THEORETICAL REVELATIONS AND THE MERGING OF METHODS

THEORETICAL REVELATIONS AND THE MERGING OF METHODS: METHOD AND THEORY IN THE STUDY OF MEDIEVAL JAPANESE BUDDHIST NUNS AND MATERIAL CULTURE

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2020) Hamilton, Ontario (Religious Studies)

TITLE: Theoretical Revelations and the Merging of Methods: Method and Theory in the Study of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Nuns and Material Culture AUTHOR: Kira Thibaudeau, B.A. (Hons) (University of Alberta) SUPERVISOR: Dr. Mark Rowe NUMBER OF PAGES: xii, 155

Lay Abstract

This thesis develops a Theoretical framework to be used in future research about medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their involvements with Buddhist material culture (paintings, statues, relics, and so on). This is a preliminary attempt at laying a Theoretical foundation for this fresh area of inquiry. In this endeavour, I am trying to respond to the enduring focus placed upon men by Religious Studies (RS) scholars, as the field has been and largely continues to be dominated by men. Consequently, there are very few English publications exploring Buddhist nuns and material culture, an important aspect of Buddhism. I examine the states of the studies of these topics, and explore two types of theory production distinct to RS and Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies respectively. Ultimately, I wish to begin the process of laying the groundwork for future research on women and gender within the context of Buddhism and material culture.

Abstract

This thesis develops a Theoretical framework to be applied to future research concerning medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their involvements with Buddhist material culture. My efforts at theory production serve as a preliminary attempt at laying a comprehensive Theoretical foundation for a fresh area of inquiry, namely merging the respective studies of Japanese Buddhist nuns with Buddhist material culture. This marks a promising area of study as a corrective to the enduring focus placed upon men by Religious Studies (RS) scholars. Indeed, RS has historically been, and largely continues to be, a field dominated by men. As such, RS research has concentrated upon the male population, both lay and monastic, and has only recently started shifting toward the question of where women were and what they were doing. Additionally, the study of Buddhist material culture is itself a relatively new field. Consequently, there are currently very few English publications exploring women's involvement with this important aspect of Buddhism. As a means of contextualizing the Theoretical framework ultimately proposed, I first examine the states of the Buddhist Studies subfields of Buddhist nuns and of Buddhist material culture. I subsequently explore the states of theory production within RS and Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies (MJBS), contending that a distinctive mode of theory (macro 'capital-T' Theoretical frameworks and micro 'lowercase-t' theoretical models, respectively) is found within each discipline. While I propose only a RS style macro Theoretical framework, I suggest that an ideal foundation for the study of nuns through the lens of material culture will take the form of a Theoretical complex comprised of both a Theoretical framework and a MJBS style theoretical model. Ultimately, I wish to begin the process of laying the groundwork for future research focusing on women and gender within the context of Buddhism and material culture.

Acknowledgements

The production of this thesis has been a long, challenging road, which, although bumpy, has not lacked in good company nor in support. I firstly wish to thank my advisors, Dr. Mark Rowe and Dr. James Benn, for many things, but above all for their exceptional patience in guiding me through this protracted journey. I deeply appreciate the extensive time and effort that they each have poured into providing thorough feedback on my very many pages of writing, without which this thesis would not be half as tidy nor sensical. More specifically, I wish to thank Dr. Rowe for granting me the kind gifts of space and time when I most needed them to heal and gather the stamina to carry on. Dr. Benn has consistently encouraged my academic endeavours, acting as a significant source of professional support without which my work would have undoubtedly suffered.

I have benefitted from much financial support throughout my MA, namely a SSHRC CGS-M scholarship, an Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and a generous grant from McMaster's Centre for Buddhist Studies. Without this funding, I would not have been able to complete my degree, and I am immensely thankful for the opportunities that these resources provided me with. I additionally wish to thank Doreen Drew and Sheryl Dick, two of McMaster's finest administrative staff, for both their not infrequent lending of a kind ear and their assistance in sorting out a great deal of paperwork throughout my degree and helpfully reminding me of crucial deadlines. Without their help, I would surely have missed many details and due dates.

I have the tolerance and kindness of many people to thank, for without the family and friends that I have spent the entirety of this degree incessantly repeating my ideas to I would not have been able to manifest the contents of this thesis from the jumble of thoughts in my head. My mother, Tory, has served as my rock throughout this degree, a boundless source of

compassion, support, and helpful ideas, suggestions, and strategies. She has always encouraged me to productively push myself, reminding me along the way of my strengths and motivating me to use them. My mom is an inspiration, and I have sought to work half as hard as she does daily throughout the production of this thesis. I wish to thank my grandmother, Jackie, for her endless patience and fiery support when I found myself struggling, and for offering a safe haven when I had nowhere to go. My uncle Dean has been and continues to be a source of rousing conversation, offering informal arenas in which to test the mettle of my ideas. I have become a better rhetorician for the many post-dinner conversations over wine and bourbon, for which I am most thankful. My auntie Louise is due thanks for her quiet but fierce support, and for her tough questions that grant necessary perspective on equally difficult situations. In short, my family buoyed my spirits throughout this degree and kept me going through it all. My best friend Dani, family in her own right, has suffered through countless hours of thesis talk with no complaint, has always helped me laugh when I needed it most, and has been proud of me even when I was at my lowest. I am boundlessly thankful for her company, now and always.

I am fortunate to be surrounded by an excellent group of friends, all of whom have been subjected to many different thesis conversations and have still (shockingly!) elected to spend time with me again afterward. Throughout this degree, I have moved seven times and been in one car accident that left me with severe whiplash that has yet to heal. I have had friends and family gather around to help me with every move, cook meals for me when I could not do so myself, help with all sorts of things that I could not physically do, and unconditionally support me through it all. I am exceptionally fortunate to have each of them in my life. Without them all, I would not have made it through this degree. It really does take a village.

Lastly, I must thank my cat, Finnegan, for his countless hours of pleasant companionship while I researched, wrote, and edited this thesis. He just might deserve due credit as coauthor.

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Declaration of Academic Achievement

I, Kira Thibaudeau, declare this thesis to be my own work. I am the sole author of this document. No part of this work has been published or submitted for publication or for a higher degree at another institution.

To the best of my knowledge, this document does not infringe on anyone's copyright.

My advisors, Dr. Mark Rowe and Dr. James Benn, have provided guidance and feedback throughout all stages of this project. I completed all of the research work myself.

Introduction

Although the past three decades or so have seen a marked increase in publications concerning Japanese Buddhist nuns, such studies have most often employed textual materials as their primary source(s) of data. Textual data is indeed rich, though it yet retains some blind spots, as does any singular mode of data. A particularly notable weak point of textual data in the case of examining premodern historical female monastic figures may be found in the lack of source materials that were penned with certainty *by women* or, for that matter, even specifically *about* women. I propose that Buddhist material culture, including secondary scholarship discussing Buddhist material culture, might gainfully be explored as an alternative complementary primary mode of data through which to (re)examine medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, as it serves as a more tangible means of digging into the social, economic, political, and personal on-the-ground lives and realities of the medieval women who called themselves (or were called) 'nuns.'

I suggest that the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns has not yet been married in a significant fashion with Buddhist material culture as a primary mode of data within English language scholarship. As such, I view this combined, niche subfield as a fresh area of inquiry that requires a strong Theoretical foundation upon which to build future studies.[1] I view the production of such a foundation as a multipurpose endeavour, which will serve to pre-emptively address several significant (though possibly yet undiscovered) theoretical landmines that may be lurking beneath the surface of this new area of inquiry while simultaneously redressing what I suggest are several recurrent known theoretical issues that continue to haunt both Religious Studies generally and (Japanese) Buddhist Studies more specifically. Such recurrent issues include, though are not limited to: the lack of existing macro Religious Studies-style Theoretical

[1] The reasoning for my use of varied capitalization for the term 'theory' is outlined in the introduction of chapter three.

frameworks that have been designed for, or are readily applicable to, non-monotheistic contexts; a persistent though typically implicit treatment of male historical actors as fundamentally normative (with female historical actors most often serving as footnotes or special chapters within publications not focused specifically on female figures) within both theoretical postulations and specific studies of medieval Japanese Buddhism; continued uncritical usage of a complex of theoretically fraught terminology; and a reluctance to provide serviceable working definitions of loaded terms.

I also suggest that the clearly gendered treatment of men as normative historical actors has continued within Religious Studies and Japanese Buddhist Studies due to the overwhelmingly male-dominated nature of the scholarship produced within these fields of study.[2] In other words, Religious Studies and Buddhist Studies departments and publications have been, and largely continue to be, primarily populated, produced, and gatekept by male scholars, who have seemingly mainly sought to study the persons with whom they themselves have the most in common up until relatively recently.[3]

What I have identified as a lack of macro Theoretical frameworks designed for non-monotheistic contexts, meanwhile, serves as a lingering holdover from the very beginnings of Religious Studies as an academic field within the Christianities-dominated western world during the late nineteenth century. Reluctance to do away with theoretically fraught terminology, or to provide adequate working definitions of loaded terms, serve as incessant issues that are certainly not unique to Japanese Buddhist Studies.

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[2] One need only glance at the bibliography at the end of this thesis to get a sense of this.

[3] Within this thesis, 'recent' refers to publications released within the last ten to fifteen years. 'Older scholarship,' meanwhile, is defined as that which was released earlier than roughly fifteen years ago, but especially publications from 2000 or earlier. I have separated the 'recent' from the 'older' along these lines primarily due my observation of what appear to be a set of significant shifts in the field of Buddhist Studies dating to the late 1990's and early 2000's. The reasoning for the identification of these shifts will become clearer in the chapters that follow (see chapters one and two especially).

In seeking to produce a theoretical foundation for the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture, I first establish that Religious Studies and Japanese Buddhist Studies each hold a distinctive mode of theory, namely macro Theory and micro theory, respectively. While I acknowledge that ideally a comprehensive Theoretical complex incorporating both macro and micro modes of theory is needed in order to develop a truly solid theoretical foundation upon which to build out future studies of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and material culture, I aim within the limited bounds of this thesis only to proffer a preliminary beginning to such an endeavour. This beginning takes the form of an examination of the states of several relevant fields, following which a macro Theoretical framework designed in the style of Religious Studies Theory is outlined. This serves simply as an exercise in illustrating how an individual might go about the process of identifying potential or recurrent theoretical issues, subsequently building out a Theoretical complex from scratch that seeks to productively address any such sticky theoretical points. I suggest that an effective Theoretical complex will first attend to big-picture issues (i.e. 'macro' in scope), an effort that, when done well, serves to lay out a solid foundation. Upon that foundation may rest a selection of much more context-specific 'micro' theories (i.e. limited and precise in scope), which I conceptualize of as a wooden frame that relies upon a concrete foundation to provide basic stability. To continue with this same construction metaphor, the walls, windows, doors, and number of floors that the 'house' of a specific body of research might be built out with are necessarily formed around the general shape and size of the frame (micro theory) and stabilized in a lasting fashion by the concrete foundation (macro Theory). The number and size of the distinguishing architectural features of the 'house' are dictated by the size, shape, and stability of the frame and foundation. In other words, I contend that in order to produce a solid and

productively self-reflexive body of research and subsequent contentions concerning any given object of study, including medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and material culture, it is prudent to first lay out a strong and explicit 'foundation' and 'frame' in the form of both macro and micro theoretical considerations.[4]

The focus of this thesis lays within the broad realm of method and theory, and more specifically within the consideration of how we as scholars might most productively, thoughtfully, and effectively approach the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture. In light of this focus, I endeavour in the pages that follow to outline the curvature of one possible macro Theoretical framework applicable to future research concerning this niche (sub)field. I contend that the production, presentation, and potential future usage of such a framework serves as a significant point of departure from the current states of several distinctive fields of study relating to medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, Buddhist material culture, method and theory. As such, below I particularly aim to delineate the present states of four fields of study as a means of orienting the reader and providing context for the Theoretical framework that serves as the primary fulfillment of the main objective of this thesis. The four fields in question are namely the studies of: medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, a predominantly text-based area of inquiry until just recently; Buddhist material culture; Religious Studies method and theory in broad terms; and (particularly Japanese) Buddhist Studies method and theory.

[4] While I recognize that certainly not all publications begin with, or even contain, explicit efforts at the production or use of a Theoretical complex such as I have described here, I find it important to note that this does not mean that such studies lack foundations or frames. Rather, the general shape of the study is, in such cases, dictated conspicuously and implicitly by a sort of assumed 'common-sense' foundation and adjoining frame. I find that such cases frequently toe the line, if not overtly step into, numerous theoretical pitfalls that render the work rather weaker than it might otherwise have been. In other words, while it is certainly possible to produce work without explicitly engaging in theory production, implicit and assumed 'theory' is always at work behind the walls.

Critical Terms in Brief

In an effort at laying the groundwork for the chapters that follow, I find it constructive to pause in order to briefly outline the general contours of a handful of principal terms that appear with frequency throughout this thesis. Of particular importance for this thesis are the terms 'nun' and 'women.' Christina Laffin suggests that scholars apprehend 'nunhood' in the broadest possible terms, an approach that I generally accord with (*Rewriting Medieval Japanese Women* 96). For the purposes of this thesis and in the interest of not overlooking any female historical actors who may have self-identified, or been commonly identified by their contemporaries, as 'nuns' in some capacity, my uses of the term 'nun' are intended to reflect a wide array of possible interpretations of what precisely constitutes a medieval Japanese Buddhist nun. Related to Laffin's suggestion is James C. Dobbins' important note that it is not clear what precisely defined an individual as a nun during the medieval period in Japan (*Letters of the Nun Eshinni* 83). Dobbins goes so far as to contend that "there is such variation among known examples" of women deemed to be 'nuns' in some capacity "that it is difficult to postulate a single archetype of the medieval nun" (83).

Gina Cogan, meanwhile, provides a salient note at the outset of *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (2014) concerning her uses of both "'monk' and 'nun' to translate a variety of Japanese terms," given that "[t]he ambiguity this engenders is productive, as it replicates the ambiguity of the Japanese terms themselves" (xv). While the complexities of translation of terms native to the context of medieval Japan is indeed a rich and fascinating means by which to explore how we as scholars opt to make use of English iterations of foundational terms such as 'nun,' I am consciously opting to leave the precarities of the term 'nun' up to those with expertise in both linguistics and in the historical context in which

medieval Japanese women are situated. My aim is to produce a functional theoretical foundation, not to wrestle with the complexities of translation. My usage of the terms 'women' and 'woman' throughout this thesis similarly holds the terms as broad concepts encompassing both the female sex and 'women' as a gendered construct, unless otherwise noted.

The other primary term upon which this thesis relies that I wish to attend to is what precisely I am referring to when employing 'medieval' as a means of bracketing off a particular span of time within Japanese history. I point primarily to William M. Bodiford's note that "[t]he label 'medieval' has been applied to phenomena dating from as early as the eleventh century … to as late as the seventeenth century" ("The Medieval Period" 163). He adds that although "scholars in different fields … frequently adopt different periodization schemes," Religious Studies scholars "have not attempted to reach agreement on the dates of the medieval period or its distinguishing features" (163). As such, no one dominant definition of 'medieval' within the context of Japan exists presently within Religious Studies. I would add to this that, much in the same way that scholars working within different fields of study are likely to adopt differing periodization schemes, so too are various subfields within both Religious Studies and Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies likely to each bear their own criteria concerning what distinguishes the 'medieval period' and the timeframe within which it occurred. As such, I feel free to offer my own periodization scheme, which encompasses the broadest range of dates noted by Bodiford. I suggest this exceptionally broad range of dates in consideration of a lack of noteworthy shifts that might have occurred relating to Japanese Buddhist nuns and material culture within that span of time. Indeed, in terms of the question of Japanese Buddhist nuns' interactions with various forms of Buddhist material culture, I have yet to identify any substantial shifts meriting a differentiation in terms of periodization or terminology from the

early 11th c. up until the mid to late 17th c. For the purposes of this thesis, then, 'medieval period' refers broadly to a span of time stretching from the 11th to the late 17th centuries.

Structure of the Thesis

Three chapters and a conclusion follow this introduction. The first two chapters each present dual sets of related states of the field, and are intended to act as contextualizing preambles to chapter three. Chapter one explores the states of two largely separate topics within English language Buddhist Studies publications, namely Buddhist nuns and Buddhist material culture. Chapter two addresses what I contend are several key differences between the states of method and theory in English-language publications within the fields of Religious Studies and Japanese Buddhist Studies respectively. While both fields of study certainly engage in method and theory (both explicitly and implicitly), both the process of construction and the end results differ markedly. Ultimately, each mode of theory fulfills helpful differing functions, and as such I propose that an ideal Theoretical complex would be comprised of a complimentary set of both Religious Studies style macro and Japanese Buddhist Studies style micro theories.

Chapter three turns towards the development and presentation of a preliminary Religious Studies style macro Theoretical framework for the study of medieval Japanese nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture. This final chapter serves as the primary meat of this thesis, as it is within this chapter that I begin the process of developing the first piece of a comprehensive Theoretical complex to be applied to future English language scholarship concerning Japanese Buddhist nuns and material culture. Finally, the conclusion seeks to round off the thesis by suggesting future avenues of scholarly inquiry related to my present efforts, and address the admittedly conspicuous lack of a chapter detailing the

development of a Japanese Buddhist Studies style micro theoretical model to dovetail with the macro Theoretical framework.

Chapter 1 – State of the Field: Buddhist Nuns and Buddhist Material Culture in (Japanese) Buddhist Studies

I begin this thesis with the provision of an analysis concerning the present state of the field in order to clarify the position of my own work and how it differs from existing publications. This chapter additionally seeks to illustrate a piece of why the production of a functional Theoretical framework, ideally presented alongside corresponding models tailored to the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of various forms of Buddhist material culture, is necessitated moving forward. Note that within the context of this thesis, I make use of the term 'primary mode of data' as a means of expressing the main (or primary) type or category of source material(s) consulted and subsequently cited within English publications. The use of this term functions as a relational concept, such that the 'primary mode of data' takes the form of the source material(s) that are employed with the greatest frequency and in the greatest volume in relation to other varieties of source materials evoked and cited throughout a given publication. Here, I will mainly employ the term 'primary mode of data' as a means of referring to textual source materials.

This chapter contains three sections, with the first attending to the tendency of English publications within Japanese Buddhist Studies to either entirely disregard or only briefly mention women as historical actors, or to evoke questions of gender and/or sex. I additionally seek to identify a further proclivity within the field toward chiefly employing textual sources as the primary mode of data within studies specifically attending to nuns, women, sex, and/or gender. The second section of this chapter focuses upon differing interests within the field of Japanese Buddhist Studies in utilizing various forms of Buddhist material culture (often alongside ritual) as the primary mode of data. This variation in interest has not yet extended significantly into the

subfield(s) of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Nuns, Women, Sex, and Gender Studies, however, meaning that my efforts represent a preliminary attempt to address this gap in the (sub)field. The third and final section of this chapter offers but one brief example of the potential benefits of making use of both textual sources and Buddhist material culture as commensurate modes of data within pre-existing English scholarship. This lack within English publications of the use of Buddhist material culture as either a primary or commensurate mode of data being applied to considerations of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns has resulted in, I suggest, a lacuna in the field. This, as a consequence, necessitates in part the driving force behind this thesis, namely a preliminary effort in the development of a functional theoretical framework and related set of models as a means of providing a foundation upon which future studies of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their interactions with Buddhist material culture might be produced.[5]

1. Trends in Publications Focusing Primarily on Nuns and Women

The study of women and nuns within English scholarship published in the field of Japanese Buddhist Studies is typically set behind men and monks as normative historical actors. As a consequence, the majority of publications that do not center on women and/or nuns either fail to mention non-male historical actors and/or concerns or interests at all, or provide only the briefest note. Examples of this penchant are particularly noticeable prior to the mid 1990's, such as Allan G. Grapard's *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History* (1992) or Neil McMullin's *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (1977, republished in

[5] I note at the outset that this chapter shares thematic similarities with two state of the field papers treating Buddhist Studies that I composed for graduate courses at McMaster University. Although the topic here differs somewhat, and is related to very different goals, my points particularly regarding sex and gender, alongside what I identify as being older methodological trends in the field, remain salient within the present context. This has caused an overlap, for which I have cited my earlier course papers below.

1984). Examining either of these texts, a reader might suspect that women (and nuns) were virtually nonexistent (or utterly irrelevant) in premodern Japan.[6]

The proclivity toward disregarding questions of sex and gender additionally persists within more recent scholarship.[7] In *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism* (2005) edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr., just one of fifteen chapters attends explicitly to nuns, women, gender, or sex. In her entry on 'sex,' Janet Gyatso approaches the term as an act as opposed to a descriptor of an individual's biological sex (as in the anatomy of one's reproductive system).[8] That is, Gyatso opts to attend to the term not as it might relate to gender, but rather as it functions within Buddhist monastic rules prohibiting a great variety of sexual acts, especially as they might be performed by monks. While Gyatso's chapter represents an interesting avenue of inquiry in and of itself, I consider this to be a squandered opportunity to draw considerations of (biological) sex and/or gender into the broader field of Buddhist Studies.

The tendency of English Buddhist Studies publications to disregard female historical actors and/or questions surrounding gender and/or sex (unless the study in question focuses

[6] Admittedly, these texts are now significantly dated and, as a consequence, contain many points outside of gendered concerns that contemporary scholars might find disagreeable. Such aspects include: proclivities toward the development of sweeping and detailed background information in terms of historical context; additional tendencies to synthesize primary source materials; the production of grand narratives; and the positing of abrupt significant historical breaks. For instance, McMullin's *Buddhism and the State* suggests a heavily emphasized historical break between Nara and Heian political shifts. Grapard's *The Protocol of the Gods* also posits a sharp historical shift in the form of a modification to the functions of blood relations and protocol, in which seemingly suddenly "there was increased insistence on blood relationships and protocol, together with the possibility of allowing outsiders into the [clan] through adoption" (123).

[7] See, for instance, Asuka Sango's *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan* (2015), which contains essentially no discussion of nuns, and precious few mentions of female historical actors at all.

[8] Gyatso's chapter does contain one subsection entitled "Woman," although this brief discussion is perhaps (regretfully) lacking in substance (see 278-81). She additionally notes that the reader may sense "a certain impatience with the perduring androcentrism and misogyny in Buddhist monasticism, and a dose of irony" present within the chapter (275). Gyatso goes on to suggest that, within the bounds of "Sex," she is "not even mentioning … the enormous occasion for feminist irritation and irony that is the fate of Buddhist nuns" (275). She does not expand further upon this matter, however, which is perhaps curious given the unusual opportunity that was available to her in composing a chapter concerning 'sex' within an anthology intended to reach a wide audience, namely the field of Buddhist Studies in a broad sense.

particularly and explicitly upon women or nuns) is perhaps curious, considering the field's inclination toward drawing upon a range of interdisciplinary studies.[9] As a consequence of this narrow focus, male actors implicitly remain the normative focus of study, and the lens through which Buddhist history is most often understood. That is, sex and gender remain outlying discourses within the field.[10] If seen within broader studies, these matters occasionally appear as a brief and unsatisfying nod to the presence and influence of sex and gender.[11] Grapard, for instance, offers passing mention of the influence of gender within the context of ritual (see 59-60).[12]

When women and/or nuns are mentioned within studies not centered upon these figures, their gender is typically problematized in some fashion.[13] See, for instance, Rajyashree Pandey's

[9] For examples of specialized work, see: Rajyashree Pandey's *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair: Body, Woman, and Desire in Medieval Japanese Narratives* (2017); Barbara Ambros' *Women in Japanese Religions* (2015); Gina Cogan's *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (2014); Lori Meeks' *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (2010); James C. Dobbins' *Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (2004); Bernard Faure's *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (2003); *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* (2002) edited by Barbara Ruch; and Wakita Haruko's "Marriage and Property in Premodern Japan from the Perspective of Women's History" (translated by Suzanne Gay, 1984).

[10] Some scholars have identified a deviation in this tendency, however. Jacqueline I. Stone suggests in "Buddhism," a chapter of the *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions* (2006), that "research into the roles and position of women and gender in Japanese Buddhism has progressed remarkably since the 1980's," stimulated particularly "by developments in the study of social history and the emergence of women's studies as an academic field" (47-8). While I do not disagree with Stone's assessment, I suggest that the field yet has a great deal of progress to make in terms of enhancing the inclusion of sex and gender as productive areas of inquiry.

[11] See especially: Bryan D. Lowe's *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan* (2017); William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert's *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (2015); *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context* (2002) edited by Robert H. Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf; Stone's *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999); and Grapard's *The Protocol of the Gods*.

[12] William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert, meanwhile, provide two brief sections devoted to the discussion of women within Japanese Buddhism within *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (2015). These sections occupy only a brief three to four pages, however, thereby rendering these discussions mere scratches of the surface (see Deal and Ruppert 79-82, and 160-4).

[13] It is worth noting, though, that some authors of texts that are not specifically geared toward sex and gender-related topics easily incorporate discussions of female actors without problematizing the realities of their sex or gender. The second chapter of Stone's *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan* (2016) contains a section entitled "The Persistence of (Female) Gender" in which she discusses "the on-the-ground assumption, contrary to scholastic dogma, that women would be born in the Pure Land as women" (102). Stone carries on to discuss long-standing medieval notions regarding "obstacles to female liberation," through which both "female soteriological hindrances" and "strategies of resistance" are explored in brief (104). Here, Stone subtly

Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair: Body, Woman, and Desire in Medieval Japanese Narratives (2016), which might serve as an indication of this tendency, despite the text's predominant focus upon sex and gender. Pandey, rather than entirely disregarding issues surrounding female historical actors, problematizes the normative nature of the male gender that is so commonly found within a variety of contexts. She notes, for instance, that even "[t]he one-sex model did not presume that men and women were equal: it was taken for granted that the male constituted the normative model of which the female was simply an inferior version" (18).[14] Pandey, then, has problematized the gender of medieval Japanese women in a fashion that might be expected of an author only including the briefest of sections concerning women within a broader topic (such as, say, the development of Japanese Zen).

A more direct example may be found in Paul Groner's "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" (2001). Within a broader discussion treating the involvements of Eison 叡尊 (or Eizon; 1201-90), the founder of the Shingon Ritsu 真言律 movement, with various objects of Buddhist material culture, Groner briefly examines the Japanese convent Hokkeji's 法華寺 relics (*shari* 舎利). Groner draws upon Eison's account in the *Hokkeji shari engi* 法華寺舎利縁起 ("Account of the Relics at Hokkeji") as a means of illustrating the Ritsu master's engagement with the convent's *shari* (see 127-31). Due in part to the heavy reliance upon Eison's own account in combination with Groner's lack of synthesis or analysis of the material, this treatment of Hokkeji and its female residents serves to reinforce normative representations of the male sex and gender. For instance, Groner's chapter includes one recounted instance of the

reinforces the normative role of male sex and gender to some degree, although she simultaneously (and productively) problematizes approaches that disregard the agency and resistance of historical female actors.

[14] Pandey's more elaborate discussion of gender and femininity can be found from 5-6. Although I lack the space to discuss this further, I note that additional relevant comments from Pandey can be located on 10, 23, and 24.

spontaneous appearing of relics at Hokkeji being understood by Eison to "surely … not have been due to the power of Zeshun," the nun counting the relics and paying them obeisance (Groner 131). Eison's suggestions are rendered problematic and, again, reinforcing of the preeminence of male historical actors (or narratives) within Buddhist Studies scholarship as a consequence of Groner's lack of critical analysis.

The treatment of male historical actors as being implicitly normative is also observable within introductory textbooks, such as Damien Keown's *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (2013) or Kevin Trainor's *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide* (2001), which might in turn serve to influence students who are entering the field, buttressing the tendency to treat women and nuns as non-normative, largely irrelevant, or otherwise problematic historical actors.[15] Such brief mentions often reinforce the treatment of the male/masculine sex and gender as being normative, treating female actors as outliers and/or as being problematic in some way or as facing a variety of insurmountable difficulties.[16]

[15] Trainor's *Buddhism* includes: a brief note concerning the account of Siddartha Gautama and the dancing girls; two extremely truncated versions of the tale of the inception of the nuns' order within the Buddhist community (*sangha*); a passing mention of the *Therigatha* ("Poems of the Female Elders"); and a short subsection entitled "The Order of Nuns" (see 28, 39, 46, 96, and 99). In total, there are a scant 11 pages listed in the index concerning 'nuns,' with the same number of pages being listed for 'women' (see 246 and 254 for these index entries). Keown's truncated book, meanwhile, contains just two mentions of nuns. One takes the form of the observation that "[t]he order of nuns did not flourish to the same degree as the male order" (27). In the second instance, Keown devotes a page and a half to an extremely condensed description of the general trajectory of the order of nuns within Buddhist history (see 90-1). Here, again, nuns are given only the briefest mention, while male historical and narrative actors serve as the implicit normative lens through which the vast majority of the short text is presented.

[16] It should be noted, though, that of course not all English scholarship runs afoul of this troublesome penchant. For instance, David Quinter's *From Outcasts to Emperors: Shingon Ritsu and the Mañjuśrī Cult in Medieval Japan* (2015) effectively incorporates some discussion of the women and nuns affiliated with Eison's Shingon Ritsu movement, neither problematizing their sex or gender nor rendering them irrelevant (see especially 14-5, 164, 176, 219-25, 235, 243, and 244). While Quinter's mentions of women and nuns are admittedly limited, he effectively avoids problematizing their gender or sex, deferring in one instance to Meeks' contention in *Hokkeji* that Hokkeji (a convent affiliated with Eison's Shingon Ritsu movement) "held a position of relative autonomy respective to Saidaiji" (the movement's main monastery) "and showing the elite standing of such female leaders of the nuns' revival movements as Hokkeji's Jizen 慈善 (b. 1187) and Chūgūji's [中宮寺] Shinnyo 真如 (b.1211)" (Quinter 15).

Contrary, perhaps, to what I see as the field's preference toward the normative use of male- or masculine-centric approaches to Buddhist history, I am focused chiefly upon publications concerning nuns and women.[17] These studies have predominantly centered upon textual materials as their primary mode of data, and/or upon nuns' and women's relationship(s) with text(s).[18] I suggest that the reliance of English scholars publishing within the field of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies upon textual data is due, in part, to textual sources having been both 'in vogue' and more widely available than objects of Buddhist material culture, especially 20 or more years ago.[19] Although interests in text shifted within English scholarship with the rise in popularity of material culture as a primary mode of data, especially from the early 2000's up until the early 2010's, studies concerning Medieval Japanese women and/or nuns have lagged behind the broader field of Japanese Buddhist Studies, largely remaining fixated upon text as the ruling mode of data.[20] For instance, Barbara Ambros's *Women in Japanese Religions* (2015) relies primarily upon textual sources in constructing her overview of the roles

[17] I hope and assume that the reasoning for this is clear. That is, many English publications not centered upon questions of sex and/or gender, or upon women and/or nuns, simply lack relevant detail concerning these matters, regretfully rendering such publications irrelevant within the context of this thesis.

[18] In addition to the publications listed in footnote 5, see especially: Christina Laffin's *Rewriting Medieval Japanese Women: Politics, Personality, and Literary Production in the Life of Nun Abutsu* (2013); Wakita's "The Japanese Woman in the Premodern Merchant Household" (translated and adapted by G.G. Rowley, 2010); Meeks' "Buddhist Renunciation and the Female Life Cycle: Understanding Nunhood in Heian and Kamakura Japan" (2010), "In Her Likeness: Female Divinity and Leadership at Medieval Chūgūji" (2007), and "Reconfiguring Ritual Authenticity: The Ordination Traditions of Aristocratic Women in Premodern Japan" (2006).

[19] Meeks provides salient commentary concerning this matter, noting that, "[g]iven the importance attributed to texts and doctrine in the Judeo-Christian traditions, it is not surprising that Western scholars of religion … have tended to overemphasize the role of sacred texts when studying other traditions" (*Hokkeji* 14). She further clarifies that "Western studies of Japanese Buddhism … have also suffered from this bias" toward the elevation of textual sources as the apex of any available modes of data (14).
Relevant exemplars of publications within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies relying primarily upon textual sources include: the *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions* (2006) edited by Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson; Stone's *Original Enlightenment*; John S. Strong's *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (1994 first edition, 2001 second edition, 2008 third edition); Grapard's *The Protocol of the* Gods; Heinrich Dumoulin's *Zen Buddhism: A History–Volume 2 Japan* (1989 first edition, 2005 second edition); and McMullin's *Buddhism and the State*.

[20] This increasing interest in, and excitement about, various forms of Buddhist material culture as a primary mode of data within the field will be discussed in further detail in the next section of this chapter.

occupied by women within Japanese 'religions' from Japan's earliest recorded history up to the present day. Gina Cogan's *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (2014) leans predominantly upon two main textual sources, an autobiography and a contemporary biography concerning the same figure.[21] A more direct example of the pre-eminence accorded to textual sources is observable within James C. Dobbins' *Letters of the Nun Eshinni* (2004) which consists, as the title suggests, "of a translation and examination of a collection of letters written by a little-known Buddhist nun named Eshinni (1182-1268?)" (xv).[22]

I should note, however, that although I advocate for increased usage of varied modes of data, I am not endeavouring to promote wholesale obliteration of the employment of primary textual sources. Certainly, many studies relying mainly upon textual sources have greatly enriched the field and will continue to do so. I yet retain my contention that approaching the same historical figures and/or phenomena by means of utilizing various forms of Buddhist material culture as either the primary, or as a commensurate, mode of data (as opposed to relying either solely or predominantly upon textual sources) will serve only to broaden the potential of scholarship engaging with these matters.[23]

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[21] Patricia Fister's "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o" (2000), meanwhile, serves as an interesting counterweight to Cogan's heavy reliance upon textual sources as her primary mode of data throughout *The Princess Nun*. Indeed, Fister's article includes a great deal of rich detail surrounding the nun Daitsū Bunchi's 大通文智 (1619-1697) productions and acquisitions of a variety of objects of Buddhist material culture. It remains curious to me that Cogan has largely failed to discuss virtually any of Bunchi's creations, given the depth and breadth that these objects might have added to her interesting examination of the princess nun's life. This will be addressed in further detail below.

[22] Part I of *Letters* is entitled "Eshinni's Letters," focusing (as one might imagine) upon the nun's letters (see Dobbins 1-42). In other words, a third of Dobbins' book is explicitly and exclusively concerned with primary texts written by a single historical actor as data to be translated and subsequently analyzed.

[23] Meeks' *Hokkeji* expresses some of this potential, making some use of various forms of Buddhist material culture as a means of shoring up the observations and suggestions extrapolated from primary textual sources. Although Meeks shifts some attention away from doctrinal texts as primary source materials for her study of the convent, she makes ample use of surviving records of Hokkeji's medieval revival movement, including state directives (*fu*), diary entries, pilgrimage records, foundational stories (*engi*), poems, land-transfer documents, and so on. In addition, however, Meeks incorporates numerous (brief) treatments of various forms of Buddhist material culture affiliated with Hokkeji and its nuns, including: the 'sandalwood' Eleven-Faced Kannon statue; a *waniguchi* (large circular bell hung near the entrance of temples and shrines); relics (*shari*); ritual implements; Hokkeji's famous bath house; a

As noted above, I contend that the continued marginal treatment by scholars of topics involving women, nuns, gender and/or sex within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies is illustrative of the sustained preeminence of male historical actors as the (implicit) normative foci of research.[24] This has been the case essentially from the inception of Religious Studies during the nineteenth century, and it is high time that we have a change both within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies more broadly. I propose that part of this push can be facilitated by a movement away from the heavy reliance upon textual sources. The field appears, however, to be preferentially employing text once again after a brief hiatus and shift in focus toward ritual and material culture.[25] The propensity of the field of Japanese Buddhist Studies to consistently rely upon textual sources has led to limitations in terms of both the questions that might be posed and in the feasible responses that may be produced in answer to existing queries. As a consequence of these limitations, I contend that the incorporation of various forms of Buddhist material culture as either a primary or as a commensurate mode of data will serve to develop further depth and richness within the subfield of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Nuns, Women, Sex, and Gender Studies.

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painting depicting Rahūla ("Image of the Honorable Rahūla"); and the "Hokkekyō mandara" of Honpōji and Hōnkōji (see 44-8, 56, 141-55, 198-200, 240, 277-8, and 307). In general, although Meeks does rely upon textual sources as *Hokkeji*'s primary mode of data, she productively incorporates numerous objects of Buddhist material culture in order to support and enrich her fascinating study.

[24] Ruch notes a related feature of Buddhist traditions more broadly in "Woman to Woman," pointedly contending that "[t]he history of Buddhism is indeed the very sum of male clerics' messages as to the nature of this faith" (537). She adds that "the curriculum in the history of Japanese religion … retains largely the same male-centric focus today" (537). That is, Japanese Buddhist Studies has, and continues to, treat men as the normative focus of research.

[25] Following a possibly similar line of thought, Marian Ury notes the sheer lack of available primary textual sources either written by, or discussing, women in "Nuns and Other Female Devotees in *Genkō shakusho* (1322), Japan's First History of Buddhism" (2002). The *Genkō shakusho*, for instance, contains only fifteen accounts of nuns and other female devotees out of a total of four hundred and sixteen biographies (190). Compounding the lack of biographies contained within the text, Ury astutely notes that there is no "mention of lineages where nuns are concerned" (191).

