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CLOSED PANEL: Rethinking the Concept of "Religion": From the Perspective of "*seken*" ("the World") and "Freedom" in Modern Japan

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第 23 回国際宗教学宗教史学会（IAHR）世界大会 パネル全体報告

第 23 回国際宗教学宗教史学会（IAHR）世界大会が、8 月 24 日から 30 日にかけて、ポーランド・クラクフ市のヤギェウォ大学を会場として開催されました。本学会からは、25 日に、「Rethinking the Concept of "Religion": From the Perspective of "*seken*" ("the World") and "Freedom" in Modern Japan」と題してパネル発表を行いました。その趣旨を簡単に説明します。

現代の日本人の多くは「無宗教」を自認するが、実際には初詣や盆などの行事に参加している。ここに見られるのは、「無宗教」とは主に個人の信仰を指す一方、行事は宗教ではなく生活慣習として捉えられてきたという事実である。こうした慣習としての宗教は「世間」によって支えられてきたが、同時に「世間」は同調圧力を生み「信仰の自由」を抑圧してきた。本パネルでは、このような現代日本の「宗教」のあり方を、「自由」の諸相を手掛かりに再考する。

以上がパネルの趣旨となります。この趣旨に基づいて、本学会の会員である井上善幸、末村正代、古荘匡義、宮本要太郎の４名が発表し、マイケル・パイ先生からコメントを頂戴しました。各発表の内容およびそれに対するパイ先生からのコメントについては、各発表者から報告されていますので、全体の質疑応答の内容について簡潔に報告いたします。

1. 「習俗」とギリシャの nomos

参加者から、日本の「custom（習俗）」は古代ギリシャの nomos に近いのかという質問がありました。パネル参加者からは明確な回答が出せませんでしたが、澤井先生から、「両者は似ているが、ギリシャの nomos はより知的で、文脈が異なるため単純比較はできないと思う」とコメントがありました。

2. 「世間」とブルデュー理論

別の質問者は、ブルデューの habitus や doxa の概念と世間を比較できるかと問いかけました。回答側は「世間は文脈依存で制度化できず、個々の人の所属によって意味が変わる点に特徴がある」と述べました。

3. 鈴木大拙に関する質疑

鈴木大拙が浄土真宗を西洋に紹介しなかったとする発表に対しては、Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist での浅原才市とエックハルトの比較、また『教行信証』英訳の試みを指摘して、異論が唱えられました。回答では、大拙が確かに妙好人や象徴論に関心を持っていた

ことを認めつつも、西洋への紹介は選択的であり、聴衆に合わせた「伝達戦略」の一環だったと説明されました。

4. 最後の質問と締めくくり

最後に「nomoi と世間、あるいは日本人が重視する『間柄（*aida-gara*）』」についての問いが出ましたが、十分な議論の時間はなく、パネルは終了となりました。

なお、参加者は 42 名と多数で、このテーマが多くの研究者の関心を集めていることがよく分かりました。

CLOSED PANEL:
Rethinking the Concept of "Religion": From the Perspective of "*seken*" ("the World") and "Freedom" in Modern Japan

Many Japanese people regard themselves as "non-religious" today. In reality, however, most Japanese people unconsciously participate in some kinds of religious events, such as *hatsumoude* (the practice of visiting a Shinto shrine or a Buddhist temple on new year's day) and Bon Festival; they do not have any religious consciousness that they perform religious activities. What these facts suggest is that in most cases when they call themselves "non-religious," the term "religion" refers exclusively to religious faith and belief of a certain religious community which individuals choose, while such popular religious activities as hatsumoude and Bon festivals are not considered as "religious" at all, but rather merely as lifestyle customs. Religion as a lifestyle custom has been (and is) supported and observed by "*seken*" ("the World"), the human relationships that are characteristic of Japanese culture. At the same time, however, *seken* has generated social pressure to conform for the Japanese people and has often suppressed "freedom of faith" to them.

In this panel, from the perspectives of religious studies, we would like to reconsider the concept of "religion" (*shukyo*) by analyzing the various aspects of "freedom" in religion in modern Japanese society in order to examine the above-mentioned state of "religion" in modern Japan.

パネル報告：
「宗教」概念の再考――近代日本における「世間」と「自由」の視点から

現代の日本人の多くは自らを「無宗教」とみなしている。しかし実際には、多くの日本人が初詣（新年に神社や仏閣を参拝する慣習）やお盆といった宗教的行事に無意識のうちに参加しており、そうした活動を自ら宗教的行為としては認識していない。この事実が示すのは、日本人が「無宗教」と自称する際、その「宗教」という言葉は、個人が選択する特定の宗教共同体における信仰や教義のみを指すということである。これに対し、初詣やお盆のような大衆的宗教行事は「宗教」ではなく、単なる生活習慣と見なされている。こうした生活習慣としての宗教は、日本文化特有の人間関係である「世間」によって支えられ、維持されてきた。同時に「世間」は、日本人に同調圧力を生み、「信教の自由」を抑圧してきた側面もある。本パネルでは、宗教学の視点から、現代日本社会における「宗教」の「自由」の諸側面を分析し、上記のような日本の「宗教」の現状を検討するために、「宗教」概念の再考を試みる。

Customs[1] as the "Religion" of *seken* (the World)

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Abstract

The Japanese critic Naoki Sato argues that the majority of Japanese people are followers of a "religion" called *seken-kyo* ("religion of *seken* or the World"). This "*seken-kyo*" has a certain structure different from "personal faith," that one might first imagine with the term *shukyo* ("religion") in Japanese these days. While "religion" as a translated term presupposes the conscious, subjective, and voluntary faith of the individual, *seken-kyo* presupposes the customs and practices of *seken* to which each individual belongs; the individual follows those rules unconsciously, passively, and compulsively. In this sense, *seken-kyo* can be regarded as an "identical religious group" to which J. Wach refers. In an identical religious group, there is no "doctrine," but instead, the sharing of "rituals" is emphasized. When a certain way of life is inherited by a certain group, "customs" are created. When such "customs" are implemented jointly with the meaning of social integration, a variety of rituals become traditions as customs. In pre-modern Japan, religion (a "specifically religious group" to which Wach refers) and custom were in a complementary relationship, and the distinction between both of them was not clear. In the modern era, however, the two of them were strictly distinguished, and the "religious" nature of some practices was denied as "magic and superstition," while others were hidden. This situation cannot be ignored when we consider the freedom of "religion" in modern Japan. Thus, we need to reexamine the dynamic relationships between "religion as faith" and "religion as custom."

