

Magic words and holy waters: healing in the cult of Mt. Fuji in the Edo period

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Abstract

While the healing practices and devices developed by religious institutions in Japanese history have been extensively studied, the analysis of similar practices at the popular level has been relegated to a secondary position. This essay analyzes the wide range of healing practices and spells developed by the popular cult of Mt. Fuji during the Edo period. Moreover, it contextualizes them within a larger system of ideas developed at the popular level by the Fuji cult. As a result, healing practices come to be seen as an index of the popular understanding of reality, and are shown to exist within a complex symbolic and interpretative network, at the popular level, applicable to various levels of reality: cosmic, geographic, and personal.

Keywords: healing, Fuji cult, magic, spells, *episteme*, Edo period

Introduction

When we think of healing and divination in Japanese religious history, the first examples that come to mind are those drawn from the vastly complex and fascinating folds of the Shugendō 修験道 and the Onmyōdō 陰陽道 discourses and their ritual richness.¹⁾ The complexity of both the ritual and symbolic levels of those healing and divinatory practices makes them fascinating and difficult topics of research that promise to lead to comparably complex and important findings.

There is however, another level at which we can study healing and divination: that of popular religious systems that compose a vast religious landscape in the Edo period.²⁾ At this popular level, it is not uncommon to encounter highly simplified versions of rituals or amulets, and a seemingly impoverished symbolic system related to them. The applications of these rituals or talismans, the purposes for which they were developed and deployed, often seem much more “mundane” and “common” than their “higher” counterparts, and may be more easily categorized simply as just another example of the “practically religious” (*gense riyaku* 現世利益) paradigm applied to Japanese

religion.³⁾

In this essay, I will argue, instead, that studying these less complex forms of healing and divination may lead us to important results, the foremost of which being an elucidation of the role of religion and belief at the popular level in Japanese history.⁴⁾ The data I present here will show in fact that at the popular level amulets and talismans were not used only to obtain material benefits like good luck or a cure for an ailment, but belonged to a larger body of ideas and concepts. These, organized into a religious system (albeit popular), constituted a bona fide *episteme*,⁵⁾ that is to say a framework of ideas for the interpretation of reality, from that of the functioning of one's body, to that of the organization of geographical space, to that of the motion of celestial bodies.⁶⁾

This essay will present the case of the popular cult of Mt. Fuji in the Edo period as a specific case in which a popular demand for healing practices intertwined with a popular religious episteme capable of developing them. After introducing some of the different forms that such healing devices took within the Fuji cult, I will conclude by placing the findings specific to this particular cult within the larger framework of medical and pharmacological applications of religion in the Edo period. In ultimate analysis, the data and approach presented in this essay should prove to be applicable also to other religious and cultural contexts, for instance in the case of the West, the role of magic and magical thought and its interaction with Christianity at the popular level.⁷⁾

The case of the Fuji cult

As a cult developed at the popular level, the Fuji cult is a good example of how popular healing practices are usually relegated to a minor category by scholars, given much less importance than, for instance, the history of confraternities in that cult, or the more doctrinal texts left by its leaders or main adherents. In the main existing scholarly works on the history and structure of the Fuji cult, we do find fragments of information on healing techniques, but they are scattered and divided under different rubrics.⁸⁾ These amulets, medicines, techniques are not grouped under the heading of healing and divination, for instance, but appear in different chapters or in chapters that collate any additional matters that could not have been fit neatly in more “standard” chapters on history, biography, or doctrine of the cult.

In so doing, the image that results is that healing for the Fuji cult was just a minor activity, peripherally linked to more central ones, like the development of various local confraternities and their differentiation, or the worship of the founder figures. Along these lines, only recently (2009) the Fuji Yoshida Museum of Local History 富士吉田市歴史民俗博物館 organized a special exhibition of objects used in healing and related amulets from the Fuji cult. Differently from many other such thematic exhibitions there, it was decided that no catalogue would be published, thus

confining in a way these artifacts to a peripheral position in our scholarly view of the cult, and negating them the possibility to be identified under the rubric of healing techniques and practices.

However, when we start re-organizing these seemingly disjointed and unrelated elements together, the picture that ensues is radically different: suddenly healing practices and their related apparatuses start appearing as quite central to both the religious discourse of the Fuji cult, as well as to the popularity this cult enjoyed. By the late 18th century (from around the 1780s on) in fact, the Fuji cult exploded in the city of Edo and the Kanto area, with many Fuji confraternities (*fūji-kō* 富士講) organizing annual pilgrimages to the mountain and with the construction of miniaturized versions of Mt. Fuji in their own neighborhoods (the so-called Fuji mounds, *fūji-zuka*, 富士塚). Thus a popular (as opposed to institutional) cult enjoyed a vast popularity in and around the city of Edo, and healing demands and practices played a major role in this development.

