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# The Teaching strategies of Kakuban Shōnin

## A new reading of Chōganbō Shōō's *Uchigikishū*

Hendrik van der Veere

### Summary

In this article I will argue that Kakuban made a conscious use of stories, anecdotes, critical remarks and puns in his lectures as they are recorded in the *Uchigikishū*. He had two main reasons for doing so. Firstly, he wanted to underscore his own position vis-à-vis other thinkers and schools during his efforts to revitalize Kūkai's original Shingon thinking and practice. Secondly, he inserted these passages to keep the attention of his disciples and structure his lectures in a more entertaining way. The use of the insertions as a stratagem may have formed part of the attraction his lectures had for many of his contemporaries, although this same attraction may have been cause for resentment as well. Here, I will propose that a research of these stories can offer new insights into the development of Kakuban's career and I will argue that glimpses of his personality and character can be deduced from the contents of these stories.

### Introduction

I have often wondered how Kōgyō Daishi Kakuban 興教大師覚鑁 (1095-1144<sup>1</sup>) could rise to such prominence and achieve such fame as he did in a relatively short period of time. Born in far-off Kashima on Kyūshū, with no background or support we know of, he succeeded in carving out a place in the history of Japanese Buddhism through his efforts to revive the Shingon-school in the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Since Kakuban's major writings belong to

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<sup>1</sup> It has become standard usage to take 1143 as the year of Kakuban's death, but since he died on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, this would be 1144 according to the western calendar.

a period in which he had already established himself as a leading religious figure, it was not his literary output that propelled him to national fame and that won him the support of nobles and the retired Emperor Toba 鳥羽 (1103-1156). I think the foundation for his successful career was a combination of the fame he achieved as a practitioner and his ability as a preacher to communicate his ideas to his audiences. It is obvious from many sources that Kakuban's fervent dedication to Buddhist practice was noted in society. It won him the name of *naikan no gyōja* 内観の行者 and lead to ever increasing interest in his activities and in his agenda for the revitalization of Kūkai 空海 (774-835)'s Buddhism. The second factor which attributed to his success and won him a large and influential following may have been his charisma as a preacher and his teaching strategies. I will confine myself in the present article to the latter factor and will make a preliminary investigation into his methods and strategies, hoping hereby to come to a better understanding of Kakuban's personality.

When looking for a personal style and character traits, Kakuban's numerous works are not of much use. Most of his major exegetical works conform to the pattern and *kanbun*-style generally adapted in most Shingon exegetical literature. These works offer few information or even glimpses that may serve as a basis for research into the way Kakuban promulgated his ideas and into specific teaching methods. The agenda he set himself in his restoration effort of the Shingon-school are clear from his own works<sup>2</sup>: to bring back the balance between theoretical studies and studies of practice as well as reconstitute the correct Dharma-transmission. These goals also transpire in contemporary documents such as the diaries of court nobles and the edicts of Toba and we have a clear idea of what his overall goal was: to revitalize the Shingon-school as he thought Kūkai had intended it to be.

Although there really seems not much to go on, there is fortunately one extant work which claims to contain jottings and notes made during

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. *Gumonji Ryūganmon* 求聞持立願文, *Kōgyō Daishi Zenshū*, 941.

lectures Kakuban gave in the *denbōe* 伝法会 sessions, twice-yearly gatherings which were organized to study, discuss and transmit the teachings of the Shingon-school. The work in question is the *Uchigikishū* 打聞集 ascribed to Chōganbō Shōō 長嚴房聖応 (dates unknown), which has been recognized as a valuable complement to other texts for the study of Kakuban's doctrinal system. These notes by one of Kakuban's closest disciples may also afford us some insights into what Kakuban was teaching and how he was teaching. Therefore, I will present another, new reading and interpretation of the contents of this text and will indicate how the reading of certain passages from a different approach may further our knowledge and expand our understanding of Kakuban as a teacher and motivator. Since these lectures were given during the *denbōe*, I will first discuss the historical background of these sessions and their importance for Kakuban before moving on to the discussion of Kakuban as a teacher and proselytizer.

### **The *denbōe***

One of the major goals Kakuban had set himself in his program for the restoration of Kūkai's Shingon-school was the revival of the training-sessions for Shingon priests called *denbōe*. Kūkai had already proposed such meetings as a method to train new disciples, but this ideal was only realized some time after his death. The first *denbōe* was held by Jichie 実恵 (786-847), the disciple of Kūkai was put in charge of the administration of the Tōji 東寺 after the death of the master. When Kūkai had been confronted with the problem of a growing number of official monks (*nenbundosha* 年分度者) who had to be instructed into his branch of esoteric Buddhism, he set up the Sōgeishūchiin 綜芸種智院 within the compounds of the Tōji, but this "university" never functioned properly. Jichie did away with it, bought land with the income and reserved the revenue for the organisation of *denbōe*.<sup>3</sup> He wrote down his ideas

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<sup>3</sup> Sumita Keikō 1940 and Matsuzaki Keisui 1973, 227-8.

on the format of the *denbōe* in *Tōji denbōe hyōbyaku* 東寺伝法会表白.<sup>4</sup> Almost at the same time another of Kūkai's major disciples, Shinzen 真然 (804-891) initiated similar sessions on Mount Kōya. In his outline *Denbō nie shikimoku* 伝法二会式目<sup>5</sup> he envisaged regular sessions consisting of a *Shugakue* 修学会 from the first to twenty-first day of the third month, which was dedicated to doctrinal matters (*kyōsō* 教相) and copying sūtras, and a *rengakue* 練学会 from the fifth to eighteenth day of the tenth month, which served as a seminar for remedial teaching and to discuss questions related to practice. With the decline of influence and power of Mount Kōya this project was subsequently abandoned as well.

It was not until Kakuban's time that the project was taken up again. Kakuban's teacher Kanjo 寛助 (1057-1125) took an interest in the restoration of buildings on Mount Kōya, especially Kūkai's mausoleum, the Okunoin 奥の院. The growing number of religious practitioners (*hijiri* 聖) living in its surroundings also contributed to a change of fortunes for Mount Kōya's head-temple, the Kongōbuji 金剛峰寺. Further, Kanjo started new *denbōe* gatherings in the Ninnaji 仁和寺 in Kyoto in 1109 and invited the famous Shingon erudite Saisen 済暹 (1025-1115) to lecture. There is a strong possibility that Kakuban attended this session and he may have been inspired by this event. It is clear, however, that the restoration and continuation of the *denbōe* became one of his top priorities.

