Shogun Jizo and "Nichirin-no-Miei"

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Shogun jizo is an ikusa-gami (military deity) that was created as a consequence of the war among gods during the Middle Ages. The belief in this deity came into being on the occasion of battles that were confrontations and internal disputes between various men of influence in sacred sites of the Kannon (Goddess of Mercy). Together with the tales of the Sei-taishogun (military general), the character of the shogun jizo took on stronger character of a military deity.

"Nichirin-no-Miei" is held at Tonomine-Tanzan Jinja Shrine, and is symbolizing the birth of the shogun jizo.

"Nichirin-no-Miei" is a depiction of the appearance of nichirin (sun) at Tonomine Fuyuno, which was the battleground of the war that took place against Kofuku-ji Temple during the Ocho and Showa periods (1311—1312). It also depicts the legend of Sanshin Yogo (appearance of three gods), that took place near sacred sites of the Kannon. The strange three-eyed figure depicted at the bottom of the drawing wearing armor over full court dress is assumed to be Ryojo Hosshinno (Imperial Prince Priest Ryojo, son of Emperor Kameyama), who is somewhat reminiscent of the shogun jizo. The figure of Fujiwara-no-Kamatari, who is an incarnation of the shogun jizo, drawn in the upper part of the drawing inside an aureole is forming a counterpart to the three-eyed creature. The three aureoles drawn in the upper part of the picture are the sun, moon and Venus, and symbolize the Sanko jizo, which are linked to the Sanno Sanaho religious belief.

The world view of the shogun jizo belief represented in "Nichirin-no-Miei" has a close relationship with the rapid spread of the sun culture, which constitutes the Sanko belief together with the moon and Venus, that emerged from the middle of the Kamakura Period (1185—1333) through to the Period of the Northern and Southern Courts (1336—1392). By linking with the belief in the shogun jizo, the sun image came to narrow down to a symbol of the ideology and military power of warring gods.

This image of the sun representing the superiority of the sun over the moon and Venus in the heavens was a belief that was modeled on the superiority of the state and territory that
constituted Japan. It was a movement that advocated the superiority of Japanese gods, sanctified the territory of Japan and sought to position Japan in the center of the Buddhist cosmology. At the same time as being inextricably linked to the concept of the medieval state and territory of that period, the belief in the shogun jizo came to have a considerable influence over later periods.