

Jeffrey L. RICHEY (ed.), *Daoism in Japan: Chinese traditions and their influence on Japanese religious culture*, London: Routledge 2015. Routledge Studies in Daoism 4. xiii + 267 pp. 25 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-138-78649-3.

Richard Bowring, Cambridge

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I used to have a colleague, an engineer, who got angry whenever he saw a colon in the middle of a title: for him it epitomized all that was wrong with scholarship in the humanities. Unfortunately it is a habit from which we all suffer and one that is difficult to break. Here, as ever, it is the subtitle that actually tells us what the book is about: the presence of certain beliefs and practices that have their origins outside of Japan but cannot be defined as being either Buddhist, Shinto, or Neo-Confucian. Many of them appear to be Chinese in inspiration, although this is not always quite as clear cut as it might be. As the editor of this collection rightly points out, it is important that such matters are not ignored or forgotten simply because they tend to be marginalized in the grand scheme of things; at certain times and in certain contexts they were a fundamental part of the religious and spiritual practice of a variety of social groups, so they call for our attention if only to illustrate

the full complexity and multifaceted nature of Japanese culture. That said, however, we should be careful not to allow them to occupy centre stage; they survive as fragments for good reason.

Gathered here are eleven essays on a variety of subjects. It is useful to have them brought together like this but in the spirit of *caveat emptor* I should point out that not all of them are quite as fresh as they might be; as the notes make clear, at least four of them can be found elsewhere: Ooms condenses material from his 2009 book, Kohn's is a revision of work that originally appeared in *Japanese Religions* (1993 and 1995), Qiu is taken from her 2005 book, and Hayek's essay is from the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (2011). How the rest of the essays were collected is not clear from the introduction, so one can only presume they were written for the book. There is no sign that this compilation is the result of any meeting or conference.

If the subtitle contains the core, the title is presumably intended as bait and a bait, of course, usually contains within it a little hook. This particular hook is well and truly barbed and this fish, for one, cannot resist rising to it. 'Daoism in Japan' is a toxic phrase that can produce in some an allergic reaction. No one would deny the presence of many elements in Japan that either relate to the Lao–Zhuang literary tradition or to the axiomatic principles of yin/yang and correlative thought that underlie such practices as star worship, divination and the mysteries of kingship; the problem arises when an attempt is made to lump everything together under the umbrella of the Western term 'Daoism', with its assumption of a graspable system with unifying features. This is particularly true of 'Daoism' because there is no sign whatsoever that *daojiao* 道教 in the sense of an organized religious tradition with a priesthood ever existed in Japan. The fact is that this kind of intellectual packaging is often unhelpful and indeed positively misleading if it is used in order to suggest a unity that was never there in the first place. Expectations will be created that are bound to be frustrated.

At first sight it might seem that the essays in this collection have a common theme, but this is an illusion created by the title. This is why when one turns to the essays themselves, any ostensible unity disappears and the confidence of the editor looks misplaced in the face of almost unanimous equivocation of each author when it comes to a definition of 'Daoism', which always appears in tell-tale quotation marks. Nowhere is the problem better illustrated than in Miura Kunio's somewhat rambling essay which tries to analyse the nature of Onmyōdō in the Heian period by studying the differences between Onmyōdō divination techniques and those described in

certain texts to be found in the 15th century Daoist canon. Not only does this involve juggling with two terms that escape easy definition, but it also ignores crucial chronological boundaries and differences. Hardly surprising, then, that his conclusions are rather lame: namely that divination techniques should be treated as a kind of third party, which probably influenced both Onmyōdō and Daoism, and that direct influence from Daoism to Onmyōdō is to be regarded as unlikely. Matters are further complicated by the ubiquitous presence of the *Yijing*, which cannot, of course, be simply identified as a Daoist text.

Despite this caveat, each essay is of considerable interest and certainly illustrates the importance of what we might term a ‘Daoist residue’ present throughout the cultural history of Japan. The book begins with a short discussion of early astromancy and astrology in the operation of the Onmyōryō, which serves to preface an equally short exercise in historical linguistics tracing the origin of the Japanese term *sumaru*>*subaru* 昇 not in Sumerian and Arabic, as Roy Andrew Miller would have it, but in the Old Chinese reading of 昇, namely *məru. This is followed by Como, who engages in some archaeological work into Jade Women (*gyokunyo* 玉女), those goddesses who occasionally bubble up in the dreams of medieval Buddhist monks and in certain Onmyōdō rites. Como proposes that these figures, and others like them, were actually far more common in early Japan than we give them credit for. By examining a hitherto neglected textbook by Minamoto no Tamenori entitled *Kuchizusami* 口遊 (970), he shows that worship of Jade Women, who were intimately connected to worship of the Pole Star, was certainly considered a proper subject for instruction; he also shows that the formulae recorded in this text clearly have a Daoist rather than a Buddhist provenance. He then links this to other ‘continental-style goddesses and immortals’ brought over by a succession of immigrants, and explains their eventual marginalization by showing that they were only ever local in nature.

