

'Buddhism', 'Shinto' and the Oracles of the Three Shrines.

Prof. Brian Bocking
Bath College of Higher Education
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Brian Bocking is Professor and Head of the Study of Religions Department at Bath Spa University College, UK. He studied religion at the Universities of Lancaster and Leeds and was formerly lecturer in Japanese religions at the University of Stirling, Scotland and the University of Tsukuba, Japan. He has written widely in the area of Sino-Japanese religions. His publications include *Nagarjuna in China: A Translation of the Middle Treatise* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1995) and *A Popular Dictionary of Shinto* (Curzon Press, 1996)

Abstract

The 'Oracles of the Three Shrines' (Japanese: sanja takusen) is the name of a distinctive type of hanging scroll which has been continuously produced in Japan for almost 600 years. The scroll provides a useful 'window' through which to view the development of Japanese religion from the medieval period to modern times. In this paper, which is part of a larger

research project on the sanja takusen, I will attempt a comparison of two different versions of the scroll. My aim is to elucidate some changes and continuities in Japanese religion, particularly around the time of the `separation of kami and Buddhas' (shinbutsu bunri or shinbutsu hanzen) of 1868.

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Introduction

The `Oracles of the Three Shrines' (in Japanese sanja takusen) is the name given to a distinctive type of hanging scroll (kakejiku) which has been continuously produced in Japan for almost 600 years.(1) The common factor linking all the different versions of the sanja takusen scroll is the representation, by text or picture, of the famous `three shrines' (sanja) of Ise, Kasuga and Hachiman.(2) All versions of the scroll contain one or more of the following elements:

- The names or titles of the three shrines
- One or more oracular texts (takusen)
- Images of the personified deities of the shrines.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate two very different versions of the sanja takusen, which will be discussed in the present article. There are many other variant forms of the scroll.

Figure 1 is an example of a `standard' sanja takusen scroll, popular in Japan from at least the late 14th century onwards. It comprises the titles of the shrines or their deities (3) and three oracular texts, one for each shrine. Figure 2 shows a `post-Meiji'

scroll. It has different shrine titles, different oracle texts, and includes pictures of the deities. In the booklet Basic Terms of Shinto published by Kokugakuin University, the sanja takusen is described as follows:

Oracles of the three deities Amaterasu omikami, Hachiman Daibosatsu and Kasuga Daimyojin in. According to legend, the oracles appeared on the surface of the pond at Todaiji in Nara during the Shoo era (1288-1292). The oracles came to form the basis of moral teachings concerning pureness of mind, honesty and benevolence, and also contributed to the formulation and spread of Shinto doctrine. (4)

This brief description refers to the oracles themselves, rather than the scroll which became the means of their popular dissemination. In the recently published Shinto Jiten (Dictionary of Shinto) a more comprehensive entry on the sanja takusen is accompanied by an illustration of an

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early example of a sanja takusen scroll now held in the library of Kokugakuin University.(5) This scroll shows the names or titles of the three shrines (Ise in the centre, Hachiman on the right, Kasuga on the left). Below each shrine-name is the text of the shrine's respective oracle; a brief utterance attributed to each deity.

An English translation of the three oracles appeared in 1985 in The World of Shinto, an anthology of Shinto writings published by the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai

(Buddhist Promoting Foundation).(6) The Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, founded by Mr Numata, Yehan, head of the Mitsutoyo manufacturing company, is best known for its publication The Teaching of the Buddha, copies of which are left, like Gideon's Bibles, in hotel rooms throughout East Asia. The translation of the three oracles in The World of Shinto, corresponding to the standard sanja takusen scroll shown in Fig.1, runs as follows:

Hachiman Daibosatsu

Though one might attempt to eat a red-hot ball of iron, one must never eat the food of a person with an impure mind. Though one might sit above a blazing fire hot enough to melt copper, one must never go into the place of a person of polluted mind. This is for the sake of purity.

Tensho Kotai Jin gu

If you plot and connive to deceive men, you may fool them for a while, and profit thereby, but you will without fail be visited by divine punishment. To be utterly honest may have the appearance of inflexibility and self-righteousness, but in the end, such a person will receive the blessings of sun and moon. Follow honesty without fail.

Kasuga Daimyojin

Even though it be the home of someone who has managed for long to avoid misfortune, the gods will not enter into the place of a person with perverse disposition. On the other hand, even though a man be in mourning for his father and mother, if he be a man of compassion, the gods will enter in there.

Compassion is all important.

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This, with minor variations, is the 'standard' text found in most examples of the sanja takusen scroll and numerous commentarial works relating to it, from the late fourteenth century up to the Meiji Restoration of 1868.(7) The sanja takusen scroll was extremely popular in the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) and retained its influence well into the twentieth century. According to one of my elderly informants in central Japan, the moral teaching embodied in the scroll represented 'ppanteki' (widespread, popular) notions of religiosity during his own childhood in the 1920's.

