

REVIEW ARTICLE

Recent Japanese Publications on the New Religions

The Work of Shimazono Susumu

Ian READER

SHIMAZONO Susumu 島蘭進, *Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron* 現代救済宗教論 [The study of contemporary salvationist religions]. Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 1992. 254 pp. ¥2,400. 0014-920305-4065.

———. *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu* 新新宗教と宗教ブーム [The ‘new’ New Religions and the religious boom]. Tokyo: Iwanami Booklets No. 237, 1992. 62 pp. ¥340. ISBN 4-00-003177-5.

———, ed. *Sukui to toku: Shinshūkyō shinkōsha no seikatsu to shisō* 救いと徳—新宗教信仰者の生活と思想 [Salvation and virtue: The life and thought of believers in a new religious movement]. Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1992. 315 pp. ¥4,500. ISBN 4-335-16022-4.

In two recent articles surveying Japanese scholarship on the New Religions, INOUE Nobutaka—himself a noted scholar in the area—drew attention to a number of important monographs and several seminal articles by leading luminaries in the field (1991a, 1991b). One name whose absence from these surveys might have surprised anyone familiar with the subject was that of Shimazono Susumu. The omission of Shimazono’s name can be explained by the fact that Inoue’s primary focus was on monographs, and Shimazono, despite the large numbers of articles he has produced, had not until recently published a full-length book on his area of expertise.

However, this situation changed with the 1992 publication of three works: *Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron*, *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu*, and *Sukui to toku*. While each stands on its own and has particular orientations that might appeal to different readers, taken together the three provide a fascinating and insightful study of the New Religions from a variety of perspectives, ranging from the general and theoretical to the specific and concrete. They also provide insights not only into the work of a major contemporary scholar on the New Religions, but also into the wider concerns and perspectives of the academic study of religion in Japan, particularly as they relate to the relationships between religion, society, and modernity expressed in the phenomenon of the New Religions (or *phenomena*, Shimazono might say, with his emphasis on the New Religions' multiplicity).

Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron is a collection of previously published essays (including two, chapters 6 and 8, that have appeared in translation in the *JJRS*) drawn together to form a coherent general discussion and overview of the New Religions. *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu* is a short essay of sixty-two pages, published in a series designed to be widely available at a modest price and to provide accessible and readable academic assessments of various historical, social, and cultural issues of concern to people in the present day. *Sukui to toku* is the result of a research project lasting several years conducted by Shimazono and a group of younger researchers and graduate students under his guidance into a small and relatively little-known (at least to me) New Religion called Shūyōdan Hōseikai 修養団捧誠会 (hereafter referred to, as in Shimazono's book, as Hōseikai). Shimazono's major contribution (besides editing the volume) is a lengthy introductory essay (pp. 9–86). The book itself is merely the first part of a larger body of material by Shimazono's group on Hōseikai, with a further volume scheduled to be published by Kōbundō (p. 7).

Shimazono is a member of that rare breed of academics who can actually write well; his crisp style and ability to explicate data and theory in a straightforward and readable style make all of his work readily approachable. The value of this is especially clear in his short booklet on the “new” New Religions, where he performs a task that is, I consider, essential to the continuing well-being of academia: the dissemination of knowledge to an audience that extends beyond the boundaries of one's own (usually rather limited) field and discipline. At the same time Shimazono does not shy away from discussing important theoretical concerns for the sociology of religion. His primary concern (as is not uncommon amongst Japanese scholars) is

with the “big” names, particularly Max Weber and Robert Bellah (some of whose works Shimazono has translated into Japanese), but this is not to imply that he takes an uncritical line on their work. Indeed, Shimazono critiques Weber’s view that one element underpinning the rise of modern ethical movements was the drive towards the elimination of magic. As Shimazono demonstrates throughout his work, but especially in chapter 6 of *Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron* and in the introduction to *Sukui to toku*, ethical teachings and magically oriented salvific practices often go hand in hand, at least in the case of the Japanese New Religions.

Because these three volumes have become available at roughly the same time, they enable us to gain a clear insight into both the broad and the specific perspectives that characterize Shimazono’s work. Through this we can also glean some interesting understandings of the slightly differing methodological approaches that color Japanese as opposed to Western treatments of the New Religions; before commenting in greater detail on the book’s contents, I would like to make some preliminary comments on this issue.