Kakuban sought and found funds to realize his ideal of regular *denbōe* sessions in a temple dedicated to this purpose. An initial success was that through lobbying in the capital he received the *shōen* 莊園 of Iwade 岩手 on Mount Negoro in 1126 (Daiji 1). Here he built the Jingūji 神宮寺 which appears to have functioned as an administrative head-quarter for the new *shōen*, which was still mostly uncultivated land when Kakuban received it. In 1129 he

<sup>4</sup> See *Tōhōki* 東宝記. Although this text speaks of the year Jōwa 14 (847), actually Jichie held a *denbōe* –lecture on the *Dainichikyō* a year earlier.

<sup>5</sup> *Kongōbuji zōbun* 金剛峰寺雜文 in: *Kōbō Daishi den zenshū* 弘法大師伝全集 II, 15.

wrote the *Iwadeshō mōshibumi*<sup>6</sup> 岩手莊申文 requesting permission to devote the revenue from this *shōen* for the construction and upkeep of a Denbōdō 伝法堂, also called Denbōin, on Mount Kōya. This petition was granted and in 1130/5/16 the temple was dedicated.<sup>7</sup>

Kakuban modelled his sessions on the format Shinzen had suggested, but extended the periods of training to fifty days.<sup>8</sup> As Shinzen had suggested, attendance of these seminars was strictly limited to qualified, i.e. initiated monks, and a placard was placed at the entrance forbidding the entrance of non-initiated.

Soon after Kakuban started this training program for Shingon monks, which essentially was the aim of this project, it became clear that there was an overwhelming interest to attend the sessions. Monks turned out in such large numbers that even though admittance was restricted, the hall he initially built turned out to be much too small. This is clear from the *Daidenbōin konryū sōjō* 大伝法院建立奏上<sup>9</sup> written 1131/4, the “Petition for the establishment of the Great[er] Denbōin”. Kakuban writes that a Denbōin on a larger scale is necessary because more people attend than he can accommodate and his project suffers from a shortage of *dōjō* and sūtras. The petition was granted and the dedication ceremonies of the Daidenbōin and Mitsugon’in 密嚴院, the temple where Kakuban would take up residence, were held on 1132 /10/17.<sup>10</sup> retired Empeor Toba allotted a number of *shōen* for both temples with the stipulation that the income of some of these was destined to hold *denbōe*.

After the dedication ceremonies of the Daidenbōin and Mitsugon’in, regular *denbōe* sessions were held, although there is no clear evidence

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<sup>6</sup> *Kōgyō Daishi Zenshū*, 1345.

<sup>7</sup> A description of the temple and the dedication ceremonies can be found in the *Denbōin kuyō gammon*, *Kōgyō Daishi Zenshū*, 1353.

<sup>8</sup> This information first appears in the *Mitsugon shōnin engi*, which was written after 1360 and therefore a rather late biography. See Miura, 44-86

<sup>9</sup> *Kōgyō Daishi Zenshū*, 1349-1352.

<sup>10</sup> See Tomabechi 2001, II, 62.

Kakuban himself was always in charge of them. Under the pressure of continued resistance to his ideas and reforms, Kakuban left Mount Kōya with a number of his followers in the twelfth month of Hōen 6 (1140) and went to live on Mount Negoro. Here, he continued his *denbōe*-lectures until his death in 1144.

### The *Uchigikishū*

The only extant material that informs us about the contents of the *denbōe* in which Kakuban was involved, is found in the *Uchigikishū* a collection of notes made by Chōganbō Shōō, a disciple of Kakuban of which we know next to nothing. He doesn't appear as one of the major disciples in the lineage charts (*kechimyaku* 血脈) but in the biographies<sup>11</sup> he is credited with nursing Kakuban during his final illness. The content of his lecture-notes was considered of such importance as a supplement to Kakuban's other writings that the *Uchigikishū* was included in the latest *Collected Works*<sup>12</sup> under the title (*Kakuban Shōnin denbōe dangi*) *Uchigikishū* [覚鑠聖人伝法会談義] 打聞集 and divided into two volumes. It is also known under the sub-title of the *Collected Works Shingonshū dangi Chōmonjū* 真言宗談義聽聞集. It is thought that *Shingonshū* was added to prevent confusion with a *setsuwa*-collection of the same name, *Uchigikishū*, a work now only extant in a copy from 1134 by the monk Eigen 栄原, who is associated with Mount Hiei.<sup>13</sup> The editors of the *Collected Works* based their text, the first edition in *katsujō*, on a Kamakura manuscript kept in the Toganoo Kōzanji 桐尾高山寺, which is in three volumes, and compared it with a copy dated Shōgan 1/9/4 (1259) made

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<sup>11</sup> *Reizui engi*, Miura, 38

<sup>12</sup> *Kōgyō Daishi Zenshū*, 407-588.

<sup>13</sup> Matsuzaki Keisui 1981, 51. This *Uchigikishū* is a collection of twenty-seven tales (*setsuwa* 説話) and has attracted the attention of quite a few scholars, but since there is no relationship between the two texts it falls outside the scope of the present article.

by Raiyu 頼愉 (1226-1304)<sup>14</sup>. Nakano in his discussion of Kakuban's works<sup>15</sup> refers to other manuscripts kept in the Chishakuin and Gokokuji, but I have not seen these. Nakano also consulted a manuscript from the Ninnaji Shinren'in 仁和寺心蓮院 attributed to Genshō 顯証 (1597-1678). It is said that Genshō made his own edition based on the Kōzanji and Raiyu manuscripts in 1650 because the order of the lectures in those manuscripts is not chronological and, moreover, a number of passages in the text itself are difficult to understand or unintelligible. This manuscript again is in three volumes.<sup>16</sup> It was reproduced with the Kōzanji manuscript in the *shahon* collection of Kakuban's works.<sup>17</sup>

One possible reason why the *Uchigikishū* is the only extant text containing notes of Kakuban's expositions to his disciples, can be found in the *shikigo* 識語 which the writer Shōō includes before what is now the second volume in the *Collected Works*, the volume that contains the notes on the *Jūjūshinron* lectures starting in Hōen 6 (1140).<sup>18</sup> He explains that Kakuban ordered all his disciples to burn the notes of his lectures which addressed esoteric matters (*kuketsu* 口決), but Shōō went against the wishes of his teacher and finds himself vindicated by the importance of the information he will leave to posterity. Although there is some dubious facet to his plea for understanding when Shōō asks the reader to keep in mind that esoteric lore should not be divulged reading his text and to consider the mental dilemma he is facing, we find in Raiyu's copy the suggestion that Kakuban may well have seen the text and sanctioned its preservation.

