

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### Things, Thoughts, and People out of Place

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Mark R. MULLINS, SHIMAZONO Susumu, Paul L. SWANSON, eds. *Religion and Society in Modern Japan*, Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1993. x + 310 pages, bibliography. Hardcover, \$50.00. ISBN 0-89581-935-X. Softcover, \$22.00. ISBN 0-89581-936-8.

I HAVE USED *Religion and Society in Modern Japan* to teach foreign (mainly Western) students at a Japanese university, and have found it to possess many excellent features as an introduction to modern Japanese culture. The book was compiled mainly for the undergraduate, who will find the well-researched range of material of an appropriate level of complexity. The articles, all of which have been published previously, cover a wide range of subjects, from mountain asceticism to factory rituals, and take a variety of approaches, including the historical, textual, empirical, and theoretical. This range is part of the book's strength, allowing it to provide considerable factual detail about many aspects of contemporary Japanese culture while simultaneously offering a historical perspective (as in its presentation of important documents from the Meiji era and the American Occupation).

The editors have succeeded in putting together an interesting and useful book that will generate many questions among an enthusiastic class and encourage further reading on contemporary Japan. With this in mind, however, I would like in this article to suggest some additional directions for analysis, not with the intent of criticizing the book for what it is not, but in the hope of indicating some common threads that might link the articles and provide a theoretical perspective to bring the disparate pieces together. This would, I believe, bring the overall theme—Japanese religion and society—into sharper focus, and also encourage a wider range of comparative connections with other cultures.

The fact that the articles were not written specifically for this volume limited the editors' ability to impose an overall editorial policy and made it difficult to achieve a consistency of approach to the subjects of "religion" and "society." Perhaps because of this, the book does highlight a problem that afflicts many such collections in the field of religious studies: the failure of individual authors to clarify their theoretical or methodological presuppositions.

For example, the book is crammed with the words "religion" and "religions" and "religious," used to cover a vast array of phenomena. Although one hardly expects a collection of this type to start out by defining the concept of religion, I nevertheless wonder—given the confusion that I and my students felt on this issue—whether a few sentences by the editors to explain their basic outlook would not have been in order. I will look later at some of the different ways in which the concept of religion is used by individual authors.

There is also an apparent lack of interest in theoretical issues by the various specialists represented. Does this reflect a general characteristic of religious studies as an area of scholarship? I believe it does. I am talking partly, but not only, about definitional issues. Let us consider the title of the book. Whenever one talks about "religion" and "society" as though the two were logically equivalent, one must keep in mind that religious facts *are* social facts. Even the mountain asceticism of the solitary *shugenja* cannot be properly comprehended without linking him to the people he serves; his belief in possession and exorcism needs to be placed in a wider context of meaning. In the preface the editors emphasize "socio-cultural expressions of Japanese religions or religion," but how is a "socio-cultural expression" of *religion* to be distinguished from other socio-cultural expressions? This may appear to be definitional nit-picking, but it has serious ramifications. Is the study of religion a *sui generis* area in its own right or is it really a branch of sociology? Religion in Japan brings out this issue in a particularly interesting way.

By way of illustration, let me cite a point raised by Paul Swanson in his helpful introduction to part 1, "Japanese Religiosity." Swanson, discussing Kuroda Toshio's article—one of the more difficult in the collection—notes that "the simplistic understanding of Shinto and Buddhism as two independent religions is misleading at best for much of Japanese history, and the same is just as true for contemporary Japanese society" (p. 4). But I would argue that Swanson's (and Kuroda's) point is too significant not to be taken further. For if "Buddhism," "Shinto," and "Shugendō" are not fundamentally independent religions, then the obvious implication is that they cannot be

adequately analyzed as such. An analysis of Shugendō, for example, or Mahikari, or Sōtō Zen, needs to be placed in a wider and deeper context of analysis, showing in what sense they *are* distinct institutions worthy of study in their own right, but also bringing out their place in the wider structure that is implied. One way of identifying this wider structure is likely to be in terms of “religious core values” discussed by Swyngedouw and identified by Takayama as basic to “civil religion.”

