

THE SAINTLY KÔBÔ DAISHI
IN POPULAR LORE
(A.D. 774-835)

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The great Buddhist priest Kūkai, known to history as Kôbô Daishi, was reputedly born in the year 774 at Byôbu-ga-ura, a lovely situated sea-village not far from Tadotsu, in Sanuki, Shikoku.¹ Yet even his birthplace is in doubt, as Zentsuji, farther inland, also claims the honour, and points out a much decayed temple as occupying the exact spot where his parents' house stood. An effort at conciliation has been made by suggesting that in those days the sea penetrated much more inland, and "Byôbu-ga-ura"—the Screen Bay—then formed part of what is now Zentsuji, which would thus have been on the shore.

The boy was born into a family called Saiki (Saheki), his father, Yoshimichi, being a provincial nobleman, descended, it is said, from an ancient emperor. Even from before his birth, the Supernatural enters Kôbô Daishi's legend. His conception was "miraculous"—his mother, in a dream, saw a saintly monk arrive to take lodgings in her house, and he caused the supernatural pregnancy by entering her body...² He came into the world with his hands folded as if in prayer... Probably for these omens, the child was given the official (baptismal) name Henshō Kongō—Worldwide Shining Diamond;—but familiarly he was called Totōmono, "Our Treasure". While still a small child, he had a

1. Also not far from the famous *Kompira* sanctuary, of which more later.

2. Similar things happened to very religious virgins or old ladies all over the world.

dream that he was sitting on an eight-petalled lotus flower and conversing with Buddha. Hardly much later, the strong-willed Totômono demanded from the Heavenly Powers to grant that he may experience the Hyperphysical; otherwise he was resolved to throw himself down the near-by tall precipice. . . . One version has it that he actually committed the deed; but angels caught him at the bottom, and prevented harm! Hence an imperial messenger later remarked, "This boy is the incarnation of Buddha, not a mere layman."

At the age of twelve, or even earlier, he was sent to the university of the capital to prepare himself for an official career, and was instructed in Confucianism. This did not quite satisfy his reasoning, so he privately studied Taoism. I would say that the "debased" Taoism of his era, which was mainly magical, incantatory, and demonistic, greatly influenced his future religion. In his search for Truth he left the capital while still quite young, and entered a Buddhist temple as an acolyte; he later remembered that even as a child he had constantly formed Buddha images of clay, which he placed into a self-made shrine and adored. . . .³ His teacher, the priest Gonzo, one of the greatest exponents of the *Sanron* tenets, was looked upon as an avatar of the star Venus. . . . One of the Scriptures which he studied says, "If one repeats secret Mantras a million times over, one will master the whole Truth of the Universe." At the age of 19—or more probably 22—Totômono was a full-fledged priest, and was given the name *Kyôkai* (Emptiness-Sea), which was later changed into *Nyokai* (Like the Sea); then he adopted the name *Kûkai*, meaning Void-Sea, which he retained throughout life.⁴

His novitiate, however, had not passed without sundry tribulations and trials, to which he was subject by evil spirits. He was a restless man seeking for the right solution of the question of Life and the Hereafter, and while not yet twenty lived as an ascetic, and visited desolate crags and shores. On such an occasion, on the *Tairyû-no-take* or Great Dragon Peak, he continued

3. At the *Saikokuji* in Onomichi, Bingo province, is preserved a small clay image of Buddha which the boy is said to have moulded out of mud when playing with his chums!

4. Upon entering religion, people take a canonic name usually based on some event in the life of Gautama, a passage in the Scriptures, and so forth. The name may be changed on attaining higher hierarchic rank.

his studies, contemplations and ascetic practices for a hundred days, sitting among trees high above a precipice, although he knew that a poisonous dragon lived on the same peak and killed many people in the vicinity. Not much later, at the lonely Cape Muroto in Tosa, we are told, "dragons and other monsters appeared out of the sea, and disturbed him in his devotions. These he drove away by repeating mystic formulae called *Darani*, and by spitting at them the rays of the evening star, which had flown from heaven into his mouth.⁵ At a temple built by him on this spot, he was constantly annoyed by hobgoblins, who forced him to enter into conversation; but he finally got rid of them by surrounding himself with a consecrated (imaginary) enclosure, into which they were unable to enter against his will." Again somewhat later, when ascending Mount Ashizuri, he saw a huge camphor-tree whose cavity was inhabited by a number of the long-nosed *Tengu* forest-goblins; and when he "offered prayers" or, rather, made incantations, "a great flame suddenly burst forth and those monsters fled in great perturbation."

Even the wily foxes, who love to fool and possess humans, once tried to bewitch Kôbô Daishi while on his wanderings through Shikoku. The wise priest of course immediately recognized their trick, and as a punishment he banished all foxes from the island. It is said that ever since, no foxes were seen in Shikoku; indeed the badger, his born antagonist, reigns supreme.

It is also recorded that "he passed years in wandering among the mountains and forests, training himself more in Taoist than in Buddhist ideas." In those days, Kôbô Daishi denied himself almost everything. "Even on the coldest winter days, he did not wear more than one unlined garment made of wistaria fibre, whilst in the hottest summer he totally abstained from any kind of cereals." The years of mental struggle came to an end when he had a "vision", in which a Buddhist saint, in conversation, definitely converted him to Buddhism. Also on Awa's Tairyû-no mine, when once absolving the occult *Kokûzô* devotion—*Kokûzô* being his patron-saint (*Ākāśagarbha*)—a heavenly sword flew down, to instruct him in the *Bosatsu's* wisdom and benevolence, wide and indestructible as the sky. At the age of twenty-

5. Similarly, St. Patrick exorcised the reptiles of Ireland into the sea, or turned them into stones. . . .

four, in 798, he wrote a confession of his struggle for truth in the form of dialogues between representatives of the three dogmas, the *Sangoshiki*.

After his studies and meditations he finally shut himself up in the *Daibutsu-den* (the Hall of the Great Buddha of bronze in the *Tôdaiji* at Nara), earnestly praying to "all the Buddhas of the Three Worlds" to be enabled to grasp the fundamental Truths. Whereupon he was instructed in a dream to go to the *Kume-dera*, there to search under the pagoda.⁶ He did, indeed, find ensconced under the "heart-pillar"⁷ the Sutra of the Great Sun (*Vâirôcana, Dainichi Nyôrai*); but there was nobody able to understand it and explain it to him... He therefore made every effort to go to China, where he might find a teacher, and being a promising young man, in 804 he was allowed to join an official embassy, like other inquisitive spirits of those days. Before leaving, he engraved a votive image of *Yakushi Nyôrai*, Buddha of Healing, now the principal image at the *Kita-in, Ninna-ji* in Kyoto. He also dedicated one hundred volumes of the *Hannya* Sutra, which he had himself copied out, to the *Hachiman* shrine at Usa. Then he embarked at Matsu-ura in Hizen, in company with Fujiwara Kadomaro, the imperial envoy.

Traveling to China was not without risks in his time; of the

6. Some 15 miles from Nara, a temple dedicated to *Yakushi Nyorai*, the Buddha of Healing. Interesting is the fact that this sanctuary is also connected with the only "Immortal" of Taoist character evolved by the Japanese, *Kume-no-sennin*. This fairy had acquired his supernatural powers by severe religious exercises, but lost them one day, while traveling about seated on a colorful cloud, when he saw below a girl squatting by a brook and washing clothes. She had pulled up her kimono, as women will do when so at work, and her white legs were so attractive that Kume lost his balance and fell down right before the girl. Being again a mortal man, Kume married the good-looking woman. He was drafted like others when some imperial palace was to be built (forced labour being a sort of tax in those days), but because of some sarcastic remark referring to his former powers decided to again practice his religious asceticism; and indeed eight days later he was again able to make timber fly from the mountain-side to the building yard, instead of having to carry it himself...

7. The heart-pillar is the main (central) pillar of a building. In a pagoda it consists in an enormous pole which reaches from base to almost the apex; it stands over a recess hewn into the rock-foundation, and in this recess are kept the relics, with sacred scriptures and other amulets, for whose glorification the edifice has been erected.

four boats of the mission, two were lost in a storm, and the other two were driven out of their course by some seven hundred miles. They were only saved because at the height of the storm Kôbô Daishi prayed to Buddha, "and lo! the wind began to abate, and the sea became calm"... On arrival at the unfamiliar spot, Fuchow, the unlucky travellers were believed to be pirates, and treated accordingly, until Kôbô Daishi's classical education and knowledge of the Chinese writing could convince the authorities that they were, indeed, imperial ambassadors from Japan...

After some more vicissitudes, Kôbô Daishi studied for two years under the most renowned Buddhist masters. He had the good fortune to become the favorite disciple of the venerable and gifted abbot Hui-kuo (*Jap. Keikwa*) of the *Ch'ing-lung* Temple (Green Dragon, *Jap. Shôryû-jî*) of Ch'ang-an. It is said that when Kôbô Daishi first met the patriarch he was greeted with the words:—"My life is rapidly declining; it is a long time that I have waited for thee. Now thou hast come." All present wondered what strange connection between Teacher and new arrival might occultly exist... When at last Kôbô Daishi had to return to Japan, he was charged by Hui-kuo to propagate in his country the tenets of the *Yogâcârya* sect of India which he had studied, and which we shall find again as the Japanese *Shingon-shû*. The emperor of China himself, sorrowing at Kôbô Daishi's departure, gave him a rosary made of seeds of the *Bodhi* tree, with many complimentary words... The people who had come to see him off "clung to his sleeves and would not let him depart."

On the return voyage a storm again arose, and the ship was at the mercy of the waves. Everybody thought all was lost; but Kôbô Daishi remained calm, and prayed to *Fudô-myôô* and all the Buddhas, so that the furiously raging storm abated and the sea became smooth. His Chinese teacher had foreseen the danger and told our saint to carve an image of *Fudô* for protection; this statue we shall find again later, on Kôyasan. It is still called the *Namikiri Fudô*, the Wave-cutter.

Not long after his arrival on native soil, in 806, only 32 years old, Kôbô Daishi engaged in one of those religious disputations which flourished under the highest patronage during many generations, when various beliefs and rituals tried to settle themselves in Japan; and in spite of his youth, he is said to have surpassed all the other learned bonzes in eloquence and science. Indeed, ever since the *Shingon* sect has had the reputation, in sermons and discourses, to seize and elaborate the subtle points of an

argument.

It was on this or a similar occasion of discoursing, at the palace of the emperor, on the doctrine of the incarnation of the Buddha, that some dispute arose in regard to certain new dogmas which he had introduced, as propounded by his Chinese master. Turning away from the assembly, he made the sign of "wisdom" with his hand, and immediately his face was observed to shine with an exceeding brightness, so that not only the disputing priests but even the emperor and his courtiers bowed to the ground in reverence, as before divinity itself...

Legend adds that soon after his return from China Kôbô Daishi went to the shrines of Ise, the most holy place of Shintô. The supreme Sun-goddess, *Amaterasu Ô-mikami*, is there venerated, as also *Toyo-uke-bime*, the Food-goddess, the deified Earth as producer of nourishment and upholder of all things under Heaven. Taking a reverent attitude before the chief shrine, our priest waited patiently for an omen, meanwhile fasting and praying. This was quite the usual thing to do for obtaining god-possession and a revelation. After a week's waiting he was granted the desired vision. The Food-possessing Goddess—I would say on behalf of her supreme mistress—disclosed to him the "yoke" (*yoga*) by which he could harness the native and the foreign gods to the chariot of a victorious Buddhism. She manifested herself to him and revealed the theory on which his system is founded, and which, briefly stated, is as follows:—

All the Shintô divinities are avatars, or incarnations, of Buddha. They were manifestations to the Japanese, before Gautama had become the Enlightened One, the Jewel in the Lotus, and before the holy Wheel of the Law or the sacred Shastras and Sutras had reached the island empire.⁸ Furthermore, provision was made for the future gods and deified holy ones, who were to be born on this soil of Japan, in accordance with Buddha's saying that "Life has a limited span, and naught may avail to extend it. This is manifested by the impermanence of human beings; but yet, whenever necessary, I will hereafter make my appearance from time to time, as a (Shintô) *kami*, as a (Confucian) sage, or as a Buddha."

In 810 the priest Kûkai, or Kôbô Daishi as we shall continue

8. *Shastra*: religious and legal textbooks of the Hindus; *Sutra*: rules expressed in aphoristic brevity. The sacred scriptures of Buddhism.

to call him for simplicity's sake, (since few people are even aware of his name while in life), was installed as abbot of the *Tôji* monastery in Kyoto, one of the two principal temples of the newly-founded capital, and still one of the most famous; close to it in olden days stood the *Rashômon* city-gate which so prominently figures in a few spooky legends of bravery. During the *Tôji* appointment, Kôbô Daishi already plainly showed his supernatural powers. Soon after its completion, the tall pagoda began to lean on one side—a rather nefarious sign, all the worse because it leaned towards the quarter where the Imperial Palace was situated. . . . Kôbô Daishi, nothing daunted, sat before the pagoda and fervently prayed that it might be restored to its perpendicular. Hard and long he prayed, until by the potency of his “will” it did stand straight again. A more rationalistic version has it that to counteract the tower's tendency Kôbô Daishi had a large pond dug on the opposite side—the very pond, full of lotuses, still there as a witness. If so, and if less magical, we can only admire the man's engineering acumen. . . .

How greatly Kôbô Daishi's doctrine influenced the Court is shown by an imperial edict concerning the *Tôji*, which describes it as “a most holy place of prayer for the security of the land and people against all injury. If the people pay due homage to the Temple, the country will be safe and its inhabitants enjoy peace and prosperity; but if otherwise the Government will go astray and the country be visited by disasters.” “The *Tôji* will rise or fall with the country; for when *Tôji* is held in high esteem, Japan will prosper, whilst when it is neglected the country will fall.” Not much later, Kôbô Daishi induced Emperor Nimmyô to build the temple *Shingon-in* within the precincts of the Palace, where in future all Buddhist rituals were to be observed by the Court on the occasion of the principal festivals; and Kôbô Daishi himself was appointed *sôjô*, or bishop, as a marked favour from the Court.

