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REVIEW ARTICLE

— Recent Japanese Publications on Religion —

Ian READER

SHŪKYŌ SHAKAIGAKU NO KAI 宗教社会学の会 , ed. *Ikoma no kamigami—Gendai toshi no minzoku shūkyō* 生駒の神々—現代都市の民俗宗教 [The gods of Ikoma: Folk religion in a contemporary city]. Osaka: Sōgensha, 1985. 331 pp. ¥1,500.

NUMATA Kenya 沼田健哉 , *Gendai Nihon no shinshūkyō* 現代日本の新宗教 [New religions in contemporary Japan]. Osaka: Sōgensha, 1988. 281 pp. ¥1,400.

ŌMURA Eishō 大村英昭 and NISHIYAMA Shigeru 西山 茂 , eds. *Gendaijin no shūkyō* 現代人の宗教 [The religion of people today]. Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1988. 258 pp. ¥1,500.

MIYAKE Hitoshi 宮家 準 , KŌMOTO Mitsugu 孝本 貢 , and NISHIYAMA Shigeru 西山 茂 , eds. *Shūkyō* 宗教 [Religion]. Volume 19 of *Riidingusu—Nihon no shakaigaku* リーディングス—日本の社会学 [Readings: The sociology of Japan]. Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1986. 302 pp. ¥2,500.

NISHIJIMA Takeo 西島建男 . *Shinshūkyō no kamigami* 新宗教の神々 [The gods of the new religions]. Tokyo: Kōdansha Shinsho, 1988. 210 pp. ¥530.

The books reviewed here are all representative and valuable contributions to the growing tide of research and literature on contemporary religion in Japan. Besides meriting serious consideration in

their own right, taken together they are indicative of the increasing sources of information and new perspectives on Japanese religion that are being produced in Japan at present. Before discussing each individually, however, I would like to make a few general remarks about some of the overriding contemporary themes that appear to a greater or lesser extent in all these works and that are indicative of general orientations and attitudes within the world of Japanese religious studies today.

All these books exhibit the continuing fascination of Japanese academics and journalists with the new religions, especially recently the "new" new religions, and with the study of folk religious themes, charisma, and shamanism. All of these are treated empathetically as enduring and central elements in the religious make-up of Japan. It is interesting to note that the new religions are receiving a generally balanced and sympathetic treatment, often clearly impressing researchers with their vigor and action. It was not very long ago that, as Numata Kenya (pp. ii–iii) points out, they tended to be dismissed by academics and the media as little more than fraudulent and manipulative movements that attracted only the dispossessed and under-educated. The strong contemporary revival of interest in such folk religious themes as spirit possession has been manifested in the growth of many new religious movements exhibiting shamanic and charismatic themes. This has been largely an urban-centered phenomenon, and consequently much of the interest of contemporary Japanese researchers has been concerned with the reasons why such religious activities in city areas seem to be increasing. A connected factor here has been the apparently growing number of young people who are becoming involved with the new religions: the younger generation (especially school and college students) has been "discovered" as a religious constituency in recent years, and three of the books reviewed here (Numata, Ōmura and Nishiyama, and Nishijima) pay special attention to this topic.

In contrast with the attention paid to the new religions, the established religious traditions have been rather neglected, a situation that is equally reflected in current Western research, which has equally shown far more interest in the new religions while quietly seeming to bury or ignore the established ones.

There is, at least in the works under consideration here, an increasingly lively tone to Japanese academic writings, with a healthy interest in analytical criticism and in the exchange of ideas and

discussion of views of other Japanese scholars. There is still a tendency to focus on the writings of *some* selected Western scholars to the exclusion or neglect of many others. The same rather select group of Western sociologists (Weber, Durkheim, Bellah, Luckmann, Berger, and Bryan Wilson) are as popular as they were a decade or so ago, while the interest in urban religion has brought Harvey Cox firmly into the frame of reference. At times one has the feeling that it is still almost mandatory for Japanese scholars to commence their writing with a reference to what Weber, Durkheim, et al., have said on the subject before embarking on their own findings!

