From the Chair

Welcome to yet another issue of the CSJR Newsletter.

This has been another busy year for the Centre, with several international gatherings, the regular seminar series and a new focus series. In November we marked the anniversary of the cyclical reconstruction of Ise shrine with a workshop and an exhibition organized by Meri Arichi; in February we hosted a young scholar workshop on new findings that shed light on the interactions between Buddhist schools in medieval Japan, cosponsored by the University of Tokyo; and in March we welcomed the members of an international project on the interactions between the Christian missions and Buddhism in sixteenth-century Japan, cosponsored with the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. The CSJR seminar series was enriched by a new focus on Revisiting Modern Buddhism, aimed at drawing attention to the growing research on this long dismissed but crucial period in the development of religion in Japan.

This issue bridges two academic years, and you will also find reports on the event that closed 2013, an international workshop on Buddhist Medicine. As Benedetta Lomi reminds us in a featured report, the interaction of religion and medicine has been a concern of the Centre for several years. In this issue you will find research notes by members and associate members on current projects related to this area of inquiry.

I would also like to mention two publications that appeared last year: Tullio Lobetti’s book Ascetic Practices in Japan, reviewed in this issue, and the volume, Shinbutsu shugō saikô that I have coedited with one of our past academic visitors, Mitsuhashi Tadashi, and which includes essays by several members of the Centre, first presented at a workshop at SOAS.

The Centre has also seen a movement of people. We welcome a new Research Fellow, Dr Tatsuma Padoan, who will be for two years attached to the Centre as a Newton Fellow and will work with Lucia Dolce on a project on urban pilgrimage. A new PhD student also joined us, Masato Kato, working on the interface between cultural particularity and universal value in New Religions abroad. On the other side, a few people have left SOAS. Congratulations to Shinya Mano, who has successfully defended his PhD dissertation on Yōsai and esoteric Buddhism after many years of painstaking research in London and in Japan! Congratulations also to Tullio Lobetti and Benedetta Lomi, who have both left SOAS for new jobs, Tullio to take up a position up the road from Russell Square, as Study of Religions project manager at the Graduate School of the Ismaili Institute; Benedetta to start a tenure-track lectureship across the 'pond', at the University of Virginia. Tullio and Benedetta have been our most active and dedicated members, and many things we have achieved would not have been possible without the enormous amount of work that they have put in through the years, taking care of the day-to-day challenges of SOAS bureaucracy, the Centre guests and the Newsletter, with much personal commitment, professionalism, and a good smile. We owe them a big thank you! Shinya, Tullio and Benedetta will remain Associate Members at the Centre, and we hope there will be many chances in the future to work again together.

Lucia Dolce
Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

Programme
2013-2014

Term 1

October 10, 5-6:30 pm, Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre (Former G2)
CSJR Lecture Series: Revisiting Modern Buddhism
John LoBreglio (Oxford Brookes)
Japanese Buddhists and Twentieth-Century Imperialism

November 21-22
CSJR Workshop: Sengū of the Ise Shrine: Rituals, Myth and Politics
Thursday, November 21
Keynote Lecture
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre DLT
Prof Yoshitaro Shirayama (Kogakkan University, Ise)
Sengū of the Ise Shrine: Tradition, Ideology and Politics

Friday, November 22 Workshop
Participants: John Breen, Lucia Dolce, Simon Kaner, Ken T Oshima, Hideki Saito, Gaynor Sekimori, Mark Teeuwen, Meri Arichi
10:00 am – 6:00 pm Room 116, SOAS Main Building

November 28, 5-6:30pm, Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre
CSJR Seminars:
Ana Fernandes Pinto (CHAM - Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
Martyr Versus Betrayer: The European Discourse on the 17th Century Persecution of the Christians in Japan

December 12, 5-6:30pm, Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre
CSJR Seminars: Revisiting Modern Buddhism
Brian Bocking (University College Cork)
The Forgotten First London Buddhist Mission, 1889-1892: Charles J W Pfoundes and the Kaigai Senkyōkai

Term 2

January 9, 6-7:30 pm, Venue the Royal Asiatic Society
CSJR Book Launch
Tullio Lobetti (SOAS)
Ascetic Practices in Japanese Religion

January 30, 5-6:30 pm, Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre
CSJR Seminars: Revisiting Modern Buddhism
Erica Baffelli (University of Manchester)
Intersections of Religion and Media in 1980s-1990s Japan

February 6, 5-6:30 pm, Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre
CSJR Seminars: Revisiting Modern Buddhism
Tamura Kanji (Rishō University/Harvard University)
Tiantai Zhiyi’s Notion of Sakyamuni Buddha: Understanding the Buddha as a Father

Saturday, February 22, 9:30 AM – 2:00PM Room B111
CSJR/University of Tokyo Workshop
Intersectarian Relations in Medieval Japan: New Findings in the Study of Buddhist Sources

March 6, 2-7:00 pm, Room TBC
International Workshop: CSJR/Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology
Interactions between Rivals: The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan (c.1549-c.1647)

March 13, 5-6:30 pm, Kamran Djam Lecture Theatre
CSJR Seminars: Revisiting Modern Buddhism
Orion Klautau (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)
Japanese Buddhism: The Development of an Idea in the Context of Empire (1880s-1940s)
Centre Activity

For further information, please check the CSJR website: http://www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/events/

Contact Information Benedetta Lomi, email: bl21@soas.ac.uk

CSJR INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
INTERSECTARIAN RELATIONS IN MEDIEVAL JAPAN: NEW FINDINGS IN THE STUDY OF BUDDHIST SOURCES

Keynote Speaker: Kenryo MINOWA (University of Tokyo)

Abstract
This workshop aims at reconstructing medieval Japanese Buddhism beyond the sectarian borders that have hitherto shaped our understanding of its development. It will explore the dynamics of mutual influence that characterised the relation between different ‘schools’ at the institutional and individual level, and shed light on how these dynamics are reflected in both textual sources and distinctive practices.

22/02/2014
9:30AM-3:30PM
ROOM B111

Sponsored by
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS

SOAS University of London
Centre Activity

THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS, SOAS
INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

INTERSECTARIAN RELATIONS IN MEDIEVAL JAPAN:
NEW FINDINGS IN THE STUDY OF BUDDHIST SOURCES

Saturday 22 February 2014, 9:30 – 3:30
Room B111, SOAS Brunei Gallery

Programme

9:30 Registration

10:00 Welcome by CSJR Chair, Lucia DOLCE

10:10 – 10:50
Emanuele DAVIDE GIGLIO (University of Tokyo)
Nichiren’s Studies on Mt. Hiei: Focusing on the Relationship with the Figure of Shunpan

10:50 – 11:30
Fumihiro OKADA (University of Tokyo)
Textual Relations: Chingen’s Hokke genki and Soshô’s Miroku nyorai kannôshô

11:30 – 12:10
Shinya MANO (SOAS)
The Use of the Putixinlun in Japan: Practices and Doctrines in Intersectarian Context

12:10 – 13:30 Lunch Break

13:30 – 14:10
Tastuma PADOAN (SOAS)
Under the Walking Steps of the Ascetic: Ritual Space, Memory and Narration in Medieval Katsuragi Pilgrimage

14:10 – 15:00 Keynote Lecture
Kenryo MINOWA (University of Tokyo)
The Influence of the Zen School on the Monks of the Southern Capital, Nara: Focusing on Ryôhen, Enshô and Gyônen

15:00 – 15:30 Final Discussion
Centre Activity

Interactions between Rivals: The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan during the Portuguese presence (c.1549-c.1647)

Thursday, March 6 2014
2:00 PM – 7:00PM Room 116, SOAS

For further information, please check the CSJR website: http://www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/events/
Contact Information: Benedetta Lomi, email: bl21@soas.ac.uk
Centre Activity

SOAS CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS
THE PORTUGUESE FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(PTDC/HIS-HIS/118404/2010)

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RIVALS:
THE CHRISTIAN MISSION AND BUDDHIST SECTS
IN JAPAN (C.1549-C.1647)

Thursday 6 March 2014, 2:00 – 7:00 PM
Room TBC

This workshop presents the first results of the research developed in the framework of the project “Interactions between Rivals,” a three-year international project funded by the Portuguese Science Foundation. The project aims at a comprehensive analysis of the way Southern Europeans (nanbanjin) and Japanese confronted each other, interacted and mutually experienced religious “otherness,” through the study of the composite cultural heritage created (mostly) in Japan by both European and Japanese. Members of the research team will discuss material related to four main lines of enquiry: 1) References to Buddhist sects, system of beliefs, and religious practices in missionary writings; 2) Buddhist influences in Christian literature published in Japan; 3) Interactions between Buddhist and missionary visual culture and ceremonial practices; 4) Interactions between Buddhist and Jesuit scientific cultures.

Programme

1:30 Registration and Coffee

14:00 - 14:15 Welcome by CSJR Chair, Lucia Dolce and Presentation of the Project

14:15 - 14:45 Silvio Vita (Kyoto University of Foreign Studies - ISEAS) - via Skype
Christianity and Early Euro-Japanese Contacts: the Academic Discourse in Modern Japan

14:45 - 15:15 Frédéric Girard (EFEO)
In Search for a Buddhist Ecumenic Reformation in Contact with Christianity

15:15 - 15:45 Claudio Caniglia (SOAS)
An Important (Proto) Ethnographic Record of Shugendō Practices: The Letter by Louis Frois from Kuchinotsu of February 1583

15:45 - 16:15 Discussion

16:15 – 16:30 Tea Break

16:30 - 17:00 Alexandra Curvelo (CHAM - FCSH/Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
Interactions Between Buddhist and Missionary Visual Culture

17:00 - 17:30 Angelo Cattaneo (CHAM - FCSH/Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
Learning, Space, and Identity. Some Methodological Notes on the Study of the Nanban Cartographic Byōbu

17:30 - 18:00 Daniele Frison (CHAM - FCSH/Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
With Nature On Our Side: The Jesuits and the Daibutsu

18:00 - 18:30 – Final Discussion
New Members

The Lucky Gods of Tokyo

Tatsuma Padoan

Everything is bright and cheerful in the old St. Nymph Church in Palermo, and everybody is ready to celebrate the wedding. And yet there is something different from what one would expect to find in a traditional Sicilian church connected to the local pilgrimage of St. Rosalia. The provenience and attire of the participants, the kind of flower arrangements, and the colourful garlands worn by the bride and groom... Everything is arranged according to a traditional South Asian style, from the garments worn by the people who attend the celebration, to the jewellery and red bindi on the women’s foreheads. I am assured by some of the participants that all the people attending this Roman Catholic wedding, including the priest’s assistants, are Tamil Christians. Later on, in the shrine of St. Rosalia, on the top of Mt. Pellegrino, a woman from Madagascar fervently prays and invokes the saint, touching the feet of a statue dedicated to her. This time, the woman explains to me, to be a truly Hindu follower, she made a pilgrimage to Palermo to expressly venerate the sacred power of this shrine. The pilgrimage to St. Rosalia, female patron saint of the city, is indeed the link between the wedding party and this individual believer. A pilgrimage that has been revitalised especially by the Tamil community of Palermo, the largest in Europe, who has recently taken charge of the Sunday Mass in the main shrine and is strongly present in other connected churches. The most interesting feature of this pilgrimage is that it has developed into a space of socialisation not only for the Christian component of the Tamil community of Palermo, but also for the Hindu one. Moreover, the saint is venerated by the Malagasy, as well as by the local Muslim gipsy community, of Kosovarian origin, who performs a specific set of rites on alternative days with respect to the patron’s main festival. Last but not least, the Palermitan residents share the pilgrimage to St. Rosalia with the Italian Buddhist Union, who recently elected the shrine to celebrate the Vesak festival. An extraordinary array of different people is therefore attracted by this pilgrimage, which works as a cult of integration between local and immigrant communities of the city (Burgio 2007).

From Palermo to Tokyo. Here we can find another interesting form of ‘immigration pilgrimage’, but this time the situation is inverted. Instead of having one local sacred figure venerated by several different people, we have an assemblage of immigrant and local gods working for the benefit of a single local population. And yet the gods venerated in this specific pilgrimage, currently the most widespread and popular in Japan, have a distinctive ‘mixed’ character, both local and foreign, as they are from different countries and religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism and Shinto. We are talking about the pilgrimage of the Seven Gods of Fortune (shichifukujin no meguri), made famous in the last forty years by the multiplication of dedicated routes, and popularisation through media. My current project as Newton Post-Doctoral Fellow at SOAS, seeks to investigate this practice from a semiotic and anthropological perspective, also challenging contemporary theories of pilgrimage which assimilate this phenomenon into generic cultural processes of mobility and travel (Eade and Coleman 2004).

The research will focus on case studies concerning pilgrimage routes that are mostly located in the Tokyo area. This is the area with the greatest concentration of pilgrimages of the Seven Gods of Fortune (currently more than 50 just in the TokyoMetropolis), besides being the place where this practice first flourished between the late 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century (Pye 2004). The choice of focusing on case studies is motivated by the fact that this pilgrimage can vary both in the number and in the identity of the worshipped deities, frequently reaching the number of eight or nine (e.g. the eight gods of Hachiōji, or the nine gods of Asakusa), and sometimes including figures other than the usual ones (like Daruma, in the Seya pilgrimage of Yokohama) (Reader and Tanabe 1998). This makes the name ‘Seven Gods of Fortune’ a collective designation for a very flexible and situated phenomenon, which needs to be studied in depth in its local urban settings (Ishii 1994). We would be indeed tempted to see it as a cult of integration, working not for different cultural communities of people, as in the case of St. Rosalia, but culturally different nonhuman actors, as a space of socialisation which connects different deities and religious institutions, namely Shinto and Buddhist ones. One of the main issues inherent in this practice is that it does not concern only the lay and unofficial level of religious activity. Quite the contrary, it also seems to question and rearticulate the relationship between different levels of the institutional apparatus. In fact its peculiarity consists of being organised by a local network of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, which negotiate shared interests and aims in order to attract pilgrims to their religious centres, without too much concern for political-religious bodies, such as the National Association of Shrines, which advocates a...
policy of separation. The pilgrimage of the Seven Gods of Fortune is particularly suited to the study of these processes of negotiation and confrontation between different institutional levels, as well as dynamics of religious marketing concerning the relationship between cultic centres and practitioners (Reader 2014). The promotion of this pilgrimage is also implemented by a strong entanglement with contemporary Japanese media and pop culture (from anime to Hello Kitty), which widely borrow from the Seven Gods’ iconographic elements, and by a deep connection with commercial organisations, which have long sponsored it (e.g. the Musashino City circuit, supported by theatre companies, restaurants, hotels, department stores and hair salons). More specifically, my research will analyse the relationship between religious and spatial politics in contemporary Japan, through an investigation of how Tokyo urban space is used in specific routes of pilgrimage that emerge from the interaction between Buddhist and Shinto institutions. By focusing on this pilgrimage and on some of its specific settings, this project will try to explain how this religious practice: (1) reconfigures urban space and institutional boundaries, within a changing geography of religious interests, economical activities and quests for local identity, and (2) leads us to reconsider the category of social as a process produced by networks of human and divine actors. While traditional Durkheimian perspectives restrict the category of ‘society’ to human actors, and see religion as a mere mirror or representation of it, I would follow a semiotic and actor-network approach (Latour 2005) to reassess the role of non-human and extra-human actors as active agents which interact and connect with people in order to produce the social processes. The particular configuration and valorisation of urban space created by these pilgrimage routes will be better understood, I argue, if we consider the distribution of agency on the deities themselves, in their specific interaction with pilgrims, institutions and media.