和文要旨

批評家・佐藤直樹は、日本人の大多数が「世間教」という宗教の信者であると主張している。この「世間教」は、現代日本語で「宗教（しゅうきょう）」という語から連想される「個人的信仰」とは異なる構造をもつ。「宗教」という翻訳語は、意識的・主体的・自発的な個人の信仰を前提とするが、「世間教」は、個人が所属する世間の慣習や実践を前提とし、その規範には無意識的・受動的・強制的に従う。この意味で、「世間教」は、J. ワッハがいう「同一宗教集団（identical religious group）」とみなすことができる。この集団には「教義」はなく、共有されるのは「儀礼」である。ある生活様式が特定の集団によって継承されると「慣習」が生まれ、社会統合の意味を伴って共同実施されると、それらの儀礼は慣習として伝統化される。近世日本では、宗教（ワッハのいう「特定宗教集団」）

[1] I use the term "customs" in a heuristic sense.

と慣習は相補的関係にあり、その区別は曖昧だった。しかし近代になると両者は厳密に区別され、一部の実践は「呪術や迷信」として宗教性を否定され、他のものは隠蔽された。このことは、近代日本における「宗教の自由」を考える上で無視できない。したがって「信仰としての宗教」と「慣習としての宗教」の動的関係を再検討する必要がある。

In his 2022 book "*Seken-kyo*" and the Deep Consciousness of the Japanese People, Naoki Sato proposed the concept of *Seken-kyo* ("Religion of *seken*"), which regards four implicit rules—unconsciously practiced by Japanese—as a form of "religion" (Sato 2022:112‐143):

1. Reciprocity: The rule of reciprocity that maintains human relationships through the obligation of giving gifts and returning favors.

2. Hierarchy: The rule of hierarchy that strongly emphasizes rank based on age and social status.

3. Conformity: The rule of suppressing individuals from standing out, functioning as the pressure of conformity—the idea that "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down."

4. Magical Thinking: The rule of making decisions based on old notions such as auspicious or inauspicious days and concepts of impurity (*kegare* ケガレ).

In Japanese, the term "religion" (*shukyo* 宗教) usually means consciously and voluntarily held belief. By contrast, *Seken-kyo* operates unconsciously and under social compulsion, thus differing from the Western concept of "religion."

The Japanese word *seken* (世間) has no direct one-to-one equivalent in English. It is often translated as "society," but while the English word "society" often refers to structured systems or institutions, *seken* carries strong nuances of social expectations, public appearance, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, the term often means the opinions, evaluations, and awareness of others in one's community or the broader social sphere.

Émile Durkheim defined religion as "a system of beliefs and practices that serves social integration." From this perspective, *Seken-kyo* functions as a religion in Japan, not by unifying society as a whole but by regulating *jinkan* (人-間 human) relations within each community. In this sense, each person belongs to a particular *Seken-kyo*. Although many Japanese claim to be non-religious, Sato argues they are in fact followers of *Seken-kyo*, which often restricts autonomy through conformity and excludes religions based on individual belief.

Nevertheless, the tension between *Seken-kyo* and individual faith is not uniquely Japanese. Joachim Wach classified religious communities into two types: "an identity of social and religious groupings" and "specifically religious group" (Wach 1944 :57). The latter are bound together firmly by faith grounded in explicit doctrine. The former, however, are naturally occurring communities such as families or villages, where religious functions are integrated into daily life. *Seken* corresponds to the former category—"an identity of social and religious groupings"—which do not have explicit

doctrines but emphasize the sharing of rituals. Within a community that maintains a consistent lifestyle, customs are handed down across generations, and through collective practice that promotes social integration, they are institutionalized as traditions. Rites of passage such as weddings, funerals, and annual festivals are inherited by kin and local communities; they regulate individual behavior and strengthen group cohesion.

Yoshitsugu Sawai contrasts "personal religious faith" with "religion as everyday custom," while Nobutaka Inoue likewise distinguishes "religion as conscious faith" from "religion as custom," noting that the latter predominates in Japan (Sawai 2021: 61-63; Inoue 2002: 27). Custom, as a socially sanctioned mode of life, often concerning deities, Buddhas, and the afterlife, is called folk religion (*minzoku shūkyō* 民俗宗教). Such practices have endured by adapting institutional religions to daily routines, and conversely, institutional religions could take root only by adjusting themselves to folk religion (Kaneko 1997:191).

In religious studies, "religion as custom" is often framed as primal religion: forms predating institutional systems, inseparable from life and centered on nature worship, ancestor veneration, and magical practice. Faith here is sustained not by doctrine but by communal lifestyle, ritual, and transmission. This overlaps with Joachim Wach's "religious groups identical with social groups."

According to Michael Pye, Shinto in prehistoric times was a "primal religion" tied to nature, ancestors, and the cycles of the seasons. Later, through contact with Chinese culture and Buddhism, it acquired the name and self-consciousness of "Shinto" and was reorganized as an "adjusted primal religion" (Pye 1996:4). At the level of popular life, Japanese folk religion and popular beliefs retained primal-religion structures at their foundation, even while undergoing syncretism with institutionalized Shinto and Buddhism. As seen in mountain worship, rice-field deities, ancestor rites, and annual festivals such as Bon, New Year, and *Setsubun* (節分), these foundations are still alive in the culture of everyday life. They are intertwined with *Seken-kyo* norms and continue to sustain the religiosity of individuals and local communities.

Pye further argues that in today's highly secularized Japan, a "new primal religion" has emerged (Pye 1996:6). This is not Shinto alone but a "religious complex" involving Buddhism, new religions, and folk beliefs, which together support life-cycle rituals, ancestor worship, and everyday petitions. In this context, there are no institutional organizations or theological thinkers. Rather, petitions such as for "traffic safety" or "family well-being" are shared in the form of social rituals. These practices overlap with the implicit rules of *Seken-kyo*, thereby manifesting religiosity in daily life.

