INEQUALITY IN THE RHETORIC OF BUDDHIST-KAMI RELATIONS

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

INEQUALITY IN THE RHETORIC OF BUDDHIST-KAMI RELATIONS

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.


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I would like to express the deepest thanks and gratitude to my advisor Edward Drott for his infinite patience and allowing me a second home in his office. This work could not have been accomplished without his guidance and support. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dan Cohen and J. Martin Holman, for their time, dedication, and impeccable skill and knowledge of punctuation and grammar.
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Section 1: Introduction

As a result of shifting economic and social concerns a theological shift occurred wherein the supreme import of a deity lay not in their ancestry and place in the hierarchy of national mythohistories such as the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) (720)* and *Kojiki (712)*, but instead lay in the extent to which they manifested esoteric Buddhist principles. This denotes a shift in ontology and cosmology; in other words, in the way deities and humans were seen to relate to each other and their place in the pantheon. The ontological change occurred with a shift from a view wherein *kami* were beings not so different in temperament from their human descendants though still vastly superior in power, to an abstract connection wherein *kami* represented the “pure mind” or *Dharmakaya*, in the case of *Amaterasu*, of esoteric Buddhism, that humans were thought to inherently possess and aspire to realize. The cosmological shift occurred with the change in the *kami*’s place as beings superior and of a different order from humans, to being the result of negative karmic effects. By changing the cosmology and ontology of *kami* it seemed as though Buddhism was making a place for *kami* within the Buddhist pantheon and philosophy. However, while the rhetoric of these shifts seemed to increasingly incorporate *kami* on an equal plane with buddhas and Bodhisattvas, there remained a persistence in the view that *kami* were inferior to Buddhist deities except in rare cases. In actuality, Buddhist attempts to “unify” with indigenous traditions masks a subjugation of said traditions to Buddhist belief and rule. Though couched in impressive and prestigious sounding titles such as “bodhisattva” or “Dharma protector”, *kami*, in reality, shifted from beings superior but analogous to humans, to beings similar to arhats struggling for karmic release and
enlightenment, only in rare cases becoming the “active function” of the absolute and equal to buddhas.¹

Outline.

This first section includes the methodology of my paper as well as a discussion of my sources. Section Two will discuss the influence of Shinbutsu shūgō, the unification of gods and buddhas, as an umbrella term for efforts to harmonize indigenous traditions with Buddhism. This resulted in kami being demoted from their lofty heights outside of the human order, to being seen as akin to deluded beings that cause trouble because they have not yet heard the Dharma. Under the banner of shinbutsu shūgō buddhas came to be seen as more efficacious deities who could better bring good fortune, and kami came to be viewed as protectors of the Dharma. Though kami came to hold a higher title, they still represented the lowest rung of enlightened beings above humans. Section Three will discuss honji suijaku, original ground and manifest trace, a particular form of shinbutsu shūgō wherein kami were paired with and viewed as the emanations of buddhas and bodhisattvas. This ideology transformed kami into manifestations of Buddhist ideals and deities, stripping them of their independent status and their turbulent nature. The development of this philosophy during the Nara and Heian periods will be the primary focus of Section Three. Section Four will discuss Honji Suijaku as it developed in the Kamakura period. In the Kamakura period honji suijaku began to incorporate hongaku, original enlightenment, and esoteric Buddhist theory. This resulted in a stratification of kami as emanations with kami such as Amaterasu becoming a kami of “original enlightenment,” meaning she was a full embodiment of the Dharmakaya instead of a

¹ Alicia Matsunaga, The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation (Tokyo: Sophia Univ, 1969.), pg. 225
partial manifestation. In contrast to being only viewed as deluded sentient beings, kami came also to be classified as 1. “real kami” who were malevolent independent beings, 2. deluded beings that attained enlightenment, or 3. kami who are the essence of enlightenment. The sun deity and Imperial Ancestor Amaterasu, for example, went from being a powerful independent kami to a Dharma protector to finally become a kami of “original enlightenment.” Section Five will discuss this progression of Amaterasu through the different time periods and views regarding kami discussed in the previous sections.

Methodology.

My paper centers on primary sources from the early Nara, the late Heian, and from the late Kamakura periods. The Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) and Kojiki, texts written at the command of the government from the early Nara, are taken as sources indicative of the religious beliefs and underpinnings of the Nara and Heian courts. Though these two sources did not receive much readership outside of the Imperial court, many other religious writings of the Nara and Heian periods claimed legitimacy by making reference to the tales of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki (Nihongi). While these sources cannot be taken as indicative of actual historical events, the court view of various kami is important as it determined how Buddhism would react to said kami. The court's high regard for Amaterasu, for example, enabled her to remain exempt, until the Kamakura period, from the Buddhist rhetoric that subjugated other kami.

The sources from the late Heian, which include an excerpt from the Konjaku Monogatari, were collections of religious and secular tales from the period written by
Buddhist monks. These sources represent how secular and low rank religious persons such as monks viewed the interaction between Buddhism and *kami*. The late Kamakura source, the *Nakatomi Harae Kunge*, is an esoteric commentary and ritual text on the much older Nakatomi purification formula. Due to the fact that by this time ritual at places such as Ise had become tailored more for the individual, the readership of the *Nakatomi* can be surmised to include monks as well as devout lay practitioners. This idea is further supported by the fact that a particular section of the *Nakatomi* has importance only for the practitioner. Due to its esoteric nature, however, it is also likely that a monk or priest was present to explain the meaning of the entire text. This text is indicative of late Buddhist and indigenous philosophy concerning the relationship between Buddhism and *kami* and is thereby important to determining what ideas regarding *kami* have carried over from the Nara and Heian periods.

In the discussion of these sources and their importance for *shimbutsu shūgō* and *honji suijaku*, I have relied on the secondary works of Japanese Historian and Buddhologist Fabio Rambelli, Mark Teeuwen, Alicia Matsunaga, and Toshio Kuroda among others. In contrast to the works by these authors, my paper seeks to highlight the demeaning elements of *honji suijaku*. With the exception of Toshio Kuroda and Hiroo Sato, the works of the other authors cited seem to suggest that the interaction between Buddhism and Indigenous traditions became progressively better with no lingering tensions in rhetoric. A lingering tension may be implied in these works but it is buried as contrasted with Kuroda and Sato who clearly and directly state that even into the Kamakura period the rhetoric of equality expressed by Buddhism should be taken with a
grain of salt.

Section 2: Shinbutsu Shūgō

Shinbutsu shūgō, the unification of gods and buddhas, is an umbrella term for attempts to unite the indigenous faith(s) of Japan with Buddhism which entered Japan in the 6th century. The first outward display of this attempt at unification came with the conversion in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) of Emperor Yōmei to Buddhism in 585. As Japanese Buddhist Alicia Matsunaga points out, the conversion of the nominal religious head of the indigenous faith to Buddhism, represents a symbolic unification of the two faiths. The actual term shinbutsu shūgō, however, first appeared in the Shoku-nihongi dated as 698 C.E. Particular practices that led to, yet differ from the practice of honji suijaku, are the viewing of kami as sentient and deluded beings and the elevation of kami from such a state to that of Dharma Protectors. As sentient and deluded beings, kami are seen as beings bound by karma, unenlightened to the impermanence of the world. As Dharma protectors, by contrast, they are considered semi-enlightened beings equivalent to Buddhist devas who vow to protect Buddhist endeavors. The difference between these two states of being is that, as a deluded being, kami are no higher, in fact are lower, on the Buddhist moral scale than humans and prone to acts of destruction. Kami at this stage are no longer viewed as supreme powers in their respective territories, but instead are viewed as similar to asuras, malevolent deities addicted to the sinful passions in Buddhism. Kami viewed in this way are evil entities who must be pacified in order to avoid their destructive attention, and worshiped in order to receive benefit. As a

2 Ibid., 151
Dharma protector, by contrast, *kami* are seen in a much more positive light. Dharma protectors are akin to devas in that they are positive and benefit bestowing deities. This ranking is deceptive, however, since though it seems as though Buddhism has risen *kami* from their lowly status as deluded beings, in fact their role of Dharma protector keeps them in the realm of delusion under the control of Buddhist devas and below all other enlightened beings.

By addressing *kami* first as deluded beings in need of salvation, Buddhism confronted the primary concern of the indigenous relations with *kami*--- how to control their power and make it beneficial. This practice aided unification in that it provided Buddhist and Shinto priests with a way to inject *kami* into the Buddhist pantheon and philosophy while also allowing Buddhism to penetrate into the daily beliefs of the populace. Due to the influence of Ying-Yang practices and theory, the court and general populace were greatly concerned with how to pacify the wild forces of nature, the *kami*, in order to protect the state, prevent illness and natural disasters.\(^4\) The Soga clan, which introduced and supported Buddhism in the Nara court, presented its deities as a more efficacious solution to the problems that plagued society. Coming into Japan, Buddhism was set up as something superior to indigenous cults and practices, not only for its Chinese associations, but also for its perceived superior thaumaturgic ability.\(^5\)

Though the term for unification attempts is dated to the late seventh century, according to Mastunaga, the practice itself had been going on prior to this date as evidenced by the advanced nature of *jingūji* (shrine-temples) by end of the seventh

