

## The *Kaihōgyō* Practice of Mt. Hiei

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The *kaihōgyō* 回峰行 is a unique form of Tendai mountain asceticism carried on at Enryaku-ji 延暦寺 on Mt. Hiei, the headquarter temple of the sect. It is a practice in which one walks around a prescribed nineteen mile (30 km.) route around Mt. Hiei and its environs, offering prayers at the various halls, shrines, and other holy sites along the way.

The *kaihōgyō* has recently caught the imagination of many Japanese people interested in religion and spirituality. A number of books and articles, some scholarly but many popular, have been published on it,<sup>1</sup> and NHK, the Japanese national public broadcasting company, has aired a critically acclaimed program on the subject. In the pages below we will attempt to give a short introduction to this practice, first outlining its history and then briefly describing how it is practiced today.

<sup>1</sup> There are very few scholarly works on the *kaihōgyō*, probably because so little is known about its history. The most comprehensive work so far is Hiramatsu 1982. I have drawn heavily on this work in writing this paper. Kōdera 1979 is the best work on the various phases in the development of this practice; I have relied almost exclusively on this paper in writing the historical section below. Kageyama Haruki and Murayama Shūichi have written extensively on the *kaihōgyō* as it relates to mountain asceticism in general. In particular, Kageyama's work on the Katsuragawa Myō-in (1960, 1975) has helped clarify the important role this temple played in the development of the *kaihōgyō*. Hoshimiya's article (1973) also provides a good overview of the *kaihōgyō*.

The recent "boom" in the interest in the *kaihōgyō* has led to the publication of many popular books on the subject. As far as I can tell this "boom" was sparked by a NHK television program focusing on Sakai Yūsai, who was then in the midst of his thousand day practice. The director of this program, Wazaki Nobuya, wrote a book (1979) based on his experiences. Sakai is also the subject of Shima's book (1983). Utsumi Shunshō, another *kaihōgyō* practitioner, is taken up in Hayashi 1986. This book is of special interest, since it is a collection of photographs recording the entire course of his thousand day practice. Hagami 1974 is a collection of talks by this former *kaihōgyō* practitioner.

*The Life of Sōō*

It is traditionally claimed that the founder of the *kaihōgyō* practice is Sōō 相 廩 (831-918); generally known as Sōō Oshō, (Venerable Sōō). Sōō was a Tendai monk who spent many years secluded in ascetic practices on Mt. Hiei and other mountains nearby. But the practices which Sōō himself undertook were neither as organized or as elaborate as the *kaihōgyō* now practiced. The *kaihōgyō* practice only gradually developed over time into its present form, but since the *kaihōgyō* practitioners trace their spiritual lineage back to Sōō, we must begin with him.

The earliest and most important biography of Sōō is the *Tendai nanzan Mudō-ji konryū oshō den* 天台南山無動寺建立和尚伝 (Biography of [Sōō] Oshō, the Founder of Mudō-ji of the Southern Mountain; author unknown), contained in the fourth fascicle of the *Gunsho ruijū*.<sup>2</sup> The following account of Sōō's life is based primarily on this biography.

Sōō was born into the Ichii family, which claims Imperial descent. His birthplace was Asai County, located to the northeast of Lake Biwa, in Ōmi Province (now Shiga Prefecture). The biography states that Sōō was conceived when his mother dreamed that she swallowed a sword. Since the sword is one of the implements carried by Fudō Myōō, this legend can be seen as an attempt to establish that Sōō had a close affinity with this Buddhist deity, the main object of devotion in the *kaihōgyō* practice, even from before the time he was born (Hiramatsu 1982, p. 13).

Sōō joined the fledgling Tendai community at Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei in 845, at the age of fifteen. Saichō, the founder of the Japanese Tendai sect, had died just over twenty years before, in 822, and the sect was still in the earliest stages of its development. On Mt. Hiei, Sōō became disciple of Chinso 鎮操. Two years later, he took the tonsure and became a *shami* (novice). It is also about this time that he is said to have aroused the aspiration to attain enlightenment — an aspiration which, according to Mahāyāna Buddhism, marks the beginning of one's commitment to the life of a bodhisattva — upon reading the "Chapter on the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging" of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

It was also during this period that Sōō began his daily custom of gathering wild flowers in the woods around Mt. Hiei and presenting it to the main hall of Enryaku-ji. At that time, the monk Ennin was residing at a sub-temple close to the hall. Several years before, in 938, Ennin had embarked on a journey to China to master Esoteric Buddhism. When he returned to Japan nine

<sup>2</sup> See Hanawa 1893, vol. 4, pp. 527-537. A list of works which give Sōō's biography is found in Kageyama 1960, p. 112, note 1. Useful summaries of Sōō's life are found in Kageyama 1960, pp. 98-113, Kageyama and Murayama 1970, pp. 54-62, and Hiramatsu 1982, pp. 13-25.

years later, he introduced to Mt. Hiei the Esoteric doctrines and practices he had learned. Ennin's return to Mt. Hiei (847) corresponds to the year of Sōō's ordination as a novice. Ennin noticed the young Sōō presenting his offering of flowers to the hall every day, not missing a day for six or seven years. Therefore in 854, the year that Ennin was appointed Tendai abbot (*zasu* 座主), Ennin proposed to nominate Sōō as a *nenbundosha* 年分度者 (annual ordinand) to eventually become a fully-ordained monk of the Tendai sect (see Kageyama and Murayama 1970, p. 55). However, Sōō demurred. Instead, Sōō called Ennin's attention to another novice whom he had seen prostrating himself in tears at the main hall, praying for ordination. This monk, Sōō suggested, should be ordained instead. Ennin agreed, praising Sōō for his virtuous act.

