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Or Porath

Chapter Fourteen

The Consecration of Acolytes (*Chigo Kanjō*): Ritualizing Male-Male Sexuality in Medieval Tendai

Introduction

This chapter discusses an Esoteric Buddhist consecration ritual known as *chigo kanjō* 児灌頂 (“Ritual Consecration of Young Acolytes”) that was practiced within Tendai institutions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries across central and eastern Japan. The ritual involved the sanctification of a child-acolyte and his initiation into secret Tendai teachings via male-male sexual interaction; indeed, it was constructed as a preparation for sexual intercourse between acolytes and priests outside the initiatory context. Scholars have thus far argued that *chigo kanjō* originated in the Eshin 恵心 school of Tendai exoteric Buddhism and that its devotional focus on children as sacred entities must be dated roughly to the Insei period (1086–1221).¹ While it is true that many of the ritual’s theoretical and practical characteristics seem to align with this sub-lineage and its doctrinal speculations dating to the Insei, manuscripts detailing the ritual programs of *chigo kanjō* and its commentaries indicate that the producers and practitioners of this ritual were in fact members of Taimitsu lineages (Esoteric Tendai) located around Kyoto and stretching all the way to the Kantō region.² Specifically, the

¹ For the argument that *chigo kanjō* originated in the Eshin lineage of Tendai, see Matsuoka Shinpei, *Utage noshintai: Basara kara Zeami e*; Abe Yasurō, “Jidō setsuwa no keisei: Tendai sokui hō no seiritsu wo megutte” (*jō* and *ge*) (now included in his *Chūsei Nihon no ōken shinwa*, 81–153); and “Sokui hō no girei to engi.”

² See “The Flower of Dharma Nature: Sexual Consecration and Amalgamation in Medieval Japanese Buddhism.” The commentarial treatises *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden* and *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden*

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ritual was devised, put into practice, and circulated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries at seminaries (*dangisho* 談義所) such as those in the Serada 世良田 area in the Nitta 新田 estate (present-day Gunma prefecture).³

This chapter demonstrates how priests formulated *chigo kanjō* as a sexual initiation ritual that transformed both the body and the mind of its participants, as well as how such transformation was fully grounded in Buddho-Shinto doctrines and practices. In particular, acolytes were turned into manifestations of three divine beings: the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana (Jp. Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来), the bodhisattva Kannon 観音, and the Tendai tutelary god Sannō gongen 山王権現. This sanctification of the *chigo*, culminating with sexual intercourse, was devised in order to both legitimize age-structured male-male sexual relationships and institutionalize them as an ideal form of regularly practiced sexuality within monasteries by symbolically and ontologically deifying and thus empowering youthful acolytes as buddhas, bodhisattvas, and hypostases of Shinto gods from the medieval pantheon. Indeed, *chigo kanjō* was as concerned with “orthopraxy” as it was with “orthodoxy”; the ritual generated new ritual techniques of deification that accorded with the Buddho-Shinto worldview and ritual repertoire of medieval Tendai.

The monastic architects of *chigo kanjō* aimed to disrupt the metaphysical dichotomy between the *chigo* (a conditioned being) and the divine entities (unconditioned) he came to be identified with. This ontological unity, envisioned as the attainment of non-duality (*funi* 不二), was carried out through a blend of various psycho-physical operations. The transformation was predicated on the notion that all phenomena possess an absolute value in and of themselves (including the material body of the *chigo*)⁴ and premised on the religious belief that the *chigo*’s body was consubstantial with the dynamic universe and highest divinities in the pantheons of Tendai Buddhism and Sannō Shinto, the latter being the prevalent Shinto cult in medieval Tendai. The *chigo*’s newly acquired divine body was actualized by three phases. First, a *chigo* performed ritual choreographies, enacted as

shi are said to be written by the monk Genshin (942–1017). This led some scholars, such as Hattori Toshirō, to argue that the ritual may date to Genshin’s followers, the Eshin lineage, of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). However, since the attribution is likely false and extant copies can *only* be traced to the Taimitsu tradition of the Muromachi period, we may hypothesize that the doctrinal knowledge may have been based in exoteric Eshin teachings, but we cannot conclude with certainty that the ritual was practiced by this lineage early on. See Hattori Toshirō, *Muromachi Azuchi Momoyama jidai igakushi no kenkyū*, 467.

3 For a more detailed analysis of the monks, temples, and institutional affiliations, see Porath, “The Flower of Dharma Nature.”

4 The idea that substantive and physical existence is suffused with the sacred originates in the Shingon notion of “each material body is unconditioned” (*tōtai jishō* 当体自性) and the Tendai concept of the “Threefold Truth” (*santai* 三諦).

either Dainichi or Kannon, via physical gestures and various embodied practices that triggered Esoteric Buddhist salvific processes. Second, the *chigo* took in special exo-esoteric knowledge both related to mythology and narratives about Kannon as well as in the form of Esoteric Buddhist doctrines. Finally, the sexual intermingling of a *chigo* and monk enacted the union with the god Sannō, actualized by a form of possession and subsequent deification, which was supported by the dominant Buddhō-Shinto doctrine of the time. In this way, *chigo kanjō* was not just a diverse set of ritual technologies; it represented the culmination of intricate ritual, hermeneutic, and narrative strategies that converged to produce a legitimate form of Buddhist sexuality – all reflecting the increasing importance of *kanjō* rituals at the time.

This chapter also offers a counterview to the dominant understanding of the role of sexuality in medieval Japanese Buddhism. According to the established view, ritualized sex in Buddhist monasteries was a peripheral phenomenon that was practiced by only a small group of heterodox monks who relied on heretical and dissenting ideas. As such, it was considered irrelevant to broader doctrinal and practical concerns of Buddhism or Shinto. This dominant view aligns with the well-known claim by Tsuji Zennosuke, who considered Muromachi period Buddhism to be “degenerate” (*daraku* 墮落), partly on account of the rampant sexual license of temple societies.⁵ The counterview presented here posits that *chigo kanjō* enacted a mystical union between the *chigo* 児 (child-acolyte) and various buddhas, bodhisattvas, and kami 神 – not as a result of heretical temple practices but derived from mainstream ideas within Buddhism and medieval Shinto. This chapter will correct the tendency to treat *chigo kanjō* as a debased legitimization of male-male sexuality.⁶ This is not to say that a rationalization of sex was not at work in this practice; it was. Japanese monks sought sexual gratification with their young male underlings, for which reason they crafted an elaborate ritual protocol that rationalized such relations as normative within the temple complex. But over-emphasis on this aspect obfuscates the ritual’s continuities with the doctrinal innovations of the period, which deeply informed its procedures and thought.

***Chigo*: Youths at Buddhist Temples**

In medieval Japan – from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries – many aristocrats, mid-rank nobles, samurai, and otherwise powerful fathers sent their male sons to Buddhist temples for apprenticeships and elementary education.

5 Tsuji Zennosuke, *Nihon Bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, 310–50.

6 For this critique, see Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*.

At the temples these children occupied various, often transitory ranks: *daidōji* 大童子 (great children), *chūdōji* 中童子 (middle children), and *chigo* 児 (acolytes), sometimes called *uewarawa* 上童 (upper children). Undoubtedly the most interesting category was *chigo*. *Chigo* often hailed from the *seigake* 清華家 families, high-ranking bureaucrats and nobles in the Japanese Imperial court, whose successors could become chancellors. There were also, although less commonly so, *chigo* born to regents and chancellors (*sekkanke* 摂関家). *Chigo* of mid-rank aristocracy descended from temple administrators/abbots (*bōkan* 房官), while those of a lower aristocratic birth held a military pedigree, having descended from samurai or the imperial guard (*hokumen* 北面).⁷ These *chigo* lived in the private cloisters of the abbot (*bō* 坊) or in particular temple halls (*inge* 院家), where elder monks were to impart their deep knowledge of poetry, musical instruments, and liturgical practice, and to instill in them pedagogy and decorum.⁸

Against this backdrop, the *chigo* led an idiosyncratic life in temple society, occupying a unique role within the monastery. He was a trainee being molded into a civilized individual – which may or may not lead to life as a monk. Of the four options available to him upon reaching adulthood, only one involved his leaving the monastery. (Many of the other boys receiving temple education returned back to society.) Of the three monastic career options for the *chigo*, one involved his remaining a child acolyte for the rest of his life – his “age” thus deemed not by biological reality but by a status, recognizable from sporting a hairstyle and donning the clothing associated with childhood, which sometimes made his gender identity indistinguishable from women.⁹ Indeed, medieval children in general (*warawa*) were a socially constructed institution and not a biological datum – identifiable more by their sartorial and tonsorial features than by their biological age. Therefore, what is referred to here as “children” is entirely different from the Western context of the term, and can encompass pre-pubescence, adolescence, and even adulthood.

A body of narrative fiction from the Muromachi period (1336–1573), dubbed *chigo monogatari* (Acolytes Tales), describe romantic exploits between a *chigo* and a monk; the stories often end with enlightenment for the monk but tragedy for the

⁷ Tsuchiya, *Chūsei jiin no shakai to geinō*, 146.

⁸ On the pedagogy of *chigo* and other children, see Or Porath, “Nasty Boys or Obedient Children?”

⁹ Concerning the difficulty differentiating between women and *chigo* in pictorial representation, see Kuroda Hideo, *Sugata to shigusa no chūseishi*, 30–45. For the different careers and life trajectories of the monastic child, see Hirano Tae, “‘Nara-no-ha wakashū’ <warawa-hen> wo yomu.”

boy.¹⁰ But whereas *chigo monogatari* are fictional tales, the literature concerning *chigo kanjō* – the medieval manuscripts that detail the aforementioned sexual initiation rite – is nonfictional. Moreover, the actual ritual reverses the soteriological orientation of the fictional tales: while in the narratives sexual or intimate relations award enlightenment to the monk, in the consecration an enlightened state is a prerequisite for the sexual penetration of the *chigo*.

The Manuscripts on *Chigo Kanjō*

There are seven manuscripts that shed light on *chigo kanjō*'s ritual procedures and doctrinal significance. The first manuscript, *Chigo kanjō shi* 児灌頂私 in the Tenkaizō 天海藏 archive of Eizan Bunko, lists the names of Hakuō Shumyō 白翁守明¹¹ and Kōkai 宏海 the Assistant preceptor (*gon-risshi* 権律師), who were masters affiliated with the *dangisho* (seminary) Chōrakuji 長楽寺 temple. The second document, *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden shi* 弘児聖教秘伝私 (1524), is a commentary on *chigo kanjō* with an extensive discussion on behavioral norms expected of *chigo* and descriptions of sexual practices beyond the confines of the initiation. *Shōgyō hiden shi* was originally written and practiced in 1450 by Enjō 円盛 in the *dangisho* Fumonji 普門寺 located about 800 meters from Chōrakuji. Enkei/Engyō 円慶 transcribed a copy of the 1450 original at the Shugendō site of Mount Haguro 羽黒, which resulted in the 1524 document we have today.¹² This manuscript roughly corresponds in content to the third manuscript, *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden* 弘児聖教秘伝, which dates to 1941 and survives in Rikkyō University's Edogawa Ranpō archive. However, it is based on a medieval text dated to 1478 that at some point was held in Michiwaki-dera 道脇寺 temple at Tōkōzan 東光山 (Chiba prefecture). The fourth manuscript, *Chigo kanjō shidai* 児灌頂次第, which dates to

10 For a fuller discussion of the *chigo monogatari* genre, some of which include exceptions to the plot structure I have noted above, see Margaret H. Childs, "Chigo Monogatari: Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?" See also the following scholarship: Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread*; Richard K. Payne, "At Midlife in Medieval Japan," 135–36; Paul S. Atkins, "Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination"; Sachi Schmidt-Hori, "The New Lady-in-Waiting Is a Chigo"; Sachi Schmidt-Hori, "The Boy Who Lived"; and Melissa McCormick, "Mountains, Magic, and Mothers."

