Introduction

Secularity and Post-Secularity in Japan: Japanese Scholars' Responses

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Abstract

Japanese universities are currently facing significant challenges that affect the study of religion in Japan in various ways. Against this backdrop, this special issue is a response from a group of Japanese scholars to the inaugural issue of this journal on “Religion and the Secular in the Japanese Context.” Contributors of this issue have chosen concrete, recent cases that appear to be “post-secular”—if based on the conventional (i.e., modern Western) concept of religion—and attempt to explicate the multifaceted dynamics of these cases through further analysis and broader contextualization. This Introduction clarifies their arguments by comparing them with debates on the same topic, in particular the contested border between religion and politics, given by representative Japanese scholars of religion during the 1980s and the 1990s.

Keywords

educational policy – normativity – secularization – post-secular – religion and politics

This special issue is developed from papers presented at the 21st World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) in Erfurt, Germany (2015). It is also special in that all of its contributors are Japanese. It is five years since the *Journal of Religion in Japan* was launched, but Japanese scholars have not participated in its production as actively as Western scholars have. Admitting the problem of demarcating “native” scholars from “Western” scholars, we expect that the journal will become a more lively discussion forum between Japanese and non-Japanese scholars. There remain high language barriers even in the 2010s. Both the editors and the contributors to this volume have taken up the challenge to cross these barriers by partic-

ipating in the IAHR's Quinquennial Congress (attended by over one hundred Japanese scholars). It is also worthy of note that all of the contributors are new faces to this journal. They are in their forties and fifties, belonging to a generation younger than Shimazono Susumu 島藺進, Inoue Nobutaka 井上順孝, Ishii Kenji 石井研士 and other senior Japanese scholars of religion who are familiar to international scholars of Japanese religions.

Accordingly, readers should expect some explanation at the outset about who the Japanese contributors are in light of contemporary Japanese scholarship. Let us start with the broad yet most recent academic context. We will then move on to the theme of this special issue, and clarify our purposes through comparing the contributors' approaches with those of the more senior Japanese scholars of religion.

6/8 MEXT Announcement and the Study of Religion in Japan

On 8 June 2015, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT; Monbu Kagaku Daijin 文部科学大臣) issued to all National University Corporations a notice which instructed them to reduce, or even terminate, the departments of the humanities, social sciences and teacher training. It asked them to take up "active steps to abolish organizations (i.e., humanities and social sciences departments at both undergraduate and graduate levels) or to convert them to serve areas that better meet society's needs."¹ Scholars, students, universities and academic societies represented by the Science Council of Japan (Nihon Gakujutsu Kaigi 日本学術会議) raised vehement objections to the notice. The media featured the notice and the reactions from the academia, and it amounted to a special volume of a long-standing, popular interdisciplinary journal *Gendai shisō* 現代思想 (Contemporary Thought), entitled *Daigaku no shūen* 大学の終焉, or "The End of Universities."

This story is neither new nor unique to Japan. The neoliberal capitalist system has been seriously affecting Japanese society, including academia, for many decades. Whether national or private, universities can no longer attract enough graduate students because young people know that they will not be able to become university professors. The situation is more serious

1 "A Review of the Organization and Operation of the National University Corporations and Other Higher Educational Institutions" (*Kokuritsu daigaku hōjintō no soshiki oyobi gyōmu zenpan no minaoshi ni tsuite* 国立大学法人等の組織及び業務全般の見直しについて), p. 6. http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/062/gijiroku/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2015/06/16/1358924_3_1.pdf (accessed 20 December 2015).

among “non-practical,” or non-vocational humanities and social sciences departments. While we were fighting our war against MEXT, we heard the news of the closure of the religion department at the University of Stirling in the United Kingdom. We also noticed sessions entitled “The Value of Religious Studies in the Age of Budget Cuts” and “Another Plan ‘A’: Religious Studies Education and Careers Beyond the Academy” in the program book of the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (2015).

How have such pressures on the humanities and social sciences been influencing the study of religion in Japan? It is not a new story, either, that universities and many academic disciplines contain two opposing drives: objective forces and practical forces. When scholars pursue objective, scientific goals alone, they eventually come to be overly detached from society, appearing practically useless. Some scholars then turn to meet society’s needs and often become activists. In the case of the study of religion, such a turn tends to involve a religionist agenda. As such, they meet with criticism from scholars who prioritize scientific neutrality. These critics argue that activist scholars are not only politically naïve (by committing themselves to particular ideologies or by serving the government’s interest at times) but also render their work indistinguishable from theology.

