Taimitsu Rituals in Medieval Japan

Sectarian Competition and the Dynamics of Tantric Performance[1]

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Taimitsu 台密, the esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai lineages, is one of the two major traditions of Tantric Buddhism in Japan, the other being the Shingon school. Despite its historical importance, Taimitsu remains largely unknown to scholars, including those of Japanese Buddhism. The ritual dimension of Taimitsu has received even less scholarly attention. Before examining the dynamics of medieval Taimitsu practice it is thus necessary to consider the reasons for such a peculiar development in the understanding of Japanese Tantras.

Scholarly analysis of Japanese Tantrism has uncovered only a tiny part of the variety and richness of the doctrinal systems and ritual practices created in Japan. This is somewhat paradoxical when one considers the paramount influence of Tantric modes of thought on Japanese Buddhism and Japanese culture in general, compared to other countries of the East Asian Buddhist sphere, as well as the influence that Japanese emic categories of analysis have exerted on the study of East Asian Tantras. Different factors have contributed to such an anomaly. One is related to the modern history of Buddhism. Modern Japanese Buddhist ideologues have attempted to present Japanese Buddhism as a world religion along the model set by Protestant Christianity, that is, one focused on doctrine rather than ritual. The Tantric traditions posed a fundamental problem to the formulation of Buddhism as an intellectual path, in that Tantrism had constructed its historical significance on ritual performance and ritual efficacy, and its textual body in large part consisted of liturgical literature. Its modern interpreters have tried to overcome this difficulty by emphasising the philosophical

1 Research for this study was made possible by a research leave grant from the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council.

aspects of Tantrism, and downplaying its ritual dimension. By doing so, however, they have failed to unfold the doctrinal developments and innovations that were effected by ritual elaborations. In the case of Taimitsu this situation has been exacerbated by the fact that Taimitsu developed within a school that was equally concerned with the philosophical system of Chinese Tiantai, a non-esoteric form of Buddhism. It is the latter, rather than the Tantric component, that has dominated the modern construction of Tendai.

The study of medieval rituals has also been affected by other problems intrinsic to the history of Japanese Buddhism. Firstly, the division of Japanese Buddhism into discrete schools has put the focus on the origin of each school and this has undermined the study of their historical development. The received representation of these schools is that of monolithic entities that have perpetuated the doctrinal stances and ritual practices of their founders through the centuries. Consequently, little attention has been paid to the medieval expressions of Tantric Buddhism, whether in the Shingon or Tendai school, for the medieval interpretations do not represent the beginnings of these schools or their modern practices. Secondly, the rituals that have received attention are those that formed the doctrinal basis of Japanese Tantrism, in particular the initiation into the practices of the Womb and Diamond *maṇḍala*s. These were, and still are, part of the training of a Tantric specialist, and today are much the same in the two major Tantric schools, following a process of ritual standardization that was completed in the Tokugawa period. Here lies another inconsistency in the received approach to Japanese Tantrism. Ritual diversification (rather than doctrinal or ideological stance) is often adduced as the origin of the split into the endless number of branches and sub-lineages that characterised pre-modern Japanese Tantrism. Yet hardly any of such ritual changes has been examined. Finally, largely unexplored in their historical, doctrinal and performative development are the rituals devoted to individual figures of the Tantric pantheon (*bessonhō* 別尊法). These are often regarded as minor liturgies, because their purpose is the attainment of immediate worldly benefits, rather than the practitioner's enlightenment, and in this sense they do not conform to the outcome prescribed by a philosophical approach to Tantric practice. Yet they constituted the greatest number of Tantric liturgies newly created in the medieval period. Furthermore, while the rites of the two *maṇḍala*s were only rarely performed, from the eleventh century onwards the core activity of the Tantric lineages at major temples as well as in private halls consisted of *besson* rituals.

This study addresses some issues in the definition and legitimation of Taimitsu as a distinct Tantric tradition by focussing on the medieval ritual world. In particular, it explores how sectarian agendas were at work

in the construction and presentation of rituals, and how the dynamics of ritual performance affected the differentiation and reciprocal influence between Tantric lineages. The assumption followed in this study is that ritual actions translate into authority for a specific monk and his lineage, and shape his doctrinal standing. Yet the process by which ritual authority is claimed and instituted is characterised by tensions and contradictions. To identify the modalities by which Taimitsu sectarian legitimation was negotiated, this paper draws attention to two key sources that have hitherto remained unexplored: the ritual anthologies compiled throughout the medieval period; and a set of specific rituals for public benefit which were constructed as the great secret rituals (*daihihō* 大秘法) of the Taimitsu lineages.

The Divisions of Japanese Tantrism: Taimitsu Lineages

The term Taimitsu designates the Tantric practices of the school initiated by Saichō on Mt. Hiei, Tendai. However, the lack of a centralised institution that represented the different loci where Tendai esoteric Buddhism was practiced poses difficulties in defining Taimitsu as a single, homogeneous tradition. At the time of maximum development of Japanese Tantrism, namely from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, which for the purpose of this paper I consider the medieval period, the term indicated at least two competing lineages: Sanmon 山門 (lineage of the mountain) and Jimon 寺門 (lineage of the temple). The two lineages went back to the two major Taimitsu scholiasts of the early Heian period, Ennin 円仁 (794–864) and Enchin 圓珍 (814–891) respectively, although the split between their disciples became definitive only at the end of the tenth century. The Jimon lineage, based at Onjōji 園城寺, or Miidera 三井寺, was institutionally much smaller but played a distinctive role within Japanese Tantrism. Medieval documents in fact describe contemporary Japanese Tantrism being constituted of Tōji (i.e. Kūkai's lineages), Sanmon and Jimon lineages. Although sharing several doctrinal and ritual elements, the two main Taimitsu lineages constructed specific liturgies in competition with each other. The *Shidō juhō nikki,* a fourteenth-century outline of the formation of Taimitsu lineages, for instance, points at the Onjōji-specific ritual of the Yellow Fudō. According to this document, the ritual was initiated by Enchin, and transmitted from generation to generation to a single practitioner, the head

of the lineage (*monshū* 門主). He alone had access to Enchin's interpretation of this form of the King of Knowledge as a 'living deity' (*shōjin* 生身).[2]

Further ramifications occurred within the Sanmon lineage, while the Jimon lineage seems to have remained more compact. From the mid-Heian period two major divisions of Sanmon are identifiable: Kawa 川, founded by Kakuchō 覚超 (960–1034) and Tani 谷, founded by Kōgei 皇慶 (977–1049). The Kawa branch extinguished itself in the course of one generation. By contrast, the Tani branch flourished through the centuries, splitting into further sub-branches.[3] Such divisions occurred in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and eventually formed the so-called thirteen lineages of Taimitsu.[4] (Fig. 1) It is not clear when these thirteen branches started being identified as representative of Taimitsu, for they do not comprise the entirety of the Taimitsu network. Some sub-lineages are in fact not counted among these thirteen.

Considering that these sub-lineages were in large part offshoots of one of the major lines of Sanmon, one may question the significance of such demarcations and how clear-cut the distinction between one branch and another was in reality. First of all, the sub-lineages present a confusing case of taxonomic accretion. A perusal of contemporary sources reveals that a specific dharma-line might have been referred to either by the name of its founder (or the toponym of the temple where he lived), or by the name of his teacher, or indeed by that of his disciple, even when the latter was at the same time considered to be the founder of a different sub-branch. Thus the Kawa branch was often referred to as Ryōgen's lineage because its initiator, Kakuchō, was a direct disciple of the eminent restorer of Tendai, Ryōgen 良源. In the Tani branch, Chōen 長宴 (1016–81), direct disciple of Kōgei, was considered the founder of the Ōhara 大原 lineage, which took its name from Chōen's sobriquet Ōhara ajari 大原阿闍梨, derived from the area to the north-west of Mt. Hiei where he lived.[5] This lineage, however, would be better known as the Sanmai 三昧 lineage, after the title of Chōen's direct

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2 *Shidō juhō nikki*, *T.* 77:137c. *Shidō juhō nikki* was compiled by Gengō 源豪 in 1391, and records the oral transmissions of his master Gongō 嚴豪. See Ōkubo Ryōshun, "Taimitsu shoryū no keisei," in *Asia bunka no shisō to girei*, Fukui Fumimasa hakase koki taishoku kinen ronbunshū kankōkai eds., Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2005, pp. 783-798.

3 Cf. *Asabashō*, "Denbō kanjō nikki," *T. zuzō* 9: 844-846. A detailed analysis of Taimitsu sub-lineages is in Inada Soken, "Taimitsu shoryū shikō," *Eizan gakuhō* 6 (1932), pp. 1-38, and "Taimitsu shoryūshi shikō (shōzen)," *Eizan gakuhō* 8 (1933), pp. 1-82.

4 See the diagram in Fukuda Gyōei, *Tendaigaku gairon*, Tokyo: Nakayama shobō busshorin, 1995, p. 487 (included here) and, for more detailed charts of each lineage, *Mikkyō daijiten* 6: 30-32.

5 In this paper I use the most common pronunciation of the name, Chōen, as in *Mikkyō daijiten* and *Nihon bukkyō jinmei jiten*. Tendai literature however gives it as Jōen. Cf. Kiuchi

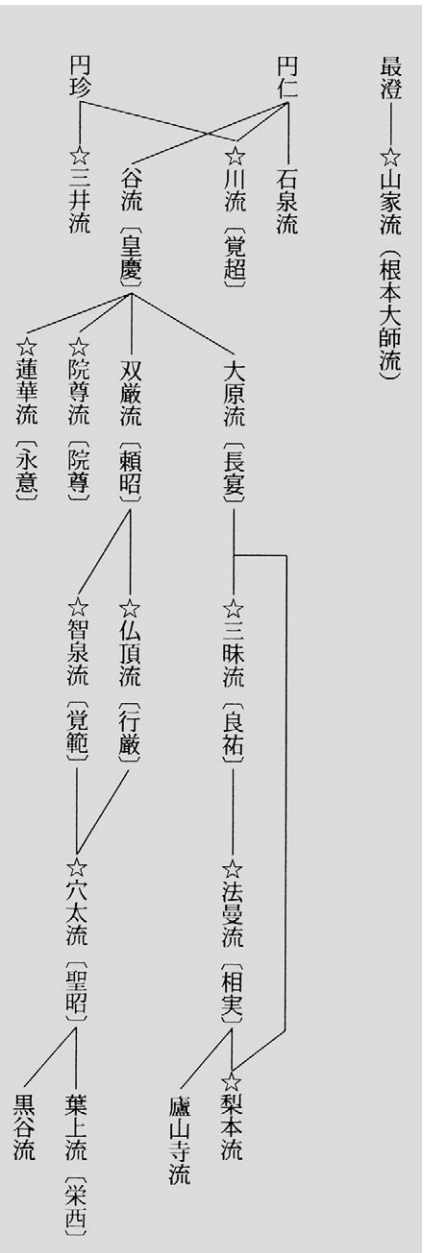

Figure 1: Chart of the medieval divisions of Taimitsu. The sub-lineages marked by a star, together with two other sub-lineages not given here, form the so-called Thirteen Lineages of Taimitsu.

disciple, Sanmai ajari Ryōyū 良祐 (1159–1231). Ryōyū was thus seen as the initiator of a new lineage, and yet regarded as the continuator of the Tani branch. Such multiplicity of designations suggests the evolution of the Taimitsu lineages within the span of one generation, but it also points to the ambiguity of intra-sectarian distinctiveness.

