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The Concept of Religion in Meiji Popular Discourse

An Analysis of the Newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*

Makoto Harris Takao

Abstract:

This article challenges claims that the Japanese neologism *shūkyō* (as a translation for “religion”) lacked an established nature prior to the twentieth century and had little to do with experiences of the urban masses. It accordingly problematizes the term as a largely legal concept, highlighting historical newspapers as underutilized sources that offer insight into Meiji popular discourse and attendant conceptualizations of “religion.” This article endorses a shift in both our chronological understanding of *shūkyō*’s conceptual history as well as its sociocultural mobility. By expanding the milieu understood as being familiar with debates on a range of “religious” issues, this article thereby offers a counter-narrative in which regular use of *shūkyō* begins to clearly emerge from the mid-1880s, exponentially increasing with the following decades.

Keywords: Anti-Christian; Conceptual history; Constitution; Japan; Meiji; Newspapers; Popular discourse; Religion

In the West there is [something they call] the “True Teachings” [*seikyō*, 正教].

These teachings [*kyō*, 教] come from Heaven . . .

[And] they also establish their laws according to them.

Government [*sei*] and teaching [*kyō*, 教] are thus one in the same . . .

There are Three Teachings¹ [*sankyō*, 三教] in our country [of Japan] . . .

Today we see many evils committed both by government and their teachings [*seikyō*, 政教].

— Yokoi Shōnan, *Numayama kankyo zasshi* (Poems Composed in the Quiet Solitude of Numayama)

Penned by the reformist intellectual Yokoi Shōnan (1809–1869) between 1855 and 1856, these excerpts from one of his miscellaneous poems grapple with the historical particularities of the Japanese language in talking about “religion.” Indeed, the absence of a universal religious category in the mid-nineteenth century manifests itself in his writing through the use of the broadly inclusive

term *kyō/oshie* (教—“teaching/s”). In this poem, such “teachings” are at once a reference to Christianity (*seikyō*), to the traditions of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism (*sankyō*), and to the didactic function of government (*seikyō*).² To this end, Yokoi’s use of *kyō* is demonstrative of its long premodern history as a concept that embodied matters not only of “religion,” but also education, science, politics, and ethics. This unity in diversity thus begs questions of conceptual boundaries when it comes to enduring essentialist understandings of religion as a shared set of beliefs, practices, and institutions across time and space.

As a compound of *shū* (宗)—meaning a (Buddhist) “sect,” “lineage,” or “principle”—and the previously discussed *kyō/oshie* (教), the indigenous neologization of the term *shūkyō* was prompted by “Japan’s incorporation into the capitalist and imperialist world of the West” following the reopening of its borders for the first time since the mid-1600s and the subsequent signing of commercial treaties with the United States, France, Britain, Russia, and the Netherlands in the mid-nineteenth century.³ In so doing, Japanese officials were confronted with the English term “religion” (as well as the Dutch *godsdienst*) and its linguistic cognates in diplomatic negotiations.⁴ After the reinstatement of the imperial system—commonly referred to as the “Meiji Restoration”—in 1868, *shūkyō* slowly emerged as an umbrella term to categorize the traditions of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam among others. To this extent, scholars have identified the 1870s as a period of significant linguistic change as policymakers (and those reporting on their actions) grappled not only with the term “religion,” but also the foreign conceptual frameworks underlying its use and application in a Japanese context. Drawing on existing concepts of Buddhist sectarian belief, a number of earlier terms (such as *oshie*—教, *shūshi*—宗旨, *shūmon*—宗門, *kyōmon*—教門, *kyōhō*—教法, and *hōkyō*—法教) were employed, but it was ultimately *shūkyō* that succeeded

as the official translation for “religion” in political and legal discourse by the 1880s and whose use continues to this day.⁵

In recent years, however, a scholarly reappraisal has ushered in what Jolyon Baraka Thomas refers to as a “reflexive turn in the field of Japanese religious studies.”⁶ Prompted by a broader shift led by the likes of Talal Asad, Jacques Derrida, and Timothy Fitzgerald the concept of religion has come to be understood “not [as] a universal entity[,] but [as] a culturally specific category that took shape among Christian-influenced Euro-American intellectuals and missionaries.”⁷ Accordingly, research in the field of Japanese studies has also critiqued the continued and uncritical use of the term *shūkyō* as the modern conceptual equivalent of “religion.” In this, scholars have continued to trace the history of the term in political, legal, and diplomatic discourse, in its use and reception among Buddhist reformists, and in the development of the modern Japanese discipline of religious studies (*shūkyō-gaku*, 宗教学).⁸ This article intends to contribute to this diverse discussion by contesting Isomae Jun’ichi’s claim that the concept of “religion—*shūkyō*—was not [yet] familiar in Japanese society before the twentieth century and was not the expression of something . . . rising out of the lives of ordinary people.”⁹ Ōsumi Kazuo has similarly claimed that a basic understanding and popular use of the term *shūkyō* was not common outside privileged social circles until after World War II.¹⁰ It will be argued that these kinds of perceptions are borne out of neglect for primary sources that can offer us critical insight into Meiji popular discourse and thus an opportunity to understand how the concept of *shūkyō* featured outside of these privileged social circles, particularly among the urban masses. In so doing, an approach to popular discourse will be employed via the work of Gregory M. Pflugfelder and Peter Nosco who prioritize commercial dynamics in their analysis of journalism, fiction, and poetry among other literary genres.¹¹ Put differently, popular discourse is understood as being

particularly accessible through “written texts bought and sold upon the commercial market,” by which the “mediation of market mechanisms offers an indication . . . that the texts under consideration were intended for consumption by a relatively broad audience to whom the terms of their discourse were, if not already familiar, at least readily intelligible.”¹² For the purposes of this article then, concepts of religion will be examined in the popular discourse of newspapers (the reasons for which will be addressed in the following section), specifically the prominent *Yomiuri Shimbun*, a vernacular daily news publication established in 1874.

This article’s contribution to the field can be defined as follows. By looking to the twentieth-century prevalence of the term *shūkyō* in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, it seeks to shift the chronology of understanding about popular use of the term, highlighting a hitherto neglected kind of everyday encounter with concepts of “religion” among a readership of the urban working class. Although much of the term’s presence is due to journalistic coverage of events and debates in the political and legal sphere, this very act of reporting is nonetheless significant. In this, we can observe how vernacular journalism on matters “religious” incorporated use of the term *shūkyō* into popular discourse for working-class consumption.¹³ In other words, the simple act of journalistic reporting and relative adoption of a previously legal/diplomatic vocabulary was critical to public education. As such, we can look beyond scholarly classifications of *shūkyō* as merely a political or legal category in Meiji Japan. Indeed, as a popular news outlet, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* offered a unique space for a working-class demographic to read and sometimes even write about a range of social issues pertaining to matters of Christianity, Buddhism, Shinto, and other traditions. This article will examine the *Yomiuri Shimbun* throughout the formative decades of the term’s institutionalization until the first decades of the twentieth century. What it does not seek to replicate, however, is the now well-trodden path of tracing the history of the term *shūkyō* and its

equivalents throughout East Asia (*zongjiao* in Chinese; *chonggyo* in Korean).¹⁴ Rather, by focusing on popular discourse, it intends to rethink the sociocultural mobility of the concept in Meiji Japan. While this is not to deny that the term and its underlying conceptual framework was nevertheless forged at the intersection of the political, legal, and diplomatic spheres, it is a motion to understand how this very intersection itself was engaged with by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and how varying concepts of religion were thus addressed and expressed via the popular press.

