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Saidaiji Monks and Esoteric Kami Worship at Ise and Miwa

By the eighth century, Mount Miwa, the most important site of worship connected to the early Yamato ruling houses in prehistoric times, had gradually become “de-sacralized” and “forgotten” by imperial family in favor of Ise. In the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was rediscovered and reinvented by Buddhist lineages who aimed to restore the proper monastic order in a time of *mappō* and to protect the state and the “divine land” of Japan in the wake of the Mongol invasions. The outcome of this was the phenomenon of *Miwa(ryū) Shintō*, a type of kami worship that has later been categorized as one of the traditions of esoteric Shinto or the “Shinto of Two Realms” (*Ryōbu Shintō*). It is thought to have developed in the vicinity of Mount Miwa during the early medieval period, and is often mentioned in connection with the Saidaiji lineage which participated in the revival of monastic precepts in thirteenth century Japan. It has also been assumed that Eizon (1201–1290), an esoteric master and a central figure to the precept revival movement, played a defining role in the ritualism of the emerging esoteric kami worship at Miwa. The question remains, however, as whether these phenomena were really connected and why Miwa attracted the attention of the Saidaiji lineage.

KEYWORDS: Mount Miwa – Saidaiji – precepts – *hinin* – worship of Mañjuśrī – Miwa *bessho* – Ise – esoteric theories and esoteric networks – esoteric kami worship

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THE STUDY of medieval Shinto has long been thought of as an elusive topic. The unavailability of sources resulted in belief that Shinto lacked textual base and, hence, lacked doctrine. That the discourse on Shinto was heavily politicized in the past has also contributed to its complexity as a field of academic inquiry. However, in the past ten years or so, a number of Shinto archives have become available to Japanese scholars. As a result we have learned of an abundance of extant texts dealing with medieval Shinto discourse, both of a doctrinal and ritualistic nature. Many more such texts are being discovered in temples or private archives connected to hereditary Shinto priests' families. Suddenly, the study of medieval Shinto has emerged as a field in urgent need of development and with a potential for rapid academic advancement.

The multiplicity of kami practices that had developed at various cultic sites in premodern Japan still remains an untapped field for research, and in this regard, another case study may be timely. It has been pointed out that a type of kami worship that developed in the vicinity of one of the principal shrines of Japan, the Ōmiwa shrine 大神神社, is a phenomenon that calls for further scrutiny (ANTONI 1995, ITŌ 1997, GRAPARD 2000, TEEUWEN and RAMBELLI 2003).

In modern Japanese scholarship it has often been referred to as Miwa Shintō 三輪神道 (NISHIDA 1961, OKADA 1988), an umbrella term that represents a plethora of practices which emerged in the vicinity of Mount Miwa 三輪山 throughout its long history. This term emphasizes the importance of the local sacred site as a pivotal center of Miwa Shintō, and places the deity of Miwa at the center of such worship. Not much is known about prehistoric forms of kami veneration at Miwa, but there is some evidence that in the early medieval period this cultic site had re-emerged as a powerful center. During the premodern period the forms of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 practice that had developed at the Ōmiwa shrine-temple multiplex became influenced to a great extent by the ritualism and doctrine of Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō* 密教), particularly the doctrine of the Twofold 两部 based on iconology of the Two-Realm Mandala (*ryōbu mandara* 两部曼荼羅), widespread in Shingon.

Medieval forms of kami worship at Miwa also deserve scholarly attention for yet another reason. There is a large number of manuscripts whose titles suggest

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that they have been related to the so-called Miwa lineage (*Miwaryū* 三輪流). Some of these texts, which were once considered secret, were published in the collection commissioned by the Ōmiwa shrine a few decades ago (OJS 1968–1991). From their contents it transpires that a corpus of esoteric practices dedicated to various kami that can generally be outlined as the “Shinto of the Miwa lineage” (*Miwaryū Shintō* 三輪流神道), existed and was widely transmitted during the late medieval and early modern periods. It is possible that the rituals transmitted by the Miwa lineage which comprised esoteric initiations into kami-related matters (*jingi kanjō* 神祇灌頂), were of early medieval origin and developed under the influence of Buddhist lineages situated at the temples adjacent to the Ōmiwa shrine.¹

This article, part of a larger study on early medieval forms of kami worship in Miwa, will examine the connection of this sacred site to one such Buddhist lineage, the *Saidaijiryū* 西大寺流, and will trace the development of esoteric theories on kami in early medieval Ise and Miwa.

At the Crossroads

Mount Miwa, an extinct volcano of relatively low height (467 m), is located in the south-eastern corner of the Yamato basin.² It dominates the Yamato landscape and is surrounded by two rivers, the Makimuku 巻向 and the Hase 長谷. The plain itself is encircled by the Ikoma mountain range in the northwest, the Nara hills in the north, Mount Nijō in the west, the Katsuragi mountains in the southwest, Yoshino in the south, and the Hase and Murō mountainous area in the east. The Hase river flows into the Yamato river to the west, allowing access to the Osaka Bay by water.

Archaeological, mythological, and literary evidence attests to the importance of Mount Miwa as a powerful ritual center in prehistoric times. It has been argued that the ritual activities in the vicinity of Mount Miwa, particularly those in the Kofun 古墳 period, may roughly correspond with the appearance of the round keyhole mounds and tombs in that area (BARNES 1988, BARNES and OKITA 1993, PIGGOTT 1997). The emergence of such tombs in the vicinity of Mount Miwa and their subsequent replication in other parts of Japan has often been interpreted as a sign of the formation of a local polity that came to dominate the political landscape of prehistoric Japan. Archaeologists and cultural historians agree that in prehistoric times Miwa was involved in hierarchical cultural, economic, and political interactions with remote regions of Japan, and may have been in the middle of a political and economic network that eventually emerged

1. On “initiations into kami-related matters” see TEEUWEN 2000. On *Miwaryū Shintō* initiations in the late medieval and early modern context, see HATTA 1991 and RAMBELLI 2002.

2. Present-day Nara prefecture, town of Sakurai.

as the “Yamato kingship” 大和王權 (INOUE 1985, BARNES 1988; PIGGOTT 1997, 28–37).

Both *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), the two texts which were considered the authoritative sources of legitimacy for the eighth-century court, contain numerous records concerning the ritual site at the foot of Mount Miwa. From these records it transpires that at some point the ritual center in Miwa, which was the most important in prehistoric times, gradually became less significant. Initially, it may have been used by the Yamato rulers as a token of pacification and a part of the political subjugation of Izumo 出雲 (ASTON 1972, I: 52–55, NKBT 67: 122–24; PHILIPPI 1969: 92; NKBT 1: 91). According to *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* the Izumo deity, Ōkuninushi, the “Great Land Master” 大國主, an offspring of Susanoo, also known as Ōnamuchi 大己貴, the “Great Name Bearer,” was offered relocation to Mount Miwa (Mimoro) (ASTON 1972, I: 52–55, NKBT 67: 122–24; PHILIPPI 1969: 92, NKBT 1: 91). Ōkuninushi’s origins as a composite of *many* deities of Izumo and Harima, possibly worshipped by Korean immigrants, were forgotten and abandoned, and received little mention in the official records (GRAYSON 2002).

The serpent deity Ōmononushi 大物主, the “Great Spirit Master,” the indigenous deity of Miwa, appears in a story of divine marriage to a daughter of a local chieftain and as a deity causing a great plague in the time of Emperor Sūjin 崇神. From the Sūjin chronicles in *Nihon shoki*, which contain many important records on the origins of the Ōmiwa shrine and the Ōmiwa clan, it becomes clear how highly the deity of Miwa was regarded by early Yamato ruling houses. It is even said that at some point the deity of Miwa and Amaterasu 天照 were both worshipped within the compounds of the imperial palace. However, the narrative goes, the emperor feared the outstanding potencies of these deities combined together, and for this reason the sacred body of imperial deity Amaterasu was transferred from the imperial house and enshrined in the remote area of Ise 伊勢 (ASTON 1972 I: 151–57, NKBT 67: 238–42).