Kakugyō and healing spells

Though people carried out religious practices at Mt. Fuji by the 9th century, and by the 12th century a particular kind of Shugendō developed on this mountain, the popularization of the cult of Mt. Fuji may be said to start with the practices carried out on and around the mountain by the ascetic Kakugyō 角行 (1541–1646).⁹⁾ According to a document attributed to Kakugyō himself, dated 1605, when he was 18 he received a direct message from the Fuji deity Fuji Sengen 藤仙見,¹⁰⁾ instructing him to enter the Hitoana 人穴 cave at the western foot of the mountain and carry out intense ascetic practices there.¹¹⁾ From that moment on, Kakugyō will develop into the leader of the popular cult of Mt. Fuji. According to another autograph document by him, during his activity, he produced a large number of spells (*fusegi* ふせぎ) and amulets with healing functions, to be distributed to his followers.¹²⁾

By the late 18th century, Kakugyō is firmly established as the original leader of this popular cult, and a hagiographic document of this period (the “Book of Great Practice,” *go taigyō no maki* 御大行の巻) provides enormous amounts of information on both the image of Kakugyō held by people in the late Edo period, as well as details of practices that were considered central in his life. Because many of the latter deal with the issue of healing, I will introduce and discuss a few in the remaining of this chapter.¹³⁾

According to the Book of Great Practice (hereafter the Book), in 1560, during his practices in the Hitoana cave, the Fuji deity, Sengen Dainichi 仙元大日, explained to Kakugyō that during this practice he turned into the Pole Star, that is the cosmic *axis mundi*, and gave him two sacred diagrams (*go monku* 御文句: see Figure 1 for an example of such diagrams). These are images that often accompany specific spells received by Kakugyō, usually depicting the mountain with some

astronomical element (e.g. sun, moon, stars, planets) pointing to a cosmogonic function of the diagram, and including words and spells that depict Mt. Fuji as a cosmic mountain originated from an “original father” and an “original mother.”

After much detail on the physical and symbolic nature of the peak and summit of Mt. Fuji, the Book describes another major practice carried out by Kakugyō: that of the Eight Inner Lakes, supposedly started by him in 1573. At each lake Kakugyō would carry a great practice of 100 days and 100 nights of fasting and ablutions, and as a result at each lake he would receive from the deity a sacred spell or formula (*fusegi* ふせぎ),¹⁴⁾ sometimes accompanied by a sacred diagram. Though at times these spells may be construed as having some literal meaning, in many cases they are almost unintelligible strings of Chinese characters, very often employing Fuji-specific characters (Figure 2),¹⁵⁾ and repetitions of some basic characters, like those for sun, moon, the cardinal directions, wind, etc.). In other words, they seem to operate as visual representations capturing the utterances of the Fuji deity, and were thus employed to apply the power of the deity to the solution of the issue for which the specific spell was produced.

We can roughly categorize these spells received by Kakugyō into two groups: one dealing with healing and health; the other dealing with doctrinal issues. To the latter belong spells and diagrams that explain the nature of the human body (anatomical plane), its relationship with the mountain (geographical plane), and further with astral bodies (cosmological plane). To the former, a rich pharmacopoeia of spells and amulets is directed

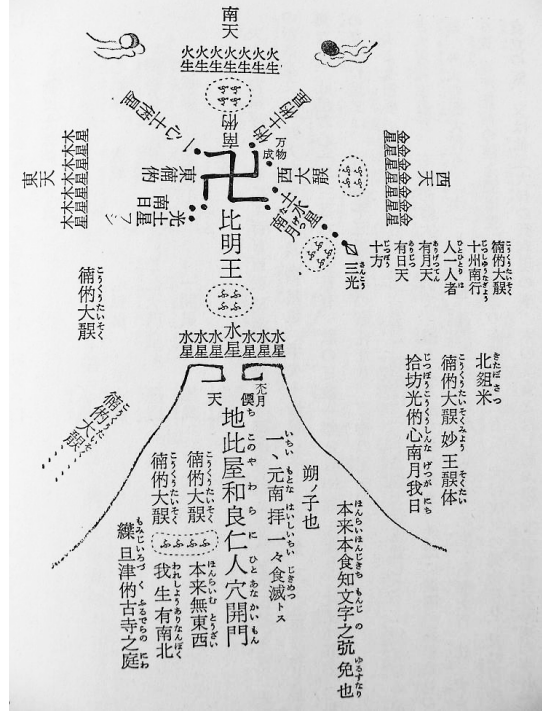


Figure 1 Spell of the Stars, from the Book of Great Practice (reproduced with permission from Murakami and Yasumaru 1971, 468)



Figure 2 13-character spell of the Fuji cult. Photograph by the author.

toward: all sickness (the first received by Kakugyō, at lake Biwa); a specific epidemic that had struck a village near Lake Nishi (the epidemic was completely cured by the spell); evil influences (thus curing those afflicted by an “evil wind” around Lake Shōji); hastening childbirth, as well as properly disposing of the afterbirth (at Lake Motosu); epilepsy (until the arrival of this spell, a disease for which there was no cure or remedy, according to the Book). From this set of data we can draw a number of conclusions that shed more light on this popular cult.

