

From Sacred Leaves to Sacred Images: The Buddhist Nun Gen'yō's Practice of Making and Distributing Miniature Kannon

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My paper will focus on the Buddhist sculptures created by Shōzan Gen'yō 照山元瑤 (1634-1727), a daughter of Emperor Gomizuno-o 後水尾天皇 (1596-1680) who became the founding abbess of the imperial convent Rinkyū-ji 林丘寺門跡, located on the grounds of Shugakuin Rikyū 修学院離宮 in northeastern Kyoto. As an extraordinary act of piety, in the years following her father's death she crafted hundreds, perhaps several thousand small Kannon images, which she gave away to Buddhist clergy and laypeople.

Early Religious Training and Endeavors

This is Gen'yō in one of her self-portraits (Plate 1). I will refer to her by her Buddhist name Gen'yō, but until she took the tonsure later in her life she was known by her given names Akenomiya Mitsuko 緋宮光子. Biographies record that she showed an interest in Buddhism from an early age.¹ The retired emperor was a devout Buddhist and frequently invited distinguished priests to lecture in the palace; Gen'yō reportedly sat by his side and listened intently. In 1665, at the age of thirty-one, Gen'yō received the bodhisattva precepts (*bosatsu-kai* 菩薩戒) from Ryōkei Shōsen 龍溪性潛 (1602-1670), an eminent Zen priest who was one of Gomizuno-o's teachers. Ryōkei originally belonged to the Myōshinji 妙心寺 school of Rinzai 臨濟 Zen, but he switched his affiliation to the Ōbaku 黄檗 school. He is well known for the key role he played in persuading the bakufu to grant the Chinese priest Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (Jp.



Plate 1
Gen'yō, *Self-portrait*.
Ink and colors on paper. Jianji.

Ingen Ryūki, 1592-1673) land in Uji and permission to build Manpukuji 萬福寺.

Influenced by her father, Gen'yō developed close associations with Yinyuan and other Ōbaku monks, supporting their temples and activities in various ways. It was she, for example, who persuaded Gomizuno-o to grant Yinyuan the honorary title “Daikōfushō Kokushi” 大光普照國師 when he was on his deathbed in 1673, and Yinyuan responded by addressing a poem to her. (Plate 2) Gen'yō also patronized the Shingon 真言 temple Sennyūji 泉涌寺, the official *bodaiji* 菩提寺 of the imperial family. Following in the footsteps of Gomizuno-o and her stepmother Tōfukumon'in 東福門院 (1607-1678), who with the financial backing of the Tokugawa bakufu completely rebuilt this massive temple complex in the eastern foothills of Kyoto, Gen'yō sponsored the restoration of the subtemple Zenmyōin 善明院 at Sennyūji in 1674.² She was also closely associated with another subtemple, Unryūin 雲龍院, where numerous works of hers remain. The patronage of her parents, who founded new temples as well as refurbished old ones, was surely an impetus for Gen'yō. As a result of the enthusiastic support which Gomizuno-o, Tōfukumon'in, and other members of the imperial family poured into the renewal of temples, the seventeenth century was a golden age for Buddhism in Kyoto.

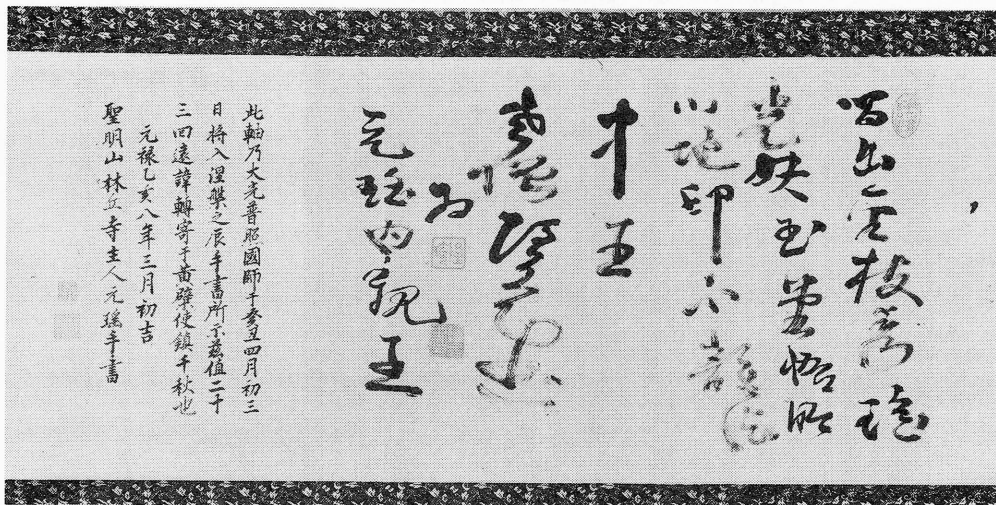


Plate 2
Yinyuan, *Poem Written to Gen'yō*.
Ink on paper. Manpukuji.

Gen'yō did not formally take vows to become a nun until after her father's death. Two months after Gomizuno-o died, in the tenth month of 1680 at the age of forty-seven, Gen'yū went to the temple Daikakuji 大覚寺 headed by her brother Shōshin Hōshinnō 性真法親王 (1639-1696) and was tonsured by the monk Tengai 天外 of Tenryūji 天龍寺. After staying temporarily at a small hermitage at Daikakuji, she had the Akenomiya palace 朱宮御所 at Shugakuin Rikyū, where she had been living since around 1670, transformed into a temple. A Kannondō 観音堂 was constructed and Gen'yō's residence officially opened as the imperial convent Rinkyūji in 1682.

