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Dan Sherer

Prayer for the Devil

Religion and the Regime of Oda Nobunaga

A common theme in the historiography related to Oda Nobunaga is his strong opposition to religious institutions. While Nobunaga's conflicts with several temples were brutal, this article argues that the image of Nobunaga as broadly anti-Buddhist is a result of an overreliance on the writings of the Jesuit Luís Fróis. Indeed, an analysis centered on documents issued by Nobunaga and his regime reveal that religious institutions served important roles in Nobunaga's regime, and that Nobunaga tended toward maintaining precedent in his relationship with religious institutions. This article provides a framework of the Oda regime's religious policies and the main aspects of it.

keywords: Oda Nobunaga—anti-Buddhism—Luís Fróis—Azuchi period—religious life

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Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582) lives large in the historical imagination. Remembered as the first of the three unifiers, he is by varying accounts remembered as a brute, a revolutionary, and a genius. Frequently the subject of academic and popular consideration, Nobunaga continues even now to be one of the best-known and most discussed figures in Japanese history. One particularly popular topic is that of Nobunaga's relationship with religion, with his violent destruction of Mt. Hiei and his brutal clashes with the Ikkō Ikki taking central stage. It would seem that Nobunaga, whether because of a general hostility toward religion or an opposition to any power center he did not control, was inclined to suppress or destroy religious institutions.

In this article, I provide a different view. I assert that the relationship that Oda Nobunaga and his regime had with religious institutions, while certainly varied, was largely cordial and conservative. For the most part, Nobunaga desired to maintain or increase the prestige of his own regime and its allies and to follow precedent. While political and especially military considerations could trump these concerns, it is clear from an examination of the documents issued by Nobunaga and his regime that religious institutions were a vital part of the social, political, and religious order that Nobunaga desired, and that this order was largely a continuation of what had come before. Thus, religious institutions cannot be seen merely as another outside political entity that Nobunaga needed to either destroy or dominate, but as a necessary part of his regime. Some of these institutions were integral to the Oda vassals before he took over, while others were brought in as Nobunaga became involved in and then master of Kyoto politics.

While no single factor overrode all others, I emphasize precedent as an important guiding principles of Nobunaga's relationship with religious institutions. Generally, Nobunaga did not make changes to practices on the ground. This is borne out in documents from Nobunaga and his regime, of which a large portion are confirmations of extant land holdings and privileges. Nobunaga's regime was primarily concerned with maintaining order and facilitating successful military campaigns, not with restructuring Japanese politics, society, or religion. I believe that Nobunaga's religious policies are, broadly speaking, in continuity with what came before. The issue is that "what came before" for Nobunaga varied: up until Ashikaga Yoshiaki 足利義昭 (1537–1597) fled Kyoto in 1574, Nobunaga's religious interests were those of a powerful daimyo who was engaged in Kyoto politics. After 1574, Nobunaga's interests were of someone trying to fill the void in the capital left by the shogun.

This argument may be surprising in light of previous work on Oda Nobunaga, much of which is focused on his opposition to religious institutions. While Nobunaga did act in opposition to religious institutions on numerous occasions, the emphasis on Nobunaga as a force opposed to religious institutions (for example in McMullin 1984; Lamers 2000) as well as the presentation of Nobunaga himself as openly atheistic are the result of an overreliance on the claims of the Jesuit missionary Luís Fróis (1532–1597). While Fróis's value as an observer of sixteenth-century Japan is immense, I argue that other sources, and especially documents of the Oda regime itself, should be given more weight. Indeed, other contemporaries of Nobunaga espoused a markedly different view of Nobunaga and his relationship to religious institutions and religion as a whole.

I demonstrate that Nobunaga was a frequent patron of special religious rites, especially at major temples in the capital and often as part of his military campaigns. These rites give us insight into what religious institutions Nobunaga saw as important. Largely, these are traditional Kyoto religious centers, befitting the regime of a man who was increasingly becoming the leading figure in the politics of the capital. I then analyze how Nobunaga and his regime interacted with specific religious groups. The Oda family had multigenerational and personal connections with several of these groups, especially with the Zen and Jōdo schools. I also examine Sōkenji 摠見寺, a mysterious temple that Nobunaga had built at Azuchi and was likely meant to become the ritual center of his regime. Finally, I discuss Nobunaga's relationship with Shinto shrines and his veneration of the emperor.

I should note that the purpose of this paper is not to refashion the image of Nobunaga into that of a monk. Nobunaga was positively engaged with religious institutions on numerous levels throughout his life without question, but I do not see any evidence that he was exceptional in this regard. After about 1574, he was more engaged in imperial, and thus Japan-wide politics, and his religious relationships changed to follow suit. The myth of a "rational atheist," anti-Buddhist Nobunaga should be challenged, but we gain nothing by jumping to the opposite extreme. It is likely that the two major religious influences on Nobunaga himself were Zen and (late in his life) Jōdo school, but certainly neither of these were overrepresented in his own documents. Neither the tendency toward precedent nor Nobunaga's own religious preferences overrode pragmatic concerns. This article is also not an attempt to downplay or ignore Nobunaga's brutality in general and toward Buddhist temples in particular. While I would argue that he was no more brutal toward temples than he was toward any other kind of opponent, he was by any metric brutal when he dealt with his enemies, especially if his prestige or safety was on the line. Perhaps Nobunaga was exceptional in this, but we should recall that the Sengoku daimyo 戦国大名 were a

brutal lot, and wholesale slaughter and destruction, while not the standard procedure, were in no way unheard of (Kanda 2014, 161–164).

Luís Fróis

A major source for views of Nobunaga's religious life are Jesuit sources, especially the writings of the Portuguese missionary Luís Fróis. Fróis's writings are indispensable as records of the so-called "Christian Century" in Japan. He wrote numerous missives full of detailed accounts, the *Historia de Iapam*—which recorded the history of the mission in Japan—and several other writings. Fróis wrote on many subjects in Japan, not surprisingly including religion, and is frequently cited in discussions of Nobunaga's relationship with Japanese religion. However, Fróis's use as a (and arguably *the*) main source on Nobunaga's attitudes has warped the discussion, not only because of insufficient criticism but also because of how widely he is cited. To demonstrate, I would point to this passage from Neil McMullin's *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan*:

> In terms of his attitude toward the Buddhist temples and Buddhist sacred objects, Nobunaga was extremely irreverent. It is clear from his statements and actions that he cared little about those sacred places and objects that were traditionally venerated in Japan. Hirata Toshiharu provides a sharp contrast between Nobunaga's opinion of Mt. Hiei and Takeda Shingen's opinion: on hearing of Nobunaga's destruction of the sacred mountain, Shingen was shocked and he said of Nobunaga, "He is the ghost of the devil!" Nobunaga, on the other hand, said of the famous mountain, "In Japan it considers itself to be a living Kami or Buddha. Rocks and trees are not Kami." Hirata also tells us that Nobunaga made a characteristically irreverent response to Shingen's exclamation by signing a letter with the signature "Nobunaga, Anti-Buddhist Demon" (*Dairokuten no Mao Nobunaga)*. Nobunaga's lack of reverence for temples and Buddhist sacred objects was demonstrated on many occasions. For example, the Jesuit missionary Luis Frois describes Nobunaga's sacrilegious acts against a number of temples in Kyoto in 1569 when he was constructing the Nijō Palace. Materials for the palace were gathered from the temples by force: Nobunaga simply confiscated their works of art and precious treasures and used the sacred stone statues of the Buddha for building blocks. Frois relates how some statues were placed on carts in order to be transported to the construction site, and how others, when carts were in short supply or the statues too large, were dragged through the streets of Kyoto by ropes tied around their necks. Frois adds, needlessly, that the priests and all the residents of the capital were terrified of Nobunaga. (McMullin 1984, 85–86)

McMullin describes Nobunaga's "characteristic" irreverence and turns to two examples: a letter to Takeda Shingen 武田信玄 (1521–1573) and the destruction

of temples to build the shogun's palace. There are, fundamentally, four claims here: (1) Shingen calls Nobunaga "ghost of the devil" ("avatar of Mara" might be a preferable translation) in response to the burning of Enryakuji; (2) Nobunaga directly disagreed with the idea that Mt. Hiei was or could be a kami; (3) Nobunaga signed a response to Shingen with the "Demon King" signature; and (4) Nobunaga destroyed temples to construct the Nijō Palace. The first three are cited from HIRATA Toshiharu's (1965) *Sōhei to bushi*, and the fourth from Fróis explicitly. The problem is that with the exception of the first claim, which is from a document in the *Daigo Rishōin monjo* collection (SIT 3: 195–196), all the other claims are from Fróis's letters, with the second and third being from within a few paragraphs of each other in the same letter, written in 1573 to Francisco Cabral (*Yasokaishi Nihon tsūshin* 2: 256–257). The fourth claim is from another letter of 1569, this one to Belchior de Figueiredo in Kyushu (*Yasokaishi Nihon tsūshin* 1: 436–439).

Hirata's book to a great extent elides this. However, the result is that in reading both Hirata's book and McMullin's, the image of an irreverent and openly anti-Buddhist Nobunaga comes to the fore, because Fróis's claims are being checked against Fróis's claims. I should also note that by mixing in the *Daigo Rishōin monjo* document with the Fróis account, Hirata (and McMullin following him) misrepresents both sources: Takeda Shingen's letter declaring Nobunaga to be an avatar of Mara was not to Nobunaga, it was to a vassal of Ashikaga Yoshiaki, and so Nobunaga would not have responded to it, because he never received it. Furthermore, the section on Nobunaga's irreverent signature lacks an account of Shingen's own supposed games with his, which serves to hide what is an obviously false part of the account. At best, the extant Shingen letter is suggestive of the original story that somehow devolved into Fróis's account, but by making them part of a single narrative HIRATA (1965, 254–256) both smooths over problems in Fróis's claims that otherwise would be obvious and hides Fróis's role as sole reporter of the incident, serving to sever the claim from its source.

Fróis's ubiquity in this debate would be less problematic were his writings read more critically. One often quoted line is from the same 1569 letter to de Figueiredo above:

> He [Nobunaga] scorns the Kami and the Buddhas and their images, and he believes nothing of paganism [Buddhism and Shinto] or of such things as divination. Although he is nominally a member of the *Hokke* school, he states unequivocally that there is no creator, no immortality of the soul, and no life after death. (MCMULLIN 1984; COOPER 1995, 93; *Yasokaishi Nihon tsūshin* 1: 430–431)

This passage is seductive in its boldness and simplicity, but it presents us with several problems. While most scholars have focused on what Fróis says Nobunaga does not believe, very little attention is paid to what Fróis says Nobunaga

does believe: Nobunaga professed to be part of the Nichiren (*Hokke* 法華) school. To reiterate: Fróis, in the same sentence where he claims that Nobunaga is in no way a pagan, says that Nobunaga himself says that he is a pagan. It is important to note that it is only in Jesuit writings that Nobunaga professes such general disbelief. There is a similar passage in Fróis's *Historia*, but it instead notes that Nobunaga had been a believer in Zen in his youth (*Kan'yaku Furoisu Nihonshi* 2: 101).

What is often lost here is context: Fróis presents Nobunaga as anti-Buddhist at the same time that Nobunaga is protecting the Christians in his domain, notably Kyoto. It makes sense, then, for Fróis to show Nobunaga in the best possible light, or at least in a relatively good light, in his missives. However, Nobunaga had not converted, and thus in order to present the pagan Nobunaga in a good light in previous correspondence, Nobunaga was made into an unbeliever; he does not believe in God, but he has nothing in which he does believe. He is thus empty and capable of being filled with the true faith at some point.[1] It is possible that Nobunaga claimed to be a believer to everyone except for Fróis, but it is far more likely that Fróis is dissembling to make Nobunaga look better. I do not know whether Fróis was doing this cynically or if he really believed that conversion was likely for Nobunaga. It is abundantly clear, however, that he was twisting reality or fabricating it to advance this narrative. However, the above quote has been received as accurate by numerous scholars: McMullin (1984, 88), for example, says that it best captures "Nobunaga's attitude toward religion in general." An even more egregious example is the source for the above McMullin quote:

> There was an interesting happening before [Takeda] Shingen invaded Tōtomi and Mikawa. When he sent Nobunaga a letter, due to his conceitedness, he signed it "Tendaino zasuxamo Xinguem." This means that Shingen was naming himself as the highest person in the Tendai school.
>
> In response, Nobunaga signed his name "Duyrocu tenmauo Nobunaga."
>
> This means that Nobunaga was calling himself the demon king who is the enemy of all the schools [of Buddhism], and that just like Daiba hindered Shaka's propagation of his faith, so would Nobunaga hinder the veneration and worship of the various idols in Japan. (*Yasokaishi Nihon tsūshin* 2: 256–257)

"Tendaino zasuxamo Xinguem" is Fróis's attempt at rendering the terms *Tendai zasu* 天台座主 (the abbot of Enryakuji), *shamon* 沙門 (an initiate to the Buddhist path), and Shingen (Takeda Shingen). "Duyrocu tenmauo Nobunaga" is an attempt at rendering Dairokuten Maō 第六天魔王 (King Mara of the Sixth

1. This description by Christian missionaries of a relatively friendly but not converted ruler as basically atheists is not unique to Fróis. Later Jesuits in Qing China would more explicitly describe the Qing rulers as "leaning toward atheism" (Brockey 2007, 111).

Heaven of the Desire Realm, the entity who is worldliness incarnate and famously attempted to prevent the Buddha's enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree).

This exchange is perhaps better known through its pop-culture references, but it has also been cited (largely uncritically) by a number of scholars, such as Hirata and McMullin above. This is unfortunate, as the story cannot stand up to any real scrutiny. Let us consider a number of points. First, we must consider when this could have occurred. While Shingen and Nobunaga are often remembered as enemies, there was a period between 1565 and 1572 when they had a formal alliance. This exchange of letters must have taken place in 1572, late enough for Shingen to be hostile to Nobunaga but before Fróis's report in 1573. A 1572 letter from Nobunaga to Shingen does exist, sent almost exactly as Shingen was beginning his initial attacks on Tokugawa and Oda territory (ONMK 3: 132). It does not in any way resemble the letters Fróis describes, and the contents are not irreverent but cordial. Nobunaga signed the letter "Nobunaga" with his cypher. Adding to the reverent nature of the letter, Nobunaga addressed it to Hōshōin 法性院, Shingen's religious title.

Fróis's story of this letter exchange comports neither with the diplomatic conventions at the time, nor with the examples that remain of Nobunaga or Shingen's correspondence. Even if we believe that Nobunaga was plagued by an irreverence such that he would sign in this way, what explains Shingen's actions? Fróis states that Shingen did so out of "conceitedness," but no matter how conceited he may or may not have been, this was a silly way of trying to impress Nobunaga, as Shingen was not the abbot and any casual observer of the situation would know this.[2] Further, such conceit was never shown in the large number of extant letters that Takeda Shingen wrote, which are, at least in terms of signature, largely unremarkable. Nobunaga's letters likewise are for the most part prim affairs in keeping with the diplomatic conventions of his time; even in cases where he jotted down quick missives to his son, he addressed him by the proper title (ONMK 2: 447). Neither of these men have in any other known case randomly assigned themselves a fanciful *nom de plume* in this way.

Further, one must keep in mind the logistics of such a letter. Such an exchange would have involved a chain of correspondence,[3] likely including several of his

2. There are popular histories claiming that the abbot, Kakujo 覚恕 (1522–1574) fled to be under the protection of Shingen, but court records and diaries (notably the *Oyudono no ue no nikki* 7: 61–157) mention him participating in various court activities until his death in 1574.

3. There are a number of cases where several of the letters in a chain are extant, even specifically in the case of Nobunaga. For example, see ONMK (1: 536–537) in which Nobunaga writes to Daitokuji and mentions that Matsui Yukan 松井友閑 (d.u.) would give further details, and ONMK (1: 537), which is the letter of Matsui Yukan that indeed notes as further messengers Ban Naomasa 塙直政 (d. 1576) and Kinoshita 木下 (later Toyotomi) Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598).

underlings who would serve as messengers and as his official representatives who would talk to Shingen in person. For Shingen or Nobunaga to cavalierly toss a joke like this into a letter would not only be a slight on the opposite party, it would be putting the reputations and the lives of his messengers at risk. The story is simply false.

Another example from the *Historia*, revolves around Nobunaga's actions in response to the death of his father Nobuhide 信秀 (1510–1551). As Nobuhide lay on his deathbed, Nobunaga asked monks to pray for his father's life. When Nobuhide then died a few days later, Nobunaga accused the monks of lying to him, locked them in their temple, and lit it on fire, mockingly telling them to pray harder for themselves than they had for Nobuhide (Lamers 2000, 24; *Kan'yaku Furoisu Nihonshi* 2: 101–102). This story too is remarkable, but is equally absurd when considered in the larger context of the sources we have. There is precious little on Nobuhide's death in the documentary record, but Nobunaga's biographer Ōta Gyūichi 太田牛一 (b. 1527) does report on Nobunaga in the aftermath of Nobuhide's death. Nobunaga behaves scandalously at Nobuhide's funeral, but the scandal is limited to Nobunaga being improperly dressed and throwing incense at the altar. These were breaches of decorum to be sure, but hardly mass murder (CLN, 60–61; SKK, 23–24).

While we can argue that both sources have flaws and must be used with care (I note my trepidation relating to Gyūichi's work below), there is no corroboration of Fróis's story anywhere, nor any sense of where Fróis could have gotten this information. The disagreement with Gyūichi could be explained as a case where Gyūichi wishes to protect Nobunaga's reputation, but then that is equally an explanation for why Fróis would either invent this story or report a baseless rumor. Further, Fróis would need to report this rumor without any native source, not even one hostile to Nobunaga, reporting it elsewhere. Nobunaga certainly had no particular compunction about burning monks to death in temples, as in the case of Erinji 恵林寺 in 1580 (CLN, 450; SKK, 400–401).[4] However, if this were the case, the monks of Banshōji 万松寺 would have been the ones to be murdered, as that was the temple directly tied to Nobuhide and where his funeral was held. No evidence suggests that Banshōji was destroyed in the sixteenth century. As with several of these cases, the details simply do not line up.

As to Fróis's claim that Nobunaga deified himself, I have little to add to Jeroen Lamers's (2000, 214–224) well-made argument that Fróis invented the story. But there are details that Lamers did not include that make his case stronger. Fróis wrote his annual report for 1582 (the one lacking mention of Nobunaga's death and the aftermath) on 31 October (*Iezusukai Nihon nenpō* 1: 165–204) in which

4. I should note that Gyūichi states that it was Nobunaga's son Nobutada 信忠 (1557–1582) who made the decision, but Nobunaga does not seem to have objected.

he claims that, because he did not have direct knowledge of the events near the capital, he based his report on letters he received dated 16 and 17 June (*Iezusukai Nihon nenpō* 1: 194).[5] However, later on he notes that Nobunaga's general Takigawa Kazumasu 滝川一益 (1525–1586) had received a whole province from Nobunaga in the seventh Japanese month (20 July–17 August), which is to say several weeks after the last of the reports Fróis is citing, as well as Nobunaga's death on 21 June (*Iezusukai Nihon nenpō* 1: 203). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the death of Nobunaga was known in the Kyushu area by the end of July of 1582. A letter from the future Toyotomi Hideyoshi to Nabeshima Naoshige 鍋島直茂 (1538–1618) dated to the eleventh day of the seventh month (30 July) of 1582 already notes that Hideyoshi had killed Akechi Mitsuhide 明智光秀 (1528–1582) (DNS 11.2: 41–42). The Nabeshima residence at Saga was within one hundred kilometers of Fróis's residence at Kuchinotsu 口之津, and it seems unlikely that knowledge of Nobunaga's death would have lagged even a few weeks behind, let alone the three and a half months between Hideyoshi's letter and Fróis's addendum letter of 5 November in which he details Nobunaga's death.

Nobunaga's death presented Fróis with a conundrum: that death needed to be justified, and so Nobunaga needed to deserve death at the hands of the Almighty Himself despite Nobunaga's support of the Jesuit mission. And so, when he started to write the annual report, he punted, simply putting it off. Perhaps he was waiting for more information; perhaps he was hoping that he could find some sense in the outcome; or, perhaps he simply could not think of a way to make sense of the story in his writings. In any case, by November he had concocted a satisfying explanation.

That said, as ASAMI Masakazu (2020, 76–88) has argued, it is likely that Fróis was planning all along to write an addendum to the annual report and that he based the addendum on a letter from the Jesuit Francisco Carrião (d.u.). The difference of a week between the two reports would have made no difference to those who received them outside of Japan, as in all likelihood these were received simultaneously. However, it is still suspicious that no attempt was made to note that an addendum was necessary, nor to begin the condemnation of Nobunaga in the annual report if the deification already had started before June. It must have started at least a year before, as Fróis claims that Sōkenji was built expressly for the purpose of self-veneration (COOPER 1995, 101; *Iezusukai Nihon nenpō* 1: 207). Sōkenji was already extant by 1581 and likely before, and presumably this means that Nobunaga's cult was already active. If not, then surely it was by the

5. Fróis, being a Jesuit writing to a European audience, used the Julian calendar in his reports. I am here including Julian dates to make clear exactly what dates he claimed for events in the narrative.

fifth month of 1582, as otherwise Nobunaga's monthly birthday celebration would not have been possible before his death.

Finally, any historian who relies on Luís Fróis's writings should be aware of several critiques of them, especially due to the fact that Fróis was not always thorough about confirming the details. Fróis's colleagues in the Society of Jesus noted in more than one case that Fróis was a somewhat credulous reporter: Father Melchior Nunes Barreto noted in 1561 that Fróis was "prone to gossip" (Loureiro 2010, 157); Fróis's eventual superior Alessandro Valignano complained that Fróis "rather lacks the necessary prudence and is prone to exaggeration" (Loureiro 2010, 164) and that he was "careless about checking whether or not everything he says is true" (Moran 1993, 35–36). Indeed, Valignano seems to have tried to prevent the publication of Fróis's opus, the *Historia de Iapam*, though whether this was because of inaccuracies, because the work was in need of editing, or because he was trying to eliminate competitors to his own history is unknown (Moran 1993, 40). While we do not need to believe Fróis's contemporaries, we must take into account these critiques, especially given the problems above.

If Fróis's writings are not the best source of historical information on Nobunaga's religious life, then what other sources are available? The two major Japanese biographies of Oda Nobunaga, Ōta Gyūichi's *Shinchō kōki* (SKK) and Oze Hoan's 小瀬甫庵 (1564–1640) *Shinchōki* are also problematic.[6] Gyūichi has similar bias problems to Fróis in that he is an avowed supporter of Nobunaga who attempts to paint Nobunaga, when possible, in a positive—if not hagiographic—light. Oze Hoan, on the other hand, was at best collating secondhand information about Nobunaga and had his own ideological biases. In my opinion, the central source in the study of the religious life of Oda Nobunaga should be Nobunaga's own documents. While these do not solve the issues above (and indeed introduce their own issues), we can at least be sure, for the most part, that they show us what Nobunaga himself wished to communicate to his contemporaries.

Nobunaga's Religious Life as Seen by Contemporaries

To be sure, Oda Nobunaga's relationship with Buddhist institutions was frequently violent. The destruction of Mt. Hiei in 1571 is perhaps his most infamous act in which several thousand people, overwhelmingly non-combatants, were killed. His battles with Honganji's affiliates occasioned frequent brutality, including the burning alive of thousands at Nagashima and the wanton slaughter of

6. Technically, the title of both books is Shinchōki, but Oze's book was published first and thus it has long been conventional to refer to Gyūichi's biography as the Shinchō kōki. Some recent Japanese scholarship has begun using the original title for Gyūichi's work as well, but in the interest of clarity I use Shinchō kōki.

Honganji partisans in Kaga and Echizen. Nobunaga was in the midst of preparing to attack Mt. Kōya at the time of his death, and had already begun killing the itinerant *Kōya nijiri* 高野聖 as part his preparations to the attack. These and other acts demonstrate that Nobunaga was not burdened with an overabundance of mercy when it came to religious institutions.

These violent and destructive acts and the image Fróis presents us with both raise the question of how Nobunaga's Japanese contemporaries saw him in relation to religion. We do know that Takeda Shingen declared him to be an avatar of Mara, though only after the two had become enemies. Kennyo Kōsa 顕如光佐 (1543–1592), abbot of Honganji, likewise said that opposition to Nobunaga was protecting the Buddhist law (ONMK 2: 21). Moreover, Honganji vassal Shimotsuma Rairyū 下間頼龍 (1552–1609) referred to Nobunaga as an "enemy of the dharma" (*hōteki* 法敵) (ONMK 2: 496). However, this was hardly a universal assessment among his contemporaries.

Several contemporary observers saw in Nobunaga a man uniquely blessed and very much concerned with the will of the gods and buddhas. Shortly before Nobunaga's death in 1582, Kōfukuji 興福寺 monk Tamon'in Eishun 多聞院英俊 (1518–1596) recounted in his diary a story passed along to him:

> Sengakubō[7] says that some years ago, perhaps even ten years ago, a monk called Kashin 可心 of Myōgenji 明眼寺[8] in Mikawa Province came to Hōryūji 法隆寺, and stayed for a year hearing talks on the life of [Shotoku] Taishi. His temple was founded by [Shōtoku] Taishi 聖徳太子, and had never been ransacked. This monk had received the patronage of [Tokugawa] Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616) of Okazaki. Some ten years ago, in a dream on the second day of the first month, [Shōtoku Taishi] had appeared before Kashin and said, "There are three men who may purify [pacify] the realm. [Asakura] Yoshikage 朝倉義景 (1533–1573) may desire it, but it is useless (I wonder, because of his abilities?)[9] and will not succeed. [Takeda] Shingen[10] may desire it, but even with his military skill, he is without mercy, and will not succeed. Only to Nobunaga should the realm submit. I gave [Minamoto no] Yoritomo a sword, *Hahikoru itten* 弥一天.[11] That sword is at the Atsuta no Sha 熱田ノ社. Quickly go and deliver it to Nobunaga." Hearing this, [Kashin] awoke. It was a wondrous thing! But thinking that it was just a dream, Kashin let time pass. In a dream on the night

7. Sengakubō Eijin 仙学房栄甚 (d.u.) was a scholar-monk of Hōryūji in Nara who appears frequently in Eishun's diary. He wrote a book about Shōtoku Taishi in 1568 and was one of the judges at the Azuchi Religious Debate in 1579.

8. Myōgenji likely refers to the Myōgenji 妙源寺 in modern Okazaki City.

9. This parenthetical represents smaller text in the original and seems to be Eishun's personal notes about the story.

10. Eishun misspells the name Shingen, using the character 源 instead of 玄.

11. The meaning of this name is unclear.

> of the fifteenth of the same month, [Shōtoku Taishi] appeared again and chastised him, saying, "Why have you not delivered the sword I told you about before?" Again, not knowing what to do, he let time pass, and in a dream on the fifth day of the second month, [Shōtoku] Taishi said, "I have said this several times, and you have not delivered the sword. If you do not heed my commands, you will be punished!" Hearing this, he rushed in a sorry state from Myōgenji three *ri* 里 to Atsuta, where he visited the shrine, found the sword, took it, and returned. He then met Murai Nagato no Kami [Sadakatsu] 村井長門守貞勝 (d. 1582)[12] and said that he wished to present it to Nobunaga, and told also Ieyasu. Soon, he brought the sword to Nobunaga, who said, "I too have seen dreams like your own. What an amazing joy!" And he promised that when the realm was under his control, he would rebuild the temples established by the Taishi. He also told Kashin to keep this story a deep secret. However, occasionally he has spoken to people about it. When I think about it now, how mysterious it is!
>
> (*Tamon'in nikki* 3: 212; Hayashi 1966, 41–44; Hori 2011, 271–276)

Two months earlier, another Kōfukuji monk, Shakain Kanson 釈迦院寛尊 (d.u.), reported this rumor in his journal:

> Someone said that last winter, Oda Shichibei (Nobuzumi 織田七兵 [信澄, d. 1582]) had asked for [control of] this province [of Yamato] and went directly [to Nobunaga] to put in his request. His highness [Nobunaga] said, "Yamato is a province of the gods, and the details have since long ago been as per the wishes of the people of the province." The pointless request was thus refused, and the matter was not raised again. (*Renjōin kiroku*, 244)

I am not arguing that the stories above were true. The diarists reported them as rumors. They did not, however, note that the rumors seemed baseless or absurd. Konoe Sakihisa 近衛前久 (1536–1612), a courtier who had initially opposed Nobunaga but then became a close ally, wrote several months after Nobunaga's death that he had likewise discussed the worship of Shōtoku Taishi with Nobunaga (Hayashi 1966, 44). In the eyes of some, the image related by Fróis could be turned completely over: a friend of Buddhism, Nobunaga acted in keeping with the will of the gods and thus received their blessings or avoided their opprobrium, respectively.

Praying for Victory

A common practice among warriors in Sengoku Japan was to request that temples or shrines pray on their behalf. These could be for no particular purpose

12. Murai was Nobunaga's deputy (*tenka shoshidai* 天下所司代) in Kyoto and an important part of his regime (Taniguchi 2009).

beyond the building of merit but were often done as explicit prayers for victory in battle. Sengoku daimyo throughout Japan would commission rites for this purpose, and this left a paper trail. When a patron would commission a rite (sutra reading, dharani chanting, and so on), the standard practice was for the temple to send the patron a *kanju* 巻数 (literally, "a count of scrolls"), which detailed the commissioned rite. This was delivered with some pomp to the patron and was sometimes accompanied with food and gifts. Often it was delivered tied around a stick.

While no *kanju* issued to Nobunaga are extant, we know that they were issued. This is because the common practice upon receiving a *kanju* was to send a letter of thanks in response. And happily, several of these responses by Nobunaga are extant in various collections (see TABLE 1).

These documents represent some of the cases where prayers were held on Nobunaga's behalf at major temples and shrines, but not all of them. In some cases, prayers on Nobunaga's behalf were commissioned by others; the emperor would commission prayers for Nobunaga's victory on several occasions from the 1570s onwards (DNS 10.1: 355–357). While it is not clear how many of the above were commissioned by Nobunaga and how many were gifted by the religious institution or by a third party, the letters themselves demonstrate a respect by Nobunaga for the power of such rites.

Obviously, we have to be careful in using this small set of documents to make broad statements, but a few conclusions can be drawn. For one, with few exceptions, these are for major temples and shrines in the capital. These rites were thus likely expensive affairs, and commissioning one was probably a complex undertaking. This shows us that for Nobunaga these rites were important. To be sure, his belief that they are important does not prove a belief in their efficacy, but certainly does suggest the possibility. It is possible that the rites were meant to have propagandistic value, but there is no evidence that the commissioners of these rites were publicized, and indeed I have seen nothing from any of the available court diaries or later chronicles that suggests that courtiers (who had close connections with these institutions) were even aware of these or any commissioned rites.

Further, of those that can be dated with any sort of specificity, several are on the eve of important battles. These included enemies that Nobunaga had particular difficulties with. For example, ITEM 3 in TABLE 1 was sent on the eve of the final attacks on the Nagashima Ikkō Ikki 長島一向一揆, a force which had occupied Nobunaga's attention since 1572 and cost him dearly in men and treasure. Items 6 and 7 were issued when Nobunaga was moving against the rebellion of Araki Murashige 荒木村重 (1535–1586), which LAMERS (2000, 156) refers to as "the most dangerous of all the revolts he faced during his career," excluding the one in which he was killed. ITEMS 9, 10, 11, and 12 were all issued during the final

TABLE 1: Nobunaga's letters of thanks for *kanju*, modified from KANDA (2015, 51–55) and revised with dates suggested in KANEKO (2018, 27–30)

ITEM NO.	DAY. MONTH. YEAR	SITE OF RITE	OBJECT RECEIVED	OCCASION	SOURCE
1	7.9.1573	Daikakuji 大覚寺	2 *kanju*	campaign against Rokkaku family	ONMK 1: 688–689
2	9.4.1574	Matsuo Taisha 松尾大社	*kanju*, fruit basket		ONMK 1: 748–749
3	28.7.1574	Fudōin 不動院	*kanju*, *goō* 牛王, *fuda* 札, *mamori* 守	campaign against Nagashima Ikkō Ikki	ONMK 1: 768–769
4	18.4.1575	Ninnaji 仁和寺	*kanju*	campaign against Osaka Honganji	ONMK 2: 20–21
5	3.9.1575	Shōren'in 青蓮院	*kanju*, archery gloves	campaign against Echizen Ikkō Ikki	ONMK 2: 74–74
6	20.3.1580	Kamigamo Jinja 上賀茂神社	*kanju*, archery gloves, horse trappings	probably campaign against Araki Murashige three weeks earlier	ONMK 2: 276
7	25.9.1579	Kamigamo Jinja	*kanju*, *shijira* じしら	campaign against Araki Murashige	ONMK 2: 377–378
8	14.2.1576	Kamigamo Jinja	*kanju*, cloth	New Year's celebrations	ONMK 2: 419–420
9	25.3.1582	Kamigamo Jinja	*kanju*, tasseled crupper	on his final campaign against the Takeda	ONMK 2: 427
10	4.4.1582	Rishōin 理性院	*kanju*, archery gloves	on the way to final campaign against the Takeda	ONMK 2: 719–720
11	10.4.1582	Sanzen'in 三千院	*kanju*, "two kinds" of unidentified object	final campaign against the Takeda	ONMK 2: 726–727
12	15.4.1582	Keikōin 慶光院	*harai no taima* (Ise equivalent to a *kanju*), dried abalone	final campaign against the Takeda	ONMK 2: 729–730
13	7.1.1580	Kamigamo Jinja	*kanju*, *shijira*	New Year's celebration	ONMK 2: 777–778

ITEM NO.	DAY. MONTH. YEAR	SITE OF RITE	OBJECT RECEIVED	OCCASION	SOURCE
14	20.1	Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮	*harai no taima*, fresh abalone	New Year's celebration	ONMK 2: 778
15	15.10	Ota Tsurugi Jinja	*kanju*, cloth		ONMK 2: 815
16	4.12	Sanbōin 三宝院	*kanju*	"in my camp"	KANDA (2015, 53–54); *Kokuhō Daigoji no subete* (187)
17	27.2	Daigoji	*kanju*, *hitoori*	"in my camp"	KANDA (2015, 54); *Daigoji monjo* (16: 133)
18	9.6.1575	Kamigamo Jinja	*kanju*	Nagashino campaign (Takeda)	ONMK 2: 35–36
19	19.9	Atsuta Jingū 熱田神宮	*kanju*, customary prayers, 500 dried abalone		ONMK 2: 814

assault on the Takeda of Kai, who had begun to fight Nobunaga nearly a decade before. There are several others that are harder to date referring to Nobunaga receiving the *kanju* during a campaign. These sorts of rites, then, seem to have been a part of Nobunaga's preparations for important campaigns.

Also clear from the documents is that there does not seem to have been favoritism toward any particular sect or school. This is hardly surprising, as this ecumenicism was common of both powerful warriors and high courtiers, both descriptions that depict Nobunaga in the last decade of his life. The temples, for the most part, are what we could term traditional power centers, in other words primarily the same sorts of temples that had dominated the Japanese religious scene for centuries. The major outlier is Tsurugi Jinja 剣神社 in Echizen, though that shrine had a different connection to Nobunaga.

Enryakuji and the Tendai School

Two temples listed in TABLE 1 call for additional comment: Shōren'in (ITEM 5) and Sanzen'in (ITEM 11). These stand out because they are two of the so-called three *monzeki* 門跡 (noble cloisters) of Enryakuji, with the other being Myōhōin 妙法院.[13] These three cloisters, while part of Enryakuji, were physically in Kyoto, and their abbots tended to be princes or the scions of the Fujiwara regency line. Most of the abbots of Enryakuji were also the abbots of one of these three cloisters. Both of these letters are from after the burning of Mt. Hiei.

In 1571, Nobunaga had destroyed Mt. Hiei atop which sat Enryakuji and at the foot of which sat the city of Sakamoto and Hiesha 日吉社. The previous year, an army led by Asakura Yoshikage of Echizen and Asai Nagamasa 浅井長政 (1545–1573) of northern Ōmi had occupied Mt. Hiei as part of their battles against Nobunaga. This siege led to major food shortages in Kyoto and seriously threatened Nobunaga's communication with his home base in Gifu. According to several sources, near the end of the siege, Nobunaga sent the monks of Mt. Hiei an ultimatum, stating that if they did not either join forces with him or declare neutrality, he would burn the whole mountain down. The monks of Mt. Hiei gave no response (CLN, 155–156; SKK, 117). Nobunaga did eventually accept an embarrassing peace with the Asai and the Asakura and withdraw to Gifu, but when he returned to the area in the fall of 1571 he made good on his promise, destroying Sakamoto and Mt. Hiei and massacring thousands.

And yet the Enryakuji *monzeki* and Nobunaga maintained a relationship that was, while perhaps not friendly, certainly not murderous, and in fact cordial. While we do not have a *kanju* from the third of the three great *monzeki* (Myōhōin), Nobunaga donated land to that cloister in 1575 (ONMK 3: 177). This

13. I should note that these are not the only three monzeki that were part of Enryakuji, but these were the most powerful.

suggests that our understanding of Nobunaga's relationship with Enryakuji and perhaps even of Enryakuji itself may be in need of revision. There is no question that after the attack Mt. Hiei was devoid of activity, regardless of the scale of the damage. In contrast, the *monzeki*, which were not on Mt. Hiei, continued to operate. This begs the question of whether the *monzeki* (who included the abbot), were considered part of the same entity as the monks of Mt. Hiei, and thus the extent to which Enryakuji was seen as a unit. It seems likely Nobunaga saw a clear division between the *monzeki* and the clergy on Mt Hiei. This is borne out in that Nobunaga mercilessly massacred the one group and was commissioning rites and donating to the other. It is also apparent in Nobunaga's other documents. For example, in the last item of his "Regulations for the Shogunal Residence" in 1569, Nobunaga ordered, "The retainers of the *monzeki* (*monzeki no bōkan* 門跡坊官), the assembled clergy of Mt. Hiei (*sanmon shuto* 山門衆徒),[14] physicians, fortunetellers, etc., should not be allowed free access to the shogun" (ONMK 1: 239–243; LAMERS 2000, 63–64), where he could simply have banned the monks of Enryakuji. Further, when given the opportunity to weaken the political and economic power of the *monzeki*, Nobunaga seems to have not done so: during a dispute over the control of Kuramadera 鞍馬寺 and all land on Mt. Kurama, Nobunaga's regime affirmed that the temple was both politically and economically under the control of the Shōren'in (ONMK 2: 502–503). This is not a sign of enmity.

In contrast, Nobunaga's relationship with the clergy on Mt. Hiei was consistently negative more or less from the time of his arrival in the home provinces; complaints to the court from Mt. Hiei that Nobunaga's men where encroaching on temple land had begun by 1569 (*Oyudono no ue no nikki* 6: 531). This was probably a factor in the decision of the monks of Mt. Hiei to side with the Asai and Asakura against Nobunaga in 1571, which in turn led to their destruction in 1572.

Other Tendai temples had a relationship with Nobunaga that may best be described as uneven. In 1568 Nobunaga declared Hyakusaiji 百済寺, an Enryakuji-affiliated temple in Ōmi, one of his dedicated prayer temples (*kigansho* 祈願所), and gave it special privileges (ONMK 1: 182–184). However, Hyakusaiji later supported the Rokkaku clan, one of Nobunaga's more stubborn enemies, and Nobunaga razed Hyakusaiji while he was attacking the Rokkaku at Namazue in 1573 (CLN, 185; SKK, 148). This rather extreme shift was unusual; the majority of the

14. I should note here that Lamers translates *sanmon shuto* 山門衆徒 as "the warrior monks of Mt. Hiei," and MCMULLIN (1984, 69) uses "sōhei." I believe these translations are in error: while in some contexts the word *shuto* has military implications, in the case of Enryakuji this refers to the senior clergy who had decision-making power on the mountain. These could (and certainly did) include those with military skills, but the term does not specifically refer to "warrior monks." The proscription here is political and not military.

Oda regime's documented interaction with Tendai temples was land confirmations, with a few temples receiving donations. Broadly speaking, there was no school-specific policy for Tendai temples, rather the more common attempt to balance precedent and order we see overall.

