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FROM THE CHAIR: 10th Anniversary Greetings!

This issue owes to be a celebratory one, as 2010 marks the 10th Anniversary of the CSJR Newsletter. It is hard to believe that a decade has passed since the Newsletter, and the regular activities of the Centre, began. The first CSJR Newsletter in 2000 comprised some photocopies of typed pages that were stapled together. In 2003 we expanded the Newsletter to include more information about activities at the Centre and at partner institutions, and also research notes by young scholars and academic visitors of the Centre. That is when the first colour issue was produced. It was initially produced off-site, but by 2006 it was being created entirely in-house, designed by SOAS MA Japanese Religions alumna Janet Foster and printed by the SOAS Print Room. Today the Newsletter is distributed to more than 400 institutions and individuals in Europe, Japan and North America with a scholarly interest in Japanese religions. I must confess that I was pleasantly surprised when a colleague told me that he actually uses it in his classes as a quick update on scholarly trends and findings. Through the years it has been a great experience to bring together people interested in Japanese religions, who have used the Newsletter as a means of communication to an audience larger than the CSJR itself. Undoubtedly the Newsletter would not have existed without the dedication of many contributors who have put an extraordinary amount of time and energy into what its production involves. I cannot mention everyone here, but I think a special note of thanks is owed to Janet Foster, who has done more than any designer would have ever thought to be her task, and to Tullio Lobetti, who in recent years has generously helped with the editorial burden. Last, but undoubtedly not least, our thanks go to the International Shinto Foundation, which sponsored the Centre for many years, and has kindly continued to support the production of the Newsletter and partly of our seminars.

2010 also marks a decade of the Centre’s regular programme of weekly research seminars and yearly workshops. To celebrate this anniversary, for this academic year we have planned a number of international workshops which will allow us to discuss themes that we have not been able to cover so far, such as media and religion in contemporary Japan, and to reflect on themes that have been a focus of interest for the Centre since the very beginning. The spring workshop, for instance, will return to the theme of shinbutsu practices exactly ten years after the first shinbutsu workshop at the CSJR, to re-examine it in the light of recent findings and explore possible theoretical frameworks. The summer workshops will address pre-modern ritual practices from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes history, literature, art, and performance. These two international events also illustrate a new type of collaboration with Japanese research teams, which we have been trying out in the last couple of years and has allowed us to welcome to London teams from ARC of Ritsumeikan University, Nagoya University, and the Minakata research group (reports on related meetings and publication are in this issue). This year we will see two larger teams. Other events are jointly organised with other research centres at SOAS, such as the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Culture, continuing a collaboration that has proven very fruitful in the past. This is a direction that we hope to follow in the future.

Lucia Dolce

Colour covers from 2003 to 2010 and Issue 1, 2000. From 2000 to 2005 the Newsletter was bi-annual, changing to an expanded annual edition in 2006.

(Front Cover) At the beginning of the saito goma柴燈護摩 ritual, practitioners belonging to the congregation of Mount Akiba (Aki-basan kō 秋葉山講) hang a big white kite made of Japanese paper over the flame. If the kite flies without catching on fire, the New Year is considered to be a prosperous one. If the fire devours the kite, the divine response is considered to be negative. (Shuyōji, Aki-basan, Shizuoka prefecture, 15th December 2007). (Text and Photos: Andrea Castiglioni)
Center for the Study of Japanese Religions

Programme
2010-2011

October 21, 2-6:30pm, Rm B202
CSJR Workshop:
Mediating (New) Religions in Contemporary Japan

November 4, 5-6:30pm, G3
CSJR Seminars:
Michael Como (Columbia) Ghostly Vagabonds and Spiritual Ecology in Ancient Japan

November 10, 6:15pm, Brunei Gallery Theatre
Toshiba Lectures:
Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan (Yale)
Two Supernovae and the Buddhist Astronomical Imagination in Japan of the 11th Century

November 11, 2-7pm, Rm 4418
CSJR/SISJAC Workshop:
Reassessing Buddhist Visual Culture in Japan
Speakers: Mimi Yiengpruksawan (Yale), Gregory Levine (Berkeley), Cynthea Bogel (Seattle), Benedetta Lomi (SOAS)

December 16, 5-6:30pm, G3
CSJR/Buddhist Forum Joint Seminar:
Brian Bocking (Cork University) U Dhammaloka in Tokyo: the Hidden History of Western Buddhist Monastics

January 19, 5:00-6:30pm
JRC/CSJR Joint Seminar:
Lucia Dolce (SOAS) Title TBC

February 24-25
CSJR Spring International Workshop:
Combinatory Practices in Japan: Rethinking Religious Syncretism

March 10-17
Jordan Lectures:
James Heisig (Nanzan University)
Nothingness and Desire: A Philosophical Antiphony

March 24-25
CSJR Film Workshop:
Documenting Japanese Religions: A Shugendō Film Festival in Memory of Carmen Blacker (1924-2009)

May 12-13
CSJR Summer International Workshop:
Words Deities Icons: Performing Rituals in Premodern Japan

ALL WELCOME

For more information and updates on the schedule please visit our website:

www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/

or contact:
bl21@soas.ac.uk
Forthcoming Centre Activity

CSJR Workshop
Mediating (new) Religions in Contemporary Japan
Thursday 21 October 2010

Aum after Aum: Internet and New Religions in Post-1995 Japan.
Dr Erica Baffelli (Otago University)

Aum Shinrikyō, the religious group who perpetrated a sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995, has been an active user of Internet since the early 1990s. Lately, Joyu Fumihiro, ex-spokesperson of Aum and now leader of a new group called Hikari no Wa, has been actively interacting with members and other users through Mixi, the biggest social network website in Japan, video sharing websites, streaming videos and, more recently, the microblogging service Twitter. This paper will discuss the online representations of Japanese New Religions after 1995, using Aum Shinrikyō as a case study. In particular, I suggest that user-generated content might impact not only on how the religious leaders (in particular Asahara and Joyu) are perceived but also on how online communities re-discussed and re-elaborated the tragic event of 1995.

Animating Religion: The Movies of Kōfuku no kagaku
Dr Istvan Keul (Trondheim University)

In addition to spreading their religious teachings through books and magazines, from the 1990s Japanese New Religions have increasingly turned to new technologies in their attempt to reach out to an even wider audience. Among the religious groups in contemporary Japan, Kōfuku no kagaku produced not only manga-versions of its major book publications, but also released six full-length animated films (anime), shown at cinemas throughout the country. Three of these anime are film versions of Kōfuku no kagaku’s “law-books”, which are considered to be the central publications of the organization. The presentation focuses on the ways in which fundamental doctrines of Kōfuku no kagaku are mediated through the films.

The Role the Media in Shaping the Works of Okada Mokichi
Masaaki Okada (SOAS)

Shizen nōhō or Nature Farming was a farming practice propagated by Okada Mokichi, the founder of a Japanese new religion, Sekai Kyūsei Kyō (SKK). In the early 1950s, Nature Farming was portrayed by the media as fraudulent and as practised by fanatics who blindly believed Okada and his works. Partly in response to this criticism, Okada attempted to spread Nature Farming separately from his religious organisation. This attitude reduced the religious tone of his work. In fact it was not limited to the farming practice but also affected other activities, such as those relating to art. Okada's legacy has influenced the way in which SKK presents Nature Farming in its various publications. Nature Farming in today's SKK is considered to be an environmentally friendly farming practice that can be explained by science. This orientation of SKK, however, greatly deviates from the essence of Nature Farming that Okada actually taught.
Reassessing Buddhist Visual Culture in Japan: New Findings and Global Perspectives

Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions & Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Culture

Thursday, 11 November 2010
Russell Square, room 4418
2-7pm

Mimi Yiengpruksawan (Yale)
On the Hybrid Nature of the Amitābha Hall at Byōdōin
Discussants: Tim Barrett (SOAS) and Naomi Standen (Newcastle)

Cynthea Bogel (University of Washington, Seattle)
Visual Efficacy and Ritual Activity: Early Shingon Contexts
Discussant: Lucia Dolce (SOAS)

Gregory Levine (University of California, Berkeley)
The Faltering Brush: Chan/Zen Buddhist Death Verse Calligraphies (Yuige) and the Master's Graphical Vanishing Point
Discussant: Kigensan Licha (SOAS)

Benedetta Lomi (SOAS)
Mandalas, Talismans and Straw-Dolls: the Six-Syllable Purification in Heian Japan
Discussant: John Carpenter (SOAS)
Combinatory Practices in Japan: Rethinking Religious Syncretism

Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions
Spring Workshop
24-25 February 2011
Room and Time TBA

Meri Arichi
Japanese Shinbutsu Paintings at the British Museum
Mitsuhashi Tadashi (Meisei University)
Formation of Shinto as a Combinatory Religious System
Tullio Lobetti (SOAS)
When Two Become One: On the Meaning and Use of ‘Syncretism’ in Religious Studies
Yoshihara Hiroto (Waseda)
Reception and Development of the Word Jindō in Ancient Japan
Satō Masato (The University of Kita Kyūshū)
The Formation of Honji Suijaku - Focus on Ninth Century Japan
Anna Andreeva (Heidelberg)
Title TBA
Matsumoto Kōichi (Ikenobo Junior College)
A Study on Dōjijin
Fumi Ouchi (SOAS/Miyagi gakuin)
The Human Body as a Basis for Syncretism: Annen’s Theories of the Voice
Satō Hiroo (Tohoku University)
The Destination of the Dead
Noriko Horsley (SOAS)
Goryō-e During the Insei Period
Sonehara Satoshi (Tohoku University)
Sannō Shintō in the Early Modern Period
Kigensan Licha (SOAS)
Hakusan in Tendai and Sōtō Oral Transmissions
Fukuhara Toshio (Musashi University)
The Funeral Procession as a Festive Procession
Gaynor Sekimori
Combinatory Practice in the Life of an Edo-Period Village Shugen: Secret Rituals from the Archive of Koshikidake Kannonji
Lucia Dolce (SOAS)
Re-inventing Combinatory Rituals in Contemporary Japan

Sannō mandala: The 21 Shrines of Hiei,
British Museum © The Trustees of the British Museum

Organised by Lucia Dolce (Soas) and Mitsuhashi Tadashi (Meisei University)
For further information, please contact Dr. Lucia Dolce:
Email: ld16@soas.ac.uk Tel. (dir): +44 (0)20 7898 4217

School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG
Jordan Lectures 2010-2011

Professor James Heisig, Nanzan University
Nothingness and Desire: A Philosophical Antiphony

Inaugural Lecture

10 March 2011, 5-6:30pm
Khalili Lecture Theatre,
followed by a reception.

In this lecture, Professor Heisig will lay out the general outline of an attempt at a conversation with the philosophy of Japan focused on the mutually defining concepts of desire and nothingness. The overall aim is to propose an approach that will address both the problem of the defragmenting of worldviews on postmodern assumptions, and the possibility of a worldview that reaches beyond philosophies grounded historically in the Mediterranean basin.

Seminars

Rooms TBC
March 11  Redefining the philosophical tradition
March 14  God
March 15  Self
March 16  Property
March 17  Ethics

The seminars will attempt to extend that conversation concretely, and in a more informal setting, in order to question the longstanding policy of excluding philosophies of the East and to argue a rethinking of a number of key notions from a broader perspective.

James W. Heisig is a permanent research fellow at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya, Japan, where he has worked since 1979. He is editor of the 19-volume collection Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture (1980–1995), and two ongoing collections entitled Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy and Tetsugaku (in Italian). His published volumes of writings and translations, which have appeared in 10 languages, comprise some 60 volumes. They include Philosophers of Nothingness (2001), Dialogues at One Inch Above the Ground (2003), El gemelo de Jesús: Un alumbramiento al budismo (2007), and the newly completed Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook (2011), co-edited with Thomas Kasulis and John Maraldo.

