International Exchange

Reflections on the Fifth Nanzan Seminar for the Study of Japanese Religions

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The fifth Nanzan Seminar for the Study of Japanese Religions invited four young scholars affiliated with universities in Australia, Hong Kong, and Japan to present and discuss their dissertation research in Japanese. This year's topics ranged from the ritualized expulsion of demons to women's agency in ancient Japanese literature. Two papers examined modern and contemporary Shinto through the lens of both domestic and overseas shrines. The Seminar was held in collaboration with a JSPS Core to Core Program at Nagoya University. In sum, the fifth Nanzan Seminar showed just how important venues for exchanges in Japanese are for non-native speakers, especially if they seek future employment at a university in Japan as international scholars.

The Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture hosted the fifth Nanzan Seminar for the Study of Japanese Religions on 11–12 January 2020. For the third consecutive year, the Seminar was conducted in collaboration with Nagoya University, as part of a broader research project on "The Formation of a Community of Scholars Devoted to the Universal Value of Religious Culture through a Study of Textual Traditions," which is sponsored by the JSPS. The idea behind the Nanzan Seminar is to bring international doctoral students in dialogue with scholars in Japan. By providing non-native speakers with an opportunity to present and discuss their research in Japanese, the Seminar aims to prepare promising PhD students for their potential roles as future leaders in the field of Japanese Religious Studies. As was the case in previous years, leading Japanese scholars, who attended the Seminar as commentators, addressed each paper individually. The time for discussion allocated to each presentation extended over forty-five minutes.

This year, moreover, three invited international scholars employed at Japanese universities shared their insights as speakers in a panel discussion on the local academic job market, providing the audience with first-hand accounts

about the working conditions at different universities in Japan. The Seminar was rounded out by a field excursion, where on-the-ground perspectives on religion allowed for moments of international exchange through observation of Buddhist ritual practices, interactions with Buddhist literature and art, and a visit to a seaside shrine. The excursion also included a tour at the museum of vinegar manufacturer Mizkan in Handa, and a joyful lunch at a local fish market.

Presenters

Presenters at the 2020 Nanzan Seminar were affiliated with universities in Australia, Hong Kong, Hokkaido, and Kyoto. The four papers, which derived from the presenters' PhD dissertation projects, reflected diverse research interests and approaches to the study of Japanese religions in history and present. Topics ranged from rituals for the expulsion of demons (Huang) to the architecture and function of modern overseas Shinto shrines (Chen); women's agency in ancient Japanese literature (McKay); and the changes in branding and marketing at a popular Kyoto Shinto shrine in response to shifting visitor behavior (Tillonen).

This year's presenters (in order of appearance):

Huang Jie (Kyoto University), "A Comparative Study on the "Ghost" Performing in the Ceremony to Drive Out Evil Spirits (*tsuina*) in China and Japan"
Zuoyi Chen (The Education University of Hong Kong), "Shinto across Borders: A Case Study of Japan's Overseas Shinto Shrines in Taipei and Changchun"
Natalie McKay (University of Melbourne), "A New Consideration of *hime* and *hiko*"
Mia Tillonen (Hokkaido University), "Constructing and Contesting the Shrine: The Case of Seimei Shrine, Kyoto"

Discussants

Sharing their expertise in various fields of research on Japanese religions, five Japanese scholars participated in this year's Seminar as discussants. By drawing on their knowledge of the history of religions, medieval Japanese literature, philosophy and religion, and gender studies, the discussants addressed each paper individually by providing feedback, comments, and questions.

The discussants (in alphabetical order):

Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎 (Nagoya University)
Chikamoto Kensuke 近本謙介 (Nagoya University)
Iwata Fumiaki 岩田文昭 (Osaka Normal University)

Kobayashi Naoko 小林奈央子 (Aichi Gakuin University)
Yoshida Kazuhiko 吉田一彦 (Nagoya City University)

Panelists

As a novelty, this year's Nanzan Seminar comprised a panel discussion on collaborative research and employment opportunities for foreign researchers in Japan. Three non-Japanese academics, who all specialized in Japanese religions, presented their insights on the peculiarities of the Japanese job market. The event's inviting atmosphere motivated the audience to ask questions, and a lively discussion emerged after the three panelists each gave their input on individual trajectories, experiences, and constellations of conditions leading to their current employment at different universities in Japan. The discussion was moderated by the Institute's Matthew D. McMullen, who also shared his insights on working at Nanzan University. From research to teaching and administrative duties, the panel discussion encompassed all aspects of academic life, offering first-hand accounts of the real prospects and challenges of an academic career in Japan.

