

Christoph KLEINE*

Hermits and Ascetics in Ancient Japan: The Concept of *Hijiri* Reconsidered**

1. Introduction

The term *hijiri*¹ has been translated in various ways: as “holy man”, “saint”, “sage”, “gods and genii”, “itinerant monk”, etc. Although in the first half of the twentieth century *hijiri* did not attract much attention, since the 1950s there has been an increasing scholarly interest in them. In the recent decades a great number of publications have paved the way for a revision of many traditional views regarding the development of Japanese Buddhism from an aristocratic and exclusive religion in ancient times to a popular religion in the medieval era.² Various authors have stressed the importance of *hijiri* for the popularization of Buddhism in Japan as well as for the establishment of the mainstream denominations centering on the belief either in Amida and his Pure Land or in the salvific power of the *Lotus Sūtra*. In most cases, the term *hijiri* has been mistakenly used as an umbrella term to denote a whole range of variant extramonastic Buddhist practitioners who were apparently not called *hijiri* by their contemporaries. The term, which was originally applied exclusively to a specific type of ascetic, was thus blurred until it was almost deprived of its meaning. This paper aims to reevaluate the religious phenomenon of *hijiri* and their significance for the establishment of the so-called “New Kamakura Buddhism”. The study is based primarily on an investigation of tale collections (*setsuwa-shū* 説話集) from the early ninth to the early thirteenth centuries, which are generally acknowledged as the most important source materials for the examination of *hijiri* in the Heian period 平安時代 (794–1185).

* Part-time lecturer, Marburg University.

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1 As shall be shown below, a variety of Chinese characters were used to represent the term *hijiri*: 聖、神人、仙人、仙、日知り.

2 Scholarly opinions vary regarding the question of when the ancient era (*kodai* 古代) ended and the medieval era (*chūsei* 中世) began. I follow here the prevalent view that the transition from the ancient to the medieval era took place towards the end of the twelfth century. This means that I treat the Heian as an ancient, and the Kamakura as a medieval period.

2. The prevailing image of *hijiri* in modern scholarship³

Since HASHIKAWA Tadashi's publication of *Heian jidai ni okeru hokke shinkō to Amida shinkō* ("Lotus faith and Amida faith in the Heian period") in 1924, and especially since his ideas were further developed by INOUE Mitsusada (1956) in his *Nihon Jōdo-kyō seiritsu-shi no kenkyū* ("Studies in the historical formation of Japanese Pure Land doctrines"), it has become a generally accepted theory that religious outsiders are to be credited with the popularization of Buddhism. These marginal but charismatic figures lived outside the monasteries in the solitude of holy mountains where they practiced severe austerities or travelled through the country to proselytize the common folk, cast out demons, heal sick persons, pacify vengeful souls, etc. According to Inoue and many others, those practitioners – who allegedly all represent typical *hijiri* – dominated the Buddhist reform movements which were finally institutionalized as the denominations that now represent the mainstream of Japanese Buddhism. Thus, according to SHINNŌ Toshikazu (1993: 199), "the so-called New Kamakura Buddhism – including the Ritsu school – could accurately be described as *hijiri* and *gyōja*-type Buddhism in a new independent form".

According to Hashikawa (as quoted in HAYAMI 1978: 155–156), the entire group of those Buddhists of the Heian period who renounced the secular life a second time (*saishukke* 再出家) by leaving the monasteries can be divided into two major strands. One indulged in asceticism and lived in strict obedience to the monastic regulations; Hashikawa defines them as the "ascetic faction" (*genshukuha* 嚴肅派). The other group, on the contrary, emphasized the experience of religious faith and did not believe in the necessity of keeping the rules; Hashikawa calls them the "naturalistic faction" (*shizenha* 自然派). The former faction was formed by the "sūtra keepers" (*jikyōsha* 持經者; i.e. practitioners who were devoted to one particular sūtra, usually the *Lotus Sūtra*), the latter by *hijiri* 聖 and *shami* 沙彌 (Skt *śrāmaṇera*, "novice").⁴ From *hijiri* evolved Hōnen's 法然 (1133–1212) movement of the single-minded and exclusive nembutsu (*ikkō senju nenbutsu* 一向専修念佛), from *shami* Shinran's 親鸞 (1172–1262) "True Sect of the Pure Land" (*Jōdo shinshū* 浄土真宗), from *jikyōsha* Nichiren's 日蓮 (1222–1282) "Lotus Sect" (*Hokke-shū* 法華宗).

3 A rather convenient overview of Japanese scholarship on *hijiri* in regard to their contribution to the "reformist" Kamakura movements (especially the nembutsu movement) is provided by HAYAMI (1978: 155–177). He does not, however, critically deal with the concept of *hijiri* as such.

4 Originally the term *śrāmaṇera* denoted a candidate for monkhood (i.e. a novice) aged between seven and twenty who had vowed to observe the first ten precepts. In ancient Japan the denomination was also applied to practitioners who were not officially ordained but looked like and acted as monks.

As I shall demonstrate in detail below, this theory is untenable mainly for three reasons: (1) among those who were called *hijiri* in contemporary texts the proportion of *jikyōsha* was extraordinarily high, and thus Hashikawa's distinction between *hijiri* and *jikyōsha* is useless; (2) among the nembutsu practitioners the number of those who were called *hijiri* was extremely low; (3) in the Heian period, asceticism and strict observation of the regulations was perceived as a characteristic feature of all *hijiri*.

Possibly because INOUE (1989: 215 ff.) had realized that among those whom Hashikawa credits with the formation of the *senju nenbutsu* movement of the early Kamakura period 鎌倉時代 (1192–1333) there were only very few who were actually called *hijiri* or *shami*, he maintains that the terms *hijiri* and *shōnin* 聖人 or 上人 (which appears much more frequently than *hijiri*) were completely interchangeable. Even now both terms are in fact unanimously treated as synonyms, in both Japanese and Western scholarship.

HORI Ichiro (1958) introduced the “Concept of Hijiri (Holy Man)” to a broader Western audience, three years after the publication of his influential book *Waga kuni no minkan shinkōshi no kenkyū* (“The History of Folk Beliefs in Our Country [i.e. Japan]”) (HORI 1955). Hori's interpretation of the character, function, and historical significance of *hijiri* has predominated not only in Western views but also within most Japanese scholarship on this subject up to the present (KAMSTRA 1987: 322). Hori emphasizes the pivotal role of *hijiri* in the process of the popularization of the hitherto completely aristocratic Buddhism as well as the religious earnestness of the unconventional recluses and evangelists who turned their backs on the monastic institutions in which they saw no chance to realize their spiritual goals.⁵ According to Hori, the spread of the individualistic belief in the spirits of the dead (*goryō* 御靈) in the Heian period contributed greatly to the development of the *hijiri* movement. As the successors to the *ubasoku* 優婆塞 (Skt *upāsaka*, “lay believer”) and *zenji* 禪師 (“meditation masters”)⁶ of the Nara 奈良時代 (646–794) and early Heian periods, *hijiri* recited Buddha-names, sūtras, or magical formulas to pacify vengeful souls and to dispatch them to a Buddha sphere such as Amida's *Sukhāvati* or Maitreya's *Tuṣita* heaven.

5 Hori's emphasis on the anti-clerical character of the *hijiri* might be responsible for Kamstra's grave error of perceiving *hijiri* as “Japanese lay ascetics and influential antagonists of priests and monks” (KAMSTRA 1987: 321).

6 Those who were called *zenji* in ancient Japan had little to do with the actual “meditation masters” of later times such as Dōgen Zenji 道元禪師 (1200–1253), etc. The *zenji* of the late Nara and early Heian periods were low-ranking or even non-ordained devotees of ascetic and magical practices who mainly engaged in exorcistic healings.

Hori divides the *hijiri* movement into two major groups, namely the devotees of the *Lotus Sūtra* – represented by Zōga 增賀 (917–1003) and others – and the nembutsu devotees – represented by Kōya 空也 (also known as Kūya; 903–972), Genshin 源信 (942–1017), Jakushin 寂心 (the priestly name of Yoshishige no Yasutane 慶滋保胤; 931?–1002), Ryōnin 良忍 (1072–1132), etc. In his book *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change* (HORI 1968) he describes the fundamental difference between the two groups as follows:

Those of the Lotus Sutra school⁷ were characterized by strict seclusion from both the secular and the ecclesiastical worlds, while the *Amida-hijiri* were characterized by a desire to proclaim Amida’s gospel among the masses. The Lotus Sutra school *hijiri* was individualistic or self-perfectionistic; the *Amida-hijiri*, evangelistic. (HORI 1968: 103–105; see also DEAL 1988: 45–46)

However, in the Heian period there was no clear distinction between the *Lotus Sūtra* cult and the nembutsu cult; most practitioners practiced both.⁸ Furthermore, Hori’s assertion is also problematic because according to it, “[t]he term *hijiri* embraces two seemingly disparate modes of religious action: reclusion and evangelism” (GOODWIN 1994: 29). Instead of questioning the concept of *hijiri* on these grounds, Goodwin – who merely exemplifies the majority of scholars – concludes that a “*hijiri* might combine the lives of hermit and preacher, secluding himself in a mountain cave to fast and to meditate ... then emerging to exhort villagers to follow the Buddhist path” (GOODWIN 1994: 29).

In his well known and influential book *Kōya hijiri* (“*Hijiri* of [Mt] Kōya”), first published in 1975, GORAI Shigeru (1990: 30) presented a more elaborate and thus even more inclusive list of characteristic features of *hijiri*:⁹

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- 7 The misleading usage of the term “Lotus Sutra school” here reflects the questionable approach of Hori and many of his colleagues. A more or less distinguishable group which might deserve to be called Lotus School or Hokke-shū did not come into existence until in the thirteenth century Nichiren’s attempts at a reform of the Tendai-shū as a school based completely on the *Lotus Sūtra* had failed. Japanese buddhologists tend to view the development of Buddhism through the interpretive patterns which have been developed by those denominations that claim to be offsprings of the great “Kamakura leaders” (Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren, sometimes Eisai and Ippen are included in this rather arbitrary list) and which now represent the mainstream of Japanese Buddhism.
- 8 In Heian Buddhism the *Lotus Sūtra* cult and the Amida or nembutsu cult were usually practiced together. The idea that both practices were antagonistic is a product of the Kamakura period when the followers of Hōnen and those of Nichiren formed competing movements. The answer to the question of, for example, whether Genshin was an adherent of the *Lotus Sūtra* or of the nembutsu, completely depends on which hagiographic tradition is consulted. See RHODES 1996.
- 9 YOSHIDA (1992: 68) presents a slightly different list of characteristic features of *hijiri*: (1) *kanjin-sei* 勧進性, (2) *kenja-sei* 験者性, (3) *yugyō-sei* 遊行性, (4) *mu-shūha-sei* 無宗派性.

- (1) *inton-sei* 隱遁性, “seclusion, retirement”;
- (2.) *kugyō-sei* 苦行性, “asceticism, arduous practice”;
- (3) *yugyō-sei* 遊行性 (*kaikokusei* 回国性), “itinerancy, mendicancy, travelling around”;
- (4) *jujutsu-sei* 呪術性, “magic”;
- (5) *sezoku-sei* 世俗性, “laicism, secularism, worldliness”;
- (6) *shūdan-sei* 集団性, “forming communities”;
- (7) *kanjin-sei* 勧進性, “propaganda and fundraising”;
- (8) *shōdō-sei* 唱導性, “evangelism and proselytization”.

The inclusiveness of this widely accepted list of sometimes rather contradictory features naturally obstructs every attempt to find a clearcut definition of the term *hijiri*. Taking the seemingly heterogeneous character of *hijiri* as a matter of fact GOODWIN (1994: 29) concedes,

[I]t is much harder to explain what the *hijiri* were than what they were not. They were not regular monks in permanent residence at a temple, devoting their time to scholarship and temple ceremonies and their ambition to rising through the monastic hierarchy.

Likewise, Murakami finds it difficult to define the term *hijiri*.

These practitioners of folk religion were later generally known as *hijiri* 聖. Since they arose quite spontaneously, they are of many types. A common characteristic, however, is to be found in their asceticism – represented by abstention from grains or food cooked over fire and arduous ascetic training deep in the mountains or in secluded valleys – through which they were believed to acquire the ability to perform supernatural deeds. (MURAKAMI 1979: 85)

Murakami mentions two important points in this passage. First, he correctly states that asceticism was a common characteristic of all *hijiri*, and second, that the “practitioners of folk religion” (a term which I find problematic, however) with whom he is concerned, were only later called *hijiri*. Murakami does not explicitly say to which time he refers when he says “later”, but the period he has in mind seems to be the time when government control over the ordination of monks and nuns had become ineffective. Unfortunately, however, Murakami does not derive a critique of the prevailing *hijiri* concepts from his insights.

According to INOUE (1989: 219), the “regulations for monks and nuns” (*sōniryō* 僧尼令; as part of the Taihō code 大寶律令 enacted in 701) lost their actual effectiveness in tandem with the weakening of the *ritsuryō* system from the early tenth century on. While the resulting political and economic changes were marked by the emergence of feudal lords and warriors as distinctive social

classes in the second half of the eleventh century, on the religious side *hijiri* and *shōnin* established independent religious groups for the first time (INOUE 1971: 213–215). Ignoring this fact, many authors apply the term *hijiri* to a great variety of religious practitioners of earlier times, who were hardly ever called *hijiri* by their contemporaries.

Traditional scholarship has it that a growing number of clerics left the large Buddhist centers in the middle and late Heian period, as a protest against a corrupt and decadent religious establishment, in order to lead pure spiritual lives in secluded places (*bessho* 別所) as *hijiri*. Out of this protest movement emerged the reform movements of the Kamakura period. This view has been challenged by the outstanding historian Kuroda Toshio (according to TAIRA 1996) who claimed that *hijiri* were fundamentally supporters of the system of exoteric-esoteric orthodoxy (*kenmitsu taisei* 顯密体制) with which they maintained an organic relationship. Rather than developing a new Buddhism in opposition against the old schools, “in most cases it was their single-minded devotion to the *kenmitsu* teachings that led them to separate themselves from the main temples” (TAIRA 1996: 436). Based on his agreement with Kuroda’s assertion that the *hijiri* of the Heian period “served a supplementary role in the existing system”, TAIRA Masayuki (1996: 436) sees “the teachings of Shinran, not as a development of Heian-period *hijiri* thought and Pure Land Buddhism, but as a rejection of them”. Although Kuroda and Taira have undoubtedly contributed to the understanding of the role played by extramonastic Buddhists in the Heian period in the dynamic developments that took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they failed to provide a new definition of the concept of *hijiri* itself.