This story, in fact, must have been a much later addition which formed a part of a conscious effort to construct a political ideology for the Yamato court. If we consider the *Nihon shoki* records in the light of their historical context, as modified and defined by the political discourse (KŌNOSHI 1997), it becomes clear that the kami worshipped at Miwa was the original deity of early Yamato rulers which was subsequently abandoned in favor of a solar deity at Ise. The Miwa deity may have still been revered as protective deity of the imperial house in the time of Emperor Tenchi 天智, if it was relocated along with imperial court to Ōtsu 大津. It was enshrined on the slopes of Mount Hie 日枝 where it became important, albeit in a different setting. With the arrival of a new cluster of political leaders, Emperor Tenmu 天武 and his consort, future Empress Jitō 持統, that prompted a political shift at court, the ruling family were finally to claim their divine status and appropriate the remote sacred site at Ise, along with its deity Amaterasu

Ōmikami 天照大神 as imperial progenitor (WADA 1995, 69; BOWRING 2005, 22). It was after the conversion of the imperial lineage to worship of Amaterasu, perhaps sometime in the late sixth century, that the sacred site on Mount Miwa began to disappear from the map of imperial political interests and, as a result, was “written out” of the official history.

By the Heian period, the worship of the Miwa deity in southern Yamato was reduced to a matter of local importance and was the responsibility of the Ōmiwa priestly lineage, who claimed their descent from Ōmononushi and his son Ōtataneko 大直禰子. The veneration of the Ōmiwa deities was nominally supported by the imperial court, as the shrine was included in the middle rank of the twenty-two shrine system 二十二社 (GRAPARD 1988). As part of this system, Ōmiwa was one of the shrines to which the messengers were dispatched during the festivals as a token of respect—or a method of control—by the imperial house. By the same token, the deity of Miwa, revered for its connections to the imperial mythology, was promoted in rank over the years.

As many other prominent shrines incorporated into the imperially sponsored system, the sacred site at Miwa had developed into a shrine-temple complex. *Engishiki* 延喜式 (927) reports that the Ōmiwa shrine was surrounded by the smaller sacred sites such as Sai 狹井, Tsunakoshi 綱越, and Himuka 日向, where the deities related to Miwa were worshipped (BOCK 1972 II, 120). The clan temple of the Ōmiwa family, Ōmiwadera 大三輪寺, may have already existed in the vicinity of the mountain and performed a function of the shrine temple (*jingūji* 神宮寺). Its origins remain unclear, although the accounts in *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 and *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語 attributed the foundation of a Buddhist temple in Miwa to the Ōmiwa Dainagon Takachimaro 大三輪大納言高市麻呂, who converted his own residence into a *garan* 伽藍 in the times of Empress Jitō. The Ōmiwa *jingūji* was said to have an image of the Eleven-Headed Kannon 十一面觀音 as its principal Buddha, so it is plausible that early combinatory cult at Miwa was based on association of the Ōmiwa deity with manifestations of bodhisattva Kannon (Sk. Avalokiteśvara). There are indications that early Buddhist culture in Miwa may have been influenced by the mixed esoteric practices characteristic of the Buddhist temples in Nara. However, the details of such worship are unclear.

With the disintegration of the twenty-two shrines system, official support gradually ceased, and the cultic site at Miwa was left to its own devices by seeking private donations from the public for its own survival. The traffic from Nara towards the eastern provinces via Hase 長谷 and Murō 室生, the Kannon pilgrimage to Hasedera 長谷詣, the mountain practitioners from Tōnomine 多武峯 and Yoshino 吉野 probably provided enough opportunities to procure funds which helped to maintain both the temple and the shrine. The flow of travelers must also have contributed towards the development of Miwa as an economic

center and an essential stopover on the crossroads of several main routes of travel.³

The expansion of Kōfukuji 興福寺 during the Heian period (GRAPARD 1992; ADOLPHSON 2000, 75–184) was another factor which may indirectly have contributed to Miwa's decline. The sacred site in Miwa found that its shrine lands came under the control of the Kasuga shrine, and the shrine temple was formally "supervised" by a Kōfukuji *bettō* 別当 who actually resided in Nara (OJS 1, 309–12). Miwa's reluctance towards the Kōfukuji power became manifested in a prolonged disagreement between Miwa and Kasuga over the Izakawa shrine 率川神社 and Miwa's affiliation with Tōnomine,⁴ Kōfukuji's archrival in southern Yamato.

The Arrival of the Saidaiji Monks

By the 1200s the old sacred site in Miwa almost balanced on the verge of oblivion. The most important center of worship in prehistoric times, the shrine continued to hold its annual festivals, but no great official services were held, court messengers were no longer dispatched, and income from the shrine land domains was channeled to Nara. This situation continued well into the 1240s, until a new lineage armed with a great mission of restoring the Buddhist order arrived at Miwa. It was a group of monks affiliated with Saidaiji at Nara, the *Saidaijiryū*, who "rediscovered" and redefined Miwa as an influential site of worship during the late Kamakura period.

It has been assumed that the study of precepts at Nara was in decline for many years before the monks of Kōfukuji, Tōshōdaiji, and Saidaiji conceived the necessity of restoring monastic codes of behavior and gradually formed what became known as the precepts restoration movement (*kairitsu fukkō* 戒律復興). Its early beginnings are often attributed to Jichihan 実範 (c. 1089–1144) or Gedatsubō Jōkei 解脱房貞慶 (1155–1213), who both put considerable effort into reproducing Vinaya texts and established ordination platforms at their temples (BUIJNSTERS 1999, FORD 2002). Due to Jōkei's political campaign against the followers of Hōnen on the turn of the thirteenth century, the revival of the precepts has often been portrayed as a measure by which the Nara establishment attempted to counterbalance the rise of the single-practice teachings (KURODA 1996, MORRELL 1987). It may have indeed been so in the times of Jōkei, but it

3. On the activities of the Nara (Kōfukuji) monks in Murō, Iga, and Owari, and the development of a ritual center at Murō see TSUJI 1970, 1979b; FUJIMAKI 2003, 2004; FOWLER 2005. On the Hasedera pilgrimage and its connections to Miwa see TSUJI 1979a and AMBROS 1997. The relationship of Miwa and Tōnomine-Yoshino Shugendō is discussed in GORAI 1978.

4. *Tōnomine ryakki* 多武峯略記 reports that by 1198 Miwadera was affiliated with Tōnomine as an affiliated temple (*matsuji* 末寺) although it was still managed by the monks of Yamashinadera 山階寺 (Kōfukuji). Such affiliation may have ensured Miwa's protection in the times of conflict and provided a steady flow of mountain ascetics.

should be said that the revival of the precepts and Vinaya study became a much more complicated and broader phenomenon that drew on a variety of factors and localities (BLUM 2002), reaching its height only in the latter half of the thirteenth century.⁵

In 1235 Eizon 叡尊 (1201–1290), Kakujō 覚盛 (1193–1249), Ensei 円晴 (1180–1241), and Ugon 有嚴 (1186–1275) performed the ceremony of self-ordination (*jisei jukai* 自誓受戒) at Tōdaiji. Although such ritual action was technically not permitted, they saw it in effect as a restoration of the official tradition of ordinations established at Nara by the Chinese master Jianzhen (Jp. Ganjin 鑑真; 687–763) back in the 750s. In the next few decades these monks along with their supporters went on to restore the Ritsu 律 seminars at several Nara temples, many of which were previously affiliated with the study of Hossō 法相 as well as other doctrines (HOSOKAWA 1987, GRONER 2005).

