



## Hard Lessons Learned

### Tracking Changes in Media Presentations of Religion and Religious Aid Mobilization after the 1995 and 2011 Disasters in Japan

When religious organizations of all types mobilized relief efforts in the wake of the 17 January 1995 Great Hanshin/Awaji earthquake in western Japan, their contributions failed to translate into favorable media coverage. By contrast, religious aid responses after the 11 March 2011 Great East Japan earthquake disasters attracted a largely positive mainstream media response. This article surveys Japan's major daily newspapers, popular books, academic reports, and other published treatments of religious responses to these two major disasters to assess a shift in recent post-disaster "religion" media narration. It suggests reasons for a change in tone from skepticism to support and points to questions about an evolving selection process that determines which religious actors fit and which are left out of a burgeoning post-2011 media picture.

KEYWORDS: religion—disaster—Japan—media—Great Hanshin/Awaji earthquake—Great East Japan earthquake disaster

SINCE THE year 1995, on the twelfth of every December, Mori Seihan, Chief Abbot (*kanshu*) at Kyoto's iconic Buddhist temple Kiyomizudera and a board member of the Japan Kanji Aptitude Test Association, known commonly in Japan as Kanken, inscribes a single massive *kanji* (a Chinese ideogram, character, or morpheme) in a televised ceremony from Kiyomizudera's impressive balcony. The *kanji* of the year (*kotoshi no kanji*) is the most popular of thousands of suggestions sent in by postcard to the Kanken headquarters by ordinary Japanese citizens. It is intended to express, in a single orthographic gesture, the zeitgeist of the preceding year as it encourages the people of Japan to renew interest in their linguistic heritage. On 12 December 2011 Mori took up his enormous brush and, in a virtuosic display of calligraphic skill expected in an accomplished Buddhist priest, swept out the character *kizuna* 絆: "bonds." *Kizuna* had received 61,453 individual votes, by far the most of any *kanji* in the history of the event and more than five times as many votes as its nearest competitor (NIHON KANJI NÖRYOKU KENTEI KYÖKAI [KANKEN] 2011). As Kanken described it, the many thousands of Japanese citizens who contributed to the selection process felt that 2011 was best defined by meaningful ties forged between people as the 11 March 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters brought citizens together in the face of adversity. Overall, a majority of the top *kanji* of the year choices for 2011 expressed optimism and cooperation.

The ideogram that Mori wrote out seventeen years earlier at Kiyomizudera for the inaugural *kanji* of the year reflected a starkly different national sentiment. The top pick of 1995 was *shin* 震: tremble, shudder, or quiver. All of 1995's top ten *kanji* of the year candidates were bleak: "disorder" 乱 (*ran*), "disaster" 災 (*sai*), and "dread" 恐 (*kyō*) came next, through to "madness" 狂 (*kyō*) at number ten. Kanken explained that 1995's events, most notably the 17 January Great Hanshin/Awaji earthquake and the 20 March poison gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system by the apocalyptic religious group Aum Shinrikyō, created malaise that shook the country.<sup>1</sup> "I pray for tranquility next year," Mori was quoted as saying during the inaugural ceremony. "I really hope to write 'brilliant' 輝 (*ki*) or 'ease' 楽 (*raku*) next time" (YS 13 December 1995).

In this article, I provide an overview of the nature of religion reportage in Japan's major newspapers and other media coverage in the immediate aftermath

of the 1995 and 2011 disasters. I assess how media portrayals of religious rescue and relief efforts have shaped the image of religious aid, and the media image of religion itself, in Japan over the last generation. I began with a description of the annual *kanji* ceremony, an event that conveniently brackets the two great Japanese disasters of the postwar era, because it demonstrates changes in the Japanese public's overall sentiment as it exemplifies religion's persistently ambivalent position in the Japanese public sphere. Chief Abbot Mori conducts a ritual at a famous temple in full Buddhist ceremonial garb, yet this is an event that is not publicly acknowledged as a religious occasion. As Kanken's representative, he operates as the face of an education-focused "public interest corporation" (*kōeki hōjin*) that is registered with Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, yet he is a tonsured priest whose performance of calligraphy—a skill otherwise employed by Buddhist clerics to inscribe talismans and other items venerated in religious settings—ritually elevates the year's nominally secular symbol. Ambivalence and paradox are built into the annual *kanji* of the year ceremony, just as they permeate all areas of Japanese civic and religious life.

While ambivalence lingers, changes are apparent. Between 1995 and 2011, Japan's public sentiment transformed from unadulterated pessimism to affirmations of communal resolve. This shift also saw a transformation in media presentations from hostile suspicion to qualified accommodation of a place for religion in post-disaster Japan. But what is this place? In Japan, as in most other parts of the world, religious organizations contribute meaningfully to rescue and relief efforts following disasters. Long after government agencies and other emergency aid providers have left the scene, religious practitioners remain to care for the dead and the bereaved. However, because religion is marginalized within popular Japanese discourse, aid initiatives by religious groups following calamities have until recently tended to go unreported in the mainstream media, and religious groups themselves frequently downplay or even conceal their religious identities as they carry out disaster relief work.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the general public, and even scholars of Japanese religion, remained almost completely uninformed about the nature and extent of aid offered by religious groups following the 1995 disaster. By contrast, the Japanese public has learned about selected aspects of religious mobilization after 11 March 2011, a date that has earned the shorthand identity "3.11." The 3.11 disasters inspired hundreds of religious organizations to rally thousands of people to donate countless hours of volunteer labor and billions of yen's worth of material resources, money, and other forms of aid that comprise the largest religious mobilization since the Second World War. For the first time in a generation, religion began to gain some positive public notice, this time bearing associations other than its post-1995 identity as a sinister menace linked to violence and social marginality.

As the ten choices for the 1995 *kanji* of the year indicated, the Japanese public was overwhelmingly pessimistic in the months following the January 1995 earthquake. This attitude was particularly evident in unfavorable portrayals of religion generally, and so-called new religions in particular. The Aum Shinrikyō attacks

triggered widespread moral panic over the dangers of new religious groups, which in turn inspired suspicion of outward religious expression of all types (DORMAN 2005; HARDACRE 2007; INOUE et al. 2011; READER 2000). It was a period that saw political upheaval and public outrage whipped up over the entry of politicians supported by Soka Gakkai into a coalition government; Soka Gakkai, a Nichiren Buddhism-based new religion, had already gained a negative public reputation for aggressive proselytizing in the postwar era. The Gakkai's engagement in electoral politics through its members' support of Komeito (the Clean Government Party) has long been treated by Soka Gakkai's religious and political opponents as a threat to Japan's postwar constitutional polity. These opponents seized upon the Aum attacks as an opportunity to intensify their anti-Soka Gakkai and anti-Komeito campaign by conflating Aum with Soka Gakkai (LOBREGGIO 1997; McLAUGHLIN 2012; WILKINSON 2009). This move had the effect of transforming public fear of new religious groups into fear of *any* religious identity, which in turn opened a chasm between religious organizations that provided aid after the Hanshin earthquake and the Japanese public that received it.

By 2011, it appeared as if the chasm had narrowed. As I will discuss here, this narrowing of distance between religion and the public can be attributed in no small part to the concerted efforts of proactive religious practitioners working closely with sympathetic academics, journalists, and other promoters since the Hanshin disaster to refashion religion's institutional innovations and public image into palatable forms. An overview of media coverage of religious aid since March 2011 reveals that religious activists in Japan have applied what they learned from the hard lessons of 1995 about earning public approbation by simultaneously mobilizing aid and deploying public relations strategies. One result of this double mobilization of aid and PR is the publicizing of Japanese religious innovators as promising contributors to emergency disaster relief and long-term therapeutic care. Since 2011, the Japanese public has regularly consumed a media narrative about religion that conveys approval for religious activists who have supplied reassuringly modern aid interventions in disaster-afflicted regions of northeast Japan. This media portrayal projects a new therapy-centered image of religion put forward by a comparatively small number of highly influential, largely university-affiliated scholars and practitioners, whose reports to a busy circuit of symposia and workshops serve as the primary conduit to Japan's major media outlets.

The post-3.11 media narrative of religious disaster responses as altruistic and ecumenical has mostly ignored long-standing intra- and inter-sectarian conflict, the persistent social and political importance of sectarian identity, expenses of maintaining institutional resources, and other less media-friendly dimensions that have, historically, both comprised important aspects of religious experience in Japan and elicited criticism from the Japanese public. In their efforts to overcome long-standing anti-religion biases, promoters of Japanese religion as relevant to post-disaster reconstruction have produced the first positive media narrative about religion that the Japanese media has seen in a generation. But they have also invited questions about which religious activists do—and which do not—deserve

public attention. Questions remain about who appears in this inspiring new vision and who is being left out, and ambiguity continues to hang over religion in Japan.

THE 1995 GREAT HANSHIN EARTHQUAKE:  
JAPANESE RELIGIONS RESPOND

At 5:46 a.m. on Tuesday, 17 January 1995, an earthquake registered at 6.8 on the Richter scale shook the northern end of Awaji Island, twenty kilometers from the city of Kobe in western Japan. The twenty-second tremor resulted in the catastrophic destruction of large areas of Kobe and neighboring cities. Approximately 6,400 people were killed—around 4,600 of them in Kobe—and property damage exceeded US\$100 billion, equal to 2.5 percent of Japan's GDP at that time. Damage to manufacturing, transportation, trade, and other parts of Japan's highly developed infrastructure made the Hanshin quake the second most costly disaster in modern history, exceeded only by 3.11. Japan is notorious for its seismic activity, and its public image as a cutting-edge modern state relies upon a popular understanding that Japanese state and society cooperate to prepare for inevitable calamities. However, the Hanshin disaster sabotaged this image when it paralyzed western Japan. The national government, led by a weak coalition of political parties, failed to coordinate quickly with the Self-Defense Forces and prefectural-level emergency crews, and it proved inept at managing rescue operations from Tokyo.<sup>3</sup> The suffering of residents, which stretched into months after 17 January, underscored the woeful lack of state preparation and an absence of cohesion between governmental emergency services and volunteers (AS 17 February 1995; KURODA and TSUGANESAWA 1999; MIKI 2001).

Failure by state agencies to deliver reliable assistance inspired people from across Japan to contribute to an exciting upsurge in volunteer activities. Organizations of many different types mark the Hanshin earthquake anniversary as *Bōsai no hi*, Disaster Prevention and Volunteerism Day, by engaging in volunteer activities across the country, such as cleaning up urban green areas or providing meals for the homeless. Religious volunteerism emerged as an active component of the volunteer response to the Hanshin disaster. Following the earthquake, hundreds of temple Buddhist groups, new religions, Christian organizations, and Shinto shrines—many of which lost their own clergy, lay members, and facilities—mobilized to rescue disaster victims; house displaced residents in homes, temples, churches, and other institutions; raise funds for relief; and otherwise care for survivors and the deceased.