(1) First of all, all these spells and diagrams were received from the deity while Kakugyō was on or in some body of water. Water, therefore, does not only hold the function of purifying the believer or practitioner: water is also the actual vehicle through which to contact the deity and receive oracles and spells. This is a particularly important point for the Fuji cult, since the Fuji deity is very often depicted as a chthonic goddess, associated with serpents and dragons as symbolic animals, and with water as the locale she inhabits. It is in this sense that the link between the Fuji deity and Benzaiten 弁才天, goddess of water worshipped especially at Lake Biwa and at Enoshima (both places connected to the Fuji cult), is particularly interesting.¹⁶⁾

(2) The second conclusion we can draw is that these spells heavily employ “magical” language. What is meant by this is that these are not sentences with a finite meaning, which operate at the level of explanation. Their meaning is at most veiled, they almost invariably use Chinese characters as symbols rather than words, and the Fuji-specific characters are often written with a large degree of variation from version to version of the spells. That is to say that language is here not employed to convey some literal meaning to the receiver of the spell, but to “translate” the power of the deity. The number of spells, their complexity, and the degree of variation between different versions of the same text, all point to a widespread understanding of language as more than just an act of verbal communication, but as the channel through which a magical power can be directed to achieve certain results.¹⁷⁾

(3) The third conclusion is that a number of these spells were meant to be applied as healing devices for medical conditions, or as aides in childbirth. This means that a most central aspect of the Fuji practices at the mountain and at the bodies of water around it (that were later carried out by Fuji cult believers too) dealt with the specific function of helping people deal with medical and pregnancy issues. This latter link to pregnancy is especially important, in the Fuji cult. In fact, the deity of Mt. Fuji came, by the time of the Book, to be superimposed and identified with the kami Konohanasakuyahime 木花開耶姬. This is the goddess who, in the Kojiki, marries Ninigi and becomes pregnant on the first night of their marriage. Suspicious of this fact, Ninigi complains and,

in order to prove her sincerity, she replies by submitting herself to an ordeal. She builds a parturition hut without openings around herself, and proceeds to set it on fire: if her words to Ninigi were sincere, her children would be born unscathed. Indeed, she gives birth to three gods of fire, and thus at once she becomes associated with safe childbirth, as well as with fire.¹⁸⁾

Childbirth has multiple meanings for the Fuji cult. As embodied deity, Mt. Fuji is the protector of childbirth (many shrines to the Fuji deity are visited even now for safe childbirth); the Fuji deity can dispense powerful spells and talismans that can help childbirth and treatment of the afterbirth; birth (and death) have a strong symbolic meaning for this cult.

The second point, of providing a “medical” help in childbirth, can be supported by another phenomenon typical of the Fuji cult. Starting from the mid-18th century, the popular pilgrimage from Edo to Mt. Fuji took the pilgrims to the northern slopes of the mountain, the Yoshida route. At the foot of the mountain, near Yoshida, was (and still is) located another cave, the Tainai 胎内 (“womb cave”), and an integral part of the pilgrimage, before climbing the mountain to the summit, was a tour of this cave. The formation of this cave resulted in its ceiling being covered in small hanging structures highly reminiscent of teats. The mineral water dripping from the cave’s ceilings was collected by the pilgrims and taken back home to be given to pregnant mothers. Since the mountain itself was seen as the body of the (female) deity, the Tainai cave was the womb of the deity and, by extension, the milky water dripping from its “teats” was the milk of the deity, whose role as protector of safe childbirth, could thus be carried out in this additional medicinal way.¹⁹⁾

