

Sōtō Zen and the Inari Cult: Symbiotic and Exorcistic Trends in Buddhist and Folk Religious Amalgamations

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We revere the Dharma, whether manifested in a round pillar, a garden lantern, a buddha, a fox, a demon or a deity, a man or a woman.

Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō* "Raihaitokuzui"¹

FOLK RELIGIOUS AND BUDDHIST INARI IMAGES

This paper investigates the historical and ideological roots of the syncretism between Sōtō Zen and the cult of Inari, which venerates the god of the rice harvest and fertility often represented by its chief messenger and avatar, the fox (*kitsune*). This example of Buddhist-folk religious syncretism is most evident in a small network of branch temples of Sōtō which, although affiliated with one of the sect's two main temples at Eihei-ji, has its own main temple in Toyokawa city in Aichi prefecture southeast of Nagoya and several subsidiary temples, including one in Tokyo Akasaka. This institution is referred to simultaneously, or at times interchangeably, as Myōgon-ji temple (the Buddhist name) and Tokoyawa Inari, and it enshrines at least three forms of the fox/rice deity which are considered mutually supportive as protector deities for the temple-shrine complex and its followers: the Buddhist deity Dakini-shinten depicted as a female bodhisattva astride a flying white fox enshrined in the dharma-hall; the indigenous Inari fertility deity known here as Toyokawa Inari in a shrine hall; and a variety of small fox icons which are guardians of these images.

Although Dakini-shinten is labeled Buddhist, the formation of its imagery and iconography has little precedent in Indian or Chinese models and seems to reflect a prior syncretism with the native god. The rites, festivals, and chants for the worship of this deity are performed by Sōtō clergy, many of whom are trained at Eiheiiji, for which Myōgonji serves as a regional teaching temple. This occurs despite the fact that medieval folklore records contain tales in which Sōtō monks, as well as numerous other Buddhist practitioners, are known for their ability to exorcise demonic trickster foxes. The distinctive combination of elements in which an indigenous deity is more highly venerated by a Sōtō temple dedicated in part to the practice of zazen than Buddhist gods, and yet still is recognized as having a malevolent potential, becomes a focal point for rethinking the function of syncretism in Japanese religion. It also calls for a reevaluation of the two-tiered, "trickle-down" assimilative model of *honji-suijaku* theology (Buddhist gods as the original ground and indigenous spirits as their manifestation), in order to account for the interaction of multiple symbols of the Inari gods.

THE INARI CULT

The cult of Inari is surely one of the oldest and largest folk religious movements in Japan.² According to legend, the origin of the cult is traced back to 711 A.D. when a bird's flight auspiciously sited the first shrine on a mountain top at Fushimi in the southern outskirts of Kyoto, and the cult was also patronized in its early years by Kūkai (774-835), who declared Inari the protector deity of Tōji temple which was built with wood from Fushimi mountain. Fushimi Inari began receiving imperial patronage during the Heian period when the first large shrine building was erected in 823 in gratitude for successful prayers for rain. A century later three shrines were built on separate hills that established a connection between Inari, based initially on local, seasonal rice-growing gods of the paddy fields (*ta no kami*) who regularly return to the mountains (*yama no kami*) for winter hibernation, and the classical Shinto mythology of *Kojiki/Nihongi* fertility gods. Inari, which according to traditional etymology means "rice plant (*ine*) growth (*naru*)," was linked especially to Ukemochi, a female deity who, it is said, was disembodied by an angry father and gave rise to vegetation which sprang from her interred body parts.³ Although the legends of pre-Heian Inari activities are unreliable, it is plausible that some of the rituals for rice planting/transplanting/harvest that were incorporated into the cult actually stemmed from local fertility rites and field dances originating from much earlier, pre-Buddhist times.

Claiming over 30,000 shrines, which may actually be an underestimate given the profusion of small, single unit shrines, *torii*, and fox

icons contained within the compound of large Shinto shrine and Buddhist temple compounds as well as located in otherwise secular spaces, the Inari cult is remarkably widespread and diffused into nearly all regions and population sectors. Although the cult originated out of a belief in the efficacy of rituals for the growing and reaping of rice, it has come at least since the Tokugawa era to be associated with notions of productivity, especially economic prosperity, in a much broader sense than agrarianism. In other words, as forms of economic production and lifestyle shifted in the early modern and modern eras from predominantly agricultural to commercial and industrial models, an important transition also occurred in Inari worship. Now, Inari is patronized not just by farmers but by people involved in any sort of commercial venture who seek success and prosperity, from large corporations to merchants, shopkeepers, and even *geisha* and *yakuza*. Inari shrines are often decorated with emblems and talismans donated as votive offerings by businesses and shops which inscribe their names on banners, *torii*, lanterns, and red bibs draped around the necks of fox statues who are imagined to be eating their favorite foods, fried sweet tofu (*aburage* or *kitsune-dofu*) or noodles (*kitsune-udon*). While quite a few of the shrines are located in secluded or rural spots allowing for a communion with nature that recalls the agrarian origins, including the cult center at Fushimi which has numerous mountain paths and lakes, many others stand within the heart of an urban area, such as the entranceway of department stores. At the same time, even the Fushimi shrine has many signs of commercialism within its compound, such as teahouses, shops selling votive candles and other items, as well as vending machines. In the Inari cult, commerce is not repudiated or suspended but rather sacralized, protected, and promoted by ritual activities. The benefits of Inari extend to the realm of fertility and childbirth as evidenced by the fact that the Fushimi shrine is patronized by barren women or women who have had miscarriages. In some interpretations Inari is a force of general providence watching over and responding to all human yearnings and aspirations.

It is impossible to determine exactly how and why the fox became the main icon of Inari because there are no historical records or systematic theological discussions that explain or justify the connection. Perhaps in prehistoric times foxes were seen, often at twilight or night, prowling around outlying areas such as rice paddies nearby but just out of the reach of the mainstream of human activity, and their presence was considered a good omen for the prosperity of the crop. The images in fox iconography use numerous symbols of fertility — long phallic tails, offspring lovingly cared for by maternal foxes, and elaborate ceremonial wedding processions. Foxes are also infernal animals

who often dwell in openings burrowed in graveyard areas, thus giving them an association with death that has several important implications for the Inari cult. First, the foxes are related to the inevitability of dissolution and decay in the seasonal cycle of planting and harvest, that is, their presence and absence reflects the way growth and flourishing is accompanied by periods of decline and fallowness. Also, the link to the site of graves makes the fox appear threatening and a harbinger of divine retribution, such as an unyielding crop or famine, which requires participation in rituals and festivals as a purification.

It is probably the case that foxes were connected with Inari first as its messenger linking the human world subject to physical limitations with the divine realm populated by gods and buddhas (*kami* and *hotoke*). However, Inari did not have another single representation distinct in form or gender; for example, human images of Inari are portrayed with different ages and features ranging from an old man with a white beard to a beautiful young woman with long flowing hair, though both carry sheaves of rice and are transported by a white fox. Thus, the fox became equated or identical with Inari, and eventually it came to be the *kami* itself, superseding though not excluding all other symbols. Fox imagery in the Inari cult also draws on rich associations with widespread folklore beliefs in the power of *bakemono* (shapeshifting animals) to transfigure into human form, or to metamorphose freely between animal, human, and divine incarnations. The fox is by no means the only *bakemono* to be enshrined and worshipped. The other prime example is the snake, associated with the god Benzaiten whose imagery is imported from the Hindu goddess of learning, Sarasvati, and additional examples include the dog, cat, and wolf as well as various ghosts, goblins, spirits, and apparitions, such as *tengu*.⁴ However, the stories of fox spirits are particularly pervasive throughout the history of Japanese literature and art, including, to cite a few examples, tales in medieval morality literature (*setsuwa bungaku*), Noh and Kabuki theater, *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, as well as the contemporary fiction of Enchi Fumiko and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, the films of Kurosawa Akira and Mizoguchi Kenji, and the paintings of Masami Teraoka. In these cultural expressions, the fox is alternately seductive/deceptive and protective/self-sacrificing. As a *bakemono*, the fox represents a doorway into a liminal realm, a veil between worlds where conventional distinctions between the natural and supernatural, demonic and beneficent, human and divine are confounded and reconstructed. As the Inari deity, the fox symbolizes threatening forces which demand pacification and purification (*o-harai*) while also offering the power to carry out an exorcism which pacifies and purifies. Like other *kami* classified as *onryō*, or *goryō*, or vengeful, malevolent spirits inflicting calamities, the power of

the fox can be both transformed and transformative, the latter often symbolized by a white fox (*byakko*) image.