In the past decade or so Western studies on the New Religions have moved from the generalized to the specific, from making broad generalizations about the religions as a single mass (e.g., THOMSEN 1963; MCFARLAND 1967), to placing specific focus on one New Religion and using it as a model through which to extrapolate themes and issues pertinent to all other New Religions (e.g., DAVIS 1980; HARDACRE 1984, 1986; EARHART 1989). The latter type of studies have used an in-depth, fieldwork approach with detailed interviews, case histories, and extensive surveys, usually involving the researcher in extended and intensive periods of contact with the religion concerned. What also characterizes these recent works is their focus on the adherents of New Religions as *individuals* rather than as just parts of a generalized mass. These studies have shown the human side of the New Religions and demonstrated how they meet the special needs and motivations of their members, and as such have gone a long way towards explaining why people are attracted to the New Religions and how they benefit from them. It could also be argued that this individualized, often personal, focus has been more valuable in highlighting the specifics of particular religious movements than in clarifying more general issues relating to the New Religions as a whole. This has, perhaps unwittingly, helped crystallize the notion of the New Religions as a homogenous mass, an assumption reflected in such comments as DAVIS’s in his study of Mahikari:

My primary concern is not what is typical or untypical about it vis-à-vis other New Religions. I shall begin by freely admitting that it *is* typical of the lot. (1980, p. 9)

Such an approach begs more questions than it answers: Why is it typical of the lot? Are the New Religions really all of a type that can be so lumped together?

I am not suggesting that Western scholarship sees all the New Religions as somehow homogenous without noticing their differences, or that the form of approach taken by Davis, Hardacre, Earhart, and others has been problematic. Indeed their studies—which form the vanguard of the increasingly specialized Western research on the New Religions—constitute some of the best and most comprehensive accounts we have not just of the New Religions in particular but also of Japanese religious life and attitudes in general. Yet I have long felt that we could use a fresh attempt to take stock of the New Religions in a broader sense as well. Perhaps what would be helpful would be a new work that takes a broader overview, along with some detailed fieldwork into a number of New Religions—a combination of the McFarland/Thomsen and the Hardacre/Davis/Earhart approaches, perhaps, that would from both generalist and particularist perspectives be able to look anew at the extent to which any New Religion really is typical of a wider phenomenon. Indeed, within that broader question lurks the further question of whether even the term “New Religions” continues to be valid as a category of definition in an age where “new” New Religions are differentiated from “old” New Religions. This is an issue that scholars will have to devote serious consideration to in the near future.

It is in this area that Japanese scholarship provides us with a number of helpful perspectives, for Japanese academics have devoted greater attention than their Western colleagues to the broad canvas. Japanese studies of the New Religions have, overall, tended to favor a more generalized approach over in-depth fieldwork research into specific organizations and groups, and have emphasized the New Religions as institutional entities existing within, and often developing in contention with, the wider society. If such generalized perspectives have at times almost lost sight of the individual in their concern with broader themes, they have also supplied a valuable fount of information on the historical differences within the New Religions and have provided various frameworks with which to categorize the New Religions in terms either of roots (Buddhist, Shinto, shamanic,

etc.), religious influences, or periods of emergence. This latter question, which has at times led to endless and not always enlightening discussions among Japanese scholars as to whether there have been three, four, or five main periods of historic growth among the New Religions, has nevertheless been useful in elucidating the diachronic aspects of the religions' development and in showing how (despite the supposed unity of the New Religions) different periods have given rise to different types of new religions. Such studies have also been useful in pointing out how patterns of emergence in the New Religions are related to changing social circumstances; I am thinking here of the work of NISHIYAMA Shigeru (1988) on the "new" New Religions and the parallels between their emergence and the rise of similar magico-mystery oriented movements in the later Meiji and early Taishō eras. They have also tended to seek out specific common characteristics found in all the New Religions or in those that share common historical or religious origins, and to focus on one or more general characteristics commonly found in New Religions (healing and founder veneration, for example).

The first two of the three volumes under review here are largely located within this tradition; in them Shimazono outlines typologies, points out commonalities and differences, and shows why it is becoming increasingly possible to draw divisions between religions that have emerged at different eras. Such an approach is especially valuable when, as the work of various Japanese scholars—amongst whom Shimazono, Inoue (whose work has focussed particularly on Shinto-lineage New Religions and New Religions abroad), and Nishiyama (whose work has dealt especially with the "new" New Religions) are especially worthy of mention—has made increasingly clear, even the broad category of New Religions is becoming increasingly fragile, with the rising fortunes of the "new" New Religions, and the waning powers of the "old" New Religions.

In this respect, then, Japanese scholastic works like Shimazono's are of great value in that they provide a dimension less in evidence in contemporary Western studies, and help us see the broader picture that contextualizes the more detailed close-ups. This is not, of course, to suggest that the generalized overview approach adopted by most Japanese scholars is without its weaknesses. Their tendency to eschew fieldwork and confine themselves to contacts with officials of the New Religions has put them at something of a distance from the actual members of the movements they are studying; one is hard put to find a Japanese scholar living in as close quarters to a New Religion as did,

for example, Hardacre with the Reiyūkai. This reticence has made it difficult for them to derive a deep knowledge of what makes the members, and thus the religions themselves, tick.

Ironically, there are perhaps more cultural problems for a Japanese doing fieldwork involving intimate excursions into the emotions and practices of other Japanese than is the case for an outsider. This is a point that has come home to me when doing fieldwork amongst pilgrims in Japan and comparing my methods of research with Japanese colleagues, who have commented on the problems they face in conducting the kind of potentially intrusive and personal interviews that characterize much anthropological fieldwork on religious motivations and feelings. Cultural problems such as these do not, however, entirely justify the lack of depth studies, and leave us with the ironic situation that it is generally those who have the greatest difficulty carrying out intensive fieldwork (because they are not native speakers) that are most likely to do so!

