

REVIEWS



Gaétan Rappo, *Rhétoriques de l'hérésie dans le Japon médiéval et moderne: Le moine Monkan (1278–1357) et sa réputation posthume*

Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017. 498 pages. Paperback, €39.00. ISBN: 9782343088259.

MONKAN 文観 (1278–1357), also known as Shuon 殊音 or Kōshin 弘真, was a Shingon Ritsu monk who worshiped *dākinī* (T 2456, 77.850a14), demonic witches controlling human vital and sexual energy. In the popular imagination, these female spirits were thought to manifest as furry foxes or lascivious courtesans, causing the death of their king by draining his vitality, such as Bao Si 褒姒 in China or Tamamo no Mae 玉藻前 in Japan (MINOBE 1988, 185–205). According to secret Shingon instructions, however, *dākinī* can be powerful allies to ensure health and longevity, especially that of sovereigns, when properly worshiped. Indeed, *dākinī* are said to be in control of the *ninnō* 人黄 (“human yellow”), the condensed form of human life force (IYANAGA 2016), which was alternatively read *ninnō* 人王 (human king) (TZ 5: 252c) or *ninnō* 仁王 (benevolent king) (*Zasshō*). Therefore, the *dākinī* were more relevant for the well-being of kings than for any other person. Moreover, following instructions in various scriptures, it was held in those days that by worshiping foxes one could transform an ordinary man into a sovereign (T 2410, 76.633b25–29). It should therefore not be surprising to know that Monkan’s master, Dōjun 道順 (d. 1322), had integrated the worship of *dākinī* in the liturgy of the imperial enthronement unction ceremony (MATSUMOTO 2005, 64–67).

Monkan himself was especially skilled at manipulating these ambivalent sexual powers because he had inherited the Tachikawa 立川 lineage (*Zoku dentō kōroku*, 456), which specialized in a practice called the “skull ritual” (MORIYAMA 1965). This was a ritual in which a human skull was first empowered by the

magical effect of aphrodisiac frankincense fumes and one-hundred-and-twenty layers of a mix of semen and menstrual blood—implying that one had to do the “act” far more than one hundred and twenty times. Then, the skull was embellished to look almost exactly as the white-faced *onna* 女 (woman) mask of Noh theater, with silver-colored teeth, narrow deep-penetrating eyes, and thin red lips. After carefully keeping the female head warm and nourished for seven years, a practice said to be a type of *ḍākinī* ritual, it would eventually, in the eighth year, commence talking to the practitioner, instructing him into the secrets of the world while fulfilling all his desires. Monkan, empowered by this female spirit—who is, moreover, the manifestation of the celebrated dragon maiden of the *Lotus Sūtra*—did not falter in cursing the military government in Kamakura for four years while praying for the safe “pregnancy” of an imperial consort and felt no fear in donning armor to face hard-boiled samurai warriors when necessary (*Taiheiki*).

The emperor to whom Monkan dedicated his exceptional magical talents, Go Daigo 後醍醐 (1288–1339), likewise did not belong to the meek and faint-hearted. Supported by a mob (*akutō* 悪党) of low-life samurai and outcasts called *hinin* 非人 (nonhumans), this emperor plotted to overthrow the Kamakura Bakufu and eventually succeeded (albeit only temporarily). Monkan, relying on his position as the *primus inter pares* within the esoteric Buddhist establishment, created hundreds of sacred writings and manipulated Shingon doctrines to illustrate that Go Daigo is the reincarnation of the founder of Shingon, Kūkai 空海 (774–835), as well as the embodiment of Kongōsatta 金剛薩埵, the bodhisattva who rediscovered the secrets of esoteric Buddhism from the Iron Tower in India. Monkan and Go Daigo were not alone in believing these thoughts, since the former is said to have had more than two hundred disciples.

The “Monkan” in the above description, to clarify to the inadvertent reader, probably never existed. Yet, if one were to uncritically assemble data on his person and on the subjects he is said to have been acquainted with (such as *ḍākinī* and Tachikawa) from existing sources—such as the *Hōkyōshō*, *Kakuzenshō*, *Zoku dentō kōroku*, *Taiheiki*, and so on—and see this data through the lens of beliefs current in the religious culture of that time, one would easily conclude that this kind of sensational description were true. This constructed image, or “memory,” of Monkan appeals to the imagination and turns him into a “wicked monk” (*yōsō* 妖僧), the “Rasputin” of Japan, whose charismatic mastery of esoteric magic and sexual energy made him one of the most influential characters of his time. That time, the fourteenth century, was one of great and fundamental changes, sometimes defined in scholarship as the true transition from the classical age to the medieval period in Japan.

