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Notes

Introduction

- 1 These observations have been made by the authors of this book in their interactions with Agonshū particularly from around 2010. We discuss these issues further in Chapter 4.
- 2 Star Festival is direct translation of *Hoshi Matsuri*, although, as we note in Chapter 4, Agonshū developed a new official English title for the event in the mid-1990s. In this book, we normally will refer to the festival by using its Japanese title.
- 3 Here we would like to thank Birgit Staemmler, of Tübingen University, Germany, for her help and support in these projects. The website is run under the auspices of the World Religions and Spirituality Project, overseen by David Bromley, of Virginia Commonwealth University, and we thank him for his help and support. See <http://wrlrels.org/SpecialProjects/JapaneseNewReligions/JapaneseNewReligions.htm>.
- 4 Studies about the 'new religions of Japan' have been numerous in Western languages (notably English) and Japanese, both treating the idea of 'new religions' (*shinshūkyō*) as a collective phenomenon, and dealing with particular movements as examples of this collectivity. See, for example, in English, Thomsen (1963); McFarland (1967); Davis (1980); Hardacre (1984; 1986); Earhart (1989); Astley (2006); Staemmler and Dehn (2011); Reader (2015); in Japanese, Murakami (1975); Numata (1988); Inoue et al. (1991); Inoue (1992); and Shimazono (1994).
- 5 Although we, in Chapters 1 and 6 in particular, raise questions about the use of the term 'new religion' we use it here and elsewhere in this book as a matter of convenience, given that the term has become so widely used that it is essentially normative in Japan.

1 Situating Agonshū: The Concept of 'New Religions' in Modern Japan

- 1 See Reader (2015) for a downloadable and extensive overview of this topic, along with the various sources cited thus far in this chapter.
- 2 These include having a designated responsible person who is answerable legally for the movement's activities and affairs, possessing a belief system, nurturing followers, performing religious rites and having places of worship.
- 3 In the most recent *Shūkyō Nenkan* (Bunkachō 2017) it is listed in administrative terms under the category of a single self-standing Buddhist organization (p. 137) and under 'other' (*sono ta*) as a Buddhist group.
- 4 We stress 'Japanese roots' here because as a rule religious traditions (notably Christianity) that come from outside Japan and may be 'new' in Japanese terms tend not to be portrayed as 'new religions'.

- 5 Nishiyama (1990) himself later rejected the term, for example.
- 6 The *Shinshūkyō Jiten* (Dictionary of New Religions) compiled by Japanese scholars in 1991 (Inoue et al. 1991) had entries for over 300 movements and the data base of the Religious Information Research Center in Tokyo numbers between 300 and 400 groups in this category (Staemmler and Dehn 2011: 5).
- 7 See the series of articles in *Nova Religio* on this issue by Barker (2004), Melton (2004), Bromley (2004) and Reader (2005).
- 8 Buddhism's entry into Japan is generally dated as in around 538 CE. While scholars debate when it is viable to refer to an independent Shinto tradition, it is clear that *kami* worship (a basis of Shinto) and Shinto shrines predate Buddhism's entry.
- 9 For more discussions on such issues and the image of established traditions such as Buddhism being out of touch, see Murai (2010), Nelson (2012), Reader (2011) and Ukai (2015).
- 10 See Reader (1994: 58 fn. 32) for further discussion.
- 11 On the use of *jakyō*, see Dorman (2012: 25); Ketelaar (1993: 42). See also Sawada (2004).
- 12 For a discussion of such state suppressions, see Stalker (2008) and Staemmler (2011a: 27) (the latter of which lists several other suppressions in this period). For a discussion of another case, Renmonkyō, see Inoue (1992); Sawada (2004).
- 13 See Dorman 2012 (esp. pp. 135–6) for a discussion of the media's self-perceived role in guarding society against new movements both in prewar and postwar Japan.
- 14 Various officials of new religions have highlighted their social welfare activities to the authors, especially in the aftermath of disasters such as the 2011 Tōhoku tsunami and earthquake, and complained that these are never featured in the media – even as the media draws attention to volunteering and relief efforts in general.
- 15 For a general discussion of media and establishment responses to Aum, see Baffelli and Reader (2012); for discussions of media constructions about 'the next Aum', see Wilkinson (2009); and for Panawave and its treatment by the media, see Dorman (2005).
- 16 Among the studies that have helped develop this more balanced assessment are several we have already mentioned, such as the works of Hardacre (1984, 1986) and Earhart (1989) in English and Murakami (1975), Shimazono (1992a), Inoue (1992) and Numata (1988) in Japanese.
- 17 The work of Kitagawa (1966: 333) is typical here in his comment that new religions 'offer nothing new, as far as their religious contents are concerned'.
- 18 Hubbard (1998: esp. 87–8). Hubbard also suggests that Buddhist Studies scholars have not taken this approach because they did not want to have to acknowledge such things.
- 19 For example, the *Besseki* lectures (a set of ten lectures for members) outline core teachings and can be attended at Tenrikyō's headquarters at Tenri on a regular basis. The healing ritual called Sazuke (the Divine Grant) can only be administered by a *yoboku* (an initiated member), who has attended the *Besseki* nine times. For details, see Katō (2017).
- 20 Konkōkyō is a good example here, as it publishes a glossary that accompanies its canonical text, the *Konkōkyō Kyōten*, and explains the nuances and meanings of terms used in the writings of its founder (Konkōkyō Honbu Kyōchō 1983).
- 21 Both authors, when interviewing figures from Kōfuku no Kagaku, have had this phrase directed at them; Shimada (1995), too, notes its usage when he questioned Kōfuku no Kagaku's representatives about the group. In its early years the group also introduced a system of examinations based on knowledge of Ōkawa's books.