The third book under review, *Sukui to toku*, represents a move by Shimazono to address this issue. As mentioned above, it presents the results of a long-term fieldwork project by Shimazono and a group of young researchers on the New Religion Hōseikai. Besides providing information about a New Religion that has been scarcely discussed before in any of the literature on the New Religions, it represents an attempt to move from the generalized studies mentioned above to more specific in-depth case-study work on a religious movement and its members (whose testimonies are presented in some detail in sections of the book).

In his prologue, Shimazono provides not only the most striking comment in all three volumes but also a telling comment on the Japanese scholastic tradition when he remarks:

In my research since taking up the study of the New Religions, I have had only limited opportunities to get acquainted with and talk to ordinary members and believers. Though I call what I have been doing “research,” I feel that it has little more than scratched the surface [of the subject]. (p. 3)

In *Sukui to toku* Shimazono makes a valiant attempt to rectify the neglect of fieldwork that has characterized the Japanese scholastic tradition. In this respect the book provides an interesting contrast to, and complement with, the other two works. Shimazono moves from the more common focus of Japanese scholarship on organization-oriented general issues towards a closer understanding of the actual

members and their relationship to their religion and, especially, to its founder. As such the book presents us with a fresh development in the Japanese study of New Religions.

Let us now examine the books in question a bit more closely.

Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron

Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron is a full-length study composed of a number of Shimazono's previously published articles that have been woven together into a general, theoretically based study providing historical, sociological, and typological perspectives of the New Religions.

In the introductory essay (pp. 7–27) and first section (chapters 1–3) of the book, Shimazono outlines his major themes and attempts to define what New Religions are, how they differ from other Japanese religious movements and traditions, and how they fit into the historical framework of religious development. He also offers a typological assessment of the various religions and a historical account of their growth. One theme central to the book is the importance of magic in the groups: Shimazono sees magically oriented techniques, practices, and beliefs (often aligned to the power of charismatic leaders) as potent forces in the New Religions, framed within an immanent, this-worldly context. The New Religions (to generalize somewhat on his thesis) offer this-worldly salvation and the attainment of human goals through such beliefs and practices, which are linked to an affirmative ethical system providing a moral basis for contemporary life. His focus on this optimistic, world-affirming dynamic emphasizes the importance of this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku* 現世利益), which, as he points out, are not just materialistic in nature but also speak very directly and clearly to the emotional and spiritual needs of the Japanese in contemporary society. He also places these at the heart of the New Religions, and at the center of their innovative appeal to contemporary Japanese people. I also happen to feel that *genze riyaku* is absolutely central to all of Japanese religion, so I was extremely pleased to read Shimazono's discussion of the issue, since it has so far received far less attention from scholars than it merits.

Shimazono also stresses, throughout this volume and also in *Sukui to toku*, the strongly ethical nature of the New Religions. The groups tend to possess firm ethical principles that frame the individual's relationship to those around him or her. Indeed, Shimazono sees the New Religions' historical roots as lying in the fusion of the popular

ethical teachings of the moral-training movements that emerged during and after the Tokugawa era (like Ishida Baigan's Shingaku 心学) with the spiritual techniques, magical practices, and rituals of established religions like Buddhism and syncretic traditions such as those centering on mountain worship. Indeed, one of Shimazono's main themes in all three books is that ethical movements did not displace instrumental techniques and concepts of magic and healing, but rather fused with them to produce a new form of religious dynamism suited to the needs of the time. This combination of salvation and virtue is, in Shimazono's view, the distinguishing characteristic of the New Religions.

Shimazono discusses the this-worldly focus of salvation in the New Religions in the book's second section (chapters 4-5), which more closely examines the relationship between Buddhism and the New Religions. He argues that while Buddhism has a very potent this-worldly dynamic, ultimately (in his view) its focus is other-worldly. This is where he sees the major difference between the New Religions and Buddhism, which, ultimately and despite its heavy preoccupation with *genze riyaku*, is concerned not with this-worldly but other-worldly salvation. In fact, Shimazono argues that, in the transition from the premodern to the modern eras (a transition largely framed around the beginnings of the Meiji period and Japan's modernization and adoption of Western and capitalist techniques), the New Religions took over from Buddhism as the primary religious vehicle offering salvation to the masses, and that in doing so they shifted the focus of this salvation from the other to this world.

