



Hideo Kishimoto
1903—1964

IN MEMORIAM

The untimely death of Dr. Hideo Kishimoto, head of the Division of Religious Studies of Tokyo University, and chairman of the board of directors of this Institute, is a loss that extends far beyond the limits of the academic field in which he was the leader. Not since the prewar days of his eminent predecessor, Dr. Masaharu Anesaki, has there been another scholar of equal influence in both religious and academic circles in this country. Others have achieved equal or even greater eminence within their respective disciplines or academic spheres; but none have excelled him in his breadth of interest, depth of understanding, or the extent of his influence.

Much will be written in the months and years ahead regarding Dr. Kishimoto's notable contributions in the field of cultural exchange. In recent years this was his paramount interest, especially exchange between Japan and the West and more particularly the United States, the country he knew best. Yet he was not a propagandist in any sense of the term. He sought genuine cultural understanding through the intelligent exchange of ideas, and he recognized that this could only be realized if Japan assumed its full responsibility in this field.

Among the many avenues open to him, only a few can be mentioned here. Besides his teaching position, he was university librarian and on the board of councillors of Tokyo University. He was a member of the UNESCO Commission of Japan and the Religious Juridical Persons Advisory Council of the Ministry of Education; he was director of the In-

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stitute for the Study of Japanese Culture and Classics at Koku-gakuin (Shinto) University; and he was chairman of the board of the Unitarian-affiliated Union of Free Religion. He appeared on several occasions in recent years before the Constitution Investigation Council, and he was a member of the Japanese delegation at both the first and second US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Exchange. No one will ever know the amount of money that has been granted by American foundations to individuals and institutions because of his recommendations.

Within the field of the History of Religions, and especially in the Japanese Association for Religious Studies, of which he was twice president, he held an unquestioned position of leadership, not only because of his position in the highest ranking university of the country, although that undoubtedly played its part, but because he was respected for his ability, honored for his integrity, and loved because of his personal concern for those that sought his advice and help.

The number of Japanese students and scholars that he assisted in one way or another — guiding and encouraging them in their studies, helping them to get positions after graduation, and arranging for overseas study — must be large indeed. Foreign scholars inevitably turned to him for guidance in their attempt to understand the maize of Japanese religions. His notebook for appointments was always filled far in advance. When new appointments were made they often had to be literally squeezed in between the lines. Somehow he seemed to find time for practically all of them — certainly far more than he had time and strength to meet.

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It is difficult to appraise Dr. Kishimoto's influence from so close a perspective because it was evident in so many areas, but a high place must be accorded to the service he rendered during the Allied Occupation. Early in October, 1945, he was asked by the Minister of Education to assist in making the adjustments required in connection with the reform of Japanese public education and the establishment of religious freedom and separation of "church" and state. On the one hand, he assisted the Ministry, the Shrine Board, the entire field of Shrine Shinto, and religious leaders of many denominations and sects. On the other hand, he devoted a great deal of attention, especially during the fall of 1945, advising Colonel (later Brigadier General) Kenneth R. Dyke, Chief of Civil Information and Education Section, SCAP, and Dr. W. K. Bunce (Lieut. Comdr. USNR), who later became Chief of Religions and Cultural Resources Division, and many others in understanding the problems of the educational and religious world as well as the nature of Japanese religious institutions. Not infrequently he acted both as adviser and interpreter, — a function that he performed with considerable skill because of his thorough knowledge of the English language.

It is not to be supposed that Dr. Kishimoto's influence was necessarily determinative in any of the major decisions that were made in those years. The situation was far too complex and the conflicting interests were too varied for anyone not in an administrative position to affect decisions directly. Nevertheless, as an advisor to all parties in the Japanese Government-SCAP-religious world triangle, he fulfilled his duties with consummate ability.

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Dr. Kishimoto's contribution to the International Institute for the Study of Religions was a notable one, because he saw in it one of numerous bridges that must be built if intercultural understanding was to be realized. The writer first met him in 1946 in connection with his numerous visits to Radio Tokyo, as the National Broadcasting Corporation Building in Uchi-saiwai-cho was then called. In the fall of 1953, before the Institute was official established he expressed a willingness to participate in it, and he agreed successively to become first a councillor, then the director, and finally, last year, chairman of the Institute's board of directors. It was mainly through his influence, that foundation grants were secured that made the continuation and expansion of the Institute's program possible. Moreover, in spite of failing health and the pressure of many duties, he continued to help the Institute until late last fall. His wise counsel and creative mind will be greatly missed.

For nearly ten years he was aware that he was suffering from a physical ailment which science was generally unable to do more than temporarily control and perhaps retard. Therefore, while knowing full well that not many years — possible only months — remained, he continued to the end to work for his fellowmen and for the achievement of his ideals with a degree of devotion that few others can hope to attain.

For Dr. Kishimoto's contribution to intercultural and interfaith understanding, and especially for his untiring promotion of the program of this Institute, the writer is especially grateful.

To his bereaved family, the officers and staff of the Institute extend their heartfelt sympathy.

William P. Woodard