

Temple Myths and the Popularization of Kannon Pilgrimage in Japan

A Case Study of Ōya-ji on the Bandō Route

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The Bandō pilgrimage is a major form of Kannon devotionism in Japan. This paper explores the role of founding tales (engi) in promoting the Bandō pilgrimage by examining an example from one of its sites, Ōya-ji. Pilgrims were deeply stirred by what they saw at Ōya-ji, particularly the mysterious image of the senju Kannon that was the temple's main devotional image. The stories collected in the Ōya-ji engi concerning the origin of this image and its worship stirred the religious imagination of pilgrims. The engi does so by identifying Ōya's environs descriptively with the myth-scene of Kannon's abode on Mount Fudaraku. Second, it offers a dramatic vision of the bodhisattva's powerful presence on site by using one type of founding myth of meeting—subjugating the kami through the issue of spiritual light. Third, it has tales about exemplary meetings of Kannon with pilgrims. These emphasize the spiritual benefits that can accrue through worship. Engi like Ōya-ji's and others collected in pilgrimage texts called reijō-ki were vital for the popularization of the Bandō and other Kannon pilgrimages in Japan.

ACCORDING TO THE *KANNON-GYŌ*, originally the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* that was widely circulated in Japan as a popular scripture in its own right, Kanzeon or Kannon (*Avalokiteśvara*) constantly surveys (*kan* 観) the world (*ze* 世) listening for the sounds (*on* 音) of suffering. Hearing sounds of distress, the “Sound Observer”—by virtue of “unblemished knowledge,” the “power of supernatural penetration” and “expedient devices”—is able to display his body “in the lands of all ten quarters.” Kannon does so “by resort to a variety of shapes,” changing into the most suitable of thirty-three different forms for preaching the Dharma to save all who are suffering (HURVITZ 1976, p. 318). In eighteenth-century Japan, the promise of salvation given in the *Kannon-gyō* was accepted as a spiritual fact. It was commonly believed that Kannon had manifested a saving presence at

temples scattered throughout the country.

Corresponding to Kannon's thirty-three forms, pilgrimage routes to thirty-three temples were a major feature of Kannon devotionism in Japan. The oldest of these, dating from the Heian period, is known as the Saikoku 西国, or "Western Provinces" pilgrimage, centered in the Kansai area. By the Tokugawa period, the popularity of the Saikoku route led to its replication. Over two hundred and thirty-six copies (*utsushi* 写) of the route spread throughout Japan, one-third of which were located in eastern Japan.¹ Of these, the Bandō thirty-three Kannon-temple route is one of the most important after the original Saikoku pilgrimage. Starting from Sugimoto-dera at Kamakura, the Bandō route extends for over a length of thirteen hundred kilometers throughout the eight former provinces of Sagami, Musashi, Kōzuke, Shimotsuke, Hitachi, Kazusa, Shimousa, and Awa in the Kantō region and includes such famous temples as Hase-dera in Kamakura, Sensō-ji (Asakusa-dera) in Tokyo, and Chūzen-ji in Nikkō.

Faith in the Bandō route is clearly evident, for example, in the key work of Kannon devotionism in the Kantō area, the *Sanjūsansho Bandō Kannon reijō-ki* 三十三所坂東観音霊場記 (The records of the thirty-three numinous places of Bandō). In its opening tale, in a dream, the bodhisattva tells the legendary founder of lay Kannon pilgrimage in Japan, the retired emperor Kazan 花山 (968–1008), that as an "expedient means" he has divided himself into thirty-three bodies throughout the eight provinces of the Bandō (Kantō) area and that pilgrimage (*junrei* 巡礼) to these thirty-three sites is the "best austerity" for release from suffering (KANEZASHI 1973, p. 221). This origin legend, traditionally dated as occurring in 988 (according to the *Sugimoto-dera engi* 杉本寺縁起 [1560] and other texts), clearly shows the influence of the Saikoku route on the creation of the Bandō, for Kazan was traditionally revered as the rediscoverer of the Saikoku route in 988 after its legendary founding by the monk Tokudō Shōnin 徳道上人 in 718.

The historical evidence for the Bandō route's origin, however, points to a much later date. The earliest reference to the route is from an inscription at the base of a Jūichimen Kannon statue carved by the Shugendo priest Jōben 成弁 in 1234. According to it, the statue was carved while the ascetic was in seclusion for thirty-three days in the Kannon Hall of Yamizo-san temple in Hitachi (temple twenty-one on the route) while on the thirty-three-temple pilgrimage (HAYAMI 1980, p. 272). Prior to the sixteenth century, the number of pilgrims on the

¹ See SHIMIZUTANI 1992), pp. 112–13. Most of these local routes appeared after the Genroku era (1688–1704). See also KURIHARA 1981, pp. 165–66.



The Kannon Hall of Ōya-ji

Bandō pilgrimage was limited, the exercise primarily attracting clergy and wandering holy men. However, evidence from votive placards (*nōsatsu* 納札) and other sources indicates that especially after the Genroku period (1688–1703) increasing numbers of ordinary people participated in the pilgrimage.² By this time the route had also become formally linked both to the Saikoku and to a third major Kannon route, the Chichibu thirty-four temple pilgrimage (in present-day Saitama Prefecture), making a mega pilgrimage route of one hundred Kannon temples.

In order to focus on the role of legends and miracle tales in establishing and promoting the Bandō pilgrimage sites I will here examine the legends of the Tendai temple Ōya-ji 大谷寺, temple number nineteen on the pilgrimage and one of its most fascinating and geographically intriguing sites. Ōya-ji is located approximately seven kilometers northwest of the city of Utsunomiya in present-day Tochigi Prefecture, ensconced under a cavernous overhang at the end of a “great valley” (Ōya) in an area noted for its impressive towering cliffs.

TSURUOKA Shizuo (1969, p. 410) has argued that as a sacred center

² This was part of the general trend of this period. See MAEDA 1971, pp. 72ff.; SHIMIZUTANI 1971, pp. 373ff.

Ōya-ji has its origin in the ancient Buddhist cave temples at Tunhuang in China, and, ultimately, to the Ajanta caves in India, but Ōya-ji also has roots in Japanese mountain Buddhism. From as early as the seventh century mountain Buddhist ascetics (*gyōja* 行者, *shugenja* 修験者) worshiped Kannon as a spiritually powerful divinity believed to have beneficial powers to drive away evil and beckon good fortune (*josai shōfuku no gorishō* 除災招福の御利生). Of the seven Kannon types related to esoteric Buddhism that were worshiped by mountain ascetics over the centuries, one of the most popular was “the thousand-arm thousand-eye” (*senju* 千手) Kannon (Sahasra-bhuja-avalokiteśvara). Along the Saikoku route, there are over fifteen, and along the Bandō route eleven temples have the *senju* image as the main image.³ The Kannon hall of Ōya-ji is one of these, enshrining a forty-two arm *senju* image. Dating from the early to mid-Heian period, it is carved as a high bas-relief (*magaibutsu* 磨崖仏) out of the soft volcanic ash rock of the cliff face and is one of the oldest rock images in the Kantō area (see figure 2).⁴ Although now only tinged red due to damage in a fire in 1811, the “Ōya Kannon” was originally painted vermilion, covered with clay for molding the fine features, and adorned with an outer layer of lacquer and gold leaf (HANAWA 1984, pp. 13–14). It was probably made by Buddhist image makers (*bussshi* 仏師) affiliated with the wandering Tendai prelate Jikaku Daishi 慈覚大師 (or Ennin 円仁, 794–864) or the mountain ascetic Shōdō Shōnin 勝道上人 (737–817), the founder of Chūzen temple at Mount Nikkō (HANAWA 1984, p. 20).⁵ Both men were born in Shimotsuke province and were influential in the spread of esoteric Buddhism in the area.

While the temple’s own tale traditions describe it as being crowded with pilgrims during the Shōan era (1171 to 1175),⁶ archeological evidence, such as votive placards dating from 1710, 1744, and the erection of several new buildings from 1704 to 1711, strongly suggest that the Ōya-ji, like other Bandō temples, did not attract large numbers of

³ On the history of the seven Kannon images in Japan, see HAYAMI 1981, pp. 30–41.

⁴ See HANAWA 1984, pp. 13–14 and GORAI 1981, p. 21. TSURUOKA dates it anywhere from the middle to late Heian period (1975, pp. 246–56). This date is also supported by KAWAKATSU Masatarō 1978.

⁵ Shōdō is credited, for example, with carving the main *senju* image at Chūzen-ji. See *Bandō reijō-ki*, pp. 289–97. According to temple traditions, Jikaku Daishi also carved several Bandō Kannon images, for example, the *senju* image at temple twelve, Jion-ji. See *Bandō reijō-ki*, pp. 266–67.

⁶ The earliest hard evidence of lay pilgrimage dates from the Kamakura period. These are sutra stones (*kyōseki* 經石) and small votive images (*kakebotoko* 懸仏) that were excavated from the temple precincts. One stone, dedicated to the parents of a pilgrim with an inscription dated 1363, is the first indicator of the existence of the Kannon Hall on the site.



The Forty-two Arm “Senju” Image at Ōya-ji

pilgrims until the eighteenth century (HANAWA 1984, pp. 22, 26).⁷ The few remaining accounts by pilgrims of this period suggest that they came to worship the golden Kannon glowing within the dark cave, an

⁷ Ōya-ji underwent two major phases of reconstruction in the Tokugawa period. In 1615–1624, under the supervision of Denkai Sōjō with the patronage of the local suzerains of Utsunomiya castle: the Okudaira clan, especially Kamehime, Tokugawa Ieyasu’s eldest daughter, who became the wife of Okudaira Nobumasa. The second phase in 1704–1711 was with the support of several patrons: Matsudaira Terusada, Okudaira Masashige, and Miegsusa Morisuge. The new buildings erected during this phase included a Benten hall, a main hall with a Shō Kannon image, a Hall for the Ten Heavenly Kings (*jūō-do* 十王堂), and a guest house.

image that evoked a sense of awe and wonder—an undeniable feeling of Kannon’s spiritually powerful presence. For example, the anonymous author of the *Shimotsuke fudoki* 下野風土記 (composed in 1688) came away from his visit to Ōya-ji “deeply moved” by what he had seen. “It is not a Buddha,” he believed, “that had been carved by an ordinary person” (HANAWA 1984, p. 12). Writing almost a century and a half later in his travel guide, the Confucian scholar Narushima Motonao 成島司直 saw it after the resident priest intoned the *Kannon-gyō* once and then opened the curtain for worship. Narushima found it “truly extraordinary” (*makoto ni kizetsu nari* 誠に奇絶なり). Along with the other Buddhist images carved from the cliffs covered with flowering vines, the Ōya Kannon presented an “extremely marvelous sight” (*hanahada kikan* 甚奇観) before him (HANAWA 1984, p. 30).⁸ As these two testimonies attest, pilgrims were deeply stirred by what they saw at Ōya-ji, particularly the mysterious image that, as attested in Kazan’s dream oracle, was believed to be a fragment of Kannon’s living body.

