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"To Tread on High Clouds"

Dreams of Eternal Youth in Early Japan

Between 700 and 1000 CE, Japanese political elites engaged in a variety of practices dedicated to obtaining longevity. Although most of these had continental roots, Japanese courtiers selected and adapted methods to suit their particular social and political circumstances. In particular, they were interested in finding a means not only to prolong life, but also to stave off the marks of senescence—to attain youthful, "ageless" longevity. To understand the unique features and significance of early Japanese longevity practices requires attention to their broader cultural and religio-political contexts. In particular, it is important to consider them in connection with the symbolic uses of the body in some of the dominant political ideologies of the day. The early Japanese court employed an eclectic set of strategies to legitimate the "heavenly sovereign" or Tennō, including many that linked royal virtue to long life and health. Other strategies involved a range of symbolic practices that projected an image of the Tennō as an ever-vital, deathless being. These tropes were also reflected in early Japanese literature, in which the imperial court was commonly portrayed as an incorruptible zone of vitality likened to a land of immortals. This article sets out to examine ritual and ceremonial practices as well as the use of elixirs and other "magical medicines" in light of this political and cultural milieu. It concludes with an examination of early Japanese legends that further illustrate the early Japanese fascination with the prospect, not just of longevity, but of prolonged vitality or a miraculous return to youth.

keywords: *yōjō enmei—furōfushi—chūrō enmei—tan—senyaku—nenjū gyōji—ga no iwai* (*sanga*)*—sennin—shinsen—Zenke hiki*—eternal youth

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In the year 715 the Empress Genmei announced her decision to abdicate in favor of her daughter, princess Hidaka, who would reign as Empress Genshō.[1] After observing that the position of the ruler was the highest attainment of the sage, whose wisdom and virtue placed him or her at the pivot of heaven and earth, her edict continued:

> From our accession, we have nourished our black-haired subjects (Jp. *reigen*; Ch. *liyuan* 黎元). Owing to the protection of Heaven and the virtue inherited from our ancestors the nation is at peace and our realm is prosperous.
>
> But in the years since our accession we have borne constant care for our subjects, not resting day or night. Day in and day out we have given our constant attention and toiled at all manner of affairs of state. In this way, nine years have passed. Now the flower of youth is gradually fading and old age (*mō* 耄) is approaching. We deeply crave peace and escape from our duties; we wish to tread on high clouds, to do away with unpleasant things, to forget the dust [of the mundane world] like discarding an old pair of sandals.…
>
> The Imperial Princess Hidaka of the first rank has been greeted with auspicious signs. She has already displayed virtuous behavior; her disposition is generous and benevolent; she is graceful and lovely; the country worships her.… Now we yield our rank to the Imperial Princess. Ministers and officials, receive her respectfully, and in so doing, obey our wishes.
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> (adapted from Snellen 1937, 277–78, with reference to SNKBT 12: 234–35 and Ujitani 1992, 1: 164–45).

This edict marked an important turning point in the way in which the body of the heavenly sovereign (*tennō* 天皇) was publicly portrayed. Although this was not the first instance in which a Japanese ruler had abdicated, it is the first time that the encroachment of old age had been given as a reason.[2] The official chronicles up to this point—the *Kojiki* (712), the *Nihon shoki* (720), and early chapters of the *Shoku Nihongi* (797)—had recorded instances in which rulers had expressed misgivings about the weight of supreme responsibility; they had

1. In this article I have followed the convention of translating Tennō as "Emperor" or "Empress"—"Empress" referring to a "Queen Regnant," as opposed to a "Queen Consort." There are instances, however, in which I have chosen to leave "Tennō" untranslated, generally in order to underscore the specific connotations of "heavenly sovereign."

2. The first case of abdication was Kōgyoku, but she appears to have done so in good health. She lived for another sixteen years after giving up the throne. For a discussion of abdication before Genmei, see Hurst (1976, 38–43).

recorded instances in which rulers had contracted serious illnesses; and they had solemnly noted the moment that each successive ruler had died. But prior to this edict not one of those rulers had been depicted *growing old*. That is to say, even in cases in which the chronicles had described a sovereign who enjoyed extraordinary longevity, none of these sovereigns had been designated as an "elder," or identified using terms indicating old age, such as *rō* 老, *mō* 耄, *ki* 耆, or their cognates. Nor did these texts attribute any of the stereotypical physical marks of old age, such as white hair or wrinkles, to any ruler prior to Genmei.[3]

Why had the compilers of Japan's earliest official histories so fastidiously omitted any mention of the aging of any of Genmei's predecessors? Before moving on to a discussion of longevity practices, we would do well to consider this question. The framing of the royal body in these earliest Japanese texts and their use of longevity and youthful vitality to symbolize power and justify authority provided cues for authors of the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods who wished to valorize the current ruler, the court, or the capital. These texts were composed in what David Bialock (2007, 13) has characterized as the "hybrid cultural assemblage" of Nara and early-Heian Japan, which brought together a bricolage of quasi-Daoist and yin-yang knowledge in efforts to legitimate the royal tradition. These discourses contributed to a political and cultural milieu that determined, in part, what kinds of practices would be of interest to those who were part of that milieu and who sought to maintain or enhance their status within it.

Longevity and Legitimacy in Early Japan

Early Japanese elites and their immigrant advisors employed an eclectic range of strategies to legitimate the Tennō. The most famous of these involved the construction of genealogies that linked the current ruler to a line of heavenly deities (*amatsukami* 天神), who were (not surprisingly) depicted possessing superhuman traits, characterized as exceedingly beautiful, powerful, fecund and, in principle, immortal.[4] But these documents also regularly invoked other sets of religio-political theories that held that divine powers endorsed rulers of

3. The sole possible exception being Shiraka-no-ōyamato-neko-no-Mikoto 白髪大倭根子命 (SNKBZ 1: 354–55; Philippi 1969, 369), posthumously known as Seinei Tennō, whose name *shiraka* ("white hair") could have been read as a reference to old age. The *Nihon shoki*, however, makes an effort to dissociate Seinei from the marks of senescence by claiming that his hair had been white from birth (NKBT 67: 502–3; Aston 1972, 1: 373).

4. There are instances in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* in which deities were depicted having been killed, as in the case of Izanami no mikoto or Ame-waka-hiko (Aston 1972, 1: 22, 66). Otherwise it is implied that these were immortal beings. For a discussion of the ways in which physically imposing bodies have been used to represent divinity across religious traditions, see LaFleur (1998, 46–47).

superior virtue, rewarding them with auspicious omens, timely rains, bountiful harvests, and protection from physical threats such as invasion, rebellion, or illness (Bender 2010).[5] Among the benefits that the virtuous ruler and his or her subjects expected to receive were health, vitality, and long life. Variations of this doctrine were to be found in numerous texts that served as ideological touchstones for the early Japanese court. These included Mahayana sutras that were prized for their supposed apotropaic effects. For example, the *Yakushi rurikō nyorai hongan kudoku-kyō* (T no. 450), which had been recited at least from the time of Tenmu (r. 673–686) to cure royal illnesses, claimed that kings who aroused compassion in their hearts could rely on their "good roots" (Jp. *zenkon* 善根) and the power of the Buddha Yakushi to realize various worldly benefits, among these being that "anointed *kshatirya* kings will attain increased longevity, beauty, strength, freedom from illness, and prolonged sovereignty" (T no. 450, 14.407c22–23).[6]

The notion that the morally superior might be rewarded with long life and sustained vitality was also found in an influential but ideologically diverse range of documents from the classical Chinese textual tradition, including those that have been classified as Confucian, Huang-Lao, proto-Daoist, or naturalist.[7] While the early Confucian tradition was ambivalent on the question of whether Heaven invariably rewarded the virtuous with long life, texts in the Chinese naturalist vein were much more consistent, explaining that the longevity of the virtuous came as a result of their living in harmony with the cosmic order or Dao.[8]

5. The assumption that Heaven protects the reigns of superior rulers clearly informs Genmei's invocation of Heaven's protection juxtaposed with assertions of her own royal virtue.

6. The *Golden Light Sutra* (T no. 663–665), another mainstay of the early court, claims that royal compassion combined with veneration of the sutra and those who preach it will allow a ruler to eventually attain the status of Wheel Turning King (*chakravartin*), blessed with longevity, power, and superlative physical beauty (T no. 664, 16.383b21–26); see also Sango (2015, 3–5).

7. A well-known tenet of classical Chinese religio-political thought held that Heaven rewarded virtue (Jp. *toku*; Ch. *de* 徳) with the mandate to rule (Ch. *ming*; Jp. *mei* 命) (Lupke 2005: 1–3). But since *ming* also held connotations of "fate" or "allotted span of life," the implication often followed that virtue determined not only one's right to rule, but one's lifespan, as well. In the Chinese context, discussion of *ming* often centered on the length of dynastic mandates. It is possible that since in Japanese royal ideology the notion of dynastic change was implicitly rejected, the semantic range of the term became slightly narrower, referring more exclusively to the reign or lifespan of individual sovereigns.

8. Part of the difference might lie in the distinction between the concept of Heaven as a divine moral force, whose "will" was nonetheless mysterious, and the Dao, which was portrayed in naturalist texts as more akin to the impersonal workings of the laws of nature. In the *Analects* (Ch. *Lunyu*), there is the famous example of Confucius lamenting the untimely death of his morally upright pupil Yan Hui and placing the blame squarely with Heaven (Puett 2005, 54–57). And although Mencius wrote that "He who accords with Heaven is preserved; he who opposes Heaven is destroyed," he also acknowledged Heaven's ultimate capriciousness (Puett 2005, 56, 61). Han-dynasty and later works sought to smooth over these inconsistencies, tending

The opening chapter of the medical classic *Huangdi neijing suwen*, for instance, attributed the longevity and virility of the ancients to the fact that they lived moral lives of balance and moderation, harmonizing their activities with the rhythms of nature (VEITH 1966, 97–78). These principles were incorporated into numerous Han-dynasty texts (206 BCE–220 CE), which sought to weave together various ideological strands—including Confucian morality, yin-yang five-phases knowledge, and proto-Daoist theories of self-cultivation—into a comprehensive political theory. Many of these Han-dynasty works became highly influential in early Japanese representations of the sovereign.[9] Texts such as the *Huainanzi* envisioned the ideal ruler standing at the nexus of Heaven and Earth, modeling himself and his realm on the cosmic order, allowing all under heaven to flourish, and ensuring a long and fruitful reign (MAJOR et al. eds. 2010, 844). Intimations of this ideology are evident, for example, in a passage from the *Nihon shoki* describing the physical well-being of the ruler Saimei in the following terms: "Her virtue (Jp. *toku*; Ch. *de* 德) is in harmony with Heaven and Earth, and she therefore naturally enjoys good health" (ASTON 1972, 2: 261).[10]

All of this continental learning was brought to Japan piecemeal, and, in the end, comprised a highly unsystematic body of knowledge.[11] In spite of the diverse and often contradictory range of views presented in Chinese and Buddhist sources, however, the staging of royal longevity in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* was strikingly consistent, and suggests that the compilers of these texts reasoned that if, ideally, virtuous rulers could expect health and long life, then

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to portray Heaven as an unambiguously moral force that rewarded the virtuous and/or their subjects with health and long life. For example, the memorials of Dong Zhongshu collected in the *Hanshu* directly linked the lifespan of the populace to the virtue of the ruler: "When Yao and Shun practiced virtue, the people were humane and long-lived; and when Jie and Zhou practiced oppression, the people were licentious and died young" (PUETT 2005, 64–65).

9. The *Huainanzi* (second century BCE), for instance, the imprint of which on the *Nihon shoki* is clear, incorporated naturalist ideas about the preservation of life and presented the ideal ruler as a *zhenren* (Jp. *mahito* 真人), a term for a perfected being, the highest level of immortal, who is utterly in tune with and responsive to the cosmic order (MAJOR et al. eds. 2010, 903, 210; OOMS 2009, 64). *Mahito* was also adopted as the highest of eight aristocratic ranks in seventh-century Japan (OOMS 2009, 74). The *Huangdi neijing* describes *mahito* as those who lived in accordance with the Dao and thus were able to preserve their bodies and live as long as Heaven and Earth (VEITH 1966, 100–101).

