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Comparative perspectives on the emergence of *jindō* and Shinto

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Abstract

The common understanding that Shinto is Japan's "indigenous religion" makes it difficult to raise the question of when and how this Shinto emerged as a religious identity distinct from Buddhism. This article argues that Shinto arose from a Buddhist cult that incorporated the *kami* as *jindō*, rather than from the classical court cult that created a distance between Buddhism and the *kami*, and that defined the latter as *jingi*. This Buddhist *jindō* cult had obvious parallels in other Buddhist states (notably in the Burmese cult of *nats*), and a comparative approach is essential if we are to understand the dynamics at work here. To explain Shinto's emergence, we must, first, recognize and analyse its origins in *jindō* and, second, address its medieval dispersal from the royal court into the periphery – another process that can be fruitfully compared with Burma's *nat* cult.

The idea that Shinto is the original, indigenous religion of Japan is so well entrenched that I feel there is some justification for starting this essay by stating the obvious: Shinto, rather than forming the timeless backdrop to Japan's culture, is a product of history that "emerged" at some point in time.

Of course, this statement is a mere platitude; yet, the question when, how and why Shinto originated rarely becomes the topic of serious discussion. The main reason for this, it would seem to me, is that ideological and theological concerns get in the way. After all, before one can discuss the origin of Shinto, one has to reach some agreement on even more fundamental questions. What practices, institutions or ideas have defined this Shinto as a coherent tradition? To what degree has Shinto (itself a Sino-Japanese term) been shaped, or even created, by continental influences? On questions such as these, views diverge wildly. As a result, scholars' views on Shinto's origin range from the prehistoric Jōmon period to late medieval, and even early modern times. In this article, my ambition will not be to assume the authority to define Shinto, but rather to reflect on this extraordinary divergence of opinions, and to identify and discuss some of the historical junctures that have shaped both Shinto itself and its many-hued representations.

Such an investigation must begin with the recognition that within a wider Asian context, the emergence of a self-consciously local, and even nativistic religion like Shinto is not particularly common. The more one studies the appearance of Shinto as a self-professed "indigenous religion",

the less obvious this development appears. A look across Japan's borders makes one wonder how either the classical and medieval periods of Buddhist dominance, or the subsequent era of Confucian hegemony, could have offered a favourable environment for a concept like Shinto to emerge and thrive.

In Buddhist states, from Burma and Sri Lanka to Tibet, local deities have conventionally been relegated to the lower echelons of the divine hierarchy, ranked below those who are partially or completely enlightened. There was therefore little potential for local cults to challenge Buddhism; the containment within Buddhism of the "spirit religion" of Sri Lanka (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: ch. 1) and the "spirit cults" in Thailand (Tambiah 1970) is typical. Even the royal cult of *nats* in Burma (on which more below) never gave rise to an anti-Buddhist movement, although it does display some signs of increasing distance and autonomy. The only exception, and perhaps in this sense the closest parallel to Shinto, must be Tibetan Bön, which has consistently defined itself in opposition to Buddhism by portraying itself as older, more original and more Tibetan than its rival.[1]

Also in states where Confucianism curtailed the influence of Buddhism, anti-Buddhist rhetoric did not inspire the development of an independent nativist religion based on (or even connected with) cults of local deities. In late Chosŏn Korea, for example, local village rites that were deemed non-Confucian were labelled "licentious cults" (Ch. *yinci* 淫祠, Kor. *ŭmsa*) using a term from the Book of Rites. They were either suppressed and discontinued, or forced into a more orthodox mould. Those few nativists who did cast their eyes on local cults as possible sites of national identity never succeeded in attracting a wider audience. This was the case even in the modern period, when Japanese influence was strong. In colonial times, a minority of Korean "cultural nationalists" attempted to construe a "pure" Korean shamanism (*mugyo* 巫教) on the basis of classical sources. Their vision, clearly inspired by the model of Japan's Shinto, was to raise this traditionalist construct to the status of Korea's indigenous religion *cum* national essence. However, the colonial government was not impressed. Its policy was to suppress shamanic practice as an obsolete form of "quasi-religion", a superstition that hampered modernization. *Mugyo* never enjoyed even the limited success that Shinto had in Japan.[2]

The point that I am seeking to make with these comparative glances at Asia is simply that there was nothing natural to Shinto's emergence in Japan. The more we look for parallels beyond the shores of Japan, the more we realize that the odds for Shinto to gain not only some autonomy, but

1 I would like to thank Henk Blezer for correcting some of my misunderstandings about Bön.

2 See Han (2000) and Robinson (1988). The government's attitude towards "shamanism" appears to have been strangely ambiguous. Shamanist groups were routinely harassed by the police, while at the same time, the Government General encouraged the academic study of shamanism as Korea's "native culture", and tried to co-opt what it could not suppress, for example by forcing shamans to incorporate Japanese *kami* in their ceremonies (Vladimir Tikhonov, personal communication).

even recognition as Japan's answer to Chinese Confucianism and Indian Buddhism, were not necessarily good. Its success should therefore surprise us much more than it usually does. In this essay, I will include comparative angles on the problem of Shinto's emergence to underscore this point, and to identify possible parallels that may shed light on this development. My aim is not to construe a universalistic typology, or to look beyond "superficial" differences to make claims about underlying "structures" shared across large swathes of Asia. I intend to use comparison merely to shed new light on developments in Japan. My hope is that by looking across Japan's borders, it will be easier to suspend the standard discourse on Shinto's early history, and to shed the sense that the development of Shinto was a natural outcome that needs no explanation.

Further, I will argue that Shinto first emerged within a thoroughly Buddhist sphere. In my search for comparative perspectives on Shinto's emergence, I have therefore concentrated on Buddhist societies "beyond" China (from a Japanese point of view). Two considerations led me to this choice. First, comparison with Buddhist societies to the south of China has the advantage that we can rule out direct influence on Japan, thus avoiding a complicating factor. Second, in classical and medieval Japan, Buddhism enjoyed a hegemony that is more easily compared with South and South-East Asian societies than with China or Korea, where Confucianism and Daoism complicated the picture. In Japan, this occurred first after the period that will be the focus of this essay: the early medieval period.

When did "Shinto" begin?

Although Shinto may be a relatively unusual phenomenon, many of the elements that are commonly associated with it are far from unique in Japan's wider geographical context. As has been pointed out by Inoue Nobutaka (2003: 7), many if not most of Shinto's defining features are commonplace throughout East Asia. Inoue lists polytheism, animism, shamanism, divination, syncretism and ancestor worship as central characteristics of what he describes as a Mahāyāna-based "East-Asian subspecies" of religion, to which Shinto clearly belongs. To these abstract concepts one could add many concrete phenomena that are as prominent in Japan as they are in many other parts of Buddhist Asia, or, indeed, most of the world: worship of deities associated with water, trees and mountains in sacred groves, worship of snakes as messengers or manifestations of deities, myths about the descent of heavenly deities to earth, and so forth. The ubiquitous nature of all these phenomena shows that it makes little sense to label their occurrence in Japan as "Shinto", as though they share a common origin in a specific Japanese tradition. Even when taken together, they are simply not particular enough to lend the term any distinctive meaning.

When we are so bold as to ask when Shinto "began", it soon becomes clear that it is impossible to settle such a question without some degree of consensus as to which concrete practices, notions, or organizational structures one might select to define Shinto, especially in a diachronic

perspective. Different views on the origin of Shinto often point to the origins of different phenomena, and are in the end based on different judgements as to what might constitute Shinto's "essence". This problem plays itself out in a striking range of answers to our deceptively simple question.

On the one extreme, there is what we may call the theological view, which refuses to imagine an age before Shinto. An example can be found on the website of the Shinto Online Network Association (http://www.jinja.or.jp): "Shinto is a general term for the activities of the Japanese people to worship all the deities of heaven and earth, and its origin is as old as the history of the Japanese". Characteristic of this approach is that it regards Shinto as the inherent core of a supra-historical national essence, embodied by the Japanese people since time immemorial. Diametrically opposed to this dogma is what we may term the "iconoclastic" view, which sees Shinto as a recent invention. One of the most well-known and eloquent advocates of this view was Kuroda Toshio (1926–93), who argued that the notion of Shinto as an autonomous (that is, explicitly non-Buddhist or pre-Buddhist) Japanese tradition emerged only in the late fifteenth century.[3] According to Kuroda, Shinto in this sense was developed as a theoretical concept by priests of the Yoshida lineage, but not implemented "in practice" before the Meiji period (1868–1912). In Kuroda's view, then, Shinto was a conscious creation, pioneered by late medieval Japanese nativists.

Most scholars position themselves somewhere between these two views. Most widespread, perhaps, is the theory that Shinto originated in the seventh century, when many shrines were incorporated in a co-ordinated court cult, regulated by *ritsuryō* 律令 law. In Inoue's introductory history of Shinto, Mori Mizue puts it as follows:

> The late seventh century saw the importation of a system of Chinese law, known in Japan as *ritsuryō*. This signalled the beginning of the classical period. Under this legal system, rule over the country was centralized to an unprecedented degree, leading also to a centralization of *kami* ritual under a special government office, the "Ministry of Kami Affairs" (*Jingikan* 神祇官). It is at this point that, for the first time, we can speak of "Shinto" as a religious system that is linked directly (if remotely) to the Shinto of today.[4]

According to this view, Shinto originated with the creation of the *ritsuryō* system and the Jingikan in the late seventh century. Mori makes an important distinction that is missing from the theological view by setting Shinto apart from the less specific phenomena ("*kami* worship") on which

3 Kuroda Toshio's article "Shinto in the history of Japanese religion" (Kuroda 1981) achieved canonical status almost as soon as it was published, at least among Western academics, and is included in a number of anthologies.

