

## The NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions Report of the Activities in 2008/09

### *Research Group on Bioethics*

The Research Group on Bioethics, established in 2007 at the NCC Study Center (cf. report in *Japanese Religions* 33/1-2), organized the following lectures:

1. "Euthanasia in German Protestant ethics: The Considerations of Carl Heinz Ratschow" by Prof. Martin Repp (Ryūkoku University and NCC Study Center) on April 26, 2008.
2. "The situation and task of terminal care today: Through an investigation of the views on life and death" by Prof. Asami Hiroshi (Ishikawa Prefectural Nursing University) on June 7, 2008.
3. "To live truly – Thoughts on the case of cancer" by Hashimoto Eisuke (President of the "Living With Cancer Society") on July 12, 2008.
4. "The present situation of Hansen disease" by Dr. Ozaki Motoaki (Former Chief Dermatologist of Nagashima Aisei-en) on October 4, 2008.
5. Public lecture on "Bioethics: Clinical medicine from the view of a Christian" by Dr. Kagajō Keiichi (Setonaikai Hospital Pediatrics, Clinical psychologist and medical doctor) on November 8, 2008.
6. "Looking at forgotten people: Bioethics, human love and Christianity" by Prof. Doi Kenji (Kwansei Gakuin University) on January 17, 2009.
7. "Legal and ethical principles of clinical medicine" by Prof. Kai Katsunori (Waseda University, Graduate School, Research Department on Law Office) on March 21, 2009.

### *Lecture Series "Re-visioning Japanese Christianity: Perspectives from inside and outside"*

This Lecture Series was organized by the NCC Study Center in preparation for two anniversaries in 2009, the first arrival of Catholic missionaries in 1549 and that of Protestant missionaries in 1859 to Japan.

1. "Viewing Japanese Christianity from the perspective of church history" by Prof. Mizugaki Wataru on June 20, 2008.
2. "Viewing Japanese Christianity from the perspective of the Catholic Church" by Fr. Ichiba Osamu (Catholic Church) on June 27, 2008.
3. "Viewing Japanese Christianity from the perspective of the Protestant church" by Rev. Taniguchi Kazuo (Nihon Kirisuto Gōdō Higashi-Nari Church) on July 4, 2008.

4. "Viewing Japanese Christianity from the Korean perspective" by Rev. Kim Anhon (Korean Church in Japan, Eiwa Church) on July 11, 2008.

#### *Research on Ecumenism*

1. "History and Present of the Salvation Army" by Prof. Maruhata Yukio (Shikoku Gakuin University, former Training Principal for Salvation Army Officers) on October 16, 2008.

2. "The Japan Baptist Convention" by Rev. Nakajima Yoshikazu (Nihon Baputesto Renmei, Osaka Asahi Church) on February 20, 2009.

#### *Special Lecture*

"Nicolai Grundvig: A pioneer of church hymns in Scandinavia" by Dr. Synnøve Sakura Heggem (Pastor of the Norwegian Church) on November 12, 2008.

#### *Participation in Networks*

This year's annual meeting of the "Research Institutes of Religious Organizations" was held on the theme "The situation, task and outlook of the training of religious teachers" at Nishi Hongan-ji on October 7, 2008. The subgroup on Bioethics organized two meetings with a number of lectures by members of the different institutes at facilities of the Oomoto Tokyo Branch on June 5, 2008 and on August 28.

This year's annual meeting of the Conference on Religion and Modern Society (CORMOS) was held on the theme "Environmental ethics and religious culture" in Kyoto from December 26 to 27.

#### *Visitors from Abroad*

Prof. Peter Steinacker, President of the Church in Hessen and Nassau (Germany) visited the NCC Study Center with a delegation in June.

Prof. John Dadosky (Regis College/University of Toronto, Canada) visited the NCC Study Center in July and Prof. Nicola Mapelli (University of Rome La Sapienza, Italy) in August.

Ms. Doris Grohs (East-Asia Secretary of mission 21, Basel, Switzerland) and Rev. Ulrike Schmidt-Hesse (Association of Churches and Mission in South West Germany, Stuttgart, Germany) visited the NCC Study Center in October.

