
Royall TYLER, *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity*. Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies Number 98. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. xv + 314 pp. Line drawings (including 3 maps), bibliography, index. Cloth \$47.50; ISBN 0-231-06958-8.

Susan C. TYLER, *The Cult of Kasuga Seen through Its Art*. Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies Number 8. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992. xv + 215 pp. 47 monochrome plates on 24 pages, 5 maps, bibliography, index. Cloth \$39.95; ISBN 0-939512-47-5.

Some years ago I attended one of those overfunded conferences perennially convened to consider the current status of Japanese studies in the world, the course of future research and pedagogy, the existence of God, and the ultimate meaning of life. The pundits generally agreed that since most of the major monuments of Japanese literature had already been translated, scholars should turn their attention to issues of contemporary aesthetic theory and comparative analysis. And, indeed, within the past decade or so we have witnessed occasional displays of critical pyrotechnics as well as fairly successful

attempts to impose a new methodological order on the study of Japanese literature, reinforced by conference rhetoric, program requirement changes, and the redirection of graduate student goals and expectations.

Nevertheless, the foundation of most of what we publish continues to be, in one form or another, the “annotated translation” – however much that pedestrian activity may be disdained by the new arbiters of literary value. Fortunately, many of the newer translations are of so-called “minor” works. If a tradition’s major compositions are its literary warp, its lesser writings are its woof – less important structurally, but necessary if the literary tapestry is to be a colorful fabric rather than a bare collection of threads. Like Tamakazura’s romances, they “fill in the details.”

Thus, to my great delight, Royall Tyler unabashedly notifies us on the second page of his introduction to *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity* that “this book is a study of the text of *Kasuga Gongen genki*. It comprises eight chapters on the *Genki* and its world, and a fully annotated translation of the *Genki*’s stories.” It provides an excellent focus for his study of the Kasuga Shrine and its associated Buddhist temple, the Kōfuku-ji – both of major historical importance – and it provides the basis for what is, in the end, much more than the translation of a minor literary work.

The *Kasuga Gongen genki* examined here is a twenty-scroll *emakimono* from 1309 now in the Imperial Household Collection. Royall Tyler’s *Miracles* deals with the textual sections of this work; Susan Tyler, in *The Cult of Kasuga Seen through Its Art*, discusses the illustrations that accompany the text, along with a number of other related items of Kasuga art. The preface to the original work indicates that the paintings were the work of Takashina Takakane (fl. 1309–1330), that the stories were compiled by the Kōfuku-ji monk Kakuen (1277–1340) and two advisors, and that the dedication of the artifact to the Kasuga Shrine was written by Saionji Kinbara (1264–1315). R. Tyler lists (pp. 20–22) six known copies of the *Genki*, with a number of textual variations.

Situated at the foot of Mt Mikasa in Nara, Kasuga is the tutelary shrine of the Fujiwara, a clan whose members dominated the literary, religious, and political activities of the nation for over a millennium. Yet how many students of Japanese history would recognize the names of the clan deities (*ujigami*) venerated in the four major shrines: Takemikazuchi, Iwainushi (or Futsunushi), Amenokoyane, and Himegami, with Wakamiya at the detached fifth sanctuary? Most of us are impressionistically aware of the Japanese creation myths, of Izanagi and Izanami, of the fracas between Amaterasu and Susa-no-o, of Hachiman’s association with the Minamoto, and of the curious Inari fox cult. Beyond this, I suspect that we pay little attention to the details of Shinto mythology. But given the importance of place in the Japanese mind-set and the significance of the *ujigami* as representative of particular places and of families who trace their lineage to specific regions, might not scholars profit by considering the tutelary gods of the family second in importance only to the imperial clan? Who can tell when some improbable detail might become a major clue to the solution of a problem.