Japanese Newspapers as Historical Sources

Approaching newspapers (in this case the *Yomiuri Shimbun*) as historical sources allows us to see not only how intellectual, political, and legal debates over “religion” were presented to a predominantly urban working class population, but also the application and currency of various approaches to the concept of *shūkyō* among this demographic.¹⁵ In this way, newspapers played a vital role in shaping the conceptual worlds of readers as to how they understood, used, and modified certain vocabularies for particular purposes. To this extent, James L. Huffman has demonstrated that newspapers were fundamental to the creation of a “public” in Meiji Japan:

Without denying the importance of education, political movements, or economic transformation, . . . no single institution did more to create a modern citizenry than the Meiji newspaper press, a collection of highly diverse, private voices that provided increasing numbers of readers—many millions, in fact, by the end of Meiji—with both a fresh daily picture of the world and changing sense of their own place in that world.¹⁶

Put differently, these publications not only acted as communicators and agents of social change but also paved the way for the collective consciousness of a Japanese “public realm” (*kugai*).¹⁷

Although forerunners to the modern Japanese newspaper already existed in the Tokugawa era (1603–1868), there is a general consensus on locating the industry’s origins in the distribution of *shimbunshi* (news sheets) during the turbulent years of the Meiji Restoration.¹⁸ Although these publications were short-lived, they nevertheless spoke to a growing demand for commercial news. By 1871, Japan had witnessed the establishment of its first daily newspaper, the *Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun*. Along with other companies, such as the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* (established in 1872), this new genre of *ōshimbun* (large newspapers), was characterized by an early use of provocative political commentary written in literary Japanese. Unsurprisingly, such publications catered to a well-educated readership due to their exclusionary use of language. However, from its very inception, the industry acknowledged the need for a publication that catered to the working class. In 1868, Fukuchi Gen’ichirō (1841–1906) established the *Kōko Shimbun*. Driven by an editorial policy to use only colloquial Japanese, Fukuchi strove to reach even the least literate of readers—the so-called *sobokuna taishū*, or the “rustic,” “simple public.”¹⁹ Although its print run only lasted a few months, Fukuchi’s push to reform the language of the popular press indicates a broader concern with making political debate—and by extension, the discussion of “religion”—accessible to the entire public realm.²⁰ In 1874, the Tokyo-based *Yomiuri Shimbun* was established, among four other daily publications, to address the needs of this “simple public.” Classified as a *koshimbun* (small newspaper), it catered predominantly to the so-called *minshū* (“the masses” or “the people”) —the urban working class—employing vernacular language articles that reported on local news, human interest stories, and light fiction. Along with other *koshimbun*, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* initiated a modernizing of journalistic language through the use

of greater colloquial vocabulary as well as standardizing the use of auxiliary verb forms (e.g., *masu* and *gozaimasu*) and the copular *da*, *desu*, and *nan da*.²¹ Furthermore, Chinese characters were accompanied by *furigana* (use of syllabic characters to indicate pronunciation) to assist less literate readers. In this language shift we can observe the inner workings of broader social and cultural transformations that made information more readily available to the public realm than ever before. Indeed, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* itself defined its mission as paving a “rapid road . . . lead[ing] the people [*minshū*] to enlightenment.”²²

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* is taken as a case study in this article for two primary reasons. The first is an essential matter of statistics. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* was the first entertainment-based newspaper distributed in large numbers to a wide audience. By 1877, there were roughly 225 newspapers in circulation, reaching some 470 within the next decade.²³ Of this ever-growing market, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* emerged as the most widely read publication, selling 5,457,000 copies for the period of July 1877 to June 1878.²⁴ It was also commercially oriented with daily circulations to 10,000 subscribers within its first year of business, increasing to roughly 33,000 by the end of the decade.²⁵ As emphasized by Huffman, we can also note a significant decline of the *ōshimbun* press by the mid-1880s and the consequent rise of “less partisan, more news-oriented, and more popular” *koshimbun* publications. Of the latter, the second largest was the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, which had become “more political [and thus more engaged in discussions of religion] without sacrificing readability or its populist approach[.]”²⁶ While it is a fundamentally difficult task to measure how many people actually read each newspaper (as purchasing does not necessarily imply reading and reading does not necessarily imply purchasing), it does appear that an even greater number of individuals read newspapers without purchasing them.²⁷ To this end, Huffman discusses at some length the existence of “reading rooms” (*shimbun jūransho* or *shimbun*

etsuransho) from the early 1870s where low-income villagers and townspeople could read Tokyo-based newspapers or, if they were of poor literacy, could have them read and explained to them.²⁸ Nevertheless, the newspaper industry both took advantage of and contributed to an exponential growth in national literacy. By the end of the Meiji era, Japan's literacy rate had increased from roughly 30 percent to 70 percent, with almost every school-age child attending elementary school and, increasingly, many continuing education at middle and upper levels, with growing numbers attending one of the two imperial universities.²⁹ We can also observe in these considerations of literacy an intersection with the consumption of newspapers. Andrew Gordon, for instance, has noted that by 1919, 80 percent of all households in Tsukishima, a working-class island in Tokyo, were subscribed to at least one newspaper, and 19 percent to multiple newspapers.³⁰ In considering an emerging Meiji culture of reading news alongside the above commercial statistics, we can begin to gain a sense of readership size and the influence the *Yomiuri Shimbun* had in this time period. Therefore, in identifying a widely consumed newspaper whose readership was largely composed of the urban working class, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* emerges as a most fitting source for analysis. The second consideration is that as a commercial company, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* was a space in which editorial articles, opinion pieces, serials, and debates were printed alongside advertisements for goods and events connected to a wide variety of "religious" matters. It is therefore an indispensable historical source whose diverse content reflects the sociological, political, and cultural landscapes of Meiji Japan. In this way we can approach the *Yomiuri Shimbun* as an archive of everyday, grassroots movements, occurrences, and opinions that are otherwise without a historical record of their existence.³¹ In what follows, this article will employ the *Yomiuri Shimbun* as a case study to demonstrate: (1) how newspapers reported on political and legal debates about "religion" in the Meiji era; (2) how newspapers offered a critical space for public debate over definitions of religion

and how this was linked to anti-Christian movements; and (3) how a unique concept of a “universal religion” came to the fore at the turn of the twentieth century.

Defining Religion against the Grain

In analyzing the total output of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* throughout the Meiji era, we can observe that use of the term *shūkyō* follows a general upward trajectory, sharply increasing with the turn of the twentieth century (see Figure 1). Despite an outlying peak between 1899 and 1900 (the reasons for which will be explained later in this article), the statistics nevertheless suggest a gradual cumulative adoption of *shūkyō* in popular discourse as Japan entered into the 1900s. But how can we explain these trends and in what ways is “religion” represented and discussed in the first decades of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*?