11 The first character is wrongly written as *ji* 自.

12 In medieval times, Shugendō sites were closely collaborating and associating with Tendai temples, and there is evidence that *yamabushi* ascetics also engaged in male-male sexual activity. For an example of a Shugendō text that attests for the sexual practices of male-male love, see "The method for expurgating the sin of violating men" (*Danshi hanzai shōmetsu hō* 男子犯罪消滅法), in *Hikosan shugen saihi injin kuketsu shū*, vol. 4: 56–57.

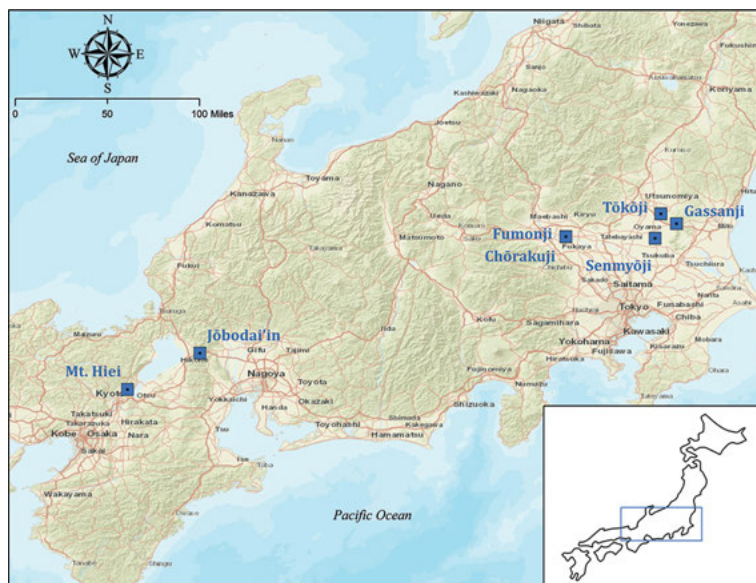
1818, was based on an original written by Ryōchin 亮珍 (?–1558) of Senmyōji 千妙寺 temple, a Tendai *dangisho* in Kuroko 黒子, Chikuse city, Ibaraki prefecture. Today it is kept in Mount Hiei's Mudōji 無動寺藏 repository of Eizan Bunko. The fifth manuscript, *Chigo kanjō shiki* 児灌頂私記, possibly dates to late-Muromachi Period (sixteenth century) or Early-Edo Period (seventeenth century); it is stored in Shinnyo-zō 真如蔵 archive of Eizan Bunko. As for the authorship of this manuscript, Kōkei 幸慶 transcribed the ritual upon completion of his initiation, by Gikō Taishin 義広大進 his master (and one of Chōrakuji's abbots), in the Shin-gon'in 真言院 chapel at Chōrakuji. It was then put into writing at Fudōin 不動院 in Tōkōji 東光寺 temple at Shida no shō 信太莊, a *dangisho* in Tsuchiura, Ibaraki. The sixth manuscript, *Chigo kanjō shiki* 児灌頂式, is housed in Jōboda'in 成菩提院藏 archive, in Maibara 米原, Shiga Prefecture. It was written in 1473 by Chōshin 澄心 (dates unknown) at this *dangisho*. The seventh and final manuscript, *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō* 児灌頂口決相承 was written in 1442, when Kōkai 幸海 transcribed the ritual upon being initiated by Kōjun 光順. The text was probably produced in the *dangisho* Gassanji 月山寺 temple, since both monks were affiliated with Gassanji and practiced there together. Gassanji is located in Yōkōzan 曜光山, in present-day Sakurakawa, in western Ibaraki prefecture.¹³ (See Map 14.1.)

That the aforementioned seminaries (*dangisho*) – Gassanji, Senmyōji, Chōrakuji, Fumonji, Tōkōji, and Jōboda'in – were based in Taimitsu lineages and shared lineal ties means they regularly exchanged ideas, texts, and personnel. From the information above we can infer that *dangisho* played a crucial role in the development, practice, and dissemination of the *chigo kanjō* ritual complex in central and eastern Japan.

Analysis of *Chigo Kanjō*

Although *chigo kanjō* follows the conventions of Esoteric Buddhist consecrations – albeit in their Tendai version of Taimitsu – it also combines various Tendai exoteric teachings, as well as aspects of kami worship. As noted, *chigo kanjō* developed in the Muromachi period (fifteenth to sixteenth centuries) at a time of the creation of new *kanjō* rituals, many also involving the kami (known as *jingi kanjō* 神祇灌頂 or *shintō kanjō* 神道灌頂). Given *chigo kanjō*'s devotional focus on

¹³ Some of these institutions have been identified by Tsuji Shōko. However, through further textual analysis, I was able to complement the full picture and identify more participating ritual actors.



Map 14.1: Provenance of *chigo kanjō* manuscripts, with Mt. Hiei as an undocumented but possible originator of its doctrines.

Image Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community.

the god Sannō, this ritual can also be seen as being part of a *shintō kanjō* tradition. The ritual is also based on *sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂 (“enthronement consecration”), and especially its monastic variant or *sokui hō* 即位法, in elements such as the presence of a *takamikura* (“throne”) as well as the royal vocabulary that Shingon and Tendai monastics often used to claim possession of secret knowledge concerning the imperial accession. In particular, *chigo kanjō* connects a secret transmission in the *sokui hō* repertory, which I call “Kannon’s secret teaching,” with a set of homoerotic tales known as the “Tale of the Compassionate Child” (*Jidō setsuwa* 慈童説話), a story commonly reiterated in *sokui hō* rites. Accordingly, the ritual is presented as “the consecration of Kannon that is also for a Great Dharma Prince” (*daihōōji* 大法王子).¹⁴

In addition to the above-mentioned typology of *kanjō*, it appears that *chigo kanjō* was also influenced by three other kinds of consecrations: *himitsu kanjō* 秘密灌頂, *denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂, and *koka kanjō* 許可灌頂. As for the first – as

¹⁴ *Chigo kanjō shi*.

noted by Fabio Rambelli¹⁵ – the category of *himitsu kanjō* (secret initiation) is an umbrella term for three other *kanjō*, namely: *jinen kanjō* 自然灌頂 (spontaneous initiation), *jingi kanjō* (consecration into kami-related matters),¹⁶ and *yugi kanjō* 瑜祇灌頂 (ordination into the *Yugikyō* 瑜祇經 teachings).¹⁷ These rituals “attempted to overcome the epistemological and ontological differences”¹⁸ between the concrete and the abstract, the finite and the eternal. This logic is also present in *chigo kanjō*, where we find many doctrinal components borrowed from the sub-categories of *himitsu kanjō*. *Jinen kanjō* is a catch-all term for consecrations that enact the original enlightenment inherent in the practitioner. Doctrines of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覺) are at the root of *chigo kanjō*, beginning with the principal oppositional concepts of “acquired enlightenment” (*shikaku* 始覺) and “original enlightenment” (*hongaku*). But *chigo kanjō* also features Shingon elements from *jinen kanjō* that speak of a primordial and innate Buddhahood, such as the idea of a “signless consecration” (*musō kanjō* 無相灌頂). Next, as noted above, *jingi kanjō* relates to both the establishment of karmic ties with the kami and the place of the kami as central objects of devotion, core elements in *chigo kanjō* evidently derived from the worship of Sannō. In addition, there are also references to the doctrines of *yugi kanjō* seen in hermeneutical material. For example, consider the visualization of a “Horse-Penis Samadhi” (*meonzō zanmai* 馬陰藏三昧) of the Wisdom King Aizen-myōō, whose main scriptural source is the *Yugi-kyō*, the sutra fundamental to the *yugi* consecration.¹⁹ This is mentioned in the commentaries on *chigo kanjō*, the *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden* and *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden shi*. Indeed, since the *yugi kanjō* is considered to be “a ritual practice of sexual yoga,”²⁰ it stands to reason that it has ties with the sexual initiation of *chigo kanjō*. Even though many of the *Yugi-kyō*-related material has been thought to be exclusive to a sub-lineage of Tōmitsu (Shingon) – the Sanbōin-ryū – Lucia

15 Fabio Rambelli, “The Myth of the South Indian Iron Stupa (*Nanten tettō*),” 84–85.

16 On *Reiki kanjō*, see Fabio Rambelli, “The Ritual World of Buddhist ‘Shinto’”; on *Ama no iwato kanjō*, another variation of kami consecration focused on Amaterasu’s cave myth, see Lucia Dolce, “Duality and the Kami: The Ritual Iconography and Visual Constructions of Medieval Shintō.” See also Itō Satoshi’s chapter in this volume.

17 In medieval times, in most cases *himitsu kanjō* referred to *yugi kanjō*. For an analysis of the medieval commentaries of the *Yugi-kyō* and for the argument that this sutra contributed to the formation of a Buddhist discourse on the body, see Lucia Dolce, “Nigenteki genri no gireika: Fudō, Aizen to chikara no hizō.” See also Dolce’s chapter in this volume.

18 Rambelli, “The Ritual World of Buddhist ‘Shinto.’”

19 Bernard Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan: Volume 2, Protectors and Predators*, 175; Roger Goepfer, *Aizen-Myōō: The Esoteric King of Lust, An Iconological Study*, 103–13. On *yugi kanjō*, see Lucia Dolce’s chapter in this volume.

20 Fukuda Ryōsei (ed.), *Kanjō*, 52.

Dolce notes that these teachings can be found in competing lineages and schools. For example, they are also taught in the Yōjō-ryū 葉上流 lineage, which was active in Chōrakuji temple – an important hub of *chigo kanjō*.²¹

The second category of consecrations that may have influenced the formation of *chigo kanjō* is *denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂 (“consecration ritual for the transmission of the Dharma”). Abe Yasurō claims that the structure of *chigo kanjō* is modeled on this ritual in which the initiand formally identifies with the cosmic Buddha Dainichi.²² Those who went through *denbō kanjō* were promoted to the role of master (Sk. *ācāryā*, Jp. *ajari* 阿闍梨) – an officiating priest who can perform consecrations and initiate others into his lineage. The influence of *denbō kanjō* on *chigo kanjō* can be seen especially in the practice of establishing a connection with a buddha by tossing a flower on a mandala; indeed, it is likely that *denbō kanjō* is the prototype of most *kanjō* initiations in medieval Japan.