The emergence of the competitive ethos of a modern capitalist society stressing individual advancement and personal amelioration served to aid this shift, and Shimazono notes (esp. pp. 19-20, but reaffirmed in subsequent sections and developed further in *Shinshinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu*) that the growth of a competitive capitalism in Meiji aided the development of New Religions, for it encouraged an emphasis on personal advancement that the New Religions have taken on board with much success. Indeed, one of the more intriguing points in the book is Shimazono's suggestion that the New Religions have been better able to absorb the influences of capitalism and its competitive structures than have traditional religions like the established Buddhist sects, and have hence been able to function better in modern society (pp. 19-20). Not only are they generally more aggressive in promoting themselves, they also offer both the opportunity and the means for self-improvement based upon merit and

personally directed action (he suggests Mahikari's miracles as an example). I find this argument convincing, though I would add that nowadays Buddhism seems to be catching up in the area of competitiveness, as evidenced by the growing interest in pilgrimages and in memorial services for aborted children (*mizuko kuyō* 水子供養), both of which have been heavily promoted by Buddhist organizations.

In subsequent chapters Shimazono continues his discussion of the relationship between modernity and religious development, discussing at length the renewed emphasis in contemporary Japan of folk belief and arguing (in chapter 6) that modernization does not mean the decline of magic but its potential reinforcement. Magical techniques and ritual practices are a means of setting out ethical teachings in a concrete form, and provide an accessible and attainable way of embodying, explaining, and dealing with problems within the complexities of modern society. As such they may be more important now than ever before.

In the latter chapters of the book Shimazono looks more closely at present trends in the New Religions, and discusses what he sees as the "new" New Religions' remythologization of the world (in response to its demythologization by secularism and rationalism), through an emphasis on animistic themes, magic, and spiritual issues. These themes are also taken up in *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu*, where Shimazono shows that the "new" New Religions are in many respects a logical development of modern society. His argument is that the self-denying ethos that was prominent in Japan during the postwar years of austerity, hard work, and economic growth, and that was closely associated with the advance of rationalism, is now on the wane, in part, ironically, because society has advanced economically to the level where people are less interested in self-denial than in actively seeking the satisfaction of their personal desires. Accompanying this shift has been a move away from New Religions that emphasize community, group, and family principles (generally through rites for the ancestors) towards those that ply a more individually focused message, in which (for example) ancestral spirits may be transformed into *personal* (rather than *family*) spirit protectors and guides. The older New Religions, broadly speaking, tend to be of the former type, while the "new" New Religions are often of the latter. This new wave of modern, spiritualistically inclined religions, stressing magical techniques and personal spirit guardians, seems more in step with the less self-sacrificing, and hence less community-oriented, emotions of people in the 1980s and early 1990s, and have grown accordingly.

The same perceptions also frame Shimazono's discussion of what he calls "new spiritualist movements" (*shin reisei undō* 新靈性運動), which exhibit themes similar to the New Age movements of the West and which possess an increasingly personalized, nonorganizational dimension. Their focus on spirit beliefs and animism, and their increasing focus on personalized relationships between individuals and spiritual entities that may act as guardian beings, present a new challenge to Buddhism if Shimazono is correct in his view that their views are displacing the practice of ancestor veneration (which, of course, has always had a strongly personal dimension to it). Shimazono argues that absolutist viewpoints have become increasingly less viable in an age influenced by scientific thought, which has not only posited its own grand answers to the ultimate questions of creation but has also emphasized the interrelationship of all things (a theme furthered, of course, by the growing awareness of environmental issues). Conversely, this has not eradicated, but may well have increased the scope for, small, localized, and personalized spiritual answers to questions—a form of shift away from high gods and large-scale, absolutist religious movements like Nichirenism towards localized, small-scale deities and religions.

The above is but a brief overview of some of the themes in *Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron*, particularly those that are dealt with in the other two volumes as well. The book also discusses questions of authority and nationalism; one point of disagreement I have with Shimazono regards his comment that the period of the 1970s and 1980s saw a marginalization of nationalist themes in the New Religions (e.g., pp. 128–29). Although I concur with his view that there is currently a new wave of nationalism within the "new" New Religions, as typified by Kōfuku no Kagaku (p. 132), there were enough nationalistic images being utilized during the 1980s to suggest that Shimazono may be not quite accurate here. Examples include the claims by Agonshū, Shinyoen, Byakkō Shinkōkai, and others that Japan possesses a special message to be spread to the rest of the world.

Overall there is much of value in this book; it is full of interesting data and stimulating insights, and I can recommend it as an important work on the New Religions. This does not mean that I wholly endorse everything the book says, that it is devoid of mistakes, or that it could not have benefited from better editing. The last would have eliminated such errors as Shimazono's comment on page 103 that until the 1960s the emergence of new religions was restricted to a few places like the USA and Japan; the vast development of new religious

movements in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in urban areas, certainly predates the 1960s! There is also a tendency towards repetition, particularly in Shimazono's analyses of the different categories and types of New Religions. This is no doubt because the chapters were all originally separate essays; nevertheless, a bit more care should have been taken to edit out the overlaps between them.

