegaki* 中興覚書, a chronicle dating from the early seventeenth century dealing with the major deeds of three eminent superintendent-priests (*bettō* 別当) of Haguro.<sup>13</sup>

In 1941 the folklorist Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875-1962) sent a letter to the young Togawa exhorting him to use his knowledge about the “history of Haguro not only on behalf of that one mountain” (*Haguro no rekishi wa oyama no tame dake de naku* 羽黒の歴史ハ御山の為だけで無く) but to explain the “history of Shugendō in Japan broadly” (*hiroku nihon no Shugendōshi toshite* 弘く日本の修験道史として).<sup>14</sup> At that time Hori Ichirō 堀一郎 (1910-1974) and Gorai Shigeru 五来重 (1908-1993) were also collaborating with Yanagita, and Togawa joined this group of scholars who were trying to analyze Japanese religious traditions through the lens of folklore studies (*minzokugaku* 民俗学).

Yanagita's aim was to downplay the influence of “elite” Buddhist doctrinal discourses and the myths associated with the official Shintō 神道 tradition on the historical development of Japanese religions in order to emphasize the (fictionalized) presence of a pre-Buddhist and pre-Shintō pristine Japanese religiosity (*Nihon minzoku shūkyō* 日本民俗宗教) among the “ordinary” strata of society (*jōmin* 常民).<sup>15</sup> Because Yanagita realized that Togawa possessed

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<sup>13</sup>. The author of the *Chūkō oboegaki* was the Haguro *bettō* Seikai 精海 (?-1724). See *Ushū Hagurosan Chūkō oboegaki*, ed. Togawa Anshō (Tōge: Hagurosan shi kenkyūkai, 1941).

<sup>14</sup>. For the original text see Togawa Anshō, *Shugendō to minzoku shūkyō* (Tōkyō: Iwata shoin, 2005), 409.

<sup>15</sup>. Fukuta Ajio, *Yanagita Kunio no minzokugaku* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2007), 90-95. See also Tanigawa Ken'ichi, *Yanagita Kunio no minzokugaku* (Tōkyō: Iwanami shinsho, 2001), 214-238.



an unsurpassed knowledge about the history of Haguro in particular and Shugendō in general, he thought to use this young scholar to support his broader intellectual discourse. For Togawa, Mount Haguro and its important Shugendō tradition constituted the ideal and unique axis of Dewa Sanzan, while Yudono, whose Shugendō institutions and Buddhist temples were less prestigious, was invariably represented as a marginal entity. In other words, Togawa's scholarship about Dewa Sanzan can be fundamentally defined as Haguro-centric and largely influenced by the folkloric approach as theorized by Yanagita.

In the second half of the Shōwa 昭和 period, two local scholars, Watanabe Tomeji 渡部留治 (1889-1977) and Hori Denzō 堀伝蔵, respectively published *Asahimura shi: Yudonosan* 朝日村誌 湯殿山 (1964) and *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō* 西川町史編集資料 (completed in 1984).<sup>16</sup> These two collections of old documents (*komonjoshū* 古文書集) are extremely important because Watanabe and Hori gathered all the written texts, not from the villages on the Haguro side of Dewa Sanzan, but from the areas around Yudono. The different geographical origin of these documents allowed them to present an atypical history of Dewa Sanzan from the hitherto understudied perspective of the Yudono sphere of influence. Even though Watanabe and Hori did painstaking work gathering, transcribing, and commenting on a great quantity of written sources related with Yudono, the results of their researches were substantially obscured by the impressive number of publications edited by Togawa on Dewa Sanzan and did not receive the attention they deserve.

In writing this dissertation I have greatly relied on this corpus of primary sources about Yudono that was discovered by Watanabe and Hori. The central aim of my research is to show the pivotal role played by Yudono within the history of the religious traditions of Dewa

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<sup>16</sup>. See *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 3 vols. (Tsuruoka: Fuji insatsu kabushikigaisha, 1964) and *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, ed. Hori Denzō, 13 vols. (Yamagata: Nishikawamachi kyōiku iinkai, 1984).

Sanzan and to demonstrate that the relationship between Haguro and Yudono was not simply antagonistic but also interdependent. In other words, Haguro needed Yudono to structure its religious and institutional identity and vice versa. This complex interaction, which was based on a sort of “forced cooperation” between competing peaks, created a fruitful tension and a positive dynamism that contributed to the development of the religious and cultural heritage associated with the three sacred mountains of Dewa as a whole.

Because the approach of Togawa toward Dewa Sanzan Shugendō was heavily influenced by the folklore studies of Yanagita, he tended not to recognize Shugendō as an independent religious tradition and often presented it as an ambiguous melange of spurious elements borrowed from esoteric Buddhism (Mikkyō 密教), the Way of Yin and Yang (Onmyōdō 陰陽道), Shintō, and folk religion (*minzoku shukyō*) without any proper doctrinal and ritual independence.<sup>17</sup> In this study when I had to deal with Shugendō issues I followed the three methodological principles that were pointed out by Gaynor Sekimori and Max Moerman in *Shugendō: The History and Culture of a Japanese Religion* (2009). First, Shugendō is a *religion* with an autonomous structure and cannot be reduced to an “eclectic mixture” of pre-existing religious elements. Second, Shugendō has a *history* that should be placed within specific temporal and spatial borders in order to be analyzed within the contingency of its context. Third, Shugendō has a *culture* that embraced a multiplicity of different fields such as literature, visual arts, dance or music and goes beyond the mere doctrinal level of the religious discourse.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>. For instance, see Togawa’s definition of Shugendō as “a mix of doctrinal teachings and practices” (*kyōsetsu gyōgi no shūgō* 教説・行儀の習合) in Togawa Anshō, “Shugendō to minzoku,” in *Shugendō to minzoku shukyō*, 3.

<sup>18</sup>. Gaynor Sekimori, D. Max Moerman, “Introduction,” in *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 18, *Shugendō: The History and Culture of a Japanese Religion - L’histoire et la culture d’une religion japonaise*, eds. Bernard Faure, D. Max Moerman, Gaynor Sekimori (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2009), 2.

Even if Yudono studies were considered to be on the fringes of Dewa Sanzan scholarship, there was a single aspect of the religious tradition associated with this mountain that attracted the interest of Japanese as well as non-Japanese scholars: the mummified corpses (*sokushinbutsu* 即身仏) of Yudono ascetics. The two volumes *Nihon miira no kenkyū* 日本ミイラの研究 (1969) and *Nihon, Chūgoku miira shinkō no kenkyū* 日本・中国ミイラ信仰の研究 (1993) gather the results of the so-called “Group for Research of Japanese Mummies” (*Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu* 日本ミイラ研究グループ) that conducted fieldwork at Yudono and other sites related with mummification practices in Japan since 1960.<sup>19</sup> At the core of this group were the historians of religion Andō Kōsei 安藤更生 (1900-1970) and Matsumoto Akira 松本明, the folklorist Horii Ichirō, and the physician Ogata Tamotsu 小片保 (1916-1980). The biggest limitation of the analysis made by the *Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu* was that it focused on the study of the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono per se without taking into account the local religious context within which the “permanent ascetics” (*issei gyōnin* 一世行人) of Yudono performed their religious practices. Because the *sokushinbutsu* were exclusively created from the corpses of *issei gyōnin*, it is impossible to understand this phenomenon correctly without studying their peculiarities.

In other words, the research of the *Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu* began from the final point of the religious career of an eminent *issei gyōnin*, i.e. the transformation of the ascetic’s cadaver into a flesh-icon (*nikushinzō* 肉身像), and treated it as the starting point through which to try to reconstruct the entire life of the ascetic. In this thesis, I suggest a reversal of this approach and start from a study of the religious practices, institutions, and local networks

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<sup>19</sup>. See *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, ed. *Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu* (1969; repr., Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1993) and see also *Nihon, Chūgoku miira shinkō no kenkyū*, ed. *Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu* (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1993). While the first volume is entirely dedicated to Japanese mummies with a special focus on those of Yudono, the second work includes also comparative research by Japanese and non-Japanese anthropologists about mummified corpses in China, Korea, the Sakhalin peninsula, the Aleutian islands, Alaska, and the Philippines.

in which the *issei gyōnin* performed their ordinary activities to better understand what types of religious, social, and cultural environment brought about the *sokushinbutsu*. From my point of view the *sokushinbutsu* is the final “effect” of a complex concatenation of “causes,” which were typical of the Yudono religious context and should be taken into account *before* analyzing the *sokushinbutsu*. For instance, the study of the economic and religious ties which linked eminent *issei gyōnin* to their lay patrons and devotees should not be neglected because here we can find the fundamental trigger for the transformation of an eminent *issei gyōnin*’s corpse into a *sokushinbutsu*.

Andō and Matsumoto’s interpretations of the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono became extremely famous among scholars inside and outside Japan. For Andō the ascetic diet based on the leaves, bark, and roots of trees (*mokujiki* 木食), which was periodically practiced by the *issei gyōnin* during the periods of self-seclusion on Yudono, favored a sort of natural dehydration of the anatomical tissues of the *issei gyōnin* so that their cadavers “easily became mummies” (*miira ni nariyasui* ミイラになりやすい) after death.<sup>20</sup> From a doctrinal point of view Matsumoto emphasized the paradigmatic role played by the legends about the “deep meditation and suspended animation” (*nyūjō* 入定) of Kūkai on Mount Kōya 高野 in shaping the mortuary rituals performed by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono.<sup>21</sup> Togawa too took part in the *Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu* and wrote the monograph *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu* 出羽三山のミイラ仏 (1974) in which he proposed once again the interpretative theories of Andō and Matsumoto, emphasizing a possible connection between the *sokushinbutsu* and the faith in the descent of the future buddha Miroku 弥勒.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>. Andō Kōsei, *Nihon no miira* (Tōkyō: Mainichi shinbunsha, 1961), 28.

<sup>21</sup>. Matsumoto Akira, “Kōyasan shinkō no seiritsu to Yudono,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, ed. Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu, 331-332.

<sup>22</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu* (Tōkyō: Chūō shoin, 1974), 246.

In this research, I demonstrate that the ascetic practice of the *mokujiki* was periodically performed by the *issei gyōnin* to exhibit the acquisition of supernatural powers (*genriki* 験力) before their devotees and was not linked with the dehydration of the body to become a *sokushinbutsu* after death. Moreover, the *mokujiki* practice per se would never have been enough to support a “natural” process of mummification of the cadaver. Emphasizing the fact that the Japanese mummies were intrinsically different from all other types of mummies, in particular the Egyptian and Chinese ones, Andō was trying to use the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono to shape a new discourse about the uniqueness and essentialism of Japanese culture (*nihonjin ron* 日本人論), which could not be compared with any other foreign culture, not even concerning the techniques of mummification.

Matsumoto’s interpretation of the *sokushinbutsu* through the exclusive filter of Kūkai’s *nyūjō* legends and the Shingōn tradition of Mount Kōya too ends up diminishing and misrecognizing the complexity of the local religious mechanisms that constituted the real background for the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono. In other words, in Matsumoto’s analysis the religious traditions of Mount Yudono were permanently doomed as being too “peripheral” or “naive” to be seriously studied for themselves and necessarily deserved to be replaced with more “orthodox” and “erudite” religious discourses that referred to famous monks such as Kūkai and “central” sites such as Mount Kōya. For Matsumoto the religious discourses of Mount Yudono make sense only if related with Mount Kōya and the practices of the *issei gyōnin* are worthy of note only if traced back to Kūkai.

The very title of Togawa’s monograph on the *sokushinbutsu* remarkably summarizes all these methodological tendencies, obliterating the specific territorial and religious association of the *miira butsu* with Yudono and presenting the ascetics’ mummified corpses as a shared

and generalized phenomenon of Dewa Sanzan. Moreover, Togawa tried to use oral legends which linked the *sokushinbutsu* to faith in Miroku, even if there was no historical proof of such a faith among the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono. In other words, it seems to be problematical from a methodological point of view not to make a clear separation between the doctrinal and devotional discourses of those whose bodies were mummified, i.e. the *issei gyōnin*, and the doctrinal and devotional interpretations provided thorough *engi* and legends by those who venerated the *sokushinbutsu*, i.e. lay sponsors, disciples, and regular devotees. It is obvious that the multiplicity of religious meanings and devotional nuances which were subsequently added by the social actors who venerated the *sokushinbutsu* constituted further expansions or extensions of the religious discourses that characterized the ascetic practices of the *issei gyōnin* within history and were not necessarily limited to an “objective description” of them.

In the early sixties Hori published an article in English, *Self-mummified Buddhas in Japan. An Aspect of the Shugen-dō (“Mountain Asceticism”) Sect* (1962), which was focused on the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono.<sup>23</sup> Even if he tried to introduce some peculiarities of the religious environment of Yudono, the difference between *issei gyōnin* and *shugenja* remained extremely vague in this work and the only explanations for the *sokushinbutsu* was the alleged influence of the legends about Kūkai’s *nyūjō* on Mount Kōya and an overview of the *engi* written by devotees and disciples to commemorate the death of eminent *issei gyōnin*.<sup>24</sup> In 1963 Andō held two conferences, first at the Collège de France and later at the Société française d’égyptologie, where he presented his theories about Japanese mummies in general and the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono in particular.

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<sup>23</sup>. Hori Ichirō, “Self-mummified Buddhas in Japan. An Aspect of the Shugen-dō (“Mountain Asceticism”) Sect,” *History of Religion* 1, no. 2 (December, 1962): 222-242.

<sup>24</sup>. *Ibid.*, 227, 233-239, 241-242.

Thanks to Hori's article in English and Andō's presentations in France, the international community of scholars began to show an interest in Japanese mummification practices and a few years later Paul Demiéville published an article, *Momies d'Extrême-Orient* (1965), in which he examined various types of mummies from India, Central Asia, China, Tibet, and Japan.<sup>25</sup> Because Demiéville did not have the chance to make any independent research on the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono, he fundamentally replicated the theoretical approaches of his Japanese colleagues and was particularly fascinated by the fact that the *issei gyōnin* were said to be buried in the ground while still alive.<sup>26</sup> For Demiéville the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono were the result of a voluntary abandonment of the body (*shashingyō* 捨身行) performed by the ascetic whose corpse was venerated as a relic obtained through a process of "natural mummification" (*momification naturelle*).<sup>27</sup>

The most interesting part of Demiéville's article concerns the analysis of the ambiguous relationships that link together the mummified corpse of the ascetic, the production of a sacred icon, and the veneration of relics. For the articulation of these concepts, Demiéville recognized his debt to the pioneering study of Kosugi Kazuo 小杉一雄 (1908-1998), *Nikushinzō oyobi yuikaizō no kenkyū* 肉身像及遺灰像の研究 (1937), where the term *nikushinzō* was used in relation with mummification practices in ancient China, and which also made a brief mention about the presence of various mummified corpses in Yamagata prefecture.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Demiéville "Momies d'Extrême-Orient," *Journal des savants*, no. 1 (1965): 144-170.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 144, 165. The influence of the theories about the *sokushinbutsu* expressed by Hori, Andō, Matsumoto, and Demiéville are reflected strongly even in the work of Massimo Raveri, who made various studies on the topic of the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono. See Massimo Raveri, *Il corpo e il paradiso. Le tentazioni estreme dell'asceti* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992), 3-104.

<sup>28</sup> Kosugi Kazuo, "Nikushinzō oyobi yuikaizō no kenkyū," in *Nihon • Chūgoku miira shinkō no kenkyū*, ed. Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu, 278.

Even if Demiéville shared most of the theories presented by the Japanese scholars who belonged to the *Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu*, he pointed out in the article's conclusion that the actual reasons about the religious motivations that triggered the mummification practices in China as well as in Japan were still obscure to him and needed further analysis.<sup>29</sup> He probably realized that Hori and Andō were often relying on the “truth of the *engi*” about the *sokushinbutsu* in order to explain the historical reality of this phenomenon and were shifting to the “truth of history” to dismiss all aspects of the written and oral legends that did not conform with their narratives. It is clear that trying to interpret legends through history and vice versa creates a “double *vulnus*” to both these elements, which are interrelated but fundamentally independent.

In 1965 another protagonist of the studies on the *sokushinbutsu*, Naitō Masatoshi 内藤正敏, started his fieldwork among villages close to Senninzawa 仙人沢, the valley where the *issei gyōnin* associated with the two temples at the front entrance of Yudono practiced their self-seclusions rituals. Naitō stressed the fact that *issei gyōnin* were a completely different class of ascetic and should not be included with the *shugenja*. *Issei gyōnin* possessed doctrines, institutions, and rituals that fell under their exclusive authority and were separated from the religious activities performed by *shugenja* or ordinary Buddhist monks. The contents of Naitō's research are condensed in two publications: *Miira shinkō no kenkyū* ミイラ信仰の研究 (1974) and *Nihon no miira shinkō* 日本のミイラ信仰 (1999).<sup>30</sup> In the second book Naitō demonstrated that most of the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono were “artificial mummies” (*miirazukuri* ミイラ作り) which were created by disciples and devotees of

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<sup>29</sup>. Paul Demiéville, “Momies d’Extrême-Orient,” 168.

<sup>30</sup>. See Naitō Masatoshi, *Miira shinkō no kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Daiwa shobō, 1974) and Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō* (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1999).



eminent *issei gyōnin* “after” death and were not the result of a voluntary abandonment of the body “before” death.<sup>31</sup>

The biggest problem with Naitō’s research resides in the fact that the *issei gyōnin* are always described as messianic figures who protected the subaltern classes of Dewa province against the rapaciousness of *daimyō* 大名, the arrogance of *samurai* 侍, and the harshness of famines.<sup>32</sup> Naitō did not recognize the existence of a well-established religious system thanks to which lay devotees could permanently sponsor eminent *issei gyōnin* to perform ascetic practices on their behalf and finance expensive funerary rituals to transform their corpses into a *sokushinbutsu* after the death. Limiting the production of *sokushinbutsu* to extra-ordinary events such as the outbreak of epidemics or overtaxation, Naitō once again ends up minimizing the complexity of Yudono religious traditions and devotional mechanisms through which the inhabitants of Dewa expressed their religiosity. Naitō is more interested in creating an eulogizing discourse about the *issei gyōnin*, which is similar to a sort of modern *engi* in marxist style, rather than showing that even these groups of liminal ascetics had their own agendas and authority to expand them to compete with other rival religious professionals such as the *shugenja*.

In recent years a new stream of Dewa Sanzan studies is emerging thanks to the contribution of Japanese and non-Japanese scholars. For instance, in the article *Paper Fowl and Wooden Fish: The Separation of Kami and Buddha Worship in Haguro Shugendō, 1869-1875* (2005) Gaynor Sekimori analyzes the historical mechanisms and ritual strategies

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<sup>31</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 168-169, 171, 177-184. In the case of *issei gyōnin* such as Honmyōkai 本明海 (d. 1683) or Shinnyokai 真如海 (d. 1783) who did not leave any historical or archeological evidence beyond the *engi* it is impossible to clearly establish the modalities of death.

<sup>32</sup>. *Ibid.*, 133-159, 222-245.

for actualizing of the *shinbutsu bunri* policies at the local level of Haguro.<sup>33</sup> In the chapter *Defining Shugendō Past and Present: The “Restoration” of Shugendō at Nikkō and Koshikidake* (2009) Sekimori focuses on the relationships between Haguro and Nikkō demonstrating the necessity to always locate the specific religious tradition of a sacred mountain within a broader network of extra-local alliances between numinous peaks.<sup>34</sup> The interpretation of the religious meanings associated with the various phases of the Haguro ritual of the *aki no mine*, the study of the historical and visual developments of the cult of Otake Dainichi お竹大日 at Haguro, Yudono, and Edo, and the iconographical analysis of a great variety of talismans (*ofuda* 御札) from the Dewa Sanzan also constitute extremely interesting topics and innovative frontiers towards which Sekimori is addressing her research.<sup>35</sup>

On the side of the Japanese scholars Iwahana Michiaki 岩鼻通明, Yamauchi Shirō 山内志郎, and Yamasawa Manabu 山澤学 have set the barycenter of their intellectual inquiries on Yudono. In *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō* 出羽三山信仰の圏構造 (2003) Iwahana applies the methodology of geographic studies (*chirigaku* 地理学) to emphasize the impact of the Yudono cult inside and outside Dewa province. In this book Iwahana presents travel diaries (*kikō* 紀行) and travel records (*dōchūki* 道中記) that are invaluable primary sources

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<sup>33</sup> Gaynor Sekimori, “Paper Fowl and Wooden Fish: The Separation of Kami and Buddha Worship in Haguro Shugendō, 1869-1875,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32, no. 2 (March 2005): 197-234.

<sup>34</sup> Gaynor Sekimori, “Defining Shugendō Past and Present: The “Restoration” of Shugendō at Nikkō and Koshikidake,” in *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 18, *Shugendō: The History and Culture of a Japanese Religion - L’histoire et la culture d’une religion japonaise*, eds. Bernard Faure, D. Max Moerman, Gaynor Sekimori, (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient Centre de Kyoto, 2009) 47-71.

<sup>35</sup> See Gaynor Sekimori, “Aki no mine no rekishi wo ayumu,” in *Shugendō: The World of the Haguro Yamabushi. Sennen no Shugendō Hagurosan yamabushi no sekai*, eds. Shimazu Kōkai, Kitamura Minao (Tōkyō: Shinjuku shobō, 2005), 88-127. See also Gaynor Sekimori, “O-take Dainichi Nyorai, or How a Servant Woman in Edo Became an Icon of Haguro Shugendō” (lecture, SOAS seminar, London, October 23, 2008): 1-13 and Gaynor Sekimori, “Shugendō and Its Relationship with the Japanese Esoteric Sects: A Study of the Ritual Calendar of an Edo-Period Shugendō Shrine-Temple Complex,” in *HdO Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, eds. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H Sørensen, Richard K. Payne (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 997-1008.

for the study of the structures of Yudono pilgrimage during the Edo period.<sup>36</sup>

The work of Yamasawa Manabu, which is focused on the analysis of the religious practices performed by Yudono *issei gyōnin* in villages in Dewa and Echigo 越後 provinces,<sup>37</sup> shows the ritual transformations and institutional flexibility of the *issei gyōnin* in adapting their teachings and activities to the different realities and religious needs of the rural communities in various territories.<sup>38</sup> The focus of Yamauchi's research is on the first historical documents that report the activities and sponsoring networks of the *issei gyōnin* in the Keichō 慶長 era (1596-1615). He also worked on the categorization and explanation of Yudono *engi* in relation with the dynamics to legitimize the independent identity of Yudono religious institutions *vis-à-vis* Haguro.<sup>39</sup>

## Synopsis

In the first chapter I take into account the historical background of Dewa Sanzan with a specific focus on the formative processes that concerned the religious traditions and institutions associated with Yudono. Dewa Sanzan can be considered as a “double” or a “refraction” of Kumano Sanzan 熊野三山 in the Kii peninsula (Kii *hantō* 紀伊半島). Toward

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<sup>36</sup>. Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 1-13.

<sup>37</sup>. Echigo province corresponds to the present-day Niigata 新潟 prefecture.

<sup>38</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūnana seiki echigokuni ni okeru Yudonosan gyōja no katsudō: Iwafunegun Ushiyamura Hōtokuji o chūshin ni,” *Nihon shigaku shūroku* 22, (May 1999): 1-18. See also Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūhasseiki Shinano no kuni ni okeru Dewa Sanzan Shugen no sonzai keitai: Sakugun nai no Yudonosan gyōnin wo chūshin ni,” *Shinano* 61, no. 3 (March 2009): 75-94.

<sup>39</sup>. Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudono shinkō to kōshō bungei,” (paper presented at the *Fugeki mōsō gakkai*, Niigata University, Niigata, 2005): 1-4. For the same author see also “Shugendō to Yudonosan shinkō,” *Risō. tokushū: “Shinkō no tetsugaku to shisō”* 678 (2007): 26-36 and “Yudonosan shinkō no seiritsu to sono shinwaka no katei. Oku jōruri Yudonosan honjibutsu to Yudonosan shinkō no hattatsu,” in *Shinwa, densetsu no seiritsu to sono tenkai no hikaku kenkyū*, ed. Suzuki Yoshihide (Tōkyō: Kōshi shoin, 2003), 59-123.

the end of the Heian 平安 (794-1185) and early Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185-1333) periods the geographical and devotional paradigm of the “three mountains” (*sanzan* 三山) was exported by heterogeneous groups of itinerant ascetics collectively known as Kumano *sendatsu* 熊野先達 that spread the Kumano Sanzan cult in numerous areas of the Japanese archipelago, including the Tōhoku region. Even if Yudono was not numbered among the Dewa Sanzan peaks before the seventeenth center, it played a pivotal role as the shared Inner Precinct for all the sacred mountains of Dewa province. In the fifteenth century the Shingon itinerant monk Dōchi 道智 (?-1427) started building a road (Dōchi *michi* 道智道) that connected the temples at the back entrance of Yudono with those at the front entrance, facilitating pilgrims’ access to Yudono. The fame of the site started to grow. The first literary reference to Yudono is found in the *Naka minato Fudaraku tokai ki* 那珂湊補陀落渡海記 of Kyōroku 享祿 4 (1531) in a description of the voyage made toward Kannon’s 觀音 paradise by Kōkai 高海, a Fudaraku seeker (*tokaisha* 渡海者) who is said to have practiced austerities at Yudono.

The religious institutions and the entire territory of Yudono were administered by the oppositional and, at the same time, synergic interaction of three different classes of religious professional: fully ordained monks (*seisō* 清僧), *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin*. Even if the members of each group perceived the others as potential rivals, they mutually cooperated thanks to the uniqueness and specificity of their religious role. For instance, fully ordained monks represented the legitimacy of the Shingon tradition, *shugenja* looked after pilgrims during their stay at Yudono in the summer season, and *issei gyōnin* mobilized the economic support and devotional discourses of numerous lay supporters who were willing to directly sponsor their ascetic practices in order that their private vows (*gan* 願) be realized.

Warlords (*sengoku daimyō* 戦国大名) such as Mogami Yoshiaki 最上義光 (1546-1614),

Naoe Kanetsugu 直江兼続 (1559-1620), Date Masamune 伊達政宗 (1567-1636) or members of the Tokugawa family such as Kasuga no Tsubone 春日局 (1579-1643) can be numbered among the devotees of the *issei gyōnin*. This fact shows that even if they were social outsiders belonging to the fringes or margins of society their lay supporters included members from the highest elite as well as subaltern strata of society. In this case the definition of *issei gyōnin* as “popular ascetics” hides more than it reveals. In *History & Criticism* (1985) Dominick LaCapra points out the necessity to avoid a “methodological scapegoating” when dealing with social actors from the subaltern classes.<sup>40</sup> The *issei gyōnin* are a case in point demonstrating that the creation and administration of authority and power were also fundamental elements in the agendas of these liminal groups of ascetics who belonged to subaltern sections of society but transversally expanded their charisma within other social strata.

In this chapter I also analyze the institutional, doctrinal, and legal struggles between Haguro and Yudono after the appointment of Ten'yū 天有 (1594-1674) as Haguro *bettō* in Kan'ei 7 (1630). The attempts of Ten'yū to extend Haguro's influence over the Yudono area resulted in the historical phenomenon known as “reciprocal construction through doctrinal disputes” (*ryōzō hōron* 両造法論) during which Yudono consolidated (and invented) its Shingon identity as self-defense against the expansionistic aims of Ten'yū who was creating a new Tendai identity for Haguro. These aspects of Dewa Sanzan religious and institutional formative processes once again show the impossibility of disentangling the history of Haguro from Yudono and vice versa.

Chapter two deals with the ascetic apprenticeship and religious practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* and their differences from *seisō* and *shugenja*. The *issei gyōnin* were not

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<sup>40</sup>. Dominick LaCapra, *History & Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 90.

monks because they did not received full ordination and, at the same time, they were not *shugenja* because they could not take part in the *aki no mine* ritual. For example, in the *Saihentō no jōjō kakuji* 再返答之条々覚事 (Kanbun 6, 1666) the *issei gyōnin* are defined as “tonsured-heads, ignorant, and without rank” (*kamikiri muchi mukai* 髮切無知無階) in the temple hierarchy.<sup>41</sup> The ritual clothes and accessories that characterized the exterior appearance of the *issei gyōnin* such as the ritual staff (*bonten* 梵天), the sacred rope (*shime* 注連) and the crown-cap (*kanmuri* 冠) had specific religious meanings, which exclusively pertained to the doctrinal discourses associated with these ascetics.

The difference between *issei gyōnin* and *shugenja* mirrors the gap between *shugen* 修験 and Shugendō. The first term indicated the performance of extreme ascetic practices (Skt. *dhūta*; *tsuta* 斗藪 or *kugyō* 苦行) thanks to which the ascetic (*gyōja* 行者) realized a process of empowerment (*genriki* 験力) and got magical powers (*jujutsuryoku* 呪術力) to benefit other persons. The aim of the *shugen* practitioner (*genja* 験者) was to share the same power of gods practicing ascesis in the recesses of the mountain. On the contrary, the final suffix *dō* (Way) of the term Shugendō denoted an institutionalization and bureaucratization of the ascetic practices, which were primarily performed to allow the *shugenja* to have access to specific ranks within a hierarchical system. While *shugen* emphasized a teleology that aimed to the obtainment of a high spiritual status for the practitioner, Shugendō translated this spiritual advancement into a career upgrade in the hierarchical system of the ascetics. Those who accepted this logic of promotion became *shugenja* and those who were excluded from it remained *issei gyōnin*. Both kept providing their religious services to lay devotees, but *shugenja* started developing a higher differentiation of their institutional status reproducing patterns similar to the monastic system of ranks and titles.

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<sup>41</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 21.

For the *issei gyōnin* Yudono was a sort of “university” where they received three years of ascetic training after which could decide to stay in the Dewa Sanzan area or return to their villages in Tōhoku or Kantō and spread the cult of the mountain among broad segments of the population. When an aspirant *issei gyōnin* was accepted as a new member of this class of ascetic, he had to perform the *kaigō* 海号 ritual during which he was granted an ascetic name such as Honmyōkai 本明海 or Zenkai 全海 that marked his formal status of *issei gyōnin*. During these three years of apprenticeship the novice *issei gyōnin* learned a great variety of ascetic practices, such as the use of the “separated fire” (*bekka* 別火), which was ritually defined as Supreme Fire (*jōka* 上火), the wood-eating practice (*mokujikigyō* 木食行), purificatory ablutions with cold water (*mizugori* 水垢離), the self-seclusion retreat (*sanrō* 山籠) for one-thousand days (*sennichigyō* 千日行) or even longer, the daily pilgrimage (*nissan* 日参) to Gohōzen 御宝前, the sacred boulder of Yudono, and the techniques to produce various types of talisman (*fuda*) for healing or against epidemics.

In this chapter I also present a group of four petitions (*meyasu* 目安) written in Keichō 慶長 8 (1603) and Keichō 9 (1604) that can be considered the first historical documents about the religious activities of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono outside Dewa province. In these petitions the *shugenja*, who were affiliated with Fudō’in 不動院 and Kōmyō’in 光明院 in Musashi province (Musashi no kuni 武蔵国), contested the legal rights of a group of *issei gyōnin* to performed certain rituals and work as guides (*sendatsu* 先達) for pilgrims.<sup>42</sup> From the point of view of the *shugenja* affiliated with Fudō’in and Kōmyō’in the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono were perceived as impostors and rivals who were trying to steal their parishioners although they were not formally certified *shugenja*. These petitions are extremely interesting

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<sup>42</sup>. Musashi province corresponds to the present-day southern part of Saitama 埼玉 prefecture and Kawasaki 川崎 prefecture and Tōkyō 東京.

because the *issei gyōnin* are specifically defined as “ascetics on commission” (*daikan gyōja* 代官行者) whose religious role was to transfer the merit (*ekō* 廻向) they accumulated by performing ascetic practices in the mountains to the lay devotees who financially and devotionally sponsored their activities.

It is also important to take into account that these petitions against the *issei gyōnin* networks in the Kantō area were written a few years before the definitive separation between the Tendai branch (Honzan-ha 本山派) and the Shingon branch (Tōzan-ha 当山派) of Shugendō, ordered by Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542-1616) in the Shugendō edict (Shugendō *hattō* 修験道法度) in Keichō 18 (1613). Because *issei gyōnin* were considered neither Honzan-ha *shugenja* nor Tōzan-ha *shugenja*, they were formally ostracized from both groups. Nevertheless, the temple registers of rural villages in Kantō and Tōhoku show that after the promulgation of the Shugendō edict many Yudono ascetics gave up their *issei gyōnin* status and joined the Honzan-ha or Tōzan-ha branches of Shugendō in order to keep performing their typical *daikan gyōja* practices under the legally authorized nomenclature of *shugenja*. The harshness with which the Tokugawa *bakufu* 幕府 dealt with liminal religious professionals such as the *issei gyōnin* on a public level ironically clashes with the intense devotion that important members of the Tokugawa family and local *daimyō* had for this type of ascetic at a private level.

Because the sacred space of Yudono was exclusively appointed to host the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin*, the *shugenja* of Yudono had to go to practice their rituals on other mountains such as Kinpōsan 金峯山 close to the city of Tsuruoka 鶴岡 or Jionji 慈恩寺 near Mount Hayama 葉山. By regularly attending the *aki no mine*, Yudono *shugenja* advanced in the Shugendō hierarchical system and obtained ranks that allowed



them to be appointed with important tasks for the ceremonial and economic management of pilgrims who arrived in the lodgings (*shukubō* 宿坊) at the foot of the mountain during the summer season. Besides taking part in mountain-entry rituals (*nyūbu* 入峰) the Yudono *shugenja* distributed the extremely popular ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin* 牛玉宝印), which the *issei gyōnin* were not permitted to sell, to their parishioners (*danna* 旦那) during the first three months of the year.

Chapter three concerns the death of eminent *issei gyōnin* and the funerary practices for transforming their corpses into *sokushinbutsu*. The fact that eminent *issei gyōnin* were permanently sponsored by lay devotees to perform ascetic practices such as the *senninchigyō* throughout their life had implications for the management of the ascetic's corpse after death. In other words, the lay devotees of eminent *issei gyōnin* slowly, but inexorably, became the ultimate owners of the ascetic's body, which was “forged” thanks to their financial and devotional investments. At the moment of death the property of the *issei gyōnin*'s corpse shifted from the ascetic to his disciples and lay sponsors, who were often members of the Yudonosan religious confraternities (Yudonosan *kō* 湯殿山講), and they transformed it into a *nikushinzō* for their private veneration. Because these funerary practices were extremely expensive and technically complex, it was possible only for a few eminent *issei gyōnin* who could rely on a vast pool of devotees to undergo this type of *post mortem* treatment. The majority of the *issei gyōnin* did not become *sokushinbutsu* and were cremated or buried at regular Buddhist temples.

Even in the Edo period the mummified corpses of *issei gyōnin* were defined also as “mummies” (*miira* ミイラ) or “actual bodies of buddhas” (*sokushinbutsu*). The shift from the first to the second term varied according to the sensibility of the observer, whether the

mummified body's grotesque aspect of anatomical *mirabilia* was emphasized, or its religious valence. *Issei gyōnin* borrowed the term *sokushinbutsu* from the Shugendō tradition where it was used to describe the practitioner's achievement of Buddhahood in this very body thanks to the performance of ascetic practices on the mountain. *Shugenja* in turn created the *sokushinbutsu* paradigm adapting the Shingon concept of "becoming a buddha in this actual body" (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏) and the Tendai doctrine of the "original enlightenment" (*hongaku shisō* 本覚思想) to their peculiar religious discourse. The *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* can be interpreted as a sort of *mise en scène* or reification of the Shugendō ideal of *sokushinbutsu*.

The stipulated period of three years and three months during which the *issei gyōnin*'s corpse was believed to be in a status of "deep meditation and suspended animation within the ground" (*dochū nyūjō* 土中入定) inside a special sepulchral cell (*ishi no karōto* 石の匱) created an "intervisuality" (*mitate* 見立) with an idealized *senninchigyō* during which the *issei gyōnin* was exclusively dedicated to asceticism overcoming the limits of his biological condition and becoming a paradigm of perfection.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the *sokushinbutsu* was never a *memento mori* for the living. On the contrary, it always represented the possibility of overcoming death and obtaining the adamant body (*kongōshin* 金剛身) of Dainichi Nyorai *hic et nunc*.

In the concluding part of this chapter I analyze different narrative *topoi* of *engi* and oral legends about *issei gyōnin* and *sokushinbutsu*. These oral and written texts were fundamental devices for boosting and propagandizing the ascetic powers attributed to eminent *issei gyōnin*

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<sup>43</sup>. I use the neologism "intervisuality" which was created by Max Moerman, to define the hermeneutic mechanism embedded in the term *mitate* that is not a simple visual or textual replication or quotation of an ancient source, but shows a creative expansion and an independent reinterpretation of the original meaning attributed to a specific paradigm. See Max D. Moerman, "Dying Like the Buddha: Intervisuality and the Cultic Image," *Impressions* 29, (2007/2008): 26.

by disciples and devotees, among various strata of society. It is interesting to note that some famous hagiographical episodes of an eminent *issei gyōnin*'s life spread *after* the creation of the *sokushinbutsu* and not before. In other words, *sokushinbutsu* inspired the production of new legends that re-created and “upgraded” the past life of the *issei gyōnin* beyond the limits of the human condition. These devotional discourses were then re-inscribed on the body of the *sokushinbutsu* in order to validate them. For instance, the testicles and the left eye of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai were actually excised after the diffusion of oral legends in which Tetsumonkai was said to have practiced self-mutilation of this type during his life.

The *sokushinbutsu* can be studied as archéiro-poiétic icons, i.e. self-made icons, the charisma of which depended on the fact that they were not supposed to be created by human intervention on inert matter but were venerated as epiphanic manifestations of the supernatural power that constantly imbued the ascetic's body thanks to the self-seclusion rituals at Yudono. Even if we know that on a historical level human manipulation of the *issei gyōnin*'s corpse was an unavoidable step in transforming it into a *sokushinbutsu*, on the iconographical and devotional level the conception of the *sokushinbutsu* as archéiro-poiétic icons was a pivotal element for creating a mechanism of “self-deception” in the devotees who wanted to believe that the ascetic autonomously succeeded in mummifying himself. The archéiro-poiétic aspect of the *sokushinbutsu* put the lay sponsors of the *issei gyōnin* in the condition of practicing a “psychological removal” of the pivotal role they played in mummifying the ascetic's corpse and allowed them to pretend that it was spontaneously or naturally originated as an effect of ascesis.

The fourth chapter concerns *engi* and pilgrimages associated with the veneration of Yudono. These are deeply interrelated because the textuality of the *engi* can be interpreted as

a first “imaginary travel” that allowed people to visualize the sacred landscape of Yudono within the mind and was often a prelude to “real travel” through space and time. *Engi* instilled a sort of database of visual and auditive memories about mythical or soteriological aspects of Yudono landscape in readers (in the case of written *engi*) or listeners (in the case of orally transmitted *engi*), transforming them into potential pilgrims.

Kan’ei 16 (1639) was a critical year for the production of Yudono *engi* because after this date all the texts invariably referred to Kūkai as the “opener of the mountain” (*kaizan* 開山) and described his ritual activities there as the ultimate evidence of the connection between Yudono and the Shingon tradition.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis of the Yudono *engi* on Kūkai was due to the fact that in the same year Ten’yū filed the first lawsuit against Yudono using the Tendai affiliation of Haguro as a pretext for questioning the doctrinal and territorial independence of the rival mountain. This shows that the aims of the *engi* were not limited to a mere transmission of eulogizing discourses about a numinous site but encompassed also narrative strategies to assert, defend, or even expand the religious and institutional authority of a specific mountain against others. According to this logic the Yudono *engi* were used to invent traditions, produce traces, and forge layers of fictionalized past, which became powerful weapons to legitimize its cultural and religious landscape. In other words, the narrative “lies” of the *engi* were essential for the preservation of the institutional, doctrinal, and historical “truth” that characterized Yudono’s religious identity.

A special type of Yudono pilgrim were called “ascending-descending ascetics” (*nobori kudari no gyōnin* 上り下りの行人). These male practitioners belonged to the Yudonosan *kō* and regularly venerated the mountain in their villages during the year in preparation for the

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<sup>44</sup> The term *kaizan* refers to the ritual appeasement of local deities and the subsequent establishment of a Buddhist presence on a certain mountain. In this specific case, Kūkai is supposed to enter Yudono’s territory in order to introduce the Shingon doctrine and venerate Dainichi Nyorai together with Yudono Gongen.

summer pilgrimage. The *nobori kudari no gyōnin* occupied an intermediate position between normal pilgrims, i.e. pilgrims who went to Yudono but did not belong to the Yudosan *kō*, and *issei gyōnin*. Before starting the pilgrimage the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* secluded themselves in ascetic huts (*gyōya* 行屋), which were built within the village, for about a month to do pre-pilgrimage purificatory rituals. Similar rituals were repeated when the pilgrims returned from the mountain to the village as concluding ceremonies before resuming their ordinary lives. The *gyōya* symbolized a miniature-mountain that could be accessed without leaving the village. Therefore, entering the *gyōya* corresponded to a “virtual and non-kinetic pilgrimage” to Yudono that fostered a preliminary transformation of peasants into pilgrims and their preparation for the “real or kinetic pilgrimage” toward the mountain.

The pilgrims of the Edo period are generally described as hedonistic travelers and this is undoubtedly true for many of them but a study of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* shows that in the case of pilgrims who belonged to the *kō* there was also a high degree of religious commitment in the ascetic and devotional aspects of the pilgrimage. The *nobori kudari no gyōnin* very often felt strong pressure to come up to the expectations of the material and spiritual benefits expressed by those *kō* members who did not directly participate in the pilgrimage but financed their travel expenses so they would bring back to the village tangible signs of Yudono’s protection such as talismans, medicines, special foods, or new ritual objects. Moreover, it did not matter if the pilgrim was a libertine, a *haiku* master, or a *nobori kudari no gyōni*; people were allowed to travel only if they met all the bureaucratic requirements such as the transit permits (*tegata* 手形) for passing thorough the various barrier stations (*sekisho* 関所) along the way. It is true that in the Edo period the development of infrastructures and public security contributed to facilitate pilgrimages but it is also true

that this brought about the inevitable bureaucratization of all aspects of this ascetic experience.

In the concluding part of the chapter I examine various travel diaries (*nikki* 日記) written by different types of Yudono pilgrim, such as Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 (1644-1694) or the Yoshida Shintō 吉田神道 scholar Tachibana Mitsuyoshi 橘三善 (1635-1703), to demonstrate how the hermeneutic approaches to the Yudono natural landscape enormously varied according to the cultural and religious background of the pilgrim. From an analysis of the *nikki* it is also possible to take into account the complexity of religious discourse about the area forbidden to women (*nyonin kekkai* 女人結界) within Mount Yudono. Even if the zone of Gohōzen was completely forbidden to women, the physical exclusion of female pilgrims from the *oku no in* of Dewa Sanzan did not necessarily correspond to a total banishment of female practitioners from the ritual activities of the mountain. Female pilgrims could have access to the four *bettōji* of Yudono and in the case of Chūrenji the *issei gyōnin* performed an *ad hoc* fire ritual (*goma* 護摩) ritual during which Yudono Gongen 湯殿権現 was summoned into the platform in order to be specifically venerated by women. Moreover, when a male pilgrim was on the road to Yudono his mother or wife was supposed to constantly perform purificatory practices and make daily offerings to a special type of *bonten* which was located inside the house, in order to assure his safety during the journey. The ascetic practices of women within the house mirrored those of male pilgrims outside and were perceived as equally fundamental.

Chapter five takes into account the ritual modalities through which the Yudono cult was exported outside Dewa province in the early seventeenth century and the different types of materiality associated with it, such as artificial earth mounds (*tsuka* 塚) or the votive stelae

(*itabi* 板碑). During the Kan'ei era Yudono Daigongen was ritually transferred (*kanjō* 勧請) and enshrined in various sacred mountains in Tōhoku and Kantō such as Nikkō 日光 in Shimotsuke province (Shimotsuke no kuni 下野国) or Mount Isseki 一石 in Musashi province.<sup>45</sup> The *kanjō* of the divine pantheon of Yudono metonymically corresponded to the installation of the entire sacred landscape of Dewa Sanzan in a new geographical site. Since the *kanjō* of Yudono implicitly included also Haguro and Gassan, the final result was a mandalic overlapping or an intervisuality (*mitate*) between two sacred landscapes: one real and the other virtual. For instance, when the powerful Tendai monk Tenkai 天海 (1536-1643) decided to perform the *kanjō* of Yudono at Nikkō the mystical symbology of the area was immediately doubled because of the hybridization process with the numinous geography of Dewa Sanzan.

Thanks to the *kanjō* rituals, various mountains included Yudono's deities within their pantheon and, at the same time, the hosted mountain, i.e. Yudono, enriched its devotional and ritual spectrum with a multiplicity of local variations. For example, in the case of the *kanjō* of Yudono at Mount Isseki, Tenkai did not rely on *shugenja* for the practical aspects of the ceremonies but gave the task to a special class of holy man (*hijiri* 聖) known as "Buddhahood-builder *hijiri*" (*sabutsu hijiri* 作仏聖) who venerated Dainichi Nyorai as their elective deity. In the city of Edo *sabutsu hijiri* and *issei gyōnin* often performed religious activities in the same zones and built their temples side by side. This fact shows that in the Edo period there was a sort of network of liminal religious professionals that collaborated in spreading specific devotional discourses such as the Yudono cult, maintaining at the same time their institutional and doctrinal peculiarities. The third model of Yudono *kanjō* that I analyze refers to the invitation of Yudono Gongen to a small village, Irishiken 入四間, in

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<sup>45</sup>. Shimotsuke province corresponds to present-day Tochigi 栃木 prefecture.

Hitachi province (Hitachi no kuni 常陸国).<sup>46</sup> The case of Irishiken is interesting because it demonstrates that the diffusion of the Yudono cult was not limited to famous Shugendō mountains but involved also ordinary villages and rural communities of peasants (*hyakushō* 百姓), which actively participated in absorbing and transmitting the religious tradition of the mountain.

The *tsuka* built for venerating Yudono were considered as non-anthropomorphic icons of Yudono Gongen and were integral elements for marking the presence of the Yudono cult on the territory. These artificial mounds of earth were miniaturized and fragmented copies of the original body of the mountain within the space of the village. In this chapter I focused on three categories of Yudono *tsuka*: the round or square shape earth-tumuli (*ontsuka* 御塚) of Michinoku province (Michinoku no kuni 陸奥国), the *tsuka* inside which were buried the old *bonten* of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* (*bontenzuka* 梵天塚) in Shimōsa province (Shimōsa no kuni 下総国), and the *tsuka* used as funerary monuments or real sepulchers for commemorating *issei gyōnin* or *nobori kudari no gyōnin* (*gyōninzuka* 行人塚) in Tōtōmi province (Tōtōmi no kuni 遠江国).<sup>47</sup>

Beside *tsuka* the Yudono cult was also spread thanks to a great variety of stelae, which could be erected on the top of the *tsuka* or in independent locations. The Yudono stelae were the result of a synergic interaction of three types of social actor: lay donors (*seshu* 施主) such as the Yudonosan *kō* members, religious sponsors (*hongan* 本願) such as *issei gyōnin* or *shugenja*, and stone engravers (*sekkō* 石工). The construction of the Yudono stelae was the final step of a long process of specific ascetic practices performed by the *seshu* under the

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<sup>46</sup> Hitachi province corresponds to present-day Ibaraki 茨城 prefecture.

<sup>47</sup> This part of Michinoku province corresponds to present-day Fukushima 福島 prefecture. Shimōsa province overlaps with present-day Chiba 千葉 prefecture and Tōtōmi province refers to present-day Shizuoka 静岡 prefecture.



guidance of the *hongan* for three years and three months, in order to empower the stelae. In other words, the stele sealed the successful accomplishment of challenging ascetic practices by groups of Yudono lay devotees and the definitive realization (*jōju* 成就) of their vows (*gan*).

I took into account four models of Yudono stelae: the stelae with bas-reliefs of the so called Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai with a prominent nose (*hana no ōkina Dainichi sama* 鼻の大きな大日様) in Hitachi province, the stelae that display the sacred triad of Dainichi Nyorai, Fudō Myōō and Gōzanze Myōō (Dainichi sanzō-zō 大日三尊像) in the same province, the stelae that show Amida Nyorai's body made of *nenbutsu* characters (Moji Amida itabi 文字阿弥陀板碑) in Shimōsa province, and the stelae for practicing a virtual pilgrimage to Yudono (*daisantō* 代参塔) or commemorating those of the past in Michinoku province.

In the concluding part of the chapter I present the two principal rituals for the empowerment of the Yudono stelae, namely the fasting and offering ceremony (*fujiki kuyō* 不食供養) and the special type of invocatory practice called *toki nenbutsu* (齋念仏). Both practices, which involved stipulated periods of fast, purification, self-seclusion, and continuous prayer recitations, were considered as exclusive elements of the Yudono cultic tradition and were widely performed by female practitioners in the case of the *fujiki kuyō* and male practitioners in the case of the *toki nenbutsu*. Even if Yudono was considered as the mountain of asceticism and silence, which resisted any type of verbal, textual, and visual representation, the rich material culture associated with its cult transformed its non-representability into meaningful semiotic strategies to show, without unveiling, its presence and power.



Fig. 1 Aerial view of the Shōnai plain and Dewa Sanzan.

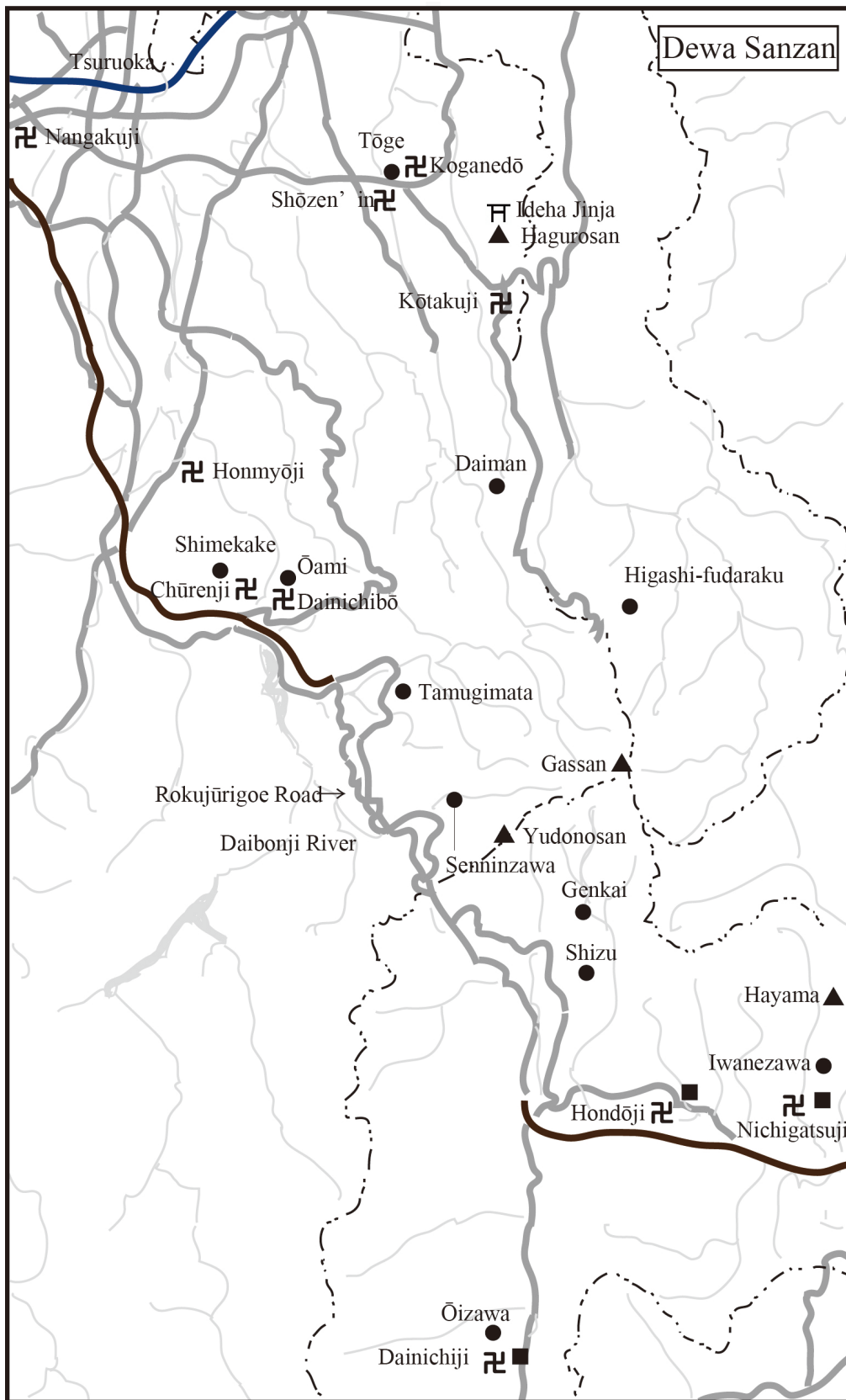


Fig. 2 Principal religious sites at Dewa Sanzan.

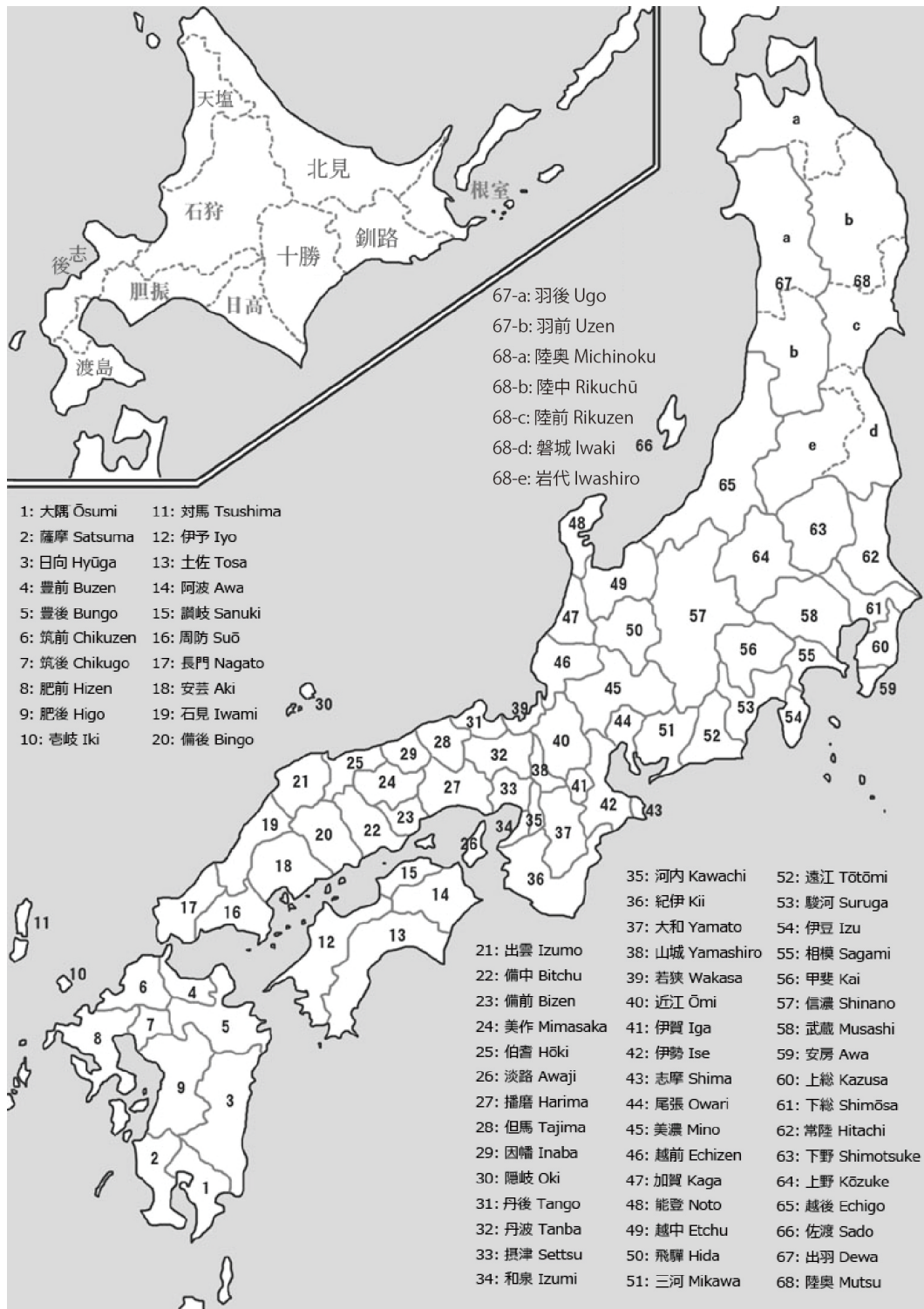


Fig. 3 Edo period provinces map.

## Chapter One

### The Formation of Dewa Sanzan and the Emerging of Yudono

The hot water comes out from this stone as sweat. Therefore it is called Yudono.  
This stone is venerated as Kongōkai Dainichi 金剛界大日.

Noda Senkōin, *Nihon kyūmine shūgyō nikki*<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the historical events that contributed to the creation of devotional discourses and religious institutions associated with Mount Yudono. Even if the pre-seventeenth century history of this mountain is extremely fragmented, it is still possible to identify and reconstruct some of the fundamental religious mechanisms that led to the devotional boom of Yudono during the Edo period.

Already in the Nara 奈良 (710–794) and Heian periods the religious, political and economic relationships between centers such as the imperial court and peripheries such as the Shōnai 庄内 plain in Dewa 出羽 province were extremely complex and animated. For instance, the government of Heiankyō 平安京 had a strong interest in the geomantic

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<sup>1</sup>. Noda Senkōin 野田泉光院 (1756–1835) was a *shugenja* 修験者 who wrote the *Nihon kyūmine shūgyō nikki* 日本九峰修行日記 during an ascetic pilgrimage which took place from Bunka 文化 9 (1804) to Bunsei 文政 1 (1818) and included the nine most sacred peaks of the Japanese archipelago. The nine peaks in which Noda practiced asceticism were Hikosan 英彦山 (Buzen 豊前 province, Kyūshū 九州), Ishizuchisan 石鎚山 (Iyo 伊予 province, Shikoku 四国), Minooyama 箕面山 (Settsu 摂津 province, Honshū 本州), Kinpusen 金峰山 (Yamato 大和 province, Honshū), Ōminesan 大峰山 (Yamato province), Kumanosan 熊野山 (Yamato province), Fujisan 富士山 (Suruga 駿河 province, Honshū), Haguro 羽黒 (Dewa 出羽 province, Honshū), and Yudono (Dewa province). For the original text see Miyamoto Tsuneichi, Haraguchi Torao, Tanigawa Ken'ichi, *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei*, vol. 2, (Tōkyō: San'ichi shobō, 1969), 164.

interpretation of the volcanic activities of Mount Chōkai 鳥海 and Gassan, which were both later included in the triad of sacred mountains (*sanzan*) of the Dewa province together with Mount Haguro. The gods (*kami* 神) of Chōkai and Gassan were, at the same time, venerated as protectors against the evil influences of the northeastern direction (*kimon* 鬼門) and as violent *kami* (*araburu kami* 荒神) to be tamed with special ceremonies and the bestowal of honorific titles.

The triadic assemblage of the sacred mountains in Dewa province, which could alternatively include Chōkai, Gassan, and Haguro or Hayama, Gassan, and Haguro, was the result of the religious activities of the Kumano *sendatsu* who introduced devotional practices dedicated to Kumano (Kumano *shinkō* 熊野信仰) in Dewa province between the end of the Heian and the early Kamakura periods. During this time a sort of cultic overlapping took place between the natural and cultural landscapes of the three numinous sites of Kumano (Kumano Sanzan) and the three sacred mountains of Dewa, which came to be venerated as “doubles” or “transpositions” of Kumano Sanzan in northeastern Japan. At this time the role of Yudono, which was not yet included in the *sanzan* paradigm, was that of shared Inner Precinct (*oku no in*) for all the sacred mountains of the Shōnai plain.

In the Muromachi 室町 period (1336–1573) the itinerant monk Dōchi 道智 (?–1427) who belonged to the Shingon School started developing important infrastructures such as roads and temples at the foot of Yudono in order to facilitate the access of pilgrims to the area. The creation of the so-called Dōchi’s road (Dōchi *michi*) is one of the earliest signals of the increasing religious relevance attributed to Yudono. The first literary source that testifies the importance of Yudono in the devotional panorama of the Muromachi period is the *Naka minato Fudaraku tokai ki* (Kyōroku 4, 1531), a narrative of the travel of the itinerant ascetic

and Fudaraku seeker (*tokaisha*) Kōkai who is said to have practiced austerities on Mount Yudono before sailing toward the bodhisattva Kannon's 観音 paradise beneath the sea from the harbor of Naka 那珂 in Hitachi province (Hitachi no kuni 常陸国).

In the second half of the Muromachi period Yudono and the entire Dewa Sanzan area were shattered by the continuous clashes of rival armies led by warlords (*sengoku daimyō*) who wanted to extend their domains into the prosperous Shōnai plain. Even if this was a historical period characterized by violence and turmoil, we will see that the warlords of the Muromachi period were also extremely interested in the religious practices associated with Yudono and did not hesitate to resort to its numinous aura to expand their power in the territory.

With the advent of the so-called “*pax Tokugawa*” the relationship between Haguro and Yudono, which in the meantime had been included in the Dewa Sanzan configuration in place of Chōkai and Hayama, progressively deteriorated because of the attempts of the head monk (*bettō*) of Jakkōji 寂光寺 on Haguro, Ten'yū (ca 1594–1674), to incorporate Yudono under Haguro's sphere of influence. This was when Yudono invented its Shingon identity as a defensive strategy against the progressive association of Haguro with the Tendai School. The sectarian identities of the two mountains underwent a process of artificial crystallization and Yudono strengthened the threefold division of the religious specialists who were associated with its temples, i.e. fully ordained monks (*seisō*), Shugendō practitioners (*shugenja*), and permanent ascetics (*issei gyōnin*), as a further sign of differentiation from Haguro.

In the concluding part of this chapter we will analyze the pivotal role played by the *issei gyōnin* in catalyzing the devotion of some of the most important *daimyō* and *shōgun* of the early Edo period, such as Mogami Yoshiaki (1546–1614), Naoe Kanetsugu (1559-1620), and

Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542–1616), toward Yudono and in the unique ascetic practices performed on this mountain.

## 2. The Sacred Mountains of the Shōnai Plain during the Nara and Heian Periods

### 2.1. Tōhoku: the Demon's Gate

The Michinoku 陸奥 and Ōu 奥羽 regions had always played a pivotal geomantic role for the Japanese archipelago.<sup>2</sup> This vast mountainous territory located in the northern part of Honshū was associated with the northeastern (*tōhoku* 東北) direction from the Kinki 近畿 region where were the imperial capitals, which corresponded to the portion of space presided over by the zodiacal signs of the ox and tiger (*ushitora* 丑寅, 艮) according to the cosmological tradition of the Way of Yin and Yang (Onmyōdō). The *ushitora* corridor was the spatial gate through which evil influences and demons could penetrate and destroy the world of humans. The security of this dangerous and fluid border, which separated wrathful deities from human beings, was entrusted to specific powerful elements of the natural landscape: the sacred mountains (*reizan* 霊山). The sacred peaks of Tōhoku were considered to be the first

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<sup>2</sup>. In the Heian period the compound Michinoku was also pronounced “Mutsu” because this territory included five different provinces that correspond to the present prefectures of Aomori 青森, Iwate 岩手, Akita 秋田, Miyagi 宮城, and Fukushima 福島. In Saimei 齊明 6 (660) Empress Saimei (594–661) received two delegations of Emishi 蝦夷. The first group was composed of ninety-nine *kita* Emishi 北蝦夷 that came from Koshi no kuni 越国 (later Echigo no kuni 越後国) and the second group of ninety-five persons was defined as *azuma* Emishi 東蝦夷 because they originated from Michinoku. The toponym Ōu included the present Yamagata 山形 prefecture and the southern part of Akita. In the early sixteenth century these two geographical areas were denoted by the cumulative toponym of the Tōhoku 東北 region, which emphasized their spacial orientation inside the Japanese archipelago. In this work I use the general term Tōhoku to indicate the Michinoku and Ōu regions, even for historical periods that precede the fifteenth century. See *Nihon shoki*, vol. 2, in *Shintei zōho Kokushi taikei* 新訂増補国史大系, ed. Kuroita Katsumi (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1967), 272-273.



line of guardians standing along the *ushitora* direction in order to protect the Japanese archipelago.

In the late seventh century the state of Yamato (Yamato no kuni 大和国) started to expand its authority, based on the Ritsuryō system (Ritsuryō *sei* 律令制),<sup>3</sup> toward the northern part of Honshū, and in Wadō 和銅 5 (712) it created the province of Dewa (Dewa no kuni 出羽国).<sup>4</sup> The principal targets of this diplomatic and military operation were the subjugation of the local clans of Emishi and the exploitation of natural resources, wood *in primis*, to support the need of raw materials for the construction of new buildings in the capital area.<sup>5</sup> The religious administration over ritual protocols for the worship of the *kami* associated with sacred mountains (*yamagami* 山神) was an essential step in protecting and consolidating the Yamato political leadership in the Tōhoku area, which was fully explored only in the eleventh century.<sup>6</sup>

Active volcanos were considered crucial geophysical elements. Their natural activities were believed to signal the existence of harmony, or its lack, between the cosmos and the political power incarnated by the imperial government of Yamato. The masters of the Way of Yin and Yang (*onmyōji* 陰陽師) were in charge of interpreting the meaning of divine signs,

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<sup>3</sup>. The Ritsuryō system was based on a complex network of satellite-states, which were controlled by the emperor and the ministers of the Yamato clan that had its headquarters in the Shikinoshimo 城下 village in the Yamato state (present Nara 奈良 prefecture, Tenri 天理 city). See Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon kodai no kokka to Bukkyō* (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 1971), 2-3.

<sup>4</sup>. In the Nara and Heian periods the pronunciation of the compound 出羽 was Ideha. The meaning of this toponym perhaps derives from the habit, diffused among the population of the Ōu region, to exchange feathers (*hane* 羽) of fine birds as ritual gifts between clans in order to consolidate political and military alliances within the territory.

<sup>5</sup>. According to the *Nihon kōki* 日本後記 (completed in 840), in Enryaku 延暦 18 (799) the commander in chief for the pacification and protection (*chinju shōgun* 鎮守將軍) of Michinoku was Sakanoue no ōsukune Tamuramaro 坂上大宿禰田村麻呂. See *Nihon kōki*, in *Shintei zōho Kokushi taikai*, vol. 3, ed. Kuroita Katsumi (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1966), 25.

<sup>6</sup>. For instance, when Empress Saimei made a military expedition to the border between Koshi no kuni and Michinoku she ordered that a stone reproduction of Mount Sumeru (Shumisen 須弥山) be built as a symbol of Yamato authority over the these lands. See *Nihon shoki zen gendaigo yaku*, vol. 2, 206.

manifested through eruptions, earthquakes, astral phenomena, or floods. According to the results of these divinatory activities, the *kami* of prominent mountains were granted special court ranks and government stipends in order to placate and transform them into protectors (*shugojin* 守護神) of the state.<sup>7</sup>

The *Shinshōkaku choku fushō* 新抄格勅符抄 (Heian period) reports that in Hōki 宝龜 4 (773) the *kami* of Mount Gassan (Gassanjin 月山神), an active volcano (1984 m.) located in the southern part (the Tagawa 田川 area) of the Shōnai plain (Shōnai *heiya* 庄内平野) in Dewa, was granted a government income of two households and nominated as a deity for the prosperity of the state (*kunitsukami* 国津神).<sup>8</sup> The *Sandai jitsuroku* 三代実録 (Heian period) records that in Gangyō 元慶 4 (880) the *kami* of Gassan (Gassanjin) was appointed to the Senior Fifth Rank, Upper Grade (*shōgo i jō* 正五位上) because of its continued eruptive activity.<sup>9</sup> A few years before, in Jōwa 承和 5 (838), the *kami* of Mount Chōkai (2236 m.), another active volcano located in the northern part of the Shōnai plain (the Akumi 飽海 area), was invested with the Senior Fifth Rank, Lower Grade (*shōgo i ge* 正五位下).<sup>10</sup> According to the list of the shrines dedicated to the most important *kami* (*meijin taisha* 名神大社) for the protection of the state that appears in the *Engishiki* 延喜式 (927), Gassanjin received an annual stipend of two thousand *koku* 石 of rice from the provincial administrative center

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<sup>7</sup>. Itō Kiyoo, *Reizan to shinkō no sekai: Ōu no minshū to shinkō* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1997), 4.

<sup>8</sup>. For the original text, see chapter sixteen of the *Shinshōkaku choku fushō*, in *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, ed. Kawasoe Taketane, Niino Naoyoshi (Tōkyō: Shintō taikai hensankai, 1990), 2.

<sup>9</sup>. For the original text, see chapter thirty-seven of the *Sandai jitsuroku*, in *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, 9. The *Shoku Nihon kōki* 続日本後紀 reports a geomantic divination that took place in Jōwa 6 (839), focused on the interpretation of the eruptive debris (*inseki* 隕石) of Mount Gassan. It describes some lava rocks as having the shape of arrowheads (*yajiri* 鏃) and halberds (*hoko* 鋒) and that they were white, black, blue, and red. This eruptive debris originally pointed in the western direction, but later turned toward the east. In order to transform misfortune (*wazawai* 禍) into prosperity (*fuku* 福), Emperor Ninmyō 仁明 (810–850) ordered that Buddhist rituals (*butsuji* 仏事) be performed and offerings (*hōbei* 奉幣) made to the *kami* of this area. For the original text, see *Shoku Nihon kōki* in *Shintei zōho Kokushi taikai*, vol. 3, 93.

<sup>10</sup>. See *Shoku Nihon kōki* in *Shintei zōho Kokushi taikai*, vol. 3, 76.

(*kokufu* 国府). The same list also includes Ōmonoimi Taisha 大物忌大社, the shrine dedicated to the *kami* of Mount Chōkai.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2. The Shōnai Plain and Dewa Sanzan

Even before the official creation of the state of Dewa, there is a passage in the *Nihon shōki* that describes the penetration of Buddhism into lower Dewa (Uzen 羽前).<sup>12</sup> In the first month of Jitō 持統 3 (689), Empress Jitō allowed Maro 麻呂 and Kanaori 鐵折, sons of a certain Shiriko 脂利古 who was the head of an Emishi noble household located in the Kikau 城養 district of the village of Ukitama 優嗜曇, to be ordained as Buddhist monks (*shamon* 沙門).<sup>13</sup> This narrative brings us closer to the northwestern part of lower Dewa, where there is a long and narrow coastal plain facing the Sea of Japan, called Shōnai. This strip of land is divided into two parts by the Mogami 最上 River. The part to the north of the Mogami is called Akumi and the wider part to the south is designated Tagawa. The Shōnai plain played a pivotal role in the religious development of the Dewa region because it was the site of three sacred mountains that in the twelfth century became known under the collective name of Sanzan (Three Mountains), now known as Dewa Sanzan.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>. For the original text, see chapter ten of the *Engishiki*, in *Shintō taikēi*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, 10-11.

<sup>12</sup>. The lower part of the province of Dewa, which largely overlaps with the actual Yamagata prefecture, was called Uzen and the upper part of the same province, which corresponds to the actual Akita prefecture, was called Ugo 羽後.

<sup>13</sup>. The village of Ukitama corresponds to the actual village of Okitama 置賜, which is close to the city of Yonezawa 米沢 (Yamagata prefecture). For the original text see *Nihon shōki*, vol. 2, 318.

<sup>14</sup>. The term Dewa Sanzan is extremely recent and is probably a Meiji 明治 period (1868–1911) coinage. It is currently employed to indicate the set of mountains comprising Haguro, Gassan, and Yudono. During the early modern period (*kinsei* 近世, 1615–1868) the same notion was expressed through the more general name *sanzan*

The identity of the three peaks that collectively made up Dewa Sanzan kept changing over history. Until the end of the Sengoku 戦国 period (1467-1573), Chōkai and Hayama were alternatively included in the Dewa Sanzan group: Haguro (419 m.), Gassan, and Chōkai or Hayama (1462 m.). This flexibility was due to the fact that for the pilgrims who came from the Akumi part of the Shōnai plain, the veneration of Chōkai was an important point of the pilgrimage,<sup>15</sup> while for the devotees who came from the inland area of Maruyama 丸山, Hayama was the first cultic site they encountered when entering Shōnai. This logistical aspect of the organization of pilgrimage routes always made the notion of *sanzan* extremely fluid and subject to change.

Haguro and Hayama are hills covered with thick forests of *Cryptomeria Japonica* (*sugi* 杉). In the Shōnai area this type of low mountain was generally defined through the term *hayama* ハヤマ, which indicated mountainous sites of modest height that served as temporary abodes for the spirits of dead (*shiryō* 死霊). For instance, the site called Akuya 阿久谷, which is a narrow valley close to the summit of Haguro, was always used as place for the disposal of cadavers.<sup>16</sup> After thirty-three years of purification on a *hayama* type of mountain the spirits of the dead could achieve rebirth in the Land of Bliss (Gokuraku *ōjō* 極楽往生), which was localized beyond the summit of high mountains such as Chōkai or

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三山, which could be preceded by the specific names of each mountain. For instance, in the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* 湯殿山法流式 (1625), attributed to Ten'yū 天宥 (1594–1674), the three Dewa mountains were called the Three August Mountains (*san no miyama* 三御山). For the expression *san no miyama*, see *Shintō taikai*, Jinjihen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, ed. Togawa Anshō (Tōkyō: Shintō taikai hensankai, 1982), 287. In the *Haguro Shusso* 羽黒出訴 (1791), which is included in the *Dainichibō monjo* 大日坊文書, the name *sanzan* was used to indicate this set of sacred peaks. For the term *sanzan* in the *Haguro Shusso*, which is included in the *Dainichi monjo*, see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, vol. 1, ed. Watanabe Tomeji (Tsuruoka: Fuji insatsu kabushikigaisha, 1964), 61. The denomination “Dewa Sanzan” was popularized through the publications of Togawa Anshō, a pioneer in the scientific research on the three sacred mountains of Shōnai. In this study I will use the term Dewa Sanzan to indicate the three sacred mountains of Shōnai even in the premodern periods.

<sup>15</sup> In the medieval period (*chūsei* 中世, 1160–1615) the pilgrimage from Shōnai to Chōkai was called Mogami *mairi* 最上参り. See Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 146.

<sup>16</sup> The same toponym was used to indicate a narrow valley for the disposal of cadavers on Mount Ōmine 大峰 in the Kii peninsula (Kii *hantō*), located in the southern part of the present Nara prefecture.

Gassan and finally become ancestors (*senzo* 先祖).<sup>17</sup> The cult dedicated to the spirits of the dead created a fundamental connection between the *hayama* type of mountain such as Haguro or Hayama and higher mountains such as Gassan or Chōkai, which were interpreted as the ultimate destination for the *post mortem* voyage of the dead. Before the Edo period, Yudono (1504 m.), which is geologically attached to the foot of Gassan, was not specifically included in the Sanzan group. Rather, it was considered the shared Inner Precinct (*oku no in*) of all the sacred mountains of the Shōnai plain.<sup>18</sup> As a result, in the medieval period, the religious identity of Yudono was both related to, and independent from, the Dewa Sanzan group.

### 3. The Introduction of the *Sanzan* Paradigm in the Dewa Province

#### 3.1. Transposition: from Kumano Sanzan to Dewa Sanzan

The notion of *sanzan*, which implies a triadic association of sacred peaks, derived from the faith in the three areas of Kumano (Kumano Sanzan) that reached Tōhoku in the twelfth century.<sup>19</sup> Kumano faith (Kumano *shinkō*) focused on the veneration of the tutelary deities

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<sup>17</sup>. Every August during the festival of the dead (*bon* 盆) the *mori kuyō* 森供養 ritual takes place on Mount Hayama. The *mori kuyō* serves to venerate the spirits of the dead and propitiates their pacification and rebirth in Gokuraku. See Suzuki Masataka, *Yama to kami to hito: sangaku shinkō to Shugendō no sekai* (Tōkyō: Tankōsha, 1991), 83 and also a documentary by Kitamura Minao, *Seirei no yama Hayama*, DVD (Tōkyō: Visual Folklore, 2006).

<sup>18</sup>. For instance, the *Hagurosan engi* 羽黒山縁起, which was written by Ten'yū in Ken'ei 21 (1655), mentions Yudono as the *oku no in* of the Three Mountains (*sanzan no oku no in* 三山の奥の院). These three sacred mountains were Gassan, Haguro, and Chōkai. When the *Hagurosan engi* was composed is difficult to determine. In its colophon, Ten'yū explained that he based his work on an older manuscript that was dated Eiji 永治 1 (1141), but this was probably a forgery. Nevertheless, Ten'yū could have included some pre-Edo period elements in his narrative. For the original text, see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 7.

<sup>19</sup>. The faith in Kumano Sanzan started in the second half of the eleventh century in central Honshū and reached the Tōhoku region in the next century. For instance, the *Engishiki* (927) does not report any Kumano

enshrined in the three shrines (Sansha 三社) of Kumano. These three cultic sites were Kumano Hongū Taisha 熊野本宮大社, Kumano Hayatama Taisha 熊野速玉大社, which was located at Shingū 新宮, and Kumano Nachi Taisha 熊野那智大社.<sup>20</sup> The *kami* venerated at Hongū was the god of the forest Ketsumiko no mikoto 家津御子命, the *kami* of Shingū was the male deity Hayatama no ōkami 速玉大神, and the *kami* of Nachi was the female deity Fusumi no ōkami 牟須美大神. When these *kami* of Kumano Sanzan were associated with the respective original buddhas (*honji butsu* 本地仏), Ketsumiko no mikoto became the provisional trace (*suijaku* 垂迹) of Amida Nyorai 阿弥陀如来, Hayatama no ōkami transformed into the *suijaku* of Yakushi Nyorai 藥師如来, and Fusumi no ōkami was conceived as the *suijaku* of Senju Kannon 千手觀音. In addition to these deities there were also the Five Princes (Gosho Ōji 五所王子) charged to protect five different sacred sites within Kumano Sanzan. The five Ōji and their *honji butsu* were: Wakamiya 若王子 (Jūichimen Kannon 十一面觀音), Zenji no Miya 禪師宮 (Jizō Bosatsu 地藏菩薩), Hijiri no Miya 聖宮 (Ryūju Bosatsu 龍樹菩薩), Chigo no Miya 児宮 (Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪觀音), and Komori no Miya 子守宮 (Shō Kannon 聖觀音). Included in the pantheon of Kumano Sanzan were also four *genii loci* (*myōjin* 明神) that played the role of guardian deities (Shisho Gongen 四所権現). They were the twin deities Ichiman/Jūman 一万/十万 (Fugen/Monju Bosatsu 普賢/文殊菩薩), Kanjō Jūgoshō 勧請十五所 (Shaka Nyorai 釈迦如来),

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shrines among its list of one hundred shrines in the Tōhoku area. According to the *Kumanodō mura fudōki goyō kakiage* 熊野堂村風土記御用書上 (Edo period manuscript), in Hōan 保安 4 (1123) the deities of Kumano Sanzan were transferred and enshrined (*kanjō* 勧請) in the village of Nadori 名取 (Miyagi prefecture) in which two halls, Kumanodō 熊野堂 and Nachi Jinja 那智神社, were built to venerate the deities of Shingū and Nachi. Moreover, in chapter six of the *Dewa no kuni fudoki ryakki* 出羽国風土記略記 (manuscript copied in 1762) it is written that in the village of Sugisawa 杉沢 (Aomori prefecture) there was a shrine dedicated to Kumano Gongen 熊野権現, which was administered by *shugenja* 修験者 of Kannonji 觀音寺 that was officially licensed to print and distribute the ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin* 牛玉宝印) associated with Nachi Taisha. See Gekkō Zenkō, *Tōhoku reizan to Shugendō* [coll. *Sangaku shukyōshi kenkyū sōsho*, vol. 7] (Tōkyō, Meicho Shuppan, 1977), 11-12.

<sup>20</sup>. The three locations known as Kumano Sanzan are included in the present Wakayama 和歌山 prefecture.

Hikō Yasha 飛行夜叉 (Fudō Myōo 不動明王), and Meiji Kongō 米持金剛 (Bishamonten 毘沙門天). All together these twelve deities were known as Kumano Jūnishi Gongen 熊野十二所権現.<sup>21</sup>

Following the mechanism of transposition, which is similar to the artistic technique of “intervisuality” (*mitate* 見立), the Kumano Sanzan paradigm and its rich pantheon was superimposed or inscribed on the mountains of the Shōnai plain and originated the concept of Dewa Sanzan. The logic that supported this process of mutual fertilization between sacred peaks derived from the idea that the same mountainous body could simultaneously manifest itself in different places and times (*dōtai isho* 同体異所).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Kumano Sanzan together with its *myōjin*, Gongen, Bosatsu, and Nyorai were omnipresent in the Kii peninsula as in the Shōnai plain of Dewa province. Jonathan Z. Smith provides the following definition of the concept of transposition, which was a fundamental aspect of the mobility that characterized Japanese sacred mountains in premodern times.

*Transposition* is a paradigmatic process set within the largely syntagmatic series of actions which characterized the ritual. The respects in which a “this” might, under certain circumstances, also be a “that” gives rise to thought which plays across gaps of like and unlike.<sup>23</sup>

The ‘dis-placement’ of Kumano Sanzan from the Kii peninsula and its ‘re-placement’ in

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<sup>21</sup> For more details about the Kumano Jūnishi Gongen see Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 75-84 and also Miyake Hitoshi, *Shugendō shisō no kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Shunjūsha, 1985), 445-466.

<sup>22</sup> The compound *dōtai isho* was specifically used to describe the cultic relationship between Kumano Sanzan and Dewa Sanzan in the *Hagurosan bettō nandai Yudonosan bettō etsū* 羽黒山別当難題湯殿山別当会通 (1665), which is included in the *Hondōji monjo*. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 75.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Constructing a Small Place,” in *Sacred Space: Shrines, City, Land*, eds. Benjamin Z. Kedar, Zwi R. J. Werblowsky (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 18.

the Tōhoku area was practically realized through the widespread preaching activities of the Kumano *sendatsu* who started penetrating Michinoku and Ōu provinces during the second half of the Heian period.<sup>24</sup> The Kumano *sendatsu* were heterogeneous groups of itinerant *shugenja* (*sendatsu shūdan* 先達集團) who spread the faith in Kumano among the population of Tōhoku following the fluvial and marine routes<sup>25</sup> that supported the intense commercial exchanges between the northern territories and the urban centers in central Honshū between the end of the Heian and the early Kamakura periods (1180–1333).<sup>26</sup> One of the main targets of the Kumano *sendatsu* was to organize parishes (*dannaba* 旦那場) and religious confraternities (*kō* 講) of devotees of Kumano Sanzan from whom they could receive economic support for the cultural and ritual activities associated with the veneration of Kumano Sanzan. The sale of licenses to local shrines and temples to print the *goōhōin* of Nachi was a fundamental part of the proselytizing strategy of the Kumano *sendatsu*.

The diffusion of the Kumano Sanzan faith among the Tōhoku population was also boosted by the fact that few persons had actually made a pilgrimage to Kumano. For most of the devotees the pilgrimage to Kumano Sanzan remained an essentially visual experience, which took place via pilgrimage-*mandara* (*sankei mandara* 参詣曼荼羅) that replaced the

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<sup>24</sup>. The oldest written source about the expansion of the Kumano Sanzan faith in Tōhoku is a legal contract written in Kōan 弘安 10 (1278), which ratified the transfer of the administrative rights (*kenri* 権利) over a group of Kumano Sanzan parishioners (*danna* 旦那) of Taichō 太町 village in the Dewa region to a Kumano *sendatsu* called Sōdōbō 證道坊. This document is located in the *Shake monjo* 社家文書 collection of Nachi Taisha. For the original text see *Kumano shinkō to Tōhoku: meihō de tadoru inori no rekishi* (Tōkyō: Tōhoku rekishi hakubutsukan, 2006), 180.

<sup>25</sup>. Suzuki Shōei points out that among Kumano *sendatsu* there were also itinerant ascetics specializing in the chanting of the Buddha's name (*nenbutsu hijiri* 念仏聖), female shamans (*miko* 巫女), fund-raising itinerant ascetics (*kanjin hijiri* 勧進聖), itinerant ascetics from Mount Kōya (Kōya *hijiri* 高野聖), and itinerant nuns from Kumano (Kumano *bikuni* 熊野比丘尼). Nevertheless, Honzan-ha 本山波 *shugenja* who were controlled by the Shōgoin 聖護院 in Kyōto constituted the most relevant group of Kumano *sendatsu*. Suzuki Shōei, *Shugendō kyōdan no keisei to tenkai* [coll. *Shugendō rekishi minzokuron shū*, vol. 1] (Tōkyō: Hōzōkan, 2003), 58-63.

<sup>26</sup>. Toyoda Takeshi, “Tōhoku chūsei no Shugendō to sono shiryō,” in *Dewa Sanzan to Tōhoku Shugen no kenkyū* [coll. *Sangaku shukyōshi kenkyū sōsho*, vol. 5], ed. Togawa Anshō (Tōkyō, Meicho Shuppan, 1975), 48-51.



physical movement through space with a virtual and intellectual journey there. The people were attracted by the religious discourse associated with Kumano Sanzan because the sacrality of this site was amplified by a sort of ‘aura of distance’, which helped transform the natural landscape into a paradise on earth. Another gripping aspect of the faith in Kumano Sanzan was that its three main *honji butsu* were associated with specific benefits that could be enjoyed both in this world (*gensei* 現世) and in the next (*raisei* 来世). Specifically, Amida was charged with bringing salvation to the dead in the *post mortem* world (*nisei* 二世) while Yakushi and Senju Kannon were interpreted as donors of worldly benefits (*genze riyaku* 現世利益) for the present life.

Pilgrims in the early modern period generally traveled to the actual sacred mountain, but until the end of the medieval period the mobility of common people (*shimojimo* 下下) was extremely limited. In order to overcome this obstacle the Kumano *sendatsu* replicated not only the real pilgrimage to Kumano Sanzan via *sankei mandara*, but also re-created a ‘copy’ of the same religious landscape among the mountains in the Shōnai plain, based on a sort of *mitate* between sacred peaks. This type of virtual pilgrimage allowed the Kumano Sanzan devotees to visit Kumano without leaving the Tōhoku region simply by going to Dewa Sanzan, which was conceived as a local manifestation of the original mountainous area of the Kii peninsula. This mechanism of mutual refraction or reverberation between holy peaks seems reminiscent of the sort of combinatory system between original grounds and provisional traces (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹) that linked together various mountains in different spaces and times.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>. The usual actors in the *honji suijaku* combinatory system were buddhas or bodhisattvas, which played the role of original grounds, and *kami*, which were described as emanations or traces of specific buddhas or bodhisattvas. Nevertheless, in the case of the religious relationship between Kumano Sanzan and Dewa Sanzan it seems that the first mountain range worked as a sort of “original ground” or matrix for the cultic transformation of the second group of mountains, which were interpreted as geophysical “traces” of the original

### 3.2. *Honji Butsu* Connections: Kumano Original Grounds and Dewa Original Grounds

The transposition of a sacred landscape onto a new landscape with preexisting religious traditions was not an easy task. When the Kumano Sanzan model encountered the cultic reality of Dewa Sanzan, the original paradigm could not but change in order to be fully integrated into the territory. In the medieval period the structure of the Dewa Sanzan *honji butsu* accurately reproduced the Kumano Sanzan paradigm with the only exception of Haguro. The *honji* of Gassan was Amida Nyorai like in the case of Hongū, Chōkai or Hayama were associated with Yakushi Nyorai like Shingū, but Haguro, which was compared to Nachi (Senju Kannon), maintained Shō Kannon Bosatsu as its *honji butsu*.

In order to spread the faith in Kumano Sanzan in the Tōhoku area the Kumano *sendatsu* made extensive use of small wooden icons and hanging-buddha plaques (*kakebotoke* 懸仏) dedicated to the *kami* of Kumano. The *kakebotoke* were complex ritual objects, which displayed the “august true body” (*mishōtai* 御正体) of the *kami* in the shape of the *honji butsu*. In other words, the real aspect of the *kami* remained invisible to the eyes of the devotees, though the *kami* could nevertheless be visualized through the transformational body (*ōjin* 応身, Skt. *nirmānakāya*) of buddhas and bodhisattvas that was embossed in low relief on the front surface of the *kakebotoke*.<sup>28</sup> These circular plaques were thought to be hung on

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ones.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that neither the *kami* nor the buddhas manifested their authentic aspect through the *kakebotoke*. Both actually remained totally invisible because the highest body of a buddha, the Dharma body (Skt. *dharmakāya*; *hosshin* 法身), was beyond the realm of form as the ultimate body of the *kami*. The charisma

the façade of small shrines dedicated to the deities of Kumano Sanzan or, in case of big shrines with a more elaborate architectural structures, on the front wall of the offering room (*gejin* 外陣), which constituted the foremost part of the main hall (*honden* 本殿).

The Kumano *sendatsu* relied also on mirror-icons (*kyōzō* 鏡像), which had the *mishōtai* of the *kami* of Kumano Sanzan directly engraved in thin lines on the front surface. The difference between *kyōzō* and *kakebotoke* was that the first was not tridimensional and was not supposed to be hung externally for a public display. Even if holes were subsequently cut into the *kyōzō* surface to convert it into a *kakebotoke*, the *kyōzō* was most commonly used as a contemplative (*meisō* 瞑想) support for private veneration.<sup>29</sup> This aspect is important because it testifies that already in the thirteenth century there were wealthy sponsors and religious specialists who purchased an expensive and complex object like the *kyōzō* from the Kumano *sendatsu* in order to express their faith in Kumano Sanzan.

The standard diameter of the circular or eight leaf *kakebotoke* or *kyōzō*, which were usually

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embedded in the materiality of the *kakebotoke* derived from the semiotic conflict of ‘presence’ and ‘absence’ of the deities, which were displayed through it.

<sup>29</sup>. The typology of *honji sujaku* transmitted through the *kyōzō* was strongly influenced by the Agui tradition (Agui *ryū* 安居院流) of the Tendai School 天台宗. For instance, in the *Shintōshū* 神道集 (1358) the *mishōtai* of the *kami* is compared to a luminescent mirror (*myōkyō* 明鏡) or a lunar disk (*gachirin* 月輪). Therefore, the contemplation of the lunar disk (*gachirin kan* 月輪観) explained in the Shingon esoteric teachings (Tōmitsu 東密) or the anointing ceremony of the bright mirror (*kanjō myōkyō* 灌頂明鏡) of the Tendai esoteric teaching (Taimitsu 台密) were fundamental concepts which supported the production and use of the *kyōzō*. Moreover, in the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (594) Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597) wrote that the ultimate reality (*shinri* 真理) of the *dharmakāya* was the mirror itself (*kagami* 鏡) and the *nirmānakāya* was constituted by the things reflected in it. According to this explanation the *kyōzō* symbolized the perfect union between the *dharmakāya* and *nirmānakāya* (*kyōzō enyū* 鏡像円融). In chapter four of the *Keiran shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集 (1318) Kōshū 光宗 (1276–1350) explained that the body of Tenshō Daijin 天照太神 overlapped with the body engraved on the surface of the *kyōzō*. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account the optical alteration produced by the *kyōzō* that inverts the religious status of the image, which is frontally displayed, and the source of the same image, which remains hidden inside the *kyōzō* itself. If the source of the *honji butsu*, which is carved on the surface of the *kyōzō*, is the invisible body of the *suijakuin* 垂迹神 then the relationship between origin (*honji*) and trace (*jaku*) is diametrically inverted. The *honji sujaku* system transmitted by the Kumano *sendatsu* via *kyōzō* could be interpreted as an early example of reverse *honji sujaku* (*han honji sujaku* 反本地垂迹) in which the *kami* were the ultimate reality for the manifestation of the *honji butsu*. For more details on the *kyōzō* and *kakebotoke* see *Shinbutsu shugō: kami to hoteke ga orinasu shinkō to bi* (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2007), 15–16, 242–243.

made of bronze, was about thirty centimeters. The small dimensions made these objects ideal vectors to materially transport the faith of Kumano Sanzan to the remote regions of Michinoku or Ōu. Because the Kumano *sendatsu* made extensive use of *kakebotoke* and *kyōzō*, the Kumano deities were usually visualized through their *honji butsu* forms and only rarely through *kami* icons (*shinzō* 神像). Nevertheless, in the Shingū Kumano Jinja 新宮熊野神社 in Kitakata (Fukushima prefecture) there are three pairs of *shinzō* made of *katsura* 桂 (*Cercidiphyllum Japonicum*) wood in the Kōhei 康平 era (1046–1065), representing the three deities of Kumano Sanzan as *kami* in the shape of court dignitaries (*zokutai* 俗体) (See Fig. 1.1).<sup>30</sup> The peculiarity of these *shinzō* is that the *kami* of Hongū, Ketsumiko no mikoto, and the *kami* of Shingū, Hayatama no ōkami, were displayed as two noble couples of male *kami* (*danshinzō* 男神像) and female *kami* (*joshinzō* 女神像). By contrast, the *kami* of Nachi, Fusumi no ōkami, was represented as two female court dignitaries.<sup>31</sup> These gender differences between the six *shinzō* could be due to the fact that Fusumi no ōkami and Ketsumiko no mikoto were thought to manifest themselves with the provisional aspect of men or women, but Hayatama no ōkami exclusively appeared in female guise.

The three icons of Kumano Sanzan conserved in the Miyauchi Kumano Taisha 宮内熊野大社 in Nan'yo (Yamagata prefecture) are interesting examples of *honji butsu* icons (*honjizō* 本地像) that date back to the late Heian period (See Fig. 1.2).<sup>32</sup> The central icon of the triptych is Kannon Bosatsu, flanked by Amida and Yakushi Nyorai. The peculiarity of this sacred triad is that the role of central deity (*chūson* 中尊) was assigned to Shō Kannon while

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<sup>30</sup> The Shingū Kumano Jinja is located in the city of Kitakata 喜多方 in Fukushima prefecture. The dating of the *shinzō* is based on a shrine record (*shaden* 社伝), which should be verified. If this document is correct, these three icons of the Kōhei period may be the oldest example of Kumano Sanzan faith in Michinoku.

<sup>31</sup> *Kumano shinkō to Tōhoku: meihō de tadoru inori no rekishi*, 51, 201-202.

<sup>32</sup> Miyauchi Kumano Taisha is located in Nan'yō 南陽 city in Yamagata prefecture.

the two Nyorai, Amida and Yakushi, were placed on either side.<sup>33</sup> This special disposition reflected the pivotal role played by Haguro, whose *honji* was Shō Kannon, *vis à vis* Gassan and Hayama or Chōkai, whose *honji* were Amida and Yakushi. The *honjizō* of Miyauchi Kumano Taisha demonstrates that the transposition of Kumano Sanzan into a different landscape was never an a-critical replication of the original paradigm. Haguro, Gassan, and Hayama or Chōkai already had a specific religious character, which preceded the diffusion of Kumano Sanzan faith, and these cultic peculiarities could not be erased when the three peaks were unified under the *sanzan* paradigm exported from Kumano by the Kumano *sendatsu*. In other words, any type of ‘natural landscape’ is first of all the product of cultural activities, which transform it from a neutral element into a ‘cultural landscape’.<sup>34</sup>

When the Kumano *sendatsu* introduced new religious hermeneutics to interpret the mountain landscape of Dewa, it was inevitable that some traits of the original Kumano Sanzan paradigm ended up being modified. Thanks to these interpretative twists the Kumano Sanzan paradigm expanded its original meaning and better overlapped with the cultic reality of the Dewa natural landscape. The religious specificity of the cult that had been attributed to the Shōnai sacred peaks was assimilated by the Kumano *sendatsu* who promptly included it inside the frame of Kumano Sanzan as demonstrated by the triptych at Miyauchi Kumano Taisha. Nevertheless, this inclusion produced new cultic and ritual effects, which had a direct impact on the transmission of the faith in Kumano Sanzan among the Tōhoku population.

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<sup>33</sup>. *Kumano shinkō to Tōhoku: meihō de tadoru inori no rekishi*, 76, 187.

<sup>34</sup>. Allan G. Grapard has extensively analyzed this mechanism of reflection between the “world (nature) and the words (culture)” during the formative process of sacred mountains in the Japanese archipelago. For the above citation see Allan G. Grapard, “The Textualized Mountain - Encounter Text: the Lotus Sūtra in Kunisaki,” in *The Lotus Sūtra in Japanese Culture*, eds. George J. Tanabe, Jr and Willa Jane Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 182, 161. See also Allan G. Grapard, “Geosophia, Geognosis, and Geopiety: Order of Significance in Japanese Representation of Space,” in *NowHere: Space, Time, and Modernity*, eds. Roger Friedland, Deirdre Boden (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994) 377, 377.

A clear example of the metamorphosis that occurred during the passage from the Kumano Sanzan paradigm to the Dewa Sanzan paradigm was the identification of the *honji butsu* of Mount Haguro with Shō Kannon instead of Senju Kannon, the original *honji butsu* of Nachi. For instance, Kōkan Kumano Nachi Taisha 高館熊野那智大社 has one hundred forty-six *kakebotoke* and *kyōzō* which date back to the twelfth century and represent the *mishōtai* of the *kami* of Nachi in the shape of the *honji butsu* Kannon. One hundred forty of them have Shō Kannon as *honji butsu* and only six display Senju Kannon.<sup>35</sup> This modification testifies that already in the thirteenth century, Michinoku devotees associated the original *honji butsu* of Nachi with the sacred landscape of Haguro and its *honji butsu* Shō Kannon.

This manipulation of the original paradigm, from Senju Kannon to Shō Kannon, was the result of two factors. The first was the great cultic reverence that the Tōhoku population paid to Komori no miya, the fifth Goshō Ōji of Kumano Sanzan. The fact that Shō Kannon was the *honji butsu* of Komori no miya could have solidified the association of Haguro with this form of Kannon and the subsequent impossibility of modifying this cultic aspect of Haguro at the moment of its inclusion in the Kumano Sanzan paradigm.

The second factor was the widespread cult of Jikaku Daishi Ennin 慈覺大師円仁 (794–864) to whom was traditionally attributed the role of founder (*kaiki* 開基) or restorer (*chūkō* 中興) of numerous important temples such as Chūsonji 中尊寺 and Mōtsuji 毛越寺 at Hiraizumi 平泉, as well as Risshakuji 立石寺, Jakushōji 若松寺, and the Miyauchi Kumano Taisha in the Dewa region.<sup>36</sup> A relevant aspect of the cult dedicated to Jikaku Daishi emphasized his architectural activities as principal builder of the Enryakuji's 延曆寺 main hall (*dōu* 堂宇), Konponchūdō 根本中堂, in which was enshrined an icon of Shō Kannon

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<sup>35</sup>. *Kumano shinkō to Tōhoku: meihō de tadoru inori no rekishi*, 58-60.

<sup>36</sup>. The city of Hiraizumi is located in the present Iwate prefecture.

Bosatsu that was specifically venerated for its supernatural powers in the Tōhoku region.<sup>37</sup> It is probable that the preservation of Shō Kannon as *honji butsu* of Haguro was due to the extreme popularity of the saving powers attributed to Komori no Miya and Jikaku Daishi's Shō Kannon in the Konponchūdō.

### 3.3. *Suijaku* Connections: Kumano Gongen and Dewa Gongen

Eighth century written sources such as the *Shinshōkaku choku fushō*, the *Sandai jitsuroku*, and the *Engishiki* report that the geophysical bodies of the sacred mountains located in the Shōnai plain were venerated as natural abodes for the mountain-*kami* (*yamagami*). These were powerful *genii loci* whose divine identity directly referred to the natural landscape to which they were linked. For instance, the *yamagami* of Gassan and Chōkai were considered as violent *kami* (*araburu kami*), who had the double power to remove obstacles or create them if not properly venerated.<sup>38</sup> This trait is derived from the fact that these mountains were active volcanos with intense eruptive activity.

In the twelfth century the Kumano *sendatsu* started to place the *yamagami* of Dewa in a relationship with the *honji butsu*, Gongen, and *myōjin* of Kumano Sanzan. As a result, the *yamagami* stopped being simply defined as a mountain *kami* but were transformed into a

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<sup>37</sup> For instance, Jionji 慈恩寺, the chief administrative temple (*bettōji* 别当寺) of Hayama until the end of the sixteenth century, possesses a twelfth century *akebotoke* on which are embossed three seated Shō Kannon. This sacred artwork was directly attributed to the hand of Jikaku Daishi. Moreover, Jionji participated in a large scale project of transcription (*shakyō* 写經) of the Heart Sūtra (Hannyashingyō 般若心經), coordinated by Kumano Hayatama Taisha of Shingū. See *Kumano shinkō to Tōhoku: meihō de tadoru inori no rekishi*, 189 and also Itō Kiyoo, *Reizan to shinkō no sekai: Ōu no minshū to shinkō*, 203.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, the *Yuza gōsonzon kimoiri tōsho jōsha* 遊佐郷村々肝煎等書上寫 (1698) reports that an alternative name for Chōkai was Kōjingatake 荒神ヶ嶽. See *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, 228.

“provisionally manifested *kami*” (*gonshajin* 権迹神) of a specific *honji butsu*. The *gonshajin* were subsequently invested with the honorific title of Gongen 権現.<sup>39</sup> In the classical Buddhist discourse the notion of *gongen* indicates a provisional manifestation or an “avatar” of a buddha or a bodhisattva, but in the medieval period it was often used as an appellative or a title to upgrade the divine status of a local *kami* of a specific mountain whose *honji* was a buddha or a bodhisattva. For instance, the *kami* of Haguro became Haguro Gongen 羽黒権現 when the local *kami* associated with Haguro was considered to be the *gonshajin* of Shō Kannon. According to the same process the *kami* of Gassan, Chōkai, and Hayama were newly defined through the title of Gongen, which transformed them into *gonshajin* of Amida Nyorai and Yakushi Nyorai.

In the case of Dewa Sanzan the standard combinatory system between *kami* and buddhas was further complicated by the fact that there was a sort of *honji suijaku* relationship between the group of Kumano Gongen which were associated with the original paradigm of Kumano Sanzan, and the group of Dewa Gongen which were the native *yamagami* of Dewa Sanzan. This last group of *yamagami* was upgraded to the level of Gongen after the introduction of the cult of the Kumano Gongen in the Shōnai plain. For example, the *Dewa no kuni Ōizumi sansho gongen engi* 出羽国大泉三所権現縁起 (Edo period) contains a passage that highlights the relationships between the group of Gongen who came first from Kumano to Dewa and those *yamagami* who afterwards became the Dewa Sanzan Gongen.

The Gongen who appeared (*shutsugen* 出現) on the Akumi peak (Akumigatake 飽海嶽)

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<sup>39</sup>. On the transition of mountain *kami* from *suijakujin* to *gonshajin* and finally *gongen*, see Mark Teeuwen, Fabio Rambelli, “Combinatory religion and the *honji suijaku* paradigm in pre-modern Japan,” in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, eds. Mark Teeuwen, Fabio Rambelli (Londo, New York: Routledge, 2003), 19, 29. In this text (p. 29) Mark Teeuwen underlines the fact that: “In Japan, however, it would seem that *gongen* constituted yet another category of deities, associated with Buddhist centers of mountain practice (*shosan*).”



was Hongū Daigongen 本宮大権現, that is the present Chōkai Gongen (*ima no Chōkai Gongen* 今ノ鳥海権現). Shingū Daigongen 新宮大権現 who appeared on the Masukawa peak (Masukawagatake 増河嶽) is the present Gassan Gongen 月山権現.<sup>40</sup> Haguro Gongen appeared on the Soegawa peak (Soegawagatake 添川嶽) after one thousand two hundred three years from the installation (*chinza* 鎮座) [in this mountain] of Kii Kumano Gongen 紀伊熊野権現.<sup>41</sup>

According to this text the three Gongen of Kumano Sanzan first manifested themselves on Chōkai, Gassan, and Haguro and only after a long period of time were the *kami* of these sacred mountains also transformed into Gongen. For instance, it took one thousand two hundred three years for the *kami* of Haguro to become a Gongen like his predecessor Kii Kumano Gongen. When this metamorphosis was completed the three Kumano Sanzan Gongen came to be a sort of *honji* from which derived the three Dewa Sanzan Gongen that were similar *suijaku*.

In the first half of the seventeenth century the structure of Dewa Sanzan changed again. Hayama and Chōkai were excluded from Dewa Sanzan and replaced by Yudono, which transformed from the shared *oku no in* of all the sacred mountains in the Shōnai plain to the specific *oku no in* of Haguro and Gassan.<sup>42</sup> This new asset of Dewa Sanzan implied a deep modification of the original Kumano Sanzan paradigm, because the *honji butsu* of Yudono was Dainichi Nyorai, for which there was no correspondence among the *honji butsu* of

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<sup>40</sup> The name of Gassan Gongen also appears in the *Saihentō no jōjō kakujū* 再返答之条々覚事 (Kanbun 寛文 6, 1666), which is included in the *Shirahata monjo* 白幡文書. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 21.

<sup>41</sup> For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 22. The only existing copy of the *Dewa no kuni Ōizumi sansho gongen engi* is a manuscript of twenty pages conserved in the city library of Tsuruoka.

<sup>42</sup> On the rear side of an oath (*kishōmon* 起請文) dated Keichō 慶長 5 (1600) that was used to stipulate a military alliance between Dewa warlords, Mogami Yoshiaki quoted the names of the deities of Dewa Sanzan as “Gassan, Hayama, Haguro Daigongen.” This document underlines the fact that in the first decade of the Edo period the structure of Dewa Sanzan was still the same as in the Chūsei period. For the original text see “Mogami Yoashiaki kishōmon 最上義光起請文,” *Shintō taikei*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, 101-102.

Kumano (See Fig. 1.3). This transformation of the internal equilibrium of Dewa Sanzan testified the fact that in the Edo period the religious structure of Dewa Sanzan had reached both complete maturity and cultic independence from the original influence of Kumano Sanzan.

In the early modern period the *kami* associated with Dewa Sanzan were widely defined as Gongen or Daigongen 大権現 like in the medieval period, but in the eighteenth century the influence of Yoshida Shintō 吉田神道 and nativist learning (*kokugaku* 国学) started to have an impact on the *honji suijaku* system of Dewa Sanzan.<sup>43</sup> For instance, the *Ryōsho gongen shanai sōzoku ki* 両所権現社内相統記 (1730) reports that the *honji* of Gassan Gongen was Amida Nyorai and its honorific name (*songō* 尊号) was Tsukiyomi no mikoto 月読命.<sup>44</sup> This new associative process tended to link the Gongen of the Dewa Sanzan with a new set of *kami*, which were selected from the mythological narrative of classical texts such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. The final stage of this hermeneutical process, which had already begun in the second half of the Edo period, reached its climax in the first decade of the Meiji period when all the Gongen, buddhas, and bodhisattvas were formally removed from the sacred landscape of Dewa Sanzan. As far as the Jingikan 神祇官 (Ministry of Worship) was concerned, the *kami* of Gassan was Tsukiyomi no mikoto 月読命, the *kami* of Haguro was

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<sup>43</sup> Yoshida Shintō refers to Yuiitsu Shintō 唯一神道, founded by Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼俱 (1435–1511) who claimed a return to an original Shintō free from Buddhist influence (*genpon sōgen* Shintō 元本宗源神道). The Yoshida family was the custodian of a secret transmission (*hidensho* 秘伝書) about the esoteric meaning of the *Nihon shoki*. Even if Yoshida Shintō was actually deeply rooted in esoteric Buddhist discourse, the *Shōsha kongenki* 諸社根元記 (late Muromachi period) reports a modification of the *honji suijaku* paradigm, according to which both the roles of *honji* and *suijaku* were played by *kami*. For instance, Yoshida wrote: “In Shintō *honji* are *suijaku*, and *suijaku* are *honji*. Tenshō Daijin is the *honji*, and Ise Daijingū is the *suijaku* (*Shintō ni wa honji soku suijaku, suijaku soku honji nari. Tenshō Daijin o honji to shi, Ise Daijingū o suijaku to su.* 神道ニハ本地即垂迹、々々即本地成。天照大神ヲ本地トシ、伊勢太神宮ヲ垂迹トス。). The emphasis placed by Yoshida Shintō on the centrality of the *kami* together with the new wave of nativist studies, which focused on the myths reported in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki*, contributed to creating a different religious discourse about the status of the *kami*. For the original text see *Jingi zensho*, vol. 1, ed. Saeki Ariyoshi (Kyōto: Shibunkaku, 1971), 42.

<sup>44</sup> For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, 23.

identified with Uka no mitama 倉稻魂, and the *kami* of Yudono was Ōyamatsumi no mikoto. These three *kami* were all created by the cosmogonical activities of Izanami no mikoto 伊邪那美命 and Izanagi no mikoto 伊邪那岐命, described in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*.

Even if these new *kami* were arbitrarily imposed on the sacred landscape of Dewa Sanzan by the officials of the Meiji government, it would be reductive to interpret them as a mere change in the nomenclature of the Dewa pantheon. On the contrary, the Meiji taxonomical discourse carefully selected three *kami* belonging to classical mythology in order to fit them with the cultic specificities of the mountains to which they had to overlap. For instance, Tsukiyomi no mikoto was a male *kami* of the moon.<sup>45</sup> His sister was the Sun goddess Amaterasu no ōmikami 天照大神 and his brother was the underworld deity (*ne no kuni* 根国) Susanoo no mikoto 須佐之男命.<sup>46</sup> The character for moon (*tsuki* 月), which is included in the name of Tsukiyomi no mikoto, reflects the name of Gassan that literally means “moon mountain.” Moreover, Tsukiyomi no mikoto ruled over the world of the blue springs (Yomi no kuni 黄泉国), the land of the dead.<sup>47</sup> The eschatological relevance of Tsukiyomi no mikoto brought this *kami* closer to the soteriological role played by the *honji butsu* of Gassan, Amida Nyorai, which guided the spirits of the dead toward the Pure Land of the West (*jōdo* 浄土).<sup>48</sup>

Uka no mitama was a female deity that created rice plants (*ine* 稻) in order to feed *kami* and men.<sup>49</sup> The *Kojiki* says that Uka no mitama was the daughter of Susanoo and Kamuōichi

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<sup>45</sup>. See *Nihon shoki*, vol. 1, in *Shintei zōho Kokushi taikai*, 22.

<sup>46</sup>. Because Tsukiyomi no mikoto was the brother of Amaterasu who was considered as the origin of the imperial household, in the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1911) Gassan became the most sacred mountain of the Dewa Sanzan and *de facto* supplanted the central role, which was traditionally attributed to Yudono. For instance, in the Edo period talismans (*osugata* お姿), which were sold to pilgrims visiting Dewa Sanzan, the central peak was always represented as Yudono. In the post-Meiji *osugata* the same place was taken by Gassan.

<sup>47</sup>. In modern Japanese the character *ki* 黄 indicates the yellow color, but in ancient Japan the same character was used to define a tonality between green and blue.

<sup>48</sup>. Suzuki Masataka, *Yama to kami to hito: sangaku shinkō to Shugendō no sekai*, 24-25.

<sup>49</sup>. See *Nihon shoki*, vol. 1, in *Shintei zōho Kokushi taikai*, 13.

hime 神大市比売.<sup>50</sup> According to the *Hagurosan suichū mondo* 羽黒山睡中問答 (Eiroku 永祿 3, 1560) the *kami* of Haguro could also be identified with the water deity Shinatorishima hime 伯禽嶋姫宮 who was known through the appellative of Tamayori hime 玉依姫命. The *honji butsu* of Tamayori hime was Kannon Bosatsu.<sup>51</sup> In this case the associative thread that linked together Uka no mitama and Tamayori hime was the fact that both *kami* had a female gender. The *kami* of Haguro traditionally played an ancillary role serving the *kami* of Gassan, which was specifically identified as a male god, i.e. Amaterasu's brother Tsukiyomi no mikoto. The emphasis on the feminine aspect of the *kami* of Haguro was also reinforced by the fact that its *honji butsu* was Shō Kannon, a bodhisattva often represented with feminine traits. Even in this case the new association of the *kami* of Haguro with Uka no mitama did not erase this important feature, which had always characterized the divine identity of this mountain, but simply re-inscribed the *kami* of Haguro into the interpretative frame of classical mythology.

The *kami* of Mount Yudono was indicated to be Ōyamatsumi no mikoto, born from the blood of the *kami* of the fire (Hi no kagutsuchi no kami 火之迦具土神) that soaked the sword used by Izanagi no mikoto to kill him. Izanagi punished Hi no kagutsuchi because his birth produced the painful burn on the vagina of Izanami that caused her death.<sup>52</sup> Ōyamatsumi no mikoto was conceived as the tutelary *kami* of mountains. The exterior aspect and gender of Ōyamatsumi no mikoto are unclear, but all the *kami* generated by the blood of Hi no kagutsuchi were related to rocks, stones, and springs of dark water as in the case of the

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<sup>50</sup> Kamuōichi hime is the daughter of the mountain god Ōyamatsumi no mikoto, the *kami* of Yudono. This detail emphasizes the close ties between Gassan and Yudono, which is geophysically located at the foot of this volcano.

<sup>51</sup> For the original text see *Hagurosan suichū mondo*, in *Shintō taikei*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 50-59.

<sup>52</sup> *Kojiki*, vol 1, ed. Tsugita Masaki (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1977), 50, 56.

goddess Kuramizuha no kami 閻罔象女神. The semiotic connection between Ōyamatsumi no mikoto and Yudono can be found in the powerful image of the burning vagina of Izanami, which was crossed by a stream of fire when she gave birth to Hi no kagutsuchi. The generative process that brought about the creation of Ōyamatsumi no mikoto seems to redefine in classical mythological terms the geological history of the huge spring of hot water that had always been venerated as Yudono.

## 4. The Epiphany of Mount Yudono

### 4.1. Gohōzen

The toponym Yudonosan 湯殿山 indicates a mountain (*yama* 山), which is a natural shrine (*[sha]den* [社]殿) for the veneration of the hot water (*yu* 湯).<sup>53</sup> The huge volcanic rock, from which originates a spring of hot water, is Yudonosan. Even if the suffix *san* 山 delineates Yudono as a “mountain,” the religious and orographic character of this sacred site is principally concentrated in one massive geological concretion, which is covered in hot water and called Gohōzen 御宝前 (See Fig. 1.4). Yudono is a metonymical site, where prevails the logic of *pars pro toto*. Gohōzen, alias Yudono, is located on the southern side of Gassan and was generated by an accumulation of magma, which overflowed from the flank of Gassan and finally solidified at the foot of the volcano. From a geological point of view Gassan literally created Yudono. The cult of Yudono was a boulder-faith (*kyogan shinkō* 巨岩

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<sup>53</sup>. For instance, in the *Ima Kumano Daigongen engi* 今熊野大権現縁起 (Genbun 元文 5, 1740) Yudono is defined as August Shrine Mountain (*gotenyama* 御殿山). For the original text see *Shintō taikei*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni*, vol. 63, 131-132.

信仰) rather than a mountain-faith (*sangaku shinkō*).

The peculiar aspect of Gohōzen was the target of an intense process of “semiotic reduction.” Allan Grapard describes this hermeneutic praxis as “the act of claiming that natural forms are morphemes or ‘semiographs’ that are semantically charged and can be decoded with the help of techniques of interpretation.”<sup>54</sup> The name Gohōzen itself derived from this type of semiotic reading of the natural landscape. *Gohōzen* indicated the position of the devotee in front of (*zen* 前) a material representation of the body of the deity, which was compared to an August Jewel (*gohō* 御宝).<sup>55</sup> Gohōzen was interpreted as a natural icon, which was self-created and independent from human agency, and worked as a provisional abode (*yorishiro* 依代) to host the *kami* of Yudono.

Gohōzen is also the spring from which originates the Daibonji River (Daibonjigawa 大梵字川) that flows through the Valley of the Immortals (Senninzawa), an ascetic site (*gyōba* 行場) at the foot of Yudono. The fact that Gohōzen was a sort of storehouse or matrix of water boosted the semiotic overlapping between this sacred site (*reijo* 靈場) and the cult of feminine reproductivity (*reijo* 靈女). Gohōzen was interpreted as a gigantic stone-vagina (*join* 女陰). The Daibonji River is a tributary of the Mogami River, which is navigable and had always been important for the development of the agricultural, economic, and cultural

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<sup>54</sup> Allan G. Grapard, “Geosophia, Geognosis, and Geopiety: Order of Significance in Japanese Representation of Space,” 377.

<sup>55</sup> The term *gohōzen* first appeared in the *Megurashi bumi* 廻文 episode, which is included in the sixth chapter of the *Heike Monogatari* 平家物語 (Heian period). In this passage the young and handsome warrior of the Minamoto clan (Genji 源氏) Kiso no kanja Yoshinaka 木曾冠者義仲 (1154-?) goes in front of the body (*gohōzen*) of Hachiman Daibosatsu 八幡大菩薩, which was probably represented through an icon, in the shrine of Iwashimizu Hachimangū 石清水八幡宮 in Kyōto and cuts his topknot (*motodori* 髻) as an offering to the *kami*. For the original text see *Heike monogatari*, vol. 1, in *Shinhen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, ed. Ichiko Teiji (Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, 1994), 443.

activities of the Shōnai plain.<sup>56</sup>

The Buddhist hermeneutic discourse also focused on the feminine aspect of Gohōzen, which became a metamorphosis (*henshin* 変身) of the Dharma body of Dainichi Nyorai of the Matrix Realm (Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai 胎藏界大日如来).<sup>57</sup> Among the two esoteric maṇḍalas the maṇḍala of the Womb Realm (Taizōkai *mandara* 胎藏界曼荼羅) represents the female principle and the maṇḍala of the Diamond Realm (Kongōkai *mandara* 金剛界曼荼羅) is associated with the male principle. In the *Chūrenji yori mōshitate* 注連寺より申立 (Kan'ei 寛永 16, 1639), Gohōzen is defined as the site where Dainichi Nyorai naturally gushes (*shizen yōshutsu no Dainichi Nyorai* 自然涌出之大日如来). The geophysical body of Gohōzen consists of two craters, which are filled with ferrous water. The bigger crater on the left side represented the maṇḍala of the Womb Realm and the smaller one on the right was the maṇḍala of the Diamond Realm. Therefore, the entire body of Gohōzen was visualized as the maṇḍala of the Two Realms (Ryōbu *mandara* 曼荼羅) and corresponded to a geological statement about the Buddhist notion of non duality (*nini funi* 二而不二).<sup>58</sup>

When Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai descended on this rock, he became the *honji butsu* of the *yamagami* of Yudono, which took the name of Yudonosan Gongen 湯殿山権現 or Ideyu Gongen 出湯権現. The *genius loci* of Yudono transformed from a local tutelary deity (*chinjushin* 鎮守神) to a protector of the Dharma (*gohōjin* 護法神). The stony body of

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<sup>56</sup> According to the *Hagurosan bettō nandai Yudonosan bettō etsū* 羽黒山別当難題湯殿山別当会通 (Kanbun 5, 1665) the hot water of Gohōzen was defined as “groin hot water” (*yu no mata* 湯ノ股). See *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 69.

<sup>57</sup> In the third chapter of the *Chirizuka monogatari* 塵塚物語 (Tenbun 天文 21, 1552) there is a Buddhist tale (*setsuwa* 説話) titled *Ōmine no denbun, senkyō, shugenja, kago, yamazakura* 大峰の伝聞・仙境・修験者・加護・山桜, in which Ōmine is compared to Yudono in Dewa province of the Tōhoku region (*Dewashū Tōhoku chihō no Yudonosan* 出羽州東北地方の湯殿山). Both sacred mountains were assimilated to the unified form of the Diamond and Womb maṇḍalas (*Kontai ryōbu no yama* 金胎兩部の山). See *Chirizuka monogatari*, ed. Suzuki Shōichi (Tōkyō: Kyōikusha, 1980), 133.

<sup>58</sup> For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 87, 90.

Gohōzen was the numinous space where the invisible Dharma body of the *honji butsu* Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai met with his provisional trace *kami* (*suijakujin* 垂迹神), which became known as Yudono Gongen. Therefore, Gohōzen constituted a sort of pole of mediation, which supported the encounter and the reification of the two invisible bodies of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and Yudono Gongen. Gohōzen worked as a sort of geological mirror, which bidirectionally reflected the *honji butsu* into the *suijakujin* and vice versa. For instance, in the *Hokinaiden* 籠篋内伝 (Edo period) there is a chapter dedicated to the deities of the auspicious days (*kichijitsu* 吉日), which gives the following description of Gohōzen and Yudono Gongen.<sup>59</sup>

Wood-yin (*kinoto* 乙). North-east, from noon to three o'clock postmeridian, day of the ox (*ushi* 丑). The trace (*suijaku*) of the Dharma body (*hosshin*) of Dainichi 大日 dimmed its light (*wakō* 和光) and appeared on the upper stream (*minakami* 水上) of the Daibonjigawa in the province of Dewa (Dewa no kuni 出羽国).<sup>60</sup> The water of this place [Gohōzen] is considered to be a five flavors (*gomi* 五味) hot medicinal water (*yakutō* 薬湯).<sup>61</sup> This is the day when Yudono Gongen manifested himself.<sup>62</sup>

According to the *Kikeishi* 亀鏡志 (Bunka 文化 9, 1812), because Yudono Gongen was equal to the Dharma nature of the Dharma body (*hosshō hosshin* 法性法身) of Taizōkai

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<sup>59</sup>. There are more than twenty versions of the *Hokinaiden*, which was traditionally attributed to Abe no Seimei 阿部晴明 (921–1005). All the actual manuscripts were composed in the second half of the medieval period. In the *Hokinaiden Kin'ugyokutoshū* 籠篋内伝金烏玉兔集, which is a manuscript of the Keichō 慶長 (1596–1615) era, the paragraph on the auspicious days does not mention the Gohōzen of Yudono. Nevertheless, another version of the *Hokinaiden* of the early Edo period, from which this passage is quoted, nested Yudono under the *occhū* 乙丑 label. For more information on the various versions of *Hokinaiden* see *Heihō hijutsu ikkansho, Hokinaiden Kin'ugyokutoshū, Shokunin yurai sho* [coll. *Nihon koten gisho sōkan*, vol. 3], ed. Fukazawa Tōru (Tōkyō: Gendai shichōsha, 2004), 100.

<sup>60</sup>. The spatial location indicated through the term *minakami* corresponds to the site of Gohōzen from which originates the Daibonji River.

<sup>61</sup>. In the *Ima Kumano Daigongen engi* the hot water of Gohōzen is also defined as divine hot water (*reiyū* 靈湯). For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 28, *Dewa no kuni* vol. 63, 133.

<sup>62</sup>. For the original text see *Hokinaiden* in *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, vol. 31-1, eds. Hanawa Hokinoichi, Ōta Tōshirō (Tōkyō: Zoku gunsho ruijū kanseikai, 1958), 399.



Dainichi Nyorai, he could manifest himself as Hachidai Kongō Dōji 八大金剛童子. When Kōbō Daishi Kūkai 弘法大師 空海 (774–839) opened the mountain site (*kaizan* 開山) of Yudono in Daidō 大同 4 (809) Hachidai Kongō Dōji appeared to him in the shape of Ryūjin Yashajin 龍神夜叉神. The *Kikeishi* describes this episode as follows.

When Daishi reached this place he met with the protective deity (*shugojin* 守護神) Ryūjin Yashajin that creates obstacles. At that moment the four corners of the mountain were shaken by a terrible howl and hailstones started falling down so violently that the rocks were crushed. A deep obscurity covered the area. Daishi sat on the rock, made the *mudrā* of meditation, and remained calm. After a while the wind cleared the sky, which became as bright as before and the Gongen took his seat on the rock. It was Hachidai Kongō Dōji. The deity turned toward Daishi and revealed to him the entire procedure of the Supreme Fire Ritual (*jōka no sahō* 上火の作法).<sup>63</sup>

Yudono Gongen manifested himself through various apparitional bodies, which also included the terrifying aspect of the dragon deity Ryūjin Yashajin and the fierce Hachidai Kongō Dōji.<sup>64</sup> It is important to take into account that the land close to Gohōzen had always been inhabited by various snakes (*ja* 蛇), which were attracted by the warm and humid temperature of the rock. The faith in Gohōzen was probably associated with a cult of the cobra (Skt. *nāga*), which was a protector of the Dharma, and was locally venerated as a dragon-*kami* (*ryūjin* 龍神). This may be the reason why Yudono Gongen decided to appear as

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<sup>63</sup>. *Kikeishi* was composed by Togashi Hisasada 富樫久定 who transcribed oral teachings and religious traditions about Yudono that were transmitted by the eminent *issei gyōnin* Tetsumonkai. For the original text see *Asahimura shi* (1) *Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 3.

<sup>64</sup>. The extended name of this divine acolyte (*dōji*) is Ōmine Hachidai Kongō Dōji 大峰八大金剛童子. This deity was the protector of ascetics (*gyōja* 行者) and water springs that were located at the ascetic sites (*gyōba*) on Mount Ōmine. Hachidai Kongō Dōji is called Joma 除魔 because he eliminates every type of demon. The *Shugen shinan shō* 修験指南鈔 reports that when Tenshō Daijin 天照大神 transported the eighty thousand tutelary deities (*shugojin* 守護神) of the Vulture Peak (Ryūjusen 靈鷲山), Hachidai Kongō Dōji also arrived with them on Mount Ōmine. In the *Chirizuka monogatari* Yudono is associated with Mount Ōmine and in the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* it is also equated to the northeastern angle of the Vulture Peak. This could be a possible reason why Hachidai Kongō Dōji is associated with Yudono. For the original text of the *Shugen shinan shō* see Oda Masayasu, “Ōmine Hachidai Kongō Dōji kō,” *Sangaku shugen* 45 (March 2010): 12.

Ryūjin Yashajin to welcome Kōbō Daishi.

The litany incessantly recited by the pilgrims in front of Gohōzen clearly condensed the hierarchical relationships between Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai, Yudono Gongen, Gohōzen, and Hachidai Kongō Dōji. The text of the prayer said: “Prostrating myself in homage (*kimyōchōrai* 歸命頂禮), I make penitence for the harmful behavior of my six faculties (*zanki zange rokkon zaishō* 慚愧懺悔六根罪障), I praise and prostrate myself at once in front of Oshime Hachidai Kongōdōji (*Oshime Hachidai Kongōdōji, ichiji raihai raihai keihaku* 御注連八大金剛童子、一時礼拝々々敬白).”<sup>65</sup> In this case the term *oshime* did not mean the ritual rope which pilgrims and ascetics wore around their necks. According to the *Hagurosan bettō nandai Yudonosan bettō etsū* the word *oshime* was a secret term to refer to Gohōzen.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the ultimate meaning of the invocation underlines the fact that the pilgrims prostrated themselves in front of Gohōzen, which was protected by Hachidai Kongō Dōji, an avatar of Yudono Gongen and Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai. In other words, the real bodies of Yudono Gongen and Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai remained forever concealed to the human eye, but they could manifest themselves in this world through the apparitional body or natural icon of Gohōzen that was protected by Hachidai Kongō Dōji. The metaphysical Dharma body of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and the invisible body of Yudono Gongen merged together and displayed their material and visual aspect via Gohōzen, which became a sort of natural icon. Hachidai Kōngō Dōji was charged to keep an eye over this sacred spring of hot water where local *kami* and *honji butsu* manifested their presence. The Buddhist process of “semiotic reduction” transformed the natural aspect of Gohōzen into a cultic *trait d’union* between *kami* and buddhas of Mount Yudono.

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<sup>65</sup> . For the original text see *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* in *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 287.

<sup>66</sup> . For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 73.

## 4.2. Emerging Yudono: Dōchi's Road and The Four Temples

During the Kamakura period the blacksmiths of Shōnai developed extremely advanced processing techniques to work iron and create sword blades and strong chisels that could easily carve the surface of stones.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, it became relatively easier to carve stelae (*itabi*) for devotional purposes. Between the Kamakura and Muromachi periods there was a proliferation of votive stelae (*kuyō hi* 供養碑) dedicated to the sacred mountains of Dewa Sanzan. These votive stelae were initially commissioned by members of the warrior class (*bushi* 武士), but the same custom later became a common practice also among groups of *kō* devotees (*kesshū* 結集) that gathered together in order to perform meritorious acts (*kechien* 結縁) such as the veneration of Dewa Sanzan.

In the previous paragraphs we analyzed the various statues, *akebotoke*, and *kyōzō* used by the Kumano *sendatsu* in order to spread the faith in Kumano Sanzan in the twelfth century, but the votive stelae of the Muromachi period represent a further step in the penetration of the *sanzan* paradigm among the population of Dewa province. For instance, the oldest stele, which testifies the presence of a local group of *kō* members that venerated Gassan, is dated Jōji 貞治 7 (1368) (See Fig. 1.5).<sup>68</sup> The text, carved on the front surface of the stone, says:

KIRĪKU [Amida]

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<sup>67</sup>. Itō Kiyoo, *Reizan to shinkō no sekai: Ōu no minshū to shinkō*, 160, 165.

<sup>68</sup>. This stele is located in the precincts of the Ichimyōin 一明院 in the Yanbemachi 山家町 district of Yamagata 山形 city. Jōji was an era name (*nengō* 年号) used by the Northern Court (Bokuchō 北朝).

