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The Buddha and the Bathwater

Defilement and Enlightenment in the *Onsenji engi*

This article examines the origins of Onsenji, a temple at the Arima hot springs, together with a set of closely related tales of other sites of curative bathing where religious exemplars encounter Buddhist deities of healing, to explore the narrative and doctrinal patterns of the *engi* genre. It suggests how a common literary trope, of deities who appear as lepers to test the compassion and perception of their followers, serves the institutional priorities of particular local sites and how the contents of these tales articulate Buddhist claims about pollution and purity, ignorance and insight, and sickness and salvation. It argues that the soteriology of these stories, in which mental defilements are shown to be the origin and engine of all human suffering, express in narrative form the meaning of the term *engi* as a Buddhist technical term for the theory of dependent origination.

KEYWORDS: *Onsen engi*—Gyōki—Yakushi—lepers—bathhouses—healing

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ON THE SEVENTH day of the fourth month of 1452, Zuikei Shūhō 瑞溪 周鳳 (1392–1473)—literatus, historian, diplomat, confidant of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義滿, and abbot of the Zen monastery Shōkokuji 相国寺—left his residence in Kyoto and journeyed to the Arima Onsen 有馬温泉. The Arima hot springs were but a day’s journey from the capital and attracted members of the capital elite long before and long after Zuikei’s mid-fifteenth century visit. The *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 notes that the sovereign Jomei 除明 (593–641) traveled to the Arima Onsen in the autumn of 631 and again in the autumn of 638, spending a period of three months there during each visit (NKBT 68: 229, 232). Although Jomei was the first royal pilgrim of record, many other eminent visitors were to follow. Arima’s later patrons included such figures as the Regent Fujiwara no Yorimichi 藤原頼通 (990–1074), the Abdicated Sovereign Horikawa 堀河院 (1079–1107), the Abdicated Sovereign Go-Shirakawa 後白河 (1127–1192), Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536–1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542–1616), who all traveled to the hot springs for the healing waters and the sacred blessing of the Medicine Master Buddha, Yakushi (薬師; Sk. Bhaiṣajyaguru). The early fourteenth-century handscroll *Zegaibō-e* 是害房絵 describes Arima as “the place where the Medicine King appears and where the Bodhisattva Gyōki 行基 experienced his blessings. There is a sacred image of Yakushi and the medicinal waters of the hot springs flow from the Buddha’s body” (UMEZU 1978, 100).

During his three-week stay at the hot springs, Zuikei visited Onsenji 温泉寺, the temple of the hot springs that enshrined the sacred image of Yakushi; there he “listened to the history of the temple while viewing a painting” (FUJIWARA 2007a, 11). The painting, the *Onsenji engi-e* 温泉寺縁起絵 (Illustrated origins of Onsenji), still exists. It is a large-format hanging scroll in ink and colors on silk dating from the late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century.¹ Accounts of the temple’s history are also extant in multiple textual sources. The earliest iteration of the narrative is in Tachibana no Narisue’s 橘成季 *Kokon chomonjū* 古今著聞集 (Notable tales old and new) of 1254. It next appears in the *Onsenyama jūso yaku no ki* 温泉山住僧薬能記, written in 1279 by the resident Buddhist monk of Onsen jinja, the temple-shrine at the hot springs.² It is found as well in the fourteenth-

1. The painting is currently kept at the Kyoto National Museum. It was housed at Onsenji until 1743, when it was transferred to Miidera’s Kangakuin 三井寺勸学院 and stored at Saishōin 最勝院, a subtemple of Byōdōin 平等院.

2. On this text, see FUJIWARA (2007b). Whereas the temple’s origin narrative is the same in all iterations, the name of the temple is not. In the *Kokon chomonjū*, the temple is Koyadera

century *Onsenji engi* 温泉寺縁起, the account that Zuikei heard (KATŌ 2010, 251). Although each of these retellings contain essentially the same story, they should not be conflated. *Engi* are neither unitary nor stable entities. They migrate across time, literary format, and media. They constitute a composite and fluid genre, one in which multiple narratives and diverse interests are sutured together to formulate a single and singular history. Zuikei's description of having "listened to the history of the temple while viewing a painting" also reminds us that the textual and visual modes were often coarticulated and that *engi* should also be understood as performative: they belonged to the repertoire of picture recitation (*etoki* 絵解き) enacted through dramatic utterance and conveyed through the public explication of images.