Figure 2 shows a quite different version of the 'three shrines' scroll. This example, which I found in an antiquarian shop in Kobe in 1982, features the same three shrines of Ise, Hachiman and Kasuga. It is a sanja takusen scroll, yet it departs significantly in appearance and content from the standard version as described in the Shinto Jiten or The World of Shinto. For one thing, my Kobe scroll, which probably dates from the late 19th century, includes pictures of the three deities. For another, the text of the oracles is completely different from the standard wording given above. The text in the Kobe scroll is in fact drawn from the Nihongi, the 8th-century 'chronicle of Japan'. Three new passages replace the standard oracle texts on purity, sincerity and compassion with the following:

Amaterasu Sume Omikami commanded her August Grandchild, saying:- 'This Reed-plain-1500-

autumns-fair-rice-ear Land is the region which my descendants shall be lords of. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go! and may prosperity attend thy dynasty, and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure for ever.'

Amaterasu Sume Omikami took in her hand the precious mirror, and, giving it to Ame no Oshi-ho-mimi no Mikoto, uttered a prayer, saying: -'My child, when thou lookest upon this mirror, let it be as if thou wert looking on me. Let it be with thee on thy couch and in thy hall, and let it be to thee a holy mirror.

Taka-mi-musubi no Kami accordingly gave command, saying:- `I will set up a Heavenly divine fence and a Heavenly rock-boundary wherein to practise religious abstinence on behalf of my descendants. Do ye, Ame no Koyane no Mikoto and Futo-dama no Mikoto, take with you the Heavenly divine fence, and go down to the Central Land of Reed-Plains. Moreover, ye will there practise abstinence on behalf of my descendants.(8)

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In what sense are both of these scrolls `oracles of the three shrines', and what do their differences tell us about the development of Japanese religion and in particular the relationship between `Buddhism' and Shinto' in Japan?

The three shrines

The three shrines featured together in the sanja takusen are those of Ise, Kasuga and Hachiman. The Iwashimizu shrine of the bodhisattva Hachiman, situated on a mountain to the south-west of Kyoto, was established in 859 by the monk Gyokyo. It was greatly venerated by the imperial court, and later by the Minamoto clan. The Kasuga shrine, now called the Kasuga Taisha (Kasuga Grand Shrine), is located in Nara. Until 1868 the shrine formed part of what Grapard calls a 'multiplex' - a combined shrine-temple complex whose main elements comprised the Kasuga shrine and the Kofukuji Buddhist temple. (9) The deity of the entire sacred area was Kasuga daimyojin (the great deity of Kasuga). Kasuga was, amongst other things, the ancestral shrine of the powerful Fujiwara clan, who dominated the imperial court from the 10th -12th centuries. 'The Ise shrine' may, according to context, refer to one or both of the Inner and Outer shrines (Naiku, Geku) which constitute the imperial household shrine at Ise. The Inner shrine houses Amaterasu omikami (also read Tensho kotaijin), grandmother of Ninigi the legendary unifier of Japan, and great-grandmother of the legendary first Japanese emperor Jimmu.(10)

Under what the historian Kuroda, Toshio has called the 'kenmitsu' (exoteric-esoteric) system, the great shrine-temple complexes sanctified and thereby legitimated their own power and that of other elite groups such as the Fujiwara, the imperial court and the bakufu through the rituals and doctrines of esoteric Buddhism. Under the kenmitsu system the meaning of each of these shrines was primarily Buddhist; the shrine deities were part of the Buddhist pantheon.(11) Hachiman's title of

Daibosatsu (Great Bodhisattva) is used in most standard versions of the sanja takusen, and the Iwashimizu Hachiman shrine is first and foremost the shrine of a Great Bodhisattva. The usual title of the deity of Kasuga in the sanja takusen is Daimyoin (great illumined divinity), a term with Buddhist connotations. The Kasuga divinity was also known by the Buddhist name of Jihimangyo Bosatsu.(12)

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Ise seems to represent a slightly different case. Buddhist rituals and even Buddhist terminology were officially prohibited in the precincts of the shrine, though pilgrimages to the shrine by Buddhist priests were commonplace. However, the Tendai/Zen monk Muju Ichien, in his work Shasekishu, tells how during his pilgrimage to the Ise shrine in the Kocho era (1261-64) a shrine official explained to him the reason for the taboos on Buddhism:

In antiquity when this province did not exist, the deity of the Great Shrine [Amaterasu], guided by a seal of the Great Sun Buddha [Dainichi Nyorai, Mahavairocana] inscribed on the ocean floor, thrust down her august spear. Brine from the spear coagulated like drops of dew, and this was seen from afar by Mara, the Evil One, in the Sixth Heaven of Desire. 'It appears that these drops are forming into a land where Buddhism will be propagated and people will escape from the round of birth-and-death,' he said, and came down to prevent it. Then the deity of the Great Shrine met with the

demon king. 'I promise not to utter the names of the Three Treasures, nor will I permit them near my person. Therefore, quickly return back to the heavens.' When she had thus mollified him, he withdrew. Not wishing to violate that august promise, monks to this day do not approach the sacred shrine, and the sutras are not carried openly in its precincts. Things associated with the Three Treasures are referred to obliquely: Buddha is called 'The Cramp-Legged One [tachisukumi]; the sutras, 'coloured paper' [somegami]; monks, 'longhairs' [kaminaga]; and temples, 'incense burners' [koritaki], etc..

