



Wm. Theodore deBary et al., comps., *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume One*

Second edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
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I AM A FAN OF Volume One of *Sources of Japanese Tradition* and use it for introductory classes in Japanese and East Asian religions. The main attraction of the book is its wide variety of primary source translations. Although *Sources of Japanese Tradition* was not intended to serve as a textbook for Religious Studies, little in premodern Japan was not affected in one way or another by what we now call religion.

The recently published second edition marks a significant improvement, primarily through the addition of new material. In fact, Volume One now ends in the 1500s, whereas the first edition continued to the early 1800s. Presumably the missing years will be included in Volume Two of a new edition.

Major additions include translations of *norito* in the Shinto chapter; substantial material by the Chinese Tiantai masters Guanding, Huisi, and Zhiyi, provided as background to Japanese Tendai; pieces by Rennyo and Ippen in the Pure Land chapter; *setsuwa* in various chapters; and writings on the tea ceremony in a chapter on Japanese aesthetics. The new edition also offers entirely new chapters, including “New Views of History,” with pieces from the *Eiga monogatari*, *Ōkagami*, and *Gukanshō*; “The Way of the Warrior,” containing excerpts from the *Hōgen*, *Heiji*, and *Heike monogatari*; and “Women’s Education,” including parts of Minamoto Tamenori’s *Sanbōe*, as well as writings by Keisei and Mujū Ichien. These additions are without exception valuable, making an already excellent text even better and more balanced.

The *setsuwa* in particular are most welcome; such tales have often been regarded as mere legend and therefore not legitimate material for the serious student of Japanese culture. While not reliable sources of historical fact, they do provide a wealth of information regarding contemporary views and beliefs.

Also added, as well as re-edited, are introductions to many of the sections. In the second edition we are told who wrote them; in many cases it is a specialist in that field, such as Paul Groner for Tendai and Philip Yampolsky for Nichiren Buddhism. This helps eliminate the problem in the first edition of considerable inaccuracy when dealing with details. Unfortunately, the book's biggest drawback is its inconsistency, and the introductions provide one example. Several do not appear to have been revised at all, or were edited merely for grammar, despite the fact that research in these areas has advanced enormously since publication of the first edition in 1958. Examples include the introductions to the chapters "Early Shinto," "Prince Shōtoku and His Court," "Nara Buddhism," and "Shinto in Medieval Japan." The statement that in early Shinto as part of kami worship at a shrine "the offerings usually consisted of the firstborn of a household" (19) has led many a student to believe that the child was in fact killed. If this is what the author intended to convey, some evidence should be supplied; no one I have spoken to is aware of such a practice. If, however, the author meant to say that the first-born was simply presented to the kami, less ambiguous wording would be preferable.

Another improvement is the addition of transcribed Chinese and Japanese titles in the Table of Contents. In the first edition, when perusing this section one was often left to wonder what the original text could possibly be. The book is, however, inconsistent on this point as well. For example, the reader is not told that "About the 'Malt Jizō' of Kanuki in Suruga" is from the *Jizō bosatsu reigen ki* until she turns to that section of the book, although she is told in the Table of Contents that Dōgen's "How to Practice Buddhism" is from the *Bendōwa*.

A related problem, at least for the scholar, is that the original source is not always cited. The text is faithful about referring to the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, for example, but in the above instance of the Malt Jizō story, the reader is directed only to Yoshiko Dykstra's translation and not told how to locate the original. In addition, we are usually but not always told who translated a particular text.

Of somewhat questionable value is the considerable reorganization of this edition. Although at first glance much material appears to have been taken out, on closer examination one discovers that it was merely moved. For example, much of what in the first edition was classified under the heading "Earliest Japanese Chronicles" now is found under "Early Shinto." Given all the problems with the term Shinto, I cannot say this is an improvement. Another example involves translations of the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, which now are classified under "Prince Shōtoku," presumably because he may have written commentaries on the two texts. The primarily value of the *Lotus Sūtra* in particular, however, arguably does not lie in this commentary but rather in the later Tendai school and its emphasis on universal enlightenment. One would not usually think to look under "Prince Shōtoku"

for information on the *Lotus Sūtra*. Yet another such problem involves the translation of “The Bodhisattva Gyōgi.” This is placed under “Nara Buddhism,” but in fact the tales were not written until around three hundred years later and probably reflect ideas of the late Heian rather than the Nara period. Such organizational problems, however, are certainly unavoidable when dealing with so much material which covers a long period of time.

One other minor complaint is that the two maps in the first edition were removed. This, I feel, is a great loss. Accessible maps make a teacher’s job much easier. Nevertheless, improvements far outweigh the drawbacks of this new edition. The daunting task of revising such a classic was skillfully handled by the editors. The additions do, of course, make for a heftier volume that is much less portable, but the new material is well worth it.

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