

CHAPTER 5

KŪKAI'S LATTER SEVEN-DAY RITES AND THE DAIJŌSAI CEREMONY

The Text

The letter submitted to the emperor regarding the New Year's rituals (Mi-shiho) of the Shingon'in temple in the palace precincts. One article. *Shoku Nihon kōki*, fascicle 3.

Jōwa 1 [834], twelfth month, second day of the ram. Humbly submitted by Kūkai, of the rank of Daisōzu, Great Dharma Teacher Transmitting the Lamp:

Kūkai inquires:

The Tathagata's exposition of dharma is of two modes. The first is the shallow, abbreviated mode; the second is the secret mode. The shallow, abbreviated mode corresponds to the prose and verse passages of the sutras. The secret mode corresponds to the dharanis in the sutras. The shallow, abbreviated mode may be likened to an exposition of the origins of illness and the distinguishing of medicines in the sutras. The secret treasures of dharani may be likened to the combination of medicine according to the methods [taught], ingesting it, and thus eliminating the illness. Even though one may extract and explain [the meaning of] the sutras to a sick person, it will not cure the disease. It is necessary that the medicines appropriate to the illness be combined and ingested according to the teaching; then the malady can be eliminated and life preserved.

Nevertheless at present, regarding the *Golden Splendor Sutra* (*Saishōō kyō*) sutra that is being expounded for the emperor, passages are simply being read and their meaning vainly discussed. There is no depicting of the images, forming a platform, or practicing according to the dharma. Though one may hear the explanation of the meaning of the sweet nectar, the teaching, one will not be able to savor its supreme taste of clarified butter.

Humbly I beg:

From the present and ever after, for the exposition of the sutras according to the sutra dharma, let fourteen expounder-monks and fourteen *shami* be selected, and adorning a special chamber, with sacred images placed in order and ritual implements arrayed, let them intone mantras for a period of seven days. In this way, through the accrual of blessings in the present in accord with the two modes of exoteric and esoteric and with the fundamental intent of the Tathagatas, the compassionate wish of the revered ones will be fulfilled.

Request granted on the second day of the ram, twelfth month, Jōwa 1. Let these rites be performed in accord with the petition and be made customary forever.

The essay that follows was prepared as a commentary on this text, but at the same time it seeks to explore the thought of its author, Kūkai 空海.

1. Buddhist Monks and the Power of State

In the twelfth month of 834, Kūkai petitioned the emperor for approval to build the Shingon'in 真言院 temple within the palace precincts. The text above is his complete petition. Every year, during the second week of the first month, for a seven-day period from the eighth to the fourteenth, the Mi-shiho 御修法 rituals were to be conducted in a newly con-

structed esoteric Buddhist practice hall for the purpose of praying for the peace and protection of the country and the well-being of the “jewel-body” of the emperor. In response to this petition by the high-ranking Kūkai, permission was swiftly granted in the same month it was submitted. At the time, Kūkai was sixty-two years old, and the emperor was Emperor Ninmyō 仁明, the second son of Emperor Saga 嵯峨. In the following year, 835, Kūkai died. Thus, constructing the Shingon'in chapel within the palace was a project that finally came to fruition in his very last years. What significance did the realization of this plan hold for Kūkai? In order to consider this problem, I will first take up two preliminary issues.

The first issue is the personal aspect of the formation and evolution of Kūkai's thought. In considering how his thought came to be generated and developed, various approaches are possible, but when we focus on his relation to the state, the following topic arises. In 821, at the age of forty-eight, Kūkai compiled his treatise on poetics, *Bunkyō hifuron* 文鏡秘府論 (hereafter *Hifuron*), and following that, edited a compendium of its core contents in a condensed version, *Bunpitsu ganshinshō* 文筆眼心抄 (hereafter *Ganshinshō*). Ten years later, in 810, at fifty-seven years of age, he developed his personal exposition of esoteric Shingon teachings in *Himitsu mandala jūjūshinron* 秘密曼荼羅十住心論 (hereafter *Jūjūshinron*), and also produced a condensed version, *Hizō hōyaku* 秘藏宝鑰.

Elsewhere I have compared the thought expressed in *Hifuron* with that in the shorter *Ganshinshō*, and also *Jūjūshinron* with its abbreviated version, *Hizō hōyaku*, and pointed out in both cases, subtle changes between the two versions in Kūkai's thinking regarding the national state.¹ A brief summary of my conclusions follows. To begin, regarding the full *Hifuron*, a work of Kūkai's late forties, we find clearly manifest his intention of subordinating literary art to a consciousness of the order of the emperor, who prevails over the entire land. By contrast, in the shortened version, *Ganshinshō*, this element has been thoroughly erased, and the path of poetry is not a means of rule, but rather is asserted throughout to manifest a realm of unworldliness and play. In other words, Kūkai, who was mindful of problems concerning the state

because of his personal association with Emperor Saga, developed his views as a public position in *Hifuron*, but in *Ganshinhō*, the vitality of his poetic spirit and his interest in matters of literary style are frankly expressed. Ten years later, however, Kūkai's stance underwent a complete reversal. Now fifty-seven years of age, he devoted his energies fully to the composition of *Jūjūshinron* and established himself as an esoteric thinker. Here, he makes no mention whatsoever of problems of the state or the emperor and allows not a trace of the Confucian rhetoric seen in *Hifuron*. In spite of this, however, in the condensed version of this work, *Hizō hōyaku*, he made a complete turnabout and introduced one section, the dialogue between the monk Genkan 玄関 and the "patriot," in which he places Buddhism under the control of the state. After completing an outline of the Buddhist tradition in *Jūjūshinron*, he immediately followed it with an abbreviated version in which he added commentary on the correlation and agreement between sovereign and Buddha.

I believe the change or faltering in thinking seen in the ten year span from Kūkai's later forties to late fifties to be a matter of significance. It may also be an indication of Kūkai's breadth as a human being. In any case, four years after writing *Hizō hōyaku*, Kūkai submitted his petition for the construction of Shingon'in to the imperial court. There appears to be a connection in contents between the dialogue of Monk Genkan and the patriot that appears in *Hizō hōyaku* and the issue of Shingon'in that emerges with some urgency shortly after. The issue I wish to raise concerns the possibility that this project of Kūkai's final years, when he faced the approach of death, represents one conclusion of his whole intellectual endeavor.

The second issue has to do with the background that led to Kūkai's birth as a highly individualistic esoteric Buddhist monk. To state the problem tersely, it concerns the relationship between esoteric Buddhism and the state in the Nara period monks Genbō 玄昉 and Dōkyō 道鏡, and seeks clarification of the continuities and discontinuities between them and Kūkai. Since I have taken up this problem and discussed the central issues in the past,² I will simply outline briefly the points that concern us here.

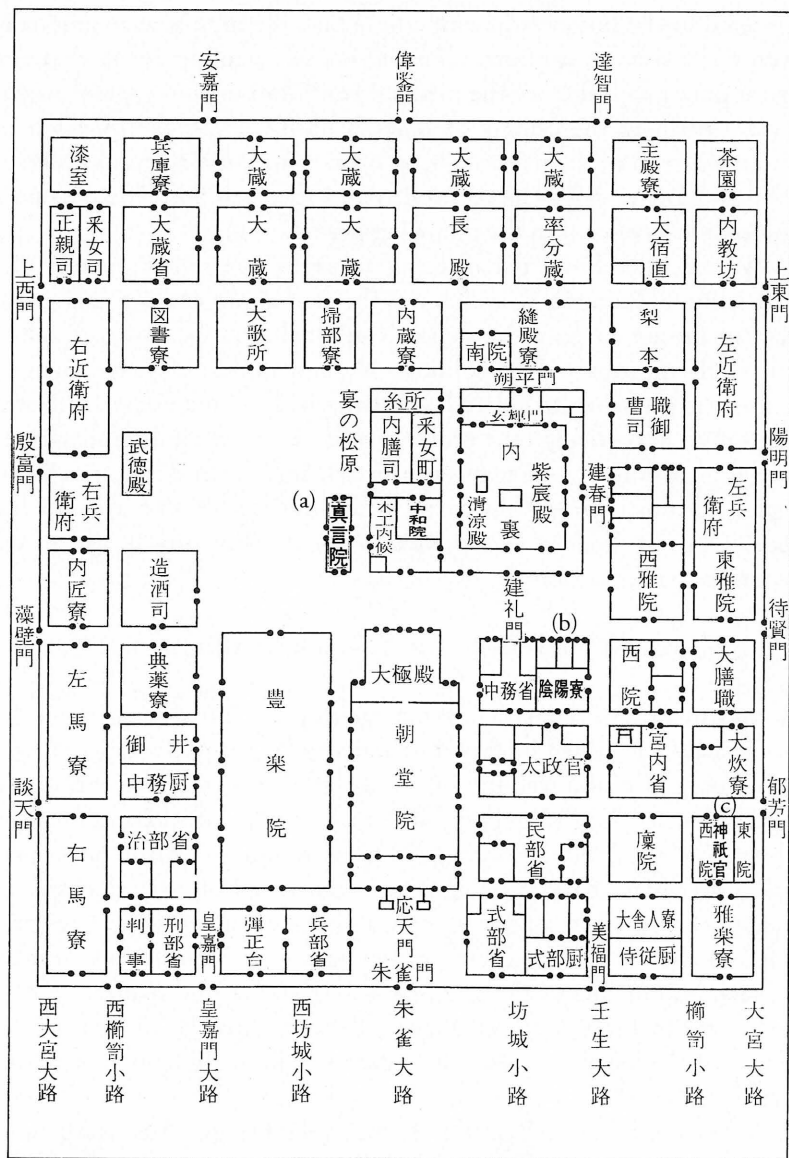
In the Tenpyō 天平 era (729-748), Emperor Shōmu 聖武 suffered from a series of major illnesses during his last ten years, and not far from his side at this time were a large number of monks who prayed for “the extended life of the sacred body.” They were called “attendant dhyana masters” (*kanbyō zenji* 看病禪師) and were expected to radiate mantras (*shingon* 真言) into the ailing sacred body that would alter its physical life-structure, thereby staving off impending death and returning the body to healthy life. Among these monks were some of lofty rank such as Rōben 良弁, the head abbot (*bettō* 別当) of Tōdaiji temple, and Daitoku 大徳 and Jikin 慈訓 of Kōfukuji 興福寺 temple, but at the same time, there were also monks like Hōei 法榮, who were without ecclesiastical rank or renown, but who had demonstrated extraordinary powers in working spells. When we focus on the function of treating the sacred body, we may distinguish two kinds of attendant monks: officially ordained and bureaucratically recognized monks like Rōben and Jikin and spiritually experienced monks like Hōei. Following the death of Emperor Shōmu, Empress Kōken 孝謙 made a determination of the relative merits and services rendered by the individual attendant chaplain-monks and distributed rewards accordingly. From an imperial edict at that time, we know that there was a consciousness of this distinction of two types.