Although our Saint stayed at the *Tôji* for only six years, his influence is still felt there, and the temple continues to be the sect's mother-shrine, even if Kôyasan is far better known and much larger. Several sculptured images at the *Tôji* are attributed to Kôbô Daishi's hand. On the 21st of each month a festival is held in his honour, when the place used to be very lively, especially also because of a colourful procession—*taiyû-no dôchû*—of high-class courtesans. . . . Kôbô Daishi has a good many obscure connections with ancient phallicism, so prevalent in

Shintô; and courtesans—or virgins, whichever—always embody the feminine element, fertility, of this Nature-worship.

The *Tôji* temple and Kôbô Daishi are also linked to the Rice-god *Inari*; we might even say with the “creation” of this rather many-sided divinity, a divinity not only of the farmer but almost more so of the trader, a divinity of Wealth and Protection and Healing, apart from his interest in Food. *Inari* is even the patron-god of swordsmiths. It was near the *Tôji* that Kôbô Daishi one day met an old man with a heavy sheaf of rice on his back. People said that he was *Ryûzata*, “Dragon Thick-Head” (because he looked like one), and a hundred years old. But Kôbô Daishi immediately recognized in him *Idaten* (*Vêda Râja*), declared that he was “the deity protector of his temple,” and called him *I-nari*, the Rice-carrier. . . . Ever since, *Inari*, who later received a mighty sanctuary at Fushimi, to the South, has acted as guardian of the *Tôji*, and through this of the entire *Shingon* sect.⁹

In this connection a legend from Kyûshû, the southernmost island, is of interest. The farmers there believe that on his returning from the voyage to China Kôbô Daishi brought three grains only of some specially good rice. As he walked along (evidently in Kyûshû), some dogs barked at him, and the grains fell out of his sleeve (which the Japanese are in the habit of using as a pocket), and in this manner the people discovered about this excellent rice. Probably to thank the dogs for the service rendered, it became customary to start the planting of rice on a (zodiacal) Dog-day, thus ensuring a good crop.

In the *Tenchô* era (824-834) there were severe droughts, and in distress the emperor asked Kôbô Daishi for help. Kôbô Daishi went to the *Shinzen-en* (Garden of the Divine Fountain), prayed fervently, seated near its lake, and as if by miracle the rain broke in such force as to overflow the embankments. This was due to a Dragon-king, who lived in that little lake, taking pity on humanity after hearing Kôbô Daishi’s prayer. Our saint as well as a number of his disciples saw the Dragon-king’s form arise at the end of the invocation: he looked like a golden snake some eight inches long, and was seated on the head of a giant serpent, some ten yards long. The Dragon-king was afterwards thanked with Shintô

9. The author’s special study of “*Inari-sama*, the Japanese Rice-deity and other Crop-divinities” appeared in *Ethnos* of the Ethnographical Museum of Sweden, Vol. 14, No. 1, Stockholm 1949.

gohei (paper-wands) and other offerings sent by the emperor. . . . This miracle, Kôbô Daishi later admitted, was of great help in propagating the *Shingon-dô* (way). Great care was thenceforth taken of the lake, so that the Dragon-king should not go elsewhere for lack of aquatic comfort, and the people suffer want.

Kôbô Daishi had brought back from China a large quantity of Buddhist books¹⁰ and devotional objects of the Tantric *Yogâ-cârya*, and while he introduced this creed, as *Shingon*, at the *Tôji*, his new doctrine only began to flourish after in 816 he moved to the top of Kôya mountain in Kishû, where he founded a great monastery. Here he also spent the closing years of his life, but meanwhile he was active travelling all over the country, preaching and incessantly toiling in the interests of humanity, and leaving behind an incredible number of mementoes. Kôbô Daishi is not only the most famous saint of Buddhism; he no doubt was a great sculptor and painter, and the best calligrapher of his time.¹¹ Like some of his great confrères, he induced people to build roads and bridges, dig wells and make embankments, and himself supervised other difficult engineering enterprises. To those people who worked hard, the Saint charitably sent drift-wood picked up on the shore. . . . But it has been said, without exaggeration, that had his life lasted six hundred years instead of sixty, he could hardly have graven all the images, scaled all the mountain peaks, confounded all the skeptics, wrought all the miracles, and performed all the other feats with which he is popularly credited. . . .

Two words must be said about the *Shingon* dogma which Kôbô Daishi introduced and propagated, although we shall not enter into a religious dissertation.¹²

The *Shingon*, that is "True Word", with the meaning of Sacred Spell, may be called "tantric" or "mantric", and in some ways resembles the Lamaism of Tibet, which represents the most

10. The *Ninnaji* monastery (Kyoto) still treasures a gold lacquer document box of the mid-10th century, inscribed in a panel surrounded by flowers and *kalavinka* birds: "Box for the writings on the Law brought back from China by the original Shingon Acarya Kûkai."

11. Kôbô Daishi, Emperor Saga, and Tachibana Hayanari are remembered as the *Sanpitsu*, the Three Brushes, of the 9th century.

12. The student of religion will find explicit passages on *Shingon* in most treatises on Buddhism. We are here mainly looking at the little of it that the common man understood, or rather rendered in his own fashion.

distinct coarsening of Buddhism.¹³ It is also known as *Misshû* or *Mikkyô*, literally Secret Religion, and seems to have come to China in about the 6th century A.D., when esotericism became rampant.¹⁴ It is said to have been founded in India in about the year 200, by a saint who made the discovery of an iron pagoda inhabited by the Holy One, *Vâjrasattva*, who communicated to him the "exact doctrine" as received from *Vâirôcana* in person. This doctrine, succinctly, is said to be contained in the *Dainichi-kyô* (Sutra) and the *Kongô-kyô*, and recognizes an "ideal" World of the Diamond (=wisdom), *Kongô-kai*, and a "dynamic" World of the Bosom (or Womb,=reason), *Taizô-kai*. The pictorial composition of these Two Halves of the Cosmos is extremely complicated: the white *Kongô-kai mandara* (*mandala*) is said to have (nominally at least) 437 figures, the red *Taizô-kai* 428, and there are innumerable attributes, geometrical arrangements, and other symbols. But it is understood that they will help man "to find out the origin of his soul and body, in order to purify all his actions and thus arrive at virtue and happiness without limit in the illumination of Buddha".... There are ten degrees of perfection, however, and it is only on attaining the last one that the believer will be able "to grasp the source and depth of his own thought, and to discover the secret of becoming 'Buddha' even in this world," of "lifting one's self to the level of Buddha" (*Sokushin Jôbutsu*). This vague sort of absorbed contemplation is said to find its expression in the phrase, "*nyû ga, ga nyû*"—(he) enters self, self enters (him). No help from the external world is needed.... Then, when one has become "free from illusion," one may discern the body and life of the Great Illuminator (*Vâirôcana*) even in a grain of dust or a drop of water, or in a slight stir of our consciousness.

13. Tantrism is concerned with the male-female union as emblematic of the blissful union with *Atman*, the Divine Spirit. The Tantras, which propound the attainment of Nirvâna through sexual union, contain collections of magical and sacramental formulas, the Mantras, of mystic letters and diagrams, Yantras of wonder-working sounds, and charms in great variety—all supposed to have power to influence people for good or for bad....

14. *Misshû* and *Mikkyô* (*mitsu-shû*, and *mitsu-kyô*; *himitsu* = secret) should only apply to the esoteric aspect, while the "apparent" *Kenkyô* can be studied in literature. However, I must refer to pertinent books for a real study of this religion and its ramifications.

I am perfectly convinced that the great masses—and even the majority of priests—understood nothing of all this. . . . At the same time, however, *Shingon* may be called *Mantrayâna*, or “the doctrine of salvation by spells, exorcisms, and incantations.” Apart from the *mantras*, or “charms”, themselves—which are *shingon* in Japanese!¹⁵ —*dhâranîs* (*darani*) largely figure, that is, wonder-working texts from the scriptures or unintelligible Sanskrit formulas, which may lay ghosts and exorcise goblins and devils.¹⁶ A good *dhâranî*, “properly applied”, will save even the worst criminal from Hell; if written on the shroud, it will send the departed soul straight to Paradise; or it will give a person (who swallows it, for instance!) “unshakable and supreme wisdom (*bodhi*)”. And much more of that kind. *Shingon* invocations could work both ways, as white and as black magic. “If any one wanted power or fame, children or wealth, to help his friends or to injure his enemies, an appropriate ceremony could be found with special deities, gestures, ornaments, and formulae warranted to bring about the wished for results.”

That, I am sure, even the most ignorant peasant could understand. In those days (as is still so often the case with us!) the more incomprehensibly cabalistic a ritual looked, the more impressive it became to the superstitious, and the greater its effect. *Yogâcârya-Shingon* therefore also utilizes mystic values of sound and colour, and particularly also the various *mudrâs* (*in-musubi*, seal-knots in Japanese), the mysterious hand and finger positions of priest and faithful.¹⁷ Each “twist” has its meaning to the initiated, and *mudrâs* are most effective in addressing the invisible powers, particularly also the evil ones. . . . The symbols and mysteries are limitless in their varieties, and may be used for any purpose, even to torturing a hated fellow-creature. . . .

Kôbô Daishi’s own mystic “mark” was the left-turned *manji*, the unfathomable and universal Swastika, but “counter-clock”

15. Originally, I read, “the term meant ‘a thought’; then ‘thought expressed’; then a Vedic hymn or text; next a spell or charm.” Later associations in India, China and Japan always implied “magic”, *Tantra*.

16. It is said that the *dhâranîs* were mainly evolved in South China during the 4th and 5th centuries, to offset the prevalent Taoist “magic”.

17. As regards the *mudrâs*, they are again said to have been adopted by Buddhism from similar but older magic signs found in Afghanistan, Persia, and adjoining countries. They were “useful to advance Buddhistic interests with the common people”!

(*sauvastika*).

No wonder then that the *Shingon* priests, like their colleagues of the similar *Tendai*, are among the best exorcisers, prayer-men, magicians of all sorts. Whether one is "possessed" by fox or dog, or wants revenge on a faithless lover, whether one is sick or suspects a thief, and on a hundred other occasions, one goes to a *Shingon* priest or even a "private" practitioner of the *Shingon* faith, and provided circumstances are sufficiently favourable (one must always leave open a little back-door), and the proper obolus is forthcoming, success is sure to follow.

These few remarks, which of course by no means cover the valuable teachings of *Shingon*, but rather emphasize its esoteric, mystic, magic aspect in the popular interpretation, will suffice to show why Kôbô Daishi's doctrine was so perfectly suited to the needs of the uneducated people of his time. Kôbô Daishi, truly the Law-spreading Great Master, gave a humanitarian flavour to Japanese religion. He took more interest in the welfare of the people in this life on earth than in their possible condition in the next. Knowing that people would not be convinced by reasoning, he resorted to magical formulas, rites and superstitions to make them behave. His peculiar genius probably re-arranged a good portion of what he had learned in China, and adjusted it to the mental status of the Japanese, distinctly different from that of the Chinese. He eliminated much that was phallic, like the constant Saktism which still flourishes in Tibet and Mongolia (gods in copulation with their female counterpart), the frightful "Death and Destruction" manifestations, and other abuses, and laid emphasis on the more noble thoughts, whatever his means to teach them. The result reminds one of the perverted and superstitious aspect of Catholicism in the 15th century, which caused Martin Luther to so strongly protest against the hoaxing and cheating of the populace by the priests, even if he himself still frequently saw the devil in person. Perhaps Luther did a good deal of harm to the superstitious of his time, who must have been pleased, rather than feel insulted or mulcted, by being able to buy off their sins. . . . So were the Japanese of Kôbô Daishi's days; and therefore the easy and prompt success of his indulgent tenets.

Shingon was not as philosophical as the older Buddhist branches. But it needed no great efforts on the part of the adherents to gain Buddha's approval, and its secrecy and occult magic appealed to the ignorant, who always like mysticism that

does not demand thinking. The common people did not worry about "the secret unity of all living beings with the universal Buddha, and the enlightenment of the universal Buddha himself which is secret from men." They were impressed by the mysterious symbols and allegories, and believed in the automatic working of Buddha's presence in their hearts as sufficient for the salvation of man. *Shingon* is constantly and logically pantheistic, perhaps better said, cosmotheistic, explaining all existence by the six elements—earth, water, fire, air, knowledge (or spirit), and the void. These six elements are discovered in reality, and in each of them all the others are involved. This cosmotheism, so much like pantheism, by a slight twist of thinking became polytheism, and this polytheism showed distinct similarities with the Nature-worship beliefs which the Japanese had followed for ages untold.

Again like the Catholic Church, the *Shingon* sect makes good use of art and ornaments, of music and incense, and of an elaborate ritual, as well as pilgrimages. It frequently employs for a decoration a peculiar form of Sanskrit letters, the *shittan*, written in vertical lines, as introduced by the same Kôbô Daishi. And it makes frequent enough use of the *mandara*, the condensed pictures subdivided into several compartments in which, as we have seen, are arranged a considerable number of deities and supernatural beings in vivid colours. At times the principal figures are again substituted by Sanskrit letters, the so-called *shûji* or "seeds", which mystically express the name and power of each deity. Numerous gods and demons are interpreted as embodying this or that aspect of cosmic life, and every one of them is represented by definite conventions, most deities having more than one form. Their functions are shown in the attire and the objects which they hold, or by other circumstances, and their faces, sometimes tripled, are most expressive. In a like manner the officiant's attitude, movements, utterances, are exactly regulated for each case, on the assumption that these will evoke the power of the divinity or demon in the manner desired, and thus answer the purpose of the worship.

