

thus causing a qualitative transformation and allowing the ritual to expand. As a consequence, water-pouring from a vase, which used to be the center of *abhiṣeka* rituals, turned out to become just one small part of the entire ritual process.

Among Tantric Buddhist rituals, *abhiṣeka* especially emphasizes the importance of secrecy. In the Esoteric Buddhist temples in Japan, *abhiṣeka* rituals are not open to the public, and taking photographs and videos is also strictly prohibited. *Abhiṣeka* is the most secret ritual of all. This character was already present in the *Tattvasaṃgraha*, which strongly prohibits disclosing mandalas and related matters to outsiders. Furthermore, in late Tantric Buddhist *abhiṣeka* that embrace sexual yoga, especially from *guhyābhiṣeka* to *caturthābhiṣeka*, only the *ācārya*, the disciple, and the female partner are allowed inside a ritual space closed to outsiders by draped curtains, shielded even from the eyes of attending monks. It was also established that even the disciple within the draped space should cover his eyes out of fear of losing his faith.

However, in older texts such as the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra*, descriptions of *abhiṣeka* do not convey this atmosphere of secrecy. Instead, the ritual has a festive mood, with monks playing musical instruments and singing auspicious songs. The space of *abhiṣeka* would be adorned with banners and flags; the mandala prepared for the occasion would depict splendid palaces of the buddhas. This was an appropriately gorgeous ritual in which the recipient (the disciple), at the end of his arduous training, was about to depart on a new journey as a newly appointed *ācārya*. It was indeed a solemn occasion not unlike the enthronement of a king or the crowning of a prince. In the last stage of *abhiṣeka*, the recipient, adorned as a buddha, circumambulates the mandala under the parasol held up by the *ācārya* himself, and displays with pride his solemn appearance. Even with new elements being added to the ritual throughout the ages and with increased emphasis on secrecy, one can still find at the basis of *abhiṣeka* this festive character as its original mode.

Dominic Steavu

## Chapter Four

# Birds of a Feather Bathe Together: Buddhist Consecration Rituals in Medieval China and their Relation to Daoism

## Introduction: Buddhist Consecration in China

The first recorded Buddhist consecration ritual, or *abhiṣeka*, performed for a ruler in China took place in 746 of the Common Era. The recipient was Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang 唐玄宗 (r. 713–756), who had already been on the throne for thirty-three years before the ceremonial ablution. The ritual was performed by Amoghavajra (Bukong jingang 不空金剛, 705–774), disciple of the famed Vajrabodhi (Jingang zhi 金剛智, 671–741) and illustrious patriarch of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism in his own right. That year, Amoghavajra had just returned from South Asia, where he had spent half a decade collecting texts and knowledge about new Buddhist rituals.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhist consecration rituals existed in China earlier than Xuanzong's reign, but they were used for the high-level initiation of clergy and the transmission of esoteric teachings, not for inducting rulers. Some of the fullest details pertaining to Buddhist *abhiṣeka* are recorded in the commentary of 725 to the *Mahāvairocana sutra* (*Darijing shu* 大日經疏), attributed to the polymath monk Yi Xing 一行 (683–727).<sup>2</sup> Yet, the ritual was performed earlier still, as a central component of the

1 See Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the Tang*, 56–57. Amoghavajra famously performed the consecration ritual for another ruler, Emperor Tang Daizong 唐代宗 (r. 762–779), in 768, once more, a number of years after the monarch had acceded to the throne. This consecration marked the emperor's Buddhist turn. He had previously supported Daoism, but Amoghavajra and a number of advisors sympathetic to Buddhism gradually convinced him to change his allegiance; this shift was cemented by the emperor's firm conviction that he had survived a pair of rebellions due only to the blessings obtained through Buddhist merit-making; see Weinstein, *ibid.*, 77–79 and 82–83.

2 See *Dapiluzhena chengfo jing shu* 大毘盧遮那成佛經疏 (Commentary to the Scripture on Mahāvairocana Becoming a Buddha), T. vol. 39 n. 1796: 665b–672c, as well as *Dapiluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 (Scripture on Mahāvairocana Becoming

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“All-Gathering Mandala Initiation” (*puji huitan fa* 普集會壇法), first undertaken in the Middle Kingdom in 651 and described in a written account three years later, in 654.<sup>3</sup> Largely similar consecration rituals modeled on the ones from the seventh and eighth centuries later became common for all clergy and even lay initiates well into the tenth and eleventh centuries. In Japan, these *abhiṣeka* rites were the centerpiece of elaborate esoteric Buddhist ritual traditions. Yet, whether deployed for inducting monarchs or the junior-most members of the Saṃgha, they remained couched, as they had been from the outset, in metaphors of royal investiture and purification via the aspersion of water.

Most historiographic narratives trace the roots of East Asian *abhiṣeka* back to South Asia, arguing for a transmission of materials or key ideas from India to China between the fourth and seventh centuries. Although accounts of Indian consecration ceremonies surely impacted the emergence and spread of the Buddhist ritual in China, to consider them as the sole source is problematic in a number of respects. To begin with, the timeline for the development of Buddhist *abhiṣeka* in India remains somewhat ambiguous; by some reckonings, it does not predate but rather parallels the ceremony’s appearance in Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, Chinese purification rites involving ablutions and royal/governing metaphors existed well before the advent of Buddhist *abhiṣeka* in China, and some might argue, in India as well. Daoist purification rites stand out in this respect since they were used in a similar context, namely that of initiation. These underwent a process of standardization as early as the second century, culminating in full institutionalization between the fifth and sixth centuries; but they were grounded in earlier still archaic purification rites that reach back at least a century or two before the Common Era. By contrast, the earliest Chinese Buddhist sources to describe *abhiṣeka* date to the fifth century, and most significantly, they incorporate elements or details that betray a familiarity with autochthonous ablution ceremonies. A close inspection of these sources suggests that in the incipient stages of their appearance in China, initiatory Buddhist aspersion rites gleaned ritual details from non-Buddhist non-Indic materials. These details then played an important part in the formulation of mature Tantric consecration ceremonies of the Tang dynasty (618–907).

a Buddha Through Divine Transformation and Empowerment), T. vol. 18 n. 848: 11–12b. See also Koichi Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Mandalas*, 147–167.

3 Koichi Shinohara, “Rethinking the Category of Apocrypha,” 70–81, esp. 71. The ceremony was first described in the *Tuoluoni jijing* 陀羅尼集經 (Collected Dhāraṇī Scriptures), T. vol. 18 n. 901, dated to 654.

## Buddhist Consecration in the Daoist Canon

By the mid-Tang, Buddhist consecration rituals constituted a visible and familiar feature of the Chinese religious landscape. Yet, despite their association with imperial sovereignty and, as a corollary, their cultural significance in medieval China, there is seemingly no indication of any attempt by the part of Daoist compilers, systematizers, and authors to adapt or incorporate Buddhist *abhiṣeka* rituals in their sources. Nevertheless, the term for *abhiṣeka* that is used in Buddhist sources, *guanding* 灌頂 – literally, to soak, to irrigate, to pour or sprinkle (a liquid) from the top down – occasionally surfaces in the Daoist Canon, sometimes in the form of its semantic cognates *guanzhu* 灌注 and *guangai* 灌溉. In these instances, the terms are used in reference to pneuma (*qi* 氣; alt. 炁), or elixirs (*dan* 丹) flowing through the body, just as a liquid would through a network of pathways or channels, and purifying it:

Visualize your birth star arriving and descending from the East, then transforming into blue pneuma, soaking the inside of the head and entering [the body]. Beforehand, visualize the pneuma of the true fire of the South arriving, and as practiced, entering inside the eyes and irrigating the entire body.<sup>4</sup>

In this example from a twelfth-century text as in others from the Daoist Canon, the backdrop is one of visualization or meditation. In extra-canonical Daoist sources, where the term “consecration” (*guanding* 灌頂) appears more commonly, the framework is once again tied to contemplation, more precisely, inner alchemical (*neidan* 內丹) contemplation:

Buddhist scriptures speak of anointing the heads of crown princes by means of the water of the [Four] Oceans. The pivot of immortality consists of raising the pneuma of primordial essence to the Upper [Cinnabar] Field. It is called “returning the essence to supplement the brain.” It is also called “the method of ghee consecration for bodhisattvas and buddhas.” Moreover, it is called “the ghee consecration of buddhas and immortals together since the beginning.”<sup>5</sup>

4 存歲星自東而來降下化為青炁灌頂中而入。先存南方真火之炁自南方而來如練入眼中灌注遍身; *Taishang zhuguo jiumin zongzhen biyao* 太上助國救民總真秘要 (Secret Essentials of the Chief Perfected for Aiding the Kingdom and Saving the People; DZ 1227), 5.2ab. This text, dated to 1116, belongs to the reformed ritual Daoist tradition of the Correct Methods of the Heart of Heaven (Tianxin zhengfa 天心正法).

5 佛經云以海水灌太子頂是也。仙機以元精之炁升至上天。謂之還精補腦。又謂之醍醐灌頂諸菩薩佛法。亦謂之醍醐灌頂仙佛起首同; *Xianfo hezhong yulu* 仙佛合宗語錄 (Recorded Sayings from the Joint Lineage of Buddhas and Immortals; DZJY 231), 1.80b. The last phrase reads somewhat like a pun since the expression *qishou* 起首, which means “the beginning” in the passage, is literally “raising the head” – a reference, perhaps, to offering oneself up for consecration.



