

## The Adaptation of Max Weber's Theories of Religion in Japan

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MAX WEBER'S WORK AND THEORIES have had a great influence in Japan for an extended period of time, not only in the area of the sociology of religion in particular, but in Japanese social studies in general. After the defeat suffered by Japan in World War II, Japanese intellectuals had an acute awareness of the backwardness of their own country in many areas, and eagerly incorporated the theories of major Western thinkers such as Weber and Karl Marx. These two figures in particular—Weber and Marx—were studied as the two major theoretical pillars in rethinking the historical process of the development of Japanese capitalism. Uchida Yoshiaki was not exaggerating when he commented that there is no country where Weber's work has been read more widely, or where the theoretical study of his writings has been carried out with greater vigor, than in Japan (see UCHIDA 1990). In recent years, however, the study of Weber has declined and come to be viewed as somewhat outdated. Even in the field of the sociology of religion, Weber's theories are not being studied as vigorously as in the past. Instead, fieldwork, or empirical research, on contemporary New Religions seems all the rage among Japanese specialists in the sociology of religion. By observing the history of Weber's reception in Japan, we hope to clarify why the study of Weber has declined, and the significance of this trend. We thereby hope to clarify the state of

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the sociology of religion in Japan and to reflect on the characteristics of various stages of Weber's influence in recent history.

A study of the history of the adoption of Weber's work should also clarify various tendencies in the study of religion in Japan. Weber's work provided the major paradigm for religious studies in postwar Japan, and thus the attitude or approach taken by religious studies scholars is reflected in how they distinguish or distance their own position from that of Weber's. We could even say that the trends in the appraisal of Weber provide a litmus test for the identity of Japanese scholars of religion.

We would like to propose dividing the Japanese adoption of Weber's work into three stages (see KAGEYAMA 1976, pp. 139-60): the pre-World War II period; the period from the end of World War II through the 1960s; and the period from 1970 to the present. The stages are divided according to changes in the attitude toward Weber's work by Japanese scholars.

We should also explain our reasons for choosing the scholars that will be discussed below. Almost none of the scholars chosen are specialists in the study of Weber's work: most are religious studies scholars, and a few are historians. Ōtsuka Hisao is the only scholar discussed in this article who could be described as a Weber specialist. We have chosen to focus on the reception of Weber's work from the perspective of religious studies, and thus have chosen to look at the work and perspectives of specialists in this field.

#### *The First Period—Pre-World War II*

It goes without saying that the Japanese adaptation of Max Weber's work in the field of the sociology of religion is only one part of the wider acceptance and influence of his work in Japan. Scholars such as MARUYAMA Masao (1965) and UCHIDA Yoshiaki (1990) have provided a broader picture of Weber's influence, and we will rely on their conclusions to give a brief outline of his reception in Japan prior to World War II.

Economists were the first scholars to take up the study of Weber. During the 1920s Weber was studied mostly for his work on economic history and commercial history. Sociologists began to discuss Weber's ideas toward the end of the decade in conjunction with their interest in sociological methodology and concepts such as ideal types and *Wertfreiheit* (value freedom). These studies eventually formed the

main current of Weber studies in Japan. At the same time, scholars in economics began to drift away from Weber. It was also at this time that sociologists such as Shinmei Masamichi 新明正菴 and Odaka Kunio 尾高邦雄 worked to translate Weber's major works on methodology into Japanese. Soon after, in the mid-1930s, interest in Weber's work spread to many areas besides sociology, leading to a variety of new developments.

In addition to the Japanese research on Weber's economic theories and sociological methodology, there now appeared numerous studies that focused on his comparative East/West studies and his analyses of the relationship between ethics and economic processes. The Japanese studies on Weber's comparison of East and West mainly attempted to clarify social structures in the East from the standpoint of historical materialism, and in these studies Weber was usually referred to critically. The research of Hani Gorō 羽仁五郎 and Anzai Fumio 安西文夫 are most representative of this trend.

The other important body of research—that which focused on economic ethics and ethos theory—was largely inspired by Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Leading scholars in this area were Naitō Kanji 内藤完爾, Ōtsuka Hisao 大塚久雄, and Deguchi Yūzō 出口勇藏. We will take a closer look at the work of Ōtsuka Hisao in the next section, but here it should be pointed out that the interest in ethos theory contributed to the tendency to see Weber's theories on religion not as objects for analysis but as matters to be understood subjectively as models for self-improvement. This is an important point to understand when analyzing the reception of Weber's work after World War II. During the war this tendency to subjectify also served to justify the significance of the work of individual researchers. MARUYAMA (1965, p. 170) points out that the rise of this subjectification led to Weber's being respected as a religious seeker-type scholar.

How, then, within the framework of Weber's overall body of work, was his thought in the area of the sociology of religion received? The most important trends emerged after the mid-1930s, a time that Maruyama sees as marking the start of a new era. The concern with Weber's economic ethics and theories of Eastern society was directly related to interest in his ideas on the sociology of religion. In any case, economic ethics and ethos theory were the central themes developed by Ōtsuka, the leading Weberian in Japan in his day. *The Protestant Ethic* became the basis for the sociology of religion, and also became the central concern of Weberian research in general.

