FROM THE CHAIR

Another academic year has just concluded and while we look forward to the summer break we reflect back on the past months. As I write, the field of Japanese religion is saddened by the news that Carmen Blacker has passed away, on the morning of her 85th birthday. Perhaps the most influential British scholar of Japanese religions, Carmen Blacker’s work opened up a new understanding of religious practices in Japan. She was very supportive of the Centre, as she was of young scholars and of new initiatives, and I have fond memories of her visits in the early years of the Centre. We will be remembering her and honouring her scholarly contributions in coming events.

Last year several people were away from the CSJR. After Brian Boching took up a post at the University of Cork, John Breen also left London to take up a three-year assignment at Nichibunken in Kyoto. A few of our PhD students spent periods in Japan conducting fieldwork, and I myself was on sabbatical for the first two terms of 2008-2009. I am very grateful to Tullio Lobetti, who helped out during my absence assuring that the Centre’s activities were run smoothly. Tullio will continue to take care of the CSJR seminars in the next academic year, while I will spend two terms in Germany on a research fellowship.

Last year the Centre hosted fascinating guest lectures on as different topics as oracles, sacred biographies, astronomy, Shugendō, dream literature, and Buddhist art, while in the Japanese Religions Forum our postgraduate students discussed a range of contemporary practices, from Pentecostalism to shaman music to farming as a soteriological activity. Reports on some of these lectures and other related research notes can be read in this issue of the Newsletter. We also screened two recently released documentaries on Japanese religious practices, which offered an occasion to learn about less known aspects of Japanese religion. Other screenings are planned for the next academic year. In particular, I would like to draw attention to a documentary film on DT Suzuki, which we will show in the autumn term, jointly sponsored with the SOAS Centre of Buddhist Studies.

In the autumn term once again the CSJR will host the Numata Lectures, a series of ten lectures and seminars sponsored by the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, which this year will be delivered by Professor Michael Pye. The spring international workshop will again be held jointly with a Japanese research team. It focuses on Minakata Kumagusu, and is dedicated to Carmen Blacker, who first drew attention to the eccentric figure of Minakata. The workshop has been organised by Professor Ryugo Matsui, who is the CSJR academic visitor from April 2009 to March 2010. We are delighted to have this opportunity to learn about the findings of recent research on Minakata, in particular about Minakata’s specific interests in esoteric Buddhism.

I hope many of you who are in the London area will be able to attend the CSJR events.

Lucia Dolce
The Bukkyô Dendô Kyôkai Visiting Professorship 2009-10

In Collaboration with the SOAS Centre Of Buddhist Studies

Perceptions of Buddhism

A series of lectures and seminars delivered by Professor Michael Pye (Marburg)

15 Oct 2009: Opening lecture. Perceptions of Buddhism and the Buddhist concept of "skilful means".


29 Oct 2009: Interpreting the "three bodies" and the immeasurable length of life of the Tathāgata.


26 Nov 2009: Images of Buddhism East and West; with special reference to Suzuki Daisetsu and other Japanese presentations of Buddhism in modern times.

03 Dec 2009: Tominaga Nakamoto's eighteenth century critique of Buddhism: pre-western modernism.


17 Dec 2009: Buddhism and the ancestors in Japan. Does "Buddhism" really need the ancestors?

Michael Pye studied Modern Languages and Theology at Cambridge. He then spent five years in Japan before holding lecturing posts in Religious Studies at Lancaster and Leeds (where he was also awarded a Ph.D). Since 1982 he has been Professor of Religious Studies at Marburg University, Germany. Apart from a specialised interest in East Asian Buddhism and contemporary Japanese religions, he has travelled widely and has interests in broad issues of religion and society in the modern world.

5:00-6:30 pm, Room G3 (SOAS) ALL WELCOME

Contact: tl3@soas.ac.uk
A ZEN LIFE

D.T. SUZUKI

The Life and Thought of Buddhist Philosopher
Daisetz Suzuki

A Documentary by Michael Goldberg

Venue and Time
Brunei Lecture Theatre
SOAS, Russell Square
6.30pm
Thursday, 26 November 2009

Programme
6.30pm: Introduction
6.40pm: Film Screening
7.50pm: Q&A with Michael Goldberg & Panel Discussion
8.30pm: Light Reception

Profile: "A ZEN LIFE - D.T. Suzuki" is an award-winning 77-minute documentary about Suzuki Daisetz Teitaro (1875-1966), the Japanese Buddhist, prolific writer, and teacher credited with introducing Zen Buddhism to the West.

He practiced Zen under Abbot Shaku Siken at Enkakai Temple in Kita-Karasaki. In 1897 he went to the United States where he worked with Paul Carus as co-translator of Buddhist texts. He also made journeys to other countries in Europe and Asia. He produced a wide range of articles in English and Japanese and wrote over 100 books, including an introduction to Zen Buddhism, Zen and Japanese Culture, and The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk.

Michael Goldberg
Born 1945 in Montreal, Michael moved to Tokyo, where he has lived 30 years. His starting point is that of "un minoritaire dans la minorité." He has been known since the early 1970s as an initiator of video projects involving non-profit organisations. Michael's documentaries reflect his commitment to cross-cultural communication, of which "Passage/Passage-n-ga Mita Nippon" (Stories of Early Foreign Wives of Japanese) and "A ZEN LIFE - D.T. Suzuki" are examples.

Sponsoring Institutions
Daumian Anglo-Japanese Foundation
The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation

Hosted by
The SOAS Centre of Buddhist Studies
The SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

Organising Committee
Michael Barrett
Teisumi Ota Cowley
Lucia Dolce
Tadeusz Skorupski

Booking recommended, please inform: Tadeusz Skorupski, ts1@soas.ac.uk, 011442 000062 - Tullio Lobetti, tij3@soas.ac.uk

Photo of D.T. Suzuki by Mikiko Okamura
Friday, 19 February 2010
10:30 – 17:30, Room 4418
Russell Square Campus, SOAS

Workshop Programme

Introduction 10:30 - 11:00
Presentations 1 11:00 – 12:20
Ryugo Matsui (Ryukoku University)
Minakata Kumagusu and the British Museum

Yoshiya Tamura (Minakata Archives)
English essays of Kumagusu contributed to Nature and Notes and Queries

Lunch Break 12:20-13:30

Presentations 2 13:30 – 15:30
Anthony Boussemart (EFEO)
Dogi Horyu and 'mantra' Buddhism

Naoji Okuyama (University of Koyasan)
Correspondence between Kumagusu and Dogi Horyu

Kazuaki Komine (Rikkyo University)
Kumagusu and the comparative studies of folktale

Coffee break 15:30-16:00

Round Table Discussion 16:00-17:30

Saturday, 20 February, 10:00-16:00
Excursion following the footsteps of Kumagusu in London (open event, free participation)

This workshop is dedicated to Dr Carmen Blacker (1924-2009), a distinguished scholar of Japanese religion. Dr Blacker was awarded the Minakata Kumagusu Prize by Tanabe City in 1997 for introducing the works of Minakata to English readers.

For further information on this event, please contact:
Tullio Lobetti: tl3@soas.ac.uk
Ryugo Matsui: rmatsui@world.ryukoku.ac.jp

MINAKATA Kumagusu (1867-1941) lived in London from 1892 to 1900 after his five year stay in the US and Cuba. He was very active in the academic society there, contributing 51 English essays to Nature magazine and 323 to Notes and Queries, including those written after his return to Japan. Although Minakata worked solely in Tanabe, Wakayama, relatively separated from mainstream Japanese academics in the latter half of his life, he is now regarded as a pioneer of comparative Folklore Studies, Buddhist Studies, History of Science, as well as of Nature Conservation, based on his ecological research on wild forests. Such achievements are all deeply rooted in the academic influences he received during his London days. This workshop is the first international attempt to focus on the relation between his experiences in London and his later thoughts, based on the results of the researches on his figure recently conducted in Japan.
Centre Activities Report

CSJR Spring International Workshop 2008

Shinya Mano (SOAS)

On March 17-18 2008, the CSJR organised a workshop on the role of religious practices and texts in Japanese religion, in cooperation with Nagoya University. The first day was devoted to reports by research students of Nagoya University and SOAS on the results of their current study. Before this, we benefitted from a visit to the British Library to examine manuscripts related to the Taishokukan story, of which Professor Yasurō Abe of Nagoya University is a specialist. Professor Abe was also the speaker at the special seminar, held on the second day.

The first day was divided into three panels, according to the methodological approach. The first was on anthropological and ethnographic research. Naoko Kobayashi (Nagoya University) explored the Oza ritual of Mt Ontake, based on ethnographic fieldwork. She highlighted the significance of believers’ individual experience, in which the existence of reijin (divine spirit) is confirmed through directly “meeting” and “talking” with them through the Oza rite. She also addressed different ways of communication with divine spirits, which revealed a highly sophisticated self in the process of performing Ontake rituals. In the next presentation, entitled “Heaven Among Us?: The Social relevance of Asceticism in Contemporary Japan”, Tulio Lobetti (SOAS) examined the interrelationship between professional ascetics and lay-supporters: they both share a fixed space and, according to Lobetti, analysing their interaction may help in understanding the nature of ascetic practice in contemporary Japan. He used the examples of the *sennichi-kaihōgyō* of Mt Hiei and the Akinomine of Haguro Shugendō, himself being a practitioner of the latter. The last talk of the first panel was given by Satomi Horiuchi (SOAS). In her presentation, based on her fieldwork, she discussed the extent to which contemporary Japanese Christians have succeeded in justifying conducting funerary rituals, which some Christian traditions consider a form of idolatry. In her conclusion, she suggested that by looking at the behavioural and emotional aspect of these rituals, one may further explore Japanese morality, social roles and family structures in general.

The second panel was an historical one. The first speaker was Toshinori Miyoshi (Nagoya University), whose talk examined the intertextuality of a number of medieval Buddhist historical texts from the Shinpukuji archives that contain sectarian aspirations. In particular he analysed the *Buppō denrai shidai*. In doing so, he emphasised that Buddhist historical texts in the Shinpukuji archives, or in other temple archives, should not be understood individually, but rather need to be read in the context of their specific relation to other texts collectively. The second presentation was given by Shinya Mano (SOAS). Like Toshinori Miyoshi, he presented an example of inter-sectarian and institutional relationships in medieval Japanese Buddhism. He discussed Yosai’s Pure Land thought in his earlier esoteric texts, and argued that it may have been influenced by a crucial doctrine developed by Kakuban of the Shingi Shingon school.

The third panel focused on literary texts. Conan Carey (Stanford University and Nagoya University) spoke on the *Tale of Heike* as a collection of folk stories. He introduced the chapter of Jishinbo Son’e, which played the role of mnemonic-technique, and discussed Jishinbo’s status as a Lotus Sutra devotee. He ended by questioning the conventional reading of the *Tale of Heike* as a requiem for the Taira clan, and suggested the need to explore it further in the context of folklore. At the end of first day, Kigen-san Licha (SOAS) presented a paper entitled “How to do things with kōan”. The talk, which followed a semiological approach, consisted of two parts: 1) Examination of the nature of *daigo*, and 2) Understanding *kirigami*. He arrived at the conclusion that the role of *kirigami* was to apply the ritual language of *daigo* to provide alternative answers to paradigmatic kōan cases.

On the second day, a special seminar was led by Professor Yasurō Abe (Nagoya University) and followed by a panel discussion, conducted by Professor Nobumi Iyanaga (BDK Visiting Professorship) and Dr Lucia Dolce (SOAS). Professor Abe spoke on “Re-Discovering Medieval Japanese Tantrism: Two Newly-Found Works by Monk Man Bun and Their Context”. As the title indicates, he initially dealt with texts compiled by Monkan, who has stereotypically been considered the founder of the heretical Tachikawa-ryū. The source materials Professor Abe provided for this occasion were the *Sanzongo yō hiketsu*, *Toryū saikyō yō hiketsu* and *Saikyō yō himitsu sho*, which show elements of the combination of three symbolic Buddhist icons, one Buddha and two Viṣṇu-śrīs. Furthermore, he proposed that this sort of threefold structure was also used to explain the Buddha relics, the Wish-fulfilling Jewel, and the Golden Wheel of Mahāvirocanā, Amaterasu and Kūkai, all of which embodied a transcendent unity above duality.
ワークショップ「日本宗教の研究—フィールドワークと古文書からの新発見」報告

名古屋大学大学院文学研究科博士研究員 三好俊徳

ワークショップ「日本宗教の研究—フィールドワークと古文書からの新発見」（Researching Japanese Religions: New Findings from Fieldwork and Archives）は、ロンドン大学SOAS日本宗教センター（CSJR）において、3月17日、18日の2日間にわたり、春期国際ワークショップ（Spring International Workshop）として開催された。当日は、SOASで日本宗教学を専攻する学生や名古屋大学文学研究科大学院GP教育推進室からの1団を中心とする日本からの研究者など多くの方が来場された。「国際」という冠にふさわしく、専門分野はもとより出身や第一言語も異なる方々が、日本宗教に対する関心を唯一の共通項にして集まり、英語を共通語として活発に議論が交わされた。

初日は、午前中のドルチェ教授の特別のご配慮により行われた大英図書館貴重書室での特別閲覧を経て、13時より開始され、SOASの大学院生4名と名古屋大学文学研究科大学院生3名（スタンフォード大学からの留学生を含む）が研究発表を行い、意見の交換が行われた。タイトルにもあるように、本会での発表はその研究方法から、現地調査によるものとテクスト分析によるものに大きく分けられる。御嶽行者の儀礼を行う小林氏の発表や行者と信者を論じたロベティ氏の発表、キリスト教における葬送・追悼儀礼についての堀内氏の発表は、それぞれ対象は異なるが現代の日本宗教の問題点を現代の日本宗教の問題点を現地調査をもとに論じたものである。一方、筆者の真福寺大須文庫での資料調査をもとに中世における仏教史書の位相を論じた真野氏の発表、真言宗僧覚鑾の思想が台密僧栄西に与えた影響を論じた真野氏の発表、『平家物語』における慈心坊の地獄巡り伝説の意義を多角的に分析したケアリ氏の発表、真言宗の写本を扱った伴禅の言説を星象学的解釈しようと試みたリチャ氏の発表は、テクスト分析を研究の基本方法とするものとなる。

これらは、研究対象や時代もそれぞれ異なる。しかし、その多様性を日本宗教の一侧面と認めたときには、それぞれの事象が日本宗教の一部として明らかになり、それらに共通する項目、すなわち日本宗教の特質について多面的に議論することが可能となるのではないだろうか。今回のワークショップは、発表者としては、異なる土地や対象から日本宗教について研究する学生同士での意見交換を通じて、自らの研究を日本宗教研究の一部として自覚化し相対化することができた機会であった。さらに、一参加者として会を振り返ると、一人一人の発表について真剣に共感や疑問を示し合うことにより、日本宗教の多様性を日本内外の視点から改めて確認すると同時に、自らの立脚点から日本宗教の特性を考える足掛かりとなる機会であった。この意味で今回の発表は全てが手法は異なるも日本宗教の現場に踏み込んだ記録であり、それを土台として参加者全員で日本宗教についての議論を行った会であったと言える。

続いて二日目に行われた阿部泰郎教授による南北朝期の真言僧文観の著作についての特別講演が行われた。そこで、個別テクストの分析から中世真言密教の異歴と今後の議論の可能性が示された。そこで、ドルチェ教授と彌永先生のコメントからより明確化されたように、世界の中の日本宗教として相対化する視点を示され、まさに、本会を総括するに余りある講演であったと思われる。

ワークショップのは以上のような日程で幕を下ろした。しかしここで萌芽した日本宗教を多角的に考察するという試みは、同年7月に名古屋大学文学研究科グローバルCOEプログラム第4回国際研究集会「日本における宗教テクストの諸位相と統経法」において、日本宗教全体をテクストとして捉えようという意欲的な研究集会として引き継がれている。報告書も刊行されているので、是非参照していただきたい。

末筆ではあるが、御多忙の中におかれたこのような有意義なる会を計画・実施し、筆者に発表の機会を与えて下さったロンドン大学SOASルチア・ドルチェ教授と名古屋大学文学研究科阿部泰郎教授、フランス極東学院彌永信美先生に、また準備運営に協力されたスタッフや学生の方々に、深く感謝の意を申し上げたい。なお、筆者は名古屋大学文学研究科グローバルCOEプログラム「2007年度大学院生海外派遣プログラム」に採択され、研究プログラムの一環として当ワークショップに参加し発表を行ったことをここに明記しておく。
Centre Activities Report
Centre for Buddhist Studies and
Centre for Study of Japanese Religions

Numata Lecture Series (2007-2008)

Under the Shadow of the Great Śiva
Tantric Buddhism and its Influence on
Japanese Medieval Culture

Shinya Mano (PhD Candidate, SOAS)

The Numata Lecture series, sponsored by the Bukkyō Dendo Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism), has come to be a customary event at SOAS. In the academic year (2007-2008), it was once again hosted jointly by the Centre for Buddhist Studies and the Centre for Study of Japanese Religions. The series of lectures and seminars was conducted by Professor Nobumi Iyanaga, who is well known for his diverse publications in the field of Buddhist studies.

The focus of this year’s Numata Lecture series was Buddhist Mythology in Japan, a topic on which Professor Iyanaga should be counted as one of the leading scholars. The series began with an inaugural lecture, held on 10 January, entitled Under the Shadow of the Great Śiva: Tantric Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Medieval Culture. In this lecture, Iyanaga presented the transformation of the Hindu deity Śiva from India to Japan, and emphasised its crucial role in the context of Japanese medieval culture as a deity of good fortune. The presentation was impressive and exciting, due to the speaker’s masterful and detailed account of the myths, and his handling of such diverse textual sources: Indian, Chinese and Japanese. Iyanaga also stressed the importance of esoteric (or Tantric) Buddhism in medieval Japan, devoting the nine lectures of the series to it.

