



Yoshida Kazuhiko 吉田一彦, ed., *Shinbutsu yūgō no Higashi Ajia shi* 神仏融合の東アジア史

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THIS IMPRESSIVE tome sets itself the task of reinvestigating the “amalgamation of [local] gods with Buddhism” (*shinbutsu yūgō*) from a new perspective. Where the bulk of Japanese research into this topic has limited itself to Japan, often with the underlying assumption that such amalgamation is a unique feature of Japanese religious history, Yoshida and his team seek to show that Japanese developments need to be understood in their larger East Asian context. Central ideas and practices that integrated the Japanese gods in Buddhism, this book argues, derived from China and Korea, and the Japanese situation can be usefully compared with similar forms of amalgamation in other countries in the wider Sinosphere.

To give substance to this reinvestigation, the book is organized in four sections. The first two deal with China and other parts of the Sinitic cultural sphere, while the latter two address Japan, through case studies in section three and in the form of chronological overviews in section four. These chapters, eighteen in total and authored by sixteen different authors, are very rich and contain a wealth of information about a wide range of topics, drawing on a broad spectrum of disciplines. Before discussing how these eighteen studies add up, it will be useful to give a brief overview.

Before jumping into section one, Sone Masato reminds us of the “polytheistic” nature of the Indian Buddhism that entered China. Already in early scriptures (for example, Buddhaghosa’s *Commentary on the Dhammapada*), gods feature as karmic beings who show an active interest in the Buddha’s preaching, while the Buddha, too, was at times seen as an emanation of Vishnu. In Chinese Buddhist sites, from the Dunhuang caves to the temple complexes on Mount Wutai and Mount Tiantai, Buddhist figures mixed with deities and other reverent beings of various backgrounds: Daoist, Confucian, or purely local. From the start, therefore, gods of many kinds were an integral element of Buddhist doctrine and practice.

This point is concretized further in the chapters of section one. Arami Hiroshi sketches the development of key concepts for divine beings that were much used in Chinese translations of Buddhist texts: *tian*, *shen*, and *fo*. Takai Ryū analyzes two Dunhuang texts, both from the tenth century, that display obvious

Confucian influence. Dunhuang monastic teachers impressed on their students that the Dharmas of King and Buddha are interdependent, and exhorted them to pass the civil service examination and assist the imperial government; this shows that the Buddhist community was actively embracing Confucian ideas. Takashi Midori focuses on Chinese rites for the spirits of the dead, notably the *shuilu hui* (water and land rites), which first developed during the Song dynasty. Takashi introduces samples from the rich pictorial record associated with the *shuilu hui*, featuring images of the Five Hundred Arhats and the Ten Kings. Practices for the dead, including popular rituals corresponding to the Japanese Obon and *segaki*, served as crossroads where divine beings, spirits, and ritualists of different backgrounds mixed and mingled. Mizukoshi Tomo offers another example from this same ritual complex, in the form of *cemiao* ancestral shrines in the Ming and Qing periods. By this time, Yanluo and the Ten Kings had largely been replaced by city deities (*chenghuang shen*) as the judges of the local dead. In city shrines, designed to resemble local government offices and replete with images of the kind explored by Takashi, local scholars as well as Buddhist and Daoist ritualists preached about reincarnation into various realms and performed rites to secure desirable rebirths for their patrons' family dead.

Section two explores “local developments of amalgamation in East Asia” in four chapters. Fujiwara Takato takes us to the Khitan dynasty of Liao (916–1125), using the *History of Liao* to analyze the initial integration and later separation of a rite of bodhisattva worship in that dynasty's grandest ceremony, “worship on Mount [Muye]” (*jishan yi*). Fujiwara argues that the separation under Emperor Xingzong (r. 1016–1055) was the result of a strengthening of Buddhism, both as a faith and as a mark of political authority. Ōnishi Kazuhiko shows how Daoism and Buddhism formed an integrated system in Vietnam from the eleventh century onwards, continuing until recent efforts to create a “purer” Buddhism. Among his examples are documented cases of Daoist ritualists and female shamans performing rites of Quán Âm (Kannon) worship at the house temples of court nobles in the fifteenth century. Matsumoto Kōichi and Nikaidō Yoshihiro take us to Taiwan and Malaysia, providing further examples of the natural integration of Daoist, Buddhist, and local deities in Chinese temples and practices in these places. Nikaidō concludes by questioning whether the concept of “amalgamation” is an apt way to describe the natural “coexistence” (*heizon*) of deities, ritualists, and teachings that (in theory), people realize have different backgrounds.

