

REVIEWS

SHINNO Toshikazu 真野俊和, *Nihon yugyō shūkyōron* 日本遊行宗教論 [Essays on Japanese pilgrimage religion]. Nihon Rekishi Minzoku Sōsho 日本歴史民俗叢書 series, vol. 1. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1991. 14+303 pp. Index. ¥5,850. ISBN 4-642-07532-3.

This is the first volume in a new series aimed at encouraging the growing contacts and common ground between folklore studies (*minzokugaku* 民俗学) and history, and as such heralds yet another encouraging sign in the study of religion in Japan. It represents a good example of the ways in which Japanese ethnographic and folkloric perspectives have become increasingly enriched by historical awareness and empirical research, and in which historians have come to value what, for want of a better term, may be described as folkloric evidence such as stories, legends, customs, and examples of popular belief and practice, as relevant materials in the understanding and reconstruction of the past.

Shinno Toshikazu has, over the last decade and a half, produced numerous perceptive and well-researched academic articles as well as one more general introductory, but excellent, book (SHINNO 1980), all of which, from a sound historical basis, have examined such evidence as folktales and the travel records of ascetics and religious itinerants to produce valuable insights into the nature, development, and dynamics of pilgrimage and other forms of religious travel. Many of the chapters in this book (all of which have previously been published individually elsewhere) deal with these themes, and focus on the actions of holy men (*hijiri* 聖 or ヒジリ), the social organizations (e.g., the religious associations (*kō* 講), and customs (e.g., initiation practices) that traditionally underpinned much religious travel, and the processes of interaction between religious itinerants such as *kanjin hijiri* 勧進聖 and the peoples and villages they visited in their proselytizing and fund-raising journeys.

However, this volume is not intended to be just a collection of essays; it is presented as an examination of folk religion through a historical framework and as a coherent investigation of the role of itinerants and religiously inspired figures in Japanese historical and religious contexts. Besides the internal content of each chapter and the particular topic each seeks to shed light on, there are some wider purposes that reflect both the aims of the series and Shinno's own perspectives as a historian of folk religion. Shinno argues that traditional Japanese historical analyses of religion have been too oriented towards the studies of institutions, religious organizations, sects, and doctrines; he is also critical of the general historical perspective of looking only at the upper echelons of society and political power, and of dividing up and "explaining" eras as if each represented a separation from earlier ages (preface, pp. 2-5). In contrast, his concerns with popular, folk-oriented religion and his studies of the massive influence of individual religious preachers, ascetics, and wanderers in spreading and developing religious ideas, customs, and practices have led him to focus more on what he views as underlying continuities within Japanese religion and on the shifting dynamics within this continuity.

To illustrate these points we are taken on an excursus from the latter Heian through to the end of the Tokugawa era, in which Shinno's concerns are with the ascetic wanderers who visited villages to preach and went into the mountains to perform austerities, with villagers who visited popular shrines, temples, and pilgrimage sites, with the relationships between local settled communities and these outsider figures, and with the dynamics of proselytism and miracle-story telling through which the wandering ascetics developed and propagated religious cults and practices. In all of this he seeks also to draw out the role of legends and miracle stories as expressions of the religious understanding of their age and as formative elements in the construction of religious views and practices.

In various chapters the multiple roles and natures of the *hijiri* as the leading forces in the creation and development of pilgrimage routes (pp. 67–87), as workers of miracles and spells, as creators and propagators of cults centered on salvific figures such as Jizō (pp. 232–47), and as the dangerously dualistic figure or stranger, *ijin* 異人, who comes from the outside (pp. 251–66), are explored with detailed reference to historical sources.

Shinno's argument that such figures as the *hijiri* are at the root of Japanese religion is not, of course, new, though his exposition of their actions and influences at multiple levels (including a brief section on the contemporary role of shamanic-type figures [pp.279–94]) seeks to show that this is a continuing, and continually enriching, theme in Japanese religious history. Shinno argues throughout that the tensions that emerge from the role of the *hijiri*, who are simultaneously expositors of a universalizing creed (i.e., Buddhism) and mediators of local and folkloric needs, customs, practices, and beliefs, and who enact a mutually vital yet tensely dualistic mediating role as mountain ascetic and village preacher/religious fund-raiser, have been at the source of Japanese religious creativity and dynamism. Although he considers that there are two currents in Japanese Buddhist history, the one being State supported, orthodox, and hierarchical, the other the "Buddhism of forests and mountains" (*sanrin bukkyō* 山林仏教; p. 5), it is clear that he regards the latter as the only real source of creativity and dynamism. In this, too, Shinno regards the laity and the ordinary people of the villages as willing and religiously active contributors. While I agree in general terms with these views, and have much sympathy with the idea that being outside the normal structures of society and in some tense opposition to the prevailing orthodoxies is the major source of such religious power and creativity, I did, at the same time, sometimes wonder whether the point was stretched too far; one perhaps needs to be a little more circumspect, for, while the nature of religious orthodoxies such as, for example, the established and mainstream Buddhist sects, does tend towards stagnation, this does not mean that they are entirely barren and defunct.