I believe that such core values provide a common foundation for a wide range of religious expressions in Japan, including Shugendō rituals, Mahikari rituals, Yasukuni Shrine rituals, and rituals performed at factories. Though treated as separate in this book, these rituals are in fact linked by the core Japanese belief that angry spirits who died a “bad death” are a threat not only to individuals but to institutions as well (including the family, the factory/corporation, and the nation itself). An analysis of the symbolic or structural meaning of these dangerous spirits can provide a more comprehensive picture of what the real subject of study is. Later in this article I will discuss how sociological concepts of hierarchy, purity, and pollution may be illuminating in this and other contexts by creating a web of cross-cutting, analytical connections.

### *Discussion*

Miyake Hitoshi, in “Religious Rituals in Shugendō,” provides a clear summary of what he means by “religious” in the case of Shugendō (pp. 47–48). Shugendō is a “religious worldview” because it involves a belief in supernatural beings who can be manipulated by the *shugenja* to achieve a practical end, such as the removal of disease or misfortune. Misfortunes are caused by evil and vengeful spirits (and also by the astrological influence of the stars); identification by the *shugenja* with a powerful deity, especially Fudō Myōō, provides the means whereby that misfortune can be averted or resolved, through possession and exorcism. Shugendō, then, is a kind of supernatural technology. It is a way of solving a practical problem (disease or misfortune) by using special powers (achieved through mystical identification with a deity) to analyze the cause (for example, possession by an angry ghost) and provide a cure (exorcism).

This characterization of the Shugendō religion is clear and helpful as far as it goes, and the article gives a useful and scholarly summary of the different kinds of rituals typically performed. But is this an adequate analysis? The author points out that Shugendō “played a major role” during the Edo period, becoming a regular part of local commu-

nity life for the services it offered in fortune-telling and divination, healing, exorcism, and averting misfortune (p. 31). He also states that Shugendō “provided the central model for the religious activities of many of the “new” religions (e.g., sectarian Shinto) that proliferated from the latter part of the nineteenth century and continue to this day” (p. 31). However, he does not discuss how Shugendō’s purely technical procedure of manipulating spirits for practical ends is related to other characteristics of the New Religions, such as their basic orientation “to the reproducing of essentially conservative values” and the organization of nearly all of them along the lines of the parent-child relationship (HORI et al. 1972, pp. 100–103). In other words, in the “religion” and “society” equation, the “society” is missing, and in consequence perhaps quite a lot of the religion is missing as well.

The main problem with this interesting and scholarly study is that it gives very little detailed information on how Shugendō is institutionalized, and how it is connected to actual empirical communities. The author says that Shugendō is a “single religious system” (p. 32) and that the religious worldview has been expressed in authorized teachings issued by “its organization” (p. 45), which suggests that Shugendō does have a kind of church organization with an official doctrine. I was unable, however, to find any information about this in Miyake’s article. There is one potentially illuminating reference to the *shugenja*’s relation to local tutelary deities and the “more prestigious status” that he can achieve as a result of his control over them. But no further details are given of this relationship. Does the *shugenja* have a “clientele” (a word that Young uses in his study of Mahikari) much as any other specialist has a clientele? What can we find out about them? Do they pay? Is the influence of Shugendō now mainly felt through its incorporation into various New Religions, or does it have a distinct status juridically?

Miyake stresses that the rituals form a definite symbolic system, “a single ordered mechanism” (p. 39), but never actually explains what it is symbolic of. For example, he says that during certain rites the *shugenja* “becomes symbolically identified” with Fudō Myōō (p. 35), but it is not clear what the symbolism is and how it differs from an actual or literal identification. This article provides a useful general description of Shugendō’s supernatural rites, but no actual case studies of particular *shugenja* and their clientele nor any analysis of their relation to other institutions or symbolic systems.

There are many possible connections with issues raised in other articles, connections that future studies on Shugendō might want to pursue. In its possession of a technology for solving problems through

possession and exorcism, Shugendō is similar to Mahikari as described by Richard Young. The concept of angry spirits links it to Antoni's article on Yasukuni Shrine. And to the degree that Shugendō is a practical technology for achieving empirical ends by the manipulation of supernatural powers, it also coincides with the concept of religion put forward by David C. Lewis in his article on religious rites in a Japanese factory. I will discuss these points in more detail below.