*The Second Period—Post–World War II through the 1960s*

Weber's theories were actively promoted immediately after World War II, building on the foundation laid by the many prewar Weberian studies. With the transformation in the postwar theoretical and social environment—symbolized by the collapse of German idealistic philosophy and *Bildung* (*kyōyōshugi* 教養主義) that formed the dominant ways of thinking in Japan before the war—Weber and Karl Marx became the most fervently and widely read theorists among intellectuals in Japan. However, the muddle in which the Marxists found themselves with the criticism and rejection of Stalinism led to a rapid decline in the prestige of Marxism. In its place, Weber's ideas as a new paradigm for social science theory climbed to new heights of popularity (see UCHIDA 1990, pp. 119–202). This was the golden age of Weber's influence in Japan.

ŌTSUKA HISAO 大塚久雄

Ōtsuka Hisao was a professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Tokyo who specialized in modern European economic history, especially that of England. It is impossible to understand the adaptation and influence of Weber in postwar Japan without discussing Ōtsuka's work. His influence has been vast, and it is not an exaggeration to say that his work, and that of his disciples, has defined the postwar direction of Weber's studies in Japan. Ōtsuka was more than a mere popularizer and interpreter of Weber's work—in Japan his name and that of Max Weber are virtually inseparable.

Ōtsuka is best known for his deep interest in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic*. Ōtsuka went so far as to say that Weber's theory of ascetical Protestantism as a deciding factor in the formation of the spirit of capitalism “has a basic correctness that is close to perfection” (1969, p. 145). This uncritical appraisal has almost the ring of a confession of faith, and reveals Ōtsuka's high regard for this work. The emphasis in Japan on *The Protestant Ethic* among Weber's vast body of writings is indicative of Ōtsuka's influence on the reception of Weber after the war. Indeed, the basic direction of postwar Weberian studies was largely set by Ōtsuka's emphasis on this work.

What, then, did Ōtsuka pick up from *The Protestant Ethic*, and what sort of interpretation of Weber did he offer? The central concept that Ōtsuka drew from this work is the ethos theory. According to Uchida, “the extraction of the theoretical and methodological meaning of ethos theory” by Ōtsuka was “one of his most important contributions

to the adaptation of Weber” in Japan, and “formed a creative contribution even from an international perspective” (UCHIDA 1990, p. 202). Let us, then, consider the significance of Ōtsuka’s emphasis on Weber’s ethos theory.

First, it should be pointed out that Ōtsuka’s wholehearted promotion of Weber’s ethos theory, occurring amidst the calls for democratization and modernization in postwar Japan, were instrumental in directing Weber studies toward the problem of what Ōtsuka called “human types” (*ningen ruikai* 人間類型), which provided one of the principle ideological supports for the modernization drive. Because of this, the problem of human types also became one of the central topics of concern even among discussions of Weber’s theories. In a short essay entitled “The Creation of Modern Human Types” (*Kindai-teki ningen ruikai no sōshutsu* 近代的人間類型の創出) published soon after the war (1946), Ōtsuka discussed how Weber’s ethos theory could be connected with a theory of human types that would support Japan’s modernization. Ōtsuka argues that the most important matter for “the reconstruction of Japanese democracy” is the creation of a “modern, democratic human type,” and that in order for the Japanese people to “forge” this type, it is necessary “to accurately and concretely comprehend the modern human type.” After introducing Weber’s characterization of the “modern Western/Occidental ethos” as an ethic of “internal dignity” and “the Asian ethos” as an ethos of “external dignity,” Ōtsuka added, “the human subjects—the modern masses—who create and sustain the democratic social order, must in turn be supported by an ethos that has a profound awareness of the individual’s inner values, and that respects human beings as human beings.” Thus ŌTSUKA emphasized the importance of creating a modern Western ethos for the reconstruction of postwar Japanese society (see 1969, p. 175)

One of the reasons that Ōtsuka maintained his position as the foremost authority and interpreter of Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic* was that he himself set a rather inflexible direction to how Weber’s thought was received in Japan. Ōtsuka wrote numerous reviews and interpretations of *The Protestant Ethic*, and one of his frequent themes was that Weber’s critics misunderstood or misread Weber’s work. He argued that criticisms of Weber were always off the mark and did nothing to damage the correctness of his theories. Such slashing away at Weber’s critics left Ōtsuka’s analysis as the only “correct” reading of Weber. This elevated Weber’s theories to the level of infallible truth that could not be readily understood by ordinary people, and charged

scholars with the task of an endless pursuit to “correctly understand” these theories. Of course this attitude did not leave room for a free discussion of Weber’s thought, and a critical transmission of Weber’s work could not be cultivated. Ōtsuka was adamant in teaching the “orthodox interpretation” of Weber’s work, and acted the role of the guardian of Weber against any and all criticism. The resulting tendency in Weber studies was to stress “correctness” in interpreting his work and to avoid “misreading” his theories. This tended to reduce Weberian studies to textual exegesis, and to block off any innovative hermeneutics.

