
Morioka Kiyomi, *Religion in changing Japanese society*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975. xvi+231 pages. Maps 3. Tables 31. Figures 2. Photos 8. Bibliography. Index. ¥4,800.

Once in a blue moon we ordinary mortals are privileged to have among us a scholar with the Midas touch. Such a man is Morioka Kiyomi, Professor of Sociology at the Tokyo University of Education. Whatever he sets his hand to turns to gold—and enriches us.

Religion in changing Japanese society is a carefully selected collection of Professor Morioka's articles and papers. Nearly all previously published in scattered scholarly journals, they have till now been largely inaccessible to most people. To find them brought together in one attractively designed book is an occasion for rejoicing.

Though written independently during the decade following 1962, these essays exhibit an intrinsic unity of theme and method. Their principle of organization is clear: a general introductory chapter, a two-chapter section on "Folk religion and Shinto," a three-chapter section on "Buddhism," a two-chapter section on "Christianity," and a conclusion followed by two appendixes—a masterful bibliographical essay on the development of sociology of religion in Japan between 1900 and 1967, and a thirty-seven page bibliography relating both to this essay and to the references employed throughout the book.

For the benefit of those coming to Professor Morioka's work for the first time, it may be useful to say a word about his assumptions and the method of research he prefers.

Anyone who has cut his teeth on Western studies of religion undertaken from the perspectives of sociology and anthropology finds himself, when first exposed to Morioka, in an inverted world. Reading in Weber and Durkheim, Lowie and Tylor, would lead one to suppose that: (1) a society's religion, however complex, can usually be considered a unitary phenomenon that provides, as it were, a "keyhole" through which to grasp the basic values at work among the society's members and institutions, and (2) the religious factor can be demonstrated to act as an independent variable in relation to man's behavior in other realms, that is, as a "cause" or "basis of explanation" for his economic behavior, political behavior, etc. Morioka, in order to deal with the realities of Japanese religion, has found that he must stand both of these ideas on their head.

His approach to Japanese religion depends on the explicit assumption that one must proceed by reference to those served by a given complex of religious organizations. He distinguishes three categories of those so served: communities or local groups, households, and individuals. Despite overlapping, local groups are served primarily by folk religion and Shrine Shinto, households by Buddhism, and individuals by Christianity and the "new religions." To coin a term, one could describe Morioka's approach not as synoptic but as "trioptic."

A second assumption is that religion in Japan is not an independent

but a dependent variable. One looks at Japanese religion, therefore, not as a factor that might explain significant dimensions of "secular" behavior but as something that changes in accordance with changes in the milieu. Two social phenomena stand out in Morioka's work as particularly significant for the understanding of contemporary Japanese religion. One is the change from the traditional two- or three-generation household to the conjugal or nuclear family. The other is population mobility. Both are presently having an immense impact on all forms of Japanese religion. Morioka's researches enable him not only to identify the problems these changes have created for each of the three clusters of religion and to evaluate the measures by which they seek to deal with them but also to venture predictions as to the shape Japanese religion will assume in the years just ahead.

With regard to method, Professor Morioka is consistent. His preference is for the case-study method, for intensive study of manageable units. Heady global theorizing he leaves to others. His is the way of "brick upon brick"—less flashy perhaps, but solid and reliable.

By way of critical comment, three points suggest themselves. First, it should be noted that nearly everything Professor Morioka has to say about Japanese Christianity pertains to Protestantism. One can only speculate as to the reasons for this limitation and hope that future publications will make this objection irrelevant. Second, it is regrettable that the book includes no study directed specifically to the "new religions." Professor Morioka himself remarks that this lacuna is due to the fact that "the focus of my investigation has for many years been the established religions" (p. xi), a procedure he regards as providing a good foundation for study of newly established religious organizations. He goes on to say, however, that he has recently studied one new religious movement, and it is to be hoped that the results will soon become available. Third, perhaps I am still too much under the influence of Weber, Lenski and company, but I question the advisability of assuming without qualification that "religion, in Japan, is a dependent variable rather than an independent one" (p. 100, n. 1). That this assumption can lead to productive research Professor Morioka has shown beyond all shadow of doubt. As stated, however, it sounds like a dogma rather than a point of view adopted for its heuristic usefulness. More to the point, one wonders if there are not classes of phenomena that simply do not come into view because of this self-imposed limitation. Shamanism might be a case in point. This is

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not to argue for the converse of Professor Morioka's assumption, for it is entirely conceivable that the same phenomenon could be treated first as a dependent, then as an independent variable. It is to suggest, rather, that the question of whether a variable should be treated as dependent or independent may need to be answered by reference to the theoretical concerns at issue rather than by fiat.

These demurrers, however, are little more than grace notes to a symphony. This is a book that will amply reward all who read it. By all means buy and digest it—and let us hope it will soon be followed by others.

David REID, Director
International Institute
for the Study of Religions