

Accession Rituals and Buddhism in Medieval Japan

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While many have discussed the status of the emperor in the medieval period in terms of the political or military powers that supported the authority of the emperor (see ISHIMODA 1964, 1986, KURODA 1975, and AMINO 1984), research on the public functions in which the emperor actually took part has been lagging. I wish to take up one of the aspects neglected so far in the study of the emperor system, and examine the accession rituals that took place during the medieval period on the occasion of a change in emperors.

The accession or enthronement of a new emperor required the performance of a series of rituals which would endow the new emperor with the proper legitimacy. In Japan these rituals have included the burial of the former emperor, the accession ceremonies (*senso* 踐祚 and *sokuishiki* 即位式), and the celebration of the great harvest festival (*daijōsai* 大嘗祭).¹ These topics have received very little attention, and though I cannot examine the topic fully in this paper, I will focus on the *sokuishiki* (hereafter "accession ceremony").

I have chosen to concentrate on the accession ceremony for the following reasons. The accession rituals (*sokui girei*), which include

* This article was translated from the Japanese (KAMIKAWA 1989a) in consultation with the author.

¹ An outline of the various imperial accession rituals, including those in the medieval period, can be found in WADA (1915).

the *sokuishiki*, are often considered traditional rites limited to the imperial family. However, the accession ceremony (*sokuishiki*) in the medieval period included a Buddhist ritual called the *sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂 (accession ordination).² Not much is known about this *sokui kanjō* and there are no serious studies on the subject, though it has been referred to in passing by many scholars. INOUE Mitsusada (1985, p. 106) and TSUKUDO Reikan (1976, pp. 297–98) point out the existence of the *sokui kanjō* in their studies on the development of Buddhism in the Heian period.³ In recent years TAIRA Masayuki (1984) has referred to *sokui kanjō* in discussing the idea of the “mutual dependence of Imperial Law and Buddhist Law” (*ōbō buppō sōi* 王法仏法相依), as the distinctive ruling ideology of the temple/shrine authorities (*jisha seiryoku* 寺社勢力) which was asserted from around the 11th and 12th centuries, as well as the concepts of a Buddhist state and a Buddhist monarchy, and the theory of imperial authority being granted by the Buddha (*ōken butsuju setsu* 王権仏授説), a kind of Buddhist “divine right of kings.”

Spirited research on this topic has proceeded in recent years with regard to Japanese literature, clarifying how expressions of *sokui kanjō* were formed in the medieval period. ITŌ Masayoshi (1980) has referred to *sokui kanjō* in pointing out that the expressions associated with imperial accession are implicit in the Buddhist tales called *jidō setsuwa* 慈童説話. Taking a hint from these studies, ABE Yasurō (1984, 1985a, 1985b) has examined many historical documents for comments on *sokui kanjō* by temple people. He concluded that *jidō setsuwa* and “infant baptism” (*chigo kanjō* 稚児灌頂) served as devices for “reversing fate” by recovering a lost sacredness, that is, by playing an intermediary role for an order that has been disrupted. MATSUOKA Shinpei (1986) has pointed out that the temple tales have a deep connection with imperial accession rites at the level of the underlying structure of the stories.

The references to *sokui kanjō* (accession protocol [*sokuihō* 即位法]) that were analyzed in the field of Japanese literature, however, are all given from the perspective of the temple people (*jike* 寺家), and

² Studies on Buddhism and accession rituals can be found in YAMAORI 1984 and 1985. However, Yamaori's work concerns the involvement of Buddhist priests in the accession rituals and assumes that the parts in which the emperor is directly involved are “traditions based on purely Shinto rituals.” If so, they are quite different from the *sokui kanjō* which I discuss here.

³ Other studies which mention *sokui kanjō* include WADA 1915; TSUJI 1969, pp. 717–20; MATSUURA 1891, TANAKA 1915, TOMITA 1915, and KUSHIDA 1941 and 1964.

almost all of the stories are in the form of religious histories (*engi* 縁起) based on fictitious tales. We cannot examine the historical actuality of *sokui kanjō* on the basis of an analysis of comments on accession rituals originally collected by temple authorities for the purpose of advocating the practice of *sokui kanjō*. We should examine how the accession ceremonies were actually performed, and inquire as to the role these ceremonies played in Japanese history. In order to fulfill this task it is necessary to analyze the historical documents which tell of the activities of the emperors who actually received *sokui kanjō*.

In short, I will analyze the *sokui kanjō* historically and thus examine the relationship between Buddhism and the accession ceremonies. Further, I will consider the special characteristics and historical evolution of accession rituals as a whole.

Before proceeding I would like to clarify a basic premise concerning the relationship between Buddhism and the medieval emperor. This premise concerns the emperor and his taking of priestly vows. During the medieval period it was often the case that a retired emperor (*in* 院) would take the vows of a Buddhist priest;⁴ there were some retired emperors who received the transmission of the Buddha-dharma (*denpō kanjō* 伝法灌頂) and the title of *ajari* (Skt. *ācārya*), and became members of a dharma lineage within the temple social structure.⁵ In contrast, as a rule an emperor still on the throne did not take Buddhist priestly vows.⁶ It was inconceivable that a medieval emperor still on the throne would officially become part of a temple lineage by voluntarily passing through the rituals of affiliation with a temple social order.⁷ The emperor existed outside the Buddhist order; as a rule he could not function as a high-level ecclesiastical figure or as a performer of Buddhist rituals.⁸

⁴ A list is given in KUNAICHŌ SHIRYŌBU 1980, p. 344.

⁵ Emperors Uda, En'yū, Go-Shirakawa, Kameyama, and Go-Uda. KUNAICHŌ SHIRYŌBU 1980, pp. 413–24, gives historical documents that tell of these ceremonies, but the lists include *kechien* 結縁 *kanjō* (ceremony for “establishing a relationship” [with Buddhism]), an ordination given to lay people, and thus should be referred to with caution.

⁶ Emperor Shōtoku of the 8th century is an exception. Also, emperors Ninmyō, Murakami, and Go-Ichijō took the priestly vows while still emperors. However, in each of these cases the vows were taken on their deathbeds, and so do not really constitute a breaking of this rule.

⁷ Many emperors received *kechien kanjō* and / or the Mahāyāna bodhisattva vows, but this did not affect their status as lay people.

⁸ I believe that the understanding of the role of the medieval emperor as explained in current histories of Japanese Buddhism is inadequate. Modern studies on the medieval Buddhist

In light of the above premise, if we can show that the *sokui kanjō* was in fact performed during accession ceremonies in the medieval period, then it is imperative that we re-examine the relationship between Buddhism and the medieval emperor, and the actual form of imperial authority in the medieval period. In this article I will try to determine the times at which the *sokui kanjō* was actually performed, ascertain the actual details of the *sokui kanjō* rituals, and place the *sokui kanjō* within its proper historical context.

As for the term *sokui kanjō* itself, there is no general consensus among scholars of medieval Japanese history as to its actual content; I will therefore try to define what I mean by the term. In this article I will analyze the three elements of *sokuihō* (accession protocol), *in'myō denju* (conferring of *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*), and *sokui kanjō*. *Sokuihō* refers to the complex narrative expressions and other oral transmissions from master to disciple (*injin* 印信) connected with the *sokui kanjō*. The only surviving *sokuihō* from the early medieval period, however, are ones which were prepared and endorsed by temple-shrine authorities. According to ABE (1984), these were systematized by Buddhist scholar-priests affiliated with the Eshin branch 恵心流 in the later part of the Kamakura period (13th–14th century). The *in'myō denju* refers to the rite preceding the accession ceremony wherein the esoteric *mudrā* (*hi-in* 秘印) and *dhāraṇī* (*shingon* 真言) are transmitted to the emperor. The *sokui kanjō* then takes place when the emperor himself, using the newly transmitted esoteric abilities and knowledge, performs the *mudrā* and chants the *dhāraṇī* during the accession ceremony. In a broad sense the *in'myō denju* could be considered a part of the *sokui kanjō*, but there is significance in the fact that the emperor performs the latter activity independently. Thus when I use the word *sokui kanjō* I am limiting it to this activity by the emperor during the accession ceremony.

When Were the Sokui Kanjō Performed?

The original meaning of *kanjō* in India (Skt. *abhiṣeka*) was that of an initiation ceremony consisting of pouring or sprinkling water from the four seas on the royal head during a king's accession

order emphasize the role of the retired emperor as a unifier of the temple and shrine power structure, especially if the discussion centers on institutions and power struggles. See, for example MORIKAWA 1981 and TAIRA 1987.

ceremony or to designate a crown prince. Along with the development of esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*) in Japan, various esoteric initiations of historical significance were performed. Perhaps one of the most important was the *denpō kanjō* (initiation for the transmission of the dharma), which was valued highly by the Buddhist temple community. This ritual consisted basically of sprinkling water, which symbolizes the five wisdoms of Mahāvairocana, on the head of the disciple. By passing through this initiation, a monk would receive the high rank of Ajari, join the dharma-lineage of Kūkai or Mahāvairocana, and enter the fold of the Buddha's disciples. In medieval temple society, however, the relationship of linkage between master and disciple meant in fact a relationship which involved secular lineages and cliques, which in turn formed the basic units of both the large and small private interest groups (see KAMIKAWA 1985).