Among the attendant monks, one official prelate who in particular gained the trust of Emperor Shōmu for remarkable healing powers was Genbō. Genbō had gone to T'ang dynasty China and received purple robes from Emperor Hsüan-tsung 玄宗 (Jp. Gensō, 685-762). He then returned to Japan bearing a large number of Buddhist texts and statues. Eventually he attained the rank of *sōjō* 僧正. At the same time, he was entrusted with the ministrations for the emperor mother, Fujiwara no Miyako 藤原宮子, who was afflicted with a serious illness, and is said to have demonstrated superior powers in working spells. Thus, Genbō was widely known for his status as a monk who had trained in China and as an attendant master of incantations who could exercise magical power. He also emerged on the stage of political activity, but quickly became embroiled in conflicts and was ignominiously transferred to Kanzeonji

觀世音寺 temple in Dazaifu 太宰府, Tsukushi 筑紫 province.

The infamous monk Dōkyō appeared on the political scene as the attendant chaplain-monk to Empress Kōken (she acceded to the throne twice, the second time taking the name Shōtoku 称徳). Dōkyō played the same role that Genbō had for Emperor Shōmu, only with greater thoroughness. Nothing is known of Dōkyō's background, but according to *Shoku Nihongi*, he was recognized as a learned and accomplished monk who could read difficult Sanskrit and who had undergone austere ascetic training. He performed the secret rite known as *sukuyō* 宿曜, an esoteric ritual rooted in astrological practices and one of the central incantation methods of the mixed esoteric (*zōmitsu* 雜密) tradition. Dōkyō acquired the qualifications to perform in the inner chapel of the imperial palace and further, after treating Kōken's sickness, began to climb rapidly up the ladder of politically significant posts. In 764, he was appointed to the rank of "prime minister-dhyana monk" (*dajō daijin zenji* 太政大臣禪師), and two years later, the empress, now with the name of Shōtoku, bestowed the rank of dharma king (*hōō* 法王) on Dōkyō. He was granted permission to use the imperial carriage and is said to have enjoyed garments and meals of the level of an emperor's. With Shōtoku's death, however, Dōkyō's arbitrary power came to an end, and like Genbō before him, he was given a distant appointment, as abbot (*bettō*) of Yakushiji 薬師寺 temple in Shimotsuke 下野 province, where he died in isolation and despair.

Even from the brief outline above, we see that both Genbō and Dōkyō began their rise in the world by establishing themselves as officially ordained and appointed monks and masters of incantatory powers. When the emperor or the nobility found their lives threatened by sickness, these monks solidified their positions as charismatic ministrant chaplains who could exercise the magical power of spells. Moreover, they far exceeded their station as protectors of the sacred body by intruding upon the focal point of political authority. This may have been a natural development, but as a result, those who commanded political influence, beginning with the Fujiwara clan, became wary of the incantatory monks who freely frequented the imperial palace and



Map of the Heian-kyō imperial palace precincts.

(a) Shingon'in (b) Onmyōryō (c) Jingikan

ministered to the body of the emperor. Thus, the monks were gradually driven from seats of authority. People became acutely aware that the magical power to influence the physical condition of the emperor might in cases endanger the centers of state authority. Thus, the question of how, on the level of the national state, official incantatory monks such as Genbō and Dōkyō might be controlled and rendered harmless became a major political concern in the following period.

We see, therefore, that in order to probe the significance of the construction of Shingon'in, which was the central project of Kūkai's final years, we must first note the major issue of that point in his personal history—the relationship of political rule and Buddhism—and further, we must be attentive to related problems in his immediate historical background, in particular, the problem of Buddhist clerical ministrations to the emperor's body. We may surmise that significant difficulties lay in the path of constructing Shingon'in within the precincts of the imperial palace. Thus, in order to clarify Kūkai's intent in his project, these two topics must be kept in mind.

2. The Monks Who Tended the Sovereign's Illness

The construction of Shingon'in temple within the inner precincts of the imperial palace assumed its function as a site for the performing of rites for the protection and stability of the nation, but it was also intimately connected with the individually directed activity of maintaining the well-being of the national sovereign. This is an example of the most personal of activities of the sovereign, being possessed of a ritual character related to the operation of the state. In this respect, the esoteric rites performed in the Shingon'in chapel possessed a characteristic in common with such Shinto rites as the Daijōsai 大嘗祭 and the Niinamesai 新嘗祭 ceremonies. To begin a consideration of these issues, let us turn to the question of the location within the palace in which Shingon'in was constructed.

According to research on the layout of the Heian palace compound by Uramatsu Kozen 浦松固禪,³ Shingon'in was constructed north of the

central ministry offices (Hasshōin 八省院), on the site where the Kageyuchō 勘解由庁 had stood. If we consult old maps of the precincts, we see that Shingon'in was quite near the Dairi 内裏 inner palace, with only Chūwain 中和院 positioned between, so that these three structures stood on an east-west axis running through the center of the palace compound. In other words, Shingon'in occupied a position close to the very heart of the Heian-kyō inner palace area (see page 161). We should note in particular the placement of Shingon'in just west of and adjacent to Chūwain, the structure where the Niinamesai ceremonies were conducted each year. In addition, to the south stood Hasshōin (Chōdōin 朝堂院), a ceremonial space where state rites such as the Daijōsai were performed. That is, Shingon'in, built specifically for conducting prayers for the peace of the nation and the health of the emperor's sacred body, was placed near Chūwain and Chōdōin, where the Daijōsai and Niinamesai ceremonies were performed, and thus occupied a position of greatest proximity to the Dairi imperial residence.

The significance of the placement of Shingon'in is highlighted when considered in contrast with Onmyōryō 陰陽寮, the Bureau of Divination, and Jingikan 神祇官, the Bureau of Kami Rites. Onmyōryō stands to the south of the Dairi imperial residence, on the west side of Nakatsukasashō 中務省, whereas Jingikan was built on the north side of Gagakuryō 雅樂寮 (Bureau of Court Music), which occupied the southeastern corner of the palace precincts. These two facilities were both located outside the central, inner palace area where Shingon'in stood. Thus, in the spatial positioning of the structures we see a hierarchical relationship among Shingon'in as the center of esoteric Buddhist rites, Onmyōryō as the center of astronomy and calendrical matters, and Jingikan as the center of administration of kami rites. If we may take the residential arrangements of the court inhabitants as reflecting the status of their particular social functioning, then the hierarchical structure of the magico-religious facilities seen above plainly indicates the official state ranking of esoteric Buddhism, Onmyōdō yin-yang magic, and Shinto. This structure indicates in particular the great importance with which the sovereign regarded esoteric Buddhist rites.

The next question to arise concerns the precedents that formed the basis for Kūkai's plan to construct Shingon'in. The most widely accepted theory is that the Inner Chapel (Nei-tao-ch'ang 内道場) in the capital of T'ang dynasty China was the example on which Kūkai modeled his thinking.⁴ Kūkai had studied in China from 804-806, and he probably became aware of the existence of the Inner Chapel within the T'ang imperial palace at this time. In fact, in 810, after he had returned to Japan, he recorded that with the flourishing of esoteric teachings, a T'ang detached palace, Chang-sheng-tien 長生殿, had been designated an inner hall for practices.⁵ During the K'ai-yuan 開元 era (713-741) of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the esoteric teachings transmitted to China by Vajrabodhi (Jp. Kongōchi 金剛智, 671-741) and Śubhakarasiṃha (Jp. Zenmui 善無畏, 637-735) gradually gained vigor, leading to the establishment of the Inner Chapel.