Muju concludes, in typical kenmitsu style:

'Outwardly the deity is estranged from the Dharma, but inwardly she profoundly supports the Three Treasures. Thus, Japanese Buddhism is under the special protection of the deity of the Great Shrine'.(13)

Broadly speaking, these 'top three' shrines represented the major centres of spiritual-temporal power in medieval Japan. It appears likely that the motif of 'the three shrines' predates the appearance of the oracles of the three shrines. In other words, these three shrines were understood to form a quintessential grouping before the sanja takusen oracle scroll emerged. A 14th century painting (14) resembling a sanja takusen but without the oracle texts, shows the resourceful emperor Go-Daigo (1288-1339; r.1318-1339) seated as a Buddhist priest. In each hand the emperor holds a vajra, the symbol of esoteric Shingon Buddhism, while above him like a canopy are the titles of the 'three shrines'. The image is evidently meant to portray Go-Daigo as

an emperor whose sacred authority derives from Buddhism and whose rule is endorsed by the major

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deities of the three most significant shrines. By the time the sanja takusen appeared, probably in the early part of the oei era (1394-1428), it appears that the character and significance of the 'three shrines' motif was already established.

The Three Oracles

Oracles are brief, authoritative utterances by deities, issued usually in response to a specific request. Oracles occupy an important role in many religious traditions including Buddhism, and techniques for obtaining oracles vary widely. Japanese history provides several significant examples of Buddhist priests using specialised techniques to seek oracular guidance from deities. In 735 the emperor Shomu resolved to set up a great statue of Roshana (Vairocana) at the Todaiji in Nara. In 742, with the project still incomplete, the Buddhist priest Gyogi travelled to Ise to seek oracular reassurance that the erection of the statue would not offend the native divinities.

Carrying a holy Buddhist relic, Gyogi journeyed as an imperial envoy to the great shrine of the Sun Goddess in Ise, to take her opinion as to the erection and worship of the great Buddha by the emperor... who was according to the native creed her descendant and her vice-regent upon earth.

Gyogi, then an aged man, after seven days and seven nights spent in prayer at the threshold of her shrine, received an oracle from her divine lips. Using (if we may believe the records) the astonishing medium of Chinese verse, she proclaimed in a loud voice that the sun of truth illumined the long night of life and death and that the moon of reality dispersed the clouds of sin and ignorance; that the news of the emperor's project was as welcome to her as a boat at a ferry, and the offering of the relic as grateful to her as a torch in the darkness....the Oracle was duly interpreted as favourable, and it was confirmed shortly afterwards by a dream in which the Sun Goddess appeared to the emperor as a radiant disc, and proclaimed that the Sun and the Buddha were the same.(15)

In 749, Emperor Shomu abdicated to become a novice monk in favour of his daughter the empress Koken, and a second oracle was reported, this time from a kami called Hachiman whose distant shrine was at Usa in Kyushu. Hachiman expressed a desire to travel to the capital. His palanquin, the prototype of the mikoshi, was met on the road by a retinue of high officials, received at the capital and installed in a special shrine. A high-born priestess of his shrine (who was also a Buddhist nun), then worshipped in the Todaiji in a ceremony attended by the whole

court including the retired Shomu, Empress Koken and

five thousand monks. Dances were performed and 'a cap of the first grade was conferred upon the god'. Subsequently extensive lands were granted to the Todaiji.(16)

Empress Koken abdicated in her turn in 758, handing over power to a young male relative, Emperor Junnin, who was advised by a member of the powerful Fujiwara family. Koken herself was counselled by a monk called Dokyo who exercised a Rasputin-like influence over her and, according to popular legend, shared a good deal more than religious ideas with his mistress, now herself a nun. Enmity between Dokyo and the Fujiwaras ended in bloodshed and victory to the Dokyo/Koken faction. The young emperor Junnin was disgraced, banished to the island of Awaji and strangled soon afterwards. In 764 Koken re-assumed the throne under the name of Empress Shotoku and appointed Dokyo as minister of state, from which position, living in her palace, he rose to the unprecedented rank of Ho-o (Dharma-king, Pope) by 769. Dokyo then went too far. Recalling Hachiman's triumphal entry into Nara two decades earlier, he announced that a further oracle had been issued by Hachiman via a medium in a trance, this time to the effect that if Dokyo were made emperor, the country would enjoy perpetual tranquillity. The empress however sent an envoy named Wake no Kiyomaro to consult Hachiman on her behalf. The envoy returned to say that Dokyo, not being of imperial blood, could not succeed to the throne. A furious Dokyo had Wake no Kiyomaro exiled, but when the empress died the following year Dokyo fell from power.(17)

Such events confirmed the bodhisattva/deity Hachiman to be a significant and authoritative source of oracular utterances. According to legend, the Oracles of the Three Shrines appeared miraculously

floating on the surface of a pond (18) at the Todaiji during the Shoo era (1288-1293). However, the earliest description of a sanja takusen proper occurs over a century later in a work called the Daigo Shiyosho produced around the end of the oei period (1394-1428). Recent Japanese research on the sanja takusen (19) suggests that the three oracles now found together in the sanja takusen scroll probably began life as separate Buddhist oracles attributed to Hachiman. The current consensus is that the sanja takusen was originally produced within the context of 'Ryobu Shinto' i.e. within the kenmitsu exoteric-esoteric system of thought and practice which interpreted the kami or other locally enshrined deities as traces or manifestations of the Buddhas

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and Bodhisattvas. Mention of the oracles in the Daigo Shiyosho suggests that the sanja takusen was connected in some way with Buddhist priests of the Southern Capital established by emperor Go-Daigo, and specifically with the priestly lineage group of the Daigoji temple.(20)

