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Carmen Blacker

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Religion in Japan

Arrows to heaven and earth

Edited by
P. F. KORNICKI
University of Cambridge
and
I. J. MCMULLEN
University of Oxford

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TO CARMEN BLACKER

TEACHER, COLLEAGUE, AND FRIEND

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations, which accompany Fosco Maraini's contribution to this volume, depict the Ainu iyomande ritual held at Kotan in 1954. The photographs were all taken by Professor Maraini himself and have not been published before.

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1 Preparations for the ritual.

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4 The bear being paraded around the village.

5 Kikuchi Ginosuke and the bear.

6 The bear after the 'sending off'.

7 The feast.

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JOHN BREEN is lecturer in Japanese in the East Asian Department at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His main research interest is the intellectual history of the late Tokugawa and early Meiji periods. His recent publications include 'Shintoists in Restoration Japan', *Modern Asian Studies* (1990); and his 'Beyond prohibition–Christianity in Restoration Japan' is forthcoming in John Breen and Mark Williams, eds, *Christianity in Japan: a dialogue between cultures*. He is currently preparing his PhD thesis, 'Emperor, state and religion in Restoration Japan', for publication.

MARTIN COLLCUTT is professor of East Asian studies and history at Princeton University. Interested in medieval Japanese society and religion, he is currently working on a series of studies of the religous interests and policies of the Kamakura shōgunate. His previous publications include *Five Mountains: the Rinzai Zen monastic institution in medieval Japan* (1981) and *A cultural atlas of Japan* (with Isao Kumakura and Marius B. Jansen; 1988).

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HELEN HARDACRE is now professor of Japanese studies at the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University; she has previously taught at Princeton University and Griffith University, in Queensland, Australia. Her main field of interest is religion in modern and contemporary Japan, and she is the author of *Kurozumikyō and the new religions of Japan* (1986) and *Shinto and the state, 1868–1988* (1989).

ELIZABETH G. HARRISON is assistant professor of East Asian studies at the University of Arizona. Her main areas of interest are religion and intellectual history in pre-modern and modern Japan. Her previous works include a dissertation entitled 'Encountering Amida: Jōdo Shinshū sermons in eighteenth-century Japan' (1992) and translations of two articles on religion and modernization in *Ethnological Studies* 29 (1990).

JOY HENDRY is professor of social anthropology at Oxford Brookes University. Her current areas of interest are politeness and other forms of indirect communication in contemporary Japan. Her most recent books are *Understanding Japanese society* (1987), which is soon to appear in a new edition, and *Wrapping culture: politeness, presentation and power in Japan and other societies* (1993).

PETER KORNICKI is university lecturer in Japanese at Cambridge University and a fellow of Robinson College. His main research field is Japanese cultural history. His previous publications include *The reform of fiction in Meiji Japan* (1982) and *Early Japanese books in Cambridge University Library* (1991; with N. Hayashi).

JAMES McMULLEN is university lecturer in Japanese at Oxford University and TEPCO tutorial fellow in Japanese at Pembroke College. His main research field is Japanese Confucianism and intellectual history of pre-Restoration Japan. His previous publications include 'Rulers or fathers? A casuistical problem in early modern Japanese thought', in *Past and Present* 116 (1987) and *Genji gaiden: the origins of Kumazawa Banzan's commentary on The Tale of Genji* (1992).

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FOSCO MARAINI is now retired, but for many years was professor of Japanese at the Università degli Studi di Firenze in Italy. His first contacts with the Ainu took place in 1938–41, when he worked in the University of Hokkaidō with Professor S. Kodama. Since then he has visited the Ainu many times, most recently in 1993. His *Gli Iku-bashui degli Ainu* (1942) is now being translated into Japanese, and amongst his other works he published *Segreto Tibet* in 1951 (translated into English in 1952 as *Secret Tibet)*. He has given a collection of nearly 500 Ainu artifacts to the Anthropological Museum of the University of Florence.

MIYAKE HITOSHI is a professor in the Faculty of Letters at Keiō University and a well-known specialist on shugendō and the folk religions of Japan. He is the author of numerous books and articles on shugendō, amongst them *Shugendō shisō no kenkyū* 修験道思想の研究 (1985) and *Kumano shugen* 熊野修験 (1992).

PETER NOSCO is professor of East Asian languages and cultures, and history, at the University of Southern California. His principal areas of research are the intellectual and social history of the Tokugawa period. His previous works include *Remembering paradise: nativism and nostalgia in eighteenth-century Japan* (1990) and *Confucianism and Tokugawa culture* (edited, 1984).