The scale of this massive religious relief effort was all but completely overlooked by the national media, and it remains mostly unknown today. Data on this mobilization gathered by sociologists, religion scholars, and other academics, working from a combination of reports produced by religious groups and scholarly surveys of religious activists, appeared mostly in small-circulation academic journals and publications issued by regional or sectarian presses. Information on the massive religious response was all but completely overshadowed in national media coverage

by negative stories about religious groups. Overall, the Hanshin disaster can best be characterized as an opportunity that Japan's religions missed, a lost chance to present themselves as positive contributors to social reconstruction unrelated to the dangerous "cults" grabbing headlines at that time.<sup>4</sup>

Religions with active lay organizations were the quickest to mobilize. This included many so-called new religions. Among the most active after the Hanshin earthquake were the Nichiren Buddhism-affiliated groups Soka Gakkai and Rissho Kosei-kai, the Shinto-related new religion Tenrikyo, and the Shingon Buddhism-affiliated Shinnyo-en. Some of these religions regard the Hanshin disaster as the start of an inspiring new chapter in their social welfare activities. For instance, Shinnyo-en's SeRV (Shinnyo-en Relief Volunteer) youth corps volunteers mark the founding of their sub-organization with activities the religion carried out after the Hanshin earthquake, when the religion mobilized 11,330 members who provided aid over seven months (CAVALIERE 2015). Others treated the Hanshin quake as one event in a long series of disasters to which their adherents responded. Tenrikyo's Disaster Relief Hinokishin Corps have mobilized post-disaster specialists in providing search and rescue, food, shelter, medicine, and infrastructure repair since 1971, and the religion distinguishes itself as one of the most consistent contributors to post-disaster rescue and reconstruction efforts, having first sent adherents to provide aid to survivors after an 1891 earthquake in central Japan (AMBROS 2016; KANEKO 2002). Christian groups also provided aid far beyond that which the small percent age of Christian believers in Japan (~2 percent) would suggest, and Shinto organizations—individual shrines in the disaster area and groups affiliated with the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honchō)—also distinguished themselves through rescue and relief activities (MCLAUGHLIN 2013a).

Temple-based Buddhist denominations opened hundreds of their facilities as short- and long-term refugee centers as they initiated volunteer efforts to aid survivors and care for the dead. A prime example of this is Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, The Pure Land Buddhist denomination's Honganji sect, which maintained in excess of 13,500 temples and 29,000 priests across Japan who ministered to more than 6.9 million parishioners in 1995, the largest number of registered parishioners of any temple-based Buddhist organization in the country. On 17 January 1995, as soon as news of the Hanshin quake was released, the sect turned its main administrative offices at the temple Nishi Honganji in Kyoto into a Disaster Response Headquarters that set about soliciting material aid from its temples across Japan. Sect leaders gathered information as best they could through spotty telephone connections with priests in disaster-afflicted Hyōgo Prefecture to determine sites of maximum need. Headquarter-based priests and lay volunteers in Kyoto loaded trucks with emergency supplies and began fundraising. The sect collected 37 million yen by 25 January, only a week after the quake. By 4 July it had brought in 870 million yen in relief funding, and by January 1998 this figure reached 920 million yen. Branch temples across Japan were encouraged to donate 100,000 yen each to this fund, and part of these proceeds went into interest-free loans to help Hanshin-

area temples rebuild (RITSUMEIKAN DAIGAKU SAIGAI SHAKAIGAKU KENKYŪKAI 1999 and 2000).

As the largest Buddhist sect, Jōdo Shinshū also accrued the greatest amount of earthquake damage. The Japan Buddhist Federation (Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai) calculated that 536 Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha temples were damaged or destroyed in the Hanshin quake, and that it lost twelve priests and clerical family members. These casualties number among the 1,200 parishioners lost to the sect, accounting for 19 percent of the total number of those killed in the earthquake. In the absence of reliable government assistance, temple priests in the disaster area set about aiding local residents. Temples that remained intact opened their doors to refugees, and temple priests also led community-based aid responses outside temple precincts. For instance, Rev. Maekawa, a priest at the Honganji-ha Kobe temple Sonkōji spent three months organizing a lay volunteer initiative at a community center that served one hundred refugees at its peak. It was only one of more than twenty temples in the Hanshin region that housed refugees, some for months at a time (RITSUMEIKAN DAIGAKU SAIGAI SHAKAIGAKU KENKYŪKAI 1999 and 2000).

Despite the scope of this sudden upsurge in religious activism, published accounts of religious aid responses to the Hanshin disaster are difficult to find. One of the only accounts of religious aid responses to the Hanshin disaster that attracted a comparatively high degree of attention appeared in a transcription published in the fall of 1996 of a symposium held at Kyoto's International Institute for the Study of Religions in October 1995. The symposium brought together religious scholars and representatives from ten particularly active religious relief providers. Anthropologist Nakamaki Hirochika, in his foreword to transcriptions of symposium presentations, noted that religious aid responses had gone all but unreported in Japan's press and that religions themselves had tended to only report their efforts in their own internal publications, leaving the general public in the dark about the extent of their activities (NAKAMAKI 1996). The remainder of the volume relayed personal accounts of the quake and on-the-ground initiatives carried out by religious activists. However, skeptical observations made by one scholar at the symposium ultimately overshadowed testimonials about religious aid efforts.<sup>5</sup>

#### FIGHTING UPSTREAM: RESISTANCE TO RELIGIOUS AID FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Though it obviously comprised a substantial contribution in the absence of reliable governmental assistance, Japanese religious aid launched in January 1995 faced opposition from several different directions: 1) a public that suspected apparently altruistic aid from religious groups of hiding covert proselytization agendas; 2) government agencies that were nervous about transgressing a constitutionally mandated separation of religion and state; and 3) a perceptible generational divide within religious groups themselves—most apparently within temple-based Buddhist denominations—between activist younger priests and traditionalist sectarian leaders.

A number of proactive Buddhist priests pitched in with volunteer initiatives as part of a broader effort to provide immediate material help to those in need. They expressed frustration about influential observers who criticized priests carrying out activities identified by the nonreligious neologism *borantia* (volunteer).

One of the most widely acknowledged of these critiques came from Yamaori Tetsuo, a well-known senior scholar of Japanese Buddhism highly regarded for his research on the medieval reformer Nichiren. At the October 1995 symposium at Kyoto's International Institute for the Study of Religions (where he holds the position of professor), Yamaori expressed skepticism about religious practitioners carrying out volunteer activities, providing counseling for the traumatized and bereaved, or otherwise performing in ways that downplayed their vocational identities:

When it comes to the role of religious practitioners, is it not the case that their importance only emerges with the passage of time? After the rescue efforts in the immediate disaster aftermath, and after volunteer activities have concluded? It's perhaps true that mental and spiritual care [*kokoro no kea*] practiced by psychologists and counselors is never complete, as even after one month, two months, half a year, or a year of continuous attention, people who require healing, people for whom pain continues, will certainly remain. I feel that it is from this point that religious practitioners, or the true value of religion, will be called into question. (cited in NAKAMAKI 1996, 90)

Yamaori questioned whether it was appropriate for religious professionals to engage in volunteer efforts to address the material and mental needs of survivors, particularly considering that, in his opinion, Japan's religions had failed to provide specifically *religious* help for survivors. Follow-up discussions of Yamaori's contentions by participants in the October 1995 symposium deepened doubt about the suitability of religious groups providing aid. They noted that religious professionals possessed doctrinal expertise, but that they were not in fact professional aid workers or certified providers of mental healthcare. Following Yamaori's argument, they suggested that volunteer-type activities would constitute half measures for religious practitioners, who should instead concentrate on more profound, appropriately "religious" matters.

Yamaori's comments received a great deal of attention. Almost without exception, every published commentary on religious reactions to the 1995 disaster quotes from his statement, and many accounts of post-3.11 religious mobilization also invoke his opinions, albeit mostly to contrast them with inspiring post-3.11 developments. Priests who initiated volunteer activities in Kobe responded to his critiques in the course of commenting on resistance they encountered on the ground. As was typical of this period, attention to religious voices was relegated to an audience of other religious specialists. Rebuttal of Yamaori went largely unnoticed outside this loop; in fact, Yamaori went on to condemn Japan's "suicide of religion" at the hands of its clergy.<sup>6</sup>

On 1 January 1996, the Buddhist newspaper *Chūgai nippō* published a roundtable discussion between young Buddhist priests about their volunteer activities

up to that point in the Hanshin region. In their discussion, they expressed positive sentiments about the help they were able to provide, but their optimism was greatly outweighed by frustration and dismay about how their aid was perceived by the needy and how they were hindered by members of the general public, by government officials, and even by their own senior colleagues.

Takeuchi Junshō, then associate representative of the Tendai sect's Buddhist Youth League (Tendai Bukkyō Seinen Renmei) addressed Yamaori's statements directly:

Yamaori Tetsuo, professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, pointed out that “priests certainly carried out a lot of activities, but couldn't they carry out activities that were appropriate for priests?” But what does “appropriate for priests” mean? I think there's a difference between what Yamaori is pointing to and the situation one encounters on the ground.

(CN I January 1996)

Takeuchi's fellow Buddhist priest roundtable participants agreed, and they described difficulties they encountered when they appeared in public as priests carrying out what many considered to be non-priestly labor of providing material aid. Kobayashi Kōki, president of the Jōdo (Pure Land) sect Kyoto Parish Youth League (Kyoto Kyōku Jōdoshū Seinenkai), noted that “at first, when we brought drinking water and food, people asked ‘where are you people from?’ ‘we're the Jōdo Sect Youth Association’ ‘is it all right if you don't proselytize?’ ‘that's fine, please just eat!’—we would go back and forth like this.” Hashimoto Kanshō, president of the All-Shingon Sect Youth League Office (Zen Shingonshū Seinen Renmei Jimukyoku), confirmed this difficulty, noting that it was difficult for the priests to carry out relief activities in the disaster zone while they were wearing their vestments. Concerns expressed through people's reactions to Buddhist relief efforts reflected the general aura of doubt that loomed over religion—a menacing cloud that darkened after the Aum Shinrikyō subway attacks two months after the Hanshin quake.

Hashimoto praised the intersectarian cooperation that emerged in the course of relief work:

The Shingon sect banded together and was able to carry out these relief activities, and while doing so was allowed to work alongside people from the Sōtō Sect Relief Committee, the Jōdo Shin sect, the Rinzai sect, and Jōdo sect. I think this was an opportunity to carry out activities that demonstrated the capacity to overcome what many people describe as the fundamental mindset of bad relations between the traditional Buddhist organizations. (CN I January 1996)

He envisioned a meaningful extension of their ecumenical aid efforts for the long-term care of traumatized survivors: “It's good to see signs of the start of recovery, but people weakened by the aftereffects of the disaster are bearing a difficult burden. In order to bolster people's spirits, religious activists want a transsectarian place where they can gather.”

Multiple obstacles stood in the way of the young priests' efforts to further their cooperative aid activities, including resistance from their own superiors. They reported that senior clerics in their denomination headquarters grew tired of hearing constantly about disaster relief and sought to return the focus to ritual events, including grand (and expensive) memorials for founding figures of their lineage. They also spoke with frustration about thoughtless actions of their senior colleagues that damaged the public image of Buddhism, making on-the-ground relief efforts and fundraising even more challenging. Takeuchi described embarrassment that ensued after a newspaper published photos days after the quake showing expensive cars with Kobe license plates owned by Buddhist priests parked outside a Kyoto hotel, creating an impression of wealthy Buddhist priests enjoying high-class entertainment while the homes of their parishioners still burned. Popular images like this—ones that reinforced centuries-old Japanese tropes of Buddhist priests as corrupt social parasites—made it difficult for priests to identify themselves as volunteers contributing to post-disaster aid. As Takeuchi put it: "The phrases 'activities as religious professionals' or 'Buddhist volunteers' came up any number of times—we used these phrases intentionally to counter the impression that we usually don't do anything."

