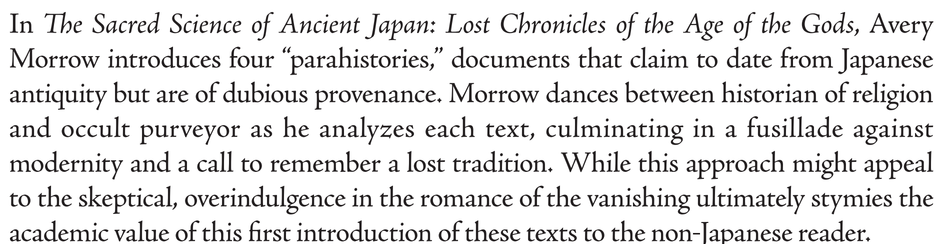
Book Reviews


Avery Morrow
The Sacred Science of Ancient Japan: Lost Chronicles of the Age of the Gods
Rochester, VT; Toronto, ON: Bear & Company, 2014. 214 pp.

Avery Morrow, translated by Miyazaki Sadayuki 宮崎貞行
Hotsuma, Katakamuna, Sendai kuji hongi: koshi koden de toku 'taiko Nihon no sei naru kagaku' ホツマ・カタカムナ・先代旧事本紀—古史古伝で解く「太古日本の聖なる科学」—
Tokyo: Hikarurando, 2019. 320 pp.

History vs. Romance in Japanese Antiquity

In *The Sacred Science of Ancient Japan: Lost Chronicles of the Age of the Gods*, Avery Morrow introduces four "parahistories," documents that claim to date from Japanese antiquity but are of dubious provenance. Morrow dances between historian of religion and occult purveyor as he analyzes each text, culminating in a fusillade against modernity and a call to remember a lost tradition. While this approach might appeal to the skeptical, overindulgence in the romance of the vanishing ultimately stymies the academic value of this first introduction of these texts to the non-Japanese reader.

The book contains five chapters: one briefly surveying Japanese antiquity, then one for each of the four texts Morrow examines in the study. The first chapter introduces several potential sources of information about the ancient Japanese archipelago, including archeology, Chinese historical chronicles, and the eighth-century texts *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, with the brunt of the summary devoted to mythology. There is also a brief discussion of divine-age scripts, inscription methods claimed to date from the age of the gods. The second chapter introduces the *Sendai kuji hongi* 先代旧事本紀, a text first attested in 906 but with many succeeding variations. Morrow's analysis focuses on the *Kujiki-72*, a variation which first appeared in the seventeenth century. The third chapter discusses the *Hotsuma* 秀真 transmission, one member of the "Oshite Corpus." This corpus uses a divine-age script, but none of its manuscripts predate the late eighteenth century. The fourth chapter moves to the modern era to discuss the *Takenouchi monjo* 竹内文書, released to the public in 1928 but purportedly predating the 712 *Kojiki*. Finally, Morrow introduces the *Katakamuna bunken* カタカムナ文献, discovered and transcribed by Narasaki Satsuki 楢崎皐月 shortly after Word War II.

With the exception of the *Sendai kuji hongi*, the texts Morrow discusses are largely unknown outside Japan, and the early modern version of *Sendai kuji hongi* he analyzes is far less familiar than its Heian-era predecessor. Combined with partial translations

and diagrams of the ingenuous inscription methods these texts employ, Morrow's work stands as a valuable reference and introduction to these texts, especially for the non-Japanese reader. Morrow's skepticism towards the academic establishment also permits his analysis to engage with these works on their own terms, rather than becoming trapped in arguments about authenticity that have circumscribed their treatment in the Japanese academy. The use of theorists René Guénon and Julius Evola lends his analysis a distinctly intellectual quality that makes the work stand out among Japanese-language occult literature on these texts.

Conversely, the consistent skirting of questions of textual provenance is concomitant with a general resistance to historicization, which Morrow criticizes in his conclusion as a "trendy critical paradigm" (159). In his view, it is the concept of parahistory that saves these texts from oblivion, from an academy obsessed with objective reality that writes off the unprovable and unverifiable as irrelevant. But the prospect that the historian of religion would value these texts precisely because they are products of their time, that is, because they demonstrate how thinkers in early modern and modern Japan conceived of high antiquity, falls by the wayside. Indeed, Morrow is often on the cusp of historicizing: "From the 1600s on some Japanese people have been engaged in a quest to understand their origins," he writes (26). But each time we glimpse historical specificity, Morrow moves on before it can come into focus. He would rather embrace the fog than dispel it. Or more precisely, his methodology demands that only from within the fog can the real meanings buried in parahistories be excavated.

Part of this approach may be derived from the historical position of these texts in the Japanese academy. Studies of these materials in Japanese find themselves pushing back, by necessity, against an academic establishment that has sidelined them because of their questionable provenances, an antagonism Morrow inherits. But there is little doubt that contemporary historians of religion, both in Japan and abroad, would value a study of the texts Morrow treats as historical artifacts. The historical reception of these works could also be instructive in grasping the discourse of textual authenticity in early modern and modern Japan.

A more robust theoretical framework would help the study significantly. Morrow builds his analysis around the ideas of the intriguing and controversial thinker Julius Evola. Morrow shares Evola's frustrations with modernity, and echoes Evola's solution: a return to tradition. But Morrow never explicitly identifies the causes of our alleged present malaise. Because the causes identified by Evola are antithetical to a free, open, and equal society, it is incumbent on Morrow to clarify his position. A chapter salvaging Evola's insights about the occult from his radical traditionalist and fascist ideology in order to develop a more nuanced idea of parahistory is desperately needed. An Evola renaissance among newly-ascendant far-right groups in Europe and North America makes this theoretical intervention all the more important, and its absence all the more conspicuous.

The Japanese translation is of excellent quality and makes numerous changes to make the text accessible to a Japanese reader. It adds considerable front matter, beginning with an appeal to nationalist sentiment with a note claiming that "While Japan is a modern state, it is the only country in which the wisdom of antiquity remains" (1). This, like the revised title, which now reads "Sacred Science of Ancient Japan *Explained by Ancient Transmissions* [emphasis added]," evinces a deeper embrace of parahistorical romance that almost certainly enhances the book's appeal to the casual Japanese reader interested in the occult. Morrow also adds a preface to the Japanese version, where he doubles-down on the claims of the English-language version conclusion. "It seems that somehow, we live in an age of disorder" (15), Morrow intones. Here, Morrow's vision for the project is voiced most clearly: "Japanese history has a unique message it should share with the world. It is hidden within a deep wisdom that crosses linguistic barriers" (16). While the contents of the book are largely unchanged in translation, this repackaging will appeal to a considerable Japanese readership interested, seemingly like Morrow himself, in a romance of antiquity. Where the English-language version strafed between academic study and occult science, the Japanese translation has veered towards the latter. It is a demonstration of the 21st-century global occult, but not a study of it.

