

Introduction

What is “Shinto”?

The modern ramifications of the term “Shinto” are rooted in Japan’s late nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, with its constructions of modernity through the building of nation-states, and subsequent tensions and conflicts over state borders and ideologies. Moreover, the glorification of Shinto as a state religion of militarist Japan in the first half of the twentieth century contributed to the emergence of a master narrative describing Japan’s cultural and religious identity as based on a homogeneous, unbroken, and monolithic native tradition of worship. In this guise, State Shinto was linked to the atrocities caused by Japanese soldiers and kamikaze pilots throughout East Asia. The repercussions of this tempestuous history continue until the present day, reflected in the contention over the Yasukuni Shrine, or in the lingering issues over the geographical definitions of East Asian nation-states. Moving away from these legacies, the twenty-first-century term “Shinto” appears to be equally loaded, this time with environmental concerns, which fit with post-industrialized societies’ anxiety over the global movements of labor and ever diminishing natural resources. Yet are such re-negotiations of terms all that unusual?

In fact, the re-formulations of the term “Shinto” (or what it actually aims to embrace, the worship of indigenous deities, *kami*) happened

constantly over the long span of Japan's history. Thus such re-formulations are far from being unique or confined only to modern times. While it is clearly futile to extend the nineteenth- and twentieth-century uses of the term "Shinto" to the medieval or ancient periods, it is possible to talk about the distinct forms of kami worship at specific cultic sites at certain points in time, and to investigate their individual peculiarities and methods of their conceptualization. Moreover, it is necessary to do so in an objective and unbiased manner, if possible unaffected by modern presumptions, precisely because we need to understand better the presuppositions on which the modern configurations of Shinto were based during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

From this point of view, the worship of kami, as continental, indigenous, or clan deities, or the forces of nature, indeed existed since early times. These loosely interrelated cults were grounded in specific locales (at times also moving between them), and it is in these forms that the worship of kami was conceptualized, re-formulated, and continuously modified over the centuries. In the *longue durée*, the re-modifications of kami worship happened on a large scale several times, and although subtle and spread over time, the changes in ideas about kami were always contingent on the specific historical circumstances, changes in economic or political situation, and the influx of new ideas from the continent and other countries. Even the definition of kami itself remained flexible: Japan's many local deities clearly had a continental background before "becoming" Japanese, and it was not unusual for the significant cultic or historical figures, objects, or celestial bodies to be included in this domain of worship and acquire the status of kami. "Kami worship," therefore, will be used in this book primarily as an inclusive neutral term, to avoid the many historical connotations of the more readily known term "Shinto," especially those manufactured in modern times. The exception to this case will be the modern term "medieval Shinto" signifying the plurality of different kinds of kami worship that emerged in Japan during the medieval period, which is currently gaining currency in academic scholarship. This plurality is envisioned and understood through the modern research and study of medieval Buddhist texts that include ample documents concerning the worship of kami. Many such archival materials, usually described as "sacred scriptures" (*shōgyō*), have been recently found and continue to be unveiled

at Japanese Buddhist temple archives, such as Kanazawa Bunko in Kanagawa Prefecture, Ise Jingū Bunko in Mie, Eizan Bunko in Shiga, Ōsu Bunko in Nagoya, or Ninnaji and Kajūji temple archives in Kyoto, in addition to other established and private collections.¹

Buddhism, which itself represents a complex, historically diverse, and culturally mobile entity with a vast array of conceptual tools and sources, played a major role in the constantly shifting dynamics that made up and operated within the religious milieu of premodern Japan, before the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Seen in this light, the Buddhist concepts, institutions, deities, doctrines, and practices that traversed the diverse cultural and historical contexts in India, China, and Korea before they reached Japan, appear as dynamic and vital for the current study.

The early relationships between kami and buddhas surfaced within a few centuries after the introduction of Buddhism. Within the paradigm of *honji suijaku*, which evolved during the Heian period (794–1185), the distant deities of Buddhism, including the Hindu gods that became known as a part of the Buddhist pantheon, were rendered as the “original ground” (*honji*), while local kami were declared to be their “manifested trace” (*suijaku*).² Gradually, these relationships took the form of specific combinations merging kami and buddhas (*shinbutsu shūgō*) that at first aligned Japan’s kami with benevolent buddhas and bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Many of those were imported over a long period of time from India, Central Asia, and China via the Korean kingdoms; among such deities were Bhaiṣajyaguru (Jp. Yakushi), Avalokiteśvara (Jp. Kannon), Amitābha (Jp. Amida), and Maitreya (Jp. Miroku). During the late Heian and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods, kami began to be juxtaposed with the fierce-looking and powerful deities of esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*), as it developed within the Japanese Tendai and Shingon temples, certain branches of Zen, Nichiren, and mountain ascetic movements. The processes of merging kami with esoteric Buddhist deities were particularly obvious during the Kamakura, Nanbokuchō (1334–92), and Muromachi (1392–1573) periods, a long span of the medieval ages,

1. See, for example, an overview in English of the Shinpukuji (Ōsu Bunko) and Ninnaji archives in Abe Yasurō, “Shintō as Written Representation,” and also Abe and Yamazaki, *Shinpukuji zenpon sōkan* and their co-edited *Ninnaji zō Goryū shōgyō*.

2. A useful introduction to this notion can be found in Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*.

which in Japan extended roughly from the late twelfth to the sixteenth century. Some of the religious configurations that emerged during that time endured until 1868, when the sweeping policies of the Meiji Restoration forcibly separated the combinatory worship of buddhas and kami. And even despite the Meiji disentanglement of the previously seamless religious entities, some aspects of medieval Buddhist thought on kami remained pivotal to the modern formulations of Shinto. For example, the idea that Japan consisted of a “patchwork of sacred sites and areas” (to borrow a phrase from a seminal work by Allan Grapard)³ and was therefore a “land of gods” (*shinkoku*), had emerged around the time of the Mongol invasions in the late thirteenth century.⁴ Initially a Buddhist construct based on the theories of inherent enlightenment (*hongaku shisō*), by the fifteenth century this idea began to be stripped of its Buddhist connotations, and in this “rectified” and essentialized form, it has persisted ever since. Moreover, developed further in a series of Nativist arguments during the Edo period, the idea of Japan as a land of gods became firmly tied to the pursuit of studying all things Japanese, and later, during the Meiji period (1868–1912), to the notion of the Japanese nation-state.

This book focuses on a crucial period of Japan’s history when several important precursors of what now is commonly understood as Shinto, namely, the worship of kami based on the concepts and practices of esoteric Buddhism, were assembled for the very first time. These precursors, manufactured predominantly by the Buddhist practitioners associated with a variety of temples, are known to the modern reader as Ryōbu Shintō, Ise Shintō, or Sannō Shintō. Such “Shintos” documented through a variety of sources developed semi-independently and in loose interconnection with each other at several localities, including Mt. Miwa in Yamato, the Ise shrines, and Mt. Hiei during the medieval period. Based on the ideas of local mythological lore and features of local reli-

3. Grapard, “Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness,” especially, 196, 210, 214–18.

4. See the seminal essay by Kuroda Toshio, “The Discourse on the ‘Land of Kami,’” and Uejima Susumu, “Nihon chūsei no kami kannen to kokudo kan.” A recent reevaluation of this concept has been attempted by Satō Hiroo, “The Emergence of *Shinkoku* (The Land of Gods) Ideology in Japan”; and Teeuwen, “The Buddhist Roots of Japanese Nativism.”

gious landscape, they incorporated the major concepts of Shingon and Tendai doctrines and other teachings and practices, and borrowed freely from each other.⁵ Of these the former, Ryōbu Shintō (called so retrospectively by fifteenth-century thinkers), encompassed the worship of kami based on the central icons of esoteric Buddhism, the Two Mandalas (*ryōkai*, alt. *ryōbu mandara*) known as the Kongōkai (Diamond World) and the Taizōkai (Womb World). This type of kami worship was largely conceived by temple lineages specializing in study and rituals based on the major esoteric Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (Ch. *Dari jing*, Jp. *Dainichikyō*, T. 848), the *Yogin Sūtra* (Ch. *Yuqi jing*, Jp. *Yugikyō*, T. 867), the *Sutra of the Guiding Principle* (Ch. *Liqu jing*, Jp. *Rishukyō*), and numerous Chinese and Japanese commentaries to them.⁶ A major example of ideas that fit this description of Ryōbu Shintō developed during the medieval period in the vicinity of Mt. Miwa and its adjacent shrine and temple complex, in present-day Nara Prefecture.

Focusing on Mt. Miwa and the medieval forms of kami worship that emerged in its proximity, this book offers a case study through which the key stages of “assemblage” (that is, the processes of assembling) and the medieval pedigree of Ryōbu Shintō, a major forerunner to modern Shinto, ought to become clear. Even though the book highlights the case of Mt. Miwa, an ancient cultic site long connected with the worship of powerful deities, the story it tells goes far beyond Mt. Miwa’s own locale. The specific strand of Ryōbu Shintō that emerged at Miwa developed in

5. Kuroda Toshio has argued that the many facets of medieval kami worship were conceived within what he termed *kenmitsu* (“exo-esoteric”) Buddhism and were developed by each cultic center to ensure its own survival in the uncertain conditions of the medieval age. Kuroda, “The Discourse on the ‘Land of Kami,’” 359.