The history of the temple that Zuikei was shown and told was itself composed of multiple stories, drawn from different sources, assembled at different times, and represented in different spatial registers in the painting. This article is concerned with only one of these stories: that of the monk Gyōki, the Buddha Yakushi, and the founding of Onsenji. This account appears at the lowest register of the hanging scroll and occupies the smallest area of the painting's surface. The majority of the painting, however, narrates two other tales. The middle register tells the story of the local deities and taboos associated with the site, and the upper register is filled with the account of the monk Son'ei's 尊恵 visit to Enma's tribunal in the underworld.³ The miraculous stories of Gyōki and Son'ei were composed at different times and for different reasons. According to Nishio Masahito, the account of Gyōki founding the temple dates from the end of the eleventh century, when the monk Ninsai 仁西 began a fundraising campaign to rebuild the site after it suffered flood damage in 1098. The story of Son'ei journeying to the underworld dates from a century later, when another fundraising campaign was carried out in the 1180s (NISHIO 1987, 76–79).⁴

One of the later retellings of the *engi* is found in the *Onsenji saiken kanjinchō* 温泉寺再建勸進帳 (List of funds raised for the rebuilding of Onsenji), of 1528 (KATŌ 2010, 251). The title of this work, like the eleventh- and twelfth-century fundraising campaigns responsible for the *engi*'s multiple narratives, signals the economic function of the *engi*. One purpose of such rare and miraculous histories was to attract popular support by distinguishing the institution in what was surely a crowded marketplace of pious appeals. This particularist imperative,

昆陽寺 but in the *Onsenyama jūshō yaku no ki* and the *Onsenji engi*, the temple has become Onsenji.

3. On the tale of the local deities of Arima, see "Nyotai no gongen: Arima onsen ni tenkai suru sanrin shinkon setsuwa" in NISHIMURA (1999, 273–83).

4. The tale of Son'ei, like that of Gyōki, appears in multiple sources, such as *Kokon chomonjū* and *Heike monogatari*.

emphasizing the exceptional history of a single sacred site, is a quality common to the *engi* genre. Attentive to this quality, much scholarship on *engi* has been concerned with how partisans of a particular institution sought to construct a unique identity. By contrast, this project works to invert such particularist assumptions about how *engi* operate: its subject is not a unique institutional history but rather a common narrative topos, one that appears across different sites, genres, and media; one that participates in larger narrative and doctrinal patterns found across Japan. Within the articles collected in this journal issue, the term *engi* refers to the origin narratives of Buddhist temples, images, or practices. In Buddhist scholastic discourse, however, *engi* has a more technical denotation. It translates the Sanskrit term, *pratītyasamutpāda*, the doctrine that explains the conditioned origin or dependent arising of all phenomena. The earliest formulation of this model of causality is represented in the twelve *nidānas*, or twelve links of dependent arising, in which the mental defilements (*kleśa*) of ignorance, attachment, and anger are said to perpetuate the cycle of samsara. It is here that the *engi* of Onsenji, and of other temples with purifying and healing waters, returns to its etymological meaning: translating soteriological formulae into narrative texts and images that articulate the origins and the overcoming of human suffering.

According to Zuikei's account, and as represented in the lower horizontal register of the painting, Onsenji was founded by the legendary holy man Gyōki, the Nara-period monk revered as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Monju (Sk. Mañjuśrī) and renowned for his charitable works, compassion for the destitute, and supernormal powers. As Zuikei tells the story, Gyōki was once traveling through the mountains of Arima, where he encountered a man suffering from leprosy lying prostrate on the ground.⁵ Gyōki inquired after the ailing man and offered him some rice to eat. The leper replied, however, that he would prefer some fresh fish. In order to satisfy the man's request, Gyōki went to the Nakagawa River 中川, procured some fish from a fisherman, and returned with it to the sick man. The leper then asked Gyōki to cook the fish and to taste it himself to ensure that it was properly seasoned. By interacting with the leper, Gyōki had come into contact with a figure embodying the most profound form of physical pollution. Furthermore, in cooking and tasting the fish, he broke his monastic precepts. Yet the *coup de grâce* and true trail of Gyōki's compassion occurs when the leper, in the hope of soothing his itching body, asked the holy man to lick his diseased skin. Just as Gyōki began to do so, however, the leper revealed himself

5. Although the term *rai* 癩 was used to designate Hansen's disease, it also embraced a wider range of meanings. According to Andrew Goble, "In medieval Japan, *rai* was an affliction that contained multiple cultural meanings. The term *rai* was applied to a number of conditions that affected face, torso, and limbs. Symptoms included a variety of sores, hair loss, scaly skin, and loss of fingers and toes" (GOBLE 2011, 67). On leprosy in medieval Japan, see KANAI 2003.

to be the Healing Buddha, who had assumed this diseased and polluted form to test the monk's piety. Yakushi thereupon named Gyōki the "holy man of the hot springs" and directed him to the nearby Arima Onsen, whose waters, he promised, would cure all disease. Gyōki thereupon created a statue of the Healing Buddha, constructed a temple to house it, and recited a sutra before the local deity of the hot springs and asked that she protect the temple.