Another factor, characteristic of both Japanese Tantric schools, Shingon and Tendai, accentuated the loose meaning of lineage. Tantric practitioners sought and received several initiations from masters belonging to competing lineages, not only within the same school, in this case Tendai, but also of the opposite school, Shingon. Kōgei, for instance, cited above as the founder of the Tani branch of Taimitsu, received initiations from Kyōun 景雲 of the Tōji line of Shingon, under whom he studied in Kyūshū. Often of aristocratic background, an individual Tantric specialist might have also had siblings belonging to competing schools. A case in point is Sōjitsu 相実, a versatile scholar-monk regarded as the founder of the Hōman 法曼 lineage of Taimitsu. A direct disciple of Ryōyū 良祐 of the Sanmai lineage, and thus inheritor of the orthodox line of the Tani branch, he also received an advanced consacration distinctive of the Kawa branch (*risagō kanjō* 離作業灌頂), several initiations into rituals of the Hirosawa branch of Shingon from the well-known Ejū 恵什 of Ninnaji, and transmission of secret texts of the Ono 小野 lineages of Shingon. Sōjitsu was the third son of the Councillor Fujiwara no Akizane, and thus the brother of Jichihan 実範 (1089–1144), a renowned scholar-monk and founder of the Nakanokawa 中川 branch of Shingon.[6] The personal circumstances of a practitioner thus assured his contacts with competing lineages, and allowed him knowledge of competing interpretations. In such a context, the meaning of lineage cannot be understood as founded on exclusivist affiliation.

Gyōō, *Tendai mikkyō no seiritsu*, Tokyo: Hokushindō 1990, and the publications of the Tendai school such as *Tendai mikkyō nyūmon*.

6 Marc Buijnsters, "Jichihan and the Restoration and Innovation of Buddhist Practice," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26/1-2, 1999, pp. 39-82, p. 40. Interestingly, Jichihan's doctrinal positions would be criticised by another Hōmanryū monk, Shura.

Constructing Ritual Knowledge: The Medieval Liturgical Anthologies

One of the characteristics of the medieval Tantric world was the production of extensive ritual anthologies. Compiled between the eleventh and the fourteenth century, these are particularly relevant sources to explore the development of Tantric Buddhism. They document the remarkable creativity of medieval ritualists and provide evidence to reconsider in historical terms the received view of the differences between the two major Japanese Tantric schools and among their sub-divisions. The collection of liturgical knowledge corresponded to the formation of branches and sub-lineages, and the production of anthologies grew in number according to the splitting up of the dharma-lines, at first giving the impression that such compilative effort was aimed at defining the sectarian identity of discrete groups. Yet the composition of these liturgical corpora highlights an ambiguous dynamic between the aspiration to exclusive knowledge and the need to circulate knowledge. Let us consider a few examples.

The sectarian agendas embedded in the constitution of the anthologies are already clear in the first substantial attempt to put together the ritual hermeneutics of the Tendai lineages, *Shijūjōketsu* (Instructions in forty books). This is a record of the oral transmissions bequeathed by Kōgei to his disciple Chōen. In fact, historically the compilation would assume canonical status and serve as a reference manual for the three main branches of Taimitsu, Sanmai, Anō 穴太 and Hōman.[7] Kōgei was a crucial figure in the development of Taimitsu rituals and thus *Shijūjōketsu* plays a significant role in attesting the changes in ritual understanding at the beginning of medieval history. The anthology presents the specificity of Taimitsu versus Shingon in its very structure. It follows a tripartite division under the rubrics of "Womb" (*taizō* 胎藏), "Diamond" (*kongōkai* 金剛界) and "Accomplishment" (*soshitsuji* 蘇悉地), reflecting the doctrinal system developed by Ennin and Enchin, where the non-duality of the two maṇḍalic realities, Womb and Daimond, was subsumed in a third element,

7 The edition included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (*T.* 75: 425-460) consisting of 15 fascicles, is a later arrangement by the initiator of the Hōman lineage, Sōjitsu (1081-1165). *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* also cites a version in 20 volumes. The titles of its rubrics suggest that the two editions might have been different. The only study of this anthology is a pre-war article by Shishio Enshin, "Tani ajari Kōgei no mikkyō ni tsuite *Shijūjōketsu* o chūshin ni," *Nihon bukkyō gakkai nenpō* 21, 1956, pp. 117-134. Reprinted in *Mikkyō taikei*, ed. by Miyasaka Yūshō et al., 12 vols., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1995, vol. 7 (*Nihon no mikkyō* 4), pp. 119-136.

identified by the category of *soshitsuji*.[8] The practices for individual deities, on the other hand, are not yet arranged according to the taxonomy that we will find in later compilations.

Similar sectarian stances are expressed in a later compilation, considered today as the most important medieval anthology of Taimitsu rituals, *Asabashō*.[9] Its title comes from three seed-letters, A, SA and VAM, which identify the three sections of the Womb *maṇḍala*, respectively, buddha, lotus and *vajra*. The anthology thus seems to point already in the title to the prominence of the Womb *maṇḍala* in the Taimitsu construction of Buddhism. *Asabashō* was compiled between 1242 and 1281 by Shōchō 承澄 (1205–1282) of an Anō sub-lineage called Ogawa 小川. Contrary to previous anthologies, *Asabashō* is complemented by extensive iconographic material, which is useful for the reconstruction of the performative elements of each ritual. For this reason, while it has been marginalised in the study of Tantric doctrine and practice, it has attracted the attention of art historians, who have drawn from it for their analyses of Tantric deities.

Asabashō is paradigmatic of the process of construction of ritual knowledge that characterised the medieval period, and it is therefore useful to take a close look at some of its features. First of all, its organization provides a chart of the ritual world of Taimitsu. The anthology may be divided in sections, according to the type of ritual dealt with. The first part, which corresponds to the first forty-four fascicles of the *Taishō* edition, concerns the practices of the two *maṇḍala*s and the rituals of consecration (*kanjō* 灌頂). It includes extensive personal instructions of different masters, and their variations according to lineage. From the following sections onwards the attention is focused on rituals directed to individual deities. The section on buddhas starts with the Buddha Yakushi, highlighting the importance

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8 For a brief outline of the threefold system see LUCIA DOLCE, "Taimitsu: The Esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai School," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia: A Handbook for Scholars*, CHARLES ORZECH general ed., Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 757-758.

9 The edition included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (*T. zuzō* 8-9) comprises 227 fascicles, based on three manuscripts (Eizan bunko, Bishamondō and Sensōji), and is slightly different in the arrangement of some material (the journals of some performance, for instance) from the edition included in *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, which counts 233 fascicles. In the present study citations are from the Taishō edition. Despite being an invaluable historical source, research on *Asabashō* has been limited to its author and existent manuscripts. See KIRIHATA TAKESHI, "Asabashō: sono seiritsu to senja Shōchō," *Bukkyō geijutsu* 70, 1969, pp. 182-205; BERNARD FRANK, "Les grandes sommes iconographiques des èpoques de Heian et de Kamakura," *Annuaire du Collége de France 1986-1987*, pp. 555-598, pp. 593-597; MATSUMOTO KŌICHI, "Asabashō no shosha okusho ni tsuite: Shiga Jōbodaiinzō ni miru kyōgaku no denju to shūseki," in *Enryakuji to chūsei shakai,* Kawane Yoshiyasu and FUKUDA EIJIRŌ ed., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2004, pp. 385-417.

that this deity had in the Tendai tradition. This is followed by two other categories of buddhas: *buddhoṣnīṣa*, or *butchō* 佛頂 and Butsumo 佛母 (buddha-mother, also referred to as Buddha-eye, Butsugen 佛眼). While the latter may be singled out only in Taimitsu sources, the first, the personification of the protuberance on the crown of a buddha's head (*uṣnīṣa*), appears as a distinct category in both Taimitsu and Shingon anthologies, documenting its cultic importance in Japan. This category is embodied in differently named buddha-figures, all depicted as *cakravartin* holding a golden wheel (*kinrinnō* 金輪王): Daibutchō 大佛頂, Ichiji kinrin 一字金輪, Shijōkō 熾盛光 and Sonshōō 尊勝王.[10] I shall return to Shijōkō. Next, the anthology covers liturgies centred on *sūtra*s; on bodhisattvas, starting from the bodhisattva Kannon; on the kings of knowledge (*myōō* 明王), for which it uses the archaic name of "irate and adamantine" (*funnu kongō* 忿怒金剛), and other deities. The last fascicles of *Asabashō* concern various ritual procedures (*sahō* 作法), rites of empowerment (*kaji* 加持), the interpretation of the *siddham* script and biographical accounts. The taxonomic arrangement of *Asabashō* is slightly different from that of *Kakuzenshō*, the major medieval Shingon anthology.[11] Furthermore, some figures in the categories of deities, such as the two-bodied Bishamon (*sōshin Bishamon* 双身毘沙門), are specific to Taimitsu, and are not found in Shingon material. Yet altogether the two anthologies show that by the early thirteenth century the ritual pantheon of Japanese Tantrism had been defined.

The relatively small space that *Asabashō* gives to the advanced initiatory liturgies, compared to that devoted to rituals for individual deities, reveals the importance that the latter type of ritual carried in the economy of Tantric Buddhism. Indeed the rituals for individual deities, performed to attain specific practical benefits rather than to train esoteric specialists, functioned as the socio-political interface of the Tantric lineages, through which patronage and power were negotiated. In the anthology, the material related to each of these liturgies is organized in ten sections: first the

10 Shijōkō, as we shall see, is a Taimitsu-specific form. The other buddhas are included in *Kakuzenshō*, the contemporary Shingon anthology compiled by Kakuzen 覚禅 (1143–ca. 1219), albeit in a different hierarchical arrangement: Daibutchō, Sonshōō and Ichiji kinrin. On the *buddhoṣnīṣa* and some of its textual sources see also Ronald Davidson's article in the present volume.

