

Reviews

Fujii Masao 藤井正雄, *Gendaijin no shinkō kōzō: Shūkyō fudō jinkō no kōdō to shisō* 現代人の信仰構造—宗教浮動人口の行動と思想 [The belief-structure of contemporary Japanese people: Behavior and ideas of the religiously floating population]. Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1974. 256 pages including appendix and index. ¥980.

This is one of the most unusual books I have ever read—unusual, that is, not in its theoretical or methodological orientation but in the way it develops its theme. What this book deals with is the subject of funerary rites as a key to the religious practices and ideas of people who, as a result of population mobility, have become “floaters” in respect of their links with traditional Buddhist temple organizations.

It should be noted from the outset that although the title includes the word “structure,” the study itself has nothing to do with the method of structural analysis propounded by Lévi-Strauss. In this context “structure” means, according to the author, the belief-principle in Japanese people and culture that, even while changing, is recognizably resistant to change.

The author, an assistant professor at Taisho University, is a social anthropologist who is himself a priest of the Pure Land tradition. He divides his study into six chapters. Chapter 1, “Mapping the distribution of religious organizations in contemporary Japan,” sets the stage with a statistical and to some extent historical survey. Chapter 2, “The state of affairs in the Buddhist world today,” traces not only the disruptive effects on Japanese Buddhism of the occupation-initiated land reform, the shift from linear to nuclear family organization, and widespread population mobility, but also the efforts mounted by several Buddhist denominations to revive interest in and support for

their organization. This survey leads the author to conclude that there are still large numbers of people who, on leaving rural for urban areas, form no new temple relationships and, moreover, that efforts by Buddhist denominations to solve this problem have been largely unsuccessful. The result is the emergence of a religiously floating population.

With chapter 3, "The dynamics of the religiously floating population," the study gets down to brass tacks. Defining "religiously floating population" as people who have moved away from their traditional home and established no new shrine or temple ties, the author proposes to use not a territorially oriented approach but an approach focusing on this particular category of people. In order to do so, he chooses two Buddhist temples of the Pure Land tradition, one in Tokyo and one in Yokohama, both of which count among their adherents many classes of people. The "floaters" who figure in the examination are people who, on the occasion of a death in the immediate family, come in contact with one temple or the other. One point of importance in this chapter is that both temples, while thus drawing in members of the religiously floating population, establish relations with them by seeking to enroll them in the traditional temple-supporters' organization—a relation in which continued ritual services for deceased family members play a more prominent role than belief. It will be readily understood, therefore, that this relation is jeopardized by the tendency of city planners to remove existing cemeteries from urban areas and establish large new ones in a few suburbs.

The cemetery location and administration question is taken up in considerable detail in chapter 4, "The problem of cemeteries in urban areas." Noting that those needing to purchase cemetery plots (no simple matter) are not the old, established families but the newly independent, nuclear families, the author introduces such matters as temple cemeteries, secular cemeteries

with denominationally distinct religious facilities, ossuary lockers (both short-term and long), and the general resistance most Japanese people have to the idea of eternal repose in a stack of steel lockers. This chapter contains the provocative suggestion that whereas Japanese people's view of their relationship to their ancestors is generally one in which the living and dead occupy the same life-space, the moving of cemeteries away from local temples to the suburbs, away from the space occupied by the living, is understandable as a return to a pre-Buddhist state of affairs. This return means that life-space is dichotomized into sacred spaces for the dead and secular spaces for the living, time is divided into sacred and secular times, and a rhythm of ritual communication between these two kinds of times and spaces is established. The author suggests, however, that the growing trend toward separation between temple and graveyard should be taken, by Buddhists, as a "shower of compassion" in that it may force them to make Japanese Buddhism less of a funereal affair and give greater emphasis to spreading the doctrine and providing community services.

Chapter 5 bears a remarkable title which, in expanded paraphrase, means "Buddhist images made of human bones and the formation of a post-religiously floating population." Here the author throws light on a heretofore little-known and poorly understood phenomenon—the practice of pulverizing the cremated bones of certain human beings and using them as material for the shaping of a Buddhist image that, when completed, serves as a focus for the veneration of the living. Singled out for special attention in this connection is Isshin temple, an Osaka temple of the Pure Land tradition. One of the few Japanese *kotsubotoke* temples (temples with "buddhas made of bones"), Isshin temple draws people from all over the Kinki district. The author's research shows that one of the fears evident among people who come to this temple is that if they are buried in a

family grave, the time may come when, for any one of a variety of reasons, no one will be left to attend the grave or remember them with visits and gifts. In Japanese terms this is the fear of becoming a *muen-botoke* ("a dead person without relatives"). The graves of people who have in fact become *muen-botoke* provide part of the material for a *kotsubotoke* image. But many living people, in order to dispel the fear of becoming a *muen-botoke*, are attracted to the idea of willing their bones for this purpose. Not only does this disposition relieve them or their survivors of the necessity of paying for a *kaimyō* (a posthumous Buddhist name assigned to the deceased by a priest of his temple at a cost correlated with its rank) but it also assures continued and almost continuous attention from the living. Some people, hedging their bets, arrange to have their remains divided, part to go into the family grave through the good offices of their local or traditional temple, and part to be used in a *kotsubotoke* at a place like Isshin temple. The cremated bones of approximately 50,000 people are required to make one *kotsubotoke* image. Isshin temple has three such images and is presently collecting for a fourth.

This alternative to customary burial arrangements, however grotesque or gruesome it may seem at first, is one that some religious "floaters" employ to dispose of their remains with a considerable degree of religious satisfaction and sense of security as regards the future. The result is the creation of a sizable post-religiously floating population.

In the final chapter, "Religion and modern man," the author presents a carefully worked out model of the structure of Japanese religion. Essentially it is a pendulum-type model that enables one to recognize Japanese religion as a sequence of pendulum swings with varying degrees of approximation to two extremes: the way of self-negation or inwardly directed religion oriented toward nature and manifesting itself in successive

renewals of the religious organization, and the way of self-affirmation or outwardly directed religion oriented toward the exigencies of rice production and manifesting itself in demands for tangible benefits and doctrinal simplifications—in a word, indigenization. Both aspects come to bear on the family, and together they constitute the belief-structure of contemporary Japanese people.

The subject of mortuary customs as one key to cultural understanding, whether for conceptualizing a world view or forming models of functional relationships between the religious system and other systems within a society, has long fascinated anthropologists and is currently undergoing something of a renaissance among American sociologists. This study by Fujii is an impressive contribution to the field.

The model that gives the book its title and conclusion diagrams in a very useful way the main parameters to be kept in mind when studying Japanese religion generally. At the same time, however, the model raises almost as many questions as it answers. For example, what forms would the model take if applied to the major periods of Japanese religious history? Can it be applied to particular religious organizations so as to yield individualized submodels? And what, in this scheme, is the place of the community, on the one hand, and the individual, on the other? These questions, it should be understood, are not intended to detract from the value of the model as presented. On the contrary, they are a way of saying that the model whets one's appetite and makes him look for more.

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