

Indirect Transmission in Shingon Buddhism: Notes on the Henmyōin Oracle

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WHILE NO TRACES of Henmyōin 遍明院 cloister remain today at its original location, there is a thirteenth century Japanese oracle record that attests to its intriguing past and significance at the Shingon 真言 esoteric Buddhist monastic complex Kōyasan 高野山. The document reports that on the thirteenth day of the eleventh month in the third year of Kenchō 建長 (1251), a young *chigo* 稚兒 (child acolyte) resident at Henmyōin suddenly began to exhibit alarming behavior. After declaring himself a former master of the temple and messenger of the deity “Daishi Myōjin” 大師明神, he proceeded to deliver a stream of information for a period of twelve days. This was transcribed by the eminent scholar-monk (*gakuryō* 学呂) Dōhan 道範 (1178–1252), and after being verified in consultation with the same deity later invoked for that purpose, the text was secreted away as a set of branch-exclusive teachings that were categorized as one of the cloister’s *shōgyō* 聖教 (sacred works). It was lent out to monks related to the cloister for limited periods of time for reading (and presumably, copying). The incident itself was later explained by Kōyasan scholar-monk Yūkai 宥快 (1345–1416) as having been a transmission of specific teachings necessary for the legitimization of a monk named Yūshin 祐信 (n.d.–1287) as Henmyōin head priest. Yūshin indeed became the head of Henmyōin, and the seventy-second head (*kengyō* 檢校)¹ of Kōyasan some years after the incident.

The incident itself attracts exploration and explanation. In what way could a possession-oracle function to transmit religious teachings and how standard

¹ Often abbreviated this way in records from the full title *kengyō shigyō* 檢校執行. The title *hōin dai wajōi* 法印大和尚位 first began to be used after Emperor Go-Uda’s pilgrimage to Kōyasan in 1313, and signifies the same position as *kengyō*.

was it? How might this incident be explained in terms of Kōyasan branch history and its strategies of acquiring legitimacy? How does the incident relate to broader issues concerning the nature of transmission in Buddhism? Focusing on the function of the oracle, the record, and several related commentaries, this paper proposes that although this specific possession-oracle was in some ways an unusual occurrence for its community, it largely conformed to general procedures and practices of knowledge transmission and legitimization of authority in pre-modern Japan and to a broader, even orthodox Buddhist context.

Authenticity of Teachings in Pre-Mahayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayāna Buddhism

Establishing the authenticity of the origin and trajectory of teachings through lineages is a primary concern of many religious communities. Authenticity may function as a validation of group and membership legitimacy, as a tool for the preservation and maintenance of the community's teachings, and as a means of cementing patriarchal authority. The study of it can uncover conceptions of patriarchs, attitudes to the past, and notions of authority.² In Buddhist scriptural rhetoric, as well as in the *Nirvana Sutra*, teachings with origins located in the enlightenment and subsequent oral transmission of the historical Buddha are described as passing from master to disciple just as water is fully decanted from one "dharma vessel" into another.³ The Mahayana dharma itself is often portrayed in sutras as an "ocean" or a plentiful, nourishing rain.⁴ Initiation in esoteric Buddhism is based on Indian practices of kingly consecration in which the new ruler has water from the "four oceans" (i.e., all corners of the world) dripped on to his head. In medieval Japan, the language governing lineages is one of water and blood: teachings are conducted along "correct streams" (*shōryū* 正流) or "corrupted streams" (*jaryū* 邪流; alternatively *jagi* 邪義) and the term "blood vessel" (*kechimyaku* 血脈) signifies lineage. These terms likely draw in part on the idea of the "dharma vessel" found in the sutras. The reception of a

² Morrison 2010, p. 8.

³ Decantation (*shabyō* 瀉瓶) is a widely used pan-Asian metaphor which goes beyond canonical text and can be found in a wide variety of textual genres as well as visual images. It is used as a simile in the *Nirvana Sutra* in reference to the aurally absorptive capacity of the Buddha's disciple Ānanda (see T no. 374, 12: 545b21). The pitcher sometimes depicted in patriarch portraits is a visual expression of this metaphor.

⁴ Charlotte Eubanks gives an exposition of the nature of this "dharma vessel." Eubanks 2011, pp. 54–55.

body of teachings transmitted by a master to disciple within a lineage was conceptually based on the model of legitimate reception of dharma through listening to the historical Buddha preach (though in esoteric Buddhism the ultimate source is located in Mahāvairocana rather than Śākyamuni, and the narrator of esoteric writings who uses the “Thus have I heard” formula to relay the teachings is designated as Vajrasattva).

This image of transmission as a pouring from one being to the next was no more than an ideal, however, in the esoteric Buddhism of medieval Japan;⁵ the rhetoric veiled a tangle of knowledge transmissions and exchanges between Buddhist communities. The notion of vertical transmission from teacher to student simply does not apply to what Mark Teeuwen has called “a tangle of live wires” in the overlapping and not always linear, exclusive, or lineage-bound conferral and exchange of teachings.⁶ The emphasis on a guru-student relationship, particularly as found in Tibetan Buddhism, was a product of a Buddhist modernity and it was overstated (in other contexts) by figures such as D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966). Suzuki also universalized the relationship between the two in ways that are not necessarily reflected cross-tradition or in pre-modern (or even modern) sources.⁷ The linear diagram remains a model that tends to be utilized by historians of religions in East Asia when they try to describe the history and formation of groups, but as John McRae writes, “Every time a straight-line relationship between two masters is posited in a lineage diagram, an entire world of complexity, an intricate universe of human relationships and experiences, is effectively eliminated from view.”⁸ The Henmyōin oracle overrides this model, for although a kind of ideal linearity is certainly instated by it, the transmission is neither conveyed by a living master nor located in him. It is instead passed on by an uninitiated child and comes from a long dead master.

“Supernatural” aspects of transmission found even in the early sutras have also been obscured by modern notions of Buddhism, explained away in service to a portrait of Buddhism as a rationalistic philosophy, particularly in early western scholarship on Buddhism. Non-human presences in lineages do not occupy a comfortable place in such a humanist history. Buddhist

⁵ From around the twelfth to the sixteenth century.

⁶ Teeuwen 2000, p. 198.

⁷ See Rambelli 2006, pp. 126–27. Stephen Hodge’s categorization of the “tantric,” for example, includes as an essential component the “great stress is laid upon the importance of the guru and the necessity of receiving the instructions and appropriate initiations for the *sādhanas* from him” (Hodge 2003, p. 5).

⁸ McRae 2004, p. 7.

modernists largely based their presentations of Buddhism on pre-Mahayana doctrine—justifying these as representative of earlier and hence more authentic teachings. Such a focus also made it easier to situate Buddhism in a comparative framework with Christianity and other “world religions” (a framework that facilitated a comparison ultimately favoring Christianity).⁹ From the mid-nineteenth century western “discovery” of Buddhism onward Mahayana was frequently represented as a degenerate form. One reason for this was that, along with a pantheon of non-Buddhist deities that enjoy prominence to a greater or lesser extent in a variety of its offshoots, and the development of the claim (already found in the canon) that Śākyamuni’s dharma had been discovered many times by many others before his enlightenment and was not his “product,” Mahayana Buddhists posited that their own corpus of sutras had been retrieved from an underwater dragon palace and had appeared some four hundred years after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa* when the time had come for its correct reception. Their version of scriptural transmission was one that involved the non-human, and from the “western” point of view, the non-rational. It is in part from this complex that later esoteric Japanese Buddhist ideas derive.

Indeed, legitimacy of transmission(s) has been a debatable issue in Buddhism from its discernible beginnings (the location of origin itself being a questionable issue). In her examination of the presentation of transmission reception in the Chan text, the *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法宝記, Wendi Adamek reminds us that in the tradition the “original teachings” are presented not as “the Buddha’s intentional bequest but as the result of the collective retentive efforts of the Buddha’s immediate disciples—and the teachings as we know them are the products of a process something like the multiplication of provisional islands of consensus.”¹⁰ The *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* famously records the Buddha’s declination to designate a successor and his investiture of authority in the Dhamma itself. Meanwhile, the doctrine of inherent Buddha nature has proved tricky to reconcile with the notion and practice of transmission of spiritual authority, and Mahayana works like the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Lotus Sutra* upended prior notions of transmission and its object through textual experience offered by, for example, negative rhetoric, and in so doing established the authority of Mahayana. However, broadly speaking, it may be useful to distinguish the issues of sect lineage and enlightenment from each other in considering this matter, and it is in fact in China, not

⁹ See Masuzawa 2005 and Almond 1988.

¹⁰ Adamek 2007, p. 18.