11 *Kakuzenshō* lists the rituals in the following order: Rituals centred on buddhas; *buddhoṣnīṣa*; *sūtra*s; Kannon and other bodhisattvas; kings of knowledge; and other deities. This taxonomy seems to have also informed the hierarchical arrangement of scriptures in the Tantric section of the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. It should be noted that earlier Shingon anthologies, such as *Zuzōshō*, also use the name *funnu kongō* for the kings of knowledge.

doctrinal underpinning and the history of the ritual is presented, then practical information on the modalities of performance is given, followed by the accounts of preceding performances, successful or not. It is important to note that in this way the anthology supplies important material related to doctrinal questions, including works that no longer exist today.[12]

The anthologies may be seen as the repository of the ritual capital of a lineage, and in this sense are classified under the lineage to which their compiler belonged. Yet the particular nature of both compilations and compilers often makes such sectarian characterization problematic. Shōchō had received transmissions of lineages belonging to both the Tani and Kawa streams. Further, in his work he drew from two previous liturgical collections, *Gyōrinshō* (82 fascicles) and *Jikkanshō* (10 fascicles), compiled by Jōnen 静然 of Mudōji 無道寺.[13] Thus *Asabashō* did not represent only the Anō transmission, as is usually assumed from the main affiliation of its compiler, but a large part of the Taimitsu doctrine and practice that circulated in the thirteenth century. While it may be possible that ritual diversification prompted and legitimised the division of the Japanese Tantric schools into branches and sub-branches, it is also true that the ritual anthologies show an inclusive approach in their attempt at reproducing and organising ritual knowledge. Such an effort to grasp what was performed in the Tantric world beyond one's specific circle may be symptomatic of the need to identify reciprocal peculiarities, as the first step to build one's sectarian identity more solidly. At the same time, it also suggests an extraordinary possibility of exchanges between ritualists, and the degree of openness of the sectarian world, which stands in contrast to the logic of secrecy that Tantric lineages are often seen to abide by. *Shijūjōketsu* or *Asabashō* not only collected rituals performed by different Taimitsu lineages, but also embedded Shingon interpretations in their presentation of these rituals. This proves that a range of Shingon oral transmissions were available to competing lineages, whether or not they claimed Kūkai's ancestry. The diversified training that Tantric monks underwent undoubtedly was one of the factors that contributed to the apparent idiosyncrasy of the anthologies. Let us take the case of *Shijūjōketsu*. As I have noted above, both Kōgei, whose oral instructions this anthology collects, and the later editor of the anthology, Sōjitsu, had received Shingon

12 Ōkubo Ryōshun, "Asabashō," in *Nihon bukkyō no bunken gaido* (*Nihon no bukkyō 3*), Nihon bukkyō kenkyūkai eds, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001, pp. 3-6.

13 Jōnen's *Jikkanshō*, so-called following the contemporary use of designating ritual works from their size, in this case ten volumes (*kan* 巻), consisted of two different works: a collection written by Jōnen's master Sōjitsu, *Sōshinshō*, in eight volumes, and Jōnen's own *Shozon gyōzō* in two volumes.

transmissions. This may explain the presence of Shingon interpretations in *Shijūjōketsu*. The same applies to Shingon collections. *Zuzōshō,* an early important anthology of the Hirosawa branch of Shingon, incorporated several interpretations by Kakuyū 覚猷 (1053–1140), the famous Tendai cleric better known as Toba sōjō.[14] The author of *Kakuzenshō*, too, extensively borrowed from the "Ōhara master," i.e. Chōen (the compiler of the *Shijūjōketsu*). A close examination of the content of the ritual collections thus demonstrates that the assumed correspondence between lineage affiliation and exclusive knowledge was far from being reciprocal and unambiguous. Interpersonal relations affected the understanding of a Tantric practitioner and the authority of his lineage. Crucially, sectarian flexibility concerned not only ritual but also doctrinal matters, as *Asabashō* attests by incorporating treatises of major scholar-monks of the Shingon school.[15]

The anthologies also allow us to comprehend to what extent rituals that seemed conceived for and legitimised by Taimitsu sectarian agendas were practised by Shingon lineages as well. The Tantric liturgy of the Lotus Sutra (*hokkehō* 法華法) is a case in point. Although it originated in China, it developed in Japan thanks to and along the lines of Taimitsu speculations on the esoteric meaning of the Lotus. I have suggested elsewhere that these sectarian interpretations converged in some medieval visual uses of the Lotus *maṇḍala* as the third element of the Taimitsu system, in which the unity of the Womb and Diamond *maṇḍala*s was subsumed.[16] As

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14 *Zuzōshō* (a.k.a as Byōdōbō's *Jikkanshō*) was compiled in 1139-1140. Its authorship was traditionally attributed to Byōdōbō Yōgen 平等房永厳 (1075-1151), a monk of the Hojuin 保寿院 sub-lineage of the Hirosawa branch, but it was most likely compiled by his fellow monk Ejū 恵什, who later moved to the competing Daigoji dharma-line. See Tamura Ryūshō, "*Zuzōshō*: seiritsu to naiyō ni kansuru mondai," *Sōbyō butsuga*, *Bukkyō geijutsu/Ars Buddhica* 70 (1969), and Bernard Frank, *op. cit.,* pp. 556-559. It is relevant for the purpose of this study to note that the anthology was contended by two different lineages, which maintained two different titles for the work to lay claim to it.
The sobriquet of Kakuyū comes from the Toba imperial palace, south of Kyoto, where he resided.

15 An example is the quotation of a commentary by Jichihan, identified by scholars as the *Bodaishinron kaikenshō* 菩提心論開見抄. *Asabashō* cites "a certain treatise compiled by Nanokawa" (i.e. Jichihan) in several passages of the chapter dedicated to another Tendai commentary, the *Bodaishinron kanmon*. Cf. *T. zuzō* 9: 598a, b; 600a-c; 603c. In his study of Jichihan, Satō Tetsuei identified this "certain treatise" as the *Bodaishinron kaikenshō*. Recent textual analysis, however, has suggested that the *Bodaishinron kaikenshō* may be a later work. See Tado Taichi, "*Bodaishinron kaikenshō* no kentō," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 57: 2 (2009), pp. 590-594.

16 Lucia Dolce, "Reconsidering the Taxonomy of the 'Esoteric': Taimitsu Hermeneutical and Ritual Practices," In *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion,* Mark Teeuwen and Bernard Scheid eds., London & New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 130-71.

loaded with (Taimitsu) sectarian connotations as the Lotus liturgy might have been, it is included in all major Shingon anthologies. It occupies several fascicles of *Kakuzenshō*, which comprise personal instructions (*shiki* 私記) of Tantric masters, hence confirming that it was not only recorded but also performed by Shingon lineages.[17] As a matter of fact, according to Raiyu's 頼瑜 (1226–1304) *Shinzoku zakki* the *hokkehō* was one of the major liturgies (*daihō*) of the Shingon school.[18]

On the other hand, by surveying how the same ritual was treated in different Taimitsu anthologies, it is possible to discern its evolution in sectarian terms. If one compares the interpretation of the *hokkehō* in *Asabashō* and in the fourteenth-century *Keiranshūyōshū*, one finds that the latter emphasised the tripartite hermeneutical pattern pertaining to Taimitsu. The author of the *Keiranshūyōshū*, Kōshū 光宗, may be considered to represent Anō transmissions as much as Shōchō, the compiler of *Asabashō* (Kōshū belonged to Seizanryū 西山流, a lineage that had split from that of Shōchō). Although *Keiranshūyōshū* is not strictly speaking a ritual collection, the sections that have been preserved are mostly concerned with Tantric rituals, and thus the compilation serves as a record of contemporaneous practices on Mt. Hiei.[19] Its treatment of the *hokkehō* suggests that by the fourteenth century a concern had arisen to claim the distinctiveness of Taimitsu vis à vis Shingon ritual interpretations in terms that resonated with the doctrinal positions of the school.

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17 Lucia Dolce, *Esoteric Patterns in Nichiren's Thought*, PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2002, pp. 215-218 and 304-5.

18 *Mikkyō daijiten* 3:1536a, which cites *Shinzoku zakki* 13 (not corresponding to the edition included in *Shingonshū zensho* 37). *Shinzoku zakki* was compiled between 1260 and 1284. Another work by Raiyu, *Hishō mondō*, attests that the *hokkehō* was performed by both the Ninnaj and the Daigoji lineages, together with a *Fugen enmeihō*. See *T.* 79: 365c.

19 Because it is not a ritual collection, *Keiranshūyōshū* is arranged according to a completely different criterion than the ritual anthologies mentioned above. The existing 116 fascicles of the edition included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* are only one third of the original number, which counted 300 fascicles. (This is based on the manuscript held in the Shinnyo archives of Eizan bunko, but some fascicles from this manuscript were left out from the Taishō edition.) The date of compilation, 1311-1347, refers to the fascicles that have been preserved. On *Keiranshūyōshū* see Allan Grapard, "*Keiranshūyōshū*: A Different Perspective on Mt. Hiei in the Medieval Period' in *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*, Richard K. Payne, ed., Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998, pp. 55-69; Nomoto Kakujō, "Keiranshūyōshū," in *Nihon bukkyō no bunken gaido* (*Nihon no bukkyō* 3), Nihon bukkyō kenkyūkai eds., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001, pp. 47-50; Tanaka Takako, *Keiranshūyōshū no sekai*, Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppan, 2003.

The Ritual Self-definition of Taimitsu

Two areas of ritual conception better illustrate the process of sectarian definition that medieval Taimitsu ritualists attempted, in the inter-sectarian context (distinction with Shingon lineages) and at the intra-sectarian level (distinction between Sanmon and Jimon).

