

## Duality and the *Kami*: The Ritual Iconography and Visual Constructions of Medieval Shintō

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## Résumé

Le discours médiéval sur les kami a produit de riches représentations iconographiques des divinités. Ces images mettent non seulement au défi l'idée reçue, moderne, selon laquelle le shintō serait une tradition sans images, mais elles témoignent également du fait que de nombreuses manières de visualiser les kami ont été expérimentées au Moyen Âge. De plus, elles mettent au premier plan la variété des performances rituelles relatives aux kami, auxquelles la production de l'imagerie religieuse était liée.

Le présent article explore l'iconographie du shintō médiéval en rapport avec le développement du discours visuel de l'ésotérisme, et sa signification épistémologique et sotériologique. Il introduit une énigmatique triade « shintō », dans laquelle Amaterasu est mise au centre, flanquée par les deux Rois de Science (myōō) Fudō et Aizen. Amaterasu est représentée comme une déesse à cheval et elle est identifiée au Bodhisattva Mvaghosa (Memyō). Les deux myōō sont représentés comme ses acolytes, mais ils jouent un rôle crucial dans la construction symbolique de la triade. Cette imagerie se retrouve dans nombre d'ouvrages appartenant au courant tardif de ce qu'on appelle le Ryōbu Shintō, et dans le contexte des rituels du Miwaryū Shintō. C'est une imagerie comportant plusieurs couches d'interprétation, où sont encastrés des mythes, des doctrines ésotériques et des exégèses du Yijing : elle est en fait informée par les idées du yin et du yang et par la notion classique de l'interface entre l'externe et l'interne exprimée dans le Yijing, en même temps qu'elle cristallise des segments de pratiques méditatives de l'ésotérisme. Une analyse détaillée de divers documents traitant de cette triade suggère que cette iconographie shintō était étroitement influencée par les tentatives de l'ésotérisme contemporain pour visualiser les différents stades et les fruits des pratiques rituelles sous forme anthropomorphique. De plus, cette triade pouvait être le point de départ d'un discours sur une « bouddhité embryologique », qui s'était développé et répandu dans toutes sortes de lignées au cours du Moyen Âge tardif. Les matériaux du Miwaryū montrent que ce discours s'est même prolongé jusqu'à l'époque Edo.

# DUALITY AND THE *KAMI* THE RITUAL ICONOGRAPHY AND VISUAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF MEDIEVAL SHINTO

Lucia DOLCE

*Le discours médiéval sur les kami a produit de riches représentations iconographiques des divinités. Ces images mettent non seulement au défi l'idée reçue, moderne, selon laquelle le shintō serait une tradition sans images, mais elles témoignent également du fait que de nombreuses manières de visualiser les kami ont été expérimentées au Moyen Âge. De plus, elles mettent au premier plan la variété des performances rituelles relatives aux kami, auxquelles la production de l'imagerie religieuse était liée.*

*Le présent article explore l'iconographie du shintō médiéval en rapport avec le développement du discours visuel de l'ésotérisme, et sa signification épistémologique et sotériologique. Il introduit une énigmatique triade « shintō », dans laquelle Amaterasu est mise au centre, flanquée par les deux Rois de Science (myōō 明王) Fudō 不動 et Aizen 愛染. Amaterasu est représentée comme une déesse à cheval et elle est identifiée au Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa (Memyō 馬鳴菩薩). Les deux myōō sont représentés comme ses acolytes, mais ils jouent un rôle crucial dans la construction symbolique de la triade. Cette imagerie se retrouve dans nombre d'ouvrages appartenant au courant tardif de ce qu'on appelle le Ryōbu Shintō 兩部神道, et dans le contexte des rituels du Miwaryū Shintō 三輪流神道. C'est une imagerie comportant plusieurs couches d'interprétation, où sont encastrés des mythes, des doctrines ésotériques et des exégèses du Yijing 易經 : elle est en fait informée par les idées du yin et du yang et par la notion classique de l'interface entre l'externe et l'interne exprimée dans le Yijing, en même temps qu'elle cristallise des segments de pratiques méditatives de l'ésotérisme. Une analyse détaillée de divers documents traitant de cette triade suggère que cette iconographie shintō était étroitement influencée par les tentatives de l'ésotérisme contemporain pour visualiser les différents stades et les fruits des pratiques rituelles sous forme anthropomorphique. De plus, cette triade pouvait être le point de départ d'un discours sur une « bouddhité embryologique », qui s'était développé et répandu dans toutes sortes de lignées au cours du Moyen Âge tardif. Les matériaux du Miwaryū montrent que ce discours s'est même prolongé jusqu'à l'époque Edo.*

A great number of medieval Shintō texts offer interpretations of the world of the *kami* by employing dualistic imagery. This peculiarity may be seen as an obvious consequence of the application to the world of *kami* the basic hermeneutical pattern of esoteric Buddhism, which unfolds through a twofold mandalic reality (Womb/Diamond). Indeed this pattern even gave its name to the most representative medieval discourse on the *kami*, Ryōbu Shintō 兩部神道. Yet contemporary Buddhist

documents dealing with matters other than the *kami* suggest that in the esoteric world of the time there was a distinct emphasis on representing duality and the effects of its overcoming. Such concern was articulated in a variety of conceptual and visual forms, informed by two paradigms. One privileged the imagery of the unity of opposites that draws from the fundamental Tōmitsu idea of the interpenetration of the two mandalic realities. The other expressed the subsuming of duality through a threefold pattern, which had a Taimitsu origin but was broadly used, as in the case of the so-called ‘combinatory practice of the triad’ (*sanzon gōgyō-hō* 三尊合行法) developed by Tōmitsu lineages. These exegeses disclose an effort to reproduce and actualize the notion of non-duality in the physical action of the ritual protocol, by incorporating traditional Buddhist and non-Buddhist motifs. They also created new iconographies.

This study considers a handful of Shintō documents within such a hermeneutical context. It explores the way in which the discourse on the *kami* appropriated binary and triadic patterns and reconfigured them by using elements of the *kami* myths as well as of classic Chinese correlative thought (*yin/yang*). The ritual dimension of this interpretative process is a crucial question that deserves more attention than it has hitherto been given. The ‘reading’ of the *kami* that we find in medieval documents both generated other mythological associations, and itself became a mythopoeic mechanism. By transposing elements of the *kami* world in the context of esoteric rituals, such readings created new versions of ritual patterns, ritual implements and ritual invocations which, in turn, re-signified and augmented the meaning of related Buddhist concepts. In these ritual narratives not only were the *kami* incorporated in the Buddhist universe, they also became one of the concrete forms into which complex Buddhist notions, such as non-duality and the physical realization of enlightenment, could be crystallized and expanded. The ritualization of the *kami* thus consisted in a change of liturgical modalities, which dynamically redefined the epistemological and soteriological significance of the ritual itself.

Indispensable elements of this process were icons and mantric syllables. The innumerable images that we find in medieval Shintō texts — drawings of *kami*, diagrams of sacred space and of ritual objects, and visual representations of concepts — give a sense of the performative dimension in which the discourse on the *kami* was produced. Indeed, many of these texts do not look much different from ritual collections produced by other Buddhist lineages. These images are not accessory elements of the intellectual rethinking of the *kami* world; rather, they constitute the interpretation itself, a visual episteme that often does not have a sustained discursive counterpart because it unfolded in a ritual framework that already possessed the general structure of the system. Such use of ‘forms’ was sustained and legitimized (both doctrinally and liturgically) by the esoteric context in which the images were conceived. At the same time, by regarding images and syllables as the actual and real form of the *kami*, it also bore a striking similarity to non-Buddhist notions, such as those expressed in the hexagrams of the *Yijing* 易經.

### Medieval Shintō iconography

This study introduces an enigmatic iconographical triad that is found in the late medieval Shintō corpus: Fudō, Aizen and Tenshō daijin 天照大神 (Amaterasu). Before discussing the details of this imagery, two further considerations on the features of what we may call ‘medieval Shintō iconography’ are in order.

The first characteristic that may be identified in the medieval production of Shintō images is the focus on the personal and corporeal identity of the *kami*. The visualization of Amaterasu, for example, was carried out not only by applying the twofold mandalic pattern to the physical space of Ise, namely, by superimposing the Womb and Diamond mandalas on the Inner and Outer shrines. It was also developed in anthropomorphic terms, by creating a double mandalic body for Amaterasu. Different sources depict Amaterasu as two discrete female deities inscribed in eight-petaled lotuses, sitting cross-legged, and holding a round mirror. One of the two deities makes the meditation *mudrā* in the guise of Dainichi in the Womb mandala while the other makes the wisdom-fist *mudrā* as Dainichi in the Diamond mandala.<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1a-b)

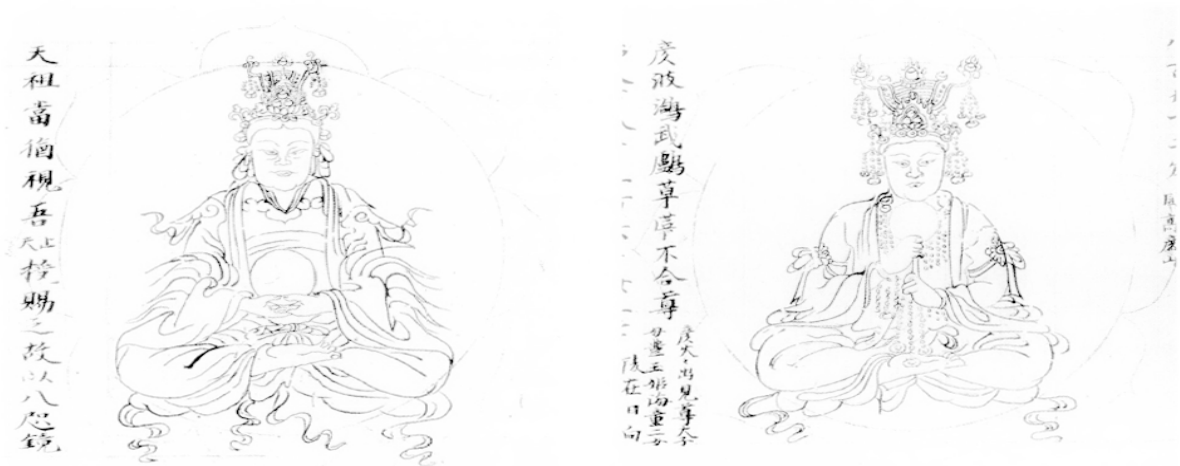


Fig. 1a-b: Mandalic Amaterasu. From *Nishō Tenshō kōtaijin senkō jidaishō*, Shinpukuji Archive.

This iconographic development may be considered as a type of ‘embodied mandalization,’ similar to the one that had been carried out by Japanese ritualists in the esotericization of other Buddhist elements such as the two Buddhas of the *Lotus sūtra*.<sup>2</sup> It stands in sharp contrast to the modern perception of Shintō as an aniconic

1. *Nishō tenshō kōtaijin senkō jidaishō* 二所天照皇太神遷幸時代抄, pp.125-27 and 154-55 (verso). Similar images are also included in the “Shintaizu 神體圖” section of the *Reikiki* 麗氣記, pp 112-3.

