

Editors' Introduction: Onmyōdō in Japanese History

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Japanese Journal of Religious Studies

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Editors' Introduction

Onmyōdō in Japanese History

ONMYŌDŌ 陰陽道, the so-called “Way of yin-yang,” is a relatively new field of study when compared to the more familiar Buddhism, Shinto, or even Shugendo, and academic articles or monographs on this subject are hitherto quite scarce. The publication of Murayama Shūichi’s *Nihon Onmyōdōshi sōsetsu* in 1981, in which he attempted to draw a global picture of the history of Onmyōdō, sparked interest in pursuing research in this area. Ten years later, Onmyōdō scholarship acquired a solid ground for further development with the publication of *Onmyōdō sōsho* (1991–1993), a four-volume collection edited by Murayama and others that gathered most of the articles already published on this topic at that time. Prior to this, if a student wished to write a graduation thesis dealing with Onmyōdō, most Japanese advisors would have disapproved due to a lack of previous scholarship or documentation. However, since the publication of *Onmyōdō sōsho*, it has become possible to write a thesis, or even a PhD dissertation, on Onmyōdō. The guest editors of this issue of the *JJRS*, having themselves obtained PhDs dealing with early modern Onmyōdō and divination respectively, are very grateful for this collection of articles.

Readers should keep in mind that Onmyōdō has not only gathered momentum as a field of study by scholars East and West, but it has also become popular in novels, manga, and films. Aramata Hiroshi’s *Tēito monogatari* novels (1985–1987), or Yumemakura Baku’s *Onmyōji* series (1988–ongoing) are bestsellers in their genre. Okano Reiko’s manga, *Onmyōji* (1993–2005), loosely based on

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Yumemakura's novels, received the Tezuka Osamu manga prize, and has built a strong following among young readers. All these works were developed into movies, and even television dramas featuring an *onmyōji* as their main protagonist were produced around the end of the 1990s. The social significance of this "Onmyōdō boom" from the 1980s to the beginning of the twenty-first century has yet to be researched by sociologists, and we can only hope that such a survey will eventually appear. Meanwhile, we cannot help but notice that Aramata lists Murayama's *Nihon Onmyōdōshi sōsetsu* as a reference, and that Okano was taking advice from Yamashita Katsuaki, a scholar whose authority on ancient Onmyōdō can hardly be disputed. Thus, it seems that the academic and popular trends are not totally unrelated, and might even be a deeply-intertwined social phenomenon.

Scholars should be delighted to see that words such as Onmyōdō or *onmyōji*, thanks to manga and films, have become widely known among the general public. However, the very word Onmyōdō is not, by far, free from all ambiguity. Its reading, for instance, is still subject to debate. Should it be read *on'yōdō* or *onmyōdō*, or even *in'yōdō*? We can exclude the latter because when Onmyōdō appeared in Japan, Chinese characters were read in their *go-on* pronunciation. It seems that the original reading was indeed *on'yōdō*, which later evolved to become *onmyōdō*. Although some scholars argue we should revert to the "original" reading, the editors have decided, for the sake of convenience and clarity, to stick to the better-known *onmyōdō* reading.

There is no real consensus among scholars about the nature of Onmyōdō: does it pertain to the category of "religion," or should it be considered as belonging to the "traditional arts"? Specialists of ancient and medieval Onmyōdō mostly advocate the latter classification. Some scholars stress the transition of Onmyōdō in the Heian period from a "technique" to a "religion," whereas others insist that the "technical" aspect of Onmyōdō never disappeared and continued without any transformation. On the other hand, scholars working on early modern Japan use the label *onmyōji* to refer to "folk-religious" (*minkan shūkyōsha* 民間宗教者), and therefore tend to consider Onmyōdō as pertaining to the field of religion. The ubiquitous nature of Onmyōdō through the ages thus requires that scholars give careful attention to their terminology, and often prompts the need to resort to era-specific definitions, like "court Onmyōdō," "medieval Onmyōdō," or "popular Onmyōdō." Recently, scholars working on Japanese religion have been relativizing the concept of "religion" (*shūkyō* 宗教) in Japan, considering it a modern construct that should be used with the utmost care when dealing with pre-Meiji reality. In such a context, it becomes harder to describe Onmyōdō in "religious" terms.

