

Peter B. CLARKE, ed., *A Bibliography of Japanese New Religious Movements: With Annotations and an Introduction to Japanese New Religions at Home and Abroad*. 276 pp. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999. £45.00. ISBN: 1-873410-80-8.

THE ACADEMIC STUDY of Japan's new religions has flourished in the 1980s and 1990s with the publication of several thousand books and journal articles both in Japan and the West. H. Byron Earhart's 1983 compendium *The New Religions of Japan* is now very outdated. Scholars in the field will thus rejoice at the publication of Peter B. Clarke's recently edited *A Bibliography of Japanese New Religious Movements*.

Clarke's bibliography contains over 1500 entries, including European, American, and Japanese entries covering books, journals, unpublished papers and theses, and a selection of in-house publications. The second half of the book provides brief profiles of each of the main new religious movements, covering the founding and subsequent history of each group, a summary of main beliefs and practices, and a listing of main publications by and about the religion. There is a brief introductory chapter, "Japanese New Religions Abroad—The Way of the Kami in Foreign Lands" and a concluding chapter, "Aum Shinrikyō: Brief History and Select Bibliography." Many of the works cited in the general bibliography are listed again in the sections pertaining to each religion.

Only scholars studying each of the religions can really judge the overall quality of the listings for that religious movement. The sections on the Soka Gakkai and Aum Shinrikyō, for example, provide a very broad and very contemporary listing of works in English and other Western languages as well as a useful sampling of publications in Japanese. One is grateful for a copious listing of in-house publications by the respective religions. There are careful and extremely useful annotations accompanying many of the entries that summarize the major themes and subjects covered in each work. No bibliography, especially in a rapidly growing and broad field such as the new religions in Japan, can be complete, and there are some omissions of major works that should have been included. Nevertheless, one must commend Professor Clarke, Research Assistant Sonia Crivello, and a long list of contributors at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King's College, University of London for their copious and diligent work. On the other hand, many of the brief summary histories and overviews of the religions themselves are poorly developed. Thus, while Masaki Fukui provides a superb chapter on

the history and theology of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, the section on the Soka Gakkai is very sketchy and weakly conceived.

Clarke, who is Professor of the History and Sociology of Religion at King's College, has provided a brief introduction to Japanese new religions in Japan and abroad as well as a brief appendix that features an overview of the history and theology of Aum Shinrikyō. Clarke's introduction consists of a survey of Japanese new religious movements abroad and a very useful discussion of the terminology of such expressions as "new" and "new, new religions." He notes, for example, that "New religions need not... be considered new in the sense of providing entirely new beliefs and rituals but in the way they have restructured aspects of Japanese cosmology with a long history and interpreted long-standing ritual practices to serve different ends than once was the case" (p. 7). He concludes that "More generally, the new and new, new religions of Japan have made a difference to the religious life of Japan by their new emphasis in their teaching on pacifism, the energy they put into recruitment and expansion overseas among non-Japanese, in the stress they place on lay spirituality, in the provision of techniques to enable devotees to reach the summit of the spiritual mountain, and in the significance they give to the laity as primary evangelists" (p. 11). Clarke includes a discussion of the successes and failures of new religions abroad, but provides surprisingly little analysis of the reasons why some of these new religions, the Soka Gakkai in particular, have found so many non-Japanese adherents throughout the world.

Clarke writes with some concern that the phenomenon of new religions in Japan is on the decline. A primary reason is a lack of fit between the models of society the new religions are providing and the changing outlook of the Japanese population, particularly those under thirty years of age. The new religions require tremendous amounts of time and exclusive commitment which fails to correspond to the more diverse and eclectic views of younger Japanese. Other factors inhibiting growth is a lack of motivation and energy among second and third generation members and the more establishment-oriented demeanor of some of the new religions that have long since lost much of their "evangelical, sectarian fire" (p. 16).

Clarke's brief history of Aum Shinrikyō is one of the best written analyses of this controversial sect. Clarke commences the chapter with a concise discussion of Aum's use of mystical power:

Aum illustrates more clearly than any other religion in the contemporary Japanese context the lethal potential of mystical power. Mysticism is a difficult word to define and often refers to an inward, spiritual religion based on the experience of direct immediate awareness of the divine. It emphasizes experience rather than theological reasoning. While these features are not being overlooked here the stress is on mysticism as a form of spiritual power that is activated by a relationship between a leader who claims supernatural powers and who regards her/himself as divinely chosen and the unswerving belief of disciples in those claims. It is a power that can be manipulated to justify the use of the most immoral and unlawful means, such as the use of sarin gas in an attack on the Tokyo underground by members

of Aum Shinrikyō on 20 March 1995 demonstrated, to further what are interpreted as spiritual ends. (p. 267)

Clarke provides a most useful overview of Aum's transition in emphasis from a "this-worldly" to an "other-worldly" orientation, correctly noting that this shift was not always even and unilinear, but which ultimately brought Asahara and many of his followers a very alienated view of society.

Despite its many small weaknesses, Clarke's *Bibliography of Japanese New Religious Movements* should be purchased by every library with a serious Japan studies collection. It will serve as a useful guide to scholars in the field as well as students seeking an overview of Japan's new religious movements.

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