REVIEWS

Japanese Religion

A Survey by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education. Tokyo and Palo Alto: Kodansha International Ltd. 272 pp. ¥2,400 in Japan, $10.00 elsewhere.

This volume provides both an introduction to Japanese religion and a handbook on religious organizations — shrines, temples, churches and denominations — that will be useful to all English-language scholars and laymen who wish to keep informed on religion in Japan. Since the discussion of Japan's religion itself covers only 129 pages, it can hardly be expected that it will take the place of the numerous scholarly works that are available on Japan's several religious traditions, but it does supplement them very well with its up-to-date data and affords the reader some intimation of the results of recent scholarship. It also opens doors to a number of areas that are waiting to be more adequately explored. Incidentally, except for the officials of the Ministry of Education who contributed Part II and Part III, all the contributors are Japanese scholars who are associate professors in some of the leading universities of the country.

One special significance of this volume — and there are several — is that, except for one of the two translators, it is entirely the product of Japanese scholarship. Another is that, although it was produced under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, the authors appear to have been untrammeled by any of the bureaucratic or traditional restraints that have heretofore characterized of-

ficially-sponsored publications. Hence it is not only an indication of a healthy change in the attitude of the Ministry, but it also constitutes a fine tribute to the competence of the Honorable Kenji Adachi, Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Ministry who writes the preface to the volume. Perhaps a third significance is its thoroughly modern perspective, including a complete disregard for the traditional taboos usually associated with discussions of the Imperial Family's origin which make the essays a pleasure to read.

Japanese Religion consists of an introduction and six descriptive and interpretive essays dealing with Shintō, Buddhism, Christianity, new religious movements, Confucianism, and folk religion (Part I); an all-too-brief discussion of "Religious Organizations in Japanese Law" (Chapter 8), brief explanations of Shintō organizations (Chapter 9), Buddhist sects (Chapter 10), Christian denominations (Chapter 11), and other religious organizations (Chapter 12) by two officials of the Ministry of Education; statistical tables as of December 31, 1970, with an excellent explanation of them (Part III); and an index. Sixteen pages of illustrations add to the attractiveness of the volume and there is a short chronology on the inside of the covers that blessedly omits any allegedly historical or mythological dates prior to the third century A. D.

The most serious limitation of the volume is, of course, its brevity. Part I requires only 124 pages, that is an average of less than 20 pages per chapter. Part II takes 89 pages. Part III covers 25 pages. This may make it more attractive to the general reader, but the specialist will regret that the discussions are not more detailed.

The introduction by Professor Shigeru Matsumoto of Sacred Heart University is one of the

finest essays of the book. He sweeps through Japan's religious history with broad, deft strokes that will convey fresh insights to many readers; but since about half of his material is devoted to comments on the subjects treated in the six succeeding chapters, there is unfortunately considerable duplication. Would it not have been more appropriate, in view of the shortness of the text, if the introduction had discussed the nature of Japanese religion, its place in Japanese history and culture, or the religiosity of the Japanese people and left all discussion of the religions to the other authors?

Be this as it may, as Professor Matsumoto notes in the introduction in discussing Shinto, "the Japanese people became unified in a single state under the Yamato court" and "previously distinct local cults and traditions became integrated and organized into a religious polity with a nationwide system of rites and myths centered in the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu" (p. 13), but he fails, presumably because of the lack of space, to suggest that the developments that resulted in Amaterasu becoming the central deity in the Shinto pantheon were based on military and political rather than religious considerations. Furthermore, now that academic freedom is a reality in Japan and the necessity of deferring absolutely to the claims of Yamato Shinto has been removed, he might well have suggested that conceivably in the future the Sun Goddess may have to surrender her paramount position to the claims of some of the local tutelary kami that were supplanted some fifteen or sixteen centuries ago.

Turning now to the interesting essay on Shinto by professor of Shinto Studies at Kokugakuin University, Kenji Ueda, we note that he divides the faith into Imperial Household Shinto, Shrine Shinto, Sect Shinto, and Folk Shinto. However, because

the first category is "not open to the public," he does not discuss it, and, except for a passing reference to the kami of flora and fauna, the pacification ceremony called *jichinsai*, etc., he omits all consideration of Folk Shinto because it is discussed in chapter 7 which deals with the larger subject of Folk Religion. It would have been well had he also decided not to discuss Sect Shinto, because it was impossible for him to give it adequate attention in the limited amount of space at his disposal.