The panelists (in order of appearance):

Timothy Benedict (Kwansei Gakuin University)
Clinton Godart (Tohoku University)
Andrea Castiglioni (Nagoya City University)



Panel discussion on job opportunities in Japanese academia



Participants of the fifth Nanzan Seminar for the Study of Japanese Religions

Summaries of Presentations

Huang Jie (Kyoto University), *A Comparative Study on the "Ghost" Performing in the Ceremony to Drive Out Evil Spirits* (tsuina) *in China and Japan*

The first presentation of the 2020 Nanzan Seminar by Huang Jie compared *tsuina shiki* 追儺式 (the ritualized expulsion of evil spirits) in Japan and China. In particular, Huang's study focused on the ritual specialists who embody *oni* 鬼 (devils) as part of the *tsuina* ritual. The presenter observed Taoist influences in Chinese *tsuina* rituals, whereas in Japan, Buddhist influences dominate. In the Japanese context, as Huang's comparative study of *tsuina* revealed, the role of the devil that expels evil spirits is often performed by Buddhist monks, which is typically not the case in China.

While extant scholarship tends to presume a continuity of *tsuina* from China to Japan and other areas in Asia, Huang Jie demonstrated that the ritual underwent complex transformations in the course of its transfer within different local and cultural contexts. To do this, she employed a multi-methodological approach that combined the historical-philological study of *tsuina* with ethnographic fieldwork in southern China (focusing on the Dong ethnic group) and Japan (focusing on communities in Nara and Ōita).

Rejected as superstition, the Dong's culture of *tsuina* rituals in southern China had been abolished in the course of the Cultural Revolution, Huang Jie explained. Attempts to revive the culture gained momentum during the 2000s

and peaked with the designation of the tradition as national intangible cultural heritage in 2006. However, the ritual's religious elements are mostly ignored in portrayals of Dong culture as cultural heritage. Beyond this discourse, as Huang emphasized, the *tsuina* culture in Southern China retained its religious aspects due to participating religious specialists and their local communities.

In Japan, these rituals were introduced from China during the Heian period. At many temples and shrines in present-day Japan, the practice has become a part of the *setsubun* 節分 spring festival. The rituals are comprised of local folk believes and practices, yet they mostly take place within a Buddhist ritual context at temples, where Buddhist priests perform the role of the devil. Here, Huang observed a change in meanings ascribed to the devils that clergy perform or embody during Japanese *tsuina* rituals:

> For local people, *oni* are no longer demons or evil spirits that need to be driven away from their home or village, but they are also understood as the incarnation of their family ancestors or Buddha; entities that could keep them away from disease and bring them goodness and happiness in the coming year.

Huang Jie's talk was very well received by the commentators and audience. "I was nervous to make a presentation before such great scholars that are famous in the field of Japanese religion," Huang explained after the Seminar. "However," she resumed, "I felt lucky to receive valuable advises and very useful comments from them during the discussion." This discussion highlighted similarities with rituals in Korea (pointed out by Yoshida); suggestions to expand the comparison of representations of devils and demons to also include India, which had a considerable influence on Japan (Yoshida); and questions as to why the presenter chose a comparison between Japan and the Chinese Dong culture to begin with (Chikamoto). Huang was also encouraged to challenge her rather uncritical dealing with discourse on cultural heritage, since the concept may also work to implicitly or explicitly exclude local beliefs, practices, and actors (Kobayashi and Castiglioni). Interdisciplinary research is currently expanding to explore the transregional and transcultural flows of religious culture in Asia, as Abe pointed out in praising Huang's promising contribution to the field.

Zuoyi Chen (The Education University of Hong Kong) ***Shinto across Borders: A Case Study of Japan's Overseas Shinto Shrines in Taipei and Changchun***

Using the example of Japan's overseas Shinto shrines, Zuoyi Chen drew on theories of modernism and pan-Asianism to explain the important role that Shinto played in legitimizing the modern nation state and the state's colonial strategy. By asking how and with what intentions Japan built Shinto shrines in Taipei

and Changchun during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chen's study drew attention to Shinto's urban and architectural history. Her findings suggested that Japanese architectural influences dominated in the construction of the first overseas Shinto shrines, whereas later models were also shaped by Western styles. In the course of Japan's territorial expansion between 1868 and 1945, Chen argued, the designers of overseas shrines began to merge traditional Japanese shrine designs with Western ideas. In so doing, Japanese shrine architects expanded existing notions of modernism to also encompass what they envisioned as Japanese and as pan-Asian. They became active agents in the construction of collective modern identities that require careful consideration in the context of Japan's nationalism and militarism during the first half of the twentieth century.