- 22 According to the group, Ōkawa entered the Guinness Book of Records in 2011, having published 52 books in 2010. His production increased to 161 books in 2014 and the total number currently is 2,600 volumes. See <https://happy-science.jp/ryuho-okawa/book/> and <http://happy-science.org/ryuho-okawa/> (both accessed 3 July 2017).
- 23 In the early 1950s, for example, officials in the Sōtō Zen sect referred to the need to adopt the methods of new religions in order to remain relevant, and the sect thereafter began producing a variety of publicity and teaching materials that were very similar to those of the new religions. As a result Sōtō began to produce a large amount of pamphlets, monthly magazines and so on – in a similar vein to the new religions – in order to try and counter the appeal of the new religions and maintain the loyalty of their existing followers (Reader 1983). Other Buddhist sects have done similarly – although the general pattern of declining affiliation in the older Buddhist sects suggests that this strategy has not always worked (Reader 2011).
- 24 See also Shimada (2005 and 2010) for two highly critical discussions of the costs of death rituals in the context of Buddhism in Japan.
- 25 This was a recurrent criticism of Aum Shinrikyō, for example (Reader 2000a: 131–2), while numerous magazines and popular books by academics and journalists have focused expressly on the topic of new religions and money (e.g. Shimada 2008; Sakurai 2011; Yamada 2012).
- 26 Debates about the nature of ‘being Japanese’ have of course been discussed widely through analyses of the ‘*nihonjinron*’ (discourses about being Japanese) debates that were prevalent especially in the period – the 1980s – when Agonshū became popular.
- 27 GLA is the official name of the movement. It is an acronym for ‘God Light Association’ and is, as far as we are aware, the only movement in Japan to use solely an English-language title for itself. This usage in itself is striking and conveys an implication that, while being Japanese (and its focus on spirits, healing and the like locates it very much within the Japanese new religions spectrum), it also embraces Western and modern notions and themes.
- 28 We use these three to illustrate the diversity of types of movement alongside some unifying themes. Each was formed at a different era – Agonshū in 1978, Kurozumikyō in the early nineteenth century and Reiyūkai in 1924 – and has a different doctrinal orientation: Agonshū has an esoteric Buddhist framework supplemented by Shinto deities and folk concepts; Reiyūkai is a Nichiren Buddhist movement; and Kurozumikyō emerged from and has close ritual and other links with Shinto.
- 29 Although this theme emerged most potently in Aum (see Reader 2000a for some examples, notably p. 108), it was a theme that could be found among members of other groups such as Agonshū and Kōfuku no Kagaku that we have met. This does not mean they rejected the materialistic world (indeed, Agonshū and Kōfuku no Kagaku followers we have met often have emphasized an interest in such things but have also sought to augment this with what they see as spiritual development).
- 30 Oomoto under Deguchi Nao’s leadership is a good example of a movement that was both xenophobic and hostile to Western medical practices such as vaccinations; Stalker (2008: 210, fn. 121), for example, notes that Deguchi Nao refused to allow her granddaughter to be vaccinated against smallpox because she thought the vaccination was a foreign pollutant.
- 31 Or, perhaps, although we have been unable to fully ascertain this, only at such institutions.

- 32 These positions are set out in pamphlets Agonshū produces as introductions to the faith, such as its dual language publication (Agonshū, ed., nd., pp. 11–13 of the English section and pp. 11–12 of the Japanese).

2 The Story of a Religious Founder: Kiriyaama Seiyū, Turmoil, Charisma and Experience

- 1 We note also that Japanese scholars have commonly used ‘charisma’ (Japanese: *karisuma*) as a foreign loanword in their discussions. See, for example, Kawamura (1981); Numata (1987 and 1988); Shūkyō Shakaigaku Kenkyūkai (1987). More generally, on leaders of Japanese new religions, see Ooms (1993); Baffelli (2005); Stalker (2008); McLaughlin (2009); Dorman (2012); and Chilson (2014).
- 2 We are not suggesting that female founders such as Nakayama and Deguchi *only* became religious founders because other avenues were shut off to them but are noting that the new religions offered scope for female participation that was not available in some other public spheres.
- 3 For this reason Staemmler and Dehn (2011) use the phrase ‘establishing the revolutionary’ in the title of their overview of Japanese new religions.
- 4 We should note that there are exceptions, such as, for example, Sōka Gakkai, whose political activism led to the establishment of a political party, the Kōmeitō. On Kōmeitō, see Ehrhardt et al. (2014). On religion and politics in postwar Japan, see also Nakano (2003) and Tsukada (2015).
- 5 A striking example, of course, is Asahara Shōkō of Aum Shinrikyō, venerated as a guru and spiritual master by his disciples and pilloried in multiple ways as a charlatan and worse in the media and in general public view (Reader 2000a).
- 6 At the 2017 Hoshi Matsuri one of the authors was approached by a *Japan Times* journalist seeking comments about the event from non-Japanese visitors; he confirmed to us that the article he had been commissioned to write was, indeed, a paid-for advertisement and that Agonshū had been doing this annually for some time.
- 7 This phrase, initially reported in the *Mainichi Daily News* in October 1987, has been recycled by Agonshū and used as a self-description as well as becoming a phrase commonly cited in academic studies of the group (see, e.g. Reader 1988).
- 8 For an analysis of the text, see Baffelli (2005).
- 9 See Ooms (1993: 21–33) for an account of Nao’s life that draws on Oomoto sources.
- 10 This account is drawn together from narratives in Yajima (1985), Murō (1987), Reader (1994) and Benod (2013), along with sermons and publications by Kiriyaama and testimonies and interviews with Agonshū officials at various periods from 1987 to 2017. It also incorporates narratives of his life produced by Agonshū and broadcast at his funeral and at the 2017 Hoshi Matsuri. The first two cited authors were involved, we understand, with Agonshū at the time of writing their accounts.
- 11 It is unclear how long he spent in prison. While Benod (2013: 162) says he served ten months in prison, both Reader (1988: 246) and Yajima (1985: 48–9) say it was six months. The account of the leader’s life presented in the text *Genze jōbutsu* (Kiriyaama 1983) does not specify how long the sentence was.
- 12 This was how it was portrayed in 1987 and 1988 in sermons attended by one of the authors (see Reader 1988, 1991).

- 13 See Reader (1994: 59, fn. 33). Although Kakida (1984: 63–4) claims that Kiriyaama's account of his practices and links with Shingon Buddhism was false, there appears sufficient evidence to show that he did undertake various practices in the Kongōin branch of Shingon Buddhism and received an ordination there; see also Benod (2013: 164, fn. 345).
- 14 It was in this area that one of the authors had a chance encounter in 2010 with an Agonshū priest, who confirmed that the movement was struggling to gain new followers (see Reader 2012: 20, fn. 10); interestingly, the movement's centre there still had the old name, Kannon Jikeikai, on its door.
- 15 It is unclear how many people were involved in it though it probably was only a few hundred at most. One of us (Reader) in 1987 met members of Agonshū who had been in the Jikeikai in the 1960s, so it is evident that Kiriyaama did at least get some followers early on. According to the annual religious yearbook published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in Japan, the recorded membership for Kannon Jikeikai rose from 500 to 18,500 between 1976 and 1977. In 1978 they claimed 20,200 members (Bunkachō 1977: 197; 1979).
- 16 The *goma* ritual is also used in a number of new religions as well that draw inspiration from the esoteric tradition, such as Bentenshū and Shinnyoen.
- 17 This is, of course, the Agonshū view. See Reader (1994: 49).
- 18 The term 'boom' (*būmu*) is widely used in Japanese media to indicate popular trends, which tend to disappear rather quickly, being replaced with a new fashion or popular topic. According to Skov (1995: 175), '[T]he Japanese word boom refers to more than consumer trends: environmental problems, economic fluctuations, political issues, cultural debates – along with television series, writers and models – have been popularized and then forgotten according to the same temporal logic.'
- 19 In this dual-language booklet the Japanese text translates the same as the English cited here except that in Japanese the term 'Shaka' (i.e. Shakyamuni) is used whereas in English it is 'Laud' (*sic*) Buddha.
- 20 Ōkawa Ryūhō's claim to the mantle of original Buddhism did not appear to be grounded in the type of study and reading that both Aum and Agonshū claimed went into their understandings. For example, Ōkawa and his followers disciples – after a fractious televised debate with Aum members that involved each group making claims that they represented true Buddhism – for not having a sound grasp of Buddhist texts (Watanabe 1997: 37–8).
- 21 Reader (2018). On Oomoto and millennialism, see Ooms (1993) and Berthon (1985).
- 22 The Western calendar is used in Japan alongside the traditional one based on Imperial reigns.
- 23 We will look more clearly at these issues of millennialism and hopes for world salvation (which were a cardinal element in Agonshū's teaching) in the next chapter.
- 24 This pattern of attribution (materialism and hence destruction as a product of Western civilization, while the solution is grounded in the 'spirituality of the East') is a recurrent theme in Japanese cultural discourses, notably in the highly nationalistic *Nihonjinron* ('debates about being Japanese') discourses: on this issue, see Befu (2001 and 2009).
- 25 Nostradamus Quatrain X.72; see <http://www.predictions-nostradamus.com/x72.htm>. This phrase is often rendered or thought to refer to a 'King of the Mongols' – hence the way it was translated into Japanese linked the rise of this king to a figure 'from the East'.