India, that the notion and practice of a succession of Śākyamuni's heirs and spiritual lineage emerges.¹¹

Proponents of the development known as Vajrayāna or esoteric Buddhism utilized a similar claim to that of their Mahayana forbears: Śākyamuni had originally taught esoteric truths, but they were confined to those few legatees capable of understanding them. And in a similar move, they demonstrated that exoteric teachings in the pre-Mahayana canon could be interpreted for their concealed esoteric meanings. Like the revelation of texts in a dragon's palace, later on discoveries by "treasure-revealers" of sacred teachings (*gterma*) long ago stowed away by Padmasambhava inside rocks and caves stamped many Tibetan Buddhist works with pedigree, history, and legitimacy. "Texts" were also disinterred from the memories, or "mental continuums" of adepts (*dgongs gter*).¹² Earlier Mahayana works too, such as the *Sarvaṇṇasamuccayasamādhi sūtra*, recount mountains, trees and caves relinquishing books of dharma teachings;¹³ elsewhere, the eighth century *Tattvasaṃgraha* author states that sutras may "emanate from walls."¹⁴ Texts, David Gray confirms, "need not descend through time from the historical Buddha via lineages that are fragile and easily disrupted, but are accessible via revelation as well."¹⁵ Visions and meditative practices, some involving evocation and others recollection, are also described in Mahayana texts such as the *Pratyutpanna Buddha Sammukhāvasthita Samādhi Sūtra* as providing access to teachings through encounters with preaching buddhas in pure lands or other divine, "non-Buddhist" beings.¹⁶ Teachings could be relayed to others once such practices were completed. Hope for rebirth in a pure land was also based on the idea that one could attain beneficial teachings there. One scholar has suggested that the perennial issue occupying Buddhists of all schools "throughout history" was the Buddha's absence from the world and the deprivation of a direct conduit to the teachings,¹⁷ and that this concern informed many practices such as visualization. The desire of the "historical" Buddha's direct disciples to be part of his audience expressly in order to hear the dharma (*dharmasravaṇa*) is amply attested in the Pali

¹¹ Morrison 2010, p. 2.

¹² See Gyatso 1993, 1996.

¹³ Harrison 2003, p. 125.

¹⁴ Quoted in Lopez 1995, p. 35.

¹⁵ Gray 2005, p. 423.

¹⁶ See Shinohara 2000, p. 141; Harrison 1992, 1997 and 2003, pp. 120, 126–27; and Williams 1989, pp. 38–44.

¹⁷ Kinnard (1999, p. 30), summarizing John Strong's proposition.

canon,¹⁸ while the development of a variety of vision experiences along with a markedly visual language in the literature may be related to methods of negotiating absence after the Buddha's withdrawal.¹⁹ But access was not only visual, and it is here that oracles come to our attention.

Michel Strickmann dates the earliest example of a "Buddhist" oracle to the mid-fifth century: Brahma's oracle in the tenth chapter of the "apocryphal" *Book of Consecration Expounded by the Buddha Concerning Brahma's Spirit Tablets*.²⁰ Strickmann notes that, regardless of opposition by some Buddhist clerics, "subsequent oracles were deemed to be the work of incarnate bodhisattvas and thus direct additions to the body of [Buddhist] revelation."²¹ Thus, in Mahayana and Vajrayāna Buddhism, oracles were revelations that could take their place alongside visions and other means of accessing Buddhist teachings.²²

Here I explore aural rather than visual revelations,²³ oracles (*takusen* 託宣 or *shintaku* 神託) as methods of transmission of doctrinal teachings in medieval esoteric Japanese Buddhism, and I look at the specific case of the thirteenth century oracular transmission described above which is reported in pre-modern sources as having been requisite when master-disciple transmission had not properly taken place. We will find that this oracle is embedded in a combinatory *shinbutsu-shūgō* 神仏習合 culture that included patriarchs in addition to buddhas and kami as objects of worship and custodians of power. These oracular teachings were recorded in text and subsequently functioned as a *shōgyō* (a "sacred work"²⁴ transmitted from master to disciple). In other words, they were treated as a wholly legitimate set. The term *shōgyō* conventionally signifies the canonical sutras but in the esoteric schools it also denotes ritual manuals (*shidai* 次第) for *shido kegyō* 四度加行 training, *denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂 consecration, and for various Buddhist deities (*sonpō* 尊法), as well as transmission certificates

¹⁸ See Kinnard 1999, p. 58. By the second century, the vision of Buddha and hearing of dharma "are represented as a transformative experience . . . for practitioners."

¹⁹ McMahan 2002, p. 86.

²⁰ Strickmann 2005, p. 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²² Strickmann provides an excellent discussion of the place of spirit possession and attendant oracles in Chinese and Japanese esoteric Buddhism (*Ibid.*, pp. 194–227).

²³ The visual aspects of "takusen culture" may also be considered: the instant of their transmission was sometimes depicted; *sanja takusen* 三社託宣 ("oracles of the three shrines") are inscribed on hanging scrolls; and *takusen* are frequently written on paintings of kami. See Bocking 2001.

²⁴ To use Ruppert's translation (2009).

(*injin* 印信).²⁵ Broadly, these sacred works were for scholarly and ritual purposes, but can be defined functionally as being primarily concerned with constructing and preserving traditions. Brian Ruppert has addressed *shōgyō* as important resources, as well, for understanding the activities of scholar monks and gauging the configurations of networks between monks and institutions,²⁶ and Asuka Sango has followed his approach, similarly emphasizing their role in doctrinal studies, including debates, competing for patronage, and authenticating knowledge and cloisters. She observes that the recent and growing interest in *shōgyō* is partly a counter to the work produced on *shōen* 庄園 estate acquisition and administration by temples in Japan and that the study of *shōgyō* is a step toward recognizing the “ritual and scholarly activities of monks.”²⁷ In fact, the two subjects can be seen as linked. In the case of Kōyasan (and no doubt elsewhere), about which there is indeed an enormous body of research on *shōen*, text production is, as we will see, linked to land ownership. The record of the oracle at Henmyōin presents an interesting example of *shōgyō* production and type, and it involves the issue of authorization of land ownership as well as lineage membership.

Furthermore, *shōgyō* and the lineages that treasured them could at times come under scrutiny. The study of “forgery” (a material product of heresy) therefore goes hand-in-hand with the study of lineage legitimation. As noted briefly below, oracles (and oracles as *shōgyō*) might appear to be perfect candidates for skeptical inquiry, but in medieval Japan they themselves could also function to determine the orthodoxy or heresy of doctrine and lineages. For example, in Yūkai’s *Hōkyōshō* 宝鏡鈔 of 1375, the writer supports his accusation of heresy by claiming that the heresy was originally identified by the deity Niu Daimyōjin 丹生大明神.

Though the teachings in question here were conveyed not by a Buddhist master but by a kami deity who had possessed a young acolyte, he announced himself as inhabited by both a previous head of the temple as well as a patriarchal kami, indicating a chain of transmission similar (in terms of the presence of patriarchs) but in some ways notably quite different (in terms of the presence of kami) to the transmission process presented as conventional by Buddhist modernists. The incident was reported in contemporary and later texts in a manner that indicates it was a valid (even if slightly unusual) alternative to the master-disciple model. And as I discuss below, as amalgamate of human-patriarchs and pre-Buddhist mountain

²⁵ See Nagasawa 2006, pp. 32–36; Sango 2012, p. 244; and Nagamura 2000, pp. 189–201.

²⁶ Ruppert 2008, 2013.

²⁷ Sango 2012, p. 245.

deities, this kami was by no means beyond the logical realms of that model. It was a variant of the Buddhist transmission process that was mediated by visions in meditative practices and dreams, mentioned above, as well as by “found” texts in Japan that in many ways paralleled the Tibetan *gterma* and *dgongs gter*.²⁸

Oracles in Japan

Oracles (*takusen*, *shintaku*) are generally understood as messages from a kami to a human who is in a state of possession (*kamigakari* 神懸かり or *hyōi* 憑依). They appear to have functioned in a number of ways in premodern Japan: as advice or discipline (often concerning monastic conduct),²⁹ prophecy regarding harvests and communal matters, instruction for the foundation of institutions,³⁰ political intervention,³¹ instrument of power for the oppressed,³² communication from the spirits of the dead,³³ and in exorcism. They were often dialogic, and here Carmen Blacker’s broad definition is useful (albeit transcultural): an oracle is a “method . . . of communication between two worlds or dimensions which are usually divided from each other. We . . . put questions which we are unable to answer for ourselves to another order of beings whose knowledge transcends the limitations of our own.”³⁴ On the other hand, scholars such as Grapard,³⁵ Hinonishi,³⁶ and Bocking³⁷ have drawn attention to the relationships between oracles and doctrine, politics, and even visual culture, from the medieval to

²⁸ This is not to disregard the procedures involved in inducing possession and in dealing with both induced and non-induced possession (as seems to be the case here) or how this particular case fits into a history of oracles, but these particular aspects of possession and oracles will have to be, for the most part, put aside to be addressed in a separate paper.

²⁹ For example, the monk Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232) was advised via an oracle of the Kasuga deity. See Tanabe 1992, pp. 68–69, and Tyler 1990, pp. 269–75.

³⁰ For example, the eighteenth century chronicle of Kōyasan, *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku* 高野春秋編年輯録 (Collection of Spring and Autumn Annals of Kōya), reports that Kōyasan’s annual doctrinal debate ceremony was established upon the orders of an oracle.

³¹ For instance, oracles issued by the kami Hachiman 八幡. See Grapard 2003 and Scheid 2014, who draws attention to the changes in the nature of Hachiman’s oracles from those concerned with anger and appeasement to those of a political, state-protecting bent.

³² Bargen 1997, and suggested by Grapard 1991, p. 8: “The denial of specific speech-situations to women may have been responsible for other types of speech on their part, particularly for the ‘speech in tongues’ that will characterize their activity as shamanesses.”

³³ For example, the female shamans called *itako* who work at Mt. Osore 恐. See Sasamori 1997.

³⁴ Blacker 2000, p. 67.

³⁵ Grapard 2003.

³⁶ Hinonishi 2006.

