

makes it at first hard to locate, on the basis of the translation, exactly what kind of self-understanding is finally being encouraged. A check of the original Japanese text, however, displays a considerably less ambiguous quality: allusions and terms which seem elliptical and thin when rendered in English are fully semantically networked and rich in Japanese, with the results that Ama's implicit critical Buddhist standpoint becomes far more lucid. Space does not allow an exploration of the numerous points of linguistic difficulty involved, but in sum this translation seems to be another example where a straightforward rendering of a text aimed at a Japanese audience cannot have anywhere near the same resonance or communicative success for an English language readership.

One final general observation: it can be noted that Ama strikingly has virtually nothing to say (in either the Japanese or English texts) about any of the disputed new religions, for example either Aum Shinrikyo or the Soka Gakkai. This choice is consistent with the fact that (at least in this little book) Ama's mildness does not reflect the more deeply worried sense manifested by many other up-to-the minute observers (opinions compiled in English for example in John Nathan's recent *Japan Unbound* (2004)) that contemporary Japanese society – at least in part because of its lack of significant consensus around existentially serious matters – may be at the moment considerably more volatile and fragile than is commonly realized. Whether Ama despite his reasonably critical Shin spirit is overlooking a more profound crisis in Japanese religious life or not, only time will tell.

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*Spirit of Christ Inculturated: A Theological Theme Implicit in Shusaku Endo's Literary Works.*

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Christianity's missionary encounter with the cultural 'other' continues to be revisioned in light of wider debates about Eurocentrism, orientalism, colonial practice, and such essentialized dichotomies as monotheism versus polytheism. The religious pluralism of John Hick and others gains salience in this increasingly timely enterprise. Shusaku Endo (1923-1996), a Japanese novelist who became inspired by Hick's work, presents a case where such revisioning takes the form of literary reflection on the broader cultural and historical issues implicit in one's religious conversion. Endo witnesses the trials of a Christian community as it assimilates its adopted faith in light of indigenous sensibilities. This context of Christian inculturation within the religious milieu of Japan is the focus of a doctoral dissertation, *Spirit of Christ Inculturated*, by Emi Mase-Hasegawa. Recently published through the Center for Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University, the study examines Endo's literary corpus as the embodiment of an evolving "implicit theology" of inculturation.

Mase-Hasegawa's study encompasses Endo's novels, essays, journal notes, and interviews. However, it focuses especially on the novels *Silence* (1966) and *Deep River* (1993) as milestones in Endo's personal struggle to define a Japanese Christian identity. The study comprises six chapters and includes a biographical and bibliographical appendix outlining Endo's life and works. Chapter one introduces terms, methods, and overall approach, while chapter two discusses the backdrop of Japan's religious landscape as the context of Endo's experience and thought, focusing particularly on a conception of "basic Shintō" (*koshintō*). Chapter three provides biographical details and Endo's major themes as a Japanese Christian. Then, chapters four and five examine in depth what Mase-Hasegawa identifies as the second and third phases in the development of Endo's understanding of a Japanese Christianity, each chapter framed by a close reading of the dominant themes in the respective phases' principal works. The final, sixth chapter summarizes her conclusions.

Endo died within three years of completing *Deep River*, leaving largely implicit a more encompassing idea of Christian inculturation than he had conceived hitherto. Mase-Hasegawa states that an objective of her study will be to "follow his intention and inductively develop his attempt at Christian inculturation in the frame of religious pluralism" (20), taking that of John Hick as her model. Her approach is based on two principal theoretical perspectives. One is typological, tracing the historical arc of Christianity in Japan in terms of paradigms from the contextual theology of Stephan Bevans and the reception model of Takeda Kiyoko. The other perspective, more fundamental to Mase-Hasegawa's overall approach, relies on the modern academic concept of *koshintō* promoted by Yamaori Tetsuo, Kubota Nobuhiro, and others. This idea postulates a deeply sedimented matrix of beliefs and attitudes constitutive of the Japanese people's religious and cultural reflexes, which comes to expression in the form of Shintō religion but which also shapes Japan's imported religions. It is her central hypothesis that this largely unconscious "spiritual" sensibility both influences and is implicit within Endo's conception of inculturated Christianity.

