

Articles 【研究論著】

**PAN GU and His Descendants:  
Chinese Cosmology in Medieval Japan**  
盤古及其後代：論日本中古時代的中國宇宙論

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way of Yin and Yang/Onmyôdô

**關鍵詞：**盤古、中國宇宙論、日本中古時代、五行、陰陽之道

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## Abstract

Chinese cosmology has had a deep impact on Japanese culture, not only on the philosophical plane, but also in the religious domain. Under a mythologic and ritual form, Chinese notions such as the theory of the Five Phases or Agents (wuxing) spread throughout medieval Japan, through the intermediary of the so-called Way of Yin and Yang (Onmyôdô). The present article examines the development of the myth of the Primordial Man, Pan Gu, who became in Japan King Banko - and of his five children (corresponding to the Five Agents), as found in ritual texts such as the Gogyô no saimon. The passage from chaos to cosmos, through the harmonization of the Five Agents, is thus described mythologically as the resolution of a conflict that opposed one of these "Princes" (ôji), named Gorô ("Fifth Son," corresponding to the Agent Earth) to his four brothers. Myths of that kind illustrate the popularity of the cult of the Earth deity (Kenrô Jijin) in medieval Japan - even within Buddhism - as well as the survival of notions inherited from Han cosmology. They also show how these notions were adapted to the Japanese context and contributed to the creation of a specifically Japanese culture.

## 摘要

中國的宇宙論對日本文化向來有深遠的影響。其影響所及不僅在哲學層面，還有在宗教的範疇。中國的概念，像是五行之說，在日本的中古時代以神話和儀式的形式，透過陰陽之道（Onmyôdô）的中介，遍傳日本。本文檢視宇宙初人盤古（後來演變成日本王 Banko）及其五子（此乃按五行之說而來；在日本的儀式文本 Gogyô no saimon 中有所描寫）相關神話的演變。此神話敘述五「王子」（ôji）中的五郎（和五行中的土行對應）和其他四個王子之間鬥爭的妥協結果。此乃宇宙五行進入和諧的過程，亦說明了宇宙如何從混沌進入有序。這個神話闡明了日本中古時代土神（Kenrô Jijin）崇拜（即使在佛教圈中）受到歡迎的原因，也印證了自漢人宇宙論承襲而來觀念的存留。此外，藉此亦可一窺這些概念如何被改寫成日本的文本，並對日本文化的創造有何貢獻。

Han cosmology has been well studied in the West, in particular since the work of Marcel Granet and Joseph Needham.<sup>1</sup> Also worth mentioning is the attempt made at the turn of the century by Marcel Mauss and Emile Durkheim to provide a sociological grounding to these systems of meaning. In their seminal essay, “Primitive Classification,” Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss tried to describe Chinese cosmology as a particular case of binary structure, itself derived from a fundamentally dualist social structure.<sup>2</sup> Without sharing their sociological fundamentalism, we will retain the ideological nature of this bipartition and the agonistic character of this complementarity, often hidden by scholars who take at face value Asian discourses about “harmony.”

However, the impact of Chinese cosmology outside China has been generally ignored. This is particularly true as regard its “matricial” role in Japanese Buddhism, which provided an epistemological and ideological foundation to medieval Japanese culture.<sup>3</sup> Thus, even today, notions such as the Five Phases (or Agents, *wuxing* 五行) are usually discussed in the context of orthodox Confucian cosmology, or in that of popular divinatory techniques — usually dismissed as mere “superstitions,” according to an elitist conception that dominated generations of Confucian literati, Western missionaries, and Sinologists. I do not intend to enter into such arcane discussions, and will therefore give simply a rapid sketch of fundamental concepts of Chinese “correlative thinking,” presumed familiar, in order to focus on their Japanese avatars.

The so-called correlative or associative thinking draws systematic correspondences among aspects of various orders of reality (the human body, the body politic, and heavenly bodies). According to this holistic approach, things and events are connected, resonating with each other rather than resulting from external causes. Chinese cosmology thus establishes homologies between nature and society. The world is perceived as a taxonomic system, in which “What is above is like what is below.”

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1968); Joseph Needham ed., *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, translated by Rodney Needham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>3</sup> See Bernard Faure, “De deux à Cinq: Figures de l’épistémologie japonaise,” *Daruma* 3 (1998).

The Five Phases or Agents (wood, metal, water, fire, and earth) are related to (or regulate) the five periods (the four seasons and the so-called intercalary season, tuyong 土用), but also various orders of reality such as the five directions (the cardinal points and the center), the five tastes, smells, planets, colors, sense organs, viscera, as well as the five classes of plants and animals. This generative schema operates a kind of spatialization of thought: everything has a place, and every place has a specific value. Thus, to locate something is to know it and to have power on it. Harmony or efficiency means to be at the right place at the right time doing the right thing. Furthermore, classification leads to correlation: things belonging to related categories enter into resonance with one another.

The associations between various symbolic orders are encapsulated in the Chinese compass, which constitutes a synthesis of the main cosmological symbols: the Yin and the Yang, the eight trigrams of the *Yi jing* 易經, the Five Phases or Agents, the twelve cyclical signs, and, through the combination of the latter two sets, the sixty symbols or positions of the sexagesimal cycle.