The story of Onsenji's founding has all of the elements one would expect to find in an *engi* narrative. Its characters and events are of a type common to the legendary origins of countless sacred sites: a wandering holy man, a strange encounter, a divine revelation, the construction of an image and image hall, even the conversion of the local deity as temple guardian. Although *engi* categorically assert their own specificity, they are composed with a limited set of narrative conventions. Gyōki, a charismatic monk revered for his compassion and insight as well as for his public works, appears in the *engi* of numerous hot springs temples, many of which are similarly dedicated to the Healing Buddha. Yakushi's powers of healing have been venerated in Japan since the late seventh century and became the object of a state-centered cult in the eighth century. Rituals to the Healing Buddha were performed for the sick and dying, to prevent or respond to epidemics and famine, to expel pollution from the land, and to cleanse individuals and the state of the karmic defilements that were seen as the cause of such misfortune (SUZUKI 2012, 11–24). The two scriptures dedicated to Yakushi—the *Yakushi rurikō nyorai hongan kudoku kyō* 藥師琉璃光如來本願功德經 (Sutra on the merit of the original vows of the Medicine Master Tathāgata of Lapis Light; T no. 450, 14.404–408) and the *Yakushi rurikō shichibutsu hongan kudoku kyō* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經; (Sutra on the merit of the original vows of the Medicine Master of the Seven Buddhas of Lapis Light; T no. 451, 14.409–418)—celebrate Yakushi's specific vows to cure all "who are rheumatic, deaf, blind, mute, bent, lame, hunchbacked, leprosy, or bound and constrained by the suffering of all sorts of disease" (T no. 450, 14.405a26–27).

Yakushi was venerated at hot springs as early as the eighth century and figures prominently in the *engi* of at least twenty-seven hot springs throughout the archipelago. Although the *engi* of the different *onsen* vary in how they articulate the causal relationship between the healing powers of Yakushi and the medicinal effects of the hot spring, all concur in linking the Buddha with the bathwater. In more than a dozen of these *engi*, the hot springs are said to have been revealed by Yakushi in dreams; five other *engi* describe the healing waters as having miraculously sprung forth where temples or images of Yakushi were constructed; and eight more *engi* note that the discovery of the hot spring was followed by the establishment of an image of the Healing Buddha. The *engi* of Onsenji, linking Gyōki and Yakushi with the curative powers of its waters, is thus far from unique. Rather, it belongs to a larger network of legendary literature that grounds the cult of the Healing Buddha at hot springs throughout Japan (NISHIO 2000, 233).

Even what may appear the most transgressive element in the tale, the leper's request to have the holy man lick his diseased skin, is nothing new. There are other stories of Buddhist deities who manifest themselves in defiled form to test the enlightened compassion of their followers. The twelfth-century tale collection *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語集 contains one example that shares much with the account of Gyōki and Yakushi although it describes the encounter between a different holy man and a different deity. It is a story about the Tang pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 on his way to India:

When crossing a strange mountain, Xuanzang came to a remote place where no humans or animals were to be seen. Suddenly he smelled a stench that was unbearably pungent. Holding his nose, he backed away, but as the smell was most unusual, he approached the odorous area where he saw only withered trees and grasses. As he came closer, he saw a corpse, which apparently caused the stench. But when he stepped toward it, he thought it moved. Thinking that it might be someone still alive, he came closer and asked the prone body, "Who are you and with what sort of illness are you lying here like this?" It was a sick woman who said, "My parents have discarded me in these remote mountains because my body has become festered and is covered with scabs from head to toe, which exude a stinking odor." Feeling deep pity, Xuanzang asked her, "When you contracted this disease, didn't anyone tell you of medicines or remedies?" "At home I tried all sort of remedies in vain. A doctor said that I might be cured if the pus was sucked from all of my scabs. But since my body smells terribly, no one who came near me would dare." Hearing this, Xuanzang said in tears, "My body does not appear to be impure but in fact is. It is foolish to think others' bodies impure while one's own body is just as defiled as the bodies of others. I will suck the pus from your body and cure you." ...

Her skin looked like mud and the incomparable stench was so strong as to cause one to vomit or faint. Yet with his strong feelings of compassion, Xuanzang withstood the odor and began to suck the pus out of the scabs from her neck down to her hips. As he sucked the pus from her scabs, he immediately spat it out. As his tongue touched her soiled scabby skin, the scabs disappeared and her skin began to be restored to its original condition. Suddenly he smelled a most delicate fragrance of sandalwood and aloes, and saw lights as brilliant as the sun's rays at sunrise. And lo and behold, the sick woman was instantaneously transformed into the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who said to Xuanzang, "You are truly a holy man of pure and sincere heart. I assumed the form of a sick woman to test your mind and found that you are most noble."

