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Tama in Japanese Myth: A Hermeneutical Study of Ancient Japanese Divinity

Tomoko Iwasawa

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Tama in Japanese Myth: A Hermeneutical Study of Ancient Japanese Divinity Tomoko Iwasawa Tama *in Japanese Myth* attempts to elucidate Japanese religious experiences by presenting a new interpretation of the oldest existing text of Japanese myth, the *Kojiki*. Informed by phenomenological hermeneutics, Iwasawa shows that the concept of *tama* lies at the core of Japanese religious experiences. *Tama* is often compared to *spirit* and *soul* in Western philosophy and religion and especially to the German concept of *Geist*. *Tama* develops in ways that do not assume a dichotomy between the ideational and the sensible, which is precisely the dichotomy informing Western theism and the Platonic tradition of metaphysics. Iwasawa argues that the Western concept of God, far from explaining all possible connections between the human and the divine, is less than satisfactory for analyzing Japanese religious experiences. Iwasawa proceeds by examining the Japanese notion of *tama* as an inquiry into the origin of values wholly unaffected by the Western idea of a moral God.

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