Sōō's opportunity for full ordination came two years later, in 856, when he was twenty-five years of age. That year Ennin was asked by Nishi Sanjō Dainagon Yoshisuke (Fujiwara Yoshisuke, 813–867) to recommend someone to be ordained a monk in his stead. He, Yoshisuke, would then revere this monk as his spiritual mentor, and in this way strengthen his karmic bond with Buddhism. Ennin nominated Sōō. It was at this time that Ennin gave the name "Sōō" to the newly ordained monk. He chose this name for him because he considered Sōō (literally "to correspond") to be an excellent "match" for Yoshisuke. Furthermore, the Chinese character for "sō" in "Sōō," is identical with the second character of Yoshisuke's name.

Sōō then became Ennin's disciple, and began the twelve year seclusion on Mt. Hiei incumbent upon those who became Tendai monks.<sup>3</sup> From Ennin he received transmission of the several Esoteric teachings, such as the *Fudō Myōō hō* 不動明王法 (an esoteric ritual dedicated to Fudō Myōō) and the *Besson giki goma hō* 別尊儀軌護摩法 (esoteric fire rituals offered to specific deities). Sōō was deeply moved by his experience of receiving these transmissions, and, according to the biography, he declared that by cultivating these practices, he would make "a present-day Fudō appear in Japan, and a living Myōō reside within Mt. Hiei" (Hanawa 1893, 4, p. 529).

Afterwards Sōō sought a quiet place far from the central area of Mt. Hiei at which to pursue his practices, and eventually built a small hermitage on one of the southern ridges of Mt. Hiei. This was the beginnings of the *Mudō-ji* 無動寺, the present center of *kaihōgyō* practice. Sōō remained there for three years, engaged in various rituals and practices.

However, in 858 Nishi Sanjō's daughter, a court lady in the entourage of Emperor Montoku, was afflicted with an illness which brought her close to death. At Nishi Sanjō's urgent request, Sōō descended Mt. Hiei to attend to her. According to the biography, when Sōō chanted a spell to dispel her illness, a spirit manifested itself above a screen which partitioned off the sick

<sup>3</sup> This requirement was stipulated in Saichō's *Sange gakushō shiki*. See Groner 1984, p. 133.

lady's chambers. This spirit then jumped above the heads of the assembled people and flew to where Sōō was performing his rituals outside. It gave off a series of furious wails, but was finally calmed by Sōō, and was sent back behind the screen to the patient. As a result, the lady recovered. From this time on, Sōō came to be respected for his ability to cure illnesses through his magical powers, and was frequently summoned by members of the Imperial family and other court nobles when they fell ill.

The next year, in 859, Sōō embarked on another period of intense ascetic practices. He made his way to the remote and uninhabited wilderness on the western slopes of the Hira mountain range, with its many rivers and waterfalls. The Hira range is situated along the western shores of Lake Biwa, about fifteen miles north of Mt. Hiei. Along the western foot of this range, and parallel to it from north to south, runs the Ado River, carving a deep valley in this mountainous region. Several monks, such as Jōan 静安<sup>4</sup> had previously practiced on Mt. Hira and several temples had been built on the eastern slopes of the mountain range before Sōō's time. However, Sōō was the first to practice on the western slopes of the mountain (Murayama 1978, pp. 66-70).

According to his biography, Sōō vowed to remain there for three years, forgoing cereals and eating only wild plants. As a result of his earnest prayer, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra appeared to him in a dream, and he gained the wisdom whereby he was able to easily gain insight into the meaning of the Buddhist scriptures.

Later works give a more elaborate version of his experiences. Since these stories form an important part of the popular image of Sōō, it will be recounted in some detail below. According to the *Katsuragawa engi* 葛川縁起 (see Hiramatsu 1982, pp. 192-93), Sōō had long entertained a wish to see a living Fudō Myōō before his eyes. It was to fulfill this wish that Sōō resolved to practice austerities on Mt. Hira. When he hiked into Hira, he came upon a waterfall. For seven days he prayed to Fudō at this waterfall, when suddenly an old man appeared. This old man revealed himself to be the god Shikobuchi Myōjin, the lord of the region. Shikobuchi Myōjin declared to Sōō that there are ninety-five pure waterfalls and seven pure streams in his domain, and that he would present this domain to Sōō since it was an auspicious place to undertake ascetic practices. This waterfall, he continued, was the third of ninety-five waterfalls. It was called the Katsuragawa waterfall, and led directly to the Tuṣita heaven of Maitreya (the future Buddha). Shikobuchi Myōjin then vowed to protect all Buddhist practitioners, and to protect the Buddha Dharma when Maitreya appears in the world. With these words, Shikobuchi Myōjin disappeared from view.