Artistic Background

Raised in the refined artistic climate of Gomizuno-o's court, in her youth Gen'yō naturally learned poetry, and she also studied painting with Kanō Yasunobu 狩野安信 (1613-1684) and the Ōbaku priest Takuhō Dōshū 卓峯道秀 (1652-1714), the latter a pupil of Kanō Tan'yū 狩野探幽. What was probably initially a kind of pastime evolved into a significant part of her Buddhist practice. To be specific, Gen'yō's devotion to Kannon spurred her to paint this deity in all its different forms. Kannon had long been worshipped by women in China and Japan, and figured prominently in the practices of syncretic Ōbaku Zen. Gen'yō's faith, however, could be described as extraordinary. Numerous sources record that Gen'yō did more than one thousand Kannon paintings.³ Her paintings of Kannon, and occasionally other deities, can be found in numerous temples in the Kyoto-Shiga area, as well as in temples in other parts of Japan with which she, Gomizuno-o and Tōfukumon'in, or Ryōkei had some connection. An example is her painting of *Kannon Riding a Horse* (Plate 3), with an inscription by Yinyuan, preserved at Shōmyōji 正明寺 in Shiga prefecture, where Ryōkei (the priest who had initially conferred the bodhisattva precepts on Gen'yō) was installed as the first abbot.



Plate 3

Gen'yō, *Kannon Riding a Horse*.

Inscription by Yinyuan.

Ink on paper. Shōmyōji.

Shikimi and Buddhist Rituals

Gen'yō's paintings are a worthy study in themselves, but in this paper I want to focus on the small Kannon statues that she began making from powdered *shikimi* leaves after Gomizuno-o's death. According to records, first she collected leaves from *shikimi* trees (Plate 4), the branches of which are traditionally placed in front of Buddhist images or graves as offerings in Japan. The Latin names for *shikimi* are *illicium anisatum* or *illicium religiosum*; it is usually called "Japanese anise tree" in English. *Shikimi* is an evergreen often described as belonging to the magnolia



Plate 4
Shikimi.

(*mokuren* 木蓮) family; however, a separate *shikimi* family category has been established called *illiciaceae*.⁴ According to one source, the *shikimi* genus includes as many as fifty different species which grow in southeast Asia and North America, and thirty kinds in China.⁵ The Japanese *shikimi* tree has pale yellowish-white blossoms in the spring, and the seeds of its fruit are poisonous.

Although one source (*Shinzoku butsuji hen* 『真俗仏事編』, 1728) records that *shikimi* was introduced to China from India and then brought by the Tang-dynasty monk Jianzhen 鑑真 (Jp. Ganjin, 688-763) to Japan, where it was used as an offering because the configuration of the flower petals resembled a type of lotus, recently published Japanese botanical texts claim that the kind of *shikimi* used for Buddhist offerings in Japan is native to this country. It is reportedly a completely different plant than the Chinese plant represented by the characters 莽草, which is often cited as the Chinese name for *shikimi*.⁶ Moreover, the characters used in Japan for *shikimi*— 檜 and 榊—are *kokuji* or characters created by the Japanese. *Shikimi* can be found in mountainous areas in Honshū from the Kantō district westward, and also in Shikoku and Kyūshū.

Shikimi has a long tradition in Japan; a reference to it appears in a poem in the *Man'yōshū* 萬葉集⁷ (ca. eighth century), and in the *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (ca. eleventh-twelfth century) there is a passage describing how *shikimi* was used together with rope to mark off a sacred area.⁸ Examples citing the use of *shikimi* offerings in front of Buddhist imagery can be found in the *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 and the *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子.⁹ Nowadays branches of *sakaki* 榊 are used by Shinto shrines for purification purposes, but some scholars believe that *shikimi* may have been originally used as well, since there are poems in the *Genji monogatari* and *Shinkokinshū* 新古今集 describing *sakaki* as being aromatic.¹⁰ The *sakaki* tree known in Japan today does not have an aroma, and thus it is surmised that the tree actually referred to in these early texts was a kind of *shikimi*. There is further speculation that at some point after Buddhism was introduced to Japan, to distinguish between Shinto *kami* and Buddhist deities, *sakaki* came to be used in Shinto purification ceremonies, and *shikimi* for Buddhist offerings.¹¹ Indeed, the character for *sakaki* 榊 is written with a tree radical 木 next to “*kami*” 神, and one of the characters for *shikimi* is the tree radical 木 coupled with “*hotoke*” 佛.

There are various theories as to why *shikimi* came to be used as offerings in Buddhist rituals in Japan, often in place of flowers. Since the tree as a whole is aromatic, even the leaves and bark, it is thought that *shikimi* branches may have originally been put into coffins and buried with corpses, as well as placed on top of

fresh graves, to neutralize the odor of decaying flesh and to prevent wild animals from digging them up. Likewise, *shikimi* trees were often planted in cemeteries, as well as around fields, to keep animals away. A florist also noted that since *shikimi* is an evergreen, the leaves stay green for a long time, making it attractive as an offering. So there were various practical reasons underlying the use of *shikimi* in funerary rites.

