

Editors' Introduction

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Six years ago this journal published a double issue (Vol.7, Nos. 2-3, 1980) introducing the thought and work of five Japanese scholars of religion. As then editor David Reid wrote in his Editor's Page, "no claim is made that these articles constitute an exhaustive or even representative survey of Japanese scholars of religion." One scholar's name he mentioned whose work was not touched upon was that of Professor Yanagawa Keiichi, the Japanese sociologist of religion to whom this present issue is devoted. Professor Yanagawa's name was not completely absent from the journal. It was carried on the inside cover, for he was at that time Chairman of the Executive Board of the International Institute for the Study of Religion which was responsible for the publication of this quarterly. Perhaps the editor refrained from selecting him as one of "the giants of Japanese religious studies" to be introduced to an international audience precisely because of his close connection with the journal.

Since the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* changed hands in 1981, Professor Yanagawa has continued in this connection, now as a member of our Advisory Board. But we do not feel hesitance any longer about giving fuller coverage to what his scholarship and human qualities have meant and still do mean for the world of religious studies. This year provides an excellent occasion. Having reached the age of sixty, Professor Yanagawa retired from his post as Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Tokyo University where he had taught for a quarter-century. This accompanied the attainment of *kanreki*, or "return of the (original) year" according to the old calendar of a sexagenary cycle formed by a combination of the twelve animals of the zodiac and the five elements, an event traditionally celebrated in Japan. Folk beliefs have it that on this occasion a person is reborn and begins a new life. For Professor Yanagawa, this new life certainly does not mean a farewell to academic life. In fact, since April he took up a new career as professor at the Shinto affiliated Kokugakuin University in

Tokyo, not to mention the many other positions he still holds in various academic organizations inside and outside Japan.

As is true for most persons of his generation, Professor Yanagawa has behind him a life experience full of upheaval. Born in 1926 in Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture, he finished the Nada Middle School in Kobe and went on to the Third High School in Kyoto. In 1944 he entered Tokyo Imperial University, a period in which social circumstances were certainly not conducive to intense scholarly work. Indeed, the young Yanagawa was drafted into the army and spent his first year as a university student far away from his academic interests. The end of the war brought him back to Tokyo, where he graduated in 1948 from the Department of Religious Studies, followed by another term as a special research student until 1952.

Neither were the twenty-five years he passed as a professor at his Alma Mater free from trouble. The year 1960, when he was appointed, was a year of struggle against the Japan-U. S. Security Treaty, events which again were not favorable to intensive academic study. From 1962 until 1963, he was able to spend a year of research at Harvard University, but almost immediately after his return to Japan in 1964 he found himself in the unenviable role of delivering the memorial address at the funeral of his respected teacher Professor Kishimoto Hideo, known in Japan as one of the most prominent scholars of religion. A few years later Tokyo University caught up in the worldwide phenomenon of campus unrest and turmoil. It was in 1969 that students and police clashed on the university grounds. Professor Yanagawa, whose character made it impossible for him to disregard what was happening around him, suffered much from those events that forced professors and students into opposite camps. The many negotiations in which he voluntarily participated took a heavy toll.

In 1972 he was promoted to full professorship, a post which greatly increased his responsibilities. Especially in the case of national universities, individual research and the education of students are not the only matters requiring attention. Administrative functions such as those related to the Japanese Association of Religious Studies with its head office at the Department of Religious Studies of Tokyo University, involvement in seeking jobs for students and former students, relations with other academic institutions and the Ministry of Education, to mention just a few, demanded much of his time and energy. Was it his deep sense of responsibility which, in 1976, led to a deterioration of his health? Yet, overcoming his physical problems, he served as President of the Japanese Association of Religious Studies from 1980 to 1982 and, in this capacity, attended several international conferences. However, in 1984 a brain stroke brought him to the verge of death. Again he miraculously recovered, but the twenty-five years

spent at Tokyo University have undoubtedly been a bountiful source of data for penetrating the deeper meaning of human suffering which had become such an integral part of his own experience.