(NKBT 23: 65–69; see, for example, DYKSTRA 1994, 1: 36–37)

The story of Xuanzang underscores, perhaps even more so than that of Gyōki, the somaticity of the holy man's intimacy with the polluted body of the leper. That the body is female seems only to make such intimacy even more scandal-

ous. As with the tale of Gyōki, the story of Xuanzang also reveals the test to be more about the mind than the body. As Xuanzang explains, “It is foolish to think others’ bodies impure while one’s own body is just as defiled.”

The narrative is at once fixed and adaptable. The characters are interchangeable but the lesson about insight and understanding remains the same. There is thus little original about the *Origins of Onsenji*. Nor is there meant to be. The tale derives its power not from its originality but rather from its familiarity. Its resonance depends on the depth of its intertextuality, its thick associative context, its place in a complex discursive network structured—to use a Mahayana metaphor—like a jeweled net with each narrative node reflecting and relying on others. To appreciate all that the *Origins of Onsenji* has to tell us about pollution and purity, suffering and salvation, and healing baths and Healing Buddhas, we need to situate it within a larger landscape of place, legend, and practice.

Buddhas and Bathwater

Japan’s sacred waters have long been revered as sites for ritual purification and therapeutic bathing. In the earliest Japanese records, cleansing with water is shown to remove the pollution of death and also to produce new life. According to the mythologies of the *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki*, after the creator deity Izanagi 伊邪那岐 encountered the putrefying corpse of his wife, he purified himself by bathing in the local waters, whereupon numerous deities were born from his ablutions. The earliest provincial gazetteers of the eighth century also praise the beneficial effects of hot springs bathing. The *Hizen no kuni fudoki* 肥前国風土記 describes the Ureshino hot springs 嬉野温泉 as “effective in healing human disease” (AOKI 1977, 267). The *Izumo no kuni fudoki* 出雲国風土記 praises the curative waters at Tamatsukuri 玉造 in similar terms: “One dip in the springs improves physical beauty and two dips heals all ailments. Since ancient times, the good effect of bathing here has never failed. Therefore the people call it ‘the hot springs of the *kami*’” (AOKI 1977, 88).

Ablution rituals, however, were not limited to *kami* worship. Although the *Izumo fudoki* names only a shrine, Tamatsukuri Onsen Jinja, the hot springs would later have a temple dedicated to the Healing Buddha (AOKI 1977, 89). This transformation from “the hot springs of the *kami*” to the hot springs of the Buddhas was a gradual, incomplete, and contested process. The final scene in the *Illustrated Origins of Onsenji*, in which Gyōki chants sutras before Arima’s local deity, however, presents the conversion of autochthonous forces into Buddhist guardians as a *fait accompli*. The *Onsenyama jūso yaku no ki* takes this relationship one step further by identifying the local deity as a manifestation (*gongen*) of Yakushi. As the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Engyō-bon 延慶本) explains, “the

spiritual efficacy of the Arima Onsen is due to the protection of Yakushi and the manifestation of the local deity” (KATŌ 2010, 253).

According to the *Gangōji garan engi* 元興寺伽藍縁起, an *engi* that claims to narrate the very origins of Buddhism in Japan,⁶ “the Buddha Dharma was first transmitted to the land of Great Yamato when King Sōngmyōng of Paekche sent an image of Prince Siddhartha, together with a vessel and a set of implements for bathing the Buddha” (STEVENSON 1999, 304–305).⁷ The ritual bathing of Buddhist images were performed annually thereafter, in reenactment of the lustrations the Buddha received at birth. Purifying water is central as well to the *abhiṣeka* consecration of esoteric Buddhist initiates in which “the water of wisdom and compassion, impregnated with goodness, is poured on the Dharma Prince’s mind” (ABÉ 1999, 136; T 18.667a). As in China and Korea, bathing was an institutionalized Buddhist practice and the bathhouse was an integral part of Japan’s earliest monasteries. Hōryūji 法隆寺, Tōdaiji 東大寺, Kōfukuji 興福寺, and Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺 all included bathhouses to insure the physical purity necessary for ritual efficacy (HASHIMOTO 1990, 207–208).