2. This iconography is discussed in Dolce, “Reconsidering the Taxonomy of the Esoteric: Hermeneutical and Ritual Practices of the Lotus Sūtra,” in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, Mark Teeuwen and Bernhard Scheid, eds., London & New York, Routledge, 2006,

tradition but it should be seen as a significant contribution to the representation of the *kami* that was being experimented with in the medieval period.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, Shintō images were not molded exclusively out of the normative model of the two maṇḍalas. Indeed, unusual and enigmatic icons, of which the origin and function still need to be fully grasped, constitute a substantial part of the medieval sources on the *kami*.<sup>4</sup> Yet if this peculiarity is seen in the wider religious landscape of the time, it parallels a trend in contemporaneous Buddhist discourse, where non-canonical iconographies developed and spread throughout the networks of esoteric lineages. One example of such ‘new’ Buddhist images was the pairing the two Kings of Knowledge (*myōō* 明王), Fudō 不動 and Aizen 愛染. These two deities were not present in canonical sources as a couple, but by the thirteenth century they appeared together in several documents and ritual objects, and in some cases the representation of each *myōō* greatly differed from canonical standards.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a new triad was created on the basis of the association of Fudō and Aizen, most prominently within the Sanbōin 三寶院 lineage of Tōmitsu, which incorporated a third icon in the form of the Wish-fulfilling jewel, Kūkai, or the five-element *stūpa* in the ritual known as *sanzon gōgyō*.<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 2)

New Shintō iconography such as the triad centred on Amaterasu thus needs to be considered in light of medieval developments of the esoteric visual discourse and its epistemological and soteriological significance. I have discussed elsewhere the performative nature of the Buddhist triads based on the association of Fudō and Aizen, suggesting that they embodied different stages of the union of opposites as enacted in a specific esoteric ritual practice. Here it suffices to point out that this process was explicated by using sets of other opposites, most remarkably astral elements such as the moon and the sun, and sexual elements such as the interaction between man and woman. The triad served to give visual form to the realization of the unity, which was in turn embodied by a distinctive deity. Ultimately it

pp. 130-71.

3. Other examples in a *honjisuijaku* 本地垂迹 context are the representations of the *sanjūbanjin* 三十番神, which include Amaterasu. See Dolce, “Hokke Shintō: *Kami* in the Nichiren Tradition,” in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., London: Curzon/Routledge, 2003, pp. 222-254.

4. One example of this imagery is discussed in Kadoya Atsushi, “Myths, rites and icons: Three views of a secret,” in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, Teeuwen and Scheid eds., London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 269-83.

5. Dolce, *Esoteric Patterns in Nichiren's Thought*, Ph.D. dissertation, Leiden University, 2002.

6. Dolce, “Girei ni yori seisei sareru kanzennarushintai: chūsei mikkyō no ‘hi-seiōteki zuzō’ to shuhō o megutte 儀礼により生成される完全なる身体——中世密教の“非正統的圖像”と修法をめぐる,” in Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, ed., *Nihon ni okeru shūkyō tekusuto no shoisō to tōjibō* 日本における宗教テクストの諸位相と統辞法, Nagoya daigaku daigakuin bungakukenyū-ka, 2008, 58-71; “Nigensei no girei: Fudō/Aizen to hiriki no zuzōka 二元性の儀礼——不動・愛染と秘力の圖像化,” in Dolce and Matsumoto 松本, eds. *Girei no chikara*, Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2009, and “Ritualizing duality: Fudō, Aizen and the secret iconography of empowerment,” in Dolce and Matsumoto, eds. *The Power of Ritual* (forthcoming). Fig. 2 is an example of this triad, from a manuscript of the *Goyuigō daiji* 御遺告大事 in the archives of Ninnaji. I would like to thank Abe Yasurō for graciously making a photographic reproduction of this manuscript available to me.

encapsulated a hermeneutic of duality that aimed at disclosing the possibilities of a bodily and liturgical accomplishment of its overcoming. The extent to which this process was a concern that was also expressed in the Shintō triad will be explored in the following pages.

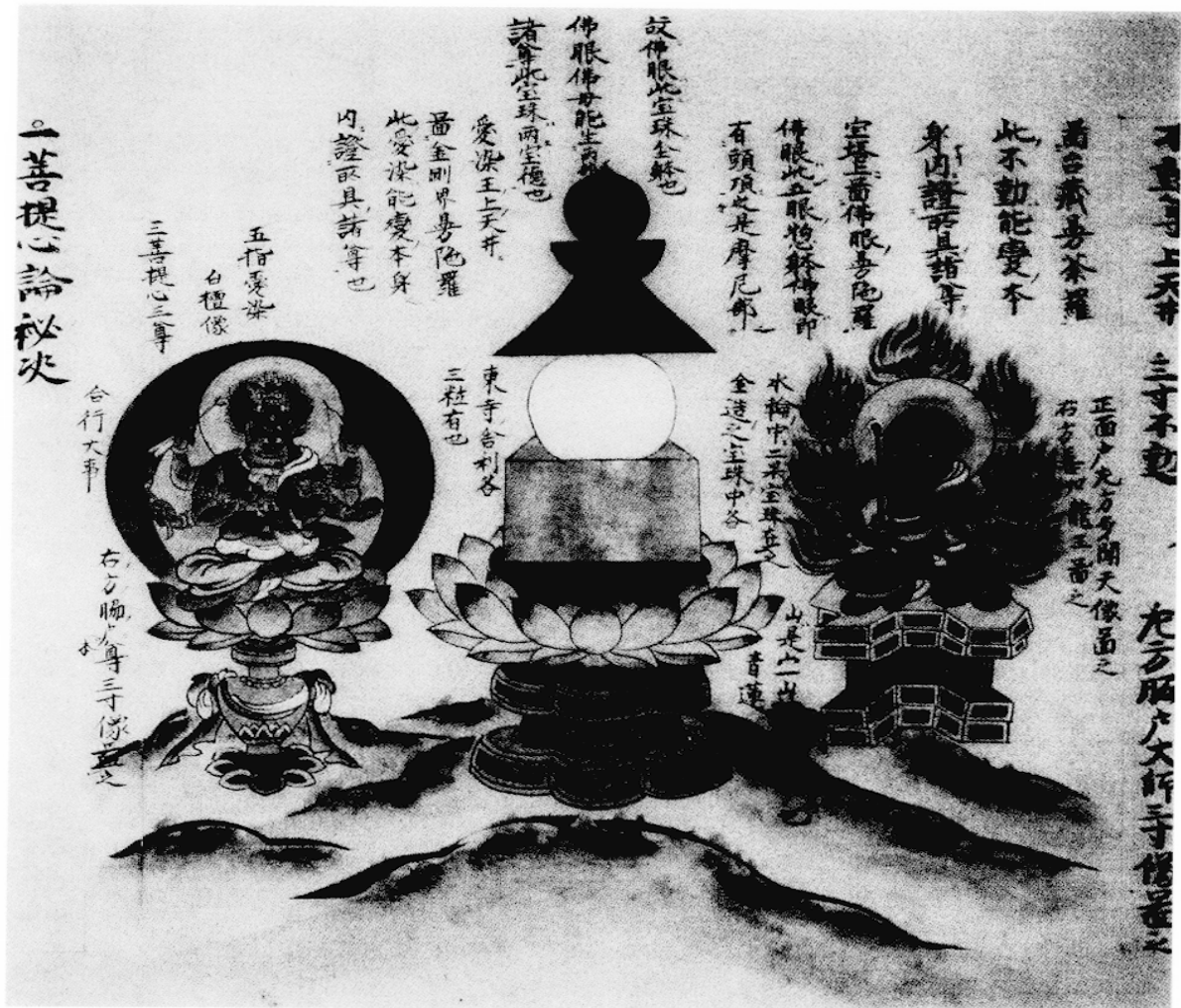


Fig. 2: Fudo, Aizen and the Five-element stūpa. From the *Goyuigō daiji*, Ninnaji Archives.

The material reviewed in this paper includes documents of the so-called late Ryōbu Shintō and of Miwaryū 三輪流 and Goryū 御流 Shintō, all belonging to the broad category of Ryōbu Shintō.<sup>7</sup> Late Ryōbu Shintō, mostly formulated from the late Kamakura period, was concerned with the deities of Ise but spread outside Ise

7. Important printed collections of this material are the volumes *Ryōbu shintōshū* 兩部神道集, which collects documents from the Shinpukuji 眞福寺 Archives; *Shingon shintō*, 2 眞言神道 of the *Shintō taikēi*, which includes a large number of Miwaryū documents, and *Shingon shintō shūsei* 眞言神道集成 of the Tōmitsu jissō kuketsu shūsei, for Goryū Shintō.

in temples of the Ono 小野流 and Ninnaji 仁和寺 lineages — the same context in which the association of Fudō and Aizen was developed. This did not exclude a Taimitsu connection, which is discernible especially in Miwa Shintō documents.<sup>8</sup> A more comprehensive survey of medieval sources than can be attempted in the limited space of this paper would be needed, however, to grasp the extent of intersectorian influences on *kami* interpretations, and to map out the spreading of specific ritual practices across different lineages and cultic sites.

### A new triad? Fudō, Aizen and Amaterasu

Archival investigations carried out in temples in Nara prefecture in the 1990s brought to light a variety of visual materials used in Miwaryū rituals. Among these images are two examples in which Fudō and Aizen were associated with a third figure, a mysterious representation of Tenshō daijin (Amaterasu).

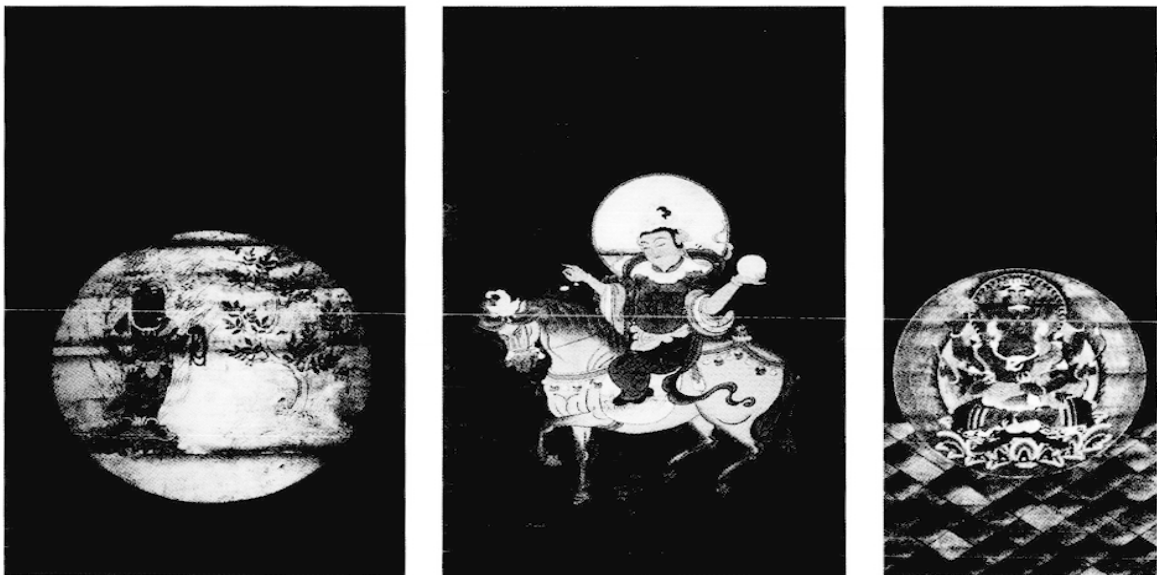


Fig. 3a-c: The Main Deity of the Rock-cave, Aśvaghōṣa (center), and his Assistants, Fudō (left) and Aizen (right). From Kongōzanji and Jishōin Archives.