Buddhist activists also encountered resistance from the Japanese state. Noting the government's aversion to religion, the priests described receiving requests from representatives of government agencies to not display any overt signs of their religious affiliation in public spaces such as elementary schools turned into refugee centers.<sup>7</sup> The activists reported that they were prevented from carrying out their professional duties as clergy—in other words, from fulfilling the explicitly religious responsibilities that Yamaori criticized them for not performing. The Jōdo sect's youth representative Kobayashi described the extraordinary difficulties religious organizations faced in dealing with governmental restrictions:

We registered as a volunteer organization with the Kobe City Response Headquarters on 19 January, and when we did so they asked "are you a religion?" while they made unpleasant faces. We were told to refrain from carrying out activities in public facilities while wearing vestments or clothing from our offices. As a result, bodies that were lying in repose in elementary schools and other public buildings, the deceased for whom even an impromptu memorial would be appropriate—we were refused permission to carry this out. (CN I January 1996)

Hashimoto noted double standards at work in public attitudes toward volunteer organizations: "Medical personnel, construction workers, and other specialists receive official permission to enter an area after a disaster—we would like the government to consider how best to make use of us as specialists just as it considers these others."

Reflecting on the lessons they learned from their year of post-disaster aid mobilization, the young Buddhist priests suggested advanced preparation of instruction materials for religious activists: "We plan to produce something like a manual, a book on which activities to undertake," stated Kobayashi. "If it were me, I would

want to distribute information via computer networks to ensure smooth communication,” suggested Takeuchi.

MEDIA PORTRAYALS IN 1995: COVERAGE OF RELIGIOUS MOBILIZATION  
MARGINALIZED IN FAVOR OF SENSATIONALIST REPORTS ON “CULTS”

A survey<sup>8</sup> of the digital archives of the *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, and *Mainichi* newspapers—the three vernacular papers with the largest circulations in Japan—provides a general overview of how religion was portrayed by Japan’s main media outlets (see FIGURE I below).<sup>9</sup> Over the 63 days between the Hanshin earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyō attacks on the Tokyo subway (17 January to 20 March), 141 stories in the *Yomiuri* featured discussions of “religion” (*shūkyō*), of which 59 dealt with religion in Japan; 23 of these related in some fashion to the Hanshin disaster, while 11 related to allegations regarding Aum Shinrikyō’s criminal activities. Religion reportage was overshadowed by reports on suspicions (later confirmed) that members of Aum had abducted and murdered public notary Kariya Kiyoshi. Thus, close to 20 percent of the *Yomiuri* stories on religion before the 20 March attacks connect the word “religion” with Aum and its criminal activities.

The situation is even gloomier in the *Asahi*: of 191 total stories that mention religion, 118 connect in some fashion to religion in Japan, but only sixteen dealt with religious contributions to Hanshin relief efforts, while fifteen documented escalating concerns with Aum Shinrikyō. *Asahi* stories on 25 February and 7 March cast Buddhist and new religion aid contributions—including material relief, counseling, and hospice care offered by Buddhist priests associated with the then-nascent Vihāra Movement—in a mostly positive fashion, but also reported negative reactions from refugees who learned that they received aid from Kōfuku no Kagaku, a new religious movement that earned a negative public image in the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere in the *Asahi*, in articles that documented relief efforts, skepticism is front and center: in a short article on 9 February 1995 assessing volunteer efforts on the ground, the reporter estimated that in excess of ten thousand volunteers of all types were active in Kobe at this point. “Newly arisen religious organizations [*shinkō shūkyō dantai*] and right wing organizations were also there. Their activities could be seen as self-promotion, but in any event they are helping residents who have become refugees.”

This story is a typical example of the freighted euphemisms surrounding “religion” that were circulating at the time. *Shinkō shūkyō*, literally “newly arisen religion,” serves as a long-standing equivalent for “cult” in Japanese. By 1995, even the apparently neutral-sounding term *dantai*, or “organization,” bore a sinister meaning when it was paired with *shinkō shūkyō* or simply with *shūkyō* (religion). Articles that appeared after the Hanshin disaster in all three papers that referred to “religious organizations”—“a religious organization,” “that religious organization,” and similar identifications—were in almost every case references either to Aum Shinrikyō or to Soka Gakkai in the context of its political entanglements. In the tabloid media, a spectral story took shape in the weeks after the quake, alluded

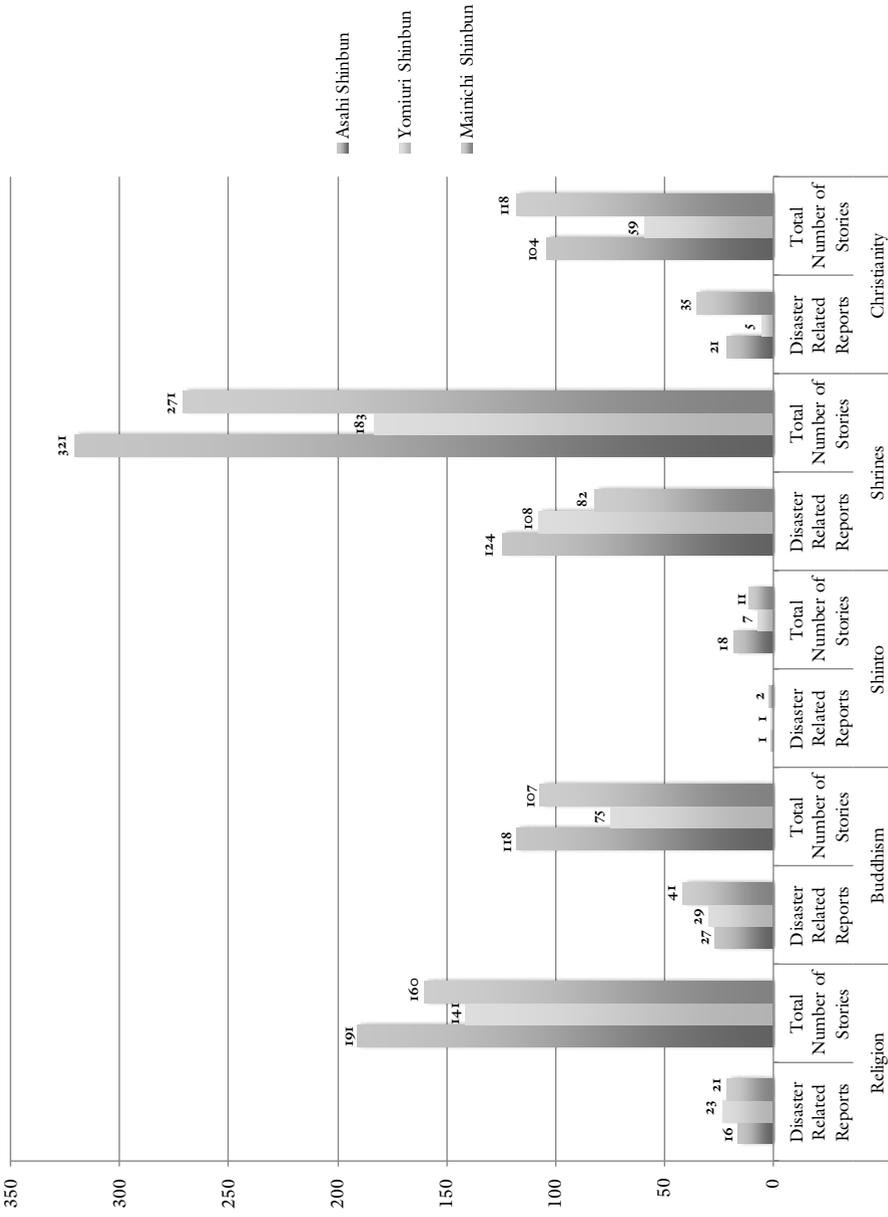


FIGURE I. Coverage of religion in Japan's three major daily newspapers, 17 January to 20 March 1995.

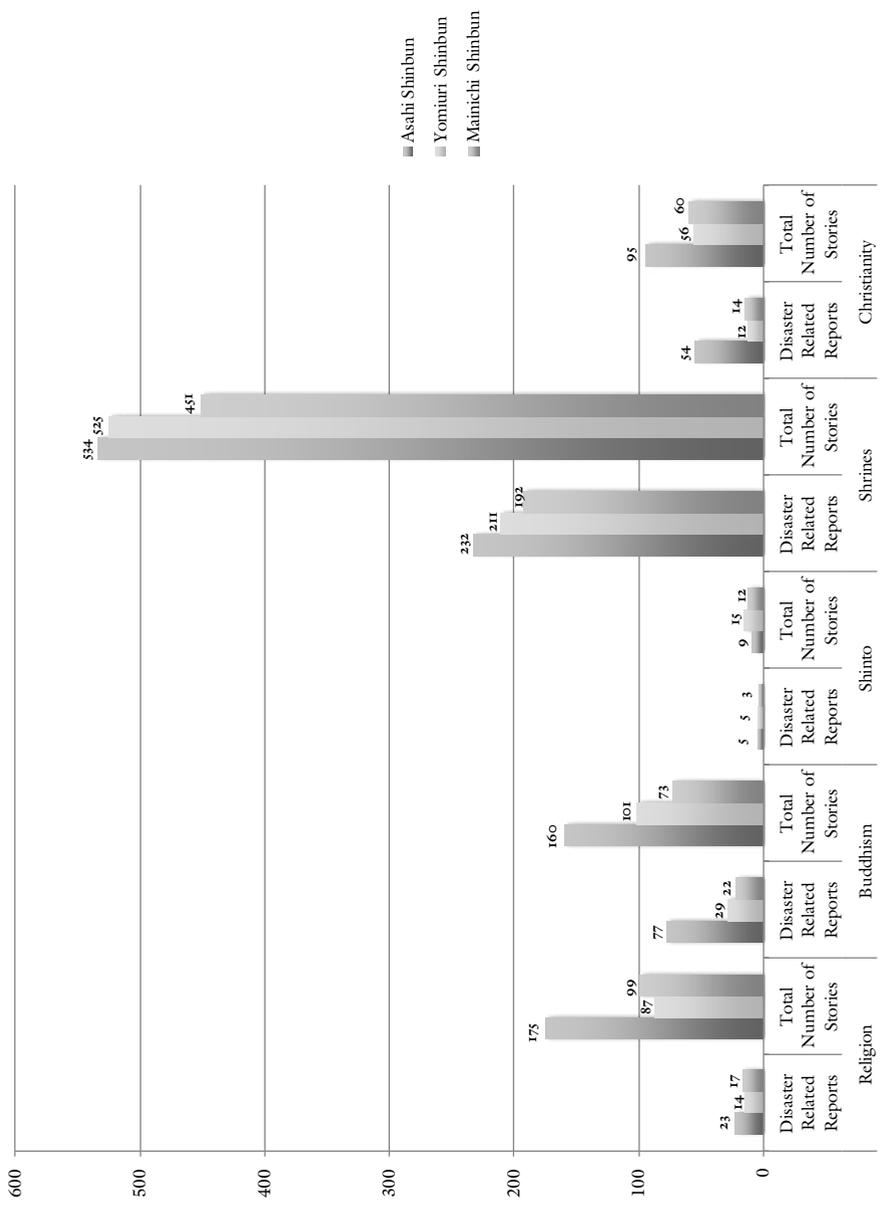


FIGURE 2. Coverage of religion in Japan's three major daily newspapers, 11 March to 12 May 2011.

to in the *Asahi* piece quoted above: the situation on the ground in Kobe is so dire that residents are forced to accept help from cults and gangsters.

Evidence of where this story began is elusive. This “cults and gangsters” trope lives on in records of the Hanshin response recorded in *kuchikomi* (word-of-mouth) online forums and in other popular venues where consumers of news on the disaster are likely to comment.<sup>11</sup> We are presented here with a striking example of what Jean Baudrillard identified as the “simulacrum effect”: no definitive original report is forthcoming, and instead endlessly recycled rumors became the entrenched, go-to reference, alluding to a spectral menace lurking within Japanese society.<sup>12</sup> Retrospective speculation recorded online suggests that the original story broke in a French television report, making the original almost impossible to locate and particularly embarrassing to people in Japan, who could now add the further humiliation of foreign attention to the shame of upright citizens forced to rely on charity from criminals and socially marginal religious groups.

