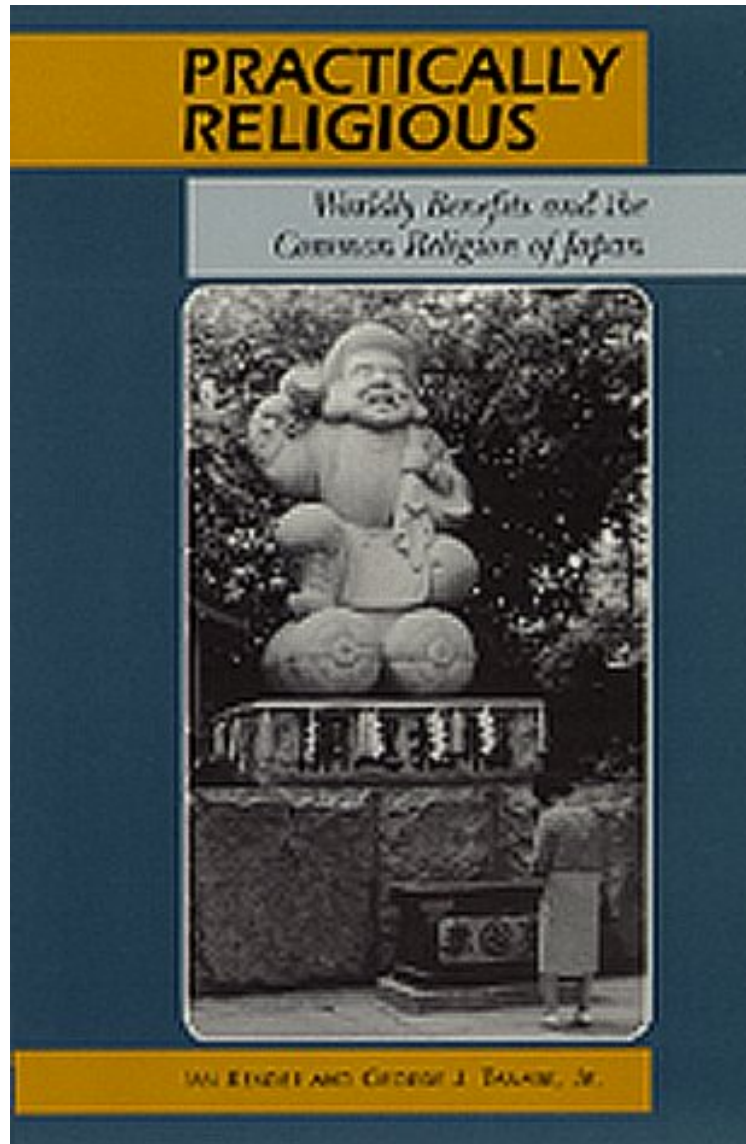


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Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan

Ian Reader, George J. Tanabe Jr.
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Ian Reader, George J. Tanabe Jr. : Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Superb analysis of Japanese religion By Daniel Mettraux Professors