2. Trends in Publications Concerning Buddhist Material Culture (Within Buddhist Studies)

Religious Studies in general has long favoured textual sources as the gold standard of data, although within the past 20 odd years or so English publications within Buddhist Studies expressed an alternate inclination to focus upon material culture and ritual as the most fashionable modes of data. A plethora of articles, alongside several book-length studies, have been published from the late 1990's onward treating Buddhist material culture in particular as a special topic, wherein discussions of ritual may or may not be included. For examples of such works dedicated to Buddhist material culture as a primary area of inquiry, see especially: Fabio Rambelli's *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism* (2007); *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia* (2004), edited by David Germano and Kevin Trainor; John Kieschnick's *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (2003); *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context* (2001), edited by Robert H. Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf; Brian D. Ruppert's *Jewel in the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan* (2000); and Karen L. Brock's "Awaiting Maitreya at Kasagi" (1988).[26]

More recent publications engaging with both Buddhist material culture and ritual as areas of supporting inquiry have largely drawn upon the dedicated book-length texts published during the 1990's and early to mid 2000's, including William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert's *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (2015), which cites Rambelli's work in particular (see 142). Due in part to the application of material culture and ritual as supporting areas of inquiry, Deal and

[26] Sharf in particular has explicitly noted the attachment of interests in material culture to both ritual and institution as additional areas of inquiry ("Introduction" 4). In addition, he interestingly implicates the division of labour (namely between Art History and Religious Studies) present within Western scholarship in the 'veiling' of Buddhist image veneration (5). Further, Sharf identifies the "Judeo-Christian intellectual legacy, which holds the practice of idolatry to be a sign of ignorance, superstition, and retarded cultural development" as a contributing factor in the field's earlier distance from inquiries into material culture and ritual (6). Also housed within *Living Images*, Groner's "Icons and Relics" offers an interesting gloss of the acquisition and spontaneous reproduction of relics at the convent Hokkeji, for instance (see 127-31). This has already been discussed in greater detail above.

Ruppert's text serves as an exemplar of shifting approaches to, and interest in, material culture and ritual within the field.[27] Deal and Ruppert explicitly note that "it is ultimately impossible to detangle practices we associate with the 'material' from others" (2). They further pointedly mark certain periods of Buddhist practices in terms of a selection of particular 'features.' In discussing Buddhism of the Asuka period (552-645), for instance, Deal and Ruppert identify four recurring features, notably including "the centrality of Buddhist material culture" and "the decided emphasis of ritual over doctrine" (29). They also interweave textual materials into their discussions of ritual and material culture.[28] In addition to block quotations, Deal and Ruppert synthesize a significant amount of both primary textual sources and secondary scholarship. In considering the text as a whole, I suggest that, while giving some attention to both material culture and ritual, Deal and Ruppert ultimately rely primarily upon textual data. That is, material culture and ritual serve as supplementary areas of inquiry to text, which, I contend, is representative of recent tendencies in the field to treat text as the preeminent interest in terms of data.

As noted above, the study of nuns, women, sex, and/or gender within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhism does not seem to have jumped aboard the excitement directed toward the employment of Buddhist material culture as either a primary or commensurate mode of data, however, and yet lags behind. Meanwhile, the field of Japanese Buddhist Studies more broadly has more recently experienced what I suggest is a movement back toward an overwhelming interest in textual analysis, though now frequently in combination with examinations of ritual and/or material culture. In distinctive opposition to the inclination of

[27] Although the text treats a span of time much broader than the medieval period, I suggest that it may still serve to productively highlight several trends within medieval Japanese Buddhist studies scholarship in recent years.
[28] Block quotations of primary material within *A Cultural History* may be found as follows: 13, 14, 22, 25, 47, 61-2, 81, 101, 120, and 232.

earlier scholarship toward largely presenting the reader with paraphrased synopses of primary source material, recent Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship demonstrates a tendency to offer large excerpts of translated primary material with little if any summary appended.[29] I suggest that this tendency has resulted as a consequence of the field's renewed interest in the preeminence of textual sources, although in recent scholarship primary textual sources are being left to speak for themselves in the form of lengthily translated block quotations. Bryan D. Lowe's *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan* (2017), Stone's *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan* (2016), Pandey's *Perfumed Sleeves*, Asuka Sango's *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan* (2015), and much of *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* (2002) edited by Barbara Ruch (including Marian Ury's "Nuns and Other Female Devotees in *Genkō shakusho* (1322), Japan's First History of Buddhism" (2002) and Ruch's "Woman to Woman: *Kumano bikuni* Proselytizers in Medieval and Early Modern Japan" (2002)) are all particularly apparent examples of this trend. Indeed, each of these relatively recently published texts express the inclination toward presenting the reader with large blocks of translated material, often with little if any summary of the text appended. That is to say, recent publications express a tendency toward letting primary texts speak for themselves, which, I suggest, serves to reinforce the notion that text is of the utmost importance. Stone in particular draws upon dense block quotations of translated primary textual material. She is certainly not alone in this, however, as Lowe, Pandey, and Ury each employ

[29] In terms of synthesizing primary source material, older publications such McMullin's aforementioned *Buddhism and the State*, along with Grapard's *The Protocol of the Gods*, serve as excellent examples of this tendency, as each provides a great deal of synthesis and limited direct translated (or untranslated) primary source material.

similar means of supporting their contentions and of providing context.[30] Stone is something of an exception here, however, in that her earlier publications, most notably *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999), present primary source material in a very similar fashion, albeit less voluminously.[31] Regardless, it appears to remain the case at present that English publications treating medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, women, gender, and/or sex have yet to experience a significant trend in employing Buddhist material culture as the primary mode of data.[32]

The field of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies has, as noted above, recently expressed an increased interest once again in textual sources. This leads me to suspect that the study of Japanese Buddhist nuns, women, sex, and/or gender may, without a forceful push, continue to employ primarily textual data as opposed to beginning the process of integrating additional

[30] Stone's *Right Thoughts* bears a great deal of block quotations of translated primary material, which can be found as listed here: 33, 39, 47, 50-1, 52, 53, 54, 55-6, 67, 76, 89, 95, 99-100, 138, 155, 162, 165, 167, 180, 186, 187, 217, 222, 223, 225, 227-8, 230, 231, 237, 243, 245-6, 246, 247, 254-5, 255, 255-6, 257, 277, 278, 278-9, 279, 280, 281, 291, 316, 317, 317-8, 324-5, 326, 328-9, 330, 330-1, 333-4, 336, 338, 340, 343, 349, 350, 360, 366, and 366-7.
Block quotations of translated primary material in Lowe's *Ritualized Writing* are observable on the following pages: 4, 29, 37, 38-9, 39, 40-1, 43, 44, 45, 50, 51, 60, 63, 67-8, 69-70, 75, 76, 83, 97, 106, 116-7, 149, 158, 159-60, 160, 171, 197, 201, 203, 208, and 209.
Block quotations of primary material in Pandey's *Perfumed Sleeves* may be located as follows: 38, 39, 40, 41, 49, 52, 77, 78-9, 79, 79-80, 80, 95, 96, 98, 105, 123-4, 125, 131, 132, 133, 134-5, 137, 138, 140, 141, 142-3, 143, 144, and 144-5. Pandey does, however, additionally engage in a significant amount of synthesizing of primary material.

[31] The first chapter of *Original Enlightenment* alone contains ten block quotations of translated primary material, for instance (Stone 23, 25, 27, 38, 39-40, 40, 42, 43-4, 44, and 46). Further, older scholarship such as McMullin's *Buddhism and the State* does make use of block quotations appended with little synthesis, though this is typically done far more sparingly. For McMullin's block quotations of translated primary material, see: 85, 130, 131, 136, 137, 208, and 270-1.

[32] There exist, however, a few selected publications that do primarily engage with Buddhist material culture as the primary mode of data in studying medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns. Such works include: *A Hidden Heritage: Treasures of the Japanese Imperial Convents* (2009), edited by Fister, Monica Bethe, Yokomizo Hiroko, Furuta Ryō, and Kimura Shinobu; *Art by Buddhist Nuns: Treasures from the Imperial Convents of Japan* (2003), edited by Fister and translated by Ken Aoki; Fister's "Creating Devotional Art;" and *Days of Discipline and Grace: Treasures from the Imperial Buddhist Convents of Kyoto* (1998), edited by Maribeth Graybill and Ohki Sadako. It is worth noting, though, that three of these publications are somewhat unusual in that they are museum catalogues, filled with beautiful colour images of various objects of Buddhist material culture, but largely lacking in terms of appended analysis of the depicted objects in comparison with, say, book-length studies of the convents from whence these objects came.

modes of data, such as various forms of Buddhist material culture.[33] Similarly, it appears unlikely that publications making prolific use of various forms of Buddhist material culture as their primary mode of data (yet not specifically dealing with women, nuns, gender, or sex) will begin to include comprehensive discussions of women's or nun's involvement(s) with these particular source materials.[34] This, too, then links neatly into my earlier suggestion that it remains the case within Buddhist Studies scholarship generally that male historical actors and concerns function overwhelmingly as the (implicit) normative lens through which the field both thinks and writes.[35] In light of this, it is the goal of this thesis to provide a functional theoretical foundation upon which future explorations of Medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, women, sex, and/or gender through the lens of Buddhist material culture as either a primary or commensurate mode of data may be conducted.

[33] It is worth noting once again that Meeks, for instance, does make some limited use of various forms of Buddhist material culture as a secondary mode of data throughout *Hokkeji*. This usage is relatively limited, however, particularly when considered directly in contrast with her considerable employment of primary textual sources. See footnote 19 for additional discussion of this matter.

[34] I suggest this as a consequence of the lack of treatment of women, nuns, gender, or sex found within existing scholarship within Japanese Buddhist Studies in a broad sense, as noted above. Publications employing Buddhist material culture as their primary mode of data express this tendency, too, notably including Rambelli's *Buddist Materiality* and Germano and Trainor's *Embodying the Dharma*. Within Rambelli's *Buddhist Materiality*, for example, remarkably few mentions of women (let alone nuns) can be found within the entirety of the book (see 229-36 and 255 for two of the only instances). Germano and Trainor's *Embodying the Dharma* similarly contains very few mentions of women or nuns. It is perhaps curious that the most extended discussion of any women may be found in Strong's chapter, "Buddhist Relics in Comparative Perspective: Beyond the Parallels," in the form of two female Christian figures (namely a fourth century CE Roman Christian noblewoman named Paula, and Saint Radegund (518-87 CE)) being evoked as comparisons and contrasts to Buddhist tales of relic veneration (in which no female figures appear).

[35] This issue extends into the differing valuation of men's and women's writing. Several points might be noted with regard to this concern, including women's writing (or rather, the genres into which their works are categorized) often being judged to be 'lower' literature as opposed to men's writing (or, again, the genres of their writings) frequently falling within the category of 'high' literature. Further, the paucity of extant premodern texts attributed to female writers serves as a significant contributing factor in the lack of focus on women for those scholars engaging with textual sources as the primary mode of data. It may also be noted that, unless the author is very explicitly female, premodern texts are typically assumed to have been penned by male authors. Employing material culture as a primary or commensurate mode of data, then, may serve as a possible corrective as a means of producing a more detailed picture of what the lives of premodern Japanese women and nuns might have been like.

3. Marrying the Study of Nuns with Buddhist Material Culture as a 'Primary Mode of Data'

There remains a great deal of opportunity to marry these two areas of inquiry, thereby deepening and enriching our information regarding Japanese Buddhism in general. Patricia Fister's "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o" (2000), when considered in tandem with Cogan's *The Princess Nun*, serves as a particularly salient exemplar of the potential for enhancing and further cultivating academic inquiries into the lives and activities of female historical actors, such as the Japanese princess nun Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智 (1619-97). In the case of Cogan's and Fister's work concerning Bunchi, both represent efforts toward crafting an image of who the princess nun may have been, and of what she accomplished during her long life. While Cogan's *The Princess Nun* contains a wealth of information, she relies almost entirely upon textual sources, making very few mentions of Buddhist material culture.[36] She does, however, explicitly acknowledge the existence of a plethora of objects of Buddhist material culture produced by Bunchi at the outset of *The Princess Nun*. Indeed, Cogan suggests that although "Bunchi did leave many works of art and poems," her own academic "concern with monastic regulation does not leave space for full consideration of them" (5). While I am not suggesting that Cogan's justification here is flawed, I do contend that the inclusion of some level of treatment of the various objects of Buddhist material culture produced by Bunchi would serve only to further strengthen Cogan's already impressive study of the princess nun.

[36] Cogan relies particularly heavily upon Bunchi's 1688 autobiography, the "Chronicle of Universal Gate Mountain" (*Fumonsan no ki* 普門山[之]記), and the monk Chimyō Jōin's 和明浄因 (1621-1700) biography of Bunchi. These texts are promptly evoked within the first five pages of the Introduction to *The Princess Nun*, and continue to be appealed to consistently throughout the entirety of Cogan's book.

In considering Fister's relatively brief twenty-five page article examining Bunchi's material productions as a supplement to Cogan's text-centered study, I find that a more well-rounded picture of this exceptional nun might be envisioned. While Fister admittedly makes rather limited use of textual sources, she does provide a relatively thorough and clear treatment of a variety of objects crafted by Bunchi.[37] Fister's analysis of these objects offers insight into Bunchi's devotional acts centering around both her father, the emperor Gomizuno-o 後水尾天皇 (or Go-Mizunoo; 1596-1680), and various forms of Buddhist practice popularly performed during the seventeenth century in Japan. Considering the physical remnants of Bunchi's actions, then, allows readers to approach the nun's life and activities from an angle that is rendered all but invisible when limiting the data consulted to primary textual sources.

Conclusion

This thesis will demonstrate just the slightest scratching at the surface of the potential for re-envisioning the activities and circumstances of medieval Japanese nuns by entwining predominantly text-based studies of nuns with an examination of relevant traces of nuns' productions and acquisitions of objects of Buddhist material culture found within existing English publications. In this endeavour, I pull upon pre-existing materialist and textualist threads observable within a selection of English scholarship, entwining them as a means of illustrating the insights into medieval Japanese Buddhism they might provide.

[37] Such objects include: devotional artwork made of Gomizuno-o's fingernails glued to silk in order to create Chinese characters and *myōgō* 名号 (the names of Buddhist deities as invocations); a clay statue in the likeness of Gomizuno-o with some of the emperor's hair attached to the face; and several portions of various *sutras* transcribed by Bunchi in her own blood.

I appeal, finally, to the closing sentence of Meeks' Epilogue in *Hokkeji*, in which she suggests that "[i]t is only when discussions of doctrine are tempered with attention to … common, on-the-ground religious practices that we begin to see the depth and complexity of Buddhist monasticism in premodern Japan" (310). I am in full agreement with Meek's entreaty to increase the attention paid by (especially Western) scholars to 'common, on-the-ground practices,' though my own interests lead me to explicitly add the productions and acquisitions of various forms of Buddhist material culture to this loose category. Increased consultation of the on-the-ground creation and obtaining of objects of Buddhist material culture within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship concerning women and/or nuns will serve to further increase our understanding(s) of 'the depth and complexity of Buddhist monasticism in premodern Japan.' In so doing, I feel it necessary to produce a functional theoretical foundation upon which to conduct these efforts at combination, as no theoretical precedents yet exist to my knowledge that have been tailored for use within such a context. First, though, I propose that an examination of the differing modes of 'theory' found between Religious Studies and Japanese Buddhist Studies as a sub-field is in order, as the underlying theoretical assumptions of each exist at present in a separate and distinct fashion.

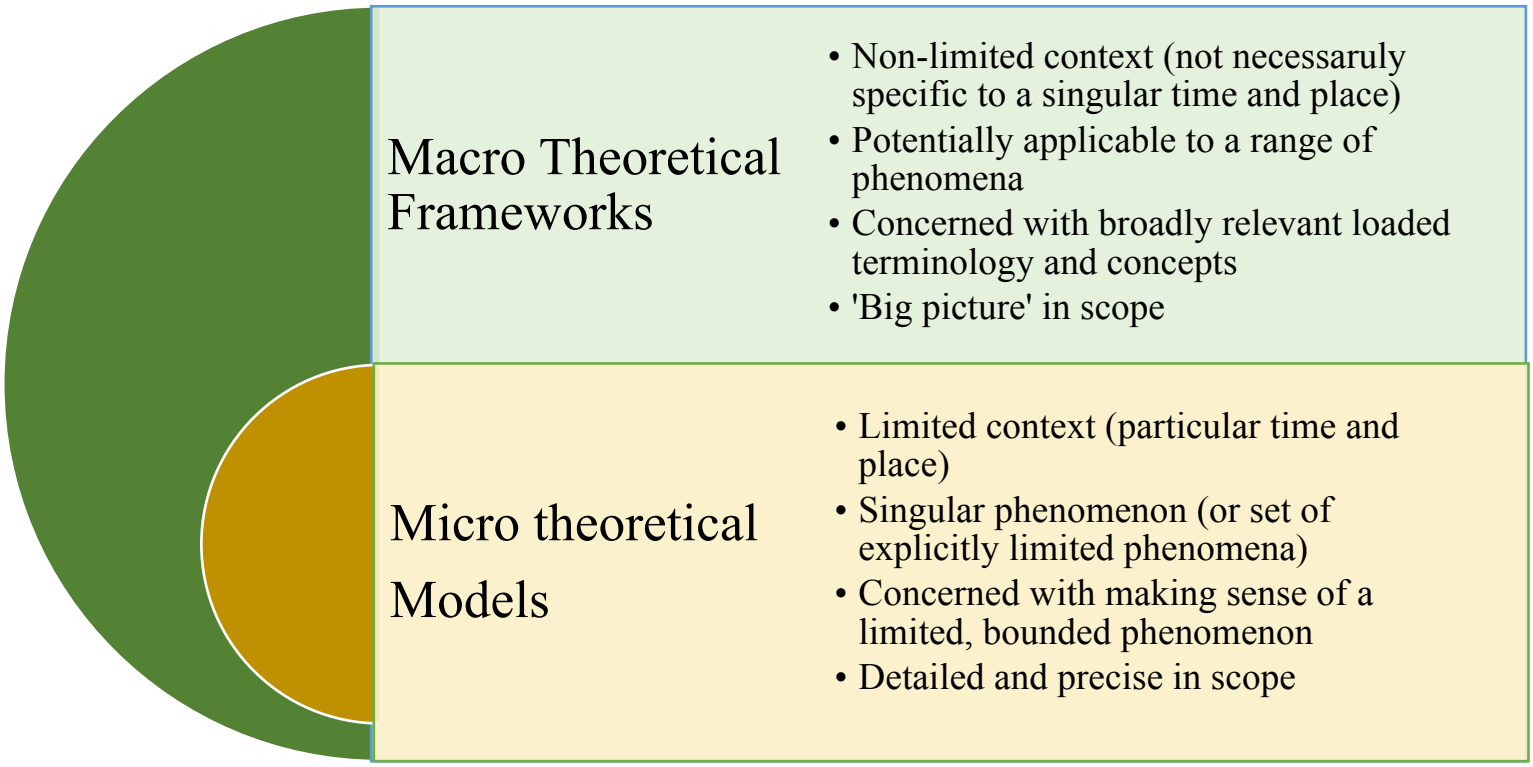
Chapter 2 – State of the Field: Method and Theory in Religious Studies and in Japanese Buddhist Studies

There remains a fundamental qualitative difference between what constitutes 'theory' in Japanese Buddhist Studies and what constitutes 'theory' in the broader field of Religious Studies. For the purpose of clarity and ease of use, I will refer to the mode of theory found within Religious Studies as capital-T 'Theoretical frameworks,' while I describe Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies' mode of theory as lowercase-t 'theoretical models.' I have drawn the idea for this distinction from Bruce Lincoln's discussion of "Culture" in the *Guide to the Study of Religion* (2000). Lincoln proposes a division of the expansive concept of 'culture' into capital-C 'Culture' and lowercase-c 'culture,' wherein lowercase-c 'culture' is understood "as the sum of all communications circulating within a group that the group recognizes as its own, and through which it constitutes and distinguishes itself from others" ("Culture" 412). Capital-C 'Culture' then functions as "a highly significant subset of this totality," consisting "of the 'choice' works and the 'select' genres that enjoy greatest aesthetic privilege, social cachet and official support" (412). Lincoln's distinction between these two modes of 'culture' exists within an explicit hierarchy, such that capital-C 'Culture' "is the subset of culture that is valorized … by the fraction of society that is itself most valorized," rendering capital-C 'Culture' "nothing other than hegemony" that seeks to suppress the remainder of lowercase-c 'culture' (412, 413).[38] In pulling on the conceptual threads of Lincoln's imagined hierarchical and hegemonic separation between capital versus lowercase iterations of the same term, I am not attempting to suggest either a hierarchical nor a hegemonic relationship between capital-T and lowercase-t modes of theory.

[38] I return to Lincoln's inventive and helpful approach to 'culture' in chapter three of this thesis.

A further important difference between Lincoln's original use of the lowercase versus capital-letter distinction and my own is that Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies' lowercase-t 'theoretical models' serve as a subset of Religious Studies' capital-T 'Theoretical frameworks.' My distinction between capital-T and lowercase-t modes of theory relates explicitly to a conceptual separation marked by differing scopes of the modes of theory under scrutiny. I identify Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks as attending to macro concerns, as in expansive theoretical issues that extend beyond the limits of a single phenomenon existing within a bounded geographic and temporal locale. Macro theory, then, may be gainfully applied to a broad range of contexts (if not also a broad range of phenomena), albeit at times with some refinement required. Conversely, within my proposed metatheoretical complex, Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies style theoretical models attend to micro concerns, which are necessarily specific to an individual phenomenon (or limited set of unambiguous phenomena) that is particular to a definite and restricted time and place (in other words, a constrained geographic and temporal context). This is not to say that either mode of theory is superior to the other, but is rather intended to emphasize the difference in functionality and applicability of each mode.[39]

[39] The distinction between macro Theoretical frameworks and micro theoretical models will be further clarified below.



I am interested in integrating Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks attending to large conceptual and terminological concerns with Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies style theoretical models that help, in part, to ground a study within a relevant historical context (or contexts) in order to ultimately develop a holistic theoretical foundation upon which future studies concerning medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their interactions with various forms of Buddhist material culture may be developed. As a preliminary effort, chapter two of this thesis outlines several relevant trends found within both Religious Studies scholarship primarily concerned with the study and/or production of method and theory and Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publications either developing, employing, or reworking theoretical models (particularly those developed by the late Kuroda Toshio [1926-1993]).

In an effort to provide context for chapter three of this thesis, I first offer an overview of the tendency of Religious Studies method and theory to attend to broad ranging terminological and/or conceptual issues on a ‘macro’ level. This is followed by a treatment of Medieval

Japanese Buddhist Studies method and theory focusing on the work and lasting legacy of Kuroda Toshio as an exemplar of trends in the field to engage predominantly with historiographically-oriented 'micro' theory. Finally, I engage in an effort at contrasting and comparing two archetypal anthologies, the *Guide to the Study of Religion* (2000) edited by Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (two major figures within modern Religious Studies method and theory) and *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism* (2005) edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr. (a leading scholar within Buddhist Studies).

1. Religious Studies Style Macro Theory (Frameworks)

I aim first to identify the distinctive tendency within Religious Studies method and theory, characterized predominantly by Christian-centric notions (especially that of monotheism), to make efforts directed toward handling expansive conceptual and terminological issues. These concerns are not limited to specific contexts (i.e. not necessarily bound to a specific time, place, event, and/or phenomenon) and are typically employed variously throughout the field as well as in related areas of study such as Anthropology, History, Sociology, and so on.[40] That being said, Religious Studies Theoretical framework(s) will often be applied to a specific context or set of contexts as a case study within the initial publication proposing the theory as a sort of 'proof.' Despite typically being applied to just one or two case studies when initially proposed, Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks are generally designed to be broadly applicable, thus self-

[40] Drawing clear lines between Religious Studies and the related fields of study noted above is somewhat arbitrary, though, given the extremely interdisciplinary nature of Religious Studies. As noted below, the beginnings of Religious Studies method and theory may be traced back to the influence of classical theorists such as E. B. Tylor (1832-1917), James Frazer (1854-1941), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Karl Marx (1818-1883), William James (1842-1910), Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), Max Weber (1864-1920), E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), Mary Douglas (1921-2007), and Clifford Geertz (1926-2006). Incidentally, not one of these scholars worked within Religious Studies, as the field did not develop as a formal and separate discipline until relatively recently, around the mid 20th c. (see Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* 37).

consciously functioning as 'macro' Theory attending to relatively expansive terminological and conceptual theoretical challenges.

This tendency began with the classical theorists of the mid 19th c. extending to the mid to late 20th c., such as E. B. Tylor (1832-1917), James Frazer (1854-1941), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Karl Marx (1818-1883), William James (1842-1910), Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), Max Weber (1864-1920), Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), Mary Douglas (1921-2007), and Clifford Geertz (1926-2006).[41] Religious Studies method and theory continues to follow a comparable basic outline to that of the frameworks proposed by the classical theorists, progressing along a similar common pattern: a macro theoretical issue is identified (and possibly illustrated via a selection of examples); a corrective in the form of a Theoretical framework is proposed; and, finally, either an individual case study or a selection of case studies to which the framework may be gainfully employed are offered.[42] William E. Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon's *The Sacred is the Profane: The*

[41] For further detail concerning these theorists, I direct the reader to Daniel L. Pals' *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* (2009), which contains relevant excerpts from the original theory work of each of the scholars listed above (with the notable and perhaps conspicuous exception of Douglas).

[42] Tylor, for instance, begins *Primitive Culture* by discussing what he considers to be an issue in the study of culture and civilization through the ages, suggesting that "much of the labour spent in investigating the progress and decline of civilization has been mis-spent in premature attempts to treat as a whole which is as yet only susceptible of divided study" (5). Tylor particularly takes issue with "the vast range of physical, political, social, and ethical considerations being left all but untouched" within studies of "the progress and decline of civilization" (5). As a 'corrective,' Tylor proposes "that the savage state in some measure represents an early condition of mankind, out of which the higher culture has gradually been developed or evolved, by processes still in regular operation as old, the result showing that, on the whole, progress has far prevailed over relapse" (5). In slightly more concrete terms, Tylor offers the notion of 'survivals,' which functions as a sort of (deeply flawed) Theoretical framework that might be placed around a broad range of possible phenomena in a variety of contexts (for more detail, see 6-10). He goes on to offer several brief examples as 'proofs' for this idea, here functioning as truncated case studies. Tylor suggests, for instance, that "[t]he saying that marriages in May are unlucky survives to this day in England," and that this serves as "a striking example of how an idea, the meaning of which has perished for ages, may continue to exist simply because it has existed" (6).
Eliade, meanwhile, proposes a distinct dichotomy between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' as a means of examining "the *sacred in its entirety*" as opposed to focusing upon "the relation between the rational and the nonrational elements of religion" (as Otto had done) (275). Eliade goes on to suggest the term 'hierophany' as a means of designating "the *act of manifestation* of the sacred" (275). Eliade's definition of the 'sacred,' accompanied by the notion of 'hierophany' and set in distinct contrast to the 'profane,' serves in and of itself as a sort of Theoretical framework that is potentially applicable to a range of phenomena across a variety of geographic and temporal

Political Nature of 'Religion' (2013) serves as a particularly clear exemplar of two of the tendencies of Religious Studies style Theory, namely to attend to macro theoretical concerns and to present a corresponding Theoretical framework following a similar basic pattern to the works of the classical theorists. Throughout *The Sacred is the Profane*, Arnal and McCutcheon seek to revisit the binary classificatory system of 'religious'/'secular,' challenging the reader to

> reconsider the now widely shared, seemingly commonsense presumption that there is such a thing in the world called religion, that it takes different forms in different regions and eras, that it is a feature of all human beings, and that it is inherently or properly distinguishable from that nonreligious thing that goes by the name of politics, the secular, the profane, or, simply put, the mundane (3).

Within the first few pages of their introduction, Arnal and McCutcheon explicitly challenge (and indeed predicate their book upon) the significant and frequently used theoretically fraught term 'religion' alongside the classificatory conglomerate that accompanies it.[43] Arnal and McCutcheon are particularly interested in the scholarly employment of the term, seeking to: question why Euro-American scholars have adopted the term; explore what the concept has accomplished; ask why scholars continue to make use of the term; and, finally, consider whether

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locales. Eliade takes this notion of the 'sacred' and applies it to numerous case studies, including: quotations from *Exodus*, *Genesis*, and *Shatapatha Brahmana*; the traditions of an Australian Arunta tribe concerning a 'sacred pole;' a literal list of "a number of cultures" that are concerned with "mountains, real or mythical, situated at the center of the world," with Eliade naming such mountains as "Meru in India, Haraberezaiti in Iran, the mythical 'Mount of the Lands' in Mesopotamia, [and] Gerizim in Palestine;" and several examples of 'holy sites' and 'sanctuaries' understood to exist at the center of the world, temples believed to act as "replicas of the cosmic mountain," and temples whose foundations are thought to "descend deep into the lower regions" (see 279, 281, 282, 283-4, 285, 285). Eliade, then, follows along the same pattern that I have mentioned above.
This same general pattern is also clearly observable within: Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (see especially 40, 40-1, 42-3, 45-6, 47, 50, 53, 54, 60-2, 65-6, 67, 70); Weber's *The Sociology of Religion* (see especially 255-6, 256-60); Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (see especially 207, 209, 210, 211, 232, and 233); Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (see especially 313-4, 315-6, 317-9); Douglas' *Purity and Danger* (see especially 9, 22, 35, 40, 48-50, 91-2, 98-100, 101-5, 118-20, 121-2, 131, 132-5, 147-8, 152-3, 156-8, 162-4, 174-6, 177-8, 179-84, 184-9, 189-90, 191-4, 201, 208-13, 217-8, 218-9); and Geertz's "Religion as a Cultural System" (see especially 347-8, 349, 355, 358-9, 361).

[43] The authors additionally reinforce the import of attending to their primary theoretical concern by extending their interest beyond 'religion' to include discussion of associated binary classificatory systems, accordingly contending that they "are persuaded that studies of the sacred/secular pairing now constitute one of our field's sharpest cutting edges" (Arnal and McCutcheon, *The Sacred is the Profane* 8).

or not we, as scholars, ought to cease using 'religion' as a technical, explanatory category and/or term (see *The Sacred is the Profane* 5-6). Having identified and problematized an expansive theoretical issue within the field of Religious Studies throughout the introduction and first two chapters of *The Sacred is the Profane*, Arnal and McCutcheon go on to push for the abandonment of 'religion' as an analytical category.[44] The push for the abandonment of 'religion' here serves, I suggest, as the corrective Theoretical framework being provided within *The Sacred is the Profane*. Arnal and McCutcheon drive the reader to acknowledge, with regard to "such cultural artifacts as are designated 'religious,' … just how fluid, artificial, and contingent those categories and strategies really are" (71).

In an effort to bolster their framework, Arnal and McCutcheon devote their fourth chapter to attempting to demystify not only the category of 'religion' itself, but also the history of the academic study of religion (73). Through chapters five and six the authors go on to deconstruct both the precarious category of 'religious experience' as a possible means of supporting a *sui generis* classification of 'religion,' and the penchant of "[n]early all modern theories of and approaches to religion … to take for granted the 'given-ness' and the cultural universality of religion" (102). Chapter seven of *The Sacred is the Profane*, meanwhile, attends to the 'codependency' of the 'religious' and the 'secular,' placing particular emphasis upon the consequences of classification, and impressing upon the reader that 'secularism' is "religion's alter ego, … the *only* means for imagining religion even to exist" (118). Consequently, Arnal and McCutcheon argue for scholars to become increasingly 'methodologically self-conscious,' and to acknowledge that the 'secular' and 'religious' are, on their own, "useless concepts; but used

[44] They openly contend that "[f]or a variety of different reasons, religion may turn out to be an unhelpful scholarly, academic, and analytical category" (Arnal and McCutcheon, *The Sacred is the Profane* 103).

together as a coordinated binary pair, they set malleable limits that make almost anything possible to say" (128).[45]

The Theoretical framework set forth in *The Sacred is the Profane* culminates in Arnal and McCutcheon's contention that "such distinctions as church/state, private/public, and sacred/secular" might as well be understood "as nothing more or less than socio-rhetorical devices that have stayed on our minds because they have continued to prove so useful to a variety of groups, … all of which have tried to regulate … their highly competitive economies of signification" (133). *The Sacred is the Profane* concludes with a final chapter outlining a pointed case study of Christian Origins as a subfield of Religious Studies, and of the limitations of the term 'religion' within that field. Thus, *The Sacred is the Profane* follows the general pattern of Religious Studies Theory production noted above, as the text: first identifies a macro theoretical issue ('religion' as a classificatory and analytical category); subsequently works at developing a corrective in the form of a Theoretical (anti-)framework; and, finally, applies this reconsideration to a case study as a means of outlining the functionality of the framework in question.[46]

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[45] Arnal and McCutcheon hammer home the driving force behind their Theoretical framework by contending that "after all, for scholars of the social, there is nothing religious about religion. The sacred is the profane" (*The Sacred is the Profane* 131).

[46] An additional instance of a modern Religious Studies scholar producing theory work following along the same general pattern may be found within McCutcheon's "Afterword: Origins Today" (2015), which begins by problematizing the notion that 'origins' are about the past, instead pushing the reader to "focus on the current speaker, the present writer, the one who is making the claim" of origin(s) (77). McCutcheon goes on to suggest a shift away from 'origins' discourses and toward discussions of 'beginnings,' given that "claims about beginnings are active, presuming some process whereby prior events result in subsequent happenings; whereas claims of origins, or of origination, are passive, that is, something supposedly just comes into existence" (85). The push toward discarding 'origins' (the macro Theoretical issue under scrutiny here) and alternatively adopting 'beginnings' (the seed of a Theoretical framework in this instance) is capped with two brief case studies, one of which appears in the form of the episode "Diversity Day" (Season 1, Episode 2) of the US adaptation of *The Office* (see 88-9). Here too then, McCutcheon has followed a similar pattern to that of the classical theorists discussed above.
Although I will not subject the reader to a chapter by chapter dissection of Braun and McCutcheon's *Guide*, it is worth noting here that the majority of the chapters contained within the anthology follow much the same pattern outlined above. Indeed, the title of each chapter of the anthology indicates the general curvature of the macro Theoretical concern at hand (such as 'religion,' 'definition,' 'classification,' 'cognition,' 'experience,' 'gender,' 'myth,' 'origin,' 'ritual,' 'sacred,' 'culture,' or 'colonialism' to name but a few). Each author typically describes their concerns with the term, provides a solution in the form of a Theoretical framework, and then applies the framework in question to one or more case studies.

The basic pattern outlined above has generally persisted, although the theoretical models currently being produced are typically more sophisticated and less evolutionarily-oriented than their predecessors.[47] The work of classical theorists such as those listed above has thus served to inform, guide, and shape the theory work undertaken by current Religious Studies scholars, both in terms of the basic format and of the content and focus of theory-oriented publications. I suspect that the extremely monotheism-centered nature of the classical theorists' works, particularly those whose ideas have continued to hold sway over modern Religious Studies scholarship, has deterred Medieval Buddhist Studies Scholars from engaging with similar modes of theory production.[48]

Although the majority of Religious Studies theorists still hold monotheistic traditions as the assumed baseline of and for their work, Theoretical frameworks are becoming increasingly less overtly theologically oriented.[49] This means that reworking Religious Studies Theoretical

[47] Tylor and Frazer are, of the classical theorists discussed in this chapter, perhaps the most explicitly interested in evolutionary ideas. The basic premise of Tylor's Theoretical framework rests upon his suggestion that "the main tendency of human society during its long term of existence has been to pass from a savage to a civilized state" (5). After stating explicitly that the "higher culture" may be traced "back to what may be called the middle culture," Tylor seeks to provide an answer to the question of "whether this middle culture may be traced back to the lower culture, that is, to savagery" (5). As the 'cherry on top' to these (clearly problematic from a modern standpoint) evolutionarily-informed notions, Tylor adds that "it may be safely presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism" (6). Frazer, a student of Tylor, follows suit in suggesting, for instance, that the development of a class of 'magicians,' serving as public functionaries within "savage society," "is of great importance for the political as well as the religious evolution of society" (48). Indeed, Frazer's entire Theoretical framework rests upon an imagined 'evolution' from 'magic' to 'religion,' ultimately culminating in 'science' as the most 'civilized' and 'evolved' form of belief (see especially 54-6, 68-9). Much like Tylor, Frazer makes frequent use of the term 'savage' in reference to groups that he deems to be less 'evolved' than western society, equally often pushing the notion of some grand "progress of civilization" upon the reader (49).
It should be noted, though, that evolutionarily-oriented ideas were extremely pervasive during Tylor's and Frazer's lifetimes, with Charles Darwin (1809-1882) having published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.

[48] This tendency will be further addressed below.