What fostered this sense that the image was extraordinary? How did eighteenth-century pilgrims learn about the existence of numinous images (*reizō* 霊像) like the Ōya Kannon and what motivated large numbers of them to visit temples like Ōya-ji where they were enshrined? Or, to put it another way, what changed Ōya-ji from a sequestered eremitical site into a well-known destination on the Bandō route? What made Kannon pilgrimage popular in premodern Japan?

The Ōya-ji Engi as Temple “PR”

Among the many social, political, institutional, and even technological changes that spurred the growth of Kannon pilgrimage after the Genroku period, certainly one key factor was the development of new propagandistic tracts known as *reijō-ki* 霊場記, or “the records of numinous places.” *Reijō-ki* were basically collections of *engi* 縁起 tales. The word *engi* is the Chinese equivalent of the Buddhist term “*pratītya samutpāda*,” or the notion that all things are causally interdependent and produced. But in Japan *engi* became a label for a major genre of shrine and temple tales. *Engi* tales, often circulated as picture scrolls (*engi emaki* 縁起絵巻), were used in temple proselytization from as early as the Heian period. It was in the eighteenth century, however, that *reijō-ki* (also labeled as *yurai-ki* 由来記, *junrei en-ki* 順礼縁記, *engi reigen entsūden* 縁起靈験円通伝) were created to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of lay pilgrims along the routes. Printed often as highly

⁸ His diary is the *Nikkō ekitei kenbun zakki* 日光驛程見聞雜記, published in 1843.

abridged versions (*ryaku engi* 略縁起) of the earlier *engi* narratives, they were widely circulated both individually and in pilgrimage sets. Especially after the Kyōhō era (1716–1736), in addition to the many road guides (*dōchū-ki* 道中記, *junrei annai-ki* 順礼案内記), pictorial guides of famous places (*meisho-zue* 名所図絵), and votive cards of the main images (*miei* 御影), numerous *engi* collections were produced.⁹ Sold or lent by the temple pilgrimage centers or “placard places” (*fudasho* 札所), bookstores, lodging houses (*hatago* 旅籠, *funayado* 磨宿), and confraternities (*kō* 講), *reijō-ki* were a handy reference for any literate traveler who wanted to know more about the origin and sacred history of the Kannon temples. They were mainly used by the pilgrimage guides (*sendatsu* 先達), who told the tales to those in their charge as they traveled from site to site (SHIMIZUTANI 1971, p. 365). As easy-to-read tales about Kannon’s saving presence at the local temples, the *reijō-ki* functioned much like Christian stories about the holy acts of the saints or the miracles associated with images of the Virgin Mary; as sacred stories, they had the power to edify the faithful and strengthen them in their belief (LÜTHI 1970, p. 37). But perhaps the better comparison is with the many Christian narratives of pilgrimages to Jerusalem that proliferated with Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land throughout the middle ages. As Glenn Bowman has argued, Holy Land pilgrimage narratives show to what extent all travel is itself an imaginative act. Early Christian pilgrims like Epiphanius, the Bordeaux Pilgrim, and Egeria were “powerful elites” whose travel accounts described what they expected and wanted to see, which were scenes and images from the Gospels that they imaginatively “grounded and sited” wherever they traveled. Their pilgrimage narratives establish Palestine as a Holy Land by creating a “mythscape”—a landscape that is imbued with Christian sacrality that they themselves experienced and that others following them could also experience. Their images of Jerusalem and other holy places constitute “a lexicon” that “was adopted by the popular imagination” (BOWMAN 1992, pp. 50–53).¹⁰ As we shall see, the eighteenth century *reijō-ki* functioned in much the same way, creating a mythscape of Kannon sacred places along the Saikoku, Bandō, and Chichibu pilgrimage routes that exerted a powerful influence on pilgrims’ religious imagination.

The *Ōya-ji engi* is collected in the major *reijō-ki* collection of the

⁹ For a comprehensive list of the travel guides, *junrei uta*, and *engi* collections produced during this time, especially for the Saikoku route, see SHIMIZUTANI 1971, pp. 367–72, and HYŌGO-KEN KYŌIKU IINKAI 1991, p. 6.

¹⁰ See also LEED 1991, pp. 144–46, and SMITH 1987, especially chapter four, “To Replace.”

Bandō route, the aforementioned *Sanjūsansho Bandō Kannon reijō-ki* (hereafter cited as *Bandō reijō-ki*), compiled in ten volumes by the Shingon priest Ryōsei 亮盛 and printed in 1771 (see KANEZASHI 1973, pp. 216–331).¹¹ The text of the *Ōya-ji engi* itself is somewhat brief, consisting of seven major sections:

1. A description of the environs of Ōya and the senju Kannon
2. The *engi* tale of the confrontation between wandering Buddhist ascetics and the Ōya snake *kami*, climaxing in the miraculous carving of the Kannon image and the founding of the temple
3. Comparisons with similar stories in China and Japan
4. The temple's pilgrimage poem-prayer (*junrei uta* 巡礼歌)
5. A miracle story concerning a poor parishioner, Gen Saburō
6. A discussion of the place-name
7. An additional commentary explaining certain esoteric Buddhist technical terms

The *Ōya-ji engi* is a fairly typical example in the *Bandō reijō-ki*. But exactly what kind of message or promises did the *Ōya-ji engi* offer to attract pilgrims to the temple? How did it edify the faithful and strengthen them in their belief?

In his important study of the genre, ŌJI Hidenori has argued that *engi* were effective religious propaganda for two reasons (ŌJI 1959). First, *engi* encouraged belief in the miraculous appearance of Buddhist divinities. In the tales, buddhas and bodhisattvas were portrayed as highly exceptional and extremely impressive beings with a potency to produce wonders (*reigen* 靈驗) and miracles (*kidoku* 奇特). In the case of the *Bandō reijō-ki*, Ryōsei's own preface makes this same point. While the Buddhist focus as stated in the *Lotus Sūtra* is on how “the seed of Buddhahood arises (*ki* 起) from conditions (*en* 縁),” Ryōsei emphasizes that *engi* were about “men of great virtue and holy men of

¹¹ On Ryōsei's life, the textual history of the *Bandō reijō-ki*, and its precursors, see SHIMIZUTANI 1971, pp. 373–442. See also my “Kannon Engi: The *Reijō* and the Concept of *Kechien* as Strategies of Indigenization in Buddhist Sacred Narrative” (MACWILLIAMS 1990). Two other important examples of eighteenth-century Kannon *reijō-ki* texts are: for the Saikoku route, the *Saikoku sanjūsansho Kannon reijō-ki zue* 西国三十三所観音霊場図絵 (The collected pictorial guide of the thirty-three Kannon numinous locales of Saikoku; hereafter cited as *Saikoku reijō-ki*), in ten volumes, printed in 1803 is a slightly revised version with illustrations by Tsujimoto Kitei of an earlier work by Kōyō Shun'ō, entitled the *Saikoku sanjūsansho Kannon reijō-ki* 西国三十三所観音霊場記, which dates from 1725, in KANEZASHI 1973, pp.18–209; for the Chichibu route, the *Chichibu engi reigen entsūden* 秩父縁起靈驗門通伝, in five volumes, collected by the monk Ensō 円宗, printed in 1766. A transcription of this text has been published in *Saitama sōsho* 3 (1970): 3–74.

the past” who “were moved by *mysterious* causes and conditions (*fushigi no innen* 不思議の因縁), and for the sake of those living in the final age (*masse* 末世) founded respectively Buddhist temples and shrines for the kami.”¹² In the tales, holy men-ascetics, various good deities who were protective of the Dharma (*gobō zenjin* 護法善神), and the enshrined Kannon statues at the temple site all produce stunning performances for the faithful. *Engi* fit Buddhism into the Japanese world of meaning by portraying Kannon as a local and intimate saving presence that merited worship because of the bodhisattva’s awesome power.

The *Ōya-ji engi* is illustrative in this respect. There the temple with its main image is portrayed as a place for intense spiritual experiences for the worshippers who come in contact with the power of Kannon. Contact occurs through dreams (*yume* 夢), waking visions (*maboroshi* 幻), and face-to-face meetings with an avatar (*gongen* 権現) or transformation body (*keshin* 化身) of the bodhisattva. For example, in the origin tale of the *senju* image (#2 in the text), the villagers experience the miracle of the deity’s sacred presence after they enter Ōya and have a collective waking vision of Kannon’s spiritually radiant image upon the cliff face. In the second tale as well (#5 in the text), a boy named Gen Saburō, a lay pilgrim, is blessed with the great compassionate manifestation (*daihi no jigen o komori* 大悲の示現を蒙り) of Kannon on two occasions after the deity conveyed wondrous dream oracles (*reikoku* 靈告) concerning the whereabouts of his lost father.

Second, Ōji argues that *engi* were effective because they often appealed to the preexisting faith in the kami. A “weak point” in otherwise successful proselytizing strategies of the new Buddhist sects of the Kamakura period was that they largely ignored the popular faith in the kami.¹³ But temples like those on the Saikoku and Bandō Kannon pilgrimage routes, which were mostly affiliated with the older Buddhist schools, especially Tendai and Shingon, pursued a different strategy. As Allan GRAPARD has noted (1984, p. 244), the buddhas and bodhisattvas of *kenmitsu* Buddhism did not necessarily dislocate the kami at sacred sites, but entered into “communication” and various “associations” with the preexisting system. In Kannon *engi*, kami are often woven into the narratives, creating a synthesis of Buddhist and kami faith (*shinbutsu shūgō*) that helped to win the hearts and minds of the people.