4 Inoue (2003: 13). The qualification "directly (if remotely)" was added by myself as the translator of this passage. The original (*Shintō: Nihon-umare no shūkyō shisutemu* 神道—日本生まれの宗教システム, Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1998: 29) simply reads "linked to the Shinto of today".

it drew. *Kami* worship can be traced back at least to the Yayoi period through excavations of ritual sites. Shinto, however, was something more consciously construed and more systematic than the local worship of local deities. Mori writes:

> It would certainly be an oversimplification to state that the Japanese islands first gave rise to *kami* cults of different types, which grew and developed naturally within local communities, and then gave birth to Shinto in some kind of natural progression. Rather, it was the Yamato court that, under the influence of Chinese notions of kingship, consciously chose sun worship as the linchpin of its ritual activities. [...] It was this consciously and deliberately constructed cult that provided the impetus leading to the emergence of Shinto as a religious system (Inoue 2003: 14).

In describing the origin of Shinto in this way, Mori reserves this term for the centralized cult of *kami* that was constructed by the Yamato court under the *ritsuryō* legal system. Central components of this Shinto are the institutionalized *kami* cult represented by the mytho-history recorded in *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), the central office of the Jingikan, the *ritsuryō* laws that regulated this institution's activities (called *jingiryō* 神祇令), and the network of shrines to which it related (as listed much later in the *Engi shiki* 延喜式, 927). At the same time, Mori also makes a clear choice as to what Shinto is *not*. Shinto is not an indigenous religion that "developed naturally within local communities". It may build on local *kami* worship, but it is more (or less, if one prefers) than simply a collective term for assorted *kami* beliefs, rituals and customs: namely, a politically inspired, institutionalized cultic system invented when the *ritsuryō* state was first created.

In contrast to the theological view, this theory trims Shinto down to a concrete body of myths, institutions and ritual practices whose origins can be traced (at least in part) through historical sources. At the same time, it blunts Kuroda's attack on Shinto's emic understanding of its own antiquity, by including the classical court cult of selected shrines in the definition of Shinto. Others have disputed this choice. Allan Grapard, for example, in writing about the *Engi shiki* and its register of shrines, argues that "it would be dangerous to refer to the shrines listed in the Procedures' register as symbolising what we today call Shinto" (Grapard 2002: 230). By explaining the court's policy towards shrines in terms of Shinto, Grapard argues, political, military, social and economic issues are obscured; moreover, such a move tempts us to ignore the reach of Buddhism in the period when this policy was developed.

Another problem is the question of continuity. Of course, measuring continuity is not a hard science, but it is worth asking whether enough of the classical court cult of *ritsuryō* times survived to form the backbone of later Shinto. Not all agree with Mori, whose account would suggest that this was indeed the case. In another article, Grapard (1988) argues that rather than in the classical court cult, Shinto's origins must be sought in the

system of twenty-two shrines that replaced this cult in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries.[5] Inoue Hiroshi (2006, ch. 1), on the other hand, points at the twelfth-century network of provincial "first shrines" (*ichinomiya* 一宮) as the source from which Shinto sprang. The shrines that were involved in these networks, and also the rituals performed there, differed substantially from those of the classical court cult. In so far as we can speak of a degree of continuity, this existed only on a rather abstract level, as the persistent idea that worship of shrines throughout the land in some form or other was an important responsibility of the court.

This idea in itself, however, was not enough to give rise to the notion that Shinto is an autonomous tradition, distinguishable (though not necessarily separate) from other "Ways" such as Buddhism and Confucianism. After all, royal worship of local or cadastral deities was a common feature of court ritual in many East and South-East Asian states, and yet, as noted above, few of these saw the development of a comparable nativistic tradition. The centralization of shrine worship in itself was not enough to produce the concept of Shinto. For this to occur, there had to be some consciously held idea that in some way or other, the universal teachings of India and China applied to Japan in some special way – or, even more boldly, that they did not fully apply.

Shinto *vs.* Buddhism: Takatori Masao

A pioneering work that focuses on the origins of exactly this idea is *Shintō no seiritsu* 神道の成立 (The emergence of Shinto, 1979), by the ethnologist Takatori Masao (1926–81). In Takatori's view, Shinto originated not with the *ritsuryō* system in the late seventh century, but a full century later. Takatori points to the famous Dōkyō 道鏡 incident as a defining moment. In the 760s Empress Shōtoku fell under the spell of the monk Dōkyō, and under his influence she implemented numerous Buddhist policies; among them was the building of a shrine-temple (*jingūji* 神宮寺) at the ancestral fane of the imperial line, the shrine of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu in Ise. Shortly after she attempted to have Dōkyō appointed as her successor to the throne; but established aristocratic clans resisted this unprecedented step (which would destroy the principle of hereditary power that applied also to their own lineages), and after Shōtoku's death in 770 Dōkyō soon lost his foothold at the court. Dōkyō's "coup" sent shock waves through the system that took generations to settle. After Shōtoku's death, great changes occurred at the court in an atmosphere of general upheaval and unrest. Most dramatically, there was a shift in the imperial line: Shōtoku was the last in Tenmu's line, and with the next emperor, Kōnin (r. 770–781), the throne returned to the lineage of Tenchi, Tenmu's older brother. In connection with this dynastic shift, the capital was moved first to Nagaoka and then to Heiankyō (Kyoto), both during the rule of Kōnin's

5 Richard Bowring (2005) likewise rejects the option of describing the classical court cult as Shinto, and dates "the emergence of Shinto" to the late thirteenth century.

successor, Kanmu (r. 781–806). Takatori sees the emergence of Shinto as a product of this chaotic period of change.

A number of innovations and experiments in court ceremonial suggest that the new leaders of the court were interested in strengthening imperial ritual and, in Dōkyō's wake, especially ritual of a non-Buddhist nature. In Tang China it was customary for princes who became incumbents to the throne under unusual circumstances to visit the shrine of the imperial ancestors (Ch. *zongmiao* 宗廟) in person. Worship at this shrine was one of the two main pillars of imperial ritual at the Tang court; the other consisted of rites honouring heaven (Ch. *jiaosi* 郊祀). In Japan, Shōtoku's successors Kōnin and Kanmu both sent their crown princes to Ise (in 778 and 791), and the shrine temple that had been built there was first moved (772) and then dismantled (780) after Dōkyō's fall from power. As another innovation, the *jiaosi* ritual was performed twice during Kanmu's reign (in 785 and 787). In Takatori's view, these events highlight a renewed interest in Chinese rituals that could strengthen the imperial succession, leading to a reinterpretation of the Ise shrines as the *zongmiao* (Jap. *sōbyō*) of the Japanese emperors. The removal of Buddhist elements from Ise served to prepare the shrines for this role; so did the detailed codification of Ise ritual shortly afterwards (in *Kōtaijingū gishikichō* 皇太神宮儀式帳 and *Toyuke-gū gishikichō* 豊受宮儀式帳, both submitted to the court in 804). Takatori points to these events as a decisive moment in the emergence of Shinto. It was at this time, he argues, that Confucian/Daoist (that is, explicitly non-Buddhist) ideas and rites from the Chinese tradition came to be applied to Japanese *kami*, turning these *kami* into the "religious foundation on which the secular order of the state was based" (p. 161).

Takatori, then, sees the emergence of Shinto as the result of a policy to curb the influence of Buddhism in the aftermath of the Dōkyō incident. Its intention was to develop a Japanese version of the non-Buddhist Chinese state ceremonial that served to limit the power of Buddhism in Tang China. This policy inspired what has since been termed *shinbutsu kakuri* 神仏隔離 – the isolation of imperial shrine ritual from Buddhism, which began with the removal of the Ise shrine temple in 772.

Takatori further points out that this policy of isolation was closely related to the growing influence of another leading principle in the Chinese ritual codes: that of maintaining a strict separation of the auspicious (*ji* 吉) and the inauspicious (*xiong* 凶). Overlapping with a Buddhist concern for isolating the purity (*jing* 浄) of the Buddhist realm from all kinds of impurity (*hui* 穢), the principle that impurity should be avoided as inauspicious, termed *imi* 忌み, rapidly became an all-pervading aspect of court protocol in the first decades of the ninth century. Takatori argues that because of Buddhism's dealings with impurity (notably death), a Buddhist presence at rituals of state came to be seen as "inauspicious". This added further urgency to the notion that the imperial shrine at Ise should be shielded from all contact with Buddhism. When the Ise *zongmiao* cult combined with a practice of tabooing the impure as inauspicious, Takatori maintains, this laid the foundation for the appearance of Shinto.

Comparing Takatori's theory on the origin of Shinto with the more standard view formulated by Mori, it is striking that both point at Chinese-inspired court policies as the direct cause of Shinto's emergence. Both reject the view that ancient *kami* worship constituted Shinto; rather, they see Shinto as the result of a process of institutionalization under the aegis of the court. Whereas Mori sees the centralization of shrine ritual by the court as sufficient to mark the beginning of Shinto, Takatori argues that the transformation of Ise into a Chinese-style imperial fane, the isolation of this fane from Buddhism, and the practice of tabooing the impure (reverberating with the policy of isolation from Buddhism) were decisive. Three issues stand out in Takatori's thesis on Shinto's emergence: imperial ritual, Buddhism, and the tabooing of impurity as inauspicious. Only the first of these figures in Mori's account.