Zenji Koishikawa argues that when popular beliefs, superstitions, magical practices, and social customs shape communities and individuals, they should be treated as "customs." In premodern Japan, religion and custom complemented one another (Koishikawa 2019:171). For example, sexuality and marriage were governed by local custom rather than Buddhism, yet Buddhism addressed issues of life, illness, and death precisely through its deep entanglement with such customs. Unlike medieval

Christian Europe, where one religion formed a "sacred canopy," Buddhism, oriented toward transcendence, remained largely passive toward secular matters.

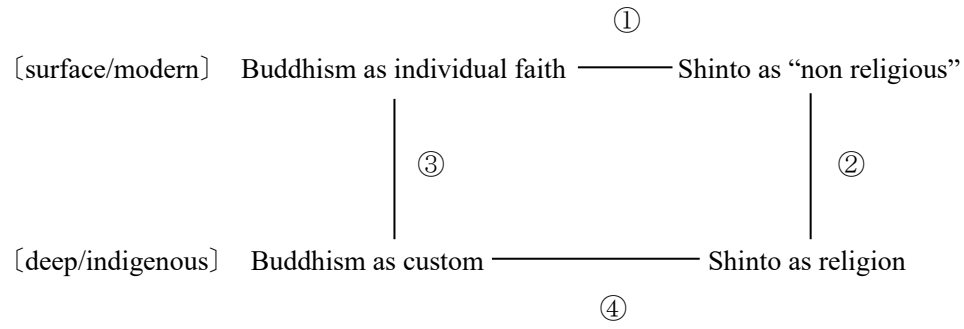
Modernization disrupted the coexistence of religion and custom. Two key events symbolized this:

1. The Meiji government's Shinto-Buddhist separation, aiming to make Shinto a state religion.

2. Government and media campaigns to eradicate "superstitions."

The state religion project collapsed under Western pressure and Buddhist resistance, but Shinto was redefined as "non-religious" national morality. Mokurai Shimaji of Jōdo Shinshū opposed state control through the Daikyōin policy. Advocating religious freedom, he argued that Shinto was not true religion but ancestor-based tradition (Nose 1992). According to Fumihiko Sueki (2011), this distinction produced a "Shinto-Buddhist complementarity": Buddhism as "religion of individual faith," Shinto as "rites of the state" (①).

Sueki also notes complementary relations within each tradition: between state Shinto and local festival Shinto (②), and between Buddhism as personal faith and Buddhism as folk practice supported by funerals and parishioner systems (③). At the everyday level, Shinto and Buddhism formed a unified set (④), effectively hidden from the category of "religion."



Even after State Shinto ended, this structure persisted. The Supreme Court, for instance, ruled that Shinto ground-breaking ceremonies (*jichinsai* 地鎮祭) were "customary" rather than religious (Kuroda 1979). From the 1960s this view shaped Japanese cultural identity, and recent nationalism has reinforced it.

In Japan, the boundary between "religion" and "custom" has never been clear; rather, it has been artificially drawn since modern times. This separation was strongly shaped by the influence of government and media, yet the role of religious studies cannot be ignored either. Customs persist precisely because they are deeply rooted in daily life and play essential roles in society. Religion, historically, has drawn nourishment from these customs in order to develop.

Michio Araki contrasted "the religion of the elites" with "folk religion," pointing out that while the former is a highly institutionalized form of religion, alongside it there has always flowed "a strong undercurrent of folk religion that, at times in close connection with institutional religions and at times

almost independently of them, has supported the religious life of the common people" (Araki 2001:228). Religion and custom are not a simple binary opposition; rather, as people's lives change, customs also change, and the religious needs of the populace evolve. For this reason, it is necessary to rethink the relationship between "religion" and "custom" in a more dynamic way. Doing so reveals that contemporary Japanese understandings of religion have been formed in deep connection with everyday life.

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Multiple Religious Belonging in Shin'ichirô Imaoka's Free Religion

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Abstract

This paper reconsiders the critical examinations of the concept of religion through Catherine Cornille's framework of Multiple Religious Belonging. Cornille provides a comprehensive analysis of various forms of Multiple Religious Belonging, ranging from the conscious belonging to multiple religions to the unconscious acceptance of religious culture without a clear awareness of belonging to any particular religion. However, the religious belonging examined in this analysis refers not to Belonging to the Religion but to belonging (or non-belonging) to specific religious groups. In contrast, Shin'ichirô Imaoka's Free Religion (Jiyû-shûkyô) endorses the concept of dual belonging to the religious organization to which each person already belongs and to the church of the Free Religion, namely, the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai (Tokyo Unitarian Church). Imaoka placed significant emphasis on personal salvation through the pursuit of the fundamental Life without being confined by the doctrines of one's own religion; at the same time, he firmly believed in the indispensability of a church in the realization of an ideal community and the attainment of social salvation. Imaoka's Free Religion, constructed within the context of religious studies in modern Japan, resulted in the establishment of a substantive church, the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai, to which Free Religionists could belong while also belonging to the organization of their own religion. The notion of dual belonging, which makes possible both Belonging to the Religion and Believing in the Religion, offers a novel perspective for the critical examination of the concept of religion.

和文要旨

本稿では、カトリーヌ・コルニールの「複合宗教帰属」の観点から宗教概念の批判的検討を再考する。コルニールは、複数の宗教への意識的な帰属から特定の宗教への帰属を明確に自覚しない宗教的文化の無意識的な受容まで、さまざまな「複合宗教帰属」の形態を総合的に分析している。しかし、この分析で検討されている宗教帰属は、特定の宗教集団への帰属（あるいは非帰属）であり、「宗教」への帰属ではない。それに対し、今岡信一良の「自由宗教」は、各人がすでに帰属している宗教組織と、自由宗教の教会すなわち東京帰一教会との二重帰属の概念を認める。今岡は、自分の宗教の教義に縛られず、根源的な「生命」を追求することによる個人的な救済を重視したが、同時に、理想的な共同体の実現と社会的救済の達成においては教会が不可欠であると確信した。今岡の「自由宗教」

は、近代日本の宗教研究の文脈の中で構築されたものであるが、実体的な教会である東京帰一教会を設立するに至った。「宗教への帰属」や「宗教を信じること」を可能にする二重帰属の考え方は、宗教概念の批判的検討のための新たな視角を提供するものである。

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1) Introduction: Is Belonging to the Religion possible?

This paper will reconsider the critical examination of the concept of religion from the perspective of religious belonging.