In tracing the use of *shūkyō* in newspapers one is unavoidably confronted with the history of Christianity in Japan. Indeed, this “foreign teaching” was intrinsically tied to the conceptual history of “religion” itself in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this, the prevalence of Christianity’s coverage in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* is attributable to the fact that in 1873, the Japanese government issued an edict of toleration, lifting a two-hundred-year-old ban on the practice of Christianity by Japanese citizens.³² A de facto legalization of these “evil teachings” (*jakyō*, 邪教), the decree ushered in a sudden flood of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox missionaries.³³ A national anxiety loomed large in the face of this radical social transformation and the 1880s to 1890s were consequently marked by a particularly anti-Western sentiment.³⁴ With the decree issued only one year prior to the establishment of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Christianity had already

become the central axis around which concepts of religion were passionately debated. To the extent that this toleration of Christianity was, however, understood as empty rhetoric, the topic of “religious freedom” came to the fore at the turn of the 1870s. While an overview of the decree’s history need not be replicated here, we can nevertheless summarize the propelling forces of its origins as both foreign (growing international pressure to uphold the “civil” notion of religious freedom in Japan) and domestic (an increasing understanding of Christianity’s denominational differences among the Japanese).³⁵

Within the first month of its distribution, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* was publishing stories about local encounters with Christianity. On 24 November 1874, an article, penned under the name Sharakusai,³⁶ speaks of the author’s observation of two children following a mountain path. Along the way, one child mocks the inequality of size between pumpkins and their fragile vines, claiming that such a “design flaw” clearly disproves the existence of a mighty Christian Creator. A gust of wind suddenly causes chestnuts to fall from a nearby tree upon his head, triggering both children to immediately drop to their knees in prayer.³⁷ This reflection of the author introduces the reader to a unique vocabulary forged in the early- to mid-nineteenth century to convey a number of key Christian concepts. In this article *zōbutsushu* (造物主)—literally the lord/superior of “creating things”—appears alongside other expressions such as *aruji-sama* (主さま)—(divine Christian) “lord”—and *osore kami wo uyamau* (恐れ神かみを敬う)—to “fearfully respect God.”³⁸ Through this local news piece, we can thus see the *Yomiuri Shimbun* as a facilitator of public education on basic Christian concepts, presenting terminology that was otherwise restricted to intellectual circles and literature tied to European and American missionaries and their Japanese congregations. Indeed, these kinds of cursory introductions to Christian theology would have undoubtedly assisted readers in understanding subsequent discussions of its various denominations

that were increasingly being published by the 1880s. However, as a space for public debate, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* soon began to publish editorials, essays, and advertisements by individuals and associations who opposed the presence of Christianity in Japan. As such, this pervasive anti-Christian sentiment demonstrates the ways in which the construction of a new category of religion came to be illuminated through a focus on how certain groups were excluded from it, and thus conceptualized through opposition.³⁹ In this way, the simultaneity of conceptualization and exclusion can be understood through theories of identity formation inherent in “religious othering,” that there is a dichotomous relationship in the way language establishes the positionality of “self” and “other.”⁴⁰

“We cannot allow the power of foreign teachings to spread throughout our country.”⁴¹ So claims the front page of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on 25 May 1884. “Foreign teachings” or *gaiikyō*, as we encountered earlier, refers to Christianity as a whole (i.e., all denominations of Protestantism, Catholicism, and the Orthodox Church). In invoking a foreign-outside (外)/domestic-inside (内) dichotomy, the term *gaiikyō* subordinates Christianity, offering its practitioners, and simultaneously relegating them to, “subject positions as others in discourse.”⁴² Indeed, the author’s anti-Christian sentiment is grounded in a moral judgment that clearly articulates that *gaiikyō* has no place in Japanese society. He goes as far as to say that Christian missionaries should abandon their activities in Japan and, rather, go to Africa where they should “convert that completely ignorant race” (其の全無智の人種を教化し).⁴³ While the author sympathizes with poverty-stricken individuals who may be seduced by Christian promises, he nevertheless appropriates the faith’s own terminology to make a moral judgment on these people. In this instance, the author uses the English word “sinful” (シンプル) to condemn this act while offering the Buddhist concept of *zaigō* (罪業)—or “sinful karma”—as an emic expression of moral disapproval.⁴⁴ This kind of

anti-Christian rhetoric was also picked up by grassroots associations, such as the Greater Japanese Youth League (大日本青年會), who advertised their meetings “on the extermination [*taiji*] of Christianity” in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, many of which provoked Christian retaliation and consequent police intervention.⁴⁵ Through this, we can identify a turbulent period of violence between Christians and Buddhists/nationalists that was thoroughly reported in the popular media throughout the 1880s and 1890s.⁴⁶

From riots at *niwaka* performances (a light comedy with an improvised text) depicting debates between Christianity and Buddhism, to the destruction of lecture halls and the hurling of stones at Christian congregations, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* paints a vivid image of Japan’s nationalistic reaction to the rise of *gaikyō* and the later introduction of constitutional protection of “religious belief” (*shinkyō no jiyū*, 信教の自由) in 1889.⁴⁷ However, the relevant Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution was not, in fact, an articulation of religious freedom in its most true sense, but a nominal form of protection limited by the very terminology employed in its composition.⁴⁸ As Jason A. Josephson has articulated, this freedom was granted to *shinkyō* (信教), but not *shūkyō* (as a universal category for all denominations and sects).⁴⁹ To this extent, *shinkyō* was also a common “religious” term present in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* before the turn of the twentieth century, reflecting a high proportion of journalistic reporting on political and legal debates in popular discourse (see Figure 2). The development of this neologism speaks to the very limits of power being drawn by the Meiji government—*shinkyō* offered policy makers a specific kind of conceptual subtlety not easily expressed in English, allowing them to distinguish between a freedom of belief that was “interior, private, bounded, and something distinct from preexisting Japanese cultural systems” and “religion” as institutionally and culturally external.⁵⁰ To this extent, the public sphere of religion was made open to policing and, as we will see, both political

and lay associations sought to curb Christian activities. We can observe the impact of this in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* itself, which published a number of open letters penned by Japanese Christian practitioners grappling with the legal limits of their “belief” and to what extent the Constitution actually protected their religious interests. On 29 September 1892, for instance, a front-page letter, penned by Christian protestors, claimed that the exclusion of their children from schools and public institutions on the basis of their belief was a constitutional breach of “religious freedom.”⁵¹ Referring to the governor of Kumamoto’s openly anti-Christian campaign, Inoue Kaoru (1836–1915), national Minister of Internal Affairs, reported to the *Yomiuri Shimbun* that politicians should avoid intervention in the “religious spirit” (*shinkyō no kokoro*, 信教の心) of their prefecture’s residents.⁵² However, we can observe that this discourse was still limited to the interiority of people’s private beliefs and less so the problem of public practice and how this related to the cultivation of a Japanese national identity or “essence” (*kokutai*).