In many of the examples of literature and art mentioned above, malevolent foxes intrude on the spirits of vulnerable people and transfigure into human form as a means of deception or as punishment, but their true vulpine shape remains unseen and invisible until an exorcism releases the purified person from the cause of possession. A prominent theme in the fox (and snake) *bakemono* myths is the opposition set up between universal Buddhist symbols which have the capacity to perform an exorcism and the localized non-Buddhist cult that utilizes the spirit's ability of transfiguration, often into the form of an irregular Buddhist priest or a beautiful, seductive woman, in order to bewitch and betray its victims. Buddhist exorcism is based on ritual gesture or the utterance of sacred language, such as a *nembutsu*, *dharani*, *sūtra* passage, or bestowing of the precepts as performed by a variety of cult figures. These include Amida and Kannon devotees, Vinaya masters, and Nichiren priests, in addition to Zen masters, who have often been in competition with non-Buddhist practitioners such as yin/yang wizards, *yamabushi* ascetics, or in modern times with New Religion movements such as the *okiyome* rite in Mahikari.⁵ Therefore, while Inari portrays the fox as a benevolent protector, a feature common to numerous cultural expressions places Buddhist exorcism in contrast to bewitching vixens.

A prime example from *setsuwa* literature (*Konjaku monogatari* 16.17), is the tale of Yoshifuji who is led astray by a beautiful vixen and sires a child. Yoshifuji feels that he has not a care in the world, but his worried brothers recite the *nembutsu* and chant sūtras, calling on Kannon to help them find him. Suddenly a man with a stick, a messenger of the Buddhist deity, arrives at his new home, scares everyone in the household away, and Yoshifuji crawls out from the storehouse under his old home. He starts to show off his new son to his older boy, declaring the young boy to be his true heir, but there is in reality no one with him, and a servant finds lots of foxes under the storehouse. It turns out that Yoshifuji had been tricked into marrying a fox. A yin-yang diviner — in this case of equal value as Buddhist ritualism — is called upon to perform an exorcism and eventually he comes to his senses. He realizes that "(t)he thirteen days he had spent under the storehouse had seemed to him like thirteen years, and the few inches of clearance between the ground and the floor of the building had looked to him like a stately home. The foxes had done all this."⁶

Yet, this kind of exorcistic contrast between Buddhism and folk religiosity is not entirely clear-cut as Buddhism also evokes the image of the fox in a positive way. For example, according to a story used in

several texts citing early Chinese sources, the *Sanbōe* and *Shōbōgenzō*,⁷ a fox living innumerable kalpas ago was chased by a lion and fell into a well from which there was no escape. The fox recites a verse expressing the impermanence of all things without any regret about dying. Suddenly Indra appears and, on hearing the fox invoking names of buddhas, assumes it is a bodhisattva. Indra lowers his heavenly robe to help the fox climb out of the well, and then prostrates before the *bakemono* he acknowledges as his master. On the other hand, even within the positive structure of theriomorphic deification there is still a considerable degree of bivalency and polarization. For example, in the Inari cult the beneficent fox is often pitted against and exorcises the demonic fox linked to the Izumo region where people are said to practice fox sorcery.⁸ This framework for a Fushimi-Izumo polarity recalls the Yamato (central Japan)-Izumo (eastern Japan) conflict played out in classical mythology in which the sun goddess Amaterasu from Yamato competes with and usually defeats her brother, the storm/moon god from Izumo, Susano. Also, the Buddhist deity Dakini-shinten, portrayed riding on a white fox while carrying rice and enshrined in the Toyokawa Inari shrine as well as at Fushimi Inari and Iizuna shrine in Shinano province has long been associated with sorcery and uncanny witchcraft. Thus, both folk religions and Buddhism identify with and at the same time seek to eliminate the fox, either in tandem or in opposition with each other.

FUSHIMI INARI AND TOYOKAWA INARI

Despite its size, endurance, and pervasive cultural resonances, Inari/fox worship is generally classified as an example of *shinkō*, or a cult based on folk beliefs and practices, as opposed to a *shūkyō*, or a sect officially affiliated with one of the major traditions, Shinto or Buddhism. Whereas a *shūkyō* has a main temple or shrine that oversees numerous branch institutions, while often allowing for tremendous regional diversity and flexibility of interpretation or application of doctrine, *shinkō* refers to a loose-knit, diffused network of associations and amalgamations without a clear, official center of authority. Although it played such a key role early on, the Fushimi shrine has probably never functioned as a central authority and most other Inari shrines have remained independent. Since the period of Heian imperial patronage, the prominence of Fushimi has declined, and it was not recognized as part of "sect Shinto" in the Meiji era. However, it is necessary to qualify the distinction between *shinkō* and *shūkyō* for several reasons. First, the complete history of Fushimi Inari is difficult to determine because a fire during the Onin War in 1468 destroyed all the existing records. Also, the government-sponsored Meiji era campaign for the separation

of Buddhism and Shinto (*shinbutsu bunri*) caused the elimination, re-writing, or distortion of many of the records and remainders of Inari worship and its connections with Buddhism, including the Shingon temple once at the foot of Fushimi, Aizenji. Furthermore, Inari worship is different than other kinds of *shinkō* which are entirely localized and limited to a particular location, such as a sacred mountain or shrine site, or to a single, specific deity. Inari shrines are incorporated into hundreds of Buddhist temples throughout the country.

But the main qualification involves the intimate, syncretistic relation between the Inari cult and the Sōtō Zen sect. One of the most important factions of Inari *shinkō* has formed vital symbiotic links with a branch of Sōtō Zen, whose primary site is the Toyokawa Inari shrine which is right in the midst of the Sōtō Myōgonji temple in Aichi prefecture, a main temple of the sub-sect which has branches in Tokyo Akasaka, Osaka, Yokosuka, Fukuoka, and Sapporo. In addition to these branch temples there are also numerous locations referred to as "divided spirit sites" (*bunreisho*) in which the spiritual power has been transmitted from a parent to daughter shrine through an icon, in this case *kitsune*, which is ritually animated and empowered. Toyokawa Inari is second only to Fushimi in importance for the overall cult of Inari, and in some senses, especially but not only in its impact on Buddhism, its role surpasses the other shrine. Here, the Inari/fox pantheon is constructively syncretized and assimilated with Buddhist and Zen deities and shrines, primarily in the form of Dakini-shinten, almost to the point of an indistinguishability between folk religion and Buddhism contributing to the *shinbutsu shūgō* tradition.⁹ This is a prime example of what Allan Grapard calls the "combinative" character of Japanese religion, such that "the words Shinto, Buddhism, sect, and religion are inadequate because they compartmentalize a reality that is not cut up in the manner implied by those words..."¹⁰ Although Toyokawa Inari is the most significant example, dozens of other Buddhist temples, including Rinzai Zen, Nichiren, and Pure Land, include a fox shrine (in addition to those which include an icon of some other local animistic deity) representing an indigenous manifestation (*gongen*) or guardian spirit (*chinja*) of the universal Buddha-nature enshrined in a main Buddhist object of worship (*honzon*) at which monks routinely pray for the protection and prosperity of their institution.