<sup>4</sup> Dates unknown. Jōan was a Hossō monk from Gangō-ji. In 838 he became the first monk to perform the Obutsumyō ceremony 御仏名会 at the Imperial palace. See Ui 1972, p. 585.

Thereupon Sōō continued his meditation even more intensely to gain a vision of Fudō Myōō. After several days, Fudō suddenly appeared in the waterfall, enveloped in a raging fire. Unable to restrain himself, Sōō jumped into the waterfall to embrace the deity. But what he embraced was not Fudō but a log of the *katsura* tree. Pulling the log out of the water, Sōō enshrined it and continued his practices.

In 861, before Sōō completed his thousand day practice at Katsuragawa, he was called to the Imperial court to conduct the *āveśa* 阿比舍 ritual. The *āveśa* is an esoteric Buddhist ritual for conducting prophecies by making supernatural beings possess young children. Such was Sōō's mystic powers that before he finished chanting the prescribed *mantra* ten times, the two young boys participating in the ritual were possessed by Matsuo Myōjin, the god of Matsuo Shrine. Questions were then put before the god, and his prophecies were received.

In the same year, Sōō was once again asked to pray for the recovery of Nishi Sanjō's daughter from another serious illness. When Sōō was successful, Nishi Sanjō presented him, as a token of his gratitude, a Chinese sword which had been one of his family's prized possessions. On the sword he had the words, "The spell of Fudō Myōō, the *mantra* with which the Buddhas compassionately protect us" inlaid in gold (Hanawa 1893, 4, p. 530).

From this time on, Sōō was repeatedly called upon to exercise his curative powers. He effected the cure of Emperor Seiwa's toothache the next year, 862. In 865, when one of Emperor Seiwa's court ladies was possessed by a fox Sōō succeeded in curing her possession. In 885 he cured Emperor Kōkō's empress of a serious illness, and in 890 he relieved Emperor Uda's toothache. Sōō also prayed for the recovery of the monk Genshō at Emperor Daigo's command in 903. In the same year, he conducted a ritual to pray for the safety of Emperor Daigo's consort when she had trouble during childbirth (see Hiramatsu 1982, pp. 18–19).

In 863 Sōō returned to Mudō-ji and gradually built this subtemple into an important center of Mt. Hiei. In that year, he commissioned a life-sized statue of Fudō, and two years later, in 865, built a hall to house this newly-carved statue. This hall grew into the Myōō-dō, which even today is the central structure of the Mudō-ji. It was also on this occasion that Sōō gave the name Mudō-ji to his temple complex.

In 881 Emperor Yōzei presented Mudō-ji with bronze statues of Vairocana Buddha and Fudō Myōō, and a bronze bell was cast for the temple. A gift of an estate (*shōden*) placed the Mudō-ji on firm economic footings. In these and other ways, Sōō gradually succeeded in making Mudō-ji into one of the major centers of Enryaku-ji.

At the same time, Sōō used his influence at court to further the prestige of the Tendai sect. It was Sōō who, in 865, persuaded the court to grant post-

humously the titles of Dengyō Daishi and Jikaku Daishi to Saichō and Ennin respectively. This marks the first time in Japanese history that such titles were presented to illustrious Buddhists by the court.

Sōō died at the Jumyō-in in Mudō-ji on the night of 3 November, 918. He is said to have passed away facing west, the direction of Amida Buddha's Pure Land, serenely reciting the *nenbutsu*.

### *History of the Kaihōgyō Practice*

Over a number of years, Sōō's relatively simple mountain asceticism grew into the elaborate and highly structured *kaihōgyō* practice as it is carried out on Mt. Hiei today. The process whereby the *kaihōgyō* developed into its modern form, however, remains obscure. Research into its early history is hampered (as is the case with much concerning Mt. Hiei) by the fact that, due to Nobunaga's total destruction of Enryaku-ji in 1571, very few documents concerning the temple and its activities predating this event remain. Kodera (1979) has reconstructed its development based on what little material is available. According to Kodera's study, the history of the *kaihōgyō* can be divided into the following four phases.

1. Period of ascetic practices centered on pilgrimages to sacred mountains (831-1130).

During its earliest phase, Tendai mountain ascetics followed Sōō's example in secluding themselves in the mountains, cut off from human contact and engaging in various austerities there. However, the *kaihōgyō* system was not yet institutionalized, and each ascetic was free to tailor his practices in accordance with their inclinations. At this time there is no mention of anyone engaged in pilgrimages at sacred sites on Mt. Hiei.