Ming (1368–1644) or Qing-dynasty (1644–1911) non-canonical sources that deal with Inner Alchemy in particular, such as the one where the above lines are from, mention consecration more frequently. But in contrast to earlier canonical Daoist texts, the Buddhist context is unapologetically flaunted. Indeed, alchemical materials were composite productions drawing heavily from Daoism, but also Buddhism, *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) lore, and Confucianism. Here, the author draws an explicit parallel between the spiritual/temporal ascension that *abhiṣeka* provides and the immortality achieved by means of advanced absorptive techniques. In this case, both Buddhist consecration and the Daoist method of “returning the essence to supplement the brain” (*huanjing bunao* 還精補腦)<sup>6</sup> involve permeating the head – in one case on the outside, and in the other, on the inside – with a purifying and relatively viscous liquid. The Daoist technique is described as an analogue to its Buddhist counterpart. In the eyes of the authors, the two practices are homologous, albeit distinct. Thus, the question still remains: if Buddhist *abhiṣeka* was a recognizable element of medieval China’s ritual practices, how was it that it had little discernible impact on Daoism? Daoists famously adopted a number of Buddhist concepts or methods, just as Buddhists did with Daoist elements.<sup>7</sup> A large part of the answer undoubtedly lies in the fact that well before the Tang dynasty, when mature *abhiṣeka* rites took root in China, Daoism already had its own established indigenous consecration rites, which involved both ritual ablution and royal investiture metaphors.

## Daoist Consecration Rituals

Ablutions (*muyu* 沐浴) were a fundamental part of most Daoist initiation rituals since the sixth century at the latest, but some traditions revolving around revealed corpora included purificatory bathing before that, from around the

<sup>6</sup> This phrase, which originally denotes a sexual practice – or “art of the bedchamber” (*fangzhong shu* 房中術) is sometimes translated more literally as “returning semen to supplement the brain.” In a nutshell, the practice involves climaxing internally and then recirculating the “essence” (*jing*) through the body up the spine, refining it into pneuma (*qi*) in the abdomen, and finally storing it in the head (as spirit, *shen* 神).

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*. In her doctoral dissertation, Wu Yang, “Transmission of Law and Merit,” has produced a valuable historical and ritual analysis of Daoist ordination and Buddhist consecration. The study undertakes a comparison of the development and codification of the rites as well as their structural elements, but there is no consideration of potential exchanges or shared ritual components.

fourth century if not earlier.<sup>8</sup> The structure of the investment ceremony depended on the level of initiation, but each version centered on the transmission of scriptures and registers (*lu* 籙). Before receiving the documents, all adepts – lay initiates, Daoist clergy of various ranks, and emperors alike – had to undergo an elaborate purification retreat (*zhai* 齋) that lasted multiple days or even weeks. The ablution component of the purification retreat involved sprinkling or spraying fragrant water on the ritual area, on ritual implements or on the body; it most commonly involved partial washing, and more rarely, full bathing. To my knowledge, however, adepts were not explicitly instructed to pour or sprinkle water on their heads specifically, as is the case in Buddhist consecration rites. The following example from the Daoist Canon provides the basic tenor of what these ablutions entailed:

Lord Lao said: Rites that are performed correctly should all include ablutions with a fragrant decoction. [. . .] A fragrant decoction is boiled water of the five aromatics. Its method prescribes to take some Slender Dutchmanspipe, Indian sandalwood, Sweet Grass, agarwood, and frankincense in appropriate quantities. [Also prepare] one hectoliter of purified water. First throw some peach tree bark and bamboo leaves into the water and boil for a while; strain to remove the dregs. Then, add the five aromatics in appropriate quantities. If you are in a secluded dwelling in the middle of the mountains or forests and do not have the means nor the energy [to collect the five aromatics], then limiting yourself to the peach tree bark and bamboo is fine. First wash your hair [with the fragrant decoction]. Take a wooden ladle and with its handle, point to the moon. Settle [your mind] and visualize pneuma clouds of the five colors filling the room and the radiance of the sun, moon, and stars<sup>9</sup> shining above the basin. With the ladle, mix the fragrant water counterclockwise<sup>10</sup> thirty-six times. Gaze at the fragrant decoction and [recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. Repeat it seven times, then proceed towards the bench and remove your clothes. [Recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. Next, untie your topknot and wash it. [Recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. At last, wash your hair, pinching the topknot as if you were wearing a cap. [Recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. Then, enter a bath [of the fragrant decoction]. Grasp the ladle and take some colored clouds of the pneuma of the five directions and put them in the bath. Stir a total of thirty-six times. Grasp the ladle and face the direction of the sun, then [recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. Next, visualize the sun, moon, and stars, and remain in the bath for a good while. When you have finished bathing, take a separate, clean decoction of the five aromatics and drink one cup. Focus on the gods in silent contemplation, externally and internally

<sup>8</sup> See for example the chapter on ablutions (*muyu*) contained in the sixth-century Daoist summa, the *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要 (Unsurpassed Secret Essentials; DZ 1138), 66.1a–13a, which contains citations on ritual bathing from sources dating between the fourth and sixth centuries. An overview of the chapter, in French, can be found in John Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao, somme taoïste du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 174–175.

<sup>9</sup> *Sanchen* 三辰, literally “the three chronograms,” the celestial bodies that are used to measure time.

<sup>10</sup> *Zuoxing* 左行, literally “leftwards.”

cleansed. Then, [recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. Put your clothes back on. [Recite] the spell, saying [. . .]. The purification retreat internally purifies one's heart while externally purifying one's form.<sup>11</sup>

A few key features emerge from this painstaking portrait of a boilerplate Daoist bathing ritual. The importance of visualization is the first. The preponderance of pneuma clouds signals this clearly. The text instructs adepts to envision them filling the room above the bath. In a second step it enjoins them to remarkably fetch some of conjured nimbuses from the air and mix them into the bath water. Moreover, bathers are also meant to visualize gods. Many of the spells that I have elected not to translate out of concern for making a lengthy passage even longer, are addressed to deities who are understood as being present and in attendance: one of the invocations describes how a clean topknot beckons immortals (*zhaoxian* 召仙), while another invites divine lads (*shentong* 神童) and jade maidens (*yunü* 玉女) to assist in lighting incense and dressing the adept after the bath. Yet another spell mentions the Yellow God (*huangshen* 黃神), the Green Emperor (*qingdi* 青帝), and the Celestial Charioteer (*tianzou* 天驕) protecting bathers.<sup>12</sup> Once the ablutions are finished, adepts must once more contemplate the gods in silence for a length of time.

The second significant feature that the Daoist consecration passage brings to light is the interrelation between ritual purification, specifically ablution, and healing. The above instructions notably appear in a text whose title features the term “extending life” (*yansheng* 延生), and accordingly, much of its content is devoted to lengthening one's years. Bathing has powerful therapeutic benefits that derive from the act of immersing oneself in water or even from having the substance enter into contact with the body. The text of course underscores pneuma clouds of the five colors (*wuse yunqi* 五色雲炁) as an essential component of the ritual bath because they encapsulate the invigorating cosmic vitality of the five

11 老君曰：凡禮是經，皆當香湯沐浴。[. . .] 香湯者，五香湯也。法取青木香、白檀香、茅香、沉香、薰陸香，多少隨宜，取淨水一石，先以桃白皮、竹葉下煎，數沸，濾去滓。次下五香，多少隨宜，若在山林幽棲，貧薄無力，止以桃竹為善。先以沐髮，取木杓，以柄指月，建思五色雲炁滿室，三辰光照盆上。以杓左行攪香水三十六度，視香湯，咒曰[. . .] 凡七遍，次就榻解衣，而咒曰[. . .] 次解髻就沐，咒曰[. . .] 次沐髮竟，撮髻戴冠，咒曰[. . .] 次入浴，執杓，取五方炁色入湯中，攪三十六遍畢，執杓向旺方，咒曰[. . .] 次存三辰，入湯中良久，就浴訖，別取淨者五香湯飲之，一杯，即凝神默想內外貞白而乃咒曰[. . .] 次還著衣，咒曰[. . .] 齋者，內齋其心，外齋其形；*Taishang jingui yujing yansheng dongxuan zhuyou chan* 太上金櫃玉鏡延生洞玄燭幽懺 (Jade Mirror and Golden Casket for Extending Life, Like a Candle in the Dark Abyss of Errors; DZ 811), 9a–10b.

12 See *Taishang jingui yujing yansheng dongxuan zhuyou chan*, 9b for the first incantation and 10a for the second and third.

directions. But the particular aromatics that make up the fragrant decoction are just as potent. Indeed, the instructions on how to prepare them echo instructions typically encountered in medical sources. Their cleansing properties rid the body internally and externally – and in some cases, ritual implements or clothes as well – of harmful pathogenic agents.<sup>13</sup>

The third key point somewhat overlaps with the first and the second: in many instances, while the immediate goal of the ablution is to purify oneself inside and out, the ultimate goal is to summon deities in order to obtain their assistance or protection. This includes but is not limited to protection against disease, as we have seen in the above passage and its incantations where, for instance, the Yellow God protects against demonic infestations in the body and the Green Emperor preserves the *hun* 魂 cloudsouls.<sup>14</sup> Generally speaking, Daoist gods are antithetical to illness, decay, or possession. Thus, health is a *de facto* result of their presence for deserving adepts who have followed ritual instructions to the letter. However, deities reward them in other ways than granting health. Through ablutions, practitioners can enter into direct contact and interact with deities. Such encounters usually take place in the inner space of the body and for good reason: by purifying their bodies, bathers effectively sacralize them as altars or receptacles of divine presence. The descent of gods into the somatic arena is typically achieved through visualization, an important component of ritual bathing identified above.

