

INTER-RELIGIO

A NETWORK OF CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER IN EAST ASIA

BULLETIN

No 43
Summer 2003

HONG KONG

Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion & Culture

JAPAN

Institute of Christian Culture/Oriental Religions
NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions
Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture
Oriens Institute for Religious Research

KOREA

Seton Interreligious Research and Spirituality Center
Institute of Religion Sogang University

PHILIPPINES

Gowing Memorial Research Center
East Asian Pastoral Institute

TAIWAN

Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies

THAILAND

FABC Office of Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs

1 FOREWORD

FEATURE ARTICLES

- 3 *Religion, Culture, and Popular Culture in Japan – A Historical Study of their Interaction*
—Martin R EPP

- 22 *Image of Christ for Japanese – Reflections on Shusaku Endo's Novels*
—EMI Mase-Hasegawa

- 34 *Endo Shusaku's Novels and Religious Pluralism. A reply to Prof. Emi Mase-Hasegawa*
—JP Mukengeshayi MATATA

39 NETWORK REPORTS



Foreword

Religion and Popular Culture in East Asia Today was the theme of the Inter-Religio Conference held in the Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand, from 2-5th March 2003. Participants from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines took part. The papers presented and discussed during the conference reflected this wide range of cultural contexts, from religiosity in Japanese comics to Korean shamans in cyberspace, from traditional culture and religion in Indonesia to a new funeral culture in Taiwan.

The interaction between religion and popular culture is a fascinating field of study, albeit a complex one. At first sight, it is a marriage of opposites. Religion has an eternal character, in but not of the world, a solid constant in a sea of fickle variables. Popular culture is fleeting and ephemeral, here today and gone tomorrow, changing with the fashion, often irreverent and rapidly irrelevant. Viewed from this standpoint, popular culture forces itself on us with cheeky brashness. It borrows, steals, manipulates, repackages and regurgitates in a tireless cycle, endlessly presenting potential candidates for approval, seeking the colour, flavour and mix that will seduce and stick, if only for a while, like a line from a song that goes 'round and 'round in your head.

There is another view of popular culture which presents quite a different picture though, one in which a viewpoint or way of thinking becomes so popular as to dominate almost every other aspect of life over a long period of time. Cast, class, and clan belong to this category, as also does fundamentalism in all its forms.

Dialogue with either has its difficulties. The first is so open and fluid that there is no fixed point from which to begin dialogue, while the second is so closed that dialogue is almost out of the question. In both cases, a capacity for self-reflection and self criticism seems missing.

It is perhaps here that religion provides the way ahead insofar as the interaction between religion and popular culture can supply the fixed point and self-reflective aspects needed to move the dialogue forward.

In the next few issues of Inter-Religio Bulletin the fruits of this dialogue conference will be published, beginning with the keynote address from Dr. Martin Repp, a long-time pillar of the Inter-Religio Network, and a first-time contribution from Emi Mase-Hasegawa.

Brian Lawless

Contributors to this issue

Dr. Martin Repp
NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions
e-mail: mgrepp@attglobal.com

Emi Mase-Hasegawa
NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions
e-mail: emi.mase@teol.lu.se

Mailing List

We are in the process of updating the Inter-Religio Bulletin mailing list. For this purpose, we are asking all readers who wish to continue receiving the bulletin by post to renew their subscription request, either by mail or by e-mail to the following address if they have not already done so.

Inter-Religio Bulletin
Taipei Ricci Institute
3F No.22 Sec.1 Hsin-hai Road
Taipei
Taiwan

riccitpe@seed.net.tw

Beginning with the next Issue, No. 44 we will use the updated database only.

We would like to offer a word of thanks to those who made contributions towards the costs of printing and mailing the Bulletin. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Religion, Culture, and Popular Culture in Japan

- A Historical Study of their Interaction

Martin Repp

*(Coordinator of the "Interreligious Studies in Japan Program" at the NCC
Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto)*

Thank you very much for the invitation to present the key note address at this Inter-Religio symposium on "Popular Culture and Religion." I do not consider myself to be an expert in this field, but since the organizers could not find a suitable specialist, and since this theme was suggested by myself, I could not avoid taking up responsibility.

The task of an introductory presentation is to formulate some basic problems which the theme poses, and to provide an outline of the framework within which our topic should be discussed. Most presentations of this symposium will treat concrete and country-specific themes. For this reason, I would like to provide some general and basic considerations in the beginning, and I hope that these deliberations may serve as an orientation in the discussions during the symposium. In this outline I have to limit myself to the Japanese situation because I am not sufficiently acquainted with the history of Asian religions and cultures. A portrait of the situation in Japan, however, allows to a certain degree for some generalizations and comparisons with the situation in other Asian countries.

I propose to discuss the topic of the symposium in four steps. In the introduction I will treat the word "culture." I do not dare to suggest a precise or comprehensive definition of the term "culture", but I will present some characteristics which may provide an idea of the nature and meaning of culture. Next I will treat the relationship between religion and culture from a historical perspective and within the Japanese context. In the third part I will discuss the relationship between culture in general and "popular culture." Here I shall provide also two definitions of "popular culture." Both understandings appear also in the subsequent presentations of the

symposium. Finally, in the last part I will discuss the relationship between “popular culture and religion.”

1. THE WORD “CULTURE”

In general, the word “culture” is used in distinction to the word “nature.” Culture is something which appears in close connection with human beings, and not with animals, for example. Culture is something that human beings create, something they add to nature. For example, when I give my cat or dog a tasty morsel of meat, they grab it quickly and devour it immediately. In contrast, members of a tribe in the rain forest will serve food first on a leaf before eating it, while members of “more advanced” societies will serve food on a dish and then consume it. Thus, in distinction to animals, human beings create certain forms of behavior and material things which transcend pure natural behavior or objects. Or, to give another example: rice culture consists of the human effort to cultivate rice for effective production and consumption. Agriculture, thus, is essentially quite different from simply gathering plants or hunting animals. However, culture cannot be grasped only in utilitarian or functional terms. While agriculture serves certain goals, such as providing people with sufficient food, it is more than a mere function for achieving this purpose. Its accompanying cultural forms such as singing songs during work in the fields, or the lavish harvest festivals in fall, cannot be explained sufficiently in functional or utilitarian terms. Culture is realized in playing, dancing, singing, and creating joy. In their cultural activities, human beings not only create useful things, but at the same time beautiful ones. They produce clothes not only as protection against cold, but embellish them with ornaments. They not only construct houses as shelters, but decorate them as well. All these forms of cultural expression transcend the mere practical function of immediately satisfying vital needs such as eating, clothing and housing. Such a “playful surplus” of cultural expressions apparently responds directly to certain emotional, mental and spiritual needs of human beings. Thus we may conclude here with the assumption that “culture” is that which makes a human being really “human.” In other words, culture distinguishes human beings from animals. When creating culture human beings manifest that they are more than just an *animal rationalis*. Now, when this symposium deals with the topic of culture, we treat something that characterizes human beings not just accidentally, but essentially.

In this respect, culture and religion seem to have much in common. Religion, like culture, does not only correspond with immediate vital and physical needs, but at the same time with a certain spiritual constitution of human beings. Therefore, religion is

also something essentially human. Now, when the theme of this symposium connects culture and religion, it treats of two fundamental aspects or ingredients of human life. However, in our present time the combination of religion and culture is not so obvious anymore because on one hand it seems that culture is secular while on the other hand religion seems to exist separated from the various forms of culture in modern society. In ancient and premodern societies, however, we discover quite an intimate relationship between the two, and their separation was the exception rather than the rule. This is difficult for us to imagine today, accustomed as we are to the separation of modern culture and religion. Later I shall return to this modern phenomenon of separation between religion and culture.¹ Before turning to the present situation, we thus have to treat the relation between religion and culture in history. This I shall discuss in the following sections.

2. RELIGION AND CULTURE

In the history of humankind we discover an intimate connection between culture and religion. In this section I would like to treat this relationship in more detail from four different angles: 1. from the perspective of myths; 2. from the perspective of the history of religion; 3. from the perspective of geographically transplanting religions from one culture to another; and 4. from the perspective of the initial separation between religion and culture. These four approaches reveal different aspects of the intrinsic and multifaceted relationship between religion and culture.

2.1 MYTHICAL ORIGINS OF CULTURE: THE “CULTURE HERO”

Historians of religion distinguish between different types of myths. One type is the creation myth which narrates how a certain land and people initially came into being. Another type of myth, based on the first one, explains how culture comes into being. This form of myth presents the so-called culture hero, or the “Kulturbringer,” a divine being who introduces food, clothing, and tools to humankind. (Cf. Jerome Long 1987: 175–178) Quite often, the culture hero risks his or her own life when conveying these cultural goods. The most famous of these culture hero myths among historians of religion is that of Hainuwele from Indonesia (Ceram). A beautiful girl, Hainuwele is killed in mythical times. As punishment, the murderers are forced to consume her body. However, her body is transformed into root crops. This is regarded the beginning of the cultivation of root crops. Myths of many countries narrate the stories of culture

1 Paul Tillich was one of the few theologians in the 20th century who treated this gap between culture and religion in modern society and attempted to bridge it.

heroes. These beings introduce speech and manners; establish social differences between male and female; institute the law of society; make economic life possible for humans; instruct about hunting, building canoes and fishing; teach cultivation of food; bring the first seed from heaven; and teach the art of blacksmithing and pottery. In short, a culture hero makes the world inhabitable and safe for mankind, introduces cultural goods and instructs in the “arts of civilization.” (Jerome Long 1987: 175)

In Japan we also find this culture hero – the food deity *Uke-mochi no Kami*. Her story is told in the *Nihongi*, the oldest official collection of myths, legends and historical records. (8th century) Here we find the following story: The main deity of the Japanese pantheon, the sun goddess *Amaterasu no Ohomikami*, sent the Moon deity *Tsuki-yomi no Mikoto* to visit the food deity *Uke-mochi no Kami*.² When the latter produced food such as boiled rice from her mouth, the Moon deity became disgusted with this kind of food production and, being short tempered, quickly killed her with his sword. Thereupon *Amaterasu* became very angry with the Moon deity and banned him from her sight. As a consequence, we read: “So they were separated by one day and one night, and dwelt apart.”³ *Amaterasu* then sent another deity to confirm the death of *Uke-mochi no Kami*. This deity found the dead body in the following form: “on the crown of her head there had been produced the ox and the horse; on the top of her forehead there had been produced millet; over her eyebrows had been produced the silkworm; within her eyes there had been produced panic[grass]; in her belly there had been produced rice; in her genitals there had been produced wheat, large beans and small beans.” (Aston 1982: 32 f) The deity carried these products to *Amaterasu*, who rejoiced and said: “These are the things which the race of visible men will eat and live [from].” She made from it the seed and sowed it for the first time. And we learn: “From this [event] began the art of silkworm rearing.” (Aston 1982: 33)

Such myths of the cultural hero teach that primitive religions view the inner core and ultimate origin of culture as being religious. In other words, according to these myths, culture has no natural origin and character, it is of divine origin and bears an innate religious character. It is religion that “creates” or “produces” culture. Moreover, the creation of culture comes at a high cost — the life of a deity has to be sacrificed so that human beings can live in a cultured

2 *Uke* or *uka* means food.