Saidaiji 西大寺 was one such temple. Constructed in the 750s, it was initially conceived as manifestation of imperial power, but its fortunes declined soon afterwards (BENDER 1979). By the thirteenth century Saidaiji had been made a sub-temple of Kōfukuji and due to the lack of funding was in a state of disrepair. From the 1240s onwards this temple became the main residence for Eizon and a group of his followers who became widely known as the Saidaiji lineage. The Saidaiji monks were one of the major monastic forces that succeeded in reinvigorating the study and practice of the precepts and reinvented Saidaiji as the head temple of a vast network of affiliated temples, and a prominent center of both the *kairitsu* 戒律 movement and Esoteric Buddhism.

Eizon was born into the family of a Kōfukuji scholar monk and a woman from the Fujiwara clan, in the village of Minota 蓑田村 in the Sō no kami 添上 district of Yamato. After his mother died in 1208, he was sent to live with his aunt, a shrine attendant (*miko* 巫女) at the Kiyotaki shrine 清滝宮 of Daigoji. Many facts of his life are known as described by himself in his diary, a “True Record of Learning for Body and Mind by the Vajra Buddha-Child Eizon” 金剛仏子叡尊感身学正記 (SEDS 1997: 2–76) written toward the end of his life, and from the accounts written by his immediate disciples.

Eizon began to study Esoteric Buddhism at Daigoji 醍醐寺 where he learnt that the “True Word (*shingon* 真言) was a miraculous cure [...] in the Last Dharma Age” (SEDS 1997, 3).⁶ And indeed, the esoteric argument of *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛 would promise instant enlightenment in this very body, thus offering a message of hope that countered the essentially pessimistic doctrine of *mappō* 末法—a trend that concerned many monastic and lay practitioners. During a period of training at different monastic centers, Eizon witnessed the

5. For an investigation of the varying sets of precepts in history, the doctrinal aspects of the Nara restoration, and in particular, Eizon’s view of precepts see GRONER 1984, ISHIDA 1976, MINOWA 1999, and GRONER 2005, respectively.

6. Translations by author unless otherwise stated.

loss of dignity by monks who had “turned into mere charlatans.” He realized that the importance of the Vinaya was also explained in important tantric scriptures, such as the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* (Jp. *Dainichikyō* 大日經, T 18, no. 848), and Yixing’s (Jp. Ichigyō 一行; 673–727) commentary on it (Jp. *Dainichikyōsho* 大日經疏, T 47, no. 1796). In his diary, Eizon cited the admonition of Kūkai 空海 (774–835):

Without precepts how one can realize the way of Buddhas? You should rigidly adhere to both the exoteric and esoteric precepts. Be pure and do not violate them. If you purposely violate them, you are not a disciple of the Buddha, nor are you my disciple. (SEDS 1997: 7, 9; trans. in GRONER 2005, 211)

Eizon also wrote that the precepts was the only means by which to purge the established monastic order of improper conduct. He made a vow to dedicate himself to the propagation of precepts and to practice Esoteric Buddhism, seeing these two practices in combination as the essential and most appropriate means to restore the declining Buddhist Law in the age of *mappō* (SEDS 1997: 7–9, 13).

From the late 1240s onwards, Eizon and his followers undertook the formidable task of carrying out many social projects that involved social outcasts and women—constructing shelters, hospices, and bridges, and dispensing clothes and food (WAJIMA 1959, INOUE 1971). By conferring the varying sets of precepts on different groups of lay and monastic practitioners and by propagating a multiplicity of exoteric and esoteric practices, the Saidaiji order had acquired a useful means for institutional and geographical expansion and managed to incorporate a large number of potential donors into its growing infrastructure as well as to create a vast network of affiliated temples and convents during the latter half of the thirteenth century (HOSOKAWA 1987, OISHIO 1995). One of the first projects that led to such expansion was the instalment of the Mañjuśrī statues at the *hinin* lodges in southern Yamato.

The Mañjuśrī Project and the Vinaya Movement at Miwa

The identifiable groups of *hinin* 非人 (literally “non-persons”) appeared some time in the tenth to eleventh century. Often they lived on the lands owned by a large religious complex in specially constructed separate facilities (*shuku* 宿), where they performed special functions such as participating in rituals (*kamugoto* 神事), dealing with ritual pollution or being used as a military force in the disputes over the land estates. In addition, they were sometimes employed by the imperial police office, the *Kebiishi* 檢非違使, to mete out punishments (NAGAHARA 1979, AMINO 1994). From a Buddhist viewpoint, these people had accumulated so much evil karma that they were subject to retribution not only in future lives, but also during their lifetime. However, despite their socially

inferior position, *hinin* were also considered reincarnations of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Jp. Monju) 文殊.⁷

Traditionally, the *Great Wisdom Sutra* (Jp. *Daihannyakyō* 大般若經, T 5–8, NO. 220) presents Mañjuśrī as a deity of wisdom, whereas another important Buddhist scripture, the *Garland Sutra* (Jp. *Kegonkyō* 華嚴經, T no. 278, 9: 395) portrays him as a deity leading to awakening (*bodai* 菩提). A poem in a text entitled the “Meditation on the Mind-base Sutra” (Jp. *Daijō honshōshinjikankyō* 大乘本性心地觀經, T 59, 305c) describes Mañjuśrī as a great teacher who inspired awakening, and the Mother of Buddhas (WU 2002, 194).

HORIIKE Shunpō (1982, 473–91) argues that the tradition of Mañjuśrī worship at Nara temples may be traced back to Gyōki 行基 and the monks of Gangōji and Daianji who promoted the veneration of this deity among the public during the early Nara period. Tendai monks may have followed the tradition of Mañjuśrī worship observed by Ennin 円仁 (794–864) on Mount Wutai 五台山 in China, whereby this deity was also perceived as a Buddhist saint in the disguise of a destitute person and praised for his equality in providing enlightenment to all people regardless of their social status (STEVENSON 1996).

The *Mañjuśrī sūtra* (Jp. *Monjushiri han nehanyō* 文殊師利般涅槃經, T 14, no. 463), a scripture imported to Japan in the 750s, explained that in the desperate times of *mappō*, those who had faith in Mañjuśrī would be able to attain the enlightened stage of *arhat*, whereas those who constructed seven images of this benevolent saint would also be able to perceive the law of impermanence and selflessness (*mujōmuga* 無常無我), and thus would be able to achieve enlightenment. In such a view, the donations and services aimed at relieving the suffering of *hinin* were often perceived as a form of homage to Mañjuśrī.

Perhaps a similar intention was behind the numerous campaigns of the Saidaiji order that converted vast numbers of *hinin* living in Yamato, Kawachi, Izumi, and Settsu into practitioners of the pure precepts 齋戒. In the entry of 1268, for instance, Eizon quoted the *Mañjuśrī sūtra* (T 14, no. 463, 481b) saying that Mañjuśrī would manifest himself as one of the poor suffering people in order to stimulate the kind hearts (慈心) of human beings, and that if one practiced compassionate acts one would be able to encounter Mañjuśrī in person (SEDS 1997: 33–34). For the Saidaiji order the worship of Mañjuśrī was important because it was also a powerful esoteric deity which could offer instant enlightenment both to the worshipper and to those on whose behalf he worshipped (WU 2002, 173–74, 206–97).⁸ However, it may also be that the Saidaiji lineage

7. Various accounts in medieval *setsuwa* collections such as *Konjaku monogatari* (19:2, 參河守大江定基出家語) or *Kojidan* (古事談 3–81, 智海、癩人卜法談ノ事), reported cases where this bodhisattva manifested himself in the form of a poor woman or a person suffering from leprosy.