Unfortunately, the same holds true for the more recent works of buddhologists, which do not remarkably step beyond the ideas of Inoue, Hori, or Gorai. In his “Historical Study of *Hijiri* and *Setzuwa*”, for instance, HIRABAYASHI Moritoku (1981: 161) adheres to the sentiment that the Heian-period *hijiri* played a significant role in the proselytization of the populace, especially in their function as propagators of Pure Land faith, and paved the way for the Kamakura reform movements. ITŌ Yuishin’s (1995) two-volume “Study of the History of *Hijiri* Buddhism” is another example of the longevity of the traditional views. As a scholar of the Jōdo-shū 浄土宗 (Pure Land Sect), Itō also stresses the contributions of *hijiri* to the development of an independent Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Like Hori and Hirabayashi,¹⁰ ITŌ (1995: I, 7–8)

10 HIRABAYASHI (1981: 3) distinguishes two groups of *hijiri*, the “*hijiri* of the market-place” (*shichū no hijiri* 市中の聖), represented by Kōya and Gyōen 行圓 (10th to 11th centuries), etc., and the “mountain *hijiri*” (*yama no hijiri* 山の聖), represented by Zōga, Shōkū 性空 (910?–1007) and Kōkō 高光 (10th century), etc.

maintains that the world of *hijiri* and *shōnin* – according to him synonymous designations for the successors of the proselytizing *shami* and *ubasoku* of the Nara period (ITŌ 1995: 37)¹¹ – could be divided into two major groups: (1) the “mountain *hijiri*” (*yama no hijiri* 山の聖) or *shugenja* 修験者 who lived in seclusion and engaged mainly in healing and the prevention of calamities, and (2) the “village *hijiri*” (*sato no hijiri* 里の聖) or *nenbutsusha* 念佛者, who engaged in funerals and who cared for the spirits of the dead. According to Itō magic (*jujutsu-sei* 呪術性, activism (*kōdō-sei* 行動性), and laicism (*zaizoku-sei* 在俗性) were the characteristic features of the Heian period *hijiri*.

The extremely inclusive, inaccurate, and often ahistorical usage of the term *hijiri*¹² has clearly hampered a correct understanding of the actual appearance, practice, and conduct of this distinctive group of religious specialists. Consequently, to gain an unbiased insight into the actual character of the Heian-period *hijiri*, we should first of all take a new look at them by confining ourselves to the treatment of only those persons who were actually denoted as *hijiri* in that period.

3. *The appearance of hijiri in the setsuwa literature: a quantitative analysis*

Contrary to what the above-mentioned authors suggest, the number of *hijiri* in the *setsuwa* literature of the Heian period is astonishingly low. Nevertheless, HAYAMI Tasuku (1996: 6) claims that *hijiri* existed even in the Nara period and appeared in early Heian texts.

Monks and *ubasoku* 優婆塞 (self-ordained monks) who practiced austerities in the mountains, or who preached to the common people in the villages, were not unknown in the Nara and early Heian periods. Such monks, the so-

11 ITŌ (1995: I, 38–39) does not provide any new or convincing argument for his assertion that *shōnin* and *hijiri* were the same, but only repeats the old erroneous view that the terms must have been synonymous because various practitioners were alternately called both *hijiri* and *shōnin* in the same text.

12 The inaccurate and ahistoric usage of the term *hijiri* merely exemplifies a very frequent problem of Japanese buddhological terminology. Terms from the Buddhist object-language are transferred to contexts and applied to phenomena that would have never been denoted by that term on the level of the respective object-language. Such terms thereby gain the status of a meta-language without being consciously and critically defined as such. It is almost impossible to decide whether such terms are Buddhist terms (in the sense that they are used and defined by Buddhists) or buddhological terms (used and defined on a scholarly basis). This dilemma, which often hampers an appropriate interpretation of historical developments, only reflects the dilemma of Japanese buddhology which is for the most part dominated by outspoken Buddhists (in many cases ordained priests) who do not clearly distinguish between the spheres of their sectarian beliefs and “pure” scholarship.

called *hijiri* 聖, appear for example in the stories of the *Nihon ryōiki* ... (HAYAMI 1996: 6)

However, in the 116 stories that are contained in *Nihon ryōi-ki* (hereafter *Ryōi-ki*), the term *hijiri* appears only three times and in a completely different sense from that indicated by Hayami. The rarity of *hijiri* in this text may be explicable by the fact that it was written by Kyōkai 景戒 (dates unknown) in the early Heian period (probably during the Kōnin era, some time between 810 and 824). As we have seen, according to Inoue the *hijiri* did not establish themselves as a distinctive religious group before the second half of the eleventh century. In the same way HORI (1958: 199) maintains that, “*Hijiri* as a specifically religious concept came into existence in the middle of the Heian Period, succeeding the formed *ubasoku* (*upāsaka*) *zenji* group of the Nara Period ...”. Thus it is not surprising that Kōya is the only person in *Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki* 日本往生極樂記 (“Records of Japan[ese] who have attained birth in the Pure Land”; written by Yoshishige no Yasutane around 986) who is called *hijiri*. However, the share of *hijiri* in subsequent *ōjō-den* 往生傳 (“[collected] accounts of [people’s] births in the Pure Land”) of the so-called Insei period 院政時代 (1086–1185) does not greatly increase, despite the common assertion that *hijiri* figured most prominently in the *ōjō-den* of this era (see, for example, JŌDOSHŪ KAISHŪ HAPPYAKUNEN KINEN SHUPPAN 1974, III: 207c). The only texts in which *hijiri* play a major role are Chingen’s 鎮源 (dates unknown) *Dainihon hokke-kyō genki* 大日本法華經驗記 (“Records of miraculous signs [linked with the] *Lotus Sūtra* in Great Japan”; compiled between 1040 and 1044) and Ōe no Masafusa’s 大江匡房 (1041–1111) *Honchō shinsen-den* 本朝神仙傳 (“Life accounts of Japanese immortals”; compiled around 1100).

The striking discrepancy between the suggested and the actual number of stories about *hijiri* is clearly due to the error of treating everyone who either matches with one or more of the numerous and rather vague criteria given above, or is called *shōnin*, *shami*, *ubasoku*, etc.,¹³ as a *hijiri*. To my knowledge, it was INOUE (1971: 215) who in 1971 for the first time realized that he had made a mistake when he treated *hijiri* and *shōnin* as synonyms for the same type of rankless and extramonastic devotees of Buddhist practices. A thorough investigation of the relevant source materials had led him to the conclusion that the term *hijiri* was applied to people who practiced arduous asceticism in the solitude of mountains and forests while those who actively spread Buddhist beliefs among the populace in towns and villages were called *shōnin*. If

13 By classifying even high-ranked clerics such as “vicar general” (*sōzu* 僧都) Genshin as a *hijiri*, HORI (1958: 3) reduces the criteria for being a *hijiri* to a practitioner’s resolution to concentrate on his studies and his practice in some more remote temple instead of being in the limelight and seeking fame and profit.

combined with Hori's distinction between the "individualistic or self-perfectionistic" *hijiri* of the "Lotus Sutra school" and the "evangelistic" *Amida hijiri*, Inoue's distinction between *hijiri* and *shōnin* seems to indicate that the former group tended to be affiliated with the Lotus cult while the latter stressed the practices centered on the Amida cult. This thesis is seemingly backed up by the fact that the number of *hijiri* among the *jikyōsha* portrayed in *Dainihon hokke-kyō genki* 大日本法華經驗記; hereafter *Hokke genki*) is much higher than among the Amida devotees in any of the *ōjō-den*. Furthermore, even in present times priests of the Nakayama wing 中山門流 of the Nichiren-shū 日蓮宗 – which is, as we have seen, regarded as an offspring of the *jikyōsha* movement by Hashikawa, Inoue, and others – practice severe asceticism in the mountains in order to obtain the power to act as exorcists,¹⁴ while such a magico-religious drill is unknown in the Pure Land denominations.

Although I do not completely agree with the way Inoue distinguishes between *hijiri* and *shōnin*, for the reasons given below, I believe that the very act of distinguishing the terms as such could have contributed considerably to a more accurate understanding of *hijiri*. Unfortunately, however, it seems that Inoue's revision did not affect subsequent scholarship.¹⁵ Even Inoue himself reiterates the old mistake of blurring the two appellations in the same book when he tries to show that the appearance of *hijiri* and *shōnin* in relation to that of ordinary monks (*shamon* 沙門; Skt *śramaṇa*) was particularly high in the table of contents of the *Hokke genki* and the *ōjō-den* of the Insei period. From this he concludes that *hijiri* and *shōnin* constituted a distinctive socio-religious group from the second half of the eleventh century onwards (INOUE 1971: 213–215).

14 "[T]he hundred days *aragyō* or rough austerities ... is carried out every winter either on the summit of Mt Minobu ... or in a secluded temple [the Aragyō-dō 荒行堂 in which the goddess Haritī – J. Kishimojin 鬼子母神 – is enshrined] in the precincts of the Hokekyōji in Chiba prefecture.... [T]he hundred days *aragyō* [荒行] start on November the 1st and continue throughout the coldest days of winter until well into the following February. ... The days [sic] starts at 3 a.m. with a bout of cold water *mizugori*. The exercitant priests, wearing only a loincloth, tip over their heads tub after tub of cold water. This exercise is repeated every three hours until 9 a.m., making in all seven times a day The rest of the time is entirely taken up with the chanting of the Lotus Sutra and with practice in the use of the bokken or magic castanets ... held to have a powerful effect on spiritual being. ... [T]he Nichiren regime is one of the most taxing and exhausting still to be found in Japan" (BLACKER 1975: 302). Already in *Genpei seisui-ki* 源平盛衰記 (XVIII) it is reported that *aragyō* was conducted in the middle of the twelfth month on Mt Kinpu in Kumano. According to this text, the practitioners took vows under the famous waterfall of Nachi for a period of seven days (BDJ 99c–100a).

15 Admittedly, I am no exception. In my study on Hōnen (KLEINE 1996), I did not distinguish between *hijiri* and *shōnin* and thus concluded that Hōnen's *senju nenbutsu* group was a *hijiri* community. Although I maintain in principal my interpretation of the historical events examined in the study, I would now refrain from applying the term *hijiri* to Hōnen and his followers.

Although I agree in general with Inoue's thesis, the argument he presents is questionable at best. First of all, the table of contents does not in every case completely correspond with the main text in terms of what the protagonists are called. Secondly, despite Inoue's claim that *shōnin* and *hijiri* are distinguishable religious types, he again lumps them together in his calculation. Among the twenty-five persons of the *hijiri/shōnin* group – as opposed to sixty-three of the *shamon* group – there is only one *hijiri* (“a priest of Gangō-ji called *hijiri* from Iga” in *Honchō shinshū ōjō-den* #34).¹⁶ Thirdly, the designations *hijiri*, *shōnin*, and *shamon* by no means contradict each other. All three terms can in fact be applied to one person in the same text. (To be sure, this does not mean that they are used synonymously.) In the main text of *Zoku honchō ōjō-den* (#30, see also *Shūi ōjō-den* III #21), for instance, there appears one *hijiri* who is called “Shamon [sic] Nichien 沙門日圓” in the table of contents.¹⁷

Thus if we insist on the distinction between *hijiri* and *shōnin*, which I assertively do, we are confronted with the bare fact that there is only one *hijiri* in the tables of contents in all *ōjō-den* of the Insei period and there are only slightly more in the texts themselves. The almost complete absence of *hijiri* from *Zoku honchō ōjō-den*, for instance, can be explained neither by the date of its compilation nor by the personal predilection of its author. In *Shinsen-den*, also written by Ōe no Masafusa at around the same time, *hijiri* figure quite prominently. Furthermore, the relatively rare appearance of *hijiri* in the two collections of birth accounts compiled by Miyoshi no Tameyasu 三善爲康 (1049–1139) – *Shūi ōjō-den* 拾遺往生傳 (“Gleanings of birth accounts”; first scroll not before 1099, third scroll not before 1111) and *Go shūi ōjō-den* 後拾遺往生傳 (“Later gleanings of birth accounts”, compiled 1137) does not indicate a rapid growth of the *hijiri* movement, nor a strong affiliation of *hijiri* with the Pure Land cult from the first half of the twelfth century. In all likelihood, the frequency of *hijiri* in texts of this period depends mainly on the character and function of the respective texts rather than on the actual number of *hijiri* in the religious world of ancient Japan. Contrary to the common view, it was apparently not the genre of *ōjō-den* that dealt preferably with *hijiri*, but texts which centered on devotees of the *Lotus Sūtra* and Daoist immortals.

16 The exact figures are: *Zoku honchō ōjō-den*: *shamon* 11, *shōnin* 1; *Shūi ōjō-den*: *shamon* 19, *shōnin* 8; *Go shūi ōjō-den*: *shamon* 4, *shōnin* 12; *Sange ōjō-ki*: *shamon* 11, *shōnin* 3; *Honchō shinshū ōjō-den*: *shamon* 18, *hijiri* 1.

17 Further examples for the titles *shamon* and *hijiri* being applied to the same person are: Kyōkai Shōnin 教懷聖人 (1001–1093) who is introduced as Shamon Kyōkai in the main text and also called “Odawara no Hijiri” 小田原聖 (*Shūi ōjō-den*.I #10); Rentai Shōnin 蓮待上人 who is also presented as Shamon Rentai and called “Iwakura no Hijiri” 石藏聖 by the laity (*Shūi ōjō-den* I #17); and Shamon Yōsen 沙門永暹, who is called “Nyohōgyō Hijiri” 如法經聖 by the people (*Go shūi ōjō-den* II #11).

Next, I would like to analyze the contents of the texts in question in order to find out what kinds of practitioners were really perceived as *hijiri* and why I maintain that the terms *hijiri* and *shōnin* have different meanings, although they are in many cases applied to one person in the same story.

4. The portrayal of *hijiri* in *setsuwa* literature: a qualitative analysis

4.1 Early usages of the term *hijiri*

Although the subject matter of this study is primarily the concept of *hijiri* in the Heian period, in order to understand its historical development better the usage of the term in the Nara and early Kamakura periods should also be taken into account. It should be noted, however, that these sidelong glances are rather limited in range.

Despite the fact that “*Hijiri* as a specifically religious concept came into existence in the middle of the Heian Period” (HORI 1958: 199), the term itself was by no means unknown in the Nara and early Heian periods. Yet its meaning in early texts such as *Kojiki* 古事記 (completed 712), *Nihon shoki* 日本書記 (completed 720), *Man'yōshū* 萬葉集 (late eighth century), etc., differs considerably from that in *setsuwa* texts of the Heian period.

Etymologically the noun *hijiri* originally meant “someone who knows the sun”. In *Man'yōshū* (I #29; NKBT 4: 27), for example, the term is actually represented by the compound 日知[り], constituted by the noun *hi* 日, “sun”, and *shiri* 知り, a nominalized form of the verb *shiru*, “to know”.¹⁸ Thus, the connection of the concept of *hijiri* with astrological knowledge is quite obvious. GORAI (1990: 29), on the other hand, who regards *hijiri* as “representatives of a primitive religiosity” (*genshi shūkyōsha* 原始宗教者), suggests that the term was originally applied to those who controlled the fire (火治), but produces no evidence to back up his thesis.