The Inner Chapel is a hall dedicated to Buddhist worship and practices within the imperial court, and its origins date back to the Six Dynasties period. It was from the time of Emperor Yang 楊 (569-618) of the Sui dynasty, however, that the name "Inner Chapel" was applied, and it flourished during the time of Empress Tse-t'ien Wu-hou 則天武后 (Jp. Sokuten bukō, 624-705).⁶ Following this precedent, Hsüan-tsung had Śubhakarasiṃha reside at the Inner Chapel.⁷ In Japan, Genbō, who served Emperor Shōmu, returned from China in 735. He was appointed to the rank of *sōjō* and lived in the Inner Chapel (Naidōjō); this is the first mention of Inner Chapel in early documents in Japan.⁸ Dōkyō also entered the Inner Chapel with the rank of *zenji* (dhyana master).⁹ From this it is clear that Dōkyō's career as a monk within the imperial palace in various ways coincides with that of Genbō.¹⁰

Kūkai, through his own personal observations in T'ang China, undoubtedly ascertained precedents for Japan's Inner Chapel and thus gradually formed his own plans for the construction of Shingon'in. While being fully aware of what Genbō and Dōkyō had already done, he sought to realize the Chinese precedent within a new framework. We can see one result of this in the development or evolutionary leap from the Inner Chapel to Shingon'in.

If Kūkai, in his plans for constructing Shingon'in, was conscious of the problems caused by Genbō and Dōkyō in the Inner Chapel of the palace and intended to bring about a reformulation of clerical activities at court, then he also surely had not forgotten that Genbō and Dōkyō had been originally and primarily official monks whose duty it was to tend and heal the sovereign's sickness. Thus, constructing a hall for esoteric practices deep within the palace had as its basic aim both the peace of the country and the well-being of the sovereign.

The trends of the times, however, were inopportune for Kūkai, for after Empress Shōtoku and her chaplain Dōkyō had departed from the scene, the *ritsuryō* 律令 state strengthened its vigilance regarding the political activities of Buddhist monks. The policies of her immediate successors Kōnin 光仁 and Kanmu 桓武 were none other than emergency measures to this end and took as their starting point efforts to amend the direction of the policies promoting Buddhism instituted by Shōmu and continued after him.

In order to restrict the activities of monks and nuns, the *ritsuryō* state had already enacted the "Regulations Governing Monks and Nuns," and had established bureaucratic ranks for monks in order to regularize their status within the state system. In actuality, however, a source of ambiguity arose to threaten the basic principle of the regulations for monks and nuns and their authority. This was the appearance of the special attendant chaplains who ministered to the imperiled condition of the emperor with magical spells and incantations. Because these were specialists who cared for the emperor's life and physical well-being, they had the authority to intervene in matters of the emperor's emotions and feelings as a human being, which was denied all others. Since it was a period during which the emperor alone held sovereign authority in the country, any instability in the emperor's condition might become a serious incentive for revolt, making it a national concern of considerable anxiety. The question became, how can official monks who pray for the security and well-being of the nation and the sovereign be prevented from overstepping the bounds of ritual prayer as a part of regular palace events and exercising supernormal

incantatory powers on the emperor's sacred body? This was a major issue of Kanmu's reign after the transfer of the capital to Heian-kyō (Kyoto).¹¹

The policy the political authorities sought to adopt from the reign of Kanmu on consisted of two major elements. One was to avoid the fusion of Shinto and Buddhism that was seen in the period of Dōkyō, and the other was to regulate the institution of attendant monks who treated the emperor's sickness.

The dangerous fusion of Shinto and Buddhism in the time of Dōkyō appeared in particular in the Daijōsai ceremonies conducted during the year of Empress Shōtoku's second accession. Shōtoku, on ascending to the throne a second time, changed the name of the era to Tenpyō jingo 天平神護 in the first month of 765 and performed the Daijōsai rites on the twenty-second day of the eleventh month that year. The morning following the Daijōsai ceremonies, she issued an edict declaring that she, as empress who has taken the Buddhist orders of a nun, serves the buddhas first of all and secondarily worships the divinities of heaven and earth. Next, it states that in the past it has been thought that the kami and the buddhas should be kept mutually separate, but according to the sutras, the kami serve as protectors of the Buddhist dharma. Hence, the Daijōsai is to be performed with monks and laity participating together. Although the coexistence of kami and buddhas in the rituals of the Daijōsai has been avoided in the past, this time it is to be embraced.¹²

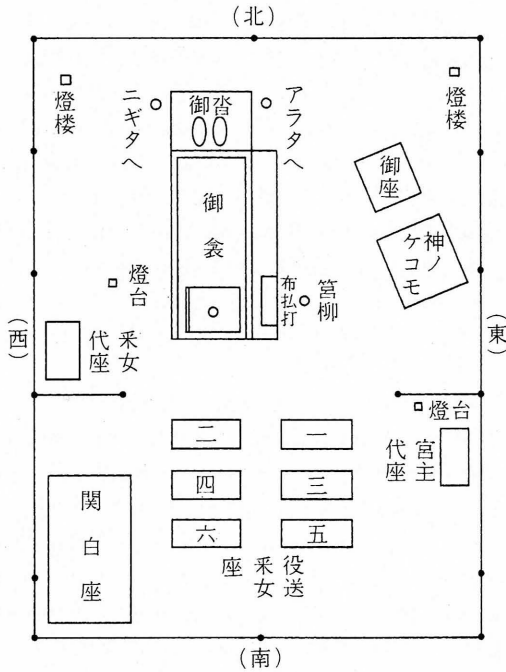
The empress, who has taken Buddhist orders as a nun, has for a second time completed accession ceremonies according to Shinto rites. The edict is clearly meant to explain this. Having made a favorite of Dōkyō, the empress-nun has been forced into a desperate measure of seeking to harmonize Buddhism with the traditions of the imperial line.¹³ According to Takatori Masao 高取正男, however, the problem did not end here, for it is likely that at the Daijōsai the night before this edict was issued, Dōkyō's figure attending on the empress in monk's robes was apparent.¹⁴

Let us review the events leading up to the issuing of the edict. In the eighth month of 758, Empress Kōken abdicated in favor of Junnin

淳仁, who was supported by Fujiwara no Nakamaro 藤原仲麻呂, and became “retired emperor” (*jōkō* 上皇). Gradually, however, she began to give important posts to Dōkyō and came into conflict with Junnin and Nakamaro. In the ninth month of 764, Nakamaro, who had planned an insurgency, was defeated and killed, and Dōkyō became minister-dhyana master (*daijin zenji* 大臣禪師). In the tenth month, Emperor Junnin’s dethronement and exile to Awaji was decided, and Kōken ascended a second time. In the tenth month of the following year, 765, Junnin died filled with resentment in his place of exile on Awaji, and in the intercalary tenth month, Dōkyō was appointed prime minister-dhyana master (*dajōdaijin zenji* 太政大臣禪師). Only a month later, in the eleventh month, Empress Shōtoku underwent the Daijōsai ceremonies. In this case, Dōkyō, who had only just advanced from minister-dhyana master to prime minister-dhyana master, would have been the only person qualified to sit in the designated “seat for the chancellor” (*kanpaku-za* 関白座) prepared in both the Yuki 悠紀 and Suki 主基 halls, and he would witness from close proximity the performance of the secret rites. Takatori conjectures that the phrase from the edict that “monks and laity should worship together” refers to these actual circumstances.¹⁵

From the above, it is clear that the amalgam of Shinto and Buddhism under the rule of Shōtoku and Dōkyō had been taken to an extreme. Whether or not Dōkyō himself actually sat in the *kanpaku-za* during the Daijōsai rituals is uncertain. Nevertheless, in the edict issued the next day, the logic of the coexistence of Shinto and Buddhism, and an attempt at its justification, is certainly apparent.

It was over half a century after these events that Shingon’in was constructed. Until Kūkai’s final years, the political trends impeded the realization of his plans. That the Mi-shiho rites of Shingon’in were born only after a difficult labor is also seen from the fact that the dates for their performance are limited to the second week of the first month. The restriction was imposed that the first seven days of the New Year would be for court banquets (*sechie* 節会) and the second seven days for Buddhist services (Mi-shiho rites). Further, at that time, as if in



Interior of the temporary Yukiden and Sukiden structures of the Daijōsai ceremonies. The seat for the chancellor is in the lower left corner; the emperor's seat is in the upper right part of the chamber.

correspondence with the *kanpaku-za* during the Daijōsai, a “seat of incantations” (*o-kajiza*) for sprinkling fragrant water on the “sacred robe” was set up inside Shingon'in. This is symbolic of the fact that the Latter Seven-day Rites bore the restricted character of Buddhist rituals.

The second problem requiring resolution by the governing authorities from the reign of Kanmu and after was the regularization of the system of ministrant healer-monks. In other words, it was necessary for the mystical powers of the attendant monks to be rendered non-political and to prevent the emergence of politically active monks like Genbō and Dōkyō. This was the problem of regulating “protector

monks" (*gojisō* 護持僧). It involved reorganizing and incorporating the ambitions of official esoteric monks within the order of the clerical hierarchy, and further, bringing the aspirations of esoteric monks of mystical powers into alignment with the formalized, refined rites of court life. Thus, such monks began to enter the imperial court in resplendent brocade vestments and to appear before the emperor in purple robes imbued with fine incense.