What influence, then, did Ōtsuka’s use of Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic* as an implement for the creation of a modern human type have on the development of religious studies in Japan? Weber’s theory is that a certain religious ideal played a decisive role in the formation of modern society. Implied by this way of thinking is that one particular religion has the honor of playing this decisive role, and that all other religions play the negative role of hindering this formation. This “special religion” was Protestantism, a religion for which most Japanese feel very little affinity. This appraisal fostered the following developments.

First, Protestantism was idealized as the source of modernization for its conquest of “magic” 呪術, and in many ways was glorified to an extent greater even than among Western followers of Protestantism. It is difficult to say how much Ōtsuka’s own faith as a Protestant influenced him in this area, but it could hardly have been irrelevant to the development of his thought.

Conversely, Japanese religions and other religions became objects of negative criticism, as purveyors of magic and thus as hindrances to modernization. To Ōtsuka, “magic” was clearly something that must be overcome, for the reason that magic is an integral part of the traditionalist ethos, the opposite of the modern human type that Ōtsuka so yearned to have created. In an essay on “Liberation from Magic” (*Majutsu kara no kaihō* 魔術からの解放), Ōtsuka wrote:

As we have seen, the “creation of a modern human type” is, if seen from another perspective, the final step in the process of world history that is “the liberation from magic.” It is the completion of this process. In this way, it is undoubtedly clear that “the liberation from magic”—its total realization—is an absolute necessity in realizing the process of the reconstruction of democracy in present-day Japan. (Ōtsuka 1969, p. 235)

For Ōtsuka, the value of Western modernization was crystal clear, and he had no doubt that Japan should attempt to catch up to the West. He was deeply concerned, however, with exactly how Japan should do this. In his view, the “liberation from magic” was the most immediate issue in Japan’s modernization. For Ōtsuka, the term included factors such as the emotional aspect of human relations and “tradition” that were considered to be in opposition to the modern ethos, but actually it is clear that by *majutsu* 魔術 Ōtsuka was referring to Japanese folk religion.

It is also important to note that “liberation from magic” in no sense means “liberation from religion.” For Ōtsuka, “magic” and “religion” were definitely not synonymous, and he clearly distinguishes between them. In fact, Ōtsuka took pains to point out that only a religion that is liberated from magic (i.e., Protestantism) can be called a true religion, and he accused religions with magical elements of being like magicians that keep people bound by spells. Weber’s proposition to rationalize religion was introduced by Ōtsuka as part of his discussion of “modern human types,” and presented as a goal that should be personally practiced as part of the effort to realize modernization.

OGUCHI IICHI 小口偉一

Oguchi Iichi was professor in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Tokyo, and was a pioneer in the study of New Religions in Japan from the perspective of the sociology of religion. He and Ōtsuka were about the same age, and for a while shared the spotlight as opinion leaders with regard to religious questions. Oguchi was not a Weberian in the sense of focusing his work on Weber alone. He was, however, active from prewar times in introducing Weber’s work to Japan, and invoked Weber’s work in the sociology of religion to clarify the characteristics of Japanese religion. In these ways he is an important scholar who must be taken into account when discussing the influence of Weber in Japan.

Oguchi, like Ōtsuka, repeatedly proclaimed the necessity of the overcoming of magic. However, his tone of argument was much more optimistic and straightforward than that of Ōtsuka. For example, Oguchi had this to say about the relationship of religion and society as the basic problematic for the sociology of religion:

When the religious outlook of the people is extremely low-level, religions that have adjusted to that level—as we can see

for many of the religions in the East—remain even today magical and traditional religions, and serve as a base for reactionary forces. The abolition of this traditional base has been carried out [in the West], even before the appearance of Max Weber, by preeminent individuals (such as prophets). In this sense it can be said that there has been much progress in the Christian world, especially in the Protestant world. (OGUCHI 1953, p. 12)

This passage, in which Weber's theories have been understood in a rather schematic and popular way, characterizes Asian religions as being "magical," especially compared to the religions (i.e., Protestantism) of the West. In Oguchi's argumentation, "magic" and "social progress" are always placed at opposing poles, and he takes the rather optimistic view that the overcoming of magic will inevitably lead to social progress.

In Oguchi's case, however, this overcoming of magic is not based on a practical problematic, like the creation of a "modern human type" as proposed by Ōtsuka on the basis of Weber's ethos theory. It appears that Oguchi's ideas developed more from a kind of simple Enlightenment ideal, and in this sense cannot be attributed to the influence of Weber. He treats the existence of magic as a given, and his interest is rather in understanding the special characteristics of the social structure of Asian societies, including Japan, that are very tolerant of magic. In other words, he tried to grasp the special characteristics of a social structure that makes possible the maintenance of magic, from the perspective of social control and the authority that supports that control. The theory that Oguchi used as a basis for approaching this subject was none other than Weber's theory of charisma. Or rather, Oguchi's incorporation of Weber's theory of charisma was dictated by the nature of his ideas on "the magical-type society of the masses" in Japan, the structure of the control that developed from this basis, and the authority that justified it. Certainly Weber's theory was very attractive for analyzing the system of social control through the emperor system in prewar Japan, the authority of the many new religious founders that appeared one after the other in postwar Japan, and the zealotry of their followers.

