

Benedetta LOMI

## Dharanis, Talismans, and Straw-Dolls Ritual Choreographies and Healing Strategies of the *Rokujikyōhō* in Medieval Japan

This article proposes a reconstruction and analysis of the *rokujikyōhō* (Ritual of the six-syllable sutra), a complex healing liturgy that enjoyed great popularity in Japan between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Performed by an assembly of Buddhist monks and *onmyōji* (yin-yang masters), the ritual used various techniques, such as talismans, *hitokata*, incantations, and medicinal remedies, which provided a comprehensive solution to different types of ailments. In this article I discuss their characteristics, as well as their relationship, to argue that their conflation into a single practice may be underpinned by a layered understanding of the cause and nature of pollution and diseases.

KEYWORDS: *rokujikyōhō*—*onmyōji*—healing ritual—*karin no harae*—*rokujikyōhō* mandara—Rokujiten

Benedetta LOMI is Mellon Assistant Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages Literatures and Cultures at the University of Virginia.

THROUGHOUT the Heian period, widespread concern over pollution and disease stimulated the emergence of ritual, mantic, and therapeutic practices aimed at the identification, prevention, and removal of a variety of afflictions. From lavish Buddhist ceremonies, to the recitation of incantations, the production of talismans and medicaments offered by *onmyōji* 陰陽師, wandering monks, and court doctors, meant that a multiplicity of procedures catered to the needs of all levels of Japanese society. The phenomena to be warded off were defilements (*kegare* 穢れ),<sup>1</sup> impurities (*fujō* 不浄), adverse astrological occurrences, ghostly apparitions, possession, and even curses of malicious people that were perceived to be the cause of physical and mental illness. This article presents an analysis of one such liturgy called *rokujiikyōhō* 六字經法, or “Ritual of the Six-syllable Sutra” (hereafter *Ritual*). Targeting ailments provoked by fox spirits (*kitsune* 狐), caused by spells and charms, or occurring during childbirth, the *Ritual* enjoyed the favor of aristocratic and imperial families. Its popularity is attested to across literary and canonical documents, from the diaries of Heian courtiers and historical compilations, to Buddhist and *onmyō* manuals. These sources reveal the point of view of the performer, sponsor, and spectator, allowing for a polyvocal outlook, while, at the same time, offering an invaluable insight into the preoccupation of the aristocracy, and the pragmatic solutions proposed by the Buddhist clergy.

The proceedings lasted between five and seven days and consisted in a daily *goma* (fire ritual) to either avert calamities (*sokusai* 息災) or to subjugate adversaries (*jōbuku* 調伏) called *rokuji hō* 六字法 or “Six-syllable Ritual,” and culminated in a nocturnal ceremony carried out on water and referred to as *rokuji karinhō* 六字河臨法 or “Six-syllable Water-facing Ritual.” The *rokuji hō* and the *karinhō* incorporated several curative strategies, such as burning talismanic

\* A preliminary version of this article was presented in April 2012 at the UC Berkeley Workshop “Healing Texts, Healing Practices, Healing Bodies: A Workshop on Medicine and Ritual in East Asia.” I would like to express my gratitude to the Shinryo-en Foundation for supporting my research at UC Berkeley at the Center for Japanese Studies, as well as to the SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions and Kanazawa Bunko for allowing me to collect and reproduce relevant materials.

1. *Kegare* translates the concept of defilement or pollution derived from contact with agents such as blood (for example, wounds, childbirth, menstrual blood), diseases, and death. *Kegare* was not only believed to be a consequence of contact with diseases, but also considered its cause. Therefore, the removal of the source of pollution and the prevention and cure of diseases were tightly related.

effigies, cleansing by means of substitute bodies (*nademono* or *hitokata* 人形), reciting the *Nakatomi harae* 中臣祓, and producing medicinal remedies. These methods, although held in conjunction, often relied on divergent conceptions of the way *kegare* or *byō* 病 (disease) occurred, and how to deal with them. In this article, I will tackle these healing strategies by investigating the origin of their association and their characteristics and meaning within the overall framework of the *Ritual*. This analysis will be articulated into four parts, which will take into account textual, visual, and performative aspects.

The first part addresses the historical background and the key sources of the *Ritual*. By retracing its textual genealogy, I will highlight how medieval Japanese monks and ritual specialists drew from Chinese Buddhist scriptures to grant authority to a distinctly autochthonous practice. The texts examined will provide the basis for a reconstruction of the liturgy itself, which constitutes the second part of this study. The inquiry will reveal two important aspects of the *Ritual*: its composite nature and its flexibility. Each liturgical segment was constituted by independent procedures, which were woven together most likely during the Insei period. Some of these were not carried out by the *ajari* master, who was accompanied by an *onmyō* master.

The originality of the *Ritual* is further supported by its unique visual apparatus, which I will discuss in the third part of the article. Two mandaras were devised by Heian period ritualists for this occasion: the *rokujikyō* mandara, representing Shaka Kinrin and the Six Kannon, and the *Rokujiten* mandara, featuring the enigmatic Lord of the Six Syllables. These deities exemplified two ways of giving shape to the six-syllable dharani, and to other key liturgical aspects of the *Ritual*. A close look at their iconography will expose links with coeval astral representations, and reveal that each element of the representation had a performative dimension connected to the *Ritual's* healing concerns.

Building on the previous analysis, the fourth part of the article will deal with these curative strategies. Taking the work of David Bialock as a point of reference, I will discuss how the *mélange* of techniques employed provided a spectrum of protection targeting the physical, soteriological, and cosmological dimensions, which were underpinned by a layered understanding of the cause and nature of pollution. As Bialock has argued, the period spanning from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries witnessed a radical reformulation of this notion, which came to be perceived as an inherently generated condition (BIALOCK 2007, 217–18). However, this shift did not happen overnight, and diverse formulations of *kegare*, *fujō*, and *byō* coexisted throughout the medieval period. I will therefore assess how the composite interpretation of these terms affected the therapeutics employed during the *Ritual*, the iconography of its mandaras, as well as its flexible structure.

*Historical and Textual Background for the Ritual of the Six Syllable Sutra*

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The *Ritual* is discussed in the major collections belonging to the two Japanese esoteric traditions—Taimitsu 台密 (Tendai esotericism) and Tōmitsu 東密 (Shingon esotericism)<sup>2</sup>—which outline the formats of the ceremony, its textual influences, and record its illustrious performers and sponsors.<sup>3</sup> A crosscheck with entries in the *Heian* and *Kamakura ibun* confirms that the *Ritual* was held consistently throughout the medieval period, and, although its appeal begun to decline from the mid-fifteenth century,<sup>4</sup> it was documented up until the beginning of the Tokugawa period.<sup>5</sup> Its popularity even sparked a competition between lineages, in particular those connected to the Tani-ryū 谷流, Tōji 東寺 and Ono-ryū 小野流, which, to different extents, all claimed authority over its original transmission.

Taimitsu sources argue that Ennin 圓仁 (794–864) had learned the practice in Tang China and introduced it to Japan in the ninth century. However, his instructions remained concealed for over one hundred years, until a monk named Amidabō Shōnin 阿弥陀房聖人<sup>6</sup> retrieved and transmitted them to his disciple Kōgei 皇慶 (977–1049), the founder of the Tani-ryū (T 2409, 170b21–26;

2. I use these two names heuristically. As stressed by Dolce, Taimitsu and Tōmitsu did not designate two distinct, homogeneous traditions, but are rather umbrella terms that emerged in the fifteenth century (DOLCE 2011b, 744). Among the texts produced by Tendai monks are: 1. *Gyōrinshō*, a ritual compendium compiled by the Hieizan monk Jōnen in 1154; 2. *Asabashō*, an extensive thirteenth century anthology of Tendai esoteric images and rituals by Shōchō (1205–1281); and 3. *Mon'yōki*, a collection of ceremonies by the Shōren'in *monzeki* Sonen (1298–1356). Among the texts written by Shingon monks are: 1. *Yōsōn dōjōkan*, by Junnyū; 2. *Besson zakkī*, a ritual collection held at Ninnaji and composed by princely abbot Shinkaku (1117–1180); 3. *Kakuzenshō*, one of the most comprehensive collections of rituals belonging to the Ono branch, by Kakuzen; 4. *Byakuhōshō*, by Chōen (fl. 1218–84), dated to the thirteenth century; 5. *Hishō mondōshō* compiled by Raiyu (1226–1304); and 6. The fourteenth century collection *Byakuhō kushō*, written by the Shingon monk Ryōson (1258–1341).

3. TSUDA (1998a, 30–35) provides a complete list of the *rokujikyō* performances noted across various Buddhist sources.

4. Numerous records of the ritual are reported in the *Mansai Jugo nikki* 満濟准后日記, the personal diary of Daigoji abbot Mansai (1378–1455). The records show that the ritual was still carried out for healing purposes. For example, one entry reports that in 1424, a *rokujihō* was held for the health of the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshikazu 足利義量 (1407–1425), who suffered from an illness that would cause his death in 1425 (ss 7, 502).

5. I have not come across any record of the ritual being performed in the seventeenth century. According to the *Gien Jugō nikki* 義演准后日記, the diary of Daigoji Head-priest Gien Jugō 義演准后, in 1634, the then court lady Tokugawa Kazuko 徳川和子 (1607–1678), who became Empress Tōfukumon'in, sponsored a *rokujihō* in Daigoji Sanpōin teien (ss 12, 74).

6. Amidabō Shōshin was a Hieizan monk also known as Jōshin 靜真, who was associated with the Western Pagoda or Saitō 西塔 district.

TZ 9, 168c). Kōgei's oral teachings form the basis of the *Gyōrinshō*,<sup>7</sup> a collection compiled in the twelfth century by Jōnen, which is the earliest Taimitsu source on the *Ritual*. In fact, the information there reported will later be included and expanded upon in the *Asabashō* and in the *Mon'yōki* as well. These three texts assert the exclusive transmission of the rite within the Tani-ryū, by emphasizing that neither Kūkai 空海 (774–835) nor Enchin 圓珍 (814–891) had any knowledge of it (T 2409, 170b23; TZ 9, 169a). In spite of these allegations, Jōnen's attribution of the *Ritual's* introduction and establishment to Ennin is not supported by any textual evidence. The *Nittō guhō junreikōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 does not mention any document on the six-syllable, and the sources attributed to the Tendai patriarch include no annotation on this service or the Six Kannon.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, a six-syllable scripture was found among the list of Enchin's Chinese acquisitions.<sup>9</sup> The text in question is a one-fascicle sutra of unknown composition, dated to the Liang Dynasty and called *Rokuji dharani kyō* 六字大陀羅尼經 (T 2137, 1102b20), which was likely related to a set of scriptures I will discuss in the next section. While this does not make Enchin the originator of the *Ritual*, it could indicate that familiarity with its key sources was by no means a privilege of one lineage only.

Kōgei had also studied Shingon doctrine under the Tōji *ajari* Keiun 景雲, renowned for having systematized the Taimitsu ritual curriculum and his mastery and assimilation of Tōmitsu teachings. It is possible that Kōgei learned this method from Keiun, and then transmitted it to his pupils. Only later was this declared unique to the Tani-ryū, maybe to distinguish their repertoire from those of rival Tōmitsu lineages, as well as from competing Taimitsu ones.<sup>10</sup> Although Jōnen admits that monks belonging to Tōji and Ninnaji were familiar with the *Ritual*, he quickly adds, not in its "original" form (T 2409, 170b26–c11). In fact, the *Ritual* was well-known within Tōmitsu circles already in the tenth century, and was generally conducted by eminent monks of Tōji, Ninnaji, and Daigoji.<sup>11</sup> These temples

7. See *Gyōrinshō*, T 76, 2409.

8. Ennin's catalogs included in T 2165, 2166, and 2167 do not have any such record.

9. This information is also recorded in the *Roku gaikyōtō mokuroku* 録外經等目錄 (T 2175, 1113b13), a collection of miscellaneous explanations based on the annotations of Daigoji Abbot Shōken 勝賢 (1138–1196).

10. Lucia Dolce discusses the creation of the famous *sonjōhō* 尊星王法 and its supposed exclusive link with the Tendai Jimon lineage (DOLCE 2011a, 235–38). In so doing, she highlighted a paradigm of constructing an ad hoc ritual authority across the sources, which resembles that of the *Ritual* under scrutiny here. DOLCE (2011a, 356) points out that the *Sonjōhō* rite was presumably attributed to a secret transmission of Enchin, and had remained exclusive to his lineage.

11. The importance of Ninnaji, Tōji, and Daigoji monks is also confirmed by the entries in the *Asabashō*. Here, Shōchō affirms that there are two ways of holding the ritual, following the tradition of either Ninnaji or Tōji.



FIGURE 1. *Rokujikyō* mandara. Daigoji 醍醐寺, Kyoto. Kamakura Period. Ink and color on silk, H. 72.1 cm. Kyoto National Museum.

FIGURE 2. Sketch of the *Rokujikyō* mandara. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji 称名寺, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.