¹² *Bandō reijō-ki*, pp. 216–17. The quotation from the *Lotus Sūtra* is excerpted from the chapter “On Expedient Devices” (*Hōben*), vol. 1, part 2. See SAKAMOTO and IWAMOTO 1962–1967, vol. 1, p. 118; Hurvitz 1976, p. 41.

¹³ The great exception, of course, is Ippen Shōnin of the Jishū sect. See ŌJI 1959, p. 89.

Ōya was inhabited long before the advent of Buddhism to the area. Excavations from 1958 to 1965 have uncovered several types of pottery, including furrowed-line earthenware, *ryūkisenmon* 隆起線文, or Ōya type one, as well as skeletal remains that prove that the cave was used both as a burial site and a dwelling place from the early Jōmon until the middle of the Yayoi period (TSURUOKA 1969, p. 402; HANAWA 1984, pp. 2-6). It also seems to have been a kami cult site. The Kannon image is situated within an outer sanctum (*gejin* 外陣) of a typical Buddha hall. This structure, however, is erected up against the mouth of the cliff overhang covering the cave opening. According to the *engi*, this architectural arrangement was adopted because the mountain itself, with its *senju* image emerging from the rock face, is the inner sanctum (*naijin* 内陣) of the temple. In this respect, Ōya-ji is very similar to certain Shinto shrines, such as the Miwa and Ōkami shrines in Yamato and the Kanasana Shrine in Saitama Prefecture, which are constructed with offering halls (*haiden* 拜殿) before mountains worshiped as the divine bodies (*shintai* 神体山) of the local kami (TSURUOKA 1969, p. 409; TYLER 1992, p. 50; HANAWA 1984, p. 12). The author of the *Shimotsuke fudoki* twice describes the area before the statue as a *haiden*, which in his time was hidden by a curtain that would be drawn open by the priest in order for worship (as in the case of Narushima Motonao noted above). On the basis of this layout of the temple, Tsuruoka concludes that the “form” (*keitai* 形態) of the Kannon hall was built upon the “foundation” (*kihon* 基本) of the *shintai* (TSURUOKA 1969, p. 409; SHIMIZUTANI 1971, pp. 200-201).

In the *Ōya-ji engi* we find a literary rendering of this spatial *naijin/gejin* synthesis with a *yama no kami* woven into the narrative. As the first story opens (# 2 in the text), the future site of Ōya-ji in the district of Arahari is troubled by a poisonous serpent (*dokuhebi*) living at the source of the stream that bubbles from the cave under the cliff face. The stream, which normally should have fertilized the valley of Ōya, made the five grains, grasses, and trees wither away and caused great suffering among the local populace. It had become so polluted that anyone who tasted the fouled waters would sicken and die. Because it was so bad, people said the area was really a hell valley (*jigoku-dani* 地獄谷). As a precaution the villagers, following the practice at Mount Kōya, put up a sign to warn travelers about the dangers of drinking the noxious water (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 297).¹⁴

¹⁴ The reference is to Kōbō Daishi's poem from the Kongobu-ji of Mount Kōya found in the *Fūga wakashū* 風雅和歌集, a fourteenth-century *waka* anthology compiled by retired emperor Hanazono (1297-1348): *wasuretemo/ kumi ya shitsuran/ tabibito no/ Takano no oku no/Tamagawa no mizu*. In his preface, Kōbō Daishi says he composed the poem after posting

This description of Ōya's *dokuhebi* is reminiscent of the water snake kami that were worshiped throughout Japan from early on for their power over floods, droughts, and the quality of water sources, and, later on, to ensure agricultural fertility (see BLACKER 1986, p. 123).¹⁵ In later legends they often appear as chaotic and polluting. Such a malevolent snake deity needs to be handled "as one would deal with other violent forces of nature. It posed a general threat to the agricultural community...and was the manifestation of the violent aspect of those deities connected with thunder, water, and the dead" (KELSEY 1981a, p. 110; see also KELSEY 1981b, pp. 223–25). In the *Toyokuni fudoki*, for example, when emperor Keiko made an imperial progress (*miyuki* 御幸) to the village of Kutami, one of his servants tried to ladle water from a spring there that was inhabited by a water snake (*okami*). The emperor commanded him to stop because the water was foulsmelling. From that time on, the place was called, "Kusai izumi" (or "Stinky Spring").¹⁶ Another famous example is the shrine origin myth of Matachi in the *Hitachi fudoki*. In this story, an imperial envoy outsider/hero named Matachi confronts the local serpentine "gods of Yatsu" who are preventing the villagers from developing their rice fields. Dressed in armor, he attacks them and chases them to the foot of the mountain. There he uses his staff to mark the border dividing the human world below the world of the serpent gods above in the mountains and founds their shrine. Matachi's descendants continued to worship the serpent deities to assure the continued fertility of the fields (DE VISSER 1913, pp. 55–56; GILDAY 1993, pp. 280–83).

As we have seen, the *Ōya-ji engi* has a similar snake in its story. But, in this case, it is three wandering Buddhist ascetics rather than a cultural hero like Matachi who save the day. Certainly, Ōji is correct in saying that *engi* with their emphasis on the miracles and, in many cases, a supporting cast of kami, helped to popularize the Kannon cult. But it is not enough to catalog, as Ōji has done, the various independently defined symbols of the sacred in *engi* texts. We must look at the stories themselves and not just the discrete symbols interspersed

a sign to warn travelers on the way to the inner temple at Kōya not to drink the water from the Tamagawa because of the many poisonous insects in the water. See TSUGITA and IWASA 1974, p. 336. For another use of this poem on the Saikoku route, see the *Saikoku junrei saikenki*, *Kokubun tōhō bukkyō sōsho* (WASHIO 1926, 7, p. 548.)

¹⁵ TANIGAWA Ken'ichi notes that *ryūkisenmon*-style pottery, such as discovered at Ōya, may represent a highly stylized snake motif, but this is uncertain. For a full discussion of the snake-decorated pottery and its religious implications, see TANIGAWA 1986, pp. 160–79. See also YOSHINO 1979, pp. 21–24.

¹⁶ See AKIMOTO 1960, p. 363; see also p. 397 for a related story. For more examples see DE VISSER 1913.

within them to understand how *engi* were powerful tools for proselytization. As Stephen CRITES has argued, any symbol of the sacred, like Kannon or a kami, “imports into any icon or life situation in which it appears the significance given it in a cycle of mundane stories, and also the resonances of a sacred story” (1971, p. 306). A few questions suggest themselves as one sets out to explore these tales. How do *engi* encompass Kannon’s new situation—the presence of the bodhisattva *in situ* at the one hundred numinous locales throughout Japan? In cases where kami appear, in what distinctive ways do *engi* fit them into a worldview and message that, as KURODA Toshio (1981) has argued, was strongly Buddhist? How does the *Ōya-ji engi* in particular specifically shape the kami-Buddhist synthesis in a way that promotes the indigenization of the Kannon cult at Ōya and the popularization of the Bandō pilgrimage? Since *reijō-ki* were promulgated with the popularization of lay pilgrimages after the Genroku period, did texts like the *Ōya-ji engi* in Ryōsei’s *Bandō reijō-ki* offer anything new in the way the “language game” of temple proselytization was played? Did the *Ōya-ji engi* create a new literary mode of contact between the Kannon of Buddhist scripture and the lives of the Japanese pilgrims who went on the Kannon pilgrimage routes?

Ōya-ji as a Kannon Reijō

The purpose of myth, according to Roland BARTHES, is to give “an historical intention a natural justification.... What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality” (1982, pp. 130–31). The *Ōya-ji engi* provides just such a natural image of the *senju* Kannon. The tales and devotional poem-prayer naturalize the deity by situating it inextricably and eternally within Ōya’s environs. The *engi* does this by being structured in a special way, by what M.M. BAKHTIN has called the chronotopes or the fundamental “concretizing representations” for materializing time in space within a narrative. According to Bakhtin, chronotopes function as “matrices” for organizing the scenes and dramatic events of a story; what gives any narrative its internal symbolic unity (and its distinctiveness and power as a genre) is its characteristic fusion of spatio-temporal relationships (1981, p. 250). Two types of chronotopes structure the narrative/ poetic framework of the *Ōya-ji engi*: the numinous place and the motifs of meeting.

The “Ōya Kannon” is a perfect example of how a spiritually efficacious *senju* Kannon image (*reizō*) is a “mysterious and magical

outgrowth” of its local matrix—the so-called numinous place or site (*reijō, reichi*) (MUS 1964, pp. 8–9). Carved out of the soft volcanic rock found in the area (*Ōya ishi*), the *senju* Kannon emerges from the cliff face within its own cave-sanctuary. That Kannon’s presence here is natural—in the sense of being considered intrinsically a part of the space it occupies—is reinforced in the *engi*’s image of Ōya’s sacred geography. In the first tale, the temple precincts are described in richly Buddhist detail, showing the relations of equivalence between the actual Japanese site at Ōya and Kannon’s mythical abode in the sutra literature.

First, Ryōsei’s speculation on the place-name (#6 in the text) offers a major clue that Ōya is no ordinary place but is rather a perfect natural dais for the deity. Ryōsei observes that the site is surrounded by towering cliffs, as if it were enclosed by a folding screen (*byōbu* 屏風) or “at the bottom of a monk’s begging bowl.”¹⁷ To gaze at the heavens one must look up; therefore, it is called Mount Tenkai, “opening toward heaven.”¹⁸ In other words, the place-name indicates that Ōya is an *axis mundi* that unites heavenly and earthly realms; it provides an opening for passage to the upper world, making it an ideal seat for a celestial *bodhisattva* “established above the stains of existence on the lotus of heavenly births and manifestations” (MUS 1964, p. 461).