The fusion of the Chinese and Buddhist cosmological systems was achieved in esoteric Buddhism, first in China with the work of Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong 不空), and in Japan with Kūkai 空海 (d. 835) and his successors — in particular Kakuban 覺鑾 (1095-1143).<sup>4</sup> It was also elaborated in the so-called “Way of Yin and Yang” (J. *onmyōdō* 陰陽道). A case in point is the ritual system centered on Tugong (J. Dokō 土公), the Earth god. Dunhuang manuscripts contain descriptions of a ritual of Tugong that call to mind the nine-square structure of the imperial “Luminous Hall” (*mingtang* 明堂). We have here a dynamic structure: in the central square of the diagram, Tugong is represented sitting. In the four squares corresponding to the four sectors North, South, East, and West, he is shown riding a horse. On the inside perimeter of the square, the sixty-four hexagrams of the *Yi jing* are disposed clockwise, with indications allowing to follow Tugong’s periodical transfer.<sup>5</sup> A similar description is found in Japan, in a

<sup>4</sup> See in particular Kakuban’s *Gorin kuji myō himitsushaku* 五輪九字妙秘密釋, in the *Taishō Daizōkyō* (T. 79, 2514); and Henny van der Veere, *A Study into the Thought of Kōgyō Daishi Kakuban* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2000), pp. 125-218.

<sup>5</sup> The diagram also provides a list of calendrical predictions on the days for giving thanks to the earth god (xietu 謝土) and prognostics depending on the position occupied each day of the

section of the *Hoki naiden* on “The Transformations of Dokô (Tugong): ‘During the three months of Spring, he dwells in the stove; during the three months of Summer, he dwells at the gate; during the three months of Fall, he dwells within the house; during the three months of Winter, he dwells in the yard.’”<sup>6</sup> As can be seen, Dokô transforms during the four periods. Thus, he is the lord of the 3,000 worlds, he is the god of the great firm earth (J. Kenrô Daijijin 堅牢大地神).<sup>7</sup> We have texts suggesting that Tugong was perceived as a cosmic deity like Pan Gu, who performed “nine transformations” in a day.

## 1. Chinese Cosmology in Japan

Chinese cosmology, as expressed in compendiums such as the *Wuxing taiyi* 五行大義, imposed itself in Asian cultures in conceptions related to space and time. The directional grid was applied to both earthly and heavenly space. Whereas earthly directions tended to organize human space, heavenly directions (related to the phases of the moon and the rotation of the constellations around the Polar) came to rhythm human time and the course of meteorological phenomena. In this way, the directions came to be seen as the seats of the powers that control and protect human destiny. The establishment of a series of spatial analogies between the house, the body, and the universe — as it had taken shape in Chinese thought already before the Han — reached an even more advanced degree with Daoism and with the introduction of Tantrism (through the mandala).

From the eighth century onward, topomancy (the Chinese *fengshui*) became a central feature of Japanese life. At the institutional level, it spread through

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month by the Earth Talisman (*tufu* 土符). See ms. Pelliot (P 2964 Recto): *Collection of various hemerological methods*. See also: P 2615, P 3954 Recto, P 3602 Verso, Stein PG Recto, “Daily transfer of Tugong” (*Tugong riyō* 土公日遊). See Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八, *Nihon onmyōdō sho no kenkyū* 日本陰陽道書の研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1985), pp. 391-392; and Marc Kalinowski ed., *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2004), p. 257.

<sup>6</sup> See *Hoki naiden* in *Shintō taikai* 神道體系 (hereafter ST), “Ronsetsu-hen” 論說編 16, “Onmyōdō” 陰陽道 59. See also *Zoku gunsho ruiju* 續群書類從, vol. 31, ed. by Hanawa Hokiichi (Tokyo: Zoku gunsho ruiju kanseikai, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> See *Hoki naiden*, *ibid.*

what came to be called *onmyôdô* (the Way of Yin and Yang). In the Code system (*ritsuryô seido* 律令制度) that prevailed from the eighth century onward, *onmyôdô* was placed under the jurisdiction of a Bureau of Yin and Yang (*onmyôryô* 陰陽領). With the disintegration of that system in the Heian period, this Bureau lost its privileges and divinatory techniques became the preserve of individual specialists called Yin-Yang masters (*onmyôji* 陰陽師). This evolution was part of a broader trend toward the privatization of rituals among the aristocracy, a trend also affected the rituals of esoteric Buddhism. As these rituals became increasingly individualized, their apotropaic elements came to the forefront. The name *onmyôji* thus no longer designated merely the officials of the Bureau of Yin and Yang, specialized in astral phenomena and calendrical topics; it also referred to independent, charismatic ritual specialists, wielding power over demons. Although he was himself affiliated with the *onmyôryô*, Abe no Seimei 安倍晴明 (dates) was particularly representative of that new type of religious specialists.

Although the Japanese term *onmyôdô* emphasizes the Yin-Yang polarity, equally important was the theory of the Five Phases or Agents (*wuxing*, J. *gogyô* 五行) that developed alongside with it. Thus, the system is more properly called Theory of the Yin and Yang and of the Five Agents (*yin yang wuxing shuo* 陰陽五行説). Chinese cosmology was no longer essentially a “proto-scientific” theory: it was above all a set of apotropaic rituals, whose proliferation led to a “re-mythologization” of Chinese cosmology.

