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The Dragon and the Ritual Master: Seiryō Gongen during the Times of the Daigoji Monk Manzei (1378–1435)

Enshrined at Daigoji 醍醐寺 temple—one of the most important centers of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism—is the female tutelary deity Seiryō (or Seiryū) Gongen 清瀧権現. Medieval texts depict her as a draconic goddess, usually the third daughter of the dragon king, Shakara (Sk. Sāgara) 娑伽羅龍王. Traditions say that she physically traveled to Japan with Kūkai 空海 (774–835), and that her cult became particularly prominent at Daigoji after the temple was established by the Shingon monk Shōbō 聖宝 (835–909).

From the eleventh century to the middle ages, Seiryō Gongen appeared mostly within the context of rainmaking rituals. Such practices at Daigoji eventually fell out of favor during the late Kamakura period, but her cult did not lose its popularity. In fact, her name is frequently referenced in one major Muromachi source for the history of the Shingon school, the diary of the Sanbōin 三宝院 monk Manzei 満済 (also Mansai, 1378–1435).[1] As the abbot of Daigoji, Manzei conducted various rituals at the Seiryō shrines of Daigoji temple, such as sutra recitations, offerings, doctrinal discussions (*dangi* 談義), and even Nō performances. He also was a central figure at the court of the Ashikaga shoguns—especially Yoshimitsu 義満 (1358–1408)—and he played a crucial role in supporting their regime (Mori 2004).

This article will analyze Manzei's Seiryō's rituals and reposition them within the historical context of this goddess's cult. After a presentation of Manzei's activities, a return to the origins of the Seiryō worship will show the cult's stability and evolution during Japan's less-understood late middle ages. I will demonstrate how Manzei's rituals—although they followed traditional patterns—also indicated a gradual shift in the goddess's role inside the Daigoji temple. This analysis will then allow for a discussion of the category of guardian deities in premodern Japan, as well as shed new light on the cult's developments during the Edo period and beyond.

1. For a complete edition see: Kyōto teikoku daigaku (ed.), 1917–1920.

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Manzei and the Offerings to Seiryō

A son of the courtier Fujiwara Morofuyu 藤原師冬, Manzei was a member of the high aristocracy at the capital. At the age of six, he became the adopted son of the shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and entered Sanbōin, the most influential sub-temple inside Daigoji at the time.

His origins and his proximity with the political power of the time allowed him to become the chief of the Sanbōin lineage in 1396, at the unusually young age of 18. This nomination was followed by others during the same year: first to the rank of superior (*zasu* 座主) of the Daigoji temple itself and then to first superior (*chōja* 長者) of the Tōji temple. Manzei was thus the de facto leader of the Shingon school in Kyōto even before his twentieth birthday.

This unusual career, which gave him an important role in both in the monastic and political spheres, can be explained mostly by his personal links to the shogunate. Manzei kept his influence during the reigns of Yoshimitsu's successors, most of all with Yoshimochi 足利義持 (1386–1428) and Yoshinori 足利義教 (1394–1441), to whom he served as a protector monk (*gojisō* 護持僧). He position was such that he was able to impact crucial decisions. For example, when Yoshimochi died, in 1428, without an heir, he was instrumental in choosing the next shōgun—Yoshinori—from the four brothers of Yoshimochi who had become monks (Conlan 2011: 188–89).

Manzei's work itself is little known, and only his diary, called the *Manzei jugō nikki* 満済准后日記, has garnered academic attention. It is in this source that we find several references to Seiryō rituals. The very first entry of this text describes the events of the first day of the first month of 1411 (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1:1):

> First day. Water Yin, boar.[2] Clear weather. The seated offering rituals to the relics (*dato* 駄都) and Aizen were conducted as usual. After that, we accomplished the initial statement of purpose (*kaibyaku* 開白) of the offering to Kangiten 歓喜天,[3] and also performed the Dhāraṇī to Seiryō 清瀧陀羅尼 as well as the Samadhi of the *Rishukyō* (*Rishu zanmai* 理趣三昧).[4]

This description of a usual day for the superior of the Daigoji temple mentions several rituals, one of them involving Seiryō. Manzei does not provide precise

2. In his journal, Manzei uses the Chinese sexagenary cycle (*jikkan jūnishi* 十干十二支) to determine auspicious days. This was very common in premodern Japan.
3. This deity, a dual bodied incarnation of the elephant god Vināyaka, was quite important at Daigoji. For example, it can be found as a main deity of enthronement rituals designed at the Jizōin, one of its sub-temples. On this topic, see Matsumoto 2005: 62–69.
4. Reading and chants of the *Rishukyō* 理趣経.

descriptions of ritual procedures mentioned in his diary, so this source alone cannot be used to determine what precisely happened during such readings of esoteric incantations to the goddess. However, the entry of the first day of the year 1413 does give us further details (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1:7–8)[5]:

> For the seasonal offering (*sekku* 節供) performed in the temple (Sanbōin), everything was the same as the previous years. In the late night (*goya* 後夜)[6], seated offerings rituals to Aizen and the relics were followed by the initial statement of purpose (*kaibyaku*) of the offerings to [Kangi]ten. After that came the Samadhi of the *Rishukyō* and the Assembly to Seiryō.

The text then describes the small seasonal offerings (*shō sekku* 小節供), in the afternoon, and the *Homa* (goma 護摩, tantric fire rituals) to the Wisdom King Fudō, at around 8pm. The entry ends by mentioning the participants: six assistants to the officiant (*bansō* 伴僧), and two servants (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1:8). Such numbers tell us that this was a fairly large-scale ceremony.

According to liturgical calendars of Daigoji, the seasonal offerings were in fact performed each year, and they did include, among other things, offerings of lectures to Seiryō (Tsuchiya 2001: 80). However, the *Seiryō-kō* in Manzei's diary did not only happen on the first day of the month. A ritual of the same name appears in entries for the first few days of the other months of the year scattered throughout Manzei's journal.[7]

This is confirmed by the *Daigoji shin'yōroku* 醍醐寺新要録, a text compiled by the Daigoji monk Gien 義演 (1558–1626) in 1608 from various sources.[8] Although he does not directly use the terms dhāraṇī or assemblies, Gien describes, in his chapter on the Kami-Daigo shrine, lectures of sūtras for the goddess on the first day of the year, after the Samadhi of the *Rishukyō* (*Daigoji shin'yōroku*, *jō*: 146). He also mentions similar rituals for other parts of the year, especially during the seasonal offerings of the first four days of the fourth month, with the "Eight assemblies to Seiryō" (*Seiryō hakkō* 清瀧八講) (*Daigoji shin'yōroku*, *jō*: 142).[9]

A description of a Seiryō-kō can be found in Manzei's diary for the third day of the fourth month of 1411 (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1: 24). This was probably the same ritual. However, Manzei also uses this term alternatively with Seiryō Dhāraṇī

5. There was a solar eclipse that day, so the ceremonies were a little disturbed.
6. From 2:00 to 6:00 am.
7. For example, the second day of the third month of 1411. See *Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 19.
8. For an edition of this text, in two volumes, see Daigoji bunkazai kenkyūjo (ed.), 1991.
9. These eight assemblies were in fact lectures of the Lotus Sūtra (*Hokke hakkō* 法華八講), which had been conducted at both Seiryō shrines since the late 11th century. See Trenson 2016: 359.

when he mentions similar practices conducted during other months.[10] This means that such assemblies were lectures that were performed either during the seasonal offerings of the first and fourth month of the year, or probably smaller scale ceremonies at the beginning of almost each month.