10. Ironically, Saimei was eventually portrayed falling victim to the wrath of gods, angered when trees belonging to the Asakura shrine were cut down, showing that divine recompense could be a double-edged sword (COMO 2008, 56–57).

11. It is also significant that the earliest transmissions of this knowledge came by way of Korean immigrant advisors. Thus, it is possible that the emphasis placed on the symbolism of longevity and immortality in early Japanese court culture might bear the mark of Korean influence. This is a matter that requires further research.

royal longevity could also serve as an index of virtue and right to rule.[12] To legitimate the current occupants of the throne it was not enough, it seems, to represent their earliest progenitors as gods. The royal line could be further valorized by representing its early "human" ancestors as sage-kings blessed with extraordinary lifespans. Ōjin, for example, often held up as a model of enlightened rule, was recorded living to the age of one-hundred ten. Jinmu was said to have lived to the age of one hundred twenty-seven or one hundred thirty-seven according to the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*, respectively (Aston 1972, 1: 135). In spite of never having tasted the fruit of immortality procured for him by Tajima Mori, Suinin was recorded living to the age of one hundred forty (Aston 1972, 1: 186–87). Jingū lived to be one hundred, but her predecessor Chūai, who disobeyed heavenly commands, was struck down in his fifty-second year (Aston 1972, 1: 222, 253).[13]

Once again, we should note that both the divine ancestors and the early generations of human sovereigns were depicted not only enjoying extremely long lives, but passing from this world without any indication that they had suffered a period of senescence. This not only further distinguished them from less elevated beings, it also resonated with naturalist theories presented in various classical Chinese texts that equated the onset of the marks of old age with a failure to behave in accordance with the Dao. The classic iteration of the theory linking senescence to moral failing comes in the *Huangdi neijing* (Veith 1966, 97–98), which also claimed that "those who follow the Dao can escape old age and keep their body in perfect condition. Although they are old in years they are still able to produce offspring" (adapted from Veith 1966, 100; sbck 21: 7a). Thus, in addition to his tremendous longevity, the chronicles describe the sage-king Ōjin fathering children well into his seventies (Aston 1972, 1: 254–55).

The early chronicles were not the only texts to strategically correlate royal virtue, legitimacy, longevity, and vitality. These tropes were also woven into contemporaneous works of literature, most prominently in poems collected in imperially-commissioned anthologies, such as the *Kaifūsō* (751) and *Man'yōshū* (ca. 759), which commonly portrayed the imperial court as a life-restoring center, likened to a land of immortals.[14] These conceits continued to play a role in

12. Although both texts implicitly link royal longevity and royal virtue, the *Nihon shoki* is more consistent than the *Kojiki* in its use of the symbolic valences of youth and old age and in associating virtuous rulers specifically with "youthful" longevity. These nuances are discussed in more detail in my forthcoming book; see Drott (forthcoming).

13. The longevity of ancient sovereigns in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* was likely modeled on Chinese precedents, such as the mythical Yellow Emperor, and the legendary long-lived sage-kings Yao, Shun, and Yu, all of whom were explicitly invoked as exemplars in early Japanese chronicles (see, for example, Aston 1972, 1: 210–11).

14. Specifically, the environs of the imperial compound and the three "permanent" capitals of Fujiwara-kyō, Heijō-kyō, and Heian-kyō were likened to Penglai, the isles of the immortals from Chinese legend; Kunlun, the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West; or Tokoyo, the "world of

both court-sponsored and private writings of the Heian period and beyond. Old age, on the other hand, commonly functioned in aristocratic writings throughout the Nara and Heian periods as a mark of negative distinction (FORMANEK 1992, 247–56). In an effort to maintain a vision of the imperial court as a zone of beauty and vitality, the aged body was often used as a negative symbol against which the glories of the center could be contrasted.[15]

Although it is clear to anyone who has read diaries or court-centric fiction from these centuries that the people closest to the ruler were all too aware of his or her humanity and mortality, the ideologies of sovereignty articulated in court ceremony, architecture, ritual, poetry, and official prose continued to treat the Tennō as a singularly significant individual, projecting, through symbolic activities, an image of the Tennō as a vital, deathless being, whose physical well-being was intimately tied both to his or her moral standing and right to rule, and to the welfare of the entire state.[16] It is significant, therefore, that in Genmei's edict, examined above, we find the first public admission that the body of the sovereign was susceptible to not just illness and death, but also the encroaching weakness and decay of old age. And yet this admission was embedded in passages that perpetuated the notion that the physical health and beauty of the sovereign was intimately related to his or her moral authority and legitimacy. Thus, the virtue and benevolence of Princess Hidaka were mentioned in the same breath as her "grace and loveliness," and the health and vitality of the populace was indicated by means of a Chinese expression referring to the uncovered heads of the peasantry ("black-haired subjects"), which also served as an index of their youthful vigor.[17] Such rhetorical tensions persisted in official writings in the centuries that followed. On the one hand, literati continued to treat the court, palace, and

perpetuity," a deathless realm envisioned beyond or under the sea, which was at times imagined as a land in which the old were returned to youth. For a discussion of the poetic connections drawn between Penglai and Japan's first capital, see OOMS (2009, 80); see also SENDA (2003, 46–47). For an example of poems comparing imperial gardens in the Heijō and Heian capitals to Kunlun and Penglai respectively, see *Kaifūsō* 21 and 24 (NKBT 69: 91–2 and 94) and *Kanke bunsō* 454 (NKBT 72: 460).

The conceit that an invitation to an occasion at which one might enjoy close physical proximity to the Tennō could have a life restoring effect is at the heart of *Kaifūsō* 18 (NKBT 69: 88–9; RABINOVITCH and BRADSTOCK 2005, 41–42).

15. Official retirement petitions (*chijihyō* 致仕表) from this period commonly echoed the theme that an ugly and incapable aged body should not be allowed to disgrace the sacred court (*seichō* 聖朝; see, for example, *Shoku Nihongi* 30, Hōki 1 (770).10.8).

16. Perhaps the most extreme case of this style of legitimation strategy was employed to aggrandize Tenmu Tennō. Herman OOMS has convincingly shown that his court and his immediate successors deployed a variety of symbolic practices aimed at portraying him as a quasi-Daoist immortal (2009, xvii, 58).

17. The terms *reigen* (Ch. liyuan) and *kensha* (Ch. *qianshou* 黔首)—both meaning "black-haired subjects"—appear frequently in the six national histories.

palace gardens as a land of immortals, producing visions of the ruler as a quasi-immortal being. On the other hand, however, we find references to an increasingly wide range of practices to ensure the longevity of the sovereign. Although it might seem natural for those with ample resources to seek out any means conceivable to secure health and longevity, such practices also provided those tasked with sustaining the ideology of the Tennō-centered state a means by which they could attempt to bridge the gap between the idealized image of the ruler as a timeless, transcendent being, and the physical reality of rulers who were at times frail, sickly, and had the disquieting and destabilizing tendency to grow old and die.[18] Accordingly, these efforts proliferated during the centuries that Japan was organized into a continental-style imperial bureaucracy—often referred to as the *ritsuryō* state after the sets of civil and administrative codes (律令) first enacted at the beginning of the eighth century. But they also continued into the so-called *sekkanke* 摂関家 period—the years in which Fujiwara regents (*sesshō* 摂政) dominated the political scene, but still derived their power by maintaining the cultural and rhetorical trappings of the Tennō-centered polity.

Of course the rulers of Nara and Heian-period Japan were not the only ones who wished to attain long life. In these centuries, people of all social classes expended a great deal of energy thinking about, writing about, and pursuing longevity or immortality. By the mid-Heian period, they were engaged in a vast array of longevity practices, relying on continental medical knowledge, esoteric and exoteric Buddhist rituals, yin-yang or quasi-Daoist rites and vigils, dietetics, and sexual practices (Sakade 2008). Although there is evidence of popular cults of immortality present in Japan from ancient times, many of the techniques that spread among Nara and Heian-period aristocrats were first applied to sustain the life and enhance the legitimacy of the sovereign.[19] This article presents a sample of these practices in order to first, demonstrate the degree to which the quest for increased longevity and vitality permeated the lives of early Japanese elites, and second, that courtiers were ardent not just in their pursuit of extended life and vitality, but in their quest to retain as long as possible the physical marks of youth. That is to say, this article examines how, as members of the *ritsuryō*

18. Kuroda Hideo (1993, 5–18), taking inspiration from the work of Ernst Kantōrowicz, has written about the "two bodies" of the ruler in premodern Japan—the physical body, and the body as symbol of the state—and the types of ritual actions undertaken on the former in order to protect the latter.

Even in court fiction that presented the Tennō as eminently human, there were inklings of the dual nature of the royal person. Norma Field, for example, has written about how in the *Genji monogatari*, through court ritual, "the emperor regularly interrupts the profane time of ordinary mortals (who grow old and die) to restore the sacred moment of creation" (1987, 23).

19. Michael Como points to evidence in the *Nihon shoki* of popular immortality cults in early Japan unrelated to the royal tradition (2009, 142–44). On the presentation of an elixir to Tenmu and Genshō Tennō as both a therapeutic and a legitimizing act, see Ooms (2009, 146–47).

cultural and political milieu, elites sought to retain their ties to the vital center by rendering their bodies appropriate to that setting, and how various parties catered to those desires by producing knowledge and engaging in ritual action that was thought to be capable of effecting those results.

Modern scholars have tended to organize Japanese practices influenced by Daoist or Chinese naturalist thought into two distinct categories: those whose goal was *yōjō enmei* 養生延命 (nourishing life and extending the lifespan) and those whose goal was *furōfushi* 不老不死 (not aging and not dying).[20] According to this model, the goal of the former set of practices was health and longevity; the goal of the latter was to become a deathless, supernatural being or transcendent (*xian* 仙, at times translated as "immortal" and most commonly rendered in Japanese as *shinsen* 神仙 or *sennin* 仙人). Scholars have also argued that Japanese practitioners were more interested in the former, "medical-style" practices, than in the fantastic, "religio-magical" practices that supposedly could lead to a state of deathlessness.[21] However, an examination of sources from the Nara through the mid-Heian periods reveal that Japanese seekers of long life were not fully committed to "medical-style" practices to the exclusion of the "religious" or the "magical," but instead combined elements from both ends of the continuum. This suggests that at least in the case of Japan the modern tendency to group practices under either the "medical" or "religious" rubric is misguided.[22] Practices that today we would probably label "medical," such as the ingestion of herbs, often promised miraculous results identical to those promised by immortality drugs and other "religious" techniques. Furthermore, the mechanisms of action by which these medicines were believed to work were based on the same Chinese naturalist world views that purported to explain the mechanism behind elixirs and many other immortality techniques.[23]

20. Other terminology for longevity included: *chōju* 長寿, *chōmei* 長命, and *chōsei* 長生. For a review of Japanese scholarship on the question of the influence of religious Daoism in early Japan, see KOHN (1995).

21. For instance, MASUO writes that "*Furōfushi*, which aims in the end at ascending in the sky as an immortal and *yōjō enmei*, which aims to extend one's life in this world, are fundamentally different, but in Japan it was mainly the latter that was pursued" (2013, 2). Although Chinese texts did at times distinguish between what we might consider "medical" and "religious" practices, they did so mainly on the basis of their perceived efficacy, treating medical techniques as preliminary steps leading, eventually, to more advanced techniques in the pursuit of immortality.

22. The attempt to distinguish religious from medical longevity practices in early Japan invites the same difficulties Catherine BELL discussed regarding the attempt to distinguish ritual activity (characterized as "expressive," "symbolic," "irrational," and "emotional") from instrumental activity (characterized as "technical," "practical," and "rational"). She notes that many have objected that such categories impose distinctions that might not be meaningful to the people being studied (1992, 70–72).