This connection with Inari occurs despite the fact that the most famous of all legends of fox exorcism performed by Buddhists involves a Sōtō monk, Gennō Shinshō (1329-1400), a disciple of Gasan Jōseki (1276-1366), the main descendant of Keizan (1264-1325) and abbot of Sōjiji temple whose followers are credited with the tremendous regional expansion of medieval Sōtō by subduing and converting local spirits. Ac-

cording to legends recorded in Sōtō texts and popular literature, in 1389 Gennō exorcised one of the most demonic of foxes, the infamous, malevolent "nine-tailed fox" that took possession of a "killing stone" (*sesshō seki*) from which it was murdering people and other living things. According to one version of the origin of this anti-shrine, the fox spirit dwelling in the stone located in a moor near Mt. Nasu north of Nikkō was originally expelled from India and took the guise of a lady who married an emperor in Japan. When he recognized her vulpine status, the fox spirit turned itself into this noxious stone. The stone is actually volcanic rock emitting poisonous gases. Bashō, traveling in this area on the way to see Saigyō's weeping willow at Ashino, as recorded in *Oku no hosomichi*, reported that the "stone's poisonous vapors were as yet unspent, and bees and moths lay dead all around in such heaps that one could not see the color of the sand beneath."¹¹ Legends record that yin-yang master Abe no Yasunari, featured in numerous *setsuwa* tales, had already expelled the demon from the capital and into the provinces where it was subdued by Genno's use of a purification stick and his chant based on one of the best-known phrases of Dōgen (1200-53), "*genjōkōan* is the great matter."¹²

The Sōtō-folk religion syncretism is surprising on another level because of the apparent sharp contrast between the exclusive emphasis on the attainment of "worldly benefits" (*genze riyaku*) in Inari *shinkō* and the focus on zazen-only in Sōtō Zen. A visit to Fushimi Inari on a festival day finds the believers climbing the mountain through a tunnel of *torii* among throngs who are making offerings, watching *kagura* dances or listening to the chanting of priests, seeing the construction of new shrines or icons in the compound, and stopping at a cafe or vending machine for refreshments. A Zen monastic temple, on the other hand, creates an atmosphere of calmness amid nature and detachment from worldly striving or activity. The pursuit of *genze riyaku*, which could be considered an ignoble use of Buddhist discipline based on desire for personal gain rather than self-mastery, has long been criticized in Buddhist texts such as the *Digha Nikāya*, and this type of criticism has been forcefully asserted in the recent Critical Buddhist (*hihan bukkyō*) methodology of Sōtō scholastics such as Hakamaya Noriaki.¹³

Yet, it is well-known that Sōtō Zen for lay persons since at least the fourteenth century has been quite different than Sōtō training designed for monks or nuns in terms of incorporating popular practices such as divination, pilgrimage, posthumous ordinations, and the veneration of indigenous deities.¹⁴ In the context of popularization, monastics who attained spiritual awakening in part through visions and dreams traditionally made displays of their meditative powers (*zenjōriki*) for proselytizing, often at the behest of or in competition with native gods

(as a matter of symbiosis or of exorcism). The fact that a great number of the approximately 14,000 Sōtō institutions are prayer temples (*kitō jūin*) reflects a significant degree of syncretism with indigenous deities based on the pursuit of *genze riyaku*. Azuma Ryūshin lists over two dozen local gods or spirits which are typically enshrined as buddha-images (*butsuzō*) along with traditional Buddhist deities (buddhas and bodhisattvas) such as Shakuzon (Śakyamuni), Amida (Amitābha), Monju (Mañjuśrī), Miroku (Maitreya), Fugen (Samantabhadra), and Kannon (Avalokiteśvara).¹⁵ Some of the most important examples of indigenous gods enshrined in Sōtō temples include Dōryōzon, a *tengu* derived from a historical monk, venerated at Saijōji temple in Shinagawa, and Hakusan Myōjin Daigongen, the god of Mt. Hakusan which is a *yamabushi* center near Eihei-ji, venerated in several temples in Fukui and Ishikawa prefectures. Nor is it unusual to find shrines for the Sixteen Rakan and the deities of good fortune, Benzaiten and Daikokuten, who are sometimes included in the Shichifukujin pantheon (Seven Gods of Good Luck). Furthermore, although the Zen scholastic tradition of philosophical commentaries composed in the Sung Chinese and Kamakura Japanese periods often refutes and makes a mockery of supernaturalism and syncretism, these texts are frequently ambivalent rather than one-sidedly critical. For example, Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* "Raihaitokuzui" fascicle endorses fox worship, in asserting that "we revere the Dharma, whether manifested in a round pillar, a garden lantern, a buddha, a fox, a demon or a deity, a man or a woman," although it is not clear that this refers specifically to Inari *shinkō*. Other *Shōbōgenzō* passages are more skeptical or negative in regard to folk beliefs.

Even within the context of wide-ranging Sōtō syncretism, Toyokawa Inari is distinctive in the extent to which a folk deity supersedes the conventional Buddhist images also found in the shrine. To some extent, the Dakini-shinten enshrinement follows a Japanese assimilative model, perhaps borrowed from Tibetan and Chinese esotericism, of reconstructing Hindu deities as Buddhist gods, such as Benzaiten (Sarasvatī), Bonten (Brahma), and Bishamonten (Vaiśravaṇa), which are considered more powerful than and become the original ground (*honji*) for the native kami. Yet, Dakini-shinten, labeled Buddhist, is only barely recognizable as having a precedent or model in South Asian, Central Asian, or Chinese beliefs — other than, literally, in name only from quasi-Tibetan sources — and probably reflects the influence of Inari worship. Usually, the history of Sōtō amalgamations is attributed to Keizan, or to the Keizan-Gasan lineage, and the ideological foundations for syncretism are explained in terms of the assimilative philosophy of *honji-suijaku* (original source-manifestation) which reflects the Mahāyāna

doctrine of two truths. While there is no question about the role of Keizan and the doctrine of assimilation in understanding Toyokawa Inari, it is also important to recognize and examine other factors and materials which may amplify and complement as well as correct and overcome some of the assumptions underlying an emphasis on these two factors. From a historical perspective, it is necessary to see the role played by Kūkai legends and Tendai thought as well as early Zen monastic codes and commentaries, including Dōgen's, which helped set the stage for Sōtō syncretism. In addition, it is helpful to use a theological model that is more flexible than *honji-suijaku*, which presumes two levels of gods, in order to understand the role of at least three levels, including the *honzon*, *gongen*, and *chinjū* deities, in addition to the function of the rhetoric of anti-supernaturalism and the ritual of exorcism, which are operative at Toyokawa Inari and other temples that enshrine the fox.

I will preface a discussion of historical and ideological influences with a description of the Toyokawa Inari shrine-temple and its role in the Sōtō sect.

THE TOYOKAWA INARI/MYŌGONJI TEMPLE NETWORK

Myōgonji temple, or Empukuzan Myōgonji, is a Sōtō Zen institution, yet to most people, including many of its patrons as well as casual visitors or tourists, it is known as Toyokawa Inari, and this in large part reflects a deliberate strategy by Sōtō to promote the site as a prayer temple. In other words, the Inari name has a higher recognition factor and makes clear the *genze riyaku* orientation of the temple despite the fact that the Inari rites are performed by Sōtō clergy. Although the emphasis on praying for worldly benefits is not unusual, it is especially interesting given the role of Myōgonji in the overall structure of the sect. The original temple of the Sōtō sect is Eiheiji temple in Fukui prefecture, founded by Dōgen, which underwent a prolonged period of declining influence beginning with the struggles over the third-generation abbacy in the late thirteenth century, and the movement to Daijōji temple of the original third abbot, Tettsū Gikai (1219-1309) who first came to Dōgen when he was at Kōshōji temple outside Kyoto in 1241 as a follower of the Darumashū sect. Meanwhile, much of the prominence shifted to Sōjiji temple in the Noto peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture, founded by the sect's fourth patriarch, Keizan, who began at Daijōji and also founded Yōkōji temple. Sōjiji's role as the center for the rapid expansion of the sect increased significantly after Keizan's death, primarily through the efforts of Gasan and two other figures: Gasan's second-generation follower, Ryōan Emyō (1337-1411), and his third gen-

eration follower in a different sub-lineage, Jochū Tengin (1365-1440). Ryōan and Jochū created numerous local temples through the assimilation of indigenous gods which were affiliated with or were converted into branch temples of Sōjiji.