SA [Shō Kannon]  
SAKU [Seishi 勢至]

Jōji 7 (1368), third month, [unclear] day.  
Assembly (*kesshū*) of Gassan ascetics (Gassan *gyōnin* 月山行人).  
Respectfully, one hundred persons.<sup>69</sup>

The Jōji era was not a particularly auspicious time. Various epidemics had stricken Dewa province and the *onmyōji* of the Ashikaga *bakufu* 足利幕府 negatively interpreted the occurrence of some celestial phenomena. Therefore, in 1368 the name of the era was changed in Ōan 応安 (1368–1375) when Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358–1408) became the new *shōgun* 將軍.<sup>70</sup> During these tumultuous times a group of ascetics (*gyōnin*) who had gathered together as members (*kesshū*) of a religious confraternity (*kō*) for the veneration of Gassan decided to sponsor the construction of a stele dedicated to the sacred triad of Amida Nyorai (Amida *sanzon* 阿弥陀三尊). The names of the deities were displayed through three seed-letters (*shūji* 種子) carved on the body of the stone. This stele was placed on the top of a tumulus of earth, already known as Nakazuka 糠塚, inside the precincts of the Ichimyōin temple that became associated with the Shingon branch of Shugendō (Tōzan-ha 当山派) in the mid-seventeenth century. Gassan ascetics chose the Nakazuka tumulus as the specific location to enshrine their votive stele because this site was already associated with the veneration of some powerful gods and the votive stele of Gassan could be doubly empowered by placing it on a magical spot inside the precincts of Ichimyōin.

We will further analyze this aspect in the final chapter of this dissertation, but it is important to take into account that the stele itself was a type of icon that did not differ from a

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<sup>69</sup>. For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 592.

<sup>70</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.* (Tsuruoka: Asahimurashi hensan iinkai, 1980), 606.

sacred statue or a pictorial image of the deity. Therefore, the ascetics of Gassan used a visual strategy, very similar to the concept of *mishōtai* associated with the *kakebotoke* brought by the Kumano *sendatsu* in the twelfth century. They represented the *honji butsu* of Gassan, Amida Nyorai, through the seed-letter KIRĪKU and, at the same time, the stone-body of the votive stele became a material allusion to the mountainous shape of Gassan and evoked the presence of Gassan Gongen as *suijakujin* of Amida Nyorai. In other words, the votive stele created a sort of “intervisuality” (*mitate*) between the silhouette of Mount Gassan, Amida Nyorai, and Gassan Gongen, whose essence was not graphically displayed, but remained concealed behind the exterior forms of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Gassan ascetics inscribed their presence on the stone-body of the votive stele specifying the exact number of persons who took part in the meritorious project and their temporal dimension (Jōji 7). In this way the confraternity of Gassan *gyōnin* could symbolically reside within the micro-replica of the stone-body of Gassan.

In Ōei 應永 2 or 3 (1395–96) the Shingon itinerant monk Dōchi (?–1427) gave a fundamental impulse to the development of the logistical infrastructures and temple networks for assisting the pilgrims (*dōsha* 道者) who traveled through the sacred peaks of Dewa Sanzan. It is in a letter that Dōchi composed during his stay at Yudono that we can find the first written reference to a specific site associated with the cult of this mountain. The location was the temple Dainichiji 大日寺, one of the Four Temples (*shikaji* 四ヶ寺) of Yudono, together with Hondōji 本道寺, Chūrenji 注連寺, and Dainichibō 大日坊. When Dōchi arrived at the back entrance (*uraguchi* 裏口) of Yudono, he first restored Dainichiji. This was a common religious practice for itinerant Shingon monks like Dōchi, who became the head

monk (*bettō*) of this temple.<sup>71</sup> Hondōji was the other temple at the *uraguchi* and Chūrenji and Dainichibō were the two cultic centers which were located at the front entrance (*omoteguchi* 表口) of Yudono.

Dainichiji was transformed into a huge lodging-temple in order to host the numerous pilgrims that desired to pay homage to the *oku no in*, Gohōzen, on their way back or toward the other peaks of Dewa Sanzan. Dōchi thought that the best way to facilitate the access of the pilgrims to Yudono and subsequently to Gassan and Haguro was to create a road connecting Hondōji at Ōizawa 大井沢 with Dainichibō in the village of Ōami 大網 (See Fig. 1.6). The distance separating Dainichiji at the *uraguchi* from Dainichibō at the *omoteguchi* was sixty *ri* 里 (39.2 Km.).<sup>72</sup> This road, which later became known as Dōchi's road (Dōchi *michi*), went through the village of Kurogamo 黒鴨 where the pilgrims could buy water, food, and clothes at the post stations (*shuku* 宿) along the way before reaching Dainichibō. From Dainichibō the pilgrims, escorted by a guide *sendatsu* (*annai sendatsu*), could enter the *gyōba* of Senninzawa, pay homage to Gohōzen, and proceed toward Gassan. Dōchi undertook this complex work of civil and religious engineering prioritizing the pilgrims who came from the Maruyama region, Yamagata, northern Kantō, and Michinoku province. The text of the letter that Dōchi sent to a Shugendō practitioner (*shugenja*) who worked as *annai sendatsu* for Dewa Sanzan pilgrims, is as follows.

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<sup>71</sup> *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 67.

<sup>72</sup> In the medieval period 1 *chō* corresponded to 60 *ken* 間, equal to 109 meters. Therefore, 6 *chō* is equal to 1 *ri*, which corresponds to 0.654 kilometers. The distance between the cities of Tsuruoka 鶴岡 and Yamagata 山形 was 152.9 *ri*, which correspond to 100 kilometers. The Dōchi *michi* was considered to be the first part of the famous road called Rokujūrigoe kaidō 六十里越街道, which connected Tsuruoka with Yamagata. This arterial road, which allowed the Shōnai plain to have cultural, military, religious, and economic exchanges with the inland areas of Dewa province, took its name from the fact that it exceeded (*koeru* 越える) the original 60 *ri* of the Dōchi *michi* that marked the distance between Dainichiji and Dainichibō. See *Rokujūrigoe kaidō ni kakawaru rekishi to bunka*, ed. Rokujūrigoe kaidō bunka kenkyūkai (Yamagata: Michinoku shobō, 2005), 8.

It has been a long time since I have been in touch with you, I am sorry for my silence. I am sure that everything is going well and you are in good health and I rejoice at that. I wanted to let you know that I am also working, as previously, in this temple. Things on this mountain are progressively improving, even if it is still difficult to organize a condition of prosperity [for the villages] at the foot of the mountain. [Since] the number of devotees (*yūshin no tomogara* 有信之輩) in your parishes (*kasumi* 霞) is increasing I would like them to come on pilgrimage (*sankei*) [to Yudono]. Since I have known your kindness for a long time, I would like to rely on that. Although I would like to meet you in person and tell you various other things, for the time being, I just wanted to say this. Sincerely yours,

Dainichiji, Dōchi (seal)

Third month, sixteenth day

To Hōkyōin 寶鏡院<sup>73</sup>

In this letter Dōchi tried to use his connections with the *shugenja* of Hōkyōin, which was located in the Hagyu 萩生 district of Nagai 長井 village, to attract groups of pilgrims to Yudono. The term *kasumi* indicated parishes that were controlled by *shugenja* belonging to the Tendai branch of Shugendō (Honzan-ha 本山派). The majority of the Kumano *sendatsu* who came in the thirteenth century were Honzan-ha *shugenja* affiliated with the Shōgoin temple in Kyōto. It was natural that among the *sendatsu* group (*sendatsu shūdan* 先達集團) of the Dewa region, there was a considerable number of Honzan-ha *annai sendatsu*. Even if Dōchi was a Shingon itinerant monk, he did not hesitate to count on them in order to bring pilgrims to Yudono, which could be independently accessed by *sendatsu* and pilgrims of different sectarian orientations. The *kasumi* of Hōkyōin included fifteen villages. Moreover, Hōkyōin was under the jurisdiction of the Date 伊達 clan, which ruled large areas of Dewa

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<sup>73</sup>. For the original text see *Yamagataken shi: kodai chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, ed. Yamagataken shihensan kaigiin, *Yamagata ken shi: kodai chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2 (Yamagata: Takahashi shoten, 1979), 186.

and Michinoku provinces even through this type of territorial alliance with local temples.<sup>74</sup> The religious network created by Dōchi between Hōkyōin and Dainichiji was an early example of the historical boundaries that linked the Date clan with Yudono. Later, as we shall see, the feudal lord (*ryōshu* 領主) Date Masamune (1567–1636) had a special relationship with Hondōji and Dainichiji and also with the ascetics of Yudono.

The pivotal role played by Dōchi in organizing the faith in Yudono in practical terms was always acknowledged by the ascetics of Yudono, who considered him a sort of patriarch and a model in which to find inspiration for their religious activities. For instance, in the Kyōhō 享保 period (1716-1736) the head monk (*hōjō* 方丈) of Dainichiji, Rikai Hōin 利海法印, patronized the construction of a stone statue of Dōchi Shōnin 道智上人, seated cross-legged, holding a wish-fulfilling jewel (*nyoi hōju* 如意宝珠) in his hands (See Fig. 1.7).<sup>75</sup> Devotees of this statue of Dōchi knew it as the “seated statue of Mida” (Mida *zazō* 弥陀座像), made by the Dainichiji parishioners picking up the stones from various stone-tumulii (*ishizuka* 石塚) that were located in sacred spots in the villages of Sagae 寒河江 and Ōizawa.<sup>76</sup>

### 4.3. Mount Yudono among Warriors and Fudaraku Seekers

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<sup>74</sup> In the Edo period, Hōkyōin changed its name to Gokurakuin 極楽院 and became affiliated with the Shugendō groups of Haguro. See *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 69.

<sup>75</sup> It is interesting to take into account that Dōchi did not use the title of Shōnin for himself, but the Edo period devotees of Dainichiji used this specification because the Shōnin title was usually granted to the most meritorious ascetics of Yudono. This detail demonstrates a process of inclusion of Dōchi inside the specific tradition of Yudono. The present statute of Dōchi has a sort of court headgear (*eboshi* 烏帽子) made of stone on the top of the head. This *eboshi* was added to the statue in the Meiji period during the separation between Shintō and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*) in order to increase the Shintō aspect of the icon and avoid its destruction.

<sup>76</sup> After the Meiji restoration, Dainichiji and Hondōji became Shintō shrines and changed their names to Ōizawa Yudonosan Jinja 大井沢湯殿山神社 and Hondōjiguchi Yudonosan Jinja 本道寺口湯殿山神社. This statue of Dōchi is still located at the old site of Dainichiji in the village of Ōizawa. See *Rokujūrigoe kaidō ni kakawaru rekishi to bunka*, 91.



After the Dōchi road, placing Yudono in a central position among the pilgrimage routes to access Dewa Sanzan, came into existence, there was a progressive development in faith in this mountain. An example of the flourishing devotional activities focused on Yudono is the portable altar (*oi* 笈) made in Eikyō 永享 2 (1430).<sup>77</sup> The owner of this *oi* was a high-ranking *shugenja* called Zenjōin 禪定院 who was affiliated with Jionji 慈恩寺, which at that time was the administrative temple (*bettōji* 別当寺) of Hayama. The entire surface of the *oi* is lavishly lacquered, inlaid, and decorated with metal low-reliefs of lotus thrones (*rengeza* 蓮華座), a three pronged *vajra* (*sanko* 三鈷), and sun (*nichirin* 日輪) and moon disks (*gachirin*). On the inner side of the third compartment of the *oi* there is an inscription, identifying the three cultic centers of Yudono as the “Three Shrines of Yudono” (Yudono Sanja 湯殿三社).<sup>78</sup> It is important to note that Zenjōin was a *shugenja* affiliated with Jionji, which in the medieval period was the head temple (*honji* 本寺; *honzan* 本山) of Hondōji and Dainichiji, which were themselves subsidiary temples (*matsuji* 末寺). A reflection of this hierarchical system between Jionji and the two temples at the *uraguchi* of Yudono remained in the Edo period, when *shugenja* affiliated with Hondōji and Dainichiji annually traveled to Jionji in order to perform the Shugendō ritual of the mountain-entry practice (*nyūbu shugyō* 入峰修行). *Shugenja* of Chūrenji also practiced the *nyūbu* rituals at Jionji, which equally

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<sup>77</sup> The *oi* was a fundamental accessory for the *shugenja* who used it to transport their ritual tools and devotional icons during the performance of ascetic practices and pilgrimages on sacred peaks. Zenjōin’s *oi* is preserved at Jikōmyōin 慈光明院 in the city of Yamagata.

<sup>78</sup> The meaning of the entire inscription is obscure. The original text is: “Over the Diamond and Womb maṇḍalas there is Seishi. Kara Ma Daishi, the Three Shrines of Yudono, the sublime palace” (*Ryōkai no ue ni Seishi. Kara Ma Daishi, Yudono Sansha, Jōzenkan* 両界二/上勢至/から广大師/湯殿三社/上善館). The expression “*kara ma Daishi*” could indicate Kōbō Daishi who went to China (*Kara* 唐) and subsequently founded the three shrines of Yudono, which are close to a sacred site called Jōzenkan that may be a different name to indicate Gohōzen. For the original text see Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudono shinkō to kōshō bungei,” (paper presented at the *Fugeki mōsō gakkai*, Niigata University, Niigata, 2005): 1.

accepted both Honzan-ha *shugenja* and non-Honzan-ha *shugenja* for the ritual. The *shugenja* of Dainichibō were a case apart because they preferred to go to the three *bettōji* of Kinpōsan 金峰山, located near the city of Tsuruoka, to perform the *nyūbu* rituals.<sup>79</sup>

In the mid Muromachi period Yudono increased in importance not only as a destination for pilgrimage but also as a strategic area to secure control over the economic activities of the Shōnai plain. In Chōroku 長祿 4 (1460) the *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490) ordered Mutō Kyouji 武藤淳氏, Lord of the Mutō clan that partially controlled the Shōnai fief, to attack the ex-*shōgun* Ashikaga Shigeuji 足利成氏 (1434–1497) who had fled from Kantō to Dewa province. Mutō Kyouji, also known under the appellation of Daihōji Kyouji 大宝寺淳氏, prepared a military expedition against Shigeuji, starting by incrementing strategic fortifications at the foot of Gassan and Yudono in order to fight off potential attacks from enemies who could penetrate Shōnai moving from the inland territories of Dewa province.

Among the chief retainers (*shukurō* 宿老) of Mutō Kyōji there was a warrior called Tonobe Shirōzaemon Shigeyoshi 渡野辺四郎左衛門重吉 who was charged with securing the mountain borders of Yudono. Tonobe arrived with his troops at the village of Ōami at the front entrance of Yudono and sought an alliance with the *shugenja*, ascetics, and monks of Chūrenji and Dainichibō. According to the *Ōizumi'in monjo* 大泉院文書 (Keichō era, 1596–1616) the commander in chief (*sōtsukasa* 総司) Tonobe established his residence at Ōami and became himself a *shugenja* with the name of Daishōbō 大聖坊.<sup>80</sup> After the war, before leaving the village of Ōami, Tonobe transferred the property of his house and the household-

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<sup>79</sup> Togawa Anshō points out that the decision of the two *omoteguchi* temples to make the *nyūbu* in different mountains was due to the animosity between the two *bettōji*. See Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu* (Tōkyō: Chūō shoin, 1974), 15, 45.

<sup>80</sup> For the original text of the *Ōizumi'in monjo* see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 101-102.

name (*kamei* 家名) Daishōbō to his brother Saburōji 三郎治. In the Edo period documents that report the names of the households associated with Dainichibō (*monzen kerai* 門前家来), the name of Daishōin 大聖院 appears among the most influent *shugenja* of this temple. The fact that the suffix of the name changed testifies that during the years the members of the household founded by Tonobe played various institutional roles as subsidiary *shugen* practitioners (*bō* 坊) or executive *shugen* practitioners (*in* 院).

After a terrible famine struck the Kantō and Tōhoku regions, the era name was changed from Chōroku (1457-1461) to Kanshō 寛正 (1461-1466). In this tumultuous period Tonobe donated three *kakebotoke* to Inookadera 井岡寺 in Tsuruoka to pray for the military victory of his Lord Mutō Kyouji over Ashikaga Shigeuji (See Fig. 1.8).<sup>81</sup> These *kakebotoke* show the typical fifteenth century twofold structure, a front plaque of bronze decorated with low-relief (*mekki* 鍍錫) and a back plank of wood (*mokutai* 木胎) on which is a black-ink inscription (*bokushomei* 墨書銘) recording the donor, the religious meaning of the object, and the recipient. Tonobe donated these *kakebotoke* to the chief monk of Inookadera, in which was enshrined the spirit of Oka Daigongen 岡大権現, all at the same time: the twenty-eighth day of the third month of the fourth year of the Chōroku era. One *kakebotoke*, which has not survived, probably displayed either a Horse-Headed Kannon (Batō Kannon 馬頭觀音) or an Eleven-Headed Kannon (Jūichimen Kannon 十一面觀音). The second *kakebote* is a seated Wish Fulfilling Wheel Kannon (Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪觀音) surrounded by the thirty-three apparitional forms of Kannon (Sanjūsan Kannon 三十三觀音). On the *mokutai* of this *kakebotoke* is written the following text.

Japan, Dewa province, village of Ōami.

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<sup>81</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 128-130.

The military administrator on the behalf of the Mutō 武藤 family, the chief retainer (*shukurō*) and donor (*toki no danna* 時旦那) Tonobe Shirōzaemon Shigeyoshi 渡野辺四郎左衛門重吉.

The tutelary deity of this land (*jinushi* 地主) Oka Daigongen 岡大権現 [is enshrined] in the inner hall (*goshōden* 御正殿).

[This *kakebotoke* is donated to] the chief monk (*shugyō bettō* 執行別当) Nyokai 如海 of the Idera 井寺 in the Ogano 遠賀野 district [of Tsuruoka 鶴岡].<sup>82</sup>

Chōroku 4 (1460), third month, twenty-eighth day.<sup>83</sup>

The third *kakebotoke* was probably supposed to be located in the central position between the other two plaques because it displays a Nyorai seated on a lotus throne that is flanked by two vases of flowers around which are four small seated buddhas. The text written on the *mokutai* is almost the same of the other *kakebotoke* except for the fact that it says: “The August True Body (*mishōtai*) of Oka Daigongen 岡大権現 [is] Ōyamatsumi no mikoto.”<sup>84</sup> It is interesting to note that this fifteenth century *kakebotoke* seems to introduce a sort of combinatory paradigm between a local deity like Oka Daigongen and an elite *kami* like Ōyamatsumi no mikoto, who was specifically linked to the mythological discourse reported in the *Nihon shoki*.<sup>85</sup> If we read the texts of the two *kakebotoke* together, a possible interpretation could be that Oka Daigongen, the invisible body of which was enshrined in the inner hall (*goshōden* or *naijin* 内陣) of Inookadera, and Ōyamatsumi no mikoto shared the same *honji butsu*, which was displayed through the visible body of the seated Nyorai that was attached to the front surface of the *kakebotoke*.

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<sup>82</sup>. Idera is an abbreviation for Inookadera.

<sup>83</sup>. For the original text see *Yamagataken shi: kodai chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, 357, 50.

<sup>84</sup>. For the original text see *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>85</sup>. It is not clear which mountains were specifically associated with Oka Daigongen and Ōyamatsumi no mikoto. If Ōyamatsumi no mikoto was already associated with Yudono in the fifteenth century, this *kakebotoke* may be considered as evidence that an associative process between sacred mountains and *kami* mentioned in classical mythological texts such as the *Nihon shoki* was already taking place a long time before the Meiji period.

These *kakebotoke* also testify that for Muromachi warriors battles were not simply a matter of military strategy, but could also be fought with divine and ritual weapons. Here, Tonobe specified the location of his military fortifications in the village of Ōami at the foot of Mount Yudono in order to include them into another type of protective system, which was the divine army of Oka Daigongen in Tsuruoka, Ōyamatsumi no mikoto, the Five Nyorai, the Horse-Head Kannon, Nyoirin Kannon, and the thirty-three forms of Kannon.

These two *kakebotoke* also demonstrate that in the mid Muromachi period warriors were active religious actors who contributed to the creation of new “local politics of religious sponsorship” in the *honji suijaku* network, shaping alliances between gods of different ranks that were associated with various sacred sites in the territory.<sup>86</sup> The high mobility that characterized the life style of Muromachi warriors also facilitated their role as “mediators” of new combinatory paradigms between various classes of deities and different models of sacred geography.<sup>87</sup> Sponsoring the construction of these three *kakebotoke*, Tonobe enrolled in the army of his lord, Mutō Kyouji, various powerful *kami*, buddhas, and bodhisattvas, which were requested to protect the strategic area of Ōami at the *omoteguchi* of Yudono. The prayers and military efforts of Tonobe were repaid with victory over the troops of Ashikaga Shigeuji and the consequent appointment of Mutō Kyouji as Guardian of Dewa (Dewagami 出羽守) by Ashikaga Yoshimasa.

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<sup>86</sup> The expression “local politics of religious sponsorship” is used by Sarah Thal to describe the influx of Matsudaira Yorishige 松平頼重 (1622-1695) on the religious landscape of Mount Zōzu 象頭山, alias Konpirasan 金比羅山, in northern Shikoku 四国. See Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 63.

<sup>87</sup> Bruno Latour provides the following definition of the difference between *intermediaries* and *mediators*: “An *intermediary*, in my vocabulary, is what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its input is enough to define its outputs. [...] *Mediators* transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. No matter how complicated an intermediary is, it may, for all practical purposes, count for just one – or even for nothing at all because it can easily forgotten. No matter how apparently simple a mediator may look, it may become complex; it may lead in multiple directions which will modify all the contradictory accounts attributed to its role.” Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 39.

In the sixteenth century, the name of Yudono appeared in various scattered sources, which were all linked to pilgrimages to sacred mountains in Kantō and Tōhoku. For example, on a fragment of the pedestal of a Buddhist statue that is preserved at Seiryūji on Kinpōsan, there is an inscription that reports: “Tenbun 天文 10 (1541), ninth month, twenty-first day. Ōminesan one time; Haguro one time; Seiryūji [at Kinpōsan] one time; Oyudono 御湯殿 three times; Fuji one time; Kantō pilgrimage one time.”<sup>88</sup> Before the enshrinement of the icon at Seiryūji this anonymous pilgrim or *shugenja* decided to empower the body of the simulacrum, inscribing on the surface of the sacred object all the achievements of his individual ascesis. Among the names of the sacred peaks Yudono is the only one to be preceded by the honorific prefix and is the most visited site compared to all the other mountains.

A few years before the creation of this icon, Yudono appeared in a Buddhist story that described the journey made by an itinerant holy man (*hijiri* 仙) Kōkai 高海 to reach the underwater paradise of Kannon Bosatsu, Fudaraku (補陀落).<sup>89</sup> The *Naka minato Fudaraku tokai ki* was composed by the scholar monk (*gakusō* 学僧) Ehan 惠範 (1462–1537) who studied at Miidera 三井寺 and Tōdaiji 東大寺 and transcribed an impressive number of sūtras and commentaries from the Buddhist Canon.<sup>90</sup> In the sixteenth century the practice of self-immolation by water (*jusui* 入水) in order to reach the Fudaraku of Kannon reached its climax, as did the religious custom of making ascetic pilgrimages through all the sacred mountains of the archipelago (*shokoku yugyō* 諸国遊行) to produce benefits for the present

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<sup>88</sup>. *Yamagataken shi: kodai chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, 356.

<sup>89</sup>. In this narrative the character *sen* 仙, which usually indicates Daoist transcendents (*sennin* 仙人), is purposely read as *hijiri* (wandering ascetic), which is usually expressed through the character 聖, in order to create a graphical conflation between the two categories of holy man.

<sup>90</sup>. Nei Kiyoshi, *Fudaraku tokai shi* (Tōkyō: Hōzōkan, 2001), 332-339.

and future life.<sup>91</sup> The terrestrial wandering among sacred landscapes in which were encrypted the entrances to the Pure Lands of Amida Nyorai, Kannon, or Shaka Nyorai 釈迦如来 had its counterpart in the maritime journeys toward the submarine paradise of Kannon, which was thought to be located toward the edge of the human continent (Enbushū 閻浮洲, Skt. Jambūdvīpa).<sup>92</sup> Ehan wrote the *Naka minato Fudaraku tokai ki* in Kyōroku 享祿 4 (1531) when he was affiliated with Rokujizōji 六地藏寺 in the province of Hitachi.<sup>93</sup> In the sixteenth century the coasts of Hitachi were considered to be the best spots to sail toward Fudaraku, and Ehan may have thought to compose a short story, focused on the practice of self-immolation by water and faith in Kannon's paradise, as a written support for oral preaching activities (*kange* 勧化) performed by the monks of this temple. Even if the *hijiri* Kōkai was not a historical figure, Ehan could have been inspired by various types of wandering ascetics who traversed Hitachi province when he created the eccentric character of Kōkai. The *Naka minato Fudaraku tokai ki* gives the following description of Kōkai.

There was a holy man (*hijiri* 仙) who disliked the world (*onri shaba* 厭離娑婆) and aspired to obtain rebirth in the Pure Land (*gongu jōdo* 欣求淨土). His name was Kōkai 高海. His innate knowledge (*shōchi* 生知) distinguished him from ordinary men so much so that he should have been a reincarnation of a great saint. He covered himself with

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<sup>91</sup>. Ibid., 750.

<sup>92</sup>. The exact location of Fudaraku varies according to the written and cartographical sources. For instance in the *Da tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Jp. *Daitō saikiiki*) (646) the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664) did not place Mount Fudaraku on an island, but on the Indian mainland. The text reports: “To the east of Malaya Mountain 秣刺耶山 is Potalaka Mountain 布陀落山, which has perilous paths and precipitous cliffs and valleys. On the top of the mountain is a lake of clear water, issuing in a big river that flows twenty times round the mountain before passing into the South Sea. Beside the lake is a stone and a heavenly place, which is frequented by Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.” See *Da Tang xi yu ji: The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, trans. Li Rongxi (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 322. By contrast, the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (*Kegonkyō* 華嚴經) states that the paradise of Kannon Bosatsu is located on an island in the middle of the ocean. In the *Map of the Five Regions of India* (*Gotenjiku-zu* 五天竺圖) drawn by Genshubō Jūkai 源春房重懷 in Jōji 貞治 3 (1364) the monk opted for a cartographical compromise and depicted Fudaraku as an island surrounded by waters in the proximity of the most remote southern corner of India.

<sup>93</sup>. The province of Hitachi overlapped with today's Ibaraki prefecture.

leaves in order to be protected from the cold and picked the fruit of trees and grasses (*kara* 果臚) to appease his hunger. When he woke up or stayed [in one place], his mind was on the white bones.<sup>94</sup> [When] he went to the toilet to shit and pee (*ashi sōnyō* 屙屎送尿) his eyes were closed or looked toward a graveyard.<sup>95</sup> He paid attention not to scare the birds in their nests when he picked flowers for offerings and when he scooped some pure water in his hands he took care not to stamp on any insect. For this reason birds that were threatened by hawks and peregrine falcons came to hide in the sleeves of the wood-eater (*mokujiki* 木食) [ascetic] and when a beast saw a bow or an arrow it hid inside the walls of his hermitage. When he heard about the sufferings of the others his heart was easily broken and when he saw the joy of others he let his eyes rejoice. He avoided even the minor misdeeds (*tokira* 突吉羅, Skt. *duṣkṛta*) and did not dig the ground or pull up weeds. In order not to commit grave offenses (*harai* 波羅夷, Skt. *pārājika*) he never mounted a horse and did not reject even a louse. In more general terms he used compassion (*jihī* 慈悲) as his necklace and meditation and wisdom (*jōe* 定慧) as decorations for himself. Moreover, sometimes he bunched up his long hair on the top of his head according to the lay style. At other times he had his hair curled up like the Buddha's head. He looked like a wild man (*enkan* 猿冠) in a pair of straw sandals.<sup>96</sup> On his shoulders he wore the clouds of the sky [i.e. he wore nothing] and around his waist he did not even wear a skirt. [...] He made his rosary with one hundred eight acorns of the *bodhi* tree. This [rosary] represented the principle of non duality between enlightenment and the passions (*bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提). He used six balls of mud to make the rings for his staff (*shakujō* 錫杖). This is the secret profundity of the circle of life and death, which does not differ from *nirvāṇa*. Each time someone saw [his rosary], that person remembered clearly [the principle of the non-duality between enlightenment and passion]; each time someone heard [the sound of the ringing of the staff], that person had more faith [in the principle of the identity between the *nirvāṇa* and the life and death]. When he traveled he had a box on his back with various objects made of stones and iron (*unkon tekki* 雲根鐵器), from which he never departed.<sup>97</sup> When he sat down he kept venerating the *vajra* (*bō* 鉾) and the staff to host the *kami* (*hei* 幣) and reciting the name of the buddha without interruption. [...]

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<sup>94</sup>. The meaning of this sentence is that Kōkai kept focusing his mind on impermanence, which characterizes human rebirth.

<sup>95</sup>. The expression *ashi sōnyō* derives from the Zen text *Rinzairoku* 臨濟錄 (1120), T no. 47, 498a17, where it was used to indicate the spontaneous and natural behavior that characterized the way of the Buddha. In this context it means that Kōkai always behaved spontaneously, but he was always mindful of the death and suffering of sentient beings.

<sup>96</sup>. The expression *enkan* could be an abbreviation of the Chinese saying: “No fine clothes can hide the clown” (*mokkō ni shite kan-su* 沐猴にして冠す).

<sup>97</sup>. These objects made of stone and iron could be the firestone and the iron wedge, which were used by *shugenja* to light the fire for rituals and ordinary purposes.



The text continues, explaining that during the night of the eighteenth day of the eleventh month of Kyōroku 3 (1530) the wandering ascetic (*shokoku yugyōja* 諸国遊行者) Kōkai had a revelatory dream in which he was urged by Kannon Bosatsu to sail toward Fudaraku. Kōkai immediately decided to start an ascetic retreat on Mount Yūsendake 勇泉嶽 in Shimotsuke 下野 province for seven days, at the end of which he miraculously obtained the necessary wood to built his Fudaraku-ship (*tokaibune* 渡海船).<sup>98</sup> One month later Kōkai sailed from the harbor of Naka in Hitachi province together with twenty-two Fudaraku believers (*tokaisha* 渡海者) that he convinced to follow him during the solemn navigation on the River Nakagawa 那珂川 toward the ocean. At the end of the story Ehan composed a farewell poem (*hōsō no kata* 奉送の伽陀) to provide an elegy to honor the memory of Kōkai and his group of *tokaisha*. This lyric is made of four stanzas, which are composed of sixteen lines of five characters each. Ehan used the technique of the double acrostic (*kutsu kaburi* 沓冠) to add a secret layer of meaning to the composition. In the *kutsu kaburi* the first and last characters of each line can be read horizontally from right to left in order to create a sort of lyric inside the lyric.

Farewell poem [vertical sense]

In the high peaks the *kami* created mountains  
 and Lord Kai,<sup>99</sup> for what reason does he go up and down?  
 [Why does he go] south, west, and north to instigate people [to seek a rebirth in] the Land  
 of Peace of Amida (*anrakukoku* 安楽国), to recommend people to eat trees (*ki o kate to shite* 木為糧) and pass across the limit of the year?  
 Even though [Kōkai] does not eat, he proceeds like flying (*tobu ka gotoku* 如飛).  
 [Kōkai] wears grass clothes and practices asceticism (*shu* 修) in front of the Buddha.  
 While his clothes are torn he wanders around in different provinces.

<sup>98</sup>. The province of Shimotsuke corresponds to the present Tochigi 栃木 prefecture.

<sup>99</sup>. The name Lord Kai (Kaishu 海主) may indicate Kōkai who is described as the Lord of the ocean and who exhorts the *tokaisha* to reach the Fudaraku.

He is not sad to depart because this is a journey.  
The fire on the wood of the previous life of the past king.  
[Kōkai] takes a bath in this stream all the time.  
When the water stops, he travels in many provinces.  
For whom is this spring of hot water (*tōsen* 湯泉) an auspicious sign?  
The palace (*tono* 殿), which is a great field of merits (*fukuden* 福田), is close.  
In the depth of the ocean there is a residence of dragons. [...]

[horizontal sense]

[First characters] Kōkai Shōnin was a wood eater (*mokujiki* 木食), who wore grass clothes (*kusagoromo* 草衣), used a separate and purified fire (*bekka* 別火), performed ritual ablutions (*yokusui* 浴水) and practiced asceticism (*shōjin* 精進) at Yudono 湯殿.

[Last characters] He was born in a northern country in the province of Echizen (Echi no zen shū 越之前州) and travelled through Hitachi province (Jōshū 常州) until Yoshida Ōsaka<sup>100</sup> 吉田大阪.<sup>101</sup>

The horizontal meaning of the elegy is the most interesting because it mentions three distinctive traits of the ascetic practices that were usually performed by the group of ascetics of Yudono. As we will see in the next chapter, the practice of wood-eating (*mokujiki*), the use of a separated fire (*bekka*) for rituals and cooking activities, and daily ablutions with cold water were some of the ascetic practices which were specifically associated with Yudono ascetics. In Ehan's lyric, Yudono is quoted as the first sacred site where the *shokoku yugyōja* Kōkai practiced asceticism before deciding to seek Kannon's paradise in the sea. The association between Yudono and the faith in Fudaraku could be a consequence of the fact that below the summit of Gassan there was a pinnacle known by the name of Futara フタラ or Eastern

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<sup>100</sup>. The province of Echizen partially corresponds to today's Fukui 福井 prefecture. Yoshida Ōsaka refers to a small village in Hitachi province where Kōkai stopped to schedule his travel to Fudaraku.

<sup>101</sup>. For the original text see Nei Kiyoshi, *Fudaraku tokai shi*, 756-763.

Fudaraku (Higashi Fudaraku 東補陀落).<sup>102</sup> It is not clear what kind of religious practices were performed there, but in Ehan's poem Yudono is described as a destination included in the pilgrimage routes of the *tokaisha* who climbed this mountain in order to perform ascetic practices of purification. It may be argued that the *tokaisha* were attracted by Yudono also because of its proximity to another entrance to the paradise of Kannon Bosatsu, which was not in the open sea, but close to the summit of Gassan.

## 5. Territorial and Hierarchic Organization of Yudono Religious Institutions

### 5.1. Happō Nanaguchi and Bettō Shikaji

In the first half of the seventeenth century the system of integration between villages and religious institutions that governed access to the sacred territory of Dewa Sanzan saw a significant development. The term *happō nanaguchi* 八方七口 indicated the eight lodging areas (*shukubō* 宿坊), which stood in the proximity of the seven entrances (*kuchi* 口) of Dewa Sanzan.

The eight lodging areas were Kiyokawa 清川 and Karikawa 狩川, Tsuruoka 鶴岡, Tamugimata 田麦俣, Shizu 志津, Shiraiwa 白岩, Torigawa 鳥川, and Ōishida 大石田. Of these, Tamugimata and Shizu played a pivotal role also for the logistic support provided to the ascetics of Yudono who practiced wood-eating and rituals of reclusion at the two *gyōba* of

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<sup>102</sup>. Under the top of Gassan there was also another rock known as Westerner Fudaraku (Nishi Fudaraku 西補陀落) but has been lost. It seems that the indentation of this rock was associated with vagina (Taizōkai) while Eastern Fudaraku symbolizes a phallus (Kongōkai). See Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 175.

Senninzawa and Genkai.<sup>103</sup> All other *shukubō*, apart from Tsuruoka, were built near the riverbanks of the Mogami River and exclusively served as sites to welcome, host, and restore the pilgrims who arrived in the Shōnai plain from afar.<sup>104</sup>

Separate from these eight lodging areas were seven entrances, which physically marked the geographical borders of the sacred area of Dewa Sanzan. These seven entrances were sort of guardians that protected the divine landscape of Haguro, Gassan, and Yudono. Each entrance was supervised by a *bettōji* that maintained public security and the correct administration of the logistic infrastructures that were included in its territory. Shimekakeguchi 注連掛口 was associated with Chūrenji, Ōamiguchi 大網口 was controlled by Dainichibō, Haguroguchi 羽黒口 corresponded to the village of Tōge 手向, Hondōjiguchi 本道寺口 was supervised by Hondōji, Iwanzawaguchi 岩根沢口 was governed by Nichigatsuji 日月寺, Ōizawaguchi was administered by Dainichiji, and Hijioriguchi 肘折口 was associated with Aun'in 阿吽院. This last entrance was nominal rather than real because this village never developed a sufficient infrastructure to host considerable numbers of devotees.

Shimekakeguchi, Ōamiguchi, and Haguroguchi were used by pilgrims who came from the Shōnai plain. Hondōjiguchi, Iwanzawaguchi, and Ōizawaguchi were convenient sites for the pilgrims who arrived from the Maruyama area. Tōge was an ideal access point for the pilgrims who came in from Tsuruoka, while Hijioriguchi faced the Mogami area.<sup>105</sup> Of these seven entrances, four were directly controlled by the four Yudono *bettōji*, while Haguroguchi,

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<sup>103</sup>. From Tamugimata to Senninzawa it takes two hours on foot. From Dainichibō to Tamugimata it takes less than one hour on foot.

<sup>104</sup>. Nagai Masatarō, “Dewa Sanzan to sono shūkyō shūroku no seisui,” in *Dewa Sanzan to Tōhoku Shugen no kenkyū*, 166.

<sup>105</sup>. Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no rekishi chirigakuteki kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Meicho shuppan, 1992), 16.

Iwanezawaguchi, and Hijioriguchi were administered by the Haguro *bettō*. For instance, Nichigatsuji at Iwanezawaguchi was a *matsuji* of Jakkōji 寂光寺, the principal shrine-temple complex of Haguro.<sup>106</sup> An important difference between the Haguro and Yudono administration of the seven entrances was that Haguro had a single *bettō* who monitored all the religious activities that took place at the cultic centers of the mountain, while Yudono had four independent *bettō* who resided in the four *bettōji* and had a specific jurisdiction only over the sacred territories associated with their temples.

The meaning of the expression *happō nanaguchi* indicated that there was a total of fifteen logistic centers around Dewa Sanzan: eight were simple lodging areas (*happō*) for pilgrims, and seven were authentic entrances (*nanaguchi*) to the extra-ordinary territory of Dewa Sanzan. The eight lodging areas were formally independent from the four *bettōji* even if were *de facto* influenced by their decisions. On the contrary, the seven entrances formed a single unit with the *bettōji*. In other words, the religious significance of the space associated with the concept of seven entrances was more complex, compared to the meaning of the space that denoted the eight lodging areas. The seven entrances were the authentic gates for access to Dewa Sanzan, while the eight lodging areas were mere in-between refreshment stations.

According to the *Jionji Hōzōin shozō kiroku* 慈恩寺宝蔵院所蔵記録, written in Enpō 延宝 9 (1681), the Tokugawa shogunate granted Dainichiji and Hondōji modest areas of land that were exempt from taxes and *corvée* (*jochi* 除地) by the Shonai domain. The fiefs (*shuinchi* 朱印地) of Dainichiji annually produced 4 *koku* 石 5 *to* 斗 of rice and Hondōji's fiefs 6 *koku* 5 *to*.<sup>107</sup> The paucity of the annual income of the two *uraguchi* temples of Yudono

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<sup>106</sup>. After the Meiji Restoration, Jakkōji became Dewa Sanzan Jinja 出羽三山神社.

<sup>107</sup>. Ōtomo Gisuke, "Dewa Hayama shinkō no kōsatsu," in *Dewa Sanzan to Tōhoku Shugen no kenkyū*, 274-275. One *koku* was thought to be the amount of the rice that one man would eat in one year.

is evident when compared to the lands administered by Haguro, which produced almost 1.460 *koku* per year. Chūrenji and Dainichibō did not have fiefs and were regularly taxed by the domain administration.<sup>108</sup>

Iwahana Michiaki points out that the seven villages associated with the seven entrances of Dewa Sanzan can be defined as “mountain-religion villages” (*sangaku shūkyō shūraku* 山岳宗教集落) in the same way as, for instance, the village of Dorogawa 泥川 at the foot of Mount Ōmine.<sup>109</sup> The social, cultural, and economic life of the lay population that formed these mountain communities was completely integrated with the religious activities that took place at the *bettōji*. In other words, *bettōji* were the villages and villages were the *bettōji*. The extreme proximity of these human settlements to the sacred area of Dewa Sanzan blurred the usual boundaries that artificially separated religious practices from non-religious ones. The ordinary space and time of the seven villages were not disentangled from the extra-ordinary space and time of the religious institutions. The fact that the lives of religious and non-religious actors of the seven villages were equally focused on Mount Yudono brought about a mutual fertilization between these two social groups. Religious professionals such as monks, *shugenja*, and ascetics lived in a sort of symbiotic relationship with the lay population of the seven villages. The degree of integration between lay villagers and religious professionals was not limited to a passive support of the first group on behalf of the second, but transformed into the active participation of the lay members of the villages in the religious institutions and activities of the *bettōji*.

A clear example of this conflation between lay and religious actors was represented by

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<sup>108</sup>. It should also be taken into account that the donations of *shuinchi* made by the Tokugawa shogunate were generally very limited in quantity and quality with respect to the *shuinchi* granted by the Ashikaga *bakufu*. This was due to the chronic financial straits that characterized the Tokugawa shogunate.

<sup>109</sup>. Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 6.

the *shugenja* who were affiliated with the four temples of Yudono. These *shugenja* were defined as “rural *shugenja*” (*zaikata shugenja* 在方修験者).<sup>110</sup> The *zaikata shugenja* of Yudono were peasants (*hyakushō* 百姓) who worked their lands or the fields belonging to the *bettōji* such as Dainichiji and Hondōji, and transformed into *shugenja* only during prescribed periods of the year. The *zaikata shugenja* of Yudono were married peasants who hereditarily transmitted to the male members of their households the privilege to serve as *shugenja* for the *bettōji* of Yudono. Among the agricultural population of these villages there were also groups of poor farmers (*kakaebiyakushō* 抱百姓) or field hands called *nago* 名子 or “water drinkers” (*mizunomi* 水呑). They could also aspire to serve as *shugenja* for the four *bettōji*.<sup>111</sup>

It is important to take into account that the working activities of the populations of the seven villages were not limited to the cultivation of fields or the lodging of pilgrims. A relevant part of the subsistence economy of these areas was linked to the hunting of wild animals, which could be killed in the forests that were not included in the temple territories.<sup>112</sup> The hunters were called *matagi* マタギ at Ōami. According to the *Yamadachi kongen hikan* 山達根元秘巻 (Edo period) the hunters of Ōami considered themselves as descendants of the two famous archers Banji 盤次 and Banzaburō 盤三郎, who received permission from Nikkō

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<sup>110</sup>. This definition is reported in the temple register (*chōchō* 調帳) of Jionji where the *shugenja* of Hondōji, Dainichiji, and Chūrenji went to perform the *nyūbu* ritual. See *Jionji shugen shiryō: zuroku*, ed. Yamagataken Sagae shi kyōiku iinkai (Sagae: Yamagataken Sagae shi kyōiku iinkai shōgai gakushūka rekishi bunka kei, 2013), 23.

<sup>111</sup>. In the Edo period the division of the public office for the administration of the Shōnai region and villages were: governor of the region (*gundai* 郡代), which was limited to families with an annual income of more than three hundred *koku*, vice-governor of the region (*koori bugyō* 郡奉行), district administrator (*daikan* 代官), village chief (*ōgimoi* 大肝煎), vice-village chief (*soeyaku* 添役), and neighborhood chief (*otona* 長人). Rich peasants could aspire to the last three offices of the bureaucratic system. For more details see *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 214-220.

<sup>112</sup>. The village name Ōami means “big net,” which was a hunting tool used to catch the birds that flew between trees.

Gongen 日光権現 to hunt on every mountain in Japan as a reward for their help.<sup>113</sup> Even the culinary customs of the populations of these villages were considerably different from the normal diet of the other agricultural villages in the Shōnai plain because of the large quantity of meat from hunting. We will see in the next chapter that this dietary component of the villagers had an impact on the eating restrictions of the ascetics of Yudono.

The relationships between main and sub-temples (*honmatsu ji* 本末寺) concerning the four *bettōji* of Yudono were not entirely clear in the early Edo period. As we have already seen, in late medieval the two *uraguchi* temples Dainichiji and Hondōji were considered *matsuji* of Hōzōin, which was part of Jionji in the village of Sagae. By contrast, the two *omoteguchi* temples Chūrenji and Dainichibō were probably not affiliated to any main temple (*muhonji* 無本寺) before Genroku 元禄 (1688–1704) era. After this period Daigoji 醍醐寺 became the *honji* of Chūrenji, and Ko'ikebō 小池坊, part of Hasedera 長谷寺, the *honji* of Dainichibō.<sup>114</sup>

On the other hand, the expansion of the authority of the four *bettōji* of Yudono reached other provinces in Tōhoku and Kantō. For instance, Dainichiji had various *matsuji* in the provinces of Dewa, Rikuzen 陸前, Iwaki 岩城, and Iwashiro 岩代.<sup>115</sup> The *matsuji* of Hondōji were concentrated in the areas of Maruyama, Yonezawa 米沢 in southern part of Dewa province, Echigo and Kazusa 上総 provinces.<sup>116</sup> Chūrenji and Dainichibō also had various *matsuji*, which were scattered in the Shōnai plain, northern Dewa, Echigo, and probably

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<sup>113</sup>. The *Yamadachi kongen no maki* is preserved at Niiyama Jinja 新山神社 in the present Asahimura village. See *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 494.

<sup>114</sup>. *Asahimura shi: Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 136.

<sup>115</sup>. Iwaki province corresponds to the present Miyagi prefecture and Iwashiro overlaps with the western part of Fukushima prefecture.

<sup>116</sup>. Kazusa province corresponds to the northern part of the present Chiba prefecture.



included also some southern zones of Ezochi 蝦夷地.<sup>117</sup>

The *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]* 湯殿山由来並別当四[ヶ持], written by a Dainichibō monk in Bunka 文化 1 (1804), described the religious groups associated with the four *bettōji* of Yudono.<sup>118</sup> It is important to take into account that this document refers to the social components of the four temples in the late Edo period. Therefore, we have to consider that the internal organization and denomination of the religious groups active in the cultic centers of Yudono might have been different in late medieval or the early Edo period.

According to this source, the four *bettō* of Yudono belonged to the Shingi 新義 branch of the Shingon School.<sup>119</sup> Inside the precincts of Hondōji there were six lodging buildings (*tacchū* 塔中), which were used as residences for the fully ordained monks (*seisō*) who belonged to the Shingon School. The peasants (*hyakushō*) who worked as *annai sendatsu* and were affiliated with this temple were not subject to *corvée* by the Shōnai domain, such as the organization of post-horses (*tenma* 伝馬) or maintenance work for the village (*murayaku* 村役). At Hondōji there were seventy *annai sendatsu* that resided in the temple and were directly governed by the monks. There were also other *annai sendatsu* that were associated with Hondōji, but did not reside in the temple. This second group of *annai sendatsu* were village-guides (*sato sendatsu* 里先達) who were affiliated with the *matsuji* of Hondōji and

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<sup>117</sup>. In Bunsei 10 (1827) Tetsumonkai 鐵門海, an ascetic associated with Chūrenji, spread the cult of Yudono in the villages of Matsumae 松前, Esashi 江差, and Hakodate 函館 in the Ezo territory, which corresponds to the present Hokkaidō 北海道. In the village of Matsumae he stopped at Kyōdōji 経堂寺 where he performed various religious services for the local parishioners and sponsored the production of two votive stelae dedicated to Yudono. It is not clear if this temple actually became a *matsuji* of Chūrenji, but in the late Edo period a considerable number of the pilgrims who traveled to Yudono came from these northern areas, which were also included in the *kasumi* administered by the Haguro *shugenja*. See Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu* (Tōkyō: Chūō shoin, 1974), 109-116.

<sup>118</sup>. The last two characters of the title have been eaten by insects, but they most probably formed the compound *shikaji* 四ヶ寺, “Four Temple.” The *Yudonosan yurai narabi ni bettō shi[kaji]* is included in the *Dainichibō monjō*. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 108-113.

<sup>119</sup>. Kakuban 覚鑿 (1095-1143) is considered to be the founder of the Shingi branch, the headquarters of which is Negoroji 根来寺.

were scattered in various provinces. During the pilgrimage season these non-resident *annai sendatsu* escorted the pilgrims from their original villages to the foot of Yudono where they were assigned to the resident *annai sendatsu* in order to access the sacred territory of Dewa Sanzan. In other words, the non-resident *annai sendatsu* played the role of agents or couriers who accompanied the pilgrims during the first part of the pilgrimage from their villages to Yudono. Once arriving in the proximity of the sacred mountain the pilgrims came under the jurisdiction of the resident *annai sendatsu* who lived in the four *bettōji* at the foot of Yudono. Among the resident *annai sendatsu* of Hondōji there were peasants and field hands (*goryō hyakushō* 御料百姓) who cultivated the land in the temple's estates (*jiryō*). These two types of farmer were allowed to keep their hair long (*sōhatsu* 惣髪) and wear ceremonial clothes (*kakegoromo* 掛衣) when they met with pilgrims. In the territories around Hondōji there were also other *matsuji*, which belonged to Jionji in Sagae.

The situation inside the precincts of Dainichiji was identical to Hondōji, but some of the resident *annai sendatsu* of Dainichiji had shaved heads (*maegami* 前髪) instead of long hair. The field hands of Dainichiji could also become *annai sendatsu* and had long hair.

The front entrance (*omoteguchi*) Chūrenji multiplex consisted of ten halls (*in* 院), eight of which were built inside the precincts of the temple and two outside in the village of Shimekake. The land on which the Chūrenji buildings were erected belonged to the peasants of this village and was subjected to regular taxation by the administration of the Shōnai domain, because Chūrenji did not have any vermilion seals (*shuin* 朱印) from the Tokugawa shogunate and were not considered as a tax-exempt land. The Chūrenji multiplex was not administered by fully ordained Shingon monks (*seisō*), but governed by resident “ascetic-monks” (*shugen no shuto* 修験之衆徒). The non-resident *shugen no shuto* of Chūrenji were

scattered in various provinces but they did not play the role of *sendatsu* in Michinoku province. Therefore, there were fifteen non-resident *annai sendatsu* who were affiliated with Chūrenji and specifically worked as *sendatsu* for the pilgrims who came from Michinoku province. Among these group of non-resident *annai sendatsu* there were people who kept their hair long during the whole year and others who wore it in a forelock on the top of the head during the pilgrimage high season.

The Dainichibō multiplex consisted of twelve halls. Eight were located inside the perimeter of the temple and four were situated in the village of Ōami. The land on which Dainichibō was built belonged to the peasants (*hyakushōchi* 百姓地) of Ōami, who were not exempted from the taxation and *corvée* system of the Shōnai domain. The *shugen no shuto* of Dainichibō were also divided into resident and non-resident. There were fifteen *annai sendatsu* associated with Dainichibō who worked as *sendatsu* only for pilgrims from Michinoku province, because the Dainichibō non-resident *shugen no shuto* did not play that role for the Michinoku pilgrims.

The *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi*[*kaji*] also reports that Hondōji and Dainichiji specialized in exorcisms and propitiatory rituals (*kitō* 祈禱) to preserve the security of the land (*tenka anzen* 天下安全) and ensure an abundance of crops (*gokoku jōju* 五穀成就). These religious services could be requested at the administrative office of the temple (*honbō* 本坊), which was located in both multiplexes of the *uraguchi*. Chūrenji and Dainichibō also performed exorcisms and propitiatory rituals for the peace of the land (*tenka taihei* 天下泰平), the abundance of the crops, the security of the lord of the domain (*ryōshu anzen* 領主安全), and harmony between lord and vassals (*kunshi wagō* 君臣和合).

At Hondōji and Dainichiji, other monks or *shugenja* substituted for the chief monk or

*shugenja* who worked in the administrative offices of the *honbō* when they were absent. The monks did not directly collect the pilgrims's offerings and were exempted from every type of work. In these two temples there were also low ranking servants (*shitabataraki* 下仵) who cleaned, repaired the roofs, served food, cooked, and distilled *sake* 酒. Such workers who were hired by the monks to do various types of manual work were also called temple-men (*tera otoko* 寺男). At Chūrenji and Dainichibō there were no resident monks, only *shugen no shuto*, and even here there were *tera otoko* who took care of the maintenance of the temple. The *shugen no shuto* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō distributed talismans (*ofuda*) to the *daimyō* of the Shōnai domain during the first and last period of the year.

This document clearly shows the high level of symbiosis between the sacred space of the *bettōji* and the profane space of the village. In the case of the four villages associated with the four *bettōji* of Yudono the usual dichotomy between 'sacred space' and 'profane space' is totally inadequate to describe a type of spatiality, which embraced, at the same time, both 'ordinary' and the 'extra-ordinary' space and time as a single indivisible entity.

## **5.2. *Shugen no Shuto*: Ascetic-monks**

The most important term appearing in the *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]* is the expression "ascetic-monks" (*shugen no shuto*). This Buddhist term indicated the special group of Yudono ascetics usually called "permanent ascetics" (*issei gyōnin*). In the medieval period the word *shuto* described groups of low-ranking monks (*gesō* 下僧) which lived in the

proximity of the temple halls and were also known as “people of the hall” (*dōshu* 堂衆).<sup>120</sup> According to the *Daizan hōin jōjō kishōji* 大懺法院条々起請事, composed in Jōgen 承元 1 (1205), there were in Buddhist temples four categories of monk: exoteric monks (*kenshū* 顯宗), esoteric monks (*mitsushū* 密宗), ascetic monks (*genja* or *gensha*), and preaching masters (*sekkyōshi* 説経師).<sup>121</sup> The *shuto* or *dōshu* were included in the *genja* group, because they were experts in extreme ascetic practices (Skt. *dhūta*; *tsuta* or *kugyō*).

The original Buddhist meaning of the word *dhūta* underlines the performance of Buddhist ascetic practices and the status of total commitment of the ascetic to these psychophysical exercises so that he completely disregards even the most elementary worldly matters such as drink, food, or clothes. *Dhūta* practitioners were renunciants who rejected the ordinary world in order to exclusively focus on ascesis. In Japan the mountain recesses (*sanchū* 山中) were considered to be the best locations for performing *dhūta* and leaving the world. In the twelfth century, the original meaning of the terms *tsuta* and *kugyō* started to be associated with another word: *shugen*.<sup>122</sup> This term underlined the process of empowerment (*genriki*) made by the ascetic (*gyōja*) through the practice (*shugyō* 修行) of extreme ascesis (*tsuta* or *kugyō*). In other words, in Japan the teleology of *tsuta* changed from mastering *yogic* disciplines per se to the attainment of magical powers (*jujutsuryoku*) through the practice of ascetic techniques. The character *gen* 験, used to create the compound *shugen*, derived from

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<sup>120</sup>. In the eleventh century, warrior-monks (*sōhei* 僧兵) were also included in the category of *shuto*. See Sōgō Bukkyō daijiten, ed. Sōgō bukkyō daijiten henshū iinkai (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2005) 674.

<sup>121</sup>. See Sekiguchi Makiko, *Shugendō kyōdan seiritsu shi: Tōzanha o tōshite* (Tōkyō: Bensei shuppan, 2009), 7.

<sup>122</sup>. The first appearance of the term *shugen* is in a passage dated Jōgan 貞観 10 (868) of the *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三代実録. In this episode Emperor Seiwa 清和 (850–880) rewarded a monk (*shamon* 沙門) for attaining a supreme degree of ascetic power (*shugen*) after one year of seclusion in the recesses (*shinzan* 深山) of Mount Yoshino 吉野. See Anne Bouchy, “Du légitime et de l’illégitime dans le Shugendō,” *Légitimés, légitimations: La construction de l’autorité au Japon* [coll. *Études Thématiques* 16], eds. Anne Bouchy, Guillaume Carré, François Lachaud (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2005), 121.

another compound *reigen* 靈驗, that described the superhuman powers that characterized the gods. The practitioners of *shugen* were human beings who tried to get the same power as the gods through the performance of ascetic practices.

The communities of *shuto* or *dōshu* who lived in the Buddhist temples provided the magical powers (*gen*) attained through the performance of ascetic practices (*shugyō*) in the mountains, for the devotees of the temples. Hosting groups of *shuto* in their temples, the monks were able to put their parishioners in contact with experts in ascetic practices who were difficult to access because they usually resided on sacred mountains. The *shuto* spent long periods of self-seclusion at the *gyōba* in the mountains and once they accumulated enough ascetic power they descended to the temples in order to share this power with the devotees who lived in rural villages or urban centers.

For the *shugen no shuto* the progression inside the temple hierarchy started and, at the same time, ended with the simple ceremony accepting the Buddhist ethical principles (*jukai* 受戒).<sup>123</sup> The *shuto* were not allowed to follow the regular monastic career and did not take part to the consecration ceremony (*kanjō* 灌頂). The continuous performance of ascetic practices and the accumulation of supernatural powers that derived from them was the exclusive reason why the *shuto* were maintained inside the religious structures. Standard monks practiced asceticism as a temporary ‘means’ to obtain full ordination, *shuto* performed it as the goal of their entire life. The first two characters (*issei* 一世) of the name *issei gyōnin* exactly underlined this sort of “life-long” devotion or commitment of the renunciant (*gyōnin*) to ascetic practices.

The *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono were a local variation of these groups of ascetics

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<sup>123</sup>. The *jukai* ritual could be administered to lay men, lay women, male renunciants, and female renunciants. It was not an exclusive ceremony for Buddhist monks. See Ryūichi Abe, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 48-55.

(*tsuta no gyōja* 斗敷の行者) and were defined as *shugen no shuto* by the fully ordained Buddhist monks of the four *bettōji* we saw in the *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]*.<sup>124</sup> The *issei gyōnin* were different from the fully ordained Shingon monks and also from the *shugenja* who worked as *annai sendatsu*. The exclusion of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono from participation in the *nyūbu* rituals made it impossible for them to have access to the Shugendō hierarchy, where ranking depended on the number of times a *shugenja* performed the *nyūbu* ritual. In other words, the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono were *shugen* experts without being *shugenja*, and honored the monastic precepts without being fully ordained monks. They were a sort of ‘double exception’ from the point of view of both the Shugendō “promotion system” (*shōshin kaitei* 昇進階梯) and the monastic hierarchical system. Nevertheless, as we will see in detail in the next chapters, they always played a pivotal role in the sacred landscape of Yudono and interacted with *shugenja* and monks to maintain and reinforce the religious traditions and institutions of the mountain.

The *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]* clearly shows that Chūrenji and Dainichibō were not just simple *bettōji* like Hondōji and Dainichiji, but were *bettōji* run by *shugen no shuto*. Therefore, Chūrenji and Dainichibō were “ascetic-temples” (*gyōninderā* 行人寺) administered by *issei gyōnin* who were flanked by *shugenja* who played the role of *annai sendatsu* for pilgrims. Other groups of *issei gyōnin* were also affiliated with Hondōji and

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<sup>124</sup>. Sekiguchi Makiko analyzed the pivotal role played by the groups of *dōshū* affiliated with Shōgōin and Tōdaiji 東大寺 in the formation of independent groups of *sendatsu* (*sendatsu shūdan*) at the end of the fourteenth century. This constitutional process of the non-Honzan-ha *sendatsu shūdan* culminated with the ratification of the Tōzan-ha branch of Shugendō by Tokugawa Ieyasu. We may suppose that the *shugen no shuto* of Dewa Sanzan had a similar influence on the formative process, which brought about the creation of Shugendō practitioners at Dewa Sanzan. It is possible that the first groups of *shugenja* at Dewa Sanzan derived from a transformation of some groups of *issei gyōnin* who were practicing asceticism there under the name of *shugen no shuto* and decided to become *shugenja*. All the specific stages of this complex transformational process, which started in medieval and ended in early modern period, are very difficult to trace in the case of Dewa Sanzan because of the scarcity of pre-Edo written sources. For the relationship between *dōshū* and Tōzan-ha *sendatsu shūdan*, see Sekiguchi Makiko, *Shugendō kyōdan seiritsu shi: Tōzanha o tōshite*, 106-108, 110-112, 118-120.

Dainichiji, but these two temples were administered by fully ordained Shingon monks, and *issei gyōnin*, who were not proper *shugenja* and not even proper monks, were totally cut off from the religious hierarchies of these two temples. By contrast, at Chūrenji and Dainichiji the *bettō* of the temple was always an *issei gyōnin* and this is the reason why the author of the *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]* specified that Chūrenji and Dainichibō multiplexes were run by *shugen no shuto* and not by *seisō*.

The religious tradition of Yudonsan was based on the interaction of three social actors: monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin*. These three typologies of religious professional were all equally indispensable for the maintenance of the institutional and ritual mechanisms of the mountain. Shingon monks incarnated the Buddhist sectarian aspect of the mountain, *shugenja* took care of the economic administration of the pilgrims who came to Yudono, and *issei gyōnin* performed extreme ascetic practices (*kugyō*) in order to acquire supernatural powers to bestow on the devotees of the Yudonosan *kō* and private patrons.

Even if the *issei gyōnin* were ostracized from the hierarchical systems of monks and *shugenja*, this did not prevent them from organizing an internal system of supervisors (*gyōnin furegashira* 行人触頭) to control the ritual activities of the *issei gyōnin* who resided at Yudono and those who were scattered in the various provinces of Tōhoku and Kantō. For instance, the last regulation of the *Yudonosan issei gyōnin hatto jōjō no koto* 湯殿山一世行人法度条々之事, written by the Chūrenji *bettō* in Kanbun 10 (1670), states that: “The ascetics who reside in Edo and other domains (*Edo narabi ni kuniguni* 江戸並国々) must follow the directives of the ascetic-supervisors (*bonten gashira* 梵天頭) when performing rituals for the *nirvāṇa* and birth of the Buddha. They must perform other rituals also during



the new and last periods of the year.”<sup>125</sup> These *bonten gashira* were probably local supervisors whose jurisdiction was limited to the single ascetic group they led.

Another document, called *Yudonosan-ha gyōnin* 湯殿山派行人, describes a more complex network of ascetic-supervisors that also had urban and regional competence over various groups of *issei gyōnin*. The *Yudonosan-ha gyōnin* was written and signed by all four *bettō* in Kansei 寛政 3 (1792). It reads:

*Issei gyōnin* are associated with the four chief temples (*bettō shikaji*) [of Yudono]. They perform the ceremony of the precepts (*seikai no sahō* 誓戒之作法) which consists of making a vow in front of Gohōzen that manifests (*gongen* 権現) the Dharma body [of Dainichi Nyorai].<sup>126</sup> They take for themselves names such as Shinkai 信海 or Sonkai 尊海. This is called [the ritual of] the *kai* name (*kaigō* 海号). The worship services (*gongyō* 勤行) performed by the *issei gyōnin* during their entire life (*isshō no aida* 一生之間) consist of using the Supreme Fire or Perforating Fire (*jōka kiribi* 上火鑽火) avoiding the ordinary fire (*hirabi* 平火). These ascetics are also scattered in various domains. From ancient times in this land they have been associated with the four chief temples and had a hierarchy that comprises ascetics (*gyōnin* 行人), local superintendents [of ascetics] (*füregashira* 触頭), and supervisors [of the ascetics] (*yakuin* 役院). The Hondōji supervisor [of the *issei gyōnin*] for the city of Edo resides in Hōjō-in 宝乗院 in Tadokoroguchichō 田所口町,<sup>127</sup> the Dainichiji [supervisor] resides in Fukuhon-in 福本院 at Hatchōbori 八丁堀, the Chūrenji [supervisor] stays in Renshu-in 蓮珠院 in Nihonbashi-aomonochō 日本橋青物町, and the Dainichibō [supervisor] is located at Fukushō-in 福性院 in Kanasugi 金杉.<sup>128</sup> The supervisors that reside in the area of Edo control also the other supervisors who live in nearby provinces.<sup>129</sup>

All these texts show that in the Edo period the institutional and ritual structures of

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<sup>125</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 131.

<sup>126</sup>. The term *seikai* indicates the acceptance of the Buddhist ethical principles (Skt. *śīla*; *kai* 戒) by a lay practitioner. Therefore, the Buddhist ordination of the *issei gyōnin* simply consisted of receiving the precepts (*jukai*). During this ritual they pledged to conduct their lives in accord with the bodhisattva precepts.

<sup>127</sup>. The Edo district of Tadokoro-chō corresponds to the present Nihonbashi.

<sup>128</sup>. The district of Kanasugi is now included in Funabashi 船橋市 city in Chiba prefecture. Here there was a great concentration of Yudonosan *kō*, which have remained active until the present time.

<sup>129</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 95.

Yudono were administered by the synergetic collaboration of Shingon monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* or *shugen no shuto*. These three groups were, at the same time, dependent and independent one from the other. Each group of religious professional was in competition with the others, but could not survive without interacting with its rivals. This sort of internal tension between the three groups was the force on which was based the sacred landscape of Mount Yudono. Shingon monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* had specific religious competences that could not be reciprocally replaced. Therefore, even if Shingon monks retained the highest social status as official members of Buddhist institutions, the *issei gyōnin* who were apparently banished to the bottom of the social ladder actually were the center of a strong devotional faith, which was focused on their unique ascetic practices. *Shugenja* too were greatly respected and played a pivotal role in spreading Yudono faith and organizing the logistic aspects of pilgrimage.

## **6. The Struggle of Yudono Against Haguro and the Relationships with the Tokugawa Bakufu**

### **6.1. Ten'yū and the Invention of Tradition**

A passage of the *Haguro sannai daichō hikiroku* 羽黒山内大帳秘記録 (Edo period) describes the divisions of the Buddhist Schools at Haguro before the advent of Ten'yū (ca 1594-1674) that drastically changed the sectarian equilibrium of Dewa Sanzan and the construction of the religious identities of Haguro and Yudono (See Fig. 1.9).

Before Ten'yū, in this mountain [Haguro] there were three types of Buddhist Schools (*sanshū* 三宗): exoteric Schools (*ken* 顯), esoteric Schools (*mitsu* 密), and Zen Schools (*zen* 禪). Even if all the temples and shrines in the Shōnai area were administered according to the Shugen protocol (Shugen *no hō* 修験の法), they were not associated with head-temples (*honji*).<sup>130</sup>

This text specifically focuses on the typologies of Buddhist Schools present on the territory of Haguro. Nevertheless, also Gassan, which was directly administered by the Haguro *bettō* from at least the sixteenth century, and Yudono were in a similar situation. The expression “exoteric Schools” (*ken*) refers to the Tendai and Jōdo 浄土 Schools, which were extremely diffuse in the Tōhoku area from the Heian period, and the reference to “Zen Schools” indicates the Sōtō 曹洞 School. Therefore, before the seventeenth century the territory of Dewa Sanzan hosted a melange of Buddhist temples and Schools, which were unified by the common acceptance of the Shugendō protocol for the performance of specific rituals and ceremonies. There was not a single Buddhist School that extended its religious monopoly on the three sacred mountains of Dewa. Tendai, Jōdo, Shingon, and Zen temples coexisted together with the other Shugendō institutions and *gyōnindera*.

Even if different Buddhist Schools were equally represented at Dewa Sanzan, during the Heian period the Tendai School played a special role in connection with the political power of the Fujiwara 藤原 family. In the eleventh century Fujiwara Moromichi 藤原師通 (1062-1099), the head a powerful local clan of Hiraizumi, administered vast territories also in the Dewa province. After Moromichi, his descendants continued to govern the Dewa region and the headquarters of this Fujiwara family was located at Chūsonji 中尊寺 in Hiraizumi, a Tendai temple built in Tennin 天仁 1 (1108) by Fujiwara Kiyohira 藤原清衡 (1056-1128)

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<sup>130</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 12.

when he was nominated governor of Tōhoku. The Fujiwara family used the already widespread network of Tendai temples to govern and consolidate diplomatic alliances with the local military aristocracy. Tendai temples became the religious institutions through which the Fujiwara family imposed its hegemony on the northern territories of Honshū.<sup>131</sup> The Tendai temples of Shōnai also played this role of *trait d'union* between the Fujiwara political apparatus and their local retainers.

In the Kamakura period the Fujiwara government collapsed, but the members of the Kamakura *bakufu* had to make various efforts to convince the feudal lords of Shōnai who had developed important political ties with the members of the Fujiwara family to support the new shogunate of the Minamoto.<sup>132</sup> Minamoto no Yoritomo tried to break the strong fiduciary relationships that existed between the Tōhoku military aristocracy and the Fujiwara family, using Zen and Shingon temples as political tools to destroy the previous Fujiwara network of alliances based on Tendai temples. Zen and Shingon temples were supposed to act as pro-Minamoto Buddhist institutions, that allowed the Kamakura *bakufu* to bring under its control recalcitrant areas such as the Shōnai plain.

In other words, the Kamakura *bakufu* adopted the same strategy as the Fujiwara family, but instead of using Tendai institutions, it selected Zen and Shingon temples to control the territory. In spite of these vicissitudes Tendai Buddhism remained strongly rooted in the Shōnai territory, but it had to face the new strategy of the Kamakura *bakufu* that tried to favor Shingon and Zen Schools to overthrow the old Fujiwara order. This explains why before the

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<sup>131</sup>. Itō Kyōo, *Reizan to shinkō no sekai: Ōu no minshū to shinkō*, 23.

<sup>132</sup>. The historical enmity between the feudal lords of Dewa and the Kamakura *bakufu* was also represented in two famous *kabuki* 歌舞伎 plays, *Yoshitsune senbon zakura* 義経千本桜, composed in Kan'en 寛延 1 (1748), and *Kanjinchō* 勧進帳 written in Tenpō 11 (1840). In this last play the Lord of Dewa Togashi Saemon 富樫左衛門 allows Benkei 弁慶 and Yoshitsune to cross the borders of Dewa province in order to escape from the killers hired by Yoshitsune's elder brother Minamonoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147–1199).

appointment of Ten'yū as Haguro *bettō* in Kan'ei 7 (1630) the four most important temples of Haguro: Jakkōji, Kōtakuji 荒沢寺, Zenjōji 禪定寺, and Mannoji 満能寺 all belonged to the Shingon School. Ten'yū himself started his career as a Shingon monk using the Dharma-name of Yūyo 有誉.<sup>133</sup>

During the Sengoku 戦国 (1467–1573) and Azuchi-Momoyama 安土桃山 (1573–1600) periods the Buddhist institutions at Haguro, Gassan, and Yudono experienced a severe decline, as a result of continuous fighting between local warlords who wanted to maintain control over Dewa Sanzan for its strategical location. For instance, in Bunmei 文明 2 (1470) Mutō Masauji took for himself the title of Hagurosan *bettō* and his clan controlled the mountain until Bunroku 文禄 1 (1592) when Mogami Yoshiaki consolidated his authority over Dewa province.<sup>134</sup> Masauji became the lay-*bettō* (*zoku bettō* 俗別当) of Haguro and other Mutō retainers played the role of supervisors (*chōri* 長吏) of the religious activities performed by Haguro *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* throughout the entire territory of Dewa Sanzan. Until the end of the Azuchi-Momoyama period the person who held the title of *chōri* rotated every ten days and was selected from among the Haguro monks or the Mutō retainers according to the period. In one month there was an alternation of three *chōri*, but under Ten'yū this custom ended and the *chōri* office transformed into a permanent appointment.<sup>135</sup>

In Tenshō 11 (1583) the office of *bettō* was assigned to the monk Keishun 慶俊 who was a member of the Mutō family, but Keishun's authority over the mountain was extremely transitory. In Tenshō 17 (1589) the Uesugi 上杉 clan conquered the Shōnai plain and Naoe Kanetsugu, a retainer of Uesugi Kagekatsu 上杉景勝 (1556–1623), removed Keishun from

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<sup>133</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō* (Tōkyō: Iwata Shoin, 2005), 59-60.

<sup>134</sup>. Gaynor Sekimori, "Haguro Shugendō and the Separation of Buddha and Kami Worship (*shinbutsu bunri*), 1868-1890" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2000), 67.

<sup>135</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō*, 163.

the *bettō* office in order to replace him with Sonryō 尊量. When Mogami Yoshiaki started his military campaign against the Uesugi clan, he asked another Haguro monk called Yūgen 宥源 (1550-1617) to perform rituals to support his military expansion. During this turbulent period on Mount Haguro, the forty-sixth *bettō* Sonryō aligned himself with the Uesugi clan, while another influential monk of the same mountain, Yūgen, supported the Mogami clan.

Inside the Mogami family there were further political divisions, which had an impact on the religious activities performed by the Haguro *bettō*. Mogami Yoshiaki and his first son Iechika 家親 (1582–1617) were allies of Tokugawa Ieyasu, but Yoshiaki's third son Yoshichika 義親 supported Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536–1596). Therefore, Sonryō performed rituals for the victory of Naoe Kanetsugu and Mogami Yoshichika who were allied with Hideyoshi, and Yūgen did the same thing for Mogami Yoshiaki and Iechika who supported Ieyasu. When Yoshiaki finally prevailed over his adversaries, he nominated Yūgen as the forty-seventh *bettō* of Haguro and formally restored the previous Keishun's line of *bettō* that Naoe Kanetsugu had tried to replace with Sonryō.<sup>136</sup> Ten'yū was a disciple of Yūshun 宥俊 (1580–1661) whose blood lineage (*kechimiyaku* 血脈) directly derived from Yūgen and Keishun.<sup>137</sup>

In 1630 Yūshun transmitted the title of *bettō* to his disciple Ten'yū who also accepted for himself the offices of *chōri* and *shugyō* 執行, which gave him special jurisdiction over ritual and ceremonial matters at Haguro and Gassan. In Kan'ei 11 (1634) Yūshun and Ten'yū went to Edo to pay their respects to the influential Tendai monk Tenkai 天海 (ca 1536–1643) who had been extremely close to Ieyasu and organized his posthumous deification at the Tōshōgū

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<sup>136</sup>. In Genna 元和 8 (1622) Sonryō was condemned to death by lapidation (*ishi kotsumi* 石こつみ) or drowning (*tara no ki no sumaki* たらの木の簀巻). The Haguro *shugenja* were ordered to perform the execution, but Sonryō preferred to commit suicide by cutting his belly (*seppuku* 切腹).

<sup>137</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō* (Tōkyō: Hoseikan, 1999), 209-210.

東照宮 of Nikkō. This encounter with Tenkai changed the life of Ten'yū and the destiny of Dewa Sanzan. It was in this period between 1634 and Kanbun 8 (1668), when Ten'yū was exiled to the remote island of Nijima 新島, that the religious identity of Dewa Sanza underwent a radical modification.

In Kan'ei 18 (1641) Ten'yū abandoned the Shingon School, embraced Tendai teachings, and became a disciple of Tenkai in order to avoid the incorporation of Haguro Shugendō institutions into the Honzan-ha branch of Shugendō. He consequently changed his name from Yūyo to Ten'yū using the first character (*ten* 天) of his new master Tenkai. Ten'yū cultivated the ambitious project to transform the institutional status of the Haguro multiplex Jakkōji into a sub-temple (*inge* 院家) directly affiliated with Tenkai's Kan'eiji 寛永寺 in Edo.<sup>138</sup> At that time Tenkai was trying to obtain the permission of the *bakufu* to host a monk-priest (*monzeki* 門跡) who belonged to the imperial family at Kan'eiji.<sup>139</sup> Ten'yū thought that if Jakkōji succeeded in becoming an *inge* of Kan'eiji, he could obtain the prestigious title of Daisōzu 大僧都 for himself and the entire mountain of Haguro could have enormous benefits from this alliance with one of the most powerful Buddhist temples in Edo. Even if Ten'yū could not enter the official line of the Dharma successors of Tenkai because his household was not related with the imperial nobility (*kuge* 公家) of Kyōto, he overcame even this obstacle by

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<sup>138</sup>. Kan'eiji was built in Kan'ei 2 (1625) in the city of Edo and was also known through its mountain-name (*sangō* 山号) of "Eastern Hieizan" (Tōeizan 東叡山).

<sup>139</sup>. In Shōō 承応 3 (1654) the Tokugawa *bakufu* confirmed Shuchō Shinnō 守澄親王 (1634–1680), a son of the Emperor Gomizunoo 後水尾 (1596-1680), as chief monk (*monshu* 門主) of Kan'eiji and the following year of Tōshōgū at Nikkō with the Dharma name of Kōkai 公海. In Enpō 延宝 1 (1673) Kōkai was also appointed as *monshu* of the Tendai multiplex at Mount Hieizan 比叡山 with the title of Rinnōji no Miya 輪王寺宮. During his life Tenkai strongly requested the Tokugawa *bakufu* to allocate a *monzeki* for Kan'eiji in order to legitimate the authority of this temple as supervisor of Tendai School activities in the Kantō area. For more details see Gaynor Sekimori, "Haguro Shugendō and the Separation of Buddha and Kami Worship (*shinbutsu bunri*), 1868-1890," 69.

adopting the noble Kakujin Yūkai 覺樹院宥海 as his successor.<sup>140</sup>

These unilateral decisions taken by Ten'yū had a tremendous impact on the religious institutions of Haguro, and of Yudono as well. Transforming Jakkōji into a subsidiary temple of Kanei'ji meant that all the Buddhist institutions of Haguro lost their autonomy to issue religious titles. Also the *bettō* office was formally removed from Haguro in order to make it nominally accessible to the Kan'eiji monks in Edo. The local Shugendō institutions interpreted Ten'yū's policy as a possible threat to their authority over the territory of Haguro. In other words, Ten'yū's strategy was based on the accumulation of social capital, which derived from the development of close connections with the central power that was represented by Kan'eiji, Tenkai, and the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Nevertheless, in order to bring about this approach to the center, Ten'yū had to sacrifice the local independence of Haguro Buddhist and Shugendō institutions, whose authority was based on local religious systems. This institutional revolution not only created frictions between Ten'yū, the other Haguro monks, and *shugenja*, but also brought about an inevitable metamorphosis of Haguro from a mountain characterized by a mix of different Buddhist Schools to a mountain formally dedicated to the Tendai tradition. In Shōō 1 (1652) Ten'yū embarked on the complex operation of rewriting the *engi* of Haguro and Gassan in order to create an *ad hoc* Tendai identity, which hitherto had not existed in monopolistic terms, for these two mountains. We will closely analyze some examples of the Dewa Sanzan *engi* in chapter four, but for now we will take into account the description provided by Eric Hobsbawm about the historical mechanisms that take place at the moment of inventing a tradition.

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<sup>140</sup>. Yūkai was the sixteen-year-old son of Minase Kanetoshi 水無瀬兼俊 (1593–1656) who was a member of the Kyōto aristocracy and an agent of the Tokugawa shogunate. For more details see Gaynor Sekimori, “Haguro Shugendō and the Separation of Buddha and Kami Worship (*shinbutsu bunri*), 1868-1890,” 70.



‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. [...] In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.<sup>141</sup>

Ten’yū invented a Tendai past for Haguro in order to create a legitimizing discourse which could be used to change the present of the entire Dewa Sanzan. Ten’yū’s project for Dewa Sanzan can be summed up through the expression “three mountains in one” (*sanzan soku issan* 三山即一山).<sup>142</sup> Stressing the connection between the Tendai School and Haguro, Ten’yū tried to extend his control over Yudono in order to include the religious institutions of this mountain under the umbrella of the Tendai School, which was locally represented by the Haguro shrine-temple complex. As a reaction against this attempt of Ten’yū to unify Dewa Sanzan under the flag of the Tendai School and Haguro, the four *bettō* of Yudono felt the urgency of inventing their own religious tradition. They declared that Yudono had always been a sacred mountain associated with the Shingon School. This institutional clash between Haguro and Yudono, which involved a spectacular fictionalization of the respective religious traditions and sectarian origins, is known as the “reciprocal construction thorough doctrinal disputes” (*ryōzō hōron*).

The invention of a unitary Shingon tradition, which the four *bettō* tried to superimpose on the sacred landscape of Yudono, developed as a sort of contrastive effect to tame the authority of the Tendai tradition, which Ten’yū artificially decided to associate with Haguro. Ten’yū

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<sup>141</sup>. Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing of Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1, 2.

<sup>142</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō*, 72. It is also interesting to take into account that the categorization of three entities united in one unique superior entity (*isshin sangan* 一心三觀) is essential in Tendai scholastics.

did not understand that emphasizing the exclusive affiliation of Haguro with the Tendai School could only result in pushing Yudono in a diametrically opposite direction. The monks of Yudono created an *ad hoc* Shingon identity, which hitherto did not exist in exclusive terms, to assert their independence from Haguro. It should be remembered that the authority of the Haguro *bettō* was exclusively concentrated in the hands of one monk, while Yudono was administered by four different *bettō* who came from different monastic institutions and ascetic groups and often had difficulties speaking in one voice.

In order to find a pretext through which Haguro could expand its authority over Yudono Ten'yū tried various expedients. In one case he requested a hydrological inspection of the valleys between Haguro and Gassan in search of a spring of hot water, which could be used to prove that Gohōzen actually originated in the territory controlled by Haguro. This hydrological research found a new spring at the foot of Gassan, but unfortunately the water was cold, and so was not suitable for the invention of the tradition that Ten'yū was trying to realize.<sup>143</sup>

For Ten'yū the inclusion of Yudono in the sphere of influence of Haguro essentially meant the possibility of controlling the rights to perform rituals (*saishiken* 祭祀権) of Yudono. When the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono made rituals for their devotees, or the *shugenja* sold protective talismans to parishioners, or hosted and guided pilgrims within the sacred mountain, all the proceeds deriving from the economic side of these religious activities were distributed among the four *bettōji* of Yudono and their subsidiary temples. There were no external authorities who could take quotas from the income that derived from the religious practices performed by monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* who were regularly affiliated with Yudono. Nevertheless, Ten'yū attempted to break this system, claiming that Yudono rituals

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<sup>143</sup>. Matsumoto Akira, *Nihon no miira butsu* (Tōkyō: Rinsen shoten, 2002), 65.

originated from the Tendai protocol of Haguro. Therefore, it was perfectly legitimate for Haguro Buddhist and Shugendō institutions to claim for themselves the ritual rights of Yudono, that had illegally usurped the authority of Haguro based on the Tendai tradition. The standard reply of the four *bettō* of Yudono to these accusations was that they did not condone the Tendai authority of Haguro because they belonged to the Shingon School.

In Kan'ei 16 (1639) Ten'yū decided to file a lawsuit (*soshō* 訴訟) against Yudono to the superintendent for shrines and temples (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行) in Edo.<sup>144</sup> Ten'yū claimed that the four *bettōji* of Yudono were *matsuji* of Jakkōji because Yudono was founded (*kaizan* 開山) by Nōjo Taishi 能除太子, the founder of Haguro, and the Supreme Fire (*jōka* 上火) ritual of Yudono derived from the Permanent Fire (*jōka* 常火) ritual of Haguro. Ten'yū implied also that the *shugenja* affiliated with the temples of Yudono did not have the legal authorization to print and distribute the protective ox-bezoar talismans, which were an exclusive monopoly of Haguro. In defense, the petition of the four *bettōji* of Yudono specified that there was no proof that the four *bettōji* of Yudono were *matsuji* of Jakkōji. Moreover, Mount Yudono had been founded by Kōbō Daishi Kūkai, and also the Supreme Fire ritual had been included in the specific religious tradition of Yudono since it was directly transmitted by Hachidai Kongō Dōji to Kūkai at the moment of his entrance into the mountain. Concerning the extremely lucrative distribution of the ox-bezoar talismans, the four *bettō* rejected the accusation of Ten'yū, pointing out that the ox-bezoar talismans were not a prerogative of Haguro. The verdict of the *bakufu* arrived in the same year and stated that the four *bettōji* of Yudono could

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<sup>144</sup>. The *jisha bugyō* office was created in Kan'ei 12 (1635) and had two primary aims: the elimination of subversive religious movements such as some fringes of Nichirenshū 日蓮宗 and Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, which favored the insurgence of local riots (*ikki* 一揆), and the prevention of antisocial or immoral religious practices. See Nishimura Ryō, "Kinsei bukkyō ron," in *Nihon shisōshi kōza 3 kinsei: The Perikan History of Japanese Thought 3: The Early Modern Period*, eds. Karube Tadashi, Kurozumi Makoto, Sato Hirō, Sueki Fumihiko, Tajiri Yūichirō (Tōkyō: Perikansha, 2012), 119.

not be considered as *matsuji* of Jakkōji. Therefore, Ten'yū could not make any demands on them.<sup>145</sup>

Ten'yū did not give up, and in Kanbun 6 (1666) filed another lawsuit against Yudono. He reasserted that Jakkōji was the *honji* of the four *bettōji* of Yudono and Haguro *bettō* should have the right to appoint the *bettō* of the four temples of Yudono. This time the defensive strategy adopted by the four *bettō* was slightly different from the first petition because they asked the *jisha bugyō* to formally recognize that the religious tradition (*hōryū* 法流) of Yudono belonged to the Shingon School and consequently was completely separate from the religious tradition of Haguro, which was based on the Tendai School. For instance, the *bettō* of Yudono replied to Ten'yū's accusations about the inconsistency of the Shingon tradition at Yudono:

According to what is said by the monk [Ten'yū] of Hōzen'in 宝善院<sup>146</sup> there were only three generations of Shingon monks at Yudono. In the past they simply performed *shugen* activities (*shugenshoku* 修験職). If one looks at the genealogical charts (*kechimyaku* 血脉) in the past registers (*chō* 帳), it is reported that some time after its foundation this temple [Hondōji] had a period of decline. Then the temple was restored and there were fifteen generations of monks starting with a monk (*shamon* 沙門) called Kūzan 空山 and continuing until the present monks. It must be emphasized that this temple has three generations of *shugen* practitioners and fifteen generations of monks. Therefore there are twelve generations of Shingon monks more than what it is claimed by the monk of Hōzen'in.<sup>147</sup>

In the case of the second lawsuit, the verdict of the *bakufu* was extremely ambiguous and the *bettō* of both mountains were equally crestfallen. This could be the reason why neither at

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<sup>145</sup>. For the original texts of the first lawsuit between Haguro and Yudono see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 6-16.

<sup>146</sup>. Hōzen'in was the residence of the *bettō* of Haguro.

<sup>147</sup>. This text is included in the Shirohata *monjo* 白旗文書. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 21.

Haguro nor at Yudono is there an original copy of the second verdict of the *bakufu*. Ten'yū's requests were all nullified because the *bakufu* pointed out that only the Sakai 酒井 family, which governed the Shōnai domain (Shōnai han 庄内藩), had the right to ratify the appointment of the *bettō* in the four temples of Yudono. In this way the *bakufu* underlined that the religious authority of Ten'yū should remain subordinate to the lay power of the *daimyō* of the domain. About the request of legitimize the Shingon identity of Yudono, the *bakufu* showed a very cautious approach. The transcriptions of the verdict simply report that the Tokugawa *bakufu* decided that: "The religious tradition (*hōryū* 法流) of Yudono must be considered as esoteric Buddhism" (*Yudonosan no hōryū wa shingon tarubeki mono* 湯殿山の法流は真言たるべきもの).<sup>148</sup> The problem was that the word *shingon* was broadly used to indicate esoteric Buddhism, which could, at the same time, be interpreted as Tendai esoteric Buddhism (Taimitsu 台密) or Shingon esoteric Buddhism (Tōmitsu 東密). In some later copies of the verdict, which were conserved at the two *bettōji* of the *uraguchi*, the character of School (*shū* 宗) was subsequently inserted after the compound *shingon* to emphasize that the Yudono religious tradition specifically belonged to the Shingon School. The *bakufu*'s strategy to not completely settle the religious disputes between Haguro and Yudono can be understood as a modification of the political paradigm of *divide et impera*. The *bakufu* tried to avoid concentrating all the power in the hands of the Haguro *bettō* in order to diminish the possibility that a single religious institution could freely govern vast territories. A certain degree of fragmentation and internal tensions between the three mountains of Dewa gave the *bakufu* the possibility of effectively extending its authority and control over a sacred landscape that attracted great movements of people and capital. The refusal to provide an ultimate legal resolution to the religious conflicts between the two major mountains of Dewa

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<sup>148</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō*, 185-187.

Sanzan was the modality through which the *bakufu* could limit the immense power of this extra-ordinary territory.

The sectarian struggles between Haguro and Yudono apparently had an impact also on the institutions of the *issei gyōnin*.<sup>149</sup> Before 1666 the groups of *issei gyōnin* of Haguro and Yudono performed their ascetic practices throughout the entire area of Dewa Sanzan without considering the doctrinal or sectarian orientations of the ascetics. After the second lawsuit the monks of Yudono tried to emphasize the fact that the *issei gyōnin* who belonged to this mountain based their ascetic practices on the Shingon doctrine. Therefore, the Yudono *issei gyōnin* were different from the Haguro *issei gyōnin* that followed the Tendai doctrine. The *Yudonosan-ha gyōnin*, which was signed by the four *bettō* in 1792, reports the following passage about the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono.

According to the regulations of Kanbun 9 (1669) the ascetics (*gyōnin*) of Yudono and the ascetics of Haguro were separated (*kakubetsu* 各別). The *issei gyōnin* and pilgrims of Mount Haguro venerated Haguro Gongen. They performed the ritual of the Perennial Fire (*jōka*) according to the ritual protocol of Haguro. Even if there are other ascetic groups in the mountains [of Dewa] it is impossible to mention them in detail, but the ascetics of Yudono have a special position (*betsudan* 別段) among them.<sup>150</sup>

We can suppose that this formal division between Yudono *issei gyōnin* and Haguro *issei gyōnin*, which was advocated by the members of the monastic institutions of the two mountains, did not have an effective influence on the ground. For instance, in Kansei 2 (1790) a group of Haguro *shugenja* kidnapped five guardians (*bannin* 番人) of Yudono who were in charge of ensuring that bandits did not steal the coins which devotees tossed along

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<sup>149</sup>. Nōrin' in 能林院 and Fudōin 不動院 were the two principal temples that hosted the *issei gyōnin* groups on Haguro.

<sup>150</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 95.

the road during the pilgrimage to Yudono. When all the negotiations between the monastic institutions of Haguro and Yudono failed, a group of five eminent *issei gyōnin* of Yudono went directly to Haguro and obtained the release of the hostages.<sup>151</sup> This episode shows the *super partes* role played by the *issei gyōnin* in spite of the sectarian divisions among the monks and *shugenja* of the two mountains.

The failure of the second lawsuit against Yudono turned to be the definitive debacle for Ten'yū who had already brought down on him the wrath of various *shugenja* and monks of Haguro for his decision to transform Jakkōji into an *inge* of Kan'eiji. In 1666 eighteen influential sub-temples of Jakkōji submitted a petition to the *jisha bugyō* of the Shōnai domain to find a solution to the dispute with Yudono and to express their resentment against Ten'yū's choice to nominate as his successor a new powerful *inge* ranked priest of Kan'eiji, Keikai 圭海 who was a maternal relative of Tokugawa Ietsuna 徳川家綱 (1641–1680), after Yūkai absconded in Kanbun 4 (1664). In Kanbun 7 (1667) the complaints of the eighteen sub-temples reached Kan'eiji, which reported them to the *jisha bugyō* of Edo. In Kanbun 8 (1668) the *bakufu* issued the order *Bettō Ten'yū dangai soshō* 別当天宥弾劾訴訟, which formalized the impeachment of Ten'yū and his exile to Niijima where he died in Enpō 2 (1674). In 1668 Keikai became the *bettō* of Haguro, but he maintained his residence at Kan'eiji and delegated his disciple Keijun 圭純 to act in his stead for the administration of the mountain.

In Tenmei 天明 6 (1786) there was a third legal dispute between Haguro and Yudono about the regulations of the ritual rights between the two mountains. In this year the *shugenja* of Hondōji erected a wooden regulation-board at the entrance of the Hondōjiguchi to inform

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<sup>151</sup>. This episode is reported in the *Yudonosan saisen tōjin to honken to no kankei* 湯殿山賽錢盜人と本件との関係. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 34.

pilgrims that the religious traditions of Yudono were completely different from those of Haguro. The first nine points on the regulation-board simply underlined the basics of the Yudono tradition such as the fact that the *honji* of Yudono Gongen was Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and Kōbō Daishi was the founder of this mountain. Nevertheless, the last passage of this board was not limited to propagandizing the uniqueness of the Yudono tradition, but also stated that the ritual style followed by the *sendatsu* of Haguro was wrong and degenerate.

These rules were established by the patriarch of this mountain [Kōbō Daishi] and have been followed by these temples. There are people who make mistakes (*kokoroe chigai* 心違得違) [about these regulations] and follow perverted (*midara* 猥) ritual styles. These people perform different ceremonies and pretend to work as guides for the pilgrims. The definitions of the ritual tradition of Mount Yudono must be exclusively decided by the four Shingon temples. From now on, all the pilgrims of high and low rank from all the domains must follow these rules.<sup>152</sup>

The polemic tone of this text was directed to the Haguro *sendatsu* and their groups of pilgrims who were requested to perform the ceremonies of the pilgrimage according to the Yudono ritual protocol once they accessed the sacred area of this mountain. It should be emphasized that this was already a common practice among the *sendatsu* of Haguro, but this regulation-board underlined the fact that this ceremonial shift was due to the “perverted” character, which defined Haguro ritual tradition. The Haguro *bettō* Gishun tried to seek the support of the Sakai family to make Yudono remove this outrageous board, but the local officials refused to help Gishun because the problem did not pertain to the civil sphere but to the religious one.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, in Kansei 3 (1791) Gishun sent a request to the *jisha bugyō* of

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<sup>152</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 33.

<sup>153</sup>. This refusal to cooperate underlines the strong animosity between the members of the Sakai clan and the *bettō* of Haguro.



Edo and in Kansei 11 (1799) the *bakufu* ordered Hondōji monks to remove the regulation-board. The meaning of this regulation-board can be better understood if we take into account the struggle taking place in this period between Haguro and Yudono for control over the districts (*kasumi* or *dannaba* 旦那場) of Dewa Sanzan parishioners in the Shōnai plain. In the late eighteenth century the members of the Yudono religious institutions were on the offensive against the Haguro *shugenja* to extend their authority over the pilgrimage circuits and *kō* dedicated to the cult of Dewa Sanzan. The regulation-board erected by the monks of Hondōji was part of a broader propagandistic strategy to elevate the status of Yudono religious institutions against those of Haguro.<sup>154</sup>

This third litigation between Haguro and Yudono was just the last evolution of a permanent tension between these two sacred landscapes, which remained latent during the medieval period and violently emerged with the advent of Ten'yū. The lawsuits between Haguro and Yudono should not be exclusively interpreted as defensive strategies of private interests. The reciprocal frictions and disputes among the two mountains were also creative moments in which the two protagonists could forge new visions of the past in order to invent their specific religious traditions and remain in tune with the needs of the present.

## 6.2. From Date Masamune to Tokugawa Ieyasu: Warlord Patronage of the *Issei*

### *Gyōnin*

An important part of the cult dedicated to Yudono in the late Sengoku period and early

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<sup>154</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūhasseiki Shinano no kuni ni okeru Dewa Sanzan Shugen no sonzai keitai: Sakugun nai no Yudonosan gyōnin o chūshin ni,” *Shinano* 61, no. 3 (March 2009): 206.

Edo period was the patronage that warlords (*sengoku daimyō*) granted to the *issei gyōnin* in order to perform ascetic practices on their behalf. Until the Keichō period the members of the warrior class were the major sponsors of the religious activities of the *issei gyōnin*. After the consolidation of the Tokugawa *bakufu* and the imposition of the so-called *pax Tokugawa* on the entire Japanese archipelago, the power of the local warlords progressively decreased. Therefore, after the second half of the seventeenth century there was a transformation in that the social rank of the patrons of the *issei gyōnin* was not exclusively limited to the warrior aristocracy but started including also members of the rural and urban middle-class who gathered together in Yudonosan *kō* that were organized and headed by the *issei gyōnin*.

A typical example of Sengoku period patronage, from which the *issei gyōnin* benefited for their ascetic practices, is represented by Naoe Kanetsugu. In Bunroku 2 (1593) Kanetsugu had successfully established the authority of the Uesugi clan on the Shōnai plain after defeating the troops of his adversary Mogami Yoshiaki. Kanetsugu knew that the organization of consent and the repression of dissent was not just a military and political matter, but necessitated the cooperation of religious institutions. In order to consolidate his ruling power he ordered three hundred ascetics to perform a pilgrimage on Yudono on his behalf. The *Yudono kyonen ryūgan no bun* 湯殿去年立願之分, composed in Bunroku 3 (1594), reports the amount of the past, present, and future expenses that Kanetsugu took upon himself in order to patronize the religious activities of considerably large groups of Yudono ascetics.

Division of the expenses for the expression of vows and supplications to the deities (*ryūgan* 立願) of Yudono during the last year [1593].

- 7 *koku* 4 *to* 1 *shō* 升 of rice.<sup>155</sup> Last year.

Three hundred “pilgrims on commission” (*godaisan* 御代参) on the behalf of public and individual patrons participated in these activities. These expenses refer to three [pilgrimage’s] sections in one day.

- 3 *kanmon* 貫文 for the offerings.

This corresponds to the alms for monks (*semotsu* 施物) provided by the three hundred persons mentioned above. It is equivalent to 100 *mon* 文 for one person.

Last year this cost has been successfully sustained.

Division of the expenses for this year [1594].

- Six pilgrims on commission to Yudono.

Prevision: 1 *to* 4 *shō* 8 *gō* 2 *shaku* 尺 of rice. This is to support (*makanai* まかない) the six persons. 600 *mon* for the offerings and alms [made by the pilgrims] to the monks.

- Seven pilgrims on commission to Haguro.

Prevision: 1 *to* 7 *shō* 3 *gō* 合. This is the cost for seven persons. 700 *mon* for the offerings and alms [made by the pilgrims] to the monks.

In addition to these [expenses] there is the annual one-thousand days pilgrimage and ascetic retreat on commission (*sennichi daisan gyō* 千日代参行) on Mount Yudono from this year onward (*tōnen yori* 当年より).

- 1 *koku* 5 *to* of rice. This is the monthly expense for thirty days.

This covers the food expenses (*daihan* 台飯) of the *Shōnin* 上人 and the ten men that share the lodge (*shuku* 宿) with him.

- 1 *koku* for the monthly offerings (*ohatsuo* 御初尾) to the deities.<sup>156</sup>

At the beginning of every month 2 *koku* 5 *to* of rice must be provided [to the ascetic]. The total cost for the twelve months of the year is 30 *koku* of rice.

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<sup>155</sup>. One *koku* corresponded to 180 liters of rice, which was the theoretical quantity of rice to feed one man for a year. In Tenshō 天正 era (1573–1591) 4 *koku* of rice corresponded to 1 *ryō* 両 of gold. In Kan’ei 2 (1625) 1 *ryō* of gold equalled to 60 *monme* 匁 of silver (or *kanmon* 貫文, which was one thousand *mon* 文), but in the previous period its value was subjected to great variations. In the Tenbun 天文 era (1532–1554), for instance, fifteen meters of cotton cost 1 *monme* and 3 *bu*. In the same period almost two liters of a high quality *sake* required 20 *mon*. In the Kan’ei era (1624–1643) a standard travel for one person along the Tōkaidō 東海道 from Edo to Kyōto cost less than 400 *mon* and the average salary for one day of work of a coolie (*ninsoku* 人足) was 24 *mon*. It is also relevant to consider that the annual income of the temple estate (*jiryō* 寺領) of Dainichiji was 4 *koku* 5 *to* and that of Hondōji was 6 *koku* and 5 *to*. For more information about the cost of life in the Edo period see Ono Takeo, *Edo bukka jiten* (1991; repr., Tōkyō: Tenbōsha, 2012), 79, 165-166, 240.

<sup>156</sup>. The term *ohatsuo* is normally written *ohatsuho* 御初穂 and indicates all kinds of offering to the deities.

The rice must be presented to the Shōnin in the quantities mentioned above.

Bunroku 3 (1594), seventh month, eighth day.

From [Naoe] Kanetsugu [直江]兼統 (seal)

To Shimo Jiemon 下次右衛門<sup>157</sup>

Even if a *daimyō* like Kanetsugu was used deal with a property asset of 10,000 *koku*, the fact that he personally signed this document to give dispositions about the financial support to be channeled to fund pilgrimages and ascetic practices on Yudono meant that he gave great importance to the proper realization of these ritual procedures. Kanetsugu decided to rely on Shimo Jiemon to distribute his funding to the ascetics. Jiemon was one of the best generals of the Uesugi army and a charismatic warrior of the Shōnai plain.<sup>158</sup>

In this document the term *issei gyōnin* is not mentioned, but it is included in the expression “pilgrims on commission” (*godaisan*).<sup>159</sup> *Godaisan* indicated those groups of *issei gyōnin* who practiced asceticism at the foot of Mount Yudono in order to transfer merit on the behalf of a third person. The typology of Yudono pilgrimage, which Kanetsugu decided to sponsor, was not a simple devotional procession through the recesses of a sacred mountain, but a long and complex ascetic ritual made by professional ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin*, for the realization (*jōju* 成就) of the vows (*gan* 願) expressed by their patron. The high number of ascetics who were requested to participate in this pilgrimage indicates that they probably included lay-members of the Yudonosan *kō* who also performed periodic ascetic activities at Yudono but did not practice asceticism full time like the *kō* founders who often were

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<sup>157</sup>. This document is known as *Yudono kyonen ritsugan no bun* 湯殿去年立願の分. For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 425-426.

<sup>158</sup>. After the battle of Sekigahara 関ヶ原 in Keichō 5 (1600) Mogami Yoshiaki also requested Jiemon's services to consolidate his authority in the Shōnai area.

<sup>159</sup>. For an analysis of the terminology used in this document see also Yamauchi Shirō, “Shugendō to Yudonosan shinkō,” *Risō tokushū: Shinkō no tetsugaku to shisō* 678 (2007): 30.

*issei gyōnin*. The huge amount of merit accumulated by these groups of professional ascetics was supposed to be directly capitalized upon by Kanetsugu and other important members of the Uesugi clan. The text reports that once arrived at Yudono the *godaisan* had to perform ascetic rituals three times a day but does not specify the total length of the pilgrimage. In the seventeenth century there were two types of pilgrimage to Yudono: a version that lasted for seven days (*hitonanuka* 一七日) and a shorter one that was limited to two nights and three days (*futayo mikka* 二夜三日).<sup>160</sup> Taking into account the total cost of the patronage we can suppose that Kanetsugu was probably referring to a seven day pilgrimage performed by professional *gyōnin* to share merits with him and pray for the prosperity of his clan. In the concluding part of the document Kanetsugu points out that 1 *koku* and 5 *to* of rice should be monthly channeled to fund the one thousand days ascetic retreat (*sennichigyō* 千日行) performed by a Shōnin of Yudono. Even in this case the term Shōnin indicates a veteran *issei gyōnin* who had the privilege of receiving public financial support to practice the *sennichigyō* ritual at Senninzawa in order to accumulate enough ascetic power to realize the prayers of his generous supporters. The high religious significance attributed to the *sennichigyō* practice performed by a top-level *issei gyōnin* is clear if we compare the total costs of sponsoring a standard pilgrimage of mixed groups of *issei gyōnin* and *kō* members to Yudono with the enormous economic effort that was requested to patronize the *sennichigyō* of a top-ranking *issei gyōnin*. Every year Kanetsugu was ready to disburse a total of 30 *koku* of rice to sponsor the ascetic practices of a single *issei gyōnin*. The total funds that the *issei gyōnin* received during the overall period of the *sennichigyō* reached the considerable amount of 90 *koku*.

The special value of this ascetic performance was motivated by the power and charisma that members of lay society recognized in one specific *issei gyōnin* who became the fulcrum

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<sup>160</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 605.

of the faith expressed by a large strata of the population. Warlords such as Naoe Kanetsugu consciously became the patrons of those *issei gyōnin* who were able to gather around them an intense popular devotion. Members of the warrior class sponsored the ascetic practices of the *issei gyōnin* not only to obtain merits for themselves, but also to consolidate their personal prestige in the eyes of the masses through the economic support of the religious activities of the emeritus *issei gyōnin* that were associated with Yudono.

The religious services provided by the *issei gyōnin* could be requested on various occasions. For instance, in 1594 Hideyoshi ordered a land survey (*kenchi* 検地) of the entire archipelago. Kanetsugu who was a minister in the confederation of *daimyō* led by Hideyoshi asked his retainer Tateiwa Kihei 立岩喜兵衛 to screen all the villages of the Shōnai plain.<sup>161</sup> Because of the harsh weather conditions and the considerable presence of snow on the ground the task was still largely unfinished at the beginning of the spring season. In order to resolve the stalemate Kanetsugu requested the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō to practice austerities in order to ask the intercession of *kami* and buddhas (*kinen* 祈念) so the land survey could be carried out. This was actually completed before the summer of 1595.<sup>162</sup> This document reports the modalities, which were personally decided by Kanetsugu, to reward the *issei gyōnin* who sustained the positive resolution of the cadastral project through their ascetic practices. In this case Kanetsugu used the term Shōnin, which was a honorific title often owned by the *issei gyōnin*, to define this particular category of ascetics of Yudono.

From last year the Yudono Shōnin 湯殿上人 have been sincerely expressing vows for the intercession of the deities (*kinen* 祈念) that brought about the realization [of the land survey]. Therefore they must be given (*shinzuru* 進ずる) 10 *koku* of rice. I will

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<sup>161</sup>. Tateiwa was also in charged to take care of logistical matters and creating fortification works for the army of Naoe Kanetsugu in the area of Dewa Sanzan.

<sup>162</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 120.

personally give it to you. Please, be sure that [they] are more than sincere when praying.  
Sincerely.

Bunroku 4 (1595), sixth month, twenty-eighth day  
From [Naoe] Kanetsugu 兼続 (seal)  
To Tateiwa Kihei.<sup>163</sup>

Naoe Kanetsugu was not the only *senigoku daimyō* to establish a sort of partnership with the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono. Also the Date clan, which ruled vast portions of Dewa province, had important connections with the *gyōnindera* of Yudono. For instance, the second son, Sukezane 宥実, of Kokubun Morishige 国分盛重 (1553–1615), who was the paternal uncle of Date Masamune, became a monk with the name of Gakujunbō 覚順坊 and resided at Dainichiji for some years. Also the first son of Morishige, Sanenaga 実永, became the chief monk of Hondōji and this fact probably explains why there was an large number of *issei gyōnin* who came from the Sendai domain (Sendai *han* 仙台藩) among the ascetics associated with this temple. Sukezane and Sanenaga started their monastic careers at Yudono, but after a while they moved to the city of Sagae. Here Sukezane became the chief monk of the Shingon temple Heienji 平塩寺, which was affiliated with Jionji. Sanenaga too received the consecration ceremony (*goma kanjō* 護摩灌頂) at Hōzōin, which was located in the precincts of Jionji.<sup>164</sup> The monastic careers of Sukezane and Sanenaga demonstrate that at the end of the Sengoku period Hondōji and Dainichiji were still included in the sphere of influence of Jionji. Even in the Edo period when Hondōji and Dainichiji reinforced their status as religious institutions, the *shugenja* affiliated with these two *uraguchi* temples and those associated with Chūrenji at the *omoteguchi* kept practicing the annual *nyūbu* ritual at

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<sup>163</sup>. This document is known as *Yudono Shōnin kinen mai* 湯殿上人祈念米. For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 32: *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 426-427.

<sup>164</sup>. Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudono shinkō to kōshō bungei,” 6-7.

Jionji close to Hayama. From the political point of view the *daimyō* of the Date clan tried to expand their authority over the Shōnai area by infiltrating the monastic institutions of Yudono with persons connected with their family.

Date Masamune did not simply establish connections with the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, but he himself was considered a rebirth of a famous *issei gyōnin* called Mankai Shōnin 萬海上人. The *Date jike kiroku* 伊達治家記録, which was completed in Genroku 16 (1703), reports the following legend about the birth and death of Masamune.

In former times, Kita no onkata 北御方<sup>165</sup> kept watch on the dangers of the world and was committed to bringing prosperity to the country. In that period there was a monk with special powers (*gen no sō* 験ノ僧) called Chōkai Shōnin 長海上人. When he was learning esoteric teachings he was known by the name of Enshōbō 円清坊, then he became a permanent ascetic (*issei no gyōja* 一世ノ行者) and went to live beside the Monjūdō 文珠堂 of Kameoka 亀岡 in the Nagai 長井 domain. Here he practiced wood-eating (*mokujiki*) and other hard ascetic exercises (*kuju rengyō* 苦修練行). Kita no onkata summoned the Shōnin and ordered him to go to Mount Yudono to pray (*Yudonosan ni inoran* 湯殿山ニ祈ラン) for [her to conceive] a son blessed with skills for letters and military arts and endowed with filial piety. On the second day of the fourth month Chōkai climbed the mountain and prayed with all his heart for the realization of the supplication (*gogan no akashi* 御願ノ証シ). Before descending he used his *bonten* 梵天 to drink some hot water (*oyu* 御湯) of Yudono. Then he gave this *bonten* to Kita no onkata and told her to put it under the roof of her bedchamber. One night a white haired monk appeared in a dream to Kita no onkata and asked to borrow her womb (*tainai* 胎内) as a lodging. Kita no onkata replied that she needed to consult her husband. The monk nodded and disappeared, but she remembered the dream. She was suspicious about this fact and decided to tell it to the lord. The lord said that this was an auspicious dream (*zuimu* 瑞夢) and he had no objections to it. He told her not to decline the offer in case she had another auspicious dream like this. During that night the monk came again as promised and asked her the question of the previous night. Kita no onkata replied affirmatively. The monk expressed his joy and gratitude, took the *bonten* and gave it to Kita no onkata. Then he recommended her to take care of the embryo. When she woke up from the dream she was pregnant and gave birth to an heir. Because of this event Chōkai gave to [Date Masamune] the childhood-name (*dōmyō* 童名) of Bontenmaru 梵天丸. Therefore, [Date Masamune] became the adopted son of Chōkai (*Chōkai ga torigo* 長海力取子). [...]

<sup>165</sup>. Kita no onkata, literally, the “august person of north,” meant the wife of a respected person (the wife’s residence was usually placed at the north direction from the residence of the main person of the house); here, it is the appellative of Yoshihime 議姫 (1548–1623) the mother of Masamune.



It was said that Lord Masamune was a rebirth (*goshin* 後身) of the *issei no gyōnin* 一世ノ行人 Mankai Shōnin. Mankai was a renowned monk (*daitoku* 大徳) because of his vows and ascetic practices (*gangyō* 願行). In the district of Nadori 名取 in the mountain village of Negishi 根岸邑 there is a pond called Kuronuma 黒沼. By the side of the pure waters of this lake [Mankai] built a pavilion, in which he enshrined a statue of the bodhisattva Kannon, and close to this place constructed a hermitage for himself to live. Every day he used the water of Kuronuma to make purificatory aspersions (*kori* 垢離) and performed ascetic practices during the day and night. During the ascesis he used to make copies of sūtras and over the years he had many of them, which he buried inside a mound (*tsuka* 塚). After this the mountain was called Kyō no mine 経峰 and corresponds to Mount Masamune 正宗山 of today. Kuronuma is located five or six *chō* 超 to the west of the mausoleum Zuihō-den 瑞鳳殿 [of Masamune]. Lord Masamune used to follow a popular belief and observe a taboo related to the little cuckoo (*hototogisu* 杜鵑) so that every year he went out to listen to its first twitter.<sup>166</sup> Also in Kan'ei 寛永 13 (1636) he went to various places, but could not hear its twitter; finally he climbed this Kyō no mine to listen to [the cuckoo's chirps]. [Masamune] stopped in this place for a while and seemed to become thoughtful. He turned toward one of his old ministers, Okuyama Daigaku Tsuneyoshi 奥山大学常良, and said that when he died he should be buried in this place. Then he stuck his staff [in the ground]. [The minister] replied that this was something to be taken into account after five hundred eighty years. At the end of that year [Masamune] died. Tsuneyoshi recounted this thing to Tadamune 忠宗.<sup>167</sup> [Masamune] ordered Tsuneyoshi to start the construction work for his mausoleum (*byōu* 廟宇) at the exact point that he had indicated by his staff. However, as this place was close to a riverbank, a mudslide was to be expected and the construction had to be done three or four *ken* further. Then a huge rock was excavated. Under this rock there was another rock, which was placed as a sort of floor. Inside [this structure] there were things that resembled to a rotten monk's staff, a rosary, and a ceremonial vestment (*kesagoromo* 袈裟衣). People thought that this was a very strange thing and an old man was interrogated. He explained that this was the sepulcher of Mankai Shōnin. A sepulcher was built in that place in order to preserve his corpse. It is a miraculous thing that this sepulcher was naturally excavated [at that place]. The icon of Kannon, which was venerated by Mankai, was enshrined beside of the Zōzenji 蔵禅寺 temple. The monks of the temple performed offering rituals morning and evening. According to another legend the old monk that appeared in the dream of Masamune's mother to announce her pregnancy was Mankai Shōnin. It is also said that Mankai Shōnin was the master of Chōkai Shōnin. [...] During his life [Masamune] was said to be a rebirth of Mankai Shōnin. Lord Masamune had always appreciated water. When he built his residence of Wakabayashi 若林, the access to

<sup>166</sup>. In Japanese folklore the *hototogisu* was considered a bird with the power to regulate life and death. During the reproduction period the *hototogisu* pushes out the eggs (*tamadashi* 卵出し) of the *uguisu* 鶯 from the nest and substitutes them with its own (*tamairi* 卵入り). Therefore, the *hototogisu* has the power to regenerate life (*tamairi* 魂入り) and, at the same time, to cause death (*tamadashi* 魂出し). The popular taboo, which Masamune followed, could be probably related to this ambivalent power attributed to the *hototogisu*. See Hioki Kōjiro, "Hototogisu to uguisu ni tsuite – minzoku, gengogakuteki – kōsatsu –," *Artes liberales : Bulletin of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Iwate University* 23 (December, 1978): 3.

<sup>167</sup>. Date Tadamune 伊達忠宗 (1600-1658) was the second son of Masamune.

water was extremely convenient. The people said that the ascetic [Mankai] constantly performed purificatory ablutions with water and now the fact that Lord [Masamune] liked water was [the sign that] he was a rebirth of Mankai. [...] Because Mankai Shōnin was one-eyed all the fish that lived in the lake of Kuronuma where he practiced ablutions had only one eye. There is an explanation according to which Masamune was one-eyed because he was the rebirth of Mankai. [However] if this is the case, he should have been one-eyed from birth (*seihin* 生稟), but [in fact] he lost his right eye when he contracted smallpox during childhood (we do not know how old he was at that time).<sup>168</sup>

The first part of this narrative clearly expresses the religious rationale on which was based the *do ut des* relationship between the patron Kita no onkata and the *issei gyōnin* Chōkai Shōnin. The key term to understand the nature of the religious deal between the lay client and the *issei gyōnin* is the word *gan* 願. The original Sanskrit expression for *gan* is *prañidhāna*, which describes the focus of the mind or the attention paid to the correct realization of a certain action. *Gan* represents a specific intent or aim toward which the person concentrates all his efforts in order to realize it. In a Buddhist context the meditator who accumulates power (*kudoku* 功德) through the fervent performance (Skt. *tapas*; *netsu* 熱) of intense ascetic practices (*kugyō*) obtains the power to realize the *gan* (Skt. *ādhimokṣika*; *ganjō* 願成). The fulfillment of supplications (Skt. *vara*; *negigoto* 願事) by the ascetic requires the final *imprimatur* or recognition of gods. The act to invoke the gods as witnesses of the authenticity of the ascetic practices is called *satyavacāna* (*shinjitsugo* 真実語).<sup>169</sup> This invocation corresponds to the culminating moment of the ascetic performance in which the ascetic requests the gods to empower him in order to be able to realize the *gan* in the name of the ascetic practices he carried out with absolute sincerity. In this specific case, Chōkai Shōnin became the bearer of the *gan* expressed by Kita no onkata. The mother of

<sup>168</sup>. For the original text see Kobayashi Seiji, “Date Masamune tanjō densetsu kō,” *Sendai kyōdo kenkyū* 18, no. 4 (October 1958): 1-2.

<sup>169</sup>. For a detailed analysis of the concept of *gan* see Iyanaga Nobumi, “Kodai Indo bukkyō setsuwa bungaku ni okeru ‘gan’ no shosō,” *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō bungaku kenkyū* 10 (March 2007): 25-26.

Masamune decided to entrust her *gan* to an *issei gyōnin* of Yudono because such top-ranking ascetics were able to accumulate the necessary ascetic empowerment to make the deities agree to her request. In other words, the *issei gyōnin* worked as “bridges” between lay patrons and gods for the realization of a specific *gan*. The *issei gyōnin* were kind of “mercenary ascetics” who could divert (*ekō* 廻向) the meritorious power of their ascetic practices on behalf of a single lay patron or groups of lay devotees who gathered together in *kō* in order to sponsor the ascetic activities of this type of ascetic.

The sacred staff (*bonten*) which marked the external appearance of the *issei gyōnin* plays a pivotal role in this story. The phallic symbolism usually associated with the *bonten* is emphasized in the passage, according to which Chōkai stuck his *bonten* in the hot water that flows out from Gohōzen and represents the universal matrix or the geological womb of Yudono.<sup>170</sup> Therefore, the embryological creation that brought about the birth of Masamune was the result of divine intercourse between the penis-*bonten* of Chōkai and the womb-Gohōzen of Yudono. Only when this sexual encounter between deities was positively accomplished was the embryo implanted inside the womb of Kita no onkata thanks to the intervention of Mankai Shōnin who acted as a sort of pollinator between the woman and the deity. The niche between the tiles and the poles that hold up the roof was a magical sealed space in a house that was often used to perform rituals. It was in this domestic incubatory

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<sup>170</sup>. Iyanaga Nobumi pointed out the symbolic conflation between the *bonten*, the august pillar used by Izanagi and Izanami to create the Japanese archipelago, and the *liṅga* of Īśāna (Izana 伊舍那) in the *Indo zōshi* 印度藏志 of Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843). Iyanaga translates the following interpretation by Hirata of the Japanese cosmogonical process, which is reported in the *Indo zōshi*: “Moreover, [they] stuck the august pike in the ground of Onogoro island, and made it the august pillar of the center of the country (*kuni-naka no mi-hashira* 國中の御柱). This pillar later became a hill, looking at its true form, it looks very much like what is called the heavenly root (*tenkon* 天根) [i.e. the divine phallus or *liṅga*]. This is not without reason, for it is clear that the bestowed pike with jade ornaments was a thing of kind.” See Iyanaga Nobumi, “Medieval Shintō as a Form of ‘Japanese Hinduism’: An Attempt at Understanding Early Medieval Shintō,” in *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 16, *Rethinking Medieval Shintō - Repenser le shintō médiéval*, eds. Bernard Faure, Michael Como, Iyanaga Nobumi (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2009), 294.

area that Chōkai requested Kita no onkata to place his *bonten*. The insertion of Chōkai's *bonten* under the roof prefigures the biological generation of the human embryo inside another powerful and protected site, which was the uterus of Kita no onkata.

Masamune was a very peculiar divine-son (*mōshigo* 申子) because he had four fathers. The first one was the god Bonten (Skt. Brahmā) who was reified through the *bonten* of Chōkai and from whom Masamune derived his childhood-name of Bontenmaru. The second father was Chōkai who actually performed ascetic practices on Mount Yudono in order to fulfill the *gan* of Kita no onkata. The third father was the *issei gyōnin* Mankai who was the master of Chōkai and the carrier that delivered the embryo inside the womb of Kita no okata. The fourth father was Date Terumune 伊達輝宗 (1544–1585), the husband of Kita no onkata. It is interesting to take into account that after his birth, Masamune was symbolically returned to Chōkai, who became his adoptive father. This detail underlines another dimension of the concept of *gan*, which was not a mono-directional gift from gods to humans, but a bi-directional exchange that started from gods, reached humans, and went back to gods. Thanks to the symbolic adoption of Masamune by Chōkai the circularity, represented by the presence of gift and counter-gift, was maintained and humans could pay back their debt to the gods.<sup>171</sup>

This balanced reciprocity underlines how the *gan*, for the realization of which the *issei*

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<sup>171</sup>. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss a structural characteristic of the gift is the exchange and the capability to produce circularity. Lévi-Strauss who recognizes the great contribution of Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) to the theorization of the exchange of gifts, criticized him however for his reduction of the gift exchanging to the symbolic force of the *hau*. For Lévi-Strauss to explain the gift exchange through the *hau* corresponds to a sort of replication of a magic act. From the point of view of Lévi-Strauss the “zero symbolic value” of the exchange *per se* is what constitutes the gift. Jacques Derrida studied the concept of gift from a more philosophical angle and realized that the “true gift” corresponds to that gift that does not presuppose the presence of a counter-gift. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Backer (1950; repr., London: Routledge, 2002), 45-47. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (1950; repr., New York: Norton, 1990), 36-38. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 7. For an application of the anthropological discourse to the Indian Buddhist literature on the theme of the gift of the body see Reiko Ohnuma, *Heads, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

*gyōnin* provided their ascetic efforts, was not simply a teleological desire to possess something, but the intention to make a deal with gods in which both humans and deities could share benefits. In this final stage the ascetic body of the *issei gyōnin* became a connective element that allowed the circulation of divine gifts from gods to humans, and, at the same time, the symbolic restitution of the gift from humans to gods.

If Naoe Kanetsugu based part of the propagandistic discourse in organizing popular consent to his patronage of the *sennichigyō* ritual performed by eminent *issei gyōnin* and other ascetic pilgrims to Yudono, Date Masamune went a step further and presented himself as a rebirth of an *issei gyōnin*. The associative strategy of Masamune aimed to take part in the great charisma that characterized the *issei gyōnin* among the masses. At the same time, this conflation and interaction between members of the warrior aristocracy who belonged to the highest classes of society with *issei gyōnin* who were liminal figures with low social status demonstrates an intense circularity between the so-called “high” and “low” religiosity. The story of Date Masamune shows how in the late medieval and early modern periods the division between elite-religiosity and popular-religiosity was more apparent than real. Warlords like Kanetsugu and Masamune were ready to use for themselves religious symbols and discourses that originated among low class ascetics and, at the same time, those ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin* were eager to cooperate with the members of high society in order to consolidate their religious power. Even in this case we have a double gain. On one side Masamune reinforced his authority by his association with a famous *issei gyōnin* and, on the other side, the *issei gyōnin* could include wealthy and powerful members of the warrior class among their clients.

*Issei gyōnin* played a pivotal role also during the establishment of the Tokugawa

shogunate. For instance, few months before the decisive battle of Sekigahara in 1600 Mogami Yoshiaki, who was allied with Ieyasu, sent a request to Gassanji 月山寺, a *gyōnindera* at Sagae, to ask for an ascetic retreat on Yudono.<sup>172</sup> On the fifth day of the seventh month he sent another letter to Seiganji 誓願寺 in the city of Yamagata to include this temple also in the religious operation he was thinking about.

In order to subjugate the great enemy Uesugi Kagekatsu at Sekigahara and assure the victory (*goriun* 御利運) of lord Ieyasu, I have already ordered the ascetics (*gyōnin*) of Gassanji<sup>173</sup> to make a retreat (*sanrō* 山籠) on Mount Yudono for forty-eight days. If the vow-bearers (*goryūgansha* 御立願者) succeed, I want both temples [Gassanji and Seiganji] to perform an outdoor *goma* ritual (*saitō goma* 柴燈護摩) on behalf of the entire household of Ieyasu on the eighth and fifteenth day of the twelfth month. In addition to this [ritual] one hundred eight people should be sent as pilgrims on commission (*daisan*) on the behalf of [Ieyasu] [to Mount Yudono]. Because of the scarcity of people during this season, I order [Seiganji] to act in concert with Shinzanji 新山寺<sup>174</sup> in order to gather one hundred eight persons.<sup>175</sup>

Yoshiaki and Ieyasu fought together against their adversaries on two battlegrounds: the first was associated with military strategy and the second dealt with a sort of ritual task-force composed of *issei gyōnin* who were asked to influence the destiny of the struggle through the ascetic power they had accumulated performing their religious practices. Yoshiaki entrusted the *issei gyōnin* of Gassanji with his crucial *gan*, which concerned the definitive

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<sup>172</sup>. Mogami Yoshiaki had a great faith in Yudono and its ascetics. For instance, in Keichō 2 (1597) he fell ill and immediately ordered a group of *issei gyōnin* to perform a pilgrimage on commission to Yudono for his recovery. See *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 601.

<sup>173</sup>. Gassanji was a sub-temple of Sōjiji 惣持寺 in the city of Sagae. According to an Edo period *engi* of Gassanji the founder of this temple was the *issei gyōnin* Kadan Shōnin 火断上人 who practiced the asceticism of Yudono (Yudono *gyō* 湯殿行). This peculiar type of ascetic style was based on a vegetarian diet (*shōjin* 精進) and the use of a separated fire (*bekka*) for ritual and cooking purposes. The meaning of the name of this *issei gyōnin* was “Separated fire,” which seems to be a reference to the purified flame used by these ascetics during their ceremonies. See Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudono shinkō to kōshō bungei,” 3.

<sup>174</sup>. Shinzanji was a Shingon temple located in the city of Yamagata.

<sup>175</sup>. For the original text, *Gebi saku shōjō* 下美作書状, see *Yamagataken shi: kodai chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, 215.

overthrowing of Hideyoshi's army and the victory of the Tokugawa clan. After the victorious outcome of Sekigahara, Yoshiaki could extend his authority even over those parts of Dewa province that had been previously controlled by his nephew Date Masamune. Nevertheless, Yoshiaki and Ieyasu did not forget to show their gratitude to those religious institutions that had ritually fostered their military projects before and during the decisive battle of Sekigahara. This record, which was written by a secretary-monk of Seiganji in Keichō 6 (1601), illustrates the details of Yoshiaki's requests for the monks, *shugenja* and members of the Yudonosan *kō* affiliated with Seiganji.

A letter arrived on the fifth day of the seventh month of Keichō 5 (1600). This letter contained a request for a forty-eight-day retreat in the mountain (*sanrō*) in order to make offerings to the deities and perform propitiatory rituals (*gokitō* 御祈禱). The *sendatsu* was the monk Son'yō 尊養. He made a pilgrimage together with one-hundred eight men on Mount Yudono on behalf of [Tokugawa Ieyasu].<sup>176</sup> As a reward for the fulfillment of the vow the people of Yōkamachi 八日町 received permission to undertake the business of lodgings for pilgrims (*gyōja shuku* 行者宿). Since this privilege was granted only to the person who took part [in the pilgrimage] there were many people who were offended by this decision and decided to take legal action in order to obtain the same rights.<sup>177</sup>

After the *issei gyōnin* of Gassanji positively terminated their self-retreat in the period that immediately preceded the battle of Sekigahara, the monks and *shugenja* of Gassanji started organizing the second ceremonial retreat on Yudono during the twelfth month of the same year. For this occasion the *bakufu* requested that another *sendatsu*, Manzan Ajari 満山阿闍梨 who came from Edo, joined the *sendatsu* of Seiganji, Son'yō, during the performance of the outdoor *goma* ceremony (*saitō goma* 柴燈護摩) on behalf of Ieyasu. It is important to take

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<sup>176</sup> The number one-hundred eight refers to the Buddhist concept of the one-hundred eight afflictions (*hyakuhachi bonnō* 百八煩惱), which constitute serious impediments for the obtainment of enlightenment.

<sup>177</sup> For the original text, *Seiganji monjo* 誓願寺文書, see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 200.

into account that the one hundred eight persons that participated in this second pilgrimage organized by Seiganji were not full-time ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin* of Gassanji, but members of the Yudonosan *kō* who also performed extreme ascetic practices on specific occasions, but maintained their lay status and social role within the rural or urban communities they came from. In other words, *issei gyōnin* were full-time ascetics of Yudono and the lay members of the Yudonosan *kō* were part-time ascetics who expressed their devotion to this sacred mountain by performing pilgrimages and other ascetic practices only at specific periods of the year. This difference between ascetic groups is confirmed by the fact that these one hundred eight ascetics who performed the second pilgrimage to Yudono in the twelfth month of 1600 profited by obtaining business licenses to lodge pilgrims who traveled toward Dewa Sanzan (*sanzan sankeisha shuku no tokken* 三山参詣者宿の特権).<sup>178</sup> This special license, which was granted by the Tokugawa *bakufu* to the district of Yōkamachi in Yamagata, symbolized the repayment of the religious debt that Ieyasu and Mogami contracted with the *issei gyōnin*, the members of the Yudonosan *kō*, the monks, and the *shugenja* of the Dewa Sanzan.

The years from 1600 to 1622 marked the apogee of Mogami power in the Dewa region. In 1601 Yoshiaki ordered the construction of a small shrine, called Omuro 御室, on the top of Gassan. Through this work of religious architecture Yoshiaki intended to underline his authority over the Shōnai plain and express, at the same time, his project to expand toward the Maruyama area that was clearly visible from the peak of Gassan. In Keichō 13 (1608) Yoshiaki sponsored the production of a statue of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai as the main icon for the central hall of Jionji. In Keichō 17 (1612) he donated a portable shrine (*zushi* 厨子) that contained his two tutelary deities, Amida Nyorai and Jūichimen Kannon, to Dainichibō.

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<sup>178</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 607.



