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Of saints and blood: the Narita Buddhist sword cult in Edo Japan

Kevin Bond
University of Regina, Canada
kevin.bond@uregina.ca

Abstract
This article examines the local character of early modern (1600–1868) Japanese Buddhism using a case study of the Narita Fudō cult of Shinshōji Temple, with particular attention to the temple's most sacred treasure, the legendary Sword of Amakuni. Drawing on local sources produced within and beyond clerical circles, it examines how the sword and its popular narratives became central to the public identity of the cult and the temple's proselytization efforts. This article illuminates the evolving, fluid nature of deity cults as highly mobile properties working across sectarian boundaries, and how these properties gained importance beyond the walls of Buddhist institutions among the artistic and theatrical landscapes of the country's capital.
Keywords: Edo Buddhism, Naritasan Shinshōji, Narita Fudō, Sword cult, Miracle tales, *Kaichō*, *Kabuki* theatre, Religion and entertainment

I. Introduction[1]

With a growing print culture, unprecedented literacy rates, and the refinement of communication and transportation networks, knowledge and worship of popular Buddhist cults spread rapidly across Edo or Tokugawa (early modern) Japan (1600–1868), especially in and around the booming capital of Edo (modern-day Tokyo). This article examines how popular urban storytelling, entertainment, and material culture aided the spread of one devotional cult, that of the Narita Fudō 成田不動 of Shinshōji 新勝寺 Temple,[2] across Edo's religious culture during the early eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. Taking a cue from recent trends in regionally based studies of early modern religion,[3] and moving

1 I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism) for their generous fellowships which made this research possible in Japan. All translations from Japanese are my own unless otherwise noted.
2 The primary monograph-length studies on Shinshōji and the Narita cult are Murakami 1968, Ōno 1978, and Asahi 1981. Shinshōji has also published two large temple histories, *Naritasan shi* 成田山史 (A History of Naritasan, 1938) and *Shinshū Naritasan shi* 新修成田山史 (A Newly Edited History of Naritasan, 1968), and more recently a six-volume collection of its primary documents, the *Naritasan Shinshōji shiryō shū* 成田山新勝寺史料集 (Collection of Naritasan Shinshōji Historical Documents, 1992–2006).
3 See, for example, the special issue in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* ("Local religion in Tokugawa history", 2001, 28/3–4). The editors (Ambros and Williams 2001: 210) identify the work of Tamamuro Fumio of Meiji University as having been

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beyond canonical sources to engage local, trans-sectarian materials, I examine the highly mobile nature of the cult's narratives and sacred objects as they became portable commodities shared among and beyond Buddhist traditions.

In particular, I approach the Narita Fudō from a less-studied, though important, perspective: that of a sword cult. I give special attention to the sword as a sacred Buddhist object, especially the temple's legendary Sword of Amakuni, through an investigation of miracle tales, biographies, temple documents, and popular sources produced by non-clerical circles. While there exist excellent studies of popular Edo-period cults examining, for instance, the socio-economics and political landscapes of pilgrimage and patronage,[4] the Narita sword cult offers a unique case-study of how Buddhist storytelling and material culture facilitated cultic movement beyond sectarian boundaries and into new artistic and theatrical spaces. The shared currency of the cult sheds light on the highly mobile nature of the deity and its fluidity across cultural spaces in early modern Japan, balancing scholarly trends which have tended to emphasize static, trans-local features across time and place specific to sectarian tradition.

II. The Narita Fudō cult

Early modern sources list scores of sites devoted to the esoteric Buddhist (Mikkyō 密教) deity Fudō dotting the landscape of eastern Japan, but it was the Shingon 真言 temple Shinshōji (popularly known as Naritasan 成田山) that often stole the limelight.[5] Although located in Narita 成田 Town, a four-day journey outside Edo in Shimōsa Province (modern-day Chiba Prefecture), the Narita Fudō nonetheless became one of the most famous deity cults in the capital alongside the likes of Kanda Myōjin and Asakusa Kannon. Popular worship of the deity initially spread during the vibrant Genroku period (1688–1703) with the advent of the temple's first "restorer" (*chūkō*), the abbot Shōhan 照範 (d. 1725) in 1700, under whose direction the temple secured a lasting patronage that, with a booming travel and print culture, propelled the cult beyond the walls of Shinshōji and across Edo's urban landscape.[6]

instrumental to the growing attention given to local, trans-sectarian studies during the Edo period. See the editors' introduction for an overview and bibliography of Tamamuro's scholarship.

4 See, for example, Ambros 2008, Hur 2000, Thal 2005 and Tamamuro 1993.

5 On general studies of Fudō in Japan, see Watanabe 1975, Daihōrin Henshūbu 1981, and Tanaka 1993. Other notable works that include substantial discussions on the deity are Yoritomi 1984 and Uehara et al. 1989. Major surveys on Fudō's iconography are Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 1981, Sawa 1984, and Nakano 1987. See also Payne (1991) for a discussion on modern Fudō rites, and Mack's (2006a) dissertation on the context of Fudō's iconography in the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods.

6 The celebrity of the Narita cult is attested by its presence across early modern art, literature and theatre (for details see Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 510–669), much of it butressed by the temple's successful *kaichō* 開帳 (exhibition) proselytization efforts in the capital from 1703 onward. As one contemporary writer noted, the Narita Fudō was one of three provincial deities whose display in Edo continually drew the largest crowds among the

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The public allure of the emerging Narita cult rested heavily on the creation and promotion of a unique "brand" of the deity to distinguish the temple from competing sites and attract patrons. This stylization reflected not a universal or trans-local "Fudō", but, as suggested by the naming of local images, a manifestation particular to Narita. The process of deity localization drew on sectarian scriptures, but was more grounded in narrative literature, primarily in the form of temple *engi* 縁起 (foundation legends and sacred chronicles) and associated miracle tales (*reigenki* 霊験記) and biographies of eminent monks. As popular cultic sites were largely defined as the spiritual domain of a miraculous deity, a central function of these narratives was to position scriptural, iconographical and ritual traditions within the context of regional culture in the service of establishing a unique deity meaningful to time and place.

Shinshōji's narrative literature thus served intimately to associate certain common features of the deity – such as his wrathful, militant iconography and character as defined by centuries of Mikkyō tradition[7] – with Narita geography. The localization process was, however, a selective one. While some "classic" features significant to canonical or iconographical sources (in particular the sword) took on new, region-specific meanings at Shinshōji, others such as Fudō's pantheonic position as a manifestation of the cosmic sun Buddha Dainichi Nyōrai 大日如来 and central deity of the Godai Myōō 五大明王 (The Five Kings of Great Illumination) played little if any role in the cult's public presentation. The negotiation of these "canonical" and "local" traditions provided a distinct personality, range of abilities, and body of material objects demonstrating the deity's ongoing miraculous benefits to its community. As

people (Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 201–02). *Kaichō* records kept by the temple clergy (see *Shiryō* 5) show the cult to have earned substantial sums of money and donations primarily among the samurai, artisan, and merchant classes, and to have received ongoing support from several confraternities (*kō*) of organized patrons (Murakami 1993: 257–60). By the end of the period, devotees had established a well-trodden pilgrimage route from Edo as evidenced by the publication of Shinshōji's own five-volume travel guide, the *Narita meisho zue* 成田名所図会 (Illustrated Guide to Famous Places in [and on the Way to] Narita, 1858). With the advent of modern Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912), Shinshōji underwent rapid institutional expansion to produce a network of "Naritasan" branch or sub-temples that by 1938 included twenty-one sites primarily in eastern Japan. The new Naritasan franchise (which now exceeds seventy sites across the country) has gained the Narita deity a national prestige, with several sub-temples particularly successful in the post-war period for offering services for traffic safety. In addition to such common parishioner activities as *goma* prayers, the acquisition of talismans, and *sūtra* copying, Shinshōji remains an important centre in eastern Japan for festivals, parades, music, theatre and even tourism.

