Fourth Nanzan Seminar for the Study of Japanese Religions

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The Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture began hosting the Nanzan Seminar in 2013 as a venue for international graduate students to discuss their research on Japanese religions and receive feedback from Japanese scholars. The seminar provides a rare opportunity for non-native Japanese speakers to present their work in a casual and supportive academic setting. This year's participants traveled from Europe, the United States, and Kansai to present on the current status of their dissertation research. Topics ranged from contemporary Buddhist youth organizations to medieval taxonomies of deities, and each presentation was followed by comments and, hopefully, fruitful discussion.

THE FOURTH meeting of the Nanzan Seminar for the Study of Japanese Religions was held at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture on 13–14 January 2019. For the second consecutive year, the seminar was organized in collaboration with the Nagoya University JSPS Core to Core Program 日本学術振興会拠点形成事業, which promotes the development of academic communities for the study of Japan's cultural heritage and texts.

The fourth meeting of the seminar continued the tradition established in 2013, 2015, and 2018 of inviting international graduate students to present their research on Japanese religion. This year's seminar included five PhD students from the United States, Italy, China, and Germany, six commentators from Japanese universities, the Nanzan Institute staff, and several local and international scholars of religion. The seminar was conducted in Japanese. Each presenter was given forty-five minutes to present his or her research project followed by forty-five minutes of questions and comments from the discussants.

The Seminar began with opening remarks from Torisu Yoshifumi 鳥巣義文 (President, Nanzan University), who gave a brief summary of the history and significance of the Nanzan Institute. Kim Seung Chul 金 承哲 (Director, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture) followed up with a comment on the progress of the Nanzan Seminar since its first meeting in 2013, and Okuyama Michiaki 奥山倫明 (Permanent Fellow, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture) discussed the objective of the Seminar as an opportunity for international graduate students to present and discuss their research in Japanese with scholars in Japan.

Presenters

Presentations at this year's Nanzan Seminar included a diversity of research topics, ranging from the disappearance of youth in Buddhist youth groups to beliefs surrounding the death of the medieval Buddhist reformer Eison. The presenters were:

Silke R.G. Hasper (Heidelberg University), "Where is the Youth? Engaged Buddhism and Buddhist Youth Groups in Contemporary Japan"

Franziska Steffen (MLU Halle-Wittenberg), "How to weld and wield 'religion' in the Meiji period? Contrasting criticism against the 'heretical' Tenrikyō with its response as 'Japan's only true Shintō'"

Emanuela Sala (SOAS University of London), "'A kami with any other name…' Ōmiya no onkoto, the Yōtenki, and the problem of kami identities"

Jesse Drian (University of Southern California), "Local Traces and Sacred Spaces: Networks of Benzaiten Manifestations"

Xingyi Wang (Harvard University, Ryukoku University), "Eison's Two Bodies: His Final Moment and Rebirth"

Discussants

Five Japanese scholars representing various fields of research in Japanese religions (medieval Japanese literature and religion, philosophy of religion, religion and gender, aesthetics, religious texts, religious history, and others) were invited to provide comments and advice to the presenters:

Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎 (Nagoya University)
Iwata Fumiaki 岩田文昭 (Osaka Normal University)
Kobayashi Naoko 小林奈央子 (Aichi Gakuin University)
Chikamoto Kensuke 近本謙介 (Nagoya University)
Yoshida Kazuhiko 吉田一彦 (Nagoya City University)

Discussants of the fourth Nanzan Seminar

Summaries of Presentations

Silke R.G. Hasper (Heidelberg University) *Where is the Youth? Engaged Buddhism and Buddhist Youth Groups in Contemporary Japan*

Hasper's PhD dissertation examines the public image of contemporary Buddhism. Specifically, as she stated at the beginning of her presentation, her research addresses a dilemma currently facing Buddhist institutions in Japan regarding the growing criticism of their traditional means of income. "Buddhism in Japan today," Hasper, stated, "faces a huge dilemma. While most temples depend on the income from funeral rituals, this very element puts Buddhism in the center of criticism. The Japanese public's understanding of Buddhism emphasizes funeral rituals and the honoring of ancestors at temples, an image which is then often combined with the accusation of old priests being greedy." In her talk for the seminar, Hasper discussed youth engagement within Buddhism, or, rather, the lack thereof. Although youth engagement is a possible way of overcoming the association of Buddhism with funerals, these groups no longer draw attention from the general public.

