

Peter B. CLARKE, ed., *Japanese New Religions in Global Perspective*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000. viii + 321 pp. \$54.00 cloth, ISBN 0-7007-1185-6.

THIS VOLUME AIMS to provide “new research on a wide range of aspects of Japanese new religions abroad” (1) focusing in particular on how they illustrate the “reverse influences” of the globalization process. The term “reverse influences” is used by the editor to indicate that globalization is not an unidirectional process, with influences coming from the dominant, meaning Western, culture, but, in various cultural situations, is something that exhibits a multitude of influences and cross-fertilization. The interest here is on the spread of Japanese cultural influences, particularly through the missionary efforts of the new religions in Australia, Europe, and the Americas. In recent years several collections of academic essays on Japanese new religions abroad have been published (e.g., INOUE 1985, MULLINS and YOUNG 1991), including one by the present editor (CLARKE and SOMERS 1994). The unique contribution of this volume is its focus on the success or failure of these movements to establish themselves abroad as illustrations of the complex process of globalization.

The first chapter, by Catherine Cornille on elements of nationalism in the Japanese new religions, is a development of work that she has previously published (CORNILLE 1999) and illustrates how the reassertion of cultural identity has been an enduring phenomenon throughout the modern period in Japan. Chapter Two, one of two contributions by Louella Matsunaga, is a case study of a direct link between Japanese corporate culture and religion, that of the retailer Yaohan and Seichō no Ie. In this case the success and failure of the company in various foreign situations is used as a window onto the complexities of globalization. The following chapter, by Gary D. Bouma, Wendy Smith, and Shiva Vasi, is a study of Japanese religion in Australia, focusing on Mahikari and Zen. Here Zen is recognized as “new to Australia” (75), indicating the fluidity of the new-religions category. While neither group has attracted a large following in Australia—Mahikari reports 2000 members and Zen has about 1500 practitioners—both have established centers throughout the country, and the majority of their followers are from outside the Japanese community. Chapter Four is a case study of Sekai Kyūseikyō, or the Church of World Messianity, in Brazil, by Ari Pedro Oro. As previous research has indicated, Sekai Kyūseikyō has had considerable success in that country, with

more than three-hundred thousand members, overwhelmingly non-Japanese. As the author points out, one of the attractions of Sekai Kyūseikyō in Brazil is precisely its Japaneseness, since Japanese culture is identified with prosperity and success. Peter Clarke next offers an extensive study of millenarianism in the Japanese new religions, particularly Ōmotokyō, Tenshō Kōtai Jingū (the so-called dancing religion), and Sekai Kyūseikyō. Particularly interesting is his reporting on the plans of Sekai Kyūseikyō to establish a “New Age City” in Brazil, as an attempt to realize their vision of heaven-on-earth. In Chapter Six, Sanda Ionescu offers a study of Sōka Gakkai in Germany, highlighting the issue of cultural adaptation. Chapter Seven, the second contribution by Louella Matsunaga, is a study of Mahikari in the UK, based on her extensive research of the group. In Chapter Eight by Tina Hamrin, the establishment of Tenshō Kōtai Jingū among the Japanese immigrant community in Hawaii illustrates the maintenance of cultural identity by an immigrant group, both through its healing activities as well as its political/nationalist overtones, in being identified with a *katta-gumi*, or a group of first-generation immigrants who continued to maintain that it was Japan that had won World War II. Chapter Nine, by Alfred Bloom, is an essay on the problems of cultural adaptation and survival of Jōdo Shinshū in Hawaii and North America. The final chapter, also by Peter Clarke, offers some reflections on factors leading to the success or failure of Japanese new religions abroad, culminating in a critique of Rodney STARK’s theory (1996). While they can only be suggestive of some of the factors at play here, his focus on the conversion stories of some non-Japanese members of the new religions serves to emphasize the complex interaction of various cultural influences in the globalization process, leading Clarke to the pessimistic conclusion that,

the difficulties involved in developing a theory that can make sense of success and failure from a cross-cultural perspective are probably insurmountable. The evidence suggests that what makes for progress in one cultural and historical context does not necessarily do so in another. (308)

As in any collection like the present volume, there is considerable difference in the quality of the individual chapters, especially in light of the overall theme of globalization. From my perspective, the real gems in the book are the chapters by Ionescu on Sōka Gakkai in Germany, and Matsunaga on Mahikari in the UK. Ionescu begins by identifying the elements of globalization theory that are relevant to her study, and on the basis of her extensive fieldwork culls three issues that have been important in the adaptation of Sōka Gakkai to German culture: women’s dress at meetings, *seiza* (the Japanese cultural way of sitting for prayer and other formal occasions), and division of labor by gender. As Ionescu points out, “It is striking that, like a marriage, it is the small things which almost lead to a breakdown of communication between the two sides” (190). Although brief, her study is an important contribution to the growing literature on Sōka Gakkai abroad (cf. WILSON and DOBBELAERE 1994, HAMMOND and MACHACEK 1999), as well as a clear attempt to illustrate the subtle nature of the multidirectional influences

of globalization that this volume addresses. It would have been interesting if some comparisons with SGI in the UK and the US, based on the studies mentioned above, had been attempted here.

Matsunaga's study on Mahikari in the UK is one of the longer chapters in the book, and the wealth of information offered, as well as the depth of its analysis, testifies to the thoroughness of her research. The study is based on extensive participant observation, interviews, and a questionnaire sent to the entire membership (350 total, 30 percent response); it also draws on other studies of Mahikari abroad (CORNILLE 1991, HURBON 1991), as well as the Wilson and Dobbelaere study of SGI in the UK, to make insightful comparisons. In her conclusion she offers perhaps the clearest analysis of the complexities of cultural adaptation under the influence of globalization to be found in this volume: that in a multi-cultural society such as the UK any religion "may present continuities with some sections of the UK population but not with others" (232); "[f]urthermore, even among that section of the UK population with wholly European antecedents, many ideas originating outside Europe, such as karma, or re-incarnation, have become common currency in some circles" (232); "the situation is further complicated by the exchange of information as well as people across national borders, which means that it is increasingly difficult to assign a particular 'culture' label to any one belief in any case" (232); and "the question of what is Japanese and what is international is itself highly problematic in the Mahikari case, with the 'Japanese' element of Mahikari presenting a constantly moving target, defined differently depending on the perspective of the member concerned" (233).

Finally, I must point out two criticisms of the volume as a whole. First, no convention is used regarding the order of Japanese names. Apparently this was left up to the individual authors, although even within one of the chapters both the Japanese and Western convention is used. People familiar with Japanese names will have no problem sorting this out, but it will no doubt cause confusion for others. Second, while some of the chapters are in relatively good shape, the volume as a whole is badly in need of copyediting, so much so that one wonders how it was published in its present state. It is a shame that typographical and other simple errors take away from the pleasure of reading what could have been an important contribution to contemporary religious studies.

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