Until recently, the above description of Monkan would probably not have been considered that remarkable. In fact, a swathe of premodern and modern

works, from Yūkai's 宥快 (1345–1416) *Hōkyōshō* and Yūhō's 祐宝 (1656–1727) *Zoku dentō kōroku* to the books of MIZUHARA (1968), MORIYAMA (1965), and AMINO (1986), to name the most salient examples, have done nothing but perpetuate such an image of this monk. Rather than studying Monkan objectively, it seems these authors were more driven by their own personal agendas and predilections and, perhaps, also a fascination with that alluring concept that is the combination of sex, death, and power.

Recent critical studies on Monkan, the Tachikawa lineage, and fourteenth-century Japan have done much to demystify Monkan's image and place his life in a more objective historical context (IYANAGA 2004; ABE 2013; CONLAN 2011; QUINTER 2015). Special credit is due here to Iyanaga Nobumi, whose insights regarding distinctions between the skull ritual and the Tachikawa lineage have truly been groundbreaking in this area. And now Gaétan Rappo's critical study of Monkan's life, *Rhétoriques de l'hérésie dans le Japon médiéval et moderne*, can be added to the list of new outstanding scholarly achievements that have been produced in the wake of Iyanaga's discoveries.

Besides providing a beacon through the swamp of hagiographical fantasies and unfounded judgments surrounding Monkan, Rappo's book also gives insight into the processes, running from premodern to modern times, which led to Monkan being characterized as a monk who espoused heretical views. The purpose of the study, as the author himself underscores, is not to reinstate Monkan's reputation but to analyze the trappings of historiography and of the study of "heresy," a notion that is always enmeshed with prejudices of given time and place. In doing so, Rappo has produced not only a polished image of Monkan, whose life and achievements still stand out as quite extraordinary even after the removal of all posterior unfounded accruments, but he also illustrates that the notion of "heresy" in a medieval Japanese context has to be clearly distinguished from that in the West, despite showing a number of apparent similarities.

Although focusing on this important Shingon Ritsu monk, the book is also a profound study of Shingon history and doctrine. The work is the first volume in a two-volume project—the second volume is currently being edited—which will highlight Monkan's extensive esoteric Buddhist doctrinal system. Traditionally, due to an uncritical reading of the sources smearing his name, scholars at best simply ignored Monkan, or at worst denigrated him as a wicked character involved in black magic and aberrant sexual practices. It hardly occurred to previous scholars that Monkan had, in fact, been one of the most important figures in the development of orthodox Shingon doctrine.

In some broad explanations of Shingon it is sometimes stated that its doctrine did not change significantly until the emergence of Kakuban 覚鑿 (1095–1144), the founder of the Shingi 新義 branch of the school, after which few doctrinal developments have ensued. This view is, of course, oversimplified, as multiple

important changes did occur in Shingon's intricate esoteric system. Owing to the work of Abe Yasurō, it has become clear that Monkan had been a prolific writer and a creative systematizer of Shingon thought. His texts, the full scope of which has just begun to be reconstituted and analyzed, may, in fact, be regarded as the crown of medieval Shingon esotericism. Indeed, after Monkan it is hard to pinpoint a Shingon monk who had an equal impact on doctrinal matters, except perhaps Yūkai, Monkan's fiercest critic. Rappo's study builds on these achievements and the result is a work that, together with the second volume, will serve as an important basis for any researcher interested in the history of medieval Shingon Buddhism.

Rappo's book, while sweeping away many uncertainties about Monkan's life and achievements, also gives rise to new questions, which is of course one of the book's merits. Indeed, having a clearer and more objective picture of Monkan now enables the future researcher to make better assessments of his place in the history of Shingon. Rappo's study unveils a Monkan who had been instrumental in furthering Go Daigo's project, initiated by his father, Go Uda 後宇多 (1267–1324), to bring a fragmented Shingon under tighter imperial control. In this process, Monkan, who had inherited the teachings of one of the Ono lineages based at Daigoji 醍醐寺, reworked various Shingon doctrines and beliefs to enhance the legitimacy of Go Daigo's Southern court. At the same time, Kenshun 賢俊 (1299–1357), head of a rival Ono lineage at Daigoji, served the Ashikaga-controlled Northern court with his own version of esoteric Buddhist secrets. This quite complex historical situation has recently been investigated by Thomas CONLAN (2011), who defined the fourteenth century as an "age of ritual determinism": that is, an era in which ritual knowledge, especially of Shingon, was the decisive element behind the legitimation of power.

