



HAL
open science

Religion as practice and experience in late Medieval and early modern Japan (General introduction)

Martin Nogueira Ramos, Gaétan Rappo, Suzuki Kenkō

► To cite this version:

Martin Nogueira Ramos, Gaétan Rappo, Suzuki Kenkō. Religion as practice and experience in late Medieval and early modern Japan (General introduction). *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, 2023, 32, pp.15-32. hal-04460498

HAL Id: hal-04460498

<https://hal.science/hal-04460498>

Submitted on 15 Feb 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



Introduction générale / General Introduction

RELIGION AS PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN JAPAN

Martin NOGUEIRA RAMOS, Gaétan RAPPO, and SUZUKI Kenkō 鈴木堅弘*

The Concept of “Lived Religion”

The concept at the heart of this volume, “lived religion,” emerged as a translation of the French term “religion vécue.” This notion originated in French sociological research, notably with the work of Gabriel Le Bras (1891–1970), and spread widely in the 1970s. Its original meaning relates to a specific idea of popular religion instead of official dogmas or doctrinal discussions. The aim was to emphasize a more practical vision rooted in the reality of religious phenomena to the detriment of the theological aspect.¹ By extension, in English-language religious studies, where the term became prevalent after the year 2000, it has a more participatory vision of religion, placing the notion of experience at its heart.²

In general, the term “lived religion” has been used, especially in English, to escape the dichotomy between popular and elite (or specialized) religion. It has allowed researchers to bypass discussion on the level of religious practices or phenomena and focus on specific case studies of religion in its social context.³ As a result, this approach has brought new light to the study of various topics—that had sometimes tended to be neglected—such as congregations and other religious organizations, ritual studies, economic aspects, religious experience, materiality, contemporary or recent history and social issues, and cultural and symbolic anthropology.⁴

* The editors of this volume would like to express their gratitude to the staff of the EFEO Editorial Office in Kyoto (Akamine Kōsuke) and Paris (Emmanuel Siron, Yola Gloaguen, Johan Levillain, and Louise Roche) for all the help and assistance given during the project.

1. Le Bras distinguished “religion légale” (legal or formal religion) and “religion vécue” (lived religion). See Henri Desroche and Gabriel Le Bras, “Religion légale et religion vécue: Entretien avec Gabriel Le Bras,” *Archives de sociologie des religions* 29 (1970): 15–20.

2. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, “Introduction: Religion as Historical Experience,” in *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion*, ed. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2–3.

3. See for example Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion,” in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3–21. Orsi analyzed the beliefs surrounding the miraculous water of a site called the Bronx Lourdes in the twentieth century, showing how, far from something that should be dismissed as superstition, this was a clear example of lived religion in Catholic communities.

4. For a general presentation of the scholarship on lived religion, see Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Studying Lived Religion: Contexts and Practices* (New York: New York University Press, 2021). To take but one example on Japan, see Jørn Borup’s recent article on the historiography of Buddhism’s economic aspects: “Economy of Buddhism,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Japanese*

Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie 32 (2023) : 15–32

In Japan, the term *ikita shūkyō* 生きた宗教, which could be translated as “lived religion,” started to appear after the Second World War. It can be found mainly in studies dedicated to folk religion and beliefs, the best example being the ones penned by Gorai Shigeru 五来重 (1908–93). Gorai especially lamented the preponderance of studies that saw Buddhism as a thing of the past, neglecting its contemporary and living aspects.⁵

In religious studies, the importance of studying religion within its lived context, such as everyday life, grew steadily after the 1970s with the influence of social history.⁶ A relevant example of this approach would be Satō Hiroo’s 佐藤弘夫 work on the founders of the new Buddhist schools that appeared in the Kamakura period (twelfth–fourteenth centuries), where he explicitly writes that he has analyzed their religious ideas and practices, not from a doctrinal viewpoint, but from the perspective of “lived religion” (*ikita shūkyō*).⁷

This concept thus evokes something closer to practice than doctrine, as well as a vivid, vibrant, and still productive tradition. While lived religion can also be understood as a form of commitment to the religious tradition itself, in this volume, it should be apprehended as a focus on religion in its social, philosophical, and dogmatic framework, considering all related aspects, such as time, space, and material setting.⁸ As the various contributions on late medieval and early modern Japan gathered here show, the idea of lived religion should not be restricted to a synonym for popular religion. Popular religiosity is often intimately linked to the approaches of the religious elite in a form of interdependence. Thus, lived religion reflects a dynamic vision of the religious phenomena of the period.

Religions, ed. Erica Baffelli, Andrea Castiglioni, and Fabio Rambelli (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 43–50. Regarding Buddhism in the West and contemporary social issues, see for example Duncan Ryūken Williams, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), which deals with the concrete role of Buddhism for the persecuted Japanese American population during the Second World War.

5. Gorai Shigeru, “Bukkyō minzokugaku no teishō” 仏教民俗学の提唱, in *Nihon bukkyō minzokugaku no kōchiku* 日本仏教民俗学の構築, vol. 1 of *Gorai Shigeru chosakushū* 五来重著作集 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2007), 14.

6. This was especially so for the *shakaishi* 社会史 (social history) movement, with historians such as Amino Yoshihiko 網野善彦 (1928–2004). For example, his *Muen, Kugai, Raku: Nihon chūsei no jiyū to heiwa* 無縁・公界・楽: 日本中世の自由と平和 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1978) puts the spotlight on the lives of humble, marginal populations, including religious figures.

7. Satō Hiroo, *Kamakura bukkyō* 鎌倉仏教 (1994; repr., Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2014), 11–16.

8. This definition was inspired, in part, by “Introduction: Pour une histoire sociale du religieux, les formes d’incorporation religieuse des sociétés modernes,” in *La religion vécue: Les laïcs dans l’Europe moderne*, ed. Laurence Croq and David Garrioch (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 9–24.

Present-Day Trends in the Study of Japan's Religious History

In the sixteenth century, Japan offered its inhabitants various religious practices and beliefs.⁹ An incomplete list of the organized traditions would include the Buddhist schools (and their numerous branches): Rinzaï 臨濟 and Sōtō 曹洞 for Zen; Jōdo 浄土, Jōdo Shin 浄土真, and Ji 時 for Pure Land Buddhism; Shingon 真言 and Tendai 天台 for esotericism; and Nichiren 日蓮 Buddhism; as well as Catholicism (Kirishitan), a creed brought by the Iberians in 1549; Shugendō 修験道, a tradition centered on the mountains as sites where ascetics acquire spiritual powers that they can subsequently share with others; or the different Shinto and Onmyōdō 陰陽道 (divination based on yin-yang principles) lineages. Japanese could follow exclusively one religious tradition or benefit from several of them simultaneously.