Dried *shikimi* bark and leaves were also used to make incense, which is burned as an offering to purify the space during Buddhist rituals. In the past, powdered *shikimi* leaves and bark were reportedly mixed with other incense materials to make what is known as *makkō* (抹香), which is used in Buddhist ceremonies.¹² While I found numerous references to this practice, I discovered that nowadays *shikimi* is not used as an ingredient in the *makkō* recipes of major incense shops in Kyoto such as Shōeidō 松榮堂 and Kungyokudō 薰玉堂. When I discussed this with Hata Masataka 畑 正高, the president of Shōeidō, he actually became curious as to why they do not use *shikimi*, since there seems to have been a tradition in Japan of using it. He explained that Kyoto, being the location of the court and a large number of Buddhist temples, was the nucleus of the incense world in traditional Japan, so imported incense materials generally found their way here. The custom of burning incense and the technology for making it were known throughout the country, but people did not necessarily have access to imported ingredients, so they turned to the trees and plants close at hand. In Akita prefecture, for example, there is a shop that uses a blend of *kuwa* 桑 (L. *Morus bombycis*; a kind of mulberry), *nemu-no-ki* ねむの木 (L. *Albizia julibrissin*), and acacia アカシア in its incense, while Shōeidō does not.¹³

It is possible that the *shikimi* commonly grown in Japan and used for Buddhist ritual offerings today, and the *shikimi* used in the Edo period for incense, are different. Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold (1796-1866) wrote in his *Flora Japonica* that Japanese *shikimi* does not have the same fragrance as *tōshikimi* (トウ・シキミ, L. *illicium verum*, Ch.八角、茴香), and that the two were often confused.¹⁴ He goes on to explain that the aromatic “essence” from *tōshikimi* commonly used in Japan was actually imported from China. Indeed, the *shikimi* available today in Japan has a strong odor as opposed to a pleasant fragrance, making it difficult to conceive it as an incense ingredient. This is a point I need to pursue further with botanical specialists.

Imagery from *Shikimi* Leaves

Gen'yō's choice to use *shikimi* as the primary material for her Kannon sculptures seems to have been inspired by a story she heard. The circumstances are related in one of the *goroku* 語録 of the Chinese Ōbaku priest Gaoquan Xingdun 高泉性激 (Jp. Kōsen Shōtun, 1633-1695), who became the fifth abbot of Manpukuji.¹⁵ The story is as follows. There was an old woman from the province of Kii (present-day Wakayama prefecture) who rejected the Buddhist faith and practice. Her child nevertheless followed the advice of Buddhist priests and constantly chanted the *nenbutsu*, but she would turn her ears away. The child collected *shikimi* leaves and wrote the name of Kannon on them, and after he or she (the gender is unclear) had assembled a large pile, ground them into a powder and made a statue of Kannon. The child prayed in front of the Kannon image everyday, and before long the old woman was converted into a believer.

Gaoquan wrote that Gen'yō was overjoyed when she heard this story, and decided to utilize the same method of making Kannon images to ensure that her deceased father would achieve bliss in the next world. From the example of the old woman in the story, presumably she recognized the power of such imagery to proselytize as well. Gen'yō was probably attracted by the aromatic aspect of *shikimi*, and its use as a raw material in incense, as well as its established role as a Buddhist offering. Since Gomizuno-o's death was the impetus for her to create small Kannon sculptures and the pious act of making them a kind of memorial on his behalf, *shikimi* was an appropriate choice. That *shikimi* (or something similar) was prized alongside such aromatic woods as sandalwood and aloes is suggested by the following passage from the first chapter (Expedient Devices) of the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hoke-kyō* 法華經, 第一方便品).

After the Buddhas have passed into extinction,
 if persons make offerings to the relics,
 raising ten thousand or a million kinds of towers,
 using gold, silver and crystal,
 seashell and agate,
 carnelian, lapis lazuli, pearls,
 to purify and adorn them extensively,
 in this way erecting towers;
 or if they raise up stone mortuary temples
 or those of sandalwood or aloes,
hovenia or other kinds of timber,
 or of brick, tile, clay or earth:

if in the midst of broad fields,
they pile up earth to make a mortuary temple for the Buddhas,
or even if little boys at play
should collect sand to make a Buddha tower,
then persons such as these
have all attained the Buddha way.
If there are persons who for the sake of the Buddha
fashion and set up images,
carving them with many distinguishing characteristics,
then all have attained the Buddha way.

(Translation by Burton Watson)¹⁶

刻	若	如	乃	若	木	或	清	碑	起	諸
彫	人	是	至	於	櫛	有	淨	礪	萬	仏
成	為	諸	童	曠	並	起	広	予	億	滅
衆	仏	人	子	野	余	石	嚴	碼	種	度
相	故	等	戲	中	材	廟	飾	碯	塔	已
皆	建	皆	聚	積	甑	梅	莊	玖	金	供
已	立	已	沙	土	瓦	檀	校	瑰	銀	養
成	諸	成	為	成	泥	及	於	瑠	及	舍
仏	形	仏	仏	仏	土	沈	諸	璃	頗	利
道	像	道	塔	廟	等	水	塔	珠	梨	者

The tree represented by the characters 木櫛 (Jp. *mokumitsu*) in the original Chinese text is translated by Burton Watson as “hovenia;” another English translation of the *Lotus Sutra* calls it “eaglewood.”¹⁷ *Mokumitsu* is listed alongside two of the major incense woods — *dan* 檀 (sandalwood) and *jin* 沈 (aloes)—as an appropriate material for constructing memorials to Buddha. The text goes on to encourage the making of Buddhist images from whatever materials are available, such as metal, lead, iron, wood, mud, and lacquer. Since the second character of *mokumitsu* is the same as that for *shikimi*, some Japanese have interpreted them as being the same. One example is Asakawa Kanae 朝川鼎 (d. 1849), who quotes the text of a commentary on this sutra passage stating that that 木櫛 is kind of tree from Chang’an 長安 (Jp. Chōan) in China called 櫛, which because it is aromatic and purifying like sandalwood and aloe, was used for making images.¹⁸ I have been searching for the original text of this sutra commentary to confirm this statement, but so far have not been able to locate it. The *Bukkyō daijiten* says that the original Sanscrit for 木櫛 is *devadaru*, a tree belonging to the pine family called Himalayan Cedar or Longleaf Pine.¹⁹ In sum, while it is unlikely that Japanese *shikimi* is the

same aromatic tree represented by the character 木樛 in the *Lotus Sutra*, I suspect that for Gen'yō, they may have been one and the same.