I am most grateful to the Department of the Study of Religions and the CSJR for hosting me during this project at SOAS, which will last two years from February 2014. My special thanks go in particular to Dr Lucia Dolce, who will be my mentor at SOAS, for her invaluable support, as well as to the British Academy for having awarded me the Fellowship, together with the unique opportunity for exploring the Lucky Gods and their routes.

Dr Tatsuma Padoan obtained his doctorate in Languages, Cultures and Societies (Religions and Anthropology of Japan) in 2011 from Ca’ Foscari University of Venice. He has been research student in Cultural Anthropology at Tokyo’s Keio University, carrying out research activities on mountain asceticism and pilgrimage in Japan. Before coming to SOAS, he taught Japanese Religions at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, and Cultural Anthropology at the Free University of Bolzano, where he also conducted an ethnographic and semiotic study of learning processes in design. His research areas cover the study of ritual – including pilgrimage, religious materiality and spirit possession – as well as the study of design practices and the politics of urban space. He is particularly interested in the relationship between generative semiotics, linguistic anthropology and actor-network-theory, as a set of models for the practical analysis of local discourses in religion, material culture, and science and technology studies.

Bibliography

Burgio, Giuseppe. 2007. La Diaspora Interculturale. Analisi Etnopedagogica del Contatto tra Culture: Tamil in Italia. Pisa: ETS.


Stamps for the Seven Gods from the Yamanote shichifukujin circuit, which is said to be the first of the Edo period.
Centre Activity Report

Sengū of the Ise Shrine: Rituals, Myths and Politics

Gaynor Sekimori

The 62nd twenty-yearly ritual rebuilding of a number of buildings at the Ise Shrines (shikinen sengū) was completed in October 2013, the culmination of a set of ceremonies that had begun in 2005 with the cutting down of the tree to be used as the main pillar in the new construction of the Inner and Outer Shrines. To mark this occasion, the CSJR held an international workshop on 21-22 November 2013.

The keynote lecture was delivered on November 21 by Yoshitaro Shirayama of Kogakkan University, with English interpretation provided. Professor Shirayama gave a general outline of the shikinen sengū and then discussed the nature of tradition and change at Ise specifically through types of funding. Public funding, first according to terms set down in the Ritsuryō codes and then through a rice tax (yakubumai), gave way to popular donations (kanjin) when the ritual shrine rebuilding was restored after a break of some 120 years in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He used these facts to make the point that ‘the shikinen sengū at Ise has always employed the policies and ideology of the previous era,’ stating that it ‘has had a history of trying to preserve old ways, and change has always come late’. He then took his thesis into the pre-modern and modern eras, when in a kind of mirror image, renovation expenses were underwritten, first by the Bakufu and then through the Meiji government, and then after a (shorter) hiatus between 1929 and 1953, by popular support, wooed by the shrine authorities.

The main session of the workshop opened on 22 November with a welcome by Dr Lucia Dolce, Chair of the CSJR. This was followed by a presentation by Ken Tadashi Oshima of the University of Washington entitled ‘Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture?’ How did the architecture of Ise become a paradigm, he asked, considering that in the Meiji period Nikko Toshogu was considered the epitome of Japanese architecture? Christopher Dresser, for example, writing in 1882, described the Nikko Shrines as the most important and beautiful of all the shrines of Japan, saying they were ‘as glorious in colour as the Alhambra in the days of its splendour’. It was Bruno Taut, who went to Japan in 1933, who turned this assumption around. A contemporary Japanese noted, ‘Fifty years ago Europeans came and told us, “Nikko is the most valuable”, and we thought so too; now Bruno Taut has come and told us, “It is Ise and Katsura which are the most valuable”, and again we believe”. Photographs of previously unseen parts of the Ise Shrines taken by Watanabe Yoshio, published in 1965 in Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture (Tange Kenzo and Kawazoe Noboru) affirmed Taut’s assertion that Ise is equal to the Parthenon in architectural importance, that is was ‘ever new, ever unchanging’. Professor Oshima assesses the influence of Ise Shrine on the Metabolist architects (‘Metabolism’ itself was a translation of shinchintaisha which had the sense of ‘replacing the old with the new’) who promoted a biological architecture of change.

The second paper was given by Mark Teeuwen of Oslo University, who discussed the origins of the Ise shrines and the shikinen sengū system. He pointed out the downplay of religious meaning in 2013, where the emphasis was on food offerings, and of the ritual of the sengū itself, and also the way historical change, such as the medieval break, has been obscured. In fact the origins of both the shrines and the sengū are not well documented, although the official line dates the shrines to the fifth century and the sengū to 690. Added to the paucity of the textual record and to the absence of archaeological evidence is the lack of theological explanation. Professor Teeuwen looks to epidemics in the seventh century as being central to how Ise developed its classical form. The Sujin myth, which speaks of the removal of Amaterasu and Yamato Okunitama from the palace, reveals a dual-natured Amaterasu, an earthly deity who threatens the court and especially the emperor with disease, and the ruling heavenly deity. This split personality was displayed in jINGI ritual.

According to the Enryaku gishikichō (804), the general design of the shrines was similar to today’s, but there was much more emphasis on abstinence rituals. In fact, Ise ritual was closely connected with imperial health. Court ritual such as the Daijosai was transferred to Ise and this involved constructing ritual buildings, which developed into dwellings of the kami. The sengū was a compromise between construction ritual and permanence, and there was no attempt to address meaning: its main purpose was
the prevention of tatari (curses) that might adversely affect the emperor. This, Teeuwen concludes, implies at the very least that early Ise must be understood in very different terms from its highly ideological modern counterpart.

Meri Arechi of SOAS looked at Edo-period pilgrimage to Ise through visual records such as the *Ise sangū meisho zue* and an *Okage mairi* scroll. Pilgrimage to Ise at this time is well documented also in written sources, such as Ippensha Jikku’s *Tokaidōchū hizakurige* and Kaempfer’s *History of Japan*. The *Ise sangū meisho zue*, first published in 1797, provides information ranging from practical travel advice, including the delicacies and souvenirs to be found along the route, to the history and geography of the Ise area and literary allusions made to it. The *Okage mairi* scroll in the British Museum illustrates scenes from mass popular pilgrimage and affirms that such pilgrimage was not the prerogative of privileged classes. This is in fact confirmed by the eye-witness account of Kaempfer, who writes that ‘The Japanese of both sexes, young and old, rich and poor, undertake this meritorious journey, generally speaking on foot, in order to obtain at this holy place indulgences (i.e. *oharai*) and remission of their Sins. Some of these pilgrims are so poor, that they must live wholly upon what they get by begging along the road’. The Edo-period visual material contrasts with the medieval *Ise sankei mandara* paintings and focuses less on the religious significance of the destination and more on the process of travel.

The next two papers looked at Amaterasu, in terms of interpretation and iconography. Saito Hideki of Bukkyō University pointed out that the Ise deities, Amaterasu and Toyouke, have been interpreted in various ways over history, and these interpretations have created new myths according to period. Thus to early modern pilgrims, Amaterasu was not the supreme deity of the ancient myths preserved in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, but a kami of this-worldly benefits. Further, in the *Hizakurige* for example, it is Toyouke who is regarded as being superior deity, a view put forward in a number of texts (*The Five Books of Shinto*) produced by the Outer Shrine in the medieval period. This view was expanded by a seventeenth-century Outer Shrine priest called Deguchi Nobuyoshi and spread by *onshi* attached to that shrine. Motoori Norinaga later created a new myth that Toyouke was a universal deity of food who sustains all human life, and thus assumes the universality previously held by Amaterasu as the sun. It was in the early part of the Meiji period that Amaterasu was given transcendental attributes and reinterpreted in terms of ‘Shinto monotheism’, but this interpretation was thinned towards the end of the nineteenth century when Shinto was declared not to be a religion but the rituals of the nation, and so Amaterasu contracted to being an imperial ancestor and national deity.

Lucia Dolce of SOAS presented a thought-provoking tour through the changing iconographical representations of Amaterasu. Modern Shinto is understood as an aniconic tradition that emphasizes symbolic representations. Thus Amaterasu is understood to be visibly present as the mirror. (This explains too the change to aniconographic forms of charms and talismans from the 1870s). However a diverse anthropomorphic iconography exists. Amaterasu exists as a male courtier in the group of thirty kami of the month as revered in Nichiren Buddhism, as a ‘youth’ (*dōji*) in scrolls of the ‘oracles of the three shrines’ (*sanja takusen*) and as Memyō Bosatsu in the esoteric transmissions of Miwa Shinto. Of particular interest iconographically is the form of Uho *dōji*, a long-haired female figure with a five-stage pagoda on the head, carrying a *nyoi hoju* and sword, which form also depicts kami such as Wakahirume. Amaterasu appears also in this form as a flanking

Amaterasu as *Uhō dōji*
Hand-coloured print on paper.
*Edo period, private collection* Standing figure of Amaterasu as a young boy (*dōji*), with a halo and long black hair. He wears a robe with motifs of dharma-wheel, and is adorned with three Buddhist accessories: a five-element pagoda (*gorintō*) on his head, a wish-fulfilling jewel in his left hand and jewelled sceptre in the right hand. Amaterasu was venerated in this form at Kongōshōji on Mt. Asama. In the Meiji period these attributes were changed in more ‘Shinto’ ones, a jewelled necklace, a mirror and a sword. The two attendants at the feet of the young boy are Hachiman and Kasuga. Thus this image reproduces the triad of the sanja *takusen*. Pilgrimage to Ise at this time is well documented also in written sources, such as *Ippensha Jikku* and Kaempfer’s *History of Japan*. The *Ise sangū meisho zue*, first published in 1797, provides information ranging from practical travel advice, including the delicacies and souvenirs to be found along the route, to the history and geography of the Ise area and literary allusions made to it. The *Okage mairi* scroll in the British Museum illustrates scenes from mass popular pilgrimage and affirms that such pilgrimage was not the prerogative of privileged classes. This is in fact confirmed by the eye-witness account of Kaempfer, who writes that ‘The Japanese of both sexes, young and old, rich and poor, undertake this meritorious journey, generally speaking on foot, in order to obtain at this holy place indulgences (i.e. *oharai*) and remission of their Sins. Some of these pilgrims are so poor, that they must live wholly upon what they get by begging along the road’. The Edo-period visual material contrasts with the medieval *Ise sankei mandara* paintings and focuses less on the religious significance of the destination and more on the process of travel.

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Amaterasu as *Uhō dōji*  
Hand-coloured print on paper.  
*Edo period, private collection*  
Standing figure of Amaterasu as a young boy (*dōji*), with a halo and long black hair. He wears a robe with motifs of dharma-wheel, and is adorned with three Buddhist accessories: a five-element pagoda (*gorintō*) on his head, a wish-fulfilling jewel in his left hand and jewelled sceptre in the right hand. Amaterasu was venerated in this form at Kongōshōji on Mt. Asama. In the Meiji period these attributes were changed in more ‘Shinto’ ones, a jewelled necklace, a mirror and a sword. The two attendants at the feet of the young boy are Hachiman and Kasuga. Thus this image reproduces the triad of the sanja *takusen*. Pilgrimage to Ise at this time is well documented also in written sources, such as *Ippensha Jikku* and Kaempfer’s *History of Japan*. The *Ise sangū meisho zue*, first published in 1797, provides information ranging from practical travel advice, including the delicacies and souvenirs to be found along the route, to the history and geography of the Ise area and literary allusions made to it. The *Okage mairi* scroll in the British Museum illustrates scenes from mass popular pilgrimage and affirms that such pilgrimage was not the prerogative of privileged classes. This is in fact confirmed by the eye-witness account of Kaempfer, who writes that ‘The Japanese of both sexes, young and old, rich and poor, undertake this meritorious journey, generally speaking on foot, in order to obtain at this holy place indulgences (i.e. *oharai*) and remission of their Sins. Some of these pilgrims are so poor, that they must live wholly upon what they get by begging along the road’. The Edo-period visual material contrasts with the medieval *Ise sankei mandara* paintings and focuses less on the religious significance of the destination and more on the process of travel.

The next two papers looked at Amaterasu, in terms of interpretation and iconography. Saito Hideki of Bukkyō University pointed out that the Ise deities, Amaterasu and Toyouke, have been interpreted in various ways over history, and these interpretations have created new myths according to period. Thus to early modern pilgrims, Amaterasu was not the supreme deity of the ancient myths preserved in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, but a kami of this-worldly benefits. Further, in the *Hizakurige* for example, it is Toyouke who is regarded as being superior deity, a view put forward in a number of texts (*The Five Books of Shinto*) produced by the Outer Shrine in the medieval period. This view was expanded by a seventeenth-century Outer Shrine priest called Deguchi Nobuyoshi and spread by *onshi* attached to that shrine. Motoori Norinaga later created a new myth that Toyouke was a universal deity of food who sustains all human life, and thus assumes the universality previously held by Amaterasu as the sun. It was in the early part of the Meiji period that Amaterasu was given transcendental attributes and reinterpreted in terms of ‘Shinto monotheism’, but this interpretation was thinned towards the end of the nineteenth century when Shinto was declared not to be a religion but the rituals of the nation, and so Amaterasu contracted to being an imperial ancestor and national deity.

Lucia Dolce of SOAS presented a thought-provoking tour through the changing iconographical representations of Amaterasu. Modern Shinto is understood as an aniconic tradition that emphasizes symbolic representations. Thus Amaterasu is understood to be visibly present as the mirror. (This explains too the change to aniconographic
deity to Kokūzō in the Asamadake mandara (Asamadake is the protector temple of Ise). Memyō, a horse-riding bodhisattva, is associated with silk production, and ka-kejiku in the Meiji period show Amaterasu as a kami of silkworms.