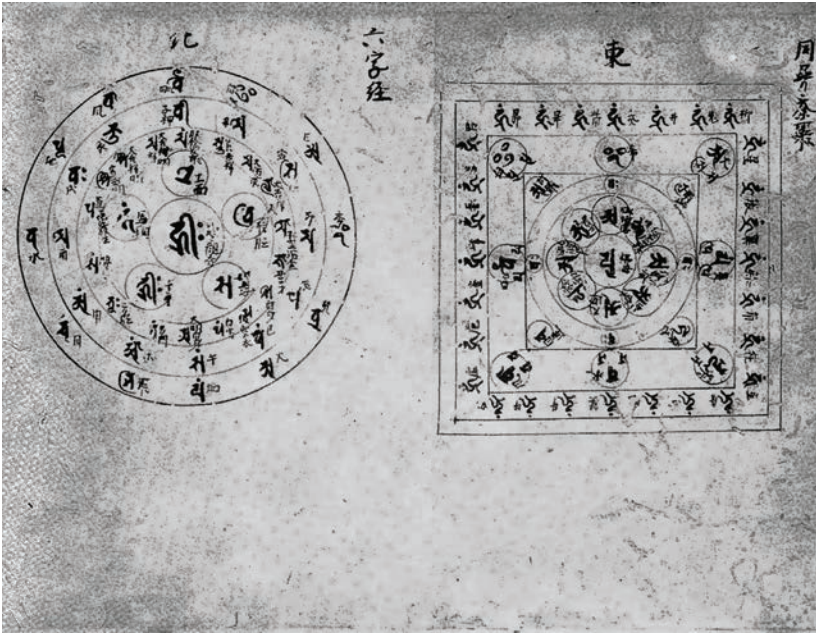


FIGURE 3. Sketch of the *Rokujikyō shūji mandara*. From *Zuzōshō*, TZ 3, 3006, 29.

remained the main centers of its performances, and the latter two devised a unique visual apparatus: the *rokujiikyō* (FIGURES 1 and 2) and *Rokujiten mandaras* (FIGURES 4 and 5). Furthermore, in spite of Jōnen's allegations, Tōmitsu sources traced its origin back to Kūkai's sibling and disciple Shinga 真雅, or Jōgan sōjō 貞觀僧正 (801–879). In this regard, Kakuzen reports that on his deathbed, Montoku Tennō 文徳天皇 (827–858) sponsored the *Ritual* for the wellbeing and protection of his son, the eight year-old Korehito Shinnō 惟仁親王, the future Seiwa Tennō 清和天皇 (850–880). Shinga presided over it at Jōganji 貞觀寺, the chapel he constructed under the auspices of Montoku to pray for the birth of a male heir (TZ 5, 351b),<sup>12</sup> and that possessed one of the first examples of the *rokujiikyō* mandara. This was a *shūji* mandara of the Six Kannon, attributed either to Shinga himself (T 2536: 412C12–01) or to his disciple Kanjuku 觀宿 (844–928) (TZ 3, 92C; TZ 5, 351C), which survives only in the sketches of the *Kakuzenshō* and *Zuzoshō* (FIGURE 3). By locating this image in a temple that was vowed to Seiwa Tennō, Kakuzen strengthened the aura of authenticity and power over the mandara's iconography and ritual procedures.

12. Initially part of Kashōji complex, Jōganji became an independent temple in 862 by order of Seiwa Tennō.

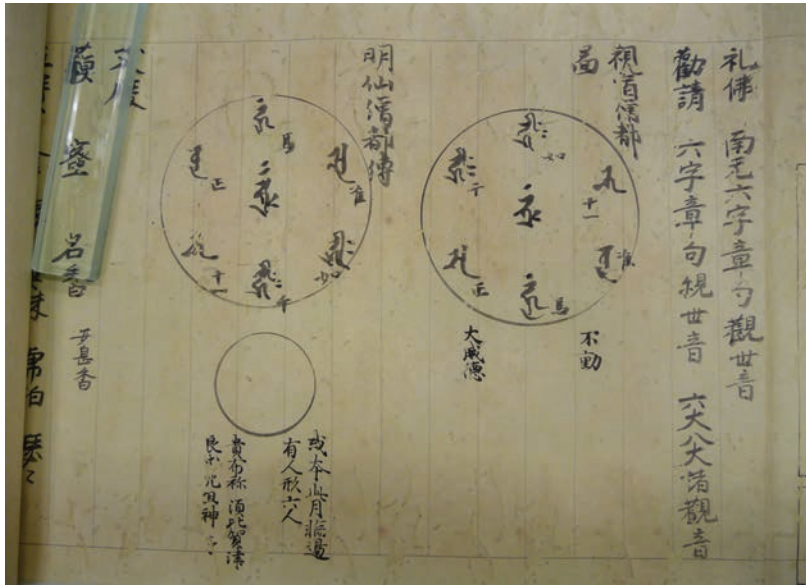


FIGURE 4. Rokujikyō mandara diagrams, sketch. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.



FIGURE 5. Rokujiten, sketch. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.



The link between the court and the Tōmitsu lineages is also supported by historical records. Ninnaji monks close to the Fujiwara clan and the Imperial family carried out the *Ritual* upon requests of their relatives to protect and cure illnesses provoked by curses and malicious spirits. For instance, Kakugyō 覚行 (1075–1105), the third son of Shirakawa Tennō and Abbot of Ninnaji, employed this practice to dispel courses of *kitsune* (TZ 5, 351b). Even the Ono monk Hanshun 範俊 (1038–1112), one of Shirakawa's protégés, who played a key role in the construction of the Toba palace where the *Ritual* was often held, effectively accomplished it on several occasions (TZ 5, 351b).

The alleged execution of the *Ritual* by Shinga can thus be considered more than a way of asserting their mastery over this method, by endeavoring to establish a direct link with Kūkai himself—the very monk that, according to Taimitsu sources, was not aware of it in the first place. Shinga was not only the brother of Kūkai, but also the master of Kangen 観賢 (853–925), who received the *denbō kanjō* 傳法灌頂 from Shōbō 聖寶 (832–909),<sup>13</sup> the reputed patriarch of the Ono-ryū. Kangen went on to take as disciple Junnyū (890–953),<sup>14</sup> who wrote about the *Ritual* in his tenth-century compendium *Yōson dōjōkan* (T 2468, 46b27–47b4), seemingly the earliest extant Tōmitsu account introducing the liturgy. By exposing a network of monks surrounding Shinga and Shōbō, these documents succeed in framing the *Ritual*'s doctrinal and formal features by grounding them to the Ono context. The meticulous establishment of connections between the rite and the Ono lineage was strategic to both contend and maintain authority over its transmission. In addition, Daigoji monks developed a novel liturgical apparatus, addressed later in the article, which represented a valuable asset to set their performances aside from those of competing groups—so much so that they continued to run it well into the Tokugawa period.

#### TEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The Japanese compendia meticulously construct a genealogy of the *Ritual* based on Chinese texts and Japanese apocrypha. From a comparative analysis of these materials, it is possible to gain a better picture of the doctrinal ideas underpinning the *Ritual*, as well as the process of their reinterpretation and adaptation to the Japanese context. I have divided these documents into three groups:

13. For Shōbō's biography, see SAEKI 1991.

14. Junnyū was briefly Abbot of Daigoji, but later retired to Ishiyamadera 石山寺 due to illness.

- a) The seminal Tiantai treatise *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀,<sup>15</sup> and two sources connected to it: the *Qing Guanyin jing* (hereafter *QGJ*)<sup>16</sup> and its commentary, the *Qing Guanshiyinjing shu* (hereafter *QGJS*).<sup>17</sup>
- b) A set of three dharani sutras compiled in China between the fifth and tenth centuries, including the fifth-century *Foshuo liuzi zhouwang jing*,<sup>18</sup> the sixth-century *Foshuo liuzi shenzhou wang jing*,<sup>19</sup> and the tenth-century *Foshuo shen liuzi damingwang tuoluonijing*.<sup>20</sup>
- c) The *Rokuji jinshuō kyō genki* 六字神咒王經驗記,<sup>21</sup> also known as the *Rokuji genki*,<sup>22</sup> the *Rokuji karin ryakki* 六字河臨略記, and the *Rokuji karinhō ki* 六字河臨法記.

While none of these scriptures, except for the latter two of Group c, bear any description of the *Ritual* as it was staged in medieval Japan, they offer a valuable insight into the understanding that Heian-period clergy had of the healing and soteriological efficacy of the six-syllable dharani, which will constitute the key element of the *Ritual*.

In discussing the dharani, the Japanese compendia all start from the teachings included in the *Mohe zhiguan* related to the Six Kannon—the main figures of the *rokujikyō* mandara. In the section entitled “Engaging in the Great Practice of the Four Samādhis” (T 46, 11a21), Zhiyi describes four techniques for cultivating *samādhi*: constantly sitting (Ch. *changzuo* Jp. *jōza* 常坐); constantly walk-

15. The *Mohe zhiguan* (T 46, no. 1911) was compiled in the early seventh century by Guanding 灌頂 as a record of Master Zhiyi’s 智顛 (538–597) lectures on Tiantai meditation. The lectures were given by Zhiyi in 594, but the final compilation was arguably completed in the early seventh century (PENKOWER 2000, 245–47).

16. The full title of *Qing Guanyin jing* is *Qing Guanshiyin pusa xiaofu duhai tuolonizhou jing* (Jp. *Shō Kanzeon bosatsu shōfuku dokugai daraniju kyō*), T 20, no. 1043. It was translated by the Indian Nanti 難提 during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420).

17. The *Qing Guanshiyinjing shu* (Jp. *Shō Kanzeon kyōsho*) (T 46, no. 1934) was compiled by Guanding. The attribution of the *QGJS* text is debated. According to SATŌ (1981, 411–28), the text was composed by Zhiyi. Alternatively, ANDŌ (1968, 330–56) argues that it was more likely to have been put into writing by his disciple Guanding. In either case, the commentary is critical for an understanding of the six-syllable *dharani* as explained in the *Mohe zhiguan*.

18. This is the *Foshuo liuzi zhouwang jing* (Jp. *Bussetsu rokujijuō kyō*; T 20, no. 1044), unknown translator.

19. This is the *Foshuo liuzi shenzhou wang jing* (Jp. *Bussetsu rokuji jinshuō kyō*; T 20, no. 1045a–and 1045b), unknown translator.

20. This is the *Foshuo shen liuzi damingwang tuoluonijing* (Jp. *Bussetsu shōrokuji daimyōō daranikyō*; T 20, 1047), translated by Dānapāla (Shihu).

21. This is reproduced in CHIMOTO 1998 379–92. A similar writing is discussed by ABE and YAMAZAKI (2004, 597–602).

22. The *Rokuji genki*, manuscript, reproduced in microfilm 278–31–8 17, B, Tokyo National Institute of Japanese Literature, Tokyo.

ing (Ch. *changxing*; Jp. *jōgyō* 常行); part sitting and part walking (Ch. *banxing banzuo* Jp. *hangyō hanza* 半行半坐); and neither walking nor sitting (Ch. *feixing feizuo*; Jp. *higyō hiza* 非行非坐) (T 46, 11a21–20a24). As part of the latter type of *samādhi*, there is a Kannon repentance rite focused on three dharani invocations, the third one of which is a six-syllable dharani composed of one hundred and five characters, beginning with the compound *andali pandali* 安陀隸般陀隸—also written 安陀罽般茶罽 (T 46, 14b26–20a24).<sup>23</sup> According to Zhiyi’s elucidations, this dharani manifests as six forms of Kannon, each able to deliver beings reborn in the six paths of existence (T 46, 5a29–15b19).<sup>24</sup> In this sense, even if the length of the dharani exceeds that of six syllables, its association with the six forms of the Bodhisattva of Compassion is considered the origin of its designation as “six-syllable dharani.”<sup>25</sup>

This dharani and the repentance ritual are also presented in the other two texts of Group A, the *QGJ*, and its commentary, the *QGJS*.<sup>26</sup> In the second scripture, it is narrated that the Buddha was once asked by the people of Vaiśali to offer a solution for a series of diseases that afflicted them. The Buddha then bestowed upon them a repentance method, which consisted in the recitation of three dharanis in conjunction with the offering of a willow twig (Skt. *dantakāṣṭha*) and

23. The method consists in paying respect to the Three Jewels (represented by the Seven Buddhas, Śākyamuni, and Amitābha), the three dharanis, the two attending bodhisattvas Kannon and Daiseishi (Mahāstāmaprāpta), and the assembly of deities. It then continues with a brief meditation, the chanting of the deities’ names and the enunciation of the three incantations, followed by the repentance of the practitioner’s sins, and concludes with a sutra recitation by one member of the assembly.

24. Zhiyi provides here the first complete articulation of the six different forms of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. The passage explains: “The Avalokiteśvara of Great Compassion destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of hell.... The Avalokiteśvara of Great Kindness destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of hungry ghosts.... The Avalokiteśvara of Leonine Fearlessness destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of animals.... The Avalokiteśvara of Universal Shining Radiance destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of asuras.... The Divine Hero Avalokiteśvara destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of human beings.... The Avalokiteśvara Mahābrahmā the profound destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of gods.” Here I follow the translation of DONNER and STEVENSON (1993, 283–85).

25. There has been much speculation on the meaning of this dharani and the origin of its name in the canonical literature of the Tiantai tradition. DONNER and STEVENSON (1993, 283, note 285) suggest that the twelve words included in the dharani do not necessarily have to be relevant to its title.

26. This ritual circulated within Tiantai circles by the late fifth century by way of two independent manuals. One, no longer extant, is mentioned in the commentary of the *QGJS*; the other is now included in the *Guoqing bailu* 國清百錄 (One hundred records of the Guoqing Monastery; T 46, no. 1934), compiled by Guanding. The latter scripture is more commonly referred to as *Qing Guanshiyin chanfa* 請觀世音懺法 (T 46, 795b16), and it includes Guanding’s description of the core part of the repentance ritual described in the *Mohe zhiguan*.

pure water (T 39, no. 1800, 973a19–23).<sup>27</sup> Augmented by the threefold invocation of Kannon's name, this rite had the power of relieving all sentient beings from any peril (most of which are described in the *Universal Gate* chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*) while, at the same time, treating any disease arising from both external and internal conditions. In this regard, the meaning of the dharani is thus explained in relation to cultivation of the causes of enlightenment, and the purification of the six senses as well (T 39, no. 1800, 975b16–17).