The concept of making images from powdered incense is no doubt related to the tradition of carving Buddhist images from aromatic woods such as sandalwood (Jp. *danzō* 檀像), a practice which began in India and was introduced to Japan from China.²⁰ The natural fragrance of the wood, like incense, was thought to symbolize the purity and benevolence of a buddha or bodhisattva. Sandalwood of course was imported to Japan; it was expensive and not always readily available. Consequently, images following the *danzō* stylistic tradition were sometimes carved from native aromatic woods such as camphor (*kusu-no-ki* 樟の木).

Small images used by individuals for private worship, called *nenjibutsu* 念持仏, were often carved from aromatic woods, as well as crafted from other materials such as clay or paper. Gen'yō was clearly familiar with this tradition, as *nenjibutsu* can be found in the collections of many imperial convents. The recipients of her Kannon images likewise regarded them as personal tutelary icons, installing them in small shrines and placing them on home altars.

Gen'yō presumably did not have training as a sculptor, so carving images from any kind of wood was not feasible. Molding images from incense powder mixed with lacquer, however, was something she could more reasonably handle. Given the fact that she intended to make images in large numbers to give away, using a mold was more practical than carving. The practice of creating multiple images by pressing clay or the ashes left over from the Buddhist ritual of burning cedar sticks for invocation (*goma* 護摩) into molds was common in the Edo period.²¹ I was informed by the current abbess of Rinkyūji, Amano Ejun 天野恵閨, that *shikimi* grows wild in the woods around the temple. Moreover, the area nearby called Hananodani 花之谷 was purportedly famous for its *shikimi*, so Gen'yō would not have had to go far to find leaves to pick.²² The availability of *shikimi* in the area she lived should also be considered as a significant factor influencing her choice of this material.

After collecting and washing *shikimi* leaves, Gen'yō would write the name of Kannon on each leaf, or single characters from sutras. When the bamboo basket became full, she (or one of her servants) ground the leaves into a powder. She added to this other kinds of incense powder,²³ and this was then mixed with lacquer and *nikawa* 膠 (a kind of animal glue traditionally blended with painting pigments and used as an adhesive in woodwork), and pressed into a mold to create small Kannon images. Gen'yō reportedly recited scriptures before and throughout the process. At first glance, her images look as though they are made of wood, but upon close

examination, one can see that there are no traces of wood grain. The resemblance is not surprising since incense materials in their raw form (shavings or powder) are the color of wood.

Manabe Shunshō 真鍋俊照 pointed out to me that imperial convents traditionally used more varieties of incense than ordinary temples. This is undoubtedly related to the custom of burning incense to scent clothes practiced by noblewomen, as well as the popularity of the incense identification game employing combinations of fragrant wood shavings. The unique world and surroundings of imperial convents inspired different kinds of art. Gen'yō's *shikimi* images are but one example.

Gen'yō may not have been the first to make images from incense powder, but the fact that many of the Ōbaku priests with whom she was acquainted wrote poems or prose praising them, suggests that her Kannon images were considered to be unusual and special because the material was *shikimi* leaves. So far I have found passages describing Gen'yō's images in the *goroku* of ten Ōbaku priests: Dokutan Shōkei 獨湛性瑩 (1628-1706), Dokuhon Shōgen 獨本性源 (1618-1689), Gaoquan Xingdun 高泉性激 (Jp. Kōsen Shōton), Hōun Myōdō 法雲明洞 (1638-1706), Tetsugyū Dōki 鐵牛道機 (1628-1700), Gettan Dōchō 月潭道澄 (1636-1713), Dōzō Hōjū 道聰寶洲 (1644-1719), Kyōdō Genzui 恭堂元髓 (1663-1730), Kaiō Hōkō 晦翁寶嵩 (1635-1712), and Jakumon Dōritsu 寂門道律 (1651-1730). They all focus in particular on her technique of using powdered *shikimi* leaves with sacred scriptures or Kannon's name written on them, and Gen'yō's zealous religious spirit throughout the creative process.

To date I have located eleven of Gen'yō's pressed incense Kannon sculptures. Four are in the collection of Rinkyūji in Kyoto (Plates 5a, 6a, 7a, 8a). All four of the Rinkyūji Kannon images are housed in small lacquer shrines (*zushi*) bearing inscriptions confirming the images as being from the hand of Gen'yō. (Plates 5b, 6b, 7b, 8b). One *zushi* in particular has a long inscription giving information about her biography as well (Plate 8b). As can be seen from the photographs, the Kannon images appear to be identical, although the attached headdresses and jewelry differ. I have asked the current abbess of Rinkyūji whether the mold, perhaps made of wood, still exists. She said she had not seen one, but would continue to keep looking.



Plate 5a
Gen'yō, *Kannon*.
Rinkyūji.

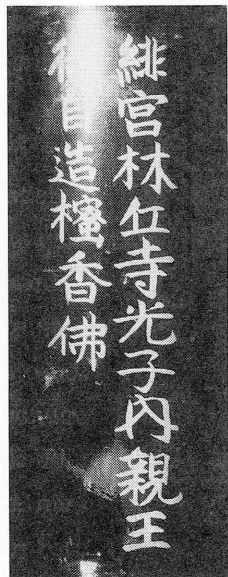


Plate 5b
Inscription
on back of shrine.



Plate 6a
Gen'yō, *Kannon*.
Rinkyūji.



Plate 6b
Inscription
on door of shrine.



Plate 7a
Gen'yō, *Kannon*.
Rinkyūji.

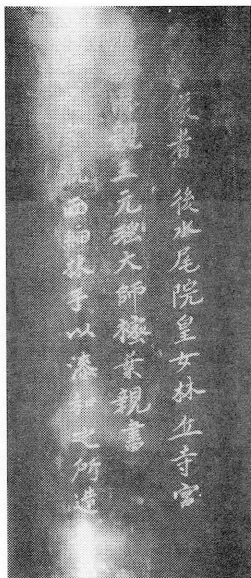


Plate 7b
Inscription
on back of shrine.



