

BOOK REVIEWS

Chousinrigaku Dokuhon [Introduction to Parapsychology—written in Japanese] by Tosio Kasahara. Tokyo: Kodan-Sha, 2000. Softcover, 940 yen (approximately \$8.00). ISBN 0-06-251502-0.

This review is designed to introduce JSE readers to a book by the man who is most responsible for exposing Japanese readers to the body of Western parapsychological research. Professional researchers and laypersons alike have benefited from Tosio Kasahara's distinguished translations of a variety of classic articles in the field.

In this new edition of the book (which was originally published in 1994) Kasahara, with his rich knowledge of Western research in parapsychology, covers almost every area in the field. While the central themes of this book are the elusiveness of psi and the study of spontaneous cases, the author covers ESP research from before Rhine until the present day, as well as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, telepathic impressions, dreams, the relationship of psychoanalysis and psychiatry to the study of parapsychology, psychokinesis (PK) including spoon-bending and thoughtography (the alleged ability of some persons to produce images on film psychically), out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, death-bed visions, mediumship, reincarnation, and several other related topics.

While much of Kasahara's book focuses on classic Western research (80% of the 135 references are in English) there are also some significant sections on research in Japan. In Chapter 1, as an introduction to stronger ESP cases (including those discussed by Ian Stevenson in his book *Telepathic Impressions*), he cites a case, observed by psychiatrist Tomio Hirai, of a woman who was diagnosed as borderline schizophrenic. She insisted that her psychiatrist had diabetes and that he should be examined. Subsequent laboratory tests revealed he did have diabetes. Dr. Hirai came to feel that the woman had seen her psychiatrist's condition clairvoyantly. Kasahara states that the case should not be dismissed as one not containing ESP, but warns that we should not immediately consider it a case of clairvoyance, either because the patient might have presumed the diagnosis on the basis of normal cues, or because such a coincidence could have happened by chance. This is typical of Kasahara's careful approach to the study of paranormal phenomena. Later in the same chapter he describes Japanese researcher Otani's work on ESP and electrodermal activity.

The entire fourth chapter is devoted to a case of Kasahara's, originally published in two parts in the *Journal of the American Society of Psychosomatic Dentistry and Medicine* in 1983 as "A presumed case of spontaneous psychokinesis in a psychotherapy situation."¹ He explains why he devotes so

much space to this case: (1) to his knowledge this is the only reported case of recurrent PK observed in a therapeutic session (2) there were noises related to the PK which occurred during the session that were clearly recorded on tape, and (3) there were similarities between this and some poltergeist cases.

In Chapter 5 Kasahara discusses the research he did with some Japanese colleagues over a period of several years, starting in 1979, investigating Masuaki Kiyota who was said to be gifted in various PK phenomena including thoughtography and spoon bending. (Western readers can find a brief account of this research in the Parapsychological Association's *Research in Parapsychology* 1980, pp. 39–42, published by The Scarecrow Press in 1981.)

Chapter 7, entitled "How (conventional) scientists view parapsychology," is a short summary of the author's earlier book, *The Battlefield of Psi*, published in Japanese in 1987.² Kasahara also describes for the Japanese reader the unreasonable and unscientific strategies skeptical Western scientists have used to try to disprove or debunk research on the paranormal. On the other hand, he writes how generous conventional Western academics have been towards paranormal research when one compares them to Japanese researchers, especially those in medical fields.

Chapter 8 reiterates the difficulty of conducting research on psi phenomena, given the elusive nature of those phenomena. Another problem with psi research, according to Kasahara, is the tendency of some skeptical researchers to suppress evidence. He describes the case of a Japanese parapsychologist who did ESP tests with a gifted spoon bender. The subject was completely accurate (25 hits out of 25) but the tester hid the data and later claimed not to remember that this testing had ever happened.

Kasahara feels that paranormal researchers tend to be fairly isolated from conventional scientists. He discusses seven strategies for improving this situation: (1) parapsychologists should work directly with critical scientists; (2) paranormal research should be done within an investigator's special field and (3) published within journals in that field; (4) a theoretical framework for psi should be further developed; (5) process-oriented research methods should be employed, including psychological and physiological indicators; (6) more time should be invested in studying spontaneous cases and (7) more attention should be given to the elusiveness of paranormal phenomena.

Kasahara does a great service for Japanese readers by providing an extensive bibliography (although only 16 of the 135 references cited are written in Japanese), a 98 term glossary, and an appendix which includes an introduction to ESP cards and the PK dice test.

At the end of the book, Kasahara points out that "Japanese research is still in an elementary stage compared with Western research, and Japanese research is generally not as competent as that in the West. Nevertheless, Japanese investigators can open a new path for research" (p. 280).

This book is of great value to Japanese lay persons and professionals alike.

And now this book review offers to JSE readers some understanding of the state of parapsychology in Japan.

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Note

Dr. Azuma's review was edited by D. Hunt.

References

¹Kasahara, T. (1983) A presumed case of spontaneous psychokinesis in a psychotherapy situation. *Journal of the American Society of Psychosomatic Dentistry and Medicine*, 30, 56–84.

²Kasahara, T. (1987) *The Battlefield of Psi* [in Japanese]. Tokyo: Heibon-Sha.

Voices of the Rocks: A Scientist Looks at Catastrophes and Ancient Civilizations by Robert M. Schoch and Robert Aquinas McNally. New York: Crown Publishing Group, 1999. xi + 258 pp., cloth. ISBN 0609603698. Softcover, 2000, \$14.00. ISBN 0609805649.

Ancient civilizations continue to be a source of fascination to anyone interested in the early steps which uplifted man's spirit from his primeval ancestry. This phase in man's development recorded in the myths and legends of many cultures is a history shrouded in mysteries, a source of perpetual wonders, a stimulus to our insatiable curiosity and our desire to know.

Undeniably the archaeological record is a testament to the grandeur and reality of earliest civilizations, their magnificent monuments and artifacts encapsulating a vibrant statement of their glorious achievements. We are surprised and are left to ponder their sophistication, their knowledge of science, mathematics, astronomy, engineering, medicine, law and commerce. The puzzle, however, is their sudden appearance and sudden demise.

For the fervent scientist in search of tangible evidence, the process of unraveling the mysteries is not a simple one. How does one separate poetic illusions from scientific facts? Myths and legends offer no test of hypothesis however inspiring they may be. One is left to wrestle the murky waters of time in search of elusive archaeological evidence which may have survived natural cycles of destruction.

In *Voices of the Rocks*, Schoch and McNally introduce a new paradigm—their thesis is that natural catastrophes have charted the course of civilization and much of man's history. A parallel is drawn between discontinuities in the geologic record and ancient civilizations.