Except for Catholicism, which evolved after its ban in 1614 as an underground movement (known as hidden Christianity in English, and *kakure kirishitan* 隠れキリシタン or *senpuku kirishitan* 潜伏キリシタン in modern Japanese scholarship), all of these traditions survived the Edo period (1603–1868), and some even gave birth to new ramifications. In the late Edo period, the spiritual panorama became more complex with the appearance and the fast growth of religious organizations that redefined the attributes of certain gods or buddhas and promised relief in this world for their devotees; specialists in religious studies (*shūkyōgaku* 宗教学) generally call them “new religions” (*shinshūkyō* 新宗教) and historians, “popular religions” (*minshū shūkyō* 民衆宗教).

Despite the diversity of the religious world in late medieval and early modern Japan, we can observe similarities in the approaches recently adopted by historians researching the topic. The following will highlight some of the latest trends.

The first noteworthy evolution is the willingness to overcome sectarian history by comparing different religious traditions or by contextualizing better the substratum of a tradition. This approach aims to determine salient characteristics of religious practices and beliefs in a given context. For the Warring States period (*Sengoku jidai* 戦国時代; late fifteenth–late sixteenth centuries), and to a lesser extent, for the beginning of the Edo period, this method has been fruitful.

Ōkuwa Hitoshi 大桑斉, whose research mainly focuses on the True Pure Land (Jōdo Shin), has been advocating, since the 1980s, that in an age of political turmoil, the Buddhist schools turned their attention to the commoners. The clergy, especially those of so-called Kamakura Buddhism, reorganized itself to offer the

9. Most of the authors mentioned in the following pages have published extensively on late medieval and early modern Japanese religions. We only mention in the footnotes the books and articles employed for writing this introduction. For a general overview in English, see Sonehara Satoshi, Umeda Chihiro, Christopher Mayo, Seriguchi Mayuko, and Hōzawa Naohide, “Religious Transformations in Early Modern Japan: Relationships between the State, Religious Organizations and Communities,” *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2020): 39–76. For a more comprehensive examination of the latest research on Japanese religious history, see the six volumes of the series *Nihon shūkyōshi* 日本宗教史 published by Yoshikawa Kōbunkan in 2020–21.

population new accessible means to gain salvation.¹⁰ Kawauchi Masayoshi 河内将芳, a specialist of the Nichiren school, has stressed the widespread diffusion of religious donations (*kanjin* 勧進) by lay devotees to the clergy and has linked this behavior to the reinforcement of sectarian identities in the sixteenth century—a prefiguration of Edo-period Buddhism.¹¹ Andō Wataru 安藤弥 has pointed out that True Pure Land Buddhism shared similarities with Nichiren Buddhism and Catholicism, not only in terms of historical development but also in religious habits and beliefs. He has noted the growing interest in funerals, the popularity of “crowdfunding” mechanisms to build or repair temples, and the strengthening of ties between local communities and the authorities of the head temples. For him, the period is characterized by the “influential power of religion” (*shūkyō seiryoku* 宗教勢力) and “the collective organization of people of the same religious persuasion” (*shūkyō ikki* 宗教一揆).¹² The first studies by Kanda Chisato 神田千里 dealt with the revolts of True Pure Land devotees (*Ikkō ikki* 一向一揆). The scope of his research later extended to Christianity and a general discussion on the prevalence of religions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He has notably argued that the belief in the “Way of Heaven” (Tendō 天道) was ubiquitous during this period. The “Way of Heaven” was a nearly monotheistic entity that subsumed all the gods and buddhas; it was believed that it controlled the fate of individuals according to their behavior and inner beliefs. Kanda has also paid attention to the influence exerted by Catholicism on the other Japanese religious traditions; it would have, in particular, provoked the emergence of a “national religious consciousness” epitomized by the use of expressions such as *Nibonshū* 日本宗, “the religion of Japan,” in contrast with *Nanbanshū* 南蛮宗, “the religion of the Southern Barbarians,” i.e., Catholicism.¹³

For the mid- and late Edo period, the general trend appears less prominent except for the emphasis on lay devotees’ agency—a point we will touch upon later. The pioneering research on the abovementioned “popular religions” by Murakami Shigeyoshi 村上重良 (1928–91) and later by Yasumaru Yoshio 安丸良夫 (1934–2016) tended to perceive these movements not only as alternatives to the so-called decadence of Buddhism but also as expressions of the commoners’ defiance toward the authorities. These scholars endeavored to identify similarities shared by the practitioners and creeds of these “popular religions.”¹⁴

10. For a representative work of Ōkuwa Hitoshi, see *Nihon kinsei no shisō to bukkyō* 日本近世の思想と仏教 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989).

11. Kawauchi Masayoshi, “Sengoku bukkyō’ ron saikō: Kyōto to Nichirenshū o chūshin ni” 「戦国仏教」論再考: 京都と日蓮宗を中心に, *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 佛教史學研究 58, no. 1 (2015): 48–68.

12. See the following two analytical articles by Andō Wataru: “Shūkyō ikki-ron to iu kadai” 宗教一揆論という課題, *Nihonshi kenkyū* 日本史研究 667 (2018): 49–71; “Sengoku-ki shūkyōshi kenkyū nyūmon” 戦国期宗教史研究入門, *Rekishi hyōron* 歴史評論 852 (2021): 50–57.

13. Kanda Chisato has summarized his latest research in a book for the general reader: *Sengoku to shūkyō* 戦国と宗教 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2016).

14. On Murakami Shigeyoshi and Yasumaru Yoshio’s research, see Aono Makoto 青野誠, “Minshū shūkyō’ wa dare o kataru no ka: ‘Minshū shūkyō’ gainen no keisei to hen’yō” 「民衆宗教」は誰を語るのか: 「民衆宗教」概念の形成と変容, in *Kami to botoke no bakumatsu ishin: Kōsaku suru shūkyō sekai* カミとホトケの幕末維新: 交錯する宗教世界, ed. Iwata Mami 岩田真美 and Kirihara

Recent research has partially rejected this comparative framework in which sociopolitical factors predominate. Ishihara Yamato's 石原和 work on Nyoraikyō 如来教 is particularly noteworthy. This religious organization spread in the Nagoya region in the first decades of the nineteenth century; its devotees believed that the foundress, Kino 喜之 (1756–1826), who was allegedly possessed by Konpira 金毘羅, here presented as the “great avatar” (*daigongen* 大権現) of the Buddha (Nyorai 如来), was able to cure diseases and perform meritorious rites for the dead. Ishihara opines that Nyoraikyō should be reexamined in the religious context of the 1800s and not only compared to other “popular religions”; he devotes attention to the contemporaneous disputes around salvation within True Pure Land Buddhism and the active participation of the lay devotees (*monto* 門徒) to them.¹⁵ Others assert that the diversity of beliefs should prevent us from bringing out simplistic trends. For example, in a recent essay, Shimazono Susumu 島蘭進, a leading figure in the study of religions in Japan, has contended the existence of various views regarding the afterlife among early modern Japanese.¹⁶

The richness of the primary sources has undoubtedly allowed researchers to study several movements in depth and thus dramatically enhanced our understanding of Japan's religious world before the modern era. Concerning Shinto, recent research has highlighted its perception as an autonomous tradition distinct from Buddhism before the emergence of so-called National Studies (Kokugaku 国学).¹⁷ Starting with the domains of Aizu 会津, Mito 水戸, or Okayama 岡山 in the Kanbun 寛文 era (1661–73), some members of the warrior elites advocated a clearer separation between the Shinto shrines and the Buddhist temples;¹⁸ moreover, the teaching of the Yoshida lineage, theorized by Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼俱 (1435–1511) at the turn of the sixteenth century, became appealing to certain daimyos.¹⁹ Kanetomo's new synthesis gave clear prominence to the Japanese gods in their relationship with the buddhas and established Shinto as the primordial teaching. He and

Kenshin 桐原健真 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2018), 109–31. For a discussion in English, see also Janine Anderson Sawada's introduction to *Faith in Mount Fuji: The Rise of Independent Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2022).