Taboos of all kind, in particular directional taboos (*kata-imi*) came to govern every aspect of the life of the Japanese aristocracy during the Heian period. Among protective rituals, an important place was given to rites stabilization of the ground (*anchin* 安鎮) and of the house (*chintaku* 鎮宅). These rites consisted mainly in placing stones and other prophylactic materials in various parts of the house (usually the central yard and/or the four directions, in accordance with the symbolism of the Five Agents. During such rites, the priest usually prayed to the gods of the Five Directions, called the Five Dragons (*goryu* 五龍) or the Five Emperors (*gottei* 五帝).<sup>8</sup> The quinary model provided by the Five Agents theory,

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<sup>8</sup> On the Five Dragons and the Five Agents, see Iwata Masaru 岩田勝, *Kagura genryu kô* 神樂源流考, pp. 177-179. On the Five Dragons in esoteric Buddhism, see *ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

emphasizing the five directions and the five periods, was challenged or rather supplemented by other models of Chinese or Indian/Buddhist origin, emphasizing eight or twelve directions.<sup>9</sup> The latter merged with the schema of the twelve cyclical animals, based on the Chinese hemerological system. Edouard Chavannes argued that the list of the twelve animals was of Iranian origin.<sup>10</sup> However, most scholars seem to agree today that it is of Chinese origin. The schema continued to develop under a Buddhist garb, with the twelve Spirit-Commanders (juni shinshô 十二神將) that form the retinue of the Buddha Yakushi 藥師 (Skt. Baisajyaguru), each wearing an animal-head on his helmet.<sup>11</sup>

Another Chinese belief that came to play an important role in medieval Japan is the belief in the god of Tai shan (Taishan fujun, J. Taizan Fukun 泰山府君), Lord of the underworld. As is well known, this belief derived itself from the Five Phases theory, since, according to the spatial conception of the Five Peaks, the Tai shan or Eastern Peak was said to govern life (and therefore death).

An interesting example of combination of Chinese and Tantric notions is found in the *Taizan Fukun saimon* 泰山府君祭文, a ritual text dedicated to a deity of the underworlds that controls human life, Taizan Fukun (Ch. Taishan fujun 泰山府君, the god of Mount Tai). During this ritual, the officiating priest invoked various sets of directional symbols: the eight Indian devas acting as protectors of the directions, the eight butchô 佛頂 (Skt. Buddhosnisa), emanations of the crown (Skt. *usnisa*) of the Buddha Dainichi 大日 (Skt. Mahavairocana), the twelve Spirit-Commanders of the Buddha Yakushi, the eight Trigrams of the *Yi jing* 易經, and the four directional emblems of ancient Chinese tradition — the so-called heraldic animals (Green Dragon, Red Bird, White Tiger, and Black Tortoise or Black Warrior).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The symbolism of the eight directions plus the center is also expressed in a nine-fold system, found in both the Tantric mandala and in Onmyôdô rituals.

<sup>10</sup> See Edouard Chavannes, "Le cycle turc des douze animaux," *T'oung Pao*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, no. 7, pp. 51-122.

<sup>11</sup> Such spatial and numerological symbolism fitted readily with Tantric symbolism. Tantric rituals are also placed under the protection another duodecimal series, the Twelve Devas.

<sup>12</sup> The list of the eight devas, going from the East to the North-east in clockwise fashion, is as follows: Indra (Taishaku; east), Agni (Katen 火天; south-east), Yama (Enmaten 閻魔天; south),

The *Yi jing* is representative of a demythologizing tendency. However, as de J. J. M. de Groot has pointed out in *The Religious System of China*, it was used, not only as an explanatory device to make sense of reality, but also as an apotropaic device.<sup>13</sup> The *Yi jing* cosmology offered an alternative to Tantric cosmology for new religious movements that, although strongly influenced by the so-called *kenmitsu* 顯密 Buddhism, attempted to distance themselves from it. Such is the case, after the Muromachi 室町 period (1392-1490), of Zen and Shintô.

According to Chinese hemerology, human destiny is governed by the Five Agents that constitute the essence of the Seven Luminaries (*qiyao* 七曜). According to the *Wuxing dayi* 五行大義, these Seven Luminaries are the Sun, the Moon, and the Five Planets (wuxing 五星), namely: Jupiter (*suixing* 歲星, corresponding to the East, and to the essence of Wood), Mars (*yonghuo* 熒惑星, corresponding to the South, and the essence of Fire), Saturn (*zhenxing* 辰星, corresponding to the Center, and the essence of Earth), Venus (*taibo* 太白, corresponding to the West, and to essence of Metal), and Mercury (*chenxing* 鎮星,

Nirriti (Rasetsu 羅刹; south-west), Varuna (Suiten 水天; west), Vayu (Fûten 風天; north-west), Vaisravana (Bishamonten 毘沙門天; north), and Isana (Ishana-ten 伊舍那天; north-east).

The eight Butchô are: Sitatapatra (J. Byakusangai 白傘蓋), Jaya (Shô 勝), Vijaya (Saishô 最勝), Vikirna (Sonshô 尊勝), Tejorashi (Hôkô 放光), Mahosnisa (Kôshô 廣生), Abhyudgata (Hosshô 發生), and Anantasvaraghosa (Muhenjô 無邊聲). See *Hôbôgirin: Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises*, vol. 1 (Paris, Adrien Maisonneuve), pp. 147-150, and vol. 4, pp. 596-98. See also the "Sonshô mandara" 尊勝曼荼羅 in *Asabashô, Taishô daizôkyô* 大正大藏經 (hereafter T.), section Iconographie (Zuzô 圖像), vol. 9, p. 52; *Byakuhô kushô* 白寶口鈔, *ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 468-75. They are often associated with the eight bodhisattvas and the eight Wisdom-kings (*myôô*).

