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I was greatly impressed by Dr Ross Bender's valuable article, 'The Hachiman Cult and the Dōkyō Incident', in *Monumenta Nipponica*, XXXIV:2, but I would like to discuss one major issue which is of much significance as regard the cultural and political history of eighth-century Japan.

We can sum up one of the most important conclusions of this article by quoting Dr Bender's own words: '. . . during the Nara period there was a crisis in the emperor's relations with the gods; since the gods were appealed to as an ultimate sanction for human reign, this meant a crisis of legitimacy' (p. 146).

Nobody can deny the growing power of Buddhism in the Nara period and its influence over political issues in Japan was quite significant. But at the same time, one should not overestimate this power, and this may be proved by a qualitative and quantitative analysis of *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 and *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀.

Regular annual entries concerning Buddhism can be traced back to the reign of Temmu 天武, 672–686. They are longer and more emotional than the Shinto entries, and are not so strictly patterned; the Shinto entries are short and, as a rule, no comments are given. For instance, when offerings are dispatched to Shinto gods, no reasons are given in most cases because everybody at the time was well aware of them. Curiously enough, the different treatment of Buddhism and Shinto in these records can be defined grammatically. Almost all the sentences in entries and edicts concerning Shinto are positive, whereas in Buddhist entries negative constructions are quite frequent. I believe that this may have been due to the fact that Shinto was deeply rooted in Japanese culture while Buddhist functions had not yet fully developed in Japanese society.

It is important to note that entries concerning calendar rituals are few in Buddhist entries but many in Shinto ones. People prayed to omnipotent Buddhas and bodhisattvas on extraordinary occasions, such as illness, disaster, rebellion, death, etc. In the Nara period extrareligious and political factors were prominent in Buddhism. In certain years the number of Buddhist entries in *Nihon Shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi* rises sharply, and my calculations show (Table 1) that there are five peaks: 686 (26 entries), 750 (20), 757 (28), 768 (25), and 771 (23). The peak in 686 was caused by the curing of Temmu's illness and arranging funerals according to Buddhist ritual. In 750 the construction of Tōdaiji 東大寺 was completed and a number of ceremonies were held at the temple to stress its overwhelming importance as a national religious center. In 756 the pro-Buddhist Retired Emperor Shōmu 聖武 died and his funeral rites were conducted in accordance with Buddhist ritual. The reign of Empress Shōtoku 称徳 is well known on account of the Dōkyō 道教 incident; in 768 a great deal of land was granted to Buddhist temples and, as part

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Table 1. The number of Shinto and Buddhist entries in *Nihon Shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi*.

Year	672	673	674	675	676	677	678	679	680	681	682	683	684
x Shinto	6	2	3	4	7	6	3	6	5	7	3	3	4
x Buddhist	2	2	0	3	4	2	0	3	9	2	2	3	4

Year	685	686	687	688	689	690	691	692	693	694	695	696	697
x Shinto	4	13	7	6	1	6	7	15	4	4	4	2	6
x Buddhist	11	26	5	6	5	5	3	5	6	3	0	2	7

Year	698	699	700	701	702	703	704	705	706	707	708	709	710
x Shinto	11	1	1	7	13	5	7	5	11	7	7	2	1
x Buddhist	4	2	4	7	8	8	1	3	2	4	1	2	0

Year	711	712	713	714	715	716	717	718	719	720	721	722	723
x Shinto	3	0	1	2	3	2	7	2	1	2	5	2	2
x Buddhist	0	4	2	1	2	6	6	3	2	7	11	4	1

Year	724	725	726	727	728	729	730	731	732	733	734	735	736
x Shinto	4	2	2	4	3	8	8	2	4	1	3	3	0
x Buddhist	2	4	5	3	4	9	1	1	3	1	2	4	3

Year	737	738	739	740	741	742	743	744	745	746	747	748	749
x Shinto	3	7	4	0	5	5	6	3	0	9	4	5	3
x Buddhist	3	10	5	3	6	7	0	4	9	16	6	6	6

Year	750	751	752	753	754	755	756	757	758	759	760	761	762
x Shinto	11	7	4	2	3	7	3	4	7	11	5	6	4
x Buddhist	20	7	5	4	2	7	1	8	13	11	6	11	6

Year	763	764	765	766	767	768	769	770	771	772	773	774	775
x Shinto	8	8	8	7	6	7	12	6	11	11	8	8	10
x Buddhist	4	9	11	7	15	25	16	16	23	10	12	11	5

Year	776	777	778	779	780	781	782	783	784	785	786	787	788
x Shinto	10	8	15	9	5	10	14	14	3	12	14	7	4
x Buddhist	6	4	5	7	7	5	6	8	7	9	7	4	0

Year	789	790	791	792
x Shinto	9	13	16	15
x Buddhist	2	6	8	4

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Table 2. Distribution of arithmetical mean ($\bar{x}$) and coefficient of variation (V) of entries in *Nihon Shoki* and *Shoku Nohongi*.