\(^4\) Ibid., 39  
\(^5\) Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: the Tenmu Dynasty, 650-800*, (Honolulu: Univ of Hawai'i Pr, 2009), pg.53
century.\textsuperscript{6} Jingūji, a way Buddhism sought to unify with the indigenous tradition by pacifying indigenous gods, were Buddhist temples built next to Shinto shrines and vice versa.\textsuperscript{7} This move played on the above mentioned indigenous desire to pacify and control malevolent and unruly deities. Jingūji, Teeuwen and Rambelli state, were aimed at improving the moral fiber of kami through Buddhist ritual.\textsuperscript{8} This was important as, ideally, if the kami awakens to enlightenment the kami's natural inclination is toward good and to bestow fortune and benefit instead of disease. This is also important because it denotes a belief and affirmation that kami were seen as beings in need of salvation, particularly Buddhist salvation. The presence of Buddhist temples at indigenous shrines suggests that it was believed that endemic practices and rituals were not very efficacious, at least in comparison to Buddhist ones. The Jingūji differed from other Buddhist temples in that their primary aim was to mellow the aramitama, or negative aspect, of the enshrined kami.\textsuperscript{9} The aramitama was the part of the kami that made it behave adversely toward humans and other deities alike. In Buddhist rhetoric it could be considered the karma producing aspect of the kami that perpetuates its accumulation of negative karma. Thus Buddhists argued, according to Teeuwen and Rambelli, that it was kami who were without the Dharma, kami ruled by this untempered aramitama, which were violent and untrustworthy. This is evidenced by stories of kami who, prior to hearing the Dharma,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Mastunaga, \textit{Buddhist Philosophy}, pg.151
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Jingūji differed from miyadera, kami temples, in that miyadera were run and administered by monks with the main object of worship being kami. Jingūji, by contrast, set up a shrine separate from the main temple in which to perform rituals to kami, and were run by priestly clans. Miyadera were also places where rituals and festivals to pacify goryō, angry ghosts, were held. These festivals and rituals, dating back to the early 9\textsuperscript{th} century, were aimed at pacifying the spirits of wrongly accused and murdered aristocrats, which were thought to cause epidemics
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, \textit{Buddhas and kami in Japan: honji suisaku as a combinatorial paradigm}. (London ;;New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pg.9
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 11
\end{itemize}
cause problems for those around them, but after hearing the Dharma become beneficial by ceasing to cause disasters and disease and instead aiding the spread of Buddhism. An example from the *Konjaku Monogatari* (late Heian) is the story of a thunder kami who was convinced to stop destroying a pagoda. On orders from an earth deity, a thunder deity continuously destroys a pagoda until a monk sits at the site of the pagoda and recites the *Hokekyo (Lotus Sutra)*. After hearing the Sutra, the thunder deity repents and vows never again to destroy the pagoda or behave in a way unfitting a good Buddhist.

"‘Why have you repeatedly destroyed the pagoda?’, the boy replied, ‘The Earth Deity of this mountain is closely related to me. The deity told me, ‘A pagoda has been built on top of me and I have lost my place. Destroy the pagoda!’ So I have destroyed it each time for the deity. However, the mysterious power of the Sutra has bound me like this. I will make the Earth Deity move to another place and never do anything contrary to the Sutra.’”

According to the research of Irene H. Lin, thunder deities in Japanese legend and myth were seen as fierce and uncontrollable deities often the attributed as the cause of plagues and natural disasters. In essence, they were *kōjin* or turbulent gods that brought destruction even while they were prayed to for rain and prosperous agriculture. At the same time, in the story above, the thunder deity starts out fearsome but is easily overcome by the reading of the Buddhist Sutra and vows to live a Buddhist life thereafter. Whereas in the Nara period thunder deities were seen as spirits that needed to be pacified through prayer in order to bring fortune, as the story above shows, by the Heian period unruly deities can be subjugated and bound by a Buddhist Sutra and their previously hostile nature permanently tamed.

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10 Yoshiko Kurata Dykstra, *Konjaku Tales* (Intercultural Research Institute Kansai Gaidai Univ., 1998), pg.88
12 Ibid., 67-68
By listening to the Dharma, or having it recited to them, kami received good karma which worked to make them more beneficial and controllable.\textsuperscript{13} Thus the previously untamable kami came to be regarded as deluded beings in need of salvation. In an 8\textsuperscript{th} century biography of Fujiwara Muchimaro written by the priest Enkei, the god Kehi appears to Muchimaro and asks that a temple be built for him that he may hear the Dharma and overcome the “sinful” karma that keeps him in his state as a kami.\textsuperscript{14} Another example that shows how after kami were enlightened the local calamities ceased is the story of the Hie kami. In the Honchō-kōsōden a kami approaches a man asking him to build the kami a Buddhist temple dedicated to the kami. Here the kami says:

“I was born as an evil god so I have had many painful sufferings. I want to convert to the Three Treasures to try to escape from my suffering but still I cannot, so will you in my place please build a Buddhist temple here and enshrine the Buddha's image? Thus calamities will not occur and the people will have peace.”\textsuperscript{15}

After the temple is constructed for the deity the diseases and disasters that had plagued the people were reported to have stopped. The kami called Tado-no-kami is another Nara period example of the view of kami as karma-suffering beings.

“It is my fate to have been born a kami but I wish straightaway to practice the Buddhist oath, shed my kami-body and become a Buddha. But I am troubled, without the ability to receive the necessary (good) karma. For this reason I desire that a place of (buddhist) practice be established.”\textsuperscript{16} from the Tado-Jingu(u)-ji records. (763)

In this story, as in the one above, kami are depicted as beings that have acquired their status via evil karma and can be released only by Buddhist merit-making activities such as building temples and pagodas. Such accounts show that the concept of kami as sentient beings...
and karma producing beings was accepted by the scholastic community as early as the Nara period. This also supports the idea that a trend was beginning wherein *kami* were no longer exalted beings above and beyond the human realm of concerns. Thus while *kami* might have remained superior in power and ability to humans, they were not exempt from the laws of karma.

In the quote above it is suggested that a *kami* who received enlightenment or is released from their existence as a *kami*, will be able to eventually become a Buddha. “I wish straightaway to practice the Buddhist oath, shed my *kami*-body and become a Buddha.” This suggests an openness to the idea that *kami*, like other sentient beings, can climb the Buddhist eschatological ladder and become a Buddha. This possibility is further suggested by the fact that enlightened *kami* became Dharma protectors. The idea developed that because the *kami* were so thankful for the Sutras read, pagodas built, and statues carved on their behalf, they willingly vowed to protect and help disseminate Buddhist doctrine out of gratitude and commitment to Buddhism.\(^\text{17}\)

*Usa Hachiman* provides an example of a *kami* who made a vow to help protect Buddhism by promising to “lead the kami of heaven and earth to ensure the safe completion” of the large Vairocana statue in 747.\(^\text{18}\) In 749 the *Usa Hachiman kami* became the official protective deity of the *Todaiji* temple, and a tutelary shrine was built for him near the *Todaiji*.\(^\text{19}\) By becoming the protective deity of a Buddhist temple and then being enshrined there is an example of the ties established between a *kami* and Buddhism upon becoming a Dharma-protector. *Usa Hachiman* is not a wandering *kami*

\(^\text{17}\) Matsunaga, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pg.218
\(^\text{18}\) Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*, pg.13
\(^\text{19}\) Mastunaga, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pg.165
enlightened by Buddhism that goes on his way, but instead settles near the temple in order to further protect it and the Buddhists who pray there. As Dharma protectors it seems as though *kami* were raised above the low status Buddhism accorded them when Buddhism first encountered indigenous deities. However this is not the case.

Though it seems that Buddhism is raising *kami* from the low status accorded to them, in reality they are still considered deluded beings and do not move into the realms of “the 'four kinds of holy beings,' who dwell in the otherworldly realm of enlightenment.”

Even as Dharma-protectors in the early Kamakura period, *kami* are still among the lowest ranked benevolent deities in the Buddhist pantheon. Satō Hirō cites texts from the early Kamakura period wherein we see that even as Dharma protectors, *kami* are not ranked much above humans and are still squarely in the realm of delusion.

In a ritual address to deities (*keibyakumon*)

“...the deva Daikichijōten; the deva Daishō Kangiten; the Dharma protector General Sanshi; the twenty-eight demons; the twelve Divine Generals; all the Dharma-protecting deva kings and devas...”

Since the deities addressed in *keibyakumon* are addressed in descending order of importance or rank, the fact that 'Dharma protector' comes after persons labeled 'deva' suggests that such a rank falls below 'deva'. The rank of 'deva' marks the last of the “four heavenly kinds of beings” that reside in the realm of enlightenment, thus a 'Dharma protector' falls into the realm of delusion which comes under the realm of enlightenment.

This quote also makes a distinction between 'devas' and 'Dharma-protecting devas'. The word 'deva' in sanskrit literally means 'god' or 'deity' thus a 'Dharma-protecting deva' is a

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21 Ibid., 105
22 Ibid., 106
Dharma-protecting god which describes the *kami* in the previous quotations who vow to protect Buddhism. Dharma-protecting *kami* therefore fall, not only under other Dharma-protectors, but also under benevolent Buddhist demons and yakshas (the “twenty-eight demons” and “twelve Divine Generals”) or nature spirits. This ranking places *kami* above humans but below other benevolent Buddhist deities including enshrined buddhas which were awarded a lower ranking than their immaterial counterpart.23 *Kami* who were awarded the rank of Bodhisattva similarly saw little rise in their status.

*Usa Hachiman* was granted the title of “Great Bodhisattva of State-Protecting, Miraculous, Majestic, Divine Power” in 781.24 Such a classification should place *Hachiman* on par with Buddhist devas if not above them.25 However the same Kamakura *keibyakumon* cites *Hachiman* after the Dharma-protecting deities and just before noteworthy humans.

“The three holy ones of the Mountain King, the Princes and their retainers, and all Dharma-protecting holy ones of this mountain...All great Deities of Hachiman, Kamo, Inari, Hirano...Great patriarchs of China, the Great Masters anyue, tientai, Zhang’an and Mioale...”26

This suggests that despite his bodhisattva status, *Usa Hachiman* was not viewed, as late as the early Kamakura period, as any higher than other prominent shrine *kami* or *kami* that had professed loyalty to Buddhism. As will be shown in section four and five of this paper, though *Hachiman* is acknowledged as an enlightened being outside of the realm of delusion by the late Kamakura, as a *kami* of 'inception of enlightenment' he, and others of his rank, are still not seen as equal to their Buddhist counterparts.