To this picture, the *engi* adds more topographical details that leave little doubt that Ōya is a Pure Land of the Great Compassionate One (*daihisha no jōdo* 大悲者の浄土).¹⁹ In the sutras, Kannon’s paradise is often located on Mount Fudaraku (Potalaka), a mountainous island somewhere in the sea south of India. One famous account of it is found in book ten of the *Daitō saiiki-ki* 大唐西域記, the travelogue of the Chinese monk Hsüan-tsang’s 玄奘 (Jpn. Genjō, 600–664) pilgrimage to India. His description of Fudaraku is fully quoted by Ryōsei in the *Bandō reijō-ki*:

The mountain paths (to Fudaraku) are through steep and dangerous cliffs and gorges. At the top of the mountain there is a pond. Its water is clear as a spotless mirror from which a

¹⁷ There are traditions in China that compare the stupa enshrining the Buddha’s relics to the shape of an inverted monk’s begging bowl. See MABBETT 1983, p. 76.

¹⁸ *Bandō reijō-ki*, pp. 299–300. The current temple *engi* pamphlet, the *Bandō jūkyūban fudasho Ōya Kannon*, offers another place-name legend. After he made the *senju* image, Kōbō Daishi’s reflection (*sugata*) was cast in the river. Hence the name of the river, Sugatagawa.

¹⁹ This is the title given to temple seventeen, Shimotsuke Izuru Mangan-ji, a temple that is located in the same area as Ōya-ji. See *Bandō reijō-ki*, pp. 289–92. It is interesting to contrast the *Ōya-ji engi* with its emphasis on the *reijō*, with the Chinese Kannon miracle collections of the Six Dynasties period with their notable lack of “emplacedness.” On this, see CAMPANY 1993, pp. 252–53.

river flows out. Beside the pond there is a rock palace where Kanjizai Bosatsu resides.²⁰

In Japan, the belief that temple sites either resembled or actually were Fudaraku was widespread. One of the earliest of these was Nachi-dera (Seiganto-ji 青岸渡寺), the first temple of the Saikoku Kannon pilgrimage in the twelfth century. Its devotional prayer suggests that the falls near the temple echoed with the sounds of the waves beating against the shore of Mount Fudaraku: *Fudaraku ya / ishi utsu nami wa/ miku-mano no/ Nachi no oyama ni/hibiku taki tsuse*. “Is it not, then, Fudaraku? The waves crashing on its shore are the rapids resounding on Mount Nachi, at the three holy shrines of Kumano” (KANEZASHI 1973, p. 20). As the eastern gate of Kannon’s paradise throughout the later medieval period, Nachi-dera served as point of disembarkation for the many boat crossings (*tokai* 渡海) to Mount Fudaraku.²¹ Fudaraku *shinkō* spread to the Kantō area with the migration of Shugendo mountain Buddhist ascetics from both the Honzan and Tōzan branches of Shugendo, who were centered in the Kinai region. One example is the fifteenth-century monk Dōkō 道光, a member of the Honzan branch who first practiced at Nachi, traveled the Saikoku route, and eventually made his way to the Kantō region (SWANSON 1981, p. 58).²² Monks like Dōkō probably first identified sacred Bandō sites like Chūzen-ji (number eighteen) in Mount Nikkō as Mount Futara or Fudaraku. Chūzen-ji, with its spectacularly beautiful lake, is described in the *Chūzen-ji engi* (*Bandō reijō-ki* #18) as surrounded on all sides by “thick groves of trees and bamboo. Yet not one leaf falls into the water. The lake water is transparent to the very bottom, and is like a bright mirror. Moreover, no scaly creatures lie in the lake. This is one of the mysteries of the area” (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 295). In the priest Jikaku’s poem, it is compared to the jeweled pond of Mount Fudaraku: *Fudaraku ya/asahi no hikari/kagayakite/Ukiyo no soto ni/sumeru*

²⁰ See the *Nikkō-san Chūzen-ji engi* in *Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 295. Ryōsei here also quotes the section on Fudaraku from Shikshananda’s translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (*Shin kegon-gyō*) in which the pilgrim Sudhana (Zenzai Dōji) finds Fudaraku “an immaculate place made of jewels, with trees with fruits and flowers growing everywhere and an abundance of flowing springs and ponds” where the very wise and steadfast Kanjizai (Kannon) dwells “for the benefit of all beings.” See Cleary 1987, pp. 150–51; T #279, 10.336–37.

²¹ Other Saikoku temples were also associated with Fudaraku, such as Chikubushima (number 30) and Ishiyama-dera (number 13). The latter temple’s connection with Mount Fudaraku has a long history. See *Ishiyama-dera engi* in the *Zoku Gunsho ruijū*, HANAWA 1926, 28a:97. There is also now a “Fudarakusen” hill near the main temple, with a route to Kannon’s thirty-three *keshin* marked off as a miniature route.

²² By Dōkō’s time, Bandō temples had become formally affiliated with both branches of Shugendo.

mizuumi. “Oh, Fudaraku! Where the morning light shines and the lake lies clear beyond the borders of the floating world” (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 294).²³

As the next stop on the Bandō route, Ōya-ji is situated close to Chūzen-ji. Moreover, Ōya-ji’s own setting, not surprisingly, is strongly evocative of Kannon’s paradise. As in the *Saiiki-ki* account, Ōya, like Fudaraku, is reached through dangerous cliffs and gorges. Moreover, the cliff overhang, which shelters the Ōya Kannon from the rain and dew, is like the rock palace (of the *devas*) where Kanjizai “in coming and going takes his abode” in the *Saiiki* (cf. BEAL 1881, vol. 1, p. 233). In the *engi*, the same cliff overhang is also described as a *funagokō* 舟後光 (or *funagata kōhai* 舟形光背), that is, a type of halo symbolizing the divine light (*kōmyō* 光明) that issues from the bodies of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and is commonly found behind *senju* images (the form of the bodhisattva often associated with Fudaraku and enshrined in all of the Kantō Fudaraku temples). Shaped like the prow of a boat, the *funagokō* is a particularly appropriate appurtenance for a deity inhabiting a mythical isle; Fudaraku itself has rich symbolic associations etymologically, mythically, and ritually with boats.²⁴ Third, as in the *Saiiki* description of Fudaraku (and also in the *Shin kegon-gyō*), Ōya-ji also has “a tranquil and pure lotus pond” (*shōjō no renchi*) next to the cave/stone palace (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 298).

In the *Ōya-ji engi* it is clear that Kannon does not just emerge anywhere. By drawing implicit relations of equivalence between distant Fudaraku and nearby Ōya in the Japanese archipelago, the *engi* gives a completely remythologized vision of Ōya’s sacred landscape in Buddhist terms. In the opening description, in the later place-name account, and, as we shall see, in the tales themselves, the *Ōya-ji engi* provides a kind of narrativized mandala: it offers a mystical vision of Ōya as a sacred realm—as Mount Fudaraku, the Pure Land abode of Kannon. It also offers what Susan TYLER has called a “visual shell” through which the bodhisattva’s power emanates for the good of the pilgrims. In both respects as a sacred text, the *engi* functions much like the Pure Land mandala paintings (*hensō* 変相) of Fudaraku that were so popular in Japan over the centuries.²⁵ Like the apparitional

²³ Other Bandō Fudaraku temples include Hoshinoya (number 8), Sensō-ji (number 13), Tsukuba-san Omi-dō (number 25), and Nago-dera (number 33). See TSURUOKA 1969, pp. 421–22.

²⁴ Several renderings of the *senju* Kannon in the Heian and Kamakura periods had such a halo. For other examples, see illustrations numbers 14, 15, 17, and 20 in NARA NATIONAL MUSEUM 1981. On the ritual of boat crossings (*tokai*) to Fudaraku from the Kumano-Nachi area during the medieval period, see GORAI 1976, pp. 119–209.

²⁵ See TYLER 1992, p. 116 and especially p. 131, where she describes the Muromachi period

visions of these paintings, the *Oya-ji engi* paints a vivid picture of Ōya's special qualifications as a numinous place (*reijō*): an enspirited Kannon image would naturally emerge from the natural cathedral-like paradise of Ōya-ji. According to Allan GRAPARD (1989), this kind of "intertextuality and sacred geography" was a basic esoteric Buddhist way of unifying the faith in the sutras (culture) with mountain worship (nature) from the middle ages until the nineteenth century.

The Motifs of Meeting

The most obvious function of the temple as a sacred place is that it is an abode of a deity. As such, the temple serves as a "meeting point between the whole structure of human life and the life of the divine realms" (TURNER 1979, p. 27; KNIPE 1988, p. 112). It is not surprising, therefore, that the *reijō* functions as a matrix in tandem with another chronotope that Bakhtin calls the "motif of meeting." Although the motif of meeting is one of the most universal of motifs, BAKHTIN emphasizes that in the mythological and religious realms this motif "plays a leading role, of course: in sacred legends and Holy Writ (both in the Christian works and in Buddhist writings) and in religious rituals.... (It) is combined with other motifs, for example that of apparition ("epiphany") in the religious realm" (1981, p. 98).

A key feature of the bodhisattva path is to enter into the turmoil of this world to save beings who, deluded by their own ignorance, are forever caught in the realm of birth and death. The *Ōya-ji engi* is essentially a mythologized history of Kannon's meetings with the local kami, the holy men-founders of the temple, and the pilgrims who visited it in the beginning. It lives up to its generic label as tales about *engi*, co-dependent origination, by offering a "primordial"—in the sense of an original and founding—karmic drama about the causes and conditions (*innen*) at work behind Kannon's manifestation and transfer of merits (*ekō* 回向) to suffering beings at the *reijō*. The tales "take place" in a valorized past that is the source of the temple's power and prestige.

