

power to synthesize and search for patterns is admirable.

This book, however, has some serious flaws. First, the editors responsible for the book have done a great disservice to its author. Repetitive and frequent typographical errors abound, as do misspellings of the names of both historical and contemporary people and places. Inconsistencies in book titles and names of organizations are also conspicuous. The Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda is later Congregation of the Propaganda Fide and finally Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Faith. Other errors that would leave the uninitiated perplexed are borrowed from previous authors. Takayama Hida-no-kami suddenly becomes Dario Takayama, with no explanation. Is this the same person? The cumulative effect of such carelessness undermines the authority of the author, since the reader is left to wonder if on the factual level as well the work is not equally imprecise.

Second, the research for this work is based entirely on secondary sources, the vast majority of which are in English. Thus, assertions such as "most authorities agree..." can carry only relative weight because the works of very few authorities, and all of these Westerners, have even been consulted. With no new primary sources introduced, the present study becomes a hearsay discourse. This is unfortunate methodology for a book that is so openly critical of "Europeanism" in the intellectual sphere.

Furthermore, the author does not seem to distinguish between authoritative and general studies and quotes them all as equal authorities. Jennes' *A History of the Catholic Church in Japan* is an excellent historical handbook, but should it be used in serious polemic? Furthermore, is it really fair to the reader to refer to Neil Fujita, as "a modern Japanese historian"? The biographical data on his book, *Japan's Encounter With Christianity*, describes a professor of religion at an American university, and a

glance at his bibliography reveals no titles in Japanese. It is just this sort of imprecision that accumulates throughout the book and leaves its impression on a critical reader. Despite these shortcomings, *A Vision Betrayed* is highly readable, covers a vast amount of information, and retells a fascinating story.

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### **Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends**

R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed.

New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 263pp.

Paper.

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*Reviewed by Robert L. Ramseyer,  
Hiroshima*

This collection of essays by Christian scholars has a clear point of view that the editor, R. S. Sugirtharajah, calls the "new extratextual hermeneutics." By this he means going "beyond the earlier monotextual approach, that puts so much emphasis on the canonical Christian texts, and...[using] literary and nonliterary resources that are common to all the peoples of Asia. It may be a coincidence, but the emergence of greater literary interest in biblical texts, especially among American scholars, has occurred at a time when Asian interpreters' attention was drawn toward literary and nonliterary genres of different religious traditions. The extratextual hermeneutics that is slowly emerging as a distinctive Asian contribution to theological methodology seeks to transcend the textual, historical and religious boundaries of Christian tradition and cultivate a deeper contact with the mysterious ways in which people of all religious persuasions have defined and appropriated humanity and divinity" (p. 3). These writers "also find the overt Christocentrism in [contemporary contextualizing efforts] a hin-

drance: such an uncompromising position cuts Asian Christians off from the wisdom of Asia" (p. 4). "The basic thrust now is not the declaration of the gospel in an Asian style but discerning it afresh in the ongoing broken relationships between different communities and between human beings and the created order. The task is seen not as adapting the Christian gospel in Asian idioms but as reconceptualizing the basic tenets of the Christian faith in the light of Asian realities. The new mood is not to assume the superiority of Christian revelation but to seek life-enhancing potentialities also in the divine manifestations of Asia....They want to refashion and reformulate the gospel....The gospel is seen as one among many divine manifestations" (p. 5).

The editor describes his guidelines for selecting material for this volume as "(1) whether the writings reflect the current cultural, historical, political, and religious realities of Asia; and (2) whether they incorporate Asian symbols, stories, images, ethos, and thought patterns in their theological enterprise" (p. 6).

Nine of the twenty chapters are written by Indians. There are three each from Hong Kong, Korea and Sri Lanka, and one each from Taiwan and Japan. The lone article from Japan is Kuribayashi Teruo's "Recovering Jesus for Outcasts in Japan," originally published in this journal in 1992. The specific chapters deal with a wide variety of topics: (1) the place of oppressed peoples in specific societies (outcasts in Japan, dalits and tribal people in India, women in Korea); (2) the place of the cultural traditions of a people in constructing a Christian theology (Korea, India, Hong Kong); and (3) the place of so-called universals, such as human rights in specific sociocultural contexts. In addition, a number of writers reflect on their own lives as they have tried to understand the Christian faith and be faithful in different cultural settings.