23 Ibid., 108
24 The raising of indigenous deities from the nominal rank of Dharma protectors to bodhisattva depended on the popularity as well as the politics surrounding the cult of the particular deity.
25 See Mastunaga’s note on the comparative assimilation of Indra. Matsunaga, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pg.221
26 Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*, pg.108
Until the mid Heian (901) and Early Kamakura period, the title of Bodhisattva was the highest level that kami attained nominally within Buddhism. According to Picken and Mastunaga, in the year 901 is the first time honji suijaku theory was tangentially applied to indigenous gods in the Sandai Jitsuroku with the quotation “When the Buddha leads existence he sometimes uses jitsu [truth] or gon [manifestation]. The Nyorai reveals jaku [suijaku] and sometimes becomes king or kami.” The “Nyorai” is the Japanese word for the Tathagata, the Buddha, specifically Dainichi who in Japanese Buddhism is Mahavairocana or the personified Cosmic Dharma. In this quotation it is revealed that the Cosmic Dharma sometimes manifests itself as kami, meaning that kami now come to be seen as emanations of the Dharma. An even more concrete connection is reported by Mastunaga to be in the Iwashimizu Hachimanguō-shozoōmonjo dated 937 where it was stated that though the Mirokuji Temple and the Hakozaki Jinguōji were in different locations “the gongen-suijaku and the bodhisattva were in reality the same.”

Here we see an instance of a particular kami being identified as being the same in essence as a Buddhist bodhisattva. The use of 'suijaku' in the title of the kami further identifies the kami as an emanation or manifestation of the bodhisattva. The development of the honji suijaku theory and practice represented an attempt by Buddhist and kami ritualist alike, to merge the two traditions closer together. It also represented a much cleverer subjugation of kami to Buddhist authority.

Section 3: Honji Suijaku in the Nara and Heian

At the same time that Buddhism began melding with indigenous traditions, at

27 Mastunaga, Buddhist Philosophy, pg.228
28 Picken, Essentials of Shinto, pg.22
29 Mastunaga, Buddhist Philosophy, pg.228
many shrines and in some large-scale rituals Buddhism was outwardly banned or forbidden. For example in 816 the Onakatomi head priest of Ise was punished for incurring divine wrath by performing Buddhist rituals alongside indigenous ones. In the Jōgan Shiki, dated as 817, Buddhist rites were banned at all court and provincial offices during the Imperial enthronement ceremony.\(^{30}\) Similarly in the Engi Shiki of 927, monks and nuns were forbidden from entering the palace in the period immediately before, during, and after, kami rituals at court.\(^ {31}\) However, these bans and prohibitions were largely a reaction by aristocratic lineages that supported the indigenous cult, to the growing power of Buddhist clergy in politics, a concern that prompted the move of the capital to Heian from Nara.\(^ {32}\) After the Dōkyō incident ended in 768, the bans and prohibitions on Buddhism became strictly enforced at major shrines during major kami festivals/rituals and at court as a way to limit Buddhist power.\(^ {33}\) These bans aimed specifically at keeping lines of hereditary rule and ritual out of Buddhist hands, and from being overly influenced by Buddhist ideals.

After the Dōkyō incident, and the destruction of the Saidaiji Temple pagoda in 772 by lightening which was attributed to the anger of the indigenous deities,\(^ {34}\) Buddhists

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30 Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*, pg.22
32 Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History*, pg.40. Growing buddhist power in government undermined the authority of lineages who based their claims to power on the power and influence of indigenous cults and histories.
33 In 761 the Buddhist priest Dōkyō won the confidence of Empress Koōken after tending to her when she was ill. Subsequently the Empress rescinded her abdication and took the throne as Empress Shōtoku in 765 under Dōkyō’s influence. Dōkyō was given control of affairs concerning the control of priests and nuns and received several high-ranking court appointments. In 768, when Dōkyō tried to take the throne, claiming a vision from Hachiman, he was thwarted and disgraced. Empress Shōtoku was removed from the throne and the government began efforts to curtail the influence of Buddhism and priests over the aristocracy and throne. (Richard John Bowring, *The Religious Traditions of Japan, 500-1600*. (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pg.97)
34 Matsunaga, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pg.176-7
felt the need to show that in reality the kami actually did support Buddhism even if outwardly it was banned by the Imperial court and seemingly also banned by high-ranking deities such as Amaterasu. Thus the rhetoric that although Buddhism was formally and outwardly banned, the kami inwardly embraced and supported Buddhism was initiated. This rhetoric, says Matsunaga, was part of a deliberate attempt to assimilate the indigenous deities into Buddhism. This was done using the practice of Honji suijaku. Honji-suijaku, therefore, was part of an attempt by Buddhists to repair the fractured relationship between Buddhism and indigenous cults.

Honji suijaku (honji “original substance” and suijaku “manifest traces”) in Japan, is the practice and philosophy of associating kami with buddhas or bodhisattvas, describing the kami as manifestations that can lead sentient beings to salvation and enlightenment. This process began in China when Honji Suijaku was integrated into Buddhist discourse in the early 5th century by disciples of Kumārajīra and Tiantai (Jpn. Tendai) patriarch Zhiyi who refined it in his interpretation of the Hokkekyō (Lotus Sutra; skrt: Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sutra), and where honji suijaku was first devised under the terms hommon (本問) and shakumon (jakumon 迹門). Originally the concepts of honji and suijaku were applied to the Lotus Sutra to distinguish between two different sets of ideas. First the concepts were used to distinguish between the eternal principle of Buddhahood (Dharmakaya; Mahāvairacana; Dainichi) and the historical Buddha. The former was taken as the honji or original source of the historical Buddha, who was seen as the manifestation (suijaku). Second, the concepts of honji and suijaku were used to

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36 Mastunaga, Buddhist Philosophy, pg.2  
37 Teeuwen and Rambelli, Buddhas and Kami, pg.16
create a structural division between the ultimate “original” teachings of the last 14 chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* as contrasted with the provisional “trace” teachings of the first 14 chapters of the *Lotus Sutra*.

This interpretation of *honji suijaku* was brought to Japan along with Zhiyi's works during the 8th century (754) by Ganjin, and again in 805 by Saichō. These teachings were used and proliferated by Buddhist monks and temples as a way to ease the tension between Buddhists and early Shinto shrines, as the Buddhist temples began to take over land previously reserved for and sacred to the worship of kami.°° *Honji-suijaku* theory was also used by both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in order to garner financial assistance from both the government and the populace by combining the lofty and prestigious Buddhist deities with the more familiar *kami* to showcase the utility of both to this target audience. Toshio Kuroda also reports a philosophical need for *honji suijaku* theory on the part of esoteric traditions such as Tendai. In order for esoteric Buddhism to appropriate *kami*, *kami* “must have had something that predisposed them to association with the realm of esotericism.”°° In other words, Kuroda suggests that in order to seamlessly incorporate *kami* into esoteric and tantric practices, a theory had to be devised that gave *kami* a spiritual connection to Buddhist deities.

According to *honji suijaku* theory, the “originals” (*honji*) were buddhas, and sometimes bodhisattvas, who out of compassion for the Japanese people had “dimmed their radiance” and become *kami*.°°°° The idea, refined in the Kamkura period, was that

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38 Mastunaga, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pg.176-77
40 This was the case in pre-modern Japan. This idea changed in the early modern period to posit *kami* as the originals. *Shintōshū*, ST, vol. *Shintōshū*, pg. 7 trans. in Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*, pg.20
buddhas and bodhisattvas were too lofty and difficult to understand in their true aspects and thus they increased their material aspects, reduce their spiritual aspects, and descended into the world of delusion, manifesting as *kami* (*wakō dōjin*), among other beings. In other words, *kami* were thought to be buddhas who had changed their appearance to something more familiar to the humans whose salvation they were aiding.

From the standpoint of intellectual Buddhism, Buddhist theory as written and discussed by ordained monks and Buddhist scholars, buddhas and *kami* were not ontologically distinct or hierarchically ranked. The perceived distinction between them was a result of one's epistemological stance, i.e., whether one was enlightened or not. In Buddhist theory the provisional or relative (*suijaku*) is not independent from the absolute, but rather it is permeated and dependent upon the absolute. Therefore, *kami*, though manifestations, were not in essence inferior to their Buddhist *honji*. Being permeated and interdependent, *kami* and buddhas were ontologically equal since the absolute is only the absolute in contradistinction to the relative.

Therefore, both their perceived distinctions, and the essence of *kami* and buddhas is important for my thesis as it points to the change occurring in perception of *kami*, to their increasing identification with the more abstract idea of buddhas, and thereby to a growing tension in the rhetoric of their ontological equality. This tension will be discussed in further detail in the next section, as it becomes more evident in the rhetorical developments of the Kamakura period. As *kami* increasingly become identified with

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41 Ibid., pg.19; *Wakō dōjin* represents a description of this phenomena that dates from the late Heain and Kamakura period.
42 Ibid., 20; from the *Kami honji no koto*
43 Ibid.,
44 Mastunaga, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pg.211
Buddhist deities the rhetoric surrounding them seemed to provide them with an equal status and temperament to their Buddhist honji. However, a closer look at the literature and ritual texts of the Kamakura period shows that underneath the rhetoric of equality, lies a persistence in the belief that kami, with few exceptions, were still inferior to their Buddhist honji.