There are also some discrepancies between the data used in this book and that in *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu*, particularly in the statistics relating to Seichō no Ie 生長の家 that have some bearing on Shimazono's arguments. In a table of New Religions given in *Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron* (p. 106), Seichō no Ie is listed as having 3 million members in 1985, while in *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu* (p. 5) the membership is given as just over 2.3 million members in 1974 and a little more than 800,000 in 1989. Unless Seichō no Ie had gone up from 2.3 million in 1974 to 3 million in 1985, and then down to 800,000 in 1989 (a rapid change that would surely have deserved greater discussion), it would appear that somewhat conflicting figures are being used here. Even allowing for the fact that religious statistics are notoriously unreliable in Japan, it is highly problematic to use differing sets of statistics when the arguments being used in conjunction with them are so crucial to the themes of the work at large. One of Shimazono's arguments, in the latter volume at least, is that the actual numbers of people involved in the New Religions has not increased substantially over the last decade or so, and that the rise of the "new" New Religions has been accompanied by a decline in the fortunes of the older New Religions. This is an argument that I find convincing, and that has been supported by other statistical evidence I have seen. However, I remain uneasy about the data Shimazono offers in support of this, given the type of discrepancies pointed out above.

Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu

Although, as mentioned above, *Shin-shinshūkyō to shūkyō būmu* is designed for a general readership, it can be profitably read by academics as well, for it provides an illuminating view of certain trends and themes within present-day religion in Japan. This is a useful definitional essay which provides some accessible answers for those who wish to know whether it is possible to have both "old" New Religions and "new" New Religions. Shimazono notes that there are various definitions one can use to distinguish "new" from "old" New Religions; as mentioned above, he sees the basic difference as lying in

the shift in focus from a community orientation to a more individual orientation, and (very rightly in my opinion) he locates the beginnings of this shift in the 1970s. Hence, by implication at least, what defines a “new” New Religion is its relationship to the changes and patterns of the age, and Shimazono treats all the New Religions that have grown rapidly during the latter part of the 1970s and in the 1980s as examples of “new” New Religions. By thus marking out the age he is stating implicitly that the movements that have grown in this period are historically and sociologically different from those that went before, a point that is amply elaborated in the longest section of the work, which outlines the main characteristics of “new” New Religions and shows where they can be differentiated from the New Religions that went before.

Other scholars might dispute certain of Shimazono’s points, such as his assertion that Shinnyoen can be accommodated under his rubric despite its origins in the 1930s. Since Shimazono’s interest is in the patterns of religious dynamism, however, and since Shinnyoen has clearly demonstrated a religious dynamism in the 1980s that makes it stand out in contrast to some of the older New Religions, he makes a fair argument for placing it in the “new” new category. Shimazono cites statistics showing that many of the religious groups so closely associated with rapid growth and religious dynamism in earlier decades suffered grave reverses in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., PL Kyōdan, Seichō no Ie) or stopped expanding (e.g., Sōka Gakkai); he argues that the older wave of New Religions lost ground because of weakened dynamism and a tendency toward institutionalization. As he wryly notes, they became rooted in the processes of memorialization and reflection on the past: one saw the memorial stones being erected for their founders, whose charisma became increasingly distant (pp. 6–7). In contrast, the new wave of religious groups like Agonshū, GLA, Mahikari, and such transplants as the Tōitsu Kyōkai (Unification Church) exuded a sense of newness and vigor, and conveyed a general feeling that they offered hope in the future rather than miracles in the past.

Shimazono focuses on the “religious boom” much beloved by Japanese academics and the media, and whose existence (always assumed and never questioned) flavors much of their contemporary writings. In his discussion Shimazono concentrates on the “new” New Religions and spiritualist movements that he sees as representing, or typifying, this “boom.” He even takes us one potential stage further from the “new” New Religions when he cites a growing tendency,

especially among the urban young, to move into yet more individualized patterns of religious behavior where people have a series of loosely structured, often casual, involvements (from dabbings in divination to attendance at meditation groups), without forming any particular affiliation to a group. This seemingly new, pick-and-choose pattern of behavior, in which individuals attend seminars on religion, read books on spiritual themes, indulge in such religious techniques as meditation, and perhaps develop a relationship to a personal spirit guardian, yet never join a particular religion, is, Shimazono suggests, drawing people away from even the “new” New Religions. What we are seeing is the continuation of the processes of individualization aligned with the further fragmentation of organizational religious structures and the continuing reconfiguration of religious constituencies within Japan.

This essay, then, provides a very readable assessment of certain dominant patterns in contemporary Japanese religion. Though not the first essay to deal with such issues or to make sense in social terms of the apparently strange beliefs that flourish in the newest of the religions, it is one of the most balanced and least pretentious accounts of present-day Japanese religious dynamics. There are just a few quibbles that I have. One, already mentioned, concerns the possibly contradictory nature of the statistical data used. A more important problem is that, in discussing the religious boom, Shimazono makes no mention of other areas of contemporary religious activity and growth (pilgrimages and festivals are two areas that immediately come to mind); this leaves the reader with the false impression that it is only in the “new” New Religions and in the new spiritualist movements that religious growth is occurring. This oversight, I might add, is not limited to Shimazono’s work but is found in that of many Japanese scholars of the New Religions.