[49] There are, of course, exceptions to the tendency of avoiding the inclusion of theological concerns and/or interests within Religious Studies method and theory publications, seen within the work of such scholars as Tyler Roberts (*Encountering Religion: Responsibility and Criticism After Secularism*, 2017) or Brent Nongbri (*Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*, 2013). The mode of theory found within this variety of publications, although often functioning as macro Theoretical frameworks, does not attend to concerns that I consider to be of any relevance to this thesis. As a consequence, I focus explicitly upon the work of scholars who approach Religious Studies method and theory from a distinctly non-theologically oriented position, such as Arnal, Braun, Lincoln, McCutcheon, and Smith.

frameworks in order to be gainfully utilized within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhism is gradually becoming more manageable, although considerable modification is still typically required to render them helpful within non-monotheistic contexts. The movement away from (explicitly or implicitly) theologically-based Theoretical frameworks is particularly evident in the work of J. Z. Smith (1938-2017).[50] Smith's often cited "Religion, Religions, Religious" (in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 1998) is a particularly clear example of the theorist's generally non-theological approach to the academic study of 'religion.'[51]

Smith suggests that two definitions of 'religion' "command widespread scholarly assent, one essentially theological, the other anthropological" ("Religion, Religions, Religious" 280). The definitions are drawn, respectively, from the works of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and of Melford E. Spiro (1920-2014).[52] In the case of the 'theological' definition, Smith suggests that, should the theological criteria be removed, "then it becomes difficult if not impossible to distinguish religion from any other ideological category" (281). In the case of the 'anthropological' definition, meanwhile, the nearest to a critique that Smith's commentary comes is in his noting that the "definition requires acceptance of a broad theory of cultural creation," which "places human cultural activities or institutions as the *summum genus* and religion as a subordinate taxon" (281). I have not provided either Tillich nor Spiro's definitions here, as it is not the substance of either definition with which I am concerned so much as Smith's treatments

[50] The movement away from theologically-oriented scholarship represented particularly clearly in Smith's work is not necessarily a consistent feature within the entirety of the field of Religious Studies, though. As Tomoko Masuzawa has noted, "[i]n present academic practice, the question of whether a given author [is] theologically motivated or free of all such parochial interests continues to be asked, explicitly or implicitly, whenever any writing on religion is evaluated" (*The Invention of World Religions* 69).
[51] Due to spatial constraints, I hone in on but one exemplar of the general tenor of Smith's work here. This is not to suggest that Smith has not attended to similar concerns in other publications, or that his non-theological approach is limited to this one piece of writing.
[52] For the definitions in question, see Smith's "Religion, Religions, Religious" 280-1.

of each. Smith's relative lack of critique of the 'anthropological' definition here is telling, as is his clear disdain for Tillich's 'theological' definition.[53]

It seems, then, that Smith himself is situated within one of the four continuing issues raised by "the major expansion of the use and understanding of the term 'religion' that began in the sixteenth century" ("Religion, Religions, Religious" 269). Notably, the list of issues outlined at the outset of "Religion, Religions, Religious" includes the contention that "'[r]eligion' is an anthropological not a theological category" (269). Smith sharpens this point by adding that 'religion' "describes human thought and action, most frequently in terms of belief and norms of behavior" (269). As such, it appears that Smith not only identifies a historical distinction between 'theological' and 'anthropological' approaches to 'religion,' but enacts this distinction within his own work.

Later theorists such as Arnal, Braun, and McCutcheon have followed in Smith's footsteps, producing similarly deliberately non-theologically oriented Theoretical frameworks. Within *The Sacred is the Profane*, for instance, Arnal and McCutcheon question the relevance of 'theology' and 'theologians' "[w]ithout contemporary scholars pitching the modern concepts of religion and not-religion backward in time" (10). They go on to suggest that, "without our modern concept 'religion,' [they are] not sure how that group of rhetoricians … whom we commonly know as theologians stands out as any different from a host of other propagandists injecting themselves into public debates" (10). Although the critique here is somewhat indirect, when considering Arnal and McCutcheon's ultimate push for the abandonment of 'religion' as an analytical category, their disinterest in theologians and theology as objects of study within

[53] Smith's own penchant for actively divorcing theological concerns and questions of belief from Religious Studies scholarship is anything but subtle, and serves as a running theme throughout his many publications. This proclivity is carried on in the works of scholars following in Smith's wake, such as Arnal, Braun, and McCutcheon.

'Religious Studies' is rendered quite apparent.[54] Braun, meanwhile, describes the pursuits of theology as being "what Jacques Derrida calls discourses of 'hauntology'" or, in other words, "obscurantist strategies in the study of religion" ("Religion" 5). Although Braun does not seek to deny the "noble aims, necessity, and appropriateness for confessional locales" of theological pursuits, he does contend that "these hauntologies … subvert a research strategy whose aim is to enlist the study of religion as a contributing partner in the pursuit of a science of human social life, an exercise that could be credible within the family of human and social sciences in the modern university" (5). In other words, Braun appears to relegate theology as a discipline explicitly external to, and apart from, the 'family of human and social sciences in the modern university.' As such, it seems that Braun sees no place for theological concerns or approaches within Religious Studies.

Despite moving away from theological concerns, virtually all English language Religious Studies Theory work that I am aware of continues to be designed for application within monotheistic traditions, as noted above. This tendency to focus on monotheistic traditions, particularly upon various Christianities, has early precedents in the form of the works of the classical theorists, especially Freud, Otto, Weber, James, and Eliade. While the majority of the classical theorists might be pointed to in discussing the pervasive tendency of early Religious Studies related theory work to treat monotheistic traditions (especially Christianities) as the implicit or explicit norm and primary target of the Theoretical framework being proposed, I limit

[54] In discussing the genre of handbooks in the study of 'religion,' meanwhile, Arnal and McCutcheon note the often "curious mix of first-order phenomenological categories (e.g., God, liberation, relic, sacrifice) with second-order analytical categories (e.g., culture, modernity, territory)" observable within the chapter topics of such texts (*The Sacred is the Profane* 35). Here, Arnal and McCutcheon object, it seems, to the consistent lack of distinction drawn between first- and second-order concepts within this genre of writing. The authors go on to note that "the more troublesome articles in these volumes are either pitched far too high for many readers or … openly engage in local theological and humanistic speculations written by and for 'religionists'" (40-1). They thus appear to advocate for more explicit separation between the fields of Religious Studies and Theology.

my discussion here to a select few due to spatial constraints. Otto serves as a particularly clear exemplar of the tendency to treat Christianity in particular as the pinnacle of 'religion' upon which all theoretical conceptions of 'religion' are consequently (and hierarchically) based. Otto explicitly suggests that "a religion which recognizes and maintains … a view of God" that is parsed in terms of "clear and definite *concepts*" may consequently be described as "a 'rational' religion" (207). He goes on to contend that "we count this the very mark and criterion of a religion's high rank and superior value – that it should have no lack of *conceptions* about God; that it should admit knowledge – the knowledge that comes by faith – of the transcendent in terms of conceptual thought" (207-8). Indeed, Otto openly adds that "Christianity not only possesses such conceptions but possesses them in unique clarity and abundance, and this is … yet a very real sign of its superiority over religions of other forms and at other levels" (208). Later, he reinforces this argument by stating that, in applying the criterion of 'rationality,' "we find that Christianity, in this as in other respects, stands out in complete superiority over all its sister religions" (235). As such, Otto appears to have viewed Christianity in no uncertain terms as the pinnacle of 'religion,' rendering his Theoretical framework of the 'numinous' all but useless within contexts external to monotheistic traditions (or perhaps to Christianities more specifically).

Eliade, constructing his notions of an absolute dichotomy formed by the 'sacred' and the 'profane' from the outline of Otto's conception(s) of the 'numinous,' expresses a slightly less explicit tendency to treat monotheistic traditions as the foundation of his Theoretical framework(s). Eliade does, however, contend that "the history of religions … is constituted by a great number of hierophanies, by manifestation of sacred realities" (*The Sacred and the Profane* 276). As a consequence of Eliade's incredibly vague definition of the 'sacred' as "*the opposite of*

the profane," resting heavily upon Otto's antecedent Christian-centric notions of the 'numinous,' I contend that Eliade's Theoretical framework of the 'sacred'/'profane' dichotomy is similarly essentially Christian-centric at its core (275). Eliade notes, for instance, that the 'manifestations' that he is focused upon range from "the most elementary hierophany – *e.g.*, manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree – to the supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ)" (276). Here, Eliade appears to be treating Christian conceptions of the 'sacred' as normative, in contrast to, say, "[t]he modern Occidental" who (according to Eliade) "experiences a certain uneasiness before many manifestations of the sacred" (276). Thus, although Eliade seeks "to present the specific dimensions of religious experience" and "to bring out the differences between it and profane experience of the world" by employing an absurd assortment of examples drawn from a wide range of cultures spanning seemingly limitless geographic and temporal locales, I contend that Christianities serve as the essential though implicit measuring stick against which all other traditions are evaluated within Eliade's Theoretical framework(s) (278).

In the case of both Otto and Eliade, their respectively explicit and implicit employments of Christianity as the norm upon which their Theoretical frameworks are predicated render their work exceptionally difficult to apply to a non-monotheistic tradition such as medieval Japanese Buddhism(s). Even if a scholar thought their frameworks might be helpful within the context of Japanese Buddhism(s), a significant amount of effort would be required in order to gainfully reconstruct those frameworks in order to render them applicable to the context of medieval Japanese Buddhism(s). I suspect that the continued treatment of monotheistic traditions as normative within Religious Studies Theory work remains the primary reason for Medieval

Japanese Buddhist Studies' lack of engagement with, or production of, Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks.

The preferential treatment for the production of Christianity-centered Theoretical frameworks may still be found within more recent publications, including Smith, McCutcheon, Burton Mack, Braun, and Lincoln. As noted above, although Smith pushes back against employing a theological approach within the academic study of religion, he does at times fall prey to the tendency of Religious Studies theory work to treat Christianities in particular as being fundamentally normative. Indeed, in tracing the shifting meaning(s) of the term 'religion' over the centuries, Smith notes that "[i]t is the question of the plural *religions* (both Christian and non-Christian) that forced new interest in the singular, generic *religion*" ("Religion, Religions, Religious" 271). He does additionally note, though, that "[t]he most common form of classifying religions, found both in native categories and in scholarly literature, is dualistic and can be reduced, regardless of what differentium is employed, to 'theirs' and 'ours'" (276).[55] Taking this observation seriously, then, it seems rather logical that the majority of English language scholarship produced by western scholars would take, as a matter of course, monotheistic traditions (especially Christianity) as the 'ours' to which all else is contrasted.[56] This is perhaps additionally related to the three 'monotheistic religions' (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) being

[55] See also: Smith "Classification" 39; Masuzawa *The Invention of World Religions* 60-1; and Arnal and McCutcheon *The Sacred is the Profane* 125.
In addition, and beyond just the Christian-centric nature of the term 'religion,' Arnal and McCutcheon observe that "a variety of religionists and anthropologists have stressed in recent years the fundamentally modern and Western origins of both the idea of religion and the circumstances that give it salience" (*The Sacred is the Profane* 139). In particular, the notion of bundling such institutions, phenomena, and behaviors as "myths, deities, spirits, temples, prayers, rituals, or sacrifices … together, seeing them as somehow unified and at the same time distinct from other types of social behaviors – in short, viewing them as a more or less natural kind, a *species* – reflects a distinctively modern and distinctively Western set of circumstances" (139). 'Religion' as a higher order category, then, is fundamentally informed by, and linked to, the context of the (Christian-centric) modern West.
[56] In noting this, I am not suggesting that the majority of western scholars are themselves Christian or otherwise ascribing to a monotheistic tradition of some variant form. Rather, I am referring to the cultural normativity of especially Christianity within the western world, and particularly in North America.

historically academically "joined together in one taxonomic unit as reflective various degrees of recollecting primordial truth, while all other religious traditions can be classified in the singular taxon, 'idolatry,' 'polytheism,' … or 'pagan,'" a "dual classification [that] continued at least through the late nineteenth century" according to Smith ("Classification" 41). I contend that this distinction continues to exist implicitly (if not at times explicitly) within modern Religious Studies scholarship. Rather more importantly even than the continued taxonomical distinction between 'religions' as either monotheistic or polytheistic, though, is the continued taking of "Christianity, either Catholic or Protestant … taxonomically to be the 'prototype' of religion" (41).[57]

1.1 'Religion,' Christianities, and 'World Religions'

Indeed, the entire category of 'religion' is in effect a product of Christian efforts at self-definition.[58] The late nineteenth century development of a classificatory system of 'world religions' serves as a particularly clear instance of such efforts. In "Religion, Religions, Religious" Smith traces the construction of (the hierarchically organized) 'world religions' via Cornelis Petrus Tiele's (1830-1902) *Outline of the History of Religions to the Spread of Universal Religions* (1876).[59] In his treatment of various 'religions,' Tiele divides 'religion' into the two primary categories of (a) 'natural' (itself subdivided into: (1) polydaemonistic magical

[57] It is perhaps worth noting at this juncture that this tendency has been informed in part by "the assumption of Euro-Christian supremacy over all others" expressed by early western scholars of 'religion' (including, for instance, Tylor, Frazer, Freud, Durkheim, James, and/or Otto), an assumption that not only influenced the early 'scientific' study of 'religion,' but "played a decisive role in the emergent sense of 'the world' as a totality" according to Masuzawa (*The Invention of World Religions* 70, see also Asad's *Genealogies of Religion*).
[58] Notably, these efforts were begun by theologians (see especially Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* 73, and Asad's *Genealogies of Religion*).
[59] Masuzawa does the same in the third chapter of *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (2005), although she expands upon this discussion considerably.

religions under the control of animism; (2) purified or organized magical religions, or 'therianthropic polytheism' (further subdivided into 'unorganized' tribal and 'organized' imperial); and (3) 'anthropomorphic polytheism' which involves the "worship of manlike but superhuman and semi-ethical beings"), and (b) 'ethical' religions (subdivided into (1) "national nomistic (nomothetic) religious communities" founded on a law or holy scripture, and (2) "universalistic religious communities," which includes Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity) (Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" 278-9).[60] 'Universalistic religious communities' is actually the English "translation of *Wereldgodsdiensten*, or 'world religions'" (Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* 110). The notion of a 'world religion' in the sense of a single 'universal religion' "proved very useful" to the confessional community, wherein 'world religion' came to serve "as just another name for Christianity and for Christianity alone … which facilitated the adaptation of Christian absolutism to the modern reality" (119). As such, 'world religion' as a category "allowed any liberal Christian to acknowledge the existence of other religions without ceding Christianity's exclusive claim to universal truth" (119). Although the 'academic usage' of the category did not necessarily follow suit, at the end of the nineteenth century "what was uncontested and seemingly beyond any challenge was the assumption that Christianity was one religion endowed with the characteristics of a universal or universalistic world religion" (119-20). It is the assumed station of Christianities within the top hierarchically positioned category of this classificatory framework of 'religions' to which I wish to draw the attention of the reader. Here, 'Christianity' serves as the only 'religion' that gets to consistently hold a superior position over most if not all other ostensibly 'religious' traditions. Within this

[60] For a helpful breakdown of Tiele's framework, see Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* 110. Masuzawa also discusses several critiques of Tiele's framework, and the means by which he sought to develop corrective(s) to those critiques (see 111-3).

classificatory framework all other 'religions' are essentially defined and categorized on the basis of what is and is not akin to Christianities in a trickle-down fashion (as in, those 'religions' that are thought to share in some aspect(s) of Christianities are placed higher up within the hierarchy, closer to, or part of, Christianities' category of 'universalistic religious communities'). As such, I contend that Christianities here serve as the norm upon which the entirety of the phenomena that get to be classified as 'religion' are subsequently judged and categorized.

Later scholars would hold fast to the 'world religions' category, ultimately including seven 'world religions' "by collapsing Tiele's two classes of 'ethical religions' in an odd venture of pluralistic etiquette" (Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" 280). Even in this slightly more modern reimagining, 'world religions' retained the hierarchic placing of Christianities above all else.[61] I contend that this is continued implicitly within the modern category of 'world religions,' which yet retains Christianities as its fundamental taxonomic benchmark. In other words, the 'ours' to which all other phenomena are deemed akin enough to fall under the classification of 'religion' remains Christianity within scholarly discourse.[62]

Given the extremely strong (though often implicit) connotations of a hierarchically oriented definitional system rooted within a modern western context for which Christianities serve as the touchstone borne by the term 'religion,' perhaps the term ought to be done away

[61] As noted by Masuzawa, the "outright Christian favoritism" held by early scholars of comparative theology "was due, presumably, to the practical reality that Christianity, in whatever variety or degree of seriousness, was the religion to which the authors themselves subscribed, and which they also presumed on the part of their readers" (*The Invention of World Religions* 73). I argue that the legacy of the comparative theologians producing hierarchical categorizations of the 'world religions' lives on implicitly within both the classifications of 'religion' and of 'world religions.'

[62] Although Masuzawa notes that "[i]t has become a prevailing ethic and custom to edit out from both academic and public discourses on religion any sign of hierarchical valuation, any overt expression of self-serving and self-elevating motives lurking behind the work of comparison," I suggest that this 'editing' does not absolve modern usages of the term 'religion' of the implicit Christian baggage carried by the term (*The Invention of World Religions* 103).
For further discussion of this and similar notions, see especially Smith's "Classification" 42, and "Religion, Religions, Religious" 278-80.

with in its entirety?[63] Beyond the Christian-centrism of the term, there remains no consensus among Religious Studies scholars concerning what constitutes 'religion.' As a consequence, much as the 'sacred' is defined in opposition to the 'profane' within Durkheim's, Otto's, and Eliade's respective Theoretical frameworks, so too is the incredibly vague 'religion' typically and lazily defined in opposition to the 'secular.'[64] The combined issues of Christian-centrism and vagueness that plague 'religion' as a conceptual category serve as driving forces behind my tendency to avoid the term 'religion' in my own writing whenever possible.[65]

In a sense, given the fundamentally and historically Christian-centric nature of the very term 'religion' (and of the study of 'religion'), it is functionally nearly impossible to avoid the implication of Christianities serving as the baseline for any usages of 'religion' as a classificatory category. Smith, then, is not exceptional in his occasional falling-into of this issue.[66] Smith's

[63] As Arnal and McCutcheon suggest, 'religion' "is an artifact of the particular modern and Western *detachment* of some of its own traditional social institutions from effective institutions claimed by the state" (*The Sacred is the Profane* 141). As a consequence, "we do encounter phenomena that *look* like our notion of 'religion' long before the invention of religion as an important modern taxon" (141). Whether it is reasonable to identify these past phenomena on the basis of the modern, western category of 'religion' or not remains, it seems, an open point of debate within Religious Studies scholarship. Clearly, though, Arnal and McCutcheon securely occupy the side of this ongoing debate that advocates for the discarding of both the term 'religion' and of "the very idea that it makes good academic sense to clump together, for description, analysis, or especially explanation, those diverse acts, institutions, objects, and claims that we normally call 'religious'" (xiii).

[64] In discussing 'classification' as it relates and has been applied to 'religion,' Smith aptly suggests that "[t]he most fundamental classificatory distinction deployed by religions, as represented by modern scholarship since Durkheim, is that between the 'sacred' and the 'profane'" ("Classification" 38). He extends this by noting "that students of religions have shown a marked preference for sharply dualistic or oppositional classes," a tendency observable within the oppositional and dualistic conceptions of 'religious'/'secular' that often implicitly appear within Religious Studies publications opting not to provide an explicit working definition of 'religion' as their object of study (38).

[65] The reader might alternatively align more closely with Smith's important note that "'[r]eligion' is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define" ("Religion, Religions, Religious" 281). While I do not disagree with Smith on this point, I do contend that any use of the term 'religion' (even in the case of it being explicitly and self-consciously redefined) requires careful consideration of the implications (such as those noted above) of the term itself as a classificatory device.

[66] The same might be noted of the majority of the chapters in Braun and McCutcheon's *Guide*, as the anthology overwhelmingly focuses upon monotheistic traditions, despite claiming to serve as a guide to the study of 'religion' in broader terms. Of course, this too begs the question of what constitutes the category of 'religion,' a significant point of contention within Religious Studies. Although I lack the substantial space required to attend to this issue in any detail here, I direct the reader to Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions* for an interesting perspective regarding the construction of the rather ubiquitous category of 'world religions,' especially chapters three and four (107-20, 121-46).

work is, rather, exceptional in its continued push to *acknowledge* the intellectual baggage borne by 'religion.'[67] In any case, the Christian-centric nature of the term 'religion,' mirrored by the tendency of Religious Studies theorists to focus predominantly upon monotheistic (and especially Christian) traditions, serves as a significant barrier to the employment of Religious Studies style macro Theoretical frameworks within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship. This barrier is certainly not insurmountable, although it does necessitate considerable reworking of pre-existing Theoretical frameworks in the case of their being applied to non-monotheistic traditions, such as medieval Japanese Buddhism(s).

It is worth noting, though, that there have been a handful of efforts on the part of Buddhist Studies scholars to produce Religious Studies style macro Theoretical frameworks attending to sweeping conceptual challenges, although these attempts have been, in my view, largely unsatisfying. I point in particular to Robert Campany's notion of 'repertoire,' which functions as a revised iteration of Ann Swidler's concept of 'cultural repertoire.'[68] Campany explicitly applies (his interpretation of) Swidler's suggestion that "people, in the course of making decisions, explaining choices, and negotiating their way through life, avail themselves of specific elements of their culture as tool kits or repertoires that are available to be used variously by individuals" to "their relationship to religion" (Campany, "Religious Repertoires and Contestation" 106).[69] In essence, Campany is picking up Swidler's Theoretical framework and

[67] The same might be said of those Religious Studies theorists whose works bear clear signs of Smith's intellectual influence, such as Arnal, Braun, and McCutcheon.

[68] While Campany is not a Japanese Buddhist Studies scholar, focusing instead on Chinese 'religions' (notably including Buddhism), I view his work as falling within the scope of Buddhist Studies scholarship. As such, I suggest that his revision and application of a Religious Studies style Theoretical framework to a distinctly non-monotheistic context (namely, Buddhist practices) is of relevance to the present discussion.

[69] Although I will not assuage the reader with further detail here due to spatial constraints, for additional treatment of 'repertoire' I recommend consulting Swidler's *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* especially 24-34, Campany's "Religious Repertoires and Constestation" 106-10 and "On the Very Idea of Religions" 317-9, and Gareth Fisher's "Religion as Repertoire" 347-8.

dropping it onto the vague classificatory category of 'religion' "as an alternative to thinking and speaking of religions as fully integrated systems, organic wholes, containers, or personified agents" (106). While Campany's efforts to employ a macro Religious Studies style Theoretical framework may not be all that helpful in practice, his theory work does serve as an unusual instance of what I identify as a Buddhist Studies scholar openly engaging with an expansive theoretical issue and attempting to develop an appropriate Theoretical framework as a corrective that might be applied to a variety of phenomena in any number of geographic and temporal locales.[70]

Although I find Campany's efforts with 'repertoire' to be more a cause of frustration than a functional or effective Theoretical framework to be applied to Buddhist Studies scholarly pursuits, I retain a certain hope for the future of Religious Studies style macro Theory within Buddhist Studies. Perhaps reworking Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks might yet prove to be a gainful pursuit in terms of providing a sound foundation upon which to build future work within the subfield of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies. This, in turn, would likely allow the subfield to become more conversant with, and accessible to, the broader field of Religious Studies.[71]

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[70] Notably, Campany's "Religious Repertoires and Contestation: A Case Study Based on Buddhist Miracle Tales" (2012) additionally follows the same general pattern often observed within Religious Studies method and theory publications discussed above. Campany begins the article by identifying an expansive theoretical issue, proceeds to offer an appropriately broad Theoretical framework as a corrective, and then applies this framework to a handful of case studies.
Campany also opens the article with a substantial quote drawn from the work of Smith, signaling to the reader precisely the type of theory work that he is engaging in within the publication.

[71] There are, of course, additional potential benefits to the fostering of communication between the subfield of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies more broadly. In discussing Christian origins as a subfield of Religious Studies, Arnal and McCutcheon suggest that "situating New Testament studies in the context of the study of non-Christian religious traditions will tend to expose the special pleading and myopic arguments that occasionally arise when we are allowed to focus too narrowly on our own privileged body of data" (*The Sacred is the Profane* 137). Arnal and McCutcheon add that a second "way in which institutional contextualization within the field of religious studies, if taken seriously, could represent a step forward is by forcing New Testament scholars to give greater consideration to the *general* implications and significance of their conclusions, again, if only to engage

1.2 Religious Studies Style Theory within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies

Notably, there exists some evidence of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholars employing Religious Studies style Theory within publications that are not explicitly focused upon method and theory such as David Quinter and Lori Meeks.[72] Quinter, for instance, draws upon Smith's notions of 'ritual' within *From Outcasts to Emperors: Shingon Ritsu and the Mañjuśrī Cult in Medieval Japan* (2015) as a means of clarifying the "ritual logic at work" during Eison's 叡尊 (or Eizon; 1201-1290) 1268 'non-discriminatory assembly' (106).[73] Here, Quinter applies Smith's pattern for ritual in general to the 1268 assembly as a critical wedge pushing against the previous scholarly "assumption that Eison saw the hinin [(outcasts)] as divine only in the ritual context of such ceremonies" as the 'non-discriminatory assembly' (106).[74] Here, then, Smith's treatment of 'ritual' serves as a macro Theoretical framework that has been effectively lifted from its original case studies and applied to the context of a medieval Japanese Buddhist phenomenon. Although Quinter's use of Smith's Theory is brief, amounting to just over one page of content within a book containing several hundred pages, the application of a Religious Studies style macro Theoretical framework in any capacity within a Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publication serves as an unusual and noteworthy occurrence.[75]

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in the larger conversation of their religionist colleagues" (137). Much the same might be said with regard to Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies.

[72] Such deployments of Religious Studies Theory are often extremely brief, though, and appear to remain uncommon within English language Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publications.

[73] For more detail concerning the assembly itself, see Quinter's *From Outcasts to Emperors* 101-6.

[74] The 'pattern for ritual' in question is outlined in a block quote from Smith that is embedded on 106 of Quinter's *From Outcasts to Emperors*.

[75] It is worth pausing for a moment here to clarify that macro Theoretical frameworks most often serve as explicit and consciously crafted responses to/rehabilitations of theoretically loaded terms that are often bandied about rather carelessly and without clarification within Religious Studies scholarship. While 'macro' in scope insofar as the frameworks can be applied to a variety of contexts with limited finessing required, the category of 'macro Theoretical frameworks' proposed throughout this chapter does not include what I would refer to as overarching thematic approaches to scholarship. For instance, the Marxist lens through which scholars such as Kuroda or Neil McMullin (see especially *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan* [1977, republished in 1985]) approach their work fall within the realm of 'overarching thematic approaches' as opposed to macro Theoretical frameworks, due to the generality with which their personal and academic political bents bleed into their work. Theoretical

Meeks takes a rather different approach from that of Quinter to Religious Studies style macro Theoretical concerns in the introduction of *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (2010). Devoting a section of the introduction of *Hokkeji* to "Terminology," Meeks makes an effort aligned with Religious Studies style method and theory work to attend to several theoretical issues borne by the terms 'monk,' 'priest,' 'nun,' and 'ordination' (see 18). Throughout the section, Meeks attends to the fact that "these terms suggest only rough equivalents to the Christian case" from which they are derived "when used in the context of Japanese history" (18). She emphasizes numerous differences between Christian monastics and Japanese Buddhist professionals, with the relative fluidity of "the relationships between clerical status, ordination, and ritual authority" within Japanese Buddhist institutions being of particular import (21). Having discussed numerous differences between Christian and Japanese Buddhist 'religious' professionals, Meeks concludes the section on terminology by stating that she uses the term 'nun' "only with the qualifications mentioned above, namely, that Buddhist nuns at Hokkeji and other medieval convents were not cloistered and that these nuns were not theologically barred from performing priestly roles in their communities" (24). Meeks thus effectively problematizes and consequently addresses several significant terminological difficulties. Although this short portion of *Hokkeji*'s introduction does not serve as a precise iteration of the Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks discussed above, it does work to address and rehabilitate several theoretically fraught terms, even if they are only rendered usable within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhism as the result of this process.

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frameworks, while broadly applicable, are consciously limited to a particular term and/or concept, and while similar techniques may be employed in the development of different frameworks, each exists as its own distinct 'unit.' So, for instance, while Smith carries an overarching thematic approach (namely upholding anthropologically-oriented scholarship while advocating for the abandonment of theologically-oriented approaches and concerns within Religious Studies) either explicitly or implicitly throughout each of the Theoretical frameworks he produces, this general stance does not itself fall within my category of 'macro Theoretical framework' as a consequence of its generality and frequently implicit nature.

In light of the continued fundamental orientation of macro Theory work of non-Buddhist Studies scholars toward (especially western) monotheistic traditions, within this thesis I engage in a preliminary step toward rehabilitating several Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks for use in the fledgling study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and/or acquisitions of various forms of Buddhist material culture. I contend that the incorporation of revised Religious Studies style macro Theory, particularly in tandem with Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies style micro theory in the form of a theoretical model devised specifically for use within the context of medieval Japan, will serve effectively as a thorough conceptual foundation upon which future studies of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their interactions with Buddhist material culture may be constructed.

2. Japanese Buddhist Studies Style Micro theory (Models)

Here, I aim to expound upon what I identify as being a longstanding tendency in the field of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies to develop what I refer to as theoretical 'models.' These models are specific to a particular phenomenon (or limited set of phenomena) occurring within, and bound to, a definite geographic and temporal locale.[76] Such models are often developed in order to either explain sharp historical shifts or to return to older models attempting such explanations in order to offer an updated corrective. Throughout this section of chapter two, I employ Kuroda's theory work, alongside several examples of more recent scholars drawing upon his work in various ways, as a critical wedge in order to illustrate the tendency of Medieval

[76] As noted above, Campany's theory work concerning repertoire (as a Theoretical framework) serves as a notable exception to this, however.

Japanese Buddhist Studies overwhelmingly to employ micro theoretical models within their publications (as opposed to macro Theoretical frameworks or other related considerations).[77]

Prior to launching into a discussion of Kuroda's work, I note that much in the same way that I advocate for pulling theoretically loaded terms such as 'religion' or 'sacred' down from their intellectually devised pedestals (i.e. making them into objects of study via careful critique and (re)consideration – rendering such terms academically accessible and useful), so too do I advocate for a similar treatment of the work of prominent figures in the field.[78] In a way, what follows is less an assessment of the figures themselves, and more a critique of how they and their work has been used. In essence, while I do not necessarily have any qualms directly with the terms or figures themselves, I do take issue with their continual and generally uncritical usage.

Kuroda, writing prolifically from the 1960's up to the early 1990's, has, in the words of James C. Dobbins, "reshaped" Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies, such that he remains a key intellectual pillar within the field ("Editor's Introduction" 217).[79] I suggest that the post-Kuroda

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[77] As I have noted above, Religious Studies style Theoretical concerns are occasionally addressed in some fashion. Usually, however, such considerations are only briefly noted if at all.

[78] Although Kuroda's theoretical models have been variously criticized and reworked by numerous scholars over the past thirty odd years, it remains the case that the bones (or basic assumptions) of Kuroda's work continue to serve as the primary foundation upon which a substantial number of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publications are predicated. As Taira Masayuki has aptly noted, Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* (exoteric-esoteric system) theory in particular "has remained on its altar, as it were, beyond the reach of critical scrutiny" ("Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 427). Much as I push for the reconsideration of theoretically volatile terms that are often used without clarification such as 'religion,' 'myth,' or 'origin,' so too do I contend that pulling the work of intellectual giants (such as Kuroda) down from their metaphorical altars will serve only to enrich the theoretical and methodological competence of the field as a whole. As I hope to illustrate throughout this thesis, while the tendency of theoretical approaches to Religious Studies topics and materials to question, reconsider, and reinvent pre-existing notions may at times appear tedious, such efforts are worthwhile in their ability to construct new lenses from the rubble of older models through which to observe a range of phenomena. In the case of this thesis, I aim not to reconstruct, but to produce a new Theoretical complex through which to observe the activities of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns.
For more detail concerning this mentality, see chapter three of this thesis.

[79] Throughout this chapter I provide only the briefest of treatments of Kuroda's theoretical models due to spatial constraints. As a consequence, this portion of the chapter is by no means a comprehensive discussion of Kuroda's theory work, nor must it be. For the purposes of this chapter, the brief gloss provided here is adequate. Note also that while many critiques have been directed toward Kuroda's theoretical models, I do not attend to these in any detail as I am less interested in the validity (or lack thereof) of the theories than I am in their repeated usage in various forms.

field has yet to experience another reconfiguration of "the conventional wisdom among scholars" so pivotal.[80] Kuroda's historiographically-oriented theoretical model(s) are presented throughout various publications, with a handful of journal articles having been helpfully translated into English.[81] Although Kuroda has put forth several different models, they are interrelated and often build upon theories that Kuroda had already proposed in earlier publications.[82] Perhaps the most influential of this complex of interconnected theoretical models is Kuroda's notion of *kenmitsu* (exoteric-esoteric) Buddhism.[83]

For interesting critiques of Kuroda's theoretical models, see: Taira, "Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisai* Theory" 434-5, 439-45, 446; Sueki, "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 457-62; Sango, *The Halo of Golden Light* xvi, xvii, 25; Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors* 27-9; Stone, "Buddhism" 46-7; and Bodiford, "The Medieval Period" 178.

[80] While much might be said about Kuroda himself, I refrain from including biographical details here due to spatial constraints. For information concerning Kuroda's life, including his markedly Marxist mindset, see Dobbins' "Editor's Introduction" to the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*' 1996 special edition concerning the legacy of Kuroda (see especially 217-21).
For further background information concerning the academic and political context in which Kuroda was writing and to which he was at times responding to, see Tomoko Yoshida's "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū: Problems in Modern Historiography" (2006).

[81] As a consequence of my own linguistic limitations, I attend only to the material contained within those of Kuroda's articles that are available in English translation. Additionally, I attend to the work of English-language scholarship drawing upon Kuroda's models. Such scholarship does, at times, reference untranslated works by Kuroda, which I regrettably cannot access myself. For the purposes of my brief survey of Kuroda's models, however, the works available in English are sufficient.

[82] For instance, Kuroda explicitly notes at the outset of "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System as Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy" (originally published in 1975, translated and reprinted in 1996) that his primary argument within the publication "presupposes the 'estate-system society' (*shōensei taisei* 荘園制社会) and the 'system of ruling elites' (*kenmon taisei* 権門体制)," which he had previously written about in earlier articles (234).
For additional detail concerning Kuroda's understanding of the estate system as it relates to *kenmitsu* Buddhist temples, see "Buddhism and Society in the Medieval Estate System" (especially 301-4, and 305).

[83] It is worth noting, too, that *kenmitsu taisei* (exoteric-esoteric system) serves as a point at which most if not all of Kuroda's theoretical models concerning medieval Japanese Buddhism(s) coalesce. As noted in footnote 82, the theory is predicated upon earlier discussions of both the *shōen* estate system and on the 'system of ruling elites.' *Kenmitsu taisei* is further linked to both original enlightenment thought (*hongaku shisō* 本覚思想) and to Kuroda's notion of the mutual dependence between the imperial law (*ōbō*) and the Buddhist teachings (*buppō*). Kuroda goes so far as to describe the "most archetypal form" of *kenmitsu* ideology as being "found in the Tendai doctrinal tradition known as *hongaku shisō*" ("The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System" 262). The notion of an interdependence between imperial law and the Buddhist teachings, meanwhile, is posited within the context of what Kuroda identified as the third stage of the establishment of the *kenmitsu* system (266). Regrettably, I lack the space to attend to either of these concepts in further detail here.
For additional information concerning *hongaku* thought and its relation to *kenmitsu* Buddhism, see: Kuroda, "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System" 262-6, "The Imperial Law" 275, "Buddhism and Society" 304-5, and "The World of Spirit Pacification" 331-2; Yoshida, "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 381; and Sueki, "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 454.

In brief, the *kenmitsu taisei* (exoteric-esoteric system) model serves as a functional corrective to an earlier model positing a sharp break between 'Old Kamakura Buddhism' (the Buddhist schools existing prior to the Kamakura period) and 'New Kamakura Buddhism' (the Buddhist schools developed during the Kamakura period), wherein the 'new' is posited to have swiftly become the most pervasive and influential form of Buddhism during the Kamakura period.[84] Dobbins characterizes the pre-Kuroda "prevailing view of Buddhism's history" as being "the standard division of it into three phases and forms of development: Nara, Heian, and Kamakura" ("Editor's Introduction" 222). These three proposed phases break down as follows: Nara Buddhism was understood to be "the Buddhist traditions transplanted from China to the major temples of Nara;" Heian Buddhism, meanwhile, "referred to the Tendai and Shingon schools founded in the Heian period, which … provided the dominant systems of thought and practice for over four hundred years;" while (new) "Kamakura Buddhism signified the various new schools of Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren Buddhism that arose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (222). Kuroda's notion of *kenmitsu* Buddhism turned the 'Old'/'New' Kamakura Buddhism model on its head, contending that it was in fact the 'old' schools (or, in Kuroda's phrasing, exoteric-esoteric Buddhism) "that pervaded the medieval scene and set the standard for

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For further treatment of the notion of an interconnection between imperial law and Buddhist thought as it relates to *kenmitsu* Buddhism, see below.

[84] Sueki Fumihiko alternatively refers to this model/approach as "the New Buddhism-centered view of history" ("A Reexamnination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 450).

For far more thorough discussions of this antecedent model and its substantial degree of popularity among Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship prior to Kuroda's corrective model(s), see: Yoshida, "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 384-6, 386-8, 388-93, 394; Taira, "Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 431-2, 436-7; Sueki, "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 450, 451-2; Sango, *The Halo of Golden Light* xiv-xviii; Stone, "Buddhism" 39-41, 42-3; and Bodiford, "The Medieval Period" 176-7.