Following an overview on the extant literature on Shinto architecture, Chen introduced her conceptual framework with a focus on Western and Asian modernism, before she turned to a discussion of several case studies, including Taiwan Shrine in northern Taipei. Here, the presenter discussed how the shrine's leading designer, Itō Chūta 伊東忠太, balanced Japan's imperialist goals with other considerations that came together in the making of Taiwan Shrine. Factors specific to the construction of overseas shrines concerned local customs in Japan's colonies and occupied territories, environmental settings, the use of modern technologies, and the longevity of materials used.

Zuoyi Chen didn't limit her observations to Taiwan Shrine to show how overseas shrines were essentially designed to look like their Japanese counterparts. Hsingking Shrine 新京神社 in Changchun was another striking example chosen by Chen. Yet, while Taiwan Shrine and Hsingking Shrine were both designed to look like typical Japanese Shinto shrines, others did not. Kenkō Shrine 建功神社, founded in 1928, displayed Western stylistic features, as seen by the shrine's roof. Here, Chen concluded that overseas Shrine architecture was actually late in picking up Western trends. Other architectural styles in Japan had long since been influenced by Western classical styles.

The discussion following Chen's talk revolved around issues of modernism and the ways that Japanese architects engaged with local actors on the ground. Iwata Fumiaki asked if Itō Chūta had actually been to Taiwan, or if he had merely designed Taiwan Shrine on paper. Iwata also asked if or how modern technological changes like steel pipe systems were incorporated into the identity construction and negotiation of architectural styles as markers of a national or pan-Asian identity, or a presumed Japanese progressiveness. Following up on the discussion of modernism, Andrea Castiglioni gave valuable input by hinting to the works of Bruno Latour. Chikamoto Kensuke wondered about which direction the presenter aimed to further develop her thesis. Institutionally, new bridges of interdisciplinary research are being established that have since

brought various sub-fields of cultural studies in conversation with technical faculties, among others. Rejecting an isolated view of architectural history, Abe Yasurō then pointed out the importance of context. To illustrate his point, he used the example of Atsuta Shrine 熱田神宮 in Nagoya, where terminological and architectural adjustments followed political changes in the Meiji period. Kobayashi Naoko picked up on this notion of contextuality, in asking whether the construction of overseas shrines was preceded by or embedded in the broader discussion of city planning.

Natalie McKay (University of Melbourne) ***A New Consideration of* hime *and* hiko**

The second day of the Seminar started with a presentation by Natalie McKay, whose paper focused on the question of male and female rulership through the scope of *hime* and *hiko* representations in ancient Japanese literature. *Himehiko* is often understood as a system of pairs that associates the political and military power with the male, whereas religious agency is ascribed to the female. McKay's paper, which comprised part of a broader PhD dissertation project on women in ancient Japanese religion at the University of Melbourne, challenged this concept of a gender-based power divide. She also questioned the narrative of a presumed pre-patriarchal "golden age" of female empowerment and gender complementarity before the establishment of the Yamato Dynasty. Based on her study of the *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, among other ancient Japanese chronicles and sources, McKay argued that a variety of power relations must have existed at the time when these texts were written and compiled. She outlined a variety of divisions of duty and power that challenge theories of a presumed decline of *hime* in the Japanese scholarship. McKay also called for an examination of regional diversity in the study of gendered power structures in ancient Japan, which has been widely overlooked. In conclusion, the presenter rejected the validity of *himehiko* theory as an analytical tool due to its vagueness.

The discussion following Natalie McKay's presentation initially focused on the importance of the disciplinary history of textual studies and gender studies dealing with *himehiko*. Yoshida Kazuhiko agreed with McKay's conclusion, but he also pointed out that criticism of the *himehiko* system has been formulated since the 1970s and 1980s. Another problem concerned the implicit understanding of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as historically accurate chronicles. Both works contain legendary tales. Abe and Chikamoto further emphasized Chinese intellectual influences in seventh- and eighth-century Japanese literature.

Turning the discussion to gender, Andrea Castiglioni wondered whether a binary system of female and male accurately reflects the social reality in Japan at the time. Kobayashi Naoko pointed out that representations of the *hime* and *hiko* relationship have long been romanticized. Here, Kobayashi gave a valuable

overview of the extant literature that elaborates on gender theory in the study of Japanese religions. In sum, the discussion was lively and very well received by the presenter and the audience. McKay later on shared her thoughts on the Seminar as follows:

> Unfortunately, being based in Australia, there are few other scholars studying ancient Japanese history, and few resources available for students of this subject, so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to receive feedback on my research from experts within this specialised field. I was not disappointed with the results, receiving extensive feedback and commentary from many very knowledgeable scholars based on my presentation.