Sukui to toku

Shimazono’s interests in the processes of change, the shifting patterns of religious dynamism, the enduring nature of magical practices, and the relationship between magic and ethical teachings are all apparent in *Sukui to toku*. This work is the first volume in a larger study on Hōseikai, a small New Religion that a decade ago lost its charismatic founder, Idei Seitarō 出居清太郎 (1899–1983). Although its major focus is the relationship between ethics and salvation, a fur-

ther issue (one that this reader, at least, found very intriguing) is what happens to such a group when its founder, whose power and inspiration had been the core of the religion, dies and leaves behind no coordinated system of practice and belief. Idei instructed his followers individually as to the practice each was to follow—the practices varied from person to person—and thus developed, as this volume shows, very close and personalized relationships with them. As a result he never became remote from the general membership, as founders of New Religions often do. Of course, he was able to do this because Hōseikai was a relatively small movement; one could also suggest that his obvious desire to retain such contacts was a factor in keeping the religion small. This focus on intensely personalized relationships also meant that Idei never developed a unified and systematized practice system for the whole group.

In Idei's person the potential tension between ethically-focused practice and magically-directed practice was defused, and the two welded into something approaching a coherent whole. With his demise, however, such tensions have risen more clearly to the surface, as suggested in Shimazono's introduction and illustrated in a particularly perceptive chapter by Nagai Mikiko (pp. 117–52). Indeed, as Shimazono points out (p. 19), there has been a loss of religious faith regarding salvation and miracles and a shift away from the individualized focus that marked the religion in Idei's time towards a community orientation stressing ethical training in everyday life. At the same time, the physical locations associated with Idei, such as his birthplace and grave, have become important sites of worship (pp. 19–20), giving the group backward-looking tendencies similar to those Shimazono commented on in the other "old" New Religions mentioned in *Shin-shin shūkyō to shūkyō būmu*.

Though the book clearly mentions the problem involved with this loss of charisma, it never examines it in as much depth as I would have hoped for. However, it is possible that a fuller coverage of this major issue will be offered in the companion volume; I certainly hope so, since it is clearly a very major question in Hōseikai.

Shimazono's introductory essay introduces Idei, the group, and the latter's history, ritual practices, organizational structures, and doctrinal formulations. It also shows how members practice their faith, and how ethical and salvationist themes interact within it. Idei was born in a small village in Ibaraki, but went to live in Tokyo in his late teens. While there he became involved in Tenrikyō and Honmichi, elements from both of which influenced his own thinking and

Hōseikai's teachings and practices. Hōseikai was formed in 1941, and became registered as a religious body under the religious organizational law (*shūkyō hōjinhō* 宗教法人法) in 1952. It is a small movement with little more than 13,000 members, and although it has 120 branches throughout Japan, only a handful have over 100 members.

The full title of the religion—*Shūyōdan Hōseikai*—implies that its main focus is on ethical training, and certainly its formative elements are based on ethical teachings formulated by Idei, often through adaptations and borrowings from Tenrikyō and Honmichi. Past deeds, poor attitudes, negative emotions (such as jealousy), and misbehavior in daily life are felt to lie at the root of illness and misfortune: reform, reflection, and repentance lead to cures. Thus Hōseikai emphasizes correct ethical behavior as a means to personal happiness.

Yet Hōseikai is a religion, not an ethical-training group; what sets it apart from the latter (many of which are active in Japan), and what places it firmly in the realm of the new religious movements, is its use of magical and instrumental forms of spiritual healing and its promises of spiritual salvation and personal benefit. These are often combined with ethical explanations of illness to provide a potent fusion characteristic of the New Religion.

Hōseikai, like many New Religions, is deeply pragmatic, and whilst affirming ethical and magical explanations of and cures for illness, it does not reject medical science. According to surveys carried out by Shimazono's research group, members are aware of medical science, and use multiple means of combating problems and diseases. Indeed, when asked which avenue of cure they would place most emphasis on, 70% of the members opted for going to a doctor and taking medicines, 20% opted for the path of ethical cure, and 10% would rely on magical means (p. 125).

In addition to discussing these issues, Shimazono takes us on a journey through Hōseikai's ethical principles, providing a fascinating insight into how these operate for the benefit of individual believers. Drawing on a variety of Idei's writings and sayings, he establishes a picture of Hōseikai ethical practice; many of the themes will be familiar to students of the New Religions, for they emphasize notions such as harmony, sincerity, love of others, and the performance of altruistic deeds. As Shimazono states, such ethical practices can be thought of as the key to salvation—one must do good deeds in order to be saved and attain happiness (p. 52). Ethical behavior is thus utilitarian rather than idealistic in nature.