John Breen of Nichibunken and Gaynor Sekimori of SOAS discussed the Ise Shrines in the Meiji period. Dr Breen explored spatial transformations, the reasons for them and the agents responsible for their implementation. The revolution that was the new Meiji rule prompted a drastic rethinking of the contours and substance of Ise’s sacred spaces. Built-up areas were razed to create open spaces, and the coming of the railway was significant both for the organization of urban space and the accommodation of pilgrims who now came by train rather than on foot. The three shrine rebuilds of the Meiji period (1869, 1889, 1909) reflect the transformations in the society of the time.

Dr Sekimori looked at Ise through the reports of western visitors before going on to describe items related to Ise in the Chamberlain collection in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. Ise was initially known to the English-speaking world mainly through Engelbert Kaempfer’s description in the History of Japan (1727). His account of the layout of the ‘temples’, the tayu who lodged the pilgrims and the oharai they had distributed stand up well to modern scrutiny. His influence on all later accounts down to the Meiji period is very great. The first European to write about an actual visit to Ise was Ernest Satow, who went there under the auspices of Okuma Shigenobu in December 1872. As in the case of Kaempfer, his influence on a generation of visitors was undeniable. His article published in the TASJ in 1874 had a long life, in that it remained the core of the information about Ise in editions of Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Japan down to 1913. Basil Hall Chamberlain, who took over the editing of the Handbook in 1891, visited Ise, among many other places, collecting material for revisions and collected some fifty-five items associated with Ise and its close surroundings at a time soon after the 1889 sengū. He deposited this, as well as a great deal of other material connected with Japanese religion, in the Pitt Rivers Museum, in 1892 and 1908. The material consists broadly of (1) pictures and plans of shrines, (2) charms/amulets, etc. (3) daidai kagura pictures (4) pictures of deities, (5) pictures related to the pleasure district of Furuichi, (6) ofuda and pictures related to Asamadake, (7) pictures of Futamigaura and (8) travel guides.

Three exhibitions were held in conjunction with the workshop. Photographs illustrating the various Shikinen sengū rituals, courtesy of Ise Jingū, were displayed in the SOAS library. Also in the library was a set of prints illustrating aspects of the Ise Shrines and their renewal. In the Khalili Foyer were a number of display cabinets containing various items related to Ise, contributed by Meri Arichi, John Breen, Lucia Dolce and Gaynor Sekimori. They included a copy of the Ise sangū meisho zue, the 1913 edition of Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Japan with its illustration of the Outer Shrine, prewar tourist items related to Ise, daidai kagura prints and a number of scrolls illustrating the various iconographic forms of Amaterasu.

Gaynor Sekimori (SOAS) was holder of the 2000-1 CSJR Postdoctoral Fellowship, and associate professor at the Institute of Oriental Culture at the University of Tokyo 2001-2007, where she was also the managing editor of the International Journal of Asian Studies. She is
Centre Activity Report

Exhibition: Sengū of the Ise Shrine 2013: Tradition and Rituals

Meri Arichi

The year 2013 marked the 62nd sengū renewal of the Ise Jingū. From 10 November to 15 December 2013, the CSJR presented ‘Sengū of the Ise Shrine 2013: Tradition and Rituals’, an exhibition on the rituals that took place in Ise in preparation for the event. Displayed at the Wolfson Gallery at the SOAS Library and in cases in the foyer of the Khalili Lecture Theatre, the exhibition was organised by Meri Arichi, and funded by the Meiji Jingu Japanese Studies Research Grants.

Following the tradition that goes back to the 8th century, the entire shrine building and numerous auxiliary shrines at Ise are rebuilt every 20 years to preserve the pristine condition of the architecture. This distinctive tradition reflects the Shinto concept of eternal youth and purity. The completion of the new shrine building was celebrated in October 2013 with the sengū ceremony when the symbolic objects of worship were moved from the old to the new building in the adjacent plot. The exhibition followed the various Shinto rituals that took place over the last 8 years in preparation for the sengū.

The exhibition featured a series of photographs that recorded the major rituals performed during the process of re-building. The preparation for the sengū commenced 8 years ago in 2005, starting with the Yamaguchi-sai, the festival for the deity of the mountain where the timber for the building is felled. Every stage of the rebuilding is punctuated by Shinto rituals conducted by priests and carpenters in traditional costume, and other festivals that involve the participation of the people of Ise. The emphasis placed on the continuation of the tradition was illustrated by the official photographs of rituals, reproduced by the kind permission of the Jingū shichō.

The Wolfson Gallery exhibition also included the works by a young British architect, Chiara Hall, whose visit to Ise inspired her to create a series of drawings that narrate the process of the rebuilding. Hall’s images combined the architectural drawing in isometric perspective with a water colour wash in free hand, creating an evocative effect. Hall employed a long horizontal format akin to the traditional Japanese emaki picture scroll to tell stories from the perspective of four kinds of people involved in the rebuilding: pilgrims, priests, towns people, and carpenters.

A selection of Ise related books, prints, historical photographs, guidbooks, and ephemera was displayed in the wall-mounted cases in the foyer of the Khalili Lecture Theatre to demonstrate how the shrine was perceived in different ages. Although the present day Ise Shrine presents itself as an ‘ancient shrine’ which has not changed for centuries, the metamorphosis in the iconography of the enshrined deity Amaterasu alone can clearly indicate the historical vicissitude. The modernization of the country brought about by the Meiji government in the 19th century also dramatically transformed the nature of the ‘sacred city’ of Ise. The materials for the display were lent from the personal collections of the participants of the CSJR workshop, John Breen, Gaynor Sekimori, Lucia Dolce and Meri Arichi.
Sanja takusen 三社託宣  (The Oracles of the Three Shrines).
Hand-coloured print on paper.
Edo period, private collection

Sanja takusen scrolls typically enshrine the names or images of the shrines of Ise, Hachiman and Kasuga, and the text of their oracles below. In this scroll the three deities are represented iconographically on floating red clouds. Amaterasu is at the centre, inside a red sun disk, depicted with the Buddhist attributes of the Uhō dōji. Hachiman stands on the left, dressed as a courtier and riding a horse, while the Kasuga deity is on the left, holding a basked. The oracles express the virtues of honesty (shōjiki), pureness of mind (shōjō), and compassion (jīhī).

Sanja takusen circulated in the mediaeval period, and became an object of worship in Yoshida Shinto. A vast amount of books, hanging scrolls and prints were produced throughout the Edo period, for the edifying tone of the oracles was seen as a means to cultivate piety in common people. Pilgrimages to Ise also played a crucial role for the development of sanja takusen scrolls. (Lucia Dolce)
Centre Activity Report: Healing Traditions

CSJR Research Projects on Healing, Medicine and Religion in Premodern Japan

Benedetta Lomi

In the past five years, the field of Japanese Studies has seen an increase of interest in the intersection between religion, medicine, and healing, as well as the history of medicine. The Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions at SOAS has been part of this trend, promoting a number of research activities on the healing traditions and practices of premodern Japan. The Centre has aimed at fostering cross-institutional dialogues, which has led to the coming together of a diverse body of scholars working on the broader Asian religious and medical context.

In June 2010, as part of a joint project with Ritsumeikan University funded by a grant of the British Council, the CSJR organised a workshop on the theme of Healing and Divination, which highlighted key issues in the comparative study of premodern religious sources. The workshop provided a framework to discuss the correlations existing between health, disease and cosmology, and also to reflect on how different understandings of the human body may lead to a different conception of bodily ills and their treatments. Although not directly focused on medicine, the paper unveiled significant connections with ideas included in premodern medical documents, opening up new stimulating avenues of research for the participants.

Drawing on this experience, in 2012, as part of my postdoctoral fellowship at UC Berkeley, I organised a workshop focused on medicine and healing in Asia called Healing Texts, Healing Practices, Healing Bodies: A Workshop on Medicine and Buddhism. The two-day workshop, inaugurated by a keynote address by Shigehisa Kuriyama, featured a line-up of papers that discussed how discourses on physical and mental illness have been constructed, represented and embodied, and the procedures deemed efficacious to deal with them. Both workshops benefited my then on-going research on a practice called ‘Ritual of the Six-Syllable’, which is now due to be published in the next volume of the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.

From the roundtable discussions at both workshops emerged the need for a more rigorous methodological as well as cross-disciplinary approach to our sources. Responding to this call, supported by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at SOAS, the CSJR organised another workshop in June 2013, Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems, which is reviewed in this issue. The aim of the workshop was to create a platform for scholars working in the fields of religious and historical studies, history of medicine, and medical anthropology to explore the intersections of healing rituals and medical knowledge in comparative perspective. We were concerned with two issues. On the one hand, the definition of medical knowledge relies on assumptions of health, disease and body, which are not only culture specific, but also extremely fluid even within the margins of a single tradition. On the other hand, medical knowledge inherently implies an epistemological unity that differentiates it from other apparatuses of knowledge, such as, for example, religion. However, in the context of South, Central and East Asia, religious and medical knowledge has often shared the same techniques and relied on similar assumptions regarding the nature of the body and its functions, well beyond the instance of Buddhist medicine alone. The workshop wished to ascertain the extent of the overlap between different methods to treat of ailments and diseases.

Buddhist Medicine is a complex and rich research area, which is receiving increasing scholarly interest, especially as far as Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist medicine are concerned. Similarly, the traditional medical practices of China and Tibet have been for a while now at the centre of regional-specific investigation. In contrast, comparatively little attention has been given to the developments of Buddhist medicine, or traditional medicine in general, in Japan and Korea. The workshop featured presentations focusing on these under-researched areas, and attempted to identify the particularity of the Japanese and Korean medico-religious practices, too often dismissed as a by-product of the Chinese milieu. Welcoming a varied exploration of ethnographic, textual and visual data drawn from different Asian contexts inspired a dense discussion, which addressed common concerns relevant for the study of a diversity of healing practices. Among these, the following questions were tackled: 1) What does the overlapping of therapeutic strategies emerging from medical and religious sources/practices tell us
about the nature of these practices? 2) Is it possible to talk about ritualised forms of healing beyond notions of ‘magical medicine’? 3) What methodological approach is more accurate in allowing for comparative work on healing across different areas of knowledge? Further details on individual presentations are given in Kanse Capon’s report in this issue.

For the CSJR, the workshop was not only the outcome of a sustained engagement with the interface of medicine and religion, but also an invaluable occasion to engage with broad questions pertaining to the nature of this relationship. This series of workshops constituted a point of development for CSJR members’ own research. Lucia Dolce has continued furthering her research on Buddhist ritual embryology, which has been presented at several venues in Japan and Europe, including a panel at the past conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies in Tallin (also see her report in this issue). A follow-up panel that explores the sensory construction of the body will be presented at the forthcoming EAJS conference in Ljubljana. At the same conference, I have organised a panel on ‘(Re)Sources of Healing: An Alternative Look at Medical and Veterinary Discourses in Heian and Kamakura Japan’ together with Katja Trippllett, Anna Andreeva and Antonio Manieri.

CSJR Associate members Katja Trippllett and Anna Andreeva have also developed exciting new research on various aspects of Japanese premodern medical practices (see their research notes in the present volume).

These events were ultimately not only successful in providing each participant with the occasion for sharing their work and getting feedback from colleagues, but also for establishing what we hope will be a lasting dialogue with other schools within the University of London, as well as with other European and International institutions in the field of Asian studies.

Centre Activity Report: Healing Traditions

Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems

Kanse Capon

The SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions held a one day workshop, ‘Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems’ on 20 June 2013 at SOAS. The workshop was organised by Lucia Dolce and Benedetta Lomi and supported by a grant of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. The workshop sought to bring together scholars of religious and historical studies, history of medicine and medical anthropology, and provide them with a platform to explore the intersections of healing rituals and medical knowledge in comparative perspective. The workshop was a truly inter-collaborative event, with scholars from the above mentioned disciplines presenting and participating in discussions which explored new avenues for comparative work on healing across different fields of knowledge.

Following a welcome by the CSJR Chair, Lucia Dolce, the first presentation was given by Benedetta Lomi (SOAS), entitled ‘Cur(s)es, Dhāraṇīs and Medical Remedies. Thinking Through Magical Medicine in Heian Japan’. Lomi first called into question Strickman’s term ‘magical medicine’, noting that whilst perhaps being a useful heuristic category it is problematic in that it implies a synchronic existence of ‘non-magical medicine’ and this may not always be the case. Further, understanding of the notion of ‘magic’ itself needs to be assessed against time and cultural specific categories. Examples provided from Heian-period Japan of a synergy between different specialists, such as Buddhist and Onmyō ritualists working together in the same ritual space, served Lomi well in demonstrating that the boundaries between...
religion, magic and medicine can in certain contexts be difficult to distinguish, and the existence of competing epistemologies questionable.

Katja Triplett (University of Göttingen) followed with another look at healing in Japan, but rather than looking at healing rituals to cure human illnesses, explored the phenomenon of ‘Hippiatry and Ritual healing: Considering Japanese Buddhist Illustrated Manuscripts on Equine Medicine’. Triplett’s analysis of the illustrated manuscripts connected the common and secret knowledges of healing in evidence in equine medicine. The Bai sōshi emaki (12th c.) was one manuscript looked at, which contained images and text about ten deities related to the healing of horses. This was a text given to Shichirōhyōenojō Tadayasu, a military man and veterinarian, by Sai Amidabutsu, a disciple of Hōnen. The methods contained in it were deemed effective only with empowerment and oral transmission, whilst the document at the same time included accurately drawn plant illustrations with alternative names provided showing a detailed medical knowledge. Another later text, the Anzai-ryū bai emaki (16th-18th c.) also connected Buddhism to medicine with horse acupuncture points sometimes being connected to the Buddha’s head, or hand and the use of the ‘A’ syllable in siddham being used. Magic, science and religion as separate categorisations were as a result subject to further scrutiny, with their western origin brought to consideration. (See also Dr Triplett’s report in this issue).

Keith Howard (SOAS) looked in his presentation ‘Rhythms of Soul(s) in Shamanic Healing: Case Studies from Nepal (Tamu), Siberia (Sakha) and Korea’ at the use of music for healing and emphasised the importance of rhythm over and above melody in having efficacy. Howard noted that simple rhythms, found for example in the north of Korea, are connected with possession and altered states of consciousness, whereas the more complex rhythms found further south mean that ritual efficacy there is a result more of a performative ‘professionalism’. Whilst a common view held today is that sound itself has a direct effect, Howard questioned whether this was in part due to rationalist and scientific ideas from modernity and westernisation. Music can aid a loss of concentration and lead to altered states of consciousness, however musical stimuli have different effects in different cultures, demonstrating the necessity of interpretation.