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The Romance of the Academy: A Response to Matthieu Felt

I thank Mattheu Felt for the review and the editors of *Japanese Religions* for the opportunity to discuss my 2014 book *The Sacred Science of Ancient Japan* in an academic forum. One additional complaint I will make about my book is that it has already become outdated. At the time of publication "parahistories" were discussed in the Japanese academy only to debunk them, but there are now two publications that have begun to contemplate their content and properly contextualize them: Ozawa Minoru's edited volume *Kindai Nihon no gishi gensetsu* (2017) and Yoshida Yui's *Jindai moji no shisō* (2018). Both books effectively continue the discussion beyond my own work and I recommend that future writers employ these works.

That being said, I must also accept Felt's criticisms. At the time of publication, I considered Julius Evola as a writer on esotericism first and foremost and discarded those parts of his work which seemed irrelevant to me. I now see that his political views are neither irrelevant to myself, nor to society at large. *The Sacred Science of Ancient Japan* is already a fairly labyrinthine book, but it could have benefited from a responsible treatment of Evola's political views. This raises the larger question posed in the review: why make use of Evola at all, and why bother writing a book that Felt describes as a "romance" and "not a study"?

When I finished my undergraduate degree in 2010, I felt a sense of failure in the academic study of religion and did not desire to continue working in the field. I did not have in mind Donald Wiebe's famous "failure of nerve" (Wiebe 1984) but rather a frustration that academics, in the immortal words of Xunzi, "observe one corner of the Way and are unable to recognize it as such" (Hutton 2014:227). Writing my book and making the connections that I did thus served as my form of "quit lit," so I have to agree with Felt that I did not intend to compose a study. That being said, as I delved deeper into Guénon and Evola following my book's publication, I realized that there were scholars of esotericism who studied their milieu from a historical perspective, so perhaps it can be said that part of my mission in the book was to address questions even academics encounter.

Two esotericism researchers whom I respect deeply are Wouter Hanegraaff and Jeffrey Kripal. A decade ago, the two of them discussed the subject of exploring one's personal views through academic writing. Hanegraaff adheres to a ruleset which he calls "methodological agnosticism," neither confirming nor denying the truth value of esoteric statements in his published writing. Kripal has some different objectives for writing, which Hanegraaff (2008:262n5, 275) calls "religionism" and refers to as a more American approach. These differences aside, Hanegraaff does not build boundaries to keep Kripal out. The two of them get along well, and in early 2019 I saw them share a stage at a "secular" center for academic religious studies donated to Harvard University by a Theosophist group.

I do not think the term religionism encompasses all non-agnostic types of academic writing, but I agree with Hanegraaff that Kripal represents an American approach. As an American, I take pride in our ability to acknowledge our own insider traits. I prefer America's 1893 World Parliament of Religions to Eric Sharpe's European segregation of "clean" religious scholars from "entangled" research subjects (Masuzawa 2005:271). American academic projects have been flawed for other reasons, but they contribute to intellectual life in a unique and worthy way. Where the 20th century religionist projects of Campbell and Eliade embarrass us today for their simplifications and their structural whiteness, they still have the power to awaken cross-cultural sympathy in those who do not accept an atheistical starting point. (The Jordan Peterson fad of a few years ago speaks to the lasting power of such projects.) *Sacred Science* attempted to critically honor this. Guénon himself loved all the worlds of tradition but disdained Japan, while Evola lionized Japan mainly for its modern imperialism, and my intent was to demonstrate the appeals and flaws of both viewpoints, rather than to hypocritically pretend to be uninvolved and objective.

Does my book fall short of the intellectual mark? Perhaps. This is a question of boundary work which varies from researcher to researcher. I don't think a Donald Wiebe-style reform of religious studies will ever be possible, because many valuable sources straddle the line between objectivity and personal commitment, and while works of outsider history or sociology can inspire readers, works that go beyond those

boundaries may sometimes inspire us more. In an essay for *First Things*, Elizabeth Corey (2014) characterized the "crisis of the humanities" in eloquent terms: "Because [humanities research] so intimately concerns human beings, and the variability of our loves, such awakenings of love's intellectual desires will evade the grasp of rationalist reformers, remaining elusive and idiosyncratic."

A Guénonian scholar of the 20th century appealed to methodological anarchism as a way to dispense with the threat of academic heresy hunting (Smith 2000). Living in an age where impulsive doubt of medical and environmental science is having serious consequences, I think this suggestion has some flaws, just as "religionism" incorrectly essentializes a social construction. Therefore, I am not in agreement with Kripal's seeming desire for the Great Wall of Enlightenment thought to be torn down. I once saw somewhere a reference to André Droogers's "methodological ludism" and this is a better explanation of *Sacred Science* than religionism. In my first publication with a mainstream academic press (Morrow 2017), I adopted methodological ludism to evoke sympathy for and understanding of the experiences of a Japanese prophet. If I rewrote *Sacred Science* today, I would make the point of this game much clearer from the outset. However, I stand by the usefulness of this method.

I hope I have made a case that it is not necessarily bad for young scholars to write their own romances. It is a difficult thing to put aside the romance of the unsayable, an altogether superior pursuit which rarely becomes a career path, and accept the romance of the academy as a substitute. Indeed, as I settle into PhD work at the age of 32, I think nostalgically of the youthful energy that produced *The Sacred Science of Ancient Japan*, and I hope others are not dissuaded from imitating it.

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Takashi Miura
Agents of World Renewal: The Rise of Yonaoshi Gods in Japan
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019. 246 pp.

For a long time, Marxist historians or scholars working on the "history of the people" (*minshū-shi* 民衆史) have shown interest in the so-called *yonaoshi gami* 世直し神 ("gods acting for the renewal of the world") of the period from late Edo to early Meiji. For Marxist historians like Sasaki Junnosuke 佐々木潤之介 (1929–2004), who tended to search in the past for the traces of a proto-revolution in each popular revolt (*ikki* 一揆), impoverished city dwellers and peasants relied on these new gods as a means to fight the authorities and to provoke significant upheaval in the society; for *minshū-shi* scholars like Yasumaru Yoshio 安丸良夫 (1934–2016), who also had inherited a rather economicist vision of history, many commoners were convinced that, at the end of the Tokugawa period, the shogunate and the domains were no longer able to alleviate their suffering; liberation would come through the help of supernatural beings, that is, the *yonaoshi* gods.

In order to discuss the established theories on this phenomenon, Miura Takashi 三浦隆司 adopts an emic perspective by observing concretely how the *yonaoshi* gods were invoked in different contexts: he considers that former studies have relied too much on etic viewpoints and made use of the concept in a catch-all way. Indeed, such works often blurred the distinction between popular movements and overused the concept of "world renewal" without paying enough attention to the actual discourses of the commoners. By focusing on case studies ranging between the 1780s and the 1920s, he also breaks through the usual periodization chosen by his predecessors who generally ended their studies in the 1870s. Rather than lengthy discussions of theoretical issues, the author makes extensive use of a vast array of primary sources ignored in the past, like popular songs, private diaries, or satirical woodblock prints.

