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Ōjōden, the *Hokke genki*, and Mountain Practices of Devotees of the *Sutra*

This article is an investigation of historical sources such as the *Hokke genki* that reveal the practices and thought of medieval Japanese Buddhists. The textual history of this genre of biographies and its sources are described. A comparison with *Ōjōden* is particularly useful. The article then analyzes a number of biographies, many of them of recluses in the mountains, and focuses on the relationship between practitioners and lay believers. Finally, the doctrinal aspects of practices are examined and a progression from a mix of esoteric-exoteric thought to a focus on the *Lotus Sutra* is suggested.

KEYWORDS: *Hokke genki*—*Ōjōden*—Chingen—Yoshishige no Yasutane—mountain practice—*jikyōsha*

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ACCORDING to the “Dharma-teacher” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, “If there is a person, who in his quest for the Buddha Path, shall throughout one kalpa, joining palms in my presence, praise me with numerous verses (*gāthās*), by reason of this praise of the Buddha that person shall gain immeasurable merit; but a person who praises the bearers of this scripture shall have merit that exceeds even that. One should praise it through eighty millions of kalpas with the finest colors and sounds, as well as scents, flavors, and textures, and make offerings to the bearers of this scripture” (T 9.31b; HURVITZ 1976, 177 [with minor changes]). Idealized descriptions of those who uphold the *Lotus Sutra* are thus found within the text itself. Moreover, devotees of the *Lotus Sutra*, or *jikyōsha* 持經者, were found in China and Japan.¹

Hijiri 聖 (holy men), including those who upheld the *Lotus Sutra*, have received much attention and been extensively discussed in studies of the genealogy of Kamakura new Buddhism.² On the other hand, few scholars have actually investigated the value of the genre of *Ōjōden* 往生伝 and the *Hokke genki* 法華驗記 as historical sources that relate the actual circumstances of Buddhism in the Heian period (794–1185), when these collections were composed. Since the late 1970s, the emphasis on the Exoteric-Esoteric Establishment (*kenmitsu taisei* 顯密体制) by historians has resulted in a lower value being placed on the *Hokke genki*.³

In this article I look at *Lotus Sutra* devotees that appear in the *Hokke genki* and analyze and classify them according to how they related to the mountains and society, the main fields of their practices. Finally, an analysis of their practices sheds light on the thought of these people. The objective of this article is to establish the importance of the *Hokke genki* as a source for history and thought.

* This article is a translation of KIKUCHI 2007, 106–23, which is originally based on a presentation given at the International Lotus Sutra Conference in Toronto, 5–6 August 2004.

1. The author has discussed the historical significance of *jikyōsha* and their activities in medieval Japan (KIKUCHI 2007, 44–84: *Jikyōsha no genkei to chūseiteki tenkai* 持經者の原形と中世的展開 [The prototype of *jikyōsha* and its development in the medieval period]).

2. The role of *hijiri* as the forerunners of Kamakura new Buddhism has been broadly accepted since INOUE Mitsusada (1985). This view was subsequently advanced by IRŌ Yuishin (1981) and others; for Itō’s latest views, see IRŌ 1995.

3. For example, when considering OBARA (1987), the results of the research are valuable, but because he focused on the “literary noble” (*bunjin kizoku* 文人貴族), the *Hokke genki* does not get much attention. As I discuss later, scholars are divided about whether the *Hokke genki* and *Ōjōden* should be analyzed along the same lines.

Ōjōden and the Hokke genki as Historical Materials

The *Hokke genki* is a collection of narratives and biographies of advocates of the *Lotus Sutra*, including many *jikyōsha* during the Heian period. Elsewhere I have argued that it can appropriately be assigned to its own unique genre of miraculous tales, or *genki-mono* 驗記物 (KIKUCHI 2007, chapter 3). The *Hokke genki* was edited around 1043 by Chingen 鎮源, a practitioner from the Yokawa area of Mount Hiei (TAKAGI 1973, 292–93). Chingen participated in a religious society devoted to Śākyamuni Buddha initiated by Genshin 源信 in 1007 and based in Yokawa at the Ryōzen'in 靈山院 (INOUE 1985, 173–74; TAKEUCHI 1963–1968, appendix [*ho* 補] no. 263).

During the Heian period, a series of *ōjōden* were compiled, beginning with *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* 日本往生極樂記 (Record of Japanese reborn in the Pure Land), which precedes the *Hokke genki*. Both of these tales and records strongly influenced collections of narratives (*setsuwa* 說話) such as *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (Collection of tales of times now past). Although the *Hokke genki* has usually been excluded from the category of *ōjōden*, Shigematsu Akihisa defined it as belonging to the *ōjōden* genre (TAKAGI 1973, 392; SHIGEMATSU 1964, 130–40, 167). Later scholars have supported this position. For example, in the *Nihon Shisō Taikei* series, the *ōjōden* and the *Hokke genki* were published as a single volume (INOUE and ŌSONE 1974). On the other hand, Chimoto Hideshi has supported the position of Ōsumi Kazuo: “On the basis of the *Record of Japanese Supernatural and Strange Stories* [*Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記], after the tenth century, various collections of Buddhist tales were edited. A major distinction can be made between *ōjōden* and the *Hokke genki*” (CHIMOTO 1999, 11; ŌSUMI 1981, 60). The *Hokke genki* has thus come to be seen as a separate literary genre. Since that time, research on the text has continued in both literary and Buddhological circles. For example, in 1983, Yoshiko DYKSTRA published an English translation of the *Hokke genki*, introducing it to a wide audience in the west; and in 1996 FUJII Toshihiro published an authoritative collated version of the text along with a comprehensive index.⁴