The first meeting in the *engi* is the story of Kannon's initial hierophany that marks the founding of the temple. In many Kannon *engi*, the story revolves around the close encounter between holy men-founders and local deities. This is often uneventful. In the tales, kami regularly appear as enabling assistants leading the holy man (who

Fudaraku mandala in the *senju* Hall at Kaidan-in at Tōdai-ji. For a full discussion of Fudaraku paintings in the context of Kasuga Shrine, see pp. 115–44. See also OKAZAKI 1977, pp. 80–82.

either carries or later carves the spiritually efficacious Kannon image) on his way to build his Buddhist hut/temple at the site. This story-type follows a pattern in which the seeker of Kannon's abode is led to the *reijō* in stages—first by a dream or some sign from the gods and then through the active intervention of a benevolent local deity. A good example is from the *engi* of Ishiyama-dera. According to temple tradition, the monk Rōben is initially guided to the site of the temple by a dream oracle of the deity Zaō Gongen. When he arrives, he meets an old man sitting on a rock, fishing, who identifies himself as Hira Myōjin, the ruler of the mountain. The kami informs him that the spot is a numinous site (*reichi*) of Kannon, and permits Rōben to enshrine his image of Nyoirin Kannon on his rock seat, which is described as shaped like an eight-petaled lotus with purple clouds floating around it. After this account of the peaceful origin of Ishiyama-dera, several miracles attributed to the Kannon image are related in other temple tales.²⁶

But, in other cases, this first meeting is fraught with peril. Generally this happens when the kami is a malevolent serpent whom the holy man must subjugate in order to build his temple.²⁷ It characteristically begins with a highly negative image of a dangerous local kami who has destroyed the crops and is beyond the ritualistic control of the local villagers. When holy men have to face off against such beings, the conflict is often dramatic.

In Kannon *engi* dealing with serpent subjugation, explicit acts of violence are generally avoided, perhaps because of the Buddhist emphasis on *ahimsā*. Various ritualistic methods and weapons are frequently used to subjugate them. For example, in the *Oka-dera engi* (*Saikoku reijō-ki* #7), the monk Gien merely strikes his serpent with prayer beads. In the *Jion-ji engi* (*Bandō reijō-ki* #12), Jikaku Daishi uses various symbolic gestures (*mudrā*) and incantations, and throws magic stones with Sanskrit characters written upon them into the serpent's pond. In the *Yamizo engi* (*Bandō reijō-ki* #21), Kōbō Daishi pacifies the large serpent Odakamaru by brandishing a copy of the *Heart Sutra*. The rare cases of actual combat generally do not involve holy men. In the *Hiki Iwadono engi* (*Bandō reijō-ki* #10), for example, a famous general, Saka no Ue Tamuramarō, is sent by the emperor to Mount

²⁶ See the probably fourteenth-century version of the tale in *Ishiyama-dera engi* (HANAWA 1926, vol. 28a, pp. 95–118); see also *Ishiyama-dera engi emaki* (KADOKAWA SHOTEN HENSHŪBU 1966). The eighteenth-century version of the *engi* is recorded in *Saikoku reijō-ki*, pp. 88–97.

²⁷ This motif is classified in Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature* under type V. 229.3/4, the saint banishes the snake (THOMPSON 1955–1957, vol. 5, p. 458). On this motif in European legends, see LÜTHI 1970, chapter three, "The Dragon Slayer," pp. 47–57.

Iwadono in Hiki to kill a noxious serpent that has ruined the local crops by causing snow in the summer and thunderstorms in the winter. In the tale the general kills it with an assist from Kannon, who sends a snowfall that marks out the dark outline of the beast and protects him until he can shoot his arrows. As a violent solution to the problem, the *engi* is comparable to the *Hitachi fudoki* tale of Matachi discussed above, as well as the well-known story of Susano-o's subjugation of the *Koshi no yamata no orochi* in the *Kojiki* (chapters 19 and 20).²⁸

The *Ōya-ji engi* offers a rather interesting variation of the motif of confrontation (#2 in the text). We have already described the beginning of the story where the poisonous serpent (*dokuhebi*) has polluted the spring source and destroyed the fields, making life impossible for the inhabitants of Ōya. In the tale, the serpent is pacified by three wandering Buddhist ascetics. These unnamed figures arrive mysteriously from Mount Haguro, Gassan, and Yudono to proclaim that they will banish the serpent by means of the subjugating power of petition and prayers (*gōbuku no hihō* 降伏の秘法). With a bodhisattva-like compassion they save the crops and perform spiritual austerities on the villagers' behalf. Then, happily for some and with misgivings by other villagers, they enter the valley. Nothing is heard for ten days until the three ascetics triumphantly return to tell the villagers that they have ended the depredations of the snake forever. Before leaving, the ascetics invite them to go and see. When they enter Ōya, the villagers gaze up at the cliff above the stream to find the images of the *senju* Kannon along with the two accompanying figures of Fudō and Bishamonten. The three images emit a dazzling spiritual light that bathes the surrounding mountains and valley in a golden hue. "There was not one person—young, old, man, or woman—who did not weep. And they say from that day forward, the villagers respected the asceticism of Mount Yudono and converted to Kanzeon. Many entered the Buddhist path." The story concludes by noting that the spring where the poisonous serpent lived is now where the villagers worship Benzaiten. It has become a pure lotus pond from which flows "the unusually luminescent mountain water of Ōya-ji" (*Ōya-ji kikei no sansui nari* 大谷寺奇景の山水なり).²⁹

²⁸ These are examples of Thompson's type A.531.2, culture hero (demi-god) overcomes snake. See THOMPSON 1955-1957, vol. 1, p. 122. The exception is in the *Kami no Daigo-ji engi* (*Saikoku reijō-ki* #11), where the ascetic Shōbō cuts the head off the snake of Mount Ōmine in Yoshino to found the *shugendō jun no mineiri* route to Kumano, but this tale is the prelude to, not an actual part of, the story of Shōbō's founding of the temple (see SWANSON 1981).

²⁹ *Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 298. This *engi* is one version of Ōya-ji's origin. Another version, first recorded in the *Shimotsuke fudo-ki* (1688), says the *senju* image was carved in one night in

In this first meeting the three mysterious Buddhist ascetics whose “compassionate power” banishes the serpent are *yamabushi* 山伏. They come from Dewa Sanzan, the famous Shugendō center of the three sacred mountains of the old province of Dewa (now in Yamagata Prefecture). Sakurai Tokutarō has convincingly argued that tales of this sort may in fact reflect historical memory.³⁰ The penetration of Buddhist ascetics into the mountains throughout Japan had the potential for causing great religious conflict. Their status as outsiders, their strange dress, and especially their unfamiliar religious practices were all potentially disruptive to local villagers with their own local kami cults. Like the legendary En no Gyōja or Shōdō Shōnin, *yamabushi* were especially disruptive because they sought to gain magico-religious power by practicing ascetical seclusion, fasting, and meditation in the mountains. This involved violating the conventional village separation between human and divine realms, a division that, as we have seen, was established in early shrine origin myths (*jinja engi*) of the *yama no kami*, such as in the tale of Matachi. In the *Ōya-ji engi*, despite the opposition of some of the villagers, the three Buddhist ascetics violate this border by brazenly entering the mountain realm of the Ōya kami. What is important here, however, is how the story effectively defuses any fears surrounding the breaking of this taboo. The founding myth of Ōya-ji effaces any history of conflict over the entry of the Kannon cult with its natural image of the marvellous manifestation of the bodhisattva on the rock face.

Serpent Subjugation through the Magical Power of Illumination

While the general tale type may be common, the origin tale of the Ōya Kannon draws its distinctive features from earlier Buddhist snake subjugation stories. Ryōsei himself draws attention to this when he cites a Chinese story he thinks is very similar to the Ōya-ji tale. This is the story of a T'ang dynasty Buddhist hero, Kantaishi, who subjugated a man-eating water serpent living in Akkei (“evil valley”) in Chōshū (Ch'ao Chou) Province (#3 in the text; *Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 298). But there are even earlier Buddhist tales about the Buddha's own subjugation of *nāga* (*ryūjin*) or water serpent deities that were believed to have power over rain and fertility and were worshiped at sites near caves, streams, and pools. In these tales, the chaotic and malevolent side of

Kōnin I (810) by Kōbō Daishi. In the current temple *engi* pamphlet, the *Bandō jūkyūban fudasho Ōya Kannon*, Kōbō Daishi is cited as the founder/carver instead of the three ascetics.

³⁰ See SAKURAI 1989, pp. 541–50.

the *nāga* is intentionally exaggerated in order to underscore the merciful saving power of the Buddha.³¹

One such story is from the Cave of the Shadow, a famous temple that was for centuries an important Buddhist pilgrimage site. The cave, located somewhere in southeastern Afghanistan, was visited by many Chinese Buddhist pilgrims from Fa-hsien to Hsüan-tsang in the mid-seventh century, who recorded one version of its foundation in his *Saiki-ki* (SOPER 1949–1950, p. 273; FALK 1977, p. 283). Hsüang-tsang's tale is strikingly similar to the *Ōya-ji engi*. First, in the opening section the area surrounding the site is described like *Ōya* with its sheer rock face arranged like a *byōbu*. In the same way, the Cave of the Shadow is described as a cavern surrounded with mountains that are steep “like walls,” with a stream gushing from the cliff face. The cave temple is also originally the abode of a malevolent serpent, Gopāla. The following section of the text also parallels the *Ōya-ji engi* with its description of the main image as a “shadow (*ying, ei* 影) of the Buddha” that appears on the cave's rock face. It was originally “bright as the true form with all its characteristic marks,” but now...is only a “feeble likeness” glimmering in the cave. Whoever prays before it “with fervent faith, he is mysteriously endowed, and he sees it clearly before him, but not for long” (BEAL 1881, vol. 2, p. 147). In like manner, after tersely describing the Kannon image on the cliff face, the *Ōya-ji engi* emphasizes the importance of faith in viewing it: “They say those whose sins are weighty do not see its form, but only see the plain cliff face” (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 297). Finally, the remainder of the Cave of the Shadow tale is about the origin of the Buddha's glowing image. Like the origin story of the glowing Kannon image in the *Ōya-ji engi*, Hsüan-tsang's version shows how the Buddha can subjugate a malevolent serpent without any explicit violence. The Buddha simply travels to the cave out of pity for the local people. When Gopāla sees him, he is instantly converted, accepting the precept against killing and vowing to defend the Buddhist law. When he also begs the Buddha to take the cavern as his abode, the Buddha replies,

When I am about to die; I will leave you my shadow, and I will send five arhats to receive from you continual offerings. When the true law is destroyed, this service of yours shall go on; if an evil heart arises in you, you must look at my shadow, and because of its power of love and virtue your evil purpose will be stopped. (Beal 1881, vol. 2, p. 94)

³¹ See BLOSS 1973, pp. 37–38. For a study of snake subjugation tales in Chinese Buddhism, see FAURE 1987.

