

## Religious change in East Asia

EUGENIO MENEGON AND GINA COGAN

Until recently, general accounts of East Asian religions still tended to offer a rather static image of the traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and other forms of religious belief and activities in late medieval and early modern times (1400–1850). The close relationship of state power to religious ritual and institutions in China, Korea, and Japan has led scholars to see change occurring only when regimes changed, and to equate political stability with religious stagnation. Continuities between early modern and modern religions have been overlooked, and genuinely momentous change, it appeared, came only with modernity, and the “opening up” of China, Japan, Korea, and other countries in the Sinitic sphere at the hands of Western powers and Christian missionaries. In fact, this historical period witnessed important new developments and changes, both in terms of domestic developments, and of global religious contacts. We are only now starting to understand better the contours of these changes, and scholars are still delineating a new, more convincing general picture, taking into account important local variations. This chapter can only cover some aspects of the diverse religious landscape of East Asia, and is divided in two parts, the first dedicated to China (E. Menegon), the second to Korea and Japan (G. Cogan).

### China, 1368–1850

#### *The Chinese late imperial state and religions: regulation, patronage, and prohibition*

The establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368 brought about an unprecedented increase of imperial control over religious activities. While the Chinese government assumed for a millennium that religion had to be under state regulation in order to harness cosmic forces for the public good, the Ming

created the first true “regulatory state” in religious matters.<sup>1</sup> The dynastic founder, the Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368–98), had been a Buddhist acolyte and member of rebel armies inspired by millenarian ideas during the final chaotic period of the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). In spite of his personal religious experience and distrust for officials and elites, Hongwu rejected millenarianism as heterodox, forbade “sectarian” practices, and proscribed magic, shamanic possession, and unauthorized religious gatherings. He endorsed Confucian ideology, moral codes, and rituals as the basis for both the imperial and local cults. Although the imperial government’s control of the populace was limited, Hongwu still attempted to dictate a new religious program for all his subjects, issuing moral edicts with unprecedented intensity. He prescribed community rituals at the village level, had monuments and altars built, and ordered the printing of moral texts espousing Confucian values.<sup>2</sup> The structure of this official state religion remained in place until the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and its officiants ranged from the emperor and his bureaucrats down to county magistrates and village elders. At the village level, official cults tended to overlap with cults of local gods and tutelary gods of powerful lineages, blurring the lines between official and popular religions.<sup>3</sup>

The Hongwu Emperor combined patronage of Buddhist institutions with control of the Buddhist and Daoist clergy, although some of his regulations amounted to outright prohibition of new monastic ordinations. He also openly opposed Tibetan Buddhism, which had been tainted by collaboration with the regime of the defeated Mongol Yuan dynasty. Hongwu’s draconian laws and measures may have had some effect during his reign, but in the long run could not work. Already during the reign of his successor, the Yongle Emperor (r. 1403–25), some of the prohibitions against established religions were relaxed. Occasionally, later Ming emperors extended their patronage to Buddhism and Daoism, but this patronage depended on their capacity as heads of the imperial household rather than as heads of state.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Brook, “The Politics of Religion: Late-Imperial Origins of the Regulatory State,” in Ashiwa Yoshiko and David L. Wank (eds.), *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China* 22–42 (Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas David DuBois, *Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Hubert Seiwert and Ma Xisha (in collaboration with), *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Romeyn Taylor, “Official Religion in the Ming,” in Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, vol. VIII, Part 2, 840–92 (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

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The Ming regulatory project developed in interaction with local elites and in local contexts. Hongwu, for example, found ready allies in his legal assault on unauthorized religion among the more fundamentalist members of the Confucian gentry, who staffed the bureaucracy and ruled over local society. Yet, attitudes to Buddhism, Daoism, and other religious traditions were not uniform among the gentry. In Jiangnan, the prosperous eastern coastal region, for example, until the 1680s local elites extended generous patronage to Buddhist monasteries thanks to a growing commercial landlord economy that sustained gentry prosperity. Other local contexts displayed yet more variations: along the southeastern coast, for example, large lineage organizations occupied a central role in funding territorial cults of their own divinized ancestors as local tutelary gods.<sup>4</sup>

### *Buddhism in the Ming period*

Buddhism was an early target of Hongwu's policy of religious control, bringing about momentous changes in the status of Buddhist institutions. The emperor completely restructured the hierarchical organizations of monasteries, disrupting networks that had flourished since the Song dynasties (tenth–thirteenth centuries). Most importantly, in 1394 the imperial government issued regulations prohibiting monks from traveling freely and associating with officials and commoners, measures tantamount to suppression. These regulations were reiterated by three successive monarchs between 1412 and 1441. The Ming government forbade the unauthorized construction of temples, and taxed monasteries as ordinary institutions, obliging them to resort to the sale of ordination certificates to cope with the fiscal pressure. A dearth of sources about Buddhist activities from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century indicates that for a century Buddhist monasticism was in a serious crisis, and that both imperial and gentry patronage dwindled to a trickle. The reign of the Jiajing Emperor (1522–66), a patron of Daoism, led to the physical destruction of Buddhist establishments, in particular those of the Tibetan tradition, culminating in 1544 in an edict disrobing all monks and

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power. Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late Ming China* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies – Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University Press, 1993); Zheng Zhenman (translated and with an introduction by Michael Szonyi), *Family, Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming-Qing Fujian* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship: Strategies of Descent and Lineage in Late Imperial China* (Stanford University Press, 2002); David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford University Press, 2007).

nuns. Coastal Buddhist centers also suffered massive destruction at the hands of Sino-Japanese pirates in the 1550s, during a period of government inability to curb such maritime incursions. It was not until the reign of the Wanli Emperor (r. 1572–1620) that Buddhist scriptures were reprinted, doctrinal studies flourished, and monasteries were lavishly reconstructed. The pious Empress Dowager Cisheng (1546–1614) received eminent monks at the palace, and the imperial house sponsored the reprinting of the Buddhist canon, distributing sets to monastic centers across the country.<sup>5</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, Beijing attracted the most renowned masters in doctrinal studies, who would spend their time lecturing court eunuchs and Confucian scholars attracted to Buddhism, and who revived research about the scriptures of several medieval schools.<sup>6</sup> This was a time of fluid and shifting boundaries between different Buddhist schools, with much syncretizing of philosophical ideas and meditational practices, accompanied by a revitalization of male and female monastic discipline.<sup>7</sup> It was also a time of increasing lay activism and literati involvement with Buddhism, and of diffusion of practices and ideas into the public sphere and popular consciousness. The Confucian School of the Mind inspired by the philosopher Wang Yangming (1472–1529) offered unprecedented openness to the Buddhist ideal of self-realization, and local gentry provided support through land donations, financial supervision, and literary propaganda to monasteries of different Buddhist traditions.<sup>8</sup> The explosion of printing encouraged the diffusion of new religious syncretic moral texts informed by Buddhist principles, known as “precious scrolls” and “ledgers of merits and demerit”.

Thus, revived monastic activities combined with the rise of a healthy lay movement helped Buddhism to penetrate all levels of society, to influence the calendar of public festivals, and to create new literature, including the celebrated vernacular novels *Jin ping mei* (*The Golden Lotus*) and *Xi you ji* (*Journey to the West*). The Wanli period in particular saw the rebirth of Chan Buddhism (Zen in Japanese), a medieval meditational school that had dwindled to almost disappearance by then, partly due to opposition by mainstream monastic institutions, and partly for economic reasons. Lay

<sup>5</sup> Wu Jiang, *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Yü Chün-fang, “Ming Buddhism,” in Twitchett and Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, pp. 899–952; Beata Grant, *Eminent Nuns: Women Chan Masters of Seventeenth-Century China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Brook, *Praying for Power*.