The author's main contribution to the field is to show that the revolutionary facet that scholars have tended to assign to *yonaoshi* movements should be considerably

questioned. He aptly demonstrates that the gods invoked by the protesters had mostly limited objectives and that their scope did not extend beyond the boundaries of a few villages or a region. These *yonaoshi gami* were essentially moral figures whose task was to help rectifying a temporary economic problem (high taxes, price increase for commodities, or usury rates by moneylenders), and therefore bring "communal revitalization." In other words, the anti-regime stance of the *yonaoshi* movements should not be overemphasized; their aim was economic, not political. Miura argues that the apparition of movements relying on new gods to achieve an upheaval of the society or sharing millenarian beliefs is not discernible before the 1880s.

The most important achievement of this study is to show the extreme diversity of these gods. A brief overview of the seven chapters will testify to this aspect. The first five chapters deal with movements intended mostly to obtain economic relief; the last two chapters present cases of gods who shared some (but not only) antiauthoritarian or millenarian features.

In the first chapter, the author focuses on the case of Sano Masakoto 佐野政言 (1757–1784), the head of a *Hatamoto* 旗本 family (a direct retainer of the Tokugawa) working as a guard in Edo castle who murdered the Junior Elder (*wakatoshiyori* 若年寄) Tanuma Okimoto 田沼意知 (1749–1784) in the third month of 1784. Dwellers of Edo swiftly deified Sano since they considered the Tanuma family to be corrupt and also because, after the incident, the price of rice suddenly dropped. The second chapter presents six uprisings that occurred between 1797 and 1868. During these events, the peasants relied on new gods in order to obtain the removal of specific economic measures by the authorities deemed to be harmful for the management of their farms. By paying close attention to the words used by the commoners, Miura proves that these *yonashi gami* could be incarnated by living or killed community leaders or even communities themselves. The third chapter is dedicated to two Tokugawa bureaucrats, Egawa Hidetatsu 江川英龍 (1801–1855) and Suzuki Chikara 鈴木主税 (1814–1856), who were deified by their constituents for providing economic relief. These examples make clear that world renewal movements should not be considered necessarily subversive or opposed to the rule of the warriors. The fourth chapter is devoted to the belief in late Edo Japan that earthquakes were provoked by a giant catfish (*namazu* 鯰) living below Japan; the author focuses on the woodblock prints produced in the aftermath of the major earthquake that struck Edo in 1855. These documents show that, despite the enormous damage caused by the quake (and therefore the giant catfish), many commoners venerated this god. Thanks to him, the wealthy had to employ a large working force in order to rebuild their properties and revive their economic activities. In other words, the god forced them to share their wealth. In the fifth chapter, Miura challenges established theories on the *Ee ja nai ka* ええじゃないか (1867–1868) phenomenon, a series of celebrations that happened after sacred talismans were thought to have fallen from the sky. He convincingly demonstrates that these festivities were not as anarchic or driven by anti-Tokugawa

resentments as was often written in previous works, but rather possessed internal structures and conventions that were in continuity with earlier folk celebrations.

Chapter 6 focuses on the Chichibu Incident of 1884 (*Chichibu jiken* 秩父事件), a large-scale uprising in Saitama prefecture partly monitored by the People's Right Movement (*Jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動); during the events, the rioters considered (or pretended to consider, for the professional revolutionaries) the leader of this political movement, Itagaki Taisuke 板垣退助 (1837–1919), as a god acting for the renewal of the world. For the author, this is the first time a *yonaoshi* god served as a means to overthrow the ruling government. The last chapter is dedicated to the millenarian beliefs of the new religion Ōmoto 大本 in the 1890s and the early 1900s. The revelations received by its leader, Deguchi Nao 出口なお (1837–1918), announced the impending renewal of the world, in its entirety, by the force of a divinity, Ushitora no Konjin 艮の金神.

All the chapters deserve praise. However, the reviewer would like to bring attention to the methodological approach used by the author in chapters 5 and 6. Concerning *Ee ja nai ka*, past studies, mostly driven by a Marxist agenda, stressed excessively on a somewhat schematic view that opposed the oppressed downtrodden to the ruling authorities. These scholars might have slightly overemphasized (or fantasized) the revolutionary potential of the frantic dancing and festivities held after the fall of sacred talismans. Miura, by considering the subject in its direct context (the harvests in 1867 were abundant) and in its "folkloric" context (the resemblance between *Ee ja nai ka* and former popular phenomena like *Ise odori* 伊勢踊り or *O-kage mairi* お蔭参り), argues these festivities were often supervised under the scrutiny of the local authorities, and that anti-Tokugawa stances were virtually unobservable.

As for the Chichibu Incident of 1884, the author tackles the issue by adopting an "on the ground" perspective; he demonstrates that the methods used by the rioters were not radically different from those in the past. He pays particular attention to the interrogation records in order to show that the rioters fought for different motives, even if they all relied on the same "god." Indeed, if a minority might have considered the movement as an opportunity to challenge the authorities, the majority struggled for economic relief. However, for all the participants, discourses and actions needed to be embedded in the *yonaoshi* framework to be persuasive.

On the whole, this study offers refreshing insights on a debate that (wrongly) seemed to be over. It reminds us of the necessity to consider, in their diversity, direct accounts of the actors involved, instead of developing hermetic theoretical frameworks beforehand and trying to find evidence that fits in.

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Richard M. Jaffe
Seeking Śākyamuni: South Asia in the Formation of Modern Japanese Buddhism
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 309 pp.

Seeking Śākyamuni is a wide-ranging culmination of Richard Jaffe's work of over a decade, and includes sections previously published as articles. It "focus[es] on the crucial but frequently overlooked role that South and, to a far lesser extent, Southeast Asia played in shaping how Japanese Buddhists thought about their tradition in the twentieth century" in order to explore the interactions, especially the "numerous flows of people, objects, texts, and scholarship," that "took place between the Japanese and South and Southeast Asian Buddhists that largely have gone unnoticed by scholars, particularly outside of Japan" (15-16). Much of the book examines the complex process by which the Japanese Buddhists explored and deployed the Buddhist traditions in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Tibet from the late nineteenth century until the height of the Fifteen Years' War in the 1940s in the context of British imperialism. Jaffe argues that the Japanese Buddhists' growing engagement with South and Southeast Asian Buddhism led to their revival and reinterpretation of Japanese practice and scholarship. In the process, they not only enhanced the South Asian and Western understanding of East Asian Buddhism from a Japanese Mahāyāna perspective but also used their knowledge to develop alliances with other Asian nations and with anti-European independent movements in line with Japanese nationalism and imperialism.