The first two lectures discussed how Buddhist mythology was constructed, by exploring the transformation of Matarajin, Daikoku and other major medieval deities. In his next two lectures, Iyanaga presented the cult of the wish-fulfilling jewel and the Japanese medieval ritual of enthronement unction by means of a Dākinī rite, emphasizing the significance of this rite in the heretical Tantric lineage, the Tachikawa-ryū. The following lecture was truly a ground-breaking one, where Iyanaga deconstructed the term Tachikawa-ryū, which in contemporary Japan immediately brings to mind heretical Buddhist teachings involving sexual practices. He suggested that a negative discourse on ‘Tachikawa-ryū’ was constructed in the fourteenth century by a self-proclaimed orthodoxy, in order to distinguish itself from lineages accused of being heterodox. Iyanaga shared with us his scepticism that the term ‘Tachikawa-ryū’ was used for denoting heretic lineages before the fourteenth century, and stressed that in medieval Japanese Buddhist society the term denoted a commonly accepted lineage. The remaining highly engaging lectures dealt with other myths, such as that of Mara of the Sixth Heaven.

In addition to these public lectures, SOAS staff members and students also had the opportunity to attend reading seminars, which examined selected passages from the Buddhist sources discussed during the lectures. The texts analysed in the seminars included Sino-Japanese canonical scriptures such as Darijing, medieval ritual anthologies such as the Kakuzenshō, and other relevant works of Buddhist literature. It was very enlightening to read these texts after the lectures, and the explanations supplied truly deepened our understanding of the context in which the texts were produced. For most Western students, the direct reading of Sino-Japanese texts is the most difficult part of research into Buddhist themes. However, because of Iyanaga’s wide range of knowledge on Buddhism and his kind supervision, we could be guided to overcome such a disadvantage.

We would like to thank the Bukkyō Dendo Kyōkai, the Centre for Buddhist Studies and the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions for providing such a great occasion every year. It is our hope that the Numata Lecture series will continue to be one of the primary annual events at SOAS.

Seminars and Postgraduate Fora
Terms 2 and 3 2010
Please check the CSJR Website:
www.soas.ac.uk/csjr
Portraiture: Power & Ritual Workshop Report

Megan Morn

On 29-30 May 2008, the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions and the Japan Research Centre hosted a two-day workshop on the theme ‘Portraiture: Power & Ritual’. The workshop was organised by Dr Lucia Dolce (SOAS) and Professor Timon Screech (SOAS) as a multidisciplinary event bringing together scholars belonging to various fields of study, from Art History to the Study of Religions. Also, the cultural areas covered were not limited to Japan, but included China and India as well.

The opening evening was reserved for the keynote address delivered by Professor Ryûichi Abe (Harvard University) with the title: ‘Delineating the Intangible - On the Eikyūji Dharma Transmission Paintings’. In his address, Professor Abe argued that the transmission from China of the portraits of Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi in the twelfth year of the Kōnin era (821) was important in developing a “voice” for Buddhism during a time when Confucian discourses dominated Japan. Professor Abe maintained that the act of viewing an image involved the performance of darśana, in this sense meant as communication with the subject of the image, that can go beyond the possibilities offered by a written text.

On the following day, six papers were presented in which the use of portraiture in Japan, from the medieval to early-modern periods, was the starting point to investigate how and why portraits were made, who was the subject of such portraiture, and the secrecy issues connected with the existence of ‘hidden’ portraits. Two papers considered parallel patterns in the production and use of portraits in China and India during the same time span.

In the first paper, ‘The Physicality of a Medieval Japanese Monarch: Portraits, Handwriting and Handprints of Go-Toba’in’, Dr John Carpenter (A&A/SISJAC) discussed the function of artifacts produced by the emperor Go-Toba, which include some famous ink handprints, in preserving the physical presence of the monarch beyond his times. The second paper was delivered by Dr Naoko Gunji (SOAS / SISJAC) with the title ‘Revealing the Secret Portrait of Emperor Antoku’, in which she analysed the use of Antoku images as a means to maintain a relationship with the deceased emperor. The image in this case works as a vessel in which the spirit of the emperor can dwell, and can be used as an object of worship in rituals aimed to appease his spirit.

In the next paper, ‘Representing the Accomplished Body: Monkan’s Portrait of Go-Daigo’, Dr Lucia Dolce (SOAS) analysed the function of portraits in ritual performance, with particular attention to the phenomenon of ‘esoteric’ images. The last paper of the morning session was delivered by Professor Tim Barrett, on the subject of ‘The Printed Icon in China’ in which he delineated the circumstances of use and diffusion of mass-printed religious images in pre-modern China.

The first paper of the afternoon session, ‘Portraiture and the Past in Early-Modern South India’ was delivered by Dr Crispin Branfoot (SOAS) who presented the development of a new genre of portraiture as a way to legitimise kingship in South India. In the next paper, ‘Representations of Confucius in Japanese Confucian Ritual’, Dr James McMullen (Oxford University) continued on the theme of the portrait as a form of connection, in this case considering how portraits of Confucius used in the Edo period where understood as a link between Japan and China. In this sense the perfect likenesses of the image with the features of the Master was a fundamental precondition for the portrait to perform this function properly. In the last paper of the workshop, Professor Timon Screech explored the subject of ‘Rangaku and Edo Portraiture’ and the circulation of images mediating between the public and private spheres.

The papers were followed by final remarks by Christine Guth (Royal College of Art/V&A) and a lively discussion focused particularly on the function played by portraits in ritual practice, and the issues of legitimisation of power connected with the representation and recognition of the portraits and images of rulers. Another fact that was particularly appreciated was the multidisciplinary span of the workshop, which also included experts on India and China. Events such as this one, in which scholars from different fields and disciplines are brought together working around a common theme are exceptional occasions to broaden one’s knowledge beyond one’s specific field of study, and it is our hope that we will see this approach employed more widely in future workshops and symposia.
Research Notes

O-take Dainichi Nyorai, a Shugendō Icon

Gaynor Sekimori

At the entrance to the pilgrimage town of Tōge at the foot of Mt Haguro, the Shugendō centre in Yamagata prefecture, there is a hall dedicated to Dainichi Nyorai, the cosmic Buddha. Nothing strange in that, you might say, except that the Buddha here is considered to be manifested as a woman called O-take. Since Shugendō, as a practice, excluded women until the end of World War II, it always seemed strange to me that a (presumably) historical female should have been taken up as a cult figure by Haguro yamabushi, particularly since her earliest legend places her firmly in Edo with only a tenuous connection with the Dewa mountains (Haguro, Yudono and Gassan).

I had always thought, without too much evidence, that O-take’s connection with Haguro Shugendō must have been related in some way with attracting women pilgrims to Mt Haguro (which had always been open to female access). However, when I started looking more seriously at the question, something far more interesting arose, relating to political and social changes taking place in the seventeenth century, when the hierarchical and affiliation structure of religious centres was being restructured in response to Tokugawa religious policy. In particular, the cult seems to have been very closely related to the fortunes of one Tōge yamabushi family, Genryōbō.

The O-take legend is woven of a number of strands, embracing Yudono, Haguro, and the Edo temple Shinkōin. The earliest reference is contained in a late 17th century chronicle called the Gyokuteki inken, in a record of the death of O-take, “the servant of Sakuma Zenpachi of Ōdenmachō” during the Kan’ei era (1624-43). It praised her for not wasting food and for feeding beggars, and stated that “a shrine priest from Mt Yudono” had recounted that she was the central figure in a triad, flanked by the Sakuma husband and wife, which existed there.

A second version, which became the best-known, focuses on Mt Haguro. It was popularized through etoki (picture narrations) of 1740 and 1777, composed by Genryōbō, Haga Chūshin, when O-take was the subject of degaichō (public displays of religious icons and objects) in Edo. In the early part of the seventeenth century, they say, an ascetic associated with Mt Yudono wanted to see a living Dainichi. He was in the habit of visiting Mt Haguro and staying at Genryōbō’s lodging, and it was there he had a dream telling him to visit Takejo, a maid-servant of the Sakuma family in Edo. She was extolled for wasting nothing, straining food so as not to throw away even a grain, and giving most of her own food to beggars and hungry animals. Genryōbō and the ascetic traveled to Edo and venerated her, and later the Sakuma family dedicated a statue of her at Mt Haguro, under the care of Genryōbō. The 1777 etoki version adds that O-take was an exemplar for women to preserve their wifely virtues, and that she promised women to protect their children and descendents, and release them from the shackles of the five obstacles and the three dependencies.

A third strand represents a more shadowy connection, to an Edo temple called Shinkōin, originally in the precincts of Zojoji, said to have been the funerary temple of the Sakuma family, where O-take was buried. This version omits all mention of Mt Haguro, and rather stresses the virtues of O-take’s washing board (nagashidai), which the temple exhibited above its gateway. (There is a picture of Shinkōin in the Edo meisho zue showing the gate where the board was hanging, with stalls and crowds outside it.) The Shinkōin etoki mentions an ascetic priest associated with Yudonosan who prayed that he might see the living embodiment of Dainichi Nyorai. After seven days of seclusion he had a dream of a golden pagoda in which there was an illuminated seat, but no figure. A priest told him the seat used to be occupied by Dainichi, but he had now taken form among human beings, as Take, a servant of the Sakuma in Edo. The centre stage of the tale though is taken by the washing board, reputed to have been bequeathed by Dainichi to benefit living beings. Those who reverently viewed this sacred object would without doubt be relieved of illness and catastrophes, be wealthy and long-lived, and have all their wishes granted. The Sakuma donated it to Shinkōin, and later it prompted in Lady Keishōin a strong devotion to O-take, and she donated a wrapping cloth and box for it.

It seems likely that O-take was a minor cult figure in Edo, revered for her “wifely” virtues as a paradigm for virtuous women. A Yudono ascetic may have initially been involved in popularizing the cult, but his role was later appropriated by Genryōbō of Haguro. How this came about is open to conjecture. But there is no doubt that Genryōbō was behind the enormously popular degaichō that were held four times in Edo between 1740 and 1849, and which in turn spawned a vast quantity of artistic and literary material in the nineteenth century. It is tempting to see Shinkōin’s entry on the scene as an attempt...
to take advantage of O-take’s popularity by offering Edo devotees a permanent focus of attention in the form of a sacred object authenticated by no less a person than a Shogun’s mother! But this did not prevent Genryōbō from exhibiting the “true” washing board, amongst other misemono, to the avid public during the 1849 degaichō, as a picture by Kuniyoshi in Gyokutei Senryu’s Ogen O-take monogatari illustrates.

Records held by Shōzen’ in, the head temple of Haguro Shugendō, say that the O-take Dainichi hall was built in 1666, through the efforts of Genryōbō, Haga Sen’an (d. 1679), who became its supervisor (domori). Though this dating cannot be independently confirmed, the architecture reveals a sophistication that points to Edo craftsmen, not local carpenters, which supports the claim that the building was commissioned externally. But a map of 1687 refers to the existence of the hall, and it is also mentioned in the Sanzan gashu of 1710, in a temple guide (Sanzan annai shuhyo) of 1755 and in the official map of 1791. There is no reason why we should not accept the temple dating.

If Haga Sen’an died in 1679, he might well have travelled to Edo in the Kan’ei era and met O-take (who, according to Shōzen’in records died in 1638). However the exact circumstances surrounding the appropriation of O-take cannot be retrieved today, since any records that may have been preserved at Genryōbō did not survive the institutional changes of the first Meiji decade, when most of the leading yamabushi in Tōge became affiliated with Ideha Jinja, the shrine created out of the former shrine-temple complex in response to the government’s policy of separating kami and Buddha worship. The earliest independent record attesting to Genryōbō’s existence is 1667, when his name appears on a kishomon, and by the early 19th century the family was one of highest-ranking yamabushi in Tōge.

While the wealth of other high-ranking Tōge yamabushi (called onbun) was based on the possession of “parishes” (kasumiba, dannabō) scattered around northern and eastern Japan, there is no mention of Genryōbō in the parish confirmation documents issued in the mid 1630s by Tenyū, the temple head (bettō). Parish relationships had already been forged by the time major institutional reorganization took place at Haguro, in response to losses suffered as a result of the turmoil at the end of the sixteenth century and to Shogunate policy designed to control religious bodies. Regulations (hatto) issued in 1613 placed all Shugendō groups under the authority of either the Tōzan or the Honzan lineage; institutions like Haguro could only exist under the umbrella of one or the other. Yamabushi throughout the land were to be controlled by their own head temple and by local supervisors called fuegashira, who might well be of a different sect.

In 1641, Haguro asserted its independence by placing itself under the protection of Kan’eiji in Edo, the dominant religious power after 1614, thereby removing it from either Tōzan or Honzan authority. Temples in the Hagurosan complex, which previously had been Shingon, Tendai, Zen and Nenbutsu, all had to become Tendai. Subsequently the Haguro presence in Edo was consolidated by the placement in 1652 of ten supervisory priests (Edo jūrō) there to supervise Haguro yamabushi and act as liaison between Haguro, the other sects and the authorities. Very soon a number of dominant Jakkōji substemes (collectively known as Honbō) were busy staking a claim to the burgeoning population and riches of Edo, employing lower ranking yamabushi to develop networks there on their behalf. Genryōbō’s appropriation of O-take must be considered in this context.

Genryōbō, as we have seen, did not possess any parishes, which were the basis of all onbun wealth and status. How then was the family able to achieve onbun status in 1778 and eventually become one of the largest landholders in Tōge and an official lodging of the betto? With no income from parishes, and therefore pilgrims, what was the source of Genryōbō’s status and wealth? Could the O-take cult, developed by the Genryōbō ancestor Sen’an, have been the means by which the family achieved both? Had Sen’an been working in Edo some time prior to 1638 to foster personal relationships, with an eye to developing a parish (kasumi) there, and in the process made contact with the wealthy merchant family of Sakuma? Since it was too late in the day for an individual yamabushi to create parishes in the traditional sense, since to do so would have brought Genryōbō into conflict with the interests of the Honbō, he may have been spurred to develop his influence in another way. In other words, it was his association with the O-take cult that may have paved the way for his family’s fortunes.

Genryōbō was the supervisor of the newly built Dainichidō, but this position in itself could not have brought in enough wealth to establish the family as one of the most prominent in Tōge. Though a supervisor had complete control of the hall’s income, gained through the sale of talismans and amulets, and also through donations, he also had the responsibility to maintain the fabric of the building, which could be a burden in the rigorous northern climate. Where then did his wealth come from?

Observing O-take. Untitled print, Kuniyoshi, ca. 1847-52.
I suggest it was based on the income generated from periodic degaichō held in Edo. Although only four were held in the course of the Edo period (1740 [site unknown], 1777 [Atagosan Enpukuji], 1815 [Nenbutsudō, Sensōji], 1849 [Ekōin]), successful degaichō are known to have been very lucrative. Massive expenses were involved, as venues had to be rented from temples (yadodera), and special halls (kaichō koya) built on these plots. With success so very important, extensive advertising was essential to attract the populace. The participation of important people, such as the Shogun and his household, could make or break a kaichō, and weather was also a deciding factor. Not just the image itself, but objects related to the figure (misemono) and related attractions and events were also very important. A successful degaichō attracted huge crowds, making them very lucrative. For example the Zenkōji degaichō at Ekōin in 1778 drew 270,000 people per day over the sixty-day period, and the Naritasan degaichō at Eitaiji in 1703 made 2000 ryō profit over the same time.

Display and advertisement were the order of the day. In 1815 and 1849, yamabushi carrying banners, red umbrellas, halberds and swords, together with 200 people representing various confraternities and the Sakuma heirs, the Magome, escorted the statue to the venue, by way of places associated with O-take (Fukiokaya Nikki [1804-68]). Etoki and related material were central to promotion. Genryōbō prepared etoki for all the degaichō, and in 1849 also took the opportunity to promote his own misemono. No records have been found recounting the financial success, but it is tempting to surmise that Genryōbō’s surprising prominence in Tōge society was largely due to the income received from the degaichō.

Ironically, O-take is probably better known among art historians than among scholars of religion or devotees. The degaichō of 1849 promoted a large volume of secular art and literature using O-take Nyorai as the topos. Around fifty different prints are known to exist, and these almost invariably transform her from a servant-saint into a “beauty”. They were created as souvenirs of the degaichō, and also in response to its popularity. They can be divided broadly into engi prints, with at least a semi-religious flavour (O-take as a servant, O-take as a teacher, O-take ascending to heaven), into prints exhibiting female virtues (O-take as a model servant), and into prints showing popular deities (hayari gorishoken). In literature too fictionalized extended biographies such as the O-take Dainichi Nyorai osanai etoki (1815) developed into illustrated novels where only the bones of the O-take legend remained (for example Takejo Ichidaiki, Kogane no hana sakura yoshibi, by Gyokuransai Sadahide, 1845-6) and even into Kabuki. For example, Futatsu cho oire no dekiuki (1864) by Kawatake Mokuami (Shinschichi), combines, with little mutual relevance, the O-take setsuwa with a revenge episode.

One of last pictorial representations of O-take was made in 1933 by the potter, artist and banker Kawakita Handeishi (1878-1963). Here O-take appears as a pert young early-Showa beauty with no hint of her connection with Dainichi Nyorai. But in a satisfying instance of serendipity, the print was discovered in the family storehouse after the artist’s death by his grandson, a practitioner of Haguro Shugendō. Realizing the significance of O-take, he donated it to Shōzen ‘in, so returning O-take in her modern manifestation to the site of her transplanted cult.

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Research Notes

Motoori Norinaga’s Thoughts on Astronomy

Reishi Tayama

In this article, I would like to discuss Motoori Norinaga’s Shinrekikō (真暦考, The True Calendar, 1782). In this work, Norinaga deals with the calendar Japan had been using since its import from China in the sixth century. This calendar was based upon an artificially imposed relation between the movements of the sun and the moon. Norinaga is widely regarded as one of the greatest thinkers in Japan’s history. His works include a philological and philosophical commentary on the Kojiki (古事記伝), a new theory of literature (紫文要領), an investigation of the nature of language (石上私淑言), and a systematic analysis of Japanese grammar (詞玉緒).