There are, however, several weaknesses in Takatori's argument. First of all, he does not elaborate on the narrow scope of the policy of isolating Buddhism from imperial *kami* ritual. As shown by Satō Masato (1986), the tabooing of Buddhism was a rule of protocol that for most of the ninth century was specifically and exclusively limited to Ise. Only with the compilation of *Jōgan shiki* 貞観式 in 871 was this practice extended to the court itself,[6] and it was not until after this that it began to have an impact on court ceremonial. *Jōgan shiki* banned the performance of Buddhist rites at all court and provincial offices in the central Kinai region for the duration of the *daijōe* 大嘗会, the first autumn offering in the reign of a new emperor; also, monks and nuns were forbidden from entering the palace during a range of other *kami* rituals. From this modest beginning, the notion that Buddhism must be tabooed on days of *kami* ritual became an established principle of court life, with many practical consequences that can be traced in the diaries of court aristocrats. Satō argues that this practice was transmitted in painstaking detail throughout the medieval period, and he shows that it was reinstituted with renewed force in the Edo period.

Yet, when one considers the broader context of this practice, isolation was clearly outshone by processes of incorporation. The isolation of imperial *kami* ritual from Buddhism was part of the classical court cult led by the Jingikan; but by the time the *Jōgan shiki* had been compiled, this cult was already in rapid decline. Its central rite was the distribution of imperial offerings in spring (*toshigoi* or *kinensai* 祈年祭), but already in 893 (some twenty years after the enactment of the *Jōgan shiki*) the court had given up its attempts to coax or force shrines into collecting these offerings.[7] The

6 *Shiki* 式 were detailed regulations specifying the more general *ritsuryō* laws. *Jōgan shiki* was a revision of the older *Kōnin shiki* 弘仁式 (compiled in 820), and was itself to be replaced by *Engi shiki* (compiled in 927).

7 In 855, the court dropped its demand that priests from the whole country come to the capital to collect these offerings, and arranged for them to be distributed at provincial head offices. By 875, this arrangement had to be extended even to shrines in the Home Provinces. In 893, when it was clear that these measures had little effect, the court reverted to the original law, but without enforcing it. At this point, the system of *kinensai* offerings became a dead letter.

tenth century saw the further decline of the Jingikan cult and, finally, its replacement by a new system (already mentioned above) under which the court sponsored twenty-two shrines, all closely connected to the imperial and Fujiwara houses. Soon, this system was combined with a network of "first shrines" (*ichinomiya*) and "provincial shrines" (*sōja* 総社) that extended throughout Japan's sixty-six provinces.

As Grapard (1988) has pointed out, all of the twenty-two shrines were encapsulated in Buddhism, though the Ise shrines less obviously so than the others. Among them, Iwashimizu Hachimangūji, Gionsha and Kitano Tenmangū were in fact Buddhist temples (*miyadera* 宮寺), and all the others (with the exception of Ise) had official shrine temples where monks dedicated themselves to steeping the gods in the Buddhist Dharma, most typically by exposing them to sutra recitations. Even at Ise, whose shrine temple had been dismantled in 780, sutra recitations and other Buddhist rites were offered to the Ise deities at a growing number of nearby temples (Sengūin, Sekidera, Rengeji/Daijingū Hōrakuji, and others), which in practice performed the same function as shrine temples elsewhere. The situation was no different for "first" and "provincial shrines". As argued by Hagiwara (1975) and Uejima (2004), shrines were designated as such to facilitate centralized Buddhist worship, notably the reading of sutras for the assembled deities of the province, often at *jingūji* temples. The "enshrinement" (*kanjō* 勧請) of all the main deities of a province at a convenient location was based on a Buddhist rationale, namely that of spreading the Dharma by edifying the spirits of the land.

Takatori's theory on the origin of Shinto has been overshadowed by the work of Kuroda, who fails to be impressed by the isolation practices emphasized by Takatori. While conceding Takatori's point that it was "during these ninth century reforms that court Shinto ceremonies and [the] Ise Shrine's organization were formalized", Kuroda objects that "nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that Shinto was perceived as an independent religion in opposition to Buddhism at this time" (Kuroda 1981: 8). To that charge, one could reply that this is hardly what Takatori argues. In my view, the importance of the fact that Buddhism was tabooed in some imperial rituals cannot be overstated. This was a concrete procedure, consistently maintained both at the court and at the Ise shrines, which had many practical consequences for all who came into contact with court protocol. Although isolation was never intended to halt the incorporation of shrines in Buddhist complexes, it did create the need to maintain a workable distinction between *kami* ritual and Buddhist ritual. A telling example of the problems that this distinction created is the case of the Iwashimizu Hachimangūji, a temple (*miyadera*) where the main object of worship was Hachiman, who was revered as the deified spirit of Emperor Ōjin and therefore an imperial ancestor on a par with Amaterasu in Ise. In spite of the fact that this temple was one of the twenty-two court-sponsored shrines, the shrine monks of Iwashimizu could not partake in *kami* rituals at the court during the first seven days of the New Year, due to the taboo on Buddhism that was maintained during this period. Ceremonial procedures of this kind created a tension between the realm of imperial

kami and Buddhism. Without this tension, which manifested itself concretely in countless practical situations that triggered ritual isolation, a Shinto discourse could hardly have originated.

Jindō *vs.* jingi

More convincing is Kuroda's objection to another weakness of Takatori's thesis: his uncritical use of the term Shinto. One of Kuroda's central points is that the word *shintō* 神道 (or rather *jindō*, as it must have been read at the time) was never used to refer to the classical body of court ceremonial. He shows that the term was used to denote the realm of *kami* as a part of a Buddhist world view, and that it did not, at this stage, carry the meaning of a separate "Way". Kuroda traces this word from its first occurrence in the *Nihon shoki* through medieval texts to modern times, and posits that the term changed meaning radically over time. Whatever it may have meant in the classical *Nihon shoki*, in medieval times it was used exclusively to designate *kami* as manifestations of buddhas. In Kuroda's view, *shintō* (*jindō*) was, in other words, a Buddhist term.

Yoshida Kazuhiko (1996) has since offered strong arguments to suggest that this was already the case in the classical period.[8] He points out that the word came to Japan as part of a Chinese rhetoric used to describe the "taming" of local gods and demons by Buddhist monks. Elaborating on Yoshida's findings, I have argued elsewhere that throughout the classical and medieval periods it was used almost exclusively in Buddhist contexts, from documents of shrine temples to intentions (*keibyaku* 啓白) read as part of the ritual offering of Buddhist scriptures, images, or other objects to the *kami*.[9] The term *jindō* referred to *kami* not in a neutral sense, but as deities in need of Buddhist domestication. The pattern of the word's usage would seem to support this hypothesis. After the *Nihon shoki* (where the word is also used in a Buddhist context), the term *jindō* was systematically avoided in the setting of the court cult. The standard term for the gods in this cult was not *jindō* but *jingi* 神祇, "gods of heaven and earth", a word with solid roots in the Chinese classics, that was ideally suited to express the hierarchical relationship between the heavenly deities of the court and the earthly deities of conquered lands – a distinction that was central to the court cult. The words *jingi* and *jindō* were both used to refer to deities and spirits, but each of these terms belonged to a different discourse. By designating *kami* as *jingi*, they were placed in an imperial hierarchical system. When the same deities were called *jindō*, they were subjected to a

8 Yoshida shows that the rhetoric employed by *jingūji* drew heavily on Chinese biographies of famous monks (*Gaosengzhuan* 高僧伝, *Xu Gaosengzhuan* 続高僧伝). In 1950, Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉 proposed that at least the first of these biographies was used as reference material for the editing of the *Nihon shoki*'s account of the introduction of Buddhism to Japan (*Nihon koten no kenkyū* 日本古典の研究 vol. 2: 93 ff.).

9 For an analysis of *jindō* as a Buddhist term in the classical period, see Teeuwen (2002).

Buddhist regime of taming and improvement. Because calling a *kami* a *jindō* subjected it to Buddhist control, the term was ill-fitted for official use; it described the *kami* as potentially harmful and stressed their powerlessness when confronted with the Dharma. Seen in this light, the rise of the *jindō* cult did not occur at the expense of Buddhism, as Takatori's analysis would suggest, but at the expense of the court cult of *jingi*. Dōkyō and Shōtoku were not *shintō*'s worst enemies; they were champions of *jindō*. The regime of isolation that emerged in their wake marked the start (or, if one prefers, restart) of a *jingi* cult, not of Shinto.

The mere existence of *jindō* as an alternative view on *kami* had an adverse effect on this *jingi* cult. As Buddhist ritual came to dominate the ceremonial calendar of the court in the late Nara period (710–84), the definition of *kami* as *jindō* undermined the court's cult of *jingi*. The Dōkyō incident is the best illustration of this. Dōkyō's career showed once again how vulnerable already beleaguered clan privileges were. The principle that power was the hereditary prerogative of the descendants or protégés of specific clan deities constituted the very foundation for that power, and this principle was closely tied up with the *jingi* discourse. In the *jindō* discourse, however, there were only two kinds of *kami*: enemies of the Dharma and servants of the Dharma. In either case, the particular powers of *kami*, connected to a specific clan and a specific territory, were undermined through their exposure to the universal Dharma. The building of the Ise shrine temple by Dōkyō, and its removal directly after Shōtoku's death, mark a turning point in the struggle between the *jingi* and *jindō* conceptions of *kami* power.

