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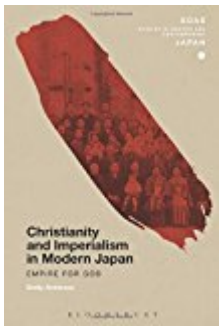

Emily Anderson. *Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God.* London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 328 pp. $114.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4725-0856-0.

Reviewed by Erik Schicketanz

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As the political and ideological structures of the modern Japanese state took shape during the Meiji period, religions in Japan had to find their place within the newly forming framework. One way of doing so was through the emerging empire. Emily Anderson's very readable volume *Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God* is a study of such an effort, examining the way that Christian belief and practice was formed in relation to the expanding Japanese empire of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The work thus contributes to a small but growing body of research in English dedicated to the examination of Christianity in modern Japan.[1] Anderson pays attention to the way that religious vision and political ideology interacted with each other as Christians searched for their place in Japanese society. She does so by providing a multisited transnational investigation of the activities of Japanese Christians from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War. The study weaves together a large number of diverse settings, ranging from the imperial metropole, the Japanese countryside, and colonial Korea to Japanese and Korean diasporic communities on the American West Coast, Shanghai, as well as a final, tragic chapter set in wartime Manchuria. Within this context, Anderson sees Christians in modern Japan as having fulfilled a crucial role in "rigorously asserting alternative notions of loyalty and national unity that challenged state-sanctioned ideals" (p. 7).

Although Anderson touches upon other denominations as well, the main focus is on the Nihon Kumiai Kirisuto Kyōkai (Congregational Church), one of the main Protestant church organizations in Japan.[2] This denomination is the focus of attention due to its decentralized ecclesiastical structure and the independent nature of its ministers, offering a "broad range of theological and ideological positions" (p. 8). Two Kumiai Kyōkai ministers in particular appear as the main protagonists of this study: the head minister of the central Hongō church, Ebina Danjō (1856-1937), and his erstwhile disciple, Kashiwagi Gien (1860-1938). As empire was a key concept in the

religious thinking of both of these figures, they serve to represent opposing poles in how church members envisioned the relationship between Christianity on the one hand, and nation and empire on the other.

A further central concern for Anderson is to provide a perspective diverging from the existing Japanese scholarship on prewar and wartime Japanese Christianity, which she sees as being characterized by a strong ethical stance that deems Christianity and empire to be irreconcilable entities (p. 10). For Anderson, however, Christian support for and engagement with empire did not reflect a false understanding of Christianity, but participation in it was "inextricably linked and even produced by their religious concerns." Empire provided Japanese Christians with opportunities to assert their identity as both Christian and Japanese imperial subjects (pp. 13-14).

To investigate the relationship between empire and Christianity in modern Japan, Anderson takes the reader through seven chronologically arranged chapters, each dealing with a key event or distinct place of activity in the history of the Kumiai Kyōkai. Besides some of the main Meiji period debates concerning Christian loyalty to the nation, particular attention is paid to how Kumiai Kyōkai members envisioned their project of creating God's kingdom on earth through the empire and their efforts to proselytize among Japanese and indigenous populations within it. Two main intellectual strands in how Kumiai Kyōkai members related to the Japanese state and empire emerge as part of these discussions. The mainstream of the denomination--represented in the book by such leading ministers as Ebina Danjō and Watase Tsuneyoshi--developed their religious visions in line with the overall political vision of the Japanese state and sought to show that Christianity was fully compatible with the nation. They thus took a supportive view of the Russo-Japanese War, which they identified as an opportunity for the moral transformation of Japan and the realization of God's kingdom on earth (p. 73). The opposite intellectual pole is represented by Kumiai Kyōkai minister Kashiwagi Gien, who, inspired by socialists such as Kōtoku Shūsui and the writings of Leo Tolstoy, offered social visions that critiqued the nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism of the Japanese state and was thus squarely at odds with the dominant state ideology.

After discussing a number of central debates concerning Christianity's relation to the nation located within metropolitan Japan, the book shifts its focus to colonial and diasporic spaces. Anderson argues that it was when hopes that Christianity would be embraced by wider society were dashed by attacks on churches during the Hibiya Riots of 1905 that the colonies emerged as a space of new opportunities for Japanese Christians (p. 93). At a time when this was increasingly difficult in the metropolitan centre, Christians could transpose their religious utopia of realizing God's kingdom on earth onto the space of empire and its peripheries. Further, as Anderson points out, even then the ***naichi*** (Japan proper) and the ***gaichi*** (the colonies) remained intricately connected in the minds of Kumiai Kyōkai ministers, as activities in the one were expected to loop back into the other. Thus, Ebina hoped that the moral transformation of Japanese communities on the West Coast of the United States or Korea would "eventually bring about the salvation of Japan" itself (p. 105).