IAN READER is senior lecturer in Japanese studies at the University of Stirling. His main areas of interest are the study of popular religion in contemporary Japan, religious consumerism, and the comparative study of pilgrimage. His recent publications include *Pilgrimage in popular culture* (1993), which he edited with Tony Walter, and *Religion in contemporary Japan* (1991).

IVO SMITS has recently completed a doctorate at Leiden University with a thesis entitled 'The pursuit of loneliness: Chinese and Japanese nature poetry in medieval Japan' and is now a Research Fellow with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences. His main area of interest is Japanese literature, both classical and modern. He has published 'Unusual expressions: Minamoto no Toshiyori and poetic innovation in medieval Japan' in *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* in 1993, and forthcoming in 1995 are a Dutch translation of *Izumi shikibu nikki*, and *The pursuit of loneliness: Chinese and Japanese nature poetry in medieval Japan, ca.1050–1150.*

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DAVID WATERHOUSE is a professor in the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. He worked in the Department of Oriental Antiquities in the British Museum and the Center for Asian Arts at the University of Washington before moving to Toronto in 1966. He has wide-ranging interests in Asian arts and thought and is the author of a number of books and catalogues, including *Harunobu and his age: the development of colour printing in Japan* (1964) and *Early Japanese prints in the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (1983).

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CARMEN BLACKER

During a long career, for most of which she has been based at the University of Cambridge, Carmen Blacker has become established as an eminent scholarly authority on Japanese religion and folklore, and a compelling figure in the world of Japanese studies. Her contributions as a scholar and teacher, however, have been richer and more varied than this characterisation might suggest.

Carmen's full-time commitment to Japanese might be dated symbolically from the moment when, at the age of eighteen, like many of the generation of scholars of Japan that was to dominate the field in the post-war decades, she joined the war effort. War service, however, merely made decisive an inclination that she had felt since her school-days. Reading in world mythology, she had become intrigued by the long names of Japanese divinities. Her parents supported what was thought an eccentric interest at the time. After an exhaustive search for some sort of textbook, her mother discovered a copy of a nineteenth-century Japanese grammar by Baba Tatsui (1850–88) in Great Russell Street, and her father found a correspondence course in the language. As a pupil at Benenden, she made Japanese part of her secret life. There, she encountered Juliet Piggott, a fellow pupil who had been to Japan. Though in different school houses, the two girls were able to arrange meetings. Juliet's father, the Japanophile Major-General F. S. G. Piggott (1883–1966), whom Carmen was later to commemorate in an article, had been military attaché in Tokyo, and, on his return to England, offered to teach Carmen the language during school holidays. She cycled nine miles each way from her family home in Surrey to attend his lessons, which consisted partly of study of old *tokuhon* (school readers). The General was an excellent speaker and teacher of Japanese, and her interest intensified. She left school early, and joined twice-weekly sessions of a course in Japanese at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. From there, she was recruited to the Government Communications Headquarters at Bletchley Park, the centre of the immensely successful British research into enemy communications and codes.

At Bletchley, she worked compiling a list of Japanese nouns of potential strategic relevance from 'pinches' (captured enemy documents) for a sub-section of the naval section. Her work, unlike its counterpart in German, was never consulted for operational purposes. In a recent memoir, Carmen has written of her sense of the futility of this task and her feelings of frustration.[1]

1 'Recollection of *temps perdu* at Bletchley Park', in F. H. Hinsley and Alan Stripp, eds., *Code breakers: the inside story of Bletchley Park* (Oxford: Oxford

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Before the end of the war, she was transferred back to the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London as a Special Lecturer, where she both taught Japanese to military personnel and studied for a degree. She graduated with First Class Honours in 1947. Her fellow graduate was Ronald Dore, and one of her examiners was Arthur Waley. No instruction had been provided in history. The details of a candidate's performance on particular papers were normally strictly confidential, but, after the examination, Waley, with the lofty disregard for conventions for which he was known, summoned Carmen to Gordon Square and informed her of certain 'rather silly mistakes' in her history paper. From SOAS, she went in 1947 to Somerville College, Oxford, to read Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. It was her enjoyment of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European political and moral thought that set her wondering how these ideas, particularly the concept of natural science, could have been assimilated into Japan in the nineteenth century. This interest determined the direction of her first research interest in Japan and led to her University of London doctoral dissertation on Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901). Research for this took her abroad, first as a Henry Fellow to the Harvard–Yenching Institute (1950–1) and then as Treasury Student to Keiō (1951–3), where she was the only foreign student, but was welcomed, she recalls, with great hospitality. It was during this first stay in Japan that, having learnt of his writings on Fukuzawa, she met the prominent intellectual historian and political scientist Maruyama Masao, who gave her invaluable advice and encouragement.