Another regular ritual to Seiryō seen in Manzei's diary is the *Seiryō honji-ku* 清瀧本地供—the offerings to the original buddhas of the goddess—which happened in the middle of certain months. This was the case on the 17th of the first month of 1411, or the same day of the 12th month of 1413 (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 4 and 612). This practice was deeply linked to the origins of the goddess, which was interpreted—as we will see—as an incarnation of two very specific buddhas.[11]

The Origins of the Seiryō Cult

Such ceremonies were clearly traditional practices at Daigoji, conducted by the abbot of the temple, and they are both mentioned in the ritual calendar of the Kami-Daigo Seiryō-gū in the *Daigoji shin'yōroku* (See *Daigoji shin'yōroku*, *jō*: 148).[12] However, this does not mean that Seiryō, as a deity always had the same signification throughout the whole Middle Ages. In fact, a return to her origins will allow us to better understand her position in Manzei's ritual world.

As mentioned above, Seiryō is presented as a dragon goddess who traveled from China with Kūkai and decided to live at Mt. Kasatori, where Daigoji would be founded a few decades later. One of the earliest accounts of her origins can be found in the *Daigoji engi* 醍醐寺縁起, a text whose earliest extant copy was made in 1299, but is probably slightly earlier.[13] Here, we learn that she was a god (*kami* 神) who appeared in front of Shōbō, and told him that she was a dragon, the daughter of King

10. The fact that *Seiryō-kō* and Seiryō *dhāraṇī* were almost synonyms in this context can be seen in the entries of the first three days of the third month of 1411. For the first day, Manzei says that he conducted *Seiryō dhāraṇī*. However, in the next two entries, he adds that he performed *Seiryō-kō*, "like the day before." See *Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 19.
11. Gien describes this ritual as offerings to Jundei and Nyoirin Kannon. *Daigoji shin'yōroku*, *jō*, 148.
12. Gien provides older documents (at least for the assemblies) which suggest that such practices existed at least from the middle ages, if not the late Heian period.
13. Fremerman (2008: 51) mentions a manuscript dating back to 937, but, given the contents of the text, this does not seem plausible. While the text has most certainly undergone several transformations over time, and some parts may date back to the early years of the temple, Tsuda Tetsuei has shown that the actual *Daigoji engi*—especially the parts about Seiryō Gongen—was probably completed during the second half of the thirteenth century (see Tsuda 1990: 141–57).

Sāgara. She came from Qianglongsi temple 青龍寺 (J. Seiryūji) in China, the same temple at which Kūkai's master, Huiguo 惠果 (746–805), resided. As such, she is thought to have followed Kūkai to Japan, wishing to receive the samaya precepts 三昧耶戒 from him. Then, guided by the words of an old man (*rōō* 老翁), she decided to live on Mt. Kasatori. She adds that while her name was Seiryū 青龍, meaning a blue dragon in China, it was changed to Seiryō 清瀧, meaning a clear waterfall "due to the water" (*Daigoji engi*: 247b–248a). This means that the water radical was simply added to the characters of Qianlongsi—a fact which could hint at an influence of the location of Daigoji at the east of the capital, a direction which also happened to be associated with the god Qianlong 青龍 (J. Seiryū) in Chinese cosmology.[14]

Apart from these legends, the earliest historical trace of a cult to Seiryō Gongen at Daigoji dates probably from the late 11th century. At that time, two shrines were founded: Kami-Daigo (1089), where she is manifested as a megalith,[15] and Shimo-Daigo (1097). Both temples were built during the life of the monk Shōkaku 勝覚 (1057–1129), who is said to have seen the goddess in a dream prior to their construction (Itō 2012: 173). Sources state that a few decades later, Shōkaku made an official request for her to obtain an official rank as a deity (*shin'i* 神位). His request states that the goddess Seiryō 清瀧神 was venerated from the time of Emperor Daigo 醍醐 (897–930),[16] and that she was also invoked in the rain rituals by the famous "rainmaker" monk Ningai 仁海 (951–1046).[17]

Seiryō as a Dragon God and Rainmaking Goddess

The first major question in the history of the Seiryō cult is her nature as a dragon. Was this aspect always present, or was it a later addition? While this issue has

14. See Trenson 2016: 349. This book is the main source for the history of Seiryō worship, especially its early form in the context of rain rituals. For a presentation of its contents, see Rappo 2016: 110–116.
15. This interpretation of the megalith (*daibanjaku* 大盤石) found at Kami-Daigo as a manifestation of Seiryō dates probably from the late 11th century. See Tsuda 1990: 63. Tsuda's view is based on Akamatsu 1966: 437–481.
16. During the middle ages, this period was considered as some sort of golden age of the court. Emperor Go-Daigo's Kenmu regime attempted to return to it. See Rappo 2017b: 198–199.
17. Steven Trenson considers such claims, and especially the official rank, as improbable, or at least impossible to verify in extant sources, and locates the emergence—or the rise to prominence—of Seiryō's cult to the time of Shōkaku. See Trenson 2016: 348–49. On Ningai and rainmaking in general, see, in English, Ruppert 2002: 143–74. Also see Trenson 2016: 125–30.

been debated, this element can probably be traced to the founding of the Seiryō-gū 清瀧宮.[18] This is crucial, because—due to the fundamental nature of dragons in East Asian Buddhism[19]—it shows that she was linked to the domain of water, and especially to rain. In fact, the first document clearly stating her nature as a dragon is the record of a rainmaking ritual conducted by Shōkaku at the Shinsen'en 神泉苑 pond of the Imperial Palace in 1117, where she is described as a daughter of the dragon king Sāgara (Trenson 2016: 349–351, 353).

Seiryō's association with the Shinsen'en, referenced in many documents from Daigoji, also allowed scholars to identify her with the famous dragon king Zennyo 善如龍王.[20] This is particularly apparent in a short text written by the Muromachi period monk In'yū 印融 (1435–1519), who states that one of her iconographical designs takes the form of Zennyo—a male noble bearing many attributes of dragons (*Seiryō onkoto, shikuketsu* 清瀧御事　私口決; see Trenson 2016: 343).

Medieval texts, such as the *Suramu Seiryō* スラム清瀧 thus affirm that she was, like Zennyo in most sources, first a dragon residing in the Anavatapta pond 無熱池 in India, who came to the Shinsen'en during rain rituals performed by Kūkai himself.[21] This naturally links her to the rainmaking rituals of another important center of such practices: Mt. Murō 室生山—where Zennyo is often said to reside (see Fowler 2005; Trenson 2016: 406–10). Such associations are largely discussed in the *Daigoji shin'yōroku*. This shows that Seiryō's nature as a dragon largely defined her perception by monks, even at the beginning of the Edo period.

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18. Yabu Motoaki states that the rainmaking rituals at Daigoji were first conducted at the Shakadō 釈迦堂, and were moved to the Seiryō-gū in the twelfth century. This leads him to say that the draconic aspects of Seiryō appeared at the time. See Yabu 2002. Trenson (2016: 351) disagrees: citing the study of this subject by Tsuda Tetsuei, he shows that this was probably already present at the time of the foundation of the Seiryō shrines at Daigoji.
19. On the symbolism of dragons in China and Japan, see De Visser 1913; Faure 2015b: 184–88.
20. The link between Seiryō and the Shinsen'en is frequently described in medieval texts. Tsūkai's 通海 (1234–1305) *Seiryō gongen kōshiki* (清瀧権現講式), a text written in 1297, says that the water from Daigoji (*Daigo-sui* 醍醐水) descends from Mt. Kasatori to the Shinsen'en, where Zennyo resides. Cited by Trenson 2016: 343.
21. Text preserved at Shinpukuji; see Trenson 2016: 341–42. On Zennyo and the Shinsen'en, see the *Seiryō gongen daiji* (pp. 35–36). An interesting story of Kūkai fighting a ritual war against Shubin also mentions the arrival of Zennyo. See Ruppert 2002: 143–74. In his book, Steven Trenson (2016: 214) also shows that the dragon god of Anavatapta was also the main object of worship 本尊 of the *Offering to Varuṇa* (*Suiten-ku* 水天供), the ritual that had replaced earlier rainmaking practices, including those involving Seiryō, at least indirectly.