It is the sight of the glorious body of the Buddha, first in gross physical form and then, after the Buddha leaves his shadow, in his brilliant spiritual form through the magical power of its illumination, that converts Gopāla to Buddhism and stays his evil purpose.

The Cave of the Shadow story focuses on the magical power of illumination (*kōmyō jinzūriki* 光明神通力) of the Buddha. As Randy KLOETZLI has noted, of all the miraculous powers possessed by the Buddha, the issue of spiritual light is perhaps the most ubiquitous in the Mahayana scriptures (1983, pp. 103–106). When rays of light issue from a buddha or bodhisattva they are usually spiritually efficacious: like the teaching of the Buddha himself the rays elevate beings to a higher spiritual plane—giving them enlightenment, freedom from doubt, and five kinds of “superknowledge” (*gozū no shinsen* 五通の神仙) to see and hear the buddhas of the ten regions with divine eyes (*ten-gen* 天眼) and ears (*tenni* 天耳). This is exactly what happens to the serpent in the story. It is magically transformed by the rays emanating from the body of the Buddha, with Gopāla turning into a Buddhist convert.

Magical transformation by the release of spiritual light is also at the heart of the *Ōya-ji engi*. In the sutras, Kannon is a celestial bodhisattva of light. The *Kannon-gyō* portrays Kannon as “the spotlessly pure ray of light, the sun of wisdom that banishes all darkness, that can subdue the winds and flames of misfortune, and everywhere give bright light to the world.”³²

In the *Ōya-ji engi*, in place of the Buddha, we have the three mysterious Shugendo ascetics from Dewa Sanzan. Here there is the obvious correspondence with the three sacred mountains of Dewa, with Mount Haguro the center devoted to the worship of Kannon.³³ The Haguro ascetic is more than what he seems—he is one of Kannon’s thirty-three forms, a human manifestation (*kenin* 化人). This corresponds closely to Hsüan-tsang’s *Saiiki-ki* account, which notes that for those unable to ascend Mount Potalaka and “dwell below,” “if they earnestly pray and beg to behold the god, sometimes [Kannon] appears as Tsz’-tsai-t’ien (Īsvāra-dēva), sometimes under the form of a

³² See HURVITZ 1976, p. 318. Several *engi* in the *Bandō reijō-ki* have accounts of *jūchimen* and *senju* Kannon images appearing (*yōgō* 影向) and emitting a dazzling light that saves beings from suffering. Another example that bears a close resemblance to the *Ōya-ji engi* is from the *Shimotsuke Izuru engi* (*Bandō reijō-ki* #17). When Shōdō Shōnin came from Mount Futara to Izuru, he found a natural stone image of the *jūchimen* Kannon in a cave there. After conversing with him about religious matters, the image turned back toward the recesses of the cave facing west (toward Amida’s paradise) and emitted a spiritual light.

³³ The sacred mountains of Yudono and Gassan enshrine Dainichi and Amida, respectively.

yogi...” (BEAL 1881, p. 233). The ascetic’s true nature only becomes fully revealed after the brilliant form of the *senju* Kannon on the cliff face.³⁴ But an air of mystery remains because at the climax of the tale the face-to-face meeting between serpent and ascetics is omitted. The fact that the ascetics (Kannon and his attendant deities) have prevailed is dramatically revealed only after the fact, when the villagers, with the ascetics’ approval, enter Ōya and have a collective vision of it aglow with the radiant Kannon flanked by the divine attendants Fudō and Bishamonten,³⁵ and, at the end of the tale, Benzaiten. Simply by manifesting a radiant presence, Kannon has fulfilled his vow to save those who have met with suffering wrought by dangerous dragons and poisonous snakes. As stated in the *Kannon-gyō*:

[O]ne might encounter evil *rāksasas*
 Poisonous dragons, ghosts, and the like.
 By virtue of one’s constant mindfulness of Sound-Observer,
 They would not dare do one harm.
 Or one may be surrounded by malicious beasts,
 Sharp of tooth and with claws to be dreaded.
 By virtue of one’s constant mindfulness of the Sound-
 Observer,
 They shall quickly run off to immeasurable distance.
 There may be poisonous snakes and noxious insects,
 Their breath deadly, smoking and flaming with fire.
 By virtue of the Sound-Observer,
 At the sound of one’s voice they will go away of themselves.

(HURVITZ 1976, p. 318)

Like Gopāla in the Cave of the Shadow tale, it is clear that the Ōya serpent is transformed from a life-threatening into a life-giving divinity, the deity Benzaiten (Sarasvatī) from the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon.³⁶ Benzaiten is a perfect choice for the poisonous snake’s new form. The goddess, originally the personification of the Sarasvatī river in India, is described in great detail in such Shingon-related sutras as the *Dainichi-kyō* 大日經 and the *Saishō-kyō* 最勝王經. It is in the *Kārandavyūha sūtra*, however, that Benzaiten is directly linked to the *senju* Kannon. In the sutra, Kannon is portrayed as a kind of cosmic Īśvara with innumerable arms and eyes. The sun and moon spring from the eyes; Brahma and the other gods issue from the shoulders, Nārāyana

³⁴ One of Kannon’s manifestation bodies was an *upāsaka*. See HURVITZ 1976, p. 315.

³⁵ There are no rock carvings of either Fudō or Bishamonten that accompany the main image on the cliff at Ōya, nor is there any evidence that there ever was.

³⁶ Similar Benzaiten transformations can be found elsewhere in the *Bandō reijō-ki*, for example, in the *Edo Asakusa engi* (*Bandō reijō-ki* #13). See *Bandō reijō-ki*, pp. 274–75.

from the heart, and the goddess Sarasvatī from the teeth (DAYAL 1932, p. 49). By the Tokugawa period, Benzaiten had become a popular fixture of folk religiosity. An idea of what Benzaiten faith was about is given, for example, in volume forty-six of Amano Sadakage's 天野信景 (1661–1733) famous collection of essays, the *Shiojiri* 塩尻. For Tokugawa-period worshippers, Benzaiten was venerated as the personification of wisdom (*zai* 才) and, if a different Chinese character was used for the goddess's name, good fortune leading to riches (*zai* 財). Amano emphasizes that, along with the goddess Kudokuten, Benzaiten is a goddess whose wisdom and compassion, ultimately, are a manifestation of the essence (*honji* 本地) of the bodhisattva Kanzeon, who in the Tokugawa period was typically venerated as a goddess herself (MIYATA 1987, p. 263).

In Japan, Benzaiten, whose images are often found near water sources at springs, ponds, rivers, and caverns, also became closely associated with dragons and snakes. Sometimes she is portrayed as a serpent-subjugating deity. One famous example comes from the *Enoshima no engi* recorded in the *Enoshimafu*. At Enoshima island near Kamakura, a famous pilgrimage center, “Benten” descended (*suijaku* 垂迹) to a cave of a kami (*shinkutsu* 神窟) on the island. She eventually marries and thereby stops the rampages of an “evil dragon” who dwells within the cave (MIYATA 1987, p. 266; GETTY 1962, p. 128). An image at Enoshima also has her in a warlike aspect with a sword in hand and a serpent and tortoise at her feet. She frequently took on the aspect of a snake herself, the upper body human-like and the lower body snake-like, holding a sword in one hand and a sacred gem in the other, resembling a *nāga*-like figure.³⁷ Moreover, in her Buddhist form she, like Kannon, also “illuminates the three worlds with the immeasurable light that radiates from her body,” which may well have influenced her most popular portrayal in Japan as a white snake (BAKSHI 1979, p. 122).³⁸ As one of the seven gods of fortune (*shichi fukujin* 七福神), she was popularly worshiped in Tokugawa Japan as a benevolent goddess of “all kinds of flow, viz. the flow of love, music, wealth, fortune, beauty, happiness, eloquence, wisdom, victory, and also the flow of children” (BAKSHI 1979, pp. 109–10).³⁹ Where the original kami is malevolent, life-threatening, and dark, the new cult

³⁷ See BAKSHI 1979, p. 118. Hayashi Razan relates that when Taira no Tokimasa went to Enoshima to pray to the Goddess, she appeared first as a beautiful woman and then turned into a sea snake. See GETTY 1962, p. 128.

³⁸ She is portrayed as a white snake in the *Chikubushima engi* (*Saikoku reijō-ki* #30). See *Saikoku reijō-ki*, p. 193.

³⁹ According to BAKSHI, in Japan Benzaiten is also sometimes portrayed as Ryūmyō, a manifestation of Kannon (1979, p. 125).

figure of Benzaiten is the exact opposite—a deity of love, life-affirmation, and light who, along with the bodhisattva Kannon, is worthy of worship for all sorts of spiritual benefits.

To summarize, the first meeting is the charter myth of Ōya-ji. It recounts the mysterious circumstances behind the temple's origin and the transfiguration of the bad *dokuhebi* into the good Buddhist assistant Benzaiten. By the end of the first tale, not only the serpent but also the entire site of Ōya has become transfigured by Kannon's spiritual light (*kōmyō*), which bathes the surrounding mountains and valley in a golden hue.⁴⁰ The rays transform Ōya into a mountain of spiritual light. As Ryōsei points out, Ōya has become a *Kōmyō-san*, the Mountain of Spiritual Light, another name for Fudaraku given in the *Kyū kegon-gyō* because "there is always a spiritual light that emanates from the trees and flowers on the mountain. On the mountain the spiritual light of great compassion shines and the signs of the bodhisattva's presence are everywhere" (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 356; T #733, 35.472).

Through the magic of Buddhist sacred narrative, Ōya has been refashioned from an indigenous kami cult site into a mythically mandalized image of Kannon's paradisiacal abode. With its transformed configuration as a Japanese *Kōmyō-san* with Kannon in residence, Ōya-ji has become a natural staging area for the salvation of suffering beings—Kannon's own Pure Land field (*jōsetsu* 淨刹) of merit (*kudoku* 功德). The shining presence of Kannon at the end of the first tale is proof that the living spiritual body of Kannon is present at Ōya in the same way as the Cave of the Shadow image was not an imitation but a true likeness of the Buddha himself, whose body, according to the *Kuan fo san-mei hai ching* 觀世音菩薩三昧海經, had actually penetrated and remained within the solid rock. As we shall see, just as pilgrims to the Cave of the Shadow can "see something in no wise different from the Buddha's own body, and (will gain thereby) the canceling-out of retribution for a period of 100,000 *kalpas*," so too can pilgrims to Ōya by meeting the true image of Kannon attain release from various forms of karmic evil (SOPER 1949–1950, pp. 280–81).