The texts included in Group B also refer to the same lengthy string of words (T 20, no. 1044, 38b8; T 20, no. 1045a, 39c24). To illustrate the benefits derived from this dharani, the scriptures all relate that at the time when the Buddha was living in Jetavana Park near Śrāvastī,<sup>28</sup> there was a non-Buddhist low-caste woman (*caṇḍāla*; Ch. *zhantuoluo*; Jp. *sendara* 梅陀羅), an expert in evil spells and talismans.<sup>29</sup> Through these means, she could conjure “mountain and tree-dwelling spirits, the sun, moon, and five planets, the South Dipper, Big Dipper, and Pole Star, as well as all varieties of ghosts and evil demons” (T 20, no. 1045a, 39c09–c24; T 20, no. 1045b, 41c04–c11). In addition, she could lure any virtuous man, including Venerable Ānanda, who fell prey to her charms. To counteract her sorcery, the Buddha then devised an incantation, which consisted precisely in the six-syllable mantra (T 20, no. 1044, 38a28–b1; T 20, no. 1046, 43c13–15; T 20, no. 1047, 44a13–a22).<sup>30</sup> Aside from reversing the *caṇḍāla*'s incantations and

27. The sections are: 1. Adorning the *bodhimaṇḍa*; 2. Obeisance; 3. Incense and flower offerings; 4. Concentration; 5. Willow twig; 6. Taking refuge in the Three Jewels; 7. Incantations; 8. Confession and repentance; 9. Worship; and 10. Seated meditation. It is worth mentioning that Taimitsu sources give a brief description of a repentance ritual of Kannon, focused on the recitation of the six-syllable dharani, called *Roku Kannon gōgyō* 六観音合行 (T 76, no. 2409, 177a3–16; TZ 9, 223–27). The ritual includes a series of purification, offerings, and repentance, followed by a walking meditation around the Kannon images (TZ 9, 225b). Here, the practitioner starts by visualizing the syllable *sa*, from which progressively each one of the Six Kannon arises (TZ 9, 225b–c), after which he continues with offerings and recitations (TZ 9, 225b–c). Although there is no explicit mention of the six-syllable dharani, this description is closer to the repentance method described in the *QGJS* than the *Ritual*. Such a dissimilarity points toward a Japanese adaptation and development of a selection of notions explained across a diversity of Chinese scriptures, rather than the adoption of a ritual transmitted from China. However, by the fifteenth century, the *Roku Kannon gōgyō* consisted in a *goma* dedicated to Six Kannon (TZ 12, 551–53), a ritual record dated Bunmei 文明 6 (1474), which is quite late if confronted with the performances of the *Ritual*.

28. The version in T 1046 is set to take place on the Vulture Peak (Skt. *Gr̥dhra-kūṭa*; Jp. *Gishakusen* 耆闍崛山).

29. Several copies of this version included in T 1045 were known in Japan and are now in the collection of temples such as Kongōji, Ishiyamadera, and Yufukuji. An exquisite example is included among the Kongōbuji-owned *Kinginji issaikyō*; the Ryūmon Bunko archives hold a copy dated Hōgen 2 (1157).

30. Similarly, the *Divyāvadāna* mentions the story of a *caṇḍāla* woman named Prakṛti, who, wanting to seduce Ānanda, had a magic spell made by her mother to tempt the monk. Drawn by

impeding her talismans, the dharani was efficacious in curing all sorts of ailments from *vātā* illnesses (*fūbyō* 風病),<sup>31</sup> colds, and fever—both *netsubyō* 熱病 and *gakubyō* 瘡病 (T 20, no. 1046, 43c21–c27)—to edema (*suishu* 水腫), head, ears, and stomach ache (T 20, no. 1047, 44b4–5). Besides delivering beings in the six paths, the dharani had an apotropaic function, and was thus effective in dispelling malignant spirits and curses, and in targeting specific diseases.

Although these scriptures do not detail any fixed ceremonial setting, they explain that the dharani should be recited several times, together with the ritual knotting of an empowered white rope, which will eliminate all ills and malicious influences. Fastening of cord made of various strings while repeating the dharani was maintained as a key element of the *Ritual*, as will be addressed below in more detail. Japanese monks thus drew from these two groups of texts not simply to underpin the meaning and function of the six-syllable dharani, but also to fashion its performance. The outcome was, however, entirely new, as demonstrated by the documents included in Group c: the *Rokuji genki*, the *Rokuji karin ryakki*, and the *Rokuji karinhō ki*.

The *Rokuji genki* is a short scripture that systematizes the information included in the Chinese examples introduced so far, and that seem to have circulated between Taimitsu and Tōmitsu circles at the beginning of the tenth century. Ishiyamadera holds a copy of this manuscript dated Tengi 1 (1053), supposedly the reproduction of an earlier one, dated Zhenyuan 21 (805), which belonged to Longxing temple in Yuezhou, and was part of the private collection of the eighth century Tiantai patriarch Daosui 道邃 (CHIMOTO 1998, 391; T 79, no. 2535, 201a28). Taimitsu sources reports that Kōgei was familiar with this scripture, but was unsure of its origins (T 77, no. 2411, 28b10). In fact, according to Chimoto, the scripture should be considered a Tōmitsu fabrication devised to provide a context to the *Ritual* and to ultimately ascertain its authenticity (CHIMOTO 1998, 382b). Indeed, the text seems well grounded into the Japanese religious milieu, leaving no doubt over its Japanese composition.<sup>32</sup>

The *Rokuji genki* begins with a careful analysis of dharani and the six manifestations of Kannon based on the *Mohe zhiguan*. However, unlike any of the texts addressed earlier, after relating each manifestation of Kannon to one of the six realms of rebirth, it identifies which curses, spells, demons, and spirits they

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the powerful spell, Ānanda left his retreat and went to the woman's house where he had been summoned by the power of her charms. The Buddha then uttered a mantra to break the incantation.

31. I use here the translation of *feng/fū* 風 as *vātā* suggested by SALGUERO 2010–11. Wind diseases have further been discussed at length by DEMIÉVILLE (1985, 65–76).

32. Chimoto accounts for five extant manuscript versions of this text, one dated 1103 and dedicated by Toba Tennō, three dated to 1115, which formerly belonged to Kajūji, and one dated 1291 (CHIMOTO 1998, 385–86).

target (CHIMOTO 1998, 387b–88b). For example, the Kannon of Leonine Fearlessness (or Batō Kannon), aside from relieving beings in the realms of animals, could also reverse the spells of wicked *onmyōji* and evil witches (CHIMOTO 1998, 387b). Likewise, all the other five manifestations have their own healing and exorcistic competences. These injunctions are followed by general instructions regarding the recitation of the six-syllable dharani, which is examined in more detail at the end of the text (CHIMOTO 1998, 391). Although the scripture does not mention the *goma* or the river-facing ceremony, it presents a description of the rite mentioned in the sutras introduced above, which consisted of chanting the dharani while carrying out the cord-tying ritual (referred to as *kessen* 結線) and the production of talismans (CHIMOTO 1998, 389a). These elements will all remain important parts of the liturgy, and, in particular, of the first part of the *rokujihō*, as will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

For a more articulated outline of the final section of the *Ritual*, the one known as *karinhō*, one has to turn to the latter two documents of Group c: the *Rokuji karin ryakki* (hereafter *ryakki*) and the *Rokuji karinhō ki*. Both scriptures are crucial in understanding how the larger practice was constructed, and, even if compiled later than the *Rokuji genki*, they were widely-known across different lineages.

The *ryakki* appears to have been a key source of information regarding the segment conducted on water since at least the late eleventh century.<sup>33</sup> Although its authorship is not determined by any of these works, a version of Jichiu's *Hizō konpōshō* included in *Daigo nyūmishō* asserts that the *rokuji karin* was exclusive to Tōji, and was transmitted by Kanchō 寛朝 (916–998) (*Daigo nyū mishō* 20: 75–76).<sup>34</sup> The manuals attest to the existence of several copies, the earliest of which is dated Kyūan 4 (1148), thus contemporaneous to both *Besson zakki* and *Kakuzenshō*, and attributed to the *ajari* Ken'i 兼意 (1072–1158ca) (*Daigo nyū mishō* 20: 71).<sup>35</sup>

The scripture can be divided into four main sections, outlining the format of the *rokuji karinhō*. The first two bear general instructions for the performance of the *karinhō* and *goma*. The third lists the tools, and the required number of monks. The fourth and final part details the steps for the *kansō*, along with the mudras and mantras. The second section is very short, and simply relates that

33. The text is entirely reproduced in Daigoji Abbot Jichiu's 実運 (1105–60) *Hizō konpōshō* 秘藏金宝抄 (T 78, no. 2485, 359a14–360a19), and partly also in the *Besson zakki*, *Kakuzenshō*, and *Byakuhōshō* (Tz 10, 762c–763a). The tenth-century *Yōsōn dōjōkan* does not mention it, perhaps suggesting that the text did not exist at the time. There are a number of later ones dating to the fourteenth century, that is, Shitoku 3 (1386) (T 78, no. 2485, 360a19).

34. Although the scripture explains that Kōgei was also knowledgeable of the practice, this reasserts that by the twelfth century, Taimitsu and Tōmitsu circles had claimed the *Ritual* was their authentic transmission.

35. A fourteenth-century copy of his teachings on the *Ritual* is held in Kanazawa Bunko, case 333, number 98. A reproduction of one of its sketches is provided in image 8.

the *goma* conducted during the river service should observe the same instructions given for the *rokuji hō*, which Tōmitsu materials discuss before introducing the *ryakki*. Therefore, although related, the two rituals may not have been initially part of the same liturgy.

Finally, the *karinhō ki* expands upon the information included in the *ryakki*, and provides a lengthier description of this rite. While the *ryakki* is referenced in the Tōmitsu manuals and the *Gyorinshō*, the *karinhō ki* seems to have been the main referent for later Taimitsu collections, especially the *Mon'yōki*, and is quoted in the historical documents as well. The earliest extant examples are dated 1248 (Hōji 2) and 1253 (Kenchō 5), and the Nara National Museum has a copy dating to the fourteenth century.<sup>36</sup> The original version, however, was made in 1260, a few years after the copies mentioned above, as the proceedings of a ritual held for the benefit of Go-Saga Tennō's 後嵯峨上皇 recovery from illness—an event recorded in the *Mon'yōki* as well. These copies, in line with the stance taken by Taimitsu compilers, attribute the origin of the ritual to Ennin, and its transmission to Amidabō and his disciple Kōgei. In fact, according to the annotation found on a version of the text included in the *Zoku Gunsho ruijū* (ZGR 20, 57–64), this was the very manual based on Kōgei's annotations (ZGR 20, 64a).<sup>37</sup>

In terms of content, the text is divided into nine sections,<sup>38</sup> but the extant documents seem to develop only five of the nine: 1. General information: aims and origins; 4. Preparation of the *dōjō*; 5. Proceedings; 6. *Goma* instructions and 9. Scriptural authorities. These sections include information very similar to that presented above, to the extent that this may well have been a later reformulation of the *ryakki* itself. In this regard, these texts rehearsed the same points of contention over the *Ritual* transmission raised in the larger collections, which was possibly one of the reasons they were compiled in the first place. In each case, instead of being helpful in settling this controversy, the number of texts on the practice, and the many *ajari* who had supposedly first transmitted it, only prove that the *Ritual* was renowned among various groups. This should not be surprising, as the majority of the monastics mentioned so far trained under masters belonging to both Taimitsu and Tōmitsu institutions. Furthermore, these allegations surfaced at a strategic time, when lineages were attempting to systematize and distinguish their repertoire, and when the *Ritual* was reaching the height of its popularity. In the attempt to set one transmission apart from competing ones,

36. See *Rokuji karinhō ki*, ID number 007073–000–000, Nara National Museum.

37. Further dates were included in the ZGR record copies being made in 1336, 1367, 1413, and 1453. (ZGR 20, 64b)

38. 1. General information on the ritual: aims and origins; 2. Ritual arrangements (empty); 3. Images (empty); 4. Preparation of the *dōjō*; 5. Ritual proceedings; 6. *Goma* proceedings; 7. Ritual instructions (empty); 8. Scriptures; 9. Records.

Buddhist monks ended up with a lengthier, composite liturgy, featuring a vast ceremonial apparatus, which I will discuss in the next section.

### *Choreographing the Rokujikyōhō*

From the comparative analysis of the sources, it emerges that the *Ritual* was elaborately choreographed. The celebrations went on for seven days, and consisted in a daily service referred to as *rokujihō*, and in a water-facing rite or *rokuji karin* held on the penultimate evening only.<sup>39</sup> The *karin* featured a series of purifications carried out on a boat or on a platform harbored in proximity to selected sites. Even though this *karin* lasted only one night, to maintain a balance with the sevenfold performance of the *rokujihō*, *karin* was conducted seven times at seven locations. This will be discussed in more detail below.

The following section provides a preliminary reconstruction of this ceremony by addressing its essential components. The analysis that follows is focused primarily on Tōmitsu textual and visual materials, as monastics belonging to these circles went to great lengths to fashion it in a distinctive manner. However, I also reference the Taimitsu sources in the hope of exposing how Heian period Buddhist masters drew from various transmissions to revamp their ritual curriculum, and eventually even incorporated a variety of instructions that were not Buddhist in origin. This will in turn reveal the process of borrowing and adaptation that occurred between lineages, as well as the cooperation existing with *onmyōji*.

#### THE ROKUJIHŌ

The *rokujihō* consisted of a *goma*, during which the *ajari* purified the chief donor by means of talismanic effigies, as well as through the cord-tying method called *kessen*. The *goma*, either a *jōbuku* or a *sokusai*, included five sections: 1. the *katen dan* 火天段—the section on the fire deity; 2. the *bushu dan* 部首段—the section on the Lord of the Assembly; 3. the *honzon dan* 本尊段—the section on the principal deity; 4. the *shoson dan* 諸尊段—the section on miscellaneous deities;<sup>40</sup> and 5. the *seten dan* 世天段—the section on worldly deities. While the first and the latter sections do not raise particular issues, the third one is interesting as it allowed for a certain degree of flexibility, which affected the *bushu* and *shoson dan*.