Organized thematically and chronologically, the book consists of five body chapters and an introduction and conclusion. The first two chapters trace a new historical development, the emergence of Japanese Buddhists' interest in South Asian Buddhism from the late Edo period to the 1920s. The last three chapters investigate the growing intensity of the Japanese's engagement with South Asia from the 1920s to the 1930s as illustrated by group tourism, the public display of South and Southeast Asian Buddhist material culture, and the translation of texts in collaboration with Ceylonese Buddhists.

Chapter 1 amplifies the author's research in "Seeking Śākyamuni" (2004), examining the pioneering Indian and Sri Lankan expeditions of Kitabatake Dōryū 北畠道龍, Shaku Kōzen 釈興然, and Shaku Sōen 釈宗演. Their stories reveal that little was known about the geographical details of Śākyamuni's life in the mid-Meiji period, even among high-ranking Buddhist clerics. The chapter provides a careful study of Kitabatake and Kōzen despite a rather cursory glance at Sōen's visit, arguing that the expeditions greatly impacted the Japanese understanding of South Asian and Japanese Buddhism. Kōzen, Sōen, and other Japanese even advocated for Śākyamuni to become

the central image for worship in order to overcome sectarianism and intra-sectarian politics in Japanese Buddhism.

Chapter 2 centers on the South Asian adventure of Kawaguchi Ekai 河口慧海, an Ōbaku 黄檗 monk-turned-layman, to argue that the Japanese exploits of South and Southeast Asia "pushed some Japanese Buddhists to reconceptualize their tradition in light of these new documents and understandings of Buddhist history" (113). Motivated by the Western academic insight that the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the Mahāyāna texts were more reliable than those translated by the Chinese, Kawaguchi began to explore South Asia. As the first recorded Japanese to reach Lhasa (in 1900), he stayed in Tibet and Nepal at the turn of the century when the two regions were relatively inaccessible to the Japanese. Altogether he spent nearly eighteen years in India, Tibet, and Nepal, with over a decade in India to study Tibetan and Indic languages and religious traditions while collecting Tibetan, Nepali, and Sanskrit Buddhist texts and ritual objects. Kawaguchi insisted that Mahāyāna was authentic and Mahāyāna sutras were the words of the Buddha, although, as Buddhism shifted from early Buddhism to "Hinayana," it incorporated "heterodox doctrines" (108). Upon returning to Japan in 1915, he taught Tibetan language, culture, and religion while cataloging, exhibiting, and preserving his collections from abroad. Despite his relative invisibility after his death, Kawaguchi contributed to the rise of Tibetan studies in Japan and was the first to launch Taishō-era Japan into "Tibet fever" (77).

Chapter 3, "Following the Cotton Road," explores the beginning of group travels and customary travel routes across India by examining Nippon Yūsen Kaisha's 日本郵船会社 (hereafter, NYK) second group trip (1926–1927). NYK, a major Japanese shipping firm founded in 1885, sponsored the first costly trip in 1923. This development was a result of Japan's growing reliance on Indian raw cotton since around 1877 (by 1902, 62% of all Japanese cotton imports were from India (119)), more accessible travel to South Asia, and the rapidly growing number of Japanese travelers by the end of the Taishō era. The "Cotton Road," through which Japan imported raw materials from India, both contributed to Japan's shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial one in the 1920s and accelerated Buddhism's global development. The members of the first two NYK trips were casual Buddhist tourists, unlike the early individuals who pursued long-term studies. The highlight of the chapter is the nine members of the second trip's interaction with overseas Japanese such as consular officials, military attachés, business representatives, and students across Asia. The short-term corporate travels launched a modern pilgrimage industry in Japanese Buddhism and standardized a route along the sites associated with Śākyamuni.

Chapter 4 traces the Japanese public's growing knowledge of South Asian Buddhism in the wake of WWI through the examples of Buddhist art and relics that Japanese travelers had been bringing home from South Asia since the mid-Meiji period, and through the subsequent changes to the Japanese Buddhist architecture of

the early twentieth century. It focuses on important examples of Buddhist structures that were designed by Itō Chūta 伊東忠太, one of the most influential architects of his day. Some of the buildings served as centers to cultivate pan-Asian Buddhist networks between Japan and other Asian countries. For example, in 1904, the gifting of Śākyamuni's relics from the Siamese court led to the creation of Kakuōzan Nissenji 覚王山日暹寺 (Nittaiji 日泰寺, Japan-Thai Temple, since 1939). The chapter touches on history, religion, and visual art and demonstrates that the material objects had made Japan's connection with other Asian Buddhist traditions visible and tangible to a larger audience than textual sources did. The interdisciplinary study is buttressed by Jaffe's careful analysis of Itō's writings. Itō designed some of his "modern" structures with Gandhāran Buddhist architecture style, expecting that the fusion of Greek and Indian influences would tie the Japanese architecture to "'classic' Greek and therefore, 'Western'… Indo-European, culture" (185), the supposed Indo-European roots of Japanese Buddhism. Despite Itō's intention to introduce a pan-Asian, trans-sectarian style to present Japanese Buddhism as a world and missionary religion, Jaffe deftly demonstrates that Itō's designs actually adopted European, American, and South Asian architectural features, some of which were unrelated to Buddhism. Nevertheless, the new style Buddhist architecture strengthened the Japanese feelings of pan-Asian Buddhist solidarity. Moreover, Itō's design of the supposed Gandhāran-style memorial stupa (*gokokutō* 護国塔) to "compete with state Shinto for the privilege of honoring the war dead" in the Russo-Japanese War illustrates that some of the architecture was intended to strengthen nationalism or state-centered ideology (182). The Japanese attempt to encompass European and broad Asian architectural and Buddhist traditions was thus consistent with their emphasis on traditional Japanese elements or milestone events in Japanese history. Accordingly, the pan-Asian architecture shows that nationalism was "rooted in the idea of a universal civilization," including Buddhism, for the purpose of Japan's imperial expansion (208).