For treatments of the significance of Kuroda's complex of theoretical models (including the *kenmitsu taisei*), see: Taira, "Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 436-9; Sueki, "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 460-2; Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors* 249; and Stone, "Buddhism" 44.

religion" (217).[85] To be more specific, Kuroda contended that "the fundamental nature of the interactions between the various religious traditions during the ninth and tenth centuries was for all religions to be subsumed or unified under esotericism as the ultimate, underlying principle" ("The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System" 251).[86] Conversely, the 'new' Kamakura Buddhism was, during the medieval period, relatively peripheral, serving as deviations from the norm represented by *kenmitsu* Buddhism.[87] So dominant, in fact, were the *kenmitsu* Buddhist schools that Kuroda explicitly suggested that *kenmitsu* Buddhism served as the orthodoxy of medieval Japanese 'religion' (265).[88]

Although *kenmitsu* Buddhism is in this model understood to function as an orthodoxy, Kuroda did recognize the existence of separate schools within this system, all possessing their own exoteric teachings and doctrine yet being united by a collective interest in, and congruent belief that, esoteric practices were not only efficacious but actually superior to exoteric doctrine.[89] Dobbins effectively surmises the meaning of '*kenmitsu*,' suggesting that the term

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[85] In order to conserve space, I provide only a brief outline of the *kenmitsu taisei* model here, which is sufficient for the purposes of this short chapter. For more detail, I suggest especially Kuroda's own "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System as Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy" (see especially 261-6).
For helpful summaries in English of the *kenmitsu* model, see: Yoshida, "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 381; Taira, "Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 439-40; Sueki, "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 455-7; Stone, "Buddhism" 44-7; Bodiford, "The Medieval Period" 177-8; and Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors* 26-7.

[86] It is important to add here that the notion of esotericism serving as the fundamental underlying principle of all 'religious' traditions found within Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model extends beyond just the ninth and tenth centuries. For Kuroda, the preeminence of esotericism serves as a fundamental feature of Japanese Buddhism throughout the medieval period.

[87] Indeed, Kuroda suggests that "[t]he doctrinal response of the Old Buddhist sects to the efflorescence of New Buddhism was to condemn their 'singleminded and exclusive' approach as exclusionary and narrow-minded" ("Buddhism and Society" 305).
See also Dobbins' "Editor's Introduction" 224 and Yoshida's "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 395.

[88] Kuroda further sharpens this point by explicitly contending that "the word *kenmitsu* came to express the totality of Buddhism" ("The Development of the Kenmitsu System" 261).
See also: Kuroda, "The World of Spirit Pacification" 335; Dobbins, "Editor's Introduction" 224; and Yoshida, "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 395.

[89] Indeed, Kuroda explicitly suggests that during the medieval period "all religious forms were unified around esotericism into an over-arching framework called *kenmitsu* Buddhism, within which individual Buddhist traditions competed, asserting their distinctive characteristics" ("The Imperial Law" 275). Elsewhere, Kuroda has expressed

"refers to the body of beliefs and practices that bound medieval religion together as a coherent and comprehensive worldview" ("Editor's Introduction" 222). Thus, this model comprises tandem notions of a shared holistic worldview alongside an acknowledgement of a variety of underlying doctrinal systems and exoteric teachings present among the 'old' Kamakura schools. As a consequence, Kuroda's exoteric-esoteric Buddhism model functions as an effective and more nuanced corrective to the previous 'New'/'Old' Kamakura Buddhism model.[90]

While Kuroda first proposed the *kenmitsu* model in a 1975 monograph-length article entitled "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System as Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy" (Jp. "Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai"), this was certainly not the first theoretical model that he had discussed.[91] Indeed, prior to the development of the notion of *kenmitsu taisei*, Kuroda proposed a model concerning the structure of the medieval state called the *kenmon taisei* (system of ruling elites). Within this system, Kuroda contended that "the medieval social and political order was dominated by three elite groups: the imperial court and aristocracy (*kuge* 公家); the bakufu and samurai authorities (*buke* 武家); and the leading religious establishments (*jike* 寺家)" (Dobbins, "Editor's Introduction" 219).[92] These three groups "derived their wealth and influence from control of estates, which were the organizational unit of economic production" (219). In

similar ideas, suggesting that "[e]soteric Buddhism was the teaching that received absolute respect in the *kenmitsu taisei*, and that formed the common doctrine of all the *kenmitsu* sects" ("The World of Spirit Pacification" 331). For further detail, see: Kuroda, "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System" 251, 252, 261, and 266, and Dobbins, "Editor's Introduction" 222-3.

[90] Although I do not attend to it here, Kuroda also helpfully contended that, prior to the forced separation of Shinto and Buddhism during the Meiji Restoration, 'Shinto' was united with 'Buddhism,' such that these (now distinct) traditions existed in a sort of unity within premodern Japan. For further discussion of this, see: Kuroda, "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System" 234, and "The World of Spirit Pacification" 344-5, 347, 348-9; and Dobbins, "Editor's Introduction" 225.

[91] The first thirty-five pages of this article are available in English translation within a special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* centering on "The Legacy of Kuroda Toshio" (1996).

[92] For more detail concerning the *kenmon taisei*, see: Kuroda, "The World of Spirit Pacification" 333, and Yoshida, "Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 381.

turn, Kuroda linked original enlightenment (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹) theory with the estate (*shōen* 荘園) system, suggesting that "the development of *honji suijaku* thought in Japan coincided with the establishment of the *shōen* system in the tenth through twelfth centuries" ("Buddhism and Society" 304).[93] The *kenmitsu taisei* model then built upon this conception of a system of ruling elites (linked to the estate system which was in turn connected to original enlightenment theory), reinforcing the power and influence of the 'leading religious establishments' group by reimagining the 'orthodoxy' of medieval Japan as the *kenmitsu* Buddhist schools.[94] Kuroda added further detail concerning the structure(s) and power of temple-shrine complexes in a 1975 publication entitled *The Power of Medieval Temple-Shrine Complexes: Yet Another Medieval Society* (Jp. *Jisha seiryoku – Mō hitotsu no chūsei shakai*).

A further layer of theory added to Kuroda's understanding of the social, economic, and political landscape of medieval Japan takes the form of the *ōbō-buppō* (王法仏法) doctrine, in which the imperial law (*ōbō*) and the Buddhist teachings (*buppō*) were interdependent, as in the two wings of a bird.[95] This model acknowledges the perception of Buddhism as 'protector of the state' (*chingo kokka* 鎮護国家), building upon this notion to suggest a more complex relationship between Buddhism and the state wherein *kenmitsu* Buddhism functioned as a unifying ideology for the entirety of the medieval state.[96] Kuroda explicitly links *ōbō-buppō*

[93] In linking the estate system to original enlightenment theory, Kuroda goes so far as to suggest that *honji suijaku* thought "functioned like a spell offering religious support to the ruling order" ("Buddhism and Society" 304). A similar train of thought is observable within Kuroda's discussions of *ōbō-buppō* (王法仏法) doctrine, wherein Buddhist teachings and the imperial law are presented as being mutually dependent upon one another. This is discussed below.

[94] Or, in Dobbins' words, "[*k*]*enmitsu* Buddhism functioned in the medieval setting … as one of the institutional pillars of society," wherein "[t]he major temple-shrine complexes (*jisha* 寺社) of the country together comprised, according to Kuroda, one of the three ruling elites (*kenmon*)" ("Editor's Introduction" 224).

[95] For more detail, see: Kuroda, "The Imperial Law" 277, and Dobbins, "Editor's Introduction" 223.

[96] For additional discussion of this relationship, see: Kuroda, "The Imperial Law" (especially 276-9) and "The World of Spirit Pacification" 330, and Dobbins, "Editor's Introduction" 223.

doctrine to *kenmitsu* Buddhism, contending that "along with *kenmitsu* Buddhism, the concept of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence must be said to have occupied a position central to the medieval system of state and religion" ("The Imperial Law" 280).

Kuroda's complex of theoretical models are intimately tied to medieval Japan as both a geographic and temporal locale, such that the concept of, say, *kenmitsu taisei* cannot be readily applied in a functional or logical fashion to any other time or place.[97] In Kuroda's own words, "medieval religion must be grasped using models that are most appropriate to the medieval age itself" ("The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System" 234). Further, Kuroda's models are specific to certain phenomena, such as the political and/or social function of Buddhism and/or the state within medieval Japan.[98] Due to this specificity, Kuroda's models are not particularly useful should they be applied to a phenomenon (or set of phenomena) outside of the application for which they were initially written. This stands in stark contrast to the work of Religious Studies theorists, who typically attend to broad ranging Theoretical concerns, developing Theoretical frameworks that can be finessed to suit a multitude of geographical and temporal locales, as well as a diverse assortment of phenomena. Often, these concerns are terminological or conceptual in nature, whereas Kuroda's publications are rife with theoretically volatile terminology.[99]

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[97] Within the first thirty-five pages of "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System," for instance, Kuroda spends the majority of his time pulling the reader back to the historical context within which the *kenmitsu* model was proposed. While this is indeed fitting given Kuroda's background as a historian, it does serve to reinforce the notion that his theoretical models cannot easily (or, I add, productively) be mapped onto alternative contexts without reconfiguration so substantial that the model would essentially need to be fully rewritten.

[98] It is perhaps worth noting here that (at least in English translation) Kuroda actually explicitly employs the term 'phenomenon' when discussing his concept of *kenmitsu* Buddhism. In the English translation of "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System," Kuroda suggests that the "phenomenon of esotericization" was not "limited to Buddhism" (250).

[99] Such terms and concepts found in Kuroda's "The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System as Japan's Medieval Orthodoxy" include: "mystical and mysterious side that was derived from religion;" "liberating religious and intellectual history;" "liberation and elevation of the human spirit;" "a religious form;" "the link between religion and the state;" "when the secular and the religious were not yet separate;" "religion as an agent;" "religious history;" "superstitious qualities;" "ancient religious asceticism;" "religious and thaumaturgic role;" "tendency to syncretize teachings;" "religious practice;" "unifying religions;" "religious order;" and "perfectly syncretized" (234, 234, 238, 240, 243, 245, 248, 252, 252, 255, 256, 259, 261, 261, 262).

Kuroda's complex of theoretical models serves as a sort of assumed and basic skeletal structure to which later theoretical flesh and embellishments would be added by Medieval

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Additional theoretically problematic terms and concepts may be found throughout Kuroda's "The Imperial Law and the Buddhist Law" as follows: "like virtually all other religions;" Buddhism described as being "independent of all worldly authority" when it "began with Śākyamuni's attainment of the Way;" "mythical;" "myths;" "all religious forms;" "sacred;" "secular life;" "system of state and religion;" and "spiritual autonomy" (272, 272, 272, 272, 275, 278, 279, 280, 284).

Further terms and concepts that might serve as theoretical landmines within Kuroda's "Buddhism and Society in the Medieval Estate System" include: "religious concepts;" "the thrall of thaumaturgy and polytheism;" "religious or political belief system" versus "a continuation of primitive, ancient religious expressions;" "indiscriminate syncretizing;" "religious organizations of peasants;" "sacred ground;" "religious cults;" "the core of religious practice;" "religious organizations;" "village religion;" "religious leagues;" "spiritual protection;" "perceived as religious institutions;" "[i]n medieval times, all authorities to some extent embodied a religious quality;" "difficult to separate the lord's authority from religious authority;" "the medium of religion;" "religious authority;" "the influence of religion;" "religious overlord;" "original religious leanings;" "offering religious support;" "religious movements;" "[n]ew syncretic doctrines;" "the polytheism and thaumaturgy that were fundamental to medieval religion;" "religious establishments;" "religious significance;" "religious patrons;" "religious affiliations;" "support of religion;" "urban life and religion coalesced;" "religious aspects of village and city life;" "lead a religious life;" "religious recluses;" "popular religion;" "the religion of the lowly classes of pre-ancient times;" "the religious keynote of medieval society;" "sacred sites;" "religious piety;" "sacred precincts;" "most representative religious practice;" "sacred objects;" "religious figures;" "holy sites;" and "religious recluses" (288, 289, 292, 292, 293, 294, 296, 296, 297, 298, 300, 300, 301, 301, 302, 303, 303, 303, 304, 304, 304, 305, 305, 306, 306, 307, 312, 312, 312, 312, 313, 313, 314, 314, 314, 314, 314, 314, 314, 315, 316, 316, 317, 318).

Kuroda's "The World of Spirit Pacification: Issues of State and Religion" also contains numerous instances of theoretically volatile terms and concepts, including: "Japanese religious consciousness;" "religious history;" "religion of spirit pacification;" "relations between religion and the state;" "popular religious consciousness;" "religious structure and doctrine;" "the religious consciousness;" "myths;" "religious features;" "folkish character;" "popular and folkish in its origins;" "all-encompassing system of religious ideology;" "sacred mausoleum;" "sacred image hall;" "past religious consciousness;" "sacred palanquins;" "sacerdotal officiants;" "sacerdotal houses;" "secular rulers;" "religious act of worship;" "relations between religion and politics;" "the subordination of religion to politics;" "all religious phenomena were weakened by the secular political regime;" "the political exploitation of religion;" "unsophisticated religious thought;" "religious veneration;" "religious fear and awe;" "religious moods of devotion, rapture, and repentance;" "religious notion of worship;" "religious rites;" "religious activities;" "unified with religion;" "relations between religion and the state;" "religion's spell;" "religion came to be exploited by the state;" "existed as a religion;" "the religious world;" "religious freedom;" "freedom of religion;" "religious feelings and principles;" and "religious originality" (322, 322, 322, 322, 322, 322, 325, 326, 327, 328, 330, 330, 333, 336, 336, 337, 340, 341, 342, 342, 343, 343, 343, 344, 344, 344, 345, 345, 345, 345, 346, 347, 347, 347, 347, 348, 348, 349, 349, 349, 349).

Kuroda particularly bandies about the term 'religion' wildly, which I suspect many Religious Studies theorists would take exception to. To be fair, this may be due to the articles having been translated into English. Curiously, though, Yoshida has acknowledged Kuroda's suggestion "that historians reexamine their own methods at the most basic epistemological level," including major "[c]oncepts such as 'politics,' 'economics,' 'religion,' 'art,' as well as 'freedom and democracy' … that were subject to change according to time, place, and the researcher's perspective" ("Kuroda Toshio (1926-1993) on Jōdo Shinshū" 400). Kuroda does not appear to be particularly self-reflexive in this regard within those publications that are available in English translation.

I should additionally note that Kuroda is perhaps a product of both his time and his training as a historian when it comes to his employment of the terms listed above. Even Religious Studies works, both those published during the same time frame in which Kuroda was writing and more recent publications, employ similar terms and concepts with frequency. Indeed, theoretically fraught terms continue to plague the field of Religious Studies, although theorists such as Smith, Lincoln, Arnal, Braun, and McCutcheon have done much to push back against these tendencies over the past twenty odd years.

Japanese Buddhist Studies scholars. Despite this foundational character, the *kenmitsu taisei* model is certainly not without flaw. More recent scholarship, produced by scholars such as William M. Bodiford, Jacqueline I. Stone, Asuka Sango, and Quinter, has variously fleshed out, problematized, and/or reworked Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model.[100] Despite various criticisms, Kuroda's complex of theoretical models has been, and continues to be, generally accepted and perpetually referred to within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publications.[101]

Stone has made relatively consistent use of Kuroda's complex of theoretical models within several publications, including "Medieval Tendai *Hongaku* Thought and the New Kamakura Buddhism: A Reconsideration" (1995) and *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999). In "Medieval Tendai *Hongaku* Thought," Stone focuses upon the debated "nature of the connection between Tendai *hongaku* thought and the new Kamakura Buddhism," aiming to raise "questions about how the problem has been formulated to date, in the hope of thus contributing to future inquiry" (18). Here, Stone offers treatment of the term 'original enlightenment,' providing a gloss of its historical and modern academic uses (see 18-27).[102] Throughout the article, there appears to be a sort of tacit

[100] Stone additionally has noted attempts by several earlier scholars to "complicate, refine, or transcend models emphasizing the opposition of 'old' and 'new' Buddhism" ("Buddhism" 42). She does, however, seek to temper the *kenmitsu taisei* model within her own work, as a means of making use of the concept (see *Original Enlightenment* 152). Bodiford, meanwhile, openly contends that from a Religious Studies perspective, Kuroda's model bears many weaknesses ("The Medieval Period" 178).

[101] Taira notes, for instance, "that, despite reservations on the part of certain scholars, Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* theory in its broad sense has been largely accepted by modern historians" and, I would add, Japanese Buddhist Studies scholars ("Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 435). Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model in particular has been so thoroughly accepted, in fact, that Sueki has contended that "[t]he terms '*kenmitsu taisei*' and '*kenmitsu* Buddhism' have gained wide currency among scholars, yet are often used without due consideration of their meaning" ("A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 449). Sueki sharpens this point by adding that "[c]ertain scholars seem under the illusion that they can resolve the problems of Buddhist history by simply categorizing people and ideas into either the *kenmitsu taisei* 'orthodoxy' or the 'heterodoxy' against it" (449-50). Perhaps the field of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies remains fixated on Kuroda's complex of theoretical models due to their relative ease of use. As Quinter has lucidly noted, "[i]t is easier to critique previous grand models than to create a new one" (*From Outcasts to Emperors* 250).

[102] Stone attends in particular to "three basic positions," including: "'Tendai as matrix;' 'the radical break;' and 'dialectical emergence'" ("Medieval Tendai *Hongaku* Thought" 21). In her treatment of 'radical break' arguments, Stone evokes Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model, suggesting that this "strand of academic argument … has worked to

acceptance of the basic premise of Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model, culminating in Stone's contention that, "[a]s Kuroda Toshio has made clear, the dominant forms of medieval Japanese Buddhism were Tendai, Shingon, and the Nara schools – the so-called *kenmitsu* Buddhism – and not the new Kamakura movements" (27). On the basis of this model, Stone goes on to add depth to the position of Tendai, noting that while the school did bear "the ideological and political authority of *kenmitsu* Buddhism" suggested by Kuroda and his successors, "medieval Tendai also exhibited a burgeoning of new religious forms" (27). As a consequence of this suggestion, the third portion of the article serves essentially as an extension of one aspect of Kuroda's *kenmitsu* Buddhism model. Stone goes on to conclude the article by emphasizing continuities between *kenmitsu* Buddhism and the new Kamakura Buddhism, outlining four characteristics of what she has identified as "a new model or paradigm for thinking about Buddhist liberation" that was developed between *kenmitsu* and new Kamakura Buddhist schools during the medieval period (see 40-3). This notion of a shared constellation of ideas, while serving to productively blur the lines between two categories of medieval Buddhism previously imagined to be neatly divided, fundamentally relies upon Kuroda's *kenmitsu* Buddhism model. In this instance, then, Stone has produced one means by which to refine Kuroda's complex of theoretical models.

Similarly, Stone's treatment of original enlightenment problematizes Kuroda's lack of discussion of *hongaku* thought within the context of Kamakura Buddhism, which she appears to take as a significant lack and flaw in the *kenmitsu taisei* model (see especially *Original Enlightenment* 61 and 84). She does make efforts to repurpose the model, however, fleshing out its initial lack of discourse treating the influences of *hongaku* thought upon medieval Japanese

reinforce the idea of the new Kamakura Buddhism being a reaction against original enlightenment thought" (25). She adds that Kuroda "was the first to see Tendai *hongaku* thought as typical of *kenmitsu* ideology" (25).

Buddhism, along with medieval Japanese culture and society more broadly.[103] Here once again, Stone continues to employ Kuroda's complex of theoretical models, albeit with her own efforts to refurbish the model(s) attached.

In "Monastic Lineages and Ritual Participation: A Proposed Revision of Kuroda Toshio's *Kenmitsu Taisei*" (2011), Mikaël Bauer explicitly notes that "[t]he main purpose of [the] article is to refine the notion of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism in order to fully grasp its institutional implications and better understand the position of the large temple complexes within the larger framework of the state" (45). In other words, Bauer has devoted a relatively recently published article to an effort at further refining Kuroda's *kenmitsu* Buddhism model. While Bauer is generally on board with the original model, he does particularly "question Kuroda's emphasis on Tendai as the main component of *kenmitsu* Buddhism" (45).[104] Bauer's article serves as yet another instance in which Kuroda's model(s) continue to be employed as a sort of baseline, although in this case with a selection of corrective efforts appended.

Quinter's *From Outcasts to Emperors* evokes Kuroda's theoretical models in tandem with Matsuo Kenji's "revised interpretation of Kamakura New Buddhism and Old Buddhism," which exists in opposition "to Kuroda's model of the 'exoteric-esoteric system'" (26). After providing a helpful summary of Kuroda's complex of theoretical models, Quinter goes on to discuss Matsuo's model as an effective substitute for Kuroda's *kenmitsu* paradigm.[105] Matsuo essentially retains the 'new'/'old' Kamakura Buddhism pairing (as does Kuroda, for that matter), though reimagines those categories in terms of "the New Buddhism of reclusive monks (*tonseisō*

[103] I add that the importance and influence of *hongaku* thought during the medieval period is, due in part to the work of Stone, also frequently taken to be generally factual. For examples of this tendency, see Deal and Ruppert, 92, 124, 148, 152, and 156, and Bodiford, "The Medieval Period" 174 and 175.
[104] Although Bauer does offer a selection of potential correctives to this emphasis, I lack the space to attend in any detail to them here.
[105] For Quinter's summary of Kuroda's models accompanied by a brief critique, see *From Outcasts to Emperors* 26-9.

遁世僧) and the Old Buddhism of official monks (*kansō* 官僧)" (29).[106] Although he proposes Matsuo's model as an alternative, Quinter goes so far as to explicitly acknowledge that *From Outcasts to Emperors* "is indebted to [the] revisioning of Kamakura Buddhism" that occurred as a consequence of "Kuroda's and other revisionist Japanese-language studies of medieval religion" (27). Kuroda is invoked here and discussed in some detail prior to an alternative model being presented, a pattern which appears to be rather common within recent publications in Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies.

In *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan* (2015), Sango questions what she interprets to be Kuroda's notion "that Buddhism in the Heian period was characterized by the growth of the esoteric at the expense of the exoteric" (xvi). Sango goes so far as to style the contentions made throughout her text in part as a 'direct challenge' to the emphasis placed upon esotericism within Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model (see especially xvi, xvii, and 25).[107] Despite this claim, Sango fundamentally relies on Kuroda's theoretical model(s) to serve as a foil to her own, functionally predicating her revisioning of medieval Japanese Buddhism as containing the "continued importance of exoteric rituals" upon Kuroda's view of medieval Japanese Buddhism (xvii). Contrary to Sango's approach, William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert's *A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism* (2015) appears to express wholesale acceptance of Kuroda's complex of theoretical models (see 136 and 137). [108] In both

[106] For Quinter's further discussion concerning Matsuo's model, and its relevance in recognizing the significance of exoteric practices (a lack identified in Kuroda's model(s) by Quinter), see *From Outcasts to Emperors* 29-30, and 249-50. For Matsuo's own discussion of this alternative model, see "What is Kamakura New Buddhism?: Official Monks and Reclusive Monks" (1997), especially 179-81.

[107] Sango is not completely alone in this critique of Kuroda's models, however. Stone also notes the tendency of scholars (in the wake of Kuroda's theoretical models) to dismiss the importance of certain esoteric rituals, including those rituals conducted for apotropaic or other wish-fulfilling purposes (*Original Enlightenment* 20).

[108] For particularly salient instances of Deal and Ruppert's general acceptance of the *kenmitsu taisei* model, see 71, 115, 137, and 138. I note, however, that *A Cultural History* is not exclusively limited to examinations of the medieval period, a feature of the text that may have influenced the lack of problematizing or critique applied to Kuroda's dated, yet influential, model. They do, additionally, observe several more recent shifts in the

instances, though, Kuroda's complex of theoretical models serves as the primary lens through which medieval Japanese Buddhism is being viewed.

In each of the above noted Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publications, the 'theory' employed is precise, dealing more explicitly with certain historical events (or back-projections of those events) than with sweeping conceptual or terminological issues (as might be found amid the topics under scrutiny within Religious Studies Theoretical frameworks). Despite the geographically and temporally limited scope of the historiographically-oriented theoretical models (such as Kuroda's complex of models) most often employed in Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies publications, such models are typically evoked in a fashion that is curiously akin to the Theoretical frameworks appealed to within Religious Studies publications (especially those engaging with monotheistic traditions). In both contexts, the theoretical model or framework is usually situated within the introduction of the publication as a sort of preliminary consideration that serves to lay the foundation for the remainder of the study. The scope of the mode of theory (or theories) being employed serves as the primary differentiating factor here. Thus, Religious Studies Theoretical frameworks bear a tendency to attend to broad concerns, rendering such work 'macro' in focus. Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies theoretical models, meanwhile, lean toward focusing on precise phenomena that are specific to a particular time and place, causing such work to be 'micro' in scope. Both modes of theory serve important functions, yet it remains rare to see Religious Studies style Theoretical frameworks being employed with any consistency within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship. I contend that the employment in tandem of a cohesive Theoretical framework and adjoining model will serve not

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conceptualizing of the notion of a sharp break between the 'old' and 'new' Kamakura Buddhist schools, including several of Stone's innovations (see 71-2).
Similarly, Bodiford's "The Medieval Period: Eleventh to Sixteenth Centuries" (2006) serves as an example of general acceptance of Kuroda's model (see 167 and 173).

only to lay a functional foundation upon which future scholarship might be produced, but will afford the reader an opportunity to reconsider the lenses through which medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns have typically been viewed.

3. Comparative Case Study: Braun and McCutcheon's Guide *versus Lopez's* Critical Terms

In seeking to distinguish between the modes of theory found within Religious Studies and Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies, I provide here a concrete example by means of contrasting and comparing Braun and McCutcheon's *Guide* and Lopez's *Critical Terms*. These two anthologies each function as well-known handbooks within their respective subfields of Religious Studies Method and Theory and Buddhist Studies Method and Theory, and were conveniently published within five years of one another by major figures in each subfield.[109] As such, they serve as effective touchstones in considering what I have identified as two distinct modes of theory: Religious Studies macro Theoretical frameworks and Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies micro theoretical models. The astute reader will note, though, that *Critical Terms* is not focused specifically on either medieval nor Japanese Buddhism. Despite the generality of the anthology, which provides discussions ranging across the broader field of Buddhist Studies, I contend that it contains many aspects consistent with my assessment of the typical approach of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship to the production of theory described throughout this chapter. Due to spatial constraints I endeavour here to provide only a

[109] Although each of these texts fall within different genres of writing and are intended for varied audiences (namely Religious Studies scholars broadly versus Buddhist Studies scholars more specifically), I retain that each anthology bears enough similarity with regard to their focus on loaded terminology to merit comparing and contrasting the two.

brief glimpse into each anthology, limiting my efforts in comparison and contrast to just one chapter drawn from each text.[110]

As discussed above, the *Guide* contains Lincoln's "Culture," which seeks to develop a broadly applicable solution to some aspects of the expansive theoretical issues posed by the term and concept 'culture.' Lincoln devises a distinction between capital-C 'Culture' and lowercase-c 'culture,' which is predicated upon the hierarchical superiority of capital-C 'Culture' and its subsequent hegemonic control over lowercase-c 'culture' (see "Culture" 412-3). The distinction between capital-C 'Culture' and lowercase-c 'culture' proposed by Lincoln, although applied within the chapter to a specific case study couched within the context of European Christianity, is macro in scope and may thus be gainfully refined and applied to an array of possible contexts.[111] Within chapter three of this thesis, for instance, I draw upon and rework Lincoln's 'culture' focused Theoretical framework as a means of bolstering my own efforts at constructing a Religious Studies style macro Theoretical framework tailored to the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture.

Meanwhile, Janet Gyatso's "Sex," contained within *Critical Terms*, serves as a clear indication of the tendency of the mode of theory commonly found within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship toward the production of micro theory that attends to an individual phenomenon (or a narrow set of phenomena) that is necessarily embedded securely within a specific and limited context and cannot be easily (or necessarily productively) lifted from that context. Although the title and corresponding topic of Gyatso's chapter takes the form of an

[110] The two chapters in question have been selected as a consequence of having been previously discussed within this thesis. Lincoln's "Culture" is noted at the outset of chapter two (and is further discussed within chapter three), while Janet Gyatso's "Sex" is treated within chapter one.
[111] The case study in question takes the form of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe (see Lincoln, "Culture" 417).

expansive and theoretically fraught term (namely, "Sex") in much the same fashion as Lincoln's "Culture," Gyatso opts not to begin her chapter by identifying the difficulties attached to the term 'sex,' instead providing a specific discussion of "the Pāli vinaya's hyperanalysis of proscribed sex acts" that places particular emphasis upon "the sense of humor" present within the Pāli vinaya (271). While this may very well be an interesting area of inquiry in and of itself, focusing from the outset upon this already narrow textual context and then further limiting the scope of the chapter to just the story of Sudinna the Kalandaka (*Pārājika* 1.5) results in the development of ideas concerning an individual phenomenon that are constricted to a very limited geographic and temporal locale. Indeed, Gyatso explicitly describes the focus of the chapter as being restricted to "[w]hat sex means for an early example of Buddhist monastic jurisprudential writing, and why its definition is attended with such obsessive analysis" (274). Throughout the discussion, Gyatso offers little in the way of what might be considered 'Theory' from the perspective of those Religious Studies theorists discussed above, though she does provide what might be considered the very beginnings of a theoretical model.

Where Lincoln's discussion is broad ranging, Gyatso's is limited. Consequently, Lincoln's chapter culminates in the development of a Theoretical framework that could be productively applied (with some refinement) to a great many contexts with relative ease. Gyatso's discussion, although limited in scope and applicability, contains a great deal more detail and might thus be more helpful in terms of providing rich and detailed context for 'sex' (within the bounds of the limited understanding of the term provided throughout the chapter) within the Pāli vinaya. The differences between Lincoln's and Gyatso's approaches to two theoretically volatile terms far outweigh any similarities, such that while each tactic might constitute 'theory' in its own right, the disparity of both scope and applicability between them

serves as an effective indication of the general and disparate form(s) that method and theory take within Religious Studies and Buddhist Studies. I do not claim that one mode of theory is superior to the other, but rather suggest that each approach serves a very different set of functions. While Religious Studies style Theory offers opportunities for scholars to devise and refine the 'tools' of their trade in the form of the terms, concepts, and classificatory systems they might employ, Buddhist Studies style theory allows scholars to develop detailed and consistent means through which to explain and contextualize (often seemingly odd) phenomena that may otherwise be erroneously disregarded or taken at face value. It is this varied applicability that renders the joint production of both a Religious Studies macro Theoretical framework alongside a Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies micro theoretical model, serving in tandem as a holistic theoretical foundation, a necessary task to be performed within a burgeoning area of inquiry such as the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of various forms of Buddhist material culture.

Conclusion

Much as I have contended in chapter one that the employment of text alongside material culture as primary or commensurate modes of data will serve only to enrich the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, so too do I suggest that Religious Studies style macro Theoretical frameworks could and should be utilized in tandem with Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies style micro theoretical models in order to produce a holistic theoretical system ideally providing solid bones upon which the flesh of data may be constructively added. Further, Religious Studies Theoretical frameworks might be employed in order to reconsider currently utilized Medieval

Japanese Buddhist Studies theoretical models, many of which remain flawed despite having undergone numerous revisions and reformulations.

This combinatory mode of Theories could additionally serve as a new lens through which to review current publications within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies, to further strengthen these works and/or possibly uncover alternative conclusions. Perhaps of greater import, though, is the potential for fostering stronger lines of communication between Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies more broadly. Theory might yet function effectively as a language that can be spoken by scholars working within a diverse range of subfields collectively falling beneath the umbrella of Religious Studies.[112] In light of these benefits, then, I forge on in an effort to produce a preliminary Religious Studies style Theoretical framework.

[112] Taira notes, for instance, that Kuroda's "*kenmitsu taisei* theory has … opened many possibilities for contact with other disciplines" (as in disciplines extending beyond the purview of history) ("Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory" 433). He adds that "any theoretical system that places" specific historical actors such as Shinran or Nichiren "at the center of medieval religious thought effectively cuts off meaningful exchange with other academic disciplines, leaving the field of Buddhist historical studies to engage in sterile discussions within its own self-enclosed world" (434). I would expand this suggestion to include mention not only of specific historical actors, but of theoretical models such as Kuroda's that are necessarily bound exclusively to a particular phenomenon that is found within a limited geographic and temporal locale, such as medieval Japan. In light of this, I suggest that the development of a Theoretical complex concerning medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture (but not necessarily limited to that specific set of phenomena nor to the context of medieval Japan) might serve to open the subfield up to productive dialogue with disciplines outside of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies.

Chapter 3 – Origins-Legitimacy-Power: A Preliminary Theoretical Framework for the Study of Medieval Japanese Buddhist Nuns and Material Culture

This chapter serves as an effort to produce a functional Theoretical framework, designed around a handful of loaded terms that I have sought to rehabilitate for use within a Buddhist Studies context. I seek to do so as a consequence of my observation that within English-language Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship, theoretically fraught terms are consistently utilized despite a lack of clarification and/or clear definitions being provided for these 'land mine' terms.[113] I view this penchant as a persistent macro Theoretical issue within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies English language scholarship, and within Religious Studies more broadly. In an effort to illustrate the dangers of this academic tendency, I point at the outset to two particularly incessant, fundamentally modern, and loaded terms that appear with frequency within English Japanese Buddhist Studies scholarship: 'sacred' and 'profane.' These terms function as a conceptually interdependent binary pair that, particularly when being utilized without a working definition (and thus relying implicitly upon 'common sense' understandings of the terms that are as varied as the individuals reading the scholarship in question), are essentially devoid of meaning as a consequence of their own interdependence.[114]

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[113] The terminological focus of the third chapter of this thesis serves in some sense as the continuation of a set of very truncated theoretically-oriented efforts that I proposed within my undergraduate honours thesis, which I composed while attending the University of Alberta. Although my theoretical concerns here certainly overlap with those expressed within my honours thesis, this chapter of my master's thesis serves as a substantial expansion upon the seeds of the theoretical premises that were only just beginning to germinate within my undergraduate work. As a consequence of the thematic similarities between this chapter and the first section of my honours thesis, though, I have cited my earlier work below.

[114] I point to Fabio Rambelli's frequent straw-man use of the terms sacred//profane throughout *Buddhist Materiality*, wherein he appears to implicitly attempt to drawn an anachronistic distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' in the context of premodern Japan only to claim that in practice the lines between these concepts were in fact blurred (see 172 especially). What is particularly interesting in the case of Rambelli's *Buddhist Materiality* is that he does engage in some effective Theory work in terms of his treatments of various forms of Buddhist material culture. It seems odd, then, to find Rambelli's lack of attendance to an entire conglomerate of theoretically fraught terms, which in turn affects his contentions concerning Buddhist material culture. Chapter Five of *Buddhist Materiality* in particular expresses Rambelli's tendency to build Theoretical frameworks atop the shaky baseline of such undefined,

Considering the jarring frequency with which a dichotomous and inseparable conceptual and terminological pair such as sacred//profane (or the related religious//secular) is employed by scholars composing English language Japanese Buddhist Studies publications, the consistent lack of provision of so much as a simplified working definition strikes me as odd at best, and theoretically pernicious at worst.[115] I contend that expansive, commonly undefined terms such as

expansive, and vague terms such as 'sacred//profane,' 'religious//secular,' 'myth,' 'mystical,' and so on. This renders many of Rambelli's Theoretical posturings unreliable at best.

[115] For the purpose of retaining a smooth flow of prose, I will employ the following to denote such binaries from hereon: sacred//profane and religious//secular.