The twelve Spirit-commanders are: Mahura, Pajira, Indra, Sandila, Majira, Andara, Mihira, Vajra, Kumbhira, Vikarala, Catura, and Cindra. They correspond to the twelve Chinese cyclical signs (Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Boar, Rat, Ox, Tiger). Among them, Kumbhira (J. Konpira 金比羅) came to assume a particular importance in Japanese religion.

The Five Dragons/Emperors are the Green Dragon (east), the Red Dragon (south), the White Dragon (west), the Black Dragon (north), and the Yellow Dragon (center). They become manifestations of the Five Buddhas in the Vajra-realm mandala.

<sup>13</sup> See J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China* (1910; reprint, Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1982), see also the review of de Groot's work by Marcel Mauss, in Marcel Mauss, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. by Victor Karady, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions de Minuit), pp. 607-627.



corresponding to the North, and to the essence of Water).<sup>14</sup> In Japan, the Five Agents were easily matched with the Five Heavenly generations of kami in classical Japanese mythology, and with the pentadic structure of Tantric cosmology. The Five Planets were very early on “mythologized”: for instance, Mars is depicted as a red horse-headed deity with six arms, riding a donkey.<sup>15</sup>

This cosmological system also served as a template for the creation of new mythological figures. By allowing to multiply relations between one thing and another, one order of reality and another, the theory of the Five Phases provided a narrative device that allowed, not only to create all kinds of abstract allegories, but also to invent new stories. A case in point, which was to become very important in medieval Japan, is the myth of Pan Gu and of his five children, to which we will turn shortly.

Chinese cosmology entered Japan at about the same time as Buddhism. During the sixth and seventh centuries, from the Korean peninsula came, not only Buddhist statues and texts, but also specialists of various kinds, as well as medical, astrological, and divinatory treatises like the *Yi jing*. In due time, the theories of *onmyôdô* (the Way of Yin and Yang) came to govern practically every aspect of everyday life.

Originally, the Yin-Yang system was essentially an attempt to reduce the unknown to the known by localizing everything precisely in the grid of heaven and earth. It supplemented the emperor-centered Confucian system based on *chanwei* scriptures.<sup>16</sup> Paradoxically, although *onmyôdô* presented itself as a way to avert astral disaster and other such calamities, nevertheless contributed to increase fear and multiply interdictions of all kinds — in particular directional ta-

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<sup>14</sup> See *Wuxing dayi*, Section 16; trans. by Marc Kalinowski, *Cosmologie et divination dans la Chine ancienne: Le compendium des cinq agents (wuxing dayi, Vie siècle)* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1991), pp. 335-38.

<sup>15</sup> See Stephen Little, et al., eds., *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> On this question, see Abé Ryuichi, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kukai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 315-322. On *chanwei* scriptures, see Anna Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” in Michel Strickmann ed., *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honor of R. A. Stein*, vol. 2 (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1983), pp. 291-371.

boos (*kata-imi* 方忌) related to the “ambulatory stars” such as Daishôgun 大將軍, Taihaku (Taibo 太白), Ten’ichi (Tianyi 天一), Konjin (Jinshen 金神), and Oosô (Wangxiang 王相). Admittedly, *onmyôdô* also provided way to turn most of these taboos, through “direction changes” (*kata-tagae* 方違).<sup>17</sup>

As noted earlier, other important functions provided by *Onmyôdô* rituals were to “pacify” or “stabilize” the ground” (*anchin*) prior to construction and to drive away evil spirits. They shared these functions with Tantric Buddhist rituals. These ground-pacifying rituals included Daoist elements such as “trampling” the ground (*henbai*), an apotropaic technique associated with the famous “Pace of Yu” and incorporating the shapes of the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper (*ho-kuto shichisei* 北斗七星) and the Eight Trigrams of the *Yi jing*. These techniques, as well as their talismans of all kinds, eventually penetrated popular culture, and also influenced esoteric Buddhist rituals.<sup>18</sup>

Next to the directional deities, permanently controlling one direction, we find ambulatory astral deities, which occupy certain quarters of space at given dates, according to an extremely complex schedule. These deities, whose movements the Chinese imagined to be similar to those of the stars, were for instance the Hasshojin 八所神, the eight gods presiding to the eight directions. They were the children or formed the retrinue of a deity called Toshitoku 年得 (Year’s Virtue).<sup>19</sup> Among them, Daishôgun (the “Great General”) was believed to be particularly dangerous. Because of its complicated cycle — a combination of two cycles (one of twelve years, another of sixty days) — it occupied one or the other cardinal point for long periods and therefore required many expedients such as directional changes (*kata-tagae* 方違) to turn its interdictions.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See Bernard Frank, in *Kata-imi et kata-tagae: Etude sur les interdits de direction à l’époque Heian* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Etudes Japonaises, 1998), pp. 43-47.