## The dating of the lectures

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<sup>14</sup> The name of the copyist is Gōshin 豪信, the monk who later became known as Raiyu, the founder of Shingi Shingon.

<sup>15</sup> Nakano 1928-30, III, pp. 81-84.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the differences between the text in the Kōzanji and Ninnaji manuscripts, see Matsuzaki Keisui 1981. For a discussion of the various postscripts (*okugaki*) of the manuscripts and the division in volumes, see Fujii 2001.

<sup>17</sup> *Kōgyō Daishi Kakuban shahon shūsei* 興教大師覚鑒写本集成 vol. II.

<sup>18</sup> *Kōgyō Daishi Zenshū*, 537.

Shōō's notes cover Kakuban's lectures in the *denbōe* from their start in 1130 until his death in 1144, but they do not include all sessions and, moreover, they are not all dated. The following list is a reconstruction which corresponds to the present order of the notes in the Collected Works, of which I have included the page numbers.<sup>19</sup>

- 1) 1130 (Daiji 5/ spring?): *Denbōdō dangi* (pp. 431-462).
- 2) 1134 (Chōshō 3/1): *Tani dangi* (pp. 462-466).
- 3) 1134 (Chōshō 3/ spring): *denbōe dangi* (pp. 466-469) Added note: thirteenth day.
- 4) 1138 (Hōen 4/3/21): *Jūjūshinron* chapter 1 (pp. 473-481). This session appears to have started on the memorial day of Kūkai death.
- 5) 1138 (Hōen 4/8/25): *Jūjūshinron* chapters 2-6 (pp. 481-484).
- 6) 1139a (Hōen 5/4/2) *Jūjūshinron* chapter 7 (pp. 484-488).
- 7) 1139b (Hōen 5/4/8) *Jūjūshinron* chapter 10 (pp. 488-504).
- 8) 1139 (Hōen 5/5/7) discussion of ritual and practice (pp. 504-507) .
- 9) 1139 (Hōen 5/autumn) *Jūjūshinron* chapter 8 (pp. 507-533). This lecture includes discussions of ritual and practice and the role of Fudō myōō 不動明王.
- 10) 1139 (Hōen 5/11/5) *Jūjūshinron* chapter 9 (pp. 533-537).
- 11) 1140 (Hōen 6/4/7) esoteric explanations of practice (pp. 537-551). The setting is at one time moved to the Mitsugon'in, according to Shōō.
- 12) 1140 (Hōen 6/autumn) *Jūjūshinron* chapter 10 (pp. 551-553).
- 13) 1141 (Eiji/1/8/25) *Jūjūshinron* chapter 10 and *Shakumakaenron* (pp. 553-563). After Kakuban's move to Mt. Negoro.
- 14) 1141 (Eiji 1/11/22) *Shakumakaenron* (pp. 564-569).
- 15) 1142 (Kōji 1/8/29) *Sokushingi* (pp. 571-581).
- 16) 1142 (Kōji 1/9/28) (pp. 582-583).
- 17) 1143 (Kōji 2/4/1) *Unjigi* (pp. 583-585).

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<sup>19</sup> See also Matsuzaki Keisui 1975. The lectures appear in Tomabechi 2001, II, but I have made some modifications.

18) 1143 (Kōji 2 autumn) *Shōjijissōgi* (pp. 585-587).

There are still a number of problems connected with this schedule. One of these is the supposed practice of Kakuban's *mugongyō* 無言行, the silent practice. Kushida<sup>20</sup> argues that this lasted from Hōen 1/3/21 (1135) until Hōen 5/4/2 (1139) and that Kakuban broke his silence only to lecture in the *denbōe*, but this creative solution is hard to prove. Another problem is that Shōō notes the absence of Kakuban before the sessions dated in the eleventh month of 1139. Further, the *Collected Works* contain three undated lectures, labelled *Shakumakaenron-dangi*; *Bodaishinron-dangi* and *Nikyōron-dangi*. Nagai<sup>21</sup> proposes to include these lectures of unknown date in the slots that are not filled in the above schedule. This would place the lectures on the in the sessions of Chōshō 2 (spring and autumn); Chōshō 3 (autumn), Hōen 6 (spring), Eiji 1 (spring), or Kōji 1 (spring). In the following I will analyze the content of the lectures and make suggestions for a more precise dating of the lectures in question.

### **Preliminary analysis of the content of the *Uchigikishū*: doctrine and stories**

A number of writers<sup>22</sup> have pointed out the importance of the *Uchigikishū* as a supplement to Kakuban's other writings, but unfortunately there still is no full analysis of its contents. The extant manuscripts of the *Uchigikishū* do not give us the lectures in chronological order and we are thus faced with a lack of overall structure. It is not even certain that all the lectures in the *denbōe* were given by Kakuban himself, and we must allow for the possibility that in the

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<sup>20</sup> Kushida 1973, 355-6. On p. 357 his conclusion is that this will always remain a riddle. I think, however, the question whether Kakuban actually practiced the *mugongyō* has to be researched more thoroughly.

<sup>21</sup> Nagai 1967.

<sup>22</sup> Fujii 2001, 78 and note 8 mentions e.g. Tomita Kōjun and Moriyama Shōshin. Almost all writers on Kakuban point this out but since this is not followed up by any research, these are mere opinions.

years Shōō made no notes, or maybe made notes that have not come down to us, Kakuban didn't lecture himself and other teachers took care of the seminars. Moreover, the location of the lectures should not be taken to be strictly confined to the Denbōin nor is it likely that all that is recorded was said during the *denbōe*. As I remarked above, Shōō noted that after a certain lecture the discussions continued in the Mitsugon'in, the temple where Kakuban was living. Better than to take the *Uchigikishū* as mere recordings of the *denbōe* we should take it as recordings of Kakuban's teachings by a close disciple. These teachings can be assessed for their doctrinal content as well as for the method Kakuban used when he was teaching.