8. For instance, during the creation of a Mañjuśrī statue which was installed in Hannyaji in 1267, Eizon inscribed the front and the back interior surfaces with four *shuji mandara*: Five-Syllable Monju 五字文殊, Eight-Syllable Monju 八字文殊, and the Two Realm 兩界 *mandaras*. In his

particularly sought to control *hinin* because of their ability to deal with pollution and assist in labor and mortuary rites which played considerable role in bringing the profit to the temple's growing infrastructure (HOSOKAWA 1987).

It was actually the monk Ninshō 忍性 (1235–1305) who first approached the groups of *hinin* in Nara and Yamato and initiated a movement involving the Ritsu practitioners, the worship of Mañjuśrī and social outcasts back in the 1240s. Eizon became his preceptor in the Ten Great Precepts 十重戒 and recommended that he follow a course of Buddhist ordinations. Ninshō told his mentor that he had made a vow to create images of Mañjuśrī and deliver them to seven *hinin* settlements (*hinin juku* 非人宿) in Yamato. On the anniversary of his mother's death, he promised to chant the name of the Buddhist saint all night on the twenty-fifth day of each month and to dedicate the achieved merit to benefit his mother's salvation. Eizon, who had also lost his mother early in life, was moved by such determination, and encouraged the young monk to commence this project (SEDS 1997, 14–15). Ninshō's initiative to install the images of Mañjuśrī at the *hinin juku* immediately found followers among the monks affiliated to the Ritsu center at Saidaiji. Among many others was a certain Rikanbō Keijitsu 理観房繼実 of the mountain temple Chōgakuji 長岳寺 who commissioned an image of Mañjuśrī for the *hinin* settlement in Miwa in 1241 (SEDS 1997, 16).

The origins of the *hinin* at Miwa remain unclear. The diaries of Heian noblewomen mention the groups of *hinin* who congregated in the vicinity of Hasedera to beg for alms from the pilgrims (AMBROS 1997); since Hasedera was only a few hours walk away, one could assume that these may have been the same groups of *hinin* who frequented Miwa. Located on the crossroads of several main roads busy with traffic, Miwa juku 三輪宿 must have accommodated a significant group of *hinin* who were possibly employed for various tasks by the Ōmiwa shrine, begged at the Tsubaki market 海柘榴市, or were involved in casting iron at nearby Kanaya 金屋.

After the installation of the Mañjuśrī image at Miwa juku in 1241, Eizon, who performed the ceremony of its dedication, became consistently involved in religious matters at Miwa: he continued to visit the old sacred site until the end of his life. It seems that at that point Eizon's interest in Miwa was solely motivated by his determination to incorporate *hinin* into Saidaiji's infrastructure and to carry on with the revival and propagation of precepts.⁹

For instance, in 1250 Eizon was introduced by his disciple Renkakubō Kōen

records he emphasized that he himself wrote the seed letters and that before writing each syllable he practiced *ichiji sanrai* 一字三禮 (bowing three times) (SEDS 1997, 31). Wu has noted that the esoteric images of Mañjuśrī, found among other existing visual materials relating to the Saidaiji order, include the Five-Syllable Mañjuśrī image appearing on the opening section of a *Great Wisdom Sutra* scroll, donated by Eizon to the Hiraoka shrine 平岡社 in 1279, and a group of 671 prints found inside a Mañjuśrī statue in Ryōfukuji 良福寺 (WU 2002).

9. On the other hand, Eizon was born in Yamato, so he may have been vaguely aware of the settlement and of the sacred site in Miwa and its history.

蓮覚房幸円 (n. d.) to the meditation master Jōshin 乘心上人 (n. d.) so that he could borrow an important book that was preserved at the Miwa *bessho* 別所 (SEDS 1997, 23). Kōen, an active member of the Saidaiji order, assisted in acquisition of the Chinese texts on Vinaya and participated in several summer retreats (*kechige* 結夏) at Saidaiji along with Eizon and Ninshō during the years 1247–1249. His name is seen in several religious vows (*ganmon* 願文) proclaimed by the Saidaiji monks and dedicated to Śākyamuni or Mañjuśrī (SEDS 1997, 130–34 & 341–42), and in the colophons of scriptures copied at Saidaiji and inserted into the statue of Aizen (SEDS 1997, 328–29). According to the inventory of the Saidaiji land ownings 西大寺田園目録 (SEDS 1997, 412–41), in 1247 Kōen even donated some lands to assist in the maintenance of the Saidaiji order’s everyday activities (SEDS 1997, 413). Most probably a local Miwa resident, he provided the important link connecting the Saidaiji order and a group of practitioners residing at the Miwa *bessho*.¹⁰

The *bessho* was established by a group of “holy men” (*hijiri* 聖) at Miwa some time at the turn of the thirteenth century. It was a small facility, possibly a hermitage in a secluded area near the mountain, where non-ordained semi-itinerant monks could practice a variety of rituals (KURODA 1996). The Miwa *bessho* was frequented by the groups of Shugendō practitioners who travelled from Yoshino and Tōnomine to Hase and Murō, and by 1235 it had grown into a temple, Byōdōji 平等寺 (MSK 1983; SUGAHARA 1994, 1996a, 1996b). Although the Miwa *hijiri* actively sought contact with other religious groups and centers, the *bessho* at Miwa remained a private facility which was not recognized as a full-fledged temple and had no official connections to larger Buddhist institutions.

It seems that in absence of the more up-to-date texts on precepts, the Saidaiji monks—many of whom were affected by the doctrine of *mappō*—came to rely on the works of the Chinese masters of the Hossō tradition, which contained manuals for initiation in the bodhisattva precepts (*bosatsukai* 菩薩戒). For instance, such were Xuanzang’s 玄奘 (600–664) writings, such as the “Rules for the Initiation in the Bodhisattva Precepts” (Jp. *Jubosatsukai hō* 授菩薩戒法), transmitted by his disciple Huizhao 慧沼 (?–714), who incorporated it in his “Collection of the Encouragement of the Mind that Aspires for Enlightenment” (Jp. *Kanpotsubodaishin Shū* 觀發菩提心集, T 45, no. 1862). These important texts were used earlier by Jichihan and Jōkei as basic manuals for initiations in the bodhisattva precepts and became transmitted as the guidelines for the revival of the precept studies at Saidaiji (BUIJNSTERS 1999, 57–58; MINOWA 1999, 434). The Miwa *bessho*, for some reason, happened to be in possession of nothing less than Jōkei’s handwritten copy of the aforementioned work by Huizhao (SEDS

10. Kōen is thought to have been involved in the early stages of formation of the Miwa lineage. His name appears in many Miwaryū transmission charts reconstructed from the late Edo records, and in some manuals concerning esoteric initiations into kami-related matters (*jingi kanjō* 神祇灌頂).

1997, 23).¹¹ Needless to say, in the case of the growing Saidaiji order ca. 1250 who set themselves to an inspiring agenda of restoring monastic society, access to up-to-date works on precepts was necessary.¹² In the difficult conditions of *mappō* this unique finding in Miwa must have been a gift of fortune for the Saidaiji lineage and for its leader who strove to revive the legitimate sangha following the correct ordination procedures.

Eizon returned to Miwa on at least three more occasions: to attend “the matter of Miwa” in 1281, to confer the precepts on hundreds of *hinin* in 1283, and to restore the old dilapidated Ōmiwa *jingū* temple in 1285 (SEDS 1997: 52, 53, 61). The Ōmiwa temple was renamed Daigorinji 大御輪寺 and made a branch temple of Saidaiji. This enabled the Saidaiji monks to establish themselves at Miwa officially, but more importantly, the Saidaiji lineage secured itself a potent cultic center dedicated to an old kami which had been all but left aside by powerful monastic lineages and official donors.

It is at this stage that we need to ask: why would kami worship be important? And why would the Saidaiji lineage look for an “available” or “forgotten” site where a powerful kami was enshrined? Were kami seen as a useful means of attaining enlightenment? Or, perhaps, something more important was at stake within a larger socio-political context?

