

<b>Editors:</b>	Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson
<b>Year:</b>	2006
<b>Title:</b>	<i>Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions</i>
<b>Publisher:</b>	University of Hawai'i Press (Nanzan Library of Asian Religion and Culture)
<b>City:</b>	Honolulu
<b>Number of Pages:</b>	466 pages
<b>Price:</b>	37,60 US\$
<b>ISBN-13:</b>	978-0-8248-3002-1

**Review:**

Straight off. This is a substantial work which promises to define "Japanese religions" as a field for some time to come. It is produced by a wonderful constellation of expert writers who have evidently been persistently cajoled and organised by Paul Swanson of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture and Clark Chilson of Ithaca, New York (and previously associated with Nanzan). These are both well known and highly competent editors who humbly admit that they were assisted by others at every turn, including two of the contributors themselves, namely Trevor Astley and Robert Kisala, three Japanese members of the "project team", namely Horo Atsuhiko, Okuyama Michiaki and Terao Kazuyoshi, and the brilliantly indefatigable James Heisig, who not only advised from the stratosphere but also found time to handle the very nice layout. I missed a contribution from him in the thematic section, but then there are various other competent scholars of Japanese religions who do not appear. Reviewing a book by 22 contributors as well as the editors is an impossible task to carry out fairly. The work is not simply *star-studded*; everybody is a star in some way. Of these, just less than one third are well-known Japanese colleagues, some of their articles having been translated by the editors. Fortunately reviewers are assisted in knowing what to think in that the editors' introduction includes not only the guidelines given to the authors but also a fascinating account of all the meetings and debates which shaped the work. Evidently the conception for the work progressed and changed, as various well-worn categories were discussed and discarded, and recent debates in the field were taken increasingly into account. In spite of all the interactions, the authors were also given much freedom, and their personal interests shine through here and there quite freely. Theoretically therefore it might be thought necessary to have a review paragraph for each contribution, but this would need a substantial article of its own. In general the book is refreshingly free of some of the older categories and "periods". In fact there is so much "reconsidering" and "revisioning" going on that it is strange that some older terms such as "folk religion" have survived at all. It is sufficiently critiqued in the relevant article by Ian Reader for it to have been dropped altogether. But then it was kept.

What we get first is a main section entitled "Traditions" including "Japanese Religions" (Robert Kisala), "Shinto" (Norman Havens), "Buddhism" (Jacqueline I. Stone), "Folk Religion" (Ian Reader), "New Religions" (Trevor Astley) and "Japanese Christianity" (Mark R. Mullins). All of these well-known experts are giving us their own review of recent scholarship in the named fields, both Japanese and foreign, and they can all be read with profit by those currently doing research. They also give clues on the historical development of these "traditions", but apparently with a varying sense of responsibility in this regard because of their greater or less emphasis on guidance through recent scholarly disputes. Some readers may want more of the kind of potted history which Mark Mullins manages to slip in about Christianity. Without reviewing the contributions severally, suffice it to say that the information value here is somewhat uneven. While Trevor Astley manfully surveys the "new religions" and their study, it should be realised that the number of their members far outweighs that of Christianity. It is sometimes argued that the latter has been particularly influential in Japanese society, but this is an argument from Christian apologetics which requires careful assessment. There is really no case for having a whole chapter on Christianity and just one chapter on all of the "new" religions from the Edo period onwards. Moreover, as Mark Mullins is kind enough to point out, Christianity is not the only "foreign" religion in Japan. However the treatments of Confucianism and Daoism, which are certainly "traditions", will be found to be scattered under other headings.

After the start-up on "Traditions", we then have a sequence under the heading "History". Truly there is a conceptual problem for the history of religions about the relations between "traditions" and "history", but there is no common line on the matter to be found here. With much, very justified agonizing over "periodization" (cf. also the Introduction) the editors and contributors settled on "Ancient Japan and Religion" (Matsumura Kazuo), "Religion in the Classical Period" (Yoshida Kazuhiko), "The Medieval Period: Eleventh to Sixteenth Centuries" (William M. Bodiford), "Religion in Early Modern Japan" (Duncan Ryūken Williams), "Religion in the Modern Period" (Hayashi Makoto) and "Contemporary Japanese Religions" (Shimazono Susumu). It is noteworthy that here the majority of authors are Japanese. It is also noteworthy that we still end up with some kind of periods, even if the phenomena drift across the borders of whatever periods have been conventionally used or are newly suggested. As to the names of these periods, the dominant terms are all incorrigibly western, and perhaps this is unavoidable. However there must be limits, and it may be wondered whether any period in Japanese history can usefully be referred to as "Classical", which was presumably not a *katakana* term in the original Japanese title (if there was one) of Yoshida's article. What do you get between "ancient" and "medieval"? Well, "classical" I suppose. But, why cannot a dominant characteristic be taken for this? The article is actually about the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, so why not call it that?