Section 4: Honji Suijaku in the Kamakura

Buddhism introduced and supported the idea of kami as emanations by citing mappo as the cause. Mappo, the belief that the world has entered the final age of the Dharma, encouraged the belief that humans, on their own, could not attain the Dharma and had to be aided by various expedient means (upaya). One such means was the “dimming of the radiance and become identical with the dust” (wakō dōjin) or, the manifestation of Buddha in the world. According to Mastunaga, as a practice, wakō dōjin is not distinct from honji suijaku.45 Teeuwen and van der Veere distinguish them as metaphor for the Buddha’s use of upaya (wakō dōjin) and identifying kami in particular as a form of upaya (honji suijaku).46 Wakō dōjin can be taken as a philosophical underpinning for honji suijaku practices that incorporates hongaku theory in its explanation.

Wakō dōjin theory, according to Rabelli and Teeuwen, derives initially from a passage in the Laozi and is used in Japan to express the manifestation of buddhas in the world of delusion to save sentient beings.47 In the Shintōshū (shasekishū) this is expressed as “skillful means to soften violent hearts” with the thought that the Japanese people

45 Mastunaga, Buddhist Philosophy, pg. 267
46 Hendrick van der Veere and Mark Teeuwen, Nakatomi Harae Kunge: Purification and Enlightenment in Late-Heian Japan (München: Jüdicum Verlag, 1998.), pg. 60
47 Rambelli and Teeuwen, Buddhas and Kami, pg.20
needed to be approached by their own violent deities that instilled fear, in order to hear the Dharma.\textsuperscript{48} Underlying the philosophy of wakō dōjin and honji suijaku is hongaku, original enlightenment, which explains how kami can come to be seen as emanation in the first place. In essence, the theory ties the associations between buddhas and kami more intimately to Buddhist doctrine and philosophy.\textsuperscript{49}

In the \textit{Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna} the term hongaku, translated as “original enlightenment”, is the expression used for the “true suchness” that exists under the conventional deluded consciousness and denotes the potential for enlightenment in all sentient beings.\textsuperscript{50} This “original enlightenment” is contrasted with “acquired enlightenment” (Jpn. \textit{Shikaku} 始覚) which is the process of actualizing the innate potential for enlightenment. In the Chinese tradition of Hua-yen this notion of original enlightenment centered on the idea of “one-mind” while its conception in Japan focused on the idea of “non-duality”.\textsuperscript{51} The interpretation of hongaku as “non-duality” is the interpretation that emphasizes the presence of the Dharma as inherently in all things.\textsuperscript{52} “Non-duality” expresses the belief that the absolute reality, the pure Dharma or \textit{Dainichi}, permeates the conventional reality and expresses itself through everything in it. What this means for \textit{honji suijaku} is that \textit{kami} come to be seen, not as a separate order with its own rules for human interaction and salvation, but as an extension of the Buddhist order. In essence, \textit{kami} come to be seen as imbued with, and a manifestation of, the Dharma.\textsuperscript{53}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{48} Ibid., 20
\bibitem{49} Particularly esoteric Buddhism
\bibitem{50} Chinese: \textit{Ta-sheng ch‘i-hsin lūn}
\bibitem{51} Tamura Yoshirō “Critique of Original Awakening Thought on Shōshin and Dōgen.” \textit{Japanese Journal of Religious Studies} 11, no.2-3 (June 1, 1984), pg.243
\bibitem{52} Shingon and Tendai came to express this, notably in the works of Kukai who advocated a doctrine that saw the entire Dharma in a single letter, sound, mantra, etc
\bibitem{53} Kūkai (774-835), the founder of Shingon, was the first Japanese scholar to engage with the concept of
\end{thebibliography}
Kami are the spirits of the various Buddhas; the Buddha constitutes the essence of the various kami. There for it is written in a Sutra: 'The Buddha dwells in non-duality and always manifests himself in the form of kami (shintō 神道).'

The “Buddha” referred to in this passage from the Nakatomi Harae Kunge is Dainichi, the personification of the eternal principle of Buddhahood. By saying he “delves in non-duality” the text is not only identifying him as Suchness, but also alluding to the fact that he pervades all. One manifestation of this Buddha are kami which now take the Buddha as their core or essence. Kami are no longer defined by a aramitama and nigimitama, as beings with a side that needs to be pacified. Instead they become upaya or helpful means for saving sentient beings. However, though this passage seems to suggests that all kami are really Dainichi in essence, this is not the case. The same text later identifies kami of three different kinds, one of which are kami without enlightenment. Such classifications, which break from hongaku, suggest that Buddhism was not as egalitarian toward all kami as the rest of Buddhist rhetoric seemed to be.

Secondly, the gods of no-enlightenment; these are the Violent Gods of Izumo and the like. Far removed from the Dharmas that come forth from the presence as explained by [the teaching of] the One Vehicle, they stay in the four evil places. Even though they see Buddhist monks and hear the Sanskrit words of the various Buddhas, they lose their mind-god. They are the likes of the evil demons of ignorance. Because these are the gods of true delusion, they are called ‘gods of no enlightenment’.  

“original enlightenment”. Relying heavily on an eighth-century commentary of the Awakening of Faith, Kūkai adopted the discourse of nondualism (funi 不二) and original enlightenment into his esoteric teachings. Hongaku in Shingon sees all buddhas and bodhisattvas as manifestations of the cosmic Buddha Dainichi who is conceived as the timeless aspect or principle(ri) underlying the universe. The realization of the pervasiveness of Dainichi in all phenomena is called ‘wisdom’(chi). When one realizes that principle and wisdom are both Dainichi and not distinct, they will realize their own inherent enlightenment; that is they will realize that their own existence is not distinct from Dainichi and “will attain union with Dainichi, and 'return to the origin', obtaining enlightenment in this existence.” van der Veere and Teeuwen, Nakatomi Harae Kunge, pg.5

54 Ibid., 21
55 Ibid., 50
Kami of no-enlightenment (fukaku) are not manifestations of the Dharma and represent the idea of “real kami” (jisshashin 実社; jisturui kijin; jittai 実体), kami that have no honji. These spirits were considered independent and autonomous beings, which derived from the spirits of humans worshiped as ancestors, snakes, and foxes. These kami, which also included Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) kami such as Susanowo, were considered malevolent kami of “no enlightenment”. Because these kami were far removed from the Dharma they were thought to cause harm and lead one to dwell in the hell realms. These types of kami were considered worthy of worship only because doing so would placate their wrath and avoid calamities.

Kami with honji, by contrast, were called “temporary kami” (gonsha 権社) and were considered as having the same status as their associated Buddha or bodhisattva. As Kuroda Toshio notes, the kami that would actually fall into the realm of “temporary kami” were a relatively small number; some of the more prominent ones being those of major shrines such as Ise.

There are three kinds of gods. First, the gods of original enlightenment; these are the gods of the Great Shrines of Ise. They are the wondrous embodiment of the essence of the presence [of Dainichi] of original purity, that is eternal and unchanging. Therefore they are called the Honoured Gods of the Great Origin...

As will be shown more prominently in the next section, deities such as those of Ise, Amaterasu and Toyouke, came to be identified as equal with their honji and accorded the honji's rank in the Buddhist hierarchy. Just as Dainichi is considered the same as the

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56 Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*, pg.31, from Kami honji no koto pg.42
58 Ibid.,
59 Ibid.,
60 van der Veere and Teeuwen, *Nakatomi*, pg.50
Dharmakaya, as the Origin, the deities of Ise are here awarded the exclusive rank of “gods of original enlightenment”. By this title and the subsequent title of “Gods of the Great Origin”, the Ise deities are also thought to dwell in non-duality which is the Origin.

As will be shown in the next section, Amaterasu’s rise in the Buddhist pantheon was not without the influence of the view that kami were inferior to buddhas.

For other kami, while acknowledged to have a honji, they were not really considered equal in rank and were considered “kami of inception of enlightenment”.

Thirdly, the gods of inception of enlightenment; these are the gods of Iwashimizu [Hachimangū], Hirota and the like. After transmigrating, they awaken from their sleep of ignorance because they rely on the teachings of the Buddhist Sutras, and they return to original enlightenment. This is inception of enlightenment. They are called ‘gods of true awakening’.

In the gods of inception of enlightenment (shikaku), we see a persistence of the separation between Buddhism and the indigenous deities. In this passage the belief that kami are inherently suffering beings is shown by the line “After transmigrating, they awaken from their sleep of ignorance”. This line shows that kami were thought to dwell in ignorance until awakening to enlightenment and rising above their status as deluded beings to “return” to the origin. This implication, that a kami is a suffering being, was absent in the passage referencing the Ise deities, suggesting that the Ise deities were always enlightened. This passage marks a distinction between true “temporary kami” and suijaku, a distinction that will be further explored in the next section on Amaterasu.

Amaterasu represented a “temporary kami” in that she came to be seen as Dainichi and awarded his rank in the Buddhist pantheon. Amaterasu was an exception to the Buddhist trend of casting kami in the role of deluded being turned Dharma-protector;

61 Ibid., 50-51
however hints of this rhetoric can be seen in Kamakura texts connecting her with Dainichi. Though Amaterasu is never explicitly spoken of as a deluded being, her rank is temporarily reduced to that of a Dharma protector before she is vaulted to the apex of the Buddhist pantheon as Dainichi.

**Section 5: Deity of Ise**

**Cosmology of Amaterasu**

In the modern period, the place of Amaterasu as the progenitor of the imperial line, and also of the Japanese people as a whole, is taken as a given. She is known widely and highly regarded in what is now called “Shinto”, a term whose meaning around the early modern period changed to encompass pre-Buddhist survivals and a theology and tradition that distinguished itself from Buddhism. Amaterasu so considered, however, is a late medieval-early modern development influenced heavily by esoteric Buddhism and the economic concerns of post-Heian Japan. From the early Nara period (710-94) to the end of the Kamakura (1185-1333), Amaterasu rose from a little known local deity to become the progenitor of the Imperial line making her an Imperial ancestor, and an embodiment of the highest esoteric Buddhist ideal. Amaterasu’s rise in importance in the Japanese consciousness was due, in part, to her rise in the Buddhist pantheon. The changes in Amaterasu’s character, discussed later in this section, enabled worship of Amaterasu to be extended to the general populace where in the Nara and Heian periods she was exclusively worshiped by the Imperial family.