- 26 On 'spirituality' in Japan, see also Horie (2009 and 2011). On New Age in Japan see Haga and Kisala (1995)
- 27 http://www.agon.org/en/about/page_b3.html. Retrieved 7 August 2017.
- 28 See Reader (1988: 242, fn. 5) for further discussion about the difficulties of finding out what motivated the Sri Lankans in this context.
- 29 http://www.agon.org/en/about/page_b3.html. Retrieved 7 August 2017.
- 30 Some scholars have argued that this pattern of according divine (or similar) status to founders of new religions is grounded also in the notion, prevalent in prewar Japan and affirmed by State Shinto (and still found in some nationalist circles thereafter) that the Emperor was a living deity. For some scholars, this reverence for the founders of new religions and their portrayal as living deities was a replacement of the prewar veneration of the Emperor who, in post-1945 Japan, had renounced his divinity. For a critical account of this theory, see Rajana (1975).
- 31 Agonshū also has produced a booklet that it hands out to prospective followers, and that has the same Japanese title as the 1993 book. It contains the text of a sermon by Kiriyaama in 1992, and outlines the themes developed in the 1993 book.
- 32 Subsequently, we should note, Agonshū has emphasized that its prime links with the Tibetan form of Buddhism has come via Bhutan and Bhutanese Buddhism (see Chapter 5).
- 33 For a photographic account, accompanied by a narrative text, of the Hoshi Matsuri, see <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/publications/photo-archive/nc-cat/1/>. Especially for Kiriyaama's activities at the festival, see <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/publications/photo-archive/nc-image/109/>.
- 34 www.hirakawa-shuppan.co.jp.
- 35 For an example of advertisement text using these statements, see *Shūkan Sunday* July 1987: 232.
- 36 <http://www.agon.org/en/books/>. The book in question is Kiriyaama (2000b), a translation of Kiriyaama (2000c).
- 37 Fukami was a major donor to the International Shinto Foundation, which was involved in supporting the conference.
- 38 <http://happy-science.org/ryuho-okawa/>. Accessed 15 August 2017.

3 Teaching as Practice: Ritual, Benefits and the Costs of Devotion

- 1 Officials have noted that, at the peak of the movement's growth in the 1980s, every year a number of members of the general public who came to watch the Hoshi Matsuri signed up to join Agonshū on the day.
- 2 These are the translations as given in Reader (1988: 244).
- 3 It has been a common feature of new movements that they have a hierarchic dimension in which senior disciples who have been in the movement for some time and who have helped introduce new members, in effect become their teachers and guides. This pattern (often referred to as the *oyabun* framework), in which earlier members become the 'parent' (*oya*) for new recruits they have brought in, is found widely among new movements in Japan (Hambrick 1974: 237).
- 4 On ancestor rituals in Agonshū, see also Prohl (2004).
- 5 See Kiriyaama's (*Agon Magazine* 2012: 18) response, in the Question and Answer session in *Agon Magazine*, to a question about whether those who fall into the hells at

death remain there eternally. Kiriya affirms the notion of transmigration and says any spirit can in time attain higher realms, but he implies this is easier for Agonshū and that those who are non-believers are likely to initially go to the hells. As with the world of Japanese Buddhism, there seems to be a somewhat indistinct area here, in which Agonshū speaks of the spirits of the dead remaining present in and affecting this world, and going in a cycle of rebirths to other realms at death.

- 6 Also cited in Benod (2013: 323). See also the series of videos on Agonshū on YouTube that express this notion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0P08rtAGy8>.
- 7 See Ambros (2015); Inose (2017); Kawahashi (2017); and Kawahashi and Kobayashi (2017) for discussions of gender-related issues, and notably, the prejudices in gender terms against women across the religious spectrum in Japan, and notably in Buddhism and Buddhist-related movements.
- 8 Not all of the movements of the 1980s were so 'modern' in this sense; Kōfuku no Kagaku, for example, appears more conservative in terms of gender issues than, for instance, Aum or Agonshū.
- 9 On Shugendō and gender issues, see Kobayashi (2017) and also Blacker (1999; (1975): 215–16), who outlines how female practitioners on the Yoshino-Kumano Shugendō pilgrimage had to follow a different route at some points because certain sacred mountains were (and some still are) prohibited for females.
- 10 In Japanese 'magic' can be rendered by terms such as *majutsu* (a term with underlying negative implications associated with 'black magic' and sorcery) and *jujutsu*, neither of which are used in Agonshū (for recent uses of these terms, see Horie [2015]). Agonshū does at times use the word *fushigi* (wonder, marvel) to refer to the ability of its rituals to help people realize their wishes (e.g. leaflets for the Hoshi Matsuri we collected in 2017 talk of how '*fushigini onegaigoto ga kanau!*' 'wonderfully, one's requests are realised' [Agonshū 2017] but the pamphlet emphasizes that such realization of wishes is based in identifying particular unhappy spirits, performing correct rituals for them and thus making them benevolent).
- 11 This term was used by Kiriya in a sermon delivered on 16 January 1992 and printed in Agonshū's membership magazine (*Agon Magazine* 2017, 5/6: 5–22).
- 12 This was the case in 2012, and is the sum reported also in Yamada (2012: 161) and Benod (2013: 183); as far as we are aware, it remains so.
- 13 Around £260 as of December 2017 prices. Benod (2013: 233–6) also provides a full description of the items involved.
- 14 However, we should note that we are not and have never been members but we have attended various Agonshū rituals without being asked to provide a card. How closely the issue of membership is enforced is unclear to us but we have not come across any examples of people being excluded from a centre for such reasons.
- 15 The eightfold path (right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration) is set out along with other elements in what Agonshū designates as the true Buddhist path on its website http://www.agon.org/en/about/page_a4.html.
- 16 For a more detailed discussion of this issue and the ways in which the term '*shugyō*' may be used in Japanese contexts, see Reader (1991: 128).
- 17 See, for example, the movement's website account of a training event for members in which those who took part in a particular event in 2017 are referred to as *shugyōsha*: <http://www.agon.org/blog/hokkaido/blog000715.php>.
- 18 This outline of practices comes from a standard Agonshū publication, titled simply Agonshū, and published in 2014 as a basic guide to the religion.