It would be a mistake, however, to think of Professor Yanagawa as someone walking around with the face of a martyr. Far from it! When we, his students, recall our days at the university, the image of Professor Yanagawa that comes to mind is that of a gentle and friendly teacher. The hours he spent with us at coffee shops and other places of entertainment were certainly longer than those in the classroom where we could only see his back while he explained things by writing on the blackboard. Now that we ourselves are in teaching positions, we realize how often he emptied his purse to pay our expenses. We wonder whether in order to care for us, his students, he did not put unnecessary stress on his own family finances.

His consideration for others became particularly manifest in his relations with foreigners. If the non-Japanese editor of this Journal has been able to engage in the study of religion in this country, this is due to the continuous guidance and support of Professor Yanagawa. Indeed, all foreign scholars who have met him, whether in Japan or abroad—Bryan Wilson, Robert N. Bellah, Karel Dobbelaere, David Martin, Thomas Luckmann, to mention only a few—have been impressed not only by his academic proficiency but also by his richly warm human personality. He has a “special ability” that makes friends of all people who come into contact with him. This ability has no doubt also promoted smooth communication with the many persons who became his “objects of research” on field trips. “The science of religion is after all a science of human beings,” he himself used to say. It is therefore not only his qualities as a scholar but especially the depth of his human concerns that constitute the background and basis of his personality.

From the late 1940s through the 1950s, Professor Yanagawa was active as a member of the “Research Group on Mountain Religions” founded by Kishimoto Hideo. When he himself became a professor at Tokyo University, field research continued to be one of the pillars sustaining his academic life. Together with his students he went to Chichibu, Aizu-Tajima, Tokoro in Hokkaido, and later to Hawaii and the American West Coast. He was also interested in theoretical study. We wonder how he could find time to digest such a great amount of literature in various languages and through this study further enrich his already profound knowledge. Field research and theoretical study must go hand in hand, but few scholars have been able to harmonize both in the way Professor Yanagawa did. Since Shimada Hiromi and Abe Yoshiya in this issue deal in detail with his “intellectual biography,” we refer the reader to their essays.

There is one thing, however, we would like to add. Professor Yanagawa has never published an independent volume of his own writings, although he produced an immense amount of articles and other short writings which appeared in scholarly journals, in newspapers and magazines, in collections of writings, textbooks, and the like. He himself often jokingly refers to this fact, adding that he has "the inclination of a short-story teller." Or could it be that his steady interest in novel things, combined with a certain inability to linger too long on the same subject, constituted a handicap for writing longer pieces? Anyhow, he seems to have an aversion to repeating arguments and always coming up with the same examples and data to prove a point, all elements that are necessary for producing lengthy books.

Since only a few of his writings have been translated into English (see Bibliography at the end of this Introduction), we first thought of honoring him in this issue by offering a translation of a representative article of his. For several reasons, not the least of which was an overload of copy due to the enthusiastic response of so many of his former students who wanted to contribute a piece, we decided to leave this honor for another occasion. Here we focus mainly upon what younger scholars, influenced by his thought and education, have to say about his work and about "Religion and Society in Contemporary Japan," one of the themes he so fervently researched.

Among the essays in this issue, six were written by former students to honor their teacher with their contributions. Reflecting the long period that Professor Yanagawa spent at Tokyo University, the oldest of the contributors is fifty-eight years old and the youngest thirty-two. All are colleagues similar in their respect for their master.

A special contribution comes from Karel Dobbelaere, currently President of the *Conférence Internationale de Sociologie des Religions* (C. I. S. R.), on whose Executive Board Professor Yanagawa has long served as representative of Japan. Professor Dobbelaere, from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, spent a few months in Japan two years ago, doing research on Japanese society and religion. It was also a time for renewing his friendship with Professor Yanagawa. He wished to express his thanks to his Japanese colleague through this contribution. We, the editors, are especially grateful to Professor Dobbelaere for this kind gesture and are pleased to publish his essay as the opening article.