HORI (1958: 129–130) has convincingly pointed out that “early usages of *Hijiri* strongly suggest the themes of sacred magic kingship”, and therefore, “this word was used as an euphemism for the Emperor”. Closely related to this usage is its application to the inhabitants of the Eternal Country underneath the sea (*tokoyo no kuni* 常世國), where, according to Japanese mythology, the spirits of outstanding persons go after death. Consequently, *Kojiki* (KAMSTRA 1967: 448) and *Nihon shoki* (VI; NKBT 67: 280) call the spirits of dead emperors *hijiri*

18 See also *Shigisan engi shisho* 信貴山縁起詞書 (I; compiled by Jakuren 寂蓮, d. 1202), where *hijiri* – denoting a practitioner on Mt Shigi who never even visited a village and who was capable of letting his bowl fly – is written 日しり. An interlinear explanatory remark is added, saying that 日しり means 聖 (DBZ 119.1b).

using the Chinese characters 神仙 (Ch. *shenxian*), which in Daoism, however, denote recluses who have gained extreme longevity or even immortality. In China the term *shenren* 仙人 was frequently used as a synonym for 神仙 (see also KNAUL 1981). Analogously to the Chinese usage the compound 仙人 was occasionally read as *hijiri* in Japan.

4.2 Hijiri in Nihon ryōi-ki

In *Ryōi-ki*, which is thought of as the oldest *setsuwa* collection, the term *hijiri* does not yet denote a certain type of religious practitioner. Following a story in *Nihon shoki* (XXII; NKBT 68: 198–200), in the fourth account of the first scroll, Prince Shōtoku's ability to recognize a starving beggar he encounters at the roadside near Kataoka 片岡 as a venerable sage or saint is commented upon as follows: “We learn that a sage 聖 recognizes a sage” (誠知聖人知聖, NKBT 70: 78; trans. NAKAMURA 1973: 110).¹⁹

Furthermore, the famous “Bodhisattva Gyōgi” (or Gyōki) 行基菩薩 is called *keshin no hijiri* 化身聖 in *Ryōi-ki* (II #29; NKBT 70: 264) which may be translated as “manifestation or incarnation of a holy being”, namely of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, which follows from another passage where it is said: “The Most Venerable [*daitoku* 大德] Gyōgi ... is an incarnation of Bodhisattva Monjushiri” [*Monjushiri no henge* 文殊師利反化] (I #5; NKBT 70: 86; NAKAMURA 1973: 115).²⁰ In modern scholarship Gyōgi is generally viewed as a

19 SAKAMOTO et al. (1970) interpret the respective account in *Nihon shoki* as “聖の聖を知ること、これ實なるかな” (NKBT 68: 200). I rather subscribe to Nakamura's translation of the corresponding and almost identical passage in *Nihon ryōi-ki* which accords with the *kakikudashibun* reading of ENDŌ and KASUGA (1989): “誠にする、聖人は聖を知り” (NKBT 70: 79). See also J. Dobbin's translation in KURODA (1996: 245). The unknown beggar in this story was from early times identified with Bodhidharma, the legendary “first patriarch” of Chinese Zen. In accordance with the Chinese monk Situo 思託 (d. 805; see DBZ 101.53*b*), who followed his teacher Jianzhen 鑑真 (687–763) to Japan in 753, Saichō's disciple Kōjō 光定 (779–858) maintained in his *Denjutsu isshin kaimon* 傳述一心戒文 (T#2379), Shōtoku was a reincarnation of Huisi of Nanyue 南嶽慧思 (515–577), the alleged second patriarch of the Tiantai tradition and teacher of Zhiyi, the “Great Master of Tiantai” (T 74: 654*b*10–11). Yasutane in his *Gokuraku-ki* only maintains that Shōtoku had in ten preceding incarnations lived in Nanyue where he practiced Buddhism (NST 7: 2). According to *Shinsen-den* #2, Shōtoku's identity with Huisi was recognized by the Korean monk Illa 日羅 (NST 7: 57). Kōjō interprets Shōtoku's encounter with the dying beggar as the fulfillment of Huisi's prediction he is said to have made when he allegedly met Bodhidharma, that both of them would be reborn in Japan where they would meet again (T 74: 653*b*–654*b*). There is still a temple dedicated to Bodhidharma on the hill of Kataoka (Nara prefecture) (see also FAURE 1987: 265). FAURE (1987: 265) refers to a passage in *Kojiki* in which “... a strange, starving beggar” is “considered a Taoist immortal”. I have been unable to identify this passage and thus do not know which term Faure translates as “Taoist immortal” here.

20 *Hokke genki* reads: “When the emperor built the Tōdaiji Temple, he ordered Gyōgi to offer a dedication service for the temple as a lecturer. Gyōgi replied that he would not be able to

prototype of all subsequent *hijiri*, although it is obvious from the account in *Ryōi-ki* that he was not called *hijiri* because of his particular religious conduct but rather because people believed that he was a great saint and an incarnation of Mañjuśrī.²¹

The third case in which Kyōkai uses the term *hijiri* in his *Ryōi-ki* is somewhat surprising, since it is the only instance I know of a woman being called a *hijiri*: a nun who does not only stand out above ordinary human beings because of the extraordinary circumstances of her birth and her exceptional knowledge but also because “[i]n her deformed body there was no vagina but only an opening for urine. Foolish laymen mocked her, calling her ‘Saru-hijiri’ 猴聖²² ...” (III #19; NKBT 70: 368; NAKAMURA 1973: 247).

Thus the term *hijiri* was evidently used as a rather unspecific honorific appellation to denote variant kinds of outstanding persons who were highly venerated by their contemporaries. Their only common characteristic was their personal charisma, which clearly distinguished them from ordinary human beings.

4.3 Hijiri in Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki

Even more than one and a half centuries after the compilation of *Ryōi-ki* the honorific title *hijiri* was very rarely used. Yoshishige no Yasutane in his *Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki* (completed around 986) renders the hagiography of the prominent itinerant priest Kōya (903–972), who, in his youth as a lay Buddhist (*ubasoku*) visited holy mountains and caves, engaged in severe asceticism, and

serve as a lecturer at such a great meeting, but that a holy man [*shōja* 聖者] from a foreign country would come to offer the service. When the day arrived, Gyōgi said that they should welcome the holy man... Gyōgi took the hundredth place among the priests and boarded a boat ... After a while ... they saw a small boat approaching ... As the boat arrived at the shore, an Indian priest stepped on the beach. Seeing this, Gyōgi raised one of his hands, smiled at the Indian priest, and recited a poem, ‘The truth of the words vowed before Śākyamuni at Vulture Peak did not die and we have met again.’ The holy man from the foreign country responded by reciting a poem, ‘As promised to each other at Kailavastu I can now see the face of Mañjuśrī.’ ... Gyōgi said to the priests and laymen in his presence that the holy man was Bodhisena, a priest from South India. The people gathered at the place now knew that Gyōgi was an incarnation of Mañjuśrī.” (*Hokke genki* #2; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 29; see also *Konjaku monogatari* XVII #37)

21 Later in *Konjaku monogatari* (XI #2) it simply says, “in the great country of Japan there once lived a *hijiri* named Gyōgi bosatsu” (see also XVII #36).

22 The origin and exact meaning of the name Saru Hijiri is rather obscure. ENDŌ and KASUGA (1989: 114, note 3) suggest that the name refers to the year in which the nun was born (the year of the monkey; *saru*). In ancient Japan it was a common practice to call people in accordance with the year of their birth. The term *saru*, however, was also used as a synonym for *yuna* 湯女 (a prostitute who worked at a public bathhouse or a hot spring), which could indicate that Saru Hijiri was formerly a prostitute. For reasons unknown to me Nakamura interprets the name as meaning “False-sage”.

travelled around the country to preach to the populace and cremate abandoned corpses while chanting the nembutsu:

He constantly chanted the name of Amida Buddha, for which reason he was called ‘the holy man of Amida’ [Amida Hijiri 阿彌陀聖]. And because he lived in the streets of the city and performed Buddhist acts there, he was also called the ‘holy man of the streets’ [literally “holy man of the market-place”: Ichi Hijiri 市聖]. (*Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki* #17; NST 7: 28; trans. KOTAS 1987: 348)

Japanese scholars regard Kōya as the ancestor of a broad movement of itinerant priests who spread the nembutsu as a magically effective practice among the populace, thereby contributing significantly to the popularization of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Accordingly, those agents of a popular Pure Land movement, which eventually culminated in the formation of the *senju nenbutsu* group around the Tendai monk Hōnen-bō Genkū 法然房源空 (1133–1212; better known as Hōnen) in the early Kamakura period, are generally called “*Amida hijiri*” like Kōya. It is thus suggested that the designation “*Amida hijiri*” was a technical term applied to an increasing number of practitioners of a certain type rather than being a byname for one particular historical person. It has become a generally accepted view that after Kōya’s appearance there was a “dramatic increase in the number of ‘*Amida hijiri*’ who walked about and styled themselves in that [i.e. Kōya’s] fashion” (KURODA 1996: 259). As we will see below, however, in far more than one thousand *setsuwa* tales the term *Amida hijiri* hardly ever appears, not to mention the term *nenbutsu hijiri* which is synonymously used by modern scholars.

4.4 Hijiri in Dainihonkoku hokke-kyō genki

Chingen’s *Hokke genki* is presumably the most fruitful source for the study of *hijiri* in the Heian period. In this text, which emphasizes the miraculous powers of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the merits gained by its veneration, more than fifteen *hijiri* are portrayed. In approximately 12% of the total number of 129 stories *hijiri* play a more or less important role. The common characteristic features of those persons called *hijiri* in *Hokke genki* are easily determinable. In all cases the term denotes monks who abandoned secular life (*shukke* 出家) for a second time, i.e. who forsook both the secular spheres of the laity and the clerics to lead a real spiritual life in mountain solitude. The established monasteries in the eleventh century were apparently perceived as completely corrupt and secularized. Most monks, sons of the nobility, were more interested in material wealth than in religious merits, and a high clerical rank was seemingly more desirable than a high rank in the netherworld. Daily religious practice consisted

for the most part of esoteric rituals for the sake of the emperor and the nation and aimed to a much lesser extent at spiritual perfection of the individual. The situation was probably even worse for monks of lower descent, who functioned as servants responsible for the preparation of the rituals, cleaning and maintaining the temples and gardens, and so forth. As a result of this situation many monks left their monasteries and secluded themselves in the solitude of holy mountains such as Mt Atago 愛宕護山, Mt Hira 比良山, Mt Shosha 書寫山, Mt Mitake 御嵩 (Kinpusen 金峰山), Nikō 二荒, or Jikō 慈光 where they zealously devoted themselves to esoteric and ascetic practices.

The mountain ascetic Yōshō 陽勝 who gained supernatural powers and proceeded to the rank of an immortal (*sennin* 仙人) thanks to his asceticism, may serve as a typical example of the *hijiri* portrayed in *Hokke genki*. Furthermore, in this account the hermit's disgust for the monastic life is expressed rather drastically. On Mt Hiei he had studied Tendai doctrines and memorized the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Later Yōshō went to seek the ancient haunts of hermits [*hijiri* 仙] in Mount Mitake and sequestered himself south of the capital in Mutaji Temple to learn the way of hermits [*hijiri* 仙]. First he avoided cereals and ate only greens. Second, he ate fruits and nuts instead of greens. Soon he only took a grain of millet a day, wore vines as a robe, and completely lost interest in food and clothes forever. He solely concentrated on attaining the way with a great faith. ... On one occasion, the ascetic Priest [*rengyō no sō* 練行僧] Onshin of Mount Yoshino said that Yōshō had become a bloodless and fleshless hermit with a strange bony frame covered by unusual hair, and that he had seen Yōshō flying²³ with two wings like a phoenix or a fiery horse near the summit north of Ryūmonji Temple. ... An old man of Mount Hiei said that Yōshō visited the mountain annually in the eighth month, listened to the recitation of the Buddha's name, and paid his respects to the Great Master Jikaku. He never came at other times. When asked the reason, Yōshō responded, "Mount Hiei is filled with the hot fire of bribery by donors and believers and I can not

23 The ability to fly belongs to the standard repertoire of Daoist immortals, but also in Chinese Buddhist texts flying *sennin* 仙人 can be found. In the Huiyuan biography of *Wangsheng xifang jingtu ruiying shanzhuan* 往生西方淨土瑞應剛傳 (#1), for instance, it is reported that a *sennin* sat on a cloud and listened to the sermons held on the occasion of the founding of a confraternity of monks and lay-believers on Mt Lu which later came to be known as the "White Lotus Association" (*byakurensha* 白蓮社) (JZ-Z 16: 2). Furthermore, the concepts of the flying immortal and a Pure Land believer's disappearing into the western direction were apparently linked by the Chinese. In Daojing's 道鏡 and Shandao's 善道 *Nianfo jing* 念佛鏡 (T#1965), for instance, it says: "From ancient times there have been famous Sages 賢 who completely relied on the nembutsu ... When the lives of Daochuo 道綽 and Daozhen 道珍 had ended they withdrew on clouds [like] immortals 仙" (T 47: 121a).

bear the vulgar smell of the various priests in the mountain.” (*Hokke genki* #44; NST 7: 108–109; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 70–71)

The resolution to abandon the secularized monastic life for a life in seclusion is absolutely typical of *hijiri* as portrayed in *Hokke genki*. Some travelled from one holy mountain to another, but most of them dwelt constantly (or at least for a long period)²⁴ in a simple hut or a cave in one particular mountain. They avoided contact with human beings, as did, for instance, Renjaku 蓮寂, “a most unusual *hijiri* of skin and bones wearing green moss for clothing” who kept a priest away from his cave, saying, “Don’t come close to me, but keep at a distance The smoke of the secular world gets into my eyes and causes me to shed tears. The smell of blood distresses my nose” (*Hokke genki* #18; NST 7: 76; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 47).

The *hijiri* engage in the *Lotus Sūtra* cult which consists mainly of the recitation of that scripture and of performing the “rites of repentance (*sange hōhō* 懺悔方法) during the six periods of the day (*rokuji* 六時)”²⁵ (*Hokke genki* I #16) or the “Three Repentance Rites” (*sanbō sanji* 懺法三時)²⁶ (*Hokke genki* III #82). Since the Lotus cult is the central theme of the *Hokke genki*, the prominence of Lotus-related practices in the text is only a matter of course. Nevertheless, the protagonists also engage in other, mostly esoteric practices such as the incantation of *dhāraṇī*, mantras (*Hokke genki* II #65), or of Amida’s name (*Hokke genki* I #38). Abstaining from food to different degrees was obviously an ideal of the ascetic’s life. Some observed the traditional “Hīnayāna precepts” and “hardly took any food after noon” (*Hokke genki* II

24 Due to the specific literary character of *Hokke genki* and similar texts, which basically consist of episodes rather than of full-fledged biographies, it is often not entirely clear whether a *hijiri* spent his whole life after his retreat from the monastery at the same place.