Teian and the Jōdo School

In the last decade of his life, Oda Nobunaga became increasingly involved with the Jōdo school of Buddhism. In a chronicle of Chion'in 知恩院, arguably the capital's most import Jōdo school temple, are documents from the Oda regime dated 1573 detailing Nobunaga's donations to Chion'in in thanks for victory in battle (*Kachōshiyō*, 44–45; Imahori 2018, 155). I use these sources with caution, as the original letters are no longer extant and several of the documents in this chronicle relating to this event have obvious errors. However, stronger evidence of links to the Jōdo school (and Chion'in specifically) does exist.

For example, in 1572, Nobunaga wrote a missive (ONMK 1: 544–545) to the monk Seigyoku 清玉 (d.u.), pledging that each person in his domain would donate a coin per month to Seigyoku's fundraiser to rebuild the Great Buddha Hall at Tōdaiji 東大寺. Seigyoku was a monk of the Kyoto Jōdo temple Amidaji 阿弥陀寺. This is the only known example of Nobunaga participating in such a fundraiser, and that he wrote a personal letter to Seigyoku instead of having a delegate write it is itself telling. It is possible, of course, that Nobunaga's connection to the Chion'in and to the Tōdaiji fundraiser was connected to his increasing closeness to the imperial court, as the Tōdaiji fundraiser had imperial support as well, and Chion'in was closely connected to the reigning Emperor Ōgimachi 正親町 (1517–1593) (Imahori 2018, 153–173). But even if this imperial connection was the main reason for Nobunaga's increasing connection to the Jōdo school, the connection became increasingly important.

Further, in constructing his castle town in Azuchi, Nobunaga had several Jōdo temples moved there from nearby, including Jōgon'in 浄厳院, which was the site of the Azuchi Religious Debate (*Azuchi shūron* 安土宗論) (Ikawa 1972, 3). It was also one of the major Jōdo temples in the province, boasting numerous branch temples in the provinces of Ōmi and Iga. The other major Jōdo temple in Azuchi, Saikōji 西光寺, was headed by the monk Teian 貞安 (1539–1615).[15] Teian was a monk of some renown, originally from the Kanto region. Even before coming to Azuchi he had received honors from the emperor (*Kyoto Jōdoshū jiin monjo*, 206–207). Teian and Nobunaga seem to have been close, as Nobunaga

15. Lamers (2000, 182) and McMullin (1984, 206) both read this name as Jōan. This would be an acceptable reading of the characters in his name, but all Japanese references I have seen use Teian, as does Elisonas and Lamers's *Chronicle of Lord Nobunaga*. Therefore, I use Teian throughout.

likely made a large donation to Chion'in at Teian's request a few months before the Azuchi Religious Debate (ONMK 3: 203).

The Azuchi Religious Debate itself is a sign of Nobunaga's increasing connection to the Jōdo school. The debate occurred in the fifth month of 1579 when the representatives of the Jōdo school and the Nichiren school met at Jōgon'in to argue about the efficacy of nenbutsu practice. The result of the debate was a disastrous loss for the Nichiren sect. Nobunaga not only judged them the losers; he broadly publicized the loss in Kyoto, and severely punished those he saw as responsible for the debate, executing two Nichiren laymen and the monk they patronized (LAMERS 2000, 179–187). Leaving aside debates over whether Nobunaga cheated to ensure the result, he certainly rewarded the Jōdo representatives after their victory; Gyūichi notes that Teian and Gyokunen Reiyo 玉念霊誉 (d. 1586) received fans from Nobunaga on the day, along with significant payments of silver later in the year (SKK, 274, 280; CLN, 318, 324). Teian reported in a letter sent a few days after the debate that Nobunaga had given a "donation" (*gokonshi* 御懇志) to Teian and Gyokunen (*Nobunaga to shūkyō seiryoku*, 55, 97). Teian also received several books taken from the executed Nichiren monks after the debate (*Nobunaga to shūkyō seiryoku*, 55, 97).

Was Nobunaga a Pure Land Buddhist? Certainly not exclusively, and certainly not to the extent that anyone recorded him as being particularly active on that front. We have no evidence that he, for example, held nenbutsu chanting sessions or used Pure Land symbols on his battle standards. However, it is likely that Nobunaga did show the school favor and that Teian was particularly close to Nobunaga.

Zen

Nobunaga had longstanding relationships with Zen monks. This is a case where we see the influence of his father Oda Nobuhide, who was very interested in Zen and who founded the temple Banshōji as his *bodaiji* 菩提寺 (a temple founded to pray for the salvation of a specific family) (TANIGUCHI 2017, 107–108). Nobunaga's own documents include numerous missives to Zen temples throughout his career, mostly land confirmations. Fróis likewise noted in the *Historia* that Nobunaga had once been a believer in Zen (*Kanyaku Furoisu Nihonshi* 2: 101).

The Azuchi Religious Debate also demonstrates the role Zen monks served in his regime. While the debate was held between Jōdo and Nichiren monks, Nobunaga (somewhat unusually) empaneled four judges. Excluding one (Sengakubō), all had Zen affiliations. Tessō Keishū 鉄叟景秀 (1496–1580), who led the judges, was the abbot of Nanzenji 南禅寺 and had been the abbot of Kenninji 建仁寺. Another, Inga Koji 因果居士 (1525–1617), was a layman but a Zen scholar.

This suggests that at the very least Nobunaga felt that others would see them as legitimate arbiters of such debates.

Nobunaga also had a hand in founding the Rinzai temple Seishūji 政秀寺, which was founded around 1553. The temple is named after Hirate Masahide 平手政秀 (1496–1553), an important vassal of Oda Nobuhide who had been, among other things, Nobunaga's guardian. Masahide had committed suicide in 1553 as means of admonishing Nobunaga for his behavior (SKK, 25; CLN, 61; *Seishūji koki*, 349–350). Nobunaga had founded Seishūji as temple for the express purpose of praying for his mentor's salvation. The founding abbot, Takugen Sōʼon 沢彦宗恩 (d. 1587), was a former abbot of Myōshinji 妙心寺 in Kyoto. According to Seishūji's temple records written in the early Edo period, Takugen was a major player in Nobunaga's life even before the founding of the temple; he was the one who recommended to Nobuhide the name "Nobunaga." The same record also states that Takugen suggested to Nobunaga to name his residence in Mino "Gifu" (which is still the name of the modern prefecture) and that he suggested to Nobunaga the famous *tenka fubu* 天下布武 seal (*Seishūji koki*, 352–353). While this record should be viewed with some skepticism (as Takugen accurately predicts to Nobuhide the age at which Nobunaga will die), Nobunaga's connection to the temple seems well established.

Again, this evidence does not suggest that there was a particular policy toward specific lineages of Zen or Zen in general. Rather, Nobunaga had a connection to specific temples and monks. However, Nobunaga did seem to have a particular interest in the scholarly accomplishments of Zen monks.

Nichiren

Oda Nobunaga showed clear hostility to the Nichiren sect in the Azuchi Religious Debate. However, some evidence does suggest that Nobunaga (again, possibly following his father) was at times a patron of the Nichiren sect. One intriguing piece of evidence is Oda Nobunaga's battle standard. It is well-known and attested to that Nobunaga's battle standard was yellow with the image of a coin minted by the Chinese Yongle emperor (*Eirakusen* 永楽銭) on it. Several Edo-period sources, including Oze Hoan's *Shinchōki* (145) and several of the extant Nagashino battle screens,[16] note that attached to the battle standards were smaller streamers, called a *maneki* 麾 bearing the Daimoku 題目, the exhortation to the *Lotus Sūtra* that Nichiren's followers chanted. These sources are certainly problematic, but they suggest that Nobunaga had some faith in the efficacy of Nichiren practice.

16. Notably the screen in the Inuyama Castle collection, which is considered one of the older extant screens (KANDA 2015, 54–56).

Further, Nobunaga had a close if nebulous relationship with the temples Hokkeji 法華寺 in Gifu and Nagoya.[17] This is made clear in the aftermath of the Azuchi Religious Debate of 1579. Hokkeji's own records suggest that the abbot, Nichiyō 日陽 (d. 1598), rode to Azuchi after the debate and convinced Nobunaga not to destroy the Nichiren sect, citing Nobuhide's and Nobunaga's own long links to the sect (Tsuji 1983, 124). This temple record has long been seen as unreliable (and seems to be lost), but it is likely that Hokkeji did in some way sway Nobunaga. Roughly two months after the Azuchi Religious Debate, the abbot of Kyoto Nichiren powerhouse Honkokuji 本圀寺 (of which Hokkeji was a branch) wrote a letter to Nichiyō, crediting "Nobunaga's great friendship" with the temple for the sect's survival and declaring that all branch temples in the provinces of Mino and Owari should "revere" Hokkeji (ONMK 2: 446). This could represent the Oda regime tightening its control on the sect in the provinces by having the Honkokuji branch temples in the Oda homelands fall under the control of a temple with close ties to Nobunaga himself. This would imply that Nobunaga was perhaps attempting to weaken the influence of the Kyoto temples in the provinces, or at least in his provinces. The exact nature of this relationship requires more study.

Azuchi Sōkenji

An important temple in Nobunaga's later years was Sōkenji, located on the grounds of Azuchi Castle. Today a Myōshinji-affiliated Rinzai Zen temple, Sōkenji records indicate that in Nobunaga's lifetime the abbot was a Shingon monk named Gyōshō 堯照 (d. 1586) who had served as the head monk of the temple that managed Kameo Tennōsha 亀尾天王社 (today, Nagoya Jinja 那古野神社) (*Azuchi chōshi shiryōhen* 1: 554). Sōkenji was an important cultural center in Azuchi, and several sources note that Nobunaga often used it as part of his larger gatherings. For example, in 1581 Nobunaga held a massive Obon celebration at Azuchi in which the keep and Sōkenji were illuminated by means of numerous lanterns (CLN, 406; SKK, 358). Likewise, on the first day of 1582, Nobunaga invited numerous warriors to present themselves at Azuchi Castle, where they were given a tour of the grounds. The very first stop was the Bishamondō 毘沙門堂 of Sōkenji, where Nobunaga had built a stage (CLN, 421; SKK, 373). A few months later, after returning from his tour of the recently conquered Takeda holdings, Nobunaga held a series of performances on that stage, with such luminaries in the crowd as Konoe Sakihisa and Tokugawa Ieyasu (CLN, 465; SKK, 413; *Tamon'in nikki* 3: 222). Ieyasu and Anayama Baisetsu 穴山梅雪 (1541–1582) also lodged at the temple, and Tamon'in Eishun notes that Nobunaga had spared no

17. The original was in Nagoya, but one was built in Gifu after Nobunaga moved there. The same monk appears to have been the abbot at both.

expense on amusements for his guests there and decorated it with treasures from Japan and China for a truly stunning display (*Tamon'in nikki* 3: 222).

Fróis clearly sensed the importance of the temple. While neither he nor the other Jesuit observers mentioned the temple by name when they previously wrote about Azuchi, when he invented Nobunaga's self-deification cult to himself, Fróis made "Soquenji" its headquarters. He also noted that a stone called the "*Bonção*" (pronounced near enough to *bonsan* 盆山) was the main item of worship in the cult and was placed on a platform at the highest point inside Sōkenji above the various other idols (Asami 2020, 211). Gyūichi also notes an important *bonsan*, a miniature mountain scape, at Azuchi, though it was not in the temple and is ascribed no particular divine potency (CLN, 254; SKK, 213). Likely Fróis had heard about the *objet* from one of the Jesuits in Azuchi and thought it appropriately menacing-sounding.[18]

Unfortunately, specifics on the temple and its role in Nobunaga's time are elusive in the records, and most of the temple burned down in 1854. There have been attempts to reconstruct the temple as it existed in Nobunaga's day, but these have leaned most heavily on Fróis's description (Okagaki and Asakawa, 2010). However, we can speculate. First, the connection to Gozu Tennō 牛頭天王 shrines is possibly deliberate. We can see with the examples of Hokkeji and Saikōji that Nobunaga surrounded himself with temples that had many branches. This policy both served to demonstrate his own power and to give him leverage over a larger group of institutions. In this particular case, as Gozu Tennō worship had major centers in his old province of Owari, Nobunaga may have been attempting to keep some of Owari with him in his far-off residence in Ōmi. This action would likely have been significant to his higher-level vassals, most of whom were originally from Owari. Likewise, the temple had an onsite shrine to the Atsuta deity, which may have served a similar purpose.

Several of Sōkenji's buildings seem to have been appropriated from nearby temples and shrines. Temple records state that the (still extant) three-story pagoda, the Niōmon 仁王門, and the onsite shrines (to the Atsuta deity and to Benzaiten), were older buildings taken to Azuchi, almost all from nearby Kōga (*Azuchi chōshi shiryōhen* 1: 555–556, 567–568.). This may have been an attempt to save on construction costs, but I believe that just as the temple was trying to keep some of Owari in Ōmi, this may have been an attempt to bring Ōmi's religious centers into Nobunaga's temple and thus his control.

From the evidence available it is clear that Nobunaga intended Sōkenji to be the central temple of Azuchi Castle and likely the temple most closely tied to

18. I should note that Cooper's (1995, 102) translation of Fróis's account claims that "Bonção" was the name not of the rock but of the man who provided it. However, I follow Asami who (along with earlier translators) notes that it refers to the rock.

his own reign as the master of central Japan. Had it survived or records of its construction and use at the time been as detailed as those of the Azuchi keep, we would have further insights into Nobunaga's religious life and policies far beyond what is currently available. Nonetheless, the temple represents the closest we have to Nobunaga building a *bōdaiji* and likely was expected to be the ritual center of the Oda regime, perhaps even into the generation of Nobutada and beyond.

The Gods

The Oda family's name derived from an estate called Ota no Shō 織田荘 in Echizen Province (modern Fukui Prefecture). Within this estate was Tsurugi Jinja, and it is from the lineage of the priests of this shrine that the Oda of Owari claimed descent. It is unsurprising, then, that Shinto shrines were heavily involved in the Oda regime. And indeed, we see close relations to a number of shrines throughout Japan and Nobunaga's career.

Within Owari were several major shrines, notably Atsuta Jingū 熱田神宮 and Tsushima Jinja 津島神社. Atsuta Jingū was connected closely to the imperial institution and supposedly houses the sword *Kusanagi no tsurugi* 草薙の剣, one of the three pieces of the imperial regalia. Nobunaga's earliest known document is a sign sent to Atsuta Jingū, listing rules and exemptions (ONMK 1: 14), and Nobunaga sent numerous documents to Atsuta early on, which were largely confirmations of previous rights and holdings (For example, ONMK, no. 3, 19, 21, 22, 31, and so on). Gyūichi says that Nobunaga stopped at Atsuta before the Battle of Okehazama (Okehazama no Tatakai 桶狭間の戦い) (CLN, 87; SKK, 53), and while he does not state specifically that Nobunaga worshiped there, he does later suggest that the Atsuta deity was joining the battle on Nobunaga's side (CLN, 89; SKK, 55). And as discussed, Nobunaga received *kanju* from the shrine at least once, though probably not for a rite he commissioned. Furthermore, at least three successive head priests (*daigūji* 大宮司) of Atsuta Jingū (all from the Senshū 千秋 family) served the Oda as warriors; two, Suemitsu 季光 (d. 1534) and Suetada 季忠 (1534–1560), died in combat under Nobuhide and Nobunaga, and a third, Suenobu 季信 (1560–1612), served in Nobunaga's Horse Guards (Uma Mawari 馬廻) (TANIGUCHI 2017, 75; 1995, 221–222).

Tsushima Jinja was, like Gion in Kyoto, a center of Gozu Tennō worship. Tsushima Jinja and the Oda family both used the *Oda mokkō* 織田木瓜 crest, though it is unclear which of the two appropriated the crest from the other, if at all.[19] Nobunaga's relationship here is less well defined, but it is clear that the Tsushima area was an important economic and political base for his father Nobuhide

19. The crest seems to be common among centers of Gozu Tennō worship, including the Gion (now Yasaka) shrine in Kyoto.

(Taniguchi 2017, 83–85), and both father and son were heavily concerned with the shrine's well-being. Nobunaga would send numerous missives to Tsushima, including putting his imprimatur on the shrine monk's succession in 1552 (ONMK 1: 22–23); approving a province-wide fundraiser in Owari, probably around 1573 (ONMK 3: 81); and voiding the debts of the *sukune* 宿祢 and the *kannushi* 神主 (the two highest ranking Shinto officials at the shrine) in 1553 following a similar precedent from the time of Nobuhide (ONMK 1: 31–32, 34–35). Tsushima Jinja officials seem to have been somewhat profligate, as Nobunaga also had to restructure the debts of the *kannushi* in 1571 such that he only had to pay back the principle and had ten years to do so (ONMK 1: 496–497). Further, like with the case of Atsuta Jingū, the *sukune* family of Tsushima Jinja would also serve the Oda family in a military capacity from before the time of Nobuhide (Taniguchi 2017, 85).

Ise Jingū, which was most closely bound to the emperor and also relatively near the Oda home base in Owari, likewise interacted with Nobunaga on several occasions. Important to us here is that Nobunaga funded the rebuilding of the inner and outer shrines in 1582, which customarily happened every twenty years but had not been done since 1462 at the inner shrine (*naikū* 内宮) and 1563 at the outer (*gekū* 外宮). According to Gyūichi, the priests of the outer shrine estimated that the reconstruction would cost one thousand strings of cash (*kanmon* 貫文; each "string" being a thousand coins), but Nobunaga, knowing that such budgets were often optimistic, sent three thousand (SKK, 377; CLN, 425). Nobunaga's instructions to the shrine to prepare the rebuilding are still extant (ONMK 2: 666–669), and the amount is in fact borne out by a letter to Nobutada asking him to send the money (ONMK 2: 670–672). And again, we see here the echoes of Oda Nobuhide, who donated to the outer shrine in 1540, hoping that they would begin rebuilding (Taniguchi 2017, 92–93).

Nobunaga likewise had several interactions with Iwashimizu Hachimangū 岩清水八幡宮 in Kyoto. During a conflict between the shrine officials and the managing temple, Zenpōji 善法寺, Nobunaga's regime seems to have been involved in arranging a settlement and urged that the parties follow precedent (ONMK 2: 465–466). Iwashimizu also benefited from Nobunaga's largess. Nobunaga funded the reconstruction of the shrine in 1579 (ONMK 2: 501–502). Gyūichi says that Nobunaga was particularly active in this, sending deputies to ensure that the project was finished on time and under budget (SKK, 295–296, 324; CLN, 339–340, 369–370). Gyūichi paid particular attention to the installation of a bronze gutter between the inner and outer sanctuaries, which Nobunaga had installed to replace a wooden one. That gutter survives to this day (CLN, 369).

And finally, we should return to the birthplace of the Oda family, Ota Tsurugi Jinja. While there is little to connect Nobunaga to the shrine before he conquered Echizen in 1573, he very quickly made clear that the shrine and attached temples

were to receive special protection. In a letter of 1573 to another vassal on the matter of encroachment on Tsurugi Jinja's holdings, Nobunaga's vassal Kinoshita Sukehisa 木下祐久 (d. 1584) wrote that the shrine was "our lord's ancestral deity, so special attention is required" (ONMK 3: 38–39). Later documents indicate that the shrine's upkeep was a concern for the regime, as in 1575 several of Nobunaga's representatives in Echizen wrote to the shrine and nearby temples after a land survey in the area, noting problems with the upkeep of the shrine halls despite an increase in the shrine's holdings (ONMK 2: 76–77). The very same day, the same agents wrote to the shrine effectively canceling the shrine's debts to ensure that shrine rites could continue without budgetary pressure (ONMK 2: 77–78). Less than a month later, Nobunaga sent a letter to two vassals who had responsibility over the area containing the shrine and ordered them to confiscate all temple and shrine holdings in the area with the exception of the holdings of Tsurugi Jinja, which being his "ancestor" was a different matter and totally exempt from confiscation (ONMK 2: 85–86). It seems straightforward, then, that Ota Tsurugi Jinja was important to Nobunaga and potentially was meant to serve an important role in his regime.

There does seem to be a fairly consistent policy as relates to shrines, which is to ensure that they are in good working order and able to continue with their rites. This seems equally true both before Nobunaga arrived in Kyoto and after, as we see a similar approach toward Atsuta as we do toward Iwashimizu. While there are still differences among the cases, Nobunaga, like many warrior leaders before him, saw the maintenance of important shrines as part of his role as a leader and pursued this with some vigor.

The Emperor

For many in Japan in this period, the emperor had a religious significance. This is not to suggest that Nobunaga or other warriors worshiped the emperor per se, but rather that the imperial court was a site of worship. Whether or not the warrior class believed that the emperor could bless or curse people in the manner of a deity is unclear. However, protecting, clothing, feeding, and funding the emperor and ensuring that his court was able to function was imbued with a sort of ritual significance.

The veneration of the emperor in this period was obvious even to outside observers. Fróis, for example, notes that the emperor was venerated among the Japanese in the manner of "other idols." Fróis also attributed to the emperor "control over the church," and analogizes him to the pope in Europe (KANDA 2010, 20). While these analogies are certainly limited in their usefulness for understanding the sixteenth-century religious and political landscape, they are based in the emperor's religious roles, both in terms of his ability to provide monks and

temples with special designations and ranks and in terms of his own unique relationship with the divine. This is visible also in native sources: there exists copies of an exchange of letters between the monk Yūzan 融山 (d. 1563) of the Hakone Gongen 箱根権現 shrine complex and the daimyo Hōjō Ujiyasu 北条氏康 (1515–1571) in 1561, wherein Yūzan explains how Ujiyasu might receive divine help in his endeavors. Yūzan suggests that Ujiyasu maintain temples and shrines and be merciful to the people, but first and foremost he advises making sure that the emperor's needs are met (Yokota 1996, 7; *Kanagawa kenshi*, 434–435). Furthermore, the emperor's traditional role as priest to the gods of Japan was innately useful to daimyo whose holdings grew larger. For the most part, people in sixteenth-century Japan were concerned with local temples and shrines, but once a daimyo had control of a large enough area each of these would only be relevant to a small part of the vassals and subjects in his holdings. As the center of worship of all the deities in Japan, as well as having control over the Buddhist clergy, the emperor could serve as a way to bring all of the gods and buddhas in a daimyo's domain (and their worshipers) under a single umbrella (Hori 2011, 274).

Nobunaga demonstrated a reverence toward the emperor in his actions. He was a major benefactor of the imperial court. He was making repairs to the Imperial Palace almost immediately upon his arrival in Kyoto in 1568, and these would continue until 1577. Furthermore, he confirmed the landholdings of the emperor and numerous court officials, and his confirmations seemed to actually guarantee income. He also established an ultimately unsuccessful system of rice-seed lending intended to grant the court income and feed the emperor in 1571 (Butler 2002, 144–148). He canceled all debts by the nobility in 1575, and went on a donation spree in that year, giving several thousand *koku* 石 (approximately one hundred and eighty liters, the standard measurement of rice production) of land to various court figures, including the emperor (onmk 1: 129–150).

In this we see again the influence of Nobunaga's father Nobuhide, who in 1543 gave one thousand strings of cash to the court to pay for repairs of the palace walls (Taniguchi 2017, 94–95; *Oyudono no ue no nikki* 4: 467). We can get a sense of how much this is by comparing the amount to other Sengoku daimyo: Nobuhide at the time controlled not even all of the single province of Owari. His longtime enemy Imagawa Yoshimoto 今川義元 (1519–1560), who controlled the three provinces of Suruga, Tōtōmi, and Mikawa, donated five hundred strings of cash (Taniguchi 2017, 95; *Oyudono no ue no nikki* 4: 478). Tamon'in Eishun stated in his diary that he had heard that Nobuhide had paid four thousand strings of cash (*Tamon'in nikki* 1: 306). One thousand seems more reasonable, but it is a princely sum in either case, and that an upstart daimyo who controlled not even a whole province was showing up one of the most accomplished and powerful warriors of his age suggests that Nobuhide was deeply concerned with imperial politics. In thanks, Nobuhide received gifts and an imperial order,

delivered by Tani Sōboku 谷宗牧 (d. 1545), the leading renga poet of the time. Nobunaga, while too young to have been involved in the donation in any meaningful sense, was surely aware of the pomp and ceremony surrounding the donation and the receipt of thanks from the court the next year and likely desired to maintain such a relationship with the court himself.

Furthermore, we can see in Nobunaga's writings a major concern for the legitimacy of the court. Nobunaga on several occasions interceded in court decisions. Two notable cases are the debate over the wearing of *ken'e* 絹衣 silk robes between the Shingon and Tendai monks of Mutsu Province, and the debate over the appointment of the *bettō* 別当 of Kōfukuji in 1574. In both cases, Nobunaga advises the court in his documents that its procedures needed to be normalized and transparent, so as to prevent the perception that the court was corrupt or incompetent (Kaneko 2015, 260–352). To be sure, Nobunaga's concerns here were in no small way self-serving, as he noted in a letter that if the court loses face, so too will he (ONMK 3: 183–184). But he also speaks to the importance of the court's own reputation, which is needed if the court will be seen as a legitimate arbiter of such matters.

There is also the matter of the piece of incense known as Ranjatai 蘭奢待, held at the Shōsōin 正倉院 storehouse at Tōdaiji. Ranjatai was brought to Japan from China and kept at the Shōsōin repository from the Nara period. It has only been verifiably cut a few times, though examinations suggest that around thirty-five cuts have been made. It is kept at Tōdaiji and today is managed by the Imperial Household Agency. Prior to Nobunaga, only Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and Yoshimasa are certain to have received cuttings. After much court maneuvering, Nobunaga received a piece of Ranjatai in 1574 and sent half to the emperor. There have been numerous interpretations of the political and symbolic meaning of the event in recent decades, with some scholars, such as Fujiki Hisashi and George Ellison (1981, 175), seeing it as a deliberate attempt to undermine the emperor's power and impose his own. Others, notably Kaneko Hiraku (2015, 214–250), disagree, noting that the only major objection from the court was that Nobunaga's main court contact in the process was the regent, which was improper as Ranjatai was a treasure of the imperial family.

I propose that the whole business of cutting Ranjatai, while clearly tied to Nobunaga's attempt to position himself as the successor to the Ashikaga, was born out of reverence for the imperial house. The Shōsōin is Emperor Shōmu's 聖武 (701–756) personal treasure house, and the items there are inherently tied to the glory of the throne. This was not lost on later rulers, including the Meiji Emperor, who received a piece of Ranjatai himself in 1868. Gyūichi certainly described the event as tinged with reverence, noting that even a glimpse of Ranjatai was a generational treasure (SKK, 167–168; CLN, 206–207). While Gyūichi was certainly prone to exaggeration, the cutting of Ranjatai is not treated in any source as the

acquisition of a simple (if rare) collectible. Rather, every source acknowledges that the event is special and that it must be carried out in a ritually correct and respectful manner, and, critically, that it was indeed properly carried out. By acquiring one of the emperor's treasures he was portraying himself as among the highest of the emperor's servants, giving his regime additional legitimacy.

Nobunaga used the religious dimensions of the imperial court to his advantage in other ways. In the third month of 1582, Tamon'in Eishun recorded that the court had exiled the gods of the lands of Nobunaga's enemies (*Tamon'in nikki* 3: 212). Furthermore, the court seems to have taken a particular interest in Nobunaga's attack on the Takeda, which was going on at the time, as it ordered prayers for Nobunaga in the same month at several temples and shrines, including Kōfukuji, as Nobunaga was on his way to Kai (*Tamon'in nikki* 3: 209).

While the political implications of the above cannot be denied, I believe it is important to emphasize that in the Sengoku political sphere, the emperor was not merely another political figure, and interactions with the emperor and his court should be seen as different than interactions between mere humans. While there were certainly those who neither paid the court any particular heed nor gave it support, many, Nobunaga included, saw in the court a unique sort of religious connection, a connection that they would seek to protect and exploit.

Conclusion

So, what does this study show us about the religious life and policies of Oda Nobunaga? First and foremost, while Nobunaga was without question atypical in many ways, his regime's relationship with religious institutions and figures was not particularly outside the norm for powerful warriors in Sengoku Japan, especially powerful warriors with connections to the shogun and the emperor. To the extent that Nobunaga was innovative, it was when the traditional power structure either failed or was working against him.

It is also clear that Nobunaga's religious policy was secondary to more worldly interests, especially those relating to his prestige and stability. I believe that this was both to the benefit and the detriment of religious interests depending on circumstance. This is perhaps most visible in the treatment of Enryakuji; the Mt. Hiei monks were a threat to stability, had harmed Nobunaga's prestige, and were destroyed. The *monzeki* were part of the court society Nobunaga wished to support and were given land grants. This also explains why Nobunaga's most favored religious institution seems to have shifted many times in a short period, as his hasty ascent meant that his priorities were fluid. Support of Hyakusaiji, for example, makes sense in 1568 when control of southern Ōmi was vital to maintaining a link to the capital, but by 1574 priorities had changed, leaving Nobunaga no reason to spare the temple when it betrayed him. Support of

Chion'in is reasonable in the context of Nobunaga increasingly taking leadership positions in the court. Finally, the focus on Sōkenji makes sense as Nobunaga, now leader of the court and master of the home provinces, sought to cement his own legacy and create a ritual center for his regime and those of his successors.

I should also note that this article is in no way a comprehensive look at all aspects of Nobunaga's religious life and policies. There are several likely fruitful avenues of inquiry that I did not explore here. For example, several cases in Gyūichi's biography suggests that Nobunaga was very concerned with religious conmen, as in the case of the mysterious Muhen 無辺 (d. 1580) and the Nichiren priest Fuden'in Nichimon 普伝院日門 (d. 1579). The relationship between Nobunaga and various Jōdoshin lineages, including Honganji, was in no way an affair of simple bloodthirsty hostility, and the documents relating to the various truces and the surrender of Osaka Honganji are fascinating on their own. The religious imagery in Gyūichi's description of Azuchi Castle likewise could possibly yield interesting results if closely examined. I have also deliberately avoided including a discussion of Christianity here, given my trepidation relating to the Jesuit sources and my desire to focus attention elsewhere. And I have not looked at the religious lives of the Oda vassals, who certainly had an impact on Nobunaga's religious policies. My hope is that this article inspires further explorations of the religious policies of both Sengoku daimyo and the unifiers, with an eye toward not only seeing how Tokugawa policies show continuities or breaks with earlier policies but also the ways in which such policies shaped and were shaped by the various players, including monks, shogunal officials, daimyo, vassals, and so on.

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CLN *The Chronicle of Lord Nobunaga*. Ōta Gyūichi 太田牛一 (b. 1527).Trans. J. S. A. Elisonas and Jeroen Pieter Lamers. Brill, 2011.

DNS *Dai Nihon shiryō* 大日本史料. vols. 10–11. Ed. Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo 東京大学史料編纂所. Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1927–.

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Saimon Recitations

Two Examples from Oku Mikawa

Saimon are recitations read as part of Onmyōdō or Shugendo rituals. They are of particular interest because their contents are not based on canonical Buddhist or Shinto lore but rather on sources of yin-yang divination like the fourteenth-century *Hoki naiden*. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *saimon* became a central feature of village ritual, both in collective village festivals and in household rites, and as such, they reached the ears of many. This article offers annotated translations of two *saimon* that were used by village ritualists (*tayū*, *negi*) in small mountain settlements in Oku Mikawa (Aichi Prefecture). These translations are based on manuscripts from *tayū* archives and date from the seventeenth century. A textual analysis demonstrates that while these two *saimon* tell the stories of different deities, they display a number of shared motifs and traits. I argue that these commonalities reflect the continued relevance and performance of *saimon* in Oku Mikawa and confound attempts to draw clear historical boundaries between "medieval" and "early modern" religion.

keywords: *saimon*—*hanamatsuri*—*kagura*—Gozu Tennō—*Hoki naiden*—Onmyōdō

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In an edited volume titled *Kagura to saimon no chūsei*, Saitō Hideki and Inoue Takahiro (2016) argue that ritual texts (*saimon* 祭文) recited by folk ritualists around Japan offer a unique window on a world of beliefs that they describe as "medieval." Texts of this kind, which are found in village rituals across the country, revolve around deities that once occupied a prominent place in village life but have since fallen from grace in the process of modernization: the likes of Gozu Tennō 牛頭天王, Daidokujin 大土公神, and Kōjin 荒神. Narratives about these deities have no basis in the classical court chronicles *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki*, nor do they rely on the Buddhist canon; rather, they draw on texts and tales from Onmyōdō 陰陽道, Shugendo, and folk traditions.

The process of marginalizing these deities and their lore had already begun in the nineteenth century, as Kokugaku activists associated with the school of Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) rewrote *saimon* at multiple sites. The "clarification of buddhas and kami" initiated by the new Meiji government in 1868 intensified this trend. Gozu Tennō was explicitly mentioned in a ban (issued in the third month of that year) against the use of Buddhist names at Shinto shrines, and both Shugendo and Onmyōdō practices were prohibited in 1872. In these years, there were many attempts to reform festivals and strip them of "syncretic" and "superstitious" elements. Gozu Tennō became Susanoo, and traditional *kagura* 神楽 dances were replaced with newly designed ones, typically featuring *kami* like Amaterasu and Susanoo rather than the likes of Gozu Tennō, Daidokujin, and Kōjin. In this process, some *saimon* were rewritten, but most were simply abandoned. At best, they survived in the archives of village ritualists, gathering dust in lofts, outhouses, and forgotten cupboards.

Village *saimon* already attracted the attention of folklorists in the 1920s. An early example of their collection is the *saimon* texts included by Hayakawa Kōtarō (1930a; 1930b) in his study of the *hanamatsuri* 花祭り festivals, performed in the region of Oku Mikawa. Yet, Hayakawa made little use of these *saimon* in his analysis of the festivals that he describes. This may be due in part to the influence of his mentor, Orikuchi Shinobu. Hayakawa and Orikuchi first observed a *hanamatsuri* festival together in 1926. To Orikuchi, the festival appeared as a truly archaic rite with roots in the primeval practices of ancient "mountain men." Yet he also noticed many recent elements, which in his view detracted from the festival's value as an authentic relic of ancient Japanese culture. In particular, he was dismayed to find influences from Onmyōdō and Shugendo lore. The performers he spoke to insisted on explaining their actions by referring to

what Orikuchi described as "obnoxious" theories of obvious Onmyōdō origin (Orikuchi 1930, 22). The *saimon* appeared to Orikuchi as an inauthentic overlay that frustrated his attempts to reconstruct the *hanamatsuri*'s older essence.

This kind of dismissal of "medieval syncretism" as a deplorable corruption of ancient traditions remained commonplace until the 1980s. It was only in that decade that both "Buddhist Shinto" and Onmyōdō became objects of serious study.[1] Around the same time, scholars of folklore became interested in *saimon* as a central ingredient of rural traditions of *kagura* deity dances. A pioneer in this respect was Iwata Masaru (1983; 1990), who actively used *saimon* in his study of the *kagura* traditions of the Hiba district in the inner reaches of Hiroshima Prefecture. Yamamoto Hiroko (1993; 1998b) was the first to analyze *saimon* as sources of a lost "medieval mythology." Her focus was primarily on the *saimon* of Oku Mikawa's *hanamatsuri*, which had been all but ignored by scholars since Hayakawa's publication in 1930.

Inspired by these studies, Saitō and Inoue's *Kagura to saimon no chūsei* expands the study of *saimon* as a hitherto neglected window into a "medieval worldview." Saitō lists three distinct features of this worldview. He points out that it mixes local and Buddhist divinities; displays a cosmology that stretches across the "three lands" of India, China, and Japan; and gives center stage to what Yamamoto (1998a) calls "strange deities" (*ijin* 異神): gods who, like Gozu Tennō, Daidokujin, and Kōjin, are characterized by their non-canonical status, their tendency to behave in violent ways, and their supreme powers to both protect and punish (Saitō and Inoue 2016, 18). Whereas Orikuchi sought traces of pre-medieval, ancient practices, Saitō and Inoue argue that *saimon* can shed light on medieval beliefs that they regard as the original core of *kagura*.

Kagura has a prehistory in the ancient period, as attested by the myth of Ame no Uzume's dance in front of the Rock Cave of Heaven and a classical history at court (notably in the form of the eleventh-century *mikagura* 御神楽). We also know of the existence of medieval *kagura* traditions at Kumano, Ise, and other influential shrines and temples. Village *kagura* seem to have emerged in the fifteenth century and spread across a wide area, from Kyushu to Tohoku, in the sixteenth century. However, most sources documenting their proceedings date from the seventeenth century and later. This also includes *saimon* documents, which as performative texts were subject to much wear and tear. Faced with a paucity of sources on early village *kagura*, Saitō and Inoue (2016, 4) argue that close readings of almost exclusively early modern *saimon* documents are the only way to rediscover their medieval roots.

1. Itō (1980) and Maruyama (1981) were particularly important in the establishment of these new fields of study.

Outside of Japanese scholarship, *saimon* have so far received very little attention. The exceptions are a handful of articles on the use of *saimon* in the Izanagi-ryū tradition in Kōchi Prefecture (Mauclaire 1992; 1994; 1996; 2012; Umeno 2012). This article introduces the reader to the *saimon* genre through two examples from the Oku Mikawa region. The selected *saimon* focus on Gozu Tennō and Daidokujin. This article aims to present these *saimon* in annotated translations and to reflect on the ways in which these texts were used in the setting where the translated manuscripts were produced: Oku Mikawa villages in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While these *saimon* may contain "medieval" elements, we cannot be content with merely assuming that their usage throughout the Edo period was a result of ritual inertia. In Oku Mikawa, generations of *tayū* 太夫 copied, learned, and recited these long and complex texts and chose to use them in a variety of ritual settings. They did so not for historical reasons, but because these *saimon* appeared relevant to their purposes and their circumstances. The concerns that these ritual texts intended to address, such as warding off illness and avoid divine punishment, are perennial. I argue that the continued relevance of *saimon* in Oku Mikawa must make us think twice before we label and interpret them as "medieval" rather than "early modern."

What are Saimon?

Before introducing the two *saimon* from Oku Mikawa that are the main focus of this article, it is useful to take a closer look at the history of *saimon* as a textual genre. In Chinese, this word (read *jiwen*) referred primarily to obituary eulogies, written in either prose or verse. In Japan, it first appeared in the court history *Shoku Nihongi* (16, 393), referring to a text in refined Chinese and composed in 787 for recitation at an equally Chinese ritual for worshiping heaven. The term was not widely used in Buddhist contexts. It overlapped partly with the Buddhist *hyōbyaku* 表白, a liturgical text chanted at the beginning of a ritual to make its intentions explicit. Even more similar are *kōshiki* 講式, a genre of chanted texts that praise an object of veneration and explain its legends and meaning in Japanese, rather than scholarly Chinese (Ambros 2016). In *jingi* 神祇 rituals, an equivalent term was *norito* 祝詞, a recited text in archaic Japanese that addresses the gods directly and appeals to them to fulfill the wishes of the ritual's sponsors.

In Japan, *saimon* first developed into a distinct genre in the context of Onmyōdō rituals. An example is *Honmyō saimon* 本命祭文, written for rites performed on days with the same zodiac signs as the birthday of the ritual's sponsor (Umeda 2016, 48). At court, texts of this nature were written by specialists of the Chinese classics (mostly members of the Sugawara 菅原 family), and they were preferably recited by Onmyōdō ritualists of the Abe 安倍 and Kamo 賀茂

families.[2] *Saimon* were collected for later reference in such works as the fifteenth-century *Shosaimon kojitsu shō* 諸祭文故実抄 and the sixteenth-century *Saimon burui* 祭文部類. The latter, associated with the Tsuchimikado 土御門 house (the court lineage specializing in Onmyōdō knowledge), included *saimon* directed at Kōjin 荒神 and Dokō 土公 (Dokū, Dokujin, later also Daidokujin), deities who would later play central roles in village *kagura*. Perhaps more than *hyōbyaku* and *norito*, these *saimon* were designed to have a direct thaumaturgical effect on the gods that they address.[3] *Saimon* typically seek to charm the gods, threaten them, send them away from the village and back to their "original palace" (*hongū* 本宮), or remind them of vows or promises that they have made in the distant past.