Gien cites other documents which associate Seiryō with a major figure of medieval Japanese Buddhism, namely, the dragon girl of the *Lotus Sūtra*. In the Devadatta chapter, she is described as having attained enlightenment, despite her status as a woman and a beast (*ryūnyo jōbutsu* 竜女成仏).[22] This association is apparent through the readings of the *Lotus sūtra*, which had been taking place at the Seiryō-gū (Trenson 2016: 384; *Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 443).

However, most sources do not identify her directly with the dragon girl. First, Gien mentions an ancient chronicle (*koki* 古記) describing an oracle 約託 from 901 (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 89). The goddess here states that she is the third daughter of the dragon king Sāgara, who came from China to Japan. He also cites a very interesting oracle given by the deity of Itsukushima—another place strongly linked to dragons.[23] Here, Itskushima myōjin 厳島明神 says that she is the first daughter of Sāgara, while the second is the dragon girl from the *Lotus Sutra*, and the third resides at Daigosan 醍醐山 (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 89). A similar story appears in a text written in 1280, the *Byakuhōshō* 百宝抄, which describes events from the twelfth century. This suggests that the symbolic association of Seiryō with dragon kings and the dragon girl was likely established by that time (Trenson 2016: 354).

According to various sources, Seiryō was probably perceived as a dragon deity from the very beginning of her cult at Daigoji. As her name, which means "pure waterfall" (or "pure stream)" suggests, Seiryō was thus a water—or perhaps even rain—deity. This aspect was accentuated in later texts, where she is associated with various mythological and ritual figures, such as the dragon girl of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and probably later, the dragon king Zennyo and the goddess of Itsukushima shrine.[24]

While we will return later to the problem of her status in the religious landscape, we can already observe that by being both a "kami" in certain (probably early) texts, and a dragon, Seiryō's very nature tends to show how blurred and shifting divine categories were in medieval Japan.

The Emergence of Seiryō Gongen

In fact, while she was most certainly perceived as a dragon even at Daigoji during the early Edo period, Seiryō is generally identified as a "provisional manifestation" (*gongen* 権現). This term is used to describe deities that are temporary emanations of major figures of the Buddhist pantheon, such as buddhas, bodhisattvas, or wisdom kings (*myōō* 明王). In the case of Seiryō, medieval texts depict her as a manifestation of both Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪観音 and Jundei Kannon 准胝観音.

22. On the dragon girl, see Abé 2015: 27–70.
23. On Itsukushima myōjin, see Faure 2015b: 181–84.
24. This also shows that she shared some symbolic attributes with the rain goddess Benzaiten.

Kannon was in fact one of the most important deities of Daigoji. According to the *Daigoji engi*, when the temple was first founded by Shōbō, he had been guided to the spot that would become Kami-Daigo by the guardian god of Mt. Kasatori, Yokoo daimyōjin 横尾大明神. After that, his first action was to make images of the two Kannon, and then build a hall for them (*Daigoji engi*: 246).

This definition of the dragon goddess Seiryō as a manifestation of two different variations of Kannon was established within a few decades of the time of the founding of two Seiryō-gū. A text called the *Go-sengū no koto Seiryō takusen no koto* 御遷宮之事清瀧託宣事, cited by Gien in his *Daigoji shin'yōroku*, relates a story involving the monk Shōkaku and his father, the minister of the left (*sadaijin* 左大臣) Minamoto no Toshifusa 源俊房 (1035–1121) to explain the founding of Seiryō-gū at Kami-Daigo. According to the text, in 1088, Shōkaku was ill, and was staying at Daigoji. When his father came to see him, the deity Seiryō started speaking through his mouth. She said that she was the manifestation (*suijaku* 垂迹) of both Jundei and Nyoirin Kannon. This event allegedly led to the construction of her shrine at the top of the mountain (Original text in Tsuda 1992: 79; see Trenson 2016: 361). Tsuda Tetsuei locates the redaction of this oracle to the late eleventh century, and thus dates the association of Seiryō with Kannon to this period (Tsuda 1992: 62–63). Steven Trenson (2016: 362–63) agrees, adding that theories attributed to the monk Shinkai 真海 (1079–1149), an important figure of Daigoji, already mention her status as a *gongen*, in the sense that she is a (normally provisionary) manifestation (*suijaku*) of the two bodhisattvas.

Seiryō's designation as a *gongen* almost from the outset is an interesting aspect of her nature as a deity, as it contrasts with other similar figures. This leads us to the problem of the status of such figures in the medieval religious landscape. In his recent book on the "pantheon," Bernard Faure considers this category as being related to the "myōjin," and close to "kami."[25] In fact, the main difference between *gongen* and *kami*, who can also be manifestations of buddhas or bodhisattvas, is that they are considered as indigenous deities. The most famous gongen of Japan are probably the three deities of the Kumano shrines, Kumano sansho *gongen* 熊野三所権現. According to some legends, these three deities came from India and settled at

25. See his chart, "The Esoteric Pantheon", at the beginning of Faure 2015b. Although I can agree with the methodological reflection behind the use of this term, which is based on the work of Marcel Detienne, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and other specialists of the gods and religions in Ancient Greece and Rome, I prefer to avoid speaking of a "pantheon" in medieval Japan. In fact, the idea of "pantheon" gives the impression that the monks were operating under a somewhat fixed or structured worldview. While structures did indeed exist, everything was—as Bernard Faure brilliantly puts it—far too "fluid" to be defined by this particular term.

Kumano where they became promoters of Buddhism, as well as protectors of the people of Japan.[26]

Another well-known *gongen* is Zaō, the main deity of Mt. Kinpu in Yoshino, a major center of Shugendō from the Middle Ages forward. In early texts, and even during the Middle Ages, Zaō is referred to as either a bodhisattva or as the "adamantine Zaō" (Kongō Zaō 金剛蔵王).[27] The name Zaō gongen first occurs in a document dated from 1007 (Fujioka 2004: 237). However, in eleventh century texts, such as the Fusō ryakki 扶桑略記[28] and the Dainihonkoku hokke genki 大日本国法華験記 (See Dykstra 1986: 60), Zaō is still described as a bodhisattva. In the fourteenth century text Kinpusen himitsuden 金峯秘密伝, compiled by the Shingon monk Monkan 文観 (1278–1357), Zaō is never directly called Zaō gongen.[29] This name seems to have been popularized later with the rise of Shugendō.[30]

The fact that Monkan, who was very close to Daigoji, did not directly call Zaō a *gongen* also provides an interesting contrast with Seiryō. Although the two deities are grouped in the same category by modern studies, medieval monks of Daigoji seemed to perceive subtle nuances in their origin and status inside the doctrinal framework of their school. However, this does not mean that Zaō had not previously been considered as an emanation of a Buddhist deity in such circles. In fact, Monkan, who mostly uses earlier sources in this text, mentions the traditional definition of Zaō as a manifestation of the three buddhas Amitabha, Śākyamuni and Maitreya representing the present, the past and the future (*Kinpusen himitsuden*: 14b).