Professor Ueda is thoroughly at home and is clearly at his best when he is discussing Shrine Shinto. His essay is excellent because it is not only scholarly but also reveals the feeling of devotion characteristic of a devout Shintoist. In somewhat the same terms as those used by Professor Matsumoto (p. 14), Professor Ueda describes Shinto as "the fundamental value orientation of the Japanese people in the various forms it has taken and the development it has experienced in the course of Japan's history, including her contacts with foreign culture" (p. 29). He characterizes Shinto in some detail under the quality of naturalness and explains briefly the forms of worship, the kami and the shrines, the kami as powers, and *matsuri* (festivals). Two matters of special interest to this reviewer are his explanation of the place of religious orgies and his belief that "Shinto bears within itself the potentiality for... universalism" (pp. 44–45).

State Shinto, which Professor Ueda calls "a political creation... in the Meiji period," is not regarded by him as a special category because it was "a combination of Shrine Shinto and the Shinto of the Imperial House" which came into existence because of a belief that "an emperor-centered Shinto provided the natural symbolic means

for consolidating and mobilizing the nation" (p. 30). This is well expressed; but his statement that State Shinto "was classified as a governmental institution" is somewhat confusing. The shrines were nationalized and classified as government institutions, the shrine priests were nationalized and made government officials, and the shrines, the priests, and shrine worship were not regarded from a legal point of view as religious. But, although State Shinto did include Shrine Shinto, State Shinto as such was not institutionalized. *It was not an institution but an unsystematized cult* without a priesthood, unless it is claimed that all government officials and school teachers were its priests. The word State Shinto (*kokka shintō*) cannot be found in any official documents and it was never classified in any manner by the government. Nevertheless, even though it was not institutionalized, it was nonetheless real, and, as Professor Ueda states, it produced a sense of national identity centering in devotion to the Emperor that became "the official foundation of a new order and the touchstone by which all religious organizations were controlled" (p. 30).

Several questions are suggested by what Professor Ueda writes about Shrine Shinto. If the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, occupies the leading position in the Shinto pantheon, as is indicated on pages 14, 40 and 41, why is she not specifically mentioned in the three-fold statement of characteristics adopted by the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho) in 1956 and why does she receive so little mention in either the introduction or the chapter on Shinto? (Parenthetically, it might be asked why her name was omitted in the index!) And why did it take eleven years for the Association to adopt these principles? If the Grand Shrine of Ise and the Emperor are as

important to Shinto as the people have been led to believe, why is the former totally ignored in this volume and the latter mentioned only once (p. 33) and then in an obviously political sense? Another question relates to the statement on page 38 regarding the status of the enshrined Kami —"and, by extension, the shrines." Is it not true that the criteria of shrine rank were the kami's lineal closeness to and their contributions in support of the Imperial Household, and was not the designation of rank made by the government, thereby making it primarily a political rather than a religious matter? Finally, we are told that the rites of Imperial Household Shinto are performed by the Emperor in person (p. 29) but it is the reviewer's understanding that most of the routine rites of the Imperial Household are performed on behalf of His Majesty by the Chief Ritualist.

In concluding this discussion of Shinto, it is necessary to comment on the subject of "Sect Shinto" to which Professor Ueda could devote only two pages. Instead of discussing Sect Shinto along with Shrine Shinto, Professor Matsumoto deals with it very briefly in a paragraph on the new religious movements of late Edo and early Meiji eras and it seems to this reviewer that that is where Sect Shinto belongs. Professor Matsumoto, however, practically limits himself to the statement that the Meiji government compelled certain religious groups "by direct and indirect intervention, to make their teachings and rites conform to those of state Shinto (*kokka shintō*)." He does point out, however, a fact which most writers on this subject have ignored, namely, that irrespective of the essential nature of these movements, some of which were strongly Taoistic, Confucian or Buddhistic, it was "only when they donned a Shinto cloak that