In 1980–1981, Ōta Shōjirō 太田晶二郎 introduced and interpreted a work called *Hokekyō shūgenki* 法華經集驗記 (Collection of miraculous tales of the *Lotus Sutra*), which had been preserved in the Main Library of the University of Tokyo. Ōta noted that, according to Chingen's introduction to *Hokke genki*, the Chinese monk Yiji 義寂 had compiled a collection of miraculous tales and broadly propagated them; that had probably influenced Chingen's *Hokke genki* (ŌTA 1980; 1981). This text was thought to correspond to the *Fahua yanji*

4. NAGAFUJI Yasushi (2003) has completed a comprehensive research on the *Hokke genki*. OGI Mitsuo (2006) also published a significant essay on the *Hokke genki*.

法華驗記 in three fascicles by Yiji, which was listed in the *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* 東域伝燈目録 (Bibliography of the transmission of the [Dharma] flame to eastern regions). Though the text was thought to no longer be extant, Ōta claimed that the *Hokekyō shūgenki* he had found corresponded exactly to that text. In addition, he argued that it was compiled not by the Chinese monk Yiji from Luoxi 螺溪 on Mount Tiantai in the early Song dynasty, but by the Korean (Silla) monk Ūijōk 義寂 (ŌTA 1980), whose name is written with the same characters as Yiji. On the basis of Ōta's research, Mitomo Ken'yō has analyzed the text from the view of Ūijōk's doctrinal stance and concluded that it did not directly influence Chingen (MITOMO 2003). CHIMOTO (1999, 89) also argues that the text is by the Korean Ūijōk.

Despite uncertainty about the influence of the *Hokekyō shūgenki*, Chingen clearly consulted both Chinese and Korean collections of biographies and miraculous tales of devotees of the *Lotus Sutra*. Even so, Chingen did not directly quote from continental sources compiled earlier; instead he composed *Hokke genki* of Japanese tales only. Furthermore, earlier Chinese collections of tales were organized around chapters devoted to the practices of the *Lotus Sutra*—memorization and chanting, reading, copying, and listening to the *Lotus Sutra*. In contrast, Chingen based his chapters on the seven groups that made up the Buddhist order, such as monks, male novices, and nuns. Thus, Chingen aimed at creating a literary genre that differed from that of continental collections of biographies and miraculous tales.

Chimoto Hideshi's remarks in this regard are very insightful. He argues, "I cannot doubt the existence of a certain literary logic in the *Hokke genki*"; at the same time, in comparing the *Hokke genki* with the *Nihon ryōiki* and *ōjōden*, Chimoto focuses on "Chingen's horizon," saying: "While Chingen's view is serious and not at all vulgar, he limits himself to being an adherent of the *Lotus Sutra*, or *jikyōsha*, and does not seek to go beyond that." Even so, he notes, "Chingen insists on keeping the format of a record in describing events." Through this attention to specific factual details, Chimoto argues, "The *Hokke Genki* is able to depict a far more attractive world than do the *ōjōden*, which were composed about the same time" (CHIMOTO 1999, 56, 80).

The differences between biographies and miraculous tales deserves consideration. Around 985, in the middle of the Heian period, Yoshishige no Yasutane 慶滋保胤 (d. 1002) composed the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki*; this was the first of the genre of biographies of those reborn in the Pure Land (*ōjōden*) composed in Japan. It had forty-two biographies organized according to the following five of the seven categories of the traditional Buddhist order: monks, male novices, nuns, laymen, and laywomen (the categories of nuns and male novices were reversed from their traditional order). The style of the order influenced later collections of biographies of those reborn in the Pure Land.