For further information, please contact Dr. Lucia Dolce:
Email: ld16@soas.ac.uk  Tel. (dir): +44 (0)20 7889 4217
CSJR Summer International Workshop

WORDS DEITIES ICONS EXPLORING RITUAL PERFORMANCE IN PREMODERN JAPAN

May 12-13, 2011
SOAS, Russell Square, room TBA

Participants:

ABE Yasuro (Nagoya University)
Anna ANDREEVA (Heidelberg)
John CARPENTER (SOAS)
CHIKAMOTO Kensuke (University of Tsukuba)
Lucia DOLCE (SOAS)
FUJIOKA Yutaka (Osaka University)
Noriko HORSLEY (SOAS)
INOSE Chihiro (PhD Candidate Nagoya University)
IZUMI Takeo (Tohoku University)
Kigensan LICHA (PhD Candidate SOAS)
Benedetta LOMI (SOAS)
MATSUO Koichi (National Museum of Japanese History)
Raj PANDEY (Goldsmith)
Timon SCREECH (SOAS)
Dominic STEAVU (Heidelberg)
UEJIMA Susumu (Kyoto Prefectural University)
YAMAGISHI Tsuneto (Kyoto University)
YAMANO Ryutaro (PhD Candidate University of Tsukuba)

Sponsored by:

SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religion & Research Team “Studies of Temple Literature Related to the Religious Policies of the Cloistered Sovereigns Era: Crossdisciplinary Investigations of the Reigns of Toba and Go-Toba (Representative: Kensuke Chikamoto) (Scientific Grant for Basic Research (B))

For further information and updates please visit the CSJR website: www.soas.ac.uk/csjr
Or contact Dr. Lucia Dolce:
Email: ld16@soas.ac.uk Tel. (dir): +44 (0)20 7898 4217
Centre Activities Report

Numata Lecture Series (2008-2009)
Centre for Buddhist Studies and Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

Perceptions of Buddhism: Some Retrospective Messages

Michael Pye

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I look back to the autumn and early winter of 2009, when I had the privilege of giving a series of lectures and seminars at SOAS in the Numata visiting professorship series, sponsored by the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism). The title was ‘Perceptions of Buddhism’, and I had the idea that I could somehow use a meta-perspective of this kind to draw together a number of rather diverse themes which have occupied me over the years. Perhaps it was the apparent diversity of themes which drew the interest of such a wide range of gifted students, researchers and members of the public, including both old friends and others who have become new friends. In view of their combined expertise I felt at once the fragility of my own knowledge in many of the sub-fields which I touched upon. Again and again, I could find benevolent assistance in the specific terminologies of Pāli, Sanskrit and Chinese, for example, and their mutual adjacent Buddhist discourses. For myself, the story of Buddhism has to some extent been refracted through a Japanese lens, or indeed lenses, but I have also tried in my studies to complement this by seeking to appreciate quite differently based perceptions. So the question of the diversity of ‘perceptions’ of ‘Buddhism’ has accompanied me through many years of teaching and exploration. I mean here not just my own inadequate perceptions but those of experts, sometimes inconsistent with each other, and also the perceptions of those who are committed to and participate in the Buddhist tradition as a living religion today. Again, these are not always quite the same. Somehow this diversity came alive for me at SOAS in the extremely alert and sophisticated group of participants, reflecting many different points of view and indeed life-experiences, responding keenly and generously week by week, both in the public lecture and in the extension seminar. I offer my profound gratitude to them for their patience and their contributions.

If there has been one theme pervading the varied subject matter, I suppose it is that ‘Buddhism’, running as it does through a range of human cultures, cannot be pinned down precisely as a fixed entity, but is always to be seen in particular forms which are, in the end, transient and soluble. These forms are constructed rafts, awaiting their own abandonment on a further shore. Or they are carriages which are there not only for our pleasure, but also to entice us out of the dangers to which we are bound by immaturity and folly. Or we find an enchanting city in the middle of the difficult forest of life, giving us rest and recreation –but only for a while. So we come across expositions of emptiness, at great, great length; or alternatively in brief, as in the sutra which ‘shines with golden light’, or even on a pilgrim’s hat. Or we hear the drum of Dharma as a golden drum which calls us to repentance, or the sparkling sounds of Sarasvatī who seems to want us to be eloquent for a while –before we become silent. It’s easy enough to be carried away by the sheer poetry of the Buddhist literature, the transformations, the immeasurability of the Tathāgata’s life, the multiplicity of bodhisattvas leading on the multiplicity of living beings. Somehow we find ourselves in there, between monkhood and worldliness, sickness and healing, power and fragility, endless elaboration –and release through some unexpected simplicity.

Yet there is also a hard, rational perception, or a set of them. If we know that the history is unreliable, this is only because serious historical investigation has indeed taken place. It was the eighteenth century thinker Tomi-naga Nakamoto who first worked out, in a modern manner, that the sūtras could not have come directly from the Buddha, and are therefore not in a literal sense bussetsu. Does this destroy ‘Buddhism’? No, not really. But it marks a significant shift in our perception of it. Or it should do. Modernity arrived by fits and starts, and there is an interesting parallelism between the Thai experience and the Japanese experience in this regard. Those who are moved by Buddhist thought may sometimes find it hard to understand its links to very persistent institutions, sometimes broken ones, and to get inside the idea that a reform of the monastic line might be needed, leading to new ordinations as under the leadership of the later King Mongkut in Thailand, and where else but on a raft in mid-stream! In the Mahāyāna version, the ordination system was hotly contested, sometimes practically abandoned in favour of lay Buddhism and, especially in Japan, very frequently subsumed under a specialised but non-celibate priesthood. Modernism also threw up the intellectual challenge of textual study and the tricky business of correlating subversive perceptions of factual origins with continuing faith patterns, as in Shin Buddhism, or indeed in any widely popular versions of the Great Vehicle. The scholarly output in Asia is of course excellent and persisting, but about what exactly? If the apparently simple designation of a field as ‘Buddhist studies’ is deceptive, the tandem term ‘Indian and Buddhist studies’ is even more problematic. What, after all, is ‘Buddhism’? There are no simple answers to this question, about which the very contestations are of great interest. It is just not good enough to say that Buddhism is what Buddhists say it
is, and that Buddhists are people who say they are Buddhists! This can lead to misunderstanding and abuse, especially when not only sectarianism but also wilful misappropriation of Buddhist symbols can easily occur. The very severity of modern scholarship calls us not only to perceive and respect ‘difference’, to respect variation, and to avoid the short-circuits of essentialism, but also to seek for coherent patterns in persistent traditions. In spite of the endless permutations of conceptual and institutional form, there must sometimes be a tightening of our definitions. Not just anything is ‘Zen’, and not just anything is ‘Shin’, and so on. We need to be sensitised to the viability, even the validity of adjacent perceptions, while understanding the fragility of all of them.

Any readers unable to attend at the time might like to see the following telegraphic view of the sequence of subjects: (i) Perceptions of Buddhism and the Buddhist concept of ‘skilful means’ (ii) The Sutra of Brilliant Golden Light as an ancient handbook of Japanese Buddhism (iii) Interpreting the ‘three bodies’ and the immovable measure of life of the Tathāgata (iv) ‘Lives of the Buddha’: old tales, new tales, fairy tales, form criticism, iconography (v) Explaining Shin Buddhism, Shinran Shōnin’s position in Shin Buddhism, and Shin Buddhism as Mahāyāna Buddhism (vi) Buddhist circulatory pilgrimage in Japan: route, transaction and meaning (vii) Images of Buddhism East and West; with special reference to Suzuki Daisetsu and other Japanese presentations of Buddhism in modern times (viii) Tominaga Nakamoto’s eighteenth century critique of Buddhism: pre-western modernism (ix) What counts as ‘Buddhism’? Various perspectives on an unavoidable question, and (x) Buddhism and the ancestors in Japan. Does ‘Buddhism’ really need the ancestors?

Discerning and demanding readers, especially those who listened to some or most of the lectures, may still be perturbed that I do not seem to have answered my own questions. This is no doubt a very justified reaction, to which I can only respond in a few simple ways. First, yes, I did not answer my own questions in any obvious or definitive manner, because the lectures were conceived to be exploratory rather than dogmatic. Second however, the questions do not thereby ‘go away’, so even if I thought it would be more educational to take an exploratory approach, it is quite right that people could expect me to have made some slight progress in my own studies. So what are my answers? Third, then, the very multiplicity of the forms of Buddhist life, in interaction with extremely varied social and cultural situations, whether religious, secular, political, artistic, or any other, remind us that the cohesion of the Buddhist tradition is very well, and perhaps even best understood in terms of the internal concept of skilful means. The necessary devices for the expression of Buddhism are inevitably multiple, because the living beings are multiple, and yet they have to make way for their own self-dissolution, because the Dharma is simply one. Devices which do not permit their own dissolution resist the nature of the Dharma, or the nature of the Buddha, the Buddha-nature. They thus become non-Buddhist. A fourth response for me to make is to recall that it is not for observers such as myself, who do not formally represent the Buddhist tradition, to provide any kind of ‘essentialist’ answer to the inner or ultimate nature of the Dharma. Yet, fifth, this too should not be a passport for scholarly evasiveness. So while I sought to get at this by various hints and pointers along the way, I will conclude here by recalling one only, namely the opening lines of Nāgārjuna’s verses on “the middle” in which he dedicates his analysis of emptiness to the Buddha himself:

No arising and no ceasing
No permanence and no annihilation
No identity and no difference
No arriving and no departing
Before him who can expound causality
And fully destroy all vain theories
I bow my head, before the Enlightened One
The greatest exponent of them all

The purpose of Nāgārjuna’s analysis is not to maintain a position, but to use the concept of emptiness to achieve detachment from mental constructs. He regards this as the way to follow the Buddha’s example, and it is what makes him ‘a Buddhist’. In so far as we ‘think’ about it, this is the middle way. It is also a spiritual path and a spiritual method. Since this is entirely consistent with the hermeneutical principle of skilful means, I would like to think that we are getting close to the nature of ‘Buddhism’ here. With this in mind, just to take the example of the last specific subject which I considered, while we have our ancestors and, especially in East Asia, we care for them in various ways, we do not really ‘need’ them. That is my answer to that particular question. This is not a provocative statement however, for even if in a profound way we do not ‘need’ them, they might nevertheless help us –so I have come to learn in Japan— not only by giving us a stable perspective on life while at the same time demonstrating its transitory character. While we invest them with ‘Buddha-nature’, if Buddhists, we may learn to appropriate this for ourselves.

Admittedly, when all is said and done, these reflections are only those of a simple observer. However the thought has arisen that they could be presented again as a series of short essays, linked by the underlying question about the different ways in which ‘Buddhism’ has been, can be, perhaps should be—and in some cases should not be perceived. For this to happen, a period of non-distraction will be needed, but if it does happen, the memory of their genesis in such a pleasant and stimulating context at SOAS will long remain. And so too will my gratitude.

Michael Pye studied Modern Languages and Theology at Cambridge. He then spent five years in Japan before holding lecturing posts in Religious Studies at Lancaster and Leeds (where he was also awarded a Ph.D.). Since 1982 he has been Professor of Religious Studies at Marburg University, Germany. Apart from a specialised interest in East Asian Buddhism and contemporary Japanese religions, he has travelled widely and has interests in broad issues of religion and society in the modern world.

1 Own version.
Healing and Divination: The Religion of the Medieval Japanese

Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto), 25-26 June 2010

Tullio Lobetti

On the 25th and 26th of June 2010, Ritsumeikan University hosted a two-day workshop on the theme ‘Healing and Divination’. The workshop, organised by Lucia Dolce and Ikuyo Matsumoto, was part of a SOAS-Ritsumeikan joint project, sponsored by the PMI2 initiative and the British Council. It was held concurrently with the exhibition ‘Healing and Divination: The Religion of the Medieval Japanese’ in which a range of materials from the Fujii Eikan Bunko was displayed.

Lucia Dolce (SOAS) introduced the audience to the themes of the workshop, remarking how the general purpose of religion can indeed be understood as being ‘healing’ both in its physical and more subtle senses. Dolce’s introduction was followed by an opening talk by Professor Ryo Akama (Ritsumeikan University) with the title ‘Omens in the World of Theatre’, in which he spoke about the interesting connections between the characterisation of the bodily orifices and the various causes and cures of diseases.

The first panel was organised around the subject ‘Professional Healing: Onmyōdō and Folk Religion’ and explored the activities of Onmyōji and other ‘popular’ professional healers. The first paper, ‘Divination and ceremonies for the healing of diseases in mid-Heian Onmyōdō’, presented by Giorgio Premoselli (Bukkyō University), was closely focused on Onmyōdō practitioners, and efficaciously exposed the influence that the demand for healing by the Heian aristocracy had on the development of healing rituals. The paper also outlined the theoretical premises on which such rituals were based, such as the correspondence between the harmony of the celestial spheres and what is happening on earth, and the capacity of Onmyōdō powers to transfer impurity for curative purposes. The second paper, ‘Striking dolls and casting spells: Onmyō exorcism in the Six Syllable Sutra ritual’ by Benedetta Lomi (SOAS), cast light on the intriguing use of the Six Syllable Dharani healing rituals, and their connection with the production and use of talismans. The principle underlying such practices was to drive impurities from the centre of the body towards the outside. The paper also confirmed the versatility of such rituals, which could be easily adapted to different objects of worship (gohonzon), ritual implements etc. in order to create a new range of performances starting from the same common elements. The last paper of the panel was presented by Jane Alaszewski (SOAS/Bukkyō University). In ‘Illness on an island without doctors: Ritual approaches to healing on Aogashima’, she presented part of the results of her in-depth fieldwork research at Aogashima island (Izu Islands, approximately 360 km south of Tokyo). It emerged that, although the people involved in the healing practices on the island were often considered to be ‘popular’ practitioners, their activities displayed a good degree of coherence and sophistication, and concurred in forming a sort of pre-modern household encyclopaedia for divining diseases. Divination was indeed outlined as the chief method for producing a diagnosis and to individuate its cause, often identified as being ‘noroi’, a curse. The discussion session that concluded the panel touched upon issues common to all the papers, which would also remain pivotal topics for reflection throughout the workshop, such as the frequent and diffused use of hitogami (human-shaped paper dolls) as symbolic/sympathetic objects to be used to convey powers and treat diseases in the real body, and the importance of talismans in healing rituals. An interesting point was raised about the frequent presence of the number seven in rituals, formulas and invocations, which everybody agreed deserves to be investigated further. The second and last panel of the day was focused on esoteric practices and included two papers investigating healing activities in the Zen and Shingon Buddhist schools. The first paper, ‘Ghosts and foetuses: Divination and communal healing in Soto Zen kirigami’, presented by Kigen-San Licha (SOAS), explored again the importance of amulets and auspicious directions in healing and divination.
rituals, but this time in a Sōtō Zen environment. Another important topic of this paper was the correlation between cosmology and health issues, a theme that we shall see developed also by other speakers. The second paper was delivered by Elizabeth Tinsley (Otani University) with the title ‘Oracles, lineage formation and monastic education at medieval Koya-san’. The paper explored a new issue related to divinatory practices: the use of divination as a way to legitimize power. Tinsley examined interesting textual evidence from medieval documents from Koya-san, where a deity-possessed 11 years-old child was employed for divination.