39. According to both Tōmitsu and Taimitsu sources, the *karin* commonly takes place on the night of the sixth day of celebrations (T 76: 2409, 60c19; TZ 5, 363; TZ 9, 165b; TZ 12, 459). The compiler of the *Asabashō* draws this information on Kōgei's teachings recorded in the *Ikegamiki* 池上記 [*Records of Ikegami Ajari*]. However, in some cases, the *karin* rite is alternatively held on either the fifth or the seventh night (TZ 9, 165b).

40. This section will become the Six Kannon section; see SOEDA 1982, 18.



The variability of the *honzon* in part reflected lineage differences. The sources include information on which master recommended the use of a specific *honzon* and why, or which temple privileged one icon over another. Although Taimitsu manuals only mention Shō Kannon (T 2409, 166b16; TZ 9, 461a), the icon was not exclusive to these contexts. Kakuzen explains that both the Ono and Hirosawa monks would employ this Bodhisattva during *sokusai goma* (TZ 5, 351c, table 1), indicating that the chief deity could depend on lineage transmission, and on the type of *goma*. This is true for other instances as well. Rokujiten functioned as *honzon* during *jōbuku* rites, in which case Daitoku was appointed Lord of the Assembly, and the Godai Myōō worshipped in the *shoson dan*. During *sokusai goma*, both Batō and Shō Kannon could be installed as *honzon*, while Senjū was placed as Lord of the Assembly. Alternatively, another possible combination was if Kinrin accompanied by Shō Kannon and the Godai Myōō (TZ 4, 359a). Of course, there were also cases in which the donor would request a particular icon, requiring the *goma* to be adjusted accordingly.<sup>41</sup>

The *goma* was complemented by other procedures. First, the *ajari* executed the *kessen*, which, following the injunctions provided in the Group B texts, consisted of weaving together five strings to form a cord, and then tying six knots to it while reciting the dharani. This set of ties was given to the sponsor of the ritual to wear for protection (CHIMOTO 1998, 389 a–b; TZ 5, 365b). These instructions echo those of the renowned Heian period Taimitsu liturgy, *Shichibutsu Yakushihō*, where a five-colored string was employed to make forty-nine knots over seven days (SUZUKI 2011, 119–20). As this custom was transmitted within Taimitsu circles only (GRONER 2002, 87–88), it is interesting to find it as part of a practice that was already contended.

An additional feature of the *goma* was an exorcism by means of a set of three figurines, which the *ajari* controlled by progressively incinerating them in the fire altar. The effigies referred to as the three foxes (*sanko* 三狐) include a kite or “heavenly fox” (*tenko* 天狐), a hog or “earthly fox” (*chiko* 地狐), and a woman or “human form” (*ningyō* 人形) (FIGURES 7 and 8) (TZ 3, 89a–b; TZ 5, 357a). Each figure could be made of paper or, according to the original transmission of Ken’i, molded into dolls by mixing flour, poisons, and juice (TZ 3, 89a).<sup>42</sup> In

41. However, contingent needs may have also required the use of a different *honzon*. Icons such as the *rokujikyō* and Rokujiten mandara were extremely valuable, with only a handful of examples accounted for, and were the property of specific temples. These icons were exclusively employed during Imperial rituals, and do not seem to have been used on any other liturgical occasion. However, the *Ritual* was often sponsored by members of the aristocracy, and even less wealthy patrons, which may not have been able to afford or access these mandarars. It would therefore make sense to allow for other representations, besides the *rokujikyō* and Rokujiten mandara, to be employed, thus explaining the flexibility of the *honzon* section.

42. Ken’i, a Ninnaji-affiliated monk, is primarily remembered as the compiler of the *Yakushushō* 藥種抄 (Notes on herbs and drugs) a compendium on *materia medica*, cataloging



FIGURE 6. Rokujiten, sketch. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.

some cases, the name of the people causing harm was written on the figures using black ink, or, if the names are not known, a male or female figure was drawn. Although the three foxes do not feature in any of the Chinese sources discussed above, the *Rokuji genki* indicates that talismans were empowered by the recitation of the dharani. The instructions are to inscribe the name of the person who has cast the malediction onto a wooden slip, which is bound together with another bearing the six-syllable incantation, and then purified with water (CHIMOTO 1998, 389 a–b). During the *rokuji hō*, however, the effigies were burned rather than cleansed, either after the *honzon* (TZ 5, 357a) or the *seten* section (TZ 3, 89a). Although never explicitly called talismans, the images of the three foxes were used in a similar fashion: the ashes produced were then

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Chinese herbs. Although those prescribed by Ken'i for making the fox's images are not mentioned in the sources, one could speculate that his knowledge of medicinal substances may have determined the composition of the effigies.



FIGURE 7. Three Foxes effigies. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.



FIGURE 8. Three Foxes effigies. From the *Rokuji* manuscript by Ken'i (Jōrenbō ajari 成蓮房阿闍梨), Shōmyōji Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Ink on paper. Kanazawa Bunko. Case 333, number 98. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.

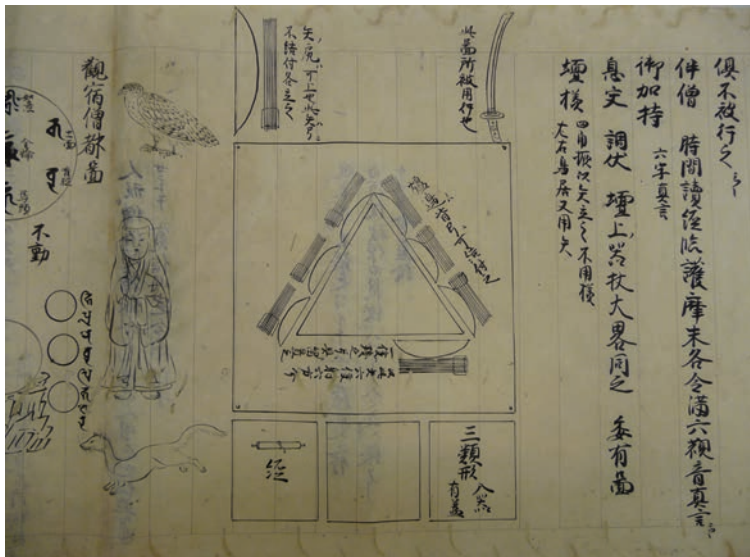


FIGURE 9. *Goma* altars for the performance of *rokujikyōhō*. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.

set aside, and, mixed with water or taken with a rice cake, were administered to the donor according to a precise posology, as will be addressed later in the article.

As an additional means to exorcize any harmful or unfavorable circumstances, the *ajari* utilized a series of weapons, which varied according to the aim of the rite. A *sokusai goma* required four swords, one bow (*sōkyō*), and arrows (TZ 3, 89c; TZ 5, 352b) placed at each side of the altar, which, in this occasion, had a triangular heart (FIGURE 9). In case of a *jōbuku goma*, the bows were seven, each accompanied by six arrows (TZ 3, 89b; TZ 5, 352a), which were arranged around a triangular-shaped heart (FIGURE 9). Furthermore, one long sword, and a second bow with twelve arrows, could be added. Bows, arrows, and swords were charged with exorcistic potency. The sword was used to vex the three fox images before their incineration, as an additional way of disempowering them. The arrows were instead shot in the four cardinal directions plus up and down at the end of the last section, the *seten dan*. Their function was that of communicating the accomplishment of the practice to the spirits residing in the six paths. This message was delivered by the sound made by the arrow, as well as by the reverberation of the bow's string (BLACKER 1975, 84). In this context, the final shooting of the arrows marked the conclusion of the proceedings, casting its protective net across the land.

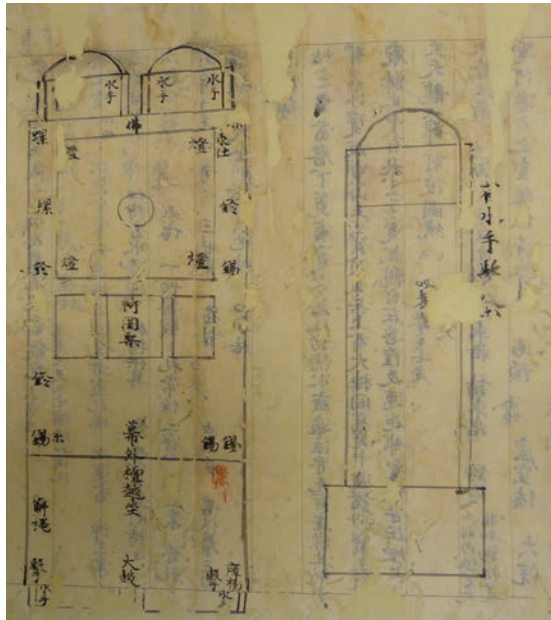


FIGURE 10. Boat for the performance of *rokujikyōhō*. From *Besson zakki*, Shōmyōji, Kamakura period (fourteenth century). Kanazawa Bunko. Case 485, number 001-11. Picture taken by Benedetta Lomi, June 2010.

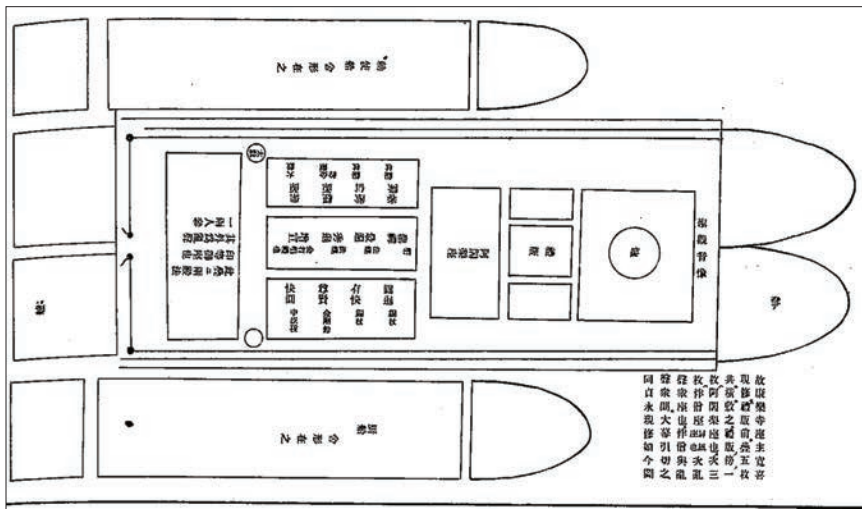


FIGURE 11. Boat for the performance of *rokujikyōhō*. *Mon'yōki*. TZ 12, 462.

*The Rokuji Karinhō*

The *rokuji karinhō*, performed on the evening of the sixth day, was characterized by a mélange of Buddhist and *onmyō* procedures, and featured: 1. an abridged version of the *goma* held during the preceding days, which included only two sections—one on *katen* and the one on the *honzon*—as well as the above-mentioned *kessen*; 2. The *Nakatomi* formula, followed by cleansing with *hitokata*; and 3. the crossing of a ring made of cogon grass, called *chinowa* or *suganuki* 菅拔.<sup>43</sup> All these steps were completed by the end of the first watch of the night, at 1 a.m. (T 78, 359a16), and took place on a boat navigating along a river, making this an incredibly dramatic event. In fact, the term *karin* indicated a category of *onmyō* rites staged at the waterfront, in particular along riverbanks, which varied depending on the type of purification sought (MATSUMOTO 2010). Since the early Heian period, these water-facing services had spread among all levels of society, and standard *onmyō* anthologies, such as the *Bunkanshō*,<sup>44</sup> give instructions for procedures varying in length and complexity, according to the means of the sponsor.

If the *karin* represented a renowned and standard means of dispelling *kegare*, the *rokuji karin* was peculiar because in this case the altar, *honzon*, and all other paraphernalia were transferred onto a large vessel, and the rite took place directly on the water (FIGURES 10 and 11). To be precise, there were several boats used for this section. The main one functioned as the stage for the ceremony while a smaller one hosted the donor, who took part together with his delegation. In addition, a number of small ships provided floodlights for the other two throughout the proceedings. Later sources paint a clear picture of the grandeur reached by the *Ritual* during the Kamakura period. The *Karin ryakki* reveals that the main vessel had at least two altars, and carried musical instruments, such as *taikō* and *shōko* drums (T 78; TZ 12, 462a–b). In addition, the entourage supporting the *ajari* included up to twenty assistant monks, joined by an *onmyōji*. The *ryakki* explains that four monks were in charge of chanting (*nenju* 念誦), four of reciting the scriptures (*dokyō* 讀經), and one of marking the rhythm with the chime (*kei* 磬). Three others assisted with the service: one presided over the *kessen*, one over the purification of the chief donor, and one took care of cutting off the rope (*tokinawa* 解繩) used to bind the *hitokata*. Lastly, the *onmyō* master enunciated the *Nakatomi* purification. The number of performers

43. This term usually refers to a large ring of *chigaya* (*imperata arundinacea*, a type of reed), which is commonly employed during *harae* services, especially during the New Year's purification or during summer's *Nagoshi harae*. Placed at the entrance of shrines, people would pass through it to remove impurities (READER 1991, 64). The origin of the *chinowa* is at times attributed to a legend involving Susanoo.

44. *Bunkanshō* is a volume collecting ceremonial instructions for *onmyōji* (DNS vol 3).

and the wealth of equipment required a boat big enough to accommodate them, so in certain cases, two vessels had to be connected together to allow everyone on board.

The *goma* altar was built on an elevated structure, shielded by high canopies, and distributed so that the *ajari* would face the direction of travel. The *honzon* was placed in front of the altar facing toward the prow (FIGURE 11)<sup>45</sup> and according to the instructions included in the *Karin ryakki*, its correct positioning was related to an overall concern with the navigation's course, which in turn was determined by the type of *goma*:

The *honzon* must face downstream, and not upstream. If [the boat is navigating on] a river flowing from south to north, conditions are auspicious for a *jōbuku* rite. In these occasions, the *honzon* faces north. If [the boat is navigating on] a river flowing from north to south, conditions are favorable for a *sokusai* one. In this case, the *honzon* faces south. However, even if the *honzon* faces south, conditions could be propitious for a *jōbuku* rite as well. (T 78, 359a17–59)

When possible, the boat departed from the donor's house, where a wooden platform was installed to cross from the shore onto the boat (T 78, 359a17–59). All the same, to assure the feasibility of either type of *goma*, the point of departure of the cruise needed to be considered in relation to the flow of the river. For instance, the *ryakki* records that the Kotsu River,<sup>46</sup> flowing north, is suitable for a *jōbuku* ritual if the chief donor resided in Nara (T 78, 359b3–4).