The "protector monks" (*gojisō*) waited upon the emperor in the Seiryōden 清涼殿 residence and, when necessary, performed rites through the night (*yoi* 夜居) to heal and guard the emperor's body. They also served in the Inner Chapel (Naidōjō), and thus were also called *naigubu* 内供奉 (inner train of attendants). In this respect, they had the status of monks who perform the rituals of the annual calendar of ceremonies in the imperial palace, but their basic function was as protector monks, and they were called on to fulfill this role in particular when serious irregularities occurred in the emperor's body and mind. On these occasions, they passed the night in prayers and incantations, seeking to expel the afflicting evil vapors and angry spirits from the sacred body. Thus, "protector" is used specifically with respect to the sacred body of the emperor.

Regarding the origins of the institution of "protector monks," two theories have been proposed. One traces the first precedent back to Emperor Kanmu's reign, when Saichō 最澄 became protector monk for the nobility in 797. The other places the beginnings with Kūkai's performance of esoteric rites (*Mi-shiho*) for the court nobles in the reign of Emperor Saga, in the Kōnin 弘仁 era (810-823).¹⁶ It should also be noted, however, that the official establishment of this institution did not come about until later times, during the reign of Emperor Daigo 醍醐.¹⁷ In any case, it is apparent that the fomentation of the regulation of the "protector monks," as a policy, arose as an attempt to replace the earlier attendant healer-chaplains. Further, it may be said that the construction of Shingon'in was realized against the background of these historical circumstances, during which the attendant chaplain-monks were transformed into the newly established "protector monks."

3. The Robe Incantation Rituals of Shingon'in

We have considered above several elements in the background of Kūkai's efforts to construct Shingon'in and have attempted to probe the significance that the extended world of the court would have seen in the establishment of the Latter Seven-day Rites. There now remains the work of investigating the internal elements of Shingon'in. This may be seen as a shift from a centrifugal approach to a centripetal one. Precisely what was Kūkai seeking to accomplish through the functioning of that space at the heart of the palace precincts?

As we have seen, Kūkai submitted his petition to the imperial court in 834. Concerning matters directly mentioned in the text, two items are significant for us here. First, as we see from references in the petition, regular service meetings for lectures focusing on the *Sutra of the Supreme Kings of Golden Splendor* (*Konkōmyō saishō ō kyō* 金光明最勝王經) were already being held previous to the petition, but this activity consisted merely of reading the text of the sutra and discussing its meaning; there was no "depicting of images or forming a platform." Thus, the "meaning of the sweet nectar" of the teaching might be discussed intellectually, but actual experience of the supreme "savor of *daigo*" was impossible. The *Golden Splendor Sutra* lectures (*Saishōkō* 最勝講) that Kūkai speaks of refer to the Gosaie 御齋会 services, an event of the ritual calendar of the court, held in the Daigokuden hall for a seven-day period from the eighth to the fourteenth in the first month. This event was begun in the mid-Nara period as a Buddhist service to pray for the peace and protection of the country and an abundant harvest of grain. We should note here that Kūkai asserts the superiority of the Shingon'in rites over the Gosaie services, which had originated among the earlier Nara schools, advocating a reformist innovation of performing esoteric practices of depicting images and raising a platform.

The second matter concerns the statement that during the observances of the Latter Seven-day Rites, in addition to lectures on the sutra, fourteen monks who expound the dharma and fourteen *shami* are to be selected, and they should adorn the chamber, enshrine sacred

images, arrange ritual implements, and intone mantras. It may be said that the central elements of the esoteric rites that Kūkai is advocating are the activities stated in this passage, together with the preparation of painted images and a platform mentioned in the first passage above. All of these elements are of course based on esoteric texts, but the problem for us concerns precisely what Kūkai sought to achieve through these ritual means.

In existing documents, Kūkai says nothing further regarding the placement and adornment of the images or a platform within Shingon'in. For knowledge of these matters we must conjecture on the basis of traditions handed down from a later period, but these are probably not far removed from the original practices. This is because secret rites and ceremonies of the court involving the safety of the sacred body of the sovereign tend, precisely because of the secrecy that surrounds them, to be accurately and consistently preserved and transmitted. In fact, there is little inconsistency or contradiction seen among the documents of later periods treating the Shingon'in rites. They have in common a faithful adherence to the traditions of Kūkai.

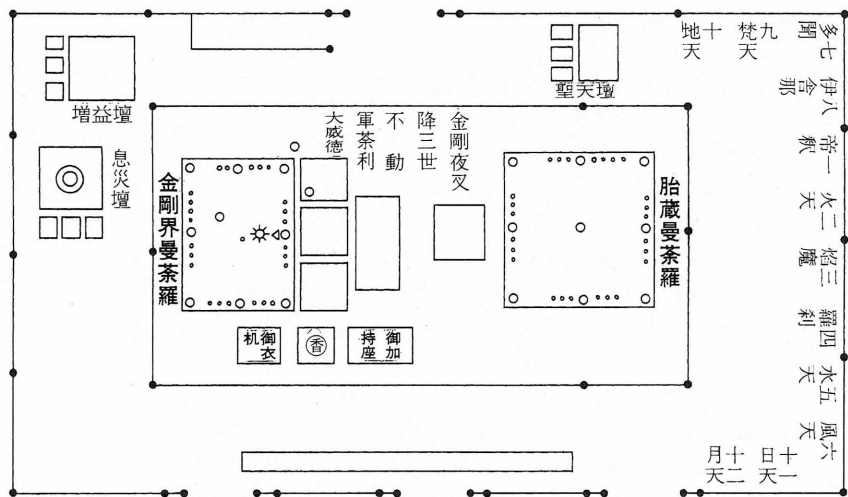
To begin with the adornment within the Shingon'in hall, in his petition, Kūkai speaks of depicting and displaying sacred images. Regarding this, *Goshichinichi* 後七日, fascicle one, may be summarized as follows.¹⁸ The hall is a rectangular space five *ken* 間 in size. On the east wall of the main chamber is hung the Matrix-store (*Taizōkai* 胎藏界) mandala, and on the west wall is the Vajra-realm (*Kongōkai* 金剛界) mandala. Each is the central object of worship in alternate years. Before the mandalas, large altar platforms and worship trays are placed. Between the two mandalas, with back to the north, the altar platform for the five great *myōō* 明王 ("bright king" divinities) is placed. In the center is Fudō 不動, at the left side are Gōzanze 降三世 and Kongōyasha 金剛夜叉, and on the right are Gundari 軍荼利 and Daiitoku 大威德. Facing the altar platform of the five great *myōō*, in front of the south wall, are the *go-kajiza* 御加持座 seat, the fragrant water stand (*kōzuidai* 香水台), and the sacred robe stand (*gyoiki* 御衣机) arranged in a row. Concerning the space beneath the eaves surrounding the main chamber, on the east side

of the north wall is the altar for the deity Shōten 聖天 (or Kangiten), and in the west corner is the altar for the esoteric rite of increasing merit (*zōyaku* 増益). Along the west wall, the altar for the rite for preventing disasters is built, and in the middle of the eastern wall the sacred images of the twelve deities are hung in a row.¹⁹

In his petition, Kūkai states that in this ritually prepared sacred space, fourteen monks who grasp the dharma (*gebōsō* 解法僧) and fourteen *shami* 沙弥 intone mantras for seven days. The central part of the ceremonies of the Latter Seven-day Rites is the prayer ritual of empowering the jewel-body (*gyokutai no kaji* 玉躰の加持) held on the final day. The sacred implements directly involved in this ritual are the robe stand, stand for fragrant water, and seat of prayer placed near the south wall of the main chamber. Kūkai does not discuss directly the details of the *kaji* prayer ritual, but we may conjecture that basically it consisted of uttering mantras, investing the fragrant water with magical power, and on the final day (the fourteenth of the first month), sprinkling the empowered water on the emperor's body. If the emperor did not participate in person, a robe would be invested with power. It was probably for this reason that the robe stand was permanently placed in the hall.

The robe-empowerment ritual (*gyoi kaji* 御衣加持) is roughly outlined in such records as *Goshichinichi* and *Goshichishō* 御質抄, along with the preceding and succeeding rites, but since it belongs to the category of secret ceremonies there are many portions restricted to oral transmission, and it is difficult to probe its depths. Perhaps partly for this reason, most records regarding the robe ritual are based on late-Heian period documents that do not provide a clear picture. Nevertheless, such records supply clues concerning the nature of the rite as transmitted, and thus give us a basis for conjecturing about the intentions of Kūkai, who established the rite.

As mentioned earlier, the Latter Seven-day Rites were begun at dawn of the eighth day of the first month and continued to the evening of the fourteenth day. Among the various ceremonies, the sacred robe-empowerment ritual involved purifying the emperor's robe and investing



Layout of the central altar area occupying the main structure of the Shingon'in compound, surrounded by a verandah with various additional altars.

it with magical power. Usually it was performed nine times over three days, the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth. To give a general outline of the ritual,¹⁹ at the hour of the ox on the twelfth, monks drew water from Shinsen'en 神泉苑 (this water was called fragrant water or *kōzui*) and put in a special bucket (*kōzui-oke* 香水桶). On occasion the vessel was covered with cloth, and a *gyūgyokujō* 牛玉杖 staff was placed standing at the robe stand. From the latter part of night (from midnight to dawn) of the twelfth, the robe-empowerment ritual was performed nine times.²⁰ Each time the ritual ended, the chief monk (*dai-ajari* 大阿闍利) stood before the fragrant water vessel and ceremonially raised the staff, and the accompanying monks also descended and raised the staff. This was to soak the staff in the fragrant water and sprinkle the water on the robe.