In this book, then, Shinno adds his voice and efforts to the strong movement among many contemporary Japanese academics towards the development of the disciplined study of folk religion. In discussing his reasons for supporting the contemporary move towards the replacement of the term *minkan shinkō* 民間信仰 (folk belief) by *minzoku shūkyō* 民俗宗教 (folk religion), Shinno argues that this is not merely a terminological change but one that brings the study

of Japanese folk religion out of the limited parochial concerns of earlier ages and into the wider field of the study of religion in general (p. 269). The religious focus of Japanese folklore studies has, for too long, he considers, been on *minkan shinkō*, which roughly correlates to the study of (and indeed search for) the special and particular aspects and characteristics of Japanese folk behavior and customs. It is therefore exclusivist, designed ultimately to construct an image of uniqueness that sacralizes one particular (but no other) society. Shinno firmly condemns this exclusivist focus for being deficient in terms of historical perspective. Moreover, an ideology or academic discipline founded in the idea of a shared heritage located in the past (and indeed, as Shinno firmly points out, in institutions such as the *ie* 家 and the “traditional” village that have been irrevocably altered, if not marginalized, by numerous contemporary processes) has no contemporary relevance or meaning; hence it cannot either answer, or be helpful in understanding, contemporary issues of change, such as the question of secularization. All it can do is postulate an idealized view of how things were. To Shinno, the concept and academic field of *minkan shinkō* is one that should have been dispensed with long ago, one that has only lingered on because of the legacy and influence of Yanagita Kunio (pp. 270–79).

If *minkan shinkō* is fatally flawed, unable to deal with change, and rooted in a particularly insular agenda, *minzoku shūkyō* implies something far more potentially universal; for Shinno it deals with the tensions that exist between ideologically and doctrinally constructed and preached/taught religions with universalizing preoccupations, and the commonly shared, customary beliefs and notions rooted within a specific place and cultural setting. Unlike *minkan shinkō*, with its implicit limitation to the study of Japanese folk religion only, and to a study of Japanese folk customs geared towards exclusivity, *minzoku shūkyō* relates to the field of relations and religious expression that may exist in any society and culture through the interaction of universalizing and local currents.

To Shinno, this creative, dynamic, and potentially changing area is where the heart of folk religion is found, and it is this area that he seeks to study. Here one can see the importance of the itinerant preacher/ascetic in Shinno’s framework of interpretation: the *hijiri*, who has come into contact with the universalizing dimensions of Buddhist thought and practice, and who acts as a proselytizer and preacher of such ideas, is also the person who is in tune with indigenous folk beliefs that may conflict with those ideas and doctrines. The *hijiri*, of course, belongs irrevocably to neither the one nor the other, and it is in this interface and creative tension that he personifies, that new ways forward, new interpretations, and dynamism are formed.

Such developments, which are becoming increasingly widespread in the world of Japanese religious and folk studies, are much to be welcomed. Shinno acknowledges that his inspiration and guidance in these matters has come largely from Sakurai Tokutarō 桜井徳太郎, though one might point out that the intellectual currents that have contributed to the shift from *minkan shinkō* to *minzoku shūkyō* are rather wider and should at the very least incorporate mentions of Hori Ichirō 堀一郎, perhaps the first person to firmly advocate re-

placement of the first term by the second, and Miyake Hitoshi, whose recent theoretical work in this area has been reviewed in this journal (READER 1990).

Although, on the whole, this volume is stimulating, providing a mixture of well-thought-out and historically-based analysis with skillful use of source materials, there are some reservations I have to add, besides the points made already. A major one is in the very construction of the book: since all the essays in this volume were written separately, there is little in the way of real cohesion and flow within the book. Ultimately this is a series of essays somewhat casually connected rather than a unified book; one has a suspicion that, rather than taking its form from a coherently formulated and connected line of propositions, the book has received its framework from the judicious positioning of separate essays set in context by a preface and afterword. Some more exact editing could have been done to make the overall more cohesive, and the fact that it has not been done shows in a number of ways. Some of the same, basic introductory points that were necessary to bring up once, came up again in subsequent essays; this repetition could have been eradicated with better editing.

Despite these reservations, this book contains much to be commended. Even if the sum of its parts does not quite add up to a convincing whole, the contents of the individual essays provide much food for thought and material of value. Shinno's work (not just this volume but all the material I have read of his) is marked by good and conscientious scholarship, and by a broad mastery of sources. The evidence that is marshalled in this book is well documented in copious and often substantial footnotes; the volume also has a good index. Certainly those who are interested in the historical study of pilgrimage, religious itinerancy, and the forces that have underpinned and promoted these practices, will find the individual essays collected here (especially those in Part One, which is specifically devoted to the study of pilgrimage) valuable both for their profusion of data and for the arguments that are put forward. Those who have encountered some of Shinno's work through essays scattered across a wide variety of journals and edited volumes will be pleased to have many of them gathered together in one cover. We should be grateful to the publishers of this volume for these reasons, and also because of their endeavors and intentions to further advance the increasingly exciting interrelationship of folk and historical studies with this new series, several further volumes of which are scheduled.

REFERENCES

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