In this examination, the concept of religion is frequently regarded as a social construction by scholars and others. While this viewpoint may indeed be valid, it is important to recognize that, once a concept of religion has been established, it can lead to the formation of substantial organizations. Belonging to these organizations, so to speak, can be regarded as Belonging to the Religion.

Is it possible to Belong to the Religion possible? To further illuminate this question, it is essential to contrast it with Catherine Cornille's notion of Multiple Religious Belonging. Cornille (2013) offers a comprehensive analysis of various forms of Multiple Religious Belonging, ranging from the conscious belonging to multiple religions to the unconscious acceptance of religious culture without a clear awareness of belonging to any particular religion. However, the religious belonging examined in this analysis refers not to Belonging to the Religion, but to belonging (or non-belonging) to specific religious groups.

This paper will introduce Shin'ichirô Imaoka (今岡信一良, 1881-1988) 's concept of Free Religion and the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai (東京帰一教会, Tokyo Unitarian Church), which he founded, as a case in which the concept of religion formed in modern Japan materialized into a substantial organization and made Belonging to the Religion possible.

2) What shaped Shin'ichirô Imaoka's religious thought and practice?

To begin with, I would like to provide a concise introduction to the background of Imaoka's religious thought and practice, which was shaped by the context of religion and religious studies in modern Japan at the beginning of the 20th century.

Though Imaoka was born into a Shin Buddhist family, he was baptized in the Anglican Church at the age of 16. Imaoka entered Tokyo Imperial University, and studied under Masaharu Anesaki (姉崎正治, 1873-1949), one of the pioneers of Japanese religious studies. Anesaki studied abroad between 1900 and 1903 and introduced to Japan the most advanced religious and Sanskrit studies of the time (Anesaki 1974). His religious studies combined an empirical and comparative understanding of religions with a mystical pursuit of the essence of religion and contributed significantly to the introduction of the concept of religion in modern Japan. He was deeply involved in the Kiitsu Kyôkai (帰一協会, Association Concordia) and other movements that promoted inter-

religious cooperations, and Imaoka assisted Anesaki's activities. It is noted that this "Kyôkai" is not a church (教会), but an association for the understanding each other's religion and the cooperation among religions.

As Imaoka began to question his orthodox beliefs, he came to understand liberal theology, and then, in 1911, he converted to Unitarianism. It must be noted that Unitarianism in modern Japan was not only a Christian denomination, but also an inter-religious movement which included some Buddhists and provided a place to understand each other's religions.

I would like to introduce three more key people who led Imaoka's inter-religious faith. Ryôsen Tsunashima (綱島梁川, 1873-1907) provided detailed descriptions of his own mystical experiences, from which he developed his religious thought centered on the awareness that human beings are the children of God. Imaoka learned from Tsunashima the importance of a pluralistic faith based on mystical experience, not on a specific religion (Furuso 2022).

In contrast, Tenkô Nishida (西田天香, 1872-1968) sought to actualize the truth that religions already possessed in their teachings but had not yet fully realized, through the practices of a New Life of penance and service with no property (Nishida 1968). With an introduction of Nishida, Imaoka encountered Torajirô Okada (岡田虎二郎, 1872-1920) 's Seiza (静坐, sitting meditation), which he practiced for the rest of his life. It is important to note that Nishida's New Life and Okada's Seiza were the practices that were not confined to any particular religion (Kobayashi 1937).

These mystical and pluralistic ideas and practices shaped Imaoka's concept of religion and led him to the development of the concept of Free Religion and the establishment of the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai.

3) Dual belonging in Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai

Next, I would like to discuss that Imaoka's concept of religion and his pursuit of genuine religion made possible a dual belonging, that is, the belonging to one's own religion and the belonging to Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai.

I will start with Imaoka's Free Religion. He believed that the Free Religion is not a religion separate from established religions, but a search for genuine truth within established religions. He asserted that this genuine truth is Fundamental Life (Imaoka 1982: 23). In the Free Religion, however, Free Religionists were not required to adhere to the Fundamental Life as Imaoka did, but rather they were encouraged to seek their own genuine truth within their own religion to which they belonged, independent of its dogma.

However, Imaoka asserted that Free Religionists also needed a community other than the community of their own religion. Imaoka sees personal salvation as unattainable apart from social salvation, and he believes that the church, understood as an ideal community, is indispensable for

personal salvation (Imaoka 1982: 63-64). Imaoka said, only when individuals "personally and voluntarily have a genuine article of religion can a genuine church be organized" (Imaoka 1982: 82).

Founded around 1948, the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai was born out of the Unitarian movement in Japan, but it is not a church based on any Christian denomination. It is neither a meta-religion that advocates pluralistic religious thought, nor an organization for interreligious dialogue. Imaoka regarded the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai as an ideal community in which each Free Religionist could seek the genuine truth within his or her own faith, and moreover, as a church which was as actual and concrete as other established religions (Imaoka 1982: 81). According to Imaoka, Free Religionists can achieve personal salvation by belonging to both their own church and the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai. This dual belonging enables the discovery of "genuine religion" within their own religious beliefs.

However, this dual belonging contained inherent instabilities. It survived for some time not only because of Imaoka's charisma, but also because of its integration with Seisoku Gakuin, an educational institution (Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai 1993).

The Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai was located on the grounds of Seisoku Gakuin. Imaoka was appointed principal of Seisoku Gakuin in 1925 on the recommendation of Masaharu Anesaki and served for many years in the administration of this institution.

In 1949, Imaoka placed the Free Religion as the basis of education at Seisoku Gakuin. However, he did not prescribe a doctrine of the Free Religion to be taught to students, nor did he teach them about any particular religion. Imaoka believed that if teachers who deepen their understanding of the Free Religion taught each subject, they would naturally impart to their students the genuine religion through their teaching. Imaoka also saw the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai as an organization that would help teachers to deepen their understanding of the Free Religion (Imaoka 1982: 220-222).

The Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai, where Free Religionists pursued the genuine truth of religion, was barely able to survive amid the various religions and secular educational institutions.

4) Conclusion: Dual belonging makes Belonging to and Believing in the Religion Possible

It is not my intention to criticize Imaoka's essentialist view of religion as Fundamental Life. Certainly, Imaoka's understanding of religion was constructed within the context of various religions and religious studies in modern Japanese society. However, once established, the concept of religion produced a substantive church, the Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai, to which Free Religionists could belong while also belonging to the organization of their own religion. Of course, it is difficult to regard Tôkyô Kiitsu Kyôkai as an organization on the same level as other religions, as Imaoka thought. However, the fact that the mystical and pluralistic concept of religion produced a substantive church and realized dual religious belonging will offer a novel perspective for a critical examination of the concept of religion. I am convinced that this dual belonging makes possible Belonging to the Religion and Believing in the Religion.