Section three consists of four case studies from Japan weighted towards the classical period. Yoshida Kazuhiko takes up accounts of En no Gyōja in *Shoku Nihongi* and *Nihon ryōiki*, noting that this legendary figure was portrayed as a Daoist master in the former, and as a Buddhist specialist in Peacock King practices in the latter. In the examined tales En no Gyōja “binds” the deity Hitokotonushi with the help of esoteric methods. Yoshida contrasts “Chinese” narratives

of deities seeking deliverance from their karmic state as deities with “Indian” tales of hostile deities that need to be subdued, or even killed, by force—a generalization that is at odds with Sone’s argument in chapter 1, that both of these deity types were prevalent also in China.

Takahashi Sakiko’s chapter discusses changes in the iconography of Jiten under the influence of Japanese images of “female deities” (for example, a ninth-century image of Jingū Kōgō kept at Nara’s Yakushiji). Seki Shin’ya addresses the development of *garanshin*, guardian deities of Buddhist temples. Both in China and in Japan, there was a shift in the nature of these guardian deities, from Indian gods and prelates related to the origins of Buddhism, to local deities of various kinds. In Japan, this shift had already occurred in the late eighth century. The practice of importing foreign guardian deities, like Ennin’s Sekizan Myōjin or Enchin’s Shinra Myōjin, failed to develop into a widespread pattern. A list of eighteen guardian deities (from the sutra *Shichibutsu hachibosatsu shosetsu daidarani shinjukyō*) features both in temple documents (for example, at Onjōji), in oaths, and even in modern folklore, but most Buddhist complexes adopted local deities of Japanese origin, such as the Hie deities (Enryakuji), Niu and Kōya Myōjin (Kōyasan), and Kasuga (Kōfukuji).

For me, the most exciting chapter in this section is by Matsuo Kōichi. Matsuo explores the interactions between Chinese cults of Mazu as they manifested themselves in Chinese temples in Nagasaki; worship of Guanyin as Mazu’s “original source”; and the use by covert Christian groups of Dehua porcelain Guanyin images imported to Japan. Completing the circle, Matsuo points out that Chinese forms of Guanyin associated with Mary (Byakue Kannon, Jibo Kannon) were likely influenced by Western iconography. His account conjures up a network of haphazard relations between practices and objects from both sides of the East China Sea, all testifying to similar tendencies of combining divine figures from various backgrounds into powerful compound objects of worship.

The fourth and final section sums up the latest findings concerning *shinbutsu yūgō* in the classical and medieval periods. Yoshida Kazuhiko focuses on the Buddhist “taming” of local deities as guardians of Buddhism (*gohō zenshin, chinju*) in the Nara and Heian periods. He stresses the impact of the Chinese notion that local deities seek liberation from their karmic state, by identifying the building of shrine temples (*jingūji*), the offering of Buddhist services to the gods, and the appointment of monks tasked with such services as proof of this notion’s decisive influence. In contrast to Chinese (and Korean) examples of this idea, however, Japanese deities were never liberated from their kami status. Rather than liberation, the purpose of the Buddhist attention they received was to render them stronger and more receptive to the prayers of their worshipers. In the next chapter, Sekiyama Maiko follows up on this argument by pointing out that while founding documents of shrine temples have kami admitting that they

have committed “sins” (*zaigō*, *tsumi*) in a previous life, those sins are rarely made explicit. Rather than focusing on the gods’ deliverance, Japanese accounts focus on the gods’ capacity to cause calamities if their wishes are not heard. Sekiyama contrasts this to tales in the Korean *Samguk yusa*, where similar episodes end with the death (or, in other words, the liberation from karmic existence) of local deities.

Uejima Susumu, on the other hand, casts doubt on the influence of the notion that gods seek Buddhist deliverance. He argues that while such tales may have appealed to monks, they had little or no impact on actual kami ritual and thus can hardly be regarded as a sign of “amalgamation.” In his view, the integration of kami in Buddhism did not begin until much later, with the development of the *honji suijaku* paradigm, which sees deities as local emanations of Buddhist beings. This paradigm originated in the tenth century, after the rebellion of Taira no Masakado (939–940), which provided a boost to kami worship and inspired the development of the system of court offerings to twenty-two shrines. It was at this time that Buddhist services for the kami were moved to the shrine precincts themselves. Subsequent centuries saw the spread of the notion that the gods embody the mercy of the buddhas (*wakō dōjin*), soon leading to the identification of gods as “traces” of particular buddhas. In the final chapter, Itō Satoshi traces the emergence of theories that see the buddhas as emanations of Japanese kami. This view arose first in the vicinity of the Ise shrines (as attested in the late-twelfth-century *Nakatomi harae kunge*), where Amaterasu was identified as the Dharma-body of Dainichi from which all existence arises. Itō traces the development of this universalistic idea into the particularistic, Japanocentric notions that Japan is the Land of Origin, and that Shinto is both older and superior to Buddhism.