The third point, of the symbolic function of childbirth, may still be developed. In fact, the discourse of rebirth (and previous ritual death) in the mountain realm is a clear link to Shugendō.²⁰⁾ At Mt. Fuji, this discourse (possibly originally linked to the specific form of Shugendō developed there) shifted to the realm of popular pilgrimage from the time of Kakugyō, especially along three directions: 1. Kakugyō’s practice of the block and later Fuji cult leaders practicing at the Hitoana, following the model of the rebirth within the body of the deity, as the deity’s child, the cosmic *axis mundi*. 2. The symbolic death and rebirth of the Fuji pilgrim in general (which we could situate in the theoretical framework of liminality, as developed by Turner).²¹⁾ 3. The tour of the Tainai cave mentioned earlier. By its narrow and circular structure, in fact, this cave was interpreted as the inside of the body of the Fuji deity (the womb, precisely), and some of its galleries and volcanic rock formations were labeled with anatomical details (like vagina, ribs, caecum, placenta, etc.). Entering through the vagina, touring the actual womb and encountering the placenta rock, suckling on the teats of the deity and then exiting to the light of day was a physical path through the symbolic rebirth of the pilgrim as child of the Fuji deity.²²⁾

(4) This extensive discourse of birth, pregnancy, and healing present within the cult of Mt. Fuji

should not be seen just as a way to satisfy the popular interest in *gense riyaku*. Indeed, there is a fourth conclusion we can draw from the examples of spells from the Book: that this popular cult reached a significant level of complexity in terms of its interpretation of reality. As we have just seen, the symbolic meaning of rebirth was solidly paired with the medical issues of safe childbirth and delivery. Moreover, just as many spells in the Book were focused on healing and medical issues, so too many addressed larger questions of the nature of reality.

In the story of Kakugyō, as well as in some of the spells, there is the juxtaposition of the idea of birth with considerations of cosmology and cosmogony. Kakugyō's birth is described as the product of the "original father" and "original mother" (seen as the sun and the moon) coming together and giving birth to the Pole Star (that is Sengen Dainichi, as well as Kakugyō, who is identified with the deity through his practice of the block). This ternary structure involving sun, moon, and stars belongs to an esoteric Buddhist discourse. Considering that the Book is a late 18th century popular text pretending to narrate the hagiography of the founder of the cult, we can say that the basic esoteric triad and the synthesis of cosmogony and gestation (and childbirth) belonged to the basic way to understand reality at the popular level by the late Edo period.

In other words, the practical aspect of healing spells is profoundly coupled with elements that allowed the establishment of a well-developed popular episteme. These healing spells, then, are not just a disorganized and random collection of "superstitions:" they belong integrally to a much larger system developed in order to interpret reality. It is in this type of context that I argue we need to consider popular religion as a serious system, and not relegate it to a peripheral position. After all, when a cult like that of Fuji spreads like fire in a city of one million people like Edo was in the late 18th century, the episteme that we can deduce from that religious system is likely to have been shared by a large number of Japanese, just like the Book was widely circulated and copied.

Magical diagrams and talismans

The repertoire of magical diagrams directed to healing purposes in the Fuji cult, however, is not limited to the spells included in the Book. Kakugyō, as well as the Fuji cult leaders after him, in fact received a number of magical diagrams from the Fuji deity. These diagrams (called *ominuki* 御見抜) would be written out on a larger format and were thought of as the graphic representation of direct utterances from the Fuji deity literally "through the body" of the cult leaders (one of whose main roles clearly was that of medium). The elements that comprise them are rather standardized, but the *ominuki* are not identical.²³⁾ In the example in Figure 3 (from the leader Getsugyō 月行, 1716), we recognize the central invocation to Fuji Sengen, the Fuji-specific characters for "original father" and "original mother" flanking it, as well as the diagrammatic depiction of Mt. Fuji itself flanked by

the sun and the moon disks.

One very interesting detail is the bottom central invocation, that starts like a typical 13-character spell (like the one in Figure 2), but ends in a set of kanji that unequivocally recall a talisman. The character for *oni* 鬼, *kuchi* 口, *ō* 王, are in fact extremely common elements in talismans both in the Shugendō and in the Onmyōdō traditions (as well as in talismans from Chinese Daoism, which are their prototypes). Even the newly coined Fuji characters fit well the talisman typology, as it is quite common to find in talismans kanji in which the radicals are inverted, or that are made up of individual kanji that, as a group, do not belong to any standard writing style. If we look at another *ominuki*, in the hand of Kaugyō himself (Figure 4), we recognize, at the bottom of this diagram of Mt. Fuji, two structured elements. The straight and curved lines that make them up look almost like an attempt to copy some “official” talisman, and the spaces created between those lines are filled with the Fuji-specific characters (Figure 5).