The sanja takusen and the meaning of shrines

Shrines and sacred places of many different kinds are ubiquitous in Japan. There is little dispute about where shrines are located, but the important question is always 'what does the shrine mean'? The meaning of shrines, whether ancient or recently-established, has been constantly redefined and renegotiated throughout Japanese history. An

important function of the sanja takusen is to establish the meaning of the three major shrines - and by extension all shrines - within an overall kenmitsu religious world-view. The 'standard' version of the sanja takusen shown in Fig.1 does this by relating each of the three shrines to one of three 'inner' spiritual and behavioural qualities or virtues already prominent in Buddhist canonical thought. Hachiman enjoins purity(shojo), Ise honesty (shojiki) and Kasuga compassion (jihi). In the oracle of Kasuga, for example, it is made clear that the 'inner' Buddhist virtue of a compassionate mind far outweighs the effect of any external evil, even the pollution normally attaching to the death of one's own parents.

Kasuga Daimyojin

Even though it be the home of someone who has managed for long to avoid misfortune, the gods will not enter into the place of a person with perverse disposition. On the other hand, even though a man be in mourning for his father and mother, if he be a man of compassion, the gods will enter in there. Compassion is all important.

The incorporation of the 'three shrines' motif into the kenmitsu Buddhist thought of the Daigoji lineage was overshadowed in the late fifteenth century by a further appropriation, this time of the sanja takusen itself, by the entrepreneurial shrine priest Yoshida, Kanetomo (1435-1511). Born into the 21st generation of the Yoshida or Urabe family, Kanetomo inherited responsibilities for the Yoshida shrine in Kyoto at a time when the court nobility was increasingly unable to support this shrine to the ujigami (tutelary deity) of the Fujiwara clan. Kanetomo

accordingly developed what amounted to a 'new religion' based at the shrine. He incorporated all the major elements of the kenmitsu system, adapted Shingon rituals and Chinese five-elements theory and explained that the yaoyorozu no kami (myriads of kami) formed a unity rather than an unconnected pantheon and that this unity of gods should be worshipped at his own shrine on Mt. Yoshida.(21) In 1489 Kanetomo attracted the vigorous hostility of the Ise priesthood when he announced that the deity of Ise had transferred its residence to the Yoshida shrine. Kanetomo's understanding, heavily influenced by Buddhism and Chinese thought and entirely consistent with the import of the sanja takusen, was that the kami (deities), rei (spirit) and kokoro (human heart or mind) comprised a form of absolute existence 'prior to the creation of heaven and earth'. The meaning of the shrines, according to Yoshida teaching, was intimately bound up with the inner spiritual state of the worshipper.(22)

Yoshida 'shinto' was extremely successful. As a result of Kanetomo's initiatives the Yoshida family had by the end of the fifteenth century secured the right to award ranks to all shrines and priests throughout the country, outside the imperial household. This privilege was retained until 1868 when shrine management passed to central government. Because the sanja takusen text was used to spread Yoshida Shinto, Yoshida Shinto was also extremely influential in the dissemination and popularisation of the sanja takusen text. From the fifteenth century onwards knowledge of the scroll and its

contents spread from the imperial family to the samurai classes and the common people, with the help of waka verse renditions of the oracles (which were in Chinese) and through simple explanatory books. So completely did the sanja takusen become identified with the teachings of Yoshida Shinto that the eighteenth century scholar Ise, Sadatake (1717-84) came to the conclusion that Kanetomo had forged the sanja takusen for his own benefit in order to propagate Yoshida Shinto.(23)

Despite such doubts cast upon the authenticity of the sanja takusen, the scroll was widely regarded as having a positive moral influence and the sanja takusen continued to receive endorsement - even as a pious forgery - from most religious quarters throughout the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), because of the encouragement it offered to popular piety and the cultivation of virtue.(24) Up to the Meiji restoration large quantities of commentarial works, scroll pictures and prints related to the sanja takusen were produced for the masses, devotional rituals and services

(tsutsumi) were organised and votive lanterns were dedicated to the 'three shrines' in various areas. Mori refers to a 'sanja takusen faith' which deeply permeated the whole country and had not declined up to recent times.(25) This does, however, beg the question of what the 'sanja takusen faith' meant in practice at different times for different people.

There is some evidence to suggest that during the course of the Tokugawa period the sanja takusen

became more and more closely associated with the cult of pilgrimage to Ise, a practice fostered by the priests and pilgrim-masters (oshi) of the Ise Outer Shrine (Geku). Pilgrimage to Ise depended on interpretations of the meaning of the shrines supplied by the Watarai priestly lineage at Ise, interpretations which came to eclipse those of Yoshida Shinto. According to Watarai teachings, the deities of the Ise shrine, including Amaterasu, were the source of 'original enlightenment' or innate purity (the Buddhist notion of hongaku) . Consequently, a pilgrimage to Ise or participation in rituals associated with Ise organised by oshi became a means of self-purification, progress towards enlightenment and the uncovering of the spiritual virtues of purity, honesty and compassion enjoined by the deities in the sanja takusen. (26) It may be that pre-Meiji illustrated examples of the sanja takusen (i.e. scrolls with personified images of the deities, as well as their titles and oracles) first emerged in connection with the flourishing pilgrimage trade to Ise, and that this led to more emphasis on the central shrine of Ise and the figure of Amaterasu and less concern with the content of the oracles. However, this is a topic that requires further investigation. (27)