The second day of the workshop opened with a panel dedicated to the ‘Healing Functions of Popular Religious Practices’. The first paper by Ikuyo Matsumoto (Ritsumeikan University), ‘Praying on the riverside: the devotional pagodas along the Kamogawa’ offered a detailed analysis of the employment of space for healing purposes, through the ‘popular’ building of small stone pagodas in the areas alongside the Kamo river understood as being ‘sacred’. The paper that followed, presented by Marco Gottardo (Tamagawa University) with the title ‘Magic words and holy waters: popular divine medicine in the cult of Mt. Fuji’ provided examples of the use of amulets, the cosmological implications of the human body, the identification of body parts with celestial bodies etc. drawn from the Fuji cult tradition from the medieval to the Tokugawa period. The following discussion particularly picked-up the dichotomy of ‘popular-established’, and revealed once again how blurred the boundaries of these two theoretical categories can be in actual practice.

The second panel of the day had as a theme ‘Shamanic Healers’ and was introduced by Naoko Kobayashi (Keio University) with a paper on ‘Healing and divination during the Ontake Oza’. Kobayashi explored the aetiology of the Oza possession, highlighting how oracles about future events, also concerning healing and disease, are delivered by the nakaza (the possessed ‘shaman’) and also what effects such performance have on the medium. The paper that followed, delivered by Andrea Castiglioni (Columbia University), about ‘Sacred poems and celestial foxes: Healing rituals in the Echigo Shugen tradition’, used some cleverly selected examples of Shugendo rituals involving the use of sacred words to ground a more general theoretical analysis of the ‘power of words’, here understood as a sort of ‘antidote’ to the physical pain which in fact ‘destroys the word’. Castiglioni also employed Levi Strauss’s idea of ‘sacred mise en scène’ to analyse how magical healing is a way to react against illness in community contexts including not only the patient and the healer, but also an audience. The discussion that followed was particularly influenced by the last two papers, in which the presence and the power of the healer was paramount, and raised interesting questions on the wider role of human agency. The last paper of the day, delivered by Tullio Lobetti with the title ‘Magical healing and divination in late medieval Europe in a comparative perspective’ analysed practices of magical healing and divination inside the European magical tradition, from the highly sophisticated rituals of the secret grimoires, to more popular practices that can be found in treaties of Natural Magic and even in some manuals for ‘Good Husbandry’. Many of the themes highlighted in the previous papers dealing with practices in Japan were also individuated in the European tradition, such as the power of words, the use of amulets and the overall understanding of disease and healing as cosmological events.

The final round table chaired by Lucia Dolce (SOAS) and Ikuyo Matsumoto (Ritsumeikan University) revolved around the most recurring and stimulating issues brought forward by the workshop contributions. Of particular interest was the correlation of matters related to health and disease with cosmology, a fact that led to a broader discussion of how the different understanding of the human body, and its place in the universe, may lead to a different conception of bodily disfunctions and their treatments as well. It was also noted how many of the concerns that led people of the past to develop such conceptual frameworks to support and justify their agency are still amply present in contemporary life, just replaced by different ideas (such as the efficacy of medicine and the idea of progress), which however perform a similar function in supporting human agency against the inevitable presence of disease and the uncertainty of the future.

The workshop was an excellent occasion for exchange and discussion, and also a very stimulating test bed for graduate students and young scholars, some of whom had the possibility to present for the first time portions of their ongoing research to the public. The kind and attentive feedback from senior scholars in the audience created a relaxed discussion environment in which senior and junior scholars felt able to mingle with ease. We cannot but thank the organisers for this event, hoping for other similar occasions in the future.

Photos courtesy of Ritsumeikan University
A Zen Life: D.T. Suzuki

Film review by Mike Barrett, former CEO, GB Sasakawa Foundation

‘He’s probably the most culturally significant Japanese person, in international terms, in all of history’. Asked to name the paragon to whom this encomium by American poet Gary Snyder refers, it is doubtful whether many would come up with the name of D. T. Suzuki. But yet another author, Lynn White, writes in his *Machina ex Deo*: ‘...it may well be that the publication of D.T. Suzuki’s first *Essays in Zen Buddhism* in 1927 will be seen in future generations as great an intellectual event as William of Moerbeke’s Latin translations of Aristotle in the thirteenth century...' Some claim!

Suzuki is widely credited with having introduced Zen to the West, yet while his name has long been familiar to those who have studied Zen, it is 44 years since he died, most of those who were directly affected by his teaching are long gone, and many of his 100-plus books are out of print. Much of the essential Suzuki and his extraordinary impact on those who knew him would have been lost were it not for the award-winning film, *A Zen Life – D.T. Suzuki*, produced by Michael Goldberg, a Canadian director living in Tokyo, which was screened to a capacity audience in the Brunei Gallery theatre last November under the joint auspices of the SOAS Centre of Buddhist Studies and the SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, with financial support from the Daiwa and Sasakawa Foundations. (For details of the DVD see end).

The 77-minute documentary is the result of several years of research and covers Suzuki’s life and work, interweaving rare archive film, photos and sound recordings of Suzuki himself with numerous commentaries by people who knew him, including scholars, artists, psychiatrists and theologians such as Huston Smith, Gary Snyder, Robert Aitken, William Theodore de Bary, Donald Richie, Mihoko Okamura, Dr Albert Stunkard, Taira Sato, Fr Thomas Merton (who, Suzuki said, understood Zen better than any other Westerner), John Cage and Erich Fromm. We also hear the voice of Christmas Humphreys, founder of the Buddhist Society of London, who comments that, until Suzuki published his *Essays in Zen Buddhism* in 1927, followed by *Manual of Zen Buddhism and Introduction to Zen Buddhism* in 1934/35, Western Buddhists were familiar only with Theravada Buddhism (and to a lesser extent Tibetan).

The variety of excerpts from Suzuki’s talks (in English) about Zen and Buddhism, inter-faith communication, ‘self’ and ‘reality’, and other aspects of psychology and philosophy which punctuate the film demonstrate why Suzuki had such a profound influence on Western thought over a good half century and continues to be a figure of considerable interest, not only for his teaching of Zen but also for his significance as a Japanese with a profound knowledge of Western philosophy and religion and as a key interpreter of Japanese culture and mentality to the West.

Daisetsu (or ‘Daisetz’ as he spelled his Buddhist name, ‘great simplicity’) Teitaro Suzuki was born in Kanazawa in 1870, just after the Meiji restoration. His family was impoverished by the changes in society, and he lived to see Japan’s modernisation, its rise as a global power, the growth of nationalism and the conflicts to which this led, as well as defeat and the establishment of a new order after the Second World War. He died in 1966 at the age of 96. Michael Goldberg’s film illustrates vividly with archive footage these upheavals as background to Suzuki’s life, although there is little direct reference to how they affected him. Suzuki educated himself and eventually taught English. He studied Zen under Shaku Soen at Enkakuji in Kamakura and chose to enter the monastery rather than stay at university, although he never became a member of the religious order. His ability in English led to employment as a translator for the Parliament of Religions at the 1893 Chicago World Fair, where the impact of the first ever presentation of the Japanese version of Buddhism led to his involvement in Paul Carus’s religious publications. He delayed his move to Lassalle, Illinois, however, in a final attempt to achieve *satori*, which came as he climbed the steps of Enkakuji – ‘I felt that I was the trees’. Having been awarded his title of Daisetsu, he set off for the USA in 1897, living with an American family while working on translations from Chinese, Pali and Sanskrit as well as Japanese.

In America he met Beatrice Lane, who became his wife in 1911. (Dr Stunkard recounts in the film that although Suzuki ‘shed bitter tears’ when Beatrice died in 1939, the difference that Zen enlightenment made to his grief was
that ‘my tears had no roots’.) They used English at home and adopted a half-Japanese boy, Alan Masaru, in defiance of the prevailing racial discrimination. Suzuki also travelled in Europe and translated Swedenborg into Japanese. Back in Japan, after teaching English at Gakushuin and Tokyo Imperial University, he was invited to take up a post at the Shin Buddhist Ōtani University in Kyoto, where he completed a doctorate. Suzuki’s adherence to Shin Buddhism seems always to have been an important concomitant of his commitment to Zen practice, and he apparently found ways to reconcile contrasting aspects of jiriki and tariki. With Beatrice, he started the English language journal *The Eastern Buddhist* to promote knowledge of Mahāyāna as well as producing his introductory texts on Zen, with dedicatory comments by Carl Jung.

At the 1936 World Congress of Faiths in London, his influential speech turned the young Alan Watts from his Christian mission to a keen proselytiser of Zen, while Christmas Humphreys was inspired to found the Buddhist Society and under its auspices published many of Suzuki’s books. This close relationship still bears fruit, as the Buddhist Society is now in the process of bringing out a new series of publications based on scholarly reappraisals of Suzuki’s key works, under the general editorship of Professor Richard Jaffe, Chair of the Department of Religion at Duke University and former President of the Society for the Study of Japanese Religion.

All the key stages in Suzuki’s life are evocatively illustrated in the film, but sometimes the commentary leaves us wanting more. For example, a passing reference to the fact that Suzuki ‘faced difficulties’ during the war does not elaborate further, although anecdotes make it clear that he was irritated by jingoistic militarism and opposed, at least, to attacking America. Other evidence in the film shows that he was troubled by questions about the relationship of the martial arts to Zen and he states that there can be no simple moral rule about taking life. His attitude to the atomic bombings was, ‘Humanity is to be responsible for this’, rather than the USA. There is some debate around Suzuki’s relation to the Kyoto School and Japanese nationalism which is not addressed in the film, but it is evident that in teaching the West about Zen and Japanese Culture (another title he began during the war years) he wanted to correct the balance of understanding and appreciation between occident and orient: ‘The West has been exploited by the West. It is only since WWII that the West has begun to study what the East has to offer.’

During the war, Suzuki had established the Matsugaoka Bunko, the library which now houses the Suzuki archives. In 1945, the death of his closest friend, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō, was a great loss, and he himself was in poor health. After the war, Suzuki was once again taken up by Americans in particular and gave open classes at Columbia from 1951-57. This was the time of the ‘Beat’ generation and Jack Kerouac and Alan Ginsberg were among those who found Zen inspirational, although by all accounts Suzuki was unperturbed by their version of it. Even so, at an advanced age, he wanted to try LSD to compare altered states of mind and had to be dissuaded on the grounds of his blood pressure. As well as the series of East-West Philosophy conferences in Hawai’i, another influential forum was the Eranos Conference in Switzerland, attended by major figures such as Jung and Heidegger.

While some cast doubt on whether Suzuki, as a lay Buddhist, had truly experienced satori or was a reliable interpreter of Zen practice, the film provides visual and anecdotal evidence for his devotion to meditation. He was, by his own words, always something of a maverick, however. ‘*Zazen* is a kind of going to hell. There ought not to be any *zazen* – just as we are, all right!’ He saw Zen as a tool available to all religions: ‘Zen is a floating cloud, not attached to Buddhism.’ The film does not ignore either Suzuki’s insightful sense of humour. When asked by a Japanese student if Americans could really understand Zen, Suzuki replies, ‘Do you?’

If the sometimes revealing interviews with his American admirers eventually become somewhat repetitious, the jewels of the film are undoubtedly the film sequences of Suzuki himself, for which Michael Goldberg deserves our gratitude. It is perhaps not Suzuki’s fault if sometimes he is driven by naive questions to superficially gnomic utterances on life, the universe and everything. ‘Ego has no existence from the very beginning’. Enlightenment is, ‘psychologically, to be conscious of the unconscious; morally, to be attached and not attached’. ‘To be and not to be’. And so on. But this is the reluctant guru being asked to simplify the ineffable. Those whose interest is stimulated by the film must go back to the texts to be reminded that Daïsetsu Suzuki was first and foremost a scholar and writer, although he insisted that Zen should be practised to be understood. He was also a truly devotional man with a great sense of compassion, which seems to have been the appeal for him of Pure Land Buddhism. Gary Snyder recounts that for Suzuki, if Zen was the ‘father’, Shin was the ‘mother’ – ‘she knows all our faults’. He spent his final years in Kita-Kamakura, studying, translating and writing with great powers of concentration into his 90’s and was working on a Jōdō Shin text when he died in 1966.

One last quotation: ‘We have never lost Paradise. We are in Eden, just as we are, now.’

The film is a remarkable document about a remarkable man whose work deserves wider attention.

‘A Zen Life – D.T. Suzuki’ is available as a DVD from www.martygrossfilms.com
The project website is www.azenlife-film.org
2 preview clips can be found on YouTube:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVpj9i4QIUUU
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RksY8GFJ460

Centre Activities Report

Workshop: Minakata Kumagusu and London

Ryūgo Matsui

The workshop Minakata Kumagusu and London was held in Room 4418 of the SOAS main building from 10:30 to 18:00 on 19th February, 2010, co-organized by CSJR and JRC. A total of around fifty people took part in this first international research meeting focusing on the Japanese scholar, MINAKATA Kumagusu (1867-1941) who stayed in London from 1892 to 1900 and left great achievements in various academic fields both in the UK and in Japan.