Many scholars have taken passages from the lectures to support arguments about his position vis-à-vis problems of the Shingon-school. When I make a first assessment of the general nature of the lectures, I find that Kakuban expositions in large part are confined to the ideas Kūkai espoused in the *Jūjūshinron* 十住心論 and to the Dharma-view of the *Shakumakāenron* 釈摩訶衍論. The subject of the lecture-series started in 1138 consistently was the *Jūjūshinron*, and the exegesis of this text is a theme pervasive in all of Shōō's notes. The *Jūjūshinron* itself is not included in the curriculum Kūkai devised to train his disciples, the *Jikkanshō*. However, its all-encompassing view of Buddhism and its final assessment of the Shingon view on enlightenment and the absolute a-duality parallel Kakuban's ideas on the subject, especially when coupled back to the statements in the *Shakumakenron* concerning the absolute nature of the Dharma-world and how, in Kūkai's interpretation, the way the universe unfolds from Dainichi's domain of enlightenment. This is the more important to recognize as all explanations Kakuban presents in his lectures hinge on the distinction between two approaches, a tool of exegesis he also used in other works, namely the approach from hindered circumstances (*shajō* 遮情) and the approach from expressed virtue (*hyōtoku* 表徳). He consequently emphasizes the claim that only Shingon has access to the absolute knowledge and can view the universe as *hyōtoku*, while all other Buddhist ways, although in itself contained in this

a-dual state, are either relative or plainly wrong, as their truths are presented from hindered circumstances. I think that this emphasis of Kakuban's teaching is continued in the subsequent lectures in later years which, although they now are labelled as discussing e.g. the *Unjigi* or *Shōjijissōgi*, turn out to be extensions of the ideas he found in the *Jūjūshinron*.<sup>23</sup>

Leaving these doctrinal matters aside I want to turn now to the second point, which is my main concern here, of the method and strategy Kakuban employed to instruct his disciples. Interspersed in the notes of Shōō we find a considerable number of remarks, stories and anecdotes. These passages are different in style and language and are written in a mixture of *kanji* and *katakana* instead of the usual Japanese style of writing classical Chinese. Japanese scholars generally refer to these passages as *setsuwa* 説話 and have compared them to similar stories in collections such as the *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語. Further, these stories are usually taken to be illustrative of certain points of doctrine. A close reading of these fragments reveals, however, two points. One is that these stories cannot all be classified as belonging to the literary genre of *setsuwa*, the other is that in many instances there is no direct relationship of the story or remark with the subject under discussion. It is my impression that these stories reflect most directly the way Kakuban attracted his audience and held them captivated and thus can be said to form part of his teaching strategy.

### The stories

The interpolations referred to as *setsuwa* were first discussed in detail by Nagai Gikei on the basis of the text in the *Collected Works*. Nagai counts seventy-nine of such passages, explains these and suggests possible sources in other collections of tales.<sup>24</sup> His conclusion is that although some of these

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<sup>23</sup> A full analysis of Kakuban's ideas in this text will have to wait to another opportunity

<sup>24</sup> Nagai Gikei 1967.

stories may be traced to known sources, there are a number of these which appear only in this text and are therefore valuable. Fujii<sup>25</sup> takes a different approach in his analysis of the *Bodaishinron* lecture and investigates the historical persons which appear in the tales. He concludes that Kakuban was acquainted with some of them and that they were possible influences on him in some of his activities. He further supposes that all stories in the *Bodaishinron* lecture are connected to the central theme of the lecture. Neither Nagai's search into the literary connections of the stories nor Fujii's reconstruction of possible historical connections, however, embark on a true analysis of the contents of the stories. This makes the claim of a connection with the central theme of the lectures in question difficult to maintain, since the function of the content of the stories in the lectures is not ascertained.

Here, I shall first present a selection of the passages in question to give an idea of their structure (if any), nature, style and atmosphere, before I embark on possible readings and interpretations of them as a reflection of Kakuban in his role as a teacher. For lack of space I will not make full translations, but shall give the gist of the argument:

From the *Nikyōron dangi* (undated)<sup>26</sup>

1. (2) (p.415) Jikaku [Daishi Ennin] 慈覺大師 円仁 went to China during the persecutions of Buddhism. Because all monks had to return to lay-status, they buried their doctrines in the earth. Ennin didn't transmit Shingon.<sup>27</sup> He became a layman himself and had to search for the doctrines in the woods in order to bring to bring them to Japan.

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<sup>25</sup> Fujii 1999.

<sup>26</sup> The first number before the stories is the numbering in my analysis, the second number between brackets is the number of the story as it appears in Nagai, since this is often used by Japanese scholars. I have included the page numbers from the Collected Works.

<sup>27</sup> Reconstructed: the text may have meant to say: "They didn't transmit Shingon to Ennin."

2. (2) (p. 415) Chishō Daishi (Enchin) 智証大師 円珍 received an oracle to go to China. At first he was not accepted by his master and he stood crying for seven days before Master Hōzen's dwelling with an incense burner in his hand and cried. One time after his return to Japan, he ritually offered water to the north-west. Some time later he received a report that a fire in the famous Ch'ing-liang Shan-ssu (Seikyōsanji 清涼山寺) in China was quenched by a drop of water which came flying from the direction of Japan.

From the *Bodaishinron dangi* (undated)

3. (p. 427) Gakushōbō 樂生房 predicted that it would not happen, the master from Dewa 出羽 predicted that it would happen; the people say that Gakushōbō doesn't understand it.

4. (3) (p. 428) At one time the high priest Shinga 真雅 (801-879) was engaged in an Inari 稻荷 ritual practice and there was an old man who used to bring him food. When this man fell ill, he ordered his daughter to carry a meal to the saint lest he might die of hunger. When Shinga saw this girl, he noticed that one of her legs was only 8 *sun* long.<sup>28</sup> Shinga complained about the fact that the man didn't come himself, but the man retorted that he was too ill. Shinga replied that he should have asked the Buddha for a cure. The man then saw in a dream how a monkey ate a cat and when he awoke, he was cured. Shinga thereupon advised the old man and his wife to abandon their daughter. After much lamenting they did as they were told, but only after Shinga had provided two bolts of silk to cloth her, and left their daughter at the roadside. She was picked up by a courtier who presented her at court. The girl became a servant in the palace, rose in favour and finally married the Emperor. She bore him a number of children of which the third son had one leg which was four *sun* shorter than the other. The Emperor was in all sorts about this and Shinga's

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<sup>28</sup> This is the accepted interpretation; the text has "sakeme hassun"

help was called in. The priest recited the [*Butchō*] *Sonshō darani* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼 for one week and the leg of the prince extended miraculously to the correct length. Thereafter the land was peaceful.