3 Aston 1982: 32. This is also an etiological myth treating the origin of the division of day and night.

way!⁴ The mythical view of the connection between religion and culture leads us to the historical view of this relationship: How do historical religions and cultural forms relate to each other? Again, I would like to demonstrate this with some Japanese examples.

2.2 RELIGION AS HISTORICAL CARRIER OF CULTURE

What can be said of the mythical world is valid for the historical world as well: Here also we observe that cultural forms originate in religion. This is true for the two main religious traditions of Japan, as we distinguish them today, Shintō and Buddhism. Modern scholarship has established the fact that because they were intertwined with each other for most of Japan's religious history, we cannot simply divide them easily into two separate entities. For the sake of convenience, however, I will treat them separately here.

To begin with theater, the two most famous forms of Japanese theater today, Noh and Kabuki, derive from Shinto rituals. (KEJ 4: 90; 6: 23–24; 7: 131) Since ancient times, dances and songs performed at shrines served as means to evoke deities and pacify them. This is called *kagura*, “divine music,” or “music of the deities.”⁵ *Kagura* developed on one hand into official court music (*mikagura*), while on the other hand it developed into Noh theater by including narratives – spoken dialogues and Buddhist chanting or *shōmyō*. (KEJ 6: 23–24) The second form of well known Japanese theater, Kabuki, developed from *dengaku* (field music), a popular performance which derived from ancient religious rice-planting and harvest rituals. Kabuki was first performed in the capital Kyoto in 1603 by a female dance troupe from Izumo shrine, one of the most important old centers of *kami* (deity) worship in Japan.

Like theater, Japanese literature derives mainly from Shinto and Buddhist sources. (Cf. KEJ 1: 180–182) On the one hand, ancient prayers (*norito*) to the *kami*, and oracles (*takusen*) were both cast in formal language and as such anticipated the Japanese poems. On the

- 4 This is true also for another divine gift which considerably contributes to creation of culture, the fire. As we read in the *Nihongi*: “When Izanami no Mikoto gave birth to the Fire-God, she was burnt and died.” (Aston 1982: 21) Henceforth, the inhabitants worshipped her spirit with drums, flutes, flags, singing and dancing, and by offering flowers. (Aston 1982: 21 f)
- 5 KEJ 4: 106–107; 5: 283. Frequently, a story of the *Kojiki* (Record of ancient matters, 8. ce.) is portrayed as the legendary origin of *kagura* (KEJ 2: 73; etc.), according to which the sun goddess Amaterasu, hidden in a rock cave, is lured out by the laughter of the assembled deities caused by an obscene dance of Ame no Uzume. (Philippi 1968: 81–86) Even if in later times this story may have been interpreted as the mythical beginning of *kagura*, it has to be maintained, that the myth itself deals with the problem of the eclipse of the sun during solstice (Naumann 1996: 80), and not with the religious origin of dance. The dance, just as in other myths, is presupposed as already existing.

other hand, poems inherited the magical character of these prayers. As a courtier stated in the first half of the 10th century: “It is poetry which, without exertion, moves heaven and earth, stirs the feelings of gods and spirits invisible to the eye ...” (Varley 1984: 56) In the Buddhist context, poems were similarly perceived as *dharani*, magic formulas which cause certain things to happen. Collections of edifying Buddhist tales (*setsuwa*) and hagiographies (*denki*) helped to get Japanese prose literature started. Most of all, Buddhist ideas, such as karma, transmigration, impermanence (*mujo*), and simplicity were extremely influential in forming the contents and aesthetic ideals of Japanese poetry and art in general. Buddhist art, paintings and sculpture, as well as its architecture, decisively helped shape Japanese arts and architecture in general.⁶

It can be said that until the 19th century the religious centers in Japan—Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples—had been at the same time the cultural centers of Japan. This is true for both the elite culture and the culture of commoners, or the popular culture.⁷ Further, the flourishing of Buddhist schools and Shinto shrines always resulted in cultural blooming, if we only think of the Heian period,⁸ the classical period of imperial court rule and culture. Also, new religious movements, such as those Buddhist new schools emerging during the Kamakura period, always brought forth creative cultural developments in art, music, architecture, literature and so on. In European history, too, we observe similar cultural innovations resulting from religious renewal movements.

2.3 TRANSPLANTED RELIGION AS CARRIER OF IMPORTED CULTURE

Up to this point we have treated the connection between religion and culture from the historical perspective. Now, shifting from historical developments to geographical movements, we shall investigate the impact on, and role of, religion when it moves from one culturally defined geographical area to another. What does such a shift tell about the relationship between religion and culture? Certain forms of religion, commonly called world religions, proselytize, and because of their missionary impulse they transcend geographical, national, and cultural borders. By contrast, so-called primitive or nature religions remain more or less identical with the traditional culture,

6 Varley (1984: 85) observes that Buddhist sculpture and painting “steadily gave ground to secular art in medieval times.”

7 For one of the famous popular religious centers during the Tokugawa period, the Sensō-ji in Edo (Tokyo), see the interesting case study by Nam-lin Hur (2000).

8 Periods in the history of Japan are divided as follows: 710–784 Nara period, 794–1185 Heian period, 1185–1333 Kamakura period, 1338–1573 Muromachi (Ashikaga) period, 1568–1600 Azuchi-Momoyama period, 1600–1867 Tokugawa (Edo) period, 1867–1912 Meiji period.

and vice versa. Further, these religions are normally confined to a specific geographical area, and they undergo almost no historical development; if they change, then they are extremely slow in doing so. In contrast, proselytizing religions are transplanting themselves from one country and culture to another. This triggers a twofold process. First, due to the symbiosis of religion and culture in the country of origin, religion carries this form of culture into the host country. Thus, one of the most important functions of a religion being transplanted from one country to another is initially to serve as vehicle for imported culture. The import of foreign culture and religion naturally may lead to a rejection by, and clash with, representatives of the indigenous religion and culture.

One such case of transplanted religion and culture is Buddhism. Buddhism was first introduced to Japan by Korean saddlers (*kura-be*) in the beginning of the 6. ce. The saddlers were skilled in wood carving, metal work and leather treatment, all of them being very important crafts. Moreover, these Koreans provided their Japanese hosts, the Soga clan, with superior weapons and warfare techniques, which enabled them to subdue rival clans. Due to the superior cultural achievements of the *kurabe*, the Soga clan took over their religion. Subsequently, the Soga gained also considerable influence at the imperial court. Eventually, in its effort to modernize the country according to continental standards, the imperial court also adopted Buddhism as an official religion.⁹

A similar development occurred when Christianity was introduced to Japan during the 16th and 19th centuries. In both periods, Christianity served as carrier of European or Western culture and civilization. Examples are education, sciences, medical treatment, food, art (painting), literature, music, and also advanced weapons such as fire arms and canons.

After having first served as a carrier of foreign culture for some time, a transplanted religion gradually sheds its old cultural shape and adapts to the new environment. This is the second step of development which an imported religion has to undergo. This process is called acculturation or enculturation. This can be seen in the case of the Japanisation of Buddhism, especially in the development of its peculiar style of architecture, art, hymns, literature, sectarian form of organisation, etc. which all distinguish it from Korean or Chinese Buddhism.

9 It may be mentioned here, however, that in the 1870s, even after a 1300 year long history in Japan, Buddhism was still criticized as foreign religion by political and religious ideologues in the 19th century.

After Christianity was established in Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries, this transformation process occurred in the subsequent time of persecution, i.e. with the formation of Kirishitan beliefs. Since the Kirishitan communities are rapidly decreasing due to modernisation, the issue of their enculturation remains today mainly of historical interest. In the 19th and 20th century mission of establishing churches, most foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians clung to the Western cultural forms of their faith and resisted this transformation process considerably. Fearful of losing its religious identity through shedding its Western forms, Christianity has not yet adopted Japanese or Asian forms consciously and on a broad scale, that is, it has not yet sufficiently pursued enculturation in a theologically reflected way. However, the situation is more complex, since, for example, the Japanese translation of the Bible or the creation of Japanese hymns were in fact the first active steps of enculturation. Moreover, beneath the surface we also observe an unconscious process of enculturation of Japanese Christianity. For example, social structures within congregations, such as the relationship between pastor and church members, reproduce the structure of Japanese society at large. Apparently, unconscious forms of enculturation inevitably occur in spite of, or rather because of, the lack of theologically reflected enculturation. Thus, the case of Japanese Christianity, split between two cultural loyalties, reveals much about a culture's power over religion. This becomes also clear when Japanese Buddhism and Christianity are compared with those of Korea and China. Both exhibit a sectarian tendency that to a large extent cannot be found on the continent.

