

# A Stylistic Study of the *Sangō shiiki* based on Comparative Calligraphy: On the Theory that It is a Forgery by Saisen

KAWACHI Shōen  
IJIMA Tachio

The *Rōko shiiki* was written by Kūkai (774-835), the founder of the Japanese Shingon school. This elegant literary work, written using four and six character phrases, was composed in 797, when he was 24 years old. The original copy of this work, consisting of about nine thousand characters, still remains even after over 1200 years have passed, in the possession of the Kongōbuji on Mt. Kōya.

Since olden times, the *Sangō shiiki* has been considered a revision of the *Rōko shiiki* composed by Kūkai himself. Comparing these two works, it can be seen that the initial preface and the concluding verse called Jūinshi which summarizes the argument of the work have been completely altered. The rest of the work, which comprises the main body of the text, is more or less the same.

The *Sangō shiiki chūshū*, belonging to Otani University, is the oldest copy of the *Sangō shiiki*. This manuscript is a commentary on the *Sangō shiiki*. It was written in 1088 and contains a preface by Saisen (1025-1115), the greatest scholar-monk of the Shingon school at that time. It was copied in 1133, which is 300 years after Kūkai's time.

Why was it that the oldest copy of the *Sangō shiiki*, which significant in that it was written by Kūkai, dates from almost 300 years after Kūkai's time? This is an extremely simple and naïve question. Moreover, this question naturally leads to the following question. Why does the revised preface and Jūinmon differ significantly from the style and thought of the *Rōko shiiki*?

To answer this question, in March of 1994, Kawachi published "The Hypothesis that the *Sangō shiiki* is a Forgery" in vol. 45 of the *Ōtani daigaku kenkyū nenpō*. The main argument of this paper is as follows. The *Sangō shiiki* is not by

Kūkai. It was composed by a different person based on the *Rōko shiiki*. There is no other way to answer the questions raised above. After it was published, the argument was supported by many people.

However, this paper had one serious drawback. It accepted the common assumption that the main body of the *Sangō shiiki* (the sections other than the Preface and the Jūinshi) is generally identical to the *Rōko shiiki*, and neglected to analyze the main body, which constitutes the bulk of the text.

The present article is an attempt to rectify the drawback of the earlier article. Reading the main body of the text once again, it has become apparent that it has been widely and frequently altered, as some people have already shown. Thus we took out the altered passages of the *Sangō shiiki*, correlated them with the original passages of the *Rōko shiiki*, and studied them from the standpoint of a scholar of classical Chinese literature. As a result, several things became clear. The first is that fact that there are innumerable cases where changes have been made, for example where the character 華 in the *Rōko shiiki* was changed to 花. There were also cases betraying lack of basic knowledge concerning the composition and reading of classic Chinese texts, such as those concerning auxiliary words, parallel phrases and rhyme. There were also cases in which words and phrases that did not exist in Kūkai's time were employed. All of these things are inconceivable for Kūkai, who had received an advanced education since his youth. As a result, it has become clear that we should no longer advance the hypothesis that the *Sangō shiiki* may be a forgery. Rather, it is clear that it is definitely a forgery.

Iijima, the co-author of the article, is a scholar who specializes in collecting the calligraphy of noted calligraphers throughout history and comparing them from various angles. In particular, he has studied Kūkai's calligraphy for over 30 years. During this period, in 1983, he published *Kūkai daijirin*, a work assembling and comparing each and every character written by Kūkai. This is an essential work for the study of Kūkai's calligraphy. He also has published a number of other books and articles on Kūkai.

The paper which Iijima presents this time is entitled "The Theory that the *Sangō shiiki* was Forged by Saisen." In this article, he attempts to show that

Saisen, the scholar-monk of the Shingon school mentioned above, is the author of the *Sangō shiiki*. First, he begins by presenting photographs of calligraphy that is authentically by Kūkai and demonstrates that the *Rōko shiiki* is one of Kūkai's authentic works. He takes this approach because this preliminary step is necessary to develop his thesis that the *Sangō shiiki* was forged by Saisen. Next, he focuses on the *Sankyōron* mentioned in Kūkai's biography in the *Shoku Nihon kōki*, one of the official histories of Japan, and suggest that this *Sankyōron* existed prior to the *Sangō shiiki*. Iijima's article takes up a number of other topics as well, but he develops his arguments by taking into consideration the state of affairs within the Shingon school. Wherever necessary, he always presents photographs of calligraphy needed to develop his arguments.

The core of his argument is as follows. Among the words altered in the *Sangō shiiki*, Iijima takes up the characters “*jakutō* 若儻” and “*teki* 適” and determines that there are cases in which the usages and readings of these characters do not conform to the ways in which they are used by Kūkai. This is something that only Iijima can determine. In particular, there is no instance in which the character “*teki*” is used adverbially as “*tamatama*” (“by chance”) in any of Kūkai's writings. Since it is used in this way in Saisen's works, this is an important piece of evidence that Saisen forged the *Sangō shiiki*. This is the result of the practical application of the method of comparative calligraphy that Iijima has championed.