Third, many of the ritual manuals explicitly profess that the *chigo kanjō* is essentially based on *koka kanjō* 許可灌頂 (“permission *kanjō*”), an *abhiṣeka* ritual that upon its completion bestows disciples with the legitimacy to study the Esoteric teachings. This claim is made in reference to the arrangement of the ritual hall, which we will examine in detail. Altogether, *chigo kanjō* contains many elements shared by other medieval *kanjō* consecrations.

Finally, note that, even though the fact that *chigo kanjō* elaborates a sexual version of the Buddhist consecration ritual marks it as an innovation in Japan, it nonetheless follows sub-continental precedents. Japanese tantric practices normally do not require a sexual partner in order to bring about union with a higher deity. The enactment of buddhahood is possible through setting in motion the “three mysteries” in the practitioner’s body: that is, mudras, mantras, and mandalas, and their identification with Dainichi’s own activities. Becoming a Buddha in one’s own body is a solitary and individual endeavor, one that ultimately results in the realization that the subject-object dichotomy has dissolved. However, *chigo kanjō*’s distinctiveness lies in the fact that it follows the Indian model of incorporating sexual practices into the *abhiṣeka* ritual. Since the so-called *Anuttarayoga tantras* had not officially arrived in Medieval Japan,²³ it is safe to assume the inte-

²¹ Lucia Dolce, “The Embryonic Generation of the Perfect Body,” 294–95.

²² Abe Yasurō, “Sokui-hō no girei to engi,” 24. See also Abe, “Jidō setsuwa no keisei” (jō and ge), and Matsuoka Shinpei, *Utage noshintai*.

²³ It is possible that Jōjin 成尋 (1011–1081) dispatched the Chinese translation of the *Hevajra Tantra* to Japan in the eleventh century. However, the exposure to the *Anuttarayoga tantras* in East Asia was limited. The Indian or Tibetan typology of Tantras does not generally apply to the Chinese or Japanese context. For the Chinese translation of *Hevajra Tantra*, see T. vol. 18 no. 892. See also Lucia Dolce’s essay in this volume.

gration of sex into the ritual was done unconsciously (and unconscientiously). While the Indian example involves a ménage à trois of initiand, female consort, and guru, in Japan the sexual practices took place between two age-differing males, with a third adult serving in an instructional, non-sexual capacity.²⁴ In a sense, then, the integration of sexual practice into the *abhiṣeka* mold, albeit in a modified male-male sexual idiom, somewhat aligns the *chigo kanjō* with a pre-existing/late Indian tantric tradition and, arguably, with the tantric cultural sphere more broadly.

Ritual Structure

The study of *chigo kanjō* ritual's structure has long been limited to just two texts: the ritual manual *Chigo kanjō shiki* 児灌頂私記 and the exegetical-commentary-based *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden shi* 弘児聖教秘伝私. In recent years, Tsuji Shōko transcribed one manuscript in full,²⁵ as well as sections of several others.²⁶ Tsuji's work has been an invaluable resource for me in the process of acquiring, reading, and transcribing the seven original manuscripts. The following analysis is based on my own archival research in Japan.

The ritual begins with “preparatory practices” performed in front of the primary object of worship: an image of Kannon. This is followed by the adornment of the hall (*shōgon* 莊嚴) – the placement of implements and arrangement of ritual space and altar. Then, a late-night consecration ensues in the practice hall, during which the *chigo*, wearing only *ōguchi bakama* (pants) and with his hair tied at the nape of the neck, steps on an altar. The master then bestows the *chigo* with mantric formulae and mudras. Then the *chigo* drinks “oath water” (*seisui* 誓水), which establishes karmic ties between him and the central divinity (Dainichi). Next, the monk applies cosmetics to the *chigo*'s face, including defin-

²⁴ For a discussion on Buddhist sexual *abhiṣeka* in India, see Harunaga Isaacson, “Tantric Buddhism in India (from c. AD 800 to c. AD 1200),” and on the differences between Śaiva and Buddhist *abhiṣeka*, see his “Observations on the Development of the Ritual of Initiation (*abhiṣeka*) in the Higher Buddhist Tantric Systems.” According to David White, in Śaiva Tantra, only the virtuous would undergo the full on Kaula initiations involving the ingestion of the combined sexual fluids of the guru and his consort. More generally, the sexual fluids were sublimated in ways not unlike those in Japan. See David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis*, 160–87.

²⁵ Tsuji Shōko, “Honkoku Tennōji-zō *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō*.”

²⁶ By Tsuji Shōko, see her “Chigo kanjō no kisoteki kōsatsu: Giki no shōkai to seiri”; “Chigo kanjō no kisoteki kōsatsu: Shohon no shōkai to seiri”; “*Kō chigo shōgyō hiden shi saikō*”; “Kon Tōkō *Chigo* to *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden*.”

ing his eyebrows and painting his teeth black. The *chigo* is then donned with a robe, and a crown is placed on his head. Next the *chigo* is installed on a throne (*takamikura* 高御座); at that moment, the master is positioned below him. In this liminal stage, the hierarchy is inverted. With *chigo* on top and master (the highest ritual authority) at the bottom, the master empowers the central vase (*kaji* 加持). The master then performs the *kanjō* proper by pouring water from the vase on the *chigo*'s head – in other words, the *chigo* becomes one with the cosmic Buddha Dainichi. Shortly after, the master gives him oral instructions: verses (which I will discuss more in detail below) from the Lotus Sutra that are part of the *Jidō setsuwa* cycle. In the final part of the ritual, the instructor (*kyōju* 教授) explains the consecration (*kyōke* 教化), including its doctrinal significance, and announces that the *chigo* is Kannon, a bodhisattva who manifested herself in this world in order to save all sentient beings. The ceremony ends with the *chigo* chanting verses, a liturgical performance aiming to transfer merit to all beings in the universe.

This is only a rough sketch of the ritual, of which there are slight variations. An exhaustive description of the ritual is beyond the scope of this book, but I will highlight the relevant portions to our discussion: the ritual actions involving embodied practices and gestural acts that enact the *chigo*'s identity with the worshipped divinities. As will be shown below, the *chigo kanjō* ritual's liturgical design and performance resonate with the wider constellations of thought and practice in the medieval period.

Participants in the Ritual

Other aspects of the ritual and its actors have not been extensively discussed in previous scholarship. As noted above, there are three main participants in the ritual: the officiating priest-master (*ajari* 阿闍梨), the instructor (*kyōju* 教授), and the *chigo* 兒. The master carries out most of the liturgical functions of the ritual, including initiating the *chigo* into his newly acquired ontological status. The instructor accompanies the *chigo* into the hall and transmits to him the teachings. And, of course, the *chigo* is the initiand around whom the ritual is organized. Contrary to other examples of *kanjō* consecrations – such as *jingi kanjō* – the *chigo* is also the main object of worship of the ritual, both because of his transcendence as Kannon as well as his carnal interfusion with and possession by the protector deity, Sannō.²⁷

27 The possession and apotheosis into Sannō is highlighted in *Chigo kanjō shidai* 兒灌頂次第 and *Chigo kanjō shiki* 兒灌頂式, but all of the various recensions of *chigo kanjō* liturgy explic-

According to *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden shi* – the text providing a doctrinal exegesis and commentary for this ritual – the format of three participants dates to the first *chigo kanjō* ever held in Japan, involving the initiation of Ennin (Jikaku Daishi 慈覺大師, ca. 794–864) carried out by the Enryakuji abbot (*zasu* 座主) and an instructor (*kyōju* 教授). While this account is likely not grounded in historical fact, it serves as a precedent for the unusual number of ritual actors. But another manuscript, *Chigo kanjō shidai* 児灌頂次第, is the only ritual manual suggesting that there are additional actors such as hymn chanters (*sanshu* 讃衆) – something thus far not mentioned in scholarship. It is possible, then, that though the ritual was secret, it included certain components of public ceremonies.

Icons and Mandalas

The arrangement of the ritual hall falls within the domain of esoteric Buddhist spatial and architectural sensibilities. As such, statues, hanging mandalas, and portraits of patriarchs were the only icons in the initiation hall; indeed, the main worship was carried out before the primary icon (*honzon* 本尊) of Kannon (see the below discussion).²⁸ But given that several *chigo kanjō* documents mention the two mandalas of Esoteric Buddhism – the Womb Realm and the Diamond Realm – it is possible that these mandalas were also present in some capacity, whether in the abstract or in reality.²⁹ And yet, the Womb and Diamond mandalas are not named in any of the flower-tossing segments – the climax of the ritual that unites the *chigo* and the Buddha Dainichi or Sannō in one body. The *Chigo kanjō shidai* variant makes it clear that this role is reserved for a Sannō 山王 mandala accompanied by another spread-out mandala shaped as an eight-petaled lotus and displaying Nine Divinities (*kuson* 九尊),³⁰ while the center represented the concentration of Sannō's numinous power. Given that several extant medieval-era mandalas of Sannō follow this template, it is safe to assume that the centerpiece mandala

itly state that when the *chigo* forms the mudra and mantra of “The Generation of the Dharma Realm,” it signifies that the primary icon and the *chigo* become entirely the same substance: 法界生印明、本尊児全一軀成意也。

28 Note that *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō*, refers to the icon as not a Kannon statue but a mandala, which literature scholar Tsuji Shōko considers to be a definitive assessment. However, given a few variants among the manuscripts, I cannot agree with certainty; *Chigo kanjō shidai*, for example, cites the use of the Sannō mandala.

29 Tsuji Shōko, “Chigo kanjō no kisoteki kōsatsu: Shohon no shōkai to seiri.” Indeed, *Chigo kanjō shi* proclaims its doctrinal basis to be the twofold mandala (*taikon* 台金).

30 *Chigo kanjō shidai*.

was a Sannō *zushi mandara* (Portable-Shrine mandala), a three-dimensional altar with a feretory-like design.³¹

I posit that the various concepts signifying the Womb and Diamond were used to doctrinally mobilize the twofold mandalas as fundamental polarities that bring about sexual union and the sanctification of the *chigo*'s body.³² Therefore, rather than the Womb and Diamond mandalas being materially present, the textual references to them functioned to remind practitioners that, underneath the exoteric façade represented by the Lotus Sutra's teachings and Tendai theories regarding Sannō, there also lied an "Esoteric episteme" intended to emphasize the attainment of absolute non-dualism through ritual activity.³³ Essentially, the two mandalas, even when not present, express semiotics of sexual activity – with their underlying meaning of unity between compassion and wisdom and between female and male aspects, standing in turn for the inseparability of master and disciple. For example, regarding how at the end of the consecration the *chigo* and the master hold hands, the text explains that this posture constitutes the unity between the Five Elements of the *chigo* and those of Dainichi – a unity that expresses non-duality.³⁴ This aspect of a soteriological process enacted via the holding of hands is found in other orthodox *abhiṣeka*, such as *waka kanjō* and *kai kanjō*.³⁵ Since collapsing the distinctions between the two mandalic realms – here conveyed by the master and disciple's physical union – triggers the initiand's inherent awakening, these semiotics empower the *chigo*.