³⁷ Bocking 2001.

the Edo period. Kobayashi Naoko's study of contemporary oracles at Ontake 御岳 gives a portrait of practices today that offers detail on the procedures surrounding oracles and their reception at a specific site.³⁸

Generally speaking, as a primary subject, oracles have been paid little attention in historical and religious scholarship both inside and outside of Japan. Their involvement with developments in sect formation and doctrine has been obscured by the tendency to categorize and isolate them as a facet of "folk" or "popular" religion and history (*minzokugaku* 民俗学) and Shugendō 修験道 (mountain-based ascetic practices) as opposed to recognizing them as embedded within institutional contexts. Additionally, oracles have often been associated with female figures like *miko* 巫女 (female spirit mediums and officiants at shrines) and the female founders of new religions (those established from the mid-nineteenth century onward).³⁹ Oracles also tend to be considered as a "shamanic" practice, a category with a troubled academic reputation.⁴⁰ Practices within such categories are viewed as less organized (by definition, perhaps) than those of institutional religious groups, and consequently the subject of lineages and community

³⁸ Kobayashi 2012.

³⁹ Gendered subordination as galvanizing the formation of "cult groups" by women elsewhere is suggested by Lewis, who writes that possession cults are partially "thinly disguised protest movements directed against the dominant sex. They thus play a significant part in the sex-war in traditional societies and cultures where women lack more obvious and direct means for forwarding their aims" (Lewis 1971, p. 31). In fact, when in the sixth year of Meiji 明治 (1873) the Meiji government banned oracles delivered in states of possession, they specified *miko* practitioners in their edict (albeit "*minkan shūzoku*" 民間習俗, or "folk," *miko*). See Miyaji and Yasumaru 1988, p. 446. On the other hand, the *sanja takusen* model was appropriated by Meiji Period Shinto and the oracle of the Goō 護王 shrine in Kyoto was fêted. Parsing the different types of oracles and the precise conditions of their acceptability during the Meiji period remains to be undertaken. Earlier periods require similar scrutiny: prohibition of divination by women at shrines is apparent from the latter part of the ninth century.

⁴⁰ The term is used, for example, in Hori Ichirō's *Nihon no shāmanizumu* (1971) and also Carmen Blacker's work on Japanese oracles and divination (2000), both of which focus on Shugendō and the practices of oracles induced in village festivals. The word in Japanese is *katakana*-ized English which should alert us to taxonomical issues in both Japanese and non-Japanese scholarship. Michael Strickmann's criticism of the use of the terms "shamanism" or "neo-shamanism" to describe certain aspects of tantric rituals applies just as well to its use in relation to possession and oracular practices: the "semantic looseness [of these terms] threatens to obscure all meaningful distinctions among radically different types of ritual structures and social institutions" (2002, p. 202). Attention, such as that given by Jane Atkinson (1992), is increasingly being drawn to the scholarly category of shamanism and political dimensions of the western characterization of certain practices as "shamanic" which are linked, for example, to the romantic notion of the "primitive." Needless to say, these challenge Mircea Eliade's acultural, ahistorical presentation. For an overview of recent research, see DuBois 2011.

formation in them are awarded less attention. Oracles have as a result been largely ignored as methods of transmitting Buddhist teachings in the major, powerful institutions.⁴¹ The Henmyōin Takusen,⁴² however, subverts the assumptions driving this dismissal. It was a transmission of teachings that was delivered and that assumed considerable importance at a large, highly organized and powerful religious institution, and functioned then and subsequently as a legitimization of figures, branches, and teachings.

The Oracle at Henmyōin

Let us now examine the nature, content, and commentarial reception of the oracle, before placing it in the context of the competing cloisters and transmission lineages of the period. I will refer to the oracle as *Takusenki*, abbreviating the title *Henmyōin Daishi Myōjin go takusenki* 遍明院大師明神御託宣記 (Record of the Oracle of Daishi Myōjin at Henmyōin) appended by Abe Yasurō who first published it in 1983. It must be said at the outset that the sources present puzzling contradictions regarding the content, figures involved, and function of the oracle, which have not to date been resolved. Mizuhara Gyōei's summary of a number of its descriptions, ending with resignation to the necessity of further research reflects the situation.⁴³ It may be noted that although the oracle was textualized, it was thought of and referred to primarily as a non-material teaching or set of teachings which were accompanied by a mudra and mantra, also transmitted by the *chigo*.⁴⁴ The *injin* on which the mudra and mantra alone were inscribed was titled the *Henmyōin no daiji* 遍明院の大事 or the *Daimyōjin go takusen daiji* 大師明神御託宣大事. The original text of the *Takusenki* itself has not been found, and the earliest copy (from 1323) comprises only the first part of a complete script of eighty-three articles (later reconstructed by Abe, using this and other copies).

Scribes write the date of the incident on their copies of the original as either Kenchō 3 (1251) or Kenji 建治 3 (1275).⁴⁵ It is recorded as having occurred at Henmyōin cloister at Kōyasan, in what is now Wakayama

⁴¹ Except, to some extent, Abe Yasurō, who explores this in his essay on the Henmyōin oracle (Abe 1983). Additional bias regarding the category of “forged” sutras or texts (*gikyō* 偽經 or *gisho* 偽書) has skewed the study of oracles. In Japanese scholarship, the significance of works that have previously been set aside as “fake” and excluded from the study of religions has only recently been reappraised. See Buswell 1990 and Nishiki, Ogawa, and Itō 2003.

⁴² I refer to the event itself (not the textual record) as the “Henmyōin Takusen.”

⁴³ Mizuhara 1956, pp. 51–53.

⁴⁴ According to the *Mikkyō daijiten* 密教大辞典 entry on “Henmyōin no daiji” and “Daimyōjin go-takusen daiji.”

⁴⁵ The date on Abe's reconstruction is Kenchō 3, based on the second year of Tenshō 天正 (1574) copy as well as a copy kept at Sanbōin 三宝院 at Kōyasan (Abe 1983, p. 87), but other

prefecture in the Kansai region.⁴⁶ Kōyasan is the mountain-based monastic complex established in the early ninth century by the promoter of esoteric Shingon,⁴⁷ Kūkai 空海 (774–835, referred to throughout this essay by his posthumous name, Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師).⁴⁸ The record itself conveys little direct information describing the scene in which the oracle occurred. It opens with a statement giving the date and place of the incident; the name of the *chigo* (as “Jishiō” 慈氏王); a note on his sudden excitable state; his pronouncement of his possessing agent (discussed below); and the fact that a *takusen* was delivered. A number of accounts that more fully depict the compelling scene survive, the earliest of which is in the “Henmyōin” section of the seventeenth century Kōyasan history *Kōyasan tsūnenshū* 高野山通念集.⁴⁹ All accounts agree that the oracle was transmitted through a spontaneously possessed resident *chigo* named Jishiōmaru 慈氏王丸. The possessing agent identified itself through the *chigo* as the “previous master of the temple,” who was inhabiting the acolyte’s body as medium of a kami called “Daishi Myōjin” (literally, Great Teacher Bright Kami); some accounts give “Daimyōjin” 大明神.⁵⁰ Five elders of the temple community were summoned as witnesses, and, as mentioned above, Dōhan was designated transcriber.⁵¹ He later compiled his records into sections. These included explanations of recent institutional disputes; instructions for monastic behavior and for *sonpō* rituals; and information about Jison’in 慈

copies give Kenji 3. He suggests the latter to be most likely a copyist’s error (the Chinese characters for both are similar in appearance) and has assumed that the two texts circulated were originally one. He also gives the record a title and allots each of its “articles” a number. On this reconstruction process see Abe 1983, pp. 52–53.

⁴⁶ Formerly Kii Province.

⁴⁷ Shingon, which translates to “true word,” is the Japanese school of Vajrayāna, or “tantric” Buddhism, transmitted from the priest Keika 惠果 (746–805, Ch. Huiguō) to Kūkai during the period of his studies in Tang China.

⁴⁸ I will refer throughout to Kūkai when discussing thirteenth century matters as “Kōbō Daishi,” since he was known and normally referred to by his posthumous title during that period. One may also distinguish between Kūkai the historical figure and Kōbō Daishi the object of devotion around whom a set of distinctive beliefs and worship practices developed after Kūkai’s passing.

⁴⁹ Written between 1661 and 1673.

⁵⁰ Others give Niu Myōjin 丹生明神 or Kōya Myōjin 高野明神, the kami primarily connected to Kōyasan, but as I explain below, the record itself explains the nature of the kami “Daishi Myōjin.”

⁵¹ Although not used in the *Takusenki*, the recorder and interpreter of *takusen* has traditionally been referred to as a *saniwa* 審神者, a word and role that can be traced back as far as the eighth century imperially-sponsored chronicles, the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 and *Kojiki* 古事記.