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support allowed a series of prominent masters to emerge as Chan leaders, and to spread their lineages empire-wide in the late Ming and early Qing, bridging the difficult moment of the Manchu conquest in 1644, characterized by widespread loss of life and destruction of religious centers.<sup>9</sup>

### *Buddhism in the Qing period*

The Qing emperors continued to patronize Buddhism, but also changed the terms of the state's relationship with it. By maintaining a carefully balanced equilibrium among Confucianism, Tibetan Buddhism, Chan Buddhism, Daoism, and their native shamanism, they projected an image of ethno-religious diversity, pivoting as enlightened rulers over Chinese, Mongols, Manchus, and Tibetans. Buddhism played a crucial role in building this image.

The first Qing emperor, Shunzhi (r. 1644–61), summoned Chan masters at court and promoted their lineages, while his successor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722) visited Chan monasteries during his southern tours in the 1680s, favored eminent Chan monks at court, and patronized Tibetan Buddhism. Yongzheng (r. 1723–35) and his son Qianlong (r. 1735–99) went further, organizing Chan training sessions at court, befriendng and supporting important Tibetan lamas, engaging in religious debates, financing a new edition of the Buddhist canon, and issuing imperial edicts to promote or attack the masters they liked or disliked. In spite of their personal engagement, however, their policies weakened the official ordination system, and hastened the decline of Chan Buddhism. By controlling Chan circles in the 1730s, Yongzheng tried to limit literati influence in monastic matters and forestall the formation of a united front against the crown, a constant preoccupation of the Manchu monarchs, whose legitimacy remained dubious among Han elites. Later on, in 1754, Qianlong took the unprecedented step of abolishing the official ordination system altogether, a decision based on new fiscal policies, and on the realization that ordinations were happening even without central permission. In spite of these measures, Buddhism continued to offer to the Qing significant ideological legitimization, since the Qing emperor adroitly employed the Buddhist notion and imagery of *cakravartin* (“the king of kings” or “the wheel-ruler”) to gain religious stature as monarchs, especially among Mongols and Tibetans. Buddhism, moreover, continued to thrive locally. Besides the large monastic communities with a nationwide appeal (especially in Jiangsu and Zhejiang), most members of

<sup>9</sup> Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*.

the clergy lived in temples or in small communities supported by local patronage, and fulfilled local cultic, magic, and liturgical needs for large number of people (Figure 16.1).<sup>10</sup>

### *Daoism in the Ming period*

Rather than being a religion in decline, as depicted by most past scholarship, Daoism in the Ming period flourished, receiving imperial patronage and reaching large segments of the population. The Ming was also a period of great change for Daoism, as political control over certain schools offered Daoists resources to develop new liturgies and scriptures. The Hongwu Emperor set the tone in the early Ming by attempting to limit the influence of organized Daoism through the imposition of a unified liturgy. He privileged the “Orthodox Unity” School (*Zhengyi*) of the Celestial Masters, while he criticized the monastic order of “Complete Perfection” (*Quanzhen*). The former school had its origins in the eighth century and was dominated by a lineage of masters traditionally approved by the state, who supplied liturgical service to the court, including cosmic rituals of propitiation and prayers for the personal well-being of the imperial family. Complete Perfection was instead modeled on the Buddhist monastic organization, privileged personal spiritual and ascetic practices, and as a consequence was more popular than Orthodox Unity, and thus potentially too subversive for the Ming founder’s taste. Through the institution of a central office of registration for Daoists in all counties and a special office for Daoist music and liturgy at court, measures that limited both the numbers of priests and the kinds of rituals they could perform, the first emperor attempted to harness the spiritual forces of the religion in the service of the imperial establishment throughout the realm while controlling undesirable elements. During the reign of the second Ming emperor, Yongle (r. 1403–25), Daoism received direct state sponsorship: the emperor ordered a new version of the Daoist canon to be compiled; he approved Mount Wudang as a new major Daoist center of worship; and several deities associated with Daoism were enshrined as official gods, bringing power to a handful of Daoist masters who had been supportive of Yongle during his struggle to capture the imperial throne. Several mid-Ming emperors became even more favorably disposed to

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness. Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003); Vincent Goossaert, “Counting the Monks: The 1736–1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy,” *Late Imperial China* 21.2 (2000): 40–85.

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Figure 16.1: Leaf from an eighteenth-century book illustrating and describing the eighteen luohans, the original followers of the Buddha, venerated by the Qianlong emperor and a popular subject in Chinese Buddhist art



Figure 16.2: A Daoist temple at the Mount Wudang temple complex, Hubei Province

Daoism, and Daoist masters and practitioners allied with court eunuchs to exert control over Ming rule. The new canon, still the main resource for scholars today, was finally printed in 1445 under imperial auspices; and Daoist priests catered to the desires of the court, culminating in the reign of the “Daoist Emperor” Jiajing (1521–66). Some Daoist masters rose to prominence in the latter part of his reign, and the emperor became so engrossed in Daoist practices that he neglected state affairs, letting his Daoist ministers rule. In reaction to these excesses, the last few Ming emperors curtailed Daoist influence at court, although they continued to employ practitioners for court rituals and alchemical processes (Figure 16.2).

Doctrinally, Ming Daoism embraced meditational practices connected to “inner alchemy” (internal transformations of the body), and important masters of the Orthodox Unity School advocated meditational methods also found in Chan Buddhism. Parallel to the rise of prominent masters at court was the popularization of Daoism and the diffusion of large-scale rituals to exorcize spiritual forces and gods threatening local communities. Some regional deities, such as Mazu, goddess of fishermen along the southern coast, were adopted into the Daoist pantheon with the state’s blessing, and various schools were integrated in the two major state-recognized traditions, Orthodox Unity and Complete Perfection. By the end of the dynasty this

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popularization had become so advanced that Jesuit missionaries who reached China could not identify major traditions, and were unable to distinguish Daoist practices from those of popular cults. Indeed, popular festivals organized by lay associations adopted Daoist ritual frameworks, and Daoist specialists animated such festivals, contributing to a merging of Daoist doctrine and rituals with localized practices. Daoism also contributed to the most important religious development in the latter part of the dynasty, i.e. the emergence of the “Lord of the Three-in-One” popular syncretic movement founded by Lin Zhao’en, combining elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.<sup>11</sup>

### *Daoism in the Qing period*

The end of the Ming dynasty and the advent of the Qing did not bring about abrupt changes in state policies. The new Manchu dynasty adopted most of the religious regulations issued by the Ming founder and contained in the law codes, and classified Daoism as a clerical religion bound by the scriptural authority of the canon. The court did not support Daoist schools with the same energy as its Ming predecessor (except for a brief interlude of favor under Yongzheng). This freed Daoism from excessive political interference, and inaugurated an attitude of bureaucratic indifference, and of increasing “cleansing” of Daoist elements from state liturgies. Daoist musicians, for example, traditionally employed in imperial official sacrifices, were expelled in 1742 by the Qianlong Emperor, who thoroughly Confucianized the liturgy. Daoist ritual officials shrank in numbers, and by 1850 there were only twenty left at court. However, when it came to the well-being of the imperial household itself, Qing emperors continued to employ Daoist practitioners, recruited from temples in the capital region and elsewhere, or specially trained liturgists within the palace supervised by the Imperial Household Department.

Although state-supported Daoism languished, popular Daoism continued to flourish. While campaigns against heterodox groups abounded, as local officials were supposed to curb all unauthorized religious gatherings,

<sup>11</sup> Judith Berling, “Taoism in Ming Culture,” in Twitchett and Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, pp. 953–86; Pierre-Henry De Bruyn, “Daoism in the Ming, 1368–1644,” in Livia Kohn (ed.), *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 594–622; Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*. (Princeton University Press, 1993); Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three-in-One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China* (Princeton University Press 1998).