Shinbutsu kakuri or isolation was a kind of truce that emerged from this struggle: at least some imperial ceremonies should be kept out of reach of the relativizing powers of Buddhism. It was extended to the court at a time when the *jingi* system was still functioning, but clearly, the *shinbutsu kakuri* truce was a victory for the *jindō* rather than the *jingi* camp, if we may put it in those terms. This is confirmed by the demise of the *jingi* cult in the course of the ninth century. Parallel to the *jingi* cult's fall, its *jindō* rival expanded rapidly. In 850, for example, the court ordained seventy monks with the specific task of exposing the same number of "kami of prime importance" (*myōjin* 名神) to the Dharma by means of sutra recitations.[10] The Jingikan itself reached its nadir in 1177 when it burnt down; it was never to be restored to its former glory. Simultaneously, the court "adopted" shrine temples by granting their monks official ordinations and recognizing their holdings. Its policy was to retain the *jingi* cult, at least in principle and on paper, while at the same time incorporating the *jindō* cult in the dominant Buddhist apparatus that had *chingo kokka* 鎮護国家, the protection of the state and its ruling houses, as its main task. The systems of twenty-two shrines and of provincial shrines, which replaced the classical *jingi* cult in the mid-Heian period, were both results of this development.

At a later stage, Shinto was to develop from this Buddhist cult of *jindō*, while feeding on the tension between this cult and the feeble remains of the

10 *Montoku jitsuroku* 文徳実録, entry Kashō 3 (850)/5/9.

jingi cult. At its roots was a latent conflict between imperial (and clan) rule based on the *jingi* hierarchy on the one hand, and Buddhism's universal Dharma, with its potential to overturn this hierarchy, on the other.

Jindō in other parts of Asia

Before addressing the further development of the *jindō* cult into Shinto, it may be useful to consider possible Asian parallels to this cult. I will here bypass the Chinese origins of the *jindō* discourse as explored by Yoshida Kazuhiko; rather, I will to look beyond China at another case of interaction between Buddhism and a local cult. In his book *Himalayan Dialogue*, Stan Royal Mumford (1989) portrays the interaction between Tibetan Buddhists and Gurung shamans in a valley on the Nepali side of the Tibetan border. The Tibetans are late settlers in this valley, where political power is firmly in the hands of Gurung clans, called the Kle and the Khrô.

Rituals that Mumford terms "shamanic" form a central element of the Gurung political order. The Kle and Khrô clans are defined as being of divine origin; the Kle ancestor was a bird who descended from the Land of the Gods to a mountain peak, while the Khrô ancestors came up from the underworld. By intermarrying, these two clans secure rain from the sky above and crops from the soil below. The clan legends are recited on the occasion of an annual harvest celebration that takes place in a sacred grove, at the foot of a large tree. The roots of the tree emerge from the underworld (Khrô territory), while its highest branches are occupied by the bird ancestor of the Kle. In this grove, the shamans present offerings of grain and, as the ritual's climax, the heart of a living deer. After the heart has been offered, the rest of the meat is roasted and shared by the cult members in a communal meal, while the shamans recite the origins of the ritual, the sacred grove, and the Gurung community whose prosperity the sacrifice ensures. A vision of the ancient harmony of the world, to be maintained through sacrifice, is thus combined with origin myths about the local community and its hereditary rulers.

This is an example of a non-Buddhist "local cult" existing on the margins of the Buddhist and Hindu cultures of Tibet and Nepal. Parallels with pre-Buddhist Japanese cults are many and obvious. Also in Japan, royal legitimacy was defined in terms of divine descent. As the descendant of the gods of heaven the king maintained a reciprocal balance in the exchange between the deities and the community, and thus ensured timely rains and an abundant harvest. This was done through ceremonies offering rice and other products, and in rituals that included the recitation of origins and that were concluded by a communal meal.

In the Gurung territory that Mumford portrays, the Tibetan immigrants were forced to take part in the harvest celebration by contributing grain to the communal meal, and by sacrificing two chickens in their own village: one to the gods above, and one to the serpent deities of the underworld. Mumford describes how these circumstances determined the agenda of the lamas in the Tibetan villages. The lamas' first priority was to "tame" the

local deities, so that the so-called "red offering" of chickens could be replaced by a "white" (vegetarian) offering. The next step was to "transmute" elements of local practice by redefining and reclassifying them in a Buddhist manner. Existing practices were not displaced, but given a new, Buddhist meaning. Buddhist classifications of deity types were applied to local deities, and through this act of classification their individuality and localness were weakened. A similar strategy of universalization was applied to the offerings, to the cultic community, and to the aims of the ritual: the offerings took on cosmic dimensions, the community in whose name they were presented was expanded to include "all sentient beings", and the aim of the sacrifice was redefined as the universal attainment of enlightenment. In a similar development, the universal teaching of karmic retribution substituted the particular reciprocity of give and take between the community and the local deities. The logic of karma dictates that even the gods are subject to its universal rules, and that even they can fall into hell if they misbehave. Through such discursive means, the shaman's concern for maintaining a cosmic balance through ritual exchanges with local deities was overlain with a future-oriented programme of merit acquisition.

In Japan, the "taming" and "transmutation" of local deities was the primary concern of the Buddhist *jindō* cult. This process started in the same way, by pointing out that local deities and clan deities are subject to karma.[11] Due to the more profound impact of Buddhism at the Japanese court, the effects of this development became much clearer than among the Gurung. In Japan, the universalization and loss of individuality of deities soon reached a stage at which leading clans felt that their traditional status as divine rulers was threatened. By relativizing the deities who created the royal order, Nara Buddhism threatened to undermine the principle of hereditary power in a process that culminated in the Dōkyō incident. At the same time, the court used the same universalizing powers of Buddhism to convert clan shrines into court temples, at times provoking local protests that took the form of violence (*tatari* 祟り) attributed to the *kami*.[12] Mumford shows us a setting in which the development of a *jindō*-type cult could be a likely natural outcome, and his work on Buddhism in a Gurung valley allows us to glean some of the structural conditions that helped produce such a cult in Japan.

Mumford describes a region where Buddhism is the weaker party in its meeting with a local clan cult. As a setting where Buddhism was dominant, the fifteenth-century Mon kingdom based in Pegu in Burma presents itself.[13] Here, the Buddhist king Dhammacetī (or Dhammazedi, r. 1472–92), otherwise known for "purifying the Sangha" by re-importing Sri-Lankan Theravāda to Burma, established a list of thirty-six "stream-winning gods"

11 See Teeuwen and Rambelli (2003: 7–31).

12 An example is the repeated burning of Kudara no Ōdera (the later Daianji) by "the *kami* of Kobe" in the seventh century, as reported in *Daianji garan engi narabi ni ruki shizaichō* 大安寺伽藍縁起并流記資財帳.

13 I rely here on Shorto (1967), while taking into account the critical remarks made in Brac de la Perrière (1996).

(Skt. *srota-āpanna*, Jap. *shudaon* 須陀洹 or *yoru* 預流) and made offerings to them to ensure the safety of the state. Most of the gods in this list were spirits of trees located at Buddhist sites, a fact that suggests that they had already been incorporated into Buddhism before Dhammacetī's time. The title "stream-winners" applies to practitioners who have embarked on the first of four stages towards enlightenment, and thus places the gods on the lowest level of the Buddhist hierarchy.[14] Their number, thirty-six, reflects Buddhist cosmology. The Sahā world that we inhabit is ruled from the palace of Indra (Jap. Taishakuten 帝釈天) in Trāyastriṃśa heaven (Jap. Tōriten 忉利天), which is located on the summit of Mount Sumeru. Four peaks surround Indra's palace, each accommodating eight devas. Taken together there are thirty-two devas in this heaven, who assist Indra in ruling the Sahā realm. Dhammacetī's thirty-six stream-winning gods represented Indra's thirty-two assistants, plus the four Dharma-protecting deities or deva-kings (Skt. *lokapāla*, Jap. *shitennō* 四天王) who are usually placed lower down on Mount Sumeru. The same cosmology was also applied to Mon administration, which divided the realm into thirty-two districts and four provinces. Here, then, we find a royal cult of the "cadastral gods" of the realm that was incorporated in Buddhism both through association with stupas and other Buddhist sites, and through sophisticated assimilation with Buddhist cosmology. The cult identified the king's rule over his realm with Indra's rule over the Sahā world.

Although our knowledge of this Mon cult is limited, we recognize many aspects of the *jindō* cult. Local deities associated with the land were domesticated and emptied of their particularity through their categorization as stream-winners, Trāyastriṃśa devas, or Dharma-protectors. In the process, control over these deities was transferred from local elites to the king, whose position was defined in universal rather than local terms – as a manifestation of Indra who rules over the Sahā world with the assistance of the thirty-six deities of the realm. Here, we find a much more advanced integration of local deities in Buddhist cosmology than was achieved in Japan. The king associated himself so closely with Buddhism that there was little room for a *jingi*-type cult to develop. Yet, as we shall see below, even in Burma there remained a tension between the subdued violence of local deities and their control by the Buddha and the king, and this tension had at least the potential to develop into a religious identity of its own.

From *jindō* to Shinto

Whereas the notion of local deities as *jindō* would have been immediately recognizable both among Mumford's Gurung and in the Mon kingdom, the isolation of imperial deities from Buddhism as *jingi* appears to have been a development peculiar to Japan. This fact is often presented as proof of Shinto's consistent strength as Japan's "ethnic religion", but if we consider Shinto as a product of history rather than as the indwelling essence of Japaneseness, such a theological statement does little to enlighten us.

14 The four stages are stream-winner, once-returner, never-returner and arhat.

Rather, it would seem that the profound impact of Buddhism, combined with continued clan rule, contributed to this outcome. Being less Buddhist than Burma but more Buddhist than China, Japan developed its own balance between the local and the universal. The tension between *jindō* and *jingi* may be understood as one arena in which this balancing act played itself out.

