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**[Seager, Richard Hughes. Encountering the Dharma: Daisaku Ikeda, Sōka Gakkai, and the globalization of Buddhist Humanism]**

*Religio*. 2010, vol. 18, iss. 1, pp. 117-119

ISSN 1210-3640 (print); ISSN 2336-4475 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/125324>

Access Date: 19. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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sa stáva Mendelova *Hidžra* monografiou medzinárodnej úrovne.

Dôvody sú iné. Autorovi sa v tejto knihe podarilo to, čo dokáže len máloktorý bádateľ: venovať sa tak komplexnému javu akým je *hidžra* a náboženská emigrácia v isláme, pojať všetky zásadné aspekty tohto javu, ilustrovať to na mnohých príkladoch, no zároveň to podať tak, aby to bolo zrozumiteľné, ba dokonca „chutné“ čítanie pre pomerne široký okruh čitateľov. Pre religionistov, historikov, islamológov, antropológov, geografov. To je vskutku náročná pozícia. Samozrejme možno to je len mojim subjektívnym čitateľským zážitkom, keďže Mendel pri spracovaní *Hidžry* uplatnil a kombinoval práve prístupy tých vedeckých odborov, ktoré sú mi blízke a to nielen odborné ale aj osobne: islamológiu, religionistiku, históriu a geografiu náboženstva. To som si začal uvedomovať po prečítaní asi prvej tretiny knihy a aby som zachoval neľahkú nezaujatost recenzenta som sa pokúsil čítať zbytok textu z viac vyhranených pozícií: chvíľu výlučne ako islamológ, potom zas ako religionista, napokon ak historik a konečne ako geograf náboženstva. Nebolo to ľahké, no musím povedať, že to bolo pravým intelektuálnym dobrodružstvom. A čo bolo možno ešte obdivuhodnejšie text ani v jednej z vyššie spomínaných rovinách čítania nestrácal zo svojej hĺbky a informatívnosti. Jedná sa teda o skutočné multidisciplinárne spracovanie témy a tento v mnohých prácach tak často spomínaný pojem nezostáva v čisto deklaratívnej rovine. Takýto prístup je isteže potrebný veď jedine tak je možné spracovať tento jav v celej jeho šírke.

Mendelovi knihy sa vo všeobecnosti vyznačujú popri odbornej náročnosti aj dobre čitateľným štýlom, čo je samo o sebe vzácnou kombináciou. *Hidžra* aj v tomto smere spĺňa očakávanie.

*Hidžra* je teda skutočne veľmi podarenou knihou, ba dokonca by som ju mohol označiť za jednu z najlepších z pomedzi autorovými publikáciami. Práve preto sa nesmieme ťažko v ňom hľadať možné nedostatky a nepresnosti, teda vlastne také sa mi ani nepodarilo nájsť. Čo by som predsa len knihe mohol vytknúť to sú len možné ďalšie smery akými by sa dala téma rozvinúť. Mys-

lím tým napríklad možné detailnejší popis *hidžry* v kontexte ismá'ílíje a jeho frakcií, alebo podrobnejšie rozvinutie vzťahu *hidžry* a *hadždžd* v isláme. Nie že by tie témy neboli v texte dostatočne vysvetlené, isteže sú, len možno ja by som sa o tých témach rád dozvedel ešte viacej. Samozrejme každá kniha musí mať svoje hranice a *Hidžra* aj tak je skoro štyristo stránkovou objemnou monografiou. Zostáva dodať na záver len toľko, že keby niekto chcel prečítať náročnú a vyčerpávajúcu no zároveň dobre čitateľnú a príjemnú knihu z okruhu islámu so silným multidisciplinárnym rozmerom, nenájde v súčasnej česko-slovenskej knižnej ponuke lepšieho kandidáta ako práve Mendelovu *Hidžru*.