These scholarly discrepancies appear in full force when it comes to translating and transcribing "Onmyōdō" into English. The usual translation, "The Way of yin and yang," although not incorrect in its separate rendering of the *on* 隅 and *yō* 陽 characters, proves in fact to be quite problematic. Of course Onmyōdō

does have some relation to the yin and yang duality (*in'yō*) which, along with the five phases (Jp. *gogyō* 五行; Ch. *wu xing*), forms the core of Chinese correlative cosmology. However, the *onmyō* in Onmyōdō cannot be taken as an equivalent of this conceptual *in'yō*. Take, for example, the context of Nara Japan, which saw the creation of an official bureau composed of four departments: astronomy, calendar, clepsydra, and divination. Only the last category is designated by the word *onmyō*, and which, given the divinatory character of ancient astronomy and calendars, provides its name to said bureau: Onmyōryō 陰陽寮. Thus, historically and technically speaking, the most accurate translation should be “the Way of divination,” or at least, “the Way of yin-yang,” rather than the confusing “Way of yin and yang.”

The goal of this special issue is to respond to the recent interest shown toward this topic by Western scholars from other fields of religious studies, and to provide some keys, grounded in the latest scholarship from Japan and the West, that will be useful for future research. In the editors’ view, Onmyōdō should not be discussed alone, but should be studied within a broader scope including Buddhism, Shinto, Shugendo, and in a more global East Asian context. This is why, taking advice from the *JJRS* editors, we have chosen not to italicize the word Onmyōdō, and to capitalize it, in order to put Onmyōdō on the same level as other fields of religious studies, while keeping the term *onmyōji* italicized.

Early Constructs

ŌCHŌ JIDAI NO ONMYŌDŌ AND YANAGITA KUNIO

In July 1909, Saitō Tsutomu, then a student of history at the Imperial University of Tokyo, graduated with a thesis on “Ōchō jidai ni okeru Onmyōdō” (The Way of yin-yang during the aristocratic era). After graduating, he entered the doctoral course and started teaching at a middle school, but he passed away in 1913, some forty years after the abrogation of the “old” sexagenary calendar and the dismissal of the Bureau of Divination. Saitō is said to have put the final touches to his thesis in April 1909. In September of the same year, the *Kojiruien*, an encyclopedia dedicated to “traditional arts” (*hōgi* 方技) and commissioned by Emperor Meiji, was published, but by that time Saitō had already conducted his own research. After Saitō’s death, his friends managed to get his work published by Kyōdo Kenkyūsha in 1915. The head of this publishing company was Okamura Chiaki, who happened to be married to Yanagita Kunio’s niece. It seems that Yanagita was pulling the strings, and had an influential say regarding Kyōdo Kenkyūsha’s editorial decisions. In other words, it was Yanagita who allowed for Saitō’s posthumous work to be published.

The link between Yanagita and Onmyōdō requires clarification. It is hard to picture the renowned father of Japanese folklore studies as interested in Chinese

cosmology or court Onmyōdō. At this time, Yanagita was leaning toward the topic of folk-religious known as *hijiri* ヒジリ, which he considered to be the main vector for the diffusion of folk beliefs. Yanagita postulated three types of *hijiri*: *kebōzu* 毛坊主 (hairy monks), *shugenja* 修験者 (*yamabushi*, mountain ascetics), and low-class *onmyōji*, who all had the capacity to tell one's fortune or expel bad spirits. It may be that it was with these interests that Yanagita noticed Saitō's work and encouraged its publication. Yanagita's interest and views were carried on by Hori Ichirō in his study on the history of folk-religious in Japan, *Waga kuni minkan shinkōshi no kenkyū* (2 vols., 1953–1955), and later by Gorai Shigeru's research on Shugendo. In his book, Hori maintained Yanagita's typology and gathered a tremendous amount of documentation in order to draw a global picture of the history of folk-religious. In this context, Hori describes how low-class *onmyōji*, while bearing a magico-religious function, eventually became discriminated as outcasts over the course of time. Gorai, on his part, started from the idea that *shugenja* pertained to the *hijiri* category when he opened the way for Shugendo studies, but made no mention of *onmyōji*. However, Kiba Akeshi, one of the first scholars to study early modern Onmyōdō, studied with Gorai, who is said to have advised him to do some research on Izanagi-ryū (see below).

