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A Spider's Web, Spanning the Ages: Entanglements of Space, Time, and Power in Japanese Spiritual Warfare¹

The paper explores constructions of “Japan” in “third wave” evangelical discourses of spiritual warfare as a lens for analyzing discursive constructions of place, history, and power. Third wave evangelicalism, which emerged in the United States in the 1980s, affirms rather than denies the reality of the spiritual traditions it encounters on the mission field but frames them as demonic in nature, leading to hybrid religiosities where local beliefs and practices are imperfectly assimilated into an evangelical worldview. The place of Japan in third wave discourse has thus far been underexamined. Focusing on the work of Japanese pastor Takimoto Jun (滝元順, 1951–), this article explores how third wave texts conceptualize the Japanese nation in relation to global networks of occult power. Analyzing Takimoto’s constructions of “Shinto” and “Freemasonry” as Japanese and American threats to the nation’s Christianization, respectively, the article demonstrates how third wave evangelicals negotiate national and transnational histories as a means of recontextualizing and refiguring ideas of national identity and destiny.

Keywords: Shinto – Evangelical Christianity – Freemasonry – Spiritual Warfare – US–Japan Relations – Takimoto Jun

One cold night in January, 1987, Takimoto Jun 滝元順 (1951–), a pastor at his father’s church in the city of Shinshiro 新城, Aichi Prefecture, felt the need to pray. On advice from Christians from Korea, he decided to try a late-night prayer, leaving his home and travelling to the Prefectural Citizen’s Forest. Alone, he journeyed up the mountain paths, the forest still, the wind whistling eerily as the dark pressed in. But Takimoto was determined. At around two in the morning the pastor arrived at the summit and,

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thinking on the issues bedeviling his church, decided to pray. “In the name of Jesus,” he proclaimed aloud, “demons, leave the church!” What happened next both shocked and terrified him. “The instant I made this declaration,” he relates, “I felt chills running down my spine. Whether it was real or a vision, I do not know, but a *tengu* 天狗 dressed as a *shugenja* 修験者² appeared before my eyes.”³ Terrified, Takimoto retreats down the mountain and returns home. The next day he relays his encounter to his peers, but none believe him. Undaunted, he delves into the history of the region, learning that the local mountains had once been sacred to *shugenja*, who would leap from peak to peak using mystical techniques gained through Shugendō 修験道. “Since that day,” he concludes didactically, “I learned the value of prayer and my spiritual thirst was deepened” (1996: 25).

In the narrative of his first book, *The Day the Lord Arose* (*Shu ga tachiagarareta hi* 主が立ち上がられた日), Takimoto’s encounter with the *tengu* marks the start of a journey into the realm of spiritual warfare (*reiteki tatakai* 霊的戦い),⁴ which would begin in earnest in 1992. “Spiritual warfare” here refers to a collection of practices through which a growing number of Christians across the globe are seeking to identify, locate, and combat the Devil and his demons (*akuryō* 悪霊), mainly through ritual actions like prayer, deliverance (exorcism) rituals, and “praise marches” (Jacobs 2009; Lewis 2013; Takimoto 1996, 2001; Wagner 2012). Spiritual warfare is not new in Christianity, and is common in Pentecostal or charismatic movements. The

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2. A practitioner of Shugendō, a form of institutional and ritual practice that developed in the mountains of Japan, combining Japanese folk beliefs with elements drawn from Korean mountain traditions, esoteric Buddhism, Daoism, and Onmyōdō 陰陽道. Also known as *yamabushi*, *shugenja* were an ubiquitous part of Japanese society until 1872, when the Japanese government issued a decree abolishing Shugendō. For a recent comprehensive discussion of Shugendō and its philosophies, see Grapard 2016.
 3. Links between *tengu* and Christian demons are not pioneered by Takimoto. As Whelan explains, Jesuit missionaries translated “devil” and “Satan” as “*tengu*” in the early Christian literature printed in Japan and in the sacred text of Japan’s “hidden Christians,” *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth*, Lucifer and the rebel angels explicitly become *tengu* after their Fall (1996: 42, 81). This theme is also found in the writings of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, most notably his 1918 ‘Lucifer’ (2006: 30).
 4. Many Japanese spiritual warfare terms are direct, even blunt, translations from English. Thus, at times they lack nuance found in the original—a lack that does not escape notice. Discussing “territorial spirits,” for example, Takimoto laments the translation of “territory” as *chiiki* 地域 with its geographical specificity as opposed to *ryōiki* 領域 with its more expansive sense of dominion (1996: 110).

specific movement which Takimoto is part of emerged in the US in the 1980s, popularized by the writings of evangelists like Peter Wagner, Cindy Jacobs, and George Otis. Sometimes identified as the “third wave” or “new apostolic reformation,” this movement is best known for its controversial practice of “spiritual mapping” (*reiteki chizu-sakusei* 霊の地図作成). This is a process by which spiritual warriors seek to “discern” the location of and reasons behind demonic control of a given space, from individual buildings to neighborhoods, cities, nations, even continents (Holvast 2009; McCloud 2013, 2015). Tools of discernment vary, often relying on both theological insights gained through revelation, prayer, or prophecy and anthropological insights gained by collating regional data—historical events, festivals, folklore, landmarks, art, architecture, and customs—much as Takimoto came to discern the influence of *shugendō* on Shinshiro.⁵ Once the identity of the “territorial spirit” (*chiiki o shihai-suru rei* 地域を支配する霊) or “principality” (*shuken* 主権; Eph. 6:12) has been reconnoitered, spiritual warriors use prayer to intercede, shifting the balance of spiritual forces and thereby (re)claiming territory for God’s Kingdom (Jacobs 2009; Takimoto 1996, 2006b; Wagner 1996).