23. Although we might now say that a herbal drug counts as "medicine" because we understand its efficacy to be based on some chemical property (for instance, the fact that it

Although it is true that, apart from legends, there is little hard evidence of full-fledged immortality seekers in early Japan, the aspiration for something *more* than health and longevity seems to have been common, at least among the upper echelons of society. Specifically, early Japanese elites evinced an intense desire for what I refer to as "ageless longevity"—a long life that was spared the perceived indignities of old age. This desire was epitomized by a less common, but more apt term, which occasionally cropped up in early Japanese longevity discourse: *chūrō enmei* 駐老延命, "halting aging and prolonging life."[24] Especially for those who wished to maintain their place within the social and political hub of the *ritsuryō* state, a premium was placed upon any means by which youth could be prolonged and old age vanquished.

Thus, rather than dividing these variegated activities into "medical longevity practices" versus "religious immortality practices"—a distinction that would not have been meaningful to the subjects under investigation here—I have chosen to arrange these pursuits into two basic categories: those connected with public and private ceremonies and rituals, and those involving the ingestion of elixirs and other "magical medicines." I conclude with an examination of legends from early Japan that featured individuals who employed certain of the techniques under examination to fend off old age—legends that vividly depict the aspirations of the elites who composed or compiled them.

By situating early Japanese longevity practices in their historical, cultural, and political contexts we can observe that they were undertaken to fulfill both instrumental and expressive functions. Thus, for instance, elaborate religious rites were hosted and rare ingredients for elixirs were procured for their stated purposes, but also as a means of publicly demonstrating one's power and wealth, or otherwise enhancing one's prestige.[25] Similarly, performing poetic prayers and felicitations for one's lord or the head of one's clan was both a means of invoking supernatural aid and, at the same time, a means of demonstrating loyalty to one's superior. That is, while people engaged in these activities in the hope that they would be effective, their performance was also strategic, serving to reproduce and reinforce social hierarchies by individuals who sought to maintain their position or advance within those hierarchies. Furthermore, by

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is rich in polyphenols), the subjects of this study instead would have pointed to the fact that, for example, a given drug strengthened vital *pneuma*s (Ch. *qi* 気), or counterbalanced the preponderance of Yang influences on a given day of the year.

24. A section of the ninth-century *Zenke hiki*, for example, featuring tales of longevity, is entitled *Fukuyaku chūrō genki*: "Miraculous Tales of Halting Aging through Medicine"; see Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai (2007, 15).

25. David Bialock writes of how magical medicines procured for Tenmu were used to enhance royal authority by purporting to invest the body of Tennō with superhuman powers (2007, 76–84, especially 80).

employing the distinction between youth or the prime of life and old age to symbolize other forms of difference, most saliently the difference between power and powerlessness, these practices served to naturalize the meanings attributed to those styles of embodiment.

While the classical Chinese textual tradition provided early Japanese elites with many promising leads in their quest for long life, Buddhist ritual repertoires eventually came to be mined for similar purposes. Although we do find occasional Buddhist voices challenging the notion that one might be able to prolong life indefinitely, during the period in question, they remained rather muted. Responding to the hunger in classical Japan for the means to extend the human lifespan, Buddhist priests played their part in sustaining this sector of the ritual economy. Nonetheless, there is evidence that they remained ambivalent about the goal of restoring youth to those who feared the onset of old age.

Prayers and Felicitations: Early Japanese Festivals, Ceremonies, and Rituals as Longevity Practices

The lives of early Japanese courtiers were dominated by public events, which ranged from rituals of state and annual festivals to privately-sponsored Buddhist lectures, rituals and ceremonies, rites of passage, and other miscellaneous banquets and gatherings. A substantial number of these events were for the express purpose of lengthening the life of the ruler and his or her subjects. Privately held ceremonies and rituals, as well, were often held ostensibly to lengthen the life of the event's sponsor or guest of honor. Even banquets and poetry gatherings with no obvious connection to longevity practices often provided a venue for guests to offer prayers for the longevity of the host or honoree in the form of poetic felicitations.

The prominence of the language of longevity and immortality in these ceremonies can often be traced to the continental origins of many of these events. With the formation of the *ritsuryō* state, the early Japanese introduced more than just continental models of government and law. Through a variety of channels they imported many other elements of continental culture and religion as well. Specifically, the Japanese adopted the Chinese liturgical calendar, which organized the year into a cycle comprising periodic observance of various rites and festivals, corresponding to seasonal and astrological changes (*nenchū gyōji* 年中行事).[26] Into this calendar were also inserted rites performed by Buddhist priests, yin-yang specialists, and members of sacerdotal lineages linked to kami cults. These rites were dedicated to purification, spirit pacification, agricultural abundance, and protection against epidemics and other calamities. And since

26. For a breakdown of the classical liturgy and a discussion of some of the ceremonies that were performed in response to special circumstances (*rinjisai* 臨時祭), see Fujiki (1963, 166–213); and Yamanaka (1972).

the body of the Tennō and the state were understood to be inextricably related and resonant, state rituals, festivals, and ceremonies often included explicit prayers and promises of health and longevity for the ruler.[27]

Michael Como (2009) has argued that the adoption of the continental liturgy played a major role in transferring elements of popular Chinese and Korean immortality cults to Japan. Traces of these are evident in the record of poetic offerings at these various festivals and ceremonies. The Ninth Day Festival (Jp. Chōyō; Ch. Chongyang 重陽), for example, occurred on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, one of the five nodal days of the Chinese calendar (*gosekku* 五節句).[28] According to Chinese tradition, on this day, people would climb to some high point to avoid an influx of dangerous spirits and enjoy chrysanthemum wine (Davis 1968). In Japan, the highlight of the festival came when the sovereign would distribute chrysanthemum petals to courtiers. The day before the festival, the flowers would be wrapped in silk to protect them from the dew. It was thought that one could achieve longevity by rubbing oneself with the dew-soaked cloth the morning of the festival (Fujiki 1963, 190–91).[29] As in China, participants would also drink wine infused with chrysanthemum petals (*kikushu* 菊酒 or *kikukashu* 菊花酒). The *Wakan rōeishū* preserves three sections of a poem by the renowned literatus Ki no Haseo 紀長谷雄 celebrating this event. His verse utilizes technical terminology from Daoist alchemical works to draw out the fact that chrysanthemums were originally used in elixirs of immortality (nkbt 73: 113–14; Rimer and Chaves 1997, 88–89).[30] The poet refers obliquely to the practice of drinking chrysanthemum wine, writing that "those who imbibe the 'sun's essence,' will halt the aging of their faces, and live five-hundred years" (nkbt 73: 114; adapted from Rimer and Chaves 1997, 89).[31] "Sun's essence" (*jitsusei* 日精) was the name of a variety of chrysanthemum that also doubled as the name of the life-restoring waters of a magical spring of Chinese lore.

There has been a tendency for modern scholars to treat such references to longevity and immortality in early Japanese literature as so much poetic flourish—nothing more than court intellectuals embellishing their work and show-

27. On the perceived relationship between the body of the Tennō and the condition of the state in premodern Japan, see Kuroda (1993, 6 and 18).

28. Since nine was considered a "yang" number, the festival was also known as *chōyō* 重陽 or "double yang."

29. The health benefits of chrysanthemums were noted in the *Jin gui lu* 金匱録, quoted in the *Ishinpō* (医心方), describing how the Kan Valley in China was filled with chrysanthemums. Thus, the spring water there tasted sweet and the people who drank it enjoyed longevity (Hsia et al. 1986, 2: 15).

30. Sugawara no Funtoki also has a poem in which he claims that chrysanthemums are the flowers of Penglai (nkbt 73: 116); see Rimer and Chaves (1997, 91).

31. In her diary, Murasaki Shikibu also referred to the power of chrysanthemums to drive away old age (nkbt 19: 446, 462).

ing off their erudition. But such a stance obscures the fact that these verses were composed at a time in which courtiers were also heavily engaged in a variety of longevity practices that required a serious outlay of time and capital. Of course we cannot gauge the extent to which courtiers like Ki no Haseo took the notion seriously that imbibing chrysanthemum-laced wine would lengthen their life and halt the aging process, but at the very least there seems to have been a blurry line between ceremonies like the Ninth Day Festival, in which the expressive function of longevity rites seems to have outweighed the instrumental function, and other activities that seem to have been undertaken with more earnest hopes of effecting the desired results.

In the case of the Ninth Day Festival, it was the Tennō who distributed quasi-elixirs to his appreciative subjects. This was in keeping with the classical Chinese notion that the sovereign's virtue worked to ensure the health and vitality of the population at large. While the Ninth Day Festival provided an opportunity for the Tennō to display solicitude toward his or her grateful subjects, in most early Japanese court festivities, both liturgical and extra-liturgical, the roles were reversed: it was the duty of the ruler's subjects to offer up poetic prayers for the sovereign's longevity. The official chronicles and early imperial collections of poetry are replete with examples of this practice. One of the earliest is from a banquet held in 612 during which the Great Minister Soga no Umako 蘇我馬子 offered a poem to his granddaughter, Suiko Tennō, in which he voiced the following wish:

...yorozu yo ni ...	For ten thousand generations
kakushimo gamo	may it be thus!
chiyo ni mo	For a thousand generations
kakushimo gamo	may it be thus!
kashikomite	That in awe
tsukaematsuramu	we might serve you,
orogamite	that reverently
tsukaematsuramu	we might serve you,
utazuki matsuru	we present tribute in song.

(adapted from EBERSOLE 1989, 218)[32]

There is evidence that the early Japanese saw the act of vocalizing such felicitations, especially in verse, to have the power to effect what was wished for (KATATA 1991, 142–44). Once again it becomes difficult to draw a clear line between what was intended as mere rhetorical flourish and what was offered out of a sincere belief in its efficacy. Such toasts and blessings, presented to the

32. See also ASTON (1972, 2: 142–43; NKBT 68: 196–97). EBERSOLE explains how such "praise-poetry" served to "create social distance between the empress and the other members of the court while simultaneously demonstrating a social proximity between the empress and himself" (1989, 218).

sovereign at banquets and other semi-official gatherings, included various continental tropes: references to animals like the tortoise and the crane, fabled for their longevity, or the pine tree that remained green year-round in defiance of the passing seasons. They employed references to vast spans of time, utilizing auspicious phrases such as *chiyo* 千代, *yachiyo* 八千代, and *yorozuyo* 萬代 ("one thousand," "eight thousand," and "ten thousand generations"), or *chitose* 千歳, *michitose* 三千歳, and *manzai* 萬歳 ("one thousand," "three thousand," and "ten thousand years"), in the hope that the ruler might enjoy a virtually limitless reign. These expressions came to be staples of Japanese verse and were eventually worked into poetic prayers for the longevity of non-royals as well.

Similar magical utterances in the form of verse were at times referred to as *hokai*. The term *hokai* and its cognates, *hoku* and *hoki*, were written using a number of interrelated Chinese characters (Katata 1991, 142–44). Most often, *hokai* was written with the character for longevity (壽, also read *kotobuki*), celebration (*iwai* 祝), or felicitation (*ga* 賀). The last of these terms also referred to a continental-style ceremony to offer prayers for longevity, the so-called *sanga* 算賀, later known as *ga no iwai* 賀の祝.[33] The semantic overlap between *hokai* and *ga no iwai* once again suggests the degree to which these events were seen not merely as an opportunity for celebration or congratulation, but a chance to offer prayers for longevity in the hope that their wishes would come to pass.

The practice of holding *ga no iwai* in Japan dates from at least the Nara period.[34] The ceremony would be held for individuals when they reached their fortieth year, and then in ten-year intervals after that. The textual record indicates that these ceremonies were originally offered to royal personages and only later came to be a widespread practice among aristocrats. The earliest reference to the *ga no iwai* is a Chinese verse preserved in the *Kaifūsō* dedicated to Tenmu's grandson, Prince Nagaya 長屋王 (684–729).[35] Another account of a royal *ga no iwai* ceremony purportedly from the Nara period appears in the *Tōdaiji yōroku*, a collection of documents related to the history of the great Nara temple of Tōdaiji.