The second panel of the day opened with ‘A Social Geography of the Medico-Religious Market in Medieval China’ by Michael Stanley-Baker (UCL China Centre for Health and Humanity). This talk moved discussions from Japan and Korea, to looking at the dubious dichotomies applied to medicine and religion in China. Stanley-Baker identified the now common distinction between medicine and religion as originating from an institutional demarcation in 12th c. Italy. In examining China’s lack of a scientific revolution, he explored western ideas such as ‘religion holds back progress in civilisation’ and ‘faith as the poor brother of rationality’. Descriptions of doctors and medicine given from the Han Dynasty included terms meaning rational, learned, elite, and using natural laws and correlative thought. Stanley-Baker noted however that Daoism also contained these aspects, as it had a technician class and held the principle of an ordered moral universe. The same terms used to describe medicine could then also apply to Daoism. Stanley-Baker concluded his talk saying that speaking of ‘Daoist medicine’ is an anachronistic use of ‘science’ and ‘religion’.

The next presentation, ‘Tibetan Medicine from Dunhuang: Probing Borders between “Medicine” and “Ritual”’ by Ronit Yoelj-Tlalim (Goldsmiths) focused on the Tibetan scroll ITJ 756 from Dunhuang; a text in which healing is not exclusively achieved through ritual, nor entirely through Tibetan moxibustion (medicine).

Concluding the second panel of the day, Lars Laamann (SOAS) presented ‘Torch-bearers of Modernity? Western Missionaries, Demonism and Exorcism in Modern China (1860s-1930s)’. Christian missionaries from Europe and
America in China at the turn of the 20th century took great pride in presenting themselves as representatives of a more enlightened civilisation. There was a self-perception of rejection of ‘superstition’ and ‘unscientific beliefs’ which went hand-in-hand with this. Laamann’s talk shed light on demon possession and exorcism between the end of the Taiping wars and the Japanese invasion of China.

The third and final panel of the day began with Barbara Gerke (Humboldt University) presenting ‘Ritualised Pharmacology: Religious Empowerments of Mercurial Tibetan Medicine’ in which the Tibetan practice of mercurial purification, turning mercury into mercury-sulphide ash, was examined. Although a seemingly curious ingredient in medicine, mercury was considered a rejuvenator in all Asian medical traditions, and a correlation between the potency of poison/medicine and its efficacy against serious illness can be drawn. The case study provided a fascinating look at the overlap between medicine and Buddhism, with the detoxification process involving removing the ‘three poisons’ of the mercury, and not only medical but spiritual effects being attributed to it. The purification process itself is carried out in retreat, with the area being consecrated and materials placed inside a mandala.

The penultimate talk was given by Fabrizio Ferrari (University of Chester) on ‘The Myth of the AIDS-Goddess: Truth or Fabrication? Stories of ‘Bad Blood’ in Bengali Folklore’. Drawing on fieldwork and recent ethnographic evidence, Ferrari enlightened us about Śītalā, formally known as the ‘smallpox goddess’, and her alleged transformation into an AIDS-goddess.

The final presentation, by Tullio Lobetti (SOAS), ‘Healing (and) the Body, Comparative Ontological and Cosmological Perspectives’ drew attention to the body as the theatre in which healing takes place, and investigated various perceptions of the body. Lobetti noted that there is an archetype for defining humanity that is delocated from the human body. Medicine deals with the physical component, which is different from the substance. Healing therefore is fixing what is wrong with the particular component, often looked at in isolation not taking into account a holistic view. Religion, on the other hand, has become emancipated from the body. It is necessary, however, to revise this view as the human body is not an ontological independent entity detached from nature, forces or theology. Lobetti argued that disease and healing are part of a broader cosmology, and are not confined to the boundary that is the modern understanding of the body. In order to understand different healing systems requires taking into account the particular understanding of the body underlying it. Whereas western culture tends to strongly disseminate ontological entities, and its ontological paradigm is very localised, favouring the immaterial in terms of soteriology, ethics and theology, this is not the case in other systems of thought and culture.

The workshop was concluded with a lively discussion from contributors, in which the questions of ‘efficacy’ and categorisation reappeared. Efficacy can be said to be based on experience, and while in the West there is an implied immediacy and universal nature in the term, this is not always the case in all cultures. Regarding categorisation, it is important to bear in mind that categories are often relative, not exclusivistic. Medicine and religion are often blurred as doctors tackle not only the material, and shamans at times use modern medicine. What we can say, that holds true for both medicine and religion, is that there is a degree of belief/trust/faith present and functioning in both. A general distinction suggested which may be useful however, is that medicine is carried out by a specific practitioner, whereas healing may well be carried out by someone who does the same medical practices along with other practices.

Kanse Capon completed his MA Religion at SOAS in 2014 having studied at Trinity College of Music for his Undergraduate Degree. He is currently training as a Novice in the Nichiren Shū tradition.
Research Notes: Healing Traditions

Ritual Embryology from Japanese Tantric Sources

Lucia Dolce

Buddhist practitioners developed distinct theories on the process of generation of the human body by applying medical knowledge to the realm of religious practice. These theories constitute the rubric of Buddhist embryology. The Indian and Tibetan context of this discourse has received some scholarly attention, but no sustained exploration of embryological practices in Japanese Buddhism exist. One of the reasons for such a gap in scholarship has been the perception that these practices represented marginal and heretical interpretations of Buddhism. They have been connected to the infamous Tachikawaryū, a Shingon lineage often seen as a heterodox school of Japanese Tantric Buddhism. In recent years, however, archival investigations at different Japanese temples have uncovered a remarkable amount of medieval documents, ranging from the 12th to the 15th century, which deploy the process of growth of a physical, human embryo as a paradigm for the construction of the perfected body that a Tantric practitioner aims to obtain. These discoveries have brought the topic into new light.

The current project aims to map out the use of embryological patterns in different mediaeval Tantric lineages and make sense of their configuration by reconstructing the web of doctrinal, ritual and textual interactions that produced the embryological paradigm. My preliminary analysis of the material shows that Indian medical knowledge was combined with classical Chinese notions of yin-yang and wuxing in an original type of initiatory embryology that is not found in continental Buddhism. The documents I have analysed emphasise the moment of sexual intercourse that starts the reproductive process, and these sexual overtones might have triggered the neglect of these documents. Yet a cross-examination of newly unveiled and already known material from other mediaeval archives attests to the circulation of these notions across lineages, demonstrating that the embryogenetic discourse represented a major soteriological model in mediaeval hermeneutics, and became a ritual template that continued to be used in early modern practices. Further, this material suggests close links between Japanese and continental Tantric Buddhism, links that have been dismissed in the intellectualised and sublimated accounts of the development of Japanese Buddhism, but which necessitate further attention to paint a more rounded picture of Tantric Buddhism.

I am particularly interested in the visual aspect of this material, for the embryological discourse seems to have been carried out through charts and diagrams, in a way typical of the ritual context that generated it. In particular, I have explored a specific pattern of foetal gestation, which developed in Japan and may be considered the most pronounced characteristic of mediaeval embryological thinking: the charts of the so-called ‘five stages in the womb’ (tainai goi 胚内五位). (Fig 1) Despite not being discursive treatises, the manuscripts that include these charts are emblematic of the reconceptualisation of the body that took place in the mediaeval period. On the one hand, they connect gestation to the idea of ‘organic body’, expressed through multiple body-mandalas that draw on the Chinese notion of five viscera (gozô mandala 五臓曼荼羅). (Fig. 2) On the other hand, they link gestation to important (orthodox) visualization practices for achieving the enlightened body-mind of Vairocana—ritual techniques that were used during the consecration of a new disciple. Thus, it is crucial to take into account the cosmological and performative dimension of mediaeval Buddhist embryogenesis.

The exegetical tradition of the Yuqi jin is also instrumental to understand the ritualization of the embryogenetic process. Embryological charts are in fact included in many medieval commentaries on the Yuqi

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Fig. 1: Embryonic Buddhahood: The Five Stages of Gestation (tainai goi 胚内五位); Detail from an untitled manuscript in the collection of Jindaiji.
Embryological Discourse in Medieval Japan: A New Soteriology of the Human Body. Since 2012 I have been able to carry out more extensive archival fieldwork in Japan, thanks to a two-year British Academy/Leverhulme grant, and I am very grateful to the Academy for this support. Among other things, this fieldwork has allowed me to discover and identify an untitled manuscript in the archives of Jindaiji, a Tendai temple in Chōfu (東京), which was considered the first Taimitsu centre in Eastern Japan, and from which the images shown here are drawn. I am grateful to Chōdō Kōshō 李堂興昭, of Taishō University, and to Chōdō Kanshun 完俊, jūshoku 義俊 of Jindaiji, for graciously allowing me to photograph the document and use the images.

References


Yuqi jin, regardless of the affiliation of its authors. I believe that the Yuqi jin, a Chinese apocryphal scripture, was a pivotal text for the articulation of the Buddhist discourse on the body in mediaeval Japan. When, several years ago, I first started exploring these themes, I discovered unconventional visual interpretations of the figure of Aizen myôô created drawing from the Yuqi jin 瑜伽経 and from another Chinese treatise, the Putixin lun 菩提心論. The documents I analysed combined Aizen with Fudô to form a sort of ‘reproductive couple’ that ritualised the notion of duality and overcame it. (See report of the workshop The Power of Ritual in CSJR Newsletter 2007 and Dolce 2010). (Fig. 3) Similar reading also emerged in sources of the so-called Medieval Shinto, the interpretation of the kami elaborated by Buddhist ritualists. Several texts dealing with kami initiations also include embryological charts, offering perhaps the most consistent example of such mapping out of gestation. (Dolce 2009). This material is of great consequence because it highlights gestation as part of abhiseka rituals —– another theme that needs more attention than it has so far been given.

I have been privileged to have access to private temple archives, including Ninnaji in Kyoto and Shinpukuji in Nagoya, and would like to thank Abe Yasurô of Nagoya University for making this possible through the years. I have worked together with Abe Yasurô, Itô Satoshi and Yoneda Mariko on part of the material uncovered in these archives. We have presented our preliminary conclusions in a panel at the 2011 conference of the European Association of Japanese Studies in Tallin (panel The

Fig. 2: Five Viscera Mandala; Kamakura period; Kanazawa bunko

Fig. 3: Aizen and Fudô and the five-element stupa. From Goyûigo daiji, Ninnaji manuscript.
Ritual healing and medical treatment have often been combined in East Asian Buddhism. Ideas on the physical body, illness and health that developed in India reached China via Buddhist textual, aesthetic and ritual activities, and were then connected with indigenous perceptions of the body and socio-cosmological worldviews. These activities continued and migrated to other parts of East Asia where further combinations with local knowledge systems ensued. The ritual healing and medical therapies were not limited to humans but also included domestic animals such as the horse. Equine medicine (ba’i 馬医) in Japan was not limited to medical treatment of afflicted horses but also seen in a religious context as well. At the SOAS Workshop ‘Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems’, I introduced selected manuscripts on equine medicine and reflected on the ritual context and meaning of these objects.

Working on a broader study on Japanese Buddhist medicine I came across a somewhat enigmatic picture scroll from the Tokyo National Museum browsing the e-museum database for material on medicine: the Ba’i sōshi emaki 馬医草紙絵巻, dated Bun’ei 4 (1267). My precursory search for academic literature on this scroll did not yield much at all, possibly because it may have neither much excited art historians nor historians of medicine or religion. The scroll is slightly longer than 6 m and shows images of ten ‘deities’ related to healing of horses followed by seventeen pictures of healing plants and a short postscript. The figures show (in order) Hakuraku (Bôle) 伯楽, Iō Hōyaku (Yīwáng Fáyào) 医王法藥, Raikō (Làigōng) 頼公, Tōgun (Dōngqún) 東群, Ten (Tiān) 天, Ōnamuchi 大汝, Ōryō (Wángliáng) 王良, Hangai (Fāngài) 幡蓋, Shinnō (Shènnóng) 神農, and Echigo no Tansuke 越後丹介. Small text boxes placed in the upper left hand corner of each image part state the name of the ‘deity’, the ‘date of death’ of the figure, often mention name(s) of original Buddhist deities of the figure, mantras and finally indicate the name(s) of attendants and the horse(s) but do not include any explanatory text as such. The image parts themselves show an image of the ‘deity’, usually one or two stabled horses, sometimes an image of the original Buddhist deity and one or two divine attendants.

The selection of the seventeen plants listed in the scroll in the plant section indicates that they were chosen because of their names that either connect the plants to the world of Buddhism, e.g. Yakushi-sō 薬師草, ‘Medicine Master plant,’ or are associated with horses, e.g. metsu-sō 馬頭草, ‘Horsehead plant.’ However, the drawings of the plants are very exact and executed beautifully, so they could have functioned as a guide to identifying healing herbs. Their designation is apparently also based on medical knowledge.

The postscript lists a lineage of ten Chinese mythical healers and healing divinities that curiously differ from the ten deities shown in the first part of the scroll. After a (fictive) Chinese date that falls into the Tang Dynasty, the author of the scroll make clear that the content is to be kept secret: ‘This knowledge should not be passed on carelessly, and those who are not noble should not receive this transmission’. Then follows a list of ritual objects probably used connected either to the empowerment ceremony or other rituals conducted in relation to the healing of horses. The list includes weapons such as hawk feather arrows and swords. It also lists animals...
and animal parts: a horse itself, ox, silk, deerskin and monkey skin. No explanation is given for what to do with these objects but we find the reference that ‘further details are found in the liturgical text(s)’. However, the objects largely point to the world of cavalry culture and myths connected to the horse. The mention of ‘silk’ is reminiscent of the legend of a human girl and a horse who became the patron deity of the silkworm and therefore of silk production. Monkeys and horses enjoy a close relationship in Japanese culture as well in the past, when live or parts of dead monkeys were kept in stables for the spiritual protection of the stabled horses.

The postscript ends with instructions for the safe transmission of the scroll to protect the secret knowledge contained within and a dated dedication: ‘Given to Shichirihōyē-no-jō Tadayasu 七郎兵衛尉忠泰 on the twenty-sixth day, first month of the fourth year of Bun’ei’. As we can see clearly from his title the receiver of the scroll was a military officer. It can be assumed that Tadayasu must have been a practicing veterinarian in care of the cavalry horses. Veterinarians usually came from military ranks in the medieval period. The name of the bestower of the scroll, however, indicates a connection to the world of Buddhist practice: Sai Amidabutsu. He instructs Tadayasu in the postscript with the following words:

The orally transmitted empowerment into the healing methods presented in this scroll must not be easily passed on to anyone. If your apprentice passes away, leaving this world where death comes to old and young alike, then the scroll should be returned to me. If I, Sai Amidabutsu, should die without leaving any apprentices, then this scroll should be burnt and the ashes should be spread.