Anderson's book gives ample evidence of how Kumiai Kyōkai ministers tended to map their visions of moral transformation and Christian utopia onto the existing political and social order, identifying closely with the Japanese imperial project. The parts of the volume dealing with the mission efforts in colonial Korea--where the Kumiai Kyōkai was able to at least for a time incorporate a substantial number of Korean Christians into its organization--illustrate well how Christian proselytization merged with the civilizing mission of empire and pacification efforts by the colonial administration (chapters 4 and 5). As Kashiwagi

Gien criticized, ministers such as Watase Tsuneyoshi tended to conflate evangelism (***dendō***) with the assimilation (***dōka***) policies of the colonial state (p. 148). Anderson draws deserved attention to the relationship between religious efforts to convert others and ideologies of political domination. While mission and empire have certainly not been identical, they have often shared common intellectual ground, enabling frequent collusion between the two projects.

However, it is also here that I believe a central shortcoming of this study lies. While Anderson argues that Christianity and the alternative visions it propagated "played a crucial role in shaping modern Japan" (p. 243), the book fails to substantiate this claim. The agrarianism and small-countryism (***shōkoku shugi***) promoted by Kashiwagi Gien (discussed in chapter 5) did indeed constitute a true alternative to the existing imperial order, but it is not clear from the pages of this book to what extent it deserves to be seen as a "challenge" to state-sanctioned ideals described by Anderson in the introduction, and what shaping influence it had on wider Japanese society.

On the other hand, the majority of Kumiai Kyōkai ministers appear to have enthusiastically identified with the nation and empire. Here, too, it is not apparent to what extent the visions of God's kingdom on earth formulated in this context were indeed alternatives to state ideology or whether they merely constituted a Christian inflection of it. A more detailed discussion of what Kumiai Kyōkai members precisely understood under the notion of "God's kingdom on earth" and how it diverged from state ideology--or why it merged so easily with it, for that matter--might have shed more light on this question. One is left with the feeling that Ebina's vision of a Christian empire probably resembled closely the one that was already in place. The fact that the Japanese state did not crack down on the Kumiai Kyōkai--as opposed to the way it dealt, for instance, with Ōmotokyō and other new religions--suggests that it did not perceive these visions as a threat.

Thus, rather than to "undo some of the violence" (p. 239) enacted by the state in the 1930s in its effort to eradicate alternative visions, the book ends up confirming in the eyes of this reader that the majority of Kumiai Kyōkai members willingly identified with the imperial project and enthusiastically engaged with it. In this regard, I also agree with another one of Anderson's arguments. It is indeed necessary to at least readjust one's ethical lenses when looking at the activities and ideas of these Christians. While it is certainly important to problematize the collusion of Japanese Christians with empire, the fact that they did take part in the imperial project does not diminish their identity as Christians. Whether Christians in the West or the adherents of the main Buddhist sects in Japan, a large number of mainstream religious organizations actively collaborated with empire at one point or another. In this sense, the members of the Kumiai Kyōkai were actually quite ordinary.

Overall, ***Christianity and Imperialism in Modern Japan: Empire for God*** is an informative case study of the activities of one Protestant denomination in Japan that provides ample material to further think about the ways Japanese religions integrated themselves into the political and social framework given by the modern Japanese state, and in particular its imperial project.

Notes

[1]. Major contributions include Richard H. Drummond, ***A History of Christianity in Japan*** (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971); David Reid, ***New Wine: The Cultural Shaping of Japanese Christianity*** (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991); A. Hamish Ion, ***The Cross and the Rising Sun: The British Protestant Mission in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, 1865 1945*** (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993); John Breen and Mark Williams, eds., ***Japan and Christianity: Impacts and Responses*** (London: Macmillan,

1995); Mark Mullins, ***Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*** (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).

[2]. As someone relatively unfamiliar with the history of Christianity in modern Japan, I would have welcomed some more background information on the Kumiai Kyōkai, as I felt it difficult to develop a sense for the scale of the denomination and its overall place within Japanese Christianity. Furthermore, the term "Christianity" is used throughout this work in a blanket fashion despite the fact that it is almost solely dedicated to the discussion of a single Protestant denomination.