the government permitted them to exist and called them 'Sect Shinto' organizations" (pp. 27–28). Some of these sects, of course, were of pure Shinto derivation, but until their organization and literary sources have been subjected to sound literary and historical criticism, it will be impossible to tell exactly what they are. As Professor Ueda himself points out, "the classification Sect Shinto is not entirely precise and is therefore open to question on both substantive and theoretical grounds" (p. 31), but he nevertheless asserts, mistakenly, I believe, that the groups thus brought together "do show certain common characteristics" without noting that whatever similarity they may possess is largely because they are Japanese and because of government *guidance* in the drafting of their applications for recognition, rather than because of any intrinsic similarity. As Professor Ueda makes clear on the same page, the category "Sect Shinto" was a creation of the Japanese government for the administrative convenience of the officials who "did not wish to incorporate them [these sects] into state Shinto." It is a mistake, therefore, to regard Sect Shinto as a religion or as even a religious category, because it is not. It was a government administrative category. Moreover, at least some of the so-called thirteen sects were not sects at all. They were federations of religious associations that allowed themselves to be thus grouped and they accepted the official designation of Sect Shinto in order to receive the benefits of government recognition.

Noriyoshi Tamaru's (Rikkyo University) very fine chapter on Buddhism and the relevant statements in the introduction call for no special comment or criticism. Such shortcomings or omissions as it may have can be explained by the limitations of space. For

example, although Zen did not thrive in Japan until the 13th century (p. 61) it was first introduced in the late seventh and early eighth centuries but it did not attract much attention. Again, the effect of the Occupation-sponsored land reform on Buddhist temples (p. 67) was uneven. The Honganji sects were hardly affected at all. The Zen sects probably suffered most. Incidentally, although land reform was implemented by a SCAP directive issued in the fall of 1945, it was based on a pre-World War II law (Law No. 78, 1939, as amended by Law No. 53, 1947). One question that remains after reading this essay is: Were any of the many internal reforms discussed so fervently by sectarian leaders during the Occupation, especially democratization, ever really implemented?

Professor Norihisa Suzuki of St. Paul's University (Rikkyo Daigaku) obviously has a good grasp of the facts of Christian history and a knowledge of the general state of Christianity in Japan today; but his penchant for what appears to be unsubtantiated generalizations and rather trite statements considerably lessens its value for the serious student. For example, he refers to an alleged "missionary conviction that Christianity should be proclaimed in a 'pure form' " that is, with "few points of contact with Japanese culture" (p. 71), and unquestionably there have been Protestant scholars and missionaries who have held this point of view, but in more than 40 years residence in Japan, this reviewer never met one of them. Furthermore, the number of scholarly books and articles on Japanese religion and culture produced by Protestant missionaries would seem to belie the soundness of the generalization. As for the Catholic missionaries, the author contradicts himself on this point by calling attention

to the fact that "in their approach to the people of Japan they [Catholic missionaries] consciously attempted to adapt themselves to Japanese custom..." (p. 77). It must be admitted, of course, that "the Christian failure to take other religions seriously" (p. 86) has undoubtedly weakened the effectiveness of the Christian approach to Japan, but the fact that many Japanese themselves do not take Japanese religions very seriously may be an important reason for this attitude (see last sentence on page 104).

Other statements in the essay could also be questioned, if space permitted, but these must be passed by with only a brief reference to the closing statement on page 87 that Christian organizations in Japan "are so inflexibly institutionalized that they cannot respond adequately to social and human need"? Specifically, what does this mean? The Christian contribution in the field of social work (see p. 85) has been outstanding. A noteworthy shortcoming of the essay is its failure to even mention the National Christian Council or the substantial number of conservative, "evangelical" churches outside the Council.

One other matter to which attention must be called is the need for making a clearer distinction between the terms "followers," "Christians," and "church members." Professor Suzuki rightly states that "any account of the influence of Christianity...should include not only those who are counted as communicant church members but also [what he calls] those latent believers" (p. 76), which, according to impartial sociological surveys, constitute approximately three percent of the entire population. Yet, in the next paragraph he ignores this group when he states that the present percentage of Christians in Japan is 0.5% — a figure that is nearly

fifty years out of date. Professor Matsumoto is guilty of the same error when he states that "the followers of Christianity still comprise less than one percent of the total population" (p. 25). It is *the reported church membership* that is less than one percent.

A few questions of minor interest are: What is the author's authority for saying that the Orthodox Church of Japan severed its relations with the Russian Orthodox Church "at the instigation of the Allied Occupation" (p. 80)? Why are the Methodists not mentioned as among those primarily responsible for the formation of the United Church of Christ (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan) (p. 81)? (Incidentally, contrary to what is stated on page 217, about one-third, not two-thirds, of the Anglican-Episcopal Seikokai churches participated in the United Church.) Finally, it is difficult to understand how Christianity can be so influential in Japan (pp. 25, 84–85) if it is "utterly alien" (p. 25).