1. *Advanced initiations*

The first area concerns the rites of advanced consecration. Here one notes a marked differentiation with the Shingon lineages, in that in medieval Taimitsu the consecration into the two *maṇḍala*s was followed by a third initiation, known as the "combinatory consecration" (*gōgyō (dan) kanjō* 合行(壇)灌頂). This initiation ritually embodied the category of *soshitsuji* that was central to the Taimitsu tripartite system, and was one of the solutions to the problems arising from the scriptural basis of this category, the *Suxidi jing*.[20] A survey of the ritual collections shows that by the medieval period initiations focused on the *Suxidi jing* were replaced by the combinatory one. This consisted in performing the rite for the two *maṇḍala*s simultaneously, using two ritual platforms on which the *maṇḍala*s were placed, while the mudras and mantras corresponding to each *maṇḍala* were transmitted separately, in alternate order. *Asabashō* dated the combinatory initiation back to Ennin and Enchin, but scholars today surmise that it emerged around the time of Kōgei during the process of transformation of the *soshitsuji* rites.[21] The combinatory consecration became the distinctive feature of Taimitsu initiations and was carried out throughout the pre-modern period with a number of variations and alternatives. It is not discussed in Shingon anthologies.

On the other hand, the record of advanced initiations also provides grounds for reconsidering the received understanding of the distinctions between Taimitsu and Shingon. One often-mentioned ritual difference between the two schools is the precedence given to one or the other of the two *maṇḍala* initiations in the basic training course of a Tantric master (*shidō kegyō* 四度加行). Shingon places the Diamond *maṇḍala* practices first, followed by those centred on the Womb *maṇḍala*, while Taimitsu

20 Lucia Dolce, "Taimitsu: The Esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai School," pp. 758-759.
21 Misaki Ryōshū, *Taimitsu no kenkyū*, Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1988, pp. 568-73.

inverts the sequence.[22] This has been explained as the importance that Kūkai gave to the scriptural basis of the Diamond *maṇḍala*, in turn reflecting the emphasis that Amoghavajra had placed on it in China. By contrast, Ennin and Enchin are thought to have been more interested in the scriptural sources of the Womb *maṇḍala*, the *Darijing* and its commentary.[23] Even though scant evidence of this tendency may be detected in the writings of the first generation of Taimitsu writers, such alleged demarcation does not take account of Annen's interest in the textual lineage of the Diamond *maṇḍala*, clearly demonstrated by his use of the *Yuqijing*.[24] Furthermore, the historical accounts of the development of the two *maṇḍala* initiations prove that the Womb-Diamond sequence was not homogeneously adopted in Taimitsu. According to *Asabashō*, the Kawa branch performed first the Diamond rites and then the Womb rites. The Tani branch followed the sequence Womb-Diamond order.[25] It may be surmised that because the Tani interpretation survived in its several ramifications, the sequence Womb-Diamond came to be understood as distinctive of Taimitsu. Yet, historically this was not perceived as a characterizing feature for all Taimitsu lineages.

2. *The four major Taimitsu liturgies* (daihō)

The second area of interest in the discussion of sectarian definition concerns the rituals for individual deities that were classified as "major liturgies" (*daihō*). These were the most important rites of a Tantric lineage, originally performed by imperial order for the protection of the state and the wellbeing of the emperor and members of his family.[26] The special status of these rituals was marked by a distinct arrangement of the space of

22 See, for instance Michael Saso, "*Kuden:* The oral hermeneutics of Tendai Tantric Buddhism," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14:2-3 (1987), pp. 235–46.

23 Osabe Kazuo, *Ichigyō zenji no kenkyū*, Tokyo: Hokushindō, 1990.

24 Annen's use of the *Yuqijing* was inherited by medieval ritualists, such as Jien 慈円. See Lucia Dolce and Shinya Mano, "Godai'in Annen," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia: A Handbook for Scholars*, Charles Orzech general ed., Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 773-775.

25 *Asabashō*, "Gōkanki." *T. zuzō* 8: p. 778.

26 Dictionary entries indicate that the term may be used both for rituals of self-empowerment conducted within the training of a Tantric master (*gyōhō no daihō* 行法の大法 or *shidai no daihō* 次第の大法) and for rituals aimed at the benefit of others (*tagi no daihō* 他儀の大法). See *Mikkyō daijiten* 3: 1535c-1536a, and Sawa Ryūken, ed., *Mikkyō jiten*, p. 366-367. Historically, however, the most common meaning was the second, and hereafter I shall use the term in this sense.

performance, which seems to have been fixed by the mid-medieval period. It consisted of four platforms: a main altar (*daidan* 大壇), devoted to the specific deity to whom the ritual was dedicated, an altar for the *goma* 護摩, an altar for the twelve protective deities (*jūniten* 十二天) and an altar for Kangiten 歓喜天. Such multiplication of ritual platforms corresponded to a remarkable increase in the number of monks deployed during these liturgies, for each of the altars was served by at least four ritualists, and often by multiples of four up to twenty monks, according to some sources. Each Tantric lineage had different sets of "major liturgies," which however were not established as such from the beginning, and might have been replaced by others with the split of a lineage. There were sets of four, five and even seven major liturgies.[27]

What are today considered to be the major Taimitsu rituals are four important liturgies which were performed by the Sanmon lineages: *shijōkōhō* 熾盛光法, *shichibutsu Yakushihō* 七佛薬師法, *Fugen enmeihō* 普賢延命法 and *anchinhō* 安鎮法.[28] By the mid-medieval period they were recognized as the ritual interface of the Sanmon lineage. The *Monyōki*, another massive Taimitsu medieval compilation, which records the ritual activities of the Shōren'in 青蓮院, starts with these four major liturgies and gives them absolute prominence: more than half of its space is devoted to them, with *shijōkōhō* and *shichibutsu Yakushihō* together occupying more than two-hundred pages of a volume in the Taishō Canon.[29] Today the four rituals are performed together, one after the other, at Enryakuji, the headquarters of the Tendai school. They constitute an important ceremony of the yearly liturgical calendar, held in the innermost area of Konpon chūdō and lasting eight days, from 4 to 11 April (*Enryakuji mishihō* 延暦寺御修法). In medieval Japan, however, each of these rituals had its own independent life and performative space. To have a grasp of the range of meanings that each engendered, it is useful to briefly survey their agency and audience, and the historical changes that they underwent. I shall start

27 For example, the thirteenth-century Shingon work cited above, *Shinzoku zakki*, lists the *shōukyōhō* 請雨経法, *kujakukyōhō* 孔雀経法, *shugo kokkakyōhō* 守護国家経法, *fugen enmeihō* 普賢延命法 and *goshichinichi misshihō* 後七日密秘法 as the major liturgies of the Shingon lineages, but adds that the Ninnaji lineage also considered the *hokutohō* 北斗法 as a major liturgy. See *Mikkyō daijiten* 3: 1536a.

28 *Sanmon anōryū juhō shidai*, *Dai Nihon bukkyō zensho* 2: 248.

29 *Monyōki* (*T. zuzō* 11: 417-723; 12: 1-692) was compiled by Son'en shinnō 尊円親王 (1298–1356), and records the activities of Shōren'in, one of the most important Taimitsu centres headed by imperial princes (*monzeki*), from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The edition available in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* numbers 184 chapters, including some Edo-period additions.

from the second, and discuss the *shijōkōhō* in detail later as paradigmatic of the sectarian construction of rituals.

Shichibutsu Yakushihō was a calamity-preventing ritual that provided relief from diseases, curses, poison and difficult labour. It became one of the four major Taimitsu liturgies because it enhanced the cult of Yakushi, whom Saichō had established as the main buddha of the Tendai school. The ritual was held for seven nights and seven days. On the main altar were placed seven statues of Yakushi, which were understood as seven manifestations of Yakushi, and could be interpreted as the seven stars of the Big Dipper, placing the ritual in the category of star rituals. One important segment of the performance, called 'knotting the cords' (*kessen* 結線), consisted of empowering five cords in the colours of the five elements by means of mantras, and then weaving them together and knotting them again. Doctrinally, it enacted a passage from the *sūtra* that served as one of the textual references for the ritual, where it was presented as an act of devotion to the Seven Yakushi. In the ritual hermeneutics, however, cosmological readings of the five colours made of these actions a "technique of prolonging life."[30] According to *Asabashō*, Ennin first performed the *shichibutsu Yakushihō* for emperor Ninmyō in 850 at Seiryōden, the emperor's quarters.[31] Later on, however, it was performed for members of the aristocracy or other ruling elites. Ryōgen, for instance, employed it to auspicate a healthy parturition for the consort of one of the Fujiwara Regents.[32] In the Kamakura period a cleric of the Ogawa lineage, Chūkai 忠快 (1159?–1227), performed it several times for the third shogun Sanetomo.[33] The anthologies document these and other changes in the ritual performance and in the ritual meaning as well. Again the *Asabashō* tells us that the rite was originally performed only by the *zasu* of Mt. Hiei, but

30 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō*, 8: 333a, 335b-c for the performative sequence, and 331a, where analogies are drawn between the five colours and the five organs that constitute the human body, and the handling of five-colour ritual objects is presented as a way of prolonging life. The *sūtra* to which the ritual segment refers is *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師瑠璃光七佛本願功德經, *T.* 451, 14: 409-418. An English translation is included in Raoul Birnbaum, *The Healing Buddha*, London: Rider, 1979, pp. 173-217.

31 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 8: 325c.

32 Paul Groner, *Ryōgen and Mount Hiei. Japanese Tendai in the Tenth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002, pp. 87-88.

33 Chūkai worked as a Tantric exorcist (*kitōsō*) for the bakufu, and is credited with introducing major liturgies of the Sanmon lineages to the shogunal court. Earlier in his career he had performed the *shichibutsu Yakushihō* at court, together with the Tendai *zasu* Jien. See Hayami Tasuku, "Kamakura seiken to taimitsu shuhō: Chūkai, Ryūben o chūshin to shite," in his *Heian bukkyō to mappō shisō*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2006, pp. 142-169.

later it started being conducted by other clerics.[34] While it was originally used to prevent calamities (*sokusai* 息災), in medieval times it became a ritual to increase benefits (*zōyaku* 増益).