The initiation into the higher mysteries is accompanied by the *Kwanjô* or "sprinkling", a ritual and occult aspersion by water. It is said that Kôbô Daishi administered it for the first time in 822 to the ex-emperor, Heijô, who had "shaved his head." Kôbô Daishi himself defined *Kwanjô* as "the bestowal of the Buddha's great mercy upon sentient beings to enable them to

obtain the highest perfect enlightenment." The consecration involves various incantations, and blindfolding in order to consult a "name-oracle" with the help of a *mandara*. But there seem to be quite a few variations in accordance with the object in view.

The supreme Buddha of the *Shingon* sect is *Mâhâ Vâirôcana*, the personification of Wisdom and Absolute Purity. The whole universe is regarded as the body of this supreme *Vâirôcana*.¹⁸ He becomes the *Âdi-Buddha*, the primal spiritual essence. He thus in turn is identical with the Sun (*Vairôcana*), and in Japanese becomes *Dainichi Nyôrai*, the Great Sun Buddha. That, obviously, made him easily identifiable with *Amaterasu Ô-mikami*, Shintô's Heaven-Shining Great Deity, also known as *Tenshōkō Daijin*, the Great Deity Heaven-Shining Ruler. She was the supreme Shintô goddess. . . .

But *Shingon's* gods are bewilderingly many, and even *Dainichi* is often confused with the hardly less important *Fudô Myôô* (*Acala*), another god of Wisdom, the Immovable, probably but a different manifestation of *Vâirôcana*. He has a terrifying countenance, and with a sword in one hand and a rope in the other will kill and bind Ignorance and the Evil Passions. *Fudô* is surrounded by flames of fire which purify the mind; but in popular belief these have made him not only a god of Fire, but also of fiery Love and fiery Vengeance—the very Passions which he nominally combats! It is in this guise, as helper of the lovelorn, the jealous, the vengeful, that the *Shingon* adherents will most often invoke him and his several attendants. And *Fudô*, this Woodrout King (*Myôô, Vidyârâja*), is in turn connected with the Dragon and with waterfalls, which brings him back into the fold of ancient Nature-gods, the procurers of Fertility.—The importance of *Fudô* in *Shingon* is shown in the name of one of the two principal ascents of Kôyasan (from Kamuro); the *Fudô-zaka*.

Incidentally, the famous *Fudô* image at the great temple *Shinshôji* in Narita was brought to Japan by Kôbô Daishi. Legend has it that at the time of the foundation of the Buddhist faith, an Indian sculptor carved a wonder-working statue of the god. After many centuries it was sent to China, where it came under the care of a holy priest, the very Hui-kuo of the *Ch'ing-lung*

18. Johann Kepler, astronomist and mathematician (1571-1630), said: "My wish is that I may perceive God whom I find everywhere in the external world in like manner within and without me".

temple from whom Kôbô Daishi sought instruction in Buddhist mysteries. When he was about to return to Japan, both the teacher and his disciple were warned in a dream that the miraculous image wanted to go to Japan too, and accordingly Kôbô Daishi brought it, and established it in a temple on Takaô-zan near Kyoto (where at that period he passed some of his time), together with the images of two attendants, which he carved with his own hands.—Nothing remarkable happened during Kôbô Daishi's lifetime. But in about 940 a nobleman, Taira-no Masakado, rebelled against his sovereign, Shujaku Tennô, because of some fancied insult; he went to his native Shimôsa (Tokyo region), built himself a capital plagiarizing Kyoto and the Court, and declared himself to be the new emperor.... To make a long story short, it was found that divine assistance was needed to subdue the rebel; and it was also found that no deity would be as powerful as *Fudô* nor any idol better than this ancient Indian one.... The *Fudô* was therefore taken to the seat of war, to exorcise the enemy. Having set up the image on a rock near the city, a high prelate, the *Daisôjô* Kwanchô, for three weeks performed the *goma* ceremony before it,¹⁹ with the result that Masakado was totally defeated, and killed in battle.... The triumphant "loyalists" naturally thought of taking home the protective image; but when trying to remove it, lo and behold! it utterly refused to budge. It waxed heavy as a rock. As usual, a dream served to explain matters: *Fudô* declared his intention to remain where he was, in order to bless and civilize this still backward Eastern Japan. And so, right after, a temple was built at the village of Narita, which meanwhile, thanks to the grace of *Fudô*, has grown to be one of the most important sanctuaries of all Japan. Many are his ardent votaries, and many are the miraculous cures, rescues, and other benefits bestowed by the Narita *Fudô-san*. He is ably assisted by a wondrous sword kept in his sanctuary, a single touch of which will even cure the insane and those possessed by foxes.

Another famous *Fudô* brought from China by Kôbô Daishi is at the *Gokurakuji* at Kamakura, but by no means in the same class as the Narita *Fudô*.—One of the best known masterpieces of Japanese painting is the "Red *Fudô*" dating from the early Heian period, about Kôbô Daishi's time. Mystically and impressively painted, it is the great treasure of the Kôyasan monas-

19. See later for *goma*.

teries, although, rather surprisingly, not attributed to the founder's own brush. . . .

More weirdly interesting is the *Tsume-Fudô* along the highway from Uchimaki-mura, Uda-gun, in Yamato, to Shintô-sacred Ise. There is a big rock on the road-side, showing a *Fudô* image which Kôbô Daishi scratched into it with his fingernails (*tsume*)—At the *Fudô-dô* (hall) in Shichishô-mura (the Village of Seven Lives!) there is kept an ancient seal known as the *Gyû-ô-hô-in*, the Ox-King-Jewel-Stamp. Kôbô Daishi made the temple's *Fudô* idol, and from a chip left over also carved this seal, which shows, above, the "seed-ideogram" (*shûji*) for "Fudô", and below the left-turned Swastika, which is Kôbô Daishi's mark.

While *Fudô Myôô* is the central figure, several other *Myôô*, Brilliant Kings, are also peculiar to *Shingon*: *Gozanze* (East), *Gundari Yasha* (North), and *Kongô Yasha* (South) are less known, but *Dai Itoku* (West), with six faces and six arms, of horrible aspect, riding on a white ox, is a personification of Death in the sense of being a Destroyer of Evil. . . . *Aizen Myôô* is often a sort of counterfoil to *Fudô*; he is popularly again regarded as a god of Love, especially of the passionate carnal love. Yet he is nothing of the kind, in spite of his "passionate face" and six arms, which carry as many weapons. He is on the contrary a formidable destroyer of the vulgar passions, in order to replace them by that universal love which aims at the salvation of all beings. We see how the uneducated twists the profound Buddhist ideology. No god is more fervently invoked for revenge (especially on an unfaithful lover) than *Fudô*, and none more in an intense desire for a sexual partner than *Aizen*. . . .

Kannon in all her (or his) forms, *Jizô* the saviour of souls and protector of children, *Monjû* on his lion and *Fugen* on his elephant, *Amida*, *Miroku*, *Seishi*, are among the principal deities worshipped in *Shingon*, apart from a good many other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. But a close connection of *Shingon* with ancient Hinduism becomes mainly apparent in those "Buddhist" gods who are but Hindu gods "taken over": *Shôten* the phallic Elephant-headed (*Ganesha*); *Kishi Môjin* who ate her own children until converted by Buddha, and now laments over the tortures of mankind (*Hâritî*); *Emma-Ô* the King and Judge of Hades; *Marishi*, *Taishaku*, *Ishana*, all "Ten" who are but *Devas*, as also *Bonten* (*Brahma* himself), *Benten* (=Venus), *Suiten* (Water), *Futen* (Wind), *Jiten* (Earth), *Nitten* and *Gwaten* (Sun and Moon), and many others. I need not go into details. While of

course these deities are not exclusively *Shingon*, they are eminently so, and this small selection will be sufficient to indicate how Kôbô Daishi's teachings were very close to Indian Tantrism, occultism, and polytheism.

Shingon also makes extensive use of the *sotoba* (a modified form of the Indian *stupa*), which consists of a basic cube, with sphere, pyramid, crescent, and "jewel" placed one on the top of the other, as representing earth, water, fire, air and ether or spirit, with the surrounding space (the "void") typifying consciousness. The combination of these "elements" is, we noted, symbolical of *Vâirôcana*, the Living Cosmos.

Kôbô Daishi's *Shingon* tenets distinctly assisted in the amalgamation of Buddhism and Shintô, which theory he disseminated. The idea that Shintô deities respected and protected the Buddhas had existed for some time,²⁰ but the idea that they might be two forms of One had not yet obtained much acceptance. This principle now became more firmly implanted. We have seen how *Toyouke-bime*, or perhaps even her mistress, the Sun-goddess *Amaterasu*, who became *Dainichi Nyôrai*, indicated that the same deity could appear as a Shintô *kami*, a Confucian sage, or a Buddha. Gautama too, on his death-bed, is made to say that he may re-appear in whatever form would be acceptable to the various religions and sects of the world. The conception of "divinity" became supradoctrinal. But of course in the Japanese *Ryôbu-Shintô* which was the result, the old Japanese *kami* are made to be but temporary manifestations, *Gongen*, or manifested traces, *Suijaku*, of the true and eternal Buddha, the "original" *Honji* or *Honchi-Butsu* of India, which itself became the "heavenly" *Tenjiku* country. On the other hand all kinds of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, *Tenjin* (Heavenly Beings), *Myôô* (Wonderous Kings), *Daimyôjin* (Great Brilliant Gods) and what not were devised to represent the infinite variety of Nature-gods, Land-protectors, Fertility-founts, tutelary *kami*, that the more primitive aboriginal religion possessed. Many of these remained practically Brahmanistic and look terrific, while a good many Taoistic conceptions were embodied in others. The *Kongô-kai* and the *Taizô-kai*, the "Two Worlds" of *Shingon*, proved invaluable in this syncretization and final fusion, which for some thousand

20. A Shintô soil-god of the locality, or a road-god, was always invoked to be the guardian of the Buddhist monastery or temple to be built, and received his larger or smaller shrine within the enclosure.

years then was the actual religion of Japan (except for certain State functions), even if but dimly understood by the majority of people. It is said that the name of *Ryôbu-Shintô* itself, meaning Both Ways or Twofold Shintô, was given to the doctrines of Kôbô Daishi by his admirer, Emperor Saga. More correctly, probably, the term should be interpreted as the "combination of Shintô with both Halves"—*ryô bu*—the Two Parts of the Cosmos, the said *Kongô* and *Kaizô kai*.²¹

Shingon is still the third-largest religious corporation in Japan, with thousands of temples; but its adherents are said to mostly belong to the lower classes.

We left our saintly priest in 816, founding (or expanding) his monastery on Mount Kôya, for which purpose the emperor, Saga, had granted him an extensive tract of land. It is said that Kôbô Daishi discovered this ideal spot on one of his earlier wanderings, and set his heart on making it the center of his great religion. Such, indeed, it became,—isolated, far from humanity's business, with its magnificent forests of enormous, heaven-aspiring conifers: *sugi*, *hinoki*, *kôya-maki*. To the original temple he gave the name *Kongôbuji*, Diamond-Brave Temple. *Kongô* is the Brahmanic *Vâjra* of *Indra* (*Taishaku-ten*), an entirely phallic symbol of Creation through Destruction, of the permanent and immutable forces of the Cosmos. It is usually called the Diamond Sceptre—indestructible. *Shingon*, incidentally, makes great use of the imitative *kongô-shô*, the *tokko*, *sanko* or *goko*, the one-, three- and five-pronged (at each end) "thunder-bolt" of bronze, a sort of religious sceptre, mainly for spells and exorcisms. The *kongô-shô* then symbolizes the irresistible power of prayer, meditation, and incantation.

The monastery was to be, and until this century was, a refuge for meditation, Buddhist concentration, a sort of Paradise for monks and an occasional refuge for worried people. Indeed, at the beginning of the vast grounds a little bridge bears the name

21. The origination of the idea that Shintô gods were but temporary embodiments of Buddhas, however, is generally attributed to Gyôgi Bosatsu (670-749), a celebrated bonze of Korean birth, whom Kôbô Daishi obviously emulated as far as possible. Gyôgi travelled through many provinces preaching Buddhism, encouraging people to build roads, bridges, dykes and canals, and he too is supposed to have made innumerable images, sculptured or painted.

Gokuraku-bashi, Bridge of Paradise, and the main emplacement on Mount Kôya—the Kongô peak—is itself said to be in the shape of an eight-petalled lotus. A “Road of many Turnings”, like a dragon, leads up to it. The monks practised fasting “in order to clear the spiritual eyesight,” and for long hours sat absolutely motionless in their “thinking chairs,” absorbed in contemplation, while mystically twisting their fingers. Of course no women were allowed even near the mountain-top, since they would have polluted the sacred soil. Not even in the villages at the foot of the mountain were women permitted to live until a generation or two ago, shops and inns being exclusively attended to by males—whence probably, as a wit remarked, the exceptional silence pervading the place. There are still no inns on Mount Kôya; all the pilgrims must lodge in the many monasteries, served by priests and acolytes as hosts, and graded for all classes of visitors. No animal viands, not even eggs, are permitted; and yet one can eat a delicious meal. Alcohol on the other hand is allowed. A quaint custom is observed at the inns of the several villages at the foot of the mountain: when the pilgrims are on their way up, as contrite sinners, they are served a purely vegetarian (“kosher”) fare; but on their return they are plentifully supplied with fish and eggs (the Japanese equivalent of meat), being then pardoned and at peace with the gods!²²

No domestic animals were tolerated on the mountain either, except dogs; and a legend explains the reason for this privilege:—As Kôbô Daishi was on his way up the mountain, he met *Kariba Myôjin*, the Shintô deity of the locality, who, being addicted to the chase, was accompanied by two dogs. The deity had the appearance of “a stout man, about eight feet in height, and garbed in a suit of blue cloth.” He was armed with bow and arrows, and his dogs were one black and the other white. This god promised his protection to the monastery, and as a return compliment his dogs (and others) were permitted to roam the mountain at will.