R. Tyler’s introduction to the *Genki* translation discusses in detail both the traditional and modern accounts of the founding of the shrine. The earliest

traditional date is 768, when the major deity, Takemikazuchi, was moved from Kashima in Hitachi Province to Mt Mikasa in order to be made more accessible to the new capital at Nara. Next was Futsunushi, with whom Takemikazuchi is associated and even confused in the early myths about Amaterasu and the Heavenly Rock Cave. The deity of the Third Sanctuary, Amenokoyane, traditionally recognized as the ancestor of the Fujiwara clan, in time assumed increasing importance, “though it is not entirely clear why” (p. 48). Some readers may wonder, as I did, which of the five major or assorted minor deities is referred to when *the* Kasuga deity is mentioned. R. Tyler helpfully explains that “the five tended to merge into an undifferentiated power or presence: Kasuga no Daimyōjin” (p. 90), although “Takemikazuchi has always been the ranking presence at Kasuga” (p. 43).

Of the 135 pages of *Genki* translation, only about sixty are required for the text itself, the rest being given over to detailed annotations and a scattering of line drawings. Since the text consists of ninety-three sections that provide either the explanation, or the occasion, for the same number of pictures comprising the scroll—Tyler organizes them into seventy-two numbered tales—Kakuen and his advisors had little opportunity to develop sustained episodes; and so, predictably, most of the stories are less than spellbinding. After briefly describing the founding of the shrine, they relate various miraculous events associated with the Kasuga/Kōfuku-ji Shinto-Buddhist complex, including an inordinate number which extol the merits of the Hossō sect’s main scripture, the *Jōyūshikiron* [Completion of Mere Ideation, T. #1585]. Dreams abound. The longer and more interesting items are perhaps those nearest in time to the people who compiled the work, especially the widely known series of episodes associated with Kegon’s Myōe (Kōben, 1173–1232), and his friend, Hossō’s Gedatsu (Jōkei, 1155–1213). It is interesting to note, however, that the work contains not a word about many issues now considered central to the age, such as Myōe’s and Gedatsu’s outspoken opposition to the “sole-practice” *senju nenbutsu* movement initiated by Hōnen in 1175. Nor, in this 1309 work, is any attention paid to such historically important figures as Eisai (Yōsai), Dōgen, Shinran, Ippen, or Nichiren. On the other hand, Kakuen does consider a current land-jurisdiction dispute involving the Kōfuku-ji as worth explaining and illustrating for posterity. Why did the gods and Buddhas of Kasuga/Kōfuku-ji manifest no signs either of approval or displeasure at what we see today as the Kamakura Buddhist reformation? Did they even know about it?

The *Genki* does provide Tyler with a useful focus. As a kind of bonus, he has thrown in a translation of *Sakakiba no nikki* (The *sakaki* leaf diary, 1366), a short devotional exercise by the noted literary figure Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388). But for most readers the work will be valuable mainly as a carefully researched reference to many facets of Kasuga, the eminent religious and historical monument. I welcome even those details that Tyler himself, in a moment of fatigue, refers to as “tedious” (p. 191). They are the fruits of good, honest work. Royall Tyler has given us an outstanding book, and none of it is superfluous.

In describing the reasons for the relative neglect of such works as the *Genki*, R. Tyler raises an issue which deserves our thoughtful consideration quite

beyond its relevance to this particular writing: the tendency to Balkanize academic disciplines into narrow autonomous regions that rarely communicate with each other. Among the unfortunate results of this often arbitrary compartmentalization is the fact that items which do not fit neatly into one or another of the prescribed areas of history, art, Buddhology, or (Western) philosophy, often get lost in a no-man's-land between the borders.

The *Genki*, for example, is usually classed in the genre of literature known as *engi*, of which few examples can be found in Western translation. The index and page 2 render the term as “origin legends,” and elsewhere the reasons for this English equivalent are explained in relation to the word's etymology as the “Sino-Japanese translation of the Sanskrit *pratītya-samutpāda* (“co-dependent origination”),” although some Japanese scholars apparently disagree with this derivation. But Tyler then points out that *Miracles*, like other examples of the genre, is not really about the “origins” of the Kasuga Shrine at all. Indeed, the *engi* classification is still not generally recognized by historians of literature, and “the status of the *Genki* as an *engi* remains unclear” (p. 41). Beyond this, he feels that it might well be classified as a *setsuwa*.

