

Shūkyō Shakaigaku Kenkyūkai 宗教社会学研究会 [Association for the Study of Religion and Society], ed., *Shūkyō no imi sekai* 宗教の意味世界 [The religious world of meaning]. Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1980. Hard-bound. 254 pp. ¥2,500.

This book is the second to be published by the Association for the Study of Religion and Society. The first bore the title *Gendai shūkyō e no shikaku* 現代宗教への視角 [Perspectives on contemporary religion] (1978).¹ Each contains articles by about a dozen contributors.

The book under review involves considerable diversity in respect of matters studied, but what unites the various contributions is a common interest in the changing features of contemporary religion. The essays themselves are unequally grouped into four parts.

Part 1, with four essays, is titled "Heritage and development in the world of tradition." The first essay, "*Izuna* and *izuna* masters" by SATŌ Noriaki, focuses on a type of local magician found in the Tōhoku area (a district of northern Honshū). The *izuna* is an imaginary animal about the size of a mouse. It is supposed to have beneficial, supernatural powers and be subject to the control of the *izuna* masters, the only ones able to see these creatures. Many clients call on *izuna* masters to present requests for assistance. Satō gives an account of the structure of this form of belief.

The second essay, by MOGI Sakae, is called "The world of the festival considered under the heading of tradition." His data are drawn from Nagano prefecture and focus primarily on two phenomena that have long attracted the attention of Japanese folklorists: the midwinter Snow Festival and the midsummer Bon Festival (sometimes identified as the Festival for the Dead). Mogi clarifies the mutual relationship between the social structure and the way the festivals are carried out.

"The ideology of *noro* succession in the Amami area" is the work of two authors, IGETA Midori and YAMAZAKI Yoshie. *Noro* is the term for a traditional priest-ritualist of the Amami and Okinawa areas. Igeta and Yamazaki did their research in the Amami area over a period of several years and established considerable rapport with a number of informants. They seek to get at the ideology of the traditional belief system centering in the *noro* on the assumption that its normally veiled

1. For a review by Jan Swyngedouw see *Japanese journal of religious studies* 5 (1978): 299-304.

structure becomes manifest when difficulties arise that interfere with the traditional ways of carrying out *noro* rituals.

The last essay in part 1 is "Social and cultural aspects in the appropriation of religion" by MONMA Sachio. He takes up the phenomenon of the Kannon cult, one of the most popular in Japan. He analyzes how it has changed in the course of its diffusion. As a faith object Kannon has great popularity, but few Japanese know much about this figure. This paradox is one of the key points in this essay.

Part 2, "The experience and logic of salvation," consists of three essays. WATANABE Masako's "The logic of salvation" treats this problem in relation to the modern period religious organization Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, popularly known to Japanese people of the immediate postwar period as "the dancing religion." The recently deceased founder of this sect, Kitamura Sayo, left many messages for her followers. Watanabe analyzes not only these messages but also the way that they have been interpreted by those who received instruction and advice on life problems directly from her.

The paper by MIYANAGA Kuniko, "The logic of possession and exorcism in contemporary Japan," deals with another new religious group: Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan [True Light for World Enlightenment Mission]. This sect is particularly known for its salvation-purification ritual called *tekazashi* (a kind of healing ritual that makes use of hand action but avoids physical contact between ritualist and clients). She traces how members become drawn into the practice of this ritual.

In his paper "Salvation for the body and salvation for the spirit," SHIMADA Hiromi advocates developing a subdiscipline that might be called "medical science of religion." He sides with those who see medical care as a kind of magico-religious healing and seeks to throw light on the boundary area where religious and medical care overlap.