While classical *saimon* at court tended to be brief statements, medieval *saimon* came to include a rich narrative content, perhaps inspired by a felt need to tell villagers about the powers of the invoked deities. The *saimon* translated and discussed here both draw heavily on what was perhaps the most ubiquitous work of this genre: the *Hoki naiden*. This text combines assorted calendrical and astrological knowledge with tales about Gozu Tennō, the deity of the Gionsha 祇園社 (today's Yasaka Jinja 八坂神社 in Kyoto), among others. It is believed that different sections of this work derive from distinct milieus in Kyoto, combined into a single text only later. As a result, the text is loosely organized and remained fluid at least until its first printing in the early seventeenth century. Its popularity is attested by a variety of commentaries (among which *Hoki shō* 簠簋抄 was the most influential), which added even more dramatic tales to the already dazzling lore in the original.[4]

From the sixteenth century onward, the practice of reciting *saimon* was adopted by local ritualists across Japan, notably in rural areas. It was during this period that Shugendo practitioners (*shugenja* 修験者) settled in villages in considerable numbers, due both to a decline of traditional Shugendo centers like Kumano and to an increasing demand among villagers for communal and household rites. Their descendants continued to take pride in their *shugenja* ancestry, but soon evolved into local village ritualists, known as *tayū* (or *dayū*), *hōsha* (or *hosa*) 法者, *negi* 禰宜, and other terms. They used their Buddhist and Onmyōdō expertise to cater to this demand, while adapting performing arts

2. Onmyōdō rites like *kudoku hō* 供土公法 (presenting offerings to Dokū) had already become part of Buddhist practices in the tenth century. Buddhist monks also came to recite *saimon* in rites directed at the stars of the Big Dipper, the Pole Star, and the "deities of the earth" (*chijin* 地神). See Saitō and Inoue (2016, 27), which refers to *Chōya gunsai* 朝野群載 (ca. 1141) as a source of such *saimon*.

3. Iwata Masaru (1990, 182), however, argues that *norito* were also originally used as tools to "force" the gods to subject themselves to the will of the ritualist.

4. Nakamura Shōhachi (2000, 223–329) gives an overview of different versions of the *Hoki naiden* and collates all versions into a single annotated text.

from larger centers to local circumstances. Masked and unmasked dances, offerings of sacralized hot water (*yudate* 湯立), and the manipulation of the spirits of the dead and other roaming spirits were central to their repertoire.

The *saimon* that were read as part of these rituals are long and colorful. They tend to start with origins, at times turning into thrilling fairy tales or collapsing into inscrutable technical jargon. Writing about the *tayū* of Izanagiryū, Umeno Mitsuoki (2008, 153) proposes that they used *saimon* to "build a ritual world through words." When a sacred space is created, the objects used in the ritual are empowered one by one with the help of *saimon* that describe where they originated—often in India—and how they made their way to Japan. Deities and spirits are called upon to listen and treated to long tales about their birth and their exploits, while reminding them of their relationship to the *tayū* and his clients. Deities were said to enjoy hearing these tales. Reciting a deity's *saimon* made it receptive to the ritual procedures and prayers of the sponsor, presented to it by the *tayū*. From another perspective, the *saimon* also helped the people present to grasp the logic of the ritual, the potency of the implements, the character of the deities involved, and the powers of the ritualist.

Saimon, then, were designed to engross their divine and human audiences in grand tales full of striking images, exotic locations, and dramatic events. They often painted on a canvas of cosmic dimensions, starting the narrative with the very origins of our world and stretching across India, China, and Japan, or even across the entire Buddhist universe. We hear of kings and dragons, battles and ghostly armies, magical treasures and supernatural powers. There are endless lists of outlandish names, punctuated by dizzyingly large numbers. In Hiroshima's Hiba district, and other places as well, *saimon* functioned as playscripts for costumed *kagura* dances, while in Kōchi's Izanagiryū, and also in Oku Mikawa, they were recited on their own or as an accompaniment to rites or dances that did not act out the *saimon* tale.

Hanamatsuri

This article discusses two *saimon* from Oku Mikawa, home to the famous festival of *hanamatsuri*, a form of end-of-year *kagura* (*shimotsuki kagura* 霜月神楽) performed in villages in the municipalities of Toyone, Tōei, and Shitara. *Hanamatsuri* centers on dances performed around a hearth and a cauldron filled with water. The proceedings are led by a priest who is titled *tayū* or *negi*. After the priest has invited all the gods of the realm to the dancing site, which is elaborately decorated with five-colored paper cuttings,[5] dancers of all ages circle the hearth to the rhythm of a drum and flutes. The dances, which continue through-

5. Some villages changed to white paper to match Meiji-period Shinto ritual language.

out the night and into the morning, are interrupted by appearances of masked demons (*oni* 鬼). There are also various intermezzos, including comic relief by clown-like figures and a concluding lion dance (*shishimai* 獅子舞). The festival reaches its climax when hot water from the cauldron is splashed over the participants, soaking them in divine blessings.

Hanamatsuri is thought to have originated in the first decades of the seventeenth century as a simplified version of an even larger festival, known simply as *kagura* or (later) *ōkagura* 大神楽.[6] This festival was led by local *shugenja* and their descendants (the *tayū* or *negi*) at irregular intervals by multiple cooperating villages from the area. It lasted three or more days, culminating in two central events called *umare kiyomari* 生まれ清まり (birth and purification) and *Jōdo iri* 浄土入り (entering the Pure Land). The former transformed children and youngsters into *kamiko* 神子 or *kango* 神護, "children of the gods" who enjoy divine protection against illness and other calamities. *Jōdo iri* secured participants safe entry into Amida's Western Pure Land after death. *Ōkagura* was last performed in 1856; the earliest source attesting to its existence is a list of the ninety-nine rites that made up its procedures, dated 1581 (or possibly 1573).[7]

This earliest source, titled *Mikagura nikki* 御神楽日記, is part of the archive of the Sakakibara 榊原 house of Yamauchi, located in present-day Toyone. Yamauchi was a hamlet of a mere handful of households, subsisting by cultivating swiddens and marginal dry fields, in addition to gathering and hunting; in this, it was similar to all other settlements in the area. The oldest of these settlements appears to have been Sogawa, ten kilometers further south; today, this village lies on the bottom of the New Toyone reservoir. From the fourteenth century onward, the valleys in this remote area served as a hideaway for warriors down on their luck. While the area was far away from anywhere else, it was not completely isolated. The nearby Tenryū River served as a route between the coast in the south and Suwa in the north. This route was frequented by *shugenja* traveling between Kumano or Ise and Suwa. The significance of this is clear from the existence of multiple Kumano and Suwa shrines in the region. It seems likely that *shugenja* had already settled in places like Sogawa by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.[8]

According to Toyone's register of historical documents, the Sakakibara archive contains no less than 175 documents "related to *saimon*." The Moriya 守屋 of Sogawa had a similar archive, and the priests of neighboring villages, too, had

6. For an introduction in English, see Lee (2006).

7. The date reads Tenshō 天正 1 (1573) or 9 (1581) (Toyonemura Kyōiku Iinkai 1985, 69).

8. The *shugenja* Manzōin 万蔵院 and his disciple Rinzōin 林蔵院 are said to have (re)designed and spread *hanamatsuri*. However, their graves date their deaths to 1703 and 1766. These ascetics (with *ajari* 阿闍梨 and *hōin* 法印 ranks) may have been descendants of local *shugenja* (Takei 1977, 203, n. 20). The Moriya house traces its ancestors to Rinzōin.

large caches of documents, including *saimon* of many kinds. By the last decades of the sixteenth century, *kagura* performances had spread southwards and westwards into what is today Tōei and Shitara; here, too, *tayū* houses have preserved large collections of documents, including numerous *saimon*.[9] Some of these are directly related to *hanamatsuri* or *ōkagura*, designed to be read as part of the proceedings—although this is rarely indicated in the documents themselves. Others, however, are not. After all, the *tayū* priests were involved in rituals of all kinds, including exorcisms, divination, healing rites, and much more. The existence of these large caches of *saimon* documents leaves little doubt that reciting such texts was an important aspect of the ritual activities of the region's *tayū*.

The two *saimon* translated and annotated at the end of this article are particularly well-suited to showcase the mixture of esoteric Buddhist and Onmyōdō lore that characterizes recitations of this kind. They are of interest also because they were among the first to have been collected and published by Japanese folklorists. These texts continue to play a prominent role in the emerging field of *saimon* studies. Below, I analyze them one by one and then discuss the striking communalities between them. I then reflect on their function within local rituals, as well as their influence on local beliefs and practices.

On Gozu Tennō shimawatari saimon

The *Gozu Tennō shimawatari saimon* (hereafter *Shimawatari saimon*) offers an extended version of the legend of Gozu Tennō, the Ox-Headed Deva King who brings illness to his enemies while sparing his friends. It clearly draws on texts about Gozu Tennō from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, notably the Onmyōdō work *Hoki naiden* and a variety of much shorter *Gozu Tennō engi* 牛頭天王縁起, known in many variants from the fifteenth century onward.[10] While details differ, all these texts share the same overall plot, which goes as follows.

Gozu Tennō, King Mutō's son from the land of Bunyō, has trouble finding a bride. He is visited by a bird that tells him about Harisainyo, the third daughter of the Dragon King Shagara. Gozu Tennō departs, accompanied by a large retinue, to ask for her hand. When night falls, he seeks lodging in the palace of the demon king Kotan Daiō (or Kotan Chōja), but he is abused at the gate and turned away. Gozu Tennō then finds the hovel of Somin Shōrai, who is poor but

9. The two *tayū* houses in the hamlet of Kobayashi (Tōei), for example, preserve 191 and 145 "religious documents"; the oldest date to the late sixteenth century (Matsuyama 2015, 655–656).

10. A version of this text (with a good number of printing errors) titled *Gion Gozu Tennō engi* is included in *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, vol. 55. For collections of different versions, see Nishida (1962; 1963a; 1963b). Suzuki (2019) discusses both the *Hoki naiden* and one version of *Gozu Tennō engi* in detail. For a broader overview of Gozu Tennō lore and related practices, see Faure (2021, 107–149).

nevertheless accommodates him and gives him a humble meal of millet. Resuming his travels, Gozu Tennō soon reaches the Dragon Palace, where he asks the Dragon King for Harisainyo's hand. He stays here for eight years, fathering eight sons—or, in some versions, seven sons and one daughter. After eight years, he returns to Japan.

On his way home, Gozu Tennō is determined to destroy Kotan. Kotan puts up sturdy defenses. He has a thousand monks recite great spells and appeal to Taizanfukun (the lord of Mt. Taishan, who judges the dead)—or, in *Gozu Tennō engi*, chant the *Daihannya Sūtra*. However, one of the monks mixes up his chanting, leaving a breach in Kotan's fortifications. Gozu Tennō's footmen enter through this gap and kill Kotan and all in his entourage.

From here, the versions diverge more significantly. In *Hoki naiden*, Gozu Tennō makes an amulet for a girl who belongs to Somin's household, marking her as the only person in Kotan's house who must be spared. He also teaches Somin a secret spell to "subdue Kotan." Gozu Tennō cuts Kotan's corpse into five parts and teaches Somin Shōrai to pacify these by means of five rites on five calendar dates (*gosekku* 五節句); the foodstuffs offered on those days are said to correspond to Kotan's body parts. *Gozu Tennō engi* adds that Gozu Tennō's eight princes promise to protect Somin's descendants against the calendrical deities who are their alter egos, starting with Taisaijin, who is an avatar (*henge* 変化) of the first prince.

Nishida Nagao (1962) gives an overview of *Gozu Tennō engi* texts. He begins by quoting a *saimon* that, like the one translated here, calls down and honors Gozu Tennō and his eight princes. Dated 1550, it goes under the name of *kanjō saimon* 灌頂 (勧請) 祭文, a recitation that calls down certain deities for worship. Nishida notes that this *saimon* was used by Onmyōdō ritualists in the countryside west of Nara. This is one example of how Gozu Tennō's tale became part of the ritual life of villages in the form of *saimon*. In Oku Mikawa, too, there was a variety of *saimon* that drew on the Gozu Tennō narrative, in addition to the version translated here.[11]

Shimawatari saimon is based on this well-known material but stands out for its unusual handling of the plotline. Most strikingly, Gozu Tennō's journey (section 3 of the *saimon*, as indicated in the translation below) is cut loose from his quest for a wife; he merely travels there because he wants to "see the famous

11. *Ontoshitokujin saimon* 御歳徳神祭文 follows largely the same plot, though it stays closer to *Gozu Tennō engi*; here, Gozu Tennō is referred to as Daiō Tennō 大王天王 (Matsuyama 2021, 91–113, 130). On the other hand, *Gozu Tennō saimon* 牛頭天皇祭文 is built around a different narrative: Gozu Tennō searches for a "residence of happiness" in Japan, but he is rejected everywhere because no gods want to expose their people to the 404 pestilences that he brings. In the end, Amaterasu in Ise grants Gozu Tennō the provinces of Echigo, Etchū, and Sado: all far away from Mikawa (Matsuyama 2021, 114–120, 132).

Blood Pond in the Dragon Palace." It is from this pond that the eighth "prince," the female Jadokke 蛇毒気, emerges: she has been "hatched" from the afterbirths deposited there after the births of her seven brothers (section 4). When Gozu Tennō and family travel back to Japan, Jadokke appears to them in the form of a sea serpent. Gozu Tennō's acceptance of Jadokke as his eighth "prince" forms the climax of the first half of the *Shimawatari saimon*. The entire family returns to Japan, where they introduce countless illnesses, without even meeting Somin or Kotan (section 5). The tale of that meeting, ending with Gozu Tennō's annihilation of Kotan and his entourage (section 6), appears only after the tale is quite abruptly restarted, almost as an afterthought.

Another startling feature of *Shimawatari saimon* is Gozu Tennō's encounter with Śākyamuni (section 7). When Śākyamuni confronts Gozu Tennō after he had "tortured even disciples of the Buddha," Gozu Tennō presents himself as a more primordial and powerful buddha than Śākyamuni, who is a mere "human." He challenges Śākyamuni to offer his life for his followers, and when Śākyamuni accepts, he infects him with a lethal disease that soon kills him. The contrast between the merciful (but weak) Śākyamuni and the murderous (but powerful) Gozu Tennō is striking.[12] The underlying message appears to be that while Śākyamuni will give up his own life for the sake of his patrons, even he is susceptible to the terrible illnesses spread by Gozu Tennō. The tangible benefits of following Gozu Tennō (as "descendants" of Somin Shōrai) are therefore much greater.

When Gozu Tennō arrives in Japan, he settles in Tsushima, on the eastern bank of the Kiso River in Owari (west of Nagoya). This detail offers evidence of the influence of traveling dealers in prayer. The Oku Mikawa area was frequented by "pilgrim masters" (*oshi* 御師) from Tsushimasha 津島社, which is dedicated to Gozu Tennō. The influence of these *oshi* is attested by the existence in Oku Mikawa of many small Tsushima shrines dedicated to Gozu Tennō and the eight princes.[13] Copies of *Shimawatari saimon* are sometimes accompanied by ver-

12. Yamamoto (1998a, 550–551) finds a parallel to this story in a text that was sung by *biwa* 琵琶 monks, titled *Bussetsu jishin daidarani kyō* 仏説地神大陀羅尼経. According to this text, Śākyamuni's disciples fail to light the pyre after their master's death because the five Dragon Kings and the earth deity Kenrō Jishin prevent the fire from burning. Śākyamuni, waking up from death, explains that these deities protect the earth and teaches his disciples the ritual to pacify them. While this text links the gods of the earth to Śākyamuni's cremation, it does not ascribe the cause of his death to such deities, let alone allow them to brag about "defeating" Śākyamuni, as *Shimawatari saimon* does.

13. Matsuyama (2021, 89) lists ten such shrines. Hayashi (2008, 42) notes that by 1608 the Tsushima *oshi* Hotta Masasada 堀田正貞 served clients in nineteen provinces, including Mikawa. Tōeichō Shi Henshū Iinkai (2001, 545–546) includes a membership list of a Tsushima *kō* 講 (a pious association) in Kobayashi, dated 1780. Of the eighty-member association, four to six were chosen each year to make a proxy pilgrimage to Tsushima.

sions of another Tsushima text, titled *Gozu Tennō godanshiki* 牛頭天皇五段式.[14] The Sakakibara house in Yamauchi also preserves an undated *Gozu Tennō hō* 牛頭天皇法, a Shugendo-type ritual manual that ends by beseeching "the pestilence deities from Tsushima" to return to their "original palace" (Takei 1996, 208). Matsuyama Yūko (2019) finds that the Sakakibara family head received more ritual texts featuring Gozu Tennō from a Tsushima *oshi* and a fellow local *tayū* in a time when famine-induced diseases were rife. *Shimawatari saimon*, then, belongs to a larger genre of Gozu Tennō texts. Its appearance in Oku Mikawa shows that practices and beliefs around this pestilence deity were spread even to remote mountain villages from such centers as Tsushimasha in Owari and the Gionsha in Kyoto.

Takei Shōgu (1996, 203) claims that Gozu Tennō was "the most important roaming deity of the *hanamatsuri* and *ōkagura*," but in fact this deity is hardly mentioned in documents and *saimon* related to those festivals.[15] *Gozu Tennō hō* does not mention *hanamatsuri* or *ōkagura*; instead, it refers to a ritual of "prayer by the village collective" (*sōson kinen* 惣村祈念) at the beginning of the new year, in which pestilence deities were gathered up, placed in a *mikoshi*, carried to the village boundaries, and "returned to Tsushima." The *hanamatsuri* was also performed around this time of the year, but its procedures did not involve such a *mikoshi* procession. *Kamiokuri no honkai* 神送之本戒, another eighteenth-century manuscript from the Sakakibara house of Yamauchi, specifies that *Shimawatari saimon* is to be used for "prayer rites for the sick" (Matsuyama 2021, 125, 134). It would appear that this *saimon* was recited by *tayū* both at a communal ritual of expelling pestilence spirits at the beginning of the year and privately, at the sickbed of ailing villagers. *Shimawatari saimon* ends by explaining to the ritual's sponsor (*ōdanna* 大旦那) that it will dispatch the deities of disease to their original abodes, thus securing the sponsor a long and healthy life (section 9).

Daidokujin kyō

As was the case with the *Shimawatari saimon*, the *saimon* titled *Daidokujin kyō* 大土公神 is a mixture of known plots and unique twists. It begins with a long

14. The original title of this text in Tsushima is *Gozu Tennō kōshiki* 牛頭天皇講式. Matsuyama (2021, 85) introduces seven copies of *Gozu Tennō godanshiki*. All copies present the text as "a secret ritual [text] on the origin of Gozu Tennō, from Tsushima in Owari." Dated copies are from the seventeenth century onward.

15. *Shimawatari saimon* may have been part of *ama no matsuri* 天の祭り, "loft worship" at *hanamatsuri* (Saitō and Inoue 2016, 35). Such worship was conducted in front of wands in the loft above the dancing site by the *tayū* or one of the *myōdo* and then, for the duration of the festival, by a "loft watch" (*ama no ban* 天の番). However, Hoshi Yūya (2020) finds no trace of *Shimawatari saimon* in his study of *ama no matsuri*. Even if it was read there, this was done as one of many recitations, out of earshot of all but the reciter himself.

preamble about the origins of the cosmos, starting with the "time of empty space" (section 1) and ending with a lengthy exploration of Mt. Sumeru, our own continent of Jambudvīpa, and the "three lands" of India, China, and Japan (section 2). The tale of the origin of our world appears to restart multiple times, setting out with the red and white jewel and then introducing in turn the "warrior king of the twelve moons," the buddha Amida, and the giant Ikuba, whose body parts gave rise to time and space. While most of these elements can be found in various older texts, this *saimon* combines them in a unique manner. Ikuba (section 2), for example, draws on tales about a cosmic giant that have ancient Chinese roots and are known in many Japanese variants, but the name Ikuba is unique to this *saimon*.[16]

In fact, this cosmic giant is usually called Bango or Banko 盤固, a figure who enters the tale in section 3, apparently out of the blue. Bango derives ultimately from the Chinese Pangu 盤古, known from the third-century Daoist text *Sanwu liji* 三五歷紀, which also served as the main source for the section about the cosmogony in *Nihon shoki*. *Sanwu liji* describes how Pangu was born from a primordial egg, and how he started the process whereby yin and yang moved apart, separating heaven from earth. This theme was further elaborated upon in numerous texts of medieval Shinto. It can also be found in *Hoki naiden*, which renders Bango as 盤牛, linking this ancient giant to Gozu Tennō by way of the character for ox 牛 (*Hoki naiden*, 40).

In *Daidokujin kyō*, Bango appears as the primordial father who sets the "way of yin and yang" into motion by having intercourse with his wife. Their union produces four sons and one daughter, collectively called the "five princes," who are the protagonists of the rest of the narrative. The motif of the last-born daughter overlaps with *Shimawatari saimon*, where the serpent Jadokke appeared as the eighth and last "prince." In the tale of that *saimon*, however, the question of the daughter's status as a legitimate child is resolved without much conflict and Jadokke plays no major role in the narrative that follows. In *Daidokujin kyō*, in contrast, the daughter fights a bloody battle with her four brothers to claim her portion of Bango's realm, and she proves to be the most powerful of them all (section 5).

16. Ōhashi (1986, 11) proposes that Ikuba derives from Shiki Bonnō 尸棄梵王, a name of Mahābrahmā, the king of the realm of form. In a thirteenth-century text titled *Gotei ryūō kongen* 五帝龍王根源 (quoted in Iwata 1983, 158), Shiki Bonnō features as the father of the five princes. Ogawa Toyoo (2019, 145) points out the many parallels between medieval Shinto texts that feature Shiki Bonnō (for example, *Reikiki* 麗気記) and *Daidokujin kyō*. Iwata (1990, 200) proposes that the Nakashitara manuscript (Hayakawa 1930a, 441–445), which does not mention Ikuba, follows an older pattern than the versions from Misono and Komadate. Ikuba would have been added to the more traditional Bango narrative at a later date.

TABLE 1. The various associations connected to the children of Bango Daiō in *Daidokujin kyō*.

	Directions	Seasons	Colors	Soteriology	Wisdoms
Tarō	East	Spring	green/blue	aspiration	*daienkyōchi*
Jirō	South	Summer	red	practice	*byōdōshōchi*
Saburō	West	Autumn	white	enlightenment	*myōkanzacchi*
Shirō	North	Winter	black	nirvana	*jōshosachi*
Gorō	Center	Doyō	yellow	skillful means	*hokkaitaishōchi*

As the *saimon* embarks on the tale of the battle of the five "princes," the language of the narration shifts abruptly into a different genre. Short sentences that use readily understandable vocabulary make way for convoluted images brimming with Buddhist verbiage. Written in a mixture of kana and *ateji* 当て字 (characters used phonetically, without much attention to their meaning), this section is difficult to interpret even for a translator with access to databases and a library. For a villager who only had one chance to hear the recitation, it must have been impenetrable. Effective storytelling is replaced with an esoteric logic of hidden correlations, accessible only to those who are in the know. The purpose of this section is not to captivate a human audience; rather, it is to empower the space where the *saimon* is being recited by laying out a fivefold mandala. Each prince is plotted into a mandalic grid of associated directions, seasons, and colors—and, beyond those, to phases of practice and attainment, and ultimately to the "five wisdoms" (*gochi* 五智) of buddhas (TABLE 1).

These correlations, all in fives, are ubiquitous in texts of esoteric Buddhism and Shugendo. For example, one can find a paradigm that closely resembles *Daidokujin kyō* in a Kamakura text titled *Gozō mandara waeshaku* 五臓曼荼羅和会釈 analyzed by Fabio Rambelli.[17] I will not enter into the buddhological territory that supports these associations, other than to point out that there is a progression from elementary to advanced, especially in the final two categories, implying that the female Gorō no Himemiya supersedes all her brothers. As Simone MAUCLAIRE (2012, 329) states, Gorō "occupies the center of the spatio-temporal complex depicted in the mandala-like formula." Despite the fact that she is the only daughter among sons and the youngest of them all, she is clearly the most powerful, the most accomplished, and the most important among them.

17. RAMBELLI (2007, 25) mentions that the fifth wisdom is usually associated with Dainichi, *doyō* 土用, the center, and the perfection of skillful means. The list of fives can be further enlarged with many other categories (for example, the five organs).

In the end, it is Monzen Hakase who brokers peace between Gorō and her brothers by giving each of them equal portions of the calendrical year. The four brothers receive the four seasons, while Gorō is given the last eighteen days of each season, in total, seventy-two so-called "earth days" (*doyō* 土用) spread throughout the year (section 6). The tale of this "calendar war" between the five princes and Monzen's mediation has a long history. Its earliest source is a didactic text titled *Chūkōsen*, a compilation of Chinese, Indian, and animal tales from the early twelfth century (Masuo 2021; Iwata 1990, 188–189). Here, an Indian king awarded the spring months and the eastern direction to his first son Tarō, the summer months and the south to Jirō, the autumn months and the west to Saburō, and the winter months and the north to Shirō. Later, a fifth son, Gorō, was born after the king's death. Gorō demanded his part of the inheritance and fought his brothers for it. A minister called Monzen Hakase intervened, urging the four brothers to grant Gorō his fair share of seventy-two days. Gorō thanked the minister by granting his descendants amnesty from divine punishment (*Chūkōsen*, 272–274). Incidentally, the name Monzen refers to *Wen xuan* 文選, a Chinese work compiled in the 520s. Reading the highly cultivated contents of this work was regarded as a great feat of learning. Monzen Hakase, then, originally meant "master of the *Wen xuan*"; but in *Daidokujin kyō*, it has become a personal name, written 門前.

Some versions of *Hoki naiden* include a similar story line to this *saimon*.[18] Here, the five princes are the sons of Bango Daiō, as in *Daidokujin kyō*. In *Hoki naiden*, Bango and his wife produce four princes, who are granted rule over four phases (wood, fire, metal, and water) and the four seasons. Bango prepares a storehouse full of treasures destined for the fifth child, whether a daughter or a son. The fifth child turns out to be a girl, and she is named Tenmon Gyokunyo 天門玉女. She marries the earth deity Kenrō Daijishinnō 堅牢大地神王, and they have forty-eight children. When these children grow up, they desire their own domain and rebel against their uncles: the green, red, white, and black dragon kings. Tenmon Gyokunyo changes her appearance into that of a male and calls herself the yellow dragon king. For seventeen days, the battle colors the Ganges River red with blood. Monzen Hakase mediates, and it is agreed that the final eighteen days of each season will become the domain of the yellow dragon king, who hereby becomes the lord of the seventy-two *doyō* days.

This tale, in many variants, forms the core of all *saimon* related to Bango and the five dragon kings, which appeared in various regions of Japan from the

18. This tale is only found in a few versions of the *Hoki naiden*; the oldest among these are the so-called *Yōken bon* 楊憲本 (1596–1615) and a printed version from 1612. For the original text, see Nakamura (2000, 265). For analysis, see Watanabe (1988, 109–113) and Saitō (2016, 96–97).

mid-sixteenth century onwards.[19] IWATA (1983, 106–109) transcribes an even earlier example from Kami Kubokawa (a village near Hiroshima), dated 1477. The first half of this manuscript is lost, but in the remaining part, describing Monzen's mediation between the five princes, the storyline and much of the vocabulary resemble our version.

It is striking that the role of Daidokujin in these *saimon* is rarely made explicit; in *Daidokujin kyō*, Daidokujin only features in the opening address (section 1), which ends with the phrase "We ask about the original ground of Daidokujin," and once again towards the end, when Monzen and his descendants are granted immunity from Daidokujin's punishments (section 6). Iwata transcribes a *saimon* dated 1679, also from the Hiroshima region, where the five dragon kings are identified as the five earth deities (Dokujin) of the five directions;[20] our own text seems to imply the same association without stating so. Dokujin (or Daidokujin) does not feature in the tale of the warring five brothers in either *Chūkōsen* or *Hoki naiden*. Indeed, classical worship of the five dragon kings (for example, in the Shinsen'en 神泉苑 garden in Kyoto) focused on prayers for rain, rather than in the context of disturbing the soil. What linked the tale of the five dragon kings and Gorō's conquest of the *doyō* days to Dokujin was the use of this *saimon* in rites to pacify Dokujin, rather than some narrative logic.

In what contexts was this *saimon* recited in the Oku Mikawa region? In contrast to *Shimawatari saimon*, we can be quite confident that it did indeed feature in both *ōkagura* and *hanamatsuri*. In *ōkagura*, rites to pacify Daidokujin were part of the process of erecting and taking down the spaces where the festival took place: the dancing arena (*maido* 舞処) with the hearth and cauldron, and the so-called "white hill" (*shirayama* 白山), which was set up next to it for the practice called "entering the Pure Land." The main means of pacification was *henbai* 反閇 (locally called *henbe*), a series of steps performed by one or two masked figures to the accompaniment of a drum. An 1872 text, compiled as a record of the then already defunct *ōkagura*, notes that this *henbai* was accompanied by worship of Dokujin. It is likely that *Daidokujin kyō* would have been used for this purpose (HAYAKAWA 1930b, 63; YAMAZAKI 2012, 132–135).[21] This is rendered even more likely by surviving practices of *henbai* in the region, now only in the con-

19. For examples from different contexts, see KANDA (2016) on versions of this tale as recited by blind *biwa* monks in southern Kyushu and MATSUYAMA (2024) on *Dokujin saimon* used by calendar makers in seventeenth-century Nara.

20. One example is a *saimon* titled *Daidokujin saimon* 大土公神祭文 from 1679 (IWATA 1990, 115–118).

21. The 1872 record is titled *Kagura juntatsu no shidai* 神楽順達之次第 and was compiled by Suzuki Kiyohei 鈴木喜代平 (1831–1900) of Tajika (Toyone) in reaction to the dissolution and prohibition of Shugendo in 1872. This record lists the 140 component rites of *ōkagura*, adding brief explanations of their general nature.

text of *hanamatsuri*. *Henbai* is performed multiple times; the most impressive display is by one of the visiting *oni*, masked demons that interrupt the proceedings at regular intervals. The so-called *sakaki oni* 榊鬼 treads the *henbai* in five directions, while reciting the spell "Banko Daiō, Kenrō Jishin," likely in reference to *Daidokujin kyō*.[22]

A similar rite concludes the *hanamatsuri* after the dancing site has been dismantled. This rite is usually called *shizume* しずめ (pacification), but in some places *Ryūō no mai* 龍王の舞 (the dance of the dragon kings) (Iwata 1990, 203). Hayakawa (1930a, 142, 455) describes a procedure where the dancer performs a *henbai* of five steps, accompanied by the words "Banko 盤古, Daiō 大王, Kenrō 乾良, Jishin 地神, Ō 王."[23] During the *shizume*, *saimon* were recited in front of a wand (*heisoku* 幣束) dedicated to Dokujin (*Dokujin yasume* 土公神やすめ, "pacifying Dokujin"). In the late 1920s, when he carried out his fieldwork, Hayakawa found many different *saimon* in use during this rite. At some stage in the festival's history, *Daidokujin kyō* must have been one of them. As per many other *saimon*, any surviving uses of *Daidokujin kyō* fell victim to the Meiji reforms.

More generally, the five directions and the five colors are central to every step in the *hanamatsuri*. Dance choreographies are built around these directions: most dances are performed five times, once in each direction. The colors are represented in the paper hangings, in five-colored wands used as seats for deities, and much else. In *ōkagura*, the "white hill" was decorated with twelve dragons represented by wooden masks with long streamers of colored cloth (Yamazaki 2012, 155–156, 160). Clearly, the words of the *Daidokujin kyō* resonate with the dances and the design of the ritual sites in both *ōkagura* and *hanamatsuri*.

Shared Features: The Saimon in Context

Although the *saimon* used in Oku Mikawa in the seventeenth century relate to different deities and were used in different ritual settings, they display many structural and thematic similarities. Both operate on a vast scale that stands in stark contrast to the confined village communities where they were recited. Gozu Tennō and Bango Daiō are both figures of cosmic dimensions. Gozu Tennō tells Śākyamuni that his parents are the father and mother of all buddhas and that the "beings of the nine realms" are all under his command; Bango Daiō is the "lord of the land" who created all plants and crops, a mighty deity who enters the "domain of life and death" and knows the fate of every living being. Dragon kings play a major role in both *saimon*. Gozu Tennō visits the

22. This practice can be found (among other places) in Yamauchi (Yamazaki 2012, 133).

23. Hayakawa (1930a, 453–455) includes undated documents titled *Henbei no denpō* 返平之伝法 (Nakanzeki, Tōei) and *Henbai no daiji* 返焙ノ大事 (Shimotsugu, Shitara), which explain this procedure. Neither mentions *Daidokujin kyō*.

eight dragon kings and marries the daughter of one of them; Bango Daiō is the father of the five dragon kings. Then there are the "princes," who are the main protagonists of both *saimon*. Gozu Tennō has seven sons and, to his surprise, an eighth child who is a daughter. Bango Daiō has four sons, and—unbeknownst to him—a fifth child who is a daughter. Gozu Tennō fights a mighty war against his foe, Kotan Chōja, while Bango Daiō's daughter battles against her brothers. Gozu Tennō rewards his helper, Somin Shōrai, and all his descendants with immunity against the punishing diseases that Gozu Tennō visits upon those who offend him; Bango Daiō's princes give a similar reward to the descendants of Monzen Hakase, the intermediator who ended their battle (Mauclaire 2012, 318). In short, both tales relate the exploits of a violent divine king, describe an epic battle, and end with promises of protection.

An even more obvious shared characteristic of these two *saimon* is that they draw on the same source: *Hoki naiden*, that expansive compilation of apparently unrelated texts about Gozu Tennō, calendrical deities and their wanderings, methods of directional and hemerological divination, and much more. *Hoki naiden* appears to be the ultimate source of many features of these *saimon*: the cosmic scale of the narrative, the stress on controlling time and space, the exotic names and settings, and the notion of "roaming deities" (*yugyōshin* 遊行神)—notably divine kings, queens, and princes—who are the creators of our world but also bring calamities and pestilence.

The discourse shared by our two *saimon* and *Hoki naiden* can be contrasted with that of *engi monogatari* 縁起物語, Buddhist etiological tales spread by agents of the great religious centers. Caleb Carter (2022, 7) calls such tales "narratives of place," stories that imbue local places with universal meaning and localize universal truths by rooting them in the landscape. The *saimon* of Oku Mikawa's *tayū* ritualists do not attempt anything of this kind. Rather than pointing to local places as sites of salvific power, they tell of threatening forces from distant places that need to be warded off, expelled, and returned to their "original ground" (*honji*) or "original palace" (*hongū*). The gods of village shrines, the buddhas of local temples, and the deities of nearby mountains are as powerless as Śākyamuni (in *Shimawatari saimon*) when it comes to controlling these roaming deities. It is significant that the *saimon* were read not in shrines or temples where deities are enshrined, but in worldly places, be it the homes of the sick or private houses and yards, where *ōkagura* and *hanamatsuri* performances were held.

The ferocious roaming deities that feature in these two *saimon* come from exotic, unreachable places like India or the Dragon Palace in the southern seas. They have no home in the region; their "original palace" is in some faraway land. *Daidokujin kyō* in particular elaborates on the cosmological universe of these deities at great length. In the setting of a mountain hamlet, where few had traveled even as far as the coast, one imagines that tales of Mt. Sumeru, Jambudvīpa,

India, and even distant parts of Japan must have struck people as unimaginable vistas of otherworldly vastness.

A striking characteristic of both *saimon* is the motif of the youngest sibling as a girl. Rather than celebrating female power, this motif appears to reflect notions of female impurity related to menstruation and childbirth (Meeks 2020). In *Shimawatari saimon*, the eighth "prince," the female serpent from the Blood Pond in the Dragon Palace, appears as a culmination of pestiferous pollution, which is quite the opposite of that other daughter of the Dragon King Shagara, who attained the highest enlightenment.[24] In *Daidokujin kyō*, Bango Daiō and his five sons are the rulers of our world, but they also appear as manifestations of Dokū or Daidokujin, the unforgiving "lords of the soil" who strike at all who disturb the earth, including even those who build temple halls or ritual spaces like the "white hill" of *ōkagura*. Here again, the fifth and most powerful "prince" of them all, Gorō, has become female. Gorō's change of gender would have served to underline the polluting nature and liminal danger of her domain: the *doyō* days at the end of each season, when the lords of the soil are particularly vindictive.[25]

Both *saimon* had the ritual effect of transforming the reciting *tayū* into a figure of power. By voicing the knowledge contained in the *saimon*, the *tayū* entered the realm of the roaming deities and clothed himself in the authority necessary to face them. These texts tell the deities that the *tayū* knows about their world, their past, their potency, and their old promises. In *Shimawatari saimon* the *tayū* poses as Somin Shōrai, while in *Daidokujin kyō* he becomes Monzen, "the master who began saying prayers as… Ikuba Bango Daiō." He knows how to welcome the deities and has the power to bargain with them. Through the performance of their *tayū*, the inhabitants of the village become "descendants" or protégés of Somin Shōrai and Monzen and thus are spared the harsh retribution of the invading forces of the roaming deities and their retinues. In contrast, there are many less lucky places where "the descendants of Kotan Chōja will receive punishment even if they perform good works and collect merit."

In Oku Mikawa, as elsewhere, ritual texts were not primarily meant to convey doctrinal meaning to participants. Were *saimon* treated similarly to the sutras that were also chanted during *ōkagura* and *hanamatsuri*, as performative texts that no spectator was expected to even try to understand? Sections of the

24. According to *Shimawatari saimon*, Gozu Tennō's spouse was "about to reach the age of seven," while according to the "Devadatta" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, King Shagara's daughter was eight years old when she heard Mañjuśri's preaching, became a male bodhisattva, and attained enlightenment.

25. Iwata (1990, 198) points out that Gorō takes on a female guise in versions of *Dokujin saimon* in central, eastern, and northern Japan, while he remains male in western Japan. There are, however, also (more recent) versions where the first four princes are female and only Gorō is male (Koike 2012, 249, citing an example from Wakayama).

saimon point in that direction, notably the long lists of names, the clusters of obscure jargon, and the garbled passages. While these inscrutable elements may have heightened the sense of power inherent in the *saimon*, they undermined the reciter's capacity to capture the attention of potential listeners. Moreover, in most cases the setting was hardly adducent to attentive listening. At a bedside rite, the listener might be too ill and afraid to care, and during a festival like the *hanamatsuri*, there was noise, alcohol, sleep deprivation, and plenty of distractions. Today, recitations of *saimon* during the *hanamatsuri* of Kobayashi (Tōei) are consistently drowned out by the sounds of the *taiko* drum and handheld bells.[26] Moreover, the occasions when the *Daidokujin kyō* was read—the preparation of ritual spaces before the crowds arrived and the *shizume* that was performed after the crowds had gone home—were not festival highlights.[27] This stands in contrast to other *kagura* traditions, spread from Tōhoku to Kyushu, that include dances inspired by this *saimon*, a genre IWATA (1983, 96) calls "dances of princes" (*ōji mai* 王子舞). This begs the question of whether villagers in Oku Mikawa could apprehend the general meaning of the texts—or had much of an opportunity to even catch the words—that the *tayū* chanted. It would seem that *saimon* were considered necessary and efficacious regardless of the answer to the question.

A Medieval Worldview?

In the small settlements of Oku Mikawa, agriculture was precarious, floods and landslides were frequent, and famines followed by epidemics were commonplace. Disturbing the soil was a daily occurrence, not only in the cultivation of permanent fields but also, and more dramatically, in the frequent cutting of forests for slash-and-burn agriculture. The *saimon* about roaming deities bespeak a concern with outside forces that regularly invaded the villages from an unknown beyond, threatening all kinds of violent retribution. The *hanamatsuri* festival also played on a fear of such visitations, as the *tayū* welcomes *oni* from the hills and controls their wild temper through dramatic dialogues and dramatized confrontations.[28] These *saimon* found a home in this region because they struck a chord.

26. I witnessed this on 9 November 2024. Today, most villages have done away with *saimon* altogether. In other places they have been replaced with Shinto-style *norito*.

27. In some places, such as Kobayashi, the *shizume* is performed as a secret rite behind closed doors; this seems to have been the case for most *hanamatsuri* in the past. In Kami-Kurokawa and Sakauba, *shizume* has been moved to an earlier, public section of the *hanamatsuri*, but this appears to be a recent development. It is not mentioned by HAYAKAWA (1930a; 1930b).

28. This is particularly evident in the questioning of the *sakaki oni*, which culminates in a pulling match between the priest and the *oni*, where the *oni* pulls at the *sakaki* branch held by the priest. He loses the match and responds by performing *henbai*.