In the same year the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō performed ascetic practices at Gohōzen in order to protect Yoshiaki during the compulsory alternate-year residence (*sankin kōtai* 参勤交代) between Tsuruoka castle and his residence in Edo. The Dainichibō *issei gyōnin* made a protective talisman (*omamori* 御守り) for Yoshiaki, which was supposed to guard him during his journey (*nobori no kadode* 登の首途). Even in this case Yoshiaki rewarded the ascetics of Dainichibō with two golden fans and a roll of rich fabric.<sup>179</sup> The religious services of the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō were requested also by Kasuga no Tsubone (1579-1643) during the struggle for dynastic succession after the death of the second *shōgun* Tokugawa Hidetada 徳川秀忠 (1579–1632). Hidetada had two sons, Iemitsu 家光 (1604-1651) who became the third *shōgun*, and Tadanaga 忠長 (1606–1633). The mother of Tadanaga, Tsukiyama Gozen 築山御前 (1542–?), tried to promote her son in the line of succession opposing Ofuku お福, alias Kasuga no Tsubone, the wet nurse of Iemitsu. In Genna 元和 9 (1623) she expressed a *gan* for the quick recovery of Hidetada from a serious illness and asked the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō to perform ascetic practices in order to realize her vow. Kasuga no Tsubone also dispatched a man of her private guard, Kume Sukeuemon 久米助右衛門, to undertake ascetic practices at Senninzawa together with the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō. Kume Sukeuemon did not return to his previous lay status of warrior, but remained at Senninzawa and became an *issei gyōnin* himself with the name of Hōkai Shōnin 法海上人.<sup>180</sup> Kasuga no Tsubone associated her *gan* for the good health of Hidetada with a secondary *gan* for the protection of Iemitsu from evil influences. In this way Kasuga no Tsubone employed the ritual language of Yudono to emphasize the dynastic line that included Iemitsu and excluded

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<sup>179</sup>. Ibid., 602.

<sup>180</sup>. The stones of the funerary tumulus (*gyōninzuka* 行人塚) in which was buried the corpse of Hōkai Shōnin are still visible in the depths of the wood at the foot of Senningatake 仙人ヶ嶽 on the right side of the entrance to Senninzawa.

Tadanaga from the succession to the shogunate. After the positive conclusion of the ritual ceremonies on Mount Yudono she donated an icon of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and became the first sponsor of the reconstruction of the main hall of this temple.<sup>181</sup> In Keian 寛永 4 (1651) the physical condition of Iemitsu worsened and the *shōgun* was close to death. In the fourth month, Sakai Tadamasa 酒井忠当 (1617–1660) ordered the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō to make an ascetic retreat on Yudono to pray for the recovery of the sovereign. Nevertheless, Iemitsu died in the sixth month. A few years later in Meireki 明暦 2 (1656) the fourth *shōgun* Ietsuna 家綱 (1651–1680) contracted chickenpox, and the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō were asked to perform ascetic practices to protect his health. The *bakufu* ordered the *samurai* Suyama Kyūrōemon 須山九郎衛門 to join the Chūrenji *issei gyōnin* during their practices and another *samurai*, Yamamoto Gozaemon 山本五左衛門, had to do the same but with the ascetic group from Dainichibō. The custom of dispatching low-ranking *samurai* as temporary ascetics to Yudono in order to pray on behalf of powerful members of society was extremely common among the *daimyō* and other personalities of the Tokugawa shogunate. For instance, every year in the fifth month the Sakai clan sent a group of retainers (*minashiro* 御名代) as pilgrims to perform ascetic practices at Senninzawa together with Chūrenji and Dainichibō *issei gyōnin*. The *gan* to be fulfilled were of two types: the continuation of the military authority (*buun chōkyū* 武運長久) of the Sakai clan, and the maintenance of peace in the domain (*ryōnai enman* 領内円満). There were also unexpected events that required the prompt intervention of the *issei gyōnin*, such as prayers for a safe delivery (*anzan* 安産) or to

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<sup>181</sup>. The wooden box decorated with a special gold lacquering (*makie* 蒔絵) technique and Paulownia leaves, the exclusive design of the Tokugawa household, used by Kasuga no Tsubone to deliver her letter with the contents of the *gan* to the ascetics of Dainichibō is still displayed in this temple. Unfortunately, the original letters of Kasuga no Tsubone are lost and the main hall that was sponsored by her was destroyed by fire a few years later. All these facts are recorded in the fourth section of the *Yudonosan hōsoku* 湯殿山法則, dated Kanbun 6 (1661). For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 96.

overcome epidemics. For instance, in Tenwa 天和 1 (1681) Sakai Tadakio 酒井忠清 (1624–1681) fell ill and the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō performed a seventeen-day pilgrimage during which an uninterrupted *goma* ceremony (*onza goma shugyō* 温座護摩修行) took place. Shōtoku 正徳 2 (1712) was an inauspicious year (*yakudoshi* 厄年) for Sakai Tadazane 酒井忠真 (1671-1731), therefore the old retainer Nagasawa Kyūbē 長沢牛兵衛 made a two-day pilgrimage on commission to Gohōzen with the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō on his behalf. In Hōreki 宝暦 5 (1755) the Dainichibō *issei gyōnin* were ordered to make ascetic practices to protect the birth of Sakai Tadakari 酒井忠徳 (1755–1812), who was born in the Sakai residence of Edo. In Tenpō 天保 11 (1840) the *bakufu* requested Sakai Tadakata 酒井忠器 (1790–1854) to move from Tsuruoka to Nagaoka in Echigo province. The Shōnai population rose up and the Sakai clan immediately asked a ritual for the pacification of the domain to the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō.<sup>182</sup> It is clear that the ritual core of Yudono was represented by the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin*. Even if the religious status of these ascetics was extremely low if compared to the institutionalized roles played by regular monks and *shugenja*, the *issei gyōnin* were able to catalyze the faith of an enormous number of devotees belonging both to the low strata of society and to the elite. The peculiarity of the ascetic activities of the *issei gyōnin* derived its legitimacy from the sacred landscape of Yudono and, at the same time, functioned as an engine for the diffusion of the cult of this mountain in various areas of Tōhoku and Kantō.

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<sup>182</sup>. The relationships between the members of the Sakai clan and the various groups of *issei gyōnin* of Yudono are reported in the *Tonosama godaisan gokyūrei shōjō* 殿様御代参御旧例書上, which was composed by the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō in Tenpō 14 (1843) by order of the *jisha bugyō* of Edo. For more details see *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 604-606.

## 7. Conclusions

In this chapter I demonstrated that apparently peripheral or marginal mountains such as Chōkai or Gassan attracted the attention of the imperial court that, already in the Nara and Heian periods, was strongly interested in the creation of political and religious ties with the Shōnai plain. The recognition of the Tōhoku region in general, and Dewa Sanzan in particular, as crucial territories for religious, political, and economic interchanges helps us better understand the dynamism and circularity in the formation of religious discourses between centers and peripheries. In other words, there were no real centers or real peripheries, but a continuous cross-pollination between various cultic sites spread along the Japanese archipelago. For instance, when the Kumano *sendatsu* introduced the Kumano Sanzan paradigm in the Tōhoku area and created Dewa Sanzan in the Shōnai plain this was not an aseptic or contamination-free translation of a cult from a central cultic site such as Kumano to a peripheral and uncivilized area in the northern part of the Honshū island. On the contrary, we saw that the Kumano Sanzan paradigm was immediately reinterpreted according to adaptive mechanisms in order to fit with the local devotional peculiarities that were already well established in Dewa province.

It is true that the introduction of the Kumano Sanzan paradigm has forever modified the religious milieu of Haguro, Yudono, and Gassan, but it is also important to take into account that Dewa Sanzan too subsequently transformed and became independent from Kumano Sanzan original pattern. The most evident sign of this process of progressive emancipation was the inclusion of Yudono within the Dewa Sanzan in the early Edo period. The high degree of religious importance that Dewa Sanzan had reached from the early Heian period to

the end of the Muromachi period allowed the religious professionals of Haguro and Yudono to radically modify the original triad of Kumano *honji butsu* excluding Yakushi Nyorai, which was alternatively represented by Chōkaisan and Hayama, and including Dainichi Nyorai that was the *honji butsu* associated with Yudono.

Another important aspect, which I tried to underline in this chapter, is the total overlapping between “natural” and “cultural” landscape. We saw that there was no such thing as a neutral landscape that could be superimposed at will on a different one. Each natural element such as, for instance, the sacred boulder of Yudono—Gohōzen—was already the product of an intense cultural work, which shaped the semiotic and hermeneutic discourses that characterized the specificity and uniqueness of that religious site. Therefore, the encounter between the Kumano Sanzan paradigm and the three sacred mountains of Dewa followed creative or original logics rather than a sterile process of copy or superimposition. Kumano *sendatsu* were not the only social actors that attempted to translate sacred landscapes and divine pantheons into the Dewa Sanzan territory. For instance, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also *sengoku daimyō* contributed to combine buddhas and *kami* from external numinous sites to those of Dewa Sanzan in order to strengthen their political plans on this area through devotional discourses.

In the seventeenth century the new religious policy of the Tokugawa *bakufu* forced Haguro and Yudono to crystalize their sectarian identity as a Tendai mountain and a Shingon mountain respectively. From both sides there was a process of “invention of tradition” because until the Edo period Dewa Sanzan was characterized by the coexistence of a melange of Buddhist Schools, none of which was placed in an exclusive position over the others. The Tokugawa *bakufu* tried to take advantage of the sectarian struggles between Haguro and

Yudono in order to avoid that the territorial authority over Dewa Sanzan entirely concentrated in the hands of a single mountain. The numerous lawsuits that ended up with a substantial assertion of the sectarian connection of Yudono with the Shingon School allowed the *bakufu* to limit the already extremely vast sphere of influence of Haguro religious institutions using Yudono's Shingon affiliation as a sectarian obstacle to stop Haguro's expansion within Dewa Sanzan.

The institutional and ritual roles played by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, which will be further analyzed in the next two chapters, are noteworthy because show that not all the individuals who performed ascetic practices (*shugyō*) in order to acquire supernatural powers (*gen*) were necessarily identified as Shugendō practitioners. There were also special categories of ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin* who mastered a large number of ascetic practices, but did not define themselves as *shugenja* and were formally excluded from the Shugendō hierarchical system. This banishment from the aura of official status provided by a formal Shugendō affiliation did not limit the enormous charismatic impact that the *issei gyōnin* had on devotees who belonged to subordinate classes as well as among members of the social elites. Even if the *issei gyōnin* can be described as outsiders or ascetics who belonged to the margins of society, this does not mean that the influence of their religious practices remained compressed within the lower strata. On the contrary, *issei gyōnin* consolidated their power and authority even because of the financial and devotional support that received from members of the elite such as Date Masamune or Kasuga no Tsubone. The *issei gyōnin* were a sort of point of junction in the loop of popular and elite religious discourses.



Shingū



Hongū



Nachi

Fig. 1.1 The three deities of Kumano Sanzan as *suijaku jin* in shape of court dignitaries. Heian period (11th century). Shingū Kumano Jinja, Kitakata, Fukushima prefecture.



Fig. 1.2 The three deities of Kumano and Dewa Sanzan as *honji butsu*. Heian period (12th century).  
Miyauchi Kumano Taisha, Nan'yo, Yamagata prefecture.





Fig. 1.3 *Fuda* of the Dewa Sanzan triad: Yudono Dainichi Nyorai (center), Haguro Shō Kannon (left), Gassan Amida Nyorai (right). Edo period (19th century). Courtesy of the Yonezawa Agricultural and Cultural Research Center, Yamagata prefecture.



Fig. 1.4 Gohōzen. Upper part of Senninzawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (15/10/2014).



Fig. 1.5 Votive stele for venerating Gassan on the top of the Naka mound (Nakazuka). Muromachi period (Jōji 7, 1368). Yanbemachi district, Yamagata city, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (14/10/2014).



Fig. 1.6 Fragment of the Dōchi road at village of Shizu. Muromachi period (Ōei 2–3, 1395–96). Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (8/9/2014).



Fig. 1.7 Dōchi statue at Dainichiji. Edo period (early 17th century). Ōizawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (8/9/2014).



Fig. 1.8 Two *kakebotoke* donated by Tonobe Shirōzaemon Jūkichi: Nyoirin Kannon surrounded by his thirty-three apparitional forms (*kakebotoke* on the left) and a seated Nyorai with vases of flowers (*kakebotoke* on the right). Fig. 1.8a Close up of the *mokutai* of the *kakebotoke* on the right. Inookadera, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photos by the author (8/09/2014).



Fig. 1.9 Portrait of the fiftieth Hagurosan *bettō*, Ten'yū. Edo period. Dewa Sanzan Jinja, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (25/07/2013).

## Chapter Two

### The Ascetic Practices and Rituals of the *Issei Gyōnin*

Renunciation speaks affirmatively.

Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter presents the standard religious activities that characterized the life of the *issei gyōnin* from apprenticeship to maturity as an ascetic. We will see that the religious career of the *issei gyōnin* was completely different from that of the other two groups of religious professionals, namely Shingon monks and *shugenja*, that were active on Mount Yudono. In order to underline the ritual and institutional gaps that separated *issei gyōnin* from *shugenja*, who are often wrongly interpreted as the same type of ascetic, the concluding part of this chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the mountain-entry rituals (*nyūbu* 入峰) performed by the Yudono *shugenja* from which the *issei gyōnin* were excluded.

It is important to take into account the fact that none of the written sources concerning the *issei gyōnin* were composed by the *issei gyōnin* themselves, but were produced by other social actors, such as monks, *shugenja*, or officials of the *bakufu*. Therefore, we have to be aware of the

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<sup>1</sup>. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (1959; repr., San Francisco: Perennial Library, 1982), 150.



fact that these texts always display the private interests of different categories of religious professionals and lay actors who followed their own agendas, were often competing against the *issei gyōnin* to assert their authority, or were trying to use the *issei gyōnin* to gain legitimation for themselves. Because the *issei gyōnin* left behind very few written documents, the only chance to know the pivotal roles played by them within the religious panorama of the Edo period is to carefully access the written and often deceptive materials left by other persons who interacted in antagonistic or sympathetic ways with them.

Even if the relationships between Shingon monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* were characterized by frictions and strong contrapositions due to the common need to defend their own particular interests, these three groups could not do without one another. This forced integration derived from the fact that the religious fields mastered by the three were different and, while each group was helpless as a singular entity, they could survive in symbiosis with the other two. Specifically, Buddhist monks provided Yudono with the allure of Shingon sectarian authenticity, *shugenja* took care of pilgrims and distributed the extremely popular ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin*), and *issei gyōnin* were the only depositaries of a complex ascetic tradition, which included long periods of self-seclusion on Yudono (*betsugyō* 別行), wood-eating practices (*mokujikigyō* 木食行), performance of the Supreme Fire ritual (*jōka* 上火), and various ceremonies of purification and healing. It was these complex interactions between Shingon monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* that created the dynamic and unique religious landscape of Yudono in the Edo period.

The first appearance of the *issei gyōnin* within historical sources dates back to the first years

of the Keichō era (1599–1615), a crucial moment in the (re)formation of Shugendō identity in the Tokugawa period. In Keichō 18 (1613) Tokugawa Ieyasu issued the Shugendō edict (Shugendō *hatto* 修験道法度) that formalized the definitive separation between Tendai *shugenja* (Honzan-ha *shugenja* 本山派修験者) and Shingon *shugenja* (Tōzan-ha *shugenja* 当山派修験者). This edict did not simply regulate the sectarian affiliation of Shugendō practitioners, but laid down strict restrictions to the typologies of ascetics who could be officially recognized as *shugenja* and those who had to be excluded from this category. It goes without saying that the Shugendō edict did not provide any legitimation for the ascetic activities of the *issei gyōnin*, who were perceived as dangerous liminal beings hard to control.

We can say that the history of the *issei gyōnin*, or at least the tip of the iceberg that can now be accessed via written sources, ironically begins with their decline. The *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, who were certainly active in the medieval period, started being ostracized under the Tokugawa *bakufu* and finally disappeared in the second half of the Meiji period. It is interesting to notice that a lot of *issei gyōnin* who were operating in the Kantō provinces and Tōhoku formally abandoned their problematic status of *issei gyōnin* and acquired that of *shugenja* in order to keep performing their religious practices under the umbrella of legal recognition. Nevertheless, it was only the formal nomenclature that changed: the ascetics of Yudono maintained their religious heritage intact and continued to practice their peculiar rituals as they had always done.

## **2. The External Appearance of the *Issei Gyōnin* and *Kaigō* Ritual**

### 2.1. Ascetic Accessories: *Bonten* and *Shime*

The institutional landscape of Yudono was a merger of three categories of religious professional: Shingon monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin*, of whom the latter were the repository of a special corpus of rituals and ceremonies that had always constituted the peculiar Yudono tradition and faith.

The term *issei* underlined the fact that this type of ascetic exclusively dedicated his entire life span to performing austerities (*shugyō*) for the veneration of Mount Yudono. The *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō practiced their ascetic retreats at Senninzawa, which is located in the rough area immediately below the sacred boulder Gohōzen (See Fig. 2.1). The Daibonji River, which originates from the Gohōzen, flows through Senninzawa. The *issei gyōnin* of Hondōji and Dainichiji performed austerities at Genkai 玄海, which is located on the eastern side of Yudono close to the Ishipane River (Ishipanegawa 石跳川) (See Fig. 2.2).<sup>2</sup> It is clear that proximity to water is a fundamental element that characterizes all the most important ascetic spots (*gyōba* 行場) of Yudono. For the *issei gyōnin*, having easy access to waterfalls or rivers was an essential condition of being able to practice daily purificatory ablutions (*mizugori* 水垢離), a distinctive trait of their ascetic practice.

In the *Saihentō no jōjō kakuji* (Kanbun 6, 1666), Shūkai 宗海, the Hondōji chief monk

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<sup>2</sup>. During the winter season the impracticability of Genkai forced the *issei gyōnin* of Hondōji and Dainichiji to move to Senninzawa, where it was easier for them to receive supplies of food, water, clothes, and wood from the village of Tamugimata 田麦俣. There is no agreement on the origin of the name Genkai. According to Togawa Anshō the character *kai* 海 of this toponym may refer to the name of Kūkai.

(bettō), provided the following definition of the *issei gyōnin* to the supervisor of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō*) of Edo.

It is transmitted that the term *issei no gyōnin* is a different name (*imyō* 異名) to indicate the [concept of] *issshō sokushin jōbutsu* 一生即身成仏 of the Shingon School. [...] The attire of the Yudono *gyōnin* is made of purified ritual clothes (*jōe* 浄衣), a crown-cap (*kanmuri* 冠), and an eight-leaf rope (*hachiyō shime* 八葉しめ) which come from the Shingon tradition. The proof of this is the existence of an oral transmission (*denju* 伝授) according to which [the *issei gyōnin*] came to use this attire according to the secret contents (*naishō* 内証) of the *Dainichikyō* 大日経.<sup>3</sup>

The hermeneutic strategy of Shūkai was to provide a definition of *issei gyōnin* using classical descriptive categories of Shingon discourse. It is important to underline that the author of the text was a Shingon monk who was trying to superimpose a specific Shingon flavor on a group of ascetics, the *issei gyōnin*, who were not exclusively connected to any specific Buddhist School until the second half of the seventeenth century. Using a linguistic technique that associates a slightly different meaning to two visually and phonetically similar characters, the word *issei* 一世 was transformed into the term *issshō* 一生, which emphasized the vital and biological functions of the ascetic's body rather than the time dedicated to the performance of ascetic practices. Therefore, *issei gyōnin* were described as Shingon ascetics who became buddhas (*jōbutsu* 成仏) in this living (*issshō* 一生) actual body (*sokushin* 即身) as a result of their ascetic practice. The Shingon notion of becoming a buddha in this actual body (*sokushin jōbutsu*) was adopted to present the ascetic category of *issei gyōnin* who did not exclusively follow Shingon doctrinal discourse. According to the same logic, the white or grey clothes that characterized the

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<sup>3</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 21-22.

external appearance of the *issei gyōnin*, the cloth-crown that was a mimesis of the Dainichi Nyorai's, and the sacred rope (*shime* 注連; 七五三) were all inexorably traced back to an elusive secret transmission based on the textual authority of the *Dainichikyō*.

The *hachiyō shime* was also called *shime kake* 注連掛 and it was one of the most important distinctive attributes of the *issei gyōnin*. For *issei gyōnin* the *shime* had the same function as the surplice with six colored tufts (*yuigesa* 結袈裟) worn by *shugenja* or the surplice (*kesa* 袈裟) of the monks, but was made in a simpler style with a cord of cotton that was tied in various knots and eyelets. A ritual memoranda (*kirigami* 切り紙) dated Shōtoku 正徳 4 (1714) reports that the deities residing in the eighteen knots of the *shime* are Gundari 軍荼利, Fudō 不動, Kannon, Seishi, Miroku 弥勒, Taizōkai Jizō 胎藏界地藏, Ashuku 阿闍, all the bodhisattvas, Kongōkai [Dainichi Nyorai], Fugen 普賢, Monju 文珠, Hōshō 寶生, Kokūzō 虛空藏, Yakushi, the twelve celestial generals, Shaka Nyorai 釈迦如来, Tahō 多宝, and the all *kami*.<sup>4</sup> The *shime* was not a mere accessory of the ritual clothing of the *issei gyōnin*, but was a sort of wearable abode (*yorishiro* 依り代) that hosted the power of various deities, which overlapped with the body of the ascetic.

The *Hagurosan bettō nandai Yudonosan bettō etsū* 羽黒山別当難題湯殿山別当会通 (Kansei 3, 1791) reports that during the rituals of self-seclusion (*betsugyō*) at Senninzawa or Genkai the *issei gyōnin* used the *shime* as a material support to enshrine and venerate Yudono Gongen, which was equivalent to the Dharma body of Dainichi Nyorai, and manifested himself

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<sup>4</sup>. This *kirigami* was compiled by an *issei gyōnin* of Haguro. The divine structure of the *shime* was attributed to the founder (*kaiso* 開祖) of Haguro, Kōkai 弘海, an appellative of Nōjo Taishi. For the original text of this *kirigami* see the *Shime no daiji* 注連之大事, in *Shintō taikei*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 291.

through the divine spirits (*shinrei* 神靈) of this mountain.<sup>5</sup> When the ascetics wore the *shime* their bodies conflated with the divine body of Yudono Gongen and, at the same time, with the Dharma body of Dainichi Nyorai. Thanks to the *shime* the human body of the ascetic was placed in a central position, which linked together the *suijaku* aspect of Yudono Gongen to the *honjibutsu* nature of Dainichi Nyorai. In other words, the *shime* favored a threefold conflation between different types of powerful body: the ascetic body of the *issei gyōnin*, the body of the *kami*, and the body of the cosmic Buddha.

Another ritual item that characterized the *issei gyōnin* was the pole (*bonten*). For the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono the *bonten* functioned like a banner (*tōban* 幢旗) and the name *bonten* was due to the fact that its shape was reminiscent of the geophysical form of the Brahmā world (*bonse* 梵世).<sup>6</sup> *Issei gyōnin* used two types of *bonten*: the most common one was a long *bonten* also used as climbing stick during the ascents of the mountains and a shorter one (*waki bonten* 脇梵天) that was held by the *issei gyōnin* during the ecstatic séance (*kamigakari* 神懸). A peculiarity of the *bonten* used by the *issei gyōnin* was the presence of a clump of long strips made of Japanese paper on the top. The central part of the *bonten* represented the body of the *issei gyōnin* and the top clump of paper was sometimes shaped as the crown of jewels (*hōkan* 宝冠) that was the headgear of Dainichi Nyorai.<sup>7</sup> Like in the case of the *shime* the *bonten* structure too underlined the mystic union between the body of the ascetic and the cosmic body of Dainichi Nyorai. For instance, the concluding act of the pilgrimage to Gohōzen was the insertion of the

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<sup>5</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 73.

<sup>6</sup>. This interpretation is derived from an oral transmission of Tetsumonkai, which was reported in the *Kikeishi* 龜鏡志 (Bunka 9, 1812). For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 3.

<sup>7</sup>. Tsushima Ikuo, *Bōsō ni ikizuku Dewa Sanzan shinkō no shosō* (Awa: Shūsansha, 2011), 166.

*bonten* into the ground around the sacred rock. Through this ritual gesture the *issei gyōnin* reinforced the idea of non-duality (*nini funi* 二而不二) between their body, which was represented by the *bonten*, and the body of Dainichi Nyorai, which was manifested by the Gohōzen.

It is also interesting to take into account that in the Shōnai area a measuring tool called *bonten-dake* 梵天竹 was used to determine the exact size of the rice fields during the assignment of ground plots in the villages.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, there was a sort of semiotic overlapping between the *bonten* of the *issei gyōnin* and the *bonten-dake*, which divided the cultivable spaces for agricultural activities. Fabio Rambelli points out that this process of “sacralization of the labor tools,” which primarily concerned the measuring instruments of artisans and merchants, created an interpenetration between human activities and the cosmogonical power of the deities.<sup>9</sup> In this case the religious power, which was supposed to be embedded in the *bonten* of the *issei gyōnin*, was used to legitimate the ordering of space that was necessary for the cadastral and economic administration of village lands. The *bonten* referred to this double metaphor of power: one was the ascetic discourse about the mystical union between the *issei gyōnin* and the divine bodies of various deities, and the other was the agricultural and economic relevance traditionally associated with the *bonten-dake*.

The *issei gyōnin* maintained celibacy, shaved their heads, did not eat meat, and accepted the Buddhist ethical principles (*jukai*) after becoming affiliated (*nyūmon* 入門) with one of the four

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<sup>8</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, ed. Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 247-249.

<sup>9</sup>. Fabio Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 173, 186.

temples (*shikaji*) of Yudono.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, they were prevented from rising in the temple hierarchy and were never considered to be regular monks. Famous *issei gyōnin* such as Testumonkai could become supervisors (*jūshoku* 住職) of ascetic-temples (*gyōnindera*), which specialized in exorcisms and propitiatory rituals (*kajikitō* 加持祈禱), but could not perform funerary services (*sōrei* 葬礼) or have registered parishioners (*danna*). The title of Shōnin, which could also be obtained by particularly meritorious Buddhist lay practitioners, was the highest distinction to which the *issei gyōnin* could aspire.<sup>11</sup>

The *issei gyōnin* differed from *shugenja* because the *zaikata shugenja* who were affiliated with the four temples of Yudono were married (*saitai shugenja* 妻帯修験者), had long hair, ate meat, and regularly worked as peasants or hunters during the pilgrimage off-season. Moreover, a fundamental difference between Yudono *issei gyōnin* and *shugenja* was that this group of ascetics were not admitted to the mountain-entry rituals (*nyūbu*). The *issei gyōnin* were usually prevented from working as *annai sendatsu* or providing lodgings (*shukubō*) for pilgrims, which remained prerogatives of the *shugenja*.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the *issei gyōnin* who were affiliated with Chūrenji and Dainichibō played the role of *annai sendatsu* for the pilgrims that stopped in their temples because these were *gyōnindera*. Since the *gyōnindera* were completely administered by *issei gyōnin*, the ascetics of these temples had more ritual and ceremonial freedom compared to

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<sup>10</sup>. It is important to remember that until the Keichō era (1599–1615) the *bettō* of the four temples of Yudono did not practice celibacy. Therefore, celibacy and the abstention from sexual activities of the *issei gyōnin* were perceived as a further level of differentiation between this group of ascetics and monks or *shugenja*.

<sup>11</sup>. When the *issei gyōnin* received the title of Shōnin they could wear a yellow robe. The Shōnin robe of the *issei gyōnin* of Haguro was characterized by eight folds and Yudono by twelve folds. The *shugenja* of Yudono usually wore *kaki* or reddish brown ritual clothes. See Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsū*, 67.

<sup>12</sup>. We have to take into account that in the Edo period there were numerous cases in which pilgrims were accompanied by *issei gyōnin* from their villages to Yudono for the annual pilgrimage during the summer. The prohibition on playing the role of *annai sendatsu* was often disregarded by the *issei gyōnin*, who performed many of the same activities that were usually reserved for *shugenja*.



those *issei gyōnin* who were affiliated with ordinary Buddhist temples run by monks or *shugenja*. In this last case the division of the roles between *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* was strict in order to avoid reciprocal interference in the management of parishioners and pilgrims.

The exclusion of the *issei gyōnin* from the *nyūbu* ceremonies meant that they were also ostracized from the Shugendō hierarchic system, in which a Shugendō practitioner attained higher ranking according to the number of times he performed the *nyūbu* ritual. As we saw in the previous chapter, the ostracism of the *issei gyōnin* from the monastic and *shugenja* institutional system did not prevent them from having a considerable religious appeal to the masses of lay devotees. This was due to their ascetic practices, such as the prolonged self-seclusion on Mount Yudono (*betsugyō*), the wood-eating (*mokujikigyō*), and the performance of Supreme Fire (*jōka*) ritual or separated fire (*bekka* 別火).<sup>13</sup> All these ritual practices, which were not performed by monks or *shugenja* and attracted the devotion and faith of lay people, contributed to placing the *issei gyōnin* in a sort of unique position compared to other categories of religious professionals of Yudono.

## 2.2. The *Kaigō* Ritual

One of the most important and distinctive elements of the *issei gyōnin* was the presence of the character *kai* 海 in their names. After the ascetics were admitted to one of the four temples they

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Demiéville proposed translating the term *mokujiki* as “alimentation dendrique.” See Paul Demiéville “Momies d’Extrême-Orient,” *Journal des savants*, no. 1 (1965): 164.

went in front of Gohōzen to perform the ceremony of acceptance of the Buddhist moral precepts. On this occasion the ascetics also had to swear to follow the rules of the Yudono ascetic tradition (*hōryū*).<sup>14</sup> It is not clear what kind of religious practices were considered to constitute this tradition, but in Kan’ei 3 (1626) Ten’yū copied an older text titled *Yudonosan hōryūshiki* 湯殿山法流式, in which it is reported that the six practices of the Yudono ascetic tradition are: “Compassion (*jihī* 慈悲), good deeds (*zenji* 善事), purifying ablutions (*korī* 垢離)<sup>15</sup>, prostrations (*raihai* 禮拜), chanting the Buddha’s name (*nenbutsu* 念佛), and meditation (*kannen* 觀念).”<sup>16</sup>

During the *kaigō* 海号 ritual, the *issei gyōnin* received a new name, which included the character *kai*, such as Honmyōkai 本明海, Shinnyokai 真如海, or Zenkai 全海. The *kai* embedded in the name of the Yudono *issei gyōnin* derived from the last character of the name of the mountain-opener (*kaisan* 開山) of Yudono: the Shingon patriarch Kūkai 空海 (774–835). It is important to keep in mind that the *issei gyōnin* of Haguro also performed the same *kaigō* ritual, but their *kai* derived from the name of Kōkai, which was the appellative of the mythical opener of Mount Haguro: Nōjo Taishi (late Nara period). The *Saihentō no jōjō kakuji* reports the following observations about the *kaigō* ritual.

All the *issei gyōnin* have a name with the character *kai* such as Sonkai *gyōnin* 尊海行人 or Shinkai *gyōnin* 信海行人. Their names display the character *kai*, which is taken from the character used in the real name of Kūkai. The reason of this [name] is due to the fact that in the recent past (*sakujitsu* 昨日) the [*issei gyōnin*] had tonsured-heads, were ignorant, and did not have any rank [in the temple hierarchy] (*kamikiri muchī mukai* 髮切無知無階), but they accepted the stream (*shiryū wo kumu* 支流を汲む) of Kūkai’s teachings in order to be saved

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<sup>14</sup>. The term *hōryū* generally refers to the spread of the Dharma, but in this case it underlines the specific rituality and traditions that characterizes the religious milieu of Yudono.

<sup>15</sup>. These ritual ablutions were performed using cold water mixed with salt.

<sup>16</sup>. For the original text see the *Yudonosan hōryūshiki*, in *Shintō taiki*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 286.

during their present life and in the next one. Therefore, in order to express their gratitude toward their preceptor (*kaishi* 戒師) Kūkai, they swear to take care of the lineage of the Dharma-life (*hōmyō* 法命) of the master [Kūkai]. This is why they use the character *kai* of the real name of Kūkai in their names.<sup>17</sup>

In this passage the Hondōji *bettō* depicted the *issei gyōnin* as a tonsured, uncultured, and extra-monastic category of ascetics who could obtain salvation for themselves only through the special connection with Kūkai that they established through the *kaigō* ritual. From the point of view of the Hondōji *bettō* the *issei gyōnin* were not powerful ascetics who were able to realize the vows expressed by the lay devotees. They were marginal entities that needed to be redeemed through the creation of a positive karmic connection with the Shingon patriarch Kūkai. This narrative, which tends to exalt the institutional status of the fully-ordained monks against the *issei gyōnin*, is indicative of the constant tension and competition that existed among monks, *issei gyōnin*, and *shugenja* who performed their distinctive religious practices in the same sacred space of Yudono.

In other words, the Hondōji Shingon monks tolerated the presence of the *issei gyōnin* groups in the two *uraguchi* temples only to the extent that they accepted the basic precepts of the Shingon doctrine. We can also suppose that the emphasis on the redeeming function of the *kaigō* ritual in the life of the *issei gyōnin* could be the result of the intense process of superimposition of Shingon doctrinal elements on the Yudono tradition, which took place during the numerous

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<sup>17</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 21.

lawsuits against Haguro.<sup>18</sup> In order to hold back the attempts of Ten'yū to include Yudono within Haguro religious jurisdiction, the monks of Yudono tried to emphasize the omnipresence of the Shingon tradition in every aspect of the religious life of the mountain and the *issei gyōnin* were not exempted from this hermeneutical process.

In order to receive the *kaigō* ritual and officially become an *issei gyōnin* the ascetic should also present a legal petition (*gansho* 願書) that had to be signed by various representatives of religious and lay institutions. Three signatures were mandatory: the first was that of the preceptor (*kaishi* 戒師) of the temple with which the *issei gyōnin* was affiliated in his original village, the second was that of the supervisor of shrines and temples of the domain the *issei gyōnin* came from, and the last was that of the representative of the residential district (*kumigashira* 組頭) who was responsible for the household of the *issei gyōnin*. For instance, among the manuscripts related to the ascetic career of Myōkai Shōnin 明海上人 (ca 1819–1863) there is a document titled *Kaigō kyōka sho* 海号許可書 where the signature of Myōkai's father (*ukara kimoiri renban* 親族肝煎連判) was requested because he was, at the same time, the chief of Myōkai's household and the *kumigashira*.<sup>19</sup> An analysis of the mandatory documents for the *kaigō* rituals clearly shows that there were two types of *issei gyōnin*: resident *issei gyōnin* who came from the villages at the foot of Yudono or from other centers on the Shōnai plain, and non-resident *issei gyōnin* who arrived at Yudono from various domains in Tōhoku and Kantō.

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<sup>18</sup>. Suffice it to say that until the end of the Genroku era (1688–1704) the four temples of Yudono were not associated with any specific head-temple (*honzan* 本山) and were often described as non-affiliated temples (*muhonji*). About the impact of the Shingon School on the *hijiri* 聖 of the Dewa Sanzan area in the late medieval period see Itō Kyōo, *Reizan to shinkō no sekai: Ōu no minshū to shinkō*, 35.

<sup>19</sup>. See, for instance, the document about the *kaigō* regulations *Kiroku torishirabe sho* 記録取調書 (Kanbun 6, 1666) in *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 125-126.

The acceptance of the practitioner in the *issei gyōnin* community (*gyōninshū* 行人衆) implied a total separation and removal of the new member from the ordinary life of the village. This rupture was exemplified by the cancellation of the name of the *issei gyōnin* from the family register, which ratified the definitive exclusion of the ascetic from the dynastic line of the household he came from. At this point the newly appointed *issei gyōnin* died as a member of the lay community and found a new social role as a professional ascetic. Even if the religious status of the *issei gyōnin* apparently placed the ascetic in a space and time totally separated from ordinary society, the *issei gyōnin* actually never ceased to maintain his ties with the lay community. The banishment of the *issei gyōnin* from the institutions of the village was a condition without which the rhetoric of the ascetic discourse could not be realized. Nevertheless this banishment was more apparent than real because the *issei gyōnin* needed constant interaction with the lay members of society in order to be able to perform their ascetic practices and provide their religious services.

### **3. The Ascetic Heritage of the *Issei Gyōnin***

#### **3.1. Ascetic Apprenticeship**

The ascetic apprenticeship of the newly admitted *issei gyōnin* lasted for about three years. During the first year the *issei gyōnin* could only meet with their companions and were prevented

from receiving visits from friends or parents even in the case of serious illness. A veteran *issei gyōnin* worked as master (*shishō* 師匠 or *shimeoya* 注連親) to train the new ascetics (*shimeko* 注連子). During this initial period the *shimeko* mainly performed menial activities, focused on the repair of the architectural structures of the temple, cooking, distillation of *sake*, and the handling of every sort of humble task.

Novice *issei gyōnin* were associated with other groups of coolies or workmen called *tera otoko* 寺男. It is important to underline the fact that the *issei gyōnin* simply worked together with the *tera otoko*, but maintained a different social and religious status from them. The *tera otoko* who were affiliated with the four temples of Yudono were exclusively selected from among the population of the villages at the foot of Yudono such as Ōami, Tamugimata, and Shizu. The *tera otoko* earned a regular stipend, usually returned to their homes to spend the night, had some days off from work during specific periods, and could be married. On the contrary, a great number of *issei gyōnin* came to Yudono from remote villages in the Tōhoku or Kantō regions and were perceived as strangers from the point of view of the villagers who lived in the Dewa Sanzan area.<sup>20</sup>

Another fundamental difference between *tera otoko* and *issei gyōnin* was that the first group exclusively performed manual activities such as transporting water, gathering firewood, cleaning, washing, or plowing the temple fields, while the second group added to these an extra training, dedicated to the learning of sūtras, mantras, *dhāraṇīs*, procedures for exorcisms (*kitō*), and methods to construct amulets (*mamori*) and talismans (*fuda*). This double apprenticeship based on a mix of menial work and ritual training performed by the *issei gyōnin* during the first period

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<sup>20</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 99.

of their ascetic career is very similar to the apprenticeship carried out by female shamans (*itako* いたこ) in other temples of Tōhoku.<sup>21</sup>

When the *issei gyōnin* reached a sufficient level of knowledge and skill in ritual matters, he could proceed to the stage of *rokku* 六供 or *jōji* 承仕. The first term underlined the fact that the novice *issei gyōnin* was progressively requested to take care of six services for the temple. They started as a) key keepers of the various halls inside the precinct (*okagidori* 御鍵取), then became b) persons in charge of the food offerings (*saichō* 菜頭), c) of the transportation of torches (*taimatsu yaku* 松明役), d) of changing the water for the flowers on altars (*aka ibō* 闕伽井坊), and e) of the incense burners (*jōkōban* 常香盤), finally reaching the most elevated role of f) *dhāraṇī* master (*nōdara* 能陀羅).<sup>22</sup> When the *issei gyōnin* obtained the rank of *nōdara* they could take the side seat (*wakiza* わき座) close to the *goma* platform (*gomadan* 護摩壇) and help monks and *shugenja* during the recitation of *dhāraṇī*. When the *issei gyōnin* played this role they were called spell-helpers (*joju* 助呪).<sup>23</sup>

The second term *jōji* was used to indicate a veteran *issei gyōnin* who was allowed to take part in the ceremony of the spring entrance into the peak (*haru no mine* 春峰) together with other monks and *shugenja* in order to gather flowers and branches to adorn the altars of temples and shrines. During the *haru no mine* ritual, which was focused on the ceremonies of presentation of offerings (*kuyō* 供養) to various deities at the beginning of the spring season, one elder *issei*

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<sup>21</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu*, 67.

<sup>22</sup>. Ibid., 23.

<sup>23</sup>. It is interesting to notice that the *Fumon'in monjo* 普門院文書 (Bunsei 6, 1823) reports that the *goma* ritual could only be performed by monks or *shugenja* and did not constitute a requirement for the ascetic apprenticeship of *issei gyōnin* (*seisō shugen naru to iedomo, goma nado shugyō muyō no koto* 雖為清僧修驗、護摩等修行無用之事). For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 133.

*gyōnin* was requested to play the *jōji hōshi* 承仕法師 role: an expert in the maintenance and decoration of the cultic areas.<sup>24</sup> The word *jōji* was originally used as a title for low ranking monks who specialized in cleaning activities in the temples. Nevertheless, in the case of the *issei gyōnin*, *jōji* was used in connection with the term master (*hōshi*) in order to underline a sort of ceremonial upgrade of the status of the *issei gyōnin* during the *haru no mine* ritual.

This type of ascetic apprenticeship, starting with the execution of menial tasks, equal to those provided by *tera otoko*, and continuing with the performance of the six services (*rokku*), was similar for the *issei gyōnin* of both Yudono and Haguro.<sup>25</sup> The main differences between the apprenticeship of the *issei gyōnin* who lived in the two mountains were limited to the length of time assigned to each stage of the ritual practices. It is probable that some eminent *issei gyōnin* of Yudono took part in the *haru no mine* as *jōji hōshi* in the same way as the *issei gyōnin* of Haguro. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account that the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono could not take part in the *aki no mine* ritual, the most important ceremony in the Shugendō tradition, whereas the *issei gyōnin* of Haguro could participate in the *aki no mine* together with the Haguro *shugenja*, if they made a special request.

The analysis of the apprenticeship of the *issei gyōnin* clearly shows the modalities through which the group of ascetics closely cooperated with the other social actors at the temples of Yudono such as monks, *shugenja*, or *tera otoko*. By the end of their apprenticeship, novice *issei gyōnin* had formed an independent religious identity as professional ascetics and were ready to provide their ritual skills to the communities of lay devotees, collaborating, and at the same time

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<sup>24</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Shugendō to minzoku shukyō* (Tōkyō: Iwatashoin, 2005), 83.

<sup>25</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu*, 33.



competing, with monks and *shugenja*.

### 3.2. Separated Fire

The most important ritual element that characterized the asceticism of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono was the use of the separated fire (*bekka*). The *issei gyōnin* avoided eating any type of food cooked on the flame of an ordinary fireplace (*seika* 世火; *hirabi* 平火). The ascetics of Yudono had to respect strict dietary limitations and were allowed to eat only selected types of food that were cooked on a specially prepared flame considered devoid of impurities (*kegare* 穢). This separated and purified fire was, at the same time, the place where the ascetic meals were prepared and the ritual platform for the veneration of Buddhist deities and *kami*. When the *bekka* was used for explicit ceremonial purposes it was called Supreme Fire (*jōka*). It is important to note that the *issei gyōnin* of Haguro also used a sacred fire for their rituals, which was defined as Permanent Fire (*jōka* 常火). It is highly possible that before the legal dispute between Yudono and Haguro all the *issei gyōnin* of Dewa Sanzan shared the same type of sacred fire and only at the end of the sixteenth century were they forced to create an artificial distinction between the two types of ceremonial flame.

The *Kikeishi* is an important source to shed light on some aspects of the *jōka* ritual practiced by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono. The author of *Kikeishi* was a lower ranking *samurai* of Tsuruoka, Togashi Hisasada 富樫久定, who worked as a sort of scribe for the eminent *issei gyōnin*

Tetsumonkai. This text was based on an oral transmission delivered by Tetsumonkai about the most important aspects of the Yudono tradition when he was the supervisor of Chūrenji in Shimekake village. The following passage explains the origins of the *jōka* ritual and its similarities with the *goma* ceremony.

[...] The deity [Hachidaikongō Dōji] turned toward [Kōbō] Daishi and revealed to him the entire procedure of the Supreme Fire ritual (*jōka no gyō* 上火の行). After receiving these teachings Daishi went back and started practicing the Supreme Fire ritual. Because this ritual is performed using the deep secret platform of the *goma* (*rodan* 炉壇), it corresponds to the consecration ceremony (*kanjō no gishiki* 灌頂の儀式). For this reason it is crucial to select an adequate location to execute it. Climbing on a high mountain [Daishi] looked down to find the best place for the Supreme Fire ritual (this is the present location of the *goma* platform [in the Chūrenji temple]).

When the fire is put inside the eight petal brazier (*hachiyō no chūdai* 八葉の中台), this object becomes like the center of the *mandara* and must be placed in a suitable location. Therefore the area of Chūrenji, which is surrounded by peaks in the eight directions, corresponds to the eight petal court [in the middle of the maṇḍala]. For this reason [Daishi] created a protective barrier (*kekai* 結界) around this sacred location and installed the flame inside the eight petal brazier on the altar following the teachings of Kongō Dōji. He also developed the ritual procedures about the rope and the crown (*shime kanmuri* 七五三冠), the external robe (*uwaginu* 上衣), and the ceremony of *bonten*, which take place during the Supreme Fire ritual. The ceremonial attire and ritual protocol chosen by Daishi at that time are transmitted and respected even now. The water (*aka-sui* 闕伽水)<sup>26</sup> that drenches the area [of the *goma* platform] is the water sprinkled by a one-prong *vajra* (*tokko* 独鈷). The evidence of this ritual protocol is manifested by the [Daishi's] seal that was placed on the Cherry Tree (Shimekake Sakura 七五三懸桜). When Yudono Gongen 湯殿権現 is summoned and enshrined (*kanjō*) inside the brazier of the *goma* platform, he takes the name of Shinzan Gongen 新山権現 and this becomes the altar of the Supreme Fire. The present *goma* platform [at Chūrenji] is placed in the area [that was detected by Daishi] when he climbed the high mountain.

Daishi selected this land, where the Supreme Fire ritual is still practiced for the people of the

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<sup>26</sup>. The term *aka* derives from the Sanskrit *argha*, which denotes the purified water used during the *goma* ritual. This passage of the text reinforces the emphasis on the parallelism between the structure of the altar, the ritual objects used during the *goma*, and the sacred geography of Mount Yudono.

age of degeneration of the Dharma (*masse* 末世). At that time an evil deity tried to stop him, using his hideous influences (*akki* 悪気), but [Daishi] performed the *goma* ritual and defeated this evil creature. This is what is called the *goma* platform. The term *aka-sui* refers to the water sprinkled using a one-prong *vajra* and empowered by incantations (*kaji*). What we call now one-pronged *vajra*-water (*tokko sui* 独鉈水) is this. The one-prong *vajra* has the power to crush. Therefore it destroys any sort of evil obstacle. If someone looks at this temple, he will discover that this *goma* platform is just there.<sup>27</sup>

According to the oral transmission of Tetsumonkai, Kōbō Daishi Kūkai received the instructions for the performance of the *jōka* ritual from Hachidaikongō Dōji and passed it down to the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji. At the end of the apprenticeship the new *issei gyōnin* were admitted to the Supreme Fire ritual that corresponded for them with a sort of final consecration ceremony (*kanjō*), that marked the conclusion of the training period. This passage shows a strong Shingon influence in the interpretative categories used to describe the meaning of the *jōka* ritual. Tetsumonkai emphasized the conflation between the esoteric ritual of *goma* and the performance of the *jōka* that characterized the ascetic practices of the *issei gyōnin*.

It is important to keep in mind that the religious practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono changed their structure and modified their meanings according to the historical period. Tetsumonkai was an ascetic of the late eighteenth century and did not hesitate to apply Shingon interpretative filters to clarify the meanings of the *issei gyōnin* rituals. In the *Kikeishi* he seems consciously to take advantage of the authority and charisma that derive from the Shingon tradition in order to legitimate the status of the *issei gyōnin* and elevate the position of Chūrenji among the other three temples of Yudono. This exploitation of Shingon categories to support the practices of the *issei gyōnin* such as the *jōka* ritual was a hermeneutical strategy identical to the

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<sup>27</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 3.

defensive mechanisms adopted by the Buddhist monks of Yudono to nullify Ten'yū's attempts to unify Dewa Sanzan under the flag of the Tendai tradition.

For Tetsumonkai, the geography of the land on which Chūrenji stood was like a mandalized space where the mountainous peaks that surrounded Yudono resemble the eight petals of the lotus flower, which characterized the innermost court (*chūdai hachiyōin* 中台八葉院) of the Taizōkai *mandara*. The *goma* platform at Chūrenji, which corresponded to the center of the Taizōkai, was where the *issei gyōnin* performed the *jōka* ritual in order to venerate Yudono Gongen, overlapping with the Dharma body of Dainichi Nyorai. It is interesting to note that when Yudono Gongen descended into the *goma* platform he took the appellation of Gongen of the New Mountain (Shinzan Gongen). The reason for this name was due to the fact that Yudono Gongen was perceived as a sort of holographic image or projection of the real Mount Yudono, which manifested itself in a miniaturized scale inside the *goma* platform in order to be worshiped by *issei gyōnin* and lay devotees.<sup>28</sup>

In a note in the *Kikeishi* Tetsumonkai provides a further explanation of the difference between the Supreme Fire used by the *issei gyōnin* and other types of purified flame.

Among the most profound secrets there is the Supreme Fire ritual. It is a ritual that can be transmitted only from master to disciple (*fuhō sōshō* 附法相承). The Supreme Fire ritual corresponds to the ritual of self-seclusion (*betsugyō*), which is practiced on Mount Yudono. There is nothing like this ritual in the other mountains and temples. [...]. There are people that say that the Supreme Fire is immutable and exists forever (*jōjū* 常住). Nevertheless [these people] are just thinking about a worldly permanence. On the contrary, [for the *issei gyōnin*] the Supreme Fire represents the notion of impermanence (*mujō* 無常). The immutable and forever existing fire is present in other mountains, but the people should

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<sup>28</sup>. The transformation of Yudono Gongen into Shinzan Gongen is explained in the first paragraph of *Kikeishi*. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 2.

refrain from assimilating it with the Supreme Fire [of Yudono].<sup>29</sup> The Supreme Fire is an excellent fire. It is the most refined type of fire. There is nothing above this fire.

There is another type of fire that is called separated fire (*kiribi* 切火). A fire that is ignited far from the houses of the village is defined as *kiribi*. During the spring it is called willow-tree fire (*yuryū no hi* 榆柳の火), during the summer incense-bundle fire (*tabakō* 束香), at the end of the summer blackberry fire (*kuwabi* 桑火), in the fall oak fire (*nara no hi* 櫛の火), and during the winter pagoda-tree or spindle-tree fire (*kaidan no hi* 槐檀の火). The *kiribi* used by En no Gyōja 彼の行者 in his cave on Mount Ōmine was called Perforating Fire (*kiribi* 鑽火). In other places it is said that the *kiribi* emanates from the cut elbow of Fudō Myōō. Therefore, it is often called cut-elbow fire (*hiji kiribi* 肘きり火).

Even if the Supreme Fire is also called *kiribi*, normal people do not know that it corresponds to the wisdom flame (*chika* 智火) of the Dharma body (*hosshin* 法身). The unique fire that was envisioned (*shōken* 照見) by Daishi corresponds to the Buddha's teachings and is the fire of the intrinsic nature and original truth (*jishō honnu* 自性本有). When Daishi transmitted this fire to sentient beings he added this new meaning to the term *kiribi*. Even if this fire is called *kiribi*, it is actually the Supreme Fire because it is not different from the intrinsic nature of the Dharma body. This principle should not be contested. Because of the name *kiribi* there are many people who make confusion and say lies about the fire used by the ascetics (*gyōja*) in this shrine-temple complex. [...].

What is defined as the Supreme Fire of Mount Yudono corresponds to the wisdom flame of the Dharma body. Even for the bodhisattvas who fulfilled the ten grounds (*jūji* 十地),<sup>30</sup> this fire remains a miraculous and profound thing.<sup>31</sup> Daishi transmitted this profound fire, which represents the depth of the Buddha's wisdom, in order to save human beings who had bad karma generated from the five pollutions (*gojoku* 五濁)<sup>32</sup> from sinking into the obscurity of ignorance (*mumyō* 無明) and departing from the light of wisdom (*chikō* 智光).

It must be understood that the practitioner who performs this ritual according to the protocol naturally penetrates the wisdom body (*chitai* 智躰) of the Dharma nature of the Dharma body (*hosshō hosshin* 法性法身). I know that some people say that we are ignorant and stupid

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<sup>29</sup>. This is a polemic reference to the Permanent Fire of the Haguro *issei gyōnin*.

<sup>30</sup>. The ten grounds of the bodhisattva are: the ground of joy (*kangiji* 歡喜地), the ground of freedom from defilements (*rikuji* 離垢地), the ground of emission of light (*hokkōchi* 發光地), the ground of glowing wisdom (*en'eji* 焰慧地), the ground of overcoming difficulty (*nanshōji* 難勝地), the ground of manifestation of reality (*genzenchi* 現前地), the ground of far-reaching (*ongyōchi* 遠行地), the immovable ground (*fudōji* 不動地), the ground of wondrous wisdom (*zen'eiji* 善慧地), and the ground of the Dharma cloud (*hōunji* 法雲地).

<sup>31</sup>. The Permanent Fire of Haguro was also defined as the bodhisattva's fire.

<sup>32</sup>. The five pollutions are: the defilement of the trends of the present age (*kōjoku* 劫濁), the defilement of mistaken views (*kenjoku* 見濁), the defilement of afflictions (*bonnōjoku* 煩惱濁), the defilement of being a sentient being (*shujōjoku* 衆生濁), the defilement of having a human lifetime, which gradually decreases of ten years (*myōjoku* 命濁).

ascetics who perform rituals using the fire of this shrine-temple complex, which is nothing more than a *kiribi*. [...] If it was just a simple *kiribi*, why would Daishi transmit it?<sup>33</sup>

In this passage Tetsumonkai underlines a fundamental connection between the ascetic practice of self-seclusion (*betsugyō*) on Mount Yudono, a fundamental moment in the ascesis of the *issei gyōnin*, and the performance of the *jōka* ritual. Even if during the *betsugyō* the *issei gyōnin* performed a variety of ascetic practices such as ablutions, prostrations, wood-eating (*mokujiki*) and fasting, the ceremony of the Supreme Fire was conceived as the ultimate target and the *raison d'être* of all the other practices. Moreover, the *jōka* is defined as identical to the wisdom flame (*chika*) of the Dharma body (*hosshin*) of Dainichi Nyorai.

It is interesting to compare the description of the *jōka* reported in the passages of the *Kikeishi* with a certificate (*shōmon* 証文) about the Supreme Fire ritual issued by the Hondōji *bettō* Eishū 永宗 in Kan'ei 2 (1625) for a confraternity (*kō*) of Yudono, which was affiliated with the Henjōin 遍照院 temple in Atsugi 厚木 (Kanagawa 神奈川 prefecture). This document is particularly important because it is one of the first written sources concerning the activities of *issei gyōnin* and members of Yudonosan *kō* outside the Tōhoku area.

The *Yudonosan jōka shōmon* 湯殿山上火証文 can be divided into three sections, made up of four clusters of five or six characters each.<sup>34</sup> The style of the text is extremely allusive and imitates the Buddhist verses (*ge* 偈) in the sūtras, which were often used as poetical devices to indirectly describe some specific ceremonial aspect in the ritual memoranda (*kirigami*) of the Edo period. The difficulty in properly decoding the meaning of this text is due to the fact that it

<sup>33</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 3-4.

<sup>34</sup>. This document is included in the collection of documents of Mrs. Abe Kuniko 阿部國子 which is conserved in the city library of Atsugi in Kanagawa prefecture.

was probably used in connection with an oral transmission (*kuden* 口伝) made by the *issei gyōnin* to the members of the *kō* in order to elucidate the deepest meanings of the strings of characters. This *kirigami* was a sort of textual maṇḍala, based on the encounter of written words and vocal explanations delivered by the *issei gyōnin* to the other adepts in the confraternity. In order to facilitate the comprehension of this text it is useful to break it into three parts.

Mount Yudono: Certificate of the Supreme Fire.

- 1) Boil (*aburu* 焔)<sup>35</sup> some water to purify the ritual space (*hōtei* 法帝) from the defilements of the passions (*jinku* 塵垢) that increase karma.  
Using the sacred cold water (*reisui* 靈水) the ascetic purifies [his body] from the darkness (*shōei* 障翳) of the obstacles of the past. (法帝禁[重]摩焔 塵垢業嵩 行者靈水洗除 過非障翳).
- 2) The power of light (*ikō* 威光) augments and creates a shining net. The entire cosmos (*mitsugū* 密宮) becomes a prosperous land. [The ascetic] embraces the prohibitions against immoral behavior (*shira* 尸羅) and washes away all impurities (*ketan* 潔湛). This is the beneficial stream of water of crystalline purity (*chōjō* 澄淨). (威光增照織 昌地之密宮 尸羅於潔湛澄淨之洪隆).
- 3) Concentrate and take the flame in order to insert it in the [fire platform]. [Say] RI-BAN (利番) and the great old man (*tai okina* 太翁).<sup>36</sup> Keep the mind focused on the provisional teachings (*kakyō* 茄教) that open the way to the ultimate teachings (*jikkyō* 実教) [for the

<sup>35</sup>. The character *aburu* visually indicates the mystical union of water (*mizu* 水) and fire (*hi* 火) in order to create hot water (*yu* 湯) for the ablution of the ritual arena.

<sup>36</sup>. The meaning of this verse is obscure. The term *okina* may indicate Yudono Gongen or the opener of Haguro, Nōjo Taishi, who is also defined as a “sacred old man” (*sei okina* 聖翁) in the *Hagurosan engi* 羽黒山縁起. BAN 番 may stand for 鑊, i.e. *VAM*, which may represent water. See *Hagurosan engi* in *Shintō taiki*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 3. The compound *ri-ban* could be two phonetic characters (*ateji* 当字) used to represent the sounds of the Sanskrit syllables of a mantra.

realization of the Buddhahood]. [The ascetic who does this] is the most noble one (*isshin* 一紳). (転浅火入授火 利番太翁 執茄教遍実教 斯尤一紳).<sup>37</sup>

There is a binary connection between the three parts of the text. Part One deals with the purification of the ritual space through ablutions of hot water and the cleaning of the body of the ascetic using cold water (*mizugori*). The initial act of sprinkling hot water reminds us of the Shugendō ceremony of boiling water (*yudate* 湯立) for the purification of spaces, the pacification of hungry ghosts, and divinatory rituals. The use of cold water to clean the body of the ascetic is a clear reference to the purifying ablutions that characterize the asceticism of the *issey gyōnin*. The text presents a sort of mirror game between the cleaning of the ritual arena and the washing of the ascetic's body. The moral and physical impurities are described as the darkness that envelops the mind and body of the ascetic.

In opposition to this shadowy reality, which characterizes the opening passage of the *kirigami*, Part Two focuses on light and purity. It represents the conclusion of the defiled status that was pictured in Part One. The body of the ascetic and the entire cosmos are cleansed by streams of water and secured inside a shining net. This macro-cosmic purity is confirmed and reinforced through the ascetic's acceptance of the Buddhist prohibitions against immoral behavior. The microcosm, which is represented by the ethical perfection of the mind of the practitioner, is reflected in the external macrocosm that is also completely purified.

When the conditions expressed in Parts One and Two are realized, the ritual of the Supreme Fire, which is mentioned in Part Three, can take place. The third part of the text describes the

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<sup>37</sup>. For the original text see *Atsugishi shi: kinsei shiryō hen shaji*, vol. 1, eds. Atsugishi hishobu shishihen san ya (Atsugi: Dainihon insatsu kabushiki kaisha, 1986), 761. I am very thankful to Professor Abe Yasurō for helping me understand the meaning of this text.



definitive purpose of the Supreme Fire ritual, which corresponds to the attainment of ultimate truth and the realization of Buddhahood. When the ascetic is able to master all the external and internal criteria of purity and wisdom, he can be venerated by all the other members of the confraternity.

The three sections of this *kirigami* are closely interconnected, but they also manifest an internal tension or opposition between one other. In the text there is a sort of permanent communion of antithetic elements such as hot water and cold water, fire and water, darkness and light, impurity and purity, macro-cosmos and micro-cosmos, and provisional truth and ultimate truth. In *Plato's Pharmacy* Jacques Derrida points out that oppositional dyads are based on an apparent conflict that produces movement or play, which actually dissolves the two antithetic poles in order to create a dialogue between differences based on mutual fertilization.<sup>38</sup> A similar mechanism can be detected in the ritual protocol of the Supreme Fire ceremony, in which the creative force generated from the encounter of oppositional concepts allows the ascetic to reach Buddhahood.

Comparing the descriptions of the Supreme Fire ritual reported in the *Yudonosan jōka shōmon* with the explanations provided by Tetsumonkai in the *Kikeishi*, it should be underlined that there is a total absence in the first text of doctrinal elements specifically referable to the Shingon tradition. The rituality of the *issei gyōnin* reported in the *Yudonosan jōka shōmon* was based on a mix of exoteric and esoteric (*kenmitsu* 顕密) Buddhist elements, which were linked together through the performance of ascetic practices that were typical of the *issei gyōnin* tradition. In

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<sup>38</sup>. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (1972; repr., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 127.

1625 the Hondōji *bettō* Eishū did not hesitate to invent a connection between the doctrinal discourse of the Shingon School and the ritual protocols of the *issei gyōnin*. The *Yudonosan jōka shōmon* was composed fourteen years before the first lawsuit filed by Ten'yū against Yudono. Therefore, this text still reflects a non-sectarian orientation among the Buddhist monks and *issei gyōnin* of Yudono during the first decade of the seventeenth century. In the *Kikeishi*, composed in 1812, Tetsumonkai chose a completely different strategy to introduce the Supreme Fire ritual of the *issei gyōnin*, which was legitimated through a semantic and semiotic overlapping with the interpretative categories of the Shingon School.

### 3.3. *Mokujiki Gyōja*

The sponsorship of stelae (*itabi* 板碑) and stūpa (*sotōba* 卒塔婆) dedicated to the cult of Yudono was one of the principal activities of the *issei gyōnin*. This type of stelae often has the signature of the *issei gyōnin* together with the names of the *kō* members who took part in bringing about this sacred object. The Dharma name of the *issei gyōnin* is almost invariably preceded by the appellative of wood-eater (*mokujiki*) or wood-eating ascetic (*mokujiki gyōja* 木食行者). For instance, on the base of the massive Yudonosan *sotōba*, which was built in Tenmei 3 (1783) and located inside the enclosure of Dainichibō in Ōami village, it is possible to read the signature “wood-eater Shinnyokai” (*mokujiki Shinnyokai* 木食真如海) (See Fig. 2.3).

The term *mokujiki* did not simply define a specific ascetic practice that characterized the *issei*

*gyōnin*, but worked as a sort of validation mark of the actual empowerment (*genriki*) that the practitioner reached through wood-eating during the self-seclusion period in the mountain. The *mokujiki* specification, which preceded the name of the *issei gyōnin*, worked as a sort of *imprimatur* that legitimized the power of the ascetic in the eyes of the lay community.

During the long retreats (*sanrō*) at the foot of Yudono that normally lasted for one thousand days (*sennichigyō*), but could also be extended to three thousand days (*sanzennichigyō* 三千日行) or five thousand days (*gosennichigyō* 五千日行), the *issei gyōnin* were believed to accumulate an enormous amount of ascetic power through the *mokujiki* practice. This ascetic activity was performed in order to purify and push the body of the ascetic toward the extreme biological limits. Nevertheless, this constant process of deduction or reduction of the physicality of the ascetic actually transformed the body of the *issei gyōnin* into a formidable receptacle of power.

This is a typical mechanism of ascetic practices, which apparently negate the body, but actually affirm it. In *On the Way to Language* (1959) Martin Heidegger pointed out this ambiguity of asceticism comparing it with some aspects of language. According to Heidegger nothing is possible beyond the territory of the language, which literarily creates reality. Therefore, even when language is based on renunciation or negation it actually turns out to be a positive or affirmative statement. In the chapter “Words” he explained that: “Renunciation is in itself a Saying [...],” because renunciation always pretends to obliterate itself by turning out to be a total affirmation.<sup>39</sup> The same principle was valid in most of the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin*, in which the ascetic body acquired power, legitimacy, and affirmation to the

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<sup>39</sup>. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 152.

extent that it was impoverished, caste away, and negated. The renunciation of saying corresponds to an affirmative stage of language and, in the same way, the annihilation of the body turns to be a fundamental moment of empowerment in the grammar of asceticism.

The term *mokuji* did not simply refer to the practice of eating leaves, berries, bark, or tubers, it also implied a total abstention from the ten cereals (*jūkokudachi* 十穀断), rice, wheat, soybeans, *azuki*, sesame, buckwheat, millet, *sanwa* millet, corn, and chestnuts that formed the base of the ordinary diet of lay persons.<sup>40</sup> An exception was made for the *soba* dumplings (*soba dango* 蕎麦団子) that were placed on altars as offerings for deities and could be eaten by the *issei gyōnin* during the ascetic retreat. This detail shows that the nourishment of the ascetic body followed the dietary habits of the gods rather than those of humans. In the *Kikeishi* there is an interesting explanation about the eating rules which characterized the *issei gyōnin*.

The village of Ōami includes five small villages: Sekitani 関谷, Uemura 上村, Nakamura 中村, Shimomura 下村 and Shigamura 四ヶ村. The people of these villages eat game birds and wild animals (*chōjū* 鳥獸). For the people who wear the *shime kake* 七五三掛 [the *issei gyōnin*] it is a wrongdoing to heat food cooked on the same fire (*dōhi wo mo osureba kanarazu akushi* 同火をも食すれば必ず悪し) [as the Ōami villagers]. If someone incurs this sort of pollution, there is a waterfall at Karuizawa 軽井沢. Making an ablution with this water purifies the internal space of the house and the body. It is always possible to use the water of the three-prong *vajra* to perform the same purification.<sup>41</sup>

In the villages at the foot of Yudonosan such as Ōami hunting activities were as relevant as agriculture. Therefore, the double exclusion of the *issei gyōnin* from the consumption of cereals and game was surely perceived as a sort of culinary stigmata, which placed the ascetics in a

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<sup>40</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 96-97.

<sup>41</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 3.

special position beyond the limits of ordinary society.

Another passage in the *Kikeishi* underlines that the *mokujiki* practice was not limited to the purification of the body of the ascetic, but could be performed as a dietetic means to obtain an altered state of consciousness, which facilitated the ecstatic séance (*kamigakari* 神懸) of the *issei gyōnin*.

Before practicing the ritual [of the Supreme Fire] the body must be purified with ablutions (*kori*), the ordinary fire (*hirabi*) must be extinguished, and clean clothes, crowns (*kanmuri*) and *shimekake* must be worn in order to eat [the offerings cooked] on the Supreme Fire.<sup>42</sup> This is in accordance with the principles of this ritual. Everyday it is necessary to fast (*danjiki* 断食), to avoid eating salt, and to practice ablutions one hundred or one thousand times.

[...] The living body is covered with a layer of skin. Between tendons, bones, and flesh there are organs and intestines (*zōfu* 臟腑), which envelop the food, ferment it, and expel it as feces and urine. Tears, saliva, and a lake of phlegm ooze from mouth, ears, and eyes like a stream of dregs. The body keeps producing a permanent flow of soil. Before facing the buddhas it is mandatory to purify the revolting smell of the impurities. [...]

To fast and abstain from salt is an effective method to eliminate impurities. Moreover, the five pungent roots<sup>43</sup> and the ingestion of meat must be considered as the greatest obstacles [to ascetic practice]. These things must be totally banned. Therefore, in the ancient scripts of this temple (*tōji korai no sho* 当寺古来之書) it is reported that the ritual that precedes the manipulation of the Supreme Fire corresponds to the ceremony for the acceptance of the Three Refuges and five precepts (*sankigokai* 三歸五戒) and a total abstinence from the five pungent roots, meat, and alcohol.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, [the *issei gyōnin*] are used to organize libations of *sake* together with their companions. What is requested is to act with faith and maintain an internal and external purity (*naige shōjō* 内外清淨).

Moreover, it is not to easy to cancel the smell of pollution; that is the reason why we fast. In

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<sup>42</sup>. This sentence refers to the ritual moment in which the *issei gyōnin* used the purified flame of the *jōka* to heat the food offerings that they presented to the deities. The meal of the *issei gyōnin* overlapped with the meal of the gods.

<sup>43</sup>. The five pungent roots (*goshin* 五辛) are garlic, wild scallion, Chinese chives, chives, and Chinese scallion.

<sup>44</sup>. The ceremony for the acceptance of the five precepts transforms the lay devotee into a Buddhist practitioner (Skt. *upāsaka*; *ubasoku* 優婆塞) who officially relies on the Three Refuges (*sanki* 三歸) and accepts the five ethical precepts (*gokai* 五戒). The Three Refuges are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *samgha*. The five precepts are: not killing, not stealing, no debauchery, no false speech, and no consumption of alcohol.

the *Saiikiki* 西域記<sup>45</sup> it is written that the Bodhisattva Kanzeon 觀世音 [Kannon] always stops inside a temple on a mountain. If a believer calls the Bodhisattva, he answers him as if he were an echo. The response [of the Bodhisattva] is never empty. This text explains that if a person stays in a mountain temple and keeps fasting for seven days, he will be able to visualize sacred beings (*shōja* 聖者) who will teach the Dharma in front of his eyes. If a practitioner keeps fasting, his mind becomes strong and is able to clearly contemplate miraculous visions. If one keeps performing ascetic practices with a brave mind, he even forgets to sleep and eat. If such a thing happens, this means that the mystical correspondences are always effective.<sup>46</sup>

The ritual consumption of *sake* performed by the *issei gyōnin* during their ceremonies went against the Buddhist prohibition against ingesting intoxicating substances. Nevertheless, these libations were necessary to provoke the ecstatic séance in the ascetic. This passage of the *Kikeishi* underlines a sort of ritual freedom according to which the *issei gyōnin* adapted and manipulated the Buddhist standards of moral behavior in order to meet the specific needs of their rituals such as the *kamigakari*. The ritual use of *sake* by the *issei gyōnin* often exposed them to the criticism of monks who accused them of dubious conduct and of disregarding their moral obligations. For instance, the *Fumon'in monjo* 普門院文書 (Kansei 6, 1823), which was signed by all the *bettō* of the four temples of Yudono, makes the following statement.

In recent years the *issei gyōnin* who practice ascetic retreat on the mountain do not reside in their ascetic huts (*gyōya* 行屋), but go out to preach the teachings of the Buddha (*kange* 勸化). They do not respect the division between the ordinary fire (*hirabi*) and the separated fire (*bekka*), and move to other places during the snowy season. They pay attention to the trivial matters of the world. In past times *issei gyōnin* practiced asceticism in order to reach the enlightenment of their minds (*jigyō* 自行). Because they had faith (*shinjin* 信心) in the Three

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<sup>45</sup>. The extended title of this Chinese text is *Record of Travels to Western Lands* (*Daitō saiikiki* [Ch. *Da Tang xiyu-ji*] 大唐西域記, T. LI 2087). This travel record to central Asia and India was written by the Chinese monk Xuanzang 玄奘 in 646.

<sup>46</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi* (1) *Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 4.

Treasures and desired to deeply meditate (*zanmai* 三昧) they secluded themselves in the mountain and did not question the regulations of the mountain (*sanhō* 山法). They rigorously respected the protocols [of the ascetic practices], but in recent years they spend a great amount of time living in the ordinary world (*tosei* 渡世) and therefore become lascivious (*midara* 猥ら).<sup>47</sup>

This sort of reprimand of the monks against the corruption of *issei gyōnin* could be motivated by actual misbehavior of the ascetics, but it is also possible to detect a certain degree of anxiety among the monks about the highly appreciated preaching activities (*kange*) performed by the *issei gyōnin* for the people in the villages around Mount Yudono. The extreme popularity of the *issei gyōnin* represented a potential risk for the monastic class of losing control of the parishioners (*danna*) and the financial sustenance that came from their donations (*fuse* 布施).

The modality through which monks criticized *issei gyōnin* tended to stigmatize any deviation from the codified ascetic behavior in order to discredit the credibility of these ascetic groups. For instance, the division between ordinary fire and separated fire was a pivotal element on which the *issei gyōnin* built their religious identity, but the accusation that they obliterated such canonical separation easily brought the ascetics back to an ordinary lay status, in which they were vulnerable because they lost the aura of renunciants. The charisma associated with the *issei gyōnin* derived from their self-advertisement as social models of perfect moral conduct and humility, but this paradigmatic role, at the same time, exposed them to the harsh criticism of other religious professionals such as monks and *shugenja* who could easily use each case of misconduct as a pretext to depict the *issei gyōnin* as impostors.

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<sup>47</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 132.

## 4. The Religious Activities of the *Issei Gyōnin* on the Ground

### 4.1. Purifications of the Flame and Healing Talismans

A fundamental practice of the *issei gyōnin* was the daily pilgrimage (*nissan* 日参) to Gohōzen. The *nissan* was repeated three times per day at dawn, noon, and evening. This type of pilgrimage included the climbing of various peaks that surrounded Senninzawa such as Yakushi no mine 薬師峰 and Senningatake. From the top of these mountains it was possible to have a direct view of Gohōzen that was compared to a natural icon of the living body of Dainichi Nyorai. From here the *issei gyōnin* practiced a preliminary long-distance veneration of Gohōzen before descending to Senninzawa and offering their homage to the sacred boulder from a closer area, which was characterized by the presence of innumerable *bonten* stuck in the ground.

The *issei gyōnin* alternated periods of intense ascetic activities and devotional pilgrimages to Gohōzen, during which they recharged their ascetic power, with other moments, in which they traveled in order to perform special rituals and spread the faith in Mount Yudono among the populations of urban and rural centers. The religious activities of the *issei gyōnin* covered a vast area, which extended from the rural communities of the Shōnai plain to the eight provinces (*hasshū* 八州) of Kantō and included also the southern part of Ezo.<sup>48</sup>

According to the *Fumon'in monjo*, the *issei gyōnin* were prevented from carrying out any kind

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<sup>48</sup>. The eight provinces of the Kantō were Sagami 相模, Musashi 武蔵, Awa 安房, Kazusa, Shimōsa 下総, Hitachi, Kōzuke 上野, and Shimotsuke.



of activity that involved economic transactions such as the distribution of talismans, amulets, or the performance of rituals on commission.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the reality on the ground was undoubtedly very different from what is described in the text. For instance, the ritual of *hijime* 火注連 was frequently requested by the villagers to the *issei gyōnin* in order to purify the domestic fire of the stove from the impurities deriving from death, menstruation, or birth. Being experts of the Supreme Fire of Yudono it is natural that the *issei gyōnin* were asked to perform purificatory practices for the fireplaces in people's houses. The ritual procedures for the *hijime* are unknown, but there is a *kirigami* dated Shōtoku 4 (1714), in which is described a peculiar type of *shime* defined as the sacred rope of the eight generals (*hasshō shime* 八将注連).<sup>50</sup> This *shime* was used together with the *bonten* to create a protective barrier (*kekai* 結界) around the fireplace to secure the flame from evil influences. Eight paper pendants (*gohei* 御幣) were attached on the *hasshō shime*. Each *gohei* corresponded to directional deities similar to those venerated in the Onmyōdō tradition.<sup>51</sup> The eight generals of the *hasshō shime* were Antakujin 安宅神 (the protective *kami* of the house); Tanjisujin 旦自須神; Kujigami 九字神 (the *kami* of the *kuji*); Sōningami 途人神 (the *kami* that protects the ascetics who abandon the world and enter the Buddhist path); Aikyōjin 愛敬神 (the *kami* of love); Kichiningami 吉人神 (the *kami* of good

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<sup>49</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 132.

<sup>50</sup>. For an illustration of the *hasshō shime* see the *Hasshō shime no daiji* 八将注連之大事, in *Shintō taikai*, Jinjohen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 293.

<sup>51</sup>. The eight divine generals (*hasshōjin* 八将神) of the Onmyōdō tradition are Taisai 太歳, Daishōgun 大將軍, Daion 大陰, Saikyō 歳刑, Saiha 歳破, Saisetsu 歳殺, Ōban 黄幡, and Hyōbi 豹尾. Taisai brings good luck to all directions and Daishōgun does exactly the opposite. The direction controlled by Daion and Hyōbi is negative for weddings and childbirths. The direction of Saikyō is bad for sowing and tree planting activities. Saiha and Ōban oppose any constructions in their directions. Travelers cannot move along the direction that corresponds to Saisetsu's residence. These eight deities change their abodes during the year and it is crucial for the Onmyōdō masters to be able to determinate their exact position in order to avoid any infraction of directional taboos. Nevertheless, the *issei gyōnin* adopted a completely different set of *hasshōjin* in order to perform the purification and protection of the flame.

luck); Ton'yokujin 貪欲神 (the *kami* of greed), and Dokōjin 土公神 (the *kami* of the fireplace).

The production and distribution of talismans was another fundamental occupation of the ascetics of Yudono. Even today there are many houses in the Shōnai area that still conserve the protective talismans made by famous *issei gyōnin* such as Tetsumonkai, Tetsuryūkai 鉄竜海 (1819–1881), or Bukkai 仏海 (1827–1903). For instance, there was a talisman against the spread of contagious diseases, which was printed at Nangakuji 南岳寺, a *gyōnidera* in Tsuruoka, and widely distributed by the disciples of Tetsuryūkai (See Fig. 2.4). In the central part of the talisman there is a seated image of Tetsuryūkai dressed in the ceremonial attire of the *issei gyōnin* with the cloth-crown on his head, a *vajra* in his right hand and a rosary (*juzu* 数珠) in his left.<sup>52</sup> On the top part of the talisman there is a verse which says: “In the house where the name of Tetsu is pasted on the gate, the evil gods (*akujin* 悪神) of epidemics (*eki* 疫) cannot enter.”<sup>53</sup> This protective talisman shows that the *issei gyōnin* not only distributed their own talismans among their devotees, but also used the images of popular ascetics such as Tetsuryūkai as the main icon empowering the amulets.

In the collection of the city library of Tsuruoka there is an extremely complicated amulet case that was probably produced by the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji or Kaikōji 海向寺 during the Edo period (See Fig. 2.5).<sup>54</sup> The external part of the object is similar to a square envelope (about 20

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<sup>52</sup>. It is interesting to notice that the shape of the cloth-crown used by the *issei gyōnin* varied according to the rank of the ascetic. Standard *issei gyōnin* wore a simple *kanmuri* similar to a bandana. Eminent *issei gyōnin*, who held the title of Shōnin and were *jūshoku* at a *gyōnidera*, used a more elaborate type of crown with a triangular shape, similar to the head gear of the Shingon esoteric masters (*ajari* 阿闍梨).

<sup>53</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu*, 141-142.

<sup>54</sup>. This talisman is part of a large collection of amulets and temple writings gathered by Sugawara Sadaemon 菅原定右衛門 who was a public official in Kumaidemura 熊出村. Because a lot of talismans in his collection are directly connected to the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, it is possible that even this anonymous amulet case was made by the ascetics of Yudono. For the original talisman see Tsuruokashi kyōdo shiryōkan, *Shoke monjo mokuroku V*,

cm×20 cm) made of Japanese paper, inside of which there are ten small pockets that contain special powders and leaves. In the central area of the external cover there is the seed letter (*shūji* 種子) ĀNKU (Skt. *ĀMH*), which symbolized Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and is encircled in a fire halo. On the right side of ĀNKU there are two more seed letters: KIRĪKU (Skt. *HRĪH*; Amida Nyorai) and UN (Skt. *HUM*; Kongō Dōji 金剛童子). On the left side there is a different version of the seed letter UN (Skt. *HHŪM*) that represents Aizen Myōō 愛染明王.

Below this calligraphic maṇḍala made of seed letters, there is an explanation of the contents of the amulet case: protective talismans (*omamori gofu* 御守護符) to seek divine intervention to preserve good health during catastrophic events (Skt. *śāntika*; *sokusai* 息災) and the prolongation of life (*enmeisho* 延命所).<sup>55</sup> On the lower right side appears an unspecified signature of a Dharma master (*keihaku hōshū* 敬白法主). Inside the envelope there are ten square papers (5cm × 5cm), on which is printed the image of Aizen Myōō seated on a lotus throne with a bow in the left hand and an arrow in the right. The decoration of the eleventh paper is an eight pointed star, which is similar to the five pointed star (*sēman* セーマン) of the Onmyōdō tradition, with some convoluted lines drawn inside. The small size of these twelve papers indicates that they were supposed to be drunk with water like talismanic pills for healing purposes.

The most interesting part of the amulet-case is a double set of six leaves on which are written a mix of Sanskrit letters (*bonji* 梵字) and *kanji*, which refer to the calligraphic forms of Buddhist

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Kumaide Sugawara ke monjo (1-3; 151), (Tsuruoka: Komatsu shashin insatsu, 1991), 64. During fieldwork at Kaikōji in Sakata, which was a subsidiary temple of Chūrenji, I discovered a woodblock (*hangī* 版木) for talismans against diseases that has graphic layout very similar to the external part of this amulet case.

<sup>55</sup>. The second character (*sai* 災) of the term *sokusai* is noticeably smaller than the first one because it refers to the manifestation of catastrophic events.

deities and the sounds of the mantra associated with them. These leaves were probably supposed to be attached to the gate of the house after being fumigated through the flame of the *jōka*. In this way they created a sort of talismanic shield that prevented the demons of epidemic access to the house of the devotee.<sup>56</sup> In a printed map, which was probably commissioned by the Dainichiji *bettō* to illustrate the sacred geography of the four temples around Mount Yudono, there is a caption that explains the meaning of the famous Shimezakura 七五三桜 tree at Chūrenji.<sup>57</sup> It is said that the leaves of this sacred tree (*reiboku* 霊木) were used to cure epidemic diseases and every sort of illness. Moreover, in the narratives of the origins (*engi*) of Mount Yudono it is often stated that all the trees and grasses of this area are constantly moistened by the dew of the Dharma, which transforms the trees into a sort of vegetal buddhas. Even if the leaves of this talisman are not from a cherry tree, it is possible that the *issei gyōnin* who specialized in this specific model of leaf-amulets used also different types of plants from the woods around Yudonosan.

Once an *issei gyōnin* accomplished three years of apprenticeship at Yudono, many went back to their original villages or traveled to other areas of Tōhoku or Kantō where they spread the Yudono faith and practiced austerities and rituals for different rural communities. During the Edo period some groups of *issei gyōnin* were active also in metropolitan areas such as Edo, but their presence was more relevant among farming communities in the countryside. For instance, the

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<sup>56</sup>. In the Edo period the leaves of the *Ilex latifolia* (*tarayō* 多羅葉) were considered extremely useful to prevent measles (*hashika* 麻疹) epidemics. Since this tree was rare people used paper reproductions of its leaves to make protective talismans to be attached to the doors and gates of the house. See *Hayaribyō no nishikie - Nishiki-e, Color Prints of Infections* [coll. *Kusuri hakubutsukan shūzō shiryōshū 4*], ed. Itō Kyōko (Tōkyō: Naitō kinen kusuri hakubutsukan, 2001), 80, 143.

<sup>57</sup>. This map does not have a title and does not show any date, but the disposition of the cultic centers that follows a combinatory logic between buddhas and *kami* denotes a pre-Meiji sacred landscape of Yudono.

temple Hōtokuji 法徳寺 at Ushiyamura 牛屋村 in Echigo province was established in Kanbun 2 (1662) as a branch temple of Dainichibō, at the *omoteguchi* of Yudono.

Hōtokuji was a *gyōnidera* and its parishioners did not request rituals for the atonement of bad karma for the dead (*metsuzai danka* 滅罪檀家), but had ninety-two households of devotees (*shinto* 信徒) who were affiliated with it and were called parishioners for propitiatory rituals (*kitō danka* 祈禱檀家).<sup>58</sup> The main icon of Hōtokuji was a statue of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai. Inside the enclosure of the temple was a votive stele dedicated to Yudono with the seed letter ĀNKU carved on the top part and an invocation for the peace of the village (*sonchū anzen* 村中安全) inscribed on the lower portion. All the *issei gyōnin* affiliated with this temple also acted as village-guides (*sato sendatsu*) for the members of the Yudono *kō* that wanted to make a pilgrimage to Yudono during the summer. Members of the *kō* called the *issei gyōnin* escorting them to Yudono by the honorific title of “honorable Dharma-seal” (Hōin *sama* 法印様). The *issei gyōnin* who worked as supervisor (*jūshoku*) of the temple was identified through the title of “venerable Shōnin” (*go* Shōnin 御上人).

A considerable number of talismans distributed by the *issei gyōnin* of Hōtokuji concerned the propitiation of the stove deity (*kamadogami* 竈神), Sanbōkōjin 三宝荒神. On this type of talisman the ascetics wrote the sentence: “May the Three Jewels Daikōjin bring prosperity to this house right now” (Sanbōdaikōjin *komon anei tokoro* 三宝大荒神戸門安寧攸).<sup>59</sup> The *issei gyōnin* did not simply distribute these amulets, but also purified the houses (*ie harai* 家祓い) and prayed for the good fortune of the family members. This kind of domiciliary religious service on

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<sup>58</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūnana seiki Echigo no kuni ni okeru Yudonosan gyōja no katsudō: Iwafunegun Ushiyamura Hōtokuji o chūshin ni,” *Nihon shigaku shūroku* 22, (May 1999): 2.

<sup>59</sup>. *Ibid.*, 6.

the behalf of the *kitō danka* was called “tour of the parishioners” (*dan mawari* 檀廻) and was more frequently performed during the end of the year, the first month of the new one, and the spring solstice (*haru no higan* 春の彼岸).

The standard protocol for the purificatory rituals was that the *issei gyōnin*, seated in front of the altar for the ancestors (*butsudan* 仏壇), presented a cup of unpolished rice (*genmai* 玄米) with a *gohei* stuck into it as the main offering before starting the recitation of sūtras. The period of the new year overlapped with the star festival (*hoshi matsuri* 星祭り) during which the *issei gyōnin* performed the popular ritual of star divination (*hoshi uranai* 星占). The *hoshi uranai* consisted of associating every single day of the year with one of the nine stars (*kuyōsei* 九曜星) that regulated the life and death of human beings. When this astrological grid was completed, the *issei gyōnin* added the digits of the person’s age to each of the nine stars starting from Rāhu (*ra* 羅), which corresponded to the first year of life, and ended with Jupiter (*moku* 木), which was associated with the ninetieth year. Then the *issei gyōnin* informed the devotee about his fortune for the new year.<sup>60</sup>

During the Bunsei era (1818–1830) the *issei gyōnin* Hōkai 宝海 from Toriyamura 鳥屋村 became the *jūshoku* of Hōtokuji. Hōkai specialized in the million times *nenbutsu* (*hyakumanben nenbutsu* 百万遍念仏), which differed from the classic *nenbutsu* practice because it was not a ritual for the individual salvation of the single devotee, but aimed to bring prosperity to all members of the *nenbutsu* confraternity (*nenbutsu kō* 念仏講) and the village community. Hōkai

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<sup>60</sup>. The nine stars are Rāhu (*ra*), Saturn (*do* 土), Mercury (*sui* 水), Venus (*kin* 金), Sun (*nichi* 日), Mars (*ka* 火), Ketu (*keito* 計都), Moon (*tsuki* 月), and Jupiter (*moku*). This division of the celestial bodies originated in India and spread to China with the diffusion of esoteric Buddhism. The first trace of this type of divinatory ritual in Japan dates back to the thirteenth century. The *hoshi uranai* became extremely popular during the Edo period thanks to the activities of the Onmyōdō masters (*onmyōji* 陰陽師) and the great diffusion of almanacs (*koyomi* 曆) for agricultural activities among peasants.

performed the *hyakumanben nenbutsu* for the pacification and transfer of merit to the dead (*chinsō tsuizen* 鎮送追善), the annihilation of insects from the crops (*mushi okuri* 虫送り), rainmaking rituals (*amagoi* 雨乞い), and rituals against calamities (*mubyō sokusai kitō* 無病息災祈禱) and epidemics (*ekibyō taisan kitō* 疫病退散祈禱).<sup>61</sup>

The famous *issei gyōnin*, Tetsumonkai, was also extremely active in the area around Iwafunegun 岩船郡 in Echigo province. For instance, he sponsored the construction of a votive stele for Yudono (Yudonosan *kuyōtō* 湯殿山供養塔) in Murakami 村上 village, and in Bunsei 1 (1818) his disciple Kakusuikai 覺水海 supported the erection of another Yudono stele for the *nenbutsu* confraternity of Shionomachi 塩野町. Kakusuikai put his name beside the invocation for the peace of the village, defining himself as the “Hermit of the mountain and wood-eater Kakusuikai” (*sanrō mokujiki* Kakusuikai 山籠木喰覺水海). Two other disciples of Tetsumonkai, Shinshōkai 新清海 and Monshōkai 門清海, supervised the erection of two votive stelae of Yudono in the villages of Shimowatarimura 下渡村 in Bunsei 10 (1827) and Monzenmura 門前村 in Tenpō 13 (1842).<sup>62</sup>

Among the stelae of Yudono that were sponsored by Tetsumonkai the case of the Yudonosan *kuyōtō* in Yamadamura 山田村 is particularly interesting. This devotional stone was built in Bunka 8 (1811) in the burial ground of Yamadamura. The spot of land selected as the site for the votive stele of Yudono was called Gyōzuka 行塚 and already hosted the tumulus of an anonymous ascetic (*gyōninzuka* 行人塚) who was considered to be in a status of deep meditation

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<sup>61</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūnana seiki echigokuni ni okeru Yudonosan gyōja no katsudō: Iwafunegun Ushiyamura Hōtokuji wo chūshin ni,” 7.

<sup>62</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “19 seiki shotō Dewa Sanzan Shugen no kakusei undō—Yudonosan-mokujiki gyōja Tetsumonkai no Echigo fukyō o chūshin ni,” *Shakai bunka shigaku* 52, (May 2009): 81.

and suspended animation inside the ground (*dochū nyūjō*), constantly praying for the protection of the villagers from epidemics and catastrophes. The *gyōninzuka* area was also considered as a transit place for the souls of the dead before entering the Pure Land of the West (*gokuraku jōdo* 極楽浄土).<sup>63</sup>

The strategy adopted by Tetsumonkai was to install the stele of Yudono in a place of the village that was characterized by a double cultic activity: one dedicated to the legend of an immortal ascetic meditating and praying in the ground for the protection of the living and a second one linked to the soteriological journey of the dead toward the Pure Land. When Tetsumonkai introduced the cult of Yudono at Yamadamura he decided to place the stone-icon of the sacred mountain at the geographical center of various religious discourses, which involved, at the same time, the society of the living and of the dead.

The foundation of a new stele dedicated to the cult of Yudono at Shimotazawa 下田沢 in the Shōnai area was also an occasion to raise funds to sponsor religious activities (*kanjin* 勧進). For instance, the *Fuji Jirō nikki* 藤治朗日記 (nineteenth century) has a description of the installation ceremony for a stele of Yudono performed by Tetsumonkai in Bunsei 1 (1818).

On the twentieth day of the sixth month Tetsumon Shōnin presided over the ceremony for the installation of a stūpa (*tōba* 塔婆) [dedicated to Yudono] and a propitiatory ritual (*gokitō*). Innumerable old and young, men and women (*rō'nyaku nannyo wo shirazu* 老若男女を知らず) gathered on the spot. Coins fell down like rain (*zeni ame no gotoshi* 錢雨の如し). The Shōnin distributed talismans (*fuda*) among the people of seven villages, gave two hundred *mon* to the disciples out of two *shu* 銖 and five hundred *mon*, and paid two *shu* of interest for the work of the stone engraver (*ishikiri* 石切).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>. Ibid., 83.

<sup>64</sup>. *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, ed. Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 613.



Tetsumonkai preached the faith in Mount Yudono and provided the ritual services of the *issei gyōnin* also for the urban communities of Sakata 酒田 and, as we will later see, Edo. For instance, the *Kamegasaki ashigaru metsuke goyōchō* 亀ヶ崎足軽目付御用帳 (eighteenth century) reports that in Kansei 8 (1796) a merchant of Sakata called Jinsuke 甚助 sent a palanquin to pick up Tetsumonkai in order to commission a magic ritual to stop *sake* drinking (*kitō no ue kinshu* 祈禱之上禁酒) and cure drunkenness. Tetsumonkai stopped in the residence of the merchant for two nights and later made a distribution of protective talismans against measles for infants (*shōni hashika mamorifuda* 小児麻疹守札). Each *mamorifuda* cost twelve *zeni* and Tetsumonkai was able to gain a total of six *kanmon*, which were used to buy ink-stones (*suzuri* 硯) for the young of the poor families of the district in order to help them learn writing.<sup>65</sup>

The *Takizawa Hachirō hyōe nikki* 滝沢八郎兵衛日記 (eighteenth century) reports that in Bunsei 11 (1828) Tetsumonkai performed a ritual against smallpox, which lasted for two nights and three days at Nangakuji in Tsuruoka. During this ceremony the *issei gyōnin* distributed various objects he brought back from Ezo (*Ezo watarimono nado ai-kazari* 蝦夷渡り物等相飾り) among which there were some dolls (*ningyō* 人形) that were dressed up in a bizarre style. The text underlines the fact that the ritual was extremely lively (*niginigishii* 賑々しい).<sup>66</sup> In order to fight the evil smallpox deities Tetsumonkai used the exotic allure of some dolls that he

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<sup>65</sup>. The *Kamegasaki ashigaru metsuke goyōchō* is a record of events that took place in the city of Sakata from Tenpō 7 (1796) to Meiji 2 (1869). The authors were probably various *samurai* who worked for the public administration of the Sakata domain. For the original text see *Sakatashi shi*, Shakai hen, vol. 8, ed. Itō Chintarō (Sakata: Sakata shi shihensan iinkai, 1981), 117.

<sup>66</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “19 seiki shotō Dewa Sanzan Shugen no kakusei undō—Yudonosan-mokujiki gyōja Tetsumonkai no Echigo fukyō o chūshin ni,” 88.

brought back from the trip he made in Bunsei 10 (1827) to spread the cult of Yudono in Matsumae, Esashi, and Hakodate in the Ezo territory. The rationale of this ceremony was probably based on a sort of battle between diversities, in which the frightening aspect of the smallpox deity that pits the human body was exorcized through the display of dolls with strange and curious features that came from a different culture.

The analysis of the rituals performed by Tetsumonkai reveals that the *issei gyōnin* mastered a broad spectrum of religious practices, which extended from the purification of the flame of the fireplace, installation of votive stelae for the cult of Yudono, distribution of protective talismans, astrological divinations, *nenbutsu* recitations, and rituals against alcoholic excesses, measles, and smallpox (See Fig. 2.6 and 2.7). Some of these rituals, such as the construction of stelae dedicated to Mount Yudono or the public ceremonies against epidemics, were specifically structured to bring benefits to the entire community of the village or all members of the Yudonosan *kō*. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the *issei gyōnin* offered their expertise for tailor-made rituals to satisfy the specific needs of clients, as in the case of the anti-drunkenness ritual.

It is also interesting to note that eminent *issei gyōnin* such as Tetsumonkai managed large sums of money that could be reinvested among community members in order to strengthen social consensus toward the preaching and ritual practices of the *issei gyōnin*. This redistribution of money attracted numerous indigent peasants and poor merchants (*chōnin* 町人), who were, at the same time, the principal sponsors of the *issei gyōnin* and the main beneficiaries of their charitable activities. The fact that the *issei gyōnin* were extremely active among the lowest strata of rural and urban society is also confirmed by the non-monetary offerings which the ascetics

sometimes received from their devotees. There were donations of rice, planks of wood, poles for construction, pulleys, roof beams, and even rags.<sup>67</sup> The noticeable presence of construction materials among the offerings was probably due to the fact that the *issei gyōnin* were often involved in the rebuilding or maintenance of old temples and worked in close contact with a vast network of small artisans (*shokunin* 職人) or carpenters (*daiku* 大工) to do so. The most relevant groups of lay supporters for the *issei gyōnin* were located in the cities of Sakata, Tsuruoka, and Matsuyama 松山 in Dewa province, but the ascetics of Yudono could rely on vast communities of followers even in the provinces of Rikuzen, Iwashiro, Echigo, Hitachi, Kazusa, and Shimōsa.

#### 4.2 The Keichō Dispute on the Role of the *Issei Gyōnin*

In some cases the religious activities performed by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono in various territories outside Dewa province generated institutional and administrative conflicts between themselves and other monks or *shugenja*. For instance, between Keichō 8 (1603) and Keichō 9 (1604) there was an intense correspondence between two temples, Fudōin 不動院 and Kōmyōin 光明院 in the village of Satte 幸手 in Musashi province, about legal issues concerning the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono (See Fig. 2.8).<sup>68</sup> Fudōin sent letters to Kōmyōin 光明院 in order to inquire about the legal rights of the *issei gyōnin* to practice specific rituals and provide services for the Dewa Sanzan pilgrims who traveled from the Kantō area. After the solicitation of Fudōin,

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<sup>67</sup>. Ibid., 87.

<sup>68</sup>. The village of Satte is located in present Saitama prefecture.

Kōmyōin forwarded a set of requests for clarification about the *issei gyōnin* to three of the Yudono *bettōji*, Hondōji, Dainichiji, and Dainichibō. A copy of the same letter with the requests was also sent to the *jisha bugyō* of Edo. Chūrenji was excluded from the inquiry probably because there were no *issei gyōnin* of this temple who were affiliated with Kōmyōin. After the involvement of the Edo *jisha bugyō* in this legal issue the three *bettōji* of Yudono directly communicated their written accounts of the facts to this office.

There are only four remaining letters of this *querelle* that is extremely important to understand the religious status of the *issei gyōnin* in the early decades of the Edo period. The first letter is a signed petition, which the Fudōin *shugenja* addressed to the *shugenja* of Kōmyōin in the eleventh month of 1603.<sup>69</sup> The *shugenja* of Fudōin requested more information about the group of ascetics (*gyōninshū* 行人衆) of Yudono, which were affiliated with Kōmyōin, and the type of administrative and legal control that Dainichiji, Dainichibō, and Hondōji were able to exert on them. This request for explanations was motivated by the fact that “This group [of ascetics] that comes from the three temples [of Yudono] and had been residing on Mount Yudono from ancient times (*zendai yori no Yudonosan ni sōrō gyōnin* 前代より湯殿山ニ候行人) have repeatedly broken the accords.”<sup>70</sup>

Satte Fudōin was not an ordinary temple. It was the one of the two headquarters of the Honzan branch of Shugendō for the control and financial organization of Shugendō rituals in the

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<sup>69</sup>. The temple Kōmyōin was located in the village of Satte and belonged to the Tōzan branch of Shugendō. The present Kōmyōin is a Shingon temple of the Shingi 新義 tradition. On the relationship between Fudōin and Kōmyōin of Satte see *Nishikawamachi henshū shiryōi*, vol. 1, ed. Horii Denzō, 69.

<sup>70</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 103.

Kantō region.<sup>71</sup> Fudōin *shugenja* lamented the fact that the *issei gyōnin* who were associated with Kōmyōin arrogated for themselves the role of guide (*sendatsu*), which was a prerogative of the *shugenja*, and performed the ritual of the *shime no kirihagi* しめのきりはぎ without having the legal authority to do so.

In the first month of 1604 the *bettō* of Hondōji, Dainichiji, and Dainichibō wrote a joint replay to the *jisha bugyō* of Edo responding to the petition (*meyasu* 目安) issued by the Fudōin *shugenja*. The three *bettō* admitted that two years previously a group of pilgrims was escorted by the *issei gyōnin* instead of regular *sendatsu* (*shugenshū agari kudari* 修験衆上がり下り) and they explained that:

Even if these ascetics define themselves as guides for pilgrims (*dōsha sendatsu* 道者先達) [damage by insects], such a thing did not exist in the past and cannot be accepted. According to the definition, which was provided by the chief monks of the three temples [of Yudono], these ascetics (*gyōnin*) are experts in the practice of permanent asceticism (*issei* 一世).<sup>72</sup>

The three *bettō* of Yudono recognized that the Fudōin *shugenja* were correct in suspecting that the *issei gyōnin* were trying to steal their parishioners through the practice of the *shime no kirihagi* ritual and the appropriation of Shugendō activities (*shugen shoku* しゆげん職) such as the role of guide for pilgrims. The concluding passage of this letter reports the answer, which was provided by the three *bettō*, to the question posed by the *jisha bugyō* about the exact meaning of the term *issei*.

<sup>71</sup>. In Tenshō 7 (1579) the Shōgoin of Kyōto, which was the head of the Honzan-ha, assigned to Satte Fudōin in Musashi province and Gyokuryūbō 玉瀧坊 of Odawara in Sagami province the administration of all Shugendō rituals in the Kantō area according to an alternation system (*nengyōji* 年行事) that guaranteed a yearly shift of leadership between the two temples.

<sup>72</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi: Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 104.

It is very difficult to say what was the meaning of the term *issei* in the ancient times. Nevertheless, it seems that the term *issei* defined two concepts. The first one is the performance of [ascetic] practices (*gyōhō* 行法) in order to acquire merits for the next rebirth (*gosei* 後世) and the second one is to share the merits of the asceticism with parishioners. It is never said that these ascetics should work as guides for the pilgrims.<sup>73</sup>

In all the four letters the ritual of the *shime no kirihagi* is presented as a contested practice. According to the *bettō* of Yudono it belonged to the Shugendō tradition and the *issei gyōnin* did not have the legal right to practice it. It must be underlined that these sources are the expression of the authority of monks and *shugenja*, therefore the voice of the *issei gyōnin* is completely erased from the text. It could be the case that the *shime no kirihagi* actually was an *issei gyōnin* ritual, which the *shugenja* desired to appropriate after the boom in the faith of the Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and Yudono during the first decades of the seventeenth century.

The *issei gyōnin* who were among the major propagators of this type of Dainichi cult were perceived as rivals by Honzan-ha *shugenja* and also by monks who were afraid of losing their authority over the respective communities of parishioners. The hard competition between *issei gyōnin* and Honzan-ha *shugenja* for the administration of pilgrims and the control of the financial income probably induced the Honzan-ha *shugenja* to claim that the role of *sendatsu* was an exclusive prerogative of the Honzan-ha Shugendō practitioners. The *issei gyōnin* who were not proper *shugenja* and were not sustained by powerful institutions such as Shōgoin in Kyōto or Fudōin in Satta should renounce performing rituals such as the *shime no kirihagi* and working as *sendatsu* for pilgrims. The *shime no kirihagi* ritual and the role of *sendatsu* were both considered as part of the Honzan-ha Shugendō exclusive heritage.

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<sup>73</sup>. Ibid., 104.

It is not clear what type of ritual was the *shime no kirihagi* that was practiced by the *issei gyōnin*. However, we can consider the fact that the problem of the performance of the *shime no kirihagi* was always discussed in conjunction with the prohibition of *issei gyōnin* acting as *sendatsu* for the pilgrims. Therefore, we can suppose that the *shime no kirihagi* was a ceremony practiced by the *issei gyōnin* for the pilgrims before beginning the journey toward Mount Yudono or other sacred mountains.

For instance, a passage of the *Jige yorozu-sadame kakiage-chō* 地下万定書上帳 (seventeenth century) describes the preparations of a group of pilgrims who traveled from the village of Ōnuma 大沼 in the Hokuriku province to Yudono in Jōkyō 貞享 2 (1685) and reports that: “The procession of Yudono [pilgrims] (*Yudonosan gyōretsu* 湯殿山行列) asked that a monk specializing in propitiatory rituals (*kitōsho no shamon* 祈禱所の沙門) or an *issei gyōnin* perform the *shime harai* 注連祓 [...].”<sup>74</sup> It may be the case that the *shime no kirihagi* performed by the *issei gyōnin* at the beginning of the pilgrimage was a protective and purificatory ceremony similar to the ritual of the *shime harai* mentioned in this travel diary. The Fudōin *sendatsu* considered the *shime no kirihagi* as a Shugendō ritual and wanted the *issei gyōnin* to be excluded from the economic profits that derived from performing it.

The term *shime no kirihagi* may not simply indicate a single ritual, but a plurality of ritual practices in which the *shime* played a pivotal role. For instance, there is a legal document written in Kanbun 9 (1669) about the sale of the administrative rights of a parish (*kasumi shiki* 霞職) in the city of Nagai 長井 in the Komazawa domain (Komazawa *han* 駒沢藩) from the temple

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<sup>74</sup>. For the original text see Kubo Yasuaki, “Sankei no shime harai: yamabushi no katsudō no kaimei,” in *Kinsei Shugendō no shosō* [coll. Rekishi kōkogaku kei H14, Iwata shoin bukkuretto], ed. Tokieda Tsutomu, Yoshitani Hiroya, Kubo Yasuaki, Satō Kikuichirō (Tōkyō: Iwata shoin, 2013), 38.

Tōshōin 東性院 to the temple Jōjuin 成就院. In this document is mentioned a ritual called *kirihagi indō* きりはきいんとう.<sup>75</sup> The *kirihagi indō* きりはき引導 was a purificatory ritual to expel death pollution from the house immediately after the funeral.<sup>76</sup> The *kirihagi indō* was also practiced to ensure the realization of buddhahood for the dead. In the Shōnai area the *kirihagi indō* implied the breaking of the *bonten* used during the funerary ceremony, and the immediate presentation of various food offerings to the altar of the ancestors (*kuyō* 供養).<sup>77</sup>

It is possible that the *issei gyōnin* performed a similar type of post-funeral ritual to eliminate the defilements of death using the *shime*, one of their typical ritual accessories. If laypeople usually requested the performance of the *shime no kirihagi* after death, births, or unexpected events to purify the domestic space, this would explain the interest of the Fudōin *shugenja* in determining if the *issei gyōnin* actually had the legal authority to practice this popular and lucrative ritual in the Kantō area. Since the three *bettō* of Yudono did not equate the *issei gyōnin* with *shugenja*, these ascetic groups had to refrain from performing the *shime no kirihagi* and yield this practice to Shugendō members.

The third letter was composed in the third month of 1604. In the opening passage the three *bettō* of Yudono returned to the issue of the *shime no kirihagi* and underlined that: “The *issei*

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<sup>75</sup>. For the original text see *Nagaishishi*, Kinsei hen, vol. 2, ed. Nagaishishi hensan iinkai (Nagai: Hōbunsha, 1982), 999.

<sup>76</sup>. The term *indō* generally refers to funerary sermons preached by monks in order to help the dead reach salvation and attain Buddhahood.

<sup>77</sup>. Toward the end of the Edo period Eijun 永潤, a *shugenja* active in Hokuriku province, wrote the *Honzan shugen sahō roku* 本山修験作法録, which explained that: “The disposition of the rope (*shime hiki* 注連引き) can be practiced during the first period of the new year to purify the house (*kanai wo kiyomete* 家内を清めて) or on extraordinary occasions (*fūji* 不時) to eliminate impurities from the house.” In this passage it emerges that rituals involving the *shime* had various aims and included also the purification of a space after unexpected or special events such as deaths or births. For the original text, see Kubo Yasuaki, “Sankei no shime harai: yamabushi no katsudō no kaimei,” 45.



*gyōnin* said a lot of false things such as the ritual of the *shime no kirihagi* characterized them and the people [who belong to the ascetic groups] from the ancient times and in various domains, where they also perform the duties of *shugenja* (*shugenshoku* 修験職).<sup>78</sup> In order to contrast these claims of the *issei gyōnin* the three *bettō* of Yudono wrote on the reverse of the letter an explanation according to which in the villages at the seven entrances of Yudono the ritual of the *shime no kirihagi* was exclusively practiced by married (*saitai* 妻帯) religious professionals. The backside of the letter is unfortunately illegible, but the use of the term *saitai* in the title of the explanatory note explicitly refers to the married *shugenja* (*saitai shugenja* 妻帯修験者) of Yudono. The letter concludes with another interesting definition of the *issei gyōnin* and the limits within which they were allowed to perform ritual activities.

The *issei gyōnin* abandon the world (*yo o nogare* 世をのがれ) in order to reach enlightenment and devote their minds to ascetic practices (*dōshin* 道心). They live in the places assigned to them by the *bettō* of Yudono<sup>79</sup> and perform meditation practices to obtain salvation in the next rebirth (*goshō zanmai* 後生三昧). They should not pretend for themselves the ritual of the *shime no kirihagi* and the role of guide for pilgrims. It is improper [for them] to try to perform the duties of the *shugenja*. In sum, they should only perform ascetic practices in order to transfer benefits to someone else (*daikan* 代官) and refrain from working as guides for pilgrims (*sendatsu*).<sup>80</sup>

The key-term of this passage is *daikan*, which denotes a fundamental aspect of the religious identity of the *issei gyōnin*. As we saw in the previous chapter, the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono were groups of ascetics specializing in the performance of pilgrimages and austerities on behalf of a

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<sup>78</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 104.

<sup>79</sup>. These places were the two *gyōba* of Senninzawa and Genkai.

<sup>80</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 105.

third party. The *issei gyōnin* were *daikan gyōja* 代官行者 who accumulated great amounts of religious merit through the practice of ascetic activities and extreme pilgrimages on Mount Yudono in order to share the merit with the lay devotees who sponsored their ascetic practices. In the Sengoku and Edo periods the members of the warrior aristocracy showed a special interest in ascetics like the *issei gyōnin* who could be dispatched to sacred mountains such as Yudono in order to pray and perform ascetic practices for the realization of the vows (*gan*) expressed by their patrons.

This correspondence between the three *bettō* of Yudono and the *jisha bugyō* of Edo ended with a fourth letter in the seventh month of 1604 that was also signed by the Haguro *bettō* who resided at Hōzen'in.<sup>81</sup> This last text is interesting because it relocates the issue of the *issei gyōnin* to a broader religious context that is a prelude to the imminent creation of the Shingon branch of Shugendō (Tōzan-ha) as a separate and independent entity from the Tendai branch of Shugendō (Honzan-ha).

*Issei gyōnin* say that they have received vermilion seals [for their *gyōninderā*] from the superintendent [of shrines and temples] (*bugyō* 奉行).<sup>82</sup> These groups of ascetics gather at Shirakawa 白河, Wakamatsu 若松, and Motomiya 本宮.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, *issei* [*gyōnin*] crouch in the streets of Yamagata and in various places of Tsuruoka in the Shōnai area. They prevent the Shingon and Tendai Shugen *sendatsu* (Shingon Tendai Shugen *no sendatsu* 真言天台修驗之先達) from performing their ceremonies as was also pointed out by the ritual-supervisor (*shugyō*) of Hōzenin [on Haguro]. We presented a signed petition against such activities. Three years ago the superintendent [of shrine and temples] came from Edo in order to solve

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<sup>81</sup>. The transcribed text of the letter reports the name of the temple as Hōshōin 宝生院, but is probably a mistaken transcription of Hōzen'in 宝善院. Before Ten'yū the name Hōzen'in was also written 宝前院.

<sup>82</sup>. The term vermilion seal (*goshuin* 御朱印) indicates the official authorization of the *bakufu* to perform various types of activities. In this case it refers to the preaching activities of the *issei gyōnin*.

<sup>83</sup>. These three cities are located in the central area of Fukushima prefecture. In the Edo period Motomiya was an important post station on the Ōshū kaidō 奥州街道 and economic activities flourished around this city.

these problems. He visited the monks of Yudono and Yamagata, then interrogated the monks of Tsuruoka, and again met the monks of the three temples of Yudono, but could not conclude anything and was deceived by the *issei gyōnin*. The *issei gyōnin* are still present in the temples and they keep inventing new definitions of themselves during the disputes. If what we call Mount Yudono was opened by Kōbō Daishi, then it is not the case to throw away the division between Shingon and Tendai Shugen (Shingon, Tendai Shugen 天台・真言修験). The *issei gyōnin* are selfish (*wagamama* 我がまま) persons who destroy Shingon and Tendai. In ancient times there was no such thing. As explained before, [the role of the ascetics] is defined by the monks, but they keep transmitting tales (*katarikuchi* 語口) [about themselves] that should be erased. [...].<sup>84</sup>

The tensions between Shingon and Tendai monks, Honzan-ha and non-Honzan-ha *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* clearly emerge in this fourth letter. On one hand the monks were afraid that *issei gyōnin* would steal their parishioners and, on the other, the *shugenja* lamented the fact that they performed Shugendō activities without being real *shugenja*. Moreover, in the new religious environment of the Edo period the clear-cut divisions between Buddhist Schools and Shugendō branches were progressively perceived as central issues. The non-sectarian character and ritual hybridity that denoted the religious identity of the *issei gyōnin* were considered as a double threat for the authority of the Buddhist institutions of Dewa Sanzan, and also for the *shugenja* who were progressively polarizing into Honza-ha or Tōzan-ha branches.

The problem of the exclusion of the *issei gyōnin* from the ritual of the *shime no kirihagi*, which was claimed to be an exclusive privilege of the *shugenja*, must be analyzed in the broader context of the clash that took place between Honzan-ha *shugenja* and the monks and *shugenja* who were affiliated with Kantō Shingonshū 関東真言宗 in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The process that led toward the institutional formation of the Tōzan-ha reached its

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<sup>84</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi: Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 105.

climax in the Keichō era when Gien 義演 (1558–1626), the chief monk of Daigoji Sanbōin 醍醐寺三宝院, decided to support all the various groups of *sendatsu* (*sendatsushū* 先達衆) that were spread in the Kantō area and did not recognize themselves as Honza-ha *shugenja*. These groups of *sendatsu* were provisionally unified under the name of Kantō Shingonshū, which transformed into Tōzan-ha after the Shugendō edict (Shugendō *hatto*) in Keichō 18 (1613).

The economic and institutional monopoly of the Honzan-ha *sendatsu* on Shugendō rituals was evident if we consider the fact that all the Kantō Shingonshū *sendatsu* had to pay a fee to the Honzan-ha *shugenja* to practice the purificatory rituals that implied the use of the *shime* (*shime harai yakusen* 注連祓役錢). Another vexatious tax was imposed by the Honzan-ha *shugenja* on the Kantō Shingonshū *sendatsu* when they wanted to perform the mountain-entry ritual (*nyūbu*) according to a different ceremonial protocol from that prescribed by the Honzan-ha.<sup>85</sup>

In Keichō 12 (1612) Yūchō 祐長, the Shingon *bettō* of Myōjōin 明星院 at Adachigun 足立郡 in Musashi province, took advantage of his friendship with Nichiyo 日誉 (1556–1641), the third chief monk of Chishakuin 智積院 in Kyōto, to forward a request to Tokugawa Ieyasu to stop the taxation of the *shime* ritual by the Honzan-ha *sendatsu*. This famous plea is known as *Shime harai yakusen chōshū no kin* 注連祓役錢徵収之禁. A few months later, six large temples in the Kantō region, Myōjōin, Hōzōin 宝蔵院, Ichijōin 一乗院, Komatsuji 小松寺, Kannonji 観音寺, and Rengakuji 連覚寺 constituted a sort of alliance to support the groups of *shugenja* that were

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<sup>85</sup>. The hegemonic position of the Honzan-ha started under the government of the Hōjō 北条 family that used Shōgoin, which was the headquarters of the Honzan-ha in Kyōto, to consolidate the influence of the Kamakura *bakufu* on the territories of central and northern Honshū. Moreover, the ritual prestige of the Honzan-ha was further reinforced by the fact that Shōgoin became the supervisor (*kengyō* 檢校) of all the Shugendō practices that took place in Kumano, which was traditionally considered as the original land of Shugendō. See Sekiguchi Makiko, *Shugendō kyōdan seiritsu-shi: Tōzan-ha wo tōshite*, 9. About the institutionalization of Shugendō see also Tokunaga Seiko, “Kumano sanzan kengyō to Shugendō,” *Chūsei shi kenkyū* 27 (October 2002): 75-77.

affiliated with the Kantō Shingonshū and practiced Shingon rituality during Shugendō ceremonies.

Keizen 慶善, an influential scholar-monk (*gakutō* 学頭) of Jionji at Sagae and a former disciple of Yūchō, also supported the request that Gien and Yūchō made to Ieyasu for the abolition of the toll on the *shime harai* ritual imposed by the Honzan-ha *sendatsu* and to obtain a definitive recognition for the independent institutional status of those *shugenja* who had a Shingon affiliation. The imminent split of Shugendo into two distinctive branches, Honzan-ha and Tōzan-ha, was interpreted by the four *bettō* of Yudono as a chance to strengthen the Shingon authority on the sacred landscape of the mountain and underline their autonomy and diversity from the Shugendō institutions of Mount Haguro.<sup>86</sup>

We can suppose that among the historical reasons for Ten'yū's later emphasis on the Tendai identity of Haguro and his filing of two lawsuits against Yudono, there was the threat that the Yudono *bettō* and *shugenja* could directly confront the religious authority of Haguro institutions using their Tōzan-ha affiliation as a weapon to expand their control over the parishioners in Shōnai plain and other provinces of Tōhoku and Kantō.

In 1613 Ieyasu finally promulgated the edict on Shugendō according to which all the *shugenja* affiliated with the Kantō Shingonshū led by the monk Gien of the Daigoji Sanbōin were identified as Tōzan-ha *shugenja*. After the Shugendō edict the *shugenja* of the Tōzan-ha were separated and became independent from the economic yoke of the Honzan-ha regarding the performance of important rituals such as the *shime harai* and the *nyūbu* ceremonies. Ieyasu made Shōgoin stop levying fees from the *shime harai* and the *nyūbu* rituals when these were performed

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<sup>86</sup>. Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudono shinkō to kōshō bungei,” 4.

by Tōzan-ha *shugenja*. In the *Honkō kokushi nikki* 本光国師日記 (1610–1633) Sūden 崇伝 (1569-1633), a Rinzai monk of Nanzenji who was extremely close to Ieyasu, commented on the final outcome of the Shugendō edict using the unequivocal expression of “overwhelming victory of Tōzan” (Tōzan *marukachi* 当山まるかち).<sup>87</sup>

It is true that Ieyasu wanted to break the traditional hegemony of the Honzan-ha branch of Shugendō, which was an expression of the old system of power created by the Hōjō family and also supported by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, but it is important to take into account that Ieyasu also imposed some new limits on the ritual activities performed by the Tōzan-ha *shugenja*. For instance, about the issue of the *shime harai* the Shugendō edict specifies the following regulation.

The Honzan-ha *yamabushi* 山伏 must stop levying fees against the Shingon School. For what concerns the Shingon School, all the groups of adepts who are affiliated with [this School] and practice [the *shime harai*] as a non-Buddhist ritual (*hibuppō* 非仏法) must be removed (*nukubeshi* 抜可).<sup>88</sup>

In another passage of the *Honkōkokushi nikki* Sūden explains the reasons for Ieyasu’s concerns about certain aspects of *shime harai* ritual practiced by Tōzan-ha *shugenja* that did not follow the standard Buddhist protocol for this ceremony. Sūden wrote that:

The system of the Honzan *yamabushi*, which was based on the levy tributes on the Shingon [*yamabushi*] for the practice of the *shime harai* ritual and defined as an exclusive ceremony of the Honzan, was declared illegal (*kyokuji* 曲事). Also the Shingon School was forced to perform the *shime harai* as a Buddhist ritual (*buppō no shime harai wo ba okonaubeshi* 仏法

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<sup>87</sup>. For the original text see Sekiguchi Makiko, *Shugendō kyōdan seiritsu-shi: Tōzan-ha wo tōshite*, 271.

<sup>88</sup>. *Ibid.*, 276.

ノ注連祓ヲハ可行) and not to practice it as an ecstatic séance typical of the *yamabushi* (*yamabushi no suru yorimashi* 山伏ノスルヨリマシ).<sup>89</sup>

It is clear that Ieyasu was eager to interrupt the Honzan-han monopoly on Shugendō rituals and, at the same time, he wanted to impose severe restrictions on the Shingon modalities to perform the *shime harai*, during which the sacred rope was probably used by the Tōzan-ha *shugenja* to induce divine possession (*yorimashi* ヨリマシ) in the performer. If the ritual protocol of the *shime no kirihagi* performed by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono also included the ecstatic séance as in the case of some variants of the *shime harai* ritual, it was probably nested under the label of *yorimashi* and was formally prohibited after the promulgation of the Shugendō edict. According to the new legislative regulations on Shugendō issued by the Tokugawa *bakufu*, the ascetic groups of *issei gyōnin* were considered as spurious religious professionals who were loosely affiliated to Shingon temples without being fully ordained Shingon monks or formally certified Tōzan-ha *shugenja*. Therefore, the Tokugawa legal discourse on the administration of religious institutions did not allow these non-sectarian ascetics any legitimacy and treated them as a potential menace to the stability of the social order.

After the promulgation of the Shugendō edict, it occasionally became more difficult for the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono to keep providing religious rituals for their devotees and members of the Yudonosan *kō* without having a specific affiliation with a religious institution officially recognized by the *bakufu* such as the Shugendō Tōzan-ha or the Shingon School. This problem was particularly relevant for non-resident *issei gyōnin* who had to move back from Yudono to their original villages in provinces other than Dewa. The resident *issei gyōnin* who stayed in the

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<sup>89</sup>. Kubo Yasuaki, “Sankei no shime harai: yamabushi no katsudō no kaimei,” 32.

Shōnai area could rely on a greater social capital because they were operating inside a religious network which was traditionally based on the reciprocal integration of monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin*.

For the non-resident *issei gyōnin* who preached the faith in Yudono in different social and religious contexts such as the Kantō region there was, sometimes, the necessity to find a sort of compromise between their religious identity as Yudono *issei gyōnin* and the necessity of becoming a *shugenja* in order to receive legitimation and support from the other institutions. For instance, the *issei gyōnin* needed an authorization (*shūhan* 宗判) from the local Buddhist temple to which they were affiliated in order to be able to provide ritual services such as *metsuzai* or *indō* during funerals. Without this license the *issei gyōnin* could not take part in the ritual organization of Buddhist funerals and had to limit their activities to the performance of exorcisms and propitiatory ceremonies. Therefore, there were numerous examples of *issei gyōnin* who requested an affiliation (*terauke* 寺請) with the local temple regardless of the sectarian denomination of the institution in order to obtain formal support for their practices. For instance, the case of the *issei gyōnin* Seikai 清海 is emblematic of this situation. Seikai completed the training to become an *issei gyōnin* at Yudono and went back to his original village of Shimogoe 下越 in Shinano province in the second half of the seventeenth century. Seikai kept his *issei gyōnin* name until Tenwa 2 (1682). After this year he changed his name in Gyōjunbō 行巡坊, but kept organizing pilgrimages to Yudono for the *kō* members of his village. In a short document about the sectarian affiliations of the *shugenja* of Shimogoe dated Kyōho 4 (1719) his name appeared again as “a Tōzan-ha *yamabushi*, Shingonshū: Daigyōin” 当山派山伏真言宗大行院.



Moreover, the ex *issei gyōnin* Seikai, alias Gyōjunbō or Daigyōin, had a disciple called Myōgaku 明覚 who became a Honzan-ha *shugenja* under the name of Jōhōin 常法院.<sup>90</sup>

The emblematic example of Seikai shows that there were *issei gyōnin* who preferred to abandon their legislatively unclear status of Yudono ascetic and adhere to the new institutional categories that were officially recognized by the Tokugawa *bakufu* and supported by influential temples of Kyōto such as Shōgoin and Sanbōin, after the promulgation of the Shugendō edict. At the same time, there were numerous groups of *issei gyōnin* who chose not to adhere to the sectarian labels that were given in the Shugendō edict and kept diffusing the faith in Mount Yudono following their specific ritual style. The Tokugawa *bakufu* itself exhibited an ambiguous criterion to deal with liminal ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin*. As we saw in the previous chapter, not only the warrior aristocracy of Tōhoku and Kantō but also many important members of the Tokugawa household such as Kasuga no Tsubone and, indirectly Ieyasu himself, requested the religious services provided by the *issei gyōnin* in order to bring about the realization of their political projects. There was a clear discrepancy between the harsh legal treatment that was reserved for the *issei gyōnin* according to the Shugendō edict and the great esteem in which they were held when they performed their ascetic practices on behalf of powerful patrons.

## 5. The Religious Activities of Yudono Shugenja

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<sup>90</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūhasseiki Shinano kuni ni okeru Dewa Sanzan Shugen no sonzai keitai: Sakugun nai no Yudonosan gyōnin o chūshin ni,” 199.

### 5.1. The *Nyūbu* rituals at Jionji and Kinpōsan

In order to develop a better understanding of the differences between the *issei gyōnin* and *shugenja* who were affiliated with the religious institutions of Yudono it is important also to take into account the ritual practices and devotional activities that characterized the rural *shugenja* of this mountain. The *Dainichi monjo* (Kansei 3, 1791) makes the following statement about the status of Shugendō on Mount Yudono.

On Mount Yudono neither the ascetic practices of the mountain-entry (*nyūbu shugyō* 入峰修行) nor the system of official licenses [for the appointment of Shugendō ranks] (*kan'i menkyo* 官位免許) existed. Therefore, nobody can really say they belong to the Yudono-branch of Shugen (Yudono-ha Shugen 湯殿派修験). [...] Yudono is a *gyōnin*-only mountain and not a Shugen-mountain (Yudonosan *wa zengyōnin yama nishite shikōshite shugen yama ni wa kore naku sōrō* 湯殿山ハ全行人山ニ而修験山ニは無之候).<sup>91</sup>

In Kaei 7 (1854) the *jisha bugyō* of Sakata started inquiring about why the Yudono *shugenja* did not perform any of the four mountain-entry rituals, which were supposed to take place once every season (*shiki nyūbu* 四季入峰) and were fundamental ceremonies for the hierarchical advancement of the Shugendō practitioners, on Mount Yudono. The *jisha bugyō* summoned one *shugenja*, Jōhōbō 常法坊, as the delegate of Chūrenji and another *shugenja*, Hongakuin 本覚院, as the representative of Dainichibō in order to investigate the condition of Shugendō at Yudono. The *Ōami kyōdo shiken monjo* 大網郷土史研文書 (Ansei 2, 1855) provides a detailed transcription of the interrogation, during which the *jisha bugyō* pointed out that at Kinpōsan the

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<sup>91</sup> For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 56.

religious practitioners would wear Shingon formal attire during Buddhist rituals and Shugendō clothes during Shugendō ceremonies. He then asked the two *shugenja* if on Mount Yudono they followed the same rule. The *shugenja* concisely replied that Yudono was an ascetic-mountain (*gyōnin yama*) where the Shugendō mountain-rituals (*buchūgyō* 峰中行) were not performed. For this reason Yudono *shugenja* usually travelled to Mount Yoshino 吉野 in order to practice the *nyūbu* rituals.<sup>92</sup>

It is probable that the two Yudono *shugenja* tried to boast a strong Tōzan-ha identity in front of the *jisha bugyō* affirming that Mount Yoshino was the place where they normally went to practice the *nyūbu* rituals. This unrealistic affirmation would have been made to underline a clearcut differentiation between the *shugenja* of Yudono and those of Haguro. In other words, the *nyūbu* style of the Yudono *shugenja* was presented as entirely based on the Tōzan-ha tradition of Yoshino and totally unrelated to the *nyūbu* rituals performed by the Haguro *shugenja*. Even if the answer of Jōhōbō and Hongakuin was slightly excessive, they were correct in affirming that other sacred mountains had replaced Yudono as locations for the Shugendō mountain-entry rituals. For instance, the *shugenja* affiliated with Hondōji, Dainichiji, and Chūrenji went to Jionji to practice the *nyūbu* rituals.

Jionji was founded by a Shingon itinerant monk, Kōshun 高俊, in Bunji 文治 2 (1186). Kōshun spread the cult of Kumano Gongen and En no gyōja, and identified Hayama as the *oku no in* of Jionji. Kōshun made Jionji the principal entrance (Jionjiguchi 慈恩寺口) to Hayama and the mountain range between the two sites was considered a single ritual space where the Jionji

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<sup>92</sup> For the original text see *Asahimura shi*, vol. 1, Endō Jūrō *et al.*, 677-678.

*shugenja* performed the role of *sendatsu* for the pilgrims who visited Hayama.<sup>93</sup> The ritual and institutional association between Jionji and Hayama came to an end between Tenshō 15 (1586) and Kan'ei 4 (1627) when the *shugenja* of Jionji stopped accessing the sacred territory of Hayama during the *nyūbu*. After this period Jionji severed its connections with Hayama. This modification of the equilibrium between the two cultic sites had an impact on the *nyūbu* style of the Jionji *shugenja*, which gradually transformed from a prevalently outdoor ceremony focused on long walks along the sacred peaks of the area to an indoor self-seclusion ritual (*komoridō* 籠り堂) during which the practitioners performed most of the rituals within three different ascetic lodges (*shuku* 宿) on the peaks lying behind Jionji.

The oldest record about the Jionji *nyūbu* ritual is reported on a wood-plank talisman (*itafuda* 板札) of Manji 2 (1659). The *itafuda* were given to the *shugenja* at the end of the *saitō goma* offering ceremony (*saitō goma kuyō* 柴燈護摩供養), which marked the conclusion of the *nyūbu* ritual. These *itafuda* were not only memorials and protective magical objects, but also reported the official rank obtained by the practitioner according to the Shugendō hierarchical system. Therefore, the *itafuda* of Jionji had also a great institutional and bureaucratic relevance for those *shugenja* who participated in the *nyūbu*. The last *itafuda* of Jionji bears the date Meiji 5 (1872), which corresponds to the last *nyūbu* performed by the *shugenja* of this temple.

Until the first half of the seventeenth century Jionji organized *nyūbu* rituals in which could participate, at the same time, *shugenja* with or without a specific sectarian affiliation (*mappa shugenja* 末派修験者), but in Kanbun 2 (1662) the *nyūbu* ritual took place in rotation (*rinban* 輪

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<sup>93</sup> Together with the Jionjiguchi there were also three other entrances: Shiraiwaguchi 白岩口, Miyauchiguchi 宮内口, and Yu no sawaguchi 湯の沢口.

番): one year for the Honzan-ha *shugenja* and the following one for the Tōzan-ha *shugenja*. This decision was motivated by the need to avoid the numerous altercations that took place between Tendai and Shingon *shugenja* (*ryōshū sōron* 両宗争論) during the *nyūbu* ceremonies.<sup>94</sup> When new *shugenja* (*sho nyūbu* 初入峰) took part in the *nyūbu*, it lasted thirty days (*hon nyūbu* 本入峰). In the case of a group exclusively composed of veteran *shugenja* the *nyūbu* lasted seventeen days (*ryaku nyūbu* 略入峰). After practicing the *nyūbu* ritual three times, the *shugenja* obtained the rank of Ichi sōgi 一僧祇, between four and six times he became Ni sōgi 二僧祇, between seven and nine times he was called San sōgi 三僧祇, and after ten times he reached the level of Daiokke 大越家. Also the official Shugendō titles of *bō, in*, and Gon no daisōzu 権大僧都 were assigned during the *nyūbu*.