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26. On Kumano Gongen, see Moerman 2005. On the concept of *gongen*, see Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., 2003: 29.
27. References to the bodhisattva Zaō living at Kinpusen can be found in a Chinese source, the *Shishi liutie* 釋氏六帖 (also called *Yishu liutie* 義楚六帖), a Buddhist encyclopaedia written between 907 and 960, in its chapter on Japan (p. 433a05). This passage is quoted by numerous Japanese authors; see for example, Fujioka 2004: 680. The name Kongō Zaō could derive from the Sanskrit *vajragarbha* (Kongō zō 金剛蔵), which appears in various texts of the East Asian Buddhist canon. A bodhisattva named Vajragharba can be seen in esoteric texts, such as the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (*Dari jing*, p. 7 a29) and its commentary *Darijing shu* (p. 682 a2–3) by Yixing 一行 (683–727). For sources on Zaō's origins, see Renondeau 1965: 46. On the deity itself, see Suzuki 2011: 141–68.
28. Note of the year 941 (in Kuroita Katsumi (ed.) 1999: 220). Suzuki 2011: 143–44.
29. Monkan always writes Kongō Zaō 金剛蔵王, except once when he uses the expression of "Zaō provisional manifestation (*gongen*) of the Taizō[kai]". See the edition in Shudō 2000: 16a.
30. On the fact that the name Zaō gongen was uncommon during the Heian period, see Shudō 2004: 34.

While Zaō was not always referred to as a *gongen* (Seiryō herself is not systematically considered a *gongen* in medieval texts), most stories about him demonstrate another similarity with the dragon goddess, namely, a foreign origin—in this case Chinese or Indian. This element appears in a fairly early text called the *Ribuōki* 吏部王記, the journal of Prince Shigeaki 重明親王 (906–954), the fourth son of Emperor Daigo. In a note dated from 932, the prince quotes the Daigoji monk Jōsū 貞崇 (866–944) saying that the Bodhisattva Zaō used to live in a place called Jinfengshan (J. Kinpusen) in China, but that the entire mountain flew to Japan, relocating there with him (in Shudō 2004: 38).

The foreign or imported nature of these figures is one of the two patterns found in the gods officiating as guardians of Buddhist—or in some cases Shugendō—religious sites, called *gohō zenshin* 護法善神, "benevolent gods protecting the Dharma" (see Yoshida 2006: 198–220). Some were local, telluric deities, who decided to protect Buddhism and give their benediction to some new temple. Their assimilation, in a process that Kadoya Atsushi considers to be an extension of the god's desire to be released from their form of existence (known in Japanese as *shinshin ridatsu setsu* 神身離脱説) underlines the integration of a different religious space into the Buddhist worldview.[31] However, while the imported gods—which include Seiryō and Zaō, but also Shinra myōjin 新羅明神—share a similar role, they do not follow the same narrative. They were brought from the continent, just like Buddhism itself, to protect it in Japan (Kadoya 2010: 278).

These two groups of deities (the local gods and the imported ones) should not be seen as antithetic. In fact, some institutions, such as Hie shrine, had both: the two Hie Myōjin 比叡明神 as telluric, autochthonous deities, and Sekizan Myōjin 赤山明神 as an imported god. However, figures such as Seiryō gongen, Shinra Myōjin, and at least the medieval incarnations of Zaō can be considered as products of the religious landscape created by the assimilation of the kami with the buddhas (*shinbutsu shūg*ō 神仏習合), rather than as results of the assimilation itself (Kadoya 2010: 278).[32]

This does however not mean that Seiryō was necessarily created *ex nihilo*. The issue of the existence of a previous substratum that may have contributed to creating Seiryō is a complex one, and given the lack of sources, it is difficult to provide a definitive answer. The *Daigoji shin'yōroku* mentions the existence of a Buddhist

31. From a brief presentation of such ideas, see Abé 1999: 417–18. Also see Kadoya 2010: 261–69.

32. On the idea of combinatory paradigm, see Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., 2003. Josephson (2012: xiii) prefers the term hierarchical inclusion, but I am not sure that the notion of hierarchy was relevant in the context of worship itself (although it may well have been the case in power struggles between temples).

temple dedicated to Yakushi on the same spot where the Seiryō-dō of Kami-Daigo was erected, but to my knowledge, there is no written proof of the existence of a god—maybe a dragon or a snake—on Mt. Kasatori during the ancient period (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 91).[33] Yokoo myōjin indeed appears in the *Daigoji engi*, but his cult was integrated to the Seiryō-gū complex, and he was not identified with the goddess itself (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 137). While it is possible that monks such as Shōkaku drew from a preexisting dragon cult on Mt. Kasatori, the goddess Seiryō was probably created as a tutelary deity of Daigoji itself, at the latest during the late eleventh century. From the very beginning, she was considered as both a dragon and the manifestation of Jundei and Nyoirin Kannon.

Seiryō and the Concept of "Non-Duality"

Later Shingon texts, especially during the twelfth to the fourteenth century, elaborated on the nature of Seiryō gongen, linking her to a famous divine pair of medieval esotericism: the wisdom kings Aizen 愛染 and Fudō 不動. Their relation was indeed understood as an incarnation of the doctrinal notion of non-duality (*funi* 不二, Sk. *advaita*). This concept has many implications, but its most common understanding refers to the non-duality of the two fundamental mandalas of Shingon Buddhism: the Womb realm (Sk. **Garbhakoṣadhātu*, J. *Taizōkai* 胎蔵界) and the Diamond realm (Sk. *Vajradhatu*, J. *Kongōkai* 金剛界).

This association stems from the fact that Aizen and Fudō were already present in rainmaking rituals at the times of Shōken 勝賢 (1138–1196). Given the prominence of dragons and the presence of Seiryō in such practices, this link was probably already present at least during the twelfth century (Trenson 2016: 363–65). Its clearest expression can be found in a text called *Seiryō gongen daiji* 清瀧権現大事, written during the late Kamakura period.[34] This text first repeats the origin of Seiryō as a dragon king hailing from the Anavatapta pond in India. Her original form (*honji* 本地) is given as Nyoirin Kannon, and she has two different manifestations (*suijaku*). One is a profane appearance (*zokugyō* 俗形), which—according to Steven Trenson—is similar to a well-known image of the dragon king Zennyo. The other was a monk figure (*shukkegyō* 出家形) that resembled the bodhisattva Jizō. The text then describes Seiryō as incarnating the concept of non-duality (Trenson 2016: 344). The author thus identifies her with the pair Aizen and Fudō and the colors of red and white,

33. The Seiryō-dō is the name of the first structure built on Kami-daigo, but later this term is also used to mean Seiryō-gū.
34. This fragmentary manuscript can be found at Kanazawa Bunko (340–79). For an almost perfect edition, see Trenson 2016: 343–344.

which in medieval esoteric Buddhism are associated (following canonical sources) with semen and menstrual blood.[35]

Such symbolism was not specific to Seiryō; it appears in many different Shingon texts from the same period.[36] Its presence in a text related to the dragon goddess tells us at the very least that this deity was fully included in the most elaborate—and often secret—doctrinal speculations of the Daigoji monks. In doing so, they gave her an entirely new layer of meaning, elevating her to a status closer to the very core of Shingon doctrine. In this context, the fact that she followed the same path—coming from China with Kūkai—was most certainly not a coincidence.

Visualizing the Dragon Goddess: Seiryo and Her Iconography

The concept of two forms of Seiryō that both manifest her original nature can also be found in other—and earlier—sources, such as the *Jikkishō* 実帰鈔, written by the Daigoji monk Jinken 深賢 (1179–1261) in 1231. According to this source, the profane form of the goddess, which Jinken sees in a dream, is presented as a female dragon holding a wish-fulfilling Jewel (*nyoi hōju* 如意宝珠)—a clear reference to Nyoirin Kannon[37]—and alternatively as a monk (Trenson 2016: 362).

