

FINUCANE, Ronald C. *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*. London, Melbourne, and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. 1977. 248 pp., with an Index and Selected Bibliography. £10.50.

The study of pilgrimage in Japan has focussed geographically on the *saikoku* pilgrimage to the thirty-three sites of Kannon in central Japan and on the Shikoku *henro*, and thematically on the basic conditions (such as sacred places) for pilgrimage to develop, and on the pilgrims themselves. The main object of interest has been the analysis of the various facets of pilgrimage in Japan itself. It has only been in the past few years, as far as I am aware, that Japanese have begun to investigate and compare various pilgrimages outside the borders of Japan. Recently Japanese researchers of pilgrimage, though still focusing on pilgrimage in Japan, have begun to compare these pilgrimages to those of Europe, in the Islamic world, in India, and so forth, and seek to discover common features or structures within the religious activity of pilgrimage.

When Japanese attempt to examine pilgrimages outside the borders of Japan, they are faced with the limitations and shortage of materials and information concerning the true state of these pilgrimages. This is especially true for pilgrimages no longer practiced in the present day, along with the topics of saints and relics related to pilgrimage in medieval Europe, the theme of the book under review. These topics are always mentioned when the theme of European pilgrimage is raised in Japan, but without the availability of any concrete details. The idea of miracles is given as a point in common with, for example, the many stories of healing associated with Kūkai and the Shikoku *henro* pilgrimage in Japan, but without any concrete examples or explanations. This book provides concrete details on pilgrimage in the medieval society of England, and in this sense is very valuable for Japanese to learn

about the worship of the saints and pilgrimage in medieval England in a concrete way.

This book consists of three sections. The first section gives the "Historical Background" of pilgrimage to places associated with saints. The second section on "English Shrines and Pilgrims" analyzes in detail the pilgrimages and miracles associated with various saints in England. The final section on "The End of the Middle Ages and the Reformation" concerns the reformation of Henry VIII and the destruction of the graves of the saints, which brought an end to the worship of saints. The second section is the longest, and will also be the focus of this review.

The worship of and miracles of the saints, which was used as a tool for evangelism among the German people by Christian missionaries, developed in medieval Europe by receiving the strong support of the people and the administration and control of the Church. The relics of the saints were supported by "the conviction that the saints, who inhabited both the earthly and the celestial realms, were especially responsive to prayers uttered in the vicinity of their relics" (p. 38). This belief attracted many people who sought for a miracle. On the other hand, the Roman Church attempted to bring this activity under its control by exercising the right of giving official recognition to saints and their miracles. In the later medieval period, however, the worship of saints had reached its peak and, in response to social changes, became transformed by being incorporated into faith in Mary or into the Mass. It finally disappeared in the 16th century after the thorough destruction of the graves of the saints during the religious reformation.

What was the reality behind these relics of the saints and the miracles which they accomplished? It is interesting to note that what is recorded as a "miracle" does not necessarily refer to the modern understanding of a miracle. The gradual recovery of health was often called a "miraculous cure," which also could refer to a partial or temporary recovery. Also, given the low level of medical expertise in determining life or death, the recovery of consciousness by someone suffering from asphyxia or a coma was easily interpreted as a "resurrection" from the dead. This should give us pause in our attempt to understand the records of miracles from that age.

A point which I found particularly intriguing is the classification of miracles and the problem of the social class of pilgrims. Simply put, more than half of the miracles experienced by the pilgrims (though there are some differences between graves) fit into four categories: healing of 1) unqualified illness such as senility, 2) cripples, and 3) blindness, and 4) non-healing miracles such as release from captivity or the discovery of a lost object. One can discover common characteristics in miracles by social class. According to the author, about two-thirds of the pilgrims were from the lower classes of farmers or poor peasantry, or men of other social groups gathered around lower clergy. The other third consisted of lower class women. The ratio between men and women was about the same in France. The striking factor is the low class of women. The types of miracles varied greatly according to the sex and class of the pilgrims. For example, the healing of blindness or lameness was most common

among those of lower class, and much more common among women than men, with very few examples of higher class men experiencing such miracles. On the other hand, the non-healing miracles were rare among lower class women, but relatively common among higher class men. This fact was not coincidental, but reflects the differences between classes in factors such as food supply, and between the roles of men and women, and may also reflect the idea that disease was a shameful matter among those of the higher class. These matters reflect the influence of the characteristics of medieval society as a whole.

One of the points I want to draw attention to is the analysis of the geographical distribution of the occurrence of miracles to show the decline of pilgrimage to the graves of the saints. The author analyzes the example of the grave of St. Thomas Cantilupe. The process of the decline in pilgrimage to this saint's grave is analyzed as follows. First, a farmer's wife experiences a miracle in being healed of a disease which afflicted her daily. The word spreads from the family to the village, and then to the surrounding area, leading to the development of a zealous cult of saint worship. Word of the grave's spiritual power spreads gradually to beyond the local area. As this area spreads, men began to become involved directly. The people who experience miracles shift from women to men. However, this wider dissemination of the faith leads to the disappearance of the zealous cult. The frequency of miracles decreases, and attention shifts to pilgrimage to the grave of a new or different saint.

This process of rise and decline is very similar to the development of faith in "popular gods" (流行神 *ryūkōshin*) in modern Japan. The birth of a *ryūkōshin* at first attracts fervent belief among the people. According to Miyata (1975, pp. 31-32), there is first a message given through a spiritual encounter with a deity, and then miracles or other spiritual experiences occur. Though women are involved at first, later men take center stage. Admittedly there are differences between the saints of medieval Europe and the deities (神仏 *shinbutsu*) of Japan, but the process of development is strikingly similar. In pondering the pilgrimage to the graves of the saints in medieval England, examined in this book, and the visits to the "popular deities" of Japan such as *Namikiri Fudō* 波切不動, the involvement in pilgrimage by people of medieval England makes much more sense and feels closer to home. This valuable study of folk religion in England before the reformation can thus give precious clues to the understanding and comparative study of Japanese folk religion.

REFERENCE

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