

The State of the Field: A Basic Bibliography on Astrological Cultic Practices in Japan.

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In spite of the importance of the stars in the religious life of Japan, scholarly works that look at the variety of the ritual practices related to astral bodies are few in Japanese, and hardly existent in Western languages, with the exception of a ground-breaking study on directional interdictions in French (Frank 1998).

The first attempt to explore astrological practices in a comprehensive way was published in the 1970s (Kanezaki 1974), a few years after a classic volume on Japanese astronomy appeared, first in English and then in Japanese (Nakayama 1969 and 1972). The study by Kanezaki brings together historical data and popular practices, and is to date the best available outline of the different forms that the worship took. A single volume on the stars has been published since (Sano 1994), which however includes essays previously published in academic journals and local histories on two stellar deities. These studies mostly refer to China as the source of the knowledge on stars, but scholars of Indian astronomy have also pointed out the significance of the connections between Japanese and Indo-European astrology (Yano 1986, 2004).

Dedicated studies on astral deities have concentrated on two bodhisattvas, Kōkuzō and Myōken/Pole Star, which have been objects of ethnographic analysis (Sanō 1991 and 1996) and art historical interest (Izumi, Hayashi On). The specific iconography of star mandalas is also outlined by Takeda (1995), and discussed in several studies by Tsuda Tetsuei, of which a summary is given in his essay included in the present volume. An excellent compendium of the Tantric liturgies for the stars is the two-volume study by Morita (1944).

Yin-yang practices, on the other hand, have been the concern of a large scholarship that ranges from the classic volumes by Murayama Shūichi

(1981 and 1987) to the recent analysis of the political context of Onmyōdō practitioners (Hayashi and Koike), and have seen an upsurge of interest in the last decade. The boom in Abe no seimei's popularity, which has produced several works of popular culture, such as the extraordinarily successful *manga* series designed by Okano Reiko (Yumemakura and Okano 1994-2001), has also attracted a great deal of attention from literature specialists, historians and anthropologists (Saitō 2004, Shigeta 2005).

The shelves of Japanese bookshops are also filled with books authored by contemporary practising astrologers, who at times offer modern interpretations of traditional texts and imagery (Uesumi 1999).

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