ATTILA KOVÁCS

**Richard Hughes Seager,  
Encountering the Dharma:  
Daisaku Ikeda,  
Sōka Gakkai,  
and the Globalization  
of Buddhist Humanism,**

**Berkeley – Los Angeles  
– London: University  
of California Press 2006, 245 p.  
ISBN 978-0-520-24577-8.**

With a membership of more than eight million households the Sōka Gakkai or “Value-Creation Society” is considered today’s largest new religious movement (NRM) in Japan, next to Kōfuku-no-Kagaku (“Happy Science”). Founded in November 1930 as Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai (“Value-Creation Education Society”), an offshoot of Nichiren Shōshū, by Makiguchi Tsunesaburō (1871-1944), the movement has quickly advanced nationally (under Toda Jōsei, 1900-1958) and internationally (under Ikeda Daisaku, b. 1928) to become a world-encompassing Buddhist network with – accor-

ding to the website of Sōka Gakkai International – affiliations in around 190 countries. However, despite its vast charitable efforts Sōka Gakkai is not without controversy. This is mainly due to the movement's importunate proselytizing methods and particularly its continuing strong ties with the political spin-off referred to as Kōmeitō, even though Sōka Gakkai cut off any organizational entwinement with Kōmeitō as early as 1970. Still, most political officials of the highly successful Kōmeitō are at the same time members of Sōka Gakkai as is the majority of its voters. Whilst critics regularly point to Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution (guaranteeing that no religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority) to denounce Kōmeitō as unconstitutional in character, supporters and Kōmeitō politicians use exactly the same paragraph to indicate that religious citizens are allowed by Constitutional law to engage in political activities as long as there happens to be a clear-cut distinction between "political party" and "religious organization" (which is actually given since 1970 in the case of Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai).

Not alone its involvement in Japanese domestic politics makes Sōka Gakkai a fascinating object of investigation for scholars of Religious Studies. Beyond that, it is of course the movement's eminent size and international entanglement why it has been periodically studied by Western academics, mostly in terms of its social, political and historical dimension. The present monograph is the most recent publication dealing with Japan's most influential NRM, the Sōka Gakkai. The author Richard Hughes Seager is Professor of Religious Studies at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. His research focuses on the religious plurality of the United States with an emphasis on transmigrated Asian religions. Seager authored *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago 1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1995) and *Buddhism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press 1999).

In Romanization of Japanese the author consistently uses the Hepburn-system omit-

ting macrons. He does not include any (auxiliary) Kanji, neither in the body text nor the short glossary (p. 223-226) at the end of the book. What is more, the glossary solely contains a few major terms, missing out a certain number of used Japanese expressions. Apart from that, formal rules are well implemented and the writing flows surprisingly refreshing throughout the whole study.

The back cover promises an "engaging, deeply personal book" offering "a rare insider's look" at Sōka Gakkai. Seager even admits that he has "been concerned with developing a strong and engaging narrative", nonetheless he "consider[s] this an academic book" (p. xiii). The time of his research on Sōka Gakkai was visibly overshadowed by the death of his wife why Seager notes in his introductory remarks: "Ann's death became so inextricably related to my encounter with Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai that I felt as though I could not write this book without reference to it ..." (p. xiii). Indeed, the study is personal to the core; occasionally the cadences of his prose are a little bit too emotional for my part. During the first chapters, the reader encounters a seemingly distressed and desperate man – reiterating his agony and pain due to his wife's sudden death, which is quite unusual for a scholarly treatise – who in the course of the book experiences a kind of spiritual conversion that eventually frees him from his torment. An initially skeptical and incredulous Seager changes into a pleased and astonished admirer, primarily highlighting the many positive accomplishments of Sōka Gakkai and Ikeda Daisaku in particular. Standard scientific narratives on Sōka Gakkai dealing with mainly sociological and historical issues alternate with personal impressions, feelings and thoughts, which appear way too frequent. Accordingly, the overall academic output falls somewhat behind. Bit by bit, the study seems to stress the master-disciple (i.e., Ikeda Daisaku-members) relationship within Sōka Gakkai Seager; thereby picturing and reflecting on individual approaches to Ikeda and Sōka Gakkai members around the globe.