Identifying mainly as non- or post-denominational Protestants, third wave evangelicals have come to form decentralized, transnational networks. Lacking organizational affiliation, such networks are linked by shared beliefs and practices, circulating methods, revelations, and battle reports via missionary work and media communication technologies (Christerson and Flory 2017; Holvast 2009; Jorgenson 2005). Framed by a territorializing demonology, these networks contribute to insider notions of spiritual warfare as “a global campaign operating in regional theatres of conflict” (Jorgensen 2005: 447). Regional variants have been analyzed in their African (Hackman 2015; Marshall 2016), American (Holvast 2009; McCloud 2015; O’Donnell 2017) and other Asian Pacific contexts (Jorgensen 2005; Ooi 2006). However, despite comprehensive work on Pentecostal, charismatic, and Holiness movements in Japan (Anderson 2014: 1534; Ikegami 1993, 2003, 2006; Mullins

5. Takimoto highlights his use of spiritual mapping prior to any formal encounter with third wave figures as evidence of divine inspiration. In this context, it is notable that his initiation into spiritual mapping came from researching *Shugendō*. As Grapard (2016) demonstrates, religious spatializing practices—what he terms “mandalization”—are core elements of *Shugendō*, facilitating the discursive construction of mountains and mountain ranges as three-dimensional spheres of ritualized meditation and as socially-figured texts through which spiritual meaning could be both consolidated and contested. Takimoto’s Christian mapping of Shinshiro’s mountains might thus be situated in a genealogy wherein various traditions have contended to determine the spiritual meaning of the Japanese landscape.

1998; Nagasawa 2000; Sonntag 2012), there has been little examination of third wave spiritual warfare in the Japanese context.⁶ This article rectifies this by examining third wave spiritual warfare writings about Japan.

Initially outlining the broad contours of third wave spiritual warfare and how Japan has been figured in its discourses, I focus on the works of Takimoto Jun as a case study. Serving on the executive committee of All Japan Revival Mission (AJRM, *Zen’Nihon Ribaibaru Missyon*, 全日本リバイバルミッション), led by Ariga Kiichi 有賀喜一 (1933–),⁷ Takimoto pioneered the introduction of third wave spiritual warfare to this group in the 1990s, influenced by figures like Wagner and Jacobs (1996: 73-4). His works are thus exemplary for examining the paradigm’s adoption in and adaption to the Japanese context. Drawing on his image of the demonic forces shaping Japanese history and lifeworlds as “spanning the ages like a spider’s web” (1996: 127), I explore how Takimoto complicates spiritual warfare narratives about Japan that fixate on the unique role of Shinto. Focusing on his integration of “Western esotericism” (*seiyō shinpishugi* 西欧神秘主義), specifically Freemasonry, I demonstrate how Takimoto uses spiritual warfare to navigate complex entanglements of space, time, and power, reframing the nation not as an isolated fortress but a juncture of threads as global as they are local, as secular as they are religious, and as American as they are Japanese.

A chained country: Mapping Japan in contemporary spiritual warfare

Japan has been a recurrent and underexamined presence within third wave spiritual warfare discourses from their early years. This often relates to the country’s position at the edges of the third wave missionary concept of the “10/40 Window,” which Wagner describes as “a piece of geography between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude, stretching from North Africa over to Japan and the Philippines” (1996: 28). As René Holvast

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6. The majority of research on Japanese spiritual warfare has been related to its growth in Okinawa, which Ikegami links to it being “less affected by Buddhism or Shinto” and the widespread propagation of Christianity in the 1945–52 US occupation (1993: 69; 1991). English-language scholarship addresses spiritual warfare mostly in passing and in historical contexts (Ikegami 2003: 138; Mullins 1998: 102; Sonntag 2012: 47-8), without detailed analysis of contemporary third wave individuals or frameworks.
 7. AJRM grew out of the All Japan Revival Koshien Mission (全日本リバイバル甲子園ミッション), which organized an evangelical rally in Koshien Stadium in Nishinomiya in 1993. This was itself a project of the Japan Revival Crusade (日本リバイバル・クルセード) founded in 1970 by Takimoto’s father, Takimoto Akira 滝元明 (1929–2015). As of April 2018, the organization has rebranded simply as “Revival Mission” (リバイバルミッション).