6. The full Japanese title of the *Yugikyō* is *Kongōbu rōkaku issai yuga yugi kyō* (The Sutra of All Yogas and Yogins of Vajra Peak Pavilion; hereafter, the *Yugikyō*). Rather than being an authentic Indian sutra, it was most likely compiled in Tang China, and subsequently became prominent in medieval Japan. See a brief discussion in Vanden Broucke, “The Twelve-Armed Deity Daishō Kongō and His Scriptural Sources,” 147–48. The *Rishukyō*, in one fascicle, was attributed as a translation to Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong, Jp. Fukū, 705–74), under the Chinese titles of *Bore liqu jing* (Jp. *Hannya rishukyō*) and *Dale jingang bukong zhenshi sanmoye jing* (Jp. *Dairaku kongō fukū shinjitsu sanmaya kyō*, T. 243). Similarly to the *Yugikyō*, it received consistent attention within the esoteric Buddhist milieu in medieval Japan as one of the major scriptures explaining the state of an enlightened being (Sk. *vajrasattva*, Jp. *kongōsatta*).

concomitance, and most likely in competition with the buddha and kami cults advanced at other important sacred sites, such as the nearby mountains of Murō and Hasedera, Yoshino and Tōnomine, or the more distant Ise shrines in modern-day Mie Prefecture and Mt. Hiei in Shiga. These sacred sites and areas were subject to their own formulations of kami-buddha worship throughout the Heian and Kamakura periods. Although the nature of Miwa's links with those sites varied, the distinct brand of "Shinto" that it produced in medieval times certainly rested on the web of interrelated and interdependent religious theories conceived at and circulating among these cultic sites and areas.

As suggested by Allan Grapard, the examination of Japan's medieval religious landscape and emergent kami worship would be incomplete without considering the crucial agency of Buddhist temples and shrines, along with their visitors and inhabitants.⁷ Among those were Buddhist scholar-monks (*gakusō*), peregrinating holy men (*shōnin* and *hijiri*), mountain ascetics (*yamabushi*, or *shugenja*), aristocrats, women, and the shrine clergy (*negi*, *kannushi*) along with the shrine temple priests (*shasō*); in short, all those whose lives and livelihoods were in major ways affected by the teachings of esoteric Buddhism. Towering above all was the idea (and sometimes, the agency) of a Japanese sovereign (*tennō*), envisioned and understood by the Buddhists not only as a descendant of the divine Sun line and hereditary ruler of Japan, but as a *cakravartin*, or "wheel-turning sage king" (*tenrin jōō*), enthroned to preside over the symbolic and geographical realms by the means of an esoteric *abhiṣeka* initiation (*kanjō*).

Although some of their voices are seldom heard for the lack of historical records, the aforementioned groups and individuals connected Japan's most important cultic sites via political and economic links, or via the routes of pilgrimage and mountain austerities. Thus, their mobility comes into special focus and becomes a key aspect underlining the majority of medieval developments in both doctrines and practices, as described in this book.⁸ To a large degree, it was the scholar-monks, holy men, shrine specialists, and wandering ascetics who transported

7. Grapard, "Medieval Shintō Boundaries," 6.

8. For the recent scholarly emphasis on mobility and its role in shaping local cultures, see Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*.

and exchanged the ideas, rituals, and icons featured in this book that made the religious world of medieval Japan so vibrant and changeable. In analyzing the key mechanisms of “assembling” the medieval forms of kami worship based on the case of Miwa, this book thus challenges the twentieth-century master narrative of Shinto as an unbroken, monolithic tradition, examining how and why groups of religious practitioners affiliated with different cultic sites, religious facilities, or political factions of medieval Japan created heterogeneous economic, symbolic, and ritual systems that operated successfully according to their own needs.

Just as it is not possible to tell the story of medieval worship of kami through the story of Mt. Miwa alone, so too this study concentrates mostly on the period between the late twelfth and sixteenth centuries, but draws on material from both ancient and early modern times. The case of Miwa demonstrates that ancient beliefs and ideas about kami were selectively re-embedded in the world of medieval Japan, which itself was defined and stipulated by the splits and tensions between multiple centers of power, imperial family branches, and changing economic conditions. On the other hand, even though most of the religious writings preserved at Miwa’s temples were destroyed in a fire in the 1460s, the external sources and early modern copies of the Miwa lineage’s ritual procedures reveal a vibrant religious culture that proliferated in the mountain’s vicinity and far beyond in both medieval and early modern times. Moreover, the rituals of *jingi kanjō* (Buddhist *abhiṣeka* initiations into kami secrets), for which the Miwa lineage was famous, were performed at a variety of places throughout the late medieval and early modern (Edo, 1600–1868) periods and became a standard addition to the formal set of Buddhist initiations in esoteric temples.⁹ Through their links to the doctrinal knowledge transmitted by scholar-monks at major centers of esoteric Buddhist learning, the Buddhist practitioners based at Miwa temples clearly played a definitive role in shaping Japan’s religious landscape. A wealth of ritual documents dating from the Edo period even describes a particular tradition known as

9. Fabio Rambelli translated this term as “initiations into kami-related matters.” Rambelli, “The Ritual World of Buddhist ‘Shinto,’” 265. He was also first to discuss the early modern Miwa-ryū Shintō ritual transmissions and documents in English. More recently, this topic was further analyzed by Lucia Dolce in “Duality and the Kami.”

“Miwa-ryū Shintō”; such “Shinto” rituals (or at least the certificates of their ritual transmission and, sometimes, detailed descriptions) circulated widely between temples of Hasedera, Mt. Kōya, Ise, Mt. Hiei, and as far as the Kantō and Tōhoku regions, even reaching Kyushu.

At the very center of these newly invented rituals and of the whole phenomenon of medieval kami worship were the transfer of esoteric Buddhist concepts onto the kami domain through production of new myths and reconfiguration of the ancient mythological lore related to local deities. In large part, such activities aimed at constructing or reaffirming the local deities’ links with esoteric buddhas, the Japanese rulers, and their divine progenitor, the solar divinity Amaterasu (or Tenshō Daijin, as it was known in the Buddhist circles). By creating direct links with Amaterasu and esoteric deities such as Mahāvairocana (Jp. Dainichi) or Aizen Myōō, temple and shrine lineages constructed and asserted new forms of legitimacy for themselves and their sacred sites. Temples and shrines actively sought such legitimation for the sake of procuring the right kind of patronage, producing mythological narratives that mixed local lore with Buddhist rituals and icons and that created linkages to important cultic figures and places. Adding allure to these processes were medieval Buddhist practitioners, often of non-elite standing, who searched for new ways of achieving the state of enlightenment and new kinds of religious authority in what they broadly perceived to be the unstable conditions of the medieval age. Although sometimes their motivation was articulated through the rhetoric of *mappō*, the “last age of the Buddhist dharma,” such non-elite practitioners had deep interests in *mikkyō* and kami worship and sought access to novel salvatory techniques that they could call their own.¹⁰ By producing and consuming the newly discovered esoteric powers of ancient cultic sites, these practitioners aspired to unity with the cosmic

10. The rhetoric of *mappō* had been present in Buddhist narratives, including Pure Land thought, since at least the Heian period. Incidentally, the late twelfth through fourteenth centuries were marked by continuous warfare, burning of major Buddhist temples, the rise of new political powers, the fragmenting of Japan’s imperial house and its economic base, and the perceived threat of the Mongol invasions. Perhaps due to these factors, medieval writings, including the Buddhist monks’ diaries, hagiographies, and letters, continued to refer to *mappō* as a generally accepted rhetorical device for describing the conditions of the time.

deity Mahāvairocana, which could be achieved through ritual contact with its manifestations in local deities and in its ultimate Japanese emanation, Amaterasu.

The mytho-histories, some of which were documented in the earliest official annals of *Nihon shoki* (720) and, specifically, the corpus of legends recorded in the fascicle on the “Age of the Gods” (*Jindai no maki*), were at the core of medieval Japanese *imaginaire* about kami and their relation to Japan’s rulers and land.¹¹ During the Kamakura period, the *Nihon shoki* lore, both written and oral, was gradually reinterpreted along the lines of Buddhist logic and combined with the deities, ritual formats, and icons of esoteric Buddhism in the broader context of the culture of secret oral transmissions shared by Buddhist practitioners of many stripes and colors, literati scholars, and kami ritual specialists.¹² This involved not only the aforementioned paradigm of *honji suijaku* that merged local kami with the benevolent deities and bodhisattvas of Buddhism, but a whole new level of drawing associations between the kami and esoteric deities.¹³ The above-mentioned processes were accompanied by the appearance of major new texts, rituals, and icons that, although rooted in the teachings and rituals of esoteric Buddhism, were also concerned with the nature, symbolic meaning, and soteriological potential of kami. One prime example of such textual, ritual, and iconographic production is a medieval compendium of the *Reikiki* (ca. late 13th or early 14th c.). This collection of eighteen fascicles describes many

11. This phenomenon was outlined in Itō Masayoshi’s influential 1972 article, “Chūsei Nihongi no rinkaku.”

12. Scheid and Teeuwen, *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*. More recently, the Japanese scholars Suzuki Hideyuki and Hara Katsuaki have analyzed the medieval commentaries on the *Reikiki* and *Nihon shoki* produced by the Tendai, Rinzaï Zen, and Pure Land scholar-monks and the Yoshida-Urabe priestly lineage during the later Muromachi period, when the *honji suijaku* theories began to give way to the interpretations privileging kami (*han honji suijaku*). Hara, *Chūsei Nihongi ronkō*, and Suzuki Hideyuki, *Chūsei gakusō to Shintō*. The role of Zen lineages in the formation of medieval kami worship at Ise has been further elucidated by Mark Teeuwen in his “The Laozi and the Emergence of Shinto at Ise.”

13. Teeuwen and Rambelli explain the several key stages in the formation of *honji suijaku* in their introduction to *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 1–53; on the esotericization of kami discourses in medieval Japan, see 33–35. Satō Hiroo has recently argued that this paradigm should be understood in a broader sense, as connecting the “other-worldly” and “this-worldly” deities. See his “Emergence of *Shinkoku*,” 37.