However, Oguchi's charisma theory did not go beyond the charisma theory of Weber. He did not deepen the theory or contribute any new developments, as Ōtsuka had done by taking Weber's ethos theory and presenting stimulating questions concerning the modernization of Japan. In any case, Oguchi considered Japan to be a "magic-oriented

society” that gave birth to the worship of authority among the masses and led to the support of the emperor system. He labelled Asian society in general as “an enchanted garden” (*jujutsu no sono* 呪術の園; OGUCHI 1955, p. 147). It is certain, however, that Oguchi was influenced by Weber’s theories as a helpful way to clarify the non-modernity of religion and society in Japan.

*The Third Period—1970 to the present*

The latter part of the 1960s and the early 1970s were an important turning point in the reception of Weber in Japan. The characteristic of this third period is that the study of Weber, the main current of social studies in postwar Japan, began to lose its practical significance, and with it the views of the Weber-influenced opinion leaders of modernization. Even in the field of the sociology of religion, healthy criticism of Weber began in the latter part of the 1960s. There were a number of factors behind this change, including specific social conditions in Japan as well as changes in the tides of intellectual opinion on a worldwide scale. In order to properly understand the significance of this third stage, one must look beyond the field of Weberian studies and gain a wider perspective on changes in the intellectual world as a whole. We would like to focus briefly on two points.

The first change to note is the increasing importance in academic circles of the anti-modernism that developed from the criticism of the evolutionary view of history centered in Western Europe. This movement began to have a vast influence across the entire field of the human and social sciences. The depth psychology of Jung, the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, and the religious studies of Eliade began to have a strong influence in Japan in the latter part of the 1960s. It is not a coincidence that these academic movements became influential at about the same time that people in the West began to take note of the harmful effects and dangers of modern culture. The awareness of and reflection on these problems by Westerners actually began in the first half of the twentieth century, but it was not until the second half that it took on a broad academic scope, encompassing the growing interest in non-Western cultures brought about by the increasing influence of studies in this area. The growing importance of anthropology, mythology, religious studies, depth psychology, symbolism, and structuralism presupposes this kind of change in the

intellectual climate, and marks a radical departure from the formerly dominant studies based on rationalism and modernism. In the new intellectual climate, myths, ritual, symbols, and worldviews are not dismissed as irrational or meaningless. It was realized that these matters have a fundamental meaning in the life and regeneration of people and cultures, and that they are worthy objects of study. For people who experienced this change in intellectual climate, the religious theories of Weber that speak of eliminating “magic” through “rationalization” began to seem useless and outmoded.

The second change to be noted concerns the various developments in Japan itself. Through rapid economic development, the Japanese people realized a great improvement in their standard of living. People began to see the politico-economic situation—and Japanese culture in general—in a more positive light. Earlier discussions of modernization always condemned Japan to lag behind the West as a backward or “undeveloped” society, but this view was undercut by the country’s successful industrialization and accompanying economic prosperity. An awareness grew among those in the academic world that the difference between Japanese society and Western models of modernization was one of type, not of being “ahead” or “behind.” As Japan became aware of itself as a member of the advanced industrial nations, the Japanese began to reappraise matters that had been negatively dismissed as relics of a feudal past, such as the traditional family (*ie*) system and group-centered social dynamics. This occurred at about the same time as the changes discussed above (see AOKI 1990).

We have briefly outlined some of the changes that have occurred in the human and social sciences since the latter half of the 1960s. Needless to say, these changes had a tremendous influence on the study of religion. The transformation in intellectual climate brought new methodologies and tools of analysis for understanding and rediscovering the value of matters such as myths, symbols, and rituals. Religious studies, along with subjects such as anthropology and the study of symbols, gained new popularity. In this context the rationalistic character of Weber’s sociology of religion became an object of criticism. Japanese folk religion, which had been scorned and slapped with the negative label “magic” by proponents of modernism like Ôtsuka and Oguchi, was reappraised and reexamined by many scholars of Japanese religion, resulting in the publication of numerous worthy studies.

The scholars who we will discuss below are not Weber specialists,

but are all researchers of folk religion in Japan with an awareness of Weber's sociological theories. Yanagawa Keiichi has responded sensitively to the recent changes in intellectual climate and, while critical of Weber's ideas, attempted to establish a study of religion that emphasizes symbols and ritual. Robert Bellah, Yasumaru Yoshio, Yamamoto Shichihei, and Shimazono Susumu all take the view that, rather than Japan being "behind," Japan's modernization has succeeded in taking a different form than that of the West. They have all argued, from their various perspectives, that Japanese folk religion has successfully provided an ethic and ethos that supports modernization. They represent an understanding and reception of Weber's theories that has taken a different form than that of modernism.

