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Review of *The Trek East: Mormonism Meets Japan, 1901–1968*, by Shinji Takagi

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is expressed and received.” In its exploration of how Indianness mattered in the nineteenth century to two people who crossed religious and racial boundaries, *Real Native Genius* illuminates how Mormons viewed and constructed notions of antebellum Indianness. In broader terms, the book also contributes to the growing body of Mormon studies informed by serious attention to intersecting issues of race, gender, sexuality, and religion.

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SHINJI TAKAGI’S *The Trek East: Mormonism Meets Japan, 1901–1968* is a sweeping and detailed account of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ struggle to establish and sustain a mission in Japan. Organized both chronologically and thematically, it recounts the hardships and frustrations endured by the first group of missionaries who ventured to Japan between 1901 and 1924—the first attempt at establishing the Japan Mission—and the more successful second attempt initiated during the Allied occupation of Japan and further reinforced during a particularly dynamic period of leadership and activity in the 1960s. While earlier studies of Mormonism in Japan have tended to focus

on North American missionaries and church leaders, Takagi's study is welcome and groundbreaking in its extensive use of Japanese-language primary and secondary sources, meticulous contextualization, attention to the complexities of linguistic and cultural translation, and perceptive accounts of native Japanese church members.

Takagi places great emphasis on situating Mormon activities within the broader social, economic, and political changes ongoing in Japan and offers substantive overviews of background information for readers unfamiliar with Japanese history and culture. At the same time, however, he assumes an insider audience familiar with the intricacies of Mormon history, controversies, and church ritual and structure, meaning that readers eager to learn how the Mormon church was different from other American-influenced Protestant denominations in Japan, or just not familiar with these details, may struggle. Ultimately, this study focuses on documenting the process of evangelization and presents an institutional history of how the mission was organized, structured, and maintained through official relationships and networks.

Despite its many impressive contributions that dramatically raise the bar for future research, the work falls short of offering a framework and focus that would help situate the Mormon mission within the broader context of religion in Japan and, more specifically, of Protestant evangelism and the establishment of Protestant Christianity in twentieth-century Japan. By the time the first Mormon missionaries arrived in Japan, other mainline Protestant missions—and a handful of less prominent ones—were well established and most Japanese congregations were led by Japanese ministers eager to assert their independence from foreign missions. The broader contextualization that Takagi provides throughout the study may situate the Mormon mission's establishment and eventual growth within Japanese society in general and alongside other Japanese religious institutions to a certain degree, but it does not sufficiently address how the reputation and influence of more prominent Christian denominations and their leaders may have helped to shape the reception (or lack) of LDS missionaries, especially in pre-World War II Japan.

In his introduction, Takagi establishes the historical context for the dual focuses of his study: Mormonism and Japan. One challenge of a study such as this is that both the LDS Church and Japan were undergoing rapid and significant changes at the moment of their initial encounter. As such, Takagi attempts to place each in its respective historical trajectory before approaching the encounter itself. The introduction also presents the reader with the main concerns of the study. He asserts, “By trying to understand the economic, intellectual, legal, political, religious, and social contexts in which Mormon missionary work took place, this book attempts to present a more holistic interpretation of the Mormon experience than would be possible with an approach based solely on the Mormon side of the story” (p. 11). This acknowledgment that the greater social and cultural context must be taken into account when examining the establishment and subsequent history of the mission is crucial. At the same time, the corollary question—what exactly it means to be a Japanese Mormon—perhaps becomes diluted in this effort.

The lingering question of what makes somebody a Japanese Mormon emerges almost immediately and is never resolved. In chapter 2, Takagi focuses on the stories of who he considers to be the first two Japanese Mormons, Tomizo Katsunuma and Tokujiro Sato, both of whom were immigrants to the US and were converted there instead of in Japan. Describing them as path breakers, he recounts their early experiences as immigrants and their general history as longtime residents in Hawaii. While both men present interesting case studies and certainly represent important aspects of Japanese immigrant history, their relative inactivity after their initial conversion begs the question: What is Mormon about them? And how do their stories help deepen our understanding of the LDS Church’s relationship with Japan? Also, since both lived out their adult lives outside Japan, does it make sense to call them Japanese Mormons?

The actual establishment of a Japanese Mormon mission occurred in 1901 with the arrival of the first missionaries. Over the following six chapters, Takagi traces the ebbs and flows of the first effort to establish

a Mormon mission in Japan. In each chapter, he is careful to establish the broader context in Japan, from the political and social upheaval transforming Japan into a modern empire to shifts in perceptions about religious belief and practice. He also examines the Japanese reception of the first missionaries with a survey of press and media coverage of the missionaries' arrival in both national and regional news sources, as well as some early publications by scholars who, while not Mormon, nonetheless presented the church in a favorable light. He also recounts the missionaries' early efforts, from completing a full Japanese translation of the Book of Mormon and publishing other materials to early conversions and baptisms. Despite these efforts, the first phase of the Japan Mission ended in 1924, when the church decided to call all missionaries home. The conventional explanation for the abrupt departure of the missionaries is that the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act in the US led to sufficient hostility against Americans in Japan that maintaining the mission became impractical. However, Takagi argues that a consistent shortage of missionaries, the difficulty of language acquisition, and other factors contributed to ineffective outreach, which was the real reason for the mission's closure.

