

## **Ferries and *Hashidera* (accommodation temples) on large rivers: The Shinbe Daiji Temple Site in Kamo Kōri**

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### **The two aspects of large rivers**

There are six large rivers in Harima, flowing more or less north–south: the Akashi, Kako, Ichi, Yumesaki, Ibo and Chikusa Rivers. Navigable rivers fulfil an important role in the development of transportation and distribution of goods. The above six rivers were routes for the transmission of all kinds of culture and technology. However, rivers with a large volume of water can also obstruct overland transportation and cause temporary hold-ups of both people and goods.

### **The tale of the ferryman at ‘Agi Ferry’**

There is a story of a king in the Kako section of *Harima Fudoki* concerning the ferry crossing of a big river. In order to seek the hand in marriage of Inami no Wake Iratsume of Harima, King Keikō attempted to cross the former Yodo River at Takase Ferry in Settsu Province. The ferryman there, Odama of Ki Province, refused, on the grounds that he himself was not the King’s servant. The King said, ‘My dear fellow, that may be so, but nevertheless ferry me across!’ Odama demanded his fare for the ferry. In response the King gave Odama his chaplet, and only then could he cross. That was why it was called Agi [‘My dear fellow’] Ferry.

This entry indicates that at the main crossing points of major rivers in ancient Japan there were ferrymen who plied ferry boats and charged a fare for doing so. This convention was clearly a drawback to overland transportation, and the ancient Japanese state regarded it as a ‘foolish custom.’ In the third month of Taika 2 (646), it was decreed that the fares for ferries across harbours on major routes were to be abolished across the country, and the ferrymen given paddy land in compensation. It is unknown what became of this system later. But once a centralised tax system was established under the *ritsuryō* state, there was a steady increase in traffic coming and going between the capital and the countryside, such as the collectors and carriers of taxes in kind and people who were paying taxes in labour (*corvée*). Therefore the provision of a system for the crossing of rivers that could not easily be forded on foot must have been a pressing issue.

### **Bridges and ferry boats in *Izumo Fudoki***

There is information about the sites of a total of nine ferry crossings at the end of *Izumo Fudoki* compiled in Tenpyō 5 (733). In this it is recorded that the San’indō [road] was bridged across the linashi River at the ‘Nogi Bridge’, and that it was longer than 30 *jō* (90 metres). Nearby was the Nogi Post Station. The post station was probably responsible for maintaining this bridge. But there are five other places recorded as ‘ferries’. Post roads at that time had unbridged crossings, and on other roads it was probably taken for granted that one had to cross by ferry boat or ford it by wading across. Under the *ritsuryō* state, it was the Buddhist temples built near to the rivers that were designated to maintain and run such ferries and bridges.

### **The sudden increase in local temples**

Buddhism spread throughout Japanese society in the Yamato state of the late seventh century, and there was a massive increase in the number of local temples. In the entry for the ninth month of Jitō 6 (692) in *Fusōryakki*,<sup>1</sup> it records that there were approximately 545 Buddhist temples in Japan. Although there is no mention of Buddhist temples in *Harima Fudoki*, to date nearly forty sites of Asuka Period temples or temple tiles have been identified. As many as thirty of them date from the Hakuho period [645–710 CE]. The locations of nearly all of them are known

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: *A Brief History of Fusang*, a historical text compiled in the twelfth century, by Kōen [?–1169], a Tendai monk of Enryakuji Temple.

to have been on the Sanyōdō and Mimasakadō roads, or else they face onto the large north-south-flowing rivers such as the present-day Kako River.

Needless to say, temples became new bases for local control. Archaeologists explain that temples became the symbols of the authority of their builders in place of former *kofun* burial mounds. Moreover, temples that were surrounded by tall fences or large moats could easily be converted into defence facilities for battle. And at the Buddhist *hōe* services on the 15th day of the 7th and 8th month every year, religious services were conducted for ‘gratitude between the emperor and his subjects.’ It is apparent that Buddhist temples were closely linked to control over the provinces and the rule of the Yamato Court.

### **The teaching of altruism and *Tōdaiji Fuju Monkō***

However, there was another, different, Buddhist ideology that entered the Yamato state, which was also accepted by society. This was the teaching of altruism based on the Mahāyāna Buddhist concept of saving ‘all sentient beings’. It refers to the practice of gaining for oneself the practical benefits in this life of performing meritorious deeds, by means of accumulating good Buddhist deeds such as alms-giving and charity towards others.