Dobbelaere's paper deals with civil religion. It traces its roots to the *religion civile* of Rousseau and introduces several contemporary theories on this topic, particularly as they are proposed in the United States. The essay offers a clear overall view of this problematic. In his postscript the author raises the question as to whether this concept as used in the West can be

applied to Japan, and in this connection points to the role of Shinto in Japanese society. His remarks are a reflection of the intensive study he did during his stay in Japan, both in the area of written materials and of actual contact with this country's various religious traditions. Undoubtedly there are not a few scholars who take dissimilar positions with regard to Japanese Shinto. His description of Buddhism as "conventional religion" and of Shinto as "operative religion" might raise some eyebrows. However, this view of a non-Japanese scholar will certainly engender new ideas on this complicated problem.

The other six contributions can be roughly divided under three headings. Reid's essay deals with the methodological aspect of religious studies and questions its frame of reference. The papers by Shimazono, Nakamaki, and Ishii are case studies, while those by Shimada and Abe treat the "intellectual biography" of Professor Yanagawa.

David Reid emphasizes the importance of the epistemological premises of the individual researcher, that is the role of the cognizing subject, in contrast to the positivistic approach to religious studies. His position is that of the contemporary phenomenological sociology of religion.

Shimazono Susumu writes about conversion in Japan's new religions. He attempts to classify the characteristics of religious language under the four categories of uniqueness in time, practicality, activity, and solidarity, by analyzing conversion stories as they appear in the form of testimonies about personal religious experience.

Nakamaki Hirochika deals with funeral customs in two localities of Japan, Tokoro in Hokkaido and Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka Prefecture. He investigates three areas, namely that of the organizations which take care of funerals, the methods for disposing the corpse, and the burial grounds, indicating a diminishing awareness of defilement.

Ishii Kenji describes religion in the Ginza district of Tokyo. While being Japan's foremost shopping and business center, religion survives. He analyzes and classifies the organizations that sustain religion to elucidate the relation between religion and urbanization. Since urbanization in Japan cannot be simply linked to *Vergesellschaftung*, his remarks deserve special attention, especially in contrast to Western society as referred to in Dobbelaere's paper.

The essays by Shimada Hiromi and Abe Yoshiya deal with the history of Professor Yanagawa's academic research. They complement each other. Shimada emphasizes the consistency in Professor Yanagawa's work, while Abe focuses on the development in his thought. Shimada clarifies how the community and the *kō* groups are linked to each other and how this linkage constitutes the substratum of Professor Yanagawa's many-faceted research.

Abe, on the other hand, traces the process whereby Professor Yanagawa's study of religion, based on the axis of human relationships, moves from an interest in the social aspect of religions to an interest in their cultural aspects, referring particularly to the human side of his personality.

This special issue is but one token of our deep respect for our former teacher. It also expresses our wish for further guidance from him, together with prayers for his health. Our hope is that this issue will benefit non-Japanese readers, acquaint them with one of the leading figures in the world of Japanese religious studies, and indicate themes that have recently come under the scrutiny of Japanese academic research.

The articles by Dobbelaere, Reid, and Abe in this issue were submitted by their authors in English. The others are translations from the Japanese, done by Paul L. Swanson for the Nakamaki article and by Jan Swyngedouw for the others. With this issue we also want to introduce our new Associate Editor, who simultaneously serves as Copy Editor. Paul L. Swanson, an American citizen born and raised in Japan, received a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Besides his expertise in T'ien-t'ai and Tendai Buddhism, he has also done work on Shugendō. He succeeds John P. Keenan, who after two years returned to the United States with our thanks for the many services he rendered to the *JJRS*. And to celebrate, not only Professor Yanagawa but also this change in Associate/Copy editors, we present a changed and more readable printing type, the result of a further "modernization" in our offices.

A Bibliography of Works by Yanagawa Keiichi in English

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- 1983 Japanese Buddhism in America. In *Japanese Religions in California: A Report on Research Within and Without the Japanese-American Community*. Yanagawa Keiichi, ed. Department of Religious Studies, University of Tokyo, pp. 9-16.
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