The first lodge (*ichi no shuku* 一ノ宿) where the *shugenja* stayed at the beginning of the *nyūbu* was the Shinzandō 新山堂, situated immediately behind Jionji. The exact location of the second lodge (*ni no shuku* 二ノ宿) is unclear, but was probably in a swampy area a few kilometers north of the Shinzandō. The third lodge (*san no shuku* 三ノ宿) was built on the top of Aizendake 愛染嶽 that faces Hayama. According to the *Buchū daihōsoku* 峯中大法則 (seventeenth century) the *nyūbu* started during the last day (*tsugomori* 晦) of the fourth month and ended on the first day of abstinence from daily activities (*gyakubi* 逆日) of the sixth month.<sup>95</sup> This text does not specifically describe the ritual procedures that were performed by the *shugenja*

<sup>94</sup> For a detailed description of the *itafuda* of Jionji see *Jionji shugen shiryō: zuroku*, eds. Sagae shi kyōiku i'inkai (Sagae: Sagae shi kyōiku iinkai, 2014), 9-10.

<sup>95</sup> The term *tsugomori* refers to the last period of the lunar phases of the month and the word *gyakubi* indicates a specific day of the month in which the *yang* aspects of the five phases (*e* 干, i.e. *kinoe* 甲, *hinoe* 丙, *tsuchinoe* 戊, *kanoe* 庚, and *mizunoe* 壬) are defeated by the *yin* aspects (*to* 支, i.e. *kinoto* 乙, *hinoto* 丁, *tsuchinoto* 己, *kanoto* 辛, *mizunoto* 癸). During this day hunting and fishing activities were prohibited.

while residing in the three lodges, but the outline of the *nyūbu* was based on the symbolic passage of the *shugenja* through the ten Buddhist realms (*jikkai mawari* 十界廻り), starting from the lowest realm of the hells and ending with the most elevated ground (*ji* 地) of the Buddhas.

During the second night of the *ni no shuku* the *shugenja* performed an outdoor *goma* ritual (*saitō goma*) during which a consecration ceremony (*kanjō*) took place on behalf of the practitioners. The *shugenja* entered the area in front of the altar (*naijin* 内陣) of the lodge, bit in turn a leaf of Japanese anise tree (*shikimi* 柾), and drank some scented water from a conch-shell (*horagai* 法螺貝) before expressing their vows (*gan*) in front of Fudō Myōō, the main icon of the *ni no shuku*. This ceremony probably constituted the climax of the entire *nyūbu* ritual.

A *kirigami* written in Tenmei 3 (1783) gives a sketch of the wooden structure of the *saitō goma* and the proper technique to tie up the bundles of small sticks (*kogi* 小柴) that constituted the upper part of the pyre. The three long branches on the top of the *saitō goma* corresponded to the sacred triad of Fudō Myōō, Kongara 矜羯羅, and Seitaka 制吒迦. The rectangular base, which contained these three branches, was made of interwoven twigs and represented the “act of seeking *bodhi* above” (*jōgu bodai* 上求菩提). The lower part of the wooden structure symbolized the “saving of the sentient beings below” (*geke shujō* 下化衆生). Together these two structural elements corresponded to the two sections of the bodhisattva’s vow. The horizontal twigs formed a sort of ladder and were bound at six points that corresponded to the six perfections (*ropparamitsu* 六波羅蜜) and the six realms of rebirth (*rokudō* 六道). The horizontal twigs were bound to the vertical twigs with one hundred-eight knots that were equated to the one hundred-eight defilements (*hyakuhaci bonnō* 百八煩惱). The binding point of these knots had to

recall the shape of a female bosom (*nyūbō* 乳房). The entire structure of the *saitō goma* was supposed to be visualized as the mother's womb (*botai* 母胎).<sup>96</sup>

During the *nyūbu* ritual the *shugenja* used a special linguistic code to indicate ordinary things. This oral camouflage of the usual vocabulary was necessary to increase the aura of secrecy associated with this ritual and underlined the separation of the practitioners from everyday society. For instance, the term *nyoi* 如意 (wish-fulfilling [mace]) meant a rice spatula (*hera* 篋), *gankō* 丸香 (incense cones) were soybeans (*daizu* 大豆), *Fudō* was a pot (*nabe* 鍋), *darani* was rice porridge (*kayu* 粥), *rodan* 炉檀 (incense burner) was the fireplace (*irori* 囲炉裏), *akaki* 闕伽器 (water container for the altar) was a dish towel (*fukin* フキン), *shari* 舍利 (relic) was white rice (*hakumai* 白米), *gokuraku* 極楽 (Amida's paradise) was *miso* 味噌, *gohei* 御幣 (sacred stripe of paper) was *tōfu* 豆腐, *okonai* 行 (asceticism) was the sleeping time (*nemuri* 眠り), *fuse* 布施 (offering) was *sake*, *mishōtai* was a rice cake (*mochi* 餅), and *tengai* 天蓋 (heavenly canopy) was an umbrella (*kasa* かさ).

Let us now turn our attention to Kinpōsan where the *shugenja* of Dainichibō, and occasionally even those of Chūrenji, practiced their *nyūbu* rituals. This mountain was administered by three *bettōji* that were collectively designated as the three chief temples (*sankaji* 三ヶ寺), namely Nantōin 南頭院, Kongōin 金剛院, and Kūken'in 空賢院. Another temple, Seiryūji, was located at the foot of Kinpōsan, but did not play an active role in the organization of the *nyūbu*. The reason for the exclusion of Seiryūji from the *nyūbu* rituals was due to the fact that this was an ordinary Shingon temple, which organized funerary ceremonies and had registered parishioners who commissioned Seiryūji monks to perform ceremonies for ancestor veneration (*senzō kuyō*)

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<sup>96</sup> For the original text see *Jionji shugen shiryō: zuroku*, eds. Sagae shi kyōiku i'inkai, 56.

or atonement of sins (*metsuzai*). The pivotal role played by Seiryūji in the organization of the funerary rituals of nearby villages exposed this temple to a constant interaction with death pollution, which did not fit the standards of ritual purity demanded by the *shugenja* during the *nyūbu*. The Seiryūji scholar monks (*gakusō* 学僧) also administered small fiefs that produced 20 *koku* 1 *to* and 8 *shō* of rice per year and used to lend out horses to peasants during the harvest season. The financial income of Seiryūji was based on the religious and economic activities of an ordinary Buddhist temple, while the income of the three *bettōji* principally derived from the administration of Shugendō rituals.

Before Ten'yū became Haguro *bettō* the three *bettōji* of Kinpōsan were included within the sphere of influence of Haguro, as testified by a fragment of an inscription placed within a Buddhist statue that was donated by the famous Haguro *shugenja* and sculptor (*busshi* 仏師) Sakuramotobō 桜本坊 to Seiryūji. Nevertheless, in the second half of the seventeenth century the interaction between the two mountains progressively deteriorated and in Genroku 3 (1690) Seiryūji, together with the three *bettōji*, asked Daigoji for permission to become its subsidiary temples and be recognized as Tōzan-ha Shugendō institutions. In Hōei 3 (1706) Shūgaku 宗覺 the *bettō* of Kūken'in died and the *bettō* of Nantōin sent a request to the *jisha bugyō* to administer this temple. With this, Nantōin consolidated its leading position among the three *bettōji* of Kinpōsan. It is not clear what the relationships between the three *bettō* and the scholar monks of Seiryūji were, but it is interesting to note that the appointment of the Seiryūji *jūshoku* had to be approved also by the three *bettō* before becoming effective.<sup>97</sup>

Like Jionji the three *bettōji* of Kinpōsan also patronized *nyūbu* rituals for both Honzan-ha

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<sup>97</sup> Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō*, 349-350.



*shugenja* and Tōzan-ha *shugenja*. The *nyūbu* performed by Honzan-ha *shugenja* was called the standard mountain-entry ritual (*junbu* 順峰) during which the practitioners entered Kinpōsan from the western side and exited from opposite direction. According to an oral transmission of Kinpōsan, the first *shugenja* to make the *junbu* was Yōshōson 陽勝尊 in Shōtai 昌泰 2 (899). The *nyūbu* of the Tōzan-ha *shugenja* took place once every three years (*sannen ichie* 三年一会) and followed the reverse route (*gyakubu* 逆峰). The *gyakubu* is said to have been started by the Daisendatsu of Kongōin, Shūgyoku 秀玉, in Kōan 弘安 6 (1283). The *gyakubu* of Kinpōsan reproduced the ritual structure of the *nyūbu* performed by the Yoshino *shugenja* along the Okugake 奥駈 path through the Ōmine 大峰 range in the Kii peninsula. Kinpōsan itself was defined as a mountain whose landscape was reminiscent of the sacred geography of other mountains in different localities (*kunimitake* 国峰). For instance, the Chūdō 中堂 corresponded to Yoshino, the summit of Kinpōsan was Kinpusen 金峯山, and Seiryūji was Kumano. All together the three numinous mountains of the Shōnai plain, i.e. Kinpōsan, Maya 麻耶, and Hokari 母狩, were equated to Kumano, Ōmine, and Kinpusen. This sort of refraction between sacred peaks allowed the Shōnai *shugenja* to perform a virtual *nyūbu* in the Shugendō mountains of the Kii peninsula without moving from Dewa province.<sup>98</sup>

The *gyakubu* started on the twentieth day of the second month when the *sendatsu* gathered in the Chūdō to make offerings to the deities of Kinpōsan. They also built a sort of fence made of branches around this hall to mark out the sacred area (*kekkaï* 結界) of the *gyakubu* and prepared a ritual banquet called *kuchiake* 口明. On the twenty-fifth day the *shugenja* arrived at the Chūdō, where a symbolic funerary ritual (*sendokō* 先途講) was performed to underline the metaphoric

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 369.

death of the practitioners and their imminent entrance into the mountain that would represent their future rebirth. The *shugenja* who practiced the *gyakubu* for the first time were called *shinkyaku* 新客, for the second time *doshū* 度衆, and for the third time *ichiwajō* 一和尚. On the twenty-sixth day the Daisendatsu escorted the *shugenja* to Kinpōsan and remained there until the twenty-eighth day, when all the participants descended the mountain blowing their *horagai* and spending one night at the Yakushidō 薬師堂 in Ōtani 大谷 village. This place corresponded to the *ichi no shuku*.

The following day the *shugenja* climbed to the top of Kinpōsan where they venerated Zaō Gongen 蔵王権現 at the Zaōdō 蔵王堂, which was the *ni no shuku*.<sup>99</sup> The area behind the Zaōdō was the *oku no in* of Kinpōsan where the *shugenja* accessed three important ascetic spots called Father-matrix (Bu tainai 父胎内), Mather-matrix (Bo tainai 母胎内), and Look [from the cliff] (Nozoki 覗).<sup>100</sup> Then, they entered the Enlightenment Cave (Bodai no kutsu 菩提ノ窟) where they venerated a stone icon of Zaō Gongen and reached Fukumanbō 福満坊 where they remained secluded for two nights. This lodge was the *san no shuku*. The first part of the *gyakubu* at Kinpōsan corresponded to the ascetic spots on the Okugake path, which were visited by the *shugenja* during the first seventeen days of the mountain-entry ritual (*nabiki jūnana nichi no gyō* 摩十七日ノ行).

On the fourth day of the third month the *shugenja* secluded themselves inside the Ryūdō 龍堂

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<sup>99</sup> The cult of Zaō Gongen was already important during the Nanbokuchō 南北朝 period (1336–1392) when Kusunoki Masakatsu 楠木正勝, nephew of Kusunoki Masashige 楠木正成 (1294-1336), built a temple at the foot of Kinpōsan and enshrined a painted scroll representing Zaō Gongen made by Emperor Godaigo 後醍醐 (1288-1339).

<sup>100</sup> The name Nozoki suggests that the *shugenja* probably performed a repentance ritual (*zange shugyō* 懺悔修行) there, during which the practitioner was suspended over a steep cliff and, looking (*nozoki*) into space, was pressed to confess his bad actions.

where they fasted until the twelfth day when they practiced the offering ceremonies for feeding hungry ghosts (*segakie* 施餓鬼会). *Shugenja* continued performing austerities until the first day of the fourth month when they exited the mountain. Even when the *gyakubu* was formally over, the practitioners continued to eat vegetarian food and spent the night in ascetic huts and did not return to their homes until the sixteenth day of the same month during which the concluding ritual of the “*hakama* roll-up” (*suso no kukuri* 裾のくくり) took place and the participants could definitely return to their ordinary activities.<sup>101</sup>

By taking part in the *nyubu* rituals at Jionji and Kinpōsan, the rural *shugenja* affiliated with the four *bettōji* of Yudono could acquire religious titles that strengthened their authority not only within the Shugendō hierarchical system but also within the parishes (*dannaba*) from which came a large part of the devotees who made pilgrimages to Yudono.

## 5.2. *Goōhōin*: Ox-Bezoar Talisman

In the fourth chapter we will further analyze the roles played by the *shugenja* of Yudono for the pilgrims who visited Dewa Sanzan during the summer season, but it is important to note that among the *shugenja*'s tasks, one of the most relevant was the distribution of ox-bezoar talismans (*goōhōin*) during the first days of the new year. While *shugenja* had to compete with *issei gyōnin* to sell other types of protective or curative talismans to parishioners, the *goōhōin* had always been considered the prerogative of the *shugenja*, from which the *issei gyōnin* were excluded. The

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<sup>101</sup> Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō*, 361-362.

*goōhōin* were so popular among the villagers of the Shōnai area that the parishioners included in the distribution circuit were called ox-print *danka* (*gohan danka* 牛判檀家). The commercial value of a small *goōhōin* (*hanshiban* 半紙判) was about 5 *gō* of rice, and that for a large one (*daihōban* 大法判) about 1 *shō* of rice.<sup>102</sup> *Shugenja* noted in their private registers the names of the families to which they distributed the *goōhōin* and this prevented the parishioners shifting from one *shugenja* to another to get various *goōhōin* at different prices.

The *goōhōin* was a complex magical object. To make it, *shugenja* dissolved in the ink mixture (*inniku* 印肉) the gall stones of an ox (*goō* 牛黄) that were characterized by an intense amber color. According to Chinese traditional medicine the gall stones of the ox had powerful healing qualities (*reiyaku* 靈藥), which transformed the *goōhōin* into a protective shield against epidemic diseases.<sup>103</sup> In an emergency people could hide fragments of the *goōhōin* within the lining of their clothes so the curative power of the talisman was in contact with the body. The first two characters (*goō* 牛玉) of the talisman's name are somewhat reminiscent of "ox head," but they could also be a disguised graphic rendering (生 plus 土) of the compound *ubusuna* 生土, an appellative of the Buddha and, at the same time, a generic name for the protective *kami* of the village (*ubusuna no kami* 産土の神). Therefore, this precious seal (*hōin* 宝印) gathered together the curative power of the ox, the universal protection of Śākyamuni, and the prosperity bestowed by the local *kami*.

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<sup>102</sup> Five *gō* correspond to 750 grams of rice.

<sup>103</sup> Another theory says that the testicles or the liver stones of the ox were dissolved in the ink for the *goōhōin*. This ambiguity is due to the character *tama* 玉, which is used as a variant of *ō* 王 in *goō hōin* 牛王宝印, and which could alternatively indicate a spherical precious object like a gem, a testicle, or a gall or liver stone. See also Elizabeth Oyler, *Swords, Oaths, and Prophetic Visions: Authoring Warrior Rule in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2006), 68-71, 182.

In the Edo period the *goōhōin* was also used as a sort of sacred template-sheet on which people composed written oaths (*kishōmon* 起請文). The nature of the oaths was extremely varied. Prostitutes used them to exchange love promises with their clients, *daimyō* to sign agreements with their allies (which were often disregarded), and merchants to make commercial contracts. Until the first half of Kamakura period the *kishōmon* was a separate sheet, containing a list of the names of Buddhas and *kami* on the front and the text of the oath on the back. The *kishōmon* was subsequently attached to the *goōhōin*. From the late Kamakura period the *kishōmon* was directly written on the paper of the *goōhōin* in order to increase the religious and legal cross-validation between the talisman itself, the names of the deities, and the authenticity of the human oath. For instance, in Keichō 4 (1599) Date Masamune formed an alliance with Arima Noriyori 有馬則頼 (1533–1602) and Imai Sōkun 今井宗薫 (1552–1627) to sustain Tokugawa Ieyasu (See Fig. 2.9). Masamune personally wrote the *kishōmon* specifying the names of deities such as Kumano Sansho Gongen and the conditions of the oath. In the third clause he wrote that he was ready to immediately sacrifice his life on behalf of Ieyasu in every circumstance (*ikagasama no sejō hitosuji ni ichimei* 如何様之世上一筋に一命).<sup>104</sup> Masamune authenticated his monogram (*kaō*) with a blood-seal (*keppan* 血判) slightly cutting his finger, but the quantity of blood was so abundant that it soaked the entire front of the *goōhōin* and large red spots appear between the sacred characters of the *kami* names.

In other words, the *goōhōin* was a sort of space of complexity where bodily and legal elements such as blood and signatures merged with divine elements such as the names of

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<sup>104</sup> For the original text and a picture of this *goōhōin* see *Kumano shinkō to Tōhoku: meihō de tadoru inori no rekishi*, 162, 219.

Buddhas and *kami* in order to testify the sincerity of human feelings and to legitimate the future actions of the contracting parties. The *goōhōin* that were used as *kishōmon* can be considered as rare examples in which the *kami*, represented through their names, were exposed to direct contact with the blood of the signer of the oath. Even if the *kami* usually abhor this type of defilement, in the case of the *kishōmon* written on the *goōhōin* the blood seems to work as the trigger to mobilize the legitimizing power of the deities.

The *goōhōin* were originally associated with various numinous sites of Kumano Sanzan, in particularly Nachi Taisha, but their diffusion over vast areas of the archipelago resulted in numerous local variations.<sup>105</sup> At Dewa Sanzan, the newly printed *goōhōin* were empowered on the third day of the first month through an “eye-opening” (*goōfuda kaigen* 牛玉札開眼) ceremony (See Fig. 2.10). The *goōhōin* was placed on the same level of a sacred statue, which served to underline the immense power that was supposed to be embedded in it. *Shugenja* began distributing it from the fourth day among their *gohan danka* and kept on selling it until the spring solstice (*haru no higan* 春の彼岸). In every village there was a household, designated by the *shugenja* to be first to receive the *goōhōin*. Distribution started from that family and progressively reached all the other households in the village. When the parishioners received the *goōhōin* from the *shugenja* it looked like a spinning top, which was set on a trifurcated branch of a willow tree (*yanagi*) or *Lespedeza* (*hagi*). On the central part of the small branch there was a rectangular cartouche (*kanzu* 卷数) that reported the number of times a certain *kitō*, sūtra, or

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<sup>105</sup> The standard *goōhōin* of Nachi gives the name of the shrine/temple in “crow characters,” in which each stroke of the character is substituted by a stylized crow that was considered to be a messenger (*otsukai*) of the *kami*.

mantra had been recited by the *shugenja* in order to empower the *goōhōin*.<sup>106</sup> The *kanzu* was fixed to the branch with two bindings on the upper and lower part of the cartouche. The names of the *kitō*, *sūtra*, and mantra reported on the internal part of the *kanzu* were hidden with a mini roller blind made of paper that was used to avoid the dispersion of the power embedded in the sacred names of the Buddhist scriptures and ritual invocations. The elevated price of the *goōhōin* did not refer to the economic value of the materials used to product the talisman, but the long ritual work of empowerment made by *shugenja* before distributing it to their parishioners. The *goōhōin* was attached to the back of the branch and bent in a sort of triangular shape with the right and left sides tightened together in order to leave the *kanzu* in the internal part of the talisman. A good *goōhōin* was mounted on a branch with at least three bifurcations that were considered as a sort of antennas to intercept the *kami*, which descended in the *goōhōin* and used it as a provisional abode (*yorishiro*). The *goōhōin* was initially placed on the *kami*-altar (*kamidana* 神棚) within the house, but with the beginning of the rice planting season (*taue* 田植 ㄨ) it was moved to the entrance of the rice-field where the elements gradually discolored it until the paper part vanished and only the trifurcated branch remained. The spatial movement of the *goōhōin* from the internal part of the house to the external limen of the rice-field displayed the religious trajectory of the worldly benefits and protective power of this type of talisman, which was supposed to have a double effect on the prosperity of the family members and the productivity of the agricultural activities.

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<sup>106</sup> Togawa Anshō, “Shugendō to minkan shinkō,” in *Dewa Sanzan to Tōhoku Shugen no kenkyū*, ed. Togawa Anshō (Tōkyō: Meichō shuppan, 1975), 356-357.

## 6. Conclusion

The *issei gyōnin* played a pivotal role in the institutional and devotional organization of Mount Yudono. The peculiarity and uniqueness that characterized the ascetic practices they performed attracted a large number of lay devotees who were specifically interested in the religious services they provided. The liminality of the *issei gyōnin*, who were experts in asceticism without being *shugenja*, and followed moral precepts equal to those of the Buddhist monks without having a standard ordination, placed them within an aura of extra-ordinariness. Lay devotees in the Kantō and Tōhoku regions were fascinated by the *issei gyōnin* specifically because of their nonalignment with the bureaucratic and artificial categories of religious professionals established by the Tokugawa *bakufu*.

Yudono worked as a sort of “university” for the ascetics, who spent three years of apprenticeship at Senninzawa or Genkai and were then appointed with the religious title of *issei gyōnin*. This encouraged a considerable influx of aspiring *issei gyōnin* not only from the villages of the Shōnai plain, but also from other distant areas, such as Echigo or Michinoku provinces. Therefore, the *issei gyōnin* could decide to stay close to Yudono to perform their ascetic practices or leave the Shōnai area in order to return to their native villages or settle down in other localities such as the metropolis of Edo. It is clear that the *issei gyōnin* more than the Shingon monks or the *shugenja* affiliated with Yudono constituted the real engine for the diffusion of the cult of this mountain in distant areas. The high mobility, which still characterized the *issei gyōnin* during the



Edo period, reminds us the nomadic nature of some types of Shugendō practitioners in the medieval period.

After the promulgation of the Shugendō edict there was a progressive institutionalization of Shugendō under the pressure from the Tokugawa *bakufu*. For this reason *shugenja* were transformed into mountain guides (*annai sendatsu*) for pilgrims, started residing in the villages at the foot of the mountain they were affiliated with, and substantially lost, or greatly diminished, their wandering activities. In other words, the *issei gyōnin* often played the role of connecting agents between Yudono lay devotees and Shingon monks or *shugenja*. Problems arose when the *issei gyōnin* were not content with merely being intermediaries but tried to claim for themselves other religious practices that were considered to be the prerogatives of *shugenj*, as testified in the four petitions of the Keichō era.

From the analysis of the written sources concerning the *issei gyōnin* we could understand that the only religious activity which was formally recognized for them by other groups of religious professionals was the performance of pilgrimages and ascetic practices on behalf of lay patrons, to whom they transferred merit accumulated during the period of self-seclusion on the mountain. In other words, the *issei gyōnin* were “on-demand ascetics” (*daikan gyōja*) whose proficiency in extreme ascetic practices was placed at the disposal of lay devotees in order for them to realize their prayers or vows (*gan*) and to provide them with a great amount of merit. As we will further analyze in the next chapter, even if the ascetics in general, and the *issei gyōnin* in particular, were often represented as independent and totally anti-social entities, the reality on the ground testified an opposite situation in which the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* were perfectly

integrated within a *do ut des* network between ascetics and their lay devotees.



Fig. 2.1 Senninzawa and Daibonji River: the *gyōba* of the *issei gyōnin* affiliated with Chūrenji and Dainichibō. Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (15/10/2014).



Fig. 2.2 Genkai and Ishipane River: the *gyōba* of the *issei gyōnin* affiliated with Hondōji and Dainichiji. Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (15/10/2014).



Fig. 2.3 Yudonosan *sotōba* with the name of the *issei gyōnin*, Shinnyokai, preceded by the title of *mokujiki*. Edo period (Tenmei 3, 1783). Dainichibō, Ōami village, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (25/07/2013).



Fig. 2.4 Talisman against epidemics with the portrait of the *issei gyōnin* Tetsuryūkai. Edo period (19th century). Nangakuji, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture.



Fig. 2.5 Internal part of an amulet-case for magical remedies against diseases, which is attributed to the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji or Kaikōji. Edo period. Tsuruoka library, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (25/07/2013).



Fig. 2.6 Protective talisman of the *issei gyōnin*, Rinkai 隣海. Edo period. Tsuruoka Library, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (25/07/2013).

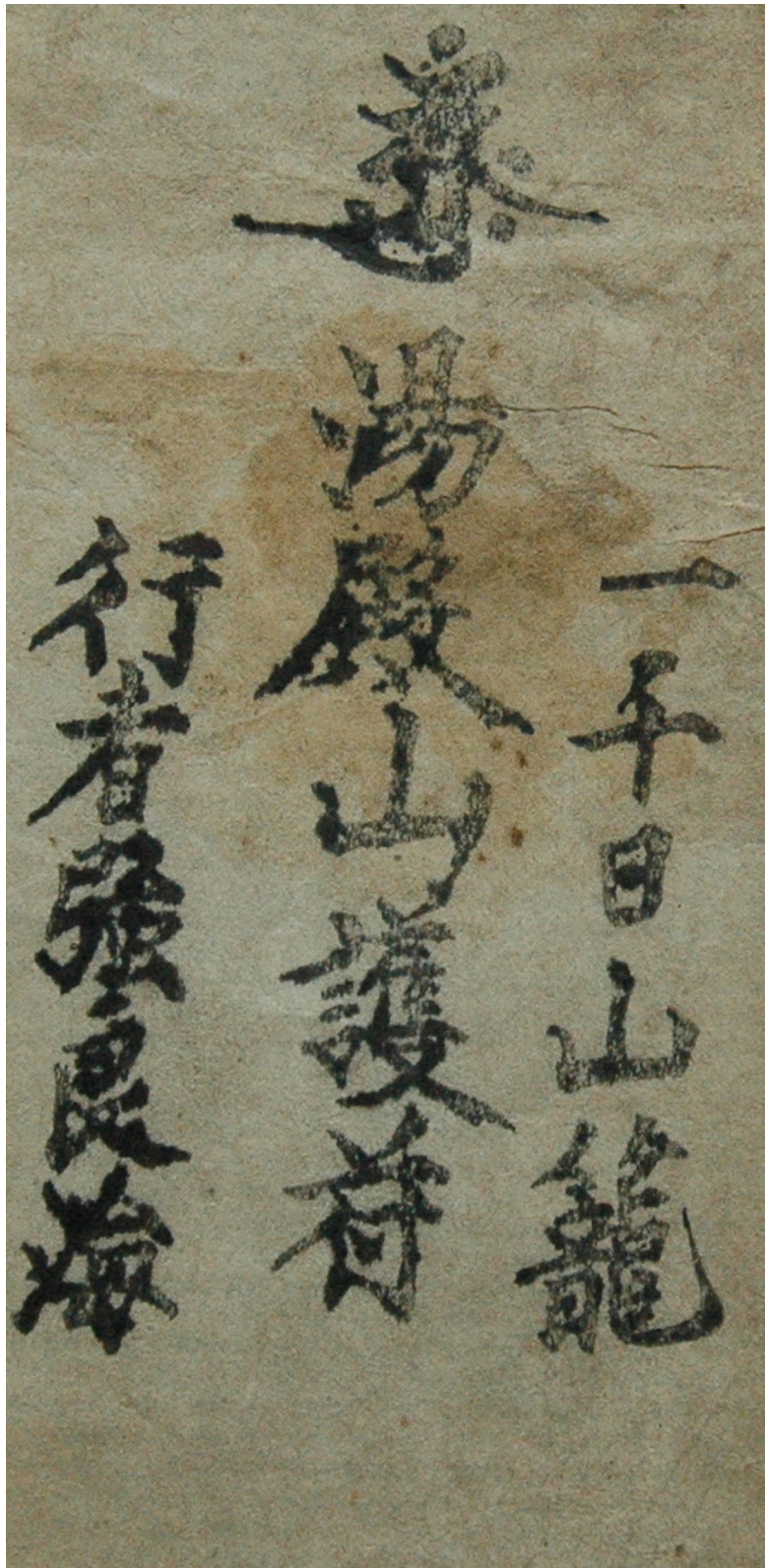


Fig. 2.7 Protective talisman of the *issei gyōnin*, Kyōryōkai 強良海, who performed the one thousand days self-seclusion retreat (*issennichi sanrō*) at Yudono. Edo period. Tsuruoka library, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (25/07/2013).



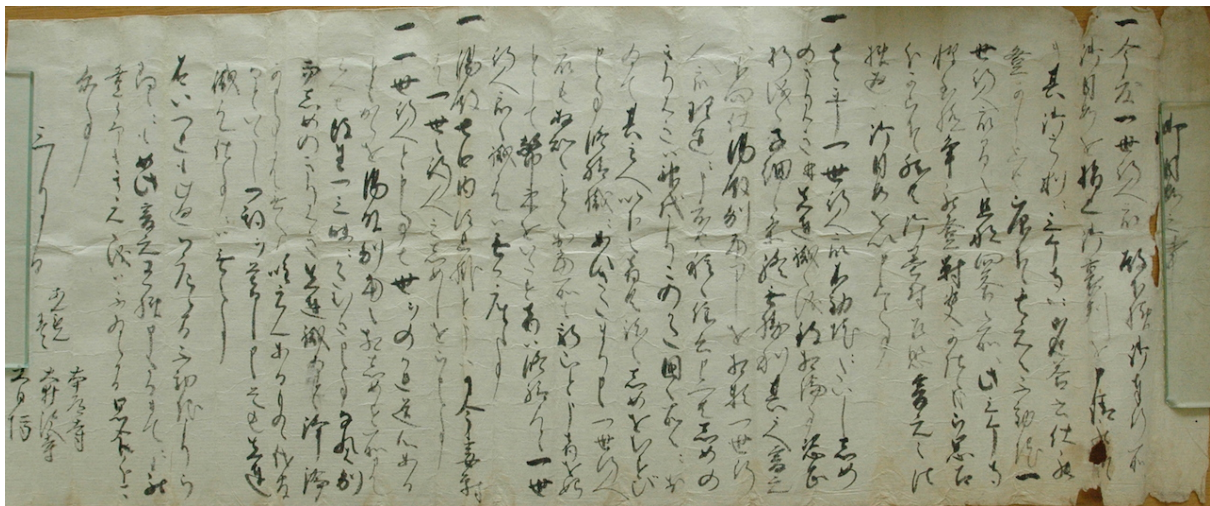


Fig. 2.8 Third petition against the *issei gyōnin* activities in the Kantō region. Edo period (Keichō 9, 1604). Tsuruoka Library, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (03/09/2013).



Fig. 2.9 *Kishōmon* of Date Masamune. Sengoku period (Keichō 4, 1599). Ōsaka rekishi hakubutsukan.



Fig. 2.10 *Goohoin* manufactured according to the Haguro style. Contemporary (21st century). Tōhoku rekishi hakubutsukan.

## Chapter Three

### *Sokushinbutsu: the Full-body Relics of the Issei Gyōnin*

Caro salutis est cardo.

Tertullian, *De res.*<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I analyzed the religious activities that *issei gyōnin* undertook while still alive. In this chapter I turn to patterns of devotion and funerary rituals that focused on the death of these ascetics and their postmortem state. The mummified corpses of the most eminent *issei gyōnin* became indispensable elements of the Yudono cult during the Edo period and remain so today. Japanese scholars have maintained that the mummification process was a natural, physical outcome of self-immolation practices (*shashingyō* 捨身行) undertaken by the *issei gyōnin*; chief among these was the practice of adhering to a diet of tree bark and acorns (*mokujiki*), which previous scholars believed led to natural desiccation (and thus preservation) of tissue upon death. In contrast to this belief that the mummification process was a direct result of actions that the *issei gyōnin* undertook, in the following pages I demonstrate that the mummified corpse of the *issei gyōnin*, rather than being the final stage of the ascetic's voluntary

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<sup>1</sup>. "The flesh is the pivot of salvation." For the original text see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 43.

abandonment of the body, was the climax of a complex series of funerary rituals that were performed in order to process and preserve the corpses of a few eminent *issei gyōnin* after their naturally-occurring deaths.

The existence of *issei gyōnin* mummies is a testament to the strength of the network of lay devotees, *kō* members, and disciples of the *issei gyōnin*, who together created the conditions necessary to transform the *issei gyōnin* into a mummy (*miira* ミイラ). The mummy was then regarded as an “actual body of a buddha” (*sokushinbutsu* 即身仏) (See Fig. 3.1). Focusing on these social relationships, it becomes clear that in order to understand what happened *after* the death of an eminent *issei gyōnin* we must first understand the *issei gyōnin*’s social networks and his relationships with those who expressed religious devotion towards him and economically supported his ascetic practices *before* his death. For example, the reason that *kō* members and lay devotees were so anxious to support the burial procedures to mummify the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* was that they hoped to maximize the religious and monetary capital that they had invested in the expensive ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* on their behalf while he was still alive (e.g., *sennichigyō*).

The *sokushinbutsu* was, then, the result of a *do ut des* relationship between the ascetic and his lay followers, who continuously sponsored the ascetic practices of the *issei gyōnin* not only during his life, but also after his death. Through this support they became the *de facto* owners of his human remains, which they transformed into a flesh-icon (*nikushinzō* 肉身像) in order to receive the protection of the eminent *issei gyōnin* even beyond his biological limits. The *sokushinbutsu* was a tailor-made, full-body relic (*zenshin shari* 全身舍利) that lay devotees and

disciples of the *issei gyōnin* built in order to fulfill their own religious and devotional needs.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the “historical *issei gyōnin*,” i.e. the Yudono ascetic whose life was embedded in a specific socio-historic context, was always associated with a fictionalized or constructed *issei gyōnin*. The fictionalized or constructed *issei gyōnin* were the *issei gyōnin* who appeared in the foundation stories (*engi* 縁起), *setsuwa*, oral legends, and folktales that were transmitted by lay devotees, disciples, and, in some cases, by *issei gyōnin* themselves. The fictionalized *issei gyōnin* were able to do things that the historical *issei gyōnin* would have never been able to do, e.g., self-mummify their bodies, emit beams of light from their corpses, or continuously self-mutilate themselves in order to offer their sacred corporality for the sake of devotees. We cannot dismiss this type of *issei gyōnin* or criticize it as ahistorical, for the fictionalized *issei gyōnin* were as (or even more) fundamental to the diffusion of the cult of Yudono as the historical *issei gyōnin*. In this chapter I examine both the historical and fictionalized *issei gyōnin* and show that these two exerted great influence on one another yet simultaneously remained independent from each other. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to bend the reality of the historical *issei gyōnin* in order to fit with the paradigm of the fictionalized *issei gyōnin*, and it would be equally misleading to disregard the “fictive truth” of the fictionalized *issei gyōnin* because it cannot be historically verified.

## **2. Religious and Financial Networks for the Creation of the *Sokushinbutsu***

## 2.1. Chūrenji: the Forge of the *Sokushinbutsu*

An important aspect of the cult dedicated to Mount Yudono is deeply interwoven with the special veneration granted to the mummified corpses of eminent *issei gyōnin*. Edo period written sources report a variety of expressions to define the mummified corpses of the *issei gyōnin*, such as the “actual body of a real buddha” (*sokushin sokubutsu* 即身即仏) or “to become a buddha in the flesh” (*nikushin jōbutsu*), but the most common term is *sokushinbutsu* 即身仏, the “actual body of a buddha.”

All the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono are *issei gyōnin*. In the Shōnai area there are eight extant *sokushinbutsu* of resident *issei gyōnin*: Honmyōkai 本明海 (d. 1683), Chūkai 忠海 (d. 1755), Shinnyokai 真如海 (d. 1783), Enmyōkai 円明海 (d. 1822), Tetsumonkai (d. 1829), Kōmyōkai 光明海 (d. 1854), Myōkai 明海 (d. 1863), and Tetsuryūkai (d. 1881). Apart from Honmyōkai who was the supervisor of Honmyōji in the village of Higashiiwamoto 東岩本 and Shinnyokai who was the supervisor of Dainichibō at Ōami, all the other *sokushinbutsu* were corpses of *issei gyōnin* who were trained, and played important roles, at Chūrenji in the village of Shimekake. In the Tōhoku and Chūbu 中部 area there are also other *sokushinbutsu* of non-resident *issei gyōnin* who returned to their original villages after practicing austerities on Mount Yudono. Among the *sokushinbutsu* of this second group the extant and most relevant ones are Zenkai 全海 (d. 1687), the supervisor of Kannonji 観音寺, a *gyōninderā* in the village of Hishigata 菱潟 in Echigo province, and Bukkai 仏海 (d. 1903), the supervisor of a different *gyōninderā* also called Kannonji in the village of Murakami 村上 in the same province.

Edmund Leach points out that any type of icon is always part of a specific “space syntax” and its analysis cannot prescind from the cultic and cultural context in which it is venerated.<sup>2</sup> This observation is particularly true in the case of the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin*, a specific phenomenon of the religious environment of Mount Yudono. It is important to take into account that all the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono were enshrined not in standard Buddhist temples, but in *gyōnidera* such as Chūrenji and Dainichibō. In the *gyōnidera* the monks were occasionally invited to take part in important ceremonies such as the installation of new icons, but all ritual performance and administrative roles were exclusively the prerogatives of the *issei gyōnin*. In the case of the four temples of Mount Yudono, the two *omoteguchi* temples, Chūrenji and Dainichibō, were *gyōnidera* and the other two, the *uraguchi* temples of Hondōji and Dainichiji, were standard Buddhist temples administered by monks. The *issei gyōnin* were a conspicuous presence also in these two temples, but they were subaltern to monks and *shugenja* and never filled the role of temple supervisor.

Matsumoto Akira pointed out that Hondōji and Dainichiji were considerably more wealthy than Chūrenji and Dainichibō because their lands were exempted from taxations thanks to rights to land under the vermilion seal of the Tokugawa shogunate. Therefore, the financial stability of Hondōji and Dainichiji actually prevented the *issei gyōnin* who were affiliated to these temples from becoming *sokushinbutsu* after their death: according to Matsumoto’s analysis, they did not feel the economic necessity of transforming their corpses into *sokushinbutsu* in order to excite the curiosity of devotees and increase the finances of the temples. On the other had, the poverty

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<sup>2</sup>. Edmund Leach, “The Gatekeepers of Heaven: Anthropological Aspects of Grandiose Architecture,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39, no.3 (Fall 1983): 244.

that characterized Chūrenji and Dainichibō forced the *issei gyōnin* to contrive new methods to attract funds from pilgrims and devotees such as the commercialization of the cult of the *sokushinbutsu*.<sup>3</sup> This economic explanation of the reasons for the creation of the *sokushinbutsu* is not however totally satisfactory because it does not explain why other *gyōnindera* in the Shōnai area, which were even more destitute than Chūrenji and Dainichibō, never had any recourse to the *sokushinbutsu* to restore their finances.

The pivotal point was that the *issei gyōnin* who desired to become a *sokushinbutsu* after death had to be affiliated with a *gyōnindera* and specifically with Chūrenji. We may suppose that only at Chūrenji did the *issei gyōnin* have enough ritual liberty to meet the necessary conditions to organize the complex procedures of desiccation and manipulation of the cadaver, which were indispensable to mummify the human remains of the ascetics. Among the various *gyōnindera* in the Shōnai plain, Chūrenji became the principal forge for the creation of the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono.<sup>4</sup>

The *Yudonosan issei gyōnin hatto jōjō no koto* 湯殿山一世行人法度条々之事, composed by the Chūrenji *bettō* Shūe 宗恵 in Kanbun 10 (1670), reports the following regulation about the standard procedures to apply when an *issei gyōnin* died.

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<sup>3</sup>. Matsumoto Akira, “Nihon no nyūjō miira no kenkyū,” in *Nihon, Chūgoku miira shinkō no kenkyū*, ed. Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1993), 85-87. For a critique of the analysis proposed by Matsumoto Akira see Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudonosan sokushinbutsu kō (1): issei gyōnin ni okeru sei to shi no sahō,” *Gendai shisō* 21, no. 12 (November 1993): 55.

<sup>4</sup>. The reason the *issei gyōnin* affiliated to Chūrenji rather than those affiliated to Dainichibō or other *gyōnindera* were more often transformed into *sokushinbutsu* is still to be clarified. In a private conversation I had with Professor Suzuki Masataka about this issue he pointed out the fact that the name of Chūrenji explicitly refers to the sacred rope (*shime* 注連), which works as a protective barrier. The *shime* cannot be penetrated by impurities, but also does not allow the defilements of death to spread around. It was the secure and sealed area of Chūrenji which became the most favorable site for the creation of *sokushinbutsu* from the corpses of the *issei gyōnin*.



In the case the ascetic dies of disease (*byōshi* 病死) or has an unexpected death (*oushi* 横死), he must be brought to a funerary temple (*bodai'in* 菩提院) for the funerary ceremony (*sōrei* 葬礼). All those who had strong ties with the ascetic must perform the rituals for the enlightenment of dead during the mourning period.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of the *issei gyōnin* did not become *sokushinbutsu* after death and their funeral ceremonies were normally celebrated according to the standard Buddhist rituals, which were administered by monks on the behalf of the ascetic. For instance, all the *issei gyōnin* of Kaikōji temple at Sakata were regularly registered at Ryūgonji 竜巖寺, that acted as their funerary temple (*bodai'in*) and hosted their tombs and mortuary tablets (*ihai* 位牌).<sup>6</sup> The death of the ascetic and the disposition of his bodily remains became a crucial matter only in the case of extremely famous *issei gyōnin*, who had a large number of followers and supporters. It is this special group of a few eminent *issei gyōnin* that succeeded in transforming their corpses into *sokushinbutsu* and received special veneration after death.

## 2.2. A *Do ut Des* Relationship: *Issei Gyōnin* and *Sewanin*

The *issei gyōnin* who were venerated as *sokushinbutsu* were extremely few when compared

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<sup>5</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 131.

<sup>6</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “Jūhasseiki Shinano kuni ni okeru Dewa Sanzan Shugen no sonzai keitai: Sakugun nai no Yudonosan gyōnin o chūshin ni,” 202.

to the totality of *issei gyōnin* who were active in the Tōhoku and Kantō areas.<sup>7</sup> The *issei gyōnin* who became *sokushinbutsu* could be considered as a sort of ascetic elite of Mount Yudono. As we saw in the previous chapters, the close relationship between an *issei gyōnin* and his devotees started immediately after his apprenticeship when he performed ritual services for the villagers and augmented his ascetic power (*genriki*) through prolonged periods of self-seclusion on Mount Yudono. It must be underlined the fact that during his ascetic career the *issei gyōnin* was never truly alone. Even if the rhetoric of hagiographies and oral legends on ascetics tends to describe the *issei gyōnin* as autarchic hermits that spent their entire life completely detached, in total isolation from lay society, the reality on the ground was different.

In order to keep performing the most important ascetic practice for an *issei gyōnin*, which was the one thousand days self-seclusion on the mountain (*sennichigyō*), the ascetic needed a considerable amount of monetary funds to be supplied with the indispensable materials to survive on the mountain for such a prolonged amount of time. For almost three years and three months, in the case of the *issei gyōnin* who practiced the three-thousand days (*sanzennichigyō*) or five-thousand days (*gosennichigyō*) seclusion, the time lag was even longer, and the lay devotees had to keep providing water, food, clothes, fire-wood, and fixing works for the ascetic hut (*gyōya*) where the *issei gyōnin* lived in seclusion. This was an extremely expensive patronage for the supporters of the *issei gyōnin* who were mostly peasants, small artisans, or women. It is true that in the Sengoku and also the Edo period the *sennichigyō* of the *issei gyōnin* was often

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<sup>7</sup> It is very difficult to estimate the exact number of *issei gyōnin* who were active in the Edo period. According to the Chūrenji *monjo* 注連寺文書 during the *bakumatsu* 幕末 period in the provinces of Dewa, Michinoku, and Echigo alone there were more than three hundred *issei gyōnin*. This number may triple if we include the *issei gyōnin* who were practicing in the Kantō provinces. For an estimate, see Endō Jūrō et al., *Asahimura shi*, 620.

sponsored by members of the warrior aristocracy, but it is also important to consider that the larger base of their followers was rooted in the lower strata of society. Eminent *issei gyōnin* could not skip the performance of *sennichigyō* and *mokujiki* because these were the two essential austerities (*nangyō kugyō* 難行苦行) through which they accumulated the necessary empowerment to share their merits and realize the vows expressed by their supporters.

The leaders of the Yudonosan *kō*, which were often founded by the *issei gyōnin* himself, were called “care-people” (*sewanin* 世話人) (See Fig. 3.2). These persons were charged to take care of the financial and logistic support that the *issei gyōnin* needed in order to complete the ascetic practices on the mountain. The role of *sewanin* was usually performed by wealthy peasants or small artisans who could dispose of their private capital to directly sustain the activities of the *kō*. The *sewanin* worked as *trait d’union* between the *issei gyōnin* and the ordinary members of the *kō* (*kōin* 講員).<sup>8</sup> They gathered money from the *kō* members and bought the material supplies to give to the *issei gyōnin* during the ascetic retreat. Through the *sewanin* the members of the Yudonosan *kō* sponsored the *sennichigyō* of the *issei gyōnin* for three or more years and, at the end of the practice, were repaid by the ascetic with the transfer of the merits he had accumulated during the self-seclusion ritual on the mountain, and with the realization of their vows. Thanks to this system the *sewanin* became sponsors of positive karmic ties (*kechiensha* 結縁者), because the act of taking care of the practical needs of the *issei gyōnin* during the period of retreat on the mountain automatically placed them in a privileged position to

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<sup>8</sup>. On the roles played by the *sewanin* of Mount Ontake (Ontakesan 御嶽山) see Akaike Noriaki, “The Ontake Cult Associations and Local Society: The Case of Owari-Mikawa Region in Central Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 8, no. 1 (March-June 1981): 59. It is important to take into account that in the Edo period every type of *kō* developed specific structures and operative models to organize the relationships between devotees and religious professionals. It goes without saying that the roles and tasks which were assigned to the *sewanin* varied with the specific *kō*.

receive the benefits of the asceticism (See Fig. 3.3).<sup>9</sup>

Eminent *issei gyōnin* not only founded and guided various Yudonosan *kō*, but their bodies, which were purified thanks to their austerities on the mountain, also became a sort of communal property of the members of the *kō* who economically supported the ascetic practices of the *issei gyōnin* during all his life. This was a sort of *do ut des* system, in which the *issei gyōnin* provided religious services such as propitiatory, healing, or purificatory rituals, talismans, transfer of merits, and vow fulfillment for his devotees or *kechiensha* and, in turn, these followers became his patrons or *sewanin*, sponsoring his ascetic practices on Mount Yudono. Top level *issei gyōnin* such as Tetsumonkai or Bukkai could manage the considerable amounts of money that came from the offerings (*fuse*) of a large pool of devotees. The *issei gyōnin* often reinvested the money of the offerings in charitable operations such as the renovation and maintenance of various *gyōnindera* or the financial support of the most indigent people among their followers.<sup>10</sup>

The terms *norikake* 乗掛 and *nagamochi* 長持<sup>11</sup> specifically refer to the parades organized by the people of the villages at the foot of Mount Yudono to welcome the *issei gyōnin* who

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<sup>9</sup>. Hori Ichirō, “Yudonosan kei no miira to sono haikai,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, ed. Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu (1969; repr., Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1993), 233.

<sup>10</sup>. For instance, in Kaei 3 (1850) Bukkai financed the construction of a votive stele dedicated to Mount Yudono (Yudonosan *kuyōtō* 湯殿山供養塔) on which were carved all the names of the Yudono *kō* members who lived in the village of Higashiiwamoto. In Meiji 6 (1873) he spent the considerable sum of one thousand *yen* to rebuild the Kannonji at Murakami village in Niigata prefecture. After the fire that destroyed Chūrenji in Meiji 21 (1888) Bukkai sponsored the construction of a new main hall (*hondō* 本堂), which is the present one. See Yamasawa Manabu, “19 seiki shotō Dewa Sanzan Shugen no kakusei undō—Yudonosan-mokujiki gyōja Tetsumonkai no Echigo fukyō o chūshin ni,” 91. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miirabutsu*, 175.

<sup>11</sup>. The compound *norikake* makes reference to the practice to have the *issei gyōnin* ride a horse along the path from Senninzawa to the villages around Mount Yudono. The other term *nagamochi* emphasizes the long wait and high expectations of those who supported the *issei gyōnin* during the *sennichigyō* and wanted to share the benefits of his ascetic empowerment.

descended from the mountain (*gezan* 下山) after the *sennichigyō* ritual.<sup>12</sup> The day of the *norikake* or *nagamochi* corresponded to the auspicious day on which the *sennichigyō* of the *issei gyōnin* terminated and the vows expressed by the devotees were completely realized (*mangan no hi* 満願の日). Before starting the *sennichigyō* the *issei gyōnin* made an initial vow (*hotsugan* 発願) to fulfill through his austerities all the vows that were expressed by the people who supported him, and after three years and three months, if he could safely conclude the practice of self-seclusion, he was confirmed to have realized his vow (*mangan*). The *mangan no hi* was the celebration of the psychical perseverance and physical strength of the *issei gyōnin*, but also the moment in which *sewanin* and *kōin* could cash back the spiritual dividends of the financial investment they made supporting the *issei gyōnin* during the *sennichigyō*.

The most relevant evidence of this delicate mechanism of *do ut des*, on which was based the relationship between *issei gyōnin* and *sewanin* or *kechiensha*, is the numerous ascetic-stelae (*gyōninbi* 行人碑) dedicated to the *issei gyōnin* by their devotees on the *mangan no hi*. For instance, at Senninzawa there is a stele dated Bunkyū 2 (1862) that was dedicated to the accomplishment of the *sennichigyō* by Tetsuryūkai. On the top part of the front side of the stele is written: “One thousand days of pilgrimage and seclusion: Tetsuryūkai” (*Issen ’nichigyō sanrō* Tetsuryūkai 一千日行参籠 鉄竜海). The name of the principal disciple of Tetsuryūkai, i.e. Unkai 雲海, appears immediately below the name of the master. On the left side of the stele it is engraved the purpose of the *sennichigyō*: “Protection for the families and realization of all the vows (*Kanai anzen. Shogan jōju* 家内安全 諸願成就). In the lowest part of the stele under the character for “care” (*sewa* 世話) are listed ten names of men from seven different villages at the

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<sup>12</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miirabutsu*, 63.

foot of Mount Yudono, Tamugimata, Ōami Uemura 大網上村, Nakamura 中村, Shimomura 下村, Shimekake, Higashiaraya 東荒屋, and Iwamoto 岩本. At the end of the list of the *sewanin*'s names there is a more general sentence, which includes all the other anonymous *kō* members who made offerings for the realization of the *senninchigyō* by Tetsuryūkai (*Daisewa mansō renjū* 大世話万惣連中).<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that this intimate relationship of mutual dependence between the *issei gyōnin* and his *sewanin* did not end with the death of the ascetic. On the contrary, *sewanin* and disciples played a pivotal role in the organization of the ritual procedures to exploit the power embedded in the physical remains of the *issei gyōnin* even after his decease. In an article on the study of Christianity in the middle ages, John Van Engen points out that “the cult of the saints and of the relics is another instance where popular practice outran theological articulation and ecclesiastical control; both were forced to catch up later.”<sup>14</sup> It seems that the influence exerted by the local institutions and confraternities of parishioners such as the *gyōnindera*, the various *sewanin* of the Yudonosan *kō*, and the disciples of the *issei gyōnin*, cannot be erased from the study of the causes that brought about the creation of the *sokushinbutsu*. In many cases the classical interpretation of the *sokushinbutsu* of Mount Yudono, which is reported in the pioneer studies of Matsumoto Akira, Togawa Anshō, and Andō Kōsei, tends to ignore or subordinate this important local dynamic of the cult of the *sokushinbutsu* in order to trace this tradition back to different geographical, chronological and religious environments such as Mount Kōya 高野, the deep meditation and suspended animation (*nyūjō* 入定) of Kūkai, or the messianic faith in the descent

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<sup>13</sup>. Hori Ichirō, “Yudonosan kei no miira to sono haikai,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 233.

<sup>14</sup>. John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (June 1986): 551.

of the future buddha Miroku (Miroku *no geshō* 弥勒の下生).<sup>15</sup>

It is true that fragments of these discourses were undoubtedly active in shaping legends and hermeneutics, which were used by the devotees to confer a polyphony of meanings on the *sokushinbutsu*. Nevertheless, it must be underlined that the Buddhist *topoi* of the *nyūjō* practiced by Kūkai or the future descent of Miroku to earth, which were fundamental parts of well-known Buddhist narratives shared by the majority of the Tōhoku population during the medieval and early modern periods, were always restructured *vis-à-vis* the specificities of the local cult dedicated to the *issei gyōnin* on Mount Yudono. The distinctiveness of the Tōhoku religious culture should be included in the analysis on the mummified corpses of the *issei gyōnin*. A new approach to the cult of the *sokushinbutsu* should take into account and verify, at the same time, the effective presence or absence of all the influences which derived from extra-local Buddhist narratives such as the faith in Kūkai or Miroku, and the local peculiarities of the religious discourse that took place at Mount Yudono during the Edo period.

### **3. The *Sokushinbutsu* Paradigm and Its Practical Realization**

#### **3.1. Terminological Dilemma: *Miira* or *Sokushinbutsu*?**

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<sup>15</sup>. For some examples of analysis of *sokushinbutsu* that tend to dismiss the local specificity of Mount Yudono in order to highlight extra-local Buddhist elements such as the faith in Kūkai or Miroku, even if this last one was completely absent among the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, see Matsumoto Akira, “Kōyasan shinkō no seiritu to Yudonosan,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 331-332, 339. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miira butsu*, 67-69. Andō Kōsei, *Nihon no miira*, 26-27. Another forced comparison between the cult *sokushinbutsu* and the faith in the descent of Miroku is made by Andō Kōsei in “Nihon no sokushinbutsu to Ejiputo no miira,” *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 154.

If we consider the titles of the major articles and books published on the issue of the mummified corpses of the *issei gyōnin* it is impossible not to notice a certain ambiguity or uneasiness about finding a shared nomenclature to define this type of sacred bodies. Scholars as Matsumoto Akira or Naitō Masatoshi preferred to call them mummies (*miira*), others such as Iwahana Michiaki chose the term *sokushinbutsu*, and Togawa Anshō opted for a conflation of the two words through the neologism of mummified buddhas (*miirabutsu* ミイラ仏).<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, even the commentators of the Edo period perceived the difficulty of giving a proper name to the mummified corpses of the *issei gyōnin* that show a strong “isomorphism”, which blurs the taxonomical boundaries between the living body, the Buddhist icon, and the corpse.<sup>17</sup> To shed light on this issue it is interesting to take into account the *Hanshu Itakurake monjo* 藩主板倉家文書 that includes a record of various events titled *Mannen fukyū oboegaki* 万年不求覚書 composed in the Hōei 宝永 era (1704–1711), in which we find the following description:

In a village at the foot of Mount Haguro there was a small shrine dedicated to Kumano Gongen. In the precinct [of this shrine] there was a small hermitage where there lived a man called Jishō 自性 who worshipped a buddha (*jibutsu* 持仏) made of an entire skeleton (*zentai no gaikotsu aru* 全骸の骸骨有). In the spring of Genroku 元禄 16 (1703) some people went to the northern part of the foot of this mountain in order to gather firewood and found something behind the small hut. At that moment [the skeleton] was similar to a dried salmon (*karazake* 乾鮭). The skin was so desiccated that looked like silk crape (*chirimen* ちりめん). The skin of the hands and feet shrunk and fell apart exposing the white of the bones. Because the right shoulder and flank were bent toward the ground the skin and bones were damaged. [The skeleton] seemed to be tall. In the right hand there was a rosary for the *nenbutsu* and the left hand was in the worship position. [The corpse] was too hardened to be moved. Because

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<sup>16</sup>. See, for instance, Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no rekishi chirigakuteki kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Meicho shuppansha, 1992), 51.

<sup>17</sup>. For the notion of isomorphism and the difference between body, icon, and mummy, see Bernard Faure, “The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 3 (June 1998): 791.



no one knew who it was and from which province it had come, [the people] called him the mummy of the mountain (*oyama no miira* 御山のミみら), but the guardian of the hermitage called him the actual body of a real buddha (*sokushinbutsu*).<sup>18</sup>

This passage is particularly interesting and unique because testifies that in the early eighteenth century there was a *sokushinbutsu* at the foot of Mount Haguro, which was not a mountain normally associated with the devotional practices dedicated to the mummified corpses of ascetics. Apart from this detail, the anonymous author of the *Mannen fukyū oboegaki* underlines two different nomenclatures, i.e. *miira* and *sokushinbutsu*, which were commonly used by the people of the Shōnai plain to refer to this type of sacred body.

The term *miira* was well-known by the Japanese of the Edo period thanks to the ubiquitous shows of anatomical *mirabilia* (*misemono* 見世物), in which the mummies of humans beings, animals, or fantastic creatures were often displayed to satisfy the predilection for the grotesque and for dark eroticism by the urban and rural populations.<sup>19</sup> It is fundamental to remember that the principal locations for the appreciation of the *misemono* were the precincts of the Buddhist temples. Therefore, the people did not perceive the term *miira* as something that was dislocated

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<sup>18</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no rekishi chirigakuteki kenkyū*, 64.

<sup>19</sup>. The Portuguese originally spread the word *momia* and its variation of *mumia*, which derive from the Latin term *myrrha*, in Japan during the sixteenth century. The Portuguese term *momia* indicated a medicinal resin, which could stop the degenerative processes of the cadaver and favors the preservation of the corpse after death. This is the reason why the pharmaceutic dictionary *Yamato honzō* 大和本草, which was published in 1708, nested the term *miira* under the label of Western drugs (*yōyaku* 洋薬) in the more general category of “barbarian seeds” (*banshu* 蛮種). Even if the Portuguese did not directly commercialize the *momia* in Japan during the sixteenth century, they made a significant contribution to spreading the notion of a special substance that prevented the decay of the corpse and desiccated the cadaver. The introduction of large quantities of *miira* on the Japanese pharmaceutical market took place after the formal closure of the country (*sakoku* 鎖国) thanks to the Dutch merchants that were based at Dejima 出島 in the bay of Nagasaki. The Dutch sold *miira* not only as a medicine to prevent the decay of the corpse, but also as a powerful remedy to stop every type of hemorrhage or gastrointestinal pain. This also explains why the term *miira* was often written with the Chinese transliteration (Ch. *munaiyi* 木乃伊) of the Dutch word *mummie*. See Yamawaki Teijirō, *Kinsei Nihon no iyaku bunka: miira, ahen, kōhī* (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1995): 158-172.

from the religious sphere, but as a hybrid term, which embraced, at the same time, the voyeuristic pleasure of contemplating a body whose taxonomical value fluctuated in a sort of grey zone between life and death, and a vision of salvation and perfection, which was symbolized by the religious term *sokushinbutsu*.<sup>20</sup> In other words the passage in the *Mannen fukyū oboegaki* emphasizes the possibility of a semantic shift between the words *miira* and *sokushinbutsu* according to the sensibility and interpretative predilection of the spectator without determining a fixed hierarchy between the two.

In the *Mannen fukyū oboegaki* the second term used to describe the skeleton venerated by Jishō as the body of a buddha is the Shugendō word *sokushinbutsu*. The Shugendō practitioners developed the concept of *sokushinbutsu* from the Shingon notion of “becoming a buddha in this actual body” (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏), which was originally expressed by Kūkai in the work *Sokushin jōbutsugi* 即身成仏義 (Tenchō 天長 1, 824).<sup>21</sup> There are seven variants of the original text of Kūkai and the last four spurious transcriptions (*ihon* 異本) introduce an important tripartition of the concept of *sokushin jōbutsu* on which is based the Shugendō threefold analysis of the term *sokushinbutsu*.<sup>22</sup>

The first type of *sokushin jōbutsu* is defined as *rigu jōbutsu* 理具成仏, which means that “in

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<sup>20</sup>. About the notion of “prayer and play” in the Edo culture see Nam-lin Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 24-29. For the relationship between *misemono* shows and *kaichō* see Furukawa Miki, *Shomin geinō - Edo no misemono* [coll. Yūzankaku BOOKS 8] (Tōkyō: Yūzankaku shuppan, 1993): 256-288. Consider also Kawazoe Yū, *Edo no misemono* (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2000) and the classic study of Asakura Musei, *Misemono kenkyū* (1928; repr., Tōkyō: Chikuma gakugei bunko, 2002).

<sup>21</sup>. It should be taken into account that the *sokushin jōbutsu* ideal is not a prerogative of the Shingon School, but is also present in Tendai esoteric discourse.

<sup>22</sup>. For a detailed analysis of the text formation and contents of the *Sokushin jōbutsugi* see James H. Sanford, “Wind, Waters, Stupas, Mandalas: Fetal Buddhahood in Shingon,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 11.

principle” (*rigu*) all sentient beings already have the potentiality to become buddhas. This is due to the fact that the human body, which is constituted of the same five elements of the cosmos (*gotai* 五大), corresponds to the power of principle (*ritoku* 理徳), and the mind (*shin* 心) represents the power of wisdom (*chitoku* 智徳).<sup>23</sup> In order to express the intrinsic quality of the body/mind of the sentient being to be equal to the body/mind of a buddha the Shingon tradition use the expression: “to become a buddha thanks to the fact of simply having a body” (*sunawachi shin nareru hotoke* 即ち身成れる仏).

The second type of *sokushin jōbutsu* is called *kaji jōbutu* 加持成仏 and refers to the practice of the eidetic meditation (*kansō* 観想), the recitation of mantra and *dhāraṇī*, and the making of specific *mudrā* in order to realize the interpenetration of self and deity (*nyūga ganyū* 入我我入). For the entire duration of this *samādhi* the meditator realizes that there is no difference between the attributes (*kudoku* 功德) of the body of the sentient being and that of a buddha. The *kaji jōbutsu* is explained through the sentence: “buddhahood rooted in the body” (*shin ni sokushite butsu to naru* 身に即して仏と成る).

The third type of *sokushin jōbutsu* is the *kendoku jōbutsu* 顯得成仏, in which the meditator incessantly experiences and manifests (*kendoku*) the non-duality (*nini funi* 二而不二) between his body and the body of the buddha in a status of deep meditation (*yuga zanmai* 瑜伽三昧). The *kaji jōbutsu* corresponds to the cause (*in* 因) and the *kendoku jōbutsu* is the effect (*ka* 果). The sentence that condenses this last model of *sokushin jōbutsu* is: “immediately the body becomes a buddha (*sumiyaka ni shin butsu to naru* 即ち身仏と成る).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>. The five elements that constitute the cosmos are: earth, water, fire, wind, and space.

<sup>24</sup>. *Mikkyō daijiten*, eds. *Mikkyō jiten hensan-kai*, vol. 2 (Kyōtō: Naigai shuppan, 1932): 1403.

In the Edo period *shugenja* absorbed and modified the Shingon concepts of *sokushin jōbutsu* in order to create a new set of conceptual paradigms which could be applied to add meaning to the ascetic practices performed on sacred mountains. For instance, the Shugendō term *bonshin soku busshin* 凡身即仏身 indicated the capability of the body of the lay practitioner to become equal to the body of a buddha. The fleshly body (*nikushin* 肉身) or living body (*shōjin* 生身) that a person received from the mother and the father was already the same of the buddha's body (*busshin* 仏身). Therefore, the Shugendō practitioners used the concept of *honrai sokubutsu* 本来即仏 to underline the idea that the body of the ascetic was intrinsically equal to the body of a buddha.<sup>25</sup>

A peculiarity of the Shugendō threefold teachings to become a buddha (*sanshu jōbutsu* 三種成仏) *hic et nuc* in this actual body was the conflation of the Shingon notion of *sokushin jōbutsu* with the Tendai doctrine of the “original enlightenment” (*hongaku shisō* 本覺思想).

The first type of *sanshu jōbutsu* is called *sokushin jōbutsu*. It refers to the primordial enlightenment embedded in the ascetic body, which already fully manifests the buddha-nature (*busshō* 仏性). The *sokushin jōbutsu* is equated to the teaching of incipient enlightenment (*shigaku hōmon* 始覺法門). At this stage the Shugendō practitioner performs ascetic practices (*shugyō* 修行) in order to let emerge and manifest the immanent principle of the buddha-nature (*rigu busshō* 理具仏性), which is already present in the living body of all sentient beings.

The second type of *sanshu jōbutsu* is defined as *sokushin sokubutsu* 即身即仏. This concept indicates that the body of the practitioner is already self-enlightened (*jikaku* 自覺) regarding its

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<sup>25</sup>. Asada Masahiro, *Bukkyō kara mita Shugen no sekai* “Shugen sanjūsan tsūki” wo yomu—Shugendō kyōgi nyūmon— (Tōkyō: Kokusho kankōkai, 2000), 153, 165.

non-duality with the body of the buddha. The *sokushin sokubutsu* corresponds to the teaching of original enlightenment (*hongaku hōmon* 本覺法門). At this stage a division still subsists between the ascetic (*gyōja*) and the goal of the asceticism, which is constituted by the fact of becoming a buddha. The *sokushin sokubutsu* is compared to the doctrines to attain buddhahood (*jōbutsuron* 成仏論) that are taught by the Buddhist Schools, but do not correspond to the ultimate goal of Shugendō.

The third type of *sanshu jōbutsu*, which represents the final target of the Shugendō tradition, is defined as *sokushin sokushin* 即身即身. The term *sokushin sokushin* means that the body of the ascetic (first *sokushin*) is non-dual and identical (*ichinyo* 一如) with the body of a buddha (second *sokushin*).<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the *sokushin sokushin* paradigm overcomes the initial division between the practitioner and the goal of the practice, which was still present in the second type of *sokushin sokubutsu*, in order to manifest a perfect overlapping between the living body of the sentient beings and the buddha (*shōbutsu* 生仏).<sup>27</sup>

The *issei gyōnin* of Yudono used the Shugendō term of *sokushinbutsu* to define the mummified corpses which were created with the bodily remains of eminent ascetics. The living body of the *issei gyōnin* was considered to be completely purified through the practice of long and complex ascetic training such as the *sennichigyō*. Therefore, death became the moment in which the *issei gyōnin* practically demonstrated the ultimate achievement of the adamant body (*kongōshin* 金剛身) *hic et nunc* and not in an immaterial or meditative realm. The adamant

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<sup>26</sup>. The Buddhist word for identity (*ichinyo*) is constructed through the union of two characters 一 (“one,” “uniqueness”) and 如 (“thus,” “thusness”), which independently refer to two specific models of non-differentiation. 一 shows the notion of non-duality (*funi* 不二) and 如 derives from the concept of non-diversity (*fui* 不異).

<sup>27</sup>. Asada Masahiro, *Bukkyō kara mita Shugen no sekai*, 215-216.

body corresponded to the final fruit (*ka* 果) of the asceticism. Once transformed into a *sokushinbutsu* the flesh body of the *issei gyōnin* overlapped with and was identical to the body of Dainichi Nyorai.

The *sennichigyō* practice put the ascetic in the condition to change his human body into an incorruptible body (*fueshin* 不壞身) at the moment of death. This incorruptible body was materially represented through the non-decomposed cadaver of the *issei gyōnin*. The *sokushinbutsu* was perceived as a protective flesh-body icon (*nikushinzō*) with an immense soteriological power, which was shared by all the *sewanin*, *kōin*, and disciples of the *issei gyōnin*.<sup>28</sup> We can say that the ultimate benefits of the *sennichigyō* practice were fully appreciated only after the death of the *issei gyōnin* and not before. This was the crucial moment during which the bodily remains of the *issei gyōnin* materially testified the reification of the ascetic ideal through which the practitioner obtained the same physicality as a buddha. Therefore, Bernard Faure describes the mummified body as a form of incorruptible body recreated “at a higher ontological level.”<sup>29</sup> When the living body of the *issei gyōnin* turned into a non-decayed corpse it

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<sup>28</sup>. The term *nikushinzō* was firstly used by Kosugi Kazuo to describe the mummified bodies of the eminent Chinese monks of the Tang period (618-907) in the seminal article “Nikushinzō oyobi yuikaizō no kenkyū” (1937). In the first part of the work Kosugi dedicates few pages to describe the flesh-body icons made of the whole-body (*ittai nikushinzō* 一体肉身像) of the Japanese monks who entered in a state of deep meditation and suspended animation (*nyūjō*). The author just mentions six examples of Japanese mummified bodies among which three are *sokushinbutsu* of *issei gyōnin* conserved at Kaikōji (Enmyōkai and Chūkai) and Dainichibō (Shinnyokai). Kosugi does not analyze the Japanese flesh-body icons in detail, but states that they are completely different from the Egyptian mummies because are “totally natural” (*mattaku shizenteki* まったく自然的) and “did not need human intervention” (*jinkō wo yōshinai* 人工を要しない) to be preserved. The Japanese *nikushinzō* are unique and should be analyzed as a “natural phenomenon” (*shizenteki genshō* 自然的現象) which is fostered by the “climatic conditions” (*kikō fūdo* 気候風土) of the country. This interpretation of the Japanese mummified bodies as ‘natural phenomena’ rather than ‘cultural phenomena’ had an enormous influence on the later analysis of this issue. This trend to study the *sokushinbutsu* of Mount Yudono as “natural mummies” was partially corrected by the results of the fieldwork done by the members of the Miira kenkyū gurūpu in 1967 and 1993. See Kosugi Kazuo, “Nikushinzō oyobi yuikaizō no kenkyū,” in *Nihon, Chūgoku miira shinkō no kenkyū*, 277-279.

<sup>29</sup>. Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 135.

became the same of a real body of a buddha and was venerated as a *sokushinbutsu*.

### 3.2. The Paradigmatic Mummy: Kōchi Hōin

Gavin Flood underlines that the body of the ascetic is always a body of memory, which functions as a sort of somatic database for a specific tradition. The ascetic practice *per se* corresponds to a process of “internalization of tradition,” which is subsequently visualized through the modifications that take place on the flesh of the ascetic’s body.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the ascetic body is similar to a white page on which the ascetic inscribes and transmits the narratives of the religious discourse.

The mummified corpses of the eminent *issei gyōnin* are often explained as imitations of Kūkai’s body that is supposed to be in a state of suspended animation inside the Oku no in of Mount Kōya waiting for the descent of the future buddha Miroku. Nevertheless, it is complex to reconstruct the exact modalities through which the cult and doctrinal background associated with the *nyūjō* of Kūkai was transmitted from Mount Kōya to Mount Yudono. A passage in the *Saihentō no jōjō kakuji*, written in Kanbun 6 (1666) by the Hondōji *bettō*, is usually considered to be the ultimate evidence that the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono were doctrinally based on the *nyūjō* of Kūkai.

The *issei gyōnin* were shown (*mi mōshi sōrō* 見申候) the painting of the *nyūjō* (*nyūjō no zu* 入定之図), which represents the eight patriarchs of the Shingon Vehicle (*Shingon-jō no*

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<sup>30</sup>. Gavin Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): IX.

*hachidai kōso* 真言乘之八代高祖).<sup>31</sup> This painting was drawn in the twelfth year of the Eiroku era (1569). This object was created one-hundred-seventeen years ago.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to take into account the fact that this text was composed in the same year (1666) as the second lawsuit between Haguro and Yudono, during which the monks of both mountains respectively re-invented their religious traditions according to Tendai and Shingon terms. In this passage, the Hondōji *bettō* was trying to convince the *jisha bugyō* of Edo, the recipient of this document, that Mount Yudono had a long Shingon tradition as testified by the presence of an ancient painting that represented the figures of the eight Shingon patriarchs absorbed in *nyūjō*.<sup>33</sup> In the Edo period it was very common for Shingon temples to possess this type of painting; it was used during the consecration ceremony (*kanjō gishiki* 灌頂儀式), when the novice monk was asked to recite by heart the names of the eight Shingon patriarchs and the particularities of their transmission of the Dharma in order to demonstrate his knowledge of the Shingon blood-lineage (*kechimyaku* 血脈). These paintings were thus used as visual supports to help the memory of the novice during the *kanjō* ceremony.<sup>34</sup>

The above passage in the *Saihentō no jōjō kakujū* is preceded by a description of the simplified *kanjō* ceremony, which was performed by *issei gyōnin* in front of Gohōzen, and is

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<sup>31</sup>. It is impossible to know if this part of the text refers to a painting illustrating the eight patriarchs of the Shingon School or to a single portrait of the eighth patriarch, Kūkai. I think that the first hypothesis may be correct, because the portrait of Kūkai was usually indicated using the specific term *mie* 御影.

<sup>32</sup>. For the original text, see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeiji, 21.

<sup>33</sup>. The standard set of the eight patriarchs of the [Shingon] transmission (*denji no hasso* 伝持の八祖) includes Ryūmyō 竜猛 (Skt. Nagârjuna), Ryūchi 竜智 (Skt. Nāgabodhi), Kongōchi 金剛智 (Skt. Vajrabodhi), Fukū 不空 (Skt. Amogha[vajra]), Zenmui 善無畏 (Skt. Śubhakarasiṃha), Ichigyō 一行 (Ch. Yixing), Keika 惠果 (Ch. Huiguo), and Kūkai 空海. The oldest painting of the eight Shingon patriarchs is in the *Gojū no tō* of the Daigōji temple in Kyōto.

<sup>34</sup>. *Kōbō Daishi shinkō ten*, ed. Kawasakishi shimin myūjiamu (Tōkyō: Kawasakishi shimin myūjiamu, 1996), 34.



followed by the interpretation of the name *issei gyōnin* as a variation of the Shingon term *isshō sokushin jōbutsu*.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, it is clear that the passage in which the *nyūjō no zu* is mentioned is part of a strategic argument employed to underline the Shingon influence on the religious life of the *issei gyōnin* at Mount Yudono. The Hondōji *bettō* was interested in presenting the *issei gyōnin* as ascetics who followed and knew the basics of Shingon doctrine rather than as actual practitioners of the *nyūjō*, which simply was the meditative status that characterized the eight patriarchs of the Shingon tradition depicted in the painting.

The possible links between the *nyūjō* attributed to Kūkai on Mount Kōya and the *sokushinbutsu* of Mount Yudono can be found, not in the above passage of the *Saihentō no jōjō kakuji*, but in the extreme popularity in the Tōhoku area of the mummified corpse of the itinerant Shingon monk Kōchi Hōin 弘智法印 (?–1363) (See Fig. 3.4). His mummified body is preserved in the Saijōji 西生寺 temple in the village of Mishima 三島 in Niigata prefecture. The mummy of Kōchi is important because it is one of the oldest mummified bodies of eminent monks conserved until now. During the Edo period it was the center of intense devotional practices and pilgrimages not only from the provinces of Tōhoku, but also from various regions in the Kantō area.

Kōchi was born in the village of Katori 香取 in Shimōsa province and became an itinerant Shingon monk who was well-known for practicing austerities and performing pilgrimages to the most sacred places in Dewa province before going to Mount Kōya in order to learn Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>36</sup> Kōchi was a protagonist of the first generation of Shingon itinerant monks who

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<sup>35</sup>. For the passages that describe the *kaigō* ritual and the relationship between the name *issei gyōnin* and the term *isshō sokushin jōbutsu* see the previous chapter, 112, 117-121.

<sup>36</sup>. Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 22.

spread the faith in Dainichi Nyorai in the provinces of Kantō and Tōhoku. After him another Shingon itinerant monk Yūhi 宥日 (1396–1473), who received the secret transmission of the Dharma (*denpō kanjō* 伝法灌頂) from the temple Chūin 中院 on Mount Kōya and became a member of the Chūin lineage (Chūin-ryū 中院流), restored the temple Henshōji 遍照寺 at Nagai and kept preaching faith in Dainichi Nyorai in the Tōhoku area. Like his predecessors the Shingon itinerant monk Dōchi focused his religious activities on the restoration of various temples in the Dewa province among which there was the Dainichiji.<sup>37</sup> Kōchi can be considered the forefather of these generations of Shingon itinerant monks who made an important contribution to the development of monastic infrastructures around the sacred mountains of the Tōhoku area during the medieval period.

The mummy of Kōchi was well-known and venerated by the common people during the Edo period. A proof of its fame is the *jōruri* 浄瑠璃 booklet *Kōchi Hōin godenki* 弘智法印御伝記 (Jōkyō 2, 1685), which is entirely dedicated to the saving power of the mummified corpse of Kōchi.<sup>38</sup> In the *Shirakawa fudoki* 白川風土記 Hirose Mōsai 広瀬蒙斎 (1768–1829) reports the following description of Kōchi giving orders to his disciple about how to treat his cadaver.

Kōchi hall (*Kōchidō* 弘智堂). [...] The Dharma Seal Kōchi 弘智法印 was in search of a peaceful place for his [Buddhist] practice. He came to a mountain pass called Saru ga baba 猿ヶ馬場 [...]. He thought that this place, where buddhas and bodhisattvas manifested themselves, was no less ideal than Mount Kōya. [Kōchi Hōin] thought that this was the place of peace and joy he had been looking forward to for many years. He built here the Yōchiin 養智院 temple where he performed the practice (*ingyō* 因行) of deep meditative concentration

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<sup>37</sup>. Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudonosan sokushinbutsu kō 2: issei gyōnin ni okeru sei to shi no sakuhō,” *Gendai shisō* 22, no. 1 (January 1994): 273.

<sup>38</sup>. For the original text see *Ko jōruri shū*, Daiei hakubutsukan bon, vol. 224, eds. Torigoe Bunzō, Charles Dunn (Tōkyō: Koten bunko, 1966), 21-77.

(*jinn'yū zenjō* 深入禪定), obtained supernatural powers (*sijji* 悉地) that derive from the *yoga* of the three mysteries (*sanmitsu yuga* 三密瑜伽) and in Jōji 2 (1363) he breathed his last in complete quietude (*jakunen* 寂然).<sup>39</sup> [...] While in life he ordered a disciple: “After I have died, under no circumstance bury (*eimai* 瘞埋) my body. I made a vow (*seigan* 誓願) to keep the chain of bones (*kossa* 骨鎖) [that constitutes my skeleton] as it is (*kono mama ni* 此儘二) in this world in order to wait for the descent of Miroku. [...].<sup>40</sup>

It is relevant to take into account that all these directions, which are attributed to Kōchi, to preserve his skeletal form in an undamaged condition refer to the *post mortem* treatment of the corpse. In other words, the above passage describes a funerary practice which aims to facilitate the conservation of Kōchi’s corpse in order to use his incorrupt skeleton to testify the power of this Shingon monk even after the decease. The word *kossa*, which indicates an unbroken chain of bones, usually characterizes the external condition of the human remains left by a bodhisattva.<sup>41</sup> Kōchi could be considered a bodhisattva waiting for the descent of the future buddha Miroku, because his skeleton was preserved as a chain of unbroken bones.

The incredible popularity of the mummified corpse of Kōchi, which started in the medieval period and continued also in the early modern period, certainly reached Mount Yudono and could have inspired a sort of funerary trend in dealing with the human remains of eminent ascetics.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>. The three mysteries of the Shingon tradition refer to the body, the voice, and the mind of the meditator. The body can be trained to reach non-duality with the cosmic body of Dainichi Nyorai through the practice of the *mudrā*, the voice through the recitation of mantra, and the mind through the meditation on the deities of the esoteric maṇḍalas.

<sup>40</sup>. Yamauchi Shirō, “Yudonosan sokushinbutsu kō 2: issei gyōnin ni okeru sei to shi no sakuhō,” 273.

<sup>41</sup>. Alan L. Miller, “Spiritual Accomplishment by Misdirection: Some “Upāy Folktales from Asia,” *History of Religions* 40, no. 1 (August 2000): 93.

<sup>42</sup>. It is relevant to consider that even Matsumoto Akira, who strongly sustained the thesis of the influence of the faith in the descent of Miroku on the practice of mummification of the corpses performed by the *issei gyōnin*, had to recognize that Mount Yudono, unlike Mount Kōya, never aspired to be the Pure Land of Miroku (*Miroku no jōdo* 弥勒の浄土). This relevant difference between the two sacred mountains demonstrates that it is methodologically inappropriate to try to erase the specificity of the religious dynamics of Mount Yudono in order to interpret it just a

Even if the faith in Miroku was not a pivotal point for the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, the mummified corpse of Kōchi Hōin could have had a relevant impact on the modalities of disposing the corpse of an eminent ascetic and could have induced the *issei gyōnin* to ask their followers to take the initiative for replicating a similar mummification process for their corpses.

### 3.3. Practice on Mount Yudono and Study at Mount Kōya: Junkai and Zenkai

Kōchi Hōin was an itinerant Shingon monks and had a different social position from an *issei gyōnin*, but his *ars moriendi* could have provided an example for the funerary practices that determined the custom of mummifying the human remains of eminent ascetics. Another relevant link between Mount Yudono and Mount Kōya can be detected in the ascetic career of Junkai 淳海 (1562–1640) who was born in the district of Tsugawa 津川 in Higashiganbara 東蒲原 village in Echigo province. Junkai went to Mount Yudono in order to become an *issei gyōnin* and in Keichō 6 (1601) traveled to Henjōkōin 遍照光院 on Mount Kōya where received the *denpō kanjō* of the Chūin lineage.<sup>43</sup> The Chūin lineage of the Shingon School was founded by Myōsan 明算 (1021–1106) and placed particular emphasis on the tradition of the *nyūjō* of Kūkai, which is supposed to be occurred at Chūin temple, where the meditation-room used by Kūkai was located.

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mere copy or duplication of the religious discourse that characterized Mount Kōya. See Matsumoto Akira, “Kōyasan shinkō no seiritsu to Yudonosan,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 331-332.

<sup>43</sup>. It is interesting to note that Junkai received the *denpō kanjō* of the Chūin lineage from Henjōkōin, where the itinerant monk Yūichi 宥日 (1396-1473) too obtained his formal initiation.

The *kechimyaku* of the Chūin lineage started with the name of Kūkai and included also Kangen 觀賢 (853-925) and Yuihan 維範 (1011-1096) who were both closely involved in the creation of Buddhist narratives (*setsuwa* 說話) and doctrinal interpretations of the *nyūjō* of Kūkai. For example, the *kirigami* of the esoteric ritual (*mippō* 密法) known as *Go nyūjō daiji* 御入定大事 is based on a type of meditation attributed to Yuihan and Rinkei 琳賢 (1074–1150).<sup>44</sup> The *Go nyūjō daiji* describes a meditative procedure that is defined as a preliminary ascetic practice (*kegyō* 加行) similar to a sort of skillful-means to prepare for meditation (*zen hōben* 前方便). This preliminary ascetic practice takes place only at the mental level of the meditator, and should prepare his mind to perform the real ascesis of the body. The most relevant passage of the *Go nyūjō daiji* reports that: “At the moment of the descent of Miroku the skeleton [of the ascetic] will certainly be once again transformed into a flesh-body; realizing buddhahood, he will meet [Kōbō] Daishi. That is [what is called] *sokushin jōbutsu*.”<sup>45</sup>

It is impossible to know if Junkai actually received the transmission of the *Go nyūjō daiji* during his stay at Chūin, but we may suppose that he could have been exposed to the influence of such doctrinal interpretations of Kūkai’s death during his stay on Mount Kōya. When he returned from Mount Kōya to the village of Tsugawa he resided at Gyōkusenji 玉泉寺, where he died in Kan’ei 18 (1640).<sup>46</sup> His mummified body was conserved until Meiji 13 (1880) when a fire irremediably destroyed it.

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<sup>44</sup>. The *Go nyūjō daiji* was also transmitted in the Jimyōin lineage (Jimyōin-ryū 持明院流), which died out toward the end of the Muromachi period (1336-1573). The oldest manuscript of the *Go nyūjō daiji* is dated Karyaku 嘉曆 1 (1326).

<sup>45</sup>. *Jison geshō no toki kanarazu shigai mata nikushin to nari, jōbutsu shite Daishi ni chigū tatematsuru. Kore sunawachi sokushin jōbutsu to un nun* 慈尊下生時、必死骸又成肉身、成仏、値遇大師、是則即身成仏 (云云). For the entire original text, see Morita Ryūsen, “‘Go nyūjō daiji’ no kenkyū,” *Mikkyō kenkyū* 27, (January 1929): 18.

<sup>46</sup>. The *Gyōkusenji no engi* reports that Junkai died in Kan’ei 13 (1636).

In 1966 Naitō Masatoshi undertook fieldwork at Gyōkusenji, where he discovered a wooden box which contained some burned remains of the *sokushinbutsu* of Junkai and an *engi* composed by Yūshin 宥心, the fifth chief monk of Gyōkusenji. The *Gyokusenji no engi* 玉泉寺之縁起 describes Junkai ordering his devotees not to bury or cremate his corpse, in order that he might become a buddha in this fleshly body (*nikushin jōbutsu* 肉身成仏).

The third great supervisor and Dharma Seal Junkai moved to this temple and made it the place for his vow (*kiganjo* 祈願所). [...] Toward the end of his life Junkai summoned his parishioners (*danbara* 檀輩) and told them: “When I die, absolutely do not practice cremation or burial (*kado no ryōsō* 火土ノ両葬). Place [my body] in a single coffin (*kankaku* 棺槨), build a small sepulcher (*shōbyō* 小廟) in the southwestern direction inside the temple and put it there. My body will not be corrupted (*haie* 敗壞). To become a buddha in this fleshly body corresponds to the vow of my School (*nikushin jōbutsu wa waga shū no shogan* 肉身成仏者我宗之所願) and it is also what I, the wild monk (*yasō* 野僧), want.” [Junkai] was seventy-eight when he died (*seikyo* 逝去) in Kan’ei 13 (1636) ninth month, ninth day. Then the parishioners who venerated him and respected his last will performed the disposal of the corpse (*haburu* 葬る) as he requested. After a few years they opened the sepulcher and saw that his dead image (*shizō* 死像) was incorrupt.<sup>47</sup>

It is interesting to take into account that the description of the funerary instructions given by Junkai to his followers closely echoes the narrative about the disposition of Kōchi Hōin’s corpse. This can be taken as sign of the progressive influence of Kōchi Hōin paradigmatic funeral on the disposal of the corpses of eminent *issei gyōnin* such as Junkai. As we saw in the case of the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono, the possibility of transforming the physical remains of the ascetic into a sort of icon, which was “built” using a mummified corpse as the construction material, was entirely based on the fiduciary relationship between the ascetic and his parishioners (*danbara*). Parishioners and disciples were in charge of the practical aspects of

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<sup>47</sup>. For the original text, see Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 121.

the funerary arrangements through which the *issei gyōnin* could perform the sacred *mise en scène* of the overlapping of his fleshly body with the buddha's body.

Junkai had many disciples, among whom the most important was Zenkai 全海. Even if Zenkai had never been to Mount Kōya, he was instructed by Junkai and became an influential *issei gyōnin* of the Dainichibō. In Shōhō 4 (1647) after eighteen years of ascetic practice at Senninzawa, Zenkai decided to move back to his native village of Hishigata 菱潟 in Echigo province, where he built the *gyōnidera* Kannonji 観音寺. After his death, which took place in Jōkyō 貞享 4 (1687), the corpse of Zenkai was mummified and transformed into a *sokushinbutsu*. It has been venerated at Zenkaidō 全海堂 inside the precincts of Kannonji down to the present.<sup>48</sup>

Even if it is difficult to exactly pin point the degree of influence and the specific modalities through which the *issei gyōnin* absorbed and creatively adapted the Shingon teachings about the *nyūjō* of Kukai to the religious environment of Mount Yudono, there is no doubt that the mummified corpse of Kōchi Hōin and the two *sokushinbutsu* of Junkai and Zenkai played a pivotal role in connecting those two sacred mountains. There are also other examples of *issei gyōnin* such as Junkai, who undertook ascetic training at Mount Yudono and subsequently moved to Mount Kōya where he was admitted to the Chūin lineage and received the *denpō kanjō* of that specific tradition. Such *issei gyōnin* spread narratives and doctrinal teachings about the *nyūjō* of Kūkai to their disciples and, at the same time, contributed to establishing the funerary trend according to which the corpse of an eminent *issei gyōnin* could be preserved as a *sokushinbutsu*.

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<sup>48</sup>. The exhibition (*kaichō* 開帳) of the *sokushinbutsu* of Zenkai takes place once every year on the eighth of July at Kannonji, now a Zen temple of the Sōtō 曹洞 School.

The fact that the *sokushinbutsu* could work as a soteriological bridge to maintain the salvific link between the deceased *issei gyōnin* and his followers is clearly reported in the *Sokubutsu Chūkai Shōnin ryaku engi* 即仏忠海上人略縁起 (late Edo period).<sup>49</sup> This passage refers to the *sokushinbutsu* of Chūkai, who is enshrined together with the *sokushinbutsu* of Enmyōkai, at the Kaikōji temple in the city of Sakata.<sup>50</sup>

The previous supervisor of this temple [Kaikōji] Chūkai Shōnin took ordination (*tokudo*) at Chūrenji temple at Yudono and became a wood-eater *issei gyōnin* (*issō mokujiki gyōja* 一生[世]木食行者).<sup>51</sup> He practiced ascetic seclusion (*sanrō*) at Senninzawa on Mount Yudono during the cold and hot seasons using only one ritual cloth. He performed daily pilgrimages (*nissan*) to Gohōzen, the Oku no in [of Yudonosan]. In the morning he made purificatory ablutions with the clear water of the river of the valley to wash away the impurities of the passions. In the evening he made his body face the rough winds of the mountain, recited the formulas of repentance for the sins of the six faculties (*rokkon zange* 六根懺悔), and exposed (*sarashi* さらし) his corpse-like body (*mukuro* 骸) to the snow and frost of the depths of the mountain. He expressed the vow (*hotsugan*) to save (*sukuwan koto* 救ん事) all the people from difficulties through these ascetic practices (*nangyō kugyō* 難行苦行). After the completion of these ascetic practices (*gyōhō* 行法) he died (*myōjū* 命終) on the dawn of the twenty-first day of the second month of Hōreki 宝曆 5 (1755). A marvelous perfume (*ikyō* 異香) spread in the room (*shicchū* 室中) [of the sepulcher] and the ascetic appeared as if the Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai had surrounded him with beams of light. Therefore, he became a buddha in this actual body (*sokushin sokubutsu to narase tamau* 即身即仏と成らせたまふ) in order to allow people to establish positive karmic ties (*kechien no tame* 結縁のため) with him and let everyone know his virtuous practices (*tokugyō* 徳行), which he performed in

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<sup>49</sup>. This anonymous *engi* is included in the *Kaikōji monjo* 海向寺文書 and could be an abbreviated version of a longer hagiography of Chūkai which is now lost.

<sup>50</sup>. Enmyōkai was an *issei gyōnin* of Haguro who performed his religious activities in the parish (*kasumiba*) of Nadori in Hokuriku province. After meeting Tetsumonkai he became his disciple and was affiliated with Chūrenji. See Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 62.

<sup>51</sup>. The compound 一生, which should be read *issō*, was probably used to reproduce the phonetic reading of the term *issei*, which should be written 一世. Even if the text uses the term *tokudo*, it is probable that Chūkai only accepted the Buddhist moral precepts in front of Gohōzen.



accordance with his vow.<sup>52</sup>

The mummified body of Chūkai served to maintain positive karmic ties (*kechien*) between the *issei gyōnin* and his *sewanin*, *kōin*, and disciples even beyond the ascetic's death. The *sokushinbutsu* did not function as a *memento mori* for the living. The mummified body of the *issei gyōnin* removed the fact of biological death from the ascetic and kept transmitting the living memory of the virtuous practices (*tokugyō*) that he had performed in accordance with his original vow (*hatsugan*) to save all his devotees. In other terms, the *sokushinbutsu* channeled and irradiated the memory and the merits of the *tokugyō*, overcoming the biological limits of the *issei gyōnin*. This aspect of the *sokushinbutsu* is similar to Jean-Claude Schmitt's description of the fundamental characteristic of the image as a "place of memory" or "*monumentum*" that creates an individual and collective process of recollection and re-invention of the past.<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting to note that Chūkai was a low ranking *samurai* and the cousin of another eminent *issei gyōnin*, Honmyōkai. When Chūkai died in Hōreki 5 (1755) his corpse was immediately transferred to the Rokkakudō 六角堂 of Chūrenji, where it was smeared with an extract of *Artemisia princeps* (*yomogi* 蓬) and the juice of the persimmon (*kaki*) for a long period of time. The same treatment was given the *sokushinbutsu* of Enmyōkai, who died in Bunsei 文政 5 (1822). According to Naitō Masatoshi's examination, both the *sokushinbutsu* show obvious traces of burning due to the fumigation done by candles and incense in order to desiccate the

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<sup>52</sup>. For the original text see *Sakatashi shi*, Seikatsu bunka hen, vol. 7, ed. Kudō Sadao (Sakata: Sakata-shi, 1977), 701.

<sup>53</sup>. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps des images: essais sur la culture visuelle au moyen âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 55.

cadaver and eliminate bad smells.<sup>54</sup> In Bunsei 1 (1818) Tetsumonkai built the Sokubutsudō 即仏堂 at Kaikōji to dedicate a separate space where the *sokushinbutsu* of Chūkai and later on that of Enmyōkai could be enshrined. It is important to underline the fact that Tetsumonkai, whose cadaver was also transformed into a *sokushinbutsu*, played a pivotal role in organizing the monastic structures and rituals such as the reclothing ceremonies (*okoromogae* お衣替え) specifically introduced for the cult of the *sokushinbutsu* of Yudono.

#### 4. Reflections Between Funerary Rituals and Ascetic Practices

##### 4.1. The Ideal *Sennichigyō* and the Double Body of Honmyōkai

A recurrent aspect of the narratives that are focused on the metamorphosis of the physical body of the *issei gyōnin* into a *sokushinbutsu* concerns the time-lag that is necessary to complete the process. In order to analyze this aspect it can be useful to take into account the study of Florence Dupont about the *funus imaginarium* (funeral of the image) which was performed for some of the early Roman emperors such as Septimius Severus (145–211).<sup>55</sup> During the ‘first funeral’ the bones (Lat. *ossa*) of the emperor were buried in the ground. After a time-lag of a few months the ‘second funeral’—the *funus imaginarium*—took place. The protagonist of the *funus*

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<sup>54</sup> Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 180. For an analysis of the *sokushinbutsu* of Chūkai, see also Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 56–58.

<sup>55</sup> Florence Dupont, “The Emperor-God’s Other Body,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, vol. 3, ed. Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff, Nadia Tazi (New York: Urzone, 1989), 417.

*imaginarioum* was a wax icon, which reproduced the physical features of the emperor and was burned on a special pyre at the end of the ceremony. This last funerary ritual corresponded to the transitional act of deification during which the emperor definitely abandoned his human body in order to obtain a divine one. In the case of the cadaver of a common person the inhumation of the human remains marked the conclusive point of the funerary ceremony according to “human norms” (Lat. *anthrōpōn nomō*), but for the extra-ordinary body of the emperor the burial was just the starting point of a complex ritual, which ended with the sacralization of the sovereign.<sup>56</sup>

*Mutatis mutandis* a mechanism similar to the *funus imaginarium* can be detected in the funerary rituals of the *issei gyōnin*, during which the mortal vestiges of the ascetic were intentionally modified in order to fabricate a divine or incorrupt body identical to that of a buddha. For instance, the *Honmyōkai Shōnin sokushin sokubutsu ryakuengi* 本明海上人即身即仏略縁起, written on a wooden plank preserved at the Honmyōji temple in Higashi-iwamoto, gives a description of the ascetic practices performed by Honmyōkai until the moment of death and the time-lag that incurred between the inhumation of the human remains of the *issei gyōnin* and the opening of the sepulcher.<sup>57</sup>

Facts about Honmyōkai Shūwa Shōnin 本明海宗和上人. The father [of Honmyōkai] was Saitō Tokuzemon 齊藤徳左衛門, a retainer in the service of the lord of Sanshū Yoshida 三州吉田, who was dispatched to the [Dewa] province.<sup>58</sup> [Honmyōkai] was adopted by Togashi Umanosuke 富樫右馬助 and took the name of Togashi Kichibei 富樫吉兵. [Kichibei] was filled with a strong faith in Mount Yudono and his devotion (*tansei* 丹誠) became deeper and deeper over time. Therefore, [Kichibei] agreed to be excluded from the heirs of the Togashi

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<sup>56</sup>. Ibid., 404.

<sup>57</sup>. The *Honmyōkai Shōnin sokushin sokubutsu ryakuengi* is undated, but could be placed toward the end of the Edo period. This text is the abbreviated version of an older *engi* about Honmyōkai which is now lost.

<sup>58</sup>. Sanshū Yoshida is a locality in the present Aichi prefecture.

household and in Kanbun 2 (1662) at the age of forty entered Chūrenji and shaved his head (*teihatsu* 剃髮). He detached himself from the impurities of the ordinary world and secluded himself in the mountain at Senninzawa for several thousand days (*sū sennichi sanrō* 数千日山籠), during which he followed the precept of wood-eating (*mokujiki kaigyō* 木食戒行). It is said that in the winter season he exhausted his body wearing only a simple tunic. [Honmyōkai] found some foundation stones in the recess of the forest and built a hut, where he lived practicing asceticism (*nangyō kugyō*) during the hot and cold seasons. He obtained supernatural powers practicing the Buddhist path (*hōriki* 法力) and accumulated merits through ascetic practices (*gyōtoku* 行徳). In Tenwa 3 (1683) [Honmyōkai] summoned a farmer called Yaemon 弥衛門 and told him his last will: “This year I will become a buddha.” He said that the vows (*shingan* 心願) of all the people in the last age of the Dharma (*masse* 末世), which relied on the faith of his good mind (*zenshin no shin wo tanomu* 善心の信を頼む), would be accomplished (*jōju* 成就). When he was sixty-one, on the eighth day of the fifth month, he quickly entered *nyūjo* (*sumiyakani nyūjo shitamau* 速に入定し玉う). After three years [the sepulcher] was opened and [Honmyōkai] really appeared as a *sokushin sokubutsu* (*sunawachi sokushin sokubutsu to narase tamahinu* 即チ即身即仏と成らせ玉ひぬ).

In the period that preceded his death [Honmyōkai] used to envelop his body in precious clothes and perform a daily pilgrimage (*nissan*) three times at noon and in the evening to Gohōzen, walking through the deep snow. For more than ten days he dug holes in the icy surface of the water and plunged into the river to practice ascetic training. In the middle of the night [Honmyōkai] had a vision (*utsutsu no yume* 現夢), in which he had been foretold that he would become a buddha. Therefore he rushed to pay homage (*sanrei* 参礼) to Gohōzen where Fudō Myōō and Daikokuten appeared to him. It was a miraculous fact that [Fudō Myōō and Daikokuten] manifested their forms to [Honmyōkai] from the natural stones of Senninzawa and directly stood at his right and left side.

On the thirteenth day of the fourth month of Kanbun 9 (1669) he descended from the mountain (*gezan*) to the village of Higashi-iwamoto and looked for the ancient traces of Shingetsu Shōnin 心月上人.<sup>59</sup> In this place he understood that not a single vow (*tachigan* 立

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<sup>59</sup>. Shingetsu Shōnin became the *jūshoku* of Honmyōji in 1592 and died in 1612. During his administration Honmyōji was granted special permission to exploit the forested areas included in the precincts of the temple. Shingetsu Shōnin was famous for his preaching activities and was able to attract a great number of parishioners and disciples around him. The next *jūshoku* of Honmyōji was called Rengebō 蓮華坊 and he died very young. After Rengebō's death, Honmyōji fell into a period of decline and was frequently at the center of internal conflicts between military factions that tried to control the Shōnai area. When the Sakai 酒井 family took control of the city of Sakata, Honmyōji was totally abandoned. It is possible to speculate that Sakai Tadakatsu 酒井忠勝 (1587–1662) and Sakai Tadanao 酒井忠直 (1630–1682) allowed Honmyōkai to become the *jūshoku* of Honmyōji in order to extend the influence of the Sakai clan in this area. An *issei gyōnin* such as Honmyōkai, whose family was traditionally in the service of the Sakai clan, could be useful in mediating conflicts in this region. See *Asahimura shi* (1) *Yudonosan*, Watanabe Tomeiji, 144–145.

願) expressed by the people with faith [in Shingetsu Shōnin] was not realized. This temple is the place where the benefits (*goriyaku* 御利益) of the *sokushinbutsu* are manifested (*arata naru* あらたなる) and the merits of his [ascetic] practices will never be corrupted (*gyōhō no toku kuchisezaru* 行法の徳朽せざる). The formal name of this temple, which shines from far and near, is Fudōsan Honmyōji 不動山本明寺. This name derived from the great merits accumulated by Honmyōkai Shūwa Shōnin. This is a very thankful thing.<sup>60</sup>

The *sokushinbutsu* of Honmyōkai is the oldest mummified body preserved on Mount Yudono. Of all the *issei gyōnin* who were mummified, Honmyōkai and his cousin Chūkai were the only two ascetics who came from the *samurai* class. The majority of the *issei gyōnin* who became *sokushinbutsu* were peasants. Honmyōkai and Chūkai were low ranking samurai, and from an economic point of view differed only slightly from peasants. As we have seen in the first chapter, it was a very common practice among the lords of Shōnai dominion to send this type of destitute retainer to make pilgrimages or perform ascetic practices on their behalf in the sacred areas of Senninzawa or Genkai on Mount Yudono. In this case, the *daimyō* of the Sakai clan, which was based in the city of Tsuruoka, was probably acting as the main supporter of the ascetic practices performed by Honmyōkai, whose accumulated merit was supposed to be transferred to the lord and all the members of the Sakai family. A different hagiography of Honmyōkai reports that once Sakai Tadakatsu 酒井忠勝 (1587-1662) fell ill and summoned Honmyōkai who performed a healing ritual thanks to which the lord immediately recovered. In order to express his gratitude Tadakatsu granted Honmyōkai the title of Shōnin.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>. For the original text see Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 34-35.

<sup>61</sup>. This episode of the hagiography of Honmyōkai is reported on a stone stele built behind Honmyōji in Taishō 6 (1917). The text of the stele was composed by the *jūshoku* Takai Ryūunkai 高井竜雲海. It was based on an older script, which was a property of the Sakai family. Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 37.

In the *Honmyōkai Shōnin sokushin sokubutsu ryakuengi* there is a narrative conflation between the body of Honmyōkai and the body of the buddha, which is emphasized through a descriptive image that is reminiscent of a Buddhist triptych (*sanzon* 三尊). When Honmyōkai arrived in front of Gohōzen, two natural rocks of Senninzawa transformed into Fudō Myōō and Daikokuten. The two deities intentionally placed themselves at each side of Honmyōkai, creating a sort of mandalic composition in which the *issei gyōnin*, who occupied the central place, corresponded to Dainichi Nyorai flanked by his two attendants, Fudō Myōō and Daikokuten.

This is not the only example of “intervisuality” (*mitate*) that we can find in this *engi*.<sup>62</sup> The period of three years and three months that must elapse before opening the sepulcher, in which the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* was supposed to rest in a status of deep meditation and suspended animation (*nyūjō*), was a sort of chronological *mitate* of the *sennichigyō*. This ascetic practice, in fact, extended for a temporal span of three years and three months during which the *issei gyōnin* reduced to a minimum level his biological needs. During the *sennichigyō* the *issei gyōnin* practiced a sort of continuous fasting (*danjiki* 断食) that was alternated with wood-eating (*mokujiki*), during which the ascetic could ingest leaves, bark, berries or *soba* dumplings (*soba dango*). This minimal feeding activity was necessary to avoid death by starvation. Beverages, clean clothes, and firewood were constantly provided by the *sewanin*, who daily brought casks of water and combustible materials from the village of Tamugimata to the *gyōya* of the *issei gyōnin* at Senninzawa. All these survival supports were indispensable for the ascetic to successfully complete the *sennichigyō*, but, at the same time, they diminished and uncovered the rhetoric of the perfect ascesis. This ideal discourse tends to present the body of the ascetic as an autarchic

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<sup>62</sup>. For the meaning of the neologism “intervisuality” see note 43 on page xxxviii.

entity or a sealed *unicum* “without overflows” in contrast to the common body, which is ravenous, corruptible, and fundamentally unstable.<sup>63</sup> On one hand, the logistic and alimentary support provided by the *sewanin* was an absolute necessity for the *issei gyōnin* during the practice of the *sennichigyō*, but on the other, it disclosed the obvious fact that the *issei gyōnin* was still a human being in need of food, water, clothes, and heat and could not survive by himself on the mountain.

The *senninchigyō* was based on the rhetoric of overcoming biological needs in order to push the *issei gyōnin* toward a sort of divine status. Nevertheless, this temptation of ascetic perfection, which characterized the *sennichigyō* practice, was impossible to realize within the human limits of the *issei gyōnin*'s physicality. The simple fact that the *issei gyōnin* was alive and could not completely overcome some basic biological instincts of his living body such as eating or drinking constituted the primary obstacle to the realization of the *sennichigyō* ideal. In other words, the best and ultimate *sennichigyō* could only be performed by the dead *issei gyōnin* inside the sepulcher. Death was the *conditio sine qua non* the ascetic could finally become a god.

When the *sewanin* placed the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* inside the sepulcher after his biological death had taken place, they created a sort of ascetic *mitate* in which, for the first time, the *issei gyōnin* could finally perform a perfect *sennichigyō* without eating, drinking, or sleeping. This was possible because the ascetic was already dead. The reason why the corpses of the eminent *issei gyōnin* were usually excavated three years and three months after the burial was to allow the *sewanin* and disciples to create a *mise en scène* of an ideal *sennichigyō*, in which the

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<sup>63</sup>. Bernard Faure, “Substitute Bodies in Chan/Zen Buddhism,” in *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*, ed. Jane Marie Law (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 212.

ascetic was perpetually absorbed in *nyūjō* in order to produce an infinite amount of benefits (*goriyaku*) for the living.

The funerary disposal of the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* in a special crypt, which facilitated the subsequent processes of mummification, clearly shows the nature of what Bernard Faure defines as the “double body” of the ascetic.<sup>64</sup> The first or “mortal body” of the *issei gyōnin* was placed inside the sepulcher in order to be excavated after three years and three months. When this part of the funerary ritual was concluded the second or “divine body” of the ascetic was ready to be venerated as a *sokushinbutsu*. The human body of the individual *issei gyōnin* was manipulated, fictionalized, and crystalized through funerary rituals, which were specifically conceived in order to create a *sokushinbutsu*. This was, at the same time, the “personal body” of a specific *issei gyōnin* and a “collective body,” which could be shared and enjoyed by all members of the community, pilgrims, followers, and disciples. The moment when the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* was extracted from the sepulcher in order to be venerated by the devotees could be considered the “apotheosis” of the ascetic, which testified the final “transformation of a man into a god.”<sup>65</sup>

#### **4.2. First Funeral: the *Ishi no Karōto* of Kōmyōkai and Bukkai**

During the first funeral, which was focused on the disposal of the human remains of the *issei*

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<sup>64</sup>. Ibid., 213.

<sup>65</sup>. Florence Dupont, “The Emperor-God’s Other Body”, 400.



*gyōnin*, the corpse was buried in a special underground cell called *ishi no karōto*. The ideal time for the cadaver to remain inside the *ishi no karōto* was three years and three months. Nevertheless, it was a settled habit to excavate the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* before the end of this canonical time-lag in order to prevent the risk of putrefaction of the human tissues and facilitate the processes of mummification.

There are few extant *ishi no karōto*, which were actually used to create *sokushinbutsu*, but in the case of Kōmyōkai Shōnin 光明海上人 and Bukkai Shōnin it is still possible to indicate the exact location where the corpse of the ascetic was buried. For the majority of the *sokushinbutsu* the place where the *issei gyōnin* entered *nyūjō* remains uncertain. The Rokkakudō of Chūrenji was probably the building where the final processes of mummification took place after the exhumation of the cadaver of the *issei gyōnin* from the *ishi no karōto*. The fact that the actual traces of the *ishi no karōto* were frequently erased from the discourse on the death of the *issei gyōnin* could be the result of an attempt to remove the memory of the real space where the human remains of the *issei gyōnin* received the very first artificial treatment in order to be transformed into a *sokushinbutsu*. *Ishi no karōto* was the place which testified to the ineluctability of a human intervention aimed at preserving a corpse that would have decayed under natural circumstances by means of a set of *ad hoc* operations to desiccate it during the initial period of inhumation. *Sewanin* and disciples preferred to dismiss the memory of the *ishi no karōto* in an act of misrecognition and consequently emphasized only the final result of the complicated funerary practices that created the *sokushinbutsu* from the cadaver of the *issei gyōnin*.

Before analyzing the *ishi no karōto* of Bukkai Shōnin it is interesting to take into account the structure of the underground cell that was built for the *issei gyōnin* Kōmyōkai, who was affiliated with the Sōtō temple Zōkōin 蔵高院 in the district of Nishikawa 西川 at Murayama 西村山 village in Dewa province. Kōmyōkai trained as an *issei gyōnin* at Dainichiji and was extremely active in the area of Ōizawa. Later he became affiliated with Zōkōin. At the moment of death in Kaei 嘉永 7 (1854) he received the posthumous Dharma-name (*kaimyō* 戒名) of Kō-tokujitsumyō Jōza 光徳実明上座, which shows a strong Zen influence.<sup>66</sup> This *kaimyō* was engraved on the front part of the funerary stele that was placed on the top of the small hill that contained the *ishi no karōto*. On the back of the stele the name of the ascetic was given as: “*Issei gyōja* Kōmyōkai” 一世行者光明海. Kōmyōkai’s corpse was probably not supposed to be excavated and transformed into a *sokushinbutsu*. Nevertheless the ascetic was buried inside an *ishi no karōto* as a funerary tribute for a high ranking *issei gyōnin*.

The *ishi no karōto* of Kōmyōkai was a small cubicle whose walls were made of river stones. It was built almost one meter below ground level and measured one meter and ten centimeters in height and sixty centimeters in breadth. The two large and flat stones, which were used to seal the upper part of the *ishi no karōto* against water seepage, were called canopy-stones (*kaiseki* 蓋石). The corpse of Kōmyōkai was placed inside a basket made of wood (*oke* 甕), which was subsequently placed inside another wooden coffin (*mokkan* 木棺). When this *ishi no karōto* was opened in 1978 various funerary offerings, such as pillow-dumplings (*makura dango* 枕団子)<sup>67</sup> and personal belongings, such as a ritual staff (*shakujō* 錫杖) and a bell for the recitation of the

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<sup>66</sup>. The term *jōza* is an honorific title used for Zen masters.

<sup>67</sup>. In the Shōnai area *makura dango* were donated immediately after death in order to pacify the dead spirit.

*nenbutsu* (*kane* 鉦), were discovered at the side of the skeleton.<sup>68</sup>

This *ishi no karōto* was probably built in order to foster the *post mortem* veneration of Kōmyōkai as an ascetic who had mastered *nyūjō* and who was in a state of permanent meditation inside the tumulus, rather than as a *sokushinbutsu*. Even if the corpse of Kōmyōkai was not excavated to be mummified, it is important to consider that eminent *issei gyōnin* who were not necessarily supposed to be transformed into *sokushinbutsu* were often buried inside an *ishi no karōto*, a type of grave usually reserved for the corpses of warriors (*buke* 武家) or members of the nobility (*taishin* 大身).<sup>69</sup>

Bukkai Shōnin (1828–1903) was an eminent *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji who practiced *sanzennichigyō* and *mokujikigyō* at Senninzawa during his thirties and gathered around him a great number of followers, *sewanin*, and disciples. Among the various ascetic performances that Bukkai practiced to share benefits with his followers, the most spectacular was the *nenbutsu* recitation with burning candles placed on the top of his head and on his palms. During this ascetic exercise, the leader of the *nenbutsu* confraternity, in this case Bukkai, was seated in front of the main icon of the temple and led the rhythm of *nenbutsu* chanting while attendants lighted

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<sup>68</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Shugendō to minzoku shukyō*, 260-261.

<sup>69</sup>. In 1978 after the opening of the *ishi no karōto* the corpse of Kōmyōkai was actually transformed into a *sokushinbutsu* by the members of the research group who worked under the supervision of Professor Ogata Tamotsu of the Department of Medicine at Niigata University. A similar treatment was given the human remains of Bukkai Shōnin, which were excavated from the *ishi no karōto* in 1961 by members of the Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu. On this occasion, Professor Ogata brought the corpse of Bukkai to his laboratory at Niigata University in order to make a medical examination. Afterwards, the skeleton was rearranged into a sitting position with crossed legs (*kekka fuza* 結跏趺坐), clothed in monastic robes, and made to hold a *juzu* in his hands. It is extremely interesting to note that the members of the Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu did not simply limit the range of their analysis to the study of the *sokushinbutsu*, but also played a pivotal role in the practical creation of two of them. Their explanations about why they mummified the corpses of Kōmyōkai and Bukkai were ambiguous, swinging back and forth between scientific research and a desire to establish a unique tie with the *issei gyōnin*. Future analysis should include a critical assessment of the research methodologies and anthropological dynamics that took place among the members of the Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu during their study the Yudono *sokushinbutsu*. See Andō Kōsei and Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 76-82; Matsumoto Akira, *Nihon no miira butsu*, 37-44.

candles on his body (*zutō shōtō to shōdō no shiki* 頭灯掌灯と唱導の式).<sup>70</sup> Talismans (*ofuda*) made by Bukkai with the imprint of the palms of his hands that are preserved at Kannonji show a clear lack of ink in the central area of the right palm. This empty space in the *ofuda* testifies to the deep scarification resulting from Bukkai's assiduous practice of the *shōtō* ritual.<sup>71</sup> In Keiō 3 (1867) he became the supervisor of Honmyōji at Higashi Iwamoto and in Meiji 7 (1874) went back to Kannonji in his native village of Murakami in Echigo province.

Bukkai fell ill and died in Meiji 36 (1903). An *ishi no karōto* was immediately prepared on the southern side behind the main hall of Kannonji for his corpse. In 1966, Naitō Masatoshi interviewed the shrine-carpenter (*miyadaiku* 宮大工) Ishii Tomozaeimon 石井伴左衛門 (1886–?) who participated in the construction of the special wooden coffin for the cadaver of Bukkai. The master of Tomozaeimon was the famous *miyadaiku* Yamawaki Sansaku 山脇三作, who was a *sewanin* of Bukkai and took care of the restoration of Chūrenji in Meiji 21 (1888) that was financed by Bukkai. Tomozaeimon remembered that he made a special square coffin of pine wood, which was twice thicker, almost six centimeters, than normal, in order to help preserve the human remains of Bukkai and protect them from water and insects (See Fig. 3.5).<sup>72</sup> At the same time, the stonecutter Kataoka Kintarō 片岡金太郎 prepared twenty-eight stones for the four

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<sup>70</sup>. This was a common ascetic practice among the *nenbutsu hijiri* 念仏聖 of the Pure Land School (Jōdoshū 浄土宗) like the famous Daijō Hōshi 待定法師 (1685–1731) and Tokuhon Shōnin 徳本上人 (1758–1818). Daijō Hōshi was born in Kurazō 蔵増 village in the Murayama district of Dewa province and in 1720 underwent a year's ascetic apprenticeship at Dewa Sanzan with the *issei gyōnin*. Nevertheless Daijō Hōshi did not become one of them and specialized in the recitation of the *manben nenbutsu*. See Matsumoto Akira, *Nihon no miira butsu*, 258, 260–261. For the *nenbutsu hijiri* of the Edo period see also Tamuro Fumio, *Edo jidai no yugyō hijiri* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2012) and Hasegawa Masatoshi, *Kinsei no nenbutsu hijiri Munō to minshū* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003).

<sup>71</sup>. Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 77.

<sup>72</sup>. This coffin is displayed in a corner of the main hall of Kannonji in Murakami village. The *ishi no karōto* is still visible at the rear of the temple, where there are also tombs of various *jūshoku* of this *gyōnindera*.

walls of the *ishi no karōto* (seven stones for each side), three *kaiseki* to close the upper part of the underground cell, and one large stone, which was placed at the bottom of the structure. Each stone was accurately smoothed to make the surfaces perfectly adhere and prevent any humidity entering. Finally an iron grid was installed in an elevated position from the bottom of the *ishi no karōto* to suspend the coffin inside the cell to allow air to circulate around it.<sup>73</sup> Bukkai's *ishi no karōto* was placed three meters under the level of the ground after a careful examination of the soil conditions, in order to avoid the presence of water that could compromise the correct desiccation of the corpse (See Fig. 3.6).

Protected inside the stone-walls of the *ishi no karōto*, the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* absorbed the regenerative power of this secret niche or hidden cavity (*utsubo* 塚), which opposed the process of “thanato-morphosis” and facilitated those of “thanato-metamorphosis.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, while inside the *ishi no karōto* the cadaver of the *issei gyōnin* went through a sort of ascetic gestation or incubatory period, similar to the period of seclusion (*komori* 籠り) on Mount Yudono during the practice of the *sennichigyō*, and so realized the transformation into a *sokushinbutsu*.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 205-209.

<sup>74</sup>. The putrefaction of the cadaver is a natural process of “thanato-morphosis,” while the mummification of human remains can be considered a process of “thanato-metamorphosis,” which allows the impure state of the cadaver to be overcome. See Adriano Favole, *Resti di umanità: Vita sociale del corpo dopo la morte* (Bari: Laterza, 2003), 21.

<sup>75</sup>. For the concepts of *utsubo* and *komori* see Bernard Faure, “Relics, Regalia, and the Dynamics of Secrecy in Japanese Buddhism,” in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, ed. Elliott Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridge Press, 1999), 281.

## 5. Historical *Issei Gyōnin* vs Fictionalizes *Issei Gyōnin*

### 5.1. *Nyūjō* and *Shashingyō*

The Buddhist term often used in the written sources to indicate the death of the *issei gyōnin* and the status of his ‘vital functions’ inside the sepulcher is “entering deep mediation and suspended animation” (*nyūjō* 入定, Skt. *samādhi-praviṣṭa*). *Nyūjō* is an abbreviation of *nyūzenjō* 入禪定, meaning to enter meditation (*zen* 禪, Skt. *dhyāna*) and deep concentration (*jō* 定, Skt. *samādhi*). For instance, according to the commentary *Jō-yuishiki-ron ryōgi tō* 成唯識論了義灯, *zen* can be considered another name (*imyō* 異名) for *jō*, which can be divided into seven types.<sup>76</sup> The first type is *sanmakita* 三摩呬多 (Skt. *samāhita*), which refers to the preliminary detachment of the body-mind (*shinshin* 心身) from the emotions of the ordinary world. The second type is defined as *samaji* 三摩地 (Skt. *samādhi*).<sup>77</sup> Here, the body-mind is able to reach momentary detachment from reality only through the active work of the cognitive faculties (*ushin* 有心位). The third type is called *sanmahattei* 三摩鉢底 (Skt. *samāpatti*). At this stage, the body-mind perceives a distinction between mental activity (*ushin* 有心) and mental inactivity (*mushin* 無心), but is still partially subject to distractions (*jōsan* 定散). The fourth type is called as *zenna* 禪那 (Skt. *dhyāna*). At this level the body-mind is able to overcome the difference between *ushin* and *mushin*, but only in the realm of form (*shikikai* 色界). The fifth type is

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<sup>76</sup>. This text (Ch. *Cheng weishi lun leyi deng*) was written by by Huizhao 惠沼 (648-714), the second patriarch of the Dharma character School (Ch. Fāxiāng zōng 法相宗) and is a sub-commentary on the *Cheng-weishi lun*. For the original text see *T* 1832.

<sup>77</sup>. The term *samaji* 三摩地 indicates a phonetic transliteration of the Sanskrit word, while *jō* 定 provides a semantic translation of it.

described as *chitta ikaagurata* 質多翳迦阿羯羅多 (Skt. *cittaikāgratā*). At this stage, the body-mind conceives a perfect equanimity and stability between itself and the external world. The sixth type is described as *shamata* 奢摩多 (Skt. *śamatha*). Here the body-mind is completely stabilized and motion-less. *Shamata* is equivalent to the state of pure concentration (*jōjō* 淨定) of the body-mind. The seventh type corresponds to *genpōrakujū* 現法樂住 (Skt. *dr̥ṣṭa dharma sukha vihāra*), in which the pacified body-mind keeps enjoying the benefits of *jō* in this real world, without being distracted or disturbed by it.<sup>78</sup> It is this final stage, where the meditator's body-mind reaches a permanent and constant level of total stillness and quietness, that is defined as “deep meditation and suspended animation” or *nyūjō*. Alan Sponberg emphasizes that this kind of stasis and termination of sensory processing are specific characteristics of *jō*. Therefore, *jō* can be described as a model of “enstatic meditation.”<sup>79</sup>

This unmoved (*fudō* 不動) and cataleptic (*anjō* 安定) meditative focus, which was supposed to be realized by the meditator's body-mind while still abiding in this world, fostered a sort of visual and conceptual conflation between the term *nyūjō* and the cadaveric status of *rigor mortis*. Jonathan Parry points out that in India the expression, “entering *samādhi*”, refers to the inhumation of the corpse of the ascetic inside the sepulcher and, at the same time, to his biological condition within it.<sup>80</sup> In other words, from the point of view of the cadaver *nyūjō*

<sup>78</sup>. Katō Seishin, “Kōso no nyūjō setsu ni tsuite: Kōbō Daishi no kasōron ni tsuite,” in *Kōbō Daishi to nihon bunka*, ed. Toganoo Mitsudō (1929; repr., Tōkyō: Kokusho kankōkai, 1976), 602-603.

<sup>79</sup>. Allan Sponger proposes a contraposition between “enstatic” forms of meditation such as *samādhi* and an “ecstatic” type of meditation, which requires visualizations and mental projections. See Alan Sponberg, “Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism,” in *Tradition of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 17-19, 21-22, 26-27.

<sup>80</sup>. Jonathan Parry, “Sacrificial death and the necrophagous ascetic,” in *Death & the regeneration of life*, ed. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 96.

corresponds to a sort of quasi-life, and from the point of view of the living body to a sort of quasi-death. In the *Da tang xiyu ji* the pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664) notes that the body of an ascetic who entered a *samādhi* where all the sensations and mentations are extinguished (*metsushin jinjō* 滅心盡定, Skt. *nirodha-samāpatti*) does not decay.<sup>81</sup>

We can say that eminent Buddhist monks and ascetics never really die. In their case the event of death is often semantically blurred through the use of the term *nyūjō*. In Japan, in fact, the word *nyūjō* became the standard synonym to indicate the ‘death’ of a member of the monastic community or an ascetic such as the *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono.<sup>82</sup> It is important to notice that written sources dealing with the topic of the death of eminent *issei gyōnin*, follow this descriptive cliché and define the decease of the ascetic as entering a status of deep concentration and suspended animation. This expression clearly underlines the fact that the dead body of the *issei gyōnin* was considered to have a different *post mortem* role from an ordinary corpse. The *nyūjō* of the *issei gyōnin* was envisioned as a posthumous expansion of the physicality of the ascetic, which was located between life and death. Therefore, at the moment of decease the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* was not just merely inhumed, but was arranged in a sitting position as if he was meditating (*zazen no gotoku* 如座禪) and placed inside the *ishi no karōto*, where the *nyūjō* actually took place.

Even if the written sources always mention *issei gyōnin*’s death through the term *nyūjō*, there

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<sup>81</sup>. John Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch’an* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005): 230. For the cases of *samādhi* provided by Xuanzang, see *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, trans. Li Rongxi (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 264-265, 370, 372-373.

<sup>82</sup>. For instance, the term *sanmaijō* 三味場 was used to indicate the burial ground. See *Mochitsuki Bukkyō Daijiten*, vol. 2, ed. Mochitsuki Shinkō (Kyōto: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1960), 1674.



are a number of oral sources like folktales (*denshō* 伝承) and legends (*densetsu* 伝説) that describe the death of *issei gyōnin* as a practice of self-immolation of the body (*shashingyō*). These type of oral sources emphasize the fact that the eminent *issei gyōnin* entered the *ishi no karōto* while still alive, and not after death. Such legends and folktales about the *ars moriendi* of the *issei gyōnin* probably draw interpretative elements from different religious traditions, such as the self-burial ritual practiced by Jōdō School devotees. For instance, in the *Yasokaishi nihon tsūshin* 耶蘇會士日本通信 (Eiroku 4, 1561) the Jesuit Gaspare Vilela (1525–1572) gives the following description of a hole-entrancing practice (*ana ni hairu* 穴に入る) that he saw at Nachi in the Kumano area.

The believers of the Amida Sect think that they can go to the paradise of this god (*kami*) in a different way. When the person is tired of the present world, while still alive he sits inside a cave (*dōketsu* 洞穴) that fits the size [of his body]. Once he enters inside, the cave is sealed. A pipe made of bamboo (*take ippon* 竹一本) comes out from the upper part of the ground where the cave is in which he is seating. Thanks to this he can breathe. He remains in this place without eating or drinking, and dies chanting the name of the devil (*akuma* 悪魔).<sup>83</sup>

In the case of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono, this aspect of voluntariness concerning the act of dying is absent. The *issei gyōnin* did not actually self-immolate their body entering the sepulcher while still alive, but were buried inside the *ishi no karōto* after death and their human remains subsequently received *ad hoc* treatment in order to create the illusion that the ascetic's body did not decay thanks to the merits accumulated during his *sennichigyō* and *nyūjō* practice. At the level of legends and folktales, this mechanism of self-deception was even further amplified

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<sup>83</sup>. Gaspar Vilela, *Yasokaishi nihon tsūshin*, vol. 1, trans. Murakami Naojirō (Tōkyō: Yūshōdō shoten, 1966), 66.

through the descriptive overlapping of *nyūjō* with the practice of *shashingyō* (See Fig. 3.7).

In order to clarify the intricate relationships between the historical reality of the death of the *issei gyōnin* and its legendary representation, it is interesting to take into account a passage about the death of Tetsumonkai quoted in the *Kirokuchō* 記録帳 (Bunsei 12, 1829), written by Seikai Shōnin 清海上人 (1795–1872). Seikai was the principal disciple of Tetsumonkai and later became the supervisor of Kaikōji. When Tetsumonkai died, Seikai was thirty-four years old.<sup>84</sup>

In the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of Bunsei 8 (1825) [Tetsumonkai] departed from Kaikōji. On the twenty-sixth day he arrived at Senninzawa on Mount Yudono. After five years, he successfully finished the practice of seclusion in the mountain (*sanrō*) and went back to Kaikōji on the nineteenth day of the eighth month of Bunsei 12 (1829). There were ceremonies of congratulation, but during the fifth and a half hour of the night of the eighteenth day of the tenth month of the same year, the Shōnin abruptly became ill (*byōshō* 病症) and lay down on the ground. All his numerous followers (*shinjin no shomannin* 信心の諸万人) were shocked. They started praying for the protection (*kago* 加護) of various buddhas and *kami* and proposed different medications (*yakuyō* 薬用). Nevertheless, these medications did not have any relevant effect. Was this the final moment of his fixed karma (*jōgō* 定業)? At the end, the power of the medicines (*iyaku* 医薬) was not enough. At the dawn of the eighth day of the twelfth month he put on his ascetic robes, held a rosary between the tips of his fingers and started reciting the *nenbutsu* three times. At that moment he peacefully reached rebirth in the Pure Land (*ōjō*) as if he had been sleeping. It was a moving situation. For three days starting from the morning of the eighth [we] burnt incense and organized the funeral decorations until the tenth. Because the external appearance [of Tetsumonkai] was the same as when he was alive (*ikeru ga gotoku* 生けるかごとく), the followers drenched their sleeves with tears of joy, and thinking that this would be the last time in this life [they could see him], recited the *nenbutsu* raising their voices to their limit with an accompaniment of gongs (*kane* 鉦) and wood blocks (*mokugyo* 木魚). An enormous crowd of old and young, men and women, rich and poor started gathering without distinction. As the mourning for the dead was endless, in the early morning of the eleventh day [we] decided to move [the body of Tetsumonkai] from Kaikōji to the house of Sada Tarō Hyōe 砂

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<sup>84</sup>. In 1965 Naitō Masatoshi together with the *jūshoku* of Kaikōji, Itō Eikō 伊藤永恒, conducted an investigation at the house of Machino Jinjūrō 町野甚十郎 in the village of Narita Shinden 成田新田 where he discovered this document, which is now known as Seikai *monjo* 清海文書.

田太郎兵衛 in the village of Daihōji. [We] left the body for one night in this house where the funeral wake (*tsuya* 通夜) of the dead man's relatives took place. The following day, the twelfth, we brought [the body of Tetsumonkai] to the main temple, Chūrenji. On the thirteenth day [the body of Tetsumonkai] was placed inside a double coffin (*nijūkan* 二重棺), which was buried (*haburikeru* 葬りける) behind the Shinzan Gongendō 新山権現堂.

List of the expenses that were met during the illness and after the death of the Shōnin.

- Total expenses: fifteen *ryō* (this includes the bill for the emergency call for the doctor (*ishi* 医師), acupuncture (*hari* 針), and other funeral expenses).
- White rice: about thirty bags.
- Coal: about ninety bags (each containing five *kanme*).
- Water and oil: about two jars.
- Candles: eight *kanme*.
- *Sake*: thirty casks.<sup>85</sup>

According to the diary of Seikai, Tetsumonkai died of illness in 1829 immediately after the completion of the *gosennichigyō* at Senninzawa. After the first funerary ceremonies at Kaikōji, his corpse was transferred to the house of a certain Sada Tarō who was probably a relative of Tetsumonkai. Here the usual funerary wake took place in order to allow the members of the household from which Tetsumonkai came to privately commemorate the dead. Then the corpse was moved to Chūrenji where it was buried in the ground behind the Shinzan Gongendō. It is important to note that even if Seikai does not mention the presence of an *ishi no karōto*, he specifies the use of a double coffin (*nijūkan*) for the corpse of the *issei gyōnin*. In Tenpō 4 (1833), or probably even earlier, the cadaver of Tetsumonkai was excavated by his disciples and *sewanin* to receive the final treatments, which aimed to completely desiccate and transform it into a *sokushinbutsu*.<sup>86</sup> At this stage the first funeral of the *issei gyōnin* was over and the 'mortal

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<sup>85</sup>. For the original text, see Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 168-169.