As I note in the introduction to this article, Saitō (2016, 18) specifies his notion of "medieval" as marked by three characteristics: the merging of deities from different traditions, a worldview that stretches across "three lands" (India, China, and Japan), and a prevalence of "strange," ambivalent deities that may bring both destruction and protection. These elements are indeed central to our two *saimon*, and they can certainly be described as medieval in Saitō's sense of the term. The drawback of describing them as medieval, however, is that such a designation suggests that these *saimon* were out of place in the Edo period, surviving only as remnants of an already defunct world.[29] The narratives in our *saimon* triggered new rites and performances across Japan from the late sixteenth century onwards. Rather than declining as the world became less medieval, they gained momentum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In most places, practices linked to these *saimon* arrived in an early modern setting, not a medieval one. They were not remnants but new impulses, innovations deliberately chosen by early modern actors.

While the *saimon* translated below clearly represent both a worldview and a set of beliefs, it is not so straightforward to identify the persons who held those beliefs. After all, the *saimon* are built around knowledge and narratives that can easily be traced to such places as Tsushima and Kyoto or (for other *saimon*) Ise, Kumano, and Suwa. We cannot automatically assume that this knowledge reflected or transformed local worldviews and beliefs. The *saimon* analyzed here diverge quite radically from versions passed down in other regions; in their specifics, they are unique. We do not know who composed *Shimawatari saimon* and *Daidokujin kyō*. After their transmission to Oku Mikawa, however, both *saimon* remained practically unchanged until they were eventually abandoned. The *tayū* made a point of reciting these texts as they were handed down to them, retaining even passages that had become corrupted and unintelligible. They did not seek to adapt them to reflect new knowledge (though the "geographical" section of *Daidokujin kyō* may be an exception) or local beliefs. Rather, the *tayū* guarded the *saimon* as snippets of elite culture to which they had privileged access, and they saw it as their task to recite them as correctly as possible.

We saw earlier that Orikuchi Shinobu treated *saimon* and their mythological world as an overlay, brought to Oku Mikawa from other places. To Orikuchi, the *saimon* were little more than a distraction, a hindrance to his quest to excavate ancient beliefs and practices from the *hanamatsuri*. Diachronically, it is unclear whether the *saimon* came first and informed some of the festival's rituals, or whether the rituals came first and the *saimon* were added later. Synchronically,

29. On this point, see also Suzuki (2021, 275–277). Suzuki, however, rejects the broad assumption that (late) medieval *saimon* remained unchanged long into the early modern period. For our two *saimon*, this assumption may well be correct.

it is not obvious to what degree the *saimon*, when they were in use, represented or influenced local beliefs. What, then, can we say with certainty about their influence? At the very least, it is obvious that *tayū* across Oku Mikawa felt that these texts were appropriate to certain settings, and this inspired them to incorporate *saimon* in their ritual repertoire. The reasons why they may have thought so are the known dangers implicit in disturbing the soil, the fear for invading roaming deities, the promise of a covenant with those deities, and, not least, the redefinition of the *tayū* as a stand-in for semi-divine figures like Somin Shōrai or Monzen Hakase. If these ideas had been entirely alien to the patrons of *tayū* rites, the *saimon* would have been abandoned, as indeed they eventually were in the modern period. It is in this sense that these *saimon* can offer us a window into the ritual culture of this region, not as remnants of a medieval past, but as meaningful narratives in early modern village ritual.

TRANSLATIONS

Gozu Tennō shimawatari saimon 牛頭天王嶋渡り祭文

This *saimon* is included in HAYAKAWA's *Hanamatsuri* (1930b, 472–481); the source was a version kept by the Suzuki 鈴木 house in Komadate (Sogawa, Toyone), dated 1814. MATSUYAMA (2021) includes four different versions derived from the Moriya house of Komadate (1621), the Hanayama 花山 house of Ōnyū (Tōei, 1633), the Tanokuchi 田ノ口 house of Kobayashi (Tōei, 1671), and the Muramatsu 村松 house of Kami-Kurokawa (Toyone, undated). I will refer to these as the Komadate, Ōnyū, Kobayashi, and Kami-Kurokawa manuscripts. FIGURE 1 shows the 1633 version from Ōnyū. YAMAMOTO Hiroko (1998a, 513–559) merges various versions into a single text, which she analyzes in great detail. The following translation mostly follows Yamamoto's version and checks it against the four manuscripts in MATSUYAMA (2021). In what follows, I will refer to this *saimon* as *Shimawatari saimon*.

Most *saimon* manuscripts are written in a mixture of kana and *ateji*. This indicates that the surviving texts were used to facilitate fluent recitation, where correct pronunciation was more important than correct notation. For this reason, I will not always add characters to Japanese names and terms in my translation. As texts were copied and recopied by each new generation of *tayū*, some sections became garbled, and the original meaning is not always retrievable. In a few places I have had to limit myself to quoting the main variants without attempt at translation.

ADDRESS

Having determined that this day, in [this] month of [this] year, is propitious, we have prepared delicious foods and offered various wands. Now we speak. Our merit is deeper than the ocean, and our will is higher than Brahma Heaven. If there are any deities of pestilence in this place, make your appearance! Listen and pay attention [to our words]. We worship you and humbly address you.

In the east, the south, the west, the north, and the center, Gozu Tennō's entourage of eighty-four thousand deities make their appearance; we humbly address them all.

GOZU TENNŌ'S BIRTH

Halfway up the mountain of Sumeru is the land of Bunyū. The king of this land was called Tōmu Tennō, and his wife was Arujibunyo from the land of Saitan; both were buddhas. They came together as husband and wife, and in a manner similar to the clear waters of the great Daibatsu River[30] running forth into its

FIGURE 1. The Ōnyū manuscript, dated 1633 and titled *Gozu Tennō shimawatari*. This is a rare example of a *saimon* manuscript in the form of a scroll. Reproduced with permission from the Education Board of Tōei; photograph courtesy of Nagoya City Museum.

30. This name may derive from Batsudaiga 跋提河, the river on the bank of which Śākyamuni is said to have attained enlightenment.

pond, Arujibunyo gave birth to five children. Their names were Hyakki, Yagyō, Nagyō, Tosajin, and Harisainyo.[31] After this, she gave birth to twelve princes. Their names were Mimei, Kakei, Jūke, Tensō, Shōsen, Shōkichi, Daiitsu, Tenkō, Daiku, Kōsō, Daikichi, and Jingo.[32]

After this, she gave birth to one prince. His name was Gozu Tennō. He was more than nine feet tall and carried seven red horns on his head. He held a lapis lazuli bowl in his left hand and a *hyakushu no sanju*[33] in his right. He is an emanation of the buddha Yakushi.

GOZU TENNŌ'S JOURNEY TO THE DRAGON PALACE

Gozu Tennō went to see his father, King Tōmu,[34] and said: "I would like to see the famous Blood Pond in the Dragon Palace." King Tōmu answered: "That is an easy matter." Gozu Tennō turned into an evil wind and soon reached the Dragon Palace in the southern seas. On the bottom of the ocean was a mountain. As he stood at the foot of this mountain, he saw a moat of 8 *chō* 町 [c. 10 acres] square. There was a horse-riding ground of 4 *chō*, a wall built of white gold, and a gate of yellow gold. Inside, he saw a single house, covered in coral, standing on a foundation of [crystals?][35] and giving off a fragrance of sandal wood and exotic incense.

Gozu Tennō said: "I am a pestilence deity from Japan who has traveled to this island. Whose house is this?" The Dragon King Shagara[36] replied: "This is the Pure Land of the Dragon Palace. It is the dwelling of a buddha, and it is not a place where a deva king (*tennō*) can stay." Gozu Tennō said: "[I am an emanation of the buddha Yakushi.] If this is the dwelling of a buddha, I ask you to

31. *Hyakki yagyō* 百鬼夜行, the night parade of a hundred demons, is here counted as two names. Meeting this parade was said to be lethal; its occurrence was linked to the calendar (for example, in the tenth-century *Kuchizusami* 口遊). Nagyō 那行 and Tosajin 都佐神 feature in Kōjin rites as two deities that are born together with each human being, report on their behavior, and at times punish evil deeds (YAMAMOTO 1998a, 544–545). Harisainyo is the name of Gozu Tennō's spouse.

32. These are names of the twelve moon generals (*jūni gasshō* 十二月将): 微明, 河魁, 従魁, 伝送, 勝光, 小吉, 太一, 天罡, 太衝, 功曹, 大吉, and 神后. The manuscripts use mostly kana. These deities represent the twelve placements of the moon and figure on the *chokuban* 式盤 astrolabe used for Onmyōdō divination (HAYEK 2021, 65–66).

33. The meaning of this phrase is unclear.

34. This name (in kana) is otherwise unknown; it may be related to Mutō Tennō 武答天王, mentioned as an alter ego of Gozu Tennō in numerous sources (SUZUKI 2019, 118–120; TEEUWEN 2023, 76–78).

35. The text reads ヲヽイクワコノウツハリ, the meaning of which is unclear.

36. Shagara (Sāgara, meaning "ocean") is one of eight dragon kings that feature in the *Lotus Sūtra* as protectors of the Dharma. Shagara was well-known as the father of the eight-year-old dragon girl who attained enlightenment in the "Devadatta" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

let me stay here for one night." The eight dragon kings—Nanda, Batsunanda, Shagara, Washukitsu, Tokusaka, Anabadatta, Manasu, and Ubatsura[37]—[gathered and] asked: "If you are indeed Yakushi, show us your lapis lazuli bowl."[38] Gozu Tennō said, "That is an easy matter," and he handed over the bowl. Seeing this, the dragon kings allowed him to stay.

The Dragon King Shagara had a daughter called Bibakanyo, who was about to reach the age of seven. Gozu Tennō lost his heart to her, and he remained in the Dragon Palace for seven years. In those years, Bibakanyo gave birth to seven princes. The first was called Sōkō Tennō, the second Maō Tennō, the third Gumora Tennō, the fourth Tokudatsu Tennō, the fifth Rōji Tennō, the sixth Danikan Tennō, and the seventh Jishin Sōkō Tennō.[39]

GOZU TENNŌ'S SERPENT DAUGHTER

After those years, Gozu Tennō declared that he wanted to return to Japan. He made a ship out of mulberry wood and ordered his entourage of eighty-four thousand deities to embark. As he was sailing towards Japan, a red serpent came swimming from the direction of Chikura Island. Pines and maple trees seemed to sprout from the serpent's head. It flicked its crimson tongue, staring out of eyes as bright as the sun and moon. It spotted Gozu Tennō's one-leaf ship and slithered onto the bow pulpit. When Gozu Tennō saw this, he drew his Blood Pond sword: "You, serpent, floating on the waves—are you a messenger from a great Dragon King or from a small Dragon King? I am the son-in-law of the Dragon King Shagara, and my name is Gozu Tennō. I am sailing to Japan with Jakattanyo[40] and our seven princes." He was surprised to see this serpent suddenly raising the waves, in a sea that had been so calm.

The serpent answered: "I too am your child. You are taking the seven princes to Japan while leaving me behind on this island, all alone. That is why I have followed you to this place."

Gozu Tennō passed on these words to Jakattanyo. She said: "I doubt that this is right. This serpent that was floating on the waves and that has now slithered onto the bow pulpit says that it is my child. How strange! You came to the Dragon Palace and stayed for seven years. We had seven children in those years. I find it strange that [this serpent too] should be one of our children."

37. This list coincides with that in the introductory chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

38. Yakushi is usually depicted holding a bowl for making medicine in his left hand. Yakushi is said to save sentient beings from illness and suffering by emitting "lapis lazuli light" (*rurikō* 瑠璃光).

39. These names correspond closely to those listed in various *Gozu Tennō engi*. For similar lists in *Hoki naiden* and another source on Gozu Tennō, the *Shinzō emaki* 神像絵巻 kept at Myōhōin, see Endō (2021, 130).

40. Jakattanyo is presumably another name for Bibakanyo.

The serpent replied: "Your words are foolish indeed. When you gave birth to your seven children, you left the afterbirths in the famous Blood Pond of the Dragon Palace. Those afterbirths hatched to produce this serpent. I too used to dwell in my father's body. I am truly a child of Gozu Tennō."

Jakattanyo said: "Did those [afterbirths] truly hatch to produce a serpent? You say that you are my child. I need to see proof of that." She stroked her coral breasts, pushed them together and forced milk from them. Both the seven princes and the serpent felt a taste of nectar in their mouths, which turned into an elixir of eternal youth and immortality. Then Jakattanyo said: "There can be no more doubts. Show us your original ground." The red serpent now appeared as the Eleven-Headed Kannon, one foot and four inches tall, standing on top of the waves. Jakattanyo said: "There are no more doubts!" and lifted the serpent into the ship.

Since this was the eighth prince, their children were now called the eight princes. The eighth prince was also called Takusōjin Tennō or Jadokke Jinnō.[41] Gozu Tennō continued his journey to Japan with his eight princes. Hail to them all.

GOZU TENNŌ AND HIS PRINCES BRING ILLNESSES TO JAPAN

The ship landed in Hakozaki Bay in Ise Province. As he disembarked, Gozu Tennō said: "My residence is in Tsushima, on the Kazuma estate in Kaisai District, Owari Province. There is no shrine there, so I will hide my body in a large rock. Gods, you can visit me here on the sixteenth day of the first month; I will receive you then."[42] He disappeared like a light that is snuffed out. The eight princes stayed in Hakozaki Bay into the new year.

Soon, the sixteenth day approached. The eight princes rejoiced at the prospect of meeting their parents.

The first prince, Sōkō Tennō, created the illness caused by curses.

The second prince, Maō Tennō, created the hot illness.

The third prince, Gumora Tennō, created pestilence.

The fourth prince, Tokudatsujin Tennō, created the coughing illness.

The fifth prince, Rōji Tennō, created the red-belly illness.

The sixth prince, Danikan Tennō, created the great illness.

41. Jadokke or Jadokkeshin 蛇毒気神 (deity of poisonous serpent *qi*) features as the name of the eighth prince in both *Hoki naiden* and *Gozu Tennō engi*. *Hoki shō* likewise explains that "the deity Jadokke arose from the Blood Pond (Ketsugyaku no Ike 血逆ノ池) in the Dragon Palace, into which the placentas and the blood from [the births of] the seven princes had been deposited" (dl.ndl.go.jp/en/pid/2544460/1/31; YAMAMOTO 1998a, 523).

42. This section relates to Tsushimasha (today Tsushima Jinja), situated in the location mentioned here. The sixteenth day of the first month was the day of the *busha* 奉射 ritual, in which priests shoot arrows to dispel harmful spirits.

The seventh prince, Chishin Sōkō Tennō, created the water illness.

The eighth prince, Takusōjin Tennō, created pox.[43]

In this manner, they created a multitude of *ingen* illnesses.[44] They stored them away in sixteen *jōbon* chests.[45] Eight yellow oxen pulled these chests as they headed for the Kazuma estate in Owari Province. They arrived there on the sixteenth day of the first month.

Gozu Tennō saw them and said: "The eight princes are arriving to pay their respects in the new year." He ordered Hyakki [and] Yagyō to join the princes, and soon the princes presented their chests to them. Gozu Tennō inspected the lids of the chests and had Nagyō and Tosajin open them. He looked at the treasures one by one: they were a deity without eyes, a deity without ears, a deity without arms, a deity without legs, a deity without a body, a deity without a nose, and a deity without a mouth—there was no end to the myriad demons.

Seeing this, Gozu Tennō smiled and took on the form of a green god. He gave the gods seasonal parting gifts and returned each of them to their original shrine. He gave sight to the deity without eyes and sent him back to his original palace. He gave smell to the deity without a nose and sent him back to his original palace. He gave hearing to the deity without ears and sent him back to his original palace. He gave speech to the deity without a mouth and sent him back to his original palace. He gave the ability to grasp to the deity without arms and sent him back to his original palace. He gave limbs to the deity without a body and sent him back to his original palace. He gave the ability to walk to the deity without legs and sent him back to his original palace. He returned the green deity to the east. He returned the red deity to the south. He returned the white deity to the west. He returned the black deity to the north. He returned the yellow deity to the center. He returned the deities of five colors to the five directions.[46]

These are the deities that remained [in Japan]: 77,010 shrines of the deity without eyes; 107,010 shrines of the deity without a nose; 88,010 shrines of the deity without ears; 77,010 shrines of the deity without a mouth; 66,010 shrines of

43. The pox is identified as *imohashika* and written as 痘疹 in the Kobayashi manuscript.

44. The meaning of *ingen* is unclear. The Ōnyū manuscript renders it as 院眼, while the others use katakana. It is tempting to associate the word with the Buddhist term 因源 ("the origin of karma"), which would imply that these illnesses have karmic causes; but that term is perhaps too specific to a particular context.

45. *Jōbon* is rendered as 上品 in the Ōnyū and Kobayashi manuscripts. Generally, this term refers to matters of a high rank or quality. In particular, it often refers to the three highest ranks of rebirth in the Pure Land (*kuhon ōjō* 九品往生), granting maximum proximity to Amida to those who have accumulated the most merit. *Jōbon* features in other Oku Mikawa *saimon* in this meaning.

46. These colors and directions are associated with each other in this manner in both Buddhist and Onmyōdō theories, as explained in the analysis of *Daidokujin kyō* above.

the deity without legs; and 50,303 shrines of the deity without a body. The *ingen* deity was sent to the great land of India. He turned into an evil wind and crossed the sea to India. Hail to them all.

GOZU TENNŌ KILLS KOTAN CHŌJA

When [Gozu Tennō] crossed to India, he came to a mountain called Dairokuzan.[47] Looking up from the foot of this mountain, he saw a house. "Whose house is this?" he asked. "This is the house of Kotan Chōja, unrivaled in all of India," came the reply. Gozu Tennō asked for lodgings for one night, but Kotan Chōja answered: "This is the home of the five hundred arhats, the disciples of the buddha Śākyamuni. You must find lodgings elsewhere."

Gozu Tennō said: "The mind of the past is ungraspable; the mind of the present is ungraspable; and the mind of the future is also ungraspable. In the past and the present, those who are close to the gods must lend them lodgings, even in the house of a buddha. You must be someone who does not have any affection for the gods." To show quickly that this was indeed so, Gozu Tennō snapped his fingers and took the road that led to the northeast.[48]

Soon, he saw another house. He asked, "Whose house is this?" Someone replied: "This is the house of Somin Shōrai, famous throughout India—the house of a pauper." Gozu Tennō said: "I am a pestilence deity from Japan. I have traveled here to see India. Grant me lodgings for the night." Somin Shōrai agreed, replying: "Please wait for a moment. I will prepare lodgings so that you can stay here tonight." He sent five men, called Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water, to the Senju Field[49] to cut bamboo grass and weave eight mats for the eight princes. He let the other gods [in Gozu Tennō's company] spend the night on blades of *chigaya* grass.

Gozu Tennō called Hyakki [and] Yagyō. He ordered them to run to Kotan Chōja's house and survey its layout. Kotan Chōja, however, was a clever man, and that night he dreamt about seven blades of *chigaya* grass. When Śākyamuni heard about this, he said: "That dream foretells your death."

Quickly, the five hundred arhats sat down along Kotan Chōja's outer wall and recited the 1,500 chapters of the golden *Daihannya* [*Sūtra*] in just one hour.[50] The

47. Dairokuzan 大六山 is perhaps a reference to Dairokuten 第六天, the Sixth Heaven of Desire from where King Māra (Maō 魔王) rules over our world.

48. The snapping of the fingers is called *danshi no hō* (written 弾指法 in the Ōnyū manuscript); it refers to a method to expel demons and avoid impurity. The northeast is the most inauspicious direction.

49. Senju Field is given as *Senju ga no*, written in katakana in all manuscripts. The meaning is unknown.

50. One hour on the traditional Japanese clock lasted about two hours as we know them.

sixteen deities who protect the Dharma[51] stood around Kotan Chōja and built an iron wall, 16 *jō* [c. 48 m] high. Myōon Bosatsu[52] rose up to Heaven and spread an iron net [over the house], also covering any holes in the fence. There was no way for the pestilence deities to enter.

When Gozu Tennō heard this, he summoned Nagyō and Tosajin and gave them orders. Nagyō and Tosajin took on the form of green gods and looked into the house through a crack above the lintel. One buddha, about thirty years old, seated in the upper eighth seat, was rubbing his left eye, letting his eyelids droop, and soon he dozed off. Sometimes he skipped a character [of the *Daihannya Sūtra*], and this created a hole in the fence. Hyakki, Yagyō, Nagyō, and Tosajin unleashed the twelve great vows.[53] Carrying halberds, they destroyed the fence, scattering it in all four directions. They cut the iron net into eight pieces, which they threw away in eight directions. Then, the eighty-four thousand pestilence deities crashed into Kotan Chōja's house. They took the heads of Kotan Chōja and his wives and stuck them into the ground. They humbled and tortured a thousand people, pinching their flesh and cutting their veins, crushing their bones and wringing out their blood. This is the karma of birth and death.

Somin Shōrai had watched vigilantly as this unfolded, and now he appeared before Gozu Tennō, saying: "A girl who is staying in Kotan Chōja's house is my daughter. She was to be married to Kotan Chōja. While you punish Kotan Chōja, I beg you to save my daughter." Gozu Tennō led his eighty-four thousand subordinates into the house to save Somin's daughter. He found that she was a servant who carried hot and cold water for Kotan Chōja and his wives. Out of the thousand people [in the house], only one was saved: Somin Shōrai's daughter.

GOZU TENNŌ KILLS THE BUDDHA

Śākyamuni asked: "What kind of demon king or deity is this? I am shocked to see how he is torturing even the disciples of the Buddha." Śākyamuni donned the robe of compassion and humility, the robe of boundless mercy; he put on the shoes of True Reality and True Suchness; he held the rosary of 108 delusions; and he carried the stick that symbolizes the unity of the three realms of existence (desire, form, and non-form). Thus he entered the house of Kotan Chōja, where he met Gozu Tennō eye to eye.

51. This refers to the sixteen deities who protect Buddhism (*jūroku zenshin* 十六善神), as told in the *Daihannya Sūtra*.

52. The *Lotus Sūtra* dedicates chapter twenty-four to Myōon Bosatsu, relating how this bodhisattva visits the Sahā world to offer music to Śākyamuni. Why Myōon appears here is unclear to me, other than the fact that the *Lotus Sūtra* describes him as a giant figure; or perhaps Myōon here personifies the "wondrous sound" of the sutra recitation.

53. This refers to the twelve vows of Yakushi Nyorai, Gozu Tennō's "original ground." Yakushi has vowed to bring salvation and healing to all sentient beings.

He asked: "What deity are you?" Gozu Tennō countered: "And who are you?" "I am the buddha Śākyamuni, famous throughout India." Gozu Tennō said: "Then you must be the son of King Jōbon and his wife Maya, incarnated in a human body. I was born in the land of Bunyū halfway up the slopes of Mt. Sumeru, as the son of two buddhas: King Tōmu and his wife Harisainyo. They are the father and mother of all buddhas of past, present, and future. The beings of the nine realms, [hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, beasts, *asura*s, humans, gods, *śrāvaka*s, *pratyekabuddha*s, and bodhisattvas,] are all part of my retinue. If you consider yourself a buddha in front of me, I challenge you to offer yourself in exchange for the lives of a thousand of your patrons (*danna*)!"

Hearing this, Śākyamuni replied: "In that case, let me offer myself in order to save a thousand of my patrons." On the first day of the second month of the first year of Shōhei,[54] [Gozu Tennō's illness] entered his left finger. If one is affected by this illness for one day, two days, three days, four days, or seven days, it is caused by a curse; but after ten days, it had reached all ten of Śākyamuni's fingers. From there it spread to his five viscera and six organs. No buddha can withstand such a disease. On the fifteenth day of the second month, Śākyamuni died as the rooster crowed.

The fifty-two kinds of beasts and the five hundred arhats all lamented his passing. Then Śākyamuni spoke his last words: "Even though I have lost my body, I still have life. On the eighth day of the fourth month [Śākyamuni's birthday], you will see what I mean."

As they cremated him at the foot of a red sandal tree, the smoke rose to heaven, turning into scarlet clouds that floated like mist. Plants shot up, blooming in all colors. His four bones became twenty-five bodhisattvas.[55] By his death, Śākyamuni saved all sentient beings, without exception. When Gozu Tennō saw this, he said: "Now I have even taken the life of a buddha." He decided that the time had come to return to Japan, and he set off together with his eighty-four thousand subordinates.

GOZU TENNŌ PROTECTS SOMIN SHŌRAI'S DESCENDANTS

Somin Shōrai followed Gozu Tennō to the Senju Field. Seeing him, Gozu Tennō said: "Is that Somin Shōrai? You should return home quickly." Somin Shōrai said: "I came here to ask you for a pass, promising that henceforth my descendants will not be punished with pestilence in the three lands." "That is an easy matter,"

54. This would correspond to 1346 if this is the Japanese year period Shōhei 正平 or 451 if the Northern Wei period Shengping is meant. Neither of these dates bears any relation to traditional dates for Śākyamuni's death.

55. The twenty-five bodhisattvas protect the faithful who call upon Amida and descend to escort them to Amida's Western Pure Land upon their death.

Gozu Tennō said. He descended to the heaven of Mahābrahmā and sat down on a large rock. He rubbed his inkstone and wetted his brush. "My eighty-four thousand gods, listen to my words. No pestilence deity may punish any descendant of Somin Shōrai." He cut a four-inch slice of wood from a willow tree and made it into a pass. "Although Hyakki, Yagyō, Nagyō, Tosajin, and Taisaijin 太歳神[56] may show you mercy now, there will be no succor for those who kill their lord or their parents, who set fire to Buddhist halls and temples, who burn gods or buddhas, or who commit any of the ten evil acts and five perfidies.[57] Even if you are a descendant of Somin Shōrai, you will not be treated with mercy if you fail to make offerings from the deity paddies to the gods and buddhas and to the three treasures.[58] Those who neglect doing this will be reborn into poverty."

FINAL WORDS TO THE SPONSORS

Great sponsors (*ōdanna*), who are showing your faith today, [we call upon] the Dharma name of Gozu Tennō. Praying that you may live for 120 years, we prepare wands of white flowers, offer foodstuffs of a hundred flavors, and return [the gods] to their original ground and original seat. If we say our prayers now, they will hear and accept them. The descendants of Kotan Chōja will receive punishment even if they perform good works and collect merit. Gozu Tennō said: "I will return to Japan. All descendants of Somin Shōrai will escape the suffering of pestilence in China, in India, and in our country." With that, he led his entourage of eighty-four thousand gods back to Japan. Hail to them all.

May all disasters be averted, may you live long, and may all your wishes be granted. Karoku 嘉禄 2 (1226), first month, first day. Homage to the Eleven-Headed Kannon of Mt. Fudaraku, the deity of the Mountain of Living Spirits (*shōryōzan* 生霊山). May he extinguish all diseases.[59]

56. Taisaijin is one of the "eight generals" (*hasshōjin* 八将神), often associated with the eight princes of Gozu Tennō. Taisaijin is identified with the first of these princes in *Gozu Tennō engi*, and with Gozu Tennō himself in *Shinzō emaki*.

57. *Jūaku gogyaku* 十悪五逆. The ten evil acts are: killing; stealing; sexual misconduct; lying; harsh speech; slander; gossip; covetousness; malice; and wrong views. The five perfidies are killing one's mother, one's father, or an arhat, and harming a buddha or the sangha. However, lists differ among sources.

58. The proceeds from such paddies and fields (*jinden kōden* 神田香田) were used to fund shrines, temples, and ritual costs.

59. This final section (from "Great sponsors" onwards) differs considerably among manuscripts. I follow the Komadate manuscript. The final phrase ("May he extinguish all diseases") is followed by the word *svāhā* in Siddhaṃ characters, identifying it as a mantra or spell. The date 1226 suggests that this phrase derives from a Shugendo ritual manual.

Daidokujin kyō 大土公神

This *saimon* is represented in the archives of most *tayū* in Oku Mikawa. The oldest version, dated 1653, is from Misono (Tōei), from the archive of the Omoteya Obayashi 表屋尾林 house. Transcribed versions can be found in KITASHITARA HANAMATSURI HOZONKAI (1980, 102–108) and TAKEI (2010, 212–227); it is also included in ŌHASHI (1986, 18–21). Two other versions are published in the second volume of Hayakawa's *Hanamatsuri*. The first is an undated manuscript from Komadate (437–449) that closely resembles the Misono version, while the second from Nakashitara (dated 1700, 449–455) is much shorter. FIGURE 2 shows a previously unpublished manuscript from Kobayashi, dated 1671.

This translation is based on the Misono manuscript, which refers to this *saimon* as *Daidokujin kyō*. The Misono manuscript uses more correct kanji than the *Shimawatari saimon* manuscripts translated above, and I will include kanji here where it is useful.

ORIGINS: UCHŪ HEAVEN

I pray that the 900,043,490 gods who are the subordinates of Daidokujin may appear and gather at this place. (*This phrase is repeated in five directions*,

FIGURE 2. An *oribon* 折本 (concertina binding) titled *Daidokō*, dated Kanbun 寛文 11 (1671). Tanokuchi house, Kobayashi. Reproduced with permission from the current head of the Tanokuchi house; photograph courtesy of Hanamatsuri no Mirai o Kangaeru Jikkō Iinkai.

facing south, *west*, *north*, *east*, *and towards the center*.) We ask about the original ground of Daidokujin.

A long time ago, this world had no heaven and no earth. Neither the sentient beings nor the trees and plants were settled. Then a red and white jewel appeared from the heaven of Uchū.[60] Its shape was like the egg of a bird. It split in two, and the clear matter in the egg became heaven while the turbid matter became earth. It split into four parts, which became the four seasons and the four directions. Running downwards, it became the sea. The yellow is revered as the buddhas; the red as the gods; the white settled as humans; the black as beasts; and the green as trees and plants.[61]

In the midst of all this arose the warrior king of the twelve moons.[62] He founded this world. All was empty and silent, and it was impossible to know what was east, west, south, or north, above or below.

Then a wind began to blow from within that jewel, and five-colored clouds appeared. Those clouds turned into rain, pelting down in a great downpour. A gale arose…[63] and the water that fell on the earth gathered in clouds. The mountains collapsed and became flat land. A wheel of fire (*karin* 火輪) rose up towards heaven. Rain, wind, and water were welded together into a golden wheel (*konrin* 金輪). The rays of light emitted by the golden wheel coalesced to become the earth. It was at this time that earth, water, wind, fire, and space began.

In the time of empty space, the very Beginning was called the Buddha of sun, moon, and stars or, by another name, Amida Nyorai. Because Amida transforms his immortal body, he is also called "the twelve moons." However, he did not manifest himself in the form of the [actual] sun, moon, and stars, and still everything was dark as night. Then Amida sent for bodhisattvas, first the Manifestation (Onjaku 御迹) Bodhisattva and then the Auspicious (Kichijō 吉祥) Bodhisattva.[64] Upon consulting with these bodhisattvas, he went to the seventh

60. The phrase "heaven of Uchū" (Uchūten 宇宙天) is not found in any other source; I thank Iyanaga Nobumi for help in searching for it. Likely, it derives from Uchōten 有頂天, the highest heaven of the three realms of non-form, form, and desire. Red and white typically refer to female and male substances in esoteric texts (Rambelli 2013, 164–165); here, the focus is on gods versus humans as well as the "black" beasts, rather than yin and yang.

61. There are obvious traces here of medieval rereadings of the cosmogony as described in classical texts like *Nihon shoki*, which ultimately draw on Chinese Daoist sources (Teeuwen and Breen 2017, 83–89). However, the details do not align with any other source.

62. *Jūnigatsu no shōō* 十二月の将王. This is clearly meant to refer to a single cosmogonic "person" (*onhito* 御人), different from the twelve moon generals that we encountered in *Shimawatari saimon*.

63. There is an unintelligible passage here: デンサケ、ムコ、イシモ、千リンサクニツウス、ソノ時天上デ眼（マナ）ゴトナル.

64. These are not standard bodhisattva names. Onjaku means "trace" or "manifestation," referring to the *honji suijaku* paradigm that combines a buddha's "original ground" with his

heaven, took the seven treasures that are kept there, and brought them to this world. He divided [these treasures] to become the sun, moon, and stars, so that the earth would be illuminated.

THE COSMIC GIANT IKUBA

From the heaven and earth of Uchū appeared [a giant], wearing a crown made from a seed tree (*shuki* 種木), holding a fire jewel in his left hand, wearing shoes of gold on his feet, and holding a water jewel in his right hand. His name was Ikuba. Ikuba's mouth was full of soft grass (*nansō* 軟草). He lay down, using the east as his pillow and stretching out towards the west. Because he wore a wooden crown, the east is called *kō otsu* 甲乙.[65] Because he held a fire jewel in his left hand, the south is called *hei tei* 丙丁. Because he wore golden shoes on his feet, the west is called *kō shin* 庚辛. Because he held a water jewel in his right hand, the north is called *jin ki* 壬癸. The Sunlight (Nikkō) Bodhisattva arose in his left hand, and the Moonlight (Gekkō) Bodhisattva in his right;[66] therefore, the center is called *bo ki* 戊巳.

Ikuba's body contained [twelve] large and [three-hundred sixty] small bones. Based on his bones, Ikuba decided that one year would have twelve months and three-hundred sixty days. His breath was the origin of the clouds, fog, mist, and wind. He fashioned the sentient beings and the trees and plants from the hairs on his body. From his navel rose a lotus that flowered with a thousand petals. These petals scattered and became the lands of the world. He gave birth to the hundred myriad [beings] of Mt. Sumeru; the hundred myriad of Brahma Heaven; the hundred myriad of sun and moon; the hundred myriad of the Iron Mountains; the hundred myriad of the [hell of] karmic fire; the great and small deities; and the thirty-three devas.[67]

"manifestations" in the form of various kinds of beings in our own world. Kichijō means "prosperity" or "an auspicious sign."

65. The paraphernalia of Ikuba here are associated with the "ten celestial stems" (*jikkan* 十干), a system with roots in ancient China. The ten celestial stems are combined with the twelve signs of the zodiac (*jūnishi* 十二支) to indicate both time and space. The stems *kō* and *otsu* are associated with the phase of wood as the "elder and younger brother of wood" (*kinoe* and *kinoto*). They stand for the east, the color green, and the season of spring. *Hei* and *tei* are the elder and younger brother of fire, standing for the south, the color red, and summer; *kō* and *shin* are metal, west, white, and autumn; *jin* and *ki* are water, north, black, and winter; and, finally, *bo and ki* are earth, center, yellow, and the periods called *doyō*, corresponding to the final eighteen days of each season.

66. Usually, Nikkō and Gekkō Bosatsu accompany Yakushi Nyorai, rather than Amida, whose standard companions are Seishi and Kannon.

67. The thirty-three devas live in Tōriten (Trāyastriṃśa Heaven), the abode of Taishakuten (Indra) above the summit of Mt. Sumeru.

Mt. Sumeru extends eighty thousand *yojana* below the sea and has a total height of sixteen *yojana*. The highest four *yojana* form Sumeru's summit.[68] This is the empty space (*kū* 空) of the four deva kings. It is here that the sun, moon, and stars dwell. The size of the sun disc is fifteen *yojana*, and that of the moon disc is fifty *yojana*. There are seven hundred large stars, five hundred medium stars, and one hundred and twenty small stars. The space above this heaven extends for four hundred *yojana*; above this is the heaven of Tōriten, also called [the heaven of] the thirty-three devas. There are eight stars in each of the four directions. In the residence of Taishaku Tennō, the deity of the Kikenjō Palace tries to keep the *asura* at bay.[69]

Mt. Sumeru has four great lands. To the east is the land of Tōjōkoku 東勝国. The people who live here have faces formed like the half moon, and their lifespan is two-hundred fifty years. The people who live on the western slope of the mountain have faces shaped like the full moon; their life span is five hundred years. The faces of the people in the north are square, and they live for a thousand years. The land to the south of Mt. Sumeru is called "the land of fertile reed plains" in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa.[70] The faces of its people are like bodhisattvas, but their life span is not settled. These are called the "four great lands."

One Mt. Sumeru with one sun and moon is regarded as one world. One thousand such worlds make up one small chiliocosm; and one thousand small chiliocosms make up one long (*chō* 長) chiliocosm. One thousand long chiliocosms make up one great chiliocosm. One thousand great chiliocosms make up the triple great chiliocosm.

[In Jambudvīpa] there are sixteen great lands, five hundred medium lands, one thousand small lands, and countless [even smaller] lands scattered like grains of millet. Foremost among all lands are China, India, and Japan. Heaven is more than 378,000 *yojana* high, and the earth is 59,049 *ri* thick. China stretches forty-eight thousand *ri* from east to west, and seventy-eight thousand *ri* from north to south.[71] Our own realm, Japan, is three-thousand eight-hundred *ri* from east to west and five-hundred twenty *ri* from north to south. It

68. "Top" is here an inadequate translation of the unclear phrase ban *fuku kashira* 鑁吹く頭 (the mountain top—or chief?—that blows the seed syllable *vaṃ*?). The length of 1 *yojana* differs greatly between sources.

69. Taishakuten, who lives in the Kikenjō 喜見城 Palace, is the king of Tōriten. There are eight devas (here, stars) in each of the four directions. Thus, the thirty-three devas are Taishakuten and the thirty-two devas in the four directions. The higher heavens are listed in the *saimon* without commentary; I skip this list in my translation.

70. "The land of fertile reed plains" (Toyoashiharakoku 豊葦原国) is a phrase from classical court mythology.

71. One *ri* equals 3.93 km. Japan's size is therefore given as about 15,000 by 2,000 km.

has eight-thousand eight districts and 18,000 villages. There were 3,900,094,121 men and 5,900,094,121 women.

BANGO DAIŌ AND HIS FIVE "PRINCES"

At that time, a yellow prince appeared from the southwest.[72] His name was Bango Daiō.[73] From the northeast appeared a red woman called Sensaifukuyo-nyo.[74] As skilled performers of the dance of three and three,[75] they became man and wife. As the lords of this land, they created the five grains and other crops, as well as all kinds of trees and plants, from pines to bamboo. Joining together in accord with the way of yin and yang, they gave life to four sons. Tarō was known as the god of wood, and he received the lands in the east. Jirō was known as the god of fire, and he received the lands in the south. Saburō was known as the god of metal, and he received the lands in the west. Shirō was known as the god of water, and he received the lands in the north. In this manner, they shared out all lands among their four sons.[76]

Their father, Bango Daiō, temporarily entered the domain of life and death[77] to divine [the fate of] the sentient beings of that place. At that time, his queen became pregnant. Even when she entered the seventh month, Bango Daiō was still hidden. Stamping her feet on a rock and holding a sword in her hands, she gave birth to the child. She lifted it up and examined it, and it was a princess. She named her Gorō no Himemiya.[78]

72. Here and in what follows, directions are given in terms of the twelve signs of the zodiac. The direction in this case is *hitsuji saru* 未申.

73. The Nakashitara manuscript renders Bango Daiō as 番古, while the Komadate has Bangon ばんごん.

74. Written 千歳福与女 (perhaps meaning, "the woman who grants good fortune of a thousand years"), this name does not appear in *Sanwu liji* or other sources. The Nakashitara manuscript has Fukusainyo 福才女, and the Komadate manuscript has Chisaibukunyo ちさいぶく女. Fukusainyo features in *Hoki naiden* as one of Bango's wives (Iwata 1990, 185).

75. *San no san no migoto wazaogi to shite* 三ノ三ノ見事俳優トシテ. *Wazaogi* (written with these same characters) is used in the *Nihon shoki* (67: 112) to describe Ame no Uzume's dancing in front of the Rock Cave of Heaven. The Komadate manuscript has *San no mikoto wazōgi to shite* 三の命はさうぎとして, "As three divine performers" (Hayakawa 1930b, 440); but this may be a creative reinterpretation, since there is no third protagonist in the tale at this point. The meaning of this phrase appears to be lost.

76. The sons' names mean "first," "second," "third," and "fourth" son. The phases and directions follow the same standard scheme as in the tale of Ikuba: wood is east, fire is south, metal is west, and water is north. The directions are indicated using both the cardinal directions and the ten stems, such as "the east, *kō otsu*."

77. "The domain of life and death" translates to *shōji no michi* 生死ノ道.

78. Gorō, meaning "fifth son," is a male name, while Himemiya means "princess." In what follows, I treat the word "prince" as gender neutral. Like "prince," the Japanese *ōji* refers only to males, but in this *saimon* it is also applied to the female Gorō, who thus carries both a male name and title.

BANGO DAIŌ'S DAUGHTER, GORŌ

When Gorō no Himemiya had grown up, she went to her mother, Banmotsunyo,[79] and asked: "My four brothers rule over the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Why have I not received even a small domain? Am I not a child of my father, [Bango] Daiō?" Her mother, Banmotsunyo, replied: "There is no doubting that you are indeed his child. However, your father was hidden when you were in my womb, and that is why you have not received even a small domain."