Meeting Kannon—Ōya as a Pilgrim's Paradise

There is a second type of meeting in the *Ōya-ji engi*. This meeting is between the Ōya Kannon and the pilgrims who come to be blessed

⁴⁰ As such, it fits the category of light that transfigures the world without blotting it out in Eliade's morphology of mystical light. See ELIADE 1969, chapter one, "Experiences of Mystical Light," especially pp. 75–77.

with a miracle. In Christian saints' legends, the original miracle is Christ's resurrection, which is reflected in many forms in the tales, such as the decapitated martyr who is revived or the ill person who recuperates miraculously (LÜTHI 1970, p. 37). In Kannon *engi*, the original miracle is Kannon's compassionate vow to save beings from suffering in all its forms—"from fears of calamity, threat, confusion, bondage...death, miserable conditions, unknown hardships, servitude, separation from loved ones," and so on (CLEARY 1987, p.152). The bodhisattva promises in the *Kannon-gyō* that anyone can be saved by "the hearing of his name" and by "the sight of his body" (HURVITZ 1976, p. 316).

The major thrust of the *reijō-ki* is that one can hear Kannon's name and see Kannon's body by going on the pilgrimage. By going to the numinous locales, one gains the divine ears to hear the bodhisattva's words of compassion and the divine eyes to visualize Kannon and his Pure Land paradise on Mount Fudaraku. The mythical model is given most notably in the *Shin kegon-gyō*. In the final book of the sutra, "Entering the Realm of Reality," Sudhana (Zenzai Dōji 善財童子), a pilgrim in search of enlightenment, hears about Kannon's spiritual abode on Mount Potalaka from a householder, Veshthila. As soon as he sees Avalokiteśvara expound the doctrine of "the light of great love and compassion" to a throng of enlightened beings, Sudhana realizes that reliance on a "spiritual benefactor" is an essential refuge for his salvation (CLEARY 1987, p. 151). The bodhisattva then enlightens him further about what he can do to save him from suffering:

I appear in the midst of the activities of all sentient beings without leaving the presence of all buddhas, and take care of them by means of generosity, kind speech, beneficial actions, and cooperation. I also develop sentient beings by appearing in various forms: I gladden and develop them by purity of vision of inconceivable forms radiating auras of light, and take care of them and develop them by speaking to them according to their mentalities, and by showing conduct according to their inclinations, and by magically producing various forms... by appearing to them as members of their own various races and conditions, and by living together with them.

(CLEARY 1987, p. 152)

This same model lies at the heart of the pilgrim's tales in the *Ōya-ji engi*. Those pilgrims who at critical moments in their lives hear about and then go to see the Ōya Kannon are saved from suffering. There are two such meetings narrated in historical sequence in the *Ōya-ji engi*. Both meetings dramatize, like the tale of Sudhana in the *Shin*

kegon-gyō, that karmic rewards accrue from directly venerating the form of an enlightened being.

As we have seen, the first pilgrim's meeting occurs sometime during the Daidō (806–810) and Kōnin (810–824) eras, at the end of the first tale. The villagers initially encounter Kannon indirectly, disguised as a *kenin*, one of the three mysterious ascetics who visit the site. After the ascetics invite them to enter, the villagers meet Kannon a second time when they gaze at “the strange sight” of the radiating auras of the bodhisattva, Fudō, and Bishamonten. It is this “pure vision” of Kannon that elevates them spiritually, just as it has transformed Ōya into a Buddhist *reijō*. For these first lay pilgrims, the “light of great love and compassion” that saves them from the snake also effectively turns them into converts of Kannon, their spiritual benefactor.⁴¹

Going to see the deity to obtain these worldly benefits is also the major theme of the second tale about the orphan Gen Saburō. This tale has nothing to do with local collective village concerns over fertility of the land and so on. The orphan Saburō is a bona fide lay pilgrim who travels from the distant province of Mikawa on his own personal quest to find his lost father. The story opens in the Shōan era (1171–1175) when Saburō is born to a poor peasant late in life. When the boy is three, his father has to leave for corvee duty in Kamakura. While there the father falls in love with another woman, moves away to Utsunomiya, and forgets about his wife and young child. The years pass and nothing is heard from him. When Saburō is eleven his mother becomes sick and dies. Her lasting sorrow is that her child would have to live as an orphan, a life that is “like a boat sailing without a rudder, without an island to lay its anchor.” But in the end, Saburō's sorrowful fate is averted because of his fortuitous decision to go to Ōya-ji. His meeting with Kannon follows the basic model of unhindered progress to the *reijō* that we have already seen in the *Ishiyamadera engi*. Initially, the destitute boy hears about the Ōya Kannon from a deity of a local shrine (*chinja* 鎮社). In response to his earnest prayers to be reunited with his father, the kami tells him to travel to Ōya-ji. Begging along the way, Saburō makes his way there and sees Kannon personally one night when the bodhisattva appears before him by walking out in the form of a monk from the inner sanctuary. In two dream oracles, Kannon tells Saburō that if he asks the name and home province of the pilgrims at Ōya he will eventually find his father. Following this advice, he recites Kannon's name at night and

⁴¹ There are also conversion stories related to the Cave of the Shadow. The Buddhist pilgrims Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang both mention seeing a radiant form when they visited the cave; see FALK 1977, p. 283.

interrogates each pilgrim by day until finally, after several months at the temple, he is happily reunited with his father at the front gate of Ōya-ji. The moral of the story is simple. The sincerity of the filial child will inevitably be rewarded: “How indeed could there not be a divine response of blessings from the Great Compassionate One, the solicitous guide?” (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 299). The “divine response” is the manifestation of the enlightening form of Kannon that guides Saburō to meet his father. It is a graphic illustration of the bodhisattva’s vow in the *Shin kegon-gyō* to save all those who have suffered from separation from loved ones.

But why is Ōya-ji such an auspicious site for such felicitous meetings—not only between pilgrims and the bodhisattva, but also between lost fathers and orphaned sons? The tale with its motif of reunion at the *reijō* is based upon an origin myth of Mount Fudaraku from a much earlier sutra, the *Kanzeon bosatsu ōjō jōdo hon'en-gyō* 觀世音菩薩往生淨土本緣經.⁴² In the tale, Saburō’s life as an orphan is compared to being cast adrift on the sea without a safe harbor to rest. It is a nice metaphor for the human condition. But it also suggests the opposite image—a life saved from the sea of pain (*kukai* 苦海) by landing at Kannon’s paradisiacal isle; Fudaraku is, if anything, a safe harbor for orphans and other castaways lost in samsara. It offers a place to anchor the pilgrim’s life upon the firmament of the bodhisattva way.

The *Hon'en-gyō* gives the origin myth behind this image of Fudaraku in its tale of the two orphans, Sōri and Enri, who were born to an old couple, the wealthy man named Chōna and his wife Manashira, a long time ago in Southern India. When they are children, their mother becomes very sick. Before she dies, Manashira begs her husband to take good care of them. He remarries after her death so he can better take care of his children, but this proves impossible to do when a famine strikes the land. The father decides to travel to Mount Dannara in search of food. While he is away the stepmother decides that the children are a burden. She sails with them south to a desert island and ends up abandoning them on the beach to starve to death. When the children realize what she has done, they vow to become bodhisattvas in their next life to save suffering beings. When the father finds out what his wife has done, he travels to the island to search for them. All he finds is their bones. Holding their bones in his arms in tears, Chōna eventually dies on the island as well, vowing to

⁴² In all probability this was a forged Chinese scripture from the Six Dynasties period. See GOTŌ 1976, p. 202.

save all beings from suffering. At the end of the tale, it is explained that the mother was Amida, the father, Shakamuni, the older brother, Kannon, and the younger brother, Seishi. The island where they made their vows is, of course, Fudaraku.⁴³ Here the vows of the castaways eventually transform them into bodhisattvas and the desert island of suffering into a Pure Land paradise of repose. In Fudaraku, father and children are reunited into one great spiritual Buddhist family for the salvation of all beings. Ōya-ji, by extension, as a temple evocative of Fudaraku, provides an ideal setting for reunions of orphans with their lost parents.

The power of stories such as these, as Stephen CRITES has suggested, lies in the fact that “the symbolic worlds they project, are not like monuments that men behold, but like dwelling places. People live in them” (1971, p. 295). In the *Ōya-ji engi*, Ōya-ji is not a monument, but a spiritual abode—or better put, a sanctuary—where pilgrims can dwell, not only physically, in close proximity to Kannon and the transformed kami, but spiritually as well (KNIPE 1988, p. 111). The tale of Saburō reveals that this abode is none other than the refuge of great compassion that, if entered, can spiritually transform the pilgrim’s way of life. The bodhisattva path (*mārga*) does so by giving the pilgrim’s life a direction and, by revealing how the separate scenes of life are in fact interconnected, providing a sense of life’s larger meaning: it is, after all, Saburō’s awakening to the spirit of compassion through his unwavering filial piety that initially orients him, leading him to Ōya-ji and, finally, with Kannon’s help, to a reunion with his long-lost father. Saburō’s reverence for his father as well as the bodhisattva’s compassionate reward is what frees him from suffering. By the end of the tale, like the reunited family of buddhas and bodhisattvas on Fudaraku, Saburō and his father are reunited through their compassionate regard for each other before the gate of Ōya-ji.