7 Here I refer to the body of Shingon and Tendai sectarian sources on the deity classified and organized in the Meiji, Taishō (1912–26), and Shōwa (1926–89) periods. These materials are primarily found in volume 21 of the Taishō canon (T.21.1199–1205), its twelve-volume *zuzō* 図像 supplement of rituals, commentaries and iconographies (for example, TZ.5.3022, TZ.7.3119, and TZ.9.3190), as well as biographies and writings of Mikkyō patriarchs published in modern sectarian collections. The earliest of these sources date from Tang (618–907) China (T.21.1199, T.21.1200, T.21.1202), but the majority are products of the Heian and Kamakura periods.

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we shall see, a central instrument in the Narita localization and its popularization across Edo was the sword, the logic of which drew from Fudō's iconic weapon as a central defining feature of the deity.

III. *Engi* origins of the Narita Fudō

The narrative foundation of the Narita Fudō was established with the temple's first complete *engi* in 1700 written by the Shingon monk Kakugen 覚眼 (1643–1725),[8] entitled *Shimōsa no kuni Naritasan Jingo Shinshōji honzon raiyūki* 下総国成田山神護新勝寺本尊来由記 (A Record of the Origins of Naritasan Jingo Shinshōji of Shimōsa Province and its Main Object of Worship) (hereafter *Daiengi*).[9] Completed in 1700 (probably under Shōhan's direction) and written in approximately 1,750 characters in Sino-Japanese (possibly to lend a prestige to the temple's emerging official *engi* history), the text can be divided into two primary and somewhat violent miracle tales,[10] each strongly associated with hagiographical literature and the sword as a sacred Buddhist object.

The central frame of the first tale is the Masakado Rebellion of 939–940, an uprising led by the ill-fated warrior Taira no Masakado 平将門 (?–940) in Shimōsa against Emperor Suzaku 朱雀 (923–952) and his imperial court in Kyoto. With an exciting cast of heroes and villains, and immortalized as Japan's earliest extant war chronicle,[11] Shinshōji claimed ancestral connections and strategically adopted the rebellion as part of the temple's *engi* heritage. Specifically, the *Daiengi* positioned Shinshōji as a heroic player in the rebellion using a unique twist on the standard tale: that imperial triumph over the insurrection was assisted by the divine intervention of the Narita Fudō. As the tale goes, a Shingon monk from Kyoto named Kanchō 寛朝 (also Kanjō, 916–998), armed with a special statue of Fudō carved by the great Kūkai 空海 (774–835), sailed east under imperial orders, and installed the image in the Narita area near the rebellion. There Kanchō petitioned the image using *goma*

8 Kakugen's connection to Shinshōji may be in part explained by his close Denbōinryū 伝法院流 lineage with Ryūchō 隆長 (1586–1656) (Sawa 1975: 136), who temple tradition regards as having become Shinshōji's abbot in 1605 (Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 67) (Kakugen appears sixth in the Denbōinryū line after Ryūchō).

9 Also known in modern scholarship by the abbreviated title *Tōji daiengi* 当寺大縁起 (The Great *Engi* of Our Temple). See Naritasan Shinshōji (1968: 17–19) and Naritasan Shinshōji Shiryōshū Hensan Iinkai (2006: 428–31) for the complete text. The *Daiengi* was probably produced to coincide with the construction of a new main hall in 1701 where the Narita Fudō statue was enshrined with a *nyūbutsu kuyō* 入仏供養 consecration ceremony (Murakami 1968: 365).

10 The *Daiengi* concludes with a third narrative, that of Fudō's conquest of Maheśvara (Śiva), a lesser-known variant of the popular Tantric subjugation tale copied from the eighth-century *Dapiluzhena chengfo jing shu* 大毘盧遮那成仏経疏 (Jp. *Daibirushana jōbutsu kyō sho*) (Commentary on the Attainment of Buddhahood by Mahāvairocana sūtra) (T.39.1796.678c.26 ff.). While its inclusion was likely to offer scriptural support for the Narita Fudō as a powerful Buddhist guardian and subjugator of heretics, the tale played a negligible role at Shinshōji, and was dropped from all subsequent *engi* texts.

11 The *Shōmon ki* 将門記 (A Record of Masakado, tenth century). For an introduction and translation, see Rabinovitch 1986.

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護摩 rites of subjugation (*chōbuku* 調伏), a practice drawn from Fudō's centuries-old heritage as a guardian deity of state protection (*chingo kokka* 鎮護国家).[12] With the rebellion ended under its miraculous presence, the statue announced its intention to remain and protect the area from evil and grant divine favour to all who wish it. In gratitude, the emperor commissioned the construction of a temple to house the deity, naming it "Shinshōji" (Temple of the New Victory).[13] Kanchō was celebrated as the founder, and the image became known as the Narita Fudō.

Though the *Daiengi* makes no mention of any sword in this first episode, later accounts added that Kanchō had been charged with a sacred sword from the emperor in support of his mission.[14] This was the Amakuni 天国 Sword, which, like other imperial swords such as the legendary Kusanagi 草薙 ("grass-cutter"), typically bore the appellation of "treasured sword" (*hōken* 宝剣). As the name implies, the weapon was the celebrated work of the legendary eighth-century swordsmith Amakuni. This added detail was possibly drawn from a sixteenth-century biography of Kanchō recorded in Sonkai's 尊海 (1472–1543) *Nin'naji goden* 仁和寺御伝 (Biographies of Nin'naji).[15] Sonkai describes

12 The treatment of Fudō as a guardian of the Japanese state dates to Heian-era Japan with Kūkai's adoption of an ideological and ritual programme derived from Amoghavajra's (705–774) translation of the *Sūtra of Benevolent Kings* (Ch. *Renwang jing* 仁王経; Jp. *Nin'nō kyō*; T.8.246) during his promotion of the Shingon tradition at the Heian court (for a study on this text and its role in the development of Tang esoteric Buddhism and its importance at court, see Orzech 1998). The locus of this programme was the Nin'nō kyō Mandara 仁王経曼荼羅, built by Kūkai at the Tōji 東寺 Temple, designated guardian temple of the nation, where esoteric rituals were regularly conducted for state protection. The *maṇḍala* consists of twenty-one wooden statues, in which Fudō occupies one of the top positions as the central deity of the Godai Myōō. The success of the programme helped cement Fudō's importance and patronage as a guardian figure of the state – so much so that by the end of the eleventh century he had become a central deity in rituals associated with the *Sūtra of Benevolent Kings* (Nakano 1987: 33), evidenced by the production of original Nin'nō kyō Mandara in which Fudō now appeared as the central deity (see, for example, TZ.3.3007.193.48 ff.). Another important, and related, ritual programme at this time was the *anchin hō* 安鎮法, which also placed Fudō as the central deity in its Anchin hō Mandara 安鎮法曼荼羅 (Maṇḍala for the Rites of Pacification and Tranquillity). These trends of Fudō worship possibly explain the production of the *Mudōson anchin kakoku tōhō* 聖無動尊安鎮家国等法 (Venerable Mudō [Fudō] Rituals for the Protection of the State; T.21.1203). Though classified by the Taishō canon as Chinese, it is most likely Japanese in origin.

13 Specifically, the emperor bestowed a series of three titles constituting the temple's formal name: first, "Jingo Shinshōji" 神護新勝寺, "Temple of Divine Protection and New Victory" (the *jigō* 寺号), to honour the victory over the rebel and celebrate the origins of the Fudō image from Kyoto's Jingoji 神護寺 Temple; second, "Naritasan" 成田山, "Narita Temple" (the *sangō* 山号); and finally, "Myōō" 明王 (the *ingō* 院号), a homage to its deity.

14 For example, the emperor's gifted sword to the temple is explicitly identified as the Amakuni Sword in the *Narita meisho zue* (Ōno 1973: 367). For a modern photograph of the sword, see Naritasan Shinshōji (1938: 48 recto).