Some sources plainly state the close ties between the purification retreat, visualization, and summoning gods. A Daoist scripture dating from around 400 contains the following passage:

13 For a sample text on the cleaning of ritual clothes, see *Sandong fafu kejiwen* 三洞法服戒文 (Tract of Codes and Precepts for the Ritual Garb of the Three Caverns; DZ 788), 7b–10b. See also Terry Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 236–237. A number of texts from the Daoist Canon enjoin adepts to sprinkle ablution water on ritual implements. See for example the Tang-dynasty, *Jiao sandong zhenwen wufa Zhengyi mengwei lu licheng yi* 醮三洞真文五法正一盟威錄立成儀 (Complete Ritual for the Offering of the Registers of the Three Caverns, the Five Methods, and the Covenantal Authority of the Correct Unity; DZ 1212), 5ab:

[. . .] Puncture the silk pouch [filed with aromatics] and submerge in boiling water to heat it. [Then] use it to sprinkle [the fragrant decoction] on the altar and ritual implements; also use it for [one's] ablutions. Alternatively, one may also use freshly-drawn spring water.

[. . .] 剝絹袋湯中煮之以灑壇及器物中并沐浴或以清泉新水亦得用也。

14 *Ibid.*, 10a. The identity between disease and demonic possession in Chinese medieval medicine, and especially Daoism, has been established elsewhere. See for example, Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, and more recently, Dominic Steavu, “Delocalizing Illness.”



On a *jiwei* day, [undertake] the ablutions and the purification retreat. When the sun is shining, enter the oratory, face the monarch [North], bow twelve times, sit in equanimity and click your teeth twelve times in total. Submit your report to the bodily gods. When you have finished, close your eyes and visualize the Lord Yellow Emperor of the Central Peak Mount Song.<sup>15</sup>

Daoist purification rites and their ablutions were practiced in some capacity by the fourth century at the latest.<sup>16</sup> But, the use of water in ritual bathing or cleansing extends further back into Chinese history. An important category of Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (1046–256 BCE) ritual bronzes were notably reserved for ablutions;<sup>17</sup> and ritual bathing is mentioned in Zhou sources as a preliminary step, unsurprisingly, in establishing contact with spirits or expelling unwanted demons.<sup>18</sup> At any rate, indigenous traditions of water aspersion in ritual settings were well established at the time that Buddhist consecration rituals started to include them in China.

Much like aspersion or abluion, royal investiture metaphors – another defining feature of Buddhist consecration rituals – also has earlier Daoist analogues in China that were connected with initiation or transmission. The relevant imagery is one of inauguration into the imperial bureaucracy, whereby initiates become officials in the celestial administration. They attain successively higher grades with each subsequent initiation until they reach a station equivalent to that of supreme official, in other words, a monarch or ruler. Daoist initiation centers around the transmission of documents which function as sacramental regalia. Customarily, these consist of revealed scriptures (*jing* 經), talismans (*fu* 符), and registers (*lu* 錄). All three categories of artefacts derive from early Chinese traditions of establishing imperial legitimacy through the revelation and transmission of divine gages and tokens that signal heavenly assent. Such documents are in

15 己未之日沐浴清齋。日映入室向王十二拜平坐叩齒十二通。關啓身神。畢閉眼思中嶽嵩山黃帝君; *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經 (Wondrous Scripture of the Jade Instructions of the Red Writing of the Numinous Treasure; DZ 352), 2.24b–25a.

16 For example, the *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇 (Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity), 4.74, completed in 317, mentions an “ablution of the five fragrances” (*muyu wuxiang* 沐浴五香) as part of a hundred-day purification retreat.

17 According to Alain Thote, “Shang and Zhou Funeral Practices” (115), the *fou* or *guan* 罐 vessels were used for storing water during ritual ablutions, the *gong* or *he* (later, *yi*) 匱 vessels for pouring it, and *pan* 盤 vessels for collecting it.

18 See, for instance, a lost passage from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang) and another from the *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou), both cited in Fu-Shih Lin, “The Image and Status of Shamans in Ancient China,” 404 and 411–412, respectively.

fact juridical contracts between the gods and their holder, verifiable proofs of power that offer direct control over demons, spirits, and divine members of the celestial bureaucracy who rank below the initiate. Registers are rosters that name or otherwise identify those supernatural beings whom ordinands can control as a result of their newly achieved station.

The reception of talismans and registers (*shou fulu* 受符錄), more commonly abbreviated as the “reception of registers” (*shoulu* 受錄), was a rite of initiation in Daoism since the second century, when the tradition first began to espouse a standardized institutional form as the Way of the Celestial Masters (*tianshi dao* 天師道).<sup>19</sup> The rite was a carbon copy of an antecedent rite of imperial investiture by the same name (*shoulu*), one which marked the new ruler’s securing of the Mandate of Heaven.<sup>20</sup> During the early imperial period, securing material proof of divine approbation was a crucial prerequisite to establishing a ruler’s legitimacy. Proving one’s authority as a divinely sanctioned administrator of the spiritual bureaucracy and a potent ruler of spiritual subjects seamlessly translated into the temporal realm, where that authority extended over human subjects. As a result, registers, talismans, portents or other similar gages of divine legitimacy were highly prized by rulers, who regularly dispatched envoys to scour the land for them.<sup>21</sup>

Since much of the pantheon of early institutional Daoism and its ritual framework is directly modelled on the Han bureaucracy, it is no wonder that the “reception of registers” found a central place in the tradition. It is not entirely clear if the Han-dynasty imperial consecration rituals incorporated ablutions, but the Daoist ones certainly did. In fact, purification by means of fragrant water was a codified prerequisite – together with fasting and burning incense – for even the most basic investiture into the ranks.<sup>22</sup> Bathing and imperial imagery were not only deployed for the initiation of commoners; the same ritual protocol was applied to the landed gentry, the ruling elite, as well as members of the imperial family and emperors themselves. These initiation rites were a spiritual induction into the world of Daoism, but since they operated within theocratic and semantic frameworks of authority and power, for sovereigns, they also doubled as an actual consecration.

19 On the Way of the Celestial Masters, its institutional history and its rituals, see Terry Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*.

20 Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 308–310, 370. See also Charles Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 64 and 97–98.

21 Seidel, *ibid.*, 349–352.

22 Charles Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 39–40, and 171 n. 2. See Benn’s detailed account, in *ibid.*, 38–98, esp. 60–65, of an eighth-century Daoist ordination rite for two imperial princesses; the importance of receiving registers is signaled throughout.

On the basis of this equivalence, a number of Chinese emperors elected to undergo Daoist consecration rites. Emperor Taiwu 太武 (r. 423–452) of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) is a case in point, as are his successors emperors Wen Cheng 文成 (r. 452–465) and Xianwen 獻文 (r. 465–471). This predates the earliest Chinese description of *abhiṣeka* rites for monks, penned in the middle of the seventh century, by roughly two hundred years.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, all rulers of the Northern Zhou (557–581) were enthroned by means of Daoist rites and many in the Tang dynasty too: Emperor Xuanzong, who, as noted above, was the first Chinese ruler for whom a Buddhist *abhiṣeka* was performed in 746, received Daoist consecration a quarter-century earlier, in 721. Later in the Tang, Daoist prelates performed consecration rites for emperors Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846–859) and Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840–846). The trend continued into the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties.

Emperors had taken lay bodhisattva precepts as early as the sixth century, but these were unrelated to *abhiṣeka* rites, both in content and form.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, several celebrated Buddhist scriptures that are replete with vivid royal imagery were translated into Chinese during the fifth and sixth centuries, but the kingly tropes, although tied to South Asian coronation rites that involved the sprinkling of water, were only loosely connected to bathing or ritual purification.<sup>25</sup> The royal consecration passage from the *Scripture on the Ten Grounds* (Ch. *Shidi jing* 十地經; Sk. *Daśabhūmika sūtra*)<sup>26</sup> presents a counterpoint, however, since it was first translated shortly before the turn of the fourth century, in 297. It notably likens the royal aspersion rites of the *cakravartin*, the universal “wheel-turning” Buddhist monarch, to the immersive brilliance of enlightenment achieved upon perfecting the tenth ground of the bodhisattva path, which is known as “the stage of *abhiṣeka*” (*aweiyān zhu* 阿惟顏住):

<sup>23</sup> See note 3, above.

<sup>24</sup> We may cite, for example, emperor Wu 武 (r. 502–549) of the Liang (502–557) and emperor Wen 文 (r. 581–604) of the Sui (581–618).

<sup>25</sup> The *Avataṃsaka sūtra* (*Huayan jing* 華嚴經), *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* (*Lengjia jing* 楞伽經), and the *Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Jingguang ming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經), all three of which contain royal analogies, were translated in 419, 443, and around 420, respectively. See Suzuki Takayasu, “Daijō kyōten ni okeru jūki to kanjō,” in Mori Masahide (ed.), *Ajia no kanjō girei*, 36–58.

<sup>26</sup> The *Scripture on the Ten Grounds* (*Shidi jing* 十地經), which makes up the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Avataṃsaka sūtra*, was translated as early as the turn of the fourth century (see the following note). It contains a section on the royal consecration of the *cakravartin*, collapsing the distinction between the temporal/political on one hand and the religious/spiritual on the other. See Ronald Davidson, “Abhiṣeka,” 74. For a discussion of this text, see Mori Masahide’s chapter in this volume.