Among the senior scholars of religion in Japan who have just reached their retiring age (in other words, the baby-boomer or *dankai no sedai* 団塊の世代 generation of scholars), these two opposing forces are best represented by Inoue Nobutaka and Shimazono Susumu. These two scholars have been leading the study of religion in Japan, especially in the field of sociology of religion, since the 1980s. Born in the same year (1948), and both graduating from the Department of Religion at the University of Tokyo, they fostered a rivalry with each other, which has been driving the study of religion in Japan, beginning with the vital study of New Religious Movements. While Shimazono did not hesitate to show his personal sympathy toward particular religious people and groups, Inoue proclaimed that he had no religious commitments whatsoever. In the 2000s Shimazono came to be engaged in political-practical issues, joining the Expert Panel on Bioethics, Council for Science and Technology (Seimei Rinri Senmon Chōsa Iinkai 生命倫理専門調査委員会), appointed by the Cabinet Office, and publicly speaking against scientists who neglected to exchange various views on ethical matters. In 2005 he organized the 19th IAHHR World Congress in Tokyo (its first Congress after 9/11) and promoted the activist theme of “Religion: Conflict and Peace.” During the latter half of the 2000s, he worked intensively on State Shintō and published a controversial book, *Kokka shintō to nihonjin* 国家神道と日本人 (Shimazono 2010). In contrast, Inoue has refrained from working for governmental bodies, and usually does not bring

up the issue of State Shintō in his works on Shintō. These differences in normativity between the two scholars partly derive from the differences in their academic affiliation: Shimazono worked for a national university, the professors of which are often mobilized for public/national purposes, whereas Inoue has been working for a university (Kokugakuin University), which is not only private but also one of the two Shintō-affiliated universities. As this university can easily be seen as religiously or politically biased, Inoue may well have been more than usually cautious, trying to take a neutral position at any time. Nevertheless, it is also a matter of their different views of learning. Shimazono argues that academic endeavors should be oriented to the public good, rather than keeping a stance of pure neutrality. Contrariwise, Inoue believes that the task of scholars is to provide the public with bare knowledge or pure information, which should be as objective as possible. This contrast between two such different scholarly leaders has benefitted the academic circle of the study of religion in Japan; when one of them pushed the circle too far in one direction, the other has pulled it back.

However, the recent pressures faced by the humanities and social sciences—intensified by the accelerated corporatization of universities—have upset the balance of the two forces. Both Shimazono and Inoue have radicalized their respective approaches. Shimazono's activist nature seems to have fully developed in the aftermath of the Tōhoku disasters of March 2011. He headed the Japan Religion Coordinating Center for Disaster Relief (Shūkyōsha Saigai Shien Renrakukai 宗教者災害支援連絡会), which helped different religious organizations exchange practical information, so as to facilitate their disaster relief activities. He also began accusing scientists, the nuclear industry and the government of concealing the risk of nuclear power plants, almost daily on Twitter. Some Japanese sociologists of religion followed Shimazono, actively engaging in disaster relief activities in cooperation with religious individuals and organizations. They argue that scholars of religion should become *bansōsha* 伴走者 (an escort or a pacesetter for a long-distance runner) for religious people, instead of mere *bōkansha* 傍観者 (onlookers).² In other words, they insist that not only religious people but also scholars of religion should more actively be engaged in and contribute to contemporary society because “objective” studies are not in fact politically neutral but rather tacitly support the status quo.

2 “Scholars of Religion Now Also Conscious of Social Contributions” (Shūkyō gakusha mo shakai kōken o ishiki 宗教学者も社会貢献を意識), *Chūgai Nippō* 中外日報, 14 November 2013. <http://www.chugainippoh.co.jp/rensai/jiryu/131114-001.html> (accessed 12 June 2016).