explains in his history of spiritual mapping in the United States and Argentina, due to possessing the lowest percentage of Christians per country this region was framed as “the last frontier of mission” and as the “realm of the last and ‘very powerful’ undefeated demons” in the decade preceding the turn of the millennium (2009: xiii). Prominent third wave figures, including Wagner and Jacobs, conducted speaking tours of Japan during this time, and many of their books were and continue to be translated into Japanese. Japan appears, to varying degrees of prominence, in several of these works, including Wagner’s 1990 *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 1996 *Spiritual Warfare Strategy*, and 1997 *Praying with Power*, Jacobs’ 1991 *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, and even Otis’ 1991 *Last of the Giants*—a work ostensibly about Islam. Several unaffiliated spiritual warriors have since added to these works, building more or less explicitly on their frameworks (Lewis 2013; Matsumoto 2009; Roth 2014; Webb 1999), but continuing to circulate around a set of problems. The most pressing and persistent of these is the country’s apparent resistance to evangelization, with only around one percent of the population being Christian (Lewis 2013: 64; Roth 2014: 82-3; Takimoto 2006b: 125; Wagner 2012: 90; Webb 1999: 10). This apparent resistance, especially when compared to South Korea, made Japan not only a critical site for third wave missionary strategy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but exemplary of how spiritual mapping understands place in theological and anthropological terms.

The third wave idea of territorial spirits serves as the foundation for a moral and metaphysical understanding of place—especially the “nation”—in which resistance to conversion is seen not only as a result of personal recalcitrance or cultural norms but of territorial demonic forces. Such forces embody and govern an (improper) “ontological bond between a people and a territory” (Fer 2015: 62) that spiritual warriors must correctly discern and ultimately displace. This nationalist ontology positions national characteristics as either divine gifts or products of demonic hegemonies. Several spiritual warriors frame Japan as a warrior nation, for example (Jacobs 2001; Low 2016: 155; Matsumoto 2009: 60). Takimoto claims that God gave Japan the gift of “battle” (*tatakai* 戦い), which Satan twisted to use Japan to invade other Asian nations as opposed to evangelizing them through missionary work (1996: 209-10). Contrasting this slightly, Keith Webb details how territorial spirits ingrained ideas of class consciousness and social hierarchy, group allegiance, national uniformity, and cultural uniqueness into the Japanese populace from *sakoku* 鎖国 (lit., “chained country,” referring to Japan’s policy of isolation from the 17th-19th centuries) onwards, imprisoning them in “strongholds” (*yōsai* 要塞) of powerlessness, conformity, and fear of incongruity and furnished them with potential gifts of perseverance, cooperation, and feelings of identification (1999: 30-47).

On initial reading, the framing of this nationalist ontology illustrates how the third wave’s privileging of national characteristics gives it potential synergy with *nihonjinron* 日本人論, the nationalist discourse on Japanese uniqueness and

homogeneity (Burgess 2010; Lie 2001). This is augmented by narratives of Japan's resistance to Christianization, evidenced, for example, by Wagner's uncritical adoption of claims about Japan's historical homogeneity as the prime reason for such resistance, discussed below (2015: 67-8). As I will explore, however, this national character is critically ascribed not to an essential cultural or ethnic core but rather to demonic influence; it is seen as ideological and inculcated, not innate. The concept of the "stronghold" is key here. In third wave cosmology, the ontological bond between nation and spirits is regulated by the presence and intensity of sin, facilitating demonic entry and entrenchment. Sins can be individual or corporate in nature and include "idolatry, bloodshed, immorality, and covenant breaking"—as a result, the "ground grieves because of past sins committed upon it, and demons haunt the territory where such horrors occurred" (McCloud 2015: 56-8; Hackman 2015). For third wave evangelicals, the lingering unrepentance or active reinforcement of sins leads to the formation of demonic "strongholds," fortified spaces where demons take up residence that can be geographic (regions where demons congregate and organize), ideological (worldviews contrary to Christianity), or personal (ingrained feelings, attitudes, behaviors) (Jacobs 2009: 96-7; Takimoto 1996: 146-8).⁸

"Idolatry" is an important stronghold, encapsulating all three types by fixing competing worldviews in specific locations/objects that are repeatedly venerated by individuals. Webb, who presents one of the more detailed spiritual mappings of Japan in *Overcoming Spiritual Barriers in Japan*, identifies the Tōshōgū Shrine in Nikko, where Tokugawa Ieyasu is enshrined as Tōshō Daigongen, as the "focal point" of the spirits ruling Japan (1999: 50). Takimoto, meanwhile, frames his city of Shinshiro as critical due to the annual festival held to commemorate the 1575 Battle of Nagashino, in which Tokugawa took part and was therefore key to his rise to power and (thus) his grandson's establishment of *sakoku* in 1639 (1996: 88). Wagner, who among the third wave founders has written most extensively on Japan, identifies Kyoto as the site from which the region's "powers of darkness" have been "directed and coordinated," framing it as "the seat of satan [sic], much like ancient Pergamos" (2012: 89; Rev. 2:13). Elsewhere, drawing on the description of Athens as a city uniquely "given over to idols"

8. While predating the third wave, older Japanese Pentecostal and charismatic organizations like the *Iesu no Mitama Kyōkai* イエス之御霊教会 and Japan Assemblies of God (*Nihon Assenburiizu obu Goddo Kyodan* 日本アッセンブリーズ・オブ・ゴッド教団) have adopted third wave techniques. Since the 1990s such groups increasingly identified "strongholds" such as famous temples and shrines, sacred mountains, and the Imperial Palace, and the need for spiritual repentance for historic crimes committed in World War II, as blocks to religious revival (Ikegami 2003: 138-140).

in Acts 17:16, Wagner elevates Kyoto even further: “Athens was the idol capital of the ancient world, possibly comparable to Kyoto, Japan, today,” he writes (1996: 198), implying the city may not simply be “idol capital” of Japan but of the modern world generally.