33. Although it is widely believed that these ceremonies originated in China, Hakamada (2007, 409) alerts us to the fact that although there were similar types of ceremonies performed on the continent, the particulars of the *ga no iwai* appear to have been unique to Japan.

34. Poems 64 and 107 of the *Kaifūsō* were composed for such occasions.

35. Since the number four was a homophone for the word for "death," rather than referring to Nagaya's fortieth year, the poem describes the celebration of his "five times eight." This became a standard practice. It is also noteworthy that the character *ga* of *ga no iwai* could also be read *hoku*, another pronunciation for *hokai*, indicating that these were ceremonies in which felicitations were also thought to carry some efficacy. These connections are made explicit in the title of the poem for Prince Nagaya: *Yosoji no toshi wo hoku utage* ("A five character verse to offer felicitations [*hoku*] at the banquet celebrating the fortieth year [of our lord])" (nkbt 69: 171).

According to that source, a *ga no iwai* was held for the Emperor Shōmu (701–756) in his fortieth year, sponsored by Rōben Sōjō 良弁僧正 (Tsutsui 2003, 10).[36]

More finely-drawn accounts of *ga no iwai* appear in Heian-period literary works such as the *Ochikubo monogatari*, *Genji monogatari*, and *Eiga monogatari*.[37] Genji's splendid fortieth-year celebrations were likely more extravagant than those held by the average aristocrat, but they can serve as a model for what would have been considered an ideal ceremony in the Heian aristocratic imagination. Although the narrator informs us that Genji wished to avoid any ostentatious displays, he was fêted three times in his fortieth year. The first banquet was hosted by his foster daughter Tamakazura on the twenty-third day of the first month. We read that Genji was presented with *wakana* 若菜, referring to twelve varieties of medicinal herbs.[38] Since the first lunar month fell in the spring, these herbs were picked while still young; thus *wakana* has been translated as "new herbs" or "young greens."[39] But *wakana* also connoted "herbs of youth," since they were believed to be able to restore one to youthful vitality (*wakagaeru* 若返る) (nkbt 16: 241 n. 20; Seidensticker 1976, 550–53). Genji was presented with the herbs and engaged in a private ceremony in which he ingested them. There followed a banquet, during which he also imbibed a decoction (*atsumono* 羹) made from the herbs (nkbt 16: 243). Among the various items that were set out in the room in which the festivities were to take place was a *kazashi* 插頭—a garland made of artificial flowers that would be worn by the honoree to "hide" their old age (nkbt 16: 241, note 32; see also endnote 310). The intention was to hide their baldness or gray hair with a garland of flowers that would never wilt.[40] Thinning or graying hair was a major concern for Heian courtiers. Literary works at times depicted old men having their lacquered court cap (*eboshi* 烏帽子) knocked off only to be subjected to humiliating jeers over their gray, thinning hair or baldness (discussed in Formanek 1992, 248). Genji, however, as the ideal Heian courtier, hardly needed such magical methods of preserving his youth. We read that "Genji seemed so youthful that one wondered whether he might not have miscalculated his age. [Exchanging greetings with Tamakazura], he looked more like her bridegroom than her foster father" (Seidensticker 1976, 551).

36. In later iterations of this ceremony we see gifts presented in multiples of forty—for example, eighty or four hundred of a given item.

37. The *Eiga monogatari* describes the sixtieth and seventieth-year *sanga* for Michinaga's wife, Rinshi (nkbt 76: 121–28 and 365–83).

38. These were collected in the first month on the day of the rat (*ne*).

39. As stated by Seidensticker and McCullough and McCullough respectively; see Seidensticker (1976, 537); McCullough and McCullough (1980, 1: 379).

40. The *Eiga Monogatari* also describes a *sanga* ceremony featuring dancing youths adorned with *kazashi* (McCullough and McCullough 1980, 2: 605).

The narrator describes guests assembling at Genji's mansion bringing gifts. Wine was circulated, congratulatory verses were offered, and music performed. A second ceremony was sponsored by Murasaki on the twenty-third day of the tenth month (Seidensticker 1976, 565–68). In preparation for this ceremony, Murasaki made offerings of images and sutras on Genji's behalf at an unnamed temple in the west of the capital, and sponsored recitations of the *Golden Light Victorious King Sutra* (T. 665), the *Diamond Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (T. 235), the *Sutra of Long Life* (T. 1134 [b]), and others. These sutras were commonly read during official ceremonies for the protection of the state and the longevity of the sovereign, but it was implied that Murasaki hoped that the merit generated from these recitations would redound to Genji's longevity as well. Later in the year, a third banquet was organized and once again sutra readings were sponsored in preparation, this time at the seven great Nara temples and forty other temples around the capital (Seidensticker 1976, 568). For both the second and third celebrations, numerous pieces of court music (*bugaku* 舞楽) were performed with accompanying dance, such as the auspiciously named "Ten-thousand years" (Manzairaku 萬歳楽) and "Celebrating the Sovereign's Grace" (Gaō'on 賀皇恩, also written 賀王恩) (NKBT 16: 272 and 276; Seidensticker 1976, 566 and 569). At both ceremonies the narrator describes how four folding screens depicting the four seasons were set out "as custom dictated" (Seidensticker 1976, 566 and 568). These screens would be inscribed with poetic felicitations, one for each month, which simultaneously played off the images of the seasons and articulated wishes for the long life and continued vitality of the guest of honor.

Such screens were described in more detail in the *Ochikubo monogatari*. In that tale, the up-and-coming son-in-law (Taishō 大将) of the seventy-year old Chūnagon 中納言 wished to celebrate his father-in-law's seventieth year (*nanasoji no ga* 七十の賀) (NKBT 13: 203). The Taishō prepared various illustrated screens with accompanying verses, one of which was a six-leaf screen with poems and pictures representing the twelve months. Many of these poems presented auspicious omens that sought to poetically invert common tropes of impermanence and decay associated with aging.

For example, the screen for the second month depicted a man looking at falling cherry blossoms. The accompanying verse read:

Sakura hana	Cherry blossoms!
chiru tefu koto wa	From this year forward
kotoshi yori	forget that you should fall and scatter,
wasurete ni hoe	and bloom as an example
chiyo no tameshi ni	for a thousand years.

(NKBT 13: 205; SNKBZ 17: 271)

Cherry blossoms, a traditional symbol of impermanence, were here entreated to remain in place—a wish that the effects of time would similarly be arrested for the aged Chūnagon.[41]

The poem for the third month evoked the celebrated land of the immortal Queen Mother of the West:

Michitose ni	Breaking off a branch
naru tefu momo no	piled with peach blossoms, from a tree
hana zakari	that bears fruit but once every three thousand years,
orite yakazasamu	I will fashion a garland for you
kimi ga tagui ni	and hope that your longevity might rub off on me as well.

(NKBT 13: 205; SNKBZ 17: 271–72)

This poem weaves together an image of garlanding the honoree with images of an immortal land, providing an opportunity for the use of an auspicious word symbolizing eternity (*michitose*).[42] Just as the elder would be presented at the *ga no iwai* with a garland to undo the marks of old age, this verse expresses the wish that the Chūnagon be crowned with flowers from the tree of the fruit of immortality. In the fictional *Ochikubo monogatari*, at least, these efforts seem to have had the desired effects. We read that though the Chūnagon had been in poor health, he felt better immediately following the celebration.

Ceremonies in the real world often were less effective. In the *Shoku Nihon kōki* it is recorded that, on the occasion of the *ga no iwai* for Emperor Ninmyō's fortieth year, monks of Kōfukuji prepared forty images of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, copied forty fascicles of the *Sutra of Long Life* (T 1134 [b]), and recited forty-eight thousand fascicles (presumably of the same sutra). Court ladies prepared longevity medicines and a feathered cloak, reminiscent of those supposedly worn by heavenly immortals. The monks also offered a lengthy poem that reworked the famous legend of Urashimako, a fisherman who traveled to the land of the immortals. In the original legend, to be discussed below, Urashimako returns to the mundane world, instantly grows old, and dies. In the

41. This resembles a verse offered by famed poet Ariwara no Narihira at the *ga no iwai* of Fujiwara no Mototsune, in which the traditional reading of scattering blossoms is inverted in the hope that rather than signaling impermanence and decay, they might prevent the aging process: "Scatter at random, O blossoms of the cherry, and cloud the heavens, that you may conceal the path, old age is said to follow" (McCullough 1985, 84).

42. The depiction of the *ga no iwai* celebrating the sixtieth year of Michinaga's wife Rinshi provides other excellent examples of poems replete with these phrases; see McCullough and McCullough (1980, 2: 607–608).

poem presented to Ninmyō, however, Urashimako succeeds in attaining eternal life (Morita 2010, 2: 323–29; discussed in Araki 1998, 44–45). In spite of the best efforts of the Kōfukuji monks, however, Ninmyō died the following year.

Many of the ceremonies and rituals related to longevity that punctuated court life were Buddhist. Although Buddhist sutras spanning the tradition routinely asserted that old age and death were two unavoidable marks of existence and counseled resignation to the fact that all forms of impermanence were inescapable, early Japanese elites nonetheless followed continental precedents in attempting to enlist the powers of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other members of the Buddhist pantheon in their quest for longevity and permanence. From the time that Buddhism was first granted official recognition in the sixth century, it was regarded as a technology for promoting health throughout the realm.

Not surprisingly, most of the earliest efforts to utilize Buddhist powers to lengthen life coalesced around the Tennō. But even in later centuries, when "state Buddhism" came to the fore, protection of the person of the ruler was seen to be a vital component of state protection (*chingo kokka*). The *Golden Light Sutra*, which along with the *Sutra for Humane Kings* was one of the two major Mahayana sutras of state protection, claimed that the four deva kings, and other dharma-protecting deities such as Benzaiten and Kichijō would guard the good ruler who practiced moral governance. As early as the seventh century we find an example of recitations of this sutra being used in an attempt to save the life of the ailing Tenmu (de Visser 1935, 436). In the eighth century, recitation of and lectures on Yijing's translation of this sutra, usually referred to as the *Victorious King Sutra* (*Saishō ō kyō*), became the centerpiece of the Gosai-e (or Misai-e 御斎会), held in the second week of the first month at the Great Hall of State (Daigokuden 大極殿), the symbolic center of the realm, and regarded as the most important annual court observance.[43]

But there were also countless other gestures undertaken by Japanese rulers who sought to translate Buddhist merit into years of life. Shōmu Tennō, best known for his construction of the great image of Vairocana at the Nara temple of Tōdaiji, also encouraged the construction of numerous smaller temples and commissioned the copying of a complete Buddhist cannon explicitly for the purpose of extending his life (Ujitani 1992, 2: 83).[44] For aristocrats as well, patronage of Buddhism was often framed in terms of hopes for longevity. For example, lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* can be reliably traced back to the Nara period, and seem to have increased in frequency in the early Heian, especially with the institution of the *Hokke hakkō* 法華八講, a series of eight lectures on the *Lotus* often

43. The Gosai-e is described in Yamanaka (1972, 139–49).

44. Hayami Tasuku warns against conflating these activities with the esoteric longevity rites of later periods, but their desired effects were the same (1975, 6).

held over four or five days. These lectures were sponsored first by priests and later by high-ranking courtiers in order to transfer merit to deceased individuals. But from early on, they were also treated as a means of attaining worldly benefits, among them longevity (Tanabe 1984, 393–94). The Nara-period prelate Rōben inaugurated an annual set of lectures on the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokke-e* 法華絵 or *Sakura-e* 桜会) at Tōdaiji in 746 (Tenpyō 18) and dedicated their merit to the welfare of the imperial family and the state (Tsutsui 2003, 14 and 123). A depiction of a privately-held *Hokke hakkō* ceremony in the *Ochikubo monogatari* on behalf of the aged Chūnagon implies that the service was performed to grant him merit for the afterlife, but also ends with the Chūnagon reflecting that the ceremony, and importantly, the felicitations he had received from the Empress Dowager and others, would certainly lengthen his life (*inochi nobite* 命延びて) (NKBT 13: 202).