Terminological ambivalence is a major industry in Japanese literary studies. We are reminded with every new book on *otogizōshi*, for example, that the term does not mean “nursery tales” but perhaps “companion books” (after the title of an Edo printed collection), but that since this equivalent is not very instructive, perhaps we should just refer to them broadly as “short stories of the Muromachi period” – which is, however, a vague explanation rather than an English equivalent. (Were *all* Muromachi short stories *otogizōshi*?) I have myself been roundly admonished by an anonymous manuscript reader for referring to *setsuwa* as “tale literature,” although the reader predictably did not suggest a viable alternative. Then there are the questions of whether Noh is “drama,” Saikaku's writings are “novels,” and so on.

Tyler is skittish about what to include under *engi*, and even what to call it, though with the *Genki* he has certainly earned the right to propose a standard English equivalent. He might, for example, consider bending the etymology of *engi* somewhat to something like “events arising depending on past and current conditions” – hence, perhaps, “traditions,” or “affairs.” We could then speak of, say, the *Shigisan engi* as *Traditions of Mt Shigi*, which sidesteps the issue of “origins” and which provides a rubric under which the *Genki* could easily fit. In any case, let us hope we can soon decide on an English equivalent for *engi* comprehensive enough to spare us the dodging and weaving encountered in all too many Japanese classification systems.

Students of literature will welcome the discussion of the shrine's *utamakura* (the place names used in poetry), an area still awaiting some patient, meticulous scholar to prepare a fat reference dictionary in English. Kasuga references to landscape, meadow, and mountain (pp. 127–39) are carefully explained. But since, as Tyler notes (p. 129), there are some six hundred Kasuga-related poems listed in the *Heian waka utamakura shimei sakuin* alone, only a few examples could be cited (p. 129). Footfalls echo in the memory. During Tyler's discussion of the goddesses of spring and autumn, I kept hearing “Miwataseba,” the Meiji adaptation of Rousseau's tune (“Go Tell Aunt Rosie,” in the Burl Ives

version) in which first Saho-hime weaves the cherry blossoms and green willows into the brocade of spring; and, in the second verse, Tatsuta-hime fashions the colored maple leaves into the brocade of autumn.

Susan C. Tyler's *The Cult of Kasuga Seen through Its Art* is every bit as fascinating as the literary-focused *Miracles*, approaching Kasuga as "a model of a *honji-suijaku* cult, as it existed at its height in the twelfth to mid-fourteenth centuries, particularly in relation to Shinto" (p. 185). There is less overlap between the two works than one might expect. The prospective reader should note that, as the title indicates, this is primarily a study of the Kasuga cult through its artistic manifestations, not an art discussion on costuming and media. As such, its monochrome illustrations are quite adequate to the argument, and are included to remind the reader of graphic details which he may wish to explore at his leisure in those large expensive quarto volumes devoted to collections of art.¹ The focus is not the written text but a coherent thread of ritual thought and behavior. Tyler explains her strategy in her introduction more succinctly than I could hope to:

The chapters that follow are arranged to give the easiest possible access to the material. They are not comprehensive, but I hope that they are clear. The book begins with a description of the importance of Kasuga in poetry and art and a survey of the range of artistic documents used in the following chapters. The next four chapters are divided to conform to categories of paintings, with the intention of providing a deep reading of the meaning of each type of painting as well as a description of a facet of the cult of Kasuga. Thus, in chapter 2 there is a description of a *miya mandara*, the shrine landscape and its meaning; in chapter 3, a description of the *Kashima dachi mandara* and of the founding of the Shrine, and so on. The second part of the book, from chapters 7 through 10, builds on material that has been introduced and presents different ways in which Kasuga functioned as a paradise. Each chapter is formed around research that began with particular works of art. Growing intimacy with the material made the matter of the choice of the *honji butsu* become more and more worthy of interest as a key to the meaning of the cult to those who practiced it. In chapter 8 the value of Kannon (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) as