On the other hand, Inoue has swiftly become the most ardent advocate of the cognitive science of religion (CSR) in Japan. CSR has been relatively unpopular in Japan, but Inoue argues that any study of religion that does not give serious consideration to the recent study results of CSR and related sciences is useless because it will be “unscientific.” At the same time, he initiated a nationwide qualification system for undergraduate/graduate students as “specialists in religious cultures” (*shūkyō bunkashi* 宗教文化士) in 2011. The aim of *shūkyō bunkashi* is to foster the study of religion in higher education in order to enhance the well-informed understanding of religions, which has potential for conflict resolution in both international affairs and domestic relationships with newcomers in Japan. It is also an attempt to make the study of religion take on the role of vocational education and let it survive among universities under the threat of budget cuts. Such an educational aim may be shared by many scholars of religion in other countries, but *shūkyō bunkashi* has become a rather unique system due to its qualifying exam in the style of a multiple-choice test (testing “facts” about religions in the world; e.g., which religion has which dietary restrictions). In the face of objections from other scholars, Inoue has insisted that only that style of exam can achieve the aim of gaining understanding of world religions because it is the most objective way to assess student proficiency (Fujiwara 2010).

The Theme of this Issue

While Shimazono and Inoue have been role models for the contributors to this special issue, both they and the guest editor are concerned that the middle ground remains left unoccupied, since these two leaders have rushed out in two opposite directions. What is missing is an in-depth analysis of what is happening in Japan with a critical reflection on the (so-called West-centric) concept of religion—as well as that of secularity, Japan, and so on. Shimazono and his fellow scholars believe that a focus on public religion or socially engaged religious groups in Japan enables such an analysis (Shimazono 2014). However, we view the situation as being more complex.

To take an example, some scholars belonging to the younger generation who are also members of new religious groups have become more self-critical of the decades-long relationships between the study of religion and New Religious Movements in Japan. According to them, the relationships have not at all been those between observers as onlookers and the observed. Rather, they have been reciprocal or mutually dependent/referential—being a part of what Giddens (1990) would call reflexivity. The bottom line is that new reli-

gious groups yearned for recognition from scholars of prestigious universities whereas postwar, liberal scholars tried to stand on the side of the socially oppressed and neglected. Consequently, when Yasumaru Yoshio 安丸良夫, Shimazono and others shed light on the role of ordinary people as active agents in modernization—which they recognized, above all, among new religious groups—leaders of these groups attempted to meet the expectations by emphasizing and furthering the elements of popular religion in their practices. Then Yasumaru, Shimazono and other scholars' understanding of the New Religious Movements in Japan became a well-grounded theory in the postwar study of Japanese religions.

Similar relationships can be found in the post-3/11 situation. Shimazono and similar-minded scholars revalorized the public role of religion in disaster relief activities, saying that the shallow view of religion centered on inner personal belief is a modern Western construct and should be replaced by a more rounded view of religion (Shimazono 2013). Religious groups, this time not only New Religious Movements but also traditional Buddhist sects, have been making sincere efforts to play practical roles in society so as to gain affirmation from such scholars as well as from the public. After all, religious groups are currently pressed to prove their social usefulness as much as universities are. However, this call for public religion (or public-serving religion) has gradually yet increasingly driven the above-mentioned younger members of religious groups to question their identities as people of faith, feeling that what they are mainly doing is no longer religious. Some wonder if they should, for once, detach themselves from their interdependent relationships with scholars of religion and revisit their original doctrines.³

It is true that scholars of religion cannot help affecting living religions to some degree, whether intentionally or not. Nevertheless, the contributors to this issue share the view that it is better for the author of an academic article to be aware of such a process of shaping actual religions as well as the concept of religion, rather than to encourage religious groups to take a particular agenda which they themselves think to be morally good. (What the contributors practice in other sectors of their lives, whether religious or non-religious, can be different and more engaged). At the same time, the contributors are also skeptical that cognitive science, with so little attention

3 Based on an interview with Fujimoto Takuya 藤本拓也, a member of Konkōkyō International Center (Konkōkyō Kokusai Sentā 金光教国際センター) conducted in December 2015. Fujimoto and the current president of the center have a M.A./Ph.D. degree in the study of religion.

to contextual varieties, will shed better light on the religiosity or secularity of current Japanese society.⁴