In the latter half of the Edo period in Japan, a tendency that can be called positivistic, or modern, is visible in such areas as classical studies, mathematics, and medicine. The Confucian scholar Itō Jinsai (伊藤實齋, 1627-1705) founded a philological approach to Chinese classics, which he used to deny the validity of many earlier interpretations of these classics. In the field of medicine, ineffective treatments based upon idealistic cosmologies were abandoned in favour of ancient therapies which simply aimed at curing patients. Furthermore, in the field of mathematics, Seki Takakazu (関孝和, 1640-1708) and Takebe Katahiro (建部寛弘, 1664-1739) developed mathematical tools resembling calculus and arithmetical series.

Norinaga’s classical studies are representative of the emerging sensibilities of this period. However, Norinaga also believed in the gods that appear in the Kojiki, thus sharing the faith of Japan’s ancient people. This seeming contradiction perplexed his contemporaries and gave rise to severe controversy. His faith was often thought to be naïve and anachronistic. However, I believe that he was profoundly sensitive to the underlying thought currents of his times. His faith is particularly interesting when viewed against the background of his ideas concerning astronomy, a field in which he proposed an original argument. In his Shinrekikō, he dealt with the emerging field of astronomy, asserting that the conclusions of astronomy remained hypothetical. In this way, Norinaga questioned the nature of this positivistic thought that was destined to become one of the bases of modernity. On the other hand, by proposing a rigorous philological reading of the classics, Norinaga criticized the arbitrary interpretations often found in the medieval era, and the chaotic mixture of religious dogmas that often accompanied them.

Let us first look at the content of the Shinrekikō. This work is now contained in the eighth volume of The Complete Works of Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長全集,筑摩書房, p.203-219). It is only seventeen pages long. Arguments are often followed by copious notes, and there is no division by chapters or sections. Despite its simple appearance, it deals with many important subjects. To follow Norinaga’s discussions, it is helpful to divide the content into tentative sections. I will divide it into six parts.

(a) At the beginning of the work (pp. 203-204), Norinaga deals with how the beginning of the year was decided. This explanation is given in the form of a poem:

Years come and pass. In this coming and passing, there is no beginning, or ending. But since the age of the gods, the beginning of the year is decided as the time when things are renewed to start new lives. The sky starts to become calm with faint mist, willows sprout, and warblers start to sing (p. 203).

Let us note here that Norinaga explicitly frames his discussion in terms of the gods.

(b) In the next section (pp. 204-206), the division of the four seasons is discussed. This division was based upon the movement of the sun in accordance with the gods’ will. Although each season was divided further into three sections, a year was not regarded as consisting of twelve months. Norinaga then embarks on a detailed description of how people in ancient times knew which season it was. They perceived the seasons through natural phenomena such as the appearance of the sky, the directions of sunrise and sunset, the strength of the light of the moon, and so on. People became directly aware of time, not only through heavenly bodies, but also through their natural environment. The familiar sights of various plants, behaviours of animals, and so on, made people aware of the passing of time (p. 205). However, after the introduction of the Chinese calendar, people became dependent upon it. That is to say, the calendar started to tell people the order of dates and months. A year started to be seen as consisting of twelve months. Days and months imposed their order on everyday life. After its introduction, people stopped seeing things around them in the way the ancients did: nature no longer gives us direct access to infallible information about the season.

The Chinese calendar was lunisolar. That is to say, the calendar was based upon the correlation between the two cyclic movements of the moon and the sun. In ancient times, many civilizations adopted the lunisolar calendar. There will be a natural objection to the ancient view of time which is seen to be overly imprecise. We are so used to life with the calendar that it is difficult to imagine life without it. Norinaga goes on to explain the vagueness of the ancients’ view of time.

(c) The third section of the paper (pp. 206-209) deals with the meaning of ‘a day’ in ancient times. For example, in ancient times one season was divided into three parts. But this division was not clearly marked by specific dates. The same can be said of the beginning of the year or seasons. This attitude of the ancients was reflected in their usage of number. To show this, Norinaga provides detailed arguments on the idea of number in ancient times. This place is a good example of Norinaga’s philological preciseness. Norinaga argues like this: In an-
cient times, (natural) numbers were used solely to count things. Therefore, they did not express the order of things. In other words, numbers were only used as cardinals not as ordinals. For example, ‘三日 (three-day)’ meant ‘three days’, not ‘the third day’. To indicate order of dates, that is, to express ‘the third day’, people said ‘the day three days after’. ‘三日 (three-day)’ started to mean ‘the third day’ due to the influence of the Chinese calendar’s way of ordering days.

Li 漢 is a Chinese word whose meaning includes ‘calendar’. When this word was introduced to ancient Japan, the pronunciation given to it was keyomi. Norinaga claims that keyomi was originally keyomi or kihyomi (来経数): ki (来) meaning ‘to come’, he (経) meaning ‘to pass’, and yomi (数) meaning ‘to count’. That is to say, the meaning of 来経数 is bound up with the act of counting the days which come and pass in simple succession. In counting, the cyclic repetitive nature of the calendar did not impinge.

(d) The fourth part of the work considers the ancients’ idea of months (pp. 209-214). Just as the year was divided into four parts, a month was divided into three, tsuitachi 周, mochi 来 and tsugomori 望. Norinaga shows that this division of a month is vague, too. First, he explains the names of these three parts. Tsuitachi derives from tsuki-tachi, that is, 月立: the moon 月 and its appearance in the sky 立. This is the period when the moon is seen to be rising above the horizon. Mochi derives from man 満 (full), that is, man-geisa 満月 (full-moon). So mochi actually indicates the period when the moon is nearly, or, perfectly round’. Tsugomori is tsuki-gomori, the moon’s disappearance 月蔽. In this period, the moon starts to disappear. By expressing the changing shapes of the moon, these names stood for a period that continued several days.

As these names suggest, 一月 (one month) meant one cyclic change of the moon’s shape. This ‘one month’ was not the calendar’s division of a year into twelve parts. In fact, the cyclic movement of the moon (that is, a month) was seen as independent from that of the sun (a year). As a result, the division of months into uniform days did not take place. For, to do this, the cyclic change of the moon’s shape must be correlated to the revolution of the sun.

After widespread acceptance of the cyclic order of the calendar the word tsukinami 月次, “order by months” appeared. Only after that were the twelve months given their names for the first time. Days also started to be treated as another cyclic order called hinami 日次, “order by days”. But it is impossible to get an even division of a year by months (p. 211). The two orders, hinami and tsukinami, seem incompatible. Norinaga argues that the movement of the moon and that of the sun cannot be correlated. They are simply different. That is why constant adjustments are needed to maintain the usage of the calendars.

(e) In the fifth part, Norinaga produces some of his most interesting arguments (pp. 214-218). As we have seen, the calendar is based upon an artificial combination of hinami and tsukinami. The dates of this year do not coincide with those of the last year, if we take the position of the sun into account. For example, the thirtieth of March last year falls on the tenth of April this year. That is to say, the sun will be in the same position to the earth on the thirtieth of March last year, and the tenth of April this year. Even the most sophisticated calendars cannot avoid these errors. Moreover, there are unavoidable errors due to the earth’s movements themselves. Norinaga takes the example of saisa 「歳差」, precession of equinoxes (the positions of fixed stars constantly change in cycles of tens of thousands of years). This is one of the causes of the constant modifications needed for any usable calendar.

After pointing to the faults of calendars in use, Norinaga turns to the basis of the calendar. Although he does not mention western astronomy explicitly, this modern science is the focus of his attention. In other words, the western calendar that is based upon this science begins to be included in his discussion. Norinaga takes the basis of astronomy to be the regular movements of heavenly bodies. He maintains that these movements obey natural laws. But there is a problem: many of these movements have very long cycles. Astronomy is a science whose conclusions are deeply dependent upon observations. The outcomes of specific observations remain unpredictable. In this sense, astronomical knowledge cannot help but remain hypothetical. Human finitude, that is, the age of man, prevents this knowledge from being a complete system. And the same can be said of the calendar (p. 215).

As we saw, in the second part of the Shinrekikō, Norinaga showed how the ancients understood the changing seasons: the surrounding things including movements of the heavenly bodies told them in which seasons they were. Instead of the calendar, the cyclic order of nature provided a vague, but firm order of life. This point appears again in the fifth part with the claim that ‘the true calendar’ had prevailed in ancient times. Norinaga said that he had been wondering why he could not find any calendar-type ordering of days in ancient legends. He emphasized that it took him a long time to be convinced of the significance of this lack of any calendar.

Now, it appears that at the very beginning of the Shinrekikō, the conclusion was clearly stated. I quote again the section in question:

“Years come and pass. In this coming and passing, there is no beginning, or ending. But since the age of the gods, the beginning of the year is decided as the time when things are renewed to start new lives. The sky starts to become calm with faint mist, willows sprout, and warblers start to sing.

This way of talking about the cycle of seasons must have been disturbing for both the Kangakusha (漢学者, scholars of Chinese classics) and the Rangakusha (蘭学者, researchers of such western sciences as medicine, astronomy, and botany): the old style of the Japanese poem, the
apparently primitive way of talking about seasons, and the mentioning of the ancient gods in particular, all these must have looked like a deliberate anachronism.

The last part of the Shinrekikō discusses the introduction of the calendar and its effect on the way of expressing time and seasons. Toward the end of this part, Norinaga mentions the Nihon shoki (「日本書紀」, the second oldest history of Japan, 720) stating that the indications of dates, months, and years in the descriptions of the ancient events were made up.

The Shinrekikō questions the essence of the relationship between human beings and nature. As we saw, Norinaga repeatedly talked about the ancients’ direct knowledge of the seasons. By directly perceiving the events in nature, they understood time. Moreover, knowing time meant taking appropriate actions; planting rice and reaping wheat were some of the actions Norinaga mentioned. Was Norinaga nostalgic about the simplicity of ancient life? Was his nationalism so strong that it made him believe the naïve knowledge of time in ancient Japan to be superior to the sophisticated artificiality in Chinese calendars?

To regard Norinaga as nostalgic and nationalistic in such a simplistic way is wide of the mark: his arguments were sturdy, based on the most advanced philological knowledge of his time. Therefore we had better look for the reason for his insistence on ‘the true calendar’ elsewhere. I take it that it is Norinaga’s sympathy for the ancients’ way of thinking about time that makes him critically examine the calendar’s foundation. That is to say, Norinaga is considering the nature of time through the discussion of a means to know time, that is, the calendar. That Norinaga’s arguments are about time becomes visible when he discusses the origin of the word koyomi, ‘calendar’.

As we saw, when the Chinese word li 历 was introduced into Japan, it was pronounced koyomi. Norinaga claims that koyomi was originally kiheyomi (来歴数): ki meaning ‘to come’, he ‘to pass’, and yomi ‘to count’. Thus koyomi meant the act of counting the days and the months coming and passing in simple succession. Thus, koyomi did not originally stand for the calendar whose main purpose was to give the cyclic repetitive order to our life. Counting days and the months as they come and pass appears to signify the ancients’ grasp of the nature of time. It is this koyomi that is the focus of Norinaga’s attention. And the impression of primitiveness about knowledge of time is only indicative of our domatic belief in our own idea of time. To understand Norinaga’s intention, it would be helpful to place his thought on time in a wider context. I shall discuss the western arguments on time in Norinaga’s time.

Modernity brings about various problems, but the issue of the relationship between man and nature is noteworthy. In modern times the meaning of ‘nature’ has changed together with the attitude of man toward it. Any attempts to seek something in nature that can be related to human value, and any efforts to treat it from a human point of view have been rejected. That is, nature has begun to be seen as something which exists independently from man. But separating nature from man prompted a fresh start in the quest for the foundation on which a new connection between them can be established.

Space and time can be thought of as foundations through which we consider the nature of the relation between man and the world. There are two main views of space and time. I believe that one of these can be related to Norinaga’s idea of time. Some maintain that space and time are substances, that is to say, they are entities existing independently from other entities. We tend to suppose ‘absolute time’ flows of itself without relation to anything in nature, and without any regard to human beings. This way of thinking was clearly seen at the beginning of modern science, particularly in classical mechanics. The orders indicated by the calendar, for instance, hinami and tsukinami, also imply a belief in this independent (substantial) time.

On the other hand, space and time are denied substantiality by thinkers like Leibniz (1646-1716) and Kant (1724-1804). They believe that space is not a substance, but the order of coexistent phenomena; we individuate places as the points of reference for things and what comprehends all these places is called space. And it is the same with time. Time is not a substance, it is the order of events. Let us call the former the substantial view and the latter the relational view.

Newton (1642-1727) introduced the concept of absolute time in his Principia (1687) in the following manner:

Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration: …

Mechanics symbolizes time as a straight line to make it clear that time is a substance existing independently from anything else. Newton’s words above are often cited as one of the clearest declarations of this substantialist view of time.

The relational view denies that it is possible to think of time as existing independently from events. According to this view, time is the order of changes in an event, or in the order of events.

In the second section of the Shinrekikō, Norinaga argued that the ancients became directly aware of time through their changing natural environment, including the movements of the heavenly bodies. He cites a catalogue of the specific ways in which the ancients reached this direct awareness of time. This knowledge consists entirely of changes in the environment, that is, events in nature. Norinaga’s arguments suggest that for the ancients, natural events are not just the signs of the flow of time; those events themselves are the passing of time. Natural events, together with people’s response to them through such activities as farming, harvesting, and koyomi, that is, counting the passing of the days and the months, constitute the ‘true calendar’.
In the fifth part of the *Shinrekikō*, Norinaga mentions the constant change of the positions of fixed stars, that is, precession of equinoxes (*saisa*). He emphasizes that this change does not mean that the motions of the stars are random: there must be laws of nature that govern the movements of the heavenly bodies. We must realize that even the cycles that are too long to show a clear regularity to finite beings like us, are in fact regular.

Norinaga says that when we understand that the stars will come back to their original positions eventually, we will be convinced of “the truth” of the calendar consisting of regular phenomena taking place in nature. As Norinaga is discussing time in terms of the true calendar, he is talking of the truth of time: the nature of time lies in the regularity perceivable in nature. In other words, time does not consist in something which “flows equably without relation to anything external”.

Although Norinaga shared the relational view of time with some western thinkers, their backgrounds were different. For example, in Norinaga’s times, Japan did not have indigenous sciences. And Norinaga was not intent on proposing his view of time against a different concept of time. Kant, on the other hand, proposed his view of time against the Newtonian idea of time.

Norinaga once said: “Everything is as it appears: there is nothing behind it. Although we do not see the gods except the sun-goddess, the ancients saw them.” (Kuzubana 葵花,「本居宣全集」, vol. 8, pp. 160-161).

Norinaga rejects the principle of yin and yang (陰陽). He does not accept this principle because it is not verifiable through perception. Norinaga’s relational view of time that recognizes the perceptible order of events as time itself reflects the importance he attaches to perception. In rejecting reasoning which lacks empirical evidence, Norinaga approaches a positivistic way of thinking.

The calendar was the focus of scholarly and public attention in Norinaga’s times. The shortcomings of the calendar in use were pointed out by many. The official calendar of Norinaga’s Japan, *sennmyōreki* (恒暦曆), had been used for more than eight hundred years. In the late seventeenth century, an indigenous Japanese calendar called *jōkyōreki* (貞享曆), was devised for the first time. After this, applying the findings of western astronomy, several more calendars were created. Norinaga had seen a Japanese version of a Dutch calendar. Moreover, he was familiar with an introductory book on astronomy, *Tenkei wakumon* 天経或同. This book was written by the Chinese astronomer You Zilu (游子六) in the seventeenth century under the influence of western astronomy; in this work, the merits of the solar system over the lunisolar system are particularly emphasized.

But Norinaga was heavily influenced by his study of Chinese classics. At the beginning of the Edo period, a system of interpreting Confucian teachings called Sung Learning (宋学) was accepted as orthodox by the Tokugawa Shogunate. Zhu Xi (朱子, 1130-1200) was one of the Neo-Confucians who founded Sung Learning. Among thinkers who challenged this official doctrine were Ito Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666-1728). They were most influential during the latter half of the Edo period. Through rigorous philological reading they proposed unique interpretations of the Chinese classics.

Jinsai was particularly critical about the Neo-Confucians’ idea of li (理, Law) as the underlying principle of existence in general. Li governs both nature and human beings. Zhu Xi said that *xing* (性, human nature) is *li*: he read the universal principle of *li* as human nature viewing this nature ultimately good. In contrast, Jinsai clearly separated the study of nature from that of humanity by denying Zhu Xi’s *li*. While Jinsai made the study of humanity independent, it was Ogyū Sorai who made the separation complete by firmly putting the study of human beings, or history, above that of nature.

It is interesting that Sorai, too, discussed the precession of equinoxes (*saisa*). Sorai used *saisa* to demonstrate that even the movement of the heavenly bodies that seemed most stable could prove irregular (Fukusui shindō 復水神童), ‘日本思想体系’ 岩波書店, 36, ‘荻生徂徠’, p. 514). Thus Sorai denied the idea that there are laws of nature by claiming that even such material objects as the heavenly bodies had a life of their own. In contrast, Norinaga, although citing Sorai’s argument, regards *saisa* as important as an example of the ultimate regularity of natural phenomena.

Norinaga is emphatic about the impossibility of making the codes of human conduct articulate and explicit; Norinaga’s natural law expresses the firm distinction he sees between human beings and nature. His claim about the hypothetical nature of astronomy is in fact based upon this distinction: between human finitude and the heavenly bodies’ potentially infinite capacity for changing their movements. But Norinaga’s idea of nature as a collection of material objects whose behaviour follows regular patterns cannot simply be regarded as scientific, for his arguments had been greatly influenced by the thought of Confucians like Ito Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai. Although the *Shinrekikō* mentions the gods, it is positivistic, one might even say modern, in its approach. But it would be hasty to regard Norinaga’s view as scientific. Although this work has empirical tendencies, the range of influences means that it is difficult to call it scientific in the current sense. The concepts of modernity and science have always been closely connected; science is often regarded as the foundation of modernity. However, the *Shinrekikō* suggests the possibility of treating these concepts separately.