The dissertation was published as *The Japanese enlightenment: a study of the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (1964). This study set new standards in Meiji intellectual history. Drawing on a knowledge of both the Japanese tradition of Chinese learning and early European influences on Tokugawa thought on the one hand, and on her knowledge of the Western tradition on the other, as well as on the work of Maruyama, Carmen surveyed the revolution in thinking worked by Fukuzawa in a number of different fields: world view, ethics, the family, history, politics and international relations. The book is marked by the lucidity and elegance of structure and style that have characterised her writing. All seemed set for a research career in this important field. Indeed, Carmen followed up her work on Fukuzawa with an article on his conservative contemporary, Ōhashi Totsuan (1816–62), who rejected Western science with something of the vehemence with which Fukuzawa had embraced it, but did so, she showed, with coherence and clarity. This article was the first in a series of sympathetic studies of neglected or minor figures, some of whom have now become fashionable, that Carmen has published throughout her career. This series includes, as well as Totsuan, the historian Rai San'yō (1780–1832); Yoshio Markino (Makino Yoshio), the Japanese expatriate artist who worked in London between the wars; Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941), the folklorist and polymath; Sir Francis Taylor Piggott

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(1852–1925), an advisor on the Meiji Constitution of 1889, and his son Major-General F. S. G. Piggott, Carmen's old tutor; Marie Stopes (1880–1958), the palaeobotanist and pioneer of birth control, who visited Japan in 1907–9 in the former capacity, and others. Nor did Carmen abandon her interest in intellectual history with her work on Fukuzawa, Ōhashi Totsuan, and Rai San'yō. She has taught the subject throughout her teaching career, at Cambridge and also as a course of lectures at Columbia, where she was Visiting Professor in 1965–6.

In 1955, Carmen was appointed Assistant Lecturer, and from 1958, University Lecturer, in Japanese Studies in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge, and this has been her main academic home since then. Her colleagues at Cambridge included Eric B. Ceadel, bibliographer and specialist in waka and later University Librarian; Charles D. Sheldon, the economic historian, author of *The rise of the merchant class in Tokugawa Japan* (1958); and Douglas E. Mills, specialist in medieval literature and author of *A collection of tales from Uji* (1970). Among the lectors (instructors in Japanese) in the early years were Itasaka Gen, editor of the Kôdansha *Encyclopedia of Japan,* Ishibashi Hiro, now Principal of Ueno Gakuen University, and Torigoe Bunzō, the well-known Waseda University scholar of Japanese theatre.

At Cambridge, the long vacations could be used for visits to Japan, then still relatively cheap if one took the ten-day route through Russia, and Carmen was able to develop her long-standing interest in Japanese religion, particularly Buddhism, by direct observation and practice. On these visits, she would often enjoy the hospitality of the novelist Osaragi Jirō, staying in the tea-house of his home in Kamakura. There, she visited the Zuisenji, made the acquaintance of the *rōshi* (Zen master) at the Engakuji, and, with assiduity as she recalls, practised *zazen* for several years. These experiences inspired her to make Japanese religion her main field of research, a switch from intellectual history of which, she feels, Fukuzawa himself would have heartily disapproved. She became increasingly aware of the subtle interconnectedness of the phenomena of Japanese religious life, ranging from conventional practices to the new religions, then still regarded with scorn by educated people. Through an interest in the Shugendō, she embarked on the sustained study of Japanese shamanism. An important source of help and information was Hori Ichirō of the University of Tokyo, and she would call on him on successive summer visits to Japan.

During the sixties, Carmen collected the material that forms the basis of her best-known work, *The catalpa bow: a study of shamanistic practices in Japan* (1975). This book rapidly and deservedly attained the status of a classic. It achieves what all scholars of Japan want for their writing, but very few manage: recognition as work of value in its own right, beyond the parochial boundaries of Japanese studies. Moreover, it embodies Carmen's strengths as a scholar: wide reading in primary historical sources and in the Japanese scholarly literature, vigorous field work, sympathy for ordinary people, and clarity and elegance in presentation. She covered spectacular