The religious significance of bathing was promoted in early Japanese Buddhist literature, cited in canonical sutra texts, and formalized in monastic practice and temple institutions. In his *Sanbō ekotoba* 三宝絵詞 of 984, Minamoto no Tamenori describes the intimate connection between monastic bathing and ritual purity: “On the fourteenth and twenty-ninth days of each month, a great bath is prepared in every temple, and all of the monks bathe. This is because the Precepts Meeting (*fusatsu* 布薩) is held on the following day” (KAMENS 1988, 260). Tamenori then cites the *Unshitsu senyoku shusōkyō* 温室洗浴衆僧經 (Sutra on bathing the Sangha in the bathhouse) to explain the bath as a site of physical and mental purification for monastics and of merit making for the laity. The sutra tells how the Buddha’s physician, Jivaka, prepared a bath for the Buddha and his disciples with a prayer for physical and mental purification, so that “all sentient beings may be cleansed of worldly filth and ignorance” (KAMENS 1988, 260; T 16.802c22–23). In his response to Jivaka’s vow, the Buddha promised that anyone who provides baths for monks will be reborn

with pleasant features admired by others, with pure, clean, and lustrous skin, ... as the son of a great king, to be bathed with fragrant incense and perfumed water, protected in all directions by the Four Celestial Kings, illuminated in the darkness of night by the sun, moon, and stars, adorned with the Seven Jewels of Indra, enjoy a long life, have a fragrant body, revel in the pleasures of the Heaven of the Sixth Realm of Desire, and dwell in Brahma’s Heaven.

(KAMENS 1988, 260–61; T 16.803a24–b18)

6. See the article on the *Gangōji engi* by Yoshida Kazuhiko in this issue, 89–107.

7. On the significance of this ritual in East Asian Buddhism, see BOUCHER 1995.

Tamenori also emphasizes the medicinal value of bathwater that has been used by monks. He quotes from the *Shotoku fukudenkyō* 諸徳福田經 (Sutra on the fields of merit), which describes a former life of the Buddha's disciple Ānanda in which he

suddenly broke out in strange pockmarks that, though treated, would not heal. Someone told him, "If you prepare a bath for monks and take the water used for the bath and wash your pockmarks with it, they will heal immediately. Also you will gain other fortunate benefits as well." So he went to a temple and did these things and was immediately cured. In every life into which he was born thereafter, he was lovely in form and pure in person. For ninety-one *kalpas* he received this fortunate benefit. Now he is with the Buddha, and all the pollutions within his mind have been extinguished.

(KAMENS 1988, 261; T 16.778a6–14)

In all of these narratives of Buddhist bathing—in sutra sources as in Japanese commentarial, tale, and *engi* literature—pollution, purity, illness, and healing are presented as both physical and mental phenomena. Within Buddhist discourse, impurity and disease are understood as ultimately matters of perception. Jīvaka prayed that "all sentient beings may be cleansed of worldly filth and ignorance" and Ananda had "the pollutions within his mind extinguished." The *Vimalakīrti Sutra* similarly teaches that illness "is born of ignorance and feelings of attachment" (WATSON 1997, 65; T no. 475, 14.544b20–21) and urges the bodhisattva "to become a king of physicians who can heal the ailments of the assembly" (WATSON 1997, 68; T 14.544c24–25). Prince Siddhartha's quest for enlightenment was motivated by his recognition of physical infirmity of old age, sickness, and death, and throughout the sutra literature Buddhas and bodhisattvas are described as physicians and medicine serves as a root metaphor for the dharma (BIRNBAUM 1979; DEMIÉVILLE 1985). The etiology of suffering that the term *engi* describes, and which the Buddha's teaching are said to cure, find their origins in mental rather than physical defilements. If *pratītyasamutpāda* (Jp. *engi*) provides a doctrinal formulation for the origins of human suffering, the *engi* of Onsenji, and other tales of Buddhist bathing, present narrative and visual illustrations of its arising and cessation.

The Leper in the Bathhouse

The bath, as a locus of Buddhist purification, and the leper, as the symbol of Buddhist defilement, have long been linked. Although temple baths were initially reserved for monastics, by the eleventh century they were also being used by the laity and urban bathhouses were soon established beyond the confines of temples (KURODA 1986, 245). Taking Gyōki as his model, the twelfth-century monk Chōgen 重源 built bathhouses for monks and commoners where the name

of Amida Buddha was chanted during bathing for physical and spiritual cleansing (GORAI 1975, 182). By the twelfth century, bathhouses were built for the communities of lepers, the physically disabled, and others classified as *hinin* 非人在 Kyoto and Nara. These settlements of outcasts were located beside temples at the urban periphery such as Kiyomizuzaka 清水坂 at the base of Kiyomizudera 清水寺 in southern Kyoto and Kitayama 北山 (also known as Narazaka 奈良坂) just beyond Hannyaaji 般若寺, at Nara's northern extremity.⁸ Although situated outside of the temples themselves, these were not secular communities. Their leaders received monastic titles and the settlements were under the authority of major temples such as Enryakuji 延暦寺 and Kōfukuji. To support such bathhouses was a pious act, known as *kudokuyu* 功德湯 or "hot water alms," the merit of which could be transferred to deceased ancestors. In 1184, for example, on the anniversary of his father's death, Yoshida Tsunefusa 吉田経房 "followed precedent and provided charity to the bathhouse at Kiyomizuzaka as well as those at various prisons" (FUJIWARA NO TSUNEFUSA 2002–2008, 4: 176–77). In 1305, on the occasion of the funeral of the retired sovereign Gofukakusa 後深草, increased funding was provided to the bathhouse at Kiyomizuzaka and four other outcast communities (KURODA 1986, 245).