The Meiji construction of “religious” otherness functioned through the conceptualization of *gaikyō* as a coherent outsider whose opposition reified a sense of nationhood. However, the very question of what constituted the “religious” self was tied up in broader political concerns with national unity, sparking significant debate in popular discourse. An essay, published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on 4 January 1891, draws on the ideology of former Shinto priest Kawai Kiyomaru (1848–1917) to critique the demise of “national teachings/religions” (*wagakuni no shūkyō*, 我國の宗教) and the relative rise of “Western religions” (*taisei no shūkyō*, 泰西の宗教).⁵³ In the author’s view, Japan’s waning vitality was directly related to an absence of a “state religion” or “state teaching” (*kokkyō*, 國教). Indeed, he invokes Kawai’s belief that the spirit of Japan lay in the “Three Teachings” (*sankyō*) of Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism, whose inseparability from one another constituted the now long-lost “Great Way” (*daidō*, 大道).⁵⁴ In this essay, the

author makes a claim for a “state religion”⁵⁵ as the embodiment of a “nation’s spirit” (*kuni no kinsei*). In so doing, he asserts that “[t]here is no better way to express one’s patriotism than Shinto, no better way to govern society’s morals than Confucianism, and no better way to liberate oneself from earthly desires (*bon’no*, 煩惱) than Buddhism.”⁵⁶ However, this movement to revive *sankyō* as a “state religion” ultimately failed to influence national policy. Such an outcome was directly related to the Meiji government’s alternative interpretation of what the concept of *kokkyō* itself meant. In understanding *kokkyō* as a teaching of public national *morality*, and thus not strictly a kind of private “religion” per se, the government effected the use of Shinto as an “ambiguous system” to unify the Japanese people against Westernizing forces.⁵⁷ As Isomae has previously emphasized, the transformation of Shinto into a secular “national teaching” rendered shrines as “non-religious or secular while also fully exploiting the Western idea of religious freedom,” as the politicized concept of *kokkyō* cut ties with any kind of religious principle that may be considered Christian, Buddhist, or otherwise.⁵⁸ In what has been presented so far, we have observed how the *Yomiuri Shimbun* facilitated a public sphere in which divergent attitudes toward Christianity were expressed and how, in turn, acts of “religious othering” led to instrumental discussions about the concept of religion and its relationship to national identity in popular discourse. In what follows, we will observe how the emergence of *shūkyō* as a universal category led to speculation about the direction religion might take at the end of the nineteenth century.

Toward a “Universal Religion”

From the early 1880s we can observe an increase in growth of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*’s use of the term *shūkyō* (see Figure 1), as newspaper contributors searched for a conceptual framework through which to engage in comparative discussion of Christianity, Buddhism, Shinto, and

Confucianism. To this extent, an illustrative essay was published on 17 December 1885. Appearing on the front page, the author bemoans the waning of Buddhist law (*buppō*, 仏法). In so doing, he makes an interesting distinction between “reading Buddhism”—*shoseki bukkyō* (書籍仏教)—and “living Buddhism”—*seikatsu bukkyō* (生活仏教): the former referring to the scholarly practice of Buddhist teachings and the latter to the everyday enactment of and self-cultivation through said teachings.⁵⁹ In referring to the absence of both forms of practice, the author claims that “*shūkyō* [religion] is no longer present among the will of the [Japanese] people.”⁶⁰ Implicit in this, is an understanding of Buddhism as belonging to a broader category of *shūkyō*. The author further outlines four clauses all “religionists” (*shūkyōka*, 宗教家) should avoid: a desire for fame, the pursuit of vanity, a lack of doctrinal pedagogy, and servility in the presence of nobles.⁶¹ In establishing these universal clauses, the author then turns to Christianity, transposing his definition of Buddhist practice into the terms of *shoseki shūkyō* (書籍宗教)—“reading *religion*”— and *seikatsu shūkyō* (生活宗教)—“living *religion*.” In his observation, Christianity lacks a clear distinction between “read” and “lived” practice and, in so doing, had “maintained the dignity of *shūkyō*” in its entirety.⁶² For the author, then, *shūkyō* in its purest form implies a balanced union between abstract theology and habitus. In understanding how *shūkyō* is used by this author, we can thus discern a kind of “essential essence” in theory and practice that he believes is common to both Buddhism and Christianity. This thus provides us with a fascinating example of how *shūkyō* featured in popular discourse as early as the mid-1880s as a “universal” category employed for comparative analysis beyond legal or political frameworks.

We can observe a similar use in an opinion piece published on 18 September 1888 under the title “Comments on Buddhism in the West.” In this, the author approaches a universal concept of religion, even using the English word itself to emphasize foreign frameworks. To this extent,

he summarizes recent Anglophone perspectives on Buddhism and their understanding of the tradition as a form of “moral philosophy” (*dōgi tetsugaku*, 道義哲学)—also rendered in English by the author—to be contrasted with “religion.”⁶³ The author nevertheless includes Buddhism within the category of *shūkyō*, disapproving of how Asian populations have come to admire the “religious doctrines of other countries” (*takoku no kyōhō*, 他国の教法), changing practices “like they are choosing goods from a store.”⁶⁴ In this, he seamlessly flips between the terms “religion” in English and *shūkyō* in Japanese, demonstrating an intriguing instance in which this direct equivalence of terminology was made abundantly clear to thousands of Japanese readers. Despite the lingering of anti-Christian sentiment into the 1890s, popular discourse reflected a (mostly reluctant) recognition that Christianity was now an enduring part of Japan’s “religious” landscape.

On 19 July 1891, a significant front-page editorial was published on “Religion in Japan” (*Nippon no shūkyō*, 日本の宗教). Throughout the article, the author discusses defining features of Shinto, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity through the universal category of *shūkyō*. In his discussion of Sect Shintoism (to be contrasted with “secular” State Shinto), the author critiques the contemporary definition of their practices as constituting “religion,” claiming that the moral mindset of ancestral worship (*sozen sūhai*, 祖先崇拜) had been confused for legitimate elements of *shūkyō*.⁶⁵ The author thus defines Shinto as a form of “polytheism” (*tashinkyō*, 多神教). To this extent, he posits that “[r]evering the virtue and influence of the imperial lineage is the duty of all Japanese subjects . . . so why does one have to force the label of religion (*shūkyō*) onto it?”⁶⁶ Indeed, the author concludes that if one wishes to do so, constitutive “religious elements” (*shūkyō no bunshi*, 宗教の分子) would have to be identified and thus would require the establishment of an entirely separate sect (宗) with a “fair doctrine” (*seiseidōdō no kyōri*, 正々堂々の教理) to defend itself.⁶⁷ Similarly Confucianism, although apparently containing certain “religious

elements” (*shūkyō no genso*, 宗教の元素)—that is, the “Way of Heaven” (天道) and “Heaven’s Mandate” (天命)—is defined by the author as a system of ethics that is best used to “serve and promote *other* religions (*shūkyō*).”⁶⁸ Buddhism, however, is outlined in the editorial as a “religion” in crisis whose practitioners are overwhelming preoccupied with “defending against what’s on the *outside* [i.e. Christianity], [rather than] making right what’s on the *inside*.”⁶⁹ Once more the reader is confronted by this pervasive dichotomy between “inside” and “outside” as a means of establishing a sense of religious “self” and “other.” The author makes a critical observation in the practice of lay Buddhists who abide by doctrine but fail to visit temples. In this he claims that new followers will continue to diminish in number, resulting in Buddhism surviving only as a philosophy (*tetsugaku*, 哲學) and not as a “religion” (*shūkyō*).⁷⁰ Here too we find parallels with the previously discussed concept of “living religion,” which prioritizes practice over theological study. The present author similarly understands practice as a critical distinction between the concept of “philosophy” and that of “religion.” In turning to Christianity in all its forms, he derides it as “nonsensical” and ill-suited to the Japanese people and their customs. In so doing, he engages in a discussion of Christian concepts of religion, critiquing its division between theology and belief.