The sanja takusen after the Meiji Restoration of 1868

The 'post-Meiji' scroll shown in Figure 2 differs from the standard sanja takusen of Figure 1 in all three aspects (titles, texts and images) . It reflects very clearly the 'separation of kami and Buddhas' (shinbutsu hanzen) formally promulgated a few months after the Meiji restoration in 1868 and consolidated throughout the Meiji period. Firstly,

the titles of the shrines/deities are changed. Kasuga and Hachiman's titles of Daimyojin and Daibosatsu become, like that of Amaterasu, Daijin (also read okami) 'Great Kami'. (28) Secondly, as earlier indicated, three extracts from the Nihongi take the place of the 'purity, honesty and compassion' oracles of the standard sanja takusen. (29) Finally, modern pictures of the deities have been added to the scroll.

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The re-naming and re-titling of deities and shrines was a major preoccupation of the new Shinto administrators of the early Meiji period. Shrine officials throughout the country were requested in 1868 to submit a history of their shrine and its traditional Buddhist associations, so that the process of 'dissociating' the kami from Buddhism could then take place. Thousands of shrines with Buddhist names, or shrines which enshrined Buddhist or other 'non-Japanese' deities such as Myoken, were renamed or their deities replaced. (30) In most cases the new names were drawn from the ancient chronicles and in particular the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters, completed in 712). This text was considered by scholars and champions of National Learning (kokugaku) to be the most authentic repository of pre-Buddhist Japanese culture. The renaming of Kasuga and Hachiman in the post-Meiji version of the sanja takusen reflects this process. Kasuga Daimyojin, the deity of both the Kasuga shrine and the Kofukuji temple, became the kami of the Kasuga shrine, separate from Kofukuji. (31) Hachiman after 1868 was no longer a 'Great Bodhisattva' - instead, his identity became

essentially that of the deified emperor ojin, whose mother, the legendary Empress Jingu, had invaded Korea. (32)

The texts of the oracles in the post-Meiji sanja takusen shown in Fig. 2 perform the same function as the texts in the 'standard' version; they establish the meaning of shrines. However, the meaning of the shrines has now changed. The layout of the three oracle texts in the post-Meiji version of the sanja takusen indicates that they are not expressly linked to the three deities. In fact, all the texts are related to Ise and its deity Amaterasu (now shorn of all Buddhist associations). The first section of text is implicitly concerned with the recent 'restoration' of the emperor to power. It deals with the authority of the imperial line.

Amaterasu Sume Omikami commanded her August Grandchild, saying: " This Reed-plain-1500-autumns-fair-rice-ear Land is the region which my descendants shall be lords of. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go! and may prosperity attend thy dynasty, and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure for ever."

The second section explains the sacred significance of the Grand Shrine of Ise, where the sacred mirror, one of the three imperial regalia of mirror, sword and jewels, is enshrined. After the Meiji restoration Ise became the apex of a government-administered, nationwide system of shrines. Ordinary people were defined as parishioners (ujiko) of local shrines and simultaneously as ujiko of the Ise shrine. (33)

Amaterasu Sume Omikami took in her hand the precious mirror, and, giving it to Ame no Oshi-ho-mimi no Mikoto, uttered a prayer, saying: -'My child, when thou lookest upon this mirror, let it be as if thou wert looking on me. Let it be with thee on thy couch and in thy hall, and let it be to thee a holy mirror.

The final section describes the origin and purpose of shrines (a sacred area defined by a fence or boundary). Early in the Meiji period the ritual calendar of local shrines was revised and newly calibrated with the ritual cycle of the imperial household shrines. This created a link between local shrines, the 'national' Ise shrine and the divinised figure of the emperor. The meaning of local and national shrine ritual is redefined in this new version of the scroll as ritual on behalf of the imperial line rather than ritual undertaken for the benefit of the individual. (34)

Taka-mi-musubi no Kami accordingly gave command, saying:- 'I will set up a Heavenly divine fence and a Heavenly rock-boundary wherein to practise religious abstinence on behalf of my descendants. Do ye, Ame no Koyane no Mikoto and Futo-dama no Mikoto, take with you the Heavenly divine fence, and go down to the Central Land of Reed-Plains. Moreover, ye will there practise abstinence on behalf of my descendants. (35)

Finally, the pictures of the three 'Great Kami' (oami, Daijin) epitomise the 'separation of kami and

Buddhas' that occurred in the Meiji period. Hachiman, riding a horse, carries no hint of his Bodhisattva past; he may even be thought to bear some resemblance to the Emperor Meiji. (36) Kasuga, mounted on a deer, is similarly devoid of any Buddhist imagery. (37) In this example he is similar in appearance to the Chinese god of longevity Shou Lao (J: Jurojin). The central figure, Amaterasu, is outlined by the rays of the rising sun and displays the hree imperial regalia' of jewels, mirror and sword. By contrast, pre-Meiji images of Amaterasu (including those in examples of the sanja takusen not illustrated here) show her as a Buddhist figure with a kohai (Buddhist halo) carrying a hoju or wish-fulfilling gem. Amaterasu even appears as a male figure in some pre-Meiji contexts. Many questions about the provenance and significance of modern personified, feminine images of Amaterasu remain to be addressed, particularly in light of the widespread view that Shinto is 'aniconic'. However, consideration of this topic must wait for another occasion. (38)