Since the scroll is still extant and in rather good condition one can assume that Tadayasu did have an apprentice, although the instructions must have obviously been neglected at some point since the scroll in its digital version is now viewable by all who have access to the Internet.

The scarcity of textual information and the choice of textual detail and imagery in this ‘secret’ scroll lead me to the conclusion that it was used in the context of an oral transmission and empowerment ritual and is itself an object of ritual empowerment, not a compendium of materia medica for practical daily use in caring for horses. The oral transmission may have included mythological explanations for each of the ‘deities’ in the first part of the scroll, which are legendary, semi-historical or divine figures forming the lineage of horse veterinarians in Japan. The figures of the ‘deities’ are rendered, with the exceptions of Iō Hōyaku who is depicted as a Buddhist monk and Ōnamuchi who looks like a possessed Shintō shrine maiden, very stereotypically as Chinese or Japanese literati courtiers – including Shennong who is usually depicted as a primordial wild man chewing on a sprig. These images of literati nobles emphasize that the healing power and blessings manifest in spiritually advanced humans or indigenous deities not only in China but also in Japan. In my view, the idea is that the ritualist can gain access to these blessings for his ‘patients,’ the horses, no matter where he is located. I recognize a strong emphasis on drawing the connection to the Buddhist cosmos and the healing empowerments of Buddhist deities because of the mantras and ‘dates of death,’ which have a special liturgical meaning.

The images of the deities in the scroll may have functioned as a register for memorizing the names and the mantras that were important in the ritual. Also the section with the medicinal plants may have invested secret ritual knowledge instead of bestowing practical medicinal knowledge kept secret from other, competing veterinary doctors. Because of the meaningful and suggestive plant names I would say that they transmit ritual knowledge intimately connected to plant lore. Here too, mythical explanations for each plant may have played a role in the transmission. If this was the case, the empowerment gave the veterinarians to whom this scroll was bestowed access to the healing power of these plants rather than purely academic knowledge of them.

Finally, the scroll places the new apprentice into the (Chinese) lineage that is mentioned in the postscript. The Tang Dynasty date guarantees additional authority and legitimacy. The ritual itself may have been conducted by Sai Amidabutsu himself, the transmitter of the secret scroll, who was probably a ‘secular’ veterinarian not a trained Buddhist priest although he may have become a monk after retiring from a military career as a veterinary doctor.

I also briefly introduced two versions of early modern hippiatric writing. The first version has the title Anzai-ryū ba’i emaki 安西流馬医絵巻, ‘Horse medicine scroll of the Anzai School.’ The undated work consists of one illustrated manuscript scroll. The second version is an illustrated book dating from 1589 with the title Anzai-ryū ba’isho 安西流馬医書. Both works are kept in the Veterinary Archives of Azabu University 麻布大学. The manuscripts are also ‘secret texts’ (秘伝書 hidensho) but otherwise quite different compared to the aforementioned scroll from the Tokyo National Museum. They combine explanatory text with ‘charts’ – tables and graphic images – and are clearly a combination of Chinese veterinary knowledge and esoteric Buddhist ideas. The text is based on the Shoku mibu annai jirazō 司牧安驥集, ‘Collection about the Care of Blood Horses by Stable Grooms’ compiled by Li Shí 李石 in Tang Dynasty China which was subsequently transferred to Japan. Anzai (or Ansai) mentioned in the title of the two works is the name of a clan of horse veterinarians in Komagane in Shinano no kuni (Nagano Prefecture), which used to be an important horse breeding area.

The emaki scroll basically consists of sections of the Chinese Tang classic on horse care but is here composed as a guide through an esoteric Buddhist way of healing by combining it with the Chinese ideas of the Five Phases and other correlative thinking such as the influence of the four seasons on the ‘organs’. This correlative system is very similar to the one found in human medical works.
First, the scroll shows a table of the Five Phases that is typical for the Buddhist medical tradition, followed by an image of a five-coloured Sanskrit syllable ‘A’. This syllable is connected with lines to a five-storied pagoda, the head and then the hand of the Buddha, a horse, the internal organs of a horse, divided into the Three Burners followed by a chart of the five sets of physical phenomena of a horse and finally a horse with five coloured sections. These connected images are then followed by a very short explanatory text after which more images are shown: a schematic rendition of the horse’s development in the womb and five-storied pagodas with combinations of the organs that explain the benign or harmful influences of the four seasons. Again, a very short text is inserted, here emphasizing that the mention of the five-storied pagodas is secret knowledge. Crudely painted images of the first Chinese Emperor Qin shi huáng 秦始皇, a horse and Hakuraku lead into a lengthy textual section of an origin legend of the horse that starts with an image of a falcon in a tree. The end of the scroll is comprised of a list of the horse’s ‘five inner organs and six viscera’ that serves as a summary of the scroll’s content.

The ba’isho, which is executed much more carefully and not as crudely and sketchy as the emaki, contains additional sections with explanatory texts after the legend of the falcon. Other versions have a substantial section with instructions for Japanese disciples, which must have been used in teaching the art of treatment of horses. The emaki scroll especially, however, is fairly useless as a guide for medical practitioners or learners. It was most probably also an object given to new practitioners on the occasion of ritual empowerment and initiation into ‘secret knowledge.’ The framework of textual sections and quotes extracted from the Tang Chinese classic text gave the Japanese Buddhist medico-ritual object great authority.

Apparently, the classic text offered Japanese veterinarians different options for the production of texts for different purposes – either used more in the ritual or in the more medical line: The ‘ritual’ texts, therefore, may have not really been studied but functioned like certificates for a successful transmission of medico-ritual knowledge. In contrast, texts containing additional details on the application of medicines and other therapies for the treatment of horses seem to have been produced as medical manuals to be read and studied and not as ‘ritual certificates’.

To summarize my considerations, the three illustrated manuscripts introduced above served rather as compendia for veterinarians who practiced hippiatry with the blessings of Buddhist deities and other powerful ‘divine’ figures culled from various traditions. This combined knowledge system became more and more supplan ted by knowledge systems introduced by European veterinary doctors who started to exert their influence in early 18th century Japan. Mura’i and Matsuo (1974) describe one of last copies of the Anzai scrolls dating to 1710, which falls precisely into that period of change.

References


Links to the digitized versions of the three manuscripts:

Ba’i sōshi emaki 馬医草紙絵巻: emuseum.jp (Tokyo National Museum)
Anzai-ryū ba’ai emaki 安西流馬医絵巻 (Basho no koto shimeshi hidari ni 馬書之事しめし左に): http://turf. azabu-u.ac.jp/htmls-201202/items/M002.html

Katja Triplett has been Professor for the Study of Religions in the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Göttingen since 2012. From 2007 to 2012 she was Associate Professor at the Department of the Study of Religions and curator of the Museum of Religions (Religionskundliche Sammlung) at Marburg University. Triplett graduated in the Study of Religions, Japanese linguistics and Anthropology, and obtained her doctorate in Marburg. She held a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, SOAS, University of London (2004-5).
Research Notes: Healing Traditions

Childbirth and Women’s Health in Premodern Japan
(Overview of a research project1)

Anna Andreeva

In Heian and Kamakura Japan, childbirth was associated with risk, pollution and danger. Early medieval hand-painted scrolls such as the Kitano Tenjin engi emaki 北野天神縁起絵巻 (The Picture Scroll of the Karmac Origins of the Kitano Deity) and Gaki zôshi 饕鬼草子 (The Scroll of Hungry Ghosts) depicted the biological event of childbirth as embedded in the religious worldview of the shinbutsu shingō 神仏習合 paradigm that merged local deities with distant divinities of Buddhism. At the center of this portrayal is the implied idea that childbirth was likely to result in the mother’s or infant’s death, leaving a parturient woman vulnerable to attack by hungry ghosts who preyed on the parturition blood and afterbirth. High infant and maternal mortality were constant sources of anxiety, and miscarriages, premature births and stillborn babies were common. Parturient women no doubt feared their impending labour.

However, it was also believed that such dangers could be successfully averted. From the mid-Heian period onward, aristocratic households (including the Fujiwara, whose daughters were married into the imperial household) invited large numbers of ritual specialists, including Buddhist clerics, Yin-Yang diviners, famous ascetics, and miko mediums who offered prayers and performed apotropaic and divinatory rituals, designed to prognosticate and assist safe delivery as well as to avert danger. The diaries, such as that by Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1489, pp. 506-49). The English translation of these texts is currently in progress and will be addressed in a larger study.

For instance, during the pregnancy and parturition of the consort of emperor Toba, Fujiwara no Shôshi, or Ta-mako,藤原璋子 (1101-1145, also known as Taikenmon'in 待賢門院 in 1119, an elaborate programme of prayers and rituals was commissioned to be held in Buddhist temples, and at the place of her seclusion. It began with the commemoration of the pregnancy sash in the first month of the year and continued for five more months until the royal heir, future emperor Sutoku 手すけ (1119-1164), was born. During this period, high-ranking Tendai and Shin-\n\n1 I am grateful to the Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe in a Global Context’ (University of Heidelberg) for the generous institutional and financial support of this project under the auspices of C11 ‘Religion and Medicine in Pre-modern East Asia’ on which I worked together with Dominic Steavu in 2010-2012. Thanks also to colleagues at Girton College, Needham Research Institute, and Faculty of History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge, for providing feedback during the early stages in 2008-2009. My warmest thanks go to Professor Charlotte Forth for her personal inspiration and encouragement.

2 ZGR, jûkan 997, zatsu-bu 147, pp. 472-505; jûkan 999, zatsu-bu 148-9, pp. 506-49. The English translation of these texts is currently in progress and will be addressed in a larger study.

3 On Ketu and Râhu, see Yu Xin 2011.
dark realms of rebirth (myōdō 冥道), would also be appealed to as a part of this protective protocol. For better effect, some of these rites, such as the Five Altar ceremony (Jp. Godanhi 五壇法) continued for seven days at a time. The staging of these rituals often used for the pacification of physical realm indicates that the pregnant body of the imperial consort was envisioned ‘as a symbolic site vital for the protection of state and the nation’. Despite the fact that such rituals were performed until the end of the Edo period, little is known about them in the West.

Given that childbirth was fraught with danger, what was the impact of medicine? Most of the time, the direct involvement in the process of labour and childbirth was left to the parturient woman’s female assistants and midwives (nyoi or joi 女医), leaving the male physicians, nyoi hakase 女医博士 (professor of women physicians), to deliver their opinion often without a direct examination of the woman in labour. However, evidence suggests that even though the women’s anatomy and physiology were not understood well in the modern sense, court physicians were aware of the processes of reproduction and theories of conception and gestation developed earlier in China and India, and could resort to a substantial cache of technical knowledge.

For example, the earliest extant Japanese collection of medical prescriptions, the Ishinpō (Essentials of Medicine) compiled by the court physician and acupuncturist Tanba no Yasuyori 丹波康頼 (912-995) had at least four volumes dealing specifically with women’s illnesses, pregnancy, childbirth, and other female health-related issues. These volumes of Ishinpō provided prescriptions for treating infertility, bleeding, pain in the back and belly and other conditions during pregnancy and childbirth, procedures during breech birth, as well as divination techniques to determine the gender of the foetus, and rituals converting female foetuses into male. For example, in the event of slow placenta delivery, the court physicians could use the following prescriptions, either individually, or in succession.

Boil a bow’s string in water and administer it as a potion. Another formula [suggests] application of boar’s fat in large quantities...Drink sesame oil in small quantities. Take a crossbow string and bind it around the back [of the labouring woman]. Burn boar’s fat in large quantities. Drink sesame oil in small quantities. Take a crossbow string and bind it around the back [of the labouring woman]. Burn boar’s fat in large quantities. Drink sesame oil in small quantities. Take a crossbow string and bind it around the back [of the labouring woman].

The next installation of medico-ritual knowledge on the subject of childbirth and women’s health would not occur until the medieval period. Then, the Buddhist clerics, often linked with Shingon and Ritsu lineages, compiled and copied medico-religious texts such as Sanshō ruishishō 産秘抄 (Notes on Childbirth, c. 1318) and Sanshishō 産秘抄 (Secret Compendium on Childbirth, c. 14th century). In his works Ton’ishō 常医抄 (Book of the Simple Physician, 1304) and Man’anpō 万安方 (Myriad Relief Prescriptions, 1327), medieval physician Kajiwara Shōzen 梶原性全 (1265-1337) introduced new prescriptions and treatments imported from Song China and adapted to the conditions of Japan. These texts also addressed, although in different ways, the issues of menstruation, infertility, difficult childbirth, prenatal determination of gender, and presented new methods for treating women’s conditions. Moreover, this medieval medico-ritual knowledge continued to circulate widely among common women, together with popular rituals for safe pregnancy and childbirth known from the Miwa-ryū, Goryū, Koyasan, and Shugendō traditions, until the Meiji Restoration.

Anna Andreeva (University of Heidelberg) earned her doctorate at the University of Cambridge in 2006. She spent a year at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard, before returning to Cambridge as a Margaret Smith Research Fellow in Japanese Religions at Girton College in 2007. She joined the Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe’ in April 2010.

Bibliography


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**PhD Research at SOAS**

**Negotiation between Nationalism and Universalism among Japanese New Religions**

Masato Kato

I am a first-year MPhil/PhD student in the Department of the Study of Religions. After completing my MA programme at SOAS this past September, I am now continuing my postgraduate study in this stimulating research environment with the supervision of Dr Lucia Dolce.

In my PhD project, I intend to explore the issue of negotiation between nationalism and universalism among Japanese new religions (shinshukyô 新宗教) which have established branches in Europe. I am particularly interested to analyse how these religious groups have wrestled—or have not wrestled—with the question of cultural particularity of their religious traditions in encountering Western cultures in European contexts.

This research question has been inspired by scholarly observations that many Japanese new religions have potentially nationalistic elements in their doctrinal discourses while at the same time proclaiming universalistic messages. These nationalistic discourses centre around such notions as Japan as the origin of human creation, Japan as the source of salvation, and Japanese people and culture as salvific vehicles. In the post-WWII period, nationalistic elements are said to be most salient among new religions that developed in the 1970s through 1990s such as Sukyô Mahikari 崇教真光 and Kôfuku-no-Kagaku 幸福の科学, which are often referred to as ‘new’ new religions or shin shinshukyô 新新宗教. It has been pointed out that this kind of religious nationalism among new new religions has one way or another been shaped by social discourses in the wider Japanese society including nihonjinron 日本人論 (or nihonbunkaron 日本文化論), a form of cultural nationalism that seeks to define the unique qualities of Japanese society, culture, and national character especially in relation to the West.

