

Reviews

SUZUKI Norihisa 鈴木 範久, *Meiji shūkyō shichō no kenkyū: Shūkyōgaku kotohajime* 明治宗教思潮の研究 ~ 宗教学事始 [A study of religious thought trends in the Meiji period: The beginnings of the scientific study of religion in Japan]. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1979. xii + 350 pp. including index. ¥3,400.

How was the scientific study of religion introduced into Japan, and how did it take root in the Japanese intellectual milieu? This is the problem to which the book under review seeks to provide a solution. It does so not by undertaking a systematic analysis of the phenomenon in its entirety, but by lifting up certain events of Meiji-period intellectual history and describing them, and the circumstances that led to them, in depth. Focussing on the second decade of the Meiji period, the author devotes each chapter to an event, or cluster of events, which exercised a notable influence on religious (particularly Christian) intellectuals of that day and which, he argues, prepared the way for the development of the scientific study of religion in Japan.

In the years bracketing 1887, three of the so-called liberal Christian bodies — Der allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein, the American Unitarian Association, and the Universalist General Convention of America — began to work in Japan. In sharp contrast to the more “orthodox” groups, they acknowledged the existence of truth in non-Christian religions and exerted themselves both to cultivate mutual understanding among religions and to study them without bias or a view to self-advantage.

Another influential event was the World’s Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. This assembly gave momentum to the trend toward interreligious dialogue, making an impact not only among Japanese Christians but also among Buddhists and among certain groups of Shintoists. It was followed, in 1896, by the first Interreligious Round-table Conference (*Shūkyōka Kondankai*) held in Japan. This conference, meeting in Tokyo, brought together about forty Japanese people from the worlds of Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity as well as from the profession of religious journalism.

Kishimoto Nobuta, who attended both conferences, and Anesaki

Masaharu, who attended the latter, were the real founders of the scientific study of religion in Japan. Kishimoto was a Unitarian who became interested in this field while studying at Harvard University. Anesaki, though raised in a devout Buddhist family, believed in no particular religion, but was led to the study of religion through his interest in Oriental philosophy and Social Darwinism. Their conversations with one another during the Interreligious Roundtable Conference led to their establishing a small group known as the *Hikaku Shūkyō Gakkai* [Society for the study of comparative religion]. This society, holding over twenty meetings between 1896 and 1899, discussed a wide range of topics.¹ It should also be noted that Kishimoto's *Shūkyō no hikakuteki kenkyū* [The comparative study of religion] was published in 1895 and Anesaki's *Shūkyōgaku gairon* [Introduction to the science of religion] in 1900.

Suzuki connects this process through which the scientific study of religion got started in Japan with an intellectual ordeal that Japanese Christian thinkers of the same period encountered. This ordeal was occasioned by the appearance, in 1893, of Inoue Tetsujirō's *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu* [The collision between religion and education], a piece given great play by the journalists of that day. As an upholder of Oriental philosophy and nationalism, Inoue denounced Christianity as contrary to the ethic of filial piety and particularly to the supreme demand: loyalty to the state.² Christian leaders and thinkers responded to Inoue's challenge in a variety of ways, which Suzuki, focussing on the relationship between "religion" and "ethics," classifies into three types. The first reduces religion to ethics, the second distinguishes between the two but blurs their qualitative difference, and the third clearly affirms the religious realm as a distinctive one that transcends the ethical. Suzuki argues that the last type, represented by Kashiwagi Gi'en, Uchimura Kanzō, and Uemura Masahisa, went beyond the view of religion traditional in Japan and served as the religious thought foundation essential to the formation of the discipline of religious studies.

Suzuki has explored every nook and cranny of the Meiji-period

1. See Suzuki, "Nobuta Kishimoto and the beginnings of the scientific study of religion in modern Japan," *Contemporary religions in Japan* 11 (1970): 155-180, esp. p. 172. — Ed.

2. See Winston Davis, "The civil theology of Inoue Tetsujirō," *Japanese journal of religious studies* 3 (1976): 5-40. — Ed.

literature on this subject and shows familiarity even with obscure and little-known works. His concise biographical sketches of the thinkers and scholars who appear in the book result in a vivid picture of the background against which the intellectual events of that day occurred. Readers will doubtless feel themselves transported to the scene where these events took place and breathe the atmosphere of that world of thought. The most important contribution of the book, however, is that it shows us where to look in order to comprehend the origin of the scientific study of religion in Japan – a discipline heretofore regarded as lacking, when it began, the feature of liberation from theology.

By way of conclusion, I should like to indicate three points that call for further study. One is the intellectual tradition of premodern Japan as inherited by the Meiji and post-Meiji science of religion. This matter is touched on in the opening chapter, but in a fragmentary way that deals only with the stream of thought critical of other religions. Second is the relationship between Japan's adoption of the science of religion and its adoption of other Western disciplines. Anesaki's science of religion was based on the philological study of Buddhism, and the topics considered by the Society for the Study of Comparative Religion have links with folklore studies and anthropology. Third is the relationship between the new discipline and developments in Japanese religious thought in general. The author presents the remarkably interesting hypothesis that the ideas of Kashiwagi, Uchimura, and Uemura, on the one hand, and the academic discipline started by Kishimoto and Anesaki, on the other, rest on a common view of religion. He does not, however, undertake a direct comparison of the two. This matter is left for future scholarship.

SHIMAZONO Susumu
Institute of Philosophy
Tsukuba University