Preparatory Practices

The actual ritual process can be teased out from two of the seven manuscripts: the *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō* and *Chigo kanjō shi*. Before the consecration proper, the *chigo* conducts three "preparatory practices" (*kegyō* 加行), for which the setup is as follows. The primary icon, Kannon, is positioned at the center of the main altar. It is flanked on each side by a hanging scroll: Sannō on the left and

31 See the portable shrine mandala, *Sannō mandara shari zushi* 山王蔓荼羅舍利厨子, housed in Shōjuraigōji 聖衆来迎寺 in Ōtsu (Shiga prefecture), representing the 21 shrines of Hie shrine, which shares the design depicted in the *chigo kanjō* variant. In Ōtsu-shi Rekishi Hakubutsukan (ed.), *Tendai wo mamoru kamigami*, 38.

32 See for example, *Shōgyō hiden shi* and *Chigo kanjō shiki*.

33 For the concept of the "esoteric episteme," see Rambelli, "True Words, Silence, and the Adamantine Dance."

34 *Chigo kanjō shi*. A similar description can be found in the commentary *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden*.

35 See the chapters by Itō Satoshi and Paul Groner in this volume.

the Great Master (Daishi, a reference to Ennin 円仁) on the right. It is interesting to note that the scrolls' two words combined form the title "Sannō Daishi" 山王大師, which refers to the first Tiantai patriarch, Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597). The learned monks who designed the ritual wanted to invoke the allure of orthodoxy that was closely associated with the founder of the Tendai tradition.

The practices themselves, all of which were done facing the image of the Kannon, were to be performed by the *chigo* during three set periods. At the hour of the tiger (*tora* 寅), 3:00 AM to 5:00 AM, the *chigo* performs a repentance ritual (*senbō* 懺法) by reading one scroll of a repentance text in front of the Kannon image. Next, at the hour of the horse (*uma* 午), 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM, the *chigo* reads the Sutra of Amida (*Amida-kyō* 阿彌陀經), one of the three Pure Land Sutras. Finally, at the hour of the dog (*inu* 戌), from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, the *chigo* recites the Kannon Sutra.³⁶ Next, the *chigo* recites mantras and *dhāraṇī* incantations.

- 1) The short Butsugen 仏眼 (The Buddha Mother, Sk. *Buddhalocanī*) Dhāraṇī: "on hotaro-shani sowaka," to be recited one hundred times.
- 2) The Shō-Kannon 聖観音 (Holy Kannon, Sk. *Āryāvalokiteśvara*) Dhāraṇī: "on arorikiya sowaka," to be recited one thousand times.
- 3) The short Senju 千手 (One-Thousand Armed [Kannon], Sk. *Sahasra-bhuja*) Dhāraṇī: "on hasarataru nikiri sowaka," to be recited one hundred times.
- 4) The Jūichimen 十一面 (Eleven-Faced [Kannon], Sk. *Ekādaśamukha*) short Dhāraṇī: "on rokeishinhara kiri sowaka," to be recited one hundred times.
- 5) The Ichiji-konrin 一字金輪 (The One-Syllable Golden Disk, Sk. *Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣa-cakra*) Dhāraṇī: to be recited one hundred times.

To close, the *chigo* would bow thirty-three times.

The *chigo*'s devotional acts prepare his body for transforming into Kannon. The first two preparatory practices – the Kannon repentance and the recitation of Amida Sutras – are tied to medieval worship of Kannon. The different dharanis express Kannon's forms (Shō-Kannon, Senju Kannon, and Jūichimen Kannon), and the concluding thirty-three bows represent the number of Kannon's avatars.³⁷ Clearly, the objective was to mold the *chigo* in the image of Kannon. Next, though the mantras and *dhāraṇī* of Butsugen and Ichiji-konrin are not directly related to

³⁶ *Kuketsu sōjō*. See also Tsuji Shōko, who discusses some of these details in "Chigo kanjō no kisoteki kōsatsu: Giki no shōkai to seiri," 277. I have amended Tsuji's transcription in several parts.

³⁷ Throughout medieval times, Amida went hand-in-hand with Kannon, since both Buddha and bodhisattva were regarded as compassionate saviors that protect sentient beings during the apocalyptic time of the Final Dharma (*mappō* 末法), when awakening could no longer be achieved through conventional means. On Buddhist theories of decline in the East Asian context, see Jan Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, 65–118.

Kannon, they call attention to the Womb-Diamond mandalas and the non-dualism of the consecration discussed earlier. The dharanis are meant to be visualized as the union of an oppositional pair of divinities often described in Tamitsu rituals. (The monk Jien popularized their usage in Taimitsu liturgies in his famous dream about a *kanjō* consecration.)³⁸ The invocation suggests the mingling of male and female – the interpenetration of the Womb Realm and the Diamond Realm, which is seen as a procreative union. The two dharanis, and other binary pairings of Taimitsu, lay the groundwork for the gendered and non-dual sanctity that is achieved through the coitus between monk and *chigo*. Therefore, one can conclude that the obeisance in honor of the icon is logically organized around both Kannon's sacrality and the non-dual ontology of Esoteric Buddhism. For the next portion of preparatory practices, the *chigo* performs devotion in front of the Sannō scroll – with several devotional practices that are also specifically tied to Sannō; and then in front of Ennin's image – with differing liturgical components for Ennin. The *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō* manuscript notes that these devotions (*gongyō* 勤行) should take place for the duration of seven days in accordance with the directives of the master.

The Adornment of the Main Altar

Like many other *abhiṣeka*, the *chigo kanjō* ritual places the *chigo*'s body at the center of the cosmos. While divinization was primarily achieved through a transformation into multiple divinities, additional procedures other than the absorption of gnosis segment and the final initiatory step – the consecration by water and sexual congress – set deification in motion. These include performative and embodied acts, and physical poses and movements of the *chigo* and the master – of which the adornment (*shōgōn* 莊嚴) of the ritual space is a telling example. The adornment ritual segment was designed to be the enactment of a chain of embodied practices that prompted different modalities of the acolyte's body to personify the Buddha Dainichi, the bodhisattva Kannon, and the god Sannō. These bodily processes were meant to produce a divine body for the *chigo* that was also coterminous with the liturgical space and, by extension, the cosmos.

Following the ceremonial preparations, the practice hall and its altar were newly constructed and decorated for the adornment stage, with the *chigo* in charge of decorating the hall.³⁹ First, as we saw with the first preparatory practice, on the

³⁸ Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 351; Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 160.

³⁹ *Chigo kanjō shi*.

left side of the practice hall there should be an image of Ennin; and on the right side, a hanging scroll of Sannō. Then, folding screens should be erected in the four corners of the hall. The primary icon, being located in the north, should face the southern direction, and must be an image of Kannon, with the main altar (*dan* 壇) in front of it. The altar was to be arranged in the same pattern as the *koka* initiation (or *koka kanjō*, permission consecration) – that is, the *chigo* should place a vase (*ichi byō* 一瓶) at the center of the altar, pour “oath water” (*seisui* 誓水), and place seasonal flowers (*tokibana* 時花) in it. A vessel with scented holy water (*aka* 闕伽) and the vajra and handbell (*reisho* 鈴杵) should also be placed on an offering table (*ichizen* 一前, a small table placed on the main altar).⁴⁰ Next, the two tables that flank the high seat of the master should be covered with table cloths (*uchishiki* 打敷).⁴¹ On the left table are to be placed the *chigo*’s toiletry: those objects used for hygiene and cosmetics, including tooth-blackener (*kane*), comb (*kushi* 櫛), toothpicks (*yōji* 楊枝), and mirror (*kagami* 鏡). Then, the *chigo*’s outfit and crown are placed on the table on the right.⁴²

In accordance with Esoteric Buddhist thought, this ritual space is envisioned as a mandala; as such, the *chigo kanjō* texts specify not just what sacred functions the different objects and their positions fulfill, but also how the *chigo*’s own gestural acts animate the surroundings he produced. The *Kanjō shi* manuscript clearly states that the adornment creates the Dharma Realm hall (*hōkai dōjō* 法界道場) – namely, it produces a microcosm of the *dharmadhātu* in the ritual space. The adornment is equated with the attainment of the path in “the land of dwelling together” (*dōgodo* 同居土), which according to the Tendai teachings is one of the Four Buddha Lands where ordinary beings and enlightened sages live together. The text explains that the adornment denotes the “place of one thought-moment among the Four [Buddha] Lands” (*shido ichinenjo* 四土一念所). The four lands designate four processes in the Buddhist life; since the *dōgodo* is the first in this scheme, it is equated here with the initial moment of arising faith. This land was chosen both because it represents the essence of the ritual – the union of the enlightened and non-enlightened – and because the adornment is an initial stage

⁴⁰ The *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō* also instructs to ring the bell. The *chigo* is required to intone a chant simultaneously.

⁴¹ The *uchishiki* is a cloth usually placed on Buddhist implements or images. The type of fabrics often used is gold brocade (*kinran* 金襴) and silk damask (*donsu* 緞子).

⁴² Note that *kanjō* ceremonies usually have a table on the left and on the right of the ritual platform (*raiban* 礼盤), which suggests that the location of the *raiban* is probably between the two tables in front of the main altar.

in the consecration, much like the temporal positioning of this life process.⁴³ This leads the narrator of the *Kanjō shi* manuscript to claim that, by the virtue of decorating the hall, the *chigo* becomes both the ritual space itself and the very act of adornment.⁴⁴ Thus, the physical activities of setting up and ornamenting the hall inscribe on the *chigo*'s body the very mandala he constructs.

Since the ritual space is now actualized as a sacred space, the physical elements in the hall are envisioned as mandalic entities that possess protective capacity and salvific importance. The phrase “folding screens” (*byōbu* 屏風) is doctrinally interpreted to be read as “blocking the wind” (*kaze wo fusegu* 風をフセグ); the narration adds that “The root of wind is the syllable *pha*, and its shape the half-moon.”⁴⁵ In Esoteric Buddhism, *pha* is the Siddham syllable that connotes the meaning of the “causes of karma” (*ingō* 因業). The placement of the screen is meant to obstruct the operations of causation – specifically, natural phenomena, such as the wind, that are driven by karmic forces. The text elucidates the pragmatic intention behind positioning the folding screens: they are meant to demarcate the site with protective boundaries that prevent the wind of negative karma from entering.