"To the east of here, there is a land called Hikiō.[80] There is a gate of black metal; if you open it and enter, you will find a gate of red metal. Open it and you will come upon a gate of white metal. When you open it, you will encounter a gate of gold. Inside that gate are three divine treasures. The first is the jewel of divine wisdom, the second is the treasure sword, and the third is the mirror called *Nanshidokoro*.[81] This mirror allows you to see all the worlds of the triple great chiliocosm in one day. With the jewel you can turn a sea into a mountain, or a mountain into a sea. If you pull the sword out of its scabbard by a single inch, all the oceans within a distance of 10,000 *ri* will disappear and turn into a wave that contains all the waters of the four seas. If you pull it out by two inches, all dead trees within 20,000 *ri* will blossom. If you pull it out by three inches, all your enemies within 30,000 *ri* will be destroyed. If you pull it out by four inches, all demons within 40,000 *ri* will be cleansed away. If you pull it out by three feet and six inches, it will turn the land into a realm of fertility."[82] Gorō no Himemiya rejoiced and rode her carriage of living spirits[83] [to the land of Hikiō]. She [took] the three treasures and never went anywhere without them.

She asked her brothers, the princes: "How can it be that each of you rules a land in one of the four directions, while I do not own even a small domain?" The four brothers answered: "You are not even an adopted child, let alone a real child of our father. That is why he did not give you even a small domain." Furious,

79. This would appear to be another name for Sensaifukuyonyo. It is written 万物女 (Misono) or ばんもつ女 (Komadate)—the "woman (mother?) of the myriad things." The Nakashitara manuscript does not include this name.

80. Hikiō is written as ヒキヲウ in Misono and Komadate; the Nakashitara manuscript offers a quite different narrative.

81. These three treasures (*sanshu no jinpō* 三種の神宝) are modeled after the three imperial regalia (*sanshu no jinki* 三種の神器), which feature prominently in numerous texts and initiations of medieval Shinto lineages. The mirror, in particular, was commonly referred to as the *naishidokoro* 内侍所, after the quarters of court ladies where it was once kept. The Misono manuscript calls it *nanshidokoro* 難視處 ("the mirror for [seeing] places that are hard to discern"); the Komadate manuscript has なんしどころ.

82. The Komadate manuscript calls this the land of Bunyū ぶにう, as in *Shimawatari saimon*. The Misono manuscript has Fuyū 富裕.

83. *Ikiryōsha* 生霊車. *Ikiryō* (or *shōryō*) are roaming spirits of the living.

Gorō no Himemiya said: "Without heaven, no rain will fall. Without earth, no grass will grow. Without a father, there is no seed. What seed could there be without the Yang of a father? Without a mother, nothing can be born. What can be born without inheriting the act of a father?[84] You must all join hands and offer me a small domain that I may rule." With this, she returned to her palace.

GORŌ FIGHTS HER BROTHERS

The princes were shocked. Prince Tarō headed for the gate of aspiration (*hosshinmon* 発心門). The spring haze of the wisdom of the great round mirror (*daienkyōchi* 大円鏡智) drifted among the branches of the trees. Prince Tarō set up nine green banners. He donned the green armor and helmet of enlightenment (*anottara sanmyakusanbodai* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提). He notched the arrow of [the buddha's] image (*tōjin* 等身) on the bowstring of the perfection of giving (*dan haramitsu* 檀波羅蜜) and summoned 99,000 soldiers. He rode a green dragon. Saying that also the sun, moon, and stars search for faith in the east, he defended the gate of the double wheel (*sōrinmon* 双輪門).[85]

Prince Jirō headed for the gate of practice (*shugyōmon* 修行門). In the heaven called the wisdom of recognizing the essential identity of all Dharmas in emptiness (*byōdōshōchi* 平等性智), he raised the seven red banners that represent the indestructible nature of true wisdom (*shōchichū fumetsu* 正智宙不滅).[86] He wore the red armor and helmet that bring peace to the sentient beings in their present life. Carrying the halberd of great compassion, he brought 77,000 subordinates. He rode a red dragon. Searching for faith from the south, he defended the gate of the wheel of space (*kūrinmon* 空輪門).

Prince Saburō headed for the gate of the wind of enlightenment (*bodaifūmon* 菩提風門). The autumn moon of the wisdom of wondrous perception (*myōkanzacchi* 妙観察智), [the moon] of the thousand doctrines that teach us to escape from the cycle of birth and death (*senbōrishō* 千法離生), may be hidden in the mist of illusory thoughts, but the wind of thusness and original enlightenment (*shinnyo hongaku* 真如本覚) will sweep away the clouds of denial. Prince Saburō raised the eight white banners that display the divine blessings and the love of recognizing the essential identity of all Dharmas in emptiness. He donned the white armor and helmet that manifest the untainted gate of purity (*jōmon muro*

84. "Inheriting the act" translates *gyō o tsugu* 行を継ぐ.

85. The descriptions of the battle preparations of the four princes follow a standard scheme of associations, linking colors to directions, stages of Buddhist practice, buddha wisdoms, and so forth, effectively turning the princes into champions of a Buddhist path towards enlightenment. Of the terms used in this passage about Prince Tarō, *tōjin* and *sōrinmon* deviate from established Buddhist terminology.

86. This is not a canonical Buddhist term.

浄門無漏), which gave him supernatural powers (*sanmyō rokutsū* 三明六通).[87] He carried the sword of the ten perfections (*hannya haramitsu tō no ken* 般若波羅蜜十ノ剣) and led an army of 88,000 subordinates. Riding a white dragon from the west, he defended the gate of enlightenment (*bodaimon* 菩提門).

Prince Shirō headed for the gate of nirvana (*nehanmon* 涅槃門). The winter snow of the wisdom of carrying out what needs doing (*jōshosachi* 成所作智), which destroys all enemies, fell from the gate of the way of water (*suidōmon* 水道門). The meditation that leads to extinction, sweet as nectar, swept away all delusions. [The snow] melted into the waterfall of the scriptures and precepts of the one mind.[88] This is the real merit of the eternally abiding. Prince Shirō raised six black banners, wearing the black armor of adamantine absorption (*kongōzanmai* 金剛三昧) and the helmet of ignorance and black karma (*mumyō kokugō* 無明黒業).[89] He led an army of 66,000 subordinates. Riding a black dragon from the north, he defended the gate of the way of water.

Princess Gorō no Himemiya closed the gate of the deity Hachiman and opened the gate of Hachiman's beneficence. The foundation of the wisdom of the original nature of the Dharma realm (*hokkaitaishōchi* 法界体性智) is the rapid transformation of delusions into enlightenment, the identity of birth-and-death with nirvana. Leading the sentient beings who are free from karmic bonds, she realized their liberation. Raising five yellow banners, she wore the yellow armor and helmet of all skillful means—showing that in the buddha lands of the ten directions there is only one vehicle, and never two nor three.[90] Holding a sword, a halberd, a Dharma wheel, a five-pronged vajra, a three-pronged vajra, and a single-pronged vajra, she made heaven and earth rumble.

Lifting her left hand, she called down the seven stars of the Northern Dipper, the twenty-eight lunar mansions, the evil stars, the evil deities, and the evil demons. Leading them as her subordinates, she descended from heaven. By putting down her right hand in a thousand circles, she called up [the earth deity] Kenrō Jishin, the thirty-six beasts of the earth,[91] and the eight dragon kings of

87. *Sanmyō* refers to knowledge of past, present, and future; *rokutsū* refers to the supernatural abilities to move to any place one wants, hear any sound, read others' minds, see the past lives of oneself and others, see all future rebirths of oneself and others, and move beyond all delusions and escape from the cycle of death and rebirth.

88. The "scriptures and precepts of the one mind" is written as *Isshin kyōkai* 一心経戒. *Isshin kyō* is unclear; *isshin kai* refers to the *Brahma Net Sūtra* bodhisattva precepts.

89. Black karma is alternative term for negative karma. This sentence is followed by an inscrutable line, which I am unable to translate: *Nyakuna nyakushin nyakuna nyotōkoku* 若那若身若那如当国 (Misono manuscript) or *Nyakuma nyakushin akuma nyotōkoku mankoku* にやくまにやくしん悪まによとう黒まん国 (Komadate).

90. The "one vehicle" refers to the vehicle that leads all sentient beings to full buddhahood.

91. The thirty-six animals (or "decans") guard the twelve zodiac signs, twelve hours of the day, or twelve months of the year.

the eight seas. These led a hundred thousand subordinates to defend [Gorō no] Himemiya. Riding a yellow dragon, she left her original palace.

The river that flows from Mt. Sumeru from the northeast to the east is called the Yōtoku River. The river that flows from the southeast to the south is called the Ryūzō River. The river that flows from the southwest to the west is called the Ama River. The river that flows from the northwest to the north is called the Gonga River.[92] For seven days and seven nights, the princes did battle along upper reaches of that last river, at the Golden Hill by the Screen Bay. Heaven shuddered, and the waters of the Gonga River took on five colors.

MONZEN'S MEDIATION

Bonten and Taishaku (Brahma and Indra) were appalled and called upon Master Monzen.[93] Monzen performed divination and said: "The five children of Bango Daiō, the lord of the realm of the three worlds, are fighting over the territories that he has bequeathed to them. Their battle is taking place above the water, causing these colors to appear. The blood of the warriors of Prince Tarō is green; that of Prince Jirō's warriors is red; the warriors of Prince Saburō shed white blood; the warriors of Prince Shirō have black blood; and the blood of the warriors of Gorō no Himemiya is yellow." Bonten and Taishaku were horrified and ordered Monzen to pacify them.

Monzen clad himself in armor and placed a wooden crown on his head. On his feet he wore golden shoes, and in his hands he carried wands. He climbed the Golden Hill above the Gonga River and saw the raging battle. Monzen announced: "I have come as an envoy of Bonten and Taishaku. I am the master who first began saying prayers as the King of the Twelve Moons, as Ikuba Monzen, and as Ikuba Bango Daiō. I ask you to pause your fighting and listen to my words." The five princes paused their battle and listened.

Monzen said: "All the myriad things that are born have Life as their mother. The children of Bango Daiō, too, both are and are not his children. As *rinchū*, *unchū*, *mōchū*, and *gōchū*, you are all sentient beings that appeared, earlier or later, as children of Banmotsunyo.[94] The lands that Bango Daiō has bestowed upon you, and also the lands that he has not bestowed upon you, are all empty and non-existent. Why are you fighting for something that is non-existent? Ultimately, you

92. The river names listed here are not standard. In most versions the Gaṅgā, Sindhu, Vakṣu, and Sītā as the four great rivers of Jambudvīpa. In most other versions of the *Dokujin saimon*, Gonga 金河 is written as Gōga 恒河, the Gaṅgā (Ganges) River.

93. Bonten and Taishaku appear here as the deva kings who rule over the Realm of Desire from their abode in the lowest heaven of the Realm of Form.

94. This is a tentative translation. The Misono manuscript reads: *Rinchū*, *unchū*, *mōchū*, *gōchū*, *mina kore gosen no shujō naru*, *Banmotsunyojin [no] ko to shite arawaruru mono naru* リンチウ、ウンチウ、マウチウ、ガウチウ、皆コレ後先ノ衆生ナル、万物女神子トシテ顕ワルルモノナル.

must follow Monzen's teaching. The order of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, the form of Mt. Sumeru surrounded by the four continents, the colors green, yellow, red, white, and black—they are all present in the five limbs of our own bodies. [All things arise] in the single mind of Vijayā due to the five causes.[95] Green, yellow, red, white, and black are like five eldest sons. Which among them is not both earlier (older) and later (younger) at the same time? As five sibling princes, you must all share the lands in the four directions."

The princes listened and agreed. Monzen rejoiced and said: "Prince Tarō rules the ninety days of the three months of spring. His official appears as a green dragon king. He governs over the eastern direction and over seventy-two days, leaving aside eighteen days; these are called the earth days (*doyō* 土用) of spring.[96] During those days, he returns to his original palace.

Prince Jirō rules the ninety days of the three months of summer. His official appears as a red dragon king. He governs over the southern direction and over seventy-two days, leaving aside eighteen days; these are called the earth days of summer. During those days, he returns to his original palace.

Prince Saburō rules the nintey days of the three months of autumn. His official appears as a white dragon king. He governs over the western direction and over seventy-two days, leaving aside eighteen days; these are called the earth days of autumn. During those days, he returns to his original palace.

Prince Shirō rules the ninety days of the three months of winter. His official appears as a black dragon king. He governs over the northern direction and over seventy-two days, leaving aside eighteen days; these are called the earth days of winter. During those days, he returns to his original palace.

If we add up the days that are left aside in the four seasons—the four periods of earth days—they amount to seventy-two days. This is the domain of Gorō no Himemiya. Her official is called the yellow dragon king, and he gives the color yellow to the four periods of earth days. [At other times] she returns to her original palace. In every year there are six periods of eight monopolized days (*hassen* 八専).[97] These you must give to Banmotsunyo, the mother [of the five princes]."

95. Vijayā 微誓耶 is the wife, or in some cases a female manifestation, of Dainichi. The five causes, as explained in *Kusharon*, are the producing cause (where the four elements combine to produce a new being), the supporting cause (where all beings depend on the four elements), the upholding cause (where the four elements allow a being to exist), the maintaining cause (where the four elements maintain this existence over time), and the nourishing cause (where the four elements provide nourishment for further expansion).

96. The term *doyō* refers to the periods when seasons change: the final eighteen days of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. While these seasons are associated with the phases of wood, fire, metal, and water, the *doyō* days are marked by the phase of earth. During the four *doyō* periods, it is unpropitious to disturb the soil, such as by digging.

97. *Hassen* are periods of twelve days, out of which eight are regarded as unlucky for the reason that their stems and zodiac signs belong to the same phase (wood, fire, and so on).

Gorō no Himemiya protested: "Although you say that I will govern seventy-two days, all those days are at the end of different months. There is not a single month that is all mine." Monzen replied: "Due to the waxing and waning of the moon, some days are lacking, so that there are not enough days. Therefore, I will insert an intercalary month once every three years. That month will be governed by Gorō no Himemiya."

The five princes were delighted with this arrangement. They asked for the seven treasures of heaven, which they wanted to give to Monzen. Monzen said: "It will not please me to receive the seven treasures. In these latter days, the sentient beings are full of delusions, and few are enlightened. Therefore, I will rather ask Daidokujin to spare my descendants from punishment." The princes all agreed that this could be arranged. They swore an oath that Monzen's descendants will not suffer the punishments of the latter days of the Dharma (*masse* 末世) even if they [disturb the earth by] building a temple hall or stupa, digging a well, setting up a birthing hut and spilling birthing blood, constructing a gate, opening up new wet or dry fields, flattening a hill, blocking a stream, improving paddies, or neglecting to worship Daidokujin.[98] Monzen was pleased with this outcome and expressed his joy.

At this, the princes fostered children. Tarō had ten children: the ten stems. Jirō had twelve children: the twelve zodiac signs. Saburō had twelve children: the twelve verticalities.[99] Shirō had nine children: the nine patterns.[100] Gorō no Himemiya had seventy-five children.[101]

FINAL WORDS TO THE SPONSORS

In a household of faith, these things must be cleansed away: may heavenly and earthly impurity, inner and outer evil, accidental fire, violence by knife or stick, and raids by bandits be swept 1,000 *ri* away. May you enjoy a long and quiet life, flourishing and widely acclaimed; and may you be as free of illness and incident

98. All the activities mentioned here involve disturbing the earth (*bondo* 犯土) and may therefore trigger retribution from Daidokujin.

99. The twelve verticalities (*choku* 直) are points in the calendar marked by the position of the "tail" of the Big Dipper (the outermost three stars of the chariot) as it revolves around the Pole Star. The tail comes full circle after twelve days. Each day comes with a particular set of lucky or unlucky activities. I thank Matthias Hayek for teaching me about this term.

100. The nine patterns (*kyūzu* 九図), which refer to the process by which the five phases originated, are listed in *Hoki naiden* in the same order as in this passage.

101. *Hoki naiden* features a similar narrative about the birth of the ten stems, twelve zodiac signs, twelve verticals, and nine patterns; but these are fostered not by the five princes but by the five dragon kings, who are the children of Bango Daiō and his five wives. In *Hoki naiden*, the fifth (yellow) dragon king has forty-eight children. This list partly overlaps with the list of seventy-five children in the *Dodokujin kyō*. Many of the names are (partly) in kana and cannot easily be identified.

as the miraculous Jīvaka.[102] May you be rich in descendants and untouched by the ravages of war. May there be no stumbling in the morning, no scares in the evening, and no commotion during the day. May you be contented and well protected.

I scatter offerings and bow with reverence.

Jōō 承応 2 (1653), propitious day
Jizōin 地蔵院

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102. Jīvaka (Kiba Henja 耆婆変者) was a disciple of Śākyamuni and legendary physician.

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From Disciples to Dissidents

Student Protests and Reform Movements in Meiji-Era Buddhist Universities

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Buddhist higher educational institutions in the Jōdo Shin Ōtani and Sōtō Zen sects became sites of dramatic student protests. This article situates these movements within three overlapping contexts: student strikes in Japan, parallel activism in the United States and parts of Europe, and institutional changes that contributed to the professionalization of the Buddhist priesthood. Student-priests, emboldened by a growing conviction that they had the right to participate in institutional governance, challenged traditional authority and staged collective actions, which were far from isolated incidents. Instead, these protests reflected a broader national and global phenomenon of late nineteenth-century student activism and a shift in attitudes toward educational and religious authority. Student-led campaigns resulted in significant reforms, including the removal of lay administrators and the establishment of public discussion halls. Drawing on frameworks from sociology and the history of higher education, this study argues that such activism was pivotal in the modernization of Japanese Buddhism. These protests not only catalyzed institutional change but also played a crucial role in establishing academic freedom within Buddhist universities and reshaping the relationship between religious authority and educational independence, leaving a lasting impact on Japanese Buddhism.

KEYWORDS: Meiji Restoration—Buddhist education—modernization—student protests—professionalization of priesthood politics

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During the final decades of the nineteenth century, a series of student protests took place at Buddhist higher educational institutions within the Ōtani denomination of the Jōdo Shin sect and the Sōtō Zen sect. At these proto-universities, students engaged in collective action ranging from public protests to mass petitions to schoolwide strikes, challenging traditional authority structures within their institutions. In each case, students and their faculty supporters were punished for their defiance and in one instance, a school was forced to close after a mass expulsion of the student body. How did systemic changes to Buddhist higher education make these protests possible? To answer this question, and to better understand Meiji-era Buddhist student protests, this study situates Buddhist protests within three overlapping strata: student strikes in Japan, student strikes in the United States and parts of Europe, and institutional changes that contributed to the professionalization of the priesthood. Rather than an epistemological product of modernization, this study approaches these historical changes as a systemic consequence of the adoption of the university model. I employ Vivienne Schmidt's "discursive institutionalism" to analyze the actions of student-priests as local actors who translated rather than simply imported global educational models. I also draw on Harold Wilensky's professionalization theory to examine how Buddhist universities became contested sites in the transformation of the priesthood from a status to a modern profession. In applying these sociological models, I argue that, as Buddhists, student-priests actively translated the emerging global model of higher education for their sectarian contexts, and they created universities with structures and norms that enabled student collective action.

Historical Background

To better appreciate the changes to Buddhist clerical education brought on by the Meiji period, I begin with a brief sketch of Buddhist seminary education in the preceding Tokugawa period.[1] It should be noted that while each sect possessed its own idiosyncratic style and had educational institutions with a distinct structure, what follows is a generalized snapshot about broad trends across Buddhist seminaries. Early in the seventeenth century, the bakufu sought to limit

1. This study focuses on Buddhist higher educational institutions that I call "seminaries." There were, however, many other forms of Buddhist education. For an examination of the modalities of education in the Tokugawa period, Buddhist and otherwise, see Montrose (2021).

Buddhist involvement in the political sphere by establishing education requirements for all priests. The bakufu even went so far as to sponsor the construction of seminaries in the hopes that priests would spend more time studying and thereby stay out of governmental affairs. The effect of these policies was a proliferation of such Buddhist educational institutions across all the major sects. Many of these institutions emulated the head-and-branch temple system with a head seminary and several regional branch seminaries. It was common for students and instructors to float between the head and branch schools. At their peak, some of the head seminaries had enrollments surpassing one thousand student-priests (KDHN, 2; ODH, 19).

Though sources from this period are scarce, the number of surviving records increased in the nineteenth century; it is from these records that we can glean more about the curricula. Curricula for much of the Tokugawa period emphasized sectarian doctrine and exegesis, mirroring wider textualist and fundamentalist trends that were augmented by new printing technologies (WATT 1984; BODIFORD 1991; RIGGS 2004; BARONI 2006). Students attended lectures, copied sutras, read commentarial works, gave practice lectures, and engaged in doctrinal debates. Toward the mid-nineteenth century, when the government's enforcement of the anti-Western ban began to wane, the Ōtani denomination of the Jōdo Shin sect began to offer sporadic opportunities to study non-Buddhist subjects. The first recorded instance of this was a lecture offered in 1824 titled "Introduction to Confucianism." In 1831, students read and discussed the *Nihon shoki* 日本書記 (ODH, 44). In 1863, during the tumultuous Bakumatsu period, the institution offered a lecture on Christianity and Heliocentrism. This was a preview of larger changes to come in Buddhist education.

With the onset of the Meiji Restoration, Buddhist sects experienced seismic shifts in their political, social, and economic status. The uncertainty brought about by these changes were compounded by the opening of Japan to the US, United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Russia. The educational landscape was changing too. Through travel and education abroad, scholars operating outside the Buddhist sphere like Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835–1901) and those within the Buddhist world like the Jōdo Shin priest Nanjō Bun'yū 南条文雄 (1849–1927) carved out new channels for the flow of ideas between Japan, the US, and the UK.[2] Fukuzawa traveled to the US and Europe in the 1860s and subsequently made a major impact on Japanese education. He founded one of Japan's first private universities, Keio, and by the mid-nineteenth century, he was widely recognized as Japan's foremost scholar of Western studies. Fukuzawa translated many Western-language works on a number of subjects and was a prolific writer of original works. His *Encouragement of Learning*, a treatise written in seventeen

2. For more on Nanjō Bun'yū's life and works, see ZUMOTO (2004) and STORTINI (2020).

installments from 1872 to 1876, sold more than 200,000 copies (Fukuzawa 2007, 448). He opens the piece with "Heaven never created a man above another nor a man below another" (*Gakumon no susume*, 1). This saying, a powerful statement about equality coming from a globe-trotting former samurai, became his most commonly quoted maxim (Fukuzawa 2007, 449).[3]

On the Buddhist side, Nanjō studied Sanskrit at Oxford University in 1876 with famed philologist Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), and their translation and editorial collaborations were numerous.[4] Upon his return to Japan, Nanjō was highly sought after for his Sanskrit expertise from both secular and sectarian institutions alike. In 1885, the University of Tokyo's Literature Department hired Nanjō as a lecturer in Sanskrit and Buddhist texts, and he split his time between his duties at the University of Tokyo and speaking at temples around Japan.

Even before Nanjō's and Fukuzawa's contributions, ideas about the place of knowledge in a burgeoning imperial state were gaining traction. Article 5 of the Charter Oath promulgated by Emperor Meiji 明治 (1852–1812) in April 1868 states, "Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world in order to promote the welfare of the empire" (*Gokajō no Goseimon*). This set into motion a decades-long series of experiments in public education at the national level that other interest groups including the Buddhist sects sought to both support and emulate.[5] At its most basic level, Article 5 established the role of knowledge in service to the empire. More than two decades later, this understanding of the role of knowledge as serving a larger project was still in use, only this time by the Minister of Education for the Ōtani denomination, Atsumi Kaien 渥美契縁 (1840–1906). In an 1894 internal document, Atsumi writes, "The spreading of the teachings is through propagation. The root of this propagation is scholarship" (ODHS, 151). In both statements, knowledge is mobilized for practical aims, but the role of education as a means to acquire status must also be accounted for. Just as the Meiji government sought global recognition of Japan's status as an empire,

3. Fukuzawa initially trained in Dutch studies but in the late 1850s shifted to studying English after recognizing its wider international applicability. I use the vague label "Western studies" above both because that is a translation of the term *yōgaku* 洋学 or *seiyōgaku* 西洋学 that Fukuzawa used, but also because as a polymath, Fukuzawa was not a specialist of any one subject and had a variety of intellectual interests (Nishikawa 1998; Craig 2009, 8–9).

4. Some examples include the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*, the *Amida Sūtra*, and the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (Stortini 2020).

5. By "support," I am pointing to the efforts of Buddhist sects to continue finding a role for priests in public education, much as was done in the Tokugawa period when priests taught young children basic skills and moral education at "temple schools," or *terakoya* 寺子屋. The contributions of Buddhist priests to education in the early Meiji period before the government had trained enough teachers cannot be overestimated. This is most striking in the case of the Great Promulgation Campaign discussed later in this study.

Buddhist sects saw education as a path to recover their standing domestically and build status internationally.

Among Buddhist sects, the Jōdo Shin sect was the first to recognize the pivotal role education would play in this new era, while the Shingon sect was among the slowest to adapt.[6] Even as early actors, the Jōdo Shin sect struggled to expand clerical education beyond the sectarian models of the Tokugawa period.

Buddhist Student Protests in Meiji Japan

Sometime during the first half of 1869, student-priests from the Ōtani denomination staged a note-burning protest outside the gates to their school, conveying their frustration and anger with a lecturer named Genjuin Tokujū 賢殊院得住 (d.u.). During the Meiji Restoration, Buddhist sects faced an array of crises as their former hegemonic status was upended. Many sects responded by pursuing clerical education reforms that included the study of Christianity and other subjects such as heliocentrism and Western philosophy. Genjuin staunchly opposed the study of Christianity in Buddhist schools. Before the protest, Genjuin argued:

> The power to destroy the Dharma is in the hands of Śākyamuni's disciples…. Just as when you work to eradicate Buddhism's enemies, more enemies will grow in their place, it naturally follows that if you willingly [work to] eradicate Christianity, more Christians will grow in its place…. Throw away the "self power"-driven efforts to destroy non-Buddhist teachings and entrust in the divine power of Śākyamuni. (ODH, 53)

This debate quickly boiled over into classrooms and strict new regulations were implemented.[7] In each classroom, two students were appointed to observe and mediate conflicts and to maintain order and peace during lectures. Nanjō Bun'yū was a student at this time and writes about two such students: one was referred to simply as "Kanabō," a reference to the thick iron rod he carried with him, from Enshū (modern day Shizuoka); the other was a physically imposing man named Ryūshū from Echigo (modern day Niigata) (*Kaikyūroku*, 21). Nanjō also writes that this system, while usually successful, could not suppress all outbursts.

During one of Genjuin's lectures, students interrupted and demanded he explain how exactly studying Christianity would only serve to promulgate Christianity. According to Nanjō's account, the students waited for Genjuin's response, but he was unable to answer; instead, he took his seat and looked down toward

6. ABE (2014) argues Shingon was relatively late to curricular reforms because of sectarian consolidation and deconsolidation, causing the sect's education system to get lost in the tumult. He also argues funding was an issue and that priority was on preserving esoteric teachings over providing education in secular subjects.

7. It is unclear in the sources available whether these regulations were coming from school administrators or the sectarian leadership.

the floor. Following that incident, the students gathered in front of the school and exclaimed, "There is no way to take notes on a lecture when you cannot answer our question. Our notebooks are now soiled, and we may as well burn them and throw them away" (ODH, 55). As a result of these protests, Genjuin was demoted and ultimately resigned in July 1869.

Around the same time of the confrontation with Genjuin Tokujū, students of the Ōtani denomination's schools pursued other avenues for reform, including changes to sect governance structures. During this period, the Ōtani denomination had two main institutes of higher learning. This division of labor stemmed from a hesitation early in the Meiji period about teaching non-Buddhist subjects in the same building as Buddhist ones. Consequently, the Gohōjō 護法場 (Institute for the Protection of the Dharma) was founded in August 1868 for the purposes of teaching non-Buddhist subjects. The curriculum centered on four pillars: Confucianism, Nativist Studies (*kokugaku* 国学), Christianity, and Western science. It was common for students to attend both the Gohōjō and the more traditional sectarian institute, the Gakuryō 学寮 (Academy).

In March 1869, three students delivered a letter to the head temple, Higashi Honganji 東本願寺. The letter begins by restating the mission of the Gohōjō: "Since the founding of the Gohōjō, young volunteers from various regions have gathered. The objective is researching subjects *suitable to the times* such as the Shinto classics, Confucianism, and other non-Buddhist teachings" (ODH, 49; emphasis added). The letter also includes demands for reforms based on what the students called the head temple's "misgovernment" of the sect, though they did not provide examples of what was meant by misgovernment. Finally, the letter called for the resignation of the lay retainers known as *kashin* 家臣 or *terazamurai* 寺侍, recommending they be replaced by priests. In the Tokugawa period, all scholarly matters within the Ōtani denomination were delegated to the Gakuryō. Temple governance was divided into dharmic affairs (*hōmu* 法務), which was handled by the clergy, and lay (or secular) affairs (*zokumu* 俗務), which was handled by lay retainers. The lay retainers worked as intermediaries who relayed communications from the head to the branch temples. The students who submitted the letter to the head temple representing the reform-minded clergy wanted a bottom-up organizational structure. To them, this meant that branch temple priests, not bureaucratic lay middlemen, should directly convey the will of the branch temples to the head temple (KASHIWAHARA 1986, 25).

In a dramatic response to the letter, the head temple leadership made attempts to seize the three students. However, the students narrowly evaded apprehension by taking refuge in the Gohōjō. Despite escaping, the students were ultimately ordered to serve a week of disciplinary seclusion; supporting teachers and staff were also disciplined by the denomination (ODH, 49). Even as they were disciplining students for their defiance, the denominational leaders were responsive

to the students' requests. In May 1869, the denomination established a public discussion hall (*shūgisho* 衆議所) for the clergy, laity, and students to openly express their opinions about the direction of the denomination. Within weeks of the discussion hall's opening, the Gohōjō students again submitted a petition along with branch temple priests from Ōmi Province (now Shiga Prefecture). Their letter highlighted the growing rift between the lay retainers at the head temple and the branch temple clergy over whether to prioritize the denomination's financial challenges or education (ODH, 50–51). The petitioners advocated for a focus on education and leadership reform, going so far as to say that those who were indifferent or critical of this direction, including lecturers at the Gakuryō, should be removed from office (ODH, 50–51). These tensions culminated in the abolition of the lay retainer position in 1870, a move that the Ōtani denominational history credits in part to the persistent protests of student-priests. Replacing the retainers were new administrative positions that were to be filled by branch temple priests.

Ōtani historian KASHIWAHARA Yūsen (1986, 25) has argued that the elimination of lay retainers from the denominational governance structure was the most impactful step in the modernization of denominational affairs.[8] Among the first priests to be appointed to these new positions were alumni of the Gohōjō, scholar-priests such as Ishikawa Shuntai 石川舜台 (1842–1931) and Atsumi Kaien. For KASHIWAHARA (1986, 32), the reform of the governance structure and the involvement by Gohōjō alumni in the new structure is evidence for the impact of these student protests, fostered in large part by the culture of the Gohōjō. Over the next two years, the power struggle between reform and conservative factions persisted and tensions grew stronger, culminating in the assassination of Senshōin Kūkaku 闡彰院空覚 (1804–1871), a prominent instructor at the Gohōjō and Gakuryō.[9] Though no one was charged with his murder, Kūkaku's untimely death was likely an act of retaliation by one of the lay retainers who had been ousted under the sectarian governance reforms discussed above and for which Kūkaku was an advocate. These reforms, though contentious, signaled an emerging new culture within these institutions, one with intellectual daylight between the schools and the sects. This new dynamic empowered students to speak out when they disagreed with those in positions of authority, with school policies, or with the direction the denomination was taking. This is a pattern we will see mirrored throughout subsequent examples in this study.

8. Kashiwahara explains that eliminating lay intermediaries and constructing a system wherein the head and branch temples are directly connected allowed for a greater opportunity for the will of the branch temples to be reflected in the head temple; he links this to the notion of *kōgi seitai* 公議政体, or public deliberative government, a concept in the first article of the Charter Oath.

9. For more on Senshōin Kūkaku's life and assassination, see MONTROSE (2019).

Though not as early as the Ōtani denomination, the Sōtō Zen sect's Sōtō Daigakurin 曹洞大学林 (Academy) made efforts in the Meiji period to expand and modernize its education.[10] Beginning in 1883, in addition to the continuation of sectarian studies, students could select either a Chinese or Western studies elective track, and in 1886, a research course was established. Just six years later, a series of student protests began that would stretch over a ten-year period and resulted in multiple school closures (KDHN, 179–197). There are scant surviving details for the first two protests. The KDHN explains only that students and the school's administration began to clash at the end of 1888. This led to the expulsion en masse of the student body and the subsequent closure of the school in January 1889. The following month, the school superintendent, Tsuji Kenkō 辻顕高 (1824–1890), resigned, and Hara Tanzan 原担山 (1819–1892) was appointed acting superintendent. Hara's acting status was made permanent in 1891, when a conflict flared up once more. The school was forced to close again for a few months until January 1892, when the formerly expelled students were allowed to re-enroll. While we know little about the causes of these earlier protests and resultant closures, some aspects are hinted at in a subsequent 1899 protest, from which more details and documents survive.

In December 1899, the Sōtō Academy's entire student body (save for two students, Akihira Tokujō 秋平徳乗 and Kubota Jisshū 久保田実宗, who opted out) submitted to the school and sectarian authorities a petition of no confidence in the vice principal (*kyōtō* 教頭), Tsutsukawa Hōkai 筒川方外 (d.u.), and dean (*gakkan* 学監), Oka Sōtan 丘宗潭 (d.u.) (KDHN, 182). The complaints lodged against the sect-appointed school administrators fell into two categories. First, students accused the administrators of neglecting their duties. This included lesson times changed without notice, disorderly lessons, failure to sufficiently answer student questions, and a lack of transparency about rule changes. Second, the students accused the men of behaving in an improper manner. They described the two men as having terrible tempers, complained that they were regularly rude to students, and cited instances of harsh name-calling, such as referring to groups of students using the counter for animals (*ippiki* 一匹, *nihiki* 二匹, and so on) and denouncing students as "heretics" (*gedōto* 外道徒). In another complaint, Oka is accused of viewing students as slaves, citing an instance where Oka warned that if students questioned the rules, they might be asked to leave the school. The students asserted that they were unable to respect Tsutsukawa and Oka as leaders or as academics, and they implored the administrators to investigate the matter.

10. The Sōtō Academy is the former name of Komazawa University. In accordance with Ministry of Education guidelines accompanying the University Ordinance of 1918, sectarian universities were restricted from bearing the names of their sect, and as a result, all sectarian universities had to change their names (Hayashi 2008).

Students also filed a second petition to the Department of Sect Affairs (Shūmukyoku 宗務局) requesting both men be disciplined (KDHN, 186–187).

For their part, Oka and Tsutsukawa wrote the sect, disputing the allegations (KDHN, 182–183). After lamenting the students' behavior and slump in academics, they explained that since the time of their respective appointments, they had been single-mindedly devoted to reforming the school, which had necessitated a change in teaching methods. The two administrators claimed that it was not they, but the students whose conduct was rude and improper. They also described students as being chronically absent from class, breaking curfew, and not taking their studies seriously. Importantly, Tsutsukawa and Oka attributed much of the students' bad conduct to the influence of former students from the past decade who had served as agitators and masterminds to the current student body's actions. This reference to bad conduct of former students is one clue that the conflict that had spurred earlier student protests still loomed in institutional memory. Regarding the use of animal counters to refer to students, they explained that this had been in reference to these rebellious graduates of the school and not to anyone in the current student body. With this, the administrators directly connected the prior conflicts from the late 1880s to the current dispute, suggesting that earlier tensions had never been fully resolved (KDHN, 179).

The rest of the school administration sided with Oka and Tsutsukawa. Their primary concern was that students had broken school rules by being insubordinate, including through the act of petitioning itself. As further evidence of insubordination, the school cited the refusal of the third-year class to attend any of the vice principal's lectures on the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼蔵 (KDHN, 188). The sect found itself in a difficult position, wedged between the students and administrators. There was a time, in the Tokugawa period, when this matter might have been resolved by the government, but by the mid-1880s, the Meiji government had retreated from sectarian affairs (JAFFE 2001, 70–71). The power vacuum that had resulted from the privatization of religious organizations left the sect with few options. Ultimately, head priests from four different temples were brought in to mediate, resulting in the sect siding with the administrators (KDHN, 191).[11] However, the sect told the students that they could avoid expulsion if they repented in front of the main Buddha image and agreed to resume taking classes from Oka and Tsutsukawa. The students refused to comply with the sect's wishes, and as a result, all students were expelled. The teachers who had supported their cause were fired. Without students, the school was forced to close temporarily.

11. The four mediators were Kitano Genpō 北野元峰, head priest of Seishōji 青松寺; Kinoshita Ginryū 木下吟竜, head priest of Sōsenji 総泉寺; Ōtani Taidō 大渓泰童, head priest of Kōunji 功運寺; and Kōda Zuihō 香田随芳, head priest of Kensōji 賢崇寺.

Conflicts of this sort were not exclusive to the Sōtō sect and Ōtani denomination. I uncovered a few additional instances of student-led protests, but with insufficient detail for analysis.[12] In 1901, at the Shingon Chisan sect's middle school for instance, students accused the dormitory supervisor of corruption. The *Concise Fifty-Year History of Taishō University* mentions this event, describing it as a "major disturbance," but only explains that it was the result of a lack of trust between the students and the dormitory supervisors and that after this incident dormitory governance was changed to allow for greater student autonomy and self-regulation (Taishō Daigaku Gojūnen Ryakushi Hensan Iinkai 1976, 217).[13] Without additional examples provided in Buddhist sources, one way to better understand what was going on in these institutions is to situate them within the broader landscape of student collective action both domestically and globally.

Occurrences of Student Protests Across Japan

If we zoom out beyond Buddhist schools, it becomes apparent that students throughout Japan were experiencing discontent with their schools and finding ways to voice that discontent. These examples bring our Buddhist case studies into the fold of a nationwide negotiation between old and new educational styles, structures, and aims. In Japan, such changes began with curricular reforms in the early Meiji period, which bred new ways of thinking about the world, including educational institutions and students' place therein. For instance, in 1894, the government changed the executive and judicial appointment system by requiring an examination for all applicants, whereas previously, Tokyo Imperial University law graduates could be appointed without examination. Though the university was new, having been only established seventeen years prior to this dispute, tensions nevertheless developed over older traditional status-based models of education and governmental appointment. In response, Tokyo Imperial University law graduates staged a total boycott of the first exam (Amano 2009, 312). Law graduates were not the only ones protesting. Morooka Sukeyuki's (1955) timeline of social movements in the late 1880s–1890s records over thirty instances of student strikes and several directives from the Ministry of Education aimed at curtailing student strikes. Though the majority of these occurred in middle schools and high schools, a notable university strike took

12. Iwata Mami's (2016) study of the short-lived Takanawa Buddhist University (Takanawa Bukkyō Daigaku 高輪仏教大学, the Jōdo Shin sect's Nishi Honganji denomination) draws fruitful parallels, though the conflicts Iwata discusses were driven by the university's faculty and staff and did not appear to be student-centered.

13. An email inquiry to Taisho University scholars with extensive knowledge of its history did not yield additional information on this incident.

place at Keio University in early 1888.[14] The Keio strike involved over two hundred students and was covered in at least one local newspaper (*Yomiuri shinbun*, 22 February 1888). Later that same year, the strike discussed above took place at Sōtō Academy. It is highly likely that Sōtō student-priests would have known of similar student protests taking place around them, including the one on Keio's campus, less than two kilometers away.[15]

While it would be impossible to account for all instances of student collective action, we can understand protesting Buddhist students were part of a nascent student-activist subculture taking shape in modernizing Japan. In his study of Japan's radical student movement of the 1920s and 1930s, Henry D. Smith defines student activism in the Meiji period using an ascending typology: student rows, school strikes, and political protests. SMITH (1972, 21–24) describes student rows as "brawls, pranks, and riots," seen most often in the lower-level schools and less so at the university level. School strikes, Smith points out, were more organized than the chaotic outbursts of student rows but usually lacked ideological underpinnings and were limited to a single school. Political protests, in contrast to school strikes, possessed ideological underpinnings that transcended the grievances of a single school and therefore commonly united students across multiple schools.