The concept of religion as a supernatural technology is much stressed in the study of Mahikari by Young, who at one point says that "orthodoxy was a priority almost as high as orthopraxy" (p. 253) in the teaching of Okada, the founder of Mahikari. The reader needs to know what significance these terms "orthopraxy" and "orthodoxy" have for the analysis. Young also distinguishes current spirit-belief from traditional salvation religions such as Jōdo Shinshū (pp. 239–40), but sees it as a modern development of the traditional worship of household divinities and ancestors and of the pacification of angry spirits (p. 241). In Mahikari the modern spirits are significantly more malevolent than traditional spirits; Young attributes this to the weakening of traditional village communities resulting from the breakaway of branch families that move to the cities during the process of modernization and urbanization (pp. 241–42).

Young also argues that the manipulation of spirits, the "manipulative art or technique of the magician" (p. 246), is complementary to the scientific attitude that accompanies modernism. This is because, while science explains how something (for example a disease) has happened, spirit religion provides an answer to the question why (p. 243). Thus both try to explain the world in terms of causes. All of this leads Young to say that spirit-belief has not only been preserved in modern Japan but also transformed so that nowadays it dovetails neatly with the demands of urban life and even reinforces the values of industrial society (p. 244).

This, however, does not match his comments that spirit-belief is considered by "the wider society" as unorthodox (p. 240) and "deviant" (p. 243), "an offense against reason, and a return to pre-modern thought." Such views are surprising given the continued belief in ancestors, gods, and angry spirits that plays such an important part not only in Mahikari and other New Religions but also in Shugendō and popular belief in general as described by Swyngedouw and the NHK survey (see below). Young owes his readers a little more tying up of loose ends here.

Young points out that Mahikari shares in the "world-renewal motif" of its predecessor Ōmoto and "the entire cluster of New Religions

descended from Ōmoto" (p. 244), and informs us that "the priority of Su-God... is to cleanse the world of the evil spirits and... the toxins and wastes produced by modernization that result in illness and unnatural death" (p. 245). Such spirits, which account for about eighty percent of humanity's misfortunes (p. 246), are cleansed primarily through the "purification ritual" (interestingly described by Young) and a magic amulet that generates divine light. According to Young, Mahikari is critical of the established world religions because they have lost their vitality, and sees itself as the divine agent of their renewal and unification (pp. 252-53). However, esoteric teachings deriving from Okada and forming part of the initiation for intermediate and advanced training provide "a nationalistic view of world history centered on Japan" (p. 253) and teach privately that other religions should be abandoned.

How are we to interpret this? It is difficult for the reader to work out how this esoteric and "Japan-centered" doctrine relates to possession by angry spirits, rituals of purification, and the overseas expansion of Mahikari. Young says that Mahikari is a "world renewal" type of New Religion and describes Okada as a "saviour," but he does not clearly set out the connection between these themes and the technology of exorcism. Nor is there a clear picture of Mahikari in relation to other New Religions and to society as a whole. The author does not explain the sociological significance of possession and purification, or of Mahikari's originality in radically re-identifying "who the real victims and assailants" are (p. 248). And when Young talks about the "clientele" of the new religions (p. 252), what relation does this bear to the idea of "initiation" into different levels of advancement? I cannot find any clear discussion of these points, so much is the emphasis on Mahikari as a technology without a social context.

Jan Swyngedouw's article "Religion in Contemporary Japanese Society" contains some of the most valuable suggestions for the analysis of religion in Japan. However, it also needs considerable interpretation and even guesswork by the readers. This is due to a lack of signposting between the different sections and a rather slippery use of key words, which leads to several instances of apparent tautology. For example, Japanese religion is defined in terms of religious feelings and aspirations, but nowhere are we told what makes an emotion, or any of the vast array of phenomena designated by the author as "religious," a specifically religious phenomena (p. 65). Thus when the author says that "one characteristic of Japanese religiosity is that it is very often, if not mostly, limited to the very time the religious events are held" (p. 60), the reader is unsure what he means, since events

can be either religious or nonreligious depending on the concept being employed.

The article begins by describing a large marketplace of vaguely religious phenomena, including “belief” as distinguished from “unbelief” (p. 52); faith in supernatural beings such as kami, *hotoke* (the soul that survives death); charms (*o-mamori*); oracle lots (*o-mikuji*); divination (*uranai*); and “worship” at home altars (*butsudan*, *kamidana*) (p. 54). He also discusses “religion-related practices,” such as ancestral worship at *o-bon* and even buying a Christmas cake.