Chapter 5 turns to the growing Japanese exchange with South Asian Buddhists, linking the Japanese desires to spread their version of Mahāyāna abroad and to develop a shared Buddhist culture in Asia. Drawing on Kimura Nichiki's 木村日紀 Indian exploits, it argues that "India and South Asia" became "a training ground for Japanese Buddhists and Buddhist scholars" in the beginning of the twentieth century (223). In 1918, Kimura began to lecture at Calcutta University, where several other Japanese also taught from a Japanese Mahāyāna perspective. Jaffe suggests that through teaching and writing, they influenced a new generation of Indian Buddhist scholars and introduced Japanese Buddhist scholarship to an Anglophone audience. Back in Japan in the early 1930s, these Japanese taught Indic languages and Indian Buddhism and philosophy at imperial and newly emerged sectarian universities in the 1920s. They not only advanced Japanese Buddhism's academic and doctrinal development but also facilitated the Japanese exchange with visitors from across Asia, especially India. In late 1934 or 1935 two Ceylonese novices, Kheminda Thera (dates unknown) and

Soma Thera (1898–1960), left Shanghai to Tokyo, where Kimura invited them to attend his lectures on Mahāyāna Buddhism and introduced them to Ehara Ryōzui 江原亮瑞. The two Ceylonese assisted Ehara in translating into English Nichiren's 日蓮 tracts and letters and the *Gedatsu dōron* 解脱道論 (*Vimuttimagga*), a text known only within the Sinitic linguistic world. By 1937, copies of the draft had been circulated across South Asia, and the publication of the translation has since 1961 become an authoritative resource on Vipassana-style meditation. The story illustrates that in the 1930s, as China was torn by its domestic conflicts and Japan's militarist expansion, Japan replaced it as the Buddhist metropole, supporting Buddhists from across Asia to study, translate, and spread Buddhist scholarship and texts. This argument might have been more powerful if the chapter had also considered that the 1930s were the high point of Japan's pre-WWII empire, when its territory stretched from the Pacific to the Asian continent. It was in this militarist and imperial context that Japanese Buddhism was spreading to non-Japanese audience, and the perception of Japanese Buddhism was changing in the Buddhist and the Anglophone worlds.

Chapter 6, "Deploying South Asian Buddhism," concludes that Japanese Buddhist modernity is the outcome of the Japanese's creative assimilation and reinterpretation of Western and South Asian Buddhist influences. Growing exchanges with South Asians inspired the Japanese to revive their Buddhism while spreading their Mahāyāna perspective to the West and South Asia. Although travel to India became challenging by 1941, personal connections and material objects sustained Japan's ties to South Asian Buddhism through the war, facilitating Japan's postwar reconnection with South Asia.

Seeking Śākyamuni is well-researched and carefully argued and provides essential insight to the revival and reinvigoration of Buddhism in Japan after the initial suppression of the Meiji period. Jaffe uses a wide range of Japanese-language archives and primary sources, but also draws insights from the pioneering work of several Japanese scholars on the Japanese Buddhists' engagement with Tibet and South and Southeast Asia, and from the work of English-language scholars on South Asia, which brings varied dimensions into this compelling narrative. If he had exclusively used his case studies of specific individuals to map the general trends and movements over a century and across a wide range of South and Southeast Asian countries, this book would have seemed overly ambitious and its claims too vague. Fortunately, he overcomes this potential weakness by giving equal attention to popular literature and less-known historical figures and drawing on important examples of Buddhist material culture to complement textual sources, which gives his book a methodological richness and intellectual breadth. The interdisciplinary approach enables him to identify the general religious, literary, and material expressions of the Japanese's exploration of South Asia and engagement with its Buddhism, and to illustrate the complex changes that marked modern Japan's distinct historical trajectories.

This book advances our understanding of modern Japanese Buddhism in important

ways. Unlike previous scholarship that emphasizes the Western impact on Japan's modernity and Buddhism, Jaffe chooses several well-documented people from the Shin, Zen, Nichiren, and Shingon sects to study their experiences in India, Sri Lanka, and to a lesser degree Tibet and Thailand, from their own perspectives. As he admits himself, he mainly "focus[es] on the Japanese side of these interactions" without studying the perspective of the Indian, Ceylonese, and Siamese sides of the exchanges (241). The book relies on the studies of South Asia by contemporary scholars in the West to broadly contextualize these Japanese's visits. By situating their visits in the context of the religious revivals in India and Sri Lanka, it foregrounds the creative agency of the Asian Buddhists. It demonstrates that the Japanese understanding of South Asia "became an important nexus for the formation of modern Japanese Buddhist practice and scholarship" (255). It delineates the Japanese's evolving reconceptualization of Mahāyāna, Buddhism in Asia, and pan-Asianism by investigating their activities back in Japan. The book illustrates the Japanese intellectual contribution to the Indian and Western understanding of Buddhism and "the circular, global nature of Buddhist-studies scholarship in the twentieth century" (235). The contribution also facilitated the revival of Japanese Buddhism and its spread to the West. However, we might also want to consider that individuals like D. T. Suzuki also misrepresented aspects of Japanese Buddhism in their work, whose long-term effects only began to be noticed in recent decades at American Zen centers and by scholars in the West. For example, studies have revealed that Suzuki's portrayal of Zen to Western audiences tends to be idealistic and mystical, downplaying his nationalistic agenda and Zen Buddhists' participation in Japan's militarist and imperial expansion until 1945.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this pathbreaking book clarifies how the Japanese "looked West through South Asia, rather than Europe and the United States," in order to develop a new form of Buddhism for modern Japan (113). It provides a balanced view that the Japanese modernized their Buddhism by creatively and selectively adopting both Western and South Asian scholarship and practices. The book enhances our understanding of Buddhist Japanese-South Asian relations and the interconnectedness of the academic and sectarian development of modern Japanese Buddhism with the West and South Asia. It not only opens up hitherto unknown worlds but also inspires further explorations. It will also serve as a solid reference book for graduate students and scholars in the fields of Japanese Buddhism and history, Buddhism in world history, religion and modernity, and Japanese-South Asian relations.

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James Mark Shields
Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan
New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. x + 404 pp.

This study by James Mark Shields, professor of comparative humanities and Asian thought at Bucknell University, considers the bridge between Buddhism and political activism and thus contributes to a growing body of literature on the complex relations of Buddhism and politics. While putting himself in dialogue with recent studies on modern Japanese Buddhism, Shields approaches the issue in yet a different way, by demonstrating how Buddhism could, in the context of modern Japan, have functioned as an alternative to Marxism, considering that they both share the argument of "liberation" from suffering. Focusing on the years between the mid-Meiji and early Shōwa periods, the author considers the political activism of modern Japanese Buddhists who attempted to overcome the tension between reality and the ideal world. Shields describes these ideas and experiments as "modernist and progressive forms of Buddhism" (245), and creates the category of "radical Buddhists" to describe groups or individuals who were "politically engaged" and "in conscious opposition to the hegemonic ideology (or ideologies) of any given period" (22).

An important contribution of *Against Harmony* is that it explores the philosophical implications of "failed" experiments in modern Japanese Buddhism—especially by focusing on the link between these and Marxism—to approach the dimension of political criticism (and its problems). Although one might argue about the efficacy of Shields' attempt to draw on experience from the modern Japanese period to solve the aporias of Marxism in the twenty-first century, *Against Harmony* does provide a perspective for understanding modern Japanese Buddhism from a specific political stance. By arguing for the rejection of the nationalism vs. anti-nationalism dichotomy, and contending that the boundaries between "conservatism," "liberalism," and "progressivism" were in fact not as well-established as one would think, it deepens some of the questions put forward by recent studies in Japanese (Ōtani 2012). Hence, by taking up a number of figures from different parts of the political spectrum, this book reveals how pluralistic and multifaceted Buddhist or Buddhist-inspired ideas were in the modern period. It also contributes to the field by exploring Buddhist or Buddhist-inspired ideas and experiments during the Taishō period, which, compared to the Meiji and Shōwa periods, has been relatively unexamined.