<sup>86</sup>. *Ibid.*, 171.

body’ of the ascetic was ready to be transmuted into a divine or ‘immortal body’, which kept protecting and irradiating merits for the living.

The analysis of the historical events that resulted in the definitive mummification of the corpse of Tetsumonkai can be interestingly compared with the *post mortem* vicissitudes of another *sokushinbutsu*, Tetsuryūkai. At the beginning of his ascetic career, Tetsuryūkai became an *issei gyōnin* affiliated with the *gyōninderā* Nangakuji in Tsuruoka and undertook ascetic training under the guidance of the *jūshoku* Tenryūkai 天龍海. Later on he became an *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji, where had developed a specific devotion for Tetsumonkai, who had been transformed into a *sokushinbutsu* few years before. The name of Tetsuryūkai derived from the fusion of the first character of the name of Tetsumonkai and the second character of the name of his master Tenryūkai.

In Bunkyū 文久 2 (1862) Tetsuryūkai went to Senninzawa to practice his first *sennichigyō*. After this period of self-seclusion on the mountain Tetsuryūkai specialized in ritual procedures against fires and epidemic diseases, and for safe childbirth. In Meiji 14 (1881) he started his last *sanzennichigyō* at Senninzawa during which he fell ill and was forced to return to Nangakuji, where he died. He was buried in a special *gyōnin zuka*, which was promptly built under the Dainichidō 大日堂 of Nangakuji.<sup>87</sup> It is probable that it shared many characteristics with the *ishi no karōto* of Kōmyōkai and Bukkai.

The period of *nyūjō* of Tetsuryūkai within the *gyōninzuka* under the Dainichidō was extremely short and the same year the corpse was excavated and brought to Chūrenji in order to

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<sup>87</sup>. The tombstone of Tetsuryūkai beside the Dainichidō at Nangakuji gives the date of Meiji 14 (1881) as the year of the ascetic’s death.

be mummified. It is interesting to note that the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsuryūkai has a surgical incision of eighteen centimeters on the belly and does not have an anus. All the internal organs were removed and the cavity of the thorax was filled with limestone (*sekkai* 石灰) to keep the corpse dry. The cut on the belly had been sutured with thirteen stitches made with a gut-string of cotton.<sup>88</sup>

Naitō Masatoshi points out that the typology of the surgical operation practiced to remove the internal organs from the corpse presupposes a certain level of knowledge of Western medicine and anatomy. According to a legend transmitted at Nangakuji, the internal organs were removed at Nangakuji by three *sewanin*, who later transported the body to Chūrenji. The names of these *sewanin* are Maruyama Shigeichirō 丸山茂一郎, Sumiya Tōjirō 炭谷トウジロウ, and Amago 余ゴ. No biographical details are known, but Naitō suggests that they might have been outcasts who helped the famous expert on Western things (*rangakusha* 蘭学者), the physician Ozeki San'ei 小関三英 (1787–1839), to gather corpses for his anatomical research. Ozeki studied at Tsuruoka during the first years of his career before moving to Edo, where he committed suicide. According to Naitō's intriguing speculation, the three *sewanin* who took care of the preliminary stages of the treatment of the body of Tetsuryūkai could have had some contact with Ozeki and learnt from him some rudiments of Western medicine, which they put into practice to achieve the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsuryūkai.<sup>89</sup>

Considering the various historical and legendary details about the religious practices performed to create the *sokushinbutsu* of the eminent *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono, we can

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<sup>88</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 180.

<sup>89</sup>. *Ibid.*, 182-187.

agree with Fabio Rabelli and Eric Reinders's definition of “‘becoming a Buddha in this very body’ as a *performative* process, in which social position and ritual practices transform the masterful practitioner's body into an ‘image’ of the Buddha-body.”<sup>90</sup> In other words, the practical realization of esoteric and ascetic ideals such as *sokushinbutsu*, *nyūjō*, or the infinite *senninichigyō* on the flesh of the *issei gyōnin* required a meticulous orchestration of ritual *mise en scène* and self-deceiving practices, which concretely supported a process of *reification* of these religious theories.

## 5.2. Meiji Penal Code: *Sokushinbutsu* as the Disfigurement of a Cadaver

The funerary practices to mummify the corpses of Tetsuryūkai and Bukkai were strongly influenced by the cultural and social changes that took place during the Meiji period. For instance, in the case of Tetsuryūkai, his corpse was excavated from the *gyōnin zuka* at Nangakuji and transferred to Chūrenji the same year as his death, in 1881. The mummified body of Tetsuryūkai was then kept secretly within the Shumindan 須弥壇 altar of the Chūrenji's main hall until Taishō 大正 12 (1923), when the *jūshoku* of Nangakuji, Narita Eishin 成田永信, presented a formal request to enshrine the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsuryūkai (*sokushinbutsu anchi negai* 即身仏安置願) to the governor (*kenchiji* 県知事) of Yamagata prefecture.<sup>91</sup>

The principal obstacle to the creation and enshrinement of a *sokushinbutsu* in a *gyōninderā*

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<sup>90</sup>. Fabio Rabelli and Eric Reinders, *Buddhism and Iconoclasm in East Asia: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 14.

<sup>91</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no Miirabutsu*, 131-132, 136-137.

was that in Meiji 13 (1880) the oligarchs promulgated a new Penal Code (*keihō* 刑法) in which there were two articles that directly affected the funerary practices and manipulation of human remains that were necessary to create a *sokushinbutsu*. Article 189 stated that opening a tomb after burial was equivalent to a desecration of the sepulcher (*funbo hakkutsu* 墳墓発掘) and would be punished as a crime. Article 190 condemned any sort of human intervention to the corpse after burial as the destruction of a cadaver (*shitai sonkai* 死体損壊).<sup>92</sup> The *issei gyōnin* of Nangakuji were probably afraid to keep the corpse of Tetsuryūkai for long time in a *gyōnindera* that was located in a downtown district of Tsuruoka, and preferred to transfer it to Chūrenji as soon as possible. When the process of desiccation was concluded, disciples and *sewanin* opted not to enshrine the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsuryūkai, fearing the possibility of an accusation for the disfigurement of corpse according to the new penal legislation.

In the case of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsuryūkai there was a clash between the ‘religious personality’ of the corpse of the *issei gyōnin*, which was supposed to be enshrined and venerated as “the real body of a buddha” and its new ‘legal personality’ sanctioned by the Penal Code.<sup>93</sup> In other words, the legislation promulgated by the Meiji oligarchs granted legal rights only to those cadavers that were maintained inside the regular space of the tomb and not to those who were supposed to play an active religious and social role outside the limits of the sepulcher, such as the *sokushinbutsu*.

The new Meiji Penal Code contributed to re-framing the discourse on the *sokushinbutsu* according to a legal taxonomy, which was extraneous to the religious logic and practices

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<sup>92</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no mīra shinkō*, 179.

<sup>93</sup>. For the difference between the legal and religious personality of the cadaver see Talal Asad, “Thinking About the Secular Body, Pain, and Liberating Politics,” in *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (November, 2011): 662.

traditionally applied by the *sewanin* and disciples to deal with the corpses of eminent *issei gyōnin*. From the point of view of the Meiji Penal Code, the set of *post mortem* practices that were indispensable to transform the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* into a *sokushinbutsu*, were not defined as devotional activities regarding the human remains of the ascetics of Yudono, but were seen as dangerous and destabilizing acts, which profaned the structural integrity of the sepulcher and the cadaver. We have seen how during the Edo period the mummified corpse of an eminent *issei gyōnin* could be interpreted either as *sokushinbutsu* or *miira* according to the different sensibility of the observer. In the Meiji period a new interpretative paradigm was added to the hermeneutical discourses on the *sokushinbutsu* and the mummified corpses of the *issei gyōnin* came to be labelled as illegal aberrations to be punished according to the law.

When Bukkai died in Meiji 36 (1903) he was acquainted with the relevant changes that had taken place in the field of the legal administration of funerary practices and graveyard organization. Therefore, he ordered his *sewanin* and disciples to limit the funerary practices to the construction of the *ishi no karōto* and not to excavate his corpse so as not to infringe the law. Nevertheless, Bukkai had a strong consciousness of the soteriological value attributed to his body by his devotees and before dying ordered them to drink the water used to clean his corpse (*yukan* 湯灌) before inhumation.<sup>94</sup> This *yukan* was supposed to have absorbed some of the ascetic power, which permanently imbued the body of Bukkai, and the funerary bathing became an occasion for *sewanin* and *kōin* to access it.

Oguro Shiori 小黒栞 (1887–?) was born in Murakami village and her grandmother was among the devotees of Bukkai. Following the example of her grandmother, Oguro became a

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<sup>94</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 208.



fervent believer of Bukkai and wrote a sort of devotional record of one-hundred-sixty pages about her faith in this *issei gyōnin*. The title of the work is *Bukkai Shōnin sama o shinobi maturite* 仏海上人様を偲びまつりて. In the manuscript there is the description of the first time Oguro saw Bukkai a few years before his death.

[Bukkai Shōnin] practiced wood-eating (*mokujiki*) for many years and now his body is reduced to just skin and bones. He used to recite mantra taken from sūtras and was always sitting on a bed placed on a high podium. He leant on an elbow cushion with his body wrapped in a light *futon* 布団. [...]. I remember that on one side of the corridor near to [Bukkai Shōnin] there were some brand-new planks of wood, which were colored red and measured three centimeters in breadth, twenty centimeters in length, and three meters in height. There were also three or four bamboos. On the way back home I asked my grandmother what was the purpose of those objects. My grandmother replied that the venerable Shōnin *sama* was going to enter the coffin and be buried alive (*ikita mama* 生きたまま) in the ground. One bamboo would be used to provide him with food (such as the *dango* made with the seeds of cogon-grass and other things he used to eat every day). The other two bamboos would be used to provide him with water and air. The venerable Shōnin *sama* will bring a bell with him in the coffin. As long as its sound is heard, he will be still alive and food must be provided for him. When I asked what was the use of those nets similar to coffee strainers, my grandmother explained that they would be used to prevent insects or mosquitos getting inside [the coffin]. The stones to build the stone-room (*ishiya* 石屋) were piled up in a slightly elevated corner of the garden. When I asked to my grandmother why there were such a stones, she told me that these stones would be used to enclose the coffin of the venerable Shōnin *sama*. Those stones came from Gekoyama 下戸山 and were extremely dark. I think that all these things were prepared according to the directives provided by the venerable Shōnin *sama*.<sup>95</sup>

In this narrative Bukkai is described as an old *issei gyōnin* who is actively planing to self-immolate his body and be buried alive within the *ishi no karōto* built behind Kannonji. The body of Bukkai was debilitated and emaciated as a result of continuous ascetic practice. The stigmata

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<sup>95</sup>. For the original text see Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no miirabutsu*, 182-183.

of his past ascetic trainings had weakened him physically and, at the same time, transformed him into a sacred and powerful entity venerated by the people. It is also important to take into account that Bukkai was the latest *issei gyōnin* of Yudono to be buried inside an *ishi no karōto* and had a strong consciousness of the mechanisms of faith, expectations and devotion which the *sokushinbutsu* aroused among devotees.

In order to support the cult of his person Bukkai could have voluntarily staged the preparations for the self-immolation of the body (*shashingyō*) according to the standard ritual procedures, which were often reported in the oral legends and folktales about the *dochū nyūjō* of the *issei gyōnin*. Even if Bukkai already knew that it would probably be difficult to actually realize *shashingyō* and transform his cadaver into a *sokushinbutsu* because of the Meiji Penal Code, he tried to exploit the religious resonance that certain objects such as the bamboo poles had on the devotees of the *issei gyōnin*. Like Tetsumonkai, Bukkai too was probably acquainted of the ritual modalities and procedures that were necessary to foster a proper “cult of the *issei gyōnin*” and expand the faith in his person among the common people. Therefore, he decided to personally coordinate some aspects of his funerary ritual in order to realize a sort of *mitate* of the ascetic ideals of *shashingyō* and *dochū nyūjō* that were usually attributed to the *issei gyōnin* at the moment of death in oral legends and folktales. Thanks to this funerary *mise en scène* Bukkai fueled the devotion for his living body in the last years of his life and also assured a cult for his corpse after death.

### 5.3. The *Nyūjō* of Kūkai and the Oral Legends About the *Sokushinbutsu*

In the section of his study on Borobudur that deals with the formation of the legends on the Buddha, Paul Mus emphasizes that the body of the Buddha can also be considered a “verbal body” that different strata of oral legends, folktales, and devotional stories contributed to “imbue with magic.”<sup>96</sup> The same mechanism is valid for the oral legends that focus on the origins, meanings, and soteriological aims of the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin*.

It can be said that at the moment of death the *issei gyōnin* usually received two types of funerary stelae: one made of stone (*sekihi* 石碑) and another one made of the voice (*kōhi* 口碑). The term *kōhi* refers to an “oral stele” that was orally built by the *sewanin* and disciples of the *issei gyōnin* in order to transmit the memory and commemorate the power of the ascetic even beyond his death. The *kōhi* was an immaterial, and yet extremely powerful, narrative tool, which allowed the *sokushinbutsu* to be associated with various Buddhist soteriological discourses that were not necessarily part of the original ascetic tradition shared by the *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono. The creators of the *kōhi* were a heterogeneous group of believers, disciples, and common people who kept adding new strata of religious meaning to interpret the *sokushinbutsu* independently of the historical conditions and religious discourses that actually constituted the background for the mummification of the ascetic’s corpse.

Analyzing the formative dynamics of the oral legends of the *sokushinbutsu* Iwahana Michiaki underlines the necessity of making a distinction between the religious ideals provided

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<sup>96</sup>. Paul Mus, *Barabudur: Sketch of a History of Buddhism Based on Archaeological Criticism of the Texts*, trans. Alexander W. Macdonald (1935; repr., New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1998), 62, 64.

by those who venerated the *sokushinbutsu* (*matsuru mono no shisō* 祀る者の思想): i.e. *sewanin* and devotees, and the religious ideals provided by those who were venerated as *sokushinbutsu* (*matsurareru mono no shisō* 祀られる者の思想): i.e. the *issei gyōnin*.<sup>97</sup> To add a deeper analytical level to this apparent distinction between ‘fictionalized *issei gyōnin*’ and ‘historical *issei gyōnin*’ we can take into account John Jorgensen’s emphasis not only on the separation but also on the continuity between oral legends and history.

[...] The ‘constructed saint’ exists on a continuum from the less constructed, those ‘real saints’ whose lives have been remodelled to meet the demands of collective representation but from whom some ‘objective facts’ are retained, to the solely constructed saints about whom nothing is known historically [...].<sup>98</sup>

It should be remembered that there is not a real contradiction between the historical truth and the truth of the oral legends about the *sokushinbutsu*. History and legend develop an intimate relationship between each other, but remain ultimately separated and independent. What is true on the historical level though is not necessarily true on the level of oral legend, and vice versa. Nevertheless, history and legend do not contradict each other because they work on different levels or stages of the discourse. It is wrong to try to subordinate the history of *sokushinbutsu* according to the terms of the oral legends and, at the same time, it is misleading to obliterate the narratives of the oral legends, which are not congruent with the analytical paradigms of history.

The hermeneutical discourse of the oral legends about the *sokushinbutsu* has a deep relationship with history, but always maintains a fundamental *independence* and *freedom* from it

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<sup>97</sup>. Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no rekishi chirigakuteki kenkyū*, 60.

<sup>98</sup>. John Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch’an*, 23.

and from the factual reality of the historical events which surround the formation of the *sokushinbutsu*. Writing about the mechanisms of production of the hagiographies of saints Michel de Certeau states that:

It is [...] impossible to consider hagiography solely in terms of its “authenticity” or “historical value”: this would be equivalent to submitting a literary genre to the laws of another genre—historiography—and to dismantling a proper type of discourse only in order to engage its contrary.<sup>99</sup>

In the case of the oral legends or folktales about the *sokushinbutsu*, the *issei gyōnin* who meditates in a state of suspended animation within the *ishi no karōto* is often equated with a sort of local version of Kōbō Daishi Kūkai. The Buddhist tales (*setsuwa*) about the *nyūjō* of Kūkai developed a few years after the cremation (*dabi* 荼毘) of his human remains.<sup>100</sup> In these devotional narratives the standard funerary treatment for the corpse of a monk, i.e. cremation, is replaced with the vision of Kūkai’s living body that enters *nyūjō* (*shōjin nyūjō* 生身入定) in the Oku no in on Mount Kōya. For instance, the “Kōya Chapter” (*Kōya no maki* 高野巻) of the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (early Kamakura period), which was extremely well-known among the common people of the Edo period thanks to the recitatives performed by blind *biwa* players (*biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師), describes the *nyūjō* of Kūkai.

It is said that Daishi replied to the Emperor Daigo 醍醐 saying: “When I met Kongōsatta 金剛薩埵 (Skt. Vajrasattva), he transmitted *mudrās* and mantras in front of my eyes. After this unique gift [from Kongōsatta] I made a vow to save all sentient beings and came to Mount

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<sup>99</sup>. Michele de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 270.

<sup>100</sup>. Matsumoto Akira, *Kōbō Daishi nyūjō setsuwa no kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Rōkkō shuppan, 1982), 22-27.

Kōya. Every day and night I felt compassion for the myriad living beings and I made a vow to obtain the same deep benevolence of Fugen Bosatsu. With this flesh-body (*nikushin ni* 肉身に) I entered into the state of deepest mediation (*zanmai*) in order to wait for the descent (*geshō* 下生) of Miroku Bosatsu. This is similar to the famous Mahākāśyapa who remained secluded (*komotte* 籠って) in the cave (*hora* 洞) on the Mount Kukkuṭapāda-giri (Keisokusen 鷄足山) waiting for the descent of Miroku.<sup>101</sup> The *nyūjō* of Daishi took place after three o'clock in the night on the twenty-first day of the third month of Jōwa 承和 2 (835) and from this time almost three hundred years have passed. Nevertheless, he is waiting for the descent of Miroku and the moment of the preaching of the Dharma at the triple assembly (*san'e* 三会) that will happen only 5.67 billions of years from now. It is a really considerable amount of time.<sup>102</sup>

This famous *setsuwa* about the *nyūjō* of Kūkai certainly had a strong influence on the formation of the oral legends about the *sokushinbutsu*. In his study on Mount Kōya and the Shingon School, Gorai Shigeru proposed an intriguing interpretation of the material causes that were behind the enormous proliferation of *setsuwa* about the *nyūjō* of Kūkai. According to Gorai, the architectural structure of the mausoleum (*byō* 廟), which was originally built to host the human remains of Kūkai, was constructed following a technique of stone-packing (*ishikozume* 石子詰). *Ishikozume* was normally used to build the *nyūjōzuka* inside which were placed the corpses of the *shugenja* to be venerated after death. Since Kūkai was, at the same time, a *shugenja* and a Shingon monk, his mausoleum was constructed according to this funerary architecture. The technique of the *ishikozume* allows air to circulate between the cavities of the stones providing the illusion or *mise en scène* that the corpse, which is placed within this special

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<sup>101</sup>. The castle-town (*tojō* 都城) of Shizu 翹頭 is the site where the dragon-flower assembly will take place three times per year (*ryūge san'e* 龍華三会) and will be led by Miroku. The bodhisattva Miroku will become a buddha in 5.67 billions of years and will deliver his first sermon seated under the dragon-flower tree.

<sup>102</sup>. For the original text see *Heike monogari*, vol. 2, in *Shinhen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, ed. Ichiko Teiji (Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, 1994), 302.

stone chamber, is still alive in a state of suspended animation.<sup>103</sup> In the case of the *sokushinbutsu* the construction of the *ishi no karōto* to dispose the human remains of the *issei gyōnin* during the first funeral played a pivotal role in the diffusion of the belief that the ascetic was not dead, but had entered *nyūjō* and was practicing the *senninchigyō* under the ground. The influence exerted by the architectural structure of the sepulcher on the soteriological discourse associated with the *sokushinbutsu* presents various hermeneutic analogies with the *ishikuzume* style used to build the mausoleum of Kūkai and the development of the cult of his living body in a state of permanent *nyūjō*.

In the *setsuwa* about the *nyūjō* of Kūkai the image of the suspended animation performed by the Shingon patriarch is often assimilated with the *nyūjō* of Mahākāśyapa who is waiting for the advent of Miroku. Even if the aspect of faith in the future descent of Miroku is never mentioned in the written sources about the *sokushinbutsu*, it plays a pivotal role in the oral legends, which are evidently influenced by Kūkai's *nyūjō setsuwa*. In these tales, the *nyūjō* of Kūkai works like a chronotope, which transfers an event that is located in a tremendously distant future into the present. For instance, the *Kōyasan hikki* 高野山秘記 (Meitoku 明德 4, 1393) describes Kōbō Daishi as a terrestrial manifestation (*rushin* 流身) of Miroku. According to the same logic, the Oku no in symbolizes the Internal Palace (Naiin 内院) of Miroku in the Tuṣita heaven (*tosotsuten* 兜率天) and the bridge outside the Oku no in is the External Palace (Gaiin 外院).<sup>104</sup> In the *Kōyasan hikki* the *nyūjō* of Kūkai provokes a collapse of the timeline, which links present and future, bringing an extremely distant future into a sudden present. The devotee can actually

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<sup>103</sup>. Gorai Shigeru, *Kōyasan to Shingon mikkyō no kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Meicho shuppan, 1976), 40-41.

<sup>104</sup>. Katō Seishin, “Kōsō no nyūjōsetsu ni tsuite: Kōbō Daishi no kasōron ni tsuite,” 626-627.

meet with Miroku and access his paradise *hic et nunc* in this life thanks to the mediation provided by Kūkai's body, which is already a reflection of the body of Miroku, and his mausoleum that is equivalent to Miroku's palace. The oral legends about the *sokushinbutsu* tend to replicate the same interpretative pattern, in which the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* works like a sort of local soteriological connector or tie with the universal renewal associated with the descent of Miroku.

Another interesting dynamic of the oral legends about the mummified bodies of the *issei gyōnin* is that the material creation of the *sokushinbutsu* often preceded the oral formation of the legends. In other words, the pragmatic act (*opus operatum*) anticipated the logic act (*modus operandi*).<sup>105</sup> The *sokushinbutsu* worked as a sort of matrix from which proliferated a variety of oral narratives. In many cases, it was the *sokushinbutsu* that influenced the legends and not vice versa.

Analyzing the relationship between icons and legends, Jean-Claude Schmitt takes the example of the famous episode of the host consecrated by Gregory the Great (540–604) that suddenly transformed into an image of Jesus Christ with arms folded standing over an empty sepulcher. Giacomo da Voragine (1230–1298) who collected the most relevant *corpus* of legends on Saint Gregory in the *Legenda Aurea* completely ignored this episode, which had become extremely popular in the fourteenth century, due to a new mosaic with an icon of Jesus Christ with arms crossed in front of the sepulcher that received special veneration at the church of Santa Croce in Jerusalem at Rome. The fame of this intriguing mosaic spread throughout Europe and

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<sup>105</sup>. For the absence of a cause-effect relationship between logic and practice, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (1980; repr., Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990), 12.



created a new appendix to the legends associated with Saint Gregory.<sup>106</sup>

In the case of the *sokushinbutsu* of Mount Yudono, the *Kōsairoku* 弘采録 (1801–1850), written by the *samurai* Ikeda Gensai 池田幻齋 (1755–1852) of Sakata, reported various oral legends dedicated to Tetsumonkai. Chapter seventy-three, “Tetsumonkai ga koto” 鐵門海ヶ事, was composed in Tenpō 3 (1832) three years after the death of the *issei gyōnin*. Its contents are: the *mokujiki* of Tetsumonkai at Senninzawa; a collection of poems (*waka* 和歌) attributed to Tetsumonkai, the preaching activities of Tetsumonkai in the city of Edo, the legend of his emasculation (*dankon* 斷根), the teaching of the Dharma at Matsumae 松前, and the public exhibition (*kaichō*) of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai in Tempō 3 at Tsuruoka.<sup>107</sup>

We will concentrate on the two most famous episodes of the life of Tetsumonkai, the gouging of his left eye as an offering to the *nāga* (*ryūjin* 龍神) of the Sumida 隅田 River to stop an ophthalmic epidemic, and the cutting off of his penis as a gift for a prostitute (*yūjo* 遊女) of the amusement district Funabachō 船場町 in Sakata. In the *Kōsairoku* Gensai reports that in Bunsei 4 (1821) Tetsumonkai took part in a *kaichō* of Yudonosan Daigongen Dainichi Nyorai 湯殿山大権現大日如来 in the city of Edo, which was sponsored by Chūrenji, but does not mention the episode of the sacrifice of the left eye. Even in the description of the emasculation of Tetsumonkai, Gensai completely ignores the particulars according to which the *issei gyōnin* donated his penis to a prostitute, with whom he was supposed to have had an affair before becoming an ascetic of Yudono.<sup>108</sup> The two specific episodes in the hagiography of Tetsumonkai

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<sup>106</sup>. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps des images: essais sur la culture visuelle au moyen âge*, 121-122.

<sup>107</sup>. Yamasawa Manabu, “19 seiki shotō Dewa Sanzan Shugen no kakusei undō—Yudonosan-mokujiki gyōja Tetsumonkai no Echigo fukyō wo chūshin ni,” 77.

<sup>108</sup>. *Ibid.*, 78.

that focus on his cutting out of his left eye during the *kaichō* in Edo and the Futabatachō prostitute who received his penis as gift after paying him a visit, were certainly invented after 1832. The *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai, which was completed in 1832 almost three years after his death in 1829, was the trigger that inspired the creation of these oral legends. Moreover, the medical analysis made by the members of the Nihon miira kenkyū gurūpu on the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai revealed that the left eye and the scrotum<sup>109</sup> of the *sokushinbutsu* were removed after the mummification of the corpse of Tetsumonkai and not before (See Fig. 3.8).<sup>110</sup>

The contemplation of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai inspired in the devotees new legends about the life of the eminent *issei gyōnin* such as the episode of the cutting out of the left eye, from which he derived the posthumous appellative of “merciful eye” (*kegan'in* 惠眼院), or the detail of the prostitute in the legend of the emasculation. After the creation of these new legends about the religious performances attributed to Tetsumonkai, his *sokushinbutsu* re-inscribed on his flesh the contents of these devotional narratives. The physical structure of the mummified body of the *issei gyōnin* was, once again, manipulated in order to perfectly overlap with the legendary body of the ‘fictionalized Tetsumonkai.’ If the ‘truth of the oral legend’ stated that Tetsumonkai cut off his penis during his life, then, even his *sokushinbutsu*, which inspired the legend, must be emasculated in order to create the illusion of a perfect convergence with the ‘truth of history’. The *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai kept generating legends about the life of

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<sup>109</sup>. Even if the oral legend mentions the penis, the anatomical organ actually excised from the *sokushinbutsu* was the scrotum. The appellative for the scrotum of Tetsumonkai is “the cut of the previous life” (*shōzengiri* 生前切り), which practically underlines the separation between the first part of the life of Tetsumonkai that was characterized by passions and violence and the second one during which he became an *issei gyōnin*. The scrotum is still preserved inside a small reliquary (*zushi* 厨子) at Nangakuji in Tsuruoka where it is venerated as a “hidden buddha” (*hibutsu* 秘仏).

<sup>110</sup>. Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 67-69.

this *issei gyōnin* and subsequently added truthfulness to these oral narratives, molding his physicality according to the newly created devotional patterns (See Fig. 3.9).

Another *topos* of the oral legends about the *sokushinbutsu* is the scene in which an old woman (*rōba* 老婆) of the village obstructs the bamboo pole for air in an attempt to feed the *issei gyōnin* who is meditating within the *ishi no karōto*. For instance, an oral legend reports the story of a certain *issei gyōnin* called Ekai 恵海 who entered *nyūjō* at Tachiyazawa 立谷沢 and died because a bun (*manjū* 饅頭) offered by an old woman irreparably stuck inside the bamboo pole. Every year the people of the village organized ceremonies to pacify the spirit of Ekai (*chinkonsai* 鎮魂祭), unable to become a *sokushinbutsu*. During a New Year night in the Meiji period a group of youths profaned the *nyūjōzuka* of Ekai in order to steal the precious objects that were buried together with the corpse and sell them to an antiques shop in Tsuruoka. A few months later, all the youths who had destroyed the sepulcher of Ekai met a horrible death.<sup>111</sup>

The first part of the legend exhibits the classical theme of the killing of social marginals (*iningoroshi* 異人殺し) by members of the conventional social classes of the village. From a different perspective it should be underlined that the old woman did not mean to kill the *issei gyōnin* at all. The purpose of the offering the *manjū* was actually the opposite, i.e. to feed and help the ascetic to properly enter *nyūjō* and become a *sokushinbutsu*. The episode of the *manjū* can be interpreted as a representation of the efforts made by the *sewanin* to take care of and support the *issei gyōnin* during the entire process to transform the physical body into a buddha's body. The old woman and her *manjū* symbolize the continuous and painstaking support provided by the *sewanin* to the *issei gyōnin* even after death during the complex funerary rituals to

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<sup>111</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Hagurosan nihyaku wa* (Tōkyō: Chūō kikakusha, 1972), 126-129.

facilitate the process of mummification of the corpse. The second part of the oral legend has a specific temporal indication: the Meiji period. We can read into the episode of the profanation of the sepulcher of Ekai a disenchantment with a modernity that brings with it a forced capitalization and monetization of every aspect of society, including the *nyūjōzuka* of the *issei gyōnin*. Nevertheless, on a deeper analytic level we may see the opening of the sepulcher of Ekai as not so much an act of profanation as the usual ritual procedure, a check on the state of preservation of the cadaver of an *issei gyōnin* who had been selected to become a *sokushinbutsu*. It does not matter that the aim of opening the sepulcher was to steal the precious things inside; the relevant point is that the tomb is actually opened. This part of the legend may represent the feelings of uneasiness and discomfort of the *sewanin* during the excavation of the corpse of the *issei gyōnin* after the first funeral in order to optimize the processes of desiccation. These feelings were associated with committing a crime rather than a devotional act because the Meiji Penal Code regarded interference with tombs and corpses as illegal acts to be punished according to the law. The atrocious death met by the members of the group who opened the sepulcher of Ekai is nothing other than a metaphor for the punishment introduced in the Code for those accused of defacing a cadaver. It is also interesting to take into account that the punishment by death of the youths of the village is not the result of a trial or the intervention of other human agencies such as soldiers or policemen, but is directly ascribed to the revenge of the angry spirit of the *issei gyōnin*. This detail seems to reaffirm rather than negate the influence on human society exerted by the *sokushinbutsu* even in the new mood of enlightenment and progress (*bunmei kaika* 文明開化) of the Meiji period.

## 6. Iconographical Analysis of the *Sokushinbutsu*

### 6.1. *Translatio*: *Sokushinbutsu* on the Road

A fundamental characteristic of the *sokushinbutsu* is their mobility. The Latin term *translatio* specifically indicates the transfer of the human remains of a saint from one place, usually the sepulcher or the church, to a different location to be displayed before devotees. In *The Cult of the Saints* Peter Brown points out that *translatio*, which implied the movement of the corpse of the saint among or toward people, manifested an opposite directionality compared to pilgrimage, during which people went to meet the sacred body of the saint.<sup>112</sup> In other words *translatio* corresponds to the pilgrimage performed by the cadaver of the saint. In the case of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono this was called “external exhibition” (*dekaichō* 出開帳) or just exhibition (*kaichō*). In the *Kōsairoku* Gensai provides the following description of a *dekaichō* of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai.

In the summer of this year Tempō 3 (1832) [the disciples of Tetsumonkai] dug out (*horidashite* 掘り出して) his corpse (*mukuro* 骸) and put [it] in a sitting position (*zashi seru* 座死せる). They exhibited (*kaichō*) [the corpse] at Sairakuji 西楽寺 even if this was said to be against the will of Tetsumonkai. [His disciples] wrote on a banner (*nobori* 幟) “Tetsumon Shōnin *sokushinbutsu*.” This was a most impudent thing in my opinion (*okogamashiku koso oboyu* をこかましくこそおほゆ). According to the talk of the wood-eater ascetics (*mokujiki gyōja* 木食行者) in the temples, this was not the real corpse (*jitsu no mukuro* 実の骸) [of

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<sup>112</sup>. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Late Christianity*, 88.

Tetsumonkai], but the cadaver of another *mokujiki gyōja* called Kihonkai 帰本海.<sup>113</sup> Thus, his disciples (*totei* 徒弟) regrettably soiled the precious virtue [of Tetsumonkai] because they were only interested in gaining money. I find this such a vain thing.<sup>114</sup>

Gensai is extremely critical about the exploitation of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai for financial purposes. However, the use of the *sokushinbutsu* in fundraising activities (*kanjin*) by the *issei gyōnin* was very common. For instance, an entry in the *Kaikōji dai jūshi sei Jisen Rinkai dai jimu nikki* 海向寺第十四世持泉隣海代寺務日記 (1882–1883), compiled by Rinkai 隣海 (1830–1894), the *jūshoku* of Kaikōji, reports:

Meiji 15 (1882), September, seventh day.

Three persons departed [from Kaikōji] to exhibit [the *sokushinbutsu*] (*ondekaichō* 御出開帳). They brought the real buddha (*sokubutsu sama* 即仏様) on their shoulders (*seou* 背負).<sup>115</sup> One was Kōyama Risuke 高山利助 and also his son Iwakichi 岩吉. Then, another man came from Tamura 田村 in order to help them. Other people followed them on foot or riding horses.<sup>116</sup>

This passage attests that the *dekaichō* of the *sokushinbutsu* continued to take place even in the Meiji period and were organized by groups of *sewanin* who probably transported the

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<sup>113</sup>. Kihonkai was an *issei gyōnin* of Nangakuji who later became a disciple of Tetsumonkai.

<sup>114</sup>. For the original text, see Yamasawa Manabu, “19 seiki shotō Dewa Sanzan Shugen no kakusei undō—Yudonosan-mokujiki gyōja Tetsumonkai no Echigo fukyō wo chūshin ni,” 90.

<sup>115</sup>. It is not clear which *sokushinbutsu* were involved in this *dekaichō* that was performed to raise funds (*kanjin*) on the behalf of Kaikōji. It may have been the *sokushinbutsu* of Chūkai or that of Enmyōkai, both of which were enshrined at Kaikōji in Sakata. Otherwise, it might have been the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai who was the *jūshoku* of Chūrenji to which Kaikōji was affiliated.

<sup>116</sup>. For the original text see Rinkai, *Kaikōji dai jūshi sei Jisen Rinkai dai jimu nikki*, vol. 1, ed. Itō Ryūbun, (unpublished document, Kaikōji, Sakata, 2013), 62. The *Rinkai nikki* was discovered by Itō Ryūbun 伊藤隆文, the *jūshoku* of Kaikōji, in 2008 during work to renovate the *hondō*. Rev. Itō made a translation of the cursive style (*kuzushiji* 崩字) of the main body of the diary except for the final part of the text. The initial and terminal pages of the *nikki* are greatly damaged by insects, but deciphering is still possible. I am grateful to Rev. Itō for letting me have access to this text.

*sokushinbutsu* inside a sort of portable palanquin (*mikoshi* 神輿) placed on their shoulders. The presence of other devotees or simple onlookers seems to suggest a sort of procession stretching along the roads of Sakata.

The *sokushinbutsu* of Shinkai Shōnin 岑海上人 is associated with another example of *translatio* and *dekaichō*. Shinkai was born in the Yahabachō 矢巾町 district of Tsuchibashimura 土橋村 in Michinoku province. He was a farmer who left his household to the husband of his daughter in order to become an *issei gyōnin* affiliated with Chūrenji. After three years of ascetic training on Mount Yudono, Shinkai went back to his village where he organized fundraising (*kanjin*) for the reconstruction of Renshōji 蓮正寺, an important *gyōnidera* in Morioka. In Genji 元治 2 (1865) a group of twelve *sewanin* of a Yudonosan *kō* dedicated a stele to Shinkai Shōnin to express their gratitude to him for his ascetic practices and to venerate Mount Yudono. This stele is still visible inside the precincts of the Hayachine Jinja 早池峰神社 in Morioka. A few years later in Meiji 1 (1868) Shinkai died and his corpse was sent back to Chūrenji where it was buried behind the Rokkakudō 六角堂 for the first funeral.<sup>117</sup> In the early years of the Meiji period, the *sewanin* of Shinkai asked the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji for permission to take the *sokushinbutsu* for a *kaichō* in the village of Tsuchidabashi. During the long journey and *kaichō* from Dewa to Michinoku the *sokushinbutsu* of Shinkai was placed in a portable shrine (*zushi* 厨子) carried on the shoulders of his *sewanin*. After the *kaichō* the *sokushinbutsu* of Shinkai was, once again, returned to Chūrenji. It disappeared in the fire that destroyed the temple in Meiji 21

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<sup>117</sup>. The tombstone of Shinkai Shōnin is preserved at Ryūgakuji 龍覚寺 of Tsuruoka and carries the date January, sixteenth day as the time of death. It is probable that the corpse of Shinkai was never buried at Ryūgakuji, which just played the façade role of *bodaiji* for the ascetic. The creation of a provisional tombstone for the *issei gyōnin*, as in the case of Tetsuryūkai, can also be interpreted as legerdemain to bypass the Meiji Penal Code, which prohibited the excavation of corpses.

(1888).<sup>118</sup>

An analysis of the *kaichō* of the *sokushinbutsu* must take into account also the reasons that prompted *sewanin* and disciples to mummify and publicly display the corpses of the eminent *issei gyōnin* during specific periods. According to the interpretation proposed by Naitō Masatoshi the *sokushinbutsu* were especially created and exhibited during epidemics or famines (*kikin* 飢饉).<sup>119</sup> For instance, the corpses of Chūkai and Shinnyokai were mummified during two terrible famines which afflicted the Shōnai area in Hōreki 5 (1755) and Tenmei 3 (1783). Even if it is possible to detect a sort of connection between a social crisis and the creation of the *sokushinbutsu*, this was certainly not the main or unique reason for the cult dedicated to the human remains of the *issei gyōnin*. An overview of the years in which eminent *issei gyōnin* entered *nyūjō* shows that the formation of *sokushinbutsu* was not limited to catastrophic or unstable periods. The decision to mummify the body of an eminent *issei gyōnin* was widely due to the presence or absence of particularly charismatic *issei gyōnin* who were able to gather around themselves a sufficient number of *sewanin* and *kōin* who could sponsor their ascetic careers during life and funerary practices after death. We can suppose that the saving power of the *sokushinbutsu* was evoked during famines and epidemics, but the devotional discourse that focused on the *issei gyōnin* was not an exclusive product of this type of temporal contingency. The *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* resulted from the basic functioning of the religious system of Yudono on which their ascetic practices were based.

Among the written sources about the *sokushinbutsu* there are few traveler's journals (*dōchūki*

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<sup>118</sup>. *Yahabachōshi*, vol. 1, ed. Yahabachōshi hensan iinkai (Yahabachō: Kumaga insatsu, 1985), 839-843.

<sup>119</sup>. Naitō Masatoshi, *Nihon no miira shinkō*, 145-155.



道中記) written by pilgrims who had the chance to participate in the *kaichō* of the mummified corpses of the *issei gyōnin* during pilgrimage to Mount Yudono. For instance, in the second half of the seventeenth century, Hosoda Keihō 細田敬豊 made a pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan departing from Todorikimura 轟村 in Tajima 但馬 province.<sup>120</sup> He recorded the events of the pilgrimage in the *Dewa Sanzan dōchūki* 出羽三山道中記. In the entry for the twenty-fourth day of the fifth month (unspecified year) he reported that: “The *sokushinbutsu* of Honmyōkai Shōnin is in the village of Iwamoto, which is five *ri* 里 from Mount Haguro.”<sup>121</sup> In Tenpō 14 (1842) another pilgrim, Suzuki Seisaburō Giman 鈴木清三郎義満, wrote the *Mogami Shōnai Echigo dōchūki* 庄内越後道中記. In the entry about his visit to Chūrenji in Shimekake-mura he noted: “The price per person (*ichinin bun* 壹人分) for the *kaichō* of the *sokushin sokubutsu* of Tetsumon Shōnin 鐵門上人即身即仏 is twelve copper coins.”<sup>122</sup> However, we have to note that such *dōchūki* reporting the participation of pilgrims to the *kaichō* of *sokushinbutsu* are extremely rare. This may indicate that the cult of the *sokushinbutsu* was a prerogative of the *sewanin* and the local population that cultivated special karmic ties with the *issei gyōnin* when he was alive rather than occasional pilgrims from external provinces. Pilgrims were admitted to the veneration of the *sokushinbutsu*, but were not the main actors in these devotional practices, which were organized and sponsored by the local people of the Shōnai area or the *sewanin* of the village from which the *issei gyōnin* came.

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<sup>120</sup>. The province of Tajima corresponds to the present Hyōgo 兵庫 prefecture.

<sup>121</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan no bunka to minzoku* (Tōkyō: Iwata shoin, 1996), 155-156.

<sup>122</sup>. For the original text see *Ibid.*, 129.

## 6.2. *Sokushinbutsu* as Full-body Relics

The *sokushinbutsu* can be considered a special type of relic (*shari* 舍利), a full-body relic (*zenshin shari*, Skt. *śarīra saṃghāta*). One of the first written sources to mention this category of relic is the “Devadatta Chapter” of the *Lotus Sūtra*. In the first part of the chapter the Buddha Śākyamuni explains that his evil cousin Devadatta is actually destined to become a buddha called God King (Skt. *Devarāja*).

At that time, after the *parinirvāna* of the buddha God King, his true dharma shall abide in the world twenty intermediate *kalpas*; and a *stūpa* of the seven jewels shall be erected to house the *śarīra* of his whole body (*zenshin shari ni shippō no tō wo tate* 全身舍利起七寶塔) sixty *yojanas* in height, forty *yojanas* in length and breadth.<sup>123</sup>

In the same way as the *parinirvāṇa* of Devatta, the *nyūjō* of eminent *issei gyōnin* transformed the whole physicality of the ascetic into a full-body relic. Bernard Faure points out that the English term relic, which derives from the Latin verb *relinquere* “to leave behind,” is misleading in the case of the mummified corpses of the ascetics.<sup>124</sup> The *sokushinbutsu*, in fact, is not a mere fragment or a part of the body that has been left to represent or symbolize the ascetic. The relationship between the relic and the body expressed by the *sokushinbutsu* does not follow the metonymical logic of the *pars pro toto*. In other words, the *sokushinbutsu* does not symbolize

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<sup>123</sup>. For the English translation see *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sūtra)*, Trans. Leon Hurvitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 181. I added italics and Chinese characters to Hurvitz’s translation. For the original text see *Myōhōrengekyō*, T no. 262, 9.35a8-9.

<sup>124</sup>. Bernard Faure, “Substitute Bodies in Chan/Zen Buddhism,” in *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*, 214.

anything: it is a pure presence that incarnates and expands the charisma associated with the wholeness of the ascetic body. Presentiality is a fundamental aspect of the *sokushinbutsu*, which is alive, powerful, and socially active as much as or—even more than—the *issei gyōnin* during his life. This characteristic of the *sokushinbutsu* can be also detected in the performative roles played by the full-body relics of the ascetics in the oral legends. In this context the *sokushinbutsu* often does things that the real ascetic had never done in his real life. For instance, the full-body relics emit beams of light, emanate wonderful fragrances, instantly heal diseases, or punish evil with death. Like the relics of the Buddha, the full-body relics of the *issei gyōnin* work as “spreaders” or “continuators” of the bibliography of the ascetic even beyond his death.<sup>125</sup> The *sokushinbutsu* is not a mere substitute for the ascetic. It is a full-body relic through which the *issei gyōnin* finally shows the perfection of his ascetic powers without being subordinated to any biological restrictions.

The *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* reports an interesting story about the relationship between relic veneration and the incorrupt body of the buddha Kāśyapa. This episode is specifically focused on the semiotic link between the preservation of the corpse after death and the notion of a relic. While traveling in the Kosala area, the Buddha made the body of Kāśyapa momentarily emerge from the ground in order to teach the proper ritual procedures for paying homage to relics. The Buddha used the expression “undivided mass of bones” (*asthi*) to refer to the cadaver of Kāśyapa when still buried underground. Once he made this marvelous chain of bones rise up from the earth into the air in order to be contemplated by everyone, the corpse of Kāśyapa is

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<sup>125</sup>. John S. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 229.

described as an “undivided mass of relics” (*śarīra*).<sup>126</sup> The word *asthi* underlines the integrity of the entire structure of the corpse ‘inside’ the sepulcher, and the term *śarīra* indicates the level of sacrality attributed to the incorrupt cadaver once ‘outside’ the sepulcher. We can say that during the first funeral, when the *issei gyōnin* is practicing *nyūjō* within the *ishi no karōto*, the cadaver of the ascetic is realizing the phase of *asthi*. During the second funeral, when the processes of desiccation of the corpse are complete, the *sokushinbutsu* is exhibited and reaches the level of *śarīra*.

In Japan the first case of an un-decayed body being specifically venerated as an “incorrupt full-body” (*zenshin fusan* 全身不散) is associated with the monk Rinke 琳賢, who died in the late Heian period.<sup>127</sup> In the eleventh chapter of the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 (1322), Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1272–1346) reports some aspects of Rinke’s death.

In Kyūan 久安 6 (1150), eight month, fourteenth day, [Rinke 琳賢]<sup>128</sup> entered *nirvāṇa* (*nyūjaku* 入寂). Before, he had built a cellar (*shitsu’u* 室宇) inside which he sat, motionless and peaceful. The entire body (*zenshin*) was incorrupt (*fusan*). [...] In the Ken’ei 建永 era (1206–1207) the Retired Emperor Genryaku 元暦上皇 [i.e. Gotoba 後鳥羽 (1180–1237)] went to Mount Kōya. Having heard about the miraculous death [of Rinke] (*jōke* 定化), [Gotoba] entered the sepulcher (*byōshitsu* 廟室) and took a close look at the meditating body. [The emperor and] all his noble retainers joined their palms and were deeply impressed. It was almost sixty years after Rinke’s death. It is also said that when [Rinke] prayed for rain,

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<sup>126</sup>. Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>127</sup>. It is interesting to note that Rinke is said to be third generation disciple of Myōsan 明算, the founder of the Chūin-ryū that was the lineage from which Junkai received the *denpō kanjō*. I am thankful to Professor Iyanaga Nobumi for pointing out this detail of Rinke’s biography.

<sup>128</sup>. Some sources such as the *Genkō shakusho* report the name of this monk as Rinke 琳賢, but the second character of this compound is a mistaken form of the character *ken* 賢. See Andō Kōsei, Sakurai Kiyohiko, “Genzai suru Nihon no miira,” in *Nihon miira no kenkyū*, 13.

Zennyō Ryūō 善女竜王<sup>129</sup> appeared to him.<sup>130</sup>

The incorrupt corpse of Rinke is represented as a pure entity, completely detached from the pollution (*kegare*) of death. For this reason the Retired Emperor Gotoba and his retainers were not afraid of contamination and venerated the human remains of Rinke from a close distance. In other words, the corpse of the monk is perceived as totally different from a common cadaver because of the integrity of its physical structure, which is taken as a tangible proof that Rinke has mastered the meditative stage of *nyūjō*. In the seventh chapter of the *Kōya shūnjū hennen shūroku* 高野春秋編年輯録 (completed in 1719) there is another description of the mummified body of Rinke, which is clearly defined as *zenshin shari*.

This relic was installed at the back of the Kondō 金堂 so that the pilgrims could venerate it (*sanpainin haiken* 参拜人拝見) and establish a karmic tie, which was equivalent to a cause of understanding (*ryōin* 了因). Then the body was put inside a coffin (*hinkan* 殯斂) in the mountain behind his dwelling (*jūbō* 住坊) [that was named] Mirokuin 弥勒院. A gate was built in front of the sepulcher and a notice was placed [to designate it as] a monument (*yūiseki* 遺跡). [...] On the twenty-seventh day of the third month the Retired Emperor Gotoba went to Mount Kōya. During the memorial service (*hōji* 法事) at the Oku no in [Gotoba] granted the rank of holy man of the Dharma (*hōkyō shōnin i* 法橋上人位) to [a monk named] Shōjō 勝成 [...]. After departing from the Oku no in [Gotoba] went to see the full-body relic (*zenshin shari*) of Rinke. This was because he had already heard about it. [...] [Gotoba] heard about the miraculous transformation (*kegi* 化儀) of Rinke into a full-body relic and was pervaded by feelings of joy. That day he desired to climb up the mountain as far as the Mirokuin.<sup>131</sup> [The Retired Emperor] ordered the supervisor of the temple to open the sepulcher and [got close to] the entire body, which remained as it was originally. The Retired

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<sup>129</sup>. Zennyō Ryūō is one of the eight *nāga* kings (Hachidai Ryūō 八大竜王), which is often invoked during rain making rituals (*amagoi* 雨乞<sup>らぎ</sup>).

<sup>130</sup>. For the original text, see *Genkō shakusho*, vol. 1, ed. Fujita Takuji (Kyōto: Kōbunsha, 2009), 255.

<sup>131</sup>. The living quarters built by Rinke was later renamed Mirokuin. It is located in the Tanigami 谷上 area on Kōyasan. During the Ken'ei era (1624–1629) Mirokuin changed its name to Hōjōin 宝城院.

Emperor (*sen'in* 仙院) faced the relic and said: “Why don’t you have [something] left for the benefit (*riyaku* 利益) of those who live in the last age of the Dharma (*masse* 末世)?” At that moment, a pupil of the eye fell down [from the full-body relic of Rinke]. The Retired Emperor and all the retainers soaked their sleeves with tears of joy. Now this detached pupil-relic (*raku dō shari* 落瞳舍利) is the protector (*chin* 鎮) of Mirokuin.<sup>132</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Retired Emperor Gotoba directly addressed the *zenshin shari* of Rinke asking for the production of material benefits for the salvation of sentient beings who live in the last age of the Dharma. This passage describes a peculiar mechanism according to which a relic autonomously generates another relic. The *zenshin shari* of Rinke is the main body (*honshin* 本身), from which emanates another fragmented body or hypostasis (*bunshin* 分身)—the pupil—to expand and irradiate its authority in human society. This duplicative relationship between *honshin* and *bunshin* is a typical phenomenon among Buddhist icons, but the full-body relics often present the same characteristic. This is due to the fact that the *zenshin shari* of Rinke or the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* tend to break the taxonomical boundaries between the categories of living body, corpse, and icon. The *sokushinbutsu* can be considered a real “symbol.” This does not mean that it prefigures something other than itself, but rather it “throws something together” (Gr. *συνβάλλω*) and creates a harmony of heterogeneous elements. In particular, the *sokushinbutsu* favors mutual fertilization and a semiotic crisscross between three apparently oppositional entities, such as the life of the body, the death of the cadaver, and the charisma of the icon.

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<sup>132</sup>. For the original text see *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho*, vol. 131, ed. Bussho kankōkai (Tōkyō: Meicho fukyūkai, 1981), 103, 132.

### 6.3. *Sokushinbutsu* as Archéiro-poiètics Icons

If we consider the *sokushinbutsu* as icons (*zō* 像) of the *issei gyōnin*, we can refer to them as “archéiro-poiètic icons.”<sup>133</sup> The term archéiro-poiètics is a compound deriving from the noun “origin/creator” (Gr. ἀρχή) and the verb “to make” (Gr. ποιέω) and indicates an icon not made by the human hand. The archéiro-poiètic icon is the image that a god produces of himself in order to donate it to human beings. For instance, the holy shroud can be considered an archéiro-poiètic icon or mark that God created using his physical body to transmit his effigy in the present world. In the same way, the *sokushinbutsu* can be interpreted as an icon of the *issei gyōnin*, which is supposed to be generated not through human intervention on inert matter, but from the ascetic power that permeates the physicality of the ascetic.

The materiality of *sokushinbutsu* is totally different from the usual types of religious simulacra, because it is not based on elements with a specific economic value such as wood, gold, or stone, but directly derives from extra-economic entities such as the flesh and bones of the ascetic.<sup>134</sup> In other words, the charisma of the *sokushinbutsu* comes from the fact that it is an archéiro-poiètic icon, made of the same materiality as the ascetic’s body.

Even if we know that on a practical level human intervention on the corpse of the *issei*

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<sup>133</sup>. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps des images: essais sur la culture visuelle au moyen âge*, 218, 287-288.

<sup>134</sup>. Even if it true that the materiality of the mummy is based on entities devoid of specific economic value such as the human body, it should be taken into account that the full-body relics of Buddhist monks and ascetics were always able to produce monetary income, as in the case of the *kaichō*. Moreover, in China and Japan there were episodes of *furta sacra*, which involved the full-body relics of eminent Zen masters. In these contexts the full-body relics were stolen as precious commodities with a high religious value. See James Robson, “A Tang Dynasty Chan Mummy [*Roushen*] and a Modern Case of *Furta Sacra*? Investigating the Contested Bones of Shitou Xiquian,” in *Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context*, ed. Bernard Faure (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 151-178.

*gyōnin* is inevitable in the creation of the *sokushinbutsu*, at the iconological level the charisma of these special icons derive from the fact that are supposed not to be ‘made’ or ‘created’ by a sculptor of Buddhist statues (*busshi* 仏師). The funerary rituals create the illusion that the *sokushinbutsu* derives from a self-generative process which starts and ends within the corpse of the ascetic. The materiality of the *sokushinbutsu* and its creative power come from the cadaver of the ascetic and this trait augments the charisma of the archéiro-poiétic icon because of its extraneousness to economic logic.<sup>135</sup>

Bernard Faure points out that Buddhist icons are often associated with procedures of *stoicheiosis* or “animation processes,” which consist of the insertion of precious seals, reproductions of internal organs made of textiles, or the Buddha’s relics in the internal or uterine space (*tainai* 胎内) of the statue in order to make it alive.<sup>136</sup> In the case of the *sokushinbutsu* it is the materiality of the ascetic body *per se* that realizes the *stoicheiosis* of the icon without any supplementary modifications of the internal structure of the image.

Another ritual that provides the illusion that the *sokushinbutsu* is not dead, but alive and active among human beings, is the re-clothing ceremony (*okoromogae* 御衣替え). The *okoromogae* ceremonies for the *sokushinbutsu* of the eminent *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono were probably influenced by the ceremony of the *miso kaji* 御衣加持 during which a monastic robe was donated to re-clothe the body of Kūkai who is supposed to have entered *nyūjō* in the

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<sup>135</sup>. For the relationship between icons and economic logic in Buddhism, see Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders, *Buddhism and Iconoclasm in East Asia: A History*, 31.

<sup>136</sup>. Bernard Faure, “The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze,” 785. For an analysis of the vessel-statues of buddhas (*tainai butsu* 体内仏) and their intra-corporal objects, see also Helmut Brinker, *Secrets of the Sacred: Empowering Buddhist Images in Clear, in Code, and in Cache* (Seattle and London: Spencer Museum of Art and University of Washington Press, 2011).



Oku no in on Mount Kōya.<sup>137</sup> The reclothing ceremony was not originally included in the standard funerary rituals to venerate Kūkai; his memory was honored through a collective remembrance of his deeds (*tsuibo* 追慕) that took place in front of his portrait (*mie*), known as the “ceremony of offering to the august portrait” (*mie-ku hōyō* 御影供法要). According to the *Kōyasan Oku no in kōhai ki* 高野山奥院興廢記, Emperor Daigo 醍醐 (885–930) received a portrait of Kūkai from the Shingon monk Kangen 観賢 (853–925) in Engi 延喜 21 (921). A month later the emperor had a dream in which he met Kūkai. In order to demonstrate his devotion to the Shingon patriarch, the emperor sent an imperial envoy to take a monastic robe dyed using the bark of a Japanese cypress (*hiwada* 檜皮) to the Oku no in. The “Kōya Chapter” of the *Heike monogatari* reports this famous episode as follows.

[...] During his reign Emperor Daigo had a revelatory dream of Kōbo Daishi, in which he donated him a robe dyed with *hinoki* bark (*hiwada* 檜皮). The imperial envoy Lord Sukezumi 資澄 was sent to make a pilgrimage to Mount Kōya accompanied by the monk Kangen of Hannyaji 般若寺. They opened the doors of the sepulcher (*gobyō* 御廟) of Kūkai to dress him in the robe. At that moment a screen of fog materialized and it was impossible for them to worship Daishi. Kangen felt terribly sad and started crying: “Since I was born from the benevolent uterus of my mother and became a disciple of my master, I have never committed any infraction of the monastic regulations (*kinkai* 禁律). I wonder why I am not allowed to worship him.” He threw his body on the ground and repented from the bottom of his heart. At that time the fog started clearing, as when the moon shines, and they could worship Kōbō Daishi. Kangen cried tears of joy and dressed Daishi in the robe. Because the hair [of Daishi] had grown a lot, he cut it. This was a very auspicious thing. The imperial envoy and the monk

<sup>137</sup>. The reclothing ceremony (*miso kaji*) for Kūkai takes place every year on March 17 in the temple Hōkiin 宝亀院 on Mount Kōya. In the precincts of Hōkiin there is a well called Misoi 御衣井, the water of which is used to dye the monastic robe to offer to the Shingon patriarch. Other objects, among which there is a rosary for the recitation of *nenbutsu* (*nenju*), are donated together with the robe. During the morning of the twenty-first a box (*hitsu* 櫃) with the gifts is transported from Hōki'in to Kongōbuji where the regalia are further examined before being taken to mausoleum at the Oku no in where Kūkai meditates in a state of suspended animation. The Rishu zanmai 理趣三昧 ceremony concludes the ritual offerings for the veneration (*kuyō*) of Kūkai. See *Kōbō Daishi shinkō ten*, ed. Kawasakishi shimin myūjiamu, 35.

could worship Daishi, but a disciple of the monk called Shun'yū 淳祐, who was still a novice at Ishiyamadera 石山寺, was desperate because he could not venerate Daishi. Therefore Kangen took his hand and placed it on the knee of Daishi. It is transmitted that Shun'yū's hand had a marvelous scent for all his life. That perfume impregnated the pages of the sūtras at Ishiyamadera and it is said that it remains even now.<sup>138</sup>

A central aspect of this passage is focused on the possibility or impossibility of actually seeing the body of Kōbō Daishi once inside the sepulcher. To see or contemplate the physicality of Kōbō Daishi means to communicate with him and establish a sort of ocular karmic tie with him. Kangen and Shun'yū are shattered to be excluded from the sight of Kōbō Daishi because they know that this is a “transformative vision” which purifies and blesses the spectator. The contemplation of the body of Kōbō Daishi is defined as an auspicious thing because it prefigures a type of reality which will be fully realized only at a future time. Augustine (354–430) divided vision into three types: corporeal vision, which is based on the senses; intellectual vision, which derives from the activities of the mind and conscience; and spiritual vision, which is similar to a dream oriented toward the future.<sup>139</sup> The spiritual vision prefigures what is yet to be realized and creates a sort of retroactive memory of a future event. The living body of Kōbō Daishi and the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* are spiritual visions in the sense that they provide the spectator with a memory of a future event that concerns the possibility of his realizing a perfect union with the cosmic body of Dainichi Nyorai. The vision of the incorrupt body of Kōbō Daishi or the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* have a consolatory effect on human beings because it testifies *hic et nunc* the possibility to obtain an adamantine body and to realize buddhahood.

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<sup>138</sup>. For the original text, see *Heike monogari*, vol. 2, ed. Ichiko Teiji, 301-302.

<sup>139</sup>. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps des images: essais sur la culture visuelle au moyen âge*, 26-27.

In the Edo period this passage of the *Heike monogatari* became extremely famous among all strata of society in conjunction with the belief that the living body of Kōbō Daishi (*shōjin no Daishi* 生身の大師) needed an annual change of clothes. This was motivated by the fact that his monastic robe was subjected to enormous wear because Kūkai was constantly wandering around to save sentient beings in various realms. The reclothing ceremony was not only a ritual procedure to show that the icon or the mummy was alive, but also to underline in practical terms the continuous manifestation of its power.

In the *Kaikōji dai jūshi sei Jisen Rinkai dai jimu nikki*, the *issei gyōnin* Rinkai recorded an episode concerning a reclothing ceremony for a wooden icon of Testumonkai.

Meiji 16 (1883), April, eighteenth day.

Three persons came from the village of Hirono Shindenmura 広野新田村. On the twentieth day of this month they have scheduled a performance of the reclothing ceremony (*koromogae* 衣替) for the wooden icon of Tetsumonkai Shōnin (Tetsumonkai Shōnin *gomokuzō* 鐵門海上人御木像). Therefore, they requested of this temple a ceremony for the reinstallation of the spirit into the icon (*nyūbutsu kuyō* 入仏供養).<sup>140</sup>

The cult of eminent *issei gyōnin* such as Tetsumonkai also included the creation of wooden icons with the physical features of the ascetic, which were venerated by devotees and *sewanin* in their native villages. Because the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* were enshrined in the *gyōnidera*, it is probable that the followers of the *issei gyōnin* desired to have other visual or material support, such as wooden icons, to maintain a solid karmic tie with the ascetic in addition to the *sokushinbutsu*. The ritual to remove the spirit (*hakken shiki* 撥遣式) from the icon was the

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<sup>140</sup>. For the original text, see Rinkai, *Kaikōji daijūyonsei Jisen Rinkai dai jimu nikki*, vol. 2, ed. Itō Ryūbun, 266.

preliminary step before proceeding to the reclothing ceremony. When the change of the monastic robe was completed, the spirit (*mitama* 御靈) was reintroduced into the *sokushinbutsu* or the icon through the *nyūbutsu kūyō* procedure.<sup>141</sup>

Tetsumonkai understood the strong religious impact that the reclothing ceremony had on believers and decided that, for instance, the *sokushinbutsu* of Honmyōkai should be reclothed every year of the ox (*ushidoshi* 丑年). The year of the ox was when Kūkai opened Mount Yudono and it was considered the most propitious time to make a pilgrimage to the mountain. The old clothing worn by the *sokushinbutsu* of Honmyōkai was cut into fragments (*kogire* 小切れ) and sold to devotees and pilgrims. Like in the case of the pupil that detached from the full-body relic of Rinzen, the reclothing ceremony allowed the *sokushinbutsu* to produce other relics, which can be defined as “contact relics.” The *kogire* of the garment worn by the *sokushinbutsu* were believed to have absorbed the ascetic power embedded in the mummified body of the eminent *issei gyōnin* for twelve years and were preserved by the followers as protective amulets.<sup>142</sup>

Relics and icons were often placed at the center of these processes of veiling and dis-veiling, which served to augment their power and charisma before the devotees. It is important to take into account that the *sokushinbutsu* and wooden icons of eminent *issei gyōnin* were momentarily

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<sup>141</sup>. The monks of Kaikōji, Chūrenji, and Dainichibō still practice the same ritual procedures during the reclothing ceremony for their *sokushinbutsu*. This ritual is also known as *kaigen kuyō* 開眼供養 or the ceremony of opening eyes. For a detailed description of the ritual procedures for the animation of Buddhist statues see Michel Strickmann, “L’icône animée,” in *Mantras et mandarins: Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* [coll. Bibliothèque des sciences humaines] (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), 184-202.

<sup>142</sup>. Even now all the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* of Mount Yudono still produce this type of contact relic or *kogire* as a result of the reclothing ceremony. The price for a protective amulet (*omamori* お守り), which includes a *kogire* of the cloth of a *sokushinbutsu*, is about one thousand yen. The *jūshoku* Endō Yūkaku 遠藤宥覚 of the Dainichibō decided to do the reclothing ceremony for Shinnyokai every six years, during June first of year of the sheep (*hitsujidoshi* 未年) and the year of the ox.

deactivated during the crucial time in which the mummified body of the ascetic was stripped in order to wear the new garments. In this intermediate moment the *sokushinbutsu* was forced to face the ineluctability of human intervention thanks to which the mummified corpse was enveloped in actual new garments. Therefore, the *sokushinbutsu* or the icon were temporarily reduced to inanimate objects through the ritual of the removal of the spirit. When the reclothing ceremony was over and the invasive—yet necessary—manipulation of the mummified corpse of the ascetic finished, the *sokushinbutsu* returned to its original state of full-body relic, which included the spirit of the *issei gyōnin* within the bodily structure. In other words, when the *sokushinbutsu* or the icon of the *issei gyōnin* is touched by human beings it reverts to the state of an inanimate object, and when the new robe is put on the mummified corpse and the aura of distance is finally restored, it regains its sacred status (See Fig. 3.10).

In the Kobayashi 小林 district of the Matsuyama 松山 village there is a small chapel called Fudōdō 不動堂, which still enshrines a wooden icon of Fudō Myōō flanked by a wooden icon of Tetsumonkai Shōnin (See Fig. 3.11). Another statue of Tetsumonkai is located in the Kannondō 觀音堂 of the Sōto temple Dōsenji 洞泉寺 in the village of Mikawa 三川.<sup>143</sup> Two wooden icons of Reiunkai 靈雲海 who was a disciple of Rinkai, and Zenkai 善海 (?–1881) who was a nephew and disciple of Tetsumonkai are enshrined in the main hall of Kaikōji, which also hosts the *sokushinbutsu* of Chūkai and Enmyōkai. It is interesting to note that all these icons of *issei gyōnin*, with the Dōsenji one being the only exception, have tufts of human beards and hair

<sup>143</sup>. This Kannondō was not originally included among the halls of Dōsenji. The Mikawa devotees of Tetsumonkai built the Kannondō in order to enshrine the icon of the *issei gyōnin* that they supported during his life, but in Taishō 6 (1917) they decided to donate the entire hall to Dōsenji because nobody could take care of the building anymore. In 2013 the *jūshoku* of Dōsenji sponsored a restoration of the icon, which obliterated all the typical traits of the external appearance of the *issei gyōnin*. The present icon of Tetsumonkai simply shows the features of a Zen monk rather than an ascetic of Mount Yudono.

inserted in the face. These additions of bodily elements, which can be considered as procedures of *stoicheiosis*, augment the visual commixture between the icon and human physicality. In the case of Reiunkai and Zenkai it is probable that the two ascetics abandoned the idea of becoming *sokushinbutsu* because of the promulgation of the new Penal Code in 1880. Nevertheless, the sacred bodies of these two *issei gyōnin* were reproduced as wooden icons to be venerated by their followers and *sewanin*.

## 7. Conclusions

The fiduciary relationships that developed between lay devotees, who made prayers and vows (*gan*), and the *issei gyōnin*, who was paid to help realize those prayers and vows on behalf of his patrons through execution of the *sennichigyō*, did not end with the death of the *issei gyōnin*. On the contrary, the burial of the eminent *issei gyōnin*'s corpse and the attendant rituals regarded as a *mitate* of a perfect *sennichigyō* during which the ascetic totally overcame his biological limitations and spent three years and three months in a status of suspended animation within the earth that allowed him to obtain an incorrupt body called a *sokushinbutsu*.

After death the *issei gyōnin* ceased to be the real owner of his body, which became a sort of sacred property that belonged to his donors. Those individuals who economically and devotionally invested in the living body of the eminent *issei gyōnin* during his life became, in turn, the ultimate owners of his dead body, which they transformed into a special icon made of

flesh (*nikushinzō*) for their private devotional practices. In this case, the authority of the ascetic was dependent upon the support that he received from his donors, so much so that at the moment of death there was an inversion in the hierarchy of power. The transitional phases toward the *sokushinbutsu* represented the retraction of the *issei gyōnin*'s right to his body, which became the property of *sewanin*, disciples, and lay devotees. The subjects over whom the *issei gyōnin* had authority during his lifetime turned out to be, after his death, the final governors and creators of that authority.

Once the *sokushinbutsu* was created, the *issei gyōnin* did not simply recover his previous authority, but expanded, reinforced, and augmented it. As in the case of the relics of the Buddha, the *sokushinbutsu* could do things that the *issei gyōnin* would never have been able to do during his life. The *sokushinbutsu* was not a mere replica or memorandum of the past authority of the *issei gyōnin*; the *sokushinbutsu* did not represent the *issei gyōnin* because it *was* the *issei gyōnin* in a different guise. Therefore, the *sokushinbutsu* supported a renewal and an empowerment of the ascetic's authority, who could finally manifest his charisma beyond the limits of life and death.

The influence of Kūkai's *nyūjō* on the ideas surrounding the *sokushinjōbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* was surely present, but it was not the only model to inform the transformation of corpses of eminent *issei gyōnin*. In this chapter we have seen that the *sokushinbutsu* was a religious phenomenon developed within the peculiar local and devotional environment of Yudono. The *sestawa* about the suspended animation of Kūkai shaped some features of the narratives about the *sokushinbutsu* in the Shōnai plain, but there were other paradigms to draw on, such as the

famous mummified corpse of the Shingon itinerant ascetic Kōchi Hōin that was enshrined at Saijōji in Echigo province. Even if there were cases of Yudono *issei gyōnin* who practiced on Mount Kōya and brought back Shingon symbols and discourses to the Tōhoku region (e.g., Junkai Shōnin), the fiduciary contract that bound *issei gyōnin* to Yudonosan *kō* members remained the foundation that allowed the creation of *sokushinbutsu*.

The analysis of eminent *issei gyōnins*' funerary rituals and the disposal of their corpses compels us to make a distinction between “historical *issei gyōnin*” and “fictionalized *issei gyōnin*.” Even though the “historical truth” about the life and death of these ascetics often seems to deny the “fictionalized truth” about pre- and postmortem activities of the *issei gyōnin*, this contradiction is only apparent, for the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono were, at the same time, historical *and* legendary. The religious practices that shaped the materiality of their sacred nature and bodies on a “historical level” were often reinterpreted in ideal terms on a “fictional level” in order to boost the power associated with this type of ascetic. In other words, the fictionalized *issei gyōnin* was an emanation of the historical *issei gyōnin*, as if the “deceptiveness” of the first one was necessary to affirm the “truth” of the second.

To say that the *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* did not derive from voluntary abandonments of the body (*shashingyō*) performed by the ascetics while still alive, but were rather the final phase of a complex, expensive funerary procedure does not entirely diminish the sacrality and religious charisma of this phenomenon. On the contrary, this analysis underlines the hermeneutical efforts made by human actors in order to transfer the religious ideal of “becoming a buddha in this very body” from the metaphysical level to the physical. In other words, the



*sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* are actualizations or reifications of the highest ascetic goal: to realize buddhahood *hic et nunc* by performing ascetic practices in the mountains.

This concept can be theorized at an intellectual level, but it is impossible to demonstrate when and if it actually took place at the biological level of the ascetic's body. The *sokushinbutsu* of the *issei gyōnin* bravely tried to eliminate this aporia, providing a reification and a sensorial experimentation of the ascetic's aspiration to exchange the human body with a divine one. The *sokushinbutsu* worked as an ultimate proof, sensorial validation, or material seal for the authenticity and effectiveness of the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* and economically sponsored by the lay devotees. The successful transformation of the corpse of an eminent *issei gyōnin* into a *sokushinbutsu* was a sort of illusory process through which disciples, *sewanin*, and lay patrons persuaded themselves that the ascetic in whom they had invested their devotional and economic capital was a real saint who could forever protect them, even beyond the boundaries of his human condition.

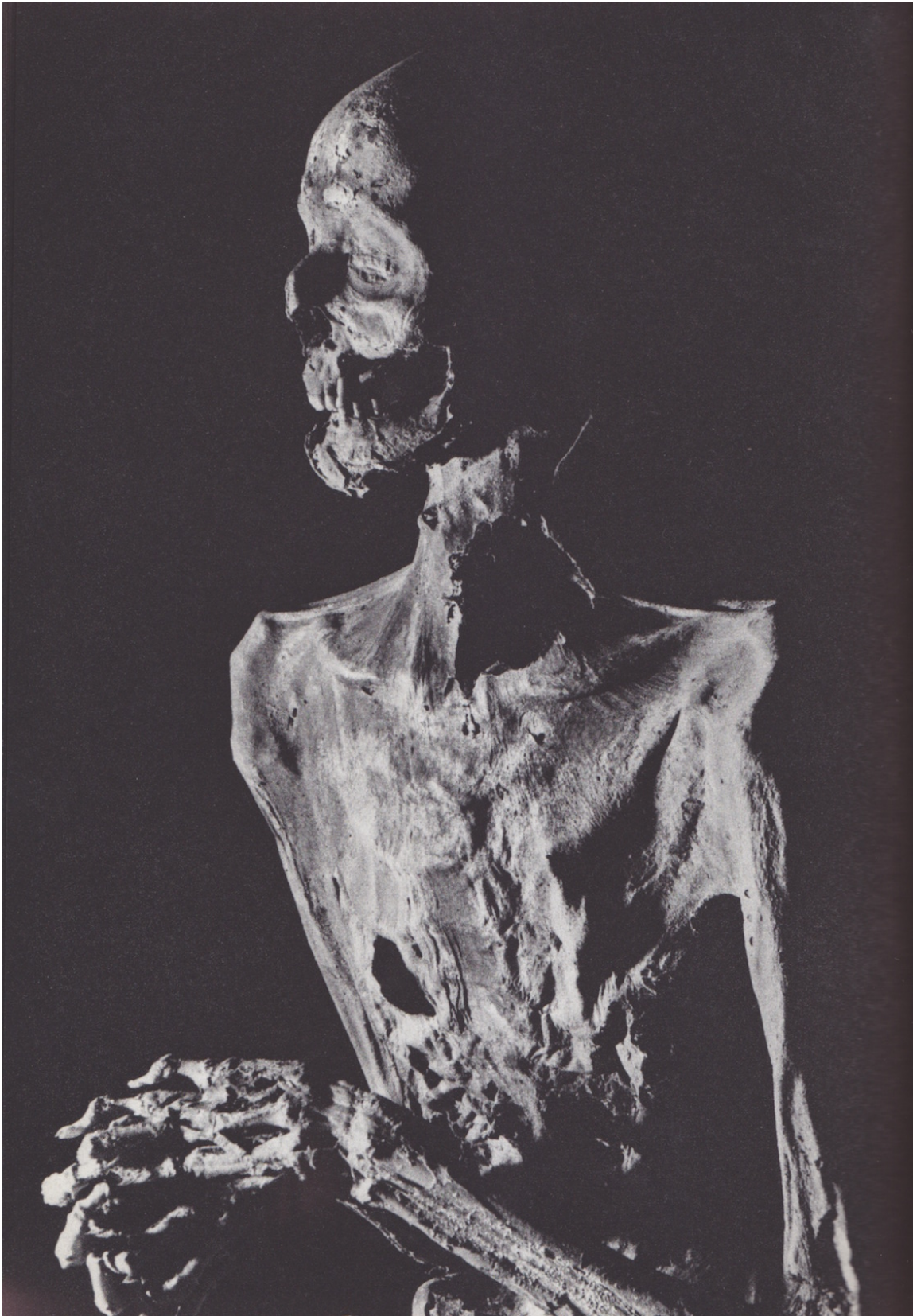


Fig. 3.1 *Sokushinbutsu* of Zenkai. Edo period (Jōkyō 4, 1687). Kannonji, Higashigata, Niigata prefecture. Photo by Naitō Masatoshi.



Fig. 3.2 Stele for celebrating the accomplishment of the five thousand days self-seclusion ritual at Senninzawa performed by Ryūunkai 龍運海. On the lower right corner there are the names of the *dai sewanin* 大世話人 and disciples of Seiunkai. Fig. 3.2a On the right side of the basement there are the names of the *kō* members who sponsored the asceticism of Seiunkai. Meiji 33 (1900). Senninzawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (23/07/2013).

今度控方美陽殿山仙人遊記  
 當由八月甲子より二十日と名上籠仕  
 度大形相企ち申上長途小返長  
 相成りし可形就建業多々在度事為是也  
 自力及筆の所陽殿山所候御止之

今度限由少所助清事也  
 湯殿山所賢前ちて五穀成就  
 家運長久諸願滿是申事長久  
 御祈禱世長壽の御丹紙化御遊之  
 旨趣極言御件  
 海向寺内  
 嘉永二年空海筆  
 四月廿五日  
 善海



Fig. 3.3 and Fig. 3.3a Register of the offerings made by the *kō* members of Kaikōji in order to sponsor the one thousand day self-seclusion ritual of Zenkai at Senninzawa. Fig. 3.3b Amount of the offering, name of the village, family name and first name of the sponsor. Edo period (Kan'ei 6, 1853). Kaikōji, Sakata, Yamagata prefecture. Photos by the author (09/09/2014).



Fig. 3.4 The mummified corpse of Kōchi Hōin. Muromachi period (Jōji 2, 1363) Saijōji, Mishima, Niigata prefecture.



Fig. 3.5 Coffin for the corpse of Bukkai. Fig. 3.5a Detail of the border's thickness. Fig. 3.6b Detail of the external coating of lacquer. Kannonji, Murakami, Niigata prefecture. Photo by the author (7/09/2014).

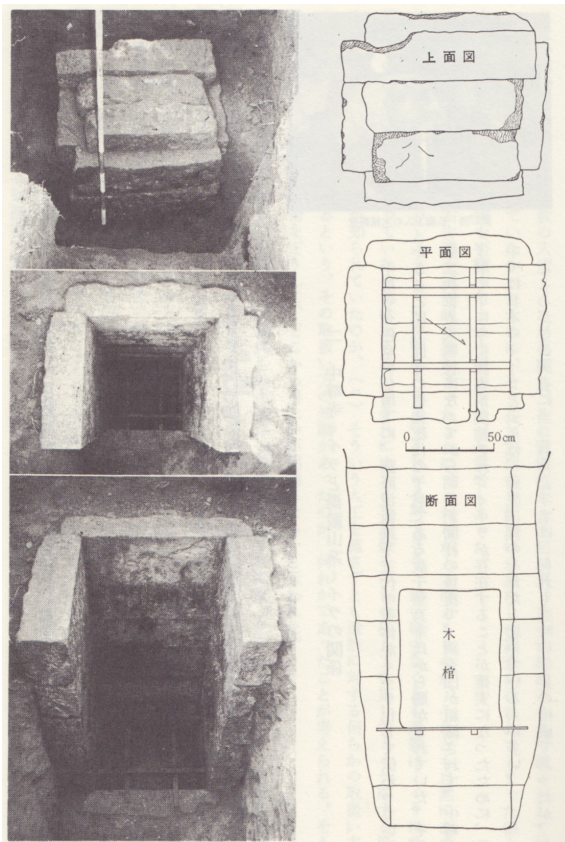


Fig. 3.6 *Ishi no karōto* of Bukkai. Fig. 3.6a Cutaway view. Meiji 36 (1903). Kannonji, Murakami, Niigata prefecture. Upper photo by the author (7/09/2014).



Fig. 3.7 Ironic representation of the *dochū nyūjō* performed by the lascivious Gankai Ajari 岩海阿闍梨. The flames of Gankai's passions (*shinka moe* 心火燃) emit from the bamboo pole instead of the ascetic heat (Skt. *tapas*). Santō Kyōden 山東京伝 (1761–1816), illustrations by Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国 (1769–1825), *Iwaigushi kume no adauchi* 岩井櫛桑野仇討. Edo period (Bunka 5, 1808).

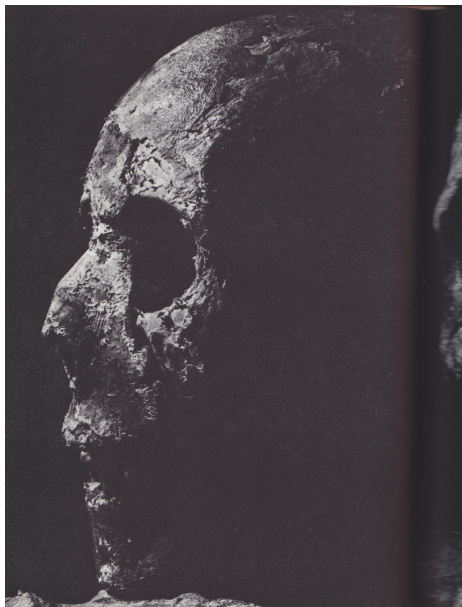


Fig. 3.8 Profile of the *sokushinbutsu* of Tetsumonkai with the left eye missing. Edo period (Bunsei 12, 1829). Chūrenji, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by Naitō Masatoshi.



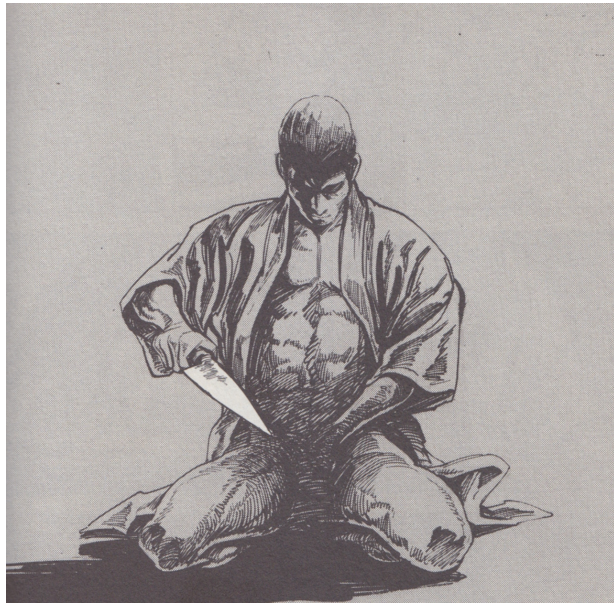


Fig. 3.9 Emasculating Testumonkai. Tomi Shinzō, *Tetsumonkai Shōnin den*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Magajin Faibu, 2006), 260.



Fig. 3.10 Re-clothing ceremony for Shinnyokai. First day of June, 2003. Dainichibō, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture.



Fig. 3.11 Wooden statue of Tetsumonkai with tufts of human beards inserted in the face. Edo period (19th century). Fudōdō, Matsuyama, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (29/11/2012).

## Chapter Four

### The Mountain of Silence: Pilgrimage to Yudono

I cannot speak of Yudono where my sleeves are wet with tears.

Matsuo Bashō, *Oku no hosomichi*<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the religious structures of pilgrimages to Yudono. At its most basic level, the pilgrimage can be understood as a ritual travel during which the practitioner penetrates the sacred landscape of the mountain. However, there are other types of pilgrimage that foster cultural and devotional visualizations of a sacred site without requiring a physical journey through it. For instance, the *engi* dedicated to Mount Yudono can be interpreted as sacred narratives that transmitted visions, legends, and cults intimately related to this mountain in order to inculcate a sort of sympathetic database of memories in the minds of those who came in contact with these texts. *Engi* were powerful tools for instilling in people the desire to actually travel to Yudono—at least once in their lives—in order to become part of this mountain.

The communicative strategies of the *engi* are also extremely varied. Some gave priority

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<sup>1</sup>. In Genroku 2 (1689) Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 (1644–1694) composed this short poem (*haiku* 俳句) after the pilgrimage to Mount Yudono, which marked the lyrical and spiritual apex of his famous travel diary (*kikō* 紀行) *Oku no hosomichi* おくのおそ道 (posthumously published in Genroku 15, 1702). The original text of the *haiku* is: *Katararenu Yudono ni nurasu tamoto kana* 語られぬ湯殿にぬらす袂かな. See Hagiwara Yasuo, *Bashō Oku no hosomichi: zuke Sora tabinikki Oku no hosomichi sugagomo shō* (1979; repr., Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 51.

to the visual aspect of the written text, which was supposed to be understood through the reader's eyes, while others were meant to be orally recited by religious professionals and aurally assimilated by the audience. *Engi*-induced sacred memories thus relied on stimulating both the vision and hearing of consumers of *engi*. Rather than being neutral, *engi* entailed the formation of layers of fictionalized pasts that were supposed to augment the power of a certain place and, consequently, the authority of the religious institutions linked to that site. The productions of new *engi* or the manipulation of the old ones played a pivotal role in the legal disputes between Haguro and Yudono for the supremacy over the Dewa Sanzan.

Yudono pilgrims can be divided into two categories: the standard pilgrims (*dōsha* 道者), who came to Yudono without any specific affiliation with a Yudonosan *kō*, and the “ascending-descending ascetics” (*nobori kudari no gyōnin* 上り下りの行人), who were pilgrims belonging to the Yudonosan *kō* and who made annual pilgrimages to Yudono. The *nobori kudari no gyōnin*'s religious status was higher than non-affiliated pilgrims, and they were regarded as a sort of *trait d'union* between the normal lay devotees and the *issei gyōnin*. The pre-pilgrimage rituals of self-seclusion that *nobori kudari no gyōnin* practiced inside ascetic huts (*gyōya*) within the village, and their adherence to ascetic regulations during the actual pilgrimage to Yudono, made their practices extremely similar to those usually performed by the *issei gyōnin*. The main difference was a matter of temporality. The ascetic practices of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were limited to the pilgrimage season, while the *issei gyōnin* continuously performed them throughout the year.

The rituals practiced by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* inside the *gyōya* are particularly interesting because they show that immobility was as important as mobility during the pilgrimage. The *gyōya* itself was a *mitate* of the sacred mountain within the mundane space

of the village. Therefore, the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* could access Yudono simply by entering the *gyōya*, without needing to abandon their everyday activities. This seems to contradict the famous Turnerian interpretation of pilgrimage as an exclusively kinetic ritual in which the extra-ordinariness of space and time and the liminality of the participants are the only distinctive characteristics. In contrast to this, the structure of Yudono pilgrimage shows cycles of, and alternations between, ordinary and extra-ordinary spaces and times. It highlights rituals that transformed farmers into pilgrims or liminals, but also other rituals that brought returned pilgrims to their status as ordinary members of the village.

## **2. The *Engi* of Yudono**

### **2.1. Yudono: the Water Hall of the Ganges**

The production of foundation stories (*engi*) about a numinous mountain was an essential step for creating and diffusing symbols and meanings that characterized a specific religious site. Pilgrims (*dōsha*) who traveled to Yudono came in contact with this mountain even before treading the roads that gave them physical access to Dewa Sanzan.<sup>2</sup> *Engi* narratives worked as a sort of “auditory pilgrimage” that put potential pilgrims and devotees in touch with a divine landscape without requiring any actual movement through space. It goes without saying that the proliferation of *engi* about a certain mountain was directly

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<sup>2</sup>. The written sources that describe the Dewa Sanzan pilgrims most often refer to them as “practitioners” (*dōsha*) or “visitors to shrines and temples” (*sankeisha* 参詣者). The first term is generally used to indicate Buddhist practitioners, but in the context of pilgrimage it underlines those groups of devotees who travel toward temples or sacred places. In this case *dōsha* can also be written as 同者 or 同社.

proportional to the fame of the site and its inclusion within important pilgrimage routes, which increased the religious, social, and economic capital associated with that site.

The narrative structure of the *engi* aimed at forming fictional layers of time and space, which were superimposed onto a real place in order to shape its religious identity. Henri Lefebvre writes that the mechanisms for the “production of space” are based on the continuous work of an “etymology of locations,” which defines a place as the result of a permanent tension between past and present.<sup>3</sup> The diachronic and historical aspects of a site are inscribed within the borders of the synchronic and present aspects of the same place. The ‘producing process’ of a site, which corresponds to the narratives of the *engi*, is so intimately interconnected with its ‘produced object’, in this case Mount Yudono, that there is a perfect reflection and absorption between the two. In other words, the *engi* is the mountain and the mountain is the *engi*. The *engi* performs a mythopoietic function, which literally builds up the epistemological body of the mountain. Reading or listening to the narration of an *engi* explaining the origins of Yudono corresponded to a noetic wandering through the multiple times and spaces associated with the mountain.

Michel Foucault further problematizes the interpretation of all the “techniques for appropriating space” among which we can include the *engi*.<sup>4</sup> For Foucault any spatial epistemology also involves a sort of subjugation or curbing of space to create power and authority. The *engi* were not limited to a neutral transmission of the origins of a numinous site, but they also provided narrative structures of knowledge that could be used to exert forms of control over specific areas. This could be one of the reasons why the practice of rewriting the ancient *engi*, which dealt with the genesis of the religious past of Yudono or

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<sup>3</sup>. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974; repr., Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 37.

<sup>4</sup>. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.

Haguro, was perceived by the Buddhist monks of the two mountains as a crucial practice to prevail in the legal disputes about the possibility of expanding, or risking a reduction to, their religious authority over the sacred space of Dewa Sanzan.

Because of the numerous lawsuits that took place between Yudono and Haguro and the subsequent operations of rewriting, elimination, or adaptation of the medieval *engi* about these mountains, it is extremely difficult to know the exact themes that characterized the *engi* of Yudono before the seventeenth century. However the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki*, which is attributed to Ten'yū, provides fragmentary echoes of pre-Edo period *engi*. It is important to take into account that Ten'yū edited this text in Kan'ei 3 (1626), when he was still a young Shingon monk called Yūyo. Since this was four years before he became the *bettō* of Haguro, it means that when he compiled the *Yudonosan hōryūshiki* he had not yet met with Tenkai and was still immune from the doctrinal bias against Yudono that inspired his rewriting of the Haguro *engi* in Shōbō 1 (1652). In the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* Ten'yū gathered together in one single work at least three different *kirigami* or oral traditions about the origins of Yudono. The heterogeneous character of the sources he used to compile the text can be inferred from the fact that there are at least three different explanations about the spatial and temporal genesis of Yudono.

The *engi* starts with a cosmological panorama in which the countries of the various Buddhist universes are divided into four categories: great countries, midsize countries, small countries, and millet grain-size countries. India, China, and Japan share together this last label. After this premise the narrative focus shifts toward a peculiar place in the Japanese archipelago: Dewa Sanzan.

There is nothing more sublime than the vow (*gogan* 御願) of Dainichi Nyorai. Moreover, the original land (*honji* 本地) of Dainichi Nyorai corresponds with the eternal (*muko murai* 無去无来) heaven of the thirty-three gods (*tōriten* 忉利天) [on Mount Sumeru], which is manifested (*arawashitamō* 顕給) through these three sacred mountains (*san no miyama* 三御山). [Dainichi Nyorai] is the source of all the buddhas. When [Dainichi Nyorai] visualized the three paths (*sanro* 三路) he opened the way to all the Buddhas that appeared in the pure country of India during the first *kalpa*.<sup>5</sup> In order to purify the defilements of the fifth realm of human beings, [Dainichi Nyorai] appeared in India and went to the Mountain of the Buddha Birth (Busshōsan 仏生山), where he taught the beginningless and endless origination [of phenomena] in order to convert the sentient beings.<sup>6</sup> When [Dainichi Nyorai] descended to this country, he created a myriad of *kami*, the most important of which was called Ise Tenshō Daijin 伊勢天照大神. During the reign of the Emperor Ninrei (Ninrei Tennō 仁禮天王), [Dainichi Nyorai] visited this country.<sup>7</sup> He dimmed his light (*wakō dōji* 和光同塵) in order to create positive karmic ties [with the sentient beings of this world] and provided benefits [for all the sentient beings] for becoming a buddha through manifesting the eight phases of the Buddha's life (*hasso jōdō* 八相成道). He flew through the three countries (*sangoku* 三国) for twentythree thousand four hundred fiftysix years and arrived in Higo province (Higo no kuni 肥後国) in Kyūshū where he climbed on (*zenjō* 禪定) Mount Aso 阿蘇 and remained there for six years.<sup>8</sup> Then [Dainichi Nyorai] moved to Shikoku and entered the cave of Takeishijō (Takeishijō ga iwa 巖石城岩) on the island of Awaji 淡路 where he remained, preaching the Dharma for thirtytwo years. Since the minds of the living beings [of that land] were not ready [to receive his teachings] a great wind started blowing from Katsuma 勝間 [region] and [Dainichi Nyorai] ate three marvelous jewels.<sup>9</sup> [Dainichi Nyorai] reached the country of Dewa and secluded himself inside the *oku no in* of Mount Gassan (*Gassan no oku no in no uchi ni komoritamau* 月山奥院内籠給), which is located in the upper region of the Tama River (Tamagawa 玉河) in the land of gold, silver

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<sup>5</sup>. The three paths correspond to three meditative stages. The first is the “bird-path,” in which the mind of the meditator is totally free and does not leave traces. The second is the “profound-path,” which corresponds to the acceptance of the Buddha's teachings that eliminate every obstacle. The last is defined as the “extending of the hands” and corresponds to the teacher's use of *upāya* in order to instruct the disciple.

<sup>6</sup>. In this narrative the buddha Śākyamuni is described as a manifestation of the cosmic buddha Mahāvairocana (Dainichi Nyorai).

<sup>7</sup>. An emperor called Ninrei does not exist in Japanese history. The author was probably trying to make an allusion to a mythical sovereign similar to the Confucian ideal of the wise ruler.

<sup>8</sup>. The area of Higo corresponds to the present Kumamoto 熊本 prefecture in Kyūshū. In Shugendō texts the term *zenjō* is often used as a synonym of the verb “climb”. For the meaning of the term *zenjō* in Shugendō context see also Gaynor Sekimori, “Defining Shugendō Past and Present: The “Restoration” of Shugendō at Nikkō and Koshikidake,” 52.

<sup>9</sup>. In the Edo period the geographical area of Katsuma indicated various territories around the city of Ōsaka 大阪. This part of the *engi* is unclear because it does not explain the narrative consequences of Dainichi's ingestion of the three jewels. A continuation of this episode was probably truncated.



and lapis lazuli.<sup>10</sup> This is a place that cannot be reached even by the wings of birds. Men do not have access to this area. All the Buddhas rejoiced, the creatures were purified, a good smell spread around and the sun, the moon, and the stars started teaching the Dharma. In order to protect this land and dispel the mist of ignorance, [Dainichi Nyorai] placed a little bit of Dharma dew, which corresponds to the One Vehicle and the marvelous law [of the buddhas], on valleys, grass, and stones. The garrulous birds chirped the two characters A UN. [Dainichi Nyorai] started teaching the two doctrines about Buddha nature and suchness, good and evil Dharma, and the Three Jewels in order to purify the minds of the sentient beings from delusion and erroneous views. In India and China there are a lot of sacred lands, but none superior to Gassan.<sup>11</sup>

In the first part of the *engi* the Pure Land of Dainichi Nyorai is localized in the heaven of the thirty-three gods (*tōriten*), which corresponds to the vast plateau on the summit of Mount Sumeru. Each of the four corners of this flat land constitute a pinnacle that is inhabited by eight gods. The thirty-third god is Taishakuten 帝釈天 (Skt. Indra) who occupies the central position. The heaven of *tōriten* overlaps with the sixth heaven of the realm of desire (*rokuyokuten* 六欲天). On the southern side of Mount Sumeru is the Jambudvīpa continent, on the margin of which is located the Japanese archipelago. In spite of Japan's peripheral position, the mountain range of Dewa Sanzan in the northeastern part of Honshū island represents a terrestrial manifestation of the inaccessible Pure Land of Dainichi on the top of Mount Sumeru. The first legitimizing argument of this *engi* makes reference to the Buddhist cosmological discourse following a descending perspective that aims to create a sort of pan-optical vision that goes from Mount Sumeru, which is the *axis mundi* of our universe, to Dewa Sanzan.

The second argument, which is used to add authority to the territory of Dewa Sanzan, is based on the journey of Dainichi through the three Buddhist countries (*sangoku*): India,

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<sup>10</sup>. The *oku no in* of Gassan indicates Mount Yudono.

<sup>11</sup>. For the original text, see *Shintō taikēi*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 286-287.

China, and Japan. This *engi* presents a hyperkinetic Dainichi that has a marked tendency to climb and seclude himself in meditation inside various sacred peaks. After discarding different mountains in India, China, and Japan such as Mount Aso in Kyūshū and a cave on the island of Awaji in Shikoku, the cosmic buddha Dainichi finally decides to hide himself inside the *oku no in* of Gassan, which corresponds to the marvelous land of Mount Yudono close to the source of the Tama River. The interesting aspect of this narrative is the incubatory role played by sacred mountains to provide a sort of natural shell or stone-womb inside which Dainichi can manifest his power thorough the universe. The geological body of the mountain works as an enormous natural shrine, which emphasizes the presence of Dainichi in a specific location and, at the same time, conceals him from human sight preserving his metaphysical aspect. Gassan, which is the highest peak of Dewa Sanzan, works as a screen displaying the infinite power of Dainichi, and the Gohōzen of Yudono, a volcanic boulder created by the eruptive activity of Gassan, becomes an insuperable natural crypt for hosting and hiding the Dharma-body of this buddha. The geographical proximity between Gassan and Yudono also underlined the interconnection between Amida, which is usually considered the *honji butsu* of Gassan, and Dainichi. At Dewa Sanzan these two buddhas were venerated as complementary deities or twin-buddhas who cooperate in saving sentient beings. For instance, the buddha of Sankozawa 三鈷沢 is called Sanko daihi henjō Nyorai 三鈷大悲遍照如来 and corresponds to the union of Jōbon jōshō Amida Nyorai 上品上生阿弥陀如来 and Taizōkai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai 胎藏界兩部大日如来. According to the Mikkyō interpretation, Dainichi Nyorai is the fundamental source of every aspect of the cosmos, which also includes Amida Nyorai and his Pure Land of the West that are conceived as different manifestations of the cosmic body of Dainichi Nyorai and his Pure Land. In other words Gassan and the Pure Land

of Amida, located on the top of this mountain, were nothing other than projections of the ultimate Pure Land of Dainichi, which was represented by Mount Yudono.

The concluding part of this *engi* gives an interesting description of the mountainous landscape of Yudono as an extension of the body-mind of Dainichi. Stones, trees, rivers, birds, and even the dew of Yudono behave like the hypostasis of Dainichi and manifest his teachings of the Dharma through their presence. The narrative of this *engi* transforms the natural environment of Mount Yudono into a sort of living sūtra, accessible by men not only as a bridging space between human beings and deities, but as a territory that embodied in all its elements the secret presence of gods.

Ten'yū also included in the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* two additional explanations of the origins of the mountain.

The Vulture Peak (Ryōjusen 靈鷲山) of India is the mountain-residence (*gozasan* 御座山) [of Shaka Nyorai] in the north-northeastern direction (*ushitora*). It represents the three bodies [of the Buddha] and the nine levels of rebirth in the Pure Land. Yudono is the Hall of Fluidity (Bariden 波利殿)<sup>12</sup> and its water is like the stream of the Ganges (Gōga 恒河).

[...] When the seal of Amida and Dainichi (*Amida Dainichi no inmon* 阿弥陀大日印文) was placed on the bottom of the sea, the world of the Dharma was introduced in this country. The haze of Daie Gongen 大悲権現 embraces the Peak of Haguro.<sup>13</sup> The water that flows out from Go[hō]zen does not differ from the Lake of the Eight Attributes (Hachikudokuchi 八功德池).<sup>14</sup> [...] These three mountains are the residences of the tathāgatas of the three times (*sansei* 三世). [These mountains] bestow great compassion on this country, favor karmic ties with the bodhisattvas, and help to convert sentient beings and convey them to salvation. Those who make a pilgrimage (*sankei no tomogara*

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<sup>12</sup> The two characters 波利 may be a simplification of the compound *bari* 婆梨 (Skt. *vāri*) that means water or fluidity. A different interpretation of the same compound reminds us of the term *hari* 頗梨 (Skt. *sphaṭika*), which denotes rock crystal (*suishō* 水晶). In both cases Gohōzen is likened to the water element, which symbolizes purity, transparency and fluidity.

<sup>13</sup> Daie Gongen corresponds to Kannon Bosatsu that is a manifestation of Amida Nyorai and the *honjibutsu* of Haguro.

<sup>14</sup> This lake corresponds to the Lotus Pond of the Pure Land of the West. The water of this pond has eight attributes, which are sweetness, freshness, softness, lightness, purity, scentlessness, cleansing, and nourishing.

参詣の輩) to Yudono wear the Dharma clothes of liberation on their bodies, the jewel crown (*hōkan*) of the five wisdoms that corresponds to the white-textile crown (*byakukan* 白冠) on their heads, the sacred cord (*shime no shime* 七五三注連) [around their necks], and in their hands [they hold] rosaries with one-hundred eight beads. During the morning [the pilgrims] make the ritual ablutions with water in the valley in order to eliminate desires and passions. They face the stormy weather of the mountains and recite the sacred names [of buddhas and bodhisattvas] and the Three Jewels. Like in the ancient times pilgrims offer foods and learn about the life-long benefits of the practice of the separate fire (*bekka*). They cut off the roots of passion and reject the mind that is subjugated by the love for women (*nyōnin ai tsuku no kokoro* 女人愛着ノ心). They make the vow of great compassion and serve the Three Jewels, the buddhas, and the *kami*. During the morning [the pilgrims] pray for the coming of the three august [*honibutsu* of Dewa Sanzan] and stay under the waterfall, which strikes their chests, in order to acquire enlightenment reciting the six syllables of the name [of Amida].<sup>15</sup> Even if during their prior lifetime they made a sincere vow [to obtain] the suchness of the Dharma-nature and respect the precepts, if now they lose their faith and become dumb, how could they be able to obtain any benefits? If they come one time [to Yudono], [they] will throw away the dust of the seven calamities,<sup>16</sup> eliminate the beginningless harmful behaviors, and be saved from the three poisons thanks to the undimmed light of the original Buddhist path. Venerating the wish-fulfilling jewel they will eliminate poverty and suffering and obtain a prosperous and long life. In twelve years, they will be able to not retrogress to the [bad] behaviors of their previous lifetime [...].<sup>17</sup>

The *engi* continues, with a further conflation between Yudono and the Vulture Peak (Skt. *Gr̥dhrakūṭa-parvata*), a mountain located near the city of Rājagṛha, the capital of the ancient state of Magadha (Magada 摩揭陀) in the northern part of India. The Vulture Peak is a pivotal site in Buddhist history because its name is associated with the exposition of important sermons and scriptures such as the *Lotus Sūtra* that the Buddha Śākyamuni revealed orally while abiding on the top of this mountain. In this specific case, the semiotic link between the Vulture Peak and Yudono is given by their spatial orientation, which

<sup>15</sup>. The three worthies are Amida, Seishi, and Kannon.

<sup>16</sup>. The seven calamities are: eclipses, movements of constellations, irregularities on earth, fire, flood, wind-storms, and pestilence.

<sup>17</sup>. For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 287.

corresponds to the northeastern direction. As the Vulture Peak protects the state of Magadha, which is intimately associated with the Buddhist faith in India, Yudono plays the same role for the Japanese archipelago from its northeastern (*ushitora*) location in Dewa province. In the Edo period, the year of the ox (*ushidoshi* 丑年) was considered the most propitious time to make a pilgrimage to Yudono, but this passage in the *engi* underlines that this temporal association originally derives from a spatial association, which linked together a Japanese peak with another Indian peak that shared the same northeasterly direction.

The *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* identifies the Gohōzen with the Indian Bariden and its hot water is compared to the lukewarm water of the Ganges River. This is another typical example of the narrative structure of the *engi*, which concentrates on a single site such as Yudono a multi-stratification of spaces and times that come from apparently distant sources. Yudono did not simply derive its legitimacy from a narrative conflation with ancient Indian Buddhist spaces and times, but it also allowed these two elements, which were geographically and temporally removed from the reality of the Japanese archipelago, to acquire a dimension of contemporaneity and accessibility for the Japanese people.

This *engi* presents also a further association of Amida with Dainichi whose magical seal was placed on the bottom of the Japanese sea to protect the land. According to medieval Buddhist texts such as the *Keiranshūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集 (Bunpō 文保 2, 1318) composed by the Tendai monk Kōshū 光宗 (1276–1350) this seal belongs to Dainichi alone. Nevertheless, the cultic relevance attributed to the overlapping of Shingon and Jōdo elements in the doctrinal teachings of Dewa Sanzan produced this adaptation of the standard explanation of Dainichi's seal. Following the same adaptive logic the two craters of hot water that constitute the body of the Gohōzen are equated with the Lake of the Eight Attributes (Hachikudokuchi),

which is supposed to be located in the central area of Amida's Pure Land and it is also known as Lotus Pond.

The concluding passage of the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* provides an all-absorbing vision of the three types of Buddhist temporality (*sansei*), which characterizes the three peaks of Dewa Sanzan. The entire pilgrimage through Dewa Sanzan corresponds to a sort of time-machine that has a direct influence on the past (*ka* 過), present (*gen* 現), and future (*mi* 未) karma of the pilgrim. Haguro represents the Pure Land of Shō Kannon who helps the pilgrim in the initial accumulation of positive karma in order to eliminate pain and suffering (*shaba uen* 娑婆有緣) from the present life (*gen*). Gassan hosts Amida's Pure Land of the West and removes the obstacles that derive from the accumulation of negative karma in the previous lives of the pilgrim (*ka*) and helps him obtain rebirth in the Pure Land. At the end of this cathartic process, Yudono, alias Dainichi's Pure Land, symbolizes the ultimate fulfillment of the redemptive practices (*shūgyō jōju* 修業成就), which the pilgrim undertook at Haguro and Gassan, and the certitude of becoming a buddha in this actual body (*sokushin jōbutsu*) in near future (*mi*).

The last lines of this *engi* point out the material target of the entire narrative, which is to invite groups of pilgrims (*sankei no tomogara*) to actually climb Mount Yudono to have a somatic experience of the Buddhist soteriological discourses emphasized in the oral and written narratives about this numinous site. The pilgrimage to Yudono is essentially defined as an extreme ascetic practice, which differs from the ascetic practices of the *issei gyōnin* only in terms of temporal length. The *issei gyōnin* made a sort of life-long pilgrimage to Yudono, while the normal pilgrims performed very similar ascetic practices but confined them within a restricted period of time.

The *Yudonosan-ha gyōnin* (1792) introduces a further specification about the religious status that was granted to the Yudono pilgrims. There were pilgrims who went to Yudono without being permanent members of Yudonosan *kō* as well as other pilgrims who were affiliated with the Yudonosan *kō* and manifested a continuous devotion for this mountain. The first type of pilgrim was simply defined as *sankeisha*, *junreisha*, or *dōsha* while the second type of semi-professional pilgrim was called “ascending-descending ascetics” (*nobori kudari no gyōnin*).<sup>18</sup> The difference between *issei gyōnin* and *nobori kudari no gyōnin* was that the second group was composed of lay persons who did not perform the *sennichigyō* and limited their presence on the sacred territory of Yudono to an annual pilgrimage. However, every year they practiced the rituals of self-seclusion (*betsugyō*) and separated fire (*bekka*) inside the ascetic huts (*gyōya*) which were specifically built in their villages. The *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were a special class of Yudono pilgrim who referred to the *issei gyōnin* as founders or charismatic leaders of the Yudonosan *kō* to which they belonged. Although all the pilgrims who visited Yudono were required as a matter of obligation to perform a period of purification and asceticism before entering the space of the mountain, there was a differentiation in the degree of commitment and religious status attributed to the normal Yudono pilgrims (*sankeisha*) and the pilgrimage practices performed by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* who belonged to the Yudonosan *kō*.

## 2.2. The Auditory Dimension of the Yudono Engi: *Saimon Gatari* and Okuni Jōruri

When Ten'yū composed the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* he unified into a single text various

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<sup>18</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 95.

*kirigami* and oral legends that monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* of the past had transmitted about the origins of Yudono. Ten'yū wrote an *engi* characterized by prose in the classical Chinese style (*kanbuntai* 漢文体), which was supposed to be read by cultivated monks rather than *shugenja* or *issei gyōnin* who probably did not possess the necessary linguistic ability to directly access this type of written text. The target of the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* was an educated reader who could enjoy the text through the visual dimension of the written characters that constituted it. In other words, this *engi* primarily engaged the sight of the reader who had to be able to recognize the characters in order to extract their meaning. This means that the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* prioritizes the signified over the signifier and the visual aspect of the text over its phonetic rendering.

Nevertheless, most of the extant Yudono *engi* are written texts that were composed to directly engage the ears of the audience rather than the eyes. The Yudono *engi* which were written in the second half of the seventeenth century and were transmitted during the entire Edo period belong to a special class of magical recitative (*saimon gatari* 祭文語り) or ballad (*tan* 譚) that combined entertaining aspects with auspicious or apotropaic functions.

There are eight texts that can be classified as Yudono *engi* and are included in the second wave of foundational stories that were produced after the legal disputation between Haguro and Yudono. These *engi* are: 1) *Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai gohonji* 湯殿山大日如来御本地 (probably Genroku period, 1688–1704); 2) *Yudonosan gohonji* 湯殿山御本地 (Saitō hōnkai 齊藤報恩会 copy, 1803); 3) *Dewa Yudonosan daigongen gohonjiki* 出羽 湯殿山大権現御本地記 (Saitō hōnkai copy, 1807); 4) *Kikeishi* (1812);<sup>19</sup> 5) *Yudonosan goengi* 湯殿山御縁

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<sup>19</sup> *Kikeishi* was composed by Togashi Hisasada who put in writing some oral teachings of the eminent *issei gyōnin* Tetsumonkai. It is a complex text that gathers together various explanations about religious traditions and rituals of Yudono. It includes in part a long description of the origins of Yudono and the story of Kukai's foundation of Chūrenji. This textual enclave can be considered as an *engi* of Yudono.



記 (Hirosaki 弘前 City Library copy, 1854); 6) *Yudonosan honji* 湯殿山本地 (Saitō hōnkai double copy, 1859); 7) *Dewa no kuni Yudonosan yurai* 出羽国湯殿山由来 (Dewa Sanzan Jinja 出羽三山神社 copy, 1862); and 8) *Dainichibō yurai* 大日坊由来 (probably late Edo period).<sup>20</sup>

Part of texts 4 and 8 can be directly attributed to the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō while all the other texts are copies (*shabon* 写本), which were transcribed by lay members who belonged to the Yudonosan *kō*. These eight *engi* often include among the main text spurious insertions of oral ballads or legends about various types of deities who were associated with Yudono. In other words the textual body of these eight Yudono *engi* is a melange of sources, which interpolate different old written materials, oral legends, and ballad texts about Yudono.

The members of the Yudonosan *kō* used to listen to these *engi* or ballads, which *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* recited for them at *kō* meetings or during village festivals (*matsuri* 祭り). The auspicious character of the *engi* was one of the main reasons for their massive diffusion inside the Edo folkloric traditions. The *engi* of Yudono were defined as magical recitatives (*saimon gatari*) that *shugenja* or *issei gyōnin* narrated in order to dispel evil influences or demons through the purificatory sound of the textual words. In winter time, and in particular during the new year period, *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* visited the houses of their parishioners to distribute new amulets, and they were often asked to recite passages of the *engi* that worked as apotropaic ceremonies for purifying the domestic space.<sup>21</sup> The conspicuous presence of apparently pleonastic quotations of names of *kami*, buddhas, or bodhisattvas in

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<sup>20</sup>. The *Dainichibō yurai* is an undated text that explains the origins of Yudono and the pivotal role of Kūkai as the founder of Dainichibō.

<sup>21</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan to Shugendō*, 226-227.

the Yudono *engi* was not simply motivated by the necessity to confer legitimacy on the mountain, but it was due to the invocatory character of these texts, which were supposed to actually summon the deities during the recitation.

Narita Mamoru proposes a further classification of the Yudono *engi* as *okuni jōruri* 御国浄瑠璃 because of the peculiar division of the main text into chapters (*dan* 段), which make the entire structure of these writings similar to *jōruri* plays.<sup>22</sup> This partition of the text into chapters was made to facilitate the memorization of the story for those who had to recite it during ceremonies or feasts. The *okuni jōruri* gather together in written form various oral legends and ballads about the origins of mountains and other numinous sites of the Tōhoku region. A peculiarity of the *okuni jōruri* is the specific link between these texts and the folkloric heritage of Tōhoku.

The diffusion of the Yudono *engi* in the form of *okuni jōruri* was probably boosted by the various public exhibitions (*kaichō*) of sacred treasures that the four chief temples of Yudono held in order to spread devotion to this mountain among the population of Edo. For instance, according to the *Bukō nenpyō* 武江年表 (a chronicle of events that took place in Edo from 1590 to 1873), in the second month of Hōreki 9 (1759) Hondōji organized an impressive *kaichō* to display its icon of Dainichi Nyorai together with other sacred objects at the temple Kaikōin 回向院 in the city of Edo.<sup>23</sup> During that *kaichō* the Hondōji monks authorized the circulation of the *Dewa Yudonosan Daigongen gohonjiki*, of which remains a later copy dated Bunka 1 (1804). The *kaichō* were fundamental occasions for advertising the cult of Yudono and the religious traditions associated with this mountain among potential pilgrims who lived

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<sup>22</sup> Narita Mamoru, “‘Dewa no kuni Yudonosan yurai’ ni tsuite. On ‘Dewanokuni Yudonosan-Yurai’ The History of Mt. Yudono in Dewa Province,” *Daitō bunka daigaku kiyō*, no. 14 (March, 1976): 134.

<sup>23</sup> Narita Mamoru, “‘Yudonosan goengi’—kaisetsu to honkoku— ‘Yudonosan–Goengi’—Notes with Reprint,” *Daitō bunka daigaku kiyō*, no. 16 (March 1978): 5.

in distant areas such as Edo. The diffusion of written copies of the Yudono *engi* was an important editorial strategy, which allowed the people of Edo to listen first, and later spread religious discourses and traditions intimately connected with the divine power of Yudono.

In the *Kasumu Komagata* かすみ駒形 (Tenmei 6, 1786) the famous traveler and scholar of national learning Sugae Masumi 菅江真澄 (1754–1829) reported an interesting episode during which he had the chance to listen to a recital of sacred ballads and famous stories while spending a night in the city of Isawa 胆沢 in Michinoku province.

Second month, sixth day [Tenmei 6, 1786]

In the morning there was a spring rain and the weather was warm. After sunset the evening moon was slightly veiled. A *biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師 came. Even if in the Keichō era [the *biwa hōshi*] played *biwa*, he played a *sansen* 三線 that showed traces of various repairs to the cat skin and the external protective-patch (*hachimen* 撥面) made of paper.<sup>24</sup> He recited various *jōruri* such as the *Soga* 曾我, *Yashima* 八島, *Nikō monogatari* 尼公物語,<sup>25</sup> *Yudonosan no honji* 湯殿山ノ本地, and the story of a beautiful woman called “Inestimable Treasure” (Chiyohōko 千代ほうこ). He raised his voice in the passages of “once upon a time the Soga” and “the storm that comes down from Mount Chichibu ちちぶ is so strong that this body becomes like dust. Oh what will be of my mother!” He kept reciting and reciting (*katari katarite* 語り語りて) until the moon turned into dawn. When he finished I quickly returned on my way and met my pillow with the daylight.<sup>26</sup>

The protagonists of this short passage are only two persons: the *biwa hōshi* who recites various *jōruri* that he had probably memorized by heart and Sugae Masumi who listens to these recitatives through the voice of the bard. The audience of the *biwa hōshi* did not engage in the *jōruri* narratives in their written form but through their sound dimension. This entry provides a vivid picture of the human sensorial faculties that were involved during the

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<sup>24</sup>. The *sansen* is a small type of *shamisen* 三味線 with a round soundbox.

<sup>25</sup>. *Yashima* and *Nikō monogatari* are *jōruri* that narrate the saga of Yoshitsune.

<sup>26</sup>. For the original text see *Sugae Masumi yūranki*, vol. 2, eds. Uchida Takeshi, Miyamoto Tsuneichi (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1966), 27.

enjoyment of religious recitatives such as the *Yudonosan no honji* quoted above. The auditory experience rather than the visual one characterized the encounter with this type of text. The fact that most of the Yudono *engi* were diffused among the population as *saimon gatari* recited by *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* or as *okuni jōruri*, which were performed by the *biwa hōshi*, demonstrates that these texts were generally not supposed to be read by devotees or pilgrims but were composed in order to be memorized or interiorized through listening. The aim of the Yudono *engi* was to provide the people in the audience with a sort of aural memory about the most relevant facts of the religious tradition of Yudono in order to transform them into devotees and pilgrims who desired to physically access this numinous site at least once in their life (See Fig. 4.1).

### **2.3. Yudono Engi and Kūkai**

The principal difference among the Yudono *engi* which were composed before the first legal dispute (1639) against Haguro, such as the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki* (1626), and those that were written after that period is the constant presence of Kūkai as the preeminent character in the narrative plot. In the second half of the seventeenth century the Buddhist monks of Yudono tried every possible expedient to establish a strong Shingon identity for their mountain, in order to resist the legal attacks of Haguro, which defined Yudono as a Tendai site. The narrative solution for emphasizing the link between Yudono and the Shingon School was to make reference to Kūkai as the opener (*kaizan*) of the mountain and founder of all the main temples in this territory.

For instance, the plot of the *Yudonosan goengi* is entirely focused on the narration of Kūkai's life and his pilgrimage to Mount Yudono. After a detailed description of the divine modalities through which the mother of Kūkai conceived him and the various miracles attributed to him, the *engi* speaks of the encounter between Kūkai and the bodhisattva Monju on Mount Godai 五台 (Ch. Wutai) during his travels in China.

[...] Kūkai arrived at Mount Godai and stood in front of the bodhisattva Monju. Then Monju said: “Did you make a pilgrimage to all the mountains and peaks of Japan?” Kūkai replied: “Since Japan is a small country, I made pilgrimage everywhere.” Monju observed that: “In that case, have you been to the sacred mountain (*reizan*) called Yudono, which is located in Dewa province in the northeastern (*ushitora*) direction from the Vulture Peak in India, and is a Pure Land of Dainichi Nyorai?” To this question Kūkai mumbled: ‘I have not done a pilgrimage to that mountain yet. I did not know the details about that mountain.’ He was perplexed, and replied: “I did not go there.” [Then] thinking that this might be a hindrance for the transmission of the Dharma, [Kūkai] turned toward the eastern direction and prayed: ‘Homage to Yudonosan Daigongen! Once back to Japan I will immediately make a pilgrimage there! Please forgive my deceitful words!’ Then he said: “I will certainly make a pilgrimage to Yudonosan!” The bodhisattva Monju said: “The people who have made a pilgrimage to Yudono even once in their life have a Sanskrit letter, which represents the base of the sun (*hi no moto* 日本), on the soles of their feet. Look at this!” Kūkai was not sure of himself, and prayed in his mind. Then by a miracle the Sanskrit letter appeared on his soles. [...] Due to these causes and conditions (*innen* 因縁) Kūkai received the order from the bodhisattva Monju of Mount Godai in China to make a pilgrimage to Mount Yudono.<sup>27</sup>

The *Yudonosan goengi* introduces an unexpected aspect of Kūkai, who is usually portrayed as a champion of morality, and puts him in the paradoxical situation of telling a quasi-lie in front of Monju. When Kūkai realized that he had missed Mount Yudono during his pilgrimages to the sacred mountains of Japan, he suddenly repented and addressed an abrupt request for help to Yudono Gongen who interceded for him *in extremis*. Thanks to the

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<sup>27</sup>. For the original text see Narita Mamoru, “‘Yudonosan goengi’—kaisetsu to honkoku— ‘Yudonosan—Goengi’—Notes with Reprint”: 17-18.

power of his faith, Kūkai was able to establish an immediate karmic relationship with Yudono Gongen who magically made the Sanskrit letter appear on the soles of his feet even if he had not been to Yudono yet. The continuation of the episode reports that a minor deity called Sankikai 三喜海 was puzzled by the fact that Kūkai obtained the sacred seal of Yudono on his soles without having made an actual pilgrimage there and decided to cancel the seal through a gust of wind he produced with his fan. At this point Monju exhorted Kūkai to make a real pilgrimage to Yudono once back to Japan.

Apart from the debunking tone of the episode that displays a lying Kūkai, the aim of this *engi* is to underline a clear hierarchy between Kūkai and Yudono Gongen, who helped the eminent monk to overcome a difficult moment. Even if the monks of Yudono exploited the authority of the religious discourse associated with Kūkai in order to create a connection between Yudono and the Shingon School, the superiority of the power of Yudono Gongen remained always undisputed. In the Yudono *engi* Kūkai played a pivotal role as a doctrinal and sectarian symbol rather than a supernatural savior. For the monks of Yudono, Kūkai incarnated the identity of the Shingon School, which they employed in the legal and political skirmishes against Haguro.

Obedying the order of Monju, Kūkai went back to Japan and during the Daidō era (806–810) he opened Mount Yudono. There is no agreement between the various *engi* about the exact year in which Kūkai was supposed to have climbed Mount Yudono. When Kūkai asked Monju how he could recognize the sacred territory of Yudono, the bodhisattva explained to him that this mountain was located in the upper part of the Daibonji River. The *Kikeishi* reports that Kūkai first arrived in Sakata and then reached Mount Iimori (Iimoriyama 飯盛山) where the Mogami River intersects with the Akagawa 赤川 River. Kūkai made ritual

offerings to the *kami* of that land at the magical spot where the two rivers met. After this he climbed Mount Iimori and discovered another branch of the Akagawa River, called Hakkuringawa 八苦輪川.

Daishi felt a deep joy at the sight of this place and kept following the Akagawa. After covering five or six *ri*, Daishi saw five Sanskrit letters A-BI-RA-UN-KEN that were floating down the waters.<sup>28</sup> When Daishi recognized that these were the “Great *bonji*” described by the venerable Monju, he was overcome by joy and built a *torii* 鳥居 in this spot (this place is called Daibonji and the adjacent area is now called Toriikawara 鳥井川原).<sup>29</sup>

Kūkai kept walking through the difficult territory at the foot of Mount Yudono until he reached a rocky place and decided to stop in a cave called the Cave of the Subtle Voice (Hosogoe no iwaya 細声の岩屋). Kūkai realized that he was not ready to directly face the majesty of Gohōzen and resolved to perform extreme ascetic practices before trying to proceed further on the path. The Cave of the Subtle Voice derives its name from the fact that laypeople did not dare to speak aloud when they passed close to this place so as not to disturb Kūkai’s meditation. The *Yudonosan goengi* reports that Arasawa Fudō Myōō 荒沢不動明王 appeared to Kūkai and urged him to practice the *sennichigyō* as necessary condition to access Mount Yudono. Everyday Kūkai performed ablutions with the cold water (*mizugori*) of the Daibonjigawa, recited the *nenbutsu*, and made ceremonies following the ritual procedures of the Supreme Fire of Yudono. Only when Kūkai succeeded in becoming an *issei gyonin* (*issei gyonin to nari Kūkai* 一世行人と成り空海), Arasawa Fudō Myōō escorted him before the

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<sup>28</sup> One *ri* 里 corresponds to six hundred and fifty-four meters.

<sup>29</sup> For the original text, see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 2.

Gohōzen.<sup>30</sup> In this *engi* Kūkai is not described as the initiator of the *sennichigyō* or the patriarch of the *issei gyōnin*. Both the *sennichigyō* practice and the *issei gyōnin* are represented as preexisting elements of a local religious tradition to which Kūkai had to conform in order to be able to access Yudono.

The *Kikeishi* explains that after the opening of Yudono, Kūkai decided to climb to the top of a high mountain, which probably refers to Gassan, in order to find the perfect spot to found Chūrenji and build within its precincts a *goma* platform (*gomadan* 護摩壇) for the transmission of the Supreme Fire ritual. In order to underline his special relationship with Chūrenji, Kūkai placed his seal (*in* 印) inside the trunk of a cherry tree called the Shimekake Sakura, by the side of this temple. The Shimekake Sakura represented the transmission of the Supreme Fire ritual by Kūkai to the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji and the living body (*shōjin*) of Dainichi Nyorai. This sacred tree symbolized also the Buddha's vow to bring prosperity to people during their present life and assure them of rebirth in the Pure Land in their next (*nise no gan* 二世の願).<sup>31</sup>

Kūkai left several other material traces (*ato* 跡) within Chūrenji's territory that were interpreted as historical evidence (*kikei* 龜鏡) of an ancient past, testifying to the association between Chūrenji and the Shingon tradition. An obsession for a legitimizing discourse that derived from a fictional past, in which Chūrenji played the role of ultimate repository of the Shingon tradition on Mount Yudono, is reflected in the following words of Tetsumonkai.

I recall that the ancient texts report that, when Daishi stopped at this temple, he [brought] thirty-three [icons] of deities and twenty-one objects. If we expand this talk to the myriad things touched [by Daishi], we can say that even the three-prong *vajra* and the Shimekake

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<sup>30</sup>. For this passage see Narita Mamoru, “‘Yudonosan goengi’—kaisetsu to honkoku— ‘Yudonosan-Goengi’—Notes with Reprint”: 21.

<sup>31</sup>. For this passage, see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 3.



Sakura can be considered as ancient traces (*kyūseki* 旧跡) of his activities. Therefore, even if [Daishi] left other traces in different mountains, when we talk about the origins (*kaibyaku* 開闢) everything reminds just of this temple. These ancient traces must be considered as properties of this temple.<sup>32</sup>

This passage describes the exploitation of the material traces that were fictionally attributed to Kūkai, in order to create a past that had never existed, but was functional to the present needs of Chūrenji. Jacques Derrida defines the trace as an “arche-phenomenon of ‘memory’”<sup>33</sup> and writes that “the trace is not only the disappearance of origin [...] it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin.”<sup>34</sup> The trace creates a sort of visual and material deception, which marks a nonexistent past. Nevertheless, this fake past does exist because the trace itself allows it to be present within reality. In other words, the trace does not remind of any origin outside itself, but it is the origin of itself. The power of the trace should not be underestimated because it gives the possibility to construct authority over specific territories and discourses. In this case, Tetsumonkai went so far as to claim that the ancient traces left by Kūkai on Mount Yudono were a sort of private property of Chūrenji which was the ultimate origin of all the other religious institutions of Yudono.

The *Dainichibō yurai* presents a similar narrative strategy in which the traces of Kūkai’s deeds become historical proofs for legitimatizing the status of Dainichibō among the other head temples of Yudono, which is explicitly defined as the Pure Land of Dainichi Nyorai (*mitsugon jōdo* 密嚴淨土). According to this *engi*, after descending from Mount Yudono Kūkai had a premonitory dream in which he saw a five pronged *vajra* (*gokosho* 五鉤杵) that

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<sup>32</sup>. For the original text, see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 4.

<sup>33</sup>. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1967; repr., London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1978), 70.

<sup>34</sup>. *Ibid.*, 61.

was caught in the branches of an enormous *sugi*. A young lady (*dōnyo* 童女) dressed like an *issei gyōnin* escorted Kūkai to the numinous site of this tree, where the monk founded Dainichibō in the village of Ōami. The *sugi* were called Kodan no Sugi 皇檀の杉 because the parishioners (*danna* 檀那) of Dainichibō used to gather there during ceremonies.<sup>35</sup> Then Kūkai built a *goma* platform, which is still preserved inside the precincts of Dainichibō (See Fig. 4.2). When Dainichi Nyorai revealed to him the teaching of the Supreme Fire ritual, Kūkai transmitted it to an *issei gyōnin* called Tokai Shōnin 渡海上人 who became the first chief priest of Dainichibō. The *Dainichibō yurai* reports:

It is not known from which country Tokai Shōnin came from. He appeared in this world as a high ranking monk, who was ordered by Amaterasu no Ōmikami to descend to this land in order to meet with Daishi and establish a deep alliance by becoming his disciple. At that time Tokai Shōnin was instructed by Daishi about the secret passages of the *Dainichikyō* 大日經 and received the ritual protocol of the Bonten Jōkagiribi 梵天上火切火 of Chūrenji.<sup>36</sup>

The *Dainichibō yurai* states that an *issei gyōnin* by the name of Tokai Shōnin was the first disciple of Kūkai. It is probable that the foundational role played by Tokai in the early versions of this *engi* was greatly reduced in order to fit Kūkai into the narrative plot. For this reason Tokai is described in a subaltern position compared to Kūkai, even if he still maintains a certain authority, which derives from the mandate he received from Amaterasu no Ōmikami.

The author of this *engi* recognizes also the sort of leading role played by Chūrenji, whose ritual procedures about the Bonten and Supreme Fire were followed by the *issei gyōnin* of

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<sup>35</sup>. For this variation of the Dainichibō *engi* see Itō Takeshi, *Kaisan 1400 nen kinen: Dewa Sanzan* (Yamagata: Michinoku shobō, 1996), 93.

<sup>36</sup>. For the original text, see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 1.

Dainichibō. There are also other similarities between the *engi* of Dainichibō and Chūrenji that concern the pivotal role played by the trees of Yudono, such as the Shimekake Sakura and the Kodan Sugi, which acted as vegetal mediators for the transmission of the deeds of Kūkai to future generations of devotees.

The *Dewa Yudonosan daigongen gohonjiki* adds a new episode to the saga of Kūkai and the miracles he performed on Mount Yudono. According to this *engi*, when Kūkai returned to Japan from China, the Emperor Heizei 平城 (774–824) informed him that Dainichi Nyorai resided on Mount Yudono. Heizei ordered Kūkai to open this mountain in order to found a temple, Hondōji, in which he had to enshrine an icon of Dainichi. At this point the narrative scene abruptly changes and the *engi* reports the sad story of Sennaka 仙中, a rich man of Echigo province who was killed by an evil musician, Kondō Iwauemon 近藤岩右衛門 in an attempt to kidnap his daughter Toyohime 豊姫. Prostrated by sorrow, Sennaka's wife committed suicide and his son Toyowaka 豊若, who had lost all the members of his family, decided to travel to seek out Kūkai. The encounter between the two men took place at the foot of Mount Yudono where Kūkai levitated Toyowaka, together with a razor for his tonsure, up into the air and transformed the young man into a monk called Kūzan 空参. Because the foot of Yudono corresponded to the entrance of the hells, Kūkai escorted Kūzan on an ultramundane trip in which they met all the relatives of Kūzan who were invariably saved by Kūkai. When the two monks returned to this world, Kūkai changed Kūzan's name to Daikōin 大光院 and appointed him as the chief monk of Hondōji.<sup>37</sup>

The most relevant difference between the Hondōji *engi* and the *engi* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō is the absence of an *issei gyōnin* as narrative companion of Kūkai. Moreover, the

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<sup>37</sup>. For a synopsis of this *engi* see Imai Hidekazu, “‘Yudonosan daigongen gohonjiki’ no tokuchō,” *Nihon bunkaronshū*, no. 29 (March 2005): 48-49.