Esoteric Theories and Esoteric Networks

By the end of the thirteenth century, Buddhist worship of kami was already a long-established tradition. The monastic lineages of powerful temples were in the process of creating different concepts and models which were based on the doctrines of “original ground and manifest trace” (*honji suijaku*) and “softening the light and mingling with dust” (*wakō dōjin* 和光同塵), and effectively placed kami under the Buddhist order.¹³ The spread of esoteric teachings in late Heian brought about a renewed interest towards kami as sentient beings at different levels of awakening. For instance, in *Nakatomi harae kunge* 中臣祓訓解, a text explaining the hidden meaning of the Nakatomi formula and incorporated into various combinatory cults, kami were envisaged as those who had achieved

11. The provenance of these texts by the Miwa *bessho* is unclear, but it is possible that the Miwa *bessho* was somehow connected to Jōkei’s followers at Kasagidera. The early beginnings of the Miwa *bessho* and the Miwa lineage, whose foundation is attributed to Kyōen 慶円 (1140?–1223), will be discussed in a separate study.

12. The lack of authoritative texts on the precepts remained a matter of urgency for the Ritsu monks both at Kyoto and Nara. In the period 1247–1249, Ugon, Kakunyo, and Jōshin travelled to China (SEDS 1997, 19) bringing back twenty sets of subcommentaries on Daoxuan’s three major commentaries on the Vinaya that were subsequently deposited in Tōshōdaiji and Saidaiji (SEDS 1997, 328–39; GRONER 2005). It seems that the Saidaiji lineage, too, was trying to acquire such texts by all means possible.

13. For a discussion of the premodern view of kami as a Buddhist concept of the non-Buddhist deities (*jindō* 神道) see TEEUWEN 2002.

enlightenment (*hongakujin* 本覺神), those who had not (*fugakujin* 不覺神), and those who were at the initial stage of Buddhist realization (*shokakujin* 初覺神) (NST 19, 54–55; trans. in TEEUWEN and VAN DER VEERE 1998, 50–51). The texts produced during the thirteenth to fourteenth century reveal much more advanced theories on kami. A text of the Tendai tradition, *Onjōji denki* 園城寺伝記, invokes several groups of kami, such as “ancestral deity” (*sūbyōjin* 崇廟神), “shrine deity” (*shashokujin* 社稷神), “avatar deity” (*gonjajin* 権者神), “real deity” (*jisshajin* 実者神), and “wrathful deity” (*jamyōjin* 邪冥神) (DNBZ 127: 105, scroll 9, 本覚院公顕事). It was also discovered that the original form of “real” kami was a snake, and that therefore, as Buddhist rhetoric put it, they were the origin of the “eight poisons” of delusion (ITŌ 1996, TEEUWEN and RAMBELLI 2003). Such deities were thought to possess an outstanding power and had to be pacified by the means of esoteric rituals. It is during this period that the new concepts of kami such as those manifested in the texts of the emerging Shintō thought began to appear (TEEUWEN 2002).

The ultimate interest of early medieval Buddhists was directed towards the Great Shrine of Ise 伊勢神宮, where the ancestral kami of the imperial house was enshrined. According to the official mythology presented in *Nihon shoki*, Amaterasu or Tenshō Kōtaijin 天照皇太神 was the main deity who ruled Japan, and all other kami were related to it in one way or another. The elevated position and the utmost sanctity of Tenshō Kōtaijin inspired great interest in Buddhist circles, and by the thirteenth century prominent Buddhist monks gradually began to pay homage to the Great Shrines despite the prohibition of private offerings and the taboos relating to Buddhism at Ise.

A notable example of this sort of Buddhist pilgrimage was that performed by a group of monks from Tōdaiji, led by Chōgen 重源 (1121–1206). They came to Ise with an appeal to sponsor the restoration campaign for the statue of Great Roshana Buddha in Nara, which had been destroyed in a fire during the Genpei war (1180–1185) (GOODWIN 1994). Jōkei, too, revered the deity of Ise, and although it is unknown whether he indeed went to Ise, a number of *setsuwa* exist that portray him on a pilgrimage to the shrines (HOSOKAWA 1991). Tsūkai 通海 (1234–1305), a Shingon monk of the Ōnakatomi lineage, left us a remarkable account of his experiences at Ise in 1286, *Daijingu sankeiki* 大神宮參詣記, from which we learn many details of contemporary worship there.

The prohibition of Buddhism in the precincts of the Ise Shrines had begun centuries earlier. Among the ritual prescriptions for the Consecrated Princess 齋宮, Book 5 in the *Engishiki* noted that certain words such as “Buddha,” “sutras,” or “pagoda” were taboo (BOCK 1972 I, 152–53) and were not to be uttered under any circumstances. Kuroda Toshio has argued that the prohibition of speaking about Buddhism “in fact did not imply a rejection of Buddhism but rather indicated a special attitude or etiquette assumed in the presence of the kami and thus it was not a strict rule” (KURODA 1993). In fact, private Buddhist temples in the

vicinity of the Great Ise shrines had been founded by the same lineages of kami priests—such as the Ōnakatomi 大中臣, Watarai 度会, and Arakida 荒木田—as early as the tenth century. It is notable that many of those temples appear to have enshrined the Eleven-Headed Kannon as their principal deity (*honzon* 本尊).

Kannon was perhaps one of the earliest Buddhist deities to be associated with Amaterasu: such theories may have emerged already by the late eleventh century (Itō 1996). Recent research suggests that the idea of Amaterasu and Kannon being one and the same existed not only at Ise, but also at Hasedera (FUJIMAKI 2003).

The ideas of association of Amaterasu with various esoteric deities must first have appeared in elite esoteric circles during the Heian period. For instance, the monk Jōson 成尊 (1012–1074) of the Onoryū lineage 小野流 wrote that bodhisattva Ikō 威光, who was considered to be a manifestation of esoteric Buddha Dainichi 大日如来, appeared in Japan as Amaterasu no mikoto 天照尊.¹⁴ This theory subsequently re-appeared in official records such as *Tōdaiji yōroku* 東大寺要録 (1106), where its origins were attributed to the eighth century, the time when the Tōdaiji temple was constructed in Nara. According to the *Yōroku* account, emperor Shōmu 聖武 (701–756), before commencing the construction of the Great Vairocana statue in Tōdaiji, dispatched a courtier, Tachibana no Moroe 橘諸兄, to the Ise shrines in order to secure divine assistance for such a grandiose state project. Following that, the emperor saw in a dream by a woman who revealed to him that the Sun deity was Dainichi (Itō 1996, 2003).

Another Buddhist theory which had emerged by the eleventh century envisaged Amaterasu as the manifestation of Aizen myōō (Sk. Rāgarāja) 愛染明王 (Itō 2004). This esoteric deity represented the powers of lust and desire and was known from a description in *Yujia yuqi jing* (Jp. *Yuga yugikyō* [金剛峯樓閣一切] 瑜伽瑜祇經, T 18, no. 867), a sutra brought to Japan from China by Kūkai. Aizen was usually depicted as a ferocious-looking deity, red-skinned, three-eyed and six-armed, sitting cross-legged on a lotus or emerging from a ring of fire and holding various esoteric tools in his arms. This deity was known for its power to transform the suffering of the defiled world into enlightenment (“passions are enlightenment”; *bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提), and was also considered to be a manifestation of Dainichi. In esoteric circles it was known that the worship of Aizen granted the possibility of sudden advance to the state of Vajrasattva (Kongōi 金剛位) and the fulfilment of worldly desires. On a larger scale, Aizen also figured in a powerful rite advocated by the Shingon and Tendai temples as a politically important tool, and served on many occasions to pacify the country, quell calamities and promote peace, harmony and respect.¹⁵ Such theories advocated

14. Jōson's collection entitled the *Shingon fuhō sanyōshō* 真言付法纂要抄 [Abbreviated compendium of transmissions in Shingon] (T 77, no. 2433) was written around 1060.

