

Anna Andreeva. *Assembling Shinto: Buddhist Approaches to Kami Worship in Medieval Japan.* Harvard East Asian Monographs Series. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017. xxi + 397 pp. \$49.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-97057-1.

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Commissioned by Jessica Starling (Lewis & Clark College)

Anna Andreeva's first monograph *Assembling Shinto* examines Buddhist interventions in the worship of kami (local deities) from the late twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. It arrives alongside several recent publications critically assessing the historical formation of Shinto at the local and regional levels.[1] The book centers on the case of Miwa-ryū Shintō, a lineage based at Mount Miwa (located south of Nara in the Yamato basin) that formed within the broader sphere of the Shingon-based Ryōbu Shintō.[2] This focus aligns with a growing body of scholarship dedicated to single sites in Japanese religions, though Andreeva readily departs from Miwa in order to contextualize institutional and ritual developments at powerful nearby sites, such as Kōfukuji, Saidaiji, Kōya, and Ise.[3] Incorporating assemblage theory, as advanced by Bruno Latour, she analyzes the "assembling" of esoteric Buddhist and kami-related matters with attention to ritual practices. This approach successfully builds on previous interpretative models (for example, Allan Grapard's use of the term "combinatory") and has been applied to similar effect in Bernard Faure's recent two-volume compendium on medieval deities in Japan, *Gods of Medieval Japan* (2015).

Despite the book's ambitious scope (both temporally and geographically), Andreeva successful-

ly weaves together a complex tapestry of practitioners, patrons, rituals, and places. Through the careful examination of medieval Shinto-Buddhist relations, her contribution joins a growing body of research that challenges the "twentieth-century master narrative of Shinto as an unbroken, monolithic tradition" (p. 7).[4] For a work that opens and closes with an overarching critique of this narrative (laid out in the introduction and conclusion), there is surprisingly little on Shinto or kami worship until the latter half of the book. While somewhat disorienting, this is not necessarily a weakness. Chapters 1–4 cover early history through mid-thirteenth-century Buddhist developments, which not only alerts readers to the latency of Shinto but also builds a historical context through which to understand the emergence of Buddhist kami worship at Miwa and within the surrounding region.

As iterated in the introduction, the book takes four intersecting lines of inquiry: Miwa and its connections with other sites, the agency of local Buddhist practitioners in the region, the assembling of complex rituals and doctrines into medieval temple lineages at Miwa, and the incorporation of esoteric Buddhist concepts and practices into kami worship in the fourteenth century. These issues are explored in seven body chapters,

organized into three parts: “Mt. Miwa and the Yamato Landscape,” “Temple Networks and Buddhist Monks at Miwa,” and “Assembling Shinto.”

Beginning the first section, chapter 1 discusses the ancient cultic roots of Mount Miwa through evidence ranging from third-century *kofun* to myths from the early eighth-century *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and relevant *fudoki* (provincial gazetteers). Andreeva maps out Miwa’s proximity to the Heijō and Heian capitals, Osaka Bay, and religious mountain centers to the east and south, demonstrating its geographical significance for regional travel and trade. This position contributed to the site’s inclusion in the state-sponsored system of twenty-two shrines that flourished in the mid-Heian period. As a result, its tutelary deity (mythical ancestor to the Ōmiwa clan) was propitiated by the court for a variety of apotropaic concerns (state protection, prevention of epidemics and natural disasters, etc.) under the oversight of a Buddhist temple.

Chapter 2 examines developments in the latter half of the Heian period, as the *jingūji* (temple-managed shrine) of Ōmiwa declined alongside its main patron, the court. Here Andreeva situates Miwa within the broader region of powerful religious centers, such as the ascendant temple of Kōfukuji (thanks to its Fujiwara patronage), Hasedera, Mount Murō, and Yoshino-Kinpusen. She then turns to the movement and practices of semi-itinerant practitioners (*hijiri*, *shugen* ascetics, and low-ranking monks), many of whom took residence at Miwa before pursuing austerities in the mountains to the south.

Continuing this avenue of investigation in part 2 (“Temple Networks and Buddhist Monks at Miwa”), chapter 3 considers the lineages and practices of low-ranking monks (*dōshū*) who resided on the flanks of Miwa amid the site’s gradual subjugation by the complex of Kōfukuji and Kasuga in the twelfth century. Andreeva introduces hagiographical evidence on the figure Kyōen (1143?–1223), whom later generations at

Miwa established as the founder of their lineage. As the thirteenth century unfolds, esoteric initiatory rituals aimed at “enlightenment with this very body” (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛) disseminated from the Shingon center of Mount Kōya. While esoteric in principle, Andreeva convincingly argues through evidence of lower-ranking figures in the region, this ritual knowledge traveled well beyond the bounds of the elite Buddhist clergy.

If chapter 3 lays testimony to the influence of lower-ranking practitioners at Miwa, chapter 4 demonstrates the impact of a single figure in reshaping the site. As Andreeva details, Saidaiji’s famous abbot and Vinaya revivalist Eizon (1209–90) initiated major construction projects, a revised version of Miwa’s origins that gave Saidaiji a central historical role, worship of the esoteric Buddhist deity Aizen Myōō (returned to later in depth), and outreach toward the region’s outcaste (*hinin*) groups. As elsewhere, her meticulous foregrounding of the relevant places and players (Saidaiji, Eizon, and Aizen) situates Eizon’s restoration of Miwa into a regional arena of contemporaneous religious and social developments.