Plate 8a
Gen'yō, *Kannon*.
Rinkyūji.



Plate 8b
Inscription
on back of shrine.

Concerning the prototype for these Kannon images, the abbess of Rinkyūji suggested that Gen'yō may have modeled them after the Shō Kannon 聖観音 statue which is the main image (*honzon* 本尊) at Rinkyūji (Plate 9). This statue, which came from Shiga prefecture and bears a traditional attribution to the Tendai priest Enchin 圓珍 (814-891), posthumously known as Chishō Daishi 智證大師, probably dates to the late Heian or Kamakura period. Her speculation is supported by passages in the *goroku* of the Ōbaku priests Gaoquan and Hōun, which state that Gen'yō recognized the tremendous spirituality of this image and had it brought to Rinkyūji from the imperial palace after Gomizuno-o's death.²⁴ Apparently Gomizuno-o had been particularly fond of this Kannon. Hōun then goes on to describe how Gen'yō created her own images, implying that one source of inspiration was the newly installed *honzon* at her temple.



Plate 9
Shō Kannon.
Rinkyūji.

There does seem to be some similarity in the face and headdress; however, the right hand of the Rinkyūji Shō Kannon is pointed downward instead of being raised as in Gen'yō's small Kannon images. The configuration of the drapery is also different. When I showed photographs to Buddhist sculpture specialists, I was informed that the prototype for Gen'yō's Kannon was probably a Heian-period image. In particular they pointed to similarities in the type of headdress and the way the drapery falls over the legs in concentric ovals. Sculptures of Shō Kannon (Plate 10) were made in large quantities during the Heian period and presumably were still plentiful in the Edo period. After carefully considering this issue, in designing her model I believe Gen'yō adapted some features of the Shō Kannon at Rinkyūji as well as from another standard type of Heian-period Shō Kannon. She may have chosen this particular style of standing Kannon, with its left hand holding a lotus and right hand in the *abhaya mudrā* (Jp. *semui-in* 施無畏印) because it was more suitable for small molded images. For example, if the right hand extended downward in the fashion of Rinkyūji's *honzon*, with space between it and the body, it might have been easily broken when extracting images from the mold or in handling them. Ōbaku priests specifically singled the delicately rendered countenances of Gen'yō's Kannon sculptures for praise, saying that they expressed both compassion (*ji* 慈) and sternness (*gen* 嚴).



Plate 10

Shō Kannon. 11th-12th century. Wood. H. 166.5cm.
Kurumi shrine, Hikone.

After Hikone-Jo Hakubutsukan 彦根城博物館 ed.,
Inori no zōkei: Ōmi Hikone no bukkō bijutsu
祈りの造型—近江・彦根の仏教美術 (1991), p1.21.

Recipients of Gen'yō's Kannon Sculptures

Accounts unanimously relate that Gen'yō gave these images away to believers. Priest Gettan Dōchō wrote in his *Shinge jōroku* 心華剩録 that on the occasion of a memorial ceremony for her father, she gave them to all the priests who participated.²⁵ Priest Gaoquan recorded that he received two images in the summer of 1682, which would have been the second anniversary of Gomizuno-o's death.²⁶ They were given away to people from all walks of life, ranging from the daimyo of Yamato;²⁷ the governor of Settsu (present-day Osaka),²⁸ who at one time was charged with overseeing the protection of the imperial palace; a superintendent of the governor in Fukuoka;²⁹ the servant of a friend;³⁰ and temple parishioners. The phenomenon of a

princess giving away images to commoners is an extraordinary example of the popularization of Buddhism.

While I have not yet found any other images in Kyoto, I have located seven in Shiga prefecture. Two images (Plates 11 and 12) are presently housed at Shōmyōji 正明寺, the temple mentioned earlier which Gomizuno-o had restored. Gen'yō continued her father's patronage of Shōmyōji after his death. The temple collection includes numerous paintings she donated, as well as a complete transcription of the *Lotus Sutra*.

In July 2001 the chief priest Abe Ryōkai 安部梁解 and I searched the altars in the various buildings at Shomyōji for Gen'yō's sculptures. The two that we discovered are not actually owned by the temple, but were placed there in recent years for safekeeping by two parishioners.³¹ The images are identical to the Rinkyūji examples discussed previously. I believe that the *zushi* in which they are enshrined are Edo-period originals. The fact that

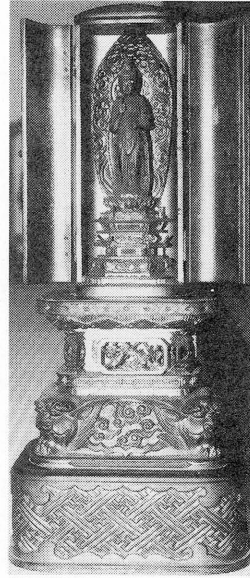


Plate 11
Gen'yō, *Kannon*.
Collection of
Takai Sakuemon.



(detail of image)

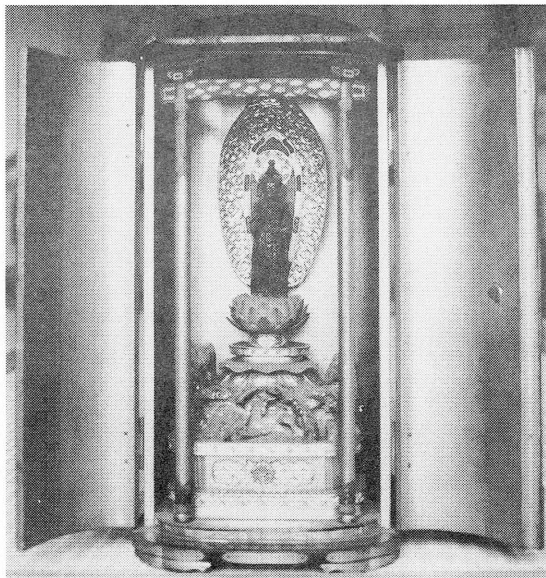


Plate 12
Gen'yō, *Kannon*. Collection of Morita Etsuko.



