

In search of the way: thought and religion in early-modern Japan, 1582-1860

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Abstrak

In Search of the Way is a history of intellectual and religious developments in Japan during the Tokugawa period, 1582-1860. It begins with an explanation of the fate of Christianity, and goes on to cover the changing nature of the relationship between Buddhism and secular authority, new developments in Shinto, and the growth of a consciousness of being Japanese; but the main emphasis is on the process by which Neo-Confucianism from Song and Ming China captured the imagination of the intellectual class and informed debate throughout the period. The narrative is divided into three sections, breaking at 1680 and 1786, each section prefaced with an essay that provides the historical, political, social, and economic background to the intellectual and ideological discussions that follow. The narrative aims, as far as possible, to show how one set of concerns led to another with some interesting digressions on the way. This period is treated as being important in its own right, not merely as a backdrop to the events of the Meiji Restoration.