15 Ōta 1952: 432. The choice of Kanchō as the hero was a logical one, fitting well the bill of ideal requirements for an *engi* hero and legendary founder of a temple: he was an eminent monk of royal descent (son of the imperial prince Atsumi Shin'nō 敦実親王, 893–967, and grandson of Emperor Uda 宇多, 867–931) who served at important Kyoto temples (for example, Nin'naji 仁和寺, Tōji 東寺, and Henjōji 遍照寺) whose

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Kanchō as a miracle worker whose prayers subjugated an imperial enemy and earned the emperor's favour. Also mentioned is a similar legendary sword forged by Amakuni, the Kogarasu 小烏 ("little crow"), commissioned to the warrior Taira no Sadamori 平貞盛 by Emperor Suzaku for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion, a notable detail found in other versions of the tale,[16] though no doubt a later interpolation meant to bolster Sadamori's line. Shinshōji's claim to the Amakuni Sword thus seems to have been partially built on top of the rebellion, with Kanchō in the role of the military hero instructed to protect the throne with a commissioned imperial sword. Much like the Kogarasu later became to the Taira warrior family,[17] it provided the temple with a trophy and sacred heirloom that, along with the Narita Fudō statue, offered material proof of Shinshōji's miraculous origins.

IV. Blood and swords

Though Kakugen makes no mention of Amakuni, the *Daiengi* next describes Fudō's weapon as a "treasured sword", suggesting that a possible identification had already taken place. The *Daiengi* notes the sword's particular ability to drive out madness and cure illness through the act of "anointing" (*chōdai* 頂戴) worshippers. This anointing later provided a narrative basis for a new ritual tradition at Shinshōji (discussed below), and advertised the object's ability to bestow "this-worldly benefits" (*genze riyaku* 現世利益) to devotees by mere ritual contact. The sword's curative powers further set the stage for the second – and here more relevant – *engi* miracle tale.[18] The action shifts sharply away from the Shingon Kanchō to a somewhat unexpected focus on a Pure Land monk, Saint Dōyo (Dōyo Shōnin 道誉上人, 1515–74), founder of the Pure Land temple Daiganji 大巌寺 near Shinshōji in the Shimōsa domain of Oyumi 生実 (present-day Chiba City). The *Daiengi* recounts how Dōyo, despite best intentions, was a slow-witted fool who suffered from "innately dull faculties" (*tenshi dodon* 天資駑鈍) that impeded his study of the dharma. He called on the Narita Fudō for one-hundred days and nights, who on the final eve of petitions appeared before the monk in a dream. In the role of a divine physician whose instrument roots out an offending sickness, Fudō thrust his "sharp sword"

fame had even been immortalized in popular *setsuwa* literature such as the twelfth-century *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (A Collection of Tales Past and Present) (NKBT.25.259–61) and thirteenth-century *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 (A Collection of Tales from Uji) (NKBT.27.388–390). Despite his accolades, the importance of biographical connection to the legendary sword probably played a decisive role in his association with Shinshōji.

16 Tsuneishi 1967: 6.

17 As we find in the fourteenth-century *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Tale of the Heike), the Kogarasu became a family heirloom of the Heike clan, passed down through the generations from Sadamori. See McCullough (1988: 346) for a translation of the passage in question.

18 The tale has lost much of its importance at Shinshōji in the post-war period, since formally dropped from *engi* tradition, though it still exists as an auxiliary miracle tale.

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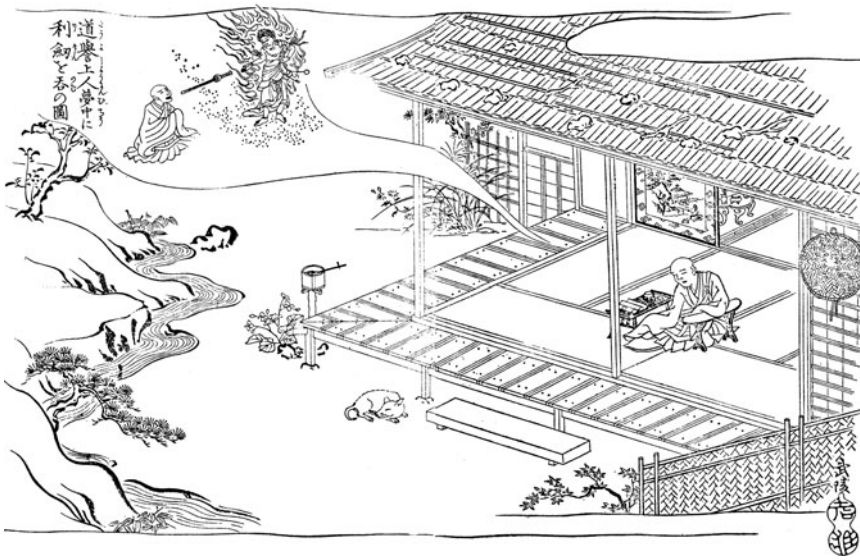

Figure 1. "Image of Saint Dōyo Swallowing the Sharp Sword While Dreaming" (from Nakaji Sadatoshi, *Narita meisho zue*, 1858). Image courtesy of Naritasan Bukkyō Toshokan.

(*riken* 利剣) down the monk's throat, a symbol of divine transformation, the conquest of spiritual hindrances, and miraculous birth (see Figure 1).[19] Dōyo awoke to find himself and the temple floor covered in a purged "dark" (*kurai* 黯) blood (later dubbed *donchi* 鈍血 or "dull blood"). The bloody rebirth endowed Dōyo with an intellectual brilliance that soon won him a reputation as an eminent Pure Land scholar.[20]

19 As Takada (1991: 191) suggests, there appears to be no such comparable episode in the earlier biographies of Dōyo. Instead, the sword-swallowing motif is drawn from the deity's scriptural roots beginning with the *Bussetsu Kurikara dairyū shō gedōbuku darani kyō* 仏説倶利伽羅大竜勝外道伏陀羅尼経 (Sūtra Expounded by the Buddha on the *Dhāraṇī* of Subjugation and the Great Nāga Kurikara's Conquest of Heretics) (T.21.1206.37c.12–23; *cf.* TZ.7.3119.23c.7–20; TZ.7.3119.23c.27–24a.29; TZ.9.3190.336a.16–24.), a short *sūtra*, probably dating from the Heian period, devoted to Fudō's serpent companion and *samaya* 三摩耶 form, the *nāga* Kurikara 倶利迦羅. (On Kurikara and his connection to Fudō, see Nakamura 1993: 319–39.) The *sūtra* describes Fudō's wrathful transformation into Kurikara and his swallowing of a heretical demon in the form of a sword (frequently represented in iconographies with Kurikara encoiling Fudō's sword). The story and its imagery may have served as a basis for later variants. Notable is the miraculous birth of the Tendai monk and Fudō devotee Sōō 相応 (831–918). According to his biography in the *Shingon den* 真言伝 (Shingon Biographies, 1325) (DBZ.106.180) and *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 (Buddhist [Biographies] Written During the Genkō Period, 1322) (DBZ.101.251), Sōō was miraculously conceived after his mother dreamt of swallowing a sword.

20 A similar miracle tale appears in the *Shobutsu kan'nō kenkōsho* 諸仏感応見好書 (Book of Propitious Sympathetic Responses from Buddhist Deities, 1726) where a monk is instructed by his master to pray to Fudō to cure his toothache. That night Fudō appears in a dream and stabs at the monk's tooth with his sword and like Dōyo, wakes with blood

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Dōyo's gruesome "anointing" likewise drew from scriptural accounts of the deity's Mikkyō background, here of his "sharp sword" as a weapon of wisdom that combats spiritual defilements,[21] and placed it within the context of local Narita history as the instrument of Dōyo's salvation. Later versions of the tale added that Fudō had presented two swords, one "dull" (*don* 鈍) to symbolize Dōyo's poor condition, and the other "sharp" (*ri* 利) to represent the promise of cure. Dōyo chooses the latter, reaffirming the treatment of Fudō's sword as a weapon of wisdom.[22] Its association with the Amakuni Sword thus would not have taken much of a logical leap, as both shared the concepts of subjugation and destruction of spiritual defilements.