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Japanese Religiosity and *seken* (World) in D. T. Suzuki's Shin Buddhism Thought

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Abstract

This presentation examines the relationship between Japanese religiosity and *seken* (the world), with reference to the writings of D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) as a case study. Suzuki left behind a large number of writings in both English and Japanese. As a general tendency, he wrote his works on Zen Buddhism for the wider world in English, and on Shin Buddhism to the Japanese people in Japanese. In other words, in Zen Buddhism, he found the characteristics of universality and globality that could be common to all peoples, while in Shin Buddhism he found those of uniqueness and ethnicity that could only be shared by Japanese people. Moreover, the instances of the term *seken* are far more common in his Japanese writings than his English ones. The fact that he discussed *seken* more often in his writings for the Japanese people implies that in this term, he found the uniqueness of Japanese religiosity. In considering that his Japanese writings were mostly concerned with the issues of Shin Buddhism, we understand that he may have detected a certain connection between Shin Buddhism and the Japanese term *seken*. This presentation will therefore attempt to clarify D. T. Suzuki's views of Japanese religiosity by focusing on his understanding of Shin Buddhism and the examples of the term *seken* in his Japanese writings.

和文要旨

本発表は、鈴木大拙（1870-1966）の著作を事例として、日本的宗教性と「世間」の関係を検討する。鈴木は英語と日本語の双方で多数の著作を残したが、一般的傾向として、禅については世界向けに英語で、浄土真宗については日本人向けに日本語で著した。つまり彼は、禅には万人に共有可能な普遍性と国際性を見出し、真宗には日本人に特有で民族的な性格を見出したのである。さらに、「世間」という語は英語著作よりも日本語著作に圧倒的に多く現れる。日本人向け著作で「世間」を多用した事実は、この語に日本的宗教性の特質を見いだしていたことを示唆する。彼の日本語著作の多くが真宗を主題としていることを考慮すると、鈴木は浄土真宗と「世間」との間に何らかの関係を認めていたと推測できる。本発表では、浄土真宗理解と日本語著作における「世間」の用例に注目し、鈴木大拙の日本的宗教性観を明らかにする。

I have been studying Zen thought in modern period, especially Japanese Zen scholars and monks who went to North America at the turn of the century. In this presentation, through a brief comparing English and Japanese writings by D. T. Suzuki (鈴木大拙 1870-1966), I would like to consider what he thought about Japanese religiosity and how it relates to Japanese "*seken*" (the world).

However, in advance, Suzuki's writings are, of course, based on Buddhism, and Japanese religiosity as he discusses is strongly inclined toward Buddhism. So most of the uses "*seken*" on Suzuki's writings are almost used to mean "loka," "laukika" or "sahā" in Sanskrit Buddhist terminology, which have standard means "the secular world" (also called "娑婆 *shaba*" in Japanese). However, he detected Japanese religiosity in one of the various forms of Buddhism. This time, to follow with the panel concept, I tried to find the connections between Japanese religiosity in Suzuki's thought and the Japanese "*seken*."

Before I begin, I'd like to quickly go over the main points. In my presentation, first, I will mention the tendency of Suzuki's writing activities, then, I will actually compare *Zen and Japanese culture* and *Nihon-teki Reisei*. And finally, I will relate Suzuki's idea about Japanese religiosity to Japanese "*seken*."

At first, about the tendency of Suzuki's writing activities. Suzuki is known as a Zen scholar, but actually he also wrote a lot of works related to Pure Land thought and Shin Buddhism thought. Among these, there are also some large works. He left behind a large number of writings on both Zen and Shin Buddhism thought in both English and Japanese, but there is a general tendency among them. It is a tendency that he talked about Zen to the world in his English writings, and talked about Shin Buddhism thought to the Japanese people in his Japanese writings. It might be possible to say that in Zen Buddhism, he found the characteristics of universality and globality that could be common to all peoples, while in Shin Buddhism thought, he found those of uniqueness and ethnicity that could be shared by only Japanese people.

This tendency is also found in the circumstance of the translations of his works. Many of his writings on Zen were written in English or translated into English, on the other hand, his writings on Shin Buddhism thought were mainly written in Japanese and not translated into English during his lifetime. To reiterate, he talked about Zen to the world in English, and talked about Shin Buddhism thought to the Japanese people in Japanese.

I would like to show some examples. His main publication, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, is a revised version of *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture*, a collection of lectures originally given in English for Western audiences. In addition, the three volumes of his *Essays in Zen Buddhism* and the three-volume introductory books on Zen (*Introduction*, *Training* and *Manual*) were also originally written in English and later translated into Japanese. On the other hand, his works on Shin Buddhism thought were written in Japanese originally. For example, this includes *Jōdo kei shisō ron* (『浄土系思想論』, A Study on Pure Land Thought Theory), *Nihon-teki Reisei* (『日本的霊性』,

Japanese Spirituality) and *Myōkōnin* (『妙好人』, Devoted Believers of Shin Buddhism thought) and so on. Some of these were translated into English after Suzuki's death, but there are more that have not been translated.

In short, Suzuki told the audiences outside Japan that Zen was the foundation of Japanese culture, and told the domestic audiences that Shin Buddhism thought was Japanese religiosity. In fact, in *Zen and Japanese Culture*, he says, "The influence of the various schools of Buddhism aside from Zen on Japanese culture was limited mostly to the religious aspects of Japanese people's lives, but only Zen transcended this limitation." In addition, in *Nihon-teki Reisei*, he states that Shin Buddhism thought is "a direct manifestation of Japanese spirituality." This means that "Japanese religiosity," its identity which he thought lies in Shin Buddhism thought that he spoke to the domestic, that is, Japanese people.

A point I should add here: Suzuki's reference to Shin Buddhism thought is not to Pure Land Buddhism that originated in India and was transmitted to China and Japan, but to the Jōdo Shinshū that was founded by Shinran in Japan. Therefore, Japanese religiosity Suzuki refers to is based on Shinran's thought. I call it "Shin Buddhism thought" in this presentation. So, what aspects of Shin Buddhism thought does Suzuki regard as characteristics of original Japanese religiosity?