*Dewa Yudonosan daigongen gohonjiki* exploits the charisma of imperial authority to explain the origins of Hondōji, which is described as a temple founded by Kūkai in agreement with the Emperor Heizei. The Hondōji monks were always in the front line of the lawsuits against Haguro and it is understandable that they wanted to emphasize their proximity to imperial authority and their belonging to the official Buddhist monastic institutions of the Shingon School. Any reference to the *issei gyōnin*, who were nonetheless associated with this temple, could compromise the credibility of this narrative strategy (See Fig. 4.3).

#### 2.4. Indian and Japanese Sovereigns to Yudono

Among the typology of Yudono *engi* that are classified as *okuni jōruri*, the *Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai gohonji* is probably the oldest. The style of this text, which is almost completely written in phonetic characters (*hiragana* 平仮名), is typical of the recitatives of the Genroku period. The preeminence of the auditory aspect of the text, which is emphasized by the extensive use of the *hiragana*, testifies that it was probably declaimed by professional storytellers like the *biwa hōshi* described in the travel diary of Sugae Masumi.

The plot of this *engi* is different from all the others. The principal episode of the story is that Ninigi no mikoto ににぎのみこと descended to the Japanese archipelago as a rebirth (*saitan* さいたん; 再誕) of Dainichi Nyorai. Ninigi had three sons from the princess Hanasakuya Hime 花さくやひめ. The firstborn was Hohotemi ほほてみ, the second Honosusori ほのすそり, and the third Honoakari ほのあかり. One day a young boy (*dōji* どうじ; 童子) appeared in the bedroom of Ninigi and exhorted the emperor to abdicate in favor

of Hohotemi and retire on Mount Yudono (*Yudonosan* ゆどのさん) to perform ascetic practices (*shugyō* しゅじやう). When Ninigi arrived at Mount Yudono in the northeastern corner of Japan he met with a Buddhist monk called Kūkai (*Kūkai to mōsu shamon* くうかい と申しやもん) and they secluded themselves together within Mount Yudono (*yudonosan ni tojikomori* ゆどのさんにとじこもり). At the moment of death (*shinzubeshi* しんずへし) Ninigi said that he will hide his physical body (*shikishin* しきしん) inside the Gohōzen, which is described as a Jewel Hall (*gyokuden* 玉殿). All the *kami* who desired to venerate him for the last time gathered around this place and cried over the death of the emperor. The text ended praising those who felt the desire to visit Mount Yudono (*Yudonosan hezo miyukinaru hitobito* ゆどのさんへぞみゆきなる人々) in order to pay homage to the buddhas and *kami* of this mountain.<sup>38</sup>

The ultimate target of this *engi* was the recruitment of potential pilgrims to actually travel to this mountain. Compared with the other *okuni jōruri* the role of Kūkai is extremely marginal and the real source of legitimacy is represented by Ninigi who decided to use the Gohōzen as a sort of natural mausoleum to hide the sight on his decomposing body after death. Hiding his body inside the Gohōzen, Ninigi added a new interpretative layer to this sacred boulder that was, at the same time, the *oku no in* of Dainichi Nyorai and the imperial tumulus that contained the physical remains of the nephew of Amaterasu no Ōmikami.

There are other *okuni jōruri* that dedicated the first two or three chapters to the connections between Yudono and the Indian continent before starting the story of Kūkai and his opening of the mountain. For instance, the first two chapters of the *Dewa no kuni Yudonosan yurai* focus on the associations between Yudono and a group of Indian deities.

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<sup>38</sup>. For the original text, see Yokoyama Shigeru, *Kojōruri shōhonshū*, vol. 9 (Tōkyō: Kadokawa shoten, 1981): 376-380.

The opening story of this *engi* reports that the celestial king (*tennō* 天王) of the Daishakkoku 大釈国 kingdom in India (Tenjiku 天竺) had two children, the princess Teirei Hime 庭冷姫 and the prince Taizō Dōji 胎蔵童子, from one of his concubines. Later on the empress conceived a third child called Kongō Dōji 金剛童子. The empress wanted Kongō Dōji to succeed to his father after his death, but Kongō Dōji decided to abandon the palace and refused to become a king. The empress started nourishing feelings of hatred against Teirei Hime and Taizō Dōji and schemed to kill them. The general Sanbō Shōgun 三宝將軍 intervened to help Teirei Hime and Taizō Dōji and extorted them to take refuge in the Rokuon ろくおん kingdom (Skt. Mṛgadāva). In this place Teirei Hime and Taizō Dōji met with their youngest brother Kongō Dōji and they decided to go together to the kingdom of Bonten (Bontenkoku 梵天国) in order to get a hearing with king Bonten'ō 梵天王 about the issue of the succession to the throne. During the hearing the empress suddenly arrived and explained that the kingdom of Daishakkoku had been attacked and destroyed by Six Great Demon Kings (Dairoku Maō 大六魔王). Hearing of this terrible event, Bonten'ō suggested that they escape to Mount Yudono and become visible traces (*suijaku* 垂迹) of the mountains and rivers of that area. Therefore, the princess Teirei Hime transformed into a manifestation (*kengen* 顯現) of Zaōgatake 蔵王嶽 in the village of Katta 荊田,<sup>39</sup> the empress of Ubajin 姥神 at Sōchigawa 僧智川, Taizō Dōji of Yudonosan Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai, and Kongō Dōji of Gassan Kongōkai.<sup>40</sup>

Imai Hidekazu classifies the first part of the *Dewa no kuni Yudonosan yurai* as a ballad of tracesdeities (*suijakujin tan* 垂迹神譚).<sup>41</sup> In this type of ballad, India is not represented as a

<sup>39</sup>. The village of Katta is located in the present Miyagi prefecture.

<sup>40</sup>. For a synopsis of this *engi* see Narita Mamoru, “‘Dewa no kuni Yudonosan yurai’ ni tsuite. On ‘Dewanokuni Yudonosan-Yurai’ The History of Mt. Yudono in Dewa Province”: 132.

<sup>41</sup>. Imai Hidekazu, “Yudonosan daigongen gohonjiki no tokuchō”: 49.

geographical territory but rather as an imaginary land inhabited only by Buddhist and Hindu deities. Japan plays the opposite role and is represented as a real land where laypeople (*bonpu*) could come into contact with the buddhas and *kami*. Even if the protagonists of this story apparently resemble human beings belonging to the Indian aristocracy, all the characters are disguised manifestations of Buddhist or Hindu deities. For instance, Kongō Dōji and Taizō Dōji correspond to a sort of embodiment of the two esoteric maṇḍalas Kongōkai and Taizōkai. Displaying Buddhist and Hindu deities as human beings that suffer, fight, and have feelings of empathy for each others is a narrative strategy that reduces the aura of otherness that permeates these deities, and makes them closer to the human sphere. Moreover, the people who listened to this *engi* were inclined to think that the deities of the story could better help them because they had first hand experience of human suffering. Once this group of deities reached the Japanese archipelago they were immediately absorbed within the sacred landscape of Dewa Sanzan and other areas of the Tōhoku region as visible traces of buddhas and *kami* that already inhabited this numinous territory.

The *Dewa no kuni Yudonosan yurai* and *Dewa Yudonosan daigongen gohonjiki* dedicate their first chapters to the transfer of Buddhist and Hindu deities from India to Dewa Sanzan. After this relatively short introductory part the narrative development of the *engi* changes its subject and the main plot becomes the opening of Yudono by Kūkai. The sections of the text that deal with the Indian origins of Yudono can be considered as a sort of story within a story. These *suijakujin* ballads can be interpreted as narratological residues of ancient Yudono *engi* that were composed before the second half of the seventeenth century, such as the *Yudonosan hōryū shiki*. The stories of this first wave of Yudono *engi* were probably set in a mythical India that was exclusively populated by Buddhist and Hindu deities and did not mention

Kūkai as source of legitimacy for Mount Yudono. In the *suijakujin* ballads the hieratic aura of Yudono primarily derives from the connections between this local mountain and the universal gods of India. After the Genroku period this first typology of Yudono *engi*, which exploited the charisma attributed to India as the cradle of Buddhism, survived only in the opening chapters of the sacred recitatives (*saimon gatari*) or *okuni jōruri* that formed the religious background of the Yudonosan *kō* members and pilgrims who traveled toward Yudono during pilgrimage season.

### 3. Pre-Pilgrimage Rituals

#### 3.1. *Gyōya*: the Liminality Inside Ordinarity

Edith Turner's classical definition of pilgrimage describes this devotional practice as a "kinetic ritual" and Victor Turner (1920–1983) emphasizes its characteristics as an "anti-structural" and "liminoid phenomenon," which contrasts with the routinization of everyday life.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of the pilgrimage to Yudono, these Turnerian axioms seem to be partially negated because the religious travel undertaken by Yudono pilgrims included also long periods of immobility and was based on widespread networks of *kō*, which reinforced the local social structures rather than opposed them.<sup>43</sup> For instance, Simon Coelman observes

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<sup>42</sup> Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978; repr., New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), XIII-XIV, 34-35.

<sup>43</sup> Analyzing the organization system of the pilgrimage to Mount Ōyama in the Musashi province during the Edo period, Barbara Ambros stresses the complexity of social connections that pilgrims, travelagents (*oshi* 御師), *shugenja* and *kō* members put in place in order to support and realize this religious practice. See Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan*, 16, 146.



that pilgrimage is often a recurrent event rather than an occasional one and pilgrims regularly take part in it, basing their participation on a sort of database of shared memories or religious cults that focus on a specific numinous site.<sup>44</sup> As we saw in the previous paragraphs this database of shared memories about sacred mountains such as Yudono were principally provided through the diffusion of *engi*, which worked as “mythhistories,” the primary target of which was to advertise specific locations as possible destinations for pilgrimage.<sup>45</sup>

The standard pilgrimage to Yudono took place once a year during the summer season when the weather was more stable and snow did not constitute a serious obstacle. Since Yudono Gongen was widely venerated as a protective deity for the abundance of crops (*sakujin* 作神), the main participants in Yudono pilgrimages belonged to the farming classes of the Tōhoku and Kantō areas. However, urban merchants (*chōnin* 町人), small artisans (*shokunin* 職人), and even members of the *samurai* class were not infrequent among the pilgrims to Yudono. In the Kantō area the majority of the Yudonosan *kō* that sponsored the pilgrimages to Yudono were located in the provinces of Kazusa, Shimōsa, and Echigo, while Dewa and Michinoku provinces were the most common places of origin for Tohōku pilgrims who travelled toward Yudono.

It is hard to reconstruct the exact variations of the numbers of pilgrims who traveled to Yudono during the Edo period. Natalie Kouamé points out that the Shikoku pilgrimage had two different upsurges, in the late seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The same tendency can be noticed also in the case of the pilgrimage to Yudono and testifies to the

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<sup>44</sup> Simon Coleman and John Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 13.

<sup>45</sup> For the definition of *engi* as “mythistory” see Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 61.

<sup>46</sup> Natalie Kouamé, *Pèlerinage et société dans le Japon des Tokugawa: le pèlerinage de Shikoku entre 1598 et 1868* (Paris: École française d’ExtrêmeOrient, 2001), 22-23.

fact that the religious fame of a sacred mountain was not constant, but exposed to abrupt oscillations that were reflected in the increase or decrease in the number of pilgrims. For example, the *Ōmachi nenbutsukō chō* 大町念仏講帳, written in Kyōhō 18 (1733) by a lodge keeper of the Yachimachi 谷地町 district in Nishimurayama 西村山 village, reports that during that year 157,000 pilgrims reached Yudono.<sup>47</sup> It is important to take into account that 1733 was the year of the ox, which was considered to be the most propitious time (*goennen* 御縁年) to visit Yudono, and this high figure could be due to the importance of that specific year. In Meiji 6 (1873) the government of Tōkyō 東京 ordered an official screening of the numbers of pilgrims who yearly stopped at the four temples of Yudono. The result of this census revealed that in one year almost 10,000 pilgrims visited Chūrenji and Dainichibō at the front entrance of Yudono, while at the rear entrance of the mountain Hondōji alone welcomed about 10,000 pilgrims and Dainichiji almost 5,000.<sup>48</sup> It is important to take into account that toward the end of the Edo period the number of pilgrims who visited Mount Fuji 富士 during the summer months exceeded the 10,000 persons. Moreover, if we consider the entire pilgrimage circuit that linked Mount Fuji, Mount Ōyama 大山, and Enoshima 江ノ島 as different locations of the same devotional route, the flow of pilgrims reached the 700,000 people every year.<sup>49</sup>

Each year a few members belonging to each Yudonosan *kō* were selected to make a pilgrimage to Yudono. A standard group of pilgrims usually included three or four people, while larger groups could reach ten participants. Yudonosan *kō* worked as benefit societies (*mujinkō* 無尽講) whose members voluntarily paid a fixed amount of money to cover all the

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<sup>47</sup>. For the original text see Matsumoto Akira, *Nihon no miirabutsu*, 57.

<sup>48</sup>. *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>49</sup>. Nishigai Kenji, *Fuji, Ōyama shinkō* [coll. Sangaku shinkō to chiiki shakai 山岳信仰と地域社会, vol. 2] (Tōkyō: Iwata shoin, 2008), 15-16, 271.

preparatory and travel expenses of those people who shared the privilege and, at the same time, the responsibility of undertaking a pilgrimage to Yudono during the summer time.<sup>50</sup>

The members of the Yudonosan *kō* were exclusively men. For young boys who turned fifteen years old participation in the Yudono pilgrimage corresponded to a rite of passage, which was called “the first mountain of fifteen” (*jūgo no hatsuyama* 一五の初山) that marked their official entrance into adulthood (*ichinin mae* 一人前). Among the pilgrims to Yudono, there were also women and independent travelers who were not affiliated with any specific Yudonosan *kō* and wanted to demonstrate their devotion to this sacred mountain. Nevertheless, this type of pilgrim had a lower religious status than those who were official members of the Yudonosan *kō* and were defined by the appellation of *nobori kudari no gyōnin*, which indicated a sort of subcategory of *issei gyōnin*.

For the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* who belonged to the Yudonosan *kō*, the ritual of the pilgrimage started three weeks before they left the village. During this period they dedicated themselves to preliminary purificatory practices (*zen shōjin* 前精進) while conducting a semisecluded life inside special ascetic huts (*gyōya*) that were built within the perimeter of the village (See Fig. 4.4). When the men returned from the pilgrimage to Yudono they spent one more week inside the *gyōya* for the conclusive purificatory practices (*go shōjin* 後精進) before finally returning to their homes and families. The *gyōya* was a small religious building, which architecturally marked the beginning and the end of the pilgrimage to Yudono within the landscape of the village.<sup>51</sup>

A standard *gyōya* was a small raised wood-building with a straw thatch (*warabuki* 藁葺

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<sup>50</sup>. *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 72.

<sup>51</sup>. The period of semiseclusion in the *gyōya* before and after the pilgrimage to Yudono and the other peaks of Dewa Sanzan such as Haguro or Gassan was also observed by the lay members of the Hagurosan *kō*.

き), which measured almost three meters and half in height from the floor to the top of the roof, less than two meters in width, and about three meters in length.<sup>52</sup> The only entrance was a sliding door placed on the shorter side of the building, while the longer side had a narrow window to facilitate the circulation of air during the night. The internal space of the *gyōya* constituted a single room which could lodge two to four persons who slept directly on the floor, which was covered with a layer of rough cushions (*chirabechi* タラベチ).<sup>53</sup> These *gyōya* were probably simplified versions of the ascetic-huts in which the *issei gyōnin* lived during the *sennichigyō* practice at Senninzawa or Genkai. They were specifically built to facilitate the ascetic performances of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* inside the space of the village before and after the pilgrimage.

The *gyōya* was not just a simple infrastructure that the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* used before and after the pilgrimage to Yudono. It was also a transformative place inside which the socio-religious metamorphosis from peasant to ascetic could take place before the pilgrimage started and the reverse metamorphosis from the ascetic to peasant could happen once back in

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<sup>52</sup>. This description is based on three *gyōya* which were used by Yudono pilgrims who lived in Yonezawa during the late Edo period. One of these *gyōya* is now preserved in the garden of the Uesugi Museum in the city of Yonezawa and the other two belong to the Yonezawa Agricultural and Cultural Research Center (Yonezawa nōgyō bunka kenkyūjo). The last record of a group of nine pilgrims secluding themselves for one week in a *gyōya* located in the district of Rokugunmachi Hitotsuurushi 六郷町一漆 in Yonezawa, before going to Yudono, dates back to August 1959. Until 1973 there were fiftyseven extant *gyōya* in the city of Yonezawa, but most of them were used as sheds for farm tools and lost their original religious meaning. See Sano Kenji, “Yamagata-ken Okutama chihō no sangaku shinkō to gogyōya,” in *Okitama no tōhai shūzoku yōgu oyobi gyōya: chōsa hōkoku sho Chōsa hōkoku sho*, ed. Yonezawashi kyōiku iinkai (Yonezawa: Yonezawashi kyōiku iinkai, 1998). 9. See also Watanabe Keikichi, “Sanzan mairi to ogyōya,” *Okitama bunka—Okitama shidankai*, no. 53 (May, 1973): 85-88.

<sup>53</sup>. Large *gyōya* could accommodate up to ten persons, but they were relatively rare. The selection of partners with whom inside the *gyōya* was probably based on friendships within the village. Close friends and relatives tended to perform asceticism together, excluding other members of the community with whom they were not intimate. The research data are still very fragmented, but the *gyōya* that were used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of the Kantō provinces seem to be bigger than those in the Tōhoku area. The *gyōya* of the Kantō region were often divided into two spaces: the humanspace (*zokkai no ma* 俗界の間) where the ascetics cooked food on the separate fire (*bekka*) and slept during the night, and the protectedspace (*kekka no ma* 結界の間), which was dedicated to the altar for the *kami* and the Buddhist icons. For some examples of the architectural structure of extant *gyōya* in presentday Chiba prefecture, see Tsushima Ikuo, *Bōsō ni ikizuku Dewa Sanzan shinkō no shosō*, 157, 159, 160, 168.

the village. The *gyōya* worked as a sort of incubator that transmuted the peasants of the village from ordinary men (*tsunebito* 常人) to extra-ordinary men or liminal beings (*kotobito* 異人).<sup>54</sup> In this case the liminoid character of the pilgrim, which Victor Turner has strongly emphasized in his studies, clearly emerges, but it is also important to note that this liminality was not realized in a total alien space and time. On the contrary it took place inside the borders of the village where the *gyōya* was located. In other words, it was a type of liminality which was fully embedded in the ordinariness of the agricultural community. Moreover, Turner tended to focus only on the first phase on the pilgrimage in which there was the transformation of the ordinary man into a liminal beings, but the ritual procedures of the *gyōya* demonstrate that at the end of the pilgrimage there was also a reverse process, which took place in order to facilitate the reintegration of the pilgrim back into his original status of ordinary man and peasant inside the village community.

The *gyōya* were usually built close to rivers or water canals on uncultivated plots of land which were located between the village houses and fields. The presence of water was an essential element for the ascetic sites (*gyōba*) on Mount Yudono where the *issei gyōnin* performed their ritual practices; in the same way the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* used the rivers close to the *gyōya* to collect water for their daily “innumerable ablutions” (*hachimanhassen gori* 八万八千垢離). During the period of self-seclusion (*komori*) inside the *gyōya* the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* had to make ablutions every morning, noon, evening and after every meal. Ablutions were also mandatory after the completion of bodily needs.

Because the overall period of self-seclusion inside the *gyōya* lasted for about four weeks in addition to the three or four days of actual pilgrimage from Yonezawa to Yudono, it was

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<sup>54</sup>. For the use of the terms *tsunebito* and *kotobito* in relation with the *gyōya* see Togawa Anshō, “Oyama mairi to shōjin: Okitama chihō no gyōya to Shōnai chihō no nagadoko,” *Nōson bunka ronshū*, no. 3 (April, 1983): 4.

impossible for the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to take such a long time away from their agricultural or manufacturing activities. Therefore, the members of the Yudonosan *kō* who were selected for the pilgrimage worked in the fields or took care of their shops during the day and transformed into *nobori kudari no gyōnin* from sunset to dawn when they went to the *gyōya* instead of going back to their houses and families. The ritual of self-seclusion that took place inside the *gyōya* was a sort of nocturnal semi-segregation because during the day the men had to go back to their ordinary work. The only chance that the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* had to closely emulate the ascetic retreat of the *issei gyōnin* was during the short number of days that they spent on Mount Yudono. During this limited period of time the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* had the possibility of reaching the climax of their ascetic practice and performing full-time ascesis inside the sacred landscape of the mountain without worrying about going back to their ordinary occupations.

### **3.2. Gyōya: the Mountain in the Village**

From winter to the beginning of summer, the *gyōya* remained empty and weeds almost covered it, but as soon as the pilgrimage season arrived, *kō* members immediately started to clean it up to prepare it for the ritual of self-seclusion. Timing was crucial because the hut could not be used after the first day of the festival of the dead (*obon* お盆), which began on the thirteenth day of the eighth month. All maintenance work related to the *gyōya* was exclusively carried out by men since the *gyōya* was considered off-limits to women and children. When the *gyōya* was cleaned, the members of the *kō* summoned a *hōshi sama* 法師

様 to perform a propitiatory prayer (*kitō*), during which a spirit was inserted (*tamashi ga hairu* 魂が入る) into the flame of the fireplace (*irori* 囲炉裏) that constituted the most sacred space of the *gyōya*. After this ritual performance of the *hōshi* the flame of the *gyōya* became alive and the fire of the *gyōya* was equated to the separated fire (*bekka*) used by the *issei gyōnin* during the *sennichigyō*.<sup>55</sup> This ritual procedure was probably similar to the opening ceremony of the *gogyō agari* 御行上り in which the *bekka* was activated inside the *gyōya* of the *issei gyōnin* during the first day of self-seclusion.

*Hōshi* is a generic term that could equally be applied to a *shugenja* or an *issei gyōnin*. Nevertheless, the large number of protective talismans (*kami fuda* カミフダ) of eminent *issei gyōnin* of Yudono such as Myōzenkai 明全海, Myōshinkai 明真海, and Eimyōkai 永明海, which were retrieved from the altars for the *kami* (*kamidana* 神棚) inside the *gyōya*, demonstrate that the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono played a pivotal role in the organization of the rituals performed by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* during the period of self-seclusion inside the *gyōya*.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the purification and ceremonial activation of the flame was a speciality of the *issei gyōnin* and it seems plausible that they were requested to administer the ritual flame of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* as well.

All the meals (*oyawara* オヤワラ) eaten inside the *gyōya* were normally prepared by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* without any external help. The eating and cooking tools were also produced and handled only by men, and could not be stored in any location other than the *gyōya*. In certain cases the female relatives of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were allowed to cook *miso* soup (*omi otsuke* オミオツケ) to be delivered to the men because this was

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<sup>55</sup> The expression *obekka* オベツカ was used to indicate those *nobori kudari no gyōnin* who were practicing the ritual of selfseclusion in the *gyōya* before or after the pilgrimage to Yudono.

<sup>56</sup> For a list of the *ofuda* of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono that were retrieved inside the *gyōya* of Yonezawa, see “Okitama no tōhai shūzoku yōgu oyobi *gyōya* bunrui ichiran hyō,” in *Okitama no tōhai shūzoku yōgu oyobi gyōya: chōsa hōkoku sho Chōsa hōkoku sho*, ed. Yonezawashi kyōiku iinkai, 252, 257-260, 262, 283.

considered to be an extremely auspicious (*goryaku* 御利益) action for a woman. In order to prepare this portion of the ascetic meal the women could not use an ordinary flame (*hirabi*) of the stove (*kama*) in the kitchen, rather, they had to boil it on the flame of the brazier in the living room of the house. When the *miso* soup was ready an old woman (*rōba* 老婆) brought it near to the *gyōya* after performing a purificatory ablution. If one of the female members of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin*'s family had her period (*higawarui* 日が悪い), she had to refrain from cooking *miso* soup for the men in the *gyōya*.<sup>57</sup> Meat, fish, garlic, scallion, and even tea were not allowed in the diet of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin*.

Because of its scarcity, food played a pivotal role in the ritual life of the *gyōya*. Reducing it to a minimum level of subsistence produced the contrastive effect of superimposing a proliferation of religious meanings to ordinary foodstuffs and cooking tools. All the standard names for the food and objects used inside the *gyōya* were changed to a secret nomenclature (*gyōya kotoba* 行屋言葉) that reinforced their religious value and the aura of the extraordinary. The language of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* thus contrasted with the ordinary language spoken by the other members of the village. To practice self-seclusion in the *gyōya* meant also to be able to name ordinary things using a different linguistic code. For example, grains of rice were called “relics” (*shari* 舍利), cooked rice was an “offering” (*goku* 御供), and the *daikon* was indicated through the periphrasis “white root” (*shirane* 白根).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>. In case of births or deceases among the relatives of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* the pilgrim had to immediately abandon the *gyōya* and renounce to the pilgrimage. According to the same logic the family members of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* avoided any contacts with other members of the village who could have been contaminated by death or birth pollution in order to not invalidate the ascetic practices of their pilgrim.

<sup>58</sup>. For the *gyōya* terminology used in the Yonezawa area see Sano Kenji, “Yamagata-ken Okutama chihō no sangaku shinkō to gogyōya,” in *Okitama no tōhai shūzoku yōgu oyobi gyōya: chōsa hōkoku sho Chōsa hōkoku sho*, 5. See also Kadoya Yumiko, “Okitama no tōhai shūzoku yōgu oyobi gyōya—kaisetsu—,” in *Okitama no tōhai shūzoku yōgu oyobi gyōya: chōsa hōkoku sho Chōsa hōkoku sho*, 30. For a complete lists of terms used in the *gyōya* on the Bōsō peninsula (presentday Chiba prefecture), see Tsushima Ikuo, *Bōsō ni ikizuku Dewa Sanzan shinkō no shosō*, 155.



Before start eating the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* placed the best portion of the vegetarian meal—with only the exception of the the *miso* soup—in front of the *bonten* that were enshrined inside the *kamidana* as a food-offering for the mountain deities and the *kami* that protected the village. Then they made three prostrations (*raihaigyō* 礼拝行) while chanting prayers in praise of the mountain deities.<sup>59</sup> After this ceremony they proceeded to eat their portion of rice, *miso* soup, and a single variety of vegetable. The concluding part of the meal corresponded to an ascetic practice, which was defined as *kirimigaki* キリミガキ. Pouring some water inside the rice-pot and rice-bowls, all the residual grains of rice were scraped from the eating utensils using a large spatula (*hera* ヘラ) and a scouring brush (*tawashi* タワシ). The resulting mix of water and rice was subsequently drunk seven times by each *nobori kudari no gyōnin*. The ritual of the *kirimigaki* took place after every meal consumed in the *gyōya*. Since the quantity of solid food ingested by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* was extremely limited, the forced drinking of water was supposed to saturate the stomach with water (*mizubara* 水原) in order to mitigate the pangs of hunger. During the night the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* woke up in order to pray and make additional ablutions, which often ended up with the formation of chilblains on the hands and feet.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup>. In Meiji period the standard formula, which was recited by the women, was: “Marvelous, marvelous, I respect your power and prohibitions. I prostrate myself in front of you oh [name of the *kami*] (*Ayani, ayani, kusushikutatto*, [name of the *kami*] *no mimae ni, orogami matsuru*; アヤニ、アヤニ、クスシクタット、〇〇ノミマエニ、オロガミマツル). A possible transliteration in Chinese characters of this prayer can be: “*ayani* 奇に, *ayani* 奇に, *kusushikutatto* 奇くたつと, [name of the *kami*] *no mimae* 御前 *ni, orogami matsuru* 拝み祀る.” For the original text see *Yonezawa shishi*, Minzoku hen, ed. Yonezawa shishi hensan iinkai (Yonezawa, Yonezawa insatsu, 1990), 461.

<sup>60</sup>. Shinno Toshikazu writes that the practice of the *mizugori*, which was performed by pilgrims to Yudono during the Edo period, “was undoubtedly an enjoyable experience.” Nevertheless, according to the oral descriptions of the Yudono pilgrims who performed this type of ascetic practice in the Taishō (1912-1924) or Shōwa period the *mizugori* was anything but an “enjoyable experience.” It seems that the tendency to interpret any type of religious phenomenon of the Edo period as a ludic or hedonistic practice sometimes obfuscates the reality of the events. Among the pilgrims of the Edo period there were, for sure, individuals who gave priority to the entertainment and recreative aspects of travel, but it would be an error to ignore or obliterate the presence of other typologies of pilgrims such as the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* whose pilgrimage shared great similarities with ascetic practices. See Shinno Toshikazu, “Journey, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travels in the Early

In a corner of the *gyōya* there was usually a small furniture or some shelves where it was possible to store the objects that were used during the retreat. Among them, the mosquito net (*shichiko* シチコ) was essential. Because during the permanence in the *gyōya* every form of violence was prohibited, the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* could not kill the insects that attacked them during the night and had to use a large mosquito net to protect themselves without injuring other sentient beings. Inside the credenza there was a wooden box that contained the ritual tools to ignite the fire (*hiuchibako* ヒウチバコ):<sup>61</sup> a steel wedge (*hiuchigane* 火打金) and a flint (*hiuchiishi* 火打石). These tools were venerated as the “parents of fire” (*hi no oya* 火の親) from whose encounter the *bekka* was generated and enshrined inside the *irori*. The purified fire of the *bekka* were used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to cook their meals, but it also served to make offerings to the deities. Before reviving the *bekka*, the area of the *irori* was sprinkled with salt to maintain its undefiled condition. Thanks to the *bekka* the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* had the chance to share a sort of divine commensality with the gods whose food offerings were prepared on the same flame that they used to cook their meals. In spite of the apparent scarcity of food that characterized the life inside the *gyōya*, the culinary elements played a pivotal role of *trait d’union* between the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* and the deities.

Many *gyōya* usually had only one *irori*, but some ascetic huts had two small *irori* placed side by side. These two *irori* were supposed to host two different types of *bekka*. The most powerful *bekka* was called Supreme Fire (*jōka* 上火) and corresponded to Mount Yudono or the “northern mountain” (*kita no oyama* 北のお山), while the other type of *bekka* was

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Modern Period,” trans. Laura Nenzi, *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 457. For a vivid testimony of a pilgrim who performed the practices of *kirimigaki* and *mizugori* in early Shōwa see Higuchi Sakuji, “Yudonosan oyama mairi no ki,” *Okitama bunka*, no. 53 (May, 1973): 103.

<sup>61</sup>. The oldest *hiuchibako* that was found in a *gyōya* of Yonezawa reports the date Kyōho 5 (1720).

defined as Medium Fire (*chūka* 中火) and represented Mount Iide 飯豊 or the “western mountain” (*onishi sama* お西様) (See Fig. 4.5). Before making pilgrimage to Yudono (*okita mairi* お北詣り) the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of the Yonezawa area used to go to Iide (*onishi mairi* お西詣り), the tutelary deity of their village. Like Yudono, Mount Iide was venerated as a *sakujin*, whose *honjibutsu* was Kokūzō Bosatsu.<sup>62</sup> When the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were still performing the rituals of self-seclusion in the *gyōya*, they used different *bekka* to make offerings to Yudono or Iide. In other words, the *jōka* of Yudono was a manifestation of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai, and the *chūka* of Iide was associated with Kokūzō Bosatsu. The fact that the *bekka* of Yudono was indicated by the name *jōka*, which was the same name as the sacred fire used by the *issei gyōnin* of this mountain during their ceremonies, reveals the paradigmatic role played by the *issei gyōnin* in the organization of the ascetic rituals of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin*. From the point of view of a *nobori kudari no gyōnin* who could perform ascetic practices only for a limited amount time, every contact with full-time ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono who performed extreme practices such as the *mokujikigyō* or the *sennichigyō* was probably a memorable experience, which boosted the faith and veneration of the *kō* members in Yudono and its group of professional ascetics.

The *bonten*, which was a bamboo stick about thirty centimeters long with three triangles of paper (*hagi* ㄥㄎ) attached on the top, was also another fundamental object that the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* always carried with them.<sup>63</sup> Before starting the ritual of self-seclusion in the

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<sup>62</sup> The semiotic association between Kokūzō Bosatsu and the divine protection of the crops derived from the fact that the first two characters of his name (Kokūzō 虚空蔵) created an assonance with the term *kokuzō* 穀蔵, which means “storehouse of cereals”.

<sup>63</sup> In the case of the *bonten* used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of Yonezawa it seems that the standard shape of the *hagi* was triangular, but the *bonten* used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of Shimōsa were different. Sometimes the *hagi* reproduced the *silhouette* of the crown of Dainichi Nyorai or a triangle (Gassan), a square (Yudono), and a rectangle with a convex side (Haguro). See Tsushima Ikuo, *Bōsō ni ikizuku Dewa Sanzan shinkō no shosō*, 166.

*gyōya* the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* went to the *gyōnindera* in their village, which in the case of Yonezawa were Hōjuji 宝珠寺 and Fukujuin 福寿院, in order to receive a new *bonten* to use in the *gyōya*.<sup>64</sup> Each *nobori kudari no gyōnin* had four *bonten*. The *irori no bonten* 炉の梵天 was placed close to the fireplace. The *kagi no bonten* 鉤の梵天 was hung on the hunger (*kagi*) for suspending the pot (*nabe* ナベ) to cook rice over the *bekka*. The *honzon no bonten* 本尊の梵天 was enshrined inside the *kamidana* together with the *kami fuda*. A fourth one, *ya no bonten* 屋の梵天, was kept under the beams of the roof of the house (*omoya* 母屋) where the family members of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* lived.

The *bonten* was not a simple ritual tool. It became a sort of symbolic extension of the body of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin*. For instance, the *ya no bonten* was daily served with offerings of water and rice (*osago* おさご) by the wife of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* or the mother in case of unmarried ascetics during the entire period during which the man was performing the self-retreat in the *gyōya* and the actual pilgrimage to Yudono. Taking care of the *ya no bonten* ensured the physical safety of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* during the pilgrimage. This ritual action also served to propitiate the realization of the vows (*gan*), which were expressed by those *kō* members who did not directly take part to the pilgrimage, but entrusted the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to make a religious journey to Yudono on their behalf.

During the period in which the men were in the *gyōya*, the women of the family performed a parallel asceticism within the house. The female relatives of the *nobori kudari no*

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<sup>64</sup> Hōjuji was a *gyōnindera* founded by Kūdō Shōnin 空道上人. It was originally called Gyōzenji 行全寺 and became a *matsuji* of Dainichiji in Keiō 2 (1866). The eminent *issei gyōnin* Myōkai was affiliated with this temple, which supported the religious activities of numerous *nobori kudari no gyōnin* in Yonezawa. At Hōjuji there are two boxes that contain various written documents and painted scrolls, which were sent from Dainichiji to this temple around the *bakumatsu* period. For more information see *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 273-277.

*gyōnin* in charged of serving the *ya no bonten*, which represented the absent male of the family, made a sort of indoor-pilgrimage (*rusu mairi* 留守詣り) that involved a vegetarian diet, daily ablutions with cold or hot water, and continuous visits to the shrines and temples of the village during the crucial period of time (*mabi* 間日) when the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* left the *gyōya* to climb Mount Yudono.<sup>65</sup> In other words, the women who remained at home were also practicing an alternative ascetic retreat inside the house, which was very similar to that performed by the men in the *gyōya*, in order to pray for a positive realization of the pilgrimage. Men and women of the village equally, but separately, manifested their faith in Yudono and Iide, the two sacred mountains that protected their village and guaranteed the abundance of their crops.

An analysis of the ritual procedures associated with the *gyōya* demonstrates that pilgrimage cannot be reduced to a simple “kinetic ritual” because “immobility” and “stasis” are also fundamental elements of this practice. When the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* secluded themselves inside the *gyōya* they realized what Eva Rosander defines as a process of “religious imaginary mobility.”<sup>66</sup> During the pre-pilgrimage phase of the *gyōya* the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were already traveling and paying homage to Yudono, but they performed these meritorious actions on a symbolic level using complex ritual objects such as the *irori*, *bonten*, cooking tools and food through which they fed and venerated the mountain deities. The *gyōya* itself was a ‘mimic building’, which recreated and symbolized the sacred mountain within the village. The *gyōya* was based on the logic of intervisuality (*mitate*) between a ritual arena artificially made by men and the natural landscape of the mountain.

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<sup>65</sup>. During the *mabi* the women of the village went to shrines and temples and tirelessly chanted the prayer: “Venerable mountain, [give us] prosperity! Venerable mountain, [give us] prosperity!” (*Oyama hanjō! Oyama hanjō!* お山繁昌。お山繁昌).

<sup>66</sup>. Eva Evers Rosander, “Going and not going to Porokhane: Mourid women and pilgrimage in Senegal and Spain,” in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, eds. Simon Coleman and John Eade, 70.

Once activated the *gyōya* became a metamorphosis of Mount Yudono or Iide inside the perimeter of the village. Water and fire were the entities, which more than any other characterized the life of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* inside the *gyōya*, but they were also the natural elements usually associated with the ecosystem of the mountain. In other words, the *gyōya* was an uterine space made of water and fire in the same way as the rock body of Mount Yudono—Gohōzen—was characterized by a mixture of aquatic and pyretic fluids. Inside the incubatory shell of the *gyōya* first, and on the mountain later, the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* forged the body until staging a symbolic death (*shi* 死) through which rebirth (*saisei* 再生) could be obtained thanks to the regenerative power embedded in these ascetic sites.

### 3.3. Cargo Pilgrims

Analyzing the various typologies of pilgrims in the Edo period, Carmen Blacker argues that the paradigm of the mendicant or wandering ascetics (*yūgyōsha* 遊行者) who were “permanent pilgrims,” such as the *issei gyōnin* in the case of Mount Yudono, constituted a sort of “archetypical figure” to which the “temporary pilgrims”—in our context the *nobori kudari no gyōnin*—tried to conform. For Carmen Blacker, pilgrimage worked as an outlet, which allowed ordinary citizens to momentarily escape the hierarchical pressure of the Tokugawa social system.<sup>67</sup> Following a similar interpretative pattern, Laura Nenzi underlines the “re-creating” and subversive role which was played by specific pilgrimage settings such as roads, stations, barriers, lodgings, or tea-rooms for contesting and blurring the ordinary

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<sup>67</sup>. Carmen Blacker, “The Religious Traveller in the Edo Period,” *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 594, 603, 608.

divisions that normally separated the various members of Tokugawa society according to their social status, gender, and wealth.<sup>68</sup>

These revolutionary and antinomic aspects undoubtedly were fundamental parts of the Edo pilgrimage, but it is important to take into account that pilgrims never completely escaped from the religious and social obligations which tied them to their local communities. This social dynamic is particularly relevant for those pilgrims who were affiliated with specific *kō* such as the Yudonosan *kō*. These pilgrims were acutely aware that they had been selected to make a religious journey on the behalf of the persons of the village who financially supported them without physically taking part in the pilgrimage. The *nobori kudari no gyōnin* knew that the future prosperity of their village was also based on the final outcome of their pilgrimage and were aware of the religious implications of their travel to Yudono. In other words they did not merely replicate the ascetic archetype provided by the *issei gyōnin* as a safety valve to set aside the harsh routine of the agricultural activities of the village. They tried to temporarily conform to an ideal ascetic life in order to access a numinous site like Mount Yudono and bring back from it as much religious benefit (*genze ryaku*) as they could. This devotional capital was not a prerogative of a single pilgrim, but was supposed to be shared with all the other members of the *kō* and the inhabitants of the village.

The clothing and accessories used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* and general pilgrims to Yudono visually exemplified the religious functions attributed to this type of traveler. When the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* finally left their villages at dawn after three weeks of self-seclusion in the *gyōya* they wore white traveling-clothes (*gyōe* 行衣) made up of a pair of

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<sup>68</sup>. Laura Nenzi, *Excursion in Identity: Travel and Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 2, 7.

trousers (*hakama* 袴) and an upper tunic. On their head they wore a long white cotton band of cloth called a “crown” (*okanmuri* おかんむり) that ended in two long loops on both sides of the face. The sacred cord (*shime*) was hung down from the right shoulder to the left flank. *Kyahan* 脚絆 were shin guards, which were tied around the lower legs with a set of strings (*kurubushi* くるぶし) that served also to tie up the straw sandals (*waraji* 草鞋). Close to the underarm the pilgrim kept a small square basket finely interwoven with wicker shoots (*akebi* 通草) to which he could hang tiny medicine boxes (*inrō* 印籠). This square box usually contained coins (*kozeni* 小銭) for offerings and quick purchases, towels to wipe off sweat (*asefuki* 汗拭き), fans (*ōgi* 扇), and facial tissues (*chirigami* ちり紙). As protection against rain they used a large hat made of sedge leaves (*sugekasa* 菅笠) and a woven rush mat (*goza* 莫蔭) of linen threads (*asaito* 麻糸), which could be draped around the shoulders as a raincoat (*kigoza* 着莫蔭). On his back the pilgrim carried a large rectangular box with a lid (*kōri* 行李), which was made of bamboo or willow shoots and served to carry the charms and talismans (*ofuda*) that he bought during the pilgrimage. The *kōri* could also store the important travel documents needed to pass through the borders of various domains. The *kōri* was considered to be a very important accessory because it contained all the religious commodities such as the protective talismans that the pilgrim brought back for the people of the village. Therefore it was often covered with a wrapping cloth (*furoshiki* 風呂敷) in order to preserve its contents.<sup>69</sup>

The special technology which characterized the clothing and travel accessories carried on the body of pilgrims emphasized the teleologic aspect of this religious journey. The *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were sponsored to become a sort of human cargo ship that was supposed to reach Mount Yudono safely and then quickly return to the village with religious goods such

<sup>69</sup>. Yonezawa shishi: *minzoku hen*, eds. Yonezawa shishi hensan iinkai, 462.



as talismans, which were interpreted as tangible proofs of the protection of the *kami* and buddha of Yudono. The preliminary period of immobility and self-seclusion in the *gyōya* served to secure the subsequent mobility and access of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to the sacred landscape of Yudono. Once they entered the mountain they acted as a purified delegation that performed ascetic practices, prayed, and accumulated merits not only for themselves but also on the behalf of their community. John Eade and Michel Sallnow define this aspect of pilgrimage as characterized by an “overly transactional ethic” according to which “physical suffering and penance are exchanged for material and spiritual favor.”<sup>70</sup>

On an individual level it is undeniable that pilgrimage was also interpreted as an occasion to enter the usually off-limit space of the mountain in order to experience amazing things and take a break from the ordinariness of life (*monomi yūsan* 物見遊山) but, at the same time, the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* were always mindful of their religious responsibility toward those *kō* members and villagers who had sponsored and supported their pilgrimage. The diligent performance of ascetic practices together with the acquisition of sacred goods were interpreted by most pilgrims as fundamental elements of religious travel and was what was expected of them by those who remained at home.

#### **4. Bureaucratic and Religious Aspects of the Pilgrimage**

##### **4.1. *Tegata* and *Hatagoya*: the Bureaucratization of Asceticism**

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<sup>70</sup>. John Eade and Michael Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 24.

During the Edo period the development of infrastructures and the general improvement of safety on the trunk routes fostered the diffusion of pilgrimage practices even among common people. Nevertheless, the increased mobility of ordinary persons went hand in hand with an enormous proliferation of the bureaucratic apparatus, which served to minutely control people's movements among the various domains. Simon Coleman explains this phenomenon as an "institutionalization" or "domestication" of mobility through which the authorities could supervise people's transfer.<sup>71</sup>

In the case of the pilgrimage to Yudono, which set the performance of ascetic practices as *conditio sine qua non* for pilgrims in order to access the mountain, this tendency brought about the paradox of a 'bureaucratization of asceticism.' Unescapable lay rituals, made of a continuous exchange of permits, stamps, and customs examinations, permanently accompanied all types of pilgrims who travelled on the roads toward numinous sites such as Yudono. It is important to take into account that this travel bureaucracy was not necessarily perceived as something totally separated or removed from the religious and devotional aspects of the pilgrimage. On the contrary, it was considered an integral part of it. In other words taking part in a pilgrimage meant also taking care of the necessary documentations, which formally decreed the shift of social status from ordinary layman or laywoman to pilgrim (See Fig. 4.6).

The high degree of interpenetration of secular and religious elements during the pilgrimage was demonstrated by the fact that the Buddhist temples located in the native villages of pilgrims, worked as a sort of administrative offices to provide travelers with transit permits (*tegata* 手形). The *tegata* were necessary to pass through the various barrier stations (*sekisho* 関所) placed on the borders between domains and at various crucial points

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<sup>71</sup>. Simon Coleman and John Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, 17.

within them. At the *sekisho* local officials (*bugyō* 奉行) certified the documents of the pilgrims before allowing them to continue to travel. For instance, in Bunka 3 (1806) the Zen temple Shōfukiji 正福寺 in the village of Shinmaki 新巻 in Kazusa province issued the following *tegata*.

This man called Kanpei 勘平 who was born in the Ichibara 一原 district of Shinmaki village in Kazusa province requests authorization to make a pilgrimage to Yudono (*Yudonosan sankei* 湯殿山参詣). He must be allowed to transit through various provinces and barrier stations (*gosekisho* 御関所) without problem. If he falls ill and dies, he must receive a funerary ritual according to the local custom without any further communication with this temple.

Bunka 3, sixth month, third day. Kazusa province, Ichibara district, Shinmaki village.

From the Zen temple Shōfukuji.

To the officers of the various customs offices in the different provinces, the supervisors of the post stations (*shukueki* 宿駅) and villages.<sup>72</sup>

On leaving Shōnai domain to go back to their villages the pilgrims needed another type of *tegata* that was composed of two pages. The front page (*omotegaki* 表書) contained general information about the pilgrims and the temple authorization to exit Shōnai domain. This part was called the “exit print” (*dehan* 出判). The rear side (*ourahan* 御裏判) of the *tegata* was the “entry print” (*irihan* 入判) and specified the formal request by the pilgrim to recross the borders of the domain to go back to his village. For example, during the Kyōhō (1716–1736) or Enkyō 延享 (1744–1748) era a group of eleven Yudono pilgrims returned to the village of Kamo 加茂 in Echigo province after visiting Dewa Sanzan. They traversed the three mountains following a route usually defined as “reverse climbing” (*uragake* 裏駆け), going first to Yudono, then climbing Gassan, and exiting the mountains from Haguro. Most

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<sup>72</sup>. For the original text see Tsushima Ikuo, *Bōsō ni ikizuku Dewa Sanzan shinkō no shosō*, 16. A standard pilgrimage from the Kazusa region to Dewa Sanzan could take three or four weeks for a round trip. For more information, see *Ibid.*, 14, 20.

of the pilgrims preferred the opposite route or “frontal climbing” (*omotegake* 表駆け), which was physically less demanding and started from the village of Tōge at the foot of Haguro, then proceeded to Gassan, and terminated at Yudono.<sup>73</sup> Because Haguro was the final location visited by this group of pilgrims, the Hagurosan *bettō* put his seal on the *dehan* side of the *tegata*, which had to be subsequently certified by the city-supervisor (*machi bugyō* 町奉行) of Tsuruoka, to allow them to exit the Shōnai domain and return home.

This group of travelers is composed by eleven people: one leader (*tayū* 太夫) and ten persons. They bring with them spare clothes (*kigae* 着替). They departed from the city of Kamo and transited without problem through the Oguniguchi 小国口 [barrier] as reported on the rear side of this document.

From: Hagurōsan *bettō* (seal).

Nanokamachi shuku 七日町宿, Goemon 五右衛門 (seal)

Sixth month, twenty-sixth day.

To: The city supervisor at the office in Tsuruoka.

[Backside]

The eleven people above who are carrying their changes of clothing with them should be allowed to transit without problem.

Sixth month, twentyseventh day, Gonjirō 権次郎 (seal).

To the Oguniguchi [barrier] office.<sup>74</sup>

This *tegata* shows that every group of pilgrims always had a groupleader who was variously defined through terms such as main person (*tayū*), forerunner (*sakidachi* 先立ち), or village guide (*sato sendatsu* 里先達). The function of the groupleader was to guide the

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<sup>73</sup> This nomenclature of *uragake* and *omotegake* follows the spacial division of the *shugenja* of Haguro who associated the *uragake* to the Shingon style of pilgrimage and the *omotegake* to the Tendai one. It goes without saying that the *shugenja* of Yudono used the term *uragake* to define those pilgrims who entered Dewa Sanzan from Haguro and *omotegake* for those who started the pilgrimage from Yudono. This is a further indication of the intense conflict between the two mountains. For more information, see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 167.

<sup>74</sup> For the original text, see Aogi Shuichi, “Dōsha, hatagoya, yūjo—Kinsei Tsuruoka no shukuhaku gyōshadan to toshi gyōsei,” in *Nihon kinsei no chiiki shakairon*, ed. Maruyama Yasunari (Tōkyō: Bunken shuppan, 1988), 334.

pilgrims from the village to the foot of Yudono. The role of *tayū* or *sato sendatsu* was usually played by a veteran pilgrim who was also a member of the Yudonosan *kō* and knew precisely the best and safest route to reach Yudono. The groupleaders also established special agreements with the lodging owners in the locations where the pilgrims stopped overnight. In the case of the Yudono pilgrimage, the nonresident *issei gyōnin* who founded Yudonosan *kō* in provinces distant from the Shōnai area often acted as *sato sendatsu* to escort pilgrims from their villages to Mount Yudono.<sup>75</sup> Once the Yudonosan *kō* was steadily rooted in the cultic life of the rural community, as in the case of the Yudonosan *kō* of Yonezawa, Yamagata, or those in Kazusa province, the pilgrims independently selected their group leaders to guide the other members with less experience.

Once the *sato sendatsu* arrived at one of the four *bettōji* at the foot of Yudono, he entrusted his group of pilgrims to a mountainguide (*yama sendatsu* 山先達) or *annai sendatsu* who accompanied pilgrims into the mountain. There were thus two different types of *sendatsu* who took care of pilgrims during specific phases of the pilgrimage: the *sato sendatsu* was the groupleader who escorted the pilgrims from their homes to the foot of the mountain, and the *yama sendatsu* accompanied them to the numinous places within the secret landscape of the mountain. The *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji and Dainichibō also performed the role of *annai sendatsu* for pilgrims who stayed at their *gyōnidera*. At Hondōji and Dainichiji the role of *annai sendatsu* was exclusively played by those village *shugenja* (*zaikata shugenja*) who were affiliated with these temples.<sup>76</sup>

The *tegata* always specified the presence of female pilgrims (*onna gyōnin* 女行人) and

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<sup>75</sup> For the competition between *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* for the right to accompany pilgrims from their native villages to Yudono and guide them there, see chapter 2, 153-159.

<sup>76</sup> See the *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]*, which is included in the *Dainichibō monjō*. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 108-113.

their exact number among the other male pilgrims (*dōsha*) of the group. In some cases the *tegata* made reference to a third category of sacred traveler, who was defined as an itinerant renunciant (*ōrai shukke* 往来出家) and comprised those pilgrims who had received some sort of religious ordination and had a specific affiliation with officially recognized religious institutions. Like laymen and laywomen who made pilgrimage to Yudono, these itinerant religious professionals were also registered, controlled, and authorized to transit thanks to a widespread and inescapable bureaucratic system that inevitably became a fundamental part of the religious experience of the pilgrimage.

Likewise, the quantity and type of the goods carried by pilgrims were also scrupulously noted on the *tegata*, to prevent pilgrims illegally selling or buying material from other persons during the journey. In the inns (*hatagoya* 旅籠屋) built on the pilgrimage routes in the Shōnai domain, there was a proliferation of itinerant commercial travelers (*tabi akiudo* 旅商人) who tried to sell their goods to pilgrims and innkeepers without paying the taxes imposed by the *han* on business activities. Pilgrims who carried with them an excessive quantity of personal belongings or who stood out because of a conspicuous increase or decrease in the amount of luggage were not allowed to transit the borders of the domain and could be fined. For instance, the pilgrims who reached Yudono from the regions of Mogami and Maruyama needed a special transit permit called *kakekoshi* 懸越 to cross the mountains which separated the two domains. Even if this mountainous route was the quickest option for the Murayama pilgrims in terms of time, it was considered to be a suspicious itinerary because it went through a usually offlimits area where possible smuggling activities were more difficult to control than on the usual major roads, which were constantly guarded by the

*han* officials who resided in the various *sekisho*.<sup>77</sup>

Before entering the sacred landscape of Dewa Sanzan, numerous pilgrims, in particular those who came from Echigo, Ugo 羽後, or northern Michinoku, stopped in the city of Tsuruoka. For the pilgrims who travelled from Awa, Kazusa, Shimōsa or southern Michinoku, it was more convenient to spend one night at Yonezawa or Yamagata before accessing the Dewa Sanzan area. In the case of Tsuruoka the pilgrims were immediately registered on their arrival in the lodging district of Nanokamachi 七日町, which in Bunsei 8 (1825) included one hundred seventyone buildings among which there were seventeen *hatagoya* for pilgrims or ordinary travelers, twentysix low ranking inns (*kagoya* 籠屋), and various businesses such as laundries, pastry shops and taverns.<sup>78</sup> At Nanokamachi there were also numerous teahouses (*chaya* 茶屋) where pilgrims could stop to take a short break, but could not lodge overnight. The usual bureaucratic system to register the pilgrims who arrived at Nanokamachi started with a written communication sent by the inn keeper (*Nanokamachi shukuhaku gyōsha* 七日町宿泊業者) to the district supervisor (*dōchō kimoiri* 同町肝煎) who subsequently transmitted the file to the vicesupervisor of the city (*ōshōya* 大庄屋). After the *ōshōya* received and examined all these papers, he sent them to the *machi bugyō* for final authentication.<sup>79</sup>

The choice of *hatagoya* was usually based on the fiduciary relationship that the groupleaders had previously built with the inn keepers of the city. At Nanokamachi those groupleaders who accompanied pilgrims to the same *hatagoya* year after year could spend a

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<sup>77</sup>. Abe Yoshiharu, *Zusetsu, Dewa Sanzan jinja sen yonyaku nen—Dewa Sanzan gokaizan sen yonhyaku nensai hōshuku kinen* (Tōge: Dewa Sanzan Jinja shamusho, 1993), 87.

<sup>78</sup>. Until the first half of the seventeenth century pilgrims who reached Tsuruoka could also stop in the Mikkamachi 三日町 district, but after the installation of the Sakai family, Nanokamachi absorbed most of the funding from the *daimyō* and inevitably became the principal center for hosting pilgrims.

<sup>79</sup>. Aogi Shuichi, “Dōsha, hatagoya, yūjo—Kinsei Tsuruoka no shukuhaku gyōshadan to toshi gyōsei,” 340.

night free of charge and received special gifts from the inn keeper, such as baked cakes of wheat gluten (*yakifu* 焼麩), a renowned local speciality (*meibutsu* 名物).

There were also pilgrims who arrived at Nanokamachi for the first time and did not have a specific affiliation with any *hatagoya*. In this case the inn keepers applied a rotation system (*mawaritsuke* 廻りつけ) according to which the first *hatagoya* with empty rooms was authorized to host pilgrims without affiliation. Once a *hatagoya* received a group of nonaffiliated pilgrims, it were moved to the bottom of the list in order to allow other *hatagoya* to share the same benefits.<sup>80</sup> When pilgrims who belonged to the *samurai* class arrived at Nanokamachi, they could independently choose the *hatagoya* they liked without considering the fiduciary relationships or the *mawaritsuke* system.

In the case of the Shōnai domain, pilgrims were not allowed to spend more than two nights in the same city, and in the Yonezawa domains the time limit was set to only one night. Any variation had to be immediately communicated to the *machi bugyō* who could grant an extension of stay to the pilgrim. These restrictive laws were promulgated in order to shorten the period of pilgrimage as much as possible because it constituted a potential threat to the agricultural and commercial productivity of the domains if large groups of workers were absent for long periods on pilgrimage during the summer.<sup>81</sup> Sometimes pilgrims preferred to sleep at temples or shrines dedicated to the cult of Yudono, instead of staying at the *hatagoya* in big urban centers. Some pilgrims could also decide to stay cheaply in the private houses of poor peasants (*nago*) who shared the same affiliation with a Yudonosan *kō* or were followers of the same Buddhist School (*hōrui* 法類). The *nago* secretly hosted pilgrims in disused areas

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<sup>80</sup>. Ibid., 343.

<sup>81</sup>. For instance, in Kansei 7 (1795) the Yonezawa domain prohibited all pilgrimages for a period of seven years to which was added an extension of five more years. Nevertheless, the pilgrimage to Yudono was considered an exception to the rule. See Watanabe Keikichi, “Sanzan mairi to ogyōya,” 78-79 and also Carmen Blacker, “The Religious Traveller in the Edo Period,” 604.



of their homes, charging them only for the cost of firewood (*kisenyado* 木錢宿), even though this practice was condemned by both the *machi bugyō* and the *jisha bugyō* because it did not involve correct registration and supervision of the movements of pilgrims through the standard *tegata* system.

One of the most vivid descriptions of Nanokamachi appears in the diary of Tomimoto Shigedayū 富本繁太夫, a *jōruri* artist (*geinin* 芸人) and traveler, who stopped for more than two months in this district of Tsuruoka in Bunsei 13 (1830). Shigedayū described Nanokamachi as “a place full of brothels” (*tōsho ni sūta jorōya aru* 当所に数多女郎や有る)<sup>82</sup> where prostitutes usually worked in small rooms of four or five *tatami* 畳 on the upper floors of the *hatagoya*.<sup>83</sup> In the Shōnai domain, prostitution was legal in the cities of Tsuruoka and Sakata, and at Nanokamachi the prostitutes were directly affiliated and administered by the inn keepers of the *hatagoya*.<sup>84</sup> Apart from the professional prostitutes (*yūjo* 遊女) there were also a type of chambermaid (*meshimori onna* 飯盛女) who often played the same role for the male guests of the *hatagoya*. It goes without saying that the activities of prostitutes contributed largely to the economic stability and fame of the *hatagoya* at Nanokamachi. Nevertheless, in Bunka 9 (1812) there was a harsh dispute between inn keepers over the possibility of expelling prostitutes from the upper floors of the *hatagoya* because various groups of pilgrims refused to spend the night in a district, which was considered to be polluted (*fujō* 不浄). The petition (*gansho* 願書) that the inn keepers, who opposed the presence of prostitutes in the *hatagoya*, addressed to the *machi bugyō* is extremely interesting

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<sup>82</sup>. Aogi Shuichi, “Dōsha, hatagoya, yūjo—Kinsei Tsuruoka no shukuhaku gyōshadan to toshi gyōsei,” 348.

<sup>83</sup>. A room of four or five *tatami* corresponds to almost seven square meters and half.

<sup>84</sup>. In the Shōnai domain there were also illegal brothels, which were called hiddenhouses of prostitution (*kakure yūjōya* 隠遊女屋). In Bunsei 8 (1825) at Nanokamachi there were one hundred sixty regularly registered prostitutes, and in Kaei 5 (1852) the number reached two hundred and three. It is important to take into account that this figure does not include the numerous hidden prostitutes or the *hatagoya* maids who *de facto* practiced the same profession.

because it mentions the procedures of hospitality which were followed in order to welcome (*mukai* 迎<sup>レ</sup>) the Yudono pilgrims during the summer (*natsuchū Yudonosan dōsha* 夏中湯殿山道者).

The inn keepers wrote that they would put up big *bonten* (*taka bonten dachi* 高梵天立) and sacred ropes (*shime*) outside their *hatagoya*. At the same time, they took care to cook all vegetarian food on a separated fire (*bekka*) and cleaned the rooms to meet the standards of purity (*shōjō* 清浄) that were requested by the category of pilgrim defined as ascetic people (*shugenshū* 修験衆).<sup>85</sup> In other words, they underlined the impossibility for their *hatagoya* to keep serving groups of pilgrims such as the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* who based their pilgrimage on high ascetic standards and satisfy, at the same time, the requests of other types of pilgrim, who were probably not directly affiliated with the Yudonosan *kō* and considered sexual amusement a fundamental element of travel.

The ultimate meaning of this controversy about the inclusion or exclusion of prostitutes from the *hatagoya* of Nanokamachi demonstrates that in the Edo period there was a great diversity among the typologies of pilgrims. Even if the pilgrimage to Yudono was based on religious and secular practices which were apparently similar for every pilgrim, such as the obtaining of *tegata*, the stay at the *hatagoya*, and the final entrance into the mountain, the emotional investment and attribution of significance could considerably change according to the cultural and religious background of the pilgrim. For instance, the semantic value attributed by pilgrims to travel to Mount Yudono fluctuated from an austere ascetic experience such as in the case of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to a more amusing or hedonist journey as in the case of Tomimoto Shigedayū. The ritual of the pilgrimage became a sort of

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<sup>85</sup>. For the original text see Aogi Shuichi, “Dōsha, hatagoya, yūjo—Kinsei Tsuruoka no shukuhaku gyōshadan to toshi gyōsei,” 362.

twilight zone or area of complexity where pilgrims' different lifestyles, sensibilities, and religious practices mingled, clashed, and mutually fertilized each other to create a many-sided phenomenon which embraced, at the same time, ascetic practices, bureaucratic procedures and erotic pleasure.<sup>86</sup>

Even if the antiprostitution party ended up in the minority, a compromise had to be found and the *machi bugyō* finally decided that prostitutes could not work in the *hatogoya* of Nanokamachi from the sixth to the eighth month of the year, that is, the pilgrimage season. The actual enforcement of this regulation was extremely difficult and prostitutes probably continued to meet with clients thanks to the networks of those inn keepers who thought that prostitution was a means to attract pilgrims rather than repel them. For instance, in Bunka 11 (1814) Jippensha Ikku 十返舎一九 (1765–1831) published the seventh volume, entirely dedicated to the Dewa Sanzan pilgrimage, of the serialized comic travelguide *Muda shugyō kane no waraji* 方言修行金草鞋 (terminated in Tenpō 1, 1830).<sup>87</sup> Jippensha set a scene in a rough inn of Nanokamachi, called Shukubō Kiraya 伽羅屋, where the two wild protagonists spend one night.<sup>88</sup> The episode starts with a humorous poem (*kyōka*) and continues with a dialogue full of obscene puns between the two pleasure-loving pilgrims—Hanage no Nobitaka 鼻毛の延高 (Mr. Long nosehair) and Chikurabō 千久羅坊 (Mr. Longdick)—and a maid of the Shukubō Kiraya (See Fig. 4.7).

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<sup>86</sup> James Foard points out that the semantic value of terms such as *mōde* or *junrei* is extremely broad and embraces a range of meanings that go from 'ascetic pilgrimage' to 'religious tourism'. See James H. Foard, "The Boundaries of Compassion: Buddhism and National Tradition in Japanese Pilgrimage," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 2 (February 1982): 231-232.

<sup>87</sup> The expression *kane no waraji* refers to a fantastic type of *waraji* that does not wear out even when walking for long distances. The author chose it to immediately transmit to the reader the idea of a continuous pilgrimage. The compound 方言 refers to the peculiarity of the dialect (*hōgen*), which was spoken in far provinces and the humor that was associated with it. When 方言 was read *muda* such as in the expression *muda shugyō* it refers to the literary performance of writing humorous poems (*kyōka* 狂歌) in dialect, which reminds the reader of the uselessness of the ascetic practices performed by the two protagonists during the pilgrimage.

<sup>88</sup> In the amusement district the term *kira* indicated a beautiful courtesan and the money paid by clients.

The successful (*shusse* 出世) merchant unfolds his wings (*hane* 羽) and flies for thousands of miles: this is the golden hill of cranes (*tsuru ga oka* 鶴が岡).<sup>89</sup>

Lodge keeper: “Come in, come in! Stop here at my place. My waitresses (*jochū* 女中) are all beautiful! For the same price isn’t it better to spend the night in a lodge with pretty waitresses? Come in!”

Nobitaka: “If it is like you say, I’ll stop at your place. But, you know, I’m an old man. I don’t need anything for myself. Please, give me a discount for tonight and serve me something delicious to eat. Then, give me the most beautiful waitress you have. By the way, you know, I feel sad sleeping alone at night. Please tell her that she can sleep by my side. I am already seventynine. She should not be afraid of anything. But, if she slightly feels something... she may consider my dick a useful tool.”

Chikurabō: “The more I look at you, the more I realize you are a gorgeous young lady! Please, bring me another cup of tea. I would be even more pleased if the cup is the one from which you have drunk. But if it is *sake* rather than tea, it would be even better for me!”

Waitress: “Dear lord, you have chosen the right lodge to spend the night! There are a lot of young ladies here. Let me show you the interior (*oku e goannai itashimashō* 奥へ御案内致しませう).<sup>90</sup> My inner is large! (*watashi no oku wa hirō gozarimasu* 妾の奥は廣うムざります).”<sup>91</sup>

Nobitaka and Chikurabō are undoubtedly caricatures used by Jippensha to create comic situations and dialogues to amuse a hypothetical metropolitan reader, but can also be interpreted as a certain type of pilgrim who was poles apart from the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* that practiced selfseclusion rituals in the *gyōya* before going to Yudono. At the same time it is important to take into account that both the libertine-pilgrims described by Jippensha and the

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<sup>89</sup>. *Ha o noshite senri hito tobi akibito no shusse wa kane no Tsuru ga oka nare* 羽を熨して千里ひと飛あき人の出世はかねの鶴が岡なれ. The compound *shusse* 出世 also indicates the manifestation of a Buddha in the present world. The use of the character “wing” 羽 in the first verse reminds us of the name of Haguro and its religious and economic ties with the city of Tsuruoka, whose name also contains an ornithological reference to “crane” (*tsuru*). The hidden meaning of the poem can be that the Buddha manifests himself as a merchant who flies back and forth from Haguro to Tsuruoka in order to make business.

<sup>90</sup>. The pronoun *watashi* used by female speakers can also mean “mistress” (*onname* 妾). This last sentence is a parody of the title of Matsuo Bashō’s famous travel diary *Oku no hosomichi*.

<sup>91</sup>. For the original text see *Jippensha Ikku zenshū*, vol. 3, ed. Takano Yoshio (Tōkyō: Nihon zusho sentā, 1979), 754-755.

ascetic-pilgrims such as the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* shared and were united—although following divergent religious and behavioral protocols—in the same allinclusive, complex, and variegated religious practice of the pilgrimage.

#### 4.2. The Overnight Stay at the Four Temples and Path Toward Shizu

After spending a night or two in the major cities of the Dewa province the pilgrims finally reached one of the seven entrances at the foot of Yudono, which marked the limen between the ordinary world and the sacred space of the mountain. There were kind of checkpoints (*kuchidome basho* 口留番所) at each village that headed the entry routes, where the pilgrims were registered again and had to pay a transit toll before sent on to the *shukubō* or *bettōji* for accommodation.<sup>92</sup> For instance, in the villages of Hondōji and Ōizawa there were various *shukubō* and *chaya* where pilgrims could rest or stay for the night besides the lodgings within the precincts of Hondōji and Dainichiji. The rural *shugenja* who administered these *shukubō* and *chaya* received a stipend in rice (*fuchi* 扶持) directly from the two *bettōji* to maintain a decent level of accommodation for pilgrims, but, at the same time, they had to pay a conspicuous percentage of their income to the monks in order to be members of this system.<sup>93</sup>

Once the pilgrims entered the *bettōji*'s precincts, they separated from the *sato sendatsu*

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<sup>92</sup>. Abe Yoshiharu, *Zusetsu Dewa Sanzan jinja sen yonyaku nen*, 85.

<sup>93</sup>. Toward the end of the Edo period some *shukubō* and *chaya* in the villages at the *uraguchi* of Yudono tried to independently organize their business, refusing to pay the usual taxation on income to the *bettōji*. This led to a harsh dispute between the monastic institutions and groups of rural *shugenja* who participated in the lodging activities. The final result was a general decline of the accommodation standards for pilgrims. See *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 143.

and met the *yama sendatsu* who would guide them in the mountain.<sup>94</sup> They then went to the temple office (*honbō*) to pay the fees for the stay. These lodging fees, which were defined as donations (*otoshimono* 落物), allowed the pilgrims to receive a square voucher (*tegata aratame* 手形改め) that they subsequently exchanged to get meals and be assigned a lodging for the night. A special group of attendant monks (*sōsha* 奏者) supervised all the payment procedures and served meals to the pilgrims. The following day the *yama sendatsu* accompanied the male pilgrims to pray in front of Gohōzen, made propitiatory rituals (*kitō*), and performed outdoor fire rituals (*saitō goma*) for his clients. In return the *yama sendatsu* received from the pilgrims a payment in coin, which were defined as “first fruit donations” (*hatsuho* 初穂).<sup>95</sup> At the two *omoteguchi* temples, Chūrenji and Dainichibō, all these religious services were provided to pilgrims by *issei gyōnin* while *shugenja* took care of the logistic aspects in the accommodation of pilgrims in temples or *shukubō* at Shimekake or the Ōami villages. It is interesting to note that in Genji 元治 2 (1865) the group leader Shingorō 新五郎 who was traveling with a group of seven people from the village of Ōhashimura 大橋村 in Michinoku province wrote in his travel diary *Yudonosan dōchūki oboechō* 湯殿山道中記覚帳 that they paid twentyfive *mon* to a two thousand day ascetic

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<sup>94</sup> According to the *Yudonosan yurai narabi bettō shi[kaji]* the *yama sendatsu* were also defined as *annai sendatsu* or parishioner-guides (*dannaba sendatsu* 旦那場先達) because they usually took care only of those pilgrims who came from the parishes with which they had an affiliation. This text also specifies that: “All the pilgrims that come to Yudono from various provinces are requested to stop in one of these four temples. If this rule is not respected the pilgrimage is not valid. This praxis has been established since the time of our founder Kōbō Daishi. If a person from nearby villages enters these temples without being escorted by an *annai sendatsu*, the pilgrimage is invalidated. This is the reason why the *bettō* dispatch *annai sendatsu* in each of these four temples.” For the original text see *Asahimura shi (I) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 108, 110.

<sup>95</sup> It is probable that the Yudono *shugenja* received two payments from their parishioners: one for the distribution of the oxbezoar talismans during the first three months of the year, and a second one during the pilgrimage season when ordinary pilgrims or members of the Yudonosan *kō* went to Yudono and benefitted from their religious services. The details about the *hatsuho* system at Yudono are unknown. For a study on the modalities of the *hatsuho* collection by the *oshi* of Ōyama see Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan*, 134-139.

(*nisennichi gyōja* 二千日行者) to play the role of *yama sendatsu* on their behalf.<sup>96</sup> This *dōchūki* shows that even in territories such as the village of Shizu where the Hondōji and Dainichiji influence was extremely accentuated the *issei gyōnin* occasionally escorted pilgrims into the mountain replacing the *shugenja* who were the only religious professionals to be officially entitled to work as *yama sendatsu*.

In Tenmei 5 (1785) Kimura Kenji 木村謙次 (1752–1811), a physician of Echigo province who dedicated his life to the exploration of the northern territories of Honshū and Ezo lands, stopped one night at Hondōji during a trip through Dewa Sanzan.<sup>97</sup> The vivid description of the temple infrastructures and the monks' manners that he reported in his travel journal, *Ōu kōri ki* 奥羽行李記, provides a contrastive example of various unpleasant aspects that were also part of the reality of pilgrimage.

[Seventh month,] fourteenth day, cloudy. [...] Together with the [*yama sendatsu*] Daizōbō 大蔵坊 who looked a very poor person I went through the first customs office (Ichinoseki 一ノ関) and spent the night at the lodging Umemotobō 梅本坊 close to Hondōji. At noon I was served with *sake*. I made ablutions and went to visit Hondōji. The temple was being rebuilt after a fire, but the work seems to be still in progress. Following the instructions of Daizōbō, I participated in the Supreme Fire ritual (*jōka*) and drank boiled water (*sayu* 白湯).<sup>98</sup> On a wooden plank a poorly written text reported that this fire corresponded to Kūkai's fire ritual for empowerment (Kūkai *kaji no hi* 空海加持ノ火). We proceeded toward a big room where a crowd of people was waiting to receive food and *sake* after performing ablutions. The meal was very bad (*hanahada so nari* 甚夕麩ナリ). [Some people] entrusted (*taku seraruru* 托セラルル) food offerings for their ancestors (*meifuku* 冥福) [to monks]. Among these people there was a group of about fifty old friends. One of them had a contract for a regular offering of tea and food for his dead father Ishii

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<sup>96</sup> For the original text see Nishigai Kenji, *Higashi nihon no sangaku shinkō to kō shūdan. Sangaku shinkō to chiiki shakai zoku* (Tōkyō: Iwata shoin, 2011), 22-23.

<sup>97</sup> Kimura Keiji was born in Kuji 久慈 village in Echigo province and was trained in Chinese history and medicine by the famous Confucian scholar Tachihara Suiken 立原翠軒 (1744–1823) at the Mito domain.

<sup>98</sup> A peculiarity of the Supreme Fire ritual which was performed on the behalf of the Yudono pilgrims was that the participants were asked to pay money in order to drink a cup of hot water during the ceremony. This hot water probably symbolized the thaumaturgic water of Gohōzen and was interpreted as a moment of union between the pilgrim and the mountain.

Gensaku 石井玄朔. Inside this temple, indecent (*waisetsu* 猥褻) and coarse behavior (*akuzoku no fū* 悪俗ノ風) mixed with semiauthentic feelings of faith (*hotondo shinjin no jō* 殆信心ノ情). I didn't know whether to vomit or laugh. During the meal a man dressed in formal clothes announced that the chief monk (*inju* 院主) would arrive immediately after the meal. All the servantmonks (*kyūji no sō* 給仕ノ僧) and the lay people lowered their heads. The chief monk went to the middle of the room, said to keep eating, and started asking about the abundance of this year's crops and other things. He was dressed in a dark red monastic robe with a surplice woven with glittering threads of brocade. The manners of that monk seemed very vulgar. I asked an attendant (*jisha no sō* 侍者ノ僧) where he came from and he told me that he was from Musashi province. Then I asked information about the opening of this mountain by Kūkai, but not a single monk could give me a reply. According to Daizōbō the Sutra Hall had been lost in the fire and this [accident] was attributed to the bandits (*zokuto* 賊徒) following a year of poor crops. We received the [transit] permit (*tsūhan* 通判) [to enter Yudono] and after paying extra money we left the place. On this transit permit we were classified as two Yudono pilgrims (Yudono *sankei no gyōja* 湯殿参詣之行者) who could travel [through Yudono] without problem. [The permit] was issued on the seventh month, fourteenth day and had the stamp of the Hondōji official. At the entrance of the village of Shizu there was an office where we showed our transit permit. We stopped in the lodge (*shuku*) of a man called Shida Zen'emom 志田善右衛門. In this village there were fourteen houses that did not work [as lodges for pilgrims] during the winter and spring season. Two spears were hung on the wall. When I asked about them I was told these spears were used to fight against the thieves (*tōzoku* 盜賊) that sneaked into the [Yudono] valley. He snapped the fingers and laughed. We still had ten *ri* to travel.<sup>99</sup>

For the pilgrims who entered Dewa Sanzan from Hondōji and Dainichiji the passage through the village of Shizu was a sort of fixed route. The area of Shizu called Genkai, which was the *gyōba* for the *issei gyōnin* of Hondōji and Dainichiji, marked the area forbidden to women (*nyonin kekkai* 女人結界), who were requested to stop their pilgrimage before entering this site. Because women were associated with impurity and passions, the recesses of Yudono remained an off limits to female pilgrims during the Edo period. Together with Genkai at the Dainichiji entrance the entire territory of Dewa Sanzan displayed *nyonin kekkai* barriers at specific places associated with each of the seven entries (*nanaguchi*) to the

<sup>99</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 176-177.



mountain range. The *nyonin kekkai* of Haguroguchi was located at Nigōme no daiman 二合目の大満. At Ōamiguchi and Shimekakeguchi the barrier for female pilgrims was placed at Nanatsutaki 七つ滝 that is close to the village of Tamugimata. At Hondōjiguchi and Iwanezawaguchi women could not go beyond a place called Kiyokawa gyōnin koya 清川行人小屋, and at Hijioriguchi a similar offlimit area was located at Haraigawa 祓川.<sup>100</sup> For instance, the *samurai* Takayama Hikokurō 高山彦九郎 (1747–1793) gave the following description in his travel diary *Hokkō nikki* 北行日記, composed during a pilgrimage from Yudono to Haguro in Kansei 2 (1790).

Fourth day, clear weather. I washed myself at the *shukubō* in Shizu and put on my travel clothes (*tabi ryosō* 旅装). I walked for twentyfour or twentyfive *chō* in the northern direction until I reached Genkai, a plateau that extended out from Shizu. From this point one person of the *shukubō* went back and I followed the *sendatsu* who guided me on the path through Genkai. The path was opened by someone called Genkai, hence its name.<sup>101</sup> The name of Shizu derives from the fact that the water is pure. After ten *chō* there was a wooden board that gave the following regulations:

From this point on, one must pay attention (*tsutsushimu beshi* 可慎) not to kill sentient beings (*sesshō* 殺生), including small insects, or behave without mercy (*mujihi* 無慈悲).

It is prohibited to cut bamboo or trees along the climbing path without good reason.

Women and nuns (*nyonin narabi bikuni* 女人並比丘尼) cannot enter.

It is prohibited to map out paths and measure distances.

For everything concerning this mountain [pilgrims] must follow the instructions of the *sendatsu*.

The official supervisors of Hondōji and Dainichiji.<sup>102</sup>

These regulations show that the space of the mountain was usually concealed and closed

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<sup>100</sup>. Even if at Dewa Sanzan the practice of the *nyonin kekkai* was formally abolished in the Meiji 5 (1872), female pilgrims started accessing sacred places such as Gohōzen in considerable numbers only after the postwar period. For more details about the system of *nyonin kekkai* at Dewa Sanzan during the Edo period see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō rekishi chirigakuteki kenkyū*, 16.

<sup>101</sup>. According to another tradition the name of Genkai derives from the rough arm of sea that Kūkai had to cross in order to reach China. See *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 142.

<sup>102</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 181-182.

to the members of ordinary society who could penetrate it only as pilgrims and always escorted by *yama sendatsu*. In the case of female pilgrims the inner part of Dewa Sanzan remained completely impenetrable. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider the *nyonin kekkai* system as a complete exclusion of women from every type of religious activity at Dewa Sanzan. Even if women were not allowed to have physical proximity to the most sacred sites such as Gohōzen they could always worship Yudono from a distance (*yōhai* 遙拜). For example, in the *Kikeishi* the eminent *issei gyōnin* Tetsumonkai analyzed *nyonin kekkai* in relation to the Supreme Fire ritual to which all the Yudono pilgrims were asked to participate.

When [the pilgrims] come to this mountain, they spend many days performing ascetic practices. For those who are interested in the things of this world it is difficult to perform ascetic practices. Therefore, these people should refrain from coming here. If one does not perform asceticism, the pilgrimage is not valid. Therefore, if [a pilgrim] visits this mountain, practices asceticism for five or seven days, and venerates the main icon of this hall, he can build a karmic tie (*kechien*) for the realization of his desires. For women it is different. Because the ritual of the Supreme Fire is extremely important, they can watch it and receive the *shime* 七五三. Nevertheless, women are not allowed to enter the mountain. Because they are not admitted within the mountain, it is impossible for them to venerate the Dharma nature of Dainichi Nyorai. Since it is a terrible thing to deprive someone of the possibility to create a positive karmic tie in this life (*chigu no en* 値遇の縁), women can visit this hall in order to establish a karmic relationship with the Dharma nature of Dainichi Nyorai and obtain salvation. This shows the great compassion of the heart [of Daishi] who invited [Yudono Daigongen] to this hall [in order to be venerated by women as well]. Therefore, it is called Shinzan Gongen.<sup>103</sup>

In this passage Tetsumonkai seems to emphasize what Bernard Faure defines to be the “transformative power” of Buddhist institutions as dynamic spaces in which the impurity that

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<sup>103</sup> For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 2.

was usually associated with women was often transmogrified and finally overcome.<sup>104</sup> In this specific case the Supreme Fire ritual, which was performed by the *issei gyōnin* at Chūrenji, was regarded as a ceremony that could bestow salvation on female pilgrims, allowing them to come in contact with Dainichi Nyorai. When the *issei gyōnin* summoned Yudono Gongen to the *goma* platform at Chūrenji they recreated a sort of holographic image of the sacred landscape and divine pantheon of Mount Yudono, which could be venerated by women without actually walking through the mountain itself. The epithet “new mountain” (Shinzan) was used to indicate a manifestation of Yudono Gongen and, by extension, of the entire mountain of Yudono and Dainichi Nyorai within the Gongendō at Chūrenji, which could be immediately accessed also by female pilgrims.

The *nyōnin kekkai* system at Yudono is a typical example in which the two apparently oppositional discourses of ‘discrimination’ and ‘salvation’ merge one into the other. Bernard Faure underlines that the notion of *kekkai* can be interpreted as a sort of “inclusive exclusion” in which women became the frame or the threshold that demarcated and empowered the sacred space within the mountain by the fact of being ostracized from it.<sup>105</sup> According to this theory the stream of female pilgrims that could only circumambulate the most sacred part of Dewa Sanzan and had to stop at the fringes of the *oku no in*, which was constituted by Yudono itself, without penetrating the internal space of the mountain created an imaginary line or thread that passed through all the seven entrances of the mountain range and provided charisma and legitimacy to the landscape included within it.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the *nyōnin kekkai*

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<sup>104</sup>. Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 238.

<sup>105</sup>. *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>106</sup> It should be remembered that in the case of Haguro women always had full access to the mountain and the *nyōnin kekkai* of Nigōme no daiman did not include the major cultic spots of the mountain. Nigōme no daiman was located after Jakkōji and before the Arasawa area.

system continuously transformed the role of women and their relationships with the mountain from renegade impure agents to purified and saved entities and, finally, to sources of legitimacy for the mountain and all its religious institutions.

The close ties between Hondōji, Dainichiji, and the village of Shizu for the management of pilgrims were often characterized by strong contrasts. In Tenwa 3 (1683) Hondōji decided to restore an ancient path, Kōshimizudōri 高清水通り, that directly linked the temple area with the top of Gassan from which the pilgrims could access Yudono. This rerouting of the pilgrim flow was perceived by the *shukubō* keepers and village institutions of Shizu as a severe threat to the economic stability of the village community, which was greatly dependent on the charges imposed on the pilgrims who transited from the two *uraguchi* temples to Yudono via Shizu traveling on the Dōchi path. In Keichō 16 (1611) Mogami Yoshiaki allowed the village of Shizu to levy a transit tax of fifteen *mon* for each pilgrim who passed through the barrier station of Shira'iwa 白岩 where local officers could print *tegata* and also commercial permits for the circulation of goods. Thanks to these past concessions the prosperity of Shizu considerably improved and when the *jisha bugyō* formally approved Hondōji's project to restore the Kōshimizudōri in Tenwa 5 (1685) the socioeconomic balance of the village abruptly changed.

The Hondōji monks also imposed three relevant restrictions about the management of pilgrims on the inhabitants of Shizu: the prohibition to host pilgrims in the private houses of poor peasants (*kisen yado*), a limitation of the transit tax to every three or five pilgrims during the summer period (instead of the fifteen *mon* for each pilgrim as in the past), and the stopping of the local production of the octagonal staffs (*kongō tsue* 金剛杖) made of *Sapium Japonicum* (*shiragi* 白木) that pilgrims were requested to buy to enter the Dewa Sanzan area.

Since it was forbidden to bring one's own *kongō tsue* from the ordinary world outside the mountain (*gekai* 下界) the pilgrims were forced to buy it on the spot and this constituted an important source of income for many villages in the area. For instance, in Tenmei 2 (1782) and Kansei 9 (1797) epidemics and famines brought the Hondōji monks to temporarily remove the prohibition on the production of the *kongō tsue* for the Shizu community in order to ease the situation of the villagers who were suffering from adverse economic and sanitary conditions.<sup>107</sup>

### 4.3. The Mountain of Silence

In their travel diaries some pilgrims defined Yudono as the “mountain of love” (*koi no yama* 戀の山). At first glance this appellative seems to contrast with the austere ascetic character that denoted this mountain, but the graphic elements forming the character *koi* were actually selected to be taken apart in order to underline the concept that ordinary words (言) must be doubly tied up (糸糸) during the pilgrimage to Yudono. The final result was a terminological and visual oxymoron where love and ascetic silence were linked together in order to describe the nature of a sacred mountain that remained beyond the borders of any narrative. It was for this reason that the pilgrims who walked through the sacred landscape of Yudono were invariably stricken by silence, which characterized the acoustic dimension of the mountain. Once inside the numinous territory of Dewa Sanzan pilgrims were requested to suspend every type of ordinary speech and silence could be broken only to recite the *nenbutsu* at specific locations along the way.

<sup>107</sup>. For more information see *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 136-138, 148.

Also in the cartographical representations of Dewa Sanzan the presence of Yudono was always implicitly evoked, but never explicitly represented on paper through graphic signs. In other words the charisma of Mount Yudono, which was the *oku no in* of Dewa Sanzan, derived from the constant presence of its absence. Yudono was a sort of elusive mountain whose presence constituted the religious core of the entire Dewa Sanzan, even if it always refused to be narrowed down by verbal, oral or graphic descriptions. For instance, in the map *Ushū Haguro sanzansō ezu* 羽州羽黒三山総絵図 (Kansei 3, 1791) the geographical location of Yudono is covered with a curtain of curling clouds among which can be read the sentence: “Yudono is a sacred mountain. Any superfluous words about this secret site are cut off.” (*Yudonosan reijō nari. Muda hisho shōryaku kore* 湯殿山靈場也徒為秘所省略之) (See Fig. 4.8).

It was probably this dimension of eloquent silence, which characterized Yudono, that attracted many *haikai* 俳諧 masters who made pilgrimages to this mountain and described their aesthetic and ascetic experiences in travel diaries. Even if Bashō is always remembered as the most prominent poet who visited and composed verses on Dewa Sanzan, there were three other travelers who left valuable literary descriptions of Yudono and the surrounding mountains before Bashō. For instance, in Kanbun 8 (1668) the *haikai* master Matsuyama Kyūya 松山玖也 (1623–1676) described his pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan in the travel diary *Matsuyamabō shuku* 松山坊秀句. When Matsuyama made his pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan it was April and the snow was probably obstructing the access paths to Gassan and Yudono. Therefore he limited his visit to Haguro and venerated the other two mountains from afar (*yōhai*). Ten years later in Enpō 6 (1678) the Yoshida Shintō scholar Tachibana Mitsuyoshi who came from Bizen 備前 province wrote a travel diary *Ichinomiya junrei ki* 一宮巡礼記 in

which he described in great detail the crossing from Gassan to Yudono.<sup>108</sup> Mitsuyoshi travelled through Dewa Sanzan following the standard route from Haguro to Yudono.

On the nineteenth day I left Kiyokawa 滝川 and proceeded thorough Tateyazawa たてや沢 until I reached Myōkōin 明光院 at Haguro. Here I met with Tōkōbō 東光坊 and together with the *sendatsu* Nangakuin 南岳院 we went to venerate Haguro Daigongen. From ancient times at the Oku no in of Arasawa あら沢 there has been a hall in which is preserved a flame that has never been extinguished (*fumetsu no hitaki* 不滅の火焼). [...] When we reached the top [of Gassan] the snow was still on the ground and the night winds were strong. Gradually the night turned into dawn and on the first day of the seventh month people started shouting that a descent of Amida (*raigō* 来迎) was taking place. The morning sun reflected itself on the clouds as in a magnificent *raigō* during which I could venerate the image (*mie* 御影) of Amaterasu no ōmikami. Going to the summit [of Gassan] I reached a place called Gyōja modoshi 行者もどし,<sup>109</sup> and walked through a steep stoneground at the end of which I visited the shrine of Gassan (Gassan no jinja 月山の神社) that is quoted in the *Engishiki*. [This shrine] had lost its ancient customs and in the main hall there was a big icon of Kannon that stood as the material receptacle for the *kami* (*shintai* 神体). Then I went down through Tsukiyama つき山, Ushigakubi 牛が首, and Kajiyashiki 鍛冶屋敷. Here I passed through one wooden gate and went to a place which was for the ritual ablutions to eliminate impurities and defilements (*fujōgoriba* 不浄垢離場). I reached a place called Katsukau かつかう and I descended to Yudonozawa 湯殿沢 where I recited this poem of Aritada 有忠: “When I start walking the hard path that leads toward the mountain of love (*koi no yama* 戀の山), I become aware of (*omoishiri* おもひ知り) how it is full of suffering.”<sup>110</sup> Then I

<sup>108</sup>. Tachibana Mitsuyoshi 橘三善 (1635–1703) studied Yoshida Shintō at Sengen jinja 浅間神社 in Suruga province (present-day Shizuoka prefecture) and wrote various treatises on *kagura*.

<sup>109</sup>. Gyōja modoshi was a toponym that indicated a site immediately below the top of Gassan. According to the *Hagurosan engi* 羽黒山縁起 (Kan’ei 24, 1644), which is attributed to Ten’yū, En no gyōja tried to climb Mount Gassan, but Gassan Gongen refused (*mososhi* 戻し) to accept him on the summit because of his lack of asceticism. Therefore, En no gyōja went back to the foot of the mountain and practiced austerities under the guidance of Nōjō Taishi. After mastering the ritual of the Eternal Fire and with a *shime* around his neck En no gyōja was finally able to accomplish the pilgrimage. This story was used to underline the superiority of the Haguro Shugen tradition, which was represented by Nōjō Taishi, over the Honzanha Shugen tradition, which recognized En no gyōja as its founder. For the original text see *Shintō taikai*, Jinja-hen 32, *Dewa Sanzan*, vol. 67, 7. For more details about this episode see Nagafuji Yasushi, “Hachiko no ōji kō: umi no Shugendō to Dewa Sanzan,” *Kodaigaku kenkyūjo kiyō*, no. 15 (March, 2011): 6.

<sup>110</sup>. *Koi no yama haite kurushiki michi zo to wa fumi somete koso omoishiri nure* 戀の山は入ってくるしき道ぞとはふみそめてこそおもひ知りぬれ. Mitsuyoshi appropriately decided to quote this lyric at the beginning of the ascent to Yudono. The author of this lyric is Rokujō Aritada 六条有忠 (1281–1339) who made an adaptation of another famous poem (*honkadori* 本歌取り) of Fujiwara Akinaka 藤原顕仲 (1059–1129), which was included in the anthology *Shinchokusen wakashū* 新勅撰和歌集 (completed in Katei 嘉禎 1, 1235). The original poem of Akinaka is: “When I started penetrating the luxuriant small bamboos of the mountain of love,

descended holding the roots of trees and small bamboos. I walked for more than one *ri* on a narrow path that resembled a hole. I reached Gohōzen and I venerated this stonebody (*sekitai* 石体). It was exactly noon and the sunlight enveloped [Gohōzen], which [shone] very preciously. This stonebody is Izanami no mikoto and stands in the southern direction. The mountain in the northern direction corresponds to Izanagi no mikoto. This is the ancient site (*iseki* 遺跡) where the two *kami* merged together (*kōgō* 遡合). In ancient times (*jōdai* 上代) this was a well-established interpretation. On the other hand, it was known also that the *kami* of Gassan was Tsukiyomi no mikoto 月弓尊, the *kami* of Haguro was Amaterasu no ōmikami, and the *kami* of Chōkai was Susanoo no mikoto 素戔鳴尊. In the early medieval period (*chūko* 中古) [Yudono] passed under the control of Tendai and Shingon that interpreted [Gohōzen] as Kongōkai and Taizōkai Dainichi. It was extremely sad to notice that nobody knew about the facts of ancient times. I got closer to venerate the stonebody from below where gushed out a flow of red water. I was astonished to realize that from the mountain in the northern direction there was a stream of white water. What a strange thing that the people of these days don't know that these sublime (*nieya no* にへやの) substances represent the fortunate Way of the *kami* (Shintō)! The ignorant men that live at this site practiced austerities during their entire life (*issei no gyō* 一世の行). They abandoned their parents and children opposing the will of the *kami* (*shinryo ni somuku* 神慮にそむく) of the stonebody. This is something extremely sad. On the top of the stonebody there was a tumulus dedicated to Kōjin (Kojinzuka 荒神塚) and few steps below there was a waterfall and a torrent which I contemplated (*kannen* 観念) as Seoritsu-hime 瀬織津姫.<sup>111</sup> Then I saw Inoyama, the stone of Kōshin 庚申,<sup>112</sup> the Rock of the innumerable *kami*, the Matrix [rock], the Birthrock, the Storehousestone, and I venerated many other sites. After this I climbed toward another place that was in an upper location from the valley. There were various streams of water in this place. When I asked the *sendatsu* about this site he said it was called the pilgrimage of the hells (*jigoku mawari* 地獄廻り). From here I penetrated inside the recesses of the mountain. I passed through narrow paths between stones

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my sleeves were wet with dew” (*Koi no yama shigeki osaza no tsuyu wakete irisomuru yori nururu sode kana* 恋の山繁き小笹の露分けていりそむるよりぬるる袖かな).

<sup>111</sup>. The goddess Seoritsu-hime does not appear in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*. In the purificatory formula (*ōharae no kotoba* 大祓詞) this *kami* is often related with water and ritual ablutions that eradicate impurities and protect from calamities. This seems to suggest a sort of conflation between Seoritsu-hime and the *kami* of water (Suijin 水神).

<sup>112</sup>. The cult of the Daoist deity Kōshin was extremely popular in the Edo period. Six times every year (once every two months) on the day of the monkey associated with fire element *yin* (*kanoesaru* 庚申) the members of Kōshin confraternities (Kōshin *kō*) organized a special vigil (Kōshinmachi 庚申待). During this night the people remained awake in order to prevent the three worms (*sanshi* 三尸) that reside inside the human body to ascend to heaven and report the bad actions and misdeeds of the humans to the celestial officials. Kōshin was often represented as three monkeys that respectively cover their eyes, ears and mouths with their hands. The meaning of these gestures was to warn people against indulging in reprehensible actions, paying attention to evil talk, and speaking ill (*mizaru, kikazaru, iwazaru* 見ざる聞かざる言わざる). In the votive stele Kōshin is often represented as three monkeys that are tamed by Shōmen Kongō 青面金剛 or Sarutahiko 猿田彦. See Iida Michio, *Kōshin shinkō shomin shūkyō no jitsuzō* (1989; repr., Tōkyō: Jinbun shoin, 1990), 11-19.



following the roots of the trees and I kept walking along dangerous roads for about three *ri*. From the village of Shizu to Ōami there was a main road called Rokujūrigoe. In Ōami there were teahouses. From the village of Tamugimata I continued by horse until Ōami and Matsugane. I arrived at Tsurugaoka at night and I lodged at Nanokamachi.<sup>113</sup>

Mitsuyoshi's narrative is extremely interesting because the author has visualized and interpreted the sacred panorama of Gassan and Yudono through a sort of Yoshida Shintō lens. This is a further example of the hermeneutic modalities according to which religious meanings associated with the natural landscape were subjected to great variation depending on the cultural background of the pilgrim. In this episode, Mitsuyoshi travelled from Gassan to Yudono at dawn when the light of the rising sun shone over a blanket of clouds that stirred in the valleys below. This was considered the best moment of the day to access Yudono because the sunlight created the natural phenomenon called the Brocken spectre where the bodies of the pilgrims were illuminated from behind and their shadows projected on the surface of the clouds in front of them. In this way the spirit of the pilgrim, represented by his shadow, was imagined to be escorted by Amida Nyorai, manifested as the sun, toward the Pure Land of Dainichi Nyorai that was represented by Mount Yudono (See Fig. 4.9).

For a Yoshida Shintō scholar such as Mitsuyoshi this Buddhist reading of the natural elements of Dewa Sanzan was probably unsatisfactory and he preferred to interpret the solar disk as an image (*mie*) of Amaterasu. The association between Amaterasu and the sun as a celestial body became a widespread discourse after the introduction of Western Studies (Rangaku 蘭学) during the time of the eighth *shōgun* Tokugawa Yoshimune 徳川吉宗 (1684–1751). Later, the works of Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) made a fundamental contribution to this type of conflation between Amaterasu and the sun. The

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<sup>113</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 169-170.

travel diary of Mitsuyoshi can be considered a very early example of this type of emerging hermeneutic discourse.

Continuing with this superimposition of Yoshida Shintō elements on the landscape of Yudono, Mitsuyoshi explains that Gohōzen corresponds to the stone-body of Izanami, and the mountain, standing in a northerly direction from the boulder, is her male partner Izanagi. The reference to the red and white waters which gush out from these two natural elements reminds us of the mystical encounter (*wagō* 和合) of the two human fluids (*shakubyaku niteki* 赤白二滴), menstrual flow (red) and seminal flow (white), that represent the vital forces of the cosmos. Even in this case Mitsuyoshi refused to use the standard Buddhist term *wagō* to describe the intermingling of red and white flows and carefully substituted it with the compound *kōgō*, which is a technical term in the *Nihonshoki* usually read as *mito no maguwai* that designates the sexual union of Izanami and Izanagi.<sup>114</sup>

The author mentions the presence of *issei gyōnin* and uses them as negative examples to stigmatize the decadence of the ancient Shintō tradition at Yudono. Resorting to a classical theme of Confucian rhetoric, Mitsuyoshi accuses the *issei gyōnin* of adopting antisocial behavior, transgressing the ethical value of filial piety, and ultimately infringing the will of Gohōzen that they wrongly suppose they are pleasing through the performance of deviant ascetic practices. After praying in front of Gohōzen Mitsuyoshi completed his pilgrimage passing through the Buddhist hells, which were symbolized by various rocks at Senninzawa, and spent the night at Nanokamachi in Tsuruoka.

In Tenwa 3 (1683) the *haikai* master Ōyodo Michikaze 大淀三千風 (1637–1707) who came from Sendai set out on a seven-year pilgrimage to various sacred mountains in Japan.

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<sup>114</sup>. I am thankful to Professor Iyanaga Nobumi for pointing out these two important conceptual and terminological aspects of the text.

On the fifth month of the same year, he reached Dewa Sanzan, but could not enter the mountains because of snow. Therefore he made a pilgrimage from afar (*yōhai*) and based his narrative description of this area, which he included in his travel diary *Nihon angya bunshū* 日本行脚文集 (Genroku 3, 1690), on a previous trip he had made to Yudono in Tenwa 2 (1682). Like Tachibana Mitsuyoshi, Michikaze too entered Dewa Sanzan from the village of Tōge, visited Haguro, spent a night on top of Gassan, and descended to Yudono the following day. He stopped at Chūrenji where he took part to a *saitō goma* ritual. In his travel notes the author defined Yudono as the inner sanctuary (*naiin* 内院) in which was enshrined Dainichi Gongen 大日權現, probably a cumulative epithet to define Dainichi Nyorai and Yudono Gongen. Then he goes on to describe the approach to Gohōzen and the three *haiku* that he composed together with his friends after the astonishing sight of the sacred boulder.

I slowly arrived at the place where clothing must be changed. I poured water over my head (*kori*) in order to make repentance for the [harmful behavior] of my six faculties (*rokkon zange*). I dressed in purified white clothing (*seijō hakui* 清淨白衣), crossed the secret gate (*himitsu mon* 秘密門), and passed through the entrance to the Pure Land (*jōdoguchi* 浄土口). Before arriving at Gozen 御前 I purified my mind and body. Then I clapped my hands in front of various *kami* and stood before the sacred mirror (*reikyō* 靈鏡) of the original enlightenment without attributes (*musō hongaku* 無相本覺). After a while I looked up. The sacred lord (*seikun* 聖君) Daibirushana 大毘盧遮那 was seated on a lotus made of hot water (*renge yu* 蓮華湯) which naturally gushed out (*jizen yūshutsu* 自然湧出). The water profusely overflowed to pay homage [to Daibirushana]. All the divine retainers (*kenshin* 賢臣) stayed on the blue surface of the vast Lapis lazuli [Land] (*senjō ruri* 千丈瑠璃) and roared with their innumerable frightening faces (*gyōzō gizen* 形相巍然). All the high clouds and pines resemble a maṇḍala of the non-duality of form and mind (*shikishin funi* 色心不二). The voice of the wind and the sound of water (*fūsei mizuoto* 風声水音) chant the mantra of the awakening to enlightenment by hearing sounds (*monshōgodō* 聞声悟道).

Even if someone asks about what is there, no words (*koto no ha* 言の葉) can describe the

recesses inside the mountain (*shinzan no oku* 深山の奥).<sup>115</sup>

If someone goes to visit the abode of the *kami* inside the mountain, he will find only the wind in the pines and the sound of water.<sup>116</sup>

Yudono: an inextinguishable luffa<sup>117</sup> of summer ice.<sup>118</sup>

At the beginning of the passage Michikaze mentions a place where the pilgrims who came from Haguro and Gassan were required to practice purificatory ablutions and change their clothing before entering the Yudono area. In the *Inchinomiya junrei ki* Tachibana Mitsuyoshi refers to the same location, which is described as a site for the elimination of impurities and defilements (*fujōgoriba*). The formal name of this place, which was situated at the foot of Gassan, was Shōzokuba 装束場, which made reference to the place where pilgrims from the Haguro area received a new set of clothing, *shime*, and *waraji* in order to be able to access Yudono.<sup>119</sup> At Shōzokuba the *yama sendatu* of Haguro who escorted the pilgrims through the three mountains were requested to shift their ritual procedures from the Tendai style, which had hitherto characterized the pilgrimage through Haguro and Gassan, to the Shingon style, which was associated with Yudono. After this aesthetic and conceptual shift from Tendai to Shingon style the *yama sendatsu* of Haguro were allowed to enter Yudono together with their group of pilgrims. In the case of the *yama sendatsu* of Yudono

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<sup>115</sup>. *Nanigoto no owashimasu ya to tomeku shi shinzan no oku ha koto no ha mo nashi* 何事のおはしますやと尋来し深山の奥は言の葉もなし.

<sup>116</sup>. *Okuyama no kami no mimuro wo kitemireba tada matsu no kaze tada mizu no oto* 奥山の神の御室を来てみれば只松の風只水の音.

<sup>117</sup>. *Yudonosan ya fugen no hechima natsugōri* 湯殿山や不滅の糸瓜夏氷. In this *haiku* Michikaze compares Gohōzen through the technique of *mitate* to a type of vegetable sponge called *Luffa cylindrica*. Thanks to a synaesthetic juxtaposition of the word “summer,” which transmits a hot sensation, and “ice,” which has the opposite effect, Gohōzen appears as a magical luffa whose water seems to be cold and refreshing from afar, but turns out to be volcanic hot water when close by.

<sup>118</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 172.

<sup>119</sup>. The enormous quantity of old *waraji* that had been used by pilgrims crossing from Haguro to Gassan were piledr together in massive heaps around Shōzokuba called *warajizuka* 草鞋塚.

who guided pilgrims starting from the opposite side of Dewa Sanzan, the Shōzokuba was the place where they had to separate from their clients and entrust them to the *yama sendatsu* of Haguro because they could not escort pilgrims beyond that point. In other words Shōzokuba geographically represented the antagonistic and, at the same time, symbiotic relationship between Haguro and Yudono. For the *yama sendatsu* of Haguro it would have been impossible to avoid escorting the pilgrims to Yudono, which was the *oku no in* of Dewa Sanzan and symbolized the religious climax of the entire pilgrimage. In the same way, it would have been inconceivable for the Yudono *bettō* to refuse in the name of the doctrinal division the pilgrims who came from Haguro and constituted the greatest part of the economic income of the mountain. The Shōzokuba exemplified a practical compromise between the two mountains, which needed each other but also repulsed each other. It was this sort of creative tension between numinous sites within the same mountain range that generated the greatest part of the devotional and ritual diversity during the Dewa Sanzan pilgrimage.

The first *haiku* composed by Michikaze touches on the most relevant aspect of Yudono, the aura of secrecy and the suspension of words that characterized this mountain. When Bashō decided to make a pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan in Genroku 2 (1689) he wanted to visit Yudono because he knew that this mountain would constitute the harshest challenge for his poetry. The ultimate site of that narrow path toward the innermost part of human sensibility which Bashō describes in the *Oku no hosomichi* (1702) implicitly refers to Yudono. For the poet this mountain was not just a simple numinous place within Dewa Sanzan, the most northern of the places reached by Bashō during his wanderings in the Deep North (Okushū 奥州), but represented the apex of his poetry that was facing the aporia to provide a narration of

silence. In other words Bashō's *haiku* on Mount Yudono constitute the most intimate part (*oku* 奥) of the lyric path on which the poet traveled during all his life.

Bashō made the pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan with his disciple Sora 曾良 (1649–1710) who also composed a travel diary, the *Sora nikki* 曾良日記, which was never published. The two pilgrims arrived at Haguro on the third day of the sixth month, and the following day participated in a *haikai* gathering in the residence of the Haguro *bettō* Egaku 会覚. On the fifth day they started fasting and received pilgrim clothing, a *shime* made of linen fiber (*yufu* 木綿), and a *kanmuri* as headgear in order to be admitted to venerate Haguro Gongen. On the eighth day (according to Sora's diary on the sixth day) Bashō and Sora climbed Gassan and arrived on the top immediately after sunset.

By the time we reached the summit, the sun had set and the moon appeared in the sky. We spread out pallets of bamboo-grass, and with bamboo stalks for our pillows, lay there, waiting for the dawn. When the sun came out the clouds melted away, and we went down to Yudono.<sup>120</sup>

The specific references to the declining and rising phases of the sun and moon are important because they show how temporal elements played a pivotal role in the transmission of religious meaning associated with the practice of pilgrimage. Climbing Gassan corresponded to the metaphorical death (*shi*) of the pilgrim, which was chronologically underlined by the fact that he approached the summit at sunset. Arriving at Gassan when the sun was going down created a *mitate* with the spirits of the dead who reach the Pure Land of Amida during the twilight of life. On the other had, the descent from Gassan to Yudonon corresponded to the pilgrim's symbolic rebirth (*saisei*), which was naturally emphasized by

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<sup>120</sup>. For the English translation of this passage see Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to Oku*, trans. Donald Keene (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1996), 111. For the original text see Hagiwara Yasuo, *Bashō: Oku no hosomichi*, 49.

the rays of the rising sun at dawn. The *yama sendatsu* were conscious of all these religious implications in the interaction between space and time during the pilgrimage and tried to coordinate the spatial movements of their clients through the three mountains in order to be constantly in tune with the temporal and devotional shifts dictated by the sun, moon, and stars.

In the morning of the ninth day Bashō and Sora entered Yudono and prayed in front of Gohōzen, but had to refrain from writing notes or poems according to the regulations of the mountain. At noon they climbed back to Gassan once again and returned to Haguro where Egaku asked them to write some *haiku* about their pilgrimage. Bashō describes the visit to Yudono and the journey back to Haguro as follows.

It is forbidden by the rule of the ascetics' order (*gyōja no hōshiki* 行者の法式) to disclose details of this mountain to other people. I will therefore lay down my pen and write no more. When I returned to the temple, at the abbot's request I wrote on poem-cards the verses I had composed during my pilgrimage to the three mountains (*sanzan junrei* 三山順礼).

How cool it is here—a crescent moon faintly hovers over Mount Haguro.<sup>121</sup>

The peaks of clouds have crumbled into fragments—the moonlight mountain!<sup>122</sup>

I cannot speak of Yudono: my sleeves are wet with tears.

Mount Yudono—as I tread on pilgrim's coins, behold these my tears.<sup>123</sup> Sora<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>. *Shuzushisa ya hono mikazuki no Hagurosan* 涼しさやほの三日月の羽黒山.

<sup>122</sup>. *Kumo no mine ikutsu kuzurete tsuki no yama* 雲の峰幾つ崩て月の山.

<sup>123</sup>. *Yudonosan zeni fumu michi no namida kana* 湯殿山銭ふむ道の泪かな.

<sup>124</sup>. The English translation follows Donald Keene's translation apart from slight modifications. For the original English translation see Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to Oku*, trans. Donald Keene, 115. For the original Japanese text see Hagiwara Yasuo, *Bashō: Oku no hosomichi*, 50-51.

In these four *haiku* (the last one was composed by Sora) Bashō is recreating a sort of miniaturized landscape of Dewa Sanzan which can be contemplated with a single glimpse through the *haiku*. In spite of the fact that Yudono was the embodiment of silence and absence, Bashō did not give up and challenged his poetic skills to provide a narration of this mountain. In the first part of the *haiku* Bashō recognizes that the word, written and spoken, cannot be uttered (*katararenu*) at this site. Nevertheless, he lets his body recount the feelings and sensations he felt during the pilgrimage to Yudono. The wet sleeves (*nurasu tamoto*) are soaked with tears and sweat with the fatigue of climbing Gassan and descending the bumpy path toward Yudono. This *haiku* is a mix of excitement to be in front of Gohōzen and anxiety about the hard ascetic protocol that characterized the Dewa Sanzan pilgrimage. Without specifically mentioning any aspect of Yudono's sacred landscape Bashō allows his somatic experience to narrate the silence of the mountain. *Mutatis mutandis* Bashō did through the *haiku* what the *issei gyōnin* did during their ascetic practices, where the body rather than words represented the fulcrum of their interaction with the mountain.

On the tenth day Bashō and Sora left Dewa Sanzan from Haguro and continued their journey to Tsuruoka where they were hosted in the house of a *samurai* called Nagayama Shigeyuki 長山重行 (d. 1707). The pilgrimage route followed by the two poets to leave Dewa Sanzan was extremely strange. In his diary Sora reports that at noon after visiting Yudono they had to climb back to Gassan in order to return to Haguro. In other words Bashō and Sora made an *omotegake* first from Haguro to Yudono, and an *uragake* later from Yudono to Haguro even if it would have been more convenient to exit Dewa Sanzan from Yudono without going back to Haguro. Moreover the mountain path from Yudono to Gassan was harder to climb ascending rather than descending. Even if Bashō did not mention this incident



in his diary, according to the *Sora nikki* the *tegata* of the two pilgrims were rejected at the barrier station of Kiyokawa and they had to enter through the barrier station of Karikawa 狩川 before being allowed to reach the Haguro entrance of Tōge.<sup>125</sup> It could be the case that Bashō and Sora preferred to exit Dewa Sanzan from the same barrier station from which they transited during the outward journey rather than risk being stopped again at the borders of Shōnai domain on the Yudono side.<sup>126</sup> This hitch shows that every type of traveler—be he a *nobori kudari no gyōnin*, a libertine, or a *haikai* master—could not easily disentangle the bureaucratic aspects of pilgrimage from the ascetic, hedonistic and aesthetic purposes of the journey.

#### 4.4. *Furta Sacra* and Ritual Misbehavior

Various travel diaries report that after praying in front of Gohōzen the pilgrims often continued their visit walking over the uneven ground of Senninzawa. This part of the pilgrimage was defined as *ozawagake* お沢駆け and included the contemplation of numerous waterfalls and rocks with which were associated specific religious symbols. In the *Hokkō nikki* Takayama Hikokurō provides one of the best description of the *ozawagake* together with a panoramic view of the ground around Gohōzen, which appears to be totally covered with clusters of *bonten* and narrow wooden planks decorated with mantra inscriptions (*sotōba*

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<sup>125</sup>. Sakurai Takejirō, *Oku no hosomichi angya "Sora nikki" wo yomu* (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2006), 103-104.

<sup>126</sup>. For more details of this incident see Togawa Anshō, *Shugendō to minzoku shūkyō*, 396. Iwahana Michiaki speculates that Bashō could have had a special connection with Kan'eiji in Edo, which was the *honzan* of Haguro. Because in the 1689 the legal dispute between Haguro and Yudono was still heated Bashō could have decided to please the *bettō* of Haguro by refusing to exit Dewa Sanzan from the Yudono side. See Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 175.

卒塔婆) that pilgrims stick directly into the earth as offerings for Yudono Gongen.

[...] From the place for [changing] clothes I descended for twenty-five *chō* to a site where there were numerous *bonten* and wooden-plank *tōba* 塔婆 driven into the ground. In certain spots the *bonten* overlapped one with other and formed a sort of curtain. Penetrating from these *bonten* was a red boulder (*akaiwa* 赤岩) that measured forty or fifty *ken* from east to west and a height of fifteen *ken*.<sup>127</sup> It stood there facing the northerly direction. I venerated this [boulder] that was called Yudonosan Daigongen. [...] Entering the curtain of *bonten* on the left side of the main body of the red boulder there was a small hole that was called the Cave of Suijin (Suijin no kutsu 水神の窟). The Gongen-boulder was also called Dainichi because this is the original buddha (*honji butsu*) of [Yudono] Gongen. From this site I descended the [Senninzawa] valley west until a place called Warehouse (Okura 御蔵) where there was a river and a waterfall that formed a deep pond. People deceive the pilgrims saying that all their coin offerings (*sansen* 散銭) made during the pilgrimage on the mountain (*sankei*) sink at this location. I heard people saying that yesterday these goods were placed in the warehouse (*kurairi* 蔵入). This means that these moneys became the income of the chief temples. This waterfall was also called Chūō waterfall (Chūō no taki 中王の滝) and the other waterfall called Ōtaki 大滝 was also named Fudō waterfall (Fudō no taki 不動滝). From here I walked down the valley following the stream of the waterfall. At the steep points there were chains that I grabbed during my way down. There were several sites equipped with chains. All the rocks that surrounded this path had the names of *kami* and buddhas such as the Rock of Aizen Myōō (Aizen Myōō no iwa 愛染明王岩) or the Rock of Izuna Gongen (Izuna Gongen no iwa 稲綱権現の岩). This place was called “Pure Land of the valley” (Yawara jōdo やわら浄土). It is said that the people of this world who die because of famine come here. [There were also] the Rock of the three Kumano shrines (Kumano Sansha no iwa 熊野三社の岩), and the Rock of Kōshin Shōmen Kongō (Kōshi Shōmen Kongō no iwa 庚申青面金剛の岩). The intra-uterine passage inside the rocks (*tainai kuguri* 胎内くぐり) was named Tainai Gongen 胎内権現. There were also the Rock on which Kōbō Daishi burned the fire *goma* (Kōbō goma wo yaitaru iwa 弘法護摩を焼たる岩), the Rocks of Nitten, Gatten, and the twenty-eight celestial mansions (Nitten Gatten Nijūhasshuku no iwa 日天月天二十八宿の岩), [the Rock of] the light offerings to the buddhas (Tomyōbutsu 灯明仏), [the Rock of] the one-thousand bodied Jizō (Sentai Jizō 千體地藏), [the Rock of] Daikoku, [the Rock of] Benzaiten, [the Rock of the] myriad buddhas (Hachimanhassen butsu 八万八千仏), [the Rock of] Bonten, [the Rock of] Taishaku, [the Rock of] Ryōbu Dainichi, and [the Rock of] Dairyō Gongen 大りやう権現 in which there were a lot of offerings inserted [inside the stone]. People deceive pilgrims saying that the coins stick there spontaneously. There were also places named “Entrance of the Hells of the myriad

<sup>127</sup>. One *ken* measures around one meter and eighty centimeters.

deities” (Yaorozu no kami jigoku 八百万神地獄) and “Thirteen buddhas” (Jūsanbutsu 十三仏).<sup>128</sup> There was a waterfall called Red-hot tumulus (Nettegatsugataki ねつてつか滝) and the Rock of the red-hot tumulus (Nettetsugaiwa ねつてつか岩), which corresponded to the “Bottom of the hells” (*jigokushiri* 地獄尻) where there is the realm of the animals (*chikushōdō* 畜生道). Walking through the Hell of the boiling cauldrons (Uchigama jigoku 内釜地獄), the Pond of Blood (Chi no ike 血の池), the Peasants’ Hell (Hyakushō jigoku 百姓地獄), I came down to the site of the Myriad deities that was located in the western part of the [Senninzawa] valley. [...] Grabbing and crawling on bamboos in a site called the Capital of bamboos, I arrived at the Rock on which Kōbō rubbed his Indian ink stick (Kōbō tesuri ishi 弘法手摺石) that was covered with coins that had oxidized on the surface of the rock and become part of it. There were also the Rock of Kōbō’s seating meditation (Kōbō zazen ishi 弘法座禪石) and the Rock of the encounter with Gongen (Gongen taimen ishi 権現対面石). This place is said to be the favorite access of the thieves. There was a rock called Rock of subjugation (Jōbuku ishi 調伏石). Here I took an oath prohibiting me from speaking about the things of the mountain pilgrimage (*sankei no mono ni iu majiki no chikai* 参詣のものにいふまじきの誓).<sup>129</sup>

A striking aspect of this mandalized geography, which provides continuous references to Yudono’s mythological narratives and classical Buddhist *topoi*, is the ubiquitous presence of coin offerings (*sansen*) that pilgrims tossed on the paths of Yudono and ended up covering almost every part of the mountain like a sort of enormous blanket made of gold. Oxidation turned copper coins green and this color change added even more splendor to the panorama. For instance, the *Dainichibō monjo* reports that in Jōkyō 4 (1687) the coin offerings were like an avalanche (*nadare nasu zeni no michi* なだれなす銭の道) that often obstructed the pilgrims’ path, and had to be piled up in special coin-mounds called *zenizuka* 銭塚.<sup>130</sup> When the pilgrims entered the area of Yudono the *yama sendatsu* told them not to put their hands below their knees during the climb, so they would not be suspected of stealing the offerings.

<sup>128</sup>. The thirteen Buddhas who take care of the spirits of the dead during the forty-nine days after death and until the thirty-third commemoration are Fudō Myōō, Shaka, Monju, Fugen, Jizō, Miroku, Yakushi, Kannon, Seishi, Amida, Dainichi and Kokūzō.

<sup>129</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 182-183.

<sup>130</sup>. For the original text see *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan*, ed. Watanabe Tomeji, 27.

According to the malicious interpretation of Takayama Hikokurō, the *bettō* of Yudono considered the coin offerings of the pilgrims as their private income and daily collected the money that gullible people spread while walking through the sacred locations of the mountain. Even if Takayama Hikokurō is strongly critical of the corrupt behavior of the Yudono monks whom he represents as greedy men seeking pilgrims' money, other written sources, such as the written complaint *Sojōsho* 訴上書 (Genroku 8, 1685) made by the Hondōji monks, provide a more complex dimension of religious meaning to the coin offerings.

[Yudono] is a natural creation (*jinen no zōsaku* 自然之造作) and not a work of human power (*jinriki no shosa* 人力之所作). Therefore, there are no shrine buildings. [Yudono] is a natural mountain (*jinen no yama* 自然之山), constituting the venerable form of [Yudono] Gongen (Gongen *no son'yō* 権現之尊容). From ancient times pilgrims have been escorted by *sendatsu* of the chief temples who give them instructions about the rituals associated with various sites. Because there is a regulation according to which the coin offerings made along the paths (*sansen*) absolutely must not be picked up, the coins should remain on the ground (*sansen nado chi ni sanzai tsukamatsuru koto kore ari sōrō* 散錢等地ニ散在仕有之候). Even if during the last fourteen or fifteen years there were some thieves who snuck into [Yudono] to steal the coin offerings, they were few and we tolerated them. Nevertheless, in the last three or four years they have become numerous. Because [the thieves] dig up the offering coins buried from year to year, they excavate and destroy the ritual stage of Gongen (Gongen *no danjō* 権現之壇場) and devastate the splendor of the sacred land (*shushō no reichi* 殊勝之靈地). More than eight hundred years have passed since the opening [of Yudono] and propitiatory rituals for the eternity of the empire (*tenka gochōkyū* 天下御長久) have been continuously performed, but the ritual stage of Gongen is now on the point of being devastated. It is impossible to know what the divine will (*shinryo* 神慮) is for this [situation], but we find it extremely annoying.<sup>131</sup>

This complaint shows that the Yudono *bettō* did not considered themselves the owners of the coin offerings, which were never removed from the paths because were conceived as a

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<sup>131</sup>. For the original text see *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 190.

sort of ritual adornment to celebrate the mountain itself. The spontaneously created geophysical body of Mount Yudono was interpreted, at the same time, as the ritual stage where Yudono Gongen could be venerated and as a manifestation of the divine body of the *kami*. When pilgrims tossed their coin offerings on the paths of Yudono they were not simply performing a meritorious act but were also incrementing the physical mass of the divine body of Yudono Gongen. Therefore, to steal the coin offerings from the territory of Yudono was nefarious, not merely from an economic perspective but from a religious one as well, because it was equated with a defacement of the somatic integrity of Yudono Gongen. Monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* probably did not consider the coin offerings of pilgrims as part of their financial property because the ultimate owner of that sacred treasure was Yudono Gongen and any type of misappropriation would have unleashed the deity's anger.<sup>132</sup>

On Mount Yudono the term *sanka* 山窩 was used to indicate those who stole coin offerings, who could risk capital punishment if captured. In the Tōhōku area *sanka* was an ancient discriminatory word originally used to define the communities of Emishi who gathered edible plants and fruits from the forest in addition to their agricultural activities.<sup>133</sup> The term *sanka* ironically depicted the thieves of Yudono as lazy persons who preferred to gather the golden fruits of the mountain rather than spend time working. Nevertheless, stealing the coin offerings from the paths of Yudono was anything but a relaxing or banal activity. The *sanka* had to build small huts camouflaged with leaves and grass on the mountain-side in order to be able to stay on the spot for several days. During the night they came out of hiding, dug up as many coin offerings as they could, and put the heavy loot into

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<sup>132</sup> Gaynor Sekimori points out that even today when Dewa Sanzan pilgrims pick up an old coin are requested to put another in its place.

<sup>133</sup>. See *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 188.

large wicker baskets to sneak back to the huts. Once in a safe place they started the laborious operation of separating the oxidized coins from the those that could still be used as normal currency. The climax of the *sanka*'s incursions took place during the summer when climatic conditions and luxuriant vegetation facilitated the illegal crossing of Yudono's borders.

In order to withstand the *sanka* the four *bettō* coordinated a system of mountain-wardens (*otakeban* 御嶽番) who lived in small lodges on the mountain and watched over the area around Gohōzen where the greatest amount of coin offerings were thrown. For instance, the *Otakeban ōsetsukaru gansho* 御嶽番仰付願書 (Ansei 6, 1859) is a petition from an employment agent (*kuchiireya* 口入れ屋) called Gonbē 権兵衛 to the monks of Dainichiji on behalf of a young farmer Koemon 小右衛門 who wanted to be hired as an *otakeban*.

We two persons present this request on behalf of Koemon from the village of Kurobuchi 黒淵. He belongs to the farmer class. The principal occupation of his father was agriculture, but he also had secondary work as a hunter (*karyūdo gyō* 狩人業). During the snowy season he entered the mountain to hunt wild boar, but he never came back and all trace of him was lost. It is almost sure that he died on the mountain. After this incident his elder brother Shinjūrō 新十郎 did everything he could to deal with various difficulties. Koemon was still a child, and his mother had to cultivate the land alone, but the work was too hard for her. [...] We would like to ask you to hire Koemon as a mountain-warden (*otakeban*) for the next year of the monkey. If this request were to be accepted, the family could redeem its farmhouse and it would be possible to continue their vows of their ancestors (*senzo no gan* 先祖の願) before the buddhas and to make a decent living. We rely on your exceptional compassion and kindness and dare to submit the present request.<sup>134</sup>

This document demonstrates the existence of the deep economic ties that linked the monastic institutions of Yudono with the lay members of the villages at the foot of the mountain. In this case the possibility of being hired as an *otakeban* of Dainichiji was an

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<sup>134</sup>. For the original text see *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 35.

important chance for a destitute farmer to improve the life of his family (*ie*). At the same time this type of petition offered the *bettō* a chance to preserve the integrity of the sacred landscape of Yudono from the intrusions of the *sanka*.

The cases of *furta sacra* at Yudono were so numerous that they also appeared in works of fiction. For instance, in Tempō 9 (1838) Shihenhansha Shibuhanku 四返半舎四分半九 (dates unknown), who was probably a disciple of Jippensha Ikku, wrote the first draft of a comic book (*kokkeibon* 滑稽本), *Yudonosan kaidō ukiyo michi no ki* 湯殿山街道浮世道記, in which a peculiar case of robbery is described. Most of the original text is lost but the extant parts reveal an interesting episode in which two Yudono pilgrims, the carpenter Kitamatsu 喜太松 and the ceramist Setetsu 瀬鉄, decide to visit a *sennichi gyōja* for a propitiatory ritual (*gokitō*) to find a wife and a talisman to dispel thunder.

Kitamatsu: “*Sendatsu*, could you tell me if there is someone who can create talismans to dispel thunder (*rai yoke no ban* 雷よけの番)?”

Ryōzanbō 両山坊: “For this the best thing is to go to the *sennichi gyōja*.”

Kitamatsu: “It sounds good to me.”

Ryōzanbō: “This *sennichi gyōja* is called Keizanbō 慶山坊 and he is an eminent ascetic (*dai gyōnin* 大行人) of Ōizawa.<sup>135</sup> Please, be respectful when you meet him. I will conduct you to his place.” [...].

*Sennichi gyōja*: “Welcome to everybody. Please prostrate yourself once in front of Yudono. Who is the person looking for a talisman to dispel thunder?”

Kitamatsu: “It is me.”

*Sennichi gyōja*: “If you are the person, come here and I will give you the envelope [with the talisman].”

Kitamatsu: “If you allow me to approach you, I will receive it.”

*Sennichi gyōja*: “If you pay me, I can give you as many [talismans] as you want.” [...].

Kitamatsu: “If you agree, I will give you thirty *mon*.”

Then the *sennichi gyōja* explained about the talisman to dispel thunder in a stentorian voice.

*Sennichi gyōja*: “The talisman to dispel thunder is really a great thing. A lot of people

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<sup>135</sup>. The name Keizanbō sounds more like a *shugenja* name rather than an *issey gyōnin* name, but it is probable that in the first draft of the text Shihenhansha Shibuhanku did not pay attention to this detail.

think that thunder is [controlled by] the four directional [deities]: Akata 阿伽多 in the East, Sudachū 須陀忠 in the West, Setsuteiro 殺帝魯 in the South, and Ridamako 莉陀广危. There are many other explanations that scare people. For example, one explanation says that thunder is produced by the encounter of cold and hot (*in'yō* 陰陽) currents of air (*kisō* 氣相). Another theory says that the cries of birds and wild beasts produce [thunder]. According to one more theory in certain seasons terrestrial pressure attacks the clouds in the sky. When this happens the hot air on the ground produces a lot of humidity that rises up into the sky and soaks it. At this point the sky responds to the pressure with a grunt and throws back the humid air as thunder. [...] Nevertheless, these are all fabrications! The real thunder is a demon (*oni* 鬼) that carries a drum. If you tame him with this talisman, he will never get close to your house. This is really a fantastic talisman!"<sup>136</sup>

Even if at first glance the tone of this dialogue seems to be frivolous, it is interesting to note that the character who plays the role of the *sennichi gyōja*, and not the *shugenja*, is depicted as the only person who can really help the two pilgrims. The *shugenja* Ryōzanbō acknowledges that an eminent *issei gyōnin* had more power and charisma than anyone else on the mountain and does not hesitate to seek for his intervention on behalf of Kitamatsu and Setetsu. Apart from the relationships of authority among the characters of this passage, which reflect the reality on the ground at Yudono in fictional terms, the humorous aspect consists in the parodical representation of the *sennichi gyōja* as a greedy seller of religious goods and improvised meteorologist who makes reference to Western scientific theories to boast about the power of his talisman against thunder.

The episode concludes with another rumbling speech by the *sennichi gyōja* who points out that the mushrooms which Setetsu carries inside his wide-brimmed straw hat (*kasa* 笠), were not *Lentinula edodes* (*shiitake* しいたけ) but a special type of phosphorescent mushroom called moon-night mushrooms (*tsukiyotake* 月夜茸, *Omphalotus nidiformis*). After leaving the *sennichi gyōja*, Setetsu and Kitamatsu decide to climb Gassan and return to Dainichiji late

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<sup>136</sup>. For the original text see *Hizakurige bungei shūsei*, vol. 20, ed. Nakamura Masaaki (Tōkyō: Yumani shobō, 2014), 500-502.



at night. Shrouded in darkness, the *tsukiyotake* inside Setetsu's *kasa* begin to emit beams of light and the *otakeban* of Dainichiji mistakes the two pilgrims for ghosts. The last part of the story is an example of narrative intervisuality (*mitate*) in which the golden light of the coin offerings is substituted with the phosphorescent beams of the *tsukiyotake*. The inside of the *kasa* was in fact the most common hiding place for unruly pilgrims to put the coin offerings they picked up off the ground to take home as protective talismans. Setetsu tried to do the same thing but picked up *tsukiyotake* instead of the coins and was discovered by the *otakeban* of Dainichiji who was more afraid to face a real ghost than a hypothetical *sanka*.

Although most of the infractions of the mountain regulations were the result of pilgrim misbehavior or the illicit incursion of *sanka*, there were also cases where the *yama sendatsu*, who were supposed to play a paradigmatic role for the correct performance of the ritual procedures during the pilgrimage, were accused of impious acts. For instance, the petition *Shiage mōsu on'ukesho no koto* 指上申御請書之事 (Tenpō 10, 1839), which was signed by a group of *yama sendatsu* affiliated with the Hondōji temple, reports the following incident.