During the navigation, the vessels would stop at the seven set places along the river, where the abridged version of the *rokuji karin* took place. Here the *onmyōji* would take paper *hitokata* onto which the Tennō had preemptively breathed his defilements, and discarded them in water to be washed away, mirroring a renowned riverside purification called *nanase no harae* 七瀬の祓, or “Purification of the Seven Brooks.” This was a monthly custom carried out by *onmyōji*, which consisted in the symbolic cleansing of the body of the Tennō,<sup>47</sup> and which, as the name suggests, was organized at seven spots located in the proximity of water, either in the capital or the provinces. These seven points projected the perimeter of the Imperial palace onto the river, confirming that the main function of the *nanase no harae* was ridding the center of power from pollution and peril (BIALOCK 2007, 6). During the Heian period, these were identified as the

45. This may suggest that, in this context, the *honzon* was turned away from the officiants.

46. This is the old name for the Kizu river (木津河).

47. Numerous diaries and accounts of the Heian period chronicle the performance of the purification of the seven rapids by *onmyō* masters. For example, in the *Midō kanpaku-ki*, Fujiwara no Michinaga recounts that on the nineteenth day of the second month of Kōnin 弘仁 1 (1017) he attended a *nanase no harae* (DNS 3, 92). Fujiwara no Sanesuke's *Shōyūki* reports *nanase* ritual held on the eighteenth day of the ninth month of Kōnin 4 (1020) (DNS 5: 38).

junctions between the Kamo river and Ichijō 一条, Tsuchi mikado 土御門, Konoe 近衛, Naka mikado 中御門, Ōino mikado 大炊御門, and Nijo 二条 (MOZUME 1927, 26). However, other sets of seven sacred localities for the performance of this purification existed.<sup>48</sup> Through this process, the purification of the Tennō directly affected that of the capital, ensuring its protection.<sup>49</sup>

After the *goma*, the donor—who had so far remained on the smaller ship—was presented with three *hitokata* made of iron, shrub, and straw, bound together with a cord, and proceeded to rub them against his body. This action was accompanied by the recitation of the *Nakatomi* formula by an *onmyōji*, as well as the monks' simultaneously chanting the six-syllable dharani. The sound of the *kei*, *horagai*, and *taikō* drums supported and intensified the cleansing process. Once the recitation had concluded, one of the assistant monks took the *chinowa* ring and held it in front of the altar, allowing the donor to cross it.<sup>50</sup> The *hitokata* were cleansed with empowered rice, and the string tying them together was cut with the sword placed on the altar. Finally, the effigies were thrown in the water, marking the washing away of any source of pollution, and sanctioning the accomplishment of the riverine purification (ZGR 20, 68–69). Following the same pattern, and including the purification through *hitokata*, the *rokuji karin* was thus not the adaptation of a general riverbank purification, but precisely of the *nanase no harae*. The only difference being that in this case, the proceedings occurred on the water.

The methods described above suggest that the *Ritual* developed around two standard, existing practices: the *goma* and the *karin*. The *rokuji hō* added the exorcism to the *jōbuku* or *sokusai goma* by using the three talismanic images and the *kessen* all held together by the recitation of the six-syllable dharani. The combination of these elements has no textual counterpart in the Chinese sources mentioned in the Japanese collections. Even though the *kessen* is also prescribed

48. At the time of Go-Reizei Tennō 後冷泉天皇 (1025–1068), the following locations were used: 1. Kawai 川合, a stream running through Tadasu Forest, where Kamo Shrine is; 2. Matsugasaki 松ヶ崎; 3. in front of the Mimito-gawa 耳敏川, a river located in present-day Kamigyo ward, south of Nijo's Suzakumon; 4. by Higashi taki 東滝, a rapid on the Kitashirakawa 北白川; 5. Ishikake 石影, a stele found by the Kamiyagawa 紙屋川, in proximity a temple called Saionji 西園寺; 6. Nishitaki 西滝, a rapid of the Kamo river by Ninnaji; and 7. Ooigawa 大井川 a stream in Arashiyama, now known as Katsuragawa 桂川 (MOZUME 1927, 26; YAMANAKA 1999, 70). YAMANAKA (1999, 70) reports that according to the *Kakaishō* 河海抄, other sets of seven intersections outside Heiankyō existed. These were: 1. Nanba 難波; 2. Ōta 農太; 3. Kawamata settsu 河俣撰津; 4. Ōshima 大島; 5. Tachibana Kojima 橘小島; 6. Sakunatani 佐久那谷; and 7. Karasaki 唐崎, the famous shore on Lake Biwa that was a favorite place for *harae* rites.

49. The reason why seven sites were chosen is not addressed in the sources, but possible interpretations will be explored later in this article.

50. The sources reveal that this practice should follow the pattern of “the sixth-month ceremony” (T 2409, 168d16), which is the *nagoshi no harae* 夏越の祓, a ritual performed on the last day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar.



in the sutras included in Group B, the manipulation of the three foxes is for the first time introduced in the Japanese sources. Furthermore, as suggested by its name, the *rokuji karin* was the result of the juxtaposition and eventual amalgamation of the six-syllable *goma* and an *onmyō* water-facing rite, the *karin*. In this context, the best expertise combined to provide a thorough solution for adversities and diseases.

The composite nature of the *Ritual* suggests that Heian period monastics took the liberty of weaving together a variety of techniques, which were drawn from a diversity of sources, supposedly discrete traditions, as well as distinct lineages. In this context, alleged secret transmissions were shared more often than not, at least within the Taimitsu and Tōmitsu esoteric traditions. This was perhaps linked to the fact that distinguished teachers often trained at different temples, and were thus knowledgeable of repertoires belonging to more than one lineage, as was the case for Kōgei. By including *onmyō* masters, one is faced with an even more inclusive facet. Although not uncommon, carrying out the service on the boat encouraged interaction between specialists, and welcomed an overlap of their respective procedures.

In the end, whether the liturgy was fashioned by Taimitsu or Tōmitsu monastics is an issue that becomes, retrospectively, less relevant. It was rather the product of a particular religious milieu, in which ritual knowledge claimed to be exclusive to one transmission, but was, in fact, a participatory accomplishment.

### *Visual Strategies of the Ritual*

As seen from the previous discussion, Tōmitsu sources suggest that it was possible to modify the *goma* to allow for various *honzon*, requiring a degree of flexibility of its core sections, which in part reflected sectarian or lineage differences. In particular, Tōmitsu ritualists created two types of mandara, the *rokujikyō* mandara, and the Rokujiten mandara, which were used exclusively for the *Ritual* performed by monks of Tōji, Daigoji, and Ninnaji. The sources also indicate that Imperial and aristocratic patrons often requested these representations; for example, Toba Tennō often asked an icon of Black Rokujiten to be brought to his retirement place in occasion of the *Ritual* (TZ 5, 351c). Featuring different deities, the two mandarar embody distinct but related ways of giving shape to the six-syllable dharani, which set the Tōmitsu performances aside from their Taimitsu counterparts, and, for this reason, require further consideration.

#### THE ROKUJIKYŌ MANDARA

The earliest surviving example of the *rokujikyō* mandara, now in the Kyoto National Museum, is a Kamakura period lavish painting formerly belonging to Daigoji (see FIGURE 1). This mandara features a central moon disk, with the Six

Kannon surrounding Shaka Kinrin, and in the lower-left and right-hand sides respectively, Fudō and Daiitoku. Underneath the seven deities and between the two Wisdom Kings is a bright moon disk sitting on a rock, around which another set of six figures is arranged. Described as either human or heavenly beings, they all have high headdresses, and their palms joined in *gasshō*. Finally, in the top register, a canopy protects two flying *Apsaras*. This is the standard format of the *rokujikyō* mandara, consistent with the sketches reproduced across the Tōmitsu manuals, as well as by the two additional existing mandaras—one held in Daigoji, and one in Rokujizō temple in Ibaraki, both dated to the Nanbokuchō period (1334–1392).

Tōji and Ono-ryū monks were actively involved in devising this icon, which is traced back to a group of individuals surrounding Shōbō, such as Shinga and Kanjuku. The ritual compendia present sketches of two *shūji* mandaras that can be considered the early matrix for the Kamakura and Nanbokuchō period examples (FIGURE 4). One of the sketches is recorded by the *Kakuzenshō* as being the *shūji* mandara held in the storehouse of Jōganji, and used during ceremonies sponsored by Montoku Tennō. This mandara is attributed to Shinga and the sketch of the diagram to his disciple and Tōji monk Kanjuku. The illustration depicts Kinrin and the Six Kannon, accompanied by Daiitoku and Fudō (TZ 3, 92c; TZ 5, 351c).

As an alternative to this format, the manuals mention another representation, this time attributed to the tenth-century Jimon monk Myōsen *risshi* 明仙律師, the only instance in which a *rokujikyō* mandara is attributed to a Taimitsu monk.<sup>51</sup> In this example, Fudō and Daiitoku are not present, but the moon disk surrounded by six figures is. Although the positioning of the Six Kannon around Kinrin varies from one sketch to the other, it would seem that the extant mandaras are the result of the merging of these two early *shūji* diagrams. The two sketches are the first visual examples in which Shaka Kinrin is positioned at the center, surrounded by the Six Kannon, an iconography that will remain exclusive to this type of mandara. In this regard, the *Byakuhō kushō* explains:

Even if the *rokujikyō* does not mention it, Kinrin should be installed at the center [of the mandara]. This derives from Shinga's *shūji* mandara, which bears Kinrin's *shūji* at its center, and is a secret master to disciple teaching, transmitted within Tōji's lineage. Here, Kinrin stands for Shaka Kinrin. Although the chief deity of this scripture is Kannon of the six paths, Kinrin has the power of conquering and crashing the army of Mara, as well as all enemies. Furthermore,... Kinrin is placed at the center because it is the original body [*honshin* 本身] of Kannon. (TZ 6, 259a)

51. Myōsen was Yokei's 余慶 (919–991) ordination master.

Here, Kinrin is explicitly recognized as Shaka, that is, one specific form of Kinrin Bucchō—the other being Dainichi—representing Śākyamuni as Wheel-Turning King or Cakravartin (Jp. Tenrin'ō 天輪王) and thus standing for the regal aspect of the historical Buddha. Ryōson's additionally explains that Shaka Kinrin is the “original body” or *honshin* 本身 of Kannon—an explanation particular, as far as I know, to Ryōson's writing.<sup>52</sup> However, this association resonates with the teachings developed by the Daigoji monk Kōshin 弘真<sup>53</sup> (1278–1357), who equated Nyoirin Kannon with Ichiji Kinrin Bucchō (the unification of the two aspects—Shaka and Dainichi).<sup>54</sup> Although there is no direct mention of Nyoirin Kannon as being connected to Kinrin in this context, the passage suggests that, in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Ono exegetical writings, Kannon was also considered as an emanation of Kinrin—a connection that is visually highlighted by the arrangement of the Six Kannon around Kinrin. This relation marks a significant difference from the Tiantai teachings discussed earlier, which considered the Six Kannon as manifestations of the six-syllable dharani, setting the mandara and its interpretation apart from any doctrinal understanding of the dharani that emerged from within Tiantai circles.

Shaka Kinrin is depicted in a seated position, with hands in *dhyāna* mudra (Jp. *jōin* 定印), holding an eight-spoke golden *cakra* (*hachi fukurin hō* 八輻輪宝) on top of his palms, a common iconography found in coeval examples as well. These eight spokes symbolize Kinrin's ability to destroy the afflictions of the eight consciousnesses (Skt. *aṣṭa vijñānāni*; Jp. *hasshiki* 八識) and the obstacles of the eight types of cognition (Skt. *aṣṭa jñāna*; Jp. *hacchi* 八智) (TZ 6, 259b).<sup>55</sup> Seven extra golden *cakras* (*shichi kinrin* 七金輪)<sup>56</sup> are inscribed into Kinrin's halo, this time designating seven seats (*za* 座) (TZ 6, 259b). Although the sources do not elaborate on the function of these seats, they may symbolize seven objects, or seven deities. Representations of Ichiji Kinrin usually include the same seven-*cakra* motives, which are interpreted as the Buddha's limitless powers (TEN GRO-TENHUIS 1999, 100). In this context, they could stand for the regal authority of the Universal Wheel-Turning King, and thus be related to seven treasures (*shippō* 七宝) that were common elements in Shaka Kinrin imageries, although not in

52. In discussing the *rokujiikyō* mandara's iconography, TSUDA (2006, 161) highlights how Shaka Kinrin was, in fact, associated with Yakushi, but this is never stated in the sources on the ritual.

53. This is a pseudonym of Monkan 文觀.

54. Abe Yasurō discusses this connection in relation to the scripture *Himitsu gentei kuketsu* 秘密源底口決, compiled in 1338 (ABE 1989, 152–54).

55. Ryōson further explains that the eight types of cognition are also symbolized by the eight-petal lotus flower on which Kinrin Bucchō of the Taizokai mandara is seated (TZ 6, 259b).

56. These seven *cakra* seats also have eight rods, and are thus a further means of removing hindrances occluding the eight consciousnesses.

the form of *cakra*.<sup>57</sup> If standing for seven deities, the *cakras* could be related to the seven stars of the Dipper, which, as we will see, may have been connected to this mandara.

