



H. Byron Earhart, *Religion in Japan: Unity and Diversity* (fifth edition)

Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014. xvi + 364 pages. Paperback, \$95.99; ebook, \$55.99. ISBN 13: 978-1-133-93481-3.

It is no surprise that H. Byron Earhart's classic textbook, *Japanese Religion*, has remained one of the only treatments of Japanese religious history truly suitable for use in undergraduate classrooms. During its long publication history, *Japanese Religion* has, without equal, fulfilled and exceeded its role as a useful teaching material. Earhart has proved through various editions that his work remains relevant and indeed the foremost resource for those teaching introductory courses on Japanese and East Asian religions. This continues to be the case in the latest, fifth edition, aptly titled *Religion in Japan*.

Continuing much of what made past editions useful to educators and students, the new edition offers an insightfully constructed narrative of religion in Japan through prehistory into modernity. As in previous editions, the history is divided into three time periods across twenty chapters encompassing the formative, elaborating, and more recent stages in the development of religions in Japan. Various religious strands are treated within this framework, beginning with prehistoric religion, and leading into chapters on the kami tradition, Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shinto, folk religion, and the new religions. A chapter comprising the Christian century and the presence of Christianity in Japan yields a potential but hesitantly stated additional religious strand. Other past characteristics of the text that similarly possess continued usefulness are retained, including a chart of Japanese religious history and a sizable annotated bibliography. The portions that have been left out of the print version, including the "Histories and Works on Japanese Culture" bibliographic section, along with study questions, may still be accessed on the publisher's website. The text remains both accessible to beginners and useful to advance students or researchers with more specified interests as a reference work and starting point for journeys into unfamiliar topics, fulfilling and even going beyond its projected purposes.

While core components of the text have remained, much has been considerably expanded with new and revised chapters, updated content, as well as broader and more nuanced thoughts on time periods and traditions. Through these additions we can see various purposes being met, accounting for changes in the field. Instead of a step by step summary of the book in an attempt to extract its fundamental merits, I will consider the many revisions made since the fourth edition.

One of the most significant changes, beyond the enhanced length and attractive new photography, is the change of the title from *Japanese Religion* to *Religion in*

*Japan*. This title change is an update that “reflects the current consensus of contemporary scholars,” stressing the “diversity of Japanese spirituality (xii).” The new edition emphasizes staying informed on contemporary conversations in the field, which is reflected in this nuanced change as well as in approaches to later chapters. As Earhart reflects on religious life in contemporary Japan, his examination of modalities and alternate reality in media reveals further components displaying his knowledge of more immediate religious currents. Sources of contemporary film and literature are both consulted. One outstanding example describes the pairing of *miko* with Western fantasy motifs, showing fictional shrine maidens to achieve fantastical abilities. It is inferred here that such associations continue to stem from the religious power ascribed to these figures (296–97). Changes in line with contemporary developments also include the use of recent academic works (including *Bones of Contention* by Barbara Ambros, published last year). Along with the related discussions on *otaku* culture, this shows an intuitive attention paid towards both the field and media that may appeal even to students with a tangential interest in Japan.

Additional content has also taken the form of new and revised chapters. One completely new addition is a chapter on Shugendo and the shrine tradition. Earhart takes note that these both comprise new and developing fields of study, emphasizing their significance in religious history, as well as the importance of examining space and localized history, which is posed as a significant theoretical trend. This section is placed directly after the chapter on Japanese Esoteric Buddhism. The location of the chapter follows the traditional narrative and leaves room for the associations between the esoteric schools and Shugendo mountain asceticism.

Revised chapters include one that originally examined “Shinto,” now reworked to look at the “Kami tradition,” a shift in terminology also reflecting updated scholarship. Earhart also expands sections on Buddhism making for a now measurable section on early popular Buddhist preaching, as well as a discussion of esoteric Buddhist ritual within the Shingon and Tendai chapter. These sections also include a consideration of women in Buddhism and in other traditions, a theme which Earhart claims from the start to be a central aim of the revised work. These additions may be seen throughout, with new explorations of female shamans and nuns as significant figures. The chapter on folk religion is updated as well, with a theoretical discussion on Japan’s “great” and “little” traditions. Additional inclusions encompass subjects such as asceticism, wizardry, shamanism, and notions surrounding sacred mountains as key elements of a Japanese folk religious structure.

Standing out as a more sobering chapter is one involving the new religions. In past editions, the text considered two of these movements, namely Soka Gakkai and Tenrikyo. This edition, however, adds a comprehensive section on the Aum Shinrikyo movement. Included here is a sub-section on religion and violence. Reflecting on religious freedom in Japan prior to and following the Aum incident, as well as stimulating thought into future implications, this chapter now stands out as one

that will certainly push students to think more critically about the pressing subject of continuity in Japanese religious life.

While the helpful inclusions serve to expand and improve a work that already contained great potential for use, this is not to say that it is free of minor issues. For example, the helpful specialized bibliography has now been supplemented by alternative, additional footnote entries noted solely at the end of chapters. While this surely makes for a wealth of sources, it may cause confusion that specific entries and citations are not located in the actual bibliography. As a minor issue, this could be rectified though using a marker or typeset indicating that a certain source is not located in the bibliography.

Another minor issue lies in the exclusion of what some may see to be a key feature in line with the text's new additions and aims, this being the exclusion of women at Mount Ōmine, a significant mountain for Shugendo practitioners. As the text now includes a chapter on Shugendo and continues its discussion of contemporary religion, such an addition would be a natural one. While the text wonderfully incorporates the role of women throughout Japanese religious history, I believe that such an addition would fulfill multifarious purposes in supplementing this new aim as well as in contextualizing the section on Shugendo for contemporary audiences.

A final problem that should be noted is the high price of the book. To be sure, instructors may find it difficult to assign their students such an expensive text. While it will be very possible to use this edition as the primary material in an introductory course, the cost may inhibit its broader use for supplementary readings. It would seem, however, that the publisher has made efforts to provide alternatives for those with reservations. Less costly alternatives include an electronic version of the book as well as rental services. The publisher also allows the purchase of individual chapters.

While some minor issues may arise throughout, the benefits and sheer usefulness of this textbook surely outweigh them. Earhart's latest edition proves to be a linear and well-read journey with many useful footnotes and entries that even the instructor and senior researcher may find intriguing. While a text for students of religious history, both continuity and discontinuity become central subjects and take up a principle line of inquiry throughout the book. Earhart's revised conclusion shows a confidence in the continuity of these traditions, extending his scope even beyond the limits of past religious history. Indeed, this new edition is a pertinent offering, elaborating on much of what made its past versions so successful.

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