On the last day of the fifth month [the *yama sendatsu*] Shūzō 秀藏 accompanied some pilgrims. During the ascent of the mountain he committed foolish actions (*fukokoroe* 不心得) without considering any fear [of divine punishment]. When he was close to Gohōzen his behavior infringed the Buddhist rules of conduct (*funyohō* 不如法). Later on he descended to the transit area of Shizu and kept talking about things that should not be said (*fugen no koto* 不言之事) along the path. Because he did not show due respect for the Gongen's power, suddenly strange things happened and a violent rain continued to fall though in recent years the wind had been blowing regularly. Everybody deplored this. These facts were secretly communicated by the mountain-wardens (*otakeban*) to the [Hondōji] monks. This Shūzō did things that since the time of the patriarch of the mountain [Kūkai] had never been seen nor heard. He broke the regulations of the mountain, and his deeds were revealed. As a severe decision had to be taken against him and to be communicated to him, he was extremely sorry. He recognized his past mistakes and repented. He repeatedly asked his comrades to present [a request for] pardon on his behalf. Because of this, we [his comrades] could not help but accept his request and

presented our petition [to the Hondōji monks]. [We ask them to be] compassionate toward him. Because his infringement of the regulations was really serious, we perfectly understand the previous verdict and the fact that [his actions] were a disgraceful thing. Because of this, all his relatives gathered here sign this petition that we now submit.<sup>137</sup>

Even if the text does not specify what kind of misconduct the *yama sendatsu* Shūzō was considered responsible for it is possible to speculate that it involved physical and verbal actions considered inappropriate given the proximity to Gohōzen. Because the sacred boulder was an extension of the body of Yudono Gongen the lack of respect demonstrated by Shūzō provoked a harsh reaction of the deity against men, who were punished with heavy rain.

Shūzō was a *yama sendatsu* affiliated with Hondōji, but there numerous *sato* and *yama sendatsu* who were officially affiliated with Haguro also traversed the Yudono territory. In the Genroku period there were incidents in which a group of *yama sendatsu* from Haguro were accused by the Hondōji monks of stealing the coin offerings from the ground around Gohōzen, but apart from such friction, the interaction between Yudono and Haguro *shugenja* were substantially smooth. For instance, in the case of the *sato sendatsu* who came from the *kasumi* close to the village of Nagai and were officially affiliated with Haguro, there was a special tendency to directly escort pilgrims to Yudono without passing Haguro and Gassan. This choice gave the *sato sendatsu* of Nagai a double privilege. They could lead a large number of persons because the pilgrimage route was less hard than climbing through the mountains and it exclusively focused on the great religious benefits that could be generated by simply accessing Yudono, which constituted the climax of the Dewa Sanzan sacred landscape.

Moreover the *sato sendatsu* who were affiliated with Haguro were not allowed to escort

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<sup>137</sup>. For the original text see *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō*, vol. 1, ed. Hori Denzō, 87.

pilgrims within the mountain unless provided with the license of *yama sendatsu* and they were treated like scullery maids or low ranking servants when waiting for their clients to return from the mountain in the *shukubō* in Tōge. By contrast, the Haguro *sato sendatsu* were warmly welcomed and kindly treated at the *shukubō* and the *bettō* of Yudono because they brought groups of pilgrims who spent money for an overnight stay at Yudono rather than in the *shukubō* of Tōge, the Haguro entrance and the most starting point.<sup>138</sup>

The warm welcome that the Haguro *sato sendatsu* usually received when stopping at the *bettōji* or *shukubō* of Yudono was indicative of the complexity and diversity that had always characterized the relationship between Haguro and Yudono. The two mountains were the two major religious centers of Dewa Sanzan and were in constant competition with each other, but an analysis of the practices of pilgrimage reveals that there were also practical agreements and fruitful cooperation between the various groups of religious professionals who did not necessarily conform to the antagonist logic of the legal and doctrinal divisions between Haguro and Yudono.

## 5. Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter we saw that the *engi* served to produce traces, which were related to an invented past that provided authority to Yudono and its religious institutions. Emblematic in this process is the role played by Kūkai. In most of the Yudono *engi* Kūkai is depicted as creating the entire sacred landscape of Yudono. Yudono discourses about power, sacrality, and domination then develop through reference to these “traces” left

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<sup>138</sup>. *Nagai shishi*, Kinsei-hen, vol. 2, ed. Nagaishishi hensan i'inkai, 1004.

by Kūkai. The fictiveness of the trace and the mendacity of the past, which was transmitted through it, worked as performative “true lies” that shaped the devotional and political assets of Yudono. Once the trace was activated, it did not produce an origin outside itself, but rather became the site of this origin. In other words, the trace was always self-referential. This self-referential nature the traces produced by the narratives of the *engi* formed legitimizing discourses used to assert the authority of Yudono and its religious institutions without risking self-contradiction.

The Yudono *engi* were used as political weapons in the numerous legal disputes between Haguro and Yudono, but also to establish visual and aural memories about this mountain in the minds of common people. When professional reciters such as the *biwa hōshi* chanted the texts of the Yudono *engi* in front of spectators, they were not simply performing an amusing activity but were transmitting streams of knowledge about a numinous site that, through such performances, attracted people’s curiosity and devotion. In other words, Yudono *engi* played a crucial role in the cultic formation of future pilgrims to Yudono.

The Edo-period Yudono pilgrimage is often represented as a sort of leisure activity, in which the amusing aspects of travel through sacred mountains, temples, and shrines were far more predominant than were the ascetic or purificatory practices that the pilgrimage entailed. Analysis of the pilgrimage to Yudono shows that in the Edo period there was a great diversity of pilgrims. In this chapter we met the two old libertines Nobitaka and Chikurabō, who were making a pilgrimage to Yudono and traveling side by side with the *nobori kudari no gyōnin*, who belonged to the Yudono *kō* of Tōhoku and Kantō. Each pilgrim differed from the other, and it would be misleading to obliterate this individuality in order to create a stereotypical and generalized description of a standard Edo-period pilgrim. The most important

characteristic of pilgrimage was probably its diversity. Pilgrimage was an all-embracing religious practice in which individuals from different devotional backgrounds participated, temporarily sharing a communality of time and space.

Good examples of this inclusive aspect of pilgrimage are Haguro and Yudono, the two competing mountains of Dewa Sanzan that were forced to re-discover their religious and ritual alliance precisely during the pilgrimage season. It would have been impossible for the *yama sendatsu* of Haguro to avoid escorting pilgrims to Gohōzen, which represented the climatic point of the entire journey through the Dewa Sanzan. Similarly, it would have been economic suicide for the Yudono *bettō* to close their territory to the enormous flow of pilgrims who accessed it via Haguro.

Concerning the internal dynamics between the three mountains that formed the Dewa Sanzan, we discovered that Yudono was ultimately characterized by a dimension of silence. Nevertheless, this was an eloquent silence in which the lack of verbal or visual representation of the mountain actually served to emphasize its presence. The narrative suspension of any direct description of the sacred landscape of Yudono—and Gohōzen in particular—constituted a sort of semantical oxymoron that implied presence through absence. The pilgrims who accessed Yudono did not simply enter into a place endowed with spatial and temporal characteristics; they had the unique chance to travel through a sacred site, which was supposed to be ontologically detached from the boundaries of time and space.

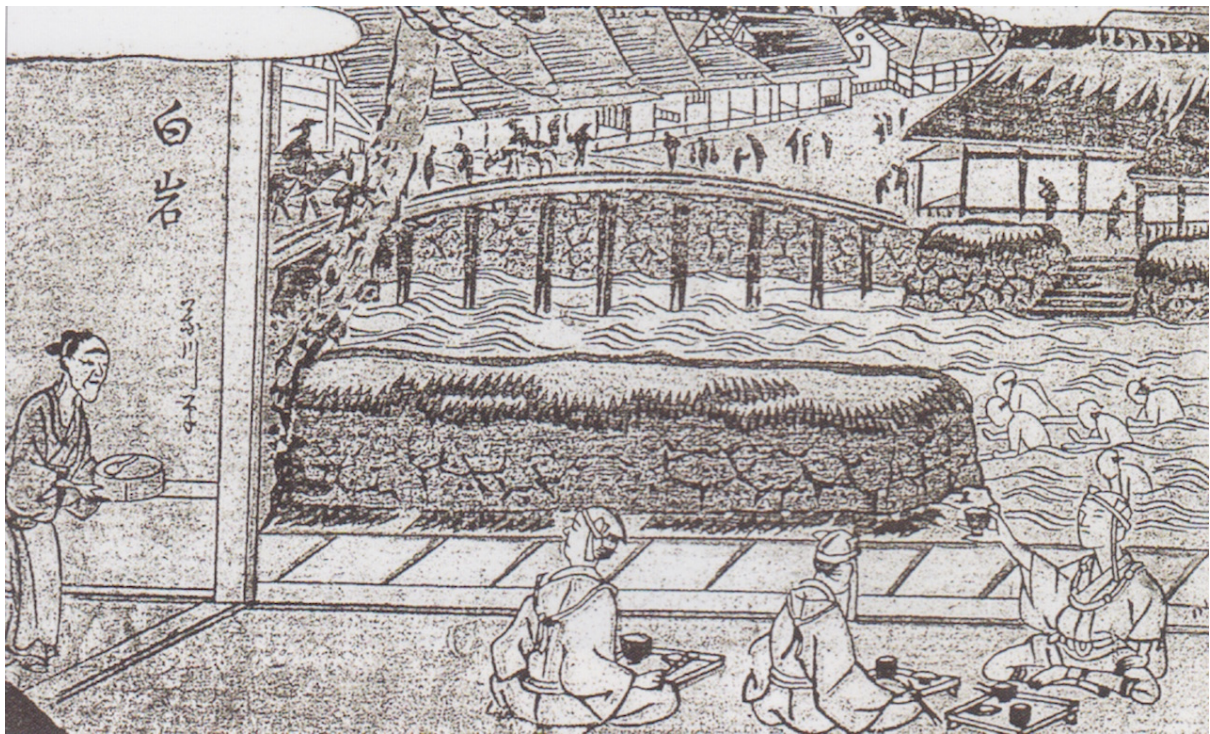


Fig. 4.1 Group of Yudono pilgrims wearing purified ritual clothes (*jōe*), crown-caps (*kan*), and sacred ropes (*shime*) while resting in a tea house (*chaya*) at Shira'iwa. Minagawa Gisen 皆川義川, *Yudonosan dōchū ichiran hanga* 湯殿山道中一覽版画. Edo period (19th century). Yamagata prefecture museum, Yamagata prefecture.



Fig. 4.2 Stone platform for the *goma* ritual with an inscription that attributes it to Kūkai. Old site of Dainichibō, Ōami, Yamagata prefecture. Edo period. Photo by the author (23/07/2013).



Fig. 4.3 Kūkai meets with the Yudono Gongen (disguised as an *issei gyōnin*) during the opening (*kaisan*) of the mountain. On the top part of the hanging scroll (*kakejiku* 掛け軸), there is a lotus throne with the Sanskrit letter A, which symbolizes the *honji butsu*, Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai. Edo period (19th century). Photo by the author (9/05/2015).



Fig. 4.4 *Gyōya* used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of Yonezawa. Edo period (19th century). Uesugi museum, Yonezawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (13/10/2014). Fig. 4.4a Set of ritual objects used inside the *gyōya*. Edo period (19th century). Yonezawa, Yamagata prefecture.





Fig. 4.5 Internal part of a *gyōya* with two fireplaces (*irori*): on the wooden beam over the left fireplace is written Supreme Fire (*jōka*) and over the right fireplace is written Medium Fire (*chūka*). *Jōka* refers to Yudono and *chūka* refers to Iide. Edo period (19th century). Uesugi museum, Yonezawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (13/10/2014). Fig. 4.5a Paper strips (*hagi*) that reproduce the *silhouette* of the crown of Dainichi Nyorai and were attached to the adjustable hanger (*jizai kagi* 自在鍵) of the fireplace. Edo period (19th century). Agricultural and Cultural Research Center, Yonezawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (13/10/2014).



Fig. 4.6 Dewa Sanzan pilgrims dressed in white clothes walk on the intersection between Yōkamachi and Tōkamachi at Yamagata. On the upper right side of the intersection, there is a white banner that reads: “Worship Yudonosan Daigongen” (*Hōnō Yudonosan Daigongen 奉納湯殿山大権現*). *Yudonosan dōchū ryakuzu* (Eastern view). Edo period. Publisher: Konrondō 崑崙堂. Tsuruoka library, Tsuruoka, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (18/07/2013).

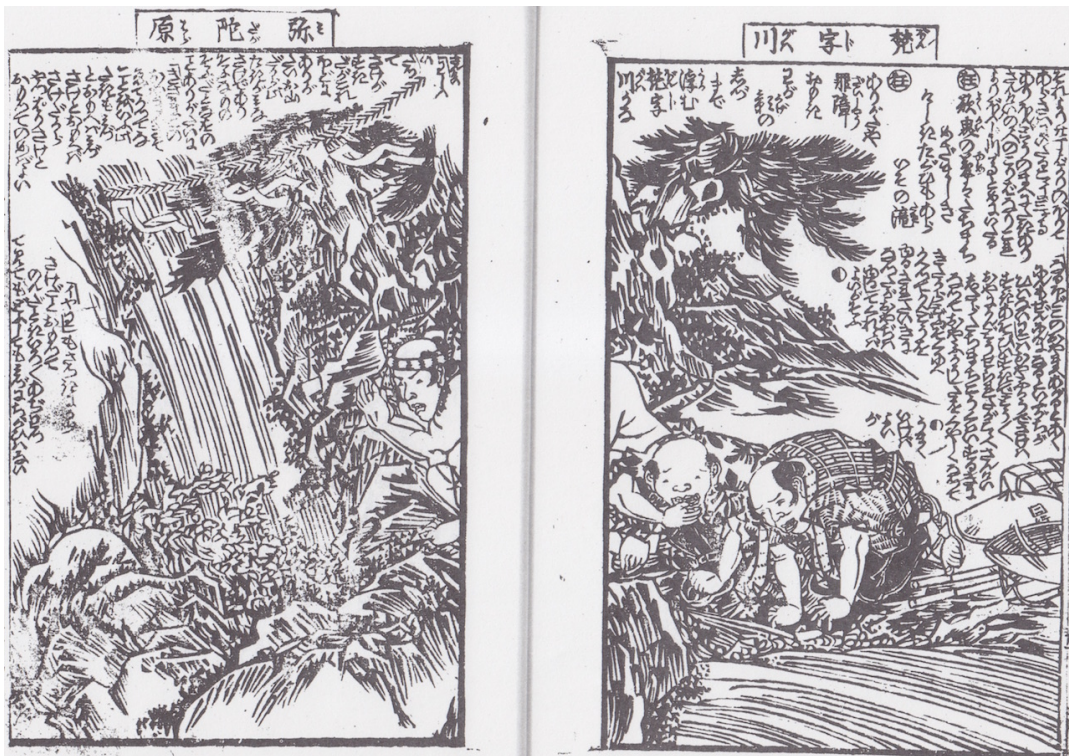


Fig. 4.7 Nobitaka and Chikurabō attempt to drink the water of the Daibonji River thinking it is sake. Fig. 4.7a Nobitaka and Chikurabō arrive at the Shukubō Kiraya in Tsuruoka. Jippensha Ikkū, illustrations by Utagawa Kuniyasu 歌川国安 (1794–1832), *Muda shugyō kane no waraji*. Edo period (Bunka 11, 1814).



Fig. 4.8 On the top right-hand corner of the map, the site of Yudono is hidden behind a curtain of clouds. *Yudono Gassan Haguro sanzan ichimai zue* 湯殿月山羽黒三山一枚図繪. Engraved by Takahashi Ryōsuke 高橋良助. Edo period (Kaei era, 1848–53).

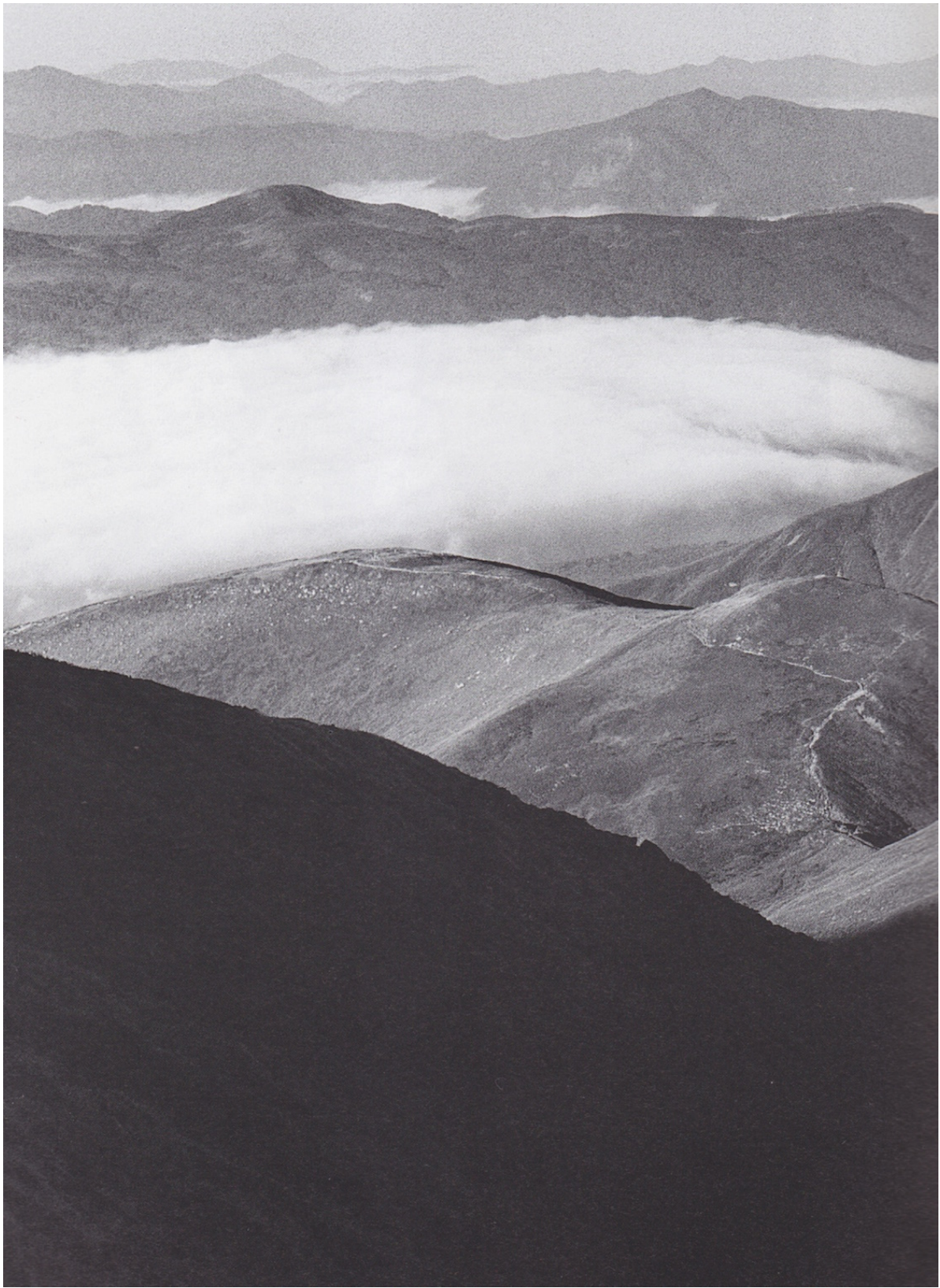


Fig. 4.9 From Gassan to Yudono at dawn. Gassan, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by Niizuma Yoshinori 新妻喜永.

## Chapter Five

### The Materiality of Faith: Tumuli, Stelae, and *Nenbutsu* of Yudono

In the early Kan'ei era Yudonosan Gongen  
wandered around through all the country (*okuni mawari* 御国廻り)  
and visited various villages here and there  
(*mura mura zaizai wo meguri tamau* 村々在々を巡り玉ふ).

*Kaikichō* (Kanbun 3, 1663)<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we analyzed the movement of persons toward Mount Yudono. In this chapter we focus on the inverse, i.e. the movement of Mount Yudono toward persons. During the Kan'ei era (1624–1644) Yudono Gongen was ritually transferred or invited (*kanjō*) to various provinces in the Tōhoku and Kantō regions and started expanding its religious influence on new territories that were considerably removed from Dewa province.

In the first chapter we encountered a very similar phenomenon, when the cult of Kumano Sanzan spread from the Kii peninsula to Tōhoku toward the end of the Heian period. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the cult of Mount Yudono reached maturity and started replicating the same diffusive mechanisms as the Kumano Sanzan faith but with particular modalities. In other words, the cult of Kumano Sanzan travelled from the west side of Honshū toward the east, while the Yudono cult penetrated various territories following an

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<sup>1</sup>. For the original text see Enomoto Minoru, “Kan'ei shoki no Yudono Gongen ni tsuite: Mito hanryō no baai,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 30 (December 1991): 28.

opposite direction from east to west almost four hundred years later.

Tenkai was one of the main promoters who directly organized and patronized the introduction of Yudono devotion to Kantō. In relation to this we will examine two examples of *kanjō* of Yudono: at Nikkō in Kan'ei 1 (1624) and at Mount Isseki 一石 around Kan'ei 16 (1639). Because Yudono was the *oku no in* of Dewa Sanzan, the *kanjō* of Yudono very often automatically symbolized the ritual transfer of the entire mountain range and implicitly included also the sacred pantheons of Haguro and Gassan. In the case of sacred mountains, the *kanjō* ritual created an immediate effect of intervisuality (*mitate*) between sacred peaks that allowed them to greatly expand their religious significance through a process of multi-stratification between real and symbolic landscapes. For instance, after the *kanjō* of Yudono, a pilgrimage to Nikkō developed a double significance as a “real devotional practice” within the space and time of that specific mountain and as a “virtual devotional practice” in the space and time of Dewa Sanzan, which was metaphorically impressed within the mandalized geography of Nikkō.

The benefits of the *kanjō* were relevant both for Nikkō, the “host mountain,” and also for Mount Yudono, the “hosted mountain,” which had the chance to establish its authority on new geographical areas, and came to include different local cultic elements in its rituality. In the second example of *kanjō* in which Yudono was transferred to Isseki we will see that the numerous caverns, which characterized the landscape of Isseki, were used to emphasize the uterine and feminine aspect of Yudono in general and Gohōzen in particular.

We will also take into account a third example of *kanjō* that concerns the ritual invitation of Yudono Gongen to Irishiken 入四間 village in Hitachi province in Kan'ei 7 (1630). This event is particularly interesting because it shows that the pervasiveness of the cult of Yudono

was not limited to famous mountainous sites such as Nikkō and Isseki but was also relevant at the micro-level of the rural villages scattered around the countryside of the Kantō area.

Mountains were undoubtedly powerful material supports for spreading Yudono devotion among the population, but artificial earth-mounds (*tsuka*), votive stelae (*itabi*), and *nenbutsu* recitations can also be considered fundamental objects and ritual practices, through which various human actors organized their ceremonial procedures to venerate Mount Yudono. The *tsuka* of Yudono were conceived as non-anthropomorphic icons (*shintai* 神体) of Yudono Gongen or Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai and received special forms of worship, which were transmitted by the *issei gyōnin* to the lay members of the Yudonosan confraternities.

Expanding Fabio Rambelli's interpretation of the meaning of the maṇḍala, it is possible to think at the *tsuka* and stelae of Yudono as “doubles” or “authentic copies” of the original mountain, based on a continuous interplay between micro- and macro-cosm, as well as on a mutual fertilization between the paradigm (Mount Yudono) and its replica (the *tsuka* or the stele).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, *tsuka* and stelae should not be studied as mere “mnemonic aids” for performing the mechanical veneration of a deity but, on the contrary, as empowered magical objects that fostered the generation of original religious practices thanks to their intrinsic agency.<sup>3</sup>

We will focus on three main types of Yudono *tsuka*: the simple round or square shape earth-tumulus (*ontsuka* 御塚) of Michinoku province, the *tsuka* for the burial of the old *bonten* used by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* (*bontenzuka* 梵天塚) in Shimōsa province, and the *tsuka* built as funerary monuments or actual sepulchers (*gyōninzuka*) to commemorate and venerate the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* in the Kantō region. Fabio Rambelli's “logic of

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<sup>2</sup>. Fabio Rambelli, *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 55, 68.

<sup>3</sup>. *Ibid.*, 71.



undifferentiatedness” perfectly applies to all these models of Yudono *tsuka*. According to this postulate: “For any entity A and B, if A is similar to (i.e. possesses at least one quality of) B, then A is identical to (i.e. possesses all qualities of) B.”<sup>4</sup> In this case the *tsuka* and stelae of Yudono can be considered as the A element that becomes identical to the B element (Mount Yudono) thanks to the fact that they share one or more characteristics.

Different types of Yudono stelae were used to mark specific territories in which devotional activities dedicated to this mountain flourished. For instance, some stelae show distinctive bas-reliefs of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai with a prominent nose (*hana no ōkina Dainichi sama* 鼻の大きな大日様), while others display the sacred triad of Dainichi Nyorai, Fudō Myōō and Gōzanze Myōō (Dainichi sanzō-zō 大日三尊像) to highlight certain particularities of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai. Other stelae related to Yudono display Amida Nyorai’s body made of *nenbutsu* characters (Moji Amida itabi 文字阿弥陀板碑) and others have the purpose of performing a virtual pilgrimage to Yudono (*daisantō* 代参塔) or commemorating the accomplishment of a past one. In all these cases it is important to take into account that the erection of a stele was always the final step in a complex ritual procedure which took place over an extended period of time, usually three years and three months, and served to empower the stele thanks to the religious merit accumulated by the lay devotees who financially and spiritually sponsored its creation.

Two of the most important rituals to empower stelae dedicated to the cult of Yudono were the ritual “fast and offering” ceremony (*fujiki kuyō* 不食供養) and a special type of *nenbutsu* called *toki nenbutsu* 齋念仏. Both involved a constant performance of oral recitations and the purificatory abstention from certain foodstuffs that were considered to be impure. It is

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<sup>4</sup>. Ibid., 168.

interesting to note that the periodic elimination of specific foods (*fujiki*) from the diet of the lay devotees of the Yudonosan confraternities and the ceremonial offerings (*kuyō*) of purified foods were considered to be pivotal elements in the rituals for the veneration of Mount Yudono. Abstention from defiled foods, offerings of purified foodstuffs and a concluding ritual commensality between lay devotees and the Yudono deities were important procedural phases that served to emphasize the ascetic character of the cultic activities to worship this sacred mountain.

## **2. The *Kanjō* and *Mitate* of Yudono in Kantō and Tōhoku**

### **2.1. Yudono's Visit to Nikkō**

The first year of the Kan'ei era (1624) was a crucial moment in the growth and diffusion of the devotional practices dedicated to Mount Yudono in various areas of Tōhoku and Kantō. Toward the end of the Heian period the Kumano *sendatsu* had exported the cultic paradigm of Kumano Sanzan to Dewa and Michinoku through the ritual technology of the *kanjō*. This consisted of a formal invitation and the subsequent enshrinement in a different place or mountainous landscape of the divided body (*bunshin*) of a deity associated with a specific numinous site (the “main body,” *honshin*). The *kanjō* ritual allowed parts of the main body of the deity to come in contact with other places, which went through a process of religious pollination and became a sort of territorial extension of the original location from which the deity came.

The fame of Dewa Sanzan reached its height in the second decade of the seventeenth century when Yudono, Gassan, and Haguro started traveling around the Japanese archipelago replicating those cross-pollination mechanisms that had taken through the diffusion of the cult of Kumano Sanzan more than four hundred years before. In other words, during the medieval period Kumano Sanzan had created a holographic image of itself in Dewa province and during the early modern period Dewa Sanzan did the same in the Kantō and Tōhoku regions. It was this capacity of sacred mountains such as Kumano and Yudono to irradiate virtual images or reflections of themselves on heterogeneous territories that marked the pervasiveness and power of their cult on the ground. When Yudono superimposed itself on other mountains it did not simply create spatial replica of its geophysical and divine landscape but also ended up including myriads of local deities within its cultic system. This encounter automatically brought about a rhizomatic proliferation of meanings and practices, based on cultural stratifications of *kami* and buddhas with different territorial and devotional origins.

One of the principal actors who supported the diffusion of the devotion in Mount Yudono in the Kantō area was Tenkai (See Fig. 5.1). In Keichō 18 (1613) Ieyasu appointed Tenkai supervisor of Nikkō, the mountain he had selected to host his post mortem cult as Tōshōgū Daigongen 東照宮大権現. Tenkai accepted the difficult task of reviving Nikkō religious institutions that included also thirty-six Shugendō facilities ranked *in* and twenty-five ranked *bō*. At the beginning of the Edo period Shugendō at Nikkō was experiencing a harsh decline as a result of the confiscation by Hideyoshi of the vast temple estates (*jiryō*) granted by the Hōjō family in Odawara 小田原, its patrons during the Sengoku 戦国 period (1467–1590), following their defeat by him. When Ieyasu took power, he started a reversal policy that

aimed to revitalize this mountain, which had been formerly repressed by Hideyoshi.

In the case of Nikkō, Tendai monks held the institutional and decisional power over the pre-Edo cultic centers such as Rinnōji 輪王寺 as well as the newly built structures such as the Tōshōgū, which was the mausoleum of Ieyasu. Nikkō *shugenja* took care of the ritual and ceremonial aspects in the old and new shrine-temple complexes on the Nikkō's territory. Therefore, Nikkō *shugenja* did not directly administer the bureaucratic and economic aspects of Nikkō religious institutions among which Tōshōgū was the most important.<sup>5</sup>

From Keichō 10 (1610) to Genroku 8 (1696) all the *shukubō* of the Nikkō *shugenja* were restored. Among them, Ōdawajuku 大田和宿 played a pivotal role in the organization of the Shugendō rituals that took place on Mount Nantai 男体, a volcanic peak considered the symbolic axis of Nikkō's sacred landscape.<sup>6</sup> In order to better administer the ritual procedures at Nikkō in Kan'ei 1 (1624) Tenkai nominated Gyōe 行恵 as *bettō* of Tōshōgū. Gyōe was born in Hongō 本郷 village in Kōriyama 郡山 district in Michinoku province where he became a scholar-monk (*gakusō*) at the Tendai temple Daigenmyōōdō 大元明王堂, which was dedicated to the cult of Daigen Myōō 大元明王 (Skt. Āṭavaka).<sup>7</sup> Tenkai was very close to Gyōe not only because he was a refined Tendai scholar-monk, but also because they shared the same geographical provenance. Tenkai was born in Aizu-takadamachi 会津高田町 in the

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<sup>5</sup>. Gaynor Sekimori, "Defining Shugendō Past and Present: The "Restoration" of Shugendō at Nikkō and Koshikidake," 49.

<sup>6</sup>. According to legend, in Ten'ō 天応 2 (782) the mountain-ascetic (*sanrin gyōja* 山林行者) Shōdō 勝道 (735–817) opened (*kaizan*) Nantai and from here started building various ascetic routes that linked together all the major peaks of the area, such as Daikenzan 大剣山, Yakushigamine 薬師峰, Nyohōzan 女峰山, and Shiranesan 白根山. In the late Nara and early Heian periods, Nantai was a center for esoteric practices, as testified also by excavations of numerous three pronged vajra and other esoteric ritual tools on the summit. The fact that Nantai was called Futarasan 二荒山 or Fudaraku underlines a connection between this mountain and the paradise of the bodhisattva Kannon. See *Shinbutsu shūgō: kami to hotoke ga orinasu*, ed. Taniguchi Kōsei *et al.* (Nara: Nara kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2007), 11, 62.

<sup>7</sup>. Āṭavaka was an Hindu deity of the forest that was used to devour humans before meeting with the buddha Vairocana who converted him. From that time on Āṭavaka became a protector of Buddhism and was periodically included in the group of the four heavenly kings (*shitennō*) and among the twelve generals of the Medicine Buddha's retinue.

Michinoku province and like Gyōe was exposed to the cult of Yudono, which was deep-rooted in that area.

In order to collect funds (*kanjin*) for the enormous restoration work necessary to regenerate the religious institutions of Nikkō and glorify Ieyasu at Tōshōgū, Gyōe suggested that Tenkai invite (*kanjō*) Yudono Gongen to the sacred landscape of Nikkō. Gyōe sensed the devotional appeal that Yudono in particular, and Dewa Sanzan in general, might have on the lay people who lived around Nikkō and in other areas of northern Kantō. Therefore, he decided to use a fashionable *kami* (*hayarigami* 流行神) such as Yudono Gongen to attract devotional and financial support from lay people. This extra flow of money from lay devotees was supposed to be integrated with the *bakufu*'s fundings to cover the substantial expenditures for restoring the cultic centers of Nikkō and maintaining the lavish rituals at Tōshōgū.

Tenkai and Gyōe were probably also interested in the protective power of Yudono Gongen against the evil influence that could penetrate Nikkō from the northeastern direction (*kimon*). In other words, the *kanjō* of Yudono Gongen was useful to put the entire territory of Nikkō under a sort of directional shield where Tokugawa Ieyasu could be safely venerated. The *Nikkōsan Manganji Shōjōjuin dōsha kenritsu ki* 日光山満願寺勝成就院堂社建立記 (Genroku 9, 1696) describes the arrival of Yudono Gongen in Nikkō's territory as follows.

In Kan'ei 1 (1624), wood-*yang*, year of the mouse, toward the end of the fifth month from Ōu province, Yudonosan Gongen [transited through] the northern part of Mount Kurokami 黒髪,<sup>8</sup> the southern part of Mount Tarōdake 太郎嶽,<sup>9</sup> and [stopped] four *ri* and half from Yamasugebashi 山菅橋.<sup>10</sup> [Yudonosan Gongen was] inside a sacred palanquin

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<sup>8</sup>. Mount Kurokami is a different name for Mount Nantai.

<sup>9</sup>. From Mount Nantai to Mount Tarō there are about five kilometers.

<sup>10</sup>. Yamasugebashi is a famous bridge on Mount Nikkō.

of bamboo (*take no mikoshi* 竹ノ神輿) adorned with white strips of cut paper (*byakuhei* 白幣) that stopped in various villages before being carried to the Dainichidō 大日堂 of Namaoka 生岡 [at Nikkō]. At that time, Gyōe, the chief monk, made a visit to Namaoka and the sacred palanquin with white strips of cut paper was moved to the worship hall of Hoshi no miya (Hoshi no miya *no haiden* 星宮ノ拜殿) on this mountain. On the fifteenth day of the eleventh month [the palanquin] was moved to the outer shrine of Jakkō 寂光. Following the orders of Tenkai Daisōjō 天海大僧正 in the middle of the third month of the next year [Kan'ei 2, 1625] about ten *shugenja* (*ichibō* 一坊), together with their disciples from the same ascetic-lodge (*shuku* 宿) shouldered in turn [the palanquin]. [They] crossed the upper part [of the Bonji 梵字 River] at Amikozawa 網子沢 and compared (*mitate*) a place called Funasawa 舟沢, which was close to the southern part of Mount Tarōdake, to Mount Yudono. Then half of Mount Tarōdake was compared to Gassan.<sup>11</sup> The northern side of Mount Nantai was compared to Goshinbutsu 御真仏 and Urami no taki 裏見滝 was compared to Arasawa.<sup>12</sup> After completing this mapping [of the territory] (*zukei* 図形) [Tenkai] Daisōjō examined it and on the eighth day of the fourth month of the same year the deities were invited (*kanjō*) to these four sites.<sup>13</sup> The old people say that in the past (*inishie*), Yudonosan was invited to this land (Yudonosan *kanjō no chi nari* 湯殿山勧請ノ地也).<sup>14</sup>

The first part of this passage describes the slow approach of Yudono Gongen to the sacred territory of Nikkō. The transfer of this deity toward the Kantō area took place along the Aizu-Ōshūkaidō 会津奥州街道 road, which started exactly from the hometown of Tenkai. Even if the palanquin of Yudono Gongen was warmly welcomed by the population of the villages around Nikkō where it stopped before reaching its final destination, its progression within the landscape of Nikkō was gradual rather than immediate. Yudono Gongen had the power to

<sup>11</sup>. The southern slope of Tarōdake was compared with Gassan.

<sup>12</sup>. The name Goshinbutsu referred to Gohōzen, alias Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai. See Naitō Masatoshi, *Edo ōken no kosumorojī* [coll. *Minzoku no hakken III*] (Tōkyō: Hōsei daigaku shuppan kyoku, 2007), 303.

<sup>13</sup>. The eighth of the fourth month has a particular meaning for Nikkō. In fact, it was during this day in Genna 3 (1617) that Ieyasu's corpse was transferred from Kunōzan 久能山 in Suruga no kuni 駿河国 (present-day Shizuoka prefecture) to Nikkō where Tenkai formally started the ritual procedures for his deification at Tōshōgū. The eighth day of the fourth month was called *uzuki yōka* 卯月八日 and indicated the time when the *kami* of the mountain met with the *kami* of the rice fields. The auspicious characteristics of this day was also amplified by the fact that it was considered to be the birthday of the Buddha and the fete day (*ennichi*) of Yakushi Nyorai that was the original Buddha (*honjibutsu*) of Tōshōgū.

<sup>14</sup>. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu* (Tsuchiura: Tsukuba shorin, 2004), 289.

tame the evil influences that originated from the northeastern direction and therefore it was considered as an extremely benevolent deity, but it was perceived, at the same time, as a foreign deity that was meeting for the first time the pantheon of the Nikkō indigenous gods.

It is probable that Gyōe preferred to monitor the reactions of the Nikkō deities to the arrival of Yudono Gongen organizing its stay in three phases: the Dainichidō at Namaoka first, the outer shrine of Hoshi no miya later, and after six months the Jakkōji temple that was located in a very peripheral area from the center of Nikkō. In other words, Yudono Gongen penetrated Nikkō's space from the southeastern (*tatsumi* 辰巳) side of Tōshōgū, which corresponded to the Dainichidō of Namaoka, and continued moving toward the northwestern (*inui* 戌亥) direction where Hoshi no miya and Jakkōji were located. All these three sites were conceived as marginal realms (*kyōkai* 境界) where the spirits of the dead make return (*reikon no kaeiri yuku* 靈魂の帰りゆく) in order to pass from life (*sei*) to death (*shi*) and then be reborn (*saisei*).

The northwestern part of Nikkō was associated with shrine-temple complexes built before Tōshōgū and further north on the same direction it was possible to reach Mount Nantai. It is clear that the *kanjō* of Yudono Gongen at Nikkō was also directionally organized to favor the rebirth of the dead guiding them toward northwest (*inui*).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, this staggering of the movements of Yudono Gongen's palanquin was probably motivated also by an economic intent because each transfer attracted vast crowds of devotees that made numerous offerings while the *shugenja* shouldered the palanquin along the way.

It is important to point out that the first *kanjō* did not immediately create an impression of Yudono on the sacred landscape of Nikkō. The final *mitate* between Dewa Sanzan mandalic

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<sup>15</sup>. See Naitō Masatoshi, *Edo ōken no kosumorojī*, 312.

geography and Nikkō was formally realized only one year later when Gyōe received the authorization from Tenkai about his renewal of Nikkō cultic mapping (*zukei*). In other words, it was only in Kan'ei 2 (1625) that Yudono Gongen could start penetrating the inner part of the numinous space of Nikkō. At this time Haguro was associated with Urami no taki on back side of Jakkōji that was considered as a refraction of Arasawa, the *oku no in* of Haguro, where Fudō Myōō was venerated by the *issei gyōnin*. Also Gassan was transferred to the southern side of Mount Tarō (See Fig. 5.2).

The semiotic complexity of *mitate* is emphasized by the fact that multiple fractions of one sacred mountainous body could have been split among different locations within the same landscape. In this specific case, Yudono was enshrined, at the same time, in the flat area of Funasawa close to the southern part of Tarōdake and on the northern side of the jagged volcanic ridge of Nantai, which was compared to Gohōzen, alias Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai. In Meiji 35 (1902) Ishikura Shigetsuge 石倉重継 (1875–1938) wrote the *Nikkō meisho zue* 日光名所図会 and gave the following description of Funasawa.

In the southern part of Mount Tarō there is Funasawa, which corresponds to the final part of Misawa 御澤. In the northern bank of the river there are rapids which are due to a spring (*izumi* 泉). The water [of this spring] fills a deep whirlpool (*shintan* 深潭). This [site] is called Bonji River. The shrine is located two or three *chō* further from this place,<sup>16</sup> but it is impossible to visit that place, so one makes a veneration from afar (*yōhai*) from a site near the rapids.<sup>17</sup>

The entire Funasawa area on the northern part of which there was the scenic whirlpool of the Bonji River became another *mitate* of Gohōzen that is actually located in the upper part of

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<sup>16</sup>. One *chō* corresponds to about one hundred meters.

<sup>17</sup>. For the original text see Ishikura Shigetsuge, *Nikkō meisho zue* (Tōkyō: Hakubunkan, 1902), 294.



Senninzawa from which originates the Daibonji River. Even Funasawa, which is close to the southwestern slope of Tarōdake, was conceived as the source of the Bonji River. Moreover, the southern side of Tarōdake, which is considered to be the most northern point of Nikkō area, was compared to Gassan. A second *mitate* of Gohōzen, alias Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai, took place on the northern side of Nantai's peak. The structure of this *mitate* shows that Yudono's poly-locative quality did not simply take place between Dewa Sanzan and other mountains in the Kantō and Tōhoku regions, but was manifested also through multiple refractions of Yudono in various locations within the same mountainous range. The *mitate* did not simply concern Mount Yudono per se, but all the most important geographical sites that were connected with its cult. For instance, the *Nikkō meisho zue* reports the description of a locality at Nikkō that was called Shizu 志津 like the village close to Hondōji where a lot of Kantō and Tōhoku pilgrims spent a night or two before accessing Yudono.

[Shizu] is located between Ōmanako 大真子 and Mount Nantai along the road that goes from the city of Nikkō to Yumoto 湯元. This is the main road (*hondō* 本道) to reach Mount Yudono. It is said that [at Shizu] there are the traces of the small hermitage (*kōan* 蝸菴) where Shōdō performed ascetic practices during the mountain-entry ritual (*nyūbu*). From that moment Shizu became the place where the ascetics who practice the mountain-entry ritual use to seclude themselves. There are five or six houses with much water. From this site it is possible to climb on the rear path (*uramichi* 裏道) to access Mount Nantai, reach Goshinbutsu [Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai] and descend toward Chūgūshi 中宮祠 walking on a shortcut path (*kandō* 間道).<sup>18</sup>

At Shizu a lodge called Shizujōkaya 志津浄火屋 was built as an infrastructure for the pilgrims and ascetics who wanted to climb Nantai. Included in the name of this lodge there is a reference to the purified flame (*jōka*) or separated fire (*kiribi*) used by the *issei gyōnin* of

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<sup>18</sup>. Ibid., 292.

Yudono during the self-seclusion rituals (*betsugyō*). Another lodge, Rōbagaku 老婆閣, was placed along the Gassan road (Gassandō 月山道) and served to mark the *nyonin kekkai* at Nikkō. The Rōbagaku was a *mitate* of Ubagamine 姥ヶ峰, a peak located half away between Yudono and Gassan, from which it was possible to venerate the southern side of Tarōdake, alias Gassan, from afar. Since An'ei 4 (1775) the confraternities of ascetics (*gyōninkō* 行人講) of Nikkō that venerated Dewa Sanzan used to perform a ritual during which they lighted a torch all night long (*jōyato* 常夜燈) in praise of Gohōzen. Every year on the seventh day of the seventh month the Yudono *gyōnin* of Nikkō practiced *mizugori* at Urami ga taki (alias Arasawa at Haguro), reached Tarōdake (alias Gassan) walking on the Gassan path, and went down to Funasawa (Gohōzen) from which they climbed Mount Nantai (alias Yudono). This double ascetic pilgrimage, which materially took place in Nikkō and virtually at Dewa Sanzan, allowed the *gyōnin* to duplicate the religious value of the Nikkō mandalic territory, which produced merit not only per se but also as an extension of Dewa Sanzan.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that the *mitate* between Nantai and Yudono was interpreted by the villagers who lived around Nikkō as the sexual encounter between a female mountain (Yudono) and a male one (Nantai). For instance, in the village of Funyū 船生 in the district of Shioyamachi 塩谷町 there are two stelae built in Kanbun 7 (1795) and Bunka 4 (1807) that display the names of Yudono and Nantai carved side by side in the stone under the Sanskrit letter KIRĪKU (Amida Nyorai) in the first case and ĀNKU (Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai) in the second one. The two sacred mountain of Yudono and Nantai became a sort of married couple similar to the male and female gods of fertility (*sai no kami* 道相神) that protected the sexual

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<sup>19</sup>. Nakagawa Kōki, "Nikkōsan Shugendō shi," in *Nikkōsan to Kantō no Shugendō* [coll. Sangaku shūkyōshi kenkyū sōsho, vol. 8], eds. Miyata Noboru, Miyamoto Kesao (Tōkyō: Meichō shuppan, 1979), 56-57.

and agricultural productivity of the entire area.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most extreme type of *mitate* between Yudono and Nikkō is demonstrated by a stone statue of Gyōe that is still located close to the site of Ōdawajuku. This statue represents a monk seated crossing legged in meditation while making the concentration *mudrā* of the Dharma world (*hōkaijō in* 法界定印). The monastic robe is widely open on the chest where it is written the name “Hōin Gyōe 法印行惠,” while on the initial part of the back just below the neck there is a string of characters that says “Opener of Mount Yudono” (Yudonosan *kaizan* 湯殿山開山). Following his ambitious plan to transfer the entire mandalic space of Dewa Sanzan to Nikkō, Gyōe thought that even he himself could become a *mitate* for another more eminent monk such as Kūkai, the opener of Yudono. In other words, Gyōe compared his enterprise of enshrining the divided body of Yudono within the Nikkō landscape to the opening of Yudono made by Kūkai in the Daidō era.<sup>21</sup> This stone statue of Gyōe shows that there were no limits to the semiotic application of the *mitate* technique among religious symbols, which could include sacred mountains, Gongen, *kami*, buddhas, and even human bodies.

## 2.2. Mount Isseki as Yudono

Nikkō was not the only place where Tenkai supported a *kanjō* of Yudono in order to create a *mitate* of Dewa Sanzan and gather funding for the various cultic centers under his

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<sup>20</sup>. Ibid., 56.

<sup>21</sup>. For more details about this statue of Gyōe see Tanaka Hideo, “Nikkō shugen Ōdawajuku no sekibutsu: Hōin Gyōe,” *Nihon no sekibutsu* 134 (June, 2010): 38.

administration. For instance, in the Okutama 奥多摩 region of Musashi province, Mount Isseki became another double of Yudono. It is important to note that for this operation of mutual fertilization between sacred peaks Tenkai did not rely on *shugenja* as in the case of Nikkō, but turned to a special group of ascetics called “Buddhahood-builder *hijiri*” (*sabutsu hijiri* 作仏聖).<sup>22</sup>

The *sabutsu hijiri* were a community of itinerant ascetics whose doctrinal teachings fluctuated between the Jōdo and Shingon Schools without a clear sectarian affiliation. The first patriarch of the *sabutsu hijiri* was Tanzei Shōnin 弾誓上人 (1552–1613), a wandering ascetic of the Owari province (Owari no kuni 尾張国) who specialized in the performance of a fast type of dancing *nenbutsu* (*yūzū nenbutsu* 融通念仏) based on the quick reiteration of the refrain “Amida, Mida, Mida” (アミダ、ミダ、ミダ). The *nenbutsu* of Tanzei was esoteric (*mikkyō nenbutsu* 密教念仏) with strong influences from Kakuban’s thought.<sup>23</sup> For Tanzei, chanting the name of Amida Nyorai was equivalent to venerating Dainichi Nyorai, while the Pure Lands of these two buddhas were conceptualized as ultimately overlapping.

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<sup>22</sup> The name “buddhahood-builder” derived from the fact that these ascetics interpreted their three main religious practices, namely *mokijikigyō*, *betsugyō*, and the construction of buddha’s images (*sabutsu* 作仏), as techniques to literarily construct buddhahood within their bodies (*butsusa butsumō* 仏作仏業). In other words the shaping of the image’s body through the hands of the artist was a metaphor of for the forging of the *hijiri*’s body through the performance of asceticism. For the *sabutsu hijiri* the production of Buddhist images testified that they had reached the stage of *sokushinjōbutsu* and were able to transfer their power into the images, which were subsequently donated to their devotees. See Miyashima Junko, *Nazo no sekibutsu: sabutsu hijiri no ashiato* (Tōkyō: Kadokawa, 1993), 130.

<sup>23</sup> For Kakuban, Amida Nyorai represented the light of the wisdom of wondrous perception (*myōkanzacchi* 妙觀察智), which is one of the Dainichi Nyorai’s fivefold wisdoms. Since Dainichi Nyorai creates and resides within every sound, the *nenbutsu* chanting for Amida Nyorai ultimately underlines the presence Dainichi Nyorai. For instance, in the third chapter of the *Gorin kuji myō himitsushaku* 五輪九字明秘密釈 (Kōji 康治 2, 1143) Kakuban wrote that: “The exoteric teachings (*kengyō* 顕教) make a differentiation between [A]mida and Shakushon. In the esoteric teachings (*mitsuzō* 密藏) Dainichi is Amida and he is the lord of the teachings related with the *gokuraku*. It must be known that the Pure Lands of the ten directions are all generated from the a single buddha. All the Nyorai are without exceptions Dainichi. Biru[shana] and [A]mida are different names of the same body. *Gokuraku* and *mitsugon* are the same place, even if their names are different.” For the original text see *Gorin kuji myō himitsushaku*, T no. 2514, 79.11a24-27. For Kakuban’s theorization of *nenbutsu* practice see Henny van der Veere, *A Study into the Thought of Kōgyō Daishi Kakuban. With a Translation of his Gorin kuji myō himitsushaku* (Leiden: Hotei Publishign, 2000), 115-119.

*Sabutsu hijiri* and *issei gyōnin* shared a common devotion to Dainichi Nyorai that was expressed through different religious modalities because the first group principally emphasized *nenbutsu* recitation while the second focused on ascetic practices of the Yudono tradition. The fact that Dainichi Nyorai was perceived as the elective or ultimate deity for the *sabutsu hijiri* as much as for the *issei gyōnin* probably facilitated the creation of collaboration networks between the two groups. For instance, the *Edo meisho zue* 江戸名所図絵 (completed in Tempō 7, 1836) describes related religious activities of *issei gyōnin* and *sabutsu hijiri* in the Meguro area in Edo.

On the western side of the same place [Shiroganedai machi 白銀台町] there is a slope that leads to Meguro 目黒. During the Kan'ei era (1624–1644) a certain Yudono ascetic (Yudonosan *no gyōja* 湯殿山の行者)<sup>24</sup> built a hall dedicated to Dainichi Nyorai, which was called Daienji 大門寺 (Now the temple does not exist any more).<sup>25</sup> [...].

This Meguro slope (Megurozaka 目黒坂) was also known as the “ascetic slope” (*gyōninzaka* 行人坂) because it was the place where many itinerant ascetics such as *sabutsu hijiri* and *issei gyōnin* gathered and founded their *gyōnindera* (See Fig. 5.2). The same text reports that close to Daienji there was another *gyōnindera*, An'yōin 安養院, which was rebuilt in Jōō 承応 1 (1652) by Chōon 長音 (1602–1678), the third patriarch of the *sabutsu hijiri*, who became the new abbot of this temple.

This temple [Banryūji 蟠龍寺] is also called An'yōin and is located about one hundred

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<sup>24</sup> According to the *Shinpen Musashi fudokikō* 新編武蔵風土記稿 (Bunsei 12, 1829) Daienji was founded by the Gondaisōzu Hōin 権大僧都法印 Daikai 大海 who was a renowned tree-eating ascetic (*mokujiki* Shōnin 木食上人) of Yudono that who died on the twenty-ninth day of the tenth month in Shōhō 3 (1646). The main icon of Daienji was Dainichi Nyorai. For the original text of the *Shinpen Musashi fudokikō* see Tokuhara Satoyuki, “Hana no ōkina Dainichi sama, hana no takai Dainichi sama,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 21 (December, 1982): 30.

<sup>25</sup> For the original text see *Edo meisho zue*, Tenki no bu, vol. 3, ed. Ichiko Natsuo, Suzuki Ken'ichi (Tōkyō: Chikuma gakugei bunko, 1996), 105

meters in the southwestern direction [of Gyōninzaka] on the right side of the road after the bridge. The An'yōin is a temple of the Vinaya branch of the Jōdo School, which was affiliated to Enzan 縁山 [Zōjōji 増上寺].<sup>26</sup> The main icon is a statue of Amida Nyorai, which was built by Jikaku Daishi. The founder (*kaizan*) was Ginrensha Ryūyoichiu Reiun Washō 吟連社竜誉一雨靈雲和尚 (when he retired from Daikōin 大光院 at Nitta 新田 in Kōzuke province, Reiun came here and started building this temple). In the precincts there is a bronze statue of Amida Nyorai four meters and eighty five centimeters tall. Under the cliff of Katayama 方山, which is behind this temple, there is a cave (*gankutsu* 岩窟) inside which is enshrined an icon of Benzaiten (this icon is said to have been made by Kōbō Daishi). The main shrine is located in front of the gate. On the top of the main gate is written the name “An'yōin” that was written by Ōbaku Dokutan Washō 黄檗独湛和尚 (1627–1707).<sup>27</sup>

A further indication of the interactions between *sabutsu hijiri* and *issei gyōnin* is demonstrated by the fact that until Meiji 14 (1881) the eminent *issei gyōnin* Tetsuryūkai restored and administered the *gyōninderā* Kimyōji 歸命時 in Akita, which was founded by Chōon and was said to be the site where the *hijiri* entered into a deep concentration and suspended animation within the ground (*dochū nyūjō*).<sup>28</sup> In Bunkyū 2 (1862) the *bettō* of Tōshōgū went to Kimyōji to perform a ceremony for the eye-opening (*kaigen*) of a new icon and from that moment on the temple was called Tamon'in 多聞院.<sup>29</sup>

Because of this already well established network between *sabutsu hijiri* and *issei gyōnin*, Tenkai thought that Tanshō 但唱 (1579–1641), the second patriarch and most important disciple of Tanzei, would be an ideal collaborator to organize a *kanjō* of Yudono at Mount Isseki. Tenkai met Tanshō for the first time in Kan'ei 10 (1633) when the *sabutsu hijiri*

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<sup>26</sup>. In the seventeenth century, An'yōin was a sub-temple of Meguro Fudō dō 目黒不動堂.

<sup>27</sup>. For the original see *Edo meisho zue*, Tenki no bu, vol. 3, 106.

<sup>28</sup>. A description of the death of Chōon is reported in two collections of miscellaneous essays (*zuihitsu* 隨筆): the *Seisōyawa* 井窓夜話 and the *Unkatei zuhitsu* 雲窩亭隨筆. For more details see Miyashima Junko, *Nazo no sekibutsu: sabutsu hijiri no ashiato*, 184.

<sup>29</sup>. Tamon'in is located in the southern part of the Tsuchizaki-minato 土崎港 district of Akita. In the precincts of the temple it is still possible to observe see a great number of votive stelae dedicated to Yudono, which werethat had been sponsored by the local members of the Yudonosan *kō* under the guidance of *issei gyōnin* such as Tetsuryūkai.

completed the construction of the Gobutsudō 五仏堂 within the precincts of Nyoraiji 如来寺 in Takahamura 鷹羽村 village in the Ebara 荏原 district of Musashi province. In this year Tanshō received from Tenkai a license to practice permanent *nenbutsu* (*jōnenbutsu* 常念仏) for the prosperity and protection of the Tokugawa family at the Gobutsudō. It is possible that Tanshō felt the necessity of establishing a close connection with Tenkai because in Kan'ei 9 (1632) the *bakufu* issued various edicts that compelled all Buddhist temples to be organized according to hierarchical divisions between main and sub-temples (*honmatsu seido* 本末制度). Because of the non-sectarian nature of the *sabutsu hijiri* temples it was extremely difficult for them to conform with the new Tokugawa legislation and Tanshō tried to gain a certain degree of legal authority and political legitimacy by opening a channel with Tenkai.

Three years later in Kan'ei 13 (1636) Tenkai decided that all the cultic centers of Mount Isseki should directly refer to Nyoraiji for the economic administration of the mountain. He also appointed Tanshō with the title of supervisor of natural resources (*yamamiwake* 山見分け) ostracizing the *de facto* *bettō*, Harashima Ukyō 原嶋右京, of Isseki. The *yamamiwake* role was important because this supervisor was in charge of administering the waters, stone caves, and trees of the entire Isseki area. For instance, the *yamamiwake* had to spot the trees that could be cut down without damaging the ecological balance of the forest and followed all the operations from the initial preparation to the final selling of the lumber. In accordance with the agreement between Tenkai and Tanshō a considerable percentage of the income that derived from the commercialization of the natural resources of Isseki had to be transferred to Kan'eiji, Tenkai's headquarters in Edo. Thanks to this income, Tenkai was able to finance the expensive rituals and ceremonies at Tōshōgū, which were necessary to support Ieyasu's post-mortem cult.

In Kan'ei 16 (1639) Tenkai nominated himself mountain-lord (*sanshu* 山主) of Isseki, promoted Tanshō to the rank of *bettō*, and included Nyoraiji within the sub-temples of Kan'eiji. It was probably in this year that the *mitate* between Isseki and Yudono took place. In a short letter, *Issekizan no okite* 一石山之掟, composed in the fourth month of Kan'ei 16 it is written that: “The coin offerings (*hatsuo* 最花) for Yudono pilgrimage [are] forty-eight *mon* [for each pilgrim] that must be directly paid to the *bettō* [of Mount Isseki].”<sup>30</sup> It is clear that in Kan'ei 16 Isseki was already considered a *mitate* of Yudono and Tanshō was in charge of administering the flow of money that derived from the access of pilgrims to the mountain. In the same document it is also specified that a part of the income should be allocated to the Harashima family, which still maintained some rights regarding *shukubō* administration (*shukubōken* 宿坊権). Moreover, the capital gained from sales of lumber could also be partially used by Tanshō for renovation work on the Gobutsudō.

Isseki was an impressive mountain made of an intricate maze of limestone caverns. For Tanshō the association between this mountain and Dainichi Nyorai, in particular Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai, was an extremely obvious semiotic operation. In the first half of the Edo period the cult of Dainichi was characterized by strong chthonian aspects according to which caves, narrow gorges of stone, or boulders were conceived as natural matrixes or uterus (*taizō*) for the preservation of the cosmic power associated with this buddha. It can be said that the stone caves' darkness and narrowness were thought to be essential elements for the habitat of a buddha, which was intimately related with the brightness and all-reaching light of the sun. According to this logic, Isseki was equated with Yudono, while a six-hundred meters high stone-slab on the upper part of the Nippara 日原川 River became Gassan and another

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<sup>30</sup>. For the original text see Miyashima Junko, *Nazo no sekibutsu: sabutsu hijiri no ashiato*, 124.



mountain located one kilometer and a half in the opposite direction was compared to Haguro. The geographical disposition of these three mountains in the Dainichi Valley (Dainichitani 大日谷) of the Okutama region followed the standard Edo period iconography of the Dewa Sanzan *honji butsu* in which Yudono/Dainichi Nyorai (alias Isseki) was always flanked by its attendants Gassan/Amida Nyorai and Haguro/Shō Kannon.

During the eighth month of Bunsei 10 (1827) a pilgrim from Shinbashi, Takemura Ritsugi 竹村立義, spent few days on Mount Isseki and recorded his ascetic experience in an illustrated travel diary known as *Ontakesan Issekizan kikō* 御嶽山一石山紀行. The fourth chapter of this text is entirely dedicated to the numinous sites in the Okutama region. The author reports that in the Bunsei era there were two main temples at the foot of Isseki: Dainichidō 大日堂 and Nyonindō 女人堂. Close to these two buildings were numerous shelters (*keisho* 憩所) for ascetics (*gyōnin*). Takemura Ritsugi visited seven of the main caves on this mountain (See Fig. 5.4). The first was the Uterus Cave (Tainai no kutsu 胎内の窟).

[...] There were caves (*dōketsu* 洞穴) located in five different spots. The money offerings (*saisen* 賽銭) [to access] the five places could be made in the first [cave]. Each person paid sixty *sen*. This money was taken by the guide (*annai no mono* 案内の者) who invoked the deities (*ogami o age* おがみを上げ) and recited prayers (*norito* 祝詞) to assure safety and prevent the occurrence of accidents on behalf of the pilgrims (*sankei no mono* 参詣の者). Then [the guide] pulled out a firestone (*hiuchi no gu* 火打の具) and transferred the flame to the bark of a tree he held in his hands which he used as a torch. I proceeded from an aperture walking on the left side. Here was the Uterus Cave (Tainai no kutsu). I faced the hole and entered from the left side. The passage was so narrow that I had to bend (*kagamu* 偃) to get inside. I came out on top of a boulder that was located on the right side [of the entrance]. In this cavern (*iwaya* 岩屋) there was a breast-stone (*nyūgan* 乳岩) with four or five stone nipples (*chichibusa* 乳ぶさ) descending [from it]. It is said that if someone pinched them with their fingers they would start lactating (*chichi deru* ちち出る). When I pinched one a drop dripped down. The internal part of the cave was completely wet because, if we pinched those places from where the water was dripping, drops of water poured copiously down. [...] The Cave of the Protector Kings

(Niō no kutsu 仁王の窟) was located about ten *ken* 間 below the Cave of the Main Shrine (Honmiya no kutsu 本宮の窟) on the left side.<sup>31</sup> The entrance was large, but after three *ken* the path became narrow and led toward a small flat area. From here one slipped outside. Here there was a bottomless hole which was called Speechless Hell (*mugen jigoku* 無言地獄).<sup>32</sup> This hole was on the left side and I walked through from the right side staying close to the stone. The guide told me to walk slowly and not to go toward the left side. The bottom of the left side was dark and looked terrible. When I peered over, the guide threw the torch down into its depths. I had heard that the infinite caves of Mount Nippara 日原 [that is, Mount Isseki] were bottomless. I heard that when the torch falls down its light progressively dims and finally becomes like a firefly that disappears somewhere. During this pilgrimage I desired to contemplate this [scene] more than everything else, therefore I watched it with great attention.<sup>33</sup> The torch, which was thrown [inside the hole], fall down only one *jō* 丈 and crashed onto a flat surface of stone. At this moment the fire died out and some sparks collected on the bottom. It seemed as if [the torch] fell down for more than three *jō*. When throwing down the torch, one should be very careful. [The guide] said it was dangerous and I had to quickly go back [to a safe place], and he carried me out. This hole too is now almost full [of torches].<sup>34</sup>

The embryological trajectory of the pilgrimage within the caves of Isseki is clearly described in Takemura's text. At the beginning of the speleological route the pilgrim transformed into a fetus (*taiji* 胎児) that received the vital nourishment through the stone-breasts of the mountain. The geophysical aspect of Mount Isseki corresponded to a female body that protected the growth of the embryo-pilgrim and was, at the same time, equivalent to the cosmic body of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai that symbolized the possibility to become a buddha in this actual body.

The *annai sendatsu* of Isseki did not simply conduct the pilgrims through the labyrinth of

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<sup>31</sup>. One *ken* corresponds to 1.81 meters.

<sup>32</sup>. This term is a variation of the Sanskrit word *avīci* that indicates the Hells without interruption (*mugen jigoku* 無間地獄).

<sup>33</sup>. One *jō* is about three meters.

<sup>34</sup>. For the original text see Takemura Ritsugi, *Ontakesan Issekizan kikō* [coll. Edoki sansho honkoku sōsho, vol. 4] (Tōkyō: Kokuritsu kokkai toshokan sansho o yomu kai, 1980), 130-131. For an illustrated version of the same text see Takemura Ritsugi, *Ontakesan Issekizan kikō* [coll. Takemura Ritsugi kikō bunshūsei, vol.5] (Tōkyō: Bunka tosho, 2013), 200-244.

caves, but also requested their customers to actively interact with the mountain's body in order to increase both the entertainment and the devotional sense of the entire pilgrimage. This was the reason why pilgrims were invited by the *annai sendatsu* to closely contemplate him throwing the torch into the dark abyss of the Cave of the Protector Kings before repeating the same action themselves.

After exiting the Cave of the Protectors Kings, Takemura climbed up a steep route equipped with iron steps and fixed ropes to reach the entrance of the Aizen Cave (Aizen no kutsu 愛染の窟). From here he could finally access the most sacred site of Isseki, which corresponded to the Cave of the Main Shrine (Honmiya no kutsu ).

The Cave of the Main Shrine was located on the top of the mountain. The entrance was narrow and low, so I had to bend to enter. After about ten *ken* I entered a wide space with four stone walls where I could walk upright for about twenty *ken*. Beyond this area there was a pond whose width measured about thirty people standing side by side. The water reached my knees. This pond was created by the accumulation of dripping water. On the right side of this pond toward the center there was a stone statue of Dainichi (*iwa no Dainichi no sonzō* 岩の大日の尊像). It was made of a natural stone and only the head emerged from the surface of the water. I crossed the water and rubbed the icon to venerate it (*nade haisu* なで拝す). I returned toward the entrance. On its right side was the Cave of Kōjin (Kōjin no kutsu 荒神の窟). In this place there were stalactites, about one *shaku* 尺 wide and two *shaku* long that looked like icicles.<sup>35</sup> One was called Drum Stone (Taiko ishi 太鼓石). If someone rubs the narrow part of this stone, it resounds like a drum. Another larger stone was called Hand-drum Stone (Tsuzumi ishi つづみ石). Its sound also resembled that of a hand-drum. One more [stalactite] did not emit any sound. This one was said to have been hit by Jikaku Daishi.<sup>36</sup>

The most sacred space within Mount Isseki was a *mitate* of Gohōzen at Senninzawa. The impressive view of a boulder almost totally submerged in water, which was conceived as a

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<sup>35</sup>. One *shaku* is about thirty centimeters.

<sup>36</sup>. For the original text see Takemura Ritsugi, *Ontakesan Issekizan kikō*, 131.

natural icon of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai, strengthened in pilgrims the sensation of being fetuses that slowly moved in a sort of amniotic fluid toward the maternal body of the cosmic buddha that supported their enlightenment *hic et nunc*. Even the space around the entrance of this cave faithfully reproduced the sacred geography of the territory that surrounded Gohōzen. For instance, on the slope behind Gohōzen there was a tumulus dedicated to Kōjin, which was venerated as a Kōjinzuka 荒神塚. It is important to take into account that each *mitate* of Yudono was different from the other because of the geographical peculiarities of the mountains where the *kanjō* of Yudono took place. This fact allowed an almost infinite range of semiotic expansions of the original religious meanings attributed to the sacred landscape of Yudono. For instance, in the case of Mount Isseki the space of Gohōzen was transformed into a subterranean area with a secret pond in the middle that dramatically emphasized its uterine aspect.

Toward the end of the chapter on Mount Isseki, Takemura Ritsugi deals with a fundamental aspect of pilgrimage to sacred mountains: the secrecy. In the case of Dewa Sanzan and its numerous *mitate* in the Kantō and Tōhoku regions, the pilgrims had to make a compulsory oath not to reveal to anyone what they saw during the tour within the mountain. Almost fifty years before, Kimura Kenji had described, in his usual critical tone, the aura of secrecy that surrounded Yudono in his *Ōu kōri ki* (Tenmei 5, 1785).

After walking through all the hells and the various things of Jōdoguchi, I was prohibited from speaking [about the appearance of this place] (*genko suru koto wo kinzu* 言語スル事ヲ禁ス). Holding a rusty sword and a slab of stone I swore (*chikai* 誓) not to speak about the recesses of the mountain (*shinzan ha, tokubekarazu nari* 深山者、不可説ナリ). It is amazing that the spirit of the mountain (*sanrei* 山靈) does not want people to know about [this place]. This rule has been respected by laymen and monks from the time of Kūkai. Unfortunately, because of this oath, I had to stop writing (*fude o tate* 筆ヲ絶テ) and I could not write up my notes (*ki sezu* 記セス). Wondrous grasses and marvelous

stones (*kisō kiseki* 奇草奇石) together with the coarse behavior (*zokuaku no jōtai* 俗悪之狀態) [of people] cannot be compared with the immense quietness (*kōdai yūsui* 廣大幽邃) of mountains and valleys. These words (*koto* 言) of mine are just a synthesis (*sōron* 総論) of this mountain.<sup>37</sup>

For Kimura, to prohibit pilgrims making written notes about Yudono was useless because the ultimate essence of the mountain always remained beyond words, which could simply evoke or synthesize some aspects of Yudono without ever representing it in an exhaustive way. He concluded that the dimension of silence, which truly characterized Yudono, was superior to any type of human interpretation of the natural landscape. Not to speak of the rudeness of the men who dwelt in that place. Because the deities of Yudono knew these things, the need for secrecy was a mere human concern with which Kimura was not inclined to agree. In the *Ontakesan Issekizan kikō* Takemura provides a deeper elaboration of the dynamics of secrecy that concerned Mount Isseki.

The guide made us hold three or four old swords which were on a stone, and swear not to reveal to anyone (*tagon* 他言) the things about this mountain. After this we went down to the bottom of the mountain. [...] Despite my oath not to reveal anything about this mountain, I took such detailed notes (*hikki* 筆記) about it that I have no place to escape from the sin [of talking about this mountain]. This is a terrible shame for me, but these things are written down in documents of various villages and in other written texts too. In fact, I had this kind of thought in my mind when I was taking the oath. [...] I heard that noble and common people are allowed to make a pilgrimage to Tōshōgū. I made a pilgrimage to Nikkō and on my way back, I entered the Flushing Cave (*Denagare no kutsu* 出流の窟). It was not prohibited to talk about this place. In the case of such a remote site like this mountain [Isseki], there are many people in Edo who have never heard anything about it. If the scarcity of pilgrims such as myself is due to the fact that one cannot reveal anything [about this mountain], there will [eventually] be no pilgrims at all. If even one single person starts talking about this numinous and marvelous mountain, the people would desire to establish positive karmic ties through pilgrimage in order to obtain salvation, and that would meet the buddha's will for the salvation of sentient

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<sup>37</sup>. For the original text see Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 178.

beings. If a person limits his narration to the steepness of the path and does not talk about the marvels of the sacred places (*reichi* 靈地), then it would be better he had not described anything. Therefore, he would not start with an oath not to diffuse any information [about the mountain] and would not take this [oath] into consideration. I only followed the instruction of the guide in holding the sword [when I made my oath not to reveal anything about this mountain].<sup>38</sup>

Takemura's passage too is extremely critical about the oath that bound pilgrims to respect the secrecy of Mount Isseki. The author interestingly pointed out the ambiguity of the fact that numerous aspects of this mountain were already revealed in written materials, which could be easily bought in the local bookstores. Therefore, the pilgrims' oath was devoid of any sense. Moreover, there were famous sacred mountains such as Nikkō that built their fame on the oral and written descriptions made by pilgrims. For Takemura, a narrative disclosure of the numinous landscape of Isseki would have been of enormous benefit for the religious and economic prosperity of this peripheral mountain.

Making these comments, Takemura shows the exact mechanism on which was based the notion of secrecy in relation to sacred mountains. For instance, Yudono and Isseki needed a certain degree of secrecy in order to preserve their aura of authority and uniqueness against other mountains. The function of secrecy was to artificially locate a sacred mountain in a different space from all the other peaks that were perceived as normal, and consequently less numinous, because of their verbal, written, or graphic representability. The silence about Yudono and Isseki made them authentic extra-ordinary spaces. At the same time, the secrecy cannot be absolute. In other words, the secret must be created only in order to be broken. A total secrecy corresponds to the absence of communication that is equivalent to a collapse of

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<sup>38</sup>. For the original text see Takemura Ritsugi, *Ontakesan Issekizan kikō*, 131.

the devotional system.<sup>39</sup>

Takemura was right in pointing out the necessity of disrupting the secrecy about Isseki in order to let the cultic aspects of the mountain freely circulate among those who might be potential pilgrims. On the other hand, the oath that the *annai sendatsu* forced pilgrims to make could have been conceived exactly to achieve this hidden aim through a contrastive method. The *annai sendatsu* instilled in pilgrims the notion that Isseki was a sacred site because of its impenetrable secrecy, which could not be revealed, and, at the same time, consciously triggered in the oath maker the desire to disseminate the charisma of the mountain's secrecy to everyone. By imposing a rule of not saying anything, the *annai sendatsu* were actually boosting a positive rupture and circulation of the secrecy about Yudono and Isseki.

### 2.3. The Invitation of Yudono to Irishiken Village

So far we have analyzed the *kanjō* and *mitate* of Yudono in famous sacred mountains such as Nikkō or Isseki. All these ritual operations were orchestrated by high-level religious professionals such as Tenkai, Gyōe, and Tanshō. However, we should also take into account what happened when the cult of Yudono penetrated the rural society of a small village in the Kantō area. For instance, the *Irishiken Yudono Gongen engi* 入四間湯殿権現縁起 (Genroku era, 1688–1704) provides a detailed description of the ritual procedures and human anxieties that accompanied the installation of Yudono Gongen within the pantheon of Irishiken village

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<sup>39</sup>. For the notion of secrecy in a Japanese religious context see Mark Teeuwen, "Introduction: Japan's culture of secrecy from a comparative perspective," in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 2, 22.

in Hitachi province (Hitachi no kuni 常陸国).<sup>40</sup>

This Yudono *engi* is a peculiar one because it does not refer to the origins of Mount Yudono in Dewa province but takes into account the cult of this mountain outside its original site. In other words, it presents an inversion of the relationship between center and periphery, because Irishiken is described as the ultimate center of the manifestation of Yudono Gongen, and Mount Yudono in Dewa Sanzan is represented as a powerful, but peripheral, source of authority and religious charisma.

The author begins by saying that in order to know the origin of the cult dedicated to Yudono Gongen on Mount Oiwa 御岩, a low mountain at the foot of which Irishiken lays, it is necessary to know the story of Mount Omuro 御室 close to Satogawa 佐都川 village, which was the location first selected by Yudono Gongen to manifest its presence.<sup>41</sup>

[...] In Kan'ei 7 (1630), fire-*yang*, year of the horse, sixth month, from the tenth day onward on this mountain [Mount Oiwa] there were beams of light every night, wind, rain, stormy weather, and a clear sky. Sometimes there was a strange aroma of flowers. At other times there was a white ox (*hakugyū* 白牛) that circumambulated the mountain. Seeing these things the people thought they were extraordinary signs (*kii* 奇異) as if *deva* (*tennin* 天人) were wandering around or bodhisattvas were descending from heaven, and they started venerating [Mount Oiwa] from a distance. As soon as the news of these events spread villagers from different regions came and started waiting for new auspicious omens (*kizui* 奇瑞) [to appear]. At that moment, clouds rose from Mount Oiwa and, while mist and rain were still in the sky, a soft light spread around. This light was different from that of the moon or the sun. It can be defined as a glow of softened light (*wakō no kage* 和光の影). The people thought that it was really marvelous. These divine signs (*shinmyō* 神妙) were beyond the comprehension of the inhabitants of the area. In order to invite the *kami* (*kami wo shōzuru* 神を請する) all the people decided [to make the ritual of] the boiling water (*oyu no hana* 御湯の花). People gathered and a male shaman (*fushuku* 巫祝) stood at the base of the stone *goma* platform (*gomadanseki* 護摩壇石) while a female shaman (*jofu* 女巫) sprinkled hot water (*oyu o tatematsuri* 御湯を奉) [for the *kami*] in the shrine for the *matsuri* where the *kami* was offered a staff with

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<sup>40</sup>. The village of Irishiken is located in the present Ibaraki prefecture.

<sup>41</sup>. Mount Omuro (427 m.) is located few kilometers on the western side of Mount Oiwa.



pendant strips of paper (*honhei* 本幣).<sup>42</sup> Monks, laypeople, men, and women were all gathered there. At the climax [of the ecstatic séance] the female shaman was possessed by the deity (*jofu ni noriutsuri* 女巫にのりうつり) and delivered this oracle (*sen* 宣): “I am Oiwa Daimyōjin 御岩大明神. I am not the cause of the marvelous events that took place around this mountain. Long time ago Yudono Daigongen transferred its spirit (*mikage wo utsushi* 御影をうつし) to this mountain and expressed the enlightened vow (*godaigan* 御提願) to bestow benefits (*riyaku* 利益) on the sentient beings of the age of the Dharma’s decline (*masse* 末世). In the past I was suffering because ordinary people did not understand this, but now, [I rejoice that] you diligently perform [this ritual of] the offering of boiling water [to Yudono Gongen]. You must absolutely believe in (*shinjin* 信心) [Yudono Gongen].” This was the message of the Daimyōjin. Then, the female shaman sent way (*tachikaeri* たちかえり) [Oiwa Daimyōjin] and raised again her voice (*nonoshireri* のゝしれり): “I am Hagurosan Yudono Daigongen 羽黒山湯殿大権現 of Dewa province. When I arrived in this province I observed the character of the sentient beings who indulged in the frivolous matters of the world (*yo no gyōri* 世の澆漓) without paying respect to the Way of the *kami* (*shintō* 神道) or to the Way of the Buddha (*butsudō* 仏道), and seeming to take even the Way of the kings (*ōdō* 王道) lightly. I thought if it were not me, who would save and liberate them all? When I looked for a place to let my trace descend on this province, this mountain was the purest and most sacred site. I do not like decorations and luxury. The stone altar of the shrine (*shadanseki* 社壇石) corresponds to the heavenly stone-cave of Amaterasu no Omikami and the stone [platform] for the *goma* [represents] the place of the assembly of Vulture Peak [where the *Lotus sūtra* was preached] (*Ryōsen* 靈山). I want you to know that six hundred years have already passed since I visited this mountain. The signs [of my descent] were known to a Haguro monk with supernatural powers (*reigen no sō* 靈験の僧) called Shugyōbō 修行坊. Now, you have perceived a reflection of my softened light and started having a deep faith. This is the sign that the divine protection (*kago* 加護) of Buddhas and *kami* is still working. From now on the sentient beings that make a pilgrimage (*sankei*) to this stone altar of the shrine and have faith in me (*ware o shinjite* 我を信して) will obtain peace and comfort for the present birth (*gense annon* 現世安穩) and the joy in the later one (*kōsei anraku* 後世快樂).”<sup>43</sup> Then the female shaman raised her voice again and said: “Now you must look forward to a sign. Wait until the hour of the ox!”<sup>44</sup> Then she fainted. At that moment the assembly of men and women shivered, inclined their heads as a token of faith, and worshipped [Yudono Daigongen] with reverence. Nevertheless, only half of these laypersons in the age of the Dharma’s decline had faith, the other half said that the

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<sup>42</sup> The term *fushuku* indicates a male shaman who probably was a *shugenja*. Male shamans were also called *geki* or *kannagi* 覡. The other term, *jofu*, refers to a female shaman who was the ritual partner of the *shugenja* during the ecstatic séance. Female shamans were also called *fu* or *miko* 巫.

<sup>43</sup> The sacred stones used for building altars, platforms, and stelae had a central role in the cultic activities dedicated to Yudono Gongen in the villages. To go to these types of stelae corresponded to making a virtual pilgrimage to Yudono.

<sup>44</sup> The hour of the ox goes from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m.

female shaman had delivered a dire oracle (*yōgen* 妖言) which was not true. An old monk (*rōsō* 老僧) and the elders of the village (*tokoro no chō* 所の長) discussed [the matter] and made a decision: “The oracle of this ecstatic séance is very doubtful. To verify its truth or falsehood (*shingi* 真偽) we must seclude ourselves (*sanrō*) on Mount Omuro and purify ourselves of internal and external defilements (*naigai ronsō* 内外論争) as if we were making a pilgrimage to Haguro. In order to understand if this oracle is real or not it is necessary to wait the miraculous event of the ox hour in the day of the ox.” Therefore, one after the other they entered the purificatory huts (*shōjin’ya* 精進屋) and performed ablutions (*kori*) seven times during the day and night. After completing [these ascetic practices] for seven days they decided: “We need a monk (*shomon*) of Shōzōin 照蔵院 and an *issei no gyōnin* 一世の行人 as guides (*sendatsu toshite* 先達として) in order to climb this mountain (*tozan sen* 登山せん).” [...] When the day of the ox that was indicated in the oracle came close, [they] became even more diligent; they purified themselves three times a day and built many huts for secluding themselves (*komoriya* こもりや) on the slope of Mount Omuro. They stood *bonten* [pillars] under the big *sakaki* 榊 tree of this mountain and the stone altar at the shrine, and venerated Arasawa Fudō at the stone *goma* platform.<sup>45</sup> During the night of the seventeenth day, about seven hundred itinerant ascetics (*aragyōnin* 荒行人) spontaneously arrived from the villages around and secluded themselves (*sanrō*) [at the foot of Mount Omuro] playing drums all night, ringing bells, and chanting various mantras and *nenbutsu*. [...] The eighteenth day was the day of the ox indicated in the oracle and [the people] started waiting for the hour of the ox with growing attention to purity and a palpable tension. After midnight a new moon seemed to rise from the stone altar of the shrine in a different direction from the waning moon, and on the top of Mount Omuro over the *bonten* there appeared [another light], similar to a dazzling solar disk (*nichirin yōgō* 日輪影向). Up to five similar lights manifested [in the sky] and penetrated Mount Oiwa. [...] At dawn the sky brightened and the people started looking around saying to one another: “What a marvelous thing! What does this mean?” A monk said: “You foolish people! As the oracle delivered at the ecstatic séance revealed the other day, it is the Buddhas and *kami* of Mount Haguro who show various signs of their provisional aspects (*yōgo* 影向) in this place. Mercifully Yudono Daigongen manifested his light on Mount Omuro, Gassan Gongen on the stone altar of the shrine, and Arasawa Fudō Myōō displayed his form on the stone *goma* platform [...].<sup>46</sup>

This narrative contains various local peculiarities of the Yudono cult in Hitachi province such as the white ox that mysteriously appeared around Mount Omuro. This type of ox was

<sup>45</sup>. The *sakaki* tree is a *Cleryera Japonica*.

<sup>46</sup>. For the original text see Sasaoka Akira, “‘Irishiken Yudono Gongen engi’ ni tsuite,” *Kyōdo Hitachi* 48 (March 1998): 41-44.

usually considered an emissary (*tsukai* 使) of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai and the entire mountainous body of Dewa Sanzan was often imagined as a huge ox, called Gagyūzan 臥牛山, the head of which was Yudono, the body Gassan, and the tail Haguro.<sup>47</sup>

The role played by Yudono Gongen in this *engi* is similar to a devotional synecdoche according to which the cult of Yudono already included within itself the veneration of Haguro and Gassan. Therefore, when Yudono Gongen manifested itself during the second ecstatic séance he chose the seemingly contrastive appellative of “Hagurosan Yudono Daigongen,” obliterating the institutional and doctrinal differences between the two centers of Dewa Sanzan. For the peasants of Irishiken to pay homage to Yudono Gongen corresponded to a simultaneous veneration of the other two main peaks of Dewa Sanzan, which were represented through their *oku no in*, namely Mount Yudono.

The influence of Yudono tradition on this *engi* is also evident toward the end of the text where Kūkai is mentioned as the first person who “climbed Mount Haguro in Dewa [province] and secretly put into this mountain the esoteric teachings of the Shingon School.”<sup>48</sup> Even here Haguro is represented as a sort of expansion of Yudono, which encompasses all the specificities of the other religious sites on Dewa Sanzan.

The reference to the Haguro *shugenja*, Shugyōbō, who knew about the descent of Yudono Gongen on Mount Oiwa six hundred years before anyone else served to build a sort of temporal connection between a fact which took place in a remote past and its effects on the immediate present of Irishiken cultic life. It is interesting to take into account that the *shugenja* of Haguro were perceived by the Kantō local population as supporters of the

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<sup>47</sup>. Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no efuda* [coll. Tōhoku bukkusu 6] (Tsuruoka: Tōhoku shuppan kikaku, 1976), 39.

<sup>48</sup>. For the original text see Sasaoka Akira, “‘Irishiken Yudono Gongen engi’ ni tsuite,” *Kyōdo Hitachi* 48: 44.

diffusion of the Yudono cult and were not considered as antagonists of the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono in spite of the doctrinal and political rivalry between the two mountains.

Haguro *shugenja*, Yudono *issei gyōnin*, and local shamans all provided their ritual contribution toward the preparation of the religious and social environment at Irishiken for the arrival of Yudono Gongen. For instance, the ritual of the boiling water (*oyu no hana*) performed by the female shaman (*jofu*) refers to the *yudate kagura* 湯立神楽 ceremony during which sacred dances, prayers, and purificatory formula were performed in front a cauldron of boiling water in which the *kami* were invited to manifest their presence. The climax of the *yudate kagura* was the possession (*kamigakari*) of the female shaman by the *kami* and the subsequent deliverance of the oracle, which was usually translated by the male shaman (*fushuku*) on the behalf of the villagers. Even if in the case of the *kanjō* of Yudono Gongen at Nikkō and Isseki there is no reference made to the performance of *yudate kagura*, it is probable that this type of ritual was often practiced among the communities of the villages in order to sound out the intentions of a foreign deity such as Yudono Gongen and possibly appease it through propitiatory chants, music, and dance (*mai* 舞).

The performance of the *yudate kagura* was also an occasion for Oiwa Daimyōjin to reveal the nature of his relationship with Yudono Gongen. Oiwa Daimyōjin was the local *kami*, venerated on Mount Oiwa before the arrival of Yudono Gongen. In this *engi* the presence of Oiwa Daimyōjin is extremely evasive because this *genius loci* was about to be absorbed into a new devotional system which though it did not completely obliterate its authority over the local territory, certainly confined it to a subaltern position compared to Yudono Gongen.

Doubts about the truthfulness of the female shaman's oracle triggered the men of the

village to form a religious confraternity (*kō*) for the devotion of Yudono. They started practicing self-seclusion rituals (*sanrō*) and purificatory ablutions (*kori*) within ascetic-huts (*shōjin'ya*), which were probably similar to the *gyōya* we have analyzed in the previous chapter. It is interesting to note that the term *sanrō* was the same one used by the *issei gyōnin* to indicate their seclusion in the *gyōba* of Senninzawa and Genkai. In this *engi* there is also an explicit reference to the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono (*issei no gyōnin*) as religious professionals who could play the role of *annai sendatsu* on the behalf of the Yudosan *kō* members who wanted to perform ascetic practices during the pilgrimage on Mount Omuro. This passage further confirms the fact that the *issei gyōnin* acted as *annai sendatsu* for pilgrims, who did not discriminate between them and the *shugenja*.

It is important to keep in mind that every *engi* is a “chronotope” because its narrative structure tends to evoke and merge together different layers of time and space as if they were a single and homogeneous flow of events.<sup>49</sup> This chronotopic aspect is true also for the *Irishiken Yudono Gongen engi*, which was probably written during the Genroku era, but falsely reports the date Kan'ei 7 ninth month at the end of the text as if it were written at the same time as the events narrated. From a historical point of view the diffusion of the Yudono cult at Irishiken was characterized by graduality rather than immediacy. Also the social actors that fostered the introduction of this cult among the rural population were not limited to peasants, shamans, or *kō* members as the *engi* wants us to believe, but included also political decisions from the elite of Mito domain (Mito han 水戸藩). For instance, according to the *Mito kinen* 水戸紀年 (nineteenth century), in Kan'ei 7 Mount Yudono was transferred (Yudonosan *wo utsusaru* 湯殿山を移サル) to Mount Oiwa in Irishiken village where it was

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<sup>49</sup>. For a definition of the concept of “chronotope” see Eugene Y. Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China*, 55.

venerated with the honorific name (*songō*) of Irishiken Daigongen 入四間大権現 and the *bettōji* of this mountain was the Shingon temple Shōzōin of Machiya 町屋.<sup>50</sup> This *kanjō* of Yudono Gongen was authorized by the lord of the Mito domain, Tokugawa Yorifusa 徳川頼房 (1603–1661), for whom the *mitate* between Yudono and Mount Oiwa already synthesized the entire sacred landscape of Dewa Sanzan.

Thanks to Yorifusa's support to the *kanjō* of Yudono in Manji 2 (1659) the number of pilgrims grew considerably and three different categories of religious professional, namely fully-ordained Shingon monks (*sō*), rural *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin*, who were affiliated with Shōzōin, started providing their services as specialists in propitiatory rituals (*kitō*), *shukubō* owners, and *annai sendatsu* for visitors. In Bunkyū 1 (1661) the flow of pilgrims became so impressive that almost all the houses of Irishiken were transformed into facilities to support the cult of Irishiken Daigongen, alias Yudono Gongen.

The fact that Irishiken became a busy destination for a great number of pilgrims and itinerant ascetics (*aragyōnin*) is vividly represented also in the narrative of the *engi*. For instance, in the episode of the nocturnal vigil to pray for the final manifestation of Yudono Gongen it is written that a large group of seven hundred uninvited itinerant ascetics started gathering and performing all sort of rituals at the foot of Mount Omuro.

In the Kanbun era (1661–1673) the religious exuberance at Irishiken apparently became a problem for the stability and public security of the entire domain and Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628–1701) decided to intervene in order to downsize the social impact of this cult. Mitsukuni was afraid of the unstoppable proliferation of Mikkyō temples and *gyōnindera* that kept attracting crowds of liminal ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin* who did not clearly

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<sup>50</sup>. For the original text see Shida Jun'ichi, *Jisha no engi to densetsu* [coll. Furusato bunko 183] (Mito: Ronshobō, 2005), 45

conform with the rigid doctrinal and sectarian divisions codified by the *bakufu* edicts. From the point of view of Mitsukuni all the itinerant ascetics and half-ordained Shingon monks that gravitated around the cult of Yudono Gongen constituted a serious threat for the social equilibrium of the domain. According to the *Sujō kinkan* 水城金鑑 (Bunsei 12, 1829) Mitsukuni first ordered that the name of Irishiken Gongen be changed to Oiwa Daigongen 御岩大権現 and then in Kanbun 6 (1666) imposed the removal from the Oiwa Gongen Shrine (Oiwa Gongen sha 御岩権現社) of one bronze statue of Yakushi Nyorai, one wooden statue of the life-extending Jizō (Enmei Jizō 延命地藏) and his two acolytes, and a wooden statue of Shō Kannon. The shrine for the cult of Oiwa Gongen was reduced to a small chapel with the roof made of wooden boards (*itabuki* 板葺) and a single *gohei* was used as the main icon for the veneration of this deity.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that Mitsukuni was not trying to persecute Buddhism in order to favor an expansion of Shintō institutions in the Mito domain. On the contrary, Mitsukuni never stopped to consider the cult of Oiwa Gongen as an example of *honji suijaku* interrelations between the Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono, Yudono Gongen, and the local *kami* of Irishiken. In other words, the targets of Mitsukuni's restrictive religious policy were not buddhas, bodhisattvas or Gongen per se but the legislative chaos and sectarian ambiguity that characterized certain religious institutions and their members who materially administered the cult of these deities in the Mito domain. Mitsukuni tried to realize an impossible task in which the doctrinal and sectarian clear-cut divisions between religious groups that were enforced by the *bakufu*'s edicts could find an actual application on the ground.

The interest of the Irishiken population in the cult of Mount Yudono remained high even

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<sup>51</sup>. The Mitsukuni's order to remove these Buddhist statues from the Oiwa Gongen Shrine and its subsequent reorganization is reported in the *Chinjūchō* 鎮守帳 (eighteenth century). For the original text see Shida Jun'ichi, *Jisha no engi to densetsu*, 50.

after the promulgation of Mitsukuni's edicts to control the religious institutions of this territory and during the Genroku period a supplementary *kanjō* for Haguro and Gassan was performed in order to complete the *mitate* of Dewa Sanzan. In Genroku 12 (1669) Arasawa Fudō started to be venerated in a *gyōba* on Mount Oiwa and was later transferred to Mount Omuro. Then, Mount One 尾根 was equated with Gassan.<sup>52</sup> This type of pattern for the *kanjō* of Dewa Sanzan, i.e. Yudono first and Haguro and Gassan later, was probably very common in the Kan'ei era. For instance, the *Zōshū wakan gōunzu* 増修和漢合運図 (eighteenth century) describes the graduality that characterized the *kanjō* of Dewa Sanzan in Tajima 田島 village in Uchiharamachi 内原町, Hitachi province.

In Kan'ei 1, wood-*yang*, year of the mouse, tenth month, fourteenth day, Yudono Gongen descended to Kantō (*Yudono Gongen Kantō chū e osagari* 御湯殿権現関東中工御下) and arrived in this village. All the people strongly believed [in this deity]. [...] In the year of the ox, wood-*yin* [Kan'ei 2, 1625], seventh month, fourth day, Arasawa Fudō 荒沢不動 descended from Yudono and stopped in this village for one day and one night and then went away."<sup>53</sup>

The fact that in the *engi* the descent of Yudono Gongen took place on Mount Oiwa but involved also Mount Omuro, which later would be associated with Haguro, could be interpreted as the necessity to underline the pivotal role played by Yudono Gongen as a synthesis of Dewa Sanzan and a sort of primordial deity, which originally pervaded all the sacred mountains of Irishiken anticipating the arrival of Haguro and Gassan.

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<sup>52</sup>. Tanaka Hideo, *Tōgoku satoyama no ishigami, sekibutsu keifu* (Tōkyō: Seiga shobō, 2014), 93.

<sup>53</sup>. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu* (Tōkyō: Tsukuba shorin, 2004), 289.



### 3. Material Aspects of the Devotion in Mount Yudono

#### 3.1. Ontsuka Daigongen, *Bontenzuka*, and *Gyōninzuka*

The term “wandering” or “roaming” (*yugyō*) was often used to describe the movements of Yudono Gongen from one place to another during the numerous *kanjō* ceremonies that marked its penetration within the landscape of Tōhoku and Kantō. The semantic choice of the word *yugyō* served to maximize the agency of the sacred mountain and its active interaction with the space and time of a specific site rather than the agency of the human actors. After Yudono Gongen entered a village, the peasants often started organizing *matsuri* to venerate the deity. For instance, in the *Kabasan kuji monjo* 加波山公事文書 (Enpō 5, 1677) the arrival of Yudono Gongen in the village of Iwasemachi 岩瀬町 in Hitachi province is narrated as follows.<sup>54</sup>

[The image of Yudonosan] Dainichi arrived here with the assistance of (*tachiai utsushi mōshi sōrōtte* 立会移し申し候て) the villagers fifty-three years ago [in Kan’ei 1]. Then it was repaired by the artisans specializing in shrine [and temple] construction (*miya zukuri* 宮作り). [Afterward] the peasants started collecting rice and money in order to hold *matsuri* [to praise Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai] every year.<sup>55</sup>

The arrival of Dainichi at Iwasemachi did not refer to the cosmic or universal buddha of the standard Buddhist scriptures such as the Dainichi Nyorai of the *Dainichikyō* but a local form of Dainichi Nyorai that came from Mount Yudono and manifested its presence through a *suijakujin*, Yudono Gongen, in various villages of the Kantō area. The Dainichi Nyorai

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<sup>54</sup>. The Iwasemachi village is located in present day Ibaraki prefecture.

<sup>55</sup>. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan’ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 290.

associated with the doctrinal texts of the Esoteric tradition had never been the center of widespread devotional discourses among a broad strata of society, but in the case of the Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono the high degree of territorial specificity, which played a fundamental role in such a cult, favored its integration even among rural and mercantile classes.

Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai, alias Yudono Gongen, did not simply have a clear geographical origin but also left permanent traces of its presence on the territory. For instance, in the *Kabasan reijozu* 加波山靈所図 (Kan'ei 3, 1627) it is written that after the *kanjō* of Yudono Gongen the area between the two main roads of Iwasemachi village was alternatively called Yudono Rock (Yudonosan iwa 湯殿山岩) or Dainichi Valley (Dainichi tani 大日谷).<sup>56</sup> The capability of Yudono Gongen to literally impregnate the land in which it was invited was materially represented through the creation of myriads of artificial earth mounds (*tsuka*) which were erected by the people of the villages in order to venerate this deity.

Yudono Gongen *tsuka* were usually square or round and the main body of the mound could be occasionally divided in three levels or steps (*dan* 段) like a sort of small pyramid (See Fig. 5.5). This type of *tsuka* usually measured two or three meters in height and three or four meters in width. In Okuriku province numerous *tsuka* were simply called “Gongen’s august *tsuka*” (Ontsuka Gongen 御塚権現). All these *tsuka* implicitly made reference to the moment when Yudono Gongen came into contact with a specific part of the Okuriku territory. Therefore, the location of the *tsuka* was not randomly selected, but corresponded to place where the palanquin of Yudono Gongen was rested by bearers during stops of the *yugyō*. It

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<sup>56</sup>. Ibid., 290.

can be said that Yudono Gongen impregnated the land of the village, which swelled as a maternal belly in order to give birth to a fragmented and miniaturized image of Mount Yudono, i.e. the *tsuka*. The *tsuka* was consequently venerated as a non-anthropomorphic icon (*shintai*) of Yudono Gongen.<sup>57</sup> For example, in the *Iwaki shiryō saiji minzoku ki* 磐城志料歳時民俗記 (Meiji 25, 1892) Ōsuga Inken 大須賀筠軒 (1841–1912) describes the numerous Ontsuka Gongen of the Iwaki region as follows.<sup>58</sup>

The so-called Ontsuka Gongen are everywhere. These [*tsuka*] were built around Kan'ei 2 (1626) in every place that served as resting-platforms for the palanquin (*mikoshi, kakeza no chi ni tsuka wo tsuki* 神輿、懸座ノ地ニ塚ヲ築キ) of Yudonosan Gongen.<sup>59</sup>

The construction of the *tsuka* was a fundamental moment marking the official entry of Yudono Gongen into the landscape of the village after the *kanjō* ceremony. Once the *tsuka* was built the devotional activities could immediately take place. For instance, a short written invocation (*saimon*) for Yudono Gongen was discovered inside a small shrine (*hokora*) build on the top of an Ontsuka Gongen in the city of Sōma 相馬.<sup>60</sup> This *saimon* was probably offered to Yudono Gongen during the celebration of a *matsuri* in its honor.

[Front side]

Praise be to Yudonosan Daigongen who fulfills all the vows (*gan jōju*). Be compassionate (*aimin* 哀愍) toward sentient beings like us who respectfully pay our homage to you, Saint Master (*shōshu* 聖主), God among gods (*ten-chū-ten* 天中天) with a wonderful

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<sup>57</sup>. For instance, in the *Iwakishi* 岩城志 (Bunsei 9, 1826) it is written that: “All the icons (*shintai*) called Ontsuka Gongen, which are spread in numerous villages of Iwaki 磐城, refer to Dainichi Nyorai that is Yudonosan Gongen in the Dewa [province].” For the original text see Enomoto Minoru, “Kan’ei shoki no Yudono Gongen ni tsuite: Mito hanryō no baai,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 30 (December 1991): 28.

<sup>58</sup>. The Iwaki region corresponds to the present day Fukushima prefecture.

<sup>59</sup>. For the original text see Enomoto Minoru, “Kan’ei shoki no Yudono Gongen ni tsuite: Mito hanryō no baai,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 30: 28.

<sup>60</sup>. The city of Soma is located in present day Fukushima prefecture.

voice [like the] birds (*karyōbinga* 迦陵頻伽; Skt. *kalaviṅka*). Written by Chōei 長栄 of [the temple] Juō-zan 寿王山 Kōmyōin 光明院 on the behalf of [the persons mentioned on the reverse side].

[Reverse side]

Kan'ei 12 (1635), fire-*yang*, year of the monkey, eighth month, auspicious day. The members of the shrine confraternity (*ujiko chū* 氏子中) of the village. The head of the village (*nanushi* 名主) Nagayama Shichiemon 永山七右エ門 and the head of the district (*kumigashira* 組頭) Nagakubo Tōemon 長窪藤右エ門.<sup>61</sup>

This text is interesting because it is probably one of the oldest *saimon* explicitly dedicated to Yudono Gongen following its cult's diffusion in Tōhoku and Kantō in the early years of the Kan'ei era. It also provides information about the social actors who played a pivotal role in the veneration of the deity at local level. Three different types of lay and religious groups were involved in the presentation of this *saimon* to Yudono Gongen. Chōei was a religious professional, probably a *shugenja* of Sōma, whose duty was to make direct contact with Yudono Gongen on the behalf of the lay devotees. These lay devotees were divided into two groups: the members of the local shrine confraternity (*ujiko*) of Sōma, which was a religious organization but led by the peasants of the village, and Nagayama Shichiemon together with Nagakubo Tōemon who represented the political institutions of the rural community. *Ujiko* members and the Sōma officials regarded the *shugenja* Juō-zan Kōmyōin Chōei as a sort of mediator or spiritual bridge between Yudono Gongen and the lay devotees who had decided to invest, both religiously and politically, in this new type of deity to obtain prosperity and protection for their village.

In some cases the *tsuka* were built by Yudono ascetics who already resided in the village at the time of the *kanjō*. The written sources simply define these persons through the general

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<sup>61</sup>. For the original text see Iwasaki Toshio, *Honpō shōshi no kenkyū—Minkan shinkō no mizokugakuteki kenkyū*— (Sendai: Iwasaki hakase gakui ronbun shuppan kōenkai, 1963), 277.

term *gyōnin*. Therefore, it is difficult to know if they were lay members of the Yudonosan *kō* (*nobori kudari no gyōnin*) or permanent ascetics such as the *issei gyōnin*. For instance, the *Kaikichō* 開基帳 (Kanbun 3, 1663) reports the following episode.

In Kan'ei 1, wood-*yang*, year of the mouse, [Kōkai *gyōnin* 光海行人] built a mountain (*yama tsukikatsu* 山築立) in this spot [at Ishizuka 石塚 village]<sup>62</sup> when Yudonosan Daigongen roamed around (*yugyō*).<sup>63</sup>

The Yudono *gyōnin* did not merely practice asceticism in the mountains, they could also build micro-mountains within the village in order to venerate them as sort of earth icons of Yudono. About the ritual activities that were performed around the *tsuka* the *Manganji daidai zakki* 満願寺代々雑記 (eighteenth century) reports this episode, which took place in the eighth month of Genroku 16 (1703).

The Ontsuka Gongen of Sugidaira 杉平 [that is located] on this mountain [Mount Hanazono 花園] is Yudonosan Daigongen.<sup>64</sup> During the Genki 元龜 era (1570–1573) and the Tenshō 天正 era (1573–1592) [Yudonosan Daigongen] roamed around (*omeguri ari* 御廻アリ) in various places of the eastern provinces. The exact circumstances are unknown, but at that time [the people] of this village [Sugidaira], of Nishimaru 西丸, and Yamaogawa 山小川 met together and decided to build a small shrine (*hokora* ホコラ) to venerate [Yudonosan Daigongen] close to the side of the hall of the shrine-temple complex of this mountain. It is said that in the Kan'ei era [the Ontsuka Gongen of Sugidaira] became difficult of access for the numerous pilgrims and was moved to the present site. It is also said that for the religious feast (*sairei* 祭礼) of eighth month [the people] of these three villages kept making small fund-raising *matsuri* [for Yudonosan Daigongen]. It is also said that [Yudonosan Daigongen] was invited (*kanjō*) to various

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<sup>62</sup>. The village of Ishizuka is located in Ibaraki prefecture.

<sup>63</sup>. For the original text see Enomoto Minoru, “Kan'ei shoki no Yudono Gongen ni tsuite: Mito hanryō no baai,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 30: 28.

<sup>64</sup>. Mount Hanazono is located in the northern part of the present Ibaraki prefecture.

other places of this province where [people] built facilities (*kenchi* 建置) [for this deity].<sup>65</sup>

This passage interestingly highlights the possibility that the fame of a local *tsuka* and its small shrine could cross the village borders and became the destination of pilgrims who came from nearby areas. This unexpected flow of visitors forced the Sugidaira villagers to relocate the *tsuka* of Yudono Gongen to another part of Mount Hanazono in order to facilitate accessibility. Therefore, mobility was another fundamental characteristic of this type of *tsuka* that could be transferred to different sites just like standard religious icons in order to fit the logistic needs of the Yudono Gongen cult.

A peculiar type of Yudono *tsuka* was called *bontenzuka* 梵天塚 and served as a funerary tumulus for the *bonten* that the pilgrims brought back to their villages after visiting Dewa Sanzan. These old *bonten* were completely buried within the earth of the *tsuka* on the top of which three big *bonten* were usually stuck into the ground in order to represent the three sacred mountains of Dewa. Therefore, the *bontenzuka* were not simply funerary monuments to pray for the Dewa Sanzan pilgrims who were symbolically represented by their old *bonten*, but were also ritual platforms or altars (*dan* 壇) for the performance of ceremonies in praise of the Dewa Sanzan deities. This explains why in the rural context the *bonten* was associated, at the same time, with the god Bonten (Skt. Brahma) and the idea of “highly soar” (*takaku medatsu* 高くめだつ) or “stand out” (*hote* ホテ), which characterized the ritual poles (*sao* 竿) used to build the ceremonial stage of the *matsuri*.<sup>66</sup>

The written sources that provide descriptions of the ritual procedures performed during

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<sup>65</sup> The *Manganji daidai zakki* is preserved at the Hanazono 花園 Shrine in the city of Ibaraki. For the original text see Enomoto Minoru, “Kan’ei gannen ‘Yudono Gongen’ yugyō no koto,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 31 (December 1992): 20.

<sup>66</sup> Konishi Masatoshi, “Funabashi no tentō nenbutsu gyōji,” in *Funabashi no tentō nenbutsu—dai san ji Funabashishi minzoku geinō chōsa hōkoku—*, ed. Funabashishi kyōiku iinkai (Funabashi: Funabashishi kyōiku iinkai, 1990), 152.

the ceremonies that took place at the *tsuka* dedicated to Dewa Sanzan are extremely scarce, but those at the gigantic *bontenzuka* of Bōdaira 某平 in the Kokusabata 小草畑 district of Ichihara 市原 village in Shimōsa province are an exception. This square *tsuka* measures eighteen meters on each side and has a height of four-hundred eighty meters from the base to the top. The ground of the *tsuka* is leveled in order to form three steps (*dan*), the larger of which constitutes the base of the *tsuka* and the smaller one the top. The *tsuka* of Bōdaira was probably built in Enpō 6 (1678) judging from the large number of coins of this era excavated together with hundreds of *bonten*. This *tsuka* was also known as Bōdai-daira kuyōzuka 棒台平供養塚 because it was used as a ritual platform for the veneration of the pilgrims' *bonten* and the deities of Dewa Sanzan. In the mid-nineteenth century a traveller, Shiota Kazunori 塩田一則, from the village of Odoro 小土呂 participated in a ceremony that took place there and left this description in the *Bonten kuyō ikkenki* 梵天供養一見記 (Ansei 2, 1855).<sup>67</sup>

[...] [I was] at a place [called] Yūkizawa 結城沢 in the village [of Kokusabata]. [From there] I went to Minowa 三野輪, Yosakumatsu 四作松 and reached Bōdai-daira 棒台平 [walking on] a narrow path, which naturally wound up into the forest. On the top of the mountain there was a tumulus (*tsuka*) built (*kizuki* 築き) on three levels (*san dan* 三段). The base was ten *ken* and four *shaku*. The middle level (*chūdan* 中段) was eight *ken* and four *shaku*. The top level (*jōdan* 上段) was six *ken* and four *shaku*. Three hundred four venerable *bonten* (*son no bonten* 尊の梵天) were standing [on this *tsuka*]. The *bonten* of the true bodies (*shintai* 真躰) [of Yudonosan, Hagurosan, and Gassan] were taller than three *jō* and had paper strips attached of nine *shaku*. There were also one hundred twenty [*bonten*] from three *jō* to eight *shaku* high that were offered by different villages. In the internal and external part of each level the three [*bonten* of] Yudonosan, Hagurosan, and Gassan were separately venerated. The true bodies (*shintai*) associated with the veneration of the three mountains (Sanzan 三山) were Birushana Dainichi 毘盧遮那大日 as the central buddha (*honbutsu* 本仏), Ashuku 阿闍 in the east, Amida in the west,

<sup>67</sup>. The village of Odoro is included in the Isumi 夷隅 district of Ōtakimachi 大多喜町 city in the present day Chiba prefecture.

Kokū 虚空往 in the south, and Tamarabassendankō 多摩羅跋梅檀香 in the north.<sup>68</sup> People worshipped the miraculous powers (*jitsū wo matsuru* 神通ヲ祭ル) [of these deities]. With respect people climbed up on the top of the *tsuka* and looked at distant points [of the landscape]. In the east [they] looked toward Cape Taitō 太東 at Kujūkurihama 九十九里浜.<sup>69</sup> In the middle of the sea there were large and small ships shaken by the winds. In the south [they looked at] the Bōsō 房総 [peninsula], Mount Izu 伊豆, and Mount Hakone 箱根. In the west [they looked at] Suruga 駿河, Mount Fuji, Mount Chichibu 秩父, Ōyama, Mount Tanzawa 丹沢, and Mount Myōgi 妙宜. In the north [they looked at] Mount Haruna 樺名, Mount Akagi 赤城, Nikkō, and Mount Tsukuba 筑波. In all I could see eleven provinces. Thinking carefully about these places [illegible characters] I could also contemplate Mount Hōtano 方多野<sup>70</sup> and Mount Sanjō 三条.<sup>71</sup> These and others could be seen [from this *tsuka*]. Even if Bōdai-daira is in a remote location, the sight that I had was so beautiful that it was impossible to describe. There were recitations of the *Konkō myōō kyō* 金光明王經, *Daihannya rishubun kyō* 大般若理趣分經, and the *Fumonbon* 普門品 chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Offerings (*kuyō*) [were donated] to thank [the deities] of these texts. For the pilgrims it was as if they could stand in front of the Buddha and bodhisattvas in the Pure Land. As to the fun we had, after going back to the lodging, we spent three days and nights talking about it but we still had things to say.<sup>72</sup>

For the author the visit to the Bōdaira *tsuka* corresponded with an authentic pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan that he had carefully scheduled to include a three nights stay at the lodge. It is interesting to note that the Bōdaira *tsuka* was used, at the same time, as ritual platform to venerate Dewa Sanzan, which was represented by the three main *bonten* at each level, and as an observation post for contemplating the *kami* associated with other mountains in the area. Since the elevated position from the top of the *tsuka* allowed pilgrims to perform a sort of veneration from afar of the various local *kami* by gazing at their sacred sites in the distance.

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<sup>68</sup>. The last two buddhas are the original buddhas (*honji butsu*) of Kokū Dōji 虚空童子 and Kōshō Dōji 香精童子 that are included in the eight protector deities (*shugojin* 守護神) of Ōmine. These *genii loci* are collectively known as Hachidai Kongō Dōji 八大金剛童子.

<sup>69</sup>. This place is located close to the city of Tōgane 東金 in present day Chiba prefecture.

<sup>70</sup>. This mountain is in the present day Akita prefecture.

<sup>71</sup>. This mountain is located in the Kumano area.

<sup>72</sup>. For the original text see Tsushima Ikuo, *Bōsō ni ikizuku Dewa Sanzan shinkō no shosō*, 93.



In general the symmetric structure of the Bodaira *tsuka* and the repetition of the three *bonten* pattern associated with Dewa Sanzan in the internal and external zones of each level made it very similar to a tridimensional maṇḍala made of earth that could be accessed by people directly climbing on it.

Another type of *tsuka* related with the cult of Yudono was the *gyōninzuka*. These were built as funerary monuments for the veneration of eminent Dewa Sanzan pilgrims or *issei gyōnin*. Sometimes the *gyōninzuka* actually contained the corpse of a practitioner and served as an authentic sepulcher. In other cases, the *gyōninzuka* was used to transmit the memory of the ascetic, but did not contain his corpse. For instance, in Kakegawa 掛川 village in Tōtōmi province (Tōtōmi no kuni 遠江国) there is a square *gyōninzuka* that is four meters wide and one meter high.<sup>73</sup> The inscription carved on the *gorintō* at the top of the *gyōninzuka* says: “Praise to Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai (Namu Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai 南無湯殿山大日如来). In the sixteenth day of the first month we practiced the self-seclusion rituals [to pray to this Buddha]. In Bunsei 10 (1827), year of the boar, ninth month, the *sewanin* Zen’emon 善右衛門, his nephew Jirō 次郎, and also [illegible characters] restored this *gyōninzuka*.”<sup>74</sup> Various bones and a wooden box for ritual tools (*hiuchi gubako* 火打具箱) to ignite the separated fire (*bekka*) were found within this *gyōninzuka*, which was probably built in the early seventeenth century and was later restored by other Dewa Sanzan *kō* members of Kakegawa village.

This type of *tsuka* shows that the Yudono *gyōnin* did not simply create miniatures or earth-icons of their mountain through the dissemination of Yudono Gongen *tsuka* or

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<sup>73</sup>. The city of Kakegawa is in present day Shizuoka prefecture.

<sup>74</sup>. For the original text see Matsuzaki Kenzō, “Gyōninzuka saikō—*tsuka* wo meguru fōkuroa (1),” in *Nihon jōmin bunka kiyō*, ed. Yoshihara Ken’ichirō (Tōkyō: Chūō kōron, 1994), 57.

*bontenzuka* within the space of the village, but also transformed their sepulchers as powerful structures to transmit and perpetuate devotion to Yudono and Dewa Sanzan to future generations. Where the *gyōninzuka* actually contained the *gyōnin*'s corpse, the cadaver became a sort of “foundational material” or “organic brick,” just as earth and stone were used to construct the *tsuka*. This total integration between the architectonic body of the *tsuka* and the *gyōnin*'s corpse allowed the ascetic to maintain an everlasting physical and mystic union with the body of Yudono, i.e. the *tsuka* itself, even after death. For a Yudono *gyōnin* to be buried within a *tsuka* corresponded to a symbolic burial within Mount Yudono and was also a moment of *stoicheiosis* or “animation process” thanks to which the *tsuka*, alias the non-anthropomorphic icon of Yudono, could be empowered by the physicality of the ascetic and become alive.

### **3.2. The Stelae of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai**

The stele (*itabi*) was a fundamental element of the *tsuka*. The stele is a complex object in which different semiotic systems and discourses such as writing, sculpture, recitation, ascetic practices, and political strategies merge to increase and sharpen the religious significance of the *tsuka*. The installation of a stele on the top of the *tsuka* marked the religious authority of a certain group over a specific *tsuka*. Sometimes the devotional fervor that surrounded the creation of a Yudono *tsuka* provoked clashes between different groups of religious actors that claimed their exclusive rights over the ritual administration of the *tsuka*. For instance, in the *Keichō kenmonshū* 慶長見聞集 (Keichō 19, 1614) the famous traveler and lay disciple of

Tenkai, Miura Jōshin 三浦浄心 (1565–1644), reports the following episode.

On the sixteenth day of the fourth month of Keichō 18 (1613) in the Mito domain of Hitachi province, a Jōdo monk called Kikurenji 菊蓮寺 installed a stūpa on a tumulus dedicated to the veneration of Yudono (Yudono *kuyōzuka* 湯殿供養塚). About three-thousand Shingon practitioners gathered [in that place], discussed [the situation], and threw down the stūpa in order to place on the top of the tumulus a high board. The board said that the ritual procedures (*gishiki* 儀式) for abstention and ceremonial offerings (*toki kuyō* 時供養) had been transmitted from Yudono Dainichi to Kōbō Daishi (Yudono Dainichi *ori* Kōbō Daishi *sōden arite* 湯殿大日より弘法大師相伝有て) and were diffused in their sect (*waga shū* 我宗).<sup>75</sup> The fact that Jōdoshū [monks] imposed (*tsutomuru koto* つとむる事) [their ceremonies] infringed the teaching of Kōbō Daishi. For this reason they decided to destroy the stūpa. [The board] also reported that any opponent should come to the bottom of the tumulus and discuss who is right and who is wrong. When Kikurenji saw this board, he erected another board at the base of the tumulus. On it he wrote: “This Mount Yudono represents the perfection of the three bodies [of the Buddha] (*sanjin enman* 三身円満).<sup>76</sup> So why does it hate the Jōdo ceremony for offerings? Those who broke my stūpa committed one of the five heinous crimes (*gogyaku* 五逆)<sup>77</sup> [because they] injured the Buddha’s body (*busshin* 仏身). How would you reply to this?”<sup>78</sup>

This narrative shows that in the Mito domain the Yudonosan *kō* members were already active before the Kan’ei era and were highly structured enough to define themselves as an independent sect (*shū*). The reason for their anger was due to the hasty attempt of the Jōdō monk to take over their Yudono *tsuka* imposing a rituality based on a Jōdō style *kuyō* rather

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<sup>75</sup>. The usual characters to write the term *toki kuyō* are 齋供養. In this case the character *toki* 時 replaces 齋 because it can be pronounced in the same way.

<sup>76</sup>. In this sentence Kikurenji resorts to the Shingon concept of the *sanjin* to criticize the intolerant behavior of the Yudonosan *kō* members. According to the *sanjin* theory the Dharma-body (*hosshin*) of Dainichi Nyorai also comprises Amida Nyorai that represents his reward-body (*hōshin* 報身) and Shaka Nyorai that corresponds to his apparitional-body (*keshin* 化身). Therefore, since Amida Nyorai was embedded in the cosmic body of Dainichi Nyorai the *tsuka* of Yudono could also be administered following a Jōdō rituality.

<sup>77</sup>. The five heinous crimes are: matricide, parricide, killing a saint, wounding the body of the Buddha, and destroying the harmony of the *samgha*. In this passage Kikurenji equates the act of destroying the architectonic body of the *stūpa* to the injuring of the physical body of the Buddha.

<sup>78</sup>. For the original text see *Keichō kenmonshū* [coll. Edo shiryō sōsho], ed. Nakamaru Kazunori (Tōkyō, Shinjin butsuōrai sha, 1969), 64.

than the peculiar *toki kuyō*, which was directly transmitted by Kūkai after his encounter with Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai to the *kō* members of Yudono. We will later analyze the religious meaning of the term *toki kuyō* for the members of the Yudonosan *kō*. For now it is important consider that the words written on the provisional board placed by the *kō* members on the top of the *tsuka* indicate that the Yudono *tsuka* was not simply associated with Yudono on a theoretical or doctrinal level, but also for what concerned the ritual orthopraxis of the *kuyō* ceremonies. In prohibiting the Jōdō monk to place his stele, here called *sotōba* 卒塔婆, on the top of the Yudono *tsuka*, the *kō* members did not merely defend their territorial authority but also asserted their devotional, doctrinal, ritual and sectarian independence.

In the fifteenth century the lay members of the *kō* started commissioning stone-engravers (*sekkō* 石工) for votive stelae for their private devotional needs, following the example of the military aristocracy who had often sponsored the production of stelae to accumulate merit for their present life and next rebirth.<sup>79</sup> The formation of groups of lay devotees (*ikkeshū* 一結衆) that gathered together in order to accomplish the specific mission to build a stele for their elective deity became an extremely common religious practices in the Kantō area, which consequently became dotted with innumerable types of different stelae.

The stelae dedicated to Yudono were often carved on biotite stones (*kurounmo hangan* 黒雲母片岩), which were particularly suitable for engraving and which were produced in the caves of Mount Tsukuba. This fact explains why the greatest concentration of Yudono stelae was in the area between Shimotsuke, Hitachi, Awa, and Kazusa provinces. Mount Tsukuba worked as a sort of logistic center from which originated the stones that were used by *issei*

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<sup>79</sup>. For a study on the *sekkō* in late Muromachi and early Edo period see Kanamori Atsuko, “Sekko,” in *Nihon sekibutsu zuten*, ed. Nihon sekibutsu kyōkai (Tōkyō: Kokusho kankō kai, 1986), 421-432. For an historical analysis of the diffusion of the stelae among the lay population see Chijiwa Itaru, *Itabi to sono jidai: tegikana bunkazai, mijikana chūsei* (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1988), 183.

*gyōnin* or Yudonosan *kō* members as a practical form of dissemination. This shows that the successful diffusion of a specific cult on the ground was also dependent on the logistic and infrastructural facilities that the diffusors could rely on to give material shape to their faith. It can be said that without the biotite stones of Mount Tsukuba, the religious impact of the Yudono cult on the Kantō provinces would have been extremely restrained.

In the devotional context the stelae of Yudono were defined as “towers” (*tō* 塔) or *stūpa* (*toba* 塔婆) that were often installed on the top of the *tsuka* or in other significant locations within the village. The rationale that underpinned the construction of a stele was that the builder, or the person who expressed the desire to build a stele, created a powerful object through which he could venerate a specific deity and accumulate merit for himself. Originally, this specific deity was almost exclusively the Buddha but later on almost every other buddha, bodhisattva, and *kami* became subjects for devotional stelae. Moreover, once the stele was created it transformed into a material representation of the body of the deity and was worthy to be venerated as a special icon of the god. In other words, the religious role played by the stele was double. On one side the stele was the mediator or the material link thanks to which the devotee could reach the deity, on the other side, it was the deity itself that manifested its body in a stone-shape within the present world. The stele allowed an ‘up-grade’ of the devotee toward the deity and, at the same time, a ‘a down-grade’ of the deity toward the devotee.<sup>80</sup>

It should also be remembered that the creation of a stele was an extremely complex

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<sup>80</sup>. Analyzing the religious meaning of the *stūpa* Paul Mus defines it as a “mesocosm” or a “magic copula” that favors a mystic union between the Buddha and the practitioner. This union was based on a breaking of communicative levels, namely the *stūpa* allowed the Buddha ‘to descend’ to the real world of human beings and the officiant ‘to ascend’ to the divine universe. See Paul Mus, *Barabudur: Sketch of a History of Buddhism Based on Archeological Criticism of the Texts*, 55-56. See also Bernard Faure, *Visions of Power: Imagining Mediaeval Japanese Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 254-256, 280.

operation not only from the religious point of view but also from the bureaucratic one. The stelae which were produced within the Yudonosan *kō* context often present a differentiation between the “religious sponsor” (*hongan* 本願; *ganshu* 願主) and the “lay donors” (*sesshu* 施主). The *hongan* could be an *issei gyōnin* or a *shugenja*, very often a Haguro *shugenja*, who shouldered the original vow (*gan*) expressed by the lay devotees to build a stele to praise Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai.

The lay devotees entrusted their vow to the *hongan* who automatically became their leader or religious sponsor during the entire process of the creation of the stele. The *hongan* played the role of spokesman or guarantor for *kō* members before the deity. Even if the *hongan* did not directly participate in the financial operations to materially produce the stelae, he followed the *kō* members in ascetic and ritual practices, such as the *kuyō* ceremonies that took place between the expression of the *gan* and the final realization of the stele. The *hongan* used his religious charisma to protect the devotional investment of the Yudonosan *kō* members and assured that their *gan* were safely communicated to Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai once the stele was finished. In the case of the *issei gyōnin* their fame of “vow carriers” on behalf of lay devotees during the *senninchigyō* probably placed them in a particularly suitable position to play the role of *hongan* for the Yudonosan *kō* members who desired to make a stele.

The *sesshu* were lay members of the Yudonosan *kō* who invested their devotional and financial capital in the realization of the stele and were supposed to receive religious merit at the end of the practice. In other words, in order to be effective, a stele needed to be empowered with specific religious practices that served to switch on its protective action. This was realized thanks to the religious and economic interaction between *hongan* and *sesshu*

within the context of the village. For instance, in the *Suifu shiryō* 水府資料 the Confucian scholar Komiyama Fūken 小宮山楓軒 (1764–1840) reports an inscription (*meibun* 銘文) that was carved on an ancient stele dedicated to Yudono Gongen in Ōsawa 大沢 village in Mito domain.

In the Daishi district (Daishigumi 大子組) of Ōsawa village there is an old stele. This stele was built when miners (*kanebori* 金堀) gathered [in this village]. The inscription (*hibun* 碑文) of this stele is: “The religious sponsor (*hongan*) Shōbōin 正宝院 took care of the vow (*gan*) to extend (*fukyū* 普及) the merit (*kudoku*) [of our practice] to all of us and the sentient beings [so that] everyone will together realize the Buddha’s path (*jōfutsudō* 成仏道). Sanskrit letter. Yudonosan Daigongen. Kan’ei 3 (1626), fire-*yang*, year of the tiger, second month, auspicious day. The Ōsawa village confraternity (*ikkeshōhū* 一結諸衆) in the Ōshū region together with the miner confraternity (*kinzanshū* 金山衆).”<sup>81</sup>

This inscription shows that the erection of a stele for Yudono Gongen became an occasion for three different types of social actors to let their plural interests converge on a single religious work. The lay members of the Ōsawa confraternity (*ikkeshū*) for the devotion of Yudono Gongen asked the miners (*kanebori*) belonging to the miner confraternity (*kizanshū*) to use their labour skills to carve a stele dedicated to Yudono Gongen. The members of the *ikkeshū* paid the miners for their work and in return offered them a share in the merit produced by the construction of the stele. In this way, *ikkeshū* and *kizanshū* members equally became the *seshu* of a Yudono Gongen stele. In order to assure a safe realization of this ambitious devotional project, which saw two different social classes of *seshū* engaged in the same devotional activity, they asked the *shugenja* Shōbōin to become their religious sponsor (*hongan*) and use his ascetic power and authority to deliver their vow

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<sup>81</sup>. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, “Yudonosan e no michi,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 30: 22-23.

(*gan*) to Yudono Gongen.

It is important to note that the social composition of the *seshu* was heterogeneous and the graphic style of the stele often reflected the different type of rural classes to which belonged the lay donors that sponsored the religious work. For instance, in the precincts of Kashima Jinja 鹿島神社 in Tsuchiura 土浦 village in Hitachi province there is a stele of Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai, alias Yudono Gongen, that was built in Kan'ei 5 (1628) (See Fig. 5.6).<sup>82</sup> The inscription reads as follows.

SUN MOON

BĀNKU [Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai]

Kakatayoshi 嘉太良, Asasaemon 朝左衛門, Kisaemon 喜左衛門 [are the] donors of the land (*kishin shikichi* 寄進敷地) certified by the government office (*geki* 外記) of Miyazu 宮津.

Two hundred forty donors (*seshu*) whose leader (*hongan*) was Rokuemon [...] 六右衛門 □□.

Miyamoto Genpē 宮本源兵衛 [is the] donor of the stone [used for the stele] (*ishi kishin* 石寄進).

For the [accumulation of] merit (*daizen* 大善) on the behalf of Genshi 源四, Yaemon 弥衛門, Kyūza 久左, Gonpachi 権八.

Kan'ei 5 (1628), earth *yang*, eleventh month, auspicious day. With respect.

Yaguchi 矢口: Genba 玄蕃, Ōkuma 大隈, Mino 美濃.

Hayato 隼人: Yohei 与兵衛, Bunjirō 文治郎, Hikoshichirō 彦七良.<sup>83</sup>

The most interesting aspect of this inscription is the different size, calligraphic accuracy,

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<sup>82</sup>. The inscription of this stele does not explicitly mention Yudono, but the iconographical peculiarities of this type of Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai such as the prominency of the nose, jaws, and hears and the fact that this stele was built in the village of Tsuchiura, where the *issei gyōnin* were extremely active, suggest that it was associated with the cult of Yudono. For an analysis of the Big-nose Dainichi Nyorai in the Yudonosan stelae see the next paragraph.

<sup>83</sup>. For the original text and a picture of the this stele see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 8, 307.



and spatial distribution of the *seshu* names on the surface of the stone.<sup>84</sup> The highest position on the left side of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and immediately under the solar disk was reserved for the names of the three donors of the land and the *hongan* of the *ikkeshū*. The information concerning these persons was engraved in large and clear characters because these men had undertaken the greatest financial and spiritual labor for the erection of the stele. In a slightly lower and intermediate position there is the family and first name of the devotee that donated the stone. The names of the four members of the confraternity that had the priority in the accumulation of merit (*daizen*) were written in very thin characters similar to grass-blades under the lotus throne (*rengeza* 蓮華座) of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai. The position of these four names emphasizes the symbolic entrance of the four devotees within the protective sphere of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai immediately under his throne and, at the same time, the submissive but continuous veneration of these persons toward this buddha. On the right side of the deity under the lunar disk there are eight names of a different class of donor that were roughly engraved in a loose calligraphy close to the margin of the stele.

It is important to note that the cult of Yudono attracted the devotion of rich and poor peasants within the same village. In the case of the Tsuchiura stele the calligraphic discrimination between the names of the first group to the detriment of the second one shows that social tensions and power modifications between different strata of rural classes were also manifested through devotional activities such the creation of stelae for the Yudono cult. In particular, it is relevant to note that in the Kan'ei era the so called “small peasants” (*kobyakushō* 小百姓) exploited the Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai devotional discourse to consolidate their social and political relevance within the village against the

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<sup>84</sup>. For a reflection on the meaning of the different graphic styles in the inscriptions of the stelae see Yamauchi Masao, “Kan'ei ki Dainichi tsuka shinkō no ronten ni tsuite,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 24 (December 1985): 60.

dominant group of the “titled peasants” (*honbyakushō* 本百姓). It was not an accident that the boom in Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai stelae took place during the Kan’ei era, which marked a deep change in the internal structure of peasant society.

In Keichō 17 (1612) Ieyasu ordered a new cadastral survey and Hidetada did the same in Kan’ei 1. These cadastral surveys, for the first time, associated the names of small peasants and seasonal peasants (*mizunomi byakushō* 水飲み百姓) with the land, which was cultivated by them.<sup>85</sup> This cadastral change transformed small and seasonal peasants, who in the early periods constituted a sort of migratory and non-resident labor force, into permanent residents of the village. This fact created enormous tensions between small and seasonal peasants, who could not abandon the village because their names were officially linked to specific lots of land that could now be inherited or left to offspring, and the titled peasants who were the ancient residents of the village and could sit on the “shrine council” (*miyaza* 宮座).<sup>86</sup> The Tokugawa cadastral reformation deeply modified the equilibrium between rural classes because it forced large groups of peasants to settled down in villages without having ancestors (*senzo* 先祖) connected with the land on which they were requested to reside. Therefore, small peasants did not have any divine ancestor (*soshin* 祖神) to contend with the power of titled peasants who monopolized the *miyaza* activities using the legitimacy of their *soshin* to ostracize small peasants from religious and political offices of the village.<sup>87</sup>

There is a high possibility that this type of cult associated with a sacred mountain such as

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<sup>85</sup>. Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Status, Power, Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1996), 76-77, 81-82, 114.