15. Ishihara Yamato, “Zomeki” no jikūkan to Nyoraikyō: Kinsei kōki no kyūsairon-teki tenkai 「ぞめき」の時空間と如来教: 近世後期の救済論的転回 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2020).

16. Shimazono Susumu, “Shisei-kan no kinsei to kindai” 死生観の近世と近代, in *Shirīzu Nihonjin to shūkyō: Kinsei kara kindai e* シリーズ日本人と宗教: 近世から近代へ, vol. 3, *Sei to shi* 生と死, ed. Shimazono Susumu et al. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2015), 3–24.

17. On Shinto's early modern history, see the following two books: Stefan Köck, Brigitte Pickl-Kolaczka, and Bernhard Scheid, eds., *Religion, Power, and the Rise of Shinto in Early Modern Japan* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Helen Hardacre, *Shinto: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), chaps. 8–11.

18. On the Mito domain's religious reform in the Kanbun era, see Nathalie Kouamé, *Le sabre et l'encens, ou Comment les fonctionnaires du fief de Mito présentent dans un “Registre des destructions” daté de l'an 1666 l'audacieuse politique religieuse de leur seigneur Tokugawa Mitsukuni* (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, Collège de France, 2005).

19. Hardacre, *Shinto*, chap. 7.

his successors even succeeded in attracting the interest of political power, and they remained an extremely influential lineage of Shinto throughout the Edo period.²⁰

In a groundbreaking book published in 1989, Takano Toshihiko 高埜利彦 drew the attention of historians to the progressive organization, from the second half of the seventeenth century, of Shinto priests and other religious specialists, such as mountain ascetics (*yamabushi* 山伏 or *shugenja* 修験者) or yin-yang diviners (*onmyōji* 陰陽師), under the leadership of influential noble lineages or temples bound to the Kyoto imperial court.²¹ Regarding the mountain ascetics, we should mention the studies of Hasegawa Kenji 長谷川賢二 on the gradual development of Shugendō as a distinct religious tradition and its regional structuration during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²² Kondō Yūsuke 近藤祐介 has shown how at that time, the Shōgo'in 聖護院, a Tendai temple located in Kyoto, started to issue licenses to *yamabushi* who had settled in the surrounding countryside.²³ These studies on Shugendō have indirectly modified our view on esoteric Buddhism's situation at the end of the Middle Ages, namely its alleged decline.²⁴

Historians scrutinize the role of religious figures at the margin of the established Buddhist clergy, but in close contact with secular society, such as the *hijiri* 聖. These highly mobile men lived on the alms they received from the population in return for amulets or prayers. The major temples began to incorporate and organize them into guilds from the late medieval period. In a time of upheaval, when the Buddhist clergy strove to find new support not only from the warrior elites but also among the population, the *hijiri*'s networks played an important role.²⁵ Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that a vivacious world of specialists, at the fringe of the established religious organizations, responded to the multifarious needs of the population: for example, soothsaying, purification prayers or rituals, and the distribution of amulets or calendars that mark lucky and unlucky days. Umeda Chihiro 梅田千尋, whose research has focused on early modern yin-yang

20. Itō Satoshi 伊藤聡, *Shintō to wa nani ka: Kami to hotoko no Nihon shi* 神道とはなにか: 神と仏の日本史 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2012), 162.

21. Takano Toshihiko, *Kinsei Nihon no kokka kenryoku to shūkyō* 近世日本の国家権力と宗教 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989).

22. Hasegawa Kenji, *Shugendō soshiki no keisei to chiiki shakai* 修験道組織の形成と地域社会 (Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 2016).

23. Kondō Yūsuke, “15–17 seiki ni okeru monzeki jūin to chiiki shakai” 15–17世紀における門跡寺院と地域社会, *Rekishi-gaku kenkyū* 歴史学研究 976 (2018): 68–77.

24. On Shugendō's history (and vitality) from ancient times to the present, see Andrea Castiglioni, Fabio Rambelli, and Carina Roth, eds., *Defining Shugendō: Critical Studies on Japanese Mountain Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

25. On these religious professionals in close contact with the laity, see Murakami Norio 村上紀夫, “‘Hijiri’ saikō: Chūsei kara kinsei e” 「聖」再考: 中世から近世へ, *Rekishi hyōron* 797 (2016): 43–54; Nishio Tomomi 西尾知己, “Chūsei kōki jisha seiryoku no kōsei to kinō” 中世後期寺社勢力の構成と機能, *Rekishi hyōron* 797 (2016): 17–29; Yoshizawa Hajime 芳澤元, “Chūsei kōki no shakai to zaizoku shūkyō” 中世後期の社会と在俗宗教, *Rekishi-gaku kenkyū* 976 (2018): 59–68.

diviners, calls these men and women *minkan shūkyōsha* 民間宗教者, “folk religious,” or *kanjin shūkyōsha* 勧進宗教者, “religious who gather alms.”²⁶

As is well known, Tsuji Zennosuke’s 辻善之助 (1877–1955) monumental work on the history of Japanese Buddhism published during and after the Second World War, and especially his thesis on the so-called decadence of Edo-period Buddhism (*kinsei bukkyō daraku-ron* 近世仏教墮落論), has had a lasting impact on the orientation of later research on the topic.²⁷ To put it simply, the Buddhist clergy was depicted as a mere tool in the hands of the secular authorities, whose principal tasks were to control the commoners and carry out their funerals; such an image of Buddhism, as a religion that limits itself to burying the dead (*sōshiki bukkyō* 葬式仏教, “funeral Buddhism”) and extorts money from its flock, is still widespread in society. Recent research by Orion Klautau has clarified how this perception of Buddhism had, in reality, already started to germinate during the Meiji era (1868–1912).²⁸

Historians have been challenging Tsuji’s thesis for nearly half a century. One way to offer new perspectives on Edo Buddhism has been to focus on the lay devotees and their daily practice, in other words, their agency. At first, studies were in particular related to the True Pure Land: Nagura Tetsuzō 奈倉哲三 has emphasized the autonomy and the regular meetings held by devotees in Echigo 越後 Province;²⁹ Arimoto Masao 有元正雄 has argued that a nearly Weberian ethic centered on a proactive religious practice had developed among the practitioners of this school, up to a point where it contradicted the “other power” (*tariki* 他力) stance of the Honganji 本願寺.³⁰ Some, such as Hikino Kyōsuke 引野亨輔, have voiced concern about the emphasis put on True Pure Land Buddhism, as it could reinforce the impression that the other Buddhist schools were indeed decadent in Edo Japan.³¹

In the field of esoteric Buddhist studies, an early example of a similar orientation would be Kushida Ryōkō 櫛田良洪 (1905–80), who already qualified, in his monumental history of the Shingon school, the idea of the decline of Buddhism in the

26. Umeda Chihiro, “‘Minkan shūkyōsha’ ga ita kinsei: Kinsei shūkyōsha kenkyū no hōhō to kadai” 「民間宗教者」が居た近世: 近世宗教者研究の方法と課題, *Rekishi hyōron* 813 (2018): 52–59. On the history of divination in Japan, see the book by Matthias Hayek reviewed at the end of this special issue: *Les Mutations du yin et du yang: Divination, société et représentations au Japon, du VI^e au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, Collège de France, 2021).