(detail of image)

these two shrines are quite ornate suggests to me that Gen'yō's images were highly treasured by their owners. This is also supported by descriptions of the sentiments of recipients recorded in *goroku*.

The *goroku* of the third abbot of Shōmyōji, Kaiō Hōkō, actually includes several poems written on the occasion of enshrining newly made images by Gen'yō in the homes of parishioners.³² This dedication ceremony is referred to as *kaikō* 開光 (literally “opening the light”). One dedication was performed for an image given by Gen'yō to the Takai family, which is probably the image mentioned above owned by Takai Sakuemon. The *goroku* also includes poems documenting that similar dedication ceremonies were performed by Priest Kaiō for the Kannon images given by Gen'yō to the Hiratsuka 平塚 family, the Takasu 高須 family, and Hayafuji Yachibe 早藤彌市兵衛.

Not far from Shōmyōji is the temple Jianji 地安寺, which Gen'yō herself started to restore a few months after Gomizuno-o died. It became a subtemple of Shōmyōji, and Ryōkei's pupil, Hōetsu Shōki 方悦正喜 (?-1709) was appointed as the first abbot. Over the years Gen'yō added more buildings and donated many paintings and scriptures. The fact that she enshrined an image of Gomizuno-o as well as a memorial tablet (*ihai* 位牌) suggests that she regarded Jianji as kind of memorial temple. The above-mentioned priest of Shōmyōji, Abe Ryōkai, is also the chief priest at Jianji, and our search for Gen'yō's Kannon sculptures there turned up two more images. One seems to have always been in the temple's collection, perhaps a direct gift from Gen'yō to Priest Hōetsu (Plate 13). A second image (Plate 14) was donated to Jianji in 1982 by Yasui Tokujirō 安井徳次郎, one of the temple's parishioners. According to Reverend Abe, previously it had been hanging in the household Buddhist altar at Yasui's home. Excited by our discoveries, Reverend Abe promised to try to look in the Buddhist altars (*butsudan*) in parishioner households during his home visits during the Obon season, and in August 2001 he located three more Kannon statues by Gen'yō.³³



Plate 13
Gen'yō, Kannon.
Jianji.



Plate 14
Gen'yō, Kannon.
Jianji.

Unlike the Rinkyūji images, none of the Kannon sculptures I have seen in Shiga prefecture have inscriptions on the *zushi* or any documentation identifying them as being made by Gen'yō. However, after making careful comparisons through photographs, there is no question that they are all from the same mold as the Rinkyūji images. The dedicatory poems mentioned above included in Kaiō's *goroku* also provide documentary evidence. Originally the recipients apparently saw no need to record for posterity Gen'yō's gift; they simply had a *zushi* constructed and placed the enshrined images in their home altars, where they have resided for nearly three centuries. Given the large numbers she purportedly made and gave away, and the fact that Gen'yō lived in Kyoto, surely many of her Kannon originally graced the homes of people here. However, Kyoto has undergone many changes during that time and a lot of shifting and destruction has taken place, making it difficult to locate them. I was pleasantly surprised to find that in the old homes and temples dotting the countryside of Shiga prefecture, sacred images have been carefully preserved, many of them in their original settings.

The Merits of Surfeit and Replication

To date I have only uncovered a small fraction of the thousands of Kannon sculptures that Gen'yō is recorded as having created. I am continuing to search for more despite the fact that they are basically identical except for differences in applied crowns and jewelry. In addition to wanting to identify more precisely the circle of recipients, I am interested in the emphasis placed on quantity in Gen'yō's devotional activities. She reportedly painted one thousand paintings of Kannon, crafted three thousand three hundred and thirty mini Kannon sculptures, and transcribed thousands of sutra fascicles.³⁴ Moreover, she tirelessly recited scriptures day in and day out.

Concerning the surfeit of images, there is no question that Gen'yō was influenced by the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*, which promoted the transcription of scriptures and creation of imagery in quantity. Gen'yō undoubtedly believed she was accruing merit through transcribing sutras, painting Buddhist imagery, and crafting Kannon sculptures—not just for herself, but for others. Several Ōbaku monks wrote that her devotional activity was carried out on behalf of her father as well as to aid others. An emphasis was placed on quantity in devotional practices and art from the Heian period onward, and it was generally believed that the more one produced, the better. Recitations of the *nenbutsu* are one example; people also transcribed sutras and commissioned sets of thousands of miniature stupas to contain them.³⁵

The creation of miniature sculptures was common in the Edo period. In 1699, for example, the Ōbaku monk Ryōō Dōkaku 了翁道覚 (1630-1707), on the occasion of dedicating a newly made bronze image of Kannon, gave away three hundred thirty-three thousand, three hundred and three thumbnail size images to clergy and lay people.³⁶ Prior to that, Ryōō's pupil Tetsugyū Dōki, who was well acquainted with Gen'yō, on the occasion of the dedication in 1689 of a group of newly completed images for the abbot's living quarters (*hōjō* 方丈) at the Kyoto temple Jōjūji 浄住寺, had three thousand five hundred small images cast in metal and distributed them among pupils, priests, and laity.³⁷ These may have looked something like the miniature images excavated from a child's grave at the site of the former Ōbaku temple En'ōji 圓應寺 in Tokyo's Shinjuku ward (Plate 15).³⁸

Gen'yō must have been familiar with the tradition of creating miniature Buddhist images and giving them away to encourage popular devotion. In her case, the creative process itself became an act of piety because she herself made the images. She chose to use *shikimi* leaves because of their aromatic quality and sacred



Plate 15

Miniature Deities. En'ōji, Tokyo.