In the early sixteenth century Eihei-ji, undergoing a revival, was declared the main temple (*honzan*) by the government, but a century later the Tokugawa government decreed that Sōtō would have two *honzan*, Eihei-ji and Sōjiji, which was moved during the Meiji era to Yokohama, a situation which continues today. Because of the impact of the Keizan-Gasan lineage, and primarily due to Ryōan and Jochū, well over ninety percent, and perhaps as many as ninety five percent, of Sōtō temples are historically affiliated with Sōjiji, although Eihei-ji's prestigious role as the temple of the founder commands great respect so that in terms of policy decisions the loyalties are probably closer to fifty percent for each *honzan*. However, Myōgon-ji is one of the five percent of the temples which are directly aligned with Eihei-ji, and it is also a local teaching temple, which means that many of the monks trained there are sent to Eihei-ji and vice-versa. That is, monks performing Inari rites at Myōgon-ji, which involve special vestments, chants, and drums, either arrive already trained or are on their way to Eihei-ji for further instruction in a strict Dōgen-style approach to zazen meditation, and the rites are viewed as an expression of the spiritual empowerment of zazen. Furthermore, Myōgon-ji is considered a *honzan* of its own small network of temples, with the Tokyo Akasaka temple the most prominent branch or subsidiary temple (*betsuin*) primarily because of its proximity to the sect's main educational facility, Komazawa University.

The Myōgon-ji foundation legend (*engi*) is only available though an unreliable historical source which is reported in the temple's publicity literature and pamphlets (some of the details of which apparently have been changed over the years)¹⁶ and cited in the dictionary, *Zengaku daijiten*.¹⁷ This states that Kangan Zenji (1217-1300), the third son of Emperor Jōtoku and a Sōtō disciple of Dōgen, had a spiritual experience (*reiken*) in which he envisioned the deity Dakini-shinten carrying a rice plant on her back and riding a white fox as a benevolent kami (*zenshin*) and a protector deity (*chinju*) of the Buddhist Dharma. Based on his vision Kangan had a statue constructed of Dakini-shinten, and in 1441 (the era of rapid Sōtō expansion) a sixth generation follower of Kangan enshrined this icon along with a thousand-armed Kannon at Myōgon-ji (the current compound dates from 1536 and gained a sizable *danka* or parish in the Edo period). The statue was later brought to the residence of Ōoka Echizen no kami (Akasaka Hitotsugi in Tokyo), once a disciple of an Aichi Myōgon-ji priest, where it remained until it was enshrined in 1887 in its present location at the Tokyo Toyokawa Inari temple in Akasaka.

The temple's *engi* apparently refers to a legend about the origin of Dakini-shinten, which was originally a Hindu deity, though its name seems to be based on a Tibetan Buddhist term, that came to be enshrined and worshipped in Japan and assigned the role of the *honzon* of Inari *gongen*, and which is usually depicted as a female bodhisattva astride a flying white fox.¹⁸ This legend is to be distinguished from another element of folklore recorded in *setsuwa* texts and in a famous floating world print by Kuniyoshi, also known for other fox paintings, depicting a *musha-e* (a picture representing a fight and struggle) of a wicked white nine-tailed fox fleeing from the palace of King Pan-Tsu of India. According to this cycle, the nine-tailed fox stayed with the Indian king for years as his mistress before revealing its true nature and then fleeing to China and finally to Japan in the twelfth century where it continued to work its evil magic.¹⁹ In many legends, Buddhist sorcerers use the power of this image of Dakini for personal gain, ulterior motives, or even by hire for demonic aims. But it is likely that in the popular imagination these legends are mixed and conflated, so the Buddhist Dakini-shinten carries demonic connotations.

It is not clear how Dakini-shinten or Myōgonji temple became associated with Inari the rice god, but it is possible that the connection was made after Kangan's statue was built simply because the fox iconography is common to both beliefs. It is also plausible that Myōgonji was first an Inari shrine subsequently converted to Buddhism, or that both Inari and Dakini-shinten were enshrined there at the same time. The whole question of the relation between the white fox in its various manifestations and legends and the typical Fushimi Inari fox, which in some representations is also white though not necessarily so, is obscure. There is also no systematic theological discussion of gender symbolism in the connection of Dakini-shinten with the female portrayals of Inari or with folklore conceptions of the vixen. In any case, according to the current beliefs, which may be shaded by the legacy of *shinbutsu bunri*, Dakini-shinten is the *honzon* and Inari the *gongen*. Yet, it is important to point out two things: first, as indicated above, Dakini-shinten cannot be considered a Buddhist deity which assimilates Inari for it itself is a result of intensive indigenization and syncretism probably influenced by preexisting Inari beliefs; and second, several Sōtō temples which enshrine the fox, though not necessarily those in the Myōgonji network, consider Inari the *honzon*.

The Myōgonji compound in Aichi has two centers, a dharma-hall (*hattō*) where Dakini-shinten is enshrined, and a main shrine-hall (*daihonden*) for the enshrinement of Toyokawa Inari. The former is assigned the role of the original source of the latter, though both are por-

trayed riding white foxes. The *hattō* and *daihonden* are adjacent to each other separated only by a *torii*. Also, Inari fox statues often decorated with red bibs stand protectively outside the *hattō*. In the Tokyo Akasaka branch temple, there is only one center referred to as a *honden*, generally a term for non-Buddhist sites, where Dakini-shinten is enshrined with foxes outside the hall, and there is also a grove (*reikozuka*) with several dozen small fox-spirit statues. This temple primarily services Inari rites rather than zazen. The Myōgonji temples offer a potpourri of other forms of worship. The temple in Aichi enshrines a thousand-armed Kannon and the Sixteen Rakan, and also has numerous statues and portraits (*chinso*) of Kangan. Tokyo Akasaka, which is dedicated to Yakushi and Śakyamuni and adorned with red lanterns lit up every night against the background of downtown Tokyo, enshrines Kannon, Jizō, and Benzaiten. It also has a Sanshinen (Hall of Three Gods: Taro Inari, Tokushichiro Inari, and Ugajin), and in the inner area of this shrine, the Shichifukujin pantheon (Seven Gods of Good Luck: Ebisu, Daikokuten, Hotei, Benzaiten, Jurojin, Fukurokuju, Bishamon) is enshrined. Both Myōgonji temples have festivals based on the cycle of the seasons and Buddhist repentance days (*uposatha*); for example, the observance of the *hatsu-uma sai* rite celebrated shortly after the lunar new year in February when, as a holdover from agrarian times, the local mountain god is supposed to return to the paddy field (*ta no kami*). Toyokawa Inari in Aichi is particularly known for *mikoshi*-carrying festivals with adults and children wearing costumes or traditional garb and some believers donning oversized fox masks. The temples also offer worship for protection in the secular realm. For instance, Tokyo Akasaka has an annual festival to pray for traffic or travel safety (*kōtsū anzen*) that is held every twenty-second day of June.

HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

The amalgamations between Sōtō Zen and folk religion are generally attributable to Keizan and the various Gasan lineages, especially those of Ryōan and Jochū. It seems that prior to this many of the rural temples in the regions northeast and northwest of Kyoto where Sōtō was spreading were eclectic centers, formerly with a Tendai or Shingon affiliation, for the performance of rituals based on the needs of the local population or the values of itinerant and irregular priests often learned in mountain ascetic practices. Apparently Keizan's approach was to attract as many powerful spiritual protectors as possible, and to convert them all through supernatural encounters. Keizan incorporated various esoteric rites syncretized with indigenous beliefs into Sōtō Zen, including geomancy, astrology, magic, visions, dreams, shamanism, and

yamabushi, accompanied by the worship of Buddhist deities Bishamon and Rakan, native gods Inari and Hachiman, and numerous tutelary and local spirits. Yet, he never abandoned zazen, and his religious philosophy is a "fusion of vigorous Zen practice with articulated faith in the efficacy of unseen Japanese spirits and Buddhist divinities."²⁰ As Heinrich Dumoulin reports, "Keizan's heart's desire was to effect a harmonious unity of Buddhist popular piety and its esoteric rituals with the serious practice of Zen meditation. This could not be accomplished, however, without compromise."²¹ Whether or not such an evaluation is appropriate, at least part of the fusion involved Inari. According to traditional hagiography, Keizan founded Yōkōji temple based on a prophetic dream of a white fox,²² and his records in *Tōkokuki* note that he considered Inari the guardian spirit of Yōkōji and called the area of wild plants in the compound "Inari Peak."²³

