

IN MEMORIAM
YANAGAWA KEIICHI
1926-1990

Four years ago this journal published a double issue on "Religion and Society in Contemporary Japan." It was a tribute to Professor Yanagawa Keiichi on the occasion of his retirement from the post of Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Tokyo University, where he had taught for a quarter-century. This did not, however, mean the end of his career as one of Japan's best-known sociologists of religion. He continued his academic life as a professor at the Shinto-affiliated Kokugakuin University in Tokyo and remained active in various academic organizations inside and outside the country. Although his precarious health increasingly prevented him from traveling far and worried his family, colleagues, and friends, nobody expected that he would leave us so soon. His passing away at the beginning of April this year did come as a shock to the many who knew him and had been impressed not only by his academic proficiency but also and foremost by his richly warm human personality.

There is no need to repeat here what was written in the special issue of the *JJRS* devoted to him in 1986. Let me, as a former student of his, only stress once again the following point. Professor Yanagawa was like a foster-father to a whole generation of students of religion and society who, in his footsteps, learned to look at their discipline as a "science of human beings" precisely because he always

appeared before us as a very human being himself. "Religion in Japan," he liked to say, "is a religion of human relationships," and it sometimes seemed to us that the human relationships he fostered constituted the basis of a religion in which we all were accepted as the faithful. And certainly in that religion the spirit of festivity, the Japanese-style *shinjin-waraku* ("gods and humans harmoniously enjoying each other") — which was in fact one of his favorite themes of academic research — was not lacking! His legacy might not be very impressive, compared to that of other scholars, in terms of learned publications. Although he wrote a considerable amount of articles, it was only in recent years — and then only under pressure and with help from colleagues and former students — that two independent volumes of his writings were published. Yet, anybody who came into contact with him was able to receive something of the spirit that inspired him, and this spirit has greatly influenced the whole world of religious studies in present-day Japan. Also, when in this journal Japanese scholars have introduced the results of their research, traces of Professor Yanagawa's "science of religion as a science of human beings" can almost certainly be detected somewhere in their work.

The name Yanagawa Keiichi will disappear from the Advisory Board of the *JJRS*. His memory will live on in our hearts. It is a memory which will keep eliciting feelings of respect and gratitude towards a man who taught us that science has to be grounded in human life itself.

Jan Swyngedouw