The practice of bathhouse philanthropy has its own genesis narrative, which shares much in common with the tale of Gyōki's encounter with Yakushi at the Arima hot springs. Like the *Onsenji engi*, it is a medieval narrative that locates its origins in an earlier time, a golden age in the Japanese Buddhist imagination. It similarly includes an eighth-century exemplar of Buddhist piety, a Healing Buddha who takes the form of a leper, a test of mental purity, and an institution of Buddhist bathing. The protagonist of the legend is Kōmyō Kōgō 光明皇后, the queen-consort associated with the founding of such major Nara temples as Tōdaiji and Hokkeji 法華寺. As told in Kokan Shiren's 虎関師鍊 *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 of 1332, Kōmyō had a dream in which a voice from the sky commanded her to build a bathhouse as an act of merit:

Kōmyō rejoiced in awe and built a warm-water bathhouse forthwith, that persons of both exalted and humble condition might be bathed. She also made a vow: "I myself will personally cleanse the bodies of one thousand people." Her lord and ministers were apprehensive but her powerful will was not to be checked. She had finished washing 999, and there was only one last man left. The stench from the leprous eruptions that covered his entire body filled the hall. She was afraid to cleanse him, but thought to herself, "I am on the verge

8. These outcast settlements (*hinin shuku* 非人宿) were collective communities organized as occupational guilds charged with removing impurities associated with the death of humans and animals from temple-controlled territories and authorized by those temples to beg in designated areas in return for contributing a portion of their income as tax to the temples; see ABE 1998, 120.

of completing the thousand, how can I shirk fulfillment of my vow?” and she persevered and scrubbed away at the man’s back. The sick man said, “It is a long time since, contracting a grievous disease, I became afflicted with these boils. By chance I met a healer who instructed me that if I should get someone to suck the pus out of them by mouth I would be certain to be cured. But in all the world there is no one of profound compassion, and hence this stubborn illness has continued to this day. You, Queen-Consort, are revered for your unbounded mercy. Have pity on me, I beg you.” Kōmyō, unable to refuse, sucked out the pus from the boils over his whole body, from the top of his head to his heels, and spat it out. Then she said to the sick man, “Keep this a secret and tell no one that I have sucked your boils.” At this moment the sick man emitted a radiant light and announced, “That your Majesty has cleansed the body of the Buddha Ashuku (Sk. Akṣobhya) you must keep secret, telling no one.” She gazed at him in astonishment and saw that his marvelous form was perfect in beauty, radiant, and sweetly fragrant. (URY 2002, 194)

As ABE Yasuro (1998, 17–64) has shown, there are many versions of this tale. In the earliest iteration, dated 1191, the leper is referred to as “a person from Kiyomizuzaka,” the community of lepers in southern Kyoto.⁹ The legend was known at least twenty-five years earlier still. A document from 1165, recording the donation of land for the support of Kōmyō’s bathhouse, refers to “the brilliant revelation of Ashuku when the Queen Consort Kōmyō fulfilled her vow to wash one thousand monks and laity” (HI 7: 2655). Although Gyōki’s leper was revealed to be Yakushi and Kōmyō’s Ashuku, the two Buddhas, both with eastern pure lands, were said to inhabit the same body and were often conflated in medieval Japan (HG 1: 40). Other early *engi*, such as the *Hokke metsuzaiji engi* 法華滅罪寺縁起 of 1304, identified “Yakushi and his twelve attendants with the hot water cauldron” of Kōmyō’s bathhouse (ABE 1998, 21). In the *Tōdaiji engi* 東大寺縁起, a set of fourteenth-century hanging scrolls, and also in the *Sangoku denki* 三国伝記 of 1431, the leper of the bathhouse is revealed to be the Bodhisattva Monju (Sk. Mañjuśrī) who, in East Asia at least, shared the role played by Yakushi and Ashuku in our stories.