CHINESE INFLUENCES

Yet, the weight of evidence suggests that the Toyokawa Inari temple developed independently from the Keizan-Gasan lineages, drawing from other sources for its brand of syncretism, some located in Chinese sources appropriated by Japanese Sōtō and others in the indigenization of Buddhism in Japan. There are several pertinent elements of folk religious practices evident in Sung era Zen texts, including monastic codes, recorded sayings, and kōan collections. First, the main Zen monastic code, the *Zen'en shingi* (C. *Ch'an-yüan ch'ing-kuei*) first published in 1103 refers to the ritualization of venerating the gods of the land and field enshrined in the land deity hall (*dojidō*) as well as local spirits (*ryūten*), who function as guardians and protectors of the monastery and collectively are often referred to as the monastery gods (*garanjin*).²⁴ It appears that Zen monasteries assumed the need to make peace rather than to try to eradicate the local deities so as to receive the benefit of their protection for the site of the institution. Perhaps this view of the local gods was the result of a long process of subduing and converting indigenous spirits that Keizan and many others undertook in a parallel way in Japan. T'ang legends record the way Zen masters used their supranormal powers (*jinzū*, Skt. *abhijñā*) to overcome spirits and apparitions. In one legend, for example, a huge snake confronted Shen-hsiu, who remained seated without fear, and the next day found a treasure hidden at the foot of a tree which enabled him to build a temple. "The snake appears in this story as a potentially harmful, yet ultimately beneficent messenger of the invisible world. The spiritual power acquired through meditation allows Shen-hsiu to vanquish fear and obtain the tribute of the local god."²⁵

Sung kōan texts make it clear that the native gods remain inferior to the spiritual power attained through meditation of realized Zen masters. According to the commentary in the *Shōyōroku* kōan collection on case no. 10, which follows a passage that cites ironic, quasi-apocryphal comments by Chuang Tzu and Confucius about the powers of divination of a spirit-turtle:

Demons and ghosts become spirits through the power of bewitchment; spells and medicines become spirits through the power of causing [effects]; heavenly beings and dragons become spirits through the power of retribution; the wise and sagely become spirits through supranormal powers (*jinza*); buddhas and patriarchs become spirits through the power of the Way.²⁶

All of these categories possess spiritual power, but the indigenous gods, which surpass the category of ghosts and demons based on their ability to affect rewards and punishments for humans, remain on the third of five levels and cannot be compared to the power of buddhas and patriarchs who are enlightened by virtue of a realization of the Tao.

Another folk religious element treated in several kōan commentaries, which often evoke land deities, pilgrimages to sacred sites, supernatural events, and the magical efficacy of Buddhist symbols, is the sacrality of mountain cultic centers in China which were considered the abode of bodhisattvas and became the pilgrimage spot of seekers of visions and oracles.²⁷ Mt. Wu-t'ai, dwelling place of Monju, was one of the main destinations of Zen pilgrims. Although rejected by the *Rinzai roku* as mere superstition,²⁸ this mountain is mentioned in a kōan cited in several collections, including *Mumonkan* no. 31 and *Shōyōroku* no. 10, discussed above.²⁹ The kōan's brief, elusive narrative involves an encounter between Jōshū, the focus of several dozen kōans, and an elderly woman, who may or may not be intended as a symbol of local, indigenous religious practice, and who has been outsmarting young monks on their way up the mountain. In a related commentary in *Hekiganroku* no. 35 dealing with Mt. Wu-t'ai practices, Monju engages in a dialogue in which he answers a question with a tautological non sequitur typical of a Zen master.³⁰ In other words, the commentary makes an ironical interpretation of the deity's role, supporting it only insofar as it reflects Zen wisdom, but not necessarily refuting its supernatural status. Yet, Monju, whether or not he is of equal stature as the enlightened Zen practitioner, is a traditional Buddhist deity, whereas the elevation to *honzon* status of Dakini-shinten or Toyokawa Inari, reflects a greater degree of veneration of what is in all likelihood a folk (or autochthonous) deity. That is, although Sung Zen records contain folk elements

which reveal a degree of deference to local gods, they do not provide a clear precedent for the theology of assimilation in the Sôtô sect in Japan.

The various roles of fox spirits as they appear in Sung records, for example, all derive from a basic image of the "wild fox" (*yako*) as a symbol of counterfeit enlightenment or of a rogue element in practitioners who deceive themselves and others into believing they have a genuine realization. The primary example is *Mumonkan* case no. 2 (also *Shôyôroku* no. 8),³¹ in which an old monk reveals that he has been suffering five hundred incarnations as a wild fox for having misunderstood — long ago, in a lifetime prior to the era of Śakyamuni — the meaning of karmic causality, and the man/fox is released by the "turning word" of master Hyakujō which expresses the inviolability of karma. Other texts that use the term "wild fox" in the same fashion include the *Hekiganroku* case nos. 1, 73, 93, and several passages in the *Rinzai roku*. That is, the Sung records transmute the folkloristic elements based on supernatural images of bewitching, seductive vixens into a demythologized rhetorical device indicating false enlightenment. It appears that part of the background for this view is the portrayal of the fox in Chinese folktales recorded in texts such as the T'ang era *Taiheikōki* (C. *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*) as malevolent, conniving tricksters, and there is little suggestion of the positive, self-sacrificing image of foxes as found in some Japanese folktales that serves as a model for veneration and worship in the Inari cult.

JAPANESE INFLUENCES

Some of the same folk elements concerning the veneration of indigenous spirits and sacred mountains are evident in the thought of Dōgen, whose writings suggest an ambivalent attitude to animism and supernaturalism. On the one hand, as indicated in the "Raihaitokuzui" passage cited above, Dōgen appears to endorse the worship of foxes and other spirits. Also, one of his Japanese *waka* poems treats the topic of shrine worship on behalf of rice production (*inasaku*): "Transplanting rice seedlings/At the beginning of spring — /For that prayer/We celebrate the festival/At Hirose and Tatta shrines."³² In addition, Dōgen cites the story of Indra's prostration before a bodhisattva in the form of a fox in *Shōbōgenzō* "Kie-buppōsōbō." Yet, in the same fascicle he repudiates an assortment of local folk religions and supernatural beliefs all too frequently assimilated by East Asian Buddhist sects, including Zen. Dōgen's critique recalls the refutation of Vedic ritualism and magic from the standpoint of causal logic as expressed in the *Tevijja Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*:

We should not act like those who, awe-struck, vainly take refuge in mountain deities and spirits or worship at non-Buddhist shrines, for it is impossible to gain release from suffering in this way. There are those who, following other non-Buddhist religions, think they can gain release from suffering and gain merit by imitating the actions of a cow, deer, demon, hungry ghost, deaf and dumb person, dog, chicken, or pheasant...Such actions are completely false and without benefit. The wise person does not engage in such practices, for they only increase suffering and obstruct beneficial rewards. You must not take refuge in erroneous ways but clearly repudiate them.³³

Furthermore, Dōgen presents two seemingly opposite interpretations of the "wild fox kōan" in the early, seventy-five fascicle text "Daishugyō" fascicle, which supports an equalization of causality and the transcendence of causality, and in the later, twelve fascicle text "Jinshin inga" fascicle, which insists on the priority of causality and a refutation of the notion of equalization Dōgen endorsed ten years earlier.³⁴ But both fascicles tend to dismiss the supernatural elements in the kōan's narrative of theriomorphic transfiguration by the punished old monk.