<sup>18</sup> A case in point is the Tendai ritual of Sonjôdô 尊星王 (that is, Myôken Bosatsu 妙見菩薩, an avatar of the Polar Star), performed at Miidera 三井寺 (Onjôji 園城寺), in Ootsu City.

<sup>19</sup> (*Zoku gunshoruijû* 32, a: 90b). The direction of Toshitoku, unlike that of her children, is said to be “open.” It is from that direction that the year-god (*toshitoku-gami* 年得神) comes at New Year.

<sup>20</sup> See the *Xinxuan yin yang shu* 新撰陰陽書: “He descends to earth, and for a period of three years he becomes the deity ruling over a quarter [of space]. In twelve years, he has gone through the four sides. When [this revolution] is achieved, he starts all over again. Every three years, it

Onmyôdô theories were popularized in medieval Japan through texts such as the *Hoki naiden*, a compendium of technical matters attributed to Abe no Seimei, but probably dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century. It does not offer truly a system, but rather a compilation of disparate beliefs and techniques, which never reached the high level of systematization and metaphysic speculation of Japanese esoteric Buddhism. Significantly, it opens with two “origin stories” (*engi* 縁起): the first one related to the pestilence deity Gozu Tennô 牛頭天王 (the Deva-King with a Bull-Head) and his family, the second one to King Banko and his five heirs. It is the latter that will detain us here. The name Banko derives from that of Pan Gu 盤古, the primordial, cosmic man of classical Chinese mythology.<sup>21</sup> We see here the mythological emplotment of a cosmology based on the notion of the Five Phases or Agents (and placed under the protection of the Five Dragons).<sup>22</sup> It is this cosmological order, or rather this reordering of the universe through the invocation of the Five Dragons, which every onmyôdô ritual attempts to reenact in the hope thereby to remedy a disease or problem perceived as resulting from some cosmic disorder.

We noted that in China, cosmological theories such as the Five Agents theory had a demythologizing impact and constituted a proto-scientific explanation

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performs a change.” Or: “Without stopping in the four initial positions (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest), he takes as his strict positions the four cardinal points.” Quoted in Frank, 1998:166. Another interesting case is that of Kôjin 荒神, a deity that was believed to dwell at times within the house, at others in the yard, by the house gate, or at the bottom of the well.

<sup>21</sup> On Pan Gu, see Giovanni Vitiello, “Pan Gu: per lo studio del tema mitico dell’uovo cosmico e dell’uomo cosmico nell’area sino-tibetana,” *Cina* 19 (1984), pp. 7-27; and Marc Kalinowski, “Mythe, cosmogénèse et théogonie dans la Chine ancienne,” *L’Homme* 137 (1996), pp. 41-60.

<sup>22</sup> Another variant has to do with the temporal division of the twelve months — symbolized by twelve princesses, consorts of the “Lord of the land” (*jinushi*). It is the story of the twelfth consort, object of the others’ jealousy. The child she bears is perceived as a potential cause of decline for the king’s “house.” The king himself expels her, and she is eventually killed by her rivals. The child, who is born by tearing the placenta of his dying mother, is adopted by the god of Kumano, and returns to claim his rights. See Mauclair, “Le saimon du maître de la terre selon la tradition de l’Izanagiryu.” In *Mélanges offerts à René Sieffert à l’occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire*, 353-72. *Cipango: Cahiers d’Etudes Japonaises*, special issue (Paris: Publications Langues’O, 1994), pp. 361-366.

of the world.<sup>23</sup> In Japan, however, *onmyôdô* contributed to the development of mythological narratives centered on specific deities such as Gozu Tennô or King Banko (Pan Gu). Indeed, Japanese mythology shows the extent to which Chinese cosmological conceptions have penetrated the imagination of the medieval Japanese.

## 2. Pan Gu (Banko) and His Five Children

The mythological element seems specifically Japanese. In its rendition of the Banko myth, the *Hoki naiden* is apparently influenced by the *Zeitgeist* of the Muromachi period, in which mythology turns into a family romance and a quarrel about succession rights. The story has many variants, and I can only give a few of them here. Their outline is the same: before dying, King Banko bequeaths his kingdom to his four sons. However his consort, then pregnant with a fifth child, intervenes to insure a part of the inheritance to the latter, called Gorô 五郎 (Fifth Male).<sup>24</sup> Faced with his brothers' reluctance to give him his share, Gorô decides to fight. Peace will ultimately prevail, owing to the intervention of a sage who divides the kingdom (the spatio-temporal realm) among the five princes. He gives the central region to Gorô, whereas the four other brothers obtain the four quarters of space. Gorô also receives a part of the four seasons — the last eighteen days of each, called *doyô* (Chinese *tuyong* 土用).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> However, that demythologizing or “disenchanting” tendency (in the Weberian sense) has perhaps to do with the Confucian bias of the interpreters. On the basis of the Guodian tomb 郭點 discovery, Donald Harper has recently argued that in ancient China *Taiyi* 太一 (The Great One) was not an abstract metaphysical principle, but a very real cosmic deity. See Donald Harper, “The Nature of *Taiyi* in the Guodian: Manuscript *Taiyi sheng shui*: Cosmic Principle or Supreme Cosmic Deity?” in *Zhongguo chutu shiliao yanjiu* 中國出土資料研究 5 (2001), pp. 1-23.