From here, I will look at the differences and gaps between the "Japanese characteristics" discussed in English in *Zen and Japanese Culture*, and the "Japanese religiosity" discussed in Japanese in *Nihon-teki Reisei*. This time, I would like to focus on the ambivalence of "solitude" and "directness." First, regarding the "Japanese characteristics" discussed in *Zen and Japanese Culture*. These characteristics are explained in various ways in this book, such as "eternal loneliness," "eternal solitude," "simplicity," "directness," and "formlessness," to cite a few examples. They are the concepts of "*wabi*" and "*sabi*." Here, solitude, directness, and its formless aspect led to the constraint-free, purpose-free, and bondage-free spirit of Zen. And these experiences were given a positive meaning as enlightenment and the attainment of freedom.

On the other hand, although *Nihon-teki Reisei* encompasses these concepts under the term of "earthiness," their features are similar in some degree. However, in *Nihon-teki Reisei*, Suzuki takes the argument further from mere descriptions of characteristics of Japanese people and connects them to Shinran's thought. Here, solitude and directness are related to the awareness of sin and karma in Shinran. And, in contrast to the case of Zen, these experiences were agony and despair for one person, Shinran. Suzuki does not mention the freedom of enlightenment here, but emphasizes the impossibility of escaping karma and the impossibility of being saved.

That is to say, the Japanese characteristics that Suzuki refers to, namely, solitude and directness, show unlimited freedom in creative activities of various cultures [Zen], but on the level of specific, real individuals, on the level of religiosity they are related to limitedness and a consciousness of sin [Shin Buddhism thought]. Considering that Suzuki detects Japanese spirituality more strongly in Shin Buddhism thought, it must be said that his idea on Japanese religiosity is extremely pessimistic.

However, Suzuki continues that it is precisely because Japanese religiosity is pessimistic and full of despair that the absolute passivity of betting all of the faith on Amitabha's compassion is nurtured. In short, Japanese religiosity which he explained to the people in Japan, is the sensitivity that people who cannot escape from sin and therefore cannot be saved feel the absolute other-power.

Incidentally, in Buddhist texts, the term "*seken*" appears relatively more often in Pure Land thought, that is Shin Buddhism thought in Japan, because they contrast the Pure Land with the secular world or impure world. Likewise, also in Suzuki's writings, "*seken*" appears more often in Shin Buddhism thought which was intended to be shared with the Japanese people. And thus, according to Suzuki's idea, Japanese "*seken*" is more deeply connected with Shin Buddhism thought.

Conclusion

Though it looks pessimistic at first glance, it seems that he saw Japanese religiosity at the religious sensitivity of the absolute passivity and the absolute other-power that grows from this despair. Regarding the formation of Japanese "*seken*," Abe Kinya, who developed this theory, pointed out that the sacred lies outside the individual in Japan, and referred to the possibility that the fundamental Buddhist doctrines like selfless and mindless are deeply involved in the structure of "*seken*" also today. However, considering Suzuki's writings, in the formation of Japanese "*seken*," I think it could be said that the passivity and the other-power based on the concepts of sin and karma in Shin Buddhism thought played a leading role rather than the doctrines of selfless in early Buddhism and mindless in Zen Buddhism. Further examination on this point will be considered in the future.

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Reconsidering the Concept of “Religion” from the Perspective of Religious and Non-Religious Interactions

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Abstract

I will examine how the concept of “religion” is perceived in Japan, taking into account the history and current state of Japanese religion. Generally, “religion” is understood as having specific doctrines, rituals, and orders. According to this definition, it must be said that in contemporary Japan, religion is in decline, people are becoming less religious, and that the significance of religion is becoming weaker. However, when we look at the original function of religion expressing unique values for individual religious needs and ordinary sufferings, we understand that this function has not been weakened. This function is manifesting itself in the listening activities of “supra-religions and supra-sects” after the Great East Japan Earthquake. In such activities, not only believers in a particular religion but also non-religious people encounter “religious discourse” that is not reduced to the values of a particular religious sect or religion, nor is it exclusively secular. Moreover, such an awareness of the “religious” does not occur intentionally, but is recognized in a religious context by both the non-religious people and the religious people. This observation indicates that the essential function of religion manifests itself in the margins of each religion. While the substantive definition of religion clarifies the outlines of each religion, we observe that its original function itself is manifested precisely in the interactions between the religious and the non-religious.

和文要旨

本発表では、日本の宗教の歴史と現状を踏まえ、「宗教」概念が日本でどのように受け取られているかを検討する。一般に「宗教」は特定の教義・儀礼・秩序を持つものと理解され、この定義によれば、現代日本では宗教は衰退し、人々の宗教性が薄れ、その意義も弱まっていると言える。しかし宗教の本来の機能――個別の宗教的必要や日常的な苦悩に固有の価値を与える――に目を向けると、この機能は弱まっていない。実際、この機能は東日本大震災後の「超宗派・超宗教」的傾聴活動において顕著に現れている。こうした活動では、特定宗教の信者だけでなく非宗教者も、特定宗派や宗教の価値に還元されず、かつ純粋に世俗的でもない「宗教的言説」に触れる。このような「宗教性」の自覚は意図的に生じるのではなく、宗教者・非宗教者双方によって宗教的文脈の中で認識される。この

事実は、宗教の本質的機能が各宗教の周縁においてこそ現れることを示している。実体的定義は各宗教の輪郭を明らかにするが、その本来の機能は宗教と非宗教の相互作用においてこそ発揮されるのである。

I will talk about “Reconsidering the Concept of “Religion” from the Perspective of interactions between religious and non-religious people. Specifically, I want to explore how we understand and define "religion" in different contexts from the following three perspectives. To achieve this, I will focus on the history and current state of religion in Japan and examine how Japanese society perceives it, particularly in relation to traditional forms of Buddhism such as Jodo Shinshu. Jodo Shinshu is the largest Buddhist sect in Japan, with over 15 million followers and a key example for understanding Japanese religious identity.

Jodo Shinshu gained prominence during the 15th century under the leadership of Rennyo. Rennyo's strategy for spreading the teachings involved "*yoriai*," or community gatherings, which facilitated discussions on various community issues, including faith. *Yoriai* meetings were held regularly in village communities, led by influential people such as elders and priests. Rennyo's efforts included issuing documents to promote the teachings and establishing dojos for rituals and learning.