A comment is needed about the increasingly annoying assertions that Shintō did not exist as "an entity" before the introduction of Buddhism (Yoshida), or even "as an immutable entity...until the creation of Shrine Shinto in the modern period" (Havens, p. 18). But who has ever been asserting

that Shintō existed as "an entity" or an "immutable entity"? Well: Shintō apologists, who like to present as far as possible a seamless story about the "way of the gods". But historians? This is no place for a detailed argument, but there is a rampant new post-Kuroda orthodoxy here, which many evidently fear to disregard or to question. In the history of religions it is both widespread and unavoidable to use terms from one period which refer back to an earlier period. It is also quite evident that the origins of religious systems (the expression is used advisedly) which are not "founded" by particular persons but accompany and regulate the lives of whole, if small communities, are lost in the mists of time. The recognition of this does not imply "essentialism", that is, not for the historian of religions. The question of "how far back?" is of course a fair one. That depends on the sources. Every first year student learns that the word "Shintō" cannot exist without the Chinese language, so it has to be later than that to which it first referred. At the same time it only came into existence to refer to something recognisable. There seems to be little doubt that there was not only *kami*-worship of some kind but also mythology relating to *kami* in "ancient" Japan (Matsumura's period). It may be right not to refer to this, yet, as "Shintō", to avoid anachronism, but the problem is greatly exaggerated and is only leading to new distortions. May future editors beware of today's fashions.

Before going to the next main section, consider the Index. As it so happened, just a couple of days before writing this review I paid a call to Higashi Honganji in Kyōto and (though there for other reasons) picked up a leaflet about the *hanamatsuri*, or "flower festival", which falls in early April (hence flowers) and celebrates the birth of the Buddha (Sakyamuni). So with this leaflet in my hand I casually checked the book's Index. Unfortunately there is no mention of *hanamatsuri*, even though it occurs every year, and not only in the context of Shin Buddhism. Strolling through Teramachi I passed through a temple with shrines to Myōken Bosatsu and Shichimenzan; but these are also not in the index. Nor is Minobu-san. This encounter with the Nichiren tradition took my mind back to the *setsubun* activities earlier this year, during which I had been invited at another Nichiren temple to don a *kamishimo* and share in tossing the beans out. So I tried *mamemaki* in the index. No luck. Looking ahead to the summer, no luck with *tanabata* either. Thinking back to Shinshū, I tried Takada-ha, which was not there. Then I thought I should try a couple of Shintō terms and picked on *shimenawa* and *torii*, also to no avail. In despair I opened the index at random just to get hold of any word that caught my eye. It fell on "Tathāgatas". For this we find just one very incidental reference to tathāgatas as "timeless cosmic buddhas" in the context of a discussion of lineages (p. 167 William M. Bodiford). There is no mention of *nyorai* (the Japanese equivalent for *tathāgata*), not even when we are quite rightly exhorted to differentiate between all the different kinds of divine beings (page 179, same author), and in spite of the fact that millions of young people stand before many a *nyorai* when going around all the national treasures and important cultural properties. It is fair to say that the work, though a "guide" is not intended to be a dictionary or a mini-cyclopedia for the field of Japanese religions. It is better understood as a guide to contemporary scholarship in the field. At the same time, there are so many words and names in the index altogether, that one expects to find even more, especially common ones, and one expects them to lead to minimal information.

On this background we can consider the third main section which is headed "Themes" and contains the following: "The ritual culture of Japan: Symbolism, Ritual and the Arts" (Richard Payne), "Literature and Scripture" (Robert E. Morrell), "State and Religion in Japan" (Helen Hardacre), "Geography, Environment, Pilgrimage" (Barbara Ambros) "History of Thought in Japan" (Thomas P. Kasulis) and "Gender Issues in Japanese Religions" (Kawahashi Noriko). But what about some other major themes? Using the index we find for example that "ancestor" and related terms lead to a number of useful spots in the book, but they remain spots, always in the context of other matters only. Surely there would have been a case for a whole chapter on this important theme. Oddly, the longest discussion on ancestors comes in the chapter on "Japanese Christianity" (Mark R. Mullins), because of the problem for the churches about how to deal with it as a problem for them. But how to deal with what? Richard Payne's article gives further clues about *kuyō*, but there is no correlation between these parts. Another major theme *could* have been divination practices, a steadily important matter both historically and in contemporary Japanese religion. From the index "divination practices" leads to just one place where these are referred to in a list of items which are said to be "central and critical elements within normative religious structures" (Reader, p. 66-7); so where and how are they studied?