Wagner’s framing exemplifies the unique place Japan has in third wave demonology. However, the more specified locations of Webb and Takimoto point both to attempts at more detailed mappings of Japan’s spiritual warfare landscape and the position that Tokugawa, and the establishment of *sakoku*, have in them. This is often due to the persecution and expulsion of Christians at this time, the importance of which is highlighted by Lewis (2013: 229), Roth (2014: 82) and Matsumoto (2009: 234), and addressed in detail by Webb and Takimoto. For these authors, Christianity is framed as achieving relative success prior to the closing of the country. Christianity’s expulsion and the cultural shifts of the Edo period are thus viewed not simply as an act orchestrated by demonic forces as a means of retaining and consolidating their territorial power but one that achieved considerable success. Webb frames 1639–1853 as “function[ing] like a demonic kiln, hardening the soft clay of the society’s sins into rock-hard strongholds” (1999: 30), claiming that the Edo period’s reputation as “the ‘Great Peace’” is “ironic, because in spiritual terms this era represents one of the darkest periods of spiritual warfare not only in Japanese history, but also in world history” (18). Takimoto’s narrative echoes this, constructing *sakoku* as a “dark era,” but critically positions it as a means rather than an end. 1650–1850 is periodized by Takimoto as “the age of preparation for the dark empire” (*ankoku-teikoku junbi jidai* 暗黒帝国準備時代), marked not just by Christian persecution but by the formalization of Shinto and the systemization of ancestor worship. This “preparation” would reach fulfilment with the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education and Japan’s shift into a “divine nation” during the “era of the dark empire’s foundation” (*ankoku-teikokuka no jidai* 暗黒帝国化の時代) that only ends in 1945 (1996: 125).

As Takimoto’s framing of the Edo period suggests, for spiritual warriors like he and Webb the formalization of Shinto is as central to their narratives as Christianity’s expulsion. While Webb locates the hub of the territorial spirits ruling Japan in the Nikko Tōshōgū Shrine, for example, its influence as a stronghold is framed as dependent on the over one hundred Tōshōgū branch shrines established across the country for veneration by local *daimyō* (1999: 20). Takimoto constructs a similar narrative about his city of Shinshiro, claiming demons were given dominion over it due both to the “sin of murder” (*satsujin no tsumi* 殺人の罪) committed during the Battle of Nagashino and that of “idolatry” (*gūzōreihai no tsumi* 偶像礼拝の罪) facilitated by the network of shrines later built to placate the battle’s dead. It is this network, as well as the annual festival, that keeps the land in chains (1996: 89-90). The spirit Takimoto ultimately discerns as ruling his city is Susano’o-no-Mikoto, from the Edo-period Tominaga Shrine (133-4), yet in his map this shrine is less important as a seat of power than as a node in a much larger network spanning the nation. Japan’s

alleged bondage is here framed not only as the result of “undefeated demons” localized in prominent religious sites, but of how these sites are integrated into reinforcing networks, “spanning the ages like a spider’s web,” in which the Japanese continue to be bound (1996: 127). For Takimoto, each individual act of veneration at a local shrine lays another thread in a nation-wide web of demonic forces, joining branch shrines to higher-ranking ones like Tominaga Shrine, ultimately binding individuals into the imperial system (*tennōsei* 天皇制) or national authority (*kokka kenryoku* 国家権力), rendering them like insects incapable of escape (1996: 136-7, 142).

Although he does not reference them directly, Takimoto’s timeframe and his imagery recall earlier Christian missionaries’ use of the sociological concept of Japan as a “web society,” notably Dorothy Pape’s *Captives of the Mighty: Christ and the Japanese Enigma* (1959).⁹ Pape explains Japan’s resistance to Christianization by describing the “close and inescapable way in which every Japanese is connected horizontally and vertically with his fellow countrymen, with the Emperor at the centre of the web.” She then identifies Satan as the spider and Tokugawa as the one “who established the patterns of the web,” which people “in more modern times have continued to tighten or repair... rather than escape” (1959: 22). Pape—whom Webb cites directly (2010: 15, 49)—here prefigures later fixations of third wave evangelicals, reinforcing not only the centrality of Tokugawa, discussed above, but the critical discursive position often accorded to the emperor. In the texts of third wave founding figures like Wagner (1996, 2015), Otis (1991), and Jacobs (2001), the emperor is central, especially in narratives of the postwar era. For Wagner—whose narrative is mostly replicated by his peers—if Kyoto was the throne of Japan’s spiritual rulers then the emperor was the “chief visible figure employed by these dark angels” (2015: 68). This centering of the emperor then feeds into the critical role played by “the West,” particularly the United States. Wagner frames the 1945–52 US occupation as “the most serious setback for Japan’s territorial spirits,” highlighting Emperor Hirohito’s denial of his divinity, the formal separation of Shinto from politics, and General MacArthur’s call for Christian