Kumagusu’s activities in London were in many senses unique, compared to the other Japanese scholars of the period. During his stay, he worked quite energetically in British academic circles; he made friends with wide range of intellectuals, transcribed huge amount of rare books in the British Museum Library, and contributed English essays to Nature and Notes and Queries, the number of which amounted to 50 at the time of his departure from London in 1900, and up to 374 by the time of his death in 1941. He also fully enjoyed his life in London, going pub-crawling, listening to hot debates at the Speaker’s Corner of Hyde Park, and even getting involved in street fights, according to his diary.

This is the reason why the workshop was an inaugural opportunity to discuss this extraordinary figure of modern Japan in the very place where he spent the most active and happy moments of his life. From the venue of the workshop, we could even see a part of the British Museum building, the centre of Kumagusu’s academic activities in London. If there exists something like a ‘Kumagusu’s bridge’ still lingering now, it must have rejoiced to come back to his youthful ‘home’ after a 110 year absence.

The workshop was also dedicated to the late Dr Carmen Blacker (1924-2009) known for her research on Japanese folk religion. She was the first person to introduce the works of Kumagusu to English readers in two essays, ‘Minakata Kumagusu, a neglected Japanese genius’ (1982) and ‘Minakata Kumagusu, a genius now recognized’ (1994). She received the Minakata Kumagusu Prize by Tanabe City in 1997 for introducing the works of Minakata to English readers.

Morning Session

The Morning Session, chaired by Lucia Dolce of SOAS, started at 11 o’clock after the introduction. Ryūgo Matsui of Ryūkoku University gave a paper entitled ‘Minakata Kumagusu and the British Museum’, then Yoshita Tamura of the Minakata Archives spoke about the ‘English Essays of Minakata Kumagusu’, focusing on his contribution to Nature.

Matsui introduced Kumagusu’s 52 volumes of notes called London Extracts written in the British Museum and other libraries in London. According to his analysis, ‘collecting the source of comparative folklore studies was the primary purpose of these notes,’ and so various travel records of ancient and contemporary times, as well as some volumes of natural history and anthropology, were transcribed for this purpose. Matsui contended that ‘Kumagusu was keen to choose documents written by authors from various cultural backgrounds, such as Chinese, Muslims, Africans, as well as Europeans. He was also able to profit from his background as an East Asian to use classical Oriental literature to make comparisons with European records. In other words, Kumagusu was seeking to introduce multiple viewpoints to understand cultural phenomena in the world.’ It is also curious, according to Matsui, that London Extracts contains many references to so-called sexology. Descriptions of ‘sodomy,’ ‘pederasty,’ ‘onanism,’ and ‘eunuch’ appear here and there in the first few volumes of these notes. As the intention to analyse different attitudes towards such sexual behaviors among different cultures is evident through

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the transcription of the materials, according to Matsui, Kumagusu’s aim was an ‘anthropological observation of sexology’ rather than a personal pleasure. Matsui concluded that London Extracts is ‘a unique example of the contribution made by an extraordinarily erudite non-Westerner in nineteenth-century London’ and needs to be studied not only through interdisciplinary research, but by intercultural academic collaboration as well.

Tamura’s paper followed the process of Kumagusu’s contributions to Nature magazine. Kumagusu is known to have begun reading Nature when he was a young student in Tokyo from 1883 to 1886. He began purchasing this weekly magazine regularly during his stay in Michigan, USA from 1887 to 1891. After arriving in London, he published his first essay in Nature entitled ‘The constellations of the East’ on 5th October 1893. According to Tamura, ‘in this first essay, Minakata attempted to outline the similarities and differences between the constellation systems of the ancient Chinese and Indian civilisations, in response to a query of an anonymous reader signed M.A.B which had appeared in the same section of a previous number (17 August 1893).’ Tamura pointed out the significance of the fact that ‘this essay appeared, the same as all his other articles in Nature did, in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ section, which was sometimes a place of exchanging information, open to general readers, without the institutional exclusiveness of Nature in later years.’

Tamura argued that Nature was founded in 1869 by Joseph Norman Lockyer (1836-1920) ‘for the purpose of facilitating the transmission of ideas between scientific disciplines. And it is worth emphasising that, when it first started, Nature had a much broader audience and range of contributors than it does today, being oriented in accordance with the personality of its founder, who remained the editor for more than half a century until shortly before his death in 1920.’ This worked in Kumagusu’s favour in the earlier stage of his relationship with Nature, even after his return to Japan in 1900. However, in the 1910s, the change of editorial policy of the magazine towards more strictly scientific subjects caused ‘Minakata’s gradual retirement from Nature,’ according to Tamura. Kumagusu then shifted to contributing more essays to Notes and Queries, a magazine focused on folklore studies.

Afternoon Session

The afternoon session was chaired by Tullio Lobetti of SOAS. Anthony Boussemart of École française d'Extrême-Orient presented a paper on ‘Dogi Hōryū and Mantra Buddhism’, Naoji Okuyama of Koyasan University spoke about ‘Correspondence between Kumagusu and Dogi Hōryū: On the new-found letters from Kumagusu to Dogi’, and Kazuaki Komine of Rikkyō University gave a paper on ‘Kumagusu and the Comparative Studies of Folktales.’

Boussemart’s paper focused on a Japanese Shingon Buddhist called DOGI Hōryū (1856-1916) who met Kumagusu in London in September, 1893 and became his close friend. After Dogi moved to Paris, they exchanged many long letters to discuss various problems in Buddhism and philosophy in general. In Paris, Dogi was warmly welcomed at the Guimet Museum and performed the ceremony of ‘Gohōraku’ in November, 1893. Boussemart described the turmoil caused by this ceremony from the contemporary newspapers of the time. The republicans decried it as nonsense to organize such ‘chinoiserie’ in a state-aided public place, while the Catholics declared it a dangerous step exemplifying the fact that civilization was regressing if the population could be lured by such ‘entertainment’.

Okuyama’s paper introduced the correspondence between Kumagusu and Dogi, focusing on forty letters from the former to the latter, newly found in Kōsanji temple in 2004. As Okuyama put it, ‘the Minakata Mandala appearing in letters he sent to Hōryū in July and August of 1903 is well-known, and it is plain that the newly discovered letters will be significant in furthering studies on that.’ ‘It is not an overstatement to say that studies of Kumagusu have entered a new phase on that basis.’ The Kōsanji collection was published just after the workshop by Fujiwara Shoten in Tokyo under the title Kōsan-ji shozō Minakata Kumagusu Dogi Hōryū-ate shokan. (As for Okuyama’s paper, please see his own article in this issue of the CSJR Newsletter.)

Komine’s paper traced the process of formation of Kumagusu’s narratology, referring to his reading of the Konjaku monogatari. Komine pointed out that Kumagusu first mentioned the Konjaku in his notes written in Wakayama and Tokyo. We can then safely assume that he
read the *Konjaku* again in 1894 in London. Interestingly, in his *London Extracts* of 1895, there are marginal annotations about a work by Henry Yule called *The Book of Sir Marco Polo*, to call attention to several stories in the *Konjaku*. One of them is the episode of Jakusho who is said to have made his cup fly in front of Chinese monks. Kumagusu later compared the stories in *The Book of Sir Marco Polo* and *Konjaku* in his English essay, ‘Flying Cup’ (1900), and its revised Japanese version, ‘Jakusho Hihatsu no Koto’ (1913). Thus, as Komine remarked, ‘Looking at all the topics cited above, we can trace back Minakata’s writing process for his essays: the remarkable results of his stay in London, both from his notes at the British Museum and from his parallel readings, were effectively combined with the reading of the *Ujishūi monogatari*, and put into the form of a short essay which was sent to *Notes and Queries*. Then, after his return to Japan, he continued his historical investigation, which provided significant results that were re-arranged into a new essay.’

Angus Lockyer of SOAS commented on the papers of Matsui and Tamura in the morning session. In the afternoon session, Lucia Dolce commented on Boussemart’s and Okuyama’s papers, and Rajyashree Pandey of SOAS commented on Komine’s paper. After the two paper sessions, a Round Table Discussion was held chaired by Matsui, which also included comments and questions from the floor. Each discussion covered quite a wide range of academic fields and it is far beyond the capacity of this brief report to introduce all the points made. But one core aspect of these discussions was that the participants shared the perspective that it is necessary to assess the meaning of Kumagusu’s activities in wider cultural and academic contexts, rather than merely in the framework of ‘Japanese Studies.’ Thus, Lockyer pointed out the importance of locating Kumagusu’s works in the context of contemporary folklore studies and anthropology, which, at the time, were about to develop as academic disciplines. Dolce remarked that there were many discussions at the time about the role of Buddhism, strikingly similar to those in the correspondence between Kumagusu and Hōryū. Pandey suggested the possibility of approaching Kumagusu’s work also through the perspective of post-colonial studies. Thus, Lockyer pointed out the importance to locate Kumagusu’s works in the context of his contemporary folklore studies and anthropology, which, at the time, were about to develop as academic disciplines. Dolce remarked that there were many discussions at the time about the role of Buddhism, strikingly similar to those in the correspondence between Kumagusu and Hōryū. Pandey suggested the possibility of approaching Kumagusu’s work also through the perspective of post-colonial studies.

Discussing these interdisciplinary and intercultural contexts in view of Kumagusu’s academic activities was our chief expectation when we started organising this workshop. As Kumagusu left many materials and results in multiple languages, intercultural collaboration is indispensable for studying him. London, in particular, is the place where we should continue to have such a joint project focused on Kumagusu in the future.

**Ryūgo Matsui**, is an associate professor of the Faculty of Intercultural Studies of Ryūkoku University, Japan. He has been researching the archives and relevant materials of Minakata Kumagusu for twenty years, not only in his former residence in Tanabe but in the UK and the US as well. He is the author of Minakata Kumagusu issai chi no yume (1991), Kumagusu no mori (2005) and several other books on Kumagusu. He was a CSJR visiting scholar at, SOAS from April 2009 to March 2010.

**New Publication**

Centre Activities Report

Kibigaku Concert at SOAS

Charles Rowe

On 15 February 2010 the CSJR was host to a performance of kibigaku, chūseigaku and kibimai, given by members of Konkōkyō before an audience of SOAS students, researchers, local Konkōkyō followers and interested members of the public.

Konkōkyō is one of the most influential of the religions founded in Japan in the nineteenth century, along with Kurozumikyō, Tenrikyō and Oomoto. It was in 1859 that the founder, Konkō Daijin, received the mission of otoritsugi or mediating between Kami and humans, and this is considered the date of the founding (rikkyō) of Konkōkyō.

Kami and humans come together in Konkōkyō’s festivals or ceremonies, and the first part of the evening’s performance was a demonstration of a Konkōkyō ceremony with kibigaku music. Konkōkyō’s liturgy follows the general pattern of Shinto worship, including kensen or food offerings, prayers, and tamagushi hōten or offering of twigs of the evergreen sakaki tree. Ceremonies may be followed by an offering from the non-ritual repertoire of kibigaku.

Kibigaku was developed in the late nineteenth century by Kishimoto Yoshihide, who was a Shinto priest and a gagaku musician in the service of the Okayama fief. We tend to think of gagaku as the music of the Imperial court, but in fact the Okayama fief had a flourishing local tradition of gagaku performance which it maintained to a high standard, and which was compared with the no tradition famously maintained by the Kaga fief. Kishimoto Yoshihide had been working on the creation of new pieces, and when the feudal fiefdoms were abolished by the new Meiji government in 1871, Yoshihide continued to pursue the project privately, and in 1872 he produced the composition Shiki no keshiki based on the gagaku piece Etenraku for voice and gagaku instruments. Further compositions followed, and these came to be known collectively as kibigaku, ‘Kibi’ being an old name for the part of Japan which includes Okayama. Believing that gagaku was too austere for the tastes of the general populace, Yoshihide created kibigaku as a music capable, like gagaku, of expressing the Japanese spirit but more appropriate to modern Japan. Kibigaku uses gagaku instruments: the transverse flute ryūteki, the double-reed oboe hichiriki, and the mouth organ shō; the drums taiko and kakko and the gong shōko; and the 13-stringed zither koto. Unlike gagaku, however, kibigaku does not use the 4-stringed lute biwa, and gives the most important part to the koto – this is in contrast to gagaku, where the wind instruments carry the main melody, while the koto does little more than accompany the winds with a limited inventory of simple patterns. Another characteristic of kibigaku is the large proportion of vocal compositions. In gagaku music, pieces using these instruments would not have a vocal part. This, too, would make kibigaku more accessible to people more familiar with koto music than with gagaku.