Religious organizations of all types were thus fighting an uphill battle to win popular sympathy for their aid efforts *before* the Aum attacks. The sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway by Aum Shinrikyō unleashed unprecedented levels of media-driven public hysteria that devastated religion’s already-beleaguered public image. From 21 March into June 1995, Aum Shinrikyō was on the front page of every national newspaper in Japan and was the lead story in every television and radio broadcast in every time slot (HARDACRE 2007). Journalists, politicians, public intellectuals, and other activists worked to conflate Aum with Soka Gakkai in order to undermine the Gakkai’s political influence (McLAUGHLIN 2012). This had the effect of tarring the public image of religion generally, generating suspicion of even the most clearly altruistic religious aid activists.

#### POST-3.11 INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES: PLACING THEM IN CONTEXT

While religion’s public image suffered, the years after 1995 did see some promise for positive social engagements by Japanese religious groups thanks in part to new governmental legislation that provided incentives for a proliferation of new NGOs. In December 1998, the Japanese government announced the Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Act, a new law that enabled NGOs to offer donors appealing tax write-offs. Religious NGOs that registered as NPOs gained the capacity to operate outside sectarian administrative and financial control, and religious activists used this new freedom to found new organizations and expand their existing activities in education, suicide prevention, hospice care, disaster relief, community development, human rights, and other initiatives (KAWANAMI 2013; WATTS 2004).

From the late 1990s, activists from religious organizations in Japan—temple Buddhism-based NGOs, but also new religious organizations such as Rissho Kosei-Kai and others—contributed to a growing phenomenon that has come to be known as “engaged Buddhism” (MUKHOPADYAYA 2005), linking Japanese efforts to the global phenomenon identified with figures such as Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama (KING 2009), and with East Asian Buddhist organizations such as

Taiwan's Tzu Chi (HUANG 2009) and Fo Guang Shan (CHANDLER 2004). By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Japanese religious activists were eager to publicize the social welfare engagements and to otherwise present themselves in a positive light. Mobilization after 3.11 provided such an opportunity.

The event known officially as the Great East Japan earthquake (Higashi Nihon Daishinsai) and popularly as 3.11 began with a 9.0 tremor that struck 129 kilometers off the coast of Sendai on 11 March 2011 at 2:46 p.m. This was the largest recorded earthquake in Japanese history and the fourth largest quake recorded since the beginning of modern seismic measurements. The earthquake triggered a tsunami that peaked at over forty meters in some areas and inundated the northeastern coast of Japan's main island of Honshu, wiping out dozens of communities as it extended as far as ten kilometers inland. The disaster also triggered nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant, located approximately 240 kilometers north of Tokyo, an event that quickly spiraled into the largest nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. As of early 2015, Japan's National Police Agency calculated the official toll of the dead and missing (presumed dead) at 18,475. In excess of 401,000 buildings in eighteen prefectures were damaged or destroyed, and initial estimates by the World Bank put the cost of the earthquake and tsunami at US\$235 billion, making 3.11 the most expensive disaster in human history; these calculations were made before the long-term impact of the Fukushima meltdown was assessed.<sup>13</sup> In the weeks following the tsunami, the number of people staying in refugee centers and emergency housing exceeded 400,000, and tens of thousands of people may never return to their homes. In the 20 kilometers area surrounding the Fukushima plants alone, as many as 200,000 residents may have been permanently displaced (GILL, STEGER, and SLATER 2013; KINGSTON 2012). Fallout from Fukushima plunged the entire country into panic over fear of radioactive contamination, anxieties about food and water safety, and outrage over corruption and mismanagement of the nuclear disaster by colluding government agencies and corporations.

The compound disaster elicited an outpouring of sympathy and material support from people in Japan and from individuals and organizations based overseas, and once again religious aid contributed to rescue and relief efforts. Within minutes of hearing news of the earthquake and tsunami in northeast Japan, Japanese religious organizations of every description put aside their regular activities and activated pre-established emergency response measures. Many of these organizations relied on plans based on their experiences after the Hanshin disaster. Buddhist, Shinto, Christian, and the headquarters of new religious organizations began coordinating with their adherents on the ground in the disaster zone. Volunteers across Japan began loading trucks with supplies and driving through roads torn apart by the quake and tsunami to deliver aid to refugees housed in temples, churches, and other facilities, while teams were dispatched into the rubble to search for survivors and victims' bodies.<sup>14</sup>

The media record of this mobilization demonstrates that these emergency measures emerged as direct responses to the hard lessons of 1995. Japan experienced a number of traumatic catastrophes between 1995 and 2011, most notably the 2007

Chūetsu Offshore earthquake, which resulted in eleven deaths and over 1,000 injuries in Niigata Prefecture. However, given the blow dealt to religion in the wake of the events in 1995 and the scale of destruction that year, it is readily apparent that the Hanshin disaster provoked a new mode of proactive response to emergencies by Japanese religious activists. In March 2011, Japanese religion engaged in what might be termed a double mobilization: while transporting personnel and emergency supplies to disaster-afflicted regions, religious groups and their advocates also took advantage of print and electronic media to mobilize carefully chosen images of their aid efforts in order to forestall the negative impressions that dominated coverage seventeen years earlier.

Recent scholarship on post-3.11 religious attitudes helps us place this double mobilization in perspective. First, a cautionary note: though the tenor of publications on religious aid activism after 2011 differed radically from post-Hanshin media portrayals, *overall* coverage of religion did not increase: in fact, as Horie Norichika points out (HORIE 2015), there is evidence that religion-related publication has declined steadily in Japan since the first decade of the twenty-first century, including in the years after 3.11. There are also compelling reasons to look beyond explicit discussions of *shūkyō* in Japanese coverage to identify Japanese concerns with the transcendent (SHIMAZONO 2007), and also to place the comparatively low level of Japanese concern with theodicy in global perspective (FUJIWARA 2013).<sup>15</sup> With these caveats in place, I propose that there was nonetheless an overall trend after 3.11 toward viewing religion positively—positive both in the sense that it continues to appear as a discrete category in media coverage, and also because readers of Japan’s major newspapers have encountered a new, optimistic narrative taking shape in the aftermath of 3.11—one carefully curated by activists who are eager to craft religion as an altruistic contributor to post-disaster Japanese society.

#### OVERCOMING RELIGION TO SAVE IT: A NEW BODY OF LITERATURE

While large-scale aid missions from resource-rich groups like Japan’s largest Buddhist denominations and massive new religions like Soka Gakkai provided the largest amount of material aid to the disaster-afflicted region, the religious initiatives that have received the highest degree of sustained media attention have tended to be activities that play down specific institutional orientations. It appears as if an overall move away from publicizing the efforts of *groups* toward emphasizing the efforts of religious *people* has allowed activists to reintroduce religion as a trustworthy, personally relatable contributor to social reconstruction. And, perhaps more importantly, the types of activities that have enjoyed some of the most laudatory media treatments are initiatives that promote religion as a form of post-traumatic care and an underutilized resource for grief care, counseling, and other modes of healing associated more with modern medical techniques than with traditional religious practices.

Some of the post-3.11 religious aid responses that have received the most consistent attention from scholars and the media make up the complex of programs

established under the umbrella of Tohoku University's Department of Practical Religious Studies, a graduate-level innovation started in spring 2012 at this prestigious public university in Sendai. The department represents the culmination of collaboration between priests, primarily ordained Buddhist and Christian clergy, working in tandem with lay activists, academics, healthcare professionals, social workers, and others seeking to meet the long-term needs of bereaved survivors. Two Tohoku University-supported programs in particular receive consistent attention. One is the Café de Monk, which has taken the form of a radio broadcast and a mobile café organized by the Sōtō Zen priest Kaneta Taiō. Rev. Kaneta, along with volunteers from Buddhist and other religious groups, sets up gatherings in community centers at temporary housing complexes at which residents can come together to enjoy low-key religious-themed activities while they eat cake, drink tea, and converse with their neighbors and sympathetic clergy.<sup>16</sup>

Another initiative that generates media interest is a training program for Rinshō Shūkyōshi, a new professional designation that could be translated as “clinical religious professionals” who have been characterized as “Japanese-style interfaith chaplains” by the program's founding instructor, Taniyama Yōzō. Taniyama is an ordained True Pure Land Sect (Jōdo Shinshū) priest who received a doctorate in Buddhist studies from Tohoku University and trained thereafter as a Vihāra Priest, one of a small number of Buddhist chaplains who drew inspiration from modern Western models of chaplaincy and Buddhist monastic principles to adapt hospice care to a Japanese framework. Priests and aid workers from Buddhist denominations and a few other religious movements train regularly with Taniyama and other instructors in intensive two- to three-day sessions in which they are immersed in techniques for grief care, post-traumatic counseling, suicide prevention, and other dimensions of a growing field that has come to be known as “spiritual care” (*supirichuaru kea*). Applicants now compete to take part in the Rinshō Shūkyōshi training program at Tohoku University, and in April 2014 the True Pure Land Buddhism-affiliated Ryukoku University in Kyoto launched its own Rinshō Shūkyōshi training initiative, under Taniyama's guidance.<sup>17</sup>

In post-1995 Japan, references to the transcendent using the Japanese neologism *supirichuaru* (spiritual) are common, and navigations around the fraught category “religion” by way of *supirichuariti* (spirituality) have, particularly since the Aum crisis, served as a means for religious organizations to extricate themselves from stigma. Religion initiatives that have taken shape since 2000 have tended to highlight ecumenical cooperation among clergy and a willingness on the part of religious professionals to accommodate popular “spirituality” ideas in order to overcome prevailing anti-religion sentiments. Religious mobilizations since 2011 framed in ways that soft-pedal sectarian identities appear to have met with success—or, at least, to not have triggered the negativity evident in media coverage after the 1995 earthquake and Aum attacks.

This ecumenical, non-confrontational public image has taken shape in presentations at forums for religious activists organized in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 disasters. The first, and still the most useful, nondenominational source

is the Faith-Based Network for Earthquake Relief in Japan (Shūkyōsha Saigai Shien Nettowāku, or FBNERJ), an electronic clearinghouse on Facebook of reports by religious organizations and media outlets covering religions' altruistic activities. The founders of the list—Inaba Keishin from the University of Osaka and Kurosaki Hiroyuki from Kokugakuin University in Tokyo—extrapolate data from these reports to plot onto a Google Maps site ([www.respect-relief.net](http://www.respect-relief.net); see MIRAI KYŌSEI SAIGAI SHIEN MAPPU 2014) that provides a dynamic visual record of aid provisions, destruction, and loss of life at specific shrines, temples, churches, and a selection of new religions facilities. These data points, plotted onto the map of northeast Japan and accessible in other formats, have made their way into numerous media reports over the years since the disaster, and they inform journalists in Japan who write stories on post-3.11 recovery efforts.