Then the chief monk read the following prayer:

Earnestly I pray to
empower the fragrant water,

attain great spiritual powers,
 protect the sacred king,
 extinguish what is unpropitious.
 May the jewel-body be at peace.
 Boundless the aspirations,
 may they decidedly be perfectly fulfilled.
 Within the court, peace;
 all people enjoying pleasures;
 beneath the heavens and throughout the dharma realm,
 benefits for all.

This is a prayer for protecting the sacred king and for peace for the sacred body through the empowerment and sprinkling of the fragrant water. After this, five great vows and the spell of Fudō are intoned. The fragrant water ritual is not performed during the daytime, but only during the evening and late night hours, and the robe ritual is a secret rite performed in the depths of night.

According to the latter part of the document *Goshichishō*, after the Latter Seven-day Rite has reached completion, the officiating chief monk immediately enters the palace and performs the empowerment ritual for the jewel-body (*gyokutai kaji*). The seat for ritual empowerment (*go-kajiza*) prepared within Shingon'in was originally for the jewel-body, but gradually the emperor ceased to participate in person and the robe as surrogate became the central focus.²¹ The jewel-body empowerment ritual came to be replaced by the robe ritual as the customary practice, and following the completion of the seven days of ceremonies, it became the rule for the chief *daiajari* monk to conduct the jewel-body ritual within the palace. There, in the center space of the main chamber of the south hall, fine reed blinds (*misu* 御簾) were hung, and in front, a stand for fragrant water was made. Above the stand, two vessels containing fragrant water for sprinkling and two *sanjō* 散杖 wands were placed. In this ritual, the *sanjō* wands correspond to the *gyūgyokujō* used in the ceremonies for the empowerment of the fragrant water in Shingon'in. The subsequent sprinkling ceremony (*reisui girei* 灑水儀礼) was

performed as follows. First, incantations were uttered for the empowerment of the fragrant water in the vessels on the left and right. Next, the *sanjō* on the right side was taken, placed in the fragrant water on the same side and incantations were performed; the ritual was repeated with the vessel on the left. Then, the right hand *sanjō* was taken and with it water was sprinkled three times facing the emperor. Next, the *sanjō* on the left side was taken and water was sprinkled three times on the officiant himself, on the nobles in attendance, or facing the dharmic realm (*hokkai* 法界). At the end, the Fudō mantra was performed.

It is uncertain precisely when it became customary for the chief officiant monk to enter the palace after the ceremonies had been concluded, but it is clear that the central purpose of the Latter Seven-day Rites has consistently been the empowerment of the jewel-body or of the robe. As indicated by the fact that the adornment of the interior of the Shingon'in hall was designed so that the robe stand and the seat of empowerment were central, the sprinkling ceremonies based on the empowerment of the fragrant water was the focal point of the secret rites. Further, from the fact that the fragrant water was drawn from Shinsen'en in the first month, it may be conjectured that there were deep associations with beliefs in the special potency of "youthful water" of the New Year (*wakamizu shinkō* 若水信仰). All the ceremonial operations of the Latter Seven-day Rites were constructed so that they moved toward the final climax of the magical empowerment through the medium of sacred water. We must note here further that in the entire process of incantatory empowerment and sprinkling, it was anticipated that the mantra of Fudō Myōō 不動明王 would exercise an important and commanding power. This is eloquently expressed above all by the central placement of the statue of Fudō between the two mandalas in the sacred space of Shingon'in.

4. Rituals for Healing Illness

As we have seen, the ceremonies conducted within Shingon'in were essentially incantatory rites for the purification and empowerment of the

jewel-body (or robe) through the intermediaries of Fudō Myōō and the sacred water. What was it, however, that formed the ultimate goal of these magical rites? In other words, what was the nature of the physical and psychological transformation in the jewel-body that was to be effected through the fragrant water empowerment and sprinkling ceremonies?

Let us turn once more to the petition concerning the construction of Shingon'in that Kūkai submitted to the court. As mentioned before, he speaks of depicting images, forming a platform, and intoning mantras, but he is silent regarding the transformative effects on the emperor's body to be expected from these actions. At the least, it may be said that we can arrive at no concrete notions from the text of the petition. The same is true of the documents from later periods related to the ceremonies. Nevertheless, we must not overlook certain assumptions that are exposed in Kūkai's petition, for they function as a compass pointing us toward Kūkai's true intentions.

At the beginning of his petition, Kūkai states that there are two kinds of preaching by means of which the Buddha expounded the dharma: the shallow, abbreviated mode and the secret mode. The shallow, abbreviated mode is manifested in the "prose passages and verses" of the sutras, and the exposition in the secret mode is found in the dharanis in the sutras. After defining these two methods of expounding and comprehending the Buddhist teaching, he develops his thesis in the following manner. The shallow, abbreviated mode of exposition is like the pathology and classification of medicines seen in traditional Chinese pharmacology. By contrast, the secret mode consisting of the hidden treasury of dharanis corresponds to actually taking the medicine made according to prescription and thus curing the illness; it has the purpose of eliminating illness and preserving life.

Here, the system of Buddhist teachings is divided into "prose and verse" passages and dharanis (mystical words of reality), but Kūkai further characterizes this division by distinguishing between concern with the causes of sickness and the appropriate medications, on the one hand, and specific diagnosis and treatment, on the other. It is the latter concern with actual treatment that is the most urgent topic, according to

Kūkai. From the context of the argument, and from Kūkai's thought expressed here, we know this discussion is not merely rhetorical or decorative. In the following passage, Kūkai continues with the harsh criticism that the lecture meetings for expounding the *Golden Splendor Sutra* fall to the level of mere pathology and pharmacy, for they simply offer a reading of the sutra text, no more than vainly discussing the meaning. The *Golden Splendor Sutra* lecture services teach the conceptual meaning of the sweet nectar of dharma, but the rituals Kūkai proposes involve actually experiencing the taste of *daigo* 醍醐. We see, then, that in considering the construction of Shingon'in, Kūkai was cognizant of the court custom of the sutra lecture (*Saishōkō* or Gosaie), with prayers for stability and fruitfulness. It is also noteworthy that this ceremony was held for one week from the eighth of the first month, and further that the hall where it was conducted was the Daigokuden, located just to the south of Shingon'in. Kūkai deliberately selected precisely the same period as the Gosaie, which was a traditional Buddhist observance, and asserted the superiority of his secret Latter Seven-day Rites over the older ceremony, which, he claimed, focused on the teaching in the shallow, abbreviated mode. Further, we must not overlook the fact that the basis for the superiority of the secret rites lay in their therapeutic function of eliminating illness, and in particular, healing the jewel-body. He sought to address above all the issue of preserving the vital well-being of both the body and the mind of the emperor. The passage from Kūkai's petition above conveys his overflowing confidence and ambition as a "monk ministering to illness" (*kanbyōsō* 看病僧).

If we may understand the background of Kūkai's notion of the "secret mode" of the teaching in this way, how are we to grasp concretely the ailments of the jewel-body and their cure? Of course, regarding the emperor's maladies, there is no need to define these in detail, but it is certainly within our task to determine the general nature of how they were understood in their linkage with their ritual treatment (the Latter Seven-day Rites). A sickness arises in association with the activity of a pathological agent. In Kūkai's petition, there is no explanation of the actual nature of the pathogen, but since he speaks of "eliminating the

actual nature of the pathogen, but since he speaks of “eliminating the sickness,” this must mean at the same time eliminating its causal agent.

As mentioned before, it was in 834, during the reign of Emperor Ninmyō, that Kūkai wrote his petition to the court and received permission for the construction of Shingon'in. During the Heian period, belief took root in afflicting spirits called *mono no ke*, whose activity was the mysterious cause of sickness, and it was precisely from the Jōwa era that the fear of *mono no ke* 物の怪 spread.²² Further, it was also just at this time that a newly emergent ritual practice with Fudō Myōō as chief object of worship gradually gained prominence as a rite of resistance that worked the elimination and expulsion of *mono no ke*, the pathogen that gave rise to maladies of body and mind. Thus, the period when Shingon'in was constructed corresponds to the time when the domination of *mono no ke* and the formation of Fudō rites gradually took on clear outline while maintaining a relationship of mutual opposition and tension.²³ Of course, already in the Nara period there was acceptance of the existence of angry spirits (*onryō* 怨霊)—such as spirits of the dead (*shikon* 死魂, *bōkon* 亡魂)—that as causes of disease attacked the world of humans and also the world of nature. From the early Heian period, the activity of the spirits (*goryō* 御霊) that tormented and eventually killed Emperor Kanmu, for example, came to be widely feared. Stories of spirits working curses or retribution were gradually amplified in the currents of the times, and eventually *mono no ke* as a crystallization of a possessing spirit was born. In this atmosphere, the rites of the mantra of Fudō quickly emerged as a replacement for the traditional sutra chanting and various services. These rites came to be widely relied upon as a method of employing powerful spells to ward off *mono no ke* and angry spirits that caused disease.