Reign	Temmu 672–686	Jitō 686–697	Mommu 697–707	Gemmei 707–715	Genshō 715–724	Shōmu 724–749	Kōken 749–758
Σx Shinto	76	60	61	19	27	93	48
Σx Buddhist	73	45	43	13	42	118	87
$\bar{x}$ Shinto	5.1	5.5	6.1	2.4	3	3.7	5.3
$\bar{x}$ Buddhist	4.9	4.1	4.3	1.6	4.7	4.7	9.7
V Shinto	0.53	0.67	0.67	0.88	0.65	0.68	0.54
V Buddhist	1.34	0.47	0.58	0.83	0.65	0.75	0.93

Reign	Junnin 758–764	Shōtoku 764–770	Kōnin 770–781	Kammu 781–792
Σx Shinto	50	38	105	121
Σx Buddhist	58	75	95	60
$\bar{x}$ Shinto	7.1	7.6	9.5	11
$\bar{x}$ Buddhist	8.3	15	8.6	5.5
V Shinto	0.25	0.39	0.23	0.41
V Buddhist	0.35	0.69	0.64	0.49

The coefficient of variation (V) was calculated according to the following formula, with n = number of years in a reign:

$$V = \frac{\sqrt{\frac{\Sigma (x-\bar{x})^2}{n-1}}}{\bar{x}}$$

For example, in the Temmu reign,

$$V_s = \frac{\sqrt{\frac{\Sigma (6-5.1)^2(2-5.1)^2(3-5.1)^2 \ldots (13-5.1)^2}{14}}}{5.1}$$

$$= 0.53.$$

of Dōkyō's challenge for power, a good number of officials responsible for Buddhist affairs were nominated at the court. The peak in 771 may be explained as a result of Shōtoku's funeral rites and the Dōkyō incident. After that, Buddhist entries in *Shoku Nihongi* sharply decrease, although the diminution of the Buddhist role in politics was only temporary for it subsequently flourished once more in the Heian period.

The instability of the Buddhist role is shown by the chronological distribution of relevant entries. The coefficient of variation (V) of Buddhist and Shinto entries has been calculated from Emperor Temmu to Emperor Kammu 桓武 (Table 2); the smaller V becomes, the more stable is the process under consideration. Only

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Table 3. Distribution of place names in principal areas, according to *Nihon Ryōiki*.

	Honshu	Shikoku	Kyushu
Volume I	49 (42)	2	2
II	57 (39)	3	1
III	57 (24)	5	6

The numbers in parentheses indicate place names in the Kinai region.

in three cases is V_B smaller than V_S.[1] This is hardly surprising as on the whole Shinto was more stable than Buddhism, which had yet to send down deep roots. Buddhism was a strong weapon in any quest for power, it is true, but although its spread throughout the country was fairly rapid, Buddhism had yet to win over the peasants. In the beginning of the Buddhist infiltration into Japan, its principal devotees were immigrants and some representatives of the high social strata, but the rapid spread of the religion may be proved by an analysis of genealogies and place names in *Nihon Ryōiki* 日本霊異記. In the beginning of this work, a typical person is active in the Kinai region and his descent can be easily traced. Toward the end of this record, however (and one must bear in mind that the stories in *Nihon Ryōiki* are arranged chronologically), the origins and names of many people are not recorded and more non-Kinai place names are found (Table 3). This would seem to indicate that an increasing number of people were drawn to Buddhism.

From Temmu to Kammu, I found 698 Shinto and 709 Buddhist entries in *Nihon Shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi*. In spite of the fact that these two figures differ only slightly, their distribution in time varies greatly. The distribution of Buddhist entries has many ups and downs, while the number of Shinto entries grows continuously from the Gemmei 元明 reign; this last fact may be explained by the adjustment of the 'Shinto party' (including the emperor) to new political, economic, and religious demands.

My arguments show, I hope, that on the whole there was no crisis in the emperors' relations with the gods; rather, one should say that from time to time there was a crisis in the emperors' relations with the Buddha.

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[1] V and $\bar{x}$ (arithmetical mean) in the period from Temmu to Gemmei do not show any clear regularity. I believe that this may be explained by at least three factors: (1) the sample is not big enough; (2) the tradition of compiling chronicles had not yet matured; and (3) leading trends had yet to form.

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Dr Bender comments:

It is very gratifying for me to find that someone else takes such an interest in ancient affairs and I thank Dr Meshcheryakov for his communication.

Dr Meshcheryakov's observation that the Buddhist entries have their ups and downs while the Shinto entries show more stable distribution and growth is very important and certainly helps to explain how it was that the Shinto tradition of legitimacy resisted the Buddhist challenge. My study dealt only with the top of the pantheon, so to speak, but he provides evidence of the underlying strength of Shinto. However, I believe that a close study of the content of the Shinto entries should be undertaken. I have examined only those entries pertaining to Usa and Ise in *Shoku Nihongi*, and there is certainly a remarkable difference in the material concerning the two shrines. The Ise entries consist largely of reports of the *Saigū* and of the dispatch of messengers with offerings. There seems to be no 'calendar ritual' or regularity as to the times when such offerings were made. No oracles are reported, and the context of offerings is rarely noted. By contrast, the Hachiman entries have a focus, which is oracular pronouncement concerning great affairs of state.

Hori Ichirō has a fascinating suggestion that one aspect of Shinto had a correlation with times of social and political crises: 'Many records suggest the intense activities of shamans or shaman-like personages during these critical sociocultural changes. . . .[1] Later, at moments of anxiety connected with social change or crisis shamanistic mass hysteria frequently occurred.'[2] I would be most curious to see a complete analysis of the contents of the 698 Shinto entries. My suspicion is that Shinto might not appear quite so 'stable' as the coefficient of variation figures indicate.

[1] Hori here describes the activities of 'witches and wizards' (Aston's translation) in the year before the fall of the Soga clan.

[2] Hori Ichiro, *Folk Religion in Japan*, University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 196–97.

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