An important question in need of investigation in this regard, as Brian RUPPERT (2013) has suggested in his review of Conlan's book, is to what extent the situation of Shingon ritualism in the fourteenth century had been "different" from previous ages. Indeed, already at the end of the eleventh century Shingon Buddhism had become deeply involved with the legitimation of imperial power. Emperor Shirakawa 白河 (1053–1129) did much to unify the school under the imperial banner by placing the figure of the *omuro* 御室 (abbot of imperial descent) of Ninnaji 仁和寺 at the head of Shingon (YOKOUCHI 2008, 19–61). After Shirakawa, the *omuro* would be further promoted to the position of *sōhōmu* 総法務, the head administrator of the office of monastic affairs, thus *de facto* becoming the head of the entire Buddhist establishment. Interestingly enough, while recognizing Ninnaji's superior position, Shirakawa had personally entrusted an Ono-branch monk trained at Daigoji named Hanjun 範俊 (1038–1112), an act that was replicated by Go Uda and Go Daigo two centuries later. A major difference is that there is no indication that before Go Uda an emperor had

been initiated into Shingon or performed esoteric rites. Nonetheless, there are many points in common between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries in terms of Shingon's connections to imperial power. Therefore, it remains to be investigated how exactly the Shingon doctrines and rituals promoted by such monks as Monkan and Kenshun differed in terms of content and function from earlier ages. There is still much work to be done to clarify Shingon development from the late eleventh to the fourteenth century. Rappo's study of Monkan proves to be crucial in dealing with such pivotal historical issues.

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- TZ *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō zuzō* 大正新修大藏經圖像. 12 vols. Takakusu Junjirō and Ono Genmyō 小野玄妙, eds. Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1932–1934.

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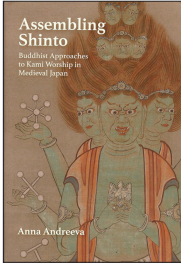
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Anna Andreeva, *Assembling Shinto: Buddhist Approaches to Kami Worship in Medieval Japan*

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017. 420 pages. Hardcover, \$49.95. ISBN: 978-0-67-497057-1.

EVER SINCE the groundbreaking and pioneering work of Kuroda Toshio in the 1970s and 1980s, scholars of Japanese religions have accepted the notion that before the fifteenth century Shinto was not an autonomous, independent, and self-conscious tradition that was clearly separate from Buddhism. Rather, it was found in combinatory and amalgamative interactions with Buddhism. With the emergence of Yoshida Shinto, Kuroda noted the first instance of a Shinto movement that saw itself as non-Buddhist and purified of foreign elements. For Kuroda, the constellations of praxis and dogma of premodern Shinto were subsumed under the exoteric-esoteric system (*kenmitsu taisei*), largely spearheaded by the *kenmon taisei* system of ruling elites and undergirded by esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*). While there have been many studies on Shinto in recent years, Kuroda Toshio's paradigm remains unchallenged, with the exception of a few minor criticisms. Moreover, the idea that Shinto was just an extension of Buddhism in premodern times made its theoretical and practical boundaries confusing for many, not to mention a *terra incognita* for scholars of modern Japan.

Anna Andreeva's new study on medieval kami-buddha interactions in the ancient cultic site of Mt. Miwa, *Assembling Shinto: Buddhist Approaches to Kami Worship in Medieval Japan*, echoes Kuroda's understanding that Shinto is "the worship of kami based on the concepts and practices of Esoteric Buddhism" (4). As Andreeva puts it, the "book offers a case study through which the key stages of 'assemblage' (that is, the process of assembling) and the medieval pedigree of Ryōbu Shinto, a major forerunner to modern Shinto, ought to become clear" (5). In fact, Andreeva's coverage of Shinto is wider than "Ryōbu," and she expands the focus of the book to include documents produced by Miwa-related personalities that laid the foundation for the latter medieval Miwa-lineage movement. The Miwa lineage was concerned with a wide array of doctrinal engagements, including, but not limited to, Buddhist ideas on the *Yugikyō* and *Rishukyō* scriptures (bound together by devotional worship of Aizen Myōō), esoteric conceptions of "enlightenment in this very body," as well as kami-centered objects and rituals such as the three regalia (*sanshu no jingi*) and esoteric kami consecration rites (*jinji kanjō*). Through the trope of "assemblage," Andreeva challenges the idea of a monolithic and stable Shinto tradition and argues that it was

formulated through dynamic interaction between different groups. Here, Andreeva goes beyond Kuroda's idea that it was merely Buddhist functionaries that shaped medieval Shinto and paints a much more complex picture: it was the interaction "between different agents and institutions and multiple strands of religious thought and practice" (15) that assembled medieval Shinto.