尊院 (originally the administrative center of Kongōbuji 金剛峯寺 and later the head of the pilgrimage path). There were also secret explanations about Shingon-related sites, kami, Buddhist divinities, founders, certain branch leaders, history, practices, and icons of Kōyasan as well as interpretations of a number of dreams. There is much of great interest here content-wise, but since the focus of this paper is the use of the oracle as a strategy of transmission and legitimization, I will confine my attention to that which is directly related to this issue and direct the reader to Abe's discussion for such details.⁵² I will first examine how and why the oracle occurred, according to the record itself and to later texts. The *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku*, a chronicle of Kōyasan completed in 1719, gives the following account of the incident in its entry for the thirteenth day of the eleventh month of Kenchō 3 (1251):

Jishiōmaru of Henmyōin, a thirteen-year-old boy born in Koichi . . . [who] later took the tonsure and was called Chōshin-bō 長信房 became strange and excitable. He said he was a messenger (*on-tsukai* 御使) of [the kami] Daimyōjin. He proclaimed, "Quickly call the five monks Kakuson 覚尊 [n.d.], Yūshin 祐真 [n.d.], Yūshin 祐信, Ryūken 龍劍 [n.d.], and Dōhan and have them come! I want to speak to them now!" The *inju* 院主 [cloister head] immediately called for and awaited the five monks. . . . A kami oracle in eighty-three articles was given . . . and difficult points were explained. . . . The eighty-three articles are in a separate record and they are a secret transmission. It says in the *Henmyōin infu* 遍明院々譜 [Genealogy of the *Inju*] that the child was in a strange state for over two days. [He said] he was the *inju* Kyōmitsu 教密 (n.d.) . . ." ⁵³

Sources agree to a specific reason for the occurrence of this event. According to the Kōyasan based scholar-monk Yūkai, in whose texts we find the earliest mentions of the oracle, the oracle had served to convey the esoteric Buddhist teachings of a particular branch of Shingon to the *inju* (cloister head) of Henmyōin, present at the incident. This explanation is matched by several Edo period accounts as well. The conferral of lineage teaching required to qualify him had been either invalid or absent altogether, but these teachings served that purpose and came to be included in the branch's collection of *shōgyō*. Let us first consider the reasons given for the oracle

⁵² Abe 1983, pp. 52–59.

⁵³ *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku*, p. 159.

deliverance by Yūkai and the other writers who mention it and then offer supporting evidence from the oracle record itself. Based on these, I will contextualize the oracle within the lineage situation at Kōyasan at the time.

Many of Yūkai's explanations accord with statements made in *Takusenki* itself, and he refers to it in such a way that makes it reasonable to assume he had access to it. He also gives some situational information for which there are no other available sources at present. The following lines are from an account given in the late fourteenth century *Komakimono* 小卷物 (literally, "little scroll"), a collection of teachings said originally to have been possessed by Meizan 明算 (1019/21?–1106), which contains oral transmissions (*kuketsu* 口訣) by Yūkai written down by his disciple Yūchi 宥智.

It was said that there was no *jūji* 住持 [resident caretaker] at this temple [Henmyōin]. At the answer that the *jūji* was Yūshin, it was said that one should be called a *jūji* as a result of having received the branch transmissions; and this was not so. Accordingly, Yūshin received these and called them the Oracle Teachings.⁵⁴

A similar explanation attributed to Yūkai appears in *Chūinryū inge sōjō denjuroku* 中院流院家相承伝授録. And here we find some names of the members of the lineage through whom these "oracle teachings" were passed, as well as evidence that the respondent indicated in the previous quotation was the deity:

These are the teachings transmitted through the generations of Daishi, Shinzen 真然 [804–891], Mukū 無空 [n.d.–918], Senkan 宣觀 [n.d.]. However, amid the group at Henmyōin, these teachings were lost. And so, in Kenchō 3, the Myōjin communicated through Jishiōmaru and said, "Even if there is a building, there are no monks." The elders [*shukurō* 宿老] who were the group [there] heard this and asked what it meant that there were "no monks." The Myōjin replied, saying, "There is no one who can transmit the teachings of the sect."⁵⁵

According to this account, the teachings in question originated with "Daishi," a title meaning "great teacher" and which refers to Kōbō Daishi. This particular conversation between the elders at Henmyōin and the deity (*myōjin*) can be attested to by the content of *Takusenki* itself (though the dialogic

⁵⁴ Ōyama 1987, p. 570.

⁵⁵ *Chūinryū inge sōjō denjuroku*, vol. 2, p. 351.

manner of the speech is only implicit and the wording varies slightly). The following is from *Takusenki*: “Although there are halls and monks’ lodgings at this temple, as long as this teaching [*daiji* 大事] is not transmitted it is as if it has no spirit.”⁵⁶

One more mention in another text (by Yūkai) warrants introduction before we draw these together and consider the explanations of the oracle’s significance. This example appears in his *Jitsugoshō* 実語抄:

This cloister [*inge* 院家] has the teachings transmitted by the Ono branch [*Ono sōjō daiji* 小野相承大事]. [Via] Hanjun 範俊 [1038–1112], Genkaku 嚴覚 [1056–1121], Sōi 宗意 [1074–1148], Junkan 淳寛 [n.d.], Ninzen 仁禅 [n.d.], Sonnen 尊念 [n.d.], Sonnin 尊仁 [n.d.], Dōhan, Yūshin, in this way the *kechimyaku* [lineage] was transmitted. However, when Yūshin Endai-bō 円大房⁵⁷ was *kengyō* [head priest of Kōyasan], the lineage was going to be severed, and at that time, Yōgō Myōjin 影向明神⁵⁸ delivered an oracle in the West Room of that cloister via the *chigo* Jishiōmaru . . . Hosshō Hōshōin 法性宝性院 [n.d.–1245],⁵⁹ and Dōhan Shōchiin 正智院 witnessed the deity oracle, and inscribed their signatures, and stored [the testament] in an *injin*⁶⁰ box.⁶¹

Yūkai makes it clear that the oracle was delivered for the purpose of legitimizing the position of the monk Yūshin.⁶² This figure makes very few appearances in historical documents and little biographical information about him is available. He was a person of considerable significance at Kōyasan. He is recorded as fifth or sixth head of Henmyōin and in 1284 was appointed to the highest clerical post at Kōyasan, where one is said to serve

⁵⁶ *Takusenki*, vol. 2, article 38.

⁵⁷ The figure connected elsewhere with the oracle is referred to here as Yūdo, but with the same monastic name, Endai-bō, that is given in other sources to Yūshin. This is presumably a textual error.

⁵⁸ Yōgō Myōjin refers to a kami’s manifestation and was often used to specify Kōya Myōjin in a white-robed form during this period.

⁵⁹ Since Hosshō is recorded as having died in 1245 while in exile from Kōyasan, his presence here as witness casts some confusion on the dating or circumstances of the incident.

⁶⁰ Transmission certificates with mudra and mantra (*inmyō* 印明) recorded on them.

⁶¹ Date unknown. A copy of *Jitsugoshō* from 1794 is kept at Kōyasan Jimyōin 持明院. The extract translated here can be found in *Kii zoku fūdoki*, a gazetteer completed in 1839. See *Kii zoku fūdoki: Kōyasan no bu*, vol. 37, p. 224.

⁶² Yūshin became *kengyō* in 1284, rather than at the time of the oracle, as Yūkai indicates. Possibly, the text means: “when he was going to be made *kengyō*,” but the considerable period of time between the oracle and his appointment counts against this.

as a “stand-in” (*migawari* 身代わり) of founder Kōbō Daishi. He evidently also had some authoritative involvement with the site at which the mountain deities were enshrined, which is suggested by his report to the *bakufu* military government about a startling kami manifestation that had happened in the previous year at this shrine, Amanosha 天野社.⁶³ He is counted as a member of the Chūinryū 中院流 branch, an increasingly powerful branch of Shingon at the time, and which, as we will see shortly, was deeply involved in the oracle record production and use.⁶⁴ This affiliation relates him, in terms of monastic lineage, to Yūkai, the commentator on his role in the oracle incident. His signature (*zaihan* 在判) appears in the list of five witnesses at the end of the oracle record.⁶⁵

The oracle—according to Yūkai—was necessary to prevent a breach in the lineage. Although Yūshin seems already to have been *jūji* of Henmyōin, his status was deemed invalid since he had not received transmission of the “*Ono sōjō daiji*.” Thus, the possession of a certain lineage teaching overrode other considerations and was paramount to the monk’s position. Moreover, statements in a number of the texts quoted above make it clear that without the transmission a monk was not even to be considered a monk at all, regardless of his presence in a temple and his status and practice in the monastic community. Whether Yūshin had himself wished to leave the lineage or whether his position was being threatened from without cannot be ascertained in the absence at this point of historical sources. However, Ōyama Kōjun,⁶⁶ Kōda Yūun,⁶⁷ and Iyanaga Nobumi⁶⁸ have contributed much to the understanding of branch lineages, legitimization and heresy during this period in Shingon’s history making it possible to speculate. These historians have turned a lens particularly on the Chūinryū branch and its sub-branches, and understand the thirteenth century flourishing of apocryphal secret teachings connected to these groups as attempts at reinforcing authority. No doubt Henmyōin Takusen and its record were a part

⁶³ Affiliated to the Kōyasan temple complex, Amanosha is today more commonly known as Niutsuhime Jinja 丹生都比売神社.

⁶⁴ The eighteenth century record compiled by Ihō 維室, *Kongōbuji sho inge sekifu shū* 金剛峯寺諸院家析負輯, mentions that the Henmyōin *takusen* can be found in the “old record” by Yūshin, but the content to which Ihō refers is unclear and may be another *takusen*.

⁶⁵ These names are not only recorded in order to validate the record but also as signatures common to “*kishōmon*” 起請文 contracts (one of which concludes the record), binding the witnesses to its terms regarding treatment of the document.

⁶⁶ Ōyama 1987.

⁶⁷ Kōda 1981.

⁶⁸ Iyanaga 2006.

of this culture, but to see them as simply fictional constructions would be insufficient. Even as they functioned to buttress group authority, they were deeply embedded in the religious culture of Kōyasan's esoteric Buddhism and kami worship. Before looking at the possessing agents that were attributed with the transmission of the oracle teachings, we will take a brief excursion into the history of the Chūinryū since this is essential as context to the content and function of the oracle, the site at which it occurred, and the monastic figures with whom it is associated. Today it is the mainstream, dominant school of Shingon Buddhism at Kōyasan, but its burgeoning yet contested authority during the thirteenth century indicates why the oracle was necessary: for group validation and maintenance.