22. All this was suddenly upset when Japan became ‘democratic’ The main ascent is now made by cable-car, and buses or taxis carry about the visitors over cemented roads. While lodgings can still only be obtained at the monasteries, they no longer rely on benevolent gifts but make a flat charge. The restrictions on food are practically abolished, and women are freely admitted everywhere. A long stretch of the road has become a souvenir bazar, and ‘business’ is evidently one of the principal concerns of the sanctuary. Instead of devout pilgrims one meets revelers; but walking through the immense forests is still impressive.

Furthermore, a Shintô shrine dedicated to the mountain-deity's mother was afterwards erected in one of the neighbouring valleys. . . . From the very beginning, then, we have proof that *Shingon* (like several other sects) was not averse to allow its Buddhist gods to commingle with older Shintô *kami*.²³ Rather unexplainable remains the fact that the protective deity should be one of the chase, since Buddhism, and especially *Shingon*, strictly forbids every kind of killing. In fact, quite in accordance with this Buddhist attitude, it was strictly forbidden to carry either bow or arrows while on the sacred Kôyasan mountain.

Kôbô Daishi, on this first occasion, ascended Mount Kôya from the Wakayama side, as is still commemorated in sundry monuments along the road. He found it indeed to be a high mountain which had never been trodden by the foot of man, with a plain on top surrounded by eight peaks, over which purple clouds hung by day, and a mysterious light appeared at night.

More mysticism enters the inception of the Kôyasan sanctuary. Kôbô Daishi prohibited all musical instruments: but perhaps this was but a precautionary extension of an original ban against the flute. It is a well-known fact that all dragons, good or bad, are extremely fond of music—hence their image on sundry instruments—and so are their relatives, the gigantic snakes.²⁴ Also, the sound of a flute resembles a dragon's cry. . . . Now on Mount Kôya there lived an enormous and evil serpent, which Kôbô Daishi with great effort was able to expel; and it was but natural that he should be afraid that the monster might be attracted and brought back by the sound of a flute—or any other instrument. . . .²⁵ Kôbô Daishi therefore also instructed that on every first of the month there should be held a mystic Snake-

23. There are now two small Shintô shrines near the temples, consecrated to the aboriginal Japanese *kami* who ruled the mountain before Kôbô Daishi's advent; brilliantly painted in red, they form a striking contrast to the green of the forest.

24. Perhaps an Indian relic, since snake-charmers seem to have originated there. Their usual "magic implement" is a flute.

25. It seems quite possible that this "expulsion of serpents" represents a conversion to his Buddhist preaching of some older native group which was ophiolatrous. The ancient inhabitants of Ireland too were serpent worshippers, and St. Patrick converted them to Christianity early in the 5th century. This uprooting of the old religion was turned into the legend that the saint banished all snakes by his prayers and holy benedictions—as is still believed as a fact by the majority of Irishmen.

exorcising ritual in a certain locality on the mountain. The purpose of the incantation, however, was to protect and preserve the sacred person of the emperor!

Snakes, through their dragon-manifestation, are connected with supernatural swords, and so is the god *Fudô*. It is but to be expected that when Kôbô Daishi had selected a spot for the pagoda, and gotten the men to excavate the soil for its foundations, he should find buried in the ground such a divine sword "which bore an inscription on both sides." Reverently putting the sword into a copper tube, he buried it again "with a prayer for the ritual purification of the ground."

It is said that some other fiendish visitors from the unseen world also tempted our hero on or near Kôyasan; visions which a psychiatrist would probably describe as due to a disordered nervous system caused by fasting, exposure, intense absorption in the contemplation of abstractions...

Other more enigmatic prohibitions issued by Kôbô Daishi applied to the planting, on his mountain, of bamboo or of trees that could be turned to profit; practising the sports of archery and football; gambling or playing checkers; and bringing up or using bamboo brooms and three-pronged rakes (or hay-forks) ... The last, a rather puzzling item, may have been forbidden because the "three-pronged *vâjra*" was the most occult and powerful anti-evil weapon of the priests, and the rake, or perhaps pronged mattock, "turns against the wielder." At any rate three prongs on some utensil would have been unfair competition against the *sanko*...

If all the traditions and legends could be trusted, Kôbô Daishi must have wandered all over Japan, leaving behind in every place some memento of his sojourn, including sundry footprints. He must have preached, painted, sculptured, supervised engineering projects like roads, bridges, canals, reservoirs, and the building of temples, every minute of day and night during the sixty years of life; and he must have had wings to go from place to place and to ascend all the mountains that claim this distinction. It is seriously asserted that "he made trips to almost every mountain in the seven provinces of Ou," which comprise the whole northern part of Hondo. At Mount Yudono he even once more met the guardian spirit of the mountain... And he did so many other things besides, that indeed even six hundred years instead of sixty look insufficient. But he certainly was one

of the greatest personalities that the world ever produced: a genius, an indefatigable worker, and a leader of men. He was not only famous as an expounder of Buddhism and commentator of the Sutras; he was a profound scholar of the Chinese and Sanskrit languages, and one of the great physicians and psychologists of his era.

It is said that in the seventh month of the year 821 Kôbô Daishi had terminated the construction of *Kongôbuji* on Kôyasan, which is still the abbatial residence. Of course we must not imagine Kôbô Daishi's original monastery to have been anything like the present enormous complex; he himself spoke of having built grass-huts in his early days. The improvements, however, were rapid, and at the time of his death there must have been several imposing buildings. Having founded this initial sanctuary, he with several of his disciples set out on a preaching tour of the Tôhoku, that is the then still "wild" Northeast of the mainland. The first stop mentioned is Yubashurizan(?) in distant Izu, where he lectured on the *Hannya Shinkyô* (Sutra). It is on record that in the place where the town of Shuzenji now is, also in Izu, he heard that a Katsura-valley was infested with numerous demons, that he proceeded there, dispersed them, and built a temple (*Shuzen-ji*). As a side-line, although I have not found the pertaining legend, the famous waters of Shuzenji were created by Kôbô Daishi, if we go by the spa's claim. That is, he actually only "loosened" the first spring; the others were discovered by and by. In the midst of the Katsuragawa there stood an enormous rock which blocked the river. Kôbô Daishi climbed on top of it, and with his staff split it in two—and a spring of hot water was released. In that spring, Kôbô Daishi took a purifying bath...

Kôbô Daishi did such things rather easily: his miraculous mantric powers were sufficient to free a spring by simply digging his pilgrim's staff into the ground, or poking it among the rocks, with an invocation. He did it once as a slight reward for hospitality received from an old woman while on his wanderings (it was somewhere in Harima); her place lacked water, but in a friendly way she went and got some for him from a great distance; so he stabbed the soil near her hut, and a nice fountain welled up. Something quite similar took place in what is now part of Tokyo and was then a lonely hamlet, where he took pity on an old woman who had to carry water from a great distance, with a bucket on her head. For centuries after the small pond

which he then created could be found near the *Shimizu Inari* shrine ("fresh water" Rice-deity), just behind Ueno Park. The water was believed to cure disease... His wells, however, need not always be fresh and sparkling *shimizu*: in Kanamari of Awa, in what is now Chiba Prefecture, with his stick he bored a salty spring for a woman too poor to buy salt... On the other hand he also made a brook run dry because a farmer refused him a cup of water; and ever since that brook is but a stony ditch, except after heavy rains when it will overflow and tear away the fields around it. Or maybe he helped some village because of a serious drought, as was the case at Matsuda of Miya-mura, Ashikaga-gun, in Shimôtsuke. For the poor inhabitants' benefit he produced a clear spring, which has been flowing ever since and is still known as the *Kôbô Daishi kaji-mizu* (incantation water).²⁶ Sometimes however he only created a "secret" spring; that is, the water became available to people who had shown him kindness, but was undrinkable for others. Or he might clear a well that existed but the water of which was brackish; this happened for instance at Kariya-chô in Mikawa. All the inns being full, he asked a woman for lodgings, and she very joyfully acceded to his request. Getting up the next morning, Kôbô Daishi found the well-water muddy; so stirring it with his staff, he made it pure. The woman's name was Oshimo, and the well has ever since been known after her as the *Oshimo-ido*, which however also means the Honourable Hoarfrost Well... As a punishment, we already noted, when people were unkind to him he would see to it that their water supply ran dry, or became unpalatable. A Japanese folklorist has collected some hundred instances of such magic wells and springs from all over the country, and in practically every case a woman was involved... The stories are all of the one or the other type above outlined, and the waters are known as *Daishi-mizu*, *Kôbô-mizu*, *Kôbô-shimizu* (fresh water) and so forth. Water is the element of the dragon, and Kôbô Daishi was in every way a "Dragon Master."

Next on his eastern travel he went to the island of Enoshima (sacred to *Benten* in the form of a Sea-dragon Lady), near Kamakura, and there performed the service of lighting the sacred fire.

26. We may note that while Japan possesses more hot springs, probably, than any other country, the average supply of subsoil water is scanty. Wells have mostly to be dug very deep, and often they dry up for prolonged periods.

Sacred fires, the *goma*, are a special observance of *Shingon*: they are, in fact, a very pagan burnt-offering, all the more remarkable because performed for some special purpose, whether private or public, as a sort of incantation. Fragrant woods, poppy-seeds, oil, incense, perfume, and similar substances are immolated in a basin on a sort of altar, under cabalistic movements and the recitation of occult prayers or spells. The rite is entirely "magical". Some large temples have their special *goma-dô* (hall), which shows the importance of the ritual.

We may note in passing that in the *Benten-dô* of the *Seiunji* in Yoshiwara-chô, Suruga, the *honzon* or principal image (*i.e.* *Benten*) is a *hai-botoke*, Ashes-Buddha, formed by Kôbô Daishi out of *goma* ashes. And in this connection it is also of some interest to recall that a petty thief and miscreant is known as a *goma-no-hai*, *goma*-ash. Among the many priest-students that soon populated the Kôya monastery, there were of course also some "undesirables", who soon banded together and went from place to place, peddling spurious "*goma-no-hai*" from sacred fires "which Kôbô Daishi himself had lit in his time." For these they naturally collected offerings—which disappeared in their pockets. They also pilfered this and that from the houses, and sometimes annoyed the womenfolk... All such mischief stamps a fellow as a *goma-no-hai*...

Crossing back to the mainland from Enoshima, Kôbô Daishi underwent an ablution in the *Jûroku-ido*, the Sixteen Wells which are still visible in the rocky floor of a cave near the *Kaizôji*, at Kamakura. Kôbô Daishi himself is said to have excavated them, and with the water which then percolated into the holes he worked many miracles in healing the sick and the blind. Perhaps in gratefulness to the great saint his image, lacquered a dark red (*Fudô*'s colour!), is kept in the main temple. Possibly he performed the ablution and the miracles on some other occasion, when visiting Enoshima again, since tradition also has it that on the spot where the *Shôju-in* now stands (on the lower slope of Reizangasaki) Kôbô Daishi made a sojourn to attend at a *goma* invocation-rite, on the occasion of a trip to Enoshima.

Kôbô Daishi is rather closely connected with the Kamakura region, and along the beginning of the path leading to the *Kaku-onji*, for instance, there is a large stone monument recording that it goes to "one of the eighty-eight resting places" of Kôbô Daishi.²⁷

27. For "88" see later.

Possibly the place where he rested was the slight knoll now bearing a grove of plum and cherry trees, right near the *Kakuon-ji*. Kôbô Daishi once more amused himself with water: in a little valley behind this temple is one of Kamakura's ten celebrated wells, the *Munetate-ido* (probably in the sense of "heart-fortifying"). "Its claim to celebrity lies in the fact that because of the exceptional purity of the spring Kôbô Daishi is said to have dug the well, and used its water to offer to the gods." At the small *Dairokujî* behind there is a most ancient image of *Fudô*, with underneath an iron receptacle in which Kôbô Daishi burned his sacred *goma* fire...

Again in the vicinity there is another old and dilapidated sanctuary actually consecrated to Kôbô Daishi, and containing his large stone statue. It is once more one of his resting places, and that fact is said to be "a cause of great pride and felicitation to the temple," which treasures various mementoes of that remote occasion. The stone image has a quaint tradition, as recorded on a large stone slab beside the shrine:— "On Kôbô Daishi's return from China in the year 816 he travelled all over Japan in search of a suitable site whereon to found his monastery. During his stay in Kyoto the Emperor bestowed on him a piece of valuable wood. The priest fashioned therefrom a statue of himself and offered it to the Emperor as a souvenir of his sojourn in the capital; it was a somewhat unusual image, the arms and legs being jointed with chains to render them moveable, so the figure could be made to rest either in a sitting or standing posture, whence it was known as the '*Kusari* (or chain) *Daishi*'. The present statue is a copy of the original work."

We find one more sanctuary dedicated to our saint, a small shrine in the precincts of the "paradisiacal" *Gokurakuji*, and here again is his lacquered statue. The importance of Kôbô Daishi in the Kamakura district also results from some irregular caves—over a hundred of them—situated on the face of the mountain-range in the background. Eighty-eight of these cliff caverns contain images known as "the eighty-eight Kôbô Daishi," evidently corresponding to the 88 temples of *Shikoku* which we shall consider later.²⁸ And again, on the very summit there is another,

28. The caves were probably pre-historic dwellings, later used as tombs, since human remains have been discovered in them. Still later they may have been used for religious purposes, as "ancient monuments" were also found in many of them. I would assume that the probably

larger and well carved statue of the saint, on a small rocky level ascended by some steep steps.