[Christians consider] religion (*shūkyō*) [to be] different from theology (*shingaku*, 神学), as religion is something that exceeds [mere] belief (*shinkō*, 信仰), and belief that is [only] in pursuit of theory (*gakusetsu*, 學説) is not true belief. How ridiculous these opinions are! They cannot even comprehend the fact that there are two types of belief: true belief (*kakushin*, 確信) and blind belief (*mōshin*, 妄信). True belief is based on knowledge and truth; those without truth and knowledge are all but blind beliefs. If theology had nothing to do with belief, there would be no theology in the first place.⁷¹

In this the author again reinforces the previous distinction between “reading religion” and “living religion.” By means of critiquing the Christian concept of *shūkyō* he thus makes implicit the necessarily interconnected nature of doctrine and practice, emphasizing how, in his opinion, Christianity makes an artificial separation between these two components. In concluding this editorial, the author poses a rhetorical question to the reader as to who will be “the final victor” (最後の勝利者), reflecting a certain anxiety at the end of the nineteenth century about the direction of Japan’s future.⁷² Such uncertainty, however, also opened space for contemplation about the universal development of *shūkyō* beyond the “contenders” of Christianity, Buddhism, and Shinto and their relative pursuits of “victory.”

As early as 1887, there are records in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* about grassroots efforts to forge a religious syncretism. On 5 March of that year, the newspaper printed advertisements for a public lecture in the Tokyo neighborhood of Yotsuya, in which the speaker was to propose a merging (*gappei*) of Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity.⁷³ To this extent, a discourse emerged at the turn of the 1890s in which a “universal religion” was discussed as an inevitable outcome of intercultural exchange and the increasing compression of geographical distance.⁷⁴ On 23 March 1891, a fascinating article was published under the title “[A] Universal Religion” (*sekai fukyū no shūkyō* 世界普及の宗教).⁷⁵ In its opening statement, the author claims to have

read all things, from the Substance Theory of Spinoza, Schopenhauer’s theory of the Will, Hegel’s Idealism, [and] Herbert Spencer’s notion of the Unknowable and Absolute, to [understanding the concepts of] Confucianists’ *Daji* (“great ultimate”), Buddhists’ *Tathātā* and *Myōkū* (“excellent emptiness”), Shintoists’ *Amenominakanushi* (“lord of the bright

center of heaven”), and the God of the Christians. I have discovered that they are all more or less the same thing.⁷⁶

The author stresses that the search for some “supreme entity” (至高の現体) appears to be a universal aspect of the human condition. That this search has manifested in the development of distinct “religions” (*shūkyō*) is only, according to him, due to a difference in geography and points in time. The author cites rising instances of interfaith violence as a cause for a new “age of preventing conflict and declaring harmony.”⁷⁷ In this, he understands the unifying efforts of people such as Kawai Kiyomaru (in the amalgamation of *sankyō*) and instances of Buddhist members joining Christian associations as a positive sign of things to come. Indeed, the author sees these examples as an early indication of a “universal religion [世界普及の宗教] [emerging] in the near future.” But while some were hypothesizing about the role of religion in establishing harmony in Japan, the government and its ministries were looking to the dawn of this new century as an opportunity to set legal limits on the concept of *shūkyō* itself.

Into a New Century

Throughout this article, we have come to see how the use of *shūkyō* in popular discourse of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* began to increase toward the turn of the twentieth century. In explaining the peak in usage of the term between 1899 and 1900 (see Figure 1), we can identify a number of direct correlations between government policies and the newspaper’s coverage of the events surrounding them. The first of these relates to the Ministry of Education’s Ordinance No. 12, enacted in August of 1899. This enforced a rule of law in which “general education [was made to] be independent of religion.” To this extent, the ministry articulated that “religious instruction must not be given, or

religious ceremonies performed, at Government Schools, Public Schools, or schools whose curricula are regulated by provision of law, even outside the regular course of instruction.”⁷⁸ Indeed, as the Bureau of Religion (*shūkyōkyoku*, 宗教局), established the following year, fell under the authority of the Ministry of Education, we can see an inextricable link between pedagogy and the government’s stance on religious practice.⁷⁹ Although this prohibition was motivated primarily by a drive to curb Buddhist education, it also had significant impact on Protestant mission schools. In the months following, a number of reports were printed in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* addressing the objection of Christian schools and communities who petitioned for the uncompromised continuation of their “religious instruction” (*shūkyō kyōiku*, 宗教教育).⁸⁰ This also came only one month after the publication of reports on the increased policing of churches in which the Ministry of the Interior further extended its power to the regulation of missionary activities.⁸¹ The enactment of Ordinance No. 12 precipitated a fervent debate among Japanese scholars about the place of “religion” in modern Japanese society. However, in looking to the popular press, and especially the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, we can also see instances in which intellectual figures made concerted efforts to convey their own arguments to a working-class readership—to engage with the urban masses on such critical issues. The influential Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), professor of philosophy at Tokyo University, was a critical voice against Christianity and “religion” in general, favoring a system of “national education.” His monumental essay “The Clash between Education and Religion” (*Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu*, 教育と宗教の衝突), published in 1893, made clear his opinion that Japanese national values were inherently incompatible with the central tenets of Christianity.⁸² Compelled by political developments at the turn of the twentieth century, Inoue published a number of editorial essays in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in 1902 articulating arguments in vernacular Japanese for the continued separation of “national education” (*kokumin*

kyōiku, 国民教育) and “religious instruction” (*shūkyō kyōiku*), drawing on nationalistic narratives of Japanese cultural integrity.⁸³ In this, we can see the critical role of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* as an increasingly political publication that bridged a gap toward the end of the Meiji era between politics and scholarly debate on the one hand and the urban masses of Japan on the other..

Attempts to control public engagement by Christian and Buddhist associations, among others, can also be perceived in the subsequent introduction of the controversial “Religions Bill” (*shūkyō hōan*, 宗教法案) in the final days of the nineteenth century. By this, Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922) accepted the notion of religious freedom “only to the extent that it was harnessed to the goal of strengthening imperial authority, not as an inherent right of Japanese subjects.”⁸⁴ Throughout December, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* reported extensively on the clauses of the bill, topics of debate regarding each “sect” (各宗), and the amendments proposed by the opposition such that the newspaper’s readers were familiar not only with the relevant terminology but also the impact the proposed bill would have on their everyday lives.⁸⁵ Although the bill was ultimately defeated in the House of Peers (and again in a revised form in 1900), the extensive media coverage of the debate resulted in an increased frequency of the central term and concept at the heart of this controversy and this very research project itself—*shūkyō*. Indeed, in comparing Figures 1 and 2, we can also identify the aforementioned peak between 1899 and 1900 as a turning point in the respective usage of *shinkyō* and *shūkyō*, with the latter consolidating its dominance over the former after this particular juncture in time.⁸⁶ As such, we can identify a dynamic shift in which popular discussion of “religion” moved beyond matters of law and politics, focusing more on the social and cultural dimensions of varied traditions as a part of daily life among the working class.