Over one hundred years later, around 1101, Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041–1111) composed the *Zoku honchō ōjōden* 続本朝往生伝 (Continuation of the biographies of Japanese reborn into the Pure Land). In the introduction he wrote that he had collected those stories that Yasutane had missed or that had occurred after Yasutane's time. The inclusion of the term “continuation” (*zoku*) in the title clearly indicates that the author intended the work as a continuation of Yasutane's *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki*. The number of biographies in the work, forty-two, is the same as in Yasutane's work. The arrangement follows secular views of social hierarchy: emperor, court nobility, monks named to the Bureau of Monastic Affairs, ordinary monks, high-ranking courtiers, lower-ranking courtiers, and women, exhibiting a unique style that differs from Yasutane's use of the seven types of members of the Buddhist order. Subsequently Miyoshi Tameyasu 三善為康 (1049–1139) compiled the *Gleanings of Biographies of Those Reborn in the Pure Land* (*Shūi ōjōden* 拾遺往生伝) and then *Goshūi ōjōden* 後拾遺往生伝 (Later gleanings of biographies of those reborn in the Pure Land), which were intended to supplement these earlier works. In addition, Renzen's 蓮禪 (aka Fujiwara no Sukemoto 藤原資基, fl. 1135) *Sange ōjōden* 三外往生伝 (Biographies outside of the three *ōjōden*) was intended to collect biographies missed by the collections of Yasutane, Masafusa, and probably Tameyasu's *Shūi ōjōden*. With the composition of the *Honchō shinshū ōjōden* 本朝新修往生伝 (Newly compiled biographies of Japanese reborn into the Pure Land), the compilation of this genre during the Heian period ended for the most part. However, even in 1187, in the early Kamakura period (1186–1333), Nyōjaku 如寂 wrote the *Kōyasan ōjōden* 高野山往生伝 (Biographies of those from Mt. Kōya reborn in the Pure Land; see TAJIMA 1987; MURAKAMI 2009, 7–58). In the thirteenth century, Gyōsen 行仙 (d. 1278) compiled the *Nenbutsu ōjōden* 念佛往生伝 (Biographies of those reborn in the Pure Land through the Nenbutsu).

In the chronological survey of *ōjōden* above, Yasutane's *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* clearly had a major influence. The composition of these works was particularly evident during the first half of the twelfth century, a period that roughly corresponds to the period of rule by retired emperors (*insei* 院政). Thus *ōjōden* can be largely characterized as a genre of biographical literature typical of the Insei period.⁵

Next, I consider the use of Pure Land biographies as historical sources. Because all of these were edited compilations, the goals, attitude of the compilers, and their characters themselves must be taken into account. For example, Yoshishige no Yasutane is well known as the Pure Land believer who compiled

5. *Ōjōden* were also compiled during the Edo period, but these are not discussed in this article. For a list of *ōjōden* including those compiled in the Edo period, see KIKUCHI 1979–1997; also note that a series of *ōjōden* from the Edo period were published in KASAHARA 1978–1980.

the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* and associated with Genshin, the famous Pure Land theorist known as the author of *Ōjō yōshū* 往生要集 (Essentials of rebirth in the Pure Land) in the middle of the Heian period. However, when Yasutane's faith is analyzed, particularly in light of his participation in the Society for the Advancement of Learning (*Kangaku-e* 勸学会) and the Society for the Twenty-five Meditative Concentrations (*Nijūgo zanmai-e* 二十五三昧会), his activities are mostly intellectual, with a focus on listening to Buddhist lectures and composing Chinese poems based on scriptural passages. Yasutane, one of the leading literary nobles of his time, built a mansion on the edge of a small pond; he recorded his refined and leisurely life of reading books and reciting the nenbutsu in his work *Record of a Pond Pavilion* (*Chiteiki* 池亭記). After Yasutane, Ōe no Masafusa was a representative scholar of the Insei period; Miyoshi Tameyasu and Renzen can be considered literary nobles of this period. Ōsumi Kazuo, in the historical analysis and evaluation of a series of Pure Land biographies, was the first to point out that those reborn in the Pure Land and other religious figures depicted in these collections reflected a longing for, and interest in, *hijiri* and commoners in the countryside on the part of the compilers, who were members of the capital's literary nobility (ŌSUMI 2005, 268–86). Nevertheless, in general, through the 1970s, scholars unexpectedly passed over Ōsumi's views. Only in the 1980s was this theme explored with OBARA Hitoshi's thorough research (1987) on the compilers of these works.

Earlier in this article, when *ōjōden* were considered as literature, I characterized them partly as biographies; however, scholars of literature usually classify them as narrative stories (*setsuwa*). In fact, in collections of narratives such as the *Konjaku monogatari* *shū*, biographies from *ōjōden* occupy a considerable place. The motifs and word usages frequently are similar. The term “biographical records” (*denki* 伝記) was often used to refer to records of ancient legends. Thus they sometimes had the quality of being narrative stories. On the other hand, the “biographies” (*chuan* 伝) and the “records” (*ji* 記) were established as genres of historiography in Chinese historical texts. When the compilers of *ōjōden* are regarded as leading literary nobles, their Pure Land biographies can be considered a particular mode of historical writing.

