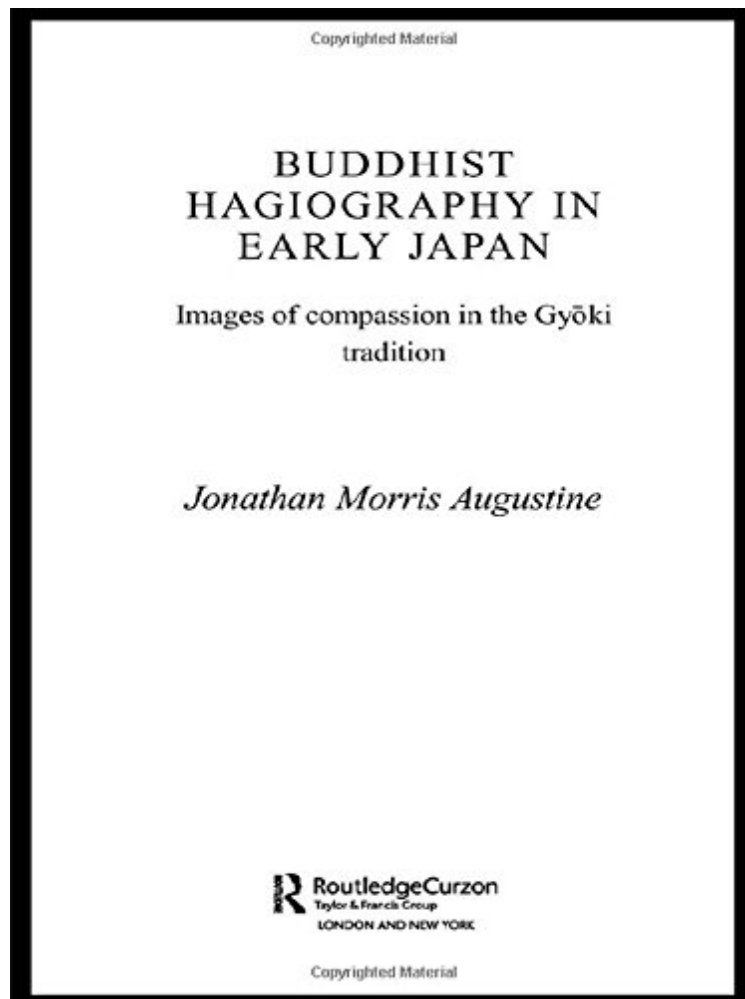


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Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan: Images of Compassion in the Gyoki Tradition (Routledge Studies in Asian Religion)

Jonathan Morris Augustine

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Hagiographies or idealized biographies which recount the lives of saints, bodhisattvas and other charismatic figures have been the meeting place for myth and experience. In medieval Europe, the 'lives of saints' were read during

liturgical celebrations and the texts themselves were treated as sacred objects. In Japan, it was believed that those who read the biographies of lofty monks would acquire merit. Since hagiographies were written or compiled by 'believers', the line between fantasy and reality was often obscured. This study of the bodhisattva Gyoki - regarded as the monk who started the largest social welfare movement in Japan - illustrates how Japanese Buddhist hagiographers chose to regard a single monk's charitable activities as a miraculous achievement that shaped the course of Japanese history.

'Augustine's attention to detail and his use of intricate evidence to support his arguments make Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan an intriguing venture into how to read and appreciate Buddhist hagiography' - Journal of Buddhist Ethics, 2008
About the Author
Jonathan Morris Augustine is an Associate Professor of International Communication at the Kyoto Institute of Technology in Japan. Since 1973 he has spent most of his life in Asia with the exception of a decade at Princeton University where he obtained his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D.