The Faith-Based Network is linked to the Japan Religion Coordinating Project for Disaster Relief (Shūkyōsha Saigai Shien Renrakukai), known as the JRPD in English and Shūenren in Japanese. Since April 2011, the JRPD has organized information exchange meetings at the University of Tokyo's Young Buddhist Association at which academics, representatives of religious NGOs, and activists from Buddhist, Christian, Shinto, and other religious organizations give reports on their activities. The JRPD has been led by the renowned scholar of modern Japanese religion Shimazono Susumu, who was professor at the University of Tokyo during the founding of the group. He has since retired from the University of Tokyo and moved to Sophia University in Tokyo, where he heads the Institute of Grief Care.<sup>18</sup> Shimazono's public advocacy of altruistic religious efforts has inspired other scholar-advocates and religious activists to join him in his objective to raise awareness about religion's relevance to post-disaster reconstruction, anti-nuclear activism, and other progressive causes. In most cases these participants are highly educated Buddhist clergy and representatives from a few new religions that enjoy a reputation for contributing to social causes—Rissho Kosei-kai and Tenrikyo in particular. They gather in conferences and symposia that have been held with great frequency at universities across Japan since the spring of 2011. Reports they present at JRPD meetings appear subsequently in print on the organization's site, in the University of Osaka journal *Shūkyō to shakai kōken* (Religion and social contribution), and in related publications.<sup>19</sup> The nature of mainstream newspaper reportage on religious contributions to post-disaster aid makes it apparent that the content and the complimentary tone of these reports are transmitted directly into press coverage.

In his 2011 book, Inaba describes himself and other scholars sympathetic to altruistic religious aid contributors using the English-language term “information curators” (INABA 2011). The information these curators prioritize pertains to altruistic clergy who put aside sectarian divides to work with one another to propose the strategic use of traditional physical resources, such as temples and finances, as well as specifically religious resources, such as memorial rituals, to address the needs of traumatized survivors for medical care, counseling, and other assistance. In contrast to post-Hanshin prevarications over clerical involvement in first-phase

relief work, curated accounts since 2011 have valorized priests who challenged prevailing images of Japanese clergy as aloof, temple-bound clerics. Recent media discourses on religious activists tend to emphasize clerical contributions phrased within the rubric of neologisms such as *borantia* (volunteer), *kokoro no kea* (care for the heart/mind/spirit), the increasingly popular designation *supirichuaru kea* (spiritual care), and other categories that minimize sectarian identities.

While the list of publications on religious reactions after the 1995 disaster was dispiritingly short, there is now a glut of books, articles, in-house publications, online resources, and other sources of information on post-3.11 religious initiatives too extensive to completely list, let alone systematically review, in the scope of this article. I will describe a few examples in order to outline some perceptible tendencies within this growing body of literature.

The tendency to valorize trans-sectarian collaborations is apparent in the rush of publications on religious activism that have emerged since the spring of 2011.<sup>20</sup> Significant efforts have been made to release publications on or around the anniversary of the disasters, in order to maintain public interest in the fate of residents in the disaster-stricken area, and to bring attention to the actions undertaken by religious aid providers cooperating across sectarian lines. Two annual publications dedicated to contemporary religious issues highlighted religious responses to 3.11 in their April 2012 editions. The publisher Heibonsha focused the 2012 edition of their *Shūkyō to gendai ga wakaru hon* (WATANABE 2012) on transcribed roundtable discussions between prominent scholars (including Shimazono) regarding Japanese religious thought after the Fukushima meltdown and short essays by other researchers on religious mobilization, *kokoro no kea*, revival of shrines and folk traditions, care for the homeless, and related issues (WATANABE 2012). The 2012 edition of *Gendai shūkyō* (Modern religion) from the International Association for the Study of Religion (KOKUSAI SHŪKYŌ KENKYŪJO 2012), which comprised a similar collection of essays, was a special issue titled “The Great Disaster and the Transformation of Civilization” (KOKUSAI SHŪKYŌ KENKYŪJO 2012), and its 2013 edition was also a special issue on the disaster that focused on reactions to Fukushima and long-term recovery initiatives (KOKUSAI SHŪKYŌ KENKYŪJO 2013).

Since then, numerous books on post-3.11 activism produced by religious activists and sympathetic researchers have continued to appear. Examples of books recounting the efforts of individuals from specific religions include *Borantia sōryō: Higashi Nihon daishinsai hisaichi no koe o kiku* (Volunteer priests: Listening to the voices of the Great East Japan disaster area), a chronicle composed by FUJIMARU Tomo’o (2013), a Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha cleric who teaches Buddhist Studies at Musashino University. Fujimaru’s book relays detailed transcriptions from conversations with survivors of the disasters collected by himself and other Shin priests working to memorialize the dead and care for traumatized refugees living in temporary housing.

Soka Gakkai has also made the most of individual adherents’ testimonials in a large-scale media campaign designed to highlight its massive post-3.11 relief effort. Shortly after the disaster, the organization pushed back against its troubled

public image by publishing collections of articles and member testimonials, aimed at both its own adherents and a general audience. This work presented both quantitative data and stirring narrative accounts from Gakkai activists who aided more than five thousand refugees (Gakkai members and non-members alike) who were housed in forty-two Soka Gakkai Culture Centers, some for months at a time. Among these Gakkai publications, three books in particular stand out: the first was *Higashi Nihon daishinsai: Sōka gakkai wa dō ugoita ka?* (The Great East Japan disasters: How did Soka Gakkai mobilize?), which included stories about ordinary adherents persevering through loss to aid others—including non-members in their communities (USHIO HENSHŪBU 2011). The second was a large volume of articles originally published in Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper *Seikyō shinbun*, focused on members testimonials about resilience (SEIKYŌ SHINBUN HENSHŪ SŌKYOKU 2012), and the third was a paperback collection that presented ten testimonials by ordinary Gakkai adherents from each of the three most devastated prefectures (USHIO HENSHŪBU 2013).

In contrast to an absence of accounts on Shinto responses after the Hanshin quake, stories about Shinto priests responding to 3.11, while not as numerous as those about Buddhist activists, have also appeared. Kawamura Kazuyo, a freelance writer and ordained Shinto priest, published *Hikari ni mukatte: 3.11 de kanjita Shintō no kokoro* (Facing the light: The heart of Shinto experienced during 3.11), relaying the experiences of men and women Shinto clergy who housed refugees in their shrines and otherwise aided fellow survivors (KAWAMURA 2012). Other published accounts of relief activities initiated by Shinto shrine priests have been published by Kokugakuin University professor Kurosaki Hiroyuki (INABA and KUROSAKI 2013).

While published narratives describing the efforts of specific religious organizations are plentiful, recent publications produced by researchers and journalists working cooperatively with religious aid providers exhibit a notable trend toward highlighting efforts by activists who looked beyond their denominations to collaborate across religious divides. *Kuen: Higashi Nihon daishinsai yorisou shūkyōshatachi* (An anguished karmic bond: Religionists who joined together during the Great East Japan disasters) by the veteran *Chūgai nippō* reporter Kitamura Toshihiro provides dynamic profiles of a large array of activists from Buddhist, Shinto, Christian, and a few other religious organizations who provided emergency supplies and initiated various forms of counseling and related therapies (KITAMURA 2013). And, in April 2013, the Buddhist NGO Network, with the support of a number of other pan-Japanese Buddhist collective organizations, published a full-color, 55-page *Ji'in to chiiki no kizuna de takameru ji'in bisai gaidobukku* (Strengthening ties between temples and communities: Guidebook for temple disaster facilities; BUDDHIST NGO NETWORK 2013). Based on surveys undertaken by Buddhist priests active in the NGO network and within the Institute for Engaged Buddhism, the guidebook summarizes best practices for communication, safety, housing refugees, making emergency toilets, and other skills developed by Japanese Buddhist temples in disaster zones. Thus, a generation after Buddhist activists bemoaned the

absence of a manual to help them in their aid work in Kobe, temple priests who wish to prepare their facilities as refugee centers now have a guide prepared by the priests who came of age in the years after Hanshin and Aum.

A NEW MEDIA NARRATIVE: NEWSPAPER  
COVERAGE OF POST-3.11 RELIGIOUS MOBILIZATION

Recent decades have seen several religion-related media narratives take shape in the Japanese press. One perennial favorite is concern over perceived transgressions of Article 20 of the 1947 Japanese Constitution, which guarantees a division between religion and state.<sup>21</sup> Stories in this vein mostly express anxieties about the role of Komeito, Soka Gakkai's affiliated political party, and the perceived disproportionate influence over policymaking Komeito's alliance with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party grants Soka Gakkai adherents (EHRHARDT et al. 2014). Related to this constitutional issue is the media attention paid to visits by Japanese prime ministers and other politicians to Yasukuni Shrine, a memorial to Japan's war dead at which Class A war criminals are venerated; these visits never fail to spark outrage in China and Korea, and they also raise questions in Japan about religion/state divisions (BREEN ed. 2008).

A new religion media narrative has emerged in the wake of 3.11. This new narrative distances religion from partisan political concerns, promotes heartening examples of religious contributions to social reconstruction, and otherwise departs from the pessimistic sentiments that have clung to religion in Japan for a generation.<sup>22</sup> As I discussed above, reports on religious mobilization immediately after the Hanshin disaster competed with a barrage of stories about dangerous new religions—even before the Aum attacks on the Tokyo subways—and popular suspicion of marginalized religious groups also permeated reports on religious aid. By contrast, since 2011 this suspicious tone has largely retreated, and in its place Japan's major newspapers are mostly apt to present examples of praiseworthy conduct publicized by organizations such as the Faith-Based Network and the Japan Religion Coordinating Project for Disaster Relief, supplemented by testimonials by religious activists that match the promotional tone set by the FBNERJ and JRPD.<sup>23</sup>

As is evident in FIGURES 1 and 2, during the 63-day period between 11 March and 12 May 2011 (a number of days that matches the period that elapsed between the 17 January 1995 Hanshin earthquake and the 20 March 1995 Aum attacks on the Tokyo subways), there was no significant shift in the *quantity* of reportage on religion related to Japan's disasters; if anything, the two months after 3.11 tended to see slightly fewer religion/disaster articles in Japan's three biggest dailies than the period immediately after the Hanshin quake, corresponding to the drop in religion-related publications identified by Horie.<sup>24</sup>

The real story lies in the *qualitative* change in newspaper coverage of religion in between 1995 and 2011 from criticism to approval. And, in contrast to the sidelining of non-negative religion coverage after the Aum attacks in March 1995, stories on post-3.11 religious aid persisted after May 2011. By 30 June 2011, the *Asahi*

published 116 stories on post-3.11 religion concerns, the *Yomiuri* 62, and the *Mainichi* 59, including many that included rich detail on material aid and *kokoro no kea*. Coverage of this nature has continued to the present.

Of the 175 stories on “religion” (*shūkyō*) the *Asahi shinbun* published between 11 March and 12 May 2011, 136 were on religion in Japan, and 23 related to 3.11 in some fashion. The first report on religious aid to the disaster region appeared on 14 March in a story surveying the dispatch of specialists (secular and religious) who provided *kokoro no kea* to traumatized survivors in refugee centers. On 16 March the *Asahi* provided the first substantive report on material aid provisioning by religions, and on 8 April the *Asahi* reported in positive terms on contributions by the new religions Tenrikyo, Shinnyo-en, and Rissho Kosei-kai, and it noted the mobilization of aid through Buddhist temple networks. On 25 April this was supplemented by discussion of a young Tokyo-based Pure Land Buddhist cleric named Yoshinaga Gakugen who collaborated with the NPO aid agency Second Harvest to supply disaster aid to northeast Japan, a discussion that led into observations by Kwansei Gakuin University sociologist of religion Tsushima Michihito on the “human power” (*jinryoku*) religious activists could provide to doctors and counselors working in the region (AS 25 April 2011).