The *sokui kanjō*, at least as far as its content is revealed in the accession protocols which we will examine later, was very similar to the *denpō kanjō*. Both *kanjō* are performed to bestow certain religious qualifications on, and alter the current status of, the recipient. I will discuss the differences between these two initiations later; at this time it is enough to point out that *sokui kanjō* was an initiation performed at the time of the new emperor's accession.⁹ In short, *sokui kanjō* was an esoteric Buddhist rite performed by the emperor himself during the accession ceremony.

Most of the studies which point out the existence of the *sokui kanjō* maintain that its origin is to be found at the time of Go-Sanjō's accession in the later Heian period. First let us examine the historical documents which relate how the initiation was actually performed.

It is generally believed that Go-Sanjō was enthroned in A.D. 1068; however, the earliest and only primary reference we have is from the *Go-Sanjō-in gosokui-ki* 後三条院御即位記 (GUNSHO RUIJŪ, vol. 7):

Minamoto no Morofusa says that . . . during the accession of retired emperor Sanjō, he held the end of the scepter and walked forward from the Koyasudono. . . . This time it was not like that. The lord, during this interval, clasped his hands and held the secret mudrā (*ken'in* 拳印) like Mahāvairocana.¹⁰

⁹ The main difference between *denpō kanjō* and *hechien kanjō* is that the latter merely establishes a lay person's relationship with the Buddha and does not involve any changes in the recipient's social or religious status or qualifications.

¹⁰ This is a report written by Ōe Masafusa 大江匡房, who was *kurōdo* (chamberlain) at the time and observed the ceremony.

As far as we can tell from this report, Go-Sanjō proceeded to the throne while making a mudrā with his hands and not carrying a scepter. This mudrā appeared, to Ōe Masafusa, to be that of the mudrā of Mahāvairocana. It seems rather farfetched to conclude merely on this basis that the *sokui kanjō* was performed at this time. There are some later documents which claim that the *sokui kanjō* was performed at the time of Go-Sanjō's accession. The *Sokui kanjō in'myō yurai no koto* 即位灌頂印明由来事 [On the origin of the mudrā and dhāraṇī of the *sokui kanjō*],¹¹ from the year 1500 says:

At the time of Go-Sanjō's accession on the twenty-first day of the seventh month of the fourth year of Jiryaku (1068), the lord received the transmission from Jōzon 成尊 (a disciple of Ninkai Sōjō). Consequently, when he ascended to the Takamikura 高御座, since he had to make the . . . mudrā, this was seen by the minister Masafusa and recorded. This was the origin [of the *sokui kanjō*].

Undoubtedly the claim that *sokui kanjō* was first performed at the accession of Go-Sanjō is based on this record. However, the two documents are separated by a great many years, and if the phrase "this was seen by the minister Masafusa and recorded" refers to the earlier document, then it must be considered to have low historical reliability. TSUJI Zennosuke (1969) expresses doubt that this document is historically reliable concerning the *sokui kanjō*, and I must agree.¹² We cannot date the origin of the *sokui kanjō* at the time of the accession of Go-Sanjō on the basis of these documents.

The next document which mentions *sokui kanjō* is a story concerning the great dharma-master Jōzō in the *Shūi ōjōden* 拾遺往生伝 :

In the past the retired emperor Uda received the initiation of the four seas (*shikai no kanjō* 四海之灌頂)¹³ in order to become the king

¹¹ A collection of pieces copied in modern times from various imperial archives. Itō 1980 quotes document number 17 in its entirety. These documents were copied by the *kanpaku* Ichijō Fuyura in 1500 from his father Ichijō Kanera's records.

¹² Tsuji adds the following comments: "The emperor must have clasped his hands in a way which looked like the mudrā of Mahāvairocana's wisdom because it would be inappropriate to take the throne 'empty-handed.' . . . In other words, it was later said that the emperor received the transmission from Seizon (1012–1074), and still later that it was a secret (esoteric) transmission, and thus the story was blown out of proportion" (pp. 719–20).

Recently ABE (1989) discovered a Shingon (*tōmitsu*) document, concerning rituals from about the same time as Jien, called *Sansōkiruishū* 三僧記類聚 (kept at Ninna-ji). This document contains entries similar in content to the Masafusa entry; it was later incorporated into the Go-Sanjō *sokui kanjō*. However, it appears that this document, like the *Musōki*, is a second-hand report, and cannot be accepted as a first-hand historical report.

of the sun's domain.¹⁴ Later he received the initiation of the three secrets (*sanmitsu no kanjō* 三蜜之灌頂)¹⁵ in order to become king of the moon's ring¹⁶ (INOUE and ŌSONE 1974, p. 324).

Emperor Uda ascended the throne in 887 and retired from the throne in 897. He received the *denpō kanjō* from the Hōmu¹⁷ Yakushin 法務益信 in 901 (TŌBŌKI 4). However, the *Shūi ōjōden* is believed to have been completed by Miyoshi Tameyasu 三善為康 (1049–1139) in 1123 (INOUE and ŌSONE 1974, pp. 741–45). Most likely it reflects the perception of people in the 12th century rather than the historical doings of Emperor Uda. In addition, based on the fact that we cannot find any other records of the *sokui kanjō* from around the 12th century, the possibility that the *sokui kanjō* was being performed during this period is very slim. About the only thing that we can conclude for sure is that the reference in the *Shūi ōjōden* to the “initiation of the four seas” reveals that this concept was known at the time among certain members of the aristocracy who had an interest in Buddhist thought.

Further evidence for this idea and of even greater value with regard to the *sokui kanjō* are the entries for Kennin 3 (1203).6.22, Kennin 4 (1204).1.1, and Jōgen 3 (1209).6 in the *Jichin Oshō musōki* 慈鎮和尚夢想記 [Record of dreams by Jichin (Jien); hereafter *Musōki*] (see AKAMATSU 1957 and MANAKA 1979). This text consists of a Buddhist interpretation by Jien 慈円 of a revelation bestowed on him in a dream which he had in 1203 concerning the sacred jewels (*shinji* 神璽) and sword (*hōken* 宝剣) of the emperor, written and analyzed after awakening from this dream.

The contents are rather complicated (for details see AKAMATSU 1957). In short, the central theme of the *Musōki* is to provide a contemporary interpretation of the sacred jewels and sword (i. e. the

¹³ Inoue notes that the “initiation of the four seas” refers to the *sokui kanjō*.

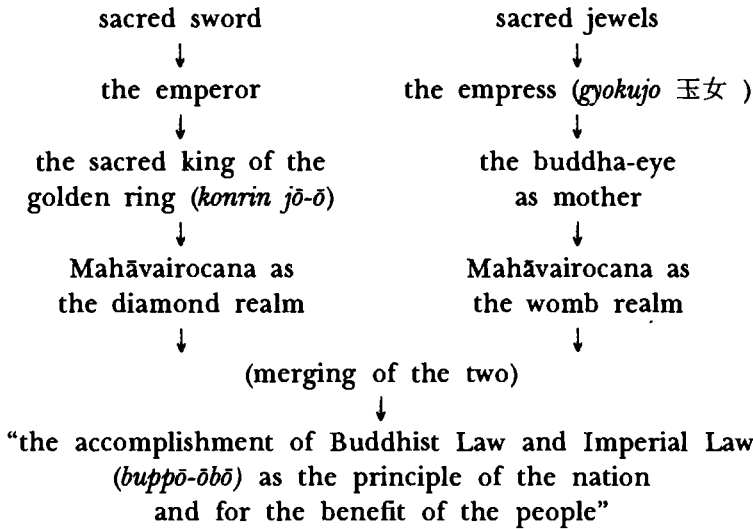
¹⁴ That is, the emperor of Japan.

¹⁵ The “three secrets” are the three activities of body, speech (verbal), and mind as taught in Shingon Buddhism; thus this could refer to *denpō kanjō*.

¹⁶ The “moon's ring” (*gachirin*) refers to the basic method of meditation as taught in esoteric Buddhism wherein one meditates on the ring of the moon. Here, with the pattern of the emperor—*sokui kanjō*—ruler of Japan, and retired emperor—*denpō kanjō*—ruler of esoteric practices, we have the emperor involved in every sort of esoteric ritual. This is expressed in such a way so that the universe is divided into two parts which are then integrated by means of the emperor.

¹⁷ A rank in the Buddhist hierarchy.

sacred symbols and treasures—*shinki* 神器) of the emperor. Jien's interpretation can be outlined as follows:



Jien identified the loss of the sacred sword in the sea at Dan-no-ura with the “ruin of the land of Japan by the warriors and shogun,” and decried the passing of the sword's power to the “human shogun.”¹⁸ There are two references to *sokui kanjō* in the context of this discussion:

(1) The rituals associated with ascending the Takamikura for the accession of the secular ruler imitate this rite of the transformation of Mahāvairocana as Konrinnō 金輪王.¹⁹ The mudrā of wisdom is clasped and transmitted. This (represents) Mahāvairocana of the diamond realm being manifested in this world in order to benefit sentient beings.

(2) When the emperor is enthroned, he clasps the mudrā of wisdom when he ascends the Takamikura seat, as the minister Masafusa notes in his record. Nothing else is known about this matter. Also, even if one sees this record, one cannot verify it. Ever since this time during the accession from generation to generation, all have not [or, none have] kept this process.