The first example consists of three paintings that appear to have been a set of ritual icons. The paintings are classified as “Image of the Main Venerable of the Rock-cave Aśvaghōṣa” (*iwato honzon Memyō zō* 岩戸本尊馬鳴像), “Image of

8. On the formation of the Miwaryū, see Ōmiwa jinja shiryō henshū iinkai 大神神社史料編修委員会 eds. *Miwaryū shintō no kenkyū* 三輪流神道の研究, Miwa: Ōmiwa jinja, 1983; Sugahara Shinkai 菅原信海, “Miwaryū shintō no keisei to hatten 三輪流神道の形成と発展,” and in English, Andreeva, “At the crossroads of esoteric *kami* worship. Mt. Miwa and the early beginnings of Miwa(ryū) Shintō.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2006.



the Rock-cave Assistant Fudō Myōō” (*iwato kyōji Fudō Myōō zō* 岩洞脇侍不動明王像), and “Image of the Rock-cave Assistant Aizen Myōō” (*iwato kyōji Aizen Myōō zō* 岩洞脇侍愛染明王像). The main deity is a figure riding a horse, and holding a solar disk in her left hand and a scale in her right hand. Fudō follows a standard iconography as a two-armed standing deity, but it is portrayed next to a tree and inscribed in a lunar disk against a dark background. Aizen is a six-armed figure, supplied with the usual implements, and sitting on a lotus pedestal, also inscribed in a circle.” (Fig. 3a-c)

The second example is a drawing of a female figure riding a horse, with her feet resting on a lotus, and holding the same accessories as the painting above. An inscription identifies her as “the Venerable inside the Rock-cave” (*iwato chūson* 岩洞中尊)<sup>10</sup> and explains that this venerable is Aśvaghōṣa. Two circles are drawn at the sides of the deity. One inscribes “the statue of Fudō inside the moon disk” in Sino-Japanese characters, and a gloss prescribes its placement to the left of the main deity. The second circle represents “the statue of Aizen inside the sun disk,” and is to be placed to the right of the main deity. Two inscriptions below the circles identify them as the “Rock-cave Assistants.” (Fig. 4)<sup>11</sup>

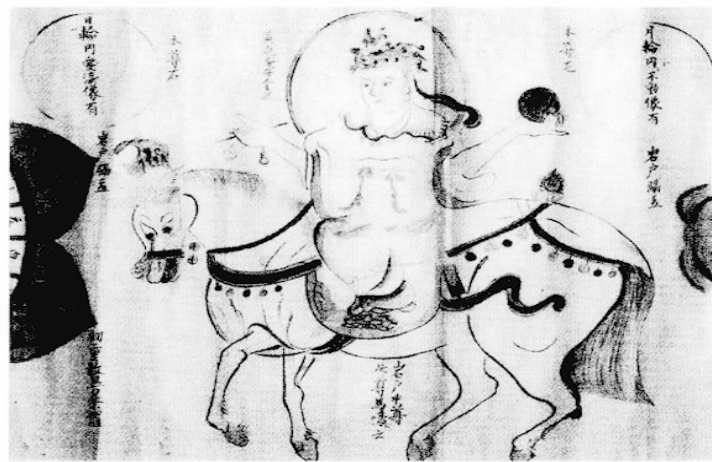


Fig. 4: The Main Deity of the Rock-cave. From *Miwaryū shidai*, Hasedera Archives.

9. Colours on paper, Kongōsanji 金剛山寺 Archives (Aśvaghōṣa and Fudō) and Jishōin 持聖院 Archives (Aizen). Reproduced in the exhibition catalogue *Shintō kanjō: wasurareta shinbutsu shūgō no sekai* 神道灌頂——忘れられた神仏習合の世界, Nara: Gangōji bunkazai kenkyūjo, 1999, p. 14, exhibits nos. 25, 26 and no. 44.

10. I have here translated *iwato chūson* as *iwato no naka no son* 岩洞の中の尊 to emphasize the importance of the cave, but the translation could also be *iwato no chūson* 岩洞の中尊, ‘Central deity of the Rock-cave.’

11. *Miwaryū shidai* 三輪流次第, Hasedera archives, colours on paper. In *Shintō kanjō: wasurareta shinbutsu shūgō no sekai*, p. 9, exhibit no. 17-7.

### The horse-riding Amaterasu

These images refer to Amaterasu indirectly, by citing the heavenly Rock-cave where the deity concealed herself. An image similar to those described above is included in the iconographic sections of the *Reikiki* known as “Shintaizu.” In this collection, too, an unnamed deity holds a solar disk in the left hand and a scale in the right hand, but is not complemented by the images of Fudō and Aizen, or by the solar and lunar disks. Instead, two sets of eight figures representing guardian gods and indicated as “the eight great bodhisattvas,” and four offering-carrying female figures called “the four heavenly women” are depicted at the sides, suggesting a mandalic arrangement of the deities.<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 5) The form of a horse-riding deity seems to have been one of the possible representations of Amaterasu in Ryōbu Shintō, and was reproduced in such valuable works of art as the one in Fig. 6.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 5: Horse-riding Deity. From “Shintaizu,” *Reikiki*, Shinpukuji Archives.

12. *Shintaizuki* 神體圖記, 2 fascicles, Shinpukuji Archives 64A, 1-2, in Abe Yasurō 阿部 泰郎, ed., *Shinpukuji Ōsu bunko jingi-sho zuroku* 眞福寺大須文庫神祇書圖録, Nagoya daigaku hikaku jinbungaku kenkyū nenpō, 2005, p. 31. The iconographic sections of the *Reikiki* have been preserved in various versions. In the Kanazawa bunko 金澤文庫 manuscript (492/6), which is a copy of the four iconographic sections of the *Reikiki* by Kenna 劔阿 (1261–1338), the second head of Shōmyōji 稱名寺, Amaterasu/Aśvaghōṣa and all accompanying figures wear T'ang period clothes. See *Yomigaeru Kamakura no gakumon* よみがえる鎌倉の學問, Kanazawa bunko, 2006, p. 22. A printed version of the images may be found in *Reikiki*, pp. 91–101. It should be noted that in another section of the *Reikiki* Izanagi is described as a male figure riding a white horse like the bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa and holding a scale to weigh human being's deeds. See “Tenchi Reikiki 天地麗氣記,” *Reikiki*, p. 29.

13. Muromachi period, color on silk. Private Collection, USA. I would like to express my gratitude to Sue Cassidy Clark and Max Moerman for making a photographic reproduction of the scroll available for publication.

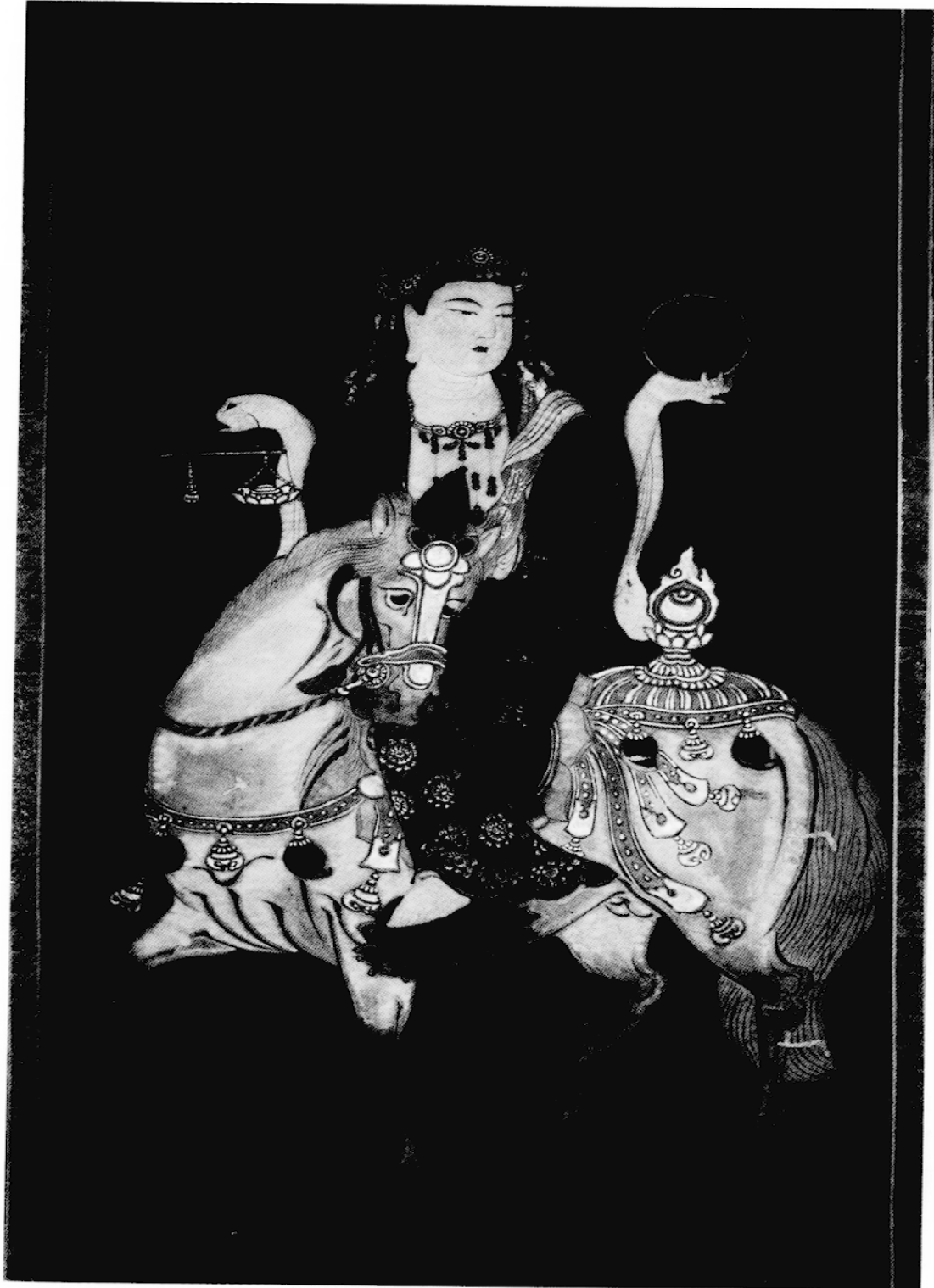


Fig. 6: Amaterasu - Memyō. Private Collection, USA.