15. For differences in the Shingon and Tendai ritualism on Aizen, and further discussion of *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪抄 and *Asabashō* 阿婆縛抄 respectively, see Itō 2004.

a perception that the kami of Ise was original and fundamental, and by the parallel with Dainichi, was a source of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覺). This realization was to play a great role in the development of similar versions of kami thought at other shrine-temple complexes, such as Hiei/Hie and Miwa, where the native deities became identified with Amaterasu (TEEUWEN 2002).

At Ise, some of the Buddhist temples associated with Shugendō pilgrimage and established Buddhist lineages became centers for dissemination of esoteric theories concerning the kami of Ise. Not only were previously known esoteric practices and doctrines transmitted in these temples, but new theories and ideas were also created. For instance, *Nakatomi harae kunge* may have been produced at one such temple, the Sengūin 仙宮院, which was connected to the Shugendō lineages of Onjōji 恩城寺 (TEEUWEN 2000, 99). This text was among the first to explain that the two shrines of Ise were a manifestation of the Two-Realm Mandala, and that Amaterasu was in fact Dainichi, the All-Illuminating Honored One 光明遍照尊, whereas the other gods were her servants (TEEUWEN and VAN DER VEERE 1998, 40–41). Esoteric theories that were created and advanced in the temples like Sengūin or Segidera 世義寺, became transmitted within esoteric lineages residing at these temples and in turn, were exchanged between the members of different lineages, in effect forming at Ise an esoteric network that due to involvement of various lineages, such as those of Saidaiji, Daigoji, Onjōji, or the Shugendō practitioners from Katsuragi, gradually became extended to other areas of Japan.

Saidaiji and Ise

Let us return to Eizon. He visited the Great Shrines of Ise on at least three occasions: in 1273, 1275, and 1280 (SEDS 1997: 38–39, 45–46). This interest in kami worship, and particularly in the worship of the imperial deity Amaterasu, is traditionally explained by his own upbringing and his concern for the protection of the state when the threat of the Mongol invasions loomed over Japan in the 1270s to 1280s (GRONER 2001, AMINO 1992). Indeed, in times of unprecedented crisis Eizon's presence was officially requested on many occasions, sponsored both by the imperial court in Kyoto and the *bakufu* government in Kamakura. However, in view of the activities of esoteric circles at Ise, one suspects there may also have been other reasons for Eizon's keen interest in kami worship, and at the Great Ise shrines in particular.

Eizon first visited Ise in Bun'ei 文永 10 (1273) at the invitation of the *gonnegi* 權禰宜 Arakida Chikamichi 荒木田親倫, a hereditary priest of the Inner Shrine 内宮. Not much is known about this visit, but it seems that Eizon's second pilgrimage, in the third month of Bun'ei 12 (1275), was performed in the aftermath of the Mongols' attack on Tsushima and was dedicated to performing the services for protection of the country against foreign invasion (SEDS 1997, 39).

Upon his arrival, Eizon presented a copy of the *Great Wisdom Sutra* to the shrine, along with other scriptures and ritual objects.¹⁶ On this occasion, he was accompanied by a large group of fellow monks from Saidaiji, as the audience may have been an official one.¹⁷ They were met by eight *negi* priests in formal garb in front of the *torii* gates leading Kaze no miya 風宮, the furthest stop on the way to the Inner shrine where Buddhist priests were allowed.

Despite the special etiquette in the presence of kami that was in effect a formal prohibition of the Buddhist Dharma at Ise, the Arakida priests of the Inner Shrine—notably Chikamichi and Nobusue 延季—actually welcomed such visits. They put considerable effort into organizing Eizon’s arrival at the shrine and his acquaintance with their traditions. Nobusue, for instance, received another prominent Buddhist monk, Enshō 円照 (1220–1277) of Tōdaiji Kaidan’in 東大寺戒壇院, during his stay at Ise.¹⁸ He also provided the preface to one of Enshō’s works that discussed the issues of attaining sudden enlightenment and the principal of non-duality (*funi* 不二) (KONDŌ 1959).

Apart from the interest in esoteric theories, the Arakida priests’ involvement may have also been prompted by pragmatic reasons. In the 1280s the situation at Ise was far from benign. The disintegration of the legitimate imperial lineage at court and the gradual impoverishment of the imperial house had led to a difficult situation at the principal state shrine: official donations came to almost nothing, imperial messengers were never dispatched and even the fortunes of the Consecrated Princess, whose presence at Ise ensured proper worship of the imperial deity, were uncertain. The shrine lands (神郡) and “sustenance households” (神戸) supporting the upkeep of the Ise shrines were treated as private holdings by their administrators (宮司), and the shrines themselves were in difficulty because of an insufficient flow of income from the estates (TEEWEN 1996, 22). In order to survive, both shrines were forced to offer private services and to welcome contributions from private donors. They both tried to reach a wider audience and employed a number of new strategies in order to attract patronage (BOWRING 2005, 272). Powerful esoteric lineages, experimenting with new salvation techniques and interested in acquiring a base at Ise, in turn, could be such potential donors. For instance, it is known that the Outer Shrine of Ise to a great extent was involved with the Sanbōin lineage 三宝院流 of Daigoji, whereas the Inner Shrine became connected to the Saidaiji order, among several others (ITŌ 1993). It was the period when the various theories concerning the Ise shrines were just about to begin and form a distinctive

16. The Sung copy of the *Wisdom Sūtra* was brought by Ninshō who sailed from the Kamakura Bay in Kantō, where he resided in Gokurakuji 極樂寺, to the Toba Bay in Ise. The *Siddham Mandala of the Two Realms* 兩界種字曼荼羅 and other important items were also presented on this occasion.

17. This procedure seems to have followed the protocol of an official visit, such as those performed by Chōgen during the campaign for Tōdaiji’s restoration of 1186.

18. For more on the activities of Enshō, see BLUM 2002.

stream of thought that later became referred to as Ise Shinto. In fact, in several years time the two shrines would embark on a debate over the use of imperial character which would further spark a legal battle between the Inner and the Outer shrines and thus prompt the “discovery” of the five books of Shinto 神道五部書 and the whole Watarai tradition (TEEUWEN 1996).

The aim of Eizon’s third pilgrimage to Ise in 1280 was to donate the full Buddhist corpus (*issaikyō* 一切經) to the both shrines (SEDS 1997, 45–46). This visit was partly sponsored by the imperial court,¹⁹ but apart from offering the Buddhist scriptures to the Great Shrines, the Saidaiji leader must have had his own goals in mind. It could have been during this visit that Eizon initiated the foundation of a Saidaiji-affiliated temple, the Kōshōji 弘正寺,²⁰ in the vicinity of the Inner shrine for the protection of the imperial deity. The Saidaiji lineage had also forged an association with several other temples of esoteric persuasion and thus had acquired a permanent base at Ise.

Kōshōji’s principal image was the esoteric Buddha Dainichi of the Two Realms 金胎大日. This temple was entrusted to Eizon’s disciple, the monk Sen’yu 宣瑜 (?–1325) who, a few decades later in 1316, was to become the third head priest of Saidaiji. Enmyōji 円明寺, another branch temple of Saidaiji, was constructed in Ise province sometime before 1273 (Itō 1993, 81–85). It also became the base for another prominent member of the Saidaiji lineage, the monk Kakujō 覚乗 (1273–1363) who lived at Ise for a number of years and was actively involved in esoteric network at Sengūin and Segidera.²¹

From the 1270s onwards the Saidaiji lineage firmly established itself in the vicinity of the Inner Shrine of Ise. It is not known whether at this stage the propagation of the precepts by the Saidaiji order took place at Ise on such a prolific scale as in other provinces or whether it ever played a role in that expansion. However, it seems likely that the power of kami was something that the Saidaiji lineage recognized as being of outstanding value, both for the protection of the state and for exploring the ways of individual salvation.