¹⁸ As AKAMATSU (1957) points out, there is a considerable difference between the attitude of Jien at this point and what he writes in the *Gukanshō* at a later date. In the *Gukanshō* the *bushi* are seen not as the emperor's enemy, but as those who protect the emperor.

¹⁹ One of the four “kings of transmigration” who rule over this world.

Jien is distressed by the loss of the sacred sword and the success of the warrior clans, but it occurs to him that the wisdom mudrā or the “mudrā of the sword and sheath” (*tōshōin* 刀鞘印) from the esoteric Buddhist practices could be a substitute. However, Jien’s knowledge concerning the accession protocols seems to rely only on “the record of the minister Masafusa.”²⁰ Even for Jien, there is no other example he can come up with in which the wisdom mudrā is used during the accession ceremony. If this is so, then we must conclude that even with the influence of the *Go-Sanjō-in go-sokui ki*, there is in fact no actual case up to this point in time during which an esoteric ritual consisting of clasping the wisdom mudrā was used in an accession ceremony.

In contrast, the first truly reliable document appears in the entry for Shōō 1 (1288).3.13 of the *Fushimi Tennō nikki* 伏見天皇日記 [Diary of Emperor Fushimi]:

The thirteenth, *tsuchinoe-inu*, clear. . . .

This evening the *kanpaku* (Nijō Morotada), during the accession, conferred the secret mudrā and such matters. This was done properly according to established standards.

The occasion referred to in this record is certainly the first observance of this practice. The accession of Emperor Fushimi occurred two days later on the 15th. It is most likely that the “secret mudrā and such matters” were repeated during the accession ceremony. The details are not clear, but the *Sokui kanjō in’myō yurai no koto* mentioned previously says,

According to reports, during the accession of the retired emperor Fushimi, on Kōan 11 (1288)3.15, Jūraku-in Dōgen (son of the *kanpaku* Nijō Yoshizane), minister to the empress, fooled the regent (Nijō Morotada, the *kanpaku*) and conferred (the *in’myō kanjō*) for the sake of the lord.

The *kanpaku* Nijō Morotada and his younger brother Dōgen 道玄, the Tendai *zasu*,²¹ appear to have promoted the *sokui kanjō* intensely.

²⁰ This must refer to the *Go-Sanjō-in go-sokui ki*.

²¹ Dōgen was the son of Nijō Yoshizane, the younger brother of Nijō Morotada, and head abbot (*zasu*) of the Tendai establishment on Mt. Hiei.

ABE (1989) introduces some historical documents which indicate possible connections between Emperor Go-Daigo and the *sokui kanjō*. The *Mon’yōki* 門葉記, *kan* 130 (in volume 12 of the collections of illustrations of the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*), says that Jidō 慈道, the protector-monk of the new emperor (Go-Daigo), conferred the “accession mudrā” (*sokui’in*) on the regent Konoe Michihira 近衛道平 in Bunpō 2 (1318).2.28. Also, according to the *Kannō ninen*

If this document is historically reliable, it means that the regents and the temple authorities took an active and central role in the first performance of *sokui kanjō* by an emperor.

Hanazono, the third emperor after Fushimi and belonging to the same Jimyō-in lineage, writes the following in his diary (*Hanazono tennō nikki* 花園天皇日記) for 1317.5.18:

The eighteenth, *mizunoto-mi*, clear. A visit from Zōki 増基 Sōjō, who conferred the mudrā for the *sokui kanjō*. I kept a pure abstinence especially during this period of seven days, in order to receive these mudrā.

Emperor Hanazono made meticulous preparations in order to receive the “mudrā for the *sokui kanjō*.” However, the accession ceremony for Emperor Hanazono was in Enkyō 1 (1308), so we cannot conclude that the *sokui kanjō* was performed for the accession ceremony. Bunpō 1 (1317), at the end of Hanazono’s reign, was the year in which the so-called *Bunpō no wadan* (Bunpō negotiations) took place in an attempt to solve the conflicting claims of the Go-Fukakusa and Kameyama imperial lineages. In the fourth month of this year both parties sent representatives to the Bakufu to negotiate the rules for the next accession and choice of the crown prince. When Emperor Hanazono heard of the arrival in Kyoto of the Bakufu agent, he thought that he was a messenger to report on the transfer of the throne (see KURODA 1965, p. 252). At this time of uncertainty when both factions believed that the other side would capitulate through the Bunpō negotiations, it is possible that Hanazono attempted to underscore the merit of his own faction and accentuate his right to the throne by receiving the *sokui kanjō*.

It is well known that Emperor Hanazono placed a high value on imperial virtue and had an interest in scholarship. He also attempted to learn more about *sokui kanjō*. Hanazono writes in his diary that on Gen-ō 2 (1320).1.21, after he had abdicated the throne, he inquired of Jigon 慈嚴 Sōjō concerning “the secret mudrā of the *sokui kanjō*.” At this time he was told about the existence of *Jichin Oshō musōki*, and Jigon explained more about it on the next day. Many examples of Buddhist monks who approached the emperor and told of the existence of *sokui kanjō* can be found from this period, and the imperial household also showed an interest. It is also significant

hinami-ki 観応二年日記 of the Daigo-ji monk Bōgen 房玄, Kitabatake Chikafusa told of the transmission by Bunkan of the “*in’myō* for ruling the four seas.”

that the *Musōki* was referred to at this time. It appears that the knowledge of *sokui kanjō* in this early period was indirectly based on the *Go Sanjō-in go-sokuiki* and the *Musōki*.

AKAMATSU (1957) points out the high probability that the *Musōki* was also read by Emperor Go-Daigo. According to ABE (1985a), the monk Monkan 文觀, who had close relations with Go-Daigo, wrote about the accession protocol in a postscript to his *Himitsu gentei kuketsu* 秘密源底口決 [Oral transmission of the innermost secrets] in 1338, and said that Amaterasu-ōmikami equals Dainichi Nyorai (Mahāvairocana) equals Konrin equals Nyoirin²² and so forth. The strong character of Emperor Go-Daigo is reflected in his political actions and also in matters of his religious faith; it is not difficult to imagine that he had a great interest in the *sokui kanjō*. In my personal opinion, however, we have no solid evidence to prove that Go-Daigo actually performed *sokui kanjō*.²³

The term *sokui kanjō* begins to appear with more frequency in documents from the period of the split between two imperial factions. Except for the fact that Emperor Fushimi (r. 1288–1298) received the *in'myō* transmission, however, there is no evidence to show that this practice was established, and we have no clear evidence concerning these matters even into the period of internal strife between the Northern and Southern dynasties (1336–1392). There are documents which show that ten years before the merging of the two factions with the accession of Emperor Go-Komatsu, the *sokui kanjō* was performed during the accession ceremony of Emperor Go-Komatsu of the northern faction on Eitoku 2 (1382).12.28. The *Sokui kanjō in'myō yurai no koto*, after referring to the times of Emperor Fushimi, says,

²² One of the manifestations of Kannon (Avalokiteśvara).

²³ KURODA (1980, p. 188) says that Emperor Go-Daigo “received the *jushoku kanjō* 受職灌頂 (a ritual for ‘conferring the rank’ of dharma-ruler, equal to that of a buddha), something for which there was no precedent by any previous emperor or retired emperor.” It is not clear what his source is for this claim, but the *Jinnō shōtōki* contains the following passage:

(Emperor Go-Daigo) was very interested in the Buddha-dharma and studied the Shingon tradition. At first he took the tonsure (i. e., became *hō-ō* 法皇) and later received qualification from the former Daisōjō Zenju 禅助. A case where an emperor receives *kanjō* can also be found in Tang China. . . . This occasion was a true conferring of rank (*jushoku*). I heard that thus his qualifications were established.

It is more likely that the term “qualifications” in this passage refers to Go-Daigo completing his studies in esoteric Buddhism and gaining approval for receiving *kanjō* later, rather than that he had completed the *jushoku* or *denpō kanjō*.

At the time of the accession of Go-Komatsu on Eitoku 2.12.18 [*sic*], the regent (Nijō Yoshimoto) conferred [the ceremony] on the infant lord (six years old at the time).

There are very few other documents concerning this event. There are some later documents, however, which support this account. First, the *Zoku shigusho* 続史愚抄 (1777–1798) says,

(Eitoku 2.12).28, *mizunoe-tora*, cloudy and clear. The emperor (six years old) had conferred on him the highest rites in the office of the Daijō Kanchō. . . . The *sokui kanjō* was conferred by the regent (Yoshimoto).