Kūkai studied in T'ang dynasty China, and on his return to Japan brought, among the various Buddhist articles he had gathered, a representative work on Fudō rituals, indicating the strong interest he already possessed in Fudō Myōō iconography and the methods of prayer rituals in which Fudō was the central object of worship. This interest is also apparent in the placement of Buddhist statues in the lecture hall of

Kongōbuji 金剛峰寺 temple on Mt. Kōya 高野, in which Kūkai himself is thought to have participated.

In China, through the activity of Amoghavajra (Jp. Fukū 不空), an India-born translator of sutras, Chinese versions of scriptures relating to Fudō rites had already appeared in quick succession from the mid-T'ang dynasty on, and among both monks and laypeople such rites grew popular as magical rituals, particularly for obtaining protection of the body, protection of the country, fecundity, and longevity.²⁴ We do not have detailed knowledge of precisely how Kūkai himself conceived the place of the Fudō rites within the overall process of the Shingon'in rituals, but it is probably permissible to view his intentions as reflected in the positioning of the five *myōō* divinities on the central altar, with Fudō in the center, in the developed Latter Seven-day Rites. This is based on the strong likelihood that the "platform" in the phrase in Kūkai's petition, "depicting images and forming a platform," includes the altar stand for Fudō.

Among the prominent pioneers in the Fudō faith after Kūkai was Sōō 相応 (831-918), a disciple of Jikaku Daishi Ennin 慈覺大師円仁.²⁵ Sōō received the transmission of the Fudō rites and special methods of the *goma* 護摩 fire offering (*betsugyōgiki gomahō* 別行儀軌護摩法) from Ennin, and performed practices at the Eastern Tower (Tōtō 東塔) and Mudōji-tani 無動寺谷 on Mt. Hiei 比叡. The variety of methods of practice Sōō performed include the recitation of the names of buddhas as a repentance based on conceptions of hell, and the Abishahō 阿比舍法 ceremony in which divine spirits were brought to possess children and prayers for health and longevity were offered, but among them the Fudō rites were central. When Somedono Kōgō 染殿皇后, the consort of Emperor Montoku 文德 and the mother of Emperor Seiwa 清和, was afflicted by a goblin (*tengu* 天狗), Sōō performed prayer rites to Fudō Myōō and dispersed the illness. Evidence indicating the degree to which Sōō received the trust of the court through his attendance upon the emperor is seen, for example, in his treatment of the toothaches of Emperor Seiwa and Emperor Uda 宇多, and his successful remedy of the fox-possession of Kōkōki Rokujō Kōgō 光孝紀六条皇后. Further, at

Emperor Seiwa's command, he performed the Abishahō ceremonies in the inner Dairi 内裏 halls.

Moreover, according to *Asabashō* 阿裘縛抄, which records an example of the Fudō rites from the tenth century, the aims of the rituals involve three kinds of life crisis: sickness, childbirth by an imperial consort, and maladies of the emperor's jewel-body.²⁶ During this period, the Enchō 延長 era (923-930), Son'i 尊意, as the attending monk of Emperor Daigo, performed the Fudō rites for a seven-day period in 923 and again in 925 on the occasion of childbirth by the imperial consort (the births of Suzaku 朱雀 and Murakami 村上), and further, in the eighth year of the era, when the emperor fell ill because of lightning that struck the Seiryōden hall, he achieved the manifestation of "the encouraging voice of Fudō Myōō" through the performance of incantations.²⁷

The document *Nihongi ryaku* 日本紀略 records that on the twenty-first of the seventh month, Enchō 8 (930), shortly after the lightning incident, five Tendai monks were summoned and the "ceremony with five altar stands" (Godan shuhō 五壇修法) was performed for the sake of Emperor Daigo, who had moved from the Seiryōden chambers and taken refuge in the Jōneiden 常寧殿 hall.²⁸ This ceremony was intended to placate the angry spirit of Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真. Sōō was the chief officiant. According to *Godanhō nikki* 五壇法日記, a document that records the Five-altar ceremonies conducted within the sacred precincts of the court from the Ōwa 応和 era (961-963) to the time of the Mongol invasions (961-1274), the first performance took place in the third month, Ōwa 1 (961), during the reign of Emperor Murakami.²⁹ This was thirty years after the 930 date of the lightning incident, but reflects the process by which the Fudō rites (Fudōhō) as a ritual format was gradually systematized and refined from the time of Kūkai and Sōō in the ninth century, so that in the tenth century it gradually came to be established as an official court rite known as the "Five-altar ceremony." According to Jōchō 承澄, who recorded the *Asabashō*, the Five-altar ceremony was performed in particular to eliminate obstructions and misfortune during such occasions as a

childbirth of an imperial consort or the designation of the prince (*ritsubō* 立坊). Further, *Godanhō nikki* emphasizes that, in addition, it was conducted in order to offer spells to ward off the emperor's "afflictions" and to pray for the recovery of the jewel-body. We should note here also that in these cases, the obstructions of the imperial consort or the prince and the infirmities of the emperor were believed to be caused by the influence of *onryō* or *mono no ke* spirits. We see here that concern for the physical safety of mother and infant in the emergency situation of an imperial childbirth and, once the person has become emperor, concern for recovery from a life crisis are regarded as nearly seamlessly linked. Needless to say, the central aim of spell and prayer rituals is the expulsion of the possessing *onryō* or *mono no ke* spirits from the ailing body. Thus, the Fudō rites came to be systematized in minute detail as a ritual treatment for expelling the external pathogenic agents that had invaded the jewel-body.

5. The Daijōsai Ceremonies

Above, I have sought to delineate the ritual structure of the Latter Seven-day Rites based primarily on the petition of Jōwa 1, but also with consultation of later documents and traditions. Through this process, a number of issues regarding Kūkai's thinking have been clarified. Next, I will focus in particular on the subtle correlations or mutual correspondences between the jewel-body (or robe) empowerment ceremonies performed in Shingon'in and Shinto rites such as the Niinamesai and the Daijōsai ceremonies. When we explore the background of these links or correspondences, we are led to conjecture that Kūkai's construction of Shingon'in in fact assumed the existence of the Daijōsai and Niinamesai ceremonies, and further, that it was conceived in a chain of reasoning developed in opposition to these Shinto rites. Below, I will investigate this idea by focusing on areas in which these two types of rites overlap.

The Niinamesai ceremony is a harvest rite held within the palace precincts each year in autumn, on the day of the hare in the latter part of the eleventh month. It is a ritual communion meal for deity and human,

with offerings of the new grain harvested that year made to Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神 (or the deities of heaven and earth) and the emperor. When an emperor has died and the accession of a new emperor has occurred, the Niinamesai that is conducted that year is called the Daijōsai. The traditions of the Niinamesai appear already in the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集. In ancient times it was performed among the common people, but gradually it was adopted by the imperial court and refined into a court rite centered on the emperor. This is conjectured to have occurred about the time of Tenmu 天武 and Jitō 持統.³⁰

Concerning the sites for these two court ceremonies, the Niinamesai takes place in the Chūwain hall, which is located just between the Dairi inner palace and Shingon'in, and in the case of the Daijōsai, the location is the Daigokuden 大極殿 hall, which stands on the south side of the Chūwain hall. As we have noted earlier, the Shingon'in chapel was built in the closest proximity to the Chūwain and Daigokuden halls.³¹ Thus, the traditions of court ceremonies developed so that the Niinamesai held in the Chūwain hall, the Daijōsai held in the Daigokuden hall, and the Latter Seven-day Rites held in Shingon'in were all conducted, though at different times, in the very heart of the palace precincts.

In considering the significance of the Daijōsai as a rite, an influential article by Origuchi Shinobu 折口信夫, "The Fundamental Meaning of the Daijōsai" (1928), is extremely illuminating. Moreover, although Origuchi may not himself have had the issue in mind, he touches on a number of points that must not be overlooked when considering the relationship between the Daijōsai and the Latter Seven-day rites.

To begin, according to Origuchi, the Daijōsai is a ritual for pacifying the spirit in connection with the death and rebirth of the emperor.³² Here, the view of spirits embraced by the ancient Japanese is clearly reflected. For example, the term "emperor spirit" (*tennō rei* 天皇靈) that appears in *Bitatsuki* 敏達紀 is said to signify the root source of the emperor's authority and power, which arises when this spirit is dwelling within him. In the past, the emperor was called *sume-mima no*

mikoto. “*Sume*” means “sacred,” and “*mima*” indicates the physical body. Hence, the meaning of the title may be expressed, “life that possesses a sacred body.” The physical bodies of the individual emperors down through history were vessels for the spirit. The emperor spirit entered into the *sume-mima no mikoto* as its abode, and at that point, for the first time, the emperor became an emperor with power and authority. The individual emperors of the historical succession did not possess such authority because of blood descent from the preceding emperor, but because the emperor spirit had been instilled in their own bodies through rituals for pacifying the spirit (*tama-shizume*). It was the Daijōsai ceremony that formed the locus for actualizing this transformation.