In the service area, the chronology by William M. Bodiford does some valuable stitching together for the book as whole. Everybody will have their own predilections for a chronology. It is not clear to the reviewer why we have entries such as "1642 Severe famine", without any reference to religion. On the other hand there are some chronological snippets to which one is led from the index, e.g. (using reviewer's privilege) about Tominaga Nakamoto (1715-1746), who was the first person in the world to argue critically that the Mahāyāna sutras could not have been preached by the historical Buddha, yet is ignored in the generally enjoyable section on "Buddhism" by Jacqueline I. Stone. Another interesting personality who makes the chronology is Kiriya Sei'yū, who was born in 1921 and founded the new religion Agonshū in 1978. This takes us back to the index. Although there are several references to Agonshū there, they lead more or less nowhere, and it has to be said that the reader will never find out anything at all about Agonshū from this book. That is fine, if it is not the purpose of the book. But in that case, why do we find out about other things? There are a couple of paragraphs about *goma* in Richard Payne's contribution mentioned above, but because of the way the essay is conceived he is mainly telling us about India at that point. Since Agonshū regularly performs the biggest *goma* (fire) ceremonies in the whole of Japan, and presumably in the whole history of Japanese religions, perhaps the editors could have ensured a brief reference to that religion there. In other words, less Sanskrit, and more real stuff! To give another example, what do Shintō priests do at every ritual? They recite a *norito*. But the three scattered references to *norito* in the whole book tell the reader practically nothing. What about a few guiding comments on the structures and patterns of these important, brief, ancient and at the same time contemporary texts?

The last main section is headed "Research". The editors tell us that the compilation process for this book began before "Google" was known, and that as it developed, the kind of resource needed had shifted in nature. Apparently a shift in the view of the field also led to new ways of looking at resources and methods. The essays on "Japanese Reference Works, Sources and Libraries" (Makino Yasuko) and "Using Archives in the Study of Japanese Religions" (Brian O. Ruppert) were planned in good time, while "Conducting Fieldwork on Japanese Religions" (Scott Schnell) was commissioned at a late date (Editors, p.xi). It seems odd that a guide to research on Japanese religions should come so late to the recognition that *fieldwork* is a vital component of such research in the contemporary period. It is even odder that it was apparently not possible to find a specialist in the study of religions to write a contribution on fieldwork in the study of Japanese religions. Scott Schnell's piece, though giving useful clues for young researchers, seems to regard "anthropology" as *the* normative discipline just as soon as one steps off a bus, and "localized" or "folk" religions as the only natural "field" for fieldwork. What is often overlooked is that the *major* traditions also occur in *local* forms, not only the "little traditions" (to use Robert Redfield's term). In general, this drastic imbalance is partly the responsibility of the editors and partly the result of the historical and textual research models assumed by most of the contributors. The whole book could have taken on a different appearance if this correlation had been correctly and directly "revised" at the outset instead of as an afterthought.

In the main sections what we have is a collection of very engaging essays written by extremely well informed colleagues. These essays will be very useful in the foreseeable future for younger researchers who want to check out their orientation in particular areas. On the down-side, the integration of the volume did not go as far as it might have done, in spite of much planning and many meetings. This is more or less admitted by the gentle editors, who concluded that the integration of the bibliographies would be an impossible task (see introduction). So each essay has its own bibliography, making it harder to find things. In general there is a good mix of Japanese and foreign references. More fundamentally, the title is ambiguous. It does not make clear whether it is a guide to the field itself (cf. the comments on the index above) or a guide to recent research in the field. While the authors have shown much interest in the latter, some readers may be expecting more of the former. Whichever way one leans it is a vast, and for many a bewildering field. Readers and users will recognise the intense efforts which have been made to produce this book, appreciating the difficulties and being grateful for many helpful features and much helpful guidance.

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© Pye, Michael (Marburg / Kyoto, May 2009), Marburg Journal of Religion, ISSN 1612-2941