According to Akamatsu Toshihide's analysis, which is largely based on Gien's record, Shōkaku saw these two images of Seiryō as provisional manifestations in a dream when he allegedly "obtained" the deity, and he decided to have these painted. However, he did not place them in either of the Seiryō-gū. He decided to keep them

35. More specifically, we also find a reference to the triad called *Ichibutsu nimyōō* (One Buddha, two wisdom kings 一佛二明王), which Aizen and Fudō form here with Nyoirin. While the *Ichibutsu nimyōō*, a ritual tradition present at Daigoji probably during the late Kamakura period, usually places Amitābha at the center (see the manuscript *Ichibutsu nimyōō kuketsu*, cited by Abe 2006: 598–625), this version seems closer to the what Monkan used as a basis for his "Ritual of the combination of the Three Worthies" (*Sanzon gōgyō-hō* 三尊合行法), which was developed during the 1320s. This could mean that the *Seiryō gongen daiji* dates from the early 14th century, at the earliest. On this symbolism of red and white, see Ogawa 2014. On Monkan and his ritual, see Abe 2013; Rappo 2017b; and Faure 2015a: 210–219. For a general discussion and the links of this ritual to the Mañjuśrī cult, see Quinter 2015: 220–230. For a doctrinal and iconographical analysis see Dolce 2010: 159–230; Rappo 2018. For a study of the paintings used in this ritual, see Rappo 2017a: 9–32. Also see Dolce 2008.
36. For example Monkan, but also several sources cited by Trenson 2016 in his study of rain rituals.
37. The Jewel could also be identified to other deities, such as Jundei Kannon. It was also seen as an expression of the concept of non-duality in Shingon texts. On this issue, see Dolce 2010, Naitō 2010, and Faure 2015a: 206–10.

hidden in the sūtra repository of the Sanbōin. The same source provides documents telling us that Shōkaku, when he founded the Seiryō-gū at Kami-Daigo, enshrined two statues of her original nature—Jundei and Nyoirin—as its main objects of worship (*honzon* 本尊) (Akamatsu 1966: 454–56).

In fact, according to Gien, the "true bodies" (*shōtai* 正体) of Seiryō, which represent the actual incarnation of the goddess in her temples, were not images. In Kami-Daigo, Seiryō's true body was the megalith she was said to have appeared on. In Shimo-Daigo, it is said to be a fragment of this stone, as well as a mirror representing the moon disk (*gachirin* 月輪) on an eight-petal-lotus (Akamatsu 1966: 456). The *Daigoji shin'yōroku* explains that this item had been obtained by a certain Yamazaki no shōnin 山崎ノ聖人 between 877 and 885. After seeing the moon disk in the sea, he entered it and traveled to the dragon king's palace, where he met the deity Seiryō, who gave him an oracle and the mirror (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 92–93; see also Akamatsu 1966: 442–444).

While both paintings based on Shōkaku's visions were probably lost, Seiryō's appearance as a female deity holding a jewel can be found in what is probably her most famous representation, the *Seiryō gongen-zu* 清瀧権現図 (or *yōgō-zu* 影向図) held at the Hatakeyama Kinenkan 畠山記念館 (oil on silk scroll, Kamakura period, 83cm × 42.5 cm). This image displays an unusually tall goddess that shares many common characteristics with the heavenly creatures called *tennyo* 天女. She wears a crown and a decorated robe and holds a jewel in her right hand. The image seems to depict her opening a wooden sliding door, to give a book to a female—and probably noble—worshipper (see Nishida 1973: 112–13). According to various sources, this iconography depicts Jinken's vision described in the *Jikkishō*, and was painted either by him or his disciple.[38] This disciple, who is also known for creating a now-lost image of Zennyo, seems to have had an important role in the development of the Seiryō cult and its images in the 13th century.[39]

On a purely iconographic level, the motive of an oversized deity completely overshadowing the worshipper can also be found in other well-known *yōkō-zu*, such as one representing Hachiman as a monk (*Sōgyō Hachiman yōgōzu* 僧形八幡影向図), or another one of the male god of Matsuo taisha danshin-zō. The term *yōkō* (sometimes *eikō* or *yōgō*) defines provisional or circumstantial apparitions of deities, especially of *kami* in the context of the *honji suijaku* paradigm. This type of "theophany" happens especially in dreams. In this picture, the difference of

38. See Akamatsu 1966: 457–59, and Shibata 2014: 212–13. On the dream, also see Itō 2012: 66, and Nishida 1973: 112–13. Akamatsu favors the idea of Jinken himself being the painter (460).
39. On this Zennyo image and its meaning as a manifestation of non-duality, see Trenson 2016: 363.

proportion can be understood as a means to represent the distance between the deity and the worshipper, or her severity (Itō 2012: 67). It also shows that Seiryō was considered as a figure who manifested herself in a very similar means to the kami, or at least to hybrid deities such as Hachiman.

Kiyotaki no Kami and Seiryō Gongen

Seiryō (or Seiryū) is also sometimes read as "Kiyotaki," the Japanese reading (*kun'yomi*) of the characters composing her name. While this reading of the deity's name can be found in poetry—mainly for rhythmic reasons—it was also the name of several places in Japan, which may not have been necessarily associated to Seiryō Gongen from the outset.[40] A reference to a "Kiyotaki" that was linked to Seiryō Gongen can be found at another major Shingon temple, the Takaozan Jingoji—the same place where Kūkai conducted his famous consecration rituals for the court in 812. In the *Daigoji shin'yōroku*, we find a chapter describing the "Kiyotaki" of Jingoji (the reading Kiyotaki for the characters 清瀧 is given in *katakana*) (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 97).

Here, Gien relates another version of the origins of Seiryō, which states that, after her arrival from China, the goddess first stayed in Kyushu, and then settled at Mt. Takao. She later came to Daigo after an oracle. The record adds that the presence of the goddess was the reason this place was called Kiyotaki.[41] The fact that a monk from Daigoji gives this interpretation could suggest that it was an attempt to include Jingoji in its sphere of influence, but it seems that the idea of a link between Kiyotaki of Mt. Takao and Seiryō could have originated at Jingoji, or perhaps at the nearby Kōzanji 高山寺.[42]

The reading Kiyotaki can also be found in other names of places, such as a river in Kyoto.[43] While many of these may not be directly related to Seiryō, at least some of them as in the Jingoji case were linked to her, because of them sharing the same name and the very nature of Seiryō as a draconic—sometimes ophidian—water deity.

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40. For Edo period examples of the reading Kiyotaki for Seiryō in poems, see the Seiryō-gū entry in *Ruijū meibutsu-kō*, 13, in Inoue and Kondō (ed.) 1974: 275.
41. The legends of the Jingoji and Seiryō are also briefly mentioned in Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003: 29.
42. See Girard 1990: 31, for a brief mention of this.
43. This river is where the nun Myōtatsu 妙達 (d. 1232), a disciple of Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232), decided to drown herself after his death in 1232. This act can perhaps be linked with elements of the dragon cult, and especially the belief of the dragon palace, as spread in the *Tale of the Heike*. After the Heike's defeat at the battle of Dan-no-ura, Kiyomori's mother jumped in the sea with the young emperor Antoku 安徳, telling him that they were going to the dragon palace. See Faure 2007: 304.

Manzei and the Doctrinal Discussion at the Seiryō-gū

In later texts, Seiryō retains all the characteristics described above. This is the case in In'yū's brief description of the goddess mentioned above. She can also be found as a draconic deity in rituals. In some variations of Monkan's "Joint ritual of the Three Worthies" (*Sanzon gōgyō hō* 三尊合行法), a complex liturgy involving the triad of Aizen, Fudō and the jewel, she appears at the end of the visualizations of the ritual space (*dōjōkan* 道場観), along with other dragon gods such as Zennyo, thus completing the mandala envisioned by the officiant.[44] Her status as a "god" can be also be confirmed in the liturgical context. Her name can indeed be seen in the pronouncement of intent and address to the deities (*hyōbyaku jinbun* 表白神分) used in the Daigoji variations of the standard ritual procedure of the Shingon school, the *Jūhachi-dō* 十八道 (Takai 1953: 150).