Therefore, it is not clear where Dōgen stands on fox worship; perhaps he was unconsciously ambivalent, or perhaps he changed positions from the time of the early "Raihaitokuzui" to the later "Kie-buppōsōbō" fascicle. It is also plausible that he deliberately crafted a posture of straddling the fence in response to the variant levels of understanding of his disciples. However, after his death several elements of Inari *shinkō* were brought into Dōgen's religious world by the Sōtō sect. First, a small Inari shrine was built at Eiheiji,³⁵ presumably as part of the rebuilding of the temple after it was destroyed in 1473 during the Onin War. Also, the *Kenzeiki*, the main biography of the founder written in 1472 (the earliest extant manuscripts are from the mid-sixteenth century), records that on his return from China Dōgen fell ill and was healed by the Inari deity.³⁶ It seems likely that the shrine and the biographical anecdote reflect developments not during Dōgen's time but from hagiological treatments of his life and thought two centuries after his death. The reason for this suggestion is that at the same time — fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — parallel processes involving similar folk religious elements were also emerging in the Sōtō sect and retrospectively applied to Dōgen. The prime example was the increasing influence of Hakusan *shinkō*, that is, beliefs in the sacrality of Mt. Hakusan located near Eiheiji. Of course, it was Dōgen himself who chose to move from the Kyoto area to Eiheiji, but his writings do not explicitly discuss the reasons for this. It is possible that the move was influenced by Gikai, who was from the Hakusan region and who, more significantly,

was influenced by Tendai and esoteric ritualism. Hakusan had long been a Tendai center connected with Mt. Hiei, and it was also an active *yamabushi* site. Once Sōtō was established in the Hakusan area, Keizan continued to develop temples along the northwest geomantic lines leading from Hakusan to Mt. Sekidozan.³⁷ During this time, Dōgen's biographies began to include, in addition to the reference to Inari's healing power, a mention of the idea that Dōgen copied the manuscript of the *Hekiganroku* in a single night before he left China (*ichiya Hekiganroku*) with divine guidance. The first reference to this is from a 1459 text, and in a 1538 edition of the *Kenzeiki* the guide was said to be another folk deity, Daigon Daishūri bosatsu. A century later, the biographies began referring to Hakusan as the guiding force behind the *ichiya Hekiganroku*.³⁸

These folklore elements involving Dōgen seem to reflect the influence of Keizan's esotericism on the Sōtō sect. As opposed to Dōgen's seeming ambivalence about supernaturalism, Keizan's approach supports a paradigm of bivalency which embraces yet holds in polarity the opposites of beneficence and demonism, as well as of Buddhist and popular religiosity. But the primary model for this paradigm of bivalency in the institutionalization of Inari is a pair of legends about Kūkai, and it seems that these legends from early esoteric Japanese Buddhism provided an effective precedent for the syncretism of Sōtō Zen's Toyokawa Inari. Kūkai is said to have supported the origin of the main Fushimi Inari shrine in Kyoto and is also reported to have expelled all foxes from his home territory on Shikoku island because a fox once interfered with his prayers.³⁹ Also, according to the cult's hagiography, Kūkai and Inari were fellow auditors of an unspecified sermon preached by the Buddha on Vulture Peak and decided to become the protector deities of the secret teachings. They met again in 816 at an inn in Japan and rejoiced at their reunion. In addition, Kūkai brought back from China an image of Fudō possessing supernatural powers, which appeared in a dream and said it wished to be located in an eastern province to help civilize and convert people there. A Shingon temple was built for it in Narita, where the god is still enshrined together with its famous sword which is said to be effective in curing insanity and other disorders that result from fox possession.⁴⁰

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETING SYNCRETISM IN JAPAN

The picture that emerges from an examination of Toyokawa Inari and related forms of fox worship involves multiple images of fox iconography that are at once intertwined and conflicting, or overlapping and competing, including Buddhist and folk religious orientations, icons that

are enshrined in a *hattō* or a *honden* and are more or less valued than traditional buddhas, and images positive and negative of the fox as protective and inspiring worship or demonic and requiring exorcism. A major study in a volume edited by folklorist Gorai Shigeru of the relation between Zen and Inari *shinkō* in over five dozen temples examines a variety of categories, including temples founded as Zen institutions and others converted in the medieval or early modern periods, and temples which primarily venerate either Fushimi Inari or Toyokawa Inari as a *honzon*, in addition to temples whose fox image has roots in different folklore beliefs.⁴¹ Many of the temples which favor Toyokawa Inari or Dakini-shinten also enshrine Fushimi Inari as either its *gongen* or *chinjū*, sometimes based on the founder's having received a dream-oracle (*mu-koku*) or on local village or clan ancestor rites.

Although the fox deity may well have existed before him, one Inari tradition maintains that Kūkai on his deathbed named the original Buddhist form (*honji*), Mandarajin, made up of Benzaiten, Shōten, and Dakini-shinten, of Inari/fox as the manifestation (*suijaku*). Yet, there are many reversals of this pattern in which Inari takes precedence over the Buddhist gods, including Kannon or Śakyamuni, or in which Dakini-shinten alone is elevated to the most venerated status or stands as the *gongen* as at the Fushimi and Iizuna shrines. Where is Zen conceptually located in such cases of syncretism, and do they reflect, as Dumoulin suggests, a compromise of Buddhist values for the sake of accommodation with indigenous beliefs? In an article examining Sôtō amalgamations with various forms of *shinkō* including Hakusan and Inari beliefs,⁴² Ishikawa Rikizan notes that Indian Buddhism was syncretized with Hindu deities which were transformed into buddhas, and that Chinese Buddhism, especially Zen, was syncretized with Confucian notions of the *chün-tzu* leading to a veneration of patriarchy. Japanese Buddhism, which absorbed many of these earlier examples of syncretism, was further syncretized with the indigenous kami resulting in a variety of gods conceived as avatars (*gongen* or *myōjin*) of buddhas or protectors (*chinjū* or *garanjin*) which, on a lesser level of divinity, guard the monastery.

Therefore, the reversals of theological hierarchy and the continuing role of exorcism in Buddhist-folk religious amalgamations suggest that syncretism in Japan is considerably more complex than the usual treatment of *honji-suijaku* as a two-tiered, trickle-down assimilative model. One of the limitations in the two-tiered view is the assumption that popular religion is a lesser version of the intellectual elite tradition. According to Whalen Lai, the roots of this assumption are based on developments in Western intellectual history: "There is a tendency to regard philosophy as elite reflection while relegating magic to the

base level of folk superstitions, conveniently dividing thereby the intellectual few from the vulgar many. However, this two-tiered model of society first employed by David Hume in his essay *Natural History of Religion* and followed by many modern scholars of religion, more often distorts reality than clarifies it. It is not uncommon that we find both aspects together in one text, revered by social elites and common folk alike.⁴³ Lai's critique of Humean thought needs to be balanced by the fact that the two-tiered model preceded Hume with early medieval Christian refutations of "vulgar" or "rustic" (i.e., pagan) religiosity. More significantly, the two-tiered view is not merely a Western invention imposed on China and Japan, for it has deep roots in East Asian thought, for example, in Hsün Tzu's critique of the supernaturalism of the common folk: "Hence the gentleman regards ceremonies as ornaments (*bunsokū* in Japanese), but the common people regard them as supernatural (*jinsoku*). He who considers them ornaments is fortunate; he who considers them supernatural is unfortunate."⁴⁴ Buddhism similarly distinguishes between the pursuit of the true dharma (*shōbō*) and superstition (*meishin*), as well as the legitimate use of supranormal powers and miscellaneous, irregular "wild fox" practices (*zatsu shinkō*), as seen in the passages from *Shōyōroku* no. 10 and Dōgen's "Kie-buppōshō" cited above.

