

【Grant-in-Aid for Transformative Research Areas (B)】

Section I



Title of Project : Religious Movements and Communication Medium /Worldview/Social Integration: A Synthetic Approach of Historical Research

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Number of Research Area : 20B103 Researcher Number : 30708095

【Purpose of the Research Project】

This project conducts comparative research on the creation and use of various types of media by monks, focusing particularly on Christian monasticism in the Middle Ages and early modern period in Europe, America, and Japan on the one hand, and Buddhism and Shintoism in medieval Japan on the other. Research results from fields adjacent to historical studies indicate that monks disseminated their religious beliefs using a variety of media, which include literary works, illuminated manuscripts, church decorations, and even pilgrimage, in addition to written documents such as monastic rules and sermons. A more systematic approach is required, however, to understand how these initiatives brought discipline and order to society or how they helped sustain society and made it resilient.

Did Catholic monks, Buddhist monks, and Shinto priests, with their strong willpower and drive, contribute to the sustainable development of society and brought about innovative worldviews and institutional frameworks to transform society through pastoral/teaching activities as they sought religious transcendence. The dynamic ways in which religious movements and society influenced each other can be elucidated when these phenomena are compared synchronically and diachronically as they occurred in different religious cultures.

This perspective is shared between the four research teams which constitute the project, each seeking to achieve the following three objectives to systematically explain the significance of religious movements in the history of civilisation:

- (1) to identify the type of medium (texts, images, mechanisms, etc.) created and disseminated by those who led religious movements in medieval and early modern periods as they sought to promote communication inside and outside their religious community;
- (2) to explicate the message religious leaders disseminated to those inside and outside the religious community using the media identified in (1), and the values and worldviews they brought about; and finally
- (3) to find out how religious leaders pursued teaching, helped integrate their society, and brought changes to civilisation through the above (1 and 2).

【Content of the Research Project】

Four research teams have been established for this purpose:

A01 Contemplative Orders Team: Comprehensive research on the formation of a 'liturgical space' by contemplative monasteries

A02 Mendicant Orders Team: In-depth media research on the pastoral revolution by mendicant orders

A03 Society of Jesus Team: Broad-ranging historical research for critical examination of the modernity of the Society of Jesus

B01 Medieval Japanese Temple and Shrine Team: Fully interdisciplinary study of travels, pilgrimages, and shrine visits involving regional temples and shrines in medieval Japan

While each team holds its own study sessions, separate research units are established to bridge between the teams as they pursue international joint research. Three disciplines within the humanities – history, art history, and literature – collaborate to achieve comprehensive interpretation of texts and images, diachronically and synchronically compare the characteristics of the media created by religious leaders, and present a fresh view of history regarding the dynamic relationship between religious movements and society.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

This research field is not simply an extension of comparative religious history. It deals with a larger issue of how religious movements impacted the long-term development of a secular society even while tension remained between the two. The goal of this endeavour is to redefine religious movements as a source of wisdom practiced and inherited in a society, and to pioneer a new research field to explain in a comprehensive manner the significance of religious movements in the history of civilisation.

【Key Words】

Christian monasticism: The lifestyle of the religious who follow Christ and leave the secular world behind to achieve total devotion to God.

Temples and shrines in medieval Japan: The major temples and shrines exercised great influence in various fields under the protection of the state and had their own branch temples and shrines throughout the country.

【Term of Project】 FY2020-2022

【Budget Allocation】 29,700 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

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