In 1879 kibigaku was played for the first time in the ceremonies of the religion Kurozumikyō, founded in
Okayama in 1815, and it became the ritual music of Kurozumikyō from then on. Kibigaku was introduced into the services of Konkōkyō in 1890. Ohara Otondo, who had been a pupil of the creator of kibigaku, Kishimoto Yoshihide, and of his son Yoshitake, became musical director of Konkōkyō. Otondo, who had mastered the entire kibigaku repertoire, had also begun the study of gagaku, and in 1915, in collaboration with his gagaku teachers, he created a new and unique ritual music for Konkōkyō, to which he gave the name chūseigaku. Like kibigaku, chūseigaku gives the koto a more prominent part than gagaku does. Unlike kibigaku, however, chūseigaku also uses the biwa lute, and in some pieces it uses the instruments of court kagura (the six-stringed zither wagon, the oboe hichiriki, the transverse flute kagurabue and the wooden clappers shakubyōshi). Thus Konkōkyō has two bodies of ritual music at its disposal, and a ceremony may be performed with either kibigaku or chūseigaku. The kibigaku repertoire is divided into three categories: shikigaku or ritual music, kateigaku or music for the home, and yokyōgaku or music for entertainment. Since chūseigaku consists entirely of ritual music, offerings of music and dance performed after services are taken from the kibigaku repertoire, even when the ritual music used is chūseigaku.

The concert at SOAS began with a short introductory performance of chūseigaku, after which Tullio Lobetti welcomed the performers and audience. Charles Rowe, who completed his PhD at SOAS on the music of Oomoto, spoke about Konkōkyō and its music, and Dr David Hughes gave a lecture on kibigaku and chūseigaku. There followed a short demonstration of Konkōkyō ceremony accompanied by kibigaku. After the audience had had an opportunity to hear the music in its ritual context, the instruments (shō, hichiriki, ryūteki and koto) were introduced, with explanations by Dr Hughes.

After the ceremony, the audience was entertained with performances of two kibimai dances. The first was a graceful composition for two dancers with the title of Sakuragari or Cherry blossom viewing, and the second was the dramatic dance Ebira no ume for solo dancer, based on a story from the Heike wars about a warrior who goes into battle with only a spray of plum blossom in his quiver. There followed a lively question-and-answer session, and informal discussions with the visitors continued after the official close of proceedings.

The ryūteki was played by Ide Harunaka, the hichiriki by Kawano Eiichi, the shō by Ota Akiko, and the three koto by Tsurumi Kazuko, Sakurai Kimie and Yamane Shūko. The dancers in Sakuragari were Iitô Honoka and Ochi Harue, and the dancer in Ebira no ume was Hachiya Yūko.
Research Notes

Correspondence between Kumagusu and Dogi

Hōryū: On the Newly Found Letters from Kumagusu to Dogi

Okuyama Naoji (Koyasan University)

Kumagusu’s encounter with Hōryū

MINAKATA Kumagusu 南方熊楠 (1867-1941) first met the Shingon Buddhist monk DOGI Hōryū 土宜法龍 (1854-1923) on the evening of 30 October 1893 at a party held at the home of NAKAI Yoshikusu 中井芳楠 (1853-1903), the manager of the London branch office of the Yokohama Specie Bank located at Streatham Hill in London.

At the time, Kumagusu had just made his debut in London scholarly circles with the publication of his article ‘The Constellations of the Far East’ in Nature. Hōryū, for his part, had attended the World’s Parliament of Religions which started at the Art Institute of Chicago on 11 September of the same year, and afterwards traveled to the Niagara Falls, Boston, and New York, arriving in London on 18 October and renting a room near Regent’s Park the following day. In London and its environs he visited Annie Besant (1847-1933), Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), Thomas William Rhys-Davids (1843-1922), and Edwin Arnold (1832-1904). Hōryū was an acārya (master) of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism, but was also interested in modern matters, having studied under FUKUZAWA Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835-1901) at Keiō Gijuku. From a young age he was in charge of administrative affairs in Shingon Buddhism, at which he was quite competent. Later he held such key positions as the abbot of Ninnaji temple 仁和寺, president of the Older Shingon Alliance, and the head priest of the Kōya branch of Shingon Buddhism. At the time, Kumagusu was 26 years old, and Hōryū, at the age of 39, was thirteen years his senior.

The two seem to have hit it off, and beginning from the following night Kumagusu spent three consecutive nights at Hōryū’s lodgings. On the morning of November 1st the two went to the British Museum, where, with the guidance of Augustus Weallaston Franks (1826-1897), head of the department of British and medieval antiquities within the ethnographical collections, they examined Buddhist statues and visited the reading room.

Kumagusu left Hōryū’s lodgings on the morning of 3 November. Returning to his own lodgings at 15, Blithfield Street, Kensington West, he wrote a letter to Hōryū that was delivered the same day to him. Hōryū immediately wrote a response, which he sent to Kumagusu along with a Buddhist kaṣīya robe. On 4 November Hōryū left London for Paris. The two began to exchange letters in earnest some twenty days later when Hōryū received a letter expressing gratitude from Kumagusu. From that point on this correspondence continued for 29 years with a few lulls until the last years of Hōryū’s life.

New materials from Kōsan-ji

Toganoosan Kōsan-ji 椎尾山高山寺 in the west of Kyoto is a well-known temple founded by the Kegon-school Buddhist monk Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232) in the Kamakura period. A large quantity of letters sent from Kumagusu to Hōryū was discovered at this temple in October 2004. This collection of materials as a whole is referred to as the Kōsan-ji collection below. It consists of a total of 45 pieces of correspondence (39 letters and six postcards). Worthy of note are a letter written on scrolled Japanese paper about one meter in length, and many long letters extending to several pages written in small, densely-packed characters. The longest among them is a letter of twelve pages reaching a total of 30,000 characters. Among them, 43 pieces of correspondence were hitherto unknown.

Hōryū had once served as abbot of Kōsan-ji temple, accounting for the presence of these materials there. In addition to the collection of letters, also found at the temple were a travel journal Hōryū kept from 1893 to 1894 as a record of his journeys in the United States and Europe, and also a trunk which he may have used at that time. The discovery of the Kōsan-ji collection was a major event for all those interested in Kumagusu. This is because until that point, only 29 letters written by Kumagusu to Hōryū had been known (most of them kept in the Minakata Kumagusu Archives 南方熊楠顕彰館 located in Tanabe City in Wakayama Prefecture).

His letters are of great importance in studies on Kumagusu. This is because Kumagusu treated his letters as the ‘répertoire’ of his own thought, and following the example of his respected Leibnitz he composed his letters purposefully [Matsui 1991: 61]. He wrote a huge amount of letters during his lifetime, and among them the letters he wrote to Hōryū are of the highest value, along with the letters he sent to YANAGITA Kunio 柳田國男 (1875-1962) and IWATA Jun'ichi 岩田準一 (1900-1945). With the discovery of the Kōsan-ji collection, the number of known letters increased 2.5 times. Furthermore, among them was the earliest known letter he sent to Hōryū (dated 3 November 1893), and also the last known letter
In the groundbreaking Japanese work *Minakata Kumagusu Dogi Hōryū ōfuku shokan* 南方熊楠土宜法龍往復書簡 [Letters exchanged between Minakata Kumagusu and Dogi Hōryū] edited by IIKURA Shōhei 飯倉照平 and HASEGAWA Kōzō 長谷川興蔵 (Tokyo: Yasakashobō 八坂書房, 1990; this work below abbreviated as *Ofuku shokan*), 24 letters of Kumagusu and 31 letters of Hōryū are given in as close to a back-and-forth correspondence style as possible. However, at the time of its publication many letters were still missing, and a true sense of a genuine back-and-forth correspondence is lacking in many places. Though still incomplete, with the new letters from Kōsan-ji a considerable portion of the previous gaps have been filled. At the same time, the need has arisen to reread the previously known letters in their original context.

In brief, the newly discovered letters are significant in that through them it is possible to know something of the thought of Kumagusu from his twenties and thirties. In terms of his thought, the Minakata Mandala appearing in letters he sent to Hōryū in July and August of 1903 is well-known, and it is evident that the newly discovered letters will be significant in furthering studies on that. Additionally, glimpses can be gained of Kumagusu’s thought on education, the preservation of historical sites, science, the immortality of the soul, and so on, topics hitherto rarely discussed [UNDÔ 2010]. It is not an overstatement to say that studies of Kumagusu have entered a new phase on that basis. In March 2010, the Kōsan-ji collection edited by OKUYAMA Naoji 神田英昭, UNDÔ Hitoshi 馮藤等, and KANDA Hideaki 神田英昭 was published under the title: *Kōsanji ō Minekata Kumagusu shokan: Dogi Hōryū-ate 1893–1922* 高山寺蔵南方熊楠書翰一土宜法龍宛 1893–1922 [Letters of Minakata Kumagusu kept at Kōsan-ji temple addressed to Dogi Hōryū from 1893 to 1922] (Tokyo: Fujiwara shoten 藤原書店; this work is hereafter referred to as *Kōsanji shokan*).

Letters exchanged in London and Paris

The largest share of the letters exchanged between Kumagusu and Hōryū date from the five months beginning in November 1893, immediately after they met in London, to March 1894, when Hōryū left Paris to return to Japan via the Mediterranean region and India.

As mentioned above, Hōryū moved from London to Paris on 4 November 1893. One of Hōryū’s tasks in Paris was to cooperate with the Japanese translator KAWAMURA Shirō 河村四郎 (dates unknown) of the Musée Guimet in producing annotations to the French edition of the work *Shido inzu* 四度印図, a collection of illustrations of mudrās used during the *shido keyō* 四度加行 training of Tendai and Shingon Buddhism (SI-DO-IN-DZOU: *Gestes de l’officier dans les ceremonies mystiques des sects Tendaï et Singon, d’après le commentaire de M. Horiou Toki, traduit du Japonais sous sa direction par S. Kawamura, avec introduction et annotations par L. de Milloué. Paris: Ernest Leroux, Éditeur, 1899*). Also, at the request of Émile Guimet (1836-1918) he carried out the ceremony of Gohōraku 法楽案 at the Musée Guimet on 13 November.

Kumagusu began to deluge Hōryū with letters from the end of that month. Nevertheless, Hōryū was himself not innocent of overwriting. At that time, a letter would arrive from London to Paris in one full day, or two days at most. The two frequently exchanged voluminous letters. The topics of their letters extended to trends in numerous subjects, including the purpose of scholarship, education, comparative religion, the origins of Buddhism, the thesis that Mahāyāna Buddhism had not been taught by the historical Buddha, the relationship between Mahāyāna and Hinayāna (as Theravāda was called at that time among Japanese Buddhists) Buddhism, expeditions to Tibet, the various forms of scholarship developing in Europe at the time including comparative religion, anthropology, ethnology, the theory of evolution, and others.

As noted by MATSUI Ryūgo 松居竜五 [2005: 134–138], Kumagusu, who had left Japan at the age of nineteen and had been constantly exposed to cutting-edge Western science and thought in the United States and Great Britain, had found a close correspondence between Buddhist thought, particularly the theory of cause and effect, and modern Western science, and saw a great academic possibility in the fusion of those two lines of thought. On the other hand, Hōryū, who was to play an important role in the revitalization of Buddhism in Japan, had attended the World’s Parliament of Religions with the intention of calling the attention of Western scholars of that time—who had been primarily concerned with Theravāda—to the existence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. He had described the virtues of Mahāyāna Buddhism to American audiences, and the effect it had made on Japanese culture. During that conference he had had discussions with many religious leaders and had been exposed to the religions of the world. He was also interested in such matters as...
Western church systems and the then-popular spiritualism and occultism. The two shared a common purpose in desiring to emphasize Buddhism, and Mahāyāna thought in particular, in competing with Western Christian civilization. Nevertheless, their exchange of opinions became heated because of Kumagusu’s strong annoyance and impatience with the misconduct and antiquated outlook of Japanese Buddhist priests ignorant of modern science. With as broad-minded a correspondent as Hōryū, Kumagusu expressed himself in sharp terms. For example, in a letter dated 9 February 1894 Kumagusu wrote the following:

I am a Buddhist. But regarding Śākyamuni, I am confident that I am a thousand times the better and more virtuous a Buddhist than the likes of a hyottoko-bōzu ひよつとこ坊主 like you. I am Konzoku-nyorai 金粟如来 of the day! I will remove all evil influences for Śākyamuni! (Kōsan-ji shokan, no. 13)

According to Chinese Buddhist traditions, ‘Konzoku Nyorai’ is a former incarnation of Vimalakīrti, the main character of the Mahāyāna text, the Vimalakīrtinirdesa. Kumagusu seems to have believed the layman Vimalakīrti was the perfect analogy for himself [Tamura 2008: 411-412]. In later letters to Hōryū he refers to himself as Konzokuō 金粟王 or Yuima 隈摩. On the other hand, he refers to Hōryū by such insulting terms as hyottoko bōzu [charlatan monk] or kōmemushi 米虫 [rice weevil].

Hōryū was patient towards Kumagusu, sometimes praising him, and at other times criticizing him or challenging him, all the while continually sending him advice. Yet he was unable to stand Kumagusu’s excessive verbal abuse, and once sent the following to him:

Greetings. Your arrogant pen and overall immaturity are amusing. Your smallness is beneath notice. You do not even reach to the great tengu 天狗 [a long-nosed devil; another name of a self-conceited person] of Europe. Now show your worth. Call yourself King Konzoku or King Diamond or whatever you like, and practice being a tengu. That will indeed be a sight. Ha-ha! (Ojuku shokan, no. 26)

Kumagusu put forward his ideas of koto no gaku 事の学, or the study of phenomena (arising through the contact between matter and mind), which Hōryū flatly rejected as being traditional Buddhist or Indian epistemology and without originality (Ojuku shokan, no. 30). However, Kumagusu later greatly expanded on this idea, and developed it into his so-called Minakata Mandala. As Matsui [2005: 139] points out, Kumagusu responded to Hōryū’s challenge ten years later in the form of his Minakata Mandala.