25 Buddhists in East Asia divided the day and their daily practice into six sections, namely (1) *shinchō* 晨朝 (morning; i.e. 6 to 10 a.m.), (2) *nitchū* 日中 (noon; i.e. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.), (3) *nichimotsu* or *nichibotsu* 日没 (afternoon; i.e. 2 to 6 p.m.), (4) *shoya* 初夜 (evening; i.e. 6 to 10 p. m.), (5) *chūya* 中夜 (night; i.e. 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.), and (6) *goya* 後夜 (late night or dawn, i.e. 2 to 6 a.m.). The term *sange* originally means the confession and repentance of sins. In this context, however, the “rite of confession and repentance” probably refers to a specific rite prescribed by Zhiyi in *Fahua sanmei chanyi* 法華三昧懺儀 (T#1941). It includes purification and decoration of the training place, purification of the body, praising the Three Treasures, confession of sins committed by the six sense-organs (i. e. the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind), vowing to transfer one’s merit for the sake of others, circumambulation, the recitation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, contemplation, etc. In the Tendai-shū this rite is performed over a period of twenty-one days. Accordingly, performing the “rite of confession and repentance during the six periods” means that *hijiri* practiced without interruption night and day, probably for twenty-one days, an arduous practice indeed.

26 In all likelihood, this is a moderate version of the repentance rite described above, performed during the three periods of morning, noon, and afternoon (i. e. from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.), thus giving the practitioner the opportunity to rest at night.

#75);²⁷ some “spent days without meals” (*Hokke genki* II #45) or “only had a bowl of gruel during a few days, and at other times spent several nights having only a cup of tea” (*Hokke genki* I #16); some “abstained from cereals, and ate only greens” or even “only took a grain of millet a day” (*Hokke genki* II #49). Abstaining from cereals or grains (*kokudachi* 穀斷) was evidently a rather typical practice of *hijiri*. Even in the Kamakura-period *setsuwa* collection *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 this diet is closely linked with *hijiri*, as can be seen from the case of a family that scolds the head of the household because of his strange behavior, saying, “What a crazy thing to do, father ... even the saintliest of holy men who refuse to eat grain [*kokudachi no hijiri* 穀斷の聖] would hardly do this kind of thing ...” (*Uji shūi monogatari* II #6; NOMURA 1971: 91; trans. MILLS 1970: 172). Originally, the avoidance of grains was a custom of Daoist hermits who strove for immortality. In Daoism the “human body was believed to harbour by nature three parasitical worms, whose activities would in due course shorten human life. The favourite food of these creatures was the Five Cereals. Abstain from all rice, wheat, millet, barley and beans, therefore, and the worms would be compelled by starvation to leave the body and find a home elsewhere, thus allowing the life of their host to be prolonged” (BLACKER 1975: 86).²⁸

A primary goal of the *hijiri*'s asceticism was clearly the attainment of supernatural powers. This does not mean, however, that their orientation was completely this-worldly. *Hokke genki* bears witness to a broad interest in the postmortal fate of the individual. Superhuman powers proved the spiritual accomplishments or holiness of a *hijiri* which consequently lead to an advantageous birth in a Buddha sphere. But they could also directly contribute to the practitioner's spiritual progress. The *hijiri* and *jikyōsha* Renjaku, for example, informs a visitor:

By the assistance of the *Hokekyō*, I see far into the distance, hear the voices of the sentient beings, and perceive all of the Law in my mind. Relying on the *Hokekyō*, I ascend to the Tosotsu Heaven, worship Miroku Buddha, and become familiar with various Buddhas and hear the Law at will (*Hokke genki* #18; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 47–48; cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* XIII #2)

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- 27 In Japan the precept of not eating after noon was invalidated by the Tendai and the Shingon schools, who claimed to observe the ten major and forty-eight minor Mahāyāna precepts (*daijō-kai* 大乘戒) derived mainly from the *Bonmō-kyō* 梵網經 instead of the stricter precepts of the traditional *vinaya* texts (e.g. the *Shibun-ritsu* 四分律), denounced as Hīnayāna precepts (*shōjō-kai* 小乘戒) by the Tendai-shū.
- 28 For a discussion of related beliefs, especially in connection with the Kōshin Rite, see also KOHN (1995a,b). Such diets, however, were also observed by Buddhist ascetics in China. See, for example, *Hongzan fahua zhuan* 弘贊法華傳 (V; T 51: 24b; STEVENSON 1995: 432).

The most frequently mentioned magical accomplishment of the hermits in the *setsuwa* texts in general is their telekinetic control over their jars or begging bowls. Some *hijiri* are capable of making their jars fly to a brook or a well and having them filled with water, others dispatch their bowls to a donor and have them return filled with food. Another variation of this skill is performed by Hijiri Ninkyō 仁鏡: “As he thought of getting water from the valley, of its own accord the jar became full of water” (*Hokke genki* #16; NST 7: 73). Hijiri Shōkū 性空 (910?-1007) of Mt Shosha solves his nutrition problems in a similarly elegant way:

Sometimes he dreamed of having a tray of delicacies. Even after he awoke, his stomach felt full and his mouth held a delicious taste. At another time he dreamed of beautiful white rice appearing from the sutra. He also dreamed that someone brought him something. After awakening, Shōkū actually found various foods besides him. The rice cakes, which he dreamed had appeared from the sutra, tasted as delicious as if they were Heavenly Sweet Dew. (*Hokke genki* #45; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 71)

In this story the *Lotus Sūtra* directly supplies the protagonist with food, while in other cases the ascetic is fed by animals or demons. When, for instance, Renjaku was sitting in his cave reciting the *Lotus Sūtra*, “[m]any animals including deer, bears, monkeys, and birds brought fruits and nuts to the *hijiri* as their offerings” (*Hokke genki* #18; DYKSTRA 1983: 48).

As is indicated in this account, *hijiri* were believed to live in harmony with the natural surroundings that were perceived as hostile by common mortals. They even controlled the visible and invisible forces of their environment. Thus it is said that Genjō 玄常 “spoke in a friendly way to wild boars and deer, and playfully ran with bears and wolves” (*Hokke genki* #74; DYKSTRA 1983: 96). Again,

Ryōsan [良算] ascended Mount Mitake and lived on Tokoro Peak for scores of years during which he recited only the *Hokekyō*, while engaging in difficult ascetic practices. In the beginning demon deities appeared as fearsome figures, but tried in vain to frighten Ryōsan. Later they came to him with offerings of fruits and nuts, and were accompanied by bears, foxes and even poisonous snakes. Sometimes beautiful Heavenly Ladies including Kōtainyo, a *rasetsu* woman,²⁹ descended and paid homage to him by bowing. (*Hokke genki* #49; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 76–77)

29 Kōtai[nyo] 皁帝 [女] (Skt Kuntī) is one of the ten *rākṣasa* (J. *rasetsu* 羅刹) daughters described in the “*dhāraṇī* chapter” of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Originally, the *rākṣasas* were thought of as evil and frightful demons who bewitch and even eat human beings. Eventually, they came to be regarded as protectors of Buddhism. They are believed to dwell in one of the twelve heavenly realms and are depicted as wearing armor, holding

KURODA (1996: 259) has correctly stated that “[t]he term *hijiri* in the medieval context indicated a distinctive lifestyle reflected in clothing, behavior, and dwelling places...”. This probably applies even more to *hijiri* in the ancient context, such as those in *Hokke genki*. Their behavior and favorite dwelling places have already been mentioned. Regarding their clothing, we find quite clear descriptions in *Hokke genki*. Genjō, for instance,

never wore silk nor cotton clothes but only those of paper or bark. Even crossing a river, he would not bother to roll up the skirt of his clothes. He wore no bamboo hat as he walked in the rain and under the sun. Travelling for a short or a long distance, he wore no footwear. (*Hokke genki* #74; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 95)

As we have seen, Renjaku preferred “a green moss for clothing”. Ninkyō “wore torn paper clothes. Sometimes he covered himself with a coarse cloth and a broken straw cape, and at other times wrapped himself in a deerskin” (*Hokke genki* #16; NST 7: 73; DYKSTRA 1983: 45). Again, Ryōsan “used vines and birch bark as his best clothes” (*Hokke genki* #49; NST 7: 116; DYKSTRA 1983: 76).

Although the ideal *hijiri* in principal shunned ordinary human beings, in reality most of them were probably unable to avoid contact with the laity. On the one hand, they depended on the material support of those who admired them or who engaged them as healers, thaumaturgs, exorcists, diviners or soothsayers. The high reputation of the holy hermits, which distinguished them from ordinary monks, caused commoners and, to a greater extent, high nobles to seek their magical help. *Hijiri* Shōkū was even venerated by ex-Emperor Kazan 華山 (968–1008) to the extent that the latter ordered a picture of Shōkū to be made and his manners to be recorded (*Hokke genki* #45).³⁰ Shōkū was, however, somewhat of an exception among the *hijiri* portrayed in *Hokke genki*, as he actively engaged in religious activities among the populace.

After having completed his self-cultivation, Shōkū descended from the recesses of the mountain to cultivate the people. He had lived to practice the Way on Mount Shosha and at other places where many people including the priests and the laymen, the high and the humble gathered like clouds. Their name cards³¹ left with Shōkū were piled up high and their offerings to him

swords in their hands and riding on a white lion. According to the *Lotus Sūtra* they made the following vow: “O World-Honored One! We, too, wish to protect those who read and recite, accept and keep the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, and to keep them from decline and care; so that if any seek the weakness of the teachers of Dharma, they shall not be allowed to get the better of them” (T 9.58a; trans. HURVITZ 1976: 322).

30 For the relationship of Shōkū and Emperor Kazan see HIRABAYASHI (1981: 75–99).

31 *Myōbu* 名簿. It has been a common practice in Japan – not only in Buddhism but also among warriors and academics – to write one’s name on a card and present it to one’s teacher or master, probably as a symbolic act of complete subordination.

were as abundant as the sea water ... (*Hokke genki* #45; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 72)

Likewise, “Genjō thoroughly understood the people’s mind and preached accordingly. He also judged the current situation properly and showed the people the good and bad signs and omens” (*Hokke genki* #75; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 95–96).

It must be noted, however, that Shōkū and Genjō were exceptional figures. Evangelism – according to GOODWIN (1994: 29) one of “two seemingly disparate modes of religious action” performed by *hijiri* – was by no means typical of the *hijiri* of *Hokke genki*, but was nevertheless an option. Even in the interpretative framework of the mainstream of traditional scholarship, their lack of interest in evangelism is not surprising, since the text deals with devotees of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and according to HORI (1968: 103–105) “[t]he Lotus Sutra school *hijiri* was individualistic or self-perfectionistic; the *Amida-hijiri*, evangelistic”.³² While the first part of Hori’s assertion is clearly backed up by *Hokke genki*, evidence for the correctness of his statement about the *Amida hijiri* cannot be found in that text because there are no *Amida hijiri* in *Hokke genki* at all. It is traditionally believed that the *ōjō-den* are major sources for the study of *hijiri* in general (HIRABAYASHI 1981: 2–3) and *Amida hijiri* in particular, and thus we will now turn our attention to this genre.

4.5 *Hijiri* in *Zoku honchō ōjō-den* and *Honchō shinsen-den*

As indicated above Yasutane’s *Gokuraku-ki* turns out to be unproductive for a study on *hijiri*. The second Japanese *ōjō-den* was compiled by the “brilliant and prolific poet and writer, Ōe no Masafusa” (KOTAS 1987: 103) as an installment of Yasutane’s work, and is consequently titled “Continued Japanese Birth Accounts” (*Zoku honchō ōjō-den* 續本朝往生傳). Around the same time (i.e. around 1100) Masafusa compiled another collection of some thirty miraculous hagiographical stories,³³ called *Honchō shinsen-den*, in which *hijiri* figure quite prominently. The title strongly suggests that the text deals with Daoist immortals rather than with Buddhist saints, although among those portrayed in the collection are outstanding Buddhists such as Kūkai 空海 (774–835) and Ennin 圓仁 (794–864). *Shinsen-den* clearly shows that archaic mountain asceticism, Daoist immortality techniques, and arduous Buddhist self-discipline

32 To my knowledge only GORAI (1990: 33) maintains that it was especially the *nenbutsu hijiri* – in contrast to the “Yamabushi-like” *hijiri*, who travelled around – who used to live in secluded hermitages.

33 According to the table of contents of the manuscript, on which the NST edition is based, *Shinsen-den* must originally have contained thirty-seven stories of which eight are lost.

were not strictly distinguished in the early eleventh century and that the concept of *hijiri* comprised elements of each.³⁴

Interestingly enough, in *Zoku honchō ōjō-den* no *hijiri* appear at all. Only in one passage is the term mentioned, in the following context:

Shamon Nichien 日圓 was a Tendai student. Later he developed the longing for enlightenment and hid himself in a deep valley. On Mt Mitake he dwelt in three caves and abstained from eating rice and grains. He was almost equated a 神仙. (*Zoku honchō ōjō-den* #30)

Although it is not quite clear how 神仙 is read here, the characters could have been read *hijiri* as shown above. And indeed, Miyoshi no Tameyasu in his *Shūi ōjō-den* calls Nichien “Hijiri of Mimasaka 美作聖” (*Shūi ōjō-den* III #21). Masafusa’s remark upon the only approximate identity of Nichien and a *hijiri* also demonstrates that the term *hijiri* was used exclusively. A certain lifestyle and appearance was only one prerequisite for gaining the title of a *hijiri*, the other being an extraordinarily high reputation as a saintly figure.

In Masafusa’s *Shinsen-den* – even more than in Chingen’s *Hokke genki* – the concept of *hijiri* – in most cases represented by the character 仙 – merges with that of Daoist “immortals” (*shinsen* 神仙, interestingly enough also read *ikibotoke*, “living Buddha”, here; #8/#11/#24; NST 7: 261/266/272).³⁵ For instance, the twenty-third story deals with an old man in Iyo 伊予 province who had listened to the instructions of a *hijiri* 聖 throughout his long life. He never took any medicine and yet he was old enough to experience the birth and growth of his descendents of the seventh generation. His face, however, looked like that of a man aged about fifty or sixty (NST 7: 271).

A monk from Mt Hira, whose supernatural powers were without comparison, diligently studied the way of a *hijiri* and was able to make his bowl fly through the air at will (#27; NST 7: 273).³⁶ In the twenty-eighth story

34 See also KLEINE and KOHN (forthcoming), “Accounts of Japanese Immortals: A Study and Translation of Ōe no Masafusa’s *Honchō shinsen-den*.”

35 BOHNER (1957: 129) renders the term *shinsen* in his translation of *Honchō shinsen-den* (as incorporated in *Zoku gunsho ruijū* 續群書類從) as “Götter-Genien” or “Gott-Genien”. Thus he accords with ASTON’s (1993: I, 187) rendering of the term *hijiri* (here denoting the inhabitants of Tokoyo no Kuni) as “gods and genii”.