YANAGAWA KEIICHI 柳川啓一

As mentioned above, a paradigm shift in the recent intellectual climate prompted a reappraisal of such subjects as myths, symbols, and rituals, which had been lumped together as "magic" by Weberian studies. This reappraisal led to the collapse of modernism-centered Weberian research as represented by Ōtsuka. The following quote from Yanagawa Keiichi is a pertinent critique of the problematic points of Weber's sociology of religion from the perspective of religious studies:

The people of the [postwar] period who discussed religious problems in relation to contemporary society were people strongly influenced by Max Weber. Their theories, therefore, were made in reference to the religion of modern Western Europe, in particular the ascetical Protestant form of Christianity. The methodological doubt that has arisen recently is that perhaps the historical phenomenon of European Protestantism was too readily accepted as a norm. On the other side, the portrayal of Japanese religions as merely "magical" was, as a categorization of empirical research, far too simplistic. (YANAGAWA 1968, pp. 134)

The main points of Yanagawa's criticism of Weberian studies are that, first, it relies too much upon ascetic Protestantism as the norm for modern religion, and second, that Japanese religions were despised and dismissed as "magic." Yanagawa, as a follower of Parson's structural and functional sociology, began, at a turning point in his career, to carry out fieldwork on *matsuri* (festivals) and rituals. This was the concrete result of his criticism of modernistic religious studies. By

incorporating the work of Lévi-Strauss, Eliade, and Victor Turner, Yanagawa strove to construct a framework for analyzing Japanese *matsuri*. Not only did Yanagawa react swiftly to the paradigm shift in the intellectual climate of the late 1960s, he perceived that important changes were occurring in the world of religious movements. He commented as follows on these changes:

Religious studies have attempted to analyze the role of religion in contemporary society, but have been puzzled by a number of new phenomena that have emerged in the so-called advanced industrial nations since the late 1960s, phenomena that cannot be explained on the basis of existing theories. Contrary to the assumption that society was steadily and surely moving in the direction of secularization cum rejection of religion, there appear to be signs of a “return to religion.” However, religious organizations that attempted to become modern, rational, and relevant to contemporary society and that responded to the expectations of religious scholars, continue to stagnate and decline. Instead, the greatest growth is being seen in conservative, doctrinaire, return-to-the-origins fundamentalism; strongly authoritarian movements; secret associations; non-Christian traditions such as exotic Oriental-appearing mysticism; and occult movements. (YANAGAWA 1975, p. 48)

Yanagawa has not written much directly concerning Weber, but he has concluded that, as the model for earlier theories in the sociology of religion, it was insufficient to explain the phenomena of the “return to religion” that has occurred since the latter part of the 1960s. Yanagawa pointed out that in the face of actual contemporary religious movements, concepts such as “rationalization,” “the elimination of magic,” and “secularization”—concepts that formed the crux of Weber’s sociology of religion—were useless as analytical tools. As a substitute for Weber’s sociology of religion, Yanagawa sought to construct new theories that would explain the phenomena of the “return to religion.” In place of “worldly asceticism” (*sezokunai kin'yoku* 世俗内禁欲) and the work ethic—the characteristics of modern religion—Yanagawa emphasized the religious importance of personal experience and the senses, and the necessity for “play and festival.” Yanagawa, who relied more on Durkheim than on Weber, exerted quite an influence on the next generation of scholars of religion through his research on ritual and stress on actual experience. While modernists could perceive *matsuri* and rituals only as “magic,”

Yanagawa attempted to decipher the relationship between symbols and social groups. In response to the heightened popular interest in *matsuri*, ritual, symbols, mysticism, Eastern religions, and cosmology, there has been an increase in the study of these subjects in the human and social sciences in general. Yanagawa's research marked an end to the era of research on religion in Japan from the perspective of Weber's sociology of religion, and provided a model for exploring the potential of religious studies to rehabilitate "magic" through theories of symbols and ritual.

YASUMARU YOSHIO 安丸良夫 AND YAMAMOTO SHICHIHEI 山本七平

We have briefly mentioned some social-science research that sought to present the modernization of Japan in a positive way, but there has been very little such research done from the perspective of the sociology of religion. Modernization in Japan has put priority on economic development, as reflected in the country's rapid economic growth, and as such it is generally assumed that the Japanese model of modernization had no relation to religious ideals or concepts. This idea, as well as the view among Japanese Weberian scholars that "Japan is behind the West," was demolished by American sociologist Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan* (1957), a pioneering application of Weber's ethics thesis to Japan. *Tokugawa Religion* exposed the onesidedness of the presentation of Weber's work by Ōtsuka and his followers. Japanese Weberian scholars had not realized that there was a religious ethic in Japan that was a match for the Protestant ethic. Nor had they thought of applying the thesis of *The Protestant Ethic* to Japanese modernization, as Bellah did. Bellah's research had a great influence on Japanese scholarship—coming at a time of economic growth and increasing self-confidence among the Japanese, it stimulated a positive reappraisal of Japan's modernization. The common assumption of Japan's backwardness by the modernists, represented by Ōtsuka and his followers, was gradually perceived by more and more Japanese as being outmoded. Perhaps for these reasons, the translation of Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion* (*Nihon kindaika to shūkyō rinri* 日本近代化と宗教倫理, 1962) became a best seller in Japan.

