

IDEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

What is the relationship between religion and power? Is secularization an aspect of “modernization”? Kiri Paramore’s probing analysis of the role of anti-Christian discourse in Japanese politics between 1600 and 1900 sheds new light on these questions. His argument that imagined “Christianity” played a key role in the two major instances of Japanese state formation during this period is both provocative and persuasive. This is an ambitious and important new work.

Hiroshi Watanabe, University of Tokyo.

In this fascinating study, Kiri Paramore bores deeply into the textual history and intellectual legacy of Christian and anti-Christian thought in Tokugawa Japan. As he shows, anti-Christian writings increasingly served the purposes of contemporary political criticism and controversy that had little to do with Christianity, and everything to do with stigmatizing the enemies of “order” in an unanswerable manner. This was an ideological strategy, Paramore further shows that, if anything, gained force as Japan’s leadership committed itself to an emperor-centered program of modernization following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Not only is it important to have these materials newly available, the research behind them is fresh and engaging, reflecting the best of recent Japanese scholarship. This is an admirable and eye-opening work.

Andrew Barshay, University of California, Berkeley.

Demonstrating hitherto ignored links in Japanese history between modern and early-modern, and between religious and political elements, this book will appeal to students and scholars of Japanese history, religion and politics.

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