Shinbutsu Rituals in Contemporary Japan
Report, MJ/SOAS small Grant 08-09
Lucia Dolce

Postwar studies of Japanese religion have focused on the process of separation of Buddhism and kami worship that started in the late nineteenth century, emphasizing the extent to which it distorted the nature of Japanese religiosity in its ritual and spatial aspects. In this narrative the associative practices that characterized pre- Meiji Japan have been relegated to just one aspect of the historical heritage of Japan, which has been completely wiped out by modernity. But to what extent does this depiction of the religious landscape of contemporary Japan correspond to reality? Field evidence and a close analysis of the liturgical calendar in temples and large Shinto institutions suggest that several shrines as well temples have maintained associative rituals, and that attempts at reversing the implementation of shinbutsu bunri are at work in various contexts.

This project has as its main objective to document and analyse specific rituals at well-known religious centres, in order to map out the forms that contemporary associative practices take. I have identified two trends of this phenomenon: a) Associative practices have been maintained, in particular at large shrines and temples that have century-long traditions of performance of such rituals. Eminent examples of this trend are the Sannō raihai at Hiyoshi Taisha, the hōjōe at Iwashimizu Hachimangu, and the omizutori at Tōdaiji. b) New associations between shrines and temples are being created, which focus on rituals performed together by Buddhist and Shinto clergy. Such are the associations between Iwashimizu and Kiyomizudera, and Yoshida Shrine and Nanzenji in Kyoto.

The MJ/SOAS grant I received last year was used to fund part of my fieldwork at Tōdaiji from February 25 to March 15, 2009, when I attended the omizutori held at Nigatsudō.

This ritual, more properly called shunie, lit. “ceremonies of the second month,” as it was performed in the second month of the lunar calendar, is a repentance liturgy (keka) devoted to the Eleven-headed Kannon, the honzon of Nigatsudō, performed for an extended period (27 days). Through the centuries different ritual segments were added to the basic action of repentance and by the medieval period the omizutori consisted of a complex ritual protocol constructed around a variety of Buddhist textual sources, canonical and not, discursive (mythological) narratives, symbolic actions and performance devices. Although this is a Buddhist ritual, several segments devoted to the kami are crucial to the conception of the liturgy and its contemporary performativity. These are also the ritual segments that attract the interest of a larger number of believers. I shall here mention the most important:

1) The recitation of the dai Nakatomi harae, performed by the ‘master of spells’ on the evening of February 28. (fig. 1) The recitation of this formula betrays the influence of esoteric rituals for the kami that developed in the medieval period. At the same time, its performance reveals an attempt to distinguish actions directed to the kami from those directed to the Buddhas.

2) The reading of the jinmyōcho (fig. 2). The reading of this list of names of kami and other deities takes place every day at the beginning of the night, announced by the blowing of conch shells. It is performed in the inner sanctuary, lightened only by a lamp, by monks who have trained for three years and who have been given an oral transmission.

3) ‘Omizutori.’ This segment, which gives the liturgy its popular name, takes place in the middle of the night of March 12. Water is drawn from the well at the bottom of the Nigatsudō (fig. 3). The performance emphasises the secrecy that surrounds kami: the well is kept completely in the dark and monks stand in front of the door preventing anyone from seeing what happens inside. The ritual enacts the mythological underpinning of the repentance,
according to which Onyū myōjin, the god of Wakasa district, was invited to attend the liturgy for Kannon at Nigatsudō, but arrived later and to compensate for his delay expressed the desire to offer scented water to Kannon. Two cormorants, one black and the other white, took off from a rock and sacred water began springing from that spot.

4) The ‘small Kannon’ matsuri. This ritual segment exemplifies how some devotional actions directed to Kannon are constructed with the symbolic framework used for the kami. In the night of March 7 the small Kannon image enshrined in the inner sanctuary is brought in procession from the inner sanctuarium to the prayer hall, in a mikoshi, and there is venerated by the ritualists and the clerics of Tōdaiji at the light of torches, and at the sound of kagaku (rather than Buddhist) music. The portable altar is guarded by the kannushi of the nearby Huchimangū.

Preliminary results of my research have been presented at two international conferences and will be published in the article “The contested space of Buddhist public rituals: the shūnie of Tōdaiji,” forthcoming in the volume Grammars and morphologies of ritual practices in Asia, vol 1 of Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual, Wiesbaden: Harrasowitiz Verlag, 2009.

I wish to thank Kojima Yasuko for guiding me through the liturgy, providing practical information and occasionally a blanket for the cold nights. I am grateful to Meiji jingu for sponsoring part of the fieldwork.

**Members’ Research Related Activities**

**Lucia Dolce**

Lucia Dolce was on sabbatical during the academic year 08-09, thanks to an AHRC research leave grant to finish a book project on medieval esoteric Buddhism. She also spent 6 weeks in Japan to do fieldwork and archival research for two undergoing projects: 1. Contemporary forms of shinbutsu shugō; 2. Divination and healing in premodern Japan. Fieldwork was kindly supported by a Meiji Jingu small grant and a PMI2/British Council Research cooperation award. From October 2009 to March 2010 Lucia will be a Research Fellow for the project Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe at the International Research Consortium for Research in the Humanities, Ruhr University, Bochum.


Members' Research Related Activities

Activity report from Japan – John Breen

Research leave September 2007- July 2008

I spent my research leave at the Jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo in Kyoto university as a visiting fellow. My purpose was to write half a history of Shinto for a Blackwells series on religion. (The other half is being written by Mark Teeuwen of Oslo University). Most of my research time though I devoted to the Hiyoshi taisha, or Hie jinja as it was known pre-WW2. Hiyoshi taisha is a cluster of seven major shrines and a multiplicity of smaller ones situated in Sakamoto, a small town in Shiga prefecture that extends from the foot of Mt.Hiei to the shores of Lake Biwa. Of course, for much of its long history, the Hie shrines were bound to the Enryakuji temple complex at the summit of Mt. Hiei. My period was Hie shrines in their early modern and modern manifestations. My task was to explore what made the Hie shrines tick before and after they became state Shinto shrines in the 19th century. I needed to understand, first of all, how the shrine priests made sense of the Tokugawa settlement. How, having recovered from their destruction by Oda Nobunaga, did the shrines re-situate themselves in relationship to Tendai Buddhism, to the bakufu and to the court in early 17th century Japan; what relationship did its priests cultivate with the increasingly influential Yoshida Shinto family? Mt.Hiei, with Enryakuji at its summit and the Hie shrines at its foot, was one of the most dynamic manifestations of shinbutsu shūgō, the combinatory cult of Buddhas and kami that defined pre-modern Japanese religious culture. It was also, however, the site of the most thorough-going ‘clarification’, as the euphemism went in early Meiji. The Hie shrines, that is, were the first in Japan to be stripped of all traces of the Buddhism that had given them meaning for century upon century. I was interested to understand both the dynamics of this revolutionary moment, but also how the shrine and its priests, now unequivocally Shinto, once more accommodated themselves, this time to the modern nation state.

Today at Hiyoshi taisha there are signs, hesitant to be sure, of a re-emergence of the combinatory cult denied in early Meiji. Understanding the Hie shrines meant understanding the spring Sannō festival and the dynamics of its transformation from Tokugawa to Meiji, Taisho and beyond to the post war. The results of my research on the Hie shrines will appear in the spring in Shinto: a short history and a couple of articles forthcoming in Japanese. During my year I wrote an occasional column for the Shinto newspaper Jinja shinpo – which was fun. I also spent a long time researching and writing an article on the Meiji emperor and his exchange of gifts with sovereigns of the Western world. Curiously, studies of the Meiji emperor have overlooked his vital involvement with diplomacy; diplomatic studies never mention his dynamic role either. So there was a gap that needed filling. So much, then, for last year except to say that it would not have been possible without the support of first the Jinbunken, and then the Japan Foundation. My contact at Jinbunken, Takagi Hiroshi, was the kindest, most helpful – not to mention most capable - of historians. To him, to Rev Suhara at Hiyoshi taisha and to the local historian Yamaguchi Yukitsugu, I am very, very grateful.

My plan was to return to SOAS for the start of the new academic year when, out of the blue, an assistant professor post came up at Nichibunken in Kyoto. Nichibunken is known in English as the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies which many SOAS academics know well. I have been at SOAS now for more than 20 years and thought it was a time for a change so I decided to apply for the post; I went for an interview and I landed the job. This is where I am now on a three-year contract. I applied to SOAS for three years unpaid leave which, very decently, SOAS granted me. I plan to stay in touch, though, via CSJR newsletter and I am bound to see many of you on my trips back to London and hopefully on your visits to Kyoto. If you come through Kyoto, please get in touch. My email address is Jb8@nichibun.ac.jp.

Best wishes

John Breen
http://www.nichibun.ac.jp/research/faculty/staff1/breen_e.html

John Breen

Publications:


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Postgraduate Research Report

Okada Mokichi: An Analysis of his Teachings and Works

Masaaki Okada

Okada Mokichi 岡田茂吉 (1882-1955) was born in Japan and founded a religious organisation in 1935 now known as Sekai Kyūseikyō 世界救世教 (SKK) or the Church of World Messianity. What this research tries to achieve is to answer the question of who and what Okada Mokichi was by analysing his teachings and works. The primary sources for the research are the works that Okada produced. They include his writings, lectures, interviews, poetry, paintings, calligraphy, buildings and the gardens he created. To analyse his writings, lectures, interviews and poetry, I refer to Okada Mokichi zenshū 岡田茂吉全集, which consists of 30 volumes and includes almost all his teachings. For his paintings and calligraphy, various SKK publications that have grouped them together are used. A biography published by SKK, entitled Tōhō no hikari 東方之光, will be used to obtain basic information about his life.

Six themes will be addressed to answer the question of who and what Okada Mokichi was: nature, art, God, human beings, motivation, and Okada’s role. These are still tentative and I expect that there may be a slight modification to the themes and the order in which they are presented as I continue to analyse the sources.

Nature: Okada developed and promoted a form of healing called jōrei 純霊 and an agricultural method known as shizen nōhō 自然農法 or Nature Farming. Okada sometimes wrote that jōrei should be recognised as “science”, and explanations as to why jōrei can heal were given based on Okada’s view on nature and his understanding of the laws of the universe. His farming method places importance on farmers’ recognition of, and feelings towards, the soil. I examine the issue as to how Okada perceived nature by looking at the two practices of jōrei and Nature Farming.

Art: Okada held that art plays an important role in one’s salvation. He created gardens in Hakone, Atami and Kyoto which were meant to be prototypes of paradise on earth (chijō tengoku no mokei 地上天国の模型). He also built an art museum in Hakone and instructed that museums be constructed in Atami and Kyoto, though only one in Atami has materialised. In his daily life, Okada enjoyed flower-arrangement and the tea ceremony as well as composing poems, painting and producing calligraphy. In his early years, before he entered the religious path, he ran a shop mainly selling women’s accessories, designing some of the products. His shop Kōrindō 光琳

1 In SKK outside Japan, jōrei is usually spelt Johrei. See, for example, the webpage of its church in England (www.johreiasociation.org.uk).

2 After Okada’s death, a museum now known as MOA Museum of Art was built in Atami in 1982, according to his will.
A number of expressions are used regarding Okada’s view of God. For example, in Nature Farming, the expression zōbutasūshi (造物主 (Creator)) was often used. Okada also likened God to an artist, regarding human beings as the greatest artwork of God. On the matter of monotheism and polytheism, Okada wrote that neither view was correct and that there is one God and many gods at the same time (isshin ni shite tashī 一神にして多神). In this section, Okada’s views on God will be analysed.

Motivation:
Okada had no interest in religion before entering Ōmotokyō in 1934 and founded his own religious organisation in 1935. This section will focus particularly on this very early stage of Okada’s religious life in order to discuss his motivation for entering the religious life and founding his own religious organisation. Okada wrote a sizeable amount of teachings in the first few years after 1935, as well as starting to publish his own newspaper, Tōhō no Hikari 東方の光 (The Light from the East) and a magazine, Kōmyō Sekai 光明世界 (The World with Light). These works of Okada in the initial stage of his religious life seem to capture the essence of his motivation towards his works. This section attempts to answer questions such as what was it that made Okada leave Ōmotokyō and what he claimed he was trying to achieve by founding his own religious organisation.

Okada’s role:
In the initial phase of his religious life, Okada thought Kannon 觀音 (Avalokiteśvara) and Miroku 弥勒 (Maitreya) were behind him, and named his religious organisation Dai Nihon Kannonkai 大日本観音会 in 1935. This emphasis on Kannon and Miroku shifted to Meshiya メシヤ (Messiah) and he renamed his organisation Sekai Meshiyakyō 世界メシヤ教 in 1950. This is often translated as the Church of World Messianity in English. It would be an oversimplification to regard Okada’s movement as a Buddhist one simply because he used the names Kannon and Miroku, or a Judeo-Christian one because he used the name Meshiya. An examination is required of what Okada meant by Kannon, Miroku and Meshiya in connection with what he thought his role was.

I hope that this research will contribute to the study of Japanese new religions by focusing on questions that have not been covered in great detail before in the studies of Peter Clarke, Hideaki Matsuoka, Elizabeth Derrett and various articles in Okada Mokichi kenkyū 舊田茂吉研究 written by a number of Japanese scholars.

Masaaki Okada is a PhD candidate at the Department of the Study of Religions at SOAS. His current research is focused on nature farming, sacred grounds and other environmental issues in Sekai kyūseikyō.
Postgraduate Fieldwork Report

Buddhist Liturgical Chanting and the Aural Community

Fumi Ouchi

My PhD research, which discusses the somatic nature of enlightenment exploring Buddhist vocal arts developed in the Tendai tradition from the Heian period to medieval times, is entering its final stage. One of my theses is that vocalisation such as sutra recitation, chanting the buddhas’ names, mantra or dhārani recitation, and listening to ritual sound, deeply involves the performer and the audience in the ritual performance and so can fulfil a soteriological function. The two pieces of fieldwork I carried out in the early spring of 2009 gave me further evidence to support my argument.

In February, I visited Eizan Gakuin at the foot of Mount Hiei, the college established by the headquarters of the Tendai school to educate Tendai priests along modern lines. My purpose was to attend a shōmyō 声明 (Buddhist liturgical chant) class conducted by Rev. Saikawa Buntai, where the students performed the Nijūgo zannai shiki 二十五三昧式, a musical liturgy for a nenbutsu assembly, as a final presentation. Rev. Saikawa is one of the greatest modern shōmyō priests and was one of the members of the Bugaku hōe concert held at SOAS in the winter of 2005. Thanks to him, I have gained the opportunity to learn about shōmyō both practically and theoretically and to attend different types of shōmyō performance from traditional to modern. These experiences have given me strong support in my exploration of how Tendai shōmyō elaborated its expression. Briefly, shōmyō has been polished into a refined and delicate vocalisation, which can draw the audience into the ritual through its aesthetic power. I discuss this point in one chapter of my dissertation.

Additionally, the performance of the Nijūgo zannai shiki gave me another understanding of vocalisation in Buddhist ritual. This liturgy is classified as a kōshiki 講式, a Japanese form of shōmyō attributed to Genshin. The present edition is not considered to have been composed by him, as it follows a later style, but the main structure faithfully reflects the ideas of the nenbutsu assembly, called Nijūgo zannai-e 二十五三昧会, which he elaborated. The members of this association got together every month to perform the liturgy with the aim of attaining the Pure Land. The liturgy is constructed by combining formulas that depict the suffering we have to undergo in each of the six realms (rokudō 六道) from hell to heaven, the invocation to Amida Buddha, and hymns. Each formula is recited by a performer, whilst the invocation ‘na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-.tsu’ and the hymns are chanted in unison. What attracted my attention was the effect of the unison section. As far as I understood it, singing together and being surrounded by the voices of others gave the performers a distinct sense of unity. If performed by a closed group, such as the Nijūgo zannai-e, the performance brings about an even more decisive effect. One of the pillars of Genshin’s nenbutsu movement is understood to have been a firm sense of solidarity. Seeing the performance of the liturgy, one realises how Genshin skilfully used vocalisation as a device for realising his ideas. If this is so, we have to reconsider the generally accepted understanding that Genshin’s nenbutsu ideas were formed within the framework of Tendai contemplation practice. That is to say, Genshin may have had a more positive stance towards using the physical nature of human beings in his soteriological system.

The Tōdaiji shunie 東大寺修二会 has shown me another type of sound device for involving the audience in a ritual. In January and February, rituals called shushōe 修正会 or shunie 修二会 are performed in many temples all around Japan to escape misfortune and gain good luck in the new year. The ritual held at the Tōdaiji temple is one of the most famous of such events. The Tōdaiji shunie has many features to attract a wide range of people. For instance, it has several “spectacles”, such as the huge torches that are thrown about on the high balcony of the Nigatsudō 二月堂 hall, and the famous rite called omizutori お水取り, where, in the middle of the night, a procession centred on two wooden buckets approaches a small hall, accompanied by subtle ritual music, and in the closed hall holy water is secretly ladled up from a well. The services performed in the Nigatsudō by especially consecrated practitioners also include impressive actions, such as the rite of repentance done by throwing one’s body onto a board, the exorcistic actions for enclosing the sacred place, and a short play-like rite performed by the practitioners who act as devas. However, the most impressive component for me was again the ‘sounds’ or the aural component. Most of the six time services in the hall are carried out at night. Furthermore, the ritual is performed around an altar set in the centre of the inner hall, though the audience can only enter the outer hall (females cannot enter even there but are only permitted to sit in the most outside room). Accordingly, the audience can barely see even fragments of the ritual in the very dim light of the candles lit in the inner hall, and they need to depend on their ears if they want to know what is being performed. Almost as if by intention, the ritual offers a lot of aural information. Not only the ritual instruments such as the bell, conch shell and rosary, but also the sandals that the practitioners put on produce important sound effects. Of course vocalisation is essential to the ritual. Sitting in the hall, you will hear the imposing
shōmyō melodies particular to the ritual. They have a distinctive characteristic of musical expression completely different from that of Tendai, in that they stress rhythm, more than the delicate and subtle melodic expression to which the latter pays special attention. As a result, the shōmyō of the Tōdaiji shunie sounds simple and rather rustic, in a sense, but because of this, the performance moves the listener like the voice of a straightforward prayer. Sometimes vocalised in a call and response style, the performance emphasises the cooperative nature of the prayer. In addition, some segments of the ritual, such as calling the names of the deities invited to the ritual and the recitation of the death register, are vocalised using a simple but impressive intonation. Surrounded by these various types of sounds, the audience is brought into the ritual. Amazingly, despite the considerable distance and obstructions between the practitioners and the audience, I felt the audience was deeply involved in the performance. Retaining the distance, both spatial and spiritual, yet filling it in with sound, the ritual rather successfully devises a way of producing a sense of involvement, of combining the practitioners and the audience.