When these issues are concretely investigated further, the significance of the term “record” (*ki* 記) in the titles is noteworthy. The title of the sixth tale in the first fascicle of the *Nihon ryōiki* is “On the cause of gaining an immediate reward for faith in the bodhisattva Kannon.” This title summarizes the contents of the entry; in contrast, the Pure Land biographies are all organized according to their human subjects. With regard to the contents, the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* begins from Prince Shōtoku (no. 1) and progresses to Ryūkai 隆海 (no. 5) by quoting or citing official biographies and historical sources such as the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, the *Nihon kōki* 日本後紀, and the *Nihon sandai*

jitsuroku 日本三代実録. When the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* dealt with periods during which official histories were no longer compiled, it drew on historical sources such as the *Brief [Historical] Record of Japan (Fusō ryakki 扶桑略記)*.⁶ Moreover, the birthplace, place where a person resided, and the date of death usually were all clearly recorded in the Pure Land biographies with the intent of contributing to the proof of rebirth and clarifying the source of the report. Sometimes different accounts were cited in parallel with the main stories; frequent efforts were made to ascertain the facts behind the rebirth into the Pure Land, revealing the intention to create a factual record of events. Thus, after the six official histories no longer covered events, *ōjōden* took on the character of being a series of successive [historical] biographies (Ch. *liezhuan*; Jp. *retsuden* 列伝), which was a format of lining up historical biographical descriptions; even so, *ōjōden* had the particular theme of being compilations of biographies of those reborn in the Pure Land.

Of course, many of the miracles in the Pure Land biographies are difficult to accept from our modern sensibilities, such as the trailing purple clouds, the wafting wondrous scents, and the dreamlike visions of Amida coming to welcome the dying to the Pure Land; in other words, “the extraordinary signs of rebirth in the Pure Land” (*isō ōjō* 異相往生) fill the biographies. Nishiguchi Junko 西口順子 was one of the first to pay attention to and analyze these signs. Obara Hitoshi examined entries concerning rebirth in the Pure Land in the court diary, *Chūyūki* 中右記, pointing out that they were “the experiences of shared dreams and visions of rebirth in the Pure Land in the Insei period” (OBARA 1987, 216; NISHIGUCHI 2004, 247–64). Because these dreams and visions were shared experiences, they were recognized as “reality,” which was then related in the Pure Land biographies.⁷

In contrast to *ōjōden*, the *Hokke genki* consists of biographies of those who had experienced miracles associated with the *Lotus Sutra*. Chingen, the compiler from Yokawa on Mount Hiei, was influenced by Chinese works of this genre. He compiled his work between the times when the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* and the *Zoku honchō ōjōden* appeared. As a matter of course, he also included many of the biographies that had appeared in the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki*. As a result, scholars have been paying considerable attention to the significance of the connection between the two works. At the same time, recent scholarship has focused on the distinctions among various *ōjōden*, as well as the differences between *ōjōden* and the *Hokke genki* (YOSHIMURA 1992). First, a significant difference exists between miracles associated with the *Lotus Sutra* and rebirth in

6. INOUE 1974 contains detailed information about the relationship between the *Hokke genki* and other collections of *ōjōden* or historical records.

7. My views of *isō ōjō* have been influenced by CHIJIRAWA Itaru’s 1987 publication.

the Pure Land. This, in turn, influenced the restrictions imposed by whether a story was classified as a biography (*den* 伝) or a record (*ki* 記). Even so, Chingen incorporated many biographies from the *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* in the *Hokke genki*. To understand why, differences in how the *isō ōjō* were treated in the two texts must be examined.

As Yasutane's introduction makes clear, he wished to "record the rebirths into the Pure Land of those in the world in which he was present," thereby encouraging Pure Land faith. Yasutane recorded their activities on the basis of national histories and biographies. Because his intention was to record successive biographies, or *retsuden*, of those reborn in the Pure Land, he used sources that described the appearance of extraordinary signs of rebirth in the Pure Land as the sole prerequisite for inclusion in the *ōjōden*. In contrast, Chingen attributed such extraordinary signs to the *Lotus Sutra*; he thought it was important to incorporate these extraordinary signs into the *Hokke genki* because he regarded them as one form of the "attainment of miracles" (*gentoku* 驗得), and transformed the biographies to reflect this. In other words, even though the *Hokke genki* shows considerable influence from Yasutane's *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* through the narration of successive biographies, Chingen's primary interest is found in the description of the attainment of miracles. As was mentioned earlier, biographical descriptions have two qualities: a historical dimension and a narrative, or *setsuwa*, dimension. The *Hokke genki* is close to the *Nihon ryōiki* because the descriptions in these two texts are closer to *setsuwa* than are the Pure Land biographies. Chinese miraculous tales that influenced the compilation of *Hokke genki* are assumed to lie behind its descriptive style. For example, in the introduction to the *Hokke genki*, Chingen refers to Dharma-master Ji's 寂 collection of miraculous tales, which was based on the practices of memorizing, chanting, reading, copying, and listening to the *Lotus Sutra*. The relationship between these two works is close in terms of their styles of composition, but, in the *Hokke genki*, several groups are added to the seven classes of Buddhist believers, including animals such as snakes, mice, and monkeys, as well as supernatural beings like traveler's guardian deities (*dōsojin* 道祖神). The *Hokke genki* thus breaks the confines of the composition of successive biographies (*retsuden*) because of its emphasis on the attainment of miracles.