Against this background, I seek to investigate the issue of negotiation between nationalism and universalism among Japanese new religions in European contexts. The overseas expansion of Japanese new religions has attracted much attention both from Japan and overseas, with scholars particularly focusing on how Japanese new religions have been—or have not been—practised both by Japanese diasporic communities as well as by non-Japanese people in respective host societies. To the extent of my knowledge, however, there has not been much discussion that squarely deals with how potentially nationalistic characteristics of these religions play out in their efforts to spread their universalistic teachings in the West. For example, how do we make sense of religious groups that utilise ‘Japanese culture’ in their efforts to...
propagate their ‘universal’ teachings? Does the cultural particularity embedded in their doctrines, practices, and religious activities necessarily undermine their universalistic applicability or otherwise? In what ways, if any, is social discourse of cultural nationalism in Japan related to the way in which Japanese cultural particularity are construed in these religious groups in Europe?

In order to explore these questions, I plan to conduct an ethnographic fieldwork on selected Japanese new religious groups in European contexts. The fieldwork will involve reviews of official documents and publications of the concerned religious groups, participant observation at their centres, and in-depth interviews with leaders and/or members of the religious groups.

At the moment, I have only started to explore this issue and thus still in the process of narrowing down my focus on a particular religious group. I hope that my research will lead to new findings and eventually be able to make contributions to the development of academic discourses surrounding the negotiation of nationalism among Japanese new religions in Western cultural contexts.

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**PhD Research at SOAS on Japanese Religions**

**Masato Kato**, *Japanese New Religious Movements in the UK: The Negotiation between Nationalism and Universalism* (Dr Dolce, Study of Religions)

**Shinya Mano**, *Eisai and the development of Zen-Esoteric Buddhism* (Dr Dolce, Study of Religions)

**Yaara Morris**, *The Cult of Tenkawa Benzaiten: Rituals Texts and Mandalas* (Dr Dolce, Study of Religions)

**MA Japanese Religions Dissertations 2012-2013**

**Masato Kato** *Negotiation between Nationalism and Universalism among Japanese New Religions: An Analysis of Tenrikyō in Europe from the Perspective of Nihonjinron*

**Ben Capon** *An Investigation into Ritual Interaction with, and function of Nichiren’s Honzon*

**Antony Sheeran** *Christian Mission in Japan and the Role of New Media*

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**The SOAS MA Programme in Religions of Asia and Africa**

**Pathway Japanese Religion**

In 1999 the Department of the Study of Religions launched an MA Japanese Religions, the first European taught graduate programme devoted to the study of Japanese religion. The degree has now converged into the MA Religions of Asia and Africa, to allow for a more individual programme catering to the needs of a diverse student body.

The degree comprises taught courses equivalent to three units in total and a distinct Dissertation in Japanese Religion. The programme may be completed in one calendar year (full time), or in two or three calendar years (part-time).

The programme centres on the course Religious Practice in Japan: Texts, Rituals and Believers, which presents Japanese religion in its historic context and devotes attention to specific themes relevant for the understanding of the multivocal practice of religion in contemporary Japan and the influence of religion upon culture and society.

Students have the opportunity to select other courses, depending on their specific interests and previous knowledge, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of Japanese religion. The courses East Asian Buddhist Thought and Readings in Japanese Religion focus specifically on Japanese Buddhism. Other options include the study of Chinese Religions, Japanese History, Society, Art, and a variety of methodologies for the analysis of religious phenomena from a hermeneutical and anthropological perspective.

A previous knowledge of the Japanese language is not required for entry in the programme. The degree offers language courses in modern Japanese.

Application forms are available from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, SOAS.

For further information on the programme, please visit the SOAS web site at: www.soas.ac.uk/religions/programmes/mareligions/ or contact the convenor:

Dr Lucia Dolce, Room 342, ext. 4217
email: ld16@soas.ac.uk
The 2013-2014 CSJR Research Student Bursary

The Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions offers a CSJR Research Student Bursary in Japanese Religions to be held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

The value of the bursary is £4000, which covers the fees for the first year of MPhil/PhD study at SOAS (UK/EU fees). If the successful candidate receives a grant to cover fees from another funding body the bursary may be used towards maintenance.

Applications are invited from outstanding students of Japanese religions, regardless of nationality. Closing date for applications is May 1, 2014.

The selection will take place in June and results communicated shortly thereafter.

The CSJR Research Student Bursary will be awarded to candidates proposing to register full-time or part-time for a research degree (MPhil/PhD) in Japanese Religions (Department of the Study of Religions) at SOAS commencing in September 2013. Candidates must have applied for a research degree at SOAS by May 1, 2014 in order to be considered for the CSJR Research Student Bursary.

The awards will be made on the basis of outstanding academic merit, and the Centre reserves the right not to make an award in the event that no suitable application is received.

You can download the application forms and further particulars can be found on:

http://www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/bursaries/

Members' Research Related Activities

Lucia Dolce

Publications


Shinbutsu shûgô saikô [Rethinking Syncretism in Japan], Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2013 (co-edited with Mitsuhashi Tadashi).


Invited Lectures

In May-June 2013 Lucia Dolce spent three weeks in Japan, to take part in a seminar on the Lotus Sutra, sponsored by Risshô kôsekai, and to continue her archival research on Buddhist embryological rituals sponsored by a British Academy-Leverhulme grant. In the fall she gave a lecture on the Lotus Sutra at the Centre for Buddhist Studies in Oxford (14 October), and a talk on ‘Embryology and Tantric Rituals from Mediaeval Japanese Manuscripts’ at the Anthropology Research Group on Eastern Medicines and Religions (ArgO-EMR), Oxford (November 6). She was invited to an international conference on Buddhist encyclopaedias held at the College de France, Paris, where she delivered the paper ‘The Ritual Collections of Medieval Japan: A Performative Approach to Encyclopaedic Knowledge?’ (24-25 October 2013). Dolce spoke at the CSJR Ise sengû workshop on the iconography of Amaterasu (22 November) and in January 2014 gave a paper on shinbutsu ritual iconography at an international workshop on The Making of Religions and Religious Representations in Pre-Modern Japan: Imported, Native, and Modified Forms at Kyushu University (12-17 January). In March she presented her latest finding on Buddhist embryology at Columbia University (March 25) and attended the AAS in Philadelphia (27-30 March).
**Claudio Caniglia**

**Publications**


**Invited Lectures**

On February 20 2013, Caniglia gave a lecture entitled ‘Research Paths in Japanese Religions: The Case of Shugendo’ at the department of Asian Studies of the University of Rome La Sapienza.

On 7 March 2013, he delivered a lecture titled ‘The Fire Ritual of Japanese Mountain Ascetics’ as part of the CSJR Seminar series at SOAS. The lecture focused on Caniglia’s ongoing research on saitō goma, the fire ritual of the yamabushi. On March 6 2014, Caniglia gave a talk at SOAS on ‘An Important (Proto) Ethnographic Record of Shugenrō Practices: The Letter by Louis Frois from Kuchinotsu of February 1583’ as part of the international workshop ‘Interactions Between Rivals: The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan’.

**Fieldwork**

Between January and February 2013 Caniglia spent some time at the Vieuxseux archives in Florence, researching the photographic documentation produced by Fosco Maraini from the 50s to the 80s on the fire ritual of mountain ascetics. He considered the work of the Italian anthropologist as a pioneering project in the Japan visual anthropology rather than a sum of different and versatile activities.

In May he began his collaboration with the Alessandro Valignano International Centre. This was opened in Chieti, the Italian hometown of Father Alessandro Valignano, one of the most important figures in the Jesuit mission in Asia, and particularly in Japan. The aim of the centre is to promote interest and research in the Jesuit mission in Asia, and particularly in Japan. The aim of the centre is to promote interest and research around Valignano and his work, times and cultural legacy. Since June 2013, Caniglia has in charge of the relations between the Chieti Municipality and Minamishimabara in Kyushu, a recently formed municipality including several towns of an important area in the history of Christianity in Japan (sites such as Arima, the port of Kuchinotsu and the Hara castle where the rebellion against Tokugawa at the beginning of the Edo period took place).

Minamishimabara is, together with Nagasaki, involved in a project aiming at the inclusion of the Christian sites of the area in the Unesco World Heritage list and, in this view, is building close relationships with Chieti, Alessandro Valignano’s hometown.

In September 2013, Caniglia attended the national congress of the Italian Association of Japanese Studies in Rome. At the end of October 2013, Caniglia attend the 34th conference of the Association for the Study of Japanese Mountain Religion held at the National Kyushu Museum in Dazaifu. Being particularly interested in Kyushu Shugendō, Claudio also conducted fieldwork in the area and had the opportunity to climb Mount Hōman in a guided research hike organized by the Association at the end of the conference and, with a volunteer guide, Mount Hiko the most important Shugendo centre in North Kyushu until Meiji period. Caniglia spent the following month doing research in Kyoto at Kyoto University Library and at the Italian School of Asian Studies.

**Anne Mette Fisker-Nielsen**

**Publications**


**Invited Lectures and Conference Papers**


**Other Research Activities in Progress**

New cooperative research project: As part of a ten-member team and co-researcher, Fisker-Nielsen will participate in a five year project that aims to re-examine the Allied Forces’ post-war treatment of religious organisations during the occupation period of Japan (1945-52) and Okinawa (1945-72). This research project is led by Professor Nakano Tsuyoshi and supported by a grant from the Japanese government.

2013 marked the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first English ship in Japan. The vessel, the *Clove*, was sent by the East India Company, but it had onboard a letter for the ‘emperor’ (meaning Tokugawa Ieyasu, the retired shogun), and several presents, including a telescope. Almost 250 events took place in 2013, in Japan and British, under the designation of Japan400. Timon Screech of SOAS was Co-Chair of this, with Nicolas Maclean, a veteran of many previous Japan Festivals.

Although the voyage to Japan was largely a matter of commerce, it is also closely tied to the history of religions, in both Japan and England. Sadly, documentation relating to the preparation of the King’s letters and gifts is lost, but they would have been closely considered, not least the telescope, which had only been invented in 1608, and is the first time one was ever sent out of Europe and the first one ever as a presentation object (it was ‘silver-gilt’, while all previous ones has been just wood).

After the prosecution of Galileo, the telescope would become an icon of Protestantism, suggestive of an investigative heavenly spirit in complete opposition to ‘Papist idolatry’. Of great relevance is the powerful Deputy Governor of the East India Company, Maurice Abbot, whose brother, George, was Archbishop of Canterbury. Interventions from ‘My Lord of Canterbury’ and questions put to him, pepper the EIC archive. When the *Clove* returned reporting that blue broadcloth would sell well, within ten days of its docking in London, Archbishop Abbot wrote to Guildford (his hometown and one of the main English production centres) offering to convey all looms to making cloth fit for export, at his own expense.

On the Japanese side, although the English never proselytised, we know they expended great effort in promoting knowledge of the Church of England in Japan, and all senior Englishmen there recorded being quizzed on the topic repeatedly. The first Japanese in England had arrived long before, in Plymouth in 1588, just weeks after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and one wonders if they made connections with Kamikaze — though it is not known if they ever made it home. But certainly well before 1613 the Japanese authorities had been informed of the ‘Protestant Wind’ and of God’s siding against Catholic aggression. Then with arrival of the *Clove*, the Japanese were told of something else: the Gunpowder Treason (today called the Gunpowder Plot) of Guido (Guy)

Pawkes, which at the time was laid of the door of the Jesuits. The English informed the Japanese that Jesuits —indeed all Roman priests— were banned from England, on paid of death, and expressed amazement that the Shogun permitted them to wander freely in his realm. There is even an explicit record of the English warning the Japanese authorities that the Jesuits would surely seek to blow up the Shogun with gunpowder. And so, having tolerated the Roman priests for over 70 years, the shogunal definitively expelled them within months of the English arrival.

Japan400 will continue with the 400th anniversary of the *Clove’s* return to Plymouth on 27 September 1614, with a big weekend festival there, and to London on 2 December 1614, with a memorial service in Westminster Abbey. On 20th December, the *Clove’s* cargo of Japanese lacquer was sold, and was the first ever art auction in British history. This will also be commemorated with anniversary events at Christie’s and Bonham’s.
**Associate Members’ Research Related Activities**

**Fumi Ouchi**

**Publications**

OUCHI, Fumi, ‘Bukkyō” riron no fukugōsei: Annen no koe-ron o megutte’ [The Combinatory Nature of “Buddhist Discourse: Annen’s Theories of the Voice’ in Lucia Dolce and Mitsuhashi Tadashi eds. Shinbutsu shūgō saikō 神仏習合再考] [Rethinking Syncretism in Japan], Bensei Shuppan, 2013, pp 136-164. In the same volume, Dr Ouchi also translated three chapters:


**Conference Paper**


**Invited Lectures**


**Carla Tronu Montané**

**Publications**


‘Los primeros materiales para el estudio del japonés realizados por un español: Diego Collado O.P. y la misión japonesa en el siglo XVII’ in Actas del 7º Centenario de los Estudios Orientales en España, 28-29 Septiembre 2011, Universidad de Salamanca.

**Invited Lectures**


**The Buddhist form of the three regalia.**

Set of three hanging scrolls, painted in ink and colour on silk (87.2cm x 28.5cm). 18th century. © Trustees of the British Museum

Discussed in Lucia Dolce’s article, ‘The British Museum Three Regalia Scrolls: Shinbutsu Art and the Nineteenth-Century Representation of Japanese “Syncretism”’. (See “New Publications” on p. 36 for further details.)
Information on Japanese Religions

Shinnyo-en, Lantern Floating and Higan Celebrations 2013

Benedetta Lomi

This year, Shinnyo-en held equinox celebrations (higan) as well as their annual lantern floating ceremony in New York City. The events took place in two of Manhattan’s key, historic locations, Saint Bartholomew’s Church and Central Park, and was attended by over two thousand invited guests. Followers of Shinnyo-en in the US were joined by a small group of researchers invited for the occasion, members of the Center for Information on Religion, as well as by representatives of different faith organizations who took on an active role in the two-day celebrations. As a past research fellow sponsored by the Shinnyo-en foundation, I was invited to New York and had the unique opportunity of not only witnessing the rituals, but also of exchanging views with a group of delegates from Shinnyo-en, who had a central role in the planning and organization of the events.