We may conclude this section with the following deliberation. Religions reveal their real character in the transition from one country to another, or from one culture to another. Even though religions of this kind seem to possess a certain distance to, or liberty from, culture¹⁰ they cannot exist without an intimate relationship with cultural forms whatsoever. We may even say that since any outer expression of religion, in one way or another, is a cultural form — such as posture of prayer¹¹ and meditation, iconography and hymns, etc. — religion itself cannot even exist without culture. There is no “pure religion” without any kind of cultural form. When we observed in 2.1 and 2.2 that religion creates culture, we may now state further that religion and culture mutually

10 This has to be seen in distinction to religions which do not proselytize and therefore do not leave the boundaries of their traditional culture.

11 The central European custom of folding hands while praying, for example, derives from the subordinate gesture of vassals towards chieftains in ancient Germany in order to prevent them from suddenly raising their sword against their superior.

condition each other. Such is the intimate nature of the relationship between religion and culture.

Finally, since the topic of this conference mentions the problem of globalisation, a brief comment may be allowed here. Normally, this problem is discussed as a purely modern phenomenon isolated from the rest of history. Instead, I would like to suggest here that the treatment of globalisation today should be freed from its perception as being only a modern and isolated phenomenon. It should be investigated in the context of its precursors, the transplantation of religions, cultures, and civilizations in former times. A historical approach could produce new and interesting perspectives for our contemporary problem.

2.4 SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

The intimate relationship between religion and culture, as shown in the history of religion and culture as well as in the process of transplanting a religion, should not conceal the fact that at certain times conflicts develop between religion and culture. One of the best known cases in world history was the violent iconoclasm of the radical wing of the reformation in Germany and of the Swiss reformation as a whole. Criticism against culture appears also in the religious history of Japan. In the middle age a heated discussion occurred in Japan about the question of whether poetry was sinful or not. (Plutschow 1978) There were many Buddhist monks and nuns who were outstanding Japanese poets. However, because some Buddhist teachers considered composing poetry a sin against the commandment for proper speech, able religious poets struggled with their feeling of guilt. In other words, sometimes in Japan's history, particular cultural forms were criticized from a religious point of view. This tendency occurs also in the teachings of two "founders" of Japanese Buddhist sects, Shinran and Nichiren, since both advocated that the main object of worship should be represented in abstract form. Accordingly, they also rejected other cultural forms of Buddhist worship.

The opposite, however, also occurs frequently. At certain stages, culture begins to develop independently of religious institutional and ideological frameworks. This may be called the process of a secularisation of culture which can be observed in the history of Europe as well as in Asia and other continents. In Japan, we observe this development towards separation of culture from religion at various times. One such important development occurred during the Edo period when for the first time in Japanese history a broad mass culture flourished which was produced and consumed by urban

commoners (*chonin*, townspeople). One interesting indication for such an intentional separation of religion and culture can be found in the use of the word *ukiyo*. The Ukiyo-e woodblock pictures became famous worldwide in the 19th century, especially due to their appreciation by European impressionist artists. These Ukiyo-e woodblock prints of the Edo period depict the life and pleasures of the townspeople, especially the geisha and theater actors, both considered to be outcasts and treated by government officials accordingly. *Ukiyo* is translated as "floating world"; in the popular culture of the Edo period it denotes the pleasures of the floating world, that is, enjoying the pleasures of life as long as they are available in this transient world. Before *ukiyo* became to be perceived in such a hedonistic way, however, the same word originally had been formed by Buddhists designating the world of sorrows, the world full of suffering. This basic change of meaning of *ukiyo* was made by replacing the Chinese character for "painful," "sorrows" (*uki*) by a homophone for "floating" (*uki*) which had also the connotation of "contemporary," "up to date," and "fashionable."¹² Now, the Buddhist worldview—that life is suffering and the world is transient—had been considerably modified and thereby replaced by a hedonistic worldview. In their hedonistic views, the townspeople first acknowledged the impermanence of the world (as Buddhists do), and its pleasures. However, they then affirmed it – in contrast to Buddhism – as the ultimate goal to be enjoyed in this life.

It seems that change of sponsorship is an important factor for the separation of religion and culture. Secularisation of culture is caused first by the shift of patronage from religious institutions to (secular) individuals and groups economically able to afford it. (Cf. Varley 1990: 463) During the Heian period these patrons were court nobility to begin with. Then during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods they were the warrior elite, and eventually during the Edo period the rich merchants. This process was intensified, sped up, and extended by the commercialisation of culture, one example is book production, which since the Edo period (cf. Shively 1991: 725–733), was increasingly financed by ordinary people.

In this 2nd section on "religion and culture" we observed first the emergence of a very intimate relationship between the two, a kind of symbiosis, which, however, after some time in history evolves into a divorce which can be seen as caused by either partner. The theme of a secularized culture and the relationship of religion to this form of culture will be taken up again in the final section of this presentation.

¹² KEJ 8: 144. Shively 1991: 730.

3. CULTURE AND POPULAR CULTURE

3.1 THE MEANINGS OF THE WORD “POPULAR CULTURE”

The word “popular” of the expression “popular culture” derives from the Latin noun *populus*, meaning the “people,” the “general public,” and also the “common people of low birth.” (Webbster’s Third New International Dictionary 1981: 1766) Now, the term “popular culture” is used basically with the following two different meanings.

The first meaning comprises the culture of the country people in distinction to that of urban citizens. This is actually where the term “popular” originated. The “discovery of the people” (Peter Burke) occurred in the 18th. and 19th. centuries in Europe and was caused by persons such as Giovanni Battista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder, and the Grimm brothers. (Charles Long 1987: 443–444, cf. 445–449) This original discovery of the people was based on the contrast between the popular and the urban; “popular” meaning a natural, archaic and original form of culture in the countryside, while “urban” meant an artificial civilization, including technology, industry, etc. This meaning of popular culture correlates with terms such as folk crafts and folk arts.¹³ In such a context, “popular religion” and “folk religion” would be more or less identical.¹⁴ In order to distinguish this meaning of popular culture clearly from the second one, I would like to call the first one “traditional popular culture.”

The second meaning of popular culture comprises “mass culture,” “contemporary culture,” “fashionable culture,” and “pop culture.” It is the mass culture of ordinary people as consumers who change their tastes quickly according to the times. Thus, in contrast to the first usage of the word, this second term includes also the meaning of being artificially produced for commercial reasons. However, both usages of the term popular culture have an opposite term in common – elite or high culture.

The themes submitted to this symposium employ both understandings of “popular culture”. In the subsequent deliberations I will limit myself to the second usage of the term because today it poses a great challenge to established religions in Japan as well as in Europe. However, this does not mean that I consider as secondary the first meaning of the term .

13 Japanese folk crafts were “discovered” by Yanagi Soetsu (1889–1961), who coined its Japanese term *mingei* and triggered the Japanese folk crafts movement since the 1920s. Cf. KEJ 2: 293–296 and Yanagi 1989.

14 The first well known scholar of Japanese folk religion *minikan shinko* folk beliefs) was Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962). (Cf. KEJ 2:298–300 and Yanagita 1970)

It may be mentioned here that sometimes another term is introduced in this context, the term “common culture”. (Ruch 1990: 501; 507) The employment of this term is aimed at clarification of the common characteristics of high and low culture in certain periods of history. Certainly, common characteristics have to be elaborated, and in this limited capacity I consider the term “common culture” as useful. However, when used as an alternative concept to popular and elite culture, as it tends to be, this term prevents recognition of the peculiar dynamic between elite and popular culture. It is precisely this dynamic interaction between low and high culture that is most interesting and to which I would like to direct attention in the subsequent deliberation. Again, I select examples from the Japanese cultural history to illustrate the underlying problems which, in the end, are relevant also for established religions as well.

3.2 DYNAMIC INTERACTION BETWEEN ELITE AND POPULAR CULTURE

In the history of Japan, between 700 and 1800, we find two major revolutions or basic restructurings of Japanese society, all with significant social, economic, political and cultural implications or aspects.¹⁵ The first one took place during the time of transition from Heian to Kamakura period, i.e. the 12th century. During this period, the warriors (*samurai*, *bushi*), who until then played only a serving role for the aristocracy, assumed (or usurped) political power from emperor and court and established the shogunate in Kamakura, the new military power center in Western Japan which was not much developed culturally at that time. However, the Japanese metropolitan culture acquired a broader base during the Kamakura period. “In music and dance the old aristocratic traditions of Nara and Kyōto were supplemented and eventually overtaken by more popular forms.” (KEJ 2: 74) These tendencies continued during the 14th–16th centuries.¹⁶ During this long process, the samurai established their own culture as an elite culture, and did so by acquiring the skills of court culture, such as poetry, and fusing it

15 For the 16th century see Hall 1987. A third major social, political, and economic restructuring occurred in the Meiji restoration (1868) aiming at the modernisation of Japan (among others, also dissolving the samurai class); a fourth major revolution took place after Japan's defeat at the end of WW II and the establishment of democracy; a fifth restructuring may occur concurrently with the IT revolution, the internet creating world wide connections on an equal level (i.e. without an authoritarian structure) and enabling free flow of information and transparency, thereby serving democratic tendencies. For this last aspect, see also Prof. Kim Seon-nae's presentation “Korean Shamanic Practice in Cyberspace” at this Inter-Religio conference.

16 This is also true for the development of *renga* or linked verse (15th century), which is divided into an elegant and an inelegant style. It was the inelegant, comic type of *renga* which later contributed to the evolvement of the famous *haikai* and *haiku* poems. (Varley 1990: 481)

with their own. In fact, this fusion of court and warrior culture flourished most splendidly during the Muromachi and Momoyama periods (cf. Varley 1997), when the shogunate moved from Kamakura back to the vicinity of the court in Kyoto. During this time, the leading samurai in the capital and in their castle towns acquired various forms of traditional elite culture in order to enhance their authority and manifest their wealth. (Varley 1990: 482) Their splendid castles, decorated inside with beautiful pictures, for example, served more to impress people than to defend against enemies. (Varley 1984: 131) This profound change of samurai mentality and culture becomes clear in comparison with previous times. Up to the 12. ce. the role of the samurai had been strictly defined as the arts of war (*bu*), while the role of the courtiers was that of culture, or peace, called *bun*.¹⁷ After assuming political power, the samurai began to acquire (additionally to the the art of war) also the fine arts, the culture.¹⁸ In other words, the *bushi*, who previously had belonged to the low class, serving the aristocracy as warriors,¹⁹ now emerged as ruling elite.

