

WAKABAYASHI Haruko/University of Tokyo

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In the past couple of decades, there has been a vast amount of new scholarship on topics related to religion in Japanese history. The *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions* is an excellent reference work that ‘guides’ the readers through the entire field of Japanese religions, both thematically and chronologically.

The volume is divided into five sections—Traditions, History, Themes, Research and Chronology—of which the first three constitute the basic framework of the book. The first section, ‘Traditions’, contains chapters on Japanese religions, Shinto, Buddhism, Folk Religion and Japanese Christianity. Each of the chapters in this section introduces the chronological development of each respective tradition, thematic and theoretical issues and new findings in the field. The second section, ‘History’, contains chapters that portray the chronological development of religion in Japanese history. The history is divided into six periods—ancient, classical age, medieval, early modern, modern and contemporary. Section three, ‘Themes’, represents some of the recent trends in the study of religions. Topics covered are as follows: ritual culture, literature and scripture, state and religion, geography, environment, pilgrimage, history of thought and gender issues. Though each chapter deserves a careful review, this essay will mainly focus on a few of the key issues brought forth by the volume.

First is the question of definition. Essays in the first section in particular deal with the critical issue of defining Japanese religion. The section opens with Robert Kisala’s chapter on ‘Japanese Religions’, which addresses an already familiar question, ‘what does “religion” mean to the Japanese people?’ He gives a sophisticated response to this question, drawing conclusions from the analysis of recent survey results and works by contemporary Japanese scholars on the idea of religion in Japan. The concept of ‘religion’ is an issue that lingers throughout the chapters in the volume. Trevor Astley brings it up in discussing the terminologies for ‘New Religion’, and the question is asked again by Hayashi Makoto in the chapter on the modern period in the ‘History’ section as he introduces recent debates on ‘rethinking *shūkyō*’ (p. 215).

‘Shinto’ is another term that cannot be easily defined. The chapter on Shinto by Norman Havens begins with the question ‘what is Shinto?’ and introduces the various approaches to this question taken by specialists in the field. The complexity of its definition is reflected in the author’s statement: ‘in the context of the other essays in this *Guide*, and depending on one’s perspective, Shinto might easily be taken as the sum total of all the other essays here, or, perhaps, no more than part of the chapter on Buddhism’ (p. 15). Sure enough, included in this section is another chapter that many readers may find surprising to be treated separately from Shinto or Buddhism: ‘Folk Religion’. Readers will soon understand why, as Ian Reader’s chapter on folk religion begins with a discussion of the discipline of folk studies, or *minzokugaku*, from which the study of folk religion originates. Terminologies such as *minkan shinkō* and *minzoku shūkyō* are discussed, and through these discussions, the reader comes to realize that although there is much overlap and interaction between folk religion and other religious traditions, and that the boundaries are not at all clear, the academic tradition under which it had been studied allows for it to stand as a distinct field, consequently binding it up with the theoretical and ideological limits of the discipline.

In contrast to Shinto, the chapter on Buddhism by Jacqueline I. Stone is a reflection of how solid the definition of this particular tradition is in contrast to Shinto or Folk Religion. The chapter, with its extensive coverage of scholarship on a variety of topics associated with Japanese Buddhism, demonstrates the wide range of topics that are distinctively defined as 'Buddhist' that have been explored in depth by scholars in the field. Yet, can Buddhism be so easily defined? Interaction between Buddhism and other native traditions is mentioned only briefly in Stone's essay. The same is true with the essay on the medieval period by William Bodiford, another scholar of medieval Buddhism—a result, perhaps of the studies in this area that have revealed 'more about the trees than the forest' (p. 169). Though quite different in nature, the complex ways in which a foreign religion develops through interactions with the more traditional religions is well demonstrated in the chapter on 'Japanese Christianity' by Mark R. Mullins, in which he notes that '[w]hat happens to a world religion as it moves from one culture to another is beyond the control of its initial missionary carriers' (p. 126).

Second, I wish to discuss periodization. The chapters in the 'History' section identify some of the key events in the history of religion. In particular, Yoshida Kazuhiko, in his chapter on the 'classical age', discusses the periodization of Japanese religious history by pointing to two major times of epochal change for Japanese Buddhism: one in the 9th century when the basic structure was created for religion in Japan and the other in the 15th century when the 'new' Buddhist movements that developed during the Kamakura period began to spread and permeate society through the common people along with the formation of *ie* as a dominant social unit (pp. 158–159). Though there may be other theories for defining the epochal periods of religious development in Japan, the chapters in this section as well as most recent scholarship confirm this periodization. Unfortunately, the essays in the volume fail to address much of the 15th and 16th centuries. This is a reflection of the present state of the field. The late medieval period, which falls between the Kamakura period, which has long been viewed as the height of Japanese Buddhism, and the Edo period, when Buddhism was incorporated into the Tokugawa system and overshadowed by Confucianism, has generally been overlooked. There is definitely an urgent need for further studies on this period in order to understand the broader picture of the development of religious traditions in Japan.