36 When the bowl one day flew to a ship loaded with rice it was intentionally jammed by the sailors who threw a bale of rice on it. This could not keep the bowl from flying back to its master, followed by all the rice bales which were on board. They flew through the sky like wild geese in autumn and returned to the ship after having paid their reverences to the monk. Another bizarre story about the art of making a jar or a bowl fly to and fro is told in *Uji shūi monogatari* (VIII #3). The bowl of a *hijiri* from Shinano 信濃 province flies regularly to the house of a rich man and always returns loaded with food. One day it erroneously gets locked up in the storehouse which does not, however, prevent it from flying home to its master, carrying the whole storehouse with it.

Masafusa tells of eight disciples of the famous *hijiri* Zōga 増賀聖 who studied the way of *hijiri* 仙³⁷ on Mt Atago. Apparently as a result of their abstinence from food their bodies had become so light that a board of cedar wood would not bend when they stepped on it (NST 7: 273–274).

In short, despite a stronger Daoist connotation, the *hijiri* concept of *Shinsen-den* does not differ greatly from that of *Hokke genki*.

4.6 Hijiri in Shūi ōjō-den and in Go shūi ōjō-den

The tendency to use the term *hijiri* rather sparingly is upheld in Miyoshi no Tameyasu's three-volume collection of ninety-four birth accounts called *Shūi ōjō-den*. Although more Buddhist in outlook than *Honchō shinsen-den* – as indicated, for instance, by the exclusive usage of the character 聖 instead of 仙 – the typical characteristics of a *hijiri* remain largely the same. *Hijiri* are depicted as self-disciplined hermits and ascetics, such as Shamon Rentai 蓮待, who as a young man had become a monk at Ninna-ji 仁和寺.

In his advanced years he suddenly developed the Aspiration of the Way. After his retirement [from the monastic life] (*inkyō* 隱居) he changed his name to Rentai. He was called Iwakura no Hijiri 石藏の聖 by the people. Day and night he practiced painful asceticism and from early times on he had never taken a rest. Then, he secluded himself on Mt Mitake and stopped eating salty food so that his body wasted away and his sinews and bones protruded. (*Shūi ōjō-den* I #17; NST 7: 305)

Likewise it is reported that Hijiri Hōen's 法縁聖 – people called him “Naked Hijiri” (*hadaka hijiri* 裸聖), apparently because he refused to wear clothes — “painful ascetic practice was unspeakable” (*kugyō ifubekarazu* 苦行不可言). Interestingly enough, however, in the same account a critique regarding extreme self-reliant asceticism is formulated on the doctrinal basis of Pure Land eschatology.³⁸ One day Hōen, who had established a mountain temple in Echigo 越後 province, encountered Sonnin *gubu* 尊忍供奉,³⁹ a Meditation monk (*zenryō* 禪侶) from the Eastern Section (*tōtō* 東塔) of Mt Tendai (i.e. Mt Hiei), who lived

37 The character is not supplied with *furigana* (kana-letters of the Japanese phonetic syllabary written at the side of ideographs in order to indicate how the character is to be read), but in other passages of that text – as well as in *Hokke genki* (NST 7: 6/126) – the character is read *hijiri* (NST 7: 75).

38 A comparable critique is formulated by priest Eikan 叡桓 of the Anraku-in 安樂院 of Mt Hiei who said, according to *Hokke genki*: “Recent ascetics tend to pay more attention to the external hardships in their practices rather than to the inner experiences in their contemplation and meditation. Some rely on merits gained by offering secular properties and treasures rather than by depending on faith cultivated by following correct precepts...” (*Hokke genki* #46; trans. DYKSTRA 1983: 72–73).

39 The title *gubu* is an abbreviation of *nai gubu* or *nai gubu jū zenji* 内供奉十禪師 and refers to the ten “meditation masters” who functioned as reciters during a vegetarian feast which was regularly conducted in the inner exercise hall (*nai dōjō* 内道場) of the palace from 584.

in the same province and daily recited *Hokkekyō*, *Nin'ōkyō*, *Kanmuryōjukyō*, and *Fudō jikyūju*. Sonnin said to the “Naked Hijiri”:

“Hōen Shōja 聖者, although your painful ascetic practice is valuable there are some doubts concerning your final hour. I have always felt sorry about that.” When [Hōen’s] disciples heard this, they said: “Our master the *shōnin* 師上人 is a *hijiri* who purifies himself by conducting painful ascetic practices 苦行精進の聖. Sonnin *gubu* is a person who lazily conducts his arbitrarily [chosen] practices. He is an ordinary man 凡 and [yet] scolds a saint 聖. This must not be.” When Sonnin heard this, he said: “[The difference between] ‘ordinary’ and ‘holy’ (*bon hijiri* 凡聖) is not to be fathomed by human beings.” When the end of the Naked Hijiri had drawn near he was in agony for several days and died without regaining consciousness. (*Shūi ōjō-den* III #18; NST 7: 373)

In *Shūi ōjō-den* there appears a *hijiri* who, just like Shōkū in *Hokke genki*, differs from the majority of his fellow *hijiri* insofar as he solemnly engages in public religious activities. Shamon Zenpō 沙門善法 (d. 1056) suddenly felt abhorrence towards the world and therefore decided to follow the path of the Buddha, although he was not properly ordained. Without a constant dwelling and dressed in rags he travelled around the provinces from village to village. Wherever he appeared he encouraged monks and laypeople (probably to practice Buddhism and to give donations; *kanjin* 勧進) and organized lectures on the scriptures (*kōkyō* 講經). Under his supervision 60,000 copies of the *Lotus Sūtra* were made. Zenpō was therefore called “Hijiri of the 60,000 volumes” (*rokumanbu no hijiri* 六萬部聖) (*Shūi ōjō-den* III #27).

The account of Zenpō is noteworthy because he is described in a completely different way from the *hijiri* in preceding texts. None of the typical features of earlier *hijiri* is mentioned here. Furthermore, Zenpō is the first figure besides Gyōgi and Kōya who fits the definition of what modern scholars call a *kanjin hijiri*, a fundraising and preaching itinerant priest. The account also indicates that in the eleventh century the “regulations for monks and nuns” (*sōniryō*) had lost their normative power. According to the *sōniryō*, monks were not allowed to change their dwelling places as they pleased.⁴⁰ Also, it was strictly forbidden to “set up [unauthorized] religious establishments and preach to congregations of the people”.⁴¹ INOUE (1989: 227–229) believes that the disintegration of the

40 “When monks or nuns for the purpose of religious meditation wish to purify their minds by solitude and fasting in a mountain retreat they shall make application through the proper channels with the approval of their Superiors. The local authorities must be kept informed of their movements” (§13) (SANSOM 1934: 130).

41 “Monks or nuns who, not residing in a monastery or temple, set up [unauthorized] religious establishments and preach to congregations of the people, or falsely expound good and evil ... shall be expelled from holy orders” (§5) (SANSOM 1934: 128).

sōniryō, which started in the first half of the tenth century, contributed considerably to the dynamism of Buddhist proselytization in the second half of the Heian period. However, Zenzō remains an exceptional figure in comparison to other *hijiri* whose accounts are given in texts prior to *Shūi ōjō-den* and in that collection itself.

Tameyasu further presents a case in his *Go shūi ōjō-den* that resembles that of Zenzō. He renders the story of Shamon Yōsen 永暹, who lived on Mt Gakuen 鰐淵山 in Izumo province 出雲. From early years on he loved nothing but Buddhist practice and sojourned on various holy mountains. He dwelt in Zenzō-ji 善峰寺 as well as in Ten'ō-ji 天王寺. In both temples he repeatedly organized the *nyohōgyō* 如法經, i.e. the production of copies of the *Lotus Sūtra*. His contemporaries therefore called him “Nyohōgyō Hijiri” 如法經聖 (*Go shūi ōjō-den* II #11; NST 7: 658a; see also I #16).

All in all, the accounts of *hijiri* in *Shūi ōjō-den* and *Go shūi ōjō-den* are less informative than those in *Hokke genki* and *Shinsen-den*, as far as the specific religious conduct of *hijiri* is concerned. From the example of Zenzō and Yōsen alone we can hardly conclude that there had been any major change in the concept of *hijiri* in the first decades of the twelfth century. There is, however, one noteworthy difference in Tameyasu's stories about *hijiri* in comparison with those in the preceding works. In each case that Tameyasu presents, he remarks that “people called him So-and-so Hijiri”, as if *hijiri* were nothing more than part of a nickname. The title *hijiri* is never affixed to a personal (i.e. a priest's) name but to something that refers to the person's dwelling place, specific activities, or habits. Unlike Chingen and Masafusa, who used the term *hijiri* to denote a certain type of a religious practitioner who had obtained a state of superhuman holiness, Tameyasu never introduces someone as “Hijiri So-and-so”. It seems that Tameyasu somehow distanced himself from the denotation *hijiri*, thus indicating that he felt not inclined to judge whether the person in question were justifiably perceived as a *hijiri* by the people due to his generally accepted holiness as well as his extraordinary lifestyle and outfit. It might be suggested that Tameyasu witnessed the beginning of an inflated usage of the title and that he somehow felt uncomfortable about this development.

4.7 Hijiri in subsequent texts

Despite the claim made by most authors that the second half of the Heian period saw a dramatic increase in the number of *hijiri* in general and of “Amida *hijiri*” in particular, accounts of *hijiri* become even rarer in the *ōjō-den* subsequent to Tameyasu's works. The only noteworthy story of a *hijiri* in *Sange ōjō-ki* 三外往生記 (“Records of births in the Pure Land outside the three [earlier collections,

i.e. *Gokurak-ki*, *Zoku honchō ōjō-den*, and *Shūi ōjō-den*]; compiled in 1139) is the one about an unknown “Jusui no Hijiri” 入水之聖 from Ōmi province who drowned himself in the presence of a great number of spectators in a lake (most probably Lake Biwa 琵琶湖) in order to be born quickly in Amida’s Pure Land. Before jumping into the water he predicts that if his unscathed body is washed up at the western shore (the direction in which the Pure Land lies) people will know that he has been welcomed to *Sukhāvātī*. If, however, his corpse were to be found at the eastern shore this would indicate that he has been reborn in an evil state. As expected, his disciples find their dead master with the palms of his hands pressed together (*gasshō* 合掌) and his legs in meditation posture (*kekka* 結跏) at the western shore (*Sange ōjō-ki* #26; NST 7: 676b).⁴²

While accounts of *hijiri* in texts from the middle of the twelfth century on are still remarkably rare, they seem to indicate a slight change in the *hijiri* concept. In the eleventh century *hijiri* were virtually without exception depicted as rather strange hermits and ascetics. Now another type seems to become more important; namely the “evangelistic” *hijiri* living in communities of like-minded practitioners. In Fujiwara no Munetomo’s 藤原宗友 *Honchō shinshū ōjō-den* 本朝新修往生傳 (“Newly compiled Japanese birth accounts”; compiled 1151), for instance, there are two quite detailed stories about *hijiri*.⁴³

Story number twenty-three tells of the monk Sengaku 沙門暹覺 (c. 1048–1142) who for a long time lived in a grass hut in a *bessho* northeast of Sūkyō-ji 崇敬寺 in Yamato 大和 province, where he practiced deep meditation and was finally born in the Pure Land. The account provides only scarce information about Sengaku’s religious conduct, but it is noteworthy that he is said to have settled with some disciples in a *bessho* which was supposedly located close to and was affiliated with an official temple. It is not quite clear, however, whether Sengaku’s hut was seen as a *bessho* during his lifetime or only after his death, as the author suggests by his interpolation, “this is the present *bessho* of the Anbai-ji 安陪寺” [probably a misreading of Anbu-ji 安部寺] (NST 7: 688a). If, however, Sengaku actually sought to maintain a loose contact with the Buddhist establishment, his case could indicate a gradual approach of the originally anti-monastic *hijiri* towards the monastic institutions, i.e. a reintegration into the

42 It remains unclear whether this Jusui no Hijiri was perceived as *hijiri* even before his suicide or whether this title was bestowed on him after his death. In the *ōjō-den* there are at least two cases in which the title *hijiri* was apparently applied to a person posthumously (*Go shūi ōjō-den* I #9, III #21). We may assume that in such cases the term *hijiri* was mainly a honorific title.

43 There is a third case in that text in which the “Hijiri from Nakagawa” 中川聖 appears, about whom however, nothing is said except that he functioned as a spiritual death-bed attendant (*zenchishiki* 善知識; see below) (*Honchō shinshū ōjō-den* #30; NST 7: 90b).

Buddhist establishment, from the twelfth century onwards. Such a tendency is also suggested by the thirty-fourth story of the same text about Dōjaku 道寂 (d. 1147), also known as “Iga Hijiri” 伊賀聖. GOODWIN (1994) summarizes the account as follows:

Dōjaku retired from his life as a layman and began a lengthy pilgrimage to holy mountains and famous temples in neighboring Yamato. Eventually he arrived at Gangōji, where he sat in meditation and practiced the nenbutsu. Subsequently he moved to another temple, where he solicited donations for one thousand images of Kannon – probably small wooden figures or woodblock prints. Later on, ‘mustering all his ability and never ceasing his efforts, even for a day,’ he collected donations to have three giant bells cast, giving one to Tōdaiji [東大寺], one to Hasedera [長谷寺], and one to the temple at the holy mountain of Kimpusen [金峰山]. (GOODWIN 1994: 31; *Honchō shinshū ōjō-den* #34, NST 7: 691)

Dōjaku differs from the earlier type of the ascetic hermit, as depicted in *Hokke genki*, *Honchō ōjō-den*, *Shinsen-den*, etc., in the sense that he not only travels to holy mountains but also to famous temples or monasteries. He does not shun the company of human beings, either monks or laypeople. Rather than being a mountain ascetic he represents the religious type of a fundraising *kanjin* priest who collects donations on behalf of, or at least for the sake of, established temples. Furthermore, he is the first *hijiri* besides Kōya to appear in the *ōjō-den* who is said to have practiced the nembutsu.⁴⁴ Alongside the rarity of *hijiri* in the *ōjō-den* of the Insei period, their obvious lack of affinity to the nembutsu is probably the most important point to note for a reevaluation of the significance of *hijiri* for the development and spreading of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan.

The gradual reentry of *hijiri* into the Buddhist institutions, and consequently their increasing public appearance, should, however, not be misinterpreted as a step towards popularization. In all likelihood, it was initially the nobility who were attracted by the alleged magical skills of these strange ascetics to heal illnesses, foretell the future, pacify and dispatch the souls of the dead, etc. Characteristic of the high regard in which the nobility held extramonastic recluses is *Eiga monogatari*'s 栄花物語 account of a religious rite

44 According to *Kōyasan ōjō-den*, Kyōkai, the “Hijiri Kōshō-bō from Odawara” 小田原迎接房聖, likewise practiced – among various other things – a particular form of the nembutsu, namely the *nenbutsu gassatsu* 念佛合殺 (*Kōyasan ōjō-den* #1; NST 7.696a). Literally meaning “combining six” (*satsu* is the transliteration of the Sanskrit word for the number six, *ṣaṣ*), the term *gassatsu* or *kassatsu* refers to a melodic set of six invocations of Amida's name. This practice was probably introduced to Japan by Ennin 圓仁 (794–864) (JŌDOSHŪ KAISHŪ HAPPYAKUNEN KINEN SHUPPAN 1974: 221). In the *Shūi ōjō-den* version there is no mention of Kyōkai practicing any kind of nembutsu whatsoever (*Shūi ōjō-den* I #10).

conducted for the sake of Kenshi, the pregnant wife of Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966–1027).