For the Daijōsai, two temporary structures—the Yukiden 悠紀殿 and Sukiden 主基殿 halls—are built in the Daigokuden (court of high ceremony), and within each a place for reclining, including matting and coverlet, is prepared. Here, the person who is to become the next emperor withdraws to complete the qualifications and solemnly observe a confinement. That is, the temporary halls are the place for the spirit, through secret rites of *mi-tamafuri* (pacifying the spirit), to be incorporated into the physical body, and for this confinement, matting and coverlet have been prepared. According to the opening fascicle on “The Age of the Gods” in *Nihon shoki*, when the deity Ninigi no Mikoto descends from heaven, he covers himself with the coverlet of the true bed (*madoko-ofusuma* 真床襲衾). It is said that this is what the crown prince, during the period of votive confinement, covers himself with to avoid the light of the sun from without. When the confinement has ended, however, and the coverlet of the true bed is removed, the emperor spirit has entered the *sume-mima no mikoto*, the sacred body, and there the fully qualified emperor is born.

The second thesis of interest put forward by Origuchi concerns the meaning of “*matsuri* 祭り” (also read “*sai*”; observance or festival) in the case of the Niinamesai and the Daijōsai. According to Origuchi, the original form of the *matsuri* consisted of three elements: the “autumn” observance (*aki matsuri*), “winter” observance (*fuyu matsuri*), and

“spring” observance (*haru matsuri*). These terms, however, do not necessarily have the seasonal meaning represented by the Chinese characters, for the characters were imported with the lunar calendar and applied to the original Japanese words. For the ancient Japanese, *aki*, *fuyu*, and *haru* held a meaning distinct from the calendrical thought expressed in the Chinese characters.

What, then, was the nature of the *matsuri* signified by *aki matsuri*, *fuyu matsuri*, and *haru matsuri*? According to Origuchi, these three formed one continuous *matsuri* held on the last night of the year. That is, the *aki matsuri* was the *matsuri* conducted in the early hours of the night, the *fuyu matsuri* was conducted in the middle of the night, and the *haru matsuri* was conducted at dawn. In terms of content, during the evening *aki matsuri*, the master of the house reported on the year's harvest of the fields to the *kami* who had come from afar (guest *kami*, *marebito* or rare visitor). During the midnight *fuyu matsuri*, the visitor *kami* wishes the master of the house long life and good fortune, and a ceremony for the pacification of spirits is performed. The dawn *haru matsuri* is for blessing the revival and regeneration of the spirits, for by implanting strong spirits, human beings undergo a rebirth.

The central element in this series of *matsuri* observances is the pacification of spirits (*tama-shizume*) performed in the severe winter night. Origuchi states that this spirit pacification holds three meanings. The first is that of fixing the spirit that has come from outside to the body—*furu* (“attaching”) *matsuri*. In the following stage, the spirit, while now fixed in the body, is at the same time capable of endless division without any diminution of its original condition. Thus, a shift in meaning occurs whereby the spirit is distributed to others—*fuyu* (“dividing”) *matsuri*. Belief in the division of the spirit is called *tama-furi*; this is the second meaning of pacifying the spirit. In later times, the notion of spirit pacification became dominant. It was thought that during a certain period the spirits of humans were liable to separate from the body and roam about; hence, it was necessary to take measures to prevent this by calming and settling the spirit. This is the third meaning of spirit pacification.

Above we have seen that the *fuyu* matsuri is based on the assumption of three functions of spirits: adherence, division, and wandering. Origuchi goes on further to apply these three functionings of spirits to the emperor spirit and the case of the Daijōsai ceremony. That is, in the Daijōsai, the new sovereign, through attaching to him or herself the emperor spirit, which comes from outside, newly attains to the imperial authority and power as the new emperor (the first meaning of spirit pacification). Next, the new sovereign, who has undergone accession, divides the emperor spirit that has been taken into himself and distributes it to his retainers. The divided spirit is attached to robes and distributed in acts called “the emperor’s robe distribution” (*kinu kubari* 衣配り). This is the second meaning of spirit pacification. Further, toward the close of each year the emperor spirit weakens and enters a condition of infirmity in which it may easily wander off. In order to settle and calm the spirit, in the eleventh month, on a day determined by divination, rites of pacification are performed. This is the ceremony conducted annually for strengthening of the spirit (the third meaning of spirit pacification).

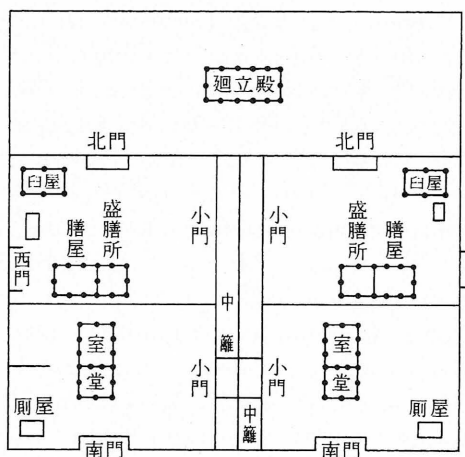
In this view, the Daijōsai ceremonies (and the Niinamesai) are intimately tied to the procedures of spirit pacification conducted in the *fuyu* matsuri observances.³³ In later times, the day of the hare in the last third of the eleventh month came to be selected for the Niinamesai ceremonies, and it was determined that on the preceding day—the day of the tiger—rites for the pacification of spirits would be conducted (I will discuss this below). In Origuchi’s thinking, however, these two ceremonies were originally conceived as a single entity. The question raised regarding our concerns in this chapter lies in the relationships or contrasts that may be seen to exist between the court ceremonies held at the close of the year and the Latter Seven-day Rites performed at the beginning of the new year. In particular, the problem concerns whether Kūkai, in first conceiving the Shingon’in rituals, already had an awareness of the ritual meanings of the Daijōsai and Niinamesai ceremonies. My belief is that precisely because he possessed such an acute consciousness, he sought to create within the Shingon’in chapel a

correlative but contrastive ritual space distinct from that of the Daijōsai and Niinamesai ceremonies. Finally, therefore, in order to clarify the contrastive natures of the two rituals, I will discuss the “empowerment of the robe” (*gyoi kaji*), focusing on its distinctive characteristics as they relate to our central theme.

6. The Feather Robe of Heaven

A number of rituals are conducted during the entire process of the Daijōsai, beginning in the fourth month with the selection by divination of the fields for planting the sacred rice to be used,³⁴ but central to our concerns here is the Daijōsai ritual of the day of the hare of the eleventh month. On this day, the emperor performs twice a secret rite called *Oyudono-goto* 御湯殿事 (matters of the hall of hot water). The first performance is called “ōmi no oyu” (hot water of great abstinence). It was enacted about 10 a.m. in the bathing chamber in the palace. The second performance, called “omi no oyu” (hot water of small abstinence), was carried out at nightfall in the *Kairyūden* 廻立殿 hall immediately before going out into the *Yuki* and *Suki* halls. Thus, the emperor cleansed himself twice, during the day and night, before secluding himself in the Daijō chambers and embarking on the rituals of sleeping and eating together with the *kami*. The night bathing, since it was repeated in the *Yuki* and *Suki* halls, was performed a total of three times. The *Kairyūden* hall refers to the bathing chamber. In this rite of bathing, the emperor changed into a hemp garment (*yu-katabira* 湯帷子) known as the “heavenly feather robe.” In other words, he first put on the hemp garment and entered the water; then, while in the bath, he removed and discarded the garment. On emerging, he donned a different “heavenly feather robe.”

A number of scholars, including *Origuchi*, have noted the importance of the rituals involving the heavenly feather robe that immediately precedes the Daijōsai rites, but before turning to them, let us consider briefly the significance of the bathing rituals. As mentioned above, on the occasion of the Daijōsai, the *Yuki* and *Suki* halls are built as temporary structures in the south court of the *Daigokuden* hall. This



Layout of the Daijōsai compound according to *Jōgangishiki*, with the Kairyūden bathing hall at the top (north) and the Yuki (right) and Suki (left) halls at the bottom. The structures in the middle area are for preparation of the ritual meals.

corresponds with the fact that two provinces—the land of Yuki (Yuki no kuni) and the land of Suki (Suki no kuni)—have been selected beforehand to provide the new grain for the rituals on that day. At the center of the north side of the Yuki and Suki halls, the Kairyūden hall is built for the bathing rites.³⁵

Jōgangishiki, 貞觀儀式 fascicle 3, which concerns the accession and Daijōsai ceremonies, states regarding the night of the ceremony day of the hare: “At the hour of the dog, entrance into the Kairyūden hall. Bathing. Donning the ceremonial robes, going to the Daijōsai ceremonies.”³⁶ *Engi shiki* 延喜式, fascicle 7, records almost the identical passage.³⁷ Thus, the emperor bathes in the Kairyūden hall, then putting on the “ceremonial robes,” proceeds to the Yuki and then Suki halls. Concerning the bathing in the Kairyūden hall, however, fascicle 11 of *Seikyūki* 西宮記, a work on ancient practices and customs by Minamoto Takaaki 源高明 (914-982), states: “Water is heated; ... advance to tub; emperor dons the heavenly feather robe; bathing in it is the tradition.”³⁸ In other words, the robes that the emperor dons in the Kairyūden hall

are simply called “ceremonial robes” (*saifuku* 祭服) in *Jōgangishiki* and *Engi shiki*, but here they are called the “heavenly feather robes” (*ama no hagoromo* 天の羽衣). The same expression appears in *Gōke shidai* 江家次第 by Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041-1111): “According to *Chōgen gyoki* 長元御記, wearing the heavenly feather robe, [the emperor] enters and descends into the tub.”³⁹ Thus, about the time of this record, the previously designated “ceremonial robe” came to be understood to be the “heavenly feather robe.” It is possible that from the beginning, the term “ceremonial robe” held the implication of the heavenly feather robe. This matter is impossible to determine at this point. Let us consider, however, the manner in which the emperor donned the heavenly feather robe in the rituals of the bathing chamber. We know from *Gōke shidai* quoted above that the heavenly feather robe was a kind of *yu-katabira*, a robe worn by the nobility in bathing and after bathing, but how was it actually employed in the bathing rituals?

