

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