

## In Memoriam

### Clemens Anzai Shin

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*Professor Emeritus, Sophia University*  
1923–1998

When the news spread that on New Year's Day 1998 Professor Anzai had passed away, all of those who had known him were utterly surprised and shocked. A few days before his sudden death he had still been an active participant in the annual meeting of CORMOS (Conference on Religion in Modern Society) at Kyoto, where—as at other gatherings—he had displayed his peculiar blend of scholarly acumen with warm *bonhomie*. It was indeed this particular gift of Prof. Anzai that made him into the outstanding figure he was in academic and religious circles in Japan, a gift by which he greatly contributed to the success of the many meetings he attended and, still more, left a lasting imprint on the hearts of the people he met.

Prof. Anzai was born in Sendai (Tōhoku region) in March 1923. After higher studies at Tokyo University (science of religion) and Sophia University (philosophy), he went to Europe to earn in 1961 a Ph.D. in the field of the sociology of religion from the National University of Vienna. Back in Japan, he became a professor of sociology at Sophia University, where he remained until retirement age a few years ago. His academic interests were focused upon two main themes. One was the problem of religious education. Prof. Anzai used his expertise in this field particularly in the service of the Catholic Church he was a member of by giving conferences on this topic and by contributing to various Christian journals. A second theme that he pursued during his whole academic career was the social analysis of Christian missionary work in the Amami and other islands of Southern Japan, where he regularly went for fieldwork together with his students. However, more than for these scholarly achievements he became known for his concrete activities in gatherings where people of different religions—and also scholars of religion—could meet one another. We should mention here the important role he played in the World Conference on Religion and

Peace and in the Conference on Religion in Modern Society.

Besides his academic writings in the field of the sociology of religion, especially in the last years of his life Prof. Anzai wrote numerous short essays on a wide variety of topics. Even when published anonymously—as, for example, his “editorials” in the Buddhist newspaper *Chūgai Nippō*—one could easily guess that he was the author, not only because of his peculiar writing style, which excelled in clarity, but because one could feel in them his love and hope for humanity, grounded in his deep Christian faith. One year before his death, many of these essays were collected in a book entitled *My Testament for the Twenty-first Century: Prospects and Proposals for Contemporary Religions and Society*.

Prof. Anzai was a regular visitor at the Nanzan Institute from its very beginning. We even gave him the (unofficial) title of “honorary family member” at the Paulus Heim, home to several members of the Institute staff, not only because he visited with us so often but also because each time his presence was for us a living reminder that scholarly work and interreligious dialogue could only bear fruits when accompanied and carried out with sincere human warmth.

He was indeed a master in this, in whatever situation he found himself. In academic encounters, whether inside or outside Japan—such as the annual meetings of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies or the biennial conferences of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion, which he regularly attended—his interventions testified as much to the depth of his research as to the especially human way he had conducted it. This was still more conspicuous in his interreligious dialogue activities.

As a Japanese Catholic Christian deeply committed to this endeavor, he was simply “outstanding,” although it must be said in all fairness that not necessarily everybody, especially in Christian circles, was equally enthusiastic about the sort of openness he manifested towards the non-Christian world. Was it perhaps because he could “afford” to be so open? Indeed, his was a Christian faith that was at ease with his being at the same time deeply steeped in Japanese culture, a harmonious symbiosis which he had, no doubt, only attained after many years of struggle. Also, in this field of interreligious dialogue his activities covered both Japan and the international scene. How greatly did we at Nanzan appreciate his participation in our symposia, whether as a panel member or as an observer. How greatly also did people abroad appreciate his many contributions to better interreligious and intercultural understanding. Who could resist being captured, for example, by the message of universal brotherhood he gave when, after

meetings, he donned traditional Japanese dress and regaled his audience with Japanese songs and dances?

Perhaps there is no better way to cherish Prof. Anzai's memory than to shed a tear and say a prayer, for we will miss him, his scholarly advice, his warm friendship, his sincere concern for all the people he met. But that tear and prayer will go together with a smile when we recall his face, his way of gesturing, of walking, of speaking, of enjoying life in spite of its hardships. Just as he himself knew how to enjoy life and to share this joy with others, even when at times pain struck, he must certainly be enjoying eternal bliss now as only he knows how.

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