A ritual does not work unless it successfully draws people into the performance. When the audience gains a feeling of belonging to the performance, the meaning of the ritual is reconfirmed and even reproduced. These two pieces of field research provided good examples for demonstrating how effectively aural events work to activate ritual power.

Acknowledgements

I was able to carry out my research at Eisan Gakuin thanks to the help of Rev. Saikawa and his students, which I gratefully acknowledge here. I would like to extend my special thanks to Dr Lucia Dolce, and Ms Yasuko Kojima, a scholar of Japanese Buddhist literature, who arranged for me to attend the Tōdaiji shunie.

Fumi Ouchi is an ethnomusicologist and an associate professor at Miyagi Gakuin Women’s University in Sendai, as well as a senior shugen priestess at Hagurosan. A PhD candidate at SOAS, her research is on the vocal arts in medieval Japan and Tendai hongaku thought.

Postgraduate Fieldwork Report

Serving Dharma – A Report on the Vow's Bar, Nakano, Tokyo

Kigensan Licha

A young, short-haired bartender hands over an adventurous “original cocktail” to an already blurry-eyed costumer in the uniform dark suit and tie of a sarariman. They engage in conversation, the costumer holding forth on some opinion or other, the bartender listening politely, at times venturing a short reply. In Tokyo this scene is repeated in thousands of tiny bars and watering holes every night, a part of the endless repetition of near-identical events that form the white noise of the city. Here is another episode lost to the unremarkable, the backyard of memory, until you realize that what the two men are discussing is the possibility of enlightenment when conceived as a fundamental structure of the human mind/heart. And that the drink is called the “Sexy Monk”.

The Vow’s Bar in Nakano was opened five years ago by Shaka Genkō. It is one of an ever-expanding network of bars and other establishments, including a vegetarian restaurant serving delicious food run by nuns in Kyoto, operated and staffed by Buddhist clergy. It aims to provide the solace and guidance of the Budhadharma to those normally beyond the pale of the traditional structures of religious participation and proselytization. As such it is part and parcel of a recent trend within Japanese Buddhism, described by Genkō as a “mini renaissance”, which looks to the increasingly dire straits and mounting pressures Japanese society finds itself in as a chance to arrive at a new form of Buddhism conscious of its social responsibilities. At the same time it seeks to create an opportunity to reengage Japan with its Buddhist heritage. Spearheaded by a generation of engaged young monks who feel dissatisfied with their appointed role of funerary specialists, this development has given birth to a number of initiatives, such as the “Bozu Be Ambitious” movement (a pun on the famous phrase, “Boys Be Ambitious”, attributed to William S. Clark). They seek to broaden Buddhism's appeal among the young and at the same time re-establish the teachings as a force of social and individual transformation. The monk’s bars are but one of the more exotic flowers growing from this root.

They have their origin in the “Monk’s Cafe”, opened in the 1980s in Osaka. This coffee shop, run by a Jōdo Shinshū priest of the Otani-ha, was established to provide a haven and meeting place for young people victimized by bullying and harsh teaching methods, then an endemic problem in Japan’ school system. Instead of attending classes, they would meet at convenience stores, a less than perfect solution given the average attitude of shopkeepers towards mauldering teenagers. The Monk’s Cafe was founded to redress this situation, but soon attempts were made to reach beyond the initial target group of disaffected youth towards the adult population, surely no less troubled in their own ways. Thus, alcohol being a universal conductor, the Monk’s bar was born and soon started to spread to other cities.
Although not specifically associated with Jōdō Shinshū and employing staff from a variety of Buddhist denominations and even the occasional layperson, the founders and owners seem, at least until now, to belong almost exclusively to the Otani-ha of the Pure Land school. When asked about this situation, Genkō declined to relate the idea of founding a bar in order to spread Buddhism directly to the teachings of his school, but implied that the Jōdō Shinshū, as originally conceived by Shinran, did have the potential of meeting people in places and on an even footing not easily established in other schools. He associates the initiative with the specific role of the Shinshū priest, who according to him lives as an equal among the people, but, given his understanding of Buddhism, not quite of the people. This, he claims, allows the Pure Land priest to reach out to people on an equal level, rather than “handing down” the eternal truths to the masses.

In fact, the idea of equality permeates Genkō’s own understanding of running a bar and practicing Buddhism. Asked about the social role played by places such as Vow’s bar, he stresses the opportunity for honest communication on both the priest’s and the customer’s side. Freed from the fetters of formal interaction dominating Japanese society, client and priest can interact over a drink in a relaxed atmosphere, opening channels of communication otherwise unavailable. In Genkō’s own conception of Buddhism as it develops along these lines of honest communication and equality, two interwoven strands seem to me to be particularly noteworthy.

First, the notion of equality leads to the revision, if not the abandonment, of the traditional temple- or monastery-based model of Buddhist practice. Although highly critical of “funerary Buddhism” (Jap. sōshiki bukkyō) which he dismisses as an “industry”, Genkō admits that rituals, including funerary and ancestral rites, might have their place as tools to help those lacking proper intention (Jap. ennaki). He doubts, however, whether this can properly be enough. An attempt has to be made to reach out beyond the traditional boundaries of the danka. Proceeding to discuss a number of such initiatives hosted by various Buddhist institutions, such as a fashion show and a rock festival sponsored by the Honganji branch of Shinshū, he continues to point out that all these, rites as well as events aimed at a broader public, have in common their reliance on the temple as the fundamental unit of organization. The monastery’s gates, however, shut at dusk and leave people to face the emptiness of the small hours on their own. This he contrasts with the Vow’s Bar, which opens its doors after the regular monks have chanted the sutra and gone to bed. It is a place for the lonely, a notion he expresses by citing his motto: “mayonaka no kakekomidera”, a temple of refuge at midnight. Thus there is the sense of the bar removing Buddhism from, or at least carrying it beyond, the temple walls.

Second, the notion of equality leads Genkō to a reappraisal of the traditional concept of Buddhist practice. He understands his own work of running a bar to be a form of shūgyō. Noting that Shinshū does not commonly employ this term, its connotations including ascetic or strenuous practice, he elaborates it in a vastly different sense. For him practice, in a wider sense, is one’s everyday life and work: in his own case, it is the running of a bar. Here the notion of shūgyō begins to take on a fundamentally social meaning. Is not, he asks, to encounter people in the midst of their solitude, their difficulties, to engage with them honestly and openly, a form of Buddhist practice? Surely, to sit zazen is difficult. But is catching compassionately those who are cut loose and alone, no matter how you might feel at a certain moment yourself, less so? To sit zazen is difficult, but so too is to live for others, to be open to others, regardless of your personal circumstances. In this sense, the bar becomes the training hall, the shūgyō dōjō. Buddhist practice becomes social (inter)action (not activism, though, it should be noted).

Judging from a number of visitors to the Vow’s Bar, this vision of Buddhism, based on equality, transcending the temple model and redefining practice as social action, seems to have proven popular. The clientele includes people of all ages and from all walks of life. Two of Genkō’s costumers have even made the decision to take the tonsure themselves, just as he himself did when he encountered the first Monk’s Bar in Osaka. Nor is it a place of loners and misfits. If you drop by just for a drink and a chat, you will be as satisfied as when you might feel at a certain moment yourself, less so? To sit zazen is difficult, but so too is to live for others, to be open to others, regardless of your personal circumstances. In this sense, the bar becomes the training hall, the shūgyō dōjō. Buddhist practice becomes social (inter)action (not activism, though, it should be noted).

A Zen monk
might run a bar, but at some point the question of zazen will have to come up. Thus the notion of shūgyō as social action, refreshing as it might be, has its inherent limitations. Furthermore, at this point the exact status of the initiative in the context of organized Japanese Buddhism remains unclear. Although the Otani-ha does not oppose the Bars, neither does it recognize them. The relationship between the temple and the midnight hours thus remains unclear, and the struggle over the role of Buddhism in society undecided.

Places such as the Vow’s Bar provide an intriguingly nuanced glimpse at the variety of Buddhism one might encounter in Japan today, beyond the boring dichotomy of moribund funerary Buddhism and mystified Zen. It confirms the continued vitality and adaptability of a 1500-year-old tradition. Genkō has remarked on the irony that he first encountered Buddhism when a philosophy student in Paris, as taught by a Frenchman. Asked about his dreams for the future, he said he would like to repay his debt and open a Vow’s Bar there. Who knows what wondrous blossoms are yet to spring from ancient roots?

(This report is based on a number of fieldwork visits to the Vow’s Bar in Nakano, which took place between October 2008 and April 2009, and an interview conducted with Shaka Genkō on April 24, 2009.)

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Publications


Reviewed by T.H. Barrett (SOAS)

Shōtoku Taishi is a figure of such unassailable significance in Japanese culture, especially in his key role within the narrative of the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, that any study looking at the forces that made him significant must perforce be seen as a major undertaking in the revision of history. Michael Como’s work is certainly that, for all the acknowledgments he makes to the work of Japanese scholars on whose foundations he builds. For his argument is that in the seventh and eighth centuries, in a land at first almost without literacy and the infrastructure of communications, it was immigrants from the Korean peninsula who in providing both skills in writing and in the construction of roads and canals shaped the context in which Shōtoku’s story acquired meaning in such a way as to create the figure known to later ages. His case is clearly laid out over seven chapters, covering the Buddhist elements in the story particularly towards the end, but doing so against a much broader background of reconstruction of the immigrant influences on non-Buddhist religion also.

The results are impressive, and by and large persuasive, particularly in the second chapter wherein diverse and hitherto unrelated materials on the cult of immortality are brought together and set within a framework of immigrant mythological thought. Yet this section provides but one example of the method used throughout, which exploits the possibilities of mapping the information we have concerning groups of immigrant descent and gods of immigrant origin onto the religious geography contained in the tales of Shōtoku and others. This method of course tends to create hypotheses rather than establish unambiguous findings, but given the nature of the historical record – and especially the frustrating dearth of early sources on the Korean side – nothing else is realistically possible.

But though the method used in this study can be readily justified by the results, a word or two of caution may still be necessary. The assumption that most of the surviving ideological constructions of the seventh century owe their existence to those who controlled their transmission in writing, namely the immigrant groups who spread the use of writing, may be basically sound, but it can lead to a tacit underestimation of the parallel indigenous oral culture, a tendency to treat the immigrant creators of new (or imported) religious institutions as though they were imposing these novelties on a tabula rasa. Quite possibly their task was made easier by the existence of a broader shared culture embracing both the islands of what is now Japan and the nearby continent. In this case it might be unwise, for example, to assume that the assignment of religious significance to crossroads always reflects immigrant activity or immigrant involvement in
the writing of our sources. There would seem to be room therefore for a ‘Devil’s Advocate’ approach against the conclusions reached here, even if one suspects that many of them may not be capable of disproof.

One starting point for such an enterprise would be the recent work of John R. Bentley on the *Sendai Kuji Hongi*.¹ This source, usually considered by scholars (including Como) to be a derivative compilation of the ninth century is shown by Bentley, following on the pioneering work of Walter Robinson, the only SOAS historian ever to have specialised in early Japan, to reflect in large part a stage of Japanese historiography predating the compilation of the *Nihongi*. It is interesting to note that Bentley, too, sees a bias towards an immigrant viewpoint in his text, too, but even a cursory glance reveals that in this respect Bentley’s text and the *Nihongi* also show clear differences as well. Some form of testing the hypotheses contained in Como’s work would appear to be immediately to hand, should anyone wish to undertake the task.

Other refinements may be possible as well. Though the bulk of Como’s work concerns a period when the Japanese islands had not yet been firmly integrated into the wider Buddhist world that had been established on the continent, the final chapters do deal with the identification of Shōtoku as the reincarnation of a Chinese figure, and so involve a more familiar textual world of hagiography written in Chinese. Como himself remarks on the relative lack of exploration of this world by Japanese scholars, and again a first reading of the sources suggests that there are important points that seem (by Como’s account of the scholarship, at any rate) to have been completely overlooked so far. Given that these sources link Shōtoku not simply to the continental traditions taken up in Japan as Tendai, which saw itself as very much a rediscovery of authentic Buddhism, but also to the deeply alluring narrative of Bodhidharma’s arrival from the West with the ultimate message of Zen Buddhism, their foundational influence on Japanese views might have merited them closer scrutiny. I hope to enlarge upon the problems involved in due course.

For it is as a stimulus to further research that Como’s work will surely have its deepest impact. The study of the earliest phases of any historical tradition tends, as one of my teachers remarked, to be reduced to squeezing the maximum meaning out of a very limited quantity of written materials, and most historians are therefore obliged to devote their time to keeping up with the publication of archaeological evidence that can help illuminate the meagre written record. Naturally, therefore, an awareness of archaeology is one of the features of Michael Como’s study of Shōtoku. But his demonstration of the way in which imaginative new approaches can make the textual legacy of early Japan both more problematic and more interesting than it has been for most readers so far is a very helpful contribution. It seems unlikely that early Japanese history will ever prove important enough a field to British historians for any institution of higher learning to support another Walter Robinson, and more than likely that this area will remain the concern, for example, of an archaeologist like Gina Barnes, or an expert on Japanese religion like Michael Como himself – perhaps even a literature specialist, though the predominance of Chinese at this time alas tends to exclude the epoch from Japanese Studies as normally understood. Even so, this book, together with that by John Bentley (whose own field is that of Japanese linguistics), both demonstrate that a sense of how history is written is absolutely essential to any scholar working on the period in question. And since that period is still in many ways a foundational one for the Japanese understanding of themselves, the appearance of this book must surely be welcomed by all who have an interest in the Japanese heritage, whatever particular aspect of that heritage may concern them most.

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Publications


Reviewed by John LoBreglio (Oxford Brookes University)

Given the vehemence with which the “Yasukuni controversy” once again stormed into the arena of East Asian politics after Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō’s first visit to Yasukuni shrine on August 13, 2001, and given the controversy’s centrality to Sino-Japanese and Korean-Japanese relations, it is surprising how little information the English-reading audience has had concerning the precise positions of the various participants in these on-going debates. John Breen’s edited volume not only redresses this lack, but also seeks to prepare, and urge, its readers to become engaged participants in the debates themselves. The introduction and eight essays thus comprise, admittedly, “a polemical book,” though, “one with a difference”: “[The volume] sets out neither to attack Yasukuni nor, indeed, to commend it. Rather, it seeks to bring together authoritative voices from different points on the Yasukuni spectrum, and asks the reader to judge the merits of the arguments presented.” (20) This review takes up the editor’s request and arrives at its own position on the controversy in the hope that still others will be encouraged to read the volume and contribute from their own areas of expertise toward the cultivation of “peaceful nations” – the meaning of “yasukuni” – in East Asia.

While the controversy revolves around a singular issue – visits to Yasukuni shrine by Japanese Prime Ministers – the various reasons for contesting or supporting these symbolically-charged visits may be outlined as follows. The Chinese and Korean governments object on the grounds that Class A war criminals are enshrined there; that such visits insult the memory of the victims of Japanese wartime aggression; and, consequently, that they cast doubt on the sincerity of Japan’s acceptance of war responsibility. Those Japanese who oppose the prime-ministerial visits do so both out of consideration for the feelings of their East Asian neighbours for the reasons expressed above, as well as on the grounds that such visits are unconstitutional in that they violate the separation of religion and the state. Proponents argue either along religious lines for the importance of mourning all dead, Class A war criminals included (Kevin Doak’s essay, Ch. 2), or along religio-political lines that “it is a citizen’s important duty and right to pay respects, and offer thanks, to those who sacrificed their lives for the nation” (Nitta Hitoshi, Ch.6). Some proponents go further and contest as “pathological” the “extremely negative view of Japan’s modern history” that undergirds all of the grievances mentioned above (Nitta). What becomes clear upon a cumulative reading of the essays in this volume is that all the actors in the “Yasukuni controversy” are ultimately concerned with this latter historical issue, and the crux of the controversy is this: what shall be the ultimate verdict on Japan’s involvement in Asia from 1931-1945 and who shall pass that judgement? Did Japan wage a war of aggression in which countless millions suffered and died on the Asian continent (as most opponents of Yasukuni visits hold), or was Japan engaged in an honourable struggle to rid Asia of colonial domination (as most proponents hold)?