In the second section he shows that many modern corporations worship spirits such as Inari the Fox Deity, or the local deity of the place where the company was founded, or some special deity connected to the type of production carried out by the factory. Some companies use Zen Buddhist meditation “to deepen human relationships and to teach proper etiquette and strict adherence to the company rules” (p. 60). (My students wondered whether Zen Buddhist meditation has always been used so blatantly as a method of social control in Japan.)

Swyngedouw’s main purpose in this article is, I believe, to explain the persistence of such a variety of “religious” phenomena in terms of underlying values and feelings. The heart of his argument seems to lie in the third section, which discusses basic values and concepts such as *wa* (harmony), *musubi* (life-power),<sup>1</sup> and “the religion of Japanese-ness” (*Nipponkyō*).

The author describes *musubi* as the “overarching value” in Japanese culture (p. 63). *Musubi* is fundamentally “the power of becoming and growth that links all things together” (p. 62), the fertile life-power that not only pervades nature and the world of the gods, giving rise to Shinto, but also strengthens “the solidarity or *wa* (harmony) of the community through common labor” (p. 62). *Musubi* is “the life-power of harmonious communities” (p. 63). It is thus an interesting but general and even vague concept, connected to natural growth, religious feelings, and the solidarity of institutions, and we need more specificity about the way it becomes sociologically significant.

What is it that makes this concept (and the emotions to which it putatively gives rise) religious? Is it Durkheim’s “conscience collective,” which derives its sacred aspect from emotions of social solidarity and the ritual reproduction of fundamental social values? Here again there is no real attempt to show how a religious feeling differs from a nonreligious feeling. Is the deeply emotional sense of camaraderie induced by sake-drinking among colleagues after work a religious feel-

<sup>1</sup> Swyngedouw translates *musubi* as “linkage.”

ing, or is it “mere conformity to popular custom”? And if the answer is *musubi*, then what lies outside *musubi*, or is everything included? Can we include the fraternities of gangsters and the cliques of politicians, which may be bound by chains of senior/junior relationships, indebtedness, and gift-exchange? Is an act made religious by the feelings that accompany it? (This is important given Swyngedouw’s point that the holding of clear beliefs or doctrines cannot normally be used to explain Japanese ritual behavior.) For example, making an offering to an ancestor and making an offering to the *sensei*: Are they typically accompanied by the same or by different feelings, and does the nature of the feeling determine if they are or are not religious actions? Or is it the object of the presentation that is the crucial point of distinction, ancestors being supernatural and therefore objects of religious veneration, *senseis* being still alive and therefore outside the range of religion? Some clarification of these issues would be useful, and might make Swyngedouw’s insights even more valuable.

Another concept that Swyngedouw gives importance to is *bun* 分, which he translates as “part,” “share,” “segment” and which he associates with a process of “compartmentalization,” of assigning values—including “alien” and “incoming” values—a proper place in the totality. It could be argued that all societies “compartmentalize,” since it is inherent in language and thought to categorize. But the significant point the author makes is *how* the Japanese people categorize, what sets of relation are established between the various elements. Swyngedouw is drawing our attention to a significant issue that gets little attention in Japanese religious studies, even though it has been important in the study of South Asian religion for three decades. For the process he is pointing to implies indigenous Japanese concepts of *structure* and *hierarchy*.

The notion of hierarchy seems to be suggested in two ways here. One is in Swyngedouw’s observation that some values are overarching (*musubi* in particular), and that other values are given a place of subordination to them. Hierarchy is also suggested in Swyngedouw’s statement that “each value... is lent its proper worth and identity by subordination to the whole” (p. 63). This seems similar to the concept of hierarchy that DUMONT described as a relationship of “encompassment” (1980). Philosophically these may or may not turn out to be precisely the same, but there is surely importance to Swyngedouw’s analysis. How much dare we read into this tantalizing suggestion about the hierarchization of values through incorporation into a totality in which they take on their meaning?

Swyngedouw says that in the Japanese view any element is only



deemed meaningful in relation to other elements, and finally to the whole structure of elements. Things do not exist in and for themselves as though they were isolated entities; each value is to be considered "not as integral in itself but only as part or fraction of the whole" (p. 63). As DUMONT pointed out in his comparison of Indian hierarchy and Western egalitarianism (1980, 1986), the ideological tendency deriving from the English, French, and American revolutions is to reduce the world to self-sufficient individuals seen as rationally and morally autonomous, and whose relation with other individuals is external and secondary. Hierarchy is suppressed by an ideology of egalitarianism. In contrast, India and other traditional societies acknowledge hierarchy as a fundamental fact about the way relationships are established between ideas, things, and people.