#### *Publications*

*Japanese Religions* Vol. 33 Nos. 1&2 contains reminiscences by the NCC Study Center's founder Harry Thomsen, as well as articles on Ritual Landtaking by G. Domenig, *Nianfo* in Ōbaku-shū by J. Baskind, Fukuan Fabian by M. Schrimpf, Translation of a Hungarian's trips to the Ainu by I. Galambos, and Social Criticism

in Pure Land Buddhism by U. Dessì. It features the “Interactions between Japan and Tibet” in three essays, and it contains a number of book reviews.

*Deai* (Encounter) Vol. 15 No. 2 contains articles on the Worldview of Christianity by Mizugaki Wataru, the funeral liturgy of the Lutheran Church by Ishii Masami, the views on life and death in contemporary American society by Sekiya Naoto, and on religious persecutions under the modern Tennō system (the case of Oomoto) by Adachi Masaki, as well as a book review and an essay on possibilities of religious education in public schools in Japan.

Several issues of the NCC Study Center’s *Newsletter* were published in Japanese language (No. 26 in April, No. 27 in November 2008, and No. 28 in March 2009).

## **Report of the Interreligious Studies in Japan Program (ISJP) Fall Semester 2008**

### *Participants*

During the ISJP Fall Semester, the following regular students participated: Dr. Synnøve Sakura Heggem (Pastor, Rena, Norway) and Mr. Alexander Kalmbach (Religious Studies, Japanology and Communication Studies, Leipzig University). Ms. Henrietta Dudgeon (England) and Prof. Marcel Martin (Marburg University) took part in selected classes.

### *Orientation*

The orientation took place from September 24 to October 4. It consisted of introductions to religions in Japan in general (Prof. em. Yuki, Dr. Yoshinaga, Prof. Repp), to Japanese culture and history (Prof. em. Hayashi and Prof. em. Schauwecker), and Japanese language (Mr. Arimoto). During this time, the ISJP-Board hosted a reception party for the new students.

### *Courses and teachers*

The regular program was held for ten weeks between October 6 and December 12 and consisted of the following seven courses and teachers:

- *Shinto and Folk Religion* by Prof. em. Peter Knecht (Nanzan University)
- *Buddhism* by Prof. Robert Rhodes (Otani University), Rev. Thomas Kirchner (Zen; Hanazono University), and Rev. Teramoto Tomomasa (Modern Buddhism; Nishi Hongan-ji)
- *Reading of a Classical Buddhist Text* by Prof. em. Michael Pye (Marburg University and Otani University)

- *New Religions* by Prof. Martin Repp (Ryūkoku University)
- *Japanese Church History* by Prof. em. Yuki, Ass. Prof. Iwano Yusuke (Kwansei Gakuin University), Rev. Peter Hamaya (Anglican Church), Dr. Higashibaba Ikuo (Kirishitan; Tenri Kyoko), Prof. Shigeru Hiroshi (Kyoto Women's College), and Fr. Hanai Takuo (Catholic Church)
- *Theology in Dialogue* by Prof. em. Mizugaki Wataru (Kyoto University), Prof. Yasunaga Sodo (Zen; Hanazono University), Prof. Yokota Shunji (Jōdo Shinshū; Kyoto Women's College) and Prof. Martin Repp
- *Basic Introduction to Japanese Language* by Mr. Arimoto Tadao

### *Special Lectures*

This year's public ISJP Annual Memorial Lecture was held by Prof. Takada Shinryo (Ryūkoku University) on the theme "Theology of Religions in dialogue with Buddhism: Visible ISJP and invisible ISE[= Europe]P" on November 25.

The following extra-curricular lectures were held: "Indigenous Christian movements in Japan" by Prof. Mark Mullins (Sophia University, Tokyo), "Shintō and nationalism in Japan" by Prof. em. Yuki Hideo, and "Endo Shusaku and Christianity" by Dr. Hasegawa Emi.

### *Fieldtrips and extra-curricular activities*

The following fieldtrips were organized during the semester:

*Shinto shrines:* Kasuga and Tamukeyama (Nara), Yoshida, Imamiya, Fushimi Inari and shrines in the Imperial Palace Park (Kyoto), and Ise jingu.

*Buddhist temples:* Tōdai-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Yakushi-ji and Tōdai-ji (Nara), Shinnyō-dō, Kurodani, Daitoku-ji, Senyu-ji, Chion-in and Tenryū-ji (Kyoto), and Tairen-ji (Aichi Pref.)

*New Religions:* Tenri-kyō (Tenri City) and Risshō Kōsei-kai (Tokyo)

*Japanese churches:* Anglican church in Nara and the Kyoto Christian Culture Center (Franciscan House) in Kyoto.