The second basic restructuring of Japanese society occurred during the Tokugawa or Edo period when the shoguns were able to unite the war-torn country and establish lasting peace and stability in Japan. As an immediate result, production of food and other commodities increased and commerce thrived. In the biggest towns, Kyoto and Osaka especially, and later in Edo (Tokyo), the class of townspeople (*chonin*) became increasingly wealthy. In the end, successful merchants became richer than many samurai whose income was still based on the old economic system of annual rice allotments. As result of their newly acquired wealth, the townspeople, especially the merchants, created their own culture.²⁰ Most conspicuous was the afore mentioned *ukiyo*-attitude, to enjoy life in theaters and geisha quarters as long as wealth and age permitted. This new class of townspeople during the Edo period, by the way, pursued the hedonistic way of life in a very similar manner

17 According to Varley (1990: 458): "Until the end of the Heian period, culture and the arts had been monopolized by the courtiers."

18 Shively 1991: 716; Varley 1997: 206 f. Varley (1990: 458) states for the Muromachi period: "A truly national culture was taking shape for the first time in Japan, a culture that derived from both, elite and popular sources and was increasingly shared and enjoyed by all classes." (Ibid.)

19 The word *samurai* derives from the verb *saburau* which means to bow, kneel or serve.

20 See Donald Shively's (1991) study of the popular culture during the Edo period. Shively states: "In the Edo period, while the shogun and daimyo continued their patronage of the higher culture and learning, the most original and lively developments took place among the populace of the cities. For the first time, commoners, the nonelite, became cultural important." (706) And: "By the end of the Edo period, the urban popular culture became the popular culture of the country." (769)

as the samurai had done before in the Muromachi period when they gained economic wealth owing to their political power. It is characteristic that in both cases the government issued sumptuary laws in order to limit the excesses of the luxurious life. (Cf. Varley 1997: 194; Shively 1991: 764)

These two examples from the Muromachi and Edo periods show that the economic and social rise of a class resulted in the creation of new forms of culture. In the beginning, representatives of the traditional elite culture despised these new forms of popular culture as being of low aesthetic taste. For example, Ukiyo-e wood block prints were considered a cheap form of pictures, mainly used for advertisement. Only ink paintings were considered to have true cultural value. Similarly, the Noh theater initially developed from a low popular form of entertaining performance and from the late 14th century on, assumed recognition and patronage by shoguns. During the Tokugawa period, Noh came to be considered as elite theater, while the newly developed Kabuki theater at that time was viewed as vulgar and belonging to the low class of the townspeople. Due to the contributions of outstanding script writers and actors, however, Kabuki subsequently also developed into an art form eventually recognized by the elite.²¹ Today, for example, famous actors of both Noh and Kabuki theater are recognized by the government as “living cultural treasures.” Such a development is extraordinary if we consider that some hundred years ago the artists were social outcasts, and that the origins of these theaters originally were gross street performances. (KEJ 4: 95) Such an interesting phenomenon occurs repeatedly in the history of culture all over the world.²² It is obvious, however, that during such processes of recognition by representatives of the elite culture, coarse and wild elements have to be tamed into civilized forms acceptable to the tastes of the elite.

Apart from this upward development from popular culture to elite culture, we observe also the opposite development that after some time, the culture of the privileged trickles down to commoners. (Cf. Hur 2000: 138 f) Such a popularization is an equally important process in the dynamic interaction between elite and popular culture. For example, in the countryside about 50km north of Kyoto, the

21 The same is true for *bunraku*, the famous Japanese puppet theater, which Chikamatsu Monzaemon transformed “from popular entertainment into artistic theater.” (KEJ 1: 214) For the religious origins of *bunraku*, see KEJ 1: 213 f. Also the *imayo* songs of the Heian period developed — thanks to the emperor Go-Shirakawa’s patronage — from popular entertainment to a refined art. (Kim 1994: 3)

22 For this phenomenon in 14. ce. Japan, see Varley 1997: 195 f. 204 f.. One modern and compact example can be seen in the case of the Beatles. Their beginnings lay in the subculture of the music scene, and they ended up a few decades later by being knighted by the Queen of England.

houses of ordinary farmers have beautiful gardens. Even though these gardens do not equal those of the temples and palaces in Kyoto, they certainly are of high quality compared with other parts of the country. The reason for these highly developed gardens in the countryside north of Kyoto is that in former times the farmers had to provide the court in the capital regularly with food, wood and other commodities. When farmers travelled to Kyoto to deliver their products, they saw the beautiful gardens and began to imitate them at home. Other examples of this popularization of elite culture can be seen in modern Japan: many ordinary citizens regularly visit schools of those arts which were formerly restricted to the ruling or rich classes: tea, flower arrangement, Noh and kabuki theater, singing, chanting, ink painting (*sumi-e*), composing poems (*haiku*), etc.

In the remainder of this section, I would like to direct attention from the formal aspect of the interaction between high and low culture to the aspect of its contents: which ideas, ideals or principles are guiding the elite and the popular culture? Here I will present a few general observations which have to be treated with caution, though, because “the devil lies in the detail”, as a German proverb says.

As an example I choose the tea ceremony in the phase of development during the second part of the 16th century. Up to this time, tea was a luxurious drink, served mainly in the mansions of the court and warrior elite. Here it developed also into the costly form of tea tasting competitions (*tocha*) by rich daimyo, quite often combined with betting. (Cf. Varley 1990: 488) The tea ceremony, it must be kept in mind, was not only centered on drinking tea, but also on appreciation of the exquisite tea bowls and utensils, as well as of hanging scrolls with ink paintings, and so on. Most of these precious items came from China or Korea (*karamono*). During the 16th century, the rich merchant commoners from Osaka and Kyoto could afford to enjoy the luxury of tea. In their midst developed a new aesthetic ideal quite opposite to the traditional one of the ruling elite. The foremost tea master in this new development was Sen no Rikyu, who virtually turned the traditional value system of the tea world up-side down: He sold the hitherto expensive Chinese and Korean tea bowls very cheaply and purchased simple, rustic pottery from the Japanese countryside and traded them expensively. (Berry 1982: 224) Thus, with his “revolution in taste” (ibid.) Sen no Rikyu brought considerable confusion into the Japanese tea market which was of quite a considerable economic volume. Moreover, Sen no Rikyu brought the rustic tea room to perfection and reduced its size to the minimum possible. Before entering the tea room, the participants had to leave their swords outside. The entrance of the

room itself was reduced to a hole, therefore everybody had to kneel when entering. Social class differences were left outside the room and the idea of equality was realized inside. The tea ceremony itself was understood as a communion and communication among equals. The achievement of Sen no Rikyu's ideas becomes fully clear when contrasted with the tea room of the powerful Shogun Hideyoshi, the absolute ruler over Japan, whom Rikyu served officially as tea master. Hideyoshi's tea room was completely golden, including the tea vessels and tools, as well as the room's walls and beams.

Sen no Rikyu's example may serve to illustrate possible achievements of the culture of commoners in contrast to that of the ruling elite. The function of high culture is to express, manifest, and symbolize the power and authority of the ruling class. Thus, it is interested in maintaining the existing class differences also in form of (or by ways of) superb, exquisite, luxurious, sumptuous cultural forms. One example for this aspect is the prose literature of the court and later of the warrior elite, such as the *Gukansho* and the *Heike monogatari*. By idealizing and romanticizing previous times when courtiers, and later samurai, had exerted real power, this kind of literature demonstrates that elite culture tends to be conservative and to end up in nostalgia. (Cf. Varley 1984: 86; 1990: 452, 454) In contrast to these underlying principles of elite culture, cultural forms of commoners rather seem to pursue ideals of realism,²³ concern for the present time,²⁴ simplicity, and equality among human beings. Thereby, popular culture becomes innovative and creative over against elite culture. It even contains liberative elements. (Hur 2000: 175) Frequently, the elite perceives the cultural developments of commoners as revolutionary in the socio-political sense, as threat for the existing class system. In the 14. ce., after the warriors had usurped power from the court, the term coined for this tendency among the new rulers was *basara*, or "extravagance" in the sense of "going beyond what is proper for one's status" (Varley 1997: 194 f; cf. 1990: 451) Again, during the 16. ce. a more outspoken term for the social rise of commoners came into the use, *gekokujo*, meaning "those below overthrow those above," or the "inferior overthrows the superior."²⁵ The two most powerful men of the art of war (*bu*)

23 For the sense of realism of the popular *imayo* songs in the Heian period, see Kim 1994: 62, 65, 68, 73, 115; for that of the literature of the Edo period, see Shively 1991: 731.

24 The *imayo*, for example, were the "present tunes," the pop songs of the later Heian period. (Cf. Kim 1994: 3) Or, as mentioned before, *ukiyo* had the connotation of contemporary, up to date, and fashionable. This tendency of popular culture to relate to contemporary fashionable manners continues throughout Japan's history until today — and occurs all over the world.

25 Kumakura 1994a: 40; 1994b: 135–137, 140; Ruch 1990: 541 f; cf. Varley 1991: 763–766. This term derives from Confucianism. However, the way modern authors use it, does not reveal whether this expression is a historical or a

and of the fine arts (*bun*) at the end of the 16. ce., Hideyoshi and Sen no Rikyu, rose from the bottom of the class system directly to the top.

As stated before, these generalizations and generalized comparisons have to be treated with caution, but I believe that they are correct when understood as characteristic tendencies of the respective cultures. With this in mind let us turn to the final topic, the relationship between Religion and popular culture.