Of course, neither the realm of *jingi* nor that of *jindō* constituted Shinto, if we understand this term to refer to a self-conscious "indigenous religion". With that phrase, I mean a tradition that understands itself as particular to Japan, and that defines itself in contradistinction to, or even in opposition to, Buddhism and, later, Confucianism. At what point in time did such a notion arise, and where did it position itself on the *jingi–jindō* axis?

Traditionally, Shinto scholars have pointed at Ise or Watarai Shinto, which appeared in the second half of the Kamakura period (1185–1333), as the first school of Shinto thought. There is some justification for this view, since a Watarai author was the first to use the word *jindō* in a clearly sectarian sense. Watarai Ieyuki 度会家行 (1256–*c*.1356) pioneered the use of this word in the titles of texts (*Jindō kan'yō* 神道簡要, 1317, and *Jindō gengi hen* 神道玄義篇, the last chapter of *Ruiju jingi hongen* 類聚神祇本源, 1320). In the latter, he singled out this term to designate the "house tradition" of his lineage (*jindō monpū* 神道門風).[15] This is all the more striking because the word was never given any attention in the rapidly growing corpus of *Nihon shoki* commentaries, handled mainly by the Urabe (Yoshida) at the court. When Ieyuki boldly adopted the Buddhist word *jindō* to flag his identity as an Ise priest, this signalled a new phase in the development from *jindō* to Shinto.

Under Ieyuki's influence, the word was taken up by the Tendai monk Jihen 慈遍 (dates unknown), who coined the phrase *Jindō taii* 神道大意 ("The essence of *jindō*", 1340).[16] Later, it became customary for the heads of the Yoshida lineage to write short texts with this same title, causing this format to develop into a genre of its own. Such texts summed up the meaning of *jindō* (by this time furnished with the new, sectarian reading *shintō*) in a few pages, and in the process they clearly established the term as the designation for a distinct realm of knowledge. Jihen, who like the Yoshida was of Urabe stock, took the first step in this development. He not only organized information about Japan's *kami* (and, especially, the Ise shrines) under the label of *jindō*, but also made a conscious effort to redefine the relationship between *jindō* and Buddhism. In his work, *jindō*

15 *Shintō Taikei* vol. Ise Shintō jō: 555. On pp. 567–8, Ieyuki juxtaposes *jindō* to *bukke* 仏家 ("Buddhist houses"), and defines *jindō* as a "profession" (*shoku*/*shiki* 職), once more employing the term to describe his position as a shrine priest.

16 Jihen's *Toyoashihara jinpū waki* 豊葦原神風和記 (1340) sets out with a section carrying this title, followed by a list of quotations from what Jihen regarded as canonical scriptures (*Jindō taii yōbun* 神道大意要文, "Essential passages on the essence of Shinto"). *Shintō Taikei* vol. Tendai Shintō jō: 165–72. Note that *toyoashihara* refers to Japan, and *jinpū* (or *kamikaze*) to Ise; this title aptly illustrates the conflation (*wa*) of Japan and Ise that is a central feature of the Ise literature.

unambiguously took on the meaning of a distinct Way and teaching, which "all people of this land, high or low, must know".[17]

With this, the stage was set for the idea of an autonomous Shinto. Yet we must wait another six decades before the notion of "Shinto schools" makes its first unambiguous appearance in the sources. Even though it is common practice in modern scholarship to speak of "Shinto schools" (e.g. Ise Shinto, Ryōbu Shinto, Sannō Shinto, Miwa Shinto) dating from the Kamakura period, no sources exist to suggest that the texts and thinkers we now categorize as such actually functioned or were understood as Shinto schools in their own time. In fact, in spite of Ieyuki's vague notion of a *jindō* "house tradition" and Jihen's more explicit *Jindō taii*, neither of these thinkers established an institutionalized lineage that transmitted Shinto teachings and rituals in a formal setting. Such lineages are not mentioned in the historical record before the early fifteenth century. The expression "Shinto lineages" (*shintō-ryū* 神道流; see below for the unvoiced reading) makes its first appearance in a record of a lecture on the *Nihon shoki* by another Tendai monk, the rather obscure Ryōhen 良遍 (dates unknown). This lecture was delivered in 1419. Here, Ryōhen mentions the existence of "many lineages of Shinto" (*shintō no taryū* 神道の多流). Strikingly, he describes these lineages as follows:

> Common folks both from the eastern and the western provinces have stolen the treasures of the traditions of the emperors, distorted them with their own foolish conjectures, and borrowed Buddhist ceremonies; these they call the many lineages of Shinto.[18]

Ryōhen points to the Shingon complexes of Daigoji Sanbōin and Tōji as important centres of such lineages, while making it clear that he prefers the lineages of the Ise *saishu* 祭主 (the Ōnakatomi), and of the Hirano priests (the Yoshida), whom he describes as imperial tutors. Lists of four to twelve Shinto lineages occur in slightly later sources.[19] Furthermore, a number of lineages (not necessarily coinciding with the medieval lists) surfaced in the Edo period, handing down transmission documents (*kechimyaku* 血脈) that, in some cases, suggest a historical origin in the fourteenth century.[20] As already suggested by the use of *kechimyaku* lineage documents, these *ryū* were organized as Buddhist Dharma lineages. They collected, created and

17 *Shintō Taikei* vol. Tendai Shintō jō: 228.

18 *Nihon shoki maki daiichi kikigaki* 日本書紀巻第一聞書, in *Shintō Taikei* vol. Tendai Shintō jō: 518.

19 Urabe Kanekuni mentioned four lineages in his *Kanekuni hyakushu kashō* 兼邦百首哥抄 (*c.*1486): the *shintō-ryū* of Shōtoku Taishi, Yoshida Urabe, Kōbō Daishi and Miwa. A late medieval text with the title *Shintō hiki* 神道秘記 (preserved at Shinpukuji in Nagoya) gives a number of twelve, but lists only nine: Ise-ryū, Miwa-ryū, Yoshida-ryū, Atsuta, Susanowo-ryū, Hachiman, Mimuro (Ninnaji), Suwa and Goryū. Other names of lineages that occur in late medieval sources include Kanpaku-ryū and Tsukuba-ryū; it is likely that there were more (Itō 1999: 92–3).

20 These matters have been studied in most detail by Itō Satoshi. For a brief overview of his main findings, see Itō (1999).

transmitted doctrinal and ritual knowledge through formalized initiations (*kanjō* 灌頂), which granted their recipients permission to teach and perform what had been revealed to them.

In the *shintō-ryū* of the Muromachi period, we encounter the first example of a body of teachings and rituals that was referred to by its transmitters as, quite literally, Shinto. The scope of this Shinto was rather small. Arguably, its core consisted of a modest number of Dharma lineages that transmitted a more or less coherent corpus of "knowledge related to the *kami*". Strikingly, large swathes of what we today regard as medieval Shinto (most notably, the so-called Sannō Shinto of Mount Hiei) are not included in these lists, which, on the other hand, feature many *ryū* of which we know little more than their name. However, not all pioneers of Shinto considered themselves part of such lineages. Ryōhen, who gives us the first reference to *shintō-ryū*, applied the term to Shingon lineages based at Sanbō in and Tōji[21] and rejected them as frauds. He does not identify his own Shinto teachings as a *shintō-ryū*, nor does he refer to a *kechimyaku* to lend his own teachings authority, or mention a *kanjō* initiation in which these teachings are transmitted. Rather, he claims to belong to the "house" (*tōke* 当家) that guards the original transmission of Izanagi and Izanami, passed on within the imperial line.[22] As a member of this "house", he has not stolen the imperial secrets, but simply inherited them. While being generous with general information about this "house tradition", he also makes frequent references to "oral transmissions" (*kuden* 口伝) whose contents are not revealed. Rather than as a Dharma-lineage, Ryōhen presents his knowledge of Shinto as a house tradition with firm roots in the innermost core of the court: the imperial line itself.

It is striking that the unvoiced reading *shintō* first occurs in the same text that also makes first mention of *shintō-ryū*. Once again underlining the centrality of this word, Ryōhen opened his lecture by discussing its reading and its meaning:

> On the name 神道: we do not read this *jindō* but *shintō*, without voicing, to indicate its straightforward (*sugu* 直) character. Straightforward means that it is just as it is (*ari no mama* 有ノ任).[23]

This peculiar reading, he continues, reflects the "deepest meaning" of Shinto, which is as unadorned as the Ise shrines and their rituals. Being clear and transparent (*sunde* 清ムテ), the term's unvoiced pronunciation represents the "wondrous principle of original, innate existence" (*honrai honnu no myōri* 本来本有ノ妙理) – a term denoting the inherent presence of enlightenment that antecedes (and therefore surpasses) all Buddhist practice. The reading *shintō*, then, was consciously designed to underline the notion that Shinto represents the fundamental principle of innate

21 Tōji was often used to refer to Shingon as a whole, rather than only the Tōji temple in Kyoto.
22 *Shintō Taikei* vol. Tendai Shintō jō: 518.
23 *Shintō Taikei* vol. Tendai Shintō jō: 517.

"original enlightenment" (*hongaku* 本覚), as it is made manifest in the Ise shrines. It contrasted this principle in a sweeping way to Buddhism, which was given a derivative, secondary role as a body of practice leading to "acquired enlightenment" (*shikaku* 始覚).[24] In itself, this notion was not new; it reflected the rise of *hongaku* thought within the Tendai school, and simply identified the realm of the *jindō* with this concept. Ryōhen's contribution consisted in his application of this idea to the word *jindō* itself, which he gave the new reading *shintō* to express better the word's esoteric meaning.[25] Moreover, by adopting the word as the overall designation for his teachings, and by giving it an unnatural reading charged with new significance, Ryōhen marked it as a new field of knowledge.