9. The conception of Japan as a “web society” was popularized in journalist Frank Gibney’s 1953 *Five Gentlemen of Japan: The Portrait of a Nation’s Character*, and refers roughly to the ways Japan was thought of, in contrast to Western Christian individualism, as a society built “of reciprocal duties and obligations that permeates all levels of society” (Burke 1962: 104-5). This, in turn, drew on Ruth Benedict’s influential 1947 *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, which popularized essentialized ideas of Japanese hierarchy, homogeneity, and reciprocal social relations that became cornerstones of postwar *nihonjinron* (Lie 2001). Pape cites Benedict directly, alongside Gibney, as “most valuable for gaining an understanding of Japan” (1959: 9).

missionaries. Many responded, he explains, and "Christianity grew well for what are now known as the 'seven wonderful years'" (2015: 68).

In third wave spiritual warfare, the regional strength or weakness of demonic forces is often tied to that region's material and financial success (McAlister 2012; McCloud 2015). Hirohito's renunciation of divinity and Japan's opening to US evangelism are thus figured by spiritual warriors as the condition of possibility for Japan's postwar economic boom. Conversely, the collapse of the bubble economy and even the 3/11 disaster have been framed as the results of recalcitrance to Christianization as well as a retrenchment of demonized deities—particularly the sun goddess and imperial ancestor Amaterasu-Ōmikami, whose return to power is linked to Emperor Akihito's 1990 performance of the *daijōsai* 大嘗祭 (Jacobs 2001; Lee 2011; Wagner 2015: 69). As "the defining rite of modern state-sponsored Shinto," Akihito's performance of the ritual garnered considerable critique and commentary around both its legality and meaning (Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 169, 170-75). For spiritual warriors, however, the ritual signified the explicit re-opening of the nation to the demonic forces they saw as subjugated in 1945 (Lewis 2013: 54-55; Otis 1991: 92-3; Takimoto 1996: 142; Wagner 1996: 232). Indeed, Wagner provocatively described it as "climax[ing] in a sexual encounter between the new emperor and the sun-goddess" by which "the two ritually become one flesh and through its supreme leader the nation invites demonic control" (2015: 68-9).¹⁰

Wagner's understanding of the *daijōsai* here exemplifies how spiritual warfare enacts processes of epistemic violence. By demonizing Indigenous deities and cultural customs, spiritual warfare affirms their power while denying the validity of the worldviews they represent. Drawing on the work of Gayatri Spivak, I have argued elsewhere that this process, which is often embedded in the mechanisms of American empire, can be understood in terms of (post)colonial "worlding," through which colonized cultures and traditions become figured as "uninscribed earth" from which colonizers sovereignly shape their "world" (O'Donnell 2017: 245). Spiritual warfare—most evidently in its US incarnations—replicates this colonial process, casting

10. Although filtered through the third wave lens, Wagner's framing bears similarities to the controversial analysis of Orikuchi Shinobu, which was publicly refuted by the imperial family. As Breen and Teeuwen outline in their history of the *daijōsai* (2010: 168-198), in a 1928 essay Orikuchi analyzed the objects present at the ritual (bed, shroud, emperor) to link the *daijōsai* to the mythic founding of the imperial line. Orikuchi suggested that the emperor was to "lay on the bed, wrapped in the shroud waiting for the sun-goddess to descend from heaven... and then enter his body," adducing that the emperor was once seen as a "vessel' that might be entered by 'the imperial spirit' (*tenmō rei*)" (173).

Indigenous traditions as raw data that can only be properly interpreted by the evangelist. This is demonstrated acutely by the claim of “idolatry,” which here should not be understood as the worship of beings considered not real (as it commonly is) but ones considered *real but not true*. Deities like Susano’o-no-Mikoto or Amaterasu-Ōmikami are understood to metaphysically exist, however their native representations are stripped of all ontological and epistemological validity. As the decolonial critic Walter Mignolo writes on the colonization of the Americas, “extirpation of idolatry was... not a religious issue, but an epistemic one.” The “eradication of other forms of knowledge was the real project at stake” (2011: 165-6). Imposing American maps over Japanese territory, Wagner—and other spiritual warriors, if less starkly—epitomize this “real project,” rendering the spiritual and political terrain of Japan uninscribed earth that can be cultivated to reaffirm the contours of spiritual warfare’s world.