These brilliant lights [of enlightenment],<sup>27</sup> at the time that they fall upon a bodhisattva’s head, they are considered no different than those of the Thus-Come-One. These brilliant lights, when they encounter and submerge the bodhisattva, complete the consecration (*aweiyān*); [the bodhisattva] is hitherto called “Thus-Come-One who has reached the realm of perfection.” He is endowed with the ten powers of undifferentiated and correct enlightenment, equanimous like the Void. This is like the bodhisattva being the first son and crown prince of a wheel-turning sage-monarch [*cakravartin*], offspring of the senior and principal consort, carried in the womb and birthed by her; it is like being endowed with the marks [of the wheel-turning sage-monarch] in response to becoming a sage-monarch. At that time, the wheel-turning monarch seats him [the crown prince] on the purple-gold elephant throne of the celestial treasure; he [has attendants] fetch water from the Four Great Oceans, grasp great canopies and baldachins, and [arrange] banners and music, all with much solemnity. Taking a golden pitcher [*kalaśa*], the wheel-turning sage-monarch washes the crown prince’s head and body with the water of the Four Oceans, as one would when bathing. At that time, he is named “sage-crowned monarch.” Wheel-turning monarchs are endowed with the ten wholesome roots. For this reason, the so-called divine rulers that are wheel-turning sages are just as the bodhisattvas who have achieved Great Wisdom.<sup>28</sup>

This passage unequivocally imbricates high spiritual attainment with a water-based consecration rite traditionally used in medieval Indian coronations; the fact that the text in which it appears was circulating in China certainly has implications for the development of *abhiṣeka* rites for the purpose of initiation in the Middle Kingdom. Nevertheless, there are marked differences between this use of the royal unction metaphor and that which we find in later, mature Tantric sources in China. First and foremost, in the present case, the imagery is not deployed in the context of investing a monarch, nor in that of initiating new adepts. Rather, it is employed to describe the luminosity of enlightenment, which cascades upon a bodhisattva’s head – a significant detail – when they reach the tenth and ultimate

<sup>27</sup> These lights are visible manifestations of the wisdom of Buddhahood.

<sup>28</sup> 此諸光明，稱量時節，應菩薩上一切如來等無有異。光明這沒諸菩薩成阿惟顏，名曰如來至真境界也。具十種力平等正覺，平若虛空。猶如佛子，轉輪聖王第一太子，從尊真后，懷胎而生，其相具足，應為聖王。時轉輪王，坐天寶象紫金床上，取四大海，致海水來，執大蓋覆，幢幡伎樂，而嚴莊之。取金澡瓶，轉輪聖王，以四海水，洗太子首體，適洗浴已。應時名曰聖頂蓋王。轉輪王者，具十善本，故謂神帝，為轉輪聖，是為佛子菩薩大士成就大慧；*Jianbei yiqie zhide jing* 漸備一切智德經 (Scripture on Gradually Obtaining the Virtue of Perfect Knowledge), T. vol. 10 n. 285: 5.495a. Dated to 297, this is the earliest translation of the *Shidi jing* 十地經 (Scripture on the Ten Grounds) into Chinese. For corresponding passages in later translations, see the early-fifth century *Shizhu jing* 十住經 (Sūtra on the Ten Stages), T. vol. 10 n. 286: 4.529a, and the eighth-century *Foshuo shidi jing* 佛說十地經 (Scripture on the Ten Grounds Spoken by the Buddha), T. vol. 10 n. 287: 8.568b. The text of the *Shidi jing*, which is part of the *Avataṃsaka sūtra* (*Huayan jing*), also appears in Chinese translations of that text, the earliest dating to the very beginning of the fifth century; see *Dafang guangfo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (*Avataṃsaka sūtra of the Great Vast Buddha*), T. vol. 10 n. 278: 27.572b.



stage of the bodhisattva path. Second, the term that denotes that stage and renders *abhiṣeka* is a transliteration, *aweiyān* 阿惟顏. It is not the habitual translation, *guāndīng* 灌頂, which gains currency around the fourth or fifth century at the same time that related terms appear in Daoist sources.

Key distinctions between early and later uses of the consecration metaphor in Chinese Buddhist sources suggest different or multiple genealogies for the development of *abhiṣeka* rites in China. In light of the passages examined in this section, we may legitimately ask if they could have drawn on indigenous and most likely Daoist precursors for certain cues. This is an inherently difficult question to answer, for it amounts to an attempt at reconstructing past circumstances on the basis of traces that were most likely deliberately erased and connections that would have been willfully occluded. Nevertheless, perhaps two mid-fifth century sources can still shed some light on the situation.

## Two Early Consecration Classics

Scholars trace the remote ancestry of enthronement unction rites in India to Atharvan sources dated to the first-century CE or even further back, to Vedic sources from before the Common Era. The emergence of distinct and formalized aspersion-based royal consecration ceremonies, however, does not occur until the fourth to sixth centuries in the guise of *puṣyasnāna* or *puṣyābhiṣeka* rituals.<sup>29</sup> These, in turn, served as the template for Indian Tantric Buddhist initiatory consecration rites, which, on the basis of current knowledge, do not make their appearance in China before the seventh century in varieties most famously incarnated by the “All-Gathering Mandala Initiation.”<sup>30</sup> In this ceremony, a mandala is drawn on the ground and offerings are made. Adepts are then sprinkled with water from a ritual vase (*kalaśa*) and a *homa* fire is lit. Various invocations are performed and other minor rituals are undertaken over a span of several days while the mandala is gradually expanded. Initiates are eventually blindfolded and asked to throw a flower into the mandala, thereby securing a sacred bond with

<sup>29</sup> See Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Mandalas*, 71–80, esp. 77–78, for a comparative description of the *abhiṣeka* component in the *puṣyasnāna* ritual and the later All-Gathering Mandala Initiation. On the broader question of religious royal unction initiation rites in South Asia, see Marko Geslani, *Rites of the God-King*. See also David White’s chapter in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> See Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Mandalas*, 64–80, esp. 72; see also Davidson, “Abhiṣeka,” 71–75. For primary sources, see n. 2 and n. 3, above.

the deity or buddha-retinue on which the flower lands. In some versions, they are crowned or receive scepters in accordance with *cakravartin* inaugurations.<sup>31</sup>

There are, however, sources that predate the seventh century and mention *guāndīng*, the Chinese term for *abhiṣeka*. They do so in a context that is broadly redolent of the ablution ceremonies of the “All-Gathering Mandala Initiation” yet genealogically distinct from Vedic, or more generally, Indic roots. The earliest, dated to 454, is the *Scripture on the Secret Essential Methods of Meditation* (*Chan miyao fa jing* 禪秘要法經), a text that has been closely studied by Eric Greene.<sup>32</sup> It describes an elaborate contemplative consecration (*guan guāndīng* 觀灌頂), sometimes referred to as *amṛta abhiṣeka* (*ganlu guāndīng* 甘露灌頂) – literally, the “sweet dew consecration”<sup>33</sup> – in which an emanation of the Buddha is visualized. As a result of this visualization effort, the true (*zhen* 真) Buddha eventually manifests:

<sup>31</sup> See a fuller description of the ritual in Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Mandalas*, 32–33 and 72–80; and Davidson, “Abhiṣeka,” 75.

<sup>32</sup> The text of the *Chan miyao fa jing*, which is preserved in the Sino-Japanese Tripiṭaka (T. vol. 15 n. 613) constitutes one half of the *Chan yao mimi zhibing jing* 禪要祕密治病經 (Scripture on Meditation Essentials and Secret Cures for [Meditation] Malady). The *Zhi chanbing miyao fa* 治禪病祕要法 (Secret Essential Methods for Curing Meditation Malady; T. vol. 15 n. 620) constitutes the other half. See Eric Greene, “Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” esp. 77–135.

<sup>33</sup> The Chinese term *ganlu* 甘露 renders the Sanskrit *amṛta*, “immortality,” which equally denotes the food, drink, or nectar (*sudhā*; Ch. *sutuo* 蘇陀) of immortality on which gods sustain themselves. It is sometimes equated with *soma* (*sumo* 蘇摩), a ceremonial fermented drink, tentatively identified by some scholars such as Wasson, *Soma, Divine Mushroom as Immortality*, as a derivative of the red-capped psychotropic fungus *amanita muscaria*. This is the same drink that was ceremonially offered to gods but also reputedly consumed by officiants. Accordingly, *amṛta* is sometimes translated into Chinese as *tianjiu* 天酒 or “deva wine.” In English, it is commonly translated as “ambrosia,” to which it is etymologically related since in ancient Greek, *ambrosia* ἀμβροσία means immortality. I opt for the more literal translation of the Chinese *ganlu* as “sweet dew.” Since *ganlu* was used in Chinese Buddhist texts (instead of *sutuo*, *sumo*, *tianjiu*) in instances where transliteration was not employed, the “sweet dew” translation retains Buddhist overtones while also pointing to pre-Buddhist autochthonous Chinese connotations: the term was notably used as a metaphor for enlightened kingship on the basis of chapter 32 of the *Daode jing* 道德經 (Scripture of the Way and Virtue), in which “sweet dew” is sent down by a harmonious Heaven and Earth to blanket the realm when a sage-rulers governs in accordance with the Way. Although this cannot be established with any degree of certainty, it is perhaps worth considering that the compilers of the *Chan miyao fa jing* might have elected to translate *amṛta* as *ganlu* instead of transliterating it (as *amiliduo* 阿密哩多; *yamiliduo* 啞密哩多; *yamilida* 啞密哩達) – the more common strategy in fifth-century Chinese Buddhist texts – in order to preserve the political connotation of *abhiṣeka*. This connotation would otherwise be completely absent from the passage.