It is then possible to conclude that these *ominuki* diagrams, received as direct revelations from the Fuji deity and transcribed so as to approximate its message, possess talismanic elements that empower them as divine utterances. We have to remember that these diagrams were often produced upon request by a Fuji cult believer to the leader for protection from some ailment or affliction. The *ominuki* (whose size meant that they were often framed as hanging scrolls and used as objects of worship at the family altar) therefore really functioned as powerful magical words given by the deity to solve a pathology or a severe problem, and were “sealed” by some talismanic element that would empower them as well as guarantee their authenticity and

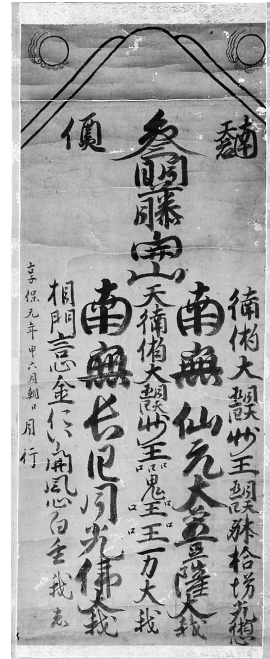


Figure 3 *Ominuki* by Getsugyō 月行, 1716 (reproduced with permission from Fujiyoshidashi 1994, 27)



Figure 4 *Ominuki* by Kakugyō 角行, early Edo period (reproduced with permission from Fujiyoshidashi 1994, 24)

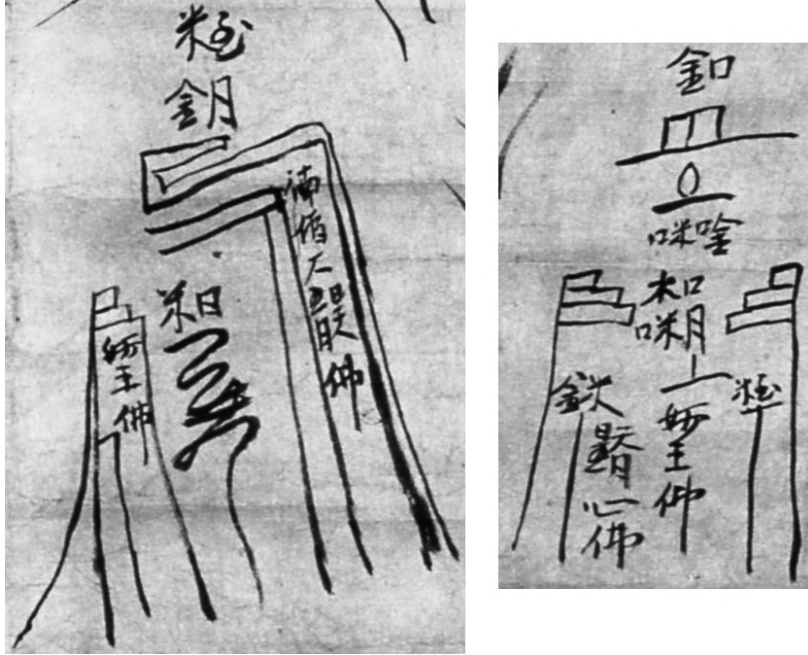


Figure 5 Details from Figure 4.

efficacy.

This, however, is not the only function of these diagrams. Just as in the case of the spells included in the Book, on the *ominuki* too we also can see inscribed the sacred geography of Mt. Fuji mapped on its physical one. Besides the Sengen deity being placed at the center top of the mountain (Figure 4), with the sun and moon rotating around it (an element that superimposes the cosmic order onto the geographic order), the eight peaks that the top of the mountain was believed to be composed of are aligned with the eight Buddhas and bodhisattvas believed to inhabit them.²⁴⁾ This is a clear citation of the inner dais of the esoteric Taizōkai mandala 胎藏界曼荼羅, and therefore this whole diagram must also be considered as depicting the organization of sacred space at Mt. Fuji.

In other words, this *ominuki* functions at the same time as a talisman and as a mandala: a mandala that also has healing, apotropaic or thaumaturgic powers that can treat diseases or solve practical problems. If on the one hand this popular version of a vastly complex orthodox esoteric Buddhist mandala has lost much of its splendor and detail, it has gained a profoundly important function: that of healing device, whose authority is given to it by talismanic elements. Just as in the case of the spells in the Book, then, we see that at the popular level of the Fuji cult, healing and issues of *gense riyaku* are indeed important, but they are coupled to a system that may be used to interpret reality. It is in this sense that we must consider popular forms of religious healing, like the one under analysis in this essay, as an integral part of a much more complex episteme, whose purpose is not

just curing a disease or averting some negative event, but that of providing an all-inclusive system for the interpretation of reality.

These talisman-like diagrams are not the only category to function in this way: there is also the record of a vast number of bona fide talismans that were used by patients to seal a disease off.²⁵⁾ Many of these include elements specific to the Fuji cult, though some do not and in fact are indistinguishable from similar talismans produced around the same time by various yamabushi and onmyōji. They come with instructions on their posology and the part of the body to which they are to be applied (or onto which they are to be copied and inscribed). In the case of these talismans too, a large number of them are targeted to safe childbirth and to the solution of problems with fetuses dying in the womb, or with the failure of the afterbirth to be discharged fully from the mother's body. There are also those that help in curing various forms of paralysis, infectious diseases, etc.