The text also comments that the *chigo* expresses, *only temporarily* (that is, during the moment of installation), the “water of wisdom” (*chisui* 智水) of the *vaṃ* syllable. The syllable *vaṃ* in Esoteric Buddhism represents Dainichi of the Diamond Realm, a meaning that also appears in the *kanjō*. The “water of wisdom” signifies the water that is poured on the head of the initiate during the consecration, an act that triggers in the newly initiated the absorption of Dainichi’s wisdom. The transmission of this newly gained gnosis is interpreted as “Conferring the Dharma Realm Wheel that is Perfectly Round” (*ju hokkai rin engan* 授法界輪圓丸).⁴⁶ The *Chigo kanjō shiki* 児灌頂式 even notes that in this step the *chigo* is effectively rewarded with the “Wisdom-Fist Mudra (*chiken in*) of the *vaṃ* syllable,” that is, a mudra that Dainichi of the Womb Realm forms at the center of the mandala⁴⁷ as a synthesis of the two realms, Diamond and

⁴³ Alan Grapard notes that Mount Hiko is divided into the Four Buddha Lands, and that the lowest zone was called *bonshō dōgodo* 凡聖同居土 (his translation being “Land of Co-habitation of Anchorites and Commoners”). This suggests that the *chigo kanjō*'s act of adornment is understood as the acting out of a doctrinal concept that is often used for the mandalization of space. See Allan G. Grapard, *Mountain Mandalas*, 131–33.

⁴⁴ *Chigo kanjō shi*.

⁴⁵ *Chigo kanjō shi*.

⁴⁶ By using the word round, the text signals that the transmission also encompasses the teachings of Tendai, which are known to be Perfect and Round.

⁴⁷ The *chiken in* is also related to ceremonial procedures that took place before the enthronement ritual of the emperor (*sokui kanjō*). See Matsumoto Ikuyo, *Chūsei ōken to sokui kanjō*, 52; see

Womb. This mudra, which is linked to the *sokui hō* repertoire, also has important sexual significance; as Susan Klein notes, “it is formed by wrapping the fingers of the right hand around the upright index finger of the left hand,”⁴⁸ which may have denoted sexual penetration. Once the hall is adorned, even the preliminary decorative actions that the *chigo* performs are seen as conducive to attaining the wisdom of Mahāvairocana, even if only for a short time.

The decoration of the hall is directly tied to soteriological attainment, as it is foregrounded by the logic of Five-Elements series correlation and esoteric semiotics. The text says that the icon maintains a south-facing orientation (or is positioned in the north) because this location is identified with both a “mind possessing a wisdom with unrestricted activity” (*jōshosachi-shin* 成所作智心), which is one of the “Five Wisdoms” (*gochi* 五智),⁴⁹ and the quiescence of nirvana (*nehan jakujō* 涅槃寂靜), which is one of the “Three Marks of the Dharma” in the Lotus Sutra.⁵⁰ *Chigo kanjō shi* claims that this exo-esoteric pairing is also the unobtainable syllable of Śākyamuni, the letter *bhaḥ*. Indeed, in Esoteric teachings the “wisdom with unrestricted activity” corresponds to the wind element and to the Northern direction, as well as to the letter *bhaḥ* of Śākyamuni. The text also comments that the root of the syllable *bhaḥ* – i.e., the syllable *bha* – signifies “all of us sentient beings to the point of nirvana,” perhaps because *bha* in Sanskrit recalls *bhava*, the existing world (and all of his living beings). The point itself may have referred to the Siddham graphic element representing *-ḥ* (Sk. *visarga*), which together with *bha* forms *bhaḥ*. According to the text, “Shaka nyorai,” whose essence is in the syllable *bha*, means the “mysterious unity of external reality and wisdom” (*kyōchi myōgō* 境智冥合). Finally, the text informs us that the purpose of decorating and modeling the altar after the template of *koka kanjō* is to make non-duality (*funi* 不二) manifest.⁵¹ The implication is that the seat of the icon, its ritual altar, instantiates the perfect integration between the world of the buddhas and conventional reality – or, in more familiar Tendai terms, the fusion of exter-

also the chapters by Matsumoto and Klein in this volume.

48 Susan Klein, *Allegories of Desire*, 178.

49 The “mind possessing a wisdom with unrestricted activity” (*jōshosachi-shin* 成所作智心) is one of the Four Wisdoms (*shichi* 四智) of the Yogācāra school. This is the fourth stage of attainment in the Yogācāra scheme. In Esoteric Buddhism, it is the final fifth stage of the Five Wisdoms (*gochi* 五智).

50 Sanbōin 三法印, the “Three Seals of the Dharma,” are the three aspects that are unique to the Buddhist teachings and sets them apart from other teachings, as expounded in the Lotus sutra: 1) All conditioned things are impermanent (*shogyō mujō* 諸行無常), 2) All phenomena lack intrinsic essence (*shohō muga* 諸法無我), 3) nirvana is quiescence (*nehan jakujō* 涅槃寂靜). See *Lotus Sutra*, T. vol. 9 n. 262: 15b7; Kubo and Yuyama, trans., 71–73.

51 *Chigo kanjō shi*.

nal reality and wisdom and the supreme knowledge of it, the perceived phenomena and the mental apparatus that perceives them in a correct and nondualistic way. As discussed above, the construction of the ritual space follows established correlations of the Five Elements and esoteric ideas while also incorporating concepts and doctrines from exoteric Tendai teachings. Thus, all the various ritual steps of adornment constitute a momentary enlightened state, whereas the final consecration produces a permanent result of Buddhahood. The salvific operation is initiated by the virtue of the *chigo*'s own outward conduct, which in itself summons divine power.

The construction and arrangement of the ritual space also involves placing ritual implements endowed with mandalic significance, and their positioning directly effects the *chigo*'s own bodily transformation. For example, a mirror should be arranged to reflect the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom (*daienkyōchi* 大圓鏡智). On the right side-table are placed an outfit of clothing and the heavenly crown, which signify “an adorned body” (*gonshin* 嚴身).⁵² The text will state later that the *chigo* attains the “Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom” upon consecration, and so he will be wearing this outfit to take on the ornamented body of Dainichi. In fact, both the *chigo* and the master have Dainichi's body overlaid on top of theirs. At this point the master's body is said to be “Dainichi's body of self-enjoyment of the dharma,” whereas the *chigo* embodies the “body of self-enjoyment of the dharma” – with no mention of Dainichi. This is because the hierarchy between master and disciple is maintained even during the adornment stage. These power dynamics harken back to the relationship between the teacher Mahāvairocana and his student Vajrasattva – while also attempting to replicate the transmission of gnosis from the former to the latter as described in the authoritative *Dainichi-kyō*.⁵³ Importantly, this statement suggests that the *chigo* realized the bliss of attainment through both physical gestures and the physical mediation of the master, who conferred on the *chigo* the internally realized wisdom of Dainichi.

As for the mirror, its role in the *chigo kanjō* initiation is akin to earlier Indian Buddhist *abhiṣeka* in two ways. First, the mirror reflects emptiness – in this case, the round essence of the mirror, which is understood in Tendai as being not just voidness per se but also the perfect-roundness of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Second, it reveals to the disciple ultimate reality through its reflection. For the same reason, upon the completion of the initiation the *chigo* has the word ending *-maru* 丸 added to his name, an initiatory title meaning “round.” (This a common

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ For a full discussion of the *Dainichi-kyō* and its model of *abhiṣeka*, see Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 113–49.

suffix added to children's names.) Thus, the themes of adornment and wisdom are used in conjunction in order to show that the *chigo* receives the highest realization of *chigo kanjō* not only through textual learning and instruction but also through manifest bodily acts and the placement of objects. More specifically, the ritual involves a processual decoration of the body and the ritual stage, which results in the attainment of insight.

The adornment stage featured a performative aspect that obeyed a prescribed and strict ritual choreography, but the minute details on this choreography are not extant. What is known is the salvific impact each action entails. In acting and performing, the *chigo* took on various embodied states that clothed his body as a mandala, thus effectively instantiating an ontological equation between the ritual space and the practitioner, which together invested sacrality in him. In setting up the liturgical space, the *chigo* constructed his own embodiment. Such sacred state must be obtained before the *chigo* is formally consecrated. Moreover, the ritual operates in accordance with the mainstream Esoteric soteriology by constructing the ritual hall as a “pansemiotic universe in which everything is organized in a systematic way and endowed with meaning.”⁵⁴ Taken cumulatively, the formulators of *chigo kanjō* wished to illustrate that the *chigo*'s own body, his bodily movements, and his embodied gestures are none other than the activities of the *dharmadhātu*, the supreme reality of the cosmos. Accordingly, the (sexual) penetration of this adamant and impenetrable body could in no way be considered sinful.

Entrance into the Hall

When the *chigo* finishes adorning the hall (and by extension, his own body), he presumably leaves the chamber before the ritual proper takes place. The best guidelines about this segment – specifically the details on the master and *chigo* before and during the entrance into the hall – can be found in an oral transmission called *Chigo kanjō shūki* 児灌頂修記 in the *Chigo kanjō shidai* manuscript.⁵⁵ In *kanjō* terminology, this procedure is usually called “entering the hall” or “entering the path [to enlightenment]” (*nyūdō* 入堂 or 入道). Standing at the entrance, the master performs Buddhist rites (*hōji* 法事) and uses the five-pronged vajra scepter to award the initiate with the “wisdom-fist mudra” (*chiken in* 智拳印) of

⁵⁴ Fabio Rambelli, *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics*, 13.

⁵⁵ Readers should note that the *kanjō shidai* has multiple variations for each step, being a collection of *kirikami* (slips of paper that function as oral transmissions). Therefore, the above is only one possible scenario.

the precept assembly (*sanmaya-e* 三摩耶會).⁵⁶ Here we again see this mudra, which is derivative of the *sokui hō* rituals. As noted earlier, the *chigo* wears only *ōguchi-bakama* pants; his chest is bare. The next steps initiates the entrance into the hall. A “Hymn of the Four Wisdoms” (*shichi san* 四智讃) is performed while the *chigo* circumambulates (*gyōdō* 行道) the main altar. In other *kanjō* consecrations – meaning, other than *chigo kanjō* – this segment involves the master entering in procession with other disciple hymn chanters and circumambulating the main altar. This is the only manuscript in which there are auxiliary people in the ritual other than the triad of participants I have mentioned above. The leader of this group, the chief chanter (*santō* 讃頭), is explicitly mentioned (however, the general description here is terse and relies on supplementary oral instructions, and therefore it is difficult to decipher). The hymn chanter is instructed to circumambulate the master in a counter-clockwise direction. The *chigo* and “everyone else” (the hymn chanters) should do the same and bow before the master when they enter. Then, the *chigo* should stand behind the master, after which he practices “correct faculties” (*shōki* 正機) three times and makes a final circumambulation of the main altar.

According to *Chigo kanjō shi*, the *chigo* enters when the master performs the “ritual of obeisance” (*gyōhō* 行法), which is described in other *kanjō* texts to be the initial stage of the ritual, a series of preliminary rites performed by the master once he sits on the smaller platform (usually located in front of the main altar), which constitute prayers for the success of the ritual.⁵⁷ As is apparent in *Chigo kanjō shi*, this coincides with the master intoning the “correct mindful chant” (*shōnenju* 正念誦) 1,000 times in front of the primary icon, the Kannon mandala.⁵⁸ As soon as the master reaches 500 chants and without error, the instructor (*kyōju* 教授) should bring in the *chigo*.