The *Zoku honchō tsugan* 続本朝通鑑 has a passage on “The secret transmission of Nijō”:

At the time of the accession of the infant lord, there was an oral transmission of secret matters. No one knew of this except the regent and his immediate family. . . . Since this time this single family transmission has been passed down to Yoshimoto. Other regents did not know of it. Therefore the four emperors Kōmyō (r. 1337–1348), Sukō (r. 1349–1351), Go-Kōgon (r. 1353–1371), and Go-En'yū (r. 1374–1382) had Yoshimoto as their teacher. On this occasion also, Yoshimoto, though he was of old age, conferred the transmission. The words which were transmitted are secret and no one has heard them.²⁴

Although it is difficult to accept all the details in this record, it serves as evidence that Nijō Yoshimoto did transmit the *in'myō*. Since Nijō Yoshimoto was, except for Emperor Kōmyō, regent at the time of the accession of the three northern dynasty emperors, there is some reason to believe that the latter half of this record is accurate. Emperor Kōmyō came to the throne in 1336, installed by Ashikaga Takauji in rebellion against Emperor Go-Daigo of the southern dynasty. The record shows that all of the remaining four emperors in the northern dynasty—Sukō, Go-Kōgon, Go-En'yū, and Go-Komatsu—received the *in'myō* transmission from Nijō Yoshimoto. The fact that this is a later document, and that it purports to relate secret transmissions of the Nijō family, casts some doubt on its

²⁴ The abbreviated part of the above passage tells that this transmission was passed on during the later Heian and early Kamakura periods by Fujiwara Motofusa, Kujō Kanezane, and Kujō Michi'ie. However, this section is an attempt to explain how the transmission was limited to the Nijō family after the Kujō and Ichijō families incurred the emperor's censure for the Hōji rebellion (1247). The entire passage thus reflects an attempt to highlight the idea that there was an actual transmission of the secret *mudrā* and that it was limited to the Nijō family.

reliability, but the *in'myō* transmission with regard to Emperor Go-Komatsu is certainly authentic. It is also quite possible that *sokui kanjō* was performed along with the conferring of the *in'myō* for the five emperors of the northern dynasty.²⁵

The emperor's *sokui kanjō* assumes the necessity of the *in'myō* transmission, and the Nijō family was responsible for performing the transmission. Nijō Morotada conferred it on Emperor Fushimi and Nijō Yoshimoto conferred it on Emperor Go-Komatsu; both were regents (*kanpaku* and *sesshō*). It is not clear whether or not this was an established role of the regent alone. In fact, however, at the time of accession ceremonies in the latter part of the medieval period, usually a member of the Nijō family was regent, and this may in turn have become the basis for claiming it as a secret transmission of the Nijō family.²⁶ In the *Sokui kanjō in'myō yurai no koto*, however, the line of transmission to Ichijō Kanera (1402–1481) is given as Nijō Yoshimoto→Ichijō Tsunetsugu→Ichijō Tsunesuke (Kanera's elder brother)→Ichijō Kanera. Kanera's son Ichijō Fuyura, who made copies of Kanera's records, is said to have received the transmission from Kanera. In addition, Ichijō Kanera's work *Tōkazuiyō* 桃華蕊葉²⁷ contains a section on "twelve of the family transmissions." The first entry is "on the *sokui kanjō in'myō*," and we can assume that in Kanera's time the Ichijō family also had such family transmissions. The Konoe family also has records of such transmissions in the modern period.²⁸

In short, it is better to conclude that the role of transmitting the *in'myō* was part of the responsibility of the current regent, rather than one which belonged to the Nijō family.

Though the documentary evidence is admittedly scarce, let us conclude that the first definite appearance of the *sokui kanjō* was at the accession of Emperor Fushimi near the end of the Kamakura period. It cannot be said for sure whether or not *sokui kanjō* was

²⁵ According to records kept by the *jike*, there were documents concerning *sokui kanjō* and the emperor belonging to Daikaku-ji. For the full citation, see KAMIKAWA 1989a, note 43, p. 135. These documents are discussed in ABE 1989, p. 143.

²⁶ The regents at the time of the emperor's accession after the time of Emperor Go-Komatsu were: Shōkō–Ichijō Tsunetsugu; Go-Tsuchimikado–Nijō Mochimichi; Go-Kashiwabara–Nijō Korefusa; Go-Nara–Nijō Korefusa; Ōgimachi–Konoe Haretsugu.

²⁷ Included in the *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, volume 20.

²⁸ ITŌ 1980 introduces some documents in the Konoe family library which mention *sokui kanjō* in the modern period.

performed consistently after this first time. We have the case of Emperor Hanazono, who received the *in'myō* transmission after his accession ceremony. As likely as not the *sokui kanjō* was performed only sporadically, then took hold via the practices of the northern dynasty emperors, and became an established custom at the time of Emperor Go-Komatsu's accession.²⁹

The following points can be made at this time.

First, the existence of the *sokui kanjō*, or at least the idea of *sokui kanjō*, can be seen from around the end of the Heian period among some of the intelligentsia and members of the aristocracy who had an interest in Buddhism.

Second, it was not until the latter part of the Kamakura period (Emperor Fushimi) that the emperor actually performed the *dhāraṇī* and secret *mudrā* during the accession ceremony. There is a good possibility that they were also performed by the emperors of the northern dynasty, but it was not until the time of Emperor Go-Komatsu, just before the re-unification of the southern and northern lines, that their performance became an established practice. In my opinion there are no documents which reflect indisputable historical fact outside of those mentioned above. The basically confidential nature of the accession ceremony and esoteric rituals undoubtedly contributed to inhibit the revelation of these matters in historical documents. However, it is the content and ritual form of the oral transmissions which are secret; if the rituals actually take place, it would not be improper for the event to be recorded. Emperor Hanazono, with his passion for knowledge, did confirm the content of the *sokui kanjō* and wrote about it in his diary. To put it another way, the fact that it is mentioned in very few documents, at least at the beginning of the medieval period, indicates that the event itself probably did not take place in cases other than the ones mentioned.

Third, as for the historical background from which the performance of the *sokui kanjō* appears: the fact that we find references to the *sokui kanjō* in connection with Emperor Go-Sanjō and Jien

²⁹ Itō refers to a document from 1414 as the source for this practice (1980, document #18). In addition, Hayashi Razan's *Shintō denju* 神道伝授 [Shinto transmissions] contains an entry "#75, on additional Shinto transmissions: the *sokui kanjō*." The entry refers to "secret records of the regent Nijō Yoshimoto" and adds that the *sokui kanjō* was performed during the accession of Emperor Go-Komatsu (see TAIRA 1972, pp. 47-8).

(during the rule of retired emperor Go-Toba) is of great significance with regard to each of their political eras, since it was exactly during this time that the medieval period is considered to have started, and it was a time of crisis for the imperial family. The later Kamakura and Nanbokuchō periods, where we find more definite references to *sokui kanjō*, is a time when the imperial line had split into two, and there was the possibility that it could split further into four or five lines. During this period the political power of the imperial family was at a state in which all the imperial authority rested in the retired emperor and was dependent on the mystical efficacy of religious vessels or symbols, such as the “three imperial regalia” of the sacred sword, mirror, and jewels (see KURODA 1965, p. 356).³⁰ It is best to understand the actual performance of the *sokui kanjō* as a means to ensure the power of imperial authority by emperors who had lost actual political power; this was done consciously and was intimately connected with the loss of the sacred sword in the sea during the battle of Dan-no-ura and the attempt to examine the contents of the “sacred seal” 神璽 (unlike the sword, reported to have been recovered after the battle).³¹

The Accession Protocol and Sokui Kanjō

There are many versions of accession protocol, but here we will use as our basis the *Shindai hiketsu* 神代秘決 (ITŌ 1980, documents 11 and 12), a text compiled during the 14th century (the period of the southern and northern dynasties) and considered “the definitive edition of accession protocol.” This is a very lengthy document, so I will summarize only the necessary points. Of interest here are the sections “On the Tō-ji Accession” (*Tō-ji gosokui-bon* 東寺御即位品) and “On the Tendai Accession” (*Tendai* 天台 *gosokui-bon*).

³⁰ During the accession ceremony, when the emperor advanced from the Koyasudono of the Daigokuden to the Takamikura, two attendants would accompany him carrying a sword and the imperial seal. The sword and seal were placed in back of the throne on which the emperor was seated. See WADA 1915 and *Gosokui shidai* 御即位次第 in ZOKU GUNSHO RUIJŪ, vol. 10.

³¹ Jien's work, as well as Hanazono's interest in the *Musōki*, was inspired by an interest in the actual contents of the box reported to contain the imperial seal. During the period of the northern and southern dynasties, the southern line retained the imperial seal. Strictly speaking, therefore, the proper accession ceremony could not be conducted for the emperors of the northern line, even at the time of Go-Komatsu's accession.

First, the section on the Tō-ji accession consists of the following:

1. Kūkai (774–835)³² combined the *Ḍākiṇī dhāraṇī* (*taten'myō* 吒天明) with the *mudrā* that he received in a transmission from Amaterasu into a single set of *dhāraṇī* and *mudrā* (*in'myō*).
2. Ever since the time of Jinmu the transmission had occurred from emperor to emperor, but since the time of (Fujiwara no) Kamatari the transmission was performed by the regent.
3. The *honzon* was Taten 吒天 (*Ḍākiṇī* 茶枳尼天).
4. Kamatari and Taten are incarnations of Amaterasu.
5. The “three *mudrā* and two *dhāraṇī*” (*san'in nimyō* 三印二明: the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* of the five-pronged pestle of Vajrasattva 金剛薩埵外五古印, the *mudrā* for ruling the four seas 四海領掌法, and the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* of wisdom 智拳) have been transmitted since the time of Kūkai.
6. The ritual process of “becoming ruler of the four seas” consists of pouring salt water from the four seas from five bottles (*gobyō*, symbolizing the five wisdoms of the buddha) on the head of the emperor as he is seated on the Takamikura.
7. A separate protocol is kept by the Hirosawa branch [of the Shingon school].