Fugen enmeihō was a propitiatory ritual to increase the lifespan of the ruler, and, by analogy, the life of the country. *Asabashō* records that it was performed for the first time in 1075 by Kakujin 覚尋 (1012-1081), then abbot of Hosshōji 法勝寺, on the commission of emperor Shirakawa. Until the fourteenth century it was often conducted at the imperial palace and at princely residences, and during the Kamakura period it was performed for the wellbeing of the shogun as well. Later performances seem to have been more sporadic. It was held for the first time at Enryakuji in the Meiji period.[35] The setting for this ritual was even grander than for the other *daihō* in that eight platforms were used, adding an altar for each of the four Heavenly Kings at the corners of the performing site. This seems to have been a literary reading of the instructions given in the canonical sources of Fugen Enmei, which the anthologies explain in detail.[36] The main deity of this liturgy was an esoteric form of the bodhisattva Fugen, depicted with two or twenty arms, and riding four elephants or one elephant with four heads. This form of Fugen was also used in a life-prolonging ritual of the Shingon lineages.[37] According to some sources the difference between the two schools lay exactly in the iconographic details of the deity. *Byakuhōkushō* 白寶口抄, a fourteenth-century Shingon collection, for instance, states that Tendai lineages used a two-armed image, following the description of the *sūtra* centred on this deity, while the Tōji lineages employed an image with twenty arms, as prescribed in a secret transmission by Vajrabodhi.[38] Yet *Asabashō* records the Taimitsu use of twenty-armed images on two occasions at least: a ritual conducted in 1080 by Kakujin, then Tendai *zasu*, and a performance held in 1186.[39] Icons in the holding of Tendai temples also confirm this use.[40] Historical evidence

34 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 8: 326a.

35 For a list of recorded performances, see Take Kakuchō, "Enryakuji mishihō 'Fugen enmei daihō'," in his *Hieizan bukkyō no kenkyū*, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2008, pp. 106-21.

36 *Asabashō*, "Fugen enmeihō," *T. zuzō* 9: 133-144.

37 See, for instance, Raiyu's *Hishō mondō* as cited in n. 17.

38 *Byakuhōkushō*, "Fugen enmeihō," *T. zuzō* 6: 379b. This and another passage in the text (*T. zuzō* 6: 377a) also attribute the difference in the number of elephants the deity rides to different lineages. *Byakuhōkushō* was compiled by Ryōson 亮尊 around 1287.

39 *Asabashō*, "Fugen enmeihō nikki," *T. zuzō* 9: 864-873, 867c and 869a (inscribed in the drawing of the ritual platform).

40 See, for instance, a fourteenth-century painting held at Enryakuji (*Hieizan to Tendai no bijutsu,* Exhibition catalogue, Asahi Shinbun, 1986, p. 172) and the well-known statue

thus shows the fluidity of ritual elements and the difficulty of identifying clear-cut sectarian differences.

Anchinhō was an exorcistic (*chōbuku* 調伏) ritual to pacify the grounds of the imperial palace, which were ritually delimitated (*kekkai* 結界) and transformed into a sacred area. In the analogical understanding assumed in Tantric Buddhism, the ruler's body symbolised the people of Japan, while his palace represented the country. By exorcizing the palace precincts the rite functioned as an exorcism for the entire territory of Japan. The main deity of this liturgy was a form of Fudō with a yellow body, for yellow is the colour of earth in the classical Chinese system of fivefold correlations (*wuxing* 五行). Both statues and *maṇḍala* of this deity were used, as may be evinced from the fact that *Asabashō* records iconographic instructions for both.[41] During the Insei period the rite seem to have evolved, and towards the end of the eleventh century started being used almost exclusively as a propitiatory ritual for the construction of new buildings or the restoration of structures within either the imperial palace or the residences of retired emperors.[42]

Shijōkōhō: A *Buddhoṣnīṣa* Ritual to Protect the Country

Of the four major liturgies, *shijōkōhō* deserves more scrutiny because of the central role it played in the process of political as well as intra-sectarian and inter-sectarian legitimation. Taimitsu anthologies repeatedly proclaimed this ritual to be "the secret key of Sanmon and the unrivalled benefit for the country."[43] Thus the ritual was posited as the most efficient rite for the protection of the state, and the monopoly of one lineage, Sanmon, versus the competing lineages, Jimon and Tōji. Furthermore, by choosing a ritual devoted to a *buddhoṣnīṣa* deity to represent their expertise, Taimitsu ritualists reasserted the distinct doctrinal position of the Tendai school, which, as mentioned above, was based on the *Suxidijing*, a *buddhoṣnīṣa* text.

Originally performed in China to pray for the emperor's longevity, the *shijōkōhō* was introduced to Japan by Ennin, who performed it for the

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from Daisanji, in Oita prefecture, dated to the late tenth or eleventh century (*Saichō to Tendai kokuhō*, Exhibition catalogue, Yomiuri shinbun, 2005, p.159).

41 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 353-364. It should be noted that Taimitsu ritualists also performed another major ritual devoted to Fudō, the so-called "rite of the five platforms" (*godanhō*).

42 Hayami Tasuku, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1975, p. 107.

43 *Gyōrinshō*, *T.* 76: 93a; *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 8:24c.

first time in 850 as an auspicious rite for emperor Montoku.[44] This may be seen as the origin of the Taimitsu primacy on the ritual. Ennin presented it as a successful liturgy that he had witnessed during his stay at Qinglongsi 青竜寺, a major centre of Tantric Buddhism in the Tang capital Changan, which Ennin considered to be the privileged site for the protection of the state. The *shijōkōhō* focused on the emperor's personal star (*honmyōshō* 本命星), identified with the Pole Star, and like other star rituals was meant to increase the ruler's life as well as avoid the adverse consequences of the movements of heavenly bodies on the country.[45] *Asabashō* attests that in the twelfth century the liturgy was indeed popular for inauspicious changes in the heavens. For instance, in 1107, when a solar eclipse was forecast, the retired emperor Shirakawa commissioned the Tendai zasu Ningen 仁源 to stage a performance of the *shijōkōhō*, conducted by twenty celebrants. The eclipse did not occur (or perhaps was not visible in Kyoto), and contemporary sources note the efficaciousness of the ritual.[46] The *shijōkōhō* was thus conceived as a particular ritual for a specific occasion (*rinji no shūhō* 臨時の修法) and never became part of the yearly rites at the palace.[47]

Medieval sources document that the empowerment of the ruler was enacted by exorcizing the emperor's robes, which an envoy would bring to the ritual site on Mt. Hiei. At times the emperor himself travelled to the place of performance to attend the ritual personally.[48] Given the status of the person on whose behalf it was held, the celebrant was expected to be the *zasu* of Mt. Hiei or a prelate of high rank. There are also cases in which

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44 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 42a-b. Ennin's catalogue of imported material includes a drawing of the altar for the ritual (*shijōkō danzu* 熾盛光壇図). *Nittō shingu shōgyō mokuroku*, *T.* 55: 1084c. See also Annen's *Hakke hiroku*, *T.* 55: 1131c.

45 For a discussion of other star rituals held for this purpose see Lucia Dolce, "The worship of celestial bodies in Japan: politics, rituals and icons," in *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, Lucia Dolce ed., special issue of *Culture and Cosmos. A Journal of the History of Astrology and Cultural Astronomy* 10:1-2 (2006), pp. 10-17; and Matsumoto Ikuyo, "Two Mediaeval Manuscripts on the Worship of the Stars from the Fuji Eikan Collection," in *Ibid.*, pp. 125-144.

46 *Asabashō*, "Shijōkōhō nikkishū," *T. zuzō* 9: 44c, See also Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, pp. 106-7. Ningen had already performed it for twenty-one days in 1094 to counter the ill effects of a solar eclipse.

47 Hayami Tasuku has argued that the ad hoc performance helped maintain its force as a country-protecting rite. By contrast, the main Shingon rite for protection of the country performed by the Daigoji lineages, *daigensuihō* 太元師法, became a cyclical rite (*nenjū gyōji* 年中行事) in the Insei period, and for this reason lost life as nation-protecting rite. Yet one should note that the *daigensuihō* was performed until recent times, against the Western enemies in the Meiji period, and on the occasion of modern battles.

48 *Chūyūki* 中右記, the journal kept by Fujiwara no Munetada, records three such occasions. See Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 132.

retired emperors, in their quality of full-fledged Tantric masters, performed it, either at the imperial palace or in detached residences.[49] It is clear that, as with the other major liturgies, the *shijōkōhō* was not originally meant for the prosperity of a single individual. However, anthologies and historical records attest that by the mid-Heian period the increase in demand for privately commissioned ceremonies affected the major liturgies as well. Ryōgen performed the *shijōkōhō* at court and for the aristocracy, in particular to cure the illness of the chancellor Fujiwara no Kanemichi.[50] In the Edo period, sponsorship of the ritual extended to other sources of political power. Tenkai 天海 performed it in Nikkō for the benefit of the shogunate. An exquisite *shijōkō maṇḍala*, today in the possession of Rinnōji, was commissioned to be used as the main object of worship on that occasion.[51] (Fig 2)

Ennin had claimed that the *shijōkōhō* was known only to him and not to Shingon or other Tendai lineages. Indeed in general Shingon lineages did not perform this ritual, maintaining that Kūkai had not transmitted its ritual manual. This does not mean, though, that they did not have knowledge of the ritual and of its procedures. Annen's comprehensive catalogue of imports by the Tantric masters of the early Heian period, *Hakke hiroku*, clearly attests that the canonical ritual manual was also brought to Japan by Eun 恵運 (798-869), a Shingon monk who went to China to study Tantric Buddhism during the last years of Ennin's stay.[52] Furthermore, some Shingon anthologies do include the *shijōkōhō*. It was thus not the lack of material on how a ritual should be performed that made such a ritual less significant for a certain group, but a rhetorically constructed proper genealogy. The mechanisms that established sectarian distinctiveness based on ritual were rendered even more complex by other external factors. As the scholar dharma-prince Shukaku hosshinnō 守覚法親王 (1150-1202) explained, the Tōji lineages did know the rituals

49 On the dharma-emperor Shirakawa's performance, see Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 107 and 132.

50 Groner, *Ryōgen and Mount Hiei*, pp. 90-92.

51 Colour on silk, Edo period. The name of Tenkai is inscribed in the back of the scroll as "The Provincial Governor (*tandai* 探題) and Chief Prefect (*daisōjō* 大僧正) of the Sanmon lineage, Tenkai." Tochigi kenritsu hakubutsukan ed., *Nikkōsan Rinnōji no butsuga*. Utsunomiya: Tochigi kenritsu hakubutsukan, 1996, p. 20.

52 *Eun risshi sho mokuroku*, *T.*55: 1090c, and *Hakke hiroku*, T. 55: 1118c. The manual is listed as *Chicheng foding weide guangming zhenyan yigui* 熾盛佛頂威徳光明眞言儀軌, and it is also mentioned in *Gyōrinshō* as one of the fundamental texts for the ritual. Cf. *T.* 76: 84a-b.