The sanja takusen today

The sanja takusen scroll is sufficiently important and well-known to be mentioned in most contemporary Japanese encyclopaedias and historical reference works, but my own experience suggests that few people in Japan today are familiar with the sanja takusen motif. As we have seen, the scroll was very popular in Japan before and especially during the Tokugawa period. In its post-Meiji form it was widely distributed up to 1945. In fact, the

post-Meiji version of the scroll is still produced and sold in scroll shops in Japan today, though even Shinto officials seem largely unaware of this. At Ise in November 1996 I was able to purchase a large modern colour-printed version of the scroll almost identical to that shown in Fig.2. (39) Few people today, however, would be able to identify such a scroll as 'assanja takusen'. As we might expect from the recent history of Shinto, most Japanese people inevitably see the scroll simply as a representation of Amaterasu, the deity of Ise, with two attendants. The sanja takusen is shown in retailers' scroll catalogues alongside scrolls of Amaterasu alone, or of Amaterasu and Toyouke, the deities respectively of the inner and outer shrines of Ise. (40) Neither the post-Meiji nor the standard version of the scroll is currently available at the Kasuga Taisha in Nara or at the Iwashimizu Hachimangu in Kyoto, the two shrines featured in the sanja takusen along with Ise.

Conclusions

The extent of the differences between the pre- and post-Meiji versions of the 'same' scroll raises a number of questions about the development of Japanese religion, in particular the relationship between 'Buddhism' and 'shinto' before and after 1868, the first year of the Meiji government. In recent years a good deal has been written about the transformation in Japanese religiosity which took place around the time of the Meiji Restoration. (41) Studies of individual shrines and temples have revealed radical discontinuities, mostly dating from the time of shinbutsu bunri or shinbutsu hanzen, the 'separation of kami and Buddhas' carried out by government decree as one of the first acts of the

new Meiji regime. (42) This 'separation' was designed above all to undermine the powerful position previously enjoyed by Buddhist institutions under the Tokugawa shogunate. It took the form of attacks on Buddhist temples, the desecration of traditional Buddhist iconography and the violent destruction of any Buddhist artefacts found in shrines. Government support of Buddhism was withdrawn and thousands of Buddhist clergy left the priesthood or reverted to the role of shrine priest, in shrines newly 'cleansed' of Buddhist influences. (43)

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In the following decades a new state-sponsored form of Shinto developed out of the 'taikyo senpu undo' or 'Great Promulgation' campaign of 1870-1884. (44) The new Shinto took as its focus the figure of the divine emperor Meiji, and it extolled Confucian virtues of loyalty and respect for superiors. In the first half of the twentieth century these new Shinto teachings developed into the official and ostensibly 'non-religious' nation-building, imperialist ideological structure known retrospectively as state Shinto. After 1945, government support and sponsorship of Shinto was removed, but the post-Meiji understanding of Shinto as a national religion focusing on the Ise shrine where the sun-goddess Amaterasu, the emperor's ancestor, is enshrined, largely remains. Shinto today is often portrayed as an ancient pre-Buddhist Japanese tradition. In fact, the origins of modern Shinto lie largely in the 19th century. The 'separation of kami and Buddhas' in 1868 marked a radical break with a Japanese religious past in which 'shinto', insofar

as it existed at all, was understood to be part of Buddhism.

The degree of discontinuity that exists between pre- and post-Meiji Japanese religion calls into question the very categories of 'Buddhism' and 'shinto' used by modern writers and scholars. Such conceptual categories, it can be argued, themselves developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as part of the modernisation process in Japan. The separation of kami and Buddhas required that the Buddhist past of both the emperor and the shrines be forgotten. Since the late 19th century Buddhists and Shintoists in Japan have found that it serves their own interests to emphasise their institutional independence from each other, despite the fact that Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples are, as ever, attended by the same worshippers. Modern Western scholars and students of Buddhism, too, have been willing to 'orientalise' Buddhism, regarding it as somehow untouched by its social and religious context. This tendency often manifests in a scholarly focus on the study of canonical texts rather than on Buddhism in practice.(45)

In turn, the term 'shinto' has acquired an undeserved aura of concreteness and solidity among foreign observers, one which it does not enjoy in Japan. Shinto has become Buddhism 'other', especially among outside observers of Japanese religion; whatever Buddhism is, Shinto is not. Sometimes, for example, the impression is given that it was Shinto alone, not Buddhism or other religions in Japan, which fostered militarism and imperialism in the pre-war period. It is commonly said in accounts of Japanese religion that Shinto has to do with life while Buddhism

deals with death; that Buddhism is rich in iconography while Shinto is aniconic, that Buddhism is doctrinal while Shinto is inherently vague in matters of belief, and so on. Such simplistic oppositions are easily contradicted by observation of the complexities of religious life in Japan. Yet the idea, successfully promulgated by the modernising Meiji government, that 'Buddhism' and 'shinto' are - and therefore always have been - separate entities, is now well-entrenched. This affects the way in which we study Japanese religions before the Meiji period, for how can we even talk about the history of Japanese religion without first agreeing the meaning of such terms as 'Buddhism' and 'shinto'? The sanja takusen offers one solution to this problem. The scroll proclaims itself neither 'Buddhist' nor 'shinto', though it undoubtedly attracts these labels at different times. It simply offers us a window through which to observe Japanese religiosity, at different times and in different circumstances.