A legend pertaining to the *Jōmyō-ji* refers to two rather miraculous pictures painted by Kōbō Daishi, showing the gods *Kōjin* (a deity of the kitchen) and *Fudō*, and which in 1198 “became endowed with animation and descended from their frames”—at least in a man’s dream—apparently to announce the forthcoming demise of the *shōgun*, Yoritomo. In a small side-temple belonging to the *Hase-Kwannon* is installed a quaint figure of *Daikoku* (popular god of Rice and of Wealth), standing upon two gilded bales of rice. It is also said to have been carved by Kōbō Daishi.

Inland he then went, to Nikko. In those days this spot was called *Futa-ara*, with a shrine to the *Futa-ara* (or *Futara*) deity, the “Double-Rough” one which sent down terrific blasts from the mountains. *Futa-ara* in Sinico-Japanese can be pronounced *Ni-ko*, so Kōbō Daishi made it into a *Nikkō* or Sun-shine; he “confined the winds” into some caves which are still pointed out to the traveller above the narrow glen of the upper *Dayagawa*. During his stay in this new Nikko, he “erected a monument”, but also left another more unusual souvenir. Along the course of the tumultuous *Dayagawa* in its deep, rocky bed, there is a turbulent pool known as the *Gaman-ga-fuchi*. Its name is traced to the following legend:— Standing above the pool, a huge and precipitous rock bears deeply engraved the Sanskrit sign *Hām-mam*, pronounced *Kamman* or *Gaman* by the Japanese, and which means “Self-control”. It seems impossible that anyone could have been able to get across the boiling surges and hang on to the rock to do the work. Nor was it necessary. Kōbō Daishi accomplished it by simply throwing his ink-brush at the rock...²⁹ Atop the rock sits a small image of *Fudō* (which perhaps is Kōbō Daishi’s “monument”).

While in this marvellous mountain-spot Kōbō Daishi once sat under three enormous cryptomeria trees, (the *Sambon-sugi* still standing not so many years ago) in deep worship. At the end of his séance a white crystal appeared to him, to

roughly hewn “Kōbō Daishi statues” supplanted phallus-stones symbolical of local fertility-gods.

29. There apparently is authority for attributing the carving to a disciple of Jigen Daishi (or Tankai, who was in charge of Nikko and Ueno temples holy to the Tokugawa), of the 17th century.

inform him that a deity to be worshipped by women should be there emplaced. Kôbô Daishi wished to know under what form the deity was to be known, so after further concentration she appeared to him, and he called her *Taki-no-ô* (Waterfall King?) or also *Taki-no Gongen* (Incarnation), the *Nyo-tai Chûgû*, Dowager of the Feminine Peak. The temple, dating back to this time, still stands near the Vermicelli Waterfall (*Sômen-ga-taki*), more poetically known as *Shira-ito-no taki* or White Thread Waterfall. The deity's true identity is said to be *Tagori-hime*, a very hazy mythological female which apparently has to do with rain.

In the same region there is a large boulder on which Kôbô Daishi once placed his hand—hence *te-kake-ishi*. He thereby transformed the stone into a magical *ko-dane-ishi*, child-seed stone, and if childless women offer up prayers for progeny to it, they are bound to be successful...

After Nikko, the saint went to ascend Bandai-san, in Mutsu, at the very northmost tip of Japan, where he established the *Enichi* temple. Then back home and to his beloved Kôyasan.

On the voyage to the North he must also have passed the still famous Lake Suwa, full of Shintô lore and supernatural happenings. Lake Suwa is situated between the northern and southern ranges of what now are called the "Japanese Alps", at that time of course a desolate country inhabited by wild aborigines, dragons and goblins. A notable feature of this little lake is that, although a good fifty miles distant, from certain spots Mount Fuji may be seen reflected on its surface. Contemplating this, Kôbô Daishi made the still popular verse:—

*Shinano naru
Koromo-ga-saki ni
Kite mireba
Fuji no ure kogu
Ama no tsuri-bune*

which tells us that when the traveller visits the promontory of Koromo in Shinano, he is able to see heavenly fishing-boats rowing over the top of Mount Fuji...

It must have been on this preaching expedition too, either going or coming, that Kôbô Daishi made a short halt in the Hakone mountains, not far from Ashinoyû, to carve some Buddhist images. Half hidden among tall grasses and bushes, one still can discern a block of andesite covered with Bodhisattvas, twenty-

five of them, cut in low relief: the *Nijû-go Bosatsu*. (These twenty-five, out of a large class of heavenly beings, are especially worshipped as having been sent by Buddha himself to watch over earnest believers.) Unfortunately two or three of them at the top of the rock could not quite be finished: all the rest were done by Kôbô Daishi in a single night, but day broke before he could complete the topmost row, and he left them as they were.³⁰—Not far from these *Bosatsu*, on the same road (the ancient *Tôkaidô*; the Hakone stretch can only have been completed just before) is the artistically more important colossal *Jizô* “of the Six Roads” (*Rokudô-Jizô*), hewn in high relief from another rock of andesite on the face of the hill. It has been described as “ranking among the triumphs of the Japanese chisel,” and indeed is still a most impressive figure; of course it was once again Kôbô Daishi’s work, and again accomplished in a single night. Calm and benign looking in spite of bad chipping, the *Rokudô-Jizô* continues to be the protector of travellers. The numerous robbers and footpads may have disappeared from this highway, but modern traffic has brought other dangers. . . .³¹

The *Shingon* sect is not the only one which highly venerates this protector, but Kôbô Daishi seems to have been especially fond of *Jizô-san*—the embodiment of Calm and Benevolence, as his other favourite, *Fudô*, looks like the embodiment of Fierceness and Malevolence (although he is not) . . . At the rear of the *Kômyôji* at Kamakura, on a plateau atop a hill, there is a large cave which contains an undoubtedly antique statue of the Bodhisattva—again, of course, attributed to our saint. Our saint also carved the *Indô-Jizô* in the *Ôjô-in* on Mount Kôya, the Temple of Mortuary Service; he made this idol especially for the purpose that *Jizô*, after the mourners have passed before it, shall lead the soul on the way to the Otherworld; and the date on which he carved it is given as the 19th day of the 3rd month of *Shôwa* 2, which would be two days before his death—or rather his Nirvana. A somewhat similar duty was laid by Kôbô Daishi on the shoulders of a stone *Jizô* which he also sculptured, and which stands near the cemetery, I believe. He was charged to take on

30. A somewhat less fantastic tradition ascribes these sculptures to the year 1293, but popularly they “no doubt” come from Kôbô Daishi’s chisel.

31. The Hakone *Jizô* is again considerably younger, although of unknown origin.

all the worries of mankind. This he does so faithfully that every morning (until ten o'clock!) he is bathed in perspiration (*ase*) so much that it runs down (*nagareru*) his body... Therefore he is known as the *Ase-nagashi-Jizô*...

Incidentally, at the *Gokurakuji* of Kamakura we find another quaint *Jizô* offering by the hand of our saint, a counterpart, in a way, to the gigantic Hakone *Jizô*. This *Sentai-Jizô*, of the Thousand Bodies, consists of a central figure of the divinity about one inch in height, surrounded in tiers by (originally) a thousand microscopic replicas hardly larger than a grain of rice...³²

At Kamijima-mura in the Inabe-gun of Mino-no-kuni there is a statue of the same deity that used to be known as the *Shôgun-Jizô*. Apparently nothing of importance happened until the year 1600, when during the wars the troops of Kuroda Nagamasa, a famous chieftain, had to cross the near-by Oi river. They did not know whether it was safe to cross, as it sometimes can be very swollen and rapid. So they asked the *Shôgun-Jizô* for a sign, and he somehow made it understood that they could pass. Since then the image has been known as the *Kawagoe* or *Kawagoshi Jizô*, the River-crossing *Jizô*.—Some time later the Tokugawa Lord of Kii, on his trip to Yedo, found the Oigawa terribly flooded, so that a crossing was entirely out of question. He begged the Crossing-*Jizô* to do something about it, and the next morning the river was low enough for his troops to wade through: and on its waters appeared the vision of Kôbô Daishi!

As a last *Jizô* I mention the one at Takesa-mura, Gamo-gun, in Ômi province. On one of his journeys, Kôbô Daishi felt hot, tired and thirsty, so he stayed for a while at a small tea-house such as are still common along the country roads: just a roof and a few benches for a rest. Having drunk his tea, he left. But the waiting-maid had fallen in love with the holy-looking bonze, and as a slight token of her sentiments drank the dregs in his cup... She thereby became pregnant, and in due course bore a son... A year later, Kôbô Daishi again passed the spot, and

32. Only a few hundred of them are left.—There are some similar manifold *Jizô* elsewhere; famous for instance is the *Rokuman-tai-Jizô* of the *Jakkô-in* at Ôhara near Kyoto, a small but historically important nunnery connected with the Imperial Family. A tall and ancient wooden *Jizô* is said to contain 30,000 tiny *Jizô* figurines, and behind it stands a large screen on which another "30,000" *Jizô*, some three inches high and in relief only, are arranged in many rows. Hence "Sixty-thousand Bodied"....

the girl eagerly told him what had happened. But Kôbô Daishi evidently was not pleased (or had he simply created a phantasm?); he took the child and made some magic passes over him, with murmured spells—and reduced him again to a few drops of tea. . . . The neighbours thought this very sad indeed, if quiet supernatural; so they erected this very *Jizô* statue for the welfare of the “child’s” soul, and prayed to it. They still call it the *Awa-ko Jizô*, the *Jizô* of the Foam-Child!

But to revert to the great travel to the North.—The entire trip (a thousand miles and more) and whatever he did on the way, only took Kôbô Daishi some nine months, as we are told that in the fourth month of the year 822, shortly after his return to Kôyasan, he was entrusted with the task of constructing the *Manono-ike*, a great irrigation-pond in Sanuki province (Shikoku), not far from his birth-place. The large artificial lake still exists: it was formed by an earthen dam seventy feet high, obviously a difficult engineering job in those days of eleven hundred and odd years ago. Another important irrigation project was entrusted to him the following year, the *Masuda-ike* in Yamato province, which took over two years to complete. Kôbô Daishi then himself erected a commemorative monument on the spot.

While the North of Japan claimed a good deal of Kôbô Daishi’s time, his presence was also made felt in the Western part, and not only in his home district. Behind Kobe, in the Rokko range, there is a conical hill called Futatabi, because our saint made “two trips” (*futa tabi*) to its top, apparently liking the scenery of mountains and sea, with Awaji island and his own beloved Kishû in the background. A temple on Futatabi is dedicated to him.

In the *Oku-no-in* (the “interior shrine”) in the hills behind the renowned *Itsukushima* Shrine, better known as Miyajima, in the western Inland-Sea, the eternal sacred fire was lit by Kôbô Daishi, and has never since been suffered to go out.

In Shikoku, quite some miles to the South of the famous *Kotohira* or *Kompira* sanctuary, consecrated to an obscure Sea-god, yet patronized not only by fishermen but also by innumerable businessmen, farmers and craftsmen, because of his enormous protecting and favouring powers, lies the *Hashikura-ji*, a temple holy to this very *Kompira Gongen* (Incarnation, Avatar). “The curious name *Hashi-kura-ji*, which means literally Chopstick Storehouse Temple, is accounted for by a legend to the effect

that Kôbô Daishi, when he came to open up this district and bring it into subjection to Buddha, first exorcised a troop of demons, and was then met by the god *Kompira*, who pointed out to him a cave in the mountain-side, which was set apart as a store-room for the reception of the innumerable chopsticks used in the presentation of food-offerings by the faithful at his neighbouring shrine on Zôzu-san."³³ Kôbô Daishi had just founded an imposing temple to the god *Kompira* on that hill, probably substituting the Indian *Kumbhîra* for an older Shintô *Kotohira*; he must have been impressed with the "cave full of chopstick offerings" and forthwith erected another sumptuous temple to take its place, as an *Oku-no-in* or Holy of Holies linked to the *Kompira* temple. This was in A.D. 828.

The offering of chopsticks to a *kami* may sound queer, but is still done, even if the origin of the custom is no longer clear. They may have been substitutes for trees (or branches), which occasionally are also planted during a Shintô festival, and being connected with food they may have stood for that too. They may also have been chopsticks which, having served for the divine food-offerings of Shintô, had become taboo. But several priests, among which our saint, were in the habit of planting one or two chopsticks as a sort of memorial mark of their visit—and these little wooden sticks grew into mighty trees.³⁴ In many places on his very long route "the Daishi" also planted his staff: perhaps as a memento, perhaps because it had been worn out, possibly also simply because he forgot it. These staves all developed into magnificent trees, and occasionally even into little forests. Now and then he used a simple bamboo cane, and when he left this it had a habit of growing, too, but "upside-down" . . . Such *sakasa-take* are considered a miracle caused by his spiritual powers. . . . They too usually developed into groves, of which a few are said to still exist. The "upside-down" marvel is due to the bamboo's branches, by some botanical freak, growing with a downward sweep, instead of the usual rather sharp upward trend. But as we know by now, anything unusual will folkloristically be attributed to the great Master, Kôbô. . . .

33. The "Elephant-head" hill on which the *Kompira* sanctuary stands.

34. This, as a matter of fact, may be but a slight exaggeration. Many chopsticks are made of willow-wood, which has a habit of taking root even if only a sliver and apparently quite dried out.

On a hill near Uwajima (also in Shikoku), there again stand 88 images of Kôbô Daishi, representing the eighty-eight Holy Places founded by him in Shikoku. A visit to these images is considered equivalent to making the entire lengthy pilgrimage. These Eighty-eight Holy Places—the *Shikoku Hachijû-hakka Shô*—indeed play a prominent part in the religious (and economical!) life of the island, over every district of which they are scattered. Holy soil from India is believed to have dropped on each of the eighty-eight “stations”. The temples are dedicated to various Buddhas; the pilgrimage should be done on foot even now, and follow a prescribed itinerary; it is of course a considerable undertaking, but it is the aspiration of every good Buddhist that he may make the tour sooner or later before he dies. It is the most famous of all the pilgrimages in Japan, but the entire course stretches over about seven hundred miles, and takes more than forty days. The temples are mostly on top of steep hills ascended by endless flights of stone-steps.³⁵ Hence, to facilitate the pilgrimage for the less leisurely or the feeble, replicas of the tour of the 88 Shikoku temples have been arranged in other provinces, and may even be further condensed into groups of 88 images; and if done “with a pure heart”, the subsidiary pilgrimage will bestow as much merit as the original one.