Rituals (or ritualized practices) have an important mediating function. Whether set in a religious and secular context, they provide a means through which feelings and sensations can be structured, made sense of, and expressed. Personal feelings are not the only ones being triggered; it is communal feeling or rather, feelings of belonging to a community, which rituals, broadly speaking, construct. Ritual mediation has, in this regard, an even wider scope: it not only concerns the relationship between the individual and his or her community, but also between different communities, in local and global contexts. In this sense, ritualized actions affect the world, in symbolic and material ways.

The higan celebrations and the related Lantern Floating Festival sponsored by Shinnyo-en in New York this past fall is a clear example of the range and breath of this mediation and mediating process, and of its coveted ramifications. Performed in conjunction with the United Nations International Day of Peace—held on 21 September, the day of the autumnal equinox, when higan services are traditionally celebrated— as well as the 68th UN General Assembly, the motto for the two-day celebration was ‘Sharing the Light of Peace’. Set within these initiatives with global scope, the performed rituals became part of a wider dialogue with other faiths, cultures and nations.

The way this has been achieved is by specifically allowing for a complex but flexible ritual fabric, and by presenting it in a globally understandable form. In this context, it is not only the timing (perfectly synchronized with the UN events) but also the spatial, material and aesthetic aspects of the rituals that have been carefully planned. Of course, this is not exclusive to Shinnyo-en; any Buddhist ritual manuals would begin by instructing the practitioner to find a ‘suitable place’ for the proceedings, and to prepare it accordingly through proper purification. Similarly, the two events, higan and lantern floating, were set at strategic locations: Saint Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church and Central Park, both Manhattan landmarks in their own right.

Saint Bartholomew’s church has breathtaking neo-Byzantine interiors, the tall apse decorated with a mosaic of the ‘Transfiguration of Christ’ by Hildreth Meière, joined to an equally wide altar space by a tall golden cross. (Figure 1) This is not at all the place one would imagine for a Buddhist service, especially in a city like New York, which has a number of beautiful Buddhist temples. Although I was initially surprised by this choice, the more the liturgy unfolded, the more I realized the church itself was functional to the message conveyed in the ritual— back home in Japan (as the event was being filmed and broadcasted) and in the city of New York. The Central Park venue featured a ritual stage built on the Trump Rink, which was transformed for the occasion into a maze of streams and footbridges that allowed for all sorts of performers and speakers to interact with the floating lanterns and audience in a very engaging way. In the background, a print reproduction of Shinjô Ito’s Great Parinirvana Image welcomed and overlooked the flowing crowd of people, at the same time conjuring the presence of the Buddha and of Shinjô Ito himself. The choice of Central Park was indeed strategic: with its beautiful natural setting, Central Park is located at the heart of Manhattan, thus situating the practice of peace-making at the very center of one of the world’s cultural and inter-political capitals.

The visual and aural aspect of the celebrations also represented an important aspect of the liturgical choreography. Throughout the two days, different types of music, chanting and dancing accompanied the ritual ceremonies, and were carefully weaved into the existing ritual fabric. From the Buddhist chanting of scriptures and mantras by Shinnyo-en believers, to the Saint Bartholomew’s choir’s special rendering of the ekômon, the traditional ‘Merit Transfer Passage,’ from world-renowned musicians to gospel choirs, the notion of giving voice to different communities took a very palpable and audible form.
In this regard, the choice of performers shaped the event in a very unique way, thus becoming strategic in conveying the meaning of ‘sharing a light for peace’ as both the prerequisite and outcome of interconnectedness. The service on 21 September featured three performances: dervish chanting and whirling from Khadija Radin, a Sheikh in the Mevlevi Order of America and the Sufi Ruhaniyat International; a sung prayer in Latin by Father Michael Holleran, of the Archdiocese of New York; and a chanted Vedic mantra from Swamini Svatmavidyananda, a Vedanta Teacher from Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam. On Sunday the 22nd, different musicians and dancers performed during the day, while the Shin-nyo Taiko Drum Ensemble opened the evening celebrations. What followed was a series of performances again representative of different cultural expressions: classical Indian dances by the Natya Dance Company, accompanied by renowned musicians Rufus Cappadocia, Brahim Fribgane and Graham Haynes.

If the stunning setting, choreographies and musical ensembles provided a suggestive frame to the higan celebrations, it is the choice of individual participants and performers that transformed the ritual medium into a clear message.

The two-day event saw the participation of representatives from a diversity of religious communities, interfaith and non-profit organizations, and delegates from Mayor Bloomberg’s Office and the United Nations.

All three ‘performers’ that opened the higan service held at Saint Bartholomew’s not only share an interest in meditation and Buddhism, but also perfectly embody the meaning of interfaith dialogue and activities. Swamini Svatmavidyananda, although not ordained in any Buddhist schools, has been actively involved in numerous interfaith events across the US, taking part in interfaith meditation initiatives and symposiums. Khadija Radin organizes yearly meditation retreats at the Dervish Center she founded in 1999, in collaboration with the Ithaca Zen Center. Her interest in meditation brought her to explore a diversity of traditions, and she studied with the Rinza roshi Kyozan Jôshû Sasaki, who conferred her ordination in the early 1990s. Father Michael also has a longstanding interest in Buddhism and meditation in general. He received dharma transmission by a Jesuit priest, Robert E. Kennedy, a roshi in the White Plum Asanga school established by Taizan Maezumi (1931-1995) and went on to fund the Dragon’s Eye Zendo in his own Church in New York. Father Michael is also part of the famous Zen Peacemakers Order, also tied to White Plum Asanga. Founded by the Zen Roshi Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, a figure at the forefront of the Western Engaged Buddhism movement, Zen Peacemakers is a global interfaith community of individuals actively involved in social work, activism and socially engaged projects.1 As Christopher Queens has pointed out, socially engaged Buddhist movements, such as Glassman’s, are promoting a new understanding of the traditional Buddhist virtues of wisdom and compassion by focusing on interconnectedness (Queen 2002: 328-29). The core idea is that there is no ontological separation between beings, and therefore the actions of a single individual have repercussions on the rest of the world (ibid.).

This notion of interconnectedness was also expressed by the short speeches given during the Lantern Floating evening by Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director UN Women; Anne-Marie Goetz, Chief Advisor on Peace and Security UN Women; and Reverend Chloe Breyer, Executive Director of The Interfaith Center of New York. All speakers focused on women peacemakers all around the world, especially those active in and for countries stricken by war and poverty. Each in their own way focused on how the ability of connecting and empathizing with people is a precondition for peacemaking.

This aspect was further in line with Her Holiness Shinshô’s own sermon. In her address to the public of believers and guests, she precisely used the notion of interconnectedness to frame the two-day higan celebrations, giving a whole new meaning to a traditional equinoxial

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1 For more on Glassman’s activities and ethos, see: Sallie B. King, 2009 Socially Engaged Buddhism. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 51-63 and 113-16.
Buddhist service.

The term *higan* (in Sanskrit *pāramitā*), literally means the other shore, a term with an important soteriological dimension: it refers to the action of going from the shore of *samsara*, tainted by passion and delusions and suffering, to the other shore, that of enlightenment. In the Japanese tradition, the equinox celebration, *higan*-e, generally lasts seven days, during which families visit the grave of their departed relatives and loved ones to cleanse them with water, a gesture believed to bring solace. At the same time, memorial services are held, where *sūtra* chanting and offerings are a means to make merit, which are then ritually transferred to the deceased. The ritual thus enables and sanctions the passage from one shore to another, from one state of being to another (for the deceased), as well as from one way of feeling to another (for those attending the ritual). In this sense, it acts by structuring and restructuring the emotions of the participants and by then transferring this onto the deceased, directly affecting their status.

However, in this specific instance, Shinsō Ito stressed the importance of focusing not only on directing one’s own efforts toward those who have left us, but also towards those living in the present, as well as the future generations. The new meaning of the *higan* celebrations would therefore be to envision *pāramitā* not as a goal to be reached by a single person, but rather a communal state of bliss. As in the previously mentioned instance of Engaged Buddhism, the ontological identity of all beings that underpins the notion of interconnectedness was further expressed in Her Holiness’s remark that ‘the realization of peace is not achieved through individual effort, but first and foremost through interrelations and mutual support’. Explicitly making the service about the present and future, the *pāramitā* started having not only a soteriological, but also a social connotation.

The social engagement of Shinnyo-en is definitely not a new development. Its lay outreach, the Shinnyo-en Foundation, participates in a variety of educational and outreach activities worldwide, which speak of the interest in establishing an international dialogue and support. However, I detected a shift or stronger emphasis, at least in my understanding of Shinnyo-en teachings, from practices of self-cultivation through a variety of deeds and activities— such as the three activities of giving (*kangi*), offering service (*gohoshi*) and sharing the teachings (*ota- suke*)— towards an application of personal efforts for a broader purpose. Although not entirely a new phenomenon, as other Lantern Floating events held in Hawaii and Canada attest to, a stress on the international community and on the need for ‘building bridges of understanding’ with other religious or cultural communities is, in my view, a recent development that surely requires further scholarly attention. What is even more interesting, from a personal perspective, is the way the yearly celebrations of Lantern Floating in different international locations refashion the structure and the message of the ritual according to specific cultural contexts and events. The ability of Shinnyo-en organizers to accomplish such a variety and polyvocality can indeed become a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can very well succeed in creating awareness and stimulating individual Shinnyo-en practitioners as well as the ‘general public’ to imagine themselves as part of an trans-national community, where each singular action has a broader global reaction. On the other hand, it begs questions as to how this can eventually be translated, embodied and ultimately actualized, without losing its distinctiveness.

All photographs are by the author.

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Selected Bibliography


This book originates from six lectures that Professor Heisig delivered in March 2011 at SOAS as the 2011 Jordan Lectures on Comparative Religion. An annual series hosted by the Department of the Study of Religions, the Jordan Lectures invite leading scholars from all over the world to present groundbreaking approaches on broad themes in the field of the Study of Religions, usually leading to the publication of a monograph. Professor Heisig’s book is indeed driven by the same purpose animating the lectures, namely to understand some pivotal ‘facts of life’ in a more profound manner by employing ‘antiphonies’ between different systems of thought, rather than by creating an artificial harmony comprising all manners and manifestations of the human experience. The author individuates such an antiphony in the oppositional categories of ‘nothingness’ and ‘desire,’ which he somehow epitomises as representative of the Eastern and Western traditions of thought. Here the reader must immediately be made aware of the fact that in no way is the author trying to regurgitate an outdated and amply deconstructed orientalist cliché. East and West, like the very pillar of the proposed antiphony, Nothingness and Desire, are to be considered as ‘guiding fictions’ (9), making the dialogue between different loci of the human experience possible and viable as a philosophical discourse. The broader attempt of this book resides instead in its choice of subjects, so radical, ubiquitous and topical that they eventually constitute the gravity centre around which such ‘guiding fictions’ revolve.

The titles of the six chapters are striking in their simplicity and directness: Self and No-Self; God; Morality; Property; The East-West Divide. Equally simple and direct is the literary style employed throughout this work. Heisig’s clear and enjoyable prose achieves the difficult balance of being simple but not simplistic, elucidating complex cross-cultural and trans-cultural philosophical arguments in ways enthralling the general reader as well as the consummate academic. Each chapter is divided in a series of numbered paragraphs starting with a guiding sentence, e.g. ‘the self with its desires’ (41); ‘the place of morality’ (79); or even simple keywords like ‘consumption’ (112), thus ensuring that the overall discourse is always kept on track, and that the reader does not get lost in the variety of proposed ideas. And such variety is indeed remarkably vast: from Japanese philosophies and philosophers like the Kyoto School, Nishida Kitārō and Tanabe Hajime (which is the least we can expect from the author of groundbreaking studies like Philosophers of Nothingness, Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy and Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook) to include elements from Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and then a remarkable array of western thinkers, including Aristotle, Augustine, Eckhart, up to Hegel and Heidegger.

The opening chapter begins with an overview of the two main terms of the overarching antiphony. In particular, the author is eager to dispel a too-facile categorisation of nothingness as a nihilist position, but rather sees it as a reaction against such straightforward cause-effect thought: ‘Nothingness is nothing if not a refusal to get entangled in this mode of thought’ (25). The dialogue with East Asian philosophers enables him to provocatively destabilise the very exclusion principle at the basis of traditional logic: ‘To put it in another way, the idea of nothingness would seem to offset the principle nothing comes from nothing with its contradictory, everything comes from nothing’ (25). Whether a critique of the ‘rampant Platonism’ (McDowell) underlying ‘the West’ (not only as a philosophical tradition, but as an existential experience as well) was the intention of the author, I do not dare to speculate, but it is beyond doubt that Heisig’s antiphonies represent an exciting opportunity for philosophers to overcome certain epistemological taboos, like the dichotomy between being and non-being. On the same account, the analysis of the idea of self in the following chapter stresses important, albeit different, shortcomings vis-à-vis self and consciousness both in Eastern and Western philosophies. While Japanese philosophers might have overlooked ‘important problems as the working of the unconscious mind, the unification of consciousness in the self as a social phenomenon, the relationship between the self and the body and the way in which the idea of the self conditions the idea of God and the origins of morality’ (40), western philosophy is equally culpable for not having ‘give[n] sufficient attention to questions about self-awareness as the goal of reason, nothingness as a locating ground for being and time, the individuation of consciousness without reliance on a dominant ego […]’ (40). Having developed a particular interest in very similar issues, particularly the formation of consciousness as an epistemological critique of scientific determinism, I could not be more grateful to Heisig for re-directing our attention towards such a pivotal question, which also carries enormous potential
for re-establishing a long lost dialogue between the natural and human sciences.

In the following chapter, the notion of a ‘personal God’ is stressed as underlying a diffused anthropocentrism which goes well beyond any theistic religion or philosophy. Again, the reaction against such an anthropocentric stance is as radical as it is provocative: Heisig points out that the ‘...death of God in modern consciousness that Nietzsche proclaimed was not nearly radical enough [...]’(66), and challenges the reader with a call to religious traditions to ‘...resurrect and centralize a more personal relationship with the earth, and this cannot take place except by imagining a less personal relationship with God’ (67). If the remark on Nietzsche might appear ungenerous (the German philosopher in fact imagined his Übermensch as ‘the meaning of the earth’), his pursuit for a ‘nothingness’ not too distant from Heisig’s own is duly acknowledged few pages later: ‘The fullness of the absolutely related is its emptiness of self [...]’. It is the incarnation of Nietzsche’s ideal of ‘becoming nothing without being nothing’ [...]’ (73).