**Amaterasu in the Nara period**

In the Asuka period during the reign of Tenmu (672-86), Amaterasu took on both
the roles of *ujigama* or tutelary deity of the family house, and ancestor of the Imperial house.\textsuperscript{62} This was the first time that an *ujigama* had been associated with ancestor *kami*. They had previously been nature gods worshiped in the locality of the family house's origin.\textsuperscript{63} While the identity of *Amaterasu* prior to her installation as the Imperial ancestor is murky, it has been established that she was not the original ancestor or tutelary deity of the Yamato court. It is surmised by Matsumae Takeshi, a Japanese historian, that the choice to make *Amaterasu* the Imperial ancestor was perhaps a result of Korean influence, which emphasized sun worship and progeny, and/or the appropriation of the local deity of a conquered clan.\textsuperscript{64} Despite these opaque beginnings, however, by time of the writing of the *Kojiki* in 712, *Amaterasu* was established as the Imperial ancestor and supreme deity. In the subsequent *Nihon Shoki* (*Nihongi*) (720), however, *Amaterasu* is made more docile and subordinate and her status as a direct Imperial ancestor is not as emphasized. Through both of these works, however, one can see *Amaterasu*’s somewhat precarious place near the top of the indigenous pantheon.

In the *Nihon Shoki* (*Nihongi*) and *Kojiki, Amaterasu* is both a sun-goddess and a heavenly *kami*, created from (one of) the first couple(s) Izanami and Izanagi.\textsuperscript{65} In the *Kojiki, Amaterasu* is more specifically born from the washing of Izanagi’s left eye as he bathes in a river to remove the pollution of the underworld. “The name of the Deity that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Felicia Gressitt Bock, *Engi-Shiki: Procedures of the Engi Era*. Vol.1 Books I-V. (Tokyo, Japan: Sophia University, 1970), pg.32
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid.,
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Takeshi Matsumae "Origin and growth of the worship of Amaterasu." *Asian Folklore Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 1978) pg.3-5.; Imperial edicts between 697 and 749 stress the connection between the Imperial line and heavenly deities, especially the Sun, which indicates a rise in belief that the Imperial line needed to be supported by connections to the myths of the Kojiki.-Breen and Teeuwen, *Buddhas and Kami*, pg.30
  \item \textsuperscript{65} In the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* and *Kojiki* there is more than one deity couple created in the beginning of the universe though only Izanagi and Izanami produce children important to the history of Japan.
\end{itemize}
was born as he thereupon washed his left august eye was the Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity [Amaterasu].”66 Thus is the origin of Amaterasu as a kami, according to both the Kojiki and one rendition of the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi). What is interesting to note about the Kojiki version of the origin tale is that Amaterasu, apart from being born of Izanagi, is not said to be created for the purpose of ruling the Plain of High Heaven, as she is in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi). In the Kojiki Amaterasu is later charged with that task. “...at once jinglingly taking off and shaking the jewel-string forming his august necklace, he bestowed it on the Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity, saying: “Do Thine Augustness rule the Plain-of-High-Heaven.”67 In this story, the role of ruler of the Plain of High Heaven is a position attached to the transfer power bestowed or given by Izanagi. Thus, Amaterasu is not necessarily born into the position of ruler, but is rather chosen for such a position.

This contrasts with an origin tale in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) where Amaterasu is a deity born, not from purification, but from the joining of Izanagi and Izanami, and created specifically for the purpose of ruling the Plain of High Heaven.

“After this Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto consulted together, saying:--"We have now produced the Great eight-island country, with the mountains, rivers, herbs, and trees. Why should we not produce someone who shall be lord of the universe? They then together produced the Sun-Goddess, who was called Oho-hiru-me no muchi. Called in one writing Ama-terasu no Oho kami."68

Though both works ultimately charge her with presiding over the Plain of High Heaven, in the later Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) her position is more firmly established as

67 Ibid., 50
68 W.G. Aston, Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D 697 (Rutland, Vermont;;Tokyo, Japan: Carles E. Tuttle Company, 1993), pg.18
such. That she is created with the intent to rule the Plain of High Heaven in the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* seems to suggest that the compilers wanted to more firmly establish her role as important in the cosmos.

*Amaterasu*'s importance in regards to the dwelling places of most powerful *kami*, the Plain of High Heaven, and to humans in the Central Land of Reed Plains, is further emphasized when *Amaterasu* hides in a rock-cave for some time.

> “So thereupon the Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity, terrified at the sight, closed [behind her] the door of the Heavenly Rock-Dwelling, made it fast, and retired. Then the whole plain of High Heaven was obscured and all the Central Land of Reed-Plains darkened. Owing to this eternal night prevailed.”

Here, *Amaterasu*'s importance as the sun-goddess is emphasized. When she shuts herself away the universe no longer is able to receive light. *Amaterasu*'s role as the sun-goddess and source of the universe's radiance is shown by the fact that, after *Amaterasu* shut herself in the rock cave, “constant darkness prevailed on all sides, and the alteration of night and day was unknown.” Angering or insulting *Amaterasu* then, can potentially cause perpetual night which would conceivably cause crops to wither and people to die. Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)*, in this respect, acknowledge *Amaterasu*'s role as the sole source of sunlight in the universe and her importance to the cycle of days and the continuation of life.

*Amaterasu* also gains importance from the descent of her grandson to Japan (Central Land of Reed Plains) and thereby has the status of an Imperial ancestor. This important position, however, is based more on the *Kojiki* telling of her grandchild's descent, than the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)*'s account. In the *Kojiki*, it is *Amaterasu*, and only

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69 Chamberlain, *Kojiki*, pg.63  
70 Aston, *Nihongi*, pg.41
Amaterasu, who orders her son, and then her grandson, to rule over the Central Land of Reed Plains.

“The Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity commanded, saying: 'The Luxuriant-Reed-Plains-the-Land-of-Fresh. Rice-ears-of-a-Thousand-Autumns,-of Long-Five-Hundred-Autumns is the land which my august child His Augustness Truly-Conquering-I-Conquer-Conquering-Swift-Heavenly-Great-Great-Ears shall govern.'...Then the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity and the Heaven-shining-Great-August-Deity commanded the eight hundred myriad Deities to assemble in a divine assembly in the bed of the Tranquil River of Heaven, and caused the Deity Thought-Includer to think[of a plan]...”

In this rendition, Amaterasu (Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity) is the one to determine that her son will rule over the Reed Plain, and she is the driving force behind the series of discussions regarding the subduing of the Reed Plain. When the son suggests the grandson in his place, Amaterasu agrees and then charges the grandson with the rule of the Reed Plain. This version places Amaterasu in a powerful position of leadership and control. In this version of the myth it would seem that Amaterasu sat at the top of the Japanese pantheon and acted as a sovereign to other gods and as divine progenitor to the ruling family.

In contrast, the first story of the grandchild's descent in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) does not mention Amaterasu at all. Instead it is the maternal grandfather, Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto who expresses desire for his grandchild to rule and he sends other Kami to pacify the land. Amaterasu in this version had been cut out all together, lacking any reference. Whereas in the Kojiki and in the second version in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi), it is initially her son that was charged to go down, the first version in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) makes no reference to her son being charged to descend at all. Breen and

71 Chamberlain, Kojiki, pg.112
72 “Eventually he desired to establish his august grandchild Ama-tsu-hiko-ho-ho-ninigi no Mikoto as the Lord of the Central Island of Reeds.” Aston, Nihongi, pg.64
Teeuwen also note that solar imagery and the character of sun are avoided in the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)*. A reliable reason for this discrepancy between the two texts, they state, cannot be obtained due to the unreliability of contemporary sources on the subject.\(^73\)

What is uncontested in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* is that *Amaterasu* is a high-ranking sun deity, without which the universe would be plunged into eternal night. Despite this important role, *Amaterasu*’s position vis-a-vis other *kami* seems to be in flux within both works. In the *Kojiki*, although *Amaterasu* is appointed as ruler, suggesting she could be replaced and is not created for that position, she is nevertheless the sole instigator in Ninigi’s descent to the Central Reed Plain. The *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* is just the opposite. The *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* presents *Amaterasu* as the *kami* created for the purpose of ruling the High Plain, which suggests that the position was hers alone, however her involvement is omitted in the descent of her grandson in the first version of this story. Ultimately, it is the *Kojiki*’s version of the descent that takes precedence. However it is interesting to note that between these two works, the exact position of *Amaterasu* at the top of the pantheon and her relation to humans remains dubious.

**Amaterasu in Late Heian and Kamakura**

According to Teeuwen,\(^74\) as the Ise Shrine gained more court support and influence during the Heian period, *Amaterasu*’s status as Imperial Ancestor went unchallenged and unchanged until the weakening of the Heian court in 1156.\(^75\) No longer

\footnotesize{“Then Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto took the coverlet which was his true couch, and casting it over his August Grandchild, Amatsu-hiko-hiko-ho-ninigi no Mikoto, made him to descend.”Ibid., 70

73 Breen and Teeuwen, _New History_, pg.30


guaranteed support by the state, the Ise Shrine had to look elsewhere for income, turning to the largely Buddhist lay population as well as the growing warrior caste. What this change in audience entailed was a repositioning and re-purposing of the Ise deities. Amaterasu, one of the Ise deities, changed in status and purpose though her status change was less dramatic in the indigenous pantheon than the Buddhist. By the time of the writing of the Nakatomi Harae Kunge in the late 12th century, Amaterasu in the indigenous pantheon had shifted from a deity who, though ruler of the Plain of High Heaven, still consulted and was occasionally subservient to other deities, to a deity who answered to no one and commanded the loyalty of all other deities. In the Buddhist pantheon, she rose from the status typically allotted to kami, as emanations (suijaku), to an embodiment of the higher Buddhist principle Dainichi.