Under the *Daiengi*'s impetus, both miracle tales provided a meaningful "PR" narrative promoting a sacred history and identity for Shinshōji and its deity. Although independent and somewhat disjointed from one another, they served a like purpose in the deity's localization at Narita, and reveal the sword as a uniquely central symbol in the process.

V. The Narita sword cult on the move

While the *Daiengi* firmly embedded Fudō within Narita geography, localization did not immobilize the cult nor bind the deity or Amakuni Sword to the temple. Rather, the violent account of swords and blood made for an entertaining tale that, with Edo's growing print and information cultures, was soon circulating beyond Shinshōji's exclusive ownership.

The mobility and shared currency of the *engi* is illuminated by Shinshōji's *kaichō* 開帳 (lit. "opening the curtain"), or exhibition, programme, which allowed the temple's treasures to move temporarily to alternate locations where they could be directly displayed to new audiences.[23] Attracted by the burgeoning population and the wealth of Edo's townspeople, Shinshōji's

pouring from the mouth, but soon finds himself cured (Nishida 1990: 144). Interestingly, the folklorist W.L. Hildburgh recorded a toothache charm petitioning Fudō in 1913 Kyoto. Using a diagram of the mouth complete with tongue and teeth, one is meant to drive a spike into the offending tooth while praying to Fudō (or Jizō according to preference) (Hildburgh 1913: 147). The driving of the nail into the tooth would seem to mimic the action of Fudō's sword piercing the monk's tooth or Dōyo's innards. Ōno (1978: 152–3) speculates whether the Dōyo tale had roots in medical treatments for certain physiological conditions of the day, particularly enlarged tonsils and empyema. Though his hypothesis remains tentative, the tale's similarity to the toothache charm may suggest a physiological logic operating in the background.

21 For example, a Chinese ritual text on the deity attributed to Amoghavajra describes Fudō's sharp sword as a weapon which severs karma, desire and defilements (*bon'nō* 煩惱) which leads to perpetual rebirth (T.21.1201.15c.1). A similar ritual text, probably dating from the Heian period, describes the weapon as a "sword of wisdom" (*chiken* 智剣) (T.21.1203.28a.10).

22 See, for example, JZ.17.461.

23 On the culture of *kaichō* exhibitions in early modern Japan, see Hiruma 1980. For a study of Shinshōji's *kaichō* programme in the Edo period, see Ogura 1976.

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clergy brought the Narita Fudō to the capital twelve times in all from 1703 to 1856 where it was paraded through the streets and unveiled in a host shrine to attract the prayers and patronage of Edoites. With two exceptions (1751 and 1809), these *degaichō* 出開帳 ("travelling exhibitions") were held in Fukagawa 深川 within the shrine precincts of Tomioka Hachimangū 富岡八幡宮 near Edo's waterfront.[24] Over the years Fukagawa grew to become a distant representative of the temple's sacred space in Edo – its spiritual home from home – where contact with the provincial deity was made possible in the big city.[25]

As *kaichō* grounds were a prime opportunity for clergy to offer public sermons and aggrandize the temple properties on display, both the *engi* and sword were from the outset promoted alongside the Narita Fudō statue. A donor list (*kishinchō* 寄進帳) from the initial 1703 Edo exhibition notes that, along with coin offerings (*kaisen* 賽銭) and the sale of *omamori* 御守 talismans and wooden *goma* prayer sticks (*goma ki* 護摩木), the temple earned money from "*engi* images" (*engi miei* 縁記御影) and the "treasured sword".[26] The presence of swords reappears in subsequent *kaichō* records in the 1700s, but as in the *Daiengi*, the name of Amakuni is nowhere to be found. It is not until the turn of the century at the 1806 Fukagawa exhibition that the "treasured sword" is identified as the work of Amakuni in the *kaichō* diary (*nikki* 日記) of Shinshōji's abbot, Shōyo 照誉 (d. 1819).[27] Although the Amakuni association had possibly been made years previously, it only becomes explicit in the temple's extant *kaichō* records when the sword emerged as a major fixture at the exhibitions. Shōyo's sketches of *fuda* 札 signboards, posted months in advance at Edo's major intersections to advertise the coming event,[28] illustrate how the sword was now formally headlining exhibitions alongside the Fudō statue (see Figure 2).

Following the 1806 exhibition, the Amakuni Sword stood on a par with the Narita Fudō statue as the main attraction in the capital and headlined all but one (1814) of the remaining five Edo exhibitions (1821, 1833, 1842, 1856). Shōyo notes that the display of the Amakuni Sword was to attract worshippers with the promise of *kechien* 結縁 ("karmic connection") through the act of "anointing" (physical contact), no doubt inspired by the *engi*. Like Buddha relics that receive their own cultic veneration, the sword had become a formal object of worship with its individual miraculous power. Before long it became celebrated as Shinshōji's "number one spiritual treasure" (*daiichi no reihō*

24 For a chronology of Shinshōji's *kaichō* exhibitions (1701–1968), see Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 208–09.

25 The spiritual relationship eventually led to the establishment of Shinshōji's foremost subtemple (*betsuin* 別院) at Hachimangū, Naritasan Fukagawa Fudōdō 成田山深川不動堂, at which the Narita deity was re-enshrined in 1881.

26 *Shiryō* 5.81.

27 *Shiryō* 5.156.

28 *Shiryō* 5.136–7. The plan directs the signboards to be posted at twenty of Edo's major intersections including Ryōgoku, Sensōji Temple and Shinagawa.

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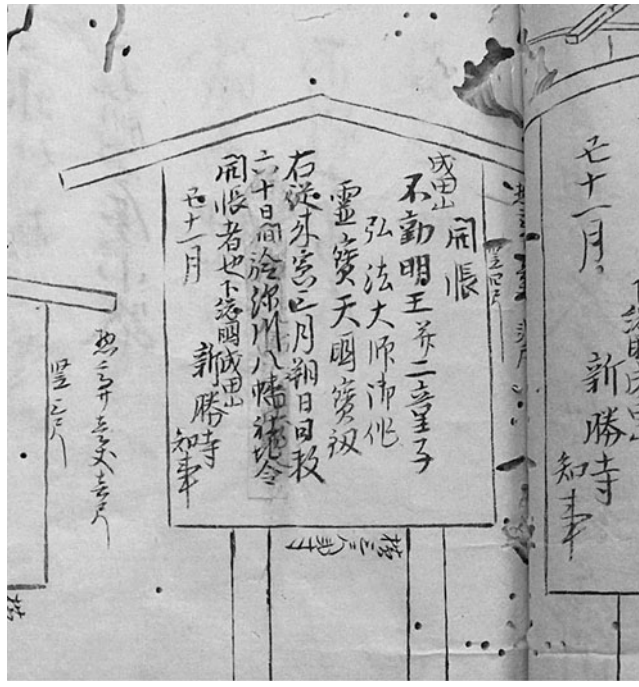

Kaichō Exhibition
Naritasan [Shinshōji Temple]
Featuring Fudō Myōō and his two acolytes made by [Kūkai] Kōbō Daishi, with the sacred treasure of the Amakuni Treasured Sword.
The above exhibition will be held in the coming [Year of the] Tiger [1806], for sixty days from the first of the third month at Hachiman Shrine in Fukagawa.
Naritasan Shinshōji, Shimōsa Province
[Posted the] eleventh month, [Year of the] Ox [1805]
Director [of Temple Affairs]

Figure 2. 1806 *Kaichō* advertisement signboard (detail). Image courtesy of Naritasan Bukkyō Toshokan.[29]

第一の霊宝),[30] and was transported with its own palanquin and parade banners[31] under the care of a specialist confraternity, the "Nihonbashi Treasured Sword Confraternity" (Nihonbashi Hōken Kōsha 日本橋宝劔講社).