False dawn:

American power, Japanese Christianity, and the shadow of Freemasonry

Despite general attentiveness to transnational influences, such as in the Latin American context (Jacobs 2009; Wagner 1996), third wave demonologies of Japan privilege domestic forces—even if only to overwrite them. The reasons are likely multiple, relying on broader narratives of the homogeneity of Japanese society and a need to address its allegedly singular resistance to Christianization—what Pape called the “Japanese enigma.” Relating a conversation with Cho Yonggi of South Korea’s Yoido Full Gospel Church on the differences between Korea and Japan, for example, Wagner claims that the relative ease of evangelization in the former is due to “the serious damage done to traditional Korean culture through 36 years of Japanese occupation and subsequently through communism from the north.” In contrast, he presents Japan’s culture as “virtually uninterrupted for 3,000 years” (2015: 67-8). Webb’s framing of *sakoku* as the “demonic kiln” in which was forged the modern

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11. This is illustrated by the treatment of Buddhism. Wagner glosses Buddhism as a mere “facade” over a Shinto core (2015: 67). Webb discusses it briefly in relation to a belief that Buddhas and *kami* were merely manifestations of Amaterasu (1999: 19). Lewis offers a more detailed picture of how Shinto and Buddhism syncretize in the Japanese religious landscape but privileges Shinto, highlighting distinctions between Japanese and “orthodox” Buddhism (2014: 28, 268). While subordinating Buddhism to Shinto is more common, it is by no means the only framing employed. Matsumoto claims Shinto was originally monotheistic, possibly introduced by Jewish immigrants, and was later corrupted by human sinfulness and growing accommodations to Buddhism (2009: 162-4).

Japanese “web society” performs a similar function. The impact of transnational influences unsettle these narratives and are, perhaps accordingly, marginalized,¹¹ especially those that complicate the West’s liberatory and modernizing influence as origin of the “seven wonderful years” or of Japan’s industrial and technological success more broadly (Webb 1999: 45).

Takimoto’s approach to both Japanese imperial power and American influence is more nuanced than that of Wagner and even other, more historicizing, spiritual warriors like Webb—although crucially does not contradict them. While Wagner presumes the *daijōsai*’s impact due to the emperor’s place as “supreme leader of the nation,” and Takimoto concurs in its capacity to transform the nation, he situates this as a result of the spiritual networks emerging during the Edo period. It is in untangling these networks that he differentiates himself most from his non-Japanese peers. Rather than framing this network as natural or even as a (lingering) effect of *sakoku*, Takimoto constructs a genealogy that is both more ancient—stretching back to the “Animism” of the Jōmon period and “Shamanism” of the Yayoi¹²—and more global, introducing transnational threads to the spider’s web. One set are wider Asian forces, notably Buddhism, whose Indian provenance Takimoto emphasizes, tying it to Chinese Confucianism and Taoism (1996: 124) and to Hinduism and New Age spiritualities derived from Indian concepts (2006b: 66-9, 127-37, 2007: 172-179). The other, perhaps more striking, are the Western ideologies he sees as introduced in the Meiji period and reinforced or reintroduced after World War II. It is this second set I focus on here. This is not to downplay Takimoto’s discussion of wider Asian influences, but because his framing of Western ideologies enacts a series of discursive shifts in spiritual warfare

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12. Takimoto links Japan’s animistic roots to Satan’s capacity to twist an innate desire to see God’s presence in nature (2006b: 59-61). However, he connects its shamanistic strongholds specifically to the Ainu, positioning their conversion as critical to the salvation of not only Japan but all peoples of the Pacific Rim (2006b: 192). His framing of the Ainu replicates American spiritual warfare writings about Native Americans, positioning the “sins” permitting demonic rule as both the “idolatry” of capitalise as Indigenous traditions and the violence done to them by settlers but focusing primarily on their “idolatry” (Takimoto 2006b: 192-99; see also McCloud 2015: 57-8).
 13. The general omission of secularism’s influence on Japan is notable given widespread US perceptions of its secularity in the 1990s (see, for example, Reischauer and Jansen 1995: 203). This is possibly due to tendencies—echoing Benedict and *nihonjinron* authors (Lie 2001)—to stress distinctions between American and Japanese societies to account for the perceived failures of evangelism. The presence of coded-modern or Western elements is thus elided in favor of those coded as traditional or non-Western.

discourse about Japan. First, while American spiritual warriors often lament the influence of secularism on the West, they rarely extend this to non-Western countries.¹³ Second, Takimoto's framing complicates their narratives of the benevolent influence of the US on Japan. Third, by doing so he constructs a contrasting image of these narratives, using the third wave paradigm to perform a spiritual diagnosis of America itself.