5. (5) (p. 429) Kanchō 寛朝 (916-998) became abbot but always took his time when doing the rituals. At one time [when he showed up late?] he noticed a big monkey, who was stealing the altar-offerings. He called for his servants but nobody showed up. Whether he was doing his rituals or was sleeping, the monkey woke him up by his stealing. He cursed and a big dog appeared from under his altar and chased the monkey away. The monkey took refuge in the Inari hall. The dog returned to his place under the altar. This monkey was Inari no kami, this dog was Niu myōjin 仁生明神.

6. (6) (p. 430) The king of Tokhara 都波羅 was driven from his land, chased and cornered by his enemies. As they were about to cut off his head, two majestic figures appeared who intervened to defend the king. The enemies threatened to behead the two figures, but they warned them that if they once more set foot on the king's land, they would behead the enemies in their turn. The king then asked one of the great protectors who he was and the giant answered that he was Tamon-ten 多聞天 [Bishamon-ten, the heavenly general who protects the north]. His companion was the Earth-god Kenrōjijin 堅牢地神. He explained that he protected the king because the king had never pissed in the northern direction in a standing position after he reached the age of seven. The moral is that you shouldn't piss standing and shouldn't piss to the north.

7. (p. 430) In the Chūin they used to gather the young monks to read the basic sūtras. Rishōbō 理性房 [Genkaku 賢覺 1080-1156] forbid this. It is said that from then on the Chūin stopped this. How sad this is and how lamentable!

8. (9) (p.431) Foxes know things six months before they happen.

From *Denbōdō dangi* (1130)

9. (12) (p. 434) When Gyōki Bosatsu 行基 (668-749) was about eight years old, he went to the temple the Prince [Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子]. He jumped off the back of his mother, ran towards the temple and met the Prince. The Prince said: “What about what was entrusted to you?” Gyōki spread his fingers and offered [the contents of his hands] to the Prince. [Kakuban said:] this was the yellow relic (*shari* 舍利) of the Tennōji 天王寺; this is an ancient oral transmission (*kuden* 口伝) from the Lord minister from the Right (Udaijin dono). When [Gyōki] was born, his hands were folded [in *gasshō*] and his fingers couldn’t be separated because he held this *shari* between them.

10. (13) (p. 435) Gyōki invited Bishop Baramon 波羅門僧正 from India to attend the first ritual in the Tōdaiji 東大寺 and the high priest arrived in a small boat. He returned to his homeland after the ceremony and as a parting gift he presented Gyōki with the alms bowl from which the historical Buddha had eaten when he was engaged in his ascetic practices. Since he returned without transmitting the “*tori no kyū*”<sup>29</sup>, Gyōki said: “this is not of much use (*riyaku* 利益) to me”. Then Baramon danced in his boat and Gyōki imitated his dancing. The begging bowl thereafter passed through a number of hands and came into the possession of a young monk. At one time Kūkai came to stay at his house and he was recognized as an incarnation of the historical Buddha. The bowl which cures diseases and prevents epidemics was given to him at that time. It is now preserved in the Tōji.

11. (p. 436) When Moritsune 守恒 burned a boil (*sō* 瘡) one *sun* high, he applied a layer of silver and intoned the spell of Yakushi Nyorai; by this he

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<sup>29</sup> 鳥の急. Marc Buijnsters suggested to me that this may refer to a certain ballad or song. This explanation would fit nicely into the context and the dancing. Apparently, Gyōki was more interested in the song than in the bowl of the Buddha.

was cured. This [kind of] boil first appeared in this period. It appeared in about four or five people in the country of Japan. It is a sign (sō 相) of the extinction of the Buddhist law.

12. (20) (p. 437) Even a lifetime dedicated to the ten virtues must come to an end. Therefore, the Daishi could not be present at the death (*rinju* 臨終) of the Emperor but went into meditation first.

13. (22) (p. 437) The Daishi made the images of Ashuku, Kongōsatta and Kongōō [on Mount Kōya]; other images were made by Imperial Prince Shinnyo, Shinzen etc. The image of Cunda Kannon in the Dining Hall (Jikidō 食堂) was made by the Daishi as well. The [five-fold] repentance before Cunda also began when he was alive. The ordained monks (*shami* 沙弥) transmit the [chanting of] repentance and the nine *hōben* 九方便 to the acolytes (*dōji* 童子).

14. (24) (p. 438) When Ninkai 仁海 (951-1046) left Mount Kōya [to found the Mandaraji in Ono] he took with him the contents of the secret treasury.

15. (25) (p. 438) In the Daishidō 大師堂 [reconstructed: the text reads 大御堂] lives Zennyō Ryūō; 善女竜王; somebody saw this in a dream.

16. (26) (p. 438) When Nyūdō Chūnagon became a priest and took the vows before the Okunoin, he heard a bell ringing inside. He is the grandfather of the governor of Harima.

17. (27) (p. 438) When Fujiwara Michinaga visited Mount Kōya, the door of Kukai's mausoleum opened [and he saw the meditating Kūkai<sup>30</sup>].

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<sup>30</sup> Nagai, 39, refers to the *Eika Monogatari* for the complete story of Michinaga's visit to Mount Kōya.

18. (28) (p. 438) Buddhahari 仏陀波梨 went to Mount Wutai 五台山 for three years and wondered whether he possessed the mind of enlightenment so he asked a disciple about it. The disciple said no, you have not. Buddhahari went away again for three years and came back with the *Sonshō darani* in three volumes [?] which he presented to the Emperor. The Emperor didn't want to return the original text to him and Buddhahari stood in the garden for three weeks and rain didn't fall [? although it was supposed to?]. The Emperor became afraid and returned the text. Eleven people translated it thereafter and our translation is the one by Pu-kung 不空 (Fukū 705-774). Buddhahari eventually retired to a cave. His light filled the country of the Tang. This is yellow metal.