Should the reader be unconvinced of the incessant tendency of prominent (and often otherwise relatively theoretically sound) Buddhist Studies scholars to throw the term sacred around without ever parsing out what, precisely, they might mean, I have composed a brief catalogue of some such instances within a handful of the sources cited throughout this thesis, organized by year of publication:

Publication Year	Title	Author	Incidences of 'sacred' being utilized uncritically without definition
1975	"The Phrase '*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*"	Gregory Schopen	151, 152, 161, 162, 170, 172, 175, 177, 178, and 179
1999	"On the Allure of Buddhist Relics"	Robert H. Sharf	77, 78, 80, 82, and 84
2000	"Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o"	Patricia Fister	222, 223, and 236
2001	"Portraits of Shinran in Medieval Pure Land Buddhism" in *Living Images*	James C. Dobbins	20, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, and 48
2001	"Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" in *Living Images*	Paul Groner	115, 147, and 150
2001	"Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons"	Robert H. Sharf	3, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17
2003	*The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*	Bernard Faure	9, 11, 20, 31, 50, 58, 62, 63, 65, 70, 72, 86, 107, 109, 110, 115, 116, 125, 136, 193, 194, 210, 213, 215, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 230, 231, 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 252, 254, 255, 256, 261, 262, 264, 268, 269, 270, 275, 281, 284, 287, 288, 289, 294, 295, 297, 298, 300, 308, 309, 314, and 334

2003	*The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*	John Kieschnick	6, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 71, 72, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 101, 105, 110, 113, 121, 123, 131, 132, 138, 139, 155, 157, 159, 167, 170, 172, 173, 174, 176, 177, 180, 183, 184, 214, 216, 221, 276, 281, 288, and 290
2004	"On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" in *Embodying the Dharma*	Robert H. Sharf	165, 166, 167, 169, 170, 171, 174, 176, and 186
2004	"Introduction: Beyond Superstition" in *Embodying the Dharma*	Kevin Trainor	4, 6, 7, 11, 20, and 36
2007	*Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism*	Fabio Rambelli	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 24, 45, 50, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 82, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 104, 106, 108, 109, 112, 113, 115, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 127, 130, 135, 136, 137, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 193, 194, 195, 196, 198, 200, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 217, 221, 232, 233, 237, 239, 240, 248, 249, 250, 254, 259, 260, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, and 273
2010	*Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*	Lori Meeks	14, 34, 35, 38, 43, 48, 54, 57, 99, 122, 140, 143, 159, 171, 199, 214, 250, and 277
2014	*The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan*	Gina Cogan	11, 74, 141, 164, 170, and 176
2015	*A Cultural History of Japanese Buddhism*	William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert	4, 6, 51, 78, 95, 98, 103, 106, 107, 108, 110, 142, 154, 156, 157, 159, 173, 177, 179, 181, 182, 190, 193, 196, 197, 206, 214, 244, and 245
2015	*From Outcasts to Emperors: Shingon Ritsu and the Mañjuśrī Cult in Medieval Japan*	David Quinter	106, 121, 154, 163, 164, 175, 176, 177, 195, 197, 209, 217, and 247 Also in the annotated translations, see 258, 274, 281, 285, and 292
2017	*Ritualized Writing*	Bryan D. Lowe	5, 9, 39, 78, 210, and 213
*2018	"Editor's Introduction"	Caroline Hirasawa and Benedetta Lomi	217, 218, 219, 220, 222, 223, and 224 (21 times over 7 pages)
*2018	"Rice, Relics, and Jewels: The Network and Agency of Rice Grains in Medieval Japanese Esoteric Buddhism"	Steven Trenson	269, 271, 285, 291, 296, and 297
*2018	"The Materiality of a Promise: Interworldly	Caroline Hirasawa	344, 345, 348, 361, 374, 377, and 381

'sacred' are often employed as an intellectual (though ultimately 'empty') crutch within Buddhist Studies, a tendency not limited to binary terminological pairs but rather found amongst an array of conceptually solitary terms as well. I primarily aim to address this 'crutch' function by developing my own iteration of a macro Theoretical framework constructed around an effort to address several encumbered terms relevant to the study of medieval Japanese nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture. The strategies that I attempt within this chapter are potentially applicable to a range of theoretical pitfalls caused by overly expansive and often ambiguous terminology and their adjoining concepts, and as such may be of use within various contexts beyond the primary focus of this thesis. Further, the proposed framework itself could likely be applied, with a limited degree of modification, to a number of Buddhist contexts if not also to practices and phenomena that lay outside of the realm of Buddhist Studies. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the Religious Studies style macro Theoretical framework proposed in this chapter is tailored to the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and their productions and acquisitions of various forms of Buddhist material culture.

As discussed throughout chapter one of this thesis, at present there remains a paucity of English publications specifically examining the interactions of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns

	Contracts in Medieval Buddhist Promotional Campaign Imagery"		

*2018 – Each of the entries marked with an asterisk are drawn from a relatively recent special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (45.2) entitled "Modest Materialities: The Social Lives and Afterlives of Sacred Things in Japan," which is conspicuously centered around the term 'sacred.' While the above chart notes three exemplars of the special issue's tendency to throw the term 'sacred' around, this is not the case for all of the articles. Lomi's article, "Ox Bezoars and the Materiality of Heian-period Therapeutics," makes very minimal use of 'sacred' as a terminological and conceptual crutch, with the term appearing just three times throughout the piece (see 227 and 231). Quinter's "Mantras and Materialities: Saidaiji Order *Kōmyō Shingon* Practices" bears the very same minimal number of uses of 'sacred' throughout (see 316 and 324).

with Buddhist material culture.[116] In my present effort at laying the very beginnings of one possible theoretical bedrock for the study of Japanese Buddhist nuns and material culture, I aim to follow the basic pattern of Religious Studies method and theory scholarship discussed throughout chapter two of this thesis. In so doing, I begin by addressing a limited selection of macro Theoretical concerns, which in this instance are predominantly terminological in nature. Following a critique of current terminological vagaries, I offer a corrective in the form of a set of working definitions for several key terms and their adjoining conceptual matrixes, ultimately knitting these explicitly parsed out concepts into a single overarching theoretical framework. As a means of offering a 'proof' of the potential capacity and applicability of the proposed framework, several exemplars will be discussed throughout the body and footnotes of this chapter, serving to cast light upon the weft and warp of the framework as a functional whole composed of a multitude of individually coloured and textured theoretical threads.

Throughout this chapter the following terms, alongside adjoining theoretical concerns, shall be discussed, redressed, and reconsidered: 'Buddhist material culture;' 'merit;' 'field of merit;' 'economy of merit;' 'origin;' and 'legitimacy.' Following the treatments of this collection of terms and their conceptual conglomerates, Maurice Godelier's power-sacrality-origins theoretical framework will be considered and reworked in order to incorporate each term and connected concept examined throughout this chapter into a single functional Theoretical framework that I refer to as the 'origins-legitimacy-power' loop. I then delve into a brief examination of the medieval revival of the convent Hokkeji as a truncated case study illustrating how the modified power-sacrality-origins model might be applied to the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and material culture. I ultimately propose the origins-legitimacy-power

[116] I find this to be a significant and lamentable blind spot in the field, for as Kieschnick has noted, "material culture is as much a part of religion as language, thought, or ritual" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 23).

loop as a convenient and functional introductory Theoretical framework that serves to encompass each of the theoretical issues addressed throughout this chapter. In essence, this framework serves as a preliminary effort at addressing a handful of what I view as some of the most egregious and common theoretical landmines stumbled into, or only narrowly avoided, in English scholarship on medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns and/or Buddhist material culture. I begin with a discussion of the term I believe is most foundational to the study of nuns and their interactions with tangible 'Buddhist' objects, namely 'Buddhist material culture.'

1. Buddhist Material Culture

I turn first to the pressing matter of providing a treatment of 'Buddhist material culture' as the keystone term of the Theoretical framework developed throughout this chapter. I have extrapolated the parameters for a baseline working definition of 'Buddhist material culture' from the works of John Kieschnick and Fabio Rambelli. For the purpose of this thesis, 'Buddhist material culture' refers to tangible objects that a person or persons involved in or connected to a group or groups that are characterized as being 'Buddhist' have made or constructed, usually for a purpose related to Buddhist traditions or practices, and which bear the potential to serve as entities endowed with 'presence' and value extending beyond the material and/or functional worth of the tangible object (see Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 15-6; Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 265).[117] This working definition of 'Buddhist material culture' remains somewhat

[117] My employment of the term 'Buddhist material culture' refers specifically to *physical*, tangible objects and to the data surrounding those objects, which, as per Kieschnick's 'middle road' understanding of the study of material culture, "includes both ideas about objects … as well as behavior associated with objects" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 15). Expanding a working definition of 'material culture' to include ideas and behaviours surrounding the object(s) in question affords scholars additional elasticity in terms of how we might approach the data, while yet retaining clear and necessary borders dictating our object(s) of study.
It is perhaps additionally noteworthy that I expressly elect to avoid using the term 'sacred' here, as the term is too loaded and prone to misunderstanding to be employed effectively in so broad and shifting a context.

ambiguous, however, in that it does not offer any explicit examples of what might be classified as falling within the definition.

While a general working definition of 'Buddhist material culture' is itself helpful in delimiting the conceptual boundaries of the term, I propose that the inclusion of further subcategories subsumed within the umbrella term 'Buddhist material culture' will serve as additional functional tools for the study of this tangible mode of data.[118] I suggest the following subcategories from the starting point of Kevin Trainor's threefold typology of material culture, a schema produced from "the classic Theravada taxonomy of venerable 'memorials' (*cetiyas* in Pāli, *caityas* in Sanskrit)" ("Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 16). This taxonomy "differentiates three distinct categories: those containing bodily relics, those defined by relics of use, and those that are 'commemorative' (a category identified with images)" (16).[119] The subcategories of Buddhist material culture proposed below draw from this early threefold typology, although I add a fourth category. The subcategories are as follows: relics; images (including icons); physical texts and specialized implements; and physical structures.[120] I aim to refine and clarify the four categories, and seek to underline the import of each variety of object's

[118] Distinguishing between several subcategories, too, serves as an effort at redressing the tendency of Buddhist Studies scholars, as noted by Robert Sharf, "to conflate relics proper with virtually every other object of Buddhist ritual devotion, including sculpted and painted images, stūpas, so-called aniconic symbols, and even scriptures and incantations" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 77, see also 78). Sharf suggests that the underlying logic of this conflation is the notion that all of these 'Buddhist' objects "denote the presence of the Buddha in his very absence" (77). In an effort at avoiding this tendency, the subcategories proposed here do not rely solely on a sense of presence as a distinguishing feature, but instead additionally consider the materiality and visually apprehensible natures of the objects and/or their varied uses.

[119] According to Trainor, this system of classification first appeared within fifth century C.E. Pāli commentaries (see "Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 16, FN 33).

[120] I propose this fourfold typology of objects while bearing in mind Kieschnick's suggestion that "when examining the history of sacred objects, it is useful to look not only at the social context that made such beliefs possible but also at the nature of the objects for clues to the factors that rendered them sacred" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 29). Although I object strongly to Kieschnick's usage of the term 'sacred' here, his push to examine the "nature of the objects for clues" serves as a constructive reminder to consider the actual materiality of any objects under scrutiny. The fourfold typology proposed here is but one effort at pulling the reader back to the tangible, material nature of the data at hand.

potential connections to 'origins' narratives (at times limited or enhanced by the materiality of the object itself) as a means of asserting the perceived legitimacy of any given object in question.[121]

As a jumping-off point in discussing my fourfold typology of Buddhist material culture, I seek to distinguish between relics and images on the basis of Robert Sharf's contentions. Sharf suggests that,

> whereas corporeal relics are procured or 'discovered,' images and *stūpas* are manufactured – modeled by human hands after established prototypes. A buddha image or *stupa* is, with few exceptions, clearly recognizable as such, even when removed from its original religious setting or ritual context. A relic, on the other hand, requires a 'frame' in space and time that explicitly signals its status as sacred object. Removed from their gilded and jewel-studded reliquaries most relics resemble so much dirt ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 81).[122]

In other words, while images are figural objects explicitly created by human hands, relics are imagined to be manifested and require a 'frame' of sorts to contextualize them. With this baseline distinction established, relics shall serve as the first subcategory under scrutiny.[123]

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[121] I use the term 'origins' in plural form quite deliberately as an expression of the potentially plural nature of origins claims and narratives. Any given object, practice, and so on that is linked in some fashion to an 'origin' narrative might possibly bear numerous (and at times conflicting) iterations in the form of various claims to numerous different 'origins,' each serving divergent rhetorical purposes for the teller(s) of the tale(s). More on this below.

[122] An explicit terminological distinction between images and relics is made, too, by Buddhists themselves (Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 82). Although I do not find it necessary for the theoretical posturings of scholars to mirror concepts and terms internal to any given object or practice of study, the existence of a logic of distinction present among Buddhist practitioners is of general interest here.
Importantly, Sharf does explicitly acknowledge that this rubric is "Western in origin" and is "developed out of certain Judeo-Christian issues entailed in rendering a likeness of God" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 81). Although this 'origin' does raise some concerns surrounding the potential imposition of western perceptions upon the context of medieval Japan, I contend that the careful bounding of the terms 'icon,' 'image,' and 'relic' through the provision of working definitions tailored to the context of Buddhist Studies serves as an effective (though far from perfect) fixative to this issue.

[123] Despite these distinctions, it remains the case that "both relics and images are among the primary material means through which Buddhas continue to be 'embodied' after their passing away," a matter to which we shall return below (Trainor, "Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 16).

1.1 Relics

On the basis of Sharf's distinctions between relics (Jp. *shari*) and icons, I propose that 'relics' be understood here as non-figural objects that are 1) purportedly discovered (as opposed to manufactured), 2) require a 'frame' in order to be rendered comprehensible and, 3) are associated explicitly by narrative with a particular figure as either corporeal remains or as an object having come into contact at some point with the figure in question. Due in part to the association of relics with ostensibly meritorious figures, relics can also serve as a sort of tangible proof of the attainments of great individuals, marked as different from the remains of ordinary persons by two primary qualities: 1) the remains emit light, and 2) after cremation, hard relic grains are left behind (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 34-5).[124]

This notion presupposes that all relics are *bodily* relics, though, which is certainly neither an accurate nor comprehensive means of depicting the variety subsumed within the category 'relic.' As Jacob N. Kinnard has noted, there persists within Buddhist Studies "a tendency to treat all relics … as the same, if not in terms of classification, at least in terms of their function" ("The Field of the Buddha's Presence" 118). Although it may be argued that my own approach to 'relics' hedges dangerously close to treating all relics as bearing the same function, I contend that the issue of conflating the classification of all relics could easily be nullified by further subdividing this category into bodily and contact relics.[125] Doing so may yet add nuance to

[124] On the basis of this notion, Kieschnick goes so far as to contend that "[i]n large measure, the allure of relics sprang from the intimate connection they provided to otherwise remote holy figures" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 48). The notion of living presences abiding within various forms of Buddhist material culture is discussed in more detail below.

[125] Sharf, for instance, makes use of the terms 'bodily relic' and "contact relic surrogate" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 77). Notably, though, to my knowledge the Japanese term *shari* more accurately refers to bodily relics, as opposed to contact relics.
While this is not an uncommon approach, my aim here is to push for an explicit and consistent approach to loaded terms such as 'relic.' As such, although my suggestions concerning 'relics' are not groundbreaking, they do represent an exemplar of the conscious and explicit development of but one aspect of a Theoretical framework.

treatments of Buddhist material culture, though I have opted not to make this distinction here for the sake of clarity, ease of use, and broader applicability of the working definition, and consequential sub-classifications, of 'Buddhist material culture.'

Unlike images, relics require some form of context or frame in order to be comprehensible (see Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 38).[126] A frame bears a complex task requiring that it "(1) straddle both realms – map and territory – yet belong to neither; and (2) draw attention to itself, and yet remain hidden at the same time" (Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 90). This is due primarily to the often rather nondescript nature of relics, which, in Sharf's terms, are "devoid of discernable representational qualities" (82).[127] In addition to being relatively nondescript objects, "relics are typically hidden away in relic monuments or reliquaries," which serve in turn as a sort of conceptual 'frame' that contextualizes the relic(s) (Trainor, "Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 16).[128]

In reference to the context required to make sense of relics (themselves often housed within icons as one means of 'framing' the objects), it is perhaps relevant to briefly draw a distinction between what constitutes a 'relic' versus an 'icon.' It is perhaps simplest to

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[126] The 'framing' of Buddhist material culture is not limited to relics, however, as principal images (*honzon*) were marked out in part by their "altar setting, which includes a small table placed in front of the image upon which is arrayed various ritual paraphernalia and offerings" (Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 84). All of this functions as "part of the icon's frame … and signals not only the presence of a supernatural being but also the authority and technical mastery of the institutionally sanctioned priests who are able to muster and direct divine forces" (84). Not only does this framing serve to clarify the role of the icon in question as the principal image of a temple, it simultaneously acts as means of adding a further layer of perceived legitimacy to the image and the practitioner engaging with it. The layering of perceived legitimacy is discussed in further detail below.
It is perhaps worth noting, too, that although relics certainly have a set of identifiable distinguishing features, "Buddhist relic veneration can be investigated as a distinctive form within a broader set of religious practices organized around the material remains (corporeal relics) and material representations (images) of authoritative religious figures" (Trainor, "Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 13).

[127] Although Kieschnick has conflictingly described relics as being both ordinary, nondescript and as being "wondrous objects abruptly intruding on the monotony of day-to-day routine" (see *The Impact of Buddhism* 38 and 51). Perhaps this is something of a case by case basis, then?

[128] This practice is not entirely unique to relics, however, as *sutras* are at times hidden within 'containers' of various forms. According to Rambelli, for instance, "a sutra was not just 'owned' but kept in a specially designated place from which it was taken out only on particular occasions, during which it was handled in prescribed ways" (*Buddhist Materiality* 102).

distinguish between 'icon' and 'relic' on the basis of form, as Kieschnick has done. Kieschnick observes that "[i]cons, whether made of clay or of human remains, were attributed with human qualities not because of what they were but because of what they looked like" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 36). *Shari*, meanwhile, act as "impersonal relics radiating light and pulsing with [supernormal] power" (36). Despite being 'impersonal,' it is worth noting that they were accorded, at times, significant value, and as such they "were contested, stolen, fabricated, and manipulated for an assortment of purposes as varied and intricate as the web of interaction that binds any complex society" (36). In this way, relics, too, exist within an active process perpetuated by the narratives and doings of historical individuals and groups.

As noted above, relics are not generally understood to be crafted by human hands, but are rather 'discovered.' Sharf suggests that "Buddhist relics are construed as the distilled essence of human corporeality," being that "they are what remains after the human form has been destroyed and the material substrate purified by the funeral pyre" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" in *Embodying the Dharma* 171). Although this may suggest a sort of limitation in terms of the raw numbers of (particularly bodily) relics that could exist, it is worth noting that relics of the Buddha "not to mention the relics of his enlightened disciples, can be multiplied virtually ad infinitum" (167). This proliferation of relics is often depicted as occurring spontaneously on the basis of the merit accrued by the group or individual in possession of the relics in question (see Groner, "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 126).[129]

[129] Note that my working definition of 'merit' can be found below within subsection 2.1.
Paul Groner, for instance, offers a translation drawn from the *Hokkeji shari engi* written by the Shingon Ritsu 真言律 master Eison 叡尊(or Eizon; 1201-90) that details the spontaneous proliferation of the relics held at the convent Hokkeji during its medieval revival in the thirteenth century (see "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 130-1). The account details how the two thousand relics initially kept at the convent increased in number to over four thousand of their own accord, although it seems that Eison finds this "difficult to explain," I posit because the relics happen to be in the possession of nuns (131).
Eison additionally notes that in 1271, "the two thousand relics that had appeared at the Hokkeji nunnery" were

The veneration of relics bears a long history within Buddhist traditions broadly speaking, such that within the first few centuries of the Common Era in India, "relics were taken as the standard against which claims for the [supernormal] power of other objects were judged" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 30).[130] In addition, "even in the writings of skeptics, the authenticity of relics, as remnants of prominent monks or the Buddha himself, was seldom questioned," suggesting that relics bear, by their very nature, tight and relatively unquestionable linkages to 'origins' of some form (48). According to Kieschnick, "much of the attraction of relics lay in the powers they were thought to contain," powers that serve not only to assert the legitimacy and efficacy of the relics, but that could be directed toward producing positive effects for persons venerating them (31). Kieschnick goes so far as to credit the appeal of relics to "those who otherwise showed little interest in Buddhism" to the powers they were said to bear, "for the miraculous exerts a general appeal unmatched by statements of doctrine or philosophical principle" (31). The same might be said of virtually all forms of Buddhist material culture discussed here, as the attribution of supernormal powers to Buddhist objects, particularly to those bearing strong origins claims, appears as a common trope within medieval Japanese discourses

counted by the nun Zeshun (see Groner, "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 130). The count was done as a consequence of the spontaneous appearance of relics, causing the convent's collection to continually grow in number. Recording the increase in number of the relics from two thousand to four thousand, Eison writes that by the time the relics had doubled in number, "Zeshun was close to the day when she would go forth from the householder's life 出家 and become a novice, but the merit of her practice must have been small" (131). He explicitly suggests that the proliferation of relics "surely must not have been due to the spiritual power of Zeshun" (131). As a consequence of this notion, Eison adds that "[t]he reason for the appearance of so many relics is difficult to explain" (131). I view this as a possible instance of the devaluation of a woman's acquisition of Buddhist material culture in the form of spontaneously manifesting relics. While it is possible that Eison's uncertainty surrounding the cause(s) of the appearance of the relics has as much or more to do with Zeshun being a layperson, I suspect that gender plays a significant role here, too.
It is also plausible, though, as Dr. James Benn has pointed out to me that Eison finding these events 'difficult to explain' could be just a typical trope through which to express to the reader that a miraculous event occurred.

[130] Kieschnick goes so far as to suggest that the cult of relics "is perhaps as old as Buddhism itself" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 29)!

concerning ostensibly Buddhist objects.[131]

1.2 Images

For the purposes of the Theoretical framework proposed throughout this chapter, I proffer a simple working definition of 'image' based upon Sharf's observations concerning the differences between images and relics discussed above. 'Image,' then, refers to predominantly figural visual representations of figures, events, and/or narratives, which may take diverse forms including paintings, illustrations, sculptures, mixed-media visual representations, mandalas, and so on.[132] Quite unlike relics, "images are usually open to view," and it is the visually graspable and figural aspects of images that are perhaps the most distinctive in comparison to relics (Trainor, "Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 16). Although Kieschnick suggests that "an image was not complete unless it was invested with the [supernormal] power that made it come alive," I propose that, on the contrary and rather unlike relics, un-enlivened images are certainly possible within the realm of Buddhist material culture (*The Impact of Buddhism* 63).[133] As such, I offer a

[131] Consider, for instance, the convent Hokkeji's famous bathhouse, which was said to have installed "the kettle used for boiling bathwater at Kōmyō's [original] bathhouse" (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 199). The kettle is significant insofar as it is said to bear "the power to heal Hokkeji's bathers" by merit of it containing "the gods of the Medicine Teacher Buddha" in it (199). In other words, the bathhouse (and its miraculous healing water) at the convent Hokkeji served "as an attraction that offered pilgrims the chance to gain positive karmic merit" while also potentially being immediately healed of whatever might ail them (199). That is to say, functionally the elaborate origins narrative (which I regrettably lack the space to discuss in any detail here) linking Queen-Consort Kōmyō (701-760) to the original bathhouse kettle establishes a precedent for the supernormal ability of the water to heal, and the propensity for the bathhouse (and by extension the convent) to serve as an efficacious field of merit. For more detail concerning the origins narrative surrounding Kōmyō's initial bathhouse, see Marian Ury's "Nuns and Other Female Devotees in *Genkō Shakusho* (1322), Japan's First History of Buddhism" 194-5.

[132] While Sharf is "concerned primarily with representations of humans and deities in sculpted or painted form" when it comes to 'images,' I find it productive to broaden this category somewhat to include visual representations not necessarily including human figures at all ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 81).

[133] According to Sharf, "those who worship images do make a distinction between an inert image of wood or stone and an animate deity" ("Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons" 11). Bearing in mind the working definitions of 'image' and 'icon' based on Sharf's own discussions of the terms in question proposed above and below, it seems that Sharf may be acknowledging the existence of both 'animate' and 'inanimate' figural iterations of Buddhist material culture, too.

secondary classification of image that refers specifically to visual depictions that *are* invested with the presence of a significant Buddhist figure: icons.

While icons are often closely interlinked with relics, I suggest the term 'icon' be utilized as a subset of the subcategory of 'images' discussed above due primarily to the figural nature of the objects in question. I employ Sharf's working definition of icon here, which presents icons as "a specific sort of [Buddhist] image that is believed to partake or participate in the substance of that which it represents" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 81).[134] This definition suggests that an icon is representational in nature and that, by some means, it is understood not just to be a visual facsimile of what it depicts, but rather *is* on some level the actual figure depicted, or at least shares in its nature. More specifically for use within the context of medieval Japan, the Japanese term *honzon* corresponds fairly neatly with this working definition of 'icon.' Sharf defines *honzon* as "the principal object of worship in a Buddhist ritual setting," wherein the "*honzon* is not some unseen transcendent deity, … but rather the sculpted or painted image enshrined on an altar in a place of worship" (83). Thus, we have a term internal to medieval Japan that operates in a conceptually similar fashion to the working definition of 'icon' proposed here.

As noted above, relics are frequently found housed within images, which (often in addition to the performance of some form of animating ceremony and/or the inclusion of additional objects such as Buddhist texts) renders such images icons, within which a living presence is understood to inhere.[135] Relics can be incorporated within an image in various ways,

[134] Sharf further hones this definition by adding that "an icon does not merely bear the likeness of the divine, but shares in its very nature" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 81).
[135] See Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 62. Perhaps of interest, too, is Kieschnick's observation that "[t]he use of bone and ash was usually reserved for images of monks, rather than images of buddhas and bodhisattvas" (62). This of course makes sense, given that a relic will often be associated with the figure portrayed by the image in which it is being installed as a sort of tool for housing a presence within a given object.

including: wrapping a relic in cloth or placing it within a reliquary before inserting it into the base of an image; ash icons created by mixing relics into the clay from which an image is made; and full-body mummification via desiccation and subsequent lacquering and adornment (see Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 82).[136] While Sharf contends that relics "came to play a significant role in the transformation of a mere image into a living icon," other objects could, and often were, added to icons as enlivening tools (82).[137] Such objects include but are not limited to: silk models of human viscera; specialized implements; donation rosters; *dhāraṇī* ("incantations viewed as potent distillations of the Buddha's wisdom"); other smaller images; and Buddhist texts (Groner, "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 132, see also 123, 125; see Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 92).

1.3 Physical Texts and 'Ritual' Implements

When making use of the term 'Buddhist texts,' I am referring specifically to physical texts (and/or scriptures) rendered distinct from non-Buddhist texts by means of strategic separations evoked and maintained by human actors (and at times within the internal discourse(s) of texts themselves), which for the purposes of the Theoretical framework at hand are framed by, and

[136] The princess nun Daitsū Bunchi (1619-1697) appears to have made use of a variety of sometimes strange and often interesting methods for including bodily relics of both her father Emperor Go-Mizunoo (or Gomizuno-o, 1596-1680) and herself in her creations. Bunchi "glued slivers of her father's fingernails onto silk or wood to create Chinese characters and *myōgō* 名号 (the names of Buddhist deities as invocations)," and she also sculpted an image of her father out of clay and attached some of his hair to the face of the image (Fister, "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments" 215 and 229; see also *Art by Buddhist Nuns* 47 and 55). Bunchi also transcribed several blood sutras (quite possibly exclusively using her blood as opposed to mixing a small volume of blood with red or black ink as would be more common), effectively incorporating her own bodily relics into physical texts during her own lifetime ("Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments" 232; see also *Art by Buddhist Nuns* 63). More fascinating yet are Bunchi's uses of her own skin as 'paper' on which to transcribe *sutras* (*Art by Buddhist Nuns* 65). Bunchi engaged in this practice on at least two occasions, cutting skin from her body (reputedly from her hand) and writing out (or perhaps more accurately 'tattooing') small sections of *sutras* in ink onto the skin (65).

[137] Although I push for a relatively clear distinction between the subcategories of 'icon' and 'relic' here, it is worth noting James C. Dobbins' suggestion that on the ground, "the distinction between icon and relics is not always clear; one could function as a substitute for the other" ("Portraits of Shinran in Medieval Pure Land Buddhism" 37). Such slippage between the subcategories proposed within this thesis is discussed in additional detail below.

examined primarily in terms of, their non-hermeneutic (and non-semiotic) dimensions.[138] I distinguish here between non-Buddhist versus Buddhist physical texts simply on the basis of the strategic historical separations of 'Buddhist' texts from other, more quotidian works accomplished by monastics (see Lowe 10). In the case of Buddhist texts, the "category is further sustained through repeated ritual actions that reinforce these separations, including recitation and transcription" (10). According to Bryan D. Lowe, at base "people turn an ordinary text into scripture by treating it in a certain way" (10).[139] While the same may be said of virtually any object falling within a specialized conceptual category (such as 'Buddhist material culture'), I pull on the thread of special/unusual treatment as a distinguishing factor for Buddhist texts specifically as a means of circumventing a definition that is reliant upon textual content as opposed to materiality in identifying physical Buddhist texts as a subcategory of Buddhist material culture here. As Rambelli has similarly and productively noted, there are at least two possible modes for examining Buddhist texts, on the basis that "sutras and other important Buddhist books whose devotional role is related to their material nature" renders them

[138] In advocating for a primarily non-hermeneutic approach to Buddhist texts centering upon the materiality of this subcategory of objects, I do not intend to dismiss the hermeneutic aspects of text as being insignificant in any way. As Bryan D. Lowe has noted, the act of copying scripture, for instance, is not simply an act involving the materiality of the object(s) at hand, but rather involves a hermeneutic set of aspects (see 7). Such aspects include: (1) the fact that "patrons carefully selected specific texts for their purposes, often because of the contents of the sutra;" (2) patrons and scribes obey "the commandments of the scripture" through the very act of copying, "as the sutras themselves demanded their own reproduction;" and (3) "seemingly devotional activities such as copying supported manuscript cultures on the ground and enabled hermeneutic practices to flourish in monasteries by creating a rich collection of texts in temple libraries" (7). While this is all very fascinating and, indeed, relevant to studies concerned with the hermeneutic aspects of scripture as their primary mode of data, I yet retain that approaching text as primarily material objects offers scholars an opportunity to explore this data from a different angle that may yet illuminate differing dimensions of Buddhist practices and social realities on the ground.

[139] The specialized treatment(s) of scriptures (as opposed to ordinary texts) begins with the writing or copying of the texts themselves. Lowe proposes the term 'ritualized writing' as a means of articulating the distinct practice of writing engaged in as compared with other forms of (bureaucratized) writing (see 2, 30). Lowe suggests that in premodern Japan, "[t]hey separated the act of transcribing Buddhist scripture from other forms through prepatory purifications, ceremonial dedications, and the belief that transcribing scripture was a morally wholesome practice (Skt. *sucarita*; J. *zengyō* 善行)" (2). As such, 'ritualized writing' is rendered distinct from other forms of textual composition and is perceived as engendering material and karmic rewards in this life and the next (2).

functionally (and thus theoretically) distinct from "doctrinal texts" that serve as primarily didactic tools (*Buddhist Materiality* 8). In other words, Rambelli proposes hermeneutic and non-hermeneutic approaches to texts as two primary options.[140] Here, I am chiefly interested in engaging with the non-hermeneutic dimension of texts as physical objects, an approach that Rambelli envisions as exploring "a specific modality of written texts that requires different forms of interaction and use based on an enhanced awareness of the text's material nature" (89).[141] To be somewhat more precise, "[n]onhermeneutic attitudes toward books involve various forms of ritual interaction (e.g., chanting and copying) and the attribution of additional forms of value that transcend 'meaning' (affective, aesthetic, economic, symbolic, etc.), rather than reading in search of meaning" (89).[142]

Robert F. Campany notes that *sutras* act as objects distinct from ordinary commodities, as narratives concerning *sutras* "tacitly argue through didactic narrative that [*sutras*] deserve the respect and veneration one would offer to the Buddha or to a bodhisattva, and to desecrate them has the same effect as desecrating a Buddha-image or slandering the Buddhist teaching" ("Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of Sūtra Texts" 41).[143] Interestingly, early

[140] Rambelli also points to the notion of 'intertextuality' as one means of branching the conceptual divide that he proposes between text-for-semiotic-meaning versus text-as-material (see *Buddhist Materiality* 127). In particular, Rambelli's discussion of 'transtext' is of some help if we imagine the possibility of 'reading' a textless object, wherein 'reading' serves as a referent towards searching for context, use, and so on of any given object in order to situate it relative to other objects, practices, and/or texts (see 127). While I lack the space to engage with this idea in any more detail here, this approach is perhaps worth exploring further within future research.

[141] This approach involves acknowledging that physical texts can be, and indeed often are, "'performed' (worked, used, enacted, handled) in some ways other than as signifiers" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 90).

[142] Notably, a similarly materiality-centric approach to text might be gainfully employed, with minor adjustment, to non-Buddhist contexts within Religious Studies scholarship. It is due to the potential for relatively broad applicability that I classify these subcategories of Buddhist material culture as a form of macro Theory, despite the explicit tailoring to a Buddhist context found throughout this section of chapter three of this thesis.

[143] While Buddhist texts often "demanded their own transcription and advocated the veneration of physical manuscripts" as exceptional objects, they also "promised rewards to those who did so," a key factor in the promulgation and proliferation of physical Buddhist texts (Lowe 5). Such incentives to (re)produce Buddhist material culture, and the economic and karmic consequences of such incentives, are discussed in greater detail below.

Japanese texts such as the *Nihon Ryōiki* (日本霊異記) suggest that "[s]criptures have power, both positive (they bring benefits to their devotees) and negative (they punish their offenders); they have agency of their own and can manifest themselves also in human forms" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 103). A related distinction between Buddhist texts and more quotidian commodities may be found within the notion of texts channeling the presence of buddhas or bodhisattvas in some fashion, not unlike the 'presences' often understood to exist within relics or icons. Indeed, according to Rambelli, *sutras* may serve as "objects of worship as embodiments, doubles of the Buddha, much as buddha images and stupas" (98, see also 112). Perhaps related to this notion of a literal presence is Kieschnick's observation that texts such as the *Lotus Sutra* insist "that Buddhist scriptures [are] a source of merit" (based, perhaps, in part on the presence borne by the object), and thus Buddhist texts are understood to serve as "physical object[s] of worship to be venerated with offerings" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 165).

James C. Dobbins, meanwhile, notes that in the case of "*myōgō honzon* 名号本尊, calligraphic inscriptions of the *nenbutsu* in either six-, eight-, nine-, or ten-character formulations," the recitation and production of such inscriptions "was conceived of not merely as a religious practice, but rather as the very presence of Amida in the practitioner" ("Portraits of Shinran in Medieval Pure Land Buddhism" 22). If we take Dobbins' assessment to be accurate, then it seems that in the case of *myōgō honzon* the presence of the buddha Amida is being evoked not within the physical object itself, but rather within the individual engaging with the text. While this is distinct from, say, a usual relic or icon, it retains a similar conceptual thread and thus accords with the working definition of Buddhist material culture proposed above insofar

as the texts here are endowed with a sort of 'presence' and value that extends beyond the material and/or functional worth of the tangible object itself.[144]

Specialized implements, meanwhile, serve as a looser sub-classification yet than 'Buddhist texts.' For the purposes of the Theoretical framework developed throughout this chapter, 'specialized implements' functions as a secondary classification housed within the subcategory of 'Buddhist texts.' This is primarily due to the fact that texts themselves can, and often do, serve as specialized implements utilized during certain events and/or practices that are physically, socially, or otherwise set apart from more everyday activities. Beyond just Buddhist texts, the classification of 'specialized implements' includes such objects as practical tools used in 'Buddhist' practices of a variety of forms, such as the production of other forms of Buddhist material culture or the private or public performance of rites by Buddhist professionals. Not unlike the subcategories of Buddhist material culture discussed above, within the context of medieval Japan "tools, their functions, myths related to those tools, and deities associated with those myths were all connected following a sort of interpretive drift" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 186-7). As a consequence of these linkages, Rambelli contends that "all of those items came to constitute a macrosemiotic entity in which distinctions among tools, deities," everyday uses, and specialized functions "were explicitly eliminated" (187). This collapsing of several layers of interrelated conceptual associations serves as a feature common to many objects that fall within the overarching classification of 'Buddhist material culture' proposed above, thus rendering the admittedly generic sub-classification of 'specialized implements' a relevant,

[144] More generally, Rambelli contends that Buddhist texts "were not essentially different from relics, icons, and talismans" (*Buddhist Materiality* 90). Thus while *myōgō honzon* may be somewhat distinct in terms of the locale of their evocation of buddha-presence, they are yet perhaps not all that different from the other subcategories of Buddhist material culture identified above.

though perhaps peripheral, component of this chapter's proffered Theoretical framework.

1.4 Physical Structures

The final classification of 'physical structures,' defined for the purposes of the Theoretical framework as usually non-portable edifices utilized in Buddhist practices, does not combine or overlap as readily or as frequently with objects classified as relics, images, icons, physical texts or specialized tools.[145] This final classification includes such things as convents and monasteries, temples, and ordination platforms. The final subcategory of 'physical structures' is similar to the early Indian Buddhist relic cult in its lack of mobility, which had "a clearly defined organizational center; i.e. the *stupa*," around which "the activity of the worshipper turned," wherein "the erection of such a structure … allowed a stable localization of the cult" (Schopen, "The Phrase '*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*" 170).

Generally speaking, the four subcategories proposed here are not representative of hard boundaries – in actuality, there appears to have been a great deal of slippage on the ground in medieval Japan between my proposed sub-categories. This is due in part, of course, to human intervention and action. In considering this, it is perhaps helpful to conceptualize of Buddhist material culture along the lines of Lowe's notion of the "quasi-object, the idea that while material goods are dependent upon human actors, they themselves also modify social relations and individual identities" (11). Thus, given the two-way street of interaction with, and

[145] That being said, there certainly does exist some overlap between 'structures' and the other subcategories of Buddhist material culture discussed throughout this chapter. Sharf, for instance, notes that "every building in a medieval monastery … enshrined one or more icons, to whom obeisance was paid on a regular basis" ("Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons" 3). On the basis of a structure such as a monastic complex housing other forms of Buddhist material culture (such as icons), perhaps not unlike an icon housing relics or texts, there remains some degree of grey area among the fourfold typology of Buddhist material culture discussed here. Such slippage between subcategories is discussed further below.

conceptualization of, Buddhist material culture by historical actors, it seems only logical that on-the-ground practices and understandings would not neatly accord with any sort of tidy typology.