Besides compiling the *Zoku honchō ōjōden*, Ōe no Masafusa composed the *Honchō shinsenden* 本朝神仙伝 (Biographies of Japanese immortals), a collection of "tales of the fantastic" (*denki-shū* 伝奇集). The literary nobles' interest in the attainment of miracles, and in the compilation of the tales of the fantastic and miraculous events during the Insei period, helps explain why collections of narratives were prominent even as *ōjōden* were said to be declining (OBARA 1987, 175–86).

The Hokke genki and Mountain Practice

A variety of behaviors and practices of those who uphold the *Lotus Sutra*, or *jikyōsha*, are described in the *Hokke genki*. Those practitioners who were engaged in mountain practice are particularly conspicuous, as has been pointed out by previous scholars. At the same time, this emphasis reveals some of the limitations of the work when used as a historical text. As Ōsumi Kazuo noted when he analyzed and evaluated the *Hokke genki* and *ōjōden* as historical sources, the literary nobles' longing for and interest in religious ascetic practitioners (*hijiri*) and commoners in the countryside are superimposed on the characters that appear in these works, including believers and those who were reborn to the Pure Land. In other words, if a mountain practitioner only hated secular life and intended to practice in the mountains until the end of his life, how could nobles or ordinary people know of such a practitioner's activities? If we emphasize this type of analysis, then we may find that the *Hokke genki* is a complete fabrication, based on fantasies or ideals put into story form for city dwellers.

While recognizing such issues, an understanding of the value of the *Hokke genki* as a historical source requires a detailed examination of individual tales. Let us first look at the story, "The *jikyōsha*, the ascetic Renjaku 蓮寂, of Mount Hira 比良" (no. 18). In Kazuragawa 葛川, not far from Mount Hiei, on the peaks between Lake Biwa and the capital in Kyoto, there lived a monk (*shamon* 沙門), who was led by a dream to visit nearby Mount Hira. As he went deep into the mountains, he saw the extraordinary practices of an immortal (*sennin* 仙人) named Renjaku, who had originally lived at Kōfukuji as a Hossō monk. Renjaku had heard a phrase from the "Parables" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* concerning the three carts and the burning house: "If you do not get them, you are certain to regret it later" (T 9.12c; HURVITZ 1976, 59), and had developed the aspiration for enlightenment. Then he heard the sentence from the "Dharma-teacher" chapter: "If a person preaching Dharma is alone in a quiet place where not even a human voice is heard, but still reads or recites this scripture, at that time I will appear to him, displaying a body of pure radiance" (T 9.32b; HURVITZ 1976, 182 [with minor changes]). Renjaku then entered the forests of the mountains and became an immortal. Because Renjaku was an extremely strict ascetic, in order to approach him, one had to purify one's body by listening to Renjaku's recitations for seven days; during that time, as a form of abstinence the person ate fruits and nuts brought by the deer, bears, monkeys, and birds that served Renjaku. The tale concluded with the following passage:

There were surely causal conditions that led the monk to visit. He was encouraged to stay there and engage in Buddhist practice. Although the monk wished to practice in accord [with the ascetic's instructions], he was by nature weak and inferior, and his body could not bear the practices. He regretted this and

was embarrassed, but finally had to return. Aided by the immortal Renjaku's miracle, he returned to Kazuragawa within a day. He told the story to good friends who practiced with him, and the seeds of the Buddha were planted [in their minds].
(INOUE and ŌSONE 1974, 77, 521)⁸

As this story indicates, an intermediary practitioner was required between the strict ascetic and the people from both town and country (including Chingen) who sympathized with the ascetic. As a result, many of the tales in the *Hokke genki* take the form of having someone meet an ascetic while traveling through the mountains. For example, in the "Tale of a *jikyōsha* from deep in the mountains of Yoshino" (no. 11), the monk Giei 義睿 is lost as he travels in the mountains from Kumano to Kinpusen, when he meets a reciter of the *Lotus Sutra*. He is told that the reciter used to be a disciple of the Tendai monk Kikei 喜慶, who was known as the Sanmai zasu 三昧座主. He ordered youthful heavenly messengers (*tendō* 天童) to do his bidding and took the mountain gods as his disciples. After seeing these miraculous scenes with his own eyes, Giei was sent back to a village. Giei "arrived in the village and while shedding tears related the story of the adherent of the *Lotus Sutra* deep in the mountains, telling of the ascetic's [*shōnin* 聖人] practices and virtues. Those who heard the story rejoiced while shedding tears; many immediately developed the aspiration to enlightenment."

The subject of the story "The immortal ascetic Yōshō 陽勝 of Hōdōin in Saitō on Mount Hiei" (no. 44) concerns a man from the Ki family of Noto province. He had studied under the Master of Discipline (*risshi*) Gen'nichi 玄日 of Mount Hiei, but later sequestered himself on Kinpusen, where he eventually became an immortal ascetic. A monk at Ryūmonji 龍門寺 [in Yoshino] saw him flying in the air. A monk who was practicing in caves in the mountains, who wished to follow the practices of the immortals, heard rumors of Yōshō's practices from a disciple of Ensai 延最, a palace chaplain from Senkōin 千光院 on Mount Hiei. As a story told by Yōshō himself, a monk from Tōdaiji heard about how Yōshō had come to town when his parents were ill and recited scriptures and preached for them. An elder spoke about how Yōshō would come to Mount Hiei every year at the end of the eighth month to listen to the unceasing recitation of the *nenbutsu* held as an annual ceremony.