¹ Nevertheless, I was a bit disappointed that although the scroll is described as "one of the major artistic achievements of the Kamakura period" (*Miracles*, pp. 1–2), neither study presents even a single example of the original illustrations. While the line drawings reproduced by Susan Tyler are nicely executed and adequately accompany the translation of the text, a single fragment reproduced in color would have been helpful in giving the reader a realistic sense of the original pictures, especially since modern printed examples of the scroll tend to be monochrome photographs (at best) in general surveys such as OKUDAIRA'S *Emakimono* (1966), translated as *Narrative Picture Scrolls* (1973), or KAGEYAMA'S *The Arts of Shinto* (1973). Few readers are likely to trek to their local university library in the hope that something better will be on the shelves. But I did, and there was. I can assure the reader that the color version is much more impressive that I had expected from having seen sketches and monochromes.

a *honji butsu* is stressed, and in chapter 9, the value of Shaka (Skt. Śākyamuni). Chapter 10 concludes the main body of the work and presents both the complexity in the background of the choice of *honji butsu* and a final statement of the simple ideas basic to the cult of Kasuga. (p. 12)

There it is in a nutshell, and I would say that she has carried out her purpose admirably. That is not to say that this reviewer was without questions and reservations, however, particularly with regard to her handling of the *honji* issue. In all fairness I must say that the correlation of Buddhist *honji* to the various shrine deities varies depending on the time, the written source, or the individual (e.g., Gedatsu Shōnin) making the correlation, and both Tylers have labored heroically to clarify the convoluted issues for their readers. But my own difficulties at getting a handle on the matter led me to wonder if other readers might not experience similar troubles, and whether we might not all work toward trying to establish some common vocabulary and procedures to facilitate comprehension. Takemikazuchi, for example, whose Buddhist *honji* was often (but not always) recognized to be Fukūkenjaku, a form of Kannon, could be referred to as the “Unfailing-Rope Kannon” or some such, with a cognate title for relevant sūtras, the *Taishō* canon number, and a pithy note sorting out the details and referring the reader to additional references. The Tylers also base their references to the *honji* on Mochizuki’s Japanese encyclopedia of Buddhism, a recognized authority, but one that is unavailable to many readers. Those who do not read Japanese (or have Mochizuki handy) would have been grateful for references to Getty’s *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* (which, unfortunately, is not listed in either bibliography).

Both Tylers seem not to be comfortable with what I take to be the prevailing view of *honji sui-jaku*. It may help to clarify S. Tyler’s position by noting her explicit disagreement with MATSUNAGA’s monograph (1969), which

takes an approach with which I disagree. It implies, even in the title, that *honji sui-jaku* was a Buddhist theory that was applied to the religious situation in Buddhist countries to create order. I think that seeing an unfamiliar deity as related in some way to a familiar deity is not dependent on any theory, but that Buddhist habits of accommodation cast the relationship the kami and buddhas were seen to have in a particular form, after or at the same time as the relationship was evident. Thus, it was no more or less than a way of thinking. As such it was not logical or orderly, but accidental and disorderly. (p. 14)

This position would be consistent with her later perfunctory treatment of *honji sui-jaku* in the separate section with that heading (pp. 88–90). In a single short paragraph she alludes to “the *benji* [*pen-chi*] system used by Zhiyi [Chih-i] (538–597) in explaining the Lotus Sutra,” to Tahō (Prabhūtaratna), to the Three Body theory, and to Matsunaga in a footnote. At this point one would expect to, but does not, hear the usual explanation found in such standard references as Nakamura’s *Bukkyōgo daijiten*: Chih-i’s view of the *Lotus Sūtra*’s

twenty-eight chapters as falling into an initial fourteen-chapter *shakumon* (“trace teaching”) and a later fourteen-chapter *honmon* (“basic, original teaching”). In chapter 16 Śākyamuni reveals his Eternal Nature, stating that the historical details of the person Gautama were mere accommodations (*hōben*) to the frailty of human understanding. Hence the rationale for the Buddhas as *honji*, the “original ground” of which in China the Confucian sages, and in Japan the Shinto kami, can be seen as their *suijaku*, “manifest traces.”