Although the earliest mention of Tendai ascetics practicing at Katsuragawa, the site of the waterfall where Sōō gained his vision of Fudō, dates from the Heian period, it was probably already an important center of Tendai asceticism during this period. Chingen's *Hokke kenki* 法華驗記 recounts the stories of a number of Buddhist practitioners, including Tendai monks, who followed the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* and pursued their practices in the mountains. Kodera suggests that they may also have taken part in pilgrimages of sacred mountains in search for mystic powers and enlightenment, and that such pilgrimages may have been the forerunners of the later *kaihōgyō* practice.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Examples are given in Kodera 1979, pp. 278-79. They include (1) Giei, a *Lotus Sūtra* reciter of Mt. Yoshino (Tale 11; Dykstra 1983, pp. 40-42), (2) Jakuren, a *Lotus Sūtra* reciter of Mt. Hira (Tale 18; Dykstra 1983, pp. 47-48), (3) Priest Kyōmyō of the Ryōgon-in (Tale 51; Dykstra 1983, p. 78), (4) Priest Renchō (Tale 60; Dykstra 1983, p. 84-5), and (5) Dōmyō Ajari, Superintendent of Tennō-ji (Tale 86; Dykstra 1983, pp. 108-110).

2. Period of ascetic practices based on pilgrimages to the Three Pagodas of Mt. Hiei (1131–1310).

The Enryaku-ji complex on Mt. Hiei is divided into three distinct areas, known as the “Three Pagodas.” They are (1) Tōtō 東塔 (“Eastern Pagoda”), centered on the Konpon Chūdō, the main hall of Enryaku-ji, (2) the Saitō 西塔 (“Western Pagoda”) centered on the Shakadō, a hall dedicated to Śākyamuni Buddha, and (3) Yokawa 横川 at the northern corner of Enryaku-ji, centered on the Yokawa Chūdō. During this second phase of the development of the *kaihōgyō*, Kodera suggests that Tendai monks began to engage in pilgrimages of the halls scattered throughout Mt. Hiei. Since the act of walking around Mt. Hiei and its environs in a fixed order to pray at various sacred spots forms the core of the *kaihōgyō*, this development was decisive in determining the form of this practice.

The practice of making a pilgrimage of the halls of Mt. Hiei grew out of the popularity of pilgrimages in general during this period. As Kodera points out, pilgrimages to the thirty-three temples sacred to Kannon in the Kinki area, and to the seven great temples of Nara, were widespread at this time (1979, p. 280). Influenced by the popularity of such pilgrimages, it became customary for newly-appointed Tendai *zasu* to offer prayers at the halls of the Three Pagodas as a part of the succession ceremony. Such pilgrimages became institutionalized by the time of Jichin’s 慈鎮 (1155–1225) accession (1979, p. 281).

Members of the Imperial family and other court nobles also began to come to Mt. Hiei to make pilgrimages of the various halls there as acts of devotion. The *Tendai zasuki* 天台座主記 (Records of Tendai Abbots) records that retired Emperor Shirakawa made such a pilgrimage in 1138 (Kodera 1979, p. 281).

At present, all *kaihōgyō* practitioners carry with them a *Kaihō tefumi* 回峰手文, a list of holy places along the *kaihōgyō* route at which one must offer prayers. The *Tōzan reisho junrei shidai* 当山靈所巡礼次第 (The order of pilgrimage of the holy places on our mountain), which Kodera believes to have been composed during the late Heian period, is one of the earliest such *tefumi*. This work lists only about forty sites on its pilgrimage route, as opposed to the 260 or so places on the *tefumi* in use today (Kodera 1979, p. 281–82).

The Katsuragawa retreat continued to be very important during this second phase of *kaihōgyō* history. Fujiwara Akihira’s *Shin sarugaku ki* 新猿樂記 includes Katsuragawa among its list of over ten centers of mountain asceticism, and Kujo Kanezane’s dairy, the *Gyokuyō* 玉葉, mentions a retreat by Tendai monks there in 1181 (Kageyama 1960, p. 132). The Myōō-in, situated on the Ado River near the Katsuragawa waterfall, was the center of these retreats. At present, this temple owns several works by Tendai monks

which describe the retreats which took place there. The oldest and most detailed is the *Katsuragawa gyōja yōjin* 葛川行者用心 (Notes for practitioners of Katsuragawa) compiled by Genyu 源愉 in 1338. It is a compilation of older works (including those dating from 1254, 1272 and 1309) describing the retreat and listing the names of the monks who took part in it. Genyu probably compiled this work to prepare for his own retreat at Katsuragawa. Another work, the *Sanrochū nikki* 参籠中日記 (A diary of the retreat) written in 1447 by Yusai, described the retreat he undertook at Katsuragawa with four other practitioners (Kageyama 1960, pp. 132-33).

3. Period of ascetic practices centered on pilgrimages throughout Mt. Hiei (1311-1570).

During the third period of its history, the *kaihōgyō* practice became increasingly systematized. Rules concerning the proper clothing and equipment to be used were standardized, and detailed routes were instituted. The *kaihōgyō* carried out at this time probably resembled the present-day practices rather closely.