Due in part to the complexities of human doings, these classifications are not intended to be understood as rigid or absolute boundaries between objects or their uses when it comes to historical realities and activities.[146] While it is important to acknowledge the fundamentally manufactured (as opposed to 'natural' or 'organic') nature of the classificatory schema that I have proposed here, this does not render the subcategories devoid of meaning or functionality when used with care. These categories function purely to render 'Buddhist material culture' less conceptually abstract and should not be held too firmly, as "Buddhist philosophical approaches to objects show a remarkable continuity among statues, mandalas, and other icons, sacred texts, and ritual implements and everyday objects on each other" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 69).[147]

These subcategories are meant merely as a thinking tool employed to express the array of 'materialities' potentially subsumed within the classification of 'Buddhist material culture.' It is

[146] Perhaps the most explicit exemplar of the grey areas among the fourfold typology proposed within this chapter are icons in a general sense, which could be classified within the proposed subcategories of 'relic,' 'image,' or perhaps even 'text' (see Trainor, "Introduction: Beyond Superstition" in *Embodying the Dharma* 16).
Rambelli, for instance, identifies Buddhist texts as being "sort of 'relics' of past masters (and ultimately, of the Buddha)," a notion suggesting overlap between my proposed subcategories of Buddhist material culture in terms of on-the-ground function (*Buddhist Materiality* 96). Rambelli additionally suggests that the multifarious nature of elaborate copies of *sutras* and their containers "serve to emphasize the proximity of sutras on the one hand and buddha images and relics on the other" (109). Similarly, it is worth noting that some *sutras* bear "a number of decorative, aesthetic features" that turned some texts "into veritable artistic masterpieces," thereby potentially blurring the lines between 'text' and 'image' (107).
Groner, meanwhile, notes that in medieval Japan, "[r]elics of Śākyamuni were installed in ordination platforms established" by masters such as Eison ("Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 121). In such instances, the structure (here an ordination platform) is housing relics (and serving as the requisite frame for said relics), and thus is fulfilling one key quality that defines an icon. Unlike an icon, though, an ordination platform is not figural in nature. Regardless, there remains some degree of conglomeration in most instances of one form of Buddhist material culture being installed within another form.
Each of these grey areas afford the attentive reader an interesting view into the multivalent function(s) of Buddhist material culture as multipurpose objects/tools (of legitimation, social power and/or influence, revenue, and so on).
[147] Rambelli goes on to suggest that the difference among objects "is mainly in the explicit presence of a 'sentient principle' (mind), which is potential or hidden in inanimate things and actualized and manifest in icons after the performance of a special ritual" (*Buddhist Materiality* 69).

my intention here to take a broad, overarching concept and break it into more digestible pieces that collectively constitute the whole of the classificatory term 'Buddhist material culture,' itself a composite of what I shall refer to as 'symbols.' Here, a particular symbol in question might be somewhat abstract (such as relics, mandalas, and so on), relatively concrete (such as images, ritual implements, physical structures, and so on), or somewhere in between, yet will often be understood to either serve as a field of merit itself (such as icons, relics, mandalas, and so on) or contribute in some fashion to a field of merit (such as a physical structure, ritual implements, texts, and so on).[148] What the object specifically symbolizes varies case by case, though I propose that in some fashion the majority of Buddhist material culture can eventually be linked back to fields of merit as its baseline function.

1.5 Presence

Throughout the preceding discussion of Buddhist material culture and the fourfold typology of objects subsumed within that category, I have at several points referred in brief to the notion of a 'presence' inhering within objects. I aim here to clarify that concept, as it serves as a significant aspect of Buddhist material culture frequently discussed within English-language Buddhist Studies publications. It is important to note from the outset of this discussion that 'presence' for premodern Japanese Buddhists appears to be a very literal notion, wherein a given Buddhist object is understood to serve as a sort of conduit for an eminent figure, or a locus of somewhat more general power able to (at times capriciously) wield supernormal power at will.[149] Indeed,

[148] 'Field of merit' is defined below, in section two of chapter three.
[149] Similar notions of 'presence' abound within Buddhist discourses and practices external to premodern Japan, and indeed much of the source material drawn upon throughout this section of my thesis offers commentary upon Buddhist conceptions of 'presence' rather generally, while others comment on non-Japanese contexts. Such scholarship remains relevant, however, given the preponderance of the notion of 'presence,' and the relative consistency of such notions, found throughout a variety of temporal and geographic locales.

according to Kieschnick, "devotees perceive a presence, or power, within [Buddhist] objects" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 25). This presence does not necessarily simply passively inhere within all forms of Buddhist material culture, but is rather often explicitly installed into an object through a ceremony performed by Buddhist professionals.[150] Eye-opening ceremonies are one means by which to accomplish the enlivening of an object, and following the completion of the eyes on an object "the image is born, and a living entity [is] now present within the inanimate exterior" (60).[151] Kieschnick goes on to observe that "[i]mages treated in this way are more than reminders or symbols of the Buddha (or bodhisattva); rather, they contain in some way the power of the Buddha" (60).[152] Sharf importantly notes, though, that "consecration is only one of a

[150] Control over the production of living images has remained with monastics, as although "laypeople were concerned that their images be consecrated and were willing to finance the operation, the actual manipulation of [enlivening] power was left to monastic specialists" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 61). This, of course, also allowed monastics to collect revenue from an additional source, as "monks were paid for their services and accorded prestige as specialists in a necessary ritual" (61). I have yet to discover an account available in English suggesting that medieval nuns in Japan ever performed an enlivening ceremony for a Buddhist object. As such, I find it reasonable to speculate that, at least in the context of medieval Japan, nuns may not have been able to perform this type of ceremony, which would have significantly limited their ability to independently produce at least some forms of Buddhist material culture. Were this indeed the case, *bikunis* would be relegated to having *bikus* as specialists performing enlivening ceremonies for them, likely for a price. Nuns could, however, theoretically bring life to an image through the incorporation of relics.

[151] Eye-opening ceremonies appear to be a favourite topic of many Buddhist Studies scholars, who refer at least in passing to this conglomerate of practices with great frequency (see Sharf's "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" in *Embodying the Dharma* 171; Dobbins' "Portraits of Shinran in Medieval Pure Land Buddhism" 20; Groner's "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 150; Rambelli's *Buddhist Materiality* 84; and Quinter's *From Outcasts to Emperors* 76, 100, and 117). Interestingly, eye-opening ceremonies appear to have initially developed within Hindu practice as a means, perhaps, of facilitating the experience of *darśan* ("religious seeing, or the visual perception of the scared"), according to Diana L. Eck (3). Eck contends that standing "in the presence of the deity" in order "to behold the image with one's own eyes, to see and be seen by the deity" functions as the "central act of Hindu worship for laypeople" (3). In order to install a presence within an image, "the ceremony in which the eyes were ritually opened with a golden needle or with the final stroke of a paintbrush" is completed and serves as a necessary step in enlivening the object, as the eye-opening is carried out "even after the breath of life (*prāṇa*) was established in the image" (7). Similar threads run through Buddhist eye-opening ceremonies.
Although the topic of eye-opening ceremonies has been much discussed, it is yet worthwhile to note the rhetorical implications of eye-opening ceremonies in terms of the 'presence' they are thought to impart upon objects, and the power such a 'presence' might draw through claims to 'origins' lending the owner of the object(s) some degree of perceived legitimacy. The linkage between 'origins' claims and legitimacy are discussed further below.

[152] This may, accurately, strike the reader as being vague at best. Indeed, as Kinnard has observed, there is a tendency within Buddhist Studies to agree "that presence is involved with images and relics and stupas," though "there is little consensus as to what exactly this presence *is*" ("The Field of the Buddha's Presence" 118). Although my aim here is not to strictly pin down what precisely constitutes Buddhist notions of 'presence' (an effort that strays, perhaps, a little too near questions concerning 'faith' or 'belief' for my academic comfort), I do endeavor to

number of strategies employed to transform a material object into a living being," with alternatives including the installation within the image of other forms of Buddhist material culture such as relics or Buddhist texts ("Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons" 11; see also Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors* 119). To be more specific, although consecration or, say, the inclusion of relics within images are technically required in order for a Buddhist image to be considered 'alive,' according to Sharf "[t]he divine status of a particular Buddhist image is more commonly established within a community of worshippers through popular narrative and myth" ("Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons" 14).[153] Thus, the 'origins' narratives developed and continually espoused in varied iterations for 'living' Buddhist material culture are of considerable import in the construction of public apprehensions of these objects.[154] It is important to note, as does Sharf, that those who engage with 'living' objects, no matter how convincing their origins narratives or tales about their supernormal powers may be, "do recognize a difference in kind between consecrated icons, on the one hand, … and living flesh-and-blood beings, on the other" (11). Sharf adds that the very "status accorded to select images is predicated on precisely this distinction," as it emphasizes the exceptional quality of icons and, I would add, their distinctive ties to origins narratives that serve to legitimize living objects as effective fields of merit (11).

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impart upon the reader a semblance of understanding concerning the import that notions of 'presence' play within Buddhist discourses on merit, and on practices relating to the generation of said merit.

[153] In Dobbins' terms, for instance, "religious portraits" of venerable masters "were thought to possess a mysterious miraculous presence," with neither consecration nor the inclusion of relics or Buddhist texts within the figural depictions necessarily being required ("Portraits of Shinran in Medieval Pure Land Buddhism" 29). Somewhat similarly, there are no shortage of Buddhist "stories about people who receive extraordinary punishment for abusing or desecrating texts," which may suggest some degree of 'presence' understood to inhere within Buddhist texts without necessarily requiring consecration rites or other means by which to explicitly install a living presence within the object(s) (Campany, "Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of *Sūtra* Texts" 40-41).

[154] Public perceptions of Buddhist material culture are consequential within the bounds of this theoretical framework insofar as they relate to perception(s) of legitimacy, which in turn affect the degree of efficacy thought to be borne by a given object in terms of its function as a field of merit. This, then, can impact the patronage, pilgrimage, and so on received by a monastery or convent. This pattern is attended to in greater detail below.

The notion of a literal presence inhering within certain objects of Buddhist material culture, "revealed when marvelous, supernormal events occurred," also serves to undergird and encourage the veneration of objects through practices such as pilgrimage and/or donation (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 29).[155] Pilgrimage, which incidentally often seems to go hand in hand with the act of donation upon arrival, may be embarked upon so as to enter the presence of a significant Buddhist figure, such as the Buddha. Indeed, "seeing the Buddha is linked to progress on the Path," which serves as "one of the basic tenets underlying the construction of Buddhist images from the earliest periods of Buddhist history" and is thus a soteriologically significant practice for devotees (Kinnard, "The Field of the Buddha's Presence" 124).

The type of object in which a presence is thought to adhere is of import, though. According to Sharf, unlike say, icons, "the materials at our disposal suggest that relics were treated as presences pure and simple" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" in *Embodying the Dharma* 166). Sharf sharpens this point by adding that "a relic did not *represent*, *symbolize*, or *denote* a transcendent presence, numinous absence, or anything in between, any more than the person of the Buddha represented or symbolized the Buddha" (166-7). Even in the case of relics, though, 'presence' is at base conceptually bestowed upon an object through the narratives

[155] Kieschnick punctuates the import of presence being illustrated through supernormal events in noting that "[i]t is one thing to read the words of the Buddha, another to stand in his presence – or at least in the presence of a part of him" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 48). The same might be said of any other given figure of significance whose presence is understood to inhere within a living image.
In terms of the supernormal events said to occur as a consequence of the presence within an object, Sharf's suggestion that "Japanese Buddhist icons were regarded, more often than not, as living presences with considerable apotropaic and salvific power" is of relevance ("Prolegomenon to the Study of Japanese Buddhist Icons" 8). Within the context of premodern Japan, 'supernormal events' were not necessarily positive nor pleasant occasions, though they certainly could be, as noted earlier in this chapter. Quinter notes, for instance, the capability of living Buddhist objects to variously heal or discipline (*From Outcasts to Emperors* 143). The somewhat more neutral powers of enlivened images, meanwhile, include the ability to issue "messages through alterations in [an object's] own materiality such as changing color, emitting light, and sweating" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 83). As noted below, such as with any individual person, icons in particular are often characterized as bearing individual personalities, which could at times be less than friendly to individuals acting carelessly toward an enlivened object.

developed, reworked, and retold by historical actors. As Kinnard has aptly noted in the case of images, "the field of presence is constituted by several layers of overlapping discourse, several different conceptions of presence that are not always consistent with one another" ("The Field of the Buddha's Presence" 133). I contend that the same principle can gainfully be applied to any form of Buddhist material culture declared to bear a 'presence.' Such an approach might be used to shift the focus from the multivalent claim(s) to the claimant(s) making them, bringing into question the rhetorical strategies at work as they might relate to origins claims when 'presence' is said to inhere within an object.[156]

If we consider material culture in these terms, possession of certain Buddhist objects serve as a sort of inherent claim to origins of some significance (though these 'origins' are generally carefully crafted, manicured, and/or manufactured, and are rarely historically accurate or verifiable) and as a draw for patrons wishing to enter the presence of a buddha or bodhisattva.[157] What matters is not that the icon be a perfect reflection of the presumed personality of the figure in question, but that the perceived legitimacy of the icon first be established through a clear narrative link to the 'origin' of the depicted figure. I tentatively propose that the individual personalities of Buddhist objects serving as loci for the presence of a given figure might serve as part of the draw for devotees to travel on pilgrimage to a particular location, as each object functions somewhat uniquely in terms of its propensity to grant boons or dole out punishments. Further, dependent in part upon how convincing the origins narrative for a given Buddhist object might be for devotees, different representations of the same figure bear not

[156] This notion of a shift in focus from the claim to the claimant bears considerable influence from the work of Russell T. McCutcheon, particularly drawn from *Fabricating Origins* (2015). Similar principles are discussed below in relation to the terms 'myth' and 'origin.'

[157] Indeed, "[i]mages and relics allowed the ordinary person to experience Buddhism in a manner that was at once powerful and intimate, without the immediate intervention of learned intermediaries explaining what should be felt, what should be understood" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 24).

only distinctive personalities, but also function as divergent fields of merit possessing differing degrees of perceived efficacy. Linkages between Buddhist material culture, origins narratives, perceived legitimacy, and the efficacy of various fields of merit are discussed in detail below.

1.6 'Culture'

Bruce Lincoln's macro Theoretical framework concerning the term 'culture,' when applied to the production and acquisition of Buddhist material culture, may be used to offer one explanation for the relative absence of medieval Japanese nuns from this crucial element of Buddhist traditions.[158] Lincoln emphasizes the hierarchical nature of this Theoretical framework by noting that "capital-C Culture is nothing other than hegemony, and the remainder of lower-case-c culture is that which hegemony seeks to suppress, contain and devalue" (413).[159] When considering the application of this model to the notion of Buddhist material culture as it relates to the disparity between monks and nuns, the hegemonic nature of capital-C Culture is of crucial importance. It should also be noted that the dominant capital-C Culture "is valorized … by the fraction of society that is itself most valorized, and which represents itself … as the custodian and arbiter of the group's core values" (412).[160] In the case of Buddhist societies, this fraction of the group often takes the form of monks of high hierarchical standing. However, wealthy, socially well connected, aristocratic, or otherwise influential upper-class lay patrons (a group that

[158] It is perhaps more accurate to say, however, that this is more a matter of a lack of evidence, both historical and contemporary, of nuns' involvement with Buddhist material culture than a strict lack of involvement.
[159] The reader may notice that I am repeating some of what has already been discussed in chapter two here. Indeed, I am drawing upon Lincoln's discourse on 'culture' once again, and have opted to consciously use this model twice in part as a means of illustrating the potentially broad applicability of Religious Studies style macro Theoretical frameworks.
[160] James L. Ford offers a similar contention, namely that "material culture … does not merely reflect ideology; it creates it" (97). Thus, monks were consolidating their power not only in a tangible, material manner but also with regard to the production and maintenance of Buddhist ideology.

notably includes both men and women) have also commonly acted as 'custodians and arbiters' of Buddhist values.[161]

In considering the role of Buddhist *material* culture particularly within this hegemonic system, Kevin Trainor's observation that Buddhist objects "lend themselves to particular strategies of consolidation, dissemination, and controlled access" due to their material nature is of relevance ("Introduction: Beyond Superstition" 13). As a consequence of this, Buddhist objects "have frequently been employed by ruling elites, both lay and monastic, to further their respective interests" (13). Thus, eminent Buddhist monks and exceptionally prominent lay patrons have typically collectively formed the group that holds control over physical objects of Buddhist material culture while also regulating what is considered 'capital-C Culture,' and they have consequently held hegemonic power over all forms of Buddhist culture that do not fall within this category. Hence, I suggest that the dominant group within Buddhist society has, with relative consistency, suppressed, contained, and devalued the Buddhist material culture produced, and in some cases acquired, by nuns.[162] Lincoln's framework serves as an effective means of exploring these fundamental power differentials within the context of the production and/or acquisition of Buddhist material culture in general terms.

In considering what I tentatively view as the suppression, containment, and devaluation of Buddhist material culture acquired or produced by nuns within the Theoretical framework

[161] The history of Buddhism in Japan is an excellent example of this, as the aristocracy, as well as subsequent ruling powers such as the powerful warrior families that rose to power during the Kamakura period (1185-1300 CE), greatly supported and influenced Buddhist traditions. This was, usually, a relatively reciprocal relationship, however, such that "even as the state funded the increased production of Buddhist symbols" during the Nara period (710-794 CE), "the state gained political legitimacy through those very symbols it paid to have produced" (Deal and Ruppert 59).

[162] I tentatively posit that this may have been done as a means of ensuring greater control of the economic market of Buddhist merit by devaluing the practices of nuns in a general sense. The understanding of nuns as lesser has, in turn, led to the notion that female monastic practitioners act as a lesser field of merit than their male counterparts, thereby establishing a competitive market of merit in which monks have the upper hand. This is somewhat speculative, but merits further research.

regarding 'culture' delineated by Lincoln, it is prudent to note that this framework is not all encompassing. Indeed, what gets to serve as 'capital-C Culture' is neither stable nor unchanging, and the fraction of society influencing the direction of shifts in perceptions of 'culture' is often engaged in rhetorical strategies aimed at maintaining, increasing, or otherwise consolidating its power(s) (which can and does take many varied forms, including though not limited to, social and/or economic power).[163] In "certain moments of Japanese history," for instance, "religious institutions have used" various doctrines and practices "to assert their economic influence or to develop new religious markets in new sociopolitical and economic situations so that they could exercise their influence on society" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 273).[164] Notably, the 'influence' in question here is not limited only to economic capital, but perhaps more importantly to "symbolic capital," that is, modes of power potentially linked to, but not reliant upon, wealth (273).

Related to the assertion of influence via Buddhist material culture is the potential of Lincoln's framework to function as a means through which to examine 'cultural objects' as intentional (and often strategic) human productions. The notion of deliberate production can be further nuanced via Kenneth Dauber's suggestion that "[i]nterpreting a cultural object as the result of intentional action requires identifying the components of this action: the producer; the goal of production; the set of alternatives, or genre, from which the object is drawn; and the

[163] Further, the act of producing Buddhist material culture "inscribed social relations as much as it reflected them," meaning that a sort of continually (though not necessarily consistently) churning feedback loop might be formed within 'capital-C Culture' and 'lowercase-c culture' as objects are produced and disseminated (Lowe 18).
[164] Related to this idea, Sharf notes that "the popularity of relics was easily exploited by the ecclesiastic, institutional, and secular authorities who oversaw their dissemination" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 78). While the term 'secular' is extremely anachronistic and thus unhelpful here, the kernel of the idea remains relevant, namely that one variety of Buddhist material culture was strategically utilized by those holding power over their circulation in order to benefit themselves as individuals or their organizations. Such strategies concerned with the consolidation of power are certainly not limited to relics (nor to Buddhist material culture), but rather appear in numerous ways throughout the history of Buddhist objects.

dimensions of variation within that genre relevant to the goal of production" (566). Lincoln's framework might serve as one means through which to approach the components highlighted by Dauber, who particularly defines the 'producer' as "the actor or actors who have effective control over the choice of form" of a given 'cultural object' (566). Viewed from the perspective of Lincoln's hierarchically oriented discourse on culture, the producer most often simultaneously fulfills the role of arbiter of whatever might constitute the dominant 'capital-C Culture' within a given historical context. Of equal import within a patronage system, such as that which exists within medieval Japanese Buddhist practice(s), is the notion that "control over the form of an object is shared by the patron and the artist, with some aspects under the exclusive control of each party and some the result of negotiation" (566). In instances in which groups or individuals have lesser access to the economic resources required to sponsor the creation of Buddhist material culture, even less control over the form of a given object may ensue, such as when a substantial number of individual donors come together to sponsor the production of a single object.[165] Regardless of the question of how much or how little control each party involved in the intentional production of Buddhist material culture may have, patrons can, and often do, derive 'symbolic capital' through sponsoring the creation of Buddhist objects. William E. Deal and Brian Ruppert note, for instance, that in the context of eighth century Japan "even as the state funded the increased production of Buddhist symbols, the state gained political legitimacy

[165] In the case of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, it seems often to be the case that monastic women only had the opportunity to produce or acquire Buddhist material culture through the support of prominent lay patrons, as opposed to sponsoring the creation of objects entirely on their own. This likely results in a more complex series of negotiations occurring between nuns, patrons, and the artist(s) commissioned to produce the object. There are instances, however uncommon, in which a nun has significant personal access to wealth, as with the princess nun Bunchi (see Cogan's *The Princess Nun* and Fister's "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o" for more detail concerning Bunchi's life, economic standing, and productions and acquisitions of various forms of Buddhist material culture). Bunchi also appears to have produced some of her own images and icons, an unusual practice for a woman in medieval Japan (see Fister's "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments").

through those very symbols it paid to have produced" (59). In a sense, then, serving as a patron supporting the creation of Buddhist objects functions on some level as an exchange of economic capital for 'symbolic' capital lending perceived legitimacy to the body that happens to have accrued said 'symbolic' capital.[166]

Further, while the theoretical framework derived from Lincoln's discussion concerning 'culture' is of great use in describing the hierarchical power structures at work within Buddhist society in a broad sense, this does little to explicitly elaborate upon the ways through which nuns come to be relegated to the margins of the *sangha*. Rather, the marginalization of nuns is accomplished through an interlocking web of rhetorical strategies implemented by the dominant group consisting of monks and prominent lay patrons, an important and contextually specific aspect of the study of nuns and material culture that I address here only in brief due to spatial limitations. When considering what I am referring to here as the marginalization of nuns within medieval Japan, I point in passing to a conglomerate of notions that significantly impacted women and how they were understood within a Buddhist context that either arose or were popularized during the medieval period. The spread of belief in blood pollution (supported most infamously by the *Blood Bowl Sutra*) alongside the notion of women's Three Obediences extrapolated from Confucian familial ideals and the Buddhist conception of women's Five Obstructions began during the early Heian period (see Ambros 66). These developments arose concurrently with the loss of autonomy experienced by the surviving nunneries, which were subjected to the authority of a monastery, "relegating them to a state of dependency and secondary status" (Ambros 66). The exclusion of women from Buddhist sites followed, becoming increasingly common as the Heian period progressed (Deal and Ruppert 161).

[166] This suggestion corresponds with a more elaborate discussion below concerning the economy of merit in tandem with fields of merit. This notion is expanded upon and discussed in more detail at a later point within this chapter.

Meanwhile, during the Heian period and onward scholarly monks forcefully suggested that women needed to transform into men prior to becoming Buddhas, an element of Japanese Buddhist discourse that would greatly impact women, although the effects of this development are ambiguous at best when considering the way women actually apprehended and interpreted this concept in practice (Ambros 66). By the mid-Heian period, "male monastic society generally viewed women … as essentially potential patrons rather than practitioners," with the exception of "the Zen and Ritsu lineages … that began to treat women as potential disciples who would ideally bow themselves to illustrious masters of lower social status" (Deal and Ruppert 162).

Lincoln's framework does, however, serve as an effective thinking tool, a lens through which to reevaluate the promulgation and creation of Buddhist material culture and how the imbalanced diffusion of objects might serve as indications of disparate social positioning, economic resources, cultural and social capital, and so on, particularly in considering on-the-ground differences in resource allocation and acquisition between monks and nuns.

2. Fields of Merit and Legitimacy

2.1 'Merit'

'Merit' serves, I suggest, as a foundational Buddhist concept critical in considering at least one facet of the multivalent functions of Buddhist material culture as it is produced and utilized on the ground. Given the import of the term, I opt to provide yet another working definition to contribute to the Theoretical framework proposed within this chapter. In seeking to define 'merit,' I lean upon Kieschnick's lucid, tidy interpretation of the term. Within the bounds of my Theoretical framework, then, merit refers to "the idea that there is an invisible moral order governing the universe, and that under the system one is rewarded in this life or the next for good

deeds, including the production of certain specified types of [Buddhist] objects" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 157).[167] I add to this baseline definition that merit may only be generated through a variety of *deliberate* means occurring through active and very *human* processes requiring *intention*, including acts of patronage bestowed upon any of a variety of 'fields of merit' (including Buddhist objects and monastic communities of monks and/or nuns).[168] Kieschnick's definition does, however, only briefly gloss over the crucial notion that the accrual of merit is often thought to result in beneficial effects during an individual's current lifetime. As Rambelli aptly notes, within the scope of everyday activities merit is imagined to result in the improvement of one's conditions in this life, or, in other words, in the generation of worldly benefits (*Buddhist Materiality* 68).[169] This serves, I contend, as a key aspect of the allure of merit accrual for many devotees, as the promise of very real rewards in this world satisfies an immediacy that post-mortem soteriological benefits are fundamentally unable to match.[170]

[167] Lowe also leans upon Kieschnick's definition, deploying it for use within a premodern Japanese context (see *The Impact of Buddhism* 32). Although Kieschnick's working definition is ostensibly designed for use within the bounds of premodern Chinese Buddhist practices, given the focus of the book within which it is proposed, his discourse on 'merit' is broad-ranging enough to be productively applicable to contexts external to the temporal and geographical locale for which it is originally devised.

[168] Lowe, too, identifies the generation of merit as an explicitly active process "enacted by *people*" (210). In other words, intentional thoughts and actions, whether expected to result in the accrual of merit (as in donating to a temple) or not (as in more generally performing what might be considered a 'good' deed without the explicit aim of being rewarded in the form of merit), lead to the accrual of karma, both positive (in the form of merit) and negative. Kieschnick, meanwhile, corroborates the second part of this suggestion in noting that "[a]ccording to a number of early Buddhist texts, in addition to gaining merit through refraining from killing, lying, and so forth, one can also gain merit through material donations" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 157). In other words, the act of patronage can serve as a source of merit. Merit might also be generated by "copying or printing Buddhist scriptures," which of course serves as but one possible means of producing Buddhist material culture (164).

[169] Interestingly, one such 'this-worldly' benefit might take the form of attempting to assure that an individual has a "good death," which would aid in assuring rebirth in a Pure Land (in other words, a somewhat more abstract or perhaps soteriologically-oriented benefit) (Stone, *Right Thoughts* 256).

[170] Regardless of whether benefits derived from the accumulation of merit are imagined to be immediate or delayed, it appears to be the case that on a basic level "few ever questioned the doctrine of merit" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 198-9). The consistency with which merit appears as a driving conceptual force within Buddhist discourse(s) and practice(s), then, is no coincidence but rather an expression of just how foundational merit appears to be within Buddhist traditions as they are enacted by historical actors on the ground.

With regard to the broader and perhaps more abstract benefits thought to be attainable through the accrual of merit, the salvation of deceased ancestors, the protection of the realm, the repayment of intangible social debts (especially to one's parents), and the promise of superior rebirths in future lives serve as prime examples (see Lowe 30 and 50-52; Stone, *Right Thoughts* 256).[171] Inextricably related to the benefits, both this-worldly and those that are more abstract and/or soteriological in nature, are the consequences potentially resulting from not accruing a substantial storehouse of merit.[172] Lowe notes, for instance, that failure to settle parental social debts "with the merit gained from sutra copying and other rituals, much like neglect of purity, could bring punishment in this world and the next" (52). Thus, the impetus for Buddhist practitioners to amass a substantial storehouse of merit relies not only upon the promise of benefits within both this lifetime and future rebirths, but simultaneously employs a rhetoric asserting the negative repercussions, also in both this life and in future existences, for failing to do so. Whether one focuses upon the rewards or the consequences associated with the generation (or lack thereof) of merit, there exist many different means by which to accrue merit.[173] Due to spatial constraints, I opt not to delve into any detail here concerning the variety of means, and instead focus below primarily upon patronage and the production of Buddhist material culture as two primary modes of merit generation.

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[171] Lowe notes that dedication ceremonies, for instance, not only increased the merit created through the sponsorship of the production of a Buddhist object, but "were also connected to East Asian notions of virtuous conduct as related to the obligation of repayment of debts," particularly social debts to one's parents (51).

[172] Such punishments are at times imagined within the context of premodern Japan to be enacted by "[t]he same heavenly beings that promis[e] protection from demons," as they "enac[t] regular surveillance and [can] punish sinners at any time" (Lowe 173).

[173] For instance, "Mahāyāna texts … extol the inconceivable merit accruing to those who make and worship Buddhist images" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 73). For additional detail concerning the notion of merit being generated through the manufacturing of Buddhist texts, see: Kieschnick 167, and 168-76; Rambelli's *Buddhist Materiality* 99-100; Schopen's "The Phrase '*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*" 169; and Lowe's *Ritualized Writing* 31 and 32.
Notably, an individual need not necessarily create a Buddhist object themselves, but might rather compensate someone else to do so for them, a matter discussed in more detail below.

Regardless of how merit may have been accrued, "merit created through deliberate actions of one's own could then in turn be transferred to others, most commonly the deceased, an act that itself generated more merit" (Lowe 32). Thus, merit can beget merit, not unlike strong origins narratives leading to perceived legitimacy of particular objects and/or practices, which in turn could attract patrons seeking efficacious fields of merit within which to engage in acts of veneration (including patronage), which then leads to an increase in the power (in various possible forms, including but not limited to social, economic, or cultural) of those that own a given Buddhist object and/or are capable of facilitating certain practices (at times related to Buddhist material culture) that attract devotees.

The notion of merit acts as the conceptual backbone to which the various forms of Buddhist material culture attended to within this thesis are each connected. Indeed, within a monastic context, Kieschnick notes that "Buddhist material culture centered on the monastery, and the monastery depended for its existence on the doctrine of merit" (188-9). Merit, too, serves as a primary linkage undergirding each of the three components of the 'origins-legitimacy-power' loop proposed below as one possible iteration of a functional Theoretical framework containing each of the loaded terms addressed (and refurbished) throughout this chapter. Although the relationship between merit and the origins-legitimacy-power loop is attended to in greater detail within the final section of this chapter, it is worth bringing the reader's attention to the critical role of merit within the Theoretical postulations presented thus far. Fundamentally, the entirety of the Theoretical framework proposed herein hinges upon merit as the conceptual foundation supporting the production, veneration, and/or acquisition of Buddhist material culture.

2.2 'Field of Merit'

Crucial to understanding the influence of the doctrine of merit on practices centering upon Buddhist material culture is the related notion of 'fields of merit.' Within premodern Japanese Buddhist imaginaires, 'fields of merit' appear to serve as loci in which the generation of merit might be accomplished through acts of devotion, notably including patronage. 'Field of merit' refers to a common Buddhist metaphor, wherein "[j]ust as the planting of a seed is later rewarded at harvest, so too are good deeds, such as donating land to monks, rewarded at a later time" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 190). To be more precise, 'field of merit' refers here to a particular, conceptually delimited space (at times literal) within which certain actions are understood to result in the generation of merit for the person(s) enacting the deed(s) and, if applicable, for those to whom the activity or activities have been dedicated.[174] Fields of merit may take a variety of forms, though for the purposes of the Theoretical framework at hand I focus particularly on Buddhist monastic communities of monks and nuns in addition to various forms of Buddhist material culture including icons, relics, physical Buddhist texts, and structures such as convents or monasteries in terms of their function(s) as fields of merit.[175] These fields are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and indeed often operate similarly to nesting dolls insofar as Buddhist objects and, indeed, the *sangha* itself may overlap with, and/or exist physically within,

[174] I lean here somewhat upon Quinter's discussion of the field of merit of Mañjuśrī within *From Outcasts to Emperors*. Quinter describes Mañjuśrī's 'field of merit' (*fukuden* 福田) as operating as follows: "[w]hen practitioners dedicate their good deeds toward such a worthy recipient as Mañjuśrī, they plant their good karmic seeds (causes) in a fertile field that yields a richer harvest (positive effects)" (*From Outcasts to Emperors* 118). My own working definition of 'field of merit' acts as an expansion of Quinter's treatment of the term.

[175] Somewhat similarly, Sharf contends that "relics, images, and their kin function as a physical locus for [a] saint's enduring charisma, apotropaic power, and grace" ("On the Allure of Buddhist Relics" 77-8). Although here Sharf is referring specifically to Buddhist objects associated with particular figures serving as continued presences of the individual in question within this world following the figure's death, I contend that the notion of a 'physical locus' is equally appropriate for use in the context of fields of merit, with relics and images serving as just two possible forms of fields of merit. A field of merit, notably, need not be lacking in the notion of 'presence.' Rather, fields of merit consistently tend to bear a presence of some form, be it the buddha, a deceased eminent master, the physical presence of members of the *sangha* themselves, or another figure.

one another (as in an icon and monastic practitioners both being housed, or 'living,' within a convent).

While Rambelli identifies 'rituals' as being the primary "instances and sites of mediation where worldly things and services are transformed and exchanged with the invisible realm of the buddha," I contend that fields of merit serve more accurately as the chief loci within which "material cash or objects are exchanged for spiritual cash – merit" (*Buddhist Materiality* 263). The mechanics of such exchanges may take many varied forms, but in principle the exchange remains much the same, regardless of how precisely it might occur. Rambelli does identify Buddhist objects as 'commodities' within the context of such exchanges, an approach that I find to be helpful in conceptualizing the multi-directional nature of the procurement of merit through fields of merit (see 263). According to Rambelli, Buddhist objects in their role(s) as commodities "enter in a circuit uniting humans and buddhas as a sort of 'sacred' commodities exchanged with the invisible to generate material and spiritual merits; the acquisition of the latter in turn will generate other offerings and memorializations" (263). Rambelli is thus, in effect, describing a sort of feedback loop wherein the acquisition of merit through acts of patronage or donation will in turn beget future opportunities for patrons to provide material commodities in exchange for yet more merit. The Theoretical framework proposed throughout this chapter operates upon the very same basic principle, though focuses more particularly upon the accrual of material commodities as a means of producing yet more forms of Buddhist material culture. This is discussed in additional detail below.

2.3 'Economy of Merit'

Intimately related to the notion of 'fields of merit' is what I refer to as the 'economy of merit,' a system of exchange occurring within the conceptual space of any given field of merit wherein economic currency or commodities are effectively traded for merit.[176] Patronage and donation serve as the cornerstones of the economy of merit, and indeed, Kieschnick notes that the importance of giving to the monastic community is repeatedly discussed within Buddhist scriptures, a feature of the landscape of Buddhist traditions that explicitly supports the basic premise of patronage (*The Impact of Buddhism* 6).

Although writing in reference to Chinese Buddhism, Kieschnick's suggestion that "it was the sacred duty of the laity to support the monastic community with material donations" remains salient within the context of medieval Japan (*The Impact of Buddhism* 6).[177] Although the term 'sacred' here is an unnecessary theoretical hiccup, the base premise that the laity bore an obligation to support the *sangha*, and that doing so resulted in compensation via "happiness in this world and a better rebirth in the next," underscores the multi-directional nature of the economy of merit (6).[178] Kieschnick additionally notes a perhaps less optimistic side of the

[176] In using the term 'economy of merit,' I am nodding at Kim Gutschow's 1998 dissertation entitled *An Economy of Merit: Being a Buddhist Nun in Zangskar, Northwest India* and her 2005 monograph, *Being A Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas*. Although Gutschow's ethnographic data falls well outside of the geographic and temporal bounds of my own academic interests, her baseline concept of the presence of an economy of merit operating within Buddhist monastic and lay practices retains conceptual relevance here, hence my usage of the phrase.

[177] Within the context of medieval Japan, the priest Chōgen (1121-1206; notably known for his exceptional fundraising abilities) "once stated: 'the temple performs rituals (*kitō*) for its estates (*shōen*), while the estates provide for the temple'" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 205). Rambelli unpacks this in suggesting that "[i]n other words, the duty of peasants is to provide offerings (i.e., wealth) to the buddhas in the temple, whereas the duty of the priests is to protect the harvest" (205). Rambelli identifies this exchange as "an explicit theory of a cycle of sacred economy" (205). Although I predictably object to Rambelli's use of the loaded, incredibly vague term 'sacred' here, what remains relevant is the basic premise undergirding the application of the term 'economy' to the exchange of worldly commodities by laypeople with the *sangha* for rewards of various forms, be they protection of crops or the opportunity to accrue merit. The 'economy of merit' proposed throughout this section of chapter three of this thesis operates in a similar fashion at base.