By contrast there is comparatively little examination of what recent empirical Western scholarship on religion in Japan has said. Numata, for example, in his long discussion of Japanese shamanism (pp. 4–49) discusses the theories of various Japanese and Western scholars, such as Eliade (rightly criticized for his insufficiently broad understanding of Japanese shamanism and resultant view that it was not true shamanism), and Hori, upbraided for being too much under the influence of Eliade. Yet in all this Numata fails to mention the one major empirical, field-work based study of shamanic practices in Japan by a Western expert (BLACKER 1975) and ultimately argues that as Japan has a different religious structure to that of the West, Western theories and research perspectives cannot really apply to Japan (p. 49).

This is a line of argument that has surfaced before (as with earlier debates on the question of secularization) and will no doubt rear its head again. It is a position easier to legitimate if one does ignore those who have a solid basis of fieldwork experience in Japan and understanding of Japanese. One notes that the Western analysts commonly cited are, by and large, not those with empirical knowledge of or detailed fieldwork in Japan. As a generalization I feel that Japanese academics are still caught between two poles, the one a continuing interest in Western academic theories and the other the wish to view religion in Japan as unique, different, and hence not subject to theories that come from the outside. This problematic relationship with the outside is, of course, a perennial Japanese dilemma not just limited to the Japanese religious studies world or to academic interpretations of religion, though perhaps it continues to be more visible than it ought to be in the academic world.

This leads to another general observation: whenever Japanese scholars do attempt to draw comparisons with other religious systems

they invariably look to the West, and notably to the United States of America. Ōmura and Nishiyama's book is a good example for, although appearing to be a general study of religious themes in modern society, its prime concern is with Japan and what comparative analysis there is centers on the U.S.A. Shimazono's study of the conflicts and relationships between evangelical and traditional liberal Christianity in the U.S.A. (pp. 118–167) is the only section centered outside Japan, while Kaneko Satoru's comparative study of contemporary religious perceptions (pp. 77–116) takes as its models Japan and the U.S.A.

This perspective of using the West, in particular the U.S.A., as a comparative model does have its advantages: Japanese scholars probably have more contact with the West, especially the U.S.A., than with any other area. Yet it can also have shortcomings by strengthening the often far from subtle suggestions that somehow the Japanese situation is unique and hence not to be understood in other than Japanese terms. It would be interesting to see whether different perceptions and attitudes would prevail if the models of comparison were different: I have a feeling that they might. The question of why many Japanese new religions have begun to grow in many Third World countries has not yet been asked in any depth by Japanese scholars, whose research on Japanese religion outside of Japan tends to focus on Brazil, Hawaii, and the West Coast, where there are large Japanese communities. Yet as Hurbon shows in his study of new religious movements in the Caribbean, one of the reasons that Mahikari has flourished in such places as Martinique is because its outlooks (which come straight out of the Japanese folk tradition) are closely aligned to the traditional outlooks of the native religious culture (1986, pp. 146–176, esp. pp. 156–159). Were the comparative norm of Western models to be set aside and the parallels and similarities of Japanese religious structures with (say) African ones more closely examined, the totem of Japanese religious uniqueness might be seen in a new light.

Ikoma no kamigami

Nonetheless, the above points aside, there is much of value to be gleaned from all the books in question. The volume compiled by the SHŪKYŌ SHAKAIGAKU NO KAI under the direction of Shiobara Tsutomu of Osaka University is a valuable account of empirical

fieldwork carried out by Japanese researchers inside Japan, examining the religious ecology of the Ikoma region of hills that lies between Osaka and Nara. The whole Ikoma area is a veritable warren of religious activity of all sorts: there are large popular shrines such as Ishikiri Shrine, famed as a healing center, and temples such as Hōzan-ji (better known as Ikoma Shōten), popular among the merchants of Osaka who come to pray for business prosperity, as well as countless smaller shrines and temples and the largest concentration of Korean temples in Japan and numerous Korean shamans, catering to the large Korean community centered in Ikuno-ku in Osaka, as well as many other shamanic centers and small religious groups. Most of these revolve around one person endowed with special powers acquired through austerities and spiritual disciplines. Throughout Ikoma there are large numbers of man-made waterfalls all affording the setting in which to perform austerities. To complement this picture of intense religious vitality that brings together just about every element in the Japanese folk tradition, as well as that of the Korean, there are numerous temples affiliated to Shugendo. Ikoma's proximity to Osaka is indicative of how closely such traditions remain part of, and a counterpoise to, contemporary Japanese urban life.