Thus, besides historical scholarship on Onmyōdō, there is also a folklorist line of researchers who have been working on this subject since Yanagita's time. In this regard, recent studies on folk-religious pertaining to Izanagi-ryū can be seen as a form of the distant continuation of Yanagita's *hijiri* studies. When presenting the history of Onmyōdō studies in Japan, it is normal to make a sixty-six year jump from Saitō's work to Murayama Shūichi's *Nihon Onmyōdōshi sōsetsu*, but we cannot forget the role folklore studies played in the development of this topic.

Nonetheless, the influence of Saitō's research should not be neglected either, specifically when it comes to the understanding of Onmyōdō. For this Meiji-era man, Onmyōdō was surely a part of Japanese history. Yet, he mainly saw it as something imported from China. In the Meiji context, where the main agenda of ideologies was to clearly differentiate Japanese culture from its "external" elements, Saitō's view was thus little discussed, despite having some merit, and Onmyōdō studies were left to specialists of Chinese traditions, with little to show for it.

This situation prevailed until after World War II. Although a few stimulating contributions on directional taboo in the Heian period appeared, Onmyōdō was still a scarcely-studied topic before the 1980–1990s. However, in 1952 Noda Kōsaburō was the first to challenge Saitō's view of Onmyōdō as a mere import from China—on the contrary, he tried to depict it as a development specific to Japan.

CALENDARS, ASTRONOMY, AND DAOISM

The history of Onmyōdō scholarship also cannot be limited to works directly addressing the “Way” globally. This is especially true given the various activities that officials of the Bureau of Divination were in charge of in ancient Japan: devising yearly calendars, making astronomical observations, and so forth. Studies on these topics, which developed in their own separate way, are highly relevant for whoever wishes to research Onmyōdō. Regarding calendars, Watanabe Toshio’s *Nihon no koyomi* (1976) still stands as an unchallenged reference for documentation and technical aspects, along with Momoi Hiroyuki’s *Nihon rekishi no kenkyū* (1990), which adopts a more historical perspective. As for astronomy, this field has been extensively studied by Nakayama Shigeru (*Nihon no tenmon-gaku*, 1972), and Watanabe Toshio (*Kinsei Nihon tenmongakushi*, 1986–1987). Lately, both calendar and astronomy studies have benefited heavily from Nakamura Tsukō and Itō Setsuko’s comprehensive index of documents and observational records, *Meiji-zen Nihon tenmon rekigaku, sokuryō shomoku jiten* (2006).

For a long time, it was mostly scholars trained in modern astronomy who led these fields, leaving little room for people with a profile more oriented toward the humanities and social sciences. Recently, however, Hosoi Hiroshi has proved that it is possible for a historian to put ancient astronomical data to good use. In his *Kodai no tenmon ihen to shisho* (2007; see Hayek’s review in this issue, 194–97), Hosoi attempted to shed light on the way official chronicles were compiled by focusing on astronomical records and shifts in the calendar system. In a related fashion, Umeda Chihiro’s *Kinsei onmyōji soshiki no kenkyū* (2009; see Sawa’s review in this issue, 189–93), underlines the prominent role played by calendar specialists in Tokugawa Japan, and opens the way for a social history of calendars and astronomy.