19. (31) (p. 439) At meal times, one should not hang a rosary (*jūzu* 数珠) around one's neck, but excepted are rosaries made of lotus-seeds and crystals (*suishō* 水精) because these are pure and can purify.

20. (34) (p. 440) Once Emperor Hsuan-tsung 玄宗 made an image of Bishamon 毘沙門 and asked Hui-kuo 惠果 (746-805) to perform the dedication ceremonies. Hui-kuo refused a number of times but in the end had to consent. When he performed the ritual and sat facing the altar, the images of various Heavenly Generals crumbled to dust and fell apart. Hui-kuo said: "I told you so". The Emperor had a dream in which Bishamon approached him saying: "I regret to say it, but I belong to the outer layer (*Gekongōbu*) [of the mandala]. This now is the result of asking Dainichi to venerate me [instead of the other way around].

21. (39) (p. 441) The official of the golden hairs: There once was a commoner who wanted to build a *stūpa* in the country of the Tang. For three years he dedicated himself to the task. He abandoned his wife and children and his clothes became ragged. After three years an official came by and asked what the cause was of the state he was in. He replied that there was a profound

meaning to it: “I became like this because of my earnest desire to erect a *stūpa*. I will certainly accomplish this in future”. The official said: “Did you by chance have any mystical experiences?” The man answered: “Yes, in fact I have. Golden hairs grow from my shoulders. By the light of these I can transport my lumber at night. They have grown quite long now.” He bared his shoulder and showed these golden hairs; their radiant light illuminated the Dharma-world. This was reported to the Emperor. When the Emperor heard this story he made this man king of all portents. He was thus called the official with the golden hairs.

22. (40) (p. 441) The Japanese custom to make three bows [to the Buddha] was started by Gyōki.

23. (47) (p. 443) Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 worked for the benefit of the people and out of compassion cried time and again. His tears were the colour of blood and coloured the ground. On such a place Shōmu Tennō 聖武天皇 built a temple and this was the Tōdaiji. Then when Shōmu cried, these tears hit the ground and became blood. Later Shōbō 聖法 (832-909) came to this place and studied in the Devil’s Room (Oni-muro 鬼室). In the evening a snake appeared which tried to eat him, but Shōbō grabbed it and ate the snake. The following morning, a female snake appeared which tried to eat him as well. Shōbō took his ritual stick and performed a demon subduing black magic ritual. It had the power of eighty people.<sup>31</sup>

24. (50) (p. 446) The saints in Ohara 大原 recite *the Sonshō darani* at their meals one time before each bite. Thus, their meal times are exceedingly long.

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<sup>31</sup> The pun is also in the character 聖 in the names of the three saints.

25. (51) (p. 446) Kūkai built the Tōji in the ninth district (*kujō* 九条) of the capital because the former site of the Ch'ing-lung-ssu used to be in the ninth district of Loyang 洛陽.

26. (53) (p. 446) When Kūkai had studied all scriptures, he stayed in the Kumedera 久米寺. In a dream he heard a voice saying: “The text you have been looking for is hidden in the pillar behind you”. He woke up and started knocking on the pillars to find the text and found a hollow sounding spot in which he discovered the *Dainichikyō* 大日經. The question is: who put it there? It was Shan-wu-wei 善無畏 (637-735) who did this. He had crossed over from China to measure the potential [for Buddhism] of this country. Because the potential was not sufficient yet, he returned to China and nobody knew anything about this. ut anybody and the people didn't learn about this.

27. (64) (p. 454) The ritual space of Tosa Muroto 土佐室戸: When Kūkai was seven years old he gathered earth [to make Buddha images] and he performed the rituals uninterruptedly. A woman appeared to him who pressed him to carry out rituals to attain enlightenment. She said: “There is a monk called Gonzō 勤操 (758-827) who is an incarnation of Miroku Bosatsu. I will most certainly help you. There is a flat plain in the south of the province of Awa and this is the place to reach enlightenment.” After Kūkai had finished his studies, he went there and saw a place where a fire was raging. He met a commoner who carried a bow and arrows and who was accompanied by two dogs. They went together to the place where they saw the fire. The woman accompanied them. A dharma sword came flying and the woman said: “To the south there is an even more powerful place; it is the superior place to reach enlightenment.” Kūkai thereupon went to Muroto in the province of Tosa. The morning star came and illuminated him; the Daishi spit it out. Its light is still there.

28. (67) (p. 456) Chūin gobō [Meizan 明算 1021-1106 started the continuous recitation of the *Rishukyō* was started by. Once he fell asleep during this ritual

and in his dream he saw two monks standing next to him without moving. When he asked who they were they replied that they were two disciples of Fukū who had come to attend the reading of the *sūtra*. If the custom was to be continued, they would certainly be glad to attend every year. When Chūin awoke, he cried loudly. When he went to the temple hall, he saw that women as well as commoners stood up before the path of practice and circled without pausing. How mysterious is the uninterrupted intonation.

29. (68) (p. 456) Shōbō of the Daigoji was very strict with his disciples. One of them spent three years in seclusion and when he appeared from his room, his hair fell over his shoulders and the colour of his face was pale like that of a saint (*sennin* 仙人). The teacher questioned him and the disciple answered that piety for one's parents is of a certain length (*itchō* 一町), but piety towards the teacher is of a certain level (*ichidan* 一段). When you have transgressed against this, you will have no earth-god (*chijin* 地神). Therefore, I have dedicated myself in my dwelling to worldly matters. Why would I be scolded for not reading the sutras as the master is teaching these? The master then took pity, shaved his hair and sent him back to his parents. When the master looked around in the room where the monk had been staying, he found a small shrine, which was locked firmly and he couldn't open it. Then he broke it down with an axe, looked inside and found an image of Shōbō himself made out of wood. There was not even a hair in the wrong place. The said monk returned and was asked what he had been doing for these three years. He answered there was nothing to do. Asked again, he admitted that he made an image and he was shown the image they had taken from his room. The disciple bowed his head before it. The master asked him: "Is there no difference between me and the picture?" The disciple denied this. They sent the picture to the temple-hall and while the two were thinking what to do, the master went to his room and died. Can we say that this was the incarnation?