- 19 For a further discussion of the role and symbolism of cleaning such spaces in Japanese religious contexts, see Reader (1995).
- 20 These points were made to one of the authors during interviews on 1 July 1987, with three young Agonshū devotees who worked for one of the movement's magazines.
- 21 Benod (2013: 229–31) even suggests, based on his experiences, that sometimes one can short-circuit the need for extensive training by just paying a fee; in his case he also seems to have negotiated a lower fee, doubtless because he was a foreign researcher and the movement was keen to get him involved in Agonshū.
- 22 For a discussion of cold water-related austerities and standing under waterfalls, see Blacker (1999 (1975): passim, esp. 142–5 and 171–2); and Reader (1991: 122–3). The statement about such water austerities disciplining the mind and body (*shinjin o tanren shimasu*) comes from Agonshū (nd. but probably 2014: 7).
- 23 This is unless they are at the very highest ranks within the movement, when they wear purple. At the 2017 Hoshi Matsuri, Wada Naoko wore purple robes.
- 24 These initially were carried out under the auspices of one of the smaller Shingon Buddhist sects (Reader 1994).
- 25 It also encourages *gomagi kanjin* for other of its rituals (such as the aforementioned monthly rituals) that involve *goma* fires and sticks, but it is the Hoshi Matsuri on which the main *kanjin* activities and expectations are centred.
- 26 Benod (2013), for example, does not discuss the term and nor do earlier studies such as Reader (1988, 1994) or Numata (1988). Agonshū's website does not mention the term in its English section and while mention is made in several places about the act of doing *gomagi kanjin* (i.e. soliciting sales and donations of *goma* sticks) for various rituals, there appears to be no explanation per se about the practice anywhere on the site.
- 27 The site is <http://agama.zouri.jp> and the text is available at http://agama.zouri.jp/gomabook_top.html. Accessed October 2017. The booklet that has been uploaded on this site was probably produced in 1995 or 1996.
- 28 <http://www.agon.org/blog/osaka/blog000670.php>.
- 29 <http://www.agon.org/blog/hiroshima/blog000590.php>.
- 30 One of the authors recalls being at the Hoshi Matsuri in the late 1980s with some visitors from outside Japan, who decided to purchase and write *gomagi* for world peace because it seemed, to them, to be a good thing to do and be part of. Neither of the current authors has ever felt the inclination to do this.
- 31 See, for example, Yamada (2012: 160–8). This is one of numerous populist publications in Japan – usually focused on new religions – that depict religions largely through the guise of money-making (or money-grubbing) organizations. Agonshū is normally one of the movements featured in such types of publication.
- 32 Discussion about and criticisms of *kanjin* and donations in Agonshū are frequent in online forums such as Yahoo Chiebukuro, Q&A sites and 2channel.
- 33 For accounts of this ritual, see Reader (1991: 225–8) and Baffelli (2016: 74–6).
- 34 Agonshū publishes a regular newsletter (*Meitoku Nyu-su*) about the *meitokusai* rituals; issue 245, in May 2012, for example, paid homage to the Japanese war dead and stated that Japan's later prosperity was built on their sacrifice.
- 35 This description comes from Agonshū's website: http://www.agon.org/schedule/schedule_000019.php.
- 36 <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/publications/photo-archive/nc-cat/1/>. This is the Photo Archive of Japanese Religions, housed in the Nanzan University website: <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/activities/photo-archive-of-japanese-religions/>.

- 37 <http://www.agon.org/hoshimatsuri/e/about.html> and <http://www.agon.org/hoshimatsuri/about.html>. Both accessed 7 November 2017.
- 38 On the worship of stars in Japan, see also Dolce (2006).
- 39 While Hayek (2011: 368) has commented that divination in Japan has not received much substantive academic treatment compared to that given to the topic in Chinese contexts, there have been a number of useful accounts of the practice, including several on Taoist-related divinatory systems (e.g. Hayashi 2006) while Blacker (1999) makes a number of references to astrology and divination as elements in Japanese ascetic and folk culture. See also Hayashi and Hayek (2013) and Suzuki (1995) for a general overview of divination in contemporary Japanese religious contexts.
- 40 This is the term used on its website (http://www.agon.org/en/schedule/page_b.html) and in promotional literature for the event. Kiriya (2005: 7 and 58–9) outlines how this change of name and increased focus on Shinto came about – a theme we discuss further in the following chapter.
- 41 It was as a result of finding a flier for the 1987 Hoshi Matsuri in his mailbox in Kobe (where he lived at the time) that Reader first became interested in Agonshū and studying it.
- 42 For example, one non-Japanese visitor to the festival, cited in Agonshū's members' magazine, commented that he had been made aware of the event by the Kyoto Tourist office (*Agon Magazine* 2012: 60).
- 43 In this context we draw attention to other means of making wishes and praying for the deceased in Japan, such as amulets, votive tablets (*ema*) and the like (see Reader and Tanabe 1998).
- 44 According to Agonshū, this development came after it had conducted a major fire ritual at Ise in October 1993, to commemorate the rebuilding of the Ise Shinto shrines. In interviews with officials of the movement in February 2017 they stated that the pyres still represented the *taizōkai* and *kongōkai* as well as the more recent designations, even if the former terms were less prominent now.
- 45 While this is something of a simplified generalization (Buddhism, e.g. has a strong this-worldly orientation in Japan alongside its concerns with the dead), it represents a standard perspective noted about Japan (see Reader 1991).
- 46 In 1988, for example, a delegation of Egyptian religious leaders was present and in 2017 Bhutanese monks played a role in the rituals. Agonshū's membership magazine often, after the annual festival, contains reports in which members of the public are cited as expressing their gratitude at being able to aid in the mission of world peace by attending the festival.
- 47 http://www.agon.org/history/history_000035.php. Interestingly Agonshū's website does not, in either its English-language or Japanese-language history pages of the movement, refer to any of its earlier (i.e. pre-2000) overseas fire rituals but only mentions those from 2000 onwards.
- 48 Agonshū's website states that the 2008 event was in Israel, whereas the 2013 one was in Jerusalem (without mentioning a country for the latter): <http://www.agon.org/history/>.
- 49 See the full-page article that appeared (as a paid advertisement) in the *Japan Times*, 20 December 2010, for an account of this event, and, for a live stream of the ritual, see <http://commonpassion.org/announcement/one-peace-live-the-buddhist-maya-aura-festival-for-world-peace-november-7-2010/>.