<sup>24</sup> The name Gorô seems also related to *goryô* 御靈 (“August spirit”), a honorific term used to placate powerful malevolent spirits, whose cult developed rapidly during the Heian period. Gozu Tennô, the epidemic deity mentioned above, was initially one of these malevolent spirits before being integrated into the Shinto pantheon.

<sup>25</sup> On this myth and its variants, see for instance Murayama Shuichi 村山修一, 1997; id., *Nihon onmyôdôshi sôsetsu* 日本陰陽道史總說 (2000), pp. 331-337; Komatsu Kazuhiko 小松和彦, *Kamigami no seishinshi* 神々の精神史, pp. 332-341; id., *Hyôrei shinkôron* 憑靈信仰論 (Tokyo: Kôdansha), pp. 173-174; Iwata Masaru 岩田勝, *Kagura genryu kô* 神樂源流考 (Tokyo: Meicho shuppan, 1983), pp. 96-205; Simone Mauclair, “Histoire et ethnographie: Le *saimon*

In a fragmentary painted scroll dated 1350, and belonging to the Tendai temple Myōhō-in 妙法院 in Kyoto, Banko is depicted as the cosmic man of Chinese cosmology: his head corresponds to heaven, his feet to the earth, etc. Some Buddhist elements are added, however: In heaven he is called Bonten (Brahmā), on earth Kenrō Jijin 堅牢地神 (the Earth-deity); his original form is the Buddha Dainichi (Mahavairocana). He is the father of the Five Dragons.<sup>26</sup>

A ritual text (*saimon* 祭文) of the late medieval period entitled *Gogyō no saimon* 五行の祭文 (Saimon of the Five Agents) offers an example of the synthesis between the Five Phases, the Five Dragons, and the Five Buddhas.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, a has shift occurred, from the Five Dragon-Kings to the Five Princes — the children of King Banko (Ch. Pan Gu), mentioned above. Originally, the Five Dragons were subaltern, demonic beings, who served as emissaries (*misaki*) of the Five Great Wisdom-kings (五大明王) of esoteric Buddhism; but gradually, through an anthropomorphizing process that led to call them “Princes” (*ōji* 王子), they lost their demonic nature and rose in the heavenly hierarchy, to the point of obtaining a status equal to that of the Five Wisdom-kings. In a slightly ulterior *saimon* (dated 1546), they are invoked side by side with the Five Wisdom-kings, and they even have the priority in the incantatory sequence.<sup>28</sup> The shift also reflects their domestication: they are no longer semi-demonic gods who cast spells on humans, but protectors of the collectivity and

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du dieu souverain Kōjin à Monobe-mura,” in Jacqueline Pigeot and Hartmut O. Rotermund eds., *Le Vase de beryl: Etudes sur le Japon et la Chine en honneur à Bernard Frank* (Editions Philippe Picquier), pp. 125-136; Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正崇, “Le chamanisme japonais en transition,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient*, pp. 240-243; id., “Yumi kagura to Doku saimon: Bingo no kōjin saishi o chushin to shite” 弓神楽と土公祭文—備後の荒神祭祀を中心として, *Minzoku geinō* 民族芸能 3 (1986).

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Murayama, *Nihon onmyōdō-shi sōsetsu* (2000), p. 337.

<sup>27</sup> See Iwata, “Gohō ni kanjō-sareta shinbutsu no henbō” 五方に勧請された神仏の変貌, in Tanaka Hisao 田中久夫, *Fudō shinkō* 不動信仰, *Minshu shukyōshi sōsho* 25 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1993), pp. 341-348.

<sup>28</sup> See Iwata (1993), p. 346; see also *Nihon shomin bunka shiryō shusei* 日本庶民文化資料集成, vol. 1.

of the individual. As to Gorô himself, he seems to have become the object of a flourishing cult toward the end of the Muromachi period.<sup>29</sup>

In the Five Phases scheme, the center is the position of the Earth, and Gorô is clearly identified with Dokô (Tugong), the deity worshiped in earth-pacification rituals. This Dokô (var. Dokku) too has lost its demonic features as he becomes worshiped as a god called Dokku-jin 土公神. He also has affinities with the Stove-God (*zaojun* 竈君).

In some variants, for instance in the *Ooji kagura* 王子神樂, the fifth child of King Banko is a girl, called “Princess Gorô” (Gorô no Himemiya 五郎姫宮). Banko has given to his four sons the four seasons and seats at the four sides of the hearth (*irori*). When the girl, born after his father’s death, claims her inheritance, her brothers dismiss her. She goes to war against them, and the matter is finally settled through the arbitration of Monsen Hakase 文選博士 (var. Monzen 門前).<sup>30</sup> She eventually receives the four *doyô*, and the place at the center of the hearth. In other words, she is identical with the Fire God.

Another development can be seen the *Dokû saimon* 土公祭文 of Oku-Mikawa 奥三河 (near Nagoya): here, King Banko 盤固 and his four spouses have given birth to four sons, who inheriting the four sectors of the world from their father. Banko’s first wife give birth to the green dragon-king, the Green Emperor, who controls the seventy-two days of spring, and engenders himself ten princes (the so-called Ten Stems of Chinese hemerology). His second wife gives birth to the red dragon-king, who controls the seventy-two summer days, and engenders twelve princes (the Twelve Branches).<sup>31</sup> His third wife gives birth to the White dragon-king, who controls the seventy-two autumn days, and engenders twelve princes (the twelve “Houses”). His fourth wife gives birth to the Black dragon-king, who controls the seventy-two winter days, and engenders

<sup>29</sup> See Hagiwara Tatsuo 萩原, *Kamigami to sonraku: rekishigaku to minzokugaku to no setten* 神々と村落——歴史學と民俗學との接點 (Tokyo: Kôbundô, 1978), p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> The term *hakase* 博士 (“Doctor”) is a title usually given to Yin-Yang Masters.

