



# HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	ROSHIA SHISOUSHI : MESHIANIZUMU NO KEIFU [HISTORY OF RUSSIAN IDEAS : A LINEAGE OF MESSIANISM], By Masayuki Kouno, Tokyo : Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1989, 397pp., ¥3,000
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What is the consciousness of "messianism" which lies in the history of Russian ideas ? That consciousness appears in such phraseology as "Russia will (ought to) play a special role in world history, which is different from other countries'. She has such a special mission from God" (p.358).

From the period of the decline of the Byzantine Empire to the Revolution, and supposedly, to the current Soviet age, this special role has been expressed in various ways by several Russian thinkers. For example, one view is that "Russia can create a broader and global culture surpassing Europe's (almost all the thinkers dealt with this concept). Russia, as a powerful nation, must use its influence to put down revolutionary forces and guard the European peace (F. Tiuchev). Russia has a great mission of liberating the orthodox Balkan people from Turkish oppression and uniting the Slavic people (A. Khomiakov, Vera Aksakova, I. Aksakov, others). In defense of the wrong interpretation of Christianity by the Catholic Church, Russia as the unique leader of the Orthodox Church has to not be daunted by but shatter this misinterpretation, and glorify the true Christian ideal for mankind (F. Dostoevskii)" (Ibid).

Lumping several Slavophile ideas together under the title of "messianism," the author of this book tries to prove a consistent tendency in the history of Russian ideas, that is the infusing of Russian principles into European-oriented culture and internationalizing Russia. In this point, his attempt shows a positive aspect of Slavophilism which is often considered as a narrowest and most nationalistic trend in Russian intellectual history.

The author's purpose is to collect and assimilate the candid opinions of several Russian thinkers on their society and its relations with other countries, as well as to prove his hypothesis : "Messianism is one very important part of the character of Russian nationality" (p. 6). Reading these opinions, the reader will realize, in spite of nationalistic appearances, their ideas and assumptions have a broader intention in relationship to the future of Russia and the world. This intention is, namely, to unite Russia and Europe and create a world-wide culture.

This aspect of Russian thought has previously been examined by V. Zen'kovskii in his book entitled *Russian Thinkers and Europe* [*Russkie mysliteli i Evropa*, 2-oe izd. Parizh : 1955]. Professor Kouno, the translator of this book in our country (*ROSHIA SHISOUKA TO YOROPPA*, Tokyo : 1973) takes a new approach in summarizing this issue and explores the fundamental sentiment of Slavophiles and their sympathizers regarding the traditional question of "Russia and Europe."

This forty-chapter book includes eleven thinkers — D. Fonvizin, V. Odoevskii, P. Chaadaev, F. Tiuchev, I. Kireevskii, A. Khomiakov, Vera Aksakova, M. Pogodin, N. Danilevskii, I. Aksakov, F. Dostoevskii. It deal with three topics — the idea of "Moscow-Third Rome," the Reform of Peter the Great, and the post-revolutionary trends of religious thought in Russia. Among them, chapters dealt with Tiuchev's political thesis (ch. 6) and other thinkers' reactions to the two main wars, Crimean and Russo-Turkish, (ch. 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13) are particularly impressive because they express a mixture of Slavic compatriotism and cosmopolitanism. Each writer's expression is based on a common, unique interpretation of Orthodox doctrine.

As for the method of studying the history of Russian ideas, the author often limits his

objective of investigating the messianic consciousness to the ideas or “beliefs” of the respective thinkers. If he tried to take steps toward treating such ideas and “beliefs” in terms of social validity, the thesis of this book would have a more concrete persuasiveness.

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