The typical talismanic elements present in them are obvious, as obvious are the extremely rough quality of their design: even the typical 5x4 grid so central in many Daoist talismans is mis-copied into a grid of an imprecise number of parallel horizontal and vertical lines. These talismans belong to a real pharmacopoeia: about 150 such Fuji-related talismans were developed for various conditions and diseases, and collected in 1860.

In fact, around the same time but also earlier in the Edo period, we see a number of collections of talismans for various use (mostly, but not solely, for healing). One such example is the collection *Jakyō jugon hossoku* 邪兇呪禁法則 of 1684 (Haneda 2006). This collection seems to have been geared for the itinerant healers (onmyōji and others) who carried their medical and healing expertise on their peregrinations throughout the country.

By the end of the Edo period, there is another source of talismans and similar healing devices that becomes extremely widespread: that of the popular household almanacs, like the *Tenpō shinsen eitai daizassho manreki taisei* 天保新撰永代大雑書萬歴大成, published in the 1840s (Kimura 1970). In it, a huge range of practical information was collected, for household use, ranging from how to avoid dangerous directional deities to how to interpret dreams, from how to read physiognomy and palms to how to treat diseases. The section on healing lists dozens of very short talismans with accompanying brief instructions on the correct posology for each talisman. Not surprisingly, here too we notice a focus on pregnancy and infectious diseases, but also on many other conditions and problems deemed curable by the application of talismans. If the large, complex, and “official-looking” (securing the help of the spiritual world for one's own concerns too requires its own bureaucracy!) talismans of the Onmyōdō, Shugendō, and Daoist traditions were to be compared to highly skilled brain surgery, the talismans contained in these household almanacs may be seen as generic over-the-counter medicines that any one patient may manage alone.

Holy waters and medicines

The examples I have drawn so far from the Fuji-specific pharmacopoeia have been diagrams and spells, to be used as talismans, both written and oral. However, the use of magical medicines to be ingested is also part of this pharmacopoeia, and the above example of the mineral waters dripping from the ceiling of the Tainai cave was one such example. Similarly, water collected from two water pools on top of the crater of Mt. Fuji, the *kinmei sui* 金明水 and the *ginmei sui* 銀明水, was carried by the pilgrims and used, back in Edo, to treat the sick.²⁶⁾

The other important cave at the foot of Mt. Fuji too, the Hitoana cave, was the site of production of another medicine. There, the family that since the time of Kakugyō has controlled that cave and area around it (as well as many of the documents related to Kakugyō), produced a particular medicine called *hitoana no oaka* 人穴のおあか (“the red pill of the Hitoana”). This consists of a small amount of the red mud from the pool formed by dripped mineral water at the bottom of the cave rolled up into a pill and dried out. This medicine, according to the small pamphlet accompanying it, “relieves the fever that affects many diseases, removes pain, is also effective before and after childbirth, against smallpox and measles. One should take it with freshly boiled water, believing in Mt. Fuji wholeheartedly.”²⁷⁾

Finally, another widespread example of Fuji-related medicines to be ingested is the variety of paper pills prepared by the leaders of the Fuji confraternities, records of which continue well into the Taishō period.²⁸⁾ These consist of small pieces of paper on which usually the character 参, very important in the Fuji cult, is printed a large number of times in regular grids of rows and columns. Being afflicted by a specific disease (often dealing with toothaches, children whooping cough, as well as conditions linked to pregnancy), the patient would rip single kanji and take them with water, over a period of time. These are called *fusegi* ふせぎ, just like the more complex healing diagrams discussed above, but differently from those, these were to be taken into the patient’s body.²⁹⁾

Though all of these medicines employ the religious power of Mt. Fuji and its deity (either through the physical water and mud found at its site, or through the writing of kanji considered special in the cult), these function more like simple medicines. In other words, they do not double as tools to be directly applied to the understanding of reality, as the diagrams in the previous sections were shown to be. In other words, these are good examples of “just” healing devices, whose existence, however, we cannot dissociate from the larger context of healing in the Fuji cult, the one that allows us to reconsider these healing practices as something beyond mere *gense riyaku*: an entry point to understand the popular mentality and *imaginaire* in the Edo period.³⁰⁾

Conclusion

In this paper I hope I have been able to show how the lack of complex healing rituals and of an extensive commentarial literature at the popular level should not lead us to consider popular forms of religious healing as inferior to the ones belonging to religious institutional settings. Though it may be at times less appealing to study the latter due to a certain lack of “aesthetic” complexity (i.e. fewer symbols, simpler structures, cheaper media, etc.), the reward is that we may uncover some very basic discourses at play at the popular level that may give us a sense of the episteme that was informing the popular *imaginaire* of the time.