Tanabe and Reader provide a superb analysis of Japanese religion. Tanabe and Reader are highly respected scholars in the field of Japanese and Asian religions and their collective works could well provide the nucleus for any library on the subject. The authors amply demonstrate that there is a distinct commonality to Japanese religion that underlies the rich varieties and apparent contradictions of Japanese religious practice. They provide a myriad of examples and case studies to demonstrate the this-worldly nature and emphasis on personal gain / advantage aspects of Japanese religious culture. To put it simply, this is one of those books that make you say: "By Jove, I've got it." The authors cut through the complexities of Japanese religion to clearly exhibit the common core. I used this book as a text for my course on Japanese religion and the students really benefitted from the experience. I have also read Ian Reader's work on the Japanese sect, Aum Shinrikyo. He understands Aum far better than any other scholar and I commend his Aum books to both the scholar and general reader. Reader's books are written in a clear and lively manner. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Practical and theoretical benefits for religious knowledge By Bernhard Scheid Awareness of economic needs as well as a tendency to playfulness make modern religions in Japan (whether Buddhist or Shinto is not important in this case) much more successful than in most other industrialized nations. This book shows by a number of detailed cases and examples how that works and has always been working. At the same time Western observers begin to understand that praying for worldly benefits is not at variance with sincere religious belief, as a Western perception of religion often presupposes. Rather, it is an intrinsic part of religious activity, and the fact that it is not ridiculed in the Japanese context is probably one factor for the still dominant role of religion in this country. 2 of 9 people found the following review helpful. WORST academic book ever written By GagaPilot I am currently enrolled in a Japanese Culture Class and assigned this textbook. I'm sorry, but this is quite simply the WORST academic book ever written. The authors, Reader and Tanabe, simply repeat their personal opinionated views over and over in each chapter. The introduction of the text is a nice summary of the book, but the chapters that follow are nothing but useless and repetitive. If you are a professor seeking a book for a class, keep looking. If you are a student assigned this book, I highly recommend reading other factual works to at first learn the basics of the term "genze riyaku," then read this book to gain an insight on how the authors interpret the meaning.

Praying for practical benefits is a common religious activity in Japan. Basing their work on a fusion of textual, ethnographic, historical and contemporary studies, the authors of this volume demonstrate that far from being marginal, the concepts and practices surrounding "genze riyaku" lie at the very heart of the Japanese religious world. The authors discuss the economic and commercial aspects of how and why institutions promote practical benefits, drawing attention to the dynamism and flexibility in the religious marketplace. The authors also examine the business of guidebooks, which combine travel information with religious advice, including forms of prayer for the protection against embarrassing physical problems and sexual diseases.

"Observers of the religious scene in Japan today will find the views of Practically Religious constantly confirmed at temples and shrines. The authors are firmly rooted in the real world of the actual conduct of religious life, and readers will find this common-sense approach, gracefully and clearly written, a welcome and readable treatment of a pervasive theme of Japanese religious life ... This study makes a solid contribution to ethnographic research on Japanese religions by taking the search for practical benefits seriously and demonstrating convincingly that genze riyaku is an important key to many aspects of Japanese religious life." -- Japan Quarterly From the Back Cover Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, Jr. Praying for practical benefits (genze riyaku) is a common religious activity in Japan. Despite its widespread nature and the vast numbers of people who pray and purchase amulets and talismans for everything from traffic safety and education success to business prosperity and protection from disease, the practice has been virtually ignored in academic studies or relegated to the margins as a product of superstition or an aberration from the true dynamics of religion. Basing their work on a fusion of textual, ethnographic, historical, and contemporary studies, the authors of this volume demonstrate the fallacy of such views, showing that, far from being marginal, the concepts and practices surrounding genze riyaku lie at the very heart of the Japanese religious world. They thrive not only as popular religious expression but are supported by the doctrinal structures of most Buddhist sects, are ordained in religious scriptures, and are promoted by monastic training centers, shrines, and temples. Benefits are both sought and bought, and the authors discuss the economic and commercial aspects of how and why institutions promote practical benefits. They draw attention to the dynamism and flexibility in the religious marketplace, where new products are offered in response to changing needs. Intertwined in these economic activities and motivations are the truth claims that underpin and justify the promotion and practice of benefits. The authors also examine the business of guidebooks, which combine travel information with religious advice, including humorous and distinctive forms of prayer for the protection against embarrassing physical problems and sexual diseases. Written in a direct and engaging style, Practically Religious will appeal to a wide range of readers and will be especially valuable to those interested in religion, anthropology, Buddhist studies, sociology, and Japanese studies. Ian Reader teaches at the Scottish Centre for Japanese Studies, University of Stirling, Scotland, and until recently was also a senior research fellow at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies,

Copenhagen. George J. Tanabe, Jr., is professor and chair in the Department of Religion, University of Hawai'i. About the Author Ian Reader is professor of religious studies at Lancaster University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on aspects of Japanese social and religious life.