Shōyo's diary also provides the first extant mention of a second popular *engi* treasure at the 1806 exhibition – the "dull-blood robes" (*donchi no koromo* 鈍血衣) – purportedly the very blood-stained garments worn by Dōyo during his miraculous

29 See *Shiryō* 5.136 for the modern print edition.
30 Ōno 1973: 367.
31 See Ōno (1973: 378–89) for an illustration.

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encounter with Fudō.[32] Shōyo notes that the robes were the property of the nearby Pure Land temple Daiganji, founded by Dōyo, and temporarily borrowed with permission for the sixty-day exhibition. With three additional objects on loan from Daiganji accounting for nearly half of all "treasures" (*reihō* 霊宝) on display, the Pure Land temple seems to have enjoyed a special presence at the exhibition.

The *engi* as shared sectarian property unsurprisingly bonded the two temples together almost from the beginning. Soon after the appearance of the *Daiengi* in 1700, the sword-swallowing tale quickly found its way into Dōyo's Pure Land biographies starting with the *Jōdo honchō kōsōden* 浄土本朝高僧伝 (Biographies of Eminent Japanese Pure Land Monks, 1704–1713),[33] and Daiganji's *engi* recorded in a 1722 gazetteer.[34] As illustrated by Kaneko Tamotsu, Daiganji's history was partially built on top of that of Shinshōji. Not only does Daiganji's *engi* include the account of Dōyo at Shinshōji, but it also describes how, out of gratitude for his reborn life, he had "re-enshrined" (*kanjō* 勧請) the Narita Fudō at Daiganji. The Daiganji Fudō became known as the "Fortune-bestowing, wisdom-increasing" (*kaiun zōe* 開運増慧) Fudō.[35] Moreover, a Daiganji document called the *Goyu shosho* 御由諸書 (*c.* 1818–28), perhaps written for submission to its head temple Zōjōji 増上寺,[36] records various temple treasures owned by Daiganji, three of which are relevant here:

1. 道誉上人感得天国宝剣壱握
   One Treasured Sword of Amakuni Miraculously Received by Saint Dōyo
2. 同大聖不動尊壱躯
   One Statue of the Great Sacred Fudō Also [Received by Saint Dōyo]
3. 開山呑剣吐血之衣
   Robe of Temple Founder [Dōyo] with Disgorged Blood from Swallowing the Sword [of the Narita Fudō][37]

The record reveals that Daiganji not only shared a similar *engi* heritage, but also mimicked Shinshōji's very temple treasures. Daiganji's ownership of Dōyo's robes was clearly acknowledged in Shinshōji records,[38] but its claim to the Amakuni Sword may have sparked a contested ownership. A Zōjōji record entitled *San'enzan shi* 三縁山志 (A Record of San'enzan [Zōjōji] Temple, 1819) gives the following interlinear note glossing the Dōyo tale:

32 *Shiryō* 5.156. A rare illustration of the robes can be found in the *Narita meisho zue* (Ōno 1973: 360). For a modern photograph, see Naritasan Reikōkan (ed.) 1998: 1.
33 JZ.17.461–2. Other examples can be found in the *San'enzan shi* 三縁山志 (1819) (JZ.19.457–8), and *Danrin oyumi Daiganji shi* 壇林生実大巌寺志 (Bunsei period, 1818–29) (JZ.20.72).
34 Bōsō Bunko Kankōkai 1930: 58–9.
35 Kaneko 2001: 2.
36 Kaneko 2001: 2.
37 Kaneko 2001: 4.
38 Shinshōji records from the 1806 (*Shiryō* 5.156) and 1855 (*Shiryō* 5.530) exhibitions explicitly state Daiganji to be the owner of the robes, borrowed temporarily for display in Edo.

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今龍澤山に鈍血の劔あり成田山開帳の時はこれを結縁せしむ
At present [Dōyo's] "dull blood" sword is at Ryūtakusan [Daiganji]. During Naritasan [Shinshōji] exhibitions, it is used for *kechien*.[39]

A few decades later the above passage was reproduced for a Shinshōji guidebook, the *Narita meisho zue* 成田名所図会 (Illustrated Guide to Famous Places in [and on the Way to] Narita, 1858), but with a single conspicuous alteration:

今龍澤山に鈍血の法衣あり成田山開帳の時はこれを結縁せしむ
At present [Dōyo's] "dull blood" robe is at Ryūtakusan [Daiganji]. During Naritasan [Shinshōji] exhibitions, it is used for *kechien*.[40]

The minor, though significant, textual alteration from "sword" to "robe" may suggest Shinshōji asserting ownership and control over any sword having to do with the miracle. Despite Daiganji's potential encroachment, the relationship did, however, seem reciprocal: both temples are recorded to have again combined their treasures to mutual advantage at least twice more during the 1855 *igaichō* 居開帳 ("home exhibition") in Narita[41] and the 1856 *degaichō* in Fukagawa.[42] Daiganji's contribution of the robes offered a complement to Shinshōji's sword as a second relic and object of *kechien* worship, and strengthened the collaborative proselytization effort indebted more to geography and shared *engi* tradition than sectarian affinity.

VI. Enter Yūten

Shōyo's diary reveals yet another significant detail from the 1806 exhibition. Among the five listed treasures owned by Shinshōji were three calligraphic *nembutsu* 念仏 scrolls, one attributed to Dōyo, and a second to another, and more famous, Pure Land monk and legendary exorcist named Saint Yūten (Yūten Shōnin 祐天上人, 1636–1718).[43] Despite Dōyo's shared importance to Shinshōji and Daiganji, the increasing inertia of the sword-swallowing tale was such that various versions were soon circulating in and around Edo attributed to different monks.[44] The most popular account in the Edo area was credited to Yūten, abbot of Edo's Zōjōji, and was attached to the monk's biographies around the turn of the nineteenth century. According to the *Yūten daisōjō*

39 JZ.19.457. The use of the term "dull blood" (*donchi* 鈍血) parallels the "dull faculties" (*donkon* 鈍根) from which Dōyo suffers.
40 Ōno 1973: 357.
41 *Shiryō* 5.530.
42 *Shiryō* 5.709–10.
43 On Yūten's legendary career as an exorcist of evil spirits, see Takada 1991.
44 For instance, the tale was present at another Fudō temple, Ōyamadera 大山寺, located to Edo's south in Sagami Province. The opening two tales of the temple's large miracle tale collection, the *Ōyama Fudō reigenki* 大山不動霊験記 (Record of the Miraculous Efficacy of the Ōyama Fudō, 1792), are faithful adaptations of the narrative, though the protagonists were changed to local monks, and the Narita Fudō substituted for the Ōyama Fudō 大山不動 (Shinzō, volume 2, folio 1 recto–8 verso). For a study of the Ōyama Fudō cult, see Ambros 2008.

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godenki 祐天大僧正御伝記 (Biography of Yūten Daisōjō)[45] Yūten received a vision from an old white-haired man at Zōjōji to seek out the Narita Fudō. There he fasted in prayer, where the deity appeared and revealed that the monk's intellectual plight – the result of past sin – will plague his religious career for lifetimes to come. In the style of the Dōyo version, Fudō presented a choice of two swords (here one long and one short) with the promise of disgorging Yūten's "bad" or "diseased blood" (*akuchi* 悪血) and severing the bad karma. Yūten swallowed the long sword, and like Dōyo, regurgitated the offending blood in a symbolic death of ignorance and rebirth to wisdom.