The chapters on Morality and Property put the premises of the book to the test against the stark reality of notions we allow, willingly or unwillingly, to govern so much of our existence, and argues how a different understanding of the self and of God would eventually lead us to reshape our lives in concrete terms. When the self and the idea of a personal God are pushed to the margin of our public discourse, morality loses its normative outfit to become a matter of diffused inter-subjective concern, a ‘convivial harmony’ where ‘whether we think of it or not, whether we act like it or not, we are convivial beings [...]’. The maxim to love my neighbour also entails love of my neighbour’s neighbour’(83). Although not explicitly mentioned in the text, here I cannot but also draw a connection to Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of dialogical existence, and we might eventually wonder if the simple ‘love thy neighbour’ maxim has indeed the power of putting the final nail in the coffin of the ‘rampant Platonism’ that appears to serve us so poorly.

The final chapter in a sense deals with more technical academic matters, particularly those shortcomings in academic disciplines and practices that somehow undermine the meeting of Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. Heisig’s suggestions carry great potential for future studies in this field. In particular, the fact that Eastern Philosophies often appear only within Asian area studies or religious studies, and are somehow shunned by ‘proper’ philosophers, needs to be taken seriously, and it is a stimulating research prospect for all philosophers in the future. At present, something seems to be stirring in philosophical environments in this sense, as can be seen by the increasing appearance of courses, conferences, workshops, etc. on subjects such as ‘World Philosophies’, ‘Non-European Philosophies’ and even ‘Comparative Philosophies’. Even if it has been finally ascertained that ‘not only the white man can think’, direction and guidance is still needed, particularly to avoid a straightforward and uncritical employment of Western epistemologies in explaining other forms of thought. Heisig’s contribution, amongst its many merits, can be fundamental to the purpose of establishing a scholarship on ‘World Philosophies’ where no self is protagonist, no subject is central, and where hopefully ‘a lot will come from nothing’.

New Publication

Lucia Dolce and Mitsuhashi Tadashi eds., Shinbutsu shûgô saikô [Rethinking Syncretism in Japan], Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2013

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The use of the body in pain as a means of spiritual empowerment manifests itself with astonishing richness throughout Japanese religious history. This richness is due to the many different traditions that have modelled ascetic practices: the idea that the more you willingly suffer and endure hardship, the greater the spiritual power you will obtain is embodied in the yoga tradition and becomes somehow bound to the Daoist techniques for immortality and the shamanistic practice of altered states of consciousness in order to communicate with spirits. Translated into Buddhist discourse, it created the concept of sokushin jōbutsu, the possibility of becoming a Buddha in the present body: a fundamental doctrine, on a higher philosophical level, of the Shingon and Tendai esoteric teachings. These traditions constructed what may be defined as a new form of ‘reconcilable duality’, between two different dimensions of the body: the material and the sacred, the ‘vessel of many sicknesses’ and the ‘body of merit and wisdom’. The body was therefore considered capable of potentially becoming the perfect expression of the Dharmakāya.

The notion of sokushin jōbutsu underlies, more or less explicitly, a great part of the ascetic practices still alive in Japan, particularly in the Shugendō tradition. For centuries, sacred mountains and their inner recesses have been identified with the dual mandala: the taisōkai and the kongōkai. The master instructs his disciple to perceive the physical elements of the mountain as revelations of a sacred dimension, guiding him along esoteric paths of meditation, to pass a test of enduring inhuman privation, including hunger, cold, and lack of sleep, in search for the ultimate secrets of the mind. ‘The mountain will teach you through the body’ said one practitioner to Lobetti. But also the sacredness of the mountain is renewed each time by the ascetic’s meditation on the three esoteric mysteries (sanmitsu) of the body, the sound and the mind of Dainichi, the luminous perfection of absolute emptiness.

Concepts, visions and rituals, transmitted by generations of masters, have been surrounded for centuries by a certain reverent silence, if not by downright secrecy. Until the publications of fundamental studies such as Gorai Shigenu’s Sangaku shōkyōshi kenkyū sōsho (1975/1989), Wakamori Taro’s Shugendōshi kenkyū (1972), and Miyake Hitoshi’s Shugendō girei no kenkyū (1971) and Shugendō shisō no kenkyū (1985), relevant materials were often scarce because the ascetics were mystics who despised words as empty sounds. In general we have monographic works centred on a particular practice of a school, analysed in a historical or theological perspective. Tullio Lobetti chose to study this subject from an anthropological perspective. But rather than focusing his research on a single practice or on a single Buddhist sect, he decided to attempt a systematic analysis of a number of case studies.

Lobetti laboured on the project for four years, a significant part of which was spent in Japan, in participant observation on the field, mainly in the three sacred mountains of Dewa — under the guidance of Suzuki Masataka (Keio University) and Lucia Dolce (SOAS). Collecting the data must surely have been a very difficult endeavour. In the case of group practices — the author says — surveying the actions of the other practitioners was not always possible, since one’s view was impeded by some of the practice requirements. Taking pictures was even more difficult, because often the context forbids photography. Enquiries about the meaning or circumstances of practice needed to be conducted carefully, as in all cases the leaders were very busy and not prone to dedicate time to answering questions. In some cases, a rigid hierarchical scale was implemented inside the group of ascetics, which made the participants’ upper echelons unavailable to neophytes. But the difficulty and complexity of the subject are also due to the problem of defining the nature and the cultural boundaries of the term ‘asceticism’ itself, which is inherently vague, and to the ambiguity in postulating some form of asceticism as a ‘universal’ category that could meaningfully be used to comprehend the various phenomena of bodily practices present in the Japanese religious context. The author is clearly conscious that these are key issues, the crucial questions at the core of his research.

Consequently, in the first chapter Lobetti deconstructs the origins and the historical development of the Western understanding of concepts of ‘asceticism’, acknowledging the variety of its meanings. It emerges how the contemporary Western conceptions of mystic practices have been heavily informed by the perception of the human body that originated in the modern period. The
practice of pain seems to connect all the ascetic experiences. In our tradition, concepts such as ‘self-denial’, ‘the contempt of the body’, and the ‘mortification of the flesh’ appear to be perfectly coherent with our common-sense characteristics of asceticism. But Lobetti’s research clearly demonstrates how Japanese ascetics consider their bodies as a precious device for empowerment and in no circumstance does a sense of contempt and disregard ever arise: his participant observation testifies that the ascetic practices are not moral repressive actions, done in repentance for the sins: the pain is chosen not for its destructive power, but quite the contrary, it is chosen for its power to transform the practitioner and awaken in him unknown energies.

Lobetti critically reconsiders whether the term ‘asceticism’ may be proficiently employed as an ‘umbrella-term’ to translate phenomena that, in the Japanese context, are indicated by a variety of different terms: kugyō (painful practice), aragyō (dreadful practice) and more often shugyō (practice). The term gyō is utilized to convey the meaning that the religious path must be experienced in a very personal way, through some extraordinary practices codified by tradition, in contrast with ordinary bodily practices. The difference from normality is, in this case, the quantity of effort and austerities used to discipline and purify the body, in order to reshape the mind and open it to a new perspective of self-knowledge and liberation.

 Chapters two, three, and four constitute the central body of the book. They are devoted to establishing a systematization of a number of ascetic phenomena in respect to their mode of practice, with the purpose of defining, among the many variables, some fundamental constants in the dynamic relationship between the categories of the human body, pain, and power.

The body can be seen as the cultural locus where the ascetic tradition is preserved and through which it is transmitted. Asceticism can be conceived as an ‘embodied tradition’ which is free to circulate among different religious movements, where it can be re-interpreted following the doctrinal agendas of each specific religious discourse. It is a process, through which unexpressed bodily sensations and feelings are associated with clearly expressed theoretical meanings. For example, the ‘sense of loss’ that ascetics so often experience, is associated with the acquisition of a greater purity of mind and the idea of ‘annihilating oneself’. Reproducing the performance of ascetic acts by means of one’s own body generates the text in which the body of the performer is part of the text itself.

Lobetti then develops his analysis exploring the role of the ascetic discourse inside the social and religious context, and the way ascetics build their identity. In many studies, ascetic practices are considered expressions of a ‘folk religion’ (minzoku shikō), with a diminutive meaning. But in comparison with the ‘orthodoxy’ of the great temples, these ‘popular’ practices are more free and creative in articulating new theological perspectives, different visions, unusual symbolic correlations, thus creating a body of ‘ascetic lore’ that still today represents a relevant part of the life of established religious traditions. I fully agree with the author in underlining that these practices are not marginal at all.

Lobetti’s fieldwork witnesses the performance of religious practices that can be labelled as ‘ascetic’ in a progressive scale of physical commitment and doctrinal complexity. In some occasions they could be ascetic feats performed as the core of communal rituals, in order to enrich and deepen the religious experience with layers of meaning and symbols. People closely connected with the organization of the matsuri or the daikagura, generally perform the mizugori, the purifying water ablution. During the harumatsuri and akimatsuri the rites of hiwatari (fire crossing) and hawatari (climbing of the ladder of swords), constitute main events. On other occasions ascetic practices can take place outside the institutional religious body. It is the case of the samugyō, which is practiced in the mountains, in winter. It consists of standing naked under a sacred waterfall, with eyes closed, the mind concentrated on reciting a mantra, and the hands tightened in a mudra, in order to achieve a body-mind dimension of clarity and purity.

The akinomine, the annual mountain-entry practice at Mount Haguro, or the oku_gake shugyō, the pilgrimage from Yoshino to Kumano, represent still another typology. The presence of religious professionals is crucial for the undertaking. The practice leaders, or sendatsu, are in fact the temple heads. All of them are fully ordained monks, and they are responsible for the performance of the rituals. Unlike the previous cases, there is a remarkably solid and articulated doctrinal structure underlying the whole practice, and this, coupled with the active presence of the monks, enhances the sense of a rigid orthodoxy. The underlying purpose of the whole procedure is to ‘experience the Ten Realms’ of existence (jakkai shugyō). In this practice, the shugenja are led from the realm of hell to that of the hungry ghosts, animals, demons, human beings, and gods by a series of ascetic exercises, specific to each realm, that push the participants to the edge of their physical endurance. They are asked to fast and drastically reduce food intake, to climb steep cliffs, to pass through very dangerous passages in the mountain, to pass little bridges suspended in the deep void of the valley, to plunge themselves into cold streams. Having discovered in themselves the supernaturally outflow of energy that arises upon passing the limit, they are then allowed to have access to the four higher Realms of the Enlightenment. During the interviews with the author, many ascetics agreed that the practice is really effective if it can bring one near the brink of complete exhaustion, a point of no return from which it appears to be impossible either to come back to normal life or to advance to any successive stage but death.

Lobetti sets himself the ambitious goal of penetrating into the minds of these ascetics and discovering what urged them to undergo these practices in the sacred mountains. Sensibly, he does not attempt a psychoanalytical interpretation of these phenomena; instead he tries...
to provide answers by relying on the assumptions that the ascetics themselves confessed to him during the informal, friendly conversations that spontaneously arose in the rare moments of rest during the days of the ascetic ordeals. Old men were more ‘thankful’ to the deity and wanted to preserve an existing relationship with the deity. They were past-oriented. The young were instead more future-oriented: They often mentioned very pragmatic and materialistic desires of good health, prosperity, and success in life. For them the practice was a way to shorten the time to reach their goals, utilizing the spiritual powers generated by the ascetic experience. Women proved to be more homogeneous in their behaviour and understanding. Nearly all the women were practicing for the sake of their family, parents, children, and husbands. They were taking part in an ascetic exercise in order to benefit others, rather than themselves. Religious professionals, such as Buddhist monks or Shintō priests, were a more homogeneous category of practitioners and portrayed a narrower range of motivations. Often they undertook ascetic practices in order to legitimize their roles in the community or advance in the hierarchy of their religious orders.

The solitude imposed by the aragyo can be better understood as the moment of ‘de-socialization’ required for the ascetic to legitimate himself and to become a ‘holy person’. But the ascetic phenomenon, as Lobetti says, cannot be isolated from the society in which it took root and found such tenacious success. One reacts upon the other, and both create a universe of meanings and reciprocal obligations. The ascetics never withdraw completely from society. In short, they form a different kind of social organization ambiguously positioned at the margins, but their ‘distance’ is respected, because they carry considerable importance for the religious needs of the rural—and now urban—communities.

The intra-ascetic society seems to be constituted by at least three different groups, the temple heads and clergy, the people regularly attending the ascetic practices in the mountain and, at the lowest level, the newcomers or the occasional practitioners. They are positioned in a vertical relationship, but as the practice goes on and the weariness of the practitioners increases—as the author often remarked during his fieldwork—all the usual social relationships collapse into a more much vague division between temple leaders and practitioners. They become a uniform community overwhelmed by exhaustion, pain and fear. So, it can be concluded that the process of desocialization takes place not only by virtue of the spatial dislocation of the ascetics in the ‘sacred space’ of the mountain, but within the intra-ascetic society as well. The centre of the collective experience is in fact the body, the physical dimensions of all practitioners.

But also the process of re-socialization is fundamental: asceticism is meaningful because it is structured and enacted on social terms. There is a sensation of rebirth vivid and sharp on the last day of the Haguro akinomine when, after the final service at the Dewasanzan jinja, the ‘newborn’ ascetic gives a loud cry (the cry of birth) and then rushes outside the shrine precinct. The ascetic re-socializes again, but with a sense of having acquired a powerful spiritual strength and a radically new freedom.

Lobetti insists on the subjective nature of the practitioner’s quest. For him, all kinds of ascetic achievements can be considered as variations of the same ideal: the search for the ultimate purity. Having done research in this same field, I fully agree with him. The sacred practices of the body speak about the unexhausted search, present in all religious traditions, to ascend from ordinary matter to something purer and holier. Tullio Lobetti, with sharp insight, chooses the term corporis ascensus to define the core of the ascetic experience: the ontological progression from the lowest level, that of an impure person, egocentric and deluded by his illusions, ‘distracted’, ‘opened’ and confused by the chaos of his undisciplined senses, to the serene perfection of the ultimate freedom of an ascetic who has achieved immortality. It is a long, difficult, but exalted itinerary of inner transformation, from the innocent and hesitating superficiality of the practitioner who, for the first time, follows his master along the path of the sacred mountain, to the silent glory of the self-mummified hermits of Mount Yudono who, through long and extremely painful practices, have achieved the deepest concentration, the complete detachment from all desires and needs, and an adamantine purity of body and mind. Their sacred presence on the altar of the temple, transforms the mountain—here and now—in a luminous Pure Land of the Buddha.

The fact that, in contemporary Japan, ascetic practices and rituals are still so rich and varied, and so actively followed not only by monks and shamans but also by a remarkably heterogeneous range of laypeople, testifies to the strength and originality of its religious traditions. It is a merit of Tullio Lobetti to have given us, through this book, a vivid, authoritative and passionate description of this experience, not easy to live and understand, but certainly provocative and fascinating.

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