She began her presentation by reviewing the literature on *Bukkyō seinen kai* 仏教青年会 (Young Buddhist Association), noting that researchers have mostly ignored the organization. One reason for this lack of research, Hasper noted, might be the difficulty of identifying the groups. Traditionally, statistics of the *Bukkyō seinen kai* were held by the temples, but with restructuring after the war the relationship between the temples and youth associations was lost, and the activities of these associations became more autonomous. Hasper, however, outlined several characteristics of the contemporary *Bukkyō seinen kai*

exemplified in her two case studies of the *Keiō gijuku Bukkyō seinen kai* 慶應義塾仏教青年会 (Keio Young Buddhist Association) at Keio University and the *Zen Nihon Bukkyō kai* 全日本仏教会 (All Japan Young Buddhist Association), an umbrella organization of several Buddhist Youth clubs. She argued that despite differences they share similar activities; both clubs, for example, engage in peace-making activities and encouraged inter-religious exchange. She concluded that, although contemporary Buddhism has lost much of its relevance in contemporary Japan in the eyes of the general public, activities of Buddhist associations such as the *Bukkyō seinen kai* may once again help to facilitate social engagement with Buddhism.

Commenting on the *Bukkyō seinen kai*, Iwata suggested that Hasper provide more in-depth historical background on the formation of the association. Although Buddhism does not seem to be a point of interest for the youth today, it was popular among younger people in Meiji Japan. "In the Meiji era," Iwata stated, "Buddhist youth associations were active throughout an array of various religious affiliations, but after the Second World War the affiliation with Buddhist sects was cut off." Iwata pointed out that since Buddhist youth associations are no longer very active, it might be more interesting for Hasper to study past members who have stayed in contact with the associations following their graduation from university. As an example, he mentioned Maekawa Kihei 前川喜平, a public critic of Prime Minister Abe, who in his book mentions how his experience as permanent secretary of *Bukkyō seinen kai* influenced his critiques of the Abe administration. Iwata also recommended looking into the history of the youth association at Keio Gijuku and Tokyo University, noting that their annual reports would offer an interesting source for Hasper's future research.

Next, Kobayashi reflected on Iwata's comments. She proposed whether it even makes sense to compare the current *Bukkyō seinen kai* with that of the Meiji era as the purpose of such youth groups has changed quite a lot over time. She mentioned how she had conducted fieldwork within a Buddhist youth association related to the Sōtō sect. Considering that the average age of its members was 41 led her to question the meaning of "youth" in this context. She also emphasized that the creation of an association for female priests in Nagano had changed the dynamic of the *Bukkyō seinen kai*. Therefore, whether or not contemporary Buddhist youth associations could accurately be compared with those of the Meiji era, Kobayashi concluded, was debatable. Hasper responded that the problem of defining "youth" had been her primary interest when she began her investigation of the *Bukkyō seinen kai* and that she was still looking into how to approach the problematic. Nevertheless, she thought it was still important to consider the historical background of the association.

Chikamoto stated that he was curious to know to what degree, if any, there existed a connection between the *Bukkyō seinen kai* at universities and the

temple authorities of Buddhism. For instance, is there an infrastructure internal to the Buddhist sects that deal with the associations in a similar fashion as funerals? He also mentioned that many groups of younger lay Buddhists sometimes engage in public events and wondered if such groups had any interaction with Buddhist youth groups at the universities. Hasper replied that most associations had some kind of relationship with the head temples of the Buddhist sects, although such agreements vary among the different groups.

Broadening the discussion, Abe wanted to know why the image of contemporary Buddhism has become so negative. He furthermore suggested expanding the scope of research to also include more positive understandings of Buddhism in society that go beyond the funeral criticism. How should Buddhists today discuss their views on life and death? Do the youth associations play a role in such discussions? Abe also wanted Hasper to tell more about the specific activities of contemporary Buddhist youth associations. He mentioned that it would be interesting to know to what degree activities such as zazen is practiced among members. Zazen, Abe noted, was a big activity among young people in the Meiji and Taisho eras, and people such as Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 were famous for having practiced it.

Franziska Steffen (MLU Halle-Wittenberg) *How to weld and wield 'religion' in the Meiji period? Contrasting criticism against the 'heretical' Tenrikyō with its response as 'Japan's only true Shintō'*

The second presentation of the day focused on the brief historical period from 1890 to 1902. During this period, journalists and intellectuals attacked the new religious group Tenrikyō, claiming its faith and healing practices were fraudulent and superstitious. According to Steffen, the history of Tenrikyō reflects the global boundary-drawing exercise between "science" and "religion" at the turn of the century. In her presentation, she contrasted criticism of Tenrikyō with primary sources from its formative years to demonstrate that both sides employed discursive categories recently imported from the emerging field of religious studies. These categories, namely the concept of "revealed religion" were used to delegitimize or legitimize the Tenrikyō as a Shinto religion.