How exactly the association with Yūten came about is unclear, though the monk's similar heritage, lineage, and name to Dōyo, may have provided some logic.[46] Whether the new Yūten version was the result of confusion on the basis of their like careers, or consciously incorporated to augment the monk's posthumous biography, is difficult to say.[47] A Daiganji record, *Danrin Oyumi Daiganji shi* 壇林生実大巌寺志 (A Record of the Danrin Temple Daiganji of Oyumi, Bunsei period, 1818–29), predictably adopts the former stance, suggesting both a confusion over the two versions as well as an apparent rivalry:

> These days there are books that associate this [event] with Yūten Daisōjō. What a big lie! To this day both the "dull blood" sword and robe are kept together within the treasure house of our temple [Daiganji]. . . .The benefits [received from the Narita Fudō] by the swallowed sword surely began with Saint Dōyo during the Tenbun era [1541–1554]. [48]

By "books", the record was probably referring to the Yūten biographies circulating at the time as independent works such as the *Yūten daisōjō den* 祐天大僧正伝 (Biography of Yūten Daisōjō, 1802) and *Yūten daisōjō riyaku ki* 祐天大僧正利益記 (Record of the Blessings of Yūten Daisōjō, 1808). These books, and their impact at Daiganji, were indicative of Yūten's greater posthumous popularity in the capital and his common linkage to the tale, as suggested by his added appellation of "Gushin" 愚心 ("Dull-minded [One]").[49]

The synchronous rise in popularity of the Yūten and Amakuni Sword at the turn of the nineteenth century illustrates an expanding storytelling world in which Shinshōji was not solely responsible for the miracle's popularity. As a

45 Takada 1991: 188.

46 Like Dōyo, Yūten was an abbot of Zōjōji, and was active at Daiganji (JZ.19.76). Yūten also bore the posthumous name Myōrensha 明蓮社 (JZ.19.496; JZ.19.76; JZ.18.467) akin to that of Dōyo's Marensha 魔蓮社 (JZ.19.457; JZ.19.54; JZ.20.83). Yūten was also known as Ken'yo 顕誉 (JZ.19.496; JZ.19.76; JZ.18.467), which, like his master's name Myōyo 明誉 (JZ.19.76), suggests their connection to Dōyo's lineage through the practice of naming monks after earlier masters.

47 The *San'enzan shi*, does, however, include an interlinear note to Dōyo's biography explaining that, "People mistake Yūten for this master" (JZ.19.457).

48 JZ.20.72.

49 JZ.18.467; JZ.19.76; JZ.19.496. We can observe the comparative popularity of Yūten in the guidebook *Tonegawa zushi* 利根川図志 (Illustrated Record of the Tonegawa [Region], 1855), which offers only a few words on Dōyo at Shinshōji, but devotes nearly three-quarters of its space to Yūten (approximately thirteen times the attention given to Dōyo) including an illustration of the miraculous event (Suzuki 1980: 175–7).

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result, Shinshōji's *engi* had become a travelling tale; it was being remapped onto a wider range of locales creating a larger network of Shingon and Pure Land sites that now included Zōjōji (and by extension Yūtenji 祐天寺 Temple founded by Yūten in Edo) that could claim participation in, and thus benefit from, the miracle and its properties.[50]

It may thus have been at this time that Daiganji consequently began lending Dōyo's robes to the exhibitions. While there is evidence that Dōyo's robes existed as early as 1722,[51] they, like the Amakuni Sword, do not seem to have become significant at the exhibitions until after 1800. The robes may have been the temple's chance to capitalize on the tale's increasing popularity while competing with the recent Yūten cult by offering irrefutable evidence of Dōyo as the saint in question.

Meanwhile back in Narita, the increasing popularity of the Yūten tale and Amakuni Sword post-1800 marked a noticeable increase in the frequency of Shinshōji's home exhibitions starring the sword.[52] Records suggest the degree to which the sword had become a visible draw of the cult. In a catalogue of items on display at the 1815[53] and 1822[54] Narita "treasure exhibitions" (*hōmotsu kaichō* 宝物開帳), listed are over a dozen additional swords on display alongside the Amakuni Sword. The sight was confirmed by the poet and nativist scholar Shimizu Hamaomi 清水浜臣 (1776–1824) in his travel diary during his 1815 visit: "One can see many old paintings and an abundance of ancient swords, in particular among them the Amakuni Sword passed down by the temple".[55] Double-edged replica swords (*tsukurimono* 作り物) given as offerings by patrons were similarly spotted by Taijō Keijun 大浄敬順 (n.d.) at the 1821 Edo exhibition and noted in his *Yūreki zakki* 遊歴雑記 (Miscellaneous Records of Recreational Travels, 1814–1829).[56] Underlining

50 The Amakuni Sword and its miracle tale had become such a valuable asset by this time that additional sites were seeking interest. In 1809 the temple Kentokuji 見徳寺 in Shimōsa borrowed the sword to raise funds for temple reconstruction (*Shiryō* 3.108). Shinshōji's willingness to lend the item may have been influenced by its mutual sectarian affiliation (both were Shingon sub-temples of Daikakuji 大覚寺 in Kyōto) (*Shiryō* 3.15). Later, in 1848, the Pure Land temple Chōgenji 長源寺 in Usui 臼井 near Narita sent a subscription list (*kangechō* 勧化帳) to Shinshōji seeking contributions to fund temple reconstruction. Chōganji claimed Dōyo as its founder, and thus pointed out to Shinshōji the mutual relationship (*en'ai* 縁合) the two temples shared (*Shiryō* 4.232), possibly to appeal to Shinshōji's coffers. During the Meiji period the gazetteer *Katorigun shi* 香取郡誌 (A Record of Katori District, 1900) lists yet another nearby temple, to the north-east in Katori, Shukkōsan Fudōin Shōtokuji 出興山不動院勝徳寺, which may have wanted to capitalize on the sword's popularity as it went one step farther by claiming their very own Amakuni Sword as one of their most precious treasures (see Yamada 1900: vol. 2, p. 53).

51 Bōsō Bunko Kankōkai 1930: 58–9.

52 Prior to this time Shinshōji had conducted only a single *igaichō*, back in 1701. With the exception of the 1807 *igaichō*, all subsequent home exhibitions from 1815 to 1855 (five in total) were headlined by the Amakuni Sword.

53 *Shiryō* 5.253–5.

54 *Shiryō* 5.256–7.

55 Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 590. Present-day temple records claim approximately two-hundred swords among their sacred treasures collection, with several dated to the Edo and Meiji periods (see Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 227–43).

56 Edo Sōsho Kankōkai 1964: 230.

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the narrative basis for the sword cult and the miraculous currency of the Amakuni blade are wooden votive tablets (*ema* 絵馬) donated by patrons with illustrations of the Yūten tale, attesting to a desire to venerate the deity and sword and acquire the benefits promoted by the temple's miracle tale traditions.[57] The 1844 sword exhibition helped further establish a regular annual temple event during Narita's Gion 祇園 festival. This was the "Anointing of the Treasured Sword" (*hōken chōsai* 宝劔頂載, still practised to this day[58]) which is said to bestow various benefits such as curing madness, healing sickness, removing evil hindrances, and providing good health.[59] The sword's "anointing" (*chōsai* 頂載) and its ability to cure "madness" (*kyōran* 狂乱), we may recall, come directly from the *Daiengi*.

VII. The Narita sword cult in popular culture and entertainment

While the *kaichō* display of sacred objects was formally promoted by Buddhists for spiritual betterment of society, they also served as major hotspots of entertainment and key sources for early modern media culture, storytelling and art. The Edo exhibitions were thus not a terminus for the cult's spread, but served as a launching ground into popular culture (no doubt facilitated by Fukagawa as one of the city's best-known entertainment districts). The tale's gruesome attention to violence, swords and blood made for a popular tale that quickly drew the attention of artists from non-clerical circles.