The manifestation of Yakushi, Kannon, Ashuku, and Monju as a leper is a matter of great significance. In the *Osenji engi e*, the leper’s body is dark, deformed, and bloated like a corpse as depicted in the standard iconography of the nine stages of death. In the fourteenth-century *Tōdaiji engi*, and in the fifteenth-century *Tōdaiji engi emaki*, the leper in the bathhouse is similarly dark and demonic, like the red-skinned *oni* of the popular imagination. Lepers represented the walking dead, the zombies of medieval Japan, the very embodiment of disease and

9. This version, from the *Kenkyū gojunreiki* 建久御巡礼記, is translated in MEEKS (2010, 36–37).

defilement. Like other outcasts, they were responsible for the removal and purification (*kiyome* 清め) of pollution (*kegare* 穢れ) associated with the handling of animal and human corpses and the jailing and execution of criminals. Lepers, however, occupied the most reviled position in medieval Japanese society and were stigmatized and marginalized even within the outcast communities in which they lived (KURODA 1986, 146). The *Konjaku monogatari* includes a tale of a jealous monk who disrupted a Buddhist ritual; as karmic retribution in his present life (*genpō* 現報), he “contracted white leprosy (*byakurai* 白癩). Even his wet nurse, who had vowed to be his parent, considered him defiled and would not let him approach her. Since he had nowhere to go, he went to live in a hut at the foot of the Kiyomizu slope. But here too he was loathed by the other outcasts and died in just three months” (NKBT 25: 201; see also DYKSTRA 1994–2003, 4: 217). Leprosy, seen as both a moral and physical defilement, was understood as karmic retribution for past transgressions. The *Daichidoron* 大智度論 (T no. 1509, 25.479a11–12) describes it as “the most severe of all diseases, caused by karmic transgressions.” Perhaps the most familiar scriptural source for the moral cause of leprosy in medieval Japan was the *Lotus Sutra*, which teaches that anyone who blasphemes the Buddha’s teachings, “shall get white leprosy.” Moreover, “His teeth shall be far apart and decayed, he shall have ugly lips and a flat nose, his arms and legs shall be crooked, his eyes shall be pointed and the pupils out of symmetry, his body shall stink, he shall have sores running pus and blood, his belly shall be watery and his breath short; in brief, he shall have all manner of evil and grave ailments” (HURVITZ 2005, 309; T no. 262, 9.62a16–23). As leprosy was understood as a karmic illness (*gōbyō* 業病), and in particular as the karmic consequences of religious offense, the disease occupied a significant position within Buddhist discourse and nosology.

Indeed, in medieval Japan, it was the very monks who attended to lepers and provided them with charitable relief who emphasized this view of leprosy as karmic retribution for past misdeeds and explicitly articulated the responsibility that lepers bore for their own suffering. The Shingon Ritsu 眞言律 movement founded by Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290) and his disciple Ninshō 忍性 (1217–1303) specifically addressed the conditions of lepers, beggars, and the disabled in their present and future lives. They emulated Gyōki in constructing shelters, medical facilities, and bathhouses and also held mass ceremonies in which lepers received the medicine of the dharma through *mantra* and *dhāraṇī* and the conferral of the eight lay precepts (QUINTER 2008). In a text that Eison composed for one such ceremony, he wrote that “the karmic retribution of ... those afflicted with the disease of leprosy” is the result of “past karma, which is none other than the sin of slandering the Mahayana” (QUINTER 2007b, 471). The text was composed for the enshrinement of a statue of the Bodhisattva Monju at Hannayaji during a grand ritual involving two thousand lepers and other beg-

gars and one thousand monks. During the ceremony the lepers were given provisions and other offerings, received the conferral of the precepts, were venerated with lamps and music, and then circumambulated by the monks. The ritual, in which the lepers were treated as objects of devotion, enacted in a performative mode the same identification between leper and deity articulated in the narratives of Gyōki and Kōmyō. As Eison wrote, “The *Mañjuśrī [Parinirvāna] Sutra* states, ‘the Dharma Prince Mañjuśrī turns into an impoverished, solitary, or afflicted sentient being and appears before practitioners.... To promote compassion, Mañjuśrī appears in the form of a suffering being’” (QUINTER 2007a, 441).

The identification of Bodhisattva and beggar expressed in both ritual and scripture is equally germane to Eison’s selection of image and place. Eison described Hannayaji as “a numinous place,... which affords lepers a means of repenting residual sins” (QUINTER 2007b, 472). Hannayaji and the deity it enshrined were deeply informed by the Chinese cult of Mañjuśrī at Mount Wutai 五台山. Indeed, Hannayaji was named after a temple of the same name, Boreisi (Prajña Temple), on Wutai, which was itself said to replicate the conjured temple where the eighth-century pilgrim Wuzhou encountered Mañjuśrī. Hannayaji, a replica of a replica (an architectural *mise en abyme* at once containing and collapsing in on its prototype) also enshrined a sculpture of Mañjuśrī with his attendants, seated on his lion mount, which replicated the iconography of the bodhisattva found at the Chinese mountain. Wutai was the setting of numerous Chinese tales in which the bodhisattva appears in disguise to test the piety of his followers. Such tales were known in Japan by at least the mid-ninth century. For example, in his *Nittō guhō junreikōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 (Record of a journey to China in search of the dharma), the Tendai patriarch Ennin 圓仁 relates a story of “long ago” when “commoners, beggars, and the destitute” came to a vegetarian feast prepared for monks on Wutai. “Among the beggars was a pregnant woman heavy with child, and, after she received her full portion, she demanded a portion for the child in her womb.” When she was reviled and refused her second portion the woman “transformed into Mañjuśrī, emitting light which filled the hall with dazzling brightness” (REISCHAUER 1955, 258).