The Chūinryū Branch of Shingon at Kōyasan, Land Claims, and Engi

That *Takusenki* is connected to the Chūinryū⁶⁹ (literally, “central cloister branch”) is indicated by the figures involved in its production and storage, the site at which it occurred, and its content, as well as by Yūkai's interest. Yūkai—also of the Chūinryū—was active in parsing lineages, systematizing the practice and scholarship of Shingon, and excising what he regarded as heretical teachings in an overhaul known as *Ōei no taisei* 応永の大成. Yūkai's importance as a lineage organizer must caution us to possible bias in his accounts of the Henmyōin oracle for, as John McRae has emphatically noted, “the more important [a statement of lineal succession legitimacy] is to the religious identity of the individuals involved, the less accurate it will be.”⁷⁰ Of the five witnesses, there is little information available on Yūshin 祐真 and Ryūken, but Dōhan, Kakuson, and (the other) Yūshin 祐信⁷¹ were all Chūinryū affiliates. Amidst many other branches, members of the Chūinryū occupied the most authoritative roles at Kōyasan at the time of the oracle production. Concerning the genre of the text, Abe Yasurō characterizes it primarily as an *engi* 縁起 (shrine/temple origin tale). Its conformity to this genre is in its concern with the origins and lineage of sacred land. Such texts (sometimes pictorialized) were produced by many large temples and shrines and they served in part as justification for possession of the land by their owners: at Kōyasan at this time the major landholders were associated with the Chūinryū. Abe adds that the *Takusenki* was a new kind of “medieval *engi*” (*chūsei engi* 中世縁起) that was generated to address “contemporary spiritual

⁶⁹ Ōyama 1987 remains the most thorough work on the history of this sub-branch.

⁷⁰ McRae 2004, p. 8.

⁷¹ Note that the Chinese characters distinguish these two monks.

and political crises,”⁷² namely, an intense dispute at Kōyasan between two factions (one of them predominantly Chūinryū, the other a wealthy landowning group based at Daidenbōin 大伝法院 cloister) that finally ended in the deaths of some monks and the exile of others.⁷³ This is clearly a major contextual framework within which to interpret the *Takusenki*: opening the text is a short section entitled “Ryōji no sōdō” 両寺の騒動, (Disorder between the Two Temples). The conflict referred to was between Daidenbōin and Kongōbuji 金剛峰寺, and the section is not only a rare source of historical information but also an esoteric exegesis of a power struggle which culminated in a violent arson attack. By the thirteenth century, Kongōbuji⁷⁴—with which members of Chūinryū were aligned in powerful positions—had come to prevail over all the other temples in the complex and was forging toward fulfillment of its aspiration to be a *kenmon jūin* 権門寺院, (“power-bloc” temple)⁷⁵ like Kōfukuji 興福寺, Tōdaiji 東大寺, and Enryakuji 延暦寺. Like all *kenmon*, territory (and the political connections that often accompanied it) was—partly through the yields of the land—central to Kongōbuji’s wealth and authority. Kōyasan historian Yamakage Kazuo notes that the Bun’ei 文永 (1264–1274) to Kōan 弘安 (1278–1288) years were those of Kōyasan’s administrators’ most forceful and enterprising moves toward establishing the complex as an independent entity, and that from around 1256 Kōyasan was making specific and concerted efforts to reclaim what it asserted was its original land (*kyūchi* 旧地).⁷⁶ The oracle and its record were, roughly, part of this period.

Kongōbuji’s objectives included reclamation of its “old lands,” the widening of its control over local estates (i.e., increasing its possession of *shōen*),

⁷² Abe 1983, p. 55.

⁷³ For the earliest account of this conflict, consult the account in the third year of Ninji 仁治 (1242), seventh month, twenty-third day entry of volume 15 of *Hyakurenshō* 百錬抄, a history compiled at the end of the thirteenth century. *Shintei zōho kokushi taiki* 新訂増補国史大系, vol. 11, p. 194.

⁷⁴ Please note that although Kongōbuji today signifies a specific temple institution originally named Seiganji 青巖寺, which also acts as the headquarters at Kōyasan, at the time it referred to the principle administrative group at Kōyasan.

⁷⁵ These “power-bloc” temples, and the structure within which they operated was first comprehensively identified by Kuroda Toshio by his now seminal *kenmon taisai* 権門体制 (power-bloc system) theory and studied by Taira Masayuki in *Nihon chūsei no shakai to bukkyō* 日本中世の社会と仏教 (1992). Kuroda proposed that during the medieval period a number of largely self-governing temple-shrine complexes shared and negotiated power with the military and imperial groups, comprising a system of ruling elites. See Kuroda 1981. They are examined by Adolphson (2000).

⁷⁶ Yamakage 2006, pp. 131–32.

attaining independence from the powers of capital-based Tōji 東寺, controlling Daidenbōin, and subsuming Amanosha. A full explanation of the conflict and its background is beyond the scope set for this paper but it is important to note that Dōhan (at the time deputy head of Kōyasan), to whose hand *Takusenki* is attributed, was exiled as a result of the disturbances. He returned to the mountain two years before the oracle occurred, and died one year after it was delivered. Dōhan was one of the highest-ranking monks to be exiled and Abe suggests that a further function of *Takusenki* was as a *kuden* 口伝 text for the group gathered around him.⁷⁷ Whether this is so cannot be affirmed, but the facts that Dōhan transcribed it and that it contains frequent and reverential mentions of him indicate his importance to its production.

The opening explanation of the turbulent events, when read as part of the oracle and against other accounts of the conflict, reflects, or rather functions to resolve a number of issues with which Kongōbuji, especially the Chūinryū, was particularly concerned. These were matters of the legitimacy of status and appointment, and about teachings and their proper transmission. As mentioned, the issue of land ownership was extremely important: *shōen* were the backbone of the temple site's economy not only as sources of funds but also as ongoing links with the often high-ranking people who had donated them. But this matter was tethered to notions of correct transmission through history of the founder's legacy, and so its economic significance was inextricably bound up with "religious" implications. Kongōbuji's response to the threat posed by the Daidenbōin faction evidences this link only too well, in that as surely as Daidenbōin's landholdings increased so too did the accusations aimed at it regarding incorrect ritual procedure, illegitimate status, and erroneous teachings (although this is not to say that economic motives were necessarily "disguised" as religious concerns).

Land and teachings are both types of transmissions legitimized by drawing on the authority of the founder of Kōyasan. *Takusenki* showcases this legitimization strategy. Any text regarding the rightful ownership by Kōyasan of sacred land as bequeathed by the kami of that land may be interpreted as functioning to legitimize its claims, and the oracle record was one of a considerable number of *engi*-type texts along with maps and legal documents produced and reproduced that supported such a project.⁷⁸ Earlier still, the *Kongōbuji konryū shugyō engi* 金剛峯寺建立修行縁起 (A Record of the Estab-

⁷⁷ Abe 1983, p. 55.

⁷⁸ The earliest and most significant of these, at Kōyasan, being the *Goshuin engi* 御手印縁起 (lit. "hand-imprinted foundation story") of between the tenth and eleventh centuries. See Akamatsu 1966 and Abe 1983, pp. 8–14.

ishment of the Diamond Peak Temple [Kongōbujī]) depicted the bestowal by the kami of a span of mountain land to Kōbō Daishi.⁷⁹ These texts confirmed and reinstated the sacred inviolability of the land. *Takusenki* has much in common with other esoteric texts of the period both concerning Kōyasan and other sites that “mandalized” or “[sacred-] textualized” space.⁸⁰ Kōyasan had been pictured from the Heian period (794–1185) onward as a “Ryōbu 兩部 mandala”—a pair of Diamond World (*kongōkai* 金剛界) and Womb World (*taizōkai* 胎藏界) mandalas. In the Heian period, a series of thirty-seven and 180 *sotoba* 卒塔婆 monuments symbolizing the divinities (*son* 尊) of the two mandalas marked distances along significant pilgrimage routes, as mentioned in the *Shirakawa jōkō Kōya gokōki* 白河上皇高野御幸記, a 1088 record of a pilgrimage made by Emperor Shirakawa 白河 (1053–1129) to the site.⁸¹ It was also mapped as a *hachiyō jōdo* 八葉淨土 (“eight-petalled pure land”) and sometimes related to “Yūgi Kongō 瑜祇金剛 Peak,” the Indian site of esoteric Buddhist origin narratives where an iron stupa was occupied by Vajrasattva Bodhisattva who transmitted the teachings there. The oracle text certainly fits the wider category of *engi*. It contains a plethora of teachings about the origins of Kōyasan, Kōbō Daishi, the land, and the presence there of the mountain gods, Niu Myōjin and Kōya Myōjin, from whom the land had been received. For example, the architecture is mandalized as the Tosotsuten 兜率天 (Skt. Tuṣita) pure land of Miroku 弥勒 (Maitreya) Bodhisattva, reflecting ideas that flourished there from the twelfth century onward about Miroku’s descent and/or immanence:

The Great Pagoda is the liver, heart, bones and eyes of Kōya [i.e., essential; the center]. It is the Inner Cloister of Tosotsuten. It is the palace of Miroku. This should be learned in detail.⁸²

Other architectural features are marked in similar ways: a bridge is revealed to be stationed by particular Buddhist divinities as reasoning for the instruction that monks bow when they are there; the ordinary ground as “actually” lapis lazuli, necessitating the removal of shoes. The oracle record includes quite specific *engi* tales of the Chūinryū itself and its figures and associated sites, including a remarkable statement about Dōhan, the highly regarded

⁷⁹ Dated 968 but likely a product of the early twelfth century.

