

Abstract

This thesis aims, based on the available literature and printed sources, to understand process of medicalization of suicide in modern Japan, in other words to outline how at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century a suicide as a traditional aspect of Japanese culture became a medical problem. In the first phase of modernization Japan successfully adopted many of Western institutional and technocratic models, especially those regarding the state. However at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century Japan achieved many of its goals and the rise of national self-confidence made Japan more selective concerning the West. Just at this time, when Japan wanted to belong to the world elite but was also aware of its own cultural values, the problem of suicide came to the fore and the question how to face it arose. This thesis deals with the problems of adopting the Western concept of suicide as a mental disease being a part of Japanese medicine modernization and psychiatry establishment. On the case of Fujimura Misao it also shows the growing influence of professional public on the changing understanding of the suicide phenomenon and clarifies the new place of a suicide in the society.

key words: suicide, medicalization, Japanese psychiatry, seppuku, Kure Shúzó, Fujimura Misao, Nogi Maresuke