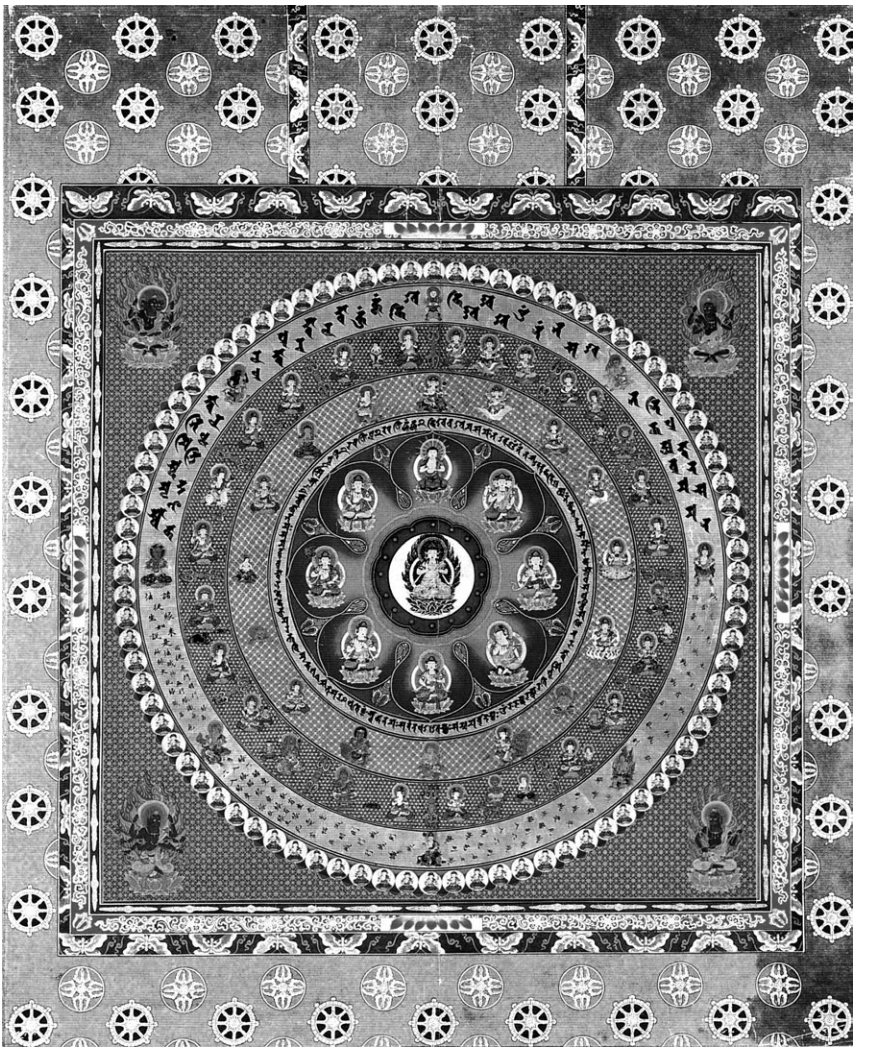

Figure 2: Shijōkō maṇḍala. Edo period. Rinnōji, Nikkō.

that were considered major liturgies in Taimitsu, but when it came to imperial commissions, only ritualists from Sanmon and Jimon lineages were requested to perform them.[53] This shows that the ritual definition of

53 *Tsuiki*, *T.* 78: 617a-618b. See also Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, pp. 126-127. This is also the meaning of a passage of Rayu's *Hishō mondō*, which explicitly states

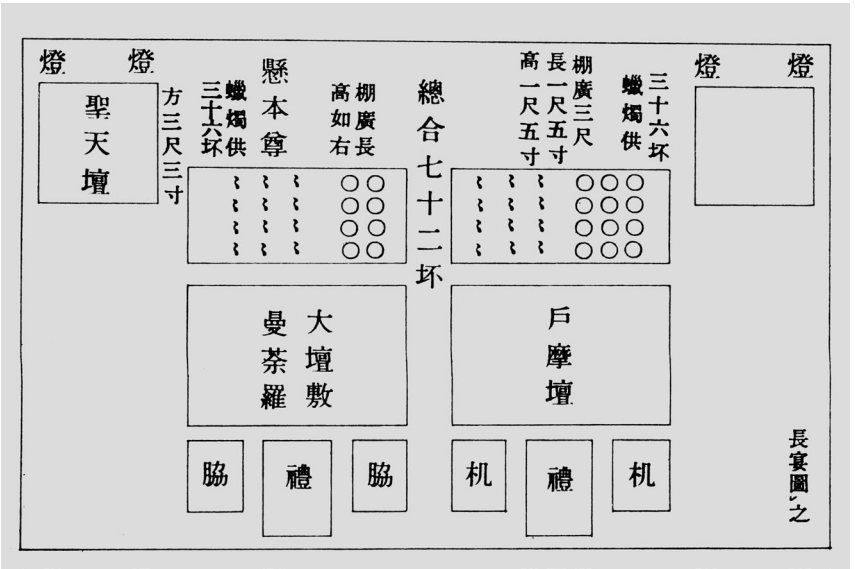

Figure 3: Drawing of the ritual space for the shijōkōhō*, by Chōen. From* Asabashō.

sectarian identity also depended on the socio-political acknowledgement of ritual monopoly, in other words, on a component that lay outside the competing group itself. I shall return to this point.

Ritual Icons

Ennin is also credited with having introduced to Japan the icon that was used for this ritual, the *shijōkōhō maṇḍala*. *Asabashō* describes the *maṇḍala* that was installed on Mt. Hiei as having Shijōkō, the Blazing Light Buddha, at the centre, sitting on Mt Sumeru, and surrounded by the ocean.[54] The drawings of the ritual space provided in *Asabashō*, such as the one in Fig. 3, attributed to Chōen, attest that two *maṇḍala* were used for the liturgy: a *maṇḍala* to spread on the floor (*shiki mandara* 敷き曼陀羅) and a hanging *maṇḍala*.[55] The latter was a circular *maṇḍala* to place on the northern wall

that the *shijōkōhō* was usually performed by both lineages, Daigoji and Ninnaji, but as a *daihō* it was performed only by Tendai lineages. See *T.* 79: 365c.

54 *Asabashō, T. zuzō* 9: 25c. It is called "the fundamental (*konpon*) *maṇḍala* of the Sōjiin."

55 *Asabashō*, "Shijōkōhō nikkishū," *T. zuzō* 9: 42c.

of the performing area, facing south.[56] Ritual material discusses different prescriptions on the use of the hanging *maṇḍala*. For instance, according to *Shijūjōketsu*, a hanging *maṇḍala* should not be used at all because the main icon of the ritual was expected to remain secret. Instead an image of Fudō or of another *uṣnīṣa* Buddha (*butchōson*) could be used as the main object of veneration (*honzon* 本尊). The floor *maṇḍala*, on the other hand, was to be placed under the platform of the main altar, for it was regarded as a secret object, not to be seen by anyone but the celebrant.[57] These variations indicate that the relation between ritual specification and the main object of worship was not fixed as is usually assumed – a point that needs to be taken into account when analysing the function of icons in the ritual context.

Ritual anthologies also alert us to the use of different iconographic styles depending on the beneficiary of the ritual. In *Gyōrinshō* it is prescribed that if the liturgy was held for the ruler of the country, and in order to deliver him from illness, the *maṇḍala* should depict all deities in their fully anthropomorphic aspect, and such a *maṇḍala* should be used both as the floor *maṇḍala* and as the main icon. When, on the other hand, the ritual was performed for ordinary people, it sufficed to render the deities placed in the central eight-petalled section of the *maṇḍala* anthropomorphically, and leave out the other deities. In this case, it was also adequate to inscribe the names of the deities in Sanskrit letters.[58]

The logographic *maṇḍala* was also an object of discussion among ritualists. Much attention was given, in particular, to the meaning and form of the seed-syllable placed at the centre, BHRŪṂ. (Fig. 4) *Asabashō* describes BHRŪṂ as the syllable that all accomplishes, a virtue that, one transmission claimed, explained why it was placed at the centre of a secret *maṇḍala*. BHRŪṂ is also the seed-syllable of another *uṣnīṣa* deity very important in Taimitsu, the One-syllable Golden Wheel Buddha, or Ichiji kinrin, and the identity of Shijōkō with Ichiji kinrin was stressed in the ritual material, bringing to the fore the wealth of doctrinal references that was deployed to give a sectarian framing to the ritual.[59] The references to Enchin's *Commentary on the Ichiji kinrin sūtra* are particularly interesting. Enchin held that the three syllables that constitute the Japanese pronunciation of BHRŪṂ (bo/ro/n) corresponded to the three bodies of the Buddha, and therefore the single mantric utterance of BHRŪṂ actualised the equivalence

56 *Ibid.*, 9: 43b-c.
57 Cited in *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 26a-b.
58 *Gyōrinshō*, *T.* 76: 93b.
59 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 26a, 27a.

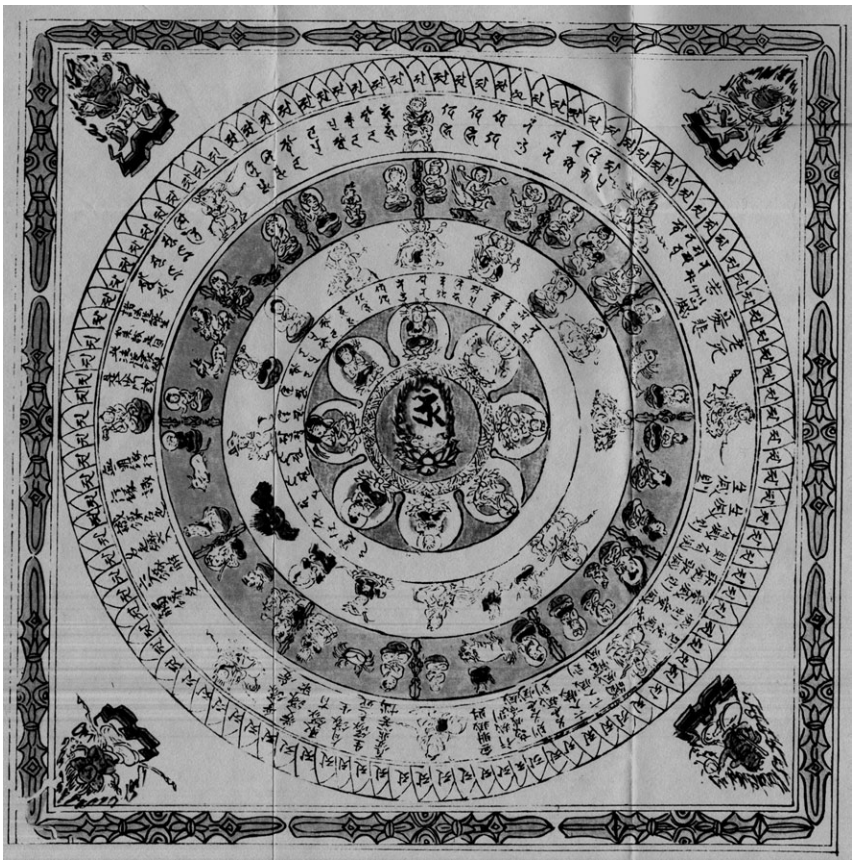

Figure 4: Shijōkō maṇḍala. From Asabashō.

of the three bodies in a single body (*sanshin soku ichi* 三身即一). This was an important concept upheld in Tendai. The *uṣnīṣa* Buddha whose essence was crystallised in this seed-syllable subsumed the meaning of all Buddha-bodies.[60] In this way, through the identity with Ichiji kinrin, the Buddha

60 *Bodaijōkyō ryaku gishaku*, *T.* 61: 536. This is Enchin's commentary on an important scripture centred on Ichiji kinrin, known as *Putichang jing* 菩提場經. There were three Chinese translations of this scripture: *Putichang suoshuo yiziding lunwang jing* 菩提場所説一字頂輪王經 (better known as *Putichang suo jing*), translated by Amoghavajra 不空 (*T.*19: 193-224); *Yiziding lunwang jing* 一字頂輪王經, translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (*T.* 19: 224-263); and *Wufoding sanmei tuoluoni jing* 五佛頂三昧陀羅尼經, translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (*T.* 19: 263-285).