In this brief paper have attempted to show that the motif of the three shrines and their oracles has a long and significant history in Japan. Moreover, a study of the sanja takusen provides a fresh perspective on the radical and far-reaching changes that occurred in Japanese religion in the latter part of the 19th century. These changes have, amongst other things, profoundly conditioned our own, modern, understanding of the relationship between 'shinto' and 'Buddhism' in Japanese history.

Notes

1 I first became aware of the sanja takusen while undertaking research for A Popular Dictionary of Shinto (London, Curzon Press, 1996). During a research visit to Japan in Autumn 1996 funded by The British Academy I was able to collect more than 20 different examples of the sanja takusen. These will form the basis of a fuller study of the history of the scroll, to be published by Curzon Press in 1999. Comments or further information on this topic are welcomed by the author. Please contact Prof. Brian Bocking, Study of Religions Dept., Bath Spa University College, Bath BA2 9BN, UK.

2 In some examples of the sanja takusen the Kamo shrine occurs instead of Kasuga. In this paper 'the three shrines' refers to the shrines, or precursors of the shrines, currently referred to as Ise Daijingu (Ise), Iwashimizu Hachiman (Kyoto) and Kasuga Taisha (Nara)

3 It is impossible to make any general statement about the relationship between a 'deity' and a 'shrine' in

Japan, since the identity, name and conception of the enshrined deity (or as Ashkenazi prefers, 'moot entity' - see M Ashkenazi Matsuri, Honolulu, U. Of Hawaii Press, 1993) and its relationship with the divinised shrine varies enormously from shrine to shrine and in different periods of history.

4 Kokugakuin University, Institute for Japanese

Culture and Classics (eds.) Basic Terms of Shinto Tokyo, Rev. Edn 1985 (1958).p.49. This definition focuses on the oracles rather than their medium of dissemination (the scroll). Both are referred to as sanja takusen.

5 Inoue, Nobutaka (ed.) Shinto Jiten Tokyo, Kobundo, 1994, p.299. Kokugakuin Daigaku in Tokyo is one of the two major Shinto universities in Japan, the other being Kogakkan University, Ise.

6 Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (eds.),Tokyo, 1985, pp.40, 118. The English translation by Norman Havens was based on modern Japanese translations by Prof. Kamata, Jun 'ichi prepared for the Japanese version of the The World of Shinto (See p.v-vi).

7 Some early examples of the sanja takusen contain completely different texts; for example, in the late Kamakura period some Pure Land Buddhist sects (Shin and Ji-shu) incorporated the 'three shrines' motif into their teachings. Details of a number of such versions of the sanja takusen, whose study falls outside the scope of this paper, are given in Nishida, Nagao 'sanja takusen no seisaku ' (The production of the sanja takusen) in Nishida's collected Nihon Shintoshi Kenkyu (4).

8 The translations here follow Aston W.G. (tr.) The Nihongi Tokyo, Tuttle, 1972

9 Allan G Grapard, The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History. Berkeley, U. Of California Press, 1992

10 Under the influence of Watarai Shinto the 'Ise' deity was successfully identified with the Outer Shrine, the pilgrimage destination which was under

Watarai control. See below.

11 See Kuroda, Toshio 'The Development of the Kenmitsu system as Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy' in Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 23:3-4 (1996) pp.233-270. All the articles in this issue of JJRS are devoted to Kuroda's work.

12 'Bodhisattva rounded practice of compassion'. See Grapard The Protocol of the Gods pp.79-80.

13 Robert E Morrell 'Muju Ichiens Buddhist-Shinto Syncretism: Shasekishu, Book 1' Monumenta Nipponica XXVIII, 4 (1973) p.457

14 Go-Daigo Tenno gazo (portrait of Emperor Go-Daigo). Nambokucho period (1337-92). Property of Shojoko-ji, Shinagawa-ken.

15 Sansom, G B Japan: A Short Cultural History, Rev. Edn. Tokyo, Tuttle 1973, p.133. The imagery, as Sansom notes, is purely Buddhistic.

16 Sansom op.cit. p.183

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17 Sansom op. cit. p.184

18 A 'Pond of the three shrines' has recently been excavated and attractively rebuilt in the precincts of the Todaiji. Why the oracle should appear in a pond is not explained. There are many legends in Japan of treasures entering this world from the underwater realm. See Carmen Blacker The Catalpa Bow, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1975, pp.75-78. I

am not aware of another example of a scroll or text appearing in this way, although buried or otherwise concealed scriptures are common in Mahayana Buddhism.

19 Japanese published research on the sanja takusen mostly dates from before 1945. The following discussion draws on the sanja takusen entry by Mori in Shinto Jiten p.299-300 and a recent article by Nagashima, Fukutaro 'sanja takusen no genryu' (The origin of the sanja takusen) in Nihon Rekishi, January 1991 pp.49-52. It updates an article of the same title by the same author published in Kokugakuin Zasshi 46:8 (1940).