Steffen pointed to the continual problem within religious studies of reframing religion in relation to modernity. In recent years, Japanese and foreign scholars have contributed to a new understanding of Shinto, Buddhism, and the ongoing religious discourse of the late nineteenth century. Focusing on the new religious organization of Tenrikyō and highlighting the use of "superstition" as a tool of exclusion, Steffen argued, reveals the intrinsic discursive nature of the concept of "religion." In other words, through an analysis of late nineteenth-century discourse regarding the legitimacy of Tenrikyō as a "religion," Steffen draws

attention to the manner in which the categories of religious studies framed the debate over Tenrikyō's status as a religion.

In the discussion, Iwata pointed out how the differentiation between religious belief and superstitious belief throughout the Meiji era played a significant role in the formation of the concept of religion. Intellectuals such as Inoue Enryō 井上円了 and his study of monsters and superstition were also involved in this debate. He wanted to know to what degree the disputes between journalists and Tenrikyō could be seen as a byproduct of these studies. Furthermore, Iwata added, it would also be interesting to investigate whether the influence of the concept of religion that developed following the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) affected the religious practice of Tenrikyō. "Logically," Iwata stated, "changes in the concept of religion must have influenced in the self-image of Tenrikyō," and then asked Steffen whether she thought there existed a difference between the theoretical discussion of religion, led by people such as Inoue Enryō, and the practical exercise of religious healing.

Chikamoto asked Steffen three questions. First, he wanted to know how the changes that occurred in Shinto during the late Meiji era affected Tenrikyō. Following the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), he pointed out, whether or not Shinto was a religion was a topic of much debate. In result, the discourse shifted from Shinto as a religion to Shinto as national polity. How, he asked, did Tenrikyō fit into this historical framework? Second, he requested a clarification of Tenrikyō's political involvement. New religions, he said, are often criticized at first, but once they have established themselves they usually become political. Tenrikyō, to his knowledge, never become political. Why was this the case? Finally, Chikamoto was curious about Tenrikyō's interaction with Christianity when the organization began to expand overseas. According to Tenrikyō, Tenri is the birthplace of humanity. How were such ideas received outside of Japan, especially among Christians?

Steffen agreed with Chikamoto that Tenrikyō did not involve themselves in politics. She stressed that one answer to this might be that during the time of Nakayama Miki 中山みき, the founder of Tenrikyō, new religious groups were not very involved in politics. Regarding Tenrikyō interactions with Christians, she noted that during the 1890s members of Tenrikyō were generally hostile towards Christianity. This might also be why Christian missionaries were unsuccessful in their efforts to convert members of Tenrikyō, although they pointed out similarities between their faiths. Steffen mentioned that although Nakayama Shōzen 中山正善 (the second leader of Tenrikyō) studied both Christianity and theology at the Tokyo Imperial University, Tenrikyō did establish an official policy towards Christians.

Abe also commented on the historical aspects of Shinto as national polity. According to Abe, the formation of State Shinto was reflected in criticisms of

Tenrikyō. In attempt to define Shinto as a cultural and civic institution, it had to be distinguished from new religions such as Tenrikyō. This was accomplished by labeling Tenrikyō as superstitious. Furthermore, Abe stressed that Nakayama Shōzen's attempts to influence religious studies at the Tokyo Imperial University was an effort to establish Tenrikyō as a recognized religion.

Emanuela Sala (soas University of London) *'A kami with any other name…' Ōmiya no onkoto, the Yōtenki, and the problem of kami identities*

According to Sala, medieval sources seem to have been confused regarding the identity of the two deities Ōmiya 大宮 and Ninomiya 二宮. As she stated, "Multiple narratives on their enshrinement coexist, often in contrast with each other." Sala noted that the position of the kami as "tutelary kami of the land" is unclear, their aspect is doubtful, and their "proper names" are often interchangeable. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the *Yōtenki* 耀天記, a text composed between the thirteenth and fifteenth century that includes miscellaneous material on the traditions of the Hie shrines. Sala's aim was to inquire into the possible reasons underlying the vague identities of these deities and how further study of their development can explain the multiple mythical discourses of medieval Japanese Buddhism.