After the official program ended, Mr. Kalmbach also made an internship in the Kibō no Ie, a social welfare center for day laborers in Kamagasaki, Osaka.

### *Trip to Tokyo*

The regular program included a trip to Tokyo from November 14 to 17 which was organized by Prof. em. Hayashi Tadayoshi, the ISJP-Coordinator. It consisted of the following program: Sightseeing in Asakusa, Akihabara and Harajuku; attending an anniversary ceremony for Niwano Nikkyo at the Risshō Kōsei-kai Headquarters; visit various temples and shrines in Kamakura.

## Reports by ISJP-Participants

Autumn 2008 in Japan  
by Dr. Synnøve Sakura Heggem

I had the pleasure to attend the ISJP program in Kyoto in autumn 2008. This gave me a great opportunity to learn about Japanese religions and cultures. I was happy to stay at the guesthouse in one of the Lutheran Churches in Kyoto. The idea and the program to learn about Shinto, Buddhism, New Religions in Japan, and about the different Christian Churches, and in general about encounters between east and west in history, is nothing less than impressive. During my stay, I also realized that in Japan this kind of project is more the exception than the rule.

From day one I felt that the leaders of the program cared about both the practical and the mental well-being for me as a student. I never felt lost or confused during my stay in Kyoto. The bicycle which I borrowed from the NCC Study Center, was as a good friend and guide, because it led me to so many different places and exciting spots, which Kyoto is full of.

The level of the program was high and professional. We got the most acknowledged teachers in every field of the broad scope of subjects. This is true both with regard to the lectures given in the classroom of the NCC Study Center, and not the least with regard to all the interesting excursions during our stay. The contact persons we met at the different excursions were impressive with regard to qualifications and kindness, etc. I do not exaggerate when I say that this was an outstanding privilege for me as a student and traveler. Three highlights may be mentioned: 1. The visit at Mt. Hiei with the World Peace Bell and the overwhelming historical and present "sounds" of this mountain. 2. The visit to Rissho Koseikai in Tokyo provided a deep impression of modern religious movements, which are not found in the West. 3. The different visits to Shinto shrines, not at least to attend the Shichi-go-san (festival for kids in the age of 7, 5 and 3) at Shimogamo Shrine.

The idea and the reality of having assistants taking care of our needs and interests was especially a good thing. I must use the opportunity to underline the qualifications of Ichikawa sensei. Without his support and profound way of guiding us into different aspects of present and past Japanese culture, and in practical things, the stay and Program would lack one of its best "keys" for foreigners.

I was also asked to talk at the NCC Study Center about my own field of research, the hymn writer and cultural key-symbol of Denmark, Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig. I was also lucky to get the opportunity to actively participate in a memorial meeting for the Norwegian-German couple Hanka Scheldrup and Bruno Petzold in a temple in Sakamoto, at the slopes of Mt. Hiei. This was a great event.

I appreciate that this was possible, and I think it is an important way of dialogue strategy also in the area of learning and teaching within ISJP.

Since I had the opportunity to take pictures during my stay and can introduce the impressions and knowledge from my stay in Japan to people and different groups in Norway, I realize that this way of learning is optimal when living in a “foreign” place and culture. I will recommend this kind of study project to other students.

Last, but not least, since I was born in Japan, and grew up there, and since my main interest in life is religion, this was one of the most special opportunities I have had with regard to education. I want to give a heartfelt thanks to all the teachers at ISJP, and all the staff at NCC Study Center for my stay in Kyoto during the autumn 2008.

## Some Reflections on my Experiences in Japan

by Alexander Kalmbach

I participated in the ISJP Program of the NCC Center for the Studies of Japanese Religions in the fall semester 2008/09. Now it is already the beginning of February, the program is over and I am facing the task to collect and sort out the experiences and impressions I have made in Japan. This is not an easy one. Let us begin with my impressions right now. I am viewing out of my window of my room in the “Haus der Begegnung,” the International Student House in Kyoto. The sky is misty, it is raining and if you look over the grey roofs of the small houses you can see many green trees in the distance and the shadows of the mountains which surround Kyoto. I hear birds and the sound of flutes. There is something mystical about the atmosphere. It comes from the Yoshida Shrine because today is the second day of *setsubun*. *Setsubun* is a Shinto *matsuri* (festival) where the evil in form of *oni* (demons) is driven out by throwing red beans (*mame*) at them. This is the short description, but it is much more impressive when visiting the shrine. The Yoshida shrine was crowded with people who gathered to view the performance. There were dances and a fight with the *oni* which ended in their retreat. Burning arrows were shot at the fleeing demons and the people with their kids sitting on their shoulders were following. I was there with friends from the student house where I am staying. And after that we went to the public bath, the *sentō*.