Kumagusu first learned about the mandalas of esoteric Buddhism from Hōryū. When he first met Hōryū, he was sympathetic to the world-view of Brahmanical Vedānta philosophy (cf. Kōsanji shokan, pp.70-71, n.181). Hōryū explained to him the Vajradhātu and Garbhdhava mandalas of esoteric Buddhism, and after Hōryū returned to Japan Kumagusu received from him a gift of a classical work on the subject titled Ryōbu mandara shishō 両部曼荼羅私抄 [Personal remarks on the two mandalas] written by the monk Innyū 印融 (1435–1519), which he eagerly devoured and which provided him with intellectual stimulation [Kanda 2009].

Thus, Kumagusu’s early correspondence with Hōryū was an extremely creative one, which formed the foundation of the later development of his thought. In later years Kumagusu recalled that time in a letter he sent to Yanagita Kunio as follows:

Some years ago, while I was living in squalid quarters in London, eating one meal a day and studying, the now-abbot of Ninna-ji temple, Dogi Hōryū was at the Musée Guimet. We sent a large number of letters back and forth about Buddhism and other religions. … At times I would spend two weeks, day and night, without sleeping, writing a single letter to him. I don’t remember what I wrote now, but I do recall that thanks to that correspondence my studies improved dramatically. (Minakata 1972: 52)

This correspondence gradually became intermittent during Hōryū’s return trip after he left Paris in March 1894, and ended around April the following year.

Conclusion

In October 1900, Kumagusu ended his fourteen-year sojourn abroad and returned to his hometown of Wakayama City in Japan. His correspondence with Hōryū began again immediately afterwards. One year later, he went to Katsuura 勝浦 in the south of Wakayama Prefecture, where he spent three years mainly in the primeval forests of Mt. Nachi 那智山 collecting plant samples, reading, and thinking.

The Minakata Mandala appears in letters to Hōryū written in July and August, 1903 during his time at Nachi. A full discussion of the Minakata Mandala must await a later occasion, except to note that in his letters to Hōryū written between March and May of the preceding
year he often refers to the immortality of the soul. This also became clear with the appearance of the Kōsanji collection. For Kumagusu, the theory of the soul was essential as a proof of transmigration or samsāra, and was directly linked to the Mandala he developed the following year. In a letter Hōryū sent to Kumagusu dated 20 March 1902 (preserved in the Minakata Kumagusu Archives) he asked, ‘Regarding the mortality or immortality of the soul, I would like to hear Konzokū Nyorai’s conclusion’. Kumagusu was stimulated by this and developed his response in significant ways. Hōryū acted at this point as Kumagusu’s intellectual midwife.

Translated by Rev. Thomas Eijō Dreitlein (瑩淨)

References


**Members’ Research Related Activities**

**Lucia Dolce** spent six months (October 09-March10) at the International Research Consortium for Research in the Humanities, Ruhr University, Bochum (Germany), as an invited Research Fellow in the project Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe.

Through the academic year she was invited to present research papers at various German universities, including Heidelberg, Halle and Munich University, on topics ranging from the function of religious iconography to shinbutsu contemporary rituals. She delivered a paper on ‘The Ritual Body: Somatic Presence, Representation and Performativity in Japanese Buddhism’ at the international conference Le corps comme objet (Centre européen d’études japonaises d’Alsace, October 31-Nov 3); spoke on the Buddhist Canon in Japan at an international conference on Canons (Bochum, Nov. 5); and on her latest research on ‘Encoded Icons: Ritual Bodies and Buddhist Embriological Practices in Medieval Japan’ (University of Zurich, May 20). She co-organised a workshop on Minakata Kumagusu (SOAS, March 2010), and an international workshop on Healing and Divination (Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, 25-26 June 2010). This was the final segment of a cooperative project with Ritsumeikan supported by a PMI2 award from British Council.

Publications:


The SOAS MA Programme in Japanese Religion

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Dr Lucia Dolce, Room 342, ext. 4217

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MA Japanese Religions

Dissertations 2007-2008

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KRESSER LUCAS, Kotodama and the Gojuonzu in Edo-period Nativism.

TAKAHASHI NOBUSHIRO, Garden at Honpo-ji: the Boundary Between the Sacred and the Profane.

Reviewed by Satō Hirō (trans. Jon Morris; a previous version of this review was published in Japanese asルチア・ドルチェ、松本郁代編『儀礼の力』[週刊読書人,(2847),(2010)])

Perhaps this is not only a Japanese phenomenon; but in the various fields of the humanities in Japan we now have, as if by some prior arrangement, talk of academic crisis. If one looked only at the number of books and papers published, one might say that the world of academic research today is active to an unprecedented extent...but what about the substance? We have dull and dry papers that just cite and list the materials. We have hollow theses, without their own words, that merely rattle off translated terms. These reams of cryptic and unintelligible verbiage seem to have been set against the possibility of other people understanding them right from the start. In the midst of all this, I have come across a work which gives a sense of an ambition and power to drive a hole through the blockades surrounding academia in its present state. This is *Girei no chikara: Chūsei shūkyō no jissen sekai* edited by Lucia Dolce and Matsumoto Ikuyo.

This book is a collection of essays put together as an outcome of the Symposium held in September 2006 at the Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University. After an introduction by the editors, the contributions of nine researchers are brought together under three sections: ‘The Performance of Ritual’, ‘The Ritual Body’ and ‘The Socio-Political Dynamics of Ritual’. Even though this is a collection of essays by a large number of writers, it differs to similar works in that it is grounded in a clear and precise methodological awareness. Furthermore, this awareness of and approach to the issues—the question of whether the latest western research on rituals might be applied to medieval Japan—is held in common not only by the editors but by all the contributors.

Research on the religious world of medieval Japan, the so-called Kamakura Buddhism and so on, has come to have its mainstay in the study of thought and doctrine based in systematic texts. In recent years, along with a steady stream of discoveries of a variety of texts and documents hitherto unknown to us, attention has turned to the diverse reality of that medieval religious world. Research on ritual is an area representative of this new trend. However, firstly in that the study of ritual has been carried out in the various fields of literature, history and art history in isolation, and secondly in that the ‘wait and see’ analytical method of placing ritual in its historical context has been broadly taken up, this book suggests that current research still has room for improvement. On that basis the purpose of this work is stated to be, as has been attempted in recent years in the west, to make clear
the actual power and influence born of the process of the practice of ritual along with the ebb and flow of its impact on culture and society, and the relationship of mutual influence between ritual and society.

It is not easy to introduce the diverse contents of this book. Many of the papers, however, demonstrate and vividly describe the ways in which, against the background of a belief that Buddhist ritual in the Middle Ages held a kind of power, there was a real and vivid sense that the rites created something real and sacred.

Saitō and Ōuchi’s papers, which describe the way in which the ‘voice’ of the practitioner is converted into the voice of the gods and Buddhas, and Matsumoto’s paper on the juraku (入洛, entering Kyoto) of the mikoshi (神輿, ‘palanquin shrine’) giving rise to a change in the very character of the god, develop and put forward an innovative discussion of these issues. Also very significant is the point that the ritual itself is not fixed but changing, with new aspects always forthcoming. This is explained and illustrated from the ways in which changing rituals give rise to unorthodox and heteromorphic ritual images, such as certain special triadic icons (Dolce) and dream-inspired images of Buddhas and kami (Tanaka) was also stimulating. The final essay, in which Abe takes a textual discourse perspective on the subject matter, serves as a general summary of the whole. I want to emphasize that all the papers in this volume are based on sound readings of materials gathered from a broad range of locations and sources, and that all develop meaningful arguments with feet placed firmly on the ground.

This book succeeds throughout in illustrating from the standpoint of ritual the dynamism and creativity of the Buddhist world of the Middle Ages going beyond the limits of sect. In the course of a ritual being performed the life energies of human beings are brought forth; this and the process of the conversion of their bodies into those of the holy gods and Buddhas are clearly described here.

The enthusiasm of the two editors, as they surely go on to take a leading role in academia, and that of the contributors who responded to it with bold, co-operative and inter-disciplinary work has meshed and connected to produce this ambitious book. It cuts a path for the future of research on religion in the Middle Ages. I look forward to the contributors of this volume going even further than the application of western analytical theories to Japan, and, with the Japanese islands as the field of study, producing new academic methodologies which might be put forward to the world. The first signs of this can be seen in the present volume.

Satō Hirō  Professor, Tohoku University Graduate School of Arts and Letters, Department of Japanese Intellectual History

Publications


Reviewed by Brian Bocking

This very substantial guest-edited volume of Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie emerged from the Symposium on Medieval Shintō held at Columbia University in 2007; a symposium organised, as Michael Como says in his preface ‘in response to a dramatic re-orientation in the field of Shintō studies that has occurred in the last 20 years, as scholars in Japan and the West have increasingly questioned long-held assumptions concerning both the status of Shintō as a religious tradition and its relationship to broader paradigms of Japanese religiosity and nationalism’. CSJR Newsletter readers aware of this ‘dramatic re-orientation’ in Shintō studies, epitomised for example in John Breen and Mark Teeuwen’s A New History of Shintō published earlier this year, will nevertheless find a vast amount of challenging and intriguing new material in Rethinking Medieval Shintō. Allan Grapard, to whom the volume is dedicated, had challenged participants in the symposium to ‘find a way forward’ in a field where neither religion nor politics has the upper hand and where the definition of [medieval] Shintō and the question of imperial authority ‘remain wide open and will never be solved by laws or studies ignoring the complex history of interdependence between rule-governed behavior, ritual efficacy in context, and several definitions of creative power as opposed to restrictive power’ (p.18). The various articles may thus be seen as energetic and thoughtful responses to this challenge.


It is impossible to do justice in a brief review to the range of data and wealth of insights offered in this volume, which will undoubtedly remain an indispensable reference work for Shintō studies. I will here mention just one topic from each section among the very many possible candidates. Anna Andreeva examines the nature of the ‘Miwa lineage’ before the Edo period, when its identity as ‘Miwaryū Shintō’ seems to have been established. Analysis of scattered pre-Edo sources reveals ‘a fascinating case in which the collision of disparate visions of the sacred prompted the creation of a new cult that appropriated a variety of elements from a number of diverse religious traditions…..[that] can best be described as a mikkyō-inspired jindō cult…’. Andreeva argues that the so-called “Shintō” practices of Miwa were ‘a local take on general medieval trends centred upon the creation of lineage transmissions, the replication of esoteric knowledge, and the acquisition of new sources of sacred power’ (p.83). Lucia Dolce’s paper on the representation, or iconology, of Amaterasu looks at how, in addition to the well-known dualistic womb/diamond imagery in esoteric Buddhism, notions of overcoming duality evoked triadic patterns of kami and Buddhas with associated icons and mantric syllables. The article focuses on an ‘enigmatic’ iconographical triad found in late medieval Shintō, of Fudō, Aizen and Tenshō daijin/Amaterasu, the latter usually riding a horse. Dolce invokes a stunningly diverse range of mythological, iconic and scriptural associations to draw out the meaning(s) of this triad in the context of the iconographical traditions and liturgical performances which underpinned the creative ‘rethinking of ritual re-

Brian Bocking taught at SOAS (1999-2007), where he was Professor of the Study of Religions and Head of Department. He is now Professor of the Study of Religions and Head of the Study of Religions Department at University College Cork since January 2008. His publications include the first English translation of Nagarjuna’s Middle Treatise (1995), a Dictionary of Shinto (1996) and The Oracles of the Three Shrines (2000).
Publications


Reviewed by Shinya Mano (SOAS)

In Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Tendai Esoteric Buddhism in Japan, Jinhua Chen analyses the process of construction of Japanese Tendai Esoteric Buddhism (Taimitsu) and its sectarian legitimacy by revisiting polemic literatures and lineages. Much of this book is dedicated to criticise the authenticity of Saichō’s esoteric transmission from Shunxiao, and it seeks to bring to light the fabrication of the threefold *siddhi* texts, which contain the most significant set of *dhāraṇī* believed to be given to Saichō by his mentor. Naturally, Chen’s criticism is aimed directly to the core of Taimitsu legitimacy and indeed that of Japanese Tendai Buddhism. At first glance, for sectarian scholars in particular, Chen may seem a radical-anti-sectarian-revisionist. This is true to some extent, yet he offers a more positive interpretation of what he deconstructed as well. In the author’s own words, ‘once accepted and treated as what they were originally intended to be, these stories and legends will prove to be rather revealing in the study of the appearance and development of sectarian ideologies.’

In many respects, this book, under Chen’s superb command of original sources, sheds light on a field which Japanese scholars have overlooked or perhaps deliberately ignored. At the same time, his analyses are highly detailed and technical. For this reason, the work is best approached with an awareness of previous studies, such as Stanley Weinstein’s The Beginning of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan: The Neglected Tendai Tradition (1974) and Paul Groner’s Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School (1984).

