

highlights a fundamental dimension of the Japanese religious tradition, does it leave out something more essential for understanding the spiritual truth and power of that tradition? Might there be a spiritual strength in its community-oriented, cultural-unity type of religiosity that is overlooked by viewing its history from the perspective of what is presumably Reid's own commitment to an individual-oriented, cultural-pluralistic model of religiosity?

On the other hand, Japanese Christians have from the outset been critical of their own culture and sensitive to the plight of those on the margins of state or social power. Reid's focus on the relation of religion to state power is thus not only a novel perspective on the history of Japanese religions, it also serves as a challenge to the apparent lack of social and political critique in Shinto and Buddhist responses to state power and social injustice—areas in which Japanese Christianity, despite its internal divisions, has spoken with a prophetic voice.

This observation must be balanced, however, by Reid's own findings on the relation of Japanese Christianity to traditional ancestral rituals in which Japanese Protestantism has shown a strong tendency to accommodate itself to "culturally expected behavior." One of the most surprising results of his investigations was that Japanese Christians, even more than Japanese non-Christians, were inclined to view the Shinto shrine and its public festivals, in contradistinction to Buddhism and Christianity, as not "religious." In a related finding the number of Japanese Christians supporting the emperor system ranged between 45 percent and 55 percent, figures almost identical to their Japanese non-Christian counterparts.

Thus a second question we might raise is, How does Reid propose to relate these two aspects of the cultural shaping of Japanese Christianity? Further, why does he appar-

ently have a different attitude toward each? He is extremely sensitive to, and on guard against, the possible reshaping of Japanese Christianity by the Japanese tradition of unity of religion and state. But he appears to pass no normative judgment against the reshaping of Japanese Christianity by traditional Japanese attitudes to ancestral rites, Shinto public festivals, and the emperor system. Is it because one poses the external threat of state power to religious freedom, whereas the other is simply voluntary behavior in the area of social custom?

Whatever his answers, Reid's essays open up new ways of looking at such fundamental and enduring relationships as those between religion and culture, church and state, individual and family, the living and the departed, ritual and belief, Christianity and other religions, the "worlds" of Japan and America, Asia and the West. For readers similarly fascinated by these issues, this is a book with which they should make friends.

[Editor's note: a shorter version of this review first appeared in *The Japan Times*, March 24, 1992, p. 18.]

Religion in Contemporary Japan

Ian Reader

London: Macmillan Press, 1991. 277pp.

Reviewed by Ernest D. PIRYNS, Tokyo

THIS WELL-CONCEIVED STUDY of contemporary Japanese religiosity is based on years of research, personal observations, and previously published articles. The author has succeeded in giving us a coherent picture of Japanese religious consciousness and practice. Reader's starting point is interesting and concrete. Rather than focusing on philosophical beliefs or theologies, he examines the actions people perform in religious contexts and considers the extent to which

social, cultural, and personal behavior manifests religious traits. Since Reader is primarily concerned with how Japanese are religious today, he has drawn together data gathered from extensive field research and participant observation.

Chapter 1 provides the major ideas regarding the place, time, and practice of religion in Japan. Chapter 2 elaborates several key themes and orientations in the world of Japanese religion. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the social settings of religious practice, examining the role of Shinto in relation to birth, fertility, and community life, and the role of Buddhism in family life, particularly in dealing with death and ancestors (this is illustrated with a study of a Zen Buddhist temple). Chapter 5 considers the individual expression of religion through an analysis of various practices. Chapters 6 and 7 deal with temples and shrines as the primary places where religious life is acted out; they are centers of religious power and arenas where the spiritual world and the power of *kami*, buddhas, and other beings can be contacted for human benefit. They are also places where people demonstrate their playfulness in a religious context. Chapter 8 provides a case study of Agonshu, one of the *shinshin shūkyō* (neo-new religions), viewed by the author as a "user-friendly" religion. It is a movement that responds to the urgent needs and desires of its adherents. Reader shows that the new religions represent the continuity of Japanese religious traditions in the modern world. Their "newness" is not so much that they create something new that is in opposition to the old traditions, but that they make the Japanese religious heritage relevant to individuals living in the modern world. Their newness also consists in the social organizations they create, where the gap between life-less religious structures and experienced religiosity is overcome.