In fact, in Monkan's times, concrete expressions of her cult, and especially of the religious activities around her shrines tended to put more emphasis on her role as a guardian deity of Daigoji and the Shingon school as a whole. This aspect was already apparent during the Kamakura period. In the thirteenth century text called *Henkushō* 遍口鈔, a compilation of oral teachings from Seigen 成賢 (1162–1231) written by Dōkyō 道教 (1200–1236), Seiryō is said to have had a role in the sudden death of the monk Chinkai 珍海 (1091–1152). This monk had enraged the goddess by criticizing the rightful heir of the Sanbōin lineage, his master Jōkai 定海 (1074–1149), in an incident involving a mandala held at Sanbōin (T. 58, n. 2496: 694 c28–29). In this context, she appears as a guardian of both the sūtra repository (*kyōzō* 経蔵) of Sanbōin and of the lineage itself (Nishi 2008: 29).

Manzei himself was deeply influenced by all of this. As the heir of the then most influential lineage of the Daigoji, he strived to obtain a good transmission of its knowledge. This is why he copied a number of texts (*shōgyō* 聖教) of the various branches of the temple, and produced several ritual manuals himself (Mori 2004: 213–214). He also tried to preserve the writings of previous masters, such as the monk Kenshun 賢俊 (1299–1357), who was his very influential predecessor at the Sanbōin, or even Monkan, a member of a rival lineage at the same institution (Conlan 2011: 188).[45]

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44. See the manuscript of the *Yuigō-hō nikudōji-za* 遺告法 肉童子坐, Kōyasan daigaku toshokan, microfilm (2普\金\13), page 2 back. A similar pattern can be seen in another variation of the ritual in the *Jigyō shidai* 自行次第, manuscript held at the Saidaiji, page 8 front. On these texts, see Abe 2013: 245 and 553.
45. On Manzei's efforts to gather items that had belonged to Monkan, see Uchida 2006: 239–40.

This conception of Seiryō as a figure encompassing the whole temple can be verified in Manzei's journal where, other than the regular ceremonies at Kami-Daigo—the *Seiryō-kō* and *Seiryō honji-ku*—we learn of the existence of *dangi* 談義, lectures or doctrinal discussions, taking place at the same shrines. For example, we see the mention of *Seiryō-gu dangi* on the 15th day of the 11th month of 1413 (*Manzei Jugō nikki* 1:58):

> Fifteenth day. Metal yin, rabbit. Clear weather. The vows (*kechigan* 結願) of the *Seiryō-gū dangi* were concluded.

Another document written by the monk Kenbō 賢宝 (1333–1398) of Kanchi'in at Tōji temple mentions the details of one such *dangi* in the fifth month of 1398. The text tells us that the subjects were the *Sokushin jōbutsu-gi* 即身成仏義, a text considered to have been written by Kūkai, and the *Bodhicitta-śāstra* (J. *Bodaishinron* 菩提心論), a text attributed to Amoghavajra. This tells us that the discussions were centered on two of the most fundamental scriptures of the Shingon school, and that Manzei also held doctrinal exchanges with his Tōji counterparts (Nishi 2011: 169–70). Manzei's active participation, combined with the presence of monks from Tōji, suggests that for him such discussions, while they remained focused on religious matters, were also an occasion to further assert his influence on the Shingon school as a whole.

This practice was also not isolated, as such *dangi* involving monks of other branches of the Shingon school were still happening under Gien, and in the eighth day of the eleventh month of 1615, a discussion of the *Bodhicitta-śāstra* was organized under the supervision of a monk of the Tōji Kanchi'in (Nishi 2011: 177).

While the term can simply mean a "sermon," *dangi* as they are seen at Kami-Daigo are dialogues where disciples must answer questions on doctrinal positions given by the examiner, usually a higher-ranking monk. Such events were held since the Heian period, and often tended to be ritualized.[46] At Daigoji, such events, which stemmed from an effort to restore doctrinal studies in the Shingon school in the medieval period (see Nishi 2011: 151–88), were held irregularly in the Seiryō-gū, at least since 1280, and continued until the Muromachi period.[47] The practice was

46. This kind of *dangi* was fairly close to what is commonly called *rongi*. On early Tendai *rongi*, see Sango 2015. On *rongi* in general, see the conference proceedings Chisan kangakukai (ed.) 2000. For the *dangi*, *rongi*, lectures (*kō* 講) and the process of learning in the esoteric schools, see Rambelli 2013: 29. On the evolutions of the meaning of such terms, see Chisan kangakukai ed. 2000: 187.
47. Nagamura Makoto (2002: 220–41) mentions an event involving Raiyu 頼瑜 in 1275, but cites 1280 as the first documented occurrence of such practices in this place.

abandoned and restored several times, and Gien provides us with an order given by the emperor Go-Uda, at the beginning of the fourteenth century (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 431; Fujii 2008: 218).[48] This document is particularly important, as it gives us a glimpse of why such discussions were held in the Seiryō-gū and not in other parts of Daigoji. In fact, it says that such discussions had to be performed "to augment the glory of the deities (*shinmei* 神明)," a term which, given the place where they were organized, of course, included Seiryō (*Daigoji shin'yōroku jō*: 431).

Art Performances at the Seiryō-gū: From Sakura-e to Nō

Another significant passage of Manzei's diary describes Sarugaku (or Nō 能) performances being offered at Seiryō-gū of Shimo-Daigo. They were organized as a part of the annual Sengū ceremonies 遷宮祭 and, according to Manzei, were held at least between 1411 and 1435. From 1424 to 1430, the performances were directed by Zeami 世阿弥 (c. 1363–c. 1443) himself. Zeami had a deep link to Daigoji from the times of his father Kan'ami 観阿弥 (1333–1384). Already in 1372, they had very successful performances of *kanjin nō* 勧進能 at this very temple (see Narukawa 1980: 68). Sarugaku plays at Shimo-Daigo mostly took place in the middle of a weeklong religious ceremony held from the 15th to the 22nd day of the fourth month. On the 17th day, around the hour of the dog (7:00 pm.), five or six pieces were shown after a *Rishu zanmai*, which included offering to the gods (see Marginean 2001: 144–45). This can be seen for example in the entry of Manzei's journal for the 17th day of the 4th month of 1417 (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 322).[49]

The origin of such performances can probably be found in the Middle Ages. In the early twelfth century, Shōkaku designed an important ceremony dedicated to Seiryō Gongen, which was performed in front of the shrine at Shimo-Daigo. It was first called "Seiryō assembly" (*Seiryō-e* 清瀧会), but, because it was performed during the cherry blossom season, it became to be known as the "Sakura assembly" (*Sakura-e* 桜会). One of the major events of the temple's liturgical calendar, this ceremony was held regularly during most of the twelfth century (Tsuchiya 2001: 190). Later, it was organized from time to

48. This event must be understood inside the very peculiar religious politics of Go-Uda, who tried to unify the Shingon school under his command. See Conlan 2011: 84–86, and Rappo 2017b: 257–266.

49. However, there is also a mention of a "remarkable" performance on the 16th day of the third month of 1423. See *Manzei jugō nikki* 2, 275.

time during the Kamakura period, and it is still mentioned in a text written by Monkan's disciple Hōren 宝蓮 (1302– after 1365), probably in the mid to late 1330s.[50]

The Sakura-e blended dances to the gods with flower offerings. It also included several different Buddhist rituals, such as rites to the *Sutra of Humane Kings* (*Ninnōkyō* 仁王経) (Tsuchiya 2001: 191).[51] According to Tsuchiya Megumi, while the Sakura-e first used offering dances (*kuyōmai* 供養舞) by children (*dōmai* 童舞), Shōken decided to change this to dances accompanied by *nyūjō* 入調 (prelude music to *bugaku* court dances), which were considered more entertaining, and thus gave the ceremony a more profane tone (Tsuchiya 2001: 191–92). However, while this evolution to a more popular or entertaining form of dance is quite possible, this does not mean that the "arts" were something "profane" which can be completely distinguished from the "sacred" chants or rituals. In fact, both the Sarugaku in Manzei's times and the dances of the Sakura-e were held in the middle of various Buddhist rituals, and there was an undeniable continuity in such activities that cannot be underestimated (Marginean 2001: 145).