The *Mainichi* newspaper published a total of 99 stories on “religion” in the same period; 17 of these dealt with religion and disaster, and 6 detailed contributions by religious volunteers. In a story published on 16 March, the *Mainichi* listed damage to 1,250 Buddhist temples as an area of particular concern, and the paper’s interest in religion increased thereafter. By 29 April it was profiling aid provided by religious aid providers in a story about a True Pure Land Buddhist priest in Kyoto who was gathering water, food, generators, and other materials to deliver to temples—of all denominations—that were housing refugees in northeast Japan. The same story emphasized the willingness of these religious activists to “overcome religious and sectarian [divides]” to offer consoling ritual memorials to the bereaved (MS 29 April 2011). The *Mainichi* published some of the most comprehensive religion relief-oriented stories in the months following 3.11. For instance, on 15 May it detailed accounts of contributions made by Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha volunteers based at the organization’s Tohoku Parish Disaster Volunteer Center in Sendai. An outstanding example of this type of coverage appeared on 21 November 2013 in a long piece titled “Higashi Nihon daishinsai shūkyō ga hatashita yakuwari to wa: Fuan na yoru, tayori, sasaerare” (What was the role fulfilled by religion during the Great East Japan disaster? Reliable, supportive in a night of fear). This article recalled innovative ways Buddhist priests from different denominations cooperated with Christians, Shinto priests, social workers, and medical professionals to offer counseling and ritual services to traumatized residents in the disaster-stricken region, focusing in particular on different forms of solace they provide for refugees in temporary housing communities, such as *zazen* meditation, the Café de Monk, and the revival of local festivals (see Miichi’s article in this issue for more on this topic).

The *Yomiuri shinbun*, Japan’s most popular newspaper, and the newspaper credited with the largest circulation in the world, produced 87 stories on religion, with

14 related directly to the 3.11 disasters. Almost all of these were reports on material aid provided by religious organizations. The *Yomiuri* distinguished itself by publishing one of the earliest long articles on religious aid contributions. Drawing on data provided to its reporters by the Faith-Based Network for Earthquake Relief in Japan, the story details relief funds raised from Shinto, Buddhist, Christian, and new religious organizations, materials and volunteers dispatched, and facilities opened to refugees before concluding with accounts of the value of counseling and *kokoro no kea* in the disaster region (YS 31 March 2011). Additionally, the *Yomiuri* published 29 stories on Buddhist disaster responses, 48 reports on shrines as sites of post-3.11 volunteer activities, and 6 on Christian relief activities; in contrast to its post-Hanshin coverage, Japanese rather than foreign Christian aid efforts received attention.

Two notable features of discussions in Japanese newspapers of religious activism since 3.11 deserve attention. The first is an emphasis on ecumenical cooperation. From the earliest stories covering religious aid, repeated use of phrases along the lines of “overcoming religious boundaries” (*shūkyō no waku o koe*) or “overcoming sectarian [divides]” (*shūha o koe*) emerge in descriptions of Buddhist, Shinto, Christian, and other religious representatives coming together in (primarily) university-sponsored roundtables or to work with one another in aid efforts. The second is a perceptible emphasis on individual rather than institutional efforts. While newspapers reported on contributions by religious groups to material aid after 3.11, providing a level of detail that was wholly absent in post-1995 coverage, there is an apparent tendency to highlight praiseworthy efforts by innovative religious activists who are marginalizing their sectarian identities in favor of working with academics, medical professionals, and other nominally nonreligious actors to present religion as a form of scientifically verifiable treatment of immediate, this-worldly relevance—treatment appropriate for the needs of unaffiliated individuals rather than sectarian parishioners. Fujiyama Midori, in her comparison of post-Hanshin and post-3.11 media coverage of “religion,” notes these trends as well: there were ten times as many newspaper articles referring to the “trans-sectarian” (*chōshūha*) after 3.11 as there were after Hanshin, and media coverage of Buddhist aid initiatives in 2011, particularly on television, focused mostly on efforts by individual priests rather than on sectarian programs (FUJIYAMA 2011a).

In the years immediately after 3.11, Japan’s newspapers adopted a “religion” narrative radically different from the story settled upon in the mid-1990s. A leading image of religion that appears to have taken hold in Japan’s newspapers is that of highly educated, proactive priests who “overcome” their archaic denominational boundaries to provide new types of chaplaincy training in forward-looking ecumenical settings. The *Asahi shinbun*, for example, has continued covering the expansion of Tohoku University’s interfaith chaplain (Rinshō Shūkyōshi) program from its base in Sendai into other parts of Japan; on 24 May 2014, the *Asahi* reported on the start of training in Kyoto at Ryukoku University, where participants “overcoming religious and sectarian [divisions]” worked together to learn how to offer relief from trauma through *kokoro no kea* (AS 24 May 2014).

## CONCLUSION: WORK TO BE DONE

In 2011, *kizuna* rose to the fore as the *kanji* of the year, a symbol of optimism and cooperation forged in the midst of the most disastrous conditions Japan had faced since the Pacific War. This contrasted with overwhelmingly negative sentiments that prevailed in 1995, when *shin* was chosen in the wake of earthquake and domestic terror. A generation after “religion” was dealt a crushing blow in 1995, representatives of religion have been carefully reintroducing the category back into Japanese public discourse, making a case for Japanese religious activists as important contributors to post-3.11 rescue operations and innovative long-term care providers. The efforts of a broad coalition of religion-supporting advocates combined with PR campaigns launched by religions themselves have exerted a measurable impact on Japan’s media. Skepticism and allusions to sinister ulterior motives that defined religion coverage in 1995 have mostly slid away in Japan’s major dailies, replaced by story after story recounting on-the-ground contributions of non-threatening, good-hearted, and safely apolitical clergy and lay volunteers caring for the bereaved and the dead.

This new “religion” profile invites further inquiry. Some of the most prominent scholars of religion in contemporary Japan have dedicated the years since March 2011 to a promotional campaign on behalf of the religious groups they ostensibly study as disinterested researchers. While it would be ridiculous to criticize religious activists who seek to save lives and improve the lot of survivors, questions may be asked about the selection process employed by self-appointed “information curators” and about the re-scripting of religion’s media presentation. Curating comes with consequences of its own, not least the ongoing marginalization of religious actors who do not fit a sanitized discourse deemed acceptable for public consumption.

The process through which this new religion narrative has been honed is not transparent. Almost no self-reflection is evident in scholarly engagements with post-3.11 religious activism, and Japan’s major newspapers have yet to discuss the fact that the information they relay on activities since 2011 transpiring across Japan’s vast religious landscape is almost always transmitted from the same small number of sources—mostly university affiliated, and noticeably eager to shift public attention to “religion” away from aspects that triggered negative reactions in the past. There is also as yet insufficient information on how the general Japanese public is reacting to this new narrative, or even *if* the public is responding to it at all. Given the persistent appeal of a nebulous interest in the transcendent that has come to be called “spirituality” and a continuing reticence of people in Japan to self-identify as “religious,” there is reason to doubt the influence of the new media narrative, but further research is needed on the relationship between media presentations of religion and religious sentiments, and what exactly people in post-disaster Japan are turning to in lieu of religion.

There is a pressing need to move beyond media representations in order to examine the complexity inherent in practices of self-identified religious actors who, with or without public acclaim, continue to conduct relief activities on behalf of

their own practitioners and others. Ethnographic and archival research on both prominent and marginalized, yet still influential, actors should animate work on religion and disaster relief in order to develop critical evaluation of ways “religion” is mediated. Carrying out this type of research will provide insight into the processes that now influence Japanese religion’s practitioners and religion’s public presentation in Japan today.

---

#### NOTES

\* I am grateful to Barbara Ambros, Patrick Daly, Michael Feener, Philip Michael Fountain, and Horie Norichika for feedback on earlier drafts, and to Shierly Mondianti for producing the graphs. Early versions of this article were presented at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting in Philadelphia in March 2012 and the conference “Salvage and Salvation: Religion, Disaster Relief, and Reconstruction in Asia,” hosted by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, in November 2012. My thanks go to the participants who offered me feedback at these events.

1. In English-language documents issued by the Japanese government, the 17 January 1995 earthquake is generally referred to as the Great Hanshin earthquake. For the sake of brevity, I will mostly call it the Hanshin earthquake or Hanshin disaster. The 11 March 2011 compound earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters is called the Great East Japan earthquake in English-language reports issued by Japanese government sources, and it has come to be known by this and other names in media coverage, such as the Tohoku disasters (referring to the afflicted region of northeast Japan) and by the date 3.11. For the sake of consistency, I refer to the Great East Japan earthquake or 3.11.

2. For a discussion of the popular aversion to explicit expressions of religion in Japan, particularly in the aftermath of the events of 1995, see BAFFELLI and READER (2012). For survey data on popular Japanese attitudes to Buddhism, Shinto, and other traditions following the 3.11 disasters, see TAKAHASHI and MASAKI (2012). For insight into how Japanese attitudes toward “religion” in the wake of disaster compare globally, see discussions in FUJIWARA (2013) and HORIE (2015).

3. Intriguingly, Japan’s national political profile in March 2011 closely resembled the situation in January 1995: in March 2011, Japan was governed by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), in power for the first time after decades of national dominance by the Liberal Democrats (LDP) and, at that point, largely untested. The DPJ lost badly to an LDP-led coalition in December 2012, in part because of popular dissatisfaction with how the party and then Prime Minister Kan Naoto handled the 3.11 disasters, particularly the debacle at Fukushima.

4. A thorough description of religious mobilization after the 1995 Hanshin disaster exceeds the scope of this article. Data provided by religious organizations on their relief efforts in and around Kobe are enumerated in RITSUMEIKAN DAIGAKU SAIGAI SHAKAIGAKU KENKYŪKAI (1999 and 2000), and narrative accounts can be found in NAKAMAKI (1996) and MIKI (2001). Martin Repp provides a useful overview (in English) of religious responses immediately after the quake and reactions to them by the Japanese public (REPP 1995).

5. Very few subsequent publications on religious mobilization emerged after this. In March 1999, Ritsumeikan University’s Disaster Sociology Research Association (Saigai Shakaigaku Kenkyūkai) issued a compilation of reports based on self-generated data gathered from twenty-six Shinto, Buddhist, Christian, new religious, and religiously affiliated aid organizations. Each report provides a narrative chronology of how these groups mobilized, in many cases meticulously enumerating amounts of relief funding gathered (to the yen), types and numbers of emergency goods delivered, and other quantified information. In March 2000, the same association from Ritsumeikan issued a summary of follow-up

interviews its researchers carried out to confirm, correct, and expand upon the data it gathered the year before. They summarize data on Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian organizations (and a few new religions) and relay brief testimonials from clergy about their post-Hanshin relief efforts and damage they and their parishioners suffered. The only available book-length treatment in the years after the Hanshin disaster apart from the transcription of the 1995 symposium is the 2001 volume edited by MIKI Hizuru. This volume provides compelling accounts of aspects of religious mobilization that have since gained increased attention, such as the role of clergy as post-traumatic counselors, laity-driven religious relief activity, and how monuments to those who died in disaster construct communities of memory and consciousness of sacred space.

6. Yamaori warned readers that Japan was witnessing the “suicide of religion” (*shūkyō no jisatsu*) due to the inability of clergy to provide solace to the homeless and bereaved after the Hanshin earthquake, a failure to demonstrate relevance that was amplified by the Aum Shinrikyō affair. See UMEHARA and YAMAORI (1995) and an analysis of Yamaori’s claims in BAFELLI and READER (2012). Immediately after 3.11, Yamaori offered his opinions on disaster once again in numerous editorials, this time musing on contrasts between “heaven-sent disaster” (*tensai*) beyond our scope and “human-made disaster” (*jinsai*) for which we are culpable. See YAMAORI (2011) for a representative example.