The protests in the Ōtani and Sōtō institutions fall between Smith's school strikes and political protests. Like the Buddhist case studies, most school strikes discussed by Smith were rooted in student dissatisfaction with administrative decisions. SMITH (1972, 23) cites examples of protests over the firing of a popular teacher or demands to fire an unpopular one, unhappiness with dormitory rules such as curfew times, disputes over curricular changes, and complaints about dining hall food. SMITH (1972, 25) argues that through Meiji-era school strikes, "Japanese students came to be convinced that they had the right to a voice in school administration, and experience showed such techniques as strikes and

14. Morooka's survey of social movements in the 1880s–1890s derives primarily from coverage in the *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞. While labor movements, both industrial and agricultural, are his primary focus, he includes a third section for "other movements," in which schools are frequently cited. It is here that he documents press coverage of student strikes and other instances of protest and collective action. Among the more than thirty instances captured, the vast majority were in middle and high schools and most appeared to be driven by student dissatisfaction with rules or school personnel, a pattern we find mirrored both in our case study Buddhist schools, as well as globally. (MOROOKA 1955).

15. In 1888, Keio's campus was in the same location it stands today, in the Minato Ward of Tokyo. Sōtō Academy's campus, however, was not in the Komazawa neighborhood, its present location, but in the Kita Higakubodanchi neighborhood (this area is now known as the Roppongi Hills). Thus, in 1888 Keio's and Sōtō Academy's campuses were less than two kilometers from one another.

demonstrations to be effective guarantees of that right."[16] Smith rightly identifies the newly held belief among students that they had a "right to a voice" in school matters, but his framework holds that this belief lacks ideological underpinnings that might transcend any single institution and unite students across schools. While I came across no evidence to suggest explicit collaboration or unified efforts across these schools, Buddhist or otherwise, the similarities in the students' demands suggest a phenomenon that does in fact transcend individual institutions.

It is not enough to understand our examples as parallel but isolated incidents. The occurrence of student strikes in analogous school settings outside the Buddhist world contextualizes the behavior and motivations of protesting student-priests as part of wider social change. The tension between the sect and their universities mirrored dynamics taking place throughout Japanese higher education. As the Meiji state was opening public universities in the service of training technocrats for its modernization project, private universities such as Keio and Waseda were offering an alternative vision for modernization that privileged academic freedom from the state. Huda Yoshida al-Khaizaran (2011, 165) observes that in a "two-way process Keio and Waseda were the product of Meiji Renovation and in turn contributed to the cultural transformation of a new civic society, renegotiating traditional values with consequent changes in education, in the socialisation of leaders and in social stratification." Like the Meiji state, Buddhist sectarian leaders viewed their universities as places for training Buddhists in service to the sect, a position that in many ways continued the traditional monastic education of previous eras. In contrast, Buddhist reformers approached these universities as a new type of institution, one in which academic freedom from the sect, or any other institution, was a requisite.

In other words, at the heart of this distinction was the question of whom or what does the university exist to serve? For the Meiji government, it was unequivocally the state. For Buddhist leadership, it was the sect. For students at private universities, including Buddhist ones, this answer was not so straightforward.

16. Smith (1972, 1) opens his book by highlighting the tension between students' self-image as "independent critics who stand apart from established institutions and see the flaws and tensions to which those enmeshed in the institutions are blind" and the reality that it is that very same institution that "molds student attitudes and thus, unwittingly, prepares the way for radical behavior but also provides a base of organization without which students would be powerless to exert political pressure." This tension is explored throughout his later chapters dealing with the late Taisho and early Showa periods but is underdeveloped in the sections on the Meiji period. To explain how students found their voices in the Meiji period, Smith gives only passing mention to factors such as behavioral tendencies of youth, rapid urbanization, and a shared belief in a "natural elite" to lead Japan. This is perhaps because Smith's study does not focus on this period, but it nevertheless has the effect of underemphasizing the role of curricular and institutional change in the development of student protest culture.

Student collective actions at Buddhist institutions signaled that the university also existed to enable personal and social advancement beyond merely training students to fulfill their roles as priests. Many of these young Buddhists, belonging to a privileged class receiving the highest level of Buddhist education available, identified strongly with their role as students, distinct from and in addition to their role as priests. Ōtani University's first president, Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), wrote that he initially joined the priesthood because it provided him access to an education that he otherwise could not have afforded. In the following passage, Kiyozawa speaks of the decision to become a "bonze," a colloquialism for priest:

> The reason I thought to become a priest was that if I became a bonze and went along to Kyoto I would be given a good education at the expense of the head temple. Since I was living in circumstances that made it completely impossible for me to study as I wanted to, it was a delight to be provided with a life-long education, so I became a bonze. (Translated in JOHNSTON 1972, 51)

As Kiyozawa expresses here, the priesthood was a means to an education and not, as one might expect, the other way around. HASHIMOTO Mineo's (2003, 14) work on Kiyozawa likewise led him to conclude "the main reason for Kiyozawa's ordination was poverty."

While Kiyozawa was an exceptional figure, his perspective nevertheless allows us to entertain the idea of similarly motivated student-priests with priorities (and, arguably, loyalties) that may have differed from some of their less educated peers in the priesthood. It is reasonable to assume that student-priests like Kiyozawa had a vested interest in the growth and success of not only their sect but also their educational institutions, as evidenced by the fact that Kiyozawa led educational reform movements designed to foster independence from sectarian control.[17]

Thus, we can understand this divide in the Buddhist world between the perceived roles and functions of the scholar/student and the priest as a part of a larger national clash over differing views on the function of higher education. If, taking a sociological approach, we accept that institutions "complicate and constitute the paths by which solutions are sought" (DIMAGGIO and POWELL 1991, 11), this becomes a clash between two institutions, sects and universities, with divergent paths and solutions for meeting the challenges brought on by the Meiji period. As we saw in the scene with Genjuin Tokujū, a flash point for these differing views centered on disagreement over the curriculum. Western models of education introduced critical approaches to the study of religion that sharply contrasted with traditional modalities of Buddhist education. One

17. For a recent in-depth study of Kiyozawa Manshi's reform movement, see SCHROEDER (2022).

individual who embodied this tension was the prominent Jōdo Shin scholar-priest and Buddhist reformer Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–1929). Ryan Ward (2020, 887), in his study of sectarian backlash to Murakami, observes that doctrinal disagreements were of secondary concern behind "demarcating an inviolable boundary between the sectarian and the academic." At a time when Buddhist sects were threatened by many outside forces, the critiques made by internal reformers were intolerable to many within the sect, particularly the leadership. And yet, as evidenced by the protests in our above case studies, these internal critiques persisted.

From this brief discussion, we can see that dissenting students at Buddhist schools were not operating in isolation, but in fact reflected broader social upheaval. It is now worth zooming out once more to consider the ways in which these protesting Buddhists were part of a global phenomenon.

Student Protests as a Global Phenomenon

Japan was not the only country experiencing a rise in student protests in this period. Rather, the Japanese protests were part of a broader global trend in higher education at the time. Historians of higher education in Europe and North America have looked at the bottom-up, or consumer-driven, movement coinciding with a series of educational reforms that began in the late eighteenth century and stretched into the early twentieth century. Regarding the boom of student protests in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the US, John R. Thelin posits,

> There were instances of student demonstrations, revolts, and acts of sabotage, rebellious incidents in which students seemed to be expressing genuine dissatisfaction with archaic administration, disrespectful faculty, and a dull course of study irrelevant to the issues they would face as adults. (Thelin 2011, 64)

For Thelin, the root of these "rebellious incidents" stemmed from student interest in novel intellectual trends at the time, such as liberty, individual rights, and self-determination. Though contextual distinctions cannot be overlooked, the role of these new ideas in overturning conventional educational models is nevertheless relevant here.

Like their counterparts in the US, students at Buddhist schools in Japan interpreted some of these new ideas and approaches to learning in ways that contributed to a critical reassessment of their relationship to authority. This reassessment revealed intersecting political, generational, and ideological fault lines within the sects and their universities and led to clashes with sectarian leadership. As part of this reassessment, student-priests began taking ownership over their education, and the result was protests and collective action that challenged

conventional power dynamics within the sect. As Mark Edelman Boren (2019, 1) explains, universities are institutions that "paradoxically encourage following rules while encouraging the challenging of preconceptions." In his comparative work of historical student movements around the globe, Boren marks the mid-nineteenth century as a turning point for global student resistance, which he attributes in large part to the formation of student organizations, especially in the German states. Germany was also the model par excellence for higher education in the nineteenth century, and both the US and Japan sought to emulate the novel German research university. Boren's work primarily focuses on student political protests and thus is of a different nature than our focus. Nevertheless, his array of nineteenth-century examples of student collective action in Spain, England, France, Turkey, India, and the US reveal that in the crucible of modernization, students and universities were engaged in a dialectic of power (re) negotiations across the globe (Boren 2019, 33–49).

Rather than viewing these as parallel but disconnected phenomena, we might use political scientist Vivien A. Schmidt's (2008) "discursive institutionalism" to interpret how the Buddhist reformers and student protesters were actively engaged with this global phenomenon. The concept of discursive institutionalism addresses some of the shortcomings of new institutionalism when applied to global contexts.[18] Previous new institutionalist scholarship interpreted the worldwide diffusion of modern institutions such as museums, universities, prisons, and even symphonies, theorizing this phenomenon as "global isomorphism" (Meyer and Rowan 1991). Likewise, we may add to this list of modern institutions the global isomorphism of student protests and collective action. But global isomorphism does little to explain the role of local actors beyond seeing them as simply conforming to institutional norms. In contrast to this top-down view, discursive institutionalism approaches local actors as "utiliz[ing] world cultural discourses" to facilitate institutional change (Alasuutari 2015, 169). Accordingly, discursive institutionalism posits that *translation* rather than diffusion is a more fitting label for the processes that produce global isomorphism.

This notion of translation is relevant for understanding the push for curricular and structural changes as part of a broader process of Buddhist engagement with the emerging global cultural discourses around higher education and the category of "world religions." In the Ōtani case study, much of the conflict

18. Schmidt (2008, 305) is careful to distinguish her use of the term "discourse" from the postmodernist use of the term: Her definition is a "more generic term that encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed." "New institutionalism" is a broad umbrella term for approaches that center institutions, broadly defined. It emerged in the 1970s as a corrective response to rational choice explanations for individual interests and agency by instead revealing the dialectic ways in which institutions and individuals are co-constitutive.

centered on whether or how much to integrate new subjects from the West into Buddhist higher education. The pro-reform actors were active agents interpreting and translating these subjects for their own purposes while at the same time considering whether or how much to invest in inserting Japanese Buddhism into the developing framework of the world religions and its accompanying category of study. This kind of institutional translation work was of course taking place alongside other forms of translation, including the translation of European-language scholarship into Japanese and the production of new works on Japanese Buddhism in European languages (Iwata 2016; Stortini 2020). In the Sōtō example, students combined their understanding of the ethical and moral standards from their own tradition with the critical approaches and organizing methods emerging out of the modern university. We can glean some of the types of ideas and texts they were engaging with from the KDHN, which provides a list of texts comprising the curriculum. These included works by prominent intellectuals of the day such as Francois Guizot's *History of Civilization in Europe* (1828), John William Draper's *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* (1862), and Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Ethics* (1879).[19] And while the exact manner in which Sōtō students engaged with these texts is unknown,[20] their presence in the curriculum nevertheless signals an interest in participating in global discourses. This dialectic between local actors and global discourses serves as an important corrective to portrayals of unilateral or top-down diffusion of modern models of higher education.

Student Protests and the Professionalization of the Modern Priesthood

Professionalization is another helpful lens through which to comprehend the changes to the priesthood during the late nineteenth century. To grasp this process of professionalization, it is essential to examine the role of status (*mibun* 身分) in the late Tokugawa. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, the status of the Buddhist priesthood was largely linked to its hegemonic authority over the temple registration system and the bureaucratic machine that it produced. The repeal of the temple registration system upended this status previ-

19. While the selection of these texts follows some major intellectual trends of the time, it is also a result of which books were brought to Japan from the US and Europe, either by foreign or Japanese scholars spending time abroad. In the latter group the most influential was Fukuzawa Yukichi (2007, 200), who said the following about his impact on foreign texts in Japan: "This use of American text books in my school [Keio University] was the cause of the adoption all over the country of American books for the following ten years or more. Naturally when students from my school in turn became teachers, they used the texts they themselves had studied. And so it was natural that those I had selected became the favored text books throughout the country."

20. The KDHN's authors caution that the list of foreign subjects and texts were largely aspirational at first, as the school lacked faculty qualified to teach all the subjects (KDHN, 140–141).

ously held by Buddhist priests. David Howell's work on the nineteenth-century transition from early modern to modern social structures contextualizes this disruption within a dissolution of the status system across all sectors of society. Howell (2005, 154) asserts that in the Meiji government's efforts to build a new centralized state, it dismantled the "internal autonomies" that characterized the Tokugawa structure, "dumping the contents of the nested boxes of the status system into the single container of imperial subjecthood." According to Howell (2005, 8–9), this transformation represented a reconceptualization of civilization itself, establishing new norms and social organization, the enforcement of which prompted the deployment of "a full Foucauldian arsenal of technologies of modernity" including schools, the military, prisons, and pageantry. This new environment, which increasingly eschewed status in favor of internalized modern norms and individual livelihood, provided fertile grounds for the professionalization of the Buddhist priesthood.

As Miura Shū (2014, 210) and James Ketelaar (1990, 215) have observed, the Meiji period signaled an important transition for the Buddhist priesthood from a *status* to a *profession* (*shoku* 職). But just what is meant by the term "profession" and the process through which this transition unfolded is underexamined in the current literature. For this, works within the field of sociology on professionalization theory can be instructive. In his research on the development of professionals in modern societies, Harold Wilensky (1964, 138) explains that "any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy." Buddhists lacked many of these elements following the Meiji Restoration. Furthermore, the overhaul in nationalized education in the Meiji period led to an increase in the average education level of the general populace. Wilensky (1964, 150) also observes that when education levels rise among the general population, one effect is "greater skepticism about matters professional, more skepticism about the certainties of practice, [and] some actual sharing in professional knowledge (the mysteries lose their enchantment)." For the priesthood, this meant the need for more schooling to maintain educational superiority over the laity.

Many Meiji-era Buddhists shared this belief that education was the ideal tool by which Buddhism could reassert its value to the state.[21] A well-educated priesthood was thus a necessity. Buddhists made an early effort in the Meiji period by actively participating in the state's Great Promulgation Campaign as National

21. Two primary examples of this were Sōtō Zen priest Hara Tanzan and Jōdo Shin priest Yoshitani Kakuju 吉谷覚寿 (1843–1914), the first two Buddhist Studies lecturers at the University of Tokyo (Klautau 2025).

Evangelists (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職) for the Great Teaching Institute. This campaign was a mobilization effort to disseminate State Shinto as the national ideology among the citizenry. When initial efforts that involved only Shinto priests failed, Buddhists were permitted to serve as National Evangelists beginning in 1872, an opportunity seized upon by many sects.[22] By 1873, Buddhists had successfully petitioned to include Buddhist themes in their preaching, and they did so by creating a Buddhist curriculum for the Great Teaching Institute that deemphasized sectarian difference and emphasized aspects of Buddhism that were useful to the state by promoting public order (Lyons 2019, 223–225). This effort, led by the Jōdo Shin sect, was significant because it was the first time Buddhists experimented with creating a modern, pan-sectarian curriculum.

Absent much of the Great Teaching Institute curricula itself, scholars have tended to rely on Great Teaching Institute examination study guides published by the Buddhist sects to glean what priests studied; these publications featured commonly shared Buddhist themes like co-dependent origination, karma, the four noble truths, buddha-nature, and morality.[23] In emphasizing trans-sectarian rationalized ethical themes, Adam Lyons (2019, 223) has argued that participation in the Great Teaching Institute is an example of Buddhists framing dharmic teachings in the language of modern civil religion. By 1875, however, it became apparent that the campaign and institute were working to undermine Buddhism in order to establish an emergent State Shinto. This led to withdrawals of support by Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1831–1911), who initially led the efforts for Buddhist inclusion in the campaign, and the Jōdo Shin sect, which represented the largest delegation of National Evangelist priests. The institute, already on tenuous financial and organizational grounds before the Jōdo Shin sect withdrawal, closed a few months later in May 1875 (Hardacre 1989, 44–48). The Great Promulgation Campaign continued without an instructional headquarters until 1884, when it, too, ended. Even after the Great Promulgation Campaign concluded and the Great Teaching Institute closed, Buddhists fought to maintain their voice in the public sphere by advocating for the ability to serve as public educators.

22. In fact, members of New Religions, Nativist Studies scholars, and even entertainers were allowed to serve as National Evangelists from 1872 as well (Hardacre 1989, 43). Numbers of National Evangelists vary widely depending on the source and date of the records used. Ogawara (2004, 51) explains that in 1874, the year prior to the Great Teaching Institute's closure, there were 3,043 Buddhist National Evangelists (out of approximately 118,000 priests nationally) and 4,204 Shinto National Evangelists (out of nearly 10,000 priests nationally). Ketelaar (1990, 105) offers much higher numbers of National Evangelists based on a record from the Bureau of Shrines and temples dated to 1880; he writes that among a total number of 103,000 evangelists, 81,000 belonged to Buddhist sects, of which Shin Buddhists made up the largest amount at almost 25,000.

23. Only a few scholars have written about these unpublished study guides (Lyons 2019).

Involvement in the Great Teaching Institute was more than just a way for Buddhists to prove their usefulness to the state: it was also a means to redefine Buddhist teachings and education for a new era and via new institutions. EJIMA Naotoshi (2014, 8) has critiqued the popular assertion that Christianity was a primary influence on Buddhist groups in the early Meiji period; he argues instead that participation in the Great Teaching Institute had a greater impact. In their interactions with the public as National Evangelists, Buddhist priests actively linked Buddhism to the reforming Meiji state and the institutions that came with it. Not only was this a valuable proselytization opportunity that many Buddhist groups found too good to pass up, the experience of educating the public on unfamiliar topics exposed gaps in priests' own knowledge about the emerging civil society, gaps that were later rectified through revisions to Buddhist curricula. Thus, early experimentations with expanded curricula at the Great Teaching Institute were important steps toward professionalization.

Wilensky's observations hold relevance among scholar-priests today, with the continuation of the same anxieties about Buddhism's "exclusive jurisdiction" and the need for public trust. In a 2004 roundtable discussion between scholars from Japanese Buddhist universities, Taisho University professor Koyama Ten'yū 小山典勇 commented:

> My personal hope is for scholars in sectarian studies and those who deal with intellectual history to pursue a much greater level of knowledge in their specializations. This specialization is what differentiates us from society in general and it's what allows us to have a critical voice. Frankly speaking, even though it's often said that religion has a degree of non-secularity or a renunciatory quality to it, in reality, unless more people who embody these qualities appear, it's difficult to convince society of religion's value. (WARD 2004, 455)

Koyama's statement highlights the effect of a continued rise in education levels into the contemporary period on the status of the priesthood. In this process that began in the Meiji period, the educational reforms pursued by protesting student-priests bore consequences for whether priests would remain members of the intellectual elite and, relatedly, contributed to the reprofessionalization of the priesthood to serve as modern educators.[24]

As we have seen, Buddhist universities served as important sites of the rebuilding process as Buddhist sects sought to claim their professional authority. For WILENSKY (1964, 142, 144), phases of professionalization begin with "doing full time the thing that needs doing," followed in short order by the need for training. The next step is to form associations, which he describes as follows:

24. This vision of priests as educators for the new state existed in theory but was never fully realized because of legal developments over the course of the Meiji period that drew stricter separations of religion and state.

> All of this is accompanied by a campaign to separate the competent from the incompetent. This involves further definition of essential professional tasks, the development of internal conflict among practitioners of varying background, and some competition with outsiders who do similar work…. The newcomers see the oldtimers [*sic*] as a block to successful professionalization; the latter see the former as upstarts… what is true of internal conflict is also apparent in external relations: hard competition with neighboring occupations seems to go with these later stages of professionalization. All occupations in the human-relations field have only tenuous claims to exclusive competence.
>
> (Wilensky 1964, 144–145)

Wilensky highlights here the commingling of internal and external pressures and competition, generational tensions, and insecurity about what he called "exclusive competence." The dynamics described here as early indicators of professionalization were present in Buddhist higher educational institutions from the earliest days of the Meiji period and are responsible for many of the external tensions and internal conflicts we have just examined.

Conclusion

To conclude, I return to my original question: how did systemic changes to Buddhist higher education make these student protests possible? Wilensky's work on professionalization paired with Schmidt's work on discursive institutionalism give us new ways to better understand some of the dialectic processes as well as the systemic consequences of the adoption of the university model. With Schmidt's discursive institutionalism, we can interpret the note-burning carried out by student-priests as an expressive act of translation. In asking Genjuin to explain his stance, the students drew on at least two conventions of the modern university. The first was students' expectation they be permitted to study Christianity as part of the exercise of academic freedom and critical inquiry required in the academic study of religion. The second was the institutional norm of questioning authority (as seen in Boren's global historical survey of protesting students). In utilizing these conventions, student-priests actively translated the isomorphic institutional form of the university for the Japanese Buddhist context.

Though Schmidt's discursive institutionalism is instructive for interpreting the act of note-burning itself, it fails to get at the underlying motivations of the protesting student-priests. For this, Wilensky's framework helps us to see student collective action as part of the tensions inherent in the professionalization process. These tensions began internally between traditional and reformer factions over how professional competence is defined. While the traditional Buddhist faction drew on preexisting models of competence, reformers argued that new professional competence was required to address the loss of status previously

vested in the priesthood. Though success for the protesting students was rarely linear, over the course of the Meiji period and into the subsequent decades of the twentieth century, the Buddhist university became increasingly central to the professionalization of the modern priesthood. The modernization of Japanese Buddhism, then, emerged not as an epistemological product but as a systemic consequence of the new Buddhist university. The Buddhist university model, translated by these student-priests, became more powerful over time, even as the institution allowed for intellectual daylight between itself and the sect. This productive tension between competing institutional priorities and intellectual freedom continues to be negotiated in Buddhist higher education in Japan today.

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ODHS *Ōtani Daigaku hyakunenshi: Shiryōhen* 大谷大学百年史—資料編. Ed. Ōtani Daigaku Hensan Iinkai. Ōtani Daigaku, 2001.

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Matthew Keller

Inari Origin Stories

Crafting Narrative in Medieval Japan

By the fifteenth century, Inari worshipers had created a vast mythology for their kami that carefully navigated the shifting religious landscape of Japan. *Engi*, or "origin stories," from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries show that authors of such stories were intent on crafting relationships for Inari that carved out an independent identity while curating associations with prominent institutions of the time. In this article, I analyze how medieval proponents of Inari Jinja crafted new narratives of the deity's origins and deeds in a concerted effort to forge an independent identity for the deity while maintaining vital ties with both Buddhist and Shinto institutions. What provided the Inari tradition with renewed coherence and relevance was not the unification and clarification of these narratives and relationships, but rather their fundamental diversity and ambiguity.

keywords: Inari—*engi*—kami—Shinto—mythmaking—*honji suijaku*

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Composed in 1474, the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* tells how the now ubiquitous kami known as Inari assumed residence on Mt. Inari, a mountain at the edge of Kyoto. According to this story, Inari and Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師 (the posthumous title for Kūkai 空海 [774–835]) had previously met in a past life, while they were both disciples of the Buddha in India. In the story, Kōbō Daishi proclaims to Inari, "I will be born in the land of the east and spread the Dharma. At that time, you should come and be invested as a guardian deity of secret teachings." The story goes on to explain that they met again in Japan, where Kōbō Daishi directs Inari, in the form of an old man carrying rice, to visit Tōji 東寺, "a sacred place where esoteric teachings for the protection of the state should be established." Upon agreeing to be a guardian of the teachings at the temple, the old man took up residence in a nearby mountain known as Mt. Inari (IS, 51–54).

The Inari Jinja 稲荷神社 origin story (*engi* 縁起) reflects how the shrine understood its own history within a Buddhist framework. The relationship between Inari and Kūkai in the story exhibited the historical conditions in which the tale was composed. Inari Jinja was destroyed during the Ōnin War (1467–1477) (Kawashima 1998). In the wake of its destruction, a monk named Fukuami 福阿彌 (d.u.) solicited support to rebuild the shrine, specifically requesting help from Tōji. Since the majority of the shrine's documents had been lost to fire, Tōji gave a copy of the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* to Fukuami (IS *kaisetsu*, 24–25).

Although the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* clearly paints Buddhism, and Tōji in particular, in a favorable light, the origin stories of Inari also problematize the Buddhist paradigm that dominated medieval Japan. *Honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 thought identified kami as local, trace manifestations (*suijaku*) of transcendent Buddhist deities' original grounds (*honji*). This Buddhist combinatory paradigm was challenged by a movement in early Shinto traditions, which devised inverted models (*han honji suijaku* 反本地垂迹) that posited Amaterasu (the divine ancestor of the imperial family) and related kami as the fundamental source of enlightenment and, in turn, the buddhas and bodhisattvas as their emanations (Tyler 1989; Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003, 1–53; Andreeva 2017, 16–24; Park 2020, 81–89). Inari worship existed within this context, and yet medieval authors created the kami's origin story by weaving together Buddhist teachings and local legends to find a middle ground between rival combinatory paradigms.

This article reassesses how kami and Buddhist traditions negotiated their place in the competitive religious landscape of medieval Japan. Accounts of

medieval Japanese religion emphasize the dominance of combinatory paradigms that theorized hierarchical relationships between kami and buddhas. These paradigms asserted the originality, and thus superiority, of one category of deities relative to the other, thus providing a basis for the preeminent category's religious efficacy. However, during the period of its active reconstruction at the close of the fifteenth century, the Inari cult resisted pressures to join the movements arguing for the superiority of either Buddhist divinities or local kami. Rather, the proponents of Inari Jinja crafted new narratives of the deity's origins and deeds in a concerted effort to forge an independent identity for the deity while maintaining vital ties with both Buddhist and Shinto institutions. It was the fundamental diversity and ambiguity of these narratives and relationships, rather than their unification and clarification, which granted the Inari tradition renewed coherence and relevance.

Reimagining Inari: Alliances with Kūkai

Numerous changes to shrines dedicated to kami veneration beginning in the thirteenth century resulted in an increased composition of origin stories (Blair and Kawasaki 2015). These changes often required reassessing the relationships between a shrine, the central court, and other sources of authority. In the case of Inari, there was a need to account for its place in the twenty-two shrine-temple multiplexes grouping and its close relationship with Tōji and the Shingon tradition.[1] Elaboration on Inari's origins was especially necessary because, despite early attestations of the kami's popularity, extant works from before the thirteenth century provide only sparse accounts of the deity. To fill this void, authors produced a wave of new narratives about Inari comprised of a wide variety of genres beginning in the thirteenth century. Some, like the *Inari Daimyōjin engi*, are standalone texts, while others come in the form of *saimon* 祭文—that is, liturgical texts embedded within ritual instructions—and Buddhist compendia. The similarities in narrative across genres indicate that the ritual, liturgical, and vernacular facets of Inari worship were tightly interwoven. Furthermore, these sources come from multiple institutions and traditions. Inari Jinja, the Shingon centers of Tōji and Mt. Kōya, the Tendai tradition, and Shōmyōji 称名寺 in the Kanto region feature prominently in Inari origin texts composed from the beginning of the fourteenth century. This wide range of sources from separate nodes in the Inari network indicate how the kami's traditions spread broadly through multiple actors.

1. On the importance and general characteristics of the twenty-two shrine-temple multiplexes, see Grapard (1988). Tōji is well known as one of the original institutions of Shingon Buddhism and a temple of imperial sponsorship.

The name of Inari appears in court histories dating back to the early eighth century, with increasing frequency from the early ninth century. However, only three remaining texts present stories centered on the Inari deity; the references are limited to a few lines in length and preserved in compiled works dedicated to broader subjects. For example, an excerpt from the eighth-century *Yamashiro no kuni fudoki* tells of a piece of mochi transforming into a bird and then into new rice plants on top of what would become Mt. Inari. Trees from the area were then taken by members of the Hata 秦 family who wished to venerate the divine spirit. The *Tenryaku Jingikan kanmon*, an official opinion presented to the government ministry dedicated to overseeing kami-related affairs (Jingikan 神祇官) in the tenth century, recounts an abbreviated form of this same tale and seems intended to confirm the Hata family's role as priests of Inari Jinja (ST 44: 3–5). Finally, a section of the ninth-century *Ruiju kokushi* records the first documented encounter between Inari Jinja and Tōji, as well as between the shrine and the imperial court. According to the story, Emperor Junna 淳和 (786–840) fell ill before the New Year's ceremonies in 827, and an oracle determined the illness was caused by a curse inflicted by Inari. Sometime earlier, Tōji had taken trees from Inari's mountain on the outskirts of the capital to use as lumber, and the emperor was afflicted ostensibly in response to this trespass. To assuage the kami's anger, the court granted Inari an official court rank of Junior Fifth Lower (*jugo ige* 従五位下). The offering apparently worked: Junna's illness was alleviated, and Inari happily integrated into the court rituals from that time forward (*Ruiju kokushi*, 312–313; KURE 2018; KONDŌ 1983, 96–97).

This story recorded in the *Ruiju kokushi* suggests that the initial relationship between Inari Jinja and Tōji involved conflict, but over the centuries the two developed a semi-symbiotic cooperation.[2] By the eleventh century, priests annually brought the portable shrine used in the popular Inari Festival to the temple compound so that the monks could propitiate the kami. The storehouse for the portable shrine is still located near the temple. Additionally, beginning from at least the fourteenth century, Tōji also assisted in the administration of Inari's estates (*shōen* 荘園). During the seventeenth century, Tōji established a branch temple named Aizenji 愛染寺 within the shrine's precincts, although it was removed at the end of the nineteenth century as part of the Meiji government's policy separating Shinto and Buddhist institutions (GORAI 1985, 36; ŌMORI 1994, 378).

Though the surge of stories written in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries came long after the initial development of the cooperative relationship

2. Numerous records related to Inari's estates have been preserved in the *Tōji hyakugōmonjo* 東寺百合文書. I have relied on the versions of these documents reproduced in *Inari Jinja shiryō*. Tōji's landholdings were already substantial, and integrating the shrine's estates into these may have allowed Inari Jinja to benefit from the temple's network.

between Inari Jinja and Tōji, they likely represent written forms of earlier oral explanations for why the two institutions were so closely related. The initial incursion of Tōji into Inari's mountain domain in the ninth century should have been hard to forget; however, authors of medieval sources thoroughly rewrote the shrine's history to avoid this controversy, such as stating that Inari took up residence on the mountain at Kūkai's direction. The *Inariki* provides an early example of reimagining how the Inari deity took up residence on the mountain:

> The Daimyōjin met face to face with Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai). In the records of their august agreement, it is stated that in the third year of Enryaku [784], a wood-rat year, when the god came to Japan from China, as they had no residence of their own, they wandered around the Otagi district of Yamashiro. Since the god was carrying rice on their shoulders, the people named the god as the kami of Inari. In the twenty-second year of the same era [806], a water-goat year, as [Inari] Daimyōjin was returning from Mt. Kumano, Kōbō Daishi (in the record book, there is his true name [Kūkai]) was traveling to Kumano. At the shrine of the Tanabe 田辺 prince,[3] he met the divine manifestation face to face. [Inari] Daimyōjin said, "I went to see the sacred mountain." When Kōbō Daishi approved of this, the deity said, "I am a lord of China. However, I have come to this kingdom so that I might save sentient beings in the Land of the Sun who have no seeds of blessings. As I wish to be called the 'Kami of Love for the Dharma' (Aihōjin 愛法神), how should I conduct myself?" The teacher approved of this divine and subtle aspiration. Afterwards, there were various promises between them.… Then, after the teacher had returned, he invited Inari to Tōji.… Inari told their story, and, after a while, the divine manifestation said, "I will stay and dwell here. Tell me someplace where I could provide benefits for sentient beings." The abbot responded, "To the southeast, there is the timber mountain (*somayama* 杣山) of this temple. Put down your traces there and again perform deeds to benefit living beings." The abbot then instructed, "Follow the road from the east gate of Tōji, and it is as I have indicated to you." (IS, 3–4)

The *Inariki*'s account is similar to that of the *Inari Daimyōjin engi*, *Yamashiro no kuni fudoki*, and *Tenryaku Jingikan kanmon* in that these sources all tell of a roving kami, a mountain with trees of vital significance, and the meaning behind that kami taking up residence on the mountain (ST 44: 3–5). However, the author of this legend adeptly altered the narrative of the two earlier works, changed the characters involved, and inverted the power dynamic between Inari Jinja and Tōji. In this version, the kami only appears after Kūkai is already active

3. The shrine of the Tanabe prince refers to one of several auxiliary shrines of Kumano, brought under the title of the ninety-nine princes of Kumano. Tanabe refers to a place to the southwest of Kyoto, in the old district of Tsuzuki.

and constructing Tōji. The mountain is specifically identified as a "timber mountain" from which people take lumber for building projects. Most importantly, the deity takes up position on Mt. Inari because they were instructed to do so by Kūkai in his capacity as the abbot of the temple. The story does not leave any room to suppose that the shrine might be a rival or opponent of Tōji. Instead, the Inari kami is clearly allied with the temple, and the god's myths could be understood by Buddhists as just another part of the larger Shingon corpus of legends about Kūkai and his activities.

The *Inariki* and the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* further agree on several important facts. Inari and Kūkai came across each other near the Tanabe shrine of Kii Province in Japan. The two meet again at Tōji, and Inari takes up residence on Mt. Inari to serve as a protector of the Shingon teachings. Notably, the timelines do not match. The *Inari Daimyōjin engi* records that the meetings between deity and founder happened in 816 and 823, whereas the *Inariki* sets their meeting a couple of decades earlier. The 823 date places the events prior to the 827 encounter with Emperor Junna and so invokes that precedent while also asserting that the agreement between Inari and Tōji precedes it. Neither the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* nor the *Inariki* directly acknowledge the kami's assault on Emperor Junna. Yet, the *Inari Daimyōjin engi*'s new timeline does more than this. The *Inariki* had already asserted that the kami was previously a lord of China. This is a claim that is repeated in the *Inari Daimyōjin engi*. However, the later text takes the deity's origins and their alliance with Kūkai back even further in time. The relationship between Inari and Kūkai now extended back to a past lifetime where the two listened to a sermon by Śākyamuni Buddha in India. The two are equals in the gathering, and while Kūkai initiates the conversation, they are companions in the beginning, with Inari catching up to Kūkai in mythic time after multiple rebirths. It is a subtle difference, but the authors of the fifteenth-century *Inari Daimyōjin engi* thus elevated Inari to be a partner with Kūkai in the service of Buddhist teachings.

Other versions of the story of Kūkai directing the Inari deity to the mountain are found in numerous works, such as: the *Kōbō Daishi den* 弘法大師伝, the *Inari Daimyōjin ryūki* 稲荷大明神流記, the *Kōbō Daishi gyōjōki* 弘法大師行状記, the *Kuji kongen* 公事根源, the *Fujimorisha engi* 藤森社縁起, and the *Jinten'ai nōshō* 塵添壒嚢鈔 (Gorai 1985, 15; Watanabe 1994, 46; Kondō 1997, 32; Yamanaka 1997, 88; Nakamura 2009, 81–82; Ueda 2011, 95–99). Each of these texts includes additional details that expand the narrative in slightly different ways. Most of these stories likewise state that the Inari kami moved to the mountain from elsewhere. However, even with further additions, the fundamental structure of the plot as seen in the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* and *Inariki* versions remains consistent. These medieval Inari origin narratives served to reinforce the relationship between Tōji and Inari Jinja. The authors taught their audiences that

the Inari deity and Kūkai were on good terms from the beginning and that the two agreed to cooperate in the past. The authors presented Inari as a kami of Japan that could base its position primarily on the prestige and importance of the temple. Nevertheless, the compilers of Inari origin stories made careful use of Buddhist lore not to subjugate Inari to Buddhist deities or hierarchies, but to give this distinctly Japanese god a specific and prominent place in the Japanese religious landscape. This subtle effort to tie Inari to Kūkai and Tōji without subordinating the kami as a simple manifestation of some greater Buddhist deity was a key strategy by which the shrine's supporters successfully maintained the kami's independence and individual authority.

This new origin story of Inari Jinja quickly spread beyond Shingon circles, as authors from different traditions adapted it to their particular needs. Stories of Inari and Kūkai became so ubiquitous that Tendai authors needed to contend with it in their own works. For instance, the *Nijūnisha hon'en* records a similar legend, but the author claims that the Inari kami first met with Saichō 最澄 (767–822), the founder of the Tendai school, who then sent the deity on to Kūkai (ZGR 2: 200). In this way, the Tendai authors sought to coopt the Kūkai narrative, implement the same discursive technique, and change the story for their own advantage.

The presence of the Inari-Kūkai story in texts like the mid-fourteenth-century *Nijūisshaki* (65–66) and the late sixteenth-century *Nijūnisha chūshiki* (ZGR 2: 224–225) is particularly important. These two compilations were works intended to describe the nature and history of the twenty-two shrine-temple multiplexes. The leaders of multiple Shinto movements treated the texts as formative and normative well into the nineteenth century. The inclusion of the Inari-Kūkai story in these works indicates that it was asserted or accepted as standard by the Shinto authors and their associates. While the story has no precedent prior to the fourteenth century, it effectively supplanted previous narratives of Inari's appearance on the mountain. This story's successful dissemination demonstrates the dominance of the cooperative relationship between the shrine and Tōji. The alliance with Kūkai raised Inari's prestige by association, while it also promoted and stabilized connections between Inari Jinja and the Shingon tradition. This explains why so many Inari-related documents are found today at both Tōji and Mt. Kōya. Furthermore, the alliance with Kūkai became the basis for understanding Inari's role as a guardian of esoteric Buddhist teachings.

Bodhisattva from Afar

Forging alliances with Kūkai was only one element of the medieval project to empower the Inari cult. Authors needed to elaborate on the kami's relationship with other Buddhist deities to establish how exactly Inari fit into a Buddhist

hierarchy. One method through which authors accomplished this is the identification of Inari as a deity that had come from beyond Japan. For example, the *Inariki* states that Inari was previously a lord of China, and the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* describes the kami as a ruler of various lands before the rebirth that brought the deity and Kūkai to the archipelago. Inari thus was refashioned as a member of the broad class of kami that scholars today classify as *yorikuru kami* 帰り来る神, deities that have come from other lands and across the sea to settle in the Japanese islands (Gorai 1985, 142–145; Hinonishi 1996, 138–139).[4] Moreover, the deity's travels from the continent to Japan mirrored the movement of Buddhist teachings and emphasized that while Inari may be localized to Japan, the kami was fully a part of the foundations of the Buddhist tradition. Accounts varied: sometimes Inari met Kūkai in India first; in other versions, the kami arrived in Japan via the sea in unconventional ways. This journey from afar is important because it showed that the Inari deity, their mythos, and their efficacy were not limited to Mt. Inari. Instead, such accounts attested to the active and important role Inari played throughout the religious world.

There is, for instance, the following legend from the early fourteenth-century *Ototari shingu saimon*. The story concerns Hata Ototari, an ancestor of the Inari Jinja Hata priest family, a clan that had immigrated to the archipelago from Korea. The author of the text claims that Ototari rescued the deity that would become the Inari kami. Inari's arrival from across the sea follows a very different narrative than that of the previous two stories:

> The deity is a manifest trace of Monju. To provide benefits to sentient beings, they sometimes appear as the Celestial Fox and bestow love and respect to people. At other times, they incarnate as Tamonten to provide fortune and merit to people.… It has been said about the Celestial Fox that long ago in the Land of the Great Tang, during the time of *Ōnanji Konanji* 大汝小汝,[5] the Celestial Fox became an envoy and set out for the country of Japan [with the Yahashira no miko no inochi 八柱御子命].[6] While crossing the difficult waves, they were swallowed by a giant catfish. Their lives were in danger. Then Hata no Ototari

4. For a discussion of the prominence and importance of immigrant deities in early Japan, see Como (2009, 1–24).

5. Also known as the *Banji Banzaburō monogatari* 磐司磐三郎物語, this folktale was once popular among hunters, such as the Matagi of the Tohoku region, and also known on the Korean Peninsula. It tells the story of the eponymous siblings and their encounter with a mountain goddess as she is in the midst of childbirth and in need of aid. One brother avoids her according to ritual pollution taboos, the other assists her regardless. The one who aided her was blessed. There is no indication of when this legend is set. It may be appropriately referenced here because Ototari also decides to assist a goddess in need.