- 50 *Agon Magazine* (2012: 2). The term ‘*bunmei*’ can have nationalist connotations and was used by activists in the period after the 1868 Meiji Restoration who were intent on building a new civilization in Japan (Gluck 1985).
- 51 See the report in *Agon Magazine* (2012: 8–12).

4 From the World to Japan: The Nationalism of an Ageing Movement

- 1 See Reader (2000a: 260 n. 71) for further discussion.
- 2 The term ‘catastrophic millennialism’ – indicating a form of millennialism in which disaster was an essential precursor of the advent of a new spiritual age – was initially suggested by Catherine Wessinger (1997) and developed further by her (Wessinger 2000: 8–9). It has come to be widely accepted in studies of millennialism and was used, for example, by Reader (2000a) in his analysis of Aum.
- 3 See <http://fakty.interia.pl/malopolskie/news-guru-sekty-w-oswiecimiu,nId,1128408>. Retrieved 14 August 2017. The authors would like to thank Paulina Kolata for translating this article for us. Other Polish magazine and online groups reported critical comments about the Agonshū event. See, for example: <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/who-donated-money-for-the-remembrance-mound-museum-rejected-support-from-a-questionable-donor,98.html>. Retrieved 14 August 2017.
- 4 By 2000 Nostradamus was, in effect, out of date, no longer a voice in the popular cultural context – a point brought home to one of the authors who, in 2002, came across a shelf of remaindered books about Nostradamus and his prophecies, outside a second-hand bookshop in the Jimbochō bookshop area of Tokyo. On sale for derisory sums of 100 yen each, the books had clearly passed their sell-by date.
- 5 It is not just new religions that face such problems or that resort to stratagems to boost their numbers and maintain a facade of continued success. Established Buddhist sects can also interpret their figures in inventive ways. As such, reported figures do not convey any realistic depiction of a movement’s strength at any time.
- 6 Data on Kōfuku no Kagaku’s membership are not published in the *Shūkyō Nenkan*. Current figures reported in Kōfuku no Kagaku’s publications claim around eleven million members.
- 7 Sometimes organizations do recognize the problem of numbers and accept there are gaps between official figures and active members; in the 1980s the Sōtō Buddhist sect reported membership figures well over 6 million in the annual Agency report but, at the same time, in a study carried out within the sect, it stated that it had only 287,000 active followers (Reader 1991: 9). Isaac Gagné (2013) reports that Kagamikyō amended its official membership numbers downwards from 140,000 to 6,000 in 2010 to reflect actual active engagement.
- 8 See also Reader (2012: 20 fn 10) for a conversation with an Agonshū priest who said the movement was experiencing similar problems of decline as other religious groups.
- 9 These observations of the 2017 festival were made by Reader, along with photographic evidence that contrasts with the crowds depicted in the 1987 and 1988 events and portrayed in the Nanzan photo archive: <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/publications/photo-archive/nc-cat/1/>.
- 10 Katō’s account of Tenrikyō’s problems has been confirmed in interviews with officials in the movement (Reader 2012: 20), while the authors have also heard numerous

similar reports from officials in new religious movements about their problems in recent times. For further discussion of the issue of decline in religious organizations in Japan, see Reader (2012) and (on Buddhism in particular) Reader (2011) and Nelson (2012).

- 11 This was to an extent because many religious organizations, notably new movements in the wake of the Aum Affair, were concerned about the attacks that had been made on them in the media over many decades and were reluctant to expose themselves to the new online media (Baffelli, Reader and Staemmler 2011: 20–34); see also Fukamizu (2011: 39–61) for an example of an older established religious organization that faced similar problems that hampered its use of the internet.
- 12 Reader (1983) examines Sōtō Zen strategies to deal with such problems, showing that playing on a sense of loyalty and on retaining the bonds of existing members has been the way this has been handled, while his subsequent discussion of Buddhist problems in Japan (2011) indicates that this has not been a great success.
- 13 During a visit to Tenri headquarters on 26 January 2006, on the occasion of the anniversary of Nakayama Miki's death, one of the authors had discussions with various Tenrikyō priests and officials about their strategies and was shown a new anime film about the origins and teaching of the movement that had been commissioned recently by Tenrikyō. The aim was to present its teachings in a modern accessible form for a new generation. The recognition that it still is losing large numbers of members (see earlier in this chapter) suggests that thus far this new anime strategy has not been a success.
- 14 It was involved in the formation of the *Nihon o Mamorukai* (Society to Protect Japan), a right-wing grouping that was one of the two groups that merged in 1997 to form the Nippon Kaigi, the right-wing nationalist organization that has become prominent in recent times (McNeill 2015). Staemmler (2013) describes it as 'more overtly patriotic than many new religions', which is a polite way of putting it.
- 15 This was the view of the leader of another new religious movement that one of the authors talked to in February 2017. He was extremely impressed with Seichō no Ie's new direction and what its leader was trying to do – but he was also not sure how successful it would be, and he recognized that if he tried any similar innovations in his movement, it would upset older members upon whom the movement relied.
- 16 Gagné uses a pseudonym to refer to this group because of its small size and in order to maintain the privacy of those who provided him with information.
- 17 Other groups have sought to do this as well. In 2010 one of the authors was contacted by a PR company in the United Kingdom seeking advice (which the author felt unable to provide) because it was bidding for a contract to work for a Japanese new religion. The religion in question similarly was worried about declining membership in Japan and was looking to expand overseas to counterbalance this problem, and to do so wanted to engage a PR company to mastermind its activities. This strategy is used in World Mate, as Kawakami (2008) has indicated; in Chapter 2 we mentioned how its leader Fukami portrayed himself as a leading figure on the international stage, and this, as Kawakami indicates, helps attract followers in Japan.
- 18 Sōka Gakkai is the main outlier here, with a following in the United States and elsewhere, while some movements have built followings among Japanese diaspora communities notably in South America, and some (e.g. Sekai Kyūseikyō) have sought to establish followings in Africa; Sekai Kyūseikyō claims to have around 80,000 followers in that continent, although this is hardly a great number given Africa's population is, as of 2018, estimated to be 1.2 billion people:

- <http://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/africa-population/>. Retrieved 20 March 2018. Sakashita (1998) provides another example of the apparent lack of major success by Japanese new religions abroad in showing that Shinnyoen – one of the most successful movements in Japan – had not, by the late twentieth century, managed to attract any following among the local population in places such as the United Kingdom.
- 19 On the wider issues of Yasukuni, see the collection of essays in Breen (2008).
 - 20 See Mullins (2012a, b) for a discussion of the links between right-wing political groups and Shinto nationalists, and John Breen (2015: 5–6, 174) for the links between Abe Shinzō, the right-wing nationalist politician who has been elected as Japan's Prime Minister, and the Shinto shrines at Ise.
 - 21 This theme, known as the *honji suijaku* theory, posits that the Shinto gods are localized manifestations awaiting the coming of Buddhism so as to become enlightened. On various issues related to the complex relationship of the Buddhist and Shinto figures of worship, see Matsunaga (1969); Rambelli and Teeuwen (2003); and Sueki (2007).
 - 22 The ritual was not actually held within the precincts of the shrines but adjacent to them. In publications Agonshū tends to be somewhat vague on this point, so that casual readers might well assume that the ritual was actually held at and hosted by the Ise shrines. On the themes of the Ise shrine rebuilding processes that take place every twenty years, and the ways in which the rebuilding is portrayed in different ways and with different meanings, see Breen (2015).
 - 23 Details on Koizumi, who died in 1989 aged 83, are unclear, and we have had to rely largely on internet sources that provide some basic materials. For example, <http://blog.kawashima-seitai.com/?eid=1248343>. Accessed 27 March 2018. It appears that he was born in northern Japan, had Shinto connections, was associated with divination practices (which may have influenced Kiriyaama) and opened a number of kendo training centres in Japan, including one in Ise in 1961, where he normally resided. The account of his meeting with Kiriyaama comes from Kiriyaama (2005), in which Kiriyaama says he had mentioned this event often when speaking to disciples, but we have found no corroborative accounts beyond that of Kiriyaama himself.
 - 24 This identification is because the ideograms for *daikoku* can also be read as *ōkuni* (Reader and Tanabe 1998: 154).
 - 25 *Sore wa kuyashii. kuni no tame ni mo shinu koto mo dekinai no dakara.*
 - 26 *Sankei Shinbun* 15 August 2012 Advertisement special.
 - 27 The text in Japanese states: *Watashi wa, ima no nihonjin zenin ga taiheiyōsensō no izoku de aru to itte yoi to omoimasu* (Agonshū 2012: 1).
 - 28 *Yasukuni sanpai wa nihonjin toshite atarimae da to omoimasu.*
 - 29 See, for example, the following news articles about Ishihara: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/16/national/politics-diplomacy/ishihara-bows-wants-war-china-compares-hashimoto-young-hitler/#.WfESRh0dq> and <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/world/asia/shintaro-ishihara-right-wing-japanese-politician-makes-gains.html>.
 - 30 Although the term '*sensei*' is widely used in Japan to refer especially to those who are older than oneself, the recurrent use of the term by Ishihara has been taken by some Agonshū members to indicate the extent to which the politician respected and took inspiration from religious leader. It is unclear when the association began and thus far we have not been able to discover when the two first met. Ishihara had links with

- a number of new movements with nationalist orientations and this may in part be because of his many years in politics and his period as governor of Tokyo; see on all these points the discussion among members at https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q12165689432. Accessed 31 October 2017.
- 31 This dialogue was published also in the *Sankei shinbun* of 7 June 2012, and summarized online at <https://togetter.com/li/316770>. Accessed 31 October 2017.
 - 32 The *Sankei Shinbun* company, for example, published an English-language book titled 'History Wars' in 2015 that was sent to many foreign academics and that disputed records of Japanese wartime misdeeds and claimed such records were politically motivated propaganda used by foreign governments to keep Japan subservient (McNeill 2015).
 - 33 The *Sankei* and its affiliates (such as Sankei Square, its online outlet) appear to be the main (if not sole) area in which Agonshū places its paid Japanese-language articles; on its website Agonshū provides links to (sponsored and supportive) items about the movement in the press and these appear, in Japanese-language terms, to be invariably in the Sankei media conglomerate. In English Agonshū uses the *Japan Times*, the widest selling English daily in Japan.
 - 34 <http://www.sankeisquare.com/event/agon/index.html>. The Japanese here is: *Yasukuni de auo" to itteyutta karera e no kansha o wasurete wa nihon ni mirai wa nai*.
 - 35 <http://www.agon.org/en/history/>.
 - 36 *Japan Times*. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/07/07/national/rites-set-for-fallen-siberia-prisoners/#.Wfmwgxh0dq>.
 - 37 http://www.agon.org/history/history_000051.php. The text reads *Shiberia ni yokuryū sare gisei ni narareta kyū nihongun heishi yaku rokumannin (isetsu ni sujūmannin) no gorei o go kuyō suru tame ni* (In order to perform a memorial ritual for the 60,000 soldiers [according to some, many tens of thousands] of the former Japanese army who were interned and sacrificed in Siberia).
 - 38 There is thus a discrepancy with the English-language website, to the extent that this just mentions 'victims' and thus implies that the ritual did not single out and focus specifically on the Japanese dead; this may be an example of how sometimes Japanese movements use different vocabularies and modes of editing to convey a different nuance in materials focused more at a non-Japanese audience.
 - 39 http://www.agon.org/history/history_000071.php. The Japanese text reads: *go-eirei o rokujūnannen buri ni kokoku e otsureshita*.
 - 40 http://www.agon.org/history/history_000071.php. It remains unclear to us whether the repatriated spirits of Agonshū's voyages are also enshrined at Yasukuni, which is where the spirits of the war dead are normally enshrined, or whether Agonshū is trying to act like Yasukuni by doing such rituals of repatriation. We have sought to clarify the relationship between Yasukuni and Agonshū and have received a lengthy email communication from a shrine priest at Yasukuni on this matter. The email managed to carefully skirt around our questions in a polite Japanese manner, affirming that Kiriya, as a well-known religious leader, was received (as would any such figure) at Yasukuni Shrine and that the institution knew him and naturally sent condolences at his funeral and so on. The communication was a masterpiece that graciously and politely managed to avoid providing any actual information on issues related to the enshrinement of spirits by Agonshū, or related to the links existing between Yasukuni and Agonshū.
 - 41 <http://www.agon.org/history/>. Accessed 5 January 2018.