<sup>31</sup> See also the *Honji of the Ten Stems and Twelve Branches*, in which the *honji* (Original Grounds) of hemerological deities are buddhas and Wisdom-kings. The first consort of Pan Gu gives birth to the Ten Stems, the second to the Twelve Branches, the third to the Twelve “Guests” (*junikyaku* 十二客), the fourth to the Nine Dragon-kings (corresponding to the seventy-two winter days), the fifth to the Yellow Dragon-kings.

nine princes (the nine “Charts”). Last but not least, the fifth wife gives birth to the Yellow dragon-king, who controls the seventy-two day period formed by the *doyô* of the four seasons. The latter marries Kenrô Jijin (the Earth-deity) and gives birth to forty-eight princes. However, a princess has been born after Banko’s death, and she is left without domain. She goes to a western land, where she is adopted by the king and eventually inherits the three regalia of the Japanese imperial house.<sup>32</sup>

An annex in one of the versions of the Hoki *naiden* also mentions a princess who marries King Kenrô Jijin [the Earth-Deity] and gives birth to forty-eight children. However, as she is left without inheritance, she goes to war against her brothers. Significantly, she turns into a man on the battlefield (perhaps owing to a Buddhist influence) and takes the title of “Yellow Dragon-king.” There follows a 17-day battle with the four dragon-kings, near the Ganga river (Ganges), under the twin Sala trees.<sup>33</sup> Monzen Hakase 門前博士 intervenes when he sees blood flowing in the river, and puts an end to the battle. He gives the intercalary periods (*doyô*) of the four seasons to the Yellow Dragon-king, and peace returns.<sup>34</sup>

The mention of Kenrô Jijin in these stories is particularly significant. The cult of the Earth-deity became specially important in medieval Japan in the tradition of the blind singer-monks (*biwa hôshi* 琵琶法師) who recited the apocryphal *Earth-deity sûtra* (*Jijin-kyô* 地神經) while playing the lute (*biwa*).<sup>35</sup> In some commentaries (*shakumon* 釋文) on the *Jijin-kyô*, we find an original development of the myth of Banko and his children.<sup>36</sup> According to one of these sources, the great king Bango 番五 (var. 番後) of the land of Shinran (probably

<sup>32</sup> See Iwata Masaru (1983), pp. 194-197.

<sup>33</sup> In the canonic Buddhist legend, these trees are those between which the Buddha enters into final extinction (*parinirvana*).

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Komatsu (1994), p. 185.

<sup>35</sup> On the cult of the Earth-deity by blind monks, see Araki Hiroyuki and Nishioka Yôko eds., *Jijin môsô shiryôshu* 地神盲僧資料集, Denjô bungaku shiryô shÛsei 19 (Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 2000), Masuo Shin’ichirô 増尾伸一郎, “*Jijin-kyô* hensô: jijin môsô to Chôsen no biwa koji, fugeki to no aida” 「地神經」變奏——地神盲僧と朝鮮の琵琶居士, in 經巫とのあいだ, *Kokubungaku* 國文學 8 (2001), pp. 65-72.

<sup>36</sup> See for instance “Ooji no shaku” 王子の釋, in Araki and Nishioka 2000, pp. 252-261.

a mistake for Shiragi 新羅, or Silla, a Korean kingdom) had twelve sons. Among these princes, five are the “landlords” (*jinushi* 地主) of Japan: Tarô 太郎 ruled over the east and spring; Jirô over the south and summer, Saburô 三郎 over the west and autumn, Shirô 四郎 over the north and winter. The last one, Gorô 五郎, was born after the death of the king. But, as his father bequeathed to him a sword that entitled him to inherit the earth, sun and moon, he claimed them from his brothers and a struggle ensued. The four brothers turn into four dragons (green, red, white, and black, following the Five Phases symbolism) and attack him from the four directions, but Gorô turns into a yellow dragon and counter-attacks. When the elder brother, Tarô, turns into a tree deity to crush him, Gorô makes the wind mudra and blows him off to the east. When Jirô turns into the fire spirit, Gorô makes the water mudra and extinguishes him. When Saburô turns into the metal deity and attacks him with a sword, Gorô turns into a large rock. When Shirô turns into the water deity and tries to drown him in a flood, Gorô turns into a huge mountain.

Finally, the five brothers resort to the arbitration of the great king Monzen, who divides the earth into four sectors, and the year into four periods. Tarô gets the East and the first seventy-two days of spring (the eighteen remaining days going to Gorô). Jirô gets the south and the first seventy-two days of summer, Saburô the west and the first seventy-two days of autumn, Shirô the north and the first seventy-two days of winter. Gorô gets the center of the spatial realm, as well as the four *doiyô* (Ch. *tuyong*), four periods of eighteen days each, amounting to a total of seventy-two days.<sup>37</sup>

This distribution shows the identity between Gorô, Dokô (Tugong), and another important Japanese deity named Kôjin (“rough god”), sometimes identified with the Stove-god. Like Dokô, Kôjin is known for its seasonal transfers. Thus, because he dwells in the stove in spring, at the gate in summer, in the well in autumn, in the yard in winter, during the spring one does not repair the stove, in summer one leaves the gate open, in autumn one does not dig wells, and in winter one does not work in the yard.