Ryōbu Shintō ideas; its contents may be linked with the emergence of several types of *jingi* or *shintō kanjō* as well as the various images on which such rituals were focused.¹⁴

In modern scholarship, the combination of the aforementioned processes and phenomena, as well as their local configurations, is often referred to as “medieval Shinto” (*chūsei Shintō*).¹⁵ The broader focus of this book will be Ryōbu Shintō, perhaps the most readily recognized type of medieval kami worship and one of the chief manifestations that developed at Buddhist temples and facilities near Mt. Miwa. As an ancient cultic site enshrining the kami whose mythic origins were perceived to be “much older” than those of the imperial deity Amaterasu, the medieval Mt. Miwa was a place where different groups of Buddhist practitioners sought to construct their own specific relations to the leading centers of esoteric learning and kami worship, and to create their own links to esoteric divinities, Japanese rulers, and Amaterasu. Moreover, as the time progressed, Miwa’s religious thinkers and specialists sought to assert their own legitimacy as bearers of a distinct religious tradition, which in the Edo period came to be known as the aforementioned Miwa-ryū Shintō, or “Shinto, Miwa-style.”

“Assembling Shinto”: An Investigation

This study has been structured around four interrelated avenues of inquiry. First, adopting a long-term perspective, it unveils a crucial part of the institutional and cultural history of Mt. Miwa, one of Japan’s most important ancient sacred mountains. It is the first major historical and multidisciplinary study of the site in English and covers a time-span ranging between roughly 500 and the 1600s. In the field of East Asian

14. The first Japanese edition of this text was published by Shinbutsu shūgō kenkyūkai in 2001. For the analysis of this text in English, see Rambelli, “The Ritual World of Buddhist ‘Shinto,’” 276 onward. A more recent evaluation in Japanese appears in Hara, *Chūsei Nihongi ronkō*, and Ogawa, *Chūsei Nihon no shinwa, moji,shintai*.

15. For the most recent analysis of this phenomenon in English, see the special issue of *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 16 (2006–7), “Re-thinking Medieval Shintō,” edited by Faure et al.

and Japanese religions, there is already a well-established and productive tradition of studying sacred sites and cultic mountains in situ.¹⁶ It is hard to disagree with this trend; moreover, in order to capture a larger nuanced historical picture, one has to further refine and reinforce this trend through the study not only of the individual sacred sites but also the networks between them. The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells in his social theory of space considers the space as “produced by social structures,” which I take to understand as including not only the existing infrastructure and material support but also the social groups such as temple and shrine lineages.¹⁷ What follows will partially adhere to the well-recognized trend of focusing on sacred sites in Japanese and East Asian studies, but, in addition, it will also adopt a broader outlook on Mt. Miwa, its neighbors, and the nature of links between them when analyzing the written, visual, and material sources at hand, particularly where the processes of interaction between different kinds of Buddhist agency and kami cults are concerned.

Second, the book concentrates on the agency of local Buddhist practitioners in the medieval period and maps out their activities, ritual goals, and motivations. These practitioners include members of established Buddhist temple lineages as well as groups of local holy men (*shōnin* and *hijiri*) and mountain ascetics (*genja*) congregating in the vicinity of major sacred sites, such as Miwa, Murō, Ise, and others. From the early medieval period onward, these non-elite practitioners were broadly concerned with acquisition of Buddhist knowledge (including esoteric), self-cultivation, and achieving spiritual goals on a par with ordained temple monks; however, “half-lay and half-holy,” they practiced and lived in semi-itinerancy, alternating between different modes of

16. Note Allan Grapard’s numerous studies of Japan’s sacred sites (1982), such as Tōnomine (1984), Hiei (1987, 1998), Kunisaki (1989), Kasuga and Kōfukuji (1992). This effort has been extended in a number of exhaustive studies investigating the significance of sacred mountains and sites in the context of Japanese and East Asian religions. See Sarah Thal on Mt. Konpira, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*; D. Max Moerman on Kumano, *Localizing Paradise*; Barbara Ambros on the Oyama cult, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage*; and James Robson on Mt. Nanyue, *The Power of Place*, among others. Most recently, Heather Blair has investigated the history of Kinpusen in her *Real and Imagined*.

17. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, especially, chapter 6, “The Space of Flows.”

reclusion, and acting largely “outside the formal temple hierarchies.”¹⁸ The study clarifies the origins and development of a private Buddhist facility (*bessho*) at Miwa through the figures of its inhabitants and traces the history of the Miwa lineage (*Miwa-ryū*) whose origins led back to the medieval Miwa *bessho*.¹⁹ In addition, the agency, political roles, and literary contributions of the Ōmiwa Shrine families and their connection to the fourteenth-century imperial court will also be briefly examined. Following Bruno Latour’s advice “to follow the actors themselves,” this study of the Miwa-ryū figures is in fact an attempt to “catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them,” to see what they saw as the intellectual and religious necessities of their age, to understand what aspirations these medieval practitioners may have had and “which associations they have been forced to establish.”²⁰

Third, this book casts light on the complex mix of religious and cultural ingredients and the uneven historical processes involved in assembling the ritual and doctrinal knowledge of medieval temple lineages at Miwa, especially concerning kami. The term “assembling” (or “assemblage”), again an inspiration from Latour’s studies on actors and networks, is currently gaining significance for new approaches to the study of social history.²¹ For example, the British historian Patrick Joyce has suggested thinking of social phenomena in “network” terms, “in the more creative vein of *processes* rather than of structures.” Joyce talks of course about the nature of the modern British state, but his words can be easily applied to address the social and networking aspects of what medieval Shinto is: something “which is held together (sometimes very uncertainly) at particular key sites or nodes and through the actions of key actors and processes, human and non-human.”²² In this sense, Mt.

18. As described by Stone in “Do Kami Ever Overlook Pollution?,” 216; on one of the Miwa *shōnin*, Jōkanbō, 204. See also the earlier studies by Hori, “On the Concept of Hijiri,” and Gorai, *Kōya hijiri*.

19. The medieval period is defined here broadly as spanning the 1150s to 1573, following Farris, *Japan’s Medieval Population*.

20. Modified from Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 12.

21. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*; Sassen, *Territory, Authority, and Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. I thank Professor Carol Gluck for bringing the latter book to my attention.

22. Joyce, *The State of Freedom*, 19; italics mine.

Miwa and other sacred sites can be envisioned as nodes and conduits that attract, generate, and reinforce the activities of medieval Buddhist monks, *shōnin*, mountain ascetics, shrine priests, and local folk. The non-human actors are as vital here as human: these are mountains, land estates, temple structures, images, and ritual objects that act as the connectivity points for the human agents. The tangible assets of sacred sites appear as important as the non-tangible ideas that the agents residing at these sites produce and exchange. To address these points, the latter part of the book will offer a study of concepts and conceptual devices that emerged from the Buddhist scriptures, medieval esoteric and Shinto ritual texts, images, and transmissions and circulated widely among cultic sites at Ise, Miwa, Hiei, and elsewhere, but became a major core of the esoteric kami worship at Miwa, and later, the so-called “Miwa-ryū Shintō.”

Fourth, the latter part of the book investigates how, why, and to what extent Buddhist ideas and concepts encapsulated in the imagery of the Diamond and Womb Mandalas (Kongōkai and Taizōkai), central scriptures of esoteric Buddhism, such as the *Yugikyō* and the *Rishukyō*, and cults of deities such as Aizen Myōō, had penetrated and influenced the ideas about kami in fourteenth-century Japan. The *Yugikyō*, *Rishukyō*, and the *Dainichikyō*, with their esoteric deities and ritual techniques, offered the ultimate ways for achieving enlightenment and the state of *kongōsatta*; the former of these scriptures, the *Yugikyō*, held a particular sway on the minds and religious aspirations of the Buddhist practitioners in medieval Japan, including those at Miwa.²³ These ideas were inseparable from the medieval conceptions of buddhahood and the symbolic constructions of rulership, and became further expressed in ritual manipulations with imperial lore, such as the “three imperial regalia” (*sanshu no jinki*), and the aforementioned *abhiṣeka* initiations into kami secrets (*jingi* or *shintō kanjō*). Many of these phenomena were documented in ritual texts linked to the Buddhist facilities near Mt. Miwa.

As a result, this book demonstrates that while the first attempts to conceptualize kami worship through a variety of Buddhist cults may

23. Lucia Dolce was the first to draw attention to the significance of the *Yugikyō* commentaries in medieval Japan in her “Duality and the Kami,” 142–44, and “Nigenteki genri no gireika.”

have been made in late Heian Japan, the whole process of assembling that key part of Japan's premodern cultural heritage began to unfold in earnest during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It happened largely through Buddhist involvement, particularly that of the esoteric milieu. Internalization and further development of the medieval theories about kami (including those brought forward by the Watarai priests at Ise) were a crucial part of Japan's religious history before the fifteenth century, when the term "Shinto," which suggested the dominance of kami in specific locations, began to gain acceptance and be treated independently of its previous Buddhist framework, again with the help of Buddhist intellectuals.²⁴ As a result of practitioners' increased mobility, the medieval discourses on kami were gradually disentangled from particular cultic sites. The discussion of the nature of kami and of the meaning of their ritual worship as independent from Buddhist numen, as well as of the significance of kami's links to the Japanese rulers, was further advanced by court figures and religious specialists who were either extremely interested in or closely related to kami worship, shrine protocol, and the specialized study of *Nihon shoki*. Among those, just to name a few, were the courtier, military leader, and scholar Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354), a descendant of the Urabe lineage, the Tendai scholar Jihen (act. ca. 1332–40), and the Urabe-Yoshida priests, with Kanetomo (1435–1511) at their helm in the fifteenth century.²⁵ The prominence of

24. Although certainly familiar with the Buddhist discourses, the Watarai were perhaps the first to put forward the idea that Japanese kami, namely, Amaterasu, should not be seen as the emanation of Buddhist deities such as Mahāvairocana, and ought to be put outside the conventions of *honji suijaku* thought. See Mark Teeuwen's exhaustive monograph, *Watarai Shintō*, esp. chapters 1 and 2; 11–131 and 132–219, respectively; also his "The Laozi and the Emergence of Shinto at Ise." On the kami discourses "bypassing Buddhism," see Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 35–36; and Rambelli, "Before the First Buddha."