While the editorial intent of the volume is “neither to attack, nor commend” Yasukuni, some of the individual essays inevitably do just this, and do so with varying degrees of merit. Doak, Seki Hei (Ch. 4) and Nitta’s essays commend; Wang Zhixin (Ch. 3) and Takahashi Tetsuya’s (Ch. 5) attack. Both Doak and Seki’s robust advocations of prime-ministerial visits see the controversy primarily as a religious issue pitting a secular Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against the rightful “religious” motivations of the Japanese Prime Minister. Such a perspective struck this reader as hopelessly naïve and ultimately distracting both from attempts to understand the nature of the tension between Japan and its neighbours and from attempts to ameliorate it. Doak’s view requires that we accept Koizumi’s account of the motivation for his visits at face value: that he was simply paying his respects to those who sacrificed their lives in the Second World War. Fortunately for the reader, though, Caroline Rose’s essay (Ch. 1) disabuses one of such naivety by showing that both domestic, as well as international, realpolitik played critical roles both in the case of Koizumi’s motives and in the response of the Chinese government to his visits. Seki’s essay is a zealous anti-CCP rant that is depressingly not only for its simplistic “clash of civilisations” analysis, but for its sombre conclusion that “there will never be a solution to the antagonism and controversy between China and Japan surrounding the issue of the Yasukuni visits” (104). It is only with Nitta’s essay that we get a straightforward account of the rationale of those
Nitta defends the controversial portrayal of Japan’s modern history at the Yūshūkan war museum in the grounds of Yasukuni. In his view, the Class A war criminals are “so-called” (131) ones; high school history textbooks prioritise the feelings of Japan’s neighbours over “historical facts” (136); the education system “is in the grip of a pacifist ideology that is keen to plant in children’s minds an anti-war mentality that is prepared to exaggerate and fabricate the evil of our ancestors” (140); “no objective proof” exists that the Japanese army forced Asian women into prostitution (137); and, stories that the Japanese army forced group suicides on Okinawa “were fabricated” (141). In order to dilute the large volume of historically inaccurate “sulphuric acid,” Nitta welcomes the “pure water” of the Yūshūkan’s portrayal (141) in which Japanese ancestors “sacrificed their lives to ensure independence” and “with military force, broke down the global colonial system” (142).

It is precisely this take on Japan’s recent past that Takahashi condemns as “revisionist” in his highly articulate and cogently-argued essay. Quite to the contrary of Nitta, he insists that “Yasukuni shrine forms an inseparable unity with the imperialism and colonialism of the modern Japanese nation-state” (114). Consequently, he sees any ritual propitiation for the war dead at Yasukuni as a de facto denial of Japanese responsibility for its colonial past. Concerning the Class A war criminals (who are not “so-called”), Takahashi takes a more unyielding position than the Chinese authorities who have suggested that their removal would be sufficient to defuse the Yasukuni issue. For Takahashi, such a narrowing of the problem would deny the war responsibility of all levels of society, including that of the emperor. A further, and extremely trenchant, criticism of the rites at Yasukuni, made by both Takahashi and Breen (Ch. 7) concerns the counterfeiting of history achieved by glorifying death in battle. As Takahashi puts it, “the bloody and merciless reality of soldiers dying on the battlefield is rewritten at Yasukuni into a narrative of noble, heroic, and thus ‘glorious death’” (116). Add to this the high percentage of those enshrined at Yasukuni who died miserably of starvation, and the point is well taken.

So, is there a way out of the current “stalemate”, described so lucidly by Rose, between Japan and China on this issue? It is clear that both sides recognise that it is in their own interest to maintain peaceful diplomatic and economic relations. Indeed, the fact that Koizumi’s successor Abe Shinzō has yet to visit the shrine since becoming prime minister in 2006 indicates that there is among LDP leaders a heightened awareness of, and concern for, the very strained relations with China during Koizumi’s tenure. Yet, as many of the essays in this volume make clear, until there is some sort of resolution to “the history problem”, the Yasukuni issue continues to be open to further exploitation by Japanese and Chinese politicians in order to gain short-term political benefit at the expense of long-term peace between their nations. Com-
Publications


Reviewed by Satomi Horiiuchi (SOAS)

In Japan today, death is dealt with comparatively privately by family and individuals, especially in urban areas where the number of nuclear families is high, and the form of funeral rituals and memorial services, as well as the household system and the role of the family grave, have changed and became more varied. Consequently, new ways of burial and commemoration have emerged, such as natural burial, non-religious burial, woodland burial, private tombs, communal tombs and so on. However, though there are prominent changes, the *danka* ideology still remains strong in Japan and sometimes it clashes with the reality of the changing family structure. Especially in agricultural areas, where lineal relations are considered to be important and the relation with the local temple is strong, family structural change is a problem that needs to be solved in order to keep family ancestral rites alive as well as to support the local temple.

The author of the volume under review, Nam-lin Hur, currently a professor in the University of British Columbia, has been researching both Tokugawa Buddhism and Korean studies. His detailed and fascinating work on Tokugawa Buddhism continues in *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System*. While his previous book, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji* (1999), explored the development of Buddhist events enabling Buddhist institutions to gain financial support from ordinary people, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan* explores the process of the establishment of the *danka* system, focusing on the strategy of the Tokugawa government, which used Buddhism as a tool to eradicate Christianity and systematise ancestor veneration.

The *danka* system has been studied by a number of Japanese scholars; however, only a few books have been translated into English. This is the first substantial study written in English examining the Tokugawa *danka* system in detail. Hur explores the far-reaching ramification of the *danka* system and funerary Buddhism by focusing on the relation between Tokugawa death rituals and social structure. It pursues the following themes: (1) how and why Buddhist institutions came to serve as an administrative vehicle for the anti-Christian policy of the Tokugawa state, thereby resulting in the institutionalisation of the *danka* system; (2) how Buddhist institutions subjected the entire population to the *danka* system, thereby imbuing death rituals and ancestral rites with a Buddhist character and so incorporating Buddhism into the *modus operandi* of households in Tokugawa Japan; and (3) how, under the *danka* system, the paradigm of Buddhist death was imposed, contested, and negotiated among the *danka* households, Buddhist temples and the state—a process that eventually resulted in the backlash of the Shinto funeral movement.

Part One is devoted to the rise of the *danka* system in the political and religious context of the period between the rule of Oda Nobunaga and that of Tokugawa Ieyasu. Here, Hur poses the question: how did the state utilize the social customs of, and ethical values embedded within, funerary Buddhism for the purposes of social engineering? He illustrates the way the government dealt with international trading, and how it utilised Buddhism for anti-Christian purposes. The relation between Christians and the government is investigated from the point of view of the Tokugawa government. Hur explains the importance of the Amakusa-Shimabara Revolt as the trigger for the anti-Christian movement, which led to the establishment of the *danka* system. However, no examples of funerals in the pre-Tokugawa period are given to allow us to understand the transformation of funerary and ancestral ritual practices before and after the Tokugawa period.

Part Two investigates the changes of the family system along with the *danka* system. When *hōji* (memorial services) and funerals came to have crucial importance for the success of Buddhist temples, the continuity of the family tomb and the inheritance by the first son became important. Hur examines the domain of “family” which is based on one household belonging to one *dannadera* (local Buddhist temple). The reputation and the status of a *dannadera* was the key to preserving the popularity of the temple and the good relationship with the *danna* (people who belong to and make an offerings to the *dannadera*). Therefore, though the *dannadera* was protected by the *danka* system, some effort was necessary to maintain a certain number of *danna* households. *Dannadera* were not places to teach Buddhism but places where mortuary tablets were kept and household graves situated. Buddhist priests at the *dannadera* devoted themselves solely to holding funerals, memorial services and other ancestral rituals at graves and within the *danna* households.

Hur then explores the social dynamism of the *danka* system by looking at the number of *danna* households in different local Buddhist sects and the ratio of sects in a
specific area, and at the dannadera strategy for securing danna households. In the Tokugawa period, death rituals consisted of 1. Inviting the soul, 2. Repose of the soul, 3. Death (funeral), and 4. Post-funeral. After these rituals were completed, the dead person became an ancestor. All Buddhist temples, regardless of the sect to which they were affiliated, followed this process, though there were different customs observed in different local areas. Death rituals were thus performed only by Buddhist priests with the support of a danaka community.

Hur finds the different doctrinal understandings and traditions between Buddhist sects interwoven with local customs, and from this unique forms of funerals have developed. For instance, the Shingon, Tendai, Zen, Pure Land and Nichiren sects use different mantras and sutras, but chanting the nenbutsu (or a mantra in the case of the esoteric Buddhist sects) and singing Buddhist songs are common to all the sects. However, the funeral etiquette, such as the purification ritual, shōkō (offering incense), veneration of both kami and buddhas, a speech of greeting and a shared meal at a funeral are common traits which have been maintained by each sect down to the present. Hur explains in detail that the shogunate was not concerned with the tenets of Buddhism or sectarian differences. One of the interesting points that he raises here is that this-worldly benefits became more important than individual salvation in memorial services.

Part Three investigates the influence of Confucianism in the construction of family ideology and ethical views in feudal society. Hur raises the issue of the unfortunate dead, who are separated from danaka system because they did not have descendants to maintain the rituals after their death. Generally these were homeless people, people who did not have a family, or people who had died while travelling. However, the untouchable class of eta/hinin were not included, as they still belonged to the danaka system.

The last part of the book makes readers consider how strongly the Tokugawa danaka system permeated the whole nation. Hur discusses the new Meiji government’s attempt to make funerals Shinto in form. He states that the attempt to introduce Shinto funerals was not meant only to abolish Buddhist funerals but also to extend anti-Christianity policies. However, this attempt was not successful as the danaka system was deeply rooted, and customs pertaining to death rituals could not be changed. Some households converted to Shinto, but Hur raises the question of the actual numbers of such conversions.

Hur explains that the danaka system is not the same as the parish system in Christian cultures as it is generally translated and understood by Western scholars. One of his aims in this book is to banish such erroneous terms and concepts. On the whole, the book is worth reading, not only to understand the establishment of Tokugawa Buddhism, but also to understand the basis of Japanese ancestral rites and the family system, both historically and socially.
Information on Japanese Religions

July 18-23, 2008

Anna Andreeva

In July 2008, the Global COE Programme and the Graduate School of Letters at Nagoya University hosted the Fourth International Global COE Symposium. This time it was dedicated to the multidisciplinary study of Japanese religious texts. Despite the intense heat of Nagoya in mid-summer, this symposium proved to be a great success. It featured lectures and presentations by both prominent and younger scholars and was very well attended; over a hundred people were in the audience for each panel.

A pre-conference meeting was held on July 18, at Shinpukuji temple in central Nagoya. After a short introduction from Professor Abe Yasurō and his colleagues who are working on the manuscript collection preserved at the temple, the participants were able to view previously unpublished texts from the Osu Bunko archive. Shinpukuji has truly become a treasure grove for scholars of Japanese religions. Suffice it to say, participants had the enviable chance to have a close look at premodern manuscripts and discuss what previously unknown facts and ideas these texts might possibly offer. That alone was a very exciting and thought-provoking event for scholars of premodern Japan, and its religious culture in particular!

The manuscript exhibition was followed by a two-hour mini-workshop dedicated to the life and activities of the Rinzai Zen monk Yōsai (1141-1215) and the reconstruction of fragments of newly discovered texts of the early Zen tradition. Professors Sueki Fumihiko (Tokyo University), Makino Atsushi (Meiji University), Yoneda Mariko (Osaka University), and Wada Ukiko (Tōhoku University) talked about the meanings, goals, methodologies and possible contributions of such a reconstruction to the field of Japanese religions.

The morning session of the Symposium on July 19 was opened by inaugural addresses, made by the Global COE Programme leader, Professor Sato Shoichi, and the chief organizer of the conference, Professor Abe Yasurō (both from Nagoya University). The theme of the first panel was “Ancient and Medieval Buddhism and the Art of Cataloguing (mokurokugaku 目録学). Professors Ochiai Toshinori (International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies), Brian Ruppert (University of Illinois), and Otosuka Norihiro (JSPS) discussed aspects of the production and copying of survey lists of religious texts in esoteric temples, such as Shinpukuji, Ninnaji and Tokuunji, respectively. These papers offered a rich insight into the process of compilation of such lists with particular emphasis on the role of esoteric Buddhist temples. Professor Uejima Susumu (Kyoto Prefectural University) commented on the presentations.

A keynote speech entitled ‘The Ritual Making of the Perfect Body’ was delivered by Dr Lucia Dolce (SOAS, CJSR), who spoke about the relationship between ritual and ‘unorthodox’ iconography and the multiplicity of interpretation in medieval esoteric Buddhism. The presentation in large part dealt with the combinatory rituals dedicated to three Buddhist deities (sanzon gōgyōhō 三尊合行法), developed by Monkan. It was accompanied by a striking series of slides, which made the lecture particularly memorable.

Panel Two had the theme ‘Texts in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism’. It was addressed by Professor Kamikawa Michio (Aichi Prefectural University), who also presented a paper dedicated to the emergence of texts related to rituals of invocation of Usnīsavijāya, the Jubilant Buddha Pate. Matsumoto Ikuyo (Yokohama City University) continued this topic with a discussion of similar esoteric rituals performed by Taimitsu lineages for the safe delivery of imperial consorts. Rappo Gaetan (University of Geneva) offered a vision of late medieval ritualistic culture, discussing the works by Monkan Gushin (1278-1357) and his disciple Horen. Professor Iyanaga Nobumi (EFEO) presented thoughtful remarks on these presentations in his paper entitled ‘The World of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism: Rituals Emerging from Sacred Texts’ and opened the floor to discussion; this concluded the day.

Panel Three on the morning of July 20 was entitled ‘Japanese Religions and Ritual Texts’. Professor Suzuki Masataka (Keio University) started a useful discussion on the nature of ritual and key issues in the study of literary and ritual texts from an anthropological point of view. Matsuo Koichi (The National Museum of Japanese
History) spoke about ritual manuals for professionals and rituals related to construction in Ryōbu Shintō. Nagamatsu Atsushi (Miyazaki Municipal University) offered an interesting insight into the formation of ritual and text in the folk traditions of the Tōhoku and Kyūshū regions. Umeno Mitsuoki (Kōchi Prefectural Museum of History) spoke about texts containing spells and the invocation of deities in the Izanagiyū tradition. Kobayashi Naoko (Nagoya University) presented a paper entitled ‘The Ontake belief as a text: the narratives produced by the oza ritual’ with a particular emphasis on gender. Finally, Mori Masahide (Kanazawa University) spoke about ‘Ritual and Text: from the viewpoint of Indology’, which offered a fine conclusion to the panel.

A second keynote speech was delivered by Professor Jean-Noël Robert (Sorbonne) who spoke about the ‘Power of Words: The Semantics of Medieval Buddhist Poetry’. This fine lecture gave an overview of the history of waka, concentrating on the poetry of Saigyō and Jien. It set the mood for the next panel.

Panel Four was dedicated to a discussion of the literary traditions and arts of premodern Japan and the religious aspects of waka. This long panel was presided over by Professor Nishiki Hitoshi (Niigata University), who remarked on waka as a religious text and the possible meanings of such a construct. Unno Keisuke (Notre Dame Seishin University) spoke about the concepts of ‘sacred’ and ‘worldly’ in the transmission of waka, while touching upon the notions of text, ritual and space. Shimizu Masumi (Aoyama Gakuin University) focused on the relationship between Buddhist memorial services and waka poetry. Hirano Tae (Jūmonji University) attempted to answer the question why the medieval monk Myōe (1173-1232) read and wrote waka. Yamamoto Akihiro (Kokugakuin University), in his presentation, addressed aspects of religious practice and sentiment in the medieval poetry collection, Hōmon hyakushū, “One Hundred Poems on the Buddhist Law”. The session finished with comments and questions from the audience.

The next day, July 21, started with Panel Five, dedicated to the role religious texts played in the traditions of kami worship. Presiding over the panel was Professor Okada Shoji (Kokugakuin University), who discussed shifts in ancient and medieval kami worship and the role of Shintō texts in that process. Following these remarks, Fujimori Kaoru (Kokudokan University) made a presenta-

tion focusing on the myth about the relationship between the kami, Amaterasu and Ame no Koyane, and its implications. Hara Katsuaki (Waseda University) concentrated on issues brought about by a variety of commentaries on the Age of Gods in the Nihon shoki, and their role as crucial texts in the intellectual history of Japan. Anna Andreeva (Cambridge) spoke about issues arising from the study of texts attributed to the Miwa lineage and their relationship to Medieval Shintō texts, secret theories and rituals. Daitō Takaaki (Kokugakuin University) finished the session with a paper on the purification formula of the Nakatomi and its interpretation and place in the annual shunie ritual at Tōdaiji. Comments by Professor Itō Satoshi (Ibaraki University) were thought provoking, and generated as much discussion as the panel papers did.

Texts on religious iconography were the theme of Panel Six. This panel included papers dedicated to the visual arts in religious practices, particularly those associated with Shōtoku Taishi. Professor Yonekura Michio (Sophia University), who presided over this section, discussed the themes and goals of research into the iconography and related texts. Tsuda Tetsuei (National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo) concentrated on the images of Shōtoku Taishi as a child and their function as conveyors of the sacred in medieval Japan. Ōta Shōko (Kanazawa College of Art) discussed the traditions of depicting Shōtoku at Hōryūji, while suggesting the surrounding religious environment itself could be read as a text. Muramatsu Kanako (Nagoya University) reported on her research regarding the image production networks and the medieval traditions of depicting Shōtoku Taishi, as well as numerous ways of perception that such traditions may have prompted in the past.

The Symposium ended with final remarks by Professor Abe Yasurō and the scholars presiding over each section. A discussion of the possible publication of a volume also ensued (A fine volume containing revised versions of each paper and comments by the invited speakers was published by the Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University, in late 2008).

July 22-23 were dedicated to an excursion organized by Professors Abe Yasurō and Abe Mika for the participants of the symposium. The excursion around several temples and shrines in the Hokuriku region entailed visiting sacred sites in mainly rural areas of Toyama prefecture and viewing ritual artifacts, paintings and relevant
Information on Japanese Religions

Shugendō: the History and Culture of a Japanese Religion


Andrea Castiglioni and Marco Gottardo

The International Symposium Shugendō: the History and Culture of a Japanese Religion took place in New York at Barnard College, Columbia University, from April 25 – 27, 2008. The conference was sponsored by the Columbia Centre for Japanese Religion (CCJR) and organized by Bernard Faure (Columbia University) and Max Moerman (Columbia University).