“It is clear that we must take orders of the Buddhas and the gods, offer to the spirits, and receive their protection; thus we can gain their protection and [learn to] perceive the Suchness that is One, the real Aspect, which is everlasting and perfect. Therefore Amateru Ōngami is Dainichi, the All-Illuminating Honoured One. She is the highest amongst gods, and peerless. All other gods are her servants.”

Though it would seem that Amaterasu has not gained much in this passage she has actually jumped several levels in both the Buddhist and indigenous pantheon. Though Amaterasu, in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki (Nihongi), is charged/created with the rule of the High Plain of Heaven, she is not depicted as an absolute ruler of such. In both there are deities who are classified as higher, or of equal rank as her, such as Takamimusubi. Takamimusubi, the maternal grandfather of Ninigi, is also one of the first deities created in the beginning of the world.

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van der Veere and Teeuwen, Nakatomi, pg.40

As one of the first deities created Takamimusubi is of a higher order than Amaterasu who is created from the pairing of one of these first deities. In other words, Takamimusubi is a first generation kami while Amaterasu is a second generation kami. Further, as has been shown, Takamimusubi in the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi) replaces Amaterasu as the Imperial ancestor and causes the descent of Ninigi. In the Kojiki Takamimusubi acts in accord with Amaterasu, putting her on par with him. “Then the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity[Takamimusubi no Mikoto] and the Heaven-shining-Great-August-Deity commanded the eight hundred myriad Deities to assemble in a divine assembly” (my insertion).  

By these examples it is clear that prior to the Nakatomi Harae Kunge, Amaterasu was not unequivocally a supreme deity but acted either in tandem with other deities or not at all. In the quote from the Nakatomi Harae Kunge above however, we can see that by the Kamakura period Amaterasu is now thought of as without equal and subordinate to none. “She is the highest amongst gods, and peerless. All other gods are her servants.” Amaterasu in this passage has been vaulted above her predecessors and creators, subjugating both.

Amaterasu’s change in cosmology from a qualified ruler of the High Plain and progenitor of the Imperial line to the uncontested ruler of all gods, represents an exception to the normal Buddhist treatment of kami. While other kami saw a demotion in rank due to the similarity of their temperament to humans, Amaterasu was raised in rank.

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77 Aston, Nihongi, pg.5
78 Chamberlain, Kojiki, pg.112
despite her temperament. The reason for Amaterasu’s exception to Buddhism’s approach to other kami is a result of Amaterasu’s connection to the power and mythology of the Imperial line and court. As was evidenced by the reaction to Dōkyō’s attempt to seize power, the Nara and Heian courts resisted a strong influence of Buddhism in the politics of succession. The Imperial cult, which held Amaterasu at its center, provided the mythic and historical foundations for Imperial power through the story of the heavenly grandchild’s descent. If Amaterasu were to be treated the same as other kami, as a deluded being in need of salvation, it would undermine the power and legitimacy of the Imperial line. This is due to the fact that as a deluded being Amaterasu would no longer be a heavenly deity worthy of worship and obedience. Therefore, in order to maintain the authority of the Imperial line and cult, Amaterasu was not subject karma as other kami were. By the time of the Nakatomi in the Kamakura period, Amaterasu’s exception to the Buddhist philosophy of assimilation was taken largely as a given.

At the same time that Amaterasu rose in the indigenous pantheon, she gained a supreme place in the Buddhist pantheon. In Esoteric Buddhism, Dainichi is the Japanese word for the Dharmakaya, Suchness itself, the essence of the Dharma, and is the highest position in the esoteric Buddhist pantheon. The quote cited above from the Nakatomi Harae Kunge identifies Amaterasu as the same as Dainichi. “Therefore Amateru Ōngami is Dainichi, the All-Illuminating Honoured One.” The campaign to raise Amaterasu in the Buddhist pantheon after the weakening of the Heian court (1156), was a move on the part of the Ise priests to make a once Emperor-exclusive deity appealing to the

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79 Breen and Teeuwen, New History, pg.40
predominantly Buddhist populace.\textsuperscript{80} Just as securing Amaterasu’s position in the indigenous pantheon supported the influence of, and funding for, the Ise shrine from the Heian court, her rise to the top of the Buddhist pantheon served to maintain that influence and financial support in the Kamakura period. Unlike her rise in the indigenous pantheon, Amaterasu’s rise in the Buddhist pantheon entailed a change in her overall ontology and temperament. It is in this change that we see the first hints of Buddhist condescension toward Amaterasu.

\textbf{The Ontology of Amaterasu}

\textit{Amaterasu in the Nara period}

In the \textit{Nihon Shoki} (Nihongi) we see the human and the divine qualities possessed by high level \textit{kami} such as Amaterasu, though, in general \textit{kami} are said to be distinct from humans and disembodied.\textsuperscript{81} From the \textit{Nihon Shoki} (Nihongi) we find a few characteristics of \textit{kami} in general that also apply to Amaterasu and that are of interest. Kami by and large exhibit dual natures with a 'wild spirit' (aramitama) and a 'gentle spirit' (nigimitama).\textsuperscript{82} Amaterasu’s dual nature is shown through her identity as the deity who provides food for humanity (nigimitama) and simultaneously through the fear humans feel in her presence (aramitama).

The gentle nature of Amaterasu, characterized by kindness, charity and goodwill, is shown through her bestowal of food to humanity.

\begin{quote}
“Ame-kuma-bito carried all these things and delivered them to Amaterasu no Oho-kami, who was rejoiced, and said:--‘These are the things which the race of visible men will eat and live.’ So she made the millet, the panic, the wheat, and the beans the seed for the dry fields, and the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{80} Teeuwen, \textit{Watarai Shinto}, pg.85 section on “New Rituals and Definitions of Worship”
\textsuperscript{81} Aston, \textit{Nihongi}, pg.33 footnote 3
\textsuperscript{82} Jean Herbert, \textit{Shintô at the Fountain-head of Japan} (London; New York: Routledge, 2011.), pg.59-63
Though *Amaterasu* did not produce these things from her own body, her gentle nature is shown by the fact that she provides humans with a wide array of food.

Though *Amaterasu* does not express her fearsome nature often, the fear inspired by *Amaterasu*'s power is shown in the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* by the tale of her removal from the Imperial household to Ise.

“Before this the two Gods Ama-terasu no Oho-kami and Yamato no Oho-kuni-dama were worshipped together within the Emperor's Great Hall. He dreaded, however, the power of these Gods, and did not feel secure in their dwelling together.”

While this quote does not depict *Amaterasu* raging and storming in the presence of humans, the fact that she was believed to possess a great deal of power and needed to be removed from the immediate presence of other great deities and the Imperial house shows that he power was fearsome. That her power also caused the emperor to worry and feel uneasy, further supports this as one would not feel uneasy in the presence of a weak or controllable deity.

Aside from being the progenitor of a human lineage and the provider of food to humanity, two other stories about *Amaterasu* from the *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)* are important because they highlight the human qualities of *Amaterasu*. The first story regards an exchange between *Amaterasu* and her earth deity brother *Sosanowo*. In this tale *Sosanowo* visits his sister in Heaven. However, on account of his fearsome nature, *Amaterasu* is alarmed and arms herself for his arrival.

“Now at first when Sosa no wo no Mikoto went up to Heaven, by reason of the fierceness of his divine nature there was a commotion in the sea, and the hills, and mountains groaned aloud. Ama-terasu no Oho-kami,

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83 Aston, *Nihongi*, pg.33
84 Ibid., 151
knowing of the violence and wickedness of the Deity, was startled and changed countenance, when she heard the manner of his coming. She said (to herself):-- “Is my younger brother coming with good intentions? I think it must be his purpose to rob me of my kingdom.”...So she bound up her hair into knots and tied up her skirts into the form of trowsers. Then she took an august string of five hundred Yasaka jewels, which she entwined around her hair and wrists. Moreover, on her back she slung a thousand-arrow quiver and a five-hundred arrow quiver...Having thus put forth her dread manly valour, she uttered a mighty cry of defiance, and questioned him in a straightforward manner.85

What is interesting about this story is the change in Amaterasu’s countenance from peaceful and nurturing to a fierce warrior. This double nature, from the peaceful and benevolent deity to the warrior deity, becomes important in Buddhism’s use of kami including Amaterasu, though to a lesser extent. Kami are not perpetually peaceful nor perpetually wrathful or destructive (with few exceptions). In the story cited above, Amaterasu is the one with an “impure” (濁にご) heart though Sosanowono is known for the “fierceness of his divine nature” and “violence and wickedness.”86 It is important to note the human qualities of Amaterasu in this tale. Amaterasu is unsure of her brother’s intentions and suspects him of foul play. Suspicion and uncertainty are human-like traits which imply a limitation on the power and ability of kami. Through this story we can see that kami are distinct and more powerful than humans, but like humans have limited knowledge and are prone to suspicion and violence. From a Buddhist standpoint, Amaterasu’s ignorance and subsequent suspicion are traits that stem from the Buddhist ill of ignorance which characterizes human existence in samsara.

In another tale about Amaterasu and her brother Susanowo, Susanowo causes trouble for Amaterasu which results in her being injured and feeling insulted.