Buddhism and Daoism were left alone for the most part, and magistrates engaged in continuous negotiation between approving legitimate liturgies, and curbing “immoral cults” with the help of local Daoist masters. Officials also relied on Daoist ritual specialists for exorcistic ceremonies and rain prayers, and used Daoist temples as public spaces for gentry assemblies and charitable activities. Local officials kept a census of both Buddhist and Daoist clergy, licensing them through ordination certificates, and empire-wide surveys in 1667 and 1736–9 attempted without great success to count all clergy and limit their numbers. In spite of official pressure, Daoist symbols and rituals permeated daily life at all levels, from art to ritual opera, and common people cared little for the divisions among clerical elites in the two main school of Orthodox Unity and Complete Perfection.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Popular religious cults and movements*

While Buddhist and Daoist symbolism and rituality tinged every form of daily religious practice, most religious activities in China still happened beyond the institutional organizations of Buddhism and Daoism. Local temples and shrines often had no direct association with institutionalized religious traditions, but represented instead the diffuse forms of Chinese religion at the communal level. These temples were the focus both of large-scale sacrificial festivals and of individual worship. A local god ruled over a territorial community, and was served by religious specialists and spirit mediums who borrowed from Daoist and Buddhist ritual and textual repertoires, but also continued ancient shamanistic practices. In the Ming and Qing periods, powerful lineages headed by the gentry often sponsored the festivals of these territorial cults, creating alliances among local elites, village religious specialists, and the common people, and buttressing local power structures. In fact, temples were the loci of local communal organization below the level of the county, and offered many of the social and charitable services that the late imperial state could not supply. While official rhetoric excoriated such festivals as wasteful and potentially subversive, in fact many local magistrates allowed local elites to run temple organizations to keep their locales in peace and under control, and even participated as sponsors. On rare occasions certain regional gods (such as

<sup>12</sup> Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life*; Goossaert, “Counting the Monks”; Monica Esposito, “Daoism in the Qing, 1644–1911,” in Livia Kohn (ed.), *Daoism Handbook*, pp. 623–58; Vincent Goossaert, “Taoism, 1644–1850,” in *The Cambridge History of China. The Ch’ing Empire to 1800*, vol. ix, Part 2 (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

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Mazu) received imperial canonization, in an attempt to co-opt local religious structures within a nationally approved pantheon.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond organized and state-approved monastic communities and territorial cults variously tolerated by the state, a plethora of “heterodox” religious specialists and groups catered to the spiritual needs of the Chinese masses, and often were the target of imperial suppression campaigns and attacks by local elites. However, the opposite was also true at certain times and in certain locales. Especially in the late Ming, some of these movements had enormous success and garnered strong local patronage. The great wave of new religious movements began in the second half of the Ming dynasty, and was accompanied by an explosion in the printing of sectarian literature from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, a truly epochal change in the previous tradition of oral and manuscript transmission within similar heterodox groups active since the beginning of the common era. The new movements, with clear boundaries of membership, independent organizations, and their own literary scriptural genres, represented a novel and distinct religious tradition. Luo Qing, a soldier and religious seeker in the late fifteenth century, was one of the most successful innovators, and the movement he established challenged orthodox monastic Buddhism and attracted hundreds of thousands of followers across the empire in the late Ming and early Qing, proclaiming the importance of the laity over the clergy, and combining Confucian and Buddhist symbols and attitudes. The movement started near Beijing, and then spread south along the Grand Canal, finding fertile ground in Zhejiang and Fujian, and receiving regional elite support. It soon became the target of state attacks, as did many other groups, in a galaxy of traditions that scholars have variously called “folk Buddhist,” “lay Buddhist,” or more generically “sectarian.” In fact, these voluntary associations freely borrowed from Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, other popular religious traditions, and integrated soteriological myths of ancient origin, such as that of the Unborn Venerable Mother, to produce eclectic scriptures known as “precious scrolls.” Most of these groups were pacific and did not promote eschatological theologies undermining the constituted order, and thus have left few traces of their passage in history. They dominated entire villages and even regions at times, under the leadership of a charismatic leader and his anointed

<sup>13</sup> Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship*; Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*; Kenneth Dean and Zheng Zhenman, *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plain* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Mark Meulenbeld, “Chinese Religion in the Ming and Qing Dynasties,” in Randall Laird Nadeau (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religion* (Chichester, West Sussex, and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 125–44.

successors; in some cases appealed to literate middle classes (merchants, low officials, monks, and nuns), although in general the rank-and-file was made up of commoners; and combined charitable and religious functions. Fearful of rebellion and social unrest, central authorities again and again ordered provincial and county officials to prosecute many of these pacific groups in the late Ming and Qing periods under suspicion of subversion, and created labels to categorize them, often distorting the picture we have of their teachings and practices. Some went underground and survived state persecution, and still flourish today in certain parts of China and Taiwan.<sup>14</sup>

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were roiled by a series of millenarian rebellions, loosely inspired by Buddhist cosmology, and by Islamic movements in the northwest. The most extensive and successful religious movement of the nineteenth century was the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (*Taiping Tianguo*, 1851–64). The Taiping emerged partly out of the socio-religious tradition of earlier millenarian movements, but also incorporated new theological elements derived from Protestant Christianity, absorbed through contacts with Anglo-American missionaries in the region of Canton. The Taiping conquered most of central China, but were finally defeated by the imperial armies, at the cost of probably 25 million lives. This uprising signaled the end of an epoch, and even though popular religious cults and practices continued to follow time-honored traditions into the twentieth century (and even today), internal change and Western aggression accelerated the emergence of a new state attitude to religion, culminating in new taxonomies of religions and a wave of anti-superstition campaigns from 1898 on. Those campaigns deeply affected organized religions in China, and eroded the communal structure of village and temple religion.<sup>15</sup>

### *Islam and Christianity*

Islam and Christianity represented religious bridges connecting China to Central Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East, as well as Southeast Asia, Europe, and its colonies. The two religions both had a long history in China, dating back to the eighth century, but each took quite different paths

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Daniel Overmyer, *Precious Volumes. An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 1999); Seiwert and Ma, *Popular Religious Movements*.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

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of diffusion, confronting some of the same challenges in adaptation that medieval Buddhism had faced in its slow penetration into East Asia from Central Asia and India.

By the Ming-Qing period, Islamic communities already had a long history in China proper, and were augmented by the new populations in borderland regions that were incorporated into the Qing Empire during the eighteenth century. The Muslim population within China itself was the product of waves of immigration going back to the Tang dynasty, when the first contacts with Central Asia and the Indian Ocean world facilitated the settlement of Muslim merchants both in the northwest and along the southern coast. These small communities remained foreign entities in China, in spite of intermarriage, as in the case of the Arabs settled in the southern port of Quanzhou, who could elect their own religious and civic leaders. The influx of foreign Muslims continued into the Song dynasties (960–1279), mostly via the maritime route, but became much more significant during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), when Muslim officials and technicians from Central Asia and the Middle East were given important government positions. Under Mongol protection, new communities of Muslim settlers also sprung up in remote parts of the empire, such as the southwestern province of Yunnan. After defeating the Mongols, the Ming founder and his successors welcomed the contribution of Muslims to empire-building, enlisting them as military officers, architects, astronomers, and engineers. The famous eunuch Admiral Zheng He, who led large imperial fleets to the Indian Ocean and Africa in the early fifteenth century, was himself a Yunnan Muslim. These populations became known as Hui, and concurrently cultivated their Chinese and Muslim identities in education and customs, participating in literati culture and the examination system. The use of Persian and Arabic dwindled, except for liturgical use, and Chinese became the spoken and literary language of the Hui elites. Hui intellectuals produced translation of religious texts, and went on to write original works in Chinese blending Confucian and Islamic ideas (Figure 16.3).<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, in the Central Asian dominions conquered by the Qianlong Emperor in the mid-eighteenth century (Xinjiang), the indigenous Uyghurs, a Turkic population, which had been a formidable power since the middle

<sup>16</sup> Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Muslims in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 2005); James Frankel, "Chinese Islam," in Randall Laird Nadeau (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, pp. 237–60.