His marvelous purity cannot be explained in detail. He holds a pitcher [*kalaśa*], standing in the air. The pitcher is filled with water whose appearance is like that of sweet dew.<sup>34</sup> This water is of the five colors and it [shines] with the purity of the five radiances, like beryl pearls. [The water] is soft and [the Buddha] pours it on the adept's head, filling their body on the inside. The adept sees within their own body that wherever the water touches, the eighty thousand worms gradually wither and die. When the worms have withered, the body is supple while the mind is delighted. [The adept] should think to themselves: "The compassionate father Thus Come One, by means of this dharma-water, this sweet dew of superior taste, has consecrated me. This method of consecration<sup>35</sup> is certainly not in vain."<sup>36</sup>

In this passage, the three key features of Daoist ablution rites outlined above are unmistakably present. First, as the text's title indicates, the consecration is framed as a contemplation; it is a meditation that unfolds for the most part in the mind's eye, a detail that does not in the slightest challenge the efficacy or veracity of the adept's encounter with the true Buddha. Second, as in Daoist purifications, the consecration has a therapeutic component. The water acts as a medicine, cleansing practitioners from the inside out and ridding them of pathogenic worms. In other passages from the same text, the liquid is referred to as a "heavenly medicine" (*tianyao* 天藥).<sup>37</sup> Third, in the contemplation, practitioners summon the Buddha, who descends and bestows the consecration upon them. But the Tathāgatha's gifts do not end there: after pouring the purificatory water on the head of the meditators, the Buddha directly preaches the Dharma to them and removes all their karmic transgressions, enabling them to enter the path of arhatship.<sup>38</sup>

Elsewhere in the text, a variant of the contemplative consecration (*guan guanding*) is found within a complex sequence of visualizations known as the Contemplation on the Flowers of the Seven [Factors] of Enlightenment (*guan qijueyi hua* 觀七覺意華; Skt. *sapta-bodhyaṅga*). The Buddha elaborates on the consecration in a dialogue with his disciple Ānanda:

34 This "sweet dew" is what gives the consecration its name; see the previous note.

35 In light of what is described in the above lines, here, the term *guanding* 灌頂, *abhiṣeka*, can also be read very literally as "pouring on the head." In the previous sentence too, we could read "The [...] Thus Come One [...] has consecrated me" as "The [...] Thus Come One [...] has poured water on my head."

36 微妙清淨，不可具說。手執澡瓶，住立空中。瓶內盛水，狀如甘露。其水五色，五光清淨，如琉璃珠。柔軟細滑。灌行者頂，滿於身中。自見身內，水所觸處，八萬戶蟲，漸漸萎落。蟲既萎已，身體柔軟，心意悅樂。當自念言，如來慈父，以此法水上味甘露，而灌我頂。此灌頂法，必定不虛；*Chan miyao fa jing*, T. vol. 15 n. 613: 2.256ab; see also Eric Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience," 442–443; the entire text is translated on 345–542.

37 See for example *Chan miyao fa jing*, T. vol. 15 n. 613: 2.251c.

38 *Ibid.* 2.256b.

Those who contemplate consecration visualize their own bodies as beryl light transcending the triple world. They visualize the real Buddha, who pours a pitcher of water into their head and entirely fills up their bodies (here, the head and torso). When the body is entirely filled, the limbs fill up and water flows out from the navel onto the ground in front while the Buddha continues to pour water [over their head]. When the World-Honored-One finishes [pouring the water], he immediately disappears and is no longer visible. The water that flows out of the navel is like beryl and its color has the radiance of violet beryl. Radiant pneuma fills every corner of the great trichiliocosm. When all the water has completely come out [from their navel], practitioners should next be instructed to focus their minds, [uttering]: "May the World-Honored Buddha consecrate me once again." At that time, they will thusly see their body as pneuma and expand it until it is as vast that it surpasses the trichiliocosm. They will see water entering [their pneuma-body] from the head and see their body expand together with the water and fill [the trichiliocosm] with water.<sup>39</sup>

Here too, all of the components of Daoist purification rites that were previously identified are present: visualization, healing, and summoning. But the passage also emphasizes the image of consecration water as pneuma and its diffusion into the body (from the head down) through visualization, just as in the twelfth-century Buddhist-inflected mention of *abhiṣeka* from the Daoist Canon that was examined at the outset of the section on "Buddhist Consecration in the Daoist Canon." Thus, it appears that the *Scripture on the Secret Essential Methods of Meditation* (*Chan miyao fa jing*) not only resonates with early medieval indigenous Daoist purification rites but also with later, medieval or early-modern Buddhist Chinese understandings of consecration that were not exclusively informed by Indic sources.

The second early Chinese Buddhist source that discusses *abhiṣeka* is the *Consecration Scripture* (*Guanding jing* 灌頂經). Its date of compilation is 457, only a few years after the *Scripture on the Secret Essential Methods of Meditation* and two centuries before the first description of the "All-Gathering Mandala Initiation." The text is relatively well-known to scholars and has previously been studied by Michel Strickmann and Koichi Shinohara among others, so I will restrict myself to only the most essential comments.<sup>40</sup> The centerpiece of the *Consecration Scripture* is a lengthy collection of consecration verses (*guanding zhangju* 灌頂章句),

39 觀灌頂者，自見己身，如琉璃光，超出三界。見有真佛，以澡瓶水，從頂而灌，彌滿身中。身彌滿已，支節亦滿，從臍中流，出在於前地。佛常灌水。爾時世尊灌頂已，即滅不現。臍中水出，猶如琉璃，其色如紺琉璃光，光氣遍滿三千大千世界。水出盡已，復當更教繫念：願佛世尊，更為我灌頂。爾時自然見身如氣，龐大甚廣，超出三界。見水從頂入，見身龐大，與水正等，滿於水中；*Chan miyao fa jing*, T. vol. 15 n. 613: 2.260b. See also Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience," 473.

40 Michel Strickmann, "The Consecration Sūtra"; and Shinohara, "Rethinking the Category of Apocrypha."



which open the first section of the first fascicle.<sup>41</sup> Shinohara has shown that these initial verses correspond to *dhāraṇī* (*tuoluoni* 陀羅尼), or divine spells (*shenzhou* 神咒) as they are termed throughout the text,<sup>42</sup> reproduced from a number of other Chinese Buddhist scriptures.<sup>43</sup> In the *Consecration Scripture*, they are parceled out and reorganized in such a way as to form titles or names of deities from which adepts obtain protection against a plethora of ills and calamities. This re-arrangement of pre-existing *dhāraṇī* into the “names of great demon spirit kings” (*da guishen wang mingzi* 大鬼神王名字)<sup>44</sup> effectively converts them into the divine “true names” (*zhenming* 真名) of the kind that make up Daoist talismanic writing, and more pertinently, talismanic registers (*fulu* 符籙). In Daoist liturgy, these rosters of supernatural guardians fulfil two principal functions: they guarantee the protection of the deities listed therein and they act as tokens certifying that the scripture in which they are featured has been correctly and legitimately transmitted to the recipient. In parallel to this second function, they sometimes constitute independent documents conferred upon adepts at different stages of initiation, tokens of rank and achievement in the Daoist hierarchy. Strickmann has already discussed the parenthood between Buddhist consecration verses and Daoist registers,<sup>45</sup> so I will abstain from rehearsing his findings here. It should be highlighted however, that even in the Buddhist *Consecration Scripture*, consecration verses are used in the context of transmission. Although the benefits of the scripture extend to all – particularly in light of the eschatological backdrop against which it is set – the text consistently repeats that it can only be transmit-

41 *Foshuo guanding jing* 佛說灌頂經 (Consecration Scripture Spoken by the Buddha), T. vol. 21 n. 1331: 1.495a–496c.

42 The *Guanding jing* uses the terms *guanding zhangju* (consecration verses) and *shenzhou* (divine spells) interchangeably. Ōmura Seigai, *Mikkyō hattatsu shi*, 128–133, has written on the equivalence between *dhāraṇī*, *mantra* (*zhenyan* 真言), and divine spells – to which we may now add consecration verses. See also Greene, “Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience,” 410 n.4, for some insights on the use of term *guanding zhangju* as a “stylized way of referring to *dhāraṇī*”

43 These include Dharmarakṣa’s 竺法護 (239–316) *Sheng jing* 生經 (Scripture of the [Buddha’s] Birth), T. vol. 3 n. 154; Zhi Qian’s 支謙 (fl. 222–252) translation of the *Agrapradīpa sūtra*, the *Chiju shenzhou jing* 持句神呪經 (The Divine Spell of Dhāraṇī Verse Scripture), T. vol. 21 n. 1351; as well as Zhu Tanwulan’s 竺曇無蘭 (Dharmarakṣa) translation of the same text, titled *Tuoluonibo jing* 陀隣尼鉢經 (*Dhāraṇī Verse Scripture*), T. vol. 21 n. 1352: 381–395. See Shinohara, “Rethinking the Category of Apocrypha,” 71–74, for a full discussion; see also appendices 1 through 3: 80–81; see Michel Strickmann, “The *Consecration Sūtra*,” 79–81 and 93–95 for more general but equally perspicacious observations.