Reaching the end of this volume, we need to ask ourselves whether the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and whether this project succeeds in renewing understandings of “amalgamation” by bringing in perspectives from other parts of East Asia. As the book’s editor, Yoshida seeks to encapsulate such a new understanding in his proposed new term, *shinbutsu yūgō*, which is used in all chapters instead of the established *shinbutsu shūgō*. In the introduction, Yoshida argues that the term *shūgō*, which came into general use under the influence of Yoshida Shinto, has particular ideological implications, defining Buddhist forms of Shinto (*ryōbu shūgō shintō*) as inferior and less pure than the “original” Shinto transmitted by the Yoshida lineage (11). The combination *shinbutsu shūgō* was first used in the latter half of the Meiji period, retrospectively describing the impure syncretism of medieval and early modern times (680–681). It is therefore bound up with the project of restoring the pure imperial Shinto that, presumably, existed in ancient Japan. Even the work of Tsuji Zennosuke, whose paradigm has dominated our understanding of the development of what Tsuji

called *shinbutsu shūgō*, was a direct (critical) response to the forced separation of Shinto from Buddhism, which Tsuji saw as an act of cultural vandalism.

Is it helpful, however, to replace the term *shinbutsu shūgō* with *shinbutsu yūgō*, and is the latter term a suitable tool for the study of parallel processes beyond Japan? Yoshida argues that this is possible if *shinbutsu* is taken to mean not Shinto and Buddhism (as in *shinbutsu shūgō*), but rather “local deities [of all kinds] and Buddhism” (674). In actual practice, however, it is clear that most authors in sections one and two of this volume struggle to apply this new term to their material. There are two reasons for this. First, *shinbutsu yūgō* assumes that there was a time when local deities were not integrated in Buddhism, which as both Sone and Yoshida himself point out, is not really the case. The Meiji separation of Shinto and Buddhism has created a Japanese reality where it appears natural for kami to be separate from Buddhism and vice versa; what needs explaining is not their present state of isolation from each other (at least on a theoretical level), but rather their past integration. In view of the fact that acts of “anti-syncretism by force” like the Meiji separation are so rare in East Asia, it would appear to me that in this cultural setting integration has been far more natural than isolation.

The second problem with the term *shinbutsu yūgō* is that it assumes that Buddhism is dominant, and that the main direction of amalgamation occurs by integration of local deity cults into universal Buddhism. However, in most East Asian contexts, variants of Daoism, Confucianism, and also Christianity and Islam complicate the picture, as many of the chapters in this book demonstrate. In Japan, too, a bipolar *shin* versus *butsu* scheme has severe limitations. In his conclusion, Yoshida argues that “after the Ōnin war” Japan entered a “religious situation where such a bipolar understanding no longer gives us the full picture” (678); this is why section four ends in the fifteenth century. It is true that Buddhism enjoyed supremacy in the centuries before that 1467–1477 war, but even then, surely “amalgamation” was more multidirectional and complicated than a *shinbutsu* model can handle. Already in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, deities from very different cultic backgrounds were “amalgamated” in new myths and rituals. The twenty-two shrines of the Heian period displayed amalgamation not only between kami and buddhas, but also gave prominence to deities of various origins; Kyoto’s Gionsha, for example, enshrined a Deva King from India with his family, Chinese star deities associated with calendrical and directional taboos, and a Yakushi triad. In medieval sources, Amaterasu was associated not just with one corresponding Buddha, but with a plethora of divine figures, from lowly foxes, via star deities and Deva Kings, to the ultimate dharma body of the entire Buddhist cosmos.

Writing about premodern Japan, Yoshida presents this complicated network as a meeting between two “religions”: Buddhism and the *jingi* cult (*jingi saishi*).

It is clear, however, that there is no clash here of religious identities, or even of religious worldviews, but rather a layering of images, practices, ideas, and rituals that was perhaps not seamless, but that was certainly perceived as natural and conceptually cohesive. Perhaps instances where this cohesion was questioned, or even condemned as impure and inauthentic, are as worthy of study as the “emergence” of amalgamation, which, after all, was almost ubiquitous.

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