In the "Tale of Ryōsan 良算 from Tokoro 藤 Peak of Kinpusen" (no. 49), the ascetic was said to "live deep in the mountains in a remote place that is distant from human habitation"; a strict ascetic regimen is described in the story. However, according to a noteworthy passage in the tale, "although he would speak with people, he would always recite the *Lotus Sutra*," indicating that he was not

8. In this article the text of the *Hokke genki* and the number of each tale are based on INOUE 1974.

completely cut off from others. When he was about to die, he smiled and spoke of the joy of realizing Buddhahood, an event that, according to the tale, was related by a companion monk (*chishiki* 知識) and was circulated to lay believers.

In the tale of “Dharma-master Hōkū of the Old Spiritual Cave” (no. 59), the protagonist is described as a person from Shimotsuke province, who served as a monk from Hōryūji; he practiced at Futarasan 二荒山 and other places in his native land. There he found a cave endowed with power that “had long been cut off from human activity and then sequestered himself in this cave of immortals.” A priest named Ryōken 良賢, who recited a single *dhāraṇī* and was an eminent mountain practitioner, came to the cave and found Hōkū 法空. Ryōken was finally tested by the female demons who protect the *Lotus Sutra*; when he failed, he was expelled from Hōkū’s cave. This story was “told to people.”

Intermediaries Between Mountain Forests and Society

An eyewitness intermediary serves as a literary device to give the reader a sense of reality and of being present at the scene. Without such a literary device, mid-Heian period tales would not have been accepted by people. Another characteristic of these tales is the frequent mention of details concerning the place, time, and the people in the tales, which gave the reader a sense of the source of the tale and its background. An example is the tale of the Ācārya Shinzei 信誓 (no. 87), which has been an important piece of evidence in dating the *Hokke genki*. Although many aspects of Shinzei’s biography are not clear, he is said to have been the third son of the governor of Awa 安房 province, Takashina no Mahito 高階真人兼弘, and the disciple of the Master of Discipline Kanmyō 勧命. He sequestered himself at the Tananami 棚波 waterfall in Funai county, Tanba province 丹波. In 1043, he was seventy years old and still alive. This narrative indicates that the compiler of the *Hokke genki* was not simply satisfied with a fictitious set of stories. At times, he suggested that readers could verify the facts behind the story.

As research into the history of Shugendo and mountain forest practice has advanced together with archeological studies, scholars have found evidence that a variety of mountain religious practices were already present during the Nara period. By the mid-Heian period, and certainly by the time Fujiwara no Michinaga’s 藤原道長 power was at its height at the beginning of the eleventh century, mountain practitioners and their ritual and practice were well-organized. An account of his famous pilgrimage to Kinpusen 金峯山 in 1007 appears in Michinaga’s diary, the *Midō kanpakuki* 御堂関白記. According to the entry, a number of rituals, as well as buildings and supporting temple organizations, had been established (KIKUCHI 2007, 124–51). Moreover, a number of networks were organized linking the practitioners who often made pilgrimages in

various provinces. According to *Chōkan kanmon* 長寛勘文 (Official counsels in the Chōkan era), composed in the late Heian period, the Kumano deity had flown from a foreign land; until the deity had finally settled in Kumano, it had resided at various spiritual mountains in western Japan (ZOKU GUNSHO RUIJŪ KANSEIKAI 1938–1940, vol. 26). Around the same time, *Shosan engi* 諸山縁起 (Records of origins of various mountain [sites]) was compiled; practitioners from spiritual mountains such as Mount Hiko 英彦 in Kyushu and from Mount Haguro 羽黒 in Dewa appear among the various mountain guides (*sendatsu* 先達) that succeeded En no Gyōja 役行者 at Kinpusen (SAKURAI 1975). These texts reflect the gradual development of exchanges between the practitioners of various mountains who had originally been independent of each other. The tales of *jikyōsha* recorded in the *Hokke genki* were not only formulated through the interest and longing of nobles and commoners; they were formulated on the basis of eyewitness accounts of the many mountain practitioners who had organized themselves into these networks and told commoners about the most austere practitioners deep in the mountains. Although the figures of *jikyōsha* described in *Hokke genki* are idealized protagonists in tales, at the same time they reveal the actual situations of mountain practitioners at that time; thus, the *Hokke genki* must be seen as a valuable historical source.