30. (76) (pp. 470-471) Eitō Nyūdō saw in a dream when he visited the Daishidō in Daiji 5/5 (1130) a small hut inside it with three rooms where the rituals never stopped. Monks appeared who walked around sleeping. This was the veneration of the Daishi. The Daishi said to him: “oh Nyūdō! When someone wants to reach enlightenment, three matters should be stopped for there are three wicked things on this mountain. The first is loud laughter, the second is to sit together and drink sake. When it rains in the evening and there is no one around, you may drink sake. The third is to be young of mind and walk around as if one is having a good time. When these three are absent, enlightenment will certainly be attained.

### **Analysis of the contents of the stories**

In the above selection I have presented some of the tales that are called *setsuwa* and in addition included some other passages which I think represent the general atmosphere of the lectures. Among them are tales that correspond to the genre of *setsuwa*, while others are clearly directives for practice, instructions for monks or historical information on the Shingonshū. Moreover, they show us some characteristics of Kakuban as a person. Firstly, his well-known veneration of Bishamon-ten, to whom he also devoted a *kōshiki*, surfaces a number of times. Secondly, his admiration for eminent monks such as Gyōki and Shōbō comes to the fore. Thirdly, Kakuban’s dedication to the *Sonshōdharani* and his belief in its efficacy is illustrated.

Based on a breakdown of the subject of the stories, I want to draw attention to two aspects I think that are neglected so far. The first one is that many of the above stories, and others I have not included in the selection, have a direct connection to the contents of the *Goyuigō* 御遺告 the so-called testament of Kūkai in twenty-five instructions, although the text is not mentioned as such. We know that Kakuban was given the opportunity in 1133 to see this text in Toba’s library.<sup>32</sup> I will return to this below. The second

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<sup>32</sup> 1133 /7/12 see Tomabechi II, 76.

aspect is that although there is no doubt about the seriousness with which Kakuban approached his subject-matter, the way he presents his tales verges on the comical at times and we find a kind of wit and self-mockery in the treatment of the story-matter. The best examples are probably story 24, which tells how long it takes the saints of Ohara to finish a meal and story 3 about predicting the future. I will discuss other examples below.

Various themes are intermingled in these stories and are hard to separate, but here I will limit myself to four characteristics we find in the passages in question. This doesn't imply that each theme is found in one particular story only. Kakuban's wit can be detected in most of these and the same can be said for his approval and admiration for certain practices and masters and his disdain and dislike for other practices and masters. The themes I will discuss are:

1. Criticism of other teachers;
2. The content of the genre of *setsuwa*;
3. The influence from Kūkai's testament, the *Goyuigō*;
4. Jokes and puns.

### **Theme One**

Kakuban was quite noted for his critical attitude towards his contemporary Buddhists. This ran him into trouble a number of times and made him a somewhat controversial figure. A number of stories are clearly aimed at people belonging to different denominations as well as at his precursors, a fact which was smoothed over by other writers on the subject. Some actions of his predecessors didn't sit easy with him; of some he was only poking fun. His criticism directed at Tendai monks such as Ennin and Enchin becomes apparent in a number of places. His strategy is mostly to cast some doubt on the veracity of the transmission (stories 1 and 2) and then present a miracle story such as Enchin's quenching of a fire in China from Japan.

Famous teachers from his own Shingon-school are not spared. Ninkai, the rain-bishop, in one place is mentioned for his enlightenment under the Nachi waterfall, while in another story he is reproached for taking away with him all secret books when he moved away from the Kongōbuji (story 14). Now since Ninkai was the founder of the Ono-branch of Shingon and Kakuban belonged to the Hirosawa-branch we may find a controversy here, but I would suggest that one other problem was that Ninkai took the manuscripts of the *Goyuigō* with him, the testament of Kūkai in which Kakuban was greatly interested. This assumption is supported by the fact that the subject of the stories appearing right before this remark (no. 13) and after it (no. 15) also refer to the contents of this testament.

Ninkai is not the only famous founder of a lineage who is criticised by Kakuban. Rishōbō Genkaku is criticised for doing away with *sūtra* reading (story 6), one of the aims, incidentally, of the *denbōe* sessions. Kanchō (story 5) is no match for a stealing monkey until the goddess Niu comes to his rescue. This anecdote can be read against the background of the competition and controversy between the Tōji and the Kongōbuji, since Tōji was famous for its Inari-shrine and Niu had promised Kūkai to protect the Shingon-school. The relationship between Niu and the Shingon-school is established in the *Goyuigō*. Kakuban's own interest was in restoring Mount Kōya to its former centre of excellence and in the continuation of the *denbōe* sessions at Mt. Kōya.

## Theme Two

A number of the tales in the *Uchigikishū* can be traced to other sources, but some of the stories appear only in this work thus contain important material. Some stories appear later in different guises and in adapted form (e.g. no 18). Kakuban practise of the *Butchō Sonshō darani* intonation is well-known. He was instructed into this practise at a young age and he performed the practice before his death as well. Illustrative is also that the main image of the Denbōdō was an image of Butchō Sonshō. It is no wonder, therefore, that we find among the tales miracle stories such as story 4, which extols both the virtue of Shinga

and the efficacy of the *Sonshō darani*, with a nice twist at the end of the extending leg of the prince. Buddhahari, who is credited with introducing the *darani* to China, figures in story 18, although the question about his own mind of enlightenment appears to me an addition by Kakuban. Story 24, however, seems to be just poking fun at the *hijiri* of Ohara.

Another of Kakuban's objects of devotion was the figure of Bishamon-ten. He appears as the great protector in story 7, but as a minor deity in story 20. There is an unproven story that Kakuban visited Mt. Shigi, the cult-place of Bishamon in 1130. Again, we find a special twist to the end of both stories I have included. There would seem no doctrinal or traditional reason for not pissing to the north or pissing standing up. It may even be that Kakuban was mocking the directional taboos that dominated life in his age so much. In these story we can clearly learn something about Kakuban's devotions.

### Theme Three

A third theme which can be clearly discerned in the stories of the *Uchigikishū* is Kakuban's interest in the *Goyuigō*.<sup>33</sup> This work has nowadays been classified as the product of a later age, probably the middle of the tenth century<sup>34</sup>, but it was held in high esteem in Kakuban's day, even though its contents belonged to the secret category. At this place I would like to draw attention to some of the correspondences. The contents of the first chapter of this work, a biography of Kūkai, is reflected in story 27 which shows us an image of the young Kūkai fabricating Buddha images from earth, Kūkai's relationship with Gonzō as well as Kūkai's initial practice on Shikoku (on the

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<sup>33</sup> There are a number of versions, but here the testament in twenty-five chapters is meant, the *Goyuigō (nijūgo kajō)* 御遺告(二十五箇条), *Kōbō Daishi Zenshū* II, kan 7, 781-808.