“After this Sosanowono Mikoto’s behaviour was exceedingly rude. In

85 Ibid., 34-35
86 Ibid., 34
what way? Ama-terasu no Oho-kami had made august rice fields of Heavenly narrow rice-fields and Heavenly long rice-fields. The Susa no wo no Mikoto, when the seed was sown in spring, broke down the divisions between the plots of rice, and in autumn let loose the Heavenly piebald colts, and made them lie down in the midst of the fields. Again, when he saw Ama-terasu no Oho-kami was about to celebrate the feast of first fruits, he secretly voided excrement in the New Palace. Moreover, when he saw Ama-terasu no Oho-kami was in her sacred weaving hall, engaged in weaving the garments of the Gods, he flayed a piebald colt of Heaven, and breaking a hole in the roof-tiles of the hall, flung it in. Then Ama-terasu no Oho-kami started with alarm, and wounded herself with the shuttle. Indignant at this, she straight away entered the Rock-cave of Heaven, and having fastened the Rock-door, dwelt there in seclusion."87

Here not only do we see a deity behaving maliciously, but we also see, in the personage of Amaterasu, that kami can be physically injured and have their pride insulted. Though kami are typically thought of as being invisible and without substantial bodies of their own, in this story Amaterasu is embodied and is subsequently injured. That a deity can be bodily injured, startled, and insulted, suggests that deities share an emotional temperament analogous to humans. In another version of the same story from the Nihon Shoki (Nihongi), Amaterasu, upon sitting in a chair with excrement, “drew herself up, and was sickened. She was therefore enraged, and straightway took up her abode in the Rock-cave of Heaven, and fastened its Rock-door.”88 In this rendition we see that deities can also be disgusted and outraged, particularly human qualities. These two versions are in stark contrast to the third version which says that Amaterasu, in response to the antics of Susanowo, “out of her friendship for him, was not indignant or resentful, but took everything calmly and with forbearance.”89 This approach is much more in line with Buddhist ideas of the equanimity with which a Bodhisattva or Buddha would deal with such situation. It is this side of Amaterasu which later comes to prominence under

87 Ibid., 40-41
88 Ibid., 47
89 Ibid.,
Buddhism's influence.

From the National Histories we can see that *Amaterasu* during and after the Nara period was conceived of as an anthropomorphic and powerful deity. *Amaterasu*, like other *kami*, could be either peaceful or fearsome and required both pacification and respect. Her dual nature was not a problem or questioned by Nara-period Japanese. This may in part be due to the fact that outside of the Imperial court not many seemed to know of or care about the Deity of Ise. The only times the general populace had contact with Ise would have been during the large-scale purification rituals, but even then it was mostly the upper echelon of society that participated. In addition, the Outer Shrine deity, *Toyouke*, at this time was also not well-known and of little to no import to anyone outside of the Ise Shrine.\(^{90}\) The limited view of *Amaterasu*, and the obscurity of *Toyouke*, continued until the end of the Heian when the Ise shrine was compelled to change its internal theology and ritual practices in order to garner financial support from the greater populace. This change was necessary because until the end of Heian, Ise ritual and theology had been centered on the Emperor and court. The rhetoric and rituals were not structured for individual worship and salvation but instead had been geared toward large-scale purifications to cleanse the state.\(^{91}\)

**Amaterasu in the Heian Period**

The choice to make Ise the location of the shrine for the Imperial Ancestor may have been motivated by political and economic concerns of the 5th-7\(^{th}\) centuries. To the Yamato court (250-710), the plains of Watarai and South Ise were of particular

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90 The Ise shrine is comprised of an Inner and Outer shrine. The Inner Shrine is dedicated to the sun-goddess *Amaterasu* while the Outer Shrine is dedicated to the moon and food-goddess *Toyouke*.  
91 Teeuwen, *Watarai Shinto*, pg.87
importance. Both had features that were essential for the control of maritime trade and defense. South Ise has a large protected bay, while the Watarai district controls the mouth of the Ise Bay. Control of this would control the sea route east and to the Inland Sea and port of Naniwa.\textsuperscript{92} Ise, then, made a profitable location for maritime taxes and trade. The political centralization effort of the 7\textsuperscript{th} century depended on revenues gained from the maritime products and taxes collected by the eastern provinces such as Ise.\textsuperscript{93} Due to its strategic geographical position, the home of the Imperial ancestral and tutelary deity Amaterasu, Ise, enjoyed financial and social security until the decline of the Heian court. During the Heian period Ise catered exclusively to the Emperor and Imperial court. The rituals involving Amaterasu or Ise were developed and aimed toward large audiences, an example of which being nation-wide purification rituals. Such rituals had no importance to individual salvation for individuals other than the Emperor.\textsuperscript{94}

After the fall of the Heian court, during the social chaos that followed, the Ise shrines could no longer depend on the government to show them any particular favor or enforce laws that gave Ise special privileges. The weakening of the Heian court resulted in a shift in the way in which shrines functioned-- from “official” to “private”.\textsuperscript{95} Instead of ministering only to the emperor, priests now had to appeal to both the Imperial court and to private persons. This led to a change in the popular conception of the Ise deities, especially the Outer shrine deity Toyouke, and later, a change in beliefs about the concepts of purity and worship, affecting the identities of both Amaterasu and Toyouke.

\textit{Amaterasu in the Kamakura Period}

\textsuperscript{92} Bock, \textit{Engi-Shiki}, pg.28
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 29
\textsuperscript{94} Teewuen, \textit{Watarai Shinto}, pg.95
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 24
Ryōbu Shinto and Esoteric Buddhism. Since late Heian, Buddhism had been a well entrenched faith among the priests of Ise as evidenced by the practice of burying Sutra scrolls. 96 This practice comes from the belief that the law of the Buddha was ending (mappo) and that by burying scrolls the knowledge could be preserved. 97 Despite prohibitions, Ise priests still practiced Buddhism as their personal faith and developed Watarai Shinto using ideas from Ryōbu Shinto, a Buddhist-Shinto syncretic theory developed by esoteric Buddhist priests. 98 Ryōbu Shinto, developed sometime in the 12th century, is based on Tendai and Shingon ideas concerning hongaku (original enlightenment) developed in the late Heian period as a reaction to mappo pessimism 100 and Jodo Buddhism. 101

In esoteric Buddhism, buddhas and bodhisattvas are conceived of as partial manifestations of the Buddha Dainichi who in turn is conceived of as the ultimate reality “ri” (principle). This ultimate reality is also described as the compassion of Dainichi through which the universe came into being. 102 The teachings of Ryōbu Shinto are constructed on the basis of a theory identifying Dainichi as the original source (honji) of Amaterasu/Ohirume. 103 This theory is attributed to the monk Gyogi (668-749) who reportedly received an oracle from Amaterasu where she identified herself as Rushana-butsu (Dainichi). The oldest sources making this identification, however, date from the
late Heian period. The connections between the Ise Shrines and Dainichi existed in older associations with Kannon since 1111. The connections with Dainichi, however, were longer lasting and by the early Kamakura period was a widely accepted and known idea among monks and lay persons.\textsuperscript{104} Ryōbu Shinto also redefined the Inner and Outer Shrines as emanations of the womb (taizokai) and diamond (kongokai) mandalas respectively, which in turn serve as depictions of ri and chi, the two aspects of Dainichi.

**Amaterasu in Ryōbu Shinto and Esoteric Buddhism.** The Nakatomi Harae Kunge, “Reading and Explanation of the Nakatomi Purification Formula”, is a late 12th century Ryobu Shinto commentary that reinterprets the Nakatomi purification ritual (Nakatomi Saimon), one of the major rituals performed by the Heian court twice a year, in esoteric Buddhist terms. This reinterpretation of the ritual recreates the once court-scale ritual for the individual practitioner, using the originally Shingon interpretations of hongaku (original enlightenment) thought. By applying hongaku rhetoric to this ritual, Ise ritualists recast Amaterasu in esoteric Buddhist terms and raised her in the Buddhist pantheon as a result.

The Nakatomi Harae Kunge seeks to establish the connection between Amaterasu and ri, as well as between Toyouke and chi. Ri and chi are the two aspects of the cosmic Buddha or Dharmakaya, Dainichi (skrt: Mahavairocana). The first aspect of Dainichi is conceived of as the timeless aspect, or principle (ri) underlying the universe. In hongaku thought, ri is 'Suchness' or the seed of original enlightenment present in all phenomena. The second aspect of Dainichi is the realization of the pervasiveness of Dainichi in all

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 53
phenomena called 'wisdom' (chi).\textsuperscript{105}

“The Great Gods of Ise have said in an oracle... 'The sun-disc of
Suchness in its real aspect brings light in the darkness of the long night
of birth and death; the moon-disc of original and eternal existence
sweeps away the clouds of ignorance and desire. (the sun-disc in the
Imperial Great God Amaterasu; the moon-disc in the imperial Great
God Toyouke.)”\textsuperscript{106}

The “real aspect” which Amaterasu is identified with in the quote cited above is \textit{ri} while
the “original and eternal existence” is \textit{chi}. That \textit{ri} is what is indicated by “real aspect” is
evidenced by the connection between 'Suchness' and “real aspect”, suchness being
considered the only real and thus timeless characteristic of the universe. \textit{Chi} is identified
as the “original and eternal existence” by the fact that it is said to “[sweep] away the
clouds of ignorance and desire”, a characteristic of wisdom, particularly enlightenment.
Thus \textit{Amaterasu}, as the “sun-disc”, is associated with \textit{ri}, while \textit{Toyouke}, as the “moon-disc”, is associated with \textit{chi}.