7. The term “religion allergy” (*shūkyō averugi*) is often used to describe this negative reaction, and it is a popular expression among bloggers and other commentators who write on the phenomenon.

8. Fujiyama Midori at the Center for Information on Religion conducted a similar survey of newspaper coverage of *shūkyō* following the 1995 and 2011 disasters, in which she surveyed four daily newspapers (the three covered here plus the popular tabloid *Sankei shinbun*) and also drew on information from magazines and some broadcast media. Fujiyama’s search criteria differ from those I employ. For the data presented here, I accessed *Asahi shinbun*’s Kikuzō 11 Bijuaru database, *Mainichi shinbun*’s Maisaku database, and *Yomiuri shinbun*’s Yomidasu Rekishikan database; performed a separate search for each term listed in figures 1 and 2; and itemized the number of articles in which the search term appeared, eliminating repeated articles in evening editions. Among many topics, Fujiyama looks into reports on specific types of aid activities and ecumenical cooperation; helpfully identifies differences in coverage between the newspapers, along with reasons why their coverage differed; and analyzes connections between the nature of newspapers’ religion coverage and their financial links to religious organizations and political entities. The trends she observes in post-disaster coverage match up well with what I cover in this article. See FUJIYAMA (2011a and 2011b).

9. In 1995, the *Yomiuri* alone claimed a circulation in excess of 14 million copies daily (including 10.1 million subscribers to the morning edition), then the largest circulation in the world, with the other two papers not far behind (NIHON SHINBUN KYŌKAI 1996). Digital media was in its infancy. Print, television, and radio were the key sources of information on reactions to the Hanshin disaster, but in the weeks following the disaster power remained cut to many Hanshin areas. While the rest of the country received broadcast media, the printed word remained the most important source of new information for those who were most adversely affected.

10. For discussions of the Vihāra Movement and its contributions to post-disaster care, see MCLAUGHLIN (2013b) and WATTS ed. (2012), and see the website for the NPO Vihāra 21 at <http://www.vihara21.jp/%E3%83%93%E3%83%8F%E3%83%BC%E3%83%A9%E5%83%A7%E8%A6%8B%E7%BF%92%E3%81%84%E5%8B%9F%E9%9B%86/> (accessed 13 February 2015). For information on Kōfuku no Kagaku, including discussions of its proselytizing activities, adherents’ veneration for its charismatic leader Ōkawa Ryūhō, and other controversies that emerged with its growth in the early 1990s, see ASTLEY (1995).

11. See, for example, <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E9%98%AA%E7%A5%9E%E3%83%BB%E6%B7%A1%E8%B7%AF%E5%A4%A7%E9%9C%87%E7%81%BD> (accessed 5 July 2014).

Japan's tabloid weekly magazines also spread salacious rumors about religions seizing on the Hanshin earthquake as an opportunity to convert people who were at their weakest. For instance, the magazine *Shūkan bunshun* published two stories along these lines on 3 March 1995, one of which alluded to attempts by the Unification Church (Tōitsu Kyōkai) to proselytize in Kobe disaster areas, and another on the “truth” behind the religious convictions of disaster volunteers (SB 3 March 1995).

12. Explanation of the “simulacrum effect” appears in Baudrillard's essay “Simulacra and Simulations” (POSTER 1988) and useful analysis can be found in HEGARTY (2004).

13. Data on damage from 3.11 are continuously updated by Japan's National Police Agency, accessible here: <http://www.npa.go.jp/archive/keibi/biki/index.htm> (accessed 10 February 2015).

14. For an overview of religious mobilization immediately after the 3.11 disasters, see MCLAUGHLIN (2013a). Data and narrative accounts related to Buddhist, Christian, Shinto, and new religious organizations' rescue and relief efforts are available online (in Japanese) at the Faith-Based Network for Earthquake Relief in Japan (<https://www.facebook.com/FBNERJ>) (accessed 10 June 2014), and see MIRAI KYŌSEI SAIGAI SHIEN MAPPU (2014) at <http://www.respect-relief.net/> (accessed 10 February 2015).

15. This is particularly apparent in the 2005 poll by Global Marketing Insite that Satoko Fujiwara analyzes, in which only 5 out of 1000 Japanese survey respondents believed that the 26 December 2004 tsunami that devastated Southeast Asia was an “act of God” and only 2 out of 1000 felt that the 2004 tsunami led them to alter their religious beliefs—results that placed Japan last in these categories of all countries surveyed. See FUJIWARA (2013) and HORIE (2015).

16. Information on the café is regularly updated at a blog hosted by Tohoku University: <http://www.sal.tohoku.ac.jp/kokoro/blog/> (accessed 10 February 2015).

17. For information on the Rinshō Shūkyōshi program's history, its training sessions, and its publications, see <http://www.sal.tohoku.ac.jp/p-religion/neo/wiki.cgi?page=%CE%D7%BE%B2%BD%A1%B6%B5%BB%D5%B4%D8%CF%A2> (accessed 10 February 2015).

18. Details on the institute can be found at: <http://www.sophia.ac.jp/jpn/admissions/griecare> (accessed 10 February 2015). Shimazono is also active on Twitter and through his blog, where he publicizes JRPD events and makes available many of his publications related to religion after 3.11. These are available through Shimazono's Twitter feed at <https://twitter.com/Shimazono> (accessed 13 February 2015).

19. *Religion and Social Contribution* is open access and available here: <http://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/web/RSC/> (accessed 13 February 2015).

20. More detailed reports began to emerge soon after this, in wide release and in special-ized publications. Researchers at Taishō University, a Buddhist school in Tokyo, released findings from their Disaster and Religion Research Association (Shinsai to Shūkyō Kenkyūkai) from 2012, results based on fieldwork conducted by their researchers in Iwaki City, Fukushima, with a particular focus on mobilization through temple-based networks maintained by the Pure Land (Jōdoshū) sect and through activism by the new religious organizations Tenrikyo, Soka Gakkai, and Shinnyo-en. The researchers noted the success of these organizations in mobilizing lay volunteers and the efficacy with which Buddhist organizations in particular were able to draw on their experiences raising funds and cultivating empathetic responses from the public through such initiatives as the Jōdo sect's Hitosaji no Kai (One Spoonful Association) homeless aid patrol. See KOKUSAI SHŪKYŌ KENKYŪJO (2012).

21. Article 20 of the 1947 Constitution of Japan holds that “No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority,” and that “The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.” The full text is available at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html) (accessed 10 February 2015).

22. For another broad survey that presents examples of changing religion-related discourse after 3.11, see ŌMI (2012), in which he chronicles ways that post-disaster reportage brings to light the care for the dead and social contributions by religious activists, the revival of traditions (including the kagura performances discussed by Miichi in this issue), theodicy, and religious responses to Fukushima.

23. Though newspaper readership in Japan has declined in recent years, the Japanese public remains one of the most newspaper-hungry populations in the world. In 1995, Japan's largest three newspapers mainstream newspapers, the *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri*, claimed morning edition subscriber rates of 8.26, 4.01, and 10.12 million respectively, and while these numbers declined to 7.7, 3.48, and 9.95 million in 2011, circulations for Japanese papers remains high in terms of sheer numbers and per capita newspaper consumption. It thus remains meaningful to track newspaper coverage of religious activism after the 3.11 disasters and to compare this coverage with newspaper stories that appeared in 1995 (NIHON SHINBUN KYŌKAI 1996 and 2012). It should also be noted that Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper *Seikyō shinbun* claims a circulation of 5.5 million copies, putting it in third place ahead of the *Mainichi shinbun* (<http://www.seikyoonline.jp/seiyo/index.html>; accessed 8 February 2015). However, as an organ of Soka Gakkai this publication should not be regarded as an indicator of general Japanese attitudes toward religion.

24. The category "disaster-related reports" extends from detailed reports on religious rescue and relief activities to nominal inclusion of religion in reference to the Hanshin and 3.11 disasters. A more comprehensive study of print media coverage, one beyond the scope of this article, would survey articles in other major national dailies (including the *Nihon keizai shinbun* and *Sankei shinbun*), regional newspapers (particularly Sendai's daily newspaper *Kahoku shinpō*), magazines with large circulations, and other publications made available to consumers via blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other electronic media.

---

#### REFERENCES

##### *Newspapers and magazines/abbreviations*

AS	<i>Asahi shinbun</i> 朝日新聞
CN	<i>Chūgai nippō</i> 中外日報
MS	<i>Mainichi shinbun</i> 毎日新聞
SB	<i>Shūkan bunshun</i> 週刊文春
YS	<i>Yomiuri shinbun</i> 読売新聞

##### *Primary sources*

AMBROS, Barbara

2016 Mobilizing gratitude: Contextualizing Tenrikyō's response after the Great East Japan earthquake. In *Disasters and Social Crisis in Japan: Political, Religious, and Cultural Responses*, Mark R. Mullins and Koichi Nakano, eds., 132–55. London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

ASTLEY, Trevor

1995 The transformation of a recent Japanese new religion: Ōkawa Ryūhō and Kōfuku no Kagaku. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22: 343–80.

BAFFELLI, Erica, and Ian READER

2012 Editor's introduction: Impact and ramifications: The aftermath of the Aum Affair in the Japanese religious context. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39: 1–28.

BREEN, John, ed.

2008 *Yasukuni: The War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BUDDHIST NGO NETWORK 仏教NGOネットワーク (BNN), ed.

2013 *Ji'in to chiiki no kizuna de takameru ji'in bisai gaidobukku* 寺院と地域の絆で高める寺院備災ガイドブック [Strengthening ties between temples and communities: Guidebook for temple disaster facilities]. Tokyo: BNN.

CAVALIERE, Paola

2015 *Promising Practices: Women Volunteers in Contemporary Japanese Religious Civil Society*. Leiden: Brill.

CHANDLER, Stuart

2004 *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

DORMAN, Benjamin

2005 Pana Wave: The new Aum Shinrikyō or another moral panic? *Nova Religio* 8: 83–103.

EHRHARDT, George, Axel KLEIN, Levi MCLAUGHLIN, and Steven S. REED, eds.

2014 *Kōmeitō: Politics and Religion in Japan*. Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies.

FUJIMARU Tomo'o 藤丸智雄

2013 *Borantia sōryō: Higashi Nihon daishinsai/hisaichi no koe o kiku* ボランティア僧侶—東日本大震災・被災地の声を聴く [Volunteer priests: Listening to the voices of the Great East Japan disaster area]. Tokyo: Dōbunkan

FUJIWARA, Satoko

2013 Reconsidering the concept of theodicy in the context of the post-2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami. *Religion* 43: 499–518.

FUJIYAMA Midori

2011a *Shūkyōkai no shinsai shien ga hōdō sarenai riyū 1: Hanshin/Higashi Nihon Daishinsai no hikaku yori* 宗教界の震災支援が報道されない理由1—阪神・東日本大震災の比較より [Reasons why earthquake relief from the religious world was not publicized 1: From a comparison of the Hanshin and Great East Japan earthquake disasters. Tokyo: Shūkyō Jōhō Sentā (Center for information on religion), 22 August. Available at <http://www.circam.jp/reports/02/detail/id=2007> (accessed 22 March 2015).

2011b *Shūkyōkai no shinsai shien ga hōdō sarenai riyū 2: Hanshin/Higashi Nihon Daishinsai no hikaku yori* 宗教界の震災支援が報道されない理由2—阪神・東日本大震災の比較より [Reasons why earthquake relief from the religious world was not publicized 2: From a comparison of the Hanshin and Great East Japan earthquake disasters. Tokyo: Shūkyō Jōhō Sentā (Center for information on religion), 22 August. Available at <http://www.circam.jp/reports/02/detail/id=2007> (accessed 22 March 2015).