Kodera calls our attention to a work called *Shokoku ikken hijiri monogatari* 諸国一見聖物語 (Story of wandering ascetics [*hijiri*] once seen in the provinces of Japan), written by Ryōkai 亮海 in 1387 (1979, pp. 283-84). This work describes the *kaihōgyō* practice as it was then conducted in considerable detail. It states that the practitioner walks for seven and a half *ri* (about 26 miles) every day, and that the practice lasts seven hundred days. Furthermore, it is stated that once they have completed these seven hundred days, they must take part in a nine day fast at Mudō-ji. The practitioners must wear white robes and *hakama* (pleated skirt), and carry a cypress hat in their left arm, wrapped in black leather and hung from the elbow.

Furthermore, according to this work, the retreat at the Myōō-in at Katsuragawa was an integral part of the *kaihōgyō*. The retreat was held twice a year, at the time of the Renge-e 蓮華会 (Lotus Flower Ceremony) in June and Hokke-e 法華会 (*Lotus Sūtra Ceremony*) in October. During these nine day retreats, practitioners were expected to eat only once a day and forego all sleep. They were to practice the Constantly Sitting Samādhi 常坐三昧<sup>6</sup> and recite the *mantra* of Fudō Myōō one hundred thousand times.

With increasing systematization, the *kaihōgyō* practice was divided into three distinct lineages (*ryū*): (1) Gyokusen-ryū 玉泉流 of Tōtō, (2) Shōgyōbō-ryū 正教房流 of Saitō and (3) Ekō-ryū 回向流 (or Mimuro-ryū 飯室流) of Yokawa. Each had their distinctive *kaihōgyō* route around Mt. Hiei, and compiled their own *tefumi* (Hiramatsu 1982, p. 60). A number of such *tefumi* remain.

<sup>6</sup> One of the four modes of practice enumerated in the *Mo ho chih kuan*, the basic Tendai meditation manual by Chih-i (538-597). In this meditation, the practitioner sits constantly in contemplation for ninety days.



4. Period of mountain austerities centered on the *kaihōgyō* circuit of Mt. Hiei (1571 to the present).

Enryaku-ji and Tendai Buddhism were dealt a sever blow in 1571 when Oda Nobunaga burned the whole temple complex to the ground as a part of his effort to unify Japan under his rule. However, just a decade later in 1583, the monk Kōun 好運 completed the thousand day *kaihōgyō* practice (Kodera 1979, p. 284). From this period on, the sources concerning the *kaihōgyō* become plentiful, and we can gain a fuller picture of this practice. There has been over forty monks who have completed the thousand day practice since Kōun's time, and both their names and the years in which they completed their practice are known.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Kaihōgyō Practice Today*

Today the Mudō-ji is the center of *kaihōgyō* practice on Mt. Hiei. Presently there are two kinds of *kaihōgyō* practices. One is the one hundred day (*hyaku-nichi* 百日) *kaihōgyō*, in which the practitioners walk the prescribed route around Mt. Hiei over a period of one hundred days. One who has completed the one hundred day practice is called a *shingyō* 新行 (novice). The second is the thousand-day (*sennichi* 千日) *kaihōgyō*, in which one walks around the same route, and engages in other additional practices, for a period of one thousand days spread out over seven years.

Nowadays all Tendai monks who wish to become an abbot of a sub-temple within Enryaku-ji must have completed a three-year period of practice on the mountain. During the first year they seclude themselves at the Jōdo-in (Saichō's mausoleum at Saitō on Mt. Hiei). Their practices there consist of spending all their time sweeping the hall (this is popularly called *sōji jigoku* 掃除地獄 or "cleaning hell"). During the second year, they move to Mudō-ji, where they complete the hundred-day *kaihōgyō* practice. During the final year, they undertake the Constantly Walking or Constantly Sitting Samādhi<sup>8</sup> at the Ninaidō Hall at Saitō (Wazaki 1979, p. 101). Thus, since the successful completion of the hundred-day *kaihōgyō* is incumbent on all Tendai priests who wish to become an abbot of a sub-temple within Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei, about five or six monks complete the one hundred day practice each year.

However, it is the thousand-day practice which is the representative form of this practice. Very few monks, though, go on to practice this. As stated above, only about forty monks have completed it since 1571. Although the

<sup>7</sup> A list of these practitioners can be found in Hagami 1974, pp. 230–36. Hagami also gives interesting anecdotes about eight of these practitioners (1974, pp. 238–57).

<sup>8</sup> One of the four kinds of Tendai meditational practice enumerated in the *Mo ho chih kuan*. During this samādhi the practitioner constantly circumambulates a Buddhist statue for ninety days, reciting the name of the Buddha Amida.

practitioner walks for a total of a thousand days, they do not walk it all at once. Instead, the thousand days are spread out over a period of seven years.

