

How to deal with scriptures in religious education in Japan

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There exists no tradition to consider so-called 'book-religion' as a special subject in Japanese societies. Buddhism is a kind of 'book-religion', but strictly speaking it has no "Canon", and how scriptures (sacred books) should be managed leaves the choice to each Buddhist sect.. Therefore it may be said that in Japanese culture there is no book equivalent for the Bible in the Western cultures. This fact has given delicate effects on religious education in Japan.

For want of specific scriptures which will control culture, in Japan we can find no viewpoint which makes a sharp distinction between the Bible and myth in Christian cultures. Here in Japan many religious scriptures can be put in the same category: so scriptures are likely to become either mere materials of linguistics or conventional moral or maxim texts all the more. More than that, however, since story-telling elements are included in scriptures, isn't it necessary to think how we will be able to make use of these elements in Japan's religious education? Then, their relations to rites and customs must be taken into consideration. To survey how to educate religion from this angle ought to surely be a common theme of modern world.