Amaterasu's identification with Aśvaghōṣa justifies this pictorial rendering in iconographical terms. The image of Aśvaghōṣa on a horse was created in China, where the Buddhist scholar-monk had been transformed into a bodhisattva and tutelary god of sericulture. It was probably evoked by his name, literally translated in Chinese as Maming (Jp. Memyō 馬鳴), meaning "horse-neigh." Japanese ritual collections of different lineages, such as the *Besson zakki* 別尊雜記 (Tōmitsu) and the *Asabashō* 阿婆縛抄 (Taimitsu), attest to the popularity of this deity in the medieval period. These sources depict him as a six-armed or a two-armed figure (depending on the ritual manual that the iconography follows), clad in white and sitting on a lotus pedestal, on a horse; in one hand he holds a scale, while the other hand(s) make different *mudrās*.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 7) The iconographic borrowings of the image of Amaterasu are evident. But why was Aśvaghōṣa, of all new deities, chosen as a model by ritualists striving to create visible forms for Amaterasu?



Fig. 7: The bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa. From the *Besson zakki*.

The ritual anthologies do not link Amaterasu and Aśvaghōṣa, but these and other medieval Buddhist sources include several stories from the Chinese lore of Aśvaghōṣa, from which analogies could be drawn with Amaterasu's myth. Chinese hagiographies, for instance, praised Aśvaghōṣa for transforming himself into a silk-worm to make clothes for poor people, where the *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki* presented

14. *Asabashō* 114, *Tzuzō* 9: 296c-298a; *Besson zakki* 31, *Tzuzō* 3: 366c, 384a-b, fig. 148 (p. 385). Curiously, *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪鈔, the major Tōmitsu anthology of the medieval period, does not include rituals for the bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa.

Amaterasu as the divine maiden who wove clothes for the gods.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the etiology of the horse-head maiden (Matou 馬頭), the popular Chinese god of silkworms associated with Aśvaghōṣa, narrated an account of a young lady enveloped by the skin of a dead horse and concealed from view.

Similarly, Amaterasu hid in the Rock-cave after Susanoo 素戔鳴尊 threw at her the hide of a dead horse.<sup>16</sup> In both myths a (dead) horse is the cause of a female figure disappearing in a dark place, and this concealment eventually produces prosperity. Other stories also offer material for the identification of Aśvaghōṣa with a Sun-god. One states that the bodhisattva transformed himself into the sun before entering *nirvāṇa*,<sup>17</sup> and another says that he was born as Nāgārjuna's elder brother and called the Sun Jewel.<sup>18</sup> These stories clearly circulated among esoteric practitioners of the time, and constituted a mythological background which was fertile soil for the medieval interest in elaborating new narratives. The association with Amaterasu must have sprung from here. Indeed one finds evidence of such a mythopoeic process in the fourteenth-century compendium of Taimitsu material, the *Keiranshūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集, which records several new myths created through linguistic and visual assonances of apparently unrelated narratives. The *Keiranshūyōshū* connected Aśvaghōṣa to the Sun deity in different places. In one entry the link is the horse, as the compiler refers to the bodhisattva's origin-story, compares it to the Sun-god (Nittenshi 日天子) who rides eight horses, and concludes that the horses are the *samaya* form of Sun-gods.<sup>19</sup> In another entry the link is sericulture: discussing why the 'Land to the East' (i.e., Japan) is called the 'Country of the mulberry tree' (Fusō-koku 扶桑國) the text sketches out multiple connections whereby Aśvaghōṣa is the original ground (*honji*) of silkworms and at the same time is identified with Kannon, and this becomes evidence for the fact that the Sun-god of the Ise shrine abides in the eastern direction (*mokubō* 木方) of the Eastern Land.<sup>20</sup>

These mythological correlations are a significant aspect of the medieval conception of the *kami* and cannot be overlooked. Later developments in Amaterasu devotionalism during the Edo period, for instance, similarly involved the worship of Amaterasu as the tutelary deity of sericulture, much as Aśvaghōṣa had been worshipped in China and medieval Japan.<sup>21</sup> The concern of the present study, however,

15. *Asabashō*, p. 296c, which quotes the *Baolin Transmission* 寶林傳 from Annen's 安然 *Shittanzō* 悉曇藏, T. 84: 371b.

16. Iyanaga Nobumi discusses the mythological background that might have connected the two deities in his *Kannon ben'yōtan* 觀音變容譚, Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2002, pp. 515–32. The Chinese sources cited in the Japanese medieval collections are analysed in Stuart Young's forthcoming dissertation "The Indian Buddhist Patriarchs in China," Princeton University.

17. Iyanaga, *op.cit.*, p. 527–8.

18. *Shingon fuhō san'yōshō* 眞言付法纂要抄 by Seison 成尊, T. 77: 420b; *Byakubō kushō* 白寶山抄, Tzuzō 7: 256a.

19. *Keiranshūyōshū*, T. 76: 586a, "Batō Kannon 馬頭觀音."

20. *Keiranshūyōshū*, T. 76: 789b, "Fusō-koku no koto 扶桑國事."

21. See, for example the catalogue of exhibition *Tama no minzoku: yōsan shinkō* 多摩の民俗・養蚕信仰 held at the City Museum of Machida (Greater Tōkyō) in 1991. I am grateful to Hatakeyama Yutaka 畠山豊, chief curator of the Museum, for taking time to discuss this material

is the ritual use of the specific iconography of Amaterasu and its incorporation in a triadic representation. In the following pages I shall therefore turn to an etiological narrative that elaborates on such ritual aspects.

**Amaterasu inside the Rock-cave: the exegesis of the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu***  
天石窟口決

Ritual documents of the Miwaryū reveal that the images of Amaterasu/Memyō, Fudō and Aizen were used during a liturgy called “the initiation of the Rock-cave” (*iwato kanjō* 岩戸灌頂). This was one of the variously named *abhiṣeka* focused on Amaterasu,<sup>22</sup> which re-enacted the disappearance of Amaterasu in the Rock-cave.

The Rock-cave was a crucial element in Amaterasu’s myth, and the centrality of the motif of its opening in the Buddhist discourse on the *kami* is also noteworthy. Indeed the myth lent itself to multiple references to other Buddhist ‘openings,’ first of all the opening of the Iron Stūpa, which is perhaps the most critical element in the mythology of transmission of esoteric teachings. The second chapter of the *Jindaikan hiketsu* 神代卷秘決, another important medieval Shintō document, argues for instance that the Heavenly Rock-cave should be considered at the same level as the *stūpa* of Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna (i.e., the jewelled *stūpa* of the *Lotus Sūtra*) and the Iron Stūpa of the South.<sup>23</sup> The Miwaryū initiation that takes its name from the Rock-cave, however, seemed to focus not on the moment of the opening of the cave, and the reappearance of the deity in world, but rather on the time in which Amaterasu was hiding inside the cave — a feature underlined in the iconography surveyed above, which purports to represent the deity *inside* the Rock-cave (*iwato chūson*).

An elaborate and intriguing explanation of the icons used during the *iwato kanjō* is contained in a secret transmission known as *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu*.<sup>24</sup> This short, cryptic document is of particular interest in that it employs the hexagrams of the *Yijing* to support the iconographical exegesis of Amaterasu and her relation to Fudō and Aizen. In this sense it presents an interpretation that goes beyond strictly esoteric lines, and further study is necessary to determine the genealogy

during my visit in 2006, and to Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡 for kindly retrieving the catalogue information.

22. Other names for this *abhiṣeka* are *Ise kanjō* 伊勢灌頂 and *tenchi kanjō* 天地灌頂. Cf. Yamamoto Hiroko 山本ひろ子, “Shinto kanjō no sekai 神道灌頂の世界,” in her *Iienjōfu Chūsei shinbutsu shūgō no sekai* 變成譜—中世神佛習合の世界, Tōkyō: Shunjūsha, 1993, pp. 325–36. A detailed description in English of one of these initiations is in Rambelli, “The Ritual World of Buddhist Shintō: The *Reikiki* and Initiations on *Kami*-Related Matters (*jingi kanjō*) in Late Medieval and Early-Modern Japan,” *JJRS* 29/3–4 (2002), pp. 265–297.

23. “Tenshō daijin,” *Jindaikan hiketsu*, p. 57. This long text presents itself as a secret commentary on the “Heavenly Generations” section of the *Nihon shoki*.

24. *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu*, pp. 136–38. This transmission is part of *Miwaryū shintō kanjō ho shinshō* 三輪流神道江補眞鈔, a collection of material on *kami* rituals compiled, according to the colophon, by Shinchō Hōin 眞澄法印 of Shōōin 聖王院 in 1673. (*Shingon shintō*, 2, *kaidai* 解題, p. 13.)

and historical context of such borrowings.<sup>25</sup>

The text starts by recalling Amaterasu's concealment in the heavenly Rock-cave, and identifies the cave with the Inner shrine of Ise, Amaterasu's (terrestrial) abode. It establishes the female identity of Amaterasu by playing with the character 陰, which means 'to hide' but also *yin*, the cosmological principle corresponding to woman and Earth. It then discusses the identity of the venerable inside the Rock-cave as Aśvaghōṣa:

When this bodhisattva appeared in the world, six hundred years after the demise of the Buddha, he was born in the eastern Indian country. This was in fact the second birth of the Sun-god (Nisshin 日神), but it was not called so. Now the master's secret explanation has clarified that [Aśvaghōṣa] is the physical form (*gyōzo* 形像) of Ōhirume no mikoto 大日靈尊. This is why in the *Kokinshū* 古今集 a poem entitled "Hirume's song" recites: "Rein in your young horse / at Hinokuma River / at Sasanokuma / and let him drink there a while / that I may at least see your back." The image of this venerable [Aśvaghōṣa] is not the least different from that described in the poem, therefore the master's transmission speaks of this *bonzon* as Hirume no mikoto.<sup>26</sup>

At this point the interlocutor, that is, the disciple being initiated, queries why Ōhirume no mikoto is riding a horse while in the Rock-cave. The answer cites a number of hexagrams of the *Yijing* in the attempt to explain the nature of the Sun goddess:

Tenshō Daijin is the original *kami* in a female body. Woman is *yin*, therefore Earth (*kun*, Jp. kon 坤), ground (*di*, Jp. chi 地). The *Yijing* says: "*Kun*: What is great and originating, penetrating, advantageous, correct and having the firmness of a mare."<sup>27</sup> It also says: "Its comprehension is wide, and its brightness great. The various things obtain (by it) their full development. The mare is a creature of the earthly kind. Its (power of) moving on the earth is without limit."<sup>28</sup>

25. It should however be noted that knowledge of the *Yijing* was transmitted and maintained by Buddhist monks, who also were, at least until the Muromachi period, the only specialists to perform divinations according to the *Yijing*. The trigrams seem to have also undergone a process of mandalization, as the example of an early medieval manuscript I have recently perused would suggest: eight trigrams were arranged in a mandalic shape to represent the deity of the eight-petalled lotus of the central section of the Womb mandala. In this context the use of the trigrams to visualise Buddhist constructions of the *kami* is not surprising.