- 42 The literature on these issues is immense; see Breen and Teeuwen (2010); Hardacre (1989, 2016); Isomae (2014); Maxey (2014); Murakami (1970); Okuyama (2011); Scheid (2013); Shimazono (2010).
- 43 Again there is an extensive and growing literature on these issues; see Victoria (1997, 2012); Sharf (1993); Hur (1999; for Buddhism and colonialism); Heisig and Maraldo (1994); Ives (2009).
- 44 <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2012/11/13/fea22.asp>. Retrieved 5 January 2018.
- 45 http://www.agon.org/img_group/news/20150730_tjt.pdf. In both the Sri Lankan and Bhutanese cases it is difficult to establish exactly how these awards and titles were bestowed, although it is evident that Agonshū has donated money to Sri Lanka over the years (via the Sri Lanka Agonshū Friendship Foundation, a foundation established and financially supported by Agonshū; see <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2012/11/13/fea22.asp>). The background details to these transactions are obscure and hard to ascertain, as Reader (1988) noted when trying to find out what, if any, transactional arrangements occurred prior to the Sri Lankan presentation of the Buddha relic to Kiriyaama in 1986. Regarding the Bhutanese connection, we have been unable to find any details of the nature of this arrangement, although the remarks made by the Bhutanese monks – that they were invited by Agonshū – make us think that Agonshū funded their visits.
- 46 http://www.agon.org/img_group/news/20150730_tjt.pdf.
- 47 On issues of globalization and Japanese issues, see, for example, Dessi (2013) and Inoue (2007, 2014).

5 Transcending Death: The Birth and Spiritual Messages of the Second Buddha

- 1 A detailed chart of the lineages of new movements that have emerged from Tenrikyō, Oomoto, Sekai Kyūseikyō and Reiyūkai is given in Inoue et al. (1996).
- 2 On some discussion boards, as we mention later, some people claiming to be long-term members have expressed discontent with the leadership of Wada in particular, and claim she is using Kiriyaama's spirit to enhance her own position.
- 3 One online poster (who may be a member) in a discussion forum related to Agonshū also claimed on 2 January 2017 that for the five years prior to his death Kiriyaama had been unable to deliver sermons (<http://rio2016.2ch.net/test/read.cgi/psy/1482223360/110> post 189 in thread).
- 4 This point was reiterated to us by members, especially during larger events such as the *Hatsugoma* in January, when the Tokyo centre tended to be crowded.
- 5 Benod (2013: 156) has made a similar point: 'Il y a bien un culte de la personne de Kiriyaama, mais il reste mesuré comparé à d'autres chefs spirituels comme Ōkawa. Aucun texte, ni parole n'exposent un transcendantalisme ontologique de Kiriyaama.'
- 6 We would like to thank Lucia Dolce for this information. In addition some online discussion forums related to Agonshū have also mentioned this, albeit with very little substantive information or reference to Kiriyaama's own writings.
- 7 Since his death *Agon Magazine* has on occasions repeated the story of Koizumi proclaiming Kiriyaama to be the reincarnation of Susanoo (*Agon Magazine* 2017, 1/2: 35, and 3/4: 37) but without going any further by directly stating that Kiriyaama was Susanoo.
- 8 As we have noted elsewhere (Baffelli and Reader 2011) there appears to be a degree of competition in terms of these claims of past lives by Asahara and

- Ōkawa – competition that served to increase the emphasis each gave to their visions of the past and that also led each to disparage the others' claims.
- 9 See, for example, Kyoto shinbun: <http://www.kyoto-np.co.jp/politics/article/20160912000069>; and Asahi shinbun: <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASJ9D5DBZJ9DPLZB012.html>. Both retrieved 10 August 2017.
 - 10 It has been difficult to find any clear and accurate information about who knew the news and when, and thus far Agonshū sources we have had contact with have not made matters any clearer. We have heard, albeit from secondary sources, that staff at some Agonshū centres, including those overseas, were only informed several days after the event.
 - 11 www.agon.org. The website was later amended to indicate that Fukuda Seia would be the chief ritual officer at the event. As it happens, Kiriyaama did preside over the 2017 Hoshi Matsuri, albeit in spirit.
 - 12 It is possible that the magazine had been printed and distributed before the death was known, especially since it is common for Japanese monthly magazines to be published sometime before their stated monthly date.
 - 13 This section is based on interviews with Agonshū officials in Tokyo and Yamashina on 8 and 11 February 2017.
 - 14 <http://www.sankeisquare.com/event/agon/index.html>. Accessed 25 November 2017.
 - 15 This is purely speculative but we are struck by how the narrative of Kiriyaama's death resembles that surrounding Kūkai's death, in which the Shingon Buddhist founder foresaw his imminent death, and died with his disciples around him (Hakeda 1972: 59; Tanabe 2002: 676–7).
 - 16 We stress that we simply do not know about this. However, we have both heard comments and questions about his state of being from a variety of people involved in the religious studies field in Japan – including leaders and senior officials of other movements. We have heard also from others that the initial withdrawal might have been Ikeda's own decision and that he gave instructions to those around him at the time about how the movement was to handle future succession. We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this comment.
 - 17 See, for example, the thread at https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q12165689432 in which the original poster notes that despite being a long-term member who had been having reservations about Agonshū in recent times, he wept on seeing Kiriyaama's body. Other posters also affirm similar emotions.
 - 18 According to *Agon Magazine* 2017, 5/6: 1, Kiyokawa Hakuho oversaw the anniversary ritual celebration of the movement's Great Buddha statue on 5 May 2017.
 - 19 http://www.agon.org/hatsugoma/pdf/hatsugoma_2017.pdf. Retrieved 11 August 2017.
 - 20 See https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q12165689432 notably the posts from *hanhannichi* and *teltagiannto*, the former reporting the sighting of the golden dragon (*kinryū*), and the latter various miracle stories claimed by people at the funeral and that were attributed to Kiriyaama.
 - 21 Agonshū officials have also confirmed to us that *kaiso* is the normative term used now in the movement for Kiriyaama.
 - 22 According to one source (interviewed in Tokyo, 8 February 2017) both Wada and Fukada are able to receive messages from Kiriyaama's spirit, although the official concerned was unclear as to which of them received the message outlined in the leaflet about the pendant that we refer to in this chapter, and which gave rise to our asking the official concerned who received such messages. There is no information provided in the *Agon Magazine* (where the *kaiso reiyu* are reported) or elsewhere in

