

Editors' Introduction

One of the most common requests we receive from readers of the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies is that we provide more material by Japanese scholars, or more information about Japanese scholarship. Indeed, one of the expressed functions of this journal is "to break through the language barriers that separate Japanese scholarship in religion from the international scene." Thus, although our summer double issue is usually compiled around a specific theme, we break with our regular practice to present this year a double issue devoted to a "Focus on Japanese Scholarship"—an issue entirely of articles on religion by Japanese scholars and reviews about Japanese scholarship.

This is not the first such issue by the JJRS—a similar "Focus on Scholars" was the theme of a double issue in 1980 (7/2-3). This year's issue, however, focuses more on studies on Japanese religion by Japanese scholars, though it also contains information about them (e.g., Ian Reader's survey of Shimazono Susumu's work).

The first article is a major new study by Akima Toshio on the Empress Jingū story and other early Japanese myths, stories, and possible historical events. The so-called horse-rider theory of an early Korean conquest of Japan, proposed by Egami Namio and popularized in the West by Gari Ledyard, provides the springboard for Akima's reevaluation of Japanese myths and their relation, if any, to history. The horse-rider theory has gained some prominence both in Japan and the West, but Akima argues, providing a formidable array of evidence for his position, that the theory is flawed. Akima, however, is not primarily concerned with debunking the horse-rider theory. Rather, he provides a broader study of the relationship between myth and history. His major concern is to show how myth and history interact, and to provide an example of how to interpret early Japanese myths.

A significant shift has occurred recently among Japanese scholars of religion—the term minzoku shūkyō 民俗宗教 is now more commonly used for "folk religion" instead of minkan shinkō 民間信仰. The theme of this shift in

Japanese religious studies from minkan shinkō to minzoku shūkyō has appeared in this journal before (see Editors' Introduction to the special issue on "Folk Religion and Religious Organizations in Asia" [15/2-3, 1988], esp. pp. 90-92). Shinno Toshikazu's article, translated from his recent book Nihon yugyō shūkyōron (reviewed in JJRS 19/1, 1992), delves further into the issue and the significance of this shift in terminology. The article also discusses the importance of hijiri-type figures in Japanese history and religion and their role as mediators between "established" religion and "folk" religion.

The influence of Max Weber on Japanese religious studies has always been strong, and continues to be so. In fact, there may be more studies on Weber appearing in Japan today than in the West. The article by Hayashi Makoto and Yamanaka Hiroshi takes a look at the influence of Weber in Japan through the years, and shows how the adaptation of Weber in various stages reflects the changing situation in Japanese society and the evolving attitudes of religious scholars themselves.

Finally, the work of Shimazono Susumu is surveyed in depth by Ian Reader, and three books by Japanese authors are reviewed. There is, of course, much more good work being done by Japanese scholars, but we offer this selection as an update on some of the best recent Japanese scholarship on religion.

**Paul L. Swanson
Thomas L. Kirchner**