One of the initial places where we find the tale is the theatre. Not long after its appearance in the *Daiengi* it was quickly turned into a noh play[60] (*yōkyoku* 謡曲), possibly during the Hōei-Shōtoku era (1704–15).[61] The play, simply titled *Naritasan* 成田山, made Shinshōji a prime beneficiary of the play's publicity, though the presence of Dōyo naturally made it of comparable importance to Pure Land tradition. The play concerns Mutetsu 無哲, Mr "No Philosophy", the characteristic travelling *waki* 脇 (deuteragonist) monk of noh tradition. Like Dōyo, Mutetsu is a devout Buddhist from Daiganji Temple but suffers from the same "dull faculties" (*donkon* 鈍根). The play opens:

> *Shidai*:[62] Fan the lamp of wisdom and illuminate the darkness of ignorance.
> *Waki*: Here is the monk named Mutetsu, in training at Daiganji in Oyumi. I have entered the Buddhist priesthood and followed the teachings of the patriarchs. However, though I cultivate non-retrogression and rebirth in the western direction, the misery of my ignorance from my dull faculties is such that I cannot commit a single verse of scripture to heart. As I have heard that the image of Fudō of Narita in Shimōsa Province is truly most miraculous, I

57 See Ōno and Ogura (1979: 17) for two Edo-period examples, one attributed to Ichiyūsai Kuniyoshi 一勇斎国芳 (Utagawa Kuniyoshi 歌川国芳, 1797–1861) dated 1856.
58 The sword is currently housed in the Kōmyōdō 光明堂, hidden beneath thick cloth wrapping, with *igaichō* and *kaji* 加持 rites held throughout the year.
59 Murakami 1968: 225.
60 For the complete text of the noh play, see Asahi 1981: 154–8.
61 Asahi 1981: 154.
62 The opening song recited by the *shite* (protagonist) or (as in this case) the *waki* upon entering the stage (Brazell 1998: 544).

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> now set off on the journey [to Narita] to pray that I may attain the way of a peaceful mind for rebirth [in the Pure Land].[63]

Making his way to Shinshōji and inspired by Dōyo's identical lot and miraculous transformation, Mutetsu prays to the Narita Fudō. Dōyo, as the conventional *nochi shite* 後仕手 (second act protagonist) in the form of a spirit, appears at Narita and explains how he too once sought the deity's healing powers. Through the two men's exchanges, the play unfolds, with Mutetsu eventually cured of his condition by swallowing the Amakuni Sword.

Details about the play's origins are obscure, and it is unclear to what extent, if any, Shinshōji (or Daiganji) played a role in the production.[64] What is certain, however, is that the recently popular tale of Dōyo's gruesome encounter with the Narita Fudō provided a direct inspiration for the play. The miraculous dream, sword-swallowing, and blood-spewing episode are repeated multiple times, complete with a description of the sword, its Amakuni provenance, and even length (given here as two *shaku* 尺, eight *sun* 寸, or approximately 85 centimetres). The Masakado rebellion, the origin of the Narita Fudō image, and founding of the temple by Kanchō are also mentioned. With this added detail, one cannot help but notice the implicit advertising permeating the play's text. In addition to its incorporation of the *engi*, the play extols Fudō's numinous powers and, through the character of Mutetsu, offers a spiritual model encouraging its audience to re-enact the pilgrimage to Shinshōji to view the Amakuni Sword first-hand and to pray to Fudō. Thus in concert with spreading the *engi*, the play may also have functioned as a type of promotion and guide, similar to the *meisho* 名所 ("famous places") genre, detailing local history and attractions of interest to visitors and pilgrims.

While the play reaffirms the trans-sectarian currency of the miracle tale, it importantly illuminates an evolving shift away from the standard account. The ultimate objective of Dōyo and Mutetsu's prayers to the Narita Fudō does not end with curing their poor faculties but extends to attaining rebirth in the Pure Land, a significant addition not present in any version of the *engi*. Throughout the play, "Pure Land" terminology (for example, *ōjō* 往生, *raigō* 来迎, *nembutsu* 念仏, and *sanbu no kyō* 三部の経) is seamlessly intermixed with those traditionally associated with "Mikkyō".[65] Mutetsu announces, "May the Myōō also lend me his assistance so that I may realize my karmic chance for rebirth [in the Pure Land]. Homage to Fudō!" While Fudō had developed connections to death and Pure Land rebirth centuries earlier,[66] no such Fudō *nembutsu* (*namu Fudōson* 南無不動尊) is to be found in Shinshōji's miracle tale tradition, nor the tale as a model for rebirth into the Pure Land. The

63 Asahi 1981: 154.

64 Asahi notes that, according to the noh scholar Tanaka Makoto, the play's author may have belonged to the Kanze 観世 school of noh, though not much more is known about its origins (Asahi 1981: 154).

65 These include "*aji*" 阿字 (the "A syllable" mantra), "*kuji goshinbō*" 九字護身法 (a ritual incantation of "nine syllables to protect one's person"), and "*a bi ra un ken*" 阿毘羅吽欠 (Sanskrit: *a vi ra hūm kham*; a protective mantra associated with the Buddha Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来) (Sawa 1975: 12).

66 On the worship of Fudō for Pure Land rebirth, see Mack 2006b.

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adaptation reflects how artists were already exercising an artistic license beyond the immediate control of Shinshōji, possibly drawing on an old and popular Fudō tale of the Pure Land monk Shōkū 証空 (1177–1247) who prayed to the deity to overcome a life-threatening illness and obtain Pure Land rebirth.[67]

While Dōyo was of some early interest to the noh theatre, Yūten similarly became known to the *kabuki* stage with his rising posthumous popularity in the early 1800s. In 1821 the tale was performed as a *jōruri* 浄瑠璃 song praising the Narita Fudō and his sharp sword during a *kabuki* play at Edo's Nakamuraza Theatre, with the famous Shinshōji patron, Ichikawa Danjūrō 市川団十郎 VII (1791–1859), in the role of Fudō.[68] A few years later the same actor again starred as both the Narita Fudō and Yūten in *Kesakake matsu Narita no riken* 法縣松成田利剣 (A Surplice-Hanging Pine and the Sharp Sword of Narita,[69] 1823) at the Moritaza Theatre in 1823.[70] The play was a hit, and repeat performances were subsequently staged.[71]

Under the impetus of its founder, Ichikawa Danjūrō I (1660–1704), the actors' line had become celebrity patrons of the Narita deity as advertised by their guild name (*yagō* 屋号) of "Naritaya" 成田屋 (House of Narita) since 1697.[72] The incorporation of Fudō into the Danjūrō repertoire facilitated their trademark acting style of *aragoto* 荒事 or "wild stuff", which emphasized wrathful deities, bombastic action and oversized weaponry that appealed to townspeople and samurai citizenry alike.[73] A signature *aragoto* move was the *fudō mie* 不動見得 ("Fudō pose") wherein the actor would mimic the iconography of the deity by imitating his sword, rope and menacing glare. As in such famous *aragoto* plays as *Kanjinchō* 勧進帳 (The Subscription List) and *Narukami* 鳴神 (Saint Narukami), the actor would glare fixedly with a sword vertically in one hand and his rosary in the other (to mimic Fudō's rope)[74] as a momentary expression of the god.

That the artistic personalities of the Danjūrō actors and their faith became a vehicle for the violent Yūten tale and Amakuni Sword is thus not surprising, evidenced by a *kawaraban* 瓦版, a type of news sheet sold around the city containing the latest news, popular tales and gossip. The untitled news sheet details the

67 The tale can be found in Shōkū's biographies in the *Genkō shakusho* (DBZ.101.287) and *Shingon den* (DBZ.106.206), and was popularized as temple *engi* in the form of two illustrated picture scrolls: the *Fudō riyaku engi* 不動利益縁起 (*Engi* of Fudō's Benefits, fourteenth century) and *Naki Fudō engi* 泣不動縁起 (*Engi* of the Weeping Fudō, sixteenth century).

68 Written by Segawa Jokō 瀬川如皐 III (1806–81) and Kineya Rokusaburō 杵屋六三郎 IV (1779–1855) and performed in the popular Ōzatsuma 大薩摩 style (Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 549, 647–8). For the song's text, see Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 640–41.

69 Here I use Oshima's translation of the title (Brandon and Leiter 2004: 200).

70 Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 648. Written by Tsuruya Nanboku 鶴屋南北 IV (1755–1829) and Matsui Kozō II. Translated by Mark Oshima in Brandon and Leiter 2004: 198–210. The play was one of several versions of the Kasane 累 legend popular in Edo theatre at the time which celebrated Yūten as an exorcist of spirits. See Takada (1991) for a study.