As already noted, Onmyōdō studies are also closely linked to Chinese studies. In this regard, we cannot fail to mention the problematic relations between Onmyōdō and Daoism. In the late 1980s, Nakamura Shōhachi’s work on the *Wuxing Dayi* (Jp. *Gogyō taigi*), a key text on ancient Japanese divination systems and techniques, helped to create renewed interest in the cosmological aspects of Onmyōdō. However, it also participated, although perhaps unintentionally, in establishing a distorted vision of Onmyōdō as a Japanese equivalent of Daoism, understood in turn as a set of Chinese popular beliefs. Nowadays most scholars consider Onmyōdō as something—be it a technique or a religion—constructed in Japan, although its theoretical framework and set of practices do have a Chinese background. Yet, it is still difficult to state that it has nothing to do with Daoism. One cannot fail to notice the conspicuous influence of Buddhist and Chinese texts in Onmyōdō rites, and this is precisely where some scholars, such as Masuo Shin’ichirō (see his article in this issue, 19–43), discern some Daoist-

related features. Still, Daoism has been widely studied for more than a century, and it would be wise to learn from specialists who continue to struggle with the very definition of their object of study. It is especially difficult to say what should be called Daoism in a Japanese context as Japan lacks Daoist temples or priests. In the eyes of the editors, there is little chance that making only vague assumptions on the presence of allegedly Daoist elements in Onmyōdō will lead to any interesting development in this field in the future.

Murayama Shūichi and the Creation of Modern Onmyōdō Scholarship

The most decisive step in the history of Onmyōdō scholarship was taken by Murayama Shūichi. In *Nihon Onmyōdōshi sōsetsu* (1981), Murayama's goal was to give a comprehensive vision of the history of Onmyōdō in Japan, from its Chinese origins to the end of the Edo era. In doing so, he established several turning points in the evolution of the "Way" and established a number of key concepts that greatly influenced later scholarship on the subject. Most notably, he followed and refined Noda's idea of Onmyōdō as a specifically Japanese element, created by the particular reception met by Chinese cosmology in the archipelago. Said cosmology, in Murayama's view, is essentially structured to yin-yang duality and the five phases.

Murayama also described the evolution of the "Way" from its "golden age" during the Nara and Heian periods—its slow decline in medieval times, until its final decay during the Edo period. Although these assertions have gradually been contested, his work must still be praised for giving modern Onmyōdō studies their basic framework. Even if his views on the medieval and early modern developments of the "Way" no longer serve as references, he proved there was more to it than the Heian period court Onmyōdō. Thus, following Murayama's breakthrough, scholarship on this topic developed around two lines: on the one hand, historical studies focus on the role and place of Onmyōdō during specific periods; on the other, we have detailed studies on technical aspects related to the various activities of the practitioners of the "Way," regarding divination, rites, or calendars.

Reevaluation of Court Onmyōdō

Onmyōdō scholarship after 1990 began to refine the early history of Onmyōdō from the perspective of religious and cultural studies. In this regard, Yamashita Katsuaki's *Heian jidai no shūkyō bunka to Onmyōdō* (1996) set up new paradigms on Heian Onmyōdō. Yamashita was the first to reflect upon the very word *onmyōdō*, and to point out that there was no such appellation in China or Korea. He also showed how this word was formed in Japan between the tenth and the eleventh century, in a similar fashion as other "Ways" such as the "Way of the classics" (*myōgyōdō* 明經道), the "Way of the laws" (*myōbōdō* 明法道), and so

forth. From there, he was able to give definitive arguments in favor of Onmyōdō as something specifically Japanese. What is more, he also established several key facts regarding the transformations of the “Way” from the middle of the Heian period. Thus, Yamashita showed that, as the system of the codes was falling apart, there was a slow transition from the early status of the Onmyōryō as an official organ in charge of state matters, to a more ambiguous “yin-yang Way,” which played a leading role in private religious matters. In this regard, we can say that Yamashita placed Onmyōdō in the social and political dynamics of the Heian period, for he also stressed the hereditary appropriation of the “Way” by the Abe and Kamo families, a phenomenon easily comparable to what was happening at the same time with other court functions.