Ise, Japan and the emperor

What was this Shinto knowledge about? What were the main themes in the writings of such central figures as Watarai Ieyuki and Jihen, and in the *shintō-ryū* mentioned by Ryōhen – in that chronological order?

Ieyuki built his *jindō* on a long tradition of what we might call Ise studies, going back more than a century, to the late twelfth century. His *Ruiju jingi hongen*, in which he airs the notion of a *jindō* lineage for the first time, is an effort to survey and organize the rapidly expanding Ise literature, and to relate it to knowledge from other sources, ranging from the classical *jingi* canon (*Nihon shoki*, *Sendai kuji hongi* 先代旧事本紀, etc.) to Chinese and Buddhist accounts of the cosmogony. Ieyuki does not hesitate to juxtapose the *jingi* classics with a vast array of *jindō* texts (*Jinnō keizu* 神皇系図, *Tenchi reiki furoku* 天地麗気府録, *Yamato katsuragi hō zanki* 大和葛城宝山記, *Tenchi reigaku hisho* 天地霊覚秘書, and many others); the effect of this is that his sources all assume the same status of canonized authority.

It has been customary to divide this Ise literature into "Buddhist" and "Shinto" categories, termed, respectively, Ryōbu and Ise (or Watarai) Shinto. However, these categories are of little help in interpreting the texts that they aim to describe. The term Ryōbu Shinto focuses on the association of the Inner and Outer Shrines of Ise with the two mandalas (*ryōbu* 両部) of esoteric Buddhism. Yet, not all "Ryōbu" texts organize their argument around these two mandalas, which also appear in many of the texts that are categorized as Ise Shinto. Ieyuki does not make any

24 Within the confines of this article, it is not possible to explore the role of *hongaku* thought in early Shinto any further; it is discussed in some detail in Stone (1999). Moreover, William Bodiford (2006) makes an important point when he relates *hongaku* ideas to the structure of the mandala. As he points out, the logic of the mandala was employed to raise the local and the peripheral above the universal and the central. Mandala practice, then, was of central importance in elevating local deities and sites over distant buddhas and bodhisattvas. The role of mandala thought in the conception of Shinto is another topic that cannot be done justice in this article.

25 That is, if he was not simply passing on an existent transmission, which in fact seems quite likely.

distinction of this kind, suggesting that Ryōbu works were very much a part of the Ise tradition, even among the Watarai priests.[26] Nothing suggests that Ryōbu and Ise Shinto formed two separate schools or lineages, let alone two distinct bodies of thought; in fact, this categorization originated first in the seventeenth century, when Outer Shrine priests attempted to construe a non-Buddhist Shinto in line with the intellectual atmosphere of that age.[27]

Ieyuki's main message in *Ruiju jingi hongen* may be summarized in the following two statements:

1. *Jindō* is the undifferentiated state of monistic, primordial "chaos" (*konton* 混沌) from which all existence arises.
2. Japan, and Ise in particular, is the place where this original non-duality manifests itself in pure, yet physical form.

Ieyuki discusses the theme of original non-duality and its materialization in the form of Japan and Ise in mythical and doctrinal ways, by reinterpreting *jingi* myth in esoteric Buddhist terms. Throughout the text (and not least in the work's conclusion, the final chapter *Jindō gengi hen*), "Ryōbu" works such as *Reikiki* 麗気記 and *Yamato katsuragi hōzanki* are given a central place. The main argument is immediately apparent in Ieyuki's organization of the Ise material: from a general discussion of the origin of heaven and earth in primordial chaos, through the creation of Japan by the heavenly deities and the origins of the two Ise shrines, to an analysis of the non-dual essence of the shrines' concrete, physical forms – from the patterns of studs in their gables to their central pillars and, finally, the mirrors that they enshrine.

When we consider the concept of *jindō* in this context, it is important to note first of all what it does *not* mean. In spite of the word *jingi* in the work's title, references to official *jingi* ritual are conspicuously absent from Ieyuki's work. Clearly, his exploration of *jindō* has nothing at all to do with such court rituals as *toshigoi*, *tsukinami* 月次 and *kanname* 神嘗, which formed the core of official (*jingi*) Ise ceremonial. Also, in spite of the conflation of Ise with Japan, *jindō* does not emerge as a national shrine cult; in fact, Ieyuki has nothing to say about the worship of shrines other than those of Ise.

When we compare Ieyuki's Ise with the royal Mon cult, we notice a striking difference. The stream-winning deities of the Mon were subordinated to the power of the Buddha and the king through the intervening figure of Indra. Indra stood on the threshold between the deluded realm of Sahā below and the enlightened heavens that stretch out above his palace on Sumeru's summit. The local deities of the land were subservient to Indra, who is represented among men by the king; Indra in turn served the

26 Works from the Buddhist "Ryōbu" category feature prominently in a list of "ultimate texts (*saigoku no sho* 最極書) among the hundreds of secret volumes of the shrines" drawn up by Watarai Yukitada, a generation after Ieyuki (*Korō kujitsu den* 古老口実伝, 1299). Yukitada sets these texts apart as "essential works beneficial for this life and the next" (*Shintō Taikei* vol. Ise Shintō jō: 262).

27 See Scheid (2003).

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buddhas. In the Ise literature on which Ieyuki drew, there is a similar theme. Ieyuki quotes a number of texts in which the Ise shrines are identified with Mahābrahmā (Jap. Daibontennō 大梵天王). In a quotation from *Yamato Katsuragi hōzanki* (p. 430), for example, the Ise deity (here identified as the first of all *kami*, Ame no Minakanushi) is described as "the divine king of eternal compassion" and "the great ancestor of the Son of Heaven and the lord of the trichiliocosm", who in his palace "creates a hundred myriad suns and moons and a hundred myriad brahmā-devas in order to save the countless sentient beings". This deity Mahābrahmā dwells in the first of the four heavens in the realm of form (*rūpa-dhātu*, Jap. *shikikai* 色界), one level above Indra's palace, and performs a role similar to that of Indra, as lord of the Sahā realm. Yet, in the Ise literature his position is very different from that of Indra in the Mon cult. Mahābrahmā, in his guises as Shiki 尸捨 (Outer Shrine) and Kōmyō 光明 (Inner Shrine) Daibontennō, is said to represent the twin aspects of Mahāvairocana, the Dharma-body itself, as it makes itself manifest in the buildings and treasures of the two shrines. In contrast to the Mon strategy of *incorporating* the local in a universalizing system mediated by the king, the Ise literature *conflates* the local with the universal, and thus collapses the dualism that makes hierarchical distinctions possible.

This move has a profound effect on the conception of the king. When the royal ancestor becomes the creator of all life, this is a universalizing move that threatens to reduce the concept of kingship to an empty abstraction. This tendency is apparent in the following, twice-quoted passage from *Mizukashiwa sengū himon* 瑞柏仙宮秘文 (pp. 451, 561):

> The original wonder of producing transformations dwells in the Imperial Deity (*kōten* 皇天). "Imperial" is the name of the great emptiness without characteristics, the wondrous principle of the purity of heaven and earth. It refers to the Dharma-body. This is why the primordial, original deity of single *qi*[28] is called the Imperial Deity.

At first sight, this passage would seem to elevate emperorship to unprecedented heights. From another point of view, however, it reduces the word "imperial" to yet another epithet of the non-dual Dharma-body. Combined with the fact that Japan/Ise is redefined as the Dharma-realm,[29]

28 *Ikki gengen no ganjin* 一気玄々之元神, the deification of primordial chaos, when matter (Ch. *qi* 気) had not yet differentiated into Yin and Yang.

29 Ieyuki repeatedly stresses that Japan, as the "land of reed-plains" (*ashi-hara* 葦原), is the land of the syllable A (*aji* 阿字), and therefore of the Dharma-body's pure enlightenment (e.g., pp. 557–8). Cf. also the following passage quoted from *Tenchi reigaku hisho* (p. 446): "Great Japan (or: Dainichi's Original Land, *Daihongoku*/*Dainichi hongoku* 大日本国) is the Great Eight Islands. It is the land ruled by Ōhirume-muchi (that is, Amaterasu – MT); or, the eight-petalled lotus pedestal. It is the territory of the world of the palace of Dainichi, [as depicted in] the assemblies of the Kongō and Taizō mandalas. This means: Originally, the world is original enlightenment (*hongaku*). Originally, it is ignorance. In origin it is the Dharma-realm. The origin is that all sentient beings are original buddhas. The origin is the principle of the Way just as it is, in accord with Dharma (*hōnen dōri* 法然道理)".

the emperor's rule over Japan becomes a metaphor for the Dharma-body's reign in the Dharma-realm.

In *Jindō gengi hen*, Ise's imperial connection appears only in this highly abstract manner. It is striking that while serving as a court-ranked Ise priest, Ieyuki chose to redefine his shrine's imperial character in this way, rather than emphasize its ties with the court of the real emperor.[30] When we consider this "universalization" of the notion of the imperial in the light of Ieyuki's equally striking failure to make any mention of Ise *jingi* ritual, it becomes clear that his creation of a new *jindō* did not mark an attempt to recall the imperial *jingi* cult of classical times, nor was it a localist (or nativist) challenge to a universalist Buddhism. Rather, it was a first step in the development of *jindō* into an autonomous Dharma-lineage, solidly rooted in Buddhism. Ieyuki's position on *jindō*'s relation to Buddhism is made explicit in the last paragraph of the text, where he contrasts *jindō* (here appearing to mean "houses of shrine priests") to *bukke* 仏家, "Buddhist houses" (p. 567):

> Buddhist houses face towards wisdom endowed with meditation, and therefore they turn to the right when they circumambulate. *Jindō* [houses] face towards meditation endowed with wisdom, and therefore they turn to the left. When there are forms, there is a difference between buddhas and *kami*; when forms disappear, they share a single essence.