Ikoma is an area I always enjoy walking around, and this book provides an invaluable companion for such wanderings, containing several maps and annotated lists of the different wayside shrines and other institutions, along with brief histories of them. The geography of Japanese religion, the ways that the physical world is alive and permeated with manifestations of the spiritual, and the interpenetration and unities of the various traditions within the spatial universe are vividly drawn.

This is not just a handbook of religious geography, though, for there are in depth discussions of the major institutions, with chapters on the major religious centers of the area, the temples Hōzan-ji and Chōgosonshi-ji (popularly known as Shigi-san) and Ishikiri Shrine. In particular the researchers focus on the ways in which Japanese people petition their deities and Buddha figures for *genze riyaku* 現世利益 , benefits and help in this life. The topic of *genze riyaku* is sympathetically treated, further indication of the renewedly empathetic way that Japanese scholars are examining their own culture. Until recently the issue of *genze riyaku*, despite being such an integral part of Japanese religious life, tended to be dismissed

as little more than superstitious and/or manipulatively mercenary, especially when related to the new religions, a corruption rather than an integral part of religion.

As this volume shows, however, the whole process of petitioning for *genze riyaku* is by no means merely, or even predominantly, materialistic in nature. Implicit in it is an underlying view that life in the physical universe is intricately bound up with the spiritual world that upholds and nurtures it. In order to live meaningfully and fully in this life, then, one needs to acknowledge the relationship that exists with the spiritual, recognizing that there is a spiritual factor in the causation of all events and that humans are frail and need spiritual succor in the pursuance of their lives.

How this process works is shown in some detail. There are detailed discussions of the types of request made, with the often humorous and occasionally plaintive vows and wishes written on *ema* 絵馬 (votive tablets) analyzed at length, both in terms of content and in terms of who (by age and sex) writes them and for what reasons. We learn that shrine and temple visiting patterns are not, on the whole, casual but constant: those who petition the deities form regular relationships with them and may well be pluralistic in their habits. Most worshipers at Ishikiri also go to other popular shrines and temples throughout the Kansai region as well as maintaining regular and long-term relationships with the shrine itself. Of 230 people interviewed 119 came every month and 21 more often still; 30 had been visiting the shrine regularly for more than twenty-one years and 48 for more than thirty-one (pp. 128–131). As visits become more regular their emphasis shifts from need-based requests for help to expressions of gratitude for the help received.

Throughout the book there are detailed breakdowns of behavioral patterns at religious centers, all of which will provide valuable information for the researcher as well as underlining many traditional perceptions about Japanese religion. We find, for instance, that amongst even the most regular shrine visitors there is a relative lack of interest in doctrines: most of those praying at the shrine did not know the teachings of Ishikiri Shintō (which is a registered religious organization in its own right). Nor did they read the Ishikiri Shrine newspaper (although it is provided free at the shrine) or know the official name of the main deity even though they expressed great confidence in its healing propensities and pray regularly to it (pp. 131–132). There is much more information and food for

thought besides and many interesting cameos of contemporary religious life that convey graphically the continuing energies of religion at the grass roots level in Japan.

The book is generally well documented and footnoted, although it is a little uneven with some (especially the early) chapters lacking adequate references. That aside it is a fine book that is a welcome addition as an example of contemporary fieldwork and as a composite picture of the Japanese religious environment. It is also a well produced and highly readable book, for which the authors, as well as Sōgensha, the publishers, deserve commendation.

Gendai Nihon no shinshūkyō

Sōgensha, in fact, has a good tradition of publishing books on religion: the work by Numata Kenya on the new religions is one of their most recent titles. In this Numata describes his methodology as that of a participant-observer, and states that his intention is to provide an overview of the new religions, especially drawing attention to and developing research on some less well-known if recently prominent groups (p. iv). As such his method somewhat resembles earlier Western scholarship, with its focus on general summaries and histories of a number of religious groups along with some unifying themes and overviews. This approach contrasts interestingly with (and, because of its broad ranging scope, complements) the trend in Western academic approaches to the new religions, which have concentrated on in-depth studies of one movement that becomes a model through which all new religions are interpreted (e.g. DAVIS 1980, HARDACRE 1984). Numata's major perspective is one that has a long tradition in Japan: the analysis of new religions through the medium of founder figures and shamanic and charismatic powers, and the first half of the book in particular examines these themes. There is an interesting and lively discussion (pp. 90–124) of the life of Takahashi Shinji 高橋信次, the founder of GLA, which provides a valuable case study of a powerfully charismatic founder figure who communicated with various spiritual figures (including Jesus and Moses), saw UFOs and had out of the body experiences. He combined different aspects of shamanic behavior, those of spirit journeys and of a possession/trance nature, both of which Numata argues are intrinsic aspects of shamanic power. Takahashi was a skilled publicist too, which helped draw people to GLA,

