
Sallie B. KING, transl. and annotations, *Passionate Journey: The Spiritual Autobiography of Satomi Myōdō*. Boston and London: Shambala, 1987. xvi + 212 pp., with illustrations. Paper \$12.95. ISBN 0-87773-392-9.

This volume consists of two parts: an English translation of the autobiography of Satomi Myōdō (1896–1978), a Japanese shamaness (miko) and Zen practitioner (pp. 1–131), and a commentary on the popular context of Japanese religion that lies behind the autobiography (pp. 133–209). Both parts are provided with clear notes and a short bibliography concludes the volume (pp.

211–212). The author notes that one may read the two parts in either order. By happenstance, I have done both. I first read the translation and then the commentary, which did elucidate many aspects of the translation. Then I promptly lost the book and my notes on it. Upon receiving a new copy from my bookdealer, I reversed the procedure, first reading the commentary as an introduction to the translation. This is, I think, the preferable way to read Satomi's autobiography. There are a fair number of occasions when Satomi is quite unique in her blending of Shinto, folk practice, and Zen, but armed with the background provided by King's concise and clear commentary, these peculiarities pose little problem for the careful reader.

The translation itself is fluid and unobtrusive. One would think it had originally been written in English. It recounts the life of Satomi, leading from her Hokkaido childhood through a number of life crises to acceptance as a Shinto shamaness, and then to Zen practice under the well-known Yasutani-roshi. The account is dramatic and accessible. It would serve admirably as a reading in courses in Japanese religion at all levels, especially undergraduate. The work is to be recommended.

A few questions remain. Satomi followed the "Kannagara no michi" tradition of Shinto, i.e. the official Shrine Shinto that was used in pre-war Japan by the Imperial government to instill a nationalistic spirit in all Japanese. In Satomi's account, however, this nationalism is not present. King notes (pp. 146–147) that a gulf existed between the government insistence on political goals and the personal practice of Kannagara no michi. Satomi "simply ignored the political aspects of the teachings, in which she had no interest, and concentrated on the spiritual aspects, which served her needs well." A more probable hypothesis is that, since the autobiography was written in 1956, just a few years after the American occupation ended, Satomi has simply expurgated all reference to a failed pre-war ideology.

The description of Kannagara no michi (p. 142) as teaching a primal state of natural and spontaneous harmony with kami, to which one might return by abandoning human desire and artificiality, suggests Taoist influence. No doubt, the blending of religious notions from diverse sources characterized the development of the Shinto tradition. The lines are so intertwined that it is difficult to unravel any single thread to its source. But this is a question that should, I think, be treated, however briefly in the account of Kannagara no michi.

These questions, however, are minor issues and hardly detract from the value of the book.

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