Next, the section on the Tendai accession is as follows:

1. The history of the origin (*engi*) of the accession protocol according to the tale of Emperor Mu (Boku-ō).
2. The procedure for the *mudrā* and the *dhāraṇī*.
3. Oral teachings concerning the transmission to the emperor by a high-ranked monk.

Among the varieties of accession protocols, the two outlined above are considered very representative. We are not concerned here to analyze in detail the content and expressions used in these accession protocols, but rather to inquire as to how the ritual forms of *sokui kanjō* were perceived within the context of the accession protocols. A document called “Accession Ordination of the Emperor” (*Tenshi sokui kanjō* 天子即位灌頂; see ITŌ 1980, document 13) includes a detailed list of the protocol for the performance of *sokui kanjō*. I would like to focus on the following certificate (*injin* 印信). It is quite long, but the entire text is as follows (numbers have been added for easier reference):

³² The founder of Shingon Buddhism; known by his posthumous title Kōbō Daishi.

Accession Ordination of the Emperor

- (1) First, the five types of mudrā 五種印 as transmitted, for each of the five types of sight.³³

The mudrā of the fist of wisdom;³⁴ the mudrā of the first sight, the sight of the physical eye.³⁵

For ruling the northern continent.

The mudrā of no-place and non-reaching;³⁶ the mudrā of the second sight, the divine sight. . . .

For ruling the western continent.

The stupa mudrā; the mudrā of the third sight, the sight of wisdom. . . .

For ruling the southern continent.

The mudrā of guidance; the mudrā of the fourth sight, the dharma-sight. . . .

For ruling the eastern continent.

The mudrā of the Buddha-eye; the mudrā of the fifth sight, the sight of a buddha. . . .



- (2) Next, conferring of the wisdom fist mudrā 智拳印

The dhāraṇī of Mahāvairocana of the vajra realm.

Dā (to have treasures) *ki* (to remove hindrances) *nī* (to attain prosperity).

Hasaratatoban.

The dhāraṇī of Mahāvairocana of the womb realm.

Dākiṇī (same as for the vajra realm).

Abira-un'ken.

³³ The five types of sight (*gogen* 五眼) refer to ordinary sight with the physical eye, divine sight, the sight of wisdom, dharma-sight, and the sight of a buddha.

³⁴ The mudrā formed by Mahāvairocana in the vajra realm (*hongōkai*).

³⁵ Translator's note: An illustration of the wisdom fist mudrā has been substituted for the detailed descriptions of the mudrās given in the text.

³⁶ The mudrā formed by Mahāvairocana in the womb realm (*taizōkai*).

- (3) Next, the mudrā for ruling the four seas .
 The outer mudrā of the five-pronged pestle.
 First Saikaidō [the road along the western sea] (from Awaji).
 Next, Tōsandō [the road along the eastern mountains].
 Next, Nankaidō [the road along the southern sea].
 Next, Tōkaidō [the road along the eastern sea].
 Next, Hokurikudō [the road along the northern coast].
 Next, Sanyōdō [the road along the southern slopes of the mountains].
 Next, San'indō [the road along the northern slopes of the mountains].
 These are called the mudrā of the seas.
- (4) The ten virtues:
 Three of the body: to avoid murder, stealing, and licentiousness.
 Four of the mouth: to avoid telling lies, idle talk, evil words, and double-talk.
 Three of the mind: to avoid greed, anger, and ignorance.
 Upholding the ten virtues, the rank of emperor is acquired.
- (5) The chapter on skillful means; the mudrā of the fist of wisdom; *hasaratatoban*.
 "Within the Buddha-lands of the ten directions, there is only the dharma of a single vehicle (*ekayāna*)." [T 9.8a17]
 The chapter on the practice of peace; the mudrā of no-place and non-reaching; *abira-un'ken*.
 "To perceive all dharmas as empty and in their real aspects." [T 9.37b12]
 The chapter on the life span (of the tathāgata); the mudrā of the stūpa; *Ken'gutarakiria*.
 "The words of the Buddha are true and not vacuous; like a physician he uses skillful means." [T 9.43c24-25]
 The chapter on the universal gateway;³⁷ the mudrā of guidance; A-AH-AM-AHK-A.
 "With the eye of compassion he views sentient beings; he is a sea of blessings, immeasurable." [T 9.58b1-2]
 When the emperor is enthroned and goes to the Daigokuden Takamikura, the regent confers on the emperor the mudrā and dhāraṇī listed above and also says:

³⁷ These chapters are, respectively, chapters 2, 14, 16, and 25 of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

“The regent, having responsibility to assist the emperor in his stately duties, is also responsible for crowning the son of heaven at the age of seven.”³⁸

The above information was transmitted by Mubon Gyōin 無品堯胤, a member of the imperial family.

Written down by the previous Tendai Zasu (Abbot), the office of Hōmu, previously Daisōjō Hōin Oshō Kōshō 公承.

This document is a private text of the *jike*, the temple families. It reveals the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* used in the *sokui kanjō* which were passed down from the previous Tendai Zasu Kōshō to the new Tendai Zasu Gyōin. The phrase “the regent confers on the emperor the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* listed above” shows that the Tendai accession protocol, unlike the *Tendai gosokui-bon* quoted above, gradually changed from having the transmission given by a high-ranking monk to having the transmission given by a regent.³⁹ First we should consider the religious meaning of the *sokui kanjō* within the context of accession protocol as it reflects *jike* ideology, by examining the content of the transmission protocols quoted above.

The certificate (*injin*) quoted above consists of five parts, and it appears that this was the sequence which was followed for conferring the transmission to the emperor. These five parts are 1) the five types of *mudrā*, 2) the *mudrā* of the wisdom fist, 3) the *mudrā* for ruling the four seas, 4) the ten positive precepts, and 5) the four essential passages (from the *Lotus Sūtra*).

1) The five types of *mudrā* are also called the “five-pronged pestle (or “limb”) *mudrā*” 五古(股)印.⁴⁰ The *mudrā* for ruling the four seas also contains the “outer” *mudrā* of the five-pronged pestle. In other words, these five *mudrā* incorporate rule over all the four continents (i. e., the world), beginning with the “northern” continent, and the *mudrā* for ruling over the four seas refers concretely to

³⁸ Translator’s note: The text is very ambiguous and could be interpreted in many ways. See KAMIKAWA 1989a, pp. 120–21 for the original text.

³⁹ This point is made by ITŌ 1980. The *in’myō* signify the transmission and conferring of lineage among the high-ranking monks of the Sanmon branch, and show that there was a transmission of *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* during accession ceremonies within the temples. The conferring of the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* to the emperor thus consisted of a transmission of a different sort; the main point here is that it was considered important that, ideally speaking, the emperor should go through a Buddhist ordination (*kanjō*).

⁴⁰ In Shingon Buddhism, *mudrā* which symbolize the five wisdoms and the five central buddhas.

the seven districts of Japan (Saikaidō and so forth). Therefore these five mudrā, as a fundamental expression of the *sokui kanjō*, symbolize rule over the “four seas.”⁴¹

2) The mudrā of the wisdom fist is the mudrā formed by Dainichi Nyorai (Mahāvairocana), the central Buddha of esoteric Buddhism. The dhāraṇī given here are *dākiṇī hasaratatoban* of the vajra realm, and *dākiṇī abira-un'ken* of the womb realm. The explanation of these dhāraṇī differs according to which text you rely on, but in general “hasaratatoban” is the dhāraṇī of Mahāvairocana in the vajra realm, and “abira-un'ken” is the dhāraṇī of Mahāvairocana in the womb realm. However, since the *honzon* (central deity) in this accession protocol is Dakini-ten (Dākiṇī), who is considered the “original ground (*honji*) of Amaterasu-ōmikami and an incarnation of Dainichi Nyorai (see ABE 1989), and given the fact that other historical documents related to *sokui kanjō* report the chanting of “dakini,”⁴² it is most accurate to refer to these dhāraṇī (*dākiṇī* plus the dhāraṇī of Dainichi Nyorai of both realms) as the *dākiṇī dhāraṇī*.

3) The mudrā for ruling the four seas refers to the four seas which surround Japan in the four directions, and the seven districts of Japan that are so surrounded (identified by the name of the main road which passes through them). The *Tō-ji gosokui-bon* calls for a sprinkling on the head with salt water from the four seas, but the mudrā concretely symbolize the seven districts, that is, the land of Japan.

In this way the complicated contents, secret mudrā, and dhāraṇī of 1) the five types of mudrā, 2) the mudrā of the fist of wisdom, and 3) the mudrā for ruling the four seas are summarized (in the *Tōji gosokui-bon* and other protocols) by the phrase “three mudrā and two dhāraṇī.”

4) The ten positive precepts (*jūzenkai*) refer to ten types of good deeds, in contrast to the ten precepts which prohibit wrong action, such as the precept not to take any life. In fact, the phrase *jūzen* itself came to refer to the emperor and his rank, implying that the emperor deserves the throne due to the merits accumulated through

⁴¹ The term “five kinds of mudrā” (*goshu-in*) is used in many accession protocols.

