

Reviews

H. Byron EARHART, *Japanese religion: Unity and diversity*, third edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982. xvi+272 pages, including Annotated Bibliography, Study Questions, and Index.

For an American college textbook on Japanese religion to go into a third edition is little short of amazing. Most Americans have forebears or relations across the Atlantic. The whole weight of cultural tradition from abroad seems to come from that direction. People who study the cultures of Asia are not only relatively few in number, they also have to work in the face of a massive stream of ignorance and indifference. The energy this requires, not to mention the difficulty of obtaining funds for travel and research, the costs of separation from family, the outlays for published materials—all this is beyond reckoning. For a time, the counterculture mood of the post-Vietnam era found one expression in the study of exotic religious traditions. College classes on Zen Buddhism, for example, suddenly filled to overflowing. That period, however, seems to have tapered off. The mood among American college students today is more restrained. The American economic situation, moreover, is one of "tight money." Even so, Byron Earhart has succeeded in producing this text in a handsome third edition. A remarkable achievement!

The questions to be considered in this brief review are: how does this edition differ from its predecessors? is it commendable as an introduction to Japanese religion? how might it be improved?

The 115-page first edition had seventeen chapters, an annotated bibliography of 115 items, and a 3-page index. The 148-page second edition contained two new chapters ("Folk Religion" and "Two New Religions"), an annotated bibliography of 197 items, and a 4-page index. The 272-page third edition consists of twenty chapters, an annotated bibliography of 358 items, and a 7-page index. The new chapter, "Religious Life in Contemporary Japan," is not the only thing, however, that makes this edition new. To mention only the most conspicuous new elements, the sections on Dogen and Zen as well as on the Japanese acceptance of Christianity have been expanded, the sections on Tokugawa government and religion and on Restoration Shinto have been rewritten, and completely new sections on Neo-Confucianism and on Motoori Norinaga have been added. The new edition is enhanced, moreover, by twenty-five excellent photographs. It also includes for the first time an 11-page list of Study Questions correlated

with the author's sourcebook *Religion in the Japanese Experience* and developed, the author says, at student request in order to clarify the significance of each chapter. The book has been entirely reset in larger, easier-to-read type; the chapters have been helpfully divided into smaller sections, each set off by its own title; and all the section titles have now been listed in the table of contents, vastly facilitating reference to specific subjects. All in all, it is a great improvement over earlier editions.

The question whether this book is commendable as an introduction to Japanese religion can be answered with a ringing "Yes." In easy-to-understand language it tells the story of the religious experience of the Japanese people. It is sensible in structure, reasonable in tone, cautious in generalization, and far more erudite than American college students (or even specialists in other fields) are likely to recognize. If I were to teach a course on Japanese religion at the undergraduate level in the United States or Canada today, I would almost certainly choose this book as a text. So far as I know, it has no peer.

This is not to say, however, that there is no room for improvement. In view of the possibility that the book may one day be published in a fourth edition, I should like to propose four areas where improvements might be made.

The first area is that of correcting certain errors of detail. On page 24 the author explains the word "Jomon" as "code pattern," but I am quite at a loss to know what kind of code the potters of Stone Age Japan could possibly have wished to put on their pottery. The dictionaries I generally use (*Kōjien*, *Nihon bunkashi jiten*, *Kōkōgaku jiten*, etc.) speak of the pottery of this period as distinguished by the imprint of fiber cord—once thought to be braided straw rope (in Japanese, *nawa* or *JŌ*), whence the name Jōmon or straw-rope pattern. I suspect that the author got his information from a Japanese speaker and that what he heard as "code pattern" was intended to be heard as "cord pattern." Again, on page 108 the author's parenthetical explanation of the term *honji-suijaku* is "original substance manifests traces." Though doubtless a typographical error, it is misleading. What is wanted, I think, is "original substance vs. manifest traces." A final quibble has to do with the annotation for *Kokutai no Hongi* as found on page 230. It is identified as "the nationalistic textbook used in public schools after 1938." Would it not be better to say "... between 1938 and 1945"?

A second improvement that may be suggested is the elimination of useless repetition. To be told, for example, that the name of the Chinese Neo-Confucian Chu Hsi is pronounced Shushi in Japanese is to the point, but to be told the same thing three times within the space of four pages (pp. 137-40) makes one feel that the author thinks his readers stupid. This is counterproductive. Another repetition of questionable value is to give for a reference the same (or nearly the same) annotation both in the chapter-by-chapter Selected Readings and in the Annotated Bibliography at the back. Would not the purpose be equally well

served by giving in the Selected Readings only the information necessary to find the reference in the Annotated Bibliography? By the same token, the number of times we are given the place of publication, publisher, and date of publication for the same book involves considerable redundancy. For example, that the book *Japanese Religion*, edited by Hori Ichirō, was published in Tokyo by Kodansha International in 1972 is information given us ten times in the Notes and Selected Readings, not to mention the seven times it occurs in the Annotated Bibliography. This degree of repetition strikes me as excessive—and expensive.

The third area where I would like to see improvement is in the Annotated Bibliography. Not that I have any quarrel either with the selections or with the annotations. The difficulty is one of format. The author divides this bibliography into twelve sections, in each section listing items alphabetically by author. This complicated arrangement means, however, that it is very difficult to locate a given item unless the author's and the user's classifications coincide. For a future edition I would like to suggest that all items be listed alphabetically in a single list, that each item be assigned an identifying classification number (I-XII?), and that the "code pattern" be explained in an unnumbered footnote at the bottom of each Annotated Bibliography page. This simplified arrangement would greatly facilitate locating items. (If the decision is to retain the present classified arrangement, it would help to list in the table of contents, under the Annotated Bibliography, the title and page number of each division. I have done so in my own copy, but generally find the single alphabetical list less time-consuming.)

The three areas suggested above, though important, are not particularly substantial. The fourth area, however, bears on the substance of the book and on the future of the discipline. When I finished reading, I found myself wondering how a serious college student could discover what kinds of research problems currently engage scholars of Japanese religion. If such a student wanted to isolate a given problem and find out what work has been done on it so far, what clues would be available? The chapter-by-chapter notes and bibliographical annotations are invaluable, to be sure, but they do tend toward the general. It may be, therefore, that an important step toward raising up future scholars in this field would be to survey, perhaps in an appendix, the kinds of articles that scholars of Japanese religion have published during the past several years and to show how research interests, techniques, and methodologies change, not only across time but also from culture to culture.

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