By the end of 1907, use of the term *shūkyō* had dramatically increased to 163 (see Figure 1) due to an ongoing series written by the young socialist Oda Raizō (1881–1918) entitled “Review of the Religious Sphere” (*shūkyō-kai hyōron*, 宗教界評論). Running from 5 July until 11 November, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* printed, on an almost daily basis, 118 installments of the series covering a wide range of topics from critiques of Shintoism and Buddhist assemblies to an exposition on Christianity and its future in Japan. For instance, in the month of September alone, 22 out of 30 days featured a series installment as a front-page article. We can perhaps conjecture that Oda’s series grew out of the political chaos of preceding years, in addition to the increased presence of “religious” debate in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* more generally, and a readership now more familiar with the term *shūkyō* itself. Indeed, the ongoing popularity of the series speaks not only to the topical nature of its focus in the early 1900s but, more importantly, is indicative of an increasingly informed readership. By the final years of the Meiji era use of the term had skyrocketed to 444 in 1925 and to a lesser 320 in 1926 (see Figure 1). This was in part due to similar short-term series such as “News from the Religious World” (宗教界だより), which ran for several weeks in 1925.⁸⁷ However, it was with the establishment of a consistent newspaper column about religion (*shūkyō-ran*, 宗教欄) on May 25 in the same year that the term became firmly entrenched in the daily reading of Japanese consumers. By the end of 1925, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* had run some 260 “religion columns” in its print. Certainly “religion” was on the lips of the popular media, and we can see how it facilitated a much-needed conceptual space for the comparative discussion of various traditions toward the end of the Meiji era.

Conclusion

This article has sought to confute the claim that *shūkyō*, as a concept, lacked an established nature before the twentieth century and had little to do with the experience of “ordinary people.”⁸⁸ To this end, studying the popular discourse of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* has offered us an important counter-narrative in which regular use of *shūkyō* began to clearly emerge from the mid-1880s, exponentially increasing with the following decades. Tied to this necessary shift in our chronological understanding is a need to acknowledge the expansion of the social milieu familiar with public debates about matters religious. In challenging previous scholarly treatments of *shūkyō* as a largely legal concept, this article has thus demonstrated how these debates were made intelligible to a working-class demographic through the vernacular foundations of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. In so doing, the examples explored throughout have offered invaluable insight into how thousands of Japanese people engaged both passively and actively with concepts of “religion” throughout the Meiji era. From early discussions of “foreign teachings” (*gaikyō*) to the legal status of interior “belief” (*shinkyō*) and concepts of state “religion” (*kokkyō*), this article has illustrated the ways in which *shūkyō* developed into a universal category for the comparative analysis of different traditions. Yet, as we have seen, the very definition of this category itself was nonetheless open to interpretation within the public sphere, expressing a certain emic tension with the concept of an abstract “religion” that arguably remains prevalent to this day.⁸⁹ From its very beginning, the popular press sought to provide agency to non-governing groups of Japanese society through the simultaneous facilitation of open access to information and a space to express their own opinions.⁹⁰ In looking to one of the most influential newspapers of the Meiji era, we have, in this way, seen that popular discussion of “religion” was not only within the purview of politics, diplomacy, and the law, but was also, perhaps more importantly, a critical part of the everyday experience of Japan’s urban working class. Indeed, it was this “ordinary” majority, the so-called *minshū*, who

ultimately looked to the popular press to make sense of Japan’s rapid state of transformation and, in so doing, found concepts to frame their social and cultural traditions for a new modern age.

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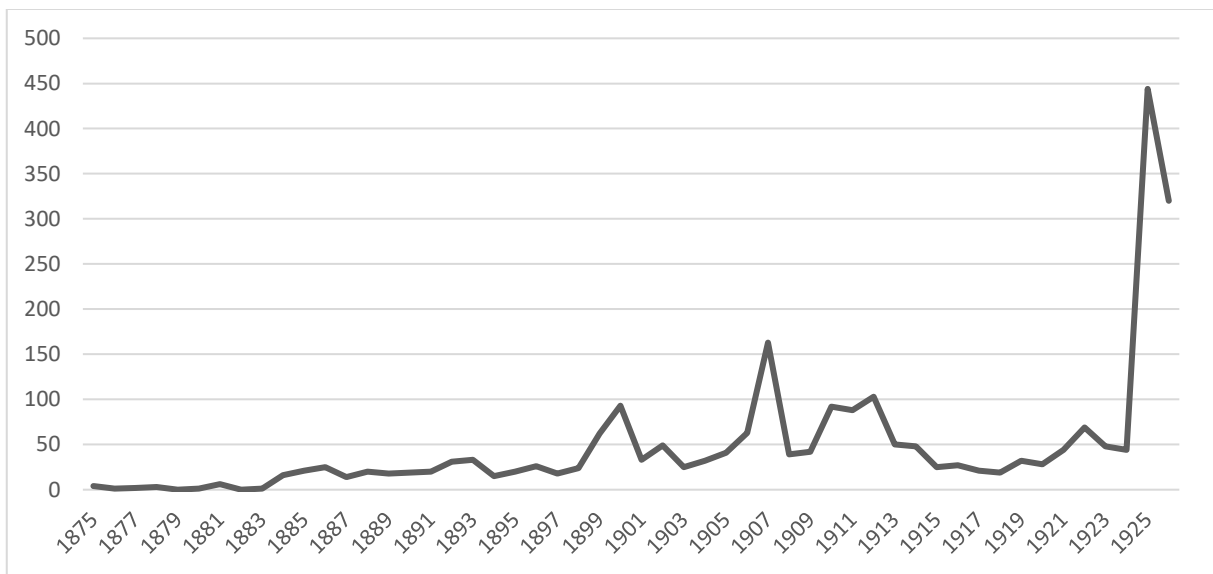


Figure 1. Number of times “*shūkyō*” appears in the Yomiuri Shimbun according to year of publication

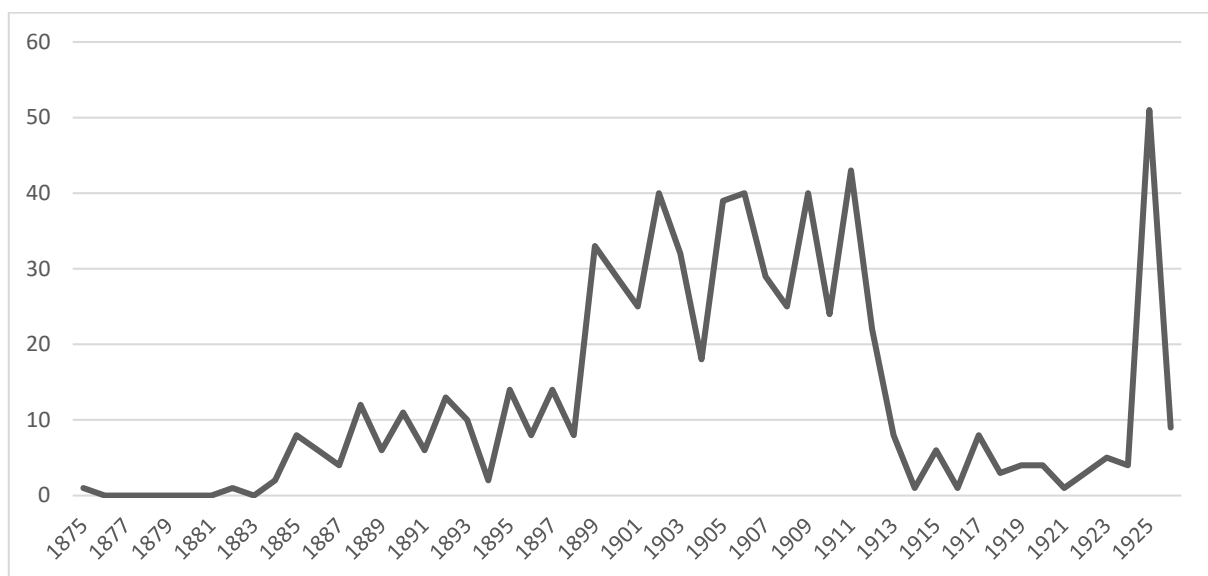


Figure 2. Number of times “shinkyō” appears in the Yomiuri Shimbun according to year of publication

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Epigraph: Reproduced in Yasushi Kuyama et al., ed., *Kindai Nihon to Kirisutokyō: Meiji hen* [Modern Japan and Christianity] (Nishinomiya: Kirisutokyō Gakuto Kyōdaidan, 1956), 114. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

1. Yokoi is referring here to the Chinese schema of the “Three Teachings” (Ch. *sanjiao*; Jp. *sankyō*, 三教). Devised in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), this division between Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, was later appropriated by the Japanese to map their cultural landscapes in terms of Japanese Buddhist, Neo-Confucian, and indigenous Shinto traditions.