With a few exceptions, most notably Kuribayashi's, there are a number of common assumptions on which most of these articles are based. The first is that Asia is a cultural unit. The editor in his introduction speaks of "resources common to all the peoples of Asia" (p. 3). In some sense that can only be described as mystic; these writers from widely disparate cultural backgrounds feel a common identity in something called "Asia."

Second, culture for these writers—their own culture, excludes any changes that have occurred since their people's initial contact with Europeans. (Most of the writers use the term "European" to include anything related to Western culture.) Their culture is something that developed when their people were in isolation from the rest of the world. Authentic culture stopped developing at that point.

Third, the culture and society that existed up to the time of European contact were good and "the people" lived in happy innocence. The problems found in Asian societies today are, without exception, the result of evils brought in by Europeans. Thus Asian people are innocent victims in no sense responsible for these problems. This understanding leads to strongly nationalistic overtones in most of the presentations.

Fourth, this authentic pristine culture was common to an entire people. Everyone shared in it. All were the same. In this world view there is no place for an individual who is different, and it is clear that "the people" are prior to the individual. Moreover, for some of the writers the identification of a people with a culture would appear to be almost genetic. One seems to inherit a cultural tradition from one's biological ancestors, and to attempt to depart from that tradition constitutes a kind of cultural apostasy or betrayal that results in an unauthentic existence. There is no hint here that at least some people might legitimately like to be freed from their society and its traditions, that

they might prefer some other path, that as individual human beings they might have the right to choose their own path.

This leads to the final assumption. Although these writers speak much about the importance of “the people” speaking for themselves, these same writers assume that they can speak for the people. There would seem to be no possibility that at least some of “the people” might have different opinions or points of view. One writer even speaks for the entire Third World.

While it is not likely that many of the readers of *The Japan Christian Review* will be persuaded by the writers of these essays, this is a volume well worth reading. These writers reveal the very deep sense of hurt of many Asian Christians resulting from the experience of European colonialism and imperialism in their countries, hurt inflicted by people among whom are many who called themselves Christian. This collection is clearly a reaction to that hurt.

In reaction to that hurt, these writers are seeking to recover a sense of pride in what they perceive to be their own cultural roots. While some of us might wish they had gone about this differently and feel that in response to European cultural chauvinism they have developed their own cultural chauvinism, this book should help us all be a bit more humble about our own traditions, including our own cultural understandings of the Christian faith.

Finally, this book deserves to be widely read simply because it represents a significant group of Christian intellectuals whose views are influential in the churches where they live and work. We need to know how they perceive the Christian faith, try to understand their views and be prepared to respond to them.

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### Japan's “Guest Workers”: Issues and Public Policies

Shimada Haruo

Translated by Roger Northridge

Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994.

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*Reviewed by John Clammer,  
Sophia University, Tokyo*

The presence of Japan's “guest workers”—the large and ethnically heterogeneous population of foreign workers who now occupy the smaller towns as well as the large urban conurbations—has in the last few years become an issue of public debate within the country. The strong yen, high wage levels, job opportunities and the high visibility of Japan economically and culturally throughout Asia and beyond have made the country a magnet not only for relatively small numbers of professionals, businessmen and language teachers but also for a very large number of individuals who enter the country as tourists from neighboring Asian countries, South Asia and as far away as the Middle East.

Overstaying the period of their visas, they often remain in Japan as illegal residents for many months or even years until they are caught or voluntarily give themselves up for repatriation. The males among them labor at the building sites, scrap-metal yards, rubber works, auto parts factories, docksides and dry cleaning establishments of Japan; the females staff the bars, nightclubs and massage parlors of the cities.

The sheer size of this community (estimated as high as half a million), their visibility (quite literally in the railway stations, parks and other locations where they gather for fellowship and information sharing) and related problems (provision of health care for uninsured workers who most often do not speak Japanese and of human rights, housing and potentially even education)