As a whole, these events—and especially the Sarugaku—probably had little to do with the original characteristics of Seiryō as a rainmaking deity; however, they were still offered to the tutelary goddess of Daigoji. Manzei himself uses a very specific term to describe the Sarugaku, which recalls Go-Uda's definition of the *dangi* assemblies. He describes a performance held in the fourth month of 1424 (*Manzei jugō nikki* 2, 97):

> 21st day. Clear weather, some lightning. Today, the *sarugaku* was started by the *gakutō* and [the performance] was held with the objective to provide dharma enjoyment (*hōraku* 法楽).

Here, the *gakutō*, Zeami, is specifically said to have performed for the enjoyment of the gods. The term *hōraku* is used to describe the fact that a deity "enjoys the Dharma" through chants, readings of sutra, dances, and, as our examples from Daigoji show, even doctrinal disputations, and Sarugaku performances. Famous examples of *hōraku* can be found in the pilgrimages to Ise by Chōgen and Eison in

50. This text, called the *Shido kegyō* 四度加行, says that it was an important event were the disciplinary rules for disciples during their initiation were in part suspended. See Rappo 2010: 160–72. The *Sakura-e* is still performed today, and it was at the origin of the famous "hanami" (flower viewing) held by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1598. See Tsuchiya 2001: 179–180.

51. The *Ninnōkyō* was an extremely important sūtra in rituals of protection of the state in ancient Japan. On its role in this context and in China, see Orzech 1998.

the Kamakura period, when similar events were held in temples surrounding the shrine.[52]

While Manzei does not mention Seiryō directly in this entry, the fact that such plays were held at her temple indicate that the goddess was at least partially concerned. In fact, in the same source, we find a *hōraku* ritual at the Seiryōgū (*Seiryōgū hōraku* 清瀧宮法楽) in a list of the ceremonies performed on the first day of 1413 (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 8). This ritual continued for the next few days, and is called *Seiryō hōmi* 清瀧法味 (Seiryō tasting the dharma), in the entry of the seventh day of the same month (*Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 9). Moreover, while they may not necessarily describe offerings to Seiryō, several other parts of his journal also attest of the deep link between the very practice of *hōraku* and performing arts, and especially poetry.[53]

The location of Seiryō-gū at Shimo-Daigo, at the center of the whole complex near the Sanbōin temple, certainly explains in part the choice of this location for such rituals, which were extremely popular in the case of the Sakura-e and the Sarugaku, and also involved courtiers and nobles from the capital. The doctrinal disputations were also prestigious occasions, which in Manzei's times involved participants from major Shingon temples. The organization of Nō plays at the Daigoji when he was either a superior, or a high ranking monk of the temple can not only be understood as an extension of this ritual pattern. For him, they were also a great occasion to reactivate an ancient tradition and further assess the position of the Daigoji temple in the religious and cultural life of Kyōto.

As a whole, these ceremonies indicate the importance of Seiryō's cult in the daily religious life of the temple. In a way, this also confirms that the goddess was perceived not only as a guardian of the temple, but also as an incarnation of the doctrine of the Shingon school.[54] While she still had a symbolic link to earlier practices such as rainmaking, Seiryō and her shrines were thus perceived as the centers of gravity of the whole temple, even after the Middle Ages. The very use of the term *hōraku* in this context also demonstrates that Seiryō was considered to be closer to the realm of the kami, at least in her "manifested" status, than to her original buddhas.

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52. On Chōgen, see Abe 2002: 193–218. On Eison and Ise, see Itō 2011: 609–10. Originally a Daigoji monk, Eison was also linked to the Seiryō through his mother, a shrine attendant (*miko* 巫女) of the Seiryō shrine. See Andreeva 2006: 355.
53. On the 27th day of the second month of 1413, we learn of the performance of *hōraku renga* (collaborative poems) 法楽連歌. *Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 19. Similar description can be found in the entry for the third day of the sixth month of 1413, among others. See *Manzei jugō nikki* 1, 20 (etc.).
54. A similar interpretation, based on different sources, can be found in Trenson 2016: 378.

Seiryō in the Works of Yoshida Kanetomo

Manzei was well-aware of the central position of Seiryō and he actively encouraged, and even promoted via the Sarugaku performances, such practices. While his lifetime was not necessarily a turning point in the evolution of the goddess' status at the Daigoji, during this span of time we see both her status as a central, tutelary deity of the Daigoji and also of the interpretations of her nature. Such conceptions would in fact be carried over through the next centuries and would also largely determine the destiny of local variations of her cult—especially during the Meiji period.

At the end of the fifteenth century, Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼倶 (1435–1511), one of the most important theoreticians of Shintō, integrated Seiryō to his inverted view of the *honji suijaku* paradigm.[55] The goddess is mentioned in the chapter describing the god Susano-o 素戔嗚尊 in his commentary to the *Nihon shoki* (*Nihon shoki jindaikan (or jindai no maki)-shō* 日本書紀神代巻抄):

> When Kōbō Daishi went to China, he prayed there to the protector god of Seiryūji [Qianglongsi] for the transmission of the Dharma. This protector god is Susano-o no mikoto. The Buddhist Dharma went progressively east, and a mausoleum (*byō* 廟) had to be built in our country to enshrine a protector deity (etc.). After he [Kūkai] returned, mausoleums (*byō*) called Seiryō were built in the upper and lower Daigo. [The term] Seiryō is formed by adding the water (radical) to the characters Seiryū [of Qianglongsi temple] (*Nihon shoki jindaikan-shō*: 79–80).

In the same passage, similar stories are told about Miwa Myōjin 三輪明神, Sekizan Myōjin and Shinra Myōjin of Miidera. Kanemoto associates these hybrid deities—who were in fact born into a Buddhist background—with deities cited in the *Nihon shoki* through the concept of mausoleum (*byō*), a building dedicated to the memorialization of imperial or aristocratic ancestors.[56] He thus creates a paradigm which allows for the full integration of such practices to his vision of "Shintō" (Takahashi 1992: 109).

While Kanetomo's ideas were not shared by the Daigoji monks (for example, Gien does not mention them), they indicate that although he was aware of the origins of Seiryō and her clear links to Buddhism, he also considered her as being close to the kami.

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55. From a brief overview, see Hardacre 2016: 208. The best study on Kanetomo in a Western language remains Scheid 2001.
56. This term can mean a mausoleum for ancestors; the ancient deities that Kanetomo mentions served as ancestors for the imperial family.

*Local Cults of Seiryō and the Separation of Gods and Buddhas (*Shinbutsu Bunri*)*

This ambivalent status of the guardian deities of monasteries, such as Seiryō, also had a profound impact in the evolution of the shrines dedicated to her outside of Daigoji. In fact, her cult was also diffused throughout Japan, especially at major Shingon temples such as Kawasaki Daishi 川崎大師 and Naritasan Shinshōji 成田山新勝寺, where, according to information provided by the temple, a Seiryū gongen-dō was built in 1732 near a waterfall. Interestingly, the same structure is also home to the god Myōken 妙見, another very peculiar deity of the esoteric "pantheon" (see Faure 2015a: 51–113). Another Seiryū gongen-dō can also be found at Mt. Takao 高尾山, an important center of ascetic (*shugen* 修験) practices near Tokyo.[57]

Most of those shrines or small temples are little studied, and it is very difficult to pinpoint exactly why and when they were built. For example, we find a shrine named Seiryū jinja 清瀧神社—whose origins are obscure—in Ōno 大野 city in Fukui prefecture (Ōno shishi hensan iinkai ed., 1991, 8: 114–115). However, several official documents mentioning donations of land in the region for rituals at the Seiryō-gū of Kami-Daigo suggest a link with Daigoji itself, which would mean that the cult was imported in the region—or linked later to a shrine sharing the same name (Ōno shishi hensan iinkai ed., 1985, 6: 48–50).