26. *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu*, p. 136. Here and in the following passages limitations of space prevent the inclusion of annotations which may render a less literal translation. Ōhirume is another name for Amaterasu. The poem is no. 1080 of the *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集, Book 20 ("Songs to entertain the gods"), *NKBT* 8, p. 326: Hirume no uta / Sasanokuma / hinokumagawa ni / koma tomete / shibushi mizu kae / kage o dani mimu ささのくまひのくま河にこまとめてしよし水かへかげをだにみん. The translation is from Helen McCullough, *Kokin wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. In her companion study of *waka* she suggests that these songs were related to the performance of *kagura*. See McCullough, *Brocade by Night: "Kokin wakashū" and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985, pp. 490-91.

27. Hexagram no. 2. I have here used the translation by James Legge, *I-Ching, Book of Change*, New York: University Books, 1964, p. 59 [reprint of *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 16, 1899].

28. This is actually the *Tuanzhuān* 象傳 commentary, the first *Wing* (yi 翼) of the *Yijing*.

Because the horse is the original essence of the *yin kami* and the female body, by drawing this [picture] the original essence is now disclosed. It reveals the form of the horse that goes back and forth in brightness and darkness.

It is also said: "A female deity riding a horse is the shape of the Sun-god falling to earth. Because both the horse and the female deity correspond to the earth, the virtue of the *yang* element [the sun] is lost, and thus it is eternally dark."

It is also said: "Because the Sun-god rules in the sky, he is endowed with the virtue of the *yang* element. This is Heaven. The horse is the Earth hexagram and thus it represents the ground. When the Sun-god rides the horse, this is the visible shape (*sugata*) of the hexagram of obstruction (*Pi* 否) of Heaven and Earth."<sup>29</sup>

The *Yijing* says: "In *Pi* there is the want of good understanding between the (different classes of) men, and its indication is unfavourable to the firm and correct course of the superior man. We see in it the great gone and the little come."<sup>30</sup> The *Tuanzhuàn* explains: "'The want of good understanding between the (different classes of) men in *Pi*, and its indication as unfavourable to the firm and correct course of the superior man' intimates that the great are gone and the little come. That is, heaven and earth are not in communication with each other, and all things in consequence do not have free course; the high and the low (superiors and inferiors) are not in communication with one another, and there are no (well-regulated) states under the sky."<sup>31</sup>

With this understanding one sees that the world under the sky is in darkness. The appearance of Tenshō kōtaijin 天照皇太神 when she abandons the people under the sky and conceals in the cave is this hexagram.

This secret exegesis thus draws on the image of the mare in the second hexagram of the *Yijing*, rather than on the image of the horse in general (which according to the *Yijing* system is *yang* 陽). The use of the first two hexagrams seems an attempt at solving the gender ambiguity of the Sun-deity, which should be male as the sun-god, and yet is a female deity in the Japanese myth. Accordingly, at one level the *Ama no sekutsu kuketsu* could be read as one of the many medieval secret transmissions on the gender of *kami*.<sup>32</sup> At a second level, though, the citations serve to support a cosmological and metaphysical reading of the visual image of Amaterasu, which at once epitomizes the dichotomous foundation of the world, and the union of Heaven and Earth, original nature and appearance. This concern with the combinatory nature of the being inside the cave needs to be underlined. Nevertheless, the text also draws attention to the solution of communication between the two cosmological poles, which occurs at the moment in which Amaterasu hides in the cave. To endorse this point, it refers to a third hexagram, and to a passage of the Japanese myth from the *Nihon shoki*. Interestingly, the latter connects the horse that the deity rides in the ritual imagery with the horse skinned by Susanoo, which was the cause of Amaterasu's concealment:

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*I-Ching*, Appendix 1, p. 215.

29. Hexagram no. 12: its inner trigram is *kun*, earth, and its outer trigram is *qian* 乾, heaven.

30. *I-Ching*, p. 83-84.

31. *Tuanzhuàn*, hexagram no. 12. *I-Ching*, p. 224.

32. This topic features, for instance, in the transmissions regarding the thirty *kami* of the month. See Dolce, "Hokke Shintō."



The *Nihongi* says: When Susano no mikoto saw that Tenshō daijin was in her sacred weaving hall, engaged in weaving the garments of the Gods, he flayed a spotted horse of Heaven, and breaking a hole in the roof tiles of the hall, flung it in. Then Tensho daijin was startled and alarmed, (...) and entered the Heavenly Rock-cave (...) <sup>33</sup>

Then the text explains the meaning of the accessories that characterize Amaterasu: The scale that [the deity] holds in her right hand weighs the good and bad [deeds] performed by sentient beings. The sun disk in her left hand is the symbolic form (*sannmaya*) that reveals the original essence of Ōhirume no mikoto.

Having discussed the middle deity, the compiler of the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu* moves on to elucidate the secret iconography of the two *myōō* that flank Amaterasu, resorting to an esoteric paradigm:

Inside a moon disk [placed] to the left of Ōhirume is painted Fudō. This is the [seed-] syllable *A*. [It stands for] the eight petals, the nine venerables, the thirteen great assemblies and all saintly beings of the original Womb [maṇḍala]. In order to defeat the four types of obstacles and enemies and to get rid of the calamities of the country, [this deity] reveals his angry aspect and abides in the fire meditation. It is called Fudō myōō. Because the venerable-in-principle of the Womb maṇḍala abides in the wisdom fire of the Diamond maṇḍala moon disk, he assumes the threatening countenance of great wisdom. It is explained: “Tsukuyomi no mikoto 月讀尊 is a male deity and thus he becomes the moon disk of the Diamond *yang*-deity. Yet [the moon] rules the night, that is, it rules the *yin*. Accordingly, on the surface [Tsukuyomi no mikoto] appears as the *yin*-deity Fudō embodying the Womb maṇḍala. The surface is dark/*yin* but the inside is bright/*yang*. It is like the hexagram of the cavern with its undivided [lines].<sup>34</sup> Inside the moon disk there is a true *sakaki* 榊 tree. This indicates the original ground of the male deity. The *sakaki* is the tree of the ‘accomplishment from which there is no return’ (...)”

The other image is the disk [placed] to the right of Ōhirume. Inside this sun disk is inscribed Aizen. This is the syllable *VAM*, the five wisdoms and the thirty-seven venerables of the original Diamond [maṇḍala]. (...) It appears with the body of Aizen myōō and it abides in the sun, the principle of the meditation gate. Therefore it is called Aizen myōō. The venerable-in-wisdom of the Diamond abides in the Womb maṇḍala moon-disk and thus becomes the venerable of the great compassion that removes suffering. It is explained: “The Sun-deity is a female deity. Therefore it embodies the Womb maṇḍala, the moon disk, a *yin*-deity. Yet, because [the sun] is *yang* and produces brightness, on the surface she appears as Aizen, the *yang*-deity of the Diamond maṇḍala. This reveals that the surface is *yang* but the inside is *yin*. This is the form of the hexagram of clinging

33. *Nihonshoki* 1, *NKBT* 67, p. 112. Translation from Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1956, p. 41.

34. See hexagram no. 29, “entrapment (Ch. *kan*, Jp. *kan* 坎),” symbol of water: “Shows its subject entering a cavern within it. There will be evil.” *I-Ching*, p. 118. I think the text refers to the shape of the hexagram, in which two continuous lines are positioned at the second and fifth places. According to Wang Bi’s 王弼 commentary on the *Yijing* this position of the strong, or *yang*, lines means that the *yang* force is not expressed externally but stays within. See Richard Lynn, *The Classic of Changes. A New Translation of the I-Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 317.

with its broken [lines].<sup>35</sup> The women of the world, too, on the outside are adorned and shine, but in the inside do not have the light of wisdom, like *yin*.

A complex and sophisticated interpretation of the differences and interaction of two opposites is crystallized in the images of the two *myōō*. It assumes an understanding of *yin-yang* notions, ultimately visualized in the lines of the hexagrams resonating together as pairs. At the same time, it is aware of the relation between the two mandalic realities posited by esoteric Buddhism. Although the text follows the conventional association of Fudō and Aizen respectively with the Womb and Diamond maṇḍalas, it also highlights elements of the ritual iconography of the two *myōō* that allow the elaboration of this binary pattern. For instance, by referring to a type of meditation that recalls the iconography of Fudō surrounded by flames, this deity is made to represent the reality of the Diamond maṇḍala that abides inside its opposite, because fire symbolises the Diamond maṇḍala. Further, this interaction is translated into a *kami* figure, Tsukiyomi no mikoto, who is a male deity and yet in his name is linked to the moon, a *yin* element; accordingly he is symbolized by a lunar circle that contains the radiance of the sun inside. Also of significance is the inclusion of the *sakaki* tree, an element that is never part of the canonical iconographies of Fudō. Yet a *katsura* (桂), symbol of the moon, appears in at least two other medieval representations of Fudō, produced in different contexts: Nichiren's 日蓮 *Kankenki* 感見記 (dated 1254) and a fourteenth-century *mani mandara* 摩尼曼荼羅 held at Mimurotoji 三室戸寺, in Uji 宇治.<sup>36</sup> Arguably the compiler of the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu* was aware of such precedent and borrowed it analogically, casting it in a shape more natural to the *kami* context. Ultimately Fudō and Aizen appear to be placed in the Rock-cave iconography in order to reinforce visually and liturgically the understanding that the true nature of each being embodies its double.

The final passage of the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu* introduces another identity for the two *myōō*:

Question: Usually the sun disk is [placed] at the venerable's left, the *yang* direction, while the moon disk is at his right, the *yin* direction. Why do now you [say that] the sun is to the right and the moon to the left?

Answer: This is not difficult to understand. Since the Rock-cave signifies the Hall of the Inner shrine [of Ise], these two assistants should not be understood as the sun and moon but as the assistants to Tenshō daijin's Hall in the Inner Shrine. In the Inner shrine Tenshō daijin is at the centre. To her right is Takuhatachiji hime 梓幡千千姫. Since her true body is the sword, she appears as Fudō. To the right is Tajikarao no mikoto 手力雄命. His true body is the bow, thus he appears as Aizen."<sup>37</sup>

35. See hexagram no. 30, "Clinging (Ch. *li*, Jp. *ri* 離)," which represents fire and light, and is considered the opposite of hexagram no. 29. The hexagram contains two broken lines in the second and fifth places. Wang Bi takes this position of the weak, or *yin*, lines to mean to be strong outside but soft inside. Cf. Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, p. 323ff.

36. I have extensively discussed these visual sources elsewhere, see n. 5, 6.

37. *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu*, pp. 137–38. In the printed text the first line has 'moon-disk,' but from the context it is clear that the meaning is 'sun-disk.' Takuhatachiji hime, a.k.a. Yoro-zuhata hime 萬幡姫, is Ninigi's 瓊々杵尊 mother. Tajikarao no mikoto (Ame no tajikarao 天

This closing passage seems to produce an anticlimax from the complex esoteric interpretation that preceded it. Nevertheless it functions in the typical fashion of medieval combinatory narratives, where the focus moves from the cosmological, universal level given by Chinese or Buddhist references to the local-specific context of Japan framed by the *kami* world. The two Buddhist deities are transformed into the visual forms of two distinct *kami* of Japanese myth, seen in the geographic location of their cultic space. This provides a third layer of interpretation, which seems to follow naturally after the Chinese and Buddhist imagery.