The third area is themes. The chapters in the 'Themes' section, particularly those on state and religion by Helen Hardacre, history of thought by Thomas P. Kasulis and gender issues by Kawahashi Noriko (her excellent essay reveals a wide range of gender-related issues that calls for further research), are extremely helpful introductions to overarching themes in the study of religion and discuss in wide scope the diverse scholarly works related to the theme.

In her essay on state and religion, for instance, Hardacre offers a brief yet concise overview of the various forms of relationship between state and religion, starting from prehistoric times up to the Aum Shinrikyō incident. The relationship between religion and state is one topic that is central to all periods throughout Japanese history and is discussed in other chapters as well. Yoshida, for example gives an overview of the recent critical re-examination of 'State Buddhism', a term that was widely used before the 1980s to refer to Buddhism in ancient Japan, and calls for a relativization of State Buddhism as part of a greater array of Buddhist activities that took place during the period. The model of exoteric–esoteric establishment, proposed by Kuroda Toshio and developed further critically by his successors, is mentioned by Yoshida as a key to re-evaluation not only of medieval Japanese Buddhism but also that of the ancient period as well. Duncan Williams attributes the lack of scholarship on religion during the Edo period in comparison to the medieval period to the so-called 'theory of Edo Buddhist degeneration' and the shift in political ideologies that favored Neo-Confucianism over Buddhism. Nevertheless, the Tokugawa policy of control over religion and popular religious practices throughout the Edo period has apparently been one of the major themes in the study of early modern

religions. Needless to say, state Shinto has been a major topic for the modern period. Hayashi Makoto's chapter on the modern period reveals how the study of Meiji Buddhism has been affected by the attitudes of scholars of the Taishō and Shōwa periods, who characterized the Meiji period as political and nationalistic. The chapters on this period and the more recent contemporary period by Shimazono Susumu not only discuss the religious developments of their respective periods but also examine the scholarship on religion from each period, which were, indeed, very much influenced by the political currents of the time. Scholars, for example have been interested in how the Buddhists engaged with and responded to modernity or have questioned the extent of dismantling of 'State Shinto' (in which case, there has been questions regarding the definition of State Shinto). The above chapters attest to the importance of the theme of 'religion and state' in the field of Japanese religions.

Another important essay in the 'Themes' section is on the 'history of thought', wherein Kasulis addresses questions regarding the history of thought as an academic discipline. He begins by discussing how the field is presently divided among such disciplines as 'history of Japanese ideas' (*shisō-shi*), Buddhist studies, aesthetics (*bigaku*), ethics (*rinrigaku*) and philosophy (*tetsugaku*) and observes that such a division may be 'counterintuitive' for many Westerners who are more familiar with a different approach. This is an important point in understanding the place of the study of religion within Japanese scholarship.

Other essays in the 'Themes' section cover more specialized topics. Each of these topics is extremely stimulating. Nevertheless, one cannot help but feel that they are perhaps too specialized for the purpose of this volume. The chapter on ritual culture, for instance, attempts to bring an interdisciplinary approach to religion by adopting the term 'ritual culture'. The theoretical discussion of ritual culture opens up new possibilities to approach the function of religion in Japanese society; however, the essay fails to address other approaches to the study of art and symbolism that are abundant in the field. The presentation of the theoretical analysis of *Genji* by Robert E. Morrell exposed this reviewer to the less familiar approach of literary criticism and was thus highly inspiring. Yet, the more obvious religious literature receives very little attention in his essay. Similarly, the topic of pilgrimage, discussed by Barbara Ambros, is certainly an interesting one and has attracted much scholarship in recent years, but the essay could have more broadly addressed issues of environment and the relationship between nature and religion—a topic that has recently achieved much recognition in the field.

Finally, I will include a note on the essays in the last two sections of the book. The first is Makino Yasuko's detailed guidelines for searching for reference works and sources in libraries. Particularly helpful at the end of the essay is a list of reference works, useful online resources and commonly used library terms. Next, Brian O. Ruppert provides first-hand information on using archives in the study of religions in Japan. In addition to a thorough introduction to major sites for manuscript research and important Web sites and addresses, Ruppert introduces the readers to the protocols necessary for successful interaction with persons involved in accessing the manuscripts. This should prove to be extremely useful for scholars who wish to visit the archives for the first time, for there have been no such written guidelines to this day. The third, by Scott Schnell, introduces the readers to methods of fieldwork. This, too, provides extremely useful tips for getting one's research started and gathering data productively. Last but not least, Bodiford's 35-page chronology of important events related to the development of religion in Japan is an excellent contribution to this volume.

All in all, the *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions* beautifully combines an incisive overview of scholarship in the fields, reference to the most recent academic trends and issues, guidelines to research and a highly selective list of resources. It is unquestionably an invaluable reference work for both novice students and experienced scholars of all disciplines dealing with any topic on Japanese religion.