Part 3, "The world of meaning in scripture and theology," likewise contains three essays, two of which deal with phenomena external to Japanese society. "Religious experience and society in Methodism" by YAMANAKA Hiroshi focuses on the theology of John Wesley and considers the relationship between Methodism and the work ethic. "Perceptions of the world in fundamentalist Islam" by ŌTSUKA Kazuo takes its theoretical orientation from the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith and deals with data gained during a one-year stay in Saudi

Arabia. Ōtsuka addresses himself not to the problem of understanding Islamic theology in general but to that of comprehending how individual Muslims live in the modern Islamic world. The third essay, "Jōdo Shinshū theology and the *Tannishō*" by HAYASHI Makoto, takes up the question of the role of the sacred text in a religious organization. In the case of the Jōdo Shinshū or True Pure Land Sect, the *Tannishō*, a text based on the words of the sect's founder, Shinran, is widely read and has resulted in the publication of numerous commentaries. Hayashi takes the view that analysis of these various interpretations provides an invaluable clue for persons interested in understanding the role of a written text in a religious organization that regards it as normative if not sacred.

Part 4, "The mode of existence of the sacred," is comprised of two theoretical articles. The first, by KAWAMURA Kunimitsu, is on "Charisma and its magnetic field." In this paper Kawamura reexamines Weber's concept of charisma and proposes as a less psychological and more sociological corrective the term "magnetic field of charisma." This term is intended to refer to the social sphere in which charisma becomes established and has its effects. The author explores the question of the structure of the charismatic field and also that of the social developments in which its influence can be traced.

The second, by TSUSHIMA Michihito, is entitled "The 'real' existence of a religiously transcendent world." The most speculative of all the contributions, Tsushima's paper examines the process through which religious people, interpreting diverse and ongoing experiences, fashion images constitutive of their "world of reality." He identifies four forms of this process: naming, direct experience of the transcendent, intuitive grasp through experience of hierophany, and analogy with the natural world.

All these contributors, still in their twenties and thirties, are relatively young. Perhaps for this reason their papers show considerable freedom from "orthodox" models. Some give us first-hand information on the religious situation in present-day Japan. Others propose new and stimulating methods for the analysis of complex religious phenomena. By and large their contributions evoke a generally positive assessment. At the same time, however, there are a few problems.

One problem is that of how a given paper relates to previous work

in the field. There exist, for example, many scholarly studies of magico-religious folk practices, and a few theoretical constructions have been proposed. In the paper on Amami area *noro* by Igeta and Yamazaki, however, there is no indication as to how their research relates to the general corpus of data and theory. This lacuna will create difficulty for readers.

Mogi's essay on winter and summer festivals is overbalanced on the side of detailed description of various rituals and processes. Readers will doubtless call for a more theoretical explanation of the phenomena.

The so-called "new religions" of Japan have a collective history of over a hundred years, but academic inquiry and research in this area did not begin in earnest until after World War II. Perhaps because of its very newness, the question of what approach to take in order to comprehend this phenomenon is still unresolved. Three of the papers in part 2 deal with religious bodies of the modern period and seek to develop new approaches, but it would be venturesome to say that they have succeeded. A more suitable appraisal would be to say that with these papers the authors have now joined the ranks of those searching for a new approach.

The final point in my list of the book's weaknesses is that several of the authors are so eager to set out and develop their own views that they fail to give a clear account of their central theme. This criticism applies particularly to the concluding essay.

Despite these weaknesses, this book can be positively assessed as one that will stimulate further contributions to the study of the contemporary religious situation.

Before concluding, I should like to say a word about the relationship between this book and the one that preceded it. The earlier book likewise sought to clarify the contemporary religious situation and also consisted of four parts: "New attempts to comprehend religion," "Contemporary manifestations of deep-seated beliefs," "New developments among religious movements," and "Points of contact between religion and culture." The reader will observe that the theme and structure of the two books are quite similar. The main difference between them is that the earlier book is more general and inclusive than the second. Interest has shifted from the problem of the relationships between religion and other dimensions of culture to that of the

religious world in and of itself. Both the virtues and the defects of the present book derive from this characteristic.

The young but professional scholars affiliated with the Association for the Study of Religion and Society will certainly continue their studies, both empirically and theoretically. We can expect that they will take seriously the criticisms leveled at their work, take encouragement from the sympathetic support they receive, and come out with another book in the not-too-distant future.

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