By the twelfth century, Ennin’s Chinese tale of the manifestation of Mañjuśrī had developed into a detailed (and by now familiar) story of a leper at the bathhouse. In the *Konjaku monogatari* *shū*, the story is associated with another Japanese monk, Jakushō 寂照 (962–1034), who is said to have visited the Chinese mountain in the tenth century:

Jakushō made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai. There he performed various acts designed to bring religious benefit, such as having water heated to provide a bath for the community of monks. When the monks had gathered at that time

to enjoy a communal meal, a very dirty-looking woman, carrying a child and accompanied by a dog, appeared in front of Jakushō. Because the woman was covered with unspeakably ugly sores, the others in the group were repulsed and tried to drive her away. But Jakushō, restraining them, gave the woman her helping of food and prepared to send her off. The woman said, “My body is covered with sores that are almost too much to endure. I’ve come so I can bathe in the water. Please let me receive a little benefit from the hot water!” The others, hearing this, drove her back, so she was forced to withdraw to a distance. Nevertheless she managed to steal into the bathhouse, where, holding the child and accompanied by the dog, she splashed about in the water.

When the others heard what she was doing, they cried, “Drive her out!” But when they looked in the bathhouse, she had disappeared as though by magic. They were startled and mystified by this, but when they emerged from the bathhouse and looked around, they saw a purple cloud gleaming and rising beyond the eaves. “It must have been Monju, who changed into the shape of a woman and appeared here!” they exclaimed. Weeping tears of regret, they bowed to the ground in obeisance, but by that time it was already too late.

(NKBT 25: 60; see also BORGES 2003, 105)

As a narrative genre, *engi* articulate the unique origins of sacred sites, images, or practices. Yet the story of Onsenji’s origins has proven to be neither unique nor original. It offers a genealogy whose genesis seems forever deferred, denying the very possibility of a unique singularity in favor of multiple and interdependent origins. The stories of Gyōki and Yakushi at Arima, Xuanzang and Kannon in India, Kōmyō and Ashuku at Hokkeji, and Jakushō and Monju at Wutaishan have been presented here sequentially. The linking of these tales, however, is cyclical rather than linear. Like the chain of dependent arising after which it is named, *engi* articulate a network of causality larger than any single instantiation. The individual elements of these origin narratives—religious exemplars such as Gyōki, Kōmyō, or Jakushō; sacred sites such as Onsenji, Hokkeji, or Wutaishan; or buddhas and bodhisattvas of healing such as Yakushi, Ashuku, or Monju—are almost interchangeable. Indeed, as we have seen, there are versions of the Kōmyō legend that employ all three deities. Two elements, however, remain constant: the leper, as the embodiment of impurity, and the bathwater, as the locus of transformation. This pericope—recurring across time, genre, and media—reveals that whereas an initial encounter with sickness and death occasioned Śakyamuni’s recognition of impermanence, the creation and the conquest of suffering is, in the Buddhist tradition, ultimately a matter of the mind. The leper, the darkest image of disease and defilement, is revealed, in all of the tales, to be none other than a glorious Buddha. And the bath offers the ideal setting for this revelatory drama, the theater of possibility and of human transformation. As the *Hokkemetsuzaiji engi* declares, “people whose bodies enter the bath will be

cleansed of the three *kleśa*, protected from all illness, and gain comfort in body and mind” (ABE 1998, 21). The three *kleśa*—ignorance, attachment, and anger—are the mental defilements that lie at the root of all human suffering. They are the mental impurities that fuel the cycle of causality that is the etymological origin of the term *engi*. The bath is where these defilements are washed away, where the poisons are flushed out. It is where the body and mind are cleansed, where all illness is cured, and where the suffering leper becomes the Healing Buddha.

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- HG *Hōbōgin: Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises*. 7 vols. Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1929–present.
- HI *Heian ibun* 平安遺文. Takeuchi Rizō 竹内理三, ed. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1963–1965.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系. 102 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957–1968.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.

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