27. Tsuji Zennosuke, *Nihon bukkyōshi* 日本仏教史, 10 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1944–55).

28. Orion Kurautau オリオン・クラウタウ [Orion Klautau], “Kinsei bukkyō daraku-ron no kindai-teki keisei: Kioku to bōkyaku no Meiji bukkyō o meguru ichi kōsatsu” 近世仏教墮落論の近代的形成: 記憶と忘却の明治仏教をめぐる一考察, *Shūkyō kenkyū* 宗教研究 81, no. 3 (2007): 581–601.

29. Nagura Tetsuzō, *Bakumatsu minshū bunka ibun: Shinshū montō no shiki* 幕末民衆文化異聞: 真宗門徒の四季 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999).

30. Arimoto Masao, *Shūkyō shakaisbi no kōsō: Shinshū montō no shinkō to seikatsu* 宗教社会史の構想: 真宗門徒の信仰と生活 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997).

31. See the introduction by Hikino Kyōsuke in *Kinsei shūkyō sekai ni okeru fuben to tokushu: Shinshū shinkō o sōzai to shite* 近世宗教世界における普遍と特殊: 真宗信仰を素材として (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2007).

late medieval period as an oversimplification.³² More recently, Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士 also amply discussed such issues in a book published in 2010. Sueki deals not only with the paradigm established by Tsuji Zennosuke, but also with long-lasting views of the religious history of early modern Japan. For example, quoting the work of Herman Ooms, he stresses how this period should not be seen exclusively as the age of Neo-Confucianism.³³ Sueki also builds on his previous work on the worldview of medieval Japanese Buddhism through the theory of the duality of *ken* 顯 and *myō* 冥, which can be translated as “visible” and “unseen.” According to Sueki, while the Middle Ages were mostly a world of the unseen—that is, the gods and buddhas—in the early modern and modern period, the place of the visible, or the importance of *ken*, steadily grew in a movement that can be linked to a form of “secularization.”³⁴

The late Nishimura Ryō 西村玲 (1972–2016), who first published an essential study on the True Pure Land monk Fujaku 普寂 (1707–81), has already shown how, far from being a period of decadence, the Edo period saw the emergence of a movement of reaffirmation of monastic rules (*kairitsu fukkō* 戒律復興) and also of restoration of Buddhism as a whole, which was understood as a return to something closer to its original form, that is, Theravāda Buddhism.³⁵ Her posthumous book *Kinsei bukkyō-ron* 近世仏教論 (Theses on Early Modern Buddhism) is a significant volume, revealing the variety and originality of her approach through a series of articles written after her first book. In it, Nishimura tackled themes as diverse as cosmology, the relation of Buddhism with Christianity, book culture, disciplinary rules and the Buddhist restoration movement, and the transition from Edo to Meiji Buddhism. Nishimura’s work provides a comprehensive vision of Buddhism in the early modern era, far removed from the preconceived notions mentioned above, and has profoundly impacted the entire discipline.³⁶

Several historians have questioned the idea according to which the development of the “temple-parishioner system” (*jidān seido* 寺檀制度) had been imposed unilaterally by the authorities on the population.³⁷ Studies on the Sōtō school,³⁸ the

32. Kushida Ryōkō, *Zoku Shingon mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū* 続真言密教成立過程の研究 (Tokyo: Sanbikō Busshorin, 1979), 587.

33. Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570–1680* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

34. Sueki Fumihiko, *Kinsei no bukkyō: Hana hiraku shisō to bunka* 近世の仏教：華ひらく思想と文化 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2010).

35. Nishimura Ryō, *Kinsei bukkyō shisō no dokusō: Sōryo Fujaku no shisō to jissen* 近世仏教思想の独創：僧侶普寂の思想と実践 (Tokyo: Toransubyū, 2008).

36. Nishimura Ryō, *Kinsei bukkyō-ron* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2018). Also see the postface to the volume by Sueki Fumihiko.

37. For an overview of the latest research on the “temple-parishioner system,” see Hōzawa Naohide 朴澤直秀, “Jidan seido to sōsai bukkyō” 寺檀制度と葬祭仏教, in *Shirizu Nihonjin to shūkyō*, vol. 3, *Sei to shi*, 25–51.

38. Hirose Ryōkō 広瀬良弘, *Zenshū chibō tenkai-shi no kenkyū* 禅宗地方展開史の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1988).

Nichiren school,³⁹ and the True Pure Land school,⁴⁰ for example, have shown that this system was already emerging at the end of the medieval period; by responding to commoners' needs, Buddhist priests were also spreading out the networks of their respective schools.

Another way to emphasize the vitality of early modern religious life has been to skirt around the Buddhist schools by focusing on specific sites, such as Ise 伊勢, Kumano 熊野, Shikoku 四国, or Mount Fuji 富士, and their growing popularity among the populace.⁴¹ Early signs of this enthusiasm were already apparent in the sixteenth century. Research has stressed the active role of itinerant religious specialists, particularly women, in this phenomenon.⁴² The fact that the work of Park Byoungdo 朴炳道 relies (as do the editors of this special issue) on the notion of “lived religion” (*ikirareteiru shūkyō* 生きられている宗教) is also noteworthy. Park has centered his research on the impact of calamities (earthquakes, tsunamis, fire) on the religious activities of early modern Japanese.⁴³

Another decisive rebuttal to Tsuji's thesis undoubtedly came from the researchers working on book history in Japan. It is now clear that, in the seventeenth century, the share of Buddhism in the burgeoning book industry was dominant.⁴⁴ Nearly half of the printed books were related to it; the impetus came from the students who attended the newly established Buddhist seminaries (*danrin* 檀林, *gakurin* 学林, or *gakuryō* 学寮), that is, the future chief priests (*jūshoku* 住職) of the innumerable temples scattered throughout Japan.⁴⁵ Each school had preferential ties with one or multiple “publishing bookstores” (*shoshi* 書肆). The en masse printing of Buddhist books marked a dramatic change in the transmission of the doctrine; indeed, until the end of the Middle Ages, disciples would generally acquire the tenets of a school through masters and manuscripts. In other words, Buddhism underwent a

39. Yuasa Haruhisa 湯浅治久, *Sengoku bukkyō: Chūsei shakai to Nichirensū* 戦国仏教: 中世社会と日蓮宗 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2009), chap. 6.