Regarding her role as a presenter, McKay also explained that she gained new confidence in her abilities as a non-native speaker:

> Although frightening at first, I feel that ultimately this was extremely good experience for both my Japanese proficiency and my conference presentation skills, and I feel like it has given me a confidence in presenting in Japanese that will surely come in handy in future academic conferences.

As with many other presenters, McKay showed a tremendous level of Japanese proficiency in her talk on *hime* and *hiko*. It is a dedicated goal of the Nanzan Seminar to enable PhD students to practice their Japanese language skills in conversation with Japanese scholars, and to enable them to experience an actual conference environment.

Mia Tillonen (Hokkaido University) ***Constructing and Contesting the Shrine: The Case of Seimei Shrine, Kyoto***

The final paper of the fifth Nanzan Seminar by Mia Tillonen illuminated the construction and contestation of a popular contemporary Shinto shrine based on ethnographic fieldwork at Seimei Jinja 晴明神社 in Kyoto. The presentation showed how today's Seimei Shrine became a popular tourist destination not only because of its religious heritage but through a connection with popular culture. As part of her PhD project, Tillonen had studied the shrine's material culture, environmental setting, visitor behavior, and the shrine's affiliation with Abe no Seimei (921–1005), introduced by Tillonen as a sorcerer and mystical figure. Abe no Seimei is well-represented in Japanese popular culture, notably through the novel series *Onmyoji* (1986–) and its adaptations in various culture formats. This includes a manga series, a television drama, and a film that boosted Seimei Shrine's popularity following the film's release in 2001. More recently, the shrine has also became a tourist hot spot for fans of figure skater Yuzuru Hanyū,

whose gold-medal-winning 2018 Olympic performance involved music from the *Onmyoji* motion picture.

New technologies have also altered meanings ascribed to shrine practices and the ways that people interact with shrines in Japan today through social media. Following up on her Seminar talk, Mia Tillonen resumed:

> The ubiquity and everydayness of devices such as smartphones have also had their effects on visitor practices as well as the way shrines connect with people. For example, Seimei Shrine frequently uses social media to spread information and to engage visitors with photography campaigns. Besides, the increase in inbound visitors means that Shinto shrines are not just visited by Japanese tourists but people from other countries as well—popular culture and tourism are ways for non-locals to connect with the shrine. These kinds of mediations bound Seimei Shrine and its objects into global networks of meaning and performances.

Since the 2000s, as Tillonen was able to show in her presentation, Seimei Shrine underwent a process of branding in adaptation to visitors' shifting needs. Changing visitor behavior and shifting ascriptions of meaning to the shrine's buildings, material objects, and practices stimulated competition among providers of religious goods. An important observation by the presenter concerned new arenas of conflict that emerged as a result of the shrine's growing popularity through association with Abe no Seimei. At Seimei Shrine, Tillonen argued, different agents are competing for religious legitimacy and authority over the sales of religious objects like talismans. This conflict has since resulted in a public dispute over the authority of the sales and use of amulets on and around Seimei Shrine's grounds. In 2012, Seimei Shrine has even threatened legal action against a nearby souvenir shop for selling amulets with an Abe no Seimei theme.

In sum, Tillonen's inspiring discussion of Seimei Shrine displayed a clear understanding and thorough use of theories of religious tourism and material religion. This reflective use of theory made her work accessible to a broad academic audience, as also the discussion following her presentation at the Nanzan Seminar has shown.

A recurring theme in the discussion of Tillonen's excellent talk concerned historical precedent for the practices that the presenter discussed through the lens of her contemporary view of Seimei Shrine. Iwata, Kobayashi, Chikamoto, and Abe provided valuable insights into the history of tourism and material religion in Japan more broadly. Drawing on her research on mountain religion from the early modern to the contemporary period, Kobayashi Naoko provided poignant examples to demonstrate how interplay between the religious and the recreational, the ludic, and the pragmatic had shaped pilgrimage to the effect



Excursion to Iwayaji 岩屋寺 in Aichi prefecture

that some pilgrimage routes became more popular than others. Here, Kobayashi suggested that Religious Studies sometimes ignores this history by assuming it is a recent phenomenon.

Mia Tillonen has since expanded her scope of research on Seimei Shrine to reach beyond tourism, as she explained after the Seminar:

> In my research, I have focused on the touristic aspect of Seimei Shrine. Tourism, however, is not the only function of the shrine, as it is also the shrine of people living close-by. How has the popularity of the shrine affected the way they engage with the shrine? Who are the people the shrine has to cater to? While Seimei Shrine has become a relatively popular attraction in Kyoto, will its touristification eventually start work against it? These are questions that need further examination.