In her presentation, Sala focused on a section in the *Yōtenki* concerning Ōmiya and Ninomiya. The section explicitly discusses doubts regarding the identity of the two deities. In her analysis, Sala argued that the identities of the deities had been reformed and manipulated by various authors, which again had influenced the overall narrative of the text. Furthermore, she explained that these changing narratives highlighted institutional shifts within the organization of medieval temples as well as the construction of identities for these particular deities within the text itself. According to Sala, there have been previous studies on how kami identities were formed, both in the west and in Japan. These works, however, do not discuss the deities of *sannō shintō* 山王神道 in depth.

Sannō shintō can be defined as a medieval discourse on the deities at the Hie shrines 日吉神社 (also read as Hiyoshi) in Sakamoto, Shiga Prefecture. However, Sala explained that in medieval Japan *sannō shintō* had not yet been constructed as a unified system. Rather, what later came to be called "*sannō shintō*" was comprised of various narratives, doctrinal analyses, and artistic depictions that often contradicted each other. The mosaic uniting these different narratives was what, according to Sala, led to the conceptualization of the identity of the deities.

Sala made an interesting point that *sannō shintō*, in many respects, was the only medieval discourse on the deities of Hie. No other material existed on the deities Ōmiya and Ninomiya prior to the establishment of Enryakuji 延暦寺 except for the short mentions of them in *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀. "We must therefore," Sala explained, "see all medieval conceptualization of the

Hie deities as strongly grounded in Tendai thought." This does not mean that religious institutions other than Tendai did not take part in the conceptualization and diffusion of the discursive practices that we call *sannō shintō*, but it reminds us, Sala stressed, that we cannot continue our research on medieval kami identities focusing only on the shrines. Material and texts concerning kami enshrined at the Hie shrines were often composed by Buddhist monastics operating there. Therefore, Sala's research on the two deities Ōmiya and Ninomiya seeks to provide further detail on the much-overlooked role of shrine lineages regarding kami mythologies.

Abe mentioned that the *Yōtenki* probably is the most difficult work regarding *sannō shintō* considering its length and lack of uniformity. Therefore, identifying the kami in specific chapters was *subarashii*. Abe recommended that it would be beneficial for Sala to include chapter thirty-two of the *Yōtenki* in her research, which provides a more systematic description of the *sannō* deities. Furthermore, a modern Japanese version is available and used in contemporary Shinto liturgies.

Yoshida also provided a helpful comment. He noted that it is important to think of the identity of the deities metaphorically, as they changed over time. As an example, Yoshida talked about the transformation of the kami of Hie and how they first appeared as mountain deities. Originally, there was just one deity of the mountain, but at a certain point it turned into two. If you look at the *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三大実録, you find sources on the creation of the kami of Hie. Later, the meaning changes again, and "Hie no kami" returned to its original concept of the deity of the mountain. Yoshida also suggested that Sala look into the idea of "yama no kami" and to consider whether the *sannō* deities were originally Japanese or imported from China.

Jesse Drian (University of Southern California) *Local Traces and Sacred Spaces: Networks of Benzaiten Manifestations*

Drian's presentation was a reexamination of the *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 system from the perspective of sacred space. Drian pointed out that in the *honji suijaku* system the transcendental buddhas and bodhisattvas take the forms of worldly deities, like kami in Japan, in order to best serve the needs of worshipers. The *honji suijaku* system, in other words, provided a means for explaining how multiple kami could be identified as the same buddha. Although this system provided the monks with a way of organizing diverse cosmological schemes, Drian reminded us that it provided a launching point for scholar monks to compare information about the deities enshrined at different temples and shrines.

According to Drian, such identification problems led to various questions among the monks. "Are the different manifestations of a buddha the same, different, or the same but different? Is the deva Benzaiten 弁財天 appearing as the

Itsukushima 厳島 deity the same as the Benzaiten of Chikubushima 竹生島, and if so, what is the relationship between their spaces?" Drian tried to illuminate these questions by exploring how medieval scholar monks tried to answered them. His conclusion was rather interesting as is pointed out how these monks in their efforts to answer these questions constructed networks linking different Benzaiten and their associated sacred spaces, consequentially, enabling each Benzaiten to simultaneously be seen as the same in essence and as what he termed "spatially unique."

The intriguing aspect of Drian's presentation was that he brought together the methodologies and perspectives of a site-based study and network analysis to investigate how deities and sacred spaces were understood through their interrelations in medieval Japan. Although, as he pointed out, "studies in single cultic sites have provided scholars of Japanese religions with an exceptionally detailed picture of the religious landscape of medieval Japan," he emphasized, it is sometimes necessary to take a step back and see how religious ideas, texts, and deities developed and moved translocally. Beginning his research from the Itsukushima Shrine 厳島神社 and its origin narrative, he carefully explained how the complex ideas regarding the space of Itsukushima became interconnected with other sites of Benzaiten deities.