Although the mountain practitioners that appear in *Hokke genki* must all be seen as being strict in their behavior, a variety of types, including *jikyōsha*, are found in the text, many of whom positively supported the relationship between society and the mountains. Sueki Fumihiko used an astute analysis of “Saint Shōkū 性空上人 from Mount Shosha in Harima province” (no. 45) to conclude that “the basic structure [of this tale] was to illustrate the many forms of propagation of teachings to others through the magical and mystical powers that arose from seclusion and austerities” (SUEKI 1993, 263–65). Many people, both nobles, beginning with the Retired Emperor Kazan 花山院, as well as commoners, placed their faith in Shōkū. As a mid-Heian-period mountain practitioner from Mount Shosha, he was one of most famous *jikyōsha* in Japanese history. As Sueki points out, according to the tale in the *Hokke genki*, the first half of Shōkū’s life was devoted to practices that benefited him, in contrast to the second half of his life in which he was engaged in proselytizing others. The first half of the tale takes place in an area unfrequented by human beings; deep in the mountains and hidden valleys where even birds did not go, Shōkū built huts and engaged in austerities such as fasting and going about without clothing. “Once his practices to benefit himself matured, he went on to proselytize among others, moving from deep in the mountains to where people traveled and lived.” Mount Shosha was thus the site for his proselytization; his work among monks and lay believers, among nobles and commoners, is then described in positive terms. Other tales in the *Hokke genki* describe practitioners emerging from the mountains to enter

society. The various patterns of behavior found in the *Hokke genki* tales should not be classified and analyzed into individual categories, as previous scholarship has often done; when the *Hokke genki* was compiled in the mid-Heian period, the various types of mountain practices and the relation of ascetics with society can be thought of as a single social system. In other words, networks formed around ascetics who strictly practiced for their own benefit with people coming and going between society and the mountains. The Dharma-master Chōzō 長増 from Tanshū (no. 56) practiced to benefit himself; when people came near he moved further into the mountains; for such practitioners, attention from people was nothing more than a bother. However, most ascetics took the thaumaturgical powers they gained in the mountains and returned to society. They preached to the masses, explaining how those strict ascetics who were secluded in the mountains and practiced for their own benefit led inexplicably spiritually powerful lives. At times they led commoners into the mountains and introduced them to strict ascetics, causing faith to arise. Such behavior became increasingly dynamic, and by the Insei period was connected with the popularity of pilgrimages to Kumano.

In *Hosshinshū* 發心集 (Collection of religious awakenings), compiled in the early Kamakura period, a tale is included with the title, “A visiting monk in Mount Shosha who realized rebirth in the Pure Land through starvation” (no. 6 of the third chapter; see TAKAO 1985). The protagonist, a *jikyōsha* who aspires to attain rebirth in the Pure Land through starvation (suicide), engages in extreme austerities and goes to Mount Shosha, which had become known as a place sacred to the *Lotus Sutra* since Shōkū’s time. However, people heard about him and crowded into the area to see him; they presented countless offerings as tokens of their fervent faith, preventing him from practicing. He fled deeper into the mountains, where he was able, at last, to realize his goal. Behind this tale lay the increasing interest and faith in mountain practices of these mid-Heian figures, an interest that would not allow them to simply be involved in practice that would only benefit themselves; as a result their activities were interpreted through the networks that encompassed society and the ascetics.

From Action to Thought

The preceding discussion clarifies how the *Hokke genki* described a social structure that encompassed mountain practitioners and commoners. What did the masses actually want to obtain through this system? Most scholars have stressed how mountain practitioners restored and benefited society with their thaumaturgical powers. In particular, historians have overemphasized their practices while their doctrinal aspects have not been analyzed sufficiently. Most have focused on the premise that their practices served as antecedents for the new

Kamakura Buddhism, which was based on easy or exclusive practice (*igyō* 易行; *senju* 専修). However, even in cases where coherent doctrinal treatises do not remain, we should try to determine the basis of these *Lotus* devotees' thought from their behavior and practices. The latter portion of the tales in the *Hokke genki*, about a third of the whole, concern women and lay people whose interests were far from Buddhist doctrine. In contrast, the first, major portion of the tales concern eminent practitioners such as the abbots of the Tendai sect (*Tendai zasu* 天台座主) and other eminent figures such as Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 and Gyōgi 行基, as well as monks who were specialists in doctrinal teachings. Although many of these tales do not include much expression in connection with doctrine, we need to read them more critically, and pay attention to the doctrinal aspect mentioned above.

The first aspect that is noticeable is the treatment of the phrase “exoteric-esoteric” (*kenmitsu* 顯密). The phrase that a monk “studied exoteric-esoteric [Buddhism]” (*kenmitsu o manabu* 顯密を学ぶ) appears early in many tales, reflecting the basic Tendai ideal that exoteric Buddhism and esoteric Buddhism should be studied together, a view that the *Hokke genki* follows. To pursue this in more detail, in the tale “The Archbishop Enshō 延昌 of the Byōdō Quarters in Western Pagoda on Mount Hiei” (no. 6), as well as in the previously-mentioned tale of Hōkū (no. 59), the monks are said to have first studied both exoteric and esoteric Buddhism and then engaged in such activities as the recitation of the *Lotus Sutra*, mantras, or the nenbutsu. Alternatively, in the tale of the Dharma Teacher Ninkei 仁慶 (no. 52), after memorizing and reciting the *Lotus Sutra*, he practices esoteric Buddhism and studies doctrine.