As we might expect, when Ooms provides a summary of his substantial 2009 book on Tenmu’s use of every conceivable kind of imperial symbol, he takes particular care to talk only of ‘Daoist fragments’ and freely admits that ‘many seemingly Daoist signifiers may have shed their “doctrinal” attachment to the extent that they were perceived as generally “Chinese” or continental, or simply commonplace and easily recognised’ (p. 39). He is also, of course, the inventor of the somewhat tortured adjective ‘daoisant’ in a desperate attempt to pin down the nature of what Tenmu accumulated in his arsenal of symbolic authority. Ooms reminds us yet again of the number of

supposed Shinto ceremonies, such as the Chinkonsai, that actually have their origins in Daoist ones imported at this time, origins that were, however, quickly obscured. In the next essay Rothschild and Knapp investigate the career of Awata no Ason Mahito (d. 719) in an attempt to investigate the significance of the (Daoist) title *mahito* 真人 as used at the Japanese court.

Moving into the medieval period, Mark Teeuwen discusses the use made of the cosmology of the *Laozi* and its *Heshang gong* commentary by Watarai Yukitada in his *Ise nisho daijingū shinmei hisho* of 1285. This essay, probably the most important in the book, suggests that this particular use of the *Laozi* was not, as is usually argued, an attempt to liberate Shinto from Buddhism by using Daoist armour, but rather an *additional* element in a process of ‘the Buddhist esotericization’ of the Ise shrines. He reaches this conclusion because the quotations from the *Laozi* clearly serve as a complement rather than as an alternative to Zen. What this essay in fact reveals, however, is the *inappropriateness* of the term ‘Daoism’ in such a context. The same concerns surface in Michael Conway’s illustration of Shinran’s polemic against Laozi, the search for immortality, and what he clearly saw as other dangerous forms of non-Buddhist mumbo-jumbo. Conway’s presentation cannot be faulted but I worry when he takes all this as proof that ‘Daoist traditions played a larger role in medieval Japanese Buddhist life than one might have suspected’. He may be right but we should not forget that Shinran was quoting from Chinese texts written in an environment where Daoism was indeed the opponent, so in the context of Japan ‘Daoism’ in these passages surely operates more as a metaphor, as an example of non-Buddhist practices in general rather than something specific. It is again use of the word ‘Daoist’ that generates anxiety here. The same anxiety does not, however, arise in the case of Livia Kohn’s detailed discussion of the rites surrounding the cult of Kōshin, because here we are presented with an example of a malign spirit being brought to Japan already contextualised within medical practice and already surrounded with Buddhist prophylactic rites involving Shōmen Kongō or Blue-faced Vajrapāṇi. It then gradually becomes naturalised to such an extent that origins become irrelevant.

The last three essays bring us into the early-modern and modern period. Peipei Qiu illustrates the importance the *Zhuangzi* had for haikai poets such as Bashō; they mined it for vocabulary and ideas, and used it as a major classical reference, partly (she argues) in order to strengthen their claim that *haikai* should be taken seriously. Hayek investigates how the eight trigrams from the *Yijing* were commonly used for divination during the Tokugawa period. Carolyn Pang discusses some of magical practices of a folk tradition

known as Izanagi-ryū that is still practiced in southern Shikoku; these practices draw on a variety of sources, including esoteric Buddhism but also Onmyōdō rites, and illustrate the degree to which these various ‘Chinese traditions’ refuse to lie down and die. One area that is not covered is the intense interest in the Lao-Zhuang tradition shown by Edo-period Confucian scholars, but one cannot have everything.

Each of these essays shows that various elements of the Chinese tradition that lie outside Buddhism and Confucianism were indeed influential in Japan at every stage. In each case, however, the influence can be shown to be specific. To treat ‘it’ as something generic and then to give it a name in the interests of little more than a desire to be tidy remains, I fear, a problematic strategy. It is noticeable that two other recent works of this kind, Lucia Dolce’s edited collection *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice* (2006) and Bernard Faure’s edited volume *The Way of Yin and Yang (Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie, vol. 21, 2012)* go out of their way to avoid using the term Daoism. That, I humbly suggest, is the wisest route to follow.

Of the presentation, there is little to be said. Editing papers is a thankless task and the miracle is that there are not more hiccups. Hanawa Hokiichi 塙保己一 is sometimes Hokinoichi but never Hokinouchi (p. 36); *sukune* 宿禰 should not be analysed as *su + kune* but rather *suku + ne* (p. 62); 案養寺 should be 安養寺 (p. 116); Seijin 成尋 should be Jōjin (p. 159); 三猿 is usually read either *san’en* or *mizaru* but not *sanzaru* (p. 165); *Shoku Nihon kōki* is not 續日本古紀 but 續日本後紀 (p. 160), tut, tut; and the second character in 偃鼠 (*enso*, ‘mole’, p. 188) is missing. Although the editor is to be applauded for having managed to retain characters in-text, the constant shift between old and new character forms and between Chinese versus Japanese fonts is likely to disturb those of a more delicate disposition. One curious editorial quirk I did notice, however, was the fact that while unusual care is taken to provide tone marks for every single romanized Chinese name and title, poor old Śākyamuni is refused the same kind of privilege, being denuded of diacritics and reduced to Shakyamuni. Do I detect here a slight trace of Daoist prejudice?