Surely S. Tyler is not suggesting that human beings spontaneously generate correlations between conflicting religious mythologies, and that Buddhist “habits of accommodation” just happened fortuitously to have effected this compromise in terms of an identification of kami and Buddhas. “Seeing an unfamiliar deity as related in some way to a familiar deity” may not be “dependent on any theory,” but it can certainly help. For me, at least, *honji suijaku* is a glorious moment in world religious history, especially in contrast to the logolatrous fanaticism which has characterized most Western sectarian interaction. It is an explicit recognition, and practical manifestation, of the metaphorical nature of human mythmaking, including the word games of philosophy, and cannot be dismissed lightly.

The correlation of specific gods and Buddhas may not have been “logical and orderly,” but surely *honji suijaku* thought is grounded in basic Mahāyānist views concerning the uses and limits of human reasoning — an issue with many more serious implications for our own time than for medieval Japan. My only major reservation about both of these valuable studies is that they might have drawn our attention to a universal message present beneath all the fascinating details.

One minor reservation is that Tyler’s generous bibliography has a few curious omissions, including PONSONBY-FANE’s *Studies in Shinto and Shrines* (1953), in which a detailed chapter is devoted to the Hiraoka Shrine. Here the same main Kasuga deities are venerated, but with Amenokoyane in the position of prominence. The bibliography also omits DYKSTRA’s article and partial translation of *Jizō bosatsu reigenki* (1978), MOORE’s introduction to the *Senjūshō* (1986), and, for that matter, my own book on the *Shasekishū* (MORRELL 1985) — although the original works are all prominently discussed.

On another note, although the two volumes were produced by different publishers, it is convenient that the same standard dimensions are used for both *Cult* and *Miracles* so that they make an attractive set. Unfortunately, there was no spirit of compromise about politically correct romanization. While Columbia’s *Miracles* consistently employs the Wade-Giles system, Michigan doggedly insists that we read Zhi-yi (p. 88), *benji* (p. 88), Faxiang (p. 89), and Xuanzang (p. 131) for Chih-i, *pen-chi*, Fa-hsiang, and Hsüan-tsang. Absolutely no concession is made to a century of Western scholarship by way of cross references in the index or list of characters; in fact, in neither volume are either of the Chinese romanizations found in the index. When citing Zürcher in *Cult* (p. 78, note 3), the press has little choice but to use the Wade-Giles system — and then lets the reader fend for himself. On page 131 Susan Tyler mentions “Xuanzang” in passing and does not include him in the index; if the reader can just remember to check the *Miracles* index under Genjō, he will find that

worthy referred to on page 265, note 4, as Hsüan-tsang (600–664). Good grief! In time the pinyin system will doubtless go the way of Japanese National Romanization, and for the same reason – in the end neither are as user-friendly as that which they pretend to improve.

Since publishers read reviews even more conscientiously than their customers, might it not serve the common good if reviewers were to deplore the exorbitant price of books today? However excellent in content, these two add up to \$87.45 – far, far beyond the means of a hand-to-mouth graduate student, who is the very person who should have them in his or her personal library. And at this price, how many volumes can even the relatively prosperous faculty member afford? We are constantly being dazzled by tales of the marvels of computerization and its cost-cutting benefits. But like the postal service, academic publishers now take more time to produce less for a higher price. Most opt to recoup their investment by targeting libraries, who have the choice of either paying whatever price is fixed or falling behind the pack. The well-heeled conference underwriters mentioned earlier might distribute their resources more productively by bridging the gap between the academic and his research materials than by solving the global problems of Japan-Western interaction in the abstract.

If you can afford these books, by all means buy them. If you can't, be sure to request your local library to make them available. Then write to the publishers expressing your interest in, and ability to purchase, a paperback edition.

I wish to leave on a completely positive note. I recommend to students of Japanese religion, art, literature, and history, two splendid studies on the Kasuga Shrine and the related temple Kōfuku-ji. Not only do they read well the first time through; over the years they will continue to be valuable references about a place and a mode of religious thought and behavior at the very heart of traditional Japanese culture.

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