The major characteristics of Japanese re-

ligiosity are evident throughout this book: inner-worldliness, the emphasis on immanence and neglect of transcendence (though not totally absent), the search for this-worldly benefits, the use of religions as a weapon against fear and illness, the sense of closeness with the natural world, and flexibility and playfulness in worship. I wonder, however, why Reader does not point out that the Buddhist role in funerals and ancestor veneration is basically Shinto but clothed in a Buddhist garb.

A careful reading of this new book on religion in modern Japan stirs up many reflections about the relationship between Japanese religious experience (as it is acted out in everyday life or at the ground level) and the deeper layer of the human heart where the openness to the Holy or the Sacred is existentially felt. Perhaps it is there that human beings hear a "rumor of angels" as Peter Berger once wrote. This deeper layer or existential dimension is present in Japanese life in many ways, although it may only be latent and rarely put into words. Religiosity is simply the concrete acting out of the response to a manifestation of the Holy or Sacred. Religion is the cumulative tradition or objectification of religious experience in rituals and institutions and tends to become distant and lose contact with the emotions and feelings of practitioners. Religion is always in danger of meaningless petrification. In the Japanese context, for example, this is what happened to Buddhism during the Tokugawa period when affiliation became obligatory and temples were used as a means of social control by the government.

Reader's study can be highly recommended as an insightful analysis of how Japanese are religious today. Since the author does not deal directly with complicated religious doctrines, the volume is very approachable even for those without previous background in Japanese religions. Attentive

readers will probably find their own empathetic observations of Japanese religious life carefully and clearly brought to expression in this work.

**Das Gold in Wachs: Festschrift für
Thomas Immoos zum 70. Geburtstag**

[Gold in Wax: Festschrift for Thomas
Immoos on his 70th Birthday]

Elisabeth Gössmann and Günter Zobel, ed.
Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 1988. 555pp.

Reviewed by Martin REPP, Kyoto

THIS FESTSCHRIFT in honor of Thomas Immoos, with its nearly thirty contributions, reflects the broad horizons of the Swiss priest who has lived in Japan since 1951 and has taught at Sophia University since 1956. Although diverse in content, the mutual encounter of East and West and common search for divine reality in this world bind the various chapters together.

The volume begins with an introductory section, which includes essays honoring Immoos and a bibliography of his writings. The remainder of the volume is divided into four main parts: (1) prologomenon to a theology of Shinto, (2) from cult to theater, (3) transcending the borderline of literature and art, and (4) dialogue of religions.

The title of the volume is derived from the first contribution by Ernst Suttner who draws on an Ethiopian theory of church hymns to explain how the method of casting gold is used to express the manner in which divine reality is revealed in the world. The form for a golden artifact is itself taken from a wax model, so the wax in some sense represents the precious gold and serves as a symbol for the appearance of the divine in our world.

The remaining articles focus in various ways on this divine-world (human) relation-

ship. Kaspar Hürliemann shows the finite as a symbol for the infinite in his philosophical essay on the meaning of symbols. Kimura Naoji explains Goethe's understanding of symbols. Ueda Shizuteru also considers the question of symbols through a study of Nishida's philosophy of religion, especially his use of such terms as "logic of topos," "pure experience," and "absolute contradictory self-identity." Heinrich Dumoulin reflects on the nature of transcendence through the transparency in Hakuin's paintings: all things become a simile for Buddha-reality. Gaudenz Domenig interprets an ancient legend (from the Hitachi Fudoki) on occupying new territory as describing the human space situated between two realms of the gods, and uses this as a basis to critique Eliade's concept of vertically oriented "holy space." Fred Thompson provides a descriptive analysis of the "archaic space order in a Shinto *matsuri* (festival)." Herbert Plutschow traces *kotodama* (word spirit) in ancient Japanese literature and convincingly demonstrates that even the poem competitions and the exchange of poems between lovers have been more than just secular events. The "mana" spirit in the word and thus in poetry moves "earth and heaven without any (physical) effort."

The divine-human relationship is also explored in the articles gathered under the theme "cult and theater." In this section there are contributions by Günter Zobel on Noh and related subjects, Stanca Scholzcionca on the fire-symbol of the Tenjin, Frank Hoff on "seeing and being seen in Noh," Kawatake Toshio on a field theory of theater, Okano Moriya on Noh and *yuishiki* teaching, and Iwabuchi Tatsuji on Bert Brecht's reception in Japan.

Several essays explore the nature of self-transcendence in literature. Margaret Dietrich considers the work of Maurice Maeterlinck, and two articles focus on the work of Fried-