Thus, it is important to recognize how Zen discourse ranges from rejection to veneration to exorcism, and that the haughty disdain and rejection of supernaturalism in some Zen records coexists with full-scale syncretism in Toyokawa Inari as well as the exorcistic rites in folklore texts. This range in the discourses of syncretism in Japan offers many striking contrasts with the non-assimilative, intolerant model in the encounter between Christianity and medieval European paganism. Like Buddhism, Christianity underwent an encounter with a variety of healers, diviners, soothsayers, and prophets whose teachings were based on visions, spells, remedies, and magic deriving from a belief in the power of nature spirits, including trees, animals, waters, crossroads, etc. A prime example is the cult of the dog saint or the "holy greyhound," St. Guinefort, which was popular in countryside chapels throughout medieval France. According to legend, St. Guinefort was martyred while saving a child from being eaten by a snake. The official church policy, as expressed by Stephen of Bourbon who learned of the existence of the cult while taking confession from women, was to dismiss and destroy it as the work of the devil:

Offensive to God are those [superstitions] which honour demons or other creatures as if they were divine; it is what idolatry does, and it is what the wretched women who cast lots do, who seek salvation

by worshipping elder trees or making offerings to them; scorning churches and holy relics, they take their children to these elder trees, or to anthills, or other things in order that a cure may be effected.⁴⁵

From the standpoint of the church, "With superstition, then, God, is the victim and the devil the beneficiary...its only purpose being to seduce (*seductio*) and to mislead (*ludificatio*)."⁴⁶ Yet the situation is more complex than this, because while the dog cult and other examples of paganism were attacked as superstition and eliminated through exorcism on one level, some of the elements of folk religiosity including sacred symbols and sites were at the same time preserved through conversion into Christian rites. Thus "pre-Christian magical practices did not vanish. However, they existed now in an entirely new mental context. Their practitioners and participants had to become aware of the limits of magic and had to develop a critical attitude towards it."⁴⁷ To some extent, then, both Christianity and Buddhism refute and exorcise yet preserve and convert indigenous spirits. The difference is that, whereas Christianity one-sidedly rejects the power of the native gods and does not allow them to stand as such, the strategy of Japanese Buddhism has been to transform and elevate even the most demonic of spirits which, when converted, became protectors of the dharma: "Thus evil and pollution are not only defeated by ritual, but are 'saved' in a Buddhist sense...[which] involves the conversion of pollution, not merely its defeat or neutralization."⁴⁸

There seem to be four levels of discourse coexisting in Japanese syncretism: First, the *rhetoric of anti-supernaturalism*, in which Sung/Kamakura kōan records disavow and mock the claims of supernatural beliefs from a transcendental perspective; second, the *practice of amalgamation*, by which indigenous gods are integrated into mainstream religious and ritual structure, and enshrined in temple compounds, though they are not always acknowledged or accepted for what they are and may function beneath the surface of the official institutional policy; third, the *theology of deference* or empowerment and elevation of native animistic spirits, which are not only accepted and absorbed but granted superior status, at least in certain contexts; and fourth, the *legacy of exorcism*, in which sacred images are seen as having a demonic, malevolent potential which, when improperly unleashed, requires an exorcism that transforms its power into a Buddhist framework, through ritual that is either homeopathic (using one image of the fox to defeat another fox image) or non-homeopathic (using symbols antithetical to indigenous fox worship, such as traditional Buddhist divinities or chants).

The question of compromise raised above in a Dumoulin passage on the role of Keizan seems to be resolved by the coexistence of the

second and third levels of discourse in which there is positive syncretism with the intellectually derisive and ritually exorcistic qualities of the first and fourth levels that condemn or refute the positive attitudes. Thus, empowerment and elevation of the indigenous gods is accompanied by a legacy of criticism. The tradition contains no clear, systematic explanation of the relation between these levels. One way to interpret this relation is to highlight the verb *bakasu* (also pronounced *ke* or *ka*), which can mean "seduce or bewitch" but can also imply any change or metamorphosis, including the compassionate manifestation of a buddha or bodhisattva (*keshin*). This term functions as a neutral category including possessions which are invited, as in the case of oracles (*kamigakari*) sought by shamans, diviners, and healers through dreams and visions, and those which are uninvited, as when someone's spirit is invaded by a demonic force (*tsukimono*) that requires purification. The category of *bakasu* encompasses top down and bottom up, as well as beneficial/protective and demonic/intrusive theological perspectives. It helps explain the twofold, bivalent function of the *bakemono* such as the snake and fox, which has been characterized as the "snake of salvation" (manifested as a deity who offers Buddhist redemption) interacting at every turn with the "salvation of the snake" (appearing as a demon in need of being redeemed by a Buddhist saint or divinity).⁴⁹

Yet there is another discursive level, an ironic, self-critical side-stepping of the issue of supernaturalism versus anti-supernaturalism, as in a *kōan* cited in Dōgen's "Raihaitokuzui" fascicle, which asserts the equality of male and female practitioners.⁵⁰ According to the case record, the monk Shikan is sent by his master, Rinzai, to study with a nun, Masan. On their first meeting she asks where he comes from, a typical encounter-dialogue query about the student's background and identity designed to test whether it can elicit a spiritual and not merely factual response demonstrating convincingly one's true identity. Shikan answers, "Roko," which literally means the "mouth-of-the-road" village. Masan retorts, "Then why didn't you close [your mouth] when you came here?" On being outsmarted by the philosophical pun of the woman cleric, another example of an elderly, seemingly unsophisticated lay woman reminiscent of similar *kōan* episodes involving Tokusan and Jōshū (the latter case was cited above),⁵¹ Shikan prostrates and becomes her disciple. Later, he asks, "What is the summit of the mountain?" (the literal meaning of the name Masan), and she replies, "The summit of the mountain cannot be seen." "Then who is the person in the mountain?" he continues, demanding to know her essential spiritual identity. "I am neither a male nor female form," she responds, recalling a debate found in the *Vimalakirti Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* about whether enlightenment must be realized in a male form or can be con-

sidered to transcend gender differences. "Then why not transfigure into a some other form (*nan-fu-hen-bō*, or *nanji nanzo henzezaruru*)?" he asks, and she concludes the dialogue with an ironic reference to supernaturalism, "Since I am not a fox spirit, I cannot transfigure." Once again Shikan bows, decides to serve as supervisor of Masan's temple garden for three years, and proclaims her teaching the equal of Rinzai's.

The interesting aspect of this passage is that it acknowledges the reality of fox metamorphosis precisely through denying its relevance for the Zen doctrine of the non-duality of male and female, human and animal, natural and supernatural realms. It leaves the door open, while also implicitly dismissing the need, for the multi-tiered, multi-directional Buddhist-folk religious syncretism that coexists with its own level of ironic, skeptical discourse.

NOTES

- ¹ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, 2 vols., eds. Terada Tōru and Mizuno Yaoko (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970 and 1972), II:317-18.
- ² I am avoiding using the term "Shinto" to categorize Inari because, as explained below, the cult is not officially recognized as such and exists in a more diffused network of associations than "sect Shinto." Or, as Thomas Kasulis writes, "Shinto generally functions as a folk religion: each locality has its special *kami*, distinctive festivals, and sacred objects. Shinto is more a set of somatically enacted feelings about purification, renewal, regionality, and communal spirit than it is any kind of philosophical or doctrinal system." In "Researching the Strata of the Japanese Self," *Self as Person in Asian Theory and Practice*, eds. Roger T. Ames, Wimal Dissanayake, and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 99.
- ³ Alan L. Miller, "Religions of Japan," *Religions of the World* (New York: St. Martins, 1983), pp. 336-38. The Ukemochi myth seems to conform to the pattern of the Pacific island Hainuwele mythic cycle.
- ⁴ Stephen Addiss, *Japanese Ghosts and Demons: Art of the Supernatural* (New York: George Braziller, 1985).
- ⁵ Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975), pp. 51-68; and Winston Davis, *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 115-60; Ishizuka Takatoshi, *Nihon no tsukimono* (Miraisha, 1972), pp. 39-45, 171-72; Naoe Hiroji, ed., *Inari shinkō* (Yūzankaku shuppan, 1983), pp. 287-93; and Kondō Yoshihiro, *Inari shinkō* (Hanawa shobō, 1978), pp. 176-78.
- ⁶ Royall Tyler, trans., *Japanese Tales* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), p. 118; *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, ed. Yamada Yoshio, et. al. (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1961-63) 24:58.