⁸⁰ See Grapard 1982, especially pp. 205–14, 1986, and 1989.

⁸¹ These wooden markers were later replaced with stone ones and are still functional today.

⁸² *Takusenki*, vol. 2, article 18. Abe 1983, p. 108.

scholar monk and, as mentioned, amanuensis of the oracular kami at Henmyōin: “Ajari 阿闍梨 [Priest] Dōhan of Shōchiin 正智院 [cloister] visits the Inner Cloister of Tosotsuten in this life.”⁸³ The site itself is possessed through the peopling of it with such branch figures.

Another tale told here is one of competing branch lineages, which leads us back to the specific reason given by Yūkai for the oracle. Given that Kōyasan, like many other temple-shrine sites, presented itself as a pure land in samsara, a bodhisattva territory in the realm of suffering, this tale is not entirely detachable from such territorial issues—as I have summarized above. This is because teachings that were legitimized by a correct trajectory to the historical Buddha or another divinity often defined lineages, and these teachings themselves could be attained through “direct” access to pure lands, as Mahayana texts on visualization stated. At Kōyasan, the pure land most often referred to is Miroku’s Tosotsuten, and by the thirteenth century, founder Kōbō Daishi was believed by many to reside there.⁸⁴ It was a site to which monks in other Buddhist Asian countries similarly aspired to be reborn, often as a means of continuing their doctrinal discussions in the audience of the future Buddha. Prominently featuring in the *Takusenki*, Miroku and Tosotsuten are also focal points of the Chūinryū origin narrative and worship. Jōyo 定誉 (958–1047), better known as Kishin Shōnin 祈親上人 and Meizan were the teacher and student who revived Kōyasan in the eleventh century after a period of disastrous fires, neglect, and decline. Kishin trained at Kōfukuji temple and was immersed in Miroku worship there since the temple “harbored some of the earliest forms of Maitreya [Miroku] belief.”⁸⁵ He was drawn to the mountain by a dream vision of Kōyasan as Tosotsuten, indicating that Kōyasan was to be returned to its original teachings, those of the founder Kūkai. Meizan, Kishin’s student, formed (or, as he conceived it, re-formed) the Chūinryū as the branch of the founder’s teachings.

⁸³ *Takusenki*, vol. 1, p. 45. Abe 1983, p. 105. There were visualization practices based on the Maitreya sutras considered to put the highly proficient practitioner directly into the presence of Maitreya and his pure land in the present body. The three Maitreya sutras well-known in Japan at this time were the *Sutra on Maitreya’s Rebirth Above*; the *Sutra on Maitreya’s Rebirth Below*; and the *Sutra on [Maitreya] Achieving Buddhahood*, and within them, simply speaking, were available a number of variables on when and where the devotee would be able to encounter Maitreya, namely before death, in this world, or in the afterlife in Tuṣita.

⁸⁴ Hiraoka 1958–60, p. 529.

⁸⁵ Londo 2002, p. 21.

The Chūinryū is a sub-branch of the Zuishin'in 隨心院 branch, itself a sub-branch of the Onoryū 小野流. It presents itself as originating with the transmission of “secret teachings” about Kōyasan (also known as the “old teachings of Kōyasan”) thought to have been passed from Kōbō Daishi to Shinzen 真然 (804?–891), his nephew-disciple. The three main teachings of this set were the *Daitō no daiji* 大塔の大事 (Essentials of the Great Pagoda), *Nanzan hachiyō no hiji* 南山八葉の秘事 (Secrets of the Eight-petalled Southern Mountain) and *Gosōjō no daiji* 後僧正の大事 (Great Abbot's⁸⁶ Essentials). As we have seen, Yūkai traces the Henmyōin oracle teachings also back to “Daishi” and Shinzen. According to tradition these teachings had been transmitted to Kyoto before being brought *back* to Kōyasan by official founder Meizan who received them from Seison 成尊 (1012–1074) at Ono Mandara-ji 小野曼陀羅寺 (Zuishin'in cloister in Kyoto) in 1072. Meizan also received the transmission of a variety of teachings in a vision of Shinzen in 1075, which will be discussed in more detail below. Various lines ran from Meizan to Kyōshin 教真 (d.1124?) of Chūin cloister and to Ryōzen 良禪 (1048–1139) of Kitamuroin 北室院 cloister, with the former severed during the time of Genshō 源照 (fl. early thirteenth century) since it seems to have been mixed with “heresy.” Ryōzen's transmission, meanwhile, split roughly into up to eight different lines with those today passed down at Kōyasan being the Injōin-kata 引摂院方, Shinnan'in-kata 心南院方, Dairakuin-kata 大楽院方 and Chishōgon'in-kata 智莊嚴院方 (acronymically abbreviated to Inshindaichi 引心大智).⁸⁷ The Henmyōin oracle and its accompanying mudra and mantra seem to have been transmitted through both the Injōin and the Shinnan'in lines. Injōin was associated with Henmyōin and Shinnan'in with Dōhan. As mentioned below, Henmyōin as a physical institution was absorbed into Injōin, but this also explains why the later viewing of the *Takusenki* was limited:

The five people that appended their seals should in times of doubt come to this temple and have a look at it [the *Takusenki*]. However, those of Shōchi'in 正智院 may send for it and look at it. . . . It must be sent back quickly to this temple [Henmyōin].⁸⁸

This returns us to Yūkai, who refers to the site of future Chūinryū founder Meizan's studies—Zuishin'in cloister—in his *Ategawa yakusō chūki* 阿互川薬艸中記 when he identifies it as the locus of the teachings. Explaining the Henmyōin oracle teachings, he writes:

⁸⁶ That is, Shinzen.

⁸⁷ For further details, consult Toganoo 1982, pp. 239–66, and Ōyama 1987, pp. 29–32.

⁸⁸ *Takusenki*, vol. 2, article 51. Abe 1983, p. 111.

This *daiji* was transmitted by the Hongan risshi 本願律師 of Kichijōji 吉祥寺 to Shunkan 俊寛 [1142–1179] of Kajūji 勧修寺. Thus, it is a *daiji* of Zuishin'in. Therefore, this Henmyōin *daiji* is of Zuishin'in cloister.⁸⁹

The teachings, then, are traced back to the “original” Chūinryū teachings attained by Meizan at Zuishin'in, but are transmitted only through two sub-sub branches. They are strongly invested with legitimacy and authenticity through their connection with Meizan and thus with Kōbō Daishi.

Henmyōin and Chūinryū: Their Spatial and Temporal Relationship to Kōbō Daishi

It was not only branch *figures* discussed above that were key to the lineage formation. Spatial location and temporal markers were too, and these also feature prominently in *Takusenki*, confirming its centrality to the Chūinryū, or more specifically, to the cloister-based lineages at Kōyasan that branched off from it. The geographic and symbolic spatial configuration of the Kōyasan site is related to the configuration of transmission lineages, because places associated with different lineages were positioned on various pictorializations of the site—which entailed superimposing them onto a symbolic system. Materially speaking, Henmyōin cloister where the oracle had occurred is no longer standing: it burned to the ground in 1864, which partly accounts for the paucity of materials related to it. It was rebuilt, then later relocated to the site of Shōjōshin'in 清浄心院 cloister in another area of the temple complex.⁹⁰ It was founded early in Kōyasan's history, by Shinnyo 真如 (799–c. 865), an imperial prince⁹¹ and a direct disciple of Kūkai. The cloister name originates with him, as he was also known as Henmyō. These cloisters were distinct from other monastic institutions since they were normally affiliated with imperial figures. According to Asuka Sango, “what created

⁸⁹ *Ategawa yakusō chūki*, p. 122. The complexity of the transmission trajectory of the Chūinryū into various sub-lineages after Meizan is one reason it was a particular object of Yūkai's scrutiny. Meizan's own line, named the Ryūkōin-kata 龍光院方 (Ryūkōin group, after Meizan's cloister residence) by his *deshi* 弟子 Kyōshin, disappeared after a few generations. It was instead Ryōzen's line, Kitamuroin, amid many other coexisting lines, which spread over Kōyasan and dominated its scholarship, serving as the source from which other lines derive. See *Mikkyō daijiten*, pp. 498–99.

⁹⁰ During the twentieth century, the old buildings of Henmyōin were taken over by the Injōin cloister, and both were amalgamated with Chūin. See the “Henmyōin” entry in *Zen-nihon Bukkyōkai Jiin Meikan Kankōkai* 1976, vol. 3, p. 340, and Mizuhara 1956, p. 37.

⁹¹ Prince Takaoka 高丘.

and maintained a cloister was the practice of transmission through which a master passed down to his disciple his teachings as well as economic resources.”⁹² Henmyōin was located next to a temple residence named Chūin, the original residence of Kōbō Daishi. “Chūin” also designated an important section of the “eight-petalled southern mountain” (*nanzan hachiyō* 南山八葉), an appellation for Kōyasan as a central area ringed by eight peaks that resembled a lotus flower, or more specifically, the eight-petalled inner platform cloister of the Womb World mandala (*Taizōkai mandarazu no chūdai hachiyō'in* 胎藏曼荼羅図の中台八葉院). Incidentally, Dōhan’s *Kōya kuketsu* 高野口訣 texts are among the oldest to explain these appellations and mandalizations.⁹³ Meizan, aforementioned founder of the Chūinryū, lived and died here, and the name of his sub-branch derived from the name of the residence.⁹⁴ These spaces, then, paralleled the transmission to which Meizan’s branch laid claim. And its most important secret teachings were received from an authoritative figure, in a process by which time and space barriers were overcome. I will introduce this as a case comparable with that of the Henmyōin oracle teachings. It is interesting to consider it, in all brevity, because it presents another instance at Kōyasan in which sect-specific knowledge, required because somehow lost, is transmitted through apparently unorthodox means. The case is also of course relevant here because it concerns the Chūinryū.