We have so far used this space to explicate how we are different from the well-known senior scholars, fearing that readers might assume we are merely repeating what they have done, especially when looking at the theme of this issue. We have set the theme as a response to the inaugural issue of this journal published in 2012. We have decided to challenge the question of whether Japanese people and society continue to be secularized or are experiencing religious resurgence. Several of us have been carrying out a joint research project titled “The Study of Religion in the Post-Secular Situation” (*Posuto sekuryā jōkyō ni okeru shūkyō kenkyū* ポストセキュラー状況における宗教研究).⁵ Japanese scholars have not been very involved in the international discussion on the “post-secular” since it began proliferating in other countries in the mid-2000s, though some of them have reported religious resurgence in the public sphere without using the term “post-secular.” Since Jürgen Habermas’s works on post-secularization began to be translated and published in Japan (initially in 2007, then again in 2014), the term has slowly caught the eye of some sociologists and political scientists as well as scholars of religion (see Habermas and Ratzinger 2007; Habermas 2014; and Habermas et al. 2014). Meanwhile, the term itself and the arguments for the “post-secular” have generated skepticism in Western academic circles (Beckford 2012; Furani 2015).

Noting the rise and fall of the discourse of the “post-secular,” the members of the collaborative research project decided not to try to catch the bus from behind but rather to articulate what is happening in Japan without easily resorting to terms such as “secularization” and “post-secular.” Their, and also our, goal is not to rehash the debate on the secularization thesis but to offer well-informed and context-conscious analyses of religious/social transformations in contemporary Japan. After all, how can we possibly argue whether Japanese society is becoming more sacred or more secular since the concept of religion has lost its self-evidency? Thus the contributors were given the following directions in writing their articles:

- 1) Choose a concrete, recent case which appears to be “post-secular,” based on the conventional (i.e., modern Western) concept of religion, with “the secular” as its “other.” Such cases include: those that show higher

4 Likewise, the multiple-choice test of *shūkyō bunkashi*, at least as is currently conducted, might fail to catch the reality of the people of faiths because it can stabilize stereotypes (Fujiwara 2010).

5 JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 26284011.

visibility of religions and spiritualities in the public sphere (so-called de-privatization, often but not necessarily as a result of intentional involvements of religious forces by certain political/economic/societal agents), or that show revitalized religious faiths/practices or spiritual yearnings, with or without changes from their precedents. Other examples might include: closer and publicly visible ties between politicians and particular religious groups; attempts to establish public memorial rituals for war/disaster victims; the nation's first chaplaincy program; revived religious/spiritual discourses and practices in disaster-stricken areas; subtle penetration of court sentences by religious ideas.

- 2) Explain what exactly, in the contributor's eyes, is taking place through describing the case with references to multiple contexts that are worthy of scholarly attention.

In addition to the members of the joint research project, two further contributors (Kimura Toshiaki and Kasai Kenta) were invited because we regarded their papers presented at the IAHR Congress as addressing similar interests. We also added Watanabe Masako's paper to give more variety to the selection of articles.

Having tackled the above task, the majority of the contributors have observed, in one way or another, that the recent enhanced presence of religion/spirituality (as groups, people, elements, and so on) in the public sphere—whether in its Habermasian sense as a civic forum or in its vaguer sense as the political sphere, the legal sphere, the media, local communities, and so on—do not directly signal religious revivals or spiritual awakenings. Rather, they have been caused by the increasing number of various agents who employ religion/spirituality to fulfill certain secular purposes. Here, “secular purposes” mean values such as human rights that can easily be approved, shared, or promoted by people who deem themselves non-religious or secular. There are arguments that such secular values have their roots in religious traditions, but we do not call them “religious” for that reason in this issue. Readers may sense cynicism in some articles but also optimism in others.

Nonetheless, such a shared observation has not led us straight to the conclusion that religion in Japan remains in decline and that the “secularization thesis” is thus still effective in Japan, as Ian Reader argued in the inaugural issue (Reader 2012). In that article, Reader critically reflected how Japanese scholars of religion in the early 1970s had been obsessed with the myth of Japanese “uniqueness” and had refused to apply secularization theory to their society, dismissing it as Western-centric. He then argues, “it is beneficial to look again at Japan, a country critical ... to discussions of secularisation theory because it

... is a vital test case by which to judge whether a Western-centric theory could be applicable beyond such borders" (Reader 2012: 32). While acknowledging the importance of Reader's critique, we still wonder why we must adhere to an either/or answer to secularization instead of constructing nuanced arguments based on multi-angled interpretations. A "rush hour away from the gods" (Reader 2012) seems to be a hasty conclusion to draw, considering Reader's strategic limitation of the term "religion" to the meanings of faith and adherence. It may also be worthwhile to ponder whether the Japanese scholars in the 1970s were blinded by the myth of Japanese uniqueness or were discussing what is now called "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt 2000) or "multifaceted modernity" (Dawson 2014). Moreover, one may ask, if religion is disappearing in Japan and every observation can be subsumed under the same, simple secularization thesis, why found a new journal solely dedicated to religions in Japan?