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Figure 16.3: The Sheng Xin Lou or “Tower of Introspection” inside the Great Mosque at Xian, founded in the eighth century and largely built in the Ming dynasty

period of Chinese history, chafed under Chinese sovereignty and maintained their cultural difference, resisting assimilation. They were divided between the more Islamicized Eastern Uyghurs (looking to Samarkand, Bukhara, and Istanbul as their religious-cultural beacons), and the more secular Western

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Uyghurs, influenced by Chinese material culture. In spite of attempts to create autonomous Uyghur khanates under Qing military supervision, the dynasty was never able to fully control this region, which has remained restless to the present day. One of the factors contributing to Muslim discontent with Chinese military control, both in Xinjiang and elsewhere, was a re-Islamicization of the Muslim populations starting in the late eighteenth century. Some sectors of the Hui, in particular, adhered to Sufi orders popular in Central and South Asia, which had been established by Chinese leaders who had traveled to Mecca for the Hajj. This provoked splits within the Hui communities, with some leaders supporting the Qing policies, and others opposing them in violent rebellions in the 1780s in Gansu and Yunnan. Rebellions continued into the nineteenth century, largely due to local economic disputes within the Muslim community and between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as against the exactions of imperial officials. This pattern of unrest has continued in Xinjiang to this day, while the Hui living in China proper, for the most part, have accommodated to Han customs.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of Christianity, by the early Ming, the earlier Nestorian and Catholic presence dating to the Tang and Yuan Mongol periods had all but vanished. With the arrival in the 1540s of Jesuit missionaries on Portuguese vessels in southern China, a new wave of missionizing started in earnest, connecting China with the globalizing Catholic missionary movement allied to the Iberian imperial enterprises. In spite of government prohibitions on foreigners residing in the empire, the intellectual openness of late Ming China favored the introduction of new ideas and missionary penetration. After a pioneering phase led by the Italian Jesuits Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci, characterized by a shift from the imitation of Buddhist scriptures and monastic lifestyle toward accommodation with the Confucian literati identity, Christianity spread in core administrative areas thanks to the support of sympathizing officials. The missionaries and their converts introduced an organic *mélange* of European cosmological, scientific, artistic, and religious elements they called “Heavenly Teachings” (*Tianxue*). While the teachings appealed to a broad public, including non-Christian elites curious about new Western knowledge and exotica, the Christian ritual and spiritual elements mainly attracted a handful of higher-degree holders, many lower-level literati, and commoners.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Donald Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China: A Short History to 1800* (Canberra: National Australian University, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Willard Peterson, “Learning from Heaven: the Introduction of Christianity and Other Western Ideas into Late Ming China,” in Twitchett and Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge*

By the end of the Ming dynasty, several Jesuits with technical skills in astronomy, sciences, and technology had settled in the imperial capital Beijing, collaborating in the reform of the imperial calendar, while small Christian communities were scattered in key areas of the empire. Missionaries and elite Christians embraced the main tenets of the moral system of Confucianism and supported the political order of China, proclaiming the orthodoxy of Christianity while still distinguishing themselves from other “heterodox” religious traditions. Behind this strategy lurked the hope that Christianity would eventually change those elements of the Confucian worldview deemed incompatible with Christian theology and moral practice. What Christianity became in the late Ming, however, did not necessarily conform to the master plan of the missionaries. Chinese Christians transformed the teachings and practices they received from Europeans into an indigenized religious movement, with a special theological understanding informed by neo-Confucian thought. The historical experience of Christian communities in different parts of the empire, moreover, varied according to localized norms and social practices. In rural contexts and among commoners, the “Confucian Christianity” and the textual world of prominent literati converts did not occupy the place of honor. Daily rituals and personal devotions, inspired by European models heavily inflected by Chinese understandings of ritual and ethics, did. In these contexts, Christians would also challenge society over some of the central issues of social organization, including ancestral rituals, gender norms, and local religious cults.<sup>19</sup>

The Qing dynastic transition further institutionalized the presence of the missionaries in the capital, as the early Manchu monarchs Shunzhi and Kangxi formally integrated them within the Directorate of Astronomy, and informally employed them in the Imperial Household Department. While getting closer to the imperial throne, the Jesuits increasingly lost intellectual contacts with Han high elites, who turned more hostile to Christianity. The Kangxi reign saw the peak of missionary influence at court, and by 1700 there were probably around 250,000 Catholics in China (out of a population of 150 million; a minuscule Russian Orthodox mission was established in Beijing, but mainly served the Russian envoys). The Jesuits also introduced to Europe the first translation of the Confucian *Four Books* (1687), praising Confucianism

*History of China*, pp. 789–839; Nicolas Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume One: 635–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, & Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 2009).

## Religious change in East Asia

as compatible with Christian morality, and damning instead Daoism and Buddhism as devilish sects. In response to these pro-Confucian Jesuit accommodationist attempts, the Church became embroiled in the notorious Chinese Rites Controversy, pitting the Jesuits and the emperor against the papacy over the issue of permissibility of ancestral cults and worship of Confucius for Chinese Christians. Two failed papal embassies in 1705–6 and 1720–1 precipitated the mission into a crisis, and missionary activities were restricted.<sup>20</sup> Finally, in 1724, the Yongzheng Emperor formally forbade Christianity in the empire as heterodox, while allowing the Beijing missionaries to stay on in the imperial service. The provincial communities went underground, forcing priests and Christians to live in close quarters to hide from authorities. While growth was stunted for a generation, suppression also fostered a sense of tighter religious identity and nurtured the formation of native clergy who could more easily conduct a local ministry. Over long stretches of time, interrupted by episodic outbursts of state repression during the eighteenth century, Christians continued their religious activities, gathering for prayer and for the ministration of sacraments and carrying on their traditions. They also remained in touch, albeit with great difficulties, with the outside world, until a more robust, but also at times oppressive, transnational and imperialist Church in the wake of the Opium Wars (1840s–60s) integrated Chinese converts into the global institutions and practices of post-Napoleonic Catholicism, while unsuccessfully trying to contain the growth of newly arrived Protestant groups.<sup>21</sup>

### Korea, 1400–1800

#### *Early Neo-Confucian ideology and rituals*

In premodern East Asia, it was generally taken for granted that rulers would provide not only for the physical and economic welfare of the state but also for its cosmic well-being. Whatever the individual inclinations of particular sovereigns, they were obliged to sponsor or conduct public, official rituals of

<sup>20</sup> Thierry Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011); Eugenio Menegon, “European and Chinese Controversies over Rituals: A Seventeenth-century Genealogy of Chinese Religion,” in Bruno Boute and Thomas Smålberg (eds.), *Devising Order. Socio-religious Models, Rituals, and the Performativity of Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 193–222.

<sup>21</sup> R. G. Tiedemann, (ed.) *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume Two: 1800 to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Henrietta Harrison, *The Missionary’s Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

all stripes as well as to patronize and support religious institutions. This was, in part, because the premodern state was not one in which a fundamentally secular order could be separated out from a complex of practices and behaviors deemed “religious.” As a result, state patronage of bureaucratic exams, for example, can be seen as religious because the principles underlying the exams and the bureaucracy, which were laid out in the materials on which candidates were tested, were applicable to the heavenly realm as well as the human one.

From the time of its introduction to Korea in the fourth century CE, Buddhism had received the enthusiastic patronage of Korean rulers. Kings founded and funded Buddhist temples, sponsored rituals, initiated large-scale printing projects, commissioned Buddhist art and, in the sixth century, even brought Buddhist texts and statues to Japan as part of their diplomatic program. Their devotion to Buddhism did not prevent these rulers from supporting Confucian and Neo-Confucian scholars and sponsoring shamanic rituals. The Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392) marked the height of state patronage of Buddhism, but, even then, rulers continued to devote resources to promoting Confucianism and worshipping local deities.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the fact that from its inception in 1392 the Chosŏn, or Yi, dynasty abandoned this centuries-old practice of broad patronage of a variety of religious traditions in favor of supporting Neo-Confucianism almost exclusively marks perhaps the most drastic change in religious practice in East Asia between 1400 and 1800.