[178] Kieschnick also makes explicit reference to the "economic implications of relics as magnets for pilgrimage and patronage," a hint at the import of Buddhist material culture in both of the aforementioned devotional activities (*The Impact of Buddhism* 6).

economy of merit in observing that "[w]hatever dark deeds lay in one's past (or the past of an intimate), they could be redeemed by those with the money to pay for it" (192). The economy of merit, then, functions not only on the basis of a codified expectation for laypeople to donate to the *sangha*, but as an effort at absolving one's past (or perhaps future) karmically questionable deeds via an exchange of economic means for merit.[179] Regardless of the impetus underlying the acts of patronage fueling the economy of merit, on a basic level although "[i]n this world, monks [have] little to offer [patrons] in return, … in the other world, through the mechanism of karma and merit, monks [are] able to offer great rewards to generous donors" (190).[180] Both patrons and recipients of patronage thus appear to derive benefit from the exchange of goods and/or currency for merit, although such exchanges do not necessarily function as one-to-one ratios, given the variance in valuations of the 'fertility' of different fields of merit available to donors. The variance in 'exchange rates' of goods or currency to merit is dependent not only upon the relative perceived fertility of a given field of merit, but also upon the value of the donations themselves.[181] Indeed, "[d]onors and monastic thinkers [are] … concerned with determining the relative value of gifts, which they [hold] depen[d] largely on the state of the donor, the recipient

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Jeffrey P. Mass, meanwhile, notes that "when aristocrats made donations to temples and shrines, they were targeting institutions with which they hoped to strike, or deepen, special arrangements" ("Of Hierarchy and Authority at the End of the Kamakura" 24).

[179] Rambelli notes, too, that various forms of Buddhist material culture as a form of commodity serve as "sources of benefits (including kammatic merit but also, and perhaps more frequently, just mundane satisfaction and peace of mind)" (*Buddhist Materiality* 262).

[180] Rambelli, too, notes the import of material donations to monastics (and/or their institutions and/or their Buddhist objects) being understood to generate karmic benefits due to the transfiguration of the donation(s) into merit (see *Buddhist Materiality* 69). That is, donation(s) made to a field of merit, which serves as a sort of intermediary, become something more than worldly currency or everyday goods – they are conceptually transformed into the intangible currency of merit. Rambelli goes so far as to refer to "the transformation of worldly commodities and wealth in general into religious capital that can be invested or deinvested at will" as "a fundamental mechanism of Buddhism" (71).

[181] I conceptualize this 'exchange rate' as something akin to going to a grocery store to buy some milk, wherein a 1-liter and a 2-liter container of precisely the same milk are both being sold for the same price. It would make good sense to purchase the 2-liter container in this scenario, as you would be getting twice the volume of product at the very same price. I imagine the differences in valuation of the fertility between a set of fields of merit to function similarly for lay patrons, who might be inclined to 'shop around' in order to find a field of merit that will give them the best possible value (i.e. the most merit) for their money.

of the gift, and the gift itself" (217). Although these factors are each of significance, I focus here primarily upon fields of merit themselves as a characteristic feature of the exchange rates at work within the economy of merit as a macro Theoretical concern that remains somewhat less contextually-specific than the mental or karmic state of a donor or the value of individual donations.

Returning to the question of varied exchange rates of donations-to-merit, I draw the reader back to Lincoln's 'capital-C' Culture versus 'lowercase-c' culture to underscore one possible strain of logic involved in these differing valuations. Namely, those in positions of significant social, political, and/or economic power, serving as the arbiters of a fundamentally hegemonic and hierarchical system of varied valuations of (material) 'culture,' wield the power to determine to some degree whether various objects of Buddhist material culture come to be perceived as functioning as superior (that is to say, efficacious) fields of merit or not. Similarly to Lincoln's notion of hegemonically dominated values, Lowe suggests that while "[o]n the one hand, religious cultures [are] shared" across geographic regions, on the other hand, such practices as "sutra transcription function[n] to demonstrate and reinforce differences in material resources, literary abilities, and social status" (18). Although Lowe is referring here specifically to premodern Japanese sutra transcription, I maintain that other aspects of Buddhist 'cultures' relating to material culture are shared throughout medieval Japan, each acting simultaneously as binding threads of Buddhist traditions while yet expressing and reaffirming differences in social, economic, and cultural capital among various groups.

Related to this is Rambelli's contention that "in certain moments of Japanese history, religious institutions have used" various doctrines and practices "to assert their economic influence or to develop new religious markets in new sociopolitical and economic situations so

that they could exercise their influence on society" (*Buddhist Materiality* 272-3). Sharpening his point, Rambelli goes on to suggest that "[i]n other words, sacred objects point to an incessant dialogue between religion, economics, representation, and power" (273). While I assert that the term 'sacred objects' ought here to be swapped for 'Buddhist objects' for the purpose of theoretical soundness and clarity, Rambelli's point remains salient and, indeed, accords neatly with Lincoln's perspective concerning 'culture' and the fundamental power imbalances borne within the term as a consequence of the efforts of those who serve as the arbiters of 'capital-C' Culture. Notably, nuns appear only rarely if ever to serve as the elite mediators of 'capital-C' Culture within premodern Japan. I contend, rather, that eminent Buddhist monks and exceptionally prominent lay patrons have typically collectively formed the group that holds control over what is considered 'capital-C' Culture, and they have consequently held hegemonic power over all forms of Buddhist culture that do not fall within this category. Hence, I suggest that the dominant group within Buddhist society has, with relative consistency, suppressed, contained, and devalued the Buddhist material culture produced, and in some cases acquired, by nuns.[182]

Regardless of which individuals or groups happen to be acting at any given moment as the primary gatekeepers over what bears the prestigious (though often implicit) distinction of being considered 'capital-C' Culture, I propose that objects thought to act as particularly legitimate fields of merit (and, by extension, as efficacious loci for the generation of merit) ultimately draw greater degrees of patronage than those perceived to function as lesser fields of

[182] I tentatively posit that this could have been done as a means of ensuring greater control of the economic market of Buddhist merit by devaluing the practices of nuns in a general sense. The understanding of nuns as lesser, in turn, leads to the notion that female monastic practitioners act as a lesser field of merit than their male counterparts, thereby establishing a competitive market of merit in which monks have the upper hand. This is somewhat speculative, but merits further research.

merit. Such 'lesser fields of merit' would be thought of as lacking in legitimacy, as the 'exchange rate' of donation-to-merit is theoretically improved when the soil in which one's karmic seeds are planted is especially fertile.[183] The possible means by which to increase the perceived 'fertility' of the 'soil' are many, including but not limited to: the performance of certain Buddhist practices or ceremonies on auspicious days; the upholding of 'purity' while engaging in Buddhist practices; the dedication of Buddhist objects to beneficiaries other than oneself; the interest in, and ownership and use of, certain objects by the state as arbiters of the 'capital-C' Culture of a given temporal and geographic locale; the possession of Buddhist material culture having miraculous events associated with the object(s) in question; and so on (see Lowe's *Ritualized Writing* 50, 45, and 55; Rambelli's *Buddhist Materiality* 108; and Groner's "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 130).[184] I refer to these means as 'merit modifiers,' which may take a variety of forms while yet sharing the consistent thread of being understood to increase in some fashion the merit generated through a given action, such as sponsoring the creation of a Buddhist object.

The 'exchange rate' from donation or pious act to merit is thus not necessarily consistent, functioning instead on a sliding scale contextually dependent in part upon the perceived legitimacy of a given institution, Buddhist object, specific location, monastic practitioner, and/or devotional practice.[185] This 'legitimacy' is developed through rhetorical strategies often

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[183] See Quinter's discussion of Mañjuśrī's field of merit in *From Outcasts to Emperors* for more detail concerning notions of the 'fertility' of the soil within a given 'field of merit' effecting the 'karmic seeds' planted therein (see especially 90 and 118).

[184] Dedication ceremonies (*kūyo* 供養), for instance, affect "the outcome of [a] ritual by altering the amount of merit gained by the sponsor. Just like upholding purity, dedication ceremonies serv[e] to augment the production of merit" (Lowe 50).
With regard to 'purity,' meanwhile, Lowe explicitly suggests that "while transcribing a sutra was meritorious in and of itself, pure transcription with dedications augmented the merit produced through sutra copying" (55).

[185] In other words, the degree of efficacy ascribed to, or perceived to inhere within, a given field of merit exists not as a static notion but is rather in flux. This flux is determined by several factors, including: the origins narratives linked to objects serving as fields of merit; the political and cultural circumstances at work within a particular

involving efforts at producing and then variously reiterating, reworking, and/or reasserting 'origins' narratives as a means of averring the legitimacy of the institution, object, practitioner, and/or practice in question. In noting this, I am pointing to what I contend is a *competitive* market within the economy of merit, such that the rhetorical strategies tied to Buddhist objects discussed above accord with Dauber's suggestion that "[t]he success of an object in achieving its goal depends not simply on its appeal, taken in isolation, but on its appeal relative to the alternatives with which the audience is faced" (567).[186] Within the economy of merit, the 'object' is a form of Buddhist material culture, and the relative alternatives are other means of generating merit (including other Buddhist objects). According to Dauber, the process of weighing alternatives engaged in by potential consumers of (Buddhist) objects "implies that objects enter into a series of comparisons, performed by audience members, with other objects, arguments, or ideologies making claims on the same acts" (567). Within such a system of comparative analysis, I contend that the Buddhist material culture acquired and/or produced by nuns often land short of those Buddhist objects acquired and/or produced by monks. This may occur as a consequence of numerous, albeit interrelated, factors beginning with the carefully crafted hegemonic baseline established and maintained by monks and prominent laymen. I suggest that the majority of these interrelated factors, extending in the case of nuns from a baseline of hegemony, relate to the perceived 'legitimacy' of a given object, it's owner(s), and/or the location in which it resides. Thus, Buddhist material culture bearing numerous layers of legitimating strategies (such as

temporal and geographic locale; the proximity and origins claims of competing fields of merit; the sex and/or gender, ordination status, and sectarian affiliation(s) of the monastic practitioners acting as the arbiters of a given field of merit; and so on. I focus here on origins narratives simply as a basic beginning point in tracing the perceived legitimacy, and thus efficacy, of a given field of merit as a jumping-off point for approaching Buddhist material culture as an expression of the broader socio-economic conditions of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns.

[186] Quinter, too, comments on the competitive nature of efforts at securing support from the laity, noting that major temples often compete for elite patronage and the resources that accompany such patronage (see *From Outcasts to Emperors* 148).

strong 'origins' discourses) cultivated carefully by the keeper(s) of the object(s) in question is, I suggest, more likely to draw economic support in the form of patronage and donation within a competitive market than those objects lacking in perceived legitimacy as efficacious fields of merit.

2.4 Patronage

Patronage functions as a keystone of the economy of merit, as devotees provide payment of some form in exchange for professional services provided by monastics and/or craftspersons, or, at times, explicitly for merit, as in donations made directly to fields of merit (such as icons, relics, physical Buddhist texts, and so on).[187] According to Lowe, the *Lotus Sutra*, for example, suggests that "having someone else write" a copy of the scripture "is sufficient to produce an inconceivable amount of merit, a notion that other sutras mention as well" (32). Thus, sponsorship of the reproduction of texts, at least, is explicitly codified within, and sanctioned by, Buddhist texts. This, of course, serves as one possible form of patronage, as a patron might sponsor the production of an image or the copying of a text in their name (or in the name(s) of others, such as their deceased family members) in order to generate merit. In addition, the potential of sponsorship-via-patronage rather neatly positions monastics to run what could in effect be a lucrative business of specialized services, such as scripture copying and/or the creation and ceremonial enlivening of Buddhist images and icons. Beyond just the sponsoring of

[187] It is worth noting, though, that the generation of merit through patronage (or other means) is not necessarily the only available option for reaching salvation of some form, at least within the context of medieval Japan. Quinter notes, for instance, that Eison and the Saidaiji order of Shingon-Ritsu monastics "promoted a plurality of practices for attaining salvation in the context of Mañjuśrī faith: constructing, ritually empowering, and venerating Mañjuśrī images; chanting and hearing Mañjuśrī's name; making charitable offerings; receiving the precepts; repenting and eliminating transgressions; awakening the bodhi-mind; and engaging in contemplative practices" (*From Outcasts to Emperors* 122). While some of these practices require the intervention of a monastic practitioner as a sort of Buddhist specialist, others are certainly practicable for a layperson without requiring patronage to a monastic practitioner or organization.

the creation of Buddhist objects or particular devotional practices surrounding them, following the completion of "a pious act such as commissioning a statue or copying a text, it was *de rigueur* to hold a dedication ceremony (*kūyo* 供養), where the merit would be directed to beneficiaries" (45).[188] This ceremony not only acts as a 'merit modifier' compounding the merit generated by the patron, but it also serves as an additional impetus toward economically engaging with the monastic community as the arbiters of such specialized practices as dedication ceremonies.

Patronage not only allows devotees the opportunity to generate merit, but additionally results in the accumulation of wealth for those monastics receiving donations or other acts of tangible support from the lay community. Considerable economic means are required to produce and maintain many of the forms of Buddhist material culture discussed throughout this chapter, meaning that some degree of wealth is required in order to exist (at least competitively) from the outset within the economy of merit.[189] Lowe attends to the necessity of economic capital for large-scale sutra copying, noting that a great deal of wealth and institutional capabilities are required to produce significant volumes of copied scriptures (and thus to generate substantial sums of merit for patrons and copyists alike) (see 116).[190] Without access to significant

[188] Notably, sponsoring the production of Buddhist material culture is certainly not the only means by which laypeople can economically engage with the *sangha*. Rambelli observes, for instance, that in medieval Japan Buddhist texts were typically read aloud, and such "[r]eading was often not a public and free (also in economic terms) activity" (*Buddhist Materiality* 94). Adding on to the impetus to visit Buddhist temples to participate as an audience member in the reading of Buddhist scriptures was the limited access, even for literate individuals, to Buddhist texts (see 94). Perhaps the degree of control over the ownership, accessibility, and production of Buddhist material culture held by the (male) monastic community within medieval Japan serves as a means of retaining a handle on the economy of merit, at least to some degree. This is somewhat speculative, and perhaps merits further research and consideration.

[189] It is worth noting here for the possibly skeptical reader that "although individual monks were not supposed to amass *personal* wealth, the *corporate* wealth of the monastic community was not restricted" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 6). The ability of monastic organizations to amass significant wealth renders the 'economy of merit' all the more significant when considering the very tangible on-the-ground implications of patronage.

[190] Lowe discusses the household scriptorium of Prince Nagaya (grandson of Emperor Tenmu and leading early eighth century political figure) in some detail, repeatedly drawing the attention of the reader back to Nagaya's economic resources and significant social connections (see especially 119, 120, and 122). Lowe goes so far as to

economic resources, scribes could not be hired, fine materials could not be purchased, and even example copies of the Buddhist text(s) intended to be copied could not be acquired (see 116). Producing any form of Buddhist material culture requires substantial disposable economic (and possibly social) resources, which many convents and nuns appear to have lacked in medieval Japan. Ultimately, lacking substantial economic means from the outset for any reason renders entering into the loop of origins-legitimacy-power extremely challenging at best, and perhaps impossible at worst. This is discussed in greater detail within the final section of this chapter.

2.5 'Origins'

I have, up to this point, thrown the terms 'origins' and 'legitimacy' around somewhat haphazardly. Given the import of these loaded terms to the basic structure of the Theoretical framework proposed below, I find it necessary to take a moment to outline the general contours of the operational meaning(s) underlying my usage of 'origins' and 'legitimacy' within this thesis. I attend first to 'origin(s),' as it serves here as the conceptual basis for the development, and consequent support, of perceptions of legitimacy tied to particular Buddhist objects, groups, and/or practices.

Not unlike the term 'Buddhist material culture' attended to earlier in this chapter, it is in part the generally unbounded, and thus conceptually vague and expansive, usages of the term 'origin' found within English language Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies publications alike

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explicitly note that "it was Nagaya's wealth and institutional capabilities … that enabled him to employ the numbers of administrators and laborers needed to carry out large-scale projects" in sutra copying effectively (120). Further, "Nagaya used his political privilege to ensure that he employed the most skilled workers in the land," an effort that, I add, may have increased the perceived legitimacy of the copied texts (120). Ultimately, without access to significant economic and social resources, this sort of substantial undertaking in the production of Buddhist material culture would be impossible. It is thus worthwhile to consider the potential degree of wealth and social connections required to produce *any* Buddhist material culture, not limited to large-scale sutra copying.

with which I take issue.[191] A theoretical concern more particular to 'origin,' though, may be found within the underlying implication of some degree of absolutism dwelling within origins claims. As Tomoko Masuzawa notes, "[i]f origin is truly absolute, it eradicates any possibility of a precedent, preexisting condition or prototype … that might in any way account for later developments" ("Origin" 209). Any assumption of absolutism, be it implicit or explicit, linked to usage(s) of the term 'origin' lift the phenomenon being described out of the realm of active human doings occurring within progressive time, deflecting the focus of the audience away from the narrator(s) of the claim(s) being made and rendering the item(s) under scrutiny fundamentally inaccessible to critical academic study. As Russell T. McCutcheon observes, "nostalgia," a feeling with which notions of 'origins' is intimately connected, "is not about the past, a long-gone time of origins, when our ancestors walked the earth … but in fact it is all about the present, a present judged dissatisfying only by reference to its inhabitant's ideas of what the past may have been like – a past that, like the standards against which a life is judged, lives nowhere but in our imaginations, here and now, a product of our criteria for what counts as worth living and worth remembering and what's worth forgetting about" ("Introduction: Midnight in the Study of Origins" 7).[192] McCutcheon advocates for seeing "history and origins tales as being all about the tale-teller's situation" (8). Focusing on the context-dependent, very

[191] Similar grievances may be noted with the thematically related term 'myth.' While I am inclined to attend to 'myth' in a fashion akin to McCutcheon and Lincoln as a means of academically rehabilitating the term, I woefully lack the space required to do so here (see especially McCutcheon's "Myth" 190, 191-2, 192-3, 199, 200, and 204; Lincoln's *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* ix, 147, and 149). Suffice it to say that 'myth' is a term laden with implicit judgements concerning the historical veracity (or rather, the lack thereof) of particular narratives. While 'myth' appears with some frequency within English language Buddhist Studies publications, I find 'origin' to be a more frequent offender. As such, I opt here to contend only with 'origin' within the confines of the limited pages of this thesis.

[192] Something of a bridge between Masuzawa's and McCutcheon's observations concerning 'origins,' Willi Braun identifies two modes of 'origin,' namely "primordial absolute terms" versus "ongoing beginnings" ("Religion" 11). I consciously employ 'origin' more along the lines of 'ongoing beginnings,' though in the context of medieval Japanese Buddhist traditions, those 'beginnings' often are elaborately traced back to the Buddha, which some may consider a sort of 'primordial absolute.'

human action of developing and presenting a narrative in service of a goal of some sort affords scholars an opportunity, I suggest, to reclaim 'origin' as a technical term to be used as a tool for reconsidering rhetorical strategies at work within a variety of contexts, including medieval Japanese Buddhist efforts at establishing or reinforcing the perceived legitimacy of any number of practices, objects, and/or groups. To be rather more precise, I appeal to McCutcheon's suggestion that "claims of origination are a form of speech or writing and, as such, they are acts in the present for social effect in that present situation's imagined future" ("Afterword: Origins Today" 77). In short, "[o]rigins are therefore not about the past" (77).[193] On the basis of McCutcheon's approach to 'origins' claims being concerned with the present, within the context of the Theoretical framework proposed throughout this chapter, the term 'origin' refers to a claim made by a historical actor or actors to a past that is painted as being prestigious and/or desirable in an often nostalgic fashion, such that the claim may be employed as part of a rhetorical narrative strategy grounded in the present context of the narrator(s) for aims defined implicitly or explicitly by the person(s) making the claim to begin with.[194] I suggest that carefully curated and deployed origins narratives act as key strategies in the establishment of a strong rhetoric of legitimacy within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhist traditions, notably including practices surrounding Buddhist material culture. Strong origins claims can serve to bolster the perceived legitimacy, and by extension, efficacy of a given field of merit,

[193] I contend that uncritical employment of the term 'origin,' then, obscures not only the 'teller of the tale,' but additionally the rhetorical strategies at work, the context such claims are being made within, and even the theses of those academics writing about phenomena being labeled as bearing some claim to a (fundamentally untouchable) 'origin.'

[194] It is perhaps relevant to make note of McCutcheon's contentions concerning the reasons that a claim of 'origins' might succeed in persuading an audience. McCutcheon argues that "an origins narrative is effective because, in keeping the listener's eye on the object of the story … and not on the subject telling the tale …, it erases these choices, overlooks the effort to create a certain set of relationships, thereby eliminating all evidence that it could have been otherwise and, instead, *portraying some result as not being a result at all*, but, rather, as necessary, as inevitable, as pre-existent, as static, as natural, and thus as always and already significant, regardless of our role in the whole exercise" ("Afterword: Origins Today" 86-7).

which in turn results potentially in a differentiation of the imagined 'exchange rate' of currency-to-merit within the field of merit in question. Perceived legitimacy and efficacy are thus involved in the economy of merit as a means of influencing and/or determining the relative value of one's actions and/or donations as they are carried out within, or directed toward, a particular field of merit. The greater the perceived legitimacy, the greater the perceived efficacy, and, in turn, the better the perceived exchange rate. That is, presumed legitimacy begets efficacy in the transformation of donations to merit for the donor(s). Thus, I propose that effective origins claims contain the potential to bear significant fruit in the form of power (be it economic, social, cultural, and so on).

Perhaps the most substantial origin that a group, individual, practice, or object can be narratively linked back to within a Buddhist context is Gautama Buddha himself as the penultimate originator of the *dharma*. In terms of the rhetorical aims borne by origins claims, it is perhaps interesting to note that "[d]escriptions of the Buddha's death say that before he died, the Buddha himself announced that worshipping his relics would bring merit to the devotee" (Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism* 30). Here, then, we have a multi-layered origins narrative, wherein the Buddha is presented as the source of the practice of venerating his own relics, which would in turn beget many origins narratives claiming that certain objects were indeed legitimate relics of the Buddha that ought to be venerated as per the Buddha's own alleged recommendation to do so. This cycle of logic, although rather like an ouroboros, ensures a continual reinforcing of the practice of venerating relics of the Buddha, legitimized simultaneously by the words of the Buddha and by the more tangible physical linkage afforded to devotees through relics as corporeal remains serving as a locus of the Buddha's literal presence.[195] This doubling up of

[195] Amid origins narratives that can at times become complex, it remains relevant to continue to consider the materiality of the object(s) in question. Indeed, Kieschnick suggests that "even in the case of relics of the Buddha,

perceived legitimacy via tandem origins claims to the Buddha himself as the presumed originator of Buddhist teachings offers but one angle from which to observe not only origins claims in general terms, but the significance and intensity of claims to the origin of the Buddha specifically.[196] Notably, though, legitimating claims to origins are not limited to the Buddha, but rather extend to other buddhas (such as Maitreya or Amida), bodhisattvas, and even eminent monks.[197]

2.6 'Legitimacy'

While rhetorics of legitimacy may be fashioned into a variety of iterations, I contend that at base within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhist practices the majority of these rhetorics involve an effort to link explicitly (or, in some instances, implicitly) to an origins narrative relevant to the object(s), practice(s), and/or group(s) around whom the claim(s) are being made. The development of rhetorics of legitimacy, facilitated in part by linkages to origins narratives, is an active process in constant motion. As with the approach to 'origin' endorsed above, I view the production of legitimating strategies to be a dynamic process grounded in the context, and relating to the interests, of the 'teller of the tale.'

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the focus is usually on the objects themselves" as a physical locus available in the present for the devotee (*The Impact of Buddhism* 49). Retaining some degree of acknowledgement of the physical reality of the objects discussed throughout this thesis yet remains an important task amid the sea of narrative and theory found within this chapter.

[196] We might observe an additional hint at the significance of the Buddha as a sort of penultimate 'origin,' one that persists in claims to legitimacy within the context of medieval Japan, in Kieschnick's note that laypeople were explicitly encouraged to make offerings to the Buddha, even though he is understood to have passed on into Nirvana (*The Impact of Buddhism* 7). Such offerings might be made to relics of the Buddha, although an icon or image may also serve as the locus of patronage (or, in other terms, the field of merit).

[197] In the context of China, Kieschnick notes that "while relics of the Buddha never lost their special cachet, they were supplemented by the relics of eminent Chinese monks" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 34). The same supplementation occurred in Japan, with Indian, Chinese, *and* Japanese eminent monks being venerated as fields of merit in various forms including relics and icons.

Possible legitimating strategies within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhist practices include buddha images being ascribed supernormal powers, "issuing messages through alterations in their own materiality such as changing color, emitting light, and sweating" (Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality* 83). Such supernormal powers are at times understood to inhere within an object as a consequence of special materials being selected for buddha images, such as trees "endowed with some spiritual feature marking [them] the residence of a supernatural entity" (83-4). While the secret transmission of texts might serve as a means of indicating the receiver's particular worthiness in terms of their progress towards enlightenment, the acquisition of certain Buddhist texts can endow "the owner with symbolic capital as a disciple of a certain master, as an initiate to a certain tradition, and in some cases, even as an enlightened buddha" (95). Related to this, too, are tales detailing wondrous occurrences as a result of transcribing sutras, including: texts emitting radiant light; containers expanding to fit scriptures; sutras becoming fireproof; illnesses being cured; and providing salvation to individuals suffering in the underworld (Lowe 33). While transcription might result in various miraculous occurrences, exceptional pre-existing karmic merit can result in the spontaneous multiplication of relics, an event that might serve as 'proof' of the karmic attainments of an individual or group.[198]

[198] Consider, for instance, the convent Hokkeji's amassing of a considerable number of relics during its medieval revival. In Eison's *Hokkeji shari engi* 法華寺舎利縁起 ("Account of the Relics at Hokkeji"), the initial relic of Hokkeji was said to have belonged to the nun Kūnyo, who tested the authenticity of the relic by striking it five times, resulting in it shattering "into small particles with light emanating from each grain" (Groner, "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 127). Following this, Kūnyo reputedly believed fervently in the relic. Later, the *Hokkeji shari engi* discusses the desire to obtain a relic expressed by a woman residing at Hokkeji who had taken the eight lay precepts (see 130). The woman's daughter gifted her a fragment of a relic, which was said to have greatly increased in size and then split in two, at which point she attempted to give the additional relic to her son, although the relic returned to the woman of its own accord. This spontaneous relocation of the relic is explained in the text as a matter of the son's "lack of karmic merit," rendering him unable to keep the relic (130). This, alongside the gradual increase in the number of *shari* present at Hokkeji, implicitly suggests that the nuns of Hokkeji must have collectively possessed a great deal of merit, as by Eison's count the convent's relics numbered in the thousands by the mid-thirteenth century (see 131). Notable here is Barbara Ambros' suggestion that "the relics legitimized the nuns as members of the Buddhist lineage traceable to Sakyamuni Buddha himself" (83). Lori Meeks offers a similar notion, stating that "[t]o possess Buddha relics was to bear the mark of authenticity" (*Hokkeji* 143). She later explicitly notes that medieval discourses on kingship bore the "idea that Buddha relics function as markers of

Meanwhile, monastics might make efforts at connecting themselves with earlier eminent masters (sometimes through signed transmission documents), such as Eison 叡尊(or Eizon; 1201-90) "trying to implicitly associate himself with Gyōki" in order to "legitimize his activities," as Gyōki was posthumously imagined to be a manifestation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors* 55, 153).[199] Quinter generally notes that "[d]ocuments purporting to record direct and exclusive master-to-disciple transmissions often represented after-the-fact legitimizations of particular lineages" (159).[200] A further means of asserting the eminent origins of a given object or practice might be accomplished through the production of *engi* (translated by Quinter as 'origin account'), as with Eison and the Saidaiji order producing the 1267 *Hannyaji Monju engi*.[201] According to Quinter, the *Hannyaji Monju engi* "makes a point of noting that the temple was founded by Emperor Shōmu and is a legacy also of the famed Shingon master Kangen (観賢) (854-925)," claims that were read aloud from the *engi* to audiences as a means of reconstructing and publicly declaring the origins of the temple and attracting patrons (90). In a less tangible yet still significant effort at making claims to origins, an individual or group might appeal to 'dream-visions' or 'dream signs' associated with buddhas, bodhisattvas, or eminent

legitimacy," which I suspect may have carried into contexts broader than that of kingship, such as monastic discourses (143).

[199] In other cases, monastics appear to have made efforts at linking themselves, their institutions, their objects, and/or certain structures or locations with prominent historical figures (often posthumously imagined to have been manifestations of a given buddha or bodhisattva), such as the Hokkeji nuns linking the eleven-faced sandalwood Kannon statue, the convent's bathhouse, and "three silk paintings of Amida attended by Kannon, Seishi, and a divine youth, dating to the late Heian or Kamakura period and kept at Hokkeji" to Queen-Consort Kōmyō, who was in turn imagined to have been an embodiment of the bodhisattva Kannon (Stone, *Right Thoughts* 152; see also Meeks, *Hokkeji* 43-7, 263).

[200] Notably, too, the 'origins' of eminent masters themselves are also frequently (re)asserted, as in tales of the anomalous conception of exceptional figures. Groner suggests, for instance, that "[t]he biographies of many of Japan's most eminent monks begin with a story of the boy's miraculous conception, often accompanied with special signs from Kannon or other members of the Buddhist pantheon" (*Ryōgen and Mount Hiei* 45).

[201] Stone, too, notes that "cultic centers drew pilgrims by producing and disseminating *engi*, tales of divine origins of sacred sites, the numinous events accompanying their founding, and the benefits, in this world and the next, to be gained from visiting them and making offerings" (*Right Thoughts* 87).

masters, the invocation of which Quinter views as being, for instance, "another significant part of the legitimizing strategies that Shinkū, Eison, and their fellow Saidaiji monks employed" (147*).* Quinter more specifically observes that Shinkū used "dream-visions of Mañjuśrī as part of the strategy of legitimization" for his exoteric-esoteric lineage and his place within it" (151).[202]

The act of patronage as it might be related to the production and/or veneration of Buddhist material culture, too, potentially fulfills a legitimating function, as in "[t]he ritual of sutra transcription and canon copying adopted by later royals" that was first "initiated by [emperor] Tenmu even before the Nara period" (Lowe 117). According to Lowe, royal sutra copying "functioned as a strategy of symbolic legitimation both within and without the Buddhist sphere" (117).

As Kieschnick notes, it seems that "[m]ore than simply an opportunity to worship relics, devotees wanted to possess them, both for the power they contained and for the prestige possession brought" (37). The same might be said of any form of Buddhist material culture, for possession of these objects, particularly those bearing strong and convincing origins narratives, afforded the owner varying degrees of social cachet, and in turn, the perception of increased legitimacy as either a Buddhist layperson or monastic. When ownership is not possible, however, patronage functions as a close second and affords individuals the opportunity to increase the volume of merit held within their karmic storehouses.[203] Clearly, any number of a variety of origin claims might be made in a bid at developing a convincing rhetoric of legitimacy. I contend

[202] Quinter generally emphasizes the "great importance of dream-visions as a rhetorical legitimizing strategy" throughout *From Outcasts to Emperors* (175).

[203] With regard to relics, for instance, Kieschnick notes that such objects "were useful not only for the revenue a monastery received from pilgrimage and the donations of prominent patrons, but also for the general sense of pride and self-worth that possession of important relics conferred on a monastery, the monks who lived there, and the laypeople who supported it" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 44). In other words, not only do relics draw revenue in the form of patronage, but so too do they lend a 'sense of pride and self-worth,' which I contend might be gainfully reworded as 'perceived legitimacy.'

that the majority of successful strategies of legitimation involve a complex layering up of origins claims, meaning that numerous combinations of claims might be simultaneously made in order to support the efficacy of any given practice, object, location, group, and so on.

3. Godelier's 'Power-Sacrality-Origins' Framework (reworked)

In discussing the means by which an item, group, or practice comes to be deemed 'sacred,' Godelier suggests the following: "the sacred always has to do with power, insofar as the *sacred is a certain kind of relationship with the origin*, and insofar as the origin of individuals and of groups has a bearing on the *places* they occupy in a social and cosmic order" (169). Considering the primary thrust of this chapter to redress the uncritical and theoretically fraught employment of several loaded terms, I expressly modify Godelier's model by replacing the vague term 'sacred' with 'legitimacy' and 'efficacy,' as this terminology is better suited to the context of Buddhist traditions.

Prior to expanding upon my employment of a revised iteration of Godelier's framework, in light of the focus of the present chapter on rehabilitating theoretically loaded terms through the provision of working definitions, I find it necessary to first address my conscious expunction of the term 'sacred.'[204] Notably, the binary model of the 'sacred' and the 'profane' is tightly connected to, and indeed subsumed within, the theoretically fraught conceptual complex denoted by the equally ubiquitous and loaded terms 'religious' and 'secular.' While I identify these binaries as being subsumed within 'religion,' it is accurately noted by Willi Braun that "in the

[204] This section (concerning the term 'sacred') of chapter three of this thesis shares thematic similarities with a paper discussing Religious Studies method and theory within the context of scholarship concerning Chinese literary studies that I composed for a graduate course at McMaster University. Although the topic here differs somewhat, and is related to different goals, my points regarding the dualistic nature of the sacred//profane and religious//secular binaries remain salient within the present context. This has caused an overlap, for which I have cited my earlier course paper below.

history of theorizing 'religion' the term has tended to fidget nervously in its own opaqueness and that it therefore has not infrequently transvested itself to play peek-a-boo behind substitute terms such as 'the holy' … or 'the sacred'" ("Religion" 5). That is to say, 'religion' is itself sometimes subsumed within the 'sacred,' making these classifications even more flexible and vast than may even initially be assumed.[205] In both cases, the dualistic thinking borne within these interdependent conceptual conglomerates in the form of the "binary logic of A/not-A may in effect continue its force in marking religion off from non-religion" (7).[206]

Quinter has lucidly expressed the trouble with dualistic models within the context of oppositional binaries proposed in various iterations of models of 'New' and 'Old' Kamakura Buddhism, wherein such binary oppositions risk "obscuring the variety of identities and models for practice within those categories" (*From Outcasts to Emperors* 30).[207] I point here to Quinter's crucial use of the term 'obscure,' for this is the crux upon which rests my objections to the many implicit and explicit binaries present within both commonsense and scholarly constructions of the 'sacred.' This obscuring function may take many forms, though here I contend that the primary form may be expressed most neatly as a metaphorical pedestal, elevated and inaccessible, though perhaps yet observable from a distance. In this sense, terms like 'sacred,' 'religious,' or 'origin' tacitly remove the subject from the realm of human doings,

[205] Veikko Anttonen suggests, however, that "[t]he criticism of phenomenological theor[ies of the 'sacred'] … ha[ve] resulted in a cutting of the age-old bond between the categories of 'sacred' and 'religion'" (274). In line with Braun's thinking noted above, I strongly oppose Anttonen's contention, finding the so-called 'age-old bond' between the 'sacred' and 'religion' to be alive and well in both historical objects of study and in the modern scholarship produced about such objects.
[206] The history of such binaries is long within the academic study of religion, and is expressed within the work of classical theorists such as Durkheim, whose conception of one such binary is described by Anttonen as being such that "the sacred exists only in contrast to things in the profane sphere of social life" (275).
[207] The 'new' versus 'old' Kamakura Buddhism model is discussed in greater detail through chapter two of this thesis.

placing the object of study upon an imagined pedestal that renders the scholar incapable of studying, or for that matter even accessing, whatever it is that has been elevated.[208]

As these binaries continue to be used, tautologically defining each concept and term against its opposite in an endless back and forth, this elevation beyond academic or even practical usage begins to take on a degree of inevitability, and of acceptance.[209] It is this very feature of such loaded concepts, which due to their tautological nature become virtually devoid of epistemological meaning, that I suggest requires the attention of scholars. That is, the difficulties involved in the usage of terms existing within implied or explicit binaries such as 'religious' or 'sacred' may productively be mitigated through the application of theoretical models, if not wholesale abandonment of the terms. In the case of sacred//profane, I contend that within the bounds of the Theoretical framework proposed throughout this chapter, simply abandoning the binary model in its entirety serves as the most efficient and effective solution to these troubles, although as with 'religion' these terms do not appear to be likely to vacate the academic vernacular any time in the near future.[210]

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[208] Such elevated things may include physical objects, practices, texts, narratives, and so forth. Lincoln has made a similar observation regarding 'religion,' as he identifies the function of 'religion' as investing "specific human preferences with transcendent status by misrepresenting them as revealed truths, primordial traditions, divine commandments and so forth" ("Culture" 416). He goes on to suggest that "[i]n this way, ['religion'] insulates them against most forms of debate and critique, assisting their transmission from one generation to another as part of a sacred cannon" (416). Although I do not like Lincoln's use of the term 'sacred' here (see below for more detail concerning my dislike of the term 'sacred'), the insulating feature of the term 'religion' is akin to my own notion of a metaphorical pedestal. In either conception of the matter, 'religion' and by extension the 'sacred' is rendered rather inaccessible, and thus academically useless as a classificatory and/or conceptual term.

[209] It is possible that this acceptance stems from the history of the academic use of these terms and concepts by theorists still largely lauded as being great scholars, such as Durkheim and Eliade and their incredibly vague, yet persistently influential definitions of what constitutes the 'sacred' and the 'profane' (see Durkheim 105 and Eliade 275).