The title "New Religious Movements" is most appropriate for chapter 5 so it is unfortunate that the author (or translators) employs the incorrect term "new religions." Most of the groups constituting this phenomenon are sects that can be properly classified as Buddhist. Soka Gakkai and Rissho Kosei Kai — both Buddhist organizations — are very properly offended at the term. Very few of these groups are so unique that they deserve to be called new religions. (For an elaboration of this subject, see *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, Volume V, No. 1, March 1964, pp. 47–49).

The decision to include a chapter on Confucianism (chapter 6) was a wise one, because Confucian ideas infuse Japanese thought and customs. However, this reviewer is not professionally informed on this subject and must refrain from any comment other

than to express general agreement with and appreciation for Professor Mitsuo Tomikura's (Tokai University) essay. Suffice it here to note, then, that it is incorrect to say, as the author does on page 119, that the Emperor in his New Year's Day rescript of January 1, 1946, denied that he was a *kami*. What he did was to deny that he was *akitsu kami* (manifest deity) which is quite a different matter. (For a detailed discussion of this point, see the reviewer's recently published *The Allied Occupation of Japan (1945–1952) and Japanese Religion*, pp. 250–268.)

Another welcome addition to customary discussions of Japanese religion is chapter 7 on "folk religion." Although not usually institutionalized and seldom much organized, folk religion is a significant and vital part of the religious life of the Japanese people. From a layman's point of view Professor Hitoshi Miyake's (Keio University) treatment of the subject seems eminently satisfactory. Nevertheless, because of a lack of professional knowledge, no comments are being made on this subject either. The only exception is to say that the author might have noted that the coming of age ceremony (p. 133) is now a national holiday, Seijin no Hi (January 15).

Mr. Yuiken Kawawata of the Religious Affairs Section of the Ministry of Education has, as would be expected, written a clear but painfully brief essay on the subject of "Religious Organizations in Japanese Law." There are, however, a few minor discrepancies that it seems appropriate to mention. 1. In spite of the statement at the bottom of page 161, the Religious Juridical Persons Law contains no provisions allowing the government "to involve itself in the administration and operations of religious juridical persons...to the minimum extent necessary for the maintenance of public order and the prevention of unlawful acts...."

2. The United Church of Christ in Japan was not a *federation*, it was a *merger*. (Technically, in June 1941 it was a federation of 11 denominational blocs, but the government very shortly ordered the blocs dissolved in order for it to be a single denomination. 3. The Religious Organizations Law (No. 77, 1939) became effective April 1, 1940, and not, as stated, on January 1 (p. 163). 4. The Religious Organizations Law was ordered abolished by SCAP's so-called Civil Liberties Directive of October 4, 1945 and not, as stated, by the Shinto Directive (p. 166). 5. On page 167 the author states that certain requirements of the law were "intended to introduce democratic principles into the organization and legal administration of religious bodies," but this is incorrect. On the contrary, special care was taken in drafting the law to avoid including anything that might be construed as an attempt in connection with incorporation procedures to force a religious organization to change its essential nature or practices. Moreover, there are phrases in the Law that were specifically designed to enable a non-democratic religious organization, a Catholic diocese, for example, to retain its non-democratic character.

In regard to the chapters of Part II on religious organizations, it would be possible to point out numerous additional minor discrepancies, but to do so would detract too much from the value of this reviewer's estimate of this very fine volume. Perfection is difficult to attain and most readers will be appreciative of the generally splendid quality of this volume and pass over its minor shortcomings.

One last word of commendation is due on the unusually good quality of the English in this volume. Not having seen the original Japanese text, it is impossible to comment on the quality

of the translation. However, Dr. Yoshiya Abe of the Religious Affairs Section of the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Dr. David Reid of the Japan Biblical Seminary (Tokyo) are to be congratulated for the smoothness of the English which makes the reader forget that it is a translation. Typographical errors are rare. Finally, the editors — Professors Ichiro Hori (Seijo and Kokugakuin Universities), Fujio Ikado (Tsuda Women's College), Tsuneya Wakimoto (Tokyo University), and Keiichi Yanagawa (Tokyo University) are to be congratulated on their part in this important contribution to our understanding of religion in Japan.

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