**St. Papalexandropoulos**

**Sasakawa Fund**

Athens, 28.09.1992

Answering to the kind offer of the Sasakawa Fund to sponsor a postgraduate course dedicated to deepening and enhancing of our knowledge of the Japanese civilization, the Section of Sociology of Religion and the History of Religions of Theological Faculty, would like to submit to your judgment the following programme

Taking as a point of departure the consideration of meeting of the different civilizations as a major characteristic of our time, we propose that the subject to be dealt with in postgraduate course be a special dimension or aspect of the general theme "JAPAN AND THE WEST: "The Meeting of two Worlds". Specifically, we can study the philosophical-religious dimension of this theme, i.e. the multi faceted meeting that took place between Japan and the West within the area of philosophical-religious thought, ever since the opening of Japan to the rest of the world, in Meiji Jidai. This meeting constitutes a magnificent and very interesting process, which, starting from Meiji Jidai reaches our days, thus spanning quite a long period of time. It is a process which unfolded itself throughout that period, fruitfully bringing forth a great spiritual production moved on many levels. According to the way we visualize the programme, it can be studied on the basis of its reciprocal movement, from Japan to the West and vice-versa, in two successive courses :

1. Starting from "Japan to the West", the first course will deal with all aspects of the spiritual upheaval caused by the introduction of western philosophical as well as religious thought into Japan from early Meiji onwards, till today. Early personalities like Inoue Enryo, Nishida Kitaro, Watsuji Tetsuro, Heteno Seiichi but also modern personalities like Voshinori Takeuchi, Nishiteni Keiji, Ueda Shizuteru, Abe Masao etc, can be studied in this context. They all represent extremely interesting efforts to assimilate western thought but also, at the same time, efforts of answering to it by formulating a thought inspired by the Japanese spiritual tradition. Their work consists of philosophical-religious systems, efforts for an articulation of the innermost core of the Japanese spirit, or of interpreting to the West the Japanese way of viewing reality. Many of them belong to the "School of Kyoto" which can be considered as the most active partner of the dialogue that still takes place within the limits of the area in question. The output of this School constitutes today, if we take into consideration the many translations into western languages of the works of its founder, Nishida Kitero but also of many of its representatives, a major point of attraction and interest among scholars. At this point let us refer to the fact that a dissertation under the title "Nishida Kitaro; Presuppositions for specifying his buddhist identity" has already been approved by our Department and that a book presenting his thought is under preparation.

Except from the above mentioned personalities, that constitute a special current, also other spiritual activities that can be subsumed in the movement "from Japan to the West" can be studied, e.g. the work of Suzuki Daisetz, representing the early transplantation of Zen to America end Europe and the following flood of - especially- Buddhist self-presentation to the West, the factors that took and take part in it, the main lines according to which it moves etc, can be very interesting topics for work and discussion,

1. In the second course, under the heading "from the West to Japan" can be studied all those efforts, activities etc, that were undertaken in order to receive, understand, and in certain cases, answer to the movement that took place from Japan to the West. Studies, translations of books or articles, many attempts at analysis and discussion, constitute this important',output, which must be seen as the impact brought about by the first movement. Here names like that of Hans Waldenfels, David Dilworth, Thomas Kasulis, Philip Capleau etc can be referred to as possible subject matter.

By way of indication, books like the folowing can be used as bibliography:

Nishida Kitaro : Zen no Kenkyu

Hataraku mono kara rniru mono e Tetsugaku no kompon mondai and other books or extracts from the "Zenshu"

Hans Waldenfels : Absolutes Nichts

Nishitani Keiji : Shukyo towa nanika

Suzuki Daisetz : Japanese Spirituality

Philip Cepleeu : The three Pillars of Zen, etc.

Existing translations can be used together with the originals.

By this program we hope that a gap concerning Japanese Studies in our country will be filled and that research pertaining to the above mentioned studies will be launched in e serious and fruitful way.