Swyngedouw's suggestion here, if I understand it correctly, is of great value. The structural principle he seems to be adumbrating could be applied to many situations, such as the relation between temples and shrines, in which each might be usefully viewed not as an "individual" religious institution but as an interrelated element in a total structure. Another example might be in the sphere of human relations, for the Japanese people are often heard to express the principle of their own society as being based on "relationships," in contrast to the selfish individualism of the West. This point has been analyzed brilliantly by NAKANE Chie (1973), and I have argued elsewhere that Nakane's book is fundamentally a structuralist analysis of Japanese values and social institutions (FITZGERALD 1993). But this is a complex area and there is no space to pursue it further here.

Ian Reader's article, "Buddhism as a Religion of the Family," is based on an analysis of publications produced by the Sōtō Zen sect and distributed to its membership. By identifying the most common themes and images in this literature, Reader argues that the family as an institution is of more concern to the sect than are the monastic ideals of Buddhism. He brings out the important point that the Zen Buddhist organization is not primarily about meditation, enlightenment, and the universalistic aspects of doctrinal Buddhism, but about legitimating the ritual order of Japanese society. (This is qualified by saying that there are some publications concerned with meditation, but these are a minority.)

The most interesting part of Reader's paper is perhaps his description of the way that the sect publications incorporate the family and its ancestors into the wider and even more extended sacred Buddhist family. Buddha himself is the ultimate source of the lineage, with the Sōtō sect founders Dōgen and Keizan as "father" and "mother" in a

cosmic spiritual sense. This reveals the mechanism whereby Buddhism legitimates the institution of the Japanese family, and becomes transformed in the process from a monastic-centered to a family-centered system. It also provides another example of the importance of hierarchy (fundamental to the symbolic system that Reader describes) in the religious worldview of Japan.

In Reader's paper this opposition between family (this-worldly) and monastery (other-worldly) is given expression in a variety of ways, which I have laid out schematically (see table below). The Sōtō pamphlets, Reader says, are more concerned with legitimating the items in the left column than those in the right (though one could say that the left side is legitimated by means of the right). This exemplifies the way the universalist doctrine of Buddhism, which teaches that all may find salvation or enlightenment by following the path and practicing morality, meditation, and wisdom, has been indigenized and fitted into the particular ritual structures of Japanese society.

It can be seen without difficulty that these distinctions, which are identifiable but which are never raised to the distinctly clear and

family	monastery
priesthood inherited	priesthood vocational
ritual particularism (upholding the extended family and household <i>ie</i> )	Zen universalism
affiliation through the <i>ie</i>	affiliation through personal faith
tradition and inertia	belief and active involvement
Buddhist in terms of circumstance	Buddhist in terms of belief
shallowness of commitment	commitment
religiously sterile "little more than a means of dealing with ancestors and death"	
the inertial processes of the Japanese socio-religious system	true religious dynamic
concern with tradition related to definitions of Japanese identity "exhortations to a moral family life and observance of customs and traditions"	meditation and Buddhist practice
intensely Japanese	universal
indigenization of Buddhism to a religion of the household	primarily monastic and meditative
stultifying	dynamic

explicit status of analytical concepts, are juxtaposed with some dubious value judgements: "inertia," "shallowness of commitment"; "religiously sterile"; "little more than a means of dealing with ancestors and death"; "inertial processes"; "stultifying." Is dealing with death and the ancestors really such a trivial matter, my students asked.

If, however, one eliminates the pejorative connotations one is left with an incipient analysis, one that parallels GOMBRICH's categorization of religion in Sri Lanka into communal religion and soteriology (1988), and Dumont's analytical distinction between the religion of the man in the world and the religion of the renouncer. In Sri Lanka *lokottara* is true religion centered on monastery, monk, and the transcendental goal of *nibbana*, while *laukika* is the religion of this world centered on the realms of the gods and the ancestors, the spirit cults, possession, healing, rebirth, caste, and social status. The works of D. T. Suzuki may have given the Western reader the impression that Buddhism in Japan is fundamentally concerned with *lokottara*, the transcendental in the sense of renunciation and satori, but Reader's intention is to correct this view. His point that Buddhism is more concerned with reproducing the ritual values of everyday life is made well when, in his discussion of the Sōtō publication *Shinkō no seikatsu*, he says,