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2. On the translation of *seikyō* (政教) as unity of “government” and “education” (rather than as two separate categories), see Shuma Iwai, “Syncretism of Christian Samurai at the Kumamoto Band in Japan: Fulfillment of Confucianism in Christianity,” in *Religion on the Move!: New Dynamics of Religious Expansion in a Globalizing World*, ed. Afe Adogame and Shobana Shankar (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 113–132, here 117.
 3. Jun’ichi Isomae, *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan: Religion, State, and Shintō* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 29.
 4. See Mitsutoshi Horii, “American Imperialism and the Japanese Encounter with ‘Religion’: 1853–1858,” *Studi e Materiali di Storia de Religioni* 82 (2016): 838–869.
 5. See T.H. Barrett, “Coming to Terms with Religion in East Asia,” in *Religion and Orientalism in Asian Studies*, ed. Kiri Paramore (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 73–84.
 6. Jolyon Baraka Thomas, “The Concept of Religion in Modern Japan: Imposition, Invention, or Innovation?,” *Religious Studies in Japan* 2 (2013): 3–21.
 7. Jason Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 3. See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, ed., *La religion: séminaire de Capri sous la direction de Jacques Derrida et Gianni Vattimo* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
 8. See, for instance, Jun’ichi Isomae, *Kindai Nihon no shūkyō gensetsu to sono keifu* [Religious Discourse and Its Genealogy in Modern Japan] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003); Seiji Hoshino, *Kindai Nihon no shūkyō gainen: Shūkyōsha no kotoba to kindai* [The Concept of Religion in Modern Japan: The Words of Religious Leaders and Modernity] (Tokyo: Yūshisha Press, 2012); Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*; Hans Martin Krämer, *Shimaji Mokurai and the Reconception of Religion and the Secular in Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015).
 9. Isomae, *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan*, xvii.
 10. Kazuo Ōsumi, *Chūsei shisōshi e no kōsō: Rekishi bungaku shūkyō* [The Idea of History of Medieval Thought: History, Culture, Religion] (Tokyo: Meicho Kankōkai, 1984), 95.
 11. Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 9–10; Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 16.

12. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, 9.

13. See James L. Huffman, *A Yankee in Meiji Japan: The Crusading Journalist Edward H. House* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 236.

14. See, for instance, Xinzhong Yao and Yanxia Zhao, *Chinese Religion: A Contextual Approach* (London: Continuum, 2010), 24–44; Jang Sukman, “The Historical Formation of the ‘Religious-Secular’ Dichotomy in Modern Korea,” in *Religion and Secularity: Transformations and Transfers of Religious Discourses in Europe and Asia*, ed. Marion Eggert and Lucian Hölscher (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 257–80; Shūji Suzuki, “Religion (*shūkyō*) and Freedom (*jiyū*),” in *The Emergence of the Modern Sino-Japanese Lexicon: Seven Studies*, ed. and trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 81–112.

15. On newspapers as sources for conceptual history, see, for instance, Melvin Richter, “Conceptual History (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and Political Theory,” *Political Theory* 14 (1996): 604–637, here 628; Pieter Boele van Hensbroek, “Conceptualizing ‘Land’ and ‘Nation’ in Early Gold Coast Nationalism,” in *Doing Conceptual History in Africa*, ed. Axel Fleisch and Rhiannon Stephens (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 162–184, here 166–167; Paula Pannu, “From *Kerajaan* (Kingship) to *Masyarakat* (The People): Malay Articulations of Nationhood through Concepts of the ‘Social’ and ‘Economic’, 1920–40,” in *A Global Conceptual History of Asia, 1860–1940*, ed. Hagen Schulz-Forberg (New York: Routledge, 2016), 111–128, here 112–113.

16. James L. Huffman, *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 2.

17. Tatsuro Hanada “The Japanese ‘Public Sphere’: The *Kugai*,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (2006): 612–614.

18. James L. Huffman, “Freedom and the Press in Meiji-Taishō Japan,” in *Meiji Japan: Political, Economic and Social History, 1868–1912*, ed. Peter Kornicki (London: Routledge, 1998), 284–307, here 285.

19. Quotes from an article in the *Kōko Shimbun* (24 May 1868), reproduced in Takeki Osatake, ed., *Bakumatsu Meiji Shimbun zenshū* [Collected Newspapers of the Bakumatsu-Meiji Period], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Taiseidō, 1934), 3.

20. Nanette Gottlieb, *Language and the Modern State: The Reform of Written Japanese* (New York: Routledge, 1991),

125. For the history of Japanese journalism, see, for instance, Anthony S. Rausch, *Japan’s Local Newspapers: Chihōshi and Revitalization Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 10–49; Taketoshi Nishida, *Meiji jidai no shimbun to zasshi* [Newspapers and Periodicals of the Meiji Period] (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1966); Hideo Ono, *Shimbun no rekishi* [History of the Newspaper] (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shippun, 1961).

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21. Dennis C. Washburn, *The Dilemma of the Modern in Japanese Fiction* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 81.
22. Chiyomatsu Katakozawa, ed., *Sandai genronjin shū* [The Works of Three Generations of Journalists], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Jiji Shimbunsha, 1963), 258.
23. Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 58.
24. Nishida, *Meiji jidai no shimbun to zasshi*, 58. See also Huffman, *A Yankee in Meiji Japan*, 118.
25. Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 87; Laurie Anne Freeman, *Closing the Shop: Information Cartels and Japan's Mass Media* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 42. See Shin'ichi Ukai, *Chōya Shimbun no kenkyū* [Research on the Chōya Newspaper] (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1985), 22–23, 32–33.
26. By 1885, daily circulation of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* had exceeded 15,000 copies. Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 142.
27. Mark E. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 59.
28. Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 57.
29. Richard Rubinger, “Education in Meiji Japan,” in *Sources of East Asian Tradition: The Modern Period*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 515–529, here 515.
30. Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 19.
31. Yoshimasa Ikegami, “Local Newspaper Coverage of Folk Shamans in Aomori Prefecture,” in *Folk Beliefs in Modern Japan*, ed. Inoue Nobutaka (Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics Kokugakuin University, 1994), 9–91, here 19.
32. For a report on this edict, see *The Japan Weekly Mail* (22 February 1873), 113.
33. On the history of Christianity as an “evil teaching,” see Hans Martin Krämer, “‘Religion’ and ‘Heresy’ in East Asia: Between Continuity and Discontinuity,” in *Defining Religion, Defining Heresy in Modern East Asia*, ed. Hans Martin Krämer (Munich: IUDICUM, 2009), 5–16.
34. For examples of newspaper articles on the prevalence of missionaries, see, for instance, *Yomiuri Shimbun* (25 February 1887), 2; (22 January 1888), 1; (8 March 1890), 1.
35. For a comprehensive exposition on the decree, see Thomas W. Burkman, “The Urakami Incidents and the Struggle for Religious Toleration in Early Meiji Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 1 (1974): 143–216.