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territory, literally as well as metaphorically. The book is based on countless visits to sacred places, mountains, lakes, temples, and shrines, and interviews with monks, priests, shamans, pilgrims, aspirants, and members of the Japanese public. Carmen performed the *kaihōgyō*, an arduous ritual circumambulation of Mt Hiei, failure at which was said to require suicide. She participated in the week long *akinomine* austerity on Mt. Haguro in Yamagata Prefecture. Three times she ascended Ontake, the sacred volcano that straddles the border between Nagano and Gifu prefectures. Her accounts of these exertions, however, do not alone account for the book's success. The prose seems, on occasion, to have absorbed something of the numinous quality of its subject matter, and there are passages of vividly evocative scenic description and of narrative skill. Pervading the book is a deeply felt poignancy, deriving in part from the fortitude of many of its subjects, often driven by adversity to seek shamanic help, and in part from its documentation of a fragile, vanishing world.

Since *The catalpa bow,* Carmen has produced a series of articles, papers, and addresses on Japanese religion and folklore. These have covered a variety of subjects, including animal witchcraft, pilgrims in Japanese history, healing, Shintō mythology, the Daijōsai (enthronement) ceremony. She has also collaborated with the distinguished Cambridge historian of Han China, Michael Loewe, on editing two volumes of essays which reflect their shared interest in cosmology and divination. Meanwhile, Japanese religion still retains its fascination, not least because, as Carmen expresses it, 'the old constantly appears in a new guise'. Some traditional themes, the power of trance and the role of the *miko,* for instance, reappear in the 'new–new religions'. Carmen has now conducted the basic research for another study, on the folkloric figure of the *ijin* (outsider) in Japan. From 1977 until his death in 1994, she was given invaluable guidance in her work by Professor Gorai Shigeru, a scholar of folklore, whom she describes as possessed of phenomenally wide reading, extraordinary energy, and imaginative insight into the inner workings of Japanese religion. Through him, she also met his remarkable French pupil, Dr Anne Bouchy. Much of her more recent research has also been pursued travelling in the company of her friend the Ryūgū Otohime (Princess of the Dragon Palace), founder of the Ryūgū Kazoku religion, a figure whom Carmen sees as re-enacting in a modern context many of the basic themes of traditional Japanese religion.

In addition to Columbia, Carmen has held Visiting Professorships in the Department of Religion at Princeton (1979) and the Department of East Asian Studies of the University of Toronto (1992). She has been Visiting Fellow at the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies, University of Kyoto (1986), and for some years has taught annually at the Ueno Gakuen University, Tokyo, where she has been appointed to the position of Professor. Carmen has been elected Honorary Member of the Folklore Society (1988), of which she was also President in 1983; Fellow of the British Academy (1989); Honorary Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford (1991); and Fellow Emeritus of Clare Hall, Cambridge (1992), where she had been a Fellow while in post

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as University Lecturer in Japanese. The Japanese Government appointed her a member of the Order of the Precious Crown for services to Japanese Studies in 1988. She retired from her Cambridge teaching post in 1992, and lives in the village of Grantchester, to the south of Cambridge.

In the more than four decades since her first visits, Japan has changed considerably. With the massive rise in economic prosperity, much of the old way of life has disappeared. On her first visit, Carmen recalls, life was hard for Japanese as well as for foreign visitors. In the fifties, she had felt it necessary to conceal the financial value of her scholarship grant, as it embarrassingly exceeded the salaries of her professors. Conditions were harsh; she would need five sweaters as well as two futon to stay warm on winter nights in her six-mat room. But there was a whole world to explore. Every walk encountered something interesting; every excursion yielded a new acquaintance, or afforded a vivid glimpse of the past. She quotes an expression of which D. T. Suzuki was fond, '*enzan mugen sōsō*' (the distant hills, unbounded, blue-green, layer on layer). Forty years on, Japan's new-found material wealth has dimmed that bright perspective. However, Carmen believes, Shintō, Buddhism, and the values of the older Japanese culture can still teach us, in these days of ecological peril, that nature is potentially holy and shares the same existential ground as ourselves, our Buddha Nature; this is a lesson that we must learn, if life on our planet is to survive.

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PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS OF CARMEN BLACKER

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1959 'Ōhashi Totsuan: a study in anti-Western thought', *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Third Series, 7: 147–68.

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1979 『梓弓』 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten) (a translation of *The catalpa bow* into Japanese by Akiyama Satoka).
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1985 'A room with a gourd: recollections of Osaragi Jiro', *Cambridge Review*, 2286 (1985): 84–85.
1986 *The catalpa bow: a study of shamanistic practices in Japan*, second edition (London: George Allen and Unwin).
1986 'The dark flower', *Temenos*, 7: 298–303.
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