The Initiation

Next the instructor leads the *chigo* into the main sanctuary of the ritual. The master then sits on the smaller platform and faces westward. He then forms the mudra of “There is no Place it Does not Reach” (*musho fuchi* 無所不至). When the

⁵⁶ One of the nine assemblies in the Diamond mandala.

⁵⁷ See Sadakata Akira, *Chōrakuji kanjō monjo no kenkyū*, 143.

⁵⁸ See Sadakata, *Ibid.*, 78. However, in today’s Tendai monasteries the object of visualization differs according to the practice of *gyōhō*. In some cases, the object can be Fudō Myōō or Monju. In the *chigo kanjō*, the visualization might have involved Kannon or Sannō. I thank the Enryakuji priest Shibata Kenryō for this information.

chigo is brought in, the master should respond by forming the mudras and chanting the mantras of “Original Sanmaya” (*honzanmaiya inmyō* 本三昧耶印明) – after which the *chigo* lays out a mat, bows three times, and sits on the mat. The *chigo* then coats his own body with incense (*zukō* 塗香), and raises the Great Five Vows (*godaigan* 五大願). He then forms the mudras and mantras of “The Sanmaya of Entering Buddhahood” (*nyūbutsu sanmaiya inmyō* 入仏三昧耶印明) seven times, the mudra of “The Production of the Dharma Realm” (*hokkaishōin* 法界生印) three times, the mudras and mantras of “The Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma” (*tenpōrin inmyō* 轉法輪印明) three times, and finally the mudras and mantras of “There is no Place it Does not Reach” three times. This last one marks the transformation of the *chigo* into the body of the Buddha [Dainichi] and his realization of a mind that aspires to save all sentient beings. “Turning of the Wheel” connotes the *chigo* becoming a *cakravartin* – a Buddhist universal monarch that disseminates the Dharma and is often identified with Japanese rulers; as such, this detail likely derives from the *sokui hō*. As we can see, as in the earlier adornment stage, the *chigo* attains certain configurations of embodiment enacted through the physical operations of the body itself.

At this juncture the master uses the toothpick to clean between the *chigo*’s teeth. Once his mouth is thus purified, the master pours the vow water into his mouth. Next, the *chigo* takes the brush, coats it in the teeth-blackener (*kane*), and paints his teeth three times. Then the *chigo* needs to follow the example of the instructor and apply these on his own. The instructor should afterwards smear the *kane* on the *chigo*’s teeth three times, wipe his mouth, apply makeup, pluck his eyebrows, dress him with a robe, and place the celestial crown on his head. The master then descends from the main seat (*honza* 本座), sits down, and has the *chigo* move from his lower position into the high seat (*kōza* 高座). This move marks the inversion of hierarchy between master and disciple; it also mimics the social difference between a monarchic ruler and a subject. (This latter element is likely an emulation of *sokui kanjō*.) In certain *chigo kanjō* variants, the word for the high seat is the *takamikura* (“throne”), which is used in the *sokui kanjō* consecration of the emperor.

Next, the master empowers the “central vase” (*chūbyō* 中瓶) and confers upon the *chigo* particular mudras and mantras: hand gestures and mantric formulae were central to the ritual. Once the master has completed the mudras, he continues the mantras holding hands with the *chigo*, via which they both achieve the body of Mahāvairocana and a non-dual union. Then the master pours water over the *chigo*’s head, thus carrying out the *kanjō* proper. The *chigo* then recites three times the secret verse from the Lotus Sutra (“Kannon’s secret teaching”). In the *Chigo kanjō shi* and *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō* manuscripts, this long recitation of “Kannon’s secret teaching” is crossed out with black ink. This obscuration was

intentional, done right after the transmission was given to the *chigo* disciple so as to keep this exclusive secret transmission hidden from the non-initiated. (I elaborate upon Kannon's secret teaching in the next section.)

The next stage involves the consecration's edification, wherein the monk explains the central teachings of the ritual. Oral transmissions (*kuketsu* 口決 and *kuden* 口伝) show that there are additional procedures involving the possession of the *chigo* by the Sannō god and the deification of *chigo* as the same deity. (The timing of this moment is unclear, as I will explain shortly.) The ritual ends with the *chigo* descending from the high seat and returning to a standing position on the mat. The master ascends the high seat once again, performs final offerings, and then chants an incantation that bestows the karmic rewards of compassion on all sentient beings, which the *chigo* recites as well.

The *Chigo kanjō shi* manuscript specifies that at the end the master presents to the *chigo* a lineage chart (*kechimyaku* 血脈) listing the past masters who received the initiation. (Unfortunately this chart is no longer extant.) Only then, after the awarding of initiatory knowledge and Dharma seals, was sexual intercourse with the boy permitted.

Absorbing Kannon's Body and Her Secret Teaching

The main doctrine transmitted to the initiand of *chigo kanjō* is a secret transmission that condenses the truth of the Lotus Sutra (Sk. *Saddharma puṇḍarīka sūtra*) as presented in the sutra's Universal Gateway chapter (Chapter 25). I posit that the creators of *chigo kanjō* purposefully connected this teaching to a homoerotic cycle of tales (*Jidō setsuwa* 慈童説話, "Tale of Jidō"), identified with the *sokui hō*, in order to provide a mythological background to the male-male sexual *chigo kanjō* ritual. But this cycle of tales was already established in medieval Japanese lineages at the time, its incorporation in the *chigo kanjō* ritual should not be seen as an aberrant legitimization of male-male sexuality. In fact, many contemporaneous monks wanting to demonstrate they upheld exclusive knowledge concerning kingship transmitted the Jidō setsuwa story in their oral transmissions as validation that their teachings belong to a mythic genealogy of kingship. In addition to Kannon's secret teaching, there are a panoply of mainstream doctrinal teachings that were mobilized to rationalize the practice, such as original enlightenment thought (*hongaku*), Taimitsu 台密 (Esoteric Tendai) knowledge, and Buddha-kami amalgamative theories (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合). But, due to the limited scope of this chapter, I will focus only on the Kannon-centered teaching.

Upon consecration, the *chigo* is transmitted the essence of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Since this is the most important doctrinal focus in the ritual, it was accordingly crossed out in the *Chigo kanjō shi* manuscript to prevent its exposure to the non-initiated. Fortunately, the content of this passage is visible in the *Chigo kanjō kuketsu sōjō* manuscript – though the passage is crossed out, it was done thinly enough that it is possible to make it out. The verse that constitutes the secret teaching is the following:

With compassionate eyes [Kannon] looks at all living beings, and gathers good merit, boundless like the sea.

jigen shi shujō fukujū kai muryō 慈眼視衆生 福聚海無量.

This phrase, which is what I refer to as the “Kannon’s secret teaching,” comes from the “Universal Gateway Chapter” of the Lotus Sutra, and was allegedly used as a secret transmission in imperial consecrations (*sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂). In the medieval period, imperial consecrations – which were Buddhist *abhiṣeka* targeted at the Emperor upon its accession – were carried out sporadically from 1288, and then on a regular basis from 1382 to 1847. Throughout the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, a large body of knowledge began to spread that claimed to be the ritual protocols and teachings surrounding the enthronement consecration. These different ritual endeavors were known as “enthronement rites” (*sokui hō* 即位法). Various groups produced them and claimed authority over their performance, such as the regents of the Nijō family, Shingon monks at Tōji, and the Tendai priests of Mount Hiei. Kannon’s secret teaching was transmitted by monks and nobles as a magical incantation to be intoned in such enthronement rites. By doing so, they hoped to establish a monopoly as exclusive transmitters of imperial knowledge.

These enthronement rites in which Kannon’s secret teaching was transmitted contained specific oral instructions (*kirigami* 切紙) praising the merits of the Lotus Sutra. These teachings were included in a cycle of legends that considered these verses as the absolute Buddha Dharma; as it happens, homoeroticism was an integral part of the legends’ narrative. This legend is now known by scholars as *Tale of Jidō* (*Jidō setsuwa* 慈童說話),⁵⁹ in which a Chinese boy named Jidō forms intimate relations with a Chinese emperor.⁶⁰ The story tells us that King Mu of the Zhou dynasty flew on eight heavenly peony horses to attend the Lotus Sutra

⁵⁹ Paul Atkins, in “*Chigo* in the Medieval Japanese Imagination,” has extensively examined *Jidō setsuwa* and connected it to the Chinese Yang Guifei story.

⁶⁰ On the argument that *Jidō setsuwa* serves as the origin story of *chigo kanjō*, see Abe, Yuya no *kōgō*, 198–206; Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread*, 256–65.

sermon delivered by Śākyamuni on Vulture Peak. On that occasion, Śākyamuni transmitted to King Mu a secret teaching (*hihō* 秘法) called “ruling the country and benefitting the people” (*chikoku rimin* 治国利民). This secret teaching was none other than Kannon’s secret teaching of the Universal Gateway chapter described above, and was subsequently presented in medieval texts as “the two *gathas*” (*ni kuge* 二句偈); sometimes it was condensed as the “two letters” (*niji* 二字). This teaching was passed on from King Mu (tenth century BCE) to successive generations of Chinese rulers, all the way to the Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi (third century BCE). Then, Qin Shi Huangdi fell in love with a young boy, Jidō, who lived in the imperial palace. Though the emperor needed to keep the intimacies he shared with Jidō secret, he publicly gave the boy special treatment. Envious, the ministers who served under the emperor punished Jidō for committing the sexual act – called the “transgression of the pillow.” Though the emperor could not forbid the punishment, he did share with Jidō the verse from the Lotus Sutra. Jidō was then exiled to a mountainous forest, where it was expected that he would be eaten alive by wild beasts. Instead, he continually chanted the Lotus Sutra verse – via which he was transformed into Pengzu, a Daoist immortal, and achieved Buddhahood.⁶¹

It goes without saying that the *chigo kanjō* ritual and the *Jidō setsuwa* story were made for each other; the “Tale of Jidō” explicitly serves as a foundational myth, of which *chigo kanjō* was probably the most faithful restaging. The sexual congress in the ritual is presented as the reenactment of the intercourse between the Qin Emperor and Jidō. The *kanjō* reiterated the sacred bonding between the two lovers – not through purely symbolic means, but through the participating actors: the monk and *chigo*. Physical embodiments of the mythological figures, the two reignited the flames of an ancient passion. The section dedicated to the explanation of the teachings (*kyōke*) clarifies this:

The consecration described above is the consecration given to the emperor at the time of his enthronement. After receiving the consecration, you should call [the *chigo*] a “king” and add “-*maru*” to its name. At this time, the primary icon is Kannon. The teachings of enthronement are the transmission of the Universal Gateway. Note that they are the Two Letters of compassion. King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty rode on eight small horses and travelled the Three Thousand Great Worlds, until he galloped to Vulture Peak where the Buddha was preaching the Lotus Sutra. Śākyamuni transmitted the Two Verses of the Universal Gateway Chapter [on this occasion], and the King received this transmission. Now, as for King Mu, his original ground was Kannon. There is a secret transmission concerning the Two Verses. Following this, the King transmitted [this teaching] to all subsequent generations of rulers. Later on, Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty fell in love with the young child