The early ninth century *Tōdaiji Fuju Monkō* is regarded as a model for Buddhist memorial service sermons, and in this is the passage: ‘Produce Buddhist sutras and statues, build bridges and roads, dig wayside wells, and plant fruit trees, with all your heart. This is called the good that comes from right thought’. According to Makoto FUJIMOTO, priests conducting *hōe* services at provincial temples at the time encouraged donors and the congregation to perform altruistic works such as building roads and bridges, drilling wells and planting orchards. And he argues that Buddhist provincial facilities at the time served the function of supporting official traffic such as the tax collection couriers, as is starkly demonstrated by the existence of charitable accommodation houses (*fuseya*) for them. This is an instructive observation.

### **Ancient *hashidera* (bridge temples)**

What is noteworthy in *Tōdaiji Fuju Monkō* in relation to the maintenance and running of ferries and bridges is the phrase ‘build roads and bridges’. This suggests that among the temples at that time, there were those that followed this teaching of altruism, constructed crossings close to the intersections between the roads and major rivers on inland routes, and took responsibility for them. On the basis of relevant documents, it seems that they called such temples *hashidera*, or ‘bridge temples’. Well-known *hashidera* in ancient times in the Kinai region included Senkyōji in Sōraku-gun, Yamashiro Province, and the Funahashi Haiji temple site, Shiki-gun, Kawachi Province. Beyond the Kinai district, there was also a temple called ‘Hizen no Kuni Saka no Kōri Hashidera’ in Hizen Province, which had a temple bell engraved with the year Hōki 5 (774).

Saka no Kōri Hashidera is thought to have been at the Daiganji Haiji Site in Saga-shi. Its location is about 1.5 kilometres from the west bank of the present Kase River (the ancient Saka River). The Saikaidō Post Road ran approximately one kilometre to the south (see Fig. 1). And on a hill to the south was Funazuka *Kofun*, the largest keyhole-shaped burial mound in Hizen Province, constructed in the mid-fifth century. Moreover, the Hizen Provincial Government Office, *Kokubunji* and *Kokubun-niji* (state-supported Provincial Monastery and Nunnery) were all located near each other on the eastern bank of the Saka River. The vicinity of where the Saikaidō [road] intersected with the Saka River was the most important strategic point for politics and the economy in Hizen Province.

What’s more, in the section on Saka Kōri in *Hizen no Kuni Fudoki* there is the tale of Ōarata, founding father of the *agata nushi* family, who placated a malevolent deity that killed half of all passers-by in the headwaters of the Saka River. That is to say that in ancient times, whilst being an important waterway linking the Hizen Provincial Government Office with the Ariake Sea, at the same time, whenever the Saka River flooded, it would suddenly turn into a fearsome river that prevented the traffic of the taxes-in-kind couriers who travelled along the inland road. It was at such places that *hashidera* were constructed in order to provide care for them when they were exhausted, sick or ill, and to assist them in crossing the river safely. This is a case of the expression of altruism ‘build bridge and roads’ that appears in *Tōdaiji Fuju Monkō* being taken to heart and leading to actual construction works.

### **The ‘Shinbe Ferry’ and the Shinbe Ōtera Haiji Archaeological Site**

A Buddhist temple in Harima that I’d like to point out in connection with *hashidera* is the Shinbe Ōtera Haiji site, the site of a Hakuō Period temple in Kawai Sato, Kamo Kōri. This temple

was located on the west bank of the Kako River at the point where it intersected with the main east–west road, and it was near the well-known ferry called ‘Shinbe Ferry’ or ‘Taikō Ferry’ which remained in operation until the mid-1960s (see Fig. 2). When the army of Hashiba [later renamed Toyotomi] Hideyoshi crossed the Kako River in 1578 in order to attack Miki, it was here that the local people assisted his crossing. It is said that those who helped were four ferrymen of Shinbe *Mura* in Kawai *Sato*. The territory of Shinbe was closely associated with assistance for crossing the Kako River.

The Kako was one of a number of rivers in Harima Province that frequently overflowed its banks. It would have been just as difficult to ford it on foot in ancient times as today. So from the point of view of the tax collectors who used the overland routes, this area where the east–west road crossed the Kako River was a major obstacle to transportation. Facilities were needed to help them cross it. It is highly likely that the Shinbe *Ōtera Haiji* and the Kawai *Haiji* to its northeast were Buddhist temples that took on that duty. Some ancient Buddhist temples fulfilled that role.