Second, in formulations of “exoteric-esoteric Buddhism,” the study and practice of exoteric Buddhism frequently is seen as the reading and chanting of the *Lotus Sutra*. For example, according to the tale of “Acārya Renbō 蓮坊 of the Western Pagoda on Mount Hiei” (no. 20), “[Renbō] chanted the *Lotus Sutra* day and night without tiring, perfected his practice of the dual esoteric traditions, and purified the water of the five wisdoms.” In the tale of “Bishop Jōshō 定照 of Saga” (no. 41), after the statement, “the bishop [Jōshō] was an expert in the exoteric-esoteric path,” chanting the *Lotus Sutra* is identified as the exoteric practice, while the esoteric practice is described as “reflecting the images of the five wisdoms on the mirror of mantra.” “The Dharma Master Kōson 好尊” (no. 61) “received and studied esoteric Buddhism along with chanting the *Lotus Sutra*.” “The Dharma Master Myōshū 明秀 of the Western Pagoda” (no. 63) “took chanting of the *Lotus Sutra* as his life’s work along with the practice of mantras and polishing the mirrors of the three mysteries.” Shinzei, mentioned earlier, is described in the same manner.

However, Chingen himself did not seem to place much importance on the cultivation of exoteric and esoteric practices together. Because the depiction of

miracles surrounding the *Lotus Sutra* was his major objective in compiling the *Hokke genki*, he usually did not mention the simultaneous practice of exoteric and esoteric Buddhism first. Instead, he depicts a practitioner in “The Dharma Master Ezō 恵増 of Daigo” (no. 31) as “not holding mantras and not studying exoteric doctrine, but wholeheartedly reading the *Lotus Sutra*.” At the time the *Hokke genki* was compiled, Chingen, who was close to Genshin in Yokawa, was not satisfied with the ideal practice of the dual cultivation of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism. “Saint Keinichi 慶日 of Uhara in the Settsu province” (no. 65) mentions that “[his practice of] exoteric and esoteric Buddhism shone as brightly as though reflected in a mirror [a symbol of wisdom].” At first this seems like praise for the simultaneous study of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism, but then Chingen goes on to state that “morning and evening he recited the *Lotus Sutra*. During three [of the six daily] periods, he cultivated mantras and with any remaining time, he studied meditation.” Thus chanting the *Lotus Sutra* is mentioned first and placed in a category different from mantra and meditation. The expression, “he carefully read and recited the Great Vehicle of the *Lotus Sutra* and painstakingly studied the teaching of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism,” appears in “Saint Zōga 増賀 of Tōnomine” (no. 82). “Bishop Genshin of the Ryōgon’in” (no. 83) employs approximately the same expressions.

The practices of the *Lotus Sutra* sometimes can be substituted for exoteric practice and study. According to “Saint Eikan 叡桓 of the Anrakuin on Mount Hiei” (no. 46), the practitioner chanted and read the one-vehicle and did not engage in other practices. Although, in the tale, the author later adds the information that Eikan cultivated the threefold contemplation, which seems to be in line with classic Tendai practice, the whole account actually suggests that a new emphasis on the *Lotus Sutra* had begun to appear and that Chingen valued it. As SUEKI Fumihiko has pointed out (1998, 42f.), Chingen’s new perspective can be placed in the mainstream of mid-Heian Tendai when the rise of exoteric Buddhism might take a position superior to esoteric Buddhism. Furthermore, this movement as described in the *Hokke genki* was not simply a reappraisal and revival of exegesis of the *Lotus Sutra*. In the *Hokke genki*, Chingen conceived the idea based on practice in which copying, reading, and chanting the text were included. For Chingen, it was impossible to separate these practices from the mainstream of Tendai exoteric-esoteric Buddhism in the mid-Heian period.

Conclusion

Strict ascetics themselves and the people of both town and country were interested in religion focused on the mountains and forests. Their religious passion significantly changed from the earlier simultaneous practice of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism to a new practice based on the *Lotus Sutra* that combined doctrine

and practice. People paid great attention to mountain forests as the very site of these practices. According to the tale of “The *jikyōsha* Heigan 平願 of Harima province” (no. 40), he “chanted the *Lotus Sutra* whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down; he performed no other practices and sequestered himself deep in the mountains, where he read the sutra for several years.” Such passages clearly indicate that the mountain forests were seen as the most appropriate site for exclusive chanting of the *Lotus Sutra*. At the starting point, the ideal of “doctrine and practice” (*gakugyō* 学行) or “theory and practice” lay behind the exoteric-esoteric concept. This was evident from the Nara through the medieval period and provided a framework that ran through Japanese Buddhism. The analysis of the *Hokke genki* as a representative collection of narratives in the mid-Heian period serves as an intermediate point in these developments.

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