Shijōkō epitomised fundamental principles of Tendai doctrine, enhancing the status of the rite as paradigmatic of a Tendai-type Tantric efficacy.

The Architecture of Performance

Ennin also devised a specific architectural complex to perform the *shijōkōhō*, the Sōjiin 総持院. Initiated by the appointment of emperor Montoku 文徳, it took almost ten years to complete the buildings.[61] Sōjiin was meant to provide the Tendai school with an equivalent of the Shingon'in, the chapel that Kūkai had established at the imperial palace in 834 for the Tantric enthronment of the ruler. In fact the Sōjiin would become the centre of the practice of Tantric Buddhism on Mt. Hiei. Already in the early days of Taimitsu the complex played a role in the intra-sectarian competition between lineages. Ennin had instructed that the abbot of the Sōjiin would be from his lineage only, and it appears that in the decades before the schims between Sanmon and Jimon the ritual was interrupted when the Tendai *zasu* was not from Ennin's lineage.

The Sōjiin complex was burned down by fire several times and rebuilt. According to the oldest extant map of the area, in the fifteenth century it consisted of three buildings: a stupa (*tahōtō* 多宝塔) at the centre, where the five Buddhas of the Womb *maṇḍala* were installed; a mantra hall (*shingondō* 真言堂), where the *shijōkō maṇḍala* was placed, on the right; and an initiation hall (*kanjōdō* 灌頂堂), containing the Womb and Diamond *maṇḍala*, on the left.[62] Records of the fire of 1322 document that at that time the stupa had three floors. The map and the records are consistent with the interpretations included in *Keiranshūyōshū*, which describe the Sōjiin as composed of a three-storied south-facing stupa; a Shijōkō hall in the west, enshrining Ichiji kinrin, and a Butsugen hall in the east, which then became the initiation hall. The two halls are said to represent the two forms of Dainichi, respectively, Dainichi of the Diamond *maṇḍala* and Dainichi of the Womb *maṇḍala*, while the five buddhas placed in the stupa are seen as the non-dual total body of accomplishment (*soshitsuji*), the symbolic (*sanmaya* 三昧耶) form of that unifying third element put

61 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 42a-b.

62 The stupa is now known as the Lotus Dharani Hall (*hokke sōjiin* 法華総持院). After the fire of 1435 the complex does not seem to have been rebuilt any longer, until the early 1980s, when a new pagoda was constructed. Rituals such as the Lotus assembly (*hokke-e* 法華会) and a combinatory *maṇḍala* service (*gōgyō mandaraku* 合行曼陀羅供) are still performed there every month. Take Kakuchō, *Hieizan santō shodō enkakushi*, Ōtsu-shi: Eizan gakuin, 1993, pp. 65-69.

forward by Taimitsu thinkers to counter the twofold Shingon paradigm of reality. The triplex architectural structure was thus conceived to serve a sectarian objective and reiterate the tripartite interpretation of Tantric Buddhism that Taimitsu upheld. The compiler of the *Keiranshūyōshū* further applied a three-tiered reading to the central building of the Sōjiin. He identified the three floors of the stupa with the personal star of the emperor, the personal star of officials and courtiers and the personal star of all people, thus presenting the Sōjiin not only as the performing place for the rituals to the emperor, but as the ritual site that benefited the entire country.[63]

The contribution of the architectural plan of the Sōjiin to the shaping of Taimitsu sectarian identity is further demonstrated by other medieval reinterpretations. *Keiranshūyōshū* offers an interesting comparison of the *shijōkōhō* with another ritual of a competing Tantric tradition. Focussing on the central structure of the Sōjin, the pagoda, it draws an analogy between the *shijōkōhō* and the special ritual for Aizen developed by the Tōji lineage, *nyohō Aizenhō* 如法愛染法. The latter was considered to be the "most important matter" of the Tōji lineage, because its object of worship was a wish-fulfilling jewel, which embodied the Buddha's relics.[64] *Keiranshūyōshū* informs us that this special ritual for Aizen was not performed by Tendai lineages, but the special ritual for Butsugen (*nyohō Butsugenhō* 如法仏眼法), which Taimitsu developed, was in fact another name for the rituals to Aizen. This applies also to *shijōkōhō*, which *Keiranshūyōshū* presents as one with the great Aizen ritual of the Tōji lineage, claiming that Aizen's wish-fulfilling jewel originated from the *samādhi* of the Blazing Light Buddha.[65] *Keiranshūyōshū* argues that *shijōkōhō* was a ritual centred on a stupa (and thus on relics, as the *Aizenhō*), and that the construction of the Sōjiin proved the truthfulness of these correlations: "The stupa of non-duality was built in the centre, between the hall to the Blazing Light (*shijōkōdō*) placed on the right, and the hall to the Buddha's Eye placed on the left. The Buddha relics were installed in the stupa and every year the relic assembly (*shari-e* 舎利会) is held here."[66] In fact here

63 *T.* 76: 621c, 858b. These passages also identify the personal star with the seven stars of the Big Dipper, another important imperial symbol.

64 On the *nyohō Aizen* ritual see Roger Goepper, *Aizen-myōō The Esoteric King of Lust: An Iconological Study*, Zurich: Artibus Asiae, 1993, pp. 144-151. Interestingly, the *nyohō Aizen* ritual, like the *shijōkōhō*, originally was a life-prolonging rite. On Aizen and the wish-fulfilling jewel see also Lucia Dolce, "Nigenteki genri no gireika: Fudō, Aizen to riki no hizō," in Lucia Dolce and Ikuyo Matsumoto, eds, *Girei no chikara–chūsei shūkyō no jissen sekai*, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2010, pp. 159-206.

65 *T.* 76: 578c.

66 *T.* 76: 578c ad 622a.

the compiler of *Keiranshūyōshū* conflated two rituals conducted for the protection of the state, the assembly for the Buddha's relics, which Ennin had first celebrated at Sōjiin, and the *shijōkōhō*, in this way amplifying the status of the Sōjiin as the place *par excellence* for the performance of rituals of protection that had public importance. At the same time the *Keiranshūyōshū* firmly established the status of the *shijōkōhō* as a counterpart of powerful Tantric rituals celebrated by competing lineages. The comparison between the ritual for Aizen and for Butsugen is not posited arbitrarily, because both deities were based on the same canonical source, the *Yuqijing* – a scripture that was doctrinally important for Taimitsu. Medieval scholiasts were thus aware that textual canonical authority, too, did not function in exclusive terms.

The insistence on the opposite allocation of the space for Ichiji kinrin and Butsugen reflects another distinctive element of Taimitsu practices: the importance of the cult of Butsugen. Butsugen originally was venerated in connection with movements of celestial bodies. In Taimitsu, however, the ritual to this deity became understood as an 'accomplishment liturgy' (*soshitsujihō* 蘇悉地法), like that devoted to the Ichiji kinrin.[67] The relation between Ichiji kinrin and Butsugen was the focus of different scriptures, such as the *Yuqijing*, and this points at the textual interactions converging in the construction of the setting for the *shijōkō* ritual.[68] While the architecture of the Sōjiin might have been informed by one of the canonical sources of the *shijōkōhō*, it is clear that the specific shape that the complex took was grounded on multiple scriptural authorities.

The Difficulties of Ritual Competition: The Secret Liturgy of the Jimon Lineages

To roundup the picture of the intra-sectarian strategies at work in medieval Taimitsu it is useful to note that the Jimon lineages devised a new ritual as a counterpart to the *shijōkōhō*. This ritual took its name from a deity of Japanese creation, called Sonjōō 尊星王, considered to be a personification of the Polar Star. Its purpose, too, was the wellbeing and longevity of the emperor. The first mention of the *sonjōōhō* is found in the diary of the aristocrat Fujiwara no Kōzei, *Gonki* 権記, where the ritual is recorded as

67 Misaki, *Taimitsu no kenkyū*, p. 536.

68 Misaki, *Taimitsu no kenkyū,* p.140. In *Yuqijing* Ichiji kinrin is a transformation of Butsumo butsugen. Other sources on Ichiji kinrin, such as *Yiziding lunwang jing* and Enchin's commentary cited in n. 59, explain the relation between these two deities.

sonjōkōhō 尊星光法. Given the similarity in name and function, and since its emergence coincided with the split between Sanmon and Jimon, it has been suggested that the rite was created by Jimon clerics to stand against that of the Sanmon lineages. Tsuda Tetsuei speculates that the most likely creator of the icons to use in the ritual was Yokei 余慶 (919-991), a powerful Jimon monk of the time.[69]

Historical records however document that it was only in the eleventh century that Sonjōō started being identified as an 'exclusive' deity of the Jimon line. In 945 a *sonjōōhō* was performed by the Tendai *zasu* Gikai 義海, and in 1093 by a cleric of the Ogawa sub-branch called Ryōi 良意, suggesting that at that time the rite did not yet have sectarian connotations as the monopoly of Enchin's lineage.[70] By the thirteenth century the ritual was acknowledged as the secret liturgy (*hihō* 秘法) of the Jimon lineage. Yet it was included in Shingon anthologies, such as *Kakuzenshō* and *Byakuhōkushō*, revealing that it was broadly known across lineages. In fact medieval sources discussed whether this liturgy could be called the secret ritual of a single lineage when its secret elements, oral transmissions, mantras and mudras were known in other schools as well. Jimon clerics clearly had a hard task claiming a monopoly on the ritual. *Byakuhōkushō* reports the arguments used by Keihan 慶範 (1155-1221), whom recent research has identified as the author of the *Hōhiki* 宝秘記, the main ritual compilation of the Jimon lineage. Keihan claimed that the *sonjōōhō* was transmitted by Enchin, who had learned it in China. It was not known to others outside the Jimon lineage, and therefore it was this lineage's secret liturgy. Because it was secret, this ritual surpassed those of all other schools.[71] The argument put forward to legitimize the ritual thus once again made recourse to the authority of the founder of the lineage. Keihan also addressed the question of the similarities between Sonjōō and Myōken 妙見, another embodiment of the Polar Star which was used by all Tantric lineages. While he did not deny the identity of these two deities,

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69 Tsuda Tetsuei, "Jimon no Sonjōō o megutte," *Museum* 581 (2002), pp.17-37. See also his "The Images of Stars and Their Significance in Japanese Esoteric Buddhist Art," in Dolce ed., *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, pp. 145-193.