and it was his flair and undoubtedly powerful nature that held GLA together: since his death in 1976 GLA has declined in numbers. Takahashi thus is an example of charismatic power combined with skilled proselytization, both of which are vital aspects of the continuing vitality of the new religions: when either or both decline, as with GLA after Takahashi, the religion involved declines.

In the first sections Numata outlines the latest wave of new religions to come to the fore in Japan. He also argues that the syncretic religious tradition of Shugendō provides the foundations for the new religions, and that the new religions have risen as Shugendō has declined and been marginalized by social change and occasional political repression (pp. 4–20). Shugendō, he considers, expresses the same themes—notably charismatic and shamanic ones, as well as an emphasis on proselytization at a localized level—as are found in the new religions today. He also equates a decline in traditional austerities (*gyō* 行) of the type performed by Shugendō (e.g. standing under waterfalls) with the rise in emphasis on *gyō* in the "new" new religions. As his discussion of the "new" new religions (pp. 56–89) shows, Shugendō motifs remain visible in Agonshū 阿含宗 and Shinnyoen 真如苑 , and the charismatic and shamanic motifs of such religions, to say nothing of their syncretism or their social position standing on the fringes of society and providing a channel to the "outside," are very much in line with many of the traditional orientations of Shugendō. The theory is interesting and worthy of consideration although, at present, I find it not entirely convincingly proved, largely because of a lack of sociological data or perspectives on Shugendō to correlate with the known data on the new religions.

Numata does also have a tendency to drift away from the thesis, and from the focus on shamanic themes, in later sections of the book, which turns into more of a catalogue of different new religions than an analysis of issues contained within them. There is a section on Christian movements such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church that have grown in numbers in recent years and which Numata justifiably considers should be treated as new religions in the Japanese context. He shows how they exhibit similar themes to many new religions, including messianic and salvationist motifs and, in the case of the Unification Church at least, a charismatic leader figure. Having made these points it is a pity that the analysis is not further developed. Instead Numata remains content to outline the histories and teachings of these groups and, as a

result, we are never shown convincingly why they have succeeded in ways that established and mainstream Christianity has not.

Clearly, as Numata argues, their high levels of proselytization, including their door to door missionary work, is a, if not the, major factor, and this is a theme that surfaces repeatedly and not just in connection with Christian groups: it is used, for example, to answer the question of why Sōka Gakkai is the largest of the new religions. This is all well and good, for clearly the vigorous ways in which some religious groups go out to get followers are a factor in their growth, but it is never substantive enough an argument to provide a full explanation: it does not, for example, really answer why some groups with high levels of proselytization seem to grow less rapidly than others. As Numata himself points out, Shinnyoen has many more members and has grown far more in the last decade than Agonshū, yet Agonshū is far more assertive and high profile in the ways it puts its message across (pp. 82–86).

There is a long section on the more established new religions such as Sōka Gakkai and PL Kyōdan which is perhaps of less interest to Western scholars, as it does not do much more than reiterate the doctrines and histories of a number of already well-known groups. Where the major informative value of the book lies is in the last two chapters, which examine the *shūyō dantai* 修養団体 (moral training organizations) such as Shūyōdan 修養団 Moralogy モラロジー and Jissen Rinri Kōseikai 実践倫理宏正会 , which set out moralistic teachings and guidance in the modern age. These groups have a huge, largely female, membership and whilst they assert that they are not religious organizations they have, as Numata points out, distinctly religious traits and, as such, should be discussed as religions. Moralogy, for example, sees illness as a "warning light" showing that one has become estranged from natural life styles, a view that has close parallels among the new religions, while the constant reiteration of the importance of family values and the use of group counseling sessions and devotional exercises among all the *shūyō dantai* are, as Numata indicates, clearly similar to the new religions. Basically such groups set out religious ideals and contain many of the same methods found amongst the new religions: progress within the organization may be linked to the amount of propagation or selling of the group's magazines that one does. I think Numata is correct to treat these groups as religious, although he has a tendency to be a little equivocal about this at times: overall,

this section is highly informative, as it brings into the spotlight several groups, and a major contemporary phenomenon, that has had scant treatment either in Japanese or Western languages so far.