<sup>86</sup>. Yamauchi Masao, “Shiryō, sorei, soshin—Dainichitsuka shinkō no genryū ni yosete—,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 23 (December 1984): 24.

<sup>87</sup>. For an analysis of the *miyaza* and the “privilege council” (*kabuza* 株座) in the Tokugawa village see Furushima Toshio, “The Village and Agriculture During the Edo Period,” in *Japanese Economic History 1600-1960* [coll. Japanese Economic History 1600-1960], ed. Michael Smitka (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 487.

Yudono and a first-class buddha such as Dainichi Nyorai, whose devotional protocols did not take into account the birthplace of the devotees' ancestors or their status as permanent or non-permanent residents within the village, had a strong appeal to small peasants. In other words, the egalitarian aspect of the cult of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was the key to its success among the most destitute members of the rural classes. These small peasants thought to exploit the charisma of this new religious discourse, which was free from the ritual constrictions imposed by the *miyaza* for the administration of and participation in the *matsuri*, to increase their social capital also among the political and administrative circles of the village.

For instance, in the early Keichō era (1596–1614) the rural class of Amichō 阿見町 village in Hitachi province was composed approximately of twenty titled peasants and about sixty small peasants. In Kan'ei 6 (1629) a stele dedicated to Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was erected in the Ishikawa 石川 district of the village. The inscription of this stele gives the names of sixty-five *seshu* who belonged to the rural class of Amichō. In Kan'ei 7 (1630) another stele of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was sponsored by sixty *seshu*. The number of names reported in these two inscriptions show that in the early Kan'ei era the small peasants of Amichō were the major donors of the stelae dedicated to Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai. They probably used these religious works to improve their social status *vis à vis* the titled peasants, demonstrating that the forced exclusion from the *miyaza* did not prevent them from making a contribution to the cultic activities of Amichō. This active participation of small peasants in the religious practices of the village by funding the erection of new stelae dedicated to the cult of Yudono kept pace with their progressive upgrade to becoming homesteaders (*yashiki mochi* 屋敷持ち), and their consequent inclusion in the titled peasants' class, which fully

materialized only toward the end of the Genroku era.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.3. Big-nose Dainichi Nyorai and Other Peculiarities of the Yudono Stelae

When the cult of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai spread among the rural classes in the early years of the Edo period, peasants started venerating this buddha as a ruler of the cosmos and, in particular, as the regulator of the meteorological phenomena. Because the body of Dainichi Nyorai and the entire universe were two inseparable entities, Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai automatically became the principal force for the equilibrium between the sun, moon, stars, winds, and rain. Since all these natural elements directly depended on Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai, the peasants believed that his influence was enormous on every type of agricultural activity. The cult of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was based on a transposition of the esoteric theory about the non-duality (*nini funi*) between the universe and Dainichi Nyorai's body to the practical level of the ordinary agricultural activities that characterized the rural world of the Edo period.

This process of “ruralization” of Dainichi Nyorai can be traced through a great variety of extremely peculiar stelae dedicated to the cult of Mount Yudono. For instance, between Kan'ei 2 (1625) and Kan'ei 8 (1631) in a small geographical area between the city of Tsukuba and the village of Tsuchiura in Hitachi province, an anonymous stone-engraver created fifty-seven stelae dedicated to Dainichi Nyorai.<sup>89</sup> Fifty-one stelae represent bas-reliefs

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<sup>88</sup>. For a detailed description of this two stelae of Amichō see Yamauchi Masao, “Dainichizuka shinkō shiron—himachikō, tentō nenbutsu, ujigami to no kanren—,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 22 (December 1983): 18-20.

<sup>89</sup>. One of these stelae was located in Kanuma 鹿沼 village of Shimotsuke province, which corresponds to present day Tochigi prefecture.

of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai and the other six of Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai. The fact that Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was ultimately conceived as the Dainichi of the Two Realms of Diamond and Womb (Kontai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai 金胎兩部大日如来) allowed the artist to alternatively display this buddha as the ruler of Kongōkai or Taizōkai. Nevertheless, it is evident that Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai, the Dainichi of the Womb Realm, received a greater veneration because of the implicit semiotic connections with the cult of fertility and reproductivity.

The local scholar Tokuhara Satoyuki 徳原聰行 (1929–2002) interestingly defined the Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai of these stelae as “Big-nose Dainichi-sama” (*hana no ōkina Dainichi sama*) because of the unusual prominence of the nose, lips and eyebrows’ arches that characterize the exterior appearance of this deity. The ears and jaws of these Dainichi Nyorai are also over-emphasized and give to the face of the deity a calm, but extremely solid, expression. The fact that these stelae were produced in a zone where the *issei gyōnin* greatly spread the cult of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai dispels all doubts about the connection between these stelae and the Yudono cult. For examples, we can examine three inscriptions of Big-nose Dainichi Nyorai stelae that report the following texts (See Fig. 5.7).

① SUN MOON

ĀNKU [Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai] BAN [Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai]

From the various confraternities of Shishitsuka-mura 宍塚村 with respect.

Thanks to the marvelous fruits (*myōka* 妙果) [of our practice] may we obtain the enlightenment (*bodai* 菩提).

The chief-monk (*bettō*) Enmyōin 延命院 who made pilgrimage to the venerable Mount Yudono for [illegible character] -eight times.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup>. This stele is located in the precincts of the Hannnyaji 般若寺 temple in the Shishitsuka-mura district of Tsuchiura. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 8, 307.

② Shirōzaemon Seikan 四郎左衛門 清観.<sup>91</sup>

Kan'ei 8 (1631), metal *yin*, year of the sheep, tenth month, auspicious day. With respect from all the members [of the confraternity].

A 𠄎 [Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai] [This stele] was built (*zōryū* 造立) for the venerable Mount Yudono that protects (*shugo* 守護) [this] village.<sup>92</sup>

③ SUN MOON

Kan'ei 4 (1627), fire *yin*, year of the rabbit, sixth month. Shunkai 春海.<sup>93</sup>

The stele ① shows that the *hongan* probably was a *shugenja*, Enmyōin, who made various pilgrimages to Mount Yudono and played the role of spiritual sponsor for a group of *seshu* in Shishitsuka village which decided to build a Big-nose Dainichi Nyorai type of stele to venerate Mount Yudono. The stele ② underlines that the Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono was often venerated by the rural population as a protector (*shugo*) of the village to which it was invited. The stele ③ demonstrates that *issei gyōnin* such as Shunkai were directly involved in the rituals for the spiritual empowerment of these kind of stelae. The inscription of the stele ③ does not specify that Shunkai was an *issei gyōnin* but another inscription of the stele ④ that was built in the nearby village of Miho, definitely clarifies the religious identity this ascetic.

④ SUN...MOON

ANKU

[This stele] was erected by thirty persons of this village (*kyōchū* 郷中) who belong to the confraternity (*shu*) for the vigil of the big and small moon (*dai shō tsuki machi* 大小月

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<sup>91</sup>. Seikan could be the religious name of Shirōzaemon.

<sup>92</sup>. This stele is located in the precincts of Inari Jinja 稻荷神社 in the Shima 島 district of Tsukuba city. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 311.

<sup>93</sup>. This stele is located in the precincts of Akiba Jinja 秋葉神社 in the Kaminanma 上南摩 district of Kanuma. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 13, 312.

待).<sup>94</sup>

Kan'ei 5 (1628), earth *yang*, year of the dragon, tenth month, auspicious day. *Issei gyōnin* Shunkai.<sup>95</sup>

Another inscription of the stele ⑤ reports the name of a different *issei gyōnin*, Seikai 淨海, who became the *hongan* of a group of *seshu* in the Edosaki village. These lay donors erected a stele for Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono, which was not represented in a bass-relief but through the seminal letter ĀNKU.

⑤ SUN...MOON

ĀNKU

Kan'ei 4 (1627) [illegible characters] spiritual leader (*hongan*) [illegible characters] three hundred persons.

[This stele] was built (*zōryū*) by Naoaki 直鏡 [illegible characters] that are the persons who expressed the vow (*gannin* 願人) [to build this stele].

*Issei gyōnin* Seikai. Men and Women (*nannjo* 男女).<sup>96</sup>

It is probable that these two *issei gyōnin*, Shunkai and Seikai, worked together to spread devotion to Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai in almost the same geographical area and also shared or collaborated with the same stone-engraver (*sekkō*) for the realization of the stelae. This detail sheds light on the existence of a network of religious professionals such as the *issei gyōnin* who spiritually activated and empowered the stele, which was engraved by a particular class of artisan, the *sekkō*, who specialized in the creation of religious stone-work. In this case the stele stands at the merging point between professional ascetics or religious

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<sup>94</sup> According to the lunar calendar the moon of the twenty-ninth day was called the small moon (*shō no tsuki* 小の月) and the moon of the thirtieth day was the big moon (*dai no tsuki* 大の月).

<sup>95</sup> This stele is located on the top of a Dainichi *tsuka* in the Shida 信太 district of Miho 美浦 village in the Ibaraki prefecture. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 333.

<sup>96</sup> This stele is located in the Sakura 佐倉 district of Edosaki 江戸崎 village in Ibaraki province. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 332.

sponsors (*hongan*), lay devotees or actual donors (*seshu*), and sacred artisans or stone-engravers (*sekkō*) who played the pivotal role in giving a material dimension to the faith of the previous two groups.

From an iconographic perspective, stelae ①, ②, and ③ represent bas-reliefs of Big Nose Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai. Stelae ④ and ⑤ also display the Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai, but through seed characters. It is interesting to note that very often stelae dedicated to Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai show a mixed iconographical strategy that consisted of making a bas-relief of the Kongōkai or Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai associated with the opposite seed character. In other words, Taizōkai was associated with the seed character BAN, which usually symbolizes the Kongōkai, and Kongōkai was deliberately associated with the seed character ĀNKU, which was usually linked to Taizōkai. For instance, we can analyze this inscription.

SUN MOON

BAN

Kan'ei 3 (1626), ninth month, twenty-third day.

[*Nen*]butsu confraternity (*shu*), seventy persons.

With respect (*keibyaku* 敬白).<sup>97</sup>

The text of this stele expressly places side by side a bas-relief of a Big-nose Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai with the seminal letter BAN (See Fig. 5.8). Thanks to this contrastive semiotic association between the sculptural image (the bas-relief of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai) and the written sign (the seed character BAN of Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai) this stele visually realized the mystic union between Kongō and Taizō that corresponded to the Kontai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono. This buddha is implicitly evoked through the visual

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<sup>97</sup>. This stele is located in the precinct of Hachiman Jinja 八幡神社 in the Kamihirooka 上広岡 district of Tsukuba in Ibaraki prefecture. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 5, 304.



language of a stele that exploits the contemporaneous presence of the two semiotic halves of Dainichi's body (BAN/Kongōkai and bass-relief/Taizōkai) to emphasize the synthesis or non-duality between the two (BAN=bass-relief→Kontai ryōbu). Like Mount Yudono the Kontai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai is, at the same time, present and absent, visible and invisible, physical and meta-physical. The complexity of the visual strategy adopted by *issei gyōnin* and *sekkō* in some of these stelae demonstrates that even if they performed their practices in a rural context this never meant a degradation or over-simplification of the main themes of the Mikkyō doctrinal discourse. On the contrary, the Mikkyō tradition was enriched by the *issei gyōnin* because they put it in contact with new devotional and conceptual needs of rural devotees.

There are inscriptions of stelae dedicated to the cult of Yudono in which the main deity of the bas-reliefs is defined through the particular appellative of Dainichi Gongen 大日權現 that symbolizes a sort of devotional fusion between Dainichi Nyorai and Yudono Gongen.<sup>98</sup> It is also possible to observe that the creation of Yudono stelae increased during the intercalary years (*uruudoshi* 閏年). This was due to the fact that peasants wanted to express their gratitude for the prolonged presence of the solar disk in the sky, which derived from the periodical necessity to add a supplementary month to the lunar calendar in order to avoid calendrical distortions.<sup>99</sup> The area that surrounded the stele was often enclosed through a sort of curtain of stones (*kekkaishi* 結界石) that marked the protected space within which the stele was erected.

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<sup>98</sup>. See, for instance, the inscription on the stele located in the Odenichi おでにち (Odainichi お大日) area in the Sakurabōshimo 桜坊下 district of Nagaoka in the Ibaraki prefecture. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 316.

<sup>99</sup>. See, for instance, the inscription of the stele located in the Community Center (Kōminkan 公民館) of the Iritsubo 入坪 district of Tsukuba. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 9, 308.

There are also cases in which the Yudono stele or the statue of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was hidden inside a stone-niche covered with a heavy slab. These encrypted stelae or buddhas are called “stone-niche buddhas” (*sekiganbutsu* 石龕仏). For instance, on Mount Yudono in the Daigomachi 大子町 village at in Hitachi province, which was a *mitate* of the original Mount Yudono in Dewa, there is a stone-niche that contains a statue of a seated Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai. This stone-niche was venerated with the name of Stone-shrine of Yudono Gongen (Yudono Gongen Sekishi 湯殿権現石祠). A small hole shaped like a wish-fulfilling jewel (*nyoi hōju*) is placed on one side of the niche to allow the devotee to peep inside. The Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai that sits inside the inner or incubatory space (*oku*) of the stone-niche forms the concentration mudrā of the Dharma world (*hōkaijō in*) not where the legs cross, but in front of the chest. This unusual position was created so that the first thing seen by the viewer was Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai’s fingers in the *hōkaijō in* position.

The materiality of this *sekiganbutsu* per se shows the *honji suijaku* relationship between Yudono Gongen, i.e. the stone-niche, and Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai, i.e. the seated buddha within the stone-niche. In other words, the devotee was able to glimpse the ineffable body of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai through the stone body of Yudono Gongen, which was equated to a sort of screen on which the *honjibutsu* could be contemplated. From an embryological point of view, the whole structure of the *sekiganbutsu* corresponds to a stone-uterus that serves to protect a precious embryo such as Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai. The only way to see the cosmic body of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai was to visually penetrate the vaginal lips shaped like a wish-fulfilling jewel in the middle of the stone-niche.<sup>100</sup>

Another type of stele dedicated to the cult of Yudono displays bas-reliefs of the sacred

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<sup>100</sup>. For a photograph and a description of this *sekiganbutsu* see Tokuhara Sotoyuki, “Yudonosan e no michi,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 30: 23.

triad composed of Dainichi Nyorai, Fudō Myōō, and Gōzanze Myōō (Dainichi sanzō-zō) (See Fig. 5.9). There are only twelve extant stelae that portray this triad in connection with the cult of Yudono. They were all erected in rural villages around the city of Tsukuba, from Kan'ei 6 (1629) to Kan'ei 17 (1642).<sup>101</sup> The main deity of four of the twelve stelae is Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai while all the others have Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai. The inscription of the Dainichi sanzō-zō stele of Ishigemachi 石下町 reports the following text.

SUN...MOON

BAN

Manji 卍

Kan'ei 15 (1638), earth *yang*, year of the dog, eleventh month, fifth day.

[This stele] was erected [after practicing] abstentions and *nenbutsu* recitations (*toki nenbutsu* 時念仏) [as transmitted from] Dainichi Nyorai [to] Kōbō Daishi.

Peace and comfort for the present birth (*gense annon*). Joyful peace and sudden enlightenment for the later rebirth (*kōsei anraku tonshō bodai* 後世安樂頓生菩提).<sup>102</sup>

An implicit link between this stele and the cult of Yudono is provided by the standard form of the sentence used to explain the preparatory rituals that were practiced by the *seshu* under the guidance of the *hongan* to empower the stele before its actual installation. As we have seen in the episode described by Miura Jōshin in the *Keichō kenmonshū*, the devotees of Yudono gave legitimacy to their ritual tradition affirming that the procedures were directly transmitted from Dainichi Nyorai to Kūkai when he opened Mount Yudono in the Daidō era (806–810). Moreover, the geographical location of these Dainichi sanzō-zō stelae was an area where the *issei gyōnin* aggressively proselytized the Yudono cult in the first decades of

<sup>101</sup>. Four inscriptions of the Dainichi sanzō-zō stelae are illegible because of weather corrosion, but the iconographical style suggests that should be similar to the others. In general the inscriptions and the bass-reliefs of all these stelae are unfortunately in bad repair.

<sup>102</sup>. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 320.

the seventeenth century. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that these twelve stelae were connected with the veneration of Yudosan Dainichi Nyorai.

The iconographical choice to display Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai in the center, Fudō Myōō on the right side and Gōzanze Myōō on the left side was carefully adopted to emphasize the particular nature of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai. This disposition follows the iconographical pattern of the Sonshō *mandara* 尊勝曼荼羅, which was among the Buddhist items brought back from China to Japan by Enchin 円珍 (814–981). In the eighth chapter of the *Besson zakki* 別尊雜記 Shinkaku 心覺 (1117–1180) wrote that Enchin transmitted the iconographical and ritual procedures concerning the Sonshō *mandara* to the Tendai monk Kakuyū 覺猷 (1053–1263). After receiving these teachings, Kakuyū decided to interrupt their transmissions within the Tendai School and chose the Shingon monk Ken'i 兼意 (1072–?) as the repository of this ritual protocol. In other words, after Kakuyū the iconographical and ritual tradition of the Sonshō *mandara* definitely passed from the Tendai School to the Shingon School where it became extremely popular.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, in the Edo period it was normal for religious professionals influenced by the Shingon tradition such as the *issei gyōnin* to choose this type of maṇḍala for their proselytizing activities.

The basic structure of the Sonshō *mandara* derives from the pattern of the Central Dais Eight Petal Hall (Chūdai hachiyō in 中大八葉院) of the Taizōkai *mandara*, but replaces Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai with Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai and leaves unchanged the two Myōō, i. e. Fudō and Gōzanze. Concerning the replacement of Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai with Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai in the Sonshō *mandara*, a passage in the *Henkushō* 遍口鈔 (thirteenth century) explains that: “The main deity [Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai of the Sonshō

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<sup>103</sup>. For more details about the transmission of the *Sonshō mandara* see Park Hyounggook, “Ōsaka Kongōji Kongōdō no Kongōkai Dainichi, Fudō, Gōzanze no sanzō keishiki ni kan suru ikkōsatsu,” *Ars Buddhica* 252 (September 2000): 51-53.

*mandara*] corresponds to the Dainichi of the non-duality between the [maṇḍala of the] Two Realms (Ryōbu Funi Dainichi 兩部不六大日) and the two flanking attendants (*kyōji* 脇士), Fudō and Gōzanze, correspond to the alternation of the teachings of the Two Realms [of the Diamond and Womb maṇḍalas].<sup>104</sup> In other words, Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai of the Sonshō *mandara* symbolizes the non-duality, or the stable synthesis, between the Womb and Diamond maṇḍalas while Fudō, alias the Taizōkai *mandara*, and Gōzanze, alias the Kongōkai *mandara*, represent the perpetual motion and circulation of these two teachings. Because Dainichi Nyorai of Mount Yudono was specifically defined as Dainichi of the Two Realms of the Womb and Diamond (Kontai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai) it is evident that the *issei gyōnin* relied on the iconographical and doctrinal characteristics of the Sonshō *mandara* to materially display the ultimate nature of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai.

It is important to note that the appropriation of the basic pattern of the Sonshō *mandara* by the *issei gyōnin* was not a mere duplication of the original, but included numerous innovative elements. For instance, the sacred triad is always located in the lower part of the stele. Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai sits on a bipartite lotus throne, which is placed on the top of an incense burner (*karo* 火炉), and makes the mudrā of the knowledge fist (*chiken'in* 智拳印). Fudō and Gōzanze stand on gem thrones (*shitsushitsu za* 瑟瑟座) that reproduce the bases of two *goma* platforms (*gomadan*). The entire body of Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai is enveloped in the extremely long pendants of an enormous jewel crown (*hōkan*) that resembles a placental membrane surrounding an embryo. In the middle of the *hōkan* there is a small cross that symbolizes the stars and, in particular, Ursa Major (Hokutosei 北斗星), which regulates the life and death of sentient beings. Over the *hōkan* there is a heavenly

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<sup>104</sup>. For the original text see *Ibid.*, 55.

canopy (*tengai* 天蓋) that constitutes further protection for Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai's body. The entire space of the sacred triad is studded with small stylized triangles that represent wish-fulfilling jewels and, by extension, the relics of the buddha (*busshari*).

On the upper part of the stele there is a representation of celestial bodies and meteorological phenomena: the sun, the moon, and a big cross that represents the stars. This big cross is placed over the fire halo of Gōzanze, while a big *manji* 卍 rotated in the clockwise direction appears over the head of Fudō. The shape of the clouds is extremely interesting because it creates a *mitate* with the body of a dragon (*ryū* 龍) that is intent on devouring the sun while a half-moon rests on its tail (See Fig. 5.10). From the perspective of this dragon the solar disk is not only the sun but also the magic pearl (*ju* 珠) of the Daoist tradition that bestows immortality (*fushi* 不死). Moreover, the *Sadaaki Kushō Rokuza Nenbutsu* 定口称六座念仏 (eighteenth century) of Shida village in Hitachi province reports that an appellation of Yudono Gongen was Dainichi Dairyū Gongen 大日大滝権現, which emphasized the dragon-like aspect of this deity.<sup>105</sup> The clouds, which were fundamental elements for the fertility of the crops, became, at the same time, the body of a celestial dragon and Yudono Gongen. Thanks to this intervisuality (*mitate*) the *suijakujin* of Kontai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai, namely Yudono Gongen, could be represented disguised as a dragon that extend its claws over the jewel crown of Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai.

In the case of the Dainichi sanzō-zō stele erected on Mount Dainichi (Dainichisan 大日山) in Akenomachi 明野町 village at Hitachi province there are two anthropomorphic figurines that dance in the space immediately below the sacred triad. These dancers represent

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<sup>105</sup>. The character 滝 means “waterfall” and was purposely used to replace the appropriate character *ryū* “dragon” in order to create a semantic conflation between dragon and waterfall that are united by the water element. In the painting scrolls (*kakejiku* 掛け軸) attributed to Tetsuryūkai and Bukkai the body of Yudono Gongen is often depicted in the guise of a dragon.

the god Shudaeten 須陀会天 (Skt. Śuddhâvasa) that pays his homages to the sacred triad while shaking an ornamental fan (*keman* 花鬘). Shudaeten appears also in the illustration of the Sonshō *mandara* reported in the *Kakuzenshō* 覚禅鈔 (Kenpō 建保 1, 1213), but in this stele the head of the heavenly god is replaced with a crow's head in one case and a rabbit's head in the other. It is clear that the *issei gyōnin* and the stone-engraver made a visual conflation between Shudaeten and the solar-crow (Yatagarasu 八咫鳥) or the lunar-rabbit (Tsuki no usagi 月の兎) that were summoned in order to venerate Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai.

A different typology of Yudono stelae is defined as “stelae of the calligraphic-Amida” (Moji Amida itabi). The main icon of these stelae is Amida Nyorai whose body is made of the six Chinese characters of the invocatory formula (*Namu Amida butsu* 南無阿弥陀仏) recited during the chanting of his name (*myōgō* 名号). The five characters 無阿弥陀仏 form his body from the throat to ankles. In the case of the character 南 the hair, nose, mustaches, and lips of Amida's head are modeled to resemble the various strokes. Currently there are only ten extant calligraphic-Amida stelae, which were produced between Bun'an 文安 5 (1448) and Eishō 永正 2 (1505). All these stelae were built in the extremely narrow area comprised from the village of Sawara 佐原 to the village of Kōzakimachi 神崎町 in Shimōsa province.<sup>106</sup>

During the Edo period the woodcut prints (*hanga* 版画) of the calligraphic-Amida were called “chopping board Amida” (*manaita* Amida 俎阿弥陀) and the origin of this type of woodcut blocks (*hangī*) was attributed to Kūkai (See Fig. 5.11). According to the legend one night Kūkai was roaming on the beach close to the village of Takaoka 高岡 in the Tosa 土佐

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<sup>106</sup>. For a detailed description of these ten stelae see Murata Kazuyoshi, “Myōgō Amidazō itabi to bonji Fudozō itabi,” *Rekishi kōkogaku* 23 (December 1998): 8-14.

province.<sup>107</sup> A fisherman, who did not recognize him, invited Kūkai to spend the night in his humble house. The following morning in order to thank the man for his hospitality Kūkai carved a chopping board as a *hangi* to print calligraphic-Amida talismans and put his signature by the side of the image.

It is clear that talismans and stelae of the calligraphic-Amida were objects produced in the esoteric *nenbutsu* (Shingon *nenbutsu* 真言念仏) context that associated the *sokushinjōbutsu* teachings of the Shingon School, which were symbolized by Kūkai's signature, with the *nenbutsu* recitation of the Jōdo School, which was graphically displayed by Amida Nyorai. In the case of the ten calligraphic-Amida stelae of Sawara and Kōzakimachi the *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō, who were particularly active in this territory, could have helped the local confraternity of *seshu* to build and decorate these stelae choosing this peculiar representational style. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that at Dainichibō there is one woodcut block for calligraphic-Amida, which is absolutely identical to the calligraphic-Amida designed on the ten stelae in Shimōsa province.<sup>108</sup> We can suppose that *issei gyōnin* used woodcut blocks, which were easy to transport, to print talismans related with the religious practices such as the esoteric *nenbutsu* recitation they performed for the groups of devotees.<sup>109</sup> Once the *issei gyōnin* settled down in a village, they could have used these woodcut blocks as models or templates to carve stelae, which steadily remained as permanent traces of their religious activities on the territory and permanently remind the villagers about the power of Yudono.

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<sup>107</sup>. Tosa province corresponds to the present day Kōchi 高知 prefecture in the Kyūshū island Shikoku.

<sup>108</sup>. For an illustration of a calligraphic-Amida talisman of the Dainichibō see Togawa Anshō, *Dewa Sanzan no efuda*, 98.

<sup>109</sup>. For this hypothesis see also Chijiwa Itaru, *Itabi to sono jidai: tegikana bunkazai, mijikana chūsei*, 189-190.



The historical period in which these stelae were produced goes from the middle fifteenth to the early sixteenth century. If these stelae are actual products of the proselytizing activities of the *issei gyōnin* in Shimōsa province, they could be considered as the oldest examples of Yudono cult in the medieval period. Among these ten stelae six inscriptions report that these objects were created for the performance of inverted-funerals (*gyakushu* 逆修) and mention the term *shichibun zentoku* 七分全徳, which was always used in connection with this type of ritual. This expression refers to the sharing out of merit (*toku*) between dead and livings after performing the *gyakushu* ritual.<sup>110</sup> According to this standard formula seven parts (*shichibun*) of merit, which derived from the construction of the calligraphic-Amida stele, were owed to the *seshu* and only one part was destined for the improvement of the ancestors' conditions in the post-mortem world. This detail underlines the fact that even if various types of stelae were linked with seeming funerary rituals such as the *gyakushu*, most of the stelae were actually built in order to gain merit for this life rather than make a positive action in exclusively soteriological terms.

Pilgrimages were also interpreted as occasions for Yudono devotees for constructing new stelae. The pilgrimage stelae can be divided into two types and were prevalently erected by members of the Yudonosan *kō* (*nobori kudari no gyōnin*). The “stelae for the virtual pilgrimage” (*daisantō* 代参塔) allowed the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to make an imaginary pilgrimage to Yudono without actually accessing the mountain (See Fig. 5.12). They simply collected the money to erect a stele within the precinct of one of the four *bettōji* of Yudono and asked a *shugenja* or an *issei gyōnin* to deliver their funding to the *bettō* who started the works on their behalf. For instance, in the precinct of the Dainichiji there are eleven *daisantō*

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<sup>110</sup>. Miyashima Junko, *Shinano no hijiri to mokujiki gyōja* (Tōkyō: Kadokawa shoten, 1983), 149.

that were donated by various groups of *nobori kudari no gyōnin* from various provinces in Tōhoku and Kantō areas starting from the late eighteenth century.

The administration of the money for the realization of the *daisantō* was often a moment of friction between *shugenja* and *issei gyōnin* that competed for getting the exclusive of this commission. Once the *daisantō* was ritually activated the *hongan* was asked to perform a monthly pilgrimage to Gohōzen in order to transfer the merit deriving from his ascetic practices to the stele, which symbolized the assembly of *nobori kudari no gyōnin*.<sup>111</sup> The *daisantō* worked as sort of “stone-teleporting” that allowed the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* to be present *in absentia* on Mount Yudono and the *issei gyōnin* or *shugenja* to transfer merit to their devotees without actually meeting them. It is possible that *issei gyōnin* and *shugenja* fought to be in charge of as many *daisantō* as possible in order to gain the monthly fees that the *kudari nobori no gyōnin* paid for the ritual maintenance of the stele.

The other type of pilgrimage stelae were erected by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* in their villages in order to commemorate the accomplishment of actual pilgrimages to Yudono. For instance, the inscription of a pilgrimage stele built in Bunka 2 (1805) and located in the precinct of the Suwa Jinja 諏訪神社 in Sendai reports the following text.

1) Front part of the stele

KIRUKU (Amida Nyorai) Gassan Daigongen

ANKU Yudonosan Daigongen

SA (Shō Kannon) Hagurosan Daigongen

Bunka 2, wood-*yin*, year of the ox, eight month, eighth day.

The leader (*dōshi* 導師) [of the donors came] from the vow-temple (*kiganjo* 祈願所)

Ryūsenji 竜泉寺.

The *ganshu* [was] the entire village (*nōsonchū* 總村中) of Ayashi 愛子.

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<sup>111</sup>. Iwahana Michiaki, *Dewa Sanzan shinkō no kenkōzō*, 95-97.

2) Written vow (*ganmon* 願文) on the left side of the stele.

May this village be in peace and comfort (*annon* 安穩) and spared from epidemics and calamities (*ekisai* 疫災). May crops be prosperous (*kakoku* 嘉穀) and the families of this village be in harmony and joy (*waraku* 和樂).

3) Inscription (*sekimei* 石銘) on the right part of the stele.

This inscription [was composed by] the [Yudonosan *kō*] *sewanin* Kannojo 勘之丞 of Kamimachi 上町 in the village of Ayashi.

The origins (*ranshō* 濫觴) of Mount Yudono in Dewa province are Dainichi Nyorai and India, which is the country in the south-western direction where the Buddha was born (*busshōkoku* 仏生国). In the first year of the Daidō era during the reign of the fifty-first human sovereign of this country Emperor Heizei, Kūkai returned [from China] and transformed [Mount Yudono] into a sacred place (*reijō*). Then, Genshun 元春 of the Ryūsenji Baishōin 竜泉寺梅松院 made the vow to pray for the removal of all diseases (*shobyō kotogotoku nozoku* 諸病悉除) and the peace and comfort of the inhabitants of this village (*minka annon* 民家安穩).<sup>112</sup> One hundred confraternity members (*dōsha* 同者) and parishioners (*danshi* 檀子) [of Ryūsenji] wore the sacred rope (*shime chūren* 七五三注連) and made a pilgrimage (*sankei*) [to Yudono] to practice self-seclusion rituals and pray (*bekki* 別祈) with faith and sincerity (*tanshin* 丹信). The fact that they were completely concentrated on this was really a rare thing. [The fulfillment of their vows] represented the power (*jingō* 神功) of [Yudono] Daigongen. When every [member of the Yudonosan *kō*] finished practicing purificatory rituals (*kessai* 潔斎), making repentance (*zange*) and prostrations (*reihai* 禮拜) in Kansei 9 (1797), fire-*yin*, year of the snake, seventh month, one-hundred ten parishioners (*danchū* 檀中) of Ryūsenji in Ayashi village together with thirty-eight parishioners of Wakōin 和光院 in Kumagane 熊根 village, for a total of one-hundred forty-eight persons, made a stone-inscription (*sekimei*). Then, in Kyōwa 2 (1802) sixty-eight people of Ayashi village and in Bunka 2 (1805), wood-*yin*, year of the ox, sixty-six people from the same village were kindly requested (*konmō* 懇望) by the *yama sendatsu* Jūgakubō 重学坊 of Iwanezawa to make a pilgrimage [to Yudono] in both years. Because the desires for which [the pilgrims] expressed vows (*shigan* 志願) were fulfilled (*jōju*), these people built this offering stele (*kuyōtō* 供養塔) putting great effort together.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup>. According to the *Tsutsugayuki* 筒粥記, a chronicle of the events that took place at the Suwa Shrine (Suwasha 諏訪社) between An'ei 3 (1774) and Meiji 18 (1885), in Genna 9 (1623) the chief-monk (*bettō*) of Suwasha was a *shugenja* called Myodai'in 妙台院. In Tenmei 7 (1787) the Suwasha *bettō* Ryōkakuin 良覚院 established the Ryūsenji temple.

<sup>113</sup>. For the original text see Satō Tatsuo, "Yudonosantō no sekimei," *Miyagi shigaku* 30 (May 2011): 48.

The front part of the stele bears the calligraphy of the three main deities of Dewa Sanzan the recipients of the work, which features as a counter-gift for the realization of the pilgrims' vows. A peculiarity of the text is that the *seshu* of Ayashi defined themselves as *ganshu* and the *shugenja* of Ryūsenji as *dōshi*. This terminological inversion could be due to modifications in the religious roles between *hongan* and *seshu* in the second half of the Edo period. The date is also significant because the year of the ox was traditionally associated with Mount Yudono and the eighth day of the eighth month was considered to be the final day of the pilgrimage season to Dewa Sanzan. The preparations for the *obon* ceremonies usually started from the ninth day.

The presence of a written vow (*ganmon*) shows that the pilgrimage stelae were not simply memorials for past events such as the accomplishment of a pilgrimage but also powerful objects that positively influenced the present and the future of the donors and their village. The inscription, which was carved on the left side of the stele, presents a multi-stratification of memories about three different past pilgrimages made by the Yudonosan *kō* members affiliated with Ryūsenji.

According to the text the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of Ryūsenji first made a pilgrimage to Yudono in Kansei 9 (1797), ten years after the foundation of the temple, and sponsored a stone-inscription (*sekimei*) to commemorate the event. To cover the costs of the *sekimei* and include as many persons as possible in the meritorious practice of building a stele the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* accepted funding from various parishioners (*danchū*) of Ryūsenji together with another group of devotees from the nearby Kumagane village. In Kyōwa 2 (1802) and Bunka 2 (1805) two other Yudono pilgrimages took place and were celebrated through the

installation of this new stela that symbolized the devotional and economic investments made by the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* and simple parishioners of Ryūsenji and Wakōin to venerate Dewa Sanzan and specifically thank Mount Yudono for protecting their village.

#### **4. Ritual Practices for the Cult of Yudono**

##### **4.1. *Fujiki Kuyō*: Ritual Fasting and Food Offerings**

In the previous paragraphs we saw that the stela of Yudono needed to be “switched on” or empowered through specific ritual practices in order to become effective. The construction of the stele was not a meritorious action per se, if it was not combined with adequate ceremonies that were performed by the *seshu* under the guidance of the *hongan*. Sometimes the procedures made by the lay devotees were so intense and prolonged that any difference from the ascetic practices of the professional ascetics was minimal. The term *gangyō* 願行 specifically indicated the vow (*gan*) expressed by the *seshu* to perform ascetic practices (*gyō*) for a stipulated amount of time at the end of which they built a stele to materially represent the success of their devotional practices (*mangan* 満願) and the consequent realization of their prayers (*gan jōju*). Therefore, the stele was the last and conclusive step of a longer ritual process that started with the *gangyō* of the *seshu*, continued with the performance of ascetic practices and *nenbutsu* recitations (*nenbutsu kōshō* 念仏口誦) for months or years, and ended with the erection of the stele. In case lay devotees failed to meet the ascetic schedule they announced in the *gangyō*, the stele could not be built and the practitioners were exposed to

the risk of negative karmic retribution.

For instance, from the mid sixteenth to the mid nineteenth century in the Kansai 関西 region, a ritual fast and offering ceremony (*fujiki kuyō*) was practiced by the members of the *nenbutsu* confraternities (*nenbutsu kō* 念仏講) in the suburban areas of Ōsaka 大阪 and in the villages around Mount Katsuragi 葛城 in the Kii peninsula. The same type of ceremony was also diffused in Shinano, Musashi, and Hitachi provinces. The *fujiki kuyō* was an ascetic and ceremonial procedure associated with various typologies of devotional discourse such as the veneration of the bodhisattvas Kannon and Jizō, or the buddha Amida. It is important to take into account that the *fujiki kuyō* was always performed by the *nenbutsu kō* members as a practice specifically associated with the religious tradition of Mount Yudono.

The term *fujiki* did not indicate a total abstention from food, but a selective elimination of certain foodstuffs, such as the ten grains (*jukkoku dachi*), meat, or the five pungent roots (*gokun*) on a specific day each month.<sup>114</sup> The *fujiki kuyō* usually lasted for three years and three months, at the end of which the practitioner could obtain “peace and happiness for the present and next rebirth” (*gense annon goshō zenshō* 現世安穩後生善処). The *fujiki kuyō* and the erection of the stela at the end of this practice were often included in the ritual protocol of the offering ceremonies that took place during the inverted preemptive funerals (*gyakushu kuyō* 逆修供養).<sup>115</sup>

In the end of the Muromachi period and in early Edo periods the ritual practices that involved a total or partial elimination of food were widely diffused among lay practitioners but were, at the same time, perceived and criticized as being too extreme or as heterodox

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<sup>114</sup>. Okumura Takahiko, “Fujiki kuyō—shinkō no yōsō wo chūshin toshite—,” *Nihon bukkyō* 48 (March 1979): 2.

<sup>115</sup>. For the relationship between the *fujiki kuyō* and the *gyakushu kuyō* see Hamada Kenji, “Ki no kawa ryūiki no sekitō,” *Rekishū kōkōgaku* 46 (August 2008): 10, 13-14.

practices. For instance, the unknown monk who edited the dictionary *Jinten ainō shō* 塵添壙囊抄 (Tenmon 天文 1, 1532) wrote the following definition for the term “fast” (*danjiki*).

Is there any authoritative source [that stipulates] the practice of fasting, which is performed by all the people of this world or there are not sources for this? It is always said that Śākyamuni performed this practice when he met with a non-Buddhist master (*gedōshi* 外道師). If it is so, is this a non-Buddhist practice? I do not find any authoritative text [stating this either]. In esotericism, it seems that there are numerous proof of that. There are abundant authoritative texts related to the abstention from food and water for one day, three days, even seven days, and also for one day and one night. The following texts show [the existence of the practice of fasting]. In the second chapter of the *Soshitsujikyō* 蘇悉地經 it is written that: “[It is possible] to fast for one day, three days or even seven days.” This passage comes from a text about ritual invocations (*kishō hōmon* 祈請法文). In the eleventh chapter of the *Darani jikkyō* 陀羅尼集經 it is reported that: “If a person wants to obtain a *mako* 馬古,<sup>116</sup> he should not eat anything for seven days and make this mudrā every day.” In the fourteenth chapter of the *Jōgenroku* 貞元錄 it is written that: “The *tripiṭaka* [master] Vajrabodhi (Kōngōchi Sanzō 金剛智三藏, 671–741) fasted and meditated for seven days; then a tree became luxuriant again.” This [episode refers to] a tree, which was dead in a garden during the Kaigen 開元 era (713–741) when the Emperor Xuan zong 玄宗皇帝 (685–762) ordered Vajrabodhi to pray for seven days. [This story is reported] in the *Jōgeroku* that was presented to Emperor Dezong 德宗 (742–805), the fourth generation emperor [after Xuan zong]. Moreover, the Batō 馬頭 [Kannon] ceremonial manual (*giki* 儀軌) reports that: “The spell master (*jushi* 咒師) must not eat for one day. If he cannot resist the hunger, he can only drink buttermilk (*so* 蘇).” In the ritual of the emissaries of Fudō [Myōō] (*Fudō shisha no hō* 不動使者の法) it is reported that: “[The practitioner] should not drink water for one day and one night.”<sup>117</sup>

The partial abstention from certain types of food during a stipulated period of time was performed by the *nenbutsu kō* members as an additional ascetic practice, which was associated with the constant recitation of the buddha’s name, in order to increase the power of

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<sup>116</sup>. The term *mako* could be a phonetic transliteration of a Sanskrit word but its meaning is obscure. It could perhaps indicate a woman or a lover. I am thankful to Professor Iyanaga Nobumi for pointing out this lexical aspect to me.

<sup>117</sup>. For the original text see Okumura Takahiko, “Fujiki kuyō—shinkō no yōsō wo chūshin toshite—,” 10.

their oral chantings and the possibility to realizing their vows. At the same time, the fact that Śākyamuni fasted under the guidance of a non-Buddhist master and eventually decided to stop this type of extreme asceticism exposed the *nenbutsu kō* members who practiced the *fujiki kuyō* to the risk of being branded as heterodox practitioners.

Analyzing the names of the *nenbutsu kō* members, which were carved on the stelae built after the completion of the *fujiki kuyō*, it is evident that this type of *kuyō* was originally practiced by mixed groups of male and female devotees, but toward the second half of the seventeenth century it became an almost exclusive practice for the female members of the confraternities. This perception of the *fujiki kuyō* as an ascetic practice particularly suitable for female practitioners could have been motivated by the great diffusion of this passage of the *Shō kanzeon bosatsu shōfuku dokugai daraniju kyō* 請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼呪經 among a broad swathe of the rural classes during the sixteenth century.<sup>118</sup>

[The practitioner] must abstain from drinking alcohol (*fuonju* 不飲酒) and eating (*fudan* 不噉) meat. One should smear the body with ashes (*kezu shin* 灰塗身) and make aspersions with water (*sōyoku* 澡浴) in order to be purified. The practitioner does not eat (*fujiki*) the five pungent roots and any other thing with a strong smell. All the women (*fujō* 婦女) are defiled (*kaio* 穢汚) and do not obtain a rebirth in the Pure Land. [Nevertheless] being constantly mindful of the buddhas of the ten directions, or the seven buddhas [of the past], or praising with one mind the bodhisattva Avalokitêśvara and chanting his mantra [even a woman] will attain in present life (*genshin toku* 現身得) a sight of Avalokitêśvara and will realize all her good desires (*zengan* 善願). After death, in front of the buddha [she] will be forever separated from suffering.<sup>119</sup>

According to this text, abstention from certain foods (*fujiki*) helped women to eliminate

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<sup>118</sup>. This sutra was commonly known as the “Sound Contemplator Petitioning sūtra” *Shō Kanzeion kyō* 請觀世音經. It was probably translated in Chinese by the monk Zhu Nandi 竺難提 in 419 a.d and became the narrative template for the *Zenkōji engi* 善光寺緣起, which was largely diffused by the *Zenkōji hijiri* 善光寺聖 among the lay population until the end of the seventeenth century. See Miyashima Junko, *Shinano no hijiri to mokuji gyōja*, 146.

<sup>119</sup>. For the original text see *Shō kanzeon bosatsu shōfuku dokugai taraniju kyō*, T no. 1043, 20.35c3-8.



all the defilements (*kaio*) which were supposed to be embedded in the female body, realizing good desires (*zengan*) for this life, and even obtaining rebirth in the Pure Land (*ōjō*) of the buddha Amida after death. Therefore, for the female members of the *nenbutsu kō* the *fujiki kuyō* represented an *ad hoc* ascetic practice to be integrated with *nenbutsu* recitation for getting, at the same time, worldly and soteriological benefits. There are only five extant ritual manuals that provide an outline of the *fujiki kuyō*. The oldest one is the *Fujiki no nikki* 不食ノ日記, which is dated Keichō 15 (1610) and was used by a female practitioner, Osaka オサカ, who belonged to a *fujiki* confraternity in the Naga 那賀 district of Kokawachō 粉河町 village in Kii province.<sup>120</sup> It reads:

Name of the person who makes the vow to practice the *fujiki* (*fujiki shu* 不食主): Osaka オサカ. Keichō 15, earth *yang*, year of the dog, second month, eighteenth day.

The ritual fasting (*fujiki no nikki*), which [was transmitted from] Yudono Gongen ユトノコンケン and Dainichi Nyorai [to] Kōbō Daishi, takes place one day per month. Thanks to this practice (*gyō* 行) it is possible to obtain peace in the present world (*gense annon* ゲン世安ノン) and rebirth in the Pure Land after death (*goze ni ōjō* 後世ニ往生).

First month, fifteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the creation of sixty-five thousand statues of buddhas.

Second month, eighth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the construction of ten nine-storied stūpas.

Third month, fourteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the building of twenty-one large Buddhist monasteries.

Fourth month, fifteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to making offerings to ninety-nine thousand renunciants.

Fifth month, eighteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to praising the father and the mother for one year.

<sup>120</sup>. The other four texts about this practice are: the *Fujiki no nikki* (Kanbun era, 1661–1673) from Kita-azumi 北安曇 district in the Shinano province, the *Fujiki no nikki* (Enpō 9, 1681) from Kawachi 河内 village close to the city of Nagano 長野 in the Izumi province, the *Fujiki no nikki* (Genroku 15, 1701) from Naga district in the Nagatanaka 長田中 village in the Kii province, and the *Fujiki no nikki* (eighteenth century) from Toyoda 豊田 village close to the city of Sakai 堺 in the Izumi province. The narrative structures of these texts are very similar. For a detailed analysis of these written sources see Okumura Takahiko, “Fujiki no nikki no isshin shiryō,” *Rekishi kōkogaku* 20 (October 1987): 46–47.

Six month, twenty-fourth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to making a hot bath six times.  
 Seventh month, fourteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the construction of eighty-four thousand stūpas.  
 Eighth month, fifteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to making offerings for ten thousand monks six times.  
 Ninth month, nineteenth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the recitation of ten thousand parts of the Buddhist Canon (*manbu* 万部) eight times.  
 Tenth month, eighth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the performance of the three meditations (*sanzenjō* 三禪定) six times.  
 Eleventh month, twenty-fourth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to making one thousand offerings for one thousand days.  
 Twelfth month, twenty-eighth day. [The *fujiki*] corresponds to the offering of the ritual reading (*tendoku kuyō* 転読供養) of the *Daihannyakyō*.<sup>121</sup>

If this practice (*gyō* 行) is diligently performed one day per month for three years and there months, [the practitioner will obtain] peace for the present life and will surely become a buddha (*jōbutsu*) in the next one. Also the six blood relatives (*rokushin kenzoku* 六親ケンソク) [of the practitioner] will surely become buddhas. The person who performs this practice will not be reborn as an ordinary man, but will be reborn as a great king (*daiō* 大王) of the country of Magadha (Magada *no kuni* マガダ国). On these days, one must not take the rope of the horse or the ox [to go to work in the fields] and must go to [temples and shrines] to pay homage to *kami* and buddhas. One should recite the *nenbutsu* [while practicing the *fujiki*].<sup>122</sup>

It is interesting to note that independently from the deity on the behalf of which the *fujiki kuyō* was practiced, this type of ritual fasting was conceived as a secret transmission that Kūkai received from Yudono Gongen, alias Dainichi Nyorai, when he opened Mount Yudono. Therefore, already in the early Edo period the name of Yudono was used as a legitimizing mark for ritual abstention from food that was performed by lay devotees in conjunction with *nenbutsu* recitations before constructing a votive stele. An extremely interesting point of this text is that Osaka was a lay female practitioner of the Kansai region and this detail shows that

<sup>121</sup>. For the original text see Sakamoto Gen'ichi, *Hitachi no kuni nanbu no Dainichi shinkō—Dainichizuka, nenbutsu kōshu no kenkyū*— (Ushiku: Sakamoto Gen'ichi, 1988), 185.

<sup>122</sup>. For the conclusive part of this text see Okumura Takahiko, “Fujiki kuyō—shinkō no yōsō wo chūshin toshite—,” *Nihon bukkyō* 48 (March 1979): 7-8.

the geographical extension of the cult of Yudono was not limited to Kantō and Tōhoku but influenced also religious practices of devotees who lived in very distant locations.

The ritual logic of the *fujiki kuyō* was that abstention from food, which was performed by the lay practitioner once a month, corresponded to an imaginary offering of precious gifts, such as sixty-five thousand statues of Buddhas, ten nine-storied stūpas, or twenty-one Buddhist monasteries. The *fujiki kuyō* allowed single lay devotees who would never have been able to make such expensive donations with their limited capital to transform their ritual fasting into precious gifts to accumulate merit. Nevertheless, *fujiki kuyō* was not a practice without risks. For instance, the *Fujiki no nikki* (Enpō 9, 1681) of Kawachi village in Izumi province reports that an incorrect (*hihō* 非法) or irregular performance of the *fujiki kuyō* condemned the practitioner and all his relatives to be reborn in the *avīci* hell (*mugen jigoku* 無間地獄).<sup>123</sup> The women who performed the *fujiki kuyō* were responsible not only for the accumulation of positive karma for themselves and six generations of relatives but also, in case of failure, for the ruin of the entire family.

The three years and three months during which the *fujiki kuyō* took place created a sort of temporal conflation with the duration of the *sennichigyō* performed by the *issei gyōnin*. In other words, the *fujiki kuyō* was an edulcorate form of *sennichigyō* for lay practitioners, and in particular female lay practitioners, who could not permanently abstain from food and ordinary activities like the professional ascetics of Yudono. Nevertheless, the benefits of the *fujiki kuyō* were enormous as testified by the concluding passage of the text, where the practitioner is said to be reborn in the country of Magadha, representing an ideal pure space rather than a real geographical territory.

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<sup>123</sup>. For the original text see *Ibid.*, 8.

The most ancient example of *fujiki kuyō* is a stele in the precincts of Fukutokuji 福德寺, which was sponsored by a group of female lay donors who belonged to the confraternity of Yudono Gongen (Yudono Gongen *shū* 湯殿権現衆) in Eiroku 永祿 10 (1567) in Sakai 堺 town on the southern outskirts of Ōsaka. In the lower part of the stele there is a bass-relief of Kūkai in a seated position making the *mudrā* of the bestower of fearlessness (*semui'in* 施無畏印) with the right hand and holding a lotus flower in the left. At the top part, above the head of Kūkai, Mount Yudono is represented through the lines of a written invocation, which are carefully disposed in order to form the silhouette of the sacred mountain. The text of this inscription is as follows.

[...] Praise be to the buddha Amida and the original vow (*hongan* 本願) to seek enlightenment (*dōshin* 道心) of the buddha Mida (Mida butsu 弥陀佛). We, members of the confraternity of Yudono Gongen (Yudono Gongen *shū* 湯殿権現衆), erected [this stele]. The members of our congregation [abstained from] food (*jikishū* 食衆) and on the last day of our practice (*kechigan* 結願) our vows were realized (*gan jōju*) [...].<sup>124</sup>

Before and after these central strings of characters there are many names of female practitioners written between the various compounds that emphasize the attainment of a pure condition for the female body in order to have access to the Pure Land of Amida Nyorai. The magical use of the written characters in this inscription is evident from the repetition of certain compounds such “marvelous woman-path” (*myō nyodō* 妙女道) that served more for their talismanic and invocatory aspect than for the syntactic organization of the text. Using the writing technique of the *technopaegna* in which the disposition of the written characters of the text represents the shape of the object to which the narrative content refers, the female

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<sup>124</sup>. For the original text see Okumura Takahiko, “Fujiki kuyō no kenkyū (3),” *Shiseki to bijutsu* 43, no. 9 (December 1973): 341-342.

practitioners of Sakai town created a written icon of Mount Yudono (See Fig. 5.13). In this case the calligraphic body of the mountain was made of characters that exalted the female practitioners' perseverance in performing the *fujiki kuyō*, the attainment of purity for their bodies, and their consequent access to the Pure Land.

It is also relevant to take into account that the inscription of this stele does not clearly mention the term *fujiki* but substitutes it with the expression “food congregation” (*jikishū*). This lexical choice could be due to the fact that the *fujiki kuyō* was a ritual practice divided into two halves. The *fujiki* part that corresponded to an ascetic abstention from specific foods once a month for three years, and the *kuyō* part that corresponded to an offering ceremony during which the practitioners actually presented purified food offerings (*saijiki* 齋食) for the deities.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the term *jikishū* could indicate a congregation of female devotees who abstained from certain foods, made *nenbutsu* recitations, and finally built a votive stele in front of which they presented food offerings to Amida Nyorai and Yudono Gongen. In other words, even if *fujiki kuyō* was a religious practice that imposed serious limitations on the ingestion of food by practitioners, at the same time, it put great emphasis on the purity of the foodstuffs that were presented to the deities during the offering ceremony.

It is difficult to single out the type of religious professionals that diffused the practice of *fujiki kuyō* and the consequent devotional reference to Yudono among the population starting from the sixteenth century. Probably it was not a single class of religious professionals but a plurality of them. For instance, in Genroku 16 (1703) the *fujiki* confraternity (*fujiki kō* 不食講) of Uchidachō 打田町 village in the Naga district of Kii province donated two altar-lanterns (*kanadōrō* 金灯籠) to the temple Kannonji 観音寺. The metal inscription engraved

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<sup>125</sup> Miyashima Junko, “Tanzei ippa ni okeru Dainichi shinkō,” in *Indogaku mikkyōgaku kenkyū: Miyasaka Yūshō hakase koki kinen ronbunshū*, vol. 2, ed. Miyasaka Yūshō (Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1993), 1277.

on the two lavishly decorated objects reveals that the members of this *fujiki kō* belonged to the parish of Haruyama gyōdō (Haruyama gyōdō *kasumi* 春山行道霞).<sup>126</sup> The use of the Shugendō term *kasumi* to indicate the geographical origin of the *fujiki kō* members shows that the Katsuragi *shugenja* probably played a pivotal role in leading the lay devotees who practiced the *fujiki kuyō* and expanding the cult of Mount Yudono in the villages between Ōsaka and Mount Katsuragi.

During the sixteenth century itinerant ascetics such as Kōya *hijiri* and Zenkōji *hijiri* were particularly active in spreading esoteric types of *nenbutsu* recitations among the rural classes in Kansai and Kantō. Judging from the concentration of *fujiki kuyō* stelae on the ground, these itinerant ascetics focused their proselytization activities in the villages around Ōsaka, at the foot of Mount Kōya, in the northern part of Shinano province, in the southern part of Hitachi province, and in the northern part of Musashi province. It is possible that the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono collaborated or formed sort of devotional networks with such *hijiri*, with whom they shared various similarities in terms of ritual procedures and doctrinal teachings.

The *fujiki kuyō* was an adaptive and porous ceremony that was performed within various devotional backgrounds and on the behalf of different deities. Nevertheless, in every case the legitimizing discourse for its practice was attributed to the secret transmission that Kūkai received from Yudono Gongen when he made a pilgrimage to this sacred mountain. Thanks to this semiotic link between the *fujiki kuyō* and Mount Yudono, some important elements of the cult of this mountain reached various strata of the population located in extremely distant territories from Dewa province.

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<sup>126</sup>. For the original text see Okumura Takahiko, “Fujiki kuyō denpansha ni tsuite no ikkōsai: kasumi to fujiki kuyō,” *Rekishi kōkogaku* 7 (September 1981): 23.

## 4.2. *Toki Nenbutsu* and Tenkai's Manji

The ritual symbiosis between *fujiki kuyō* and *nenbutsu* recitation was so pervasive that in the early seventeenth century a sort of fusion took place between them and gave rise to a new type of *nenbutsu*: the *toki nenbutsu*. Like the *fujiki kuyō*, the *toki nenbutsu* too was related to the cult of Mount Yudono and became particularly diffused in Hitachi, Shimōsa, and Musashi provinces. For instance, in the precincts of Kannonji 観音寺 temple in the city of Tsukuba there is a stele with a bas-relief of a Big-nose Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono with the following inscription.

SUN MOON

In this place for three years [we] practiced seclusion rituals, alimentary abstentions, and food offerings while chanting the *nen[butsu]* (時日記念 *toki nikki nen[butsu]*) [in order to] realize our vows (*jōju*).<sup>127</sup>

A confraternity (*ikkeshū*) of almost sixty persons.

Kan'ei 4 (1627), fire *yin*, year of the rabbit, eleventh month, twentieth day.

With respect Rokubē 六兵衛.<sup>128</sup>

In the religious context of the Kantō villages the meaning attributed the term *toki* derived from the conflation of ritual elements that came from the Shintō and Buddhist ceremonial tradition. In the *Jingiryō* 神祇令 section of the *Taihō ritsuryō* (Taihō 1, 701) the word *sai* 齋, which is expressed through the character 時 in this inscription, indicates a period of abstention and seclusion (*imigomori* 忌籠り) from the contact with corpses (*chōsō* 弔喪),

<sup>127</sup>. In the inscriptions of the stelae the character 齋 is often replaced with the character 時, which was easier to engrave and could be read as *toki*. In the same way, the concept of “daily ingestion of purified food” (*nikki* 日食) is often hidden behind the phonetic characters *nikki* 日記.

<sup>128</sup>. For the original text and a picture of this stele see Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan'ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 15, 313.

illness (*byō* 病), and meat (*shishi* 肉) in order to reach a status of ritual purity. In the Buddhist context the term *toki* 齋 was associated with the prohibition for monks to ingest food during an inappropriate time (*hiji jiki* 非時食), i.e. after noon. According to the monastic regulations about the moral precepts (*kairitsu* 戒律) all the food eaten after noon was to be considered as an unsuitable nourishment (*fusai jiki* 不齋食). During the purificatory rituals (*kessai* 潔齋), which anticipated the worshipping and sūtra-reading assemblies (*hōe* 法会), monks were used to present offerings of purified food (*saie* 齋会) to the deities. At the end of the *saie* monks ate a vegetarian meal (*shōjin kessai* 精進潔齋) that was supposed to be over before noon (*saijiki*).<sup>129</sup>

During the empowerment of the stelae, the *toki nenbutsu kō* members practiced rituals of abstention and self-seclusion, which were very similar to the Shintō use of the term *sai*. At the same time they respected the temporal limitations and vegetarian prescriptions, which characterized the Buddhist meaning attributed to the term *toki* according to the *kairitsu* regulations. This sort of ceremonial overlapping between the Shintō and Buddhist notions of *sai* and *toki* led the members of the *toki nenbutsu kō* to perform a sort of “sacred commensality” (*kyōdo inshoku* 共同飲食), which did not simply take place between themselves but included also food sharing between them and the elective deities.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, the term *nikki* indicated the daily ingestion of purified aliments (*nikki* 日食) by the members of the *nenbutsu* confraternity who prepared them on the same purified flame (*doka dojiki* 同

<sup>129</sup>. Gorai Shigeru, *Sō to kuyō*, vol. 2 [coll. Gorai Shigeru chosakushū, vol. 11] (1992; repr., Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2009), 309-310.

<sup>130</sup>. Some inscriptions of stelae, which were erected after the completion of the *toki nenbutsu*, report the compound *jikidoki* 食時 to indicate the period of ritual abstention from certain foods. The term *jikidoki* had a calendrical function and indicated the period of the day in which the deity of the shooting star, Tengu 天狗, descended on the earth for absorbing the nourishment of the aliments. During the *jikidoki* human beings were supposed to abstain from food in order to not disturb the Tengu’s banquet. See Tokuhara Satoyuki, *Jōsō kan’ei ki no Dainichi sekibutsu*, 252-253.



火同食) that was used to cook the food offerings for the deities (*nitsuku* 日供).<sup>131</sup> Because the *nenbutsu* recitation was a ritual practice that constantly accompanied the *toki* and *nikki* ceremonies, the inscriptions of the stelae often make reference to all these complex ritual procedures with the abbreviated expressions of *toki nenbutsu* and *nikki nenbutsu*.

The *toki nenbutsu* ritual could last for three years but did not take place every day because it would have been impossible for lay practitioners to constantly respect these strict diet limitations without interruptions. Like the *fujiki kuyō* also the *toki nenbutsu* was performed only in specific days of the month, which were called *rokusai nichi* 六齋日 and corresponded to the eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, twenty-third, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth day of the month. During these six days of the month lay practitioners were supposed to follow the eight pure precepts (Skt. *poṣadha*; *hassaikai* 八齋戒) that characterized the moral conduct of the monks. Among these precepts the eighth, which concerned the prohibition to eat food after noon (*hiji jiki*), was considered the most important and was specifically associated with the eighth day of the month that corresponded to the first day of the *rokusai nichi*.<sup>132</sup> For instance, the *Shindō Butsudō nenbutsu tonaebon* 神道仏道念仏唱本 (eighteenth century), which is a ritual manual used by the *toki nenbutsu* members of the Moriyachō 守谷町 village in the Hitachi province, report the following instruction about the frequency of this practice.

[The practitioner] must have a peaceful and steady attitude toward the skillful mean (*hōben*) through which Dainichi Nyorai of Haguro in the Dewa province of the Ōshū region aids, liberates, and bestows benefits to sentient beings (*saidō risei* 濟度利生). He

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<sup>131</sup>. Tokuhara Satoyuki, “Hana no ōkina Dainichi sama. Hana no takai Dainichi sama,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 21 (December 1982): 28-29. See also Sakamoto Gen’ichi, “Yudonosan shinkō to Tsukuba shugen—mandara, nenbutsu tonaebon wo chūshin toshite—,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 25 (December 1986): 24-25.

<sup>132</sup>. The *hassaikai* are: not to kill (*sesshō* 殺生); not to take things not give; not to have an ignoble sexual conduct (*hibonkyō* 非梵行); not to speak falsely; not to drink alcohol (*inju* 飲酒); not to use cosmetics, jewelry, or performing dances or singing; not to sleep on beds or seats that are high off the ground; and not to eat out of regulation hours (*hiji jiki*).

must make the vow to practice (*gangyō*) the *toki nenbutsu* for three times in a day once per the month (*tsuki ni mikka* 月に三日).<sup>133</sup> He must purified from the defilements of the ordinary men making ablutions with pure water (*sosogi* 雪ぎ) and wearing a jewel-crown (*hōkan*) of seven *shaku* and five *sun* on his head.<sup>134</sup>

Besides the temporal indications for correctly performing the *toki nenbutsu* this text shows that during the shift from the *fujiki kuyō* to the *toki nenbutsu* the gender of the practitioners also changed. While the *fujiki kuyō* progressively became a practice for female devotees, the *toki nenbutsu* was mostly performed by male practitioners who were often *nobori kudari no gyōnin* of the Yudonosan *kō*, as testified by the ritual attire and ascetic practices prescribed in the passage. Every day the members of the *toki nenbutsu* congregations chanted for one-hundred or one-thousand times short *nenbutsu* recitations (*nikka nenbutsu* 日課念仏) that were upgraded to *toki nenbutsu* ceremonies during the *rokusai nichī*.

The fact that the first day of the *rokusai nichī* was considered to be the most ritually relevant for the practice of the *toki nenbutsu* created a semiotic conflation between the eighth day of the month, the purificatory practices (*sai*), the abstention from food (*toki*), and the cult of Mount Yudono. This was probably the reason for the great diffusion of the name Yōkakō 八日講, which can be translated as “religious confraternity of the eighth day,” among the various appellatives of the Yudonosan *kō*.<sup>135</sup> For instance, in the conclusive sections of the *Rokuza nenbutsu tonaebon: fujiki no nikki* 六座念仏唱本 不食ノ日記 (Meiwa 8, 1771), a

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<sup>133</sup>. In other texts the practitioners must perform the *toki nenbutsu* three times during the day and three times during the night (*mikka mitsuya* 三日三夜).

<sup>134</sup>. For the original text see Sakamoto Gen'ichi, “Yudonosan shinkō to Tsukuba shugen—mandara, nenbutsu tonaebon wo chūshin toshite—,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 25: 25.

<sup>135</sup>. For a detailed analysis of the religious meanings attributed to the eighth day of the month during the Edo period and a reference to the Yōkakō, see Suzuki Masataka, “Nenbutsu to shugen—Chibaken Funabashi-shi no tentō nenbutsu no jirei kara—,” in *Fugeki mōsō no denshō sekai*, vol. 3, eds. Fukuda Akira, Yamashita Kin'ichi (Tōkyō: Miyai shoten, 2006), 120-126.

*nenbutsu* manual of the Tonechō 利根町 village that is divided in six main parts (*rokuza* 六座) and twenty-eight sub-parts, it is reported the following explanation about the link between the *toki nenbutsu* practice and the cult of Mount Yudono.<sup>136</sup>

24) Transfer of merits [through the recitation] of the *toki nenbutsu*.

The *toki nenbutsu* was created in the capital of a different [Buddha's] land (*tato miyako wo tatetamau* 他土都立給). Standing in front of (*onmai* 御前) Dainichi Nyorai on Mount Yudono in Dewa [province] in this world (*futen sotto* 普天率土) Kōbō Daishi received the transmission (*gosōden* 御相伝) [of the *toki nenbutsu*] and diffused it in order to convert and convey to salvation (*kedo* 化度) all sentient beings. In the year of the tiger, wood yang (*kinoe tora* 甲寅),<sup>137</sup> third month, twenty-first day [Kōbō Daishi] entered into deep meditation (*nyūjō*) and recited the *nenbutsu* down to the present without interruption. If a person [fulfills the vow] to recite [the *toki nenbutsu*] for three years and three months (*sannen mitsuki jōjū no hito* 三年三月成就人), old and young, men and women without exception (*rōnyaku nannyo nokorinaku* 老若男女無残), all will obtain incommensurable joys in this world (*gense muhi no ukefuku* 現世無比之諸樂) and will for sure become a buddha in the higher level of the Pure Land in the future (*mirai wa jōbon jōdo jōbutsu utagai nashi* 未来ハ上品浄土 成仏無疑).

[...]

26) Meaning of the [*toki nenbutsu*] formula.

The *toki nenbutsu* [refers to] Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai in the province of Dewa (Dewa no kuni Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai 出羽国湯殿山大日如来). Standing in front of [Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono] Kōbō Daishi [was initiated to the *toki nenbutsu*] and transmitted [it] to save all the sentient beings. [Kōbō Daishi] diffused [this type of *nenbutsu* according to which one must] perform purificatory ablutions (*kori shōjin* 垢離精進) three times during the day and three times during the night (*mikka mitsuya*), eat purified food and self-seclude (*sai*) while reciting *nenbutsu* for one day and one night (*ichinichi ichiya* 一日一夜).

[...]

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<sup>136</sup>. The village of Tonechō is in present-day Ibaraki prefecture.

<sup>137</sup>. This temporal indication could indicate Jōwa 承和 1 (834), which is the year before the Kūkai's death of Kūkai.

28) Introduction to the *rokuza nenbutsu* according to the *Rokuza nenbutsu yōshū* 六座念佛要集.

We praise and give thanks for the benefits of all the *kami* and all the bodhisattvas of the various mountains and peaks of Yudonosan, Gassan, and Hagurosan.

Homage to the buddha Amida. Homage to the buddha Amida.<sup>138</sup>

It is interesting to note that the narrative explanation about the divine origins of the *toki nenbutsu* is identical to the one, which was used to provide legitimacy to the *fujiki kuyō* that was practiced toward the end of the sixteenth century in the villages close to Mount Katsuragi. In other words, the male members of the *toki nenbutsu kō* adopted the explanatory and ceremonial procedures of the *fujiki kuyō*, which consequently became an almost exclusive women's practice, for their monthly rituals to venerate Mount Yudono. According to this text during the *rokusai nichi* the *toki nenbutsu* practitioner had to make three purificatory ablutions and *nenbutsu* recitations in the early morning (*jinchō* 晨日), midday (*nicchū* 日中), and sunset (*nichibotsu* 日没). These three ritual moments constituted the diurnal aspect (*mikka*) of the practice. Then, there were three adjunctive purificatory ablutions and *nenbutsu* recitations, which were performed during the nocturnal period (*mitsuya*) after eight (*shoya* 初夜), at midnight (*chūya* 晝夜), and before dawn (*goya* 後夜). The term *rokuza nenbutsu* derives from this peculiar triadic division of the diurnal and nocturnal time during which the *nenbutsu* practitioners performed their rituals. It is also clear that the *toki nenbutsu* was considered to be the ritual climax of a larger *nenbutsu* ceremony, which was generally defined as *rokuza nenbutsu*.

The practitioners who succeeded in performing the *toki nenbutsu* for three years and three

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<sup>138</sup>. For the original text see Sakamoto Gen'ichi, *Hitachi no kuni nanbu no Dainichi shinkō*, 182-183.

months were equated to a sort of “lay *issei gyōnin*” who had accomplished a special type of *sennichigyō* made up of *nenbutsu* recitations, ritual fasting (*toki*), and foodstuff offerings (*nikki*) at prescribed days (*rokusai nichī*) of the month. In the Shimōsa province the *toki* and *nikki nenbutsu* practices associated with the cult of Yudono were supposed to have positive soteriological effects for the liberation of the practitioners from the torments of the hells. For instance, the *Nikki nenbutsu no tonaebon* 日記念仏ノ唱本 (eighteenth century) of the Inzai 印西 village in the Bōsō peninsula reports the following explanation of the karmic effects related with a one-year performance of *nikki nenbutsu*.

The *nenbutsu* (*o nenbutsu* 才念仏) of the seventeenth day of the first month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the suffering (*ku*) of the path of the sword-mountain (*tsurugi no yamaji* 劍ノ山路).

The *nenbutsu* of the eighth day of the second month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the hungry ghosts realm and the hells.

The *nenbutsu* of the fourth day of the third month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the Infernal River (*Sanzu no kawara* 三途河原).

The *nenbutsu* of the twentieth day of the fourth month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the mountain path of the death-realm (*shide no yamaji* 死出の山路).

The *nenbutsu* of the twentieth day of the fifth month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the karmic scales of the karma (*gō no hakari* 業ノ秤).

The *nenbutsu* of the twenty-third day of the sixth month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the hells [thanks to] Kannon (Kannon *jigoku* 観音地獄).

The *nenbutsu* of the second day of the seventh month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the hell of those who take of life (*sesshō jigoku* 殺生地獄).

The *nenbutsu* of the tenth day of the eighth month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the eight great hells (*hachidai jigoku* 八大地獄).

The *nenbutsu* of the third day of the ninth month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the Avīci hell (*mugen jigoku* 無間地獄).

The *nenbutsu* of the ninth day of the tenth month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the beasts hell (*chikushō jigoku* 畜生地獄).

The *nenbutsu* of the first day of the eleventh month allows [the practitioner] to escape from the pain of the hell of the pond of blondblood-pool hell (*chi no ike jigoku* 血ノ池地獄).

The *nenbutsu* of the tenth day of the twelfth month allows [the practitioner] to escape

from the pain of the one hundred thirty-six hells and the six nights hell (*ippyakusanjū-roku jigoku rokuya jigoku* 一百三十六地獄六夜地獄).

The person who always performs [the *nikki nenbutsu*] during the twelve “moons without waters” (*minatsuki* 水無月) for one year,<sup>139</sup> will be protected from calamities, attain peace in the present life, and will become a buddha in the next one.<sup>140</sup>

In this case the practice of the *nikki nenbutsu* did not follow the temporal division based on the *rokusai nichi* but an alternative ceremonial procedure that was calibrated according to the changes in the lunar phases (*minatsuki*). This text shows that once the cult of Yudono became associated with specific ritual practices such as the *fujiki kuyō*, the *toki* or *nikki nenbutsu* it expanded its religious relevance penetrating a multiplicity of heterogeneous cultural fields, which went from the attainment of worldly benefits in the present life, to the elimination of the defilements, and the creation of positive soteriological effects for the next rebirth.<sup>141</sup>

A fundamental aspect of all these types of popular *nenbutsu* (*minkan nenbutsu* 民間念仏) was the absence of regular Buddhist monks as leaders of the *nenbutsu* confraternities, which were exclusively administered by special types of religious professionals such as *issei gyōnin*, *shugenja*, *sabutsu hijiri*, and *Zenkōji hijiri*. In the Kan'ei era, Tenkai requested that all

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<sup>139</sup>. The term *minazuki* usually indicates the moon of the sixth month of the lunar calendar. In this context it probably refers to a lunar phase during which the dew is supposed to moisten the fields (*mi no zuki* 水の月).

<sup>140</sup>. For the original text see *Bōsō no sekibutsu hyakusen*, ed. Bosō sekizō bunkazai kenkyūkai (Kashiwa: Takeshima shuppan, 2010), 50.

<sup>141</sup>. About the soteriological effects of the *nenbutsu* recitations related with Mount Yudono it is interesting to note that in the village of Kita-aikimura 北相木村 in Shinano province the confraternity of Shira-iwa women (Shira-iwa nyōnin *kō* 白岩女人講) chanted a special type of *nenbutsu* called “pillow *nenbutsu*” (*makura nenbutsu* 枕念仏) at the deathbed in order to appease the spirit of the dead. The initial part says: “If you forget the choral *nenbutsu* (*o-so[ro]ji no o-nenbutsu* おそ[ろ]いのおねんぶつ) of the Dharma land, bright, Tanzei, [you can recite] even one time the rice-*nenbutsu* (*gohan no o-nenbutsu* ごはんのおねぶつ) of Kōbō Daishi of Mount Yudono (Yudono no *oyama no Kōbō Daishi* ゆどののおやまのこうぼうだいし) and Dainichi Nyorai in order to send benefits to the father. *Yūzū nenbutsu*, homage to Amida. The equation between the *nenbutsu* transmitted by the *sabutsu hijiri* Tanzei Shōnin and the *nenbutsu* associated with Kūkai and Mount Yudono should be noted. For more details about this type of *nenbutsu* and for the original text see Miyashima Junko, *Nazo no sekibutsu*, 127.

religious professionals affiliated with the branch temples of Tōeizan transmit only standardized forms of *nenbutsu* recitations, which had to be based on the *yūzū nenbutsu* of the Tendai tradition. For instance, in the letter *Yūzu nenbutsu gutsū shuin jō* 融通念仏弘通朱印状 (Kan'ei 16, 1639) Tenkai gave the *sabutsu hijiri* Tanshō the following instructions about the ritual modalities to follow during the *nenbutsu* recitation.

I order the branch temples of Tōeizan to follow the Tendai transmission (*tairei no hōryū* 台嶺之法流) for the performance (*gyōgō* 行業) of the *yūzū nenbutsu* that must be based on the vow and practice (*gangyō* 願行) of Ryōnin 良忍 (1073-1132) and must follow the flavor of the Dharma (*hōmi* 法味) of Tōshō Daigongen 東照大権現.<sup>142</sup>

It is important to take into account that Tenkai did not try to remove the various types of ascetics who had always have been the leaders of the *nenbutsu* confraternities in order to impose a Tendai style of *nenbutsu* through regular Buddhist monks. On the contrary, he relied on the enormous charisma that *hijiri* and ascetics had on their groups of lay devotees to foster a homogenization of the various styles of *nenbutsu*. Thanks to this operation the *nenbutsu* leaders could add a patina of legal legitimacy for their practices, which were included within the Tendai *yūzū nenbutsu* tradition, and, in return, Tenkai could levy a tax on the incomes that derived from the administration of the *nenbutsu* confraternities.

Miyashima Junko points out that the almost ubiquitous presence of a big clockwise *manji* on the the front side of various stelae dedicated to Yudono in the Kantō provinces could be interpreted not only as the Buddhist symbol for the origin of the all dharmas (*mansō* 万相) but also as a visual *imprimatur* of Tenkai for authorizing the *toki* and *nikki nenbutsu*

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<sup>142</sup>. For the original text see Miyashima Junko, “Kinsei ni okeru Kanntō, Shinano no yūzū nenbutsu,” in *Yūzū nenbutsu shinkō no rekishi to bijutsu—ronkōhen*, ed. Yūzū nenbutsu shūkyōgaku kenkyūjo (Tōkyō: Tōkyō bijutsu, 2000), 128.

recitations. In other words, the *hijiri* and *issei gyōnin* who diffused *nenbutsu* practices and devotional stelae dedicated to the cult of Mount Yudono in the Kantō provinces could have taken advantage of Tenkai's legal protection to perform their religious practices among the population and formalized this *do ut des* relationship by carving this type of "license" as a clockwise *manji* on the front of the stelae.<sup>143</sup>

In Kanbun 5 (1665) the Tokugawa *bakufu* issued an edict that officially prohibited Buddhist monks from preaching in public spaces (*hōdan* 法談) and becoming leaders of *nenbutsu* confraternities (*nenbutsu kō*).<sup>144</sup> The major concerns of the *bakufu* was to avoid the formation of large concentrations of people that could be instigated by religious leaders, namely monks, against the central government. On the other hand, this edict paradoxically reinforced the *issei gyōnin*, *hijiri*, and *shugenja* leadership of the *nenbutsu* confraternities that proliferated as a sort of village organizations independent from the monastic control. For instance, in the Hokutoji 北斗寺 temple in the Shimokurihara 下栗原 district of the Sakuramura 桜村 village in the Hitachi province it is conserved the text of a legal dispute that took place between the lay members of a *toki* and *nikki nenbutsu kō* and the monks of a temple in the same village.

During the exchange of communications about the offering ceremony of the *toki nenbutsu* and *nikki nenbutsu* (*toki nenbutsu nikki nenbutsu kuyō* 時念仏日記念仏供養) between the Chifukuji 地福寺 and the Iōji 医王寺 [we] requested that the main temple, Nichirinji 日輪寺, took take care of [our] project (*ochūsaku* 御籌策).<sup>145</sup> It was decided that two stelae would be built, and each temple would have taken care of one. Since the time of the opening of Mount Dainichi (Dainichizan *kaizan* 大日山開山) [it was decided] in a general meeting with all the villagers (*murachū sōdan* 村中相談) to nominate Iōji as

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<sup>143</sup>. See Miyashima Junko, *Nazo no sekibutsu*, 170.

<sup>144</sup>. For the original text of this edict see Tamamuro Fumio, *Edo bakufu no shūkyō tōsei* (Tōkyō: Hyōronsha, 1971): 97.

<sup>145</sup>. Chifukuji and Iōji were branch temples of Nichirinji.



administrator (*bettō*) [of this mountain]. In the above indicated year, at the moment of holding the offering ceremony of the *toki nenbutsu*, there did exist (*magire mo naku* 紛無) a letter from Iōji to Hokutoji to ask for the permission [to hold our *toki* and *nikki nenbutsu* ceremonies]. As this was confirmed, the administration of the stelae built on Mount Dainichi should be entrusted to the [Iōji] *bettō*. As this was also ratified [in our meetings] we politely send this request to you.

Kanbun 7 (1667), year of the sheep, tenth month, twenty-seventh day, Shimo Kurihara village.

[From]

Chifukuji, seal.

Sōbē 惣兵衛, seal.

Chūbē 忠兵衛, seal.

Dengobē 伝五兵衛, seal.

[To]

Iōji<sup>146</sup>

Even if the exact details of the dispute remain obscure, this text shows that all the requests about the ritual administration and construction of the two stelae on the top of Mount Dainichi, which actually was a large Yudono *tsuka* in the village of Sakuramura, were advanced by the lay practitioners who belonged to the *toki* and *nikki nenbutsu* confraternities. The *nenbutsu kō* members appointed the Iōji *bettō* as the administrator of the land of Mount Dainichi, but the ritual rights for the ceremonies that concerned the empowerment of the two stelae remained a prerogative of the lay devotees of these *nenbutsu* confraternities.<sup>147</sup>

It can be said that regular Buddhist monks remained marginal actors in the organization of *matsuri*, *nenbutsu* recitations, and erection of stelae dedicated to the cult of Yudono. Their relevance was limited to the bureaucratic level, while *hijiri*, *issei gyōnin*, and lay devotees

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<sup>146</sup>. For the original text see Tokuhara Satoyuki, “Hana no ōkina Dainichi sama, hana no takai Dainichi sama,” *Ibaraki no minzoku* 21: 29.

<sup>147</sup>. *Ibid.*: 30-31.

took care of all the pivotal aspects of the administration of the cult that became a devotional operation totally governed by villagers and non-monastic religious professionals. At the same time, some high ranking monks such as Tenkai tried to take advantage of these devotional networks offering legitimacy for their practices and guaranteeing protection from the oppressive regulations issued by the *bakufu* on religious matters. The price that *nenbutsu kō* leaders and members had to pay in return for being located under the protective sphere of Tenkai's protection was prevalently monetary and probably left their ritual practices in the original form.

## 5. Conclusions

Yudono was always perceived by its devotees as a secret, silent, and hidden mountain that could not be described in any way, neither through voice, nor through written words, nor through images. Nevertheless, as Fabio Rambelli points out: "Absence of representation is [...] not an absence of signification."<sup>148</sup> The analysis of the rich material culture that proliferated around the faith in Mount Yudono from the late sixteenth century to the end of the Edo period specifically testifies the powerful presence of Yudono in the real world thanks to a polyphony of material signs, symbols, and practices such as *tsuka*, stelae, and *nenbutsu* recitations, which transformed its 'mystical *absentia*' into a 'devotional *praesentia*.'

The *kanjō* of Yudono, which was often followed by the *kanjō* of Haguro and Gassan, in various sacred mountains and standard rural villages in Kantō and Tōhoku regions during the

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<sup>148</sup>. Fabio Rambelli, *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics*, 11.

Kan'ei era constituted the first important step for the diffusion of its cult beyond the borders of the Dewa province. The analysis of the stelae linked to the *fujiki kuyō* demonstrates that already in the mid-sixteenth century the name of Yudono Gongen was associated with a special type of ritual fast, which was performed by groups of female *nenbutsu* reciters in the southern area of Ōsaka. Even if the textual and material traces about Yudono cult in the medieval period are extremely scarce, it is reasonable to think that already in the sixteenth century the cult of this mountain and its divine pantheon was already well established among large strata of population that equally included members of the elite as well as the subaltern classes.

It is impossible to clearly single out all the social actors that contributed to spreading the devotion in Yudono. Nevertheless, it is clear that there was a plurality of religious professionals and lay devotees that gave their creative contribution to fostering this cult. These propagators belonged to the religious elite of the Buddhist world such as Tenkai, but also to its fringes such as the *issei gyōnin* and the *sabutsu hijiri*. The same thing can be said for the lay devotees of Yudono who included a vast range social actors from the *sengoku daimyō* such as Naoe Kanetsugu and Mogami Yoshiaki to the small peasants (*kobyakushō*) who sponsored the construction of Yudono stelae in order to elevate their social position within the village. This aspects show the transversality and non-exclusivity of the devotional discourses linked with Mount Yudono that were transmitted thanks to the synergic interactions of social agencies, which moved freely from the top level of society to the bottom one and vice versa.

Compared with extremely popular bodhisattvas such as Jizō and Kannon, and widely venerated buddhas such as Amida Nyorai and Yakushi Nyorai, the cult of Dainichi Nyorai has

never succeeded in capturing the devotional attentions of large strata of society, in particular the religious discourses of those who belonging to the subaltern classes. The case of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai and Yudono Gongen is a significant exception. The high degree of presentiality and spatial localization of this type of Dainichi Nyorai, which was materially represented by the rock-body of Gohōzen, allowed large numbers of lay devotees to develop a sort of intimacy and proximity with this buddha that was hitherto perceived as a remote entity confined in the unfathomable realm of esoteric texts and rituals. Thanks to their association with Mount Yudono the *issei gyōnin* could transmit a local version of the faith in Dainichi Nyorai transforming this buddha into a rural deity that bestowed fertility on the fields, prosperity in this life, and soteriological support for the next one.

A fundamental contribution for the reification and material visualization of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai derived from the construction of numerous *tsuka* or stelae with special types of bas-reliefs, seminal letters, and inscriptions dedicated to this deity. Because these stelae, in the same way of the *tsuka*, were conceived as material bodies of Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai, they provided the devotees with the chance to increase their physical and ritual proximity with this deity and, at the same time, allowed Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai to directly access the everyday reality of the believers. The stele became a sort of fulcrum for the economic, political, and religious activities of three groups of social actors: *hongan*, *seshu*, and *sekkō*. The empowerment of the stele derived from the intense interweaving of lay and religious practices that anticipated the creation of the object per se. Once the stelae was erected, it started emanating benefits not only for those persons who directly contributed to its creation but also for all the other inhabitants of the village.

In this way stelae and *tsuka* of Yudono became indelible mediators that kept transmitting

the cult of Yudono and inspiring a multiplicity of religious practices such as the *toki* or *nikki nenbutsu* recitations. For what concerns the types of *nenbutsu* associated with the Yudono cult it is important to note that they were not simple invocatory recitations, which engaged only the oral dimension of the devotee, but were rather extreme ascetic practices that involved the entire physicality of the reciters. In other words, the boom of the Yudono cult in the Edo period was based on the iteration of *kanjō* rituals in various sacred mountains as well as anonymous villages in Kantō and Tōhoku, the proliferation of *tsuka* and stelae in the areas where *issei gyōnin* performed their proselytizing activities, and the diffusion of special models of *kuyō* and *nenbutsu* such as *fujiki kuyō*, *toki nenbutsu*, and *nikki nenbutsu* among a great number of religious confraternities.



Fig. 5.1 Portrait of Jigen Daishi 慈眼大師 alias Tenkai. Edo period. Hongakuin 本學院, Tōkyō.

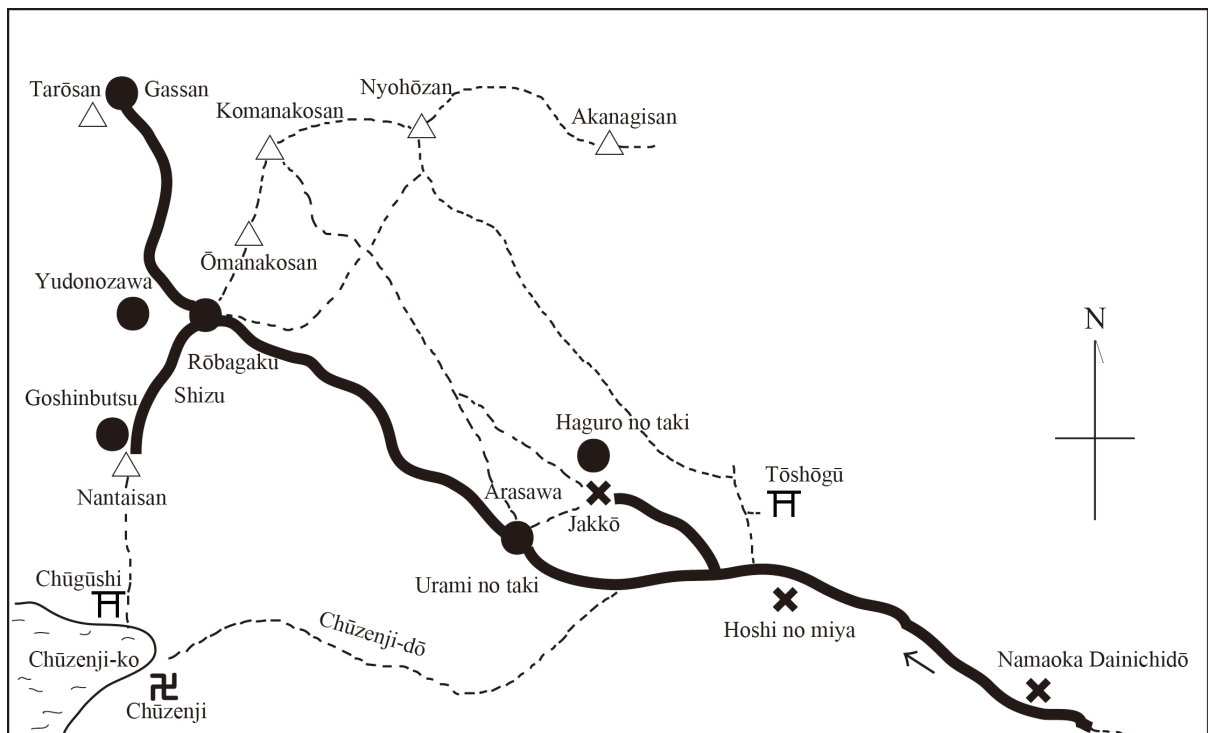


Fig. 5.2 Map of the route covered by the palanquin of Yudono Gongen at Nikkō. The x indicates the first three places visited by Yudono Gongen during the *kanjō* in 1624. The • indicates the locations of the final *mitate* between Nikkō and Dewa Sanzan in 1625. Fig. 5.2a Whirlpool of the Bonji River close to Funasawa that was venerated as a *mitate* of Gohōzen. Ishikura Shigetsuge, *Nikkō meisho zue*. Meiji 35 (1902).

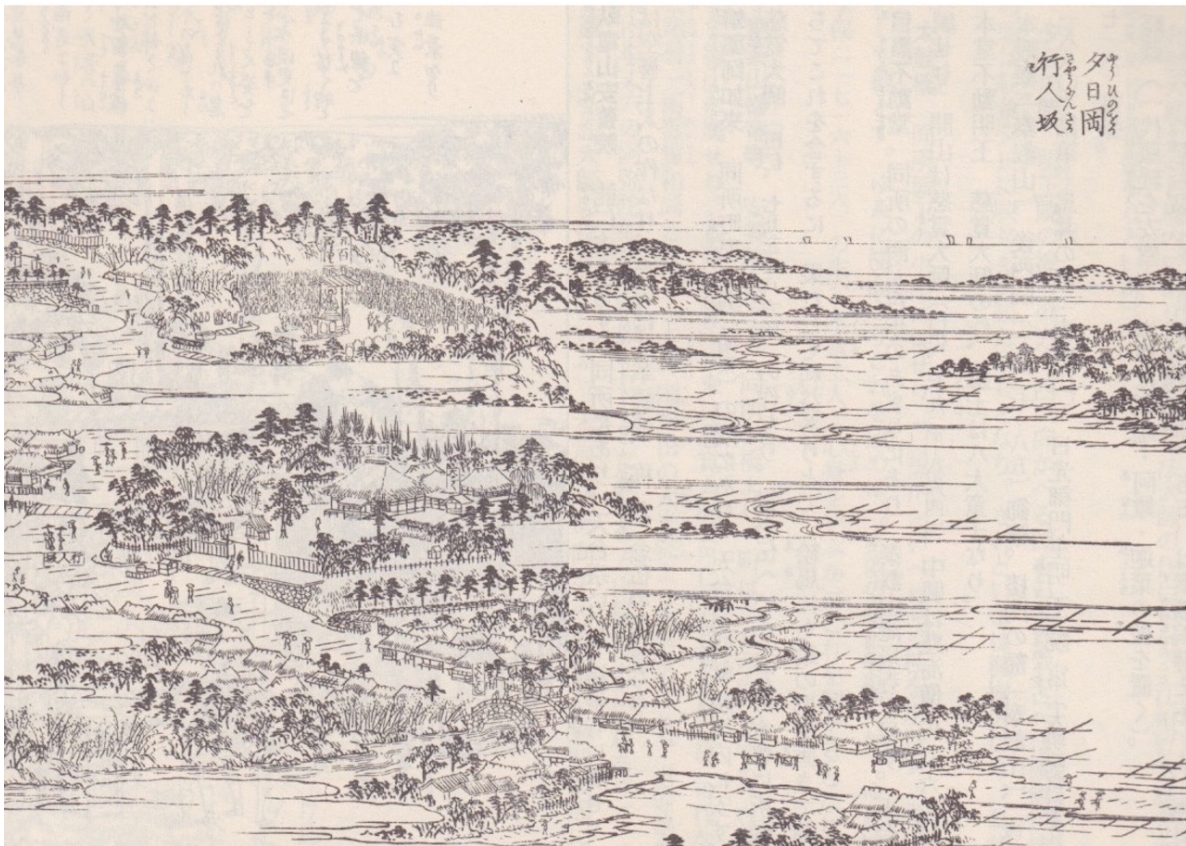


Fig. 5.3 Aerial view of Gyōninzaka at Meguro where *issei gyōnin* and *sabutsu hijiri* performed their religious practices. *Edo meisho zue*. Edo period (Bunsei 12, 1829).

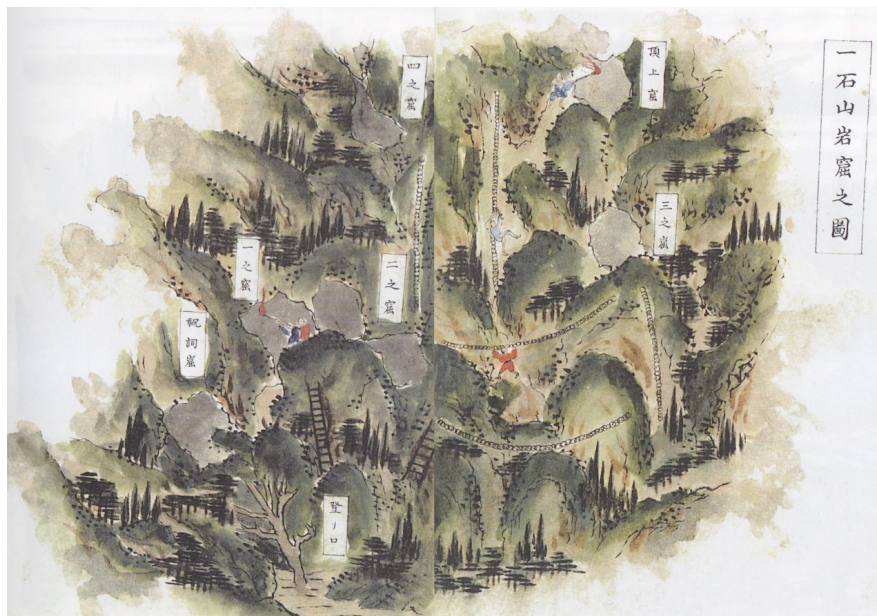


Fig. 5.4 *Annai sendatsu* escorting pilgrims through the caves of Isseki, which was a *mitate* of Yudono in the Okutama region of Musashi province. Illustration by Takemura Ritsugi, *Ontake Issekisan kikō*. Edo period (early 19th century).





Fig. 5.5 Yudonosan *tuska* with a stele of a Big-nose Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai on the top. Fig. 5.5a Close up of the Big-nose Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai stelae. Edo period (Kan'ei 5, 1628). Tsukuba, Kichise 吉瀬, Ibaraki prefecture. Photo by the author (6/05/2015).



Fig. 5.6 Stele of a Big-nose Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono. Fig. 5.6a Close-up of the Big-nose Kongōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono. Edo period (Kan'ei 5, 1628). Kashima Jinja, Tsuchiura, Ibaraki prefecture. Photo by the author (6/05/2015).



Fig. 5.7 Stele of a Big-nose Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono. Edo period (Kan'ei era). Hannyaji, Tsuchiura, Ibaraki prefecture. Photo by the author (6/05/2015).



Fig. 5.8 Stele of a Big-nose Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai of Yudono associated with the seminal letter BAN and flanked by a *bonten*. Edo period (Kan'ei 3, 1626). Hachiman Jinja, Tsukuba, Ibaraki prefecture. Photo by the author (6/05/2015).



Fig. 5.9 Stele of Dainichi Sanzon-zō. Edo period (Kan'ei 16, 1639). Mitsukaidō 水海道, Chūtsuma 中妻, Ibaraki prefecture. Photo by Tokuhara Satoyuki.



Fig. 5.10 Stele of Dainichi Sanzon-zō. Edo period (Kan'ei era). Mitsukaidō, Shimotsuma 下妻, Ibaraki prefecture. Photo by Tokuhara Satoyuki.



Fig. 5.11 Chopping board of Amida (*manaita* Amida) of Dainichibō. Edo period. Dainichibō, Ōami, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (20/07/2013).



Fig. 5.12 Stele for the virtual pilgrimage (*daisantō*). Edo period (18th century). Dainichiji, Ōizawa, Yamagata prefecture. Photo by the author (8/09/2014).



妙圓妙園妙德妙法妙法道覽  
 妙西妙正妙心妙祐妙祐妙法妙女道永  
 妙西妙法妙珍妙蓮妙德妙海  
 妙西妙西妙伸妙法妙□妙王妙珍妙正妙阿  
 妙正妙法妙西妙珍妙連妙西妙祈  
 奉造立湯殿權現妙西妙珍  
 南無阿彌陀仏本願道心弥勒佛  
 食衆中衆結願成就処  
 妙法妙西妙忍妙法善阿弥  
 妙善妙西斑女道久淨久  
 長泉五郎女妙音  
 道祐淨圓妙  
 宗西

Fig. 5.13 Reproduction of the technopaegna representing the silhouette of Yudono in the inscription of the *fujiki kuyō* stele at Fukutokuji. Muromachi period (Eiroku 10, 1567). Fukutokuji, Sakai, Ōsaka.

## Epilogue

Yudono and the various institutional and devotional discourses associated with it had an important impact on the religious panorama of the Kantō and Tōhoku regions during the Edo period. The fame of Yudono derived from the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin*. Even if the *issei gyōnin* were also diffused in other mountains of the Dewa province such as Haguro or Hayama, Yudono always remained their headquarter where they could practice a full range of ascetic procedures without limitations.

Even if the first written sources about the Yudono cult appear with a certain frequency from the seventeenth century, there are some fragmentary references to this mountain that date back to the sixteenth century. For instance, the *Naka minato Fudaraku tokai ki* (1531) speaks of the *tokaisha* Kōkai who is said to have performed ascetic practices on Mount Yudono, and the *fujiki kuyō* stele (1567) in Sakai village unequivocally suggest a considerable diffusion of devotional discourses related to Yudono already in the medieval period. Moreover, they show that the devotional practices associated with it had a strong trans-local character, which extended as far as the Kansai area and involved female as well as male lay practitioners. In other words, the charisma of Yudono was associated to extreme ascetic practices such as self-seclusion rituals, fasting, purificatory ablutions that could be employed in conjunction with other religious practices that were not necessarily connected to the veneration of this mountain, but used its religious heritage as a legitimizing tool. The ascetic tradition of Yudono worked as a sort of validation mark for the authenticity of numerous religious practices in different contexts. This probably was one of the major triggers for the diffusion of

the cult related with this sacred site.

The study of Yudono demonstrates that the principal actors of Edo period religious discourses were not always fully ordained monks or Shugendō practitioners, but there was also a variegated substratum of in-between or liminal religious professionals such as the *issei gyōnin* who played the role of mediators or, in some cases, competitors against monks and *shugenja* in spreading devotional practices among the population. The multi-stratification of religious professionals that characterized Yudono institutions was probably a pervasive reality in many others mountains and cultic centers of the Japanese archipelago. For instance, at Nikkō there were groups of ascetics known as *kobō* 小坊 that were to some extent similar to the *issei gyōnin* and at Ōyama or Kumano there were networks of *oshi* 御師 who interacted with monks and *shugenja* for administering the mountain. Nevertheless, *issei gyōnin* were different from all these religious actors for what concern the capacity to provide unique rituals such as the *senninchigyō* or purificatory practices to their devotees. The *issei gyōnin* were more competitive compared to *kobō* or *oshi*, because they could rely on an independent religious tradition to legitimize their activities.

Because of the strong influence exerted by Togawa Anshō's scholarship on Dewa Sanzan studies, the majority of Japanese scholars tended to consider Haguro as the exclusive institutional and ritual fulcrum of Dewa Sanzan and often dismissed or ignored the pivotal role played by Yudono in the formative processes of the religious identity associated it. I have nevertheless attempted to demonstrate in the preceding chapters that the creative tension and religious equilibrium of Dewa Sanzan were based on a symbiotic relationship between Haguro and Yudono. Haguro could not do without Yudono and vice versa. Even if the two mountains built their religious identities in oppositional and very often conflictual terms, they

were invariably bound in a sort of “forced alliance.”

For instance, an analysis of the pilgrimage to Dewa Sanzan clearly exemplifies the ritual ties that kept Haguro and Yudono together. During the pilgrimage, the *yama sendatsu* of Haguro could not avoid escorting their clients to Yudono because it was the *oku no in* of Dewa Sanzan and the devotional climax of the entire ascetic route. There was no other place within Haguro’s territory that could replace the soteriological and devotional charisma that was associated with Yudono in general and Gohōzen in particular. At the same time, the four *bettō* of Yudono could not refuse access to the enormous flow of pilgrims who arrived at their temples from Haguro just to flaunt doctrinal or institutional divisions with the rival mountain. Such a decision would have brought about their economic annihilation.

Moreover, the soteriological temporality embedded in the mandalic geography of Dewa Sanzan, namely Haguro (Shō Kannon/present), Gassan (Amida Nyorai/past), and Yudono (Dainichi Nyorai/future), had an impact on the elimination of the pilgrim’s karmic load only if taken as a coherent mountainous block. Any eventual exclusion or distortion of the divine pantheon associated with the three mountains would have irremediably compromised the ritual, devotional, and doctrinal structures on which was based the equilibrium between the two poles, i.e. Haguro and Yudono, of Dewa Sanzan.

From an institutional point of view the three classes of religious professional who administered the sacred territory of Yudono were characterized by internal competition and, at the same time, cooperation, which resembled the interactions between Haguro and Yudono. Fully ordained monks (*seisō*) guaranteed an aura of sectarian legitimacy to Yudono religious institutions thanks to their association with the Shingon School, *shugenja* were essential for caring for the pilgrims who visited Yudono during the summer and for distributing ox-bezoar

talismans (*goōhōin*) to the parishioners during the first three months of the year, and the *issei gyōnin* were the only ascetics who could perform the one thousand days ascetic retreat (*sennichigyō*) at Senninzawa or Genkai, which attracted the devotional interest and financial support of a broad stratum of lay devotees. Each of these individually mastered doctrinal, ritual, and institutional discourses from which members who belonged to the other two groups were precluded. At the same time, none of the three could stand alone, needing the support of the others in order to govern Yudono's territory in real terms.

It is also important to take into account the fact that *issei gyōnin* rather than fully ordained monks or *shugenja* contributed to the shaping of the particular religious identity of Yudono. If *shugenja* were at the heart of Haguro's cultic life, *issei gyōnin* were the lifeblood of Yudono. Both mountains can be considered ascetic centers, but the asceticism of Haguro was rather a "collective asceticism" based on Shugendō rituality,<sup>1</sup> while that of Yudono was mostly an "individual asceticism" based on the self-seclusion rituals (*sanrō*) of the *issei gyōnin*. This differentiation was further underlined by the fact that Haguro *shugenja* were the principal users of Haguro's landscape for their Shugendō rituals, while Yudono *shugenja* had to go to Kinpōsan or Jionji close to Hayama to take part in mountain-entry rituals (*nyūbu girei* 入峰儀礼). Yudono was not therefore associated with a Shugendō style of asceticism and remained a site exclusively dedicated to the practices of the *issei gyōnin*.

An analysis of the religious practices of the *issei gyōnin* forces a rethinking of the taxonomical boundaries between various categories of mountain ascetics. In other words, not all practitioners who performed asceticism in mountains to acquire supernatural powers (*shugen*)

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<sup>1</sup>. During the Winter Peak (*fuyu no mine* 冬の峰) of Haguro Shugendō two senior *shugenja* called *matsu hijiri* 松聖 secluded themselves for one hundred days in their *shukubō* in order to increase their magico-religious powers, which were tested (*gen kurabe* 験競べ) at the end of the practice. The *matsu hijiri* shows that certain types of semi-individual asceticism were practiced also by the Haguro *shugenja*. See Suzuki Masataka, *Sangaku shinkō: Nihon bunka no kontei wo saguru* [coll. Chūkō shinsho] (Tōkyō: Chūōkōron shinsha, 2015), 63-66.

were necessarily defined as *shugenja* or followed the protocol of the Shugendō mountain-entry rituals. *Issei gyōnin* mastered a multiplicity of specific ascetic practices without being *shugenja* and respected monastic precepts about ethics and morality without being fully ordained monks.

The marginality of the *issei gyōnin vis-à-vis* fully ordained monks or *shugenja* whose activities were authorized in terms of the law by the Tokugawa *bakufu* and legitimized in terms of doctrine by powerful networks of monastic institutions was a great obstacle for the ascetics who performed their practices in areas far from Yudono or Dewa province. Non-resident *issei gyōnin* frequently gave up their problematic religious status as Yudono ascetics and became Tōzan-ha or Honzan-ha *shugenja* in order to increase their legitimacy as religious professionals. Nevertheless, the aura of outsidership that permanently characterized the *issei gyōnin* was also the principal reason for their popularity among various levels of society. Eminent *issei gyōnin* performed their self-seclusion rituals at Yudono to produce merit (*tokugyō*) that was transferred (*ekō*) to their lay devotees to fulfil their vows (*gan jōju*). Among the lay supporters of the *issei gyōnin* there was a great variety of social actors, from small peasants (*kobyakushō*) in peripheral rural communities to *sengoku daimyō* like Mogami Yoshiaki and Date Masamune and members of the Tokugawa family such as Kasuga no tsubone.

It is evident that for the *issei gyōnin* marginality did not necessarily correspond to a lack of religious authority and also that belonging to the subaltern classes of society (most of the *issei gyōnin* were in fact peasants) did not prevent them from actively interacting with the elites. Moreover, the fact that both elite and popular devotional discourses converged on the *issei gyōnin* and their ascetic practices shows the inadequacy of what Peter Brown defines as

the “two-tiered” model that proposes an artificial split between the so-called “popular religion” and the “un-popular religion.”<sup>2</sup> *Issei gyōnin* constituted the center of a devotional loop in which participated members from the bottom as well as the top levels of society.

Even if asceticism is usually portrayed as an autarchic affirmation of the ascetic’s power in total isolation from society, a study of the ascetic practices performed by the *issei gyōnin* of Yudono demonstrates exactly the opposite. *Issei gyōnin* lived in symbiosis with society and never really abandoned it even when retired on the mountain. Without the devotional and financial support of their lay sponsors, *issei gyōnin* would never have been able to accomplish their ascetic practices and, even if they could, they would have been irrelevant because they were not shared with any one else apart from the practitioner himself. Asceticism is always a public act even if it pretends to be intrinsically secret.<sup>3</sup> It can be said that the emphasis of hagiographies on the heroic and solitary asceticism performed by the *issei gyōnin* probably had a compensative function to cover the ascetic’s vulnerability toward and dependence on society.

At Yudono, perhaps more than in any other mountainous site, the binomial asceticism/devotion or the *issei gyōnin*/lay community was based on an extremely well structured *do ut des* relational system, which allowed the ascetic to share with third parties the meritorious results of his practices. Once a group of lay devotees selected an eminent *issei gyōnin* to realize their personal vows, they continued to support his religious charisma financially and religiously throughout his life and even beyond it. The *sokushinbutsu* of eminent *issei gyōnin* can be interpreted as the ultimate extension of the authority of lay devotees and disciples over the body of the ascetic, which was specifically forged to meet the soteriological needs of

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<sup>2</sup>. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Late Christianity*, 18-19.

<sup>3</sup>. On the public aspect of asceticism, see Gavin Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition*, 15.

those who supported him. Not only was the living body of the *issei gyōnin* venerated as an inexhaustible field of merit (*fukuden* 福田) but his corpse also was mummified to transform it into a powerful flesh-icon (*nikushinzō*). These considerations can provide a possible answer to the question about the reason why at Yudono there is such a concentration of mummified corpses in comparison with other areas of Japan. The *issei gyōnin* of Yudono were “ascetics on commission” (*daikan gyōja*) whose practices were specifically performed on behalf of private or communal lay sponsors who could benefit from the merit accumulated by them. Once the ascetic died the fiduciary relationship between the ascetic, his lay supporters and disciples did not come to an end but culminated in the creation of the *sokushinbutsu*. At the same time, it is also important to consider that only eminent *issei gyōnin* became *sokushinbutsu*; the majority were regularly cremated after death according to the standard procedures for monastic funerary rituals.

Another aim of this dissertation has been to demonstrate that the religious complexity of Yudono was not confined to the phenomenon of the *sokushinbutsu* but embraced a plurality of other aspects. For instance, the territory of Yudono was constantly recreated thanks to a rich production of foundation stories (*engi*). It is possible to say that Yudono *engi* had three principal targets: (1) the diffusion of devotional, mythological, and hagiographic narratives associated with the Yudono tradition to spread its cult among a large part of the population; (2) the transformation of those persons who were exposed to the messages of the *engi* into possible pilgrims who actually desired to travel to Yudono; and (3) the association of Yudono’s natural landscape with charismatic and fictionalized layers of time and space in order to increase its authority and consequently limit the expansionist tendencies of Haguro.

The topological discourses which the Yudono *engi* superimposed on the space and time



associated with the mountain are characterized by multidimensional and asynchronous models of temporality and spatiality that constantly blur and turn upside down the relations between proximity and remoteness, past/present/future, history and myth, subjectivity and objectivity. For instance, Steven Connor provides the following definition of topology.

Topology may be defined as the study of the spatial properties of an object that remain invariant under homeomorphic deformation, which is to say, broadly, actions of stretching, squeezing, or folding. Topology is not concerned with exact measurement, which is the domain of geometry, whether Euclidean or non-Euclidean, but rather with spacial relations, such as continuity, neighborhood, insideness and outsideness, disjunction and connection. [...]. Because topology is concerned with what remains invariant as a result of transformation, it may be thought of as geometry plus time, geometry given body by motion.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that Yudono *engi*'s topology is not limited to a mere measurement of temporal and spatial distances related with the site, but becomes a performative discourse through which time and space could be stretched or shrunk in order to conform with religious and political strategies of specific historical moments.

Even if *engi* are usually analyzed for their scriptural dimension, a considerable number of Yudono *engi* were supposed to be orally recited by professional storytellers such as the *biwa hōshi* in front of an audience of listeners whose mnemonic activities were aurally stimulated through the sounds of voice and music instruments. In the case of Yudono it is improbable that the storytellers also used visual materials to describe the mandalized geography of the mountain because Yudono could not be directly represented through graphic arts.

Yudono could be obliquely evoked but never completely unveiled. The religious charisma of Yudono derived from its non-representability and remoteness from every aspect

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<sup>4</sup>. Steven Connor, "Topologies: Michel Serres and the Shapes of Thought," *Anglistik* 15 (June 2004): 106.

of the ordinary world. Just as the popularity of the Kumano Sanzan cult in the Tōhoku region during the thirteenth century was fueled by the fact that few people had actually visited the site, the “aura of distance” and secrecy associated with Yudono contributed greatly to the consolidation of its hieratic nature. In other words, the “presence” of Yudono in numerous devotional discourses of the Edo period was a direct result of its “absence.”

After climbing the “mountain of silence” that was Yudono, various pilgrims complained about the prohibition imposed by the *yama sendatsu* on revealing any details about what they had seen in the recesses of the mountain. Nevertheless, this imposition of secrecy on pilgrims often had the opposite effect and resulted in the total disclosure of the secret. This mechanism reveals the rhetoric of secrecy, which ultimately corresponds to a refined communicative system where an apparent silence or lack of communication is artificially created in order to generate a proliferation of noise and, therefore, transmission of data.<sup>5</sup>

*Mutatis mutandis* a similar strategy can be detected also in the establishment of the invisible barriers beyond which female pilgrims were not allowed to pass (*nyonin kekkaï*) while traveling over Dewa Sanzan. Female pilgrims going to Yudono could not access the area of Gohōzen and so were excluded contemplating the natural icon of Yudono Gongen and Yudonosan Dainichi Nyorai directly. Monks, *shugenja*, and *issei gyōnin* were the guardians of this system of ostracism but, at the same time, the *issei gyōnin* of Chūrenji provided special *goma* rituals for female pilgrims during which Yudono Gongen was invited to descend to the ritual platform within the temple precincts. Male religious professionals often created discriminatory discourses against female practitioners and, at the same time, provided the necessary ritual technology to bypass the artificial obstacles.

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<sup>5</sup>. On the notion of noise in the network theory see Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (1980, repr., Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 12-14.

In her recent book on the Kinpusen Shugendō tradition in the Kii peninsula during the Heian period, Heather Blair points out that the hermeneutics about Kinpusen were based on its continuous reinterpretation as real, imagined, and “real-and-imagined” space.<sup>6</sup> The same observation is valid also for Yudono. In the previous chapters we observed various types of “intervisuality” (*mitate*), which created conflation and transpositions of sites, meanings, signs, and symbols ‘from’ as well as ‘to’ Yudono. All the *mitate* which involved Yudono show a double dynamic. On the one hand, aspects of Yudono tradition were assimilated by heterogeneous entities, on the other hand, the recipients of the *mitate* transmitted to Yudono some peculiarities of their religious identity. Therefore, *mitate* was an exchange process between two poles, which mutually fertilized and reciprocally borrowed something from each other.

For instance, there were *mitate* between sacred peaks such as Yudono and Isseki or Yudono and Nikkō, *mitate* between human actors of the present and of the past such as the Nikkō *bettō* Gyōe who presented himself as a holography of Kūkai, *mitate* between religious buildings and mountains such the *gyōya* of the *nobori kudari no gyōnin* and Yudono, or *mitate* between artificial objects and natural elements such as the *tsuka* or stelae dedicated to the cult of Yudono and the geophysical body of the mountain itself.

It is interesting to notice that during the ritual invitation or transfer (*kanjō*) of Yudono’s divine pantheon and sacred geography from Dewa province to Mount Isseki in Musashi province, the area of Gohozen was re-created within a subterranean cavern with a small lake at the center. Even if the real geography of Gohozen was totally different, the *mitate* with the hidden cave of Isseki perfectly emphasized the uterine, amniotic, and fertilizing aspects of the

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<sup>6</sup>. Heather Blair, *Real and Imagined: the Peak of Gold in Heian Japan* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 3.

original site. Therefore, the *mitate* of Yudono were never pedantic operations of copy and paste but creative semiotic assemblages between heterogeneous aspects of factual as well as imagined levels of reality.

Although this dissertation mostly focuses on the Yudono cult during the Edo period, the analysis of *mitate* allows us to understand the pivotal role of semiotic technique for preserving the Yudono tradition even in the Meiji period. For example, in the village of Shiratakamachi 白鷹町 there is a *gyōya*, known as Shioda *gyōya* 塩田行屋, that was built by Myōjukai 明寿海 (1830–1909), an *issei gyōnin* of Dainichibō, in Meiji 10 (1878). The twenty-three statues of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Myōō, and *kami* that are disposed on various levels of the Shumi altar (Shumi *dan* 須弥壇) are collectively defined as “the buddhas of the valley” (*ozawabutsu* 御沢仏) and were carved by the famous *busshi* Shinkai Sōkei 新海宗慶 (1846–1899).

These statues form a tridimensional maṇḍala of the thirty-seven names of deities that are mentioned in the Yudonosan paean (Yudonosan *hōraku* 湯殿山法楽) that pilgrims recited while walking through the numinous spots of Senninzawa before arriving at Gohōzen. The order according to which the statues are disposed on the Shumi altar is not casual but accurately reproduces the succession of places and deities that devotees encountered entering the sacred space of Yudono. In other words, the *ozawabutsu* of the Shioda *gyōya* were a *mitate* of the divine pantheon of Senninzawa. It is interesting to note that this *gyōya* was built after the enactment of the *shinbutsu bunri* policies that in Meiji 4 (1871) transformed Yudono into a Shintō mountain removing most of the Buddhist elements from the landscape. Patronizing the *mitate* of the *ozawabutsu* at the Shioda *gyōya* the *issei gyōnin* Myōjukai allowed Dewa Sanzan pilgrims to virtually perform a *shinbutsu shūgō* style of pilgrimage

through Senninzawa in a historical period when it was formally banished.<sup>7</sup>

Another relevant aspect of Yudono was its association with Dainichi of the Two Realms of the Diamond and the Womb (Kontai ryōbu Dainichi Nyorai). It can be said that Yudono represented an almost unique example of diffusion of the Dainichi cult among members of subaltern classes. The link between Yudono and Dainichi Nyorai of the two realms, in particular Taizōkai Dainichi Nyorai, allowed this cosmic and ethereal Buddha to be located in a specific site of the Japanese archipelago and perceived in sympathetic terms by the ordinary population. In other words, Yudono contributed to a process of “ruralization of Dainichi Nyorai,” venerated by peasants as a powerful ruler of the cosmos who had a direct influence over their agricultural activities.

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<sup>7</sup>. For more information about the Shioda *gyōya* see Okada Yasushi, Miyamoto Akio, “Tenjikai oyobi sono chōsa kara tenkai suru chiiki bunka isan no hogo katsudō: Shiratakamachi Shioda gyōya no butszō (machi shite bunkazai oyobi Shinkai Sōkei, Taketarō saku no Meiji ki shozō) wo jirei toshite,” *Tōhoku geijutsu kōka daigaku. Bunkazai hozon shufuku kenkyū sentā kiyō* 2 (March 2012): 5-11. See also Okada Yasushi, Miyamoto Akio, “Shinkai Sōkei (Sōmatsu) oyobi shonenki no Shinkai Taketarō no zōkeiteki tokuchō ni okeru shin chicken-shinbutsu bunri ni tomonau kobutsu shuri kara erareta zōkei rikai ni kan suru kōsatsu-,” *Tōhoku geijutsu kōka daigaku Bunkazai hozon shufuku kenkyū sentā kiyō* 3 (March 2013): 47-59. For other examples about *mitate* created by *issei gyōnin* in the Morioka area see also Yamasawa Manabu, “Yudonosan mokujiiki gyōja Tetsumonkai no katsudō keitai-Morioka hanryō o jirei toshite,” *Rekishi jinrui* 43, (March 2015): 25-45.

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### Abbreviation

- A* *Asahimura shi (1) Yudonosan* 朝日村誌 (一) 湯殿山, edited by Watanabe Tomeji 渡辺留治, 4 vols., Tsuruoka 鶴岡 (Yamagata pref.): Fuji insatsu kabushikigaisha 富士印刷株式会社, 1964.
- N* *Nishikawamachi shi henshū shiryō* 西川町史編集資料, edited by Hori Denzō 堀伝蔵, 13 vols., Yamagata (Yamagata pref.): Nishikawamachi kyōiku i'inkai 西川町教育委員会, 1984.
- ST* *Shintō taikei* 神道大系, edited by Shintō taikei hensankai 神道大系編纂会, 120 vols., Tōkyō: Shintō taikei hensankai 神道大系編纂会, 1977–1994.
- T* *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経, edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭, 100 vols., Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切刊行會, 1924–1935.

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*Dainichibō monjo* 大日坊文書 (Documents of Dainichibō), by anonymous (seventeenth century). In *A*, vol. 1, 26-33.

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## Appendix

### *Irishiken Yudono Gongen engi*

入四間湯殿権現縁起<sup>1</sup>

In order to know the origin of the trace (*suijaku*) of Yudonodo Gongen on Mount Oiwa in the Irishiken district of Kujigun 久慈郡 in the Hitachi province [it is necessary to go to] Satogawa village in the Higashigōdo 東河内 district where the people venerate Mount Omuro, which is the most famous mountain and numinous site (*shōji* 勝地) of this province. This mountain stands high and distant from the villages. [On this mountain there are] odd trees (*kiju* 奇樹) with branches that bend down and strange pines (*kaishō* 怪松) that stand tall. The only sound is the roar of the tempests that cross the valleys below. When clouds and mist clear up, the sun light that comes from the west strikes the summit of the rock (*iwao* 岩尾), which shines like a folding screen of lapis lazuli. The spring flowers bloom and quickly die while the autumn moon is the only one to enter and exit [from this mountain]. Except for flying immortals (*kaihi no sennin* 解飛の仙人) and eminent monks who practice asceticism, nobody lives [on this mountain].

There was a marvelous omen (*fushigi no jinpen* 不思議の神変) in this place. In Kan'ei 7 (1630), fire-*yang*, year of the horse, sixth month, from the tenth day onward, beams of light every night, wind, rain, stormy weather, and clear skies on this mountain of [Mount Oiwa]. Sometimes there was a strange aroma of flowers. At other times there was a white ox

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<sup>1</sup>. This text is located in the Irishiken village (Ibaraki pref.) and was probably composed during the Genroku era (1688–1704). For the original text see Sasaoka Akira, “‘Irishiken Yudono Gongen engi’ ni tsuite,” *Kyōdo Hitachi* 48 (March 1998): 41-44.

(*hakugyū*) that circumambulated the mountain. Seeing these things, the people regarded them as extraordinary signs (*kii*), as if *deva* (*tennin*) were wandering around or bodhisattvas were descending from heaven. They began to venerate [Mount Oiwa] from a distance. As soon as news of these events spread, villagers from different regions came and waited for new auspicious omens (*kizui*) [to appear]. At that moment, clouds rose from Mount Oiwa, and while mist and rain were still in the sky, a soft light spread. This light was different from that of the moon or the sun. It can be defined as a glow of softened light (*wakō no kage*). The people thought that it was really marvelous. These divine signs (*shinmyō*) were beyond the comprehension of the inhabitants of the area. In order to invite the *kami* (*kami wo shōzuru*), the people all decided [to perform the ritual of] the boiling water (*oyu no hana*). People gathered and a male shaman (*fushuku*) stood at the base of the stone *goma* platform (*gomadanseki*) while a female shaman (*jofu*) sprinkled hot water (*oyu wo tatematsuri*) [for the *kami*] in the shrine for the *matsuri*, where the *kami* was offered a staff with pendant strips of paper (*honhei*). Monks, laypeople, men, and women were all gathered there. At the climax [of the ecstatic séance] the female shaman was possessed by the deity (*jofu ni noriutsuri*) and delivered this oracle (*sen*): “I am Oiwa Daimyōjin. I am not the cause of the marvelous events that took place around this mountain. A long time ago Yudono Daigongen transferred its spirit (*mikage wo utsushi*) to this mountain and made the enlightened vow (*godaigan*) to bestow benefits (*riyaku*) on the sentient beings of the age of the Dharma decline (*masse*). In the past I suffered because ordinary people did not understand this, but now [I rejoice that] you diligently perform [this ritual of] the offering of boiling water [to Yudono Gongen]. You must absolutely believe in (*shinjin*) [Yudono Gongen].” This was the message of the Daimyōjin. Then, the female shaman sent (*tachikaeri*) [Oiwa Daimyōjin] away and raised her

voice (*nonoshireri*) again: “I am Hagurosan Yudono Daigongen of the Dewa province. When I arrived in this province I observed the character of the sentient beings who indulged in the frivolous matters of the world (*yo no gyōri*) and who did not pay their respects to the Way of the *kami* (*shintō*) or to the Way of the Buddha (*butsudō*); they seemed to take even the Way of the Kings (*ōdō*) lightly. I thought if not me, then who will save and liberate them all? I looked for a place in this province to let my trace descend, and this mountain was the purest and most sacred site. I do not like decorations and luxury. The stone altar of the shrine (*shadanseki*) corresponds to the heavenly stone-cave of Amaterasu no Omikami and the stone [platform] for the *goma* [represents] the place of the assembly of Vulture Peak [where the *Lotus sūtra* was preached] (Ryōsen). I want you to know that six hundred years have already passed since I visited this mountain. The sings [of my descent] were known to a Haguro monk with supernatural powers (*reigen no sō*) called Shugyōbō. Now you have perceived a reflection of my softened light and have begun to have deep faith. This is a sign that the divine protection (*kago*) of Buddhas and *kami* is still working. From now on the sentient beings that make a pilgrimage (*sankei*) to this stone altar of the shrine and have faith in me (*ware wo shinjite*) will obtain peace and comfort for the present birth (*genze annon*) and joy in the later one (*kōsei anraku*).” Then the female shaman raised her voice again and said: “Now you must look for a sign. Wait until the hour of the ox!”<sup>2</sup> Then she fainted. At that moment the assembly of men and women shivered, bowed their heads as a token of faith, and worshipped [Yudono Daigongen] with reverence.

Nevertheless, only half of these laypersons of the age of the declining Dharma had faith; the other half said that the female shamans had delivered a dire oracle (*yōgen*) which was not true. An elderly monk (*rōsō*) and the elders of the village (*tokoro no chō*) discussed [the

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<sup>2</sup>. The hour of the ox goes from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m..

matter] and made a decision: “The oracle of this ecstatic séance is very doubtful. To verify its truth or falsehood (*shingi*) we must seclude ourselves (*sanrō*) on Mount Omuro and purify ourselves of internal and external defilements (*naigai ronsō*) as if we were making a pilgrimage to Haguro. In order to understand if this oracle is real or not it is necessary to wait for the miraculous event of the ox hour on the day of the ox.” Therefore, one after another they entered purification huts (*shōjin’ya*) and performed ablutions (*kori*) seven times during the day and night. After completing [these ascetic practices] for seven days they decided: “We need a monk (*shomon*) of the Shōzōin and an *issei no gyōnin* as guides (*sendatsu toshite*) in order to climb this mountain (*tozan sen*).” However, nobody was used to going to this mountain and there were no guides. Then, an old monk who was with them said: “Listen. I heard that a long time ago when Kōbō Daishi opened Mount Yudono a hunter guided him just as [a hunter guided him] when he opened the peak of Mount Kōya. The same thing happened for the opening of Nikkō and Gassan. [Mount] Fuji is another case like this. Thus the meritorious men of olden times relied on the guidance of people who knew the sites, and thus could open various mountains.” Taking their cue from these examples from the past, [they] asked a hunter to become their guide and on the eighth day of the eighth month of the same year [Kan’ei 7] departed [for Mount Omuro] and called [their confraternity] the Ascetics of Yudono (Yudono dōgyō 湯殿道行). They first visited the stone *goma* platform at Takizawa 滝沢, the stone altar at the shrine at Ōsawa 大澤, the Great Waterfall (Ōtaki 大滝) at Jigokuzawa 地獄沢, the Big snake Lake (Daijaike 大蛇池), the Helmet stone (Kabuto-ishi 甲石), Takasuzudake 高鈴嶽, Kabudake 神峯嶽 at Akazawa 赤沢, the Black waterfall (Kurotaki 黒滝), and performed difficult ascetic practices (*nangyō kugyō*), making pilgrimages (*junrei*) to Mount Oiwa. When the day of the ox that was indicated in the oracle



came close, [they] became even more diligent: they purified themselves three times a day and built many huts for secluding themselves (*komoriya*) on the slope of Mount Omuro. They stood *bonten* [pillars] under the big *sakaki* tree on this mountain and at the stone altar at the shrine, and venerated Arasawa Fudō at the stone *goma* platform.<sup>3</sup> During the night of the seventeenth day, about seven hundred itinerant ascetics (*aragyōnin*) suddenly arrived from the surrounding villages and secluded themselves (*sanrō*) [at the foot of Mount Omuro], playing drums all night, ringing bells, and chanting various mantras and *nenbutsu*. At that moment a fresh wind started blowing and at noon an exotic scent filled the four directions. An auspicious glow of the moon (*tsukikage* 月影) seemed to tell of the world of the Highest Bliss (Gokuraku *sekai* 極楽世界) in the direction of the sunset. Then the night cleared up. The eighteenth day was the day of the ox indicated in the oracle and [the people] waited for the hour of the ox with growing attention to purity and a palpable tension. After midnight a new moon seemed to rise from the stone altar of the shrine in a different direction from the waning moon, and on the top of Mount Omuro over the *bonten* there appeared [another light], similar to a dazzling solar disk (*nichirin yōgō*). Up to five similar lights appeared [in the sky] and penetrated Mount Oiwa. Then a flame of three *jō* rose from the stone *goma* platform and the big stone of the Gongen's mountain emitted beams of light as if the sun and the moon had risen together. In other places, at valleys and mountains, there were various extraordinary events. Crowds of noble and poor persons felt an intense faith in their hearts, went down to the valley to make ablutions, and returned to the mountain hanging their heads while chanting *nenbutsu* and mantras without thinking about anything else. At dawn the sky brightened and the people started looking around, saying to each other: "What a marvelous thing! What does this mean?" A monk said: "You foolish people! As the oracle delivered at the ecstatic séance

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<sup>3</sup>. The *sakaki* tree is a *Cleryera Japonica*.

revealed the other day, it is the Buddhas and *kami* of Mount Haguro who show various signs of their provisional aspects (*yōgo*) in this place. Mercifully Yudono Daigongen manifested his light on Mount Omuro, Gassan Gongen on the stone altar of the shrine, and Arasawa Fudō Myōō displayed his form on the stone *goma* platform. Moreover, Buddhas and *kami* revealed their external appearance in various valleys and mountains. You must not have doubts about this! Each one of us must venerate all these sites, making pilgrimages to them.” The people agreed [with him] and every day the number of pilgrims was incalculable. After this a lot of miracles happened and those who received benefits from the deities started narrating [their] stories. The devotion to Irishiken Gongen was know not only to the people of the neighboring villages, but spread also in other provinces and distant areas.

Concerning Yudono Gongen [we have to remember that] a long time ago Kōbō Daishi returned from China and was ordered by Emperor Saga 嵯峨 (786–842) to open Mount Kōya. Then [Kōbō Daishi] wandered around the entire country, climbed Mount Haguro in the Dewa [province], and secretly put into this mountain the esoteric teachings of the Shingon School. These [teachings] correspond to the so called maṇḍala of the two realms of the Matrix and the Diamond. Then Kōbō Daishi had this thought: “Even if we say that this country is the country of the *kami* (*shinkoku* 神国), there is not distinction between *kami* and buddhas. They are like water and ice. When water freezes it turns into ice, and when ice melts it becomes water. Therefore, the original buddha is Birushana and the provisional trace appears as the *kami* of the sun, which sheds light on earth beneath the heaven. In this way, the omnipotent buddhas and *kami* protect this country. If the sentient beings pray to [the *kami*] with a sincere spirit and strong faith, the *kami* will fulfill their prayers.” The old people said that: “The *kami* that reside in this country are like water within earth. Where does it not exist?

In the same way we have to think that everywhere beneath the heaven there are buddhas and *kami*.” Considering this, there is not doubt that Yudono Daigongen is on Mount Haguro and also resides [in the village of] Irishiken. The people who believe in these words do not have to go afar but can obtain benefits nearby, and also have an extension of their lives and a great amount of good luck.

Written record composed in Kan’ei 7 (1630), fire-*yang*, year of the horse, ninth month.