We have found the contributors' findings to be interesting and significant because the intentional utilization of religion implies a high degree of reflexivity on religions and the concept of religion in contemporary Japan. It is commonly said that religion has always been used for political purposes by rulers throughout history, and the Japanese policy/thought of *chingo kokka* 鎮護国家, or the employment of Buddhism as a power for national protection, represented by Emperor Shōmu's 聖武 reign (724–749) is one such example. However, what is happening is a characteristically modern phenomenon, yet one that can be distinguished from secularization in the sense of functional differentiation or individual disbelief.⁶ Before turning to each article to see the outcomes of the self-conscious/referential interaction between the secular and the religious, let us briefly re-examine how Japanese scholars of religion used

6 Among recent literature, works by the members of the "Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, Beyond Modernity" project at Leipzig University deserve particular attention here. Christoph Kleine examines the premodern Japanese and emic distinction between the religious and the secular, though he focuses on the binary code of *ōbō* 王法 (the ruler's law) and *buppō* 仏法 (the Buddha's law) found in the periods later than Shōmu's reign (Kleine 2013). In addition, a part of what we have mentioned as self-conscious/referential interaction between the secular and the religious in contemporary Japan is explained by Ugo Dessì as border negotiations between the religious and the political subsystems as reactions to globalization (Dessì 2013: 98–114). What needs to be further discussed is how to compare and contrast such premodern and modern negotiations and interactions on different social levels in a coherent manner. Moreover, to expand Kleine's critique of post-colonial polemics, it may be timely to ponder the political implications in present Japanese social contexts of the post-colonial discourses on the concept of religion (and the lack thereof in premodern Asia), which are rather welcomed by conservatives trying to obscure the religious quality of Shintō.

to discuss the issue of religion in politics in order to underscore in what ways our contributors are moving the discussion forward.

Abe-Arai's Debate on Politics and Religion in Contemporary Japan

Abe Yoshiya (1937–2003) and Arai Ken (b. 1935) are ten years older than Inoue and Shimazono, and, particularly during the 1980s and the 1990s, furiously debated how thoroughly politics should be separated from religion in Japan.⁷ Both were involved in the same court case, the Mino'o War Memorial Case (Mino'o-shi Chūkōnhi Soshō 箕面市忠魂碑訴訟), in the early 1980s. We consider their debate worthy of introduction here as an example of earlier studies by Japanese scholars of religion because it has not been referred in this journal so far.

Both Abe and Arai had a clear political agenda, which was not at all uncommon among the scholars of their generation. Abe sided with the Liberal Democratic Party; Arai was affiliated to the Japanese Communist Party. While Arai made every effort to keep the wall between politics and religion high, Abe exerted his power to flatten it—yet his logic was different from the one currently used by those who support the idea of public religion. Their thoughts (Abe 1990, Arai and Tanaka 2008, Kumano and Mino'o Chūkōnhi Ikensoshō Genkokudan Bengodan 2009) can be summarized as follows.

First, despite their obvious political commitments, both claimed that they were “objective scholars of religion.” Nonetheless, they both defined “religion” (*shūkyō* 宗教) and “secularity” (*sezoku* 世俗) in their own respective manners in order to actively participate in and influence political/legal public discussions as academic experts in religious matters. Nearly every time Arai argued that the case was against the constitutional separation of religion from politics, while Abe insisted the opposite. In so doing, they equally referred to the modern Western origin of the word “religion” and argued that their opponents (politicians, lawyers, plaintiffs, defendants and so on) have too narrow or biased understandings of religion. For example, Abe argued that a groundbreaking ceremony (*jichinsai* 地鎮祭), which appears to be a Shintō ceremony, is an example of secularized customs rather than something religious. People who attend it are only wishing for the safety of construction. Therefore, local authorities should be allowed to organize and sponsor the ceremony as they

7 Here I use a direct translation of *seikyō bunri* 政教分離 instead of the common American expression of “the separation of church and state.”

are not supporting the particular religion of Shintō. In contrast, Arai argued that a groundbreaking ceremony is religious because workers are unwilling to engage in construction (for fear of an accident due to supernatural causes) if the ceremony is not performed. The ceremony may look secular, but it actually expresses and conveys a distinctive religious worldview.