Finally, this commentary tells how Gorô, having received from the great king Bango the great earth and the “four joints” of the year, became the tutelary

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<sup>37</sup> See *Hoki naiden*, ST, op. cit., p. 60.



deity (jinushigami) of Japan. Because they worshiped specially the Prince Gorô who controls the *doiyô* of the four seasons, blind monks performed their purification rituals during these intercalary periods.

The mixture of Chinese cosmological themes with Buddhist ideas is even more apparent in another text recited by the blind monks, the *Bussetsu jijin dai darani ôji kyô*. We are told that the Buddha, owing to his skillful means, appeared in China as the great king Bangon 伴權 (Pan Gu).<sup>38</sup> He also appears as the Buddha Dainichi of the Vajra-realm (Kongôkai 金剛界) mandala, as the Earth-deity (Kenrô Jijin) of the Womb-Realm (Taizôkai 胎藏界) mandala, and, in the lower world, as the dragon-girl (of the *Lotus Sutra*). Through the skillful means of man and woman, he gave birth to six heirs: five princes and a princess. The five princes are the Five Emperors, the Dragon-kings of the Five Directions, etc. There follows an entire cosmology and calendar, enumerating the children of the five dragons.

The text continues: after his birth, “the kôjin [that was] in his mother’s womb [at the time of King Bangon’s death] obtained the *doiyô* and became the god of the center.” It is worth noting that Gorô, the “Fifth prince”, is called here the “kôjin in the womb.” This kôjin appears as the Earth-deity (Kenrô Jijin) and protects the entire land. He has three faces, and a wrathful appearance. Follows a dialogue between Kôjin and his mother. Kôjin claims his inheritance and asks who is his father. The mother replies: “Your father is the Buddha Dainichi [Vairocana] of the Vajra-Realm, and I [your mother] am the Kenrô Jijin (Earth-goddess) of the Womb-Realm. You are the Dharma-body. To raise you at the bottom of the sea, I have also manifested myself as a dragon-woman, and I raised you till the age of seven.” Kôjin then confronts his brothers, with an army of 98,000 great deities of calamities.

In this version, the final arbitration between the five brothers is done by the bodhisattva Monju (Manjûshri), who gives the *doiyô* (seventy-two days) to Kôjin, and also gives an intercalary month (once every three years) to the sixth child, the princess (*hime-miya* 姫宮, identified with the dragon-goddess Benzaiten 弁財天). The Yellow Dragon at the center is the Buddha Dainichi. Because he protects the land, the villages and the houses, he is called Sanbô Kôjin 三寶荒神

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<sup>38</sup> See Iwata (1983), p. 124.

(Kôjin of the Three Treasures), and he also appears as Stove God and Earth-deity (Dokô), or Earth-king (Doô 土王). During the Spring, he controls the stove; during the summer, the wooden gate; during the fall, the bottom of the well; during the winter, the stable. Hence the various taboos regarding these places. During each season, he is turned toward the corresponding direction and protects beings.

## Conclusion

The tradition of the Five Princes, based on the Five Agents theory, spread in the medieval period in onmyôdô texts like the the *Hokishô* and the *Hokinaiden*, in collections of legends (*setsuwa* 説話) and in musical texts, but also in numerous plays and kagura 神樂: gogyô kagura 五行神樂 (Kagura of the Five Phases), gogyô no mai 五行の舞 (Dance of the Five Phases), Gorô no mai 五郎の舞 (Dance of Gorô), Godairyûô 五大龍王 (The Five Great Dragons), etc.).<sup>39</sup>

The importance of the myth of the Five Princes in popular Japanese culture is clear from the fact that, until very recently, it was one of the central features of many kagura, temple-entertainments offered to the gods. These kagura, which became part of the famous Flower Festival (Hana matsuri 花祭), have been preserved till today in various places. King Banko and his five children appear for instance in the rituals of the so-called Izanagi-ryû いざなぎ流 in Tosa 土佐 (Kôchi 高知 Prefecture).<sup>40</sup> The name Izanagi is that of a demiurge who is not exactly the same figure as the Izanagi of Shinto mythology, but rather a god dwelling in India and identified with the cosmic man Bangon or Banko (Pan Gu). Through Chinese cosmology, irremediably intertwined with Indian, Buddhist, Chinese, and Japanese mythological elements, the basic spatio-temporal structures of the Chinese worldview have served for the creation of a thoroughly Japanese culture, showing, once more, that any tradition implies a forgetting of its origins.

<sup>39</sup> See Iwata, *ibid.*; and Hagiwara (1978), pp. 167-183.

<sup>40</sup> See Komatsu Kazuhiko, "Izanagi-ryu no saimon: 'Shaka, Kôtei no saimon'" いざなぎ流の祭文——「釋迦」。こうていの祭文, *Nihon gakuhô* 3 (1984), pp. 123-132.