In *The Day the Lord Arose*, Takimoto initially seems to echo the celebratory framings of the postwar era found in Wagner and others' works, periodizing it as the "age of dawn" (*akatsuki no jidai* 暁の時代) that follows the breaking of the *ankoku-teikoku*. Yet this dawn is marked and marred by the propagation of new, and distinctly Western, demonic strongholds: Materialism (*busshitsushugi* 物質主義), Humanism (*jindōshugi* 人道主義), and Rationalism (*gōrishugi* 合理主義) (1996: 125). In subsequent works, such as the 2006 *Regain the Glory of God!* (*Kami no eikō o torimodose!* 神の栄光を取りもどせ!) and 2007 *Spiritual Warfare and the Church's Problem-Solving Power* (*Reiteki tatakai to kyōkai no mondaikaiketsu-ryoku* 霊的戦いと教会の問題解決力), Takimoto expands on this diagnosis, linking these ideologies to "Western esotericism" (*seiyō shinpishugi*), specifically Freemasonry, as the occult force that opposes and suppresses the "mysterious affairs" (*shinpiteki na kotogara* 神秘的な事柄) of the Holy Spirit (2006b: 176).¹⁴ Takimoto sees this force as influencing not only Japanese society but the Japanese Church. It lies behind their "recoiling from" (*hanpatsu* 反発) charismatic modes of Christianity and the privileging of the material form of Churches (*kaidō kenchiku* 会堂建築, lit. "church architecture") over the people who are the true Church, and who represent the "wealth of the Holy Spirit" (*Seirei no tomi* 聖霊の富) (168).

Takimoto devotes much space to discussing the introduction of Freemasonry to Japan in the Meiji period, its later suppression, and postwar reintroduction through MacArthur's links to the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. However, "Freemasonry" for Takimoto does not refer so much to the material influence of members of Masonic Lodges as to the ideology he sees it as reflecting. In keeping with third wave

14. While demonization of Freemasonry is far from unique in third wave literature (McCloud 2015: 21, 34-7), Takimoto's specific framing of its occult influence in relation to secularization, technological progress, and American dominance is more common to the subset overlapping with US conspiracy culture (Horn 2013, 2017). Like Takimoto, these authors also situate the Western esoteric tradition as the occult engine driving modernity, figuring a secular veneer on a diabolic core. For spiritual warfare's overlap with conspiracy culture and antagonism to emerging technology, see O'Donnell 2016.

framings of territoriality, Takimoto articulates this claim through two discussions of space—one personal, the other national—reaching the same conclusion. Discussing a time when his congregation were seemingly suffering spiritual attacks tied to their attempts to alter the church's architecture, Takimoto reflects on the influence of a Japanese American missionary he calls "M." M came to Japan during the US occupation and converted Takimoto's parents, placing him at the root of Shinshiro Church and Takimoto's own conception. Reflecting on M's post-occupation life, Takimoto comes to suspect M of Masonic ties and therefore as the root of the Masonic "shadow" behind Shinshiro's malaise. He cannot prove such ties, but decides that if M was actually a Mason it is secondary to his adherence to its "Idea" or "foundational principle" (*rinen* 理念): "To be a Freemason," Takimoto concludes, "what is essential is not to be a member but to live in its Idea (*rinen*)" (2006b: 168, 164-9). Situating this Idea as concealed at both his own (church's) origin as well as the "seven wonderful years," Takimoto complicates the history of Japanese evangelicalism. Freemasonry becomes a "virus" attached to Christianity, to be discerned and separated from the "pure work of the Lord" (*Shu no junsui na waza* (主の純粹な業) (2006b: 165).

This impacts on the second, national context, relating to Takimoto's wider framing of US power and Japanese modernity. For Takimoto, the Idea of Freemasonry is that which has lain behind Western secularization since the Renaissance: a force that privileges Reason over Revelation and outer form over inner essence while also driving technoscientific progress through war. It is also a spirit he associates with America. Writing at the height of the Bush administration's Global War on Terror, Takimoto identifies "war" (*sensō* 戦争) as the core of American history and identity (2006b: 175), pointing to the US's past and present embroilment in conflict and (related) place at the front of technological development to present the Idea of Freemasonry as the true power behind the nation (2006b: 174-5, 2007: 195). While acknowledging the strong influence of Christianity on US culture, Takimoto discerns that the US's spiritual ruler is not the triune god of Christianity but the "Supreme Being" (*Shikō no Sonzai* 至高の存在) (2006b: 175, 2007: 195) of Freemasonry. He sees this as represented by the deism (*rishinron* 理神論) of many of the Founding Fathers, materialized in the Statue of Liberty and architecture of Washington, DC, and symbolized by the Eye of Providence (*sekai o mitoosu me* 世界を見通す目) on the dollar (2006b: 174; 2007: 188). Takimoto's spiritual mapping of America here alters its relation to Japan, rendering it not simply an unproblematic source of evangelical Christianity but of demonic ideologies secreted along with it (2006b: 169-74, 2007: 187-94). Beyond this, however, Takimoto frames Freemasonry's spirit—not just spirits tied to Shinto—as influencing Japan from the Meiji era onwards as the nation has sought to imitate, exceed, and partner with the West. "After the Meiji Restoration," he writes, "Japan's central task (*chūshin kadai* 中心課題) was Westernization," and, postwar, "keeping pace with America as its closest ally." Thus, "even if there are no direct ties to Freemasonry, it [Japan] can still be considered deeply under its sway (*eikyōka* 影響下)." After all, he

concludes, reiterating his earlier statement: “To be a Freemason, what is essential is not to be a member but to live in its Idea” (2006b: 175-6).