More recently, Shigeta Shin’ichi, in *Heian jidai no kizoku shakai to Onmyōdō* (2004), went yet deeper into Heian sources, and provides us with a definitive study on the nature and formation of court Onmyōdō. Shigeta’s most interesting point resides in his redefinition of Onmyōdō not only as a corpus of knowledge and techniques, but as a group of specialists, including present and former employees of the official Bureau of Divination.

Finally, Nakamura Shōhachi and Kosaka Shinji contributed in unveiling the textual and technical basis of court *onmyōji* practice. Nakamura’s *Nihon Onmyōdō-sho no kenkyū* (1985; 2000) presents key texts of the Onmyōdō tradition used from the Heian to the Edo periods, and gives valuable insights on how they were compiled and transmitted. Kosaka, in various articles and in his edition of Abe no Seimei’s *Senjiryakketsu* (2004), gives us a very detailed view of the functioning of the divination board (*shikiban*) technique.

Medieval and Early Modern Onmyōdō Studies

The fate of Onmyōdō during the medieval period has long been a kind of “black hole” of Onmyōdō studies. Aside from Yanagihara Toshiaki’s work on Onmyōdō in the early Muromachi period (see Yanagihara’s article in this issue, 131–50), there has been hitherto very little progress on this topic. However, in the past few years, two important works by Akazawa Haruhiko and Kimura Sumiko respectively have reopened the field and showed there is still much to do in order to deepen our understanding of what Onmyōdō became during the middle ages. Akazawa, in his *Kamakuraki kanjin onmyōji no kenkyū* (2011), followed the example set by Shigeta regarding the Heian period, and those of Hayashi and Umeno for the Edo period, and questioned the status of *onmyōji* within the Kamakura shogunate. Kimura adopts a similar stance in *Muromachi jidai no Onmyōdō to jiin shakai* (2012), insofar as she studies the official position of court *onmyōji*, albeit under the rule of the Muromachi shogunate. Kimura does not stop there, though, and provides us with a detailed presentation of the activities

of these specialists, whether they were performed for aristocrats, for samurai, or for temples.

In comparison, studies on the early modern transformations of Onmyōdō developed quickly after the publication of Murayama's overview. As early as 1985, Endō Katsumi published a monumental work, *Kinsei Onmyōdō-shi no kenkyū*, later republished in an augmented version in 1994. Endō was among the first, along with Kiba Akeshi, to see the need to give a proper look at what happened to Onmyōdō during the Edo period, at least regarding its official status and organization. Endō dug into numerous sources, starting with the archives of the Tsuchimikado family, who created a control structure for specialists labeled as *onmyōji*.

The influential works on early modern religions and society by Takano Toshihiko (1989), Hayashi Makoto (2005), and Umeda Chihiro (2009) further refined the definition of Edo Onmyōdō, thus giving strong grounds for further research on this topic (see Hayashi's article in this issue, 151–67). Meanwhile, specialists of folklore such as Koike Jun'ichi attempted to look at how some technical knowledge related to Onmyōdō made its way to commoners through books. Koike most notably shed light on a type of popular almanac known as *Ōzassho* 大雜書, and showed how such items allowed for calendrical lore to be diffused through the country, with consequences lasting until the present.