To sum up, the *Ōya-ji engi* was a powerful tool for proselytization for several reasons. First, it takes the symbolic world from earlier Buddhist sutra and *avadāna* literature and refashions them, giving them a context that is local and seemingly “uniquely” Japanese. In the tales, Kannon is no longer foreign but a local deity who has taken a place on Japanese soil. The tales accomplish this feat by describing the local site of Kannon’s hierophany in Buddhistic terms, as the bodhisattva’s paradise on Mount Fudaraku. Second, by using one type of founding myth of meeting (subjugating the kami through the issue of spiritual

⁴³ See GOTŌ 1976, pp. 197–202. Cf. *Kanzeon bosatsu ōjō jōdo hon’en-gyō* 観世音菩薩往生淨土本緣經 in KAWAMURA 1975, pp. 362–63.

light), the *engi* also naturalizes the presence of Kannon through an account of how the new deity has displaced—or better put—transfigured the old. Third, the tales emphasize the spiritual benefits that can accrue to the faithful who come on pilgrimage to Ōya-ji. The image of the villagers and Saburō in the tales offers not only a model of Kannon's spiritual efficacy but also a model for being a pilgrim—it shows not only what to expect but also what one should do if one wants to be saved. Such descriptive and narrative techniques as these were vital for the indigenization of the Kannon cult at Ōya and the popularization of the Bandō pilgrimage.

The junrei uta as an Innovative Mode of Contact

But does the *reijō-ki* genre offer anything new in the way the temple proselytization and pilgrimage was undertaken, offering a new literary “mode of contact” to tie Kannon's own sacred image directly to the lives of the lay Japanese pilgrims who, by the eighteenth century, traveled the Bandō route in increasing numbers? One innovation that created a new mode of contact between bodhisattva and believer is the *junrei uta* (pilgrimage songs, also known as *goeika* 御詠歌). Of course, Buddhist poetry (*shakkyōka* 釈教歌) developed early on in Japan (e.g., Princess Senshi's [964–1035] collection, the *Hosshin wakashū* 発心和歌集, a collection of poems on the aspiration for enlightenment, compiled in 1012) (see YAMADA 1989, pp. 97–101). But what made the *junrei uta* special as Buddhist poetry was that they eventually became part of the major devotional liturgy on the pilgrimage; Kannon pilgrims repeated them at each temple along the route.

According to popular tradition, the *junrei uta* were authored by the retired emperor Kazan, who, accompanied by his guide, Butsugen (Buddha Eye), and six other holy men, was believed to be the founder of the three pilgrimage routes.⁴⁴ Ryōsei dates Kazan's pilgrimage along the Bandō route at 990, only two years after he was supposed to have opened the Saikoku route (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 221).⁴⁵ In fact, the *junrei uta* were written over the centuries by anonymous pilgrims who dedicated them to the temples they had visited. In the concise and simple format of thirty-one-syllable *waka* poems, the prayers provided

⁴⁴ Ryōsei reserved judgement on this. Some of the Bandō *junrei uta* were of poor quality and, therefore, seemed of doubtful authenticity. See *Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 216. Kazan did, however, travel to some temples on the Saikoku route and left his poems as an offering. See, for example, his poem in the *Kokawa-dera engi*, in SAKURAI et al. 1974, pp. 46–47.

⁴⁵ Ryōsei draws his conclusions from the *Sugimoto-dera engi* 杉本寺縁起. See also SHIMIZUTANI 1971, pp. 458–59.

poetically a pure vision of the numinous sites as well as praise for the spiritual power that resided there. By Ryōsei's time, they had become a fixed liturgy, often collected in small printed volumes for use by the pilgrims during their journey. In his preface to the *Bandō reijō-ki*, Ryōsei claims that he based his work on copying *engi* from the temples he visited (he did the pilgrimage three times), stories he heard (*kuchizutae* 口つたへ) from "old men," and old records (*kyūki* 旧記) he discovered during his researches. Concerning the latter, Ryōsei mentions discovering a document that recorded the *junrei uta* (*sanjūsansho eika* 三十三所詠歌) for the Bandō route (*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 216).⁴⁶ When Ryōsei wrote the *Bandō reijō-ki*, he followed the practice of other eighteenth-century *engi* compilers by combining all these materials to make his new *reijō-ki* collection. He inserted the poem-prayers within the *engi* and added a short didactic section and additional tales to illustrate their religious meaning.⁴⁷

In the *Ōya-ji engi*, the poem-prayer is found between the temple foundation tale and the tale of Saburō, the first lay pilgrim:

*na o kiku mo/ fukaki megumi ni/ Ōya-dera/ inoru makoto no/shirushi
naru kana*

Even when I hear your name, I am deeply blessed, Ōya-dera,
The wondrous outcome of my heartfelt prayers.

(*Bandō reijō-ki*, p. 299).⁴⁸

The positioning of this poem-prayer in the body of the *engi* is crucial for tying the threads of a pilgrim's life to the temple itself. Because of its legendary origin, the poem-prayer symbolizes the

⁴⁶ Concerning his sources for the *Bandō reijō-ki*, Ryōsei mentions discovering a "small *engi* volume" at Sugimoto-dera under the pedestal of the main image, an "old record" (*koki* 古記) dated Shōka 2 (1258) that he discovered at the sutra repository on Mount Tsukuba, and the unnamed *junrei uta* collection, with no mention about where he found it. SHIMIZUTANI Kōshō argues it is a text from Sugimoto-dera, an *engi/junrei uta* collection that is mentioned briefly in another Bandō guide, the *Bandō sanjūsankasho dōki* 坂東三十三ヵ所道記 (1701) or the *Bandō junrei uta* 坂東巡礼歌 (date unknown), the worn woodblocks of which are still stored there (1971, p. 375).

⁴⁷ In this respect Ryōsei imitated Ensō's earlier *engi* collection for the Chichibu route, the *Chichibu engi reigen entsūden*. For a full discussion of the *Bandō reijō-ki*'s literary antecedents, see SHIMIZUTANI 1971, pp. 398–419.

⁴⁸ This poem-prayer is different from the one in general circulation today in the standard pilgrimage guides: *na o kiku mo/ megumi Ōya no/ Kanzeon/ michibikitamae/ shiru mo shiranu mo*. "The mere sound of (the bodhisattva's) name is blessed. O Ōya Kanzeon! Lead both the knowledgeable and the ignorant (to the Pure Land)." See, for example, HIRAHATA 1985, p. 133; SHIMIZUTANI 1971, p. 90. This *junrei uta* is from the so-called vulgate collection (*ryūfubon* 流布本) printed in several editions in the Genroku 14 (1701), Kyōhō 6 (1711), and Meiwa 3 (1766) periods respectively. Twenty-two of the poems collected in Ryōsei's text are different from those in the vulgate text. See SHIMIZUTANI 1971, p. 467.

sacred historical link between the founding of the local temple by the wandering holy men and the pilgrimage route to it by Kazan. Moreover, the *junrei uta* also forges a link between the founding tale and Saburō's story with its pun on *ōya* or *oyaji*, which signifies both the temple itself and his "parent" or "old man," and *kiku*, which signifies both Saburō's hearing about Ōya Kannon from his local *kami* and his asking pilgrims their names (*na o tou* 名を問ふ) to find his lost father. Here the poem-prayer weaves Saburō's miracle tale into the institutional life of meetings at Ōya-ji. The *junrei uta* is also the key liturgy for the pilgrims who come to the temple. By reciting the poem-prayer before the *senju* image, the pilgrim not only hears the temple's name but also becomes mindful of the sacred history of the temple—Kannon's initial radiant manifestation on the cliff face, Kazan's founding of the pilgrimage, and Saburō's miraculous reunion with his father at Ōya-ji. Becoming mindful by reciting the poem-prayer, the pilgrim gains the "purity of vision" to see the Ōya Kannon as it really is—not as an inanimate statue, but as an inconceivable form radiating an aura of spiritual light, a mysterious and compassionate presence that in the past has been deeply involved in freeing the faithful from suffering. At this ritual juncture, when the reciter gazes upon the cliff face, he or she becomes the latest pilgrim to meet the Ōya Kannon and to be bathed by its spiritual blessings. The pilgrim becomes karmically tied to Ōya's sacred history as the latest causal link (*en*) in the chain of the salvation.

Does the *Ōya-ji engi* create a new literary mode of contact between the Kannon of Buddhist scripture and the lives of the Bandō pilgrims who worship at Ōya-dera? I think it does. The *Ōya-ji engi* creates a karmic chain of salvation that begins with the appearance of Kannon, whose mysterious activities (*fushigi no innen*) create the proper (that is, the properly Buddhist code) soil for "the seed of Buddhahood to arise" (*engi*) (the context, Kannon's Fudaraku *reijō* abode). As a now localized deity, Kannon produces a drama of wonders (*reigen*) and miracles (*kidoku*) making up the sacred history (*engi*) of the temple that, narrativized in the *engi*, attracts pilgrims to come to the temple. The *Ōya-ji engi* also promotes a two-way communication. The pilgrim who is attracted to Ōya by hearing the tales about the marvelous image also communicates with the author of blessings. The pilgrims appear before the Kannon Hall as a sanctuary, and, while gazing at the image, offer their own Buddhistically coded message by repeating the *junrei uta* as they worship. Their prayers create a ritual link with Kannon by binding them karmically (*kechien* 結縁) to the bodhisattva, a condition that results in the benevolent response of a transfer of merit (*ekō*). Understanding the *Ōya-ji engi* in this way helps us to appreciate how

reijō-ki were powerful vehicles of religious instruction and experience in eighteenth-century Japan. Rather than being the fossilized remains of an important medieval sacred genre, *reijō-ki* gave new life and new meaning to the old *engi* stories. By adding the *junrei uta*, Kannon *reijō-ki* offered a new mode of contact that tied pilgrims directly in worship to the salvation history of the numinous site. As a *product* of the social-historical, institutional, and cultic contexts of temple pilgrimage as well as the *medium* that gave them representation, *reijō-ki* helped to ensure the continuing vitality of the Kannon pilgrimage in Japan into the modern era.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bandō reijō-ki *Sanjūsansho Bandō Kannon reijō-ki* 三十三所坂東観音霊場記, by Ryōsei 亮盛. See KANEZASHI 1973, pp. 211–361.

Saikoku reijō-ki *Saikoku sanjūsansho Kannon reijō-ki zue* 西国三十三所観音霊場記図会 (by Tsujimoto Kitei 辻本基定 and Kōyō Shun'ō 厚誉春鶯). See KANEZASHI 1973, pp. 18–209.

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, 100 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 et al., eds. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai and Daizō Shuppan, 1924–1932.

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