4. RELIGION AND POPULAR CULTURE

The reason I suggested the theme “Religion and Popular Culture” for this symposium was that all institutes belonging to *Inter-Religio* are institutes of established religions which normally tend to relate to established or elite culture. However, what we observe today at least in Europe and Japan, but I think elsewhere as well, is a broadening and deepening gap between established religion and the popular culture of young people. For example, there is not much communication between young people and members of Christianity or Buddhism in contemporary Japan. In spite of the undeniable fact of such a deep communication gap, most representatives of established religions do not even recognize the existence of this gap and the severe problems and challenges it poses.²⁶ Serious academic studies of popular culture, however, may help to understand the ways young people are thinking, feeling, behaving and acting today.²⁷

In the past we can observe that religionists turned their attention consciously to popular culture. A few examples may be sufficient to demonstrate the case: Buddhism created the practice of *etoki*, explanation of the Buddhist teaching in form of pictures which were shown and explained publicly to crowds of illiterate people. Another example is the illustration of the Heart Sutra with sketches of ordinary items whose names are homophones of Sino-Japanese phrases of the sutra. Or, to give a Christian example: the images richly embellishing medieval cathedrals served the illiterate as illustration of the basic Christian teachings.

historiographical term, i.e., whether it was used by contemporary authors or whether it is a modern interpretation of historical facts.

26 To give an example: once I suggested to teach a class on “theology and manga” in a theological school in Japan which the majority of the faculty rejected in favor for a class on Martin Luther.

27 An equally urgent problem is that established Christianity and Buddhism today seem to lack the ability and vigor to create innovative and authentic forms of cultural expression — as they used to do in former times. This requires studies of their own.

A well known example from Christianity is the case of Martin Luther. He instructed preachers to “look at the mouths” of ordinary people in order to learn how to preach properly. It does not help much if a sermon is very learned and orthodox if it cannot be understood by ordinary people. In order to bridge this gap preachers have to pay attention to the manner and content of ordinary speech. Also, it may surprise you that a number of famous, solemn hymns of the Lutheran Church originated in German pubs. Luther took up the melodies of drinking songs, refined them and added new texts (verse). This is a creative, innovative cultural process, one which Christianity and Buddhism today seem to be lacking to a large degree. There are many more examples to illustrate the innovative and critical role of popular culture in its relationship to religion. The popular songs of ordinary people in the late Heian Period, the *imayo*, for example, anticipate and reveal much of the social, political, cultural and religious changes which took place during the transition to the Kamakura period.²⁸ Or today, for example, the *manga* and *anime*, can reveal much about the religious and spiritual or mental situation of young people today.²⁹ I hope that the two contributions on “manga and religion” later in the conference may clarify and demonstrate this issue. Thus I may conclude this general introduction into our theme “Popular Culture and Religion” in the hope that each of the following presentations may contribute to a better understanding of the basic problem, and to bridge the gap between religion and popular culture.

LITERATURE

- Aston, W.G., transl. 1982. *Nihongi. Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*. Rutland Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company. (6. printing of the Tuttle edition)
- Berry, Mary Elisabeth. 1982. *Hideyoshi*. The Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University. Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press.
- Hall, John Whitney. 1987. “Japan’s Sixteenth-Century Revolution,” in George Ellison and Bardwell L. Smith, eds., *Warlords, Artists & Commoners. Japan in the Sixteenth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 7-21.
- Hur, Nam-lin. 2000. *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan. Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society*. Harvard University Asia Center, Cambridge and London 2000.
- Kim, Yung-Hee. 1994. *Songs to Make the Dust Dance. The Ryōjin hisho of Twelfth-Century Japan*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*(KEJ). 1983. Tokyo: Kodansha (9 vols.).

28 For translations and a study of *imayo*, see Yung-Hee Kim 1994. For drawing a connection between their underlying worldview and Honen’s new ways of thinking during the transition from Heian to Kamakura periods, see Repp 2003.

29 For a treatment of this issue, see Repp 2000.

- Kumakura Isao. 1994a. "Sen no Rikyu: Inquiries into His Life and Tea," in Varley and Kumakura, eds., *Tea in Japan. Essays on the History of Chanoyu*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 33-69.
- 1994b. "Kan'ei Culture and *Chanoyu*," in Varley and Kumakura, eds. *Tea in Japan. Essays on the History of Chanoyu*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 135-160.
- Long, Charles H. 1987. "Popular Religion," in: Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Vol. 11: 442-451.
- Long, Jerome H. 1987. "Culture Heroes," in: Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Vol. 4: 175-178.
- Naumann, Nelly (transl.). 1996. *Die Mythen des alten Japan*. München: C.H. Beck.
- Philippi, Donald L. (transl.). 1968. *Kojiki*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
- Plutschow, Herbert. 1978. "Is Poetry a Sin? — *Honjīsuijaku* and Buddhism versus Poetry." *Oriens Extremus* 25. Jg. No.2: 206-218.
- Repp, Martin. 2000. "Popular Youth Culture and Religion in Contemporary Japan." *Japanese Religions* Vol. 25: 105-119.
- *Honens religiöses Denken. Strukturen religiöser Erneuerung*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2003 (forthcoming).
- Ruch, Barbara. 1990. "The Other Side of Culture in Medieval Japan," in Kozo Yamamura, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 3 Medieval Japan*. Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press: 500-543.
- Shively, Donald. 1991. "Popular Culture," in John Whitney Hall, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 4, Early Modern Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 706-769.
- Varley, Paul. 1984. *Japanese Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Third edition.
- 1990. "Cultural Life in Medieval Japan," in Kozo Yamamura, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 3 Medieval Japan*. Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press: 447-499.
- 1997. "Cultural Life of the Warrior Elite in the Fourteenth Century," in Jeffrey P. Mass, ed., *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 192-208.
- and Kumakura Isao, eds., 1994. *Tea in Japan. Essays on the History of Chanoyu*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Webbster's Third New International Dictionary*. 1981. Springfield (Mass.): G. & C. Merriam Co. Publishers.
- Yanagi, Soetsu. 1989. *The Unknown Craftsman. A Japanese Insight into Beauty*. Tokyo, New York, London: Kodansha International. Revised edition.
- Yanagita Kunio. 1988. *About Our Ancestors. The Japanese Family System*. Transl. by Fanny Hagin Mayer and Ishiwara Yasuo. New York, Westport, London: Greenwood Press. Reprint.
- Yung-Hee Kim, *Songs to Make the Dust Dance. The Ryojin hisho of Twelfth-Century Japan*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 1994.

Image of Christ for Japanese Reflections on Shusaku Endo's Novels

Emi Mase-Hasegawa

Emi Mase-Hasegawa was born in 1970 in Japan to Christian parents. At the age of twelve, she spent time abroad in the U.S.A. and since then has felt increasingly uneasy about being a Christian. Engulfed by self-criticism, she encountered the novels of Shusaku Endo. Like Endo, her commitment to Western Christianity has been a major issue throughout her life. Through her study of Endo's novels, she explores his challenge of inculturating Christianity in a given context, transcending the traditional Western framework of Christianity. Now she is finishing her doctorate thesis at the University of Lund, Sweden, entitled "The Spirit of Christ Inculturated - Theology Implicit in the Literary Works of Shusaku Endo." She is a researcher at the NCC Study Center for Japanese Religions in Kyoto, Japan. She is married to a Buddhist and has a three-year-old son.

INTRODUCTION

My paper aims at raising the problem of the relationship between religions and culture, and my main concern is from the perspective of transplanting religions from one culture to another. The word "adaptation" or "accommodation" (mostly in Catholicism) or "indigenization" (mostly in Protestantism) described the missionary approach to culture. Much research has been devoted to the question of Christianity and culture in Japan. Japanese words for this relationship vary, expressing such meanings as "acceptance", "reception", or 'perception'.¹ Frequently, the term "indigenization" is translated as *dochaku* which literally means "to take root in the soil". This concept often appears in modern missiological thought, but presupposes a static or stable "indigenous" culture.² Later, this concept was replaced by words such as "inculturation"³, which leaves room for a Christian encounter with a changing culture. This

1 Japanese translations are: *tekio* (適応) adaptation, *juyo* (受容) reception, *bunka nai kaika* (文化内開化) inculturation, and *bunmyakuka* (文脈化) contextualization. However, I have not encountered any Japanese essays or thesis analyzing the terms.

2 Takeda 1967.

was particularly relevant after the impact of modernization on the indigenous culture and religion. There is, however, a new concept currently used to express the relation between Christianity and culture: “Contextualization”. This implies an understanding of Christianity in “context”, a word which widens and transcends the concept of culture.⁴

This question of terminology is a very sensitive issue. I prefer the term “inculturation” for two reasons. First, the term inculturation focuses on culture, and translated as *bunka-nai-kaika* which literally means “blooming in culture”. The focus is on the cultural feature in which the gospel took form. Second, while “accommodation”, “adaptation”, and “indigenization” emphasize the “givers” perspective, “inculturation” emphasizes the perspective of the “receiver”. Obviously, the Japanese people and culture are “receivers” of Christian teachings. However, “receive” should not be understood as a passive attitude but as an active part of the missionary process. It is a creative reception, a dynamic reinterpretation of the transmitted faith. Therefore, I believe that the term “inculturation”, although, narrower than “contextualization”, carries a wider meaning and dimension than “adaptation”, “accommodation”, or “indigenization”. “Inculturation” implies reinterpretation, and it presupposes active participation by persons within the culture itself. In this sense, I interpret Endo’s life and his literary works as a significant model of Christian inculturation in Japan.⁵

- 3 “J. Masson coined the phrase Catholicism inculture (inculturated Catholicism) in 1962. It soon gained currency among Jesuits, in the form of “inculturation” In 1977 the Jesuit superior-general, Aruope, introduced the term to the Synod of Bishops. The Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT), which flowed from this synod, took it up and gave it universal currency (cf. Muller 1986:134; 1987: 178). It was soon also accepted in Protestant circles and is today one of the most widely used concepts in missiological circles.” Bosch 1991: 447.
- 4 The debate and clarification of the latter concept is in particularly represented by American missiologists. Bevans 2000.
- 5 Regarding my usage of the term “inculturation”, cf. Kuschel: “The inculturation of Christianity is understood as a process of the acceptance and transformation of the various cultures of peoples and nations which cannot be concluded in history—as a counter-concept to the way in which, over the centuries, missions have made Christianity with an exclusively Western stamp a foreign body within non-Western cultures. The accommodation, indigenization and contextualization of the gospel are parallel concepts. This kind of inculturation is deliberately focused on the development of new types of Christianity. An authentically African, Asian, Latin American Christianity is called for in which the Christian message is expressed and lived anew in the language of the particular cultures. This kind of inculturation is indispensable, and the intercultural, contextual theology which has meanwhile come into being in Asia, Latin America and Africa is of the utmost significance for the capacity of Christianity to survive spiritually in the third millennium.” Kuschel 1997/99: 21.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Japan is a small island in East Asia with a population of 123 million. Its indigenous faith is Shinto, while Buddhism arrived via China in 538. Christianity was first introduced in the century following Francis Xavier's arrival in 1549, and the Roman Catholic Church grew after his arrival.⁶ However, Christianity was banned at the beginning of the period known as the national isolation – from 1639–1853. In 1858, Christian missionaries were again allowed to enter the country, this being the second introduction of Christianity. A further period of Christian mission followed after Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945.

