CHAPTER 8

The Phallus as Kami: The Cult of Konsei Daimyōjin

One of the themes of this book is that the word phallicism, with its conventional concentration on the male element, is an expression that should be employed only with care in the context of Japan’s sexual shrines. There are certain places, however, where phallicism would appear to be the only appropriate term to use. This is partly owing to the lack of ktenic imagery at these shrines but also because their central and very prominent phalluses act neither as offerings nor as protective symbols. Instead they provide the goshintai for a very individual and mysterious kami known as Konsei Daimyōjin, whose name is usually written as 金勢大明神 or 金精大明神 (‘Konsei the great shining god’).

Konsei Daimyōjin may be encountered in a wide variety of shrines located primarily in northern Japan. The Matsunoki Konsei Shrine in Kazuno (Akita Prefecture) is one of the largest in the country. Others include the Dōso Konsei Daimyōjin 道祖金勢大明神 in Atsuta (Nagoya City), where Jizō’s protective role is complemented by Konsei Daimyōjin’s procreative symbolism.

A dominant phallus is not however entirely sufficient as a means of distinguishing these shrines from other places that display a single phallic symbol. All Konsei Daimyōjin are phalluses, but not all phalluses are Konsei Daimyōjin. Many will be protective sai no kami and there are some other named phallic goshintai with procreative specialities, although these are quite rare. Named phalluses known as Raseki Daimyōjin 裸石 大明神 are to be found in Hyōgo and Niigata Prefectures, and some phalluses may simply be referred to using the word mara in some combination such as kanamara.

If Konsei Daimyōjin is the enshrined kami his name will be found on an accompanying notice or on the phallus itself with the choice of characters for ‘Konsei’ being split about equally between 金勢 or 金精, although three Konsei Daimyōjin shrines in

1 The name may also be expressed as Konsei-sama and is subject to various dialect interpretations. Masuta identifies the use of Kōsen, Köhen, Kone and Kösei-sama within Aomori Prefecture alone. Another in Aomori is called Konsei Ōkami (2012, p. 37).
2 From a personal observation made on 23 April 2012.
3 Ashida 1963, p. 35 and from a personal observation made on 22 October 2012.
4 In Mukabaki (Hiroshima Prefecture) a stone that bears the name Omara-sama オマラサマ is the goshintai of a simple rural shrine. A notice board informs visitors that the stone was found by a village headman whose daughter was suffering from gonorrhoea. He prayed to Omara-sama and she was cured, since when it has received great devotion and has phalluses offered to it. (From a personal observation made on 6 March 2014).
Chiba, Ibaraki and Gifu Prefectures use the characters 魂生. In addition the names of both Konsei Daimyōjin shrines at Komaki Onsen in Misawa (Aomori Prefecture) are expressed using the characters 根精, as is the Konsei Ōkami in Sannohe in the same prefecture.

In only one Konsei Daimyōjin shrine studied in the course of this research does a female symbol appear to enjoy equal status with a phallus. Yet this apparent exception within the precincts of the Hiraide Shrine 平出神社 in Utsunomiya (Tochigi Prefecture) is in fact half of an in'yōseki standing outside the inner shrine that holds the unseen goshintai.5 In a similar manner the Konsei Daimyōjin in the village of Kobansawa (Saitama Prefecture) is surrounded by phallic votive offerings and has three female companions at its side. Even the three phalluses and one kteis at the Konsei Shrine at Ashinomaki Onsen (Fukushima Prefecture) are simply explained. The largest phallus is for Konsei Daimyōjin. The kteis is for Ame no Uzume, while the other phalluses stand for Sarutahiko and their offspring Ōta no Mikoto who are also enshrined there.6

5 From a personal observation made on 21 October 2012.
6 From a personal observation made on 1 July 2013.