During the early Edo period, the number of Buddhist temples increased significantly. In response, the government introduced a temple ordinance to regulate this growth, and temples began to manage family records through a registration system. Japan now has around 70,000 temples — more than there are convenience stores.

Now the topic shifts to the present. In the mid-1950s, Japan experienced rapid economic growth, leading to urban population concentration. The industrial structure shifted from primary industries to secondary and tertiary industries. This shift caused younger generations, particularly second and third sons from rural areas, to migrate to cities for work, resulting in the formation of nuclear families distanced from local communities. Younger generations moving to urban areas and lacking ties to their ancestral temples wanted new religious affiliations.

Religious groups such as Soka Gakkai, Rissho Kosei-kai and Reiyukai adopted their teaching methods to meet the needs of urban dwellers. The original form of these methods could be called "*yoriai*" as used by Rennyo. These methods emphasize sharing personal experiences and problems, providing guidance and support, and encouraging community. With large population movements, new places of faith emerge that are different from the previous ties between community and faith.

Today, the share of tertiary industry exceeds 70%, allowing individuals to change their living situations relatively freely. This mobility has made it difficult to pass on religious beliefs from one generation to the next, as many people leave their ancestral lands without hesitation.

While traditional views see religion as doctrines, community, and rituals, their importance may be changing. However, religions still provide valuable perspectives on individual suffering and values. This function is not necessarily weak today.

There are various non-traditional activities that play similar roles to religions in addressing personal issues. As an example, I would like to introduce *Guchikore*. "*Guchikore*" is an abbreviation for "*Guchi* Collection," an activity that began in December 2012 to listen to people's complaints on the street for free, collect them, and publish them on a website. In Japanese Buddhist terminology, "*guchi*" means to complain and is considered one of the most common forms of attachment. In this sense, the word "*guchi*" has an inherently negative meaning. However, this activity was started with the hope of creating a society where modern people, who often face many problems, can freely express their frustrations. The idea is that by openly sharing their feelings, people can confront their true emotions in a positive way. Although this activity was originally started by volunteer Jodo Shinshu priests, it is not intended to promote the teachings and beliefs of Jodo Shinshu, nor is it initiated by any religious order. The priests participate in casual clothing, and the main participants are ordinary citizens—many of whom are non-religious—who come to complain and seek a listening ear. Since priests explain the activity's purpose beforehand, those who complain know they will be speaking with a religious person. While they don't offer solutions, many find relief and perspective simply by talking to someone they see as a spiritual listener.

Another example is " Café des Monk," created by Soto Zen monk Taio Kaneda to support victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake. It is distinct from traditional sectarian activities. Café des Monk is also a listening activity, and its name comes from the English word "monk" and the Japanese word "*monku*" meaning "complaint" or "agony." It focuses on listening to the complaints and suffering of earthquake victims, fostering a sense of shared agony. This activity is also not a traditional missionary activity, but rather an activity of being close to the victims of the disaster. These activities are not confined to sectarian boundaries. Similar efforts, like "Study de Monk," involve students in disaster areas.

These efforts and activities are marginal to the traditional view of religion, which sees doctrine, sect, and ritual as the core of religion. Therefore, some people criticize that listening to people's complaints is not a religious activity. But throughout history, religions have inherently possessed these functions. For example, Christianity provides pastoral care. These functions extend beyond the inner workings of a sect as a community of believers to the margins of each religion. There, not only followers of a particular religion, but also non-religious people may encounter discourses or "religiosity" that cannot be described as the values of a particular sect or religion, but which are not entirely secular. Moreover, the awareness of such "religiosity" does not occur intentionally, but is instantly recognized in a religious context, not only by the non-religious people involved, but also by the religious people themselves.

These activities are often referred to as "super-sects" or "super-religious". This may indicate that the original function of religion is manifested on the margins of each specific religion.

In conclusion, while the substantive definition of religion clarifies its structure, its core functions－such as compassion and listening－are often expressed through interactions between religious and non-religious people. These interactions reveal the original, universal aspects of religion that transcend specific doctrines or sects.

Comments and Responses

Michael Pye (University of Marburg)
Yotaro MIYAMOTO (Kansai University)
Tadayoshi FURUSO (Ryukoku University)
Masayo SUEMURA (Chiba Keizai University)
Yoshiyuki INOUE (Ryukoku University)

Comment from Michael Pye

The term *seken* comes up in several papers, but I wonder how far we can internationalize that term. It's rather a mysterious word in Japanese. If you ask a Japanese person to explain *seken*, well, it could take some time. And if we try to bring it into English or German, we have to start all over again. So I think it has a very strong power of suggestion for those who are familiar with the scene in Japan, and it's instructive for us to hear about it from Japanese colleagues. But I'm not sure if we can internationalize it. I'd like to know your reaction. Maybe you wish to do so, and then we will all go back to the drawing board.

I think you said that Japanese people are largely unaware of this stratum of *seken*, because they're used to thinking about the things that you refer to as customs. Custom is a very difficult word. Just by the way, I once bought a little book called Introduction to Japanese Customs. I thought it would be good to read on the train, you know, to keep up my knowledge. And when I opened it, there were lots of pictures of buildings in Osaka and Kobe and other ports—the customs offices. All of that was "Japanese customs." After that, I decided not to use the word customs in my discussion of Japanese religions anymore. I've been waiting for many years for the opportunity to tell that story.

Anyway, it is an important distinction, but I think my conclusion is that we have to be careful not to go along with the distinction between religion and custom, because custom or customs can easily become an alibi. For example, that happens when Japanese people are saying, "No, I'm not religious." Then you say, "Well, did you go anywhere at New Year?" "Well, I just went to the shrine, you know." "Oh yes, you're not religious, No. You went to the shrine. What did you do? Did you pray?" "Well, not really." "Did you clap your hands?" "Yes, I did that." "And what did you think about?" "Well, I just wished for the welfare of my family." So in fact, they were doing it, but they would say that is a custom. Now, that's not a sufficient answer for those of us who study religions. And it can easily be politicized to normalize the attitudes which people have towards Shinto shrines, etc. So I'm a bit concerned about that term, customs. But *seken* is extremely instructive.