25. See Chikafusa's famous treatise, *Jinnō shōtōki*, written in 1339–43 as a justification for the legitimacy of the Southern Court (Varley, trans., *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*). Jihen was the brother of Yoshida Kenkō, the author of *Tsurezuregusa* (Notes in Idleness). He was close to the Southern Court and, personally, to Go-Daigo tennō (1288–1339). Among Jihen's numerous treatises discussing kami and the Age of Gods is the voluminous *Toyoashihara jinpū waki* (Native Records of Divine Wind in the Abundant-Reed-Plain). Grapard, "The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo," 34–36. See also the annotated translation of Yoshida Kanetomo's major treatise on Shinto in English by Grapard, "*Yuitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū*." In German, see Scheid, *Der Eine und*

non-Buddhist Shinto, as proclaimed by Kanetomo, received a warm welcome as “the ancient belief of Japan” in Nativist scholarship during the Edo period.

In very general terms, before the fifteenth century, the preliminary processes of “assembling” Shinto (to the extent that Shinto can ever be understood as a single entity) involved a variety of historical and cultural elements and agencies, such as cultic sites, pilgrimage networks, religious specialists, donors, practitioners, and Buddhist concepts, often of esoteric persuasion. Such processes were facilitated and shaped by the constantly changing social, economic, and political conditions of Japan. In this respect, the broader term “Shinto” emerging from this book should be understood, as Teeuwen and Scheid have described it, as “a collective term for *various* attempts made in different historical periods to unify kami practices and beliefs.”²⁶ By situating this study in the geographical and historical contexts of Mt. Miwa and mapping out its connections to other important cultic sites, I hope to demonstrate that local Buddhist practitioners, such as holy men, mountain practitioners, and Buddhist priests (at different times and with varying agendas), played the most important role in shaping the worship of kami during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The priestly families from the Ōmiwa Shrine, motivated to seek links to important donors and by the need to preserve their economic and mythological heritage, were also instrumental in this process, albeit to a lesser degree and, perhaps, for different reasons.

In all its diversity, kami worship in medieval Japan will emerge as a multifaceted, dynamic phenomenon being assembled through constant negotiation or “power play” between different agents and institutions and multiple strands of religious thought and practice.²⁷ It is clearly far from being the monolithic entity that the politically motivated twentieth-century narratives sought to present it as.

Einzige Weg der Götter, and his later essay on the Urabe scholarship, “Two Modes of Secrecy in the *Nihon Shoki* Transmission.”

26. For a detailed discussion of this definition, see Teeuwen and Scheid’s introduction to the special issue of *JRS*, “Tracing Shinto in the History of Kami Worship,” and Teeuwen, “From *Jindō* to Shinto,” 233. Italics mine.

27. Grapard, “Medieval Shintō Boundaries,” 6.

Kami Worship at a Glance

The history of kami worship in premodern Japan has attracted the growing attention of Japanese and Western scholars. What follows below is a simple overview of this history based on recent scholarship, a brief general account that will help to put the case of Mt. Miwa and its main protagonists discussed in the central part of this book into historical perspective.²⁸

Japan's earliest records, such as *Kojiki* (Records of Old, 712), *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720), and regional gazetteers (*fudoki*, ca. 713) describe the prehistoric landscape as inhabited by invisible supra-human entities and supernatural forces that were conceptualized in terms of their actions and effects on the environment and humankind. They mentioned land-creator, plague, or ancestral deities, and deities capable of causing environmental or political disorder, obstruction at passes, mountains and roads, and so on. These unruly, irrational deities, many of whom were known to have come to Japan from "beyond the sea," could be benign or malicious depending on the circumstances; their main duty seemingly was to punctuate the time and space inhabited by humans with their oracles and sudden, unpredictable actions. Ancient deities, capable of attaching themselves to human beings, ruled over both the human realm and the unseen world and required constant placation and regular ritual offerings in order to be kept silent and docile.

The ritual communication with these deities and their harsh, wild spirits could be performed by female or male priests, or persons of elevated social and political standing. Prehistoric kami did not dwell in one place; the oldest cultic sites, particularly those in the vicinity of sacred mountains, did not have shrine buildings attached to them. For example, the sheer scale of ritual deposits found among the archaeological remains in the vicinity of Mt. Miwa suggests that the kami were usually invited to descend into substitute objects (*yorishiro*), such as rocks, large

28. Up to now, the standard accounts of the history of kami worship have leaned predominantly on Tsuji Zennosuke's study, *Nihon bukkyōshi kenkyū*, especially, the section on the *honji suijaku*, 88–94. Tsuji's theory continues to be revised; for a recent reevaluation in English, see Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 7 and 21–30, on the complicated and uneven processes of the *honji suijaku* amalgamation processes.

trees, or ritually decorated tree branches, and sacred compounds (*himo-rogi*) at certain times. After the ritual performance was complete, the kami would return to their abode on the mountain.²⁹

From the earliest official records, it is known that early Yamato chieftains had attempted to implement a more locally centralized ritual worship of the “eight myriad of deities” for the purpose of preserving their political status and ensuring peace and stability in the area they controlled.³⁰ By the eighth century, the ancestral deities of different indigenous and immigrant clans and their corresponding cults were incorporated into the early cosmologies of the Yamato ruling houses as a result of polity-building and the compilation of written histories by the Yamato court, which positioned the Sun line of Tenmu and Jitō as a leading force within Japan’s political and ritual landscape. During that early period, the veneration of local divinities included many continental gods that continued to “cross over the seas” and that were becoming steadily localized. Continental ritual practices and frameworks such as the *yin-yang* and the five agents (Ch. *wuxing*, Jp. *gogyō*) shaped the communication with the deities, as did the techniques of plastromancy, oracular speech, and divination, or even some elements of the Daoist episteme that were not always described explicitly by the official chronicles.³¹ The worship of the solar deities at Ise and a class of the “sky-lightening” deities (*amateru kami*), which became conceptualized as a single figure, Amaterasu, was promoted by the ruling house of *tennō* from that time as part and parcel of their legitimate status.³²

29. Satō Hiroo, “Ikaru kami to sukuu kami” in Satō Hiroo, *Kami, hotoke, ōken no chūsei*, and “Chūsei ni okeru shinkannen no hen’yō.” In English, see also the earlier discussion by Grapard, “Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness,” 197; on mountains as deities (*shintaiizan*), including Mt. Miwa, 199–200. For the archaeological study of Miwa, see Barnes and Okita, *The Miwa Project*.

30. Ellwood, “The Sujin Religious Revolution.”

31. Michael Como has discussed several such deities, who must have arrived in Japan with the continuous waves of migration. See his *Shōtoku, Weaving and Binding*, and more recently, “Daoist Deities in Ancient Japan.” Herman Ooms has argued that Tenmu used certain Daoist tropes and practices to consolidate his rule. See his *Imperial Politics and Symbolics*, and “Framing Daoist Fragments.”

32. It is now recognized that the term *tennō* was an adaptation of the Chinese title *tianhuang*, which may have been borrowed by the Yamato court of Suiko (r. 592–628) from Later Han texts, where it was used to designate the “sovereign of the heavens.” Piggott, *The*

The historic connection between the ruling house and the worship of kami was further reinforced and institutionalized during the Ritsuryō and early Heian periods when the Bureau of Kami Affairs (Jingikan) was established, and shrines were constructed as places of fixed abode for local kami. Furthermore, the formal procedures for kami rituals (with some pre-existing continental modes already obscured) were prescribed during the Jōgan (859–77) and Engi (901–23) eras, and many of the previously private shrine festivities became affairs of state, with their performance regularly requested by the court. These processes of appropriation of kami worship by the court culminated in a compilation of the ritual codes, the *Engishiki* (905–27, implemented 967), which gave special directions for shrine rites that came under the jurisdiction of the Jingikan.³³ The implementation of a system of twenty-two state-sponsored shrines (*nijūnisha*) in the metropolitan region of Kinai, and a more loosely connected network of provincial shrines (*shokoku ichinomiya*) in other regions, further immobilized and stabilized the previously unruly deities. It firmly connected kami with the emerging state politics, ritual, and above all, the figure of the *tennō* presiding over the realm as the Pole Star, a divine being (*arahitogami*) and the descendant of the Sun line.³⁴ This historic link between the Japanese *tennō* and kami became a trope that was reconceptualized and reinterpreted many times in Japan's history, particularly in the medieval period when the very position of *tennō* as a social and symbolic ruler of Japan was challenged in unprecedented ways.

The process of integration of kami into Buddhist discourse was set in motion by the gradual assimilation of Buddhist ideas in Japan in the

Emergence of Japanese Kingship, 91. This term thus only appeared in Japan around the seventh century and could be awarded posthumously to deceased non-ruler figures. Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics*, 11. The problematic connotations of the English term “emperor” as a translation of the Japanese term *tennō* were pointed out earlier by Piggott, 8–10. This monograph will utilize the Japanese term and only make use of the English translation “emperor” in contexts where it is necessary to avoid repetition.