Although Christianity has more than 230 years of history in Japan, it nonetheless still carries the Western dogmatic accent. The Christian population in Japan comprises less than 1 %, making it a very minor religion indeed,⁷ and indicating that Christianity is considered an alien religion, not yet rooted in the country. This situation is a personal concern for many Japanese Christians.

For me, as well as for Endo, Christianity was a religion received from my parents, and the Christian “God” and Jesus Christ were already present within me from a very early age. However, being a Christian in Japan is not an easy task when one becomes self-critical about one's identity as an ‘authentic’ Christian. In this paper, I would like to present the disputed questions of being a Christian in the Japanese context, and try to show how I received Christianity through the Image of Christ, reflecting on theology implicit in the work of Shusaku Endo (1923–1996), a Japanese Roman Catholic novelist). His method I interpret as a self-critical hermeneutical strategy challenging Western dogmatic Christianity.

A CHALLENGE TO THE WEST: *SILENCE*

The novel, *Silence* by Endo Shusaku, though written in fictional form, is a narrative based on real history, on the harshest period of persecution in Japan. During the persecution Christian churches were destroyed, foreign missionaries expelled, and Japanese Christians ruthlessly tortured and killed. From this time on Christians went into

6 Indeed, the 16th century is often characterized as a Christian century by Western scholars; cf. Boxer 1951/1993, Phillips 1981, Kitagawa 1987 and other Western scholars. However, Christianity was still a minor religion even at that time. Thus, I would prefer to speak of a “emerging Christianity”. Inappropriate use of the term “Christian Century” is also noted by Prof. Takenaka Masao.

7 The survey in the Christian Almanac 2002 states that the Christian population in Japan is 1,097,730 (Believers: 1,086,685 and Clergy: 11,045). This is 0.8649% of the total Japanese population. Quoted in Kirisuto-kyo shinbun (Christianity), 2001.10.6

hiding, hence the term *Kakure-Kirishitan* (Hidden Christians). During the time of national isolation, Japanese officials controlled people by forcing them to walk on the *fumie* (a brass image of Christ's face) annually, as a visible sign of unbelief or of renunciation of faith; thus the *Kakure Kirishitans* declared themselves openly Buddhist, and denied Christ every year, or whenever they were questioned by the authorities. They did whatever they could in order to escape suspicion. They were deprived of religious freedom for two and a half centuries.⁸

In the book Sebastian Rodrigues is a Portuguese missionary and stowaway who enters Japan during its isolationist policy. He is soon captured and suffers many trials. He is told that as long as he stays a Christian, other Japanese *Kirishitans* will be killed instead of him. He then realizes that if Christ were here, (in Japan at this time of persecution)..., certainly Christ would have apostatized to help other Japanese. Finally Rodrigues steps on to the *fumie*, the icon of Jesus Christ, and abandons his faith with pain. At that moment he hears the voice of Christ saying:

You may trample. You may trample.
I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot.
You may trample.
It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world.
It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross.⁹

Hearing the voice of Christ through the *fumie*, Rodrigues understands the real meaning of love. In this last section of the novel, I understand that Endo questions the historical Christendom that cherished the martyrdom of Christ. Endo does not oppose martyrdom out loud, but he implicitly criticizes the Western

8 *Kakure Kirishitan* (Hidden Christians) are nowadays known as the descendants of communities who maintained the Christian faith in Japan during the time of persecution, which lasted from about 1614 -1873, and who then chose not to rejoin the Catholic church. A few descendants of *Kakure Kirishitans* still exists only in Nagasaki prefecture, the southern islands of Japan, in Sotome, Ikutsuki, and Goto.

9 Endo, 1966. Restated in my own words. W. Johnston translated "*fumu ga ii*" 「踏むがいい」 as "Trample!" Even though I appreciate the English translation, by William Johnston, I am opposed to this part of the translation "Trample!" in an imperative form. In the original Japanese text, it is "*fumu ga ii*" 「踏むがいい」 and it shows a more passive aspect of Jesus, emphasizing his weakness. It should rather be translated in a more motherly form as "You may trample". This is important, and shows Endo's Christology involves the feminine aspect of Jesus. Some English readers were misled and made comments such as "Rodrigues tramples because Christ commands him to. His betrayal is thus an act of submission and obedience to Christ, a real act of love as well." Thus Startzman, 1984: 62 also Cohen, 1993: 111. See also Gessel 1993: 72, who prefers to translate "Trample!" as benevolent words of permission: "(it is) alright to trample".

theological ideological concept of God, and Martyrdom “for” God. God does not demand human sacrifice, because God is Love. This must be the core of Christian teaching.

This, then, is the personal challenge that I received from the novel: it is not only the formality of stepping on an icon, but of stepping on the Western, idealistic Image of God, the creator, redeemer, ruler, almighty father, of majesty and power. The Christ on the *fumie* suffered as Rodrigues and all others. In the novel, I heard the constant cry: what does it mean to be a Christian? Endo was trying to transcend and reshape the traditional Western framework of Christianity so that it could be rooted in the Japanese culture, tradition, and way of life.

ENDO’S IMAGE OF CHRIST

The history of *Kakure Kirishitans* in Japan is the history of suffering. They had to live a double life of being Shinto/ Buddhists socially, and Christians personally. In such a cruel persecution of Christianity, the *Kakure Kirishitans* managed to survive in rural areas under the protection of a Shinto shrine and Buddhist temple. They were weak in faith, could not endure physical punishment and apostatized. They lacked the courage to die as martyrs, and went through this form of recantation, but after that cowardly act, they went back to their miserable hovels and begged for forgiveness. Japanese Christians today are in a sense, descendants of converts who betray God again and again.

From this historical evidence of Japanese Christians, Endo builds an image of Christ who is in solidarity with the Japanese people living in a multiple religious context. Endo writes *Silence* from the world of the sorrowful, the weak, and the cowardly with no intention to glorify them or heal them.¹⁰ From this starting-point Endo began seeking a Christ for *Kakure Kirishitans*, for himself and for the Japanese Christian minority.

Endo emphasizes the struggling with Christ, trying to understand Christ, and the experiencing of the presence of Christ. The core of the Christianity that Endo presents is the Jesus Christ who offered his life through deeds of love and service to all.

10 Endo claims: “as I stood facing the valley, I thought that if the *Kirishitans* were to be divided into the weak and the strong, I would be among the former. It was from this standpoint that I decided to write the novel. I would write it from the point of view of a weakling who did not have the strength to maintain his belief against fear for his body and uncertainty of death.” Endo 1970: 103.

JESUS RE-MYTHOLOGIZED

Following the publication of *Silence*¹¹ in 1966, Endo's approach takes a new turn in that he begins to re-mythologize Jesus as a powerless man in a worldly sense but powerful in sacred terms.

Jesus was presented as one of the marginalized. He was crucified as weak, suffered, and died in all his agony. After his miserable death, disciples realized the fact that through Jesus' life he showed them that God relates to each person positively and firmly and stands by their side. When the disciples realized this fact, Jesus began to live within them, and this is the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus as Christ. It is the paradox that Jesus' apparent weakness is in fact his true strength, and that this so-called 'weak' Jesus appeals to the Japanese, because they can sense – and indeed experience – the strength that lies behind it. The resurrection of Jesus as a glorified king is not the central issue of Jesus' divinity. Resurrection is not a historical "fact" but a spiritual "truth".

CHRIST AT PRESENT: *DEEP RIVER*

Deep River was published three years before Endo Shusaku's death in 1996. In the novel, Endo focuses on the globalization of religions, basing himself in the Japanese present religious situation where a diversity of religions co-exist in the culture, and people do not hesitate to synthesize different religions.¹² They go to shrines, temples, and churches, and worship in all of them without hesitation. They see no difficulty or inconvenience in belonging to two or more religions.¹³ Most of the Japanese people respect an individual religiosity and regard religions as dynamic entities that should be transformed with people and culture. This attitude toward a diversity of religious life is sustained in harmony with a plural value orientation. The harmony of diversity has played an important role in the Japanese religio-cultural situation and religious pluralism in

11 Gessel (1979:408) makes a division between before 1960 and after 1963. I agree with him that Endo's writings mature after his hospitalization in 1963 leading him to write *Silence* (1966). However, I regard 1966 as the opening of the second stage in his literature.