In the specific case of the Fuji cult, most of the data I have discussed have already been published in various books and articles, but in a matter so scattered as to render this topic of healing at most peripheral in our understanding of the Fuji cult itself. On the other hand, when combined and approached as a unified theme, and further placed within the larger context of healing beliefs and practices at the popular level, the picture that results is one in which healing is a fundamental aspect of the association of people to this cult.

On second thought, this ought not to surprise us: we should remember, in fact, that before (and often even during) the Meiji period, the only episteme available for the majority of Japanese was religion.³¹⁾ It is through religion that they understood the world in which they lived, and thus thought they could control it by applying what they knew to their condition. In addition, they also believed that the future could be changed because of what they knew: they believed, for instance, that applying a certain talisman on a pregnant woman’s body may dispel any potential health problem that may otherwise have affected the child and the mother.

Therefore, their actions in the context of healing should not be framed just by an application of *gense riyaku* ideas, but should be recognized as part of a much larger and deeper approach developed to provide answers to one’s questions. Questions of cosmology, of mapping of the surrounding physical reality, of the laws that control our lives, within which healing is one important application. Though the case I developed in this essay concerned a specific cult in Edo period Japan, the conclusions can be employed in the analysis of similar practices in totally different cultural, historical, and religious contexts. When a Catholic believer purchases a silver *ex voto* to plead Saint Lucy to cure his eyesight, when she touches an ampoule of holy water from Fatima before a big match, when she places a *santino* in her car for protection, that act is not just a minor act to receive a favor, or a superstition. That act represents the multiple ideas and beliefs that inform that person, that allow that person to understand reality and to try to control it. By studying those acts we can start to understand the popular episteme of the time.

Notes

- 1) For examples of the complexity and diversity of such divinatory and healing apparatuses, see Noguchi 1997, Miyake 2006, and Frank 1998.
- 2) This paper is based on the research I presented at the “Healing and Divination” symposium (シンポジウム「祈祷と占い」) held at Ritsumeikan University in June 2010. I would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the organizers of that workshop, Matsumoto Ikuyo (Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto) and Lucia Dolce (SOAS, London University) for inviting me to present my work on that occasion.
- 3) The main contribution that developed this paradigm in the interpretation of Japanese popular religions is Reader and Tanabe 1998.
- 4) A study that shows the complexity of the role of religion at the popular level in the Edo period is Williams 2005, especially chapter 5 (“Medicine and Faith Healing in the Sōtō Zen Tradition”).
- 5) I use the term *episteme* in the particular sense of the word as developed by Michel Foucault in his *Le Mots et les Choses* (1966). Foucault defines *episteme* as “the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within, I won’t say a scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false. The episteme is the “apparatus” which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterized as scientific.” (Foucault 1980, 197).
- 6) I am developing these ideas in my doctoral dissertation on the cult of Mt. Fuji in the Edo Period, at Columbia University, Department of Religion, which is in the final phases of completion. For a short exposition of these ideas, see Gottardo 2010.
- 7) In the West, a fundamental study of these matters remains that by Ernesto de Martino on magic, especially as it was understood in southern Italy. See de Martino 1961 and de Martino 1973.
- 8) See for instance Iwashina 1983, Inobe 1928, Hirano 2004.
- 9) For a concise historical depiction of the development of the Fuji cult, see Earhart 1989.
- 10) The theme of the multiple orthographies employed in documents of the Fuji cult is a central and fascinating one, but cannot be dealt with in this essay, due to space limitations. I analyze this point in detail in my upcoming dissertation.
- 11) Iwashina 1983, 56. Besides multiple water ablutions, a peculiarity of Kakugyō’s practice in the Hitoana cave was long periods of standing on a small block placed in the center of the cave. This “practice of the block,” carried out in the depth of the perceived body of the Fuji deity embodied as Mt. Fuji, allowed Kakugyō to himself embody the function of *axis mundi* proper of Mt. Fuji in this popular cult. Through this practice, then, Kakugyō could directly contact the Fuji deity and in a sense “become” it, and at that point receive various teachings and instructions. On this link between the cosmic, geographic, and human dimension as carried out in Kakugyō’s practice of the block, see for example Tyler 1993, 273–274.
- 12) Iwashina 1983, 59 and Tyler 1993, 255.
- 13) There are many variants of this text: for a Japanese version, see Murakami and Yasumaru 1971; for a full translation of this version, as well as a very detailed analytical apparatus on this text, see Tyler 1993. For the translations of spells and sacred diagrams from this primary source in the remainder of this essay, I will use Tyler’s, unless otherwise noted. All other translations are mine.
- 14) On the meaning and spelling of *fusegi*, see Tyler 1993, 321.
- 15) The spell in this photo, taken by the author, is pronounced as follows: “*kō kū tai soku myō ō soku tai jip pō kō kū shin.*”
- 16) One chapter of my upcoming dissertation deals with the multiple identities of the Fuji deity, and