Chosŏn Korea has been characterized as a Neo-Confucian state, but the hegemony of Neo-Confucianism as an ideology took decades to develop and its penetration into the daily lives of elite aristocrats, called *yangban*, not to mention those of commoners, took even longer. Efforts to replace previous Buddhist and shamanic methods of ensuring the posthumous welfare of the deceased with Confucian-style ancestor worship were accompanied by the wholesale restructuring of Korean kinship. The previous system – in which marriage was often uxorilocal; male and female children shared in the patrimony; and daughters as well as sons were able to conduct ancestral rituals – had to be transformed into a patrilineal, patrilocal kin structure in which primogeniture was practiced in order to conform to Confucian ideals. Even so, among the *yangban*, widows of the primary son in a family could take responsibility for continuing ancestor worship until the mid-sixteenth

<sup>22</sup> Sem Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas: The Politics of Buddhism During the Koryŏ Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

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century, and grandsons through the daughter's line could also serve as the ritual heir through the eighteenth century. A sharp distinction was drawn between primary and secondary wives, and sons of secondary wives occupied a lower place in the family hierarchy than primary sons.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to mediating the relationship between this world and the realm of the dead, ancestor worship, as the continuation of the parent-child relationship after death, was seen as the filial act par excellence and as the Chosŏn period progressed, it became the exclusive domain of sons, bestowing upon them moral agency and social power. Neo-Confucian scholar-officials acknowledged that women were capable of moral behavior, but they had to redirect this activity into the domestic sphere. In order to bring women in line with what they saw as Confucian values, they reconceptualized women's activity as directed exclusively towards the family into which she married. To this end, didactic texts for women were published and promulgated throughout the Chosŏn period.<sup>24</sup>

The Chosŏn capital was conceptualized as the residence of the sovereign and by extension the chief site of the harmonization of the relationship between heaven, earth, and humanity. This necessitated not only the expulsion of Buddhist temples and clerics from the capital (discussed below), but the construction of Confucian altars to the gods of land and grain, or *sajik*. Similar altars were constructed in local administrative centers throughout the realm, underscoring the importance of state rituals as well as individual rituals, such as mourning or ancestor worship, to the construction of an ideal Confucian realm.<sup>25</sup>

### *Mid- to late Chosŏn Neo-Confucianism*

The late sixteenth through the mid-seventeenth century was a time of transition within Korea. The Japanese warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536/7–98) invaded in 1592 and conflict did not cease until 1598, with Hideyoshi's death. A few decades later, the Manchus invaded Korea in 1627 and then in 1636. Only a few years later, in 1644, the Ming fell and the Manchu Qing dynasty was established on the continent. These events

<sup>23</sup> Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies Harvard University, 1992); Martina Deuchler, "Propagating Female Virtues in Chŏson Korea," in Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (eds.), *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 142–69.

<sup>24</sup> Deuchler, "Propagating Female Virtues."

<sup>25</sup> Boudewijn Walraven, "Religion and the City: Seoul in the Nineteenth Century," *The Review of Korean Studies* 3 (2000): 178–206.

precipitated a crisis for Neo-Confucian thinkers; to have the Ming rulers supplanted by the Manchus, whom they saw as barbarians, upset not only the political but also the cosmic order. In the eyes of Korean Neo-Confucians, Manchu rulers could never maintain Confucian ideals, leaving Korea as the last bastion of civilization and mediator of the relationship between heaven and earth.

How precisely to carry this out was debated through a controversy over the appropriate mourning rituals for King Hyojong (1619–59) and, by extension, over his legitimacy as a ruler. Some Neo-Confucians felt that the fall of the Ming left the Korean king with no external source of legitimation other than adherence to Confucian norms, norms that were not determined by political expediency of the sort that conferred legitimacy on the Qing but were absolute and transcendent. Others argued that a ruler enthroned without violence or controversy was by definition legitimate and able to rule Korea according to universal norms.<sup>26</sup>

At about the same time, the place of rituals and ancestor veneration were a source of conflict in the relationship between private academies and the state. Private academies (*sŏwŏn*) began to be founded during the mid-sixteenth century as better alternatives to state-run academies. Their founding was accompanied by the inauguration of shrines dedicated to the worship of a sage or worthy, as a patron of the academy. Students were obliged to pay homage to these enshrined sages every morning, and sacrificial rituals were conducted in their honor every spring and autumn. These shrines to eminent scholars not only elevated a moral exemplar as a model for the students, but also served to establish a lineage for the school in much the same way that the veneration of ancestors maintained family relationships after death. They also reinforced the link between heaven and earth, as well as between the ideal, embodied in the enshrined scholar, and the actual, embodied in the students.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Early Chosŏn Buddhism*

As the fortunes of Neo-Confucianism rose in the early fifteenth century, those of Buddhism fell; by the late Chosŏn period, Buddhism had become a

<sup>26</sup> JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea," in JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (eds.), *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), pp. 46–90.

<sup>27</sup> Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, "Private Academies and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea," in Haboush and Deuchler (eds.), *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, pp. 134–59.

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religion of the provinces and of the common people, although some elites still patronized it privately. The campaign against Buddhism was both ideological and practical. Anti-Buddhist polemicists charged the monastic institution with corruption and laxity and maintained that Buddhism had no program for active engagement in public affairs; later in the period, some even charged that it was a pernicious influence on the populace.<sup>28</sup> Although it took decades to disestablish Buddhism completely, this development made Korea unique among East Asian nations between 1400 and 1800. The sovereigns of China and Japan continued to assume that the cosmos was multiple and that, while some rituals might be more effective than others for particular aspects of state protection, to neglect one tradition, whether it be Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, or “folk,” would be to fail in their duty to their subjects. In contrast, Korean kings during the Chosŏn period distanced themselves from Buddhism, a move Confucian advocates saw as guarding the purity of the king’s role as mediator between heaven and earth.

Early Chosŏn kings, however, did not agree wholeheartedly with the charges against Buddhism. Although the second king, T’aejong (r. 1400–18), decreed that all but 242 Buddhist temples be closed, and confiscated land, property, and slaves from these remaining Buddhist temples, he and his successors recognized that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate all Buddhist practice from the realm.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it is clear that early anti-Buddhist legislation was prompted as much by economic necessity as by agreement with the polemicists; the new regime needed land and funds urgently and the land and slaves they took from Buddhist monasteries went a long way towards filling their coffers.

Although it took at least a century, the rulers and officials succeeded in ending public and official support of Buddhism. In the interest of making the capital a pure center of Confucian government, all the Buddhist temples within the city walls of the capital were closed by 1512, and monks and nuns were not permitted to enter the city. In spite of this, rulers continued to patronize Buddhism as individuals, as did members of the *yangban* class, and

<sup>28</sup> U-Gŭn Han, “Policies Toward Buddhism in Late Kōryo and Early Chōson,” in Lewis R. Lancaster and Chai-shin Yu (eds.), *Buddhism in the Early Chōson: Suppression and Transformation* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies University of California at Berkeley, 1996), pp. 1–58; Sōngmu Yi, “The Influence of Neo-Confucianism on Education and the Civil Service Examination System in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Korea,” in William Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush (eds.), *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press 1985), pp. 125–160.

<sup>29</sup> U-Gŭn Han, “Policies Toward Buddhism.”

the government ran an office to supervise the publication of Buddhist texts between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Mid- to late Chosŏn Buddhism*

The disestablishment of Buddhism enabled two groups, women and commoners, to participate in Buddhism more actively. Many of the individual patrons from the elites were women, who, as the Chosŏn period progressed, were gradually excluded from ancestor worship systems. These women, seen now as belonging exclusively to the domestic sphere, found Buddhist monks and nuns, themselves excluded from state religion, willing recipients and ritualists. Legislation was issued prohibiting lay women from visiting monasteries, but *yangban* women ignored these and continued to participate in monastery events. Many elite women also took the tonsure during this period, most frequently after they were widowed. Confucian prescriptions against remarriage made it not only permissible but respectable for women to demonstrate their chastity and allegiance to their deceased husbands by becoming nuns.<sup>31</sup>

Lay people enabled Buddhist monasteries and convents outside the capital to survive the loss of state patronage by forming temple fraternities called *sach'algye*. These groups raised funds for monks and monasteries and encouraged each other in practices such as the recitation of the Buddha's name. Other lay groups sponsored the publication of popular Buddhist texts. Buddhist monks never gave up the fight to be accepted by the Neo-Confucian elite, and continued to produce texts arguing for the compatibility of Buddhism and Confucianism throughout the Chosŏn period.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Popular religion and Christianity*

The changes to family structure necessitated by the implementation of Neo-Confucian patterns of marriage and inheritance meant that ancestral rituals became part of the popular religious landscape by the sixteenth century.