In the Introduction, the author carefully explains the meanings and implications of three terms used throughout the book — "modernism," "progressivism," and "radical" — claiming that these terms (as well as the overlaps among them) are of significance in understanding the political stances of the figures discussed in the book.

The Prelude offers an overview of the five decades from the late Meiji period to the beginning of the Pacific War. As described by the author, this period provides good examples of Buddhists' engagement in political changes during turbulent times (23).

In Chapter One, "The Many Faces of Buddhist Enlightenment," the author examines various figures considered to have played a role in "the Buddhist Enlightenment movement" (ca. 1886–1911), such as Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) and Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919). By envisioning Buddhism as a modern "religion" that embraced both science and philosophy, and by reimagining the relationship between Buddhism and the Japanese state, these figures presented "a fascinating and important bridge to the 'progressive' Buddhism of the succeeding generation" (34). Shields shows us how Theosophy was one of the many paths these individuals explored in envisaging a *modern* Buddhism, although, he argues, Theosophy's influence eventually declined and came to be replaced by Unitarianism.

Chapter Two, "Unification and Spiritual Activism: Murakami and Manshi," is devoted to two other prominent Buddhist figures of late Meiji Japan, Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–1929) and Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), as they exemplify the problems and possibilities of the progressive and radical Buddhist movements that emerged around that time. In Shields' words, "while neither followed a direct course to social activism, they nevertheless helped shape the discourse of virtually all forms of lay Buddhist modernism to follow" (64). Here, Shields presents Murakami as setting the stage for New Buddhism through his emphasis of critical rationality and moral progress. As a number of Murakami's students became members of the New Buddhist Fellowship (Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai 新仏教徒同志会), he contributed to its development despite a lack of an explicit commitment to political activism (73-74). In contrast to Murakami's approach, Kiyozawa's perspective was more "existential" and had even further impact on Buddhist ideas thereafter. The author argues that since Kiyozawa's *seishinshugi* 精神主義 (which he translates as "something like 'spiritual activism,'" p. 81) was aimed at liberation from egoism and this-worldly suffering, it was politically passive in general (84).

In Shields' perspective, the works of Murakami and Kiyozawa serve as "archetypes" for following Buddhist revival experiments, one of which is the theme of Chapter Three, "Warp and Woof: The New Buddhist Discovery of Society": the "New Buddhism movement" (*Shin Bukkyō undō* 新仏教運動). Regarding the relationship between Buddhism and social activities, Shields argues that, despite discovering the dimension of "society" (*shakai* 社会) — itself a neologism and new category of thought in this period — New Buddhists never fully embraced socialism. He explains that the primary figures of the movement, along with those of the Buddhist Enlightenment movement, had essentially a liberal mindset rather than a radical one. While they advocated for a "New Buddhism" which reconciled modern science and philosophy with religious teachings, they were unable to develop substantial criticism toward the capitalist system. However, in the sense that they

"provide[d] a counterexample of an arch-modernist, decidedly liberal and progressive movement dedicated to pushing religion into the public sphere," this very feature of the New Buddhists contributed, according to Shields, to the advancing of "secularization" in Japan (135).

Chapter Four, "Zen and the Art of Treason: Renegade Priests of Late Meiji," treats the development of "Buddhist socialism" in the late Meiji period by exploring the life and work of social activists such as Pan-Asianism thinker Tarui Tōkichi 樽井藤吉 (1850–1922), Shin Buddhist Takagi Kenmyō 高木顕明 (1864–1914) and the Sōtō Zen priest Uchiyama Gudō 内山愚童 (1874–1911). Exploring sources of inspiration for their socialist perspectives, Shields investigates the concrete historical context of their connecting between socialism and Buddhism. As he points out, "socialism" in the late Meiji period was generally considered as "foreign, individualistic, and materialistic" (162), which explains to some extent these figures' quest for "both a 'spiritual' and an 'indigenous' pedigree for" it (143).

In Chapter Five, "Anarcho-Buddhist Utopia: Taishō Tolstoyans," the author explores a new kind of progressive Buddhism especially focusing on the conceptions and experiments in communal and agrarian living inspired by Tolstoy: the *Muga-ai* 無我愛 (Selfless Love) movement started by Itō Shōshin 伊藤証信 (1876–1963), and the thought and activities of Kawakami Hajime 河上肇 (1879–1946), Eto Tekirei 江渡狄嶺 (1880–1944), and Miyazawa Kenji 宮沢賢治 (1896–1933). Shields argues that these utopian examples shared the same general feature by focusing on "self-discovery" and "self-awakening," as "religion" here came to be considered more in an "aesthetic" than a sociopolitical sense. Moreover, consistent resistance to materialism also played a significant role during this process, which "led to the search for an escape in art, literature, and utopian communities from the storms of politics and social conflict" (196).

Chapter Six, "Extremes Meet: Radical Buddhists of Early Shōwa" (203-243) treats the "radical Buddhists" of the early Shōwa period, focusing on the founder of the Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism (*Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei* 新興仏教青年同盟), Seno'o Girō 妹尾義郎 (1889–1961). Shields asserts that similar to the New Buddhists of the late Meiji period, Seno'o based his ideas on "a 'naturalistic' (or 'pantheistic') world view while appropriating traditional Buddhist concepts as a means to bridge the divide between matter and mind/spirit" (225). Despite advocating materialism and atheism, Seno'o considered Marxism insufficient, which led him to attempt to incorporate Buddhist ideas into socialism. The author further develops his argument by contrasting Seno'o with Sano Manabu 佐野学 (1892–1953), the Communist Party leader who was also coerced into *tenkō* 転向: an official renouncement of the left. Shields concludes that by asserting "a simultaneous 'spiritual' regeneration" along with a political revolution (240), Sano's attempt to merge Buddhism and Marxism, which led to affirmation of the "national essence" (*kokutai* 国体) ideology, reveals the limits of Buddhist Marxism / Marxist Buddhism.