<sup>34</sup> Ueyama Shunpei and Takano Shingen, see also my forthcoming article on the matter

Tairyūji and Cape Muroto)<sup>35</sup>; story 26 describes Kūkai’s discovery of the *Dainichikyō* in the Kumedera (p. 783); story 15 explicitly mentions Zenryo ryūō, the dragon-king from the pond in the palace, 神泉園 (p. 785); story 5 mentions the protecting deity of Kōya-san, Niu. This deity is mentioned in other stories and so are other references to the testament. Noteworthy is that story 27 situates the legendary meeting between Kūkai and a local hunter with his dogs on Shikoku, although in most accounts this episode is included in the legend of Kūkai’s discovering of Mt. Kōya. I wonder whether this may not be a conscious attempt by Kakuban, since the story itself does not appear in the *Goyuigō*.

The subject-matter of other chapters of the *Goyuigō* is scattered throughout Kakuban’s stories as well. We can see a correspondence between story 25 and chapter 5 which explains that the Tōji as “Kyōōgokoku no tera” 教王護国之寺 was named after the Ch’ing-lung ssu. Here it is even pinned down to the ninth ward. Story 13 is a straight reference to customary practices in the same Ching-ling-su described in chapter 7 of the testament. Here it is prescribed that ordained priests chant the five-fold repentance at meal times and that acolytes are to be trained in reciting the nine-fold *hōben*. A further connection may be found between story 30 and chapter 19, which discourages drinking liquor, but suggests to drink liquor from a container which does not look like a liquor bottle and “to pretend that one is drinking tea”.

I think that in other stories as well information from the *Goyuigō* is included in Kakuban’s teachings, but further research must wait until another opportunity.

## Theme Four

My fourth theme, which I haven’t seen discussed before it, concerns the entertaining and witty side which pervades many stories. I am under the

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<sup>35</sup> *Kōbō Daishi zenshū*, 782. Gonzō is not mentioned by name here, but generally regarded in the Shingon school as the monk who taught Kūkai the *Gumonjihō*-recitation.

impression that this may well have been a conscious strategy Kakuban employed to keep the interest and attention of his audiences. This doesn't mean that he is making outright jokes, but mockery and wit form part of the basic structure of a number of stories, even at the expense of practices and masters for which he had high regard. Buddhahari is portrayed as in doubt about his mind of enlightenment and the saints of Ohara take very long to finish their meals. A puzzling remark is found in story 11 about the first cure for a certain boil (*sō*) in Japan. The story is concluded with the statement that this is a mark of the degeneration of Buddhism. The pun on *sō*, boil and mark, is clear since Kakuban didn't consider Buddhism to be in a degenerate age and moreover, spoke about the efficacy of the Yakushi-spell. Story 3 is obviously making fun of the ineptness of fortune and future telling of Gakubōshō, The snake-eating Shobo is an image I haven't found elsewhere. Story 10 about the dancing Brahman is even stranger, not so much in what the story (probably) conveys as well in the way it is told. Poking fun of adversaries or even priests belonging to the same Shingon brand of Buddhism (Kanchō) is another device put to good use. I think reading the stories in this way will reveal more about Kakuban's personality and relationship with his disciples.

### Concluding remarks

In the above I have delved into Shōō's *Uchigikishū* and the stories labelled *setsuwa* in an attempt to reconstruct an image of Kakuban as a teacher. For lack of material this image will remain sketchy, but still I think we may derive some conclusions from the lectures preserved here.

The first conclusion is that Kakuban's main interest during these lectures was the exposition of Kūkai's *Jūjūshinron*. Even though these discussions are labelled *Nikyōron-dangi* or *Bodaishinron-dangi*, the main focus is formed by the ideas and ideology from this major work. There is no

mentioning of ideas related to Amidism or its practices, but the figure of Miroku, as in the *Goyuigō*, appears a number of times.<sup>36</sup>

The second conclusion is that in a number of lectures the stories and anecdotes are not inserted solely to support the argument or to serve as examples of doctrinal points, but may have played a very different role, namely as part of a teaching strategy. In fact, two strategies convene: firstly, the use of modern stories to hold the attention of the audience, the real *setsuwa*, secondly, their use to transmit information about the history and practice of the Shingon-school as Kakuban envisaged it. It is clear that Kūkai's *Goyuigō* was an inspiring influence in this respect. Overall, Kakuban is an advocate of the Kūkai-tradition and Shinga-line with an emphasis of Mount Kōya as the centre over the Tōji. These stories show that Kakuban felt a need to distinguish his own type of Shingon from other branches, and the stories underscore his intentions to return to Kūkai. In his efforts he comes across as very lineage-conscious.

Most of the stories appear in the *Denbōdō dangi* (1130) and in some undated *dangi*. Kakuban's visit to Toba's library where he saw the *Goyuigō* took place in 1133. This raises a number of questions. Did he already possess a copy of the text? Did his interest in the text lead to the permission he received from Toba? Are the biographical data correct?

The third conclusion I would like to present is that these stories also tell us something about Kakuban's personality and method of teaching. Kakuban appears to insert the stories to captivate his audience and they have no specific relationship with the subject at hand. It may be the hindsight of a later generation reading more into this than there was, but I am under the impression that here we find a display of Kakuban's wit and sense of humour. Such a knack for teaching can also be found with some professors who taught at our universities and who used such a talent to convey their message, the message of Buddhism, across.

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<sup>36</sup> See also Honda 1992.

In my view, Kakuban was a teacher who not only knew how to structure a doctrinal argument, but also would set out a strategy to make his points with a method that applied modern stories as well as wit and mockery to clarify his intentions. He captivates his audiences by all means, even using the funny side of some stories in his tactics. In his later lectures these funny remarks disappear, or Shōō didn't record them any more. These lectures belong to the period after the Daidenboin was founded. Thus, when reading the lectures of the first *denbōe* and the stories inserted, we must keep in mind that Kakuban was teaching his own brand of Shingon to his followers, but we may also extract additional information from these stories. The least I can say of these passages is that I found them entertaining and this is one of the marks of a great teacher.

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