[210] Within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhist practices more specifically, it is worth additionally noting that terms such as 'religion' and 'sacred' are fundamentally modern, incidentally western constructions that are at base anachronistic when applied uncritically to a temporal and geographic location well outside of the bounds of the context in which the terms were first developed and employed. Although I regrettably lack the space to attend to this issue in further detail here, I point the curious reader to Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (2005, see especially chapters three and four)

For the sake of clarity and theoretical soundness, I refer below to the proposed refurbished iteration of Godelier's model as the origins-legitimacy-power framework or loop.[211] This modified version of Godelier's framework of power-sacrality-origins (or power-sacred-origins) offers a productive means of examining the critical process of acquiring perceived legitimacy or efficacy, a quality that I suggest is intimately entwined with both various forms of power and claims to origins discourses. I contend that within this model there are varying degrees of legitimacy that can be claimed, and that legitimacy and efficacy are here understood to operate upon a sort of sliding scale, determined primarily by the strength (and, notably, the reception) of the claim(s) made by various individuals and/or groups to an 'origin' or 'origins.'[212]

Nuns' lesser claims to perceived legitimacy, which could be illustrated by examining nuns and Buddhist material culture though the lens of the origins-legitimacy-power framework, has an additional and very specific negative effect, with which I am particularly concerned. Nuns have at times been apprehended as lesser fields of merit as a consequence of their problematic claims to origins, instilled at the start through the narrative(s) of the very inception of the first

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and to James Edward Ketelaar's *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (1990, see chapter four) for lucid and thorough discussions of the inception and early usages of these terms.

[211] Notably, although the linear presentation of the three terms that comprise the title of the Theoretical framework proposed below may suggest that a consecutive progression from origins claims to perceived legitimacy to power is part and parcel of the development of power and the acquisition of economic resources within the context of medieval Japanese Buddhist practices, I make no such claim. Rather, I propose that the relationship(s) between origins claims, perceived legitimacy (and by extension efficacy), and power be viewed as a cyclical process (best visualized as a loop or wheel), though not one that is self-perpetuating. I contend instead that the origins-legitimacy-power framework be understood as functioning like a (*dharma*) wheel that must be actively turned by those making and perpetuating the claims to each of the constituent elements identified in the title of the model. That is, the cycle must be entered and maintained through effort on the part of the claimants and/or the supporters of the claim(s), though I allow that the continuation of the cycle is likely to require increasingly less explicit effort once a series of strong and socially well accepted precedents for origins claims, legitimacy, and power in various forms has been established and/or acquired by the individual(s) or group(s) operating within the loop.

[212] I contend further that within the context of most Buddhist traditions, the Buddha acts as the ultimate 'origin.' Within the bounds of my adaptation of Godelier's power-sacrality-origins model, claims that align closely with the Buddha in some manner are often deemed to possess a higher degree of legitimacy and efficacy, and thus power, resulting in a greater amount of social power being attached to the object, group, or practice about which the claim(s) are being made.

Buddhist nuns' order.[213] This results in monastic women having further difficulty in securing social power and influence, in part because their claim to legitimacy is rendered lesser in the eyes of their potential patrons than that of monks. There are numerous consequences resulting from these lesser claims to legitimacy and efficacy, particularly the potential for difficulties in acquiring social power and/or material and economic resources.[214] It must be further noted that these two consequences are tightly interrelated and should not be thought of as detachable issues. Indeed, the ability to wield social power or influence is both a requirement for and simultaneously dependent on the attainment of material and economic resources. In this context a loop involving Buddhist material culture is identifiable, in which the possession of Buddhist material culture understood to have strong claims to legitimacy and/or efficacy as fields of merit via persuasive origins narrative(s) results in the ability to attract patronage and economic resources. Thus, a cycle legitimated through Buddhist material culture (as fields of merit), acting

[213] The core of the narrative presents Siddhartha Gautama's "own aunt and foster mother, Mahaprajapati Gautami," approaching the Buddha to ask that he allow the formation of a female monastic community (*sangha*), for a male *sangha* had already been established (Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism* 3rd ed. 63). Mahaprajapati requests permission to form a nuns' order thrice, and thrice she is denied, with the Buddha telling his aunt not to "long for the initiation of women into the order or for their ordination as nuns" (64). Seeing that her request will not be met, Mahaprajapati speaks with the Buddha's closest attendant, Ananda, who agrees to approach the Buddha on behalf of the women to ask for permission to form a female *sangha* (63). In the same three-fold pattern, Ananda asks thrice, though is denied only twice. During the second denial, the Buddha again suggests that Mahaprajapati "should not long for the initiation of women into the order or for their ordination as nuns" (65). He adds that doing so would be akin to disease falling "upon a ripe field of grain and [making] it turn to chaff" and that establishing a nuns' order "would be a great defilement to the teaching of the Buddha" (65). Upon the third request by Ananda the Buddha concedes, although he only does so after considering the caveat that the *dharma* will only abide half the length of time they otherwise would have (63, 66). The narrative is explicit in outlining this consequence, and indeed, *bikunis* have largely continued to be held responsible throughout Buddhist history for the shortening of the *dharma*. It is important to note that the Buddha only "relented when his close attendant Ananda intervened," and furthermore that "the nuns agreed to eight additional rules that subordinated their community to the community of monks" (Trainor, *Buddhism* 39). Thus, a clear pattern of the subordination and devaluation of nuns has been crafted through the presentation of this narrative, such that this tale would be frequently used in the justification of the marginal position of nuns within the Buddhist monastic community.

[214] Cogan notes, for instance, that "by virtue of their sex, nuns could not lead prestigious monasteries and come to the attention of wealthy patrons," at least within the context of the institutional and textual misogyny perpetuated by monks and laypersons in late medieval Japan (155). This institutional and textual misogyny occurred for Japanese nuns throughout the medieval period, and had a significant hand in the difficulty that nuns experienced in developing convincing origins narratives in order to craft a perception of legitimacy and consequently draw in patrons in order to develop various forms of power.

as variably legitimate and efficacious fields of merit, is perpetuated by monastics vying for patronage. Within this cycle, a stream of economic resources is exchanged by patrons for merit, thereby allowing the individual or group in possession of the object(s) to produce or acquire additional items of Buddhist material culture. The accrual of additional forms of Buddhist material culture then results in additional origins claims. In the event that these claims are effective, the object(s) will be understood as legitimate and efficacious fields of merit, which then serve as an additional draw for patrons seeking fertile fields of merit in which to plant their karmic seeds in part through the act of donation. Thus, while the origins-legitimacy-power loop is not entirely self-perpetuating as origins claims are necessarily an active and, I would argue, continual process directed and curated by the teller(s) of the tale(s), it remains the case that the wheel might be kept turning at an increasingly fast rate with relatively little explicit effort on the part of the owner(s) of the object(s).

In considering the sliding scale of legitimacy and efficacy attributed to groups, practices, and items of Buddhist material culture, it is important to consider that while *bhiksunis* often face diminished claims to legitimacy and efficacy as fields of merit relative to their male counterparts, the potential to bolster claims to origins remains. I posit that nuns possess the potential to access greater degrees of legitimacy and efficacy through the acquisition of Buddhist material culture, particularly those items understood to have more direct and less problematic claims to origins, thereby resulting in the material culture being understood as efficacious fields of merit. I further contend that a group is able to layer, and thereby increase, its own declarations of legitimacy by producing or acquiring multiple items of Buddhist material culture that offer strong assertions of connections to legitimizing origins. Indeed, Rambelli notes this 'layering' phenomenon in his suggestion that as "certain objects are better catalysts for [salvific] power, then, the more you

have, the better" (*Buddhist Materiality* 70). Thus, through the ability to 'laminate' various degrees of legitimacy and efficacy onto a given group, there remains the opportunity for nuns to maneuver themselves and their convents to higher social and, consequently, economic statuses by enhancing their claims to origins through the acquisition or production of Buddhist material culture.[215] That is, by acquiring Buddhist material culture deemed legitimate and efficacious, nuns could present themselves and their convents as more efficacious fields of merit, thus rendering themselves more competitive within the economy of merit. In light of this, I suggest that the initial production or acquisition of Buddhist material culture be conceptualized as a sort of investment. Were a convent able to acquire the initial resources necessary (whether economic, material, and/or social) to acquire or produce a piece of Buddhist material culture that already had strong ties to origins (or could convincingly be narrated into such ties) and was thus deemed an especially legitimate and efficacious as a field of merit, that convent could enter a sort of investment loop in which the item is able to reproduce a continuous cycle of both economic and material resources grounded in the physical world.[216] In other words, the origins-legitimacy-power loop acts as a carefully maintained, interconnected process of cultivation occurring within the economy of merit between legitimacy derived through origins narratives, variously fertile fields of merit, the consequential generation of merit, and the resulting power(s) and/or resources

[215] It is worth noting, though, that obtaining Buddhist material culture is certainly not the only means by which nuns (or anyone, for that matter) can lay claim(s) to legitimizing origins narratives. The princess nun Bunchi, for instance, cultivated a thorough origins narrative supporting her decision to construct the third and final iteration of the convent Enshōji in Yamamura village, involving prophetic dreams as well as the presence of the foundation of the buildings that comprised a monastery that once stood at the site. According to Cogan, "[l]ike the dreams that brought messages from the kami, the presence of these traces of an old monastery both legitimized and sacralized her choice of location, giving her a karmic link with this old establishment" (*The Princess Nun* 176). In other words, the carefully crafted narrative linkages to the 'origins' of the kami and of the erstwhile monastery served to enhance the perceived legitimacy of Bunchi and her convent, thus potentially increasing the 'exchange rate' from currency to merit associated with the convent and its monastic practitioners.

[216] And merit, as Kieschnick aptly puts it, can serve as a form of currency from 'the other world' (*The Impact of Buddhism* 190).

acquired by the owner(s) of the object(s), wherein each affects the other like spokes on a wheel that keeps turning.[217] It is the active and continuous efforts at cultivation of all of these aspects that keeps the 'wheel' turning along smoothly. This investment phenomenon can be observed, for instance, in the case of the revival of Hokkeji during the twelfth through thirteenth centuries and its use of the 11-faced sandalwood Kannon statue alongside their plethora of *shari* (relics) to draw economic support, eventually culminating in the convent being added to a popular pilgrimage route (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 198).[218]

Once a convent and/or nun or group of nuns had entered the origins-legitimacy-power loop by one means or another, they appear to have typically been able to remain within that loop.[219] It appears, then, that is it the getting into the loop that proves to be a significant hurdle. In other words, initially acquiring sufficiently prestigious Buddhist material culture, developing a convincing origins narrative from which to derive perceived legitimacy for the item(s) and by extension their owner(s), and then hopefully attracting patrons to bestow further economic,

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[217] Indeed, Kieschnick suggests that "[o]ne of the ways one is rewarded for giving material things is by the easy acquisition of even more material things" (*The Impact of Buddhism* 6). I would extend this to include not just the giving of material things, but the production and advertisement of, in the case of monastic orders flaunting their most prized objects of Buddhist material culture as an effective means of drawing in additional patrons. Wealth, possession of objects, and social influence appear to beget yet more of the same.

[218] Although I would relish the opportunity to discuss the case of Hokkeji in detail, the spatial limitations of this thesis allow only a brief scratch at the surface below.
An interested reader might consider consulting the work of Lori Meeks for a plethora of detail concerning Hokkeji's medieval revival, particularly *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (2010), "Buddhist Renunciation and the Female Life Cycle: Understanding Nunhood in Heian and Kamakura Japan" (2010), "Vows for the Masses: Eison and the Popular Expansion of Precept-Conferral Ceremonies in Premodern Japan" (2009), "In Her Likeness: Female Divinity and Leadership at Medieval Chūgūji" (2007), and "Reconfiguring Ritual Authenticity: The Ordination Traditions of Aristocratic Women in Premodern Japan" (2006).

[219] I direct the reader to the following medieval convents as particularly clear case studies illustrating this contention: Hokkeji (see Meeks' numerous publications concerning the medieval revival of this convent, especially *Hokkeji* and "Hokkeji Imperial Convent;" as well as Groner's "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities"); Chūgūji (see Meeks' "In Her Likeness" and "Chūgūji Imperial Convent"); and Enshōji (see Cogan's *The Princess Nun*; Fister's "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments," "Daughters of the Dharma: The Religious and Cultural Pursuits of Four Imperial Nuns," and "The Artistic Practices of Aristocratic Buddhist Nuns;" Hanafusa Miki's "Empress Tōfukumon'in and Empress Shōken," "Empress Tōfukumon'in and the Imperial Convents," and "From Princess to Abbess: The Life Cycle of Imperial Nuns;" and Monica Bethe's "Imperial Convents as Literary Salons"). Although I would love to expand upon these case studies, I lack the space to do so here.

social, and/or political 'power' to the nun(s) in possession of the object(s) appears to have been no small feat for female Buddhist monastic practitioners within the context of medieval Japan.

4. Hokkeji – A Case Study

In order to demonstrate the potential applicability of the origins-legitimacy-power loop in more concrete terms, I offer here merely a brief case study of the mid-thirteenth century revival of the convent Hokkeji 法華寺. The convent experienced numerous cycles of decline and restoration throughout its history, though its medieval revival appears to have resulted in the most significant and long-lasting positive change to the convent's status (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 1). Initially the restoration was begun by a small group headed by Jizen 慈善 (b. 1187), the first abbess of Hokkeji and a pupil of Kūnyo (b. 1176), a high-ranking lady-in-waiting who was fully ordained by Eison (Fister and Hanafusa, "Convent Histories" 356). Patricia Fister and Hanafusa Miki note that Jizen undertook renovations of Hokkeji with the support of Eison and his movement, which is certainly accurate, although Eison's involvement with, and direct assistance in, the revival of Hokkeji should not be overstated (356). In fact, it appears to be the case that Jizen and her small group began their efforts to revive the convent prior to becoming affiliated with Eison, moving to Hokkeji around 1243 (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 65). The ordination of the twelve Hokkeji nuns by Eison in 1249 is certainly significant, however, as it "marked the first time in at least four hundred years that a group of women took the entire set of nuns' precepts in a manner recognized as legitimate by the male authorities of a Buddhist monastic institution in Japan" (1, see also 126).[220] Although these ordinations did exist outside of state authority, they at least were

[220] With the ordination of these nuns, Hokkeji became the first of a total of fourteen convents that would eventually be affiliated with the Saidaiji branch of the Ritsu sect (Meeks, "Hokkeji Imperial Convent" 138). This sectarian affiliation would come to be of great significance, as by the end of the thirteenth century, Hokkeji would ultimately

understood to be legitimate within the *sangha* (4). I suggest that the full ordination available to Hokkeji's nuns serves as a legitimating factor, as it links the women to Eison's group and through that group back to the 'origin' of earlier Buddhist monastics preceding the Ritsu lineage.[221]

A significant aspect of Hokkeji's medieval revival was its success in reinventing itself as a site of elite pilgrimage, particularly drawing the interest of elite women (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 33). Part of this appeal was undoubtedly connected to "legends of the convent's founding, its legacy of female leadership, and miracles associated with its founder, Queen-Consort Kōmyō" (701-760) (34). Indeed, Kōmyō functions as such a critical origins figure in the long history of Hokkeji that Meeks contends that "[p]opular worship of Empress Kōmyō … supported the medieval revival of Hokkeji" ("Hokkeji Imperial Convent" 53).[222] Each of these aspects, all of which relate in some fashion to the figure of Kōmyō, act as means of establishing connections

come to act as the training ground for all nuns affiliated with Saidaiji's network of temples as the center of the Ritsu nuns' order (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 158).

[221] While Eison and company act as significant figures for Hokkeji, the importance of the narrative association of the figure of Queen-Consort Kōmyō (701-760) with Hokkeji is of great significance, as this connection would come to play a critical role in the medieval revival of the convent, particularly in its ability to attract pilgrimage and court interest. Deal and Ruppert's noting that "Ritsu nuns of Hokkeji and Chūgūji would later interpret the re-emergence of the female monastic movement not in connection with Eison's movement but instead would attribute it to the ancient notions of queen-consorts like Kōmyō" further reinforces the importance of the function of the figure of Kōmyō within the context of Hokkeji (162).

[222] It is constructive to further consider the association of Hokkeji with Kōmyō in light of several historical details, including the high hierarchical status of the women who joined the convent. Notably, both Kūnyo and Jizen were exceptionally tied to the court through their former roles as ladies-in-waiting of powerful royal women known as *nyoin* (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 59 and 89). In fact, "[m]any of the women involved in the restoration of Hokkeji had served as ladies-in-waiting under powerful women," which meant that "they were well-educated, well connected, and proud of the social status they possessed" (59). As a consequence of this, the "ties they had formed with each other as a community of cultural producers and patrons … positioned them to formulate and support the restoration of Hokkeji both ideologically and economically" according to Meeks (59). The status of *nyoin* was so high and their landholdings so impressive that they were able to assert "their place among Japan's most powerful political figures and institutions," rendering such women exceptional patrons and powerful allies (66). Further, as *nyoin* courts frequently inspired a rich salon culture, the women associated with these figures were involved in: various forms of learning; large-scale patronage practices; the amassing and transmitting of Buddhist relics; and engagement in pilgrimage (67, see also 77). I suggest that having economically, socially, culturally, and politically influential supporters such as the *nyoin* would have lent a sense of validity in the eyes of other patrons to the origins claims (particularly to claims concerning Kōmyō) made by the nuns restoring Hokkeji.

with an origin of the convent's own device in the form of Kōmyō as she came to be associated with the bodhisattva Kannon. In this effort to develop and appeal to a sort of dual origin of their own formation, the Hokkeji nuns were able to cultivate their connections with prominent female lay patrons, partly by functioning as a field of merit accessible through pilgrimage and legitimated through their strong and carefully cultivated narrative origins linkage to Kōmyō. The perceived legitimacy of Hokkeji's *bikunis* as monastic practitioners, in addition to their preexisting connections with court ladies of high standing, allowed them to attract pilgrims and patrons, which resulted in the amassing of further economic resources alongside social and political pull.

In similar fashion to the symbiotic relationship that existed between Hokkeji's nuns and laywomen of the court, the Ritsu monks and nuns existed within a mutually beneficial relationship. Within this monastic relationship, ordination and training became accessible for *bikunis*, while *bikus* gained access to relics and enhanced court ties. Indeed, within this context women utilized their traditional link to relics to further enhance their own legitimacy as generators of merit, which in turn attracted pilgrims while also aiding to convince Eison's movement to affiliate with them, thereby attaining access to full, recognized ordination. There appears to be a further connection between the Ritsu monks and Hokkeji's nuns, in that the convent's tactics of attracting pilgrimage and lay patronage through the use of images and relics with strong origins to figures such as Kōmyō and the Buddha fit neatly within Eison's own approach.[223]

[223] As Groner notes, images (and, I would add, relics) were "central to Eison's relations with his lay patrons, serving not only as foci for lay devotion but also as the concrete objects of fund-raising campaigns" ("Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 115). Eison's interest in relics was such that he composed an account of the miracles associated with Hokkeji's relics in the *Hokkeji shari engi* (*Account of the Relics at Hokkeji*) (see 127).

Barbara Ambros, in reference to the expanding collection of relics held by Hokkeji's *bikunis*, notes that these "nuns also served as the purveyors of Buddhist relics, which were very important to Eison's community and thus gave the nuns a seminal role in the popularization of the reform movement" (83). This mutually beneficial relationship with Eison's movement, in addition to granting access to full, recognized ordination, provided the Hokkeji nuns with the opportunity to engage in "comprehensive doctrinal training comparable to that which he offered his male disciples" (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 113).

A more explicit exemplar of the nuns' development of origins claims as they relate to material culture is the convent's famous sandalwood Eleven-Faced Kannon statue. The statue was first installed in Hokkeji during the early ninth century, although several of its origins narratives claim it to have been carved much earlier, during Kōmyō's lifetime (Fister and Hanafusa, "Convent Histories" 356). While the historical provenance of the Eleven-Faced Kannon is unknown, it has been dated to the early Heian period (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 44). Textual evidence indicates that Kōmyō commissioned the West Golden Hall of Hokkeji, where this image was housed, in honour of her mother, thereby linking the statue to the figure of Kōmyō directly in terms of the physical location of the object and the patronage involved in constructing this space (46). Eventually, various narratives detailed several versions of the origin of the Eleven-Faced Kannon sculpture in which Kōmyō functioned as a manifestation of Kannon (46). This served to contribute to Kōmyō's position as a significant and powerful component of the convent's origins claims, which I suggest further enhanced the expanding perception of the legitimacy of the convent itself.[224] These narratives served to further strengthen the image's ties

[224] Of interest here is one particular stream of thought that presented a narrative in which the image was sculpted in the empress' likeness, though in an androgynous fashion that "exceeds the boundaries and the limitations of femininity" (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 47).

to the origins of the bodhisattva manifestation of Kōmyō as Kannon, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of the object as a fertile field of merit from the lens of the origins-legitimacy-power loop. With regard to the conception of Kōmyō as a manifestation of Kannon, it is worth noting that records after 1191 explicitly celebrate the empress in this role (47). In an effort to encourage devotion to this divinized Kōmyō, by the early thirteenth century Hokkeji possessed and displayed several images that had already been celebrated in pilgrimage records as being legitimate material links to the legacy of the empress (48). I view this as being essentially a brilliant marketing strategy on the part of the Hokkeji nuns, as they developed and then associated themselves with an origin that could be appealed to on multiple levels, including narratively, historically, textually, and materially. Meeks espouses a similar view, although phrased more formally, stating that it was surely "this connection to Kōmyō that enabled Hokkeji to gain visibility in the early Kamakura period" (48).

A further draw for pilgrims and patrons were the relics possessed by the nuns of Hokkeji. Eison's autobiography recounts several relic miracles that occurred at Hokkeji, as in one passage recording the events of 1271 wherein relics were observed spontaneously appearing at the convent whilst being counted and deposited into a sealed vessel of some sort (Groner, "Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities" 130-1). The relics reputedly continued to appear, increasing in number to over four thousand grains. Eison additionally writes that during his lecture in the winter of 1251 at Hokkeji, relics spontaneously appeared, which Eison states are the property of the convent (131).[225] The particular importance of Hokkeji's relic collection

[225] Meeks notes, importantly, that "the appearance of Buddha relics during [Eison's] lecture at Hokkeji serves to demonstrate to readers [of the *Hokkeji shari engi*] that the buddhas and gods were pleased with Eison's decision to train Hokkeji nuns in the *vinaya*" (*Hokkeji* 127). This, of course, served to increase the legitimacy, particularly through the strong origins of the Buddha relics, of both Eison's decisions and of the nuns themselves as monastic practitioners.

relates not only to their function in proving the nuns' ability to generate merit or in Eison's vested interest in the *shari*, but to the matter of legitimacy more broadly per the origins-legitimacy-power loop.[226] Corroborating my proposed Theoretical framework in this context is Ambros' suggestion that "the relics legitimized the nuns as members of the Buddhist lineage traceable to Sakyamuni Buddha himself" (83). Meeks offers a similar notion, stating that "[t]o possess Buddha relics was to bear the mark of authenticity" (*Hokkeji* 143).

Hokkeji's nuns, in addition to acquiring icons and relics, directly produced Buddhist material culture. The convent's tradition of "making small votive dogs from incense ashes," which is still practiced at the convent in the modern day, acts as another instance in which Hokkeji made associations between Buddhist material culture and Kōmyō (Meeks, "Hokkeji Imperial Convent" 53). The tradition reputedly began when Kōmyō produced "the first votive dogs from the incense ash that had formed after seventeen days of chanting the *Lotus Sutra* in connection with a ritual fire ceremony for the protection of the state" (53). This itself is an excellent example of the multifaceted means through which Hokkeji nuns appealed to the queen-consort as an origin in order to legitimate their convent, their practices, and their objects in the eyes of the monastic and lay communities. Within this practice the connection to Kōmyō, to ritual performed for the state, and to the production of merit through ritual followed by the production of Buddhist material culture all serve to mutually reinforce the political and cultural capital derived by the convent through the figure of Kōmyō, whose status and presence in

[226] In terms of Eison's interest in the convent's substantial relic collection, the sheet number of relics possessed by Hokkeji allowed the nuns to lend or donate relics to other Ritsu temples, meaning that Hokkeji assumed a "role as fecund source of Buddha relics" for the Ritsu sect (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 147). As a result of this significant role, Hokkeji's "relics tradition enabled the convent to occupy important political and symbolic roles within the Ritsu network" (147).

Hokkeji's origins claims offered its nuns a stronger grasp at perceived legitimacy as monastic practitioners and, by extension, efficacy as fields of merit.

These strategies of legitimation, supported through several varied origins claims connecting to distinctive origins, appear to have been effective in the case of Hokkeji, as the convent was able to establish itself as a major pilgrimage site, attracted and held the attention of elite court patrons in addition to common patrons, and attached themselves (I suggest quite deliberately and strategically) to a prominent monk and his teachings.[227] In the case of Hokkeji's medieval restoration, the production, acquisition, and even the use of Buddhist material culture is indicative of the convent's ability to generate not only the economic means to engage with the material components of Buddhist practice, but the degree of legitimacy required to (convincingly) do so in the first place.

Hokkeji's *bikunis* were able to serve as an efficacious field of merit due to the compelling origins claims of their material culture coupled with their ability to establish their own legitimacy through various means.[228] Most tangibly, this is related to Hokkeji's ability to spontaneously generate Buddha relics, a feature of the convent that physically illustrated its ability to offer practical or worldly benefits to the laity (see 143). While the convent's relic collection was certainly effective in attracting both active pilgrimage and patronage, the use of images such as the Eleven-Faced Kannon also contributed to the ability of Hokkeji to, through emphasizing its material connections to the origins of Kōmyō and the Buddha, very successfully enter and remain within the repeating loop of origins begetting legitimacy, which in turn leads to notions

[227] With regard to non-elite patrons, "Hokkeji records also indicate that the nuns had attracted a large following of local laywomen and female pilgrims" in addition to numerous patrons of both sexes, meaning that the convent appealed to a broad range of individuals and groups as a field of merit and a locus of patronage (Meeks, *Hokkeji* 90). I suggest that this appeal was related to Hokkeji nuns' abilities to act as efficacious fields of merit, as they won the trust of donors by asserting their legitimacy in part through complex and layered origins claims (see 209).
[228] Such means include gaining access to full ordination and instruction from Ritsu monks.

of efficacy surrounding certain fields of merit and, by extension, the accrual of various forms of power. An efficacious and legitimate field of merit offers opportunities for merit production in exchange (ideally at a good rate) for economic resources. Although entering this figurative loop could be a markedly difficult task for medieval Japanese nuns, I suggest that the women leading the restoration of Hokkeji, as exceptionally well-connected individuals, had significant advantages from the outset in terms of entering the loop of legitimacy generation due to their access to the economic, social, cultural, and political means necessary to establish themselves from the outset of their monastic lives. This may explain, in part, their success in restoring the convent. Regardless, the origins-legitimacy-power loop might still gainfully serve as a foundational Theoretical framework from which to further examine the nuances of Hokkeji's medieval revival and the sociocultural, political, and economic on-the-ground realities of its nuns.

Conclusion

For all that the origins-legitimacy-power loop may appear to be a conceptual ouroboros at first glance, I am not endeavouring to describe a cyclical self-contained, self-perpetuating, or self-defeating system lacking in human agency. I instead am most interested in how nuns were (or were not) able to break into what I have described as a particular feedback loop involving Buddhist material culture as it relates to perceptions of legitimacy, an effort that is contextually conditioned and reliant upon fallible human action. As a consequence, the efforts of nuns to engage in practices that might place them and/or their convents within this 'loop' rarely if ever align perfectly or even particularly neatly within the origins-legitimacy-power loop if taken as a static, exhaustive schema. I posit this framework, rather, as a thought exercise of sorts, an effort

to demonstrate both one possible means of curtailing some of the theoretical issues present within the loaded terms discussed throughout this chapter and as a model of how a macro Theoretical framework might be constructed from the ground up. The origins-legitimacy-power loop additionally serves, for the sake of my own academic interests, as a means to conceptualize what I postulate to be the difficulty, and potentially significant and continuing reward(s), for female monastic practitioners in medieval Japan attempting to enter tactile, mainstream Buddhist practice and production in a lucrative fashion (not just economically but also socially and politically) via Buddhist material culture. This framework is, then, merely intended to serve as a scholarly starting point, not a holistic or all-encompassing system. Further, a malleable Theoretical framework such as the origins-legitimacy-power loop can and should be finessed to suit the specific context(s) to which it is being applied, which in turn should serve to stymie the potential for tautological misinterpretation. One means of fine-tuning the origins-legitimacy-power loop to better suit a specific context might be the tandem employment of a micro theoretical model, which as discussed in chapter two of this thesis is necessarily context dependent. I contend that the concurrent usage of both a tailored macro Theoretical framework and a micro theoretical model will serve as an effective and relatively comprehensive means of establishing a theoretical foundation upon which to construct studies within fledgling scholarly subfields, such as medieval Japanese nuns and their productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture.

Conclusion

This thesis began with the question of where medieval Japanese monastic women were and what they were doing. This thesis consequently serves as an effort at establishing a preliminary framework comprised of several interlocking components centering around loaded terms commonly found within English Buddhist Studies scholarship, as a means of laying a stable Theoretical groundwork upon which to build future research. I proposed the origins-legitimacy-power loop as a functional macro Theoretical framework following the provision of two sets of related states of the field. Chapter one of this thesis explored the current states of the studies of nuns and of Buddhist material culture as two distinct areas of inquiry within Japanese Buddhist Studies, while chapter two sought to examine the current state of, and consequently compare and contrast, what I have contended act as two distinct modes of theory developed and utilized within Religious Studies and Japanese Buddhist studies. Ultimately, I contended that the study of nuns has largely remained a primarily text-based pursuit, while studies of Buddhist material culture have yet to sufficiently consider the activities and possessions of female monastic practitioners. As such, the study of medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns with material culture serving as the primary mode of data acts as a fledgling subfield, with little work yet published in English centering upon such a topic. With regard to the current states of 'theory' within Religious Studies and Japanese Buddhist Studies, I suggested that each field attends respectively to either macro or micro theoretical considerations. In other words, I proposed that Religious Studies scholars tend to produce and/or make use of macro Theoretical frameworks, while Japanese Buddhist Studies scholars tend to produce and/or make use of micro theoretical models.

In considering instances in which nuns have been able to produce or acquire objects of Buddhist material culture that remain extant in the historical record, I tentatively contend that the

ability to do so depends most crucially upon nuns' capacities to derive and subsequently reinforce a rhetoric of legitimacy for themselves, their convents, and their monastic practices. Within the logic of the origins-legitimacy-power loop, refining and enhancing their standing as legitimate monastic practitioners in the eyes of the Buddhist monastic and lay communities served as one of the most fundamental features of a *bikuni's* abilities to actively engage with the material aspects of Buddhist traditions and to consequently benefit financially. This legitimacy further enhanced their abilities to serve as efficacious fields of merit, which in turn bettered their legitimacy as perceived by the laity and male monastic community. Thus, I have contended that both 'legitimacy' and 'fields of merit' act as cyclical forces, in which the initial entering of the loop poses the greatest challenge for many female monastic groups and individuals. The origins-legitimacy-power loop outlined in chapter three of this thesis is intended to serve as a critical Theoretical wedge with which to approach these cycles and the power structures that perpetuate them.

I further suggested that a Religious Studies style macro Theoretical framework, such as the origins-legitimacy-power loop, would ideally be utilized in tandem with Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies style micro theoretical models in order to produce a more comprehensive Theoretical complex. Such a Theoretical complex will serve as a solid skeletal structure upon which the flesh of data may later be constructively added. Religious Studies Theoretical frameworks could additionally be used as a means of (re)considering currently utilized Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies theoretical models while also serving as a new lens through which to review current publications within Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies. A shift in perspective(s) prompted by the development of new Theoretical complexes might afford scholars the opportunity to revisit current publications in order to mine for data potentially applicable in new

and interesting ways to either existing topics or fledgling areas of inquiry. The development of combinatory Theoretical complexes additionally bears potential for fostering stronger lines of communication between Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies more broadly. As I have suggested in chapter two of this thesis, Theory might yet serve as a language common to scholars working within a diverse range of subfields, including Medieval Japanese Buddhist Studies, collectively falling beneath the umbrella of Religious Studies.

For all that I might advocate for the production and application of a comprehensive Theoretical complex, the incisive reader will notice a conspicuous lack of a chapter within this thesis detailing a micro theoretical model to be applied in tandem with the origins-legitimacy-power loop to the study of medieval Japanese nuns' productions and acquisitions of Buddhist material culture. During the process of researching for, and eventually composing, this thesis, two chapters were sacrificed in the interests of retaining something of an appropriate length. The fourth chapter was, at the outset of the thesis, intended to serve as a preliminary effort at the development of one possible iteration of a micro theoretical model tailored to the geographic and temporal context of medieval Japan and to Buddhist nuns and their involvement(s) with material culture. Although I lack the space here to thoroughly build out a micro theoretical model, it is worth pausing to outline the general curvature of the model that I intended to develop. The model in question primarily takes the form of the identification of several traceable and recurrent 'elements' that I propose exist among recorded instances in English-language scholarship of medieval Japanese nuns' interactions with various forms of Buddhist material culture. To be more precise, I posit that the following 'elements' might serve as productive and supportable touchstones in the form of a micro theoretical model within the context of medieval Japanese nuns' successful and continued productions and/or acquisitions of Buddhist material culture:

patronage; merit; sectarian affiliation; type of convent; and, finally, ordination status. The 'elements' noted above, serving as a geographically and temporally specific theoretical model aligning with present trends in Japanese Buddhist Studies, would ideally be applied to preexisting English publications in order to trace connecting threads between nuns and Buddhist material culture. In the initial outline of my thesis, chapter five was slated to serve that very purpose.

Chapter five was intended to serve as a sort of 'proving ground' for the Theoretical complex proposed in chapters three and four through the mechanic of the provision of several case studies to which the complex could be applied. My intention was to pull the data for this final chapter from existing English language publications concerning medieval Japanese Buddhist nuns, patchworking together individual case studies through the provision of general background information concerning the nun(s) and/or their convent(s), their production(s) and/or acquisition(s) of various forms of Buddhist material culture, and their interactions with the laity, other monastic professionals, and the court as they relate particularly to Buddhist material culture. Although I regretfully lack the space here to go into any detail concerning the case studies that I had initially planned to include in this thesis, I will list the names of the nuns and/or convents that I had intended to examine here, should the reader be interested in exploring these historical figures and their institutions with the origins-legitimacy-power loop outlined in chapter three in mind. The would-be case studies are as follows: Hōjō Masako (1157-1225), a woman from a warrior family that was married to the future *shogun* Minamoto no Yoritomo who took up nunhood following the death of her husband; the medieval revival of the convent Hokkeji 法華寺, accomplished during the mid-thirteenth century by a small group of women led by female master Jizen 慈善 (b. 1187); the mid-thirteenth century restoration and expansion of the convent

Chūgūji 中宮寺 by the nun Shinnyo 真如 (b. 1211); the nun Mugai Nyodai (1233-98) and the founding of the convent Keiaiji; and, finally, the late medieval princess nun Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智 (1619-97) and her founding of the imperial convent Enshōji during the mid-seventeenth century.[229] For the time being, I shall reserve these case studies for my own future academic endeavours.

[229] I have listed these figures and convents in roughly chronological order, alongside relevant secondary source materials:

Figure's Name	Publication Year	Title	Author
Hōjō Masako	2002	"'Nun Shogun': Politics and Religion in the Life of Hōjō Masako (1157-1225)"	Martin Collcutt
	2002	"Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan"	Ushiyama Yoshiyuki
Hokkeji's Medieval Revival Nuns	2001	"Icons and Relics in Eison's Religious Activities"	Paul Groner
	2002	"Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan"	Ushiyama Yoshiyuki
	2009	"Hokkeji Imperial Covent"	Lori Meeks
	2010	"Buddhist Renunciation and the Female Life Cycle: Understanding Nunhood in Heian and Kamakura Japan"	Lori Meeks
	2010	*Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*	Lori Meeks
	2016	"Mantra, *Hinin*, and the Feminine: On the Salvational Strategies of Myōe and Eizon"	Abé Ryūichi's
Chūgūji and Shinnyo	2002	"Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan"	Ushiyama Yoshiyuki
	2007	"In Her Likeness: Female Divinity and Leadership at Medieval Chūgūji"	Lori Meeks
	2009	"Chūgūji Imperial Convent"	Lori Meeks
Mugai Nyodai and Keiaiji	2002	"Obstructions and Obligations: An Overview of the Studies That Follow"	Barbara Ruch
	2002	"Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan"	Ushiyama Yoshiyuki
Bunchi and Enshōji	1998	"The History and Special Character of *Ama Monzeki Jiin*"	Ohki Sadako
	2003	"The Artistic Practices of Aristocratic Buddhist Nuns"	Patricia Fister
	2009	"From Princess to Abbess: The Life Cycle of Imperial Nuns"	Hanafusa Miki
	2009	"Empress Tōfukumon'in and the Imperial Convents"	Hanafusa Miki
	2009	"Empress Tōfukumon'in and Empress Shōken"	Hanafusa Miki
	2009	"Imperial Convents as Literary Salons"	Monica Bethe
	2009	"Intertwined Threads: The World of the Enshōji Altar Cloth"	Yamakawa Aki
	2014	*The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan*	Gina Cogan

Given that my efforts here are far from exhaustive, I intend to pursue the development of a micro theoretical model in the form of the 'elements' noted above in future studies, ultimately linking this model to the origins-legitimacy-power Theoretical framework. I additionally intend to apply the cohesive Theoretical complex comprised of the origins-legitimacy-power framework and the elements model to the selection of case studies listed above as a means of testing the applicability of the Theory in action. Alas, such efforts must be shelved until such a time as I might be able to gainfully revisit them.

	2016	"Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o"	Patricia Fister

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