There is much to tell about my time in Japan but let us just go back to the beginning. I arrived September 19, 2008. It was a Friday and as I got to the student dormitory “Haus der Begegnung” it was already dark and its office was closed. But Ichikawa Sadataka was waiting for me (it was the first time he had to do that for me and I have to admit that it wasn't the last time). He gave me the keys, showed me around and went to a *konbini* store with me. He also gave me his name card so that I

could easily contact him in any case. The following Monday, Prof. Hayashi came by and went with me to the NCC Study Center. Tuesday I took part in the bazaar of the Rakuyo church where I was warmly welcomed by Rev. Fugami and his congregation. And Wednesday the orientation of the study program began, with an Introduction by Prof. Yuki. Here I also met the other participant for the first time, Dr. Synnøve Sakura Heggem, whom we may call Sakura. I was very glad for her being there. Especially in the first days with all the new experiences and impressions in this new environment there were many occasions for exchange in form of conversation and discussions. Be it in matter of daily life in Japan, our homes in Norway and Germany or about religion and the things we learned as the program and time went on.

The lessons of the program were interesting and there was always the opportunity to discuss questions. These discussions were enriching and gave me new perspectives along with the knowledge transmitted in the lessons. Additionally to the regular courses on Buddhism, Shinto, Japanese New Religions, Japanese Christianity, Theology in Dialogue, Reading a classical Buddhist text and Japanese language class, the extra lessons about indigenous Christian movements or Endo Shusaku awoke my interest. But the program would not be what it is without the many fieldtrips, mostly led by Prof. Repp and Mr. Ichikawa Sadataka. We visited temples and shrines in and around Kyoto, for example in Arashiyama and on Mount Hiei, and also traveled to Nara, Toyohashi and Tenri. We also went to Tokyo and Kamakura with Prof. Hayashi. Everywhere we were guided with expertise, warmly welcomed and there was always room for communication. I am very grateful for the visit to Toyohashi, where we were welcomed by Ichikawa Sadataka's family and could attend their *butsumyo-e* ceremony with a common meal afterwards. We stayed overnight and visited Okazaki castle and the grand shrine of Ise the next day. Books and words cannot transmit what there is to see and experience. And this program provided me with the opportunity to encounter Japanese religions.

The keyword is "encounter." I stayed in the international student house "Haus der Begegnung" which means "house of encounter." And for its yearbook I wrote "some thoughts on encounter." I was writing about the removal of a wall. And I called this wall "ethnocentrism" and "prejudice." But we could also call it the wall which surrounds our own world. And without that wall there is room for better communication and we see each other more clearly. The ISJP as well as the "Haus der Begegnung" are steps in this removal.

I am a student of Japanese studies, religious studies and communication studies. Because of the first two subjects, my interest lies in Japanese religions. "Religion" is a part of "culture." In the field of the latter my interest lies in "intercultural communication." And I read books about it. But only if we take the challenge to enter a different culture and remove that wall I spoke about we are able to see the differences and to learn to accept and respect and also to cope with that differences. I learned that communication is a process of exchange whereby something new is

created. So it also showed me who I am, to make me think about and realize my own cultural (that also means religious) background. In this aspect the ISJP is such an important and enriching experience. Simple speaking: It's all a matter of perspective. Therefore I participated in the Interreligious Studies in Japan Program.

In January I visited the "Kibō no Ie" (House of Joyful Hope) in Kamagasaki, a social welfare center in Osaka. There I learned from Rev. Akiyama about the difficult situation for the day laborers living there and the help the institution can and does provide. This was also a very important experience for me because it also gave me a different perspective of Japan.

And I hope I will not forget the feeling of wonder when entering the area of the bigger shrines and temples in the city and then having the feeling to be in deep nature. I walked much around in Kyoto and I will miss it. I will also miss the people there, the teachers and friends. I am so grateful for all the help, all the good conversations, all the effort which helped me to live in Japan, and to see and understand something about it.