33. Grapard, “The Economics of Ritual Power,” 70–71.

34. On the *nijūnisha*, see Grapard, “Shrines Registered in Ancient Japanese Law” and “Institutions, Ritual, and Ideology.” On *shokoku ichinomiya*, see Okada, “Chūsei ni okeru jinja chitsujo no keisei” and *Kodai kokka to shūkyō*. On *tennō* as the Pole Star, see Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics*, 65–69.

centuries following the introduction of Buddhism. As Buddhism was taking hold in Japan during the Heian period, one of the novel ideas to be propagated was that the entire phenomenal world as experienced by living creatures was caught up in a cycle of suffering (Sk. *duḥkha*, Jp. *ku*) and transmigration (Sk. *samsāra*), caused by ever-perpetuating karmic bonds. This idea of suffering initially justified the formation of a lasting relationship between Buddhist doctrine, ritual, and institutions and the realm of local kami, and not only in Japan. Japanese scholars have recently pointed out that the hagiographies of Buddhist monks from the Tang and Song dynasties, *Gaoseng zhuan* (Biographies of Eminent Monks), included tales explaining the links between local divinities and Buddhist figures and the construction of temples, which may well have been adopted in Japan within the context of acculturation of Buddhism.³⁵ In this respect, one of the earliest often-mentioned examples is a case of a kami residing in Kehi in the province of Echizen in northwestern Japan (map 1). According to eighth-century sources, around the year 715 the deity expressed the wish to convert to Buddhism, citing resentment caused by being born into the phenomenal world as a kami. Other contemporaneous sources reported that soon a deity of the Tado Shrine in Ise followed suit, proclaiming in an oracle that it wished instead to escape being trapped in a kami's body and to praise the "three treasures [of Buddhism]."³⁶ Following these divine statements, the Buddhist milieu responded by constructing Buddhist facilities (*jingūji*) at local cultic sites where native deities resided, and by dispatching Buddhist monks to read sutras in front of kami to relieve them of their suffering and convert them to Buddhism. Japanese scholar Kadoya Atsushi has pointed out that the earliest *jingūji* were mostly constructed at the peripheries

35. Yoshida Kazuhiko, "Tado jingūji to shinbutsu shūgō," and Kadoya, "Shinbutsu shūgō to wa nanika?," 264–65. Notable here for example is the case of an early Buddhist monk and translator An Shigao (fl. 148–ca. 170) who reportedly built a Buddhist temple after a request from the local serpent deity resenting its own condition. Tibet presents a comparable case of assimilating Buddhism with the cults of local deities. Samuels, *Civilized Shamans*.

36. These events were described in the Nara-period source *Tōshi kaden* (Transmissions of the Fujiwara Family, ca. 760) and the record entitled *Tado jingūji garan engi narabi ni shizaichō* (Inventory and Origins of the Tado Shrine Temple, 801), respectively. See the discussion on the Tado oracle and other examples in Teeuwen and Rambelli's introduction to *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 9–11.

of the eighth-century Yamato polity.³⁷ This supports the thesis regarding the vital role that the regional elites and their own links and resources played in the early adaptation of Buddhism and other continental practices in early Japan.

The growing political influence of Buddhism stipulated that kami (many of which descended from overseas) were seen increasingly as protective deities of this new ritual system, not only benefiting from its presence, but actively aiding its further integration on Japanese soil. Such was the case of Hachiman, a deity originally worshipped by the immigrant lineages, the Hata and Ōmiwa (also called Ōga), at Usa in northern Kyushu (map 1).³⁸ This deity became famously involved in the construction of the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji in Nara and was awarded the title of Great Bodhisattva (*daibosatsu*) and princely status for its outstanding services to the state under Emperor Shōmu (701–56, r. 724–49).³⁹

The Buddhist clergy promptly took notice of kami. Local and distant deities were invited to be enshrined as protective deities at temple precincts (*chinju*); in that form, they began to appear as a part of the sacred landscape at Buddhist monastic complexes and were perceived as benign kami protecting Buddhism (*gohō zenjin*). For example, the Tendai temples Enryakuji and Onjōji established the cults of continental deities, such as Sekizan Myōjin and Shinra Myōjin, respectively. These deities soon became integral parts of these temples and were regarded on a par with other pre-existing local kami. Temples connected with the Shingon school, such as Daigoji and Jingoji near the Heian capital, or Kongōbuji at Mt. Kōya, worshipped female kami called Seiryū Gongen (fashioned after a Chinese deity from the Qinglonsi in Chang'an) or Niu Myōjin. Syncretic, volatile deities, such as Zaō Gongen, were appropriated as guardians of Buddhism within the mountain asceticism and pilgrimage discourse.

37. Kadoya, "Shinbutsu shūgō to wa nanika?" 266–69.

38. On the Hata lineage, see Como, *Weaving and Binding*, "Immigrant Gods on the Road to Jindō." The Ōga are discussed in Grapard, "The Source of Oracular Speech," 78–87, and Scheid, "Shōmu Tennō and the Deity from Kyushu."

39. Bender, "The Hachiman Cult and the Dōkyō Incident." Also, Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 13–14. On Hachiman receiving princely status from Shōmu, see Scheid, "Shōmu Tennō and the Deity from Kyushu," 39.



MAP 1 Medieval Japan, with an inset showing the location of the Ise shrines and Futami Bay area. Courtesy of Dr. Ivan Sablin.

In general terms, from the Buddhist perspective, kami-related matters were seen as part of the Buddhist cosmology and one of the six paths of transmigration, *jindō*.⁴⁰ The surviving sources suggest that during the Heian period the Buddhist gaze was mainly fixed on those kami that played a major role in the official cosmologies incorporating the ancestral deities of the imperial and aristocratic families, or those who were beneficial to the development of Buddhist temples as institutions, for example, the kami venerated at twenty-two shrines officially sponsored by the court.⁴¹ Folk deities, less relevant to the political process of institutional advancement, were left aside for the time being; at the very least, the documentation of such practices was avoided by the official scribes.

The Japanese scholar Satō Hiroo has argued that the arrival of novel Buddhist cosmologies, not least the powerful imagery of Pure Land paradises and Buddhist hells and the ideas of “the last age of the Buddhist dharma” (*mappō*) in the Heian period facilitated further incorporation of kami into the Buddhist landscape of Japan and necessitated a major change in their character. From irrational, unpredictable supra-human beings, kami began to be understood as saving deities, patiently answering the prayers and wishes of human beings, acting as agents of transition toward the enlightened state.⁴² The domestication of Buddhist ideas led to the merging of kami and Buddhist divinities (later called *shinbutsu shūgō*) that took place during the late Heian and subsequent medieval periods.⁴³ This uneven and often asymmetrical process was aided

40. On the historical development of this notion, see Teeuwen, “From *Jindō* to Shinto.”

41. Grapard, “Religious Practices,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 2, Heian Japan.

42. Satō Hiroo, *Kami, hotoke, ōken no chūsei*.

43. To describe the nature of the medieval kami cults of the Buddhist persuasion, the fifteenth-century Shinto theorist Yoshida Kanetomo used the term *Ryōbu shūgō shintō* (“the Shinto devised around the Twofold Mandala combinations”): Grapard, *Yūitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū*, 137. The term *shinbutsu shūgō* as a heuristic category was employed in the late Meiji period by the Japanese scholar Tsuji Zennosuke (1877–1955) in his work on Japanese religions, and has been used by other Japanese and Western scholars ever since. Teeuwen and Rambelli translate this term as “amalgamation of kami and Buddhism,” *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 7.

by the construction of the paradigm of *honji suijaku*, “original ground and manifest trace,” which helped to establish, conceptualize, maintain, and diversify the emerging combinatory and associative relationships between specific kami and buddhas within the compounds of each local cultic site. In the words of Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, *honji suijaku* functioned not only to connect buddhas and kami, but “rather as an extremely versatile tool for assembling complex divine entities of the greatest possible power.”⁴⁴

Kami largely remained unseen. Their presence could only be channelled through the speech of a possessed person, or through a physical representation of their true body (*goshintai*), often a sacred rock, tree, mirror, or a Buddhist statue deposited at the shrine built in the vicinity of a sacred area or a cultic site. Since ancient times, catching a glimpse of a kami capable of inflicting grave injury or wrath in its true form (often a snake) was thought extremely dangerous and deemed a strict taboo. It was believed that if ordinary people saw the kami, they might be struck dead, or made blind, destitute, or heirless. Only persons of outstanding purity and virtue, such as Buddhist monks and mendicant holy men, *shōnin* or *hijiri*, who practiced the Buddhist precepts and had no selfish motives, might safely look upon one.⁴⁵

The Buddhist milieu, however, had no strict taboos on the depiction of deities or the production of Buddhist images and statues. It is therefore of little surprise that the earliest examples of kami portrayed in a physical form were the statues and images of Hachiman as a Buddhist monk.⁴⁶ From the late Heian period, sacred sites enshrining kami were depicted in a format somewhat fashioned after the Buddhist mandalas (*miya mandara*), and simple wooden statues of kami (*shinzō*) began to be produced in considerable numbers, most likely for rituals of purification,

44. Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, 30. On the history of the term *honji suijaku* and a similar construct of *wakō dōjin* (“dimming their light, and mingling with dust”), *ibid.*, 15–21. For a recent reevaluation in Japanese, see Satō Mabitō, “Honji suijaku no son’i wo megutte—shinbutsu shūgō wo toraenaosu.”

45. Yamamoto Yōko, “Kami wo miru koto to egaku koto,” 142–45.

46. On the iconography of the statues of Hachiman and other kami, see Guth, *Shinzō*. On more recent directions for research see Kadoya, “On the Formation of Shintō Icons,” 151–59.

redemption, or healing and rainmaking.⁴⁷ Still, even the production of such statues was imbued with ritual taboos and deemed dangerous for the artisans involved. Perhaps for this reason, such images were often kept hidden away as *hibutsu* (literally, “secret buddhas”).⁴⁸ Medieval pictorial scrolls, such as the *Kitano tenjin emaki* and the *Kasuga gongen genki emaki*, typically seen by a circle of spectators at court and in aristocratic residences, would often depict kami in their anthropomorphic form, but with their faces obscured by clouds or nearby objects.

The invisibility of kami and the awesomeness of their true form, their close relation to concepts of authority and their historical connection with the imperial house and state politics, their individual abilities to cause disturbances and to provide direct links to the Buddhist deities as well as their conceptual ambivalence; these were the chief factors that attracted medieval Buddhist practitioners to the kami inhabiting the ancient cultic sites of Japan.