By making these associations the \textit{Nakatomi} raises the status of both \textit{Amaterasu}
and \textit{Toyouke} above emanations of lower level buddhas or bodhisattvas, and to the highest
level in the esoteric pantheon. While other \textit{kami} were \textit{kami} of 'inception of
enlightenment' \textit{Amaterasu and Toyouke} became classified as \textit{kami} of 'original
enlightenment' and thus were not a result of a Buddha “dimming the radiance”. In raising
\textit{Amaterasu} to this level, however, the \textit{Nakatomi} first subtly demotes her to a Dharma-
protector before raising her status again.

“And ever since this time, the Great God [\textit{Amaterasu}] has acted as a
divine warrior who, although on the surface performing ceremonies
that are different from the buddhist teaching, in essence protects the
Buddhist Law. Although within and without[the buddhist teachings]
the words are different, [\textit{kami} and Buddhas] are identical as means of

\textsuperscript{105} van der Veere and Teeuwen, \textit{Nakatomi}, pg.5
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 41
This passage is important as it shows the first attempts by Buddhism to treat Amaterasu in the same manner as other kami. This quote, which occurs in the text before the quote cited on the previous page, casts Amaterasu, not as an emanation of Dainichi, but as a Dharma-protecting warrior. This first association reflects ideas that kami, as sentient beings in need of salvation, were thought to become Dharma protectors. This shows that Amaterasu, despite her political importance in the Heian, was also viewed as a karma-producing deity who becomes a Dharma protector at an early point in the writing of the Nakatomi. By contrast, later in the Nakatomi Amaterasu's status both as a kami and in relation to Buddhism is raised. Teeuwen and van der Veere view this an indication that multiple hands wrote parts of the Nakatomi at different periods in time.  

Second, this passage shows the application of hongaku and honji suijaku theory. The assertion that “Kami are the spirits of the various buddhas; the Buddha constitutes the essence of the various kami” at once establishes kami as the spirit emanations of buddhas and at the same time asserts the hongaku belief that the Buddha Dainichi (Skr. Mahavairocana) pervades all. The above quotation, combined with the assertion that “[kami and buddhas] are identical as means of salvation” combines the indigenous and Buddhist pantheons, and legitimizes indigenous kami practices for Buddhists by asserting that kami are the spiritual equivalent of buddhas and thus their thaumaturgic and religious power is equal. This connection became important when the Ise shrine needed to garner

107 Ibid., 21
108 See the introduction of Teeuwen and van der Veere's translation of the Nakatomi Harae Kunge
donations from the largely Buddhist population after the fall of the Heian court. In this way, the Shinto priests establish the import of their traditional rituals involving kami and make them more meaningful and efficacious to Buddhists. The lines “the Buddha constitutes the essence of the various kami[....] The Buddha dwells in non-duality and always manifests himself in the form of kami” express the developing elements of hongaku theory, allowing for the association between Amaterasu and Dainichi that comes later in the text. It tells the priest and practitioner early on that Dainichi is the essence of all kami so that the reader is already prepared for associations with particular kami.

“It is clear that we must take orders of the Buddhas and the gods, offer to the spirits, and receive their protection; thus we can gain their protection and [learn to] perceive the Suchness that is One, the real Aspect, which is everlasting and perfect. Therefore Amateru Ōngami is Dainichi, the All-Illuminating Honoured One. She is the highest amongst gods, and peerless. All other gods are her servants.”

The identification of Amaterasu with Dainichi is an affirmation of Amaterasu as sovereign in the indigenous and Buddhist pantheons. In this excerpt Amaterasu is identified with “Suchness that is One, the real Aspect, which is everlasting and perfect”, which is also the description used for Dainichi cementing their connection as a unified being.

“Therefore he is called Henjōson, the All-illuminating Honoured One (that is Dainichi), or Ōhirume no Mikoto (that is Amaterasu). When he descends to the Central Land of Plentiful Reed Plains (Japan), his name is changed and his appearances are called ‘the Two Imperial Great Heaven-Shining (Amaterashimasu) Deities.’

The identification of Amaterasu was originally based on the identification of her as an emanation, as a product of “dimmed radiance”. In the quote cited above Dainichi is said to “descend to the Central Land of Plentiful Reed Plains[....] and his appearances are

109 Ibid., 40
110 Ibid., 49
called” *Amaterasu* and *Toyouke*. This means that *Amaterasu* is an appearance or manifestation of *Dainichi* or that *Dainichi* takes on the guise of *Amaterasu*.

Later in the *Nakatomi* however, she becomes more than a mere manifestation as the *Nakatomi* identifies three kinds of enlightened *kami*. This ranking highlights the difference between *kami* who are merely manifestations (*suijaku,* and *kami* who are identified as buddhas or bodhisattvas (*honji*) in their own right. This is significant because it brings to the fore, the hitherto underlying notions of inequality between *kami* as *suijaku* and their Buddhist *honji*. By this three-fold distinction, the difference between *kami* who are actually equal to their *honji* and those that are not is shown.

> “Therefore the Two Shrines of Ise are the highest amongst the gods. They are different from all other shrines under heaven. There are three kinds of gods. First, the gods of original enlightenment; these are the gods of the Great Shrines of Ise. They are the wondrous embodiment of the essence of the presence [of *Dainichi*] of original purity, that is eternal and unchanging. Therefore they are called the Honoured Gods of the Great Origin...Thirdly, the gods of inception of enlightenment; these are the gods of Iwashimizu [Hachimangū], Hirota and the like. After transmigrating, they awaken from their sleep of ignorance because they rely on the teachings of the Buddhist Sutras, and they return to original enlightenment. This is inception of enlightenment. They are called 'gods of true awakening'. All those who have attained the Way by way of inception of enlightenment become outer manifestations of the Buddha. They are not primeval Gods of the Origin, associated with original enlightenment.”

*Amaterasu* is identified as the “embodiment” of *Dainichi*, however, embodiment here is contrasted with a manifestation. The last lines refer to the *kami* of inception of enlightenment as “outer manifestations” only, and not “primeval Gods of the Origin” like the deities of Ise. What this means is that *kami* as manifestations retain some of their former nature. This is important because it means that these *kami* are beings still working for their salvation and only have partial enlightenment. The *kami* may come to be seen as

111 Ibid., 50-51
the channels for various Buddhist virtues and the buddhas/bodhisattvas associated with that virtue, but they are not full representations. Kami can be used by Buddhist deities for the salvation of sentient beings, however the kami are themselves still sentient beings working toward their own salvation, working toward the “return to original enlightenment.”

To say that kami of inception of enlightenment are not their honji in essence, would seem to deny the theory of hongaku upon which Buddha-kami associations are based. Japanese hongaku rhetoric stresses the non-duality of Dainichi and all phenomena, meaning phenomena are non-dual in that Dainichi permeates all phenomena. If Dainichi constitutes the core of all phenomena, to say that some kami embody Dainichi and some merely manifest Dainichi seems to be a matter of semantics as Dainichi constitutes the core of both embodiments and manifestations. The difference then, between the kami of inception of enlightenment and the kami of original enlightenment, is that the latter completely embody Dainichi in an unmediated form while the former embody lesser principles mediated through their buddhas/bodhisattvas honji. In other words, Amaterasu (and Toyouke) is the pure embodiment of all that Dainichi is, while other kami are manifestations of the various principles which can be said to be contained within Dainichi but are not the totality of Dainichi. Therefore, to create classes of kami is not contrary to hongaku thought as the ranking denotes the degree of manifestation or embodiment, rather than establishing a complete lacking of the presence of Dainichi.

What an association with Dainichi amounts to is a change in ontology and cosmology for Amaterasu. Amaterasu changes from the anthropomorphic sovereign
heavenly deity of import only to the Emperor, to the complete embodiment of the abstract principle of Dainichi, and becomes central to esoteric Buddhist practice and soteriology. She loses many of her anthropomorphic qualities and fierce aspects, becoming the “perfect”, “all-illuminating”, and “real aspect” of Dainichi. Though Amaterasu was already centered at the apex of the indigenous pantheon prior to this point, she is now elevated above the place of other kami in the Buddhist pantheon. Instead of being viewed as a sentient being equal or below devas in Buddhist cosmology, Amaterasu has now become equal to the cosmic Buddha, rising above all the other buddhas and bodhisattvas.

**Conclusion**

Temples and Shrines in the Nara through Kamakura periods sought to associate and harmonize with one another in response to economic concerns. Buddhism sought to ingratiate itself to the indigenous population by providing a more efficacious way to subdue unruly indigenous deities and make them beneficial. The philosophies that followed and underpinned such actions, shinbutsu shūgō and honji suijaku, began by viewing kami as deluded beings in need of enlightenment but who could rise to become emanations of buddhas and bodhisattvas. By the Kamakura period kami by and large were considered manifestations of buddhas who had “dimmed their radiance” or inserted themselves in the world to save sentient beings. The rhetoric of honji suijaku came to profess equality between kami as suijaku and buddhas as honji.

However, despite the equality professed by Buddhist doctrine, the rhetoric and practices of shinbutsu shūgō and honji suijaku suggest a gradation between kami and buddhas that is more than just convention or the product of one's epistemological view.
As Dharma protectors, *kami* are still in the entry stages of enlightenment and are not much different from arhats. Even as bodhisattvas they are still mediated by higher level Buddhist bodhisattvas and as such, they only partially manifest the ultimate. *Kami* such as *Amaterasu* are among the few that, even in rhetoric, become equal in essence and rank to their *honji*. By the Kamakura period there is a definite ranking among enlightened *kami* ranging from the *kami* of no enlightenment to *kami* of the Origin. What this says is that while scholarly Buddhism would insist that from the viewpoint of the absolute, *kami* and buddhas are the same, the rhetoric presents the opposite view. Though the texts express equality between buddhas and *kami*, it nevertheless goes through lengths to distinguish between *kami* of the origin and *kami* who have acquired enlightenment. This suggests that an equality of essence should be taken with a grain of salt.
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