Many of Idei's teachings appear to encourage submissiveness to authority: he emphasizes the importance of not holding antagonistic feelings towards others, of going along with the instructions of those above one, and of being humble, all of which contribute to harmony and the smooth running of society and personal relationships. Yet there is a subtly self-empowering dimension to all of this, and Shimazono shows how Hōseikai actually encourages autonomy: members are shown how acts of humility (which often approach flattery) can work to their own advantage and as a means of gaining concessions from others. Idei placed great emphasis on the notion that actions bring karmic results: hence doing good for others ultimately brings benefits to oneself, so that altruism becomes a means of self-promotion and self-benefit. This, Shimazono observes, has produced a movement whose members have a strong sense of personal autonomy and a comparatively weak sense of community and group autonomy. At times it also gives outsiders a sense of unease in dealing with Hōseikai members, who seem to use flattery to conceal their true intent (p. 74).

Thus, Shimazono argues, an ethical perspective that seems to encourage subservience, meekness, and deference to the powers that be is in fact cunningly subversive and self-serving, using flattery to boost the egos of others and thereby manipulate them into granting favors to Hōseikai members. In reality, then, Hōseikai has shifted the focus away from self-sacrificing altruism towards individual autonomy and benefit, a point emphasized in three extended personal-experience narratives (*taikendan* 体験談), in which Hōseikai members describe their strategies for success in various courses of action. He notes that members, in attributing their success to selfless religious practice and personal spiritual virtue, do not seem aware that their personal gain is necessarily at the expense of someone else's loss, and that their talk of universal altruism is therefore fallacious. He is equally aware that Hōseikai is similar to many religions in speaking a language that legitimates self-aggrandizement as a manifestation of personal piety and virtue. While recognizing the difficulty of avoiding this trap, he remains critical of Hōseikai on this issue, suggesting that its particular fusion of altruism and autonomy fails to provide a strong moral focus, and allows followers to slide easily into the pursuit of self-interest (pp. 80-82).

Many of the themes of Shimazono's introduction are developed in subsequent chapters, and are underpinned by the survey work his research team conducted amongst Hōseikai members. There are

chapters on salvation and the transformation of personal thought (chapter 2), on the relationship of ethics and instrumental practices (chapter 3), on education and faith (chapter 4), on economic issues and faith (chapter 5), on Hōseikai's young peoples' division (chapter 6), and on members' attitudes and activities (chapter 7). A detailed appendix outlining the results of the group's survey of Hōseikai members completes the book. Since space does not permit detailed descriptions of all the chapters, I shall concentrate here on two that augment points made in the introduction and that are representative of the quality of work found in the book.

Matsuoka Hideaki reinforces Shimazono's point about the individualized and self-directed nature of Hōseikai in his chapter on the transformation of personal thought processes and its relationship with salvation (pp. 87–116). Matsuoka makes some valuable comments about the personalized nature of Hōseikai practice; one particularly fascinating anecdote describes how, when visiting a Hōseikai center in Gifu in 1954, Idei prescribed different personal practices for 151 individual members (p. 92). Hōseikai experienced its highest growth in the 1950s, when this individualized teaching was most prominent. In the 1960s an attempt was made to shift from practices tailored to the individual to ones prescribed for entire branch meetings; this proved less popular, and halted the religion's growth. What people sought from Hōseikai were personal practices that would lead to personal good fortune rather than communally focused results (p. 92). Those attracted to the group tend to be inwardly driven more towards individual benefits and salvation than towards social ideals of community.

Several of these points are further developed in the aforementioned chapter by Nagai Mikiko on ethics and magical practices, which examines the interrelationship of these two aspects of the religion. It also provides insight into the fissures and tensions that have now appeared within Hōseikai as a result of the loss of Idei's unifying charisma.

The ethical dimensions of Hōseikai are strong enough for some 60% of its members (p. 118) to regard it not as a religion but as an ethical-training group. Yet, as Nagai points out, there is also a strong focus on the practice of spiritual healing and miracles (almost invariably related to Idei's personal charisma), and members relate numerous examples of spiritual cures occasioned by such actions as Idei's laying on of hands (*oteate* お手当て) and transmission of "holy light" (*goreikō* ご霊光). Many members also testify to the force of energy that

emanated from Idei and wiped away their pains; Nagai provides a fascinating series of testimonies from cured members (pp. 136-40). Even after death his healing influence continues. Some two months before his death Idei made five hundred talismans (*omamori* お守り) impressed with his thumbprint, and these are used by some members to instigate cures (a good example of charismatic power continuing after death). A typical story of such a cure is told by a woman whose husband had a high fever; she placed a thumbprint *omamori* (*goshuin omamori* ご手印お守り) on his head and recited a prayer, and the next day his fever had gone and he was able to go back to work (p. 141).