While elaborate rituals such as these required enormous resources and were cases of conspicuous ritual consumption, there were also numerous smaller-scale rituals for longevity that enjoyed popularity in the Heian period.[45] And although the ritual protection of the sovereign had long been the purview mainly of yin-yang masters who staffed the On'yōryō 陰陽寮, in the mid-ninth century, Buddhist priests increasingly came to assert themselves in this arena.[46] The great Buddhist master Kūkai (774–835) was instrumental in this. One of Kūkai's great political triumphs was to institute the performance of esoteric rites to protect the nation and the sovereign in a Shingon cloister (Shingon-in 真言院), constructed on the grounds of the Palace Compound (Abe 1999, 58–59). These esoteric rites, consisting of the *Goshichinichi mishuhō* 後七日の御修法 and the secret rites to the Wisdom King Taigen (*Taigensuihō* 太元帥法), would be performed between the eighth and fourteenth days of the first month, in concurrence with the exoteric lectures of the Gosai-e (McCullough and McCullough 1980, 1: 383).[47]

Roughly a decade and a half later, the Tendai School, armed with its own newly imported esoteric rites, sought to challenge Shingon hegemony in this field. Ennin (円仁, 794–864), who had only recently returned from the Tang, with the support of Fujiwara no Yoshifusa (804–872), successfully petitioned the court for sponsorship of the Rite of the Buddha of Abundant Light (*Shijōkōhō* 熾盛光法). Between 851 and 860, Ennin oversaw the construction in the palace compound of the Sōji-in 総持院, a permanent structure for the *Shijōkōhō* to be

45. Many of these were star rites, involving faith in Myōken bosatsu; see Dolce (2007). Another example of a popular longevity practice was the so-called Kōshin 庚申 cult, a vigil held once every sixty days to prevent the three "death bringers" from leaving one's body to report one's misdeeds; discussed in Masuo (2000, 833).

46. This process is discussed in Hayami (1987).

47. McCullough and McCullough refer to the Goshichinichi mishuhō as the Shingon'in no mizuhō.

performed night and day, without interruption in perpetuity.[48] The rite sought to guarantee the longevity of the ruler, especially at times of celestial irregularities. Most esoteric star-rites involved determining the "star of destiny" (*honmyōshō* 本命星) of its sponsor and directing ritual action toward that star. In the case of the *Shijōkōhō*, the Tennō's star of destiny was identified as the Pole Star, the star closest to the zenith around which all other stars revolved and a longstanding continental metaphor for the sovereign. In the *Shijōkōhō*, the Pole Star was personified as a fierce, glowing esoteric manifestation of the buddha Śākyamuni, the central figure of the mandala used in the ritual (described in Hayami 1987, 84; see also Dolce 2012, 347). This manifestation of Śākyamuni was depicted with an abundance of light emanating from his hair follicles. At times of solar eclipse, lunar eclipse, or other celestial irregularities, this light would be released and all the various luminaries of the sky would supplicate themselves to it, thus returning the cosmos to its original order (Hayami 1987, 62).[49]

Although the Sōji-in had been commissioned in order to provide a space for the ritual's regular enactment, *Shijōkōhō* were only performed sporadically in the early Heian period. The highly influential Tendai chief abbot (*zasu*) Ryōgen (良源; 912–985) is credited with reviving the practice, rebuilding the Sōji-in for that purpose (Groner 2002, 181–82). But in 977 Ryōgen also performed the *Shijōkōhō* for the chancellor, Fujiwara no Kanemichi (925–977) (Groner 2002, 92). There had been one earlier recorded instance of the rite being performed for a noble, but Ryōgen is regarded as having ushered in a new period of patronage between high ranking clerics and major aristocratic families, in the process contributing to the privatization of esoteric rites.[50] To fully grasp the significance of Ryōgen's arrangement of the *Shijōkōhō* for Kanemichi, it is worth noting that in 996, Fujiwara no Korechika (974–1010) was exiled for the treasonous act of sponsoring another esoteric ritual for state protection, the *Taigensuihō*, for his own private benefit. Concurrent with the privatization of the *Shijōkōhō* we find numerous cases in which similar rites came to be performed for nobles.[51] The

48. Montoku approved this, but future emperors let the practice taper off; see Groner (2002, 90–1).

49. Relying on Chinese metaphors equating the person of the ruler with the Pole Star, the *Shijōkōhō* ritually reinforced the image of the emperor as the central figure of the cosmos, the unmoving pivot connecting the celestial and terrestrial realms—an image found in the Confucian *Analects*. This rite is a clear example of the way, according to Catherine Bell, ritualization functions as "a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations" (1992, 170).

50. Although esoteric rites had been performed for private individuals or groups in the late Nara period, in the early Heian, Emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806) had instituted stricter controls, and for a few generations, ceremonies had served to reinforce the centrality and power of the ruler (Groner 2002, 85).

51. Hayami lists various cases in which these rites were performed for aristocrats; see Hayami (1987, 80; 1975).

proliferation of private Buddhist rituals for longevity thus signaled a breakdown in the authority of the *ritsuryō* state. But it also reflected once again the tremendous demand among Heian period aristocrats for longevity techniques, and their willingness to pay almost any price for the means to lengthen their lives.

Interestingly, although Buddhist priests were complicit in the early Japanese economy of longevity, the services they provided did not emphasize the possibility of a return to youth. Tantric rituals, exoteric sutra recitations and lectures, and other variegated Buddhist merit-making activities stressed the ability of the Dharma to secure health, stability, and prosperity, but did not encourage clinging to youth. On the other hand, they did not encourage a positive view of old age either. Even the *Golden Light Sutra* used a reference to the incapacity of the aged body as a narrative device in its chapter on "Eliminating Disease." In that chapter we learn that a young man named Flowing Water had a father who excelled in medicine, but who had grown old and decrepit. Flowing Water, however, "was of extraordinary appearance, exceedingly handsome, with exquisite features, dignified, and of intelligent character."[52] Once, when the kingdom was overrun by a terrible epidemic, Flowing Water reflected to himself: "Although my father excels in the practice of medicine [and] can cure many ailments … he is already frail, elderly, and withered. His skin and face are wrinkled, and his body is weak and trembles. He relies on a cane to walk around and gets exhausted. He is unable to go to the cities, towns, and villages" (Salguero 2013, 28–29). For this reason, Flowing Water resolved to have his father explain the tenets of medicine to him so that he could go out and treat the people suffering from the epidemic. Through this narrative device, the sutra could segue smoothly into a lengthy exposition of the principles of medicine as related by the elderly doctor to his son. But, given the context, the depiction of the decrepit old doctor unable to practice medicine is striking. Even in the midst of a sutra that promised the power to end epidemics and cure diseases came the sobering reminder that old age was something that could not be surmounted, even by the powers of the Dharma.

Elixirs and other Magical Medicines

The early Japanese fascination with the prospect of ageless longevity led to the active importation of various continental medical techniques dedicated to "nourishing life" (Jp. *yōjō*; Ch. *yangsheng* 養生). These included methods for guiding and drawing *qi* (Jp. *dōin;* Ch. *daoyin* 導引), meditation and visualization practices, breathing exercises, sexual practices, and the ingestion of herbal and mineral drugs. Several Japanese rulers are recorded having received Daoist-style

52. Translations from Dharmakṣema's version (Salguero 2013, 27).

elixirs—at times from doctors of the Imperial Medical Bureau (Ten'yakuryō 典薬寮) or earlier organs of the state that fulfilled a similar purpose. Tenmu was perhaps the first Japanese ruler to be presented with medicine specifically identified in Daoist and Chinese medical texts as possessing longevity-enhancing properties. In 685, he is reported to have been given a decoction (*sen* 煎), consisting of *okera* (*Atractylis ovata* 白朮, a member of the chrysanthemum family, also known in Japanese as *hakuchi*) (NKBT 68: 473; discussed in Ooms 2009, 146 and 156–58). Tenmu's granddaughter, Empress Genshō, is thought to have received an elixir of cinnabar (*tan* 丹)—a valued ingredient in Chinese alchemy—in 722.[53] She also was recorded discovering a pure spring 美泉 whose waters tasted like sweet wine (*rei* 醴) and which could allegedly reverse the aging process.[54] In an edict, she declared that washing her hands and face in the water made her skin wondrously smooth (*nameraka* 滑). "Moreover, I have heard that those who drink or bathe in these waters have had white hair turn black and had hair that had fallen out restored. Eyes that were unable to see have been made bright. Those with longstanding illnesses have all been made well" (SNKBT 13: 34–35).

What records we have of the activities of the early medical bureaus indicate that their doctors continued to be fascinated by longevity medicine and magical elixirs well into the mid-Heian period. The *Nihon koku genzai sho mokuroku* of 891, a catalogue of continental texts present in Japan at the time of compilation, lists one hundred sixty-five medical works, at least nineteen of which had titles that refer to elixirs, cinnabar, or other "medicines of immortality" (*senyaku* 仙薬) (Yajima 1984, 183–202).

These medicines often promised not only to halt the aging process, but to reverse the signs of aging—a possibility that held particular appeal in Nara and Heian Japan. The earliest Japanese collection on longevity medicine, the *Setsuyō yōketsu* 攝養要决 (Essential formulas for nourishing life) in twenty fascicles by Mononobe no Kōsen (also given as Hirozumi) 物部廣泉 (785–860), was produced during the reign of Emperor Junna (r. 823–833) (Takeda and Satō 1986, 96–97). Although the text is no longer extant, the short biography attached to Kōsen's death announcement in the *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* provides some indication of what his contemporaries considered to be significant about his medical contributions. His biographer wrote that in old age "his hair and eyebrows were pure white, but his skin remained bright and dewy, and he remained strong both physically and mentally" (Takeda and Satō 1986, 97).

53. The *Shoku Nihongi* records Wang Yuanzhong 王元仲 presenting her with a "flying boat" (飛舟) on Yōrō 6 (722) 4/21, which the editors of the *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* suggest might be a copyist error for a type of cinnabar elixir (飛丹) found in Chinese longevity manuals; see SNKBT 13: 114–115, especially note 9. Ujitani (1992, 1: 238) has Wang presenting Genshō with a "swift boat."

54. For more on the etymology of *rei*, see Wada (1995, 2: 251).

There appears to have been a surge of medical, ritual, and symbolic efforts to prop up the vitality of the sovereign during the reigns of Junna (785–840) and Ninmyō (806–850). Ninmyō in particular was physically weak and often infirm. Concerns for his mortality led to several extraordinary measures to extend his life. In 850, the year of his untimely demise, two major esoteric Buddhist longevity rites, the *Shijōkōhō* and *Enmeihō* 延命法, were first commissioned.[55] When Ninmyō was clearly nearing the end of his life, amnesties were granted, sutras were chanted, and his mother, the Dowager Empress, took the tonsure to transfer merit for his recovery (Katata 1985, 395). Ninmyō was also treated with a Daoist elixir (*tan* 丹) of Golden Liquor (Jp. *kin'eki*; Ch. *jinye* 金液) (Pregadio 2008, 1: 586–88).[56] This potion was described in the fourth fascicle of the *Baopuzi* on "medicines of immortality" and appears to have required a substantial amount of gold to concoct; it also contained cinnabar.[57] Imbibing this draught could supposedly transform one's body into a gold-like material that would share that metal's incorruptibility. Ge Hong's description of this drug indicates that depending on the amount taken one could either fly into the sky, becoming a *xian*, or with a more moderate dose "enjoy fullness of life and become an immortal." This was followed by a claim that surely appealed to many *ritsuryō*-era elites: one who imbibed only a moderate amount of the drug would still "be able to have a wife and family and hold official position" (Ware 1966, 90; Hattori 1975, 144).