Another important work on the study of popular thought (*minshū shisō* 民衆思想) was the book on Japanese modernization and popular thought by YASUMARU Yoshio (1974). While praising Bellah's work for probing the relationship between modernization and traditional Japanese ideas, Yasumaru criticizes him for not grasping the forma-

tive process of popular thought. Yasumaru's research was historical and took the basic standpoint of historical materialism, but it is not out of order to consider his work as an example of the influence of Weber. The reason is that Yasumaru proposed that the force for promoting modernization in Japan was not change in the economic structure or political order, but rather self-reform among the common people. According to Yasumaru, the formative process of modern society was one that brought about a reformation of the attitude toward life-style among the common people and set off an immense explosion of human energy. Yasumaru invokes Ōtsuka Hisao's phrase, "the creation of human types" in portraying modern powers of production in human terms. He admitted that "basically I adopt the position of Weber and Ōtsuka's 'theory of asceticism'" (YASUMARU 1974, p. 56), and developed a theory of popular morality (*tsūzoku dōtokuron* 通俗荀徳論) in the form of an asceticism that is specific to the process of Japan's modernization. On the one hand Yasumaru was extremely critical of the view of modernist scholars such as Ōtsuka and Maruyama Masao that popular thought is "irrational, backward, and feudal" (1974, p. 40), and stressed the necessity of carefully understanding the process of self-formation and self-training that is part of popular morality. The object of this theory of popular morality took a wide variety of forms:

Ishida Baigan's 石田梅岩 *shingaku* 心学; Ninomiya Sontoku's 二宮尊徳 *Hōtokusha* 報徳社; Ōhara Yūgaku 大原幽学; later Kokugaku 国学; the various popular religions like Kurozumi-kyō 黒住教, Konkō-kyō 金光教, Tenri-kyō 天理教, Fujidō 不二荀, and Maruyama-kyō 丸山教; figures like the *myōkōnin* 妙好人 saints of the Shinshū Pure Land Buddhist tradition; numerous elderly farmers like Nakamura Naozō 中村直三; various local leaders, both known and unknown; the wealthy farmers and common people of the nineteenth century who participated in the rural uprisings and movements for people's rights; and what ethnologists call *korō* 故老 (elders) and *seken-shi* 世間師 (worldly-wise people). (YASUMARU 1974, p. 11)

The "popular morality" represented by such movements and individuals included ideals such as diligence, frugality, and harmony. Yasumaru showed through the study of historical materials that these virtues formed an inner religious ethic for the common people, and that this ethic served to support modernization in Japan. This research by Yasumaru, while firmly established on the standpoint of

demonstrable historical studies, can be taken as an example of the influence of Weber's ethos theory via the work of Ōtsuka, insofar as it took up the issue of the inner asceticism and transformation among the common people that conformed to the needs of Japanese modernization. It is also worthy of attention as an important contribution of historical studies that take up a sociology-of-religion-type theme such as "modernization and religion."

Another noteworthy study is the book on the spirit of Japanese capitalism (*Nihon shihonshugi no seishin*) published in 1979 by the prolific social critic Yamamoto Shichihei. Yamamoto examined figures from the early Tokugawa period (eighteenth century) such as the Zen monk Suzuki Shōsan 鈴木正三 and the founder of *shingaku*, Ishida Baigan, introducing such ideas of theirs as the importance of honesty and frugality and the propriety of profit-gaining from business activities. The almost religious fervor with which the common people took on their daily tasks after the time of these two figures developed into a habitual diligence that served as an important factor in the post-Meiji, twentieth-century modernization of Japan. Yamamoto Shichihei rejected the Eurocentric idea that the modernization of Japan was modelled on that of Europe, and argued instead that it developed on a Japanese foundation and that Japan had achieved a modernization that was not inferior to that of the West.

Yamamoto's theories undoubtedly reflect the current experience of life in Japan after the period of rapid economic growth. It is interesting, however, that this argument—that it was the premodern religious ideas of the common people that served as the causes for promoting capitalism and industrialization in modern Japan—did not arise from among Japanese Weberian scholars but from outside of this group. This may reflect the rivalry in Japan between those who perceived Japan's modernization in terms of Japan being behind the West, and those who saw it in terms of Japan being on an equal footing.

SHIMAZONO SUSUMU 島蘭進

Let us now consider the work of Shimazono Susumu, a professor of religious studies at the University of Tokyo who has ruminated on the question of modernization in Japan and considered the issue of religion and ethics in modernization with a problematic informed by Weber. Shimazono specializes in the study of the New Religions in Japan, not in Weber. However, a look at his work is helpful for understanding how Weber's work has been understood in the field of the

sociology of religion in Japan from the 1970s on.