Here, the differentiation between *jindō* and Buddhists is similar to that between Bön and Buddhism in Tibet: they move around the same Dharma, but in opposite directions.

Jihen

If Ieyuki universalized emperorship into abstraction, Jihen's *Jindō taii* may be seen as an attempt to reintroduce some particularity into the discussion. Jihen, a Tendai monk of Urabe stock who moved in court circles, was engaged in a close dialogue both with Ieyuki and Ieyuki's fellow priest Tsuneyoshi 常昌 (1263–1339) in Ise, and quoted generously from a range of Ise texts (Kadoya 1997); yet the tenor of his work is very different from Ieyuki's. *Jindō taii* forms the introductory chapter of a longer work (*Toyoashihara jinpū waki*, see note 16), in which Ieyuki's references to the Dharma-body and original enlightenment are consistently replaced with a focus on Yin and Yang, heaven and earth, and the relation between lord and minister. *Jindō taii* stresses Ise's roots in the cosmogony and draws a straight line from that event to Amaterasu's establishment of the imperial

30 One may wonder how this choice relates to an earlier dispute (1296–97) between the Outer and Inner Shrines over the former's use of the character *kō* 皇 ("imperial") in its name. This dispute, in which Ieyuki played an active role, ended inconclusively. It amply demonstrates the great value that the Outer Shrine attached to its alleged right to call itself and its deity by the title "imperial". See Teeuwen (1996: 58–73).

dynasty. Imperial rule is the sole theme of the *Jindō taii*. The contrast with Ieyuki's *jindō* discourse becomes apparent in Jihen's definition of the term "imperial":

> The character "imperial" 皇 means "great" 大. The character "great" means "one person" 一人. Heaven is great, and earth is great; the man who is in accord with heaven and earth is also great. Because he is the one man of heaven and earth, he is called "the one person" … He is the only person who knows the hearts of the *kami* well, and who can master this Way [of heaven and earth]. This is [why the *kami*] protect the Hundred Kings. Truly great and brilliant are their works. This is why it is said that [the king] "relies on heaven and earth to maintain his life, and reveres the imperial ancestors to make their virtue apparent".[31]

It is not impossible to read this section to mean that all human beings can aspire to become "great", but the emphasis on the imperial lineage in the passages surrounding this explanation of the term "imperial" suggests strongly that Jihen had a more restricted view. In the final section of the work (pp. 226–7), Jihen explains that his interest in *jindō* was due both to his disillusionment with the state of Buddhism, and to his shock at Emperor Go-Daigo's exile to Oki in 1332. He finds in *jindō* a pre-Buddhist divine order that was destroyed when the Age of the Gods ended and people lost their original upright (*sunao* 淳) nature. Only after humanity had squandered its connection (*tsūriki* 通力) with the gods of heaven, did the gods "bequeath the *jindō* to the Buddha-Dharma" and cease to convey oracles. Buddhism, then, was introduced to Japan as a tool of the gods to extinguish the illusions that first arose when non-dual purity was invaded by impure plurality (pp. 222–3).

Even this brief foray into Jihen's work reveals a fundamental difference with Ieyuki's notion of *jindō*. Jihen finds himself in a differentiated world, where harmony depends on a connection with the realm of the gods (*jindō*). This connection is mediated by the "one man" who is their descendant (the emperor), who employs Buddhism to that end. Ieyuki, in contrast, uses the esoteric logic of collapsing identities, and for him, "emperor" is nothing but another word for the presence of the Dharma-body within a world that, while being karmic in nature, is ultimately identical with the Dharma-realm.

Perhaps as important as this difference, however, is the underlying continuity between Ieyuki's and Jihen's conceptions of *jindō*. *Jindō* is the original monistic essence that underlies reality, and that manifests itself in the form of Japan, Ise, and emperorship. It is *not* related to the old *jingi* system. There are no references to any of the rituals that defined the meaning of Ise in the classical court cult supervised by the Jingikan. Likewise, there is no mention of the *saiō* 斎王, the "dedicated princess" who represented the imperial house at Ise – an institution that was in an

31 *Shinto taikei* vol. Tendai Shintō jō: 166–7.

acute crisis in the late Kamakura period.[32] Instead, *jindō* was proposed as a new body of Buddhist knowledge: knowledge of a deeper truth, rooted in Japan's soil and manifest in condensed form in Ise. This knowledge concealed itself below the surface of conventional Buddhism in much the same way that esoteric teachings form the inner essence of exoteric ones. It was further personalized in the figure of the emperor, and rooted in a distant past (in fact, in the cosmogony itself) through lineage charts of gods and emperors, extracted with variable accuracy from such classical sources as *Nihon shoki* and *Sendai kuji hongi*. *Jindō* in this sense had little to do with the Jingikan, the systems of the twenty-two shrines and provincial shrines, or with popular shrine worship in general.

Shintō-ryū

The first *shintō-ryū* appear in the sources some decades after Ieyuki and Jihen. They developed as the emerging *jindō* discourse evolved into a formalized body of transmissions and initiations within Dharma lineages. The *shintō-ryū* were a late product of the culture of oral teachings and secret transmissions that had earlier caused the rise of original enlightenment thought itself (Stone 1999). They typically combined initiations into the *Nihon shoki* (*Nihongi kanjō* 日本紀灌頂) and the *Reikiki* (*Reiki kanjō* 麗気灌頂) with esoteric transmissions on *waka* and literary texts (notably *Ise monogatari*) and, not least, the imperial enthronement unction (*sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂). The themes that occupied the *shintō-ryū* were the same as those we encountered above: Japan, Ise, and emperorship.

Even a quick glance at medieval lists of *shintō-ryū* shows that they range from central institutions close to the court (Daigoji, Tōji, Ninnaji) to minor groups in the periphery (Miwa, Suwa, Kanpaku-ryū in the Kantō). This odd collection of lineages reflects the internal structure of what Stone (1999: ch. 3) has called the "culture of secret transmission". "Secrets" created at the centre soon leaked into the periphery, where they acquired new functions. I have described elsewhere the typical career track of such secrets by analysing the diffusion of *sokui hō* 即位法 ("enthronement methods"), a complex of secret transmissions on the imperial enthronement unction that was introduced into court protocol in the mid-thirteenth century (Teeuwen 2006). This was a procedure created at the centre (the court and temple lineages closely associated with the court) for a concrete purpose – to ensure its possessors (the Nijō house of imperial regents) a prominent role in the ceremonies that create imperial authority, and to reflect some of that authority onto themselves. Within a few decades, a wide range of Dharma-lineages claimed to possess exclusive knowledge of this secret, and a dazzling array of variant *sokui hō* was produced and

32 Go-Daigo was the last to appoint *saiō* (his daughters Yoshiko in 1330 and Sachiko in 1333), but neither of them ever left for Ise. These were to prove the last *saiō* appointments. I find it striking indeed that the demise of the *saiō*, as one of the last surviving remnants of the classical *jingi* cult, did not elicit any comment in any of the Ise texts.

ritually transmitted at temple complexes in the Home Provinces and, soon, in the Kantō region as well (Matsumoto 2005). As such transmissions strayed into the periphery, they found a new role in new settings: the procedure of "being enthroned" was soon transformed into a rite that "is not limited to kings; those who possess of this method, from temple monastics to lay people, will all in their own ways attain high positions".[33] The *sokui hō* formed the nexus of a "black market" of secret transmissions that appears to have flourished throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The *shintō-ryū* of the time were very much part of this economy of secrets.

Matsuo Kōichi (2000) has given a detailed description of the *Nihongi kanjō* and *Reiki kanjō* as they were performed (usually in tandem) at Ninnaji.[34] A brief look at these proceedings reveals that they were, in fact, variants of the *sokui hō*. After a period of preparatory practice (*kegyō* 加行), lasting from three weeks to a hundred days, the initiand was led into a practice hall that had been decorated for the occasion. The main focus of the ritual was a set of scrolls depicting the three imperial regalia (seal, sword and mirror). Before entering a *torii* gate, the initiand received the "precepts for attaining the position of King of the land of Dainichi/Japan".[35] Proceeding through the gate, the blindfolded initiand circumambulated the altar (symbolizing Brahmā's palace) three times and dropped a flower onto the mirrors of the gods of heaven and earth, arranged as a mandala on the altar. After this, the blindfold was taken away and the initiand was crowned and sprinkled with water. Stating that the initiand "is endowed with the body and nature of the gods (*jingi*)", the master conferred the three regalia on him. After another triple circumambulation of the altar, the initiand was awarded the "ten regalia" together with their mudras and mantras, while he visualized himself as being one with Amaterasu. Having attained the status of a deity (*shin'i* 神位), the initiand took off his crown and the procedure was brought to an end. The transmission of the three regalia formed the climax of the *Nihongi kanjō*; that of the ten regalia constituted the *Reiki kanjō*.[36] In this procedure, the "gods" (here termed *jingi*!), Amaterasu, Dainichi and the emperor all blend into one, and together serve as a metaphor for a status that all can attain through training and initiation: that of a person with access to the powers of the Dharma-body, mediated through the regalia as Tantric objects.