Esoteric Buddhism and the Imperial Deity

The appropriation of new ritual techniques and ideas of esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*), as systematized by Kūkai (774–835), Saichō (767–822), and later Shingon and Tendai thinkers and ritualists, instigated further formidable changes to Japan’s religious landscape.⁴⁹ Local deities,

47. On shrine mandalas, see Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, 144–52; also, Arichi, “*Sannō Miya Mandala: the Iconography of Pure Land on this Earth.*” On the rainmaking aspect, see Ruppert, “Buddhist Rainmaking in Early Japan.”

48. For the discussion of *hibutsu*, see Rambelli, “Secret Buddhas,” and Horton, *Living Buddhist Statues*, 156–92.

49. Upon their introduction to Japan, the ideas and teachings of esoteric Buddhism (also referred to in Japanese context as *mikkyō*) were far from being a fossilized entity or a stabilized force. On the development of esoteric Buddhist traditions and issues regarding the construction of esoteric Buddhist discourses in China, see Sharf, “Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism” and *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*. On the issues of terminology and the category of “esoteric Buddhism,” see McBride, “Is There Really ‘Esoteric’ Buddhism?” On the establishment of the esoteric Buddhist traditions in Japan and Kūkai’s creation of the new *mikkyō* taxonomies, see Abé Ryūichi, *The Weaving of Mantra*, and Bogel, *With a Single Glance*.

especially those central to the political discourse, began to be identified with the divinities of esoteric Buddhism. The divine progenitor of the imperial house, Amaterasu, is a primary example of this process. During the late Heian period, Buddhist circles put forward different theories as to which Buddhist divinity could act as Amaterasu's "original ground." According to some of them, Amaterasu's original source Buddha (*honji-butsumi*) was the bodhisattva Kannon, but more elaborate explanations also developed.⁵⁰

Often cited in this regard is a text penned by the monk Seizon (1012–74), entitled *Shingon fuhō san'yōshō* (Abbreviated Compendium of Esoteric Rituals and Mantras).⁵¹ Seizon was an important cleric of the Ono lineage of Shingon who in his later years served as the *bettō* of Tōji, the imperially designated temple in the southwest of the Heian capital. Closely associated with Emperor Go-Sanjō (r. 1068–72), he occupied the post of a protector-monk (*gojisō*) performing daily esoteric prayers for him, and was known to have assisted the then prince during his enthronement ceremony (*sokui kanjō*).⁵² More controversially, he allegedly performed a secret ritual of Aizen Myōō with the aim of "pacifying" the previous ruler, Go-Reizei (1025–68).

Largely preoccupied with the construction of the correct Shingon tradition in Japan more than two hundred years after the death of Kūkai, the *Shingon fuhō san'yōshō* was dedicated to the royal prince Takahito (later Emperor Go-Sanjō). It contained a crucial passage setting out the relationships between the various esoteric deities. Here, Seizon drew the first parallel between the imperial ancestor, Amaterasu, and the esoteric Buddha Mahāvairocana, known in Japan as the Buddha of "Great Light," Dainichi.

50. Teeuwen, "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity," 140–41. See also the extensive analysis of this theory in Japanese: Itō Satoshi, *Chūsei Tenshō Daijin shinkō no kenkyū*, 175–243. Itō suggests that this theory must have come into existence by the eleventh century; the earliest mention of it in Japanese literary sources appears in Ōe no Masafusa's (1041–1111) collection of stories, *Edanshō*, which he penned around 1104–7. Itō Satoshi, *Chūsei Tenshō Daijin*, 178–80.

51. This link was pointed out by the Japanese scholar of Shingon Buddhism, Kushida Ryōkō, in his *Shingon mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū*, 277.

52. On the activities of the *gojisō*, see Uejima, "Nihon chūsei no kami kansen to kokudokan."

In the olden days, the Bodhisattva Weiguang [Ikō, Divine Light], an incarnation of Mahāvairocana and also Deva Maricī, lived in the Sun Palace [*nichigū*] and avoided the troubles caused by the evil Asura kings [who waged war].⁵³ Nowadays, All-Illuminating Vajrasattva [*henshō kongō*] dwells endlessly in the land of the sun, increasing the good fortune of Golden Wheel-Turning Sage Kings [Sk. *cakravartin*, Jp. *kinrin jōō*, the rulers of Japan]. As a kami, it is called Tenshō no son [or, Amaterasu no mikoto], in the country which is called the true land of Mahāvairocana [or the great country of Japan, *Dainichi no hongoku/Dai nihon koku*].⁵⁴

As the above passage demonstrates, among the select Buddhist monks affiliated with leading esoteric lineages there was a realization that the ritual powers of esoteric Buddhism could be transferred to the Japanese deities. Of utmost interest, of course, was the fact that through the light metaphor and sun imagery the divine progenitor of Japan's ruling family could be successfully linked to the central divinity of esoteric Buddhism, the universal cosmic deity Mahāvairocana. Nevertheless, when considering the historical circumstances surrounding the production of this text, more important details begin to emerge. Given Seizon's proximity to the imperial family and his close involvement with the ritual needs of Go-Sanjō, it is fair to say that identifying the kami with the deities of esoteric Buddhism at that time was paramount for the successful enthronement of a new ruler. Drawing parallels between Amaterasu and Mahāvairocana-Dainichi was first of all a political move by the Shingon clergy that established a precedent allowing the succession of a royal offspring born to a non-Fujiwara mother. Such an offspring would have had no direct relation to the Fujiwara family, whose regents and ministers dominated court politics at that time. This

53. Jp. Marishiten, a Brahmanic goddess of the morning sun, incorporated into Buddhist cosmology.

54. *T.* 2433, 421c03–04. Itō Satoshi interprets the second sentence in this passage as referring to Kūkai, who constantly improves the fortunes of the Japanese emperor by practicing in Japan the esoteric Buddhism he had brought from China (Itō Satoshi, *Chūsei Tenshō Daijin*, 29–30). A more extended English translation and discussion of this passage can be found in Iyanaga, "Medieval Shinto as a form of Japanese Hinduism," 269–74.

purpose was successfully achieved, as Go-Sanjō ascended the throne soon after the death of his predecessor in 1068, a few years after Seizon finished writing his *Shingon fuhō san'yōshō*. At that time, however, understanding of this potential linkage remained confined to small circles of elite monks residing in close proximity to the Heian capital who were concerned with retaining and strengthening their position at court.

Yet there were broader implications in these events. First of all, the emergence of the new concept that Amaterasu was one and the same as the esoteric Buddha Dainichi served to strengthen the political, ritual, and symbolic power of the Japanese sovereigns and supported notions of imperial authority as essentially Buddhist rule (*obō buppō*), leading toward an ideal Buddhist state. Second, Japan could be envisioned as such an entity, being “the main base of the universal Buddha Dainichi” (*Dainichi no hongoku*). Third, it was proposed that the ritual framework for achieving this could only be provided by the teachings and ritual technologies of esoteric Buddhism, brought to Japan by Kūkai and embodied in elite esoteric lineages, such as those of Tōji, Daigoji, or Ninnaji. In short, by throwing their weight and ritual expertise to support a non-Fujiwara ruler, the main branches of Shingon were to be regarded as the major protectors of the Japanese state and of its *tennō*.⁵⁵

These ideas, however, may have been known only to the select monks working closely with the Heian court. It took another two hundred years before Buddhist monks, and then “holy men,” mendicant priests, mountain practitioners, *yin-yang* diviners, travelling nuns (*bikuni*), and other folk directed their steps toward the sacred groves of Ise Province on their way to worship Amaterasu.

55. This particular episode suggests that the Shingon temples led the process of conceptualizing the Japanese kami along the lines of esoteric Buddhism. Even so, one must not assume that the same efforts were not made within Tendai and other Buddhist temples that also specialized in esoteric Buddhist doctrine and ritual. On the Tendai appropriation of kami see Grapard, “Linguistic Cubism” and “*Keiranshūyōshū*”; Dolce, “Hokke Shinto”; Bodiford, “Matara.” I have also sketched the approaches of Tendai lineages to Miwa in “The Deity of Miwa and Tendai Esoteric Thought.” This topic will be picked up again in chapters 5 and 6.

The Ise Shrines and the Buddhist Pilgrimage to Ise

According to Japan's earliest mytho-historical sources, the origins of the Ise shrines went back to the time of an early third-century Yamato chieftain called Sujin. In the sixth year of his reign, the ruler, fearful of enshrining two powerful kami, Amaterasu Ōmikami and Yamato no Ōkunidama, together in his residence, entrusted the sacred body of Amaterasu to a princess (or possibly, a female shaman), who installed this important deity at a nearby cultic site, Kasanui, near Mt. Miwa.⁵⁶ Later, during the reign of Suinin, the princess Yamato-hime took the sacred body of the deity to Ise, where she found a site on the bank of the Isuzu River that was finally deemed appropriate for the ruler's divine ancestor. Such were the origins of the Inner Shrine (*Naikū*), according to the *Nihon shoki*, the earliest mytho-historical annals sponsored by the eighth-century court. As map 1 shows, the Inner Shrine was located on the bank of the Isuzu River.

The first official record documenting the Outer Shrine (*Gekū*) appeared in the early Heian period. Entitled *Toyuke no miya no gishikichō* (Ritual Manual of the Toyuke Shrine), it was a part of the state ritual manuals of the Enryaku era (*Enryaku gishikichō*). According to it, the deity Toyuke (also known in medieval Japan as Toyouke) from Tanba Province was charged with feeding Amaterasu and ritually installed on the Yamada Plain of the Watarai District at Ise, during the reign of Yūryaku *tennō*.⁵⁷ The ritual specialists overseeing the worship of Toyuke were the Watarai, and the priestly family in charge of the shrine of Amaterasu were the Arakida; both shrines' administrative affairs were under the jurisdiction of the Ōnakatomi clan, who also presided over the Jingikan in the capital. It is not clear when exactly the two shrines fully came into being, but by the eighth century the deity of Ise was already revered as the imperial ancestor, and worship at the Ise

56. The *Nihon shoki* states that Yamato Ōkunidama was another name for Ōnamuchi, also known as Ōkuninushi or Ōmononushi, the deity enshrined on Mt. Miwa. These deities will be discussed further shortly. Kasanui was located on the site of the Hibara Shrine, an auxiliary shrine of Ōmiwa, in the northwestern part of Mt. Miwa.

57. Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō*, 29–33.

shrines was exclusive to the imperial family.⁵⁸ It was not possible to carry out private worship there.

Despite the famous taboo on Buddhist attire and language within the sacred compound of the two Ise shrines, Buddhism played an important role at Ise from early times.⁵⁹ The first Buddhist temples were constructed in the area around the late seventh century. Official records reported that in 767, following an imperial edict to construct a shrine temple, a Buddhist image was installed there to ensure the presence of the Buddhist dharma.⁶⁰ By the late Heian period, the hereditary ritual lineages employed at the shrines also established their ancestral temples (*ujidera*) there: the members of the Ōnakatomi family who presided over the ritual worship at the shrines built the Buddhist temple Rendaiji, the Arakida had Dengūji, and the four branches of the Watarai had their family temple of Jōmyōji. In the Futami area, there was also Tengakuji built by the Arakida priests.⁶¹

During the late Heian and Kamakura periods, monks from the large Buddhist temples, including those in Kyoto and Nara, repeatedly went to Ise to pay their respects at the imperial shrines. Some recorded their experiences in diaries and travelogues, while for others only testaments in numerous *setsuwa* collections remain. For example, the monk Shōken (1138–96) from Daigoji, known to scholars as the teacher of Dharma Prince Shūkaku (1150–1202) of Ninnaji, was reported to have come to Ise on pilgrimages many times during the late 1180s and 1190s. Like many

58. One theory is that Amaterasu, originally a male sun deity, was worshipped by local fishermen at Ise. Wada, “The Origins of Ise Shrine.” Herman Ooms notes that Amaterasu was almost absent from the *Nihon shoki*, apart from its beginning chapter on the Age of Gods and the sections describing the reign of the late seventh-century ruler Tenmu. It may have been adopted as the imperial progenitor and installed at a certain site in Ise as a result of the political and military aspirations of Tenmu and his consort Jitō, and the existential needs of the eighth-century Yamato court. Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics*, 30–31.

59. On the taboo of Buddhist attire and language at Ise, see for example Kuroda Toshio, “The Discourse on ‘The Land of Kami,’” 366–71.

60. Jingo Keiun 1 (767.10.3), in *Daijingu shozōjiki* (Miscellaneous Records of the Great Ise Shrine), 79.

61. Itō Satoshi, *Chūsei Tenshō Daijin*, 194–95, 220, 551. He notes that many of these temples had the Eleven-Headed Kannon (Jūichimen Kannon) as their principal image.

other monks, he was directly involved in collecting resources for the repairs at Tōdaiji and in busy exchanges with the Ise clergy; this resulted in a compilation of numerous important ritual memoranda and records that were subsequently deposited at Shinpukuji in Owari Province.⁶² The Kōfukuji monk Gedatsubō Jōkei (1145–1213) supposedly went to Ise in 1195. Having received an oracle from the deity, he commissioned a sacred image that could fit into a portable shrine (*zushi*), and subsequently installed it in his quarters at Kasagidera, near Mt. Mikasa in the province of Yamato.⁶³

In fact, Jōkei's reverence for the deities of Ise and Kasuga has been well-documented in his famous rebuttal of the *nenbutsu* movement, the *Kōfukuji sōjō*, and in his works dedicated to religious awakening, such as the *Gumei hosshinshū*. In the latter, Jōkei advocated the manifestation of Buddhas and bodhisattvas who possess the inherent dharma quality (*hosshō*) as local kami (*reijin kenbutsu*). They appear, he argued, in a defiled world in order to save sentient beings.⁶⁴ In the *Kōfukuji sōjō*, Jōkei was even more explicit about kami, stating that “ferocious kami of a real kind” (*jitsurui kijin*) were in fact the avatars, reincarnations, and manifest traces of Buddhist deities (*gonge suijaku*), and hence great Buddhist saints who had been respected by the high Buddhist clergy for centuries.⁶⁵ Similar understandings of kami were spreading among Buddhist monks and practitioners of many denominations, including Shingon, Tendai, Zen, and later, for example, among the followers of Hōnen, Ippen, Nichiren, and Shinran (although not necessarily always in a positive sense).⁶⁶

62. Shōken was linked to the esoteric teachings of the Goryū lineage and multiple ritual texts on kami transmitted at Ise, Tōdaiji, and Shinpukuji (Ōsu Bunko temple archive) in Nagoya. Abe Yasurō, “Shintō as Written Representation,” esp. 111–12.

63. Agatsuma, “Jōkei to jingi shinkō.”

64. *NST*, vol. 15, 28. Cited in Agatsuma, “Jōkei to jingi shinkō,” 9.

65. *Kōfukuji sōjō*, in *DNBZ* 124, 105. Cited in Agatsuma, “Jōkei to jingi shinkō.” Morrell translates this passage as follows: “They [the *nenbutsu* followers] put aside the reality of supernatural beings [*kijin*]. The trace manifestations [*suijaku*] who assume provisional forms [*gongen*] are actually the great [Buddhist] Holy Ones, revered by all the eminent priests of antiquity.” Morrell, “Hossō's Jōkei and the Kōfukuji Petition,” 79. For a study on Jōkei in English, see James Ford, *Jōkei and Buddhist Devotion in Early Medieval Japan*.

66. Itō Satoshi, “Shinbutsu shūgō riron no hen'yō,” 177–79. Suzuki Hideyuki, *Chūsei gakusō to Shintō*. Also Stone, “Do Kami Ever Overlook Pollution?,” 211–12. On the kami

During the Kamakura period, pilgrimages to Ise were undertaken by different types of Buddhist practitioners, not only by the large temple clerics and scholar-recluses but also by semi-itinerant holy men who often pursued the ritual practice of dream incubation in front of famous shrines and temples.⁶⁷ In his diary, *Gyokuyō* (Jewel Leaves), the regent Kujō Kanazane (1149–1207) described how a blind Hokkebō Shōnin secluded himself in the vicinity of the Ise shrines in order to receive direct contact with the imperial kami through means of an oracular dream.⁶⁸ A few years later, Kanazane himself dispatched a Shingon *ajari* to the Ise shrines to offer a gold-inscribed *Wisdom Heart Sutra* to ensure the birth of an heir to the imperial consort, his own daughter.⁶⁹

This important trend of approaching the deities of Ise for private interests was best exemplified by the monk Chōgen (1121–1206), who was initially educated at Daigoji and performed mountain pilgrimages at Ōmine as a part of his religious training. He first went to Ise in the middle of winter in 1186 on a mission to collect funds for the restoration of the great statue of Vairocana at Tōdaiji, after the Nara temples had been torched by Taira forces. Following custom, he spent a night in the vicinity of the shrine's precincts, outside the *mizukaki* fence, and received an oracle from Amaterasu. The imperial deity allegedly complained that it felt somewhat tired and weakened of late, and asked Chōgen to worship it. Upon his return to Tōdaiji, the monk made a new copy of the *Great Wisdom Sutra*, and two months later, accompanied by a party of sixty monks and a seven-hundred-strong group of onlookers, he went to Ise again and made an offering of a copy to each shrine, performing *tendoku* (reciting the title of each volume) and team doctrinal debate (*ban rongi*). Since Buddhist rituals were forbidden within the shrines' precincts, Chōgen's party performed the service at the

interpretations and practices in Nichiren traditions, see Dolce, "Hokke Shinto." On Tendai and Zen approaches, see Bodiford, "Matara," and Teeuwen, "The *Laozi* and the Emergence of Shinto at Ise."

67. Visual evidence of such pilgrimage can be found in medieval pictorial scrolls, for example, *Ippen hijirie* (ca. 1299) and *Ippen shōnin eden* (ca. 1304–7), preserved at the Tokyo National Museum.

68. *Gyokuyō* on Genryaku 2 (1185.3.17), Yamada, "Ise jingū no chūseiteki igi," 165–66.

69. *Gyokuyō* on Kenkyū 5 (1194.1.20), Yamada, "Ise jingū no chūseiteki igi," 165–66.

nearby temple, Seikakuji, where they were lodging. He visited Ise again in 1193 and 1195 to present the two copies of the *Great Wisdom Sutra* to both shrines and offer the recitation of selected sutras (*hōraku*, lit. “dharma appeasement”) to the kami through services at Tengakuji, the Arakida family temple located in the Futami Bay area, and at a temple near Mt. Bodai.⁷⁰

The monk Tsūkai (1234–1305), who was related to the Ōnakatomi clan and also trained at Daigoji, went to Ise at imperial request in 1258. Relating the details of his stay in his *Daijingu sankeiki* (Records of Pilgrimage to the Great Ise Shrines) in 1286, he noted that Buddhist practitioners were akin to private visitors to the shrine and thus had to follow a code of behaviour that often saw them paying their respects at the shrines at night; Buddhist monks could go no further than the garden in the immediate vicinity of the second *torii*.⁷¹

Nuns also could pay their respects at the Ise shrines, and they often did. The experience of the consort of the retired emperor Go-Fukakusa, Lady Nijō, described in a record dated Shōō 4 (1291) in the *Towazugatari* (ca. 1306–8), is a notable example. After taking the tonsure, she went to the Outer Shrine for the first time. Upon hearing that Buddhist garb was prohibited at the Inner Shrine, but not knowing the best way to pay homage, she resorted to seeking advice from the shrine priests at the purification hall. One of them informed her that the shrine priesthood did not mind visitors coming to the second *torii* gate and worshipping the deities from the garden there. Following this advice, Lady Nijō also paid homage to the deity of the Inner Shrine, again from a distance, at a hall located across the Mimosuso River. She also observed other women attending the shrines.⁷²

70. *Tōdaiji shuto sankei Ise daijingu ki*, discussed in Itō Satoshi, “The Medieval Cult of Gyōki and the Ise Shrines,” and Yamada, “Ise jingū no chūseiteki igi,” 165–67. Itō has also investigated new evidence related to Chōgen’s campaign in Ise, including a record of offertory services of chanting the *Great Wisdom Sutra* to the Ise deities, preserved at Kanazawa Bunko (Shōmyōji temple archive, Yokohama). Itō Satoshi, *Chūsei Tenshō Daijin*, 541–53.