40. Daiki Naohiko 大喜直彦, *Kami ya botoke ni deau toki: Chūsei bito no shinkō to kizuna* 神や仏に出会う時: 中世びとの信仰と絆 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2014), 153–88.

41. On early modern Shikoku pilgrimage, see Nathalie Kouamé, *Pèlerinage et société dans le Japon des Tokugawa: Le pèlerinage de Shikoku entre 1598 et 1868* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2001); on Mount Fuji, see Sawada, *Faith in Mount Fuji*.

42. Sonehara, Umeda, Mayo, Seriguchi, and Hōzawa, “Religious Transformations in Early Modern Japan,” 48–54.

43. Park Byoungdo, *Kinsei Nihon no saigai to shūkyō: Jujutsu, shūmatsu, irei, shōchō* 近世日本の災害と宗教: 呪術・終末・慰霊・象徴 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2021).

44. For a summary of the latest research on Buddhist books in early modern Japan, see Hikino Kyōsuke, “The Establishment of Commercial Publishing and the Transformation of Buddhism in Early Modern Japan,” *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2020): 103–24; Mannami Hisako 万波寿子, “Bussho shuppan no tenkai to igi” 仏書出版の展開と意義, in *Shirizu Nihonjin to shūkyō: Kinsei kara kindai e*, vol. 5, *Shomotsu, media to shakai* 書物・メディアと社会, ed. Shimazono Susumu et al. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2015), 33–59.

45. On the education of Edo-period Buddhist clergy, see Matsukane Naomi 松金直美, “Sōryo no kyōyō keisei: Gakumon to zōsho no keishō” 僧侶の教養形成: 学問と蔵書の継承, in *Shirizu Nihonjin to shūkyō*, vol. 5, *Shomotsu, media to shakai*, 89–123.

process of “exoterization” of its knowledge.⁴⁶ Gradually, the masses got acquainted with this knowledge via the sermons (*seppō* 説法 or *hōwa* 法話) given by the clergy, the reading—private or collective—of books, or even entertainment such as theater plays. Seriguchi Mayuko 芹口真結子 has studied early modern sermons by taking into consideration not only their medium—books that feature sermons (*kangebō* 勧化本, for example)—but also their orality. The transcriptions of sermons (*kōroku* 講録), which circulated among lay devotees, allow us to catch a glimpse of these priests “enlightening” the populace.⁴⁷

Neither the clergy nor the laity received this stream of knowledge passively. More and more scholars think that the propagation of teachings provoked the emergence of different understandings regarding the central concepts of certain Buddhist schools and, therefore, triggered tensions. For example, Kobayashi Junji 小林准士 dismisses the idea that Edo Japan was a society immune to religious conflicts. He has shown that True Pure Land parishioners came, from time to time, into conflict with parishioners of other schools, notably because of the former’s stance of “non-devotion toward the gods” (*jingi fukie* 神祇不帰依).⁴⁸ Although disputes between schools (*shūron* 宗論), especially between the Nichiren and True Pure Land Buddhism, were prohibited at the turn of the seventeenth century, an echo of these intersectarian rivalries remained in the books printed in the early modern period. Nevertheless, it is mainly within the schools that doctrinal disputes reached a new level.⁴⁹ Studies on True Pure Land Buddhism have pointed out the active involvement of the lay devotees in the technical debates.⁵⁰

46. As shown by Matthias Hayek, the exact same trend can be observed within yin-yang-based early modern divination in Japan; see *Les Mutations du yin et du yang*, chaps. 4–6.

47. Seriguchi Mayuko, *Kinsei bukkyō no kyōsetsu to kyōka* 近世仏教の教説と教化 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2019).

48. Kobayashi Junji, *Nihon kinsei no shūkyō chitsujō: Jōdo Shinshū no shūshi o meguru funsō* 日本近世の宗教秩序: 浄土真宗の宗旨をめぐる紛争 (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 2022).

49. Ueno Daisuke 上野大輔, “Kinsei zenki no shūha funsō to seikyō kankei” 近世前期の宗派紛争と政教関係, *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 1015 (2021): 68–77. For an example of doctrinal dispute within True Pure Land Buddhism in the mid-seventeenth century, see Jérôme Ducor, *Terre pure, Zen et autorité: La Dispute de l'ère Jōdo et la “Réfutation du Mémoire sur des contradictions de la foi” par Ryōnyo du Honganji, avec une traduction annotée du “Ha Anjin-sōi-no-oboegaki”* (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, Collège de France, 2007).

50. Hikino Kyōsuke, “Kōshaku to shuppan no aida” 講釈と出版のあいだ, in *Shirizu Nihonjin to shūkyō*, vol. 5, *Shomotsu, media to shakai*, 175–208.

Presentation of the Eight Articles

The articles in this special issue reflect some of the latest trends in the study of Japanese religious history. The pages that follow will serve to introduce the eight contributions and the specific academic debates they contribute to. We have divided them into three main topics: (1) rituals and books in Buddhism, (2) spatiality and materiality, and (3) religious heresy and deviancy.

Rituals and Books in Buddhism

Lived religion is a concept focusing on religious practice. Thus, it is no surprise that ritual is an important theme beyond the contributions in this section. In recent years, rituals have become an important topic in studies of Buddhism and Japanese religions. In this sense, it is part of a long theoretical development initiated by the analyses of the social and communal aspects of rituals in the wake of works such as those by Catherine Bell (1953–2008).⁵¹

In this context, the monumental five-volume collection on the question of ritual, published in 2010 under the supervision of Axel Michaels, represents an important milestone; the first volume, in particular, includes an entire section dedicated to ritual in Chinese and Japanese religions.⁵² The introduction to this section points out that studies of Buddhist rituals in Japan have tended to take a very sectarian approach, examining rituals in relation to the specific doctrinal context of a given school.⁵³ In this vital work, and also in a book on the power of ritual published in Japanese the same year,⁵⁴ the authors depart from this view, showing how ritual configurations often go beyond this restricted framework.

Another important example of this approach is the work of Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎. In his recent triad of monumental monographies, Abe proposes a larger conception of the term “text” (which he writes *tekusuto* テクスト and not *tekisuto* テキスト, the usual Japanese rendering); he understands texts not as simple written objects but as the various products of a system of symbols and representations specific to a given culture and time frame. This includes literary texts, performative works, manuscripts, Noh plays, and rituals.⁵⁵ The essays in this section build on these

51. See for example Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

52. Lucia Dolce, Gil Raz, and Katja Triplett, eds., “Ritual Discourse, Ritual Performance in China and Japan,” in *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual*, ed. Axel Michaels, vol. 1, *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), sec. 2.