20 Shinto Jiten p.299 Daigoji, head temple of the Daigo branch of Shingon Buddhism, is located in Fushimi ward, Kyoto. Daigo (ghee) refers to the fifth and most clarified period of the Buddha's teachings (literally, the quintessential teachings). The temple, established in 874-6 was visited by emperor Daigo in 907 and maintained links with the imperial court thereafter. The 'Southern' court and capital was established in Yoshino by Emperor Go-'Daigo (i.e. Daigo II) in 1336, while Ashikaga Takauji set up the competing emperor Komyo in Kyoto, following the end of the Hojo regency and the destruction of Kamakura in 1333. Sansom op. cit. p.349

21 For this reason Yoshida Shinto is also known as 'Yui-itsu Shinto' (unique, peerless or unitarian Shinto)

22 Kanetomo also established a link between the sanja takusen and the origin of the Yoshida shrine, and associated the Yoshida shrine with the imperial family by conducting memorial services for the

imperial family using a sanja takusen scroll personally inscribed by the emperor. These and other matters are explained in Kanetomo's work Kagura Korokki also known as the Sansha takusen honroku. (Shinto Jiten p.299).

23 Ibid. p.299-300.

24 According to Mori (Shintyo Jiten p.299-300) dissemination of the scroll was supported by popular Shintoists, Ishimon Shingaku-ists and others connected with Buddhism who supported the 'unity of the Three Teachings' (of Buddhism, Shinto and Confucianism). Zen priests made copies of the sanja takusen, among them Hakuin (1686-1789) whose boldly inscribed version of the sanja takusen shrine titles is preserved in the Jingo Chokokan museum in Ise. The scroll shown in fig. 2, photographed by courtesy of Mr Maezawa, Eiichi of Seikan-do Maezawa Co., Kyoto, is by the Zen monk Kokan (Edo period).

25 Shinto Jiten p300.

26 The Watarai clan were responsible for the Outer Shrine (Geku) at Ise, which until the Meiji restoration eclipsed the Inner Shrine as a focus of religious devotion. For a recent account of the development of Watarai Shinto see Mark Teeuwen Watarai Shinto: An Intellectual History of the Outer Shrine in Ise CNWS Publications vol.52. Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996.

27 A number of late Tokugawa (i.e. mid-19th century) examples of the sanja takusen show the titles of the

shrines and (Buddhist-style) images of the three deities, without the oracle texts. This may be because the ideas expressed in the oracles had become unfashionable or, more prosaically, that the medieval Chinese text could no longer be understood by those buying the scroll.

28 The title of Hachiman daijin is also found in some earlier examples of the scroll. However, after the Meiji restoration the more usual title of 'Great Bodhisattva' (daibosatsu) was prohibited.

29 The three texts selected from different parts of the Nihongi are known as the sanchoku (three imperial decrees) and are well known in 'State Shinto' contexts.

30 Myoken ('wondrous seeing'), originally an Indian deity, is the divinised form of the Pole Star or Great Bear constellation and was believed to protect the country, avert disaster, lengthen the life span and (because of the name) avert eye diseases. In most cases Myoken was replaced by the officially-favoured zoka no kami or 'kami of creation', three deities from the age of the gods referred to in the Kojiki.

31 See Grapard *The Protocol of the Gods* p.249ff. for an account of the day in 1868 on which kami and Buddhas were 'separated' at Kasuga and the monks of the Kofukuji became Shinto priests.

32 The Bodhisattva Hachiman comprised Emperor ojin, his wife Himegami and his mother, the warlike Empress Jingu. In the sanja takusen in Fig. 2 he is depicted as yumiya Hachiman 'bow and arrow Hachiman', the god of archery and war.

33 On the promotion of Ise as a national shrine after 1868 see Helen Hardacre *Shinto and the State, 1868-1988*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1989, p.83ff.

34 Hardacre *op.cit.* Ch.5

35 The translations here follow Aston W.G. (tr.) *The Nihongi*

36 I am grateful to Carmen Blacker for this intriguing suggestion.

37 The association of the deer (actual and symbolic) at Kasuga with the deer park at Benares where the Buddha taught his first sermon was displaced in Post-Meiji times by the legend of the kami Takemikatsuchi's arrival on a deer from Kashima.

38 An important article by Toba, Shigehiro on the iconography of Amaterasu has recently appeared in the *Bulletin of the Shinto Institute*, Kogakkan University (*Shinto Kenkyusho Kiyō*) Vol.13, March 1997 pp.119-180. Attention is currently focused on the figure of the Ise deity Uho Doji as the precursor of

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modern images of Amaterasu. I am grateful to Profs. H Sakurai and M Motozawa of Kogakkan University for drawing this article to my attention.

39 Amaterasu's expression is less solemn in the 1996 version.

40 Most scrolls in these catalogues are of Buddhist

subjects. I have found no example of the 'standard' sanja takusen in retailers' catalogues. I was told that it is no longer printed, although hand-inscribed versions are occasionally made to order.

41 For example Kuroda, Grapard, Hardacre, *op. cit.*

42 There were two decrees, the first on March 28 and the second in April, 1868.

43 Before the Meiji period it was normal for Buddhist priests to be qualified to perform rituals at shrines to the kami as part of their priestly duties.

44 See Hardacre, Ch.2.

45 Widely-read student textbooks on Buddhism still tend to focus on canonical literature, the role of 'founders' and idealised characterisations of Buddhist history and belief. A notable recent exception is Donald Lopez *Buddhism in Practice* Princeton, Princeton UP, 1996.