The death announcement of the Emperor Ninmyō in the *Shoku Nihon kōki* was followed by a detailed account of his medical treatment, including his use of this mineral elixir. The drug was apparently recommended to him by his father, Junna Tennō, who had also suffered from various ailments. The compilers of the *Shoku Nihon kōki* recount that, in the past, Ninmyō had once explained the situation thus:

> "Three years after my *genpuku* 元服 ceremony I began having pains in my chest. For this I was prescribed a *shichikigan* 七氣丸 [a pill thought effective against the seven types of cold and hot *qi*], *shion* 紫苑 [*Aster tataricus*], and an infusion of ginger. However, medicines that were effective at first, afterwards, even in increased dosages, came to have no effect. At that point Emperor Junna was concerned, saying 'I too in the past had the same illness. I tried various prescriptions, but none were effective. I asked to be prescribed *kin'ekitan*

55. Hayami notes that a version of the *Enmeihō* had been performed in the Nara period for Shōmu, but its first use in the Heian period was for Ninmyō (*Shoku Nihon kōki* 850.2.27) (Hayami 1975, 52).

56. This potion is described in Ge Hong's *Baopuzi*, which is mentioned in an essay from the *Man'yōshū* by Yamanoue no Okura (660–733), pointing to the possibility that *kin'ekitan* was known in Japan as early as the Nara period (snkbz 7: 85). *Kin'ekitan* was also described in tenth-century texts such as the *Wamyō ruijushō* and *Ishinpō*. For a discussion of its use in the Heian period, see Hattori (1975, 144–48).

57. The potion contained one *kin* 斤 or six-hundred grams of gold; see Shinmura (1983, 189).

> 金液丹 and *hakusekiei* 白石英 [white quartz], but the doctors all forbade it. However, ignoring their warning I ordered [them to let me] take it and I was cured. Herbal drugs were not capable of curing my symptoms, and I think it is suitable to prescribe *kin'ekitan*. If you call ordinary doctors (*zokui* 俗醫), they will certainly be opposed. Therefore you should call Ōmi no Amako 淡海海子, ask him to explain [the prescription] in detail, and follow what he says.'"[58]
>
> "So I [Ninmyō], following what he [Junna] said, took mineral drugs (*tanyaku* 丹藥) and as expected they were effective. Together with what I have described, in order to cure my illness, I myself have tried various medical strategies.… Now that I have gotten old, various feverish illnesses have arisen, and treatments are troublesome. It is common for the people of the world, not understanding the character of my illness and the words of retired emperor Junna, to say for no reason that it was mistaken for me to follow my own course of medicine and take mineral drugs. Thus, I must make known the origins of my experiences and [expose] the needlessness of these criticisms."
>
> (KT 3: 238–39; MORITA 2010, 2: 376–77)

One of the most fascinating elements of this passage is the indication that Junna and Ninmyō had to procure their elixirs over the objections of state doctors, turning instead to a nonofficial physician. It seems that doctors within the Imperial Bureau of Medicine already entertained suspicions about the efficacy, and perhaps the safety, of mineral drugs. The fact that Junna and Ninmyō had both received them nonetheless points to the intensity of the demand for these medicines in high quarters. But the passage also alludes to criticism emanating from outside the medical establishment, as well. As a clue to why non-physicians might have been opposed to such treatments, we can point to a memorial offered to the Emperor Daigo in 914 by Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki 三善清行 (849–918). In it, he offered harsh criticism of Ninmyō's use of the elixir due to the vast outlay of public funds that had been required to produce it (MASUO 2013, 9b).

The defensive tone of the passage describing Ninmyō's treatment is curious, as is its placement at the end of the chronicle, immediately after accounts of Ninmyō's funeral. The effect is that of Ninmyō's voice speaking to us from beyond the grave, justifying his use of *kin'ekitan*. Since Fujiwara no Yoshifusa, minister to Ninmyō, Montoku, and Seiwa, was one of the two men tasked with compiling the text who saw the project to completion, the inclusion of this passage appears to have been intended to deflect criticism that might have been directed, in part, at him.[59] The discussion of the Golden Liquor shows on the

58. We have no other record of Ōmi, but Masuo Shin'ichirō observes that his name suggests he was from Ōmi no kuni, home to Paekche kinship groups who were knowledgeable in Daoist medicine; see MASUO (2013, 6b).

59. The other compiler of the original five who remained on the project was Haruzumi Yoshitada. Yoshifusa was by far the more powerful of the two; see SAKAMOTO (1991, 141–42).

one hand that all possible measures were attempted to preserve Ninmyō's life, but on the other hand places the responsibility for ingestion of this dubious draught with Ninmyō himself.

The closing sentences of the *Shoku Nihon kōki* read as Yoshifusa's final attempt to close the door on the matter:

> The emperor 帝 from youth had a delicate constitution; but eighteen years had passed from the time he acceded to the throne, and he was already over the age of forty (*senrei* 仙齡). Taking up examples from middle antiquity, we cannot say it was a short reign. We can attribute this to his working for the good, spreading benevolent rule, and the effects of food and medicine.
>
> (KT 3: 239; MORITA 2010, 2: 377)

Because the lifespan of the sovereign continued to be seen as an index of his virtue throughout the premodern period, Ninmyō's early death could have led to unsettling questions about the imperial institution. At the time the text was presented to Ninmyō's grandson Seiwa in 869, Yoshifusa was serving as regent (*sesshō* 摂政) concurrent with his position as chancellor (Daijō daijin 太政大臣). As regent, Yoshifusa occupied what was essentially an extra-*ritsuryō* position, which allowed him tremendous latitude in manipulating the throne and other organs of state. But he still required the structures of the *ritsuryō* state in order to exercise his power and authority. He thus needed to maintain the impression that the Tennō-centered polity and the economy of virtue were still operational.[60] Therefore, in a tone of barely concealed embarrassment and rationalization, Yoshifusa and his co-compiler, Haruzumi no Yoshitada (春澄善縄; 797–870), sought to argue, somewhat incoherently, both that Ninmyō's reign was not as short as it seemed, relatively speaking, and that it might have even been shorter had it not been for his good works and benevolent rule. In this context, we can see another reason why those around Ninmyō might have had qualms about his ingestion of mineral drugs. For a ruler, resorting to extraordinary measures in response to his weak constitution could have been read as evidence of a lack of inherent virtue. Unlike Tenmu and Genshō, whose elixirs were presented in large part to symbolically underscore their status as notional immortals, Ninmyō's use of Golden Liquor smacked of desperation.

As this episode demonstrates, those knowledgeable about medicine in Heian Japan clearly had doubts about mineral drugs, *kin'ekitan* in particular. But their allure must have remained, for we continue to see references to them throughout the classical period. The Emperor Sanjō (975–1017) is reported to have taken *kin'ekitan*, although the anonymous author of the *Ōkagami* suspected that it

60. Ryūichi Abe coins the term "economy of virtue" to describe Ōmuro Mikio's assessment of Han dynasty ideology of rulership, which proved highly influential in early Japanese statecraft; see ABE (1999, 313–14), and ŌMURO (1981).

might have caused maladies of the eyes from which he suffered (NKBT 21: 56; discussed in HATTORI 1975, 134–35, 142–43). Furthermore, as with many longevity techniques, what began as a practice available only to rulers eventually came to be employed by high-ranking aristocrats as well. The tenth-century Chinese-Japanese dictionary, *Wamyō ruijushō*, provided several alternate names for *kin'ekitan*, attesting to its popularity (SHINMURA 1983, 189). Fujiwara no Tadahira (藤原忠平, 880–949) wrote of numerous instances in which he took the drug in his *Teishinkōki*. Fujiwara no Sanesuke (藤原実資, 982–1032) recorded receiving a prescription from the doctor Tanba no Tadaaki (丹波忠明, b. 990) over three days in 1031.[61]

Given the enormous expense required to produce the Golden Liquor, it is remarkable that we find so many references to its use. But not all longevity medicines were as rare as *kin'ekitan*, and the consumption of herbal drugs appears to have been even more widespread.[62] Many of the most intriguing examples of Heian longevity seekers are found in the scholar-aristocrat Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki's mid ninth-century *Zenke hiki* 善家秘記. The text exists today in six fragments, with one section dealing exclusively with cases of extreme longevity. In this section, Kiyoyuki included a long description of the life and career of Takeda no Chitsugi 竹田千繼, who, like the doctor Kōsen, demonstrated the wondrous potential of his medicine through his own vitality. We read that, as a student at the Imperial Bureau of Medicine, Chitsugi was deeply impressed by a passage in the *Shinnō honzōkyō* (Ch. *Shennong Ben Cao Jing*), claiming that wolfberry (*Lycium chinense*; Jp. *kuko* 枸杞) prevented old age and lengthened life. He resolved to test it and see if it was true. He set aside a plot of land and planted wolfberry.

> In spring and summer he took the leaves of wolfberry as medicine; in autumn and winter he ate the roots of the plant. Also, on a daily basis, he boiled the stems and roots of the wolfberry and made with that decoction a crude wine which he drank. When he bathed he always used the same decoction. For seventy years without fail he lived like this, and his face remained lustrous, like that of a child.
>
> In 855 (Saikō 2), Emperor Montoku was suddenly stricken with a debilitating disease. Many doctors prescribed *saké* 酒 infused with dried abalone (*sekketsumei* 石決明). There was an attendant at the time who offered a memorial to the emperor informing him of the fact that Takeda no Chitsugi had taken wolfberry and been able to prevent the onset of old age. The Tennō was extremely surprised and immediately summoned Chitsugi. The emperor

61. See SHINMURA (1983, 189–91). See notes 5 and 6 in SHINMURA (1983, 191) for references to the drug in the *Teishinkōki* and *Shōyūki*.

62. Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903), for instance, composed a poem in which he reported sending foxglove to a friend in the tongue-in-cheek hope that he could become a "wine-drinking immortal" (RABINOVITCH and BRADSTOCK 2005, 133).

asked, "how old are you?" Chitsugi replied, "I was born in the year 765 (Tenpyō Hōji 9) during the year of *kōshi* 庚子 [sic.].[63] I am now 97 years old [sic.]." The emperor was extremely suspicious. He had his attendant examine Chitsugi once, and then again. His hair was black to the roots, his skin was gleaming, his hearing and vision were excellent, and he had no cavities in his teeth. The Tennō was impressed and gave Chitsugi an exceptional promotion, making him an attendant physician to the throne (Ten'yaku no jo 典薬允) in the Imperial Bureau of Medicine. In the official medicinal herb garden he had a great amount of wolfberry planted.

(Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai 2007, 15a–b and 19b–20a)

Unfortunately for Chitsugi, this great honor was also his downfall. In keeping with the notion found in many Daoist texts that the strain of service at court could accelerate the onset of old age, Kiyoyuki informs us that Chitsugi was so busy with his official duties that he did not have enough time to continue his wolfberry regimen. "Before even two years had passed his hair had become completely white, his face wrinkled, his back bent. Even when he only walked a short distance he needed a cane." He died at the age of one-hundred one (Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai 2007, 15a and 20a).

In addition to reports of those who lived to extraordinary ages (he describes another wolfberry enthusiast having lived to one hundred nineteen), Kiyoyuki included examples of seemingly miraculous medical results involving the restoration of youthful vitality (Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai 2007, 20a–b and 25a–b). He reports that Kunaikyō Tōyo'ō (宮内卿十世王, 833–916), son of Nakano Shinnō (仲野親王, 792–867), after taking dried abalone (*sekketsumei*) had his hair turn from white to black (Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai 2007, 25b–26a and 29a–b). The retired Dainagon, Fujiwara no Fuyuo (藤原冬緒, 808–880), took a prescription of beehive combined with the fruit of the Pagoda Tree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*; Jp. *Enju* 槐子). Although he was over eighty, his hair had not a touch of white, and he continued to be sexually vital (Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai 2007, 20b and 25b).[64] One of the most successful practitioners of the arts of halting old age and preserving life appears to have been Ōkura no Yoshiyuki 大蔵善行:

He took one pill of ground stalactite (*shōnyū seki* 鍾乳石) every day. Even though he reached the age of ninety, he maintained the appearance of a man in his prime. He could hear and see clearly; he remained healthy and light on his feet. In his household he had many wives, and he did not curtail his activities "within the chamber" (*bōshitsu* 房室). At the age of eighty-seven he had a baby boy. In 917 (Engi 17), he was called on to educate the crown prince on the

63. The *kōshi* year of the sexegenary cycle would have fallen on 760 (Tenpyō hōji 4). However, even if Chitsugi had been born in 760, this still would not have made him 97 years old in 855.