Belief is clearly equated with the correct etiquette of the traditional family, with much emphasis being placed on correct table manners and other such aspects of daily life. Harmonious family life, which includes praying to the ancestors..., becomes the basic model of a religious life. (p. 147)

Perhaps Buddhism can be connected to the more general qualities of Japanese religiosity described by Swyngedouw. For example, both Swyngedouw and Reader stress that religion should be thought of in terms of Japaneseness, of promoting the harmony of the institutions, of conforming to and reinforcing the particular ritual structures of Japanese society and its values. Religion is not so much concerned with renunciation, with universal doctrines of salvation, with the ultimate fate of the individual, but more with the particularisms of the Japanese socio-cultural identity. To use the formulations of Dumont or Gombrich, which might be useful in opening up a comparative context, Japanese religion tends to be "communal" and "this-worldly" rather than "soteriological" and "other-worldly." The ancestors, the founders of the sect, the founders of the corporation, even the Buddha, are ultimate points in the hierarchical structures of Japanese institutions (sect, family, corporation, school).

Another important issue, one that Reader does not touch on, is

that of death pollution. Since one of the primary concerns of the Sōtō organization is the continuity and well-being of the family (and thus of society as a whole), the question of pollution might be relevant both in terms of the priests who perform mortuary ceremonies and the mourners themselves. Surely death is a danger to the “harmony” of social relations because it violates them, not only through physical separation and the resultant grief, but also through revealing the sheer contingency of life and the categories that create a sense of meaningful social order. Pollution typically occurs in all societies when boundaries are broken or violated. But the issue of pollution may not be confined only to death in Japanese society. Japan is a society in which clearly demarcated boundaries are highly valued: outsiders and insiders, seniors and juniors, men and women. These boundaries are marked out by the different levels of appropriate language use and the highly developed consciousness of rules in every area of life. I would suggest that “harmony” and the strong disapproval of confrontational behavior, whether in the family or any other institution, are conceptually connected to some notion of purity or “correct order” and the maintenance of boundaries. It may also be considered cognate with “safety,” another important value and one that cannot be reduced to the avoidance of fires and car accidents.

“Pollution” and its removal is one of the concerns of the religious rites performed in the factory studied by David C. Lewis (“Religious Rites in a Japanese Factory”). The most important goal of such rites is safety, followed by the continuing prosperity of the company. When Lewis distinguishes between religious and non-religious contexts in Japanese factory life (p. 170), it seems fairly clear that for him the religious contexts are distinguished by rituals performed at a shrine and directed towards a supernatural agent for the achievement of a given, practical end (i.e., religion as spiritual technology). Thus Lewis concludes that the development of an urban factory economy does not imply “secularization,” since it may even lead to an increase in the number of rites performed. The reason for the increase is “factors such as fires and other disasters in the industrial context” (p. 170).

This assumption seems to be contradicted by the point that follows, which is that many people who perform or participate in the rites are skeptical about their efficacy, and that the real reason they perform them is “out of a sense of obligation or duty” (p. 170). But if this sense of duty does not derive from a belief in the efficacy of the supernatural technology, then where does it derive from? Lewis seems to reject the possibility of applying a Durkheimian type of sociological analysis to this situation (p. 170), but I suspect such an approach might actually

be quite fruitful. If you start by identifying religion with belief in the gods and their ability to bring benefits; if you acknowledge that religious acts are increasing, not decreasing, in modern Japan; and if you then show that there is significant skepticism about these rites, then you have undermined the basis for the distinction in the first place. For “skepticism” about the rites may be beside the point, since “duty” has become the motivator, that is, duty regardless of belief. The question then is why such rites continue and even increase if many people do not actually believe that they “work.” Arguably, the rites derive their imperative from being symbolic of the social order, as it is manifested in the ethos of the corporation.

If this is a possible interpretation, it might lead to a reassessment of the categories of safety, prosperity, and pollution. Lewis points out that most of the rites are dedicated to the theme of safety. I would suggest that “safety” is concerned not only with fires and natural disasters but also with the related notion of “things (and people) being in their correct order.” In the symbolic order of things, safety is often cognate with purity, the safeguarding of boundaries, and danger with pollution, the breaking of boundaries. This idea of things being in their correct place and in good working order is surely implied in what any fire brigade would include in its safety precautions. But what kind of correct order would the supernatural be guarding? Could the data not be reinterpreted to suggest that the performance of rituals to the various deities and company ancestors, while having the appearance of supernatural technology, is also a metaphor for celebrating and recreating the order of the company? The talk about “safety” may thus be directed toward avoiding dangers to group harmony (mentioned by Swyngedouw as a fundamental value in Japanese society generally, and by Reader as central to the dynamics of Sōtō Zen), dangers such as people not knowing their place in the hierarchy and not knowing how to behave properly, and thus throwing the symbolic order into disarray.