Spanning outward from Miwa, chapter 5 turns to Buddhist developments at the Ise Shrines (it opens with Eizon’s engagement there, providing a smooth transition between chapters). While not explicitly stated by the author, I would suggest this is where we receive the first glimpse of Buddhist-kami interactions in a way that reflects the book’s expressed aim. Covering developments in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Andreeva examines the existence of temples at Ise, Buddhist appeasement of the Ise kami (initially petitioning protection against the Mongol invasions), doctrines connecting Aizen Myōō with these kami, and the interpretation of the site’s two main shrines as geographical representations of the Diamond and Womb Realm mandalas.

Part 3, appropriately titled after the book (“Assembling Shinto”), serves as the culmination

to Andreeva's primary target of investigation. Taking the kami of Ise, Aizen Myōō at Miwa, and the worship of divine serpents in medieval Japan, chapter 6 analyzes the ritual culture of medieval esoteric Buddhism and its contact with local deities. The content centers on Ryōbu Shintō, though Andreeva also touches on the Tendai esoteric tradition (Taimitsu). Her treatment of the actors involved in this worship illustrates a key argument she makes throughout the book: "secret Buddhist texts, icons, and rituals featuring kami" often circulated and took new forms among non-elite practitioners at local temples before being "eventually re-absorbed by the major esoteric temples" (p. 239). This evidence counters the presumed top-down dissemination of ideas and practices that has been commonly held among scholars of East Asian religions.

Chapter 7 explores the systematization of esoteric Buddhist rituals that invoked kami at Miwa, Ise, and elsewhere in the late medieval period. Andreeva investigates these developments through scattered sources that describe esoteric initiation rituals (*jingi kanjō* 神祇灌頂, or "Kami Abhiṣeka") aimed at such objects as the three imperial regalia or cosmogenic deities (for example, Izanagi and Izanami), the latter of whom were visualized as (Buddhist) wrathful deities and divine serpents. Although not treated in depth, we learn of the emergent conceptualization of "Shinto" at Miwa, initially designated by Urabe no Kanekuni (n.d.) in the late fifteenth century (p. 260). A final section on Edo-period developments hints at Miwa-ryū Shintō's growing reputation in the seventeenth century. As the author admits, thorough investigation of this period exceeds the scope of the book but would make a promising avenue of research in the study of early modern Shinto (still underdeveloped).

As a whole, the book continues a critical discussion on the nature of medieval Shinto. Andreeva's lexicon revolves around, in her words, "'kami worship,'... primarily as an inclusive neutral term,

to avoid the many historical connotations of the more readily known term 'Shinto'" (p. 2). She carefully qualifies that kami were "*perceived* as local deities" (p. 304, my emphasis), even though they often originated on the continent—an issue that such scholars as Michael Como and Gina Barnes have taken up in recent years.[5] This definition of "kami" takes a historically emic approach by allowing for a broad application of the term "kami" (even when the glyph 神 is not used). In this way, Andreeva avoids the modern, anachronistic binary of foreign/native with the more historically situated juxtaposition of *local* (kami) versus *translocal* (esoteric Buddhist deities).

Modes of assembling kami with esoteric Buddhist deities were realized through the theories of nonduality (*funi* 不二) and origin-trace relations (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹). Andreeva zeroes in on the case of Aizen Myōō to illustrate this process. At times, her analysis of Aizen seems to overshadow the role and identity of the accompanying kami. Given that Buddhist worship of the kami is the book's explicit object of investigation, this left me expecting more coverage of the kami. The case is well made for the cosmogenic deities at Ise; in contrast, there is minimal treatment of the Ōmiwa deity, though this may reflect the nature or dearth of the sources (many were lost to a fire in the 1460s).

Ultimately, *Assembling Shinto* adds fascinating evidence to the ongoing reevaluation of medieval Shinto. On a final note, reactions to the book in a recent graduate seminar of mine on "vernacular figures" in Japanese religions, which I taught in the International Master's Program (IMAP) in Japanese humanities at Kyushu University, were overwhelmingly positive. Despite the challenging nature of the material, students found the book's nuanced treatment of Buddhist-kami relations, sites of investigations, and range of practitioners readily accessible. A valuable contribution to the fields of Japanese religions and Bud-

dhist studies, Andreeva's work will undoubtedly provoke lively discussions in graduate classrooms and among scholars on the complexities of Buddhist ritual and local deity worship in premodern Japan.

Notes

[1]. Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Fabio Rambelli, ed., "Aspects of Shinto in the Muromachi Period," special issue, *Japanese Religions* 42 (2017); and Yijiang Zhong, *The Origin of Modern Shinto in Japan: The Vanquished Gods of Izumo* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

[2]. Andreeva applies a macron to distinguish the term "Shintō," as used in premodern historical contexts, from the modern anglicized "Shinto."

[3]. Allan Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573–1912* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); and Heather Blair, *Real and Imagined: The Peak of Gold in Heian Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

[4]. Foundational works include Kuroda Toshio, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religions," trans. James Dobbins and Suzanne Gay, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 1–21; Mark Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō: An Intellectual History of the Outer Shrine at Ise* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996); and Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

[5]. Michael Como, *Weaving and Binding: Immigrant Gods and Female Immortals in Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press,

2016); and Gina L. Barnes, "A Hypothesis for Early Kofun Rulership," *Japan Review* 27 (2014): 3–29.

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