Throughout the late Heian and Kamakura periods, various aspects of Kinrin Bucchō were at the center of major liturgies performed by Tōmitsu ritualists for the benefit of the Imperial family, which required particular *besson* mandaras, such as the *hokutō* or Big Dipper mandara (北斗曼荼羅).<sup>58</sup> This icon was employed during the homonymous *hokutohō* 北斗法, one among several Pole Star rites held by Shingon and Tendai monks, popular during the Insei period. In this case, Shaka Kinrin is depicted in a seated position, surrounded by the seven stars of the Big Dipper, the nine planets, the twelve zodiacal signs, and finally the deities of the twenty-eight lunar mansions (TEN GROTHENHUIS 1999, 116–17). Although the formal layout of the mandara, whether in squared or circular fashion, is very different from the *rokujikyō* arrangement, Tsuda has argued that the two may be related (TSUDA 2006, 160–61) as in part they are supported by the presence of the Six Kannon.

In reference to this group, the sources generally draw from the teachings of Ningai in elucidating their formal features. A well-known passage of the *Hishō mondō* reports that Ono master equated the Six Kannon elaborated by Tiantai Zhiyi with existing Japanese examples, and elucidated their main iconographic traits. The note, supposedly compiled in 1023 (Jian 3 治安), states:

[Kannon of] Great Compassion (Ch. *Dabei* 大悲) is Shō Kannon, and [is responsible for] the realm of hell. It is of light blue or white color, and holds a lotus flower in its left hand, and the right hand is performing the *abhaya* mudra. [Kannon of] Great Kindness (Ch. *Daci* 大慈) is Senju Kannon, and [is responsible for] the realm of hungry ghosts. It is of golden color, with six faces; it holds a red lotus flower with the left hand, and the right hand is performing the *abhaya* mudra. [Kannon of] Leonine Fearlessness (Ch. *Shizi wuwei* 獅子無畏) is Batō Kannon, and [is responsible for] the realm of animals. It is of blue color and holds a lotus flower with its left hand. On top of the lotus flower, there is a *tāla*-leaf scripture (*bonkyō* 梵籙). [Kannon of] Universal Shining Radiance (Ch. *Daguan puzhao* 大光普照) is Jūichimen Kannon, and [is responsible for] the realm of *asuras*. It is of red color and holds a red flower with the left hand. On top of the lotus flower there is a water bottle, from which emerges a single-pronged vajra (*dokukosho* 獨杵). Divine Hero [Kannon] (Ch. *Tianren zhangfu*

57. The seven precious treasures are the golden wheel, the elephant, the dark horse, the precious jewel, the able minister, the queen, and the loyal general.

58. Among these are the Daibutchō mandara zu 大仏頂曼荼羅圖, representing both Ichiji and Shaka Kinrin; the Ichiji Kinrin mandara 一字金輪曼荼羅, the Butsugen mandara 仏眼曼荼羅, focused on Butsugen Butsumo 仏眼仏母, the Buddha Eye or the Buddha Mother, but also bearing Ichiji Kinrin.

天人丈夫) is Juntei, and [is responsible for] the realm of humans. It is of dark blue color, and holds a blue lotus in its right hand. The left is placed in *abhaya* mudra. Mahābrahmā [Kannon] (Ch. *Dafan shenyuan* 大梵深遠) is Nyoirin, and [is responsible for] the realm of *devas*. It is of white color and holds a lotus flower with the right hand. On top of the lotus flower, there is a three-pronged vajra. The left is in *abhaya* mudra. (T 79, no. 2536, 424b26–c10)

This description matches the Six Kannon painted in the Daigoji mandaras and in the sketches reproduced in FIGURES 1 and 2. Even though the colors of each figure have faded, and are hardly recognizable, the implements and hand gestures mirror those described in the text, so that it seems possible that Ningai was referring precisely to this type of mandara. Ningai's explanation was also used by Raiyu to highlight the featured *rokujikyō* mandara shared with coeval imageries. He compares Ningai's examples with the set of sculptures located in the Yakushidō of Hōjōji 法成寺,<sup>59</sup> and with Jōganji's *shūji* mandara (T 79, no. 2536, 412b08–c11). Here he stresses how, unlike the freestanding six examples of Hōjōji, those in the Daigoji mandaras surround a central Shaka Kinrin. Through the writings of Raiyu, Ningai thus becomes a key figure for the understanding of these images and ritual function. Without this elucidation, each single Kannon in the mandara itself would be difficult to identify, as they all share common traits, and are dissimilar to their standard iconographies. For example, Jūichimen Kannon has six instead of eleven heads; Batō lacks his characteristic horse's head and is blue, not the usual red.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, by linking Zhiyi's set with the one depicted in the mandara, Raiyu manages to create a remarkable aura around these figures: on the one hand, they can be traced back to Tiantai origins, and on the other they are distinguished from it. In this sense, if Zhiyi's teachings provided the doctrinal link between the Six Kannon and the six-syllable dharani, Ningai gave new shape to their formal representations, as well as to their worship context.

The allure of the *rokujikyō* mandara may have originated from the importance that the Six Kannon had in the religious milieu of Heian Japan. Already in the early tenth century, the Six Kannon set was worshipped by the aristocracy as saviors of beings in the six destinies independently from the *Ritual* (FOWLER 2006, 198–99).<sup>61</sup> The *Eiga Monogatari* reports several festivities during which the

59. This was the palace commissioned by Fujiwara no Michinaga for his retirement.

60. All the extant visual representations of Batō, with the exception of the Daigoji mandaras, are red, as per its description in the *Dainichikyōshō* stating “its color should be that of the sun at dawn, and its body adorned with white lotuses. It is as bright as flames, and its fierce roar exposes its fangs. Its claws are sharp, and he has the mane of a lion” (T 18, no. 848, 7a16–22).

61. Sherry Fowler provides a number of relevant examples. The Tendai priest Sōō 相応 (831–918) commissioned a Six Kannon set for the benefit of beings on the six paths in the tenth century (910), one of the earliest references of the construction of these images to date. The fourteenth century *Sanmon dōshaki* records a memorial service requested by Go Shirakawa in Kaō 1

Six Kannon images enshrined by Michinaga in Hōjōji were made visible to the public.<sup>62</sup> The deities' role of delivering beings in all realms, especially hell, as well as the power derived from being in their presence, is highlighted several times (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, 622–30). In addition, the existence of different types of liturgies on the Six Kannon—mentioned in section one of this article—emphasizes the importance that this group had at this time.

As mentioned earlier, six other figures appear in the lower central register of the mandara, arranged around a small moon disk located on a rock, in a position resembling a worship practice. According to the *Besson zakki* and the *Byakuhōshō*, these figures portray a group of six plague deities or *jūsoshin* 呪詛神. The *Besson zakki* names only three of them, Kibune 貴布禰, Suhi 須比, and Kazura 賀津良, three water kami associated with the Kibune Jinja in Kurma.<sup>63</sup> The *Byakuhōshō* identifies the other three as Yamao 山尾, Kawao 河尾, and Okubuka 奥深 (TZ 10, 755b; MURAYAMA 1981, 215), also a water kami worshipped at Kibune. In the Heian period, this shrine was connected to rainmaking rituals<sup>64</sup> and even though (to my knowledge) the *Ritual* was never performed for this purpose, monks belonging to the Ono-ryū, and in particular Ningai, were renowned for their rainmaking skills, possibly explaining the presence of water-related kami in the mandara.

The *Byakuhōshō* tackles these characters in detail. First, the text clarifies that the small moon disk placed on the rock is, in fact, a mirror. This mirror should be understood as standing in front of the mandara, that is, in front of Shaka Kinrin and the Six Kannon, not underneath it. Here, the mirror has both symbolic and ritual functions. On the one hand, it a *sammaya* form of Kannon, and, for this reason, the sources provide sketches with the syllable *hrih* inscribed inside it. On the other hand, the mirror is used for mantic purposes: exposing the dis-

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嘉応 (1169), consisting of a reading of the Kannon sutra in front of the Six Kannon. Furthermore, inside the Batō Kannon statue belonging to the Six Kannon set of Daihōonji 大報恩寺 in Kyoto was found a sutra dedicated by the daughter of the donor, Fujiwara no Mochihisa 藤原以入, for the benefit of all the beings of the dharma worlds.

62. The *Eiga Monogatari* mentions a Kamo festival held in 1024, presided over by Hiei Abbot Ingen (954–1028), and a festival held in the sixth month of the same year where verses of the Kannon chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* were painted on the pillars in front of the statues, and a sutra recitation was held.

63. Although the name of the Shrine is now spelled 木船, meaning “wooden boat,” the Heian period phonetic spelling was 貴布禰. Interestingly, the inner sanctum of the shrine is believed to be a boat that was used by Tamayori no hime to sail upstream and found the shrine in the mountain (AKIMA 1993, 134–35).

64. Akima Toshio has pointed out that this was the place where, in ancient times, the emperor dedicated a black horse to pray for rainfall, and a white horse to pray for a stop to rainfall (AKIMA 1993, 134, note 21).

ease that afflicts the ritual sponsor and its supernatural causes. As Strickmann has pointed out, catoptromancy, or divination by mirror, was often mentioned in Buddhist scriptures as a material support to conjure immaterial presence (STRICKMANN 2002, 212–17). In this mandara, the mirror may indicate precisely one such custom. Chōen makes explicit reference to it in quoting a passage from the *Bishamon giki* 毘沙門儀軌 instructing one to recite dharanis in front of a mirror in order uncover the root of a disease or the nature of a poison (T 10, 755b–c). He explains that through the mirror all evil spirits (*reiki* 靈鬼) can be made manifest. These images could thus be considered here as six deities denoting the disease-bearing entities appearing in front of the mirror as a result of the ritual recitation of the six-syllable dharani.

As embodiments of the six-syllable dharani, the Six Kannon gave visible and material form to a key healing function of the *Ritual*. However, other visual elements of the composition had an important role, making this mandara an effective curative tool in its own right. The depiction of the mirror in the lower register of the mandara evokes a ritual enactment of a divination that should reveal the source of an illness. In this sense, even if a mirror was not necessarily present in the *Ritual*, one could argue that the mandara itself absolved this significant function, becoming a crucial element of the practice. The six figures with joined hand surrounding the mirror further hint at the recitation of the dharani to remove the manifested cause of the afflictions. In this sense, not only did the mandara instantiate the deities portrayed, it also provided a concrete shape to their curative powers. Overall, the mandara is able to bring together all the key components of the ritual from the Six Kannon, to the elimination of curses, plague deities, and their nefarious influences.

Ryōson highlights an additional visual link to the function of the dharani: each one of the Six Kannon holds in his chest a six-rods wheel, which symbolizes their ability to conquer any false discrimination, associated with the six consciousnesses (*rokushiki* 六識). Ryōson stresses how these *cakras* release the six senses, breaking down the three hindrances (*sanshō* 三障) of the *rokudō* (TZ 6, 259b).

In addition to these aspects, Chōen explains that Kinrin and the Six Kannon can convert the negative influences of “unusual” stars (*akusei* 悪星) into positive occurrences (TZ 10, 755a–b). While this explanation is far from supporting an interpretation of the *rokujiikyō* mandara, its ritual, and the worship of celestial bodies, it reasserts its function as a means of forsaking potentially dangerous circumstances. However, according to Kanjo’s 寛助 (1057–1125) *Bekkyōshō* 別行抄,<sup>65</sup> six of the seven brightest stars of the Ursa Major are considered manifestations of Kannon (TZ 10, 755a–b). The constellation is composed of

65. This is a manual in seven fascicles recording the ritual practices of the Hirosawa-ryū.

Komonshei 巨門星 (*beta ursae majoris*), which is associated with Senjū Kannon; Rokuzonsei 祿存星 (*gamma ursae majoris*), arising from from Batō Kannon; Monkyokusei 文曲星 (*delta ursae majoris*) from Fukukenjaku Kannon; Renchōsei 廉貞星 (*epsilon ursae majoris*) from Jūichimen Kannon; Mugokusei 武曲星 (*zeta ursae majoris*) from Suimen Kannon 水面觀音; and Hagunsei 破軍星 (*theta ursae majoris*) from Arorika Kannon 阿魯力迦觀音. The only star that does not originate from a form of Kannon is Donrōsei (*Alpha ursae majoris*) 貪狼星 (T 78, no. 2476, 182b–183a4). Although the Kannon included in this list only in part corresponds to the Japanese Six Kannon group, and consequently to the deities of the *rokujikyō* mandara, according to Tsuda, it may be enough to envision a connection between this mandara and coeval Dipper imageries. Tsuda stresses that the Six Kannon of Hōjōji were part of a larger set of icons, which included the Seven Yakushi. Not only were the deities of the Big Dipper considered emanations of this set of Yakushi, but Yakushi itself could manifest as Shaka Kinrin—the central figure in star mandaras and of the *rokujikyō* (TSUDA 2006, 160–62). On the basis of these associations, the seven *cakras* on Shaka Kinrin's halo may well be a reference to the Seven Yakushi that emerge from the central deity, which are also related to the seven stars of the Dipper. In this regard, even if no explicit connection between the Six Kannon and the constellation is ever made in the *rokujikyō* sources, nor the ritual classified as a star ritual, the iconography of the *rokujikyō* mandara seems to conjure up a network of ideas related to astral representations. As the Heian period was characterized by a steady interest in both the Six Kannon and polar and star deities, it may not be surprising to find that both themes had influenced the *rokujikyō*. The doctrinal elucidation of its deities, and their association with a diversity of entities, must have played an essential role in making the mandara an efficacious and highly requested ritual implement.

#### THE ROKUJITEN MANDARA

The other icon associated with the *Ritual*, and with the Ono ritualists, is the Rokujiten mandara (FIGURES 5 and 6). As in the previous case, few examples of this deity and its mandara have survived,<sup>66</sup> and although the sources present clear sketches of its features, they betray a composite and at times problematic genealogy for the image.