Yet even this postmortem continuation of spiritual power has problems, for Idei's death has removed the source of instrumental healing. Several of Idei's followers are believed to emanate the holy light (a power not so much granted as verified by Idei, who would occasionally say to someone, "The holy light issues forth from you too" [p.138]), but many members are reluctant to accept that anyone besides the founder can possess such powers, or to turn to such people for help. Members who from the first had stronger leanings in the ethical direction, though able to relate to the use of instrumental magic while Idei was alive, frequently find the continuing use of such powers less attractive now that Idei is no longer present and the possibility of directly receiving his power is gone. Many have come to question whether members of a religious group that was founded on the basis of ethical teachings should continue the practice of magical healing. Indeed, based on responses to various survey questions, Nagai identifies two predominant groups within Hōseikai: the magical techniques faction (*jujutsuha* 呪術派) and the ethical training faction (*shūyōha* 修養派, which she suggests is slightly the larger of the two). The former continues to focus on individual needs and benefits, while the latter stresses social values, affirms the importance of building an ideal world according to Hōseikai doctrine, and maintains the importance of spreading its ethical values to society at large (pp. 146-48). Having been so closely constructed around the person of its founder, Hōseikai now appears to be gradually coming apart; one senses, from this and other chapters, that Idei's death has taken the charismatic core from the religion and left it rudderless and uncertain as to its future direction. Although one wishes that Nagai had ventured some further comments on how this relates to general theoretical issues relating to founders and charisma, her chapter makes it easy to envisage the potential for the continued fragmentation of Hōseikai.

All in all, this is one of the richest treatments of the inner dynamics (particularly the members' attitudes) of a Japanese New Religion ever produced by Japanese scholars. The exposition of the workings of Hōseikai's ethical practices is especially fascinating, and is greatly enhanced by Shimazono's ability to critically reflect on the negative side of the issue while still maintaining a balanced perspective on the religion as a whole. The fact that the contributors to this volume are, except for Shimazono, young scholars just starting their careers bodes well for the future development of the field, and their overall approach, based on extended fieldwork, suggests a welcome commitment among the present generation of Japanese scholars to look at the inner workings of the New Religions.

Concluding Remarks

One final point that deserves mention is Shimazono's generous reference, in the appendix to *Gendai kyūsai shūkyōron*, to Western scholars from whom he has gained valuable help for his studies (pp. 253–54). It is clear, both from his comments here and from the balanced perspective that characterizes his work, that his studies have been enriched by an ability and willingness to take note of the varying research methodologies and approaches of both his Japanese and non-Japanese academic colleagues. I draw attention to this because it has long been my feeling that, as a rule, Japanese scholars have paid less attention to the insights of non-Japanese scholars, and vice versa, than should be the case. I might mention as examples two works on the New Religions, one by a Japanese and one by a Westerner, that are generally praiseworthy but are both hampered by this apparent myopia. One is the general study of the New Religions by NUMATA Kenya (1988), the other is EARHART's comprehensive study of Gedatsukai (1989). Although both works sought to examine the general field of scholastic study of the New Religions, Numata's paid little if no attention to works by Western scholars, while Earhart's discussion of the theories and approaches to the study of the New Religions entirely overlooks Japanese scholarship.

When one bears in mind the comments I made earlier about the different (yet often complementary) perspectives and methods of Western and Japanese scholars, it should be clear that each should be attentive to the theories, ideas, and research work of the other. In this respect, Shimazono's work, which merits reading by non-Japanese as

well as Japanese academic audiences, could serve as a needed bridge towards further interaction between these scholastic circles. All three works deserve our attention, for each enriches our understanding of the New Religions as a genuine and vital religious phenomenon in contemporary Japan, and contributes to our knowledge of the ways in which such religions function in modern social contexts. These three volumes, then, represent a very major and valuable addition to the growing literature on the Japanese New Religions.

REFERENCES

DAVIS, Winston

1980 *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

EARHART, H. Byron

1989 *Gedatsukai and Religion in Contemporary Japan: Returning to the Center*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

HARDACRE, Helen

1984 *Lay Buddhism in Contemporary Japan: Reiyūkai Kyōdan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

1986 *Kurozumikyō and the New Religions of Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

INOUE Nobutaka 井上順孝

1991a Recent trends in the study of Japanese New Religions. In *New Religions*, Inoue Nobutaka, ed. (translated by Norman Havens), Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, pp. 4-24.

1991b Shin shūkyō o dō kaidoku suru ka 新宗教をどう解説するか. In *Bukkyō 仏教* (special supplement and book guide No. 5, June 1991), *Shūkyō wa omoshiroi 宗教は面白い*, pp. 244-49.

MC FARLAND, H. Neill

1967 *The Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan*. New York: Macmillan.

NISHIYAMA Shigeru 西山 茂

1988 Gendai no shūkyō undō 現代の宗教運動. In *Gendaijin no shūkyō 現代人の宗教*, Ōmura Eishō 大村英昭 and Nishiyama Shigeru, eds., Tokyo: Yūhikaku, pp. 169-210.

NUMATA Kenya 沼田健哉

1988 *Gendai nihon no shinshūkyō 現代日本の新宗教*. Osaka: Sōgensha.

THOMSEN, Harry

1963 *The New Religions of Japan*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co.