- ⁷ This is based on an Abhidharma story in *Mizōu innengyō* (Taishō 17:577c) and included in *Maka shikan* (Taishō 46:45b). See Edward Kamens, trans., *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori's Sanbōe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), p. 285; and Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, 11:427-29.
- ⁸ Ishizuka, *Nihon no tsukimono*.
- ⁹ On the remarkable number of syncretistic temples and deities see Gorai Shigeru, ed., *Inari shinkō no kenkyū* (Sanin shimbunsha, 1985), pp. 75-170 (on Buddhist sects generally) and pp. 541-638 (on Zen, especially Sōtō temples). Sōtō Zen temples also have extensive syncretisms with a variety of indigenous deities as well as deities imported from India, both Buddhist and Hindu; for a full list see Azuma Ryoshin, *Sōtōshū: waga ie no shūkyō* (Tokyo: Daihōrinkan, 1993), pp. 82-88.
- ¹⁰ Allan Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 11.
- ¹¹ Dorothy Britton, trans., *A Haiku Journey: Bashō's Narrow Road to a Far Province* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1980), p. 39; Koizuka Minoru, *Kitsune monogatari* (Tokyo: Sanichi shobō, 1982), pp. 102-115.
- ¹² See Anne-Marie Bouchy, "Le Renard, element de la conception du monde dans la tradition japonaise," in Marie-Lise Befa and Roberte Hamayon, eds., *Le Renard, tours, détours et retours*, Special issue of *Etudes mongoles...et sibériennes* 15 (1984): 9-70; William M. Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 173; Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 281. There are many such accounts in vols. 16 and 17 (*Shiden* 1 and 2) of *Sōtōshū zensho*, 18 vols. (Sōtōshū shūmuchō, 1970-73), esp. 17:278a as discussed in Hirose Ryōko, "Sōtō zensō ni okeru shinjin kado-akurei chin'atsu," *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 21.2 (1983): 233-36.
- ¹³ Kyoko Motomichi Nakamura, trans., *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 78 n.121; Hakamaya Noriaki, *Hihan Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Daizō shuppan, 1990), pp. 275-304.
- ¹⁴ Ian Reader, "Zazenless Zen? The Position of Zazen in Institutional Zen Buddhism," *Japanese Religions* 14.3 (1986): 7-27; Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*.
- ¹⁵ Azuma Ryōshin, *Sōtōshū: waga ie no shūkyō*, pp. 82-88; see Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, p. 282 fn.46. For a partial list of Sōtō temples, see Ishikawa Rikizan, "Chūsei Zenshū to shinbutsu shūgō,"

- Nihon Bukkyō* 60-61 (1984): 44-45.
- ¹⁶ Karen Smyers, "The Jewel and the Fox: A Study of Shared and Private Meanings in *Inari* Worship," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1993, pp. 160-62.
- ¹⁷ *Zengaku daijiten* (Tokyo: Taishukan shoten, 1985), p. 1190. A rich source of information is a 1993 NHK documentary entitled "Toyokawa Inari: Myōgonji ni tsutaerareta shinkō."
- ¹⁸ For an example of a folktale about the demonic Dakini, see Tyler, *Japanese Tales*, pp. 63-66; *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 84:214-219.
- ¹⁹ Kiyoshi Nozaki, *Kitsune: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance and Humor* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1961), p. 204.
- ²⁰ Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan*, p. 88.
- ²¹ Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen: A History*, vol. 2 (Japan) (New York: Macmillan, 1990), p. 213.
- ²² Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 166 n.27.
- ²³ Ōtani Teppu, ed., "Daijōji hihon "Tōkokuki," *Shūgaku kenkyū* 16 (1974): 233.
- ²⁴ Kagamishima Genryū, Satō Tatsugen, Kosaka Kiyū, trans., *Yakuchū Zen-en shingi* (Tokyo: Sōtōshū shūmūchō, 1972), pp. 76-77, 256; T. Griffith Foulk, "Myth, Ritual and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism," in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, eds. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp. 177-78.
- ²⁵ Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, p. 158; *Baso goroku*, ed. Iriya Yoshitaka (Kyoto: Zen bunka kenkyūjō), pp. 120-29 (Pin-yin changed to Wade-Giles).
- ²⁶ *Shōyōroku* no. 10 (Taishō 48:233a-c).
- ²⁷ Abe Chōichi, *Zenshū shakai to shinkō: zoku Chūgoku Zenshūshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kindai bungeisha, 1993); Chün-fang Yü, "P'u-t'o Shan: Pilgrimage and the Creation of the Chinese Potalaka," *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 190-245. The four main mountain sites and their bodhisattvas are Mt. Wu-t'ai (C. Wen-shu, J. Monju), Mt. Omei (P'u-hsien, Fugen), Mt. P'u-t'o (Kuan-yin, Kannon), Mt. Chiuhua (Ti-tsang, Jizō).
- ²⁸ *Rinzai roku*, ed. Iriya Yoshitaka (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991), p. 65; Robert Gimello, "Chang Shang-ying on Wu-t'ai Shan," in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, eds. Naquin and Yü, pp. 119-24.
- ²⁹ *Mumonkan* no. 31 (Taishō 48:297a) and *Shōyōroku* no. 10 (Taishō 48:233c). In the kōan Jōshū promises to "check out" or investigate an old woman at the foot of the mountain who has been giving directions

to inquiring Zen monks, "Go straight ahead," and then remarking sardonically "Watch him go off," when they follow her. Jōshū gets the same treatment, but when he returns to the monastery he declares, "I checked her out."

³⁰ *Hekiganroku* no. 35 (Taisho 48:173b-174b). Monju responds to questions about the size of the congregation on Mt. Wu-t'ai, "In front three by three, in back three by three."

³¹ *Mumonkan* no.2, *Taishō* 48:293a-b; and *Shōyōroku* no. 8, *Taishō* 48:231c-232b.

³² Steven Heine, trans., *A Blade of Grass: Japanese Poetry and Aesthetics in Dōgen Zen* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 109; the shrines mentioned are located in Nara prefecture.

³³ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō* II:518.

³⁴ Heine, "Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyō*) and the Controversy Concerning the 75-Fascicle and 12-Fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* Texts," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 21.1 (1994): 37-72.

³⁵ Gorai, ed., *Inari shinkō no kenkyū*, p. 546.

³⁶ Kawamura Kōdō, ed., *Eihei kaizan Dōgen zenji gyōjō — Kenzeiki* (Tokyo: Taishōkan shoten, 1975), p. 30; Gorai, ed., *Inari shinkō no kenkyū*, p. 599.

³⁷ Satō Shunkō, "Hakusan shinkō to Sōtōshū kyōdan shi," 20-part series in *Sanshō*, issues 556 (1990) 575 (1991), map appears in 8:29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:23.

³⁹ The first anecdote appears in Smyers, "Of Foxes, Buddhas, and Shinto Kami: The Syncretic Nature of Inari Beliefs," *Japanese Religions* 16.3 (1991): 62-64. The story of Kūkai and Shikoku is reported in Juliet Piggott, *Japanese Mythology* (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1982), p. 48.

⁴⁰ Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince* (New York: Penguin, 1964), p. 114.

⁴¹ Gorai, ed., *Inari shinkō no kenkyū*, pp. 541-638.

⁴² Ishikawa Rikizan, "Chūsei Zenshū to shinbutsu shūgō," p. 51.

⁴³ Whalen Lai, "The *Chan-ch'a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 175, which mentions criticism of Hume by Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 12-22.

⁴⁴ Hsün Tzu, *Basic Writings of Mo-tzu, Hsun-Tzu, Han Fei-tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia, 1967), p. 85, slightly modified.

⁴⁵ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, healer of children since the thirteenth century*, trans. Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

- ⁴⁷ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 97.
- ⁴⁸ Janet R. Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p. 126.
- ⁴⁹ Michael Kelsey, "Salvation of the Snake, the Snake of Salvation: Buddhist-Shinto Conflict and Resolution," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 8.1-2 (1981): 110. Tyler points out how Kannon can take any form to save people, including a voracious snake, in *Japanese Tales*, p. xli.
- ⁵⁰ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō* I:318.
- ⁵¹ The Zen masters are one-upped spiritually by women in *Hekiganroku* no. 4 (Taishō 48:143b-144c), and *Mumonkan* no. 31 (Taishō 48:297a).