



Notto R. THELLE\*

### *Yuki Hideo – Colleague and Friend*

I had the great privilege of working with Professor Yuki Hideo for twenty-two years, from 1973-1985. But I met him already in 1970, when I attended a seminar on Tendai Buddhism at Mount Hiei northwest of Kyoto, arranged by the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions. I have no immediate recollection of talking with Yuki at that time, but he was certainly there, as I remember him from innumerable similar seminars for Japanese pastors and theologians in the following years.

Others will describe his contributions as Professor of Religion at Doshisha University, as Associate Director and Director of the NCC Study Center, as a church leader with strong involvement in questions related to nationalism, the Yasukuni Shrine, war responsibility, and other ethical issues. I will limit my contribution to a few comments about Yuki Sensei as a dedicated colleague at the NCC Study Center, and as a friend.



When I was assigned to be Associate Director of the NCC Study Center in 1973, Yuki was a member of a resource group of younger scholars and pastors in the Kyoto region who met regularly for the study of Japanese religions and various aspects of the relationship between Christianity and Japanese religion and culture. For me these research meetings represented a fascinating introduction to a complicated history with quite challenging questions about the role of the church in the interaction with Japanese culture. It did not last long before I realized that Yuki was a leading spirit of the group, with his quiet presence and friendly and polite, but at times critical analyses and questions. It was quite obvious in my mind that he would be the natural successor when Professor Doi Masatoshi retired from the NCC Study Center in 1985. Long time before that Yuki served as Associate Director, with particular responsibility for the Japanese journal *Deai* (Encounter) and for the Japanese programs of the NCC Study Center.

I returned to Norway in 1985 after twelve years under Professor Doi, and hence I never had the opportunity to work under Yuki as director. But the years working together with Yuki as Associate Director and in later years, visiting the Center and observing his work, I am sure that I would have relished that sort of team work. For

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Yuki was a remarkable combination of being an academic gentleman with moral stamina and a sharp mind and at the same time being a gentle man without any academic whims – quiet, polite, warm, generous, liberal, frank, and friendly. His quiet ways could at times be taken for weakness – it could take time before he made his final decisions in difficult situations – but behind his patience one would usually discover a strong determination and an enduring search for a sustainable solution.

As we lived in quite opposite and distant locations in Kyoto, we did not have the opportunity to develop close private relations involving our families. But I have clear memories of his hospitality when he and his wife invited our family for a delicious *sashimi* dinner in their home. And for us it was a great privilege to welcome Yuki and his wife in our mountain cabin in Norway during one of his research periods in Scotland. The simple facilities in our cabin, without electricity and running water and with earth closet, were unfamiliar and perhaps somewhat shocking to their standards, but we all relished the friendship and the beauty of the mountains. How I miss him.

With his quiet ways Yuki Hideo was perhaps not as visible as some other religious leaders in the religious communities or in the academia. But as an academic gentleman and as a gentle person with a caring concern, deep convictions and sharp mind he will be remembered and honored by those who were fortunate to get to know him.