<sup>30</sup> Hee-sook Nam, "Publication of Buddhist Literary Texts: The Publication and Popularization of Mantra Collections and Buddhist Ritual Texts in the Late Chosŏn Dynasty," trans. Inga Diederich, *Journal of Korean Religions* 3, no. 1 (2012): 9–27.

<sup>31</sup> Ji-Young Jung, "Buddhist Nuns and Alternative Space in Confucian Chosŏn Society," in Eun-Su Cho and Robert Buswell (eds.), *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen: Hidden Histories, Enduring Vitality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), pp. 147–64.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Buswell, "Buddhism Under Confucian Domination: The Synthetic Vision of Sŏsan Hyujŏng," in Haboush and Deuchler (eds.), *Culture and the State In Late Chosŏn Korea*, pp. 134–59; Sangkil Han, "The Activities and Significance of Temple Fraternities in Late Chosŏn Buddhism," trans. Matty Wegehaupt, *Journal of Korean Religions* 3, no. 1 (2012): 29–63; Nam, "Publication of Buddhist Literary Texts."

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Although contemporary Korean shamanism has been thoroughly studied, very little is known of how it was practiced during the Chosŏn period, or indeed in premodern Korea as a whole. Shamanic rituals, in which *mudang*, or female mediums, were possessed by deities who spoke through them, had been sponsored by the state in the Koryŏ era, but they fell out of favor as Neo-Confucianism took hold. Female mediums continued to practice throughout the Chosŏn period, but their clientele changed from members of the elite to members of the commoner class and they became associated with popular religion. Other popular religious specialists included *p'ansu*, blind men who worked as diviners and exorcists, and *pŏpsa*, rituals specialists who conducted ceremonies in their homes.<sup>33</sup> Undoubtedly similar sorts of religious specialists flourished in smaller cities, towns, and rural communities throughout the Chosŏn period.

Although Christianity was not practiced by many people, in comparison with shamanism, which was popular with commoners throughout the Chosŏn era, both forms of religion were marginal to the Neo-Confucian mainstream, and Christianity suffered from state persecution after its introduction. The late-sixteenth century success of Jesuit missionaries in Japan led some Jesuits to plan a mission to Korea. This did not come to fruition and early seventeenth century attempts by Catholics in China to enter Korea to spread the gospel were also unsuccessful. It was not until the last quarter of the seventeenth century that Koreans began to practice Christianity. At that time a Confucian scholar who had previously read Christian tracts returned from a diplomatic mission to Beijing, where he had met Jesuit priests, and began to spread the teaching to his friends and colleagues. This prompted a strong negative reaction from the state, which banned Christian teachings and imprisoned and persecuted Christian believers. After an intense period of persecution in 1871, when approximately 8,000 lay believers were executed, the state backed off, in part because it was trying to establish diplomatic relations with the West. Because most Korean Christians were lay people and did not have access to priests, and also due to the persecution believers faced, much of the Christianity of the nineteenth century was practiced at home, and was disseminated among households. This gave women a strong leadership role in the community, as the home was their main sphere of activity.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Boudewijn Walraven, "Popular Religion in a Confucianized Society," in Haboush and Deuchler (eds.), *Culture and the State In Late Chosŏn Korea*, pp. 160–98.

<sup>34</sup> James Huntley Grayson, "A Quarter-Millennium of Christianity in Korea," in Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Timothy S. Lee (eds.), *Christianity in Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp. 7–25; Gari Ledyard, "Kollumba Kang Wansuk, an Early

EUGENIO MENEGON AND GINA COGAN

## Japan, 1400–1800

During the medieval and early modern periods, religion in Japan underwent a number of significant changes. The late medieval period began in 1336, when the general Ashikaga Takauji (1305–58) seized power as shogun, or military ruler, in the wake of a revolt against the previous shogunal regime led by the emperor Go-Daigo (1288–1339). It ended in the late sixteenth century, as a series of warlords reunified the realm after a century of civil war. The last of the reunifying warlords, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) founded a new shogunate in 1603, ushering in what is called the early modern period, which lasted until 1868, when the Tokugawa regime collapsed. During these centuries, devotion to the many Buddhas and bodhisattvas (enlightened beings) of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition spread throughout the populace, while at the same time great monastic complexes became independent political entities, competing with the shogunate and regional warlords, called daimyo, for control of the realm. Ieyasu and his immediate predecessors, however, subdued them by force and in the early modern period the relationship between religion and the state changed drastically. The medieval model of the mutual support of Buddhism and the secular realm was replaced by one in which the state was clearly superior and religious institutions existed to serve the regime. They did so in large part by acting as the institutions that guaranteed the non-Christian status of their lay parishioners, a result of the mid-seventeenth century suppression of Christianity, which had been brought by missionaries in the mid-1500s.

### *Buddhism*

The third Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimitsu (1358–1408) not only managed to cow the fractious regional lords, or daimyo, and maintain strong central rule, perhaps the last Ashikaga to do so, but also patronized Buddhism in an effort both to protect the realm and to legitimize his own rule. He was a devotee of Zen Buddhism, called Chan in China, which had been brought to Japan in the thirteenth century. In particular, he patronized monks of the Rinzai school of Zen, which used koans, or stories of old masters, to test the accomplishments of its members. In imitation of a system used in Song China, during the early medieval period, Rinzai monasteries were grouped into a group called the *gozan*, or five mountains, and received official

Catholic Activist and Martyr,” in Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Timothy S. Lee (eds.), *Christianity in Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), pp. 38–71.

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recognition from the shogunate. Yoshimitsu and successive Ashikaga shoguns maintained close relationships with these five-mountain monasteries in order to bolster their own authority and exert an indirect influence on lesser Rinzaï monasteries with connections to the daimyo. Under Ashikaga patronage, five-mountain monasteries were centers of learning and the arts. Their monks were indispensable to Ashikaga relations with China, due to their expertise in Chinese language and literature, as well as their financial experience in their capacity as moneylenders. The Ashikaga shogunate also patronized the corresponding group of five-mountain nunneries, but these institutions, in spite of housing accomplished nuns, never attained the prominence of those staffed by men.<sup>35</sup>

Five-mountain monasteries, however wealthy and powerful they were, did not have economic resources comparable to those of the older schools of Shingon, which was primarily esoteric, and Tendai, which focused on the recitation and study of the *Lotus Sutra*. Both of these schools had been established in the eighth century and had longstanding ties to the emperor and the aristocracy. The Tendai monastic complex of Enryakuji for example, had many subtemples whose abbots were members of the imperial family. Enryakuji and other Tendai and Shingon monasteries had grown rich due to their proprietary rights to the income produced by estates throughout the realm. They also filled their coffers by lending money and licensing trade guilds, placing them in the center of the growing commercial economy. Consequently, even when it was difficult for their representatives to collect the income due from their lands, these large temples could rely on their other businesses to support them, rendering them independent of the central shogunate as well as the regional daimyo.<sup>36</sup>

The outward spread of Buddhist practices, ideas, and institutions from their traditional strongholds in the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara that had begun during the early medieval period continued in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Monks of the Sōtō school of Zen, which emphasized seated meditation, spread their teachings to towns and agricultural villages as a way of gaining patronage without competing with the influential Rinzaï

<sup>35</sup> Martin Collcutt, "Zen and the Gozan," in Kozo Yamamura (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. III: Medieval Japan (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 583–652; Yoshiyuki Ushiyama, "Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan," trans. Anne Dutton, in Barbara Ruch (ed.), *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies the University of Michigan, 2002), pp. 131–64.