71. *Daijingu sankeiki*, by Tsūkai, Kōan 9 (1286.8.14), 759. This text should not be confused with the similarly titled record written by Saidaiji monk Shōkai around 1280.

72. For an English translation, see Brazell, *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*, 211–16.

In fact, according to Tsūkai's thirteenth-century records, the flow of pilgrims may have intensified during that time. He reported that a special facility (*hōrakusha*) for Buddhist visitors to perform services to entertain the local deities was constructed around 1275–81 as a space to perform pacification rituals at the time of the Mongol invasions.⁷³ Given the perceived threat of an unprecedented foreign incursion during the late thirteenth century, the political and religious importance of the Ise shrines and kami in general evidently reached new heights.

At Ise, Buddhist practitioners of various stripes mingled with religious specialists and mountain ascetics from all over the country, and more importantly, with members of the Arakida and the Watarai families who were available for guiding the pilgrims around the sacred complex and the Futami Bay area. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the temples and private Buddhist facilities at Ise formed a unique environment where, under a veil of secrecy, new rituals, esoteric theories, and new salvatory techniques were invented, developed, and exchanged.

Several Buddhist temples and *bessho* on the fringes of the Ise shrine precincts were linked to esoteric Buddhist temples and mountain ascetic practices, both in central Japan (for example, in the Ōmine mountains) and in the vicinity of the shrines. One, Sekidera, established around the mid-thirteenth century, was located near the Outer Shrine, on the southern slopes of Mt. Takakura (map 1). A small pond in its vicinity supplied water for ritual procedures at both shrines. The temple had strong connections with Onjōji, a powerful Tendai temple and the great rival of Enryakuji, situated on the shores of Lake Biwa, within a short distance of the capital. Another temple, Kongōshōji, was located on top of Mt. Asama, not far from the Inner Shrine. This temple specialized in the star cults, rituals for acquiring perfect memory (*gumonji hō*), and rain prayers and was associated with the worship of Maitreya (the Buddha of the Future) and esoteric and *shugen* practices.⁷⁴ Sengūin, originally

73. *Daijingu sankeiki*, recounting the events from Kōan 4 (1281), 766. From the evidence discussed above by Yamada and Itō, it is evident that such *hōraku* services were performed by Buddhist pilgrims by the late twelfth century, although it is not clear whether any permanent facilities for such rites existed at that time.

74. The exact date of Kongōshōji's foundation is unclear. In 1392, it was "restored" by a meditation master from Zen temple Kenchōji in Kamakura. The ritual texts from Mt.

the *jingūji* of the Sengū Shrine, guarding the entrance to Ise from the Kumano area, was another hub of a network of Buddhist and *shugen* practitioners, often with connections to Onjōji, who came on their way from Kumano. Buddhist practitioners posed no particular threat and were welcomed by the shrine priests and personnel of the shrine family temples if they arrived in small groups, stayed away from the main buildings, and behaved with deference.

Thus, despite the formal taboo of Buddhism at the Ise shrines, outside the shrines' sacred compounds the boundaries separating the two realms were porous and allowed interaction and a fairly unrestricted flow of ideas between the shrine clergy and Buddhist practitioners. Moreover, in the course of these interactions Buddhist and kami circles studied each other with the utmost intensity and interest. For example, during the late Heian and early Kamakura periods, Onjōji monks were involved in producing esoteric Buddhist commentaries on the Nakatomi formula (*Nakatomi harae*), a ritual purification performed for private donors by shrine specialists and *yin-yang* diviners (*onmyōji*). These specialists travelled the country to establish ties with local landowners and propagate the virtues of the Ise shrines while performing a wide range of rituals aimed at personal gratification and success. Commentaries such as the *Nakatomi harae kunge* (Explanation of the Nakatomi Purification Formula) and *Nakatomi harae kike* (Notes on the Nakatomi Purification Formula), attempted to understand this practice from the perspective of esoteric Buddhism by clarifying how and why the ritual procedures of the Nakatomi could be infused with esoteric Buddhist meaning.⁷⁵

Compiled toward the end of the twelfth century, these texts may have been the earliest to propose that the two Ise shrines were the Two Mandalas of esoteric Buddhism, the Womb (Taizōkai) and the Diamond (Kongōkai) Mandalas, and that together they represented the notion of non-duality (*funi*). Moreover, as if following up Seizon's esoteric theory recorded earlier for consumption at court, it was understood that Amaterasu, the solar deity enshrined at Ise, was none other than the esoteric

Asama's own tradition state that previously in this location there had been a temple or, perhaps, a meditation hall founded by Kūkai in 825 and frequented by mountain ascetic and esoteric Buddhist priests practicing the *gumonji hō*.

75. For the English translation, see Teeuwen and van der Veere, *Nakatomi Harae Kunge*. Teeuwen, "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity," 120–21.

Buddha Dainichi, the universal cosmic deity permeating and illuminating all places in the physical and divine realms.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many more texts recording esoteric theories about kami and discussing the true nature of the Ise shrines using ideas originating in the world of esoteric Buddhism, Onmyōdō cults, and mountain religion were produced at Ise.⁷⁶ Some can be traced to Sekidera, some to Sengūin, while others, like the major Ryōbu Shintō compendium, the aforementioned *Reikiki*, remain difficult to trace precisely. The majority of these esoteric texts were fixated on the Ise shrines, introducing theories about the essentially esoteric nature of Amaterasu and how the deities could be helpful for those seeking Buddhist enlightenment; they also contained new ideas about the nature and appearance of kami and about ritual implements that could be used in esoteric rituals summoning them.⁷⁷

The idea that the imperial shrines were a manifestation of the utmost truths of esoteric Buddhism rapidly penetrated the circles of Buddhist monks with links to Shingon, Tendai, Zen, and Pure Land temples as well as itinerant *hijiri* and *shugen* practitioners. It was understood that Amaterasu, especially its turbulent spirit (*aramitama*), could appear not only in the form of the supreme deity of esoteric Buddhism, Dainichi, but also in the form of Dainichi's fiercer manifestations, such as the esoteric wisdom kings Aizen and Fudō, or even darker divinities, the female demons Dakiniten.⁷⁸ With time, the kami installed at other cultic sites were also brought into these discussions. It became clear that the turbulent kami (*araburu kami*), especially those appearing in the form of unenlightened beings such as dragons, serpents, or foxes, proved to be the most powerful in a ritual context.⁷⁹

76. See a detailed discussion of ritual texts, such as late Kamakura period *Tenshō Daijin giki* and *Bikisho* (ca. 1324), in Teeuwen, "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity," and Iyanaga, "*Honji Suijaku* and the Logic of Combinatory Deities," 159–69. These texts will be addressed again in chapter 6.

77. On the relationship between medieval Shinto imagery and the *Reikiki*, see Kadoya, "On the Formation of Shintō Icons," 159–79; Hayashi, "*Kogo ruiyōshū* ni miru jishshu jinpō zu"; and Suzuki Hideyuki, *Chūsei gaksō to Shintō*.

78. Itō Satoshi, "Chūsei Nihon ni okeru taiyō shinkō-toku ni Tenshō Daijin to Aizen Myōō no shūgō wo megutte"; on Amaterasu as the judge of the dead, see Teeuwen, "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity."

79. Teeuwen, "The Creation of a *Honji Suijaku* Deity," 110.

Toward the second half of the thirteenth century, the secret theories about Amaterasu and other kami began to be passed on in the form of *kirikami*, simple paper strips or certificates that proved one's knowledge of the special ritual of *abhiṣeka* initiations, called *Ise kanjō* (Ise Abhiṣeka) or *Reiki kanjō* (Abhiṣeka of the Divine Spirits). Practitioners exchanged such rituals at the private facilities and the Buddhist and *shugen* temples at Ise. From there, esoteric theories and initiations were making their way to other regions of Japan.

The kami realm was similarly affected. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, the Watarai, anxious about the status of the Outer Shrine and their own situation, recorded a series of secret scriptures that justified their claims to place the deity Toyuke (alt. Toyouke) on a par with Amaterasu. These texts, produced over a period of several decades, mainly to legitimize the Watarai's position during the litigation at court, acquired the name of the "Five Secret Scriptures of Shinto" (*Shintō gobusho*). At least the early versions of some of the Watarai scriptures were written under the influence of the court circles in Kyoto and selected Zen scholarship newly arriving from Song China.⁸⁰ The Arakida, who were in charge of the Inner Shrine and the hereditary priests attending on the imperial deity, did not produce anything on that scale, but they were actively involved in interactions with the esoteric Buddhist and *shugen* specialists who were at the center of the creation of secret theories about kami. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Ise continued to be a center of study of various writings on kami, including the *Nihon shoki* and transmissions on the Age of Gods; Pure Land, Zen, Shingon, and Tendai monks continued to be actively involved in these exchanges.⁸¹ It is against the backdrops of these medieval developments that the story of Mt. Miwa and the emergence of a particular brand of kami worship associated with it came into being.

80. For an in-depth study of this period in the Ise shrines' history, see Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō*, and more recently, "The *Laozi* and the Emergence of Shinto at Ise."

81. While the activities of esoteric monks and temple lineages are becoming well researched, less is known about the involvement of Zen and Pure Land priests. A recent study by Suzuki Hideyuki, *Chūsei gakuō to Shintō*, rectifies this problem.