The number of days in which one walks varies from year to year. During each of the first three years one walks one hundred days each. During the next two years (i.e., the fourth and fifth years), it is increased to two hundred days each. The *dō-iri* 堂入り, a nine-day fast held at the Myōō-in in Mudō-ji, must be completed at the end of these seven hundred days. When one has fulfilled the *dō-iri*, the practitioner is called *tōgyōman* 当行満 (one who is about to fulfill his practices), and is given the title of *ajari* (Skt. *ācārya*, "master").

During the sixth year, the route is extended to include a visit to the Sekizan Zen'in temple at the western foot of Mt. Hiei. The total distance to be walked during this period is thirty-six miles. This is called the *Sekizan kugyō* 赤山苦行 (Sekizan austerities). In the seventh and final year, one walks two hundred days, of which the first hundred days consists of the *Kyōto ōmawari* 京都大廻り, a forty-eight mile route around the city of Kyoto as well as Mt. Hiei. The person who has completed the thousand-day practice is called a *daigyōman* 大行満 (great person who has fulfilled his practices) and is given the title of *Dai-ajari* (Great *Ācārya*) (Hiramatsu 1982, pp. 38-9).

Upon completing the thousand day practice, the *daigyōman* traditionally takes part in a ceremony known as the *dosoku sandai* 土足参内 (visit to the Imperial Palace wearing foot gear). This is a ritual in which one prays for the well-being of the Emperor and the welfare of the Japanese state and its people at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto (Hiramatsu 1981a, p. 17). It gets its name from the fact that the *daigyōman* is allowed to enter the palace grounds in his straw sandals (*waraji*), whereas all other people were required to change into *asagutsu*, a special kind of wooden shoes (Hayashi 1986, p. 112).

Furthermore, sometimes after completing the thousand days, the practitioner performs a *goma* ceremony at the Mudō-ji, in which one burns one hundred thousand *goma* sticks over a period of nine days. During this time one is expected to go without food, water, or sleep. When this is finished, the entire *kaihōgyō* cycle comes to an end.

#### THE KAIHŌGYŌ ATTIRE

The *kaihōgyō* practitioner is considered to be a symbol of a living Fudō Myōō. Thus his entire attire is interpreted to represent Fudō in some way (see Hiramatsu 1982, p. 48).

The most distinctive part of the *kaihōgyō* attire is the unique headgear. This hat is made by weaving together strips of wood from a *hinoki* tree, and is rolled up on both sides to make an oblong tube. This headgear is considered to be Fudō Myōō himself, and is treated with utmost respect. In fact, the practitioners are not even allowed to wear it (except in rain) until they have completed the first three hundred days of practice. Until then, it is carried

under the left arm. The practitioners wear straw sandals (*waraji*) over their bare feet, but again, after three hundred days, they are allowed to wear *tabi* (Japanese socks) above the sandals. This *waraji* is said to symbolize lotus petals, upon which, in Buddhist iconography, Buddhas and bodhisattvas are considered to stand.

It is said that *kaihōgyō* practitioners are pledged to kill themselves if they are unable to finish their practice for any reason. Thus, as part of their equipment they are obliged to carry a dagger and to tie a hemp rope called a *shidehimo* 死出紐 around their waist. These are both supposed to be used for killing oneself when one finds that one cannot continue the practice (the rope is to be used for hanging oneself). A coin called the *rokumon-sen* 六文銭 (six *mon* coin) is placed in the hat. This is supposed to be used to pay for the ferry across the *sanzu* river, which in Buddhist cosmology is considered to separate the dead from the living. Thus prepared for death, the practitioners set forth on their *kaihōgyō*. The fact that practitioners wear white robes further strengthens this death motif, since in Japan the dead are shrouded in white (Hiramatsu 1982, pp. 48–9).

#### THE KAIHŌGYŌ ROUTE

The core of the *kaihōgyō* practice lies in walking around Mt. Hiei and its environs, offering prayers at the various halls and other places which are considered holy. The *kaihōgyō* is carried out in spring and early summer. The practitioner begins his walk sometimes after midnight. Starting from Mudō-ji, he first makes his way to the Konpon Chūdō (the main hall of Mt. Hiei) and other halls in Tōtō. He then proceeds to Saitō, and from there continues on to Yokawa. The route to Yokawa lies along a ridge with a fine view of Lake Biwa to the east and the city of Kyoto to the west. Along this ridge, there is a cryptomeria tree, called the *gyokutai sugi* 玉体杉 (jewel-body [=Emperor] cryptomeria). When the practitioner reaches this tree, he faces the direction of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto and offers a prayer for the Emperor's well-being. This is called the *gyokutai kaji* 玉体加持 (prayer for the Emperor). Incidentally, the practitioner is allowed to sit on a stone bench at the foot of the tree during this prayer. This is the only time in his walk that he is allowed to sit down.