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36. This may refer to the Japanese painter Ochiai Yoshiiku (1833–1904) who used, among others, the penname Sharakusai (洒落齋).
37. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (24 November 1874), 2.
38. On the translation of *aruji* as “lord,” see James C. Hepburn, *Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary* (New York: A.D.F. Randolph, 1873), 9.
39. Krämer, “‘Religion’ and ‘Heresy’ in East Asia,” 13.
40. On the notion of Christian exclusion in Japan, see Tasuku Aso, “The Landscapes of Exclusion Concerning Christian Groups in Modern Japan: The Case of Two Incidents in the 1930s,” *E-Journal Geo* 11 (2016): 219–243.
41. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (25 May 1884), 1.
42. Sune Q. Jensen, “Othering, Identity Formation and Agency,” *Qualitative Studies* 2 (2011): 63–78, here 54. On the role of the inside/outside binary in Japanese thought, see Jane M. Bachnik and Charles J. Quinn, Jr., eds., *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society, and Language* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
43. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (25 May 1884), 1.
44. Ibid.
45. See, for instance, *Yomiuri Shimbun* (26 October 1884), 3; (2 August 1885), 4; (07 August 1885), 4; (19 November 1889), 3; (6 October 1892), 2.
46. For one of the earliest reports indicating a high level of Christian denunciation (*Kirisutokyō shinja wo haigeki suru kōdō*), see *Yomiuri Shimbun* (19 July 1881), 1.
47. See *Yomiuri Shimbun* (26 October 1884), 3; (2 August 1885), 4; (7 August 1885), 4; (6 October 1892), 2. For an overview of anti-Christian movements in Meiji Japan, see Notto R. Thelle, *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1854–1899* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 135–149.
48. Yoshiya Abe, “Religious Freedom under the Meiji Constitution,” *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 9 (1968): 268–338. Toshio Ozaki, “Meiji rikken shugi to ‘shinkyō no jiyū’ kitei: teikoku kenpō dai 28-jō no seiritsu katei o chūshin to shite” [Meiji Constitutionalism and Provisions for the “Freedom of Religious Belief”: A Focus on the Process of Establishing the 28th Article of the Imperial Constitution], *Tokyo kasei gakuin daigaku kiyō* [Journal of Tokyo Kasei Gakuin University] 30 (1990): 87–106; Hiroshi Suga, “Gakusetsu-shi kenkyū to kenpō kaishaku: Meiji

kenpō ni okeru shinkyō no jiyū” [Research on the History of Theory and Constitutional Interpretation: Freedom of Religious Belief in the Meiji Constitution], *Kōhō kenkyū* [Journal of Public Law] 73 (2011): 107–120.

49. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, 236.

50. Jason Ānanda Josephson, “The Invention of Religions in East Asia,” in *Routledge Handbook of Religion in Asia*, ed. Bryan S. Turner and Oscar Salemink (New York: Routledge, 2015), 17–29, here 22–23. See also Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

51. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (29 September 1892), 1.

52. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (11 October 1892), 1. On a petition to guarantee the enactment of constitutional religious freedom, see (11 October 1892), 2.

53. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (4 January 1891), 2.

54. On Kawai Kiyomaru, see Yoshizō Kodani, *Kawai Kiyomaru to sono shūhen* [Kawai Kiyomaru and His Environs] (Tokyo: Makino shuppan, 1977).

55. The translation of *kokkyō* as “state religion” in this newspaper essay is arguably more appropriate than “state teaching” as the author uses the category of *shūkyō* not only to speak of Christian denominations, but also the “Three Teachings” of Japan.

56. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (4 January 1891), 2.

57. Ju’ichi Isomae, “The Formative Process of State Shinto in Relation to the Westernization of Japan: The Concept of ‘Religion’ and ‘Shinto,’” trans. Michael S. Wood, in *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations*, ed. Timothy Fitzgerland (New York: Routledge, 2007), 93–102, here 99. See also Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868–1988* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 60–78.

58. Isomae, “The Formative Process of State Shinto,” 99. On the development of State Shinto as a kind of national teaching of Japanese morality, see Hardacre, *Shintō and State*; Josephson, *Invention of Religion in Japan*, 132–163; Hans Martin Krämer, “Reconceiving the Secular in Early Meiji Japan: Shimaji Mokurai, Buddhism, Shinto, and the Nation,” *Japan Review* 30 (2017): 63–77.

59. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (17 December 1885), 1.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (18 September 1888), 2.

64. Ibid.

65. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (19 July 1891), 1.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid. Emphasis added.

69. Ibid. Emphasis added.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (05 March 1887), 2.

74. On the topic of “universal religion” and Japan at the turn of the twentieth century, see Judith Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Thomas David DuBois, ed., *Casting Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

75. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (23 March 1891), 2.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Cited in Thomas John Hastings, “Japan’s Protestant Schools and Churches in Light of Early Mission Theory and History,” in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 101–124, here 115.

79. A. Hamish Ion, *The Cross in the Dark Valley: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1931–1945* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1999), 83.

80. See, for instance, *Yomiuri Shimbun* (1 October 1889), 1; (5 October 1889), 1.

81. See, for instance, *Yomiuri Shimbun* (27 June 1899), 1. On this ordinance, see Yoshiya Abe “Religious Freedom under the Meiji Constitution (Continued),” *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 11 (1970): 223–296, here 281–282.

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82. Tetsujirō Inoue, *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu* [The Clash between Education and Religion] (Tokyo: Keigyōsha, 1893). See Winston Davis, “The Civil Theology of Inoue Tetsujirō,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 3 (1976): 5–40; Kiri Paramore, *Ideology and Christianity in Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 131–160.
83. See *Yomiuri Shimbun* (29 September 1902), 1; (13 October 1902), 1; (14 October 1902), 1; (17 October 1902), 1. On the so-called National Morality Movement, see Richard M. Reitan, *Making a Moral Society: Ethics and the State in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii press, 2010).
84. Hardacre, *Shintō and the State*, 124–125. See also Thomas, *Faking Liberties*, 60–63.
85. See, especially, *Yomiuri Shimbun* (27 December 1899), 1.
86. The statistics for use of *shinkyō* in 1899 and 1900 are 33 and 29 respectively; use of *shūkyō* is 62 and 93 respectively.
87. See *Yomiuri Shimbun* (13 April 1925); 18 April 1925; 25 April 1925; 30 April 1925; 6 May 1925; 7 May 1925; 9 May 1925; 12 May 1925; 17 May 1925; 18 May 1925; 19 May 1925.
88. Isomae, *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan*, xvii.
89. On this “trouble with religion,” see Michael Roemer, “Religious Affiliation in Contemporary Japan: Untangling the Enigma,” *Review of Religious Research* 50 (2009): 298–320.
90. See Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 8–9.