Part 1 of Legend and Legitimation investigates how Saichō and his followers made an effort to catch up with, and to overcome, Kūkai’s Shingon school. In terms of Kūkai’s influence on Saichō, Chen first elucidates the transition to Saichō’s interpretation of the esoteric transmission. This is represented by the change from an interpretation based on the Diamond Sutra (Kongō-kai) to a Dual one. The Dual basis has been known as the constitution of the so-called Pure Esotericism (*junmitsu*), and it consists of the Diamond and Matrix divisions. Chen then moves on to examine a series of court certificates (*Fuhōmon*). These are referred to in Saichō’s biography and sectarian polemic writings, and Chen forwards a controversial argument pointing out the fabricated nature of these *Fuhōmon* texts and transmission certificates. For the *Bishamondō* manuscript in particular, it seems to me that Chen implies that the genuine author is likely to be Saichō, although Chen does not identify the author specifically. Furthermore, in accordance with the perspective of this study indicated above, he explores the meanings of each of the *Fuhōmon* texts in the framework of the ‘development of sectarian ideologies’. However, it is a pity that he does not pay attention to doctrinal issues in tracing the constructing process of Taimitsu legitimation. The latter half of Part 1 focuses on Yakushun. Entitled ‘Shigon-Taimitsu Strife as Seen in Yakushun’s *Haja benshō ki*’, Chen here investigates Yakushun’s supposed superiority towards Kūkai, the glorified image of Shunxiao and Saichō’s claim to the dual transmission which is espoused in Kakushin’s work. The author estimates the *Haja benshō ki* to reveal the ‘sectarian struggles between post-Saichō Tendai and post-Kūkai Shingon’ and ‘the points on which the two schools were fiercely debating at the time.’ It seems to me that in fact the *Haja benshō ki* was a rare example of sectarian polemics. It should also be noted that the majority of Yakushun’s contemporaries, such as Jōzan and Dōzui, were keen to study the Tendai perfect teachings. In other words, there had come to be a crucial paradigm shift from Esotericism to perfect Buddhism. Exceptionally, Shōshin’s *Nishū dōi shō*, written approximately half a century later, indeed contains sectarian polemics on the basis of esotericism, but it has been known that his interest was mainly in the perfect teachings.

In the second part of the book, Chen analyses the three editions of the Threefold *siddhi* texts (T. 905, 906 and 907). These include the important set of *dhāraṇī*, namely the three fivefold *dhāraṇī*. Examining these texts appears to be the most pressing task, around which Chen’s book rotates. To begin with, he takes T. 907 as the earliest version of the three texts and considers it the most important among the other editions by comparing verses. This urges him to trace the first reference to the text. He analyses a work by a later Tendai monk, Enchin’s *Ketsujī sanshu shicchi hō*, which cites a scripture called the *Sanshu shicchi hō*. The author concludes that the *Sanshu shicchi hō* which Enchin perused was not one of the series of the Threefold *siddhi* texts, but rather a similar canonical text, the *Pilužhen biexing jing*. Chen then notes that
a work by Annen contains a mysterious announcement: ‘Recently, I discovered a copy of the text called Sonshō hajigoku hō (alt. ki or giki).’ By juxtaposing the fivefold patterns presented in the Sonshō hajigoku hō with those in the three versions of the Threefold siddhi texts, Chen argues that what Annen ‘discovered’ was T. 907. This ‘discovery’ leads Chen to foster additional scepticism on the texts under examination. That is, he suspects that Annen is very likely the one who composed T. 907, primarily on the basis of Enchin’s Ketsuji sanshu shicchi hō. For T. 905, Chen assesses its role to have been to cement the idea of one of the Fuhōmon documents by someone who was dissatisfied by T. 907. Here, the author also proposes a similarity of its texts with the Shinmoku, attributed to Enchin. The author’s estimation of T. 906 is that it brings the form of the Threefold siddhi text to its completion, incorporating various elements, such as the one from the Yōga institutions and that from the Diamond traditions. Chen’s analyses of the Threefold siddhi texts throughout these chapters are superb, and I should not hesitate to say that this is a masterpiece.

In the final chapter of the book, Chen explores the concept of Wuxing (Five phases/elements). He does so in the context of the works of Chinese esoteric and non-esoteric masters, such as Yixing and Zhiyi. Especially, Yixing’s application of the Wuxing principle to his Commentaries on the Darijin is intensively studied in relation to the Embellishing Practitioner’s Body by Means of Five Syllables (Ch. Wuzi yanshen guan Jp. Goji goshin kan). This is the pivotal visualising practice to actualise the Matrix world. Chen also looks into the uses of Wuxing theory in a work by Enchin and in the Threefold siddhi texts. Since medieval Japanese esoteric masters, such as Kakuban and Yōsai, made allusion to these texts in their writings, the author surveys the role of the Threefold siddhi texts in these later writers as well.

This book is a ‘must read’ not merely for all students of Tendai Esotericism, but also for those who specialise in esoteric Buddhist cultures and in East Asian Buddhism.

Shinya Mano is a Ph.D. student at SOAS. His doctoral research is focused on ‘Eisai and the development of Zen- Esoteric Buddhism’, and he has broad interests in Esoteric Buddhism and Japanese Medieval Buddhism.
Report on the International Symposium on Onmyōdō, Columbia University

The Way of Yin and Yang (Onmyōdō): Aspects of a Japanese Religious Tradition
1-3 May 2009

Giorgio Premoselli

In May 2009, the Centre for Japanese Religions of Columbia University, New York, sponsored a three-days symposium on Onmyōdō, which brought together all the major Japanese scholars on the subject, but also welcomed American and European researchers that have recently become interested in this topic. This symposium was the last of a series of three symposia, which first focused on Medieval Shinto, then Shugendō and lastly Onmyōdō. The panels were spread over three days, which gradually looked at the Classical, Medieval and lastly Contemporary period. This symposium represented an important step forward towards the understanding of Onmyōdō, a topic that has only surfaced in Japan fairly recently and that struggled to get outside the boundaries of Japanese scholarship.

The first lecture, (‘Onmyōdō in a Restricted Market: Nara’), given on May 1 by Herman Ooms (UCLA), raised some pivotal questions regarding the use of yin and yang knowledge and its deep bonds with the monopoly of the state. Ooms concentrated on the political use of the study of the movement of the stars during the Nara and then the Heian period, to underline the restrictions on the use of manuals and textbook applied by the state. Ooms' lecture was followed by a lecture by Koike Jun’ichi (National Museum of Japanese History) on the influence of Onmyōdō on folkloric culture and performative arts (‘Onmyōdō and Folkloric Culture: Three Perspectives for the Development of Research’). Koike looked at the calendrical knowledge in popular uses during the early modern period, to spot some of the differences between the textual transmission of Onmyōdō knowledge through almanacs, manuals and calendars and the oral transmission in folk culture, especially in rural areas. This lecture focused on the ritualisation of the passing of time through the events in the life cycle, and the dynamics of transmission through the different historical periods up to the Meiji period.

The third morning lecture (‘On’yōdo’ and ‘Onmyōdō’: Reflections on the Lineage and System of the ‘Way of Yin and Yang’”) was delivered by Suzuki Ikkei (Eastern Institute) with a reflection on the difference between the words ‘On’yōdo’ and ‘Onmyōdō’. Suzuki pointed out that the word ‘On’yōdo’, indicated a set of skills and in particular was strongly connected to the Bureau of Yin and Yang, composed mainly by former Buddhist monks and Korean immigrants. By the 13th century, ‘On’yōdo’ furthermore came to include also the popular practitioners, hōshi onmyōji, influenced by Esoteric Buddhism. In contrast, the word ‘Onmyōdō’ indicated the early modern and popular specialists who acted through licenses distributed by the Tsuchimikado clan.

The next lecture (‘Technology and the Diffusion of Onmyōdō in Ancient Japan’) by Michael Como (Columbia University) looked at the influence of Onmyōdō through different practices during the Ancient period. Como focused on such practices as weaving and sericul-
ature, as well as engineering, to reflect on the problem of lineages and the transmission of knowledge in different clans. His lecture upturned the ‘from the court down’ concept of knowledge transmission during the Ancient period, to underline what appeared as a transmission that cut across different clans.

The fourth lecture of the first panel (‘The Characteristics of Onmyōdō and Related Texts’), by Yamashita Katsuaki (Daitō Bunka University), looked at the characteristics of Onmyōdō from the Nara to the Heian period. Yamashita focused on the transformation of Onmyōdō following the collapse of the Ritsuryō system and the consequent feeling of uneasiness by the aristocratic families in regards to spiritual curses. This lecture raised some important points regarding the basic characteristics of Onmyōdō, such as the carrying out of rituals at night when the stars appear clearly in the sky, the astrological deities are more willing to descent and the demons are more active. These characteristics were uniform throughout state and individual uses of Onmyōdō.

The first day of lectures concluded with a film screening on Izanagiryū, an interpretation of a popular aspect of Onmyōdō found in Kōchi province in Shikoku, which will be discussed on the last panel.

The second day started with a lecture (‘Geographies of Sound: Onmyōdō, Music, and Heike Narratives’) by David Bialock (University of Southern California) on the influence of Onmyōdō knowledge on music and in particular on the transmission of the Heike narratives. Bialock focused on the ritual functions of music during the Medieval period to appeal and placate vengeful spirits and the purificatory abilities of recitation of these narratives. Onmyōdō and music shared a strong bond as can also be seen by the appointment of the Abe clan as uta no kami (chief court musicians).

The second lecture of the second panel (‘Shingon Rain Rituals and Dragon Cults: A Case of Onmyōdō-Mikkyō Interrelation’), by Steven Trenson (Kyoto University) reflected on a Shingon rain-making ritual which was held at the Shinseien by both Shingon monks and Onmyōjī. The ritual centered on the figure of the Five Dragons, which were contextualized within the Five Elements of Onmyōdō. The ritual tools used in the rain making ritual were also reinterpreted both in Buddhist and Onmyōdō terms as in the use of the shikiban (divination board), which was cosmologically understood as the Anavatapta pond of Buddhist cosmology.

Nishioka Yoshifumi (Kanazawa Bunko) gave the third lecture (‘Aspects of Esoteric Rituals Centered on the Divination Board (banpō)’ on the ritual use of the divination board by Shingon monks for Esoteric rituals. His lecture focused on the deification of the divination board for ritual purposes and its use in Esoteric rituals such as the Dakini ritual during the sokui kanjō (the enthronement ritual).

Following on, Bernard Faure (Columbia University) looked at the bonds between Esoteric Buddhism and Onmyōdō in terms of the worship of Daishōgun, a calendrical deity (‘Daishōgun: From Calendar to Cult’). Daishōgun was believed to be an itinerant astral deity whose movements were tracked down by the Bureau of Yin and Yang following the belief in directional taboos. Daishōgun represented Venus and had to be placated to avoid natural disasters and calamities, but also represented the protectors of the four directions.

The lecture by Matthias Hayek (Paris Diderot University) shifted the attention to the early modern period and the transmission of divinatory manuals (‘Divinatory Practices and Knowledge in Early Modern Japan: Redefining Onmyōdō from the Inside’). Hayek focused on the institutional control on professional diviners and the compilation of new manuals that were banned by the Tsuchimikado clan. During the span of two centuries from the 17th to the 19th century, more than 1000 books were published on woodblocks. This emerging trend represented a threat for the retainers of specialised knowledge, until then controlled by family lineage.

The second panel concluded with a lecture (‘The Yin-Yang Masters of Early Modern Japan and the Kirishitan (‘Christians’)’ by Hayashi Makoto (Aichi Gakuin Daigaku) focused on the interaction between Christians and Onmyōdō during the early modern period. Hayashi reflected on the categories of Onmyōdō and onmyōjī, the distribution of calendars from the Tsuchimikado clan and their control of practitioners through licenses.

The last day of panels was inaugurated by a lecture from Saitō Hideki (Bukkyō Daigaku) on the cult of Gozu Tennō and Izanagirī (‘The Cult of Gozu Tennō and the Ritual World of the Izanagirî’). His lecture focused on the narrative aspect, not present within Onmyōdō, which plays an important role during the ritual for the placation of curses. During the ritual recitation of the saimon, the origin of all curses is traced back to the narrative of this deity.
The following lecture (‘Aspects of the Izanagiryū’), by Umeno Mitsuoki (Kōchi kenritsu minzoku shiryōkan), focused more in depth on the ritual aspects of Izanagiryū to observe how the different deities found in this tradition are worshipped. Many elements of Izanagiryū can be traced back to Onmyōdō through the passing down of traditions amongst different lineages. However, an important point was made on the practical ritual use of ritual knowledge, as opposed to textual knowledge and lack of actual training that can be observed in Onmyōdō.

The concluding lecture (‘The Izanagiryū and the Theory of Universal Power’) was scheduled to be delivered by Simone Mauclaire (Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique, Paris), who could not attend due to health problems and was thus replaced by a discussion involving three different panelists. This lecture focused on the syncretic and combinatory issues behind folk religions, not only on the popular level but also on the official level, and the need to rethink the borders of religious specialisation. This issue was also stressed regarding how we interpret Izanagiryū practitioners, who do not see themselves as part of the tradition of Onmyōdō.

This three-day symposium hopefully allowed participants to reconsider little known aspects of the tradition that we call Onmyōdō, and to discuss the difficulties in defining it. This inspired both Western and Japanese scholarship on a renewed collaboration on the topic of Onmyōdō.

Giorgio Premoselli completed a Bachelor’s Degree in Japanese & Study of Religions at SOAS (2007), and subsequently a Master’s Degree in Japanese Religions also at SOAS (2008). He is currently enrolled as a 1st year Master’s student in Buddhist Cultural Studies at Bukkyō University, Kyoto, Onmyōdō under the Monbusho scholarship, furthering his studies on Heian period apotropaic Onmyōdō rituals for healing the illnesses of the court aristocracy.