Although the book has shortcomings, particularly in its tendency to drift away from its earlier premises and in its failure to do more than summarize the features of many of the religious groups under discussion, it does have many positive values. The discussions of the "new" new religions and of the *shūyō dantai* are important additions to the field and the analysis of the position of shamanism and of Shugendō are interesting food for thought. Researchers on the new religions in particular will find much in it of use both as a source book and as an example of contemporary Japanese perspectives on the new religions.

Gendaijin no shūkyō

Ōmura Eishō and Nishiyama Shigeru's book, although actually intended as a textbook, reads well also as a commentary on and analysis of current religious developments in Japan, although less so as a comparative work. It manifests a clear and continuing interest in statistical data, with every essay citing figures and surveys, especially those indicating an upturn in religious activities. The view that there is a religious revival in Japan since the mid 1970s, stimulated by a growing unease with many aspects of modern society, including distrust of science and technology and a desire to reassert traditional Japanese cultural values over and against modern Western ones, is a paramount assumption in all the essays here, and each discusses its nature and underlying meanings from a number of perspectives.

There is considerable focus on the new religions, on major religious (and socio-religious) events, and on the relationship between young people and religion in Japan, but little on the established traditions. Ōmura's opening essay sets the tone by asserting the importance of action and behavior as basic religious criteria: in contrast, he notes, the Japanese have never felt very happy with the concept of religion in terms of belief (pp. 17–19). Interestingly, his remark that the Japanese conceive of the word *shūkyō* 宗教 as bringing to mind the image of intrusion, of people knocking on one's door and disturbing one on a Sunday morning, (p. 1) seems not quite to fit with Numata's consistent reiteration of the impor-

tance of active grassroots missionary work as a major factor in the growth of new religions. Ōmura considers that the contemporary religious revival (which is taken as a given fact and never really questioned as such) is similar to the resurgence of religious interest in folk themes and magical and miracle oriented religious groups that occurred in the Taishō era (pp. 13–15), a view that is later repeated by Nishiyama (pp. 178–189) who details many similarities between the rise of the "new" new religions such as Agonshū and Mahikari today and groups such as Oomoto 大本 and Taireidō 太霊道 in the earlier age. The desire, especially among the young who seek release from the pressures forced upon them by the social and education systems with their demands for success and conformity, to relieve social tensions and anomie and to find expression through exciting (and hence magically oriented) religious means is very much, it is argued, at the heart of this revival (pp. 13–15).

Ōmura, noting that the Japanese tend not to express (or admit!) religious belief, considers that the core of Japanese religiosity is in culturally imbibed actions and customs. The Japanese, he states, enjoy events and religious activities and participate in them (as with *hatsumōde*) even whilst denying belief. Accordingly contemporary religious groups that have a primary focus on events, rituals, and techniques (usually of a magical nature centered on spirits and the control and/or exorcism thereof) are popular whilst religions of "belief" (in which are included the established religious traditions) are in decline. This somewhat questionable division between belief and magic/techniques is evident throughout and never satisfactorily justified. Why classify established Buddhism and new religions such as Sōka Gakkai as the former when they also make use of many rituals and have a primary focus in formalized actions that lead to results, or Mahikari as the latter when its magical techniques are in part at least dependent on a belief in their efficacy and in the existence of the spirits they are meant to exorcize?

If this position is not entirely satisfactorily justified, much of the rest of the book does provide valuable insights into contemporary religious trends. Kōmoto Mitsugu's discussion of urban religion in Japan (pp. 33–75) suggests that traditional folk religious themes have, rather than being eradicated by urbanization, been transformed and developed in an urban environment. He shows how, as Japan becomes more and more industrial and urbanized, there has been a growing nostalgic idealization of traditional, rural and agri-

cultural themes, with a consequent revival of folk religious motifs restated in contemporary contexts. Thus festivals have become increasingly popular, both as expressions of community solidarity in newly developed urban areas and as a manifestation of a resurgent development of regional identity: they are also increasingly touristic, as religious activities tend to develop a more and more overtly ludic dimension to them. Major events in the calendrical cycle, such as the visit to shrines at New Year, have also increased consistently over the last two decades. This is not the same thing, however, as a Shintō revival for, as Kōmoto points out, the number of shrines and of shrines with priests is in fact declining (p. 50). The growth of visitors is directed at a number of famous, usually urban, shrines and this, along with the increasing number of large scale, touristic festivals, indicates an interest in events and entertainment more than anything else.