61 See Abe, “Jidō setsuwa no keisei (jō).” See also *Yōtenki* in *Shintō taikei*.

Pengzu the Immortal. This young child boasted about his imperial favors. When he committed the transgression of the pillow, the court ministers ordered him to be exiled. Because the Emperor was very saddened, he transmitted to the boy the Universal Gateway Chapter. Ever since, this teaching spread in the world. Having loved him, the Emperor violated the precepts through having sex with a male [Jidō]. Pengzu the Immortal also has his original ground as Kannon. He came [to our world] because of compassion.⁶²

Chigo kanjō attempts to integrate the *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (“original essence and manifested traces”) theory into the narrative aspect of the ritual. According to this pervasive theory in medieval Japanese religion, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other Indian divinities are the original forms (*honji*) of Japanese deities, while the latter are seen as traces (*suijaku*) of translocal buddhas, who appear in Japan to teach Buddhism to sentient beings.⁶³ In the passage above, the Emperor Ming transmits to Pengzu (the immortalized Jidō) the Universal Gateway Chapter. In this version of the tale, Kannon’s secret teaching is encapsulated by the two letters of compassion, *jihī* 慈悲. It is highlighted that the King Mu was the traces of an original ground, the bodhisattva Kannon. Surprisingly, Pengzu is also given the same elated ontological state as the provisional expression of Kannon. The labeling of both parties as the emanations of *honji* has socio-religious implications: the *chigo* and monk’s sacred status is echoed by that of their mythological counterparts, which therefore resolves the two ritual participants’ discrepant identities – both are equally acknowledged as manifested forms of a bodhisattva. Since the sexual act thus takes place between divine beings or bodhisattvas, their intercourse is envisioned as a hierogamy rooted in myth. Implicit in this statement is the fact that the *chigo kanjō* ritual functions to sanctify the monk as well as the *chigo*. The monk both partakes of the divine through having coitus with the *chigo* and has his body affirmed as a projection of Kannon bodhisattva.

However, rather than simply creating an egalitarian metaphysical relationship between the two, the real purpose was to enhance the monk’s sacrality:

Also, this consecration was transmitted by Jikaku Daishi [Ennin] who was an incarnation of Guze Kannon. Thereafter, he spread [this ritual] in the world, and Jie Daishi [Ryōgen] was also an incarnation of Jūichimen Kannon. In the Final Age, all of the lads who became *chigo* are incarnations of Kannon. Therefore, it is said in a sutra, “In all the realms of the ten directions, there is no place where she will not manifest herself.” The meaning of this passage is that [Kannon] appears in order to benefit all sentient beings. Also, it is said that “If there are sentient beings who are greatly prone to sensual desires, if they contemplate the Bodhisattva Kannon with respect, they will become free from these desires.” This passage is clear. At one

⁶² *Chigo kanjō shi*.

⁶³ On the *honji suijaku* theory, see Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli (eds.), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*.

point, there is a “ritual of obeisance” directed at Kannon. This ritual refers to the consecration (*kanjō*). The consecration contains the most important secret matters related to Kannon. Based on this, the commentaries explain, “There is a Wonderful Dharma that is untold in this one chapter. Therefore, one should know that Kannon shares the same essence with the Wonderful Dharma.” The Lotus Sutra explains the fruits of the consecration. This is also the “signless consecration.” Therefore, it is also called “the consecration of Kannon that is also for a Great Dharma Prince.” There are more details in oral transmissions.⁶⁴

The fact that this consecration is “also for a Great Dharma Prince” (*daihō ōji* 大法王子), coupled with the statement that the consecration is similar to the one “given to the emperor at the time of his enthronement,” suggests that the devisers of *chigo kanjō* wished to attach the royal authority of the *sokui hō* to *chigo kanjō*. Moreover, as Matsuoka Shinpei argues, the ritual’s appropriation of imperial power is entrenched in the image of the child emperor that dates back to the Insei period (“the rule of cloistered emperors” of the eleventh century).⁶⁵ The emperor possessed secular power and sacrality when he ruled over the Ritsuryō system in mid-Heian period, but in the eleventh century the system of regency rule (*sekkan*) was established. From that point onward, the heads of aristocratic rule were the Sesshō (regent) and Kanpaku (chancellor), hereditary positions reserved only for the heads of the Fujiwara family. To ensure power over the emperors the Fujiwara family appointed only young children to that post. Though the child emperor was secluded behind closed doors, and had no power to exercise formally, his sacred authority was maintained in ritual practices and his symbolic significance was preserved. The child emperor, Matsuoka claims, is the image that has been cast on the *chigo* in the *chigo kanjō* ritual. He also draws a comparison between the *chigo* and the cult of sacred children, including the worship of Shōtoku Taishi in the form of a child, who according to Yamaori Tetsuo often prefigured as “an incomplete emperor” (*mikan no tennō* 未完の天皇).⁶⁶ Thus, the royal authority and prestige is not merely awarded to the *chigo*; it is also important for monks to showcase that they practice a ritual connected with imperial heritage.

In addition to this regal symbolism, we also see in *chigo kanjō* a concerted effort to ground the ritual in the exoteric tenets of the Lotus Sutra’s “Universal

⁶⁴ *Chigo kanjō shi*.

⁶⁵ Matsuoka Shinpei, *Utage noshintai*, 126–28.

⁶⁶ However, we should note that while the imagery of the child-emperor may have influenced early iterations of the Jidō cycle of tales and was eventually transmitted to the *chigo kanjō* ritual, this does not entail that the *chigo kanjō* actually took place during the Insei period. It would be more apt to say that the discursive knowledge around the figure of the sacred child can be dated back to the Insei era, while a definite practice of *chigo kanjō*, as substantiated through textual evidence, can be traced to the eastern provinces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Gateway Chapter,” focusing in particular on its protagonist Kannon and her inexhaustible ability for compassion. The stated purpose of the consecration is to allow Kannon – that is, *chigo* – to spread the Buddha Dharma. To repeat a passage from the Lotus Sutra quoted above: “If there are any sentient beings who are greatly prone to sensual desires, if they contemplate Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara [Kannon] with respect, they will become free from these desires.”⁶⁷ In accordance with the medieval eschatology of the “Final Age of the Dharma” (*mappō* 末法), it is understood that Buddhism could no longer be effectively practiced after the year 1052, due to the fact that the Dharma was in decline ever since the passing away of the Buddha. During this degenerate age, the *chigo kanjō* texts tell us, all of the lads who became *chigo* are incarnations of Kannon, and therefore they appear to save everyone. The *chigo kanjō*, like many other practices in the latter medieval period, is an alternative soteriology for when salvation is no longer achievable. By having sexual relations with the *chigo*, the monk can also attain enlightenment. However, the *chigo kanjō shiki* enjoins practitioners not to have sexual acts with acolytes who did not carry out the consecration – in such instance a monk would receive rebirth in the Three Paths of Evil as karmic retribution. The idea that consecration purges sexual defilement is of course based on the exoteric notion of *bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提, which is reiterated in the ritual texts; this notion holds that defilements and awakening, due to their mutually exclusive nature, need to be brought together to be cancelled out and then transcended. Therefore, while the passage above informs us that all *chigo* are Kannon, if we read closely we see that this statement is only valid for *chigo* who specifically underwent consecration. Their bodies transubstantiate into Kannon only through ritual that joins together the sacred (consecrated *chigo*) and the profane (a defiled sexual act).

In the passage the character used for “lad” (*dōnan* 童男) is the term denoting one of Kannon’s thirty-three manifestations (*sanjūsan shin* 三十三身) in the Lotus Sutra.⁶⁸ According to the scripture, Kannon incarnates herself as a young boy – and, indeed, this view is accepted in several medieval works of Japanese religious literature. Especially worthy of mention are *Aki no yo no naga monogatari* 秋夜長物語 (A Long Tale for an Autumn Night, 1377)⁶⁹ and *Chigo Kannon engi* 稚児観

⁶⁷ *Lotus Sutra*, T. vol. 9 n. 262: 57a1.2. Kubo and Yuyama (trans.), *The Lotus Sutra*, 296.

⁶⁸ See the passage “Sometimes she has appeared in the body of a boy or a girl”: *Lotus Sutra*, T. vol. 9 n. 262: 56a 1.22–23.

⁶⁹ For a fuller discussion and a full translation of *Aki no yo no naga monogatari*, see Margaret H. Childs, “*Chigo Monogatari*: Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?” For the story in Japanese, see *Aki no yo no nagamonogatari* 秋夜長物語.

音縁起 (The Origins of *Chigo Kannon*),⁷⁰ which form part of the so-called *chigo monogatari* genre (Tales of *Chigo*), which portrays the *chigo* as a manifestation of Kannon who emanated in this world in order to satisfy the desires of older monks and lead them in turn to Buddhist awakening.

In fact, there are additional religious texts that connect Kannon and male-male love. The *Innenshō* 因縁抄 (Muromachi Period), a collection of doctrinal teachings and commentaries that were produced in a Tendai seminary (*dangisho*), includes the article “Concerning the illicit sexual intercourse with boys [lads] by Buddhist practitioners” (*Buppō gyōja dōnan wo okasu koto* 佛法行者童男ヲ犯ス事). This section quotes the apocryphal sutra *Kanjizai sanmaya kyō* 観自在三摩耶經 (“The Sutra of Avalokiteśvara’s Samādhi”) and its doctrinal claims about monastic male-male sexuality: “If sexual lust shall arise and thus obstruct the Buddhist teachings, you should have sexual intercourse with fifteen boys to pacify your evil mind!”⁷¹ The passage allegedly originates in a sutra dedicated to Kannon (Avalokiteśvara), and the word used for “boys” or “lads” (*dōnan*) comes from Lotus Sutra–related terminology.⁷² It seems, then, that in the medieval period there were different ways to endorse male-male sexuality as part of Kannon worship, and *chigo kanjō* may in fact just be the most complex concretization of this shared discourse.

As such, by referring to a “lad,” the *chigo kanjō* ritual manuals are in fact alluding not just to the Lotus Sutra’s passage concerning Kannon’s manifestations but also to a broader body of medieval texts that recount the projection of Kannon onto the body of a boy – and the salvific power of such a boy as an extension of Kannon. The boys who are initiated into the *chigo kanjō* ritual, and who demonstrate the virtues of lads (*dōnan*), will become true incarnations of Kannon.

Deification as Sannō in the *Chigo Kanjō* Ritual

The summoning of Sannō into the ritual space did not begin with a metamorphosis, such as in the case of Kannon, but in the form of adorcism – that is, a ritual scenario in which a god is invoked for initiatory purposes, in this case to seize the hair of the *chigo*. The *Chigo kanjō shidai* notes that, in a certain segment of the

⁷⁰ Margaret H. Childs, trans., “The Story of Kannon’s Manifestation as a Youth (*Chigo Kannon Engi*).” For the Japanese version, see *Chigo kannon engi* in *Zoku Nihon no emaki*.

⁷¹ *Innenshō*, 107.