⁴² The documents referred to in note 27 contain the phrase “merely saying ‘dakini,’ the mudrā is transmitted.” More recent documents, e.g. the papers in the Konoe family collection kept at the Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensansho, contain the following: “*Sokui kanjō*: the mudrā of the fist of wisdom; Mahāvairocana of the vajra realm; the dhāraṇī ‘dakini hasaratatohan’ [orally transmitted].”

his performance of good deeds in previous lives (NAKAMURA 1981, p. 655c).

5) Finally, the four essential passages from the *Lotus Sūtra* (chapters 2, 14, 16, and 25), are said to represent the *kengyō* ("manifest" in contrast to "esoteric" teachings), thus providing the elements necessary to form a whole *sokui kanjō* which included both the esoteric and exoteric traditions (*ken-mitsu itchi*; see ABE 1989). However, it can be said that the *mudrā* for ruling the four seas and the *dākinī dhāraṇī* (*taten'myō*) are the fundamental content of the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* in the *sokui kanjō*.

Dakini-ten is believed to have attained buddhahood in this life (*sokushin jōbutsu*) through sexual union, and the monk Monkan, who had a close relationship with Emperor Go-Daigo, was known as one who performed this ritual. AMINO (1989, p. 184) claims that Go-Daigo himself performed "offerings to the holy deity" in an attempt to tap the fundamental power of sexuality for the sake of his imperial authority. Tales related to the accession process give similar indications. According to ABE (1984), tales concerning Boku-ō (King Mu) and *jidō setsuwa*,⁴³ which developed as stories connected to the *sokui kanjō*, include those in which abnormal sexual activity is used to reverse a disrupted imperial order and bring about a new sacred order. Also, Jien's *Musōki* speaks of an identity of: imperial sword = Dainichi of the vajra realm = the sacred king of the golden ring [i. e. ruler of this world] = the emperor, and imperial jewels = Dainichi of the womb realm = the buddha-eye as mother = the empress, and that the two become one through [sexual] union, legitimized through the concept of the *tōshōin* ("sword and sheath *mudrā*") of esoteric Buddhism. Jien also interpreted the use of the *mudrā* of the fist of wisdom by the new emperor during the accession ceremony as a manifestation of the "golden ring" of Dainichi Nyorai (as the ruler of this world).

By legitimizing and reinterpreting in Buddhist terms the transmission of imperial rank through conferral of the three sacred

⁴³ Tales concerning Boku-ō are centered around the Chinese King Mu of the Chou dynasty (r. 1001–946 B. C.), who is said to have received secret rites of imperial accession by receiving a transmission of the four essential chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra* from Śākyamuni in India. The *jūte* placed great weight on the significance of this secret rite in the transmission of Buddhism from India to China and Japan. *Jidō setsuwa* (tales of compassion to children) refer to tales involving the performance of "infant baptism" (*chigo kanjō*), beginning with those found in the *Taiheiki*.

imperial regalia and the announcement of this fact to heaven and earth in the accession ceremony, Jien introduced some hidden symbolism through his identification of: imperial sword = Dainichi = the sacred ruler = the emperor. Later, the interpretation in the *Musōki* was used as a premise to introduce the chanting of the Dakini-ten dhāraṇī as an expression to symbolically represent the birth of a new emperor; and thereby the sexual union may have been expressed by the identification of: jewels = Dainichi = the buddha-eye as mother = the empress. This could be understood as a medieval Buddhist ritual of sacred matrimony. As many accession protocols were created in the later part of the Kamakura period, it seems that the dhāraṇī of Dakini-ten were incorporated into the *sokui kanjō* for this very reason.

The mudrā for ruling the four seas must surely symbolize the attainment by the emperor of the rights of a ruler to “rule the country and benefit the people”; this is a symbolic ritual from the Buddhist tradition.

A complicated ideology which served to legitimize the emperor's rule was developed and continuously re-created by the rulers themselves. At least as far as the *sokui kanjō* is concerned, the process was created and built up by the ruling upper class on the basis of the *ken-mitsu* theory and transmitted surreptitiously from master to disciple through secret rituals and teachings.⁴⁴ In other words, the temple power faction, by emphasizing the ideology of the *sokui kanjō*, continuously protected the emperor's rank and legitimacy. In this sense the existence of a protocol with the ideology of an emperor who ruled over “the four seas” played an important role in maintaining the emperor's right to rule.

In another sense, the mudrā and dhāraṇī of the *sokui kanjō* played a role in advancing and making concrete the concept of the “mutual dependence of Imperial Law and Buddhist Law” that began at the

⁴⁴ According to TOMITA Masahiro (1988), there was a monk named Shūhō (1378–1441) of Kanchi-in who lived a typical life in the Muromachi period. Although one could say typical, he did inherit the advantages of being part of the powerful temple family of Kanchi-in, and thus was the recipient of many teachings and transmissions. Among these Shūhō received the transmission of the *sokui in'myō* at the age of fifty-five. Later, at the age of sixty-one or two, he copied down the contents of this transmission in a document called *Sokui daiji*. This is just one example, and even though there is no evidence of any direct connection with the actual performance of a *sokui kanjō*, it shows that the *sokui* mudrā and dhāraṇī were transmitted from master to disciple within the temples, and reflects the strong association between the emperor and the temples.

beginning of the medieval period, by taking it from an abstract theoretical level to that of having a concrete ritual which came to be accepted as something which should be performed at the time of an emperor's accession. The *jike* temple faction continuously emphasized in their verbal expression of the accession protocols that the mutual dependence of Imperial Law and Buddhist Law is realized by having the *sokui kanjō* accepted as a part of the emperor's accession rituals.

These kinds of accession protocols were supported not only by the *jike* people, but also, at the end of the Kamakura period, in writings by those who took a Shintoesque [*shingi*] approach while incorporating many *mikkyō*-type interpretations. As KUSHIDA (1941, 1964) has pointed out, documents kept at the Kanazawa Bunko include those which speak of a *shingi* 神祇 *kanjō*. According to Kushida, ceremonies called the *tenshi shōun* 天子紹運 *kanjō* (*kanjō* for the emperor to solicit good fortune) and the *rinnō* 輪王 *kanjō* (*kanjō* of the ring-king) were associated with the emperor's accession. The *tenshi shōun kanjō*, also called the *Tōke* 藤家 *kanjō* (Fujiwara family *kanjō*), had the bodhisattva Shinko-ō (Dakini-ten) = Amaterasu-ōmikami as the *honzon*, and Dainichi Nyorai as the *honchi*. The *rinnō-kanjō*, explained as "the ceremony to be performed at the Takami-kura," had as its purpose the conferral of the certificate of transmission (*injin*) at the time of imperial accession. The *mudrā* for ruling the four seas were considered central *mudrā* at the time of the emperor's accession, and these were also called *Dakini-ten-hō*. These "Shinto" *kanjō* which surfaced toward the end of the Kamakura period were used to legitimate the emperor's rule by erecting medieval Shinto ideas on a foundation of *mikkyō* Buddhist thought.

An important point here is that it was not until after Emperor Fushimi that we have a definite case of *sokui kanjō* actually being performed during the imperial accession ceremony. An examination of the records concerning ceremonies after this time, as seen in the records of the *jike* concerning accession protocol, shows that they have been greatly altered. Therefore I would like to examine the records of the actual performance of the *sokui kanjō* as recorded by the emperors themselves.

Of the accession protocols we have examined, the Tō-ji protocol had the transmission being done by the regent, while the Tendai protocol called for the transmission to be performed by a high-ranking Buddhist monk. Even the Tendai protocol, however, by the

middle of the medieval period was calling for the transmission to be performed by the regent. This aspect is a major difference between this ceremony and the more regular *denpō kanjō* and *kechien kanjō*. I will discuss the meaning of this transmission of *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* in the next section, and will now examine the actual *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* conferred on the emperor, and the procedure for the performance of the accession ceremony. According to the record left by Ichijō Kanera included in the *Sokui kanjō in'myō yurai no koto*, the ceremony proceeded as follows:

The *mudrā* was the *mudrā* (of the wisdom fist), the *dhāraṇī* was the *dhāraṇī* (of Dakini). At the time of accession, at the Gobō, having washed his hands, rinsed his mouth, and supplicated heaven, the regent conferred [the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*] on the emperor. The emperor formed the *mudrā* with his hands, and with his mouth chanted the *dhāraṇī* (to himself). Advancing along the hall he arrived at the throne of the Takamikura. There were no other matters besides these. As for matters concerning the *sokui kanjō*, although there are various rituals affiliated with the masters of the Sanmon branch of Tō-ji, our branch does not use them. One should be aware of the fact that they do not go beyond the single *mudrā* and the single *dhāraṇī*.

A definite difference between this explanation and the one given by the *jike* people is that the *jike* claimed that the contents of the *sokui kanjō* consisted of three *mudrā* and two *dhāraṇī*, while this report by the regent speaks of only one *mudrā* and one *dhāraṇī*. According to Ichijō Kanera, the "various rituals" of the "masters of the Sanmon branch of Tō-ji" are not utilized by the regents.