The other focus of his article is on the changes in ancestor worship due to urbanization, the nuclearization of households and the changing social patterns these bring with them. Ancestor worship has certainly not declined along with the extended family: Kōmoto's statistics show virtually every area of activity connected with the ancestors, such as participation in the o-bon rites and visits to graves, on the increase, while the focus on ancestors, especially as a cause of problems when neglected, has been a growing phenomenon amongst the new religions. Kōmoto, using and building on Robert Smith's study (1974) of ancestor worship with its analysis of whose memorial tablets are enshrined in the *butsudan*, points to a growing move away from the traditional patterns of venerating patrilineal members of the extended family who are seen as protectors of the household towards choosing whom to enshrine, based on personal choice and empathy.

In this the focus of ancestor worship is becoming more and more diffuse, no longer centered so much around concepts of continuity and guardianship as linked to issues of causation when problems occur. This has become especially true in the most recent new religions, which often see ancestral spirits that have been neglected as a cause of problems such as illness. Unease brought about by changing circumstances such as the breakdown of traditional communities is therefore projected onto ancestral spirits whose role shifts from preserving continuity to that of acting as an explanation for problems and as a means of solving them and restoring equilibrium.

The spirits of aborted fetuses (*mizuko* 水子) are seen in this light also, as products of increased individualization and nuclearization (which leads to smaller families, greater concern for material comforts, and hence more abortions), a growing concern for spiritual explanations of illnesses and worries, and a broadening of the categories of who may be memorialized after death (pp. 60–75).

Kaneko Satoru also discusses several of these points and shows clearly the extent to which revival, especially of what appear to be folk-oriented religious themes, is closely linked to social developments. It is the desire to escape from modern rationality that is at the heart of much contemporary religious activity, and is a cause of its growth. Improved educational standards, far from eradicating religious feelings, have stimulated them, or at least have increased the interest in irrational and at times escapist religious fantasies. The more educated young people have become, the more they have become likely to buy amulets and lucky charms, show an interest in divination, join miracle-focused religious groups, become interested in spiritual healing, and worry about spiritual pollution. Both Kōmoto and Kaneko, from different angles, thus show that much that is extant and flourishing in the contemporary Japanese religious world is not so much a new departure as a reassertion of older themes placed within new contexts and gradually individualized.

In the final two essays Nishiyama Shigeru discusses in depth the popularity of the "new" new religions and the occult themes among the young. He reaffirms the thesis that nationalism is at the core of revival: rather than universally secularizing different societies it provokes reactive re-examinations of fundamental cultural identities. People, Nishiyama notes, want reaffirmations of their own culture rather than universalisms (pp. 211–213), and consequently there has been a growing interest in reviving and reiterating aspects of traditional Japanese folk religion. This does not mean a freezing of culture or a purely nostalgic look backwards so much as a malleable adaptation to changing circumstances, as shown in Kaneko and Kōmoto's essays. Although the underlying contention of the book is that similar themes are evident elsewhere (Shimazono's essay looks at the rise of evangelical movements in the U.S.A. in a similar vein) it is in the Japanese context that its perceptions and assertions are most clearly stated and carry most conviction. The book's strength lies in its value as a commentary on contemporary themes and processes of change in Japanese religion and it is as such that it

deserves to be read. Despite some shortcomings, which I have outlined here, it remains a coherent and informative book. Moreover, by providing large amounts of data to back up its assertions as well as a detailed bibliography, it serves as an accessible source of information as well as analysis of contemporary religious affairs in Japan.

Shūkyō—Riidingusu

Nishiyama is also one of the editors, along with Kōmoto and Miyake Hitoshi, of *Shūkyō*, a volume of articles and extracts from books (some of which have been abridged for the purpose) gathered together with short sectional introductions as the nineteenth volume in a twenty volume compendium series of readings on the sociology of Japan. Unlike the other works reviewed here it is not a new book as such, for all the entries have been published elsewhere, but it merits attention because it draws together in one volume a fairly comprehensive overview of the sociology of religion in Japan as seen through Japanese eyes.