If pollution can be understood as danger arising from a rupture of boundaries, from things or people being out of place, then the analysis might be extended to Klaus Antoni’s interesting discussion of “the bad death” in his article “Yasukuni Shrine and Folk Religion.” Antoni notes that of the various religious ideas behind the shrine, the most prominent is the pacification of the souls of warriors through a process of deification, expressing the gratitude of the emperor and the nation. However, along with gratitude and honor is a sense of danger associated with the warriors’ violent, unnatural deaths in battle or in foreign countries. Therefore the rites performed at Yasukuni can be understood as transforming these potentially dangerous spirits into

benevolent guardian deities of the nation.

One important distinction that Antoni makes in his article is between the individualistic notion of souls being transformed into vengeful spirits because of bad thoughts at the time of death, and the more general notion of souls undergoing such a fate, not because of bad thoughts at death, but because certain types of death are inherently dangerous (p. 126). This is the concept of "the bad death," which is any death deemed unnatural, untimely, or out of the normal order of events. It is bad for structural reasons, not because of the type of thoughts the individual had at the moment of death. Antoni mentions two particularly malevolent forms of the bad death: that of the childbearing mother and that of the warrior (p. 127). People who die young, unmarried, or in violent and premature circumstances become *muen-botoke* (Buddhas without affiliation) or *gaki* (hungry ghosts). Such souls suffer from eternal hunger and thirst. Antoni quotes Yanagita Kunio, who noted that the "people of Japan have had a dread of meeting such homeless spirits" (p. 128).

This kind of belief is widespread in other cultures. Antoni mentions Indonesia and Okinawa, and one could add South Asia. In India, for example, one can find equivalents for both the individualistic type of bad death and the structural type of bad death. For example, if the long, elaborate mortuary rites that transform the soul into an ancestor (*pitri*) and incorporate it into the ancestral spirit world are not performed, then the soul is condemned to be a *preta*, a dangerous and malevolent hungry ghost. Such ghosts must be propitiated.

The purpose of many small shrines in Japan is to establish some kind of relationship or reciprocity with such spirits and thus control this danger, in order to protect the living and their fragile social relations from souls whose death was somehow abnormal. This principle is raised to a matter of national political concern at Yasukuni Shrine, where the warrior dead of the nation are deified. Antoni's point is that this is not done simply to express imperial gratitude for the fallen warriors' loyalty, and, by deifying them, to transform them into supernatural protectors of the nation. It is even more to protect the nation from the fallen warriors.

Antoni has raised a peculiarly interesting point. Could it be that the fallen warriors symbolize structural opposites simultaneously? On the one hand they symbolize the perfect sacrifice for the emperor and his national family—for what could be a more perfect sacrifice than giving one's life to protect the inviolate and sacred boundaries of the nation? And yet in their very death they also represent a most dangerous threat to those very boundaries: "The dead warrior is anything but

a hero; instead he becomes a 'bad dead', one who is feared especially by his relatives" (p. 128).

I would like to link Antoni's perceptive discussion with the concepts of purity and pollution. All death is polluting, but a bad death especially so. The interpretation I would put on the bad death is that it violates boundaries in an extreme way by threatening the integrity of the conceptual grid upon which all social relations are constructed.

Death is connected symbolically with the wild, for it is uncontrolled by the categories that order social relations and that bring things and people into harmonious and safe living. Shrines are erected to calm, to pacify, to capture the soul, to bring it once again into relation with the social order, to transform a wild and alien spirit into a god with whom reciprocity can be established. The shrines that deify malevolent spirits make things safe by setting up reciprocal relations to create peace, to mark out safe boundaries, to reestablish the ruptured parts of the social order. Through the shrine, ritual relations can be reestablished through symbolic exchange. Thus the true purpose of Yasukuni Shrine is to protect Japaneseness, the intense value of belonging to the Japanese nation, which, as Swyngedouw points out, is one of the basic values of *Nihonkyō*.