The work consists of nine main chapters, some acknowledgments (p. ix-x), a preface

(p. xi-xv), notes (p. 213-222), a glossary, a bibliography (p. 227-232) and an index (p. 233-245). Chapter 1 literally covers the author's *first contact* with Japanese culture and Ikeda, giving a glimpse of Seager's persistent bafflement (p. 1-20). In chapter 2 the author discusses the beginnings of the movement, reflecting on Makiguchi Tsunesaburō, the founder of Sōka Gakkai (p. 21-41). The following chapter is an account on the second shiny figure of Sōka Gakkai, Toda Jōsei, who was the mastermind behind the brilliant success story of the movement during the first decade of post-world war II Japan (p. 42-64). The next section entitled "Rising Star" is programmatic (p. 65-85). It deals with the early Ikeda and his discipleship under Toda. Chapter 5 basically concentrates on the first years of Ikeda's presidency (p. 86-113), whereas chapter 6 includes an account on the author's second get-together with Ikeda, and the period between 1970 to the excommunication of Sōka Gakkai by Nichiren Shōshū in 1991 (p. 114-140). In the following two sections (p. 141-170, 171-201) we learn about Sōka Gakkai's way of adapting its doctrine to different cultural settings, exemplified by the author through the United States, Singapore and Brazil. The last chapter concludes with a complaisant recapitulation (p. 202-211). Finally, Seager highly praises Sōka Gakkai for its many achievements and appeals for less suspicion towards the movement: "I think it is also time to cease being overly intrigued by the Soka Gakkai's history of controversy. ... Through the skill of its leaders and the dedication of its members, it has become a formidable and, I think, quite admirable network of creative and productive institutions ..." (p. 209-210).

In earnest, the study offers an enthralling personal view, loosely set within an academic framework. It might be called "truly humane scholarship" (see the back cover), however, it is ultimately unbalanced. In fact, it seems even biased due the obvious sympathy the author undeniably has for his object of investigation. In my opinion serious/academic scholarship has to remain prosaic, unbiased and matter-of-fact. Moreover, even if Seager is merely intrigued by the sociologi-

cal and historical impact of Sōka Gakkai he nevertheless ought to discuss the underlying worldview or doctrine, which eventually sets the foundation for the practical context. He clearly misses that. What is more, he does not provide detailed information on the recent development of the movement, nor does he sufficiently discuss the political dimension of Sōka Gakkai. To sum it up, *Encountering the Dharma* is definitely not the first choice for someone new on the spot. But it serves as a stimulating additional reading – a kind of eye-witness account which reads like a novel or rather a field report – for those already familiar with the issue.

LUKAS POKORNY

## Martin Fárek, Hnutí Haré Kršna: Institucionalizace alternativního náboženství,

Praha: Karolinum 2008, 208 s.  
ISBN 978-80-246-1579-0.

Ačkoliv se religionistické a sociologické studium náboženství zdárně rozvíjí a v posledních letech se objevily publikace domácích autorů, kteří se věnují tématu netradiční religiozity a nových náboženství, takto zaměřených odborných textů je stále nedostatek. I proto lze přivítat publikaci Martina Fárka *Hnutí Haré Kršna* s podtitulem, který úžeji vymezuje faktické zaměření textu na otázku institucionalizace tohoto náboženského hnutí. Fárek tímto textem, který je jeho upravenou doktorskou prací, navazuje na svoji předchozí knihu *Haré Kršna v západním světě: Setkání dvou myšlenkových tradic* (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice 2004), kterou ukončil své magisterské studium. Z uvedenoého je zřejmé, že „kršnovské“ téma je autorovou specializací, což lze jistě hodnotit pozitivně, neboť specializace může být předpokladem hlubších odborných analýz. Může však mít i druhou stránku, totiž nezohledňování širších souvislostí, především teoretických a metodologických.