- Agonshū publications, whether in print or online at the time of writing, to indicate how they are transmitted, or whether any special ritual process is undertaken in order to receive them.
- 23 We should also note that channelling spirits became popular in Japanese religious culture in the era when Agonshū came to the fore and other movements (notably Kōfuku no Kagaku) have made great play about their leaders' ability to communicate with and transmit the thoughts of figures (including past religious leaders) from the spiritual realms. Ōkawa Ryūhō has been especially prominent in this context, claiming to channel messages from and hold conversations with the spirits of numerous famous figures both from past and present times (Astley 1995; Baffelli 2005).
 - 24 This is the first such message we have been able to discover and we have seen no references in Agonshū to any earlier message. Online discussions (which, as we stress, cannot be verified for accuracy) have also implied that the December *kaiso reiyu* was the first one in the movement; see comments in the thread <http://rio2016.2ch.net/test/read.cgi/psy/1482223360/110>. Accessed 8 January 2018. Unlike later messages reported in *Agon Magazine*, this had no specific date apart from the month (December 2016) on it. It has not been printed in totality, as far as we are aware, in any other official Agon publication, although sections have appeared elsewhere in Agonshū magazines and pamphlets. It was printed and circulated only among members, so we have been informed, and was not supposed to be seen by non-members. However, it is clear that some copies have been circulated beyond the movement and found their way into the public domain, where we were able to access it.
 - 25 For reasons of style when reporting these messages we use terms such as 'Kiriyaama' and 'he' to indicate that (in the view of Agonshū) this is Kiriyaama's voice we are hearing.
 - 26 These citations come from the unpublished *kaiso reiyu* text circulated in December 2016, using the page numbers of that text. The Japanese text here states: *Watashi wa nikutai o hanare, kanzen ni reikon to natte nirubāna ni iri, saikō saijō no reikai sunawachi bukkai ni itta.*
 - 27 *Shinu made ni kanzen ni budda ni naru. Kanzen ni budda ni natte shinu koto ga dekiru.*
 - 28 While this is speculative on our part, we cannot but help note a similarity to Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, in which people are instructed to invoke Amida Buddha, and to popular cults centred on the bodhisattva Kannon and on Kōbō Daishi, both of whom may be called out to for aid at times of crisis.
 - 29 Tōzan is the *onyomi* (Chinese-style reading) of the ideograms Kiriyaama, and giving them this reading clearly confers a formality to this term.
 - 30 As far as we can ascertain, this is the first use of the term *Tōzanryū gomahō* to refer to Agonshū's fire rituals and as such appears to be a post-death development in the movement.
 - 31 *Ikite iru kaiso sonomono de aru watashi no shinjinshari.*
 - 32 *Daga Nihon wa, Agonshū no gohō ga sonzai suru kuni de aru.*
 - 33 *Kotoshi mo, watashi to tomoni ganbarō!*
 - 34 Agonshū follows a pattern found in Japanese Buddhism of giving the deceased (through a ritual process) a *kaimyō* or preceptual/posthumous name for the next realm that supposedly indicates the deceased's nature and qualities.
 - 35 Again this allusion to the diamond further suggests an implicit association with or mirroring of the image of Kūkai (see above, note 15).

- 36 These details are taken from the undated leaflet *Gomagi kanjin 2000 hon tokubetsu gohōse* available at the Agon centre in Tokyo in February 2017.
- 37 <http://www.agon.org/hoshimatsuri/>. Accessed 4 October 2017: *Daireiriki no hotoke ni inori!*
- 38 <http://www.agon.org/hoshimatsuri/>. Accessed 4 October 2017.
- 39 This account is based on observations made at the event itself, coupled with reports published in the *Agon Magazine* 2017, 3/4: 2–45.
- 40 Sadly, despite one of us being in attendance at the event, we cannot recall this sudden transformation in the weather at this point.
- 41 *Hoka ni hirui no nai kanzen bukkō no seichi de aru.*
- 42 This term ‘true law’ (*shōbō*) has been used historically in Japanese Buddhism by those who claim that they have brought to Japan the true, correct transmission of Buddhism; it was a term used, for example, by Dōgen (1200–53), the founder of the Sōtō Zen tradition in Japan, on his return from China and reiterated in his magnum opus the *Shōbōgenzō*.
- 43 http://www.agon.org/about/about_000010.php.
- 44 The point of interest here is that according to the *kaiso reiyu* we reported earlier, Kiriama’s attainment of complete Buddhahood occurred on 29 August 2016 at the point of death – which was not, as far as we are aware, during an Agonshū ritual.
- 45 Kiyokawa’s actual words are: *Dai ichi no budda yorimo sarani ookikuna kyūsairiki ga hakki saremasu.*
- 46 These reports, in the *Japan Times* and the *Sankei Shinbun*, are, like the newspaper reports we cited in Chapter 2, paid advertisements.
- 47 <http://www.agon.org/news/news000724.php>, also on <http://www.sankeisquare.com/event/agon2017/index.html>.
- 48 This account of the voyage is based on reports in *Sankei Square* (in Japanese) <http://www.sankeisquare.com/event/agon2017/index.html> and the *Japan Times* <http://info.japantimes.co.jp/ads/pdf/20170831-Agonshu.pdf>, both of which are linked to Agonshū’s web pages. Interestingly the *Sankei Square* article account is written by Kamijima Yoshirō; it mentions the visit to Yasukuni whereas the *Japan Times* one does not.
- 49 See <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E6%87%89%E4%BE%9B>. We would like to thank Ian Astley for helping us understand the meaning of this term.
- 50 We are unclear exactly when during 2017 this new addition occurred. We first heard it chanted at the first *goma* ritual of 2018, although it appears that this was not the first time it had been used. It had not been in use in our previous attendance at Agonshū rituals in February 2017.
- 51 This account of the *hatsugoma* is based on attendance at the event in Tokyo on 1 January 2018.
- 52 We were unable to attend this event; the outline here is from a flyer of the event produced by Agonshū.
- 53 We also draw attention to the study by Sharf (1992) who discusses the mummification and preservation of the bodies of Ch’an Buddhist masters in China
- 54 For example, such concerns have been raised in threads such as https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q14168762729 and <http://rio2016.2ch.net/test/read.cgi/psy/1482223360/110>. In one of these, the original participant specifically requested criticisms of the movement and in the other, comments alleging that Wada was taking over the movement appeared to have a gender-discriminatory orientation

to them, complaining that since Kiriya's death the movement had become 'strange' (*okashikunaru*) because a female figure was relaying the messages from Kiriya. We have also had informal conversations with followers who feel uneasy about her role, about the apparent emphasis being made on soliciting *gomagi* and about what they fear might be increased financial demands in terms of membership fees in future.

- 55 The case of Deguchi Ōnisaburō is in many ways an anomaly, in which Oomoto, founded by Deguchi Nao, produced a second highly charismatic and dynamic leader with new insights – but it is widely known that Ōnisaburō and Nao in effect engaged in a power struggle in Oomoto, with Ōnisaburō changing many of its orientations, to the extent that one could argue it became a rather different movement under his leadership. Another example is Ikeda Daisaku, Sōka Gakkai's third leader, but the one who has most encapsulated themes of charisma into his leadership.

6 Concluding Comments: Founder Worship and the Problem of the 'New'

- 1 For fuller discussion of Kōbō Daishi and the role of this figure in the growth of Shingon and of Kōyasan, see Miyata (1988) and Kitamura (1988); for ascetics associated with Kōyasan, see Gorai (1975); and in connection with pilgrimage see Reader (2004b and 2005: 41–5).
- 2 The sect's constitution portrays them both as sect founders and places them alongside the main object of worship of Sōtō, namely, Shakyamuni (Reader 1983: 172).
- 3 See Reader (2005) for a contribution to this discussion.
- 4 For an example of this perspective, see the essay by Melton (2004) in the same series of essays in *Nova Religio* debating the terminology of the 'new'.