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Leslie E. Sponsel (ed.): *Religious Environmental Activism in Asia: Case Studies in Spiritual Ecology*. Basel, Switzerland: MDPI, 2020, 194 pp.

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In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Goals (SDGs). Since then, there has been an upsurge in research on environmental activism and, with it, a general interest in this issue by people, businesses, and governments. However, much of the research has focused on the situation in Europe and the North America from an economic perspective. In this context, the anthology *Religious Environmental Activism in Asia: Case Studies in Spiritual Ecology* is unique in two ways: 1) its focus on Asia; and 2) its focus on religion.

The editor, Dr. Leslie Sponsel, specializes in ecological anthropology and is one of the pioneers in the development of spiritual ecology. The anthology is a reprint of a special issue of *Religion*. It contains 11 articles, 10 of which were reprinted from *Religion* 10 in 2019 and the introduction, which appeared in *Religion* 11 in 2020. Let me introduce each article.

The first article is “Introduction to “Religious Environmental Activism in Asia: Case Studies in Spiritual Ecology” by Leslie E. Sponsel. He says that “Religious environmental activism in Asia is a relatively neglected subject (...)”, thus the articles in this anthology help “explore a strategic gap” (Sponsel 2022, 3). He also mentions the growing interest in spiritual ecology. Its core principles are “(1) It is necessary, and potentially pivotal, in engaging many environmental problems and issues from local to global levels. (2) It recognizes the unity, interconnectedness, and interdependence of all things, beings, and forces (...). (3) Spiritual ecology relates to the *spiritual, moral, and intrinsic values of nature*. (4) It cultivates respect, affection, and reverence for nature with caring stewardship and benevolent coexistence.” (Sponsel 2020, 4)

The second article is written by Radhika Borde, titled “New Roles for Indigenous Women in an Indian Eco-Religious Movement.” The author studies “how a movement aimed at the assertion of indigenous religiosity in India has resulted in the empowerment of the women” (Borde 2020, 7). Those indigenous women of east-central India are devotees of the indigenous Earth Goddess and channel Her via possession trance.

The third article is “River Goddesses, Personhood and Rights of Nature: Implications for Spiritual Ecology.” Kelly D. Alley “takes two specific legal cases in India and examines the recent high-profile rulings designating the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and their tributaries and glaciers as juristic persons,” and consider “whether legal interventions giving rights to nature can become effective avenues for environmental activism and spiritual ecology” (Alley 2020, 19).

The fourth article, “The Anuvrat Movement: A Case Study of Jain-inspired Ethical and Eco-conscious Living,” is written by Michael Reading. He focuses on the Jain-inspired Anuvrat Movement, founded in 1949, which “today offers some arguably vital relevance for the urgent modern task to live eco-consciously.” The article analyzes its potential for ensuring ethical (and eco-conscious) behavior, “presenting some of the basic history and philosophy behind Anuvrat” and “providing a brief inventory of Jain ecological practice in general” (Reading 2020, 37).

Jennifer Lemche and James Miller write the fifth article, titled “Global Capital, Local Conservation, and Ecological Civilization: The Tiejia Ecology Temple and the Chinese Daoist Association’s Green Agenda.” According to them, “since 1995, the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA) has pursued a green agenda,” and “the CDA built its first “ecology temple” in Shaanxi Province and convened its first ecological conference there” (Lemche and Miller 2020, 57).

“Daoism and the Project of an Ecological Civilization or *Shengtai Wenming* 生态文明” is the sixth article by Martin Schönfeld and Xia Chen. In contemporary China, environmentalism is central. “This creates unprecedented opportunities for Daoist practitioners to engage in state-coordinated activism,” and the authors “show how the science of the planetary crisis resonates with Daoist values, how these values integrate in national policy goals, and how this religious environmental activism plays out in case studies” (Schönfeld and Chen 2020, 67).

The seventh article is titled “Dai Identity in the Chinese Ecological Civilization: Negotiating Culture, Environment, and Development in Xishuangbanna, Southwest China,” and written by Lily Zeng. Dai is an ethnic minority in Yunnan province. “This article explores the relationship between Dai cultural identity and the Chinese state in the context of environmental concerns and development goals” (Zeng 2022, 83).

The eighth article, written by Chris Coggins, is titled “Sacred Watersheds and the Fate of the Village Body Politic in Tibetan and Han Communities Under China’s *Ecological Civilization*.” He reports “on “animate landscapes,” associated with gods and spirits in Tibetan communities, and “vital landscapes” associated with *fengshui* in Han Villages” (Coggins 2020, 103).

“The Reincarnation of Waste: A Case Study of Spiritual Ecology Activism for Household Solid Waste Management: The Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative of Rural Bhutan” is the ninth article, written by Elizabeth Allison. “Spiritual ecology approaches to waste and pollution

can provide deeper insight into the attitudes and practices that create a “throw away” society” (Allison 2020, 135). She says that the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative’s Zero Waste project is an example of spiritual ecology activism for household waste management and waste reduction.

The tenth article, “Buddhist Integration of Forest and Farm in Northern Thailand,” is written by Susan M. Darlington. “Forests and farms are integrated by Buddhist environmental activists in Thailand” and she examines the work of a monk in Thailand, “who promotes dhammic agriculture and engages a new interpretation of Right Livelihood, a basic Buddhist principle, to support and protect the well-being of both the forest and farmers.” (Darlington 2020, 155)

The eleventh, final, article is written by Fachruddin Majeri Mangunjaya and Gugah Praharawati, titled “Fatwas on Boosting Environmental Conservation in Indonesia.” “This paper will highlight environmental movements by the Muslim community in Indonesia, and describe how the implementation of the MUI fatāwa can contribute to addressing the massive increase in environmental challenges and increase the involvement and understanding of the Muslim communities in tackling biodiversity conservation as well as climate change” (Mangunjaya and Praharawati 2020, 169).

This anthology is challenging, because it focuses on Asia and religion. However, I would like to say the countries and the religions covered are unbalanced. Although the title says “Asia,” there are three articles on India, four on China, and only one for each on Bhutan, Thailand, and Indonesia. That is it. And the only religions covered are Animism, Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism. The editor regretted “authors were not available for important religions such as Shintoism and countries such as Mongolia” (Sponsel 2022, 2). Although Christianity is important in South Korea and the Philippines, it is not included. Even with this fact, the anthology is a significant contribution to the field of environmental activism.