Abe was the first to comment on Drian's presentation. He pointed out that Drian's presentation was very well-organized, clearly-structured and insightful. However, as a piece of advice, he suggested that Drian should have provided more detailed background on the evolution of Benzaiten sites. Abe further pointed out that the notion of sacred grounds in Tendai varied according to the connections between specific deities. In some cases, for example, networks were drawn connecting different sites throughout Japan rather than individual Benzaiten deities. In this respect, Abe recommended additional sources that provide imagery of Benzaiten. He further suggested several origin tales regarding sacred grounds related to mountain temples such as Zenkōji 善光寺.

Paul Swanson also chimed in on Drian's presentation. Drian noted in his talk that the *Keiran shūyōshū* 渓嵐拾葉集, and compendium of Tendai esoteric practices and doctrines, employs a triangular diagram to explain the relationship between various forms of Benzaiten and their locations. Swanson pointed out that he came across the same configuration when writing the *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy* in which it was used to illustrate the doctrine of the three truths (emptiness, conventional, and their intersection). Therefore, the Tendai influence on medieval *honji suijaku* discourse is undeniable.

Yoshida cautioned Drian not to assume that such tales of gods in Japan and origin stories about their locales were strictly a Japanese innovation. In fact, many of these stories were imported from India and China. For example, stories regarding the origins of devas called *kishin* 鬼神 were taken from tales incorporated into early Mahayana Buddhist scriptures. Furthermore, as Yoshida

pointed out, what constituted a "*honji*" and "*suijaku*" was always quite vague. A "*suijaku*" deity could become a "*honji*" for another deity, and "*suijaku*" deities were sometimes divided into further subclasses. Therefore, one must be careful not to assume that *honji suijaku* was in any way a stable discourse on Buddhist taxonomy.

Xingyi Wang (Harvard University, Ryukoku University) *Eison's Two Bodies: His Final Moment and Rebirth*

Wang's dissertation research primarily concerns Vinaya revival movements in China during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These movements were in connect with Buddhist intellectuals in Japan, and there are several parallels between the Vinaya revival efforts on the mainland and on the archipelago. In her presentation at the seminar, Wang focused on the Vinaya master Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290) and his preparation for death. Based on descriptions in his biography written by a close disciple and a statue of himself, which had commissioned to be made toward the end of his life, Wang argued that the image of Eison represents a medieval ideal of death and the transformation of the physical body.

In the second part of her presentation, Wang positioned Eison's biography and his statue within a broader Japanese Buddhist tradition. While it is commonly accepted that Eison was a major figure in the Vinaya revival movement, Wang suggested that it is important to consider his relationship to the Hossō school as well. Examining Eison's preparations for death at the end of his long career as a monk, Wang pointed out how Hossō thought influenced his understanding of his own mortality. The carefully arranged dying and death of Eison, Wang stated, provided an example of how the doctrinal and practice aspects of Buddhism were conceptualized and embodied as a singular whole over the course of Eison's life.

Iwata was the first to comment on Wang's presentation. He wanted to know more about Wang's interpretation of Eison's death. Wang had mentioned in her talk that when Eison died miraculous signs had appeared, which she termed as a sign that the dharma body of the Buddha was present. Iwata wanted to know if there existed any sources or texts that confirms this claim. It is said that when Eison died auspicious signs appeared, but this interpretation contradicts sources on Eison's birth. These sources stress that he endeavored to be reborn in Tusita Heaven, which was an aspiration that ran counter the more popular ideal of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land.

Following up on Iwata's comment, Chikamoto suggested Wang take a closer look at Eison's commentaries and writings on ritual texts. He also recommended that she study Eison's comments on Huizhao's 慧沼 *Quanfa putixin ji* 勧発菩提心集 and the *Kasuga gongken genki* 春日権現験記, which would help Wang's

research in making a connection between the study of the Vinaya and religious movements in Kamakura period.

Yoshida suggested that Wang might compare the hagiographical account of Eison's death to the death of Shotoku Taishi 聖徳太子 in the *Nihon shoki*. Shotoku Taishi's death scene could be interpreted in one of three ways. It could be understood as emulating the death of the Buddha; it could be interpreted as an imitation of the death of the Hossō patriarch Xuanzang 玄奘; or, it could be understood as a doctrinal statement on rebirth in Tusita Heaven. This episode in the *Nihon shoki* was probably the basis for depictions of Eison's death, not to mention other religious figures such as Kūkai 空海.

Presenters of the fourth Nanzan Seminar