There are twenty such articles in the book, placed under five section headings as follows: (1) the social nature of religion in Japan, (2) household, family, and religion, (3) regional society and religion, (4) religious organizations and religious movements, and (5) religion and social change. The major scholars and influences of sociological analyses of religion in Japan, such as Yanagawa Keiichi and Morioka Kiyomi, as well as Sakurai Tokutarō and Miyake himself, with their more anthropological leanings, are well represented, and the book as a whole presents something of a guide not simply to Japanese religion but to those who write about it and the areas of interest and methodological approaches that have colored it over the years. Thus we find an abiding interest in the structure of festivals, in the *ie* 家 , especially in relation to the ancestors, and a continuing interest in new religions which are especially dominant in the last two sections. Conversely there is comparatively little on the established religions and, somewhat surprisingly, considering that it has long been a major area of study in Japan, nothing specifically on shamanism.

These omissions aside it is a book that scholars of religion in Japan will find extremely useful, as a source of information and as a ready introduction to the sociology of Japanese religion in general. Reading through it I was reminded of the book edited by Roland

ROBERTSON (1969) which has long served as a general introduction to, and condensed guide of the sociology of religion. This current volume could well play a similar role in a more specific sense for Japan, especially as it also contains a detailed bibliography for each section, which is a good resource in its own right and a guide to further avenues of study.

Shinshūkyō no kamigami

The final book reviewed here, by Nishijima Takeo, is the work not of an academic per se but of a journalist and, as Nishijima himself points out, it is journalistic in style, having been originally written as a series of articles in the Asahi Shinbun, and lacks citations and footnotes. However the style and lucidity of his writing more than compensates for this, making it one of the most eminently readable books on contemporary religion in Japan that I have come across. The role of the Japanese media in reporting and analyzing religion has been quite important: the major newspaper companies as well as NHK are major sources of the investigative surveys that provide the raw statistical data on which much academic analysis is based, as can be seen throughout the book by Ōmura and Nishiyama. Besides this the major newspapers have conducted journalistic investigations and have produced a number of fine books on various religious phenomena, such as the Mainichi Newspaper's five volume set *Shūkyō o gendai ni tou*, published in 1975, and the Asahi Newspaper's study of small new religious movements, *Gendai no chiisana kamigami*, published in 1984.

Nishijima has added to this tradition with his investigation of new religious groups. His basic thesis is similar to that of Ōmura and Nishiyama: the growth of a technological system and rationalized society which de-personalizes the individual has been countered by a reawakening of interest in pre-modern and ultimately irrational ideas that, because they are irrational cannot be categorized or "explained" by scientific or technological means. Equally the fears aroused by science (notably the feeling that it has unleashed uncontrollable monsters in the form of nuclear weapons and pollution) have contributed to a religious backlash. Nishijima argues that small religious groups based on charismatic leaders who make the world of miracles and spiritual power accessible to their followers act as a counterweight to increased societal rationalization and help pre-

serve the members' sense of personal identity. They also provide a sense of excitement that is increasingly missing from the conformist structures of organized society: hence the religious groups that flourish are those that are especially concerned with mystery, magic, spirits, and UFOs.

Nishijima does not say much that cannot be found in the other books reviewed here and we are not presented with any challenging new theories (indeed, where he does stray into the world of theory it is usually through the medium of Max Weber), but it is nonetheless a book that is worth reading. It is not all that often that one comes across a book that summarizes the continuities and developments of the contemporary Japanese religious world in so fluent, informative, and precise a manner as this.

It is also representative of a growing number of books of an informative nature that are published in economically priced and widely available series such as Kōdansha Shinsho, which has also published many other accessible works on religion in Japan. Other series worthy of note include the NHK Books series, which has published, amongst others, the results of various of the NHK surveys on religion, and the new Kadokawa Sensho series that has made available in new editions some of Gorai Shigeru's work. Quite possibly one of the manifestations of the religious revival that is so much a current concern of Japanese researchers is the healthy interest shown in books on religion, not just in terms of sales but in terms of the scope and quality of many of the books produced. This is true both at the more popular as well as at the academic level, as this review has attempted to show. All this is very much to the advantage of all who study religion in Japan, providing a wealth of information and analytical materials written from a Japanese perspective that is relevant and enriching to the field in general.

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