70 *Tendai zasuki* 37, cited in Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 96-97.

71 *Byakuhōkushō*, *T. zuzō* 10, 1160a-b; Misaki Ryōshū, "Onjōji to sonjōōhō" in his *Mikkyō to shingi shisō,* Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1992, pp. 226-261. *Hōhiki* has recently been published (*Onjōji monjo*, Onjōji eds., 7 vols, Tokyo: Kodansha, vol. 7, 2004), but still awaits to be studied. In 44 volumes, it consists of three sets of oral transmissions and records of performances. It takes its name from the first thirty-three fascicles, compiled by Keihan of Daihōin 大宝院. See Shimozaka Mamoru, "Onjōji denrai no *Hōhiki* ni tsuite, " in *Onjōji monjo* 7, 2004, pp. 444-451.

he maintained their distinctiveness, explaining that the deity that on earth appeared as Myōken and was placed at the four directions of the palace to protect it, in heaven manifested itself as Sonjōō. Hence even though ritualists of other lineages learnt rituals to Myōken, they would not have known the ritual for Sonjōō.[72] Sanmon anthologies, on the other hand, seem to downplay the status of the *sonjōōhō* arguing that this was not a liturgy proper of the Tantric lineages (*shingonke* 真言家) because it rather followed the procedures of yin-yang masters (*onmyōke* 陰陽家)[73] –an argument that opens up a different problem regarding the composition of the major liturgies and the extent to which they incorporated cosmological elements related to heavenly bodies. In order to support their sectarian appropriation of the *sonjōōhō* ritual, Onjōji scholiasts also constructed specific relations between its main deity and 'Taimitsu' kami. The first was between Sonjōō and the tutelary kami of Onjōji, Shinra myōjin 新羅明神, who is said in some texts to have come to Japan to protect the performance of the secret ritual for Sonjōō.[74] Other sources suggested a close relation with the tutelary kami of Mt. Hiei, Sannō 山王, by presenting Sonjōō as the original ground (*honji* 本地) of the main Sannō deity, Ōmiya 大宮.[75] In this way Jimon ritualists attempted to extend the territory of influence of 'their' deity beyond the Onjōji borders, and to claim a school-wide importance for the ritual. Once again we see that strategies of different order and drawing from different aspects of the ritual, genealogical, performative or mythological, are in place to create the meaning of the ritual in a reflexive and referential fashion.[76]

The *sonjōōhō* played a very important role in the interaction between Onjōji and the court. Emperors Shirakawa and Toba, for instance, sponsored the construction of a dedicated hall (*sonjōōdō*) both at Onjōji and in Shirakawa to perform the ritual for the protection of the state. In the medieval period these rites were often officiated by princely abbots. According

72 *Byakuhōkushō*, T. *zuzō* 10, 1160b.

73 *Asabashō*, "Myōkenhō." *T. zuzō* 9: 462b-c. On the *shugendō* use of this ritual see Gaynor Sekimori, "Star Rituals and Nikkō Shugendō," in Lucia Dolce ed., *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, pp. 217-250.

74 *Shinra myōjin mondōshō yōgunsho*, included in Suishin 水心's *Jitokushū* 寺徳集. Cited in Misaki, "Onjōji to sonshōōhō," p. 229-30.

75 *Keiranshūyōshū*, *T.* 76: 527.

76 On the application of the concept of reflexivity to ritual see the entries "Reflexivity" and "Relationality" in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts,* Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg eds., Leiden: Brill, 2008.

to the *Hōbiki* the ritual was also held to assure safe childbirth to aristocratic women of the Regent house.[77]

Concluding remarks: Ritual Authority and the Ambiguities of Sectarian Identity

The analysis of ritual anthologies and major liturgies of medieval Taimitsu has demonstrated the various levels at which rituals served the sectarian legitimation of Taimitsu. It has also disclosed the difficulty and the ambiguity of a sectarian construct of ritual in a context where there is no single authority or uniform tradition to validate it. A number of issues have emerged from this exploration, which are crucial for understanding the specific dynamics of the development of Japanese Tantras.

The first point concerns the extent to which the claims of unicity, exclusivity and secrecy, by which a ritual could be defined as "sectarian," were effective strategies for the establishment of an institutional monopoly on a given ritual, or mere rhetorical positions. As we have seen in this study, the claim of exclusive possession and mastery of a ritual was played on two simple assertions: the founder of other lineages did not transmit it, and other lineages did not know it. Once a certain liturgy was appropriated to represent a given lineage, it was also constructed as its secret liturgy. The inclusion in this rubric marked its significance for the lineage itself, in political and at times doctrinal terms, with a process similar to the one that characterised the concept of "secret teachings." Some elements of the ritual in question might indeed have been secret, in the sense that they were transmitted orally from master to disciple, but they were not necessarily unique to one master. The fact that medieval anthologies repeatedly questioned whether a ritual could be seriously regarded as the secret liturgy of one lineage when it might have been performed in another, perhaps under a different name or for a patron of different status, suggests that medieval Tantric ritualists were aware of the ambiguity underlining the sectarianization of rituals and of their own rhetorical interventions. When Ninnaji dharma-prince Shukaku hōshinnō, a learned scholar and accomplished liturgist, attempted a comparison of the two major Shingon branches according to their ritual differences, he noted that the same ritual was treated differently according to lineages: for one it might have been a

77 Matsumoto Ikuyo, "Chūgū gosan to mikkyō: *Hōbiki* sonshōōhō mishuhō o megutte," in *Nihon ni okeru shūkyō tekisuto no shoisō to tōjihō*, Abe Yasurō ed., Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University, 2008, pp. 81-88.

very important one, for the other just an ordinary ritual. When one lineage selected a ritual to become its most important ritual (*daihō*), that selection was affected by the existence of similar rituals performed in other lineages.[78]

Thus a ritual classified as distinctive of a certain lineage of Tantric Buddhism was not necessarily so from its origin, but was constructed in these terms at a certain point of its history. Several such lineage-specific rituals seem to have originated from rituals that were shared by different lineages. As Hayami Takusu has suggested, the rite of the Seven Yakushi clearly developed from a single-platform ritual to Yakushi that existed both in Taimitsu and Shingon. Once it became a "major liturgy" in Taimitsu, it lost importance in Shingon. This justifies the claim of exclusivity that we find in anthologies such as *Asabashō*. A similar process affected other types of ritual. The *rokuji kanrinhō* 六字河臨法, another important Taimitsu ritual, originally was a popular Shingon liturgy known by the name of *rokujihō* 六字法. Kōgei, who had learned it from his Shingon teacher, introduced it to Taimitsu circles in the eleventh century. It was given its particular setting along a river (hence the name of *karinhō* 河臨法) at the time of Chōen, probably adapting it from a similar ritual performed by yin-yang masters, and then it became an "exclusive" Taimitsu ritual.

The second issue that has come to surface in this study is the difficulty in assessing the impact that the sectarianization of rituals had on the political connections of the Tantric branches. In general, in the medieval period Sanmon and Jimon shared the support of the major political sponsors, the emperor and the court, while the bakufu patronage of esoteric Buddhism mostly privileged Jimon over Sanmon.[79] Yet the above-mentioned case of Chūkai confirms the performance of Sanmon rituals at the shogunal court. Undoubtedly the political elites of Japan acted as patrons of more than one school, lineage or cleric at the same time. None of the Tantric lineages had a monopoly on the protection of the ruler and the state, and competing rituals that were similar in content and function could be commissioned at the same time.[80] Political legitimation thus did not follow exclusivist lines. The sectarian distinctiveness of the rituals was not irrelevant, but no exclusive relation between patrons and ritualists was established on the basis of a single liturgy.

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78 *Zuiki*, *T.* 78: 617a-618b.

79 Sasaki Kaoru, *Chūsei bukkyō to Kamakura bakufu*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1997.

80 In 1106 for the illness of Emperor Horikawa the retired emperor Shirakawa ordered a ritual to the Big Dipper, a *sonjōōhō* and a *shijōkōhō*. Cf. Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 107.

Lastly, the material discussed above engenders a broader consideration on the foundation of ritual authority. The records of continuous changes in ritual performance challenge the often-invoked relation between ritual invariance and authority.[81] The very existence of a large number of liturgical collections speaks for the need to document variants and alterations, small or not, and casts doubts on the assumption that invariance is a crucial constituent of a ritual. Rather than emphasizing that rituals are essentially identical to their prototype, medieval Tantric ritualists were preoccupied with underlying differences in each liturgical element, and even changes in the purpose for which a ritual had been devised. The content of the anthologies demonstrates that change was intrinsic to the process of ritual significance. Medieval practitioners were aware of and acknowledged these changes. Despite the existence of canonical models, and their deployment in rhetorical terms, in the medieval dynamics of performance, gestures, accessories and utterances did not need to be reproduced in a perfect repetition of the original. Yet this did not undermine the legitimacy of the ritual, nor its performative power or socio-institutional efficacy. The liturgical material suggests that invariance was not invoked as the indispensable ground on which authority could be acquired and maintained. On the contrary, the continuing resignification of a Tantric ritual, namely, the shifts in form, function and sponsors, enhanced its possibilities and assured its strategic performativity.

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