GILL, Tom, Brigitte STEGER, and David H. SLATER, eds.

2013 *Japan Copes With Calamity: Ethnographies of the Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disasters of March 2011*. Bern: Peter Lang.

HARDACRE, Helen

- 2007 Aum Shinrikyō and the Japanese media: The Pied Piper meets the Lamb of God. *History of Religions* 47: 171–204.

HEGARTY, Paul

- 2004 *Jean Baudrillard: Live Theory*. London and New York: Continuum.

HORIE Norichika 堀江宗正

- 2015 Shinsai to shūkyō: Fukkō sezokushugi no taitō 震災と宗教—復興世俗主義の台頭 [Earthquakes and religion: A rise of reconstruction secularism]. In *Shinsai to shimin 2* 震災と市民 2 [Earthquakes and citizens 2], Nitagai Kamon 似田貝香門 and Yoshiwara Naoki 吉原直樹, eds., 215–33. Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppan.

HUANG, C. Julia

- 2009 *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

INABA Keishin 稲場圭信

- 2011 *Ritashugi to shūkyō* 利他主義と宗教 [Altruism and religion]. Tokyo: Kyōbundō.

INABA Keishin and KUROSAKI Hiroyuki 黒崎浩行, eds.

- 2013 *Shinsai fukkō to shūkyō* 震災復興と宗教 [Disaster recovery and religion]. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.

INOUE Nobutaka 井上順孝 et al., eds.

- 2011 *Jōhō jidai no Oumu Shinrikyō* 情報時代のオウム真理教 [Aum Shinrikyō of the information age]. Tokyo: Shinjūsha.

KANEKO Akira 金子昭

- 2002 *Kaketsukeru shinkōshatachi: Tenrikyō saigai kyūen no hyakunen* 駆けつける信仰者たち—天理教災害救援の百年 [The faithful who rush to the scene: One hundred years of Tenrikyo emergency disaster aid]. Tenri City: Dōyūsha.

KAWAMURA Kazuyo 川村一代

- 2012 *Hikari ni mukatte: 3.11 de kanjita Shintō no kokoro* 光に向かって—3.11で感じた神道のこころ [Facing the light: The heart of Shinto experienced during 3.11]. Tokyo: Shōbunsha.

KAWANAMI, Hiroko

- 2013 Implications of international relief work and civil society for Japanese Buddhists affiliated with traditional denominations. In *Buddhism, International Relief Work, and Civil Society*, Hiroko Kawanami and Geoffrey Samuel, eds., 101–21. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

KING, Sallie B.

- 2009 *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

KINGSTON, Jeff, ed.

- 2012 *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan's 3/11*. London and New York: Routledge.

KITAMURA Toshihiro 北村敏泰

- 2013 *Kuen: Higashi Nihon daishinsai: Yorison shūkyōshatachi* 苦縁—東日本大震災寄り添う宗教者たち [An anguished karmic bond: Religionists who joined together during the Great East Japan disasters]. Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten.

- KOKUSAI SHŪKYŌ KENKYŪJO 国際宗教研究所, ed.  
 2012 *Gendai shūkyō 2012 tokushū: daisaigai to bunmei no tenkan* 現代宗教 2012 特集—大災害と文明の転換 [Modern religion 2012 special issue: Great disaster and the transformation of civilization]. Tokyo: Akiyama Shoten.  
 2013 *Gendai shūkyō 2013 tokushū: 3.11 go o hiraku* 現代宗教 2013 特集—3.11後を拓く [Modern religion 2013 special issue: Leading the way after 3.11]. Tokyo: Akiyama Shoten.
- KURODA Nobuyuki 黒田展之 and TSUGANESAWA Toshihiro 津金沢聡広, eds.  
 1999 *Shinsai no shakaigaku: Hanshin/Awaji daishinsai to minshū ishiki* 震災の社会学—阪神・淡路大震災と民衆意識 [Earthquakes and sociology: The Great Hanshin/Awaji earthquake disaster and popular consciousness]. Kyoto: Sekai Shisōsha.
- LOBREGLIO, John  
 1997 The revisions to the Religious Corporations Law: An introduction and annotated translation. *Japanese Religions* 22: 38–59.
- MCLAUGHLIN, Levi  
 2012 Did Aum change everything? What Soka Gakkai before, during, and after the Aum Shinrikyō affair tells us about the persistent “otherness” of new religions in Japan. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39: 51–75.  
 2013a What have religious groups done after 3.11? Part 1: A brief survey of religious mobilization after the Great East Japan earthquake disasters. *Religion Compass* 7: 294–308.  
 2013b What have religious groups done after 3.11? Part 2: From religious mobilization to “spiritual care.” *Religion Compass* 7: 309–25.
- MIKI Hizuru 三木英, ed.  
 2001 *Fukkō to shūkyō: Shinsaigo no hito to shakai o iyasu mono* 復興と宗教—震災後の人と社会を癒すもの [Reconstruction and religion: Therapists for people in post-disaster society]. Osaka: Tōhō.
- MIRAI KYŌSEI SAIGAI SHIEN MAPPU 未来共生災害支援マップ [Map of Cooperative Disaster Relief for the Future]  
 2014 <http://www.respect-relief.net/> (accessed 10 June 2014).
- MUKYOPADYAYA RANJANA ランジャナ・ムコパディヤーヤ  
 2005 *Nihon no shakai sankā bukkō: Hōonji to Risshō Kōsei-kai no shakai katsudō to shakai rinri* 日本の社会参加仏教—法音寺と立正佼成会の社会活動と社会倫理 [Social participation Buddhism in Japan: Social activities and social ethics of Hōonji and Risshō Kōsei-kai]. Tokyo: Tōshindō.
- NAKAMAKI Hirochika 中牧弘允, ed.  
 1996 *Hanshin Daishinsai to shūkyō* 阪神大震災と宗教 [The Great Hanshin earthquake disaster and religion]. Osaka: Tōhō.
- NIHON KANJI NŌRYOKU KENTEI KYŌKAI 日本漢字能力検定協会 (KANKEN 漢検)  
 2011 *Kotoshi no kanji* 今年の漢字 [kanji of the year]. [http://www.kanken.or.jp/project/edification/years\\_kanji/2011.html](http://www.kanken.or.jp/project/edification/years_kanji/2011.html) (accessed 10 June 2014).
- NIHON SHINBUN KYŌKAI 日本新聞協会, ed.  
 1996 *Nihon shinbun nenkan* 日本新聞年鑑 [Japan newspaper almanac] 1995/1996. Tokyo: Nihon Shinbun Kyōkai.  
 2012 *Nihon shinbun nenkan* . Tokyo: Nihon Shinbun Kyōkai.

ŌMI Toshihiro 碧海寿広

- 2012 Shinsai ikō no shūkyō jōhō: media hōdō/ronsetsu no naiyō to bunseki 震災以降の」宗教情報—メディア報道／論説の内容と分析 [Post-disaster religion information: An analysis of articles and editorials]. In *Gendai shūkyō 2012 tokushū: Daisaigai to bunmei no tenkan* 現代宗教 2012 特集—大災害と文明の転換 [Modern religion 2012 special issue: Great disaster and the transformation of civilization], *Kokusai Shūkyō Kenkyūjo*, ed., 102–21. Tokyo: Akiyama Shoten.

POSTER, Mark, ed.

- 1988 Simulacra and simulations. In *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, 166–84. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

READER, Ian.

- 2000 *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

REPP, Martin

- 1995 The earthquake in the Kobe-Osaka area January 17<sup>th</sup> 1995: Its impact on religions and their response. *Japanese Religions* 20: 207–29.

RITSUMEIKAN DAIGAKU SAIGAI SHAKAIGAKU KENKYŪKAI

立命館大学災害社会学研究会, ed.

- 1999 *Hanshin, Awaji Daishinsai to shūkyō kyōdan no taiō* 阪神・淡路大震災と宗教教団の対応 [The Great Hanshin/Awaji earthquake disaster and responses by religious organizations]. Ritsumeikan Daigaku.
- 2000 *Hisai to saisei no shakaigaku: Hanshin, Awaji daishinsai, hito, kazoku, gaiku* 被災と再生の社会学—阪神・淡路大震災、人・家族・街区 [Sociology of disaster and rebirth: The Great Hanshin/Awaji earthquake disaster, people/families/urban areas]. Ritsumeikan Daigaku.

SAMUELS, Richard J.

- 2013 *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

SEIKYŌ SHINBUN HENSHŪ SŌKYOKU 聖教新聞編集総局, ed.

- 2012 *Magedetamakka! Seikyō shinbun/Higashi Nihon daishinsai hōdō kara* 負けでたまっか！聖教新聞・東日本大震災報道から [We won't give up! The Great East Japan disasters from Seikyō Shinbun coverage]. Tokyo: Seikyō Shinbunsha.

SHIMAZONO Susumu 島蘭進

- 2007 *Supirichuariti no kōryū: Shinreisei undō to sono shūben* スピリチュアリティの興隆—新霊性運動とその周辺 [Burgeoning spirituality: The new spirit movement and its surroundings]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

TAKAHASHI Kōichi 高橋幸市 and MASAKI Miki 政木みき

- 2012 Higashi Nihon daishinsai de Nihonjin wa dō kawatta ka: Bōsai, enerugī, seikatsu ni kan suru seron chōsa kara 東日本大震災で日本人はどう変わったか—防災・エネルギー・生活に関する世論調査から [How did the Japanese people change with the Great East Japan earthquake? From an opinion poll on disaster prevention, energy, and livelihood]. In *Hōsō kenkyū to chōsa* [Broadcast research and surveys], June, 34–55. [http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2012\\_06/20120603.pdf](http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2012_06/20120603.pdf) (accessed 13 February 2015).

UMEHARA Takeshi 梅原猛 and YAMAORI Tetsuo 山折哲雄

- 1995 *Shūkyō no jisatsu: Nihonjin no atarashii shinkō o motomete* 宗教の自殺—日本人の新しい信仰を求めて [The suicide of religion: In search of a new faith for the Japanese people]. Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo.

USHIO HENSHŪBU 「潮」編集部, ed.

- 2011 *Higashi Nihon daishinsai: Sōka gakkai wa dō ugoita ka* 東日本大震災—創価学会はどう動いたか [The Great East Japan disaster: How did Soka Gakkai mobilize?]. Tokyo: Ushio.
- 2013 “*Kokoro no takara*” wa kowasarenai: *Higashi Nihon daishinsai 30-nin no shōgen* 「心の財」はこわされない—東日本大震災30人の証言 [The “jewel of the heart” cannot shatter: Thirty testimonials from the Great East Japan disaster]. Tokyo: Ushio.

WATANABE Naoki 渡邊直樹, ed.

- 2012 *Shūkyō to gendai ga wakaru hon* 宗教と現代がわかる本 [Book for understanding religion and modernity]. Tokyo: Heibonsha.

WATTS, Jonathan S.

- 2004 A brief overview of Buddhist NGOs in Japan. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 31: 417–28.

WATTS, Jonathan S., ed.

- 2012 *This Precious Life: Buddhist Tsunami Relief and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Post 3/11 Japan*. Yokohama: The International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC).

WILKINSON, Gregory

- 2009 The Next Aum: Religious Violence and New Religious Movements in Twenty-first Century Japan. PhD dissertation, University of Iowa.

YAMAORI Tetsuo

- 2011 *Daisaigai ni mukiau Nihonjin no shinzō* 大災害に向き合う日本人の心像 [The mental image of Japanese people who confront damage from the great disaster]. *Sankei shinbun*, 28 March.