In an essay on modernization and popular religion in Japan (*Nihon no kindaiika to minshū shūkyō* 日本の近代化と民衆宗教; in SHIMAZONO 1992, pp. 135–52), Shimazono gives a high appraisal of Weber’s position in the sense that Weber presumed a religiously informed “ethical reform among the people” as the background to modernization in the West. Up to this point Shimazono’s interest overlaps that of Ōtsuka and his followers. However, in contrast to Ōtsuka and others who severely criticize Japanese society as “backward” on the basis of Weber’s theories, Shimazono attempts a reexamination of this theoretical framework itself. He points out that the people who have discussed Japan’s modernization from the perspective of Weber’s theories “have been so attached to the standpoint of modernism that they have believed that the Japanese people languor in an ‘enchanted garden,’” and have lost sight of the existence of “the current of popular ethical reform 大衆の倫理革新” (1992, p. 137). It is not possible to discuss Shimazono’s theories in detail here,<sup>1</sup> but suffice it to say that Shimazono proposes that modernization in Japan contains a current of popular ethical reform that is completely different from that of the West. This is reminiscent of Yasumaru’s theory of “popular morality” (*tsūzoku dōtoku*), but also points to the existence of a “vitalistic concept” (*seimeishugiteki shisō* 生命主義的思想) among the New Religions.<sup>2</sup> Shimazono appraises this “vitalistic concept” from a completely different perspective than Weber or Yasumaru, giving a positive and sanguine analysis of so-called “magical” elements. In other words, Shimazono, while inspired by Yasumaru’s theory of “popular morality,” points out that “in considering popular ethical reform and magical elements as being at completely opposite poles, Yasumaru and Weber share the same position” (1992, p. 141). Thus Shimazono criticizes Yasumaru’s position and clearly distances himself from Weber.

Insofar as Yasumaru takes a negative view of magic, he has not freed himself of the position of the modernists. By positively admitting the value and significance of magic—in contrast to Weber—Shimazono has revised Yasumaru’s theory and provided a positive perspective on the significance of the ethics of the New Religions within the modernization of Japan. The magical religiosity of the New Religions and their teachings—seen only as obstacles to Japan’s mod-

<sup>1</sup> Editors’ note: for details on Shimazono Susumu’s theories, see Ian Reader’s review article in this issue, pp. 229–48.

<sup>2</sup> For details on the concept of a “vitalistic conception of salvation,” see TSUSHIMA et al. 1979.

ernization by scholars like Ôtsuka and Oguchi and regarded as things to be negated and overcome—have been positively appraised by Shimazono as factors aiding modernization in Japan. It should be added that Shimazono does not consider magic itself as the element of popular ethical reform that supported Japan's modernization; rather, he perceives "something that can act as the foundation for modern and post-modern society" (1992, p. 149) within the "vitalistic concept" that encompasses the magical religiosity of the New Religions.

At the basis of his appraisal of the New Religions' "vitalistic concept" of salvation, one can perceive a basic discomfort with the one-sided presentation of the relationship between religion and modernization found in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic*. Shimazono compares his own position with that of Weber as follows:

In contrast to Weber, who saw the significance of Calvinism for the West in its teaching of "the inner loneliness of the single individual" and "the elimination of magic from the world," and in its consequent search for liberation from the natural bonds between person and person and between people and the world, I find the significance of the "vitalistic concept" that is central to the New Religions of Japan in its attempt to restore the natural bonds between person and person and between people and the world. (SHIMAZONO 1992, p. 150)

As can be seen clearly in this quote, Shimazono is not looking for something in the "vitalistic concept" among the New Religions that corresponds to Protestantism. Rather, he has gone beyond the perspective presented by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic* to consider a separate configuration for religion as the support of modernization. Through his examination of the New Religions' "vitalistic concept," he has developed "a second model for the relationship between religion and modern popular ethical reform" (1992, p. 150). The debate concerning Shimazono's position has just begun, but the least that can be said is that it is based on a critical view of the modernistic acceptance of Weber's theories and, based on the awareness that Japan's modernization is different yet on an equal footing with modernization in the West, attempts to reappraise the element of magic in religion and society. In this sense Shimazono's position presents an important new perception of Weber based on the academic currents that have appeared since 1970.

*Conclusions*

In looking back at the history of Weber's reception in Japan, we have seen that there have been significant changes in the distance from Weber's theories that scholars have chosen to place themselves. Serious attention to Weber's thought began mostly after World War II. The trends in the adaptation of Weber's theories reflect the specific social and cultural characteristics of Japan, which had achieved modernization after a late initial start. However, as one of the first countries outside of Europe to successfully incorporate capitalism, Japan's foremost aim was to catch up to the "advanced" countries of Europe both "organizationally/institutionally" and "spiritually." Thus Weber's theory that a specific religious ethos underlay the achievement of modernization by Western societies was a theory that Japanese scholars of religious studies had to keep in mind. Weber's theories were accepted as more than mere social-science theories—they were taken as a practical model for achieving modernization.

Ōtsuka Hisao's interpretation of Weber played a major role in setting this direction of Weberian studies in Japan. One of the reasons that Ōtsuka's influence was so widespread was that he preached Weber's thought as a kind of gospel for Japan's Westernization. This was also the main reason for the distinctive phenomenon in which Weber took on an almost sacrosanct status, as a "prophet of modernization." This sanctification of Weber's thought led, even in the academic field of religious studies, to an extreme idealization of Western Protestant religion, setting the stage for the condemnation of magic as an element that had to be rejected. In these developments we can perceive a certain degeneration in the understanding of Weber's theories in Japan. Weber's perspective is that in the background of the development of modernization in the West there was a process of rationalization that included the elimination of or liberation from magic. In Japan, this idea developed into the mandate that, in order for Japan to achieve modernization, it must promote the elimination of magic. It was on the basis of this interpretation that Weber was transformed into a prophet who taught the overcoming of magical religiosity.