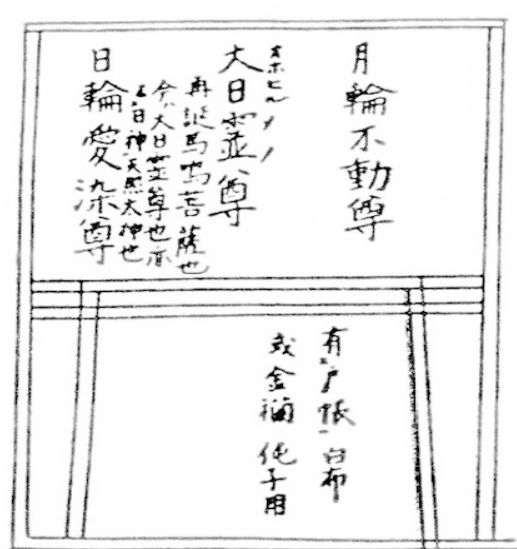


Fig. 8: Diagram of the Rock-cave altar.  
From the *Miwaryū jingi kanjō zu*.

The passage also draws attention to the ritual protocol of the *iwato kanjō* by scrutinizing the specific position of the two *myōō* at the sides of a main deity. While the polar use of Fudō and Aizen is reiterated in their identification as a male and female *kami*, the pair is now inserted into a liturgical triad, another incarnation of the Rock-cave Venerable with her Two Assistants. Other documents confirm that the liturgical arrangement discussed here is that used in *Miwaryū* initiation rituals. Various collections of charts of altars and implements used during these initiations include diagrams of the space where the adept is to perform the ritual, such as the one shown in Fig. 8. Here the altar is called 'Rock-cave' and marked by a *torii*-gate, and the names of the triad are inscribed inside: Ōhirume in the centre, the moon-abiding Fudō to the left and the sun-abiding Aizen to the right. A note adds that Ōhirume is the bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa and at the same time the Sun-god (Nisshin) and the deity of Ise, Tenshō daijin.<sup>38</sup> This position of the two

手力雄) is the deity that pulled Amaterasu out of the rock-cave.

38. "Iwato danzu 岩戸壇圖," *Miwaryū jingi kanjō zu* 三輪流神祇灌頂圖, p. 226. Another example is in a different collection of ritual prescriptions, the *Miwaryū shintō kanjō shiki* 三輪流神道灌頂私記, where the triad is inscribed as Aśvaghōṣa/moon-disk Fudō/sun-disk Aizen

*myōō*, and their correspondence to the two celestial bodies, is shared with other triads non-related to the *kami*, such as those of the *sanzon gōgyō-hō* ritual that I mentioned at the beginning of this study. Thus if the equivalences crystallized in the two Buddhist deities do not conform fully to the correlations of the *Yijing* system, they imply further significant influences from the contemporary Buddhist discourse, which are necessary to identify.

### Fudō/Aizen, moon/sun: The binary icons of non-duality

The interaction of mandalic realities, cosmological elements and biological opposites that are subsumed in the ritual images of Fudō/Aizen emphasizes the binary grammar of Ryōbu Shintō hermeneutics. The imagery developed in the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu* is informed by the mutual generation of *yin* and *yang* and supported by the classic notion of an interface between inner and outer expressed in the *Yijing*, but at the same time it unquestionably represents segments of the esoteric meditative practice. Interestingly, early medieval esoteric sources that attest to such practice already present a similar combination of themes. A short work by Kakuban 覺鑊 (1095–1143) entitled *Secret visualization of sun and moon*, for instance, is a case in point. It discusses the meditative process, the *mudrās* and mantras for this practice, which clearly derives from the *Putixin lun* 菩提心論, one of the canonical texts of Japanese esoteric Buddhism, and it presents its dynamics as the “union of Heaven and Earth.”<sup>39</sup> Shukaku hosshinnō’s 守覺法親王 (1150–1202) *Tsuiki* 追記, on the other hand, records a transmission concerning the *honzon* for a fire ritual (*goma*), whereby the *goma* is seen as the *samādhi* of the two *myōō*: the visualization of Aizen becomes the wisdom-meditation of the inner *goma*, while the visualization of Fudō becomes the principle-meditation of the outer *goma*.<sup>40</sup>

A large number of Ryōbu Shintō sources reiterate the notion of the interpenetration of sun and moon exhibiting a similar hybridity of esoteric and *yin-yang* polarities. A thirteenth century document, *Tenka kōtaijin hon'en* 天下皇太神本縁, in an entry entitled “The original pledge of the single-pronged vajra” (*dokko honzei* 独鉤本誓), includes two drawings, a waning crescent moon with two dots in the middle, and a full circle with a black dot in the middle. These lunar and solar forms are decoded through a double paradigm. The compiler first considers their correspondence to the two fundamental seed-syllables of the esoteric system and to political elements

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(p. 160). This document also gives a list of Shintō icons (*shintō ezō* 神道繪像), which must have been transmitted in the lineage. The sub-entry “Buddhist images,” which curiously starts with twelve scrolls representing the seven generations of Heavenly *kami* and five generations of Earthly *kami*, records several paintings of the deities of the triad: three scrolls depicting Aizen, of which one is called “Aizen in the moon disk” (Gachirin Aizen); two scrolls depicting Fudō, one said to be a conventional representation and the other an image inscribed in the moon disk, to be used in the Rock-cave triad, opposite that of Aizen; a scroll representing Aśvaghōṣa. (p.170).

39. *Nichigatsu bikan* 1111秘觀, *Kōgyō daishi chosaku zenshū*, vol. 5, pp. 103–4.

40. *T.* 78, pp. 618c.

of the *Yijing*, then to the cosmological and ontological discourse of both the *Yijing* and esoteric Buddhism:

At the mantric level, the perfect moon disk of emptiness [waning moon] is the syllable *VAM*, which is wisdom, and the water element (...) The moon indicates the way of the vassal. At the mantric level, the moon disk of the mind [full circle] is the syllable *A*, and the subtle radiance of the syllable *VAM*. The sun represents the way of the lord. At the level of Heaven and Earth, *yin* and *yang*, these [forms] determine the shape of all things as well as that of man and woman. The sun unfolds the meaning of the *taizokai*, the moon that of the *kongokai*. *VAM* is the water of great compassion, the mind dharma-body which encompasses all phenomena and all forms of consciousness. This is usually Vairocana.<sup>41</sup>

This exegesis is attributed to Kūkai, but at the margin of the page the compiler adds a gloss with his own interpretation, which consists in a further set of equivalences: the colour white corresponds to father and to water, and the colour red to mother and to fire. Such sexual, colour-coded combinations, which are found in several contemporary documents, including those related to the *sanzon gōgyō-hō*, draw on another canonical esoteric source, the *Yuqi jing* 瑜祇經. I shall discuss the implications of these correlations shortly.

Another significant Ryōbu Shintō work, the fourteenth-century *Bikisho* 秘歸書, compiled by a monk clearly connected with Sanbōin lineages, brings into play the different levels of esoteric hermeneutics in order to reconcile the apparent contradictions of the binary imagery:

If one considers [these matters] at the level of superficial and abbreviated meaning, Fudō embodies the Womb maṇḍala and the Inner shrine [of Ise] and Aizen the Diamond maṇḍala and the Outer shrine. According to the profound and secret meaning, however, when the sun and moon disks come together, the moon disk is Fudō and the Outer Shrine. The moon, symbolising wisdom, is the surface, the sword of Fudō. The sun is Aizen and the Inner Shrine. The Womb maṇḍala, being the principle, is the core, the vase on which Aizen sits. These two disks are Fudō and Aizen in their living body (*shōjin Fudō Aizen* 生身不動愛染) ... The living bodies before your eyes are the three luminous heavenly princes (*sankō tenshi* 三光天子).<sup>42</sup>

The *Bikisho* turns to the implements of the conventional iconography of Fudō and Aizen, and it identifies the two *myōō* with the two deities of the Inner and Outer shrines of Ise, rather than with minor *kami* related to Amaterasu's myth. The imagery developed in this text has broader ramifications and links to a variety of other medieval ideas. For instance, it defines Fudō and Aizen as deities appearing

41. *Tenka kōtaijin hon'en*, p. 332-3 [photographic reproduction], p. 512 [edited text]. This 'pledge' seems to be the first of a ten-step process embodied in various esoteric tools/Buddhas, and may correspond to the first stage of gestation in an embryological metaphor used to illustrate Buddhist practice. In another document I shall mention below, the *Shintō daiji* (see n. 49), the same symbolic associations are in fact explicitly made to correspond to the ten stages of gestation.

42. *Bikisho*, pp. 506-7. I am grateful to Iyanaga Nobumi for this reference. The *Bikisho* was authored in 1324 by a certain Chien 智圓, who was connected to Sanbōin lineages through Dōjun 道順.

‘in their living body,’ a notion that occurs in the already mentioned *Kankenki* by Nichiren and in the *Jindaikan hiketsu*; and it introduces a new triad, consisting of sun, moon and stars, an image found again in the *Jindaikan hiketsu* and in material related to the practice of *sanzon gōgyō-hō*.<sup>43</sup> These connections provide evidence that the use of Fudō and Aizen in the triad of the Rock-cave was not due to the idiosyncratic interpretation of one lineage of *kami* ritualists, but drew on the ritual and pictorial language established at the time.

### What happens inside the Rock-cave? Generative polarities and ritual birth

By focusing on the realization of non-duality that takes place through the dynamic interpenetration of inner and outer, sun and moon, Fudō and Aizen, the sources analysed in the previous sections seem to downplay the meaning of Amaterasu as the central element of the triad in the *iwato* initiation. Yet, if one considers the exegesis of the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu* as part of a comprehensive liturgical programme, the same collection in which this transmission is included offers further grounds for reconsidering the discourse on duality within a broader hermeneutical framework that highlights the generative process started by two opposites. In this process the icon of Amaterasu inside the Rock-cave plays a distinct role.

One of the transmissions following the *Ama no sekkutsu kuketsu*, listed as *Kanjō tashu no koto* 灌頂多種事, illustrates this point with a series of five diagrams, each focused on a specific geometric shape or figure. (Fig. 9a-e) The first three diagrams reproduce a circle, a ship-like shape, and a three-pointed shape (a half moon with a jewel-like object on the top); the fourth consists of a five-element *stūpa*; and the last is the figure of a man sitting crossed-legged and forming a *mudrā*. Each of these forms is identified with one sound of the fivefold seed-syllable *A*, one of the five Buddhas of the Diamond maṇḍala and one of the ritual steps of the initiation protocol, according to different levels of association.<sup>44</sup> The diagrams are said to represent the stages of an initiation, which is due to take place in one night, and correspond to the five stages of gestation of a fetus within the womb. Through this initiatory ritual the adept is expected to quickly achieve the ultimate enlightenment with his body born from mother and father. This one-night initiation is further presented as the most important matter of the *sūtras*, and the essential matter of the esoteric schools (*misshū* 密宗).<sup>45</sup> The document thus provides us with a significant example of embryonic buddhahood applied to the context of *kami* practices. This ‘spiritual gestation’ is performed through specific movements of the body in the *kami* ritual space (“exiting the hall”) and the utterance of a seed-syllable, is sustained by the ontological and cosmological meaning of the mandalic buddhas, and is ultimately crystallized in a body, which is a human body, the body of the practitioner, and at the same time the perfected body of enlightenment.