<sup>36</sup> Neil McMullin, *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

temples of the capital. Early Sōtō monks encouraged women to practice, leading to the establishment of Sōtō nunneries that remained active through the late medieval and early modern periods.<sup>37</sup> Many monks and nuns associated with branches of the Pure Land School, which advocated praying for rebirth in a realm in which it was easy to become enlightened, and it became one of the most popular forms of Buddhism in Japan. This school was disseminated largely through the efforts of itinerant monks and nuns. Wandering priests of the Ji school of Pure Land, which practiced continuous chanting, developed close relationships with lower-level provincial warriors. Other itinerant Pure Land preachers, both male and female, used picture scrolls to deliver sermons to an audience that included the literate and the non-literate.<sup>38</sup> Another devotional school that focused on the *Lotus Sutra*, the Nichiren School, put down roots not only in the provinces, but also in the cities; by the mid-fifteenth century its adherents included most of the merchants in the cities of Kyoto and Sakai (Figure 16.4).

The Ōnin civil war of 1467–77 undermined Ashikaga authority even further and daimyo became even bolder in seizing land, impoverishing the traditional elites. Only the most powerful monastic complexes were able to marshal the military forces necessary to compete with the daimyo and protect the landholdings that bordered their grounds. At the same time, leaders of the Honganji school of Pure Land Buddhism joined the conflict, commanding their followers to fight on their behalf throughout the realm. Honganji's followers were so strong that they were able to seize control of Kaga province in 1488 and hold it for almost a century.<sup>39</sup> The independent economic and military power of Buddhist institutions in the sixteenth century made them bitter foes of the daimyo attempting to unify Japan. The warlord Oda Nobunaga had to battle for ten years from 1570 to 1580 in order to defeat Honganji and in 1571 razed Enryakuji, once the most powerful monastic complex in the realm. Lesser monastic institutions fared better in the late sixteenth century; Nobunaga restored the land rights of many Buddhist institutions, including those of two convents affiliated with the imperial family.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> William M. Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Sybil Thornton, *Charisma and Community Formation in Medieval Japan: The Case of the Yūgyō-ha (1300–1700)* (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program Cornell University, 1999); Ikumi Kaminishi, *Explaining Pictures: Buddhist Propaganda and Etoji Storytelling in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Carol Richmond Tsang, *War and Faith: Ikkō Ikki in Muromachi Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> McMullin, *Buddhism and the State*.

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Figure 16.4: Seventeenth-century Japanese devotional image of Amitabha, the principle Buddha in Pure Land Buddhism

After Ieyasu reunified Japan, he and his successors were faced with a problem similar to that of the early rulers of the Korean Chosŏn dynasty, namely how to provide for the cosmic welfare of the realm and put their own stamp on religious patronage and policy. The early shoguns also had to integrate Buddhist monastic institutions into the new state as supporters rather than as the political rivals they had been in the preceding era. In doing so, they broke with the centuries-old model of the mutual dependence of the Buddhist dharma and the sovereign's law, instead making them subordinate to the shogunate and responsible for enforcing its policies.

Early shoguns took advantage of existing networks of Buddhist temples to police the populace, ostensibly to make sure Christianity had been eradicated. The development of the parishioner, or *danka*, system, in which households had to declare an affiliation with a Buddhist institution, went hand in hand with the temple registration system, in which a temple guaranteed the non-Christian status of its parishioners, a system which lasted until the end of the Tokugawa period. Once a lay household was affiliated with a Buddhist temple, that temple had the exclusive right to conduct the funeral rituals needed by that household. This relationship made temples central to village life and enabled monks to develop close ties to their parishioners.<sup>41</sup> Although it is not clear how many convents were active during the early modern period, the two shogunally sponsored convents that brokered divorces for wealthy commoner women were well known due to the many poems written on the theme of women fleeing a bad marriage. Convents associated with women of the imperial family were also influential, as they provided the lower-status women who worked in the kitchens with Buddhist training that enabled them to return home as accomplished religious practitioners. These institutions provided women with a model of celibate ascetic practice that stood in sharp contrast to the expectation of the time that women fulfill their religious inclinations in the lay world, without giving up their domestic roles. Itinerant nuns affiliated with the sacred site of Kumano collected funds for their home

<sup>41</sup> Nam-Lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity and the danka System* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); Kiri Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity in Japan* (London: Routledge, 2009); Alexander Marshall Vesey, "The Buddhist Clergy and Village Society in Early Modern Japan," PhD diss., Princeton University, 2003; Duncan Ryūken Williams, *The Other Side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

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institution by preaching using picture scrolls, in a manner similar to that of the earlier Pure Land picture preachers.<sup>42</sup>

### *Christianity*

Christianity was the first significant religion to take root in Japan since the introduction of Buddhism, and was openly practiced in Japan from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. It also became the catalyst for much of the Tokugawa shogunate's religious policy. The first Portuguese traders arrived in Japan in 1543, bringing muskets and other trade goods and six years later the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506–52) started his religious mission, working in the western part of the main island as well as on the smaller island of Kyushu. He succeeded in attracting powerful daimyo, many of whom saw conversion to Christianity as a means to forge trade relations with Portugal and Spain. Other daimyo and their retainers, however, developed faith in the new religion and converted without regard for pragmatic considerations. As a result, the numbers of Christians in Japan increased fivefold between 1559 and 1601 to around 300,000, out of a population of possibly 15 to 20 million.<sup>43</sup>

The status of Christianity in Japan changed drastically after Ieyasu took power. Once English and Dutch traders arrived, he could afford to alienate the Spanish and Portuguese by proscribing Christianity, which he saw as inappropriate for his retainers and potentially subversive. Ieyasu issued orders to expel all foreign priests and banish Christian domain lords and their retainers by 1614. The shogunate quickly extended its anti-Christian measures to the general populace. These measures became more severe after the Shimabara rebellion of 1639, a peasant uprising that came about due both to harsh taxation and millenarian Christian beliefs, and by the 1640s Christianity had either disappeared or gone underground. In the course of this suppression, Christian priests and lay followers were persecuted, tortured, and killed and tests were devised such as the *fumie*, in which one trod

<sup>42</sup> Sachiko Kaneko Morrell and Robert E. Morrell, *Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes: Japan's Tōkeiji Convent Since 1285* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006); Gina Cogan, *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014); Kaminishi, *Explaining Pictures*; Barbara Ruch, "Woman to Woman: Kumano bikuni Proselytizers in Medieval and Early Modern Japan," in Barbara Ruch (ed.), *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies the University of Michigan, 2002), pp. 537–86.

<sup>43</sup> Kentaro Miyazaki, "Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan," in Mark R. Mullins (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 1–18.

on a cross or a Christian image to demonstrate one's status as a non-Christian. Those who escaped detection and practiced in secret, called Kakure Kirishitan (hidden Christians), maintained their tradition through the Tokugawa period.<sup>44</sup>

### *Shinto*

During the medieval period, there was no such thing as an independent Shinto of the sort familiar today. Rather, *kami*, the gods of Japan, were understood as local manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, whose power and influence were universal. Most shrines to *kami* were part of Buddhist temples, and Buddhist priests performed most rituals to *kami*. This began to change in the fifteenth century, when the shrine priest Yoshida Kanetomo (1434–1511) claimed that the *kami* had priority over Buddhas and bodhisattvas and invented a purely Japanese, pre-Buddhist origin for his particular lineage.<sup>45</sup>

This kind of understanding of the *kami* was limited to specialists, however, until the early Tokugawa period, when the term “Shinto” came to mean a way of worshipping *kami* not necessarily related to Buddhism. This trend accelerated when the shogunate gave the Yoshida family control over ranking shrine priests in 1665, drastically increasing the influence and visibility of Yoshida Shinto. The shogunate also used ideas of the *kami* taken from Shinto to elevate Ieyasu, the founder, to the status of a deity. Yoshida Shinto was also responsible for the dissemination of popular scrolls that combined images of *kami* with passages advocating purity, honesty, and compassion.<sup>46</sup> In spite of this, popular practice continued to combine the worship of *kami*

<sup>44</sup> Hur, *Death and Social Order*; Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Christal Whelan, *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth: The Sacred Book of Japan's Hidden Christians* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Alan G. Grapard, “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 47, no. 1 (1992): 27–58.