Takagi's assessment of the shuttering of the formal mission in 1924 raises several issues that could have been pursued much further. In his dismissal of the conventional view that anti-American hostility made missionary work no longer feasible, he points out that other American missionaries in Japan—while facing temporary resistance and animosity—continued their work as before, and most maintained robust missions until the onset of war made it necessary for them to leave. Not only does this cast doubt on the claim that the Mormon mission's departure was inevitable, but it also raises the question of why it struggled so much when other missions were able to maintain their work there.

While Takagi also discusses early baptisms and conversions, there is little on the day-to-day operations of congregations, how membership was determined and participation was assessed, the degree to which Japanese converts were assigned responsibilities and granted authority, and various other factors that help shed light on the reach and impact

of the mission. Knowing that missionaries, with the help of bilingual Japanese, were able to publish and distribute pamphlets and tracts, and even the Book of Mormon, provides only a partial view of the mission's activities if we do not have a sense of who read these things, how the messages were received, what discussions were like, what circumstances led to church attendance and even eventual baptism, and other markers of active engagement. Why, ultimately, did Japanese converts in this early lean period find the missionaries' message attractive and inviting? What difference did it make in the way they lived? How did they integrate this message into their lives, or their lives into the church?

One recurring issue is that in Takagi's efforts to offer detailed contextualization of the different moments of significance in Japan for the Mormon mission, he has made choices in what to focus on or what sources to rely on that can be problematic. The occasional disconnect between context and LDS activity not only adds length to an already-substantial study but also has the effect of muddying the linkages Takagi is attempting to establish. One possible cause for this may be the sources he has relied on in guiding his overviews of Japanese history. They are a mix of older English-language studies, Japanese-language studies written for the general public, and many out-of-print or difficult-to-access works. His use of unconventional or uncommon sources is not just a matter of personal choice, particularly when it comes to a study like this in which the assumption is that the typical reader will not know about Japan at all. This, after all, is why he provides these contextual interludes. But his choice of sources is occasionally puzzling, and the focus of these interludes does not always offer the reader unfamiliar with Japan the most helpful context.

As Takagi makes clear, the brief existence of the first mission and the sporadic contact between Japanese converts and the church in Utah have made answering many questions challenging. The second phase, beginning with the Allied occupation of Japan following the end of World War II, is the focus of the second half of this study. It was also much more promising. This second effort was spearheaded by servicemen who were stationed as part of the occupation. Critical among them

were Americans of Japanese ancestry, many of whom were from Hawaii, who were interpreters and translators with the US military. Discovering Japanese members who had retained their faith in the intervening years since 1924, these servicemen—especially Army chaplain Warren Richard Nelson—worked informally as missionaries. When the LDS Church received permission from General MacArthur’s office to send a representative missionary, a new Japan Mission was established, with tenuous but existing ties to its pre–World War II predecessor.

With the end of the occupation in 1952, Japan entered a new era, and the Japan Mission did as well. Starting with a rigorous effort to purchase properties for member use, the postwar mission also enjoyed a labor force unimaginable to any of the few missionaries who had worked in the first phase. This period saw other critical developments, such as the publication of not only a new translation of the Book of Mormon but also, for the first time, translations of the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. The mission expanded significantly. The introduction of the new method of outreach that emphasized personal connection over doctrinal debate, according to Takagi, also contributed to a significant increase in conversions and baptisms. The study concludes with the reorganization of the mission into two missions in recognition of its growth into an unwieldy size, a promising and hopeful moment in the mission’s history.

In the final main chapter (the book also contains numerous so-called annexes with additional information), Takagi addresses what he calls demand-side reasons for the promising growth of the LDS Church in the immediate postwar years: the shift of the population from rural to urban areas and a sense of not necessarily outright religious freedom but freedom from “Edo Buddhism” that allowed people to consider other religious affiliations. He makes a brief reference to the parallel surge in popularity of “new religions,” particularly Soka Gakkai, and acknowledges that the LDS Church was a small player by comparison. Nonetheless, he attributes the mission’s relative successes to similar factors.

An excellent case can be made for ending the study at this particular point, but there are still important questions that remain unanswered. Again, what did it mean—in this period, after Japan had been soundly defeated in World War II and when its baby-boomer generation was just coming of age—to be a Japanese Mormon? Were these conversions a reflection of the age of the majority of the population—that is, a youthful moment that would be followed by a return to more conventional and conservative life choices—or were these permanent changes? Did these changes persist into the booming 1980s and the endless recession that has continued since the 1990s? How does the mission compare with long-term trends among the new religions Takagi mentions? How about with Protestant Christianity?

The more ambitious and comprehensive a study of any kind, however, the more questions there are to ask. Takagi is to be commended for embracing the vital undertaking of telling a story about Japanese Mormonism that captures the richness and complexity of its local context. Future historians of Japanese Mormonism are lucky that Takagi has done so much heavy lifting in bringing together a trove of material that could serve as the foundation for additional inquiry. With *The Trek East*, Takagi has provided a valuable starting point that will benefit anyone with an interest in LDS missions in general or the Japan Mission in particular.

Emily Anderson is the author of *Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God* (Bloomsbury, 2014) and has also published articles on the ways in which Japanese Protestant Christians developed their identity and practice within the context of Japan's emergence as a colonial empire. Most recently she was the editor of *Belief and Practice in Imperial Japan and Colonial Korea* (Palgrave, 2017).