6. There are multiple Yahashira shrines in Ibaraki, Aichi, and Nara prefectures. This story's connection to these shrines, if there is one, is unclear. The identities of the divinities in question also vary between the different shrines.

> caught that catfish and saved the divinities' lives. Each was overjoyed to be alive and with one voice they promised: "We will become the servants of Ototari and follow the descendants of his children. Crossing mountains and rivers, from this time and ever after, we will fulfill any desire without fail. If we irresponsibly forget the debt of today and do not fulfill the wishes of the descendants of Ototari, then for many years we will lose great benefits and not attain Correct Awakening." This is the same as an Original Vow—who could question the benefits it will bring to sentient beings? These divinities of long ago are the Celestial Fox King. (*Ototari shingu saimon*)[7]

While the Hata clan does not appear in the *Inariki*, they were the original shrine priests for Inari and feature prominently in the *Yamashiro no kuni fudoki* excerpt and *Tenryaku Jingikan kanmon*. The author reinforces the associations of Inari and the narrative with the shrine's historic conditions by referencing the Hata, thereby striking a balance between the classic Inari myths and the overlaid concept of Inari as a continental deity. In other words, through the inclusion of a member of the Hata family, the author supports this unusual account of the god arriving after being swallowed by a catfish without entirely disconnecting the deity from otherwise more common stories of Inari's origins.

This origin story appears in the middle of a *saimon* designed to propitiate the main deities of a ritual ceremony by explaining their qualities and the praiseworthiness of their efficacy. On the one hand, a *saimon* is a technical, liturgical text that should be recited or intoned, requiring an expert priest or ritualist. On the other hand, they are read in vernacular Japanese and intended to be understood by lay devotees. *Saimon* thus provide a bridge between esoteric rituals and lay audiences. The inclusion of this Inari origin story in a *saimon* indicates an effort to establish and disseminate the ritual identity of the kami beyond the composers and readers of esoteric texts to reach lay traditions as well.

The *Ototari shingu saimon* was copied down by the monk Kenna 釵阿 (1261–1338). Kenna was the second abbot of Shōmyōji near Kamakura, and he received support from the Kanazawa Hōjō 北条 family.[8] The document also includes a comment in the hand of his disciple Shūhan 秀範 (b. 1276). Shūhan states that when the *saimon* is performed, an offering of white rice should be made and an offering wand of one *shaku* 尺 and two *sun* 寸 (36 cm) in length should be used. A second version of this legend can be found in the *Inari ichiryū daiji*. This text was produced on Mt. Kōya in 1408 by a monk named Jōjun 成純 (d.u.), who

7. This document is kept in the Shōmyōji collection of the Kanazawa Bunko archive, case number 317, document number 7. For the *Inari ichiryū daiji* version of the story, see IS (94–95).

8. Kenna collected texts for Shingon royal accession rituals (*sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂) on behalf of the Hōjō (Nishioka 2014). Because Inari is sometimes connected to these rituals through an association with Dakiniten, the *saimon* is likely related to Kenna's activities for the Hōjō.

was recording the dreams and interpretations of another monk named Echibō 恵智房 (d.u.) (IS *kaisetsu*, 32–33). That version of the *saimon* states that Echibō declared the story a strict secret and passed it down among his disciples. In addition to the *saimon*, the *Inari ichiryū daiji* includes instructions for venerating Inari via rituals for the Celestial Fox King and the goddess Dakiniten.

In both versions, the *saimon* begins with an explanation that anyone who performs this sort of rite, even if they were born into a poor and destitute house, will surely manifest a mind for enlightenment and achieve awakening in their next rebirth. The author further prefaces the story by stating that the main deity for the rituals is a temporary manifestation of Monju. Like the *Inariki*, the *Ototari shingu saimon* and *Inari ichiryū daiji* pointedly make use of specific Buddhist terminology to characterize the deity's activities. A similar text, the *Inari shingyō*, uses familiar Buddhist language to express that the deity was moved by compassion to provide benefits to sentient beings (IS, 91–92). In reminiscent language, the *Inariki* adds that the kami will help particularly those "who have no seeds of blessings," that is, those who are without good karma from previous lives.

The narrative in these *saimon* elevates the status of Inari in Buddhist terms by indicating that they are a manifestation of Monju, the bodhisattva of wisdom. However, the text also makes clear that Inari maintains their own identity as a being on the Buddhist path. This dual aspect of Inari expanded on the idea that kami are in the process of actualizing enlightenment (*shikaku* 始覚) found in the twelfth-century *Nakatomi harae kunge* 中臣祓訓解 (RAMBELLI 2009, 245–246). Here, Inari is both on a search for enlightenment and takes a vow to save other sentient beings.

Throughout the medieval period, authors found many ways to associate kami and shrines with Buddhist teachings. Often this process involved the above-mentioned *honji suijaku* paradigm and its Shinto-leaning reverse, which raises the question of hierarchy: do the local kami or the Buddhist deities take priority? The authors of the medieval Inari origins stories were able to strategically avoid the trap of either subordinating the shrine's kami to Buddhist deities or vice versa by casting the Inari deity as a bodhisattva from distant lands that was on an equal footing with other bodhisattvas. Like in the story of Ototari, Inari was reimagined to have taken a vow to support the Dharma somewhere else and then come to Japan to fulfill that vow, becoming simultaneously local and transcendent.

Indeterminacy and Original Grounds

Authors of Inari origin texts presented the complexity of Inari's relationship with other Buddhist deities in ways that promoted the kami's individuality. Imaginations of Inari as a manifest trace of a single Buddhist divinity could fit nicely within

the classical *honji suijaku* paradigm. For instance, the *Ototari shingu saimon* states that the main deity of the ritual is a manifestation of Monju. However, preceding rituals in the *Inari ichiryū daiji* claim that the Inari deity is also a manifestation of the Thousand-Armed Kannon, Nyoirin Kannon, and the Eleven-Headed Kannon, while the deities of the Shi no Ōkami, Tanaka, and Myōbu sub-shrines are embodiments of Tamonten, Fudō, and Monju, respectively. Suddenly, each of the sub-shrines of Inari is a trace manifestation of independent Buddhist deities, and together they create a mandalic image of Inari. But what about the main Inari deity itself? In a complex case like this, Inari's status as a manifest trace is more difficult to parse. The lack of consensus across prominent texts generated ambiguity, and authors deployed this indeterminate nature of Inari to great effect.

Scholars have observed that in practice Inari's position as a manifestation of any particular bodhisattva or buddha is weak. For example, Yamaori Tetsuō (1991, 172–173) asserted that in comparison to a deity such as Hachiman, who medieval sources generally agree was the manifestation of Daijizaiten, Inari instead often took the place of the "original ground" and would temporarily manifest as either an old man or a maid. In other words, since authors did not consistently identify Inari with only one of the more well-known bodhisattvas, the kami would act as an original ground in place of those bodhisattvas. In turn, the versions of Inari that act in origin narratives, such as the old man carrying rice or the Yahashira Divinities, serve as provisional manifestations of the true form of the god. This is one of the peculiarities of a kami whose shrine complex consists of multiple significant shrines: while the kami is a composite deity wherein each major shrine's enshrined god is considered an aspect of one, singular deity, each individual shrine also has its own identity. If one attempts to comprehend the composite deity in relation to the separate shrines, then the result is that the composite deity is a multivalent and ambiguous entity. That is, the multiplicity of bodhisattva original grounds for each separate shrine in the Inari multiplex makes it unclear if the composite Inari kami actually is a trace manifestation and has a separate, distinct original ground.

This opacity regarding the kami's status as an original ground or trace manifestation provided an opportunity for authors to assert a superior status for Inari. For example, the authors of the mid-thirteenth-century *Kada kōshiki*, a liturgical text produced by a branch shrine family, stated that the Inari deity "while expressing the meaning of the twin mandalas… conceals the true form of the god's original ground… and is the true body (*shinjin* 眞身) of Monju" (Is, 25–26). The true body is juxtaposed with a transformation body (*keshin* 化身) or the temporal body that a buddha or bodhisattva would assume in the physical world to save human beings. The true body is instead the Dharma and perfected body of a buddha or bodhisattva. *Suijaku* or *gongen* 権現, which are provisional

bodies, are often understood as transformation bodies rather than true bodies and therefore only mediate encounters with a buddha (Mochizuki 1960, 2042). According to this explanation, the many shrines around Mt. Inari and their possible bodhisattvas resemble the composition of the womb realm and diamond realm mandalas, and the multiplex and the composite deity taken together constitute the true body of a Buddhist deity, not merely a provisional one. It is clear that there were some, such as the authors of the *Kada kōshiki*, who did not view Inari as a trace manifestation or as inferior to the original ground of Monju.

In the 1340s, the Tendai monk Jihen 慈遍 (d.u.) first introduced an inverted *honji suijaku* hierarchy in which kami constituted the original grounds, and bodhisattvas were cast as their traces (Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003, 31–37). Fabio Rambelli (2009, 247–250) has posited that Ryōbu and Ise Shintō thinkers like Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼倶 (1435–1511) also sought to reverse the *honji suijaku* paradigm in order to refute the idea that kami were only trace manifestations and assert that primordial, fundamental enlightenment originated in the Japanese islands with Amaterasu. For Jihen and Kanetomo, this transposition was vital to establish Shinto schools of thought—the Ryōbu and Yuiitsu traditions, respectively—that transformed the basis for their ritual efficacy. We see this approach spread outward from Ise to other cultic sites, such as Mt. Miwa where, by the sixteenth century, Amaterasu was posited as the origin and Dainichi Nyōrai as manifestation (Andreeva 2017, 276–297).

However, this is not the approach that compilers of medieval origin narratives took to promote Inari. They instead opted for a third strategy that did not fully embrace a *honji suijaku* paradigm, nor reverse it. Inari acted as an original ground and provided devotees with the same sort of direct access to the benefits of the Dharma that any other original ground would. However, the kami was not directly juxtaposed or put into opposition with Buddhist deities. This lack of juxtaposition, combined with the ambiguity that prevented the kami from being subsumed by another deity, enabled Inari to act alongside other bodhisattvas and buddhas while retaining its independence.

Inari proponents were able to claim originary status for the kami by characterizing Inari as bodhisattva-like, yet resisting the deity's collapse into any single bodhisattva. Presenting a kami as an original ground emphasized the deity's efficacy, as propitiators would not be worshiping Inari or performing the god's rituals with the hope that the kami would intercede on their behalf with some more powerful Buddhist deity. Instead, Inari would help directly and without mediation. Moreover, the identification of Inari as an original ground meant that the kami was not dependent on any other deity or bodhisattva for their own divine efficacy. The prevalence and persistence of traditions of indeterminacy meant that Inari could not be cleanly subsumed under any other Buddhist deity, nor refute the validity of the original enlightenment of any of those deities. In

this way, the supporters of Inari assembled a local kami tradition that eschewed the inverted *honji suijaku* rhetoric of the Ise movements and found leverage at other peripheral sites such as Mt. Miwa at the time.

The Names of Inari

The authors of medieval origin narratives thus established Inari's distinct position in the Japanese religious landscape while also affirming various connections with bodhisattvas, Kūkai, and Tōji. Authors then continued to curate Inari's identity as an original ground through the careful naming of Inari's trace manifestations. The *Inariki* and similar sources assert that the name "Inari" was bestowed by the people of the land, namely the citizens of Otagi, because the kami carried (*ninau* 荷) rice (*ine* 稲) in bags on its shoulders. The *Inariki* provides little description of the deity's form beyond this, although most other texts state that the deity had the appearance of a mysterious old man (*okina* 翁) when they appeared before Kūkai.[9] This depiction of Inari is common today, because they are easily associated with the kanji that are used for the kami's name. However, the earlier *Yamashiro no kuni fudoki* provides a different story for the Inari etymology, and it is possible that the current kanji were assigned to the kami after its name had already been established.

The *Inariki* states that the deity called "Inari" was also known as the Aramatsuri 荒祭 of Ise, the Shiratōme 白嫁女 of Kibune, and the Hitokotonushi 一言主 of Isagawa in Nara (IS, 6). The association of Inari with the names of other deities and ritual sites connected the kami to new places. Moreover, this associative strategy denotes Inari Jinja's participation in the mythologies being promoted by agents of the Ise cult during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (TEEUWEN and BREEN 2017, 83–111). The same approach was used at other sites around Japan, such as Miwa and Izumo, to enliven the kami of those shrines with Ise ritual thought (ZHONG 2016, 17–47; ANDREEVA 2017).

The author of the *Inariki* claimed that the Inari deity had one distinct name that the kami preferred: Aihōjin, the "Kami of Love for the Dharma." The use of this name brought together two types of local associations with Inari into one title. Cultivation of love for the Dharma is an orthodox practice intended to sustain focus on the Buddha's teachings expounded upon in major Buddhist treatises such as the *Mohezhiguan* (T 1911, 46.46b10), the *Four-Part Vinaya* (T 1428, 22.682b14), and the *Yogācārabhūmi śāstra* (T 1579, 30.383a6). However, the characters for *aihō* can be understood literally to mean the "rites of love." Works such as Fujiwara Akihira's 藤原明衡 (989–1066) eleventh-century *Shinsarugakuki* describe *aihō* rituals performed around Kyoto and associated with Inari

9. See the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* or the *Inari ryūki*, wherein the author labels the deity as the "old man of strange aspect" (*isō rōō* 異相老翁; IS, 39).

wherein people prayed to kami for help in finding romantic partners or giving birth to children (*Shinsarugakuki*, 36; Abe 1998, 280–315). The name Aihōjin is likely wordplay intended to cause the audience to recollect both associations with the Inari kami. Yet, the *Inariki* does not expand on the issue other than to state that if people revere the kami, then they will develop the right sort of love for the Dharma and also obtain worldly blessings. This well-chosen but ambiguous moniker allowed the authors of Inari origin stories to emphasize both Inari's powers in this world and the power to escape it.

In the context of kami in medieval Japan, the issuing of names is complex and has several peculiarities. This is especially the case for composite deities like Inari with their multiple prominent sub-shrines, each with their own host of names, that are fundamental to their reputation. According to the *Engishiki* (514–515), Inari was known to have three main shrines from the tenth century, but they are given no definite names besides "Upper," "Middle," and "Lower" Shrine in most medieval texts. Today, they are identified with Ōmiya no Me no Ōkami 大宮能売大神, Satahiko no Ōkami 佐田彦大神, and Uka no Mitama no Ōkami 宇迦之御魂大神, all gods prevalent in the imperial myths of the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 or the *Kojiki* 古事記. These names did not become commonplace until after the construction of a new main shrine at the foot of Mt. Inari in 1499. As of the compilation of the *Ryōjin hishō* 梁塵秘抄 around 1171, two more shrines had risen to prominence, and Inari was then referred to as a deity with five enshrined aspects (Ueda 2011, 16). The additional two shrines were the Tanaka and Shi no Ōkami shrines, but there is further debate as to the individual names of the kami enshrined in these places as well.

Authors made good use of the potential contained within Inari's multiple names as they constructed discourses for the god and the shrine complex. The *Inariki* reorients and re-identifies the existing shrines to create a mandala, explaining the nature of the mountain topography and its deities:

> This place is the secret place that now universally illuminates and pacifies the land. In the past it was a ground on which buddhas became enlightened. This mountain is a mountain of five peaks. This place is a place of eight leaves. The assembly where Birushana 毗盧遮那 expounded the dharma was here. At the west peak, Aizen'ō Benzaiten manifested and bestowed fortune unto sentient beings without seeds of fortune (it is named the Peak of Bestowal). In the north, Fudō Sandaijin manifested and punished those people of no belief. In the east, Daiitoku Tenshōdai Daten manifested and took pity on all sentient beings. In the south, Kōzanzetan no Myōjin Kariteimo 降三世丹ノ明神訶利帝母 manifested and took pity on those people bound by affection towards others. In the middle is Inari Amida Shinkoō. (IS, 12)

This reimagining overlayed esoteric Buddhist discourses of Inari onto the landscape and ritual sites of the mountain. In fact, the text lists these peaks in accordance with the order that most pilgrims would have encountered them as they ascended the mountain from the southwest slope and circled around the sites clockwise. Elsewhere, the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* and *Inari ichiryū daiji* identify the shrines and their deities as three forms of Kannon, along with Fudō and Tamonten. The five deities are identified in the same way on a fifteenth-century map of the mountain dating from shortly before the Ōnin War, indicating that this series of names gained some level of acceptance. Thus, the many names and of manifestations of Inari added to the indeterminacy of Inari's role as original ground or manifest trace.

Myōbu and Localization

The *Inariki* added another persona to Inari's repertoire: Myōbu 命婦, a local kami and protector of Japan. Following the origin story of Inari taking up residence on the mountain, the author recounts the many ways in which the deity assisted the local people and protected the imperial court. In these legends, the author calls the kami Myōbu, a term originally referring to a woman above the fifth rank who served at the court in an official capacity. Even today, *myōbu* is sometimes used to refer to the foxes that serve Inari (Kitahara 2004; Yamamoto 2018, 344–349). Yet, it is clear that the author of the *Inariki* used the title of Myōbu to refer not to a messenger of Inari, but instead to the deity itself, as did other sources. The identification of Inari with Myōbu provides a fundamental example of how authors added to the bodhisattva-like imagination of Inari and localized the kami to relate them to significant events and concerns in Japan.

The authors of the *Inariki* asserted that Inari, in the guise of Myōbu, was exceptionally active behind the scenes of Japanese history. They present Myōbu as a kami to whom people could direct rites of veneration and prayers for assistance. This goddess form of Inari in particular was a supporter of the Fujiwara family and royal authority (IS, 5–7). At the same time, sources provide accounts that show Myōbu Inari will defend all worshipers, not only the Fujiwara family, from all dangers out of the god's own sense of obligation. The climax of the *Inariki* comes when Myōbu acts to defend Emperor Daigo 醍醐 (884–930) from the onslaught of a wrathful Kitano Tenman Tenjin. The fantastic story of Inari turning back the might of a wrathful thunder god like Tenjin demonstrates that the kami is able to protect someone from the fiercest of dangers:

> [Myōbū] also made the bitter enemy of this realm retreat and gave the fortune of peace to the land. One day, they peered through the obstructions of the Māra Realm and decided to become a protector of the safety of the Jeweled Body.… When Tenman Daijizai Tenjin was exiled to Dazaifu, he harbored wrath and

> became angry. He turned into Daishō Itokuten and gathered together 168,000 evil deities, appeared as a god of thunder, and fell upon the royal palace. He harmed retainers and intended to kill the ruler. When the sovereign asked who the deity on guard duty that day was, the guardian unwaveringly announced themselves as Inari Daimyōjin, came to the palace hall, and covered [Emperor Daigo] with their robes. Even the awesome Tenjin Daijizaiten feared the divine might of Inari, and as he would not look upon the kami, great disaster did not befall the Jeweled Body. It was a wonderful event. At that time, the deity came flying in the form of a woman of the court and concealed the ruler. She paid respect to the minister [Fujiwara Tokihira] and then an image of the form of Myōbu was reflected in the long sword that had been drawn by the minister.[10] People thought this greatly wonderful, and it is said that now that long sword has been passed on as a protective amulet of the Royal Household Guards. According to this, it is because of Inari Daimyōjin that Tenjin was not able to kill the ruler. (IS, 7–9)

The story of Sugawara Michizane and his deification as Kitano Tenman Tenjin is well known (Borgen 1994). The misfortunes that befell the capital and the Fujiwara following his death and exile led to the Kitano shrine's swift rise to fame. The Kitano shrine is counted among the twenty-two shrine-temple multiplexes alongside Inari. Despite both being included in this prestigious grouping, the author of the *Inariki* wrote that "even the awesome Tenjin Daijizaiten feared the divine might of Inari." This is a clear statement of the superiority of one kami over another. Introducing Kitano Tenjin into Inari's legends simultaneously confirmed Inari's role as a protector of the state, connected the deity to the popular legends of Kitano, and asserted its superiority to the undoubtedly powerful Tenman Tenjin. Whereas the other stories recorded in the *Inariki* allude to Myōbu's ability to assist individuals, here the author reinforces the kami's position as a deity that protects the wellbeing of the whole country, and the sovereign—the foremost member of that state—in particular.

This story of the conflict between Inari and Kitano Tenjin was not limited to the *Inariki*. The legend had enough social currency to achieve cross-pollination and escape out into the imaginations of other authors. For comparison, the author of the fourteenth-century Buddhist compendium known as the *Keiran shūyōshū* retells the story in the following way:

10. The grammar of the original Japanese is particularly oblique here and so the episode is left open to some interpretation; however, it appears that the Inari deity possessed a regular woman of the court and used her body to physically defend Daigo from Tenjin's attack. Yet, while she may have appeared plain, the blade of Tokihira's sword reflected the divine form of the personality of Inari known as Myōbu, a form that was more spectacular than the mortal woman before them. This may draw on the notion that a mirror, or a sword polished well enough to serve as a mirror, reflects only the true form of reality.

> One story says that when Kitano Tenjin became a thunder deity and wanted to violently enter the palace and become a hindrance to the court, there was a meeting of the senior council. It was asked who of the thirty guardian deities was appointed for that day. At that time, Inari Daimyōjin mounted a cloud and appeared. Because Inari opposed their divine authority to Tenjin, he did not become a hindrance. There is ill will between Kitano and Inari. Therefore, on the day that one journeys to Kitano, they should not travel to Inari.
>
> (T 2410, 76.512c15–21)

Succinct in comparison, the *Keiran shūyōshū* tells the same story as the *Inariki*, disagreeing only on one crucial point. While the *Inariki* claims that the relationship between the two gods has been healed and that the former travel restriction is no more, the *Keiran shūyōshū* asserts that one does not travel to Kitano and Mt. Inari on the same day due to lingering ill will. The title of the section in the *Keiran shūyōshū*—"On the Matter of Ill Will between Inari and Kitano"—and its inclusion in the encyclopedic work suggest that this story may have been of broad interest to the medieval esoteric world.

In contrast to the *Inariki*, which is clearly influenced by the Shingon tradition as expected from a text associated with Tōji and Mt. Kōya, the *Keiran shūyōshū* is a work produced from within the Tendai school (Matsumoto 1996). In part, this difference is apparent from the way in which Inari's court duty is referred to across the texts. The *Inariki* simply refers to Inari as a "deity on guard duty" (*tonoi no kami* 宿直ノ神), whereas the *Keiran shūyōshū* calls Inari one of the thirty guardian deities (*sanjū banjin* 三十番神). The thirty guardian deities were a group of kami established as protectors of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the imperial court within Tendai circles, before being adopted in the Nichiren tradition as well.[11] This difference in tradition may be related to the difference of opinion about the state of the relationship between the kami. Some version of the story must have served as a seed to affect the imagined identity of Inari for the authors of both works.

These are not the only stories that describe Inari's capacity to protect people from evil spirits. The first scroll of the mid-thirteenth-century *Kokon chomonjū* includes a tale about an early Heian monk named Teisū 貞崇 (866–944) (KT 15: 3). One day Teisū was chanting the *Greater Wisdom Sūtra* and the *Diamond Sūtra* in one of the emperor's dwelling places in the Imperial Palace. He heard the footfalls of a large person and then those of a small person but did not see to whom they belonged. Afterwards, a small person appeared to Teisū and informed him that evil spirits caused the first set of footfalls, but they were

11. This grouping is established in Japan, but is based on the Chinese precedent of the thirty guardian buddhas (*sanjūnichi butsumyō* 三十日仏名). The permutations of which kami were included in this grouping varied some, although Inari was usually responsible for the sixth or twenty-second days (Mihashi 1997).

repelled when the small person interceded on account of Teisū's chanting. The small figure then identified themself as Inari. In the same regard, the author of the *Kada kōshiki* presents an account, similar to that found in the *Inariki*, which associates Inari and Shichijō'in 七條院 (also known as Fujiwara Shokushi 藤原殖子, 1157–1228), demonstrating that the origin story was also circulating among multiple centers of production for the Inari cult's literature (IS, 28). Examined together, these stories illustrate how Inari's localized repertoire of abilities and legends of the kami's deeds in Japan extended beyond the boundaries of genre and reached multiple audiences.

Conclusion

The *Inari Daimyōjin engi* represents the culmination of the techniques used to imagine the Inari tradition throughout the medieval period. Inari and Kūkai were brought together as allies and partners for the benefit of Japan, and Inari Jinja formed a close relationship with Tōji. By extending this partnership beyond the borders of the archipelago, the kami was identified as a bodhisattva in their own right, and the traditions of Inari Jinja were elevated to be on equal footing with the temple. The multifaceted nature of Inari manifested as the original bodies and manifest traces of the kami maintained the delicate tension necessary for authors to continue that partnership, even among the shifting landscape of Buddhist and Shinto traditions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Inari was tied to Tōji but constructed as both an independent bodhisattva and their own original ground. Inari as Myōbu and Aihōjin was active in both the foreground and background of Japanese history. Kenna at Shōmyōji in the east, Echibō on Mt. Kōya in the west, and Kōshū in the *Keiran shūyōshū* all made use of different ritual programs, but their descriptions of the nature of Inari were remarkably consistent. Together these agents were able to spread a new form of Inari, reimagined from earlier sources, that set the kami in a careful balance between common Shingon and Tendai ideologies and the growing concerns of Shinto movements.

Today, Inari worship across Japan encompasses considerable diversity across the thousands of shrines that bear the kami's name. Karen SMYERS (1998, 144–149) has argued that this diversity is seemingly supported by the equally considerable autonomy among the worshipers of the various Inari institutions. The centers of Inari worship, such as Fushimi Inari Taisha 伏見稲荷大社 and Toyokawa Inari 豊川稲荷 at Myōgonji 妙厳寺, are silent about the meanings of the fox and jewel symbols of Inari, thereby allowing devotees to make individualized connections with the kami according to their personal interpretations. In comparison, the center of Inari worship in the medieval period was relatively loud. The authors working to promote the kami were clearly in conversation with

one another. There seems to have been a concerted effort to dictate how the Inari kami was viewed by devotees and practitioners, and proponents of Inari disseminated explicit details about the origins of the god and the shrine. The authors of texts like the *Inariki* and the *Inari Daimyōjin engi* worked to determine how the practitioners of Inari-related rituals understood the personality and efficacy of the kami, and they were much in agreement as to the deity's nature, even as they promoted different rituals or specified different steps for the rites.

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IS *Inari Taisha yuishoki shūsei: Shinkōcho sakuhen* 稲荷大社由緒記集成—信仰著作篇. Fushimi Inari Taisha. Fushimi Inari Taisha Shamusho, 1957.

KT *Kokushi taikei* 国史大系. 17 vols. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998–2002.

ST *Shintō taikei* 神道大系. 123 vols. Shintō Taikei Hensankai, 1977–1994.

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経. 85 volumes. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyōku 渡邊海旭. Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.

ZGR *Zoku gunsho ruijū* 続群書類従. 30 vols. Ed. Hanawa Hokiichi 塙保己一. Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1928–1934.

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Inari ryūki 稲荷流記. IS, 39–48.

Inari shingyō 稲荷心経. IS, 91–92.

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Bryan D. Lowe

Reflections on Esoteric Hegemony in Medieval Japan and the Modern Academy

This review essay examines four recent titles that deal with esoteric Buddhism in medieval Japan: *Kamakura Bukkyō: Mikkyō no shiten kara* (Daizō Shuppan, 2023); *Rituals of Initiation and Consecration in Premodern Japan: Power and Legitimacy in Kingship, Religion, and the Arts* (De Gruyter, 2022); *Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2023); and *Esoteric Zen: Zen and the Tantric Teachings in Premodern Japan* (Brill, 2023). They all helpfully challenge sectarian narratives by showing how esoteric Buddhism permeated various medieval schools. In doing so, these works build upon Kuroda Toshio's idea of a hegemonic exoteric-esoteric system (*kenmitsu taisei*), a concept now fifty years old. While Kuroda's ongoing influence on recent scholarship, including the volumes under review, has been a net positive for the field, my essay raises questions about the definition and coherence of the term "esoteric Buddhism." It also encourages future scholars to examine other non-esoteric aspects of medieval Japanese religions.

KEYWORDS: esoteric Buddhism—Kuroda Toshio—Kamakura Buddhism—Zen—Pure Land—*kanjō*

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A high school friend of mine was once arrested for graffiti. The officer, who caught my friend, asked what he had written. My friend replied, "esoteric." The officer, confused by this unexpected response, followed up, "What's that mean?"

The story, which reads like a Zen encounter dialogue, is true but has a punchline. If esoteric means "Designed for, or appropriate to, an inner circle of advanced or privileged disciples; communicated to, or intelligible by, the initiated exclusively," as the *Oxford English Dictionary* would have it, how could my friend reveal the term's meaning to the cop? He was stuck and ended up in handcuffs.

The police officer's simple question and my friend's paralysis are surely familiar to scholars of Buddhism. The word "esoteric" (*mitsu* 密) shows up everywhere in primary sources and secondary scholarship. Defining it, however, proves difficult, if not impossible. This is not only because of the secrecy that supposedly surrounded esoteric traditions, but also because of the term's protean quality. There are many definitions with little consensus. Some see it as rhetorical, others as institutional. Is it simply a superlative for "the best" (McBride 2004, 355)? A sect (Chou 1945, 245–247)? A school (Goble 2019, 1)? Perhaps esoteric is what practitioners do. Could it refer to a gradually developing set of rituals, culminating in practices tied to mandalas (Shinohara 2014, xii–xiv)? Or a form of Buddhism centered on initiations that grant authority (Wedemeyer 2013, 9). Maybe it's more about what people collectively say or think? A religious discourse (Abé 1999, 4)? An episteme (Rambelli 2013, 5–6)? If there is "a there there," to riff on Gertrude Stein, no one can agree on what it is.

While few, if any, are certain about what esoteric Buddhism means, most scholars agree that it was everywhere in medieval Japan and beyond. Esoteric Buddhism is most famously associated with Kūkai 空海 (779–835) and the Shingon school that he supposedly founded, but it also played a key role in the thought and practice of the Tendai tradition (for example, Dolce 2011). Recent works, including books under review in this article, describe "Esoteric Zen" (Licha 2023) and "Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism" (Proffitt 2023). Beyond Japan, scholars of Southeast Asian Buddhism speak of "Esoteric Theravada" (Crosby 2020). Some even claim that "it was the Buddhism scholars commonly designate 'esoteric Buddhism' that had the greatest geographical spread of any form of Buddhism" (Orzech, Payne, and Sørensen 2011, 3). Once ignored by scholars in favor of Zen, esoteric Buddhism is now ubiquitous in academic publications.

In this essay, I am concerned with how the category functions in the study of medieval Japanese Buddhism. Overall, the turn to esotericism has been a net positive for the field. The recent revisionist scholarship helpfully counteracts earlier preferences for an idealized "Protestant Buddhism," divorced from ritual and iconography. It also combats sectarian myths of purity that treat schools as hermetically sealed entities, uncorrupted by esoteric influence. The new consensus better captures the messiness of Japanese religions, painting a more realistic picture of the age, one less colored by nineteenth-century assumptions about religion and less defined by teleological, sectarian narratives.

All of the books under review build upon the insights of the historian Kuroda Toshio, who, in a landmark study from 1975, overturned standard models in the fields of medieval Japanese history and religions. Before Kuroda, scholars typically treated the founders of the so-called new Kamakura schools, such as Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282), and Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), as the heroes of the day who revolutionized medieval religions and brought Buddhism to the populace for the first time. In place of this simplistic story, which, not uncoincidentally, served sectarian interests, Kuroda pointed to the continued dominance of the older, mainstream schools, which he saw as promoting an "exoteric-esoteric system" that provided the ideological justification of the social and political order. The system presumably included both exoteric and esoteric elements, but Kuroda, and subsequent scholars, typically emphasized the esoteric, noting that the entire system was "predicated on a belief in the absolute superiority of the esoteric teachings," and emerged from "a process where all religions and schools were subsumed under the esoteric teachings and formed a unified system" (Kuroda 1996, 251–252). While all of the books under review refine Kuroda's thesis, his shadow looms, and most works today accept his general emphasis on esoteric Buddhism as a dominant ideological force. Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制, first used to describe a medieval hegemony, has itself become hegemonic in the academy.

Still, questions remain. Most centrally, what is esoteric Buddhism? But also, how and why did esoteric Buddhism gain supremacy? Is its persuasive power rooted in economic might? The aesthetics of its ritual? The elegance of its doctrines? When did esoteric dominance start, and how long did it last? Were there shifts over time? Should scholars continue to use Kuroda's framework, fifty years after it was first introduced? What is gained or lost by doing so?

In this essay, I hope to explore some of these questions by looking at four recent books in the field that show both the utility and limits of the term "esoteric." To borrow language from Clifford Geertz, the study of esoteric Buddhism is a field "whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other" (Geertz 1973, 29). This essay neither overturns the established consensus

nor proposes an alternative. If it is successful, it will have refined the debate, calling for just a touch more precision and open-mindedness.

The first study under review, the edited volume *Kamakura Bukkyō: Mikkyō no shiten kara*, emerged out of a 2016–2021 series of conferences and colloquia organized by the Chisan Kangakukai, a transectarian research organization affiliated with the Chisan branch of the Shingon school. The volume, practically a who's who of Japanese scholars of medieval Buddhism, is organized into four parts on the following topics: the place of Kamakura Buddhism within esoteric Buddhism as a whole; developments in intellectual history; esoteric Buddhism across sects; and something of a hodgepodge final section on the so-called Tachikawa school, esoteric forms of Shinto, and literature's relationship to Buddhism.

The first chapter in part one, by Kikuchi Hiroki 菊地大樹, introduces a newly discovered source, likely by Yōsai 栄西 (1141–1215), the purported founder of Rinzai Zen, on the Gumonjihō 求聞持法, a ritual that grants total recall. In doing so, Kikuchi shows how esoteric ideas permeated Zen. He also provides an alternative model of Kamakura Buddhism, one that focuses on the integrative unification of teachings rather than exclusive devotion to a single practice. Taira Masayuki 平雅行 looks at esoteric Buddhism in the Kamakura region of eastern Japan. As he notes, Kamakura was closely connected to the religious life of the western capital and its surroundings. This conclusion is important, because one of Kuroda's recent critics, Sasaki Kaoru (1997, 7–19, 208–286), has argued that the *kenmitsu taisei* only existed in western Japan. Taira rebuts this thesis. Nagamura Makoto 永村眞, one of Japan's leaders in the emerging study of manuscripts preserved in temple libraries and archives known as *shōgyō* 聖教 (sacred teachings), uses these materials to gently refine Kuroda's thesis by demonstrating the diversity found within Buddhist texts across space and time. Kuroda's model tends toward totalization, but Nagamura's ground-level approach reveals a more fragmented and complex world, albeit one in which esoteric Buddhism played an undeniable role.

The next two chapters deal more directly with Buddhist doctrine. Ōkubo Ryōshun's 大久保良峻 chapter focuses on buddha-body theories, particularly those about the self-enjoyment body (*jijuyūshin* 自受用身). His research reveals the deep entanglement between Tendai's esoteric (Taimitsu) tradition and that of Shingon (Tōmitsu). Monks from both camps read one another's works, sometimes accepting and sometimes criticizing their purported opponents. In medieval Japan, esoteric Buddhism was not hermetic. It was a shared, trans-sectarian doctrinal conversation. While Ōkubo's piece focuses mostly on Taimitsu monks but also looks at Shingon figures, Kobayashi Jōten 小林靖典 examines debates within Shingon between the Shingi and Kogi factions. They argued over which body of the *dharmakāya* preached. The Kogi tradition maintained it was the "original ground body" (*honjishin* 本地身), while Shingi scholastics asserted that

it was the "empowerment body" (*kajishin* 加持身), a form intended to help sentient beings of inferior wisdom who could not understand teachings without the use of signifiers. While scholars often treat the esoteric worldview as monolithic, these two chapters reveal how fragmented it was, with major disagreements on fundamental matters of doctrine. In addition, by delving into the doctrinal minutiae, the authors of these chapters show that esoteric Buddhism was not merely an ideological tool, the feature that Kuroda emphasized. Rather, for many monks, esoteric Buddhism was primarily an intellectual and philosophical enterprise, aimed at resolving doctrinal problems that emerged out of contradictory or unclear canonical texts.

Part three contains four chapters that look at esoteric Buddhism across sects. Ōtsuka Norihiro 大塚紀弘 points out that even so-called exoteric temples often included esoteric instruction. As numerous monks returned from Song China, however, new identities and institutions emerged based on the *zen-kyō-ritsu* 禅教律 (meditation-teachings-precepts) framework, ones that were irreducible to esoteric Buddhism, while also not entirely separate from its influence. In this way, Ōtsuka's piece both refines the *kenmitsu taisei* framework by showing the importance of *zen-ritsu* identity, while also demonstrating the ongoing influence of both exoteric and esoteric study throughout the medieval period. Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士 homes in on the relationship between esoteric Buddhism and Zen, summarizing some of his writings on the topic published over the past decade. Sueki deconstructs notions of a "pure Zen" by focusing especially on Yōsai and his contribution to the debate over which body of the *dharmakāya* preached, a broader doctrinal conflict also described by Kobayashi. Sueki demonstrates the porosity of *shū* 宗, often rendered as "sect" in English, arguing that whatever *shū* might have been in the medieval period, it was by no means closed off. While most of the authors under review focus on the tolerant attitudes of monks who incorporated esoteric Buddhism into their writings, Maegawa Ken'ichi 前川健一 takes up Nichiren, who lambasted the court for relying on esoteric prayers in the face of Mongol invasions. In this case, it would have been helpful for Maegawa to engage with English-language scholarship. In particular, Lucia Dolce, who has looked at many of the same sources studied by Maegawa, reached the opposite conclusion:

> In spite of his condemnation of esoteric Buddhism, Nichiren's endeavor to articulate a "new" practice implied a complex process of appropriation of esoteric categories and icons that one can hardly imagine to have been unconscious. I am convinced that Nichiren, far from forsaking *mikkyō* after his definitive commitment to the *Lotus Sūtra*, continued to pursue his study of esotericism, and from this source drew inspiration for his reformulation of Tendai *Lotus* thought. His interest in esoteric notions and practices perhaps

> even increased with time, together with his apparent criticism of the esoteric tradition. Dolce (1999, 377)

It seems, at least possible, that even the most vocal critics of esoteric Buddhism never fully escaped its logic. The final chapter in part three by Noro Sei 野呂靖 turns to medieval Kegon and its relationship to esoteric Buddhism, a comparatively little-known topic. As Noro demonstrates, from at least the Heian period, Kegon monks took an interest in notions of buddhahood in this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏) and the *dharmakāya* preaching. Moreover, Shingon authors were aware of trends at Tōdaiji 東大寺, the center of Kegon studies, and even wrote commentaries on Kegon texts. Altogether, the chapters in part three reveal porous boundaries and open exchange amongst medieval schools. Esoteric Buddhism was a constant topic of conversation and debate, if not a unifying, hegemonic ideology.

Part four turns to the monastic margins with chapters on the supposedly heretical Tachikawa school, Shinto, and esoteric literature. Iyanaga Nobumi 彌永信美 offers an updated distillation of his now voluminous publications in English and Japanese on the Tachikawa movement, emphasizing the importance of and difficulties in developing a concrete and precise vocabulary and method for distinguishing discursive texts and on-the-ground practice. Despite polemical claims to the contrary, Tachikawa, as practiced, seems to have been a not especially out-of-the-ordinary movement. The next chapter by Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡 looks at Ryōbu Shintō, which is famously indebted to esoteric Buddhism and well-known in English. Itō's findings that Zen monks, who imported new commentaries on *Laozi* 老子, had a major influence on the emergence of Ryōbu Shintō are especially noteworthy. Itō's essay, much like Ōtsuka's, complicates our narrative of esoteric dominance; Zen and other traditions also shaped the medieval episteme. The final chapter, by Takahashi Shūjō 高橋秀城, surveys the relationship between esoteric Buddhism and literature. While the category of "Buddhist literature" is often used, Takahashi proposes a framework of "esoteric literature," which he situates within a Shingon cultural sphere. Esoteric literature included diverse perspectives, ranging from those described as primarily literary to ones that are more explicitly religious. These chapters make it clear that esotericism's reach was broad, extending into literary and Shinto traditions. However, the question of whether esoteric logics dominated these spheres remains open to debate. The volume as a whole suggests that Kuroda's thesis, while inescapable, requires at least some revisioning to better account for the contributions of non-esoteric discourses and practices.