<sup>46</sup> Bernhard Scheid, “‘Both Parts’ or ‘Only One’? Challenges to the *honji suijaku* Paradigm in the Edo Period,” in Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen (eds.), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 204–21; W. J. Boot, “The Death of a Shogun: Deification in Early Modern Japan,” in John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (eds.), *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), pp. 144–66; Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570–1680* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies the University of Michigan, 1985); Brian Bocking, “Changing Images of Shinto: *Sanja Takusen* or the Three Oracles,” in John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (eds.), *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), pp. 167–85.

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and Buddhas, and most Buddhist institutions had at least one shrine on their grounds until a more nationalistic and institutionally independent form of Shinto took shape after the Meiji restoration of 1868.

### *Neo-Confucianism and nativism*

During the late medieval period, Rinzai monks studied and commented on Neo-Confucian teachings as part of their scholarly endeavors, but this did not affect larger debates on ethics, self-cultivation, or the relationship of the individual to the state and cosmos. The Tokugawa period, however, saw Neo-Confucian scholars with no particular Buddhist affiliation develop influential political philosophies and serve as important advisors to the shogunate. Neo-Confucian teachings were also conveyed to a wide audience through figures such as Ishida Baigan, founder of the Sekimon lineage of “Shingaku” (Study of the Mind-and-Heart). Baigan and his successors did not rely exclusively on Neo-Confucian teachings, but drew on Buddhism and the newly emergent Shinto to set out a program for self-cultivation.<sup>47</sup>

Nativism, as the idea that Japan’s ancient past could be discovered through new readings of early historical chronicles that distinguished Japanese material from later Chinese accretions, developed during the seventeenth century, when its proponents saw it as compatible with Neo-Confucian studies. Eighteenth-century advocates of the new National Learning School, in contrast, rejected Neo-Confucian teachings as too Chinese, and thus too foreign to be compatible with what they saw as the Japanese spirit. Both nativists and National Learning scholars identified the newly emerging Shinto as an original, purely Japanese form of worship that had been adulterated by Buddhism, whose foreign origin was now seen as suspect.<sup>48</sup> Although the anti-Buddhist stance of these figures was not influential during the Tokugawa period, it did plant the seeds for the movement to separate Buddhism from Shinto that gained popularity during the Meiji period (1868–1912).

### *Popular religion*

In spite of the great changes that took place between 1400 and 1800, the eclectic and trans-sectarian character of popular religion remained consistent throughout the late medieval and the early modern periods. The emergence

<sup>47</sup> Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*; Janine Anderson Sawada, *Confucian Values and Popular Zen: Sekimon Shingaku in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993).

<sup>48</sup> Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nostalgia and Nativism in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies Harvard University, 1990).

of an independent Shinto in the late Tokugawa period did not prevent people from considering the *kami* and Buddhas to be related and to be jointly available to hear people's prayers. Specifically Buddhist beliefs in karmic cause and effect and the value of renouncing lay life for making progress on the Buddhist path were widespread, encouraging people to take seriously didactic stories such as those told by itinerant preachers and recounted in popular tales. Concern with the afterlife was also consistent, although it was not until the Tokugawa period that peasants and other commoners engaged in elaborate funerary rituals; funerals became a mainstay of the temples that were part of the parishioner system, providing much of their economic support.<sup>49</sup>

Pilgrimage was one of the most popular religious activities of premodern Japan, attracting everyone from peasants to courtiers. The most famous pilgrimage destination was the great shrine of Ise, associated with the imperial family. Large-scale mass movements in which people left their jobs and families to go to Ise occurred several times during the early modern period, in 1705, 1771, and 1830, disrupting social order. In addition, many other sacred mountains, temples, and shrines saw a steady stream of men and women come to petition the gods and Buddhas or express thanks for answered prayers. These practices encouraged people high and low to consider themselves part of a realm that had a sacred geography as well as a secular one, providing a sense of community that was not dependent on state interests, and was occasionally in conflict with them.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the touristic aspect of religious travel and of local visits to sacred sites subverted conventional Tokugawa notions of social hierarchy as people of different social statuses mingled for leisure and religious edification.

<sup>49</sup> Margaret Helen Childs, *Rethinking Sorrow: Revelatory Tales of Late Medieval Japan*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies University of Michigan, 1991); Kaminishi, *Explaining Pictures*; Hur, *Death and Social Order*; Vesey "The Buddhist Clergy and Village Society"; Williams, *The Other Side of Zen*.

<sup>50</sup> Winston Davis, "Pilgrimage and World Renewal: A Study of Religion and Social Values in Tokugawa Japan, Part One," *History of Religions* 23, no. 2 (1983): 97–116; Laura Nenzi, "To Ise at All Costs: Religious and Economic Implications of Early Modern Nukemairi," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33, no. 1 (2006): 75–114; Marcia Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period, 1603–1868* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Barbara Ambros, *Emplating a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573–1912* (The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

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### Conclusion

Large-scale religious change in early modern times often coincided with changes in leadership in China, Korea, and Japan, as, for example, in the religious reforms of the Ming founder, the promotion of Neo-Confucianism by the Chōson state, or the anti-Christian policy of the Tokugawa shogunate. Nevertheless, the effects of these policy changes took decades, even centuries, to affect people at lower levels of society. This lengthy process often started during the dynamic transitional periods between changes in regime, when social upheaval and questioning of established ways facilitated the embracing of new practices and the assimilation of new beliefs. The Ming restructuring of Buddhist monastic institutions, for example, led to the creation of new clerical networks and forms of lay practice that continued to develop long after the seventeenth century. The imposition of the parishioner system in Tokugawa Japan, partly emerging as a response to Christian presence, took decades, and the new funerary practices this change inspired altered family structures and relationships to the ancestors. In Korea, the rejection of Buddhism as a religion that could support the state enabled Buddhist monks and nuns to flourish in rural areas and to develop new ways to serve the religious needs of the common folk.

Religious change, however, did not take place exclusively from the top down. Not only did the responses to state policy drive innovation, such as the worship of government-approved deities in China and Korea, but new practices originating among commoners and peasants, such as the worship of regional deities like Mazu in China, the practice of forming lay Buddhist associations in Korea, or the practice of large-scale pilgrimage, all helped to drive religious change, including efforts to co-opt these popular practices in China and Japan. Some of these popular practices, such as Chinese millenarian movements, contained an explicit critique of the state and status quo, but even less overtly subversive activities such as pilgrimage, travel, or shamanic ritual often existed in tension with state-approved religion.

Finally, religious change also derived from contact between China, Japan, and Korea, and other parts of the world, in particular Europe, Central Asia, and the Indian Ocean region. Islam and Christianity arrived in China in the early medieval period, but reached a broader portion of the population in the period 1400–1800. Muslims and Christians remained minority groups and adapted to native ways, but also challenged the existing socio-religious framework of the Chinese Empire, with consequences that, as in the case of the Taiping Uprising, could be cataclysmic. Iberian Christianity had an important impact in Japan, where it spurred the strict anti-foreign and

religious policies of the Tokugawa shogunate. In Korea, where foreign missionaries were not a factor in early conversion, Christianity was perceived as heterodox and destabilizing, yet it attracted a number of intellectuals, a prologue to Protestant success in modern times.

In sum, in spite of government interference, the religious landscape of East Asia in the period examined in this essay was vivacious and dynamic. Clerical establishments and religious practitioners engaged in continuous adaptation and transformation of their traditions. Notwithstanding the tremendous transformation of the religious landscape that began in the latter part of the nineteenth century, many of the experiences and experiments of the early modern period continue to have a bearing on the state of religion in East Asia today. Understanding that past remains crucial to illuminate contemporary government policies and social responses toward religion.

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