The Japanese manuals explain that the name Rokujiten or Lord of the Six Syllables—alternatively called Rokuji Myōō 六字明王—derives from the *rokuji dai myōju* 六字大名呪 (TZ 5, 351c), the famous *om maṇi padme hūm* expounded in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra* (Jp. *Daijō shōgon hōō kyō* 大乘莊嚴寶王經).<sup>67</sup> How-

66. An outstanding Kamakura period example is held in Hōjuin 宝寿院, Kōyasan 高野山.

67. See *Dasheng zhuangyan baowang jing*, translated by Tianxizai 天息災 (T 20, no. 1050).



ever, nowhere in the ritual instructions is it made clear that this formula should be invoked instead of the one discussed so far. In any case, no matter which six-syllable dharani the sources take into account, Rokujiten is interpreted as a manifestation of a Kannon, of his abilities of saving beings in the six paths, and of removing any occlusion provoked by the wrong functioning of the six senses. This correlation could be visually expressed by inscribing the *shūji* of the Six Kannon around him (TZ 5, 354b).

In terms of iconography, Ryōson traces its origins back to the fourth chapter of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra*. Here Rokujuten is part of a mandala featuring the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Life (Jp. Muryōju Nyorai 無量壽如來), and the Precious-gem Bodhisattva (Jp. Daimanibō 大摩尼寶 Bosatsu). The deity is described as having four arms, two holding a jewel and a rosary, and two locked in a mudra in front of the abdomen; he has a fleshy complexion, and stands on top of heavenly figures (TZ 6, 602a–b). This version, however, did not become prominent in the Japanese context, and sketches as well as the few surviving images are slightly different. Rokujiten is more often represented with a dark complexion, and for this reason is referred to as Black Rokuji. He has three sets of arms: one clutching a sword and a three-pronged spear (both possible *sammaya* forms); one holding a sun and moon disk; and one placed in front of the navel, with the palms of the hands facing each other (FIGURE 5).<sup>68</sup> Just like the Six Kannon, these six arms express the potential of reaching out to all beings in the six paths of existence, an interpretation that reinforces the idea that Rokujiten gives shape to the six-syllable dharani, and, in turn, to the faculties of the six manifestations of Kannon.

Furthermore, in line with the fundamental characteristic of the *Ritual*, some elements of Rokujiten's iconography betray an *onmyō* heritage. Rokujiten is represented standing on his right leg, with the ankle of the left one resting on the right knee. This posture symbolizes the ritual Steps of Yu or *uho* 禹步 (TSUDA 1998b, 76–78) performed during *onmyō* rituals for the aversion of calamities, and follow the pattern of the Big Dipper constellation.<sup>69</sup> These steps were used by Chinese Daoist masters in the Tang period to expel disease-bearing deities.<sup>70</sup> Eventually, the steps were also employed in directional rites, in particular those

68. There are instances in which the deity is depicted with four arms instead of six, but sword and spear are always present.

69. The ritual dance derives its name from the legend of the Chinese sage Yu, who was able to control waters during floods, and was thus praised in myths as the model ruler (ANDERSEN 1989, 21–22).

70. Andersen explains that this practice was known in China already in the third century BCE, and was further documented in the Shangqing revelations (ANDERSEN, 1989, 15–53).



FIGURE 12. Myōken mandara sketch. From *Besson zakki*, TZ 3, 3007, 531.

entailing traveling through mountains (Poo 2008, 576), a function that was maintained in the Japanese context as well.

The connection with the Dipper, and in particular with the Pole Star believed to preside over it, is only hinted at in passing in the Chinese textual sources on the six-syllable dharani. As already mentioned above, the *Foshuo liuzi shenzhou wang jing* relates that the dharani can dissipate evil spells cast by sorceresses wishing to control all sort of spirits, ghosts, and evil demons, as well as the Big Dipper and Pole Star (T 20, no. 1045a, 39c09–c24; T 1045b, 41c04–c11). However, as in the passage of the *Byakuhōshō*, explaining that the deities of the *rokujikyō* mandara can rule over the influences of “unusual” or malignant stars, this short gloss is far from providing a scriptural basis for the association between the six-syllable dharani and the Pole Star. If anything, it highlights that this formula was considered efficacious in warding off misfortunes caused by all kinds of entities and occurrences.

If the textual sources do not reveal any connection between Dipper worship and the *Ritual*, Rokujiten’s iconographical characteristics are very close to coeval Pole Star imageries. The deity is always accompanied by the twelve animals of the zodiac, as is the case in depictions of star deities. As already pointed out by Tsuda, he is nearly identical to other two deities worshipped in the Heian and Kamakura periods: Myōken 妙見 and Sonjōō 尊星王, which were considered within Tōmitsu and Taimitsu circles as incarnations of the Pole Star. The two sketches of Rokujiten included in the *Besson zakki* and reproduced in FIGURES 5 and 6 show the similarities with those of Sonjōō and Myōken (FIGURE 12).

The only difference between the mandarar are the presence of a dragon, symbolizing the Big Dipper, on which Sonjōō and Myōken are standing,<sup>71</sup> absent in the Rokujiten example, as well as the animal emerging from the head of the three deities. Sonjōō bears a *makatsu* large fish or a deer, Myōken one or more snakes, and Rokujiten is described as having as a unique characteristic a “monkey crown” or *enkan* 猿冠. According to Ryōson’s annotations, this serpent-like figure stands for the six consciousnesses, which correspond to the key activities of the six sensory organs (TZ 6, 260a). As discussed earlier, the regulation of the six organs was among the key functions of the six-syllable dharani. The “monkey crown” of Rokujiten thus alludes to this cleansing activity, and distinguishes the deity, from a theoretical and visual standpoint, from Sonjōō and Myōken.

Rokujiten representations are also distinguished by three foxes placed in the lower register of the mandara, just underneath the pedestal on which the deity stands. These figures may recall the heavenly beings mentioned in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* sutra’s description of Rokujiten, and, more importantly, portray the three *kitsune* 狐 exorcized during the *Ritual*.

These differences notwithstanding, the medieval ritualists were well aware of the similarities between these deities, and this often resulted in one lineage accusing the other of worshipping a “non-Buddhist” deity (*gejutsu* 外術). For instance, in addressing the apparent resemblance between Sonjōō and Myōken, the Tendai Jimon monk Keihan 慶範 (1155–1221) argued for the superiority of Sonjōō. In response, Tōmitsu ritualists underlined the fact that Sonjōō derived not from a Buddhist but an *onmyō* milieu, hence representing an inferior deity (DOLCE 2011a, 336–37). Interestingly, an identical strategy is used for Rokujiten. Both Kakuzen and Ryōson reference an oral transmission of the Daigoji monk Shōken 聖賢 (1083–1149), according to whom an image similar to Rokujiten was found in the collection of Toba Sōjō 鳥羽僧正 (1053–1140) at Miidera,<sup>72</sup> evidently referring to Sonjōō. This icon is called a *gejutsu* kami (TZ 8, 261a), reinforcing the idea that Tōmitsu specialists may have been trying to downplay the role of Sonjōō, and possibly of the rituals connected to it.

It is worth remembering that this is not the only icon revealing a connection with Onjōji. Kakuzen attributes one of the earliest sketches of the *rokujiikyō* mandara to the Jimon monk Myōsen, giving the impression that the two mandarar of the *Ritual* were both related to Enchin’s lineage, even if to different extents. The regular recurrence of monastics linked to the Ono and Jimon lineage, in line with the point raised above, suggests yet again that the doctrinal and ritual milieu out of which the *Ritual* emerged was characterized by a degree of mobility. Far from being unproblematic, the circulation of knowledge beyond strict sectarian bound-

71. There are also examples in which Myōken is standing on a turtle.

72. Also known as Kakuyū 覚猷, he became head of Miidera’s Hōrin-in 1135.

aries required justification and eventual validation. The mixture of elements borrowed from Dipper deities indicates precisely that the Rokujiten mandara was the product of a heterogeneous religious milieu, in which practices and icons considered *gejutsu* could merge with Buddhist ones. Pole Star imageries that developed in the course of the Heian period were thus the result of the intersection with ideas in origin belonging to various milieus, and were heavily influenced by Daoist representations of stars and planets. Tsuda discusses how Sonjōō's iconography tapped into earlier Chinese images of Mercury and Kannon, and its mandara may have been patterned after star diagrams produced in China (TSUDA 2006, 155–56). Rokujiten's posture, evoking the performance of the Steps of Yu, reveals the close link existing with *onmyō* exorcistic rituals (SEKIMORI 2006, 237), which, as already highlighted earlier, was indeed one of the constitutive characteristics of the *Ritual*.

A final association between the Seven stars of the Dipper and the *Ritual* is the constant recurrence of the number seven and its multiples. The *karin* was performed seven times at seven locations, either along the Kamo or other rivers. Although seemingly unrelated to Dipper worship, the name “seven branches” and the choice of seven locations conjure up meaningful cosmological connotations. As discussed earlier, the seven forks of the *Nanase no harae* could be a way of mapping the political borders of the capital onto the river for purificatory purposes. In this context, the introduction of representations of the seven deities in the form of either Shaka Kinrin and the Six Kannon, or Rokujiten, would add a further spatial compass to the ritual. As will be argued in the next section, this had significant repercussions on healing and salvation, which affected the performative strategy of the *Ritual*.

The identical features that Rokujiten shares with contemporaneous Pole Star deities, and the links between the *rokujikyō* mandara and the deities of the Dipper discussed above, leave no doubt of the close link between these representations. It is not my intention to argue here that the *Ritual* was intended as a star ritual, or that its mandarars were considered star mandarars, as this is never explicitly stated in any source. However, these icons were both informed by and embodied a specific way of understanding key cosmological aspects that were believed to have a direct impact on the health and well-being of people.

### *Healing Strategies of the Rokujikyō*

Turning to Buddhist monks to hold assemblies, sutra recitations, empowerment rites, and incantations to settle health related matters, on top of consulting court doctors or diviners, was widespread in the Heian period. Ritual and historical documents record instances in which the *Ritual* was requested to solve ailments triggered by sorcery. Among the most illustrious cases, and unlucky turnouts, is that of the eighth son of Toba Tennō, the young Konoe, who ascended to the throne when only three years old, and suffered from very

unstable health. His mother Bifukumon'in believed these constant illnesses to have been caused by the resentful Sutoku 崇徳 (1119–1164), the dethroned second heir of Toba, and by the Minister of the Left Fujiwara Yorinaga 藤原頼長 (1120–1156) (McCULLOUGH 1988, 448–49). In several occasions between 1152 and 1155, Bifukumon'in sponsored performances of the *Ritual* for the protection and well-being of her son (TZ 5, 351b–c), who nevertheless died at the age of seventeen.

In other cases, the liturgy was employed to avert bad omens, announced by foxes' cries (TZ 5, 351b), or to protect women in childbirth. To address these concerns, and to provide a wide spectrum of protection, a variety of techniques tapping into what could now be considered discrete traditions were employed.

The first curative and preventive strategy occurred during the *goma* and consisted in the manipulation of the three foxes' effigies, directly aimed at removing defilements provoked by *kitsune*. At the stipulated time, the *ajari* slowly burned them in the hearth, with perfumes and poisons, accompanied by the entourage of assistant monks reciting the six-syllable dharani, the subjugation mantra of Dai-itoku, and that of Gosanze. Handling and incinerating these objects required a great deal of attention, so the *Gyōrinshō* warns the *ajari* not to burn the images too fast, but to gradually extinguish them in the fire instead (T 76, no. 2409, 164b22–26). Such scrupulous action prevented the three foxes from being empowered by the blazing flames of the *goma*, instead of subjugated. In this sense, the aim of the *goma* was not one of complete annihilation, but of transformation: the measured but relentless fumigation turned the foxes from “pathogen” to cure. The success of this procedure, and the change in state of the foxes, was sanctioned by the appearance of the syllable *hūm* out of the smoke of the burning figures (T 76, no. 2409, 164c2–5).

At the same time, there was also a practical purpose: the talismans were not thrown hastily into the heart, because their ashes were needed to make a medicine for the donor. In each case, the medicament was administered following a specific posology. For example, the *Gyōrinshō* suggests taking the ashes the next day on an empty stomach, stressing that they should never be mixed with alcoholic beverages. Alternatively, medication in the form of pills had to be taken with liquids once every hour (T 76, no. 2409, 164c21–27). Also, it was never taken all at once, but guarded and used until the symptoms had completely vanished.

Even though in this case the images of three foxes are never explicitly called talismans, the practice of drinking their ashes resembles the way talismans were used in a variety of Buddhist and Daoist ritual contexts, in particular when trying to get rid of disease-bearing entities (STRICKMANN 2002, 9; ROBSON 2011, 225–26). Inscripting the name of the person who has cast the curse, or the name of a pestilence deity, further suggests that their use was similar to that of a talisman. The burning of the effigies removed and warded off any source of evil and the ingestion of the ashes assured that any ailment they provoked was completely removed.

During the *goma*, the *ajari* carries out another protective rite, the *kessen*, which here differs slightly from the one introduced earlier. The *Byakuhōshō* and *Byakuhō kushō* instruct to take not five but fourteen purified white strings and lace them together to make two cords, each composed of seven threads. The two cords would then be combined to form a longer one measuring three *shaku* and five *son* in length—roughly 1.06 meters or 41 inches (TZ 10, 760b–61a). When handling the rope, the *ajari* was facing the northeast or the demon gate (*kimon* 鬼門), an unpropitious direction. The donor would instead be turned toward the southwest, or the human gate (*ninmon* 人門). The knotted cord was then secured around the head, hand, or waist of the donor.<sup>73</sup> In case the rite benefitted more than one person, or the sponsor could not be present, the *ajari* tied the extremity of the cord to his right ring finger in his or their stead (TZ 10, 760b). According to the *Byakuhōshō*, the *kessen* is based on two of the three six-syllable dharani sutra previously discussed—the *Foshuo liuzi zhouwang jing* and the *Foshuo liuzi shenzhou wang jing*. In particular, the passage below explains:

Hold a white string and recite the [six-syllable] dharani seven times. Each time, make one knot. If there is an official problem, dispute, or spell, all evils [they may provoke] will be dissipated. Once the recitation is finished, tie the rope to the donor's clean sash. (T 20, no. 1044, 39b2–4; T 1045a, 41a18–21)

Although the passage only mentions the creation of seven knots, the overall idea of empowering them and then giving the cord to the donors is admittedly shared in all these instances. Carried out in conjunction with the recitation of the six-syllable dharani, this method had a crucial role, strengthening that of the effigies.