One of the best-known ritual objects illustrating the kind of kami worship carried out by the Saidaiji lineage is the Ise Jingū Goshōtai Zushi 伊勢神宮御正体厨子, a miniature shrine dedicated to the sacred body of both Ise shrines, which was installed at Saidaiji. There is a theory maintaining that Eizon commissioned the creation of this ritual item immediately after his third visit to Ise in 1280 (KONDŌ 1985). Several documents reporting the circumstances of his pilgrimage

19. Since the two sets of six hundred volumes each were required, Eizon had to appeal to the imperial court: one set, the Sung Chinese copy, was donated by Emperor Kameyama 龜山, another set was provided by the Saionji house 西園寺家.

20. This temple was located in the present-day Kusube district of Ise 伊勢市楠部町.

21. Kakujō was personally acquainted with the people who influenced the dynamism behind the various strands of esoteric kami worship at Ise: Chien 智円 (n. d.), Jibu Risshi 治部律師 (n. d.), Jihen 慈遍 (active in the 1340s) and, possibly, the main organizers of medieval Ise Shinto, Watarai Ieyuki 度会家行 (1256–1361?) and Watarai Tsuneyoshi (1263–1339).

were found inserted into this small box-like object. However, in one of these documents Eizon is called Bodhisattva Kōshō 興正, which was in fact a posthumous title granted to him ten years after his death, in 1300. Still, despite the debates over whether the *zushi* was created after Eizon's demise, or whether the documents were simply inserted later, one cannot underestimate the meaning of this object to the history of esoteric kami worship in early medieval Japan.

The *zushi*, a lacquered box with two doors, is about 56 cm high, 43 cm wide, and has a depth of 22 cm. Behind its wooden doors the *zushi* contains two *shuji mandara*, ritual representations of the Womb and Diamond Realms composed in Siddham script, and two mirrors that depict the spring and autumn landscapes of the two Ise Shrines. The Womb Realm mandala and the spring-themed mirror (which is considerably larger than its autumnal counterpart) represent the Inner Shrine and the imperial deity Amaterasu, whereas the mandala of the Diamond Realm and the autumn mirror represent the Outer Shrine and the deity Toyouke. Kondō Yoshihiro points out the difference in size between the mirrors representing the two shrines, and notes that Eizon and the Saidaiji lineage must have revered the Inner Shrine and the imperial deity Amaterasu as the deity and the shrine of the utmost importance, as opposed to the Outer Shrine and the deity Toyouke, which are represented by a much smaller mirror (KONDŌ 1985). Nakahara Shōtoku, a Shingon scholar from Kōyasan University, analyzed the mandalic representation of the *zushi* in more detail. In his opinion, the interpretation of the Ise Shrines in the terminology of the Two Realms was typical for Shingon monks in the medieval period. However, the use of the Buddha-Eye (*butsugen* 仏眼) mandala for the Outer Shrine and the combination of the Aizen and Taishō Kongō 大勝金剛 mandalas for the Inner Shrine of Ise appears to be unique and may have been specific to the Saidaiji lineage, whose ritualism partially adhered to the traditions of Ninnaji 仁和寺 and the Hossō tradition of reading of the *Yugikyō* (NAKAHARA 1997). Similar *zushi* were also found in other Saidaiji-affiliated temples at Ise, such as Futaiji 不退寺 and the above mentioned Enmyōji 円明寺 (ABE 1985).

The miniature shrine of Ise represented Saidaiji's very own version of esoteric kami worship, where the Grand Deities of Ise were envisaged as the embodiment of the Two Realms, the fundamental concepts of the cosmological and intellectual framework in Shingon. This veneration of kami combined with esoteric Buddhist traditions at Saidaiji is perhaps a good example of the early stages of what later became known as the "Shinto of Two Realms" (*Ryōbu Shintō*), a multiplicity of theories and practices that envisioned the Great Ise shrines as embodiment of the Two-Realm Mandala of Shingon (KADOYA 1995). The esoteric network at Ise where such theories were created and advanced, gradually became connected (in some cases, via the lineages who practiced Shugendō) to other cultic centers, where esoteric theories and rituals were further transmitted. The monks of the Saidaiji lineage residing at Ise, for instance, played a

crucial role in transmission of such esoteric kami theories to Miwa and its subsequent re-invention of as a powerful esoteric center.

Why Miwa?

The signs of this change in the status of Miwa can be seen in a text entitled the “Origins of the Great Miwa Deity” (*Miwa daimyōjin engi* 三輪大明神縁起, ST *Shingon shintō, ge*, 95–103). This text, which is considered one of the earliest examples of medieval kami worship at Miwa, may have been written as early as 1318, although this is unclear. Its authorship has often been, at least partially, attributed to Eizon, but modern scholarship suggests it more likely to have been accomplished with the involvement of the later generation of the Saidaiji monks, such as Sen’yū or Kakujō, both of whom were active members of esoteric network at Ise (Itō 1993).

The *Miwa daimyōjin engi* relates a number of theories, some of which could be of local origin. On the other hand, some theories appearing in this text contain many threads of esoteric and mythological knowledge that could be traced back to the esoteric Buddhist circles at Ise. For instance, the *engi* cites an oracle²² according to which the august name of Amaterasu or Tenshō Kōtaijin, translates as the sacred name of Buddha Mahāvairocana of Two Realms, the “All-Illuminating Bright Wisdom and the King of Heavenly Golden Wheel, Dainichi” 天金輪王光明遍照大日尊. According to that theory, Amaterasu is a manifestation of Māhāvairocana’s Three Bodies in One 三身即一之大日, which is the “original ground” (*honji* 本地) of the imperial ancestor.²³ The *engi* further explains that Dainichi appeared to the universe in its “Corresponding Body” 應身, “Reward Body” 報身, and “Dharma Body” 法身, in effect citing the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, one of the essential scriptures of Esoteric Buddhism. It was in this sutra that the figure of the cosmic Buddha Dainichi, Three Bodies in One, initially emerged. The sutra’s explanation of the three essential aspects of Dainichi (法報應之三身) and their corresponding effects of “principle, wisdom and compassion” (理知悲之三德) had also found its reflection in *Miwa daimyōjin engi* (KUSHIDA 2004, 283–84).

The esoteric theories emerging in the *engi* include the discussions of the supremacy of the Miwa deity over imperial ancestor, its connection to the deity of Hie, the doctrines of *sōmoku jōbutsu* 草木成仏, and other highly creative

22. A late-seventeenth-century collection, *Ritsuen sōhōden* 律苑僧宝伝, actually ascribed the fact of reception of the oracle proclaiming the true meaning of the name Amaterasu to Sen’yū (Itō 1993, 79).

23. Similar theories emerge in other texts produced at Ise, such as *Bikisho* 鼻婦書 (ST, *Shingon Shintō, ge*, 505–21) and *Tenshō Daijin kuketsu* 天照大神口決 (ST, *Shingon Shintō, ge*, 497–504). *Bikisho* (colophon of 1324), a compilation by Chien 智円 (n.d.), contains many esoteric theories concerning Amaterasu and other kami (TEEUWEN and RAMBELLI 2003). The *kuketsu* is thought to have been recorded in 1327 by Kakujō after his exchange with Chien.

fragments that provide a glimpse into a world of medieval thought specific for the cultic site at Miwa. The Saidaiji lineage who is thought to have been at stake in *engi's* compilation must have combined a knowledge of local lore with the most advanced secret theories that circulated in esoteric circles at Ise and Hie.²⁴

A substantial part of the *engi* is based on the ancient secret transmissions (*hiketsu* 秘訣) of the Ōmiwadera/Daigorinji priests 大御輪寺別当. One of the smaller colophons within the text attributes these transmissions to the twenty-ninth abbot of Daigorinji, the monk Jōnbon Shōnin 淨音房性忍, a disciple of Eizon who actively participated in the religious activities of Saidaiji. His name is seen in the list of the followers who received the bodhisattva precepts at Saidaiji (授菩薩戒弟子交名), discovered inside the statue of Eizon along with many other documents (SEDS 1997, 361; NISHIDA 1961, 178–79).