44 *Guanding jing*, T. vol. 21 n. 1331: 495a, 495b.

45 See Strickmann, “The *Consecration Sūtra*,” 94–95.

ted to the most sincere and meritorious among initiates.<sup>46</sup> The verses function identically to their Daoist analogues, as esoteric gages certifying that the scripture itself has been successfully transmitted to the proper and most deserving of practitioners.<sup>47</sup> Knowing them is simultaneously a sign that one has the requisite spiritual endowment for obtaining the powerful stanzas and that one can deploy their apotropaic potential by directly calling on the gods they denote. The consecration verses are as much about transmission and initiation as they are about kingly potency, as the following lines from the *Consecration Scripture* illustrate:

The Buddha said [to Ānanda]: “if there is one who receives these spirit rosters [i.e., the consecration verses] for protecting oneself, one should first pay obeisance to the Buddhas of the ten directions, next to treasure-scriptures, next to sage monks, and then to the masters of *pāramitā* texts. [Obeisance] should be performed with single-mindedness and full devotion, baring the right shoulder and turning it [toward the Buddha], kneeling with hands joined together. The master should hold the text [of the consecration verses] in their right hand and the disciple should receive it with the right hand. With the left hand, the master should hold dharma water and pour it on the top of the disciple’s head. It is for this reason, Ānanda, that they are called consecration verses. It is like this because just as when a royal prince regent is handed down the position of king, in accordance with the codes, they pour water on the top of his head. [Only] then can he command in the affairs of governing a kingdom. My dharma is also like this.”<sup>48</sup>

46 *Guanding jing*, T. vol. 21 n. 1331: 497a–499b, *passim*.

47 Davidson, “Abhiṣeka,” 74, signals that the *Consecration Scripture* uses the *abhiṣeka* rite and, I would add, the consecration verses that are central to that rite, “to transmit the text itself from one person to the other (*Guanding jing*, T. vol. 21 n. 1331: 497b5–24), which has not been a function of Indian tantrism for most of its history.” In other words, the text not only uses the consecration motif “for the transmission of Buddhist authority from one person to the next,” but also for the transmission of the scripture itself, which is what Daoist scriptures accomplished by incorporating talismans or talismanic registers into their pages. In the same paragraph, Davidson, *ibid.*, is quick to distance the Daoist-inflected *Consecration Scripture* from “mature tantric Buddhism,” noting that it “does not implicate the imperial metaphor for the transmission of the teaching,” nor does it “transmit mantras” or “employ *abhiṣeka* to inaugurate a candidate into a mandala.” There are indeed no mandalas mentioned in the *Consecration Scripture* since the inauguration is completed through the transmission of the consecration verses, but the divine spells (*shenzhou*) are equivalent to *dhāraṇī* or *mantra*. In this respect then, Davidson’s assessment is not completely accurate. Moreover, as is apparent from the excerpt translated below, the imperial metaphor is indeed present in the transmission. In contrast to Davidson, I read the transmission rite of the *Consecration Scripture* as an early prototype of mature Tantric Buddhist transmission rites in China.

48 佛言若有受此護身神典者。先當禮敬十方佛。次禮經寶次禮聖僧。次禮度經之師。皆當專心一意。偏露右肩長跪合掌。師當右手持文。弟子以右手受之。師以左手持法水灌弟子頂上。阿難以是因緣故名灌頂章句。所以然者如王太子紹王位時。法應以水灌其頂上。然後統領治國之事我法亦爾; *Guanding jing*, T. vol. 21 n. 1331: 497a-b.

Unmistakably, in the *Consecration Scripture* the function of the consecration verses mirrors that of talismanic registers, namely, certifying that materials have been successfully and legitimately transmitted to an adept while, at the same time, qualifying and initiating that adept. Moreover, the verses grant and also confirm the recipient's power "to command in the affairs of governing a kingdom," in this case, a supernatural kingdom populated by the great demon spirit kings named in the stanzas. Once more, this is identical to Daoist registers, which attest to and grant initiates the power of control over various officials and ministers in the Daoist bureaucratic pantheon, all the way up to celestial monarchs – a vital ability since most interactions with the supernatural consist of administrative requests sent up the chain of command in a divine hierarchy. In institutional Daoism, once initiates are inducted, they are immediately empowered over their supernatural subjects or, in the case of rulers who enter into the tradition, both supernatural and human subjects.

Yet, while part of the form and much of the function of the consecration verses are Daoist in inspiration, the justification that the Buddha provides to Ānanda is not: the markedly Indic imagery of royal unction that was to become one of the defining features of mature Tantric *abhiṣeka* is already present in the *Consecration Scripture*, as evidenced by the last few lines of the excerpt. As Strickmann concludes, the text "gives the earliest description in surviving Buddhist literature of the *abhiṣeka* rite, 'consecration,' performed as an esoteric initiation for Buddhist believers and subsequently one of the hallmarks of Tantric Buddhism."<sup>49</sup> But the *Consecration Scripture* and the *Scripture on the Secret Essential Methods of Meditation* are fascinating sources for another reason: while they provide some of the earliest data on Tantric Buddhist *abhiṣeka* rites in China or elsewhere – and to be clear, that data shows an indebtedness to Indian sources or notions – much of the sources' content is steeped in earlier autochthonous traditions, more specifically Daoist understandings of purification rites as they pertain to transmission and initiation ceremonies.

## Concluding Remarks, Including a Note on the Bathing of Statues

From around the second half of the seventh century, Buddhist consecration rites in China reached peak development, as exemplified by the "All-Gathering Mandala Initiation." These mature initiation rituals became hallmarks of Tantric ritual in

<sup>49</sup> Strickmann, "The *Consecration Sūtra*," 81.

China and other parts of East Asia, where they still take place today. Early translations of Indic sources including the *Scripture on the Ten Grounds* (*Shidi jing*), completed at the turn of the fourth century, contain some of the precursory imagery of royal unction that is prevalent in Buddhist *abhiṣeka* ceremonies, but these can only provide part of the picture. In India, *puṣyābhiṣeka* rites based on aspersion and royal metaphors gradually developed between the fourth and sixth centuries, constituting a basic blueprint for Tantric consecration rituals. But, as far as we know, no written accounts of these rituals made their way to China before the seventh century. In the interim, Chinese Buddhists must have heard of emerging *abhiṣeka* initiations from those who had witnessed them, most likely returning pilgrims, or prelates and translators coming from South or Central Asia. Without a detailed written record of the initiations, Chinese Buddhists were thus left to imagine how the particulars of the rite unfolded. Autochthonous ritual ablutions, which were often part of transmission or induction ceremonies and had been practiced well before Buddhists made inroads in China, provided a viable point of reference.

Daoism in particular offered a long-lived initiatory tradition that combined many of the operative elements of early *abhiṣeka*, from the characteristic purificatory bathing or water aspersion to imperial imagery and the legitimation of spiritual status. The latter two are united by a juridical logic most distinctly incarnated in the talismanic register (*fulu*). In this context, it is perhaps not altogether surprising to find that the *Scripture on the Secret Essential Methods of Meditation* and the *Consecration Scripture*, two of the earliest Buddhist sources in China to describe consecration rituals for adepts, display a confident familiarity with Daoist rituals. A number of aspects betray this familiarity, but perhaps none is more telling than the scriptures' framing of water-based consecration. In their treatment of *abhiṣeka*, both texts reproduce the key functions of Daoist ablutions, namely, a) their contemplative dimension, involving elaborate visualizations; b) their therapeutic healing benefits; and c) their summoning function, through which gods and high-ranking spirits are conjured.

Thus, the earliest descriptions of Buddhist consecration for Chinese adepts exhibit a clear Daoist imprint. Although expunged from later descriptions of *abhiṣeka*, which were eager to trace their genealogy directly back to India, indigenous Chinese and more pointedly Daoist elements certainly contributed to the ritual's developmental trajectory in East Asian Buddhism. This is not to say that East Asian Buddhist or Chinese Buddhist consecration rites were exclusively nor even predominantly Daoist in origin. Avowedly, accounts such as that of the *Scripture on the Ten Grounds*, although scarce and impressionistic, provided enough material to sketch out the ritual's broad strokes. But indigenous sources certainly contributed to filling in the details, perhaps even lending an already familiar ritual structure to the novel initiatory ceremony. In any event, the evidence pre-



sented above is sufficient to reconsider the chronologically tenuous narratives of *abhiṣeka* in China developing directly and solely from Indian precursors. Simply put, what I hope to have impressed upon readers in this chapter is the need, when looking at certain aspects of Buddhism in China, to give due consideration to input from outside of the Buddhist tradition, when the evidence warrants it.

