A Comprehensive Study of Liturgical Texts in Medieval Buddhism

ABE Yasuro

In the development of Japanese Buddhism from ancient through medieval times, various rituals, which were formed during the period, created a field (Jp. ba) that was generated; and the texts that were thus established as its product are categorized under the rubric of "liturgical texts." I will locate them within the varieties of religious texts that comprised Buddhism and attempt to reassess their phases and functions.

In the first section, by concentrating on the ganmon (dedicatory prayers) and hyōbyaku (pronouncements), which were the focus of Buddhist rituals that were supported by the imperial court and temples, I analyze the structural relationship of text and ritual that developed during the Heian period and extend this analysis to the performative texts that shaped this relationship.

In the second section, I begin with an analysis of the Shiki-chō and Rengyōshūchū-nikki as well as the Jinmyō-chō, Kako-chō in regard to the system of ritual texts of the Shuni-e held at the Nigatsudō of Tōdaiji and indicate that the daidōshi-sahō (protocol of the chief officiant) and the shushi-sahō (protocol of the dharani master) form two major streams in the system of medieval Buddhist ritual in addition to that of the keka-sahō (protocol of repentance).

In the third section, I reconstruct the system of shōdo texts of the Agui school that sustained the aspect represented by the hyōbyaku, which are located in the lineage of the daidōshi-sahō, through an analysis of the Tenpōrinshō mokuroku and introduce the “Kamo kannushi dōkuyō” (Dedication of the hall of the head priest of Kamo shrine) manuscript from Kanazawa Bunko as a concrete example.

In the fifth section, I indicate the existence of a system of liturgical texts that is part of the lineage of the shushi-sahō, which includes the kakochō that was developed by the hall monks (dōsō) of the practice hall (jūgyōdō) and the Chūdō shushi-sahō, a procedural manual, for the Shushō-e held at Tendai temples and then go on to address compound texts as realized in the Yuzu nembutsu engi emaki.

In the sixth section I argue by introducing the Shari kuyō shiki, a manuscript in the Former Tanaka Yutaka Collection at the National Museum of Japanese History, that Buddhist assemblies, which demonstrated multiple developments in the medieval period, were integrated by the genre of ritual text known as the kōshiki.
I hope to portray the broad outline of the system of medieval Buddhist liturgical texts in a comprehensive fashion through a consideration of the above.

Key words: liturgical text, religious texts, ganmon (dedicatory prayers) · hyōbyaku (pronouncements), shōdō, shushi, kōshiki