64. On *enju* see Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai (2007, 24b).

> *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Ch. *Hanshu*; Jp. *Kanjo*). Every morning he lectured on this text without a rest. There was not one in the realm who did not marvel at him. Everyone said, "this is *xian* come to earth" (*chisen* 地仙).
> (Kai'i Shiryō Kenkyūkai 2007, 25b–26a and 29b)

Although such tales appear fantastic, the enthusiasm among court nobles for methods to stave off old age, or, if possible, reverse its effects, is reflected in the numerous references in aristocratic diaries to the ingestion of longevity medicines. In addition to his use of *kin'ekitan*, the *Teishinkōki* records multiple instances in which Tadahira was prescribed herbal longevity drugs (Masuo 2013, 7b, note 17). We see similar references in the diaries of Fujiwara no Morosuke (藤原師輔, 908–960; *Kyūreki*); Fujiwara no Sanesuke (982–1032; *Shōyūki*); Fujiwara no Michinaga (998–1021; *Midō Kanpakuki*); Fujiwara no Yukinari 藤原行成 (972–1028; *Gonki*); and Fujiwara no Sukefusa 藤原資房 (1007–1057; *Shunki*) (Masuo 2013, 7b; Hattori 1975, 156–200).

Further attesting to the yearning among elites for medical solutions to senescence and death, ten years after Ninmyō's death, work began on the second Japanese treatise on longevity medicine, the *Kinranhō* (金蘭方 "Golden Orchid Prescriptions") in fifty fascicles, compiled by a team led by Sugawara no Minetsugu 菅原峯嗣 (793–870) for Emperor Seiwa and completed in 868.[65] We also have records of Fukane no Sukehito (深根輔仁, fl. 918–936) producing the *Yōjōshō* (養生抄 "Gleanings on Nourishing Life") in seven fascicles and the *Yōjōhishō* (養生秘抄 "Secret Gleanings on Nourishing Life") in one fascicle in 918.[66] Unfortunately, none of these works has survived. The earliest extant Japanese medical work, and thus an invaluable source on medical knowledge in Heian Japan, is the *Ishinpō* ("Essential Medical Prescriptions") of 984. The *Ishinpō* was compiled by the court physician Tanba no Yasuyori (丹波康頼, 912–995), and contained three fascicles devoted entirely to longevity medicine: fascicle twenty-six providing recipes for botanical drugs; twenty-seven providing miscellaneous methods including breathing exercises, meditation, and *dōin* exercises; and fascicle twenty-eight devoted to sexual techniques—practices to be conducted "within the chamber" (*bōnaijutsu* 房内術). The *Ishinpō* included discussion of longevity techniques, such as the use of mineral drugs, in the fascicles devoted to more prosaic medical issues, as well.[67]

The recipes given in the twenty-sixth volume generally promised not only longevity, but such benefits as increased vigor, improved mobility, heightened

65. See *Sandai jitsuroku* (870.3.30, in Takeda and Satō 1986, 498); on the *Kinranhō*, see Shinmura (1983, 250–51 and 252, note 14).

66. On Fukune no Sukehito, see Shinmura (1983, 241–42).

67. For example, fascicle nineteen, item fourteen; see Shinmura (1983, 189).

acuity of the senses and mental clarity—all marks of youth.[68] The third recipe from the twenty-sixth fascicle claimed to be "the secret Way of returning to youth" (Tanba 1935, 6: 2395). Other recipes made more surprising assertions, such as the fourth, which promised to "make the body light, increase vitality (*qi* power), turn white hair black again, and grow back teeth that had fallen out.… One's years will be extended, and elders (*jurō* 壽老) will again be as youths" (Tanba 1935, 6: 2395).[69] Recipe five claimed to be a method for "immortality, long life, not dying, and not aging" (*shinsen, chōsei, fushi, furō* 神仙長生不死不老), and stated that after three hundred days of use, immortal maidens (jade women 玉女) would come and serve the person who had taken the medicine.[70] Recipe six promised again to arrest the aging process but also to "make one's complexion like that of a fifteen-year old" (Tanba 1935, 6: 2396–97).[71]

Although the *Ishinpō* was technically private property and supposedly only to be viewed by members of Yasuyori's lineage, there was immense curiosity among aristocrats about the esoteric learning it contained. One way or another, much of its knowledge appears to have seeped out into aristocratic circles. Machi Senjurō has shown that many of the specialized terms referring to sexual techniques (*bōnai*) thought to preserve male vitality found their way into certain mid-Heian Chinese poetry and prose—thus indicating that what was supposed to be secret had actually become relatively common knowledge.[72] The *Honchō monzui*, for example, includes a parodic biography, the *Tettsui-den* 鉄槌伝, by an anonymous poet under the pen-name Ratai 羅泰.[73] The name of the protagonist

68. The first recipe of the twenty-sixth volume of the *Ishinpō* consists of a combination of seven botanicals to be collected at specific times of year. Taking this medicine for one hundred days was said to cause "the ears and eyes to become acute and bright. At night one will be able to see; hearing will become acute; eyes will become clear and bright, able to see at night and even cast out glistening lights; vigor and stamina will increase twofold. By taking this preparation frequently you will live as long as the heavens and the earth"; see Hsia et al. (1986, 2: 5).

69. The second recipe was purported to have been provided to its original source by an immortal; see Hsia et al. (1986, 2: 5).

70. We also read that Fan Li was "youthful when he was fifty years old after he took this medicine"; see Tanba (1935, 6: 2397); Hsia et al. (1986, 2: 9).

71. As a prelude to another recipe, Tanba includes a long passage originally from the *Da Jing Jing* 大清経 describing a traveler who came upon a woman beating a man of eighty or ninety with a stick. It turned out that the man was her child. He had neglected to take his medicine and thus had become old and sick. Although she was three-hundred seventy-three years old she had retained her vigor. One who took this recipe would retain a complexion that looked "shiny and smooth as cream"; see Hsia et al. (1986, 2: 13–4).

72. Personal communication. From his talk titled "Health and Sexual Practices as Seen in the *Kōso Mōyron*" (曲直瀬道三著『黄素妙論』に みる房中養生について). Given on 26 August 2008 at "The Physician Manase Dosan (1507–1594): An International Workshop on Medical Texts and Sino-Japanese Writings in Early Modern Japan," University of Oregon.

73. The editors of the *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* describe this name as a thinly veiled reference to male genitalia (NKBT 69: 520); also discussed in Smits (2007, 120–21).

of this would-be biography, Tettsui or "Iron Hammer," itself derives from a term found in the twenty-eighth book of the *Ishinpō* (on *bōnaijutsu*) referring to the penis. The essay depicts Iron Hammer's exploits and is replete with references to obscurely-named sexual techniques such as the "arts of the flying dragon and the walking tiger" (NKBT 69: 429–36).[74] As a result of his use of these arts, Tettsui remained powerful and "did not grow old or die" (NKBT 69: 433).

Youthful Immortals in Early Japanese Legends

Given the amount of time and energy devoted to the practices described above, it is not surprising that the dream of eternal youth permeated the early Japanese literary imagination, as well.[75] In their fictional accounts of immortals, literati up to the mid-Heian period seem to have been most inspired by the tales from the classical Chinese tradition that involved those who had been able to maintain their youth. The locus classicus for such figures comes from the first chapter of the Daoist classic, the *Zhuangzi*, which describes a "spirit man" who dwelt on Mount Kuyeh. This entity abstained from the five grains, could ride the clouds, drive flying dragons, and had "skin like ice or snow and the temperament of a virgin" (adapted from MAIR 1998, 6–7). Although the spirit man was not explicitly identified as an immortal (*xian*), the image of the master of the Dao who could retain the marks of youth became a staple of later immortality tales in China, and had great influence in early Japan. But the Chinese tradition was heterogeneous. The two earliest and most influential collections of Chinese immortality tales, the *Liexian zhuan* 例仙傳 (Collected biographies of immortals), edited by Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 79–8 BCE), and the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (Biographies of divine immortals) attributed to Ge Hong, included roughly equal cases in which the immortals were described as men or women who had retained or regained the marks of youth, and those in which the immortals were depicted as white-haired elders.[76] The predominance of legends involving youthful immortals in early Japan was thus not the result of an automatic imitation of continental precedent, but the result of selective appropriation.

Interestingly, the earliest stratum of immortality legends in Japan most often dealt not with old men, or even men who had magically returned to youth, but

74. Note 14 on page 434 (NKBT 69) identifies the *Ishinpō* as the source of these terms. For the relevant passage see TANBA (1935, 7: 2576), and HSIA et al. (1986, 2: 177). As Hsia's translation indicates, in the *Ishinpō*, the technique is actually referred to as the art of "upside-down dragon" 龍翻.

75. Inoue Mitsusada and Ōsone Shōsuke discuss the fascination of mid-Heian literati with *sennin* and their techniques (NST 7: 735).

76. In most cases, the physical appearance of the immortal was not described; see KALTENMARK (1953) and CAMPANY (2002).

with immortal young women who were presented as "heavenly maidens."[77] Early works, such as the *Nihon shoki*, various *fudoki* or gazetteers, the *Man'yōshū*, *Kaifūsō*, and *Shoku Nihongi*, contained legends dealing with these heavenly maidens, including the tales of Tsuminoe 柘枝, Urashimako 浦島子, and material that formed the germ of the legends of Hagoromo 羽衣 and the *Taketori monogatari*.[78] All of these tales involved heavenly women who were captured or courted by mortal men. These early legends also, at times, identified specific geographic locations in Japan as the dwelling place of immortal maidens. The most common of these loci was Yoshino. But Miyako no Yoshika's 都良香 ninth-century *Fujisanki* (Record of Mount Fuji) depicted that storied mountain as the home of youthful female immortals as well.

All of the tales involving immortal maidens shared thematic elements. They depicted male seekers of immortality capturing otherworldly females and hoping to gain from them the secrets of eternal youth. Although some narratives involved taking these maidens as foster daughters, at times these tales used erotically-charged language to suggest that it was sexual congress with one of these immortal women that had the power to restore and maintain a man's vigor.[79] Some tales depicted old men begging these women for their assistance, only to be spurned and ridiculed. And even in cases in which a man was able to "possess" one of these women, the narrative most often ended with the man losing his immortal bride and reverting once again to miserable old age. For instance, in the legend of Tsuminoe, the "Mulberry Branch Maiden," when a mortal man is able to steal the magical cloak that she uses to fly between heaven and earth, she is forced to marry him.[80] Later, she regains her garment and the man is left behind bemoaning his loss in song.[81] In the *Tango no kuni fudoki* we find a similar narrative in which a heavenly maiden (*amatsu otome* 天女) is captured by an old couple who make her their foster daughter (NKBT 2: 466–69; translated

77. A point observed by MARRA (1991, 17).

78. For a discussion of the tales featuring heavenly maidens in the *fudoki*, see SHIMODE (1968, 212–28). On the possible origins of the legends of the Taketori okina, see KATATA (1991, 70–86).

79. The gendered positioning of male longevity seekers and immortal maidens in these tales bears similarities to certain continental traditions, such as that of the Jade woman 玉女 or Mysterious woman 玄女 who hold the key to longevity in *bōnaijutsu*, or even to Shangqing 上清 Daoist traditions in which divine women instructed mortal males in the arts of longevity and promised to be their brides in heaven.