The symposium was dedicated to Professor Carmen Blacker for her fundamental role in opening the mountain of Shugendō studies in the West. The principal aim of the three-day conference was to delineate the common features linked with the cultural identity of Shugendō, not only as a religious tradition pertaining to the past, but also as sacred experience pursued in the present. Shugendō appears to be an extremely variegated, polymorphic phenomenon, sketched by blurred lines, hence its analysis opposes formal or rigid interpretations. Traditions, rituals and structures of power connected with Shugendō are the result of a never-ending process of construction and deconstruction of religious elements in reciprocal contrast. It is exactly this transformative aspect of Shugendō that forges its complex and composite identity. Two key elements come into play together: antinomy and legitimacy. Shugendō practitioners consciously choose to emphasise, alternatively, one side or another of this identity, according to their desire to represent is as antagonist/reformist vis-à-vis the established power, or as an entity which intends to exploit that power in order to create an aura of legitimacy for itself, thus being re-incorporated inside tradition.

The conference opened with the documentary Shugen: Hagurosan Akinomine, directed by Kitamura Minao. The film focuses on the ritual entrance to the mountain (nyūbu) at Haguro in Yamagata Prefecture. Kitamura underlined the various ascetic stages of the passage through the ten worlds of the Buddhist cosmology (jikkai shugyō), which symbolise the death and subsequent rebirth of the ascetics of the Haguro tradition. Shugen is the first documentary dedicated to the practice of the Akinomine and Kitamura, who himself has taken part in it, had to obtain special permission from the Haguro daisendatsu (head priest) in order to be allowed to film it. This last point discloses some mechanisms concerning the rhetoric of secrecy in Shugendo’s context. The daisendatsu permitted the structure of this esoteric ritual to be made visible – and therefore knowable – in order to preserve its memory for posterity in case the tradition should disappear from Haguro. Secrecy is an ideal always ready to change, evolve, and bend in accord with the vital needs of transmission/communication (and also preservation) expressed by the very structure of the religious message.

Anna Andreeva received her doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 2006. She works on Japanese medieval religions, in particular, Esoteric Buddhism and kami worship. After spending a year at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard, she returned to Cambridge in 2007, where she currently holds the position of Margaret Smith Research Fellow in Japanese Religions at Girton College.

materials as well as attending the ‘etoki’ ritual – a ceremonial explanation of Shōtoku Taishi’s biography. Needless to say, it was a fine opportunity to witness the works of religious traditions in practice.

Those few days in Nagoya and Hokuriku were truly unforgettable. We had so many chances to investigate the elusive but ever present culture of the religious practices of premorden Japan. Professor Abe and his colleagues are to be congratulated on the great success of the COE conference on religious texts. It has invigorated the field of premorden Japanese religions, already a lively research area, even further. Also, of particular significance is the fact that many scholars in Japan have begun to realize that the artificial division of scholarship along the rigid lines of disciplines has exhausted itself as a useful concept. A more holistic and diversified approach has been long overdue and the COE Symposium in Nagoya has given a good illustration of how to realise it.

Fruitful links with research groups in Japan, such as that of Professor Abe Yasurō, has been a great achievement for the study of Japanese religions in the UK, and for the CSJR at SOAS in particular. It ensures the flow of new ideas and intellectual exchange, maintains the values of academic challenge, and benefits tremendously the activities of the Centre.
that it wants to preserve. Kitamura skillfully avoided misrepresenting the rhetoric of secrecy linked with the religious practice, allowing its transmission through images, which allows it to be understood even by an external audience.

The first session (April 26) started with the keynote address by Professor Miyake Hitoshi (Kokugakuin University). Professor Miyake outlined the historical development of Shugendō from its origins to the present, stressing the absence of significant breaks from the cult of mountains (sangaku shinkō) established during the Jōmon period to the subsequent ascetic practices labelled as Shugendō. According to Professor Miyake, Shugendō’s tradition embraces the core of many autochthonous religious practices of Japan, which were only subsequently hybridized with conceptions of continental origin, like Buddhism or Taoism. Professor Miyake pointed out the necessity of studying Shugendō inside the field of folk religion, in order to discern the dynamics of transformation and adaptation of a religious system from abroad in a specific Japanese context.

If Professor Miyake chose to shed light on the diachronic aspect of Shugendō’s history, Gaynor Sekimori (SOAS) dealt with the synchronic aspect of contemporary Shugendō and the creation of logical categories to present a broad definition of this sacred experience inside the Japanese religious landscape. Sekimori structured her paper on two case-studies to delineate some crucial elements of contemporary Shugendō identity: the community of shugenja at Nikkō (Tochigi Prefecture) and another group at Koshikidate (Yamagata Prefecture). She divided the unifying elements into three categories: ideological identity, practical/organizational identity, and teleological identity. The necessity to restore the combinatory cult of kami and buddha (shinbutsu shigō) along with the annual practice of entering the mountain (Akinomine) as central moments of the ritual praxis constitute the nucleus of the ideological identity of Shugendō. The emphasis on the concept of being part of a religious community, the use of the internet as a means of communication between members, the interaction between ascetic practices and everyday work, and the creation of a private domestic religiosity shape the features of the practical identity. Finally, the concept of purification by contact with nature, the achievement of worldly benefits (genze riyaku), and the domestic veneration of ancestors (senzo kuyō) are the shared elements in the teleological identity of the new Shugendō groups. Contemporary Shugendō collocates itself as a link between the sacred and the secular world, giving to its members the possibility to experience an active role – not only as observers – inside a sacred tradition deeply embedded in the everyday life.

During the discussion chaired by Dominick Scarangello (Virginia University), the necessity to deconstruct the entire process of identity-creation undergone by Shugendō was underlined. Scarangello warned us against the risks of an analysis pointing toward the ideal of an “original tradition” of Shugendō. The obsession for an origin that never existed is generated by Shugendō itself in order to construct a performative discourse about its identity.

The mountain and its rituals are one common denominator of present and past Shugendō. The study presented by Satō Hiroo (Tōhoku University) expressly focuses on this polyphony of meanings, values, and symbols, related to the mountain. Satō organised the different meanings related with the mountain into a threefold historical periodisation: kodai, chūsei, and kinsei. During the kodai (Nara and Heian periods), the mountain was understood as a “space of otherness” (ikai), the abode of kami, tengū, sennin, and many fantastic creatures (chimi). At the same time, the peak was also imagined as “another space” (takai), where the dead rest. Satō stressed the aspect of the mountain as unpoluted space, destined to host the Pure Land as an entity pertaining to this real world and accessible hic et nunc. During the chūsei (Kamakura and Muromachi periods), on the other hand, the peak becomes an intermediate step or a transition zone to reach the Pure Land, which is no more in this world, but is conceived as a separate universe away from here. Even the ascetics of the mountain turn to be merciful hypostasis of kami or buddhas, no longer living in this world, but always ready to appear in order to bring salvation to sentient beings. In the kinsei (Tokugawa period) there is a return to the ideology typical of the kodai period. Once again the mountain hosts kami, buddhas, and spirits of the dead in its recesses. It is during this time that Shugendō established the ascetic practice of jikkai shugyō, superimposing on the borders of the mountain a complex interpretative structure of Buddhist origin.
During the discussion, Mark Teeuwen (Oslo University) emphasised the ambiguity of meanings related to the mountain. The mountain is the abode of the spirits of the dead, but gives lodging to their decaying corpses as well. The alteration processes of the dead body and a spatial liminality complex to control make the mountain a problematic place.

The paper by Suzuki Shōei presented a close-up of the cult of Zaō gongen at Mount Kinpusen (Nara Prefecture). Zaō, which originally came from India, is a fundamental deity in the Shugendō pantheon. Initially it was venerated as bosatsu and lately as gongen. According to Suzuki, this passage testifies a process of “naturalization” of the deity from the continental landscape to the local Japanese context. Once again it is striking to notice how the mountain invents the deity and not vice versa. Kinpusen is understood as an extension of Mount Dańdaka, where Śākyamuni practiced austerities and preached the Dharma, and also as an emanation of the Tuṣṭa heaven, where the bodhisattva Miroku lives. Then again, Senjū Kannon completes the manifestation triad of Zaō gongen, which is composed of Zaō as terrifying emanation of Śākyamuni in the form of the wheel-body of instruction (kyōrei rinshin) corresponding to the past, Zaō as Miroku bosatsu related with the future, and Zaō as Senjū Kannon connected with the present. Zaō presents itself like a kami (or gongen of Kinpusen) with one threefold apparitional body made up by the buddha and bodhisattva. During the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, the cult of Zaō gongen continued its rhizomatic transformation, establishing links with other local deities such as Benzaiten of Tenkawa or Jizō of Kawakami.

Barbara Ambros (University of North Carolina) chaired the discussion that followed. Ambros pointed out the enormous merit of Suzuki Shōei’s work in the development of the analytical methodologies about Shugendō. The reconstruction of Shugendō ritual practices before the kinsei period is very difficult, because of the lack of directly related sources. Suzuki’s research shows the need to use alternative or peripheral sources like setsuwa, níkki and monogatari.

In the next paper, Suzuki Masataka (Keio University) presented a study on the ritual of yudate (sacred ablutions with hot water) in the mountain range of Kumano (Wakayama Prefecture). The religious practice of yudate may be analysed through three different perspectives: as kami ritual, as Shugendō ritual, and as sacred dance (yudate kagura). Suzuki pointed out the fundamental presence of the pot for the yudate ritual at the centre of pictorial representation in the Nachi mandalas. The pot served as a link between the mountain (Mount Myōhō) and the waterfall of Nachi. This waterfall has the shape of a dragon, understood as the terrestrial emanation of Hirō gongen, a water kami interpreted as the transformation of Kannon bosatsu. Numerous blazes depart from the waterfall’s jet, which symbolise Fudō Myōō in his form of the serpent/dragon Kurikara. Here it may be seen how, in Shugendō’s ritual universe, the water becomes fire and the fire becomes water. According to Suzuki, the yudate ritual aims at multiple finalities such as the oblation in favour of the kami, the achievement of a trance-like status of mind in order to produce oracular divinations, the pacification of the dead spirits and angry ghosts, the purification and exorcism of the community, the creation of positive ties with the Pure Land, the experience of the mystic unity with the deity by the ascetic, the personification of the hot water as yu no chichi (father of the hot water) and yu no haha (mother of the hot water) and the dedication of prayers for a prosperous and long life by means of paper decorations.

Gaynor Sekimori and Andrea Castiglioni (Columbia University) acted as discussants. Sekimori underlined how this study about yudate allows us to rethink the image of Fudō Myōō not only as deity related with the flame, but also as sacred entity linked with water, thanks to his serpentine form of Kurikara Fudō. Even during the performance of fire ordeals by shugenja, the purification of the body by cold water (mizugori) anticipates the entrance of the body in the fire. During the crossing of the fire-path (hi watari) the dragon (symbol of water) is invited to reside in the red-hot coals in order to protect the body-mind of the ascetic. Andrea Castiglioni underlined the interpretation of the yudate ritual as one of the four types of samādhi of fire (kashō zanmai) as it appears in Shugendō tradition in the Tsugaru area (Aomori Prefecture). This analysis stresses that yudate may be interpreted as a symbolic ritual expression concerning the ascetic practice of ‘discarding the body’ (shashingyō) by fire. Castiglioni suggested also a further investigation of the term hijiri, not simply understood as a guardian ascetic of the sacred fire, but also as the central figure in the organization of the funerary flame for the cremation of the corpse.
Sekiguchi Makiko (Japan Women’s University) concluded the first day. Her paper focused on the formation of the Tōzan-ha (the Shugendō branch affiliated with the Shingon school) and the Sanbōin monzeki (the temple in charge of its administration). The study of the division of Shugendō between Honzan-ha (linked with the Tendai school) and Tōzan-ha during the Edo period is useful to shed light also on Shugendō’s structures in the medieval period. It is evident that, during the medieval period, shugendō were not divided in according to doctrinal organizations that were clearly distinct or autonomous. The Tokugawa bakufu imposed – from above – a reform of these independent groups in order to exert more efficacious control over them. At the time of this mandatory reform, different needs, coming from the innermost part of the Shugendō structure, also pushed for a renewal of the religious establishment. These endogenous transformative forces were seeking new forms of legitimacy by creating new links with important schools like Tendai or Shingon. The profit in this case was two-fold. On one hand, the bakufu succeeded in consolidating its control over the extremely loose groups of shugendō and, on the other, Shugendō itself was able to exploit the power of the Shingon and Tendai schools to add legitimacy to its own tradition.

George Clonos (Stanford University) chaired the ensuing discussion. He stressed how the fragmentation of Shugendō developed along with other strategic alliances between shugendō and different religious schools like Nichiren-shū or Jōdo-shin-shū. During the Tokugawa period, it is possible to see a process of mutual fertilization between Shugendō and many other religious congregations. On one hand, these new alliances allowed Shugendō to renew its charisma and legitimacy and, on the other hand, this process brought enormous benefits also in terms of the creation of new ritual forms by an increasing exchange of symbols, signs and meanings from heterogeneous religious traditions.

The second day of the conference was opened by Robert Duquenne (Ecole Française d’Etrême-Orient), who presented his work on the relationship between Enkū and Shugendō. Initially, Duquenne drew a parallel between Enkū and the early Shugendō figure Mangan Shōnin: just as the latter had completed ten thousand recitations of the Hōkō-daishōgon-gyō, Enkū claimed to have fulfilled a vow to produce 100 thousand bodies of the Buddha. After important considerations on matters of sculpting styles and tools employed by Enkū, Duquenne discussed the many mountains important in Enkū’s artistic life as they transpire from his biography: from Mt. Fuji to Hakusan, from Ōmine to Nikko to Mt. Ibuki, Enkū’s life is marked by many mountain retreats. Enkū’s connection to Hakusan allowed him to spend two years in Ezo (both areas were controlled by the Takeda clan), and it was in Ezo that the repetitive nature of his sculptures, recalling his early shugendō’s vow, is particularly striking.

Will Hansen (San Diego State University) responded to the paper by drawing attention on the multiple biographies of Enkū. From the depiction of a miraculous shugendō (in Edo period works), to that of an accomplished artist (in certain post-war narratives), Enkū has come to embody the multiple dimensions of Shugendō, particularly the binary institutional vs. popular. A consequence of this may be seen in the fact that many of his works have been intentionally effaced or mutilated, reflecting the Meiji policy of haibutsu kishaku (abolish Buddhism and destroy Shākyamuni).

The second paper of the day, presented by Ouchi Fumi (Miyagi Gakuin Women’s University), addressed the role of the Lotus Repentance Liturgy (hokke senbō) in Haguro Shugendō. This liturgy belongs to the Tendai Lotus Samadhi Practice (hokke zanmai gyōhō), but was taken up by Haguro Shugendō by the medieval period, and by the late seventeenth century it became its most important liturgy. The original aspect of this practice at Haguro is its popularization, in that practitioners themselves take part in the its recitation. By analysing its musical structures (its melody lines, its basic tetrachord, and the hymns that have been added to it), Ouchi showed that Haguro Shugendō was able to achieve two main results. The first was the popularization of the liturgy by the simplification of its musical structures; the second was the self-orientation of Haguro Shugendō with respect to Tendai. Though not affiliated with either officially recognized “branch” of Shugendō (Tōzan and Honzan), Haguro effectively borrowed the Tendai framework (and its orthodoxy) by the utilisation of the hokke senbō, but through the changes introduced in it, Haguro Shugendō was able to retain its independence and identity.

Lisa Grumbach (Institute of Buddhist Studies), the discussant, praised the original contribution of Ouchi’s approach (ethnomusicology) to the field of Shugendō. Whereas when we discuss mountain asceticism we tend to address the (mountainous) landscape inhabited, visited, and re-mapped by the practice, we are almost never concerned with the “soundscape” created by its practices. During the discussion, other elements of ritual practice were pointed out as worthy of study, such as the role of sound in sutras and the one of choreography in rituals carried out to address a larger body of participants.

In the next presentation, Anne Bouchy (Ecole Française d’Etrême-Orient and Center for Social Anthropology, Toulouse University) provided an account of the problematic issues and commitments in Shugendō. After some considerations on the importance of the an-
throppological approach in the contemporary study of Shugendō, Bouchy raised three topics for further scrutiny. The first is that of Shugendō as intimate personal experience, the close relationship between the human body and the mountain landscape, exemplified by the small groups of local shugenja organized all over the country. The second was that of Shugendō as a spectacular activity, and its tendency toward secresy. Enormous ceremonies held at hotels with hundreds of participants attest to the spectacular nature of contemporary Shugendō, while the opposite pull toward a more private and interior type of rituals is also a consequence of this view. Finally, she took up the issue of the place of women within Shugendō and how the active discussion on the prohibition of women from practice may affect the very survival of Shugendō itself. In all these issues we see the transformation of a “tradition” through new definitions and concepts of religion and tradition, even beyond the national context.

Suzuki Masataka (Keio University) responded to this paper, reiterating the importance of direct observation (i.e. anthropology) in the study of a religion very much centered on the body. He then raised a number of critical topics that relate to Bouchy’s list of issues, like the importance of the “native” perspective in the study of the experiences of the practitioners; the relationship between change and continuities in social phenomena; and the idea of World Heritage, a western concept based on the idea of “uniqueness” (that relates to politics and tourism) that is affecting the transformation of Shugendō.

Fabio Rambelli (Sapporo University) next presented his paper on the social status of yamabushi in pre-modern Japan. Starting with a close analysis of the etymology and interpretation given to the character for “bushi” (武) in Shugendō doctrinal texts, he showed the normative self-understanding of the yamabushi as beings composed of two natures, both animal and human, men and ascetics with supernatural powers, sentient beings and Buddhas. After placing the non-human component within the larger discourse of esoteric soteriology, Rambelli expanded his analysis by placing the yamabushi within the heterogeneous category of social groups that claimed direct relation to a non-human component, especially onmyōji (in the figure of Abe no Seimei) and the hinin/kawaramono. These various groups, tracing part of their origin to a non-human ancestor, were thus able to secure a particular social place and role. This unique social power was one of mediation between various other groups, and thus the yamabushi’s liminal social role is paralleled by their intermediate or, better, double ontology.