The book is a very accessible introduction to modern Japanese Buddhism in English. However, I still encountered a few issues, mostly related to Shields' approach. First, his choice of research subjects: the author deals with a (sometimes considerable) number of different individuals in each chapter, assuming their influence on later generations. Thus, although through its chapters the book provides readers with the impression that modern Japanese Buddhists challenged the hegemonic ideology in chronological succession, focusing on specific cases might provide us with a different perspective. For instance, the author emphasizes the influence of Kiyozawa and his *seishinshugi* on later progressive and radical thinkers, considering him as the idealizer of an "existential" sense of Buddhism, which can be found, for instance, in the thought of Takagi Kenmyō and more generally in the Kyoto School. However, the type of evidence presented by Shields to assert this link between Kiyozawa and the likes of Takagi seems to be less historical — that is, pointing out direct references by the latter to the former — and more in terms of an abstract similarity between their arguments. In fact, scholarship has argued that Buddhist thinkers more directly influenced by Kiyozawa (or those who claimed to have him as spiritual mentor) developed precisely into hardcore supporters of the *Tennōsei*-state (that is, the state founded upon the *tennōsei* 天皇制 imperial system; see Kondō 2014). In turn, Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 (1871–1933), one of the central figures of the New Buddhism Movement who lived into the early Shōwa, also abandoned his more "progressive" position in favor of focusing on the topic of "personality" (*jinkaku* 人格), itself intrinsically connected to the task of establishing national morality. While the book does point out that so-called New Buddhists took more conservative stances as they aged, I believe more research is needed on questions regarding the development of mid to late Meiji "New Buddhist" ideas into the Taishō period, and the more direct influence they had on Buddhist (and Buddhist-inspired) arguments and movements thereafter.

Last, the reviewer could not help but wonder how the "progressive" genealogy provided by Shields should be considered in relation to recent studies on the role of Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870–1941), perhaps one of the most popular Buddhist speakers of late Meiji Japan (Ōmi 2014). By advocating the "experience" (*taiken* 体験) of faith, Chikazumi also developed an "existential" type of Buddhism, and yet, there is little about him in this book. Since Chikazumi was the key figure in the formation of an "existential" Buddhism, the examination of his thought seems to me necessary in order to explain the type of development Shields intends to depict, and could have made the book's argument stronger. Besides, although both Kiyozawa *and* Murakami are regarded as "archetypes" for the various kinds of "New Buddhism" that unfolded after them, the author pays little attention to the discussion of the influence of Murakami's thought. This is perhaps because, in the author's perspective, in contrast to the latter's historicism, it was the "existential" type of Buddhism that eventually became the mainstream. Yet, it would still be important to explore the connections

between Murakami's ideas and the New Buddhist movement, a topic which has only recently begun to receive attention (Klautau 2015).

Despite these and some other minor issues—the number of typos in Japanese terms is sometimes distracting—*Against Harmony* is a highly recommended book. By tracing the intellectual genealogy of "progressive" and "radical" Buddhists over nearly fifty years, it provides a multi-layered grasp of "Buddhist criticism," and thus contributes to the ongoing re-examination of modern Japanese Buddhism.

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Jeff Wilson and Tomoe Moriya (Volume editors)
Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume III: Comparative Religion
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016. 320 pp.

The *Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume III*, edited by Jeff Wilson and Tomoe Moriya 守屋友江, contains various texts culled from Suzuki Daisetsu's 鈴木大拙 writings dealing with the topic of "Comparative Religion." The editors have done an impressive job of choosing a fairly coherent array from Suzuki's voluminous and wide-ranging writings. Each section is prefaced by the editors' comments who, whilst admirers of Suzuki, do not fall into the facile fan-worship that informed so much of earlier Suzuki commentary. Rather than presenting Suzuki as the omniscient man of Zen, they allow for the fact that his positions and beliefs grew, changed, and evolved from his early years, most notably in his transition from being a tad hawkish to strongly pacifist in matters of international relations. Suzuki, of course, has fallen

foul in the eyes of many in recent years due to his blasé and cloying celebrations of samurai Zen at a time when East Asia was being cruelly put to sword by Japanese militarist expansionism. However, the inclusion in this volume of Suzuki's open letter (pp. 226-229) to Kennedy and Khrushchev reveal, if anything, that in matters of politics Suzuki was an innocent: happy to indulge in perfectly true but utterly useless bromides about how permanent peace can be won if we all just chill out and dig our inner one-ness. He was guilty always, if anything, of passive indifference rather than active collaboration.

The Volume is particularly valuable for its first-time translations of selections from Suzuki's earliest book *Shin shūkyō-ron* 新宗教論 ("A New Interpretation of Religion"). The work was originally written in tricky-to-read Meiji-era Japanese, making these translations most welcome. *Shin shūkyō-ron* provides Suzuki's precociously eloquent and coherent statement of his most basic views on religion: that religion does not need to fear the loss of superstitions and dogma in the age of science and reason, since religion, when based on inner *empirically* valid experiences, expresses truths that science and rationality can never attain. This is the insight that would inform Suzuki's easy-going religious eclecticism and drive him to engage with various non-Buddhist traditions, such as Swedenborgian occultism and Meister Eckhart mysticism, over the next few decades. However, parallel to this, *Shin shūkyō-ron* also contains Suzuki's misgivings about Christianity which he saw as being infused with dogmatism and erroneous assumptions about the nature of God and the universe. This was the other side of Suzuki, his grumpy sectarian entrenchment which often went beyond religious criticism to casual offhanded pub-talk level occidentalist sniping at the West as a whole. For example, consider this badly thought-out comment from "Selections from *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*": "The cross [Greek] and the swastika are closely related, probably derived from the same source. The swastika, however, is dynamic, whereas the cross symbolizes static symmetry" (193). Even when, after a quick intake of breath, one realizes that he means by "swastika" the traditional Buddhist *manji* 卍字, the point is still silly and pretentious.

However, there was a consistency to the wide but rigid boundaries of Suzuki's openness to other religions. Any religion that justified itself on the basis of natural inner experience won Suzuki's approval. Any religion that sought justification through external authority, such as traditional Christianity, was condemned. These criteria worked well to ensure that Suzuki was on the right side of history when he criticizes, in stark terms and when it was neither safe nor fashionable to do so, State Shinto, on the grounds that it was detached from inner experience. We should admire here Suzuki's brave and insightful comments, such as: "Psychologically, there is much in common between militarism and official Shintoism in their both placing too much emphasis upon system, hierarchy, and mechanical formalism. Where militarism prospers, Shinto may thrive well" (71).

Suzuki's various takes on other traditions and mystical writers, such as Swedenborg and Eckhart, are also offered in this volume. For Suzuki, Swedenborg's inability to see any real division between the heavenly and mundane realms made him a natural ally of Buddhism (54). All obvious distinctions between the two were dismissed as superficial. With admirable ecumenicalism, Suzuki comments: "Of course, one does not have to believe in all of Swedenborg's claims, but one also cannot say that there are not diamonds in the rough. Jewels, in whichever world, are jewels. It would be foolish to reject them simply because they come in a strange package" (54).