Moreover, such shrines are mostly known for being mentioned in documents related to the separation of gods and buddhas (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離) during the early Meiji period. Similar to what happened to other hybrid deities such as Kanayama gongen 金山権現, or at several places related to Kumano 熊野, Seiryū (or Kiyotaki) shrines were either destroyed, renamed, or cut from their Buddhist

57. It is located near the Yakuō'in 薬王院. However, its name (Seiryū gongendō 青龍権現堂) is written without the water radical. On Mt. Takao during the Edo period, see *Kinsei Takaosan-shi no kenkyū*, ed. Murakami Nao (Tōkyō: Meicho shuppan, 1998). A document describing the origins of the Seiryō cult at Mt. Takao can be found in the Yakuō'in archives. It was written during the 14th century and copied several times until the Muromachi period. The author clearly states a link with the Daigoji. See Hōsei daigaku tama toshokan chihō shiryōshitsu iinkai, ed., 1989, 1: 30–31. The same archives also contain a copy of a *Seiryō gongen daiji*, which may well be the same text as the one cited above. First written by Daigoji monks in 1353, it was last copied during the early 18th century (Ibid.: 121).

background and associated with "Shintō" deities.[58] For example, there are two Seiryū jinja at both the east and west of Mt. Kasatori. With *shinbutsu bunri*, the western one was dedicated to Ninigi no mikoto 瓊々杵尊, while the eastern deity was changed to the mountain god Ōyamatsumi no kami 大山津見神 (Hayashiya and Fujioka, eds., 1979, 5: 72). Also, the Seiryū jinja of Urayasu 浦安 is said to have been originally built in 1192 to worship the sea god Ōwatazumi no kami 大綿津見神, but it seems more plausible that this deity was changed in a similar way during the Meiji period.

Conclusion

At the end of our journey from Manzei's journal to earlier and later incarnations of Seiryō, it is clear that her cult was created during the late eleventh century, perhaps on the basis of a local dragon god on Mt. Kasatori. As a dragon, she was thus closely related to the symbolism of rainmaking—one of the main ritual practices of the time. Even when such rites lost their prestige and popularity, she remained in the background and still held an important role in the practices of Daigoji. This can be seen in Manzei's diary, where he scrupulously conducted several rites dedicated to her each month of the year.

In fact, rainmaking was not her only role at Daigoji. Seiryō was also designated, on the model of other guardian gods, as the protector of the entire temple. This aspect was intensified with medieval esoteric speculations. Her identification with the concept of non-duality—as incarnated by the pair Aizen and Fudō—was not an anecdotal theory created for minor rituals. In doing so, the monks created the foundations for Seiryō to further embody one of her functions from the outset: she became an incarnation of the entire doctrine of the temple. This is perhaps the most important implication of her perceived status as an imported god, who came from China with Kūkai; her journey mirrors that of the esoteric doctrine itself.

The doctrinal discussions and Sarugaku performances conducted during Manzei's time mirror practices of the Kamakura period such as the Sakura-e and

58. On "shinbutsu bunri", see Grapard 1984. A more recent outline can be found in Hardacre 2016: 368–373. In Ōmiya-shi, several shrines dedicated to various *gongen*, including Seiryū, existed during the Edo period. It seems that a Seiryū gongensha existed in the Bunsei period (1818–1830), but this shrine was destroyed before 1876: see Ōmiya shishi hensan iinkai, ed., 1982, 4: 799–800. Due to a lack of sources, it is difficult to pinpoint the location of this shrine. However, the *Shinpen Musashi fudokikō*, compiled in the early 19th century, mentions a Seiryū gongensha at the Manpukuji 満福寺 temple of the Kamika village 上加村. See *Shinpen Musashi fudokikō* (*daiyonki*), 8: 84.

the *dangi*. Such events not only show the centrality of both Seiryō as a cult. It also showcases the importance of both her shrines within the spatiality of the temple. In fact, the Shimo-Daigo Seiryō-gū was located near the Sanbōin, which had been home to the major spiritual lineage of the temple since the thirteenth century. The Kami-Daigo Seiryō-gū was perhaps even more influential, at least on the symbolic level. Being close to the original space where Shōbō founded Daigoji, in a sense, it operated as a source of religious legitimacy for the whole temple.

Ceremonies, including those held by Manzei at the Shimo-Daigo Seiryō-gū, also combined Buddhist rituals, such as chanting the *Rishukyō*, with "artistic" performances. This should not be understood as a secularization of the practices around the Seiryō shrines. Rather, it demonstrates extremely blended boundaries between "performing arts" (*geinō* 芸能) and "religious" rituals in pre-modern Japan. This is also suggested by the fact that Manzei himself—just as Emperor Go-Uda did regarding the doctrinal discussion at Kami-Daigo—defined the ceremonies as a means to either empower the gods, especially Seiryō, or make them "enjoy the Dharma" (*hōraku*).

Himself the heir of the long ritual tradition of the Shingon school, Manzei clearly held—as did his predecessors—Seiryō in high regard. While he followed traditional patterns in the Seiryō cult, he also promoted practices such as the Sarugaku, which not only reconnected with ancient assemblies such as the Sakura-e. He also fully integrated the dragon goddess within the new context of the Muromachi period, ensuring both her place as a central figure in the Shingon school in the capital, but also positioning Daigoji—and especially Shimo-Daigo—as a cultural landmark of the Ashikaga regime.

This ritual history, where Manzei's period stands as a sort of final evolution, also demonstrates that Seiryō Gongen was perceived as fundamentally being a kami, albeit hybrid. In fact, while Seiryō incarnated the entire esoteric doctrine, her link to Buddhist divinities expressed itself through the well-known mechanism of *honji suijaku*, as a provisional manifestation (*gongen*) of Jundei and Nyoirin Kannon, the two main objects of worship of Daigoji. This confirms the observation made by Bernard Faure, who, in his diagram of the Japanese "pantheon," placed the *gongen* (or *myōjin*) closer to the kami than to the Buddhist deities. This is also suggested by the interpretation of Yoshida Kanetomo, who, while recognizing her Buddhist background, tried, as he did for other similar figures such as Shinra myōjin, to reintegrate her fully in his view of Shinto through an identification with Susano-o no mikoto.

Seiryō Gongen's many attributes also allowed her cult to spread throughout the country. This happened either via the importation of this deity in temples related to Daigoji, or through identification with various places named Kiyotaki (clear stream or waterfall). This regional diffusion of her cult seems to have happened already during the Middle Ages, but lack of sources prevents us from creating a clear

timeline. Lines were further blurred during the Meiji period, due to the *shinbutsu bunri* phenomenon. Similar to other hybrid deities that were inseparable from their Buddhist backgrounds, a sizable part of her shrines was attributed to other figures considered purely "Shintō," such as the mountain god Ōyamatsumi from ancient mythology. However, this did not affect Daigoji itself, where both Seiryō-gū still stand, respectively at the top and at the foot of Mt. Kasatori.

Throughout the history of this temple, at least from the times of Shōkaku, and of its lineages inside the Shingon school, Seiryō Gongen was a fundamental deity on several levels: ritual, symbolic, spatial, and religious. Her cult was often directed by the most prestigious members of the community, and especially temple abbots such as Manzei. In his time, the Seiryō cult was mostly a continuation of the medieval period. However, some of its concrete rituals implications were relegated to the background, and this may well have led to the strengthening of her position as a central deity of the temple, as an incarnation not only of Daigoji, but also of its brand of esoteric Buddhism as a whole. In the worldview of this master of rituals, the dragon goddess was thus not a figure that could be ignored.[59]

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59. This article was written with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

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