In the following presentation, Lucia Dolce addressed the differences between low and high ranking members of “Shugendō”, asking who was actually using mythical narratives as a way of legitimisation. In her paper she expressed the need to reconsider the extent to which low-ranking shugenja gained their legitimacy from their ritual expertise, and how we ultimately need to distinguish between Shugendō and shugenja.

The final paper of the conference was given by Bernard Faure (Columbia University), on the embryological discourse in Shugendō. Focusing on the Akinomine at Mt. Haguro for the first part of the paper, he analysed the shugenja’s attire in terms of its embryological referents, and the discourse of gestation and rebirth central to the practices in the “womb” of the mountain. Faure addressed particularly the symbolism of the placenta: this structure protecting the foetus is symbolically present above the shugenja as the headgear (hangai) and hat (ayagasa). Further, the shugenja carries it with himself as the portable altar (oi), which is also understood as a symbolic coffin. The rituals symbolising death and rebirth at Mt. Haguro utilize and handle these implements, thus translating this symbolism into actual physical acts. In the second part of his paper Faure showed the shift from the symbolic utilization of the placenta (and other) embryological organ(s) to the identification of these organs with specific deities. Central in his discussion is the deity Ena Kōjin, which he traced in a number of textual sources from different traditions, but additional deities associated or identified with Kōjin are also Fudō, Aizen, and Shōten. It is with the elephant-headed Shōten/Vināyaka, that Faure closed his presentation, showing how this deity of obstacles was also perceived as a placenta deity.

In his comments to the paper, Marco Gottardo (Columbia University) attempted to broaden the context of the presentation by highlighting how deeply the embryological discourse so central to Shugendō penetrated the popular imagination of the Edo Period: the same elements of gestation and rebirth described by Faure are found in many examples of popular religion and popular literature. An approach focused on religious symbolic discourse can thus lead us to uncover larger epistemic patterns that apply well beyond a single “tradition”.

This conference was extremely successful in bringing together scholars from Europe, Japan, and the United States, bridging different generations of scholarship as well as methodologies. The diversity of topics covered in the papers attests to the importance that Shugendō has for scholars engaged in the field of Japanese religion from the point of view of various disciplines. In that sense, this conference can be seen as the first big step toward the laying out of common themes and directions of research on Shugendō (if not the actual establishment of a “Shugendō” field of studies) in the West.
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To Display Pilgrimage: Reflections on the *Saikoku* Thirty-three Kannon Pilgrimage Exhibition

Benedetta Lomi

*And in fact memory is a sort of anti-museum: it is not localizable.*

Museums have been associated, not simply metaphorically, with temples or churches, and the type of practice engaged in by the museum has been considered to be characterized by a ritualized behavior. The arguments brought to support such an understanding of a very common modern and contemporary phenomenon relies on overcoming any distinction between religious and secular ritual activities, to uncover the way culture is performed, metabolized, institutionalized and reproduced. In this sense we could say that the person going to see an exhibition will be in a suitable frame of mind, will relate to the objects on view, and will walk, behave and experience in a “ritualized manner.” For example, the layout of an exhibition is just as much fixed as, let us say, that of a pilgrimage: it allows detours and stops, but ultimately it has to be completed. The objects on display in the galleries cannot be touched, are illuminated in a specific way, and are protected by screens and ropes that often make it quite difficult to get a close look at them: they have to be gazed at from a certain distance, just like in a temple or a church. The most important works are obviously given relevance in the organization of the room with the intent of generating a sense of awe in the spectator. The art object, even when is something as desecrating as Marcel Duchamp’s “Fountain” or Joseph Beuys’ rotting food, is viewed, arranged and perceived as a sacred one.

On the other hand, religious objects displayed as works of art suffer from the opposite effect: the decontextualization of the sacred object that takes place when set out in a museum or an art gallery, depriving the object of its primary religious function, and desacralizing it almost completely. The decontextualization is not necessarily caused by taking the sacred image outside its physical location, the temple or church; it is not the museum that strips the sacred image of its religious function but the viewers alone is not enough.

The key to a successful display or exhibition of religious objects does not necessarily lie in the reproduction of the exact layout of the religious site (temple, shrine or pilgrimage), as already enough parallelisms exist between museums and sacred spaces. Rather, it is found in the ability of leading the *viewer* to identify (or at least empathize) with the *practitioner*. In the museum display formula, and certainly in its practice, the interaction between the object and the curator is crucial for the understanding of the general public, but is ultimately the viewer that determines what to make of the outcome or to choose how to perform the museum visit. It is even more so because the object *per se*, its production, existence and dissemination say very little about its *use* to those who are not familiar with it; therefore, if the viewer is able to identify with the practitioner, for example by relating to the object in a *devotional* way, by bowing, making offerings or praying, then maybe the original function of the object is not lost completely. For obvious reasons, it is easier if the museum viewers are culturally acquainted with the objects on display, but even here the intention of the viewers alone is not enough.

With these considerations as a background, I want to discuss the exhibition entitled *Worshipping Kannon: Treasures from the Thirty-three Pilgrimage Sites of Western Japan* (西国三十三所観音霊場の祈りと美), held in the Nagoya City Museum and organized on occasion of the 1000th anniversary of the death of Emperor Kazan (968–1008).

The focus of the *Saikoku* exhibition was to provide through the devotional objects a better understanding of the Thirty-three Kannon pilgrimage, and several factors surely played in favour of the curators: the familiarity

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5 The exhibition was held between August 1st and November 30th 2008 at the Nara National Museum and the Nagoya City Museum contemporaneously.
most of the viewers would already have with the types of objects and the practice, the fact that the objects were not culturally decontextualized, the possibility of creating a dialogue with the temples involved, and finally the intrinsic parallelism between the museum visit and pilgrimage. In the first instance, it is quite clear that even though not all observers might be knowledgeable about Buddhism or have done the pilgrimage, they are partially aware of the power and function of the objects (even when they think that this power is generated by an aesthetic value, which they are able to assess). In this sense the religious items are recognized by the viewers as such, something that would not always happen in a western art museum. In this case, the exhibition was also conceived as a sort of side-pilgrimage of the actual one: from September 2008 and during the next two years, the thirty-three honzon of the temples, all of which are hibutsu (secret images), will be on view in their original location. In doing so the curators worked with the temples in order to get access to images displayed only extremely rarely, without taking them out of context, at the same time encouraging the museum viewers to visit the pilgrimage sites.

Furthermore, if the way a museum experience unfolds can be theoretically compared to that of a pilgrimage to a sacred site, as a journey in search of a place or a state that embodies a “valued idea,” and where the person setting off to view the exhibition does so in a frame of mind of discovery, enriching and changing experience, the Thirty-three Kannon exhibition had all the prerequisites for a successful outcome.

As far as the organization was concerned, there was no attempt to translate the pilgrimage route onto the exhibition one by ordering the objects on display from temple 1 to temple 33, which makes even more sense if we consider that there is no prescribed way of doing the pilgrimage: it is not important to start at temple one and finish at temple thirty-three, as the location of the temples suggests. What is important is to visit them all. Instead, the space has been divided into seven sections, each dealing with a particular aspect of Kannon faith along the pilgrimage route, trying to stress the implications of the religious practice by looking at the production of meaning created by the interaction of worshippers, objects, people and texts. In this equation, pilgrimage clearly becomes the context and field in which faith is produced on a variety of levels, and the thread along which the path unfolds, uniting each location, is the Bodhisattva Kannon. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the first section of the exhibition is dedicated entirely to Kannon sacred statues. Among the ones displayed, coming from fifteen of the thirty-three temples, all of which are hibutsu (secret images), all designated Important Cultural Properties. As the honzon of the temples could not always be shown, the exhibition featured other Kannon statues coming from temples that are part of the Saikoku route or that are in the proximity of one of the Thirty-three temples. This enabled the viewer to assess the impact that the faith in one of the many forms Kannon had in each location, and even made me wonder whether the proliferation of a particular iconography or healing function of Kannon in a specific area could be derived from the power and popularity of that enshrined in the nearest Saikoku Temple. This would also suggest that each station on the route in turn shaped the Kannon worship in the area, insofar as today we can witness a form of branding. (A few days after the exhibition, I visited Matsunooadera 松尾寺 for research purposes. The honzon of the temple is Batō Kannon, a form of Kannon that is rarely enshrined as a main deity. Interestingly enough, around Matsunooadera there are other two temples devoted to the same deity. Initially I thought there might have been a connection with horse-breeding, usually an index for the proliferation of Batō faith. After some research it became apparent that the area is not famous for any horse-breeding activity and the temples themselves do not really focus on the protection of horses: it rather seems that with the popularization of the Saikoku route in the Edo period, Batō Kannon worship also flourished in the area, thanks to the importance of Matsunooadera, as suggested also by the dating of the Batō Kannon statues).

In this light, Kannon faith provides not only the link between each temple on the route, but is extremely important in the shaping of religious practice of every one of the sacred areas the pilgrimage cuts across. The second part of the exhibition focuses thus on the origins and parallelism between the museum visit and pilgrimage.

8 These temples are Nakayamadera 中山寺, a Shingon Temple in Fukui Prefecture founded in 1580, and Magoji 馬居寺. While both temples claim to have been founded in the Nara period, the halls and statues of Batō Kannon are from the Edo Period.
development of each temple in its original context, by looking at the foundation myths of the pilgrimage and its temples. The first object of the section is the *Saikoku Sanjūsansho junrei engi* 西国三十三所巡礼縁起, the *Origin Story of the Thirty-three Pilgrimage sites in Western Japan*, a hand scroll dated 1536 (Tenbun 5, Image 2 Catalogue 25). According to the *engi*, the pilgrimage was instituted in the eighth century by priest Tokudō, of Hasedera 長谷寺 temple in Nara, of which two Edo period portraits are displayed (Catalogue 26, 27). The revival of the route is attributed to Cloistered Emperor Kazan and to priest Shōkū 証空. Catalogue image 27, four Edo period portraits, shows the thee personalities together with Butsugen 仏眼, and the exhibition also features a Kamakura period statue of Shōkū, originally held in Engyō-ji 円教寺 (Catalogue 32). From the objects displayed, it is quite clear that in this section, the curators wanted to give a certain prominence to the figure of Kazan and Shōkū. Through a number of beautiful Edo period *engi* of the Thirty-three temples and the association between the *engi* and the images displayed, there was a subtle attempt to maintain the centrality of the figure of Kazan in the development of the pilgrimage, so that he serves the purpose of creating a story-line for the institution and development of the pilgrimage.

The third section of the exhibition deals with how the role and power of Kannon faith along the Saikoku route has been futhered, reinvented and kept alive through temple treasures, both those passed on from other temples and accumulated through times, and devotional objects produced by and for the faith of people. Both these aspects are extremely important in understanding the dynamics of sacred places and their ability of maintaining a tradition alive, which inevitably goes through the accumulation of sacred wealth, being it a reflection of the faith and worship practice. Among these, surely worth mentioning are the exquisite Heian Period hanging scroll of Fugen Enmei 菩賢延命 (National Treasure, Image 3, Catalogue 78) and two Kamakura period Guhari Amida.

The exhibition further investigates the role of Kannon faith through the production and importance of sacred objects in the religious practice, in the fourth and fifth section, dedicated to the *Lotus sūtra* and to miraculous images and the transmission of benefits respectively. These two sections look at the reproduction and circulation of sacred texts and images of the Thirty-three Kannon for meritorious or venerational purposes and the spread of their beneficial power throughout the territory. Through the variety of objects, such as scrolls, reliquaries, mandalas and statues the viewer gets the sense of the richness and variety of such miraculous images, yet it would have been even more complete, for the sake of the argument made, to show more ordinary types of objects circulated among people, such as talismans or portable images, *fuda* and pilgrims book. The transmission of benefits did not go through the most outstanding reproductions alone, its is often manifested through the proliferation of copied and less valuable items among people.

The sixth part of the exhibition deals with sacred geography and Mount Potalaka, the abode of Kannon. As in the previous section there is a prevalence of Kannon images, except for two miniature shrines and two scrolls from the *Kegon sūtra* 華厳経 describing the Pilgrimages of Sudhana. In this sense I believe the section was weaker than the others, not for the richness of objects on display, but because it failed to develop the association between some of the temples on the route and Mt. Potalaka through the materials presented.

The seventh and final section attempts to contextualize all the above to the pilgrimage practice, and it was one of the more interestingly developed sections for the way it used different types of materials, from personal diaries to official temple documentations and records of donations, from map printing blocks to pilgrimage mandalas, from pilgrimage *engi* to pilgrimage guides (Image 4) and placards to examine the nature of the Saikoku pilgrim-
age, what attracted the pilgrims, which type of devotional practice it involved.

The richness of materials and the way the exhibition was organized made it extremely thought provoking and critically engaging: the viewer is enabled to learn and reflect on each section thanks to the poignant explanations provided. Of course, as any good exhibition, it also raises a number of questions pertaining to the nature of the pilgrimage experience in the Japanese tradition and the way it can be best explained to museum viewers. To stress the importance of the objects, intrinsic to the museum experience, and to make visible the production of religious faith through the display of a variety of artifacts is one of the most successful aspects of this exhibition. Yet the story-line of emperor Kazan, which has to be maintained because the exhibit was held in his memory, fails to address an important point: the diachronic development of the route. The objects on display are chronologically decontextualized. By putting on the same level the objects produced in different periods, without attempting any considerations on the way the saikoku pilgrimage has changed through time, and the lack of any reference to the way these objects where perceived and employed in different historical circumstances, gives the false perception that the saikoku pilgrimage has somehow maintained the same characteristics from the Heian period until today. Furthermore, it fails completely to investigate the type of people that did the pilgrimage: each temple on the route was initially the residence of ascetics and hijiri and those who embarked on the practice from the Heian throughout the Kamakura period, tracing the earlier saikoku route, belong to this category. Yet it is never acknowledged, nor is there any mention the first ascetics for whom we have written records of the saikoku practice. The way materials are presented never hints at the popularization of the route from the Fifteenth Century onward, a change that surely had deep repercussions on Kannon faith along the route and on the definition of the route itself.

Given the almost complete absence, if not for the two above-mentioned diaries, of the practitioners, how could those visiting the museum relate to or identify with the pilgrims? Behind the cabinet the sacred objects lose their religious power not because they are misplaced, but because they are frozen in time, just as if they had expired on the date shown on the explanatory tag. This clashes with the explanations of each section, which are accurate and raise important points on the popularization of Kannon worship along the saikoku route, and it would have been even more interesting to see such considerations somehow translate in the objects displayed.

My impression is, that by trying to create a mythical scenario for the saikoku pilgrimage, an idea that it is supported by the fact that only highly valuable materials have been put on display and with the little attention given to the type of people who have embarked, in different times, on the journey, the curators failed to show the most active and dynamic part of the pilgrimage practice. It is not enough to show the religious objects: pilgrims define the pilgrimage.

I recognize that the pattern chosen by the curators was not aimed at reproducing a religious practice, rather, through the value and of importance of the objects displayed and the centrality of Cloistered Emperor Kazan, they wanted to provide the viewer with a specific interpretative framework for the pilgrimage, which they surely succeed in doing. Yet while approaching the end of the last gallery I was still hoping to be surprised. After the cases and the cabinets orderly displaying objects of faith, sacred texts put momentarily on hold, living images in suspended animation, there is a map laid open on the floor. The visitors can stand in front of it, look down at it, try to make sense of directions, names of places, mountains and rivers they have just learned about. There are thirty-three temples on the map, and a route is sometimes visible, sometimes not, as if traced with a very light pencil, a labyrinth. If we take refuge in the rules of the game, we can walk it and have it mean something: a replica of a pilgrimage brings just about enough merit as walking it in real life. It grants a privileged point of view that obviously is not granted to the pilgrim, a vision of the whole, yet this is the only moment we can witness an identification between the visitor and the pilgrim. A group of monks passes by the hall quickly and exits the exhibition, unexplainably is not granted to the pilgrim, a vision of the whole, yet this is the only moment we can witness an identification between the visitor and the pilgrim. A group of monks passes by the hall quickly and exits the exhibition.

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Information on Japanese Religions

Exhibition of Temple Treasures from Daigoji
(Bonn, Germany 25 April – 24 August 2008)

Katja Triplett

A large number of sacred objects from Kyoto’s Daigoji (f. 974) could be admired in a carefully and splendidly designed show in the National Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle in Bonn last year. Altogether 240 works were exhibited over a period of four months, and due to the fragility of some, 160 objects could be seen at one time to give insights into the rich history and religious life of this famous Shingon temple. Never before has there been an exhibition outside of Japan with such a large number of highly-important objects (94 ranked important cultural property; 16 national treasures). The 2008 Daigoji exhibition in Bonn follows a similar project that – in cooperation with the Tokyo National Museum - brought numerous treasures from the temple to Germany five years before in 2003.

The most exquisite sculpture or painting cannot tell its history or show its quality without a meaningful and relevant display, and the makers of “Temple Treasures of a Sacred Mountain: Daigo-ji - The Secret Buddhism in Japan” succeeded in providing a worthy frame for the treasured objects. After entering the exhibition space, the visitor was greeted by large modern sliding doors opulently painted with a landscape showing the Daigoji five-storied pagoda and blooming cherry trees in the nihonga-style. Some basic information was provided in this entrance area. The visitor then entered a mandala-like display area. The heart of this space imitated the world of the two central mandalas in Shingon Buddhism: directly underneath the high tower that extends the ceiling of the Bonn exhibition hall seemingly into the sky by ending in a pointed tip covered with window glass, two sitting sculptures of Dainichi Nyorai were displayed with their backs to a wooden column, thereby facing outward. The faces of the two statues were directed appropriately to the two central mandalas in Shingon Buddhist practice. A number of precious gifts from patrons (e.g. Toyotomi Hideyoshi) to the temple were also shown near this area. Light brown was chosen as a background for the next area exhibiting a number of statues and large paintings of wrathful deities. The visitor then followed “traces of mountain ascetics” because the temple founder Shōbō (Rigen Daishi) is cel-