Whilst these other traditions may not be Buddhist, they each tap the same sources of religious consciousness over which no tradition can claim priority. For Suzuki, Buddhism here was one more localized version of the same universal spirituality that all religions have the potential to reveal. However, with Suzuki's 1917 essay "Zen, the Spiritual Heritage of the East," later incorporated into *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1934), we see the first of the wild and wondrous descriptions of Zen that would make Suzuki's (and Zen's) name. "Zen is the mountains," declares Suzuki (63). Zen is, in this account, not one more religion drinking from the common fountain of spiritual awakening, but is that fountain itself. It is no longer one more player on the religious field, but is the field itself. It is not one more peddler hustling in the great bazaar of creeds but is the landlord of the whole marketplace itself. But while Zen is the mountains, Zen is also, as Suzuki the scholar would tell us elsewhere, a particular religious tradition with its own institutions, texts, history, and, dare we say it, beliefs. Zen is the universal truth: Zen is a particular religion. There is a contradiction here. But Suzuki, rather than letting it crush his thinking, seemed to become more energized by it, as though being sanguine in the face of contradiction was the very challenge of Zen. Whether Suzuki's campaigns for Zen supremacy in the dialogue of religions succeeded or not, they did produce swashbuckling texts that always shake the reader. This volume does a masterful job of reassembling them for further deployment and enjoyment.

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Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader
Dynamism and the Ageing of a Japanese 'New' Religion: Transformations and the Founder
London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. x, 203 pp.

Japanese new religions have been foregrounded in the study of new religious movements (NRMs) since the publication of H. Neill McFarland's *The Rush Hour of the Gods* (1967). Several of these religions have a small but devoted following in the West; for example, Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 (Value Creation Society), Kōfuku-no-

Kagaku 幸福の科学 (Happy Science) and Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光 (Universal True Light). The media coverage of the Aum Shinrikyō オウム真理教 sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway in 1995, and the execution of its founder Asahara Shōkō 麻原彰晃 and twelve co-conspirators in 2018, in turn projected a negative image of paranoia, terror, and violent actions against innocent bystanders.

Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader, both scholars with expertise in Japanese new religions, have dealt substantially in the past with Aum Shinrikyō and other prominent new religions' relationships with the media. This time, with *Dynamism and the Ageing of a Japanese 'New' Religion: Transformations and the Founder*, they have produced a concise and thought-provoking account of a less well-known new religious group, Agonshū 阿含宗, which was founded by Kiriyama Seiyū 桐山靖雄 (1921–2016) in 1954. Yet Agonshū is not their sole focus, but rather a case study illustrative of currents identifiable in a number of movements in their early stages of development, such as "the role and nature of charisma as a driving force in the construction of new movements, (…) how movements deal with the physical loss of charismatic founders and (…) how a deceased founder is used in the continuing development of a movement" (1-2)

Reader's engagement with Agonshū dates to the mid-1980s and Baffelli's to the late 1990s, and the two have collaborated on research that mapped the ways in which particular Japanese NRMs developed and changed in response to other, rival groups and the differing types of media engagement that various groups attracted or sought. The death of Kiriyama on 29 August 2016, his funeral that 16 October, and the developments that followed the departure of the charismatic leader sparked the present study.

Chapter 1, "Situating Agonshū: The Concept of 'New Religions' in Modern Japan," interrogates the idea of 'new' and 'new new' religions in Japan, noting the lack of precision in the employment of these terms and the artificial division between some groups that are regarded as new and others that are deemed continuations of older traditions, and discusses factors such as the roles of traditional religions, state actions, and the relationship that Japanese NRMs have with science. Chapter 2, "The Story of a Religious Founder: Kiriyama Seiyū, Turmoil, Charisma and Experience," ranges across charismatic leadership, questions of authority, the place of entrepreneurship and the development of hagiography in the life of Agonshū's leader. Kiriyama's life is shaped by traditional motifs like ill health, suicidal depression, the transition from seeker to leader, assumption of a salvific role, miraculous powers, and identification with Buddhism. Kiriyama's performance of charisma involved the embrace of 'science', commercial success, and the development of "an international profile" (66).
Chapter 3, "Teaching as Practice: Ritual, Benefits and the Cost of Devotion," looks at Agonshū's founder-centric doctrines and ritual behaviours, which emphasise morality, purpose in life, hope for the future, and particular applicability to Japanese religious world views, such as this-worldly realization and the liberation of unhappy spirits

of the dead. Reader and Baffelli discuss the hierarchy of ranks in the religion, and practices such as sutra recitation, meditation, and almsgiving. The ritual calendar is described, with an emphasis on the Hoshi Matsuri 星祭 (Star Festival), a festival common to other esoteric Buddhist groups, although Agonshū's version is particular, in that it emphasizes Japanese identity and "Japan as the spiritual centre" (96).

Chapter 4, "From the World to Japan: The Nationalism of an Aging Movement," covers the rapid growth of Agonshū in the 1980s and early 1990s, and difficulties that emerged for Japan later in the 1990s: the earthquake that befell Kobe, a collapsing economy, and the impact of the Aum subway attacks slowed the growth of various groups, especially Agonshū and Kōfuku-no-Kagaku because of their employment of millennial prophecies and end-of-times themes. Claims of membership numbers in 2016 are deemed exaggerated, the membership is aging, and Agonshū's late adoption of the internet has also had a negative impact on its image and appeal. Some interesting changes of emphasis since the 1990s are the adoption of Shinto themes, notably the development of a relationship with the controversial Yasukuni Shrine and the cult of the dead who perished in World War II. This nationalistic tone has become stronger as the religion aged. Yet, despite its universalist Buddhist rhetoric, progressive attitudes to gender equality, and growing nationalism, the authors argue that Agonshū is not particularly politically active.

Chapter 5, "Transcending Death: The Birth and Spiritual Messages of the Second Buddha," tackles the issue of succession in Agonshū. The authors, based on their fieldwork observations, dispute the claim that Kiriyama was fully active as leader till his death, arguing that in "later years he appeared to be more of a presiding spirit than an active performer" (127). There was no designated successor, and the group's main focus of worship after the death of the founder has been the Buddha, Shakyamuni. The administrative head of Agonshū after Kiriyama's funeral at the temple in Yamashina is Fukada Seia 深田靖阿, a priest in his eighties. Kiriyama is believed to communicate with senior Agonshū members, and miracles are associated with him. Members are encouraged to worship him and to understand that he is "a living presence in this world" (136). The founder's relics were enshrined, and he was elevated above the Buddha as a "world saviour" (143).

Chapter 6, "Concluding Comments: Founder Worship and the Problem of the 'New'," comments on the rapidly changing life story of the young Kiriyama, which gave way to a more stable status quo as he aged, and the personalized version of founder worship engaged in by Agonshū. The ways in which this religion fits a pattern or template familiar from the study of other Japanese NRMs is canvassed, and the extent to which the new and the fringe might be regarded as mainstream in the twenty-first century discussed.

The future of Agonshū is unknown, but the passing of the founder must be acknowledged as a major event in its history. This short monograph is clearly written, well-organised, deeply researched and does the authors great credit. It will be of

interest to all who study Japanese religions, but also to scholars and students of new religions in general. Its clarity and ease of comprehension means it will be of use to a range of readerships, from undergraduate students to professional academics. It is strongly recommended.

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