71 Asahi 1981: 43.

72 Nishiyama 1960: 329.

73 On Shinshōji's relationship with the Danjūrō guild, see Asahi 1981.

74 Leiter 2006: 83.

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Figure 3. *Kawaraban* news sheet of Ichikawa Danjūrō II, the Narita Fudō, and Amakuni Sword. Image courtesy of The University of Tokyo Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies.

news that Ichikawa Danjūrō II (1688–1758) had been saved from a life-threatening illness by the Amakuni Sword in the vein of Yūten (see Figure 3).

> It is said that long ago, Saint Yūten had a miraculous dream of Fudō Myōō in which he swallowed the Amakuni Treasured Sword and [awoke] vomiting "diseased blood", only to become possessed of outstanding brilliance. However, just after the seventh hour on the evening of the twenty-third of the fifth month of this year [1735], our favourite Ichikawa Danjūrō suddenly coughed up over two *masu*[75] of "diseased blood" and lost consciousness. When he uttered not a single word, people were completely dumbfounded. Among the many who attended to him was one in particular, a servant named Mankichi Eiji, who had taken the tonsure. At first light he made a great petition to the Narita Fudō before the [temple] treasury, and a wonder took place. That night around the ninth hour [Danjūrō] gradually began to regain consciousness. Everyone was overjoyed. Day after day he [improved until he] made a complete recovery. Before long he was as good as new. It is said that his revival [*sōsei*] could not have

75 "Two *masu*" (*ni masu* 二升), meaning "two measures", was likely a play on "*mimasu*" 三升 ("three *masu*"), the Danjūrō guild's official crest.

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been due to anything but the divine favour of Fudō Myōō. There was not a single person who was not awe-struck. How awesome! How awesome! How awesome!

Later, in 1851, Danjūrō VIII (1823–54) is said to have fallen ill on stage, his condition so severe that a *shinie* 死絵 ("death print"), a type of memorial picture announcing the death of a celebrity, had already been prepared. He soon recovered, however, and prints (*surimono* 刷物) entitled *Ichikawa Danjūrō sosei no shidai* 市川団十郎蘇生の次第 (How Ichikawa Danjūrō Revived from Death) celebrating the event were soon being sold.[76] The print's title – particularly its use of the word "revived" (*sosei* 蘇生) – suggests that Danjūrō's return to health had also been celebrated after the style of Yūten's near-death encounter. Since *kawaraban* were produced for the urban masses and sold on the streets by vendors (*yomiuri* 読売), their existence, like the memorial print, is a strong indication of the extent to which the tale and sword had taken on a new life outside sectarian tradition.

By the end of the period, the sword-swallowing tale had even found its way into Edo's world of *misemono* 見世物, carnival-like sideshows run by townspeople showcasing a wide variety of attractions from craftworks and street performances to freak shows and exotic animals. A *misemono* chronology records that Yūten and Fudō became the subject of an 1856 *misemono* doll show by Ōe Chūbei 大江忠兵衛 (n.d.), a craftsman specializing in the display of "mechanical living dolls" (*karakuri iki ningyō* 機関生人形) fashionable at the time.[77] The display featured a number of life-like folk characters popular in Edo theatre such as Chūjōhime 中将姫 and the demon of Adachigahara 安達原. The inclusion of Yūten and Fudō was a natural fit; the tale was known to the theatre, and such displays commonly featured gruesome violence, swords and blood.[78]

The doll display was commemorated in *nishiki-e* 錦絵 prints by artists from the popular Utagawa 歌川 school, Kunitsuru 国鶴 (1807–78) and Kuniyoshi 国芳 (1797–1861), which featured a menacing Fudō brandishing his sword over a terrified Yūten, somewhat lessened of religious significance and more concerned with its shocking imagery.[79] The Kuniyoshi print is notable for its pairing of the tale with a popular scene from the Adachigahara folktale of the demon Onibaba 鬼婆 ("demon granny") who preys on unborn children. The imagery of Fudō threatening Yūten with sword and rope was made to parallel the demon's knife attack on the belly of a haplessly restrained pregnant woman, underlining its popularity in the gothic horror popular at the end of the period. A decade later an even more graphic depiction entitled *Yūten Shami* 祐天沙弥 (Yūten the Novice), was included in the *Azuma nishiki ukiyo kōdan* 東錦浮世稿談 (Tales of the Floating World in Eastern Brocade, 1867–68), an *ukiyoe* 浮世絵 collection of popular violent tales by Kanagaki Robun 仮名垣魯文 (1829–94) and illustrated by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年 (1839–92). Though the accompanying text does not deviate from the

76 Naritasan Shinshōji 1968: 553.
77 Asakura 1992: 90–91.
78 Pate 2008: 142.
79 Two extant examples can be found in Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 2000: 110–11.

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standard tale, the image again depicts Fudō in a near-thuggish manner with his sword to Yūten's throat.[80]

Finally, the date and location of the *misemono* doll display are notable. It is recorded that it was held in the precinct of Hachimangū Shrine in Fukagawa during the third month of 1856,[81] the location and opening date of Shinshōji's Edo exhibition featuring the Amakuni Sword that year.[82] The timing of the two events was not an unlikely coincidence: *misemono* shared a similar culture of urban display for religious curiosities and were commonly held alongside *kaichō* exhibitions – an apt indicator of the mobility of the tale and sword across the interconnected worlds of religion and entertainment.

VIII. Summation

That the provincial Narita Fudō became one of the capital's most worshipped deities underlines a significant yet hitherto underappreciated factor in understanding early modern Japanese religion: that while popular cults were grounded in local sites of sacred power, the geographic characteristics which defined such localizations did not render them centralized or static, but rather translated into a mobility inviting wider participation. The relevance of place, person, and event in the definition of a deity illuminates how popular, entertaining narratives and material objects stood as important local agencies in the fluidity of early modern Buddhist properties across geographical, sectarian and artistic boundaries, thus functioning in different ways to different audiences.

The mobility of the Narita Fudō cult, and its remapping atop new cultural spaces in and around the capital, is to be understood as a distinct product of early modern Japan as an age of unprecedented physical movement. The shared currency of the deity demonstrates in detail the cultural shifts in Edo Japan explored by scholars such as Nenzi (2008) and Berry (2006), such as the effects of increased travel and the spread of print information on transforming early modern spaces into highly polysemic and elastic geographies. The markedly improved roads connecting Edo to its environs, and the diffusion of popular storytelling literature and theatre now accessible to the masses, allowed Buddhist objects like the Narita Fudō statue and Amakuni Sword to become multivalent commodities operating across an expanded network of sites. The sword and legends of Dōyo and Yūten operated among popular narratives, biographical literature, and local temple cultures to produce a distinctively new complex of Pure Land and Shingon institutions defined less by sectarian tradition and more by regional power structures. The fluid dynamics of worship and commercial entertainment further suggest that non-elites such as playwrights, storytellers, actors and artists should be considered on a par with clergy as key players in the promotion of religious traditions. The case study of the Narita cult reveals an intricate and shifting network of institutions, spaces, agents and media operatives behind early modern Buddhist properties in which temple clergy were not always the immediate proprietors or even participants.

80 A reproduction of the image can be found in Naritasan Reikōkan 1998: 4.
81 Asakura 1992: 90.
82 *Shiryō* 5.733.

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Abbreviations

DBZ = *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書
(Reference format: volume.page)

JZ = *Jōdoshū zensho* 浄土宗全書
(Reference format: volume.page)

NKBT = *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系
(Reference format: volume.page)

Shiryō = *Naritasan Shinshōji shiryō shū* 成田山新勝寺史料集
(Reference format: volume.page)

T. = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経
(Reference format: volume.text number.page and register.line)

TZ. = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō zuzō* 大正新修大蔵経図像
(Reference format: volume.text number.page and register.line)

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