80. Originally found in a work entitled *Shashiden* (The mulberry branch legend), no longer extant, but referred to in the *Man'yōshū*, *Kaifūsō*, and the *Shoku Nihon kōki*; see CRANSTON (1993, 496); COMO (2009, 144–45); and KATATA (1991, 39–55). A tale with similar elements is also found in the *Ōmi no kuni fudoki* (MARRA 1991, 18).

81. Como finds the basis for these tales in the fourth-century *Sou shen ji* ; see COMO (2009, 144). The earliest Japanese versions are in the *Suruga* and *Ōmi fudoki*; see COMO (2009, 74–75).

in Cranston 1993, 150–51).[82] During her time with them she is made to brew medicinal saké, which Cranston notes is "suggestive of the *ochimizu* [変若水], or waters of restored youth, said to exist on the moon" (Cranston 1993, 149).

An elixir from the moon also plays a central role in the early-Heian legend, *Taketori monogatari*, the "Tale of the Old Bamboo Cutter." The earliest text featuring the tale's protagonist, an old woodcutter or *taketori okina* 竹取翁, is a set of poems from the *Man'yōshū* in which the old man brags at length of the fine figure he used to cut in the days of his youth to a group of nine immortal maidens (nkbt 7: 120–27). He describes how, with his slim waist, extravagant wardrobe, and hair as black as the bowels of a mud-snail, he was wooed by many young ladies. The immortal maidens appear to be preparing some kind of food, which Cranston suggests might be identified as some form of elixir. They teasingly invite the old woodcutter to blow on their fire, and eventually declare in song their intention to "submit" to him, making this one of the rare cases in early legends in which an elderly mortal succeeds in "possessing" a heavenly maiden, or in this case a group of them (Cranston 1993, 743).

In the Heian-period narrative, the old woodcutter finds an immortal maiden, Kaguya-hime, who has come to earth from the moon. In the end, after spurning the advances of various nobles and even the Tennō himself, the maiden must return home. Her heavenly escorts give her an elixir of immortality (*fushi no kusuri* 不死の薬) to cleanse her after her exposure to this "polluted world" (*kitanaki tokoro* 穢き所) (nkbt 9: 65). She wishes to leave some of the elixir for her foster parents, but in the end, they are too grief stricken over their parting to take any form of medicine (*kusuri*), and die of old age. A portion of the elixir is sent to the emperor, but he refuses it, having it burned atop Mount Fuji.

Themes of frustration and loss also reverberated in the earliest versions of the Urashimako legend, found in the *Nihon shoki*, the fragmentary *Tango no kuni fudoki*, and the *Man'yōshū*.[83] A young fisherman, Urashima of Mizunoe (水江之浦嶋兒), marries an immortal woman of Tokoyo (the "Land of Perpetuity," given as both 常代 and 常世), only to lose her (and his life) in the end (nkbt 5: 384–87). In the *Tango fudoki* variant, a five-colored tortoise transforms into an immortal maiden and brings Urashimako (水江浦嶼子) to heavenly Penglai 蓬莱, the isle of the immortals from Chinese mythology (nkbt 2: 470–7). In the version found in the *Man'yōshū*, Urashimako is taken to Tokoyo, in this case described as an immortal land beneath the sea. In both versions, Urashimako longs to see his native home once more. But once he is back, he breaks a vow and opens a for-

82. The *Suruga no kuni fudoki* includes a variant in which a "spirit maiden" (*shinnyo*) is captured and forced to marry a fisherman (nkbt 2: 447).

83. His legend is mentioned briefly in the Yūryaku chapter of the *Nihon shoki* (Aston 1972, 1: 368). For the *Tango fudoki* variant, see Cranston (1993, 144–49).

bidden jeweled box from which his soul escapes. The narrator of the *Man'yōshū* variant is astounded by his folly:

Oi mo sezu	They might have lived
shini mo sezu shite	forever in those wondrous halls,
nagaki yo ni	never growing old
arikeru mono o	or dying, through long ages,
yo no naka no	but this fool
orokahito no	of all the foolish world,
wagimoko ni	he went to his love
tsugete kataraku	and this is what he said to her:
shimashiku wa	"Let me go home,
ie ni kaerite	just for a little while…"

(Cranston 1993, 324; NKBT 5: 385)

During his sojourn in the land of the immortals, Urashima's hair was black and his skin had a youthful glow. But upon returning to the mundane world:

Kokoro keusenu	His heart grew faint, he fell.
wakakarishi	Wrinkles spread across
hada mo shiwaminu	the skin that had
	been smooth and young,
kurokarishi	whiteness fell upon
kami mo shirakenu	the locks that had
	been gleaming black.
yunayuna wa	Moment by moment
iki sae taete	his breath ebbed away, was gone;
ato tsui ni	at last it was over.
inochi shinikeru	Life died within him.

(Cranston 1993, 325; NKBT 5: 387)

Although these narratives have survived because they were included in documents prepared by or for members of the court, it is interesting that this earliest stratum of Japanese immortality legends largely featured individuals from the underclass—fishermen, woodcutters, or old men and women from the provinces with no standing in the *ritsuryō* hierarchy.[84] Perhaps the fact that these

84. Michele Marra has written that these tales "made common people dream about possessing one of these magic beings in order to improve their social standing" (1991, 18). The sole example of a marriage between a low-status mortal and immortal female that resulted in children is found in the *Ōmi fudoki*. We read that their offspring became the ancestors of the powerful Ikago no Muraji 伊香連 clan (Marra 1991, 18). These stories could thus also be read as expressions of the aspirations of men in the provinces who sought to improve their social status by "marrying up" and producing offspring as well-placed as the Ikago no Muraji. Conversely, they could also be read as representing the misery of females from the capital forced to marry someone "beneath them": being offered in marriage to husbands in the provinces.

individuals lived on the periphery of the Tennō-centered polity made their failure to obtain renewed youth more palatable to elite readers.[85] But these narratives also call to mind the single case in the official chronicles describing the failure of a sovereign to procure medicines of immortality. In the *Nihon shoki*, Tajima Mori was reported to have traveled to Tokyo to bring back the fruit of the *tachibana*, the "Seasonless Fragrant Tree" of immortality, to present to his lord, Suinin.[86] Sadly, Tajima was too late: before he could provide the ruler with the means to conquer death, he had passed from this world (Aston 1972, 1: 186–7). What distinguishes this tale from those involving woodcutters and fishermen, however, is that nowhere is it hinted that Suinin had grown old. As with all members of the imperial line until the reign of Genmei, Suinin had passed from this world without any mention of gray hair, a bent back, or wrinkles. The marks of old age, so starkly presented in the conclusion of the Urashima tale, were too harsh a reality to associate with the body of a heavenly sovereign.

Conclusion

The fervency with which royals and nobles pursued the quest for longevity in classical Japan would seem to give lie to the assertion that the majority of early Japanese elites regarded old age as a less than desirable life stage. But the fact is that in this period enormous amounts of energy were expended not merely on lengthening lives, but on retaining or even regaining youth. Records of practices that promised to turn hair from white to black, to regrow teeth, and to restore sexual vitality, provide a striking counterpoint to the various examples of early Japanese poetry and prose on the theme of "lamenting gray hair." Poets wishing to convey their love of the sovereign, their superiors, or their peers, as well as flaunt their knowledge of obscure Chinese sources, mined the textual tradition for novel ways to convey their wishes that the subject of their poems live long and stay forever young. The quest for a halt to aging allowed mid- and lower-ranking nobles familiar with esoteric medicines or continental lore to trade on their knowledge, or, in the case of Chitsugi, to attain promotion within the imperial bureaucracy.

Although the early tales involving aged men seeking elixirs from heavenly maidens all ended in frustration, despair, and death, as we have seen in our dis-

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An early and rare example of an underclass woman successfully obtaining immortality through her moral conduct and the consumption of herbs is found in the *Nihon ryōiki* (Como 2009, 76).

85. The mid-Heian version of the *Taketori okina* also portrayed the Tennō as one of these frustrated immortality seekers. Marra (1991, 27–34) suggests that the emperor's rejection of the elixir is meant to signal the recognition, inspired by Buddhism, that Daoist-style immortality is ultimately an illusion. The depiction of the failure of the other courtiers, he claims, is a veiled critique of the then-dominant northern branch of the Fujiwara clan.

86. The Tachibana is discussed in Cranston (1993, 1: 463–64).

cussion of the *Zenke hiki*, the classical period also saw the production of other narratives that straddled the boundaries of legend and history, which featured men (rarely, if ever, women) who had kept their youthful glow into old age.[87] By the late Heian period, however, the obsession with eternal youth appears to have waned. Longevity treatises continued to be written in the centuries that followed, but their authors placed less emphasis on maintaining or regaining the marks of youth. Furthermore, while the late-Heian *Honchō shinsenden* (Traditions of heavenly immortals in our land) of Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041–1111) still included examples in which immortals were presented as youths with glistening skin, it also included as many tales in which immortals appeared as elders. The closing centuries of the Heian period also saw a dramatic proliferation of legends in which not just immortals, but local kami, gods from abroad, bodhisattvas, and even buddhas were represented taking the form of elderly men or (less commonly) women (Kim 2008, i–ii, 3). It was in these years that the political and cultural edifice of the *ritsuryō* system was reconfigured, making space for novel ways of representing authority—including those in which the aged body was no longer something that needed to be avoided at all costs, but could itself be used as a symbol of power.

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DNK *Dai Nihon kokiroku* 大日本古記録. 1952–. Ed. Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

KT *Shintei zōho kokushi taikei* 新訂増補国史大系. 1929–1967. Ed. Kuroita Katsumi 黒板勝美. 66 vols. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.

NKZ *Nihon koten zenshū* 日本古典全, 1934–1937. Ed. Atsuo Masamune 正宗敦夫. Tokyo: Nihon Koten Zenshū Kankōkai.

NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系. 1957–1967. Takagi Ichinosuke 高木市之助 et al., eds. 100 vols. and 2 index vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

NST *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想大系. 1970–1982. 67 vols. Iwanami Shoten.

SBCK *Si bu cong kan chu bian suo ben.* 四部叢刊初編縮本. Second Taiwan edition. 1967. Ed. Wang Yunwu 王雲五. 110 vols. Taipei: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan.

87. One exceptional example of a mid-Heian legend featuring a white-haired immortal is the tale of the "White chopsticks okina" 白箸翁 attributed to Ki no Haseo (SNKBT 27: 272).

SKT *Shinshaku kanbun taikei* 新釈漢文大系. Tokyo: Meiji Shoin.

SNKBT *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 新日本古典文学大系. 1989–2005. Satake Akihiro 佐竹昭広 et al., eds. 100 vols. and 6 index vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

SNKBZ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集. 1994–2002. 88 vols. Tokyo: Shōgakkan.

SQ *Ying yin Wen yuan ge Siku Quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書. 1983–1986. 1501 vols. Taipei: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan.

ST *Shiryō taisei* 史料大成. 1934–1944. Sasagawa Taneo 笹川種郎 and Yano Tarō 矢野太郎, eds. 43 vols. Tokyo: Naigai Shoseki.

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Honchō monzui 本朝文粋. NKBT, vol. 69.

Honchō shinsenden 本朝神仙傳. NST, vol. 7.

Huainanzi 淮南子. SBCK, vol. 24. See also SKT, vols. 54–55, 62.

Huangdi neijing suwen 黄帝内経素問. SBCK, vol. 21.

Ishinpō 醫心方. NKZ, part 5, vols. 1–7.

Kaifūsō 懐風藻. NKBT, vol. 69

Kanke bunsō 菅家文草. NKBT, vol. 72.

Kojiki 古事記. NKBT, vol. 1.

Kyūreki 九暦. DNK, part 9.

Liexian zhuan 列仙伝. DZ, vol. 294.

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Nihon ryōiki 日本霊異記. NKBT, vol. 70.

Nihon sandai jitsuroku 日本三代實録. KT, vol. 4.

Nihon shoki 日本書紀. NKBT, vols. 67–68.

Ochikubo monogatari 落窪物語. NKBT, vol. 13.

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