An additional therapeutic consisted in the recitation of the *Nakatomi* formula in conjunction with the use of *hitokata*. These small figurines were of three kinds, made of wood, straw, or metal, mirroring the three effigies burned during the *goma*, and were bound together using an empowered rope. Rubbing the three *hitokata* either on one's body or robes, or even by blowing onto them, would sympathetically transfer defilements from the actual body to the substitute one, remove any impurity. Once this action was accomplished, the rope was symbolically cut and the *hitokata* were cast in the river and set adrift. As mentioned earlier, this rite had a strong geopolitical underpinning, structured according to what Bialock has defined as a “center–periphery opposition” (BIALOCK 2007, 6). In this context, the capital, as cultural and political center, was associated with purity, while the provinces were associated with menacing defilements that needed to be kept at bay. This was achieved through the performance of rituals at border spaces, such as rivers, which guaranteed protection

73. The *Byakuhōshō* also instructs to fasten the cord around the ring finger of the chief donor (left for men and right for women).

from external defilements, as well as expulsion of internal ones. The cleansing of the body of the Tennō and the subsequent discarding of the dolls in the rapids that characterized the *nanase no harae* symbolized the removal of *kegare* and the preservation of the idea of center and centralized power as sacred (BIALOCK 2007, 6–7).

Similar to these cases, *hina-nagashi* ceremonies also entailed setting a straw doll afloat on a boat down a river toward the sea specifically to expel pestilence deities or malignant spirits. The *Engishiki* includes a *norito*—still recited in contemporary instances—that clearly describes the cleansing process through water. The passage says:

As a result of the exorcism and purification, there will be no offenses [*tsumi*] left. They will be taken into the great ocean by Seoritsu-hime no kami, who dwells in the shallows of the rapid-running rivers that fall surging perpendicular from the summits of the high mountains and low mountains. When she thus takes them, they will be swallowed with a gulp, by Hayakistu-hime no kami, who dwells in the wild brine, the myriad tides of the brine, in the myriad meeting-place of the brine of the many briny currents. When she thus swallows them with a gulp, Ibukido nushi no kami, who dwells in the Ibuki-do [lit. breath-blowing-entrance], will blow them away with his breath to the underworld. When he thus blows them away, Haya Sasura hime, who wanders in the root country, the underworld will seize them and lose them.

(WILLIAMS 2003, 159–60)

So-called boat expulsion rites were a standard way of dealing with a polluted, pestilence-bearing entity, widely practiced across East and South East Asia.<sup>74</sup> Standard examples consisted of paper or wooden boats, sometimes real life-size vessels—as in Taoist *jiao* rituals—where images of plague deities had been installed and sent floating adrift or burned.<sup>75</sup>

In ordinary *harae*, the *hitokata* cannot be said to represent a pestilence deity, but rather to temporarily incorporate the defilement that had been transferred onto it. This role could more easily be attributed to the effigies of the three foxes burned during the *goma*, which seem to be as perpetrators and carriers of troubles.

As we have seen, these images portray the group of three foxes—earthly fox, heavenly fox, and human fox—that Strickmann interprets as a sorceress

74. Katz discusses a number of Chinese examples in the chapter “Epidemics and Responses to Them” (KATZ, 1995, 39–74).

75. The twelfth century Chinese source *Jile bian*, composed by Zhuang Zhuo, records a festival for the exorcism of the gods of the Five Plagues: “They construct a large boat, several dozen *zhang* long, of light wood. From the stern to the bow, and the mast to the rudder, there is nothing left out. It is decorated with five colors.... [The boat] is let to float in the river. This is called Sending off Pestilence” (SZONYI 1997, 119).

and her acolytes—the fox and the kite—who enact her curses, and fulfill her deeds (STRICKMANN 2002, 265). In this guise, the female figure calls to mind the *caṇḍāla* woman described in the three sutras on the six-syllable dharani (Group B), who could summon all sorts of spirits and cause even wise and holy men to lose their way. She could also more broadly personify any agent of malignant deeds, or what was at a later stage referred to as a fox-owner, or *kitsune tsukai* 狐仕. This term, indicating those people capable of witchcraft, who performed malicious actions with the help of foxes they controlled, became widespread in Japanese lore (BATHGATE, 2003, 141–49). Placed at the bottom of the Rokujiten mandara (see FIGURE 5), shaped into earth or paper dolls, burned, and vexed, these three figures thus incarnate the hexes and ills the *Ritual* aimed at purging. The same idea is evoked by the group of six *jūsoshin* depicted at the lower end of the *rokujiikyō* mandara. These figures, divided into two groups of three, are clearly identified as plague-bearing water kami in both the *Besson zakki* and the *Byakuhōshō*, providing yet another visual reminder of the connection between the *Ritual* and the elimination of diseases. Their exorcism was achieved primarily through the six-syllable dharani, which—used to empower the ropes, effigies, *hitokata*, and talismans, and employed to ward off *kitsune* and *jūsoshin*—was the curative backbone of the liturgy.

Besides retaining all the characteristics of a spell against hexes and plagues (as suggested by its tantric origins), the dharani could purify the six senses and six planes of existence, as originally elaborated within Tiantai circles. In this respect, the Japanese sources quote a passage of the *QGJ*, reporting a conversation between Upasena and Śāriputra on the possibility of maintaining perfect concentration in spite of the evil dharmas produced by the activity of the six senses. Śāriputra exhorts Upasena to contemplate the emptiness of each dharma arising from the six senses (TZ 9, 750–51). As the *QGJ* explains, the recitation of the *dharani* helps this contemplation, which, in turns, leads to the purification of the six senses. The six-syllable dharani has the property of freeing the practitioner from obstructions created by both illness and delusions, equally affecting the proper functioning of body and mind, and, in conjunction with its other aural and visual properties, such as the *cakra* held by the Six Kannon, constituted a crucial healing technique.<sup>76</sup>

76. Interestingly, the therapeutic properties derived from the recitation of sets of six syllables is further linked to a breathing practice, already established by the Six Dynasties and Tang periods, attested to in Chinese Taoist sources and Japanese medical sources (such as the *Ishinpō*). Among these a technique called *Liuzi fa* 六字法, found in a Dunhuang manuscript [Pelliot 3043], introduces the practice of breathing six sounds (he 呵, hu 呼, si 四, chui 吹, xu 虛, xi 嬉) in connection to diverse bodily disorders and unbalances (DESPEUX 2010, 790). While in this text no apparent connection is made between the six-syllable dharani and the six sounds practice, the circulation of the latter among the medical manuscript used by court physicians in Japan may add an additional layer of meaning to the use and understanding of medico-ritual techniques.



Finally, the ritual stage can be considered as an efficacious way of handling impurities. In this instance, we are confronted with an unconventional setting, demarcated by the river and the vessels on which the celebrations were held. The river here comes to embody a multitude of ideas. From the beginning of the *karin* to its end, the vessel would progress from the first location to the last, only to go back to the point of departure—seemingly requiring the whole night, depending on the sailing conditions and on the distance between each locality, where the rite would be reproduced following an identical pattern. This nearly serial action was certainly underpinned by a concern for directional taboos; however, the multiplication of space and time by seven could not have been a coincidence in a service that paraded a visual apparatus close to Dipper imageries. Positing the existence of a link between the seven branches, a symbol of Imperial power, and the Seven Deities of the Big Dipper, grants the *Ritual* a further cosmological dimension. Most importantly, it stresses that its purificatory and healing properties were able to affect not only the earthly realms, but the six paths and the ten directions as well.

In addition, by marking a geographical outpost that divided center from periphery, the river was a dangerous place, in constant contact with what (or who) inhabited the outskirts. Reminiscences of water kami are found across the textual and visual materials, suggesting that rivers were not necessarily perceived as reliable environments. However, in light of the description of the practice, the river could be considered a sanitized environment in which pollutions were displaced, isolated, and dealt with, aptly removed from the mainland. In this sense the boat, as the ultimate pestilence-removing medium, not only had the function of carrying away the impurities, but also of temporarily isolating the person bearing them, together with the entirety of the paraphernalia employed to remove such pollutions. In addition, stepping through the *chinowa* ring, which marked the accomplishment of the ceremony, sanctioned the final change from a state of pollution to one of purity. In this regard, the river was a quintessentially liminal space: spatially located at the border, it was at the threshold between peril and safety. This ambiguity made it both a propitious location for a religious service, and its source of efficacy.

The movement of the vessel-turned-ritual-stage along a physical confine reminds one of the transformation that Bialock argued deeply affected a diversity of activities of the Heian court, from ludic to religious (BIALOCK 2007, 218–20). This reconfiguration of the space and time of performance was informed, in Bialock's analysis, by a change in the very notion of defilement, also influenced

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Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the Ming Dynasty alchemical text *Xingming guizhi* 性命圭旨 explicitly identifies the six sounds with the six-syllable dharani of Kannon.

by Pure Land ideas and *hongaku* thought (BIALOCK 2007, 218–20). Diseases and impurities started to be conceived as inherent rather than external conditions, and therefore the body itself became the locus from which filth and pollution originated. However, in the context of the *Ritual*, this process has yet to come to full fruition. Conflicting notions of external defilements provoked by spirits, foxes, or sorceresses, and internal ones, such as the deluded activities of the six sensory organs, coexist in the textual sources of the *Ritual*, as well as in its visual elements and enactment. Weaving together a variety of therapies, underpinned by a diverse understanding of how the ailment occurred, it was able to address conditions generated by the mind, while keeping a close eye on evil sorceress and malignant kami.

The result was a complex autochthonous liturgy, which was characterized by a high degree of flexibility, originality, and by the collaboration between different experts. Buddhist ritualists tapped into existing Chinese texts, devised ad-hoc images to strengthen the aura of power and authenticity of their repertoire, and relied on the support of a vast number of assistants, which included *onmyōji*. This is indeed informative of the synergy existing between these specialists whom were apparently working together during the *karin* section. However, it also highlights the attempt on the side of the Buddhist clergy to control and monopolize various fields of ritual knowledge. In fact, Buddhist ritualists appropriated existing repertoires. As discussed in the second part of the article, each section making up the *Ritual* was not novel: the *karin no harae*—and especially the *nanase no harae*—and the recitation of the *Nakatomi* formula, were renowned forms of purification, which historical records show could be held independently and as part of more complex celebrations. This suggests that the way they were weaved into new ritual procedures may have been less problematic than what we now think. Hence, the difficulty announced at the beginning of this article to trace the origin of the *Ritual* is closely related to the fluidity that underpinned the creation of these performances. This is an important issue to have emerged through an analysis of the sources: a whole service, or only even part of it, could be edited, shortened, adapted, or attached to others, even if belonging to competing “traditions.” “Traditions” appears within quotation marks here because the synthetic nature of the *Ritual* challenges the boundaries between established denominations. Ultimately, this could lead to further reflection on the patterns of adaptation and the transmission of the foremost liturgical segments in spite of the context they were originally meant for. The fact that *onmyō* specialists read the *Nakatomi* formula during a Buddhist ritual or that many invocations, empowerment, and ritual objects were used within the same ritual surely indicates that the mixture of symbols and methods denounced in the scriptures as *gejutsu* was, and perhaps still is, acceptable beyond the rhetorical overtones of the textual authorities.

The flexibility of the *Ritual* is challenging not so much because it makes it hard to frame, but because it forces us to question how we look at medieval ritual manuals in general. We are constantly confronted with stratagems aimed at demonstrating the supposed superiority of one transmission or lineage over another, which also functioned as full-fledged taxonomic tools used to make sense of a vast and heterogeneous body of materials. The way rituals are described in these sources may give us the false perception that the existence of a written account necessarily entails a sort of standardization of the practice: this certainly is not the case here. Further studies on large liturgies as well as of the numerous *besson* rites included in the manuals can hopefully yield insight on the way medieval Buddhist ritualists creatively engaged with their sources, the “secret” transmission to strategically respond to the ever-changing need of their patrons. I would therefore like to suggest that the uniqueness of the *Ritual* does not lie in the novelty of its techniques, but rather in how they were “choreographed.” On the one hand, the icons chosen as *honzon*, the talismans employed, and finally the choice of the ritual location all drew on symbols and themes that were popular at the time, but that managed to become distinctive to this liturgy. On the other hand, the allure created around its mandara, the variety of tools manipulated, the setting, as well as the awe the sounds of the instruments in the middle of the night must have provoked, all had a crucial role in its efficacy, and therefore popularity.

This pliable, elaborate, and choral dimension of the *Ritual* structure resonates with its content. As paradigmatic of an understanding of pollution that included external menaces, supernatural curses, and internally arisen conditions, it could reach the body and mind of a person, the space it inhabited as well as all the planes of existence. The arrangement of the *Ritual*, its temporary confinement of performers and donors on the vessels during the ritual, represents a momentous step toward the conception of disease as inherent to the body itself. This aspect is corroborated by the conclusion of the ritual with the repeated recitation of the six-syllable dharani, which is effective in dealing not only with external agents but with internal ones as well. The body of the donor, initially a spectator of its own purification, is here in the process of becoming the real object of therapy: it steps on the boat, together with the plague-carrying entities, the healers and all their paraphernalia. Besides the dramatic performance, as well as the technical challenges that this maneuver involved, it is precisely in the ritual reconfiguration of the diseased body that we are informed of its transformation into the real locus of defilement. The suffering, defiled body starts here to occupy the center stage, in terms of both healing and salvation, and will eventually become a thriving ground for new religious as well as medical discourse.

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