Yet, under the impulse of various motivations, some scholars still elect to sidestep the discussion of Buddhist creolization in China or contest it wholesale.<sup>50</sup> One line of argumentation is that Buddhist *abhiṣeka* in China derived from within the Buddhist tradition, via early statue-bathing ceremonies that symbolically reproduced the Buddha's birth.<sup>51</sup> Once more, this hypothesis is not to be discounted altogether, but it would ideally be counted among a plurality of streams, some of them non-Buddhist, that fed into the river of medieval Chinese *abhiṣeka*. Even so, positing that Buddhist icon-washing rituals are direct precursors to aspersion-based Buddhist inauguration rites in China is problematic. To begin with, the earliest canonical source to provide instructions – and minimal ones at that – on the consecration (*guanding*) of new images and statues with reference to royal unction and/or the initiation of disciples, is dated to *circa* 730, considerably later than the consecration scriptures examined above.<sup>52</sup> The purificatory injunctions amount to repeatedly washing the carved object of veneration (*ke benzun* 刻本尊) by means of fragrant water (*xiangshui* 香水) over a number of days while

<sup>50</sup> See Strickmann, "The Consecration Sūtra," 85, where he notes: "Japanese sectarian scholars have generally denied that the word 'consecration' (*kuan-ting*) as found in our sūtra's title, is to be understood as designating a rite of empowerment by aspersion (*abhiṣeka*) of the sort that marks the stages of initiation into the mysteries of the later Sino-Japanese Tantric Buddhist system." He continues, relating that some of his colleagues maintain "the term 'consecration' is not used in reference to the rite of transmission employed in Esoteric Buddhism in which water is sprinkled on the head of the aspirant; rather, it is a hyperbolic reference to the sūtra's meritorious efficacy." Indeed, this argument is deployed to negate the possibility that elements of *abhiṣeka* could have emerged in China before Indic sources describing the full rite were translated and disseminated.

<sup>51</sup> Broadly speaking, these East Asian consecration rituals for icons of Buddhas or bodhisattvas largely follow the template of South Asian *pratiṣṭhā* installation ceremonies by which a god is invited to inhabit a material vessel or representation. These ceremonies were codified during the medieval period, but there are clues suggesting they were practiced centuries earlier. The ceremony involves the pouring of auspicious liquids including oils, clarified butter, milk, and aromatic water on the icon as well as repeated washings with water. The emblematic *añjana śalākā* eye-opening ritual is also part of the ceremony. For a synoptic description, see Michel Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins*, 184–186. For more in-depth considerations of the *pratiṣṭhā* in South Asia and its relation to *abhiṣeka*, see Geslani, *Rites of the God Kings*, 205–228 and 230–233.

<sup>52</sup> *Da weili wushusemo mingwang jing* 大威力烏樞瑟摩明王經 (Scripture of the Great Powerful Wisdom King Uçusma), T. vol. 21 n. 1227: 148c. See Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins*: 188–189; and Yang Zhaohua, "Devouring Impurities," *passim* and esp. 34–38.

making offerings to it, before finally activating it. By the year 1000, there appears to be, in Chinese and Indic sources as well, a complete superposition between washing images and statues on one hand – when inaugurating new icons or in the context of the Buddha's birthday for instance – and the rite of *abhiṣeka* on the other.<sup>53</sup> In such sources, the principal metaphor is no longer enthronement, which remains present nonetheless, but rather birth. The new image or statue is animated by insufflating it with the presence of the deity, but it only properly comes alive after its post-natal purificatory ablution and eye-opening; prior to that, it is in gestation.<sup>54</sup>

Yet the conflation between icon-bathing and consecration that is typical of these late-medieval or early-modern *buddhābhiṣeka* rituals, is patently absent from early medieval sources. Indeed, Yijing 義淨 (635–713) judged the annual practice of washing previously-enshrined images on the Buddha's birthday intriguing and novel enough to record it in the travelogue relating his trip to India.<sup>55</sup> And in his description, dating from the end of the seventh century, none of the royal imagery or themes of initiation that came to define Buddhist *abhiṣeka* are present.<sup>56</sup> The point of the ritual, readers are told, is to cleanse their minds

<sup>53</sup> Thus, in China, the *Foshuo yiqie rulai anxiang sanmei yigui jing* 佛說一切如來安像三昧儀軌經 (Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Ritual of all the Tathāgatas for the Samādhi of Installing Images), T. vol. 21 n. 1418, dated to around the year 1000, exhorts practitioners to repeatedly anoint a Buddhist icon during the process of carving and installing it. The short ritual text also unambiguously refers to cleaning the statues as a consecration (適悅尊像如灌頂儀; 934a) and lists kingly authority as one of the benefits of washing them (當得轉輪王位大國王位無復疑惑; 935a). A detailed account can be found in Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins*: 197–202. For India, the *Somaśambhupaddhati* supplies an eloquent example of how the lines between icon-bathing and consecration were eventually blurred. See Hélène Brunner-Lachaux's French translation, the *Somaśambhupaddhati* vol. 1, Puducherry: Institut français d'indologie, 1963, 138–202, cited in Strickmann, *Mantras et Mandarins*, 453 n. 46.

<sup>54</sup> *Foshuo yiqie rulai anxiang sanmei yigui jing*, T. vol. 21 n. 1418: 933c. For references to the animation of the image as a birth, see 934ab and 935a. The eye-opening (*kaiyan* 開眼) occurs after the last bath on 934c, but it precedes the *homa* (*huoma* 護摩), which supplies the fire element as a counterbalance to the ritual's emphasis on water.

<sup>55</sup> See *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (Account of Buddhism sent from the South Seas), T. vol. 54 n. 2125: 4.226b-c.

<sup>56</sup> The term "sprinkle" or "pour" 灌 *guan* is used, but not the familiar compound for "consecration," *guanding* 灌頂. The passage from *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan*, T. vol. 54 n. 2125: 4.226c, which is most suggestive of *abhiṣeka* reads:

This water used for bathing images, suppose it raised with two fingers and dripped atop of one's head, in this case, it is known as the "water of auspiciousness for one may use it to seek success."

其浴像之水，即舉以兩指灑自頂上，斯謂吉祥之水，冀求勝利。

and karmic debts just as they cleanse the images, and to generate prosperity for themselves and others, in this life and future ones.<sup>57</sup>

This is also true of the handful of other medieval texts on washing icons that circulated before the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, when the earliest mature form of the Tantric consecration ritual, the “All-Gathering Mandala Initiation,” was described and performed in China. These usually short ritual manuals describe the purpose of image ablution as cleansing the statue to make it suitable for the divine presence who inhabits it and, as a corollary, to produce merit and obtain good fortune. For example, the Six-Dynasties *Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on Washing Buddha Icons* (*Foshuo guanxi fo xingxiang jing* 佛說灌洗佛形像經), attributed to Faju 法炬 (Dharmalokā; fl. ca. 300) opens with a description of the Buddha’s birth. It highlights the presence of gods and devas in attendance at the miraculous event and describes the purificatory bath of aromatics and flowers that the newborn received. This ablution, the text specifies, led to the young Siddhārtha Gautama entering the Path, and to the day of his birth, the eighth day of the fourth month, becoming synonymous with good fortune. Thus, we are told, if on that day “one washes an icon of the Buddha as the Buddha was washed at the time of his birth, one will experience innumerable and countless auspiciousness” or “obtain all that one wishes for.”<sup>58</sup>

A coterminous text on bathing icons dated to the Western Jin (265–317) and attributed to the renowned Central Asian/Yuezhi 月支 translator Dharmarakṣa (Zhufahu 竺法護) similarly emphasizes the merits and felicity occasioned by washing images of the Buddha.<sup>59</sup> The same holds true for ritual manuals on icon-bathing from the mid to the late Tang.<sup>60</sup> One of these, the succinct *New Compilation of Image-Bathing Rites* (*Xin ji yu xiang yigui* 新集浴像儀軌) has a distinctly Tantric

Nevertheless, even in this instance, there is no reference to initiation nor is there an inkling of kingly enthronement. There is no doubt that the goal of the practice is to obtain auspiciousness and that alone.

57 *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan*, T. vol. 54 n. 2125: 4.226b and 4.226c, respectively.

58 浴佛形像如佛在時，得福無量不可稱數 [ . . . ] (用浴佛形像者，如佛在時) 所願悉得; *Foshuo guanxi fo xingxiang jing* 佛說灌洗佛形像經 (Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on Washing Buddha Icons), T. vol. 16 n. 695: 796c–797a. The text repeats this same idea throughout. *Foshuo Mohechaitou jing* 佛說摩訶剎頭經 (Scripture on the Mahāsattva Spoken by the Buddha), T. vol. 16 n. 696, is a variant, translated by Shengjian 聖堅 roughly ninety years later.

59 *Bannihuan hou guanli jing* 般泥洹後灌臘經 (Scripture on Washing Images After [the Buddha’s] Nirvāṇa), T. vol. 12 n. 391.

60 See *Foshuo yuxiang gongde jing* 佛說浴像功德經 (Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Meritorious Virtues of Bathing Images), T. vol. 16 n. 697, translated by Manicinta (Baosiwei 寶思惟; fl. ca. 700) and its variant, *Yu fo gongde jing* 浴佛功德經 (Scripture on the Meritorious Virtues of Bathing Buddhas), T. vol. 16 n. 698, attributed to Yijing 義淨 (635–713).

flavor (it notably features *dhāraṇī*), likely on account of having been compiled by Huilin 慧琳 (737–820), a disciple of Amoghavajra. Being a medieval Tantric ritual manual, one would expect that it would also contain copious references to the inauguration of monarchs. Yet, just as in the case of its predecessors, there is a complete absence of royal tropes; nor is there any mention of initiatory functions. Instead, the text stresses the merits and personal benefits accrued from washing icons. It goes so far as to suggest that those who wish to escape punishment for misdeeds or seek fortune can achieve their ends by washing likenesses of the Buddha every single day. If this cannot be achieved, they must wash them at least once a month and they will still meet with success.<sup>61</sup>

The absence of certain key indicators such as royal metaphors or initiatory functions in Six-Dynasties or Tang ritual manuals on washing Buddha images strongly suggests that Buddhist *abhiṣeka* rites did not directly emerge from the tradition of icon-bathing, as the common theory holds, and eventually blend with it towards the end of the Tang on account of a shared emphasis on ablution. Buddhism, even at the highest echelons of orthodoxy, developed in China through an intricate process of interchange with local traditions. Rather than looking for the origins of Buddhist consecration rites in Buddhist sources alone, it may prove fruitful to consider a wide spectrum of materials. In the preceding pages, it was my intention to show that accounts of autochthonous or, more specifically, Daoist purification rites are a good place to start. One would hope they are not thrown out with the bath water.