- especially its links to Benzaiten and water.
- 17) In a different essay, this magical function of language, in Japan, ought to be discussed vis-à-vis the concept of *kotodama* 言霊, especially as developed by the Kokugaku school, and of mantras, *shingon* 真言, as employed and developed by the esoteric Buddhist tradition.
 - 18) Philippi 1968, 144–147.
 - 19) A triptych by Sadahide of 1858, *Fujisan tainai meguri no zu* 富士山体内巡之図, shows the pilgrims in the act of suckling and collecting the water from the Tainai cave's teats. The cartouches in this part of the triptych read the posology for this medicine: "1. collect the milk on the sash and dry it; 2. bring the sash back home; 3. lend it to a pregnant woman to help her, or to someone without breast milk; 4. this milk is white and it is as if solid; 5. the woman without milk then soaks the obi in water and drinks this; 6. this milk is not different from that of the human body; 7. those with a lot of milk produce it all year round; 8. this milk has the warmth of the human body."
 - 20) See for example Miyake 2001, 88–93 and Blacker 1965.
 - 21) Turner 1978.
 - 22) For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Stein 1988, 57–66. In this context, it is very interesting to remember the case of a Fuji mound in Saitama, described in Aoki 2004. This Fuji mound, initially built in 1620, presents a tunnel that leads to a central inner chamber called the womb (*go tainai* 御胎内), the walls of which are decorated with large reliefs depicting the ten Buddhist deities in charge of the ten monthly phases of human gestation. In this locale too, then, the discourse of symbolic rebirth intersects that of Mt. Fuji (or the Fuji mound, as its "clone") as the body of the deity.
 - 23) For a general description of *ominuki*, see Iwashina 1983, 289–295. For a good selection of reproductions of *ominuki*, see Fujiyoshidashi 1994, 24–28.
 - 24) Their identity changes somehow from diagram to diagram, but a basic set, like the one in Figure 4, includes the deities Monju, Hōshō, Yakushi, Miroku, Shaka, Kannon, Amida, Jizō.
 - 25) A small sample of these talismans (*fu* ふ ㄨ) can be seen in Iwashina 1983, 306–312.
 - 26) Ishihara 1929, 89.
 - 27) Inobe 1928, 318–319.
 - 28) These took up a large portion of the exhibition on healing practices at the Fuji Yoshida Museum of Local History mentioned in the introduction. An example of these paper pills is discussed in Iwashina 1983, 305.
 - 29) Such magical paper pills are still currently available at various temples and shrines in Japan. A popular example is a sheet of 5 written characters being sold at the Suitengū Shrine in Tokyo, an aspirin-like general medicine sold at a shrine strongly linked to safe childbirth.
 - 30) The study of the popular mentality, or *imaginaire*, in Medieval Europe was plowed by the seminal work of Jacques Le Goff (see for example Le Goff 1985).
 - 31) Of course, I use this term without implying that this was an analytic category for people at that time: we call "religious" practices what was just the common way to do things. Just like when we have a headache we may take an aspirin without considering categories like organic chemistry, neurobiology, or evolutionary theory. And yet, by the mere fact that in that situation we do take an aspirin, we demonstrate that our current episteme is informed by science, no matter whether we may be able to understand science's intricacies or not: for us this is just what we do in this situation because for us science is the dominant matrix of ideas used in the understanding of reality.

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(ゴッタルド, マルコ)

呪言と聖なる水——江戸時代の富士信仰における治癒行為

Marco GOTTARDO

要 約

歴史上、日本の宗教組織が発達させてきた呪術・祈祷・治癒行為については、多くの先行研究があるが、民間レベルでの同様の行為についての分析は殆どなされていない。本研究は、江戸時代の民間信仰である富士信仰において発達した呪術・祈祷・治癒行為の、広範なあり方を分析し、これらの行為を、富士信仰が民間レベルで発達させたより大きな思想の枠組みの中に位置づけるものである。本研究により、民間レベルで現実世界がどのように理解されていたかを示す指標として、これらの行為を定義することができる。またこの分析を通じて、現実界としての宇宙、地理的世界、身体観など、様々なレベルでの現実世界に適用される複雑な象徴的・解釈学的枠組みの中に、こうした呪術・祈祷・治癒行為を位置づける事が可能となる。

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