Contemporary Onmyōdō and the Abe no Seimei Boom

The renewal of Onmyōdō studies since the 1990s and the Onmyōdō boom of the early twenty-first century cannot be explained without the contribution of anthropologists to the “rediscovery” of contemporary religious groups distantly related to antique practices. This movement was led by seminal studies by Komatsu Kazuhiko on Izanagi-ryū, a group of folk-religious based in Monobe (Shikoku), whose liturgy and activities appear to echo Heian and medieval Onmyōdō. Komatsu's life work on the history of Izanagi-ryū finally came out in print (2012, see Hayashi's review in this issue, 197–200), and encompasses all the results he obtained through years of fieldwork and his meticulous analysis of numerous manuscripts. In Komatsu's view, studying this modern avatar of Onmyōdō can help us obtain a clearer perception of the place and role of *onmyōji* in the past. Following this, scholars such as Umeno Mitsutoki, Saitō Hideki, and Matsuo Kōichi went yet deeper into the study of the sacred texts and procedures of Izanagi-ryū. Thanks to these works it is now possible to see more precisely what links this peculiar group has to Onmyōdō. Meanwhile, they also brought into focus the image of *onmyōji* as religious specialists dealing with otherworldly powers. Most notably, Komatsu (2000) and others helped bring Abe no Seimei back into the spotlight. Seimei was a tenth-century diviner who appears in many fantastic stories of the *setsuwa* genre, and although a well-known figure until

World War II, he faded from public attention until his “revival” at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Yumemakura Baku’s serial novel, *Onmyōji*, in which Seimei is the main protagonist, and the following manga and movies may have been as much, if not more, influential in this process than academic works. There is no doubt that these contributed to a new generation of Onmyōdō studies. Although the “Seimei boom” now seems to have faded away, it allowed for a higher public awareness of this topic, and made possible opportunities that scholars of the 1980s would never have dreamed of—for example, multiple exhibitions related to Onmyōdō were held in various places, including national museums. In 2001, the National Museum of Japanese History welcomed an exhibition that was first held in Kōchi Folklore Museum: “Ikai Mangekyō: Ano yo, yōkai, onmyōji” [異界万華鏡—あの世、妖怪、陰陽師], renamed “Ano yo, yōkai, uranai” [あの世、妖怪、占い] for the occasion. Originally organized by Umeno, part of the exhibit and the voluminous catalog owes much to the late Takahara Toyoaki. This collector, who was also a student of Komatsu Kazuhiko, dedicated his time to collecting legends about Abe no Seimei around the country, and published very welcome books on this subject (Takahara 1999; 2001). In 2003, at the apex of the boom, the Museum of Kyoto organized an exceptional exhibition on Abe no Seimei and Onmyōdō. Although this event was part of a broader plan by Kyoto city to revive its cultural patrimony, the content and material that were exhibited were superb. A great number of the scholars mentioned above were involved in the preparation of the exhibition and in the production of the catalog, and this event marked a new step toward a better acknowledgement of Onmyōdō studies. Finally, in 2007, the Kanazawa Bunko held a special exhibit entitled “Onmyōdō vs. Mikkyō,” which reflected a new vision of Heian and Kamakura Onmyōdō as being deeply intertwined with other religious traditions.

Onmyōdō Studies in the West

Western studies on Onmyōdō have yet to be fully developed. This does not mean the topic has received no attention in the West. The interest shown in Onmyōdō in Europe even predates Saitō Tsutomu’s work. For instance, SEVERINI’s 1874 publication, although it does not make any explicit reference to the word Onmyōdō, actually deals with calendrical beliefs that are part of Onmyōdō lore. However, no further works were forthcoming before the late 1950s. Again, European research on Onmyōdō managed to precede Japanese research: FRANK’s seminal research on Heian directional taboos was first published in 1958, and yet the Japanese translation had to wait until after the revival of Onmyōdō studies, and came out only in 1989. In a similar way, TUBIELEWICZ (1980) was published in Socialist Poland, but garnered almost no attention at all, and is still widely unknown. Regarding more contemporary topics, such