As mentioned, Meizan had been a student of Kishin Shōnin—who had become an icon during the medieval period for his revival of the complex after a period of decline and near-dormancy. However, Meizan is described as having received certain *hiketsu* 秘決 (secret teachings) teachings about Kōyasan from Kūkai via Shinzen. How was this possible when both founder and disciple Shinzen were long gone? The conventional transmission of doctrine was circumvented in a way that conforms, I suggest, to a larger category of Mahayana access, and comparable to that which allowed teachings to be transmitted via oracle at Henmyōin. A text entitled *Kōyasan hiki* 高野山秘記 (Secret Record of Kōyasan), which presented itself as a compilation of these teachings from Kūkai,⁹⁵ states that these teachings were “texts” in

⁹² Sango 2012, p. 255.

⁹³ See the Kōyasan Reihōkan museum website. Accessed 13 March 2015.

<http://www.reihokan.or.jp/yomoyama/various/mount/hachiyō/utisoto.html>.

⁹⁴ In Meizan’s time it was also called Ryūkōin, and generally is known by this name today.

⁹⁵ *Kōyasan hiki* was likely produced slightly earlier than the Henmyōin oracle, in the first half of the mid-thirteenth century by Dōhan and perhaps one of his followers. See Abe 1983, pp. 31–32.

the forms of scrolls (*makimono* 巻物) of “transmission seals” (*injin*), oral transmissions (*kuketsu* 口訣), records (*ki* 記), and ritual instructions (*shidai*) and that they were perceived (*kantoku* 感得) by Meizan in either a dream (*musō* 夢想) or in a vision (*jigen* 示現) of the *kōso* 高祖 (i.e., Kōbō Daishi). The dream directed him to the location of the texts, which was Okunoin 奥之院 (the “inner hall”), a significant site at Kōyasan since it was where Kōbō Daishi was believed to be residing in a meditative state until the coming of Miroku.⁹⁶ It was there that Meizan dug up the *shōgyō*. This matter of “unearthing” (*kusshutsu hō* 掘出法) is explained in a text which relates that upon retrieval, Shinzen, Kūkai’s disciple, manifested (*yōgo* 影向) and conferred them.⁹⁷ The significance of Shinzen is likely in his capacity as transmitter of mudras, mantras, and explanations of the text.

The date in the second year of Shōho 承保 (1075) given for Meizan’s dream by the eighteenth century chronicle of Kōyasan, the *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku*, is March 20. This date is highly significant in terms of its connection to the Shingon patriarch. It is one day before Kōbō Daishi’s entrance into eternal meditation. In later texts popular in the medieval period at Kōyasan it is reported that on this day he gave his “last words.” The account of Meizan converges with this to convey the idea that the latter had received teachings directly from Kūkai, crossing, through the mediation of visions, a temporal gap of over two centuries, as if he were a disciple directly receiving teaching from his master.⁹⁸ The temporal correspondences as well as the spatial configurations of temple arrangement and their connections to the patriarch (and also to Miroku, whose teachings Kōbō Daishi, in turn, was often described as audience to) made Kōyasan, at this moment, a compact sacred site where the ordinary constraints of time and space did not affect access to knowledge. The fascinating explanation in the *Kōyasan hiki* for the transmission of lineage teachings casts light on some aspects of the Henmyōin oracle and on the kami who conveyed it. Both transmissions were, like many other Mahayana and Vajrayāna transmissions, triumphs over space and time.

The rhetoric of proper and improper transmission (and also of urgency) in both the Meizan and the Henmyōin cases, has echoes in writings regarding

⁹⁶ At least two notions, not necessarily contradictory, of Kōbō Daishi’s presence co-existed during this period: that he was at Okunoin awaiting Miroku’s appearance, at which time he would emerge and, that he was residing in Tosotsuten with Miroku.

⁹⁷ Iyanaga 2006, p. 217; Kōda 1981, p. 21. The text that explains the incident is the *Gisho mokuroku narabini jagi kyōron* 偽書目錄并邪義經論.

⁹⁸ Granted, it is possible that the date, as an auspicious one, was used by the chronicler of the *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku* in the absence of a date in his sources.

contemporary burials of texts in walls or boxes. In her study of the culture of secret transmission in medieval Japan, Jacqueline I. Stone writes about the strict protocols informing proper transfer of teachings. In the case of a certain set of medieval *kuden* (textualized oral transmissions), she notes that they were guarded against inappropriate transmission in a remarkably material way. “If there is no one qualified to receive it, this transmission should be buried in the depths of a wall,” a writer instructs his reader.⁹⁹ In Japan, sutras were devoted to Maitreya and literally buried in containers in anticipation of this Buddha’s future emergence, a concept and practice that falls into a category of transmissions and “treasures” awaiting their time to be discovered.¹⁰⁰ Statesman Fujiwara Michinaga’s desire for his buried offering of sutras was that, in the future, and for the purpose of education in dharma, they would “spontaneously well up out of the earth.”¹⁰¹ The burial of such things is the counterpart, or prefiguration, to “discoveries” of all kinds, and “retrieval” of a teaching from an unusual source, as at Henmyōin, by a qualified recipient, belongs to this broad set of methods of access to knowledge. The ideas embedded in burial and disinterment also resonate with Mahayana and esoteric doctrines that hold access to knowledge to be conditional upon the absence or presence of one worthy of, and with the capability of, receiving it.

Several similarities with the specific way in which Meizan received teachings as well as with its broader framework can be found in the case of the Henmyōin oracle, and help to validate Yūkai’s explanation of its function: access to long-gone figures of authority who provide teachings that legitimize a lineage and which subsequently become *shōgyō* for the Chūinryū. I will address these figures and the person through which they communicated in the following section.

Possessors and Transmitters of Knowledge

The agent that possesses the Henmyōin *chigo* is a “double-figure.” It identifies itself in the first line of the *Takusenki* record:

On the twelfth day of the eleventh month in Kenchō 3 . . . , the *chigo* Jishiō of Henmyōin, suddenly became abnormal [*irei* 違例] and from the thirteenth day of the same [month], calling himself

⁹⁹ Stone 2003, p. 142.

¹⁰⁰ On sutra burial in Japan, see Moerman 2010.

¹⁰¹ Translation by Moerman 2010, p. 83.

the former master of the same [temple], the *on-tsukai* of Daishi Daimyōjin, gave this oracle.

“Daishi Myōjin,” the source of transmission which is mentioned throughout the record as distinct from the separate “Daishi” (Kōbō Daishi) and “Myōjin” (the kami Niu Myōjin or Kōya Myōjin) was an amalgamate deity, comprised of deified patriarchs and mountain kami. It announced its messages through the *chigo*. It describes itself in the oracle record as a four-part entity; each character in its name denoting a different figure. This forms a “name mantra” (*myōgō shingon* 名号真言), which is to be chanted by monks regularly, in moments of fear, and as a kind of *rinjū gyōgi* 臨終行儀 ritual on the deathbed:

This is an interpretation of the four [Chinese] characters of [the name] “Daishi Myōjin.” “Dai” is Keika, “Shi” is Daishi, “Myō” is Niu, and “Jin” is Kōya. Accordingly, the four characters “Daishi Myōjin” are the most secret mantra. In one’s daily life one should keep them in one’s heart and chant them. Also, when one has fear in the evil world, and when one closes one’s eyes [at death], one should chant this name mantra.¹⁰²

“Keika” was the teacher of Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi) who had instructed and initiated him into the Shingon school; “Daishi,” Kūkai’s title; and “Niu” and “Kōya,” the two protective mountain kami that were by this time fully incorporated into Shingon Buddhist practice and doctrine at Kōyasan. However, in addition to this amalgamate possessing entity, there is also, in the opening statement of *Takusenki*, mention of a “former master” who is the “*on-tsukai*”—the “messenger” of this impressive deity. The colophon of later copies of the record confirms and clarifies this; the possessing agent was a former head priest of Henmyōin, Kyōmitsu. Ōyama speculates that Kyōmitsu was in fact the name of the *chigo* himself, and that the colophon mention of Kyōmitsu is a reference to another oracle that involved the same witnesses and possessed person at a later time.¹⁰³ However, indications of Kyōmitsu’s status and period of activity in other sources make this unlikely, as does a particular colophon on the boy’s subsequent fate, described below. The *Kongōbuji sho inge sekifu shū* in its section on Henmyōin and its past masters, which gives similar information to that found in the oracle text, includes information on Kyōmitsu’s status. According to this, he was indeed

¹⁰² *Takusenki*, vol. 1, article 83. Abe 1983, p. 107.