Dispersed emperorship

The notion of emperorship on which the *shintō-ryū* built was Ieyuki's rather than Jihen's. In a wider context, it was far removed from the notion of the "king as Indra" that we encountered in the Mon cult. Nor is it comparable

33 *Tenshō daijin kuketsu* 天照太神口決 (1327), in *Shintō Taikei* vol. Shingon Shintō ge: 500.

34 For a detailed description and analysis of *shintō kanjō* (focusing on the *Reiki kanjō*), see Rambelli (2002).

35 Abe Yasurō 2000: 72. The original text reads 大日国即王位戒; Matsuo assumes that this is a mistake for 大日本国 (Matsuo 2000: 120).

36 On the three and the ten regalia in medieval Shinto, see Kadoya (2006).

to the notion of the *dharmarāja* – the king who, due to his great merit, upholds the eternal Dharma in a world ruled by desire (Tambiah 1976). Much more recognizable is the Tantric conception of kingship as described by Ronald M. Davidson (2002). Davidson proposes that the image of "an individual assuming kingship and exercising dominion" (p. 121) has served as the central sustaining metaphor of Tantra from its early beginnings in India. Consecration of practitioners as "kings of divinities" (p. 302) – often including local deities – emerges as Tantra's distinctive characteristic in Davidson's analysis. He sees this as the result of Buddhism's "internalizing the political models of medieval India" (p. 160) in a period of political disintegration and militarization. Davidson argues that Tantra originated in the turmoil that followed the collapse of the Gupta empire in the sixth century, and sees it as a product of the fragmentation of power, politics and culture in the ensuing "medieval" period (p. 29).

Strikingly, the period in which Japan's *shintō-ryū* emerged is often described in almost identical terms, as the start of a truly feudal, fragmented medieval age. As in India, this led to an increased focus on locality, secrecy and, not least, royal imagery. In Japan, this created the remarkable effect that while the *actual* imperial court lost its last remnants of power, emperorship as an abstract idea came to be invoked by a rapidly expanding range of social groups. Amino Yoshihiko's writings on the relationship between the emperor and medieval non-agricultural groups such as artisans, merchants and fishermen (1984) have highlighted this development. It appears that as the "real" emperor lost his power, the authority given to the *notion* of an emperor grew to unprecedented proportions. The transmissions and consecrations of the *shintō-ryū* tapped into this authority by giving concrete form to this increasingly diffuse idea.

One Japanese scholar who explains the "formation of Shinto" both as a result of, and as a contributing factor to, this dispersal of royal imagery in medieval Japan is Wakita Haruko (2003). Interestingly, Wakita focuses not on the *shintō-ryū* but rather on the influence of "Ise and Yoshida Shinto", as new doctrines organized around the central theme of emperorship, on popular art forms such as Sarugaku Nō 猿楽能. Also, she points out that many local deities came to be associated with imperial deities (Ise, Jingū Kōgō) in the late medieval period. Both Wakita and Amino show how local groups, caught in the chaos of a fragmented society, appropriated imperial myths and metaphors in an attempt to link up to a universal authority that might rise above the cauldron of localized power. The question is whether this popularization of royal imagery may have contributed to the rise of Shinto to a Japanese "Way", at some distance or even separate from Buddhism. Again, a comparison with developments in Burma throws up a number of interesting parallels that appear to confirm such a hypothesis.

The Mon kingdom fell to the Burmese kingdom of Taungoo in 1539, but its cult of stream-winning gods survived in a new form, as a royal cult of thirty-seven *nats* (Skt. *nātha*, "lord, protector"). Much of the early history of this cult is unclear, but is likely that it was influenced or even inspired by the Mon cult of the thirty-six stream-winners. The cult of *nats* was based on the same cosmological scheme; the thirty-seventh *nat* was a manifestation

of Sakka (Skt. Śakra, Burmese Te'dya), a common epithet of Indra as the ruler of Trāyastriṃśa heaven and the Sahā world. Most of the thirty-seven *nats* were (and are) identified as spirits of former rebels who have suffered a violent death. According to legend, Burma's founding king Anuruddha (or Anawrahta, r. 1044–77) had "tamed" these powerful spirits by Buddhist means, and enshrined them on the platform of the state pagoda of Shwezigon in Pagan: in fact, however, most of the *nats* postdate his reign. This cult, then, highlighted the "taming" of the *nats* as the foundational accomplishment of Buddhist kingship in Burma. Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière (1989, 1996) describes the *nat* cult as a construct of Burmese Buddhist kingship, and as a product of the Burmese localization of Buddhism. Sakka, as the guardian of the Dharma, bestowed karmic legitimacy on the king in the form of the royal sceptre, and thus granted him the power to transform local, malevolent spirits into *nats* or "protectors" who assist Sakka and the king in safeguarding the Dharma and the realm. Royal patronage was made visible at festivals for the *nats* (*pwe daw*), and ritual specialists sent by the court officiated at these festivals, representing the king.

Yet, in spite of the royal nature of this cult, the demise of the Burmese royal house in 1885 (when Burma became a British colony) did not signal its end. Quite to the contrary, *nat* worship appears to have taken advantage of its new-won freedom from court control to expand into new areas of religious life. The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of an independent class of professional ritualists (*natkadaw*, "spirit-mediums") specializing in *nat* worship. They replaced court ritualists as officiating leaders of the festivals, while at the same time utilizing the exposure that their performances at festivals gave them to develop an expanding market for private rituals. Brac de la Perrière argues that the development of the royal cult of *nats* into the "spirit-possession cult" that it is today was a direct consequence of the collapse of royal authority.

As the cult's original centre disappeared, a new class of ritualist stepped in to fill the void. The result was a new tradition that built on the old royal symbolism, while adapting itself to changing local concerns and needs. The *natkadaw*, who carry titles such as "minister" and "queen", form a kind of royal court that supervises the re-enactment of the *nat*'s original submission by the Buddhist king, which is played out in the festival. The leadership of the *natkadaw* and their shared participation in the same round of festivals has driven a process of standardization. As the cult of *nats* developed into an ever more integrated cult, it also assumed increasing autonomy from Buddhism, leading both Burmese Buddhists and Western anthropologists (such as Melford Spiro) to define *nat* worship as Burma's second religion, with an identity that is quite distinct from Buddhism.

In spite of the large geographical, historical, and cultural distance between the cult of *nats* in Burma and Shinto in Japan, it is perhaps possible to discern some structural similarities. Both Burma's *nats* and Japan's *kami* (or, rather, *jindō*) were local divine beings domesticated by Buddhism, under the leadership of the royal court. The cults of *nats* and *jindō* showed few signs of evolving into distinct, autonomous traditions,

until their dependence on the court weakened to such a degree that it was incumbent upon their priests to find new sources of patronage. This patronage was secured by exploiting the cult's original royal imagery and symbolism in new ways that were relevant to, and actively sought by others than the court aristocracy.

On the early history of the cult of thirty-seven *nats*, Brac de la Perrière writes:

> We should not forget that Burma was formed through a long history of confrontations with countless cultures… Its history is that of the construction of an original, distinctive society, by unifying all its components under a single state authority – a process that still continues today. The cult of the thirty-seven presents itself as a fusion of local cults and a Burmese cult forged by royal authority. Its tendency to amalgamate other religious ideologies in its rituals is manifest to this day. (…) Above all, we should not see the cult of *nats* as the product of a linear evolution with roots in a form of animism or ancestor worship. (1996: 26–7)

Brac de la Perrière warns us against construing the cult of *nats* as a pre-Buddhist native tradition. Rather, she stresses the central role of the Buddhist court in shaping the cult of *nats* as it exists today. Its formative history went through two phases: first, the integration of local cults into a national cultic system under the aegis of a Buddhist royal court; and then, the slow evolution of this cult into an autonomous tradition after the demise of the court, while retaining much of the cult's original royal symbolism.

I believe that the origin of Shinto in Japan can be explained along the same lines. Shinto emerged when a Buddhist court cult of local (or, at least, Japanese) deities spilt into the periphery. Like in Burma, this cult rooted the king's authority in his power to tame and control local deities in the name of Indra (and/or Brahmā). In Japan, however, the picture was complicated by two additional factors, both of which further enhanced Shinto's chances of challenging Buddhism's hegemony. First, there was the legacy of the early tension between *jingi* and *jindō*, as fossilized in court protocol and Ise ritual. At least in its initial stages, Shinto (as the word itself suggests) drew exclusively on *jindō*, and was remarkably unconcerned with the near-extinct *jingi* cult. Yet, at a later stage, the *jingi* cult offered a concrete model for the institutionalization of an autonomous Shinto. Second, the *hongaku* paradigm opened for the valuation of local deities as "more fundamental" (and therefore higher, older and purer) than universal buddhas. This theme, which we recognize in Tibetan Bön rather than in the Burmese cult of *nats*, prepared the ground for a later turn towards anti-Buddhist nativism.

Of course, none of these circumstances would have produced Shinto without the creative efforts of Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼倶 (1435–1511), or the Confucian and Kokugaku Shintoists of the Edo period. The aim of this essay has been to gain some idea of the foundations on which they built their Shinto, and to address the puzzling question why their remarkable

project had some success. When considered in a wider Asian context, Shinto was, after all, a remarkable phenomenon. The first step towards explaining its occurrence is to break away from the long tradition of ''naturalizing'' Shinto, as a self-evident ingredient of Japan's natural order of things. Comparative work, drawing especially on studies of the localization of Buddhism in other parts of Asia, will be essential if we are to set the study of Shinto free from the prison of Japanese studies, and gain a fresh perspective on its emergence and development.

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