

Master's Thesis Abstract

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Title:

Knowledge and Practice of *Ichidai-sama* Religion: The Development of Yin-Yang Tao Knowledge in the Tohoku Region

This thesis focuses on the practice of *Ichidai-sama* religion in the Tohoku region, with the aim of identifying the factors behind the diversity of this practice. This religion is a religion of lifelong guardian deities, combining the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac of the year of birth and eight deities and Buddhist images. It is believed that this knowledge was originally published in the books called *Oozassho* which were written about miscellaneous popular sayings drawing on the lineage of the Yin-Yang Tao books published in the Edo period, and the knowledge expanded nationwide through the circulation of the books. Today, it is mainly practiced in the marginal areas in Japan such as the Tohoku region and Okinawa Prefecture.

Previous studies on this religion have examined the origins of the religion and the opportunities for its spread, but have not clarified the diverse practices that have actually developed. This thesis, therefore, examines this religion in the Tohoku region based on literature review, field research, questionnaire survey and interviews to examine (1) how it is expressed as a religious practice, (2) what the regional differences in religious practice are, and (3) what processes have transformed it into an individual religious practice. It then identifies the factors contributing to the diversity of practices and examines the acceptance of literal culture in folk culture and its development.

In Chapter 1, the previous studies were reviewed and the research objectives and methods were set out. In Chapter 2, an overview of the *Oozassho* books, their acceptance in the Tohoku region, knowledge of *Ichidai-sama* religion in the books and the use of this knowledge by religious figures were identified. In Chapter 3, the practice of this religion in the Tohoku region was identified from literature survey. In Chapter 4, the tendency of temples and shrines that have adopted this religion and the influence of those on the practice were examined through field research and interview survey in the Tsugaru region in Aomori Prefecture, Morioka City in Iwate Prefecture, and Sendai City in Miyagi Prefecture. In Chapter 5, I compared the framework of religion in temples, shrines, and the media, with individual perceptions and practices of this religion based on interviews and questionnaires in the Tsugaru region, and clarified the reality of this religion depending on individuals. In Chapter 6, summative discussion was conducted in terms of the three objectives of this thesis based on what has been examined.

In conclusion, with regard to the purpose of (1), the basic knowledge that "the guardian deity of a person born in a certain (zodiac sign) year is a certain deity or Buddhist image" was manifested as a practice when other knowledge was combined or incorporated into practices. It became clear that the knowledge combined and the practices incorporated differed by regions and individuals, resulting in the diversification of practices. With regard to the purpose of (2), in areas where there was temples and shrines intervention, knowledge and practices were fixed to a certain extent, so practices were apparently monotonous. However, even within these areas, individuals flexibly reinterpreted this religion and changed their practices to suit their own circumstances, so that even practices that appeared similar varied in detail by individuals. Regarding the purpose of (3), this religion is knowledge spread through the *Oozasho* books, and is considered to have originally been a personal religion centered on literate people. Through the mediation of religious figures, the religion spread to illiterate people and became systematic and collective. Today, as their influence has weakened, this religion has been found to have reverted to a personalized religion, with individuals flexibly interpreting this religion and choosing to practice to suit their own convenience.

Key words: *Ichidai-sama* religion, religious practice, *Oozassho* books, Yin-Yang Tao knowledge, knowledge gained through literacy