Pilgrims mostly wear the traditional white dress (*shiro shôzoku*) with leggings and mittens, and a large mushroom-hat (*suge-gasa*), on which is the inscription: “*dôkô ni-nin*”, “two travelling in company”: either Kôbô Daishi’s spirit or Buddha himself is the constant partner, to guide and comfort...³⁶ To keep their garb undefiled, an extra piece of cloth hangs behind from their belt, to sit on while on the road: the *shiri-tsube* or *shiri-ate*, “rear-appliance”, about. On their back they carry the

35. Awa Province has 24 of these temples, Sanuki 22, Iyo 26, and Tosa 16. Distributed according to gods venerated, they range as follows:—*Yakushi Nyorai* 23, *Senjû Kwannon* (the thousand-handed) 13, *Jû-ichi men Kwannon* (the eleven-headed) 11, *Amida* 10, *Dainichi Nyorai* (the Buddha as illuminated man) 5, *Jizô Bosatsu* 5, *Hijiri Kwannon* (of Wisdom) 4, *Fudô Myôô* 3, *Kokuzô Bosatsu* 3, and one each for *Daisû Chishô Butsu* (? Great Highway Wisdom Victor Buddha; probably the Great Civilizer), *Monjû Bosatsu*, *Mikan Bobatsu* (? *Amida*-manifestation?), *Batô-Kwannon* (the horse-headed), and *Bishamonten*.

36. In the Bible too, I believe, it says somewhere that you should “walk humbly with your God”....

kyû, an elongated box-shrine in which are a sacred picture or text, and a very few personal necessities in a drawer below. In it, or carried in the hand, they also have a *fuda-basami*, two small and thin wooden boards which between them hold the *fuda*, *o-fuda*, a sort of "visiting card" which is stuck on some part of the temple-building visited. All the while the pilgrims pray "*Namu Daishi henjô kongô*"—Hail to the Daishi; may the Diamond shine everywhere!—and sing special hymns, a different one for each temple.

Pilgrimages to the eighty-eight sanctuaries are mostly undertaken to ask for relief from illness, whether of oneself or others, particularly leprosy (the *tenkei-byô* or "heavenly punishment sickness", which it was believed to be), or to seek religious salvation. But at the same time people enjoy the carefree life and the sight of so many beautiful places during these several weeks on the road. Often elderly people, especially women, will band together for a *Shikoku-mairi* (circuit) for greater pleasure and comfort. And old-fashioned people of the countryside may still offer some alms to such worshippers, in the belief that they will themselves thereby "acquire merit". The pilgrimage is familiarly also known as the *Shikoku meguri* (circling), or even shorter, *O-Shikoku*, or *O-hendô*, the Honourable Shikoku or the Honourable Around-Way.³⁷ And the pilgrim's staff is often called "the Kôbô Daishi"!

A quaint feature of the Shikoku pilgrims is that they carry a small *waraji*, straw sandal, a miniature of the usual footwear of the traveller, at the back of their neck (of all places!), as a silent and worshipful tribute to the greatest traveller of all, "the *Daishi*" in whose footsteps they follow on this pilgrimage, and whom they hope to follow on the road crossing the *Shide* mountains, which separate this world from the next... Since Kôbô Daishi, as we shall see, is by many believed not to be truly dead, numerous fervent pilgrims hope that on this most sacred tour they may be favoured with his appearance...

I have not come across any legend as to the reason which induced Kôbô Daishi to found these Eighty-eight Sanctuaries. It was probably just his excessive zeal, together with his quite obvious enjoyment of a good tramp. One tradition has it that

37. *Henrô* is the correct term for pilgrimage; in the Shikoku and Kishû dialects the "r" is frequently pronounced like "d", hence probably this "special terminology."

he was then forty-two years old, and as forty-two was (and is) a dangerous age for men, he founded these temples to offset the expected misfortune and "to crush the Eight Passions." Eighty-eight, however, with him must have been an occultly favourable numeral, which we have encountered several times. "Eight" as a rule means "every direction", hence "all". It occurs in many combinations. There were the eight Cardinal Virtues and the Eight Immortals of China; Buddhism had an Eightfold Path, the Eight Teachings, the Eight Precious Things. Shôtoku Taishi was "the eight-eared" because he could easily absorb and understand the most difficult things propounded at the same time by several people; Japan was poetically "the Eight Great Islands". Everywhere in China and Japan there were groups of Eighty Famous Views—and much more of the kind. Repeated or "double" numbers are auspicious in Chinese superstition, wherefore the main festivals of Japan were also on "double days."³⁸ But "88" is not really a "double" numeral. However, in Chinese and Japanese it is written as 8-10-8, 八十八, which looks very much like the dissected parts of the ideogram for "rice", 米. Hence it is of happy omen, and because of it the first rice should be sown around the eighty-eighth day of the (lunar) year. All this does not imply nevertheless, that Kôbô Daishi did not have a different mystic reason. Buddhism, for an example, is said to know the *hachijû-hachi-shi no madoi* (*mayoi, bonnô*), the Eighty-eight Worldly Passions That Lead Astray. By Kôbô Daishi's favour, one of them will drop off after each temple visit, and the pilgrim end up as a *hotoke* (Buddha). Usually, however, one speaks of the Hundred-eight Passions or Sins (*bonnô, kuresa*).³⁹

38. New Year on the 1st day of the 1st month; the Girls' Festival (originally of purification in spring) on the 3rd IIIrd; the Boy's Festival (similar purification with the beginning of summer) on the 5th Vth, the Star Festival on the 7th VIIth, the Chrysanthemum Festival (originally probably Harvest purification) on the 9th IXth. All "odd" numbers, which are the more forceful *yang* ones. Even the Revolution Day of China was officially fixed for the 10th of October (Xth month), and is known as the "double ten"....

39. Probably the pilgrimage was patterned after the Circuit of the Thirty-three Places Holy to *Kwannon*, the so-called *Saikoku Sanjû-san shô*, as the respective temples are all located in the provinces surrounding Kyoto (the *Saikoku*). Legend traces their institution to Tokudô Shônin, a famous abbot of the 8th century. This holy man once in a coma visited the Underworld at the request of *Emma-Ô*, its King, who forthwith

A legend again showing Kôbô Daishi's supernatural powers is told from the neighbourhood of Takamatsu. When once, in these wanderings over Shikoku, our saint felt thirsty and saw a pear-tree full of luscious ripe fruit, he asked the owner whether he would not give him one for charity's sake.⁴⁰ "These are *ku-wazu-no nashi*," was the churly reply, which means either "not to be eaten" (not for you to eat), or "inedible". "Ah so," said Kôbô Daishi, and wandered on. But ever since, the pears borne by that tree (which is said to still be there) have become quite uneatable. He seems to have been fond of such punishments; we have already noted some similar results with springs or brooks as the consequence of unfriendly stinginess.⁴¹

Much more serious, however, was the punishment meted out to one Uyemon Saburô of Ebara-chô, Onzen-gun, Iyo Province, and to which eight graves "treasured" by the *Te-ishi-dera* bear witness. The story is that when Kôbô Daishi came along as a wandering pilgrim, this man not only refused charity but angrily smashed the saint's begging-bowl, breaking it into eight pieces. As a "heavenly castigation" his eight children died one after the other, as confirmed by the said graves. . . . Uyemon Saburô, recognizing his sacrilegious misdeed, abjectly apologized to the saint,

revealed to him the existence of 33 places especially cared for by *Kwan-non*, Saviour of Mankind, the Merciful who had divided herself into 33 parts to do so. She had wished to succour each human being in the way best suited to his particular spiritual capabilities, but found that nobody knew of these sacred shrines, so men went on doing evil rather than good. He, *Emma*, had therefore called Tokudô to impart this good news, and now wished him to return to earth to announce that a single pilgrimage to the thirty-three sanctuaries would save even the worst sinner. Whereupon Tokudô again awoke, with a seal in his hand to prove the subterranean journey. . . . With his disciples he then made the indicated circuit as the first pilgrim of the kind.

40. The native pears, *nashi*, are apple-shaped and almost tasteless, but very juicy and an excellent thirst-quencher. Some kinds, however, are so "woody" as to be hardly edible.

41. It is of some interest to refer to *St. Mark, xi, 13-14*. Jesus was hungry, "and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered (?) and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it."—At least Kôbô Daishi had a justifiable if somewhat vengeful reason to condemn the tree; Jesus would have done it out of pure spite, which does not sound quite fair to him.

who thereupon was good enough to cause that another child be born to him. And this child arrived in our world with a stone (*ishi*) in his hand (*te*), and later became a great warrior and the possessor of a castle. Why the *Te-ishi* temple commemorates the event, and what the apparent connection between stone and castle is, I cannot guess. Another heavy punishment of a different kind was inflicted on a farmer in the Hitachi province, which Kôbô Daishi visited on one of his many pilgrimages. Tired and foot-sore, he asked for a night's lodging at a farmer's house, but the man, seeing only a beggar in soiled clothes, roughly refused. Kôbô Daishi went on, when it suddenly struck the farmer that the "beggar" must be this famed saintly priest; so in order to call him back he climbed to the top of a *keyaki* tree, and loudly shouted, "*moshi-moshi, Kôbô Daishi! moshi-moshi, Kôbô Daishi!*, ho there, come back please"! The Saint had perhaps gone too far already, or he was too angry to listen; so the man continued his call "with heart and soul", without end, and he gradually shrank and changed form and became a *semi*, a cicada, the kind now known as a *chibahime*. That must have happened on the evening of a twenty-third day of the seventh moon, because to this our time on that date the *keyaki* trees suddenly swarm with noisy *chibahime* cicadas, constantly calling "*moshi-moshi Kôbô Daishi!*"

That such an indefatigable wanderer on God's earth should have left behind an occasional foot-mark is natural. At Uwo, for instance, in a cave known as the *Iwaya* (Rock-house) on Tobi-jima island, in the deepest recess there is such a foot-mark. But I understand that there are several others—always in rock—as also some hand-marks of Kôbô Daishi.

The rather hedonistic *Shingon* creed was of course condemned by many reformers of the 12th and 13th centuries as a low superstition, a trumpery practice which could not be called religion; and the violent Saint Nichiren (1222-1282, founder of the *Hokke-shû*), bluntly asserted that Kôbô Daishi was the biggest liar in all Japan. Yet in all the annals and legends of Japanese Buddhism there is no more celebrated and commonly known name than his. "Whether as a saint, miracle-worker, writer, painter, or sculptor, he is familiar alike to the most learned and the most ignorant of his countrymen." By his ingenious interpretation of "psycho-Buddhism", Kôbô Daishi exemplified the means by which man, be he a scholarly prelate or an illiterate peasant, "can feel

in his heart the presence of Divinity, can elevate himself Godward." And that, after all, is what all religion wishes to accomplish, and wherein lies his greatness. ("The Kingdom of God is within you" . . .)

Every temple of note, every spot in Japan which has a historical tradition, will possess something, some legend or object, ascribed to this great saint. He is the hero of a thousand tales, the author of a hundred books, and of more works of art than all his contemporaries combined. He is the most famous exponent of the semi-religious "Cult of the Mountains" which so flourishes in Japan, and made innumerable "first ascents". However, a saying is recorded of him which many Japanese seem to have forgotten: "As mountains are not noble because they are high, but because of the trees that grow on them, so, also, a man is not noble because he is stout but because he is wise. . . ." He was apparently of a gentle and conciliatory disposition, and anxious to be on good terms with all creeds. He must have been vigorous not only intellectually but also physically. There can hardly be a doubt that, whatever the fanciful embroideries, Kôbô Daishi was profoundly erudite, perhaps the most learned Japanese of all ages.

His many-sided dogmas appealed to the aristocrats because of the mysteriousness, the aesthetic refinement and elaboration of the rituals, the artistic luxury of his temples: many *Shingon* sanctuaries look more like repositories of art and classic literature than religious centres of inspiration.⁴² The lower classes were fascinated by the same bewitching extravagance, and for them were added promise of eternal bliss, plus amulets and exorcisms to make their life on earth easier. *Shingon*, like all Tantric systems, had a stupendous apparatus for captivating the fancy of the unthinking.

We noted in passing that Kôbô Daishi was one of the best calligraphists, and apt at playing tricks with his brush. This he also did once while in China, when the emperor, as a compliment, asked him to renew the inscription on one of the entrance tablets. Kôbô Daishi took five brushes: one in each hand, one held with

42. Kôyasan has a collection of 8,000 scrolls of the Buddhist Scriptures written in letters of gold and elaborately ornamented with silver designs. There is a real museum for the other innumerable and varied works of art.

each foot, and one in the mouth. With simultaneous strokes he inscribed the text in exquisite characters. Then from a distance he spattered India-ink on the walls, where the drops alighted as further beautiful ideograms. . . .⁴³ Kôbô Daishi was therefore later known as the *Go-hitsu-no Ôshô*, the Abbot of the Five Brushes.⁴⁴ During his wanderings in Shikoku, when he established the Eighty-eight Holy Places, he dispersed a horde of demons that had lodged in the *Zentsuji* by some wonderful strokes of the brush which he made on a tablet. On another day as Kôbô Daishi was strolling along a stream, he was approached by a young man who seemed to know him, and who begged him to show his powers as a calligraphist by writing some characters in the air, since, as he had been told, nothing was impossible to him. To oblige, Kôbô Daishi took his brush, moved it about in the air, and some magnificent ideographs stood out against the blue sky. But then the young man took the brush, and imitated him with equal perfection. He then asked Kôbô Daishi to write some characters on the flowing water of the stream. Again Kôbô Daishi did so: a whole poem became apparent on the clear surface and stayed for a while, until washed away by the wavelets.⁴⁵ Now the young man wrote on the water, a single ideogram only, "dragon", perfectly traced, except, as Kôbô Daishi noticed, that he had forgotten a dot. So he took the brush and added it. But hardly had he done so when the ideogram became alive, transformed itself into a real dragon, and flew up to the sky with a mighty noise. Surprised, Kôbô Daishi asked the young man for his name, who then disclosed that he was *Monju Bosatsu*, Enlightener of the

43. Writing or painting with five brushes in this way is told of several other great masters of China and Japan, and it is interesting to note that according to mediaeval European belief Ezra, the Jewish scribe, could write with five pens.