At the Higashisanjōin, Michinaga selected a propitious date on which to begin constant recitations of the *Great Wisdom*, *Kannon*, *Healing Buddha*, and *Life* sutras. (Readings of the *Lotus* had begun as soon as the Empress's condition was made known.) As reciters he sought out monks who had lived for many years in mountain retreats, recluses who shunned human habitations. Continuous rites were also commissioned by the Court – altogether a most impressive array of prayers. (NKBT 75: 334; trans. MCCULLOUGH and MCCULLOUGH 1980: 343)

How close the contacts between the nobility and *hijiri* sometimes were is clearly demonstrated by the example of Gyōen, the “Skin[-wearing] Hijiri” (*kawa no hijiri* 皮聖),⁴⁵ who was well acquainted with both Masamichi (see *Hokke genki* #101, *Konjaku monogatari-shū* XV #43, *Shūi ōjō-den* II #15, *Go shūi ōjō-den* III #21) and Michinaga. Gyōen participated in the event in the Higashisanjō-in, probably as one of the above-mentioned reciters. At night Michinaga's second son Kenshin 顯信 expressed to Gyōen his desire to become a monk. Despite his grievance about the loss of his son, Michinaga did not develop any grudge against the *hijiri* he admired so strongly (*Eiga monogatari*; NKBT 75: 334–5; cf. MCCULLOUGH and MCCULLOUGH 1980: 343).

However, GOODWIN's (1994: 14) assertion that “[t]he second half of the Heian period saw an explosion of popular evangelism on the part of *hijiri* acting outside formal institutions” can hardly be proved on the basis of the extant source materials. Furthermore, there is no evidence for the alleged appearance of the masses of *Amida* or *nenbutsu hijiri* who – according to Hori, Inoue, Itō, and others – played a decisive role in the proselytization of the populace. As stated above there are no *Amida hijiri* in the *ōjō-den*, *Hokke genki*, etc., except Kōya, and even in the 1,040 stories of *Konjaku monogatari-shū* I could find no more than two *Amida hijiri*. In the second story of scroll seventeen it is said that, “at this time there lived a person whom people called ‘Amida no Hijiri’. Day and night he ran around and encouraged the people to practice the *nenbutsu*” (NKBT 24: 506). Thus we have here a rather rare piece of evidence for the existence of itinerant priests who engaged in *nenbutsu* propaganda (*kanjin* 勧進) among the populace and who were perceived as *hijiri*. The second case in *Konjaku monogatari-shū* is the story about an “Amida no Hijiri” whose outfit is clearly that of a *hijiri*, well known, for example, through popular portrayals of

45 He was also called “Hijiri of Yokawa” 横川聖 or the “Naked Hijiri of Yokawa” 横川皮仙, according to the diary of Fujiwara Sanesugu 藤原實次 (d. 1046), *Shōyūki* 小右記 (entry 999/11/7).

Kōya and Ippen: “to the top of his priest’s staff a deer’s antlers were fixed, he struck a metal fork (*eburi* 杵)⁴⁶ on his backside, beat a small metal drum, and went to numerous places to recommend Amida Buddha ...” (NKBT 26.154–155). Despite his respectable appearance he is actually an evil and greedy person, a robber and a murderer.

Two instructive accounts of the public appearance of *Amida hijiri* can be found in *Eiga monogatari*. In an episode in which the “Myriad-light service” (*mandō’e* 萬燈會)⁴⁷ – organized by Fujiwara no Michinaga on the tenth day of the third or fourth month in the year 1023 in Hōjō-ji 法成寺 – is depicted it says:

Around the hour of the Monkey [3:00–5:00 p.m.], more than 100 monks robed themselves in gorgeous garments and formed a chanting procession, which wended its way around the lake, appearing and disappearing as though passing through groves of trees All the saints [*hijiri* 聖] had come. There was much loud, devout chanting of buddha-invocations from monks [*hōshi* 法師] with names like Shin’amida [新阿彌陀佛] and Zen’amida [前阿彌陀佛] – the sort who always put in a noisy appearance on Ichijō Avenue during the Kamo Festival⁴⁸ – and that too conveyed a feeling of holiness ... (NKBT 76: 109–10; trans. McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980: 588)

This is the first evidence I know for *hijiri* who gathered to recite the nembutsu publicly at certain events. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that they chose the four characters of Amida’s name (*a* 阿, *mi* 彌, *da* 陀, *butsu* 佛) to make up their own religious name. It is traditionally believed that this custom started with the famous commissioner of the campaign for the reconstruction of the Tōdai-ji, Shunjō-bō Chōgen 俊乘房重源 (1121–1206) who allegedly in 1186 (i.e. more than 160 years after the event described in *Eiga monogatari*), following a public lecture by Hōnen in Ōhara,⁴⁹ encouraged the participating

46 In GILES’ (1964, #8507) “A Chinese-English Dictionary” the character 杵 is explained – in accordance with MOROHASHI (1957, #14427) – as follows: “A kind of hark without teeth, used to level the ground where seeds have just been sown”. The meaning of this character in this context is somewhat obscure. According to YAMADA et al. (1959: 154, note 5) it could have been a misreading of another character with the original meaning of a fork or a staff with a forked end.

47 For information on the *mandō’e*, see VISSER (1935: 237–248). In *Go shūi ōjō-den* (I #9, NST7: 47b) there appears a priest named Kankyū Shōnin 觀久上人 (first half of the twelfth century), who is also called Mandō hijiri 萬燈聖 posthumously. This might indicate that he belonged to the group of nembutsu priests mentioned in the *Eiga monogatari* account cited below.

48 For a detailed description of the regular festival of Kamo shrine, which was a major annual event in the Heian period, see McCULLOUGH (1968: 245–247)

49 According to *Shijū hyakuin’en-shū* (IKAWA 1978: 985b) the event took place in 1189. Most sources claim that the meeting was held in the Ryūzen-ji 竜禪寺 / 龍禪寺 of Ōhara, while *Hōnen Shōnin gyōjō ezu* (XIV; IKAWA 1978: 62) claims it was the Shōrin-in 勝林院. On the

priests to choose a character from the *Lotus Sūtra* and combine it with Amida's name to make up their own name.⁵⁰

According to *Eiga monogatari*, Amida *hijiri* were also employed as reciters to take part in the funeral of Michinaga's daughter Kanshi 寛子.

The vanguard was made up entirely of monks – Amida saints, whose distant chants of homage to the buddha evoked poignant feelings of grief. (NKBT 76: 198–9; trans. McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980: 668)

Before rashly jumping to conclusions about the existence of a large number of nembutsu priests who were called *Amida hijiri* in the eleventh century, however, we must be aware of the fact that although *Eiga monogatari* tells of events which took place in 1023 and 1025, the text itself was probably written towards the end of the Heian period. It is possible that the author applies the term *hijiri* to priests who were not called *hijiri* by their contemporaries. There are several examples of men who were not called *hijiri* in texts written shortly after their death but who were so described in subsequent texts, which seems to indicate that it was easier to become a *hijiri* posthumously than during one's lifetime. For instance, in *Hosshin shū* 發心集 (II #4) – compiled between 1211 and 1216 by Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (1153–1216) – Jakushin (Yoshishige no Yasutane) is rendered as “Naiki no Hijiri” 内記の聖⁵¹ and his disciple Jakushō 寂性 (Ōe no Sadamoto 大江定基) as “Hijiri of Mikawa” 三河の聖. In earlier texts

invitation of the future abbot of Enryaku-ji (*zasu* 坐主) and “vice-bishop” (*gonsōjō* 權僧正) Kenshin (1130–1192), Hōnen reportedly explained his nembutsu doctrine to more than 300 listeners. According to an early Hōnen biography (*Genkū shōnin shi'nikki* 源空聖人私日記; IKAWA 1978: 771a; for an English translation see HARA 1997) among the audience there had been famous priests such as Myōhen 明遍 of Kōmyōsen and Gedatsu-bō Jōkei 解脱房貞慶 (later one of the most passionate critics of Hōnen's doctrine). According to *Shōgen myōgi-shō* (III; IKAWA 1978: 845), even the famous Kegon reformer Kōben Myōe 高辨明恵 (1173–1232), another critic of Hōnen, participated in that event; however, this is more than unlikely, since Myōe was only thirteen or sixteen years old at the time.

50 In the sixth scroll of *Gukan-shō* (NKBT 86: 295) it is reported that all disciples of Chōgen, following their master's example, affixed 'Amida-but-su' to their names. According to *Ichigo monogatari* (IKAWA 1978: 775a, see also *Jūrokumon-ki*; IKAWA 1978: 802b) towards the end of Hōnen's sermon in Ōhara Chōgen decided henceforth to call himself 'Namu-Amida-but-su', in order automatically to say the nembutsu when Yama (J. Emma 閻魔), king of the world of the dead, asked him his name after his death. In the *Jōdo-shū* as well as in the *Ji-shū* it was a common practice to affix the syllable 'A' 阿 (as an abbreviation of Amida) to the names of the transmitters of the orthodox teaching (e.g. Ben'a 弁阿, Nen'a 然阿 etc.). In *Genkū shōnin shi'nikki* it is asserted that Kenshin, the host of the so-called Ōhara debate, suggested that every participant choose a character from the *Lotus Sūtra* and combine it with the syllable 'A' to make up their new names (IKAWA 1978: 771b). ITŌ (1995: I, 81), however, provides four more pieces of evidence for the existence of the so-called “Amidagō” 阿彌陀號 prior to the Ōhara debate.

51 This refers to Yasutane's position in the “Inner Secretary [*naiki*], an office within the Nakatsukasa-shō, or Ministry of Central Affairs, that carried with it sixth court rank” (KOTAS 1987: 58–59) and which he held from 978.

such as *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVII #38, XIX #2, XIX #3) or *Zoku honchō ōjō-den* (#31), however, the denotation *hijiri* is completely lacking.⁵² Inaccuracies of this kind are by no means rare, and it can be demonstrated that *Eiga monogatari* contains a considerable number of historical errors (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980: 33). We might assume that the descriptions of religious rites quoted above were influenced by the author's own experiences with similar events in his time when the nembutsu movement swept the country. When he says that "monks with names like Shin'amida and Zen'amida" were of "the sort who always put in a noisy appearance on Ichijō Avenue during the Kamo Festival", he might have been referring to what he himself had witnessed. Be that as it may, alongside the above-mentioned accounts in *Konjaku monogatari-shū*, *Eiga monogatari* serves as evidence for the existence of *Amida hijiri* in the twelfth century when both texts were compiled. However, the accounts do not indicate that the proportion of *hijiri* among the nembutsu movement was particularly large. On the contrary, the fact that among the few *hijiri* who are mentioned in the *ōjō-den* those who practice the nembutsu are extremely few, indicates that the religious activities of *hijiri* were largely dominated by practices other than the nembutsu. Rather than the invocation of Amida's name they were inclined towards recitation of the *Lotus Sūtra* and esoteric practices such as the *Fudō jikūju* 不動慈救呪 and other *dhāraṇī*, fire-rituals such as the *Fudō goma* 不動護摩 and the *Amida goma* 阿彌陀護摩, etc. Furthermore, it is safe to assume that the nembutsu movement was predominantly formed by practitioners other than *hijiri*.

5. The characteristic features of *hijiri*

Before systematically rethinking the prevalent *hijiri* image of modern scholarship in the light of the results gained so far, I feel obliged to make some remarks on the difficulties of obtaining an accurate knowledge through an examination of the *setsuwa* literature.

A serious problem of all research on *hijiri* is that we have virtually no information from official or historical documents, and must therefore, rely almost completely on *setsuwa* texts. As we have seen, even in *setsuwa* literature the number of stories about *hijiri* is rather limited, thus leaving some doubt about how representative the image we gain from them can possibly be. Furthermore, *setsuwa* texts are not historical documents which aim at a precise description of the religious and social phenomenon of *hijiri*. The authors could presuppose that their audience knew what a *hijiri* looked like and what he

52 Sometimes, however, the opposite happens and a person who was called *hijiri* in an earlier text is deprived of that denomination in a succeeding work (e.g. Shōkū in *Hokke genki* #45 and in *Konjaku monogatari-shū* XVII #14).

usually did. In addition, each text was compiled for a specific purpose that determined the focus of the individual accounts it contained. For example, *Ryōiki* was compiled to demonstrate the working of karmic retribution, a concept unknown to pre-Buddhist Japanese; the purpose of *Hokke genki* was to foster the *Lotus Sūtra* cult by showing the magical and spiritual power of that sūtra; the various *ōjō-den* demonstrated the fact that, the circumstances under which, and the reasons why different kinds of people were born in Amida's Pure Land; and *Konjaku monogatari-shū* and comparable *setsuwa* collections mainly aimed at moral edification based on Buddhist teachings. Due to the variant purposes and orientations of the texts, their respective emphases in their portrayal of *hijiri* naturally differ considerably. This means that differences in the description of *hijiri* do not necessarily indicate an evolution in the concept or image of *hijiri*. They might equally reflect the authors' different perspectives. Moreover, most of the texts are only extant as copies often made hundreds of years after the compilation of the respective originals. The possibility of slight deviations (whether caused by unconscious errors or deliberate alterations) from the original cannot be completely denied. This should be kept in mind before rashly presenting all too assertive theories derived from an examination of *setsuwa* texts; which does not mean, however, that I deny the value of these source materials.

In order to determine the concept of *hijiri* as it developed in the Heian period, it might be a good idea to check if and to what extent Gorai's eight characteristic features really apply to *hijiri* as portrayed in the texts under investigation.

(1) *Inton-sei* 隱遁性 (seclusion, retirement)

Retirement from the secular as well as from the monastic world is a common characteristic shared by all *hijiri* in the Heian period. Although it seems that some *hijiri*, especially from the middle of the eleventh century onward, descended from the holy mountains to make use of the magical skills they had acquired by performing various ascetic practices, in order to be accepted as *hijiri* a considerable amount of time spent in solitude was undoubtedly required. Even Kōya, generally perceived as the prototype of socially active *hijiri*, according to the *Eulogy for Kōya* (*Kōya rui* 空也誄; HAYAMI 1996: 9), in his youth travelled to various holy mountains and caves before becoming the "holy man of the market-place".

(2) *Kugyō-sei* 苦行性 (asceticism, arduous practice)

As with seclusion and retirement, arduous asceticism was apparently an inevitable part of every *hijiri*'s life. Their asceticism ranged from the vow to

remain silent, through often non-specified difficult practices, renunciation of food and clothing, to self-mutilation and self-immolation. Only if his endurance was far beyond the average was a practitioner qualified to be called a *hijiri*.