The shift in intellectual paradigm from the late 1960s and into the 1970s, however, largely transformed the position that naively affirmed modernization and its concomitant values. It became increasingly clear that the Western model of modernization is not the only possible one, and that modernization itself entails a host of problems. The

Eurocentric assumption underlying modernistic Weberian studies that "Japan is behind the West" gradually faded away, and the approach to Weber changed to that of taking a relativizing look at Weber's theories from the perspective of the actual situation of Japanese society in the past and the present. This change gave rise to two positions with regard to Weber: one that dismissed Weber's theories of religion as irrelevant, and another that was critical of, yet sought to adapt, Weber's theories. In this article, Yanagawa Keiichi represents the first approach, and Yasumaru Yoshio, Yamamoto Shichihei, and Shimazono Susumu represent the second approach.

The scholars who took the first approach perceived Weber as an outdated rationalist and chose a complete break with his ideas. This antipathy toward Weber, however, is not something that appeared for the first time with the new intellectual paradigm. A similar attitude could be found among those who were outside the circle of Weberian studies. The fact is, in Japan the study of Weber was for a long time the monopoly of Ōtsuka Hisao and his followers, who regarded Weber as an honored master and permitted no real criticism. In these circumstances it is not surprising that a feeling of rejection would gradually grow among scholars; this feeling rose to the surface with the changes in intellectual paradigm that started in the late 1960s and became the womb for true criticism of Weber. This was particularly true in the field of religious studies, where the resurgence in religious interest in the 1970s confronted scholars with the fact that many of Weber's "prophecies" were off the mark, opening the door for a rejection of Weber's theories.

The second approach, that of a critical adaptation of Weber's theories, maintained the Weber/Ōtsuka perspective of giving serious consideration to the idea of ethos—the spiritual side of human relations—while overturning the negative appraisal of Japanese folk religion shared by scholars such as Ōtsuka and Oguchi. Those who took this second approach rejected the position that viewed Weber's Protestant ethos as the only possible model and dismissed Japanese religiosity as feudal and magical. While respecting the framework of Weber's theory, they sought to conscientiously examine the practice and historical development of ethical ideas among the Japanese people, and thus clarify the relationship between Japan's own modernization and the religious ethos that supported and sustained it. *The Protestant Ethic* was not taken as a universal historical model for the relationship between "modernization and religion."

Finally, on the basis of the above brief examination of the history

of Weber's reception in Japan, we would like to make a couple of comments on the possible direction of Japanese Weberian studies in the future. First, is it not time for an empirical reexamination of Weber's theories in terms of the history of religions in the West? That is to say, the thesis that was developed by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic* was first understood in Japan as historically applicable to Japanese society, but without sufficient corroborative studies. The idea that capitalism is linked to Protestantism is often stated as a historical fact, an attitude connected to the above-mentioned acceptance of *The Protestant Ethic* as a near-sacred text. KANAI Shinji, in his recent book on Weber's religious ethics, points out that in *The Protestant Ethic* Weber hermeneutically clarifies the affinity between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, but that he does not show corroborating evidence of a historical cause-and-effect relationship between the two (1991, pp. 95-115). Kanai claims that the perceived relationship between them is no more than a "hermeneutical fabrication" based on an inordinate exaggeration of only one aspect of the historical reality. Kanai's point is an important one, because the world depicted in *The Protestant Ethic* is usually understood in Japan to be an accurate portrayal of the historical reality of European Protestantism. The unconscious acceptance of Weber's framework as self-evident led to major misunderstandings, such as thinking only in terms of a stereotypical schematization in which Puritanism acted as the bearer of rationalization and modernization.

Actually there have been not a few attempts to criticize Weber's thesis from an empirical perspective (see MACFARLANE 1987, pp. 195-200). In Japan, however, this approach rarely leads to a reexamination of the history of religion in the West, including the Protestantism that forms the basis of Weber's theory, but tends instead to be dismissed as a misreading or misunderstanding of Weber, thus reducing it again to a problem of the exegesis of Weber's work.

Another point is the question of the understanding of religion by Weber himself. We have discussed the distortions in the Japanese acceptance of Weber's theories, but in addition it cannot be denied that, from the perspective of contemporary scholars of religion, there are a number of problems with Weber's ideas about religion. Weber, influenced by the cultural Protestantism of his time, accepted rationalization and the ethical progress of religion as self-evident presuppositions. The appraisal of Protestantism as the pinnacle of ethical development is based on these assumptions. According to Weber, only a total and complete ethical practice born from an integrated

meaning system based on a religious ideal is capable of breaking away from “the enchanted garden” and promoting rationalization. We must point out, however, that this analysis is lacking in that it ignores aspects such as symbols and rituals. Contemporary religious studies have shown that it is impossible to make a clear and definitive distinction between religion and magic, and it is also widely recognized that symbols and rituals are crucial structural elements in religious phenomena. It must thus be concluded that Weber’s understanding of religion contains a basic flaw. In any case, the recent changes in approach to magical-religious phenomena by Japanese scholars of religion reveal a large gap between their theories of religion and those of Weber’s, and this indicates one aspect of the attitude toward religious questions taken by scholars of religion in Japan today.

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