Takimoto’s framing of Freemasonry impacts third wave spiritual mapping discourses of Japan in key ways, rendering them both more global and more local. By aligning America with a Freemasonry that must be separated from the “pure work of the Lord,” his work can be placed among wider trends towards indigenizing Christianity in Japan, here supernaturalizing distinctions Japanese Christians draw between Christianity “itself” and the Western cultural and ideological trappings that often accompanied it (Mullins 1998, 2007). Yet Takimoto’s privileging of the forces of Westernization in later framings of Japan’s *ankoku-teikoku* also spiritualizes another historical dynamic: the development of modern Shinto itself. As scholars of the history of Shinto and the category “religion” (*shūkyō* 宗教) in Japan have shown, it was the introduction of Western concepts of the religion/secular divide that ultimately facilitated the consolidation of a Shinto based around Amaterasu and the imperial line (Josephson 2012; Zhong 2016). As Yijian Zhong (2016) demonstrates, faced with the heterogeneity of Japanese spiritualities, the challenges brought by competing Shinto shrines, and the threat of Christianity as “foreign religion” (*gaikyō* 外教), the imperial Amaterasu-centric form of Shinto reinvented itself by adopting the framework of secularity, permitting its elevation above competing forms of Shinto by labelling those as “private” and “religious” and itself as “public” and “political,” and (thereby) avoiding the potential threats of relativizing imperial power by placing it in competition with Christianity.

Although filtered through spiritual warfare’s supernaturalizing worldview, Takimoto’s leveraging of “Freemasonry” to redefine the interplay of Western and Japanese ideologies centers this dynamic. As such, he refocuses spiritual warfare discourses from a narrative of the independence of Shinto to one of the interdependence between (trans)national forces whose conjunctures shaped the identity of the modern Japanese nation. While Takimoto complexifies American mappings, however, this should not be viewed uncritically. He nuances, but does not ultimately challenge, their dynamics; his paradigm is imbricated in the same logics of epistemic violence. Discussing Pape’s framing of the “web society,” Webb advocates evangelizing the Japanese “in the context of the group” rather than by “seeking individuals and pulling them out of their relational network[s]” (1999: 49-50). Takimoto concurs with Webb, advocating co-opting the networks that the demons’ constructed to subjugate Japan as a means of rapid Christianization (1996: 142). Maintaining relational networks here is a matter of temporary pragmatism, not morality. For Takimoto as much as for his non-Japanese peers, cracking the “Japanese enigma” is a means to an end. His goal in excavating the influence of Freemasonry is not only to understand the complex spiritual history of Japan but to do so in order to overthrow and ultimately efface that history. Discerning the “ontological bond” between Japan and its people serves the aim of displacing it. Mapping the spider’s web—those relational networks that bind

individuals to the land, to history and culture, to each other—is done for the purpose of sundering those threads that can be sundered and subverting those that cannot.

Conclusion

In this article I have explored how third wave spiritual warfare discourses conceptualize and negotiate “Japan” as an object within their demonological frameworks. As discussed, much of this negotiation is oriented around attempts to untangle the “Japanese enigma”—the nation’s perceived singular resistance to Christianity. In the buildup to the millennium, as the third wave expanded its evangelization efforts through the 10/40 Window, meeting with success in East Asia and former Soviet territories (Jacobs 2009, Wagner 1996, 2015), the apparent intractability of Japan presented a question that demanded an answer. For figures like Wagner, the answer was found in appeals to the undisturbed nature of the Japanese religious landscape; to those like Webb, in identifying unique historical instances in which Christianity had first been violently excluded and the nation transfigured into a stronghold against its influence. However, unlike his American counterparts, for Takimoto Jun the intractability of the nation was not solely a result of national isolation but of complex, transnational entanglements that have woven and rewoven “the spider’s web” across the ages. Bringing his mapping of Japanese traditions into relation with external, notably Western, forces Takimoto complicates, consolidates, and contests spiritual mappings of the “Japanese enigma” found among his peers.

This remapping of Japan’s spiritual landscape brings with it a remapping of American influence on that landscape, linked to an indigenization of Christianity and a reevaluation of the role of American power in the early twenty-first century. This reevaluation is one that often differs from spiritual warfare discourses used in and about the US itself, which are often joined to ideologies of Manifest Destiny and projects of settler colonial and imperialist expansion (Holvast 2009). Takimoto at once replicates and rejects such discourses, imitating them by coding Japanese traditions as essentially demonic while also framing American paradigms themselves as the result of a diabolic force parasitizing the “pure work of the Lord.” In doing so, he discursively navigates the complex US inheritance of Japanese evangelicalism, evading simple impositions of American maps over Japanese territories in favor of charting complex, transnational assemblages of religious, political, and social forces, unstable entanglements and palimpsestic inscriptions of power and knowledge. Ultimately, he suggests that if Japan truly is singular in resisting evangelization this is not because its culture has been uniquely undisturbed for millennia or solidified by self-imposed

isolation, but due to a unique confluence of threads laid and re-laid over the nation's spiritual and political terrain—threads as global as they are local, as secular as they are religious, and as American as they are Japanese.

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