Photos: Kia Cheleen

Information on Japanese Religions

Manabu - Days of Study for Italian Students, Grant-Holders and Researchers in Japan

Method and Theory in the Study of Religions - Modes of Worship, Practices and Texts in Japan and Asia (Kyoto, 30th June 2010)

Conference report by Tullio Lobetti

On the 30th of June 2010 the Italian School of East Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Kyoto hosted a one-day workshop in their Manabu series, around the theme ‘Method and Theory in the Study of Religions’. The Manabu series is aimed to provide a space for cultural exchange and discussion for Italian researchers and students currently working in Japan on a variety of subjects mostly related to Japan. The event was thus held in Italian for a predominantly Italian audience, which however included a few other participants who possessed a sufficient grasp of the language.

The Institute director and organiser of the event, Silvio Vita, introduced the conference themes and purpose together with Lucia Dolce (SOAS), who highlighted the recent developments in the field - such as the ongoing re-evaluation of the role of the so-called Kamakura New Buddhism in the history of Japanese Buddhism, the problematic stance of the longstanding division between ‘popular’ and ‘established’ religion and so forth. These paradigmatic evolutions were also the underlying motives in many of the papers presented in the conference.

The following lecture (‘Aspects of the Izanagiryū’), by Umeno Mitsuoki (Kōchi kenritsu minzoku shiryōkan), focused more in depth on the ritual aspects of Izanagiryū to observe how the different deities found in this tradition are worshipped. Many elements of Izanagiryū can be traced back to Onmyōdō through the passing down of traditions amongst different lineages. However, an important point was made on the practical ritual use of ritual knowledge, as opposed to textual knowledge and lack of actual training that can be observed in Onmyōdō.

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Photos: Kia Cheleen
with other contemporary religious systems. This paper re-interpreted the Fuji cult from a wider point of view, including other Japanese religious practices not only as different religious systems, but also as complex symbolic systems developed to influence reality at a popular level.

The paper that followed was delivered by Giorgio Premoselli (Bukkyō University) on the topic of ‘Divination and rituals for healing in mid-Heian period’. The paper focused on the Onmyōdō tradition which has been ‘constructed’ in Japan between the ninth and tenth centuries to meet the need for apotropaic rituals against curses and diseases. Premoselli argued that the shift in power (from the imperial court to the Fujiwara family) also prompted Onmyōdō practitioners to offer their services to a wider range of customers, including those outside the court.

In his paper about the ‘Analysis of Shugendō in the early Tokugawa period through the healing rituals of the Echigo region’, Andrea Castiglioni (Columbia University) analysed the cultural relationships between Shugendō ascetics and the members of local village communities. Castiglioni analysed some religious practices that became part of the everyday life of local people through a reading of the rituals portrayed in the Denpō jūni maki (a ritual manual used by ascetics in the Echigo area). Castiglioni employed this case study to propose wider considerations in the field of medical anthropology, such as the relationship between body and disease, the integration of ‘proper science’ and religious practice, and the interpretation of the symbols of physical pain.

The next paper, by Alessandro Poletto (Osaka University), ‘Theories of “pilgrimage”, itinerancy technicians and yugyō’, re-considered the studies of Victor and Edith Turner on pilgrimage, and highlighted some of the inconsistencies that make them unsuitable to describe the Japanese context. Poletto then reviewed other anthropological approaches to the theme of the pilgrimage that have developed in later years, concluding with an overview of those more closely connected with Japan. Yugyō was here used as a case study to conduct a diachronical analysis, ranging from its more ancient forms to those developed by Ippen and his disciples.

In the last paper of the day ‘The making of the perfect body: ascesis and bodily hermeneutic’, Tullio Lobetti (SOAS) offered a further analysis of two recurring themes in the conference: the different levels of hermeneutics involved in textual research (and what ‘text’ may mean in different contexts) and the often-recurring dichotomy between the ‘popular’ and ‘established’ dimensions of religious practice. Lobetti argued that practices involving the use of the body can also be considered as a form of ‘bodily text’, which needs to be investigated through participation and direct experience, rather than by mere conceptual means. He then proceeded with a critique of the popular/established pair employing the Gramscian reading of ‘folklore’ as an expression of the innermost social ‘structure’ vis-à-vis the ‘official religion’ of the intellectual ‘superstructure’.

The conference was a remarkable occasion for Italian scholars and students having a common interest in Japanese religions to meet and discuss their ongoing research. It is important to point out how contacts between Italian scholars living and working abroad and Italian academic institutions are often very limited, and that this somehow prevents the circulation of research produced abroad amongst students and scholars in Italy. A large portion of the audience consisted, as mentioned, of students and grant-holders who are likely to return to Italy at the end of their period of study in Japan. Beside the valuable knowledge they will have certainly gained during their stay, they will also hopefully bring back an awareness of how rich and varied the reality of Italian researchers working abroad is. We cannot but sincerely thank Silvo Vita and the Italian Cultural Institute for this opportunity, and we hope that other similar occasions will present themselves in the future.
SOAS Alumni

My Experience of Studying Japanese Religions in Japan

Jon Morris

I owe a great deal to my time at SOAS and especially to the CSJR, so I was delighted to be asked to write a few words about my time studying at Tohoku University. Of the six years or so since the last time I wrote for the CSJR Newsletter, about four and a half have been spent here in Sendai. I couldn’t have guessed then what my life would be like now, and it is with the me of six years ago in mind that I would like to share with you some of my experiences and the things I have learned here. Don’t worry, there won’t be any advice. I know that nearly everyone reading this will have much clearer ideas about where they want to go and what they want to study than I have ever had. But then, the me of six years ago was something of an oddity: an English male hoping to do a PhD in Japanese Religions. I wonder how many of us there are. Thanks to the support, teaching and kindness I have received studying at the Japanese Intellectual History kenkyūshitsu, the shy and academically mediocre Englishman who wanted to do that PhD has just started it.

I had done a little bit of Japanese and Religious Studies before I came to SOAS. I read Theology RS and Philosophy at Bristol before teaching English in Shimane Prefecture through the JET scheme for 3 years. The reason I took that job was Judo, and by the end of it I had enough Judo (injuries etc.) for a lifetime and almost enough money for a year at SOAS if paid off credit cards count as money. Though I took the MA in Buddhist Studies at SOAS, I spent a lot of my time studying Japanese language and religion and was planning to apply, if it seemed like I would have any chance at all of being accepted, to the Japanese Ministry of Education scholarship program. I had been thinking about this route while I was still in Shimane, but it was while I was at SOAS that I really started to understand that reading Japanese Buddhist texts, and if I could stretch to it reading them in the original, was going to offer me a lot and it was worth applying. I knew that I needed at least a couple of years more study before attempting a PhD. I got all the help and advice I needed to apply, and applied to the right university. A lot of people who get the MEXT scholarship, in the Arts anyway, seem to want to go to Tokyo University; if not there then one of the good places in Kansai. I have found Tohoku very rewarding indeed and for me personally at least, without a doubt the right place to be. I received a very warm welcome indeed in Sendai.

The four “extra” years I put in before starting my PhD were the minimum I needed to prepare for it. I have recently received an MA from Tohoku University in Japanese Intellectual History after a two-year course. I spent the two years before that studying as a kenkyūseitai, or “research student”. This is a kind of academic halfway house between courses. There is also a distinction made between undergraduate and graduate school research students. I was of the undergraduate status: which was fair enough considering my reading and writing. Luckily, Tohoku University has one of the more highly regarded courses in Japanese language for foreign students, and this took up the majority of my time to start with. I was always a slow learner of Japanese, and I remember that my homework used to take me a little longer than it took the Chinese students who make up the majority of the foreign students. Unlike at SOAS where UK students are a minority, students from other countries will stand out as different at a Japanese university. As a foreign student you will be treated differently, that is, (mostly) better than your Japanese peers. The key factor in all this is the disposition of your supervising professor. I was very fortunate in this regard. The good news is that I can genuinely say that all the Japanese and non-Japanese academics I know involved with religious studies are of the auspicious variety. Having a supervisor with research interests in the area which interests you is important, arguably more so than your choice of university. My supervisor’s teaching and research are of the type, and on the topics, which interest me most, and they answer my questions and give me new perspectives.

The perennial complaint of postgraduates—that they don’t have enough time for their research—also applies in Japan. I found my SOAS MA a challenge, but even if Japanese had been my first language the Tohoku MA would have been a lot more demanding. I was doing an essay and a couple of presentations every week at one point, and I remember actually running around the campus to try to make time. The trick, of course, is not to try to do everything you think perhaps you ought to. Some people took half the number of classes I was taking, others double. When I first arrived some of the challenges I had like translating English papers into Japanese and giving me new perspectives.

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The key factor in all this is the disposition of your supervising professor. I was very fortunate in this regard. The good news is that I can genuinely say that all the Japanese and non-Japanese academics I know involved with religious studies are of the auspicious variety. Having a supervisor with research interests in the area which interests you is important, arguably more so than your choice of university. My supervisor’s teaching and research are of the type, and on the topics, which interest me most, and they answer my questions and give me new perspectives.
time they might take anyone. Doing this work has really helped me feel a part of the *kenyūshitsu*. I would like to recommend to you the *kenyūshitsu*’s journal *Nenpō Nihon Shisōshi*, and the online search database of publications related to Japanese Intellectual History accessible at http://www.sal.tohoku.ac.jp/dojih/.

The MA course required me to take a lot of classes, whereas the PhD course does not. My priority now should be getting some of the research I have done so far ready for submission to a journal. My research started with an interest in the *sokushinbutsu* and took a first step in evaluating the past research on the topic. There are a few mistakes in it. I wanted to find out more about the cases of the bodies of holy people not decaying after death in late ancient and medieval literature, so set about reading the Heian *Ōjoden* and found a fair bit of material not dealt with in previous research. This took a long time. In Japanese Intellectual History, a lot of emphasis is put on reading original documents in detail and in full. Part of my MA thesis was a comparison of this material with the *zuisō*-like phenomena in the *Legenda Aurea*, discussing related questions of the relationship of the (dead) body and the soul. I did a chapter on other Buddhist mummies and one on the relationship of the state of the body and other worldly fate in the *mogari*/*return to life tales of the Nihon Ryōiki*. A major part was on the legend of the eternal meditation of Kūkai, the *Kōbō Daishi Nyūjōsetsu*.

Recently at Tohoku I have been looking at early modern materials relating to *Kōchi Hōin*, one of the *sokushinbutsu*, discussing their content and context in intellectual history. I am currently looking at the early modern Kūkai hagiography with a view to hopefully writing a paper comparing this with the *Hōin* material. I have just returned from the IAHR conference in Toronto where I discussed the *Kōbō Daishi Nyūjōsetsu*. On this point I go a fair bit further than previous researchers and say the legend bears the major hallmarks of the *Ōjoden* and must have been influenced by that genre. The lecture theatre wasn’t exactly packed out for my presentation though! Last year I presented a part of this material in Japan and got some valuable feedback and criticism. Being honest again, the amount of complex material that has to be gone through to get near a comprehensive idea of the *Kōbō Daishi Nyūjōsetsu* probably makes it a bit much for a journeyman researcher like me. I think I would have much more in presentable form by now if I had been focused on a more limited range of material. Then again, it’s important to try to get to the bottom of something. Reading the texts and learning from them has always been the main thing for me.

The other thing is places. I had developed a taste for visiting Japanese religious sites while I was teaching English here before going to SOAS. While I have been here I have taken every opportunity to get out and see things. Through my supervisor and others at the university I have had a lot of opportunities to see fascinating stuff of the type you can’t see if you just show up. Tohoku has three or four sites that everyone knows, Dewasanzan, Osorezan etc. Not so many people know that the area around Sendai, if you take the time to get into it, is one of the richest and most varied religious landscapes outside of the Kinki region. The whole university area was a *reijō* (sacred ground), the city and its environs are scattered with *itabi* (stone tablets), *shōkonsha* (shrines for the war dead), *sekihi*, sutra burial sites and wall-carved Buddha statues, *shugen* practice sites, the lot. *Nōkotsu* (the practice of placing the cremated remains of the dead in holy sites usually linked to a *seijin* and Pure Land) in Tohoku comes highly recommended, as does the Shiogama fish and the *wagyu*. Of all the *nōkotsu* places, the one that really speaks to you is Matsushima. Visit Oshima, kind of behind the family restaurant. It must have been almost completely covered in bone fragments back in the day. You can still find them today if you look carefully - try near the *gorintō* on the right. How hundreds of *itabi* ended up in the sea near there is an interesting open question.

Sendai has a lot of character, and I would be pleased to provide tours for anyone who has been kind enough to read this far. Also, if you need something from the Kano collection at the library etc please contact me on jm8975@hotmail.com. I will be around here for a good few years to come I think.

*Jon Morris* is a SOAS alumnus (MA Buddhist Studies) who has been studying at Tohoku University for four years. His research interests include Buddhist mummies, hagiography and comparative religions.
Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions
School of Oriental and African Studies
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square
London WC1 0XG

email: csjr@soas.ac.uk

Centre Website
www.soas.ac.uk/csjr

Centre Chair:
Dr Lucia Dolce (ld16@soas.ac.uk)

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