Andreeva shows that before the end of the twelfth century, kami were often understood as manifestations of transcendental buddhas as part of the *honji suijaku* doctrine. By the end of the twelfth century, the kami were understood to epitomize ignorance, but, at the same time, would be used as vehicles for attaining Buddhist awakening. Then, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, perhaps the most illuminating part of the book, ideas about the kami began to expand and became increasingly mobile. According to Andreeva, during this period new forms of kami worship were devised, not only in elite temples or shrines such as Mt. Hiei or Mt. Kōya but also in Miwa Shrine, a seemingly neglected establishment in the Yamato basin. Andreeva's research demonstrates that, contrary to what scholars may think, the Miwa Shrine, and especially the private Buddhist facility (*bessho*) on Mt. Miwa, served a crucial role in the production and dissemination of knowledge and rituals concerning kami by casting them in an esoteric framework. These developments stand as a backdrop to the rise of Miwa Shinto as an eclectic gathering of Buddhist-Shinto teachings and rituals that evolved well into the early modern period.

Miwa was part of a vast network of temple-shrines where eminent monks hailing from various backgrounds, such as Eison (1201–1290) and the Saidaiji movement he spearheaded, would often visit. Yet, it was actually lesser-known religious figures who were active in the creation of kami-buddha knowledge. These were institutionally unaffiliated figures, such as mountain ascetics (*shugen*), holy men (*hijiri*), and other itinerant religious specialists. They developed kami theories and rituals at Miwa, and it is very likely that later on such ideas were carried on into elite temples. *Assembling Shinto* suggests that Miwa was not a final destination in these popular routes of pilgrimage and travel. It was a node, albeit in a complicated and major network. In short, the book demonstrates that the nodes of a religious network were just as important as the primary sites. Andreeva's network-theory-driven approach is unique; she provides a decentered account of an oft-overlooked religious space, which serves as a case study for the complex interweaving of kami-buddha concepts that took place throughout the medieval era. It highlights the interstitial quality of Shinto, as being formed through constant dialogue, negotiation, and sometimes conflict.

Since several book reviews were already published about this monograph, and most of them offer a succinct summary of the book's arguments, I will touch upon a few aspects worthy of mention. First of all, it is important to note that *Assembling Shinto* is the first ever monograph published on the study of the Miwa

lineage. There are no other books dedicated to this religious phenomenon, apart from edited volumes in Japanese and collections of primary sources. In this regard, the book is an achievement on an international scale. Moreover, Andreeva's breadth of sources is impressive. Most of the documents were borrowed from well-known archival sites such as Kanazawa Bunko at Shōmyōji in Kanagawa, Shinpukuji in Osu Kannon, Nagoya, and many other institutions. Andreeva conducts a major portion of her research on handwritten primary sources from a variety of temple repositories and archives across Japan, also incorporating iconological analysis to her work. Additionally, Andreeva's investigation and theoretical discussions are driven by philological rigor and an acute attention to theological considerations. For example, she identifies the importance of certain religious concepts, such as original enlightenment thought and *sokushin jōbutsu*, Buddhist ideas that carried increasing weight in the development of doctrines in which ignorance (*mumyō*) was harnessed in order to trigger enlightenment under the guise of kami theology.

If there is any issue with the book, it is the fact that it can be too successful in revealing how multifarious, site-specific, and ultimately ambiguous Shinto is. Readers may accept too readily that "Shinto should be understood as multiple attempts to invent its meaning depending on the specific historical circumstances" (303) without always fully comprehending all the complexities discussed throughout the book. The contours of Shinto are still blurry, and many questions are left unanswered. If much of the kami-buddha discourse is centered on the cult of Ise, then why was Miwa, an old rival, mobilized in its favor? Moreover, the network model, while raising new perspectives on Miwa, also raises questions about the degree of Miwa's prominence in the development of Shinto. Considering the substantial attention paid to Ise's worship of Amaterasu and its appropriation of the double mandalas as pervasive elements of medieval religiosity, this reader cannot help but wonder about the influence of other sites and especially the *kenmon* institutions more commonly studied. Additionally, while the *Miwa daimyōjin engi* indicates that the Miwa deity achieved the prominent symbolic role of a supreme deity, how can we be sure that this status was not limited to Miwa-related establishments? After all, Miwa did not enjoy the same geographical spread in Japan like other deities such as Hachiman, Amaterasu, Inari, and Sannō. It is likely that the book will not put to rest the many controversies involving the study of Shinto, but its insights provide new directions for reexamining the central issues that lie at the heart of Japanese religion. These quibbles aside, this is by far one of the best studies on kami-buddha interactions, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to scholars in the field of Japanese Studies.

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