

Notes on Recent Edited Volumes on Japanese Religions

EDITED COLLECTIONS of essays present a problem for the journal's book reviews process. Often (especially for collections with a very specific topic) most or even all of the possible reviewers already have their own contribution included in the collection, and thus cannot be asked to write a review. Thus, such edited collections languish on the shelf and eventually are passed over for review by journals such as the *JRS*. These collections, however, are often of interest and importance in the field, having gathered together the most recent and (hopefully) the best research on a certain topic. I will take up a number of such recent collections and, rather than discuss them in detail, briefly introduce the contents and its significance. It does not make much sense to merely list the titles of the chapters and their authors, since such information is easily available at the publisher's homepage or other sources; instead, I will attempt to provide a general overview and comment on the value of the publication.

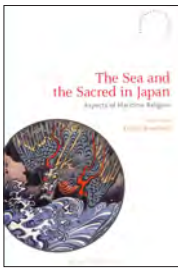


Karen M. Gerhart, ed., *Women, Rites, and Ritual Objects in Premodern Japan*

Leiden: Brill, 2018. Brill Japanese Studies Library, volume 63. 411 pages. Hardcover, €132.00/\$159.00. ISBN 978-90-04-36819-4. doi.org/10.1163/9789004368194_009

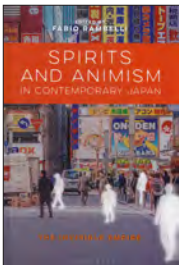
THIS COLLECTION is described as “a multidisciplinary examination of rituals featuring women, in which significant attention is paid to objects produced for and utilized in these rites as a lens through which larger cultural concerns, such as gender politics, the female body, and the materiality of the ritual objects, are explored. The ten chapters encounter women, rites, and ritual objects in many new and interactive ways and constitute a pioneering attempt to combine ritual and gendered analysis with the study of objects” (BACKCOVER). It begins with

a feisty prologue by Barbara Ruch (whose edited collection *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* [2003] was a landmark in this area), which shows how far the study of women in Japanese religions has progressed from even the quite recent past. The list of contributors reads like a “who’s who” of current researchers bringing to light the role and contributions of women in Japanese religions: Anna Andreeva, Monica Bethe, Patricia Fister, Sherry Fowler, Karen M. Gerhart, Hank Glassman, Naoko Gunji, Elizabeth Morrissey, Chari Pradel, Barbara Ruch, and Elizabeth Self. Topics include esoteric rituals for women, Kannon as a female icon, the Zen nun Mugai Nyodai, religious aspects of retired empresses and mothers of emperors, and much more. This collection reveals the wealth of material available for research on women—in this case focusing on ritual—and presents a challenge and opens the possibilities for further studies.



Fabio Rambelli, ed., *The Sea and the Sacred in Japan: Aspects of Maritime Religion*

London and NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Bloomsbury Shinto Studies. 296 pages. Hardcover, EPUB, PDF, and paperback, £100.00. ISBN 9781350062856.



Fabio Rambelli, ed., *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: The Invisible Empire*

London and NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Bloomsbury Shinto Studies. 240 pages. Hardcover, EPUB, PDF, and paperback, £85.00. ISBN 9781350097094.

FABIO RAMBELLI has certainly been busy, not only in composing his own books but also in editing a number of collections. These two volumes are from Bloomsbury, a publisher that has happily leveraged their success with the Harry Potter books to support a large number of academic publications, such as a series on Shinto Studies currently in twenty volumes, including *The Sea and the Sacred in Japan*. This volume “is the first book to focus on the role of the sea in Japanese religions. While many leading Shinto deities tend to be understood today as

unrelated to the sea, and mountains are considered the privileged sites of sacredness, this book provides new ways to understand Japanese religious culture and history. Scholars from North America, Japan and Europe explore the sea and the sacred in relation to history, culture, politics, geography, worldviews and cosmology, space and borders, and ritual practices and doctrines. Examples include Japanese indigenous conceptualizations of the sea from the Middle Ages to the 20th century; ancient sea myths and rituals; sea deities and sea cults; the role of the sea in Buddhist cosmology; and the international dimension of Japanese Buddhism and its maritime imaginary” (BACKCOVER). One of the features of this collection is the inclusion of translations of many articles by Japanese scholars (such as Ōuchi Fumi and Abe Yasurō), thus providing the fruits of recent research by Japanese as well as young (and some not-so-young) Western scholars. The essays are organized under four general topics: (1) Ancient Sea Myths and Rituals and Their Reinterpretations, (2) Sea Deities and Sea Cults, (3) Buddhism and Japan in the Global Ocean, and (4) Interpretive Constructs.

Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan “draws attention to a striking aspect of contemporary Japanese culture: the prevalence of discussions and representations of ‘spirits’ (*tama* or *tamashii*). Ancestor cults have played a central role in Japanese culture and religion for many centuries; in recent decades, however, other phenomena have expanded and diversified the realm of Japanese animism. For example, many manga, anime, TV shows, literature, and art works deal with spirits, ghosts, or with an invisible dimension of reality. International contributors ask to what extent these are cultural forms created by the media for consumption, rather than manifestations of ‘traditional’ ancestral spirituality in their adaptations to contemporary society.” Thus, this collection “considers the modes of representations and the possible cultural meanings of spirits, as well as the metaphysical implications of contemporary Japanese ideas about spirits. The chapters offer analyses of specific cases of ‘animistic attitudes’ in which the presence of spirits and spiritual forces is alleged, and attempt to trace cultural genealogies of those attitudes. In particular, they present various modes of representation of spirits (in contemporary art, architecture, visual culture, cinema, literature, diffuse spirituality) while at the same time addressing their underlying intellectual and religious assumptions” (BACKCOVER). As with the collections mentioned above, this volume brings together research from many promising young researchers who take a fresh look at the role of religion (in this case focusing on “spirits”) in modern and contemporary Japanese society.



Orion Klautau, ed., *Sengo rekishigaku to Nihon Bukkyō*
 「戦後歴史学と日本仏教」(Postwar Historiography and
 Japanese Buddhism)

Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2016. 381 pages. Paperback, ¥3,800. ISBN 978-4-8318-5544-2.

THIS VOLUME is a collection of fifteen essays on the same number of important scholars of history and Buddhism from the postwar period written by current scholars, beginning with essays on Ienaga Saburō by Sueki Fumihiko, on Hattori Shisō by Kiriwara Kenshin, on Inoue Mitsusada by Taira Masayuki, on Tamamuro Taijō by Hayashi Makoto, and so forth, finishing with essays on Tamura Yoshirō by Hanano Jūdō and on Kuroda Toshio by Satō Hiroo. Thus, we are presented not only with the background and contribution of influential postwar scholars, but also the perspective and insights of many of the best current scholars of history and religion in Japan. The volume opens with an introduction by the editor Orion Klautau, fresh off his PhD work at Tohoku University. This is an intriguing collection that provides a look behind the curtain at many of the major postwar scholars of Japanese religion—their background, their work, their ideas, and their influence. This is not a book that can be used as an undergraduate or even graduate seminar textbook, but it should be on hand for reference by (and inspiration for) scholars of Japanese history and religion.



Ōtani Eiichi 大谷栄一, Kikuchi Akira 菊池 暁, and Nagaoka
 Takashi 長岡 崇, eds., *Nihon shūkyōshi no kīwādo: Kindai-*
shugi o koete 「日本宗教史のキーワード—近代主義を超えて」
 (Keywords in the History of Japanese Religions: Beyond
 Modernism)

Tokyo: Keiō Gijyuku Daigaku Shuppankai, 2018. 441 pages.
 Paperback, ¥2,900. ISBN 978-4-7664-2535-2.

THIS HANDY VOLUME contains new summaries of fifty-three “key” words or concepts considered important for understanding Japanese religions, while attempting to go “beyond the modernist” (*kindaishugi* 近代主義) or “assumed” (*jōshiki* 常識) understanding of these terms in the past hundred years or so. In their introduction, the editors provide a succinct summary of their goal of going beyond considering religion merely in terms of Western categories (such as viewing the

“new Kamakura schools” of Buddhism in terms of Weber’s analysis of the Protestant ethic) and taking into account recent Japanese analyses such as that of Kuroda Toshio. The fifty-three items (composed by over forty participants) are organized into five categories: 1. *アイコン・アイテム・トポス—聖なるもの* (Icons, Items, and Topos: The Sacred), with topics such as 「神と仏」 (Gods and Buddhas), 「親鸞像」 (The image of Shinran), and 「マリア観音」 (Maria Kannon); 2. *プラクティス—実践* (Practice), with topics such as 「プラクティス・ビリーフ」 (Practice/Belief), 「慰霊」 (Memorials), and 「病気なおし」 (Healing Disease); 3. *エージェント—担い手* (Agents), with topics such as 「氏子」 (Shrine parishioner), 「女人禁制」 (Prohibition of Women), and 「民衆宗教」 (Folk Religion); 4. *ガバナンス—権力と信仰* (Governance: Power and Faith), with topics such as 「鎮護国家」 (Protection of the State), 「顕密体制」 (Esoteric-Exoteric Structure), and 「朝鮮仏教」 (Korean Buddhism); and 5. *ディスコース—思想* (Discourse: Thought), with topics such as 「神仏習合」 (Combinatory Gods and Buddhas), 「進化論の受容」 (Acceptance of Evolution), and 「精神主義」 (Spiritualism). This is a mixture of “traditional” and current religious topics. As with all such collections one could argue about the selection of individual topics (which inevitably reflects the interests of the participants and contributors), but it is an accessible and stimulating source for browsing and reference.

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