Of the books under review, Fabio Rambelli and Or Porath's edited volume, *Rituals of Initiation and Consecration in Premodern Japan: Power and Legitimacy in Kingship, Religion, and the Arts*, is the only one that does not use the word

"esoteric" in the title. Instead, it focuses on a ritual known as *kanjō* 灌頂, literally "pouring [water] on the top [of the head]" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 1). The ritual is often understood as an initiation ceremony, but the editors argue it is better translated as consecration. As they explain, *kanjō* was the culmination of a longer process that started with initiation but ultimately transformed the initiant into a higher being or buddha. This impressive volume covers a wide geographic region and swath of time, gathering together leading scholars from North America, Europe, and Japan across disciplines (it is still worth noting that only three of the nineteen chapters are by women, which is three more than *Kamakura Bukkyō: Mikkyō no shiten kara*).

For our purposes, consecration rituals are important because of their deep, complex connection to esoteric Buddhism. The precise nature of the relationship between esoteric theory and ritual practice, however, is somewhat opaque. Toward the start of their introductory essay, Rambelli and Porath (2022, 6) argue that the medieval esoteric "episteme" helped generate *kanjō* rituals: "[T]he hegemony of Esoteric Buddhism in Japanese society, and at court in particular, was instrumental in the development of *kanjō* consecrations for the emperor." In other cases, the two seem to work in tandem, as the "rituals were a natural complement to the semiotics of Esoteric Buddhism" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 13). In still others, consecration facilitates the spread of esoteric Buddhism, serving as "a vehicle by which such semiotics were transmitted" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 29). Finally, the editors occasionally posit an even stronger agency for *kanjō* rituals, which seem to define and regulate esoteric Buddhism; "consecration rituals control the structuring and the reproduction of the Buddhist Esoteric system" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 15). These four statements are in tension with one another, but they are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive. Still, future scholars need to more systematically assess the relationship between practice and knowledge and outline a coherent ritual theory, describing how it is possible for consecration rituals to control the very structure of the episteme from which they emerge.

Four parts follow the introduction. The first, with chapters by David Gordon White, Mori Masahide, Dominic Steavu, and Adam Krug, deals with continental precedents and examples from South Asia, China, and Tibet. Mori's chapter is especially important for scholars of Japanese Buddhism, as it meticulously traces the history of consecration rituals in South Asian materials (often using sources preserved in Chinese) to highlight several features that would reappear in Japan, including flower-tossing initiation rituals, water pouring, and secrecy. Steavu's chapter complicates this neat Buddhist-centered narrative by highlighting possible Daoist sources for consecration as well. More work is needed on the genealogy of consecration rituals, which will surely reveal a convoluted web of influences rather than a straightforward lineage.

The second part focuses on imperial consecrations in medieval Japan. It is bookended by the first imperial *kanjō*, definitively proven by Ryūichi Abé to have been performed by Kūkai in 822, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when, as Matsumoto Ikuyo shows, esoteric enthronement rituals formally ended, despite a push by some Buddhist clerics for their revival. Susan Klein's chapter, which appears between Abé's and Matsumoto's, makes a crucial methodological intervention. She argues that scholars need to consider the agency of literary figures in shaping religious traditions. Whether one accepts her speculative thesis that the poet Fujiwara no Tameaki 藤原為顕 (ca. 1230s–1290s) helped develop enthronement consecration ceremonies or not, Klein's broader point that "it might be useful to consider the possibility that literary and artistic figures played an active role in the construction of political and religious culture, including the development of important religio-political rituals" is crucial (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 156). Notably, most of the other research discussed in this review essay focuses almost exclusively on monks. We need to broaden our perspective to examine how other non-monastic actors shaped esoteric Buddhism and the broader religious world of Japan.

Part three is the longest section of the book, with eight chapters on the "religious developments of the imperial consecration." Abé Yasurō's chapter surveys an impressive amount of materials to provide a sweeping overview, which is followed by studies of particular types of consecration: *kechien kanjō* 結縁灌頂 (Tomishima Yoshiyuki), *kai kanjō* 戒灌頂 (Paul Groner), *yugi kanjō* 瑜祇灌頂 (Lucia Dolce), *shintō kanjō* 神道灌頂 (Itō Satoshi), *chigo kanjō* 児灌頂 (Or Porath), *jinzen kanjō* 深仙灌頂 (Kawasaki Tsuyoshi), and *buchū kanjō* 峰中灌頂 (Andrea Castiglioni). Throughout these chapters, the authors frequently reference unpublished materials from temple archives, and Dolce's chapter in particular includes informative photographs of the various manuscripts and diagrams that shed light on an otherwise mysterious ritual. Collectively, the chapters show how *kanjō* rituals transcended various boundaries, including those defined by sect, gender, the lay-monastic divide, center and periphery, and Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. For our purposes, Groner's chapter is especially pertinent, as it questions whether *kanjō* rituals were really "esoteric" at all. As he succinctly puts it, "the term 'consecration' did not necessarily indicate a close connection with Esoteric Buddhism" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 256). The word "esoteric" appears in this book about ten times as much as "exoteric," and as noted above, the editors (rightly) treat the ritual as central to a larger esoteric hegemony. Groner's chapter, however, reminds us that the esoteric episteme may not have been quite so hegemonic; original enlightenment thought and exoteric scriptures were equally valid resources for doctrinal justification and ritual practice.

Part four demonstrates how consecration rituals spilled beyond the walls of the monastery into the arts. In this way, these chapters can be seen as a response

to Klein's challenge to attend to non-monastic agents. Unno Keisuke's chapter looks at consecration rituals tied to the transmission of Japanese poetry (*waka* 和歌). He argues that these rituals were "envisioned as a copy of a Buddhist ceremony" and points out fascinating esoteric Buddhist interpretations of poetry, such as "the idea that the god of waka Kakinomoto no Hitomaro and Dainichi Nyorai are one and the same" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 412, 415). In contrast, Inose Chihiro's study of *kanjō* in the transmission of secret melodies for the *biwa* 琵琶, *shō* 笙, and *koto* 箏, reveals comparatively thin Buddhist associations, ones that eventually disappeared. Groner cautioned against limiting *kanjō* to esoteric Buddhism; Inose's findings suggest that consecration eventually transcended Buddhism altogether. Rambelli's analysis, in the final chapter in the volume, resembles Inose's in that he sees the *shō kanjō* as "secularized" with less pronounced Buddhist content than the *biwa kanjō*. However, he concludes that "*shō kanjō* is in itself a microcosm of the Esoteric episteme in which it was rooted" (Rambelli and Porath 2022, 457). For Rambelli, the esoteric episteme does not require explicit Buddhist symbols or language; it provides an invisible framework for the entire interpretive world, whether premodern authors were aware of it or not. I see these differences between Inose and Rambelli as illustrative of overarching but unresolved questions that haunt the field: what gets classified as esoteric Buddhism and who gets to decide?

Overall, I found Rambelli and Porath's centering of *kanjō* to be a useful approach, one that avoids some of the definitional problems with the category of esoteric Buddhism. After reading their introduction and the essays that followed, I wondered if the field could benefit from more attention to specific ritual practices and less reliance on sometimes polemical and abstract categories like esoteric Buddhism. Building off of Proffitt and Licha's studies to be discussed below, one could, for example, undertake a transsectarian study of *nenbutsu* or embryology. I suspect this type of project would challenge Protestant and sectarian narratives, just as attention to esoteric Buddhism has done. However, it would potentially open up new research questions and avoid both the vagueness and insularity that have come to characterize the study of esoteric Buddhism in both Japanese and English. I hope to see more books like Rambelli and Porath's in the future.

As edited volumes, the first two titles should be celebrated for their breadth. The next two books under review are monographs, which, as would be expected, have tighter foci and sharper theses. As Aaron P. Proffitt (2023, xi) describes it, *Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism* focuses on "a monk and his text." The monk is Dōhan 道範 (1179–1252), and his text is the *Himitsu nenbutsu shō* 秘密念仏抄 (*Compendium on the Secret Contemplation of Buddha*), a work translated in the appendix. This is a well-worn method, but one that Proffitt defends, largely because Dōhan was influential by just about every metric. He authored an

impressive number of titles; Proffitt (2023, 174–188) summarizes the contents of twenty-seven "major works." Dōhan interacted with monks at the most important monasteries in Japan. He was well-read in Tendai, Kegon, Hossō, and even Zen traditions. Dōhan was an important figure who has not received enough attention. Proffitt's work gives him the light he deserves.

Proffitt's main thesis rejects the standard view that Dōhan "syncretized" esoteric and pure land Buddhism. The two were not discrete schools or sects that could be combined. Rather, they represented "heterogeneous and mutually informative spheres of inquiry and specializations" (Proffitt 2023, 4). The deep entanglements between esoteric and Pure Land thought and practice significantly predated Dōhan; for this reason, Proffitt (2023, 5) claims, "In Dōhan's time there was nothing really novel about Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism." Instead, "Dōhan exemplifies the general Mahayana tendency toward dialogic engagement" (Proffitt 2023, 290). In other words, since esoteric Buddhism and Pure Land were not truly separate entities to begin with, Dōhan cannot be credited with syncretizing the two traditions. These arguments are important because they counter early modern and modern sectarian impulses to treat schools as closed-off traditions. Moreover, while esoteric Buddhism is often seen as this-worldly, and pure land Buddhism is understood as other-worldly, Proffitt shows how esoteric Buddhism offered techniques for reaching a post-mortem realm that was at once remote and a part of this world. In short, medieval Japanese Buddhism was more fluid than many of our modern assumptions would suggest.

Most of the first half of this book tries to explain why "Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism" matters. In these chapters, Proffitt shows that Pure Land ideas have long permeated Mahayana, Tantric, and East Asian Buddhism. I wished that some of the long summaries and analyses of past scholarship used to make these points had been condensed. They read, in some ways, like an extended series of literature reviews on a range of topics such as the definition and origins of Mahayana; the history and historiography of Pure Land Buddhism; debates over the categories of esoteric Buddhism and Tantra in South and East Asia; the early, pre-medieval history of Japanese Buddhism; Kamakura Buddhism and periodization; and so on.

After outlining these various debates and histories over about 130 pages, Proffitt at last turns to Dōhan, providing a biography and overview of his larger corpus for another 150 pages or so. Close to the end of the study, we learn that the main source at the center of Proffitt's monograph is a "relatively minor" work that is "less a reflection of Dōhan's main area of interest as it is of my [Proffitt's] particular (perhaps idiosyncratic) interests" (Proffitt 2023, 197). It seems that scholars still need to wait for another study to cover Dōhan's primary contributions to Japanese Buddhism, something Proffitt admits.

Proffitt's goals are different. Dōhan is more a lens than a biographical subject. Proffitt's (2023, 2) main objective is to "identify a new area of academic inquiry: Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism 密教浄土教."[1] He defines this as "approaches to rebirth in a 'pure land' through the use of various 'esoteric' ritual techniques and doctrinal interpretations derived from the tantras" (Proffitt 2023, 2). In other words, esoteric refers to a set of practices and views that emerged from a specific body of literature originating in South Asia. At times, we encounter other definitions of esoteric as well, including a polemical claim for superiority, spellcraft, a new aspect of Mahayana Buddhism, and a lineage defined by secret initiation. These diverse definitions stem from Proffitt's correct recognition that the sources themselves are multivocal, even cacophonous. Perhaps for this reason, he stresses that the concept of esoteric Buddhism is a "heuristic" or "upāya" (Proffitt 2023, 28, 55, 289, and so on). Like the police officer who arrested my friend, I had hoped for more clarity, but part of the problem is less Proffitt's than the diverse ways that both scholars and primary source materials have used the term esoteric. This book reminds us to embrace the mess and not seek clarity where it cannot be found.

Proffitt's notions of esoteric become clearer, however, when we move out of the numerous surveys and introductions and into his analysis of Dōhan's *Himitsu nenbutsu shō*. For example, Amitābha and his pure land are understood by Dōhan in terms of "the dual mandala system" of the Vajra and Womb realms. Amitābha is further equated with the ever-preaching *dharmakāya* and the body of the practitioner. Dōhan uses technical vocabulary from the esoteric tradition to reinterpret core concepts, such as identifying pure land teachings and practices with the three mysteries and mantra. Proffitt also emphasizes lineage, particularly through Kūkai. To summarize, esoteric pure land Buddhism refers especially to mandalas, mantras, theories of the *dharmakāya* preaching, and lineages that are all associated with Amitābha, his realm, and the practices that enable birth there. These are all concrete ideas that ground Proffitt's study and demonstrate the inseparability of pure land and esoteric teaching and practice.

There are strong reasons to call all of this esoteric, and Proffitt makes a compelling case. At the same time, it is also clear that Dōhan was more than just an esoteric pure land monk. Proffitt points out the strong influence of original enlightenment thought (*hongaku* 本覚) on Dōhan. Dōhan had deep connections

1. It is worth pointing out that this area is not quite as new as it would appear. Proffitt's footnotes and bibliography reveal the Japanese equivalent of the term "esoteric pure land" (*mikkyō jōdokyō* 密教浄土教) in publications beginning in 1979 with similar phrases such as "esoteric pure land thought" (*mikkyō jōdo no shisō* 密教の浄土思想) appearing as early as 1921. Moreover, Proffitt rightly calls attention to Richard Payne, Jacqueline Stone, and George Tanabe as anglophone precedents, scholars who started publishing on the topic from the 1990s. Still, Proffitt offers the most detailed treatment of esoteric pure land Buddhism in English to date.

with early Zen monks, too. This raises the question of whether we are better off seeing Dōhan not as an exemplar of "esoteric Pure Land Buddhism," but rather as a part of "medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhism," a diverse but unique configuration of ideas and practices related to birth in Amitābha's realm, rooted in thinkers across the entire spectrum of intellectual and sectarian influences. After reading this study, I was left wondering what is gained and lost with the adjective "esoteric." Why privilege this particular framework at the expense of others? Has the hegemony of Kuroda's thesis caused scholars to emphasize esoteric over other equally valid models? Proffitt is surely correct that Pure Land Buddhism was never closed off from other influences; I would just ask that we open the door even further.

Stephan Kigensan Licha's *Esoteric Zen: Zen and the Tantric Teachings in Premodern Japan* also seeks to undermine claims of sectarian purity. As Licha (2023, 6) explains, the vast majority of scholarship on Zen "tends to be framed in a way that isolates it from the broader medieval Buddhist world." Scholars often replicate the Zen tradition's obsession with lineage, telling its history as a diachronic series of internal conversations from one generation of masters to the next, beginning in China and ending in Japan. They have given little attention to how Japanese Zen monks interacted with contemporary figures in Japan outside of Zen lineages. This is a mistake. Medieval Japanese Zen monks were a part of the medieval Japanese Buddhist world. This point seems obvious, but it has generally gone unobserved. Licha's book looks horizontally to uncover how Zen monks interacted with their contemporaries across sects. In my view, this is a superior approach for Zen studies, and I hope more scholars will adopt it moving forward.

Licha interprets esoteric Buddhism as a discourse, using prose peppered with linguistic metaphors. Esoteric Buddhism is a "dialect," an "idiom," a way to "articulate" or "elucidate" Buddhist ideas. It is the way monks read texts, a "hermeneutical attitude or interpretive strategy" (Licha 2023, 17). Like Proffitt, Licha rejects syncretistic approaches that classify esoteric and Zen as distinct entities that were later combined; instead, esoteric logics were the very way through which Zen monks made sense of the world.

Given Licha's interest in linguistic metaphor, I found it fascinating that debates over language also captured the attention of the monks he studies. Much of the first two chapters has comparatively little to do with "esoteric" Zen and instead focuses on "a lively conversation, and often a quarrel," between Enni 円爾 (1202–1280) and the Tendai monk Jōmyō 静明 (d.u.) over the relationship between language and realization. As Licha (2023, 26) explains, Enni needed "to articulate and frame Zen in a Buddhist idiom profoundly different in semantics from the one used in China." These chapters point to the broader argument of the book that Zen monks needed to adapt Chinese texts and teachings to the dominant Japanese (Tendai) intellectual context. In some ways, they show that

Enni promoted Zen within "a discursive space" that was "demarcated and determined by… the emergent original awakening and oral transmission teachings" of medieval Tendai (Licha 2023, 88), ones that, I should stress, were not always esoteric in any discernible way.

The next two chapters get to the literal heart of the matter by exploring how monks translated Zen into a Tantric idiom with particular attention to their conceptualizations of the mind as an eight-petaled lotus-shaped lump of flesh. Chapter 3 continues the book's focus on Enni, who remained "at least metaphorically, in the shadow of the Tendai headquarters of Mt. Hiei," a position that made him feel "the need to articulate Zen's place within a fundamentally tantric world" (Licha 2023, 104). Enni interpreted Zen as an expression of the awakening of Mahāvairocana and latched onto the syllable "*a*" in particular, which, as "both the first syllable of the Indic alphabet, and a negative prefix," was the perfect tool to walk the tightrope between positions that simultaneously claim the emptiness of all signs and the utility of language (Licha 2023, 111). Later thinkers discussed in chapter 4 responded to these questions about the relationship between Zen and esoteric Buddhism in divergent ways. Enni's student, Chikotsu Daie 癡兀大慧 (1229–1312), emphasized Zen's inferiority to and dependency on esoteric Buddhism. In contrast, Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278–1346) and his successors stressed Zen's superiority and independence with particular emphasis on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. In doing so, they "no longer depended on their opponent's vocabulary for formulating their self-understanding" (Licha 2023, 132). However, since even Kokan had to respond to the esoteric discursive framework, his efforts too were uniquely Japanese and, in some ways, a part of the esoteric Zen conversation. These chapters, like many of the other studies discussed so far, show a plurality of hierarchical configurations, ones that did not always put esoteric Buddhism in the dominant position. Everyone needed to address esoteric Buddhist discourse, but monks responded in diverse and ever-shifting ways, sometimes asserting the superiority of non-esoteric Buddhism.

The following three chapters look at late medieval and early modern developments with a focus on embryology. These chapters show that esoteric ideas continued to linger within the Zen tradition and were by no means replaced by some sort of authentic or pure Zen in the wake of Kokan. They also expand the discussion into the Sōtō faction, showing how esoteric ideas pervaded diverse corners of Zen. These findings, however, complicate the thesis of the book in ways that warrant further exploration. In particular, Licha notes how Zen monks introduced neo-Confucian cosmologies derived from the *Yijing* 易経 into their embryological analyses. The influence appears to have been vast; Licha (2023, 194–195) argues that "The *Yijing*… provided meta-terms… which could be applied in diverse doctrinal contexts… [it] came to be seen as an alternative, stylishly continental language in which to express Buddhist concepts." It is

telling that the text that Licha (2023, 259) describes as the "perhaps most eloquent testimony to the wide circulation of embryological speculation," the *Sanken icchisho* 三賢一致書 by the Rinzai monk Dairyū 大竜 (d.u.), combines Buddhist, Shinto, and "Confucian" (defined by Licha as "calendric speculation") ideas, drawing particularly from the trigrams of the *Yijing* alongside yin-yang cosmology. For the Sōtō school, monks developed a conceptual framework based on the *Yijing* that was free of tantric elements. These arguments are nuanced and compelling. Still, I wanted Licha to explain how the centrality of neo-Confucianism and the *Yijing* fit his larger argument for esoteric Zen. Does he see all embryological discourse as somehow inherently esoteric? What makes it so? Why not title the book (or at least this third of the book) as "Neo-Confucian Esoteric Zen" or "embryological Zen?" Or, given the first two chapters' emphasis on Tendai, how about calling those "Tendai Zen?" Or, as Licha (2023, 298) ponders in the final pages of the book, why privilege the esoteric as the overarching framework? Couldn't there also be "zenic Esotericism?" These are not trivial questions; they point to and potentially undermine Kuroda's thesis of esoteric superiority.

Licha is aware of these problems. His purported answer is Foucauldian genealogy, though he uses this term idiosyncratically. For Licha, if something is deemed esoteric by "the standards of the recognized community of tantric practitioners," then scholars should adopt the classification of those individuals and their community. In other words, esoteric is whatever the "majority" of esoteric practitioners say it is. To borrow phrasing that Licha himself calls flippant, "if you get away with claiming to be a Zen master, or if another gets away with accusing you of being a *tāntrika* and others replicate such claims… then a Zen master, or a *tantrika* you are" (Licha 2023, 294). To this reviewer, Licha's method in the conclusion, which seems closer to emic analysis, differs from Foucault's notion of genealogy. Foucault's (1977, 147, 161–162) project "fragments what was thought unified," works toward "the systematic dissociation of identity," and claims that "the purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation." His very point cautions against accepting the claims of a tradition or the majority and instead stresses the need to uncover the mess of contestation and contingency that troubles assertions of identity. Licha's conclusion is also in conflict with the introduction, which insists that "esoteric Zen is an etic concept" (Licha 2023, 2). If Licha is correct that "esoteric" is more of an idiom or hermeneutic than a collection of components, it remains unclear how we separate an esoteric idiom from an exoteric one and who has the authority to distinguish the two. I left feeling that a genuine Foucauldian genealogy of the category is in order. In some ways, esoteric is a power claim, and we need to interrogate who makes such claims, when, where, and why. Much of Licha's book does this work, but he ends in a different space that perhaps overly privileges insider voices.

These definitional questions and the emphasis on "esoteric" as an overarching framework or hermeneutic point to at least two larger problems facing the field as a whole. The first is about coherence. In a classic and characteristically insightful review essay, Catherine Bell raises a series of questions that emerged from new works on the history of Daoism, a tradition just as nebulous and contested as esoteric Buddhism. As Bell writes,

> [H]ow do we talk about a "tradition" without implying and imposing more coherence and continuity than there actually has been or without ignoring the self-understanding of those who have seen themselves as bearers of a transmitted inheritance? How do we get an appropriate analytic handle on the internal dynamics that create and recreate traditions, the dynamics—simultaneously doctrinal, organizational, and attitudinal—by which people and movements configure their identity, construct their pasts, and determine their alliances and oppositions? When does a self-consciousness about the past together with a set of internal dynamics for interpreting it become a tradition, something that exists as an independent subculture that shapes as much as it is shaped?
>
> Bell (1993, 200)

Scholars of esoteric Buddhism need to answer these same questions. In particular, much of the scholarship discussed above emphasizes fragmentation, debate, and change. Given this interest, we must ask to what degree "esoteric Buddhism" is a coherent category, and what ties it together. Is it an actor's category or a scholarly one? Does this distinction matter? Did esoteric Buddhism mean the same thing at the time of Kūkai as it did in the early modern period? If so, how do we account for such consistency, one that outlasts drastic changes in politics, economics, and culture? If not, has the category itself become too neat, too timeless?

The second problem is about the hegemonic role that esoteric Buddhism has taken in scholarship on medieval Japan. The works discussed above make clear that medieval Buddhist authors incorporated a host of diverse intellectual traditions into their writings, including those derived from original enlightenment thought, kami worship, neo-Confucianism, literary and musicological theory, and other Buddhist schools. The consistent use of "Esoteric" as the modifier in titles like *Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism* and *Esoteric Zen* repeats Kuroda's assertion that all was subsumed under an esoteric framework. However, the world of medieval Japan was more complex than a unitary esoteric episteme. Esoteric Buddhism was by no means the only discourse in town. I fear that esoteric Buddhism has, in the wake of Kuroda, become a monolithic and all-powerful monster, exerting too much force on our narratives and choice of research topics. Kuroda has forced us to look for the esoteric everywhere; in many ways, this has been helpful. But we have also been trained to find what we seek. This is a dangerous tendency, an intellectual move that once opened up new

pathways but has begun to close them off. What in the archive have we ignored or underappreciated in our search for esotericism? We should be cautious about too quickly asserting esoteric dominance; hierarchies are always fluid and contested. The time has come to seek out other Buddhisms and non-Buddhisms that also defined the medieval age.

The world of medieval Japanese religions was more complex and more integrated than the emphasis on "esoteric" would suggest, and the field has reached a point where the vast benefits of examining esoteric aspects may no longer outweigh what is lost. This is not to criticize any of these books. It is their successes, not their shortcomings, that have led us to a place where it is clear that esoteric discourse and hermeneutics permeated most aspects of medieval Japanese religious life. Future scholars must move the field forward by developing a new understanding of the medieval age that recognizes esoteric Buddhism's centrality without letting it blind us to a more complex religious order.

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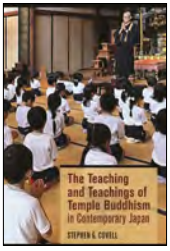

Stephen G. Covell, *The Teaching and Teachings of Temple Buddhism in Contemporary Japan*

University of Hawai'i Press, 2024. 188 pages. Hardcover $75.00, ISBN-13 9780824897574; paperback $30.00, ISBN-13 9780824898878.

Stephen Covell's 2005 monograph, *Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation*, transformed the study of Buddhism in modern Japan. Among other things, it gave us "Temple Buddhism," a useful term for "Buddhism as lived by the members of those sects of Japanese Buddhism that were founded before the 1600s" (Covell 2005, 4). Before this work was published, contemporary forms of Japanese Buddhism had been largely neglected by scholars who assumed it to be a degenerate, hollowed-out form of Buddhism as it must have existed in Japan's more religiously vibrant medieval past. Covell's quantitative and qualitative research illuminated the current concerns, struggles, and strategies of Buddhist practitioners in contemporary Japan, particularly those in the Tendai school with whom Covell spent the most time.

This landmark contribution opened up new territory for scholarly investigation, laying the ground for a burgeoning field of scholarship on various facets of Temple Buddhism. To name just a few monographs that took up Covell's call to take Temple Buddhism seriously: Jørn Borup (2008) delved into the lived tradition of Myōshinji in the Rinzai Zen sect; Mark Rowe (2011) examined changing death practices and work by temple priests to maintain the "bonds" of the dead; John Nelson (2013) explored the experimentation of temple priests in response to societal and economic changes; Niwa Nobuko (2019) highlighted the performance of gender by female resident priests in Nichiren temples; and my own ethnographic study of temple families focused on the domestic mode of doing Buddhism in contemporary Jōdo Shinshū temples (Starling 2019). Still more recent work by scholars such as Monika Schrimpf (2021), Paulina Kolata and Gwendolyn Gillson (2021), and Hannah Gould (2023) has shed further light on material culture, food, gender, and emotion in shaping Buddhist institutions and practices in contemporary Japan.

Covell's newest monograph, *The Teaching and Teachings of Temple Buddhism in Contemporary Japan*, contributes to this now well-established field an

enlightening picture of the doctrinal content and institutional contexts in which Buddhism is taught in Japan today. Framing his study as being about "teachings" rather than "doctrine" allows Covell to zoom in on less obvious sites for the doing and transmitting of Buddhist ideas, habits, values, and the like. Covell argues that "the center [of Buddhist teaching] is much more diffuse" (4) than we would think if we were to limit ourselves to studying materials produced by head temples and doctrinal training centers of Buddhist sects. Combating the scholarly bias for the past that many of us working on the contemporary period are quite familiar with, Covell takes up the contemporary activities of Buddhist universities, preschools, and charismatic monks, as well as Buddhist perspectives on moral education in Japan.

After an introduction in which Covell makes a plea for scholars to rethink our "valuation of the old over the new" (3), the second chapter explores the state of Buddhist-affiliated kindergartens (*yōchien*) and daycares (*hoikuen*). Here, Covell highlights the interactions of Buddhist institutions with secular standards of teacher training and educational content. These early-childhood schools are generally not seen as an opportunity to spread the teachings in the sense of converting people or winning adherents to Buddhism, and indeed the learning goals at both Buddhist and secular preschools consist of broadly amenable values such as empathy, kindness, health, and perseverance (23). At Buddhist schools, Covell argues, such values "tend to be couched in terms of a Buddhist worldview" (31). Further study of this topic might incorporate more information about the educators and families who send their children to such preschools, to better understand whether the Buddhist flavor of such moral education is discernible—perhaps even appealing—even to those who do not identify as Buddhist.

The third chapter turns to Buddhist institutions of higher education in Japan, of which there are currently sixty-five registered with the Council of Buddhist Universities (33). Primarily engaged in delivering undergraduate education and conducting research, increasingly such institutions are also seen as occasions to "make manifest a vision of Temple Buddhism as an engine of public service" (63). The fourth chapter, titled "Moral Education and Buddhism," profiles public debates about moral education after the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education was removed from Japan's schools after its defeat in World War II. Covell provides many examples of hand-wringing by politicians, educators, and Buddhist leaders over the apparent impoverishment of Japanese hearts/minds (*kokoro*) in postwar Japan. In this discourse, Buddhism—and religion in general—is often positioned as an antidote to the perceived materialism of Japanese values. The final chapter, "Learning to Persevere: The Popular Teaching of Tendai Ascetics," is an adaptation of an article of the same name published in the *JJRS* in 2004. Here, Covell describes the teachings of several Tendai monks who have attained

a degree of charismatic authority through their completion of the *kaihōgyō*, an intensive thousand-day ascetic ritual on Mt. Hiei.

In all, the book paints a broad and complex picture of the Buddhist teachings and their place in contemporary Japanese society, primarily within various types of Buddhist-affiliated institutions. It would be wonderful to see this important material put to more analytical use, for instance by engaging with more recently emerging questions about lived expressions of Buddhist doctrine (Rowe 2017; Starling 2019) and the complicated role of Buddhist personnel in secular institutions like hospitals (Benedict 2023) and prisons (Lyons 2021). The main concern expressed by Covell throughout the book is for scholars to take contemporary developments in Japan as a serious form of Buddhism, despite its differences from the past or from other Buddhist cultures. I share this desire, but in my own experience the bias for the past has softened in most scholarly venues, in large part thanks to the massive influence of Covell's first monograph on the field of Japanese Buddhist studies.

Where the book falls short in terms of argumentation it exceeds in much-needed emphasis on practitioners' own priorities and the broader sociological context in which Buddhism exists in Japan today. Covell expresses the wish that scholars seek to "learn more about how Buddhist teachings are created and re-created in contemporary Japan and what that process says about how we as scholars approach Buddhism as a subject of research and teaching" (8). With recent and forthcoming work by a newer crop of scholars following in Covell's footsteps, I would say we are well on our way.

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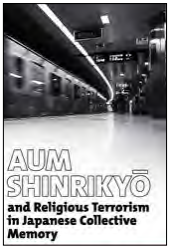

Rin Ushiyama, *Aum Shinrikyō and Religious Terrorism in Japanese Collective Memory*

British Academy and Oxford University Press, 2023. 226 pages. Hardcover $70.00, ISBN 9780197267370; online open access, ISBN 9780191987663.

Since its atrocious sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995, Aum Shinrikyō has attracted a great deal of attention from the mass media, journalists, and academics alike. Over the course of the past thirty years, numerous studies have been published on this topic, including a special issue of the present journal (Baffelli and Reader 2012). These works have revealed the history of the religious group, the philosophical underpinnings of Asahara Shōkō's teachings, and the details of various Aum-related incidents, among many others. With the presence of such prominent studies, one may be inclined to think that the study of Aum Shinrikyō—if not that of its successor organizations—has already been saturated in terms of providing new information or perspectives.

Rin Ushiyama's recent monograph, *Aum Shinrikyō and Religious Terrorism in Japanese Collective Memory*, demonstrates that there is still much to be learned from the incident. The book seeks to further illuminate this subject not through its attention to the "*history*" or "*internal* dynamics" of Aum. Rather, it seeks to offer a comprehensive study of the "*consequences* of Aum's violence as instances of religious terrorism" by investigating "complex social networks of actors and institutions *external* to Aum Shinrikyō that sought to define the meanings of the Aum Affair" (6). Furthermore, Ushiyama contributes to discussions on "collective memory discourses in Japan" (7)—which have tended to focus on Japan's imperialism during the prewar period—and on the theme of "collective mourning, remembrance, and post-violence reconciliation" (8), for which the Aum Affair stands as a unique case.

Ushiyama's distinctive approach to this subject is informed by his disciplinary background in cultural and political sociology. In chapter 2, he discusses theoretical frameworks for the book by elaborating on what he calls a "multi-layered account of collective memory" (15). On the one hand, he employs theories of cultural trauma from cultural sociology, which pay attention to how a collectivity's

experience of extreme discomfort feeds into the collectivity's sense of identity (18). On the other hand, he applies Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogue, polyphony, and heteroglossia, which illuminate the open-ended nature of speech acts, copresence of diverse opinions, and various speech genres in different strata of society (22–25). Combining these two theories, Ushiyama proposes three principles, which together highlight how collective memory is a collection of multiple narratives and symbolism that express moral meanings of past events, as well as how social resources required for organizing such speech acts are unevenly distributed in society (26–29). These theoretical arguments are laid out in a lucid, succinct manner, allowing non-specialists in sociology to follow the argument without being held back by disciplinary barriers.

These principles allow Ushiyama to effectively address various questions surrounding the collective memory of Aum Shinrikyō in the following chapters, which are structured in chronological order. In chapter 3, Ushiyama discusses the 1994 Matsumoto Sarin Attack. Ushiyama notes that, despite killing seven and injuring hundreds more in the immediate aftermath, the incident did not develop into a cultural trauma due to the lack of clarity as to why the incident happened as well as the perceived absence of attack on Japanese moral values. The following three chapters deal with responses to the 1995 incident from various sectors of society. Chapter 4 sheds light on how various social actors perceived Aum as an "existential threat to the nation" as well as portrayed Asahara as the "embodiment of evil" through the social processes of distilling all the negative qualities into Asahara's personality and of publicly discrediting his sacred status (75–79). Meanwhile, as discussed in chapter 5, state, media, and civil responses to Aum in the wake of the arrests of Asahara and his aides were characterized with diverse narratives and stances. On the one hand, state responses centered on developing a series of legislation targeting Aum and its successor organizations while providing no official platforms to commemorate the violence. On the other hand, there have been various initiatives to prevent "weathering" (107) of the incident at the grassroots level, including annual acts of commemoration conducted on the day of the subway attack at Kasumigaseki Station. Diverse ways of recognizing the violent crime are further illustrated by an analysis of public intellectuals' responses to the so-called mind control issue in chapter 6. By making a distinction between "authoritative intellectuals" and "dialogical intellectuals" (110), Ushiyama focuses on Murakami Haruki's novel *Underground* and Mori Tatsuya's films *A*, *A2*, and *A3* as examples of polyphonic, dialogical voices that challenge the discourses produced by authoritative intellectuals supporting the mind control thesis.

The remaining two core chapters focus on the social construction of victims and perpetrators of the Aum-related incidents. Chapter 7 discusses the construction of victimhood as enacted through "social performances" and

"performative utterances" (132). Framing a survivor as a "memory agent" (131) who communicates their experiences to others in the future, Ushiyama proposes what he calls "performative models of victimhood" (139), which allows an analysis of various types of victimhood as articulated through polyphonic voices. In a similar vein, chapter 8 approaches the conceptualization of perpetrators through the lens of social construction. With a view that the "status of the perpetrator" arises through the "'enactment' of a social identity associated with guilt, shame, and responsibility" (158), Ushiyama sheds light on various ways in which people including Asahara's senior disciples as well as two of his daughters—namely Matsumoto Rika and Matsumoto Satoka—negotiate their positions through their articulation of such concepts as "blind faith, guilt, and individual as well as collective responsibility" (158).

As summarized in the conclusions presented in chapter 9, Ushiyama's book seeks to provide new perspectives on the Aum Affair by presenting a sociological conceptualization of how cultural traumas can be made when narrated as collective experiences, how there are no singular narratives of cultural trauma, and how cultural trauma narratives are a result of a hierarchy of social powers and resources. Moreover, the present work draws scholars' attention to Japan's oft-discussed characteristics, including the general aversion to religions, the cultural tendency to ostracize potential threats or symbolic pollution, and the limitation of restorative justice due to the presence of a large segment of the population supporting capital punishment.

As briefly reviewed above, Ushiyama's book aims to advance two distinctive areas of academic knowledge: the consequences of the Aum Affair, on the one hand, and sociological theories of collective memory, on the other. The implications of Uchiyama's approach on the study of religion in Japan can be organized into three key themes. First, while relying on the accounts of the Aum Affair presented in previous studies, this new work employs a wide array of primary sources such as media reports, ethnographic observations, and interviews with various relevant social actors including Asahara's former senior disciples. Conducting interviews with former senior disciples or members of Aum itself is not new, but doing so with a focus on how they construct their narratives relating to the collective memory of Aum-related events allows scholars of Japanese religions to gain fresh insights into this much-discussed topic. Ushiyama's meticulous ways of using these primary sources, on the one hand, and of laying them out in scholarly narratives guided by his theoretical articulation, on the other, make this work as a well-balanced monograph that builds upon previous studies on Aum Shinrikyō.

The second contribution concerns the book's theoretical component. Ushiyama's conceptualization of cultural trauma as well as various sociological concepts concerning the responses to the Aum Affair and the construction of

victimhood and perpetrators can serve as useful analytical frameworks for studying similar social controversies and violent events surrounding religions in Japan. Perhaps one of the most relevant cases in the current political climate is the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe by Yamagami Tetsuya and the ensuing civil and political pressure leveled against the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (WPUUC, the former Unification Church), which is in turmoil due to the arrest of its spiritual leader, Han Hak-ja, as well as the impending court order to dissolve its Japanese organization. To date, various scholarly works have been published on the political involvement of the WPUUC in Japan as well as on the issue of *shūkyō nisei* 宗教二世 (second-generation members of religious groups including WPUUC). Once the full case details are released after sentencing on 21 January 2026, Ushiyama's theoretical frameworks will be highly relevant to analyzing how the historical event will be narrated and commemorated, if at all, as a cultural trauma in Japanese society. Moreover, Ushiyama's theorization of the construction of victimhood and perpetrator can help shed light on—or even reconsider—the portrayal of Yamagami as the "perpetrator" and of second-generation members of controversial religious groups as "victims" in public discourses.

Lastly, Ushiyama's approach to situating Aum's case in a broader context of religious violence makes the present work, perhaps as an unintended consequence, a model for addressing the problem of "methodological nationalism," which Aike ROTS (2023; 2025) has critiqued in recent years. In Rots's view, methodological nationalism is a "classification model that reifies Japan as a distinct entity and 'things Japanese' as a separate category of social or cultural phenomena that must be studied on their own merits, rather than in an explicitly comparative manner" (ROTS 2023, 15). In contrast, Ushiyama discusses Aum's distinctive features and patterns in various parts of his book by simply stating how Aum's millenarian thoughts are not only inspired by "existing religious scriptures" but also "secular conspiracy theories" (36) as well as how ex-members' narratives as told from the perpetrator's perspective are unique compared to those of other controversial groups (157). In expounding these details, Ushiyama does not resort to the idea of the uniqueness of Japan but rather simply compares Aum with other similar cases regardless of their cultural milieus. These accounts can be seen as examples that address part of the issues Rots has raised in his critique of methodological nationalism, particularly as it concerns the need for comparative approaches.

Notwithstanding all these strengths, Ushiyama's monograph has some minor issues that relate to his understanding of basic concepts concerning the study of religions in Japan. For instance, he describes Shugendo as a religion that is "syncretic" (171) rather than "combinatory," the latter of which has been preferred in recent decades so as to avoid negative nuances of the former. Also, in

making a statement about the aversion to religions in Japan in the concluding chapter, he places Japan in contrast to other cultural contexts, where "religions or religious symbols can provide solace and moral guidance in the face of collective adversity" (187). Though many scholars may share the same sentiment at a general level, such a statement may overlook various works that have highlighted, among many others, the roles played by religious organizations to alleviate the suffering of people affected by traumatic disasters, such as the 11 March 2011 earthquakes and tsunami that struck northeast Japan. Readers specializing in the study of religions in Japan may find other minor issues with Ushiyama's general statements regarding Japanese culture and society.

Yet, these shortcomings in no way diminish the contributions this book makes and should rather be seen as proof of taking the risk of going beyond the boundaries of disciplines and areas of study. Specialists of religions in Japan, including the present reviewer, may also overlook some of the important details when, for instance, applying theories and concepts of cultural or political sociology to their studies. Ushiyama's study should be assessed in this light, and there is no doubt that this monograph will serve as a critical point of reference for studying the social consequences of the Aum Affair and any other events that can shape the collective memory of Japan and elsewhere.

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