JAPANESE ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES AWARDS

日本宗教学会賞

2021 JAPANESE ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES AWARD

SAWAI MAKOTO, Tenri University

Isurāmu no adamu: Ningen o meguru Isurāmu shinpishugi no genryū イスラームのアダム―人間をめぐるイスラーム神秘主義の源流 [Adam in Islam: An Anthropological Approach to Sufi Thought]. Keio University Press, 2020.

Synopsis by the Author

THIS BOOK IS concerned with the ways in which Sufis have interpreted Adam through referring to the Qur'an, Hadith, and historiographies, and have produced mystical thought on human existence through their understanding of Adam. As well as in Judaism and Christianity, Adam has played a pivotal role in Islam: he is a key figure for considering humanness since Adam, the first human creature, demonstrates the essential characteristics of human beings. In order to seek the way to attain an ideal condition for human beings, Sufis weave their mystical thought mainly based on the description of Adam in the Qur'an and Hadith.

In his introduction, Sawai traces the formation of the concept of Islamic mysticism that has also been called Sufism. Western scholars gradually shifted their perspective on Sufis and at last regarded them as mystics in Islam. While Sufis historically seek a perfect level of human existence, the concept of mysticism coined by scholars aims to investigate human nature. In other words, scholars of religion came to form the concept of Islamic mysticism by dealing with Sufis as mystics and emphasizing their religious experience, as William James considers in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

The first part of the book deals with the role of Adam in the Sufi interpretation of the verse called the "primordial covenant" (*al-mīthāq*). In mythical time, God drew all other human beings from Adam and made them swear that God is their lord. Sufi theologian Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī argues for a cyclical model of life and death based on this "primordial covenant." Aiming for unification with God, Sufis ground their anthropological thought on the story of Adam. Sawai deals with Adam in the context of the primordial covenant, life and death, the perfect man, and gender issues. The first part of Sawai's book mainly focuses on Sufis' interpretation of the Qur'an. Because Adam is directly created by God, Sufis regard him as the nearest existence to God.

The latter part of the book picks up the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) of Ibn 'Arabī, one of the most prominent Sufis in the medieval era, and the thought of scholars in Ibn 'Arabī's school. Deriving self-disclosure of the Real from Neo-Platonic emanation theory, Ibn 'Arabī elucidates the ontological relationship between God and human beings. Moreover, he thinks that Adam is the first perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) since God creates him with the divine presence that is expressed by the divine name. Adam as the perfect man is the ideal to which Sufis should attain. Referring to Adam and Eve, moreover, Ibn 'Arabī stresses that man is equal to woman since both man and woman stand at the same place as wayfarers attaining to God. Muslim thinkers continuously interpret Adam as an existence evoking new understandings of human beings in Islam.

Statement from the Awards Committee

Sawai Makoto's book is an ambitious work that explores and elucidates the philosophical anthropology of Islamic mysticism by bridging the split between the study of religion and Islamic studies. Its academic contributions can be summarized in three points.

First, Sawai critically examines the concepts of "religion," "mysticism," and "Islamic mysticism" by carefully reviewing previous works on them. His aspiration to connect the study of religion with that of Islamic thought should be highly appreciated.

Second, the book has a wide impact upon scholars of religion regarding the subject of philosophical anthropology. It attempts to construct the anthropology of

mysticism by presenting the analytic notion of the "Adamic myth" and approaching the fundamental question of what a human being is. This research method reflects Sawai's academic attitude as a scholar of religion not confined to Islamic thought.

Third, the book is based upon the rigorous philological scrutiny of complex Arabic primary sources. For example, Sawai argues that the interpretation of the term *tajallī* (the self-disclosure of God) differs between early Sufis and the School of Ibn ʿArabī. Such a finding is only possible through a scrupulous reading of Arabic texts.