53. Lucia Dolce, Gil Raz, and Katja Triplett, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*, 355–58.

54. Ruchia Doruche ルチア・ドルチェ [Lucia Dolce] and Matsumoto Ikuyo 松本郁代, eds., *Girei no chikara: Chūsei shūkyō no jissen sekai* 儀礼の力: 中世宗教の実践世界 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan 2010).

55. See Abe Yasurō’s introduction to *Chūsei Nihon no shūkyō tekusuto taikai* 中世日本の宗教テキスト体系 (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2013).

broad orientations, which locate ritual and religious practice in the late medieval and early modern periods' extensive philosophical, social, and symbolic networks.

Gaétan Rappo's article shows how a complex ritual cycle centered on a triad of divinities (Shōten, Benzaiten, and Dakiniten), born in a particular context in the Middle Ages, evolved into a whole series of practices to meet the needs of later eras. Originating from a blend of esoteric Buddhism and Onmyōdō during the Middle Ages, their cult gradually expanded through Shinto texts, particularly those centered around the god Inari, as well as through practices like Shugendō and rituals used in battle. The article describes the development of a consistent symbolic framework employed in these rituals, driven by the pursuit of wealth, longevity, and, above all, fortune in battle. As a result, it presents an encompassing view of the historical evolution of these interconnected rites, myths, and symbols, representing a compelling case of lived religiosity.

As highlighted in the previous section, significant progress has been made in research on print culture and book history in the early modern period. Didier Davin's article focuses on one of the major topics in the history of religious publications in Edo Japan, the *kana hōgo* 仮名法語 ("kana homilies," also often translated as "vernacular tracts") within Zen traditions. *Kana hōgo* are texts written in vernacular Japanese and in a relatively understandable language; they can also be seen as texts used primarily in a preaching context. Recent research inspired by the work of Abe Yasurō has included these sources, not only in Zen but also in Shingon or Pure Land schools,⁵⁶ within the large category of religious texts, analyzing them in the same context as rituals or images.⁵⁷

Davin's article describes the historical evolution of *kana hōgo* in Rinzai Zen and, to a lesser extent, in the Sōtō school. In doing so, his article showcases how the emergence of such texts was related to the social changes of the late Muromachi period (around the fifteenth century), with the decline of the shogunate's power and through it of the warrior class patronage forcing Zen monks to engage with a broader audience. This trend was amplified in the Edo period when a more extensive public gained access to knowledge of Zen teachings through the publication of *kana hōgo*.

Davin also demonstrates how the texts themselves—especially sources attributed to Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275–1351) and Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394–1481)—functioned in a preaching context, not only through their contents but also their language, their doctrinal value, as well as their concrete function. He concludes by showing that this literature cannot be understood as a fruit of so-called popular religion distinct from that of learned monks and that it can be seen as an important example of "lived religion" in the period covered by this volume.

56. Abe Yasurō, *Chūsei Nihon no sekaizō* 中世日本の世界像 (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2018), 290–91.

57. See for example Koida Tomoko 恋田知子, "Amamonzeki oyobi amadera: Josei no manazashi no moto ni aru shūkyō tekusuto" 尼門跡および尼寺:女性のみなざしの許にある宗教テキスト, in *Chūsei bungaku to jūin shiryō, shōgyō* 中世文学と寺院資料・聖教, ed. Abe Yasurō (Tokyo: Chikurinsha, 2010), 501–23. This article showcases *kana hōgo* held in a nunnery (*amadera* 尼寺) and made mostly between the mid-sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries.

Spatiality and Materiality

There is an increased awareness that what we call “religion” goes far beyond doctrine: the cultic spaces, their decoration, the garments used by the clergy, the objects of piety, the gestures of devotion, the intonation of the voice when reciting a prayer or a mantra, etc., are central aspects of the religious experience. Not only that: it is also through them that the doctrine manifests itself to the devotees and, inevitably, evolves. The three articles in this section interrogate the spatiality and materiality of religious practice.

Several researchers have recently advocated studying religion through a spatial approach. More and more books and articles are centered on a specific site (i.e., a temple, a shrine, or a mountain) or a particular environment (the sea, the mountains);⁵⁸ to take but one example, our understanding of the anti-Christian policy of the Tokugawa has dramatically improved, thanks to the research on the location of the shrines and temples built to fight against (or substitute) the forbidden faith.⁵⁹

The organization of the “religious space” is also relevant for studying the rituals. The pioneering works of Takatori Masao 高取正男 (1926–81) have shown the ties between sacred and secular architecture in ancient Japan; the *nando* 納戸 (storeroom) in a house and the *ushirodo* 後戸 (backdoor) in a temple or shrine, that is, the most remote spaces in a building, were generally allotted to a particularly “irascible” and dual guardian deity.⁶⁰ Yamada Masanori 山田雅教, a specialist in medieval True Pure Land, contends that the undervaluation of rituals within this school—and, more broadly speaking, within Japanese Buddhism—dates back to the nineteenth century. He argues that the spatial and material organization of the Honganji’s cultic halls reveals the evolution of the doctrine throughout the centuries and how it was delivered to the devotees.⁶¹

Markus Rüsçh’s article in this special issue concerns the multifarious meanings of secret spaces within three underground movements related to True Pure Land Buddhism, but not necessarily under its control or with the same understanding of the *nenbutsu* 念仏, the invocation of Amida Buddha’s name: the Kakure Nenbutsu 隠れ念仏 (Covert Shin Buddhists, groups of devotees in Satsuma 薩摩 and Hitoyoshi 人吉 domains whom the Honganji recognized and supported), the Kakushi Nenbutsu 隠し念仏 (groups still active today that practice a secret form of *nenbutsu*

58. For instance, for more on Mount Togakushi 戸隠 (in present-day Nagano Prefecture) and Shugendō, see Caleb Swift Carter, *A Path into the Mountains: Shugendō and Mount Togakushi* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2022). Fabio Rambelli has recently edited a volume on sea-related religion in Japanese history: *The Sea and the Sacred in Japan: Aspects of Maritime Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

59. Carla Tronu, “Anti-Christian Measures in Nagasaki during the Early Edo Period (1614–44),” in *Religion, Power, and the Rise of Shinto in Early Modern Japan* (see note 17), 47–60.

60. Doi Hiroshi 土居浩, “Takatori Masao ni okeru nando no kami no ichizuke: Sono Kon Wajirō jūkyō ron no hatten-teki keishō ni tsuite” 高取正男における納戸の神の位置付け: その今和次郎住居論の発展的継承について, *Jinbun gakubō* 人文学報 113 (2019): 91–104.

61. Yamada Masanori, *Chūsei Shinshū no girei to kūkan* 中世真宗の儀礼と空間 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2021).

rejected by the Honganji), and the Kayakabe カヤカベ (originally a confraternity of Satsuma similar to other Kakure Nenbutsu confraternities that mingled True Pure Land Buddhism with local beliefs surrounding Mount Kirishima 霧島). Rüsich's approach combines the study of ritual spaces and writings penned or used by the religious leaders; by doing so, he clarifies the different logics behind the recourse to secrecy: concealment can serve to magnify or enhance the religious experience (Kakushi Nenbutsu),⁶² ensure a purified space for the cultic practice (Kayakabe), or avoid repression (Kakure Nenbutsu). The decoration deployed in these secret spaces also reveals the central doctrinal tenets of the three groups.