What, then, are the single *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* conferred by the regent? If we may deduce on the basis of the explanation of the three *mudrā* and two *dhāraṇī* in the *sokui kanjō* as explained by the *jike*, these most likely refer to the single *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* of part (2), i. e. the *mudrā* of the wisdom fist and the Dakini *dhāraṇī*. The *mudrā* of the wisdom fist is included among the five types of *mudrā* in the first section, and also can represent the power of ruling over the four seas. The *dhāraṇī* associated with the *mudrā* of the wisdom fist is the Dakini *dhāraṇī* of the vajra and womb realms. It is safe to conclude that the single *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* transmitted to the emperor by the regent were the *mudrā* of the wisdom fist and the Dakini *dhāraṇī*.⁴⁵

The *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* transmitted by the regent to the emperor

were thus only the wisdom fist mudrā and Dakini dhāraṇī; the procedure was very simple (compared to the accession protocol, with its complicated esoteric rites as handed down by the *jike*), consisting of very minimal steps. As an ideology it maintained the symbolic power of Dakini-ten and “rule over the four seas,” but the ritual process itself was compressed into a very simple form by the regent and emperor. The transmission of the mudrā and dhāraṇī was performed by the regent before the actual accession ceremony, and then the emperor, with the knowledge from this transmission, formed the wisdom fist mudrā and chanted the dhāraṇī of Dakini-ten during the accession ceremony. A note indicates that this was not chanted out loud, but “to himself.”

The *sokui kanjō* during the accession ceremony, as recorded by the priests, was supposedly performed at the top of the Takamikura. However, the *sokui kanjō* and the transmission of the mudrā and dhāraṇī were actually conducted separately, with the transmission taking place before the accession ceremony. According to Ichijō Kanera, the emperor reached the Takamikura while forming the mudrā and chanting the dhāraṇī. In sum, there was a process of *sokui kanjō* rituals, which ran from the moment the emperor progressed toward the Takamikura until he ascended the Takamikura, which was considered to be the first moment of his rule over “the hundred officials and myriads of people.”

The Ideology and Meaning of the Sokui Kanjō

It is interesting to note that the *sokui kanjō* that came to be performed in medieval Japan is very similar to an important element in the royal inauguration ceremonies in Christian countries in the West, i. e., the ceremony of anointing with oil. This anointing with oil consisted in having the Roman Pope pour sacred oil on the king during his inauguration—a ceremony of consecration.⁴⁶ Anointing

⁴⁵ The *Sokui kanjō in'myō yurai no koto* has been passed down continuously in the modern period. In a note added on Hōei 7 (1710).8.21, which records the content of the transmission, the mudrā was the wisdom fist mudrā of the vajra realm, and the dhāraṇī was the five-lettered dhāraṇī (*abira-un'ken*) of the womb realm. See also AMINO 1986. One may conclude that the dhāraṇī used was the Dakini *abira-un'ken* dhāraṇī.

⁴⁶ According to HOCART 1969, royal accession ceremonies throughout the world almost always involve anointment or pouring of oil, indicating a ceremony of consecration. *Sokui kanjō*, insofar as it involves pouring water on the head, corresponds to this kind of ceremony.

with oil came to have a critical political significance at the time of Pepin's coup d'état in 751. Pepin, as ruler of the Franks, transferred the royal lineage from the Merovingian family to the Carolingians, and he himself became king of the Franks. At this time, following the practice in the Old Testament, he had himself anointed with oil by a Catholic archbishop. It is said that the sacramental nature of this anointment was a Christian form of the ancient magico-religious Germanic rites celebrating the rank of kingship (see MITTEIS and LIEBERICH 1976). After this time the Pope came to hold the position of mediator between God and king during the accession ceremonies, thus maintaining a position superior to that of earthly kings during the medieval period in Europe. In other words, the religious and political activities of the king, whose legitimacy was based on the theory of the divine right of kings, stood in tension with the Pope's authority, who constantly (at least theoretically) had the authority to judge the king's legitimacy. This situation contributed to repeated conflicts over the right of investiture by the Church, and even to the excommunication of some kings (see ULLMANN 1966).⁴⁷

Whatever their similarities as ceremonies for imperial accession, however, the anointment with oil and the *sokui kanjō* have distinct differences in their appearance in history.

The *sokui kanjō* was the concrete manifestation of the idea of the mutual dependence of Imperial Law and Buddhist Law, an idea first proposed at the level of abstract theory and then manifested symbolically through the actual performance of esoteric Buddhist rites by the emperor himself during the accession ceremony. If we spoke of these esoteric rites during the accession ceremony in terms of the sanctification of the emperor on the Takamikura, and as being on the same level as a transmission of a Buddhist lineage in the sense of a *denpō kanjō* by the masters of the esoteric and exoteric Buddhist traditions, then we could say that the *sokui kanjō* had a meaning similar to that of the European kings' anointment with oil. In other words, we could say that the emperor in medieval Japan

⁴⁷ ULLMANN (1966) claims that the relationship between the Pope and King as established in the early medieval period already contained all the elements which resulted in the conflict between the two sides in the middle of the medieval period. MITTEIS and LIEBERICH (1976) claim that the anointing of oil by the Pope became an important element in the enthronement ceremonies after the middle of the ninth century, and that this nullified any meaning to having the king crown himself.

based his legitimation on a kind of Buddhist "divine right" of kings. However, the actual performance of *sokui kanjō* was significantly altered from the accession protocol proposed by the *jike*. The concept of the *sokui kanjō* was incorporated in a greatly condensed and simplified form, with the regent first receiving and then in turn conferring the transmission of the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*, and then the emperor himself performing these actions at the Takamikura on the day of the accession ceremony.

The master-disciple relationship (*shishi sōshō* 師資相承) formed through the performance of *denpō kanjō* within the temple society of medieval Japan involved the creation of lineages and factions which carried over into secular society.⁴⁸ However, the performance of *sokui kanjō* by the emperor did not involve the creation of a lineage relationship such as that created through *denpō kanjō*. In addition, the complicated accession protocol developed by the temple and shrine people was accepted and used by the court only after considerable simplification and change. What, then, were the ideological reasons for these modifications?

The conferral of the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* in the *sokui kanjō* was always actually performed, not by a Buddhist monk, but by a regent. The emperor received the transmission of one *mudrā* and one *dhāraṇī* from a *sesshō* or a *kanpaku*, and on the day of the accession ceremony, from the moment when he started to climb the Takamikura until he reached the top, the emperor formed the *mudrā* of the wisdom fist and chanted the Dakini *dhāraṇī*. Although the ceremony is called a *kanjō*, the activity is carried out by the emperor alone. If the emperor were to receive the transmission from a Buddhist monk, this would establish a master-disciple relationship, and this would involve incorporating the emperor into one of the factions in the temple social structure. The actual performance of *sokui kanjō*, however, assumes that it is the emperor who stands at the apex. Therefore the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* are not conferred on the emperor directly by Buddhist monks, and even the presence of monks was not allowed during the actual accession ceremony.

⁴⁸ I consider this master-disciple relationship to be the basic norm which characterized temple society in medieval Japan, i. e. the restricted and exclusive transmission of the dharma lineage served as the basis also for passing on responsibility for "secular" matters: material rights to the economic assets of the temple families such as buildings, property, religious teachings, *shōen*, land, and so forth, as well as the religious inheritance. I believe that the medieval temple system was formed in this way around the middle of the 11th century.

The religious ideology of the *sokui kanjō* consisted in the production of an emperor who stood at the apex of a Buddhist world order. As interpreted by Jien, the emperor was identified with Dainichi Nyorai (Mahāvairocana), and Dainichi Nyorai is incarnate in the emperor who ascends the Takamikura.⁴⁹ If so, then the emperor, as the incarnation of Dainichi Nyorai, would stand as the pre-eminent figure and ruler with regard to the temple factions, i. e. the disciples of the Buddha who belong to the dharma lineage of Dainichi Nyorai. The reason is clear: Dainichi Nyorai is the primal existent which transcends all the lineages of which the Buddhist disciples were a part.

Thus the emperor, as one who through the *sokui kanjō* has gone beyond secularity, attained sacrality, and become like one who is enlightened with regard to the entire universe, embodied an unassailable status which transcended temple and shrine authority. The performance of *sokui kanjō* involved an absorption of Dainichi Nyorai; the emperor did not become a servant of Śākyamuni or a partial embodiment of a Buddha⁵⁰—he was transformed into Dainichi Nyorai.

It is likely that the people in the temple / shrine power structure had an interest in supporting the legitimacy of the emperor, and did so by offering a Buddhist legitimization of the emperor through endorsing the *sokui kanjō*. On the other hand, they also sought to expand their influence by increasing the number of followers within their organization.⁵¹ The temple / shrine power structure was not able to establish a single absolute authority which would serve as a unifying factor, however, and during the medieval period the right to appoint the highest ranking clerics rested with the emperor (see KURODA 1975). Behind the ideology symbolized in the *sokui kanjō*

⁴⁹ Originally the Takamikura of the accession ceremony represented the peak of Takachiho 高千穂, on which the "grandson of the kami" descended, and the appearance of the emperor before the ministers was a ritual re-enactment of Ninigi's descent on Takachiho. See OKADA Seiji 1983.