After Tokyo-to-Edo Tokyo Hakubutsukan 東京都江戸東京博物館,
Horidasareta toshi 掘り出された都市 (1996), p. 58.

nature. Even though she did not invent the idea of making images from incense powder, I believe Gen'yō fashioned her own style of process, beginning with making three thousand three hundred and thirty-three bows and reciting the *Fumon* Chapter 普門品 of the *Lotus Sutra*,³⁹ popularly called the *Kannon-gyō*. Using powdered sacred leaves—which were a form of incense—to craft her Kannon images was the ultimate “sacred” expression, since the purity of the *shikimi* incense was embodied in the images. Moreover, the act of writing sacred characters on this sacred material presumably increased the efficacy. Priest Tetsugyū wrote in one of his dedicatory poems that “the entire body consists of *shikimi* leaves, but [within] the form is made up completely of the *Lotus Sutra*.”⁴⁰ In other words, from beginning to end—every aspect of the process and the materials involved—all could be considered as “sacred.”

Gen'yō's “sacred” creative process was written about so much by contemporary priests that I think we can assume it was widely known among the recipients of her Kannon sculptures. The fact that the images are referred to by the material used, i.e. *shikimi* or incense, suggests that this was an important aspect of the images.⁴¹ In his poem composed on the occasion of the “eye opening” of one of Gen'yō's Kannon, Priest Gaoquan related how she would also add a touch of other incense (presumably sandalwood or one of the other imported kinds) to the powdered *shikimi* leaves. But when looking at the finished images, it was not visible, so one could not tell the incense was there. He employed this as a metaphor for the bodhisattva existing inside the “dust” of humans, who likewise are often oblivious to its existence.⁴²

In addition to the tangible “sacred” materials, each image could also be described as embodying Gen'yō's spiritual energy. This was alluded to by several Ōbaku priests in their poems and prose concerning Gen'yō's images. Through the act of painting and crafting Kannon images, she was carrying out literally the following prescription in the *Lotus Sutra* for “attaining the Buddha way.”

If there are persons who for the sake of the Buddha
fashion and set up images,
carving them with many distinguishing characteristics,
then all have attained the Buddha way.
Or if they make things out of the seven kinds of gems,
of copper, red or white copper,
pewter, lead, tin,
iron, wood, or clay,
or use cloth soaked in lacquer or resin
to adorn and fashion Buddha images,

then persons such as these
 have all attained the Buddha way.
 If they employ pigments to paint Buddha images,
 endowing them with the characteristics of hundredfold merit,
 then all have attained the Buddha way.
 Even if little boys at play
 should use a piece of grass or wood or a brush,
 or perhaps a fingernail
 to draw an image of the Buddha,
 such persons as these
 bit by bit will pile up merit
 and will become fully endowed with a mind of
 great compassion;
 they all have attained the Buddha way.

(Translation by Burton Watson)⁴³

具 足 大 悲 心	如 是 諸 人 等	或 以 指 爪 甲	乃 至 童 子 戲	自 作 若 使 人	綵 画 作 仏 像	如 是 諸 人 等	或 以 膠 漆 布	白 鐵 及 鉛 錫	或 以 七 宝 成	刻 彫 成 衆 相	若 人 為 仏 故
皆 已 成 仏 道	漸 漸 積 功 徳	而 画 作 仏 像	若 草 木 及 筆	皆 已 成 仏 道	百 福 莊 嚴 相	皆 已 成 仏 道	嚴 飾 作 仏 像	鉄 木 及 与 泥	鍮 鈷 赤 白 銅	皆 已 成 仏 道	建 立 諸 形 像

Through her complete absorption in creating sacred imagery, and reciting and copying sacred texts, there is no question that Gen'yō did in fact “attain the Buddha way.” While her miniature Kannon images may not be recognized as part of the mainstream of art history, in the Buddhist world their artistic and spiritual significance was perceived and appreciated, and for three hundred years they have illuminated the sacred spaces in people’s homes.

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and manuscripts, and Hayakawa Monta of IRCJS for helping me to decipher some of the difficult *kanbun* passages. Hata Masataka of Shōeidō was extremely helpful in answering my questions regarding incense, and Tsujimura Taizen and Takahashi Hiraaki from the Gangoji Bunkazai Kenkyūjo in Nara provided me with valuable information on *nenjibutsu* and other types of small images made from molds in the Edo period. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the comments made by Yoritomi Motohiro, Manabe Shunshō, Samuel Morse, and Tanaka Kimiaki at the “Figures and Places of the Sacred” symposium, which aided me in preparing the final version of this paper.

