

MIYAKE Hitoshi, *Shugendō: Essays on the Structure of Japanese Folk Religion*. Edited and with an Introduction by H. Byron Earhart. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2001. xv + 306 pp. \$60.00 cloth, ISBN 0-939512-05-X.

THERE IS A SAYING in the world of folk religion and Shugendō studies in Japan—*nishi wa Gorai, higashi wa Miyake* (Gorai in the west, Miyake in the east)—which reflects the stature and towering achievements of two of the most prolific religious scholars of post-war Japan: Gorai Shigeru and Miyake Hitoshi. The book under review here is a collection of essays by Miyake Hitoshi (the pillar in the east) translated into English over the past thirty years and published or presented in a wide variety of venues. It presents a rich

source for the study of folk religion in Japan, and Shugendō in particular.

The collection opens with an Introduction by H. Byron Earhart, nicely introducing the author and his voluminous work, and emphasizing the importance of folk religion and Shugendō for the study of “Japanese religion.” The essays themselves are presented in two parts: eight essays in “Part One: Shugendō,” and five essays in “Part Two: Folk Religion.” The essays on Shugendō range from a general outline of the history and organization of Shugendō; to detailed and concrete studies of subjects such as the Kumano deities, mountain austerities, and Shugendō ritual and cosmology; to a specific discussion of the controversial issue of the prohibition of women at Mt. Sanjō (Ōmine). The shorter section on folk religion includes a mixed bag of essays that, rather than provide a broad introduction to the subject, address a number of issues such as “the idea of nature,” worldly benefits, the revitalization of traditional religion, and the cycle of death and rebirth.

The essays are all informative, and I found the chapters on religious rituals (3) and mountain austerities (4) particularly useful for a basic understanding of Shugendō. Chapter 8 on the prohibition of women at Mt. Sanjō is of special interest, as it takes up an important issue not only for Shugendō but also for Japanese society in general, and the author does not hesitate to take a stand on the issue—one that will probably not be very popular among Western readers. The essays on folk religion (9–13) are more mixed—each individual topic is of interest, but the reader should not expect to find an overview of the general field of folk religion in Japan. Chapter 10 on “the idea of nature” goes beyond description to the proscriptive, advocating an embrace of folk religion to overcome modern environmental destruction. Finally, inclusion of other essays by Miyake, such as “The Influence of Shugendō on the ‘New Religions’” (originally published in Kiyota 1987, pp. 71–82), would have made the collection even more complete.

This collection is not without its problems. There is too much repetition of basic material, probably due to the fact that the essays were produced (and translated) independently and presented in various formats over such a long period (some of the chapters were originally produced in 1975, and the earliest in 1972). The Bibliography, though quite extensive and useful, has not been updated to contain many recent and important Western-language works, such as those by Anne-Marie Bouchy and David Moerman, nor do many of the translations take into account the English-reading audience. I believe that a translation of a Japanese article should—in consultation with the original author—supplement the original text by adding references to appropriate works in Western languages (some of which would be superfluous in a Japanese essay) and providing supplementary explanation (usually, but not restricted to, new notes), with the new audience in mind. Most of the essays in this collection are straightforward translations of the original Japanese, not to mention that many of the chapters are distillations of vast tomes in Japanese that serve as a summary of mountains of material available to the Japanese reader, and thus are not as user-friendly as they should or could be.

As one who has dabbled in Shugendō for almost thirty years, and having read and translated and learned so much from Miyake's work in Japanese, I find it difficult to judge how these essays will appear to those approaching the subject for the first time. I suspect that the complexity of the subject and the heavily distilled form found in some of the essays will be daunting to many. Nevertheless, this collection is most welcome and provides a stimulating introduction to, and sourcebook on, Shugendō (and folk religion), one of the most pervasive forms of religious activity in Japan. As Earhart aptly points out in his introduction, "all future scholarship on Shugendō will have to take into account the corpus of Miyake's work" (5).

REFERENCE

KIYOTA, Minoru, ed.

1987 *Japanese Buddhism: Its Tradition, New Religions and Interaction with Christianity*. Tokyo-Los Angeles: Buddhist Books International.

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