(3) *Yugyō-sei* 遊行性/*kaikoku-sei* 回国性 (itinerancy, mendicancy, travelling around)

The accounts examined do not provide a clear indication that itinerancy was as characteristic of a *hijiri*'s life as were seclusion and asceticism. In particular, travelling from town to town to engage in proselytization and fund-raising activities was apparently rather the exception than the rule. However, it is safe to assume that many *hijiri* were eager to visit as many holy and spiritually powerful mountains as possible and thus could hardly avoid traversing human habitations on their way. From the second half of the eleventh century the tendency to seek contact with the laity to encourage them to conduct religious acts seems to have become stronger. However, the term *yugyō hijiri* – frequently used by Hori, ŌHASHI (1977), and others to denote a certain type of *hijiri* — to my knowledge is nowhere to be found in Heian-period texts.⁵³

(4) *Jujutsu-sei* 呪術性 (magic)

The cultivation of magical skills was certainly one major objective of the *hijiri*'s career. In many cases the use of these skills for the sake of laypeople secured their maintenance. Because the performance of magical arts was strictly forbidden by the *sōniryō*, except for the “cure of sickness by the recitation of spells (mantra) in accordance with Buddhism” (§2),⁵⁴ the gradual disintegration of the *ritsuryō* system in the Heian period may have favored the public emergence of *hijiri* as healers and diviners. As can be seen in *Ryōi-ki*, as early as the ninth century marginal Buddhist figures such as *ubasoku* and *zenji* fulfilled this function (I #31, III #36). It must be noted, however, that there is only scarce evidence for the engagement of *hijiri* in magical healing and exorcism in Heian-period *setsuwa* collections. At least *Uji shūi monogatari* claims that Engi no Mikado 延喜の御門 (i.e. Emperor Daigo 醍醐; r. 901–923) “became seriously

53 It seems that the authors here, as in many other cases, mistakingly took the byname of a concrete historical person – namely Ippen 一遍 (1239–1289), the “Travelling Saint”, in this case – for a type designation. I have come across the term *yugyō hijiri*, denoting an unknown itinerant priest, only once, namely in the forty-eight-volume illustrated biography of Hōnen (*Hōnen shōnin gyōjō ezu*, XVII) compiled in the early fourteenth century, i.e. well after Ippen's death. This might indicate that the unknown *hijiri* in this text was a follower of Ippen's Ji-shū.

54 “Monks and nuns who practise fortune-telling [*kikkyō no uranai* 吉凶の卜占], or pretend to cure illness by exorcism [*majinai* 禁厭] or magic [*fujutsu* 巫術] shall be expelled from holy orders: but this shall not apply to the cure of sickness by the recitation of spells (mantra) in accordance with Buddhism” (§2) (SANSOM 1934: 128).

ill” and sent for a *hijiri* from Mt Shigi 信貴 in Kawachi 河内 province “blessed with the power to work miracles” in order to have his illness cured (*Uji shūi monogatari* VIII #3; trans. MILLS 1970: 286–291).

As rare as accounts of *hijiri* who engage in healing are those of *hijiri* who perform pacification rites for the spirits of the dead. Gorai cites the example of *hijiri* Seitoku 清徳, who “after his mother’s death, put her body in a coffin and carried it by himself to Mt Atago ... and began to perform the rite of circumambulation about it; for three years he did this, all the while reciting the magic incantation to the thousand-armed Kannon” until she finally obtained buddhahood (*Uji shūi monogatari* II #1; trans. MILLS 1970: 161–162). In my opinion, however, it is not reasonable to conclude from this isolated account that *hijiri* regularly performed rites for the dead or even institutionalized a specific funeral system. *Go shūi ōjō-den* (II #19; NST 7: 660*b*) and *Honchō shinshū ōjō-den* (#30; NST 7: 690*b*) mention two *hijiri* (“Koyuya Hijiri” 小湯屋聖 and “Nakagawa Hijiri” 中川聖 respectively) who function as *zenchishiki* 善知識, i.e. deathbed attendants who offer their spiritual aid in order to help the dying person to be born in the Pure Land.⁵⁵ The custom of employing *zenchishiki*, usually based on Pure Land belief,⁵⁶ however, is not directly related to the postmortem pacification rites based on the *goryō* belief.

Magical powers were, however, not only believed to cure illnesses, foretell the future, or pacify souls, but also to gain other secular benefits. *Heike monogatari* tells the story of the ambitious Narichika 成親 who employs a *hijiri* to perform the heterodox *dākinī* ritual (*dagini no hō* 拏吉尼の法)⁵⁷ in a hollow tree on the precincts of the Kamigamo jinja 上賀茂神社 for one hundred days, hoping that this might help him to acquire a desired position (NKBT 32: 122).

(5) *sezoku-sei* 世俗性 (laicism, secularism, worldliness)

Although I could – with the reservations mentioned above – subscribe to Gōrai’s

55 See also *Hosshin-shū* (IV #6/7) in which a *hijiri* is called for by a dying nun.

56 Although the concept of *zenchishiki* (Skt *kalyānamitra*), originally meaning a good and wise companion, can be found as early as in the *Zōichi agon gyō* 増一阿含經 (skt. *Ekottarāgama*) it was particularly important in Pure Land Buddhism. In the *Sūtra of Contemplation on Buddha Amitāyus* (J. *Kan Muryōjubutsu-kyō* 觀無量壽佛經) the circumstances of the death of the lowest beings of the lowest ranks (*gebon geshō* 下品下生) is described as follows: “But this person is too tormented by pain to be mindful of the Buddha. Then the virtuous friend [*zenchishiki*] says, “If you cannot be mindful of the Buddha, you should say that you take refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.” And so with a sincere mind and an uninterrupted voice, this person says ‘Namu Amida Butsu’ manifesting ten moments of thought.” (T 12: 346*a*; trans. YAMADA et al. 1984: 109). Thus, through the help of the *zenchishiki*, the dying sinner finally obtains birth in the Pure Land.

57 A ritual during which one asks heaven for the fulfillment of one’s wishes. The *dākinī* ritual was “much performed by warriors, noblemen or priests anxious for power and wealth” (BLACKER 1975: 55).

assertion that retirement, asceticism, itinerancy, and the performance of magic are characteristic of the lives of most *hijiri*, I resolutely reject his claim that leading a layman's life was an option for *hijiri*. It seems that here again terms and concepts are mingled which should be kept apart. GORAI (1990: 40–41) writes: “The *hijiri* of ancient times were called *ubasoku*, which means that, although they looked like monks, they were in fact Buddhist lay-believers”. As we have seen, however, one characteristic feature of *hijiri* was their second retirement (*saishukke* 再出家), i.e. they not only forsook the life of a householder but also that of an ordinary monk. Only in *Shinsen-den* are there cases of laymen who attained the rank of an immortal (*hijiri* 仙), but only after they had retired from all kinds of secular affairs (#13, #25). As can be deduced from the sources, most *hijiri* were probably correctly ordained monks⁵⁸ who left their monasteries to lead an even stricter religious life than ordinary monastics. This fact is not affected by some remarks in the texts which indicate that, because of their holiness, *hijiri* were not to be judged by the moral standards of society.⁵⁹ Also, it is certainly not true that *hijiri* invalidated the “Hinayāna”-based precepts on the grounds of their insight that Mahāyāna was a religion of the laity as Gorai maintains on page 46. At least in the Heian period, the life of a *hijiri* and that of a householder were absolutely incompatible. Although there are cases in which monks or *shami* lived together with wife and children, celibacy was an imperative aspect of a *hijiri*'s life. Even in the Kamakura period the term *hijiri* was used as a synonym for a purely celibate life. For example, in *Wago tōroku* 和語燈錄 Hōnen is reported to have addressed his disciple Zenshō-bō 善勝房 (1174–1258) with the following words: “If you cannot say [the nembutsu] as a *hijiri* ヒジリ, say it as a married man. If you cannot say it as a married man, say it as a *hijiri*” (T 83.238a). Also, in *Shaseki-shū* 沙石集 (IV.4) – compiled by Mujū Ichien 無住一圓 (1226–1312) between 1279 and 1283 – the term *hijiri* is used as a synonym for an unmarried priest.⁶⁰ This should be kept in mind when

58 Despite their alleged anti-clerical attitude, *hijiri* apparently preferred to be properly ordained. This is, for instance, illustrated in the account of a *hijiri* from Shinano (present-day Nagano prefecture) who travels to the distant Nara only to be officially ordained at the ordination platform of the Tōdai-ji (*Uji shūi monogatari* VIII #3).

59 See, for example, Zōga's impertinent behavior in the palace according to *Uji shūi monogatari* (XII #7). Anybody else who acted like Zōga would have been severely punished. In Zōga's case, however, his misconduct was only viewed as yet more evidence for his holiness. See also *Uji shūi monogatari* II #1.

60 “At a mountain temple called Matsu-no-o in Yamato province lived the monk Chūrembō, who after having become paralyzed, put up a small hut near the highway in Takita. Whenever monks from the mountain temple passed along the road, he would inquire if they were single [御房ハ聖ニテ御坐カ]; and if they replied that they were [聖ナリ], this is how he encouraged them. ‘Get yourself a wife right away...’” (NKBT 85: 187–188; trans. MORRELL 1985: 145). Kamo no Chōmei in his *Hosshin-shū* (1 #11) renders the story of a

some authors repeatedly claim that the so-called *hijiri* movement strongly contributed to a laicization of Japanese Buddhism. To my knowledge, the term *zoku hijiri* 俗聖 (“lay *hijiri*”) – frequently used by Gorai and Hori to denote an alleged type of *hijiri* – was not only completely unknown in the Heian period but is also a contradiction in itself. *Hijiri* were anti-secular and (probably) never lay.

(6) *Shūdan-sei* 集団性 (forming communities)

The vast majority of *hijiri* in the Heian period did, without any doubt, seek a solitary, not a communal life. Apparently, however, many *hijiri* were surrounded by a number of disciples, which means they were not necessarily isolated completely from other human beings. It may be assumed that a typical *hijiri* career began with a period of complete isolation in which the practitioner cultivated his spiritual and magical powers. After accomplishing the desired abilities and thereby gaining a reputation as a holy man, he may have accepted some earnest ascetics as his disciples. The term *shūdan-sei* as used by Gorai, however, refers to the formation of communities of like-minded practitioners in the so-called *bessho*. According to GORAI (1990: 102) the term *bessho shōnin* [sic!] appears first in *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (probably compiled by the Tendai monk Kōen 皇圓 after 1104) to denote the community founded by Kyōkai on Mt Kōya.⁶¹ The story of Kyōkai’s life and birth into the Pure Land as presented in *Kōyasan ōjō-den* 高野山往生傳 (“Birth accounts from Mt Kōya”, compiled around 1187; see also *Shūi ōjō-den* I #10) is the only account known to me (except for the case of Sengaku mentioned above) in the Heian texts so far examined in which the term *bessho* appears in connection with *hijiri*. The author relates here that he retired to Mt Kōya in 1184 where he searched for the traces of the venerable Kyōkai in the Odawara *bessho* 小田原別所 (NST 7: 696a). The old monks (*sō* 僧) who resided there are not called *hijiri*, however. As far as I can see, there is no indication that practitioners who lived in that *bessho* were collectively perceived as *hijiri*. We may assume, however, that some *hijiri* dwellings, such as Kyōkai’s on Mt Kōya, gradually evolved into *bessho* in a

hijiri in the vicinity of Mt Kōya who took a wife late in his life. However, after the *hijiri*’s death the widow affirmed that he had never touched her, and that he had only married her in order to instruct her and encourage her to practice the nembutsu. Furthermore, the following statement by Gyōsen-bō 行仙房 (d. 1278, author of *Nenbutsu ōjō-den* in *Ichigon hōdan* (II #131) clearly indicates that abstemiousness and continence were required from *hijiri* even in the Kamakura period: “Be diligent in making yourself a *hijiri*. Of obstacles to birth, none exceed covetousness [*ton’ ai* 貪愛]. Among the various forms of evil, the foremost is hunger for things [*shikiton* 色貪]” (HIROTA 1989: 62).

61 GORAI (1990: 103) concludes from the fact that ex-Emperor Shirakawa donated one robe for each of the thirty leading *bessho shōnin* that the number of monks residing in that *bessho* might have exceeded one thousand.

strict sense under the guidance of the *hijiri*'s successors who were not necessarily regarded as *hijiri* themselves.

Furthermore, the most famous *bessho* of the late Heian and early Kamakura periods, Ōhara 大原 (*bessho* of the Enryaku-ji and stronghold of the *Yūzū nenbutsu* 融通念佛), Rengedani 蓮華谷 on Mt Kōya, Kōmyōsen 光明山 (*bessho* of the Tōdai-ji), Saitō Kurodani 西塔黒谷 on Mt Hiei, etc., were mentioned neither in *setsuwa* texts nor in historical documents as dwelling places of *hijiri*. The impression that *bessho* were by no means automatically associated with *hijiri* is further strengthened by Emperor Go-Shirakawa 御白河 (d. 1192) who writes in his *Ryōjin hishō* 梁塵秘漿抄 (probably 1157–1179; see KWON 1986: 3) that the dwelling places of *hijiri* were Ōmine 大峰, Katsuragi 葛城 (present-day Nara prefecture, formerly Yamato), Ishi no Tsuchi 石の鎚 (石鎚山), Minoo 箕尾, Kachio 勝尾, Mt Shosha in Harima, and Nachi 那智 in Kumano 熊野 (GORAI 1990: 33). None of these places were regarded as *bessho*. It seems that *hijiri* were first occasionally linked with *bessho* in Kamakura texts such as *Hosshin-shū*,⁶² which may be seen a consequence of the rather inflationary usage of the term *hijiri* in the thirteenth century.⁶³ If we accept the theory that the reformist movements of the Kamakura period evolved out of the *bessho* we must also accept the fact that *hijiri* played only a marginal role in the Kamakura reform.

(7) *Kanjin-sei* 勧進性 (propaganda and fundraising)

The institutionalization of religious fundraising, which started with Chōgen's campaign for the restoration of the Tōdai-ji – destroyed during the so-called Genpei war 源平亂 by the troops of the Taira clan 平氏 in 1180 – undoubtedly exerted an enormous impact on the further development of Japanese Buddhism as a religion deeply rooted in all spheres of society. The large Buddhist temples and monasteries employed fundraisers from outside their own institutions who urged clerics and the laity alike to give donations as a contribution to the building or restoration of a temple. In order to bind the populace to a certain temple and to convince people that their cooperation was a beneficial religious

62 According to *Hosshin-shū* (VII #13, according to MIKI 1976, chapter 12 according to TAKAO and NAGASHIMA) Gon no Suke Narikiyo's 權介成清 son joined the "Daibutsu no Shōnin" 大佛の上人 [Chōgen] to serve him. Eventually Chōgen sent his disciple to the "new *bessho*" (*shinbessho* 新別所) on Mt Kōya, where he himself had lived in earlier years, to devote himself whole-heartedly to the *nenbutsu* practice. Chōgen (as well as his disciples) is called a *hijiri* in this story as well as in the preceding one. *Hosshin-shū*, which uses the term *hijiri* extremely generously, is the only text known to me in which the *kanjin* group surrounding Chōgen is classified as being entirely formed by *hijiri* (TAKAO and NAGASHIMA 1985: 207–211).