12 Ref. Bragt in Cornill (ed.) 2002: 7–19.

13 Dale states: "Japanese religiosity is characterized by a syncretistic view of all religion. Most Japanese are both Buddhist and Shinto at the same time. According to the Yearbook of Religions compiled by the Ministry of Education for 1993 (numbers under one hundred thousand deleted): Shinto—116,900,000; Buddhist—89,900,000; Christian—1,500,000; other—11,300,000; total—219,700,000. The surprise comes when this total is put alongside the total population of Japan—about 125,000,000! One of the reasons for this syncretistic phenomenon is that many strata of religious traditions exist. As new strata were added, they did not replace the old, but were simply an addition. So today there is still the primitive strata of Shintoism, plus the strata of Buddhism, plus the strata of Confucian ethics, plus the Christian influence, etc." Dale, 1996:3 and 34

Japan is not a theory but is exercised daily by people respecting adherents of other religions. People hardly quarrel over religion in Japan. But in such a religio-cultural context, what does it mean to be a Christian whose religion requires the commitment to the "One" ultimate truth?

Here I shall confine myself to one issue, that of the Image of Christ presented by Endo through the protagonist Ootsu.¹⁴ Ootsu is a Japanese-born Christian who is teased by a beautiful woman at university and has to choose between his faith and her. After choosing the woman rather than Jesus, he is snubbed by her. At a loss, he visits a chapel and hears the voice of Jesus saying, "Come. I was rejected as you have been, but I will never abandon you."¹⁵ Ootsu returns to Jesus and decides to become a priest. He goes abroad to study in France, but is criticized and rejected by his superiors at the seminary and the novitiate because, unconsciously and in common with other Japanese Christians, he inherits a poly-/pantheistic religious sensibility, and he could not help coming into conflict with traditional Western dogmatic theology. Ootsu is condemned by the Church. Here, Endo explicitly protests: Is there a true faith of Christianity? Is the European brand of Christianity the absolute religion? And if so, will Japanese whose religious sensibility is opposed to western Christianity never be able to become qualified Christians?

Endo then challenges the Western dogmatic Christianity leading Ootsu (a failure as a priest in Western Christianity) into a personal relationship with God as a Japanese Christian through social work in India, in a Hindu World.. "Then Jesus told his disciples, If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."¹⁶

CHRIST AS A SYMBOL OF LOVE

Ootsu stays at a Hindu Ashram, dressed as an outcast. Every day he carries on his back the poor, weakened, and dying Hindus from the street to the crematory pyres by the River Ganges. He is imitating the acts of Jesus, poor and weak, lacking response and

14 Not all but some part of Ootsu's experiences and thoughts are modeled on Fr. Inoue Yoji (1927-), who boarded the same ship as Endo to study abroad when they were young.

Fr. Inoue returned to Japan in 1957 (four years after Endo's return) and became a priest in 1960. Inoue searched for an inculturation of Christianity in Japan, both as a priest in the field of theology, and in practice through meeting Japanese Christians. Inoue and Endo had the same concern, and Inoue became a lifelong friend and the spiritual support for Endo until his last moments.

15 Endo 1993/98:101 (1994:62)

16 Matthew 16-24.

understanding, who carried the cross, took the sorrows of all men on his back, and climbed the hill of Golgotha. Ootsu genuinely believes that were Jesus to be here, he would also take the dead on the street to the crematory, and imitate the act of Love. Exhausted, Ootsu worships alone at the ashram in the Hindu language. He loves Jesus and follows him by sharing others' suffering.

Endo reveals his own image of Christ in the life of Ootsu, who has failed in authoritarian Christianity, yet ended up living in India following Jesus' Way. Endo finally comes to the reflection on his religious experience that the Love of God through Jesus Christ is present in this world not only in European churches, but can be found in Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as in other religions.¹⁷ The life of Jesus manifested in Ootsu demonstrates that "Love" subordinates to itself all religious systems, dogma, traditions, organized institutions, or boundaries. Ootsu is a weakling, yet strong in the universality of Christ Jesus as the center of his faith, and his work is presented as a process moving toward a pluralistic understanding of Christ. Christ is in solidarity with him, with his maternal love and as an eternal companion. Endo's *Imago Christi* matures through the transition from Christocentric to Pneumacentric, so that the Divine Spirit of Christ is disclosed within Ootsu. Endo's outstanding contribution to modern Christianity in his novels is his understanding of Christ as a symbol of Love in the social context. He points directly to social awareness and commitment. And Jesus could just as well be called 'the Onion':

Through Ootsu, Endo states:

"If the Onion came to this city, he of all people would carry the fallen on his back and take them to the cremation grounds. Just as he bore the cross on his back while he was alive....But, in the end, I've decided that my Onion doesn't live only within European Christianity. He can be found in Hinduism and in Buddhism as well. This is no longer just an idea in my head, it's a way of life I've chosen for myself."¹⁸

To find this Spirit of Love in every religions was not just an idea in his head, but was drawn from his religious experiences living in the religio-cultural context where the harmony of diversity was appreciated.

17 He states: "God has many different faces. I don't think God exists exclusively in the churches and chapels of Europe. I think he is also among the Jews and the Buddhists and the Hindus." I was viciously reprimanded: "These are the notions born of your pantheistic delusions!" Endo 1993/98: 196-199. (121-123)

18 Endo 1993/98: 300- 301. (184)

Endo's challenge is comparable to John Hick's hypothesis of Religious Pluralism. Endo claims it is not necessary to hold onto the institutional church doctrines of Western theology, or even to the name of God, Jesus Christ, Kami, or Buddha. It is openly stressed by Ootsu, that "if one is unfamiliar with or gets irritated with the terms

God, Jesus, or Christ, it can be called 'x' or 'tomato' or 'onion'.¹⁹ Endo explains "Onion exists everywhere... Onion is Love, a life force that enables us to live."²⁰

SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD CULTURE

In the last scene of *Deep River*, Endo presents a dying woman confronting a Japanese (Mitsuko) who is about to depart from India. Two young nuns (a white nun and a dark nun) in gray frocks from the "Mission of Charity" are going to take her to their home to care for her until she dies. She sees Ootsu's pathetic life in these nuns, too. (In the end Ootsu receives life-threatening injuries from his altruistic interventions.) She runs toward them and in her honesty, asks why they are doing such acts. It is a realistic question that many would ask. With a look of surprise, the nun slowly replies, "Because except for this... there is nothing in this world that we can believe in".²¹ Her words for "this" do not describe clearly what she means exactly. If the nun had said "Only Him", then she means Ootsu's Onion, Jesus Christ. But she does not signify whether "this" is personal or impersonal. Only the author implicitly confesses that "this" is the Onion, the other name for Christ, but enclosed in an infinite embracement of Love.

As for secular terms, the life of Ootsu and the acts of the nuns, to believe in and follow a powerless Jesus might seem like an immobilized act in this realistic world, but still there are Christians who follow that way in their acts of love, service and sacrifice. Love speaks through their total commitment, spiritual energy, and their embracing love for others. Endo's attempt at the incarnation of Christ as a symbol of Love claims that their spiritual strength will surely be passed on to others.

19 Endo 1993/98: 103. (1994: 63)

Also, Endo writes: "If Japanese do not prefer using the term Christ, it can be called "Onion", or "X". However, the "X" took the form as Christ for me. For others, it may appear as Buddha." Endo 1983/88: 35.

"x is certainly 'Lives, Life something that makes human beings live higher --- I myself call it Jesus." Ibid.

20 "God is not so much an existence as a force. This Onion is an entity that performs the labors of love." Endo 1993/98: 104. (1994: 64)

21 Endo 1993/98: 350. (215)

When the mission approach gave precedence to Christian baptism, converting people of other faiths, the aim was for Christian expansionism and a development of a colonial power structure. However, as I understand Endo's protest, a person's task is not to convert people of other faiths. That should be left to the Spirit. It is the same with the inculturation of Christianity. Inculturation ought not to be based on power domination but on serving others through the Spirit.

Primarily, the kernel of Christian teaching for Endo was the Spirit of God's love incarnated in Christ given to the world. In his literature, Endo presents his understanding of love.²² Jesus, who was totally powerless, an abject failure, abandoned by everyone, never deserted other people. Love means to be in solidarity with others, and to serve as an eternal companion with the essence of maternal love. Jesus Christ as love incarnate is reborn in every one, in the yellow man Ootsu, in the white nun, and in the dark nun. In describing a Christ-like selfless-love, Endo presented the ideal that one can lead a religious life anonymously, abandoning status and fame. That is similar to the concept of "kenosis" found in the Bible.²³

Endo's interpretation of God's boundless love is centered on the very weakness of Jesus Christ. He maintained his Image of Christ in the midst of cultural diversity and presented Christ manifested in the "Far East". In this way, the very weakness of Jesus gave power and appeal in the contemporary Japanese cultural context. It was a transformation of the Western dogmatic understanding of Christianity in order to establish roots in the context.²⁴ Jesus Christ becomes powerless in solidarity with suffering people, maternally embracing love, as an eternal companionship. The Spirit of Christ inculturated in world culture is a diaconal service of love in a given context with no ulterior motives.

I believe Endo's Image of Christ, developed in his own cultural context, opened up a much wider, deeper, and global view of theology – toward world culture.

22 Endo 1973(b) See 4.3.1.

23 Philippians 2:5-11. Ref. Eto 1998: 165.

24 I Ban, a Korean playwright writes that "*Silence*, I believe, has unleashed a new wind in Asia to blow away the Western image of Jesus" I Ban (Lee Ban) 1988:159.

REFERENCES:

Endo Shusaku

1966/97 *Chinmoku* (*Silence*) Tokyo: Shincho. CSEL 2: 181-330.

1968(b) "Shusseï saku no koro" (Time of my promotion), Tokyo: The Yomiuri. CSEL 12: 406- 416.

1970 "Concerning the Novel *Silence*", JCQ Fall 1970: 100- 103.

1973(a) *Shikai no Hotori* (By the Dead Sea) Tokyo: Shincho. CSEL 3: 7-204.

1973(b) *Iesu no Shogai* (A Life of Jesus) Tokyo: Shincho. CSEL 11: 77-204.

1977(a) "At the Baptism of One Friend after Another...", JCQFall 1977:208-210.

1978 *Kirisuto no Tanjo* (The Birth of Christ) Tokyo: Shincho. CSEL 11: 205- 350.

1983(b) *Watashi ni totte Kami towa* (God for Me) Tokyo: Koubundo 1983/1988.