Response from Miyamoto

Because of the time limit, I will take just brief responses from the presenters before opening the discussion. I'd like to add just one comment about the meaning of *seken*. I mentioned that the term *seken* often means the opinions, evaluations, and awareness of others in one's community or the broader social sphere. I'd also like to add that *seken* involves not only human beings but also ancestors, kami, buddhas, and so on. So while the concept of religion is based on individual human beings, on the individual existence of human beings, *seken* is based on the division or mutual existence of human beings in Japanese history. That's the point I'd like to make.

Comment from Michael Pye

The second talk was by FURUSO Sensei, and this was about multiple belongings. I think this multiple belonging is very interesting in the case that you adduce, FURUSO Sensei, because the person you described was mobilizing the concept of belonging as an opportunity for people to belong to more than one thing.

This reminded me of my youth in England, when I met somebody who said they went to a church, and I said, "What kind of church is it?" And they said, "It's a non-denominational church". But I thought, how can you have a non-denominational church. If it's a church with an organization and so on, well, it's some kind of a denomination. So to say it’s non-denominational is a sort of trick, really, it can be a trick to say you can have this and you can have that. You can’t have it both ways.

So it is in the case, for example, of somebody who is a member of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyôdan, while other family members are members of Tenrikyô. They might say, well, she gors to the Kirisuto Kyôdan sometimes, but actually, she belongs to Tenrikyô. In that case, what is her concept of God? Is your concept of God male only, or is it like God the Parent, as in Tenrikyô, which is a very nice concept.

I'm therefore always a little bit suspicious about these cases, but I don't want to be negative. So, what I want to do is to pick up the beauty of multiple belonging, and, in fact, it's quite common in Japan, I think.

There are many people where there are mixed families, and it's often the case that the problem really arises when it comes to burials. Where is somebody going to be buried? That's the problem that arises if you have a Christian wife and a Buddhist husband, or he may not be religious. He might say, "No, I'm not religious. I just go to the shrine sometimes". But then, his family is a Zen Buddhist traditional family, so they want to have the remains of the wife in the Zen Buddhist cemetery. But she doesn't want that, because she wants to have a Christian burial. Up till then it's not a problem. In life, she goes to church. Sometimes she doesn't, sometimes she does, but when it comes to the burial, then the family has a crisis about their multiple belonging. Anyway, it's all a very interesting area, and I thank you for bringing a particular case, in which you told us about the Jiyū Shūkyō of Imaoka.

Response from Furuso

Free Religion is a religion for the "elite", or for religious people who belong to other religious groups, so Free religionists do the ritual of their own religion. But Free Religion itself has a kind of ritual. For example, in a meeting of Free Religion, Free Religionists recite Imaoka's words. But Free Religion is for the people who have own religion as well, and seek to deepen their own religion.

Thank you for your comment.

Comment from Michael Pye

Time is short and I must hurry on. The next talk was by Suemura-sensei from Nagoya about Suzuki Daisetsu. Thank you very much. I'm sure everybody here has read something by Suzuki, and it would be very interesting to go all around the room and see which books you've actually read and in which languages, and then do a statistical study. But I can see there's a huge variety of awareness here.

Now, something I missed in your talk, in your discussion about his Japanese works and his English works, was the point that Suzuki Daisetsu was always very, very much relating to his audience. He was a publicist. He didn't just write books. He knew how to address this audience or that audience.

And that's why some of his books in English are about subjects which are quite different from the subjects in Japanese, because he thought people in the international readership would not be interested in Shin Buddhism. Well, I'm not sure that that's quite true. I think at that time it might have been true, in that we had the beginnings of the Zen boom, which he was helping to create. And Shin Buddhism was not really part of his message. And I think there was not a market for “Shin” Buddhism.

Actually, Shin Buddhist thought is extremely profound. It's just different from Zen Buddhist thought. And so I think we have to be careful about that. It’s another problem that we have with that term, if we want to introduce it more widely. I think we have to have further considerations about the different uses of “*seken*.”

Response from Suemura

Thank you for your comments. I agree with your opinion that Suzuki was a good speaker. He talked about Zen to Westerners, and he talked Shin Buddhism to Japanese. But I think he recognized clear differences Zen and Shin Buddhism. I think he thought that Zen is beyond to the framework of religion. So Zen can be shared with all peoples, not only Japanese. On the other hand, as to religion, Shin Buddhism fits in with Japanese people.

Zen is beyond religion, and Shin Buddhism is religion, I think. Further examination of this is needed.

Comment from Michael Pye

I'll move on to the fourth contribution now, which I was also very interested in for particular reasons. I think it's wonderful that you produce the connection between the beginnings of *yoriai* in Jōdo Shinshū, in the teaching of Rennyo. After Shinran, Rennyo was very geared to looking after the people. He really looked after the people in great ways through all his activities. That was the starting point for this idea of *yoriai*.

And then you have these lovely new terms, which are such fun. We have Monku, Cafe de Monk, that's very good pun because *monku* means complaints. And of course, in Japanese life it's very bad to complain. *Monku wo iimashite*, *yoku nai desu ne*. Very bad. It's bad manners. And so it's quite interesting that they brought this up in a café, where you can actually speak up if you've got anything to complain about. Then we can look into it and think about it.

I also thank you for making the link to the Risshō Kōsei-kai, and to the Sōka Gakkai, I believe. Actually, I wanted to make further links. As to this idea of mutual caring about problems, I think you find it also in Konkōkyō, the *toritsugi*, and possibly in Tenrikyō, where there is a similar activity. So it's not really restricted to any one religion, even though there's a strength there in Jōdo Shinshū.

We also see here the interaction between a religious orientation and the non-religious. You emphasize the lay quality of the people involved. I think that's very interesting. This brings us back again to the *seken* level a little bit. I think (this is what I'm learning from you) we shouldn't consider the primal religion, or the *seken*, as being only transactional, only getting benefits, this-worldly benefits and so on. We should also recognize that there is a culture of personal interactions involved in it, which can possibly be helpful mutually. So that's a very good lesson, I think, to learn from your paper, if I may say so.

Response from Inoue

Thank you for your comment.

Concerning activities such as pastoral care, Japanese temples have long been deeply involved in the family situations of followers and have been involved in activities like pastoral care. However, this was in the context of the relationship between each temple and its members, not in a systematic and specialized way as seen in Christianity. By focusing on the aspects of each religion that transcend secular values, cooperation among different religions becomes possible, I think. Thank you.