63 As mentioned above in this period even people such as Jakushin and Jakushō are occasionally regarded as *hijiri*.

act, they told legends about the origin and history of a particular temple (*engi* 縁起) and edifying stories which explained Buddhist teachings and morals in simple terms.⁶⁴ As a result the relationship between the Buddhist institutions and the common folk was considerably deepened. The question that concerns us here, however, is whether it was really *hijiri* who led the *kanjin* campaigns, as is commonly believed. It is true that since Gyōgi there had occasionally been *hijiri* (such as Zenpō and Dōjaku) who encouraged monks and laymen to engage – either materially or by their labour supply – in the making of copies of the *Lotus Sūtra* or statues, etc. However, before the restoration of the Tōdai-ji led by Chōgen there had not been any organized and continual *kanjin* system. Even Gyōgi, the alleged prototype of all subsequent *kanjin* priests, had not been directly linked with the erection of the Tōdai-ji under Emperor Shōmu prior to Chōgen’s campaign of the early Kamakura period (GOODWIN 1994: 79).⁶⁵ In addition, we must remember that Gyōgi was not called a *hijiri* because of his religious activities. Furthermore, it must be noted that Chōgen, who was the actual prototype of an organized and institutionalized *kanjin* activist, was not classified as a *hijiri* in contemporary sources. Only *Hosshin-shū* (VII #9 or 10), a text which was compiled a few years after Chōgen’s death (probably between 1211 and 1216) which uses the term *hijiri* rather liberally, renders him as *kanjin hijiri*.⁶⁶ Furthermore, there is no indication in contemporary documents that there was any close connection between *hijiri* and the *kanjin* campaigns. Fundraising monks were usually called “*kanjinsō*” (TAKEUCHI 1965, vol. 1: 163, 293) and “*kanjin shōnin*” (TAKEUCHI 1965, vol. 8: 3110; 1971, vol. I: 147). The only two cases known to me in which the term *kanjin hijiri* appears are the above-mentioned passage in *Hosshin shū* about Chōgen, and another in *Ippen*

64 Such stories are now generally subsumed under the category of *setsuwa* 説話. In most cases the stories utilized by *kanjin* priests probably belonged to the genre of *reigen-ki* 靈驗記 (“records of miraculous signs”) which were often illustrated (*emakimono* 繪巻物).

65 In *Hokke genki* (#2) and *Konjaku monogatari* (XII #7), for instance, Gyōgi is only connected with the “eye-opening ceremony” (*kaigen kuyō* 開眼供養) of the great statue of Buddha Vairocana in the Tōdai-ji but not with its erection. Considering the fact that various activities of Gyōgi are mentioned in the Heian texts but nothing is said about his alleged participation in the erection of the Tōdai-ji, we may safely assume that the story of Gyōgi’s contribution to the building of that temple was an invention of the late twelfth century for the purpose of creating a historical model for Chōgen’s *kanjin* campaign. The famous and popular Gyōgi was certainly the ideal candidate for such an enterprise.

66 As far as I know, the denotation *hijiri* is applied to Chōgen neither in historical documents of the late Heian period nor of those of the early Kamakura period. He is called “Waga Chō Shōnin Chōgen” 我朝聖人重源, “Kanjin Nittō Sando Shōnin Chōgen” 勸進入唐三度聖人重源, “Shōbusshi Chōgen 小佛師重源 (TAKEUCHI 1965: VIII: 3094; 金: 402, 427), “Kanjin Shōnin” 勸進重源, “Shōnin” 上人, and “Tōdaiji Shōnin” 東大寺上人 (TAKEUCHI 1971: I: 362, 373, 378) instead.

Shōnin goroku 一遍上人語録.⁶⁷ Thus we can conclude that, although the concept of *kanjin hijiri* was not entirely unknown in the first half of the Kamakura period, *kanjin* campaigns were apparently not seen as activities dominated by and typical of *hijiri*. GOODWIN (1994: 28) unintentionally confirms this impression by constantly using formulations like, “In this tale a pilgrim-monk a type of *hijiri* himself, though again the term is not used ...”.⁶⁸

(8) *Shōdō-sei* 唱導性 (evangelism and proselytization)

Notwithstanding the fact that a few *hijiri* (Shōkū, for instance) taught the common folk a simplified version of the Buddhist teachings, the source materials do not suggest any noteworthy participation of *hijiri* in proselytization activities in the Heian period. Like the formation of the *bessho*, Buddhist propaganda among the populace was closely related with the institutionalization of *kanjin* campaigns from the late twelfth century, as has been indicated above. In order to persuade people to give generous donations they first had to be converted. However, as has been demonstrated above, neither the *bessho* nor the *kanjin* campaigns were dominated by *hijiri*. The same holds true for missionary activities. *Hijiri* were basically recluses and ascetics, not preachers and evangelists.

6. Conclusion

In the Nara and early Heian periods, widely venerated outstanding persons who were endowed with an extraordinarily strong personal charisma, which made their admirers believe that they had transcended the stage of ordinary human beings, were called *hijiri*. Thus they were equated with the spirits of deceased emperors and demi-gods or “*Götter-Genien*”. In a more Buddhist terminology they were perceived as incarnations of holy beings such as bodhisattvas. It thus makes no sense to utilize accounts of Gyōgi to create a definition of the term *hijiri* as it was used in later times, as many authors continue to do. They could as well present Prince Shōtoku as a prototypical *hijiri*.

67 *Hosshin-shū* (VII #9 according to TAKAO and NAGASHIMA 1985; chapter 10 according to MIKI 1976). In *Ippen goroku* we read: “Being indisposed toward desire for gain, I won’t collect donations as a wandering monk [*kanjin hijiri* 勸進聖]; Never free from the five faults of impure preaching, I have vowed not to teach the Dharma” (NST 10: 295; quoted from IPPEN 1986: 69).

68 Further passages are: “Zenban himself is typical of *kanjin hijiri* in the late Heian and Kamakura periods. Whether he was originally a muen *hijiri* or just a monk ... he was an outsider” (GOODWIN 1994: 36); “Another example appears in both *Hokke genki* and the ... *Konjaku monogatari*shū, although in this case the term *hōshi* is used instead of *hijiri*” (GOODWIN 1994: 28); “Although the term *hijiri* is not used in this instance ... the two central characters both follow the *hijiri* path in their own ways” (GOODWIN 1994: 29); “The three men seem to have been resident monks at the temple rather than muen *hijiri* ... However, if the campaign followed the standard patterns, some of the legwork must have been performed by muen *hijiri* ...” (GOODWIN 1994: 51).

From approximately the middle of the Heian period the term *hijiri* denoted a certain type of religious practitioner which in some aspects resembled the *ubasoku* or lay believer of earlier times. This may be explicable by the fact that the distinction between fully fledged, imperially recognized monks, whose numbers were strictly limited under the *nenbun dosha* 年分度者 system,⁶⁹ and non- or self-ordained practitioners was still quite strictly observed in the Nara and early Heian periods. During the Heian period the government and its “monks’ office” (*sōgō* 僧綱) gradually lost their control over the ordination of monks and nuns, which resulted in a considerable dilution of the terms *shamon*, *sō*, *hōshi*, etc. People who shaved their heads, wore robes, and performed Buddhist practices were now largely accepted as monks, even if they had never entered an ordination platform. Consequently, the term *ubasoku* came to be used more in its original sense of a Buddhist lay believer who led a family life. It is important to note, however, that *hijiri* were not the direct heirs of the *ubasoku*, because most *hijiri* were apparently ordained monks.

Without losing its character as an honorific title that indicated the superhuman holiness of a charismatic person,⁷⁰ the term *hijiri* gradually evolved into a designation for a distinctive type of religious specialists. Supposed holiness was a necessary but not a sufficient prerequisite for a *hijiri*. A real *hijiri* could be distinguished from other practitioners by his lifestyle and his clothing and equipment. The title was exclusively applied to those who had renounced the secular as well as the monastic life in order to practice stern asceticism in the solitude of holy mountains and had thereby gained supernatural magical and spiritual powers. Their appearance was extravagant. As Go-Shirakawa confirms, even as late as the twelfth century, *hijiri* preferred moss, bark, paper, and deer skins as clothing. They carried priests’ staffs with antlers,⁷¹ wore rosaries made out of a certain kind of wood (*mokurenji* 木欒子), used umbrellas,

69 The *nenbun dosha* system was enacted by Empress Jitō 持統 (r. 686–697) in 696. In *Nihon shoki* (entry 10/12/1) it is noted: “An Imperial order was given that the Kin-kwō-myō Sutra [sic! i. e. *Konkōmyō-kyō* 金光明經] should be expounded, and that every year on the last day of the twelfth month ten persons of a pure life should be made to enter religion” (ASTON 1993: part II, 421; NKBT 68: 532/3). In 806, two Kegon and two Tendai priests were ordained. In addition two others were ordained in order to occupy themselves with the *vinaya* (monastic regulations). The shares of the Sanron-shū and Hossō-shū were three monks each. This is to say that in 806 twelve persons were officially recognized as new monks (BDJ 4162c).

70 This usage is even reflected in the early fourteenth-century text *Hōnen Shōnin gyōjō ezu* (III) where it is said that Genkū (i.e. Hōnen) received his “residence name” Hōnen-bō from his teacher Eikū 叡空 who regarded his talented disciple as a “*hōnen dōri no hijiri*” 法然道理聖, a phrase which COATES and ISHIZUKA (1949: 133) translate as “natural born saint”.

71 “Deer were regarded as sacred messengers of the gods and their antlers and skins were thought to possess supernatural properties” (HIROTA 1989: 668).

and wore raincoats and flintstone boxes (GORAI 1990: 33). They shunned human beings (the laity and clerics alike), who represented the defiled secular sphere, and preferred the company of the animals and demons who served them. The *hijiri*'s behavior was often so eccentric that they came to symbolize strange manners. They had clearly transcended the standards of the society on which they had turned their backs. *Hijiri* of this period, i.e. roughly the eleventh century, were mountain ascetics who in their practice combined concepts and ideas of Daoist immortals, the symbols and religio-magical rites of esoteric Buddhism, and indigenous Japanese beliefs. Rather than Gyōgi or Kōya, their ideal model was seemingly the father of all Japanese mountain ascetics, En no Gyōja 役行者 (c. 7th–8th centuries), in whose legends we find various motifs typical of *hijiri* stories.

Although a slight tendency towards a more inclusive and liberal usage of the term *hijiri* becomes apparent in the second half of the Heian period, the ideal *hijiri* was still a recluse supposedly endowed with supernatural powers who led an ascetic and celibate life deep in the holy mountains and who preferred the above-mentioned equipment.

At the same time a considerable number of mostly low-ranked priests, just like *hijiri*, renounced their monasteries which did not provide the proper environment for the attainment of higher spiritual goals. The majority of practitioners, however, did not choose the radical way of *hijiri*, but formed communities and confraternities at the margins of the Buddhist institutions, to study and practice without being disturbed by lower duties and the struggle for rank and position in the clerical hierarchy. Monastic life was largely seen as corrupt and decadent and thus did not attract people with strong spiritual ambitions. Kenkō, in part one of his *Tsurezure gusa*, explains the situation as follows:

The clerics [*hōshi* 法師] impress nobody, even when they flaunt their authority and their importance is loudly proclaimed. It is easy to see why the holy man [*hijiri*] Sōga [i.e. Zōga 増賀] should have said that worldly fame is unseemly in priests, and that those who seek it violate the teachings of Buddha. A true hermit [*seshajin* 世捨人] might, in fact, seem more admirable. (KENKŌ 1967: 3; cf. KIDŌ 1977: 22)⁷²

Accordingly, many young monks after their ordination – which was in many cases conducted by their masters in their respective huts and not on an official ordination platform – moved to the *bessho* of Enryaku-ji, Kongōbu-ji,

72 Not without sympathy, SEI Shōnagon (1967: 26) remarks in her *Makura no sōshi* (#6), written in the late tenth century, that "... most people are convinced that a priest is as unimportant as a piece of wood, and they treat him accordingly".

Tōdai-ji, or Shiten'ō-ji. Since they usually held no official rank they were commonly called by the honorific title *shōnin*, which reflects the high esteem in which they were held. Eventually, every rankless monk who distanced himself to a certain degree from the established institutions came to be called *shōnin*. This designation therefore includes *hijiri* as well as dedicated scholars and followers of a particular cult such as nembutsu devotees, *Lotus Sūtra* reciters, or diligent meditators. The compatibility of the terms *hijiri* and *shōnin* should not be mistaken as an identity, however. It is certainly not pure coincidence that so many practitioners in the texts examined here are called *shōnin* but only very few *hijiri*. Even in the thirteenth century people apparently distinguished between *shōnin* like Hōnen, engaging in doctrinal studies and the practice and spread of the invocational nembutsu, and *shōnin* like Ippen, who chose the career of a *hijiri*.

There existed a broad variety of extra-monastic practitioners in the Heian period, of whom *hijiri* were only one relatively small but distinctive group. For a better understanding of the dynamic process undergone by Buddhism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it would be more helpful to distinguish the variant strands of extra-monastic Buddhism in the Heian period rather than to lump every aspect of this multi-faceted movement together under the entirely inappropriate umbrella term *hijiri*.

For reasons of limitations of time and space, this preliminary study had to leave several interesting problems unsolved. For the sake of a deeper insight into the usage and historical development of the term *hijiri* after the Heian period, the relationship of affiliated terms such as *ubasoku*, *zenji*, *hijiri*, *shōnin*, etc., the impact of *hijiri* on the establishment of an organized *yamabushi* tradition, the relationship between *hijiri* and the Kamakura movements (especially on the Ji-shū and the Hokke-shū) require further research. It should have become evident, however, that these problems can only be handled properly if we avoid blurring the varieties of then existing types of Buddhist practitioners for the sake of simple and seemingly consistent hypotheses about the history of Japanese Buddhism. I believe that a new and closer look at the available source materials, free from any sectarian bias, will produce results that demand a rewriting of many well established theories.

Abbreviations

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|------|---|
| BDJ | <i>Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten</i> 望月仏教大辞典 (TSUKAMOTO 1973) |
| DBZ | <i>Dainihon bukkyō zensho</i> 大日本佛教全書 (BUSSHO KANKŌ KAI 1986) |
| JZ-Z | <i>Jōdoshū zensho zoku</i> 浄土宗全書續 (JŌDOSHŪ KAISHŪ HAPPYAKUNEN KINEN KEISAN JUNKYOKU 1973) |

- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文學大系 (vol. 4: TAKAGI et al. 1957; vols 22–26: YAMADA et al. 1984.; vols 67– 68: SAKAMOTO et al. 1970; vol. 70: ENDŌ and KASUGA 1989)
- NST *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想大系 (vol. 7: INOUE and ŌSONE 1974; vol. 10: ŌHASHI 1971)
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (TAKAKUSU and WATANABE 1924–32)

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