Second, Abe argued that a “civil religion” (in Bellah’s sense) is needed in Japan as much as it is needed in the United States in order to integrate the nation. On the other hand, Arai consistently tried to prevent state power from regulating people, whether as corporations or as individuals in any way or form. According to him, it is problematic that, since most Japanese people cannot recognize religious practices as religious, they generally fail to deter the state from associating itself with particular religions.

Since Abe and Arai argued against each other in the late-twentieth century, Japanese society has changed in many ways. Newcomers (immigrants and seasonal workers) began arriving in the mid-1990s, giving a new type of religious diversity to Japanese society. That is to say, some cities and communities now have a considerable number of Muslims or evangelical Christians who would find it hard to consent to the idea that a groundbreaking ceremony is not religious. It is also remarkable that, in political terms, Japanese society for the most part has leaned to the right, at least when being compared with how it was during the latter half of the twentieth century. At the same time, many people have lost interest in supporting particular political parties. Furthermore, it is reported that young people are exposed to rightist discourses on the Internet while they are also more inclined to volunteer for social activities than young people were in the late-twentieth century. Such social transformations suggest that the dynamics of identifying and treating religion have also changed. It is these dynamics that the contributors of this issue have tried to capture.

Compared with the Abe-Arai debate above, the contributors of this issue, as well as the recent proponents of public religion, have the following characteristics.

First, whereas Abe and Arai plunged in real politics by manipulating the dichotomy of religion and secularity by themselves, our contributors have chosen to critically analyze how the dichotomy is manipulated in the public discourses on religion and politics. Second, both Abe and proponents of public religion argue against the strict interpretation of the constitutional separation between state and religion, which was dominant during the latter half of the twentieth century. Yet, they are opposite in that Abe tried to camouflage the religiousness of public ceremonies while public religion proponents (who are politically diverse, some being communitarians, others conservatives) do not hesitate to highlight the word “religion.” Our contributors reveal that both dis-

courses appear in various contexts in present Japan. Third, the Abe-Arai debate makes us realize that, whether for or against José Casanova (1994), (international) contemporary scholars of religion have been influenced by his reformulation of secularization theories as well as his idea of de-privatization and, thereby, have a different understanding of the term “secularization” than the one held by the generation of Abe and Arai. That is, scholars now include the Shintō Directive and the abolishment of the State Shintō system in the significant stages of secularization.⁸ This usage of the term was entirely unfamiliar to the older generation of scholars, for whom the same period right after WWII indicated nothing but the “rush hour of the gods.”

Summary of Articles

The first three articles of this volume were originally presented at an IAHR panel entitled “Rethinking the History of Religions in Postwar Japan from a Post-Secular Perspective.” Date Kiyonobu’s article, “Religious Revival in the Political World in Contemporary Japan with Special Reference to Religious Groups and Political Parties,” historically and statistically analyzes the political engagements of Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 and Shintō with a focus on Kōmeitō 公明党 and the Shintō Political Association (Shintō Seiji Renmei 神道政治連盟). Although these two religio-political organizations appear rather conspicuous, according to Date, it would be misleading to interpret their conspicuity as a sign of revitalized religious influence upon the public sphere. He rather regards it as a side effect of “depoliticization,” by which he means, above all, Japanese people’s loss of interest in, or expectation of, party politics. After he submitted his paper to this volume, the media started to report quite sensationally on Nippon Kaigi 日本会議 (Japan Conference), another religio-political organization closely tied with LDP. Whereas Shimazono warns the public of Nippon Kaigi’s agenda for the recovery of State Shintō, Sugano Tamotsu, a freelance writer whose critical book on the organization has sold more than one hundred thousand copies during spring 2016, argues that its central drive is not so religious (Shimazono and Sugano 2016, Sugano 2016). Date’s arguments will also contribute to this on-going debate on Nippon Kaigi.