From Yokawa, the route leads down the eastern slope of Mt. Hiei to Sakamoto, where prayers are given at the Hie and other shrines there. Finally the practitioner climbs the steep slope of Mt. Hiei leading from Sakamoto back to Mudō-ji. In general it takes between five to six hours to complete the journey.

Along this route, the practitioner recites *mantras* and offers prayers at two hundred sixty (or three hundred, depending on how they are counted) sites (Hiramatsu 1982, p. 51). All of these sites, as well as the types of prayers, etc., to be offered there, are listed in the *Kaihō tefumi* which each

practitioner carries. The practitioner makes his own personal *tefumi*, copying out the entire document by hand. Furthermore, he is strictly forbidden to show it to the uninitiated.

Using a recently published text of the *Kaihō tefumi* (see Murayama 1975, pp. 407-24), Hiramatsu has conducted a detailed study of the sites along the *kaihōgyō* pilgrimage. According to his study, there are fifty-seven sites in Tōtō, forty-one in Saitō, forty-one in Yokawa, seventy connected with Hie Shrine, and twenty-nine in Sakamoto and Mudō-ji. He has found that a wide variety of objects are worshipped at these sites, including Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heavenly beings of the Buddhist pantheon, trees, rocks, and other natural phenomena, Tendai patriarchs such as Sōō and Ryōgen, and local gods such as the god of Hie Shrine (1982, pp. 62-75).

#### KATSURAGAWA GE-ANGO

All *kaihōgyō* practitioners who have completed the hundred day practice take part in an annual summer retreat called the Katsuragawa Ge-ango 夏安居 (summer retreat at Katsuragawa) held at the Katsuragawa Myōō-in. The Myōō-in, as stated above, is situated near the waterfall at which Sōō is said to have gained the vision of Fudō, and has remained an important center of Tendai mountain austerities ever since. We have already mentioned that, although formerly two retreats, the Renge-e and Hokke-e were held in June and October, respectively, only the Renge-e (now held in July) is continued today. The Katsuragawa Ge-ango refers to this Renge-e.

The retreat lasts from 16-20 July, during which a number of rituals are performed. However, the most well known ceremony connected with the retreat is called the *taiko nori* 太鼓乗り (Riding the Drum), which takes place on the night of the 18th. During this ceremony, a large drum about a meter in diameter is spun around in a circle, making a thunderous noise. Then, one by one, the *kaihōgyō* practitioners jump on the drum and immediately leaps off of it, hands pressed together in prayer. The whole ceremony is a reenactment of Sōō's jumping into the waterfall to embrace Fudō. The spinning drum and the deafening roar it makes represent the swirling waterfall, and the practitioners' actions represent Sōō diving into the water. The entire ceremony, which begins at about ten in the evening, lasts about half an hour.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE DŌ-IRI

During his fifth year, on the day he completes the seven hundredth day, the *kaihōgyō* practitioner starts the *dō-iri* (entering the hall). During the nine days of this austerity, the practitioner shuts himself up in the Myōō-dō Hall of Mudō-ji. During this entire period, he undertakes a complete fast, abstain-

<sup>9</sup> On the Katsuragawa Ge-ango, see Kageyama 1960, pp. 133-48. The *taiko nori* ceremony is described in Wazaki 1979, pp. 150-54.

ing from all food and drink. Moreover, he is not allowed to sleep or even to lie down. Since under normal circumstances humans can survive only about seven days without water, this fast literally brings the practitioner to the brink of death. During the *dō-iri*, the practitioner conducts a two hour service six times a day. At all other times, he sits at one corner of the hall, where he recites the *mantra* of Fudō Myōō for a total of one million times during this seclusion. He is allowed out of the hall only once a day, at two in the morning, to draw water at a well situated about two hundred meters from the hall. Because he grows progressively weaker from the fast, this ritual trip to the well takes longer each day. By the final day this short trip to and from the well can take up to forty minutes (Wazaki 1979, p. 194).

It may be interesting to note here that the practitioner's senses become exceedingly acute during the *dō-iri* austerities. One former *kaihōgyō* practitioner who experienced the *dō-iri* has reported that he was able to hear the sound of ash falling from an incense stick within the hall (Wazaki 1979, p. 182).

The whole *dō-iri* can be understood as a ritual of death and rebirth within the Buddhist context. This motif is made plain by the fact that the corner of the hall at which the practitioner sits is partitioned off by a *sakasa byōbu* 逆さ屏風, a folding screen which has been arranged upside-down, which is used only when someone dies. Concerning the structure of the thousand day *kaihōgyō*, it is said that the first seven hundred days are centered on self-benefitting practice, i.e., practice conducted to gain enlightenment for oneself. But from the seven hundredth day on, it is understood that the practitioners commence upon others-benefitting practice, i.e., practice conducted for the purpose of leading all beings, along with oneself, to enlightenment. By going through the austerities of the *dō-iri*, the practitioner dies to his old egocentric self and is reborn as a bodhisattva who works for the salvation of all beings. The *dō-iri* ritual can be understood as a ritual which the practitioner undergoes to symbolically experience this death.

