

The *Sangō Shiiki* : An Apocryphal Work ?

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Among Kōbō Daishi Kūkai's (弘法大師空海 774-835) numerous writings, there are two works which resemble each other greatly. They are the *Rōko shiiki* (聾瞽指帰) and the *Sangō shiiki* (三教指帰). In both of these works, Kūkai compares the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and argues for the superiority of Buddhism. According to their prefaces, both of these works were written in 797.

The Kongōbuji on Mt. Kōya owns the original of the former work written by Kūkai himself. However, no other copies of this work remain and no commentaries were written on it. Revered as Kūkai's own piece of writing, his work was long kept hidden. In contrast, the original of the latter work by Kūkai himself does not exist, but there remain numerous later copies and commentaries on it. Among the commentaries, the oldest extant one in the *Sangō shiiki chūshū* (三教指帰注集), written in 1088 by the late Heian period scholar-monk Shaku Jōan (釈成安). It is now held by the Ōtani University library. The Ōtani copy of the *Sangō shiiki chūshū* is a copy made by Genkan (嚴寛), a scholar-monk of Tōji in Kyoto, between 1133 and 1134.

When we compare the *Rōko shiiki* and the *Sangō shiiki*, only the preface which describes the circumstance surrounding the composition of the work and the verse called *Jūinshi* (十韻詩) at the end of the work, are different. In all other respects (except for several minor differences), the text of the two works are identical. For this reason, it has long been assumed that the *Rōko shiiki* was Kūkai's first draft, and the *Sangō shiiki* revised version. This has been the undisputed interpretation concerning the relationship

between these two works.

In this paper, I have attempted a comparison of the preface and the *Jūinshi* from the point of view of their style and their content.

As stated above, the central portion of the two texts are identical. It is written in a beautiful style known as *pien wen* (駢文) which was popular in the Six Dynasties period of China. It is written in magnificent Chinese which probably no Japanese can imitate. The preface of the *Rōko shiiki* is also written in the same style. Similarly, the *Jūinshi* is composed of twenty verses of ten rhymes, most of which are parallel to each other. In contrast, the preface of the *Sangō shiiki* is lacking in elegance, and is discontinuous in style with the body of the text. Moreover, the *Jūinshi* of the *Sangō shiiki* is not only almost entirely lacking the use of parallelism, but it is also written in a juvenile style. It is impossible that it could have been written by Kūkai.

A large part of the preface of the *Rōko shiiki* is taken up with a discussion of poetic style. This discussion, which at one point refers to the *Yūsenkutsu* (遊仙窟), a Chinese novel of the T'ang period, reveals the genius of young Kūkai. The *Yūsenkutsu* was widely read in Japan during the Nara and Heian periods, but it is a pornographic work written in an elegant style. This preface, which referred to a pornographic work, must have been extremely embarrassing to later monks of the Shingon sect, which revered the ascetic Kūkai as its founder. Further, the *Jūinshi* concludes by rejecting Confucianism and Taoism as inferior teachings and preaching the absolute superiority of Buddhism. This helps to establish close correspondence with the arguments developed in the main body of the text. However, such way of thinking was considered subversive in a society which was based on a political system founded on Confucianism.

The preface to the *Sangō shiiki* also contains a short discussion of poetic style, but here the text quoted are the *I-ching* (易經), *Shih-ching* (詩經) and *Lao-tzu* (老子) — all orthodox works. The preface then immediate-

ly plunges into Kūkai's biography. This biographical section is considered an extremely important source by students of Kūkai's life. Moreover, although the *Jūinshi* of this work also preaches the superiority of Buddhism, it declares that both Confucianism and Taoism are useful teachings, and deals with these two religions in a more conciliatory manner. Such syncretic attitude towards the three teachings was more acceptable to the society of that time. However, this resulted a great disparity between the position of the preface and the arguments for the absolute superiority of Buddhism found in the main body of the text.

As a result of my research outlined above, I conclude as follows.

The *Rōko shiiki* is the greatest literary work of Kūkai's youth. However, due to its discussion of women and its exclusivistic position which holds that Buddhism is the only truth, it was not suitable for his age and society, and was not widely disseminated.

The *Sangō shiiki* was made public by some person connected with the movement to exalt Kūkai which developed in the Shingon sect in the early eleventh century. This person rewrote the socially inconvenient sections of the preface and *Jūinshi* of the *Rōko shiiki*, added a biography of Kūkai which was advantageous for the followers of the sect, and changed its title to *Sangō shiiki*.