61 *Xin ji yu xiang yigui*, T. vol. 21 n. 1322: 489c.



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**Volume 87**

## **Rituals of Initiation and Consecration in Premodern Japan**

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## Preface

This book is the outcome of the conference entitled “The World of *Abhiṣeka*: Consecration Rituals in the Buddhist Cultural Sphere,” which took place at the University of California, Santa Barbara in May 2018. It was co-organized by Fabio Rambelli and Or Porath in California and Abe Yasurō in Japan. Aware of the importance of *kanjō* rituals in premodern Japan, we decided to take a systematic approach and explore both their variety and complexity in Japan and their origins and ramifications in the Asian mainland. In other words, we aimed to overcome the typical insularity of Japanese studies and gesture towards a transnational perspective, but also to bring together discussions on disparate ritual programs that appeared to show shared epistemic frameworks. We were especially interested in the varied ways in which multiple *consecration* rituals bring together processes of knowledge production and transmission on the one hand and status elevation and legitimization on the other, through procedures that involve embodiment and bodily transformations – ontology, epistemology, and politics (and, in some cases, soteriology as well). The editors of this volume are glad to include a contribution by Matsumoto Ikuyo, who was unable to join us in Santa Barbara for the conference.

This book gathers contributions by scholars from various disciplines in an attempt to address a broad range of Japanese consecration rituals from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective, beyond their standard confinement to Esoteric Buddhist liturgy. The book covers numerous approaches and subjects: from Indian and Chinese precedents and Tibetan developments, to various kinds of consecrations carried out in premodern Japan related to kingship, monastic ceremonies, religious articulations in multiple areas, and the transmission of knowledge and practices about the performing arts. Contributors focus variously on the ritual procedures, their doctrinal and narrative backgrounds, and the social contexts in which these rituals emerged and were carried out. This book not only enriches the understanding of specific practices typical of Esoteric/Tantric Buddhism in its transnational forms, but also shows how these liturgical practices came to constitute the template for a number of ritual actions throughout many fields and disciplines of premodern Japanese culture.

One common thread is the shared transnational nature of *abhiṣeka/kanjō* rituals. Established in ancient India (possibly at the end of a process that began in prehistoric times) and later adopted by Buddhism, *abhiṣeka* rituals spread to other parts of Asia and for many centuries have been the template for a number of ceremonies. In the case of Japan, we also see traces (or echoes, parallels, or perhaps instances of synchronicity?) between some medieval developments and doctrinal and ritual inventions elsewhere in Asia (most significantly, Tibet) at



about the same time (as for instance, in *yugi kanjō*), despite the absence of any known direct connection.

Another common thread, elaborated in the following chapters according to numerous variations, is the interplay between monastic consecration (*denbō kanjō*) and imperial enthronement consecration (*sokui kanjō*), which reflects one of the fundamental aspects of Buddhism, namely, the closely related and yet conflictual relation between monastic institutions and the state or, stated differently (by adapting Stanley Tambiah's felicitous expression), between world-renouncing and world-conquering. Later on in Japan, a disembodied, a-historical figure of the ruler (the "emperor") became a template for *shintō kanjō*; and a simplified and stereotypical image of Esoteric Buddhist monastic transmission became the template for performing arts consecrations (*biwa kanjō*, *waka kanjō*), in which knowledge was supposedly transmitted, in a mediated form, directly from a divine figure. In this way, a ritual that was closely related to the center of kingships and monastic organizations came to be used to transmit secular forms of knowledge to commoners.

The book is divided into four main parts. Part One, Origins and Developments on the Asian Mainland, begins with a chapter by David White on Indian consecration rituals that were originally performed to enthrone kings, with their vast web of significations. This is followed by chapters on later developments in Asia involving the Buddhist adoption of enthronement rituals to consecrate monks (especially in the Tantric/Esoteric tradition): Mori Masahide writes about various types of Buddhist *abhiṣeka* in India based on several sutras and ritual manuals; Dominic Steavu discusses Chinese variations of *abhiṣeka* (Ch. *guanding*) ceremonies in China at the intersection of Buddhist and pre-existing local (Daoist) practices; and Adam Krug traces *abhiṣeka* rituals in Tibet, especially the important *mahāmudrā* consecration.

Part Two, Imperial Consecration in Japan, discusses the history of the adoption of Indian *abhiṣeka* in the enthronement ceremonies of Japanese emperors. Interestingly, it appears that these rituals came to be performed for Japanese emperors by adapting Esoteric Buddhist liturgies for the consecration of monks. In other words, in contrast with the Indian case, in which a kingship ritual was adopted by Buddhist institutions, in Japan it was a Buddhist monastic ritual (itself a transformation of the same Indian kingship ritual) that was applied to imperial rituals. Ryūichi Abé studies the first imperial *kanjō* in ninth century Japan and discusses its impact on both subsequent imperial ceremonies and developments in Esoteric Buddhist teachings. Susan Klein explores the connections between performing arts, religious rituals, and imperial ceremonies in medieval Japan in relation to the development of the Esoteric Buddhist enthronement consecration (*sokui kanjō*) for emperors. Matsumoto Ikuyo deals with a little-known topic,

namely, the motivations behind failed Buddhist attempts to revive the imperial consecration in the modern period after its discontinuation in 1867.

Next, Part Three, Religious Developments of the Imperial Consecration, explores a number of instances in medieval and early modern Japan in which monastic and imperial *kanjō* consecrations were modified and adapted to various religious developments. Abe Yasurō presents an overview of the field by outlining various lines of intersection between imperial ceremonies, monastic rituals, and the arts (performing arts and literature) that lie at the basis of such developments. Tomishima Yoshiyuki discusses an often overlooked but influential ritual, *kechien kanjō*, in which the officiant monk established a karmic connection between gods, past emperors, and the divinities in the mandalas of Esoteric Buddhism, which lay at the background of medieval Japanese cosmology. Paul Groner examines long lost secret rituals for the consecration to the monastic precepts, in which their recipients were freed from the obligation to actually observe the Buddhist monastic code. Lucia Dolce presents her work on an elusive but very influential Esoteric Buddhist scripture, *Yugi-kyō* (Ch. *Yuqi jing*), and the *kanjō* based on it. *Yugi kanjō* stands out as a ritual consecration that highlights exegetical innovations in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism and, at the same time, ritual shifts in the wider medieval world; in particular, this ritual does not use ritual implements but the body of the practitioner. Itō Satoshi presents *shintō kanjō* that were used in the medieval period to transmit knowledge about the standard classical source of Japanese mythology, *Nihon shoki* (a ritual called *Nihongi kanjō* 日本紀灌頂), and the medieval interpretations of its myths, via a text entitled *Reikiki* (in a ritual called *Reiki kanjō* 麗氣灌頂). Or Porath continues the exploration of the ways in which *kanjō* consecrations came to sacralize the body of the participants by focusing on a set of rituals, known as *chigo kanjō*, that were used at some Buddhist temples to transform young acolytes (*chigo*) into embodiments of divinities while at the same time positing them as objects of sexual desire accessible to senior monks. Kawasaki Tsuyoshi and Andrea Castiglioni both work on *kanjō* in the Shugendō 修験道 tradition of mountain asceticism, a rarely explored dimension of ritual consecrations. Kawasaki discusses the origin of these rituals – an origin that, he argues, is mostly based on narrative accounts, rather than on actual practices; Castiglioni focuses on actual *kanjō* performed in the mountains in the late medieval and early modern periods and the emphasis they place on discursive practices involving secrecy.

Finally, Part Four, Developments in the Arts, addresses another important aspect of the cultural impact of *kanjō* rituals, namely, the fact that they increasingly came to be used outside of the court and monastic contexts as ways to sanction and legitimize transmission and acquisition of specific competences associated with literature and the arts. Unno Keisuke discusses *kanjō* transmissions

of the art of *waka* poetry. Inose Chihiro analyzes the *kanjō* rituals for the transmission of specific music pieces and performing techniques for the *biwa* (a type of lute) used in Gagaku, in a phenomenon that lasted for about three centuries before being abandoned. Finally, Fabio Rambelli explores the secret transmission rituals for the music of the *shō*, the unique mouth organ used in Gagaku and Bugaku 舞楽 performances. *Shō kanjō* 笙灌頂 emerged in the mid-fourteenth century, when the Ashikaga Shoguns and the emperors adopted this instrument as one of the regalia for their authority; the ritual was then abandoned in the late fifteenth century, together with its secret repertory and symbolism. This chapter also offers some general considerations about the nature of the secret knowledge transmitted in *kanjō* consecrations and possible reasons for the discontinuations of such rituals when social and epistemological conditions changed in the sixteenth century.

Fabio Rambelli and Or Porath

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*Edited by Fabio Rambelli and Or Porath*

**RELIGION AND SOCIETY**