1970 *Watashi no Rireki-sho* (The Personal History of Failed Rascal) Tokyo:Nihon Keizai CSEL 14: 217-272.

1993/98 *Fukai Kawa* (*Deep River*) Tokyo: Kodan. CSEL 4: 167-346.

Bevans,Stephan B. *Models of Contextual Theology*, New York: Orbis, 2000.

Bosh, David J. *Transforming Mission*, New York: Orbis, 1991.

Boxer, Charles *The Christian Century in Japan*, Manchester: Carcanet Press,1993.

Cohen, Doron B., "The God of Amae: Endo's *Silence* Reconsidered", *Japanese Religions*, Vol.19, No.1&2 January 1993: 106-121.

Cornille, Catherine (ed.) *Many Mansions?* New York: Orbis, 2002.,

Dale, J.Kenneth *Coping with Culture: The Current Struggle of the Japanese Church*, Tokyo: Lutheran Booklets, No3, 1996.

- Eto Naozumi , “Endo Shusaku shi tonon Taiwa”(Dialogue with Shusaku Endo)in *Tayosei tonon Taiwa* (Dialogue with diversity), Lutheran University Theological Seminar (ed.) AVACO, 1998: 161-170.
- Gessel, Van C., “ENDO SHUSAKU: His position(s) in Postwar Japanese literature”, JATJ, Pittsburg, PA, Vol.27, No.1 April 1993: 67-74.
- , “The literature of Kojima Nobuo, Yasuoka Shotaro, and Endo Shusaku: Cripples, Clods, and Cowards in Contemporary Japanese Fiction”, Columbia University, USA, 1979.
- Kitagawa Joseph M. *On Understanding Japanese Religion*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Koyama Kosuke *No Handle on the Cross*, New York: Orbis, 1977.
- Kuschel, Karl-Josef *The Poet as Mirror*, London: SCM Press, 1997/99.
- Mathy, Francis, “Shusaku Endo: Japanese Catholic Novelist”, *Thought* winter, 1967:585-614.
- Phillips, James M. *From the Rising of the Sun*, New York: Orbis Books,
- Startzman, Eugene, “Can there be Faith in betrayal?”, *Christianity Today*, Vol.28, 1984: 62-63.
- Takeda Kiyoko, *Dochaku to Haikyō* (Indigenization and Apostasy) Tokyo:

Endo Shusaku's Novels and Religious Pluralism.

A reply to Prof. Emi Mase-Hasegawa

By JP Mukengeshayi Matata
Oriens Institute for Religious Research

Seven years ago, I had a big chance to assist in Tokyo at an opera based on the well-known novel of Endo Shusaku: "Silence". I remember again the voice of the commentator reminding the audience that Endo Shusaku was then completing his journey on earth in a hospital and would remain for most of his compatriots a faithful Japanese writer who described Christianity—brought to Japan with its European traditions, its intense faith commitment and its ways of understanding—as inappropriate to Japanese sensitivity and culture.

The tensest part of the Opera came when Sebastian Rodriguez, a representative of the indomitable mission spirit of the Jesuits, was captured, forced to endure the torture of the pit and finally recanted his faith. Rodriguez felt his apostasy would save his Christian followers. From my experience of missionary life in Japan, I think that various conclusions can be drawn from Endo Shusaku's Silence novel.

First of all Endo insists on the fact that God's silence persists amid the presence of evil. God does not intervene in the cruel persecution of Christians, so the priest sees himself as responsible for the lives of those required to step on the *fumie* (Christ figure on a copper tablet).

Secondly, Endo criticized the triumphal exaltation of martyrdom as a way for Christians to achieve intimacy with the ultimate reality. He strongly emphasized God's compassionate love for the weak and forgiveness of sins (apostates) as the most important value of the Christian faith. Because religious people are always longing for the transcendent, they never achieve their goal and are always on the way.

Henceforth, from the point of view of Endo's Silence or from his Life of Christ, Rodriguez's reaction toward persecution is not understood as an act of treason to God but an act which describes Jesus Christ as the Compassionate One speaking words of mercy to

women in trouble, to a grief stricken officer, to slow hearts of disciples, to the repentant thief on Calvary, to the disciples in the way to Emmaus, and in particular to Judas who betrayed him. Jesus' way to Calvary was marked by the silence of God. There was no intervention from God but Jesus was aware of his deep link to the Father and this total trust in God accompanied him. Trust was the most important action of Jesus on the cross. Endo also found this heroic character lived anew in the 17th century Japanese martyrs.

Furthermore Endo's novel "Silence" probes the mission drama as it appears in its internal paradox between universal and particular values within the Christian church. Endo presents Jesus as the love of God extended to all humanity. This message of Christ's love has been transmitted to Japan via the excessive clarity and abundant logic of European thinking. This made Japanese people feel out of harmony with European Christianity. Here appears the main theme of his last master-piece "Deep River". Here again we are introduced to the main theological reflection of Endo's novels. Christianity has to be acculturated in Japan. Christianity must Japanize to become understandable and acceptable by Japanese. Christianity must accept dialogue with the existent religions of the country.

For instance, in "Deep River", Endo's admiration of the sites of ancient Buddhism and Hindu temples raised the question of the grace of God reaching out to the billions of their followers in Asia. Strictly speaking, Endo used the word reincarnation to explain that Christian resurrection is God's grace bestowed on humankind and not only reserved to Christians.

Therefore I would like to stress that a very sharp problem of post-modern evangelization is how inculturation should be done and what its implications are for Asia and Japan. The post-colonial resurgence of national and cultural identities has brought to the Church a renewed realization of the need to reaffirm cultural identities also within the Church herself seen as a communion of local Churches. A local Church comes about when a people respond to the gospel from within their own cultural context. Therefore, the dialogue between gospel and cultures is at the heart of evangelization. This dialogue, generally called inculturation, is the most important element of the process that ends up in making the Church truly local. That goes far beyond the assimilation, acceptance or adaptation of certain innocent elements of a non-Christian religion and culture in the evangelization process.

As for the Japanese church, inculturation means formulating Christ's teaching in Japanese terms and then expressing Christ

himself in terms of Japan's culture and history. It is not merely a case of distinguishing between what is Japanese and what is European, but rather discovering how best to present Jesus' words and deeds so that they become part of Japan's culture. There is no thought of changing a nation's culture, the concept so common in colonizing days.

As described by H. Byron Earhart, "The unity of Japanese religion is evidenced by a nexus of persistent themes that are present in most historical periods and cut across most of the religious strands. One may be dominant in one period or more prominent in one religious strand, but generally they all interacted to form the total world-view of the traditional person. Six themes whose recurrence may be taken as a sign of the unity of Japanese religion are (1) the closeness of human beings, gods, and nature; (2) the religious character of the family; (3) the significance of purification, rituals and charms; (4) the prominence of local festivals and individual cults; (5) the pervasiveness of religion in everyday life; and (6) the natural bond between religion and the nation"¹

Unlike monotheist religions such as Judaism and Christianity, Japanese religion emphasizes neither one sovereign God nor a sharp distinction between the several gods and human beings. Mortals and gods alike share in the beauty of nature. The tendency of Judaeo-Christian theology is to think of a hierarchy with God first, human beings second, and nature a poor third. In Japanese religion the three are on more or less equal terms. Mortals, gods, and nature form a triangle of harmonious interrelationships.²

As several of you know, Japanese religion is a blend of at least five major strands: folk religion, Shinto, Buddhism, religious Taoism, and Confucianism. Christianity, which entered Japan in the sixteen century, may be considered a sixth strand, but since it did not contribute to the formation of traditional Japanese religion, it was anti-Japanese and against the Japanese religious traditions.³ Christianity was considered anti-Japanese because a Japanese Christian was loyal to foreign gods and to foreign priests, rather than to native *kami* and to the local Japanese feudal lord.

Until today Japanese understanding of "gods" is either the *kami* of Shinto (human beings, ancestors, animals, natural phenomena) or the

1 H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion. Unity and diversity*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982, 7.

2 Cf. *ibidem*, 7.

3 Cf. *ibidem*, 121.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas of Buddhism.⁴ The question that should be asked when people stress the importance of inculturation of the Gospel in Japan is “inculturation” into what?

Japanese folk religions are deeply influenced by the early Buddhist tradition. Therefore, “I do not believe that it is the role of Christianity in Japan to do away with and to supplant or even absorb the other religions: Shinto, the Buddhist sects, [etc.]... This would not be a positive contribution to ... Japan and should thus not be aimed at with inculturation as a strategic means.”⁵ As Christians, we should abstain from attacks on Buddhism, Shinto and other religions. But through a sincere dialogue, it may be indicated to conscientize one another to one’s shortcomings. As a matter of fact, Christianity should abstain and resolutely resist from some practices of proselytism which are strong in some fundamentalist Protestant sects. It is not worthy to pull true convinced Buddhists away from their Buddhist allegiance. Christian proselytizing efforts should be directed at people who for some reason do not find the spiritual food they need in the established religions. Notwithstanding, it can happen that some of these convinced Buddhists or Shintoists experience a conversion to Christ and then want to join the Church.

But to become understandable by the Japanese, Christianity by some means has to take into account some predominant Buddhist values reflecting the common understanding of the Japanese society and its culture. This does not mean that Christianity is inferior to the eyes of local people. This will certainly enable it to express itself accordingly to the sensitivity and world-view of Japanese Christians. For example the respect for Karma, the respect for life, the Buddhist teaching of selflessness and nothingness, the spirit of meditation, the generosity in giving, the aesthetic sensitivity and the respect for nature are some of the most important values that shape our everyday living in Japan. As far as I understand them, they contain more or less some meanings close to our understanding of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Christianity has been distorted in the West and explained through the blatant individualism and attitudes of self-affirmation. However, Christianity, while insisting on maintaining and promoting faith in Christ should recognize that this task “cannot be done in abstract and timeless terms, or from the mere desire for self-assertion. It has a definable and circumscribed place amongst modern problems.”⁶

4 For further information see Inoe Nobutaka, ed., *Kami. Contemporary Papers