In this sense the rites performed at Yasukuni are a recreation of the social order, a reaffirmation of the symbolic boundaries that seem to have been violated by the warriors' deaths. Additionally, many of these warriors were killed abroad, in other parts of Asia and the Pacific. Outsiders, with their potential to disrupt the social harmony of Japan, are perceived as a particular danger to the symbolic order. Thus soldiers killed abroad carry the pollution not only of the dead but of the outsider as well. The rites of Yasukuni Shrine are in part an attempt to deal with this pollution by purification and transformation.

### *Conclusion*

I have not been able to comment on every article in this interesting book. What I have tried to do is identify several leads that have been thrown to the reader by individual authors, and suggest ways in which they might be brought together into a theoretical perspective that maximizes the interconnections between the different phenomena. It seems to me that much of the discussion relates to what Peter Takayama and others call "civil religion" and the "religious core values" associated with it (p. 119). Anxiety about the successful reproduction of these core values is, Takayama points out, exemplified by such "religio-political issues as the nationalization of the Yasukuni Shrine,

the moral education of children,...the restoration of the emperor system, [and] the reform of education (p. 118).

It is also true, as Mark Mullins indicates in his introduction to part 2 ("Religion and the State"), that we should not have a simplistic idea of "religion" promoting harmony and consensus alone. He gives a useful introduction to the way religion has been controlled in the interests of political power, leading to the creation of, among other things, an "invented tradition" and the Japanese civil religion. That this religion is not simply about belief in spirits is effectively demonstrated by the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), which, as Mullins shows, not only defined the limits of religious freedom but itself became an object of religious veneration.

Yes, but still it might be that the invented civil religion, though developed consciously as a political tool after the Meiji period, had such a strong grip on the Japanese people because it corresponded to an "implicit" set of values that already existed in local forms and that, even after the American introduction of a democratic constitution, is still in significant ways identifiable in contemporary Japanese society. This at any rate seems to be the view of Takayama (see p. 119). Here a connection with Swyngedouw's thesis may be possible, and also with Nakane Chie, who has argued persuasively to a deep level of continuity in values and institutions, as with the transposition of the basic values of the traditional "*ie*" into the modern corporation.

I have suggested that sociological concepts of hierarchy, purity, and pollution have emic equivalents that have been identified by contributors to this volume, and are indeed fundamental and arguably "sacred" values in Japanese society and culture. I believe that an explanatory model can be constructed around these notions, though to what extent they can help us understand the kind of supernatural technology described by Miyake and Young is not clear. However, terms such as "purity" and "purification" can without strain be understood as cognate to "safety," "harmony," the strict maintenance of boundaries, and an emphasis on correct ritual action with people, things, and words all in their right order. This is orthopraxy, the ritual particularism of a specific bounded society. That society, in the minds of orthodox thinking, is a pure Japan and a pure Japanese people, a special way of living and doing things unsullied by dark and disruptive forces. Pollution can be seen as anything that threatens this mythological order, and angry spirits can be interpreted as the fears and anxieties that have accompanied the assaults on traditional boundaries resulting from Japan's increasing economic power, immigration, expansion overseas, and so on.



This book has done us a valuable service by bringing together an interesting variety of studies and thereby inviting us to make new connections. Interpreting the data in terms of *ritual hierarchy* effectively liberates us from the distinction between “society” and “religion,” a distinction that is unnecessarily burdensome and that seems especially artificial in the Japanese context.

Religion and society are really modern Western categories into which we try to force the data. When considering life in Japan it may be more fruitful to think in terms of *ritual*, a spectrum of stylized acts that ties together the entire Japanese world, including schools, factories, government ministries, shrines, and municipal swimming pools. Some rituals are directed towards the company boss, others toward the teacher, still others toward the ancestors or the Buddha. Rituals at one end of the spectrum are more symbolic, while those at the other end are more pragmatic; some rituals are statements about hierarchical relationships, while others are for controlling the wild, polluting “outer” (*soto*) and safeguarding the socially harmonious “inner” (*uchi*). What underlies them all is the maintenance of boundaries.

These are some of the themes that the book has brought up, and that might profitably be pursued if the book under review is ever re-edited for a second edition (which this reader would welcome), or if other scholars wish to follow up on some fertile areas for research. Durkheim, after all, may have been right. Perhaps religion really is the symbolic worship of one’s own society.

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