⁷² However, the number of boys here, fifteen, might be related to the number of attendants that accompany Benzaiten (Sarasvati), a female deva.

ritual, when the spirit of Sannō is called upon, monks are required to “grab the hair” (*hassō* 髮抓) of the *chigo*, an expression that refers to a certain method of hair combing. According to the text, once the practitioner hails the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Monju), “Master Sannō rides on [the *chigo*’s] hair” (*Sannō daishi kami no ue ni noriutsuri tamau nari* 山王大師髮上乘移給也).⁷³ This possession relates to a broader tradition in the cult of sacred children that celebrates youths as mounts of the gods. In the *Chigo kanjō shiki* manuscript, before Sannō descends upon the *chigo*, his hair is envisioned as a microcosm of a Buddhist mandala filled with many bodhisattvas and sentient beings. With each pass of the comb through the hair of the *chigo*, a deity manifests itself. Divine possessions allow the supreme god Sannō to enter the *chigo*’s body, and perhaps it is the boy’s original enlightened nature that allows such transformation. The *chigo*’s head is readied for ritual unction by implicitly marking it as the *dharmadhātu*, making it thereby already imbued with the sacred even before being consecrated. The possession by Sannō precedes the physical transformation into Sannō through sexual intercourse – which, again, leads to the human deification of the monk as well as the *chigo*.

A number of *chigo kanjō* manuscripts explicate that Sannō manifests in the ritual as *chigo* in order to absolve monks from sexual transgressions. “If you abide in the principle of the uncreated Grapheme A, you will see that all natural phenomena are afflictions. By using its skill to extinguish the flames of these afflictions, Sannō appears as *chigo*.”⁷⁴ I have elaborated elsewhere that this “visualization” is in fact the sexual penetration, whereby the ass of the *chigo* is imagined as the locus of his mind-heart and described as “the Flower of Dharma Nature.”⁷⁵ In any case, Sannō manifests to deliver monks from any damnation that might arise from sexual offenses. We are also told that the appearance of Sannō is in itself a goal of the ritual. “This transmission of *kanjō* is meant to make manifest the transmission of the Seven Buddhas of the past, and to make manifest the Seven Sannō Shrines.”⁷⁶ That is, the Sannō described here is an all-encompassing deity, a collective designation for the sacred compounds-gods of Hie shrine. The procedures note that the Seven Shrines are synonymous with the Seven Buddhas, as well as the Seven Stages of Afflictions 七位門 – meaning, sacrality and defilement are ultimately one and the same. Undoubtedly, this assertion was intended

⁷³ *Chigo kanjō shiki*, Jōbodaiin.

⁷⁴ A 字本不生/理ニ住シテ見ハ、森羅ノ万像モ皆煩惱也。是ノ煩惱ノ炎ヲ可レ消ス巧ヲモツテ山王、児ニテ現レ給也。 *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden*.

⁷⁵ See Porath, “The Flower of Dharma Nature.”

⁷⁶ *Chigo kanjō shiki*.

to convey that there is nothing inherently sinful in the sexual act once Sannō's powers are brought to bear on the *chigo*.

Upon consecration (the pouring of water on his head), the *chigo* attains the Dharma-body as Mahāvairocana, and his body is both refigured as Kannon, the main icon of the ritual, and transformed into an embodiment of Sannō, an absolute god. Then, in order for the monk to absorb the *chigo*'s newly acquired ontological state and initiatory wisdom, he has sexual intercourse with the sanctified *chigo*. This leads to a bodily enactment of the Tendai notion of the Threefold Truth, encapsulated by a saying: "The *chigo* is foremost, Sannō comes second" (*ichi chigo ni Sannō* 一見二山王). This phrase, which I call the *chigo* adage, came to denote that the *chigo* was primary ontologically, a kind of supreme god. Another reading to take from this is the normative and prescriptive assertion that monks should first become infatuated with *chigo* as objects of sexual passion and only later devote their time to Sannō worship – therefore, the *chigo* adage was embedded in a sexual context. Together, these readings make the *chigo* a supreme god identical to Jūzenji, a boy emanation of Sannō – as well as elevate the *chigo*-as-Jūzenji above Sannō, his own godhead.⁷⁷ The *chigo kanjō shiki* reads:

An oral transmission says: "What is the meaning of the adage "*ichi chigo, ni Sannō* 一見二山王" ('the *chigo* is foremost, Sannō comes second')?"

This issue is an important secret matter. "*Ichi chigo, ni Sannō*" stands for the *chigo* as the Three Truths of the External World 境ノ三諦, and Sannō is the Threefold Contemplation of Wisdom 智三觀. This is because the Threefold Contemplation of Wisdom originates from the Three Truths of the External World. It has been established that the *chigo* is foremost, and the Sannō deity comes second. Because the External World and Wisdom are interconnected, "*Ichi chigo, ni Sannō*" refers to the performance (*furumai* 振舞) of the concept that the two are non-dual."

This is the Three-Thousand [Realms] and the Wisdom of the Threefold Contemplation eternally abiding, complete as they are. The scholar-monks and practicing monks of the Perfect Sect [Tendai] wear a thin black robe to model their shape after Sannō. This is what constitutes learning "*Ichi chigo, ni Sannō*." That "the *Chigo* is foremost, the monk (*hōshi*) comes second" designates the performance (*furumai*) of the Ten Realms interpenetrating.⁷⁸

According to this passage, the *chigo* stands as the Threefold Truth that embodies the phenomenal world, whereas Sannō is the Threefold Contemplation of Wisdom, signifying a direct perception that realizes the three truths. These terms are interdependent, much like the *chigo* and Sannō themselves. The union between *chigo* and Sannō in this case does not only presuppose an identity between the acolyte

⁷⁷ See *Keiran shūyōshū*, in T. vol. 76 n 2410: 518b20–24.

⁷⁸ *Chigo kanjō shiki*, Jōbodaiin.

and the god Sannō; it also conceives of the *chigo* and the Tendai monk as non-dual – referring here to the monks who engage with him in ritual sex. In fact, this identity between *chigo* and Sannō is further enacted by sexual penetration, which elicits an interpenetration of all realms of transmigration. And given that the *chigo* is a divine figure that is superior to Sannō (based on the *chigo* adage, which assumes the *chigo* is foremost), then ultimately the result is an allegorization of the intermingling between kami (*chigo*) and buddhas (monk).

As previously noted, the *chigo* is an inherently awakened entity on top of which the god Sannō descends. But this was no simple possession – the *chigo* transubstantiated into the body of Sannō. Moreover, the Tendai monk is the *chigo*'s derivative counterpart (“the monk comes second” or “Sannō originates from *chigo*”), absorbing Sannō's powers during sexual acts. The two are nonetheless mutually constitutive; they illuminate each other and cannot be separated. According to this reasoning, sexual connection allows them to instantiate not only their Buddhahood but also their full potential as kami. The deification actuates the co-mingling of all aspects of reality, allowing the monk to capitalize on the kami's divine power that was channeled through the deified *chigo* and absorbed through him in a Tantric sexual union. Put simply, the monks were awarded the essence of kami and Buddha awakening, and the gods were glorified through incarnation in flesh and blood, emanating in the innately awakened body of a child and in the world of phenomena, which was valorized over the abstractions of ultimate reality. Both kami and humans were drawn closer to an elated absolute mode of being through ritual deification.

In the commentarial text of the *Shōgyō hiden shi* manuscript the interpretation of the *chigo* adage is as follows: “The *chigo* is original ground. Sannō is manifest traces. Therefore, we say that the *chigo* is foremost, Sannō comes second. This is written in oral transmissions.”⁷⁹ Discussing this metaphysical assertion, Hirota Tetsumichi observes that, in the *chigo kanjō* ritual, “The *chigo* equals Sannō.”⁸⁰ However, there is an additional layer to this. It seems clear that this sacred phrase situates the *chigo* above Sannō at the top of the pantheon, and this sudden apotheosis reveals what happens to the *chigo*'s body after sex: the *chigo* transcends transcendence itself.

The *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden* manuscript states that inside Sannō there is a *Chigo no miya* 児ノ宮. This suggests that the *chigo* exists within the god Sannō as its kernel – the *chigo* is the seed from which Sannō's divinity sprouts. The sexual act between *chigo* and monk allows to overcome differentiation between the

79 児ノ本地，山王ノ垂迹也。故ニ一児二山王也可秘々々口傳 在之。 *Kō chigo shōgyō hiden*.

80 Hirota Tetsumichi, *Chūsei Hokkekyō chūshakusho no kenkyū*, 411.

two and appreciate the sameness, in addition to the elevation of the *chigo* above Sannō. Through summoning Sannō, then, there is no final separation from the delusional world – but rather an absolute affirmation of the concrete, including passionate afflictions.

Conclusion: A Consecration of Male-Male Sexuality

In my analysis of the various manuscripts of *chigo kanjō*, we have seen that the *chigo*'s body was the locus of doctrinal and ritual engagement. In addition, bodily transformations in the ritual were formulated in accordance with existing exo-Esoteric liturgical and doctrinal understandings so as to make manifest the divine power of the *chigo*. Paradoxically, the appropriate exo-Esoteric balance of the ritual is often ignored by scholars, who focus instead on its exoteric elements, sometimes to the exclusion of the Esoteric. Especially evident in previous scholarship is the focus on Kannon over any other deity and its respected physical transformation. But to do this is to discount a vital aspect of *chigo kanjō*. The ritual was not limited to one climactic moment. But, rather, it constituted a Tantric (Esoteric) process of attaining manifold bodily states that triggered the union with Mahāvairocana. In turn, other bodies that were attained in the ritual – those of Kannon and Sannō – were reinforced by the Tendai exoteric knowledge. In the case of Kannon, the transformation into the bodhisattva was validated by the oral transmissions of the Lotus Sutra represented in the ritual by Kannon's secret teaching and its revelation that *chigo* is an avatar of Kannon. In the case of Sannō, the deification was grounded in Tendai's Threefold Truth (*santai*), which supported the transubstantiation of *chigo* as the kami Sannō. Overall, in this ritual the workings of the body tapped into the salvific power of Buddhism. In addition, the ritual-doctrinal apparatus – including its potency to transform the body – collapsed the distinction between *chigo* and monk, dissolved the polarities between the concrete and the abstract, and provided an ontological realization enacted during sexual union.

With the institutionalization of monk-*chigo* sexuality in the Tendai ritual of *chigo kanjō*, the veneration and adoration elder monks felt for young boys acquired unprecedented legitimization and status. *Chigo kanjō* exemplified how the *chigo* socio-occupational category was richly invested with various ontological and semiological aspects directly imposed by a monastic discourse on sexuality. This coerced romance, operating in the discursive fields of doctrine, literature, and ritual, was supported by the prevalent religious authority of the

time – which inscribed the *chigo*'s body with the status of a libidinal god. The *chigo* was understood as the originally enlightened Dainichi, the bodhisattva Kannon, and the god Sannō – all of which were sought for their powers to overcome sexual desire and sanctify sex. This understanding constituted the building blocks of an institutionally-sanctioned Buddhist consecration of male-male sexuality, perhaps the only one known in world history.