as Izanagi, the studies conducted by French anthropologist Simone Mauclaire since the 1990s should not be overlooked (MAUCLAIRE 2010). However, these works appear mostly as “stand-alones,” and did not create a trend in Western Japanese studies. This situation is starting to change, mainly thanks to the incremental dynamism of Onmyōdō scholarship in Japan, and to the interest shown in the topic by researchers working on other aspects of Japanese religions. Scholars such as OOMS (2009) and COMO (2009) have shed new light on the role of Onmyōdō-related conceptions in the early Nara period. In 2009, Columbia University’s Center for Japanese Religions, headed by Bernard Faure, organized the first Onmyōdō Symposium, which gathered most of the Japanese specialists on the subject as well as scholars from the West. The results of this gathering will be published soon in a special issue of the *Cahiers d’Extrême Asie*. The authors of this introduction, who attended the event, were delighted to see that young students from the United States and Europe were attempting to dig deeper into Onmyōdō studies. We hope the publication of these two special issues will help established scholars as well as newcomers to continue to widen their scope and contribute to our understanding of Japanese Onmyōdō.

Summary of the Contents of this Special Issue

In this special issue, Masuo Shin’ichirō’s essay on the influence of Daoism on the formation of Onmyōdō examines the kind of official positions that were held by *onmyōji* as bureaucrats in the government offices of the Onmyōryō from the sixth to the eleventh centuries. It builds on the history of Onmyōdō as expounded in Yamashita Katsuaki’s pioneering work on Onmyōdō and the religious culture of the Heian period (1996), and develops it further, especially by explaining how Daoist texts were utilized. At this time the officials of the Onmyōryō were expected to make predictions based on lucky or unlucky omens, but by the end of the Nara Period, they also performed “quelling ceremonies.” These quelling ceremonies expanded to include the quelling of vengeful spirits and natural disasters, leading to the formation of various Onmyōdō rituals. There was also the compilation of Japanese Onmyōdō texts, based on Chinese yin-yang texts. Japanese innovations included the naming of the twelve deities of the realm of the dead, and placing Tai-zan Fukun 泰山府君 as lord of the dead. In this way various Daoist elements were transmitted to Japan. In the past there was a general identification of Onmyōdō with Daoism, and, on the other hand, attempts to emphasize the differences between them, but Masuo’s research reveals the relationship between Onmyōdō and Daoism in a concrete way.

Ross Bender’s study of auspicious omens during the Nara Period focuses on “good omens” during the reign of Empress Kōken/Shōtoku, and the “theology of auspicious omens” that followed in this period. There was a plethora of good

omens reported during the reign of Kōken/Shōtoku (749–770), but almost none during the intermediate reign of Junnin (758–764). The good omens were particularly welcomed during the reign of Shōtoku (764–770), when it was believed that the many good omens reflected the virtues of Empress Shōtoku and supported her reign. On the other hand, there was a significant scarcity of bad omens which would have been proof of the ruler's lack of virtue. Thus, this reflects an intent to underscore political legitimacy on the part of Empress Shōtoku, whose own political powers were in doubt in the midst of various social strife and rebellions. It is clear that the empress herself, the court, bureaucrats, Buddhist monks, the Department of Divinities (Jingikan), officials of the Onmyōryō, local government officials, and the editors of the *Shoku Nihongi* all cooperated in creating a “theology of auspicious omens.”

Shigeta Shin’ichi’s article is on Abe no Seimei and attempts to extract the historical elements of his life—which, for the most part, are hidden in the mist of traditional tales—by examining reliable historical texts from the records of this era. Shigeta has produced a historical timeline showing the various historical activities of Abe no Seimei, which indicate that Seimei was involved in a variety of magical techniques. Abe no Seimei was an *onmyōji* of the Imperial office during the reign of Emperor Ichijō (986–1011), performing various divinations and incantations for the emperor, and making arrangements for his daily schedule. During this period, rituals centering on the lord of the dead (Taizan Fukun) became popular. Shigeta speculates that it was Abe no Seimei who was responsible for this development. Again, Seimei only became a top *onmyōji* late in his life, after he turned sixty. He attained the Fourth Rank and was recognized as an official “Master of Onmyōdō” at the advanced age of eighty. Shigeta opines that if Abe no Seimei had not lived to such an old age, he probably would not be so famous today and through the ages.