Mase-Hasegawa understands *koshintō* to be inherently pluralistic, grounded as it is in a polytheistic system of myriad *kami* spirits and deities. It is seen as one source of Japan's ancient and characteristic credo, "harmony in diversity" (*ta no wa*). Her second chapter discusses six constituent elements of *koshintō*: a syncretizing attitude, harmony in diversity, an emotional dimension, loyalty to nature, inclination to *amae* (dependency) as a social behavior, and a prominent feminine dimension of the divine. This feminine or maternal aspect is reflected, for example, in the veneration of the merciful Kannon (*Avalokitesvara*) among the Amida sects of Japanese Buddhism. Mase-Hasegawa also situates the discussion of *koshintō* in the context of two important exponents of 20th century Japanese philosophical and religious scholarship: Nishida Kitaro and, especially, Takizawa Katsumi, in whose "negative," Shinran-influenced theology she locates a congruent concept of "harmony in diversity." These reference points give depth and context to her approach to Endo's pluralism.

Mase-Hasegawa's interpretation thus largely turns on the idea of *koshintō*. Since it is held to determine Japanese spirituality and attitudes about religion, it can serve as an "analytical tool" (16) for assessing Endo's concept of inculturation. That is, inasmuch as the novelist's concept reflects the fundamentally pluralistic values of *koshintō*, it can be seen as a stance homologous to religious pluralism. She concludes that the idea of Christianity arrived at in *Deep River* represents a form of religious pluralism based on "a kenotic, a maternal, and what could be called a spiritual" (157) or "pneumatic" image of Christ grounded in universal love that, while reflecting the underlying values of *koshintō*, finally transcends any explicit Japanese point of reference and becomes universal.

Scholars generally agree that rituals and beliefs centered on *kami* veneration are quite ancient in Japan. It is well-known that written testimony for the term *shintō* itself does not emerge until the early 8th century, almost two hundred years after the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan in 538. The history of Shinto is intimately bound up with that of Japanese Buddhism and other imported Asian religions (Confucianism, Taoism, etc), in complex and politically motivated ways. Yet *koshintō* is a posited form, a reconstruction of a constitutive Japanese religiosity based largely on inferences from historical evidence. Mase-Hasegawa makes only fleeting reference to Kuroda Toshio's influential critique of the traditional, Ise-centric (and largely nationalistic) narrative of Shinto origins and history. Recent debate problematizes the application of any idea of "Shintō" to the prehistoric past of *kami*-focused belief and practice, such that the gesture begins to be regarded as anachronistic.

Given the importance of the idea of *koshintō* to the overall analysis of Endo's notion of inculturated Christianity in this study, one might wish for a more critical exposition of the concept. But to point this out in no way detracts from a broadly and rigorously investigated work of interpretive research, which places its author in the vanguard of scholarship on the theological implications of Endo's work. Mase-Hasegawa succeeds admirably in her stated hermeneutical aim "to bridge the gap between text and reader, theology and literature" (20). Her careful analysis of distinct phases in Endo's evolving conception of Christian inculturation sets a new framework for future study. In addition, the appendix provides an extensive English-language bibliography of Endo's complete literary output, with an up-to-date list of foreign-language translations of his works. Altogether the study is a boon for readers lacking facility in Japanese.

Endo is an "object" of Mase-Hasegawa's study, but she regards him as her "predecessor in the field of inculturation" (19). Here, hidden in a footnote, she makes an important comment. In teasing out the implicit theology in Endo's literary work, she follows Werner Jeanrond's idea of theology as a hermeneutical undertaking which, as she quotes, "works toward the most adequate interpretation theory by participating in a worldwide interdisciplinary conversation on human understanding." This suggests something of the broader importance of *Spirit of Christ Inculturated*: it contributes to this worldwide conversation by situating the experience of inculturation under the banner of the

“dialogue of civilizations.” Taking a stand in religious pluralism, efforts like Mase-Hasegawa’s aim beyond tolerance toward real coexistence and mutual respect among peoples, religions, and societies.

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