Hokusai, of *ukiyo-e* fame, in one of his humoristic sketches, shows Kôbô Daishi sitting before a large upright sheet of paper, and industriously copying sutras and shastras with five brushes held in the manner above described, all moving in unison.

44. Perhaps this was rather meant to say that he could write skillfully in five different styles of calligraphy, or in five languages, and the legend was woven around this scholarship. The Chinese recognized five (or even six) types of script: the seal (great and small), chancery, regular, running and cursive writing.

45. Keats' tomb in the Protestant Cemetery of Rome bears the "sad inscription", "Here lies one whose name was writ in water" . . .

World.⁴⁶ Kôbô Daishi being so much interested in the art and occultism of writing, he is of course also credited with having introduced into his country the "science of names", or *seimeigaku*. With this "science", which is still largely practised, not only can babies be given names which will insure their future happiness and long life, but illness can be cured, misfortune turned away, luck and prosperity acquired. The basic principle of *seimeigaku* is to ascertain the person's chances by dissecting his name's ideograms into the component strokes and dots, calculating their respective values, their "totals" both individually and together, in relation to birth-day, which in turn is swayed by the zodiacal animal and the "element" current when he was born. The strokes and their relations must of course be "lucky", and a choice among sundry names submitted to the savant will therefore be rather easy. But if the Kôbô Daishi system has been neglected to start with, and misfortune persecutes the man when he grows up, there is still a good chance to change this fate by changing the personal name, the wise *seimeigaku* professor making his mathematical calculations and speculations on basis of the family name plus the other influences mentioned. And if people neglect such a precaution, it is certainly not the fault of Kôbô Daishi...

Kôbô Daishi could write perfectly with whatever material he had: "*Kôbô wa fude erabazu*", he does not select his brush, has become a current saying, corresponding to our "the cunning workman does not quarrel with his tool." And yet, even this great man was not infallible. There is, in the monastery of *Kurodani*, Kyoto, a large temple-building called *Shinnyo-dô*, with a name-tablet inscribed by Kôbô Daishi. Of the three characters, *shin-nyo-dô*, however, the middle one is considered to be imperfectly written, whence the proverb has arisen, "*Kôbô mo fude ayamari*"—even Kôbô's brush may go wrong! Seriously considered, Kôbô Daishi's attitude towards all literary pursuits is probably best exemplified in his actual saying: "In writing poetry, a study of the old forms is an excellent thing, but it is no mark of ability to copy old poems. In calligraphy too, it is

46. *Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri)* is the apotheosis of transcendental Wisdom, seated on the lion of Power. One of the most important of the Bodhisattvas of *Shingon* (and the principal of the *Kegon-shû*) he holds a sword with which to cut all intellectual and affectional entanglements, and to cause spiritual unification through mystic religious insight.

good to imitate the old conceptions, but it is not a mark of skill to make one's writing resemble the old examples."

As a painter he enjoyed hardly less renown, as the many preciously treasured pictures prove. In the *Hase-dera* (or *Chôkokuji*) of Yamato, sacred to *Kwannon*, there is a large fresco of *Shaka* and the twenty-five *Bosatsu* of Paradise, by his brush. On its left hangs an enormous *mandara*, 18 feet broad by 30 feet high, representing that half of the Universe which *Shingon* calls the *Taizô-kai*, by the same artist. So, possibly, is the other *mandara*, of the *Kongô-kai*.⁴⁷ A large *kakemono* of *Dainichi Nyorai* hangs opposite, also painted by *Kôbô Daishi*. This temple may be particularly fortunate in having so many pictures by *Kôbô Daishi*, but is not the only one. In a temple on *Kôyasan* are again the two *mandara* of the Two Worlds painted by him; several other paintings have already been mentioned in passing, and it would simply be tedious to enumerate all the pictorial relics ascribed to this great and indefatigable saint. However, most venerated by all pilgrims to *Kôyasan* is a portrait of *Kôbô Daishi* in the *Mieidô*, painted from life by his disciple, Prince *Shinnyo*, and in which the eyes—the seat of life—were set in by the saint himself.⁴⁸ I suspect that a good many other portraits and statues were "done" by *Kôbô Daishi* in the same manner...

As a sculptor, we have had a few examples of his craftsmanship.⁴⁹ A self-portrait statue done at the age of 42 is in a *Kôyasan* sanctuary, which also contains a thousand gilt images of *Amida Butsu* (*Amitâbha*), the Lord of Boundless Light who presides over the Western Paradise. The *Kondô* (Golden Hall) of the same monastery contains a large image of *Yakushi Nyorai* (the *Tathâgata Bhaisajiya-guru*), the Buddha of Healing or Master of Medicine, although his main endeavour is to cure humanity of Ignorance, which is at the bottom of all the ills that the flesh is heir to. The image is again by *Kôbô Daishi*. Interesting is a legend applying to a portrait-statue of the saint at the temple

47. The two *mandara* together are said to contain the figures of three hundred Buddhas.

48. It was "the opening of the eyes" which gave the image vitality, whether painting or sculpture. Before that ceremony it was simply "matter".

49. *Kôbô Daishi* had an enormous influence on the arts of painting and sculpturing of the *Heian* period, but also on its architecture, as any study of Japanese art will confirm.

dedicated to him in Kawasaki City (between Tokyo and Yokohama), which is simply known as the *Daishi-sama-no-tera*.⁵⁰ The great sanctity of the spot is attributed to this image, which Kôbô Daishi himself carved while in China. Having finished it, he consigned it to the seas. Under divine guidance the statue floated to this coast, where it was caught in a fisherman's net; and after being conveyed ashore, it performed numerous miracles. —The trees in the temple-grounds are trained in the shape of junks under sail, to attest to the voyage as well as the devotion paid to the holy image by the sea-faring folk. So great is its popularity that special trains have to be run every 21st of the month, Kôbô Daishi's memorial day, to accommodate the crowds that visit the *Daishi-sama*.

Apart from all his regular activities, Kôbô Daishi invented the so-called *hiragana* syllabary, intended to do away with the difficult Chinese ideograms, to write the Japanese language "by sound", or at least to add verbal endings and other peculiar mutations even when using ideograms. The Japanese language is so completely different from the Chinese that a direct and exclusive use of ideograms is hardly practicable. True, during the eighth century a courtier, Kibi no Mabi, had already had the idea of using portions of certain characters as an identical syllabary, the *katakana*, and he must therefore be given full credit for the innovation. But the *katakana* is stiff and slow to write, while the *hiragana* is an easy-flowing, cursive script, well adapted to correspondence and even poetry. It became the current medium especially among the court-ladies, and through them actually created the *belles lettres* of Japan. The men, more conservatively brought up on the Chinese classics, did not relinquish the ideograms so easily; but the women, with their romances and diaries and jottings, were the forerunners, in *hiragana*, of whatever light literature Japan has produced since the tenth century.

Incidentally, the 48 *kana* signs (of both kinds) are so "alphabetically" arranged that they form a Sutra poem of deep Buddhist significance. This arrangement—the *i-ro-ha uta* or "song"—is of course also ascribed to Kôbô Daishi's genius:—

50. There are several famous Buddhists with the title "*daishi*" (Great Teacher), but when speaking of "the Daishi" it is always Kôbô.

i ro ha ni ho he to	or in modern transcription:—
chi ri nu ru wo wa ka	<i>Iro wa nioedo chirinuru wo--</i>
yo ta re so tsu ne na	<i>Waga yo tare zô tsune naran?</i>
ra mu u (w)i no o ku	<i>Ui no oku-yama kyô koete</i>
ya ma ke fu ko (y)e te	<i>Asaki yume miji ei mo sezu—n.</i>
a sa ki yu me mi shi	
(w)e hi mo se su n	

The final “n” serves as a strong affirmation, like the Buddhist “Um” or “Om” (our “amen”), the Japanese *n* being rather pharyngeal. A fair poetical translation seems to be:—

The colours are bright but the petals fall!
 In this world of ours, who shall remain forever?
 To-day, crossing the high mountains of mutability,
 We shall see no fleeting dreams, being inebriate no
 longer... “Um”

The meaning of the last lines seems to be that to obtain enlightenment, worldly thoughts must first be overcome; our life is but like the shadowy dream of an intoxicated man, who takes it for reality.⁵¹ It is only when we give up all confidence in ourselves and truly seek after Truth to depend upon, that we hear the voice of *Dainichi* or *Amida* Buddha. This *Nyorai* lives within ourselves; but his existence is suppressed by our worldly desires and hates. Only when we become conscious of how poor our own power is, how inconstant everything around us, will we hear the *Nyorai's* voice, will we free ourselves from worldly troubles and sorrows.

The end-syllables of each original line form a “caudal acrostic”—*to-ka na-ku-te shi-su*—which may be translated as “he died faultless”; in a Buddhist sense, of course... Since Kôbô Daishi was so much interested in writing and painting, he must also have been interested in the proper quality of the paper he would use. In the small town of Furusawa, at the foot of Mount

51. Another translation of the poetical arrangement is: “Flowers, however fragrantly they bloom, are doomed to wither; who in this world can hope to live permanently? When the last mountain-pass is crossed I wake from my evanescent dream, subject no more to intoxication.” The Japanese language allows a good many interpretations!

Kôya, they still produce an excellent (of course hand-made) mulberry paper known as "Kôya paper". Tradition has it that it was invented by the Sage himself, and the same age-old methods are pursued as a cottage industry.

Kôbô Daishi was the first to give his attention to general learning, education being in those days distinctly separated into the Buddhist instruction for the clergy and Confucian instruction for the nobility. He took what was good in Buddhism and in Confucianism, and in 828 established the *Shûgei Shuchi-in*, the Combined Institute for Learning, a sort of theological college which flourished for many years. This forerunner of the later educational establishments revolutionized the disciplines then in practice.⁵² The survival of Kôbô Daishi's influence on all arts and learning can be seen to our day: painting, sculpture, ornamentation in gold and colours, music, dancing, literature—all are pervaded by his mystic ideas.

Possibly Kôbô Daishi must even be credited with the introduction of the tea-plant in Japan, or at least the drinking, of its leaves' infusion to better keep awake for religious meditations. While the honour is generally given to Eisai (1141-1214), propagator of the *Zen* doctrine, there are indications that Kôbô Daishi knew tea as a stimulant centuries before him.

The discovery of "burning stones" coal in Kyûshû or Echigo is also attributed to Kôbô Daishi. He "gave it" to a village which suffered from lack of fuel.⁵³ Similarly, at Kusatsu, seeing a priest who was in want of oil, he took pity of him and produced some out of a rock: the first Japanese petroleum. There is even a belief that he showed the charcoal-burners of Western Japan how to produce better fuel by opening some holes in the kiln. Hitherto their product had always been "raw" or overburnt. The men were so pleased with the result that they danced about the kiln, and therefore the coal-burning places have ever since been known as the *odori-dan* or *odori-niwa*, the dancing flats or

52. Modern *Shingon* enterprises are mostly educational and medical: libraries, social welfare, charitable institutions, sundry hospitals, free medical treatment—spread over many provinces.

53. The Chinese must have known mineral coal for a long time, but there is no indication, I believe, that the Japanese knew coal-mining before. Kôbô Daishi may have recognized geological symptoms, and applied methods which he had observed in China.

yards... The coal-burners all pray to "*Taishisama*"...⁵⁴ One more "benefit to humanity" is attributed to Kôbô Daishi, the introduction (from China) of the medicamentary moxa-burning, which is still widely practiced. In a number of ailments, tiny cones of the "wool" obtained from dried artemisia leaves, the *moe-gusa* or "burning herb", are placed on mystically corresponding, well-defined parts of the human body, and fired, usually with the help of a smouldering incense stick. The sharp, fiery sting will cause a salutary reaction. Buddhist priests are still recognized adepts.⁵⁵ We see that our Sage was connected with all kinds of fires, natural ones and mysterious ones, including the *goma* and even gods surrounded by flames. Hence, evidently, also his mastery over dragons, who are the fire's antithesis, being bringers of rain... And, not content with all his religious and humanity-benefiting activities, Kôbô Daishi paid great attention to state affairs, serving as a councillor to four successive emperors, Heijô (806-809), Saga (810-823), Junna (824-833) and Nimmyô (834), and rendering great and efficient services in political matters. Of course he also constantly offered prayers for the welfare of the emperor and the peace of the nation.

After all his wanderings, Kôbô Daishi spent some fifteen years in quiet contemplation and teaching on his beloved Kôyasan, in the restful surroundings of the parklike sacred grounds. Then, having reached a full cycle of sixty years and more, and found his doctrine prospering, he gathered his disciples around him and exhorted them to faithfully abide by the precepts of

54. However, this may be a "transposition" or confusion of terms. The original "*Taishi*" probably was not the "Great Teacher" (Kôbô) but a mythologic "Great Son", child of the *Yama-no-kami*, the Shintô Mountain-deity protecting the district. Mountain-deities of all sorts were also the earliest civilizers.