The transmissions of the Daigorinji abbots that adhered to the religious culture of the Saidaiji lineage comprise a vision of Mount Miwa as a part of the Two-Realm Mandala. In the *engi*, various categories of the mandala are applied to the actual geographical landscape. Guided by tantric logic (GRAPARD 1998), the text exposes the discovered similarities wherever possible and treats them as proof of the elevated sacrality, and hence the remarkable power, of Mount Miwa. For instance, one such oral transmission says:

This mountain is in between the two rivers *Ram* and *Vam*, both surrounded by the peaks. The mountains to the north of the river *Vam* are called the tail of the Womb Realm 胎藏界; the mountains to the south of the river *Ram* are called the tail of the Diamond Realm 金剛界. In between these two realms, all mountains are called the tail of Non-Duality 不二尾. Again, at the place where the two rivers merge, there is a road to the west of the bridge that is called the Six Paths [of transmigration] 六道.

It is thus revealed that the areas in the vicinity of Mount Miwa are none other than components of the Two-Realm Mandala. The Womb Realm in the north is the Buddha section 佛部, and is represented by the Buddha-Eye, Buddha Mother (Sk. *Buddhalocanī*) 佛眼佛母. The Diamond Realm in the south is actually the Diamond section (金剛部) of the *mandala*, which is represented by One-Syllable Golden Disc (一字金輪, Sk. *Uṣṇīṣa*).²⁵ In the middle of this sacred landscape there is the Lotus section (蓮華部) and the Non-Dual section (不二之尾), which is represented by the Thousand-Armed Kannon.

The earliest examples of envisaging the mountain landscape as manifestation of the Two Realm mandala had already appeared in the late twelfth century,

24. Due to the limitations of this article, a broader discussion of esoteric theories concerning the deities of Ise, Miwa, and Hie, as well as an annotated translation of *Miwa daimyōjin engi*, will be reserved for a separate study.

25. On the mandalic representations see TEN GROTENHUIS 1999, 100–102 and SNODGRASS 1988. On the meaning of *Uṣṇīṣa* and *Buddhalocanī* see RUPPERT 2000, 319 and 337–38.

when the oral traditions of Shugendō practitioners of Yoshino and Ōmine became recorded in a collection known as *Shosan engi* 諸山縁起 (NST 20: 90–139, *Jisha engi*). Such an interpretation may also be reminiscent of the layout of the Two Realm Siddham mandala described earlier in the context of the *Ise goshōtai zushi*, a miniature Ise shrine, preserved at Saidaiji. It seems that a similar strategy of “mandalization” was employed to represent Mount Miwa. In the *engi*, the actual geographical realm of Miwa is placed within the Buddhist universe of meaning and reinterpreted along the lines of tantric logic, producing, as a result, an example of a new sacred and secret geography of the old site of kami worship.

According to such logic, Mount Miwa becomes a real manifestation of esoteric wisdom in the “here-and-now.” One of the parallels drawn in the *engi* is that Mount Miwa was in fact the Flower-Store realm (華藏界), the world in the form of a Lotus, which emerges in the *Garland Sūtra* as a version of the Pure Land. Another theory reveals that Mount Miwa is actually the land of the Tranquil Light (寂光土), the true *Sambhogakāya* and the home land of cosmic Buddha Vairocana, Three Bodies in One (三佛一体).

The last question remains: why Miwa?

It seems that the special etiquette towards all things Buddhist at Ise created a powerful rhetoric of exclusion and attraction. On one hand Buddhist monks were prevented from worshipping the main kami of Japan directly. On the other hand, these limitations brought about an explosion of creative intellectual activity, especially at esoteric temples. The author of *Miwa daimyōjin engi* laments that “nothing can be done” about the taboo of Buddhism at Ise. Instead, he says, our attention should be turned to the Miwa deity, who “seeks the teaching of Buddha as fervently as a thirsty man seeking water.” Such appeal of the sacred site at Miwa to Buddhist order and Buddhist logic, its strategically useful location as well as its former position as a main ritualistic center were decisive factors in Miwa’s emergence as the “next best thing” after Ise.

In the view of the Saidaiji lineage, confronted with an explosion of esoteric theories about Ise, the deity of Miwa, was a long-forgotten kami that might have initially possessed a greater power and urgently needed revival. The Great Miwa Deity was thus appropriated by the authors of *engi* and given a new place and a new meaning. For this reason, whoever wrote *Miwa daimyōjin engi* clearly did so in an attempt to appeal to a larger audience by reinstating the supremacy and prevalence of the kami of Miwa over the imperial ancestor and the deity of Hie. It may have also been done in order to create a further sense of authority for the Saidaiji lineage at Ise and to counteract numerous theories expounded at other temples.

An important motivation for the Buddhist pacification of Miwa could be the Miwa deity itself. Its origins as the serpent deity Ōmononushi were known from the old legends, which described a divine union between the snake god of Miwa

and the daughter of a local chieftain. In the Buddhist view, kami, particularly those of a “real kind” (実者) who manifested themselves as snakes, were perceived as “cursing kami” (*tatarigami* 崇神) and beings who were at the origin of the eight sins, or delusions. For instance, *Nakatomi harae kunge* considered the Miwa deity, along with its lineage of Izumo descent, an “unruly deity” and a kami of ignorance who had not yet made even the first step towards enlightenment (TEEUWEN and Van DER VEERE 1998, 32). Needless to say, such kami had outstanding capacities and could potentially serve as a source of enlightenment, but they also needed to be subjugated and brought into the Buddhist realm (TEEUWEN and RAMBELLI 2003, 30–35).

The theories on kami discussed in this article, are only few examples of esoteric kami worship that were developing at several important cultic sites. It could be that such theories, especially those concerning the Miwa deity, were combined with the ritualistic practices of the Saidaiji and Miwa lineages and gave rise to a phenomenon later known as Miwaryū Shintō. Although the connection between the Saidaiji and Miwa lineages may be obscured by the time, this topic will remain on the agenda of a large-scale academic enquiry into the nature of medieval forms of kami worship.

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- MSK *Miwaryū Shintō no kenkyū: Ōmiwa jinja no shinbutsu shūgō bunka* 三輪流神道の研究—大神神社の神仏習合文化, ed. Ōmiwa Jinja Shiryō Henshūkai 大神神社資料編集会, Sakurai: Ōmiwa Jinja Shamusho, 1983.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系, ed. Sakamoto Tarō 坂本太郎, 100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958–1968.
- NST *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想大系, ed. Ienaga Saburō 家永三郎 et al., 67 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970–1982.
- OJS *Ōmiwa jinja shiryō* 大神神社史料, ed. Ōmiwa Jinja Shiryō Henshū Inkaikai 大神神社資料編集委員会, 10 volumes plus Index and Chronology. Miwa: Ōmiwa Jinja Shiryō Henshū Inkaikai, 1968–1991.
- SEDS *Saidaiji Eizon denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成. Nara Kokuritsu Bunkaikai Kenkyūjo, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1997.
- ST *Shintō taikei* 神道大系, ed. Shintō Taikei Hensankai 神道大系編纂会, 120 vols. Tokyo: Shintō Taikei Hensankai, 1977–1994.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎

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