Carolyn Pang’s study of *shikigami* takes a look at a phenomenon that is well-known among Japanese but has not yet been carefully researched. Many Japanese scholars have hesitated to study the *shikigami* that appear in traditional tales as a topic of historical research, since they do not appear very frequently in the materials studied by historians. Western scholars who have shown an interest in *shikigami* have translated the term variously with Western concepts such as “spirit,” “genie,” or “familiar,” which fail to capture the meaning of *shikigami*. Pang attempts to rectify the situation by discussing the various meanings implied by *shikigami*, and points out that it cannot be reduced to a single meaning. Pang delineates various types or meanings: a metaphorical reference to a form of augury, an expression of human perception, a form of useful energy, a type of magical curse, or a kind of supernatural being. It would be interesting to see if these various meanings of *shikigami* would also apply to other types of “attendant deities” that are manipulated by religious figures.

The article by Yanagihara Toshiaki on Onmyōdō in the Muromachi period is a simplified summary of his research. One of the contributions of Yanagihara's research is that he has overturned the assumption, going back to the work of Murayama Shūichi, that Muromachi was a period of decline for Onmyōdō. He clarifies the Onmyōdō policy of the Muromachi government and shows that, on the contrary, this was a period when Onmyōdō bloomed. Ashikaga Yoshimitsu had usurped all of the powers of the aristocracy/Imperial Court and placed them under his control. For this purpose, Yoshimitsu had to control not only police and taxation powers, but also the rights to incantations. The Onmyōdō rituals were performed as national prayers, along with the Buddhist "esoteric rites of the Kitayama villa." As the performer of these rites, Yoshimitsu showed that he was the true "king/ruler" of the country. Based on Yanagihara's research, Iman-tani Akira published his study of "kingship in the Muromachi period" (1990). Another recent addition in this area is Kimura Sumiko's research on Onmyōdō and temple society in the Muromachi period (2012).

Moving ahead to the early modern period, the article by Hayashi Makoto attempts to clarify the characteristics of Onmyōdō in the Edo period, in contrast to that of the medieval period. Onmyōdō had spread throughout society and developed into various branches during the medieval period, such as that of the Imperial Court, the warrior class, and the common people. In the early modern period, however, *onmyōji* were centrally organized under the umbrella of the Tsuchimikado family and subject to a unified control, thus resulting in an identifiable group of *onmyōji*. The Tsuchimikado family, with an eye toward their role in the emerging society, received the vermilion seal of the Shogun Tsunayoshi that granted them official recognition for control over the followers of Onmyōdō. Henceforth *onmyōji* actively challenged *shugenja*, Shinto priests, Shinto dance performers, and so forth, obstinately proclaiming their rights with regard to divination. Through these disputes it was determined that divination was the proper responsibility of *onmyōji*, and that anyone who wished to perform divination had to be licensed by the Tsuchimikado family. The Tsuchimikado family was also involved in producing the annual calendar. Through this calendar, various taboos such as directional divinities, and lucky or unlucky days, were disseminated in the daily lives of the common people.

Finally, Matthias Hayek looks at changes in divination practices in the late seventeenth century, with a focus on the influence of Baba Nobutake. Baba is a famous figure, but very little research has been done to shed light on his actual activities. Hayek shows how Baba carefully studied numerous texts on divination and, realizing that the old hexagram and group divination of the past were no longer applicable to his era, developed a new type of divination aimed at the individual. Baba organized these methods so that they could be understood and applied even by uneducated followers (a proto-“Divination for Dummies”), such

as using the palm as a method for memorization. For advanced specialists he transmitted precise knowledge concerning the *Book of Changes*. Thus Hayek shows how the techniques for divination were changed considerably by Baba during the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with results in the modern period that were quite different from that of the medieval period. This article is the first (in either Japanese or Western languages) to present such research on these changes in divination techniques. Hayek has also presented a detailed analysis of hexagram divination in his article “The Eight Trigrams and Their Changes: An Inquiry into Japanese Early Modern Divination” (*JJRS* 38/2 [2011]: 329–68).

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