43. Chapter 17 of the *Jindaikan hiketsu* is entitled “Shōjin Fudō Aizen” and starts with a discussion of the three astral bodies (pp. 217-23). On the *Kankenki* and *sanzon gōgyō-hō*, see n. 5 and 6.

44. *Kanjō tashu no koto*, in *Miwaryū shintō kanjō ho shinsbō*, pp. 139-41.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.



Fig. 9a-e: Diagram of a five-stage 'Shintō' initiation. From "*Kanjō tashu no koto*," *Miwa shintō kanjō boshinhō*.

The *Kanjō tashu no koto* does not refer directly to Amaterasu as the incarnation of this enlightened body, but other transmissions do. A similar set of diagrams is included in the *Ise shoshō Nihongi ushiki honshō nin denki* 伊勢所生日本記有識本性仁傳記, a fascinating exegesis of the two ideograms that compose the name 'Ise,' whereby the two ideograms function as the foundation of the binary opposition man/woman and of their union. The five figures in this document inscribe seed-syllables, and this clarifies the correspondence of each symbolic form and ritual

segment to a specific stage of gestation. The first figure, the circle, contains two identical syllables *A* and the ideograms for 'white' and 'red.' The text explains that these stand for the fluids that are united during the sexual intercourse, and that this process is both like the coming together of Heaven and Earth to bring energy and merits, and like the true body of Dainichi, which is represented by the two maṇḍalas. The ship-like figure inscribes the syllable *A* and *VAM*, thereby representing the diversification that takes place during the second stage of gestation. The three-pointed figure inscribes a syllabic triad, consisting of the syllables *A* and *VAM* at the sides, and the syllable *HUM* in the centre. This suggests the conception of a third being (the head and the two hands). According to a gloss, this stage corresponds to the third seven-day period of development of a fetus, roughly, the third month in the womb. The fourth figure, the *stūpa*, inscribes the seed-syllables of the five elements, and is said to correspond to a formed body, i.e., a fetus in its fourth seven-day period.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the bodily figure that concludes the set is depicted as emerging from two syllables *A*, once again equated to red and white. The text thus emphasizes that the newly-born body is a human body made of flesh and bones (red and white) and yet, since it abides in a non-differentiated reality (the double seed-syllable *A*), at the same time it is the perfect body of the Buddha. The union of the two fluids, of father and mother, is presented as the twofold Dainichi who abides in the body of sentient beings, and as the deity of Ise attaining buddhahood in her own body. The newly born body is said to be the original nature of Ise.<sup>47</sup>

46. The five seven-days periods described in the text embody the epigenetic model of fetal development presented in Indian medical and Buddhist literature. Japanese sources often identified the five stages with the Indian terms of *kalala* (Jap. *kararan* 羯刺藍), *abhūda* (*abudon* 頽部曇), *peśin* (*heishi* 閉尸), *ghana* (*kennan* 鍵南) and *prāsākhya* (*harashakya* 鉢羅奢佉), found also in Vasubhandu's Commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa*. These indicated periods lasting one week each. Medieval Japanese material further suggests that each of these seven-day periods was commonly associated with one month of gestation. According to Indian narratives the fetus was regarded as completely formed in the fifth month. This partly explains the imagery used in medieval Japanese texts, both in the five-stage and ten-month schemes, whereby the shape of a human being first appears at the fifth stage/month of conception. Japanese scholars have also pointed to the correspondence between these seven-day periods and the seven-day cycle of the rites of commemorations for the dead (Nakamura Kazuki 中村 一基, "'Tainai jūgatsu no zu' no shisōshiteki tenkai" 「胎内十月の呪」の思想史的展開, *Iwate daigaku kyōiku gakubu kenkyū nenpō* 岩手大学教育学部研究年報 50, 1 (1990) pp. 23–36). On Indian embryological theories see, for instance, Robert Kritzer, "Life in the womb: conception and gestation in Buddhist scripture and classical Indian medical literature" in *Imagining the Fetus: the Unborn in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, Vanessa R. Sassoon and Jane Marie Law eds., Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 73–90, and Frances Garrett, *Religion, Medicine and the Human Embryo in Tibet*, Abingdon/ New York: Routledge, 2008.

47. *Ise shoshō Nihongi ushiki honshō nin denki*, in *Shingon shintō*, 2, pp. 559–60. Other passages of this work are translated in Faure, "Japanese Tantra, the Tachikawa-ryū, and Ryōbu Shintō," in *Tantra in Practice*, pp. 543–56. For a discussion of the meanings of the two characters for Ise, including the exegeses in literary commentaries, see Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡, "Ise niji o megutte: Kokinchū, Isechū to mikkyō setsu, shintō setsu no kōshō 伊勢二字を巡って—古今注・伊勢注と密教説・神道説の交渉," in Sugahara Shinkai 菅原信海, ed., *Shinbutsu shūgō shisō no tenkai* 神佛習合思想の展開, Tōkyō: Shunjūsha, 1996, pp. 77–122.



Here the meaning of the pictorial configuration of Amaterasu in a triad becomes palpable, as does the indispensability of visualizing the biological binaries through the images of Fudō and Aizen.



Fig. 10: Everywhere-reaching *mudrā*. From *Jingi no daiji*.

Of particular interest in the *Ise shoshō Nihongi ushiki honshō nin denki* is the use of a third seed-syllable, *HŪM*. Other Ryōbu Shintō sources, such as the *Tenchi kanjōki* 天地灌頂記<sup>48</sup> and the *Shintō daiji* 神道大事,<sup>49</sup> elaborate on the meaning of this syllable, which epitomizes the non-duality of binary opposites: the two maṇḍalas, Heaven and Earth, *kami* and buddhas, *kami* and human beings, man and woman. This notion is also performed through a ritual gesture which is made while uttering the seed-syllable *HŪM*: the “all-reaching *mudrā*” (*musshō-fushin-in* 無所不至印), in which the fingers are tied to form the shape of a *stūpa*. (Fig. 10)<sup>50</sup> I should add that the possible use of the *stūpa* to materialize the central element of the generative triad is also addressed in this context. The *Ise daijingū mizu kashiwa chinju Sengū himon* 伊勢大神宮瑞柏鎮守仙宮祕文, for instance, fashions the discussion of non-duality around the combination of Fudō and Aizen, and eventually suggests that their ultimate reconciliation is expressed by the seed-syllables of the five-element *stūpa*.<sup>51</sup>

48. *Tenchi kanjōki*, 2 fascicles, the first dated 1568, Eizan bunko 叡山文庫 Archives. Cited in Yamamoto, *Henjōfu*, p. 327.

49. This work discusses the relation between the usual sets of binaries and connects it to the ten stages of gestation, to cosmological elements from the *Yijing*, and then to shrine features, giving a comprehensive example of the correlative logic that supported medieval Shintō elaborations. A reprint of this manuscript is included in Ogawa Toyoo 小川豊生, “Kyōto daigaku toshokanzō *Shintō daiji*: kaidai to honkoku 京都大学図書館蔵『神道大事』—解題と翻刻,” in *Nihon koten bungaku ni okeru gisho no keifu no kenkyū*, Research group Chimoto Hideshi 千本英史 Report, 2002, pp. 37–58. I am grateful to Itō Satoshi for making this publication available to me.

50. See *Jingi no daiji* 神祇大事, a late document of Goryū Shintō, in *Shingon shintō shūsei*, p. 172.

51. *Tenchi reigaku hisho/Ise daijingū mizu kashiwa chinju Sengū himon* 天地靈覺祕書／伊勢大神宮瑞柏鎮守仙宮祕文, *Ryōbu Shintōshū*, p. 114–18 [photographic reproduction]; p. 412–414 [edited text]. Here Aizen is described inside a sun-disk, together with a three-legged red bird. Fudō is

These variations within a range of iconographical and performative options all denote the structural relation between the binary and triadic patterns, and between these and the imagery of gestation. It may be noted that the latter was pervasive in the medieval representation of Buddhist realization. While the theory of reproduction in five stages is a classic Buddhist motif, which draws on Indian medical knowledge and may already be found in the *Abhidharmakośa*, in Japan it was applied to esoteric Buddhist practice only from the twelfth century. Kakuban probably was the first to implement it, and other contemporary scholar-monks developed it in the exegetical context of the *Yuqi jing*. Indeed early medieval commentaries on this Chinese apocryphal sūtra, such as the *Yugikyō hiketsu* 瑜祇經秘訣 attributed to Jichiun 實運 (1106-60), and the *Yugikyō kenmon* 瑜祇經見聞 by Enni Bennen (1202-80), contain 'embryological diagrams' identical to those examined above.<sup>52</sup> This imagery spread across lineages, and it appears further in a fourteenth-century document compiled by Sanbōin lineages, the *Sekishitsu* 石室,<sup>53</sup> and in a long commentary on the *Yuqi jing* transmitted in the Tōfukuji 東福寺 lineage, the *Taimitsu keigushō* 胎密契愚抄.<sup>54</sup> (Fig. 11) Hence it is hardly surprising that it became intrinsic to the discourse on ritual realization carried out in Ryōbu material.

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inside a moon-disk, along with a moon-tree and a human figure. This document is actually the combination of two texts, compiled in the mid-thirteenth century, the first attributed to Saichō 最澄 and the second to Ennin 圓仁. See Itō Satoshi, "Kaidai," *Ryōbu shintōshū*, pp. 534-36. The content indeed resembles with Taimitsu interpretations, and scholars have discussed the connections with works by Enni Bennen 圓爾弁圓. See Ogawa Toyoo, "Chūsei shingaku no mechie: *Tenchi reigaku hisho* o yomu 中世神學のメチエ—『天地靈覺秘書』を読む," in Nishiki Hitoshi, Ogawa Toyoo and Itō Satoshi 錦仁, 小川豊生, 伊藤聰 eds., *Gisho no seisei: chūseiteki shikō to hyōgen* 「偽書」の生成—中世的思考と表現, Tōkyō: Shinwasha, 2003, pp. 155-195.

52. *Yugikyō hiketsu*, SZ 5, pp. 14-5; *Yugikyō kenmon*, ZTZ mikkyō 2, pp. 214-5. On embryological themes in medieval texts, see Itō Satoshi, "Sanbōinryū no gisho: tokuni *Sekishitsu* o megutte 三寶院流の偽書—特に『石室』を巡って," in Nishiki Hitoshi, Ogawa Toyoo and Itō Satoshi, eds., *Gisho no seisei*, pp. 197-231, and "Sekishitsu ni tsuite no memo 『石室』についてのメモ," in *Nibon koten bungaku ni okeru gisho no keifu no kenkyū*, Research group Chimoto Hideshi report, 2002, pp. 25-36.