Much effort has been devoted to analyzing Japan's pantheon and the combinatory paradigm that underlies it, especially in the medieval period. Bernard Faure's three volumes on the gods, buddhas, and "intermediary" deities whose identity and origin are generally impossible to retrace, have greatly helped to refine our understanding of what he calls the rhizome-like structure of Japanese religiosity in the Middle Ages.⁶³ Some scholars have tried to follow the trajectory and evolutions, throughout the centuries, of specific deities, such as Shōgun Jizō 勝軍地藏 ("Jizō the Victor," or 將軍地藏, "Jizō the General")⁶⁴ or Maso 媽祖 (Ch. Mazu),⁶⁵ originally a Chinese maritime deity incorporated within the Taoist pantheon that found its way to early modern Japan, first in Nagasaki and later in other regions of the archipelago, via the monks of the Ōbaku 黄檗 Zen school. Such studies often rely on an iconographic approach.

This approach also characterizes Suzuki Kenkō's article; it focuses on two early modern hanging scrolls (*kakejiku* 掛け軸) kept in blacksmiths' houses in Tohoku. The iconographic method allows him to trace the historical ties around Mount Gassan 月山 (in present-day Yamagata Prefecture) between Sanbō Kōjin 三宝荒神—a "Janus-face" occupational god who originated from the daily activities of the commoners—Shugendō, Tendai Buddhism, and the blacksmiths. It discloses the highly combinatory nature of Kōjin and how this cult spread throughout Northern Japan.

Andrea Castiglioni's article also examines several hanging scrolls from Tohoku. It explores through these artifacts the ties between cultic materiality and religious

62. Concerning the meanings of secret spaces in the ritual of another religious tradition, see Andrea Castiglioni's article on *buchū kanjō* 峰中灌頂 ("consecration on the peak"), the initiation ritual for the transmission of the Dharma among Shugendō ascetics: "*Buchū Kanjō: Secret Dharma Transmission in the Shugendō Mountain-Entry Ritual*," in *Rituals of Initiation and Consecration in Premodern Japan: Power and Legitimacy in Kingship, Religion, and the Arts*, ed. Fabio Rambelli and Or Porath (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 391–406.

63. The University of Hawai'i Press published the three volumes: *Gods of Medieval Japan*, vol. 1, *The Fluid Pantheon* (2016); vol. 2, *Protectors and Predators* (2016); vol. 3, *Rage and Ravage* (2022).

64. Kuroda Satoshi 黒田智, *Tatakau shinbutsu no zuzōgaku: Shōgun Jizō to chūsei shakai* たたかう神仏の図像学:勝軍地藏と中世社会 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2021).

65. Kikuchi Noritaka 菊地章太, "Chūsei, kinsei ni okeru dōkyō shinkō no denpa: Maso sūhai no kakudai o tegakari ni" 中世・近世における道教信仰の伝播:媽祖崇拜の拡大を手がかりに, in *Nihon shūkyōshi*, vol. 4, *Shūkyō no juyō to kōryū* 宗教の受容と交流, ed. Satō Fumiko 佐藤文子 and Uejima Susumu 上島亨 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2020), 275–95.

devotion in the worship of the late Edo-period and early Meiji-era Mount Yudono 湯殿—an essential site for Shugendō practitioners located in present-day Yamagata Prefecture. These scrolls stood at the crossroads of multiple interactions between the religious professionals and the lay devotees: the former empowered these objects via the ascetic seclusion they performed at the Immortal Valley (Senninzawa 仙人沢), and the latter maintained their “spiritual energy” through the monthly gatherings of confraternities (*kō* 講). Furthermore, Castiglioni’s contribution emphasizes the emotional and sensorial impact provoked by these scrolls on the devotees.

Heresy and Deviancy in Early Modern Japanese Religions

The compound *seija* 正邪 (“orthodoxy and deviancy”) frequently appears in the latest research on early modern Japanese religions.⁶⁶ There are ongoing discussions around the demarcation of orthodoxy and heresy by the secular authorities, the Buddhist school, and even the commoners. The three articles in the last section deal with Christianity, Edo Japan’s heresy par excellence, and underground religious organizations closely monitored by the rulers. These were not epiphenomenon in number; many Japanese were attracted by practices, rituals, and creeds outside the legally established religious framework.

Ōhashi Yukihiro 大橋幸泰 has been reflecting on what he calls “heterodox religious activities” (*itan-teki shūkyō katsudō* 異端的宗教活動), that is, movements at the fringe of religious lawfulness that were more or less severely repressed by the authorities depending on the political and socioeconomic context.⁶⁷ To avoid harsh punishments that could disrupt socioeconomic activities, the domains and the *bakufu* generally labeled these groups or their practices and creeds as *ishū* 異宗 (“heterodoxy” or “religious deviancy”), *ihō* 異法 (“heterodox religious law”), *isetsu* 異説 (“heterodox discourse”), or *kikai* 奇怪 (“bizarre”). They refrained from using terms such as *ja* 邪 or *Kirishitan* even when dealing with underground Christians.⁶⁸

According to Yasumaru Yoshio, the authorities generally perceived with apprehension the religious phenomenon in itself, though there was a “dangerousness ranking,” Christianity being on the top of it.⁶⁹ Historians have been reassessing the evolution of the authorities’ attitude toward religions from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. For example, it has been demonstrated that the implementation

66. Besides Ōhashi Yukihiro’s research (see note 67), Kobayashi Junji’s book mentioned above (note 48) also offers a reflection on the notions of orthodoxy and deviancy in early modern Japanese religions.

67. The main results of Ōhashi Yukihiro’s research can be read in *Kinsei senpuku shūkyō ron: Kirishitan to kakushi nenbutsu* 近世潜伏宗教論: キリシタンと隠し念仏 (Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 2017).

68. Kate Wildman Nakai has considered in an article some cases of religious practices deemed suspicious and therefore investigated by the authorities in the late Edo period: “Deviant Practices’ and ‘Strange Acts’: Late Tokugawa Judicial Perspectives on Heteropraxy,” in *Religion, Power, and the Rise of Shinto in Early Modern Japan* (see note 17), 75–88.

69. Yasumaru Yoshio, *Kamigami no Meiji ishin: Shinbutsu bunri to haibutsu kishaku* 神々の明治維新: 神仏分離と廃仏毀釈 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979), 42–43.

of the ban on Christianity in the first decades of the Edo period was far from unified and synchronic.⁷⁰ Research on the Fujū Fuse 不受不施, an exclusivist faction within Nichiren Buddhism that rejected the religious system conceived by the Tokugawa, has shown that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the rulers agreed to exempt its devotees from specific religious donations (*kanjin*) even though its regional professionals could be, from time to time, severely punished. It reveals that the handling of this group by the authorities was more complex than previously thought.⁷¹ Concerning the late Edo period, there is a consensus that religious organizations or movements without official recognition were increasingly the target of the authorities.⁷²

Martin Nogueira Ramos's article focuses on the anti-Christian policy of the Shimabara 島原 domain (in present-day Nagasaki Prefecture) in the second half of the 1620s and the reaction of the Christian communities to it. Based on chronicles in Japanese and missionary (mendicant and Jesuit) reports in Portuguese and Spanish, it adopts a microhistorical perspective to understand better the dissensions within local society, the erratic nature of repression, and how individuals practiced religion in a critical situation. The primary sources reveal the pivotal role played by some lay leaders—both men and women—in the survival of Christianity, namely through the brotherhoods and the gradual substitution of the missionaries.