#### THE KYŌTO ŌMAWARI

One of the most arduous part of the *kaihōgyō* comes during the sixth year (801–900 days), with the *Kyōto ōmawari* (grand circuit of Kyoto). During the *ōmawari*, it is stipulated that one must make a pilgrimage to a number of temples and shrines within the city of Kyoto, in addition to walking the usual route around Mt. Hiei. The total route of the *ōmawari* is about forty-eight miles.

As for the route of the *ōmawari*, after making the usual round of Mt. Hiei, the practitioner heads down the western slopes of Mt. Hiei to Sekizan Zen'in. From there, he heads south to Kiyomizu Temple, visiting Shinnyō-dō Temple, Heian Shrine, Shōren-in and Gion Shrine (among other places) along the way. From Kiyomizu, he walks west to Horikawa Street and then

north until he reaches Kitano Shrine. From there he heads east to Shimogamo Shrine, and hence to his quarters at some designated temple within the city of Kyoto. The next day, he walks back along the same course and returns to Mudō-ji (Hiramatsu 1982, p. 53).

Several times during the day he takes short rests at a few select places (at the Sekizan Zen'in, for example) where he also performs a brief ritual and blesses each of the assembled believers by touching his rosary to their heads. Furthermore, he must likewise bless the many believers who line the streets of Kyoto every day awaiting his appearance. Towards the end of the hundred days, when the number of believers waiting to receive his blessings increase, it is not unusual for him to get to his quarters well after dark. During these hundred days, the practitioner is pushed to his limits by lack of sleep as well as by the constant walking. However, the *ōmawari* is interpreted as an others-benefitting practice, in which the practitioner, through his blessing of the believers, works for the salvation of others as well as oneself. Thus the *ōmawari* is considered to be an important part of the *kaihōgyō* practice.

#### *The Doctrinal Background of the Kaihōgyō Practice*

Before closing, some words must be said concerning the doctrinal basis of the *kaihōgyō* practice. The first notable point is the heavy influence of esoteric Buddhism on the *kaihōgyō*. For example, the use of *dhāranīs* (mystic phrases) and *mudrās* (mystic hand gestures) is an integral part of the practice, as is the use of esoteric rituals, such as the *goma* fire ceremony. Fudō Myōō, an esoteric deity, is its main object of devotion. Even the term "*kaihō*" is said to derive from the *Kongōchō-kyō* 金剛頂經, an esoteric *sūtra* (Hiramatsu 1982, p. 31). For these and many other reasons, the *kaihōgyō* is closely related to esoteric Buddhism.

However, the *kaihōgyō* practice is often described as having a non-esoteric doctrinal base. First, it is frequently portrayed as a special form of the Constantly Walking Samādhi (Hiramatsu 1981a, p. 16). This samādhi is one of four modes of meditational practice enumerated in the *Mo ho chih kuan*, the comprehensive outline of Tendai meditation by Chih-i. In the original Constantly Walking Samādhi, one circumambulates a Buddhist statue for ninety days without stopping, reciting the name of Amida Buddha. The *kaihōgyō* is said to be modelled on this because it, too, is based on the practice of walking extensively around Mt. Hiei. However, in actuality, there seems to be little in common between the two modes of practices except for the fact that both emphasize the act of walking over a protracted period of time.

Second, the *kaihōgyō* is also interpreted as a practice based on the spirit underlying the "Chapter on the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging" of the *Lotus Sūtra*. As stated above, Sōō's biography states that he aroused the aspiration

to seek enlightenment after reading this chapter. This chapter recounts the story of a bodhisattva named Never Disparaging (*Jōfugyō Bosatsu*) who went around paying obeisance to all Buddhists, monks and laymen, praising them as being destined for future Buddhahood. Because he made such a nuisance of himself, he was reviled and even beaten. But he persevered in his practice and eventually attained Buddhahood (Hurvitz 1976, pp. 279–85). It is said that the *kaihōgyō* practice, which centers on the daily pilgrimage to the numerous sites around Mt. Hiei sacred to Buddhism, reflects the spirit of the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who greeted all Buddhists he met by paying obeisance to them.

### Conclusion

The *kaihōgyō* is one of the most distinctive forms of Buddhist practice found in Japan today. While it traces its origins back to the mountain asceticism of Sōō Oshō, the *kaihōgyō* developed over a long period of time into its present elaborate form. It can be counted among the most representative form of Tendai practice being carried out on Mt. Hiei today. Indeed, so central is the *kaihōgyō* to modern Tendai practice that nowadays everyone who wishes to become an abbot of one of the sub-temples on Mt. Hiei must have completed one hundred days of the *kaihōgyō*. Although few monks resolve to complete the thousand-day *kaihōgyō* because of its demanding regimen, the fact that the practice continues is an indication of the vitality of the Tendai sect. At the same time, the great deal of publicity which has been given to the *kaihōgyō* in recent years reflects the depth of interest in this practice (not to mention religious asceticism as well as spiritual matters in general) on the part of the Japanese public.

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