⁵⁰ On the concept of the retired emperor as a servant of Śākyamuni or a partial embodiment of a Buddha, see TAIRA Masayuki 1987.

⁵¹ TAIRA (1987) points out that the temple / shrine power structure did not have an independent unified organization, and argued that the unification of the temple and shrine power structure through the political power of the *insei* (retired emperor system) reveals the weak political power of the temple and shrine power structure. This interpretation of the political weakness of the temples and shrines can also be supported from the perspective of the ideology revealed in the symbolism of the *sokui kanjō* ritual.

as an accession ritual lies the world of the temple/shrine power structures, which supported the emperor as ruler of the country, and thereby affirmed its own usefulness and *raison d'être*.

What, then, was the historical significance of having the regent confer the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*? The regent was responsible for assisting and counseling the emperor. By the end of the Kamakura period, however, the rank had lost much of its actual political status. Especially after the rule of retired emperor Go-Saga, when the role of the regent was significantly weakened, there was a movement to strengthen the position and justify its existence through emphasizing the relationship of the regent to the emperor. The tendency was concretely manifested in the new role of the regent as one who confers the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* on the emperor at the time of accession. We might surmise, then, that the regency was an active party in the process which culminated in the actual performance of the *sokui kanjō*.

However, the role of the regent is to assist the emperor, and he could not play the central role in the *sokui kanjō*. During the *sokui kanjō* it was the emperor alone who performed the rite, and the regent's role was limited to transmitting the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*.

The temple and shrine authorities, who savored social status particularly during the medieval period, granted the status of a manifestation of the highest Buddhist authority to the emperor through the accession ceremony. In contrast, court society's relationship to the emperor had already been defined through the mythological world of ancient times. This fact was reconfirmed during the medieval period, e. g. by Kujō Michiie, whose political authority was absorbed by the retired emperor Go-Saga, and who attempted to assert his role as a counselor to the emperor by quoting the phrase "the intention of the pledge made by Amaterasu-ōmikami (the ancestral kami of the emperors) to Amanokoyane-no-mikoto (the ancestral kami of the ministers)."⁵² Also, Dainichi Nyorai, who was believed to be incarnate in the emperor through the accession ceremony, was the *honji* ("original basis") of Amaterasu-ōmikami. In the latter part of the Kamakura period, ceremonies corresponding to the *sokui kanjō* were endorsed by Shintoesque (*shingi*) thinkers,

⁵² See OKADA 1986. Amanokoyane-no-mikoto was the ancestral kami of the Fujiwara family, who had received the pledge that he would be Amaterasu's counselor. The attempt to justify the relationship between the regent and the emperor had already been done previously by Jien in the *Gukanshō*. See ŌYAMA 1974.

and among court society it was never completely accepted that the emperor was fully Dainichi Nyorai, and they maintained their own traditional / mythological system. Therefore even if the emperor performed the *sokui kanjō*, this was understood as an appendage to the traditional concept of recognizing Amaterasu as the original source who, in terms of the logic of medieval esoteric Buddhism, was the manifestation of the more basic Dainichi Nyorai. One could go even further and say that the transmission of *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* by the regent was merely a part of the duties required of the assistant to the emperor, and that this includes no implications of the principle of master-disciple relationship that one has in the Buddhist context.

In other words the regent families, after experiencing an inexorable political decline in the second half of the Kamakura period, showed an active interest in the *sokui kanjō* and bought into the role of transmitting the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* because of an increasing need to accentuate their place in the country's political rule. Even so, their role was limited to a preliminary level, and was an attempt to stress their own role as an assistant to the emperor.

In short, through this subject of the *sokui kanjō* we can perceive the various tendencies of the three groups of emperor, temples and shrines, and the regents. The temple and shrine people used the logic of their Buddhist tradition, and the regents used the logic of the traditional / mythological system, each to stress their place and relationship to the emperor. Each emphasized their own role in the *sokui kanjō* as an accession ritual, both attempting to express the legitimacy and security of their own status. The emperor, however, retained the right to perform the *sokui kanjō* alone, and thus absorbed the tendencies of both groups, maintained his supremacy, and expressed his status as the ruler of the whole land and sea.⁵³

The status and relationship of the temples and shrine people, the regents, and the emperor are thus reflected in the accession protocols, transmission of *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*, and the *sokui kanjō*. The nature of the emperor's authority is manifested symbolically in the manner in which the emperor performed the *sokui kanjō*, that is, by himself.⁵⁴

⁵³ Of course, the emperor should be distinguished from the retired emperor, who was able to take the precepts and become a Buddhist monk.

⁵⁴ A full analysis of the *sokui kanjō* should include the role of the military families (*buke*), who did not have their own source of authority and yet were in fact the real rulers of the country. I hope to consider this aspect in the future. For details see KAMIKAWA 1989a, p. 138.

Conclusion

In this article I have examined the *sokui kanjō* performed during the Japanese emperor's accession ceremony as an example of a Buddhist element present in the accession rituals of the medieval period. A change of emperors was complete only after the performance of the accession rites, which included many rituals besides the accession ceremony. It is worth noting, however, that the structure of the accession rites underwent various changes throughout history.

The *daijōsai* was an important event under the *ritsuryō* system, and it continued to be of significance in the medieval period—so much so that when Emperor Chūkyō was unable to have the *daijōsai* performed due to the Jōkyū rebellion, he was called a “half-emperor” 半帝.⁵⁵ The *daijōsai*, however, practically ceased to be performed towards the end of the medieval period. Except for the performances of the *daijōsai* in Bunshō 1 (1466) for the accession of Go-Tsuchimikado, and in Jōkyō 4 (1687) for Emperor Higashiyama, until the revival of the *daijōsai* in Genbun 3 (1738) for Emperor Sakuramachi, the emperors during a period of more than 272 years are recognized as legitimate without the benefit of having gone through a performance of the *daijōsai*.

The *yasoshima matsuri* 八十嶋祭, a festival that has its origins in ancient times and was celebrated by the emperor under the *ritsuryō* system the year after the *daijōsai*, also was last celebrated at the beginning of the Kamakura period, around the time of the Jōkyū rebellion (OKADA 1970). According to Okada, the *yasoshima matsuri* has its origins in the fifth century A.D., and was celebrated so that the “spirits of the eight great continents” 大八洲之靈 would join with the new emperor, thus bestowing upon him religious status as ruler of the country. The extinction of this celebration at this time is significant: the *sokui kanjō* which appeared around that time in its place was also performed to legitimize rule over the country (“rule over the four seas”), based on the ideology of esoteric and exoteric Buddhism.

Even though the *daijōsai* and *niinamesai*⁵⁶ fell into disuse, along

⁵⁵ In fact the name “Chūkyō” is a posthumous title that wasn't conferred on this “emperor” until 1870.

⁵⁶ The *niinamesai* also fell into disuse at the same time as the *daijōsai*, being last performed in Kanshō 3 (1462) for Emperor Go-Hanazono.

with the *yasoshima matsuri*, the accession ceremony during the period of warring states was performed, though often delayed. However, in the midst of great changes in the accession rites, it is unlikely that the accession ceremony alone retained the same form and meaning it had in ancient times. As we have seen in this article, there was the addition of the *sokui kanjō*, an esoteric Buddhist ritual—a fact of great significance with regard to the place of the emperor in medieval Japan.

If, in fact, the emperor performed a Buddhist accession ritual in the midst of the traditional accession ceremony, this was an epochal event in the history of the emperor system, even if all Buddhist monks were carefully barred from attendance. By the introduction of an esoteric Buddhist ritual into the accession ceremony, the ceremony itself came to take on additional meaning. Presumably, along with the abandonment of the thoroughly secret ritual performance of the *daijōsai*, the secret ritual of esoteric Buddhism for the purpose of having the emperor attain the spiritual status of unity with the original source (i. e. Dainichi Nyorai = Amaterasu-ōmikami) was added to the accession ceremony. This ceremony was based on the idea that it was performed in order to make public—announce to the “hundred ministers and myriads of people”—the fact of the emperor’s accession. In other words, esoteric and exoteric Buddhism was an important structural element in the authority of the medieval emperor, and as long as the emperor could attain this religious status through the performance of the *sokui kanjō* during the accession ceremony, there was no longer any need for performing the *daijōsai*.

How to interpret the meaning of *sokui kanjō* in modern times is a topic for further study. The *sokui kanjō* was performed until the end of the Tokugawa period, with the last performance in Kōka 4 (1847) during the accession ceremony of Emperor Kōmei. At that time, however, it was objected to, and this practice, along with all other Buddhist elements, was completely purged from the accession rites performed for the next emperor, Meiji (see TAKAGI 1987).

From the perspective of modern ideas governing the relationship between religion and the state, it may be difficult to imagine why a Buddhist ritual was incorporated into the imperial accession ceremony. This may also be one reason why not much is known about the *sokui kanjō*, even among scholars. However, just as the accession ceremony was “reformed” in the Meiji period by adding new

contents through the process of creating the modern imperial system (see INOUE 1986), so in the medieval period a new authority was born on the basis of mutual relationships between religion, national systems, and social structures, a situation that could not be adequately controlled by ancient institutions. It was this situation which came to be expressed symbolically through the ritual performance of *sokui kanjō* in the accession ceremony.

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