53. See Itō, "Sanbōinryū no gisho: tokuni *Sekishitsu* o megutte," p. 201.

54. This work follows the interpretative lines of the Taimitsu Sanmai lineage 三昧流. The diagram is included in an appendix, which was transmitted by Yōsai 榮西 (1141-1215) and Enni (1202-80). See Mizukami Fumiyoshi 水上文義, "Taimitsu keigushō ni tsuite 『胎密契愚抄』について," *Tendai gakubō* 32 (2006), pp. 53-60. A printed and edited version of the entire text is in Mizukami's *Taimitsu shisō keisei no kenkyū* 胎密思想形成の研究, Tōkyō: Shunjūsha, 2008, pp. 595-670 (diagram on pp. 666-67).

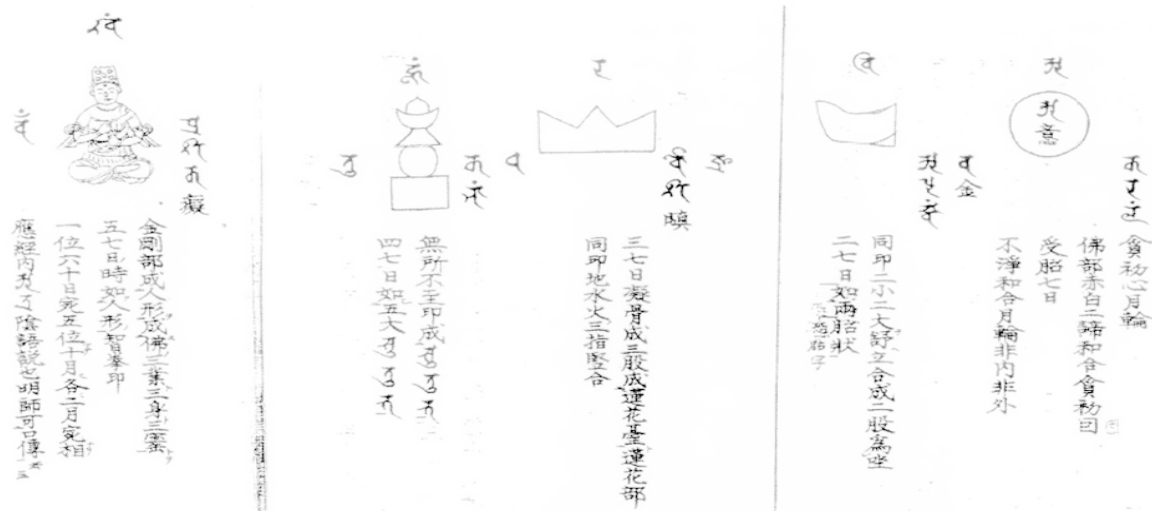


Fig. 11: Diagram of the five-stage Tantric gestation. From *Taimitsu keigushō*, Eizan bunko.

The performative context of medieval Shintō eventually sheds light on why the Amaterasu triad examined in this study abides in the Rock-cave. As yet another transmission related to the *iwato kanjō*, included in the *Tenchi kanjōki*, irrevocably states, the Rock-cave is a mother's womb: "Amaterasu concealed herself within it, holding in her arms sun and moon. This alludes to our status, when in the womb the fluids of mother and father mix." The seed-syllables uttered during the ritual are the breathing of mother and father during the intercourse. The moment in which Amaterasu peeps out of the cave is symbolized by the syllable *A*, for this syllable is the fundamental non-originated sound that is the origin of all things. The utterance of *A* is the first cry at birth: at that moment the body is complete, at that point the practitioner becomes the body of Amaterasu.<sup>55</sup> The Rock-cave thus functions as the natural, primordial setting in which the practitioner can experience and ritually partake in a cosmic birth, by re-enacting the gestation that takes place inside the Rock-cave with the mantras, *mudrās* and visualizations proper to esoteric ritual. The process of the creation of a human being becomes the secret meditative practice of the adept.

Accordingly, Amaterasu inside the Rock-cave is a pivotal figure, which sets the process in motion by hiding in the cave and at the same time discloses its results. The horse-riding female deity portrayed with the features of darkness and light, Heaven and Earth, personifies the non-dual perfected body, cosmologically and biologically born out of duality, which the practitioner must aspire to. At this level of understanding the physical identity of the *kami* may also be represented by a 'body of practice.' This is, I think, the meaning of an image in the Shinpukuji Archives, simply entitled *Shintō* 神道.<sup>56</sup> It depicts the dharma-body of a practitioner,

55. "Ama no iwato kanjō 天岩戸灌頂," *Tenchi kanjōki*, cited in Yamamoto, *Henjōfū*, p. 331.

56. Shinpukuji Archives, 65A, 5. Late Muromachi period. In Abe Yasurō, ed., *Shinpukuji*

achieved through the practice of visualizing the five-element syllables on one's body, by which the practitioner is transformed into the adorned body of the *dharmakāya* (*goji gonshin kan* 五字嚴身觀). (Fig. 12a-b)<sup>57</sup>

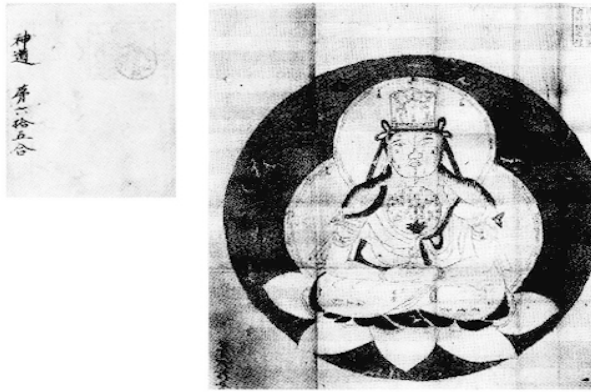


Fig. 12a-b: *Shintō*. Shinpukuji Archives.

### Conclusion: Creative experiments with the *kami*

The documents and pictorial representations analysed in this study are not comprehensive treatises on the meaning of Shintō and of the *kami* in the medieval world, but ritual instructions that point to specific meanings and effects of the liturgical performances centred on the *kami*. They do not discuss the identity of Amaterasu and Dainichi, which is assumed *a priori*. Instead, they focus both on the soteriological process that is enacted during esoteric rituals and the outcome of this process, which they illustrate with a layered imagery that embeds within itself myth, esoteric doctrine, and the architecture of the *Yijing*. This ritualization of the world of the *kami* follows patterns established in contemporary esoteric Buddhism and brings the *kami*, their myths and their accessories to the level of the constituent elements of Tantric reality. In this sense medieval Shintō texts go beyond *honji suijaku* taxonomies and rethink the *kami* in absolute and metaphysical terms. Both the recourse to visual means, and the pictorial experimentation of newly created icons, reflect a novel stage of understanding the *kami*.

Of the two epistemological patterns discernible in the documents analysed in this study, the triadic pattern seems to constitute a new trend in Japanese esoteric Buddhism, diffusely expressed in contemporary interpretations, and influenced by the *Yuqi jing*, a scripture which itself was considered to inscribe the union of the two mandalic realities. This model resolves the interaction of opposites in a third

*Ōsu bunko jingi-sho zuroku*, p. 53, no. 66.

57. See, for instance, a similar image from a Kamakura period folio in the Kanazawa bunko Archives, entitled *Rinjū biketsu* 臨終秘決. Exhibition catalogue *Shōmyōji no sekitō: Chūsei risshū to sekitō* 稱名寺の石塔—中世律宗と石塔, Kanazawa bunko: 2002, p. 23 (exhibit no. 49). The *goji gonshin kan* is a fundamental esoteric practice to achieve identity with the Buddha.

element, crystallized into the physical characteristics of the fetus, symbolized by the cosmology of the *stūpa* or the jewel, and anthropomorphically conveyed in imaginative icons, such as the horse-riding Amaterasu, or the unconventional bodies of Kūkai portrayed in Monkan's 文觀 *Goyuigō daiji* 御遺告大事.<sup>58</sup> In this context the 'Shintō triad' constituted by Fudō, Aizen, and Amaterasu does not have a mere devotional purpose, but consciously exemplifies the dynamic process of ritual production, like the triads of the *sanzon gōgyō-hō* material. The solar attributes that in other medieval documents associate Amaterasu to Aizen are not directly at play here.<sup>59</sup> It is rather the relation between Fudō and Aizen that affects the triadic pattern. Once again this draws on the *Yūqi jing*, for here Aizen is presented with its double, Zen'ai 染愛, who in turn became identified with Fudō in Japan. The sexual connotations encompassed by these two deities in Ryōbu Shintō sources are thus to be seen as part of a broader rethinking of ritual realization, which in the medieval period was carried out ubiquitously across lineages, geographical areas and liturgical procedures, and was sustained by canonical sources. Although previous scholarship has maintained that the sexual imagery represents the marginal interpretation of the heretical Tachikawa-ryū, this paper argues that this discourse was, in fact, the 'medieval mainstream' interpretation of the esoteric religious practice.

In a history of Japanese religions written at the end of the nineteenth century, William Griffis dedicated much space to 'Riyōbu shintō,' which he regarded as the distinctive development of Buddhism in Japan. Griffis identified Kūkai as "the wonder worker that (...) re-read the *Kojiki* as a sutra, and all Japanese history as only a chapter in the incarnations of the Buddha." He credited the "School of Yoga" with this achievement and pointed out that "Kōbō's smart example was followed only too well by the people in every part of the country." But Griffis did not understand the historical changes that informed medieval Shintō: "unfortunately the characteristics of this literature and undergrowth of idol lore are monotony and lack of originality. For nearly all are copies of Kōbō's model."<sup>60</sup> A close analysis of Ryōbu Shintō textual and visual material demonstrates that the medieval reading of the *kami* was extraordinarily creative and produced almost unlimited ways to re-conceive Buddhist concepts and give them momentum. It also reveals the extent to which the ritual interpretations of the *kami* incorporated current views of the process of buddhahood, which did not exist in the early Heian period. More material needs to be investigated to understand how esoteric practice was conceived, visualized and ritually performed in the centuries after Kūkai. This will no doubt shed further light on the obscure and unorthodox imagining of the world of the *kami* that gave shape to medieval Shintō.

58. On the imagery of the *Goyuigō daiji* see Dolce, as in n. 6.

59. This identity has been discussed in previous studies by Itō Satoshi. See, for instance, his "Chūsei Nihon ni okeru taiyō shinkō 中世日本における太陽信仰," in Matsumura Kazuo 松村一男 and Watanabe Kazuko 渡邊和子 eds., *Taiyōshin no kenkyū* 太陽神の研究, 1, *Shūkyō shigaku ronsō* 宗教史學論叢 7, Tōkyō: Lithon, 2002, pp. 191-208.

60. *The Religions of Japan from the Dawn of History to the Era of Meiji*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895, pp. 197-216.

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- NKBT Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文學大系. Ed. Takagi Ichinosuke 高木市之助 et al. 102 vols. Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, 1957-1968.
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