As mentioned above, there is a growing tendency to go beyond sectarian history by comparing religious traditions with entirely different backgrounds. Christianity, Nichiren Buddhism, and True Pure Land Buddhism, in particular, are often compared. Wasada Makoto 植田誠, for example, has examined the situations in which the clergy of these three religions tolerated temporary faith concealment by the lay devotees. The religious professionals generally did not expect their flock to die for refusing to abjure their beliefs openly.⁷³

In his article, Ōhashi Yukihiro reflects on the premises (and limits) of coexistence among commoners with different religious backgrounds in early modern Japan. It also discusses the episodes in which the secular authorities would interfere in the religious activities of ordinary people. Ōhashi considers three underground movements of Kyushu: the hidden Christians, the Kakure Nenbutsu of Satsuma domain, and the Kakushi Nenbutsu of Tajiro 田代, an enclave of Tsushima 対馬 domain located close to present-day Kurume 久留米 City in Fukuoka Prefecture. He argues, first, that the vagueness of orthodoxy's boundaries was favorable to the

70. Ōhashi Yukihiro, *Kirishitan minshūshi no kenkyū* キリシタン民衆史の研究 (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 2001), 100–31.

71. Dan Shiā ダン・シアー [Dan Sherer], “Chūsei kinsei ikōki ni okeru ‘Fujū Fuse’ no igi to sono henka” 中世近世移行期における「不受不施」の意義とその変化, *Kyōtōgaku, Rekisaikan kiyō* 京都学・歴史館紀要 4 (2021): 162–78.

72. See the abovementioned research by Ōhashi Yukihiro and Kate Wildman Nakai (notes 67–68).

73. Wasada Makoto, “Shinkō hitoku no jittai to sono shisō-teki haikai: Chūsei–kinsei shoki o taishō ni” 信仰秘匿の実態とその思想的背景: 中世–近世初期を対象に, *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史 854 (2019): 16–32.

survival of underground religious movements and, second, that in most cases, the commoners would not put forward their religious identity but rather their social status. By doing so, tensions regarding religious matters were relatively uncommon. However, he points out that at the end of the Edo period, the rulers and those ruled became more concerned with the orthodoxy of religious practices, and conflicts arose within the population.

In the past few decades significant progress has been made in research on women's roles in the Japanese religious realm.⁷⁴ As in other sectors of society, men *generally* and *theoretically* had the upper hand: the idea that the path for women toward salvation was hindered by the “five obstacles” (*goshō* 五障) gradually spread during the Edo period; moreover, women could not access specific numinous sites (*nyonin kekkai* 女人結界)⁷⁵ and in most shrines, they occupied at best secondary and subordinate roles as *miko* 神子.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding this misogynistic atmosphere, systematic research on women's roles in Japanese Buddhism and case studies on itinerant female religious professionals such as the Kumano *bikuni* 熊野比丘尼 have shown that religions could also be a space of creativity and initiative for women.⁷⁷ Retrieving women's agency cannot be achieved through prescriptive documents; it is necessary to turn on “lived” documents such as diaries (*nikki* 日記) or letters to visualize better the dynamics within households and the involvement of women in religious networks.⁷⁸ Miyazaki Fumiko 宮崎ふみ子 has emphasized the pivotal role of Matsushita Chiyo 松下千代 (1799–1872) within Fujidō 不二道, a religious movement centered on Mount Fuji whose founders, Jikigyō Miroku 食行身祿 (1671–1733)

74. For an overall view on the topic, see Barbara R. Ambros, *Women in Japanese Religions* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

75. On the *nyonin kekkai* on Mount Fuji, see Miyazaki Fumiko 宮崎ふみ子, “Nyonin kinsei: Fuji tohai o megutte” 女人禁制: 富士登拝をめぐる, in *Shirizu Nibonjin to shūkyō: Kinsei kara kindai e*, vol. 6, *Tasha to kyōkai* 他者と境界, ed. Shimazono Susumu et al. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2015), 51–86. It should be noted that according to Miyazaki, the limitations imposed on women gradually loosened at the end of the Edo period thanks to the actions of several religious actors and the tenacity of some lay women.

76. Nishida Kaoru 西田かほる, “Josei shūkyōsha no sonzai keitai: Jinja miko kara” 女性宗教者の存在形態: 神社神子から, in *Shirizu Nibonjin to shūkyō*, vol. 6, *Tasha to kyōkai*, 87–113.

77. On early modern Buddhism and women, see Sugawara Ikuko 菅原征子, *Kinsei no jōsei to bukyō* 近世の女性と仏教 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2019). For a case study, see Gina Cogan's book on the “princess nun” Bunchi 文智 (1619–97), a daughter of Emperor Go-Mizunoo 後水尾 (1596–1680, r. 1611–29) and the founder of Enshōji 円照寺, a Rinzaï temple located in Nara: *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014). On the Kumano *bikuni*, see the fourth part of Ikumi Kaminishi, *Explaining Pictures: Buddhist Propaganda and Etoki Storytelling in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006); and Nei Kiyoshi 根井浄 and Yamamoto Shigeo 山本殖生, eds., *Kumano bikuni o etoku* 熊野比丘尼を絵解く (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2007).

78. For an overview of the latest research on the history of early modern Japanese women, see the introduction in Bettina Gramlich-Oka, Anne Walthall, Miyazaki Fumiko, and Sugano Noriko, eds., *Women and Networks in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020).

and Rokugyō Sanshi 禄行三志 (1766–1841), advocated for a more egalitarian society between men and women, poor and rich people.⁷⁹

In this special issue, Miyazaki’s article focuses on a group of self-proclaimed Kirishitan located in Osaka and Kyoto—three women and two men—who were arrested in 1827 and executed in 1829. Their “Christianity” was a patchwork of elements drawn from diverse sources, including anti-Christian polemical literature, Chinese texts penned by Jesuit missionaries, and practices from local folk religions. The article examines the activities of this small group from a gender perspective. It reveals that the motives for becoming “Christians” and the practices differed between men and women: if the former mainly sought worldly success and were attracted to this faith by intellectual curiosity, the latter, who were Inari mediums, hoped to obtain supernatural powers through performing austerities, intoning the mantra of Tentei, the Lord of Heaven, and observing celibacy.

79. Miyazaki Fumiko, “Networks of Believers in a New Religion: Female Devotees of Fujidō,” in *Women and Networks in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, 145–75.