In *Daijōeki*, also by Ōe no Masafusa, it is recorded that during the Daijōsai conducted in the eleventh month of 1108, retainers of the treasury storehouse (*uchikura*) placed “one robe” and “a silk head scarf” in the Kairyūden hall, and further, the seamstress prepared “two heavenly feather robes.”⁴⁰ As we have seen, the emperor, wearing a *katabira* bathing robe, descended into the tub, then in the tub removed the *katabira* robe, and on emerging from the bath donned another *katabira* robe.⁴¹ The same procedure is recorded in *Heihanki* 兵範記 concerning the Daijōsai performed in Nin’an 仁安 3 (1168). In other words, one heavenly feather robe was worn when bathing, and another was put on after emerging from the bath. Since the same procedure was repeated for both the Yuki and Suki halls, a total of four heavenly feather robes were prepared.⁴² The description above relies on records of the Daijōsai ceremony, but of course the procedure applies in the case of the annual Niinamesai ceremony also. The Niinamesai was conducted in the Shinkaden 神嘉殿 hall of Chūwain, and in the space under the eaves on the west, the bathing chamber was constructed. There, after the emperor performed the bathing ritual with the heavenly feather robe, he proceeded to the reclining place.⁴³

Concerning the original significance of this rite of bathing using heavenly feather robes, Origuchi put forward a striking interpretation. He states that the fundamental focus of the Daijōsai lies not in the emperor's partaking of the newly harvested grain together with the kami, but rather in the bathing rituals conducted at the sacred site. The rites of the Yukiden hall are said to originally have had the meaning of attaching the spirit in the former emperor who has died, and this signifies, at the same time, the emergence of the next emperor. As a result, exactly the same rite came to be performed in the Sukiden hall. In other words, through the process from the death of the former emperor, to the votive confinement of the new emperor, to the emergence from confinement and bathing, the new sovereign attains the "status of kami." This process expresses the revival of the emperor spirit and the birth of new life through rites of spirit pacification, and up to the point of revival and rebirth, the new sovereign wears the heavenly feather robe for the sake of abstinence and confinement. Upon removing the heavenly feather robe in the ritual space (*yukawa* 齋場), the new emperor becomes an adult for the first time. Origuchi thus conjectures that the original form of the Daijōsai ceremony is preserved in the bathing rituals of the Kairyūden hall.⁴⁴

With regard to the heavenly feather robe, Origuchi's views have been criticized by Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱.⁴⁵ Saigō states, in essence, that the Daijōsai is an observance that is enacted on the stage of the High Plain of Heaven (*Takama no hara* 高天の原). Thus, the new emperor's donning the heavenly feather robe in the bathing tub of the Kairyūden hall symbolically signifies that he has become a person of the heavenly realm. In other words, each new generation of sovereign has been born as a child of Amaterasu Ōmikami on the High Plain of Heaven, and afterwards descended to the Land of Reed Plains.⁴⁶ We see from this that Saigō regards the heavenly feather robe as a kind of magical garment belonging to the realm of myth, and Takatori Masao, from the same stance, attributes a magico-religious significance to the feather robe. That is to say, it was believed that the spirit of the wearer of a garment is transferred to the piece of clothing, so that if garments are

charged by spells, the spirit of the wearer may be influenced in various ways. The heavenly feather robe worn by the emperor when bathing in the Kairyūden hall on the occasion of the Daijōsai is a conspicuous example of this. Although the garment may in actuality be only a *katabira* 帷子 robe for bathing or a loincloth, since it is pure, a sacred robe of precepts, or a robe of abstinence, the one who puts it on attains sanctity.⁴⁷

The views of Saigō and Takatori have in common the notion of the heavenly feather robe as a magical garment that brings about a qualitative change in the body of the emperor who wears it. What is of particular significance here, however, is the thinking of Origuchi. He asserts that to affix the spirit of the dead (the previous emperor) is at the same time to prompt the birth of the new emperor, and he ties the functioning of the heavenly feather robe employed in this scene to the act of spirit pacification. Further, this coincides with his explanation of the fundamental meaning of “matsuri” in Japan as lying in the rites of spirit pacification performed deep in the winter night. The heavenly feather robe covers the physical body of the new emperor as a special robe for the enactment of a “mystical binding of spirit” in the depths of night on the day of the hare in the eleventh month precisely because the Daijōsai ritual bears the specific function of the “matsuri.”

Viewed in this light, the importance of the performance of the spirit pacification ceremonies on the eve of the day of the tiger before the Daijōsai proper becomes apparent. The pacification rites of the day of the tiger are performed in anticipation of the Daijōsai or the Niinamesai. The determination of the “midwinter day of the tiger” for the spirit pacification rites as a court ritual occurs in the *Ryōnogige* 令義解 and *Jōgangishiki* 貞觀儀式, and before that it appears to have been performed whenever the emperor fell ill.⁴⁸ Further, examples of the performance of rites for the pacification of the spirit in the case of an emperor's sickness are seen in the cases of Jinmu⁴⁹ and Tenmu.⁵⁰ Concerning the procedures for the rites of spirit pacification, details are recorded in *Jōgangishiki*, and after this period, three rites—Uki no oke 宇気槽, Momen musubi 木綿結び, and Gyoi shindō 御衣振動—came to be fused into a single ceremony and performed. Gyoi shindō consisted of binding the spirit (spirit

pacification) by shaking the garment box in which a robe of the emperor had been placed, and already appears in a record relating a sickness of Emperor Kanmu.⁵¹ Needless to say, Chinese influence is also apparent in the spirit pacification rites adopted among the ceremonies at court, but it was probably characteristic native Japanese notions that led to its placement on the eve before the Niinamesai or Daijōsai and to its adoption into that configuration of rituals.⁵²

To summarize, when we note that the spirit pacification rituals of the day of the tiger and the Daijōsai (or Niinamesai) of the day of the hare possess the function of pacifying the spirit (*tama-shizume*) of the emperor, then they appear to be mutually inseparable and interrelated ceremonies. Moreover, as we see from the highly characteristic procedures such as the shaking of the emperor's robe and the bathing with the heavenly feather robe, there is a notion of rebirth and revitalization through the medium of a kind of magical garment.

The period from autumn to winter is, of course, a season when the vigor of the sun wanes. The days when its weakness is most apparent fall around the period of the winter solstice. At that time, the emperor's spirit also declines to its lowest ebb. The Niinamesai is the most propitious opportunity for attending to the emperor's decline and bringing new energy and vigor to his life. Thus, in relation to the accession and Daijōsai ceremonies, which enact the dramatic transference of the emperor spirit, it is natural that rites of spirit pacification and revival should be considered necessary. For the actualization of this, the heavenly feather robe served as a magical tool for bodily transformation.

Postscript

In this chapter, we began with a reading of the petition Kūkai composed in 834 and its background. We probed Kūkai's historical context and sought to clarify the train of thought underlying his petition. Here, I proposed the idea that the Latter Seven-day Rites that Kūkai desired to instate as a new ritual was conceived with the long-established rite of the

Daijōsai in mind. In contrast to the *fuyu* matsuri held in the midst of the severe winter, Kūkai fleshed out in his mind a *haru* matsuri performed amid the felicitations of the springtide. When we pursue this line of thinking, we notice surprising correspondences and contrasts between the donning and removal of the feather robe of heaven in the Daijōsai ceremonies and the empowerment of the robe in the Latter Seven-day Rites. Correspondences here are related to the problem of rituals of treatment-invigoration based on the use of sacred water and magical robes. Contrasts have to do with the reverse correspondence between, on the one hand, the expulsion of outside spirits (evil spirits) in the ritual empowerment of the robe and, on the other hand, the fixing, settling, and purification of the emperor spirit in donning the heavenly feather robe and bathing. To borrow the expressions of Origuchi, the Daijōsai ceremony originally signified a religious observance (matsuri) from the time of Emperor Jinmu for affixing the emperor spirit to the physical bodies of the successive generations of emperors. In this sense, it may be said to be a rite involving the forceful manipulation of an outside spirit (the emperor spirit). Once the emperor spirit was affixed, however, thereafter its functioning as an inner spirit was recovered and it was regarded as an object for pacification and reinvigoration in the depths of each winter.

Seen in this way, Kūkai's true intentions in the Shingon'in rites become clear. The work of the transmission of the emperor spirit and its annual revival, as a traditional kami rite within the palace, was beyond his powers of influence. The sphere of the emperor's inner spirit was under the specialized care of *miko* priestesses who mediated an intimate interchange with the kami of heaven. In this case, what was left to Kūkai? It was the work of exorcising the spirits from without that possessed the physical body of the emperor and gave rise to maladies. As we have seen, the work of caring for the jewel-body already had a long tradition as the work of attendant chaplain-monks. Kūkai was successful in refining that tradition within the format of a completely new rite in the palace calendar of events and reviving it in a far more stable form.