Notes

- ¹ The major sources for Gen’yō’s biography are: Kimura 1709; Rekichō Kontokuroku Henshūkai 1913, pp. 449-453; Ōtsuki et al. 1988, pp. 576-577.
- ² Akamatsu 1984, p. 681.
- ³ For example, Gettan 1710, vol. 4, p. 35.
- ⁴ Hirai 1996, p. 211.
- ⁵ Murakami 1991, p. 149.
- ⁶ Hirai 1996, p. 211.
- ⁷ Hirai 1996, p. 211.
- ⁸ *Konjaku monogatari shū*, vol. 3, p. 367. Cited in Fukuta 1999, p. 752.
- ⁹ Uehara 1961, vol. 1, p. 1105.
- ¹⁰ Uehara 1961, vol. 1, p. 1106.
- ¹¹ Uehara 1961, vol. 1, p. 1106.
- ¹² Ariga 1993, p. 124; Ariga 1990, p. 73.
- ¹³ Letter from Hata Masakata, November 14, 2001.
- ¹⁴ von Siebold 1996, p. 11. For information on *Tōshikimi*, see also Hirai 1996, p. 213.
- ¹⁵ *Kōsen* 1690, vol. 20, pp. 8-9.
- ¹⁶ Watson 1993, pp. 38-39.
- ¹⁷ Katō 1975, p. 68.
- ¹⁸ Asakawa 1850, *Nihon zuihitsu taisei*, vol. 10, pp. 448-449. The commentary Asakawa quotes reads as follows:
木樛者長安有木名樛、任造像、已上、是乃栴檀沈香樛木等ハ清淨ニシテ、香気アル故ニ仏像等ヲ造り、
又仏前ニモ供スルト見タリ。
- ¹⁹ Furuta et al. 1988, p. 376.
- ²⁰ For a survey of this tradition, see Nara National Museum 1991.
- ²¹ For an example, see Ikomazan Hōzanji 2001, p. 40.
- ²² *Shūi miyako meisho zue* 拾遺都名所図絵 1787, vol. 2, p. 300. I was directed to this reference through the entry on *shikimi* in Uehara 1961, vol. 1, p. 1107.
- ²³ I was informed by Hata Masataka of Shōeidō that she probably added a kind of incense called *tabu* 榘, which when mixed with water becomes malleable like clay. The particles of other incense powders apparently do not adhere together well and would have been difficult to manipulate. The technique for molding incense into shapes using *tabu* came from China during the early Edo period via Yinyuan and other Ōbaku priests.

- ²⁴ Kōsen 1690, vol. 14, p. 12 and Hōun 1695, vol. 4.
- ²⁵ Gettan 1710, vol. 4, p. 313.
- ²⁶ Kōsen 1690, vol. 20, p. 9.
- ²⁷ Lord Matsudaira, daimyo of Yamato 松平太和守. Recorded in Dokutan, vol. 7.
- ²⁸ Makino Naritoki 牧野成時. Recorded in Dokuhon 1708, vol. 2, p. 316. After returning to Edo, Naritoki had the image installed in a temple.
- ²⁹ Hayafuji Yachibe 早藤彌市兵衛. Recorded in Kaiō 1924, p. 29.
- ³⁰ Suna Shigai 須那旨外. Recorded in Tetsugyū 1700, vol. 12, pp. 1-2.
- ³¹ Takai Sakuemon 高井作右衛門 and Morita Etsuko 森田悦子.
- ³² Kaiō 1944, pp. 25, 29.
- ³³ In the homes of Yasui Tadashi 安井正, Morita Chūzō 森田中蔵, and Morita Sadao 森田貞夫.
- ³⁴ Kimura 1709.
- ³⁵ Tanabe 1988, pp. 26-27.
- ³⁶ Ryōō 1701, p. 17. I am grateful to Tanaka Chisei 田中智識 of the Manpukuji Bunkaden for pointing out this reference to me in an article by Itō Akiko in vol. 117 of *Ōbaku bunka*.
- ³⁷ Ōtsuki 1990, p. 62. Again I would like to acknowledge Tanaka Chisei for calling my attention to this reference, and for Okuda Mitsuru 奥田実津留 for lending me the book as well as other Ōbaku-related materials.
- ³⁸ Published Tokyo-to Edo Tokyo Hakubutsukan 東京都江戸東京博物館, *Horidasareta toshi* 掘り出された都市 (1996), p. 58. I was directed to this source by a reference in Itō 1997, p. 131, note 15.
- ³⁹ Gettan 1697, vol. 1, p. 3.
- ⁴⁰ Tetsugyū 1700, vol. 12, p. 6.
- ⁴¹ The following appellations are the ones most commonly used: “*Makkō* (a kind of incense) Kannon image” 抹香観音瑞像, “Kannon incense image” 観音香象/香像, and “*Shikimi*-leaf Kannon image” 櫛葉観音瑞像.
- ⁴² Kōsen 1684, vol. 20, p. 9.
- ⁴³ Watson 1993, p. 39.

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【要旨】

神聖な「葉」から神聖なイメージへ：
元瑤尼の観音像の造像法とその施し

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京都の林丘寺という尼門跡寺院の開祖である照山元瑤(1634~1727)は非常に優れた芸術家であり、観音に対する信仰心を仏画及び仏像で表現した。後水尾天皇の皇女で、31歳の時に菩薩戒を受け、その後、後水尾天皇が1680年に亡くなった時に出家した。彼女は画家として広く知られており、観音図を千点以上描いた記録が残っている。その仏画は、主に京都と滋賀の寺に祀られていて、日本の他の地方でも見られる。しかし彼女が造った観音彫像は、絵に比べるとあまり知られていない。その観音彫像を造るプロセスは非常にユニークで、それについては何人かの黄檗禅僧が詳しく書物で述べている。そのプロセスとは、まず榊(しきみ)という木から葉を集めて、各葉に「観世音菩薩」という名号を書き、その葉を粉末にする。粉末にしたものは(当時、線香の一種であった)、他の線香と漆と膠と一緒に混ぜられ、小さい聖観音像の型に入れられて造像された。これらの観音像は、高さ約10センチあまりで、信者たちに施された。ある記録によると、元瑤尼は三千三百三十軀を造ったとされている。しかし、最近までそのうちの林丘寺門跡の4軀が確認されているのみであった。平成13年の夏、元瑤尼と親交のあった滋賀県の寺で、この観音彫像数軀が見つかった。その内の何軀かは、もともと寺の檀家たちに配られたものである。この発表では、元瑤尼の信仰心と、修行の一つである小さい聖観音像造像のプロセスについて考察してみたい。また、この観音像の材料である榊の聖なる本質の意味を考えてみたい。