¹⁰³ Ōyama 1989, p. 320.

a former master of Henmyōin (and the slightly earlier *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku* records, too, that he was an *inju*). The writer explains:

At the time of the oracle at Henmyōin, becoming the *on-tsukai* of Daishi Myōjin, Jishiō, identified himself saying, “I am the previous [master] of this temple, Kyōmitsu-bō.” The period during which he served at this temple is not stated in the historical records. His real name, and other details, are unknown.¹⁰⁴

Very little information on Kyōmitsu is available. In other oracle records of the period such as those of the kami Kiyotaki 清滝 Myōjin and Kōbō Daishi,¹⁰⁵ the possessing entity announces its identity, but they do not involve past, non-deified humans or give detail about the person possessed (though a wider survey is necessary to clarify this). But the doubling of possessing agents in *Takusenki* makes sense if we turn to present-day practices of possession and oracle transmission, such as those studied by Kobayashi Naoko.¹⁰⁶ She has discussed the mountain peak Ontake which is the site of pilgrimage for the purpose of receiving messages from kami present there. Specific sacred locations are visited and a leading monk-medium often becomes possessed by both the deity and a famed past “*gyōja*” 行者, that is, an ascetic with powers attained from mountain based practices that incorporate both Buddhist and “Shinto” elements.¹⁰⁷ One important difference (of several) between this process and the incident at Henmyōin, however, is the role of the medium, who in the latter case is a child.

Writing on contemporary mediums of Northern Thailand, Rosalind Morris observes that, “for believers and devotees, part of the marvelousness of possession depends on the ignorance of the medium in relation to the historical knowledge that seems to be speaking through him or her.”¹⁰⁸ This statement resonates with the Henmyōin case and with medieval Japanese

¹⁰⁴ *Kongōbuji sho inge sekifu shū*, in *Zoku shingon shū zensho* 続真言宗全書, vol. 34, p. 189.

¹⁰⁵ These are as yet unpublished. The former is kept in the Shinpukuji 真福寺 temple archive in Nagoya and the latter at Kajūji, Yamashina.

¹⁰⁶ Although many elements are suggestively comparable, one cannot, of course, uncritically cast the framework and functions of present-day Ontake practices back onto those of thirteenth century Kōyasan. Aside from the many hermeneutical problems potential in such a move, there are some significant differences in the elements that make up the practices. Nevertheless, the comparison is valid as a tentative step toward understanding the “doubling” of the possession.

¹⁰⁷ Kobayashi 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Morris 2000, p. 100.

possessions and oracles more widely. In conjunction with Grapard's observation that the three "other worlds" in Japan are gendered in literature as female, while the fourth "real" world, Japan, is male, and that women "lead lives that appear to be irrelevant to the formal articulation of social order,"¹⁰⁹ we might well explain the prevalence of women and child mediums in pre-modern Japan as having to do not only with their constructed purity and otherness,¹¹⁰ but also with their removal from the realm of action in the formation of knowledge. The pronouncements of those members of society deemed ignorant, could be, paradoxically, more authentic and the claim that they originated elsewhere, in a higher power, may be less assailable. The object of possession at Henmyōin was not a woman (such a possibility would in any case have been precluded by the prohibition of women at Kōyasan until the late nineteenth century), but a "*chigo*," a thirteen-year-old untensored boy;¹¹¹ he is referred to as a "long hair" in the text. A certain violence attends a great number of literary tales regarding *chigo*; they are often either murdered or commit suicide in youth or young adulthood, and seem, in the texts, as exploited sexualized bodies, sites of transgression, and at the very least, "to lead an abnormally imperiled existence."¹¹² Some studies of *chigo* have suggested they are cultural figures that sacrificially absorb violence.¹¹³ According to the colophons on some copies of the oracle record, Jishiōmaru originated from Kawachi 河内 province (near to Kōyasan) and his name after ordination was Chōshin. He was later forced to leave Kōyasan after being involved in a violent incident, and eventually, in strange fulfillment of the fate of *chigo* as cultural figure, died in some violent way.¹¹⁴

As at other large temples of the time, Kōyasan was populated by a substantial number of *chigo* who studied and served at the monastic institutions. They are not described as mediums. However, child mediums were used, in particular, in medieval Japan, for gohō 護法 ("dharma protectors," often related to the protection of a text and its transmission¹¹⁵), deities that

¹⁰⁹ Grapard 1991, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ And penetrability (or receptivity as a physical/psychological/spiritual "carrier") if we consider the sexual status of *chigo* discussed by Faure (1998) and Atkins (2008).

¹¹¹ On possessed youth mediums in China, see Berthier 1987.

¹¹² Atkins 2008, p. 966.

¹¹³ Abe 1983, Faure 1998, Atkins 2008.

¹¹⁴ See Abe 1983, p. 88.

¹¹⁵ Particularly protection of the *Lotus Sutra*.

often had a child-like form¹¹⁶ and were thus often referred to as “*gohō dōji*” 護法童子 (“dharma-protecting children,” though adult mediums also were possessed by them). Such use of children extends much further back, however, as we see from the esoteric ritual the *abishahō* 阿尾奢法, literally “spirit possession ritual.”¹¹⁷ The earliest known Buddhist text to delineate the process of inducing such a possession is the *Amoghapāśa sūtra*, which Strickmann discusses.¹¹⁸ The Amoghavajra translation of this possession ritual manual was brought back from Tang China by Kūkai. Thus, there were such texts available to esoteric temples, and the presence of the child as mediator conforms to the procedure for possession found in these. The status of such a “vessel” no doubt supported the claim of the indisputable legitimacy of the transmission.

In the *Amoghapāśa sūtra*, a child is used by an officiant as a medium for a spirit and is able to relay information about “good or evil things in the past, future, or present” in response to questions. A seventh century translation of Vajrabodhi’s *Budong shizhe tuoluoni mimifa* 不動使者陀羅尼秘密法 (Secret Rites of the Spells of the Divine Emissary, the Immoveable One), also involves the use of a child, with the similar claim that “when the officiant discusses matters pertaining to the past, present, or future, all questions will be answered” by the possessing spirit.¹¹⁹ The interrogative aspect here is the object of induced possession, and though the Henmyōin Takusen was delivered during a state of spontaneous possession, it too involved a series of questions and answers. The commentaries on the *Takusenki* often describe it in a way that suggests a similar scenario to that given in these very early sutras. For example, the *Kongōbuji sho inge sekifu shū* reports that the *chigo* spoke fluidly about “deep meanings” (*shingi* 深義) of things “hard to understand” to Dōhan, who asked him about them; the conversation is here referred to as a *hōdan* 法談—a doctrinal discussion.¹²⁰ In the *Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku*, the *chigo* is described as revealing “things hidden and difficult, past and present.” It is a dialogue also implicit in *Takusenki* itself where the presentation of the oracular speech at times indicates the passages are answers to questions. It seems that the *chigo* was possessed by the former priest who was “carrying” the messages of the kami Daishi Myōjin

¹¹⁶ Strickmann 2002, p. 225.

¹¹⁷ *Āveśa*, the Sanskrit for spirit possession, is transliterated into Japanese as *abisha* 阿尾奢.

¹¹⁸ Likely earlier than its seventh/eighth century translation. Strickmann 2005, p. 204.

¹¹⁹ Strickmann 2005, p. 207, translated from T no. 1202, 21: 24b.

¹²⁰ Mizuhara 1956, p. 51.

and had the means not only of clarifying knotty points but had the power of omniscience as well. In this way, teachings essential for qualifying Yūshin as the new master could be conveyed. Furthermore, the *chigo*-borne kami requests a room be set up with an altar especially for its future manifestations and for offerings to be made to it, which Strickmann reports was one way of conversing with a spirit on a regular basis in East Asian Buddhist practices.

The use of a child; the induction or spontaneous occurrence of possession; the access to Buddhist teaching via oracle that was conducted through past masters which included not only a previous cloister head but also the patriarch of the temple complex itself: it cannot be said that these aspects and roles of knowledge transmission were remarkably unconventional ones in Japanese pre-modern culture. Indeed, were there not other instances, the textualized oracle would not have been acceptable either to the members of the Chūinryū or to members of other branches. Instead, it was honored as a *shōgyō* and was stored away, copied, and studied. In addition, *Takusenki* closes with a stern warning to its reader: those who ridicule the text must be rebuked.¹²¹ Yet even here the work cleaves to traditions around the production of new scriptures, for the presentation of the “preacher of the dharma” (*dharmabhāṅka*) figure in Mahayana sutras casts him as one who is likely to be scorned and laughed at by other Buddhists for the transmission of new types of teachings that originated in meditative states.¹²² Because the deity involved at Henmyōin was partly Kōbō Daishi, partly Keika, the figures most authorized to pass on teachings, the transmission of those teachings could presumably be considered valid by the Kōyasan monks and the oracle itself a valid medium, indeed a kind of oral transmission conventional to Mahayana and esoteric Buddhism. Authenticity here is verified through discovery or reception, not manufacture, and the passing on of teachings via a human dharma vessel intertwined (in ways that remain to be examined more closely) with the legalities of land ownership that depended on proof of legitimate reception, described in *engi*: in both cases considered above efforts are made to show that an object has been bequeathed, not simply taken. The significance of the variety of dharma transmission we witness in the case of the Henmyōin Takusen may be yet further illuminated in the future by firmly contextualizing it in social practices and cultural notions of ownership, inheritance, and lineages linked

¹²¹ *Takusenki*, vol. 2, article 52.

¹²² Harrison 1979, p. xxvi.

to land. *Takusenki*, moreover, casts light on one dimension of the rich textual category of *shōgyō*. The incident not only indicates alignments between the oracle transmission procedure and purpose with far older ones, it also links to the culture of scholar monks in premodern Japan, their means of access to sacred knowledge, and the use of knowledge in the maintenance and transmission of lineages.

ABBREVIATION

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.

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