55. A "branch" of the Kôyasan temples still produces an "*onmogusa*", honourable mugwort, medicament which goes under the name of *Kaji Yakushi*—*kaji* being "incantation" and *Yakushi* the Buddha of Healing. The package is marked with a corresponding inscription in ancient style, and the red "mark" of Kôbô Daishi, two crossed *Vâjras*... The sausage-like packet of some peculiar paper containing the moxa is lit at one end; the hurting spot is covered with some cloth, and the smouldering end pressed on the cloth or drawn over it in some prescribed way, and the queer fact is that the cloth will not be scorched. The treatment is bound to help, "because *O-Daishi-san* put all his soul into the recipe". But it will act faster if the patient at the same time will mumble endless *Ave's*—*Nammandabutsu*, *Nammandabutsu*—that is, *Namu Amida Butsu*, "Hail, Buddha *Amitâbha*" of the Supreme Light!

Buddha. He predicted that on a certain day he would leave them, and enjoined them not to sorrow for it. Originally, he told them, he had intended to live to a hundred years, so as to fully make known Buddha's *Dharma*; looking at his disciples, he no longer thought it necessary.

For several months he relinquished food and drink, being completely absorbed in thought. "Soon this body will be corrupt; it is not worth-while filling it with further corruptible matter."—When the predicted day came, he once more addressed the disciples, gathered around him, and then sank into a state of profound meditation. "Strange-looking clouds covered the sky, and odours of singular fragrance filled the air. Noting this, thousands and thousands of clergy and lay-folk climbed the Kôya-san, and bowing down before the Daishi asked for his blessing." His attitude remained unchanged, his countenance was as calm and composed as ever, although he breathed slower and slower. His eyes closed, but he seemed only a man sleeping. In this *sammai* (*samâdhi*) posture of meditation he entered *Nirvâna*. This was on the twenty-first day of the third moon of the second year of Shôwa (our 835) at the hour of the Tiger (between 3 and 5 a.m.; the most "powerful" hour).

As desired by him, his priests carried him to his mausoleum in this very *sammai* attitude, and sat him into his tomb, whose emplacement Kôbô Daishi had himself selected only the autumn before. When, some time after, the tomb was opened, Kôbô Daishi was found as if still sleeping, with complexion unchanged and hair grown a bit longer. It is still believed that Kôbô Daishi never truly died, but like Barbarossa sleeps, awaiting the coming of *Miroku*, the future Buddha.⁵⁶ People therefore believe that meanwhile he is free to emerge from his tomb—now the *Oku-no-in*, the Holy Sanctuary of the Interior, in a secluded spot of his beloved mountain—whenever he wishes, and to continue his religious ministrations and magic performances. There are indeed proofs that he does so. His "spirit", for instance, at the beginning of the 18th century once fashioned the grooves in a mill-stone in one night, as a token that he would protect the village in question and its surrounding region during the following year. . . .

The mausoleum, *Go-Byô*, but not the tomb, is opened once a

⁵⁶ *Miroku Bosatsu* (*Maitreya*) is said to be due some 5,670,000,000 years hence.

year, on the 21st of the third month, old style, his day of "withdrawal", when there is a ceremony of presenting new vestments for the saint. These vestments have a story:—

Once his scholarly friend and patron, Emperor Saga, sent Kôbô Daishi a present of winter clothing, accompanied by a poem. Almost a hundred years later, the then reigning sovereign, Daigo Tennô, had a dream that Kôbô Daishi was cold because these garments had been worn out; so he sent a dark-coloured new robe to Kôyasan, for the use of the saint. When the imperial messenger, the *Chûnagon* Sukezumi no Kyô (a high Councillor), accompanied by the bishop (*sôjô*) Kwangen of the *Hannyaji*, opened the tomb to present the gift, the saint could not be seen. A thick mist had arisen, and hidden his figure from their eyes. Bursting into tears, Kwangen exclaimed: "Why are we not permitted to see him? This is the first time since I was born that I have received such a rebuke!" Casting himself on the ground and weeping bitterly, the old prelate confessed the sins which probably obscured his eyes, and implored the manifestation of the saint's presence. After some time in such ardent prayers, "like the moon issuing from the mist, or like a shape reflected in a mirror," came the vision of one whose garments were in rags, and whose long hair had grown to the feet. And Kwangen, weeping now for joy, clothed him in the new robe, and also shaved his hair. . . .

Though the imperial messenger and the *sôjô* Kwangen now were able to see and adore the saint, the *sôjô*'s acolyte, Naigû Shunyû of the *Ishiyama* temple, who had accompanied them, was unable to do so on account of his youth. The priestling being very grieved at this, his teacher took his hand and placed it on the saint's knee; and ever after his hand had a fragrant odour, like incense. Indeed, it is said that the *Ishiyama-dera* to this day continues to make an incense which perpetuates this supernatural scent. . . .

To the emperor Kôbô Daishi sent a return-message saying that, having learnt from a Bodhisattva all the sacred traditions of *Dharâni* and *Mudrà*, in everlasting pity for the people of the world he took upon himself an unparalleled vow, and now, trusting in the great mercy of *Fugen*, he was awaiting in perfect tranquillity the coming of *Miroku*.—But the *sôjô* Kwangen, being fearful that others with less earnest faith might seek vainly for the sight of Kôbô Daishi's face, ordered the tomb to be sealed forever.

Nevertheless it is said that since that occasion it became customary for each emperor, upon his accession to the Throne, to send a complete new set of vestments to Kôbô Daishi's temple. In between I suppose that the priests themselves look after his wardrobe.

There is still a ceremony of changing Kôbô's dress, held every 21st of April at the Kôyasan Temple, where in one of the buildings there is a lifelike statue of him. And at this ceremony it is yearly proved that our Saint has not yet given up his wanderings... When his old dress is removed from the image, its hem is found to be frayed and splashed with mud; a satisfactory evidence that he has, in the meanwhile, visited a good many villages along the interior mud-roads...⁵⁷

It was, incidentally, this same Emperor Daigo (898-930) who in 921 bestowed on Kûkai the posthumous title of *Kôbô Daishi*, literally "The Great Teacher Propagating the Law" of Buddha. Another honorific appellation of this saintly priest is *Haijô Kongô*, which means "the Diamond (Sceptre) of Universal Enlightenment."

Without intending to describe the Kôyasan temples in all their grandeur, built with huge columns and beams of magnificent woods, ornamented with carvings and resplendent in gold and lacquer, with screens and pictures by the greatest classic artists, and perfect Japanese gardens everywhere, a few items will reflect the mood which Kôbô Daishi instilled into his foundation.⁵⁸ We find, for instance, along the main walk three bronze images of

57. In this connection it is interesting to quote some instances cited by Crawley & Besterman in *Dress, Drinks & Drums*, in connection with burial clothes. "When preservatives are not applied to the grave-clothes, some peoples periodically renew them. The bodies of the Ccapac-Incas were preserved and clothed, new clothes being supplied as required. At stated periods the Malagasy open the tombs of their ancestors, removing the rotten *lambas* and rolling the bones in new ones. A simpler method is to place changes of raiment in the grave, just as other articles of use are deposited", etc.

58. The grandeur of the temple premises is considered to be "foremost in the world". The distance between the main gate and the innermost recess is said to be about 2½ miles, and the entire emplacement covers some 240 acres, with 120 temple structures, an important library, a magnificent museum of fine art objects of all epochs, and 800 living-houses. It is said that during the eras when *Shingon* flourished most there were some 2000 buildings for the monks and their worship.—About a million adherents still visit Kôyasan every year!

Dainichi, *Fudô* and *Jizô*, placed behind a trough of water: the faithful pour water over the figures, in order to succour the souls of their ancestors. The *nagare-kanjô* or Flowing Invocation is chiefly followed by the *Nichiren* sect, but also by the *Shingon* and others. The idea is, probably, based on the universal conception of "washing away sin"; the pouring of water over the statue or over a special, wooden *sotoba* post, while uttering a short invocation, will, by proxy, help to shorten the pains of a soul in Purgatory. Every charitable passer-by will be glad to assist. The *sotoba nagare-kanjô* is generally for the benefit of the person whose posthumous name (*kaimyô*) is inscribed on the post; pouring the water over the image of a divinity whose favour is relied upon will benefit the person one has in mind, or be of general use to all souls in Purgatory.

Near the tomb of the saint is the large Hall of a Myriad Lamps, the *Man-dôrô-dô*, whose numberless brass-lanterns used to be lit each night; but that has become too expensive even for Kôyasan. . . . "No sacrifice," says a Buddhist teacher, "can be more acceptable in the eyes of Buddhist piety than burning lamps, which typify the refulgent wisdom of the gods *Dainichi* and *Amida*." In regard to these ten thousand lamps of Kôyasan a legend recalls the Biblical story of the Widow's Mite. "On some great occasion a few rich men presented ten thousand lamps, while a poor woman, who had nothing, cut off her long tresses to make up money enough to present a single lamp. Nevertheless her offering was the more acceptable of the two; and when a gust of wind arose, the rich men's ten thousand lamps were all blown out, while the poor woman's single lamp shone on with increased brilliancy." Probably Kôbô Daishi's spirit had his hand in the game. The largest lamp in the hall is even now called the *hinja-no-ittô*, the poor woman's single lamp.⁵⁹

Even if the saint's life be "suspended" in meditation, his watchfulness remains unabated, and people are afraid of incur-

59. So-called *mandô-e*, "festivals of ten-thousand lamps", were apparently held now and then for a particular devotion or invocation by some wealthy man. The famous Prime-Minister Fujiwara Michinaga is said to have held one in 1004.

The saying "*Fûja no mandô yori hinja no ittô*", "better than the wealthy man's ten-thousand lamps (is) the single lamp of the poor", is said to be based on the Sutra *Jôdosambukyô*, and/or the *Urabonkyô*. I believe Christ said something similar. . .

ring his wrath. Thus, for instance, there is a bridge near the mausoleum, the *Mumyô-bashi* or Nameless Bridge,⁶⁰ which nobody is able to cross who, for moral reasons, is unacceptable to Kôbô Daishi. This was well known even to the great warrior, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, as tradition records when he once made a pilgrimage to Kôyasan, after he had risen to the highest position in the land. Of course he was due to pay his formal visit to the tomb, accompanied by all the lords and retinue; but he was rather scared that the slaughter he had been compelled to make among his enemies would be disapproved by Kôbô Daishi. So the night before the procession, and accompanied by the high-priest alone, Hideyoshi went to the bridge "for a trial". Having safely crossed it both ways, he was thus assured that the saint would not put him to shame the next day, but rather did approve of the many sacrifices made to restore peace to the nation. . . .⁶¹

The cemetery on Mount Kôya is enormous, covering many acres; the magnificent cryptomeria avenue leading through it is some one and a quarter mile long. The number of graves of historically prominent people is indeed very large, and includes all centuries: statesmen, noblemen, *daimyô*, warriors, poets, savants, priests of course, but even actors have their plot. In the case of great families, the principal monument is often surrounded by several subsequent ones. But not all the graves contain a body or its ashes; it suffices to bury a bone, or even some hair or a tooth. The important thing is that one's symbol be interred near the great teacher in order to share in his resurrection and re-birth into the *Tosotsu* Heaven (*Tushitâ*). This was also the desire of Akechi Mitsuhide (1526-1582), considered the arch-traitor of Japanese history because he rebelled against his emperor (and because his coup did not succeed; he was hardly worse than many another "great" baron and *shôgun!*). His cenotaph on Mount Kôya is one of the largest; but this monument was soon after erection strangely riven from top to bottom by a thunderbolt, as an unmistakable sign of the saint's displeasure, and a warning to faithless servants of the sovereign. . . .

Many people too poor to own a separate burial place on Kôya

60. Said actually to be a mutilation of *Mi-byô-no hashi*, the Bridge of the August Tomb.

61. Hidetsugu, the erratic but unfortunate nephew and adopted son of Hideyoshi, later, upon order from his father, committed *harakiri* on Mount Kôya, in a room of the *Kongôbuji*.

consign the cremated remains—or at least the “Adam’s apple”, which plays a great role as one of the seats of life—to a common pit, the *Kotsu-dô*, Hall of Bones. Thousands of mortuary tablets (*ihai*) with the posthumous name of the deceased are also kept in the temples, and all visitors are welcome to attend the matins which every day are offered to these spirits. One can even “deposit” one’s tablet while still alive—for the future!—as I myself did many years ago. Then one is “on the safe side”. . . . A picture of Kôbô Daishi may be found in many Buddhist house-shrines or altars, the *Butsudan*: he will look after the welfare of the living and the dead. . . .

Popular belief has it that Jikyô Shônin⁶² was a re-incarnation of Kôbô Daishi, while the retired Emperor Shirakawa (1073-1086, lived till 1129), a fervent Buddhist and erector of temples, was recognized as a re-incarnation of Jikyô Shônin—which would make him Kôbô Daishi III. . . .

Everywhere the 21st of each month is sacred to the memory of Kôbô Daishi, and there is a minor festival at the *Shingon* temples throughout the country. These days are simply known as the “*O-Daishi-san*”. The main memorial feast is naturally held on the 21st of the third month, the day on which he entered Nirvana; but in some places this has been transposed to the 21st of the first month, for reasons unknown. And on every twenty-first day, throughout the year, it is said that it rains, if even a little. Whether the heavens weep in sorrow or for joy I would not say. But after all, Kôbô Daishi was a “Dragon Master” and “Rain Master”, who was always concerned with water in some way or other.

Kôbô Daishi and his religion continue to live after more than eleven hundred years. Kôbô Daishi, the “emotional artist in syncretism,” summed up his religion as follows:—

The healing power of the exoteric doctrines has wiped away
all dust;

Now opens the store of the True Word (*Shingon*),
In which all hidden treasures are brought to light,
And there embodied are all virtues and powers.

Such is “the Soul filled with the Glories of Mystery.”

62. I have been unable to trace this great bonze, abbot, or saint.