Nishimura Akira’s article, “Are the Public Commemorations in Contemporary Japan Post-secular?” discusses whether or not religious expressions found in public cemeteries as represented by Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery (Chi-

8 Mark Mullins’s article in the inaugural issue of this journal is one such example (Mullins 2012).

dorigafuchi Kokuritsu Senbotsusha Boen 千鳥ヶ淵国立戦没者墓苑) reflect the process of de-privatization. His careful and subtle arguments can be summarized as “religion has survived in public commemorations by newly taking a non-denominational (yet not State Shintō disguised as non-religious) form of expression.” Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery has played a role as a counter-example war memorial against the Yasukuni Shrine. Liberal and leftist proponents such as Arai have supported Chidorigafuchi, which they regard as secular, using arguments for the separation of state and religion. Nishimura draws our attention to its hitherto unnoticed religious aspects, though neither in order to argue that it violates secularism nor to praise the power of religion in the public sphere. He historically elucidates how government officials and other agents have created such non-denominational yet still religious forms of public commemorations by manipulating the categories of “religion” and “the secular,” and how legal trials centered on the Yasukuni Shrine have affected these forms of manipulation. Readers may feel inclined to compare such nondenominational religiosity with Bellah’s “civil religion,” yet the former is devoid of a nationalistically integrative function.

Sumika Masayoshi, author of “Behind the Mask of the Secular: Habermas’ Institutional Translation Proviso and Japanese Court Cases,” had given a thoroughgoing examination of secularization theories in his Japanese dissertation submitted in 2004. In this article he compares the Habermasian model of the translation of religious language to secular language in public discussions with the actual discursive processes of Japanese court cases on the separation of politics and religion. It is well known that Habermas characterizes contemporary Western societies as being post-secular, in which religious voices should be heard via translation to ensure a deliberative democracy. Sumika has found that in the Japanese court cases that involve debates on whether a certain practice or expression is religious or secular, religious language is often secularly translated. Nevertheless, Sumika argues, they are not examples of Habermasian translation but rather those of the state’s manipulation of the categories of religion and the secular. In other words, the state is trying to recover its controlling power over religion rather than showing hospitable attitudes to the presence of religion in the public sphere. He concludes that it is difficult to say whether the state’s use of the category of religion (and, concurrently, of religion) reflects secularization or de-privatization. More fundamentally, he doubts such a question is ever meaningful.

Takahashi’s and Horie’s articles are papers presented for another IAHR panel, “Transcending Borders in the Wake of Catastrophe: Religion and Spiritual Care after the 11 March 2011 Earthquake in Japan.” Takahashi Hara is one of the core organizing members of a program for training interfaith chaplains (*rinshō*

shūkyō shi 臨床宗教師; literally, clinical religious specialist) at Tōhoku University in 2012, designed to offer spiritual care to the sufferers of the Tōhoku disasters. His article, “Ghosts of Tsunami Dead and *kokoro no kea* in Japan’s Religious Landscape,” is a product of his field research on both victims with uncanny experiences and local Buddhist priests who face such victims as clients. Observing seriously engaged priests, Takahashi argues that it is an exaggeration to say that religion has revived in post-3/11 Tōhoku. Although the priests perform traditional religious rituals for their clients, they interpret their clients’ conditions in ways that are entirely secular and psychological. Takahashi argues that the same largely holds true with *rinshō shūkyō shi* because, while it can be called an example of public religion in Japan in the sense of the presence of traditional religions in the public sphere, the training program itself is based on the secular idea of *kokoro no kea* 心のケア (care for minds and souls) and psychological theories. The whole practice can more aptly be described as a struggle and balancing act that works in the interstices between the secular and the religious.

Horie Norichika’s article, “Continuing Bonds in the Tōhoku Disaster Area: Locating the Destinations of Spirits,” has been developed from his qualitative and quantitative research in two disaster-stricken cities in Tōhoku. The interviewees, the bereaved victims of City A and those of City B living in shelter houses at the time of interviews, showed quite different attitudes to the deceased. On the one hand, many of the former felt the natural presence of the deceased as familiar spirits (that is, spirits of their family members) and had positive experiences of inner conversations with them. On the other hand, the latter tended to give scary stories about unfamiliar spirits or ghosts. Horie argues that the difference derives, above all, from the different degrees of community integration as well as from the locational differences of temporary housing. City A was previously (that is, until the disaster) a more cohesive community and its temporary housing was closer to the seashore. According to Horie, these factors formed conditions for successful grief work.⁹ City B used to be less integrated, its temples and graveyards had been washed away by the tsunami, and its makeshift houses were remote from the seashore where the deceased had lost their lives. In contrast to Shimazono (2012), who regards disaster spiritual care provided by chaplains as the revived power of religion in the public sphere, Horie argues that such de-privatization does not necessarily entail religious resurgence because the chaplains carefully avoid being

9 “Continuing bonds” in the title is a term used in death and grief studies and means inner representations of the dead, experienced as spiritual relationships, which support the bereaved to cope with their lives.

regarded as religious. To put it another way, he does not see much difference between such disaster spiritual care and the kind of privately performed spiritual care that he has been investigating since the 1990s.

Kimura Toshiaki's article "Revival of Local Festivals and Religion after the Great East Japan Earthquake" also carefully probes the complex relations between the religious and the secular in post-3/11 Tōhoku, instead of giving a simple answer to the question of whether the society has become more or less religious. As part of the process of recovery there have been attempts to revive local festivals in affected areas, attracting both the media and NGOs. Kimura, himself being a victim as a faculty member of the department of religion of Tōhoku University, has been conducting a field research of local communities' endeavors to revive the Oshigori 御潮垢離 festival, a traditional ritual of a village shrine in Miyagi prefecture. Whereas some scholars who support engaged Buddhist and Shintō movements in Japan often emphasize the role of religious rituals in community restoration, referring to the integrative social function of religion (Inaba and Kurosaki 2013), Kimura closely analyzes how both the agents and the interpretations of the festival have changed in the process of reviving the Oshigori festival. The festival could not continue as a fishermen's cyclical ritual as it used to be and has become instead a prayer for the reconstruction of the tsunami-afflicted area. Folk performances given by local people during the festival came to be replaced by a *kagura* 神楽 dance, an orthodox Shintō practice performed by an invited *miko* 巫女, a supplementary priestess. Elderly parishioners accepted the changed festival, but what it evoked in them were their childhood memories of their village. Kimura also points out that the festival became less "polyphonic," by which he means that some of the agent groups no longer actively participate in organizing it due to the effects of the disastrous damage accompanying changes in local power and human relations.

Kasai Kenta's article, "Introducing Chaplaincy to Japanese Society: A Religious Practice in Public Space," is a report on how interfaith chaplain certification programs have been set up in Japan. It was in the 1970s when thanatology, or death and life studies (*shiseigaku* 死生学), came to the fore in Japan. Some scholars of religion soon took interest in it (for example, Yanagawa Kei'ichi 柳川啓一, the Department Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Tokyo, mentioned thanatology in his introductory course for undergraduate students in the early 1980s). Then in the 2000s more scholars of religion began to engage in death and life studies as an "applied" study of religion. When Tōhoku University (a national university) introduced the above-mentioned chaplaincy program in 2012 and Sophia University (a Jesuit private university) launched its own grief caregiver program in 2014, scholars of religion were involved from the beginning. Kasai, himself a supervisor of the Sophia program, delineates

the historical development of spiritual care practices and systems up to the establishment of the two university programs. Finally, he discusses whether such an expansion of chaplaincy, which he views as “American” in style, can be construed as a regained public recognition of the potentialities of religious organizations and personnel.

Watanabe Masako’s article, “New Religions, Depopulation, and the Aging Population: Konkōkyō and Risshō Kōseikai,” which originally appeared in *Shūmu jihō* 宗務時報 published by Bunkachō Shūmuka 文化庁宗務課 (the Religious Juridical Persons and Administration of Religious Affairs of the Agency for Cultural Affairs), illustrates how the problems of aging and depopulation have been affecting New Religious Movements in Japan. The effects are twofold: while the problems have resulted in a decrease in membership as well as in the difficulty of leadership succession, the members of both groups, Konkōkyō and Risshō Kōseikai, have been trying to deal with the challenges quite actively and their local churches and Dharma centers serve as safety nets for old members who otherwise would have to live isolated lives. The article offers further cases that are difficult to describe in terms of a simple decline of faith. Watanabe convincingly explains that the two groups have created their safety nets in quite different manners owing to the differences in their long-cherished organizing principles. The article may well be the very first study on the relationships between new religious movements and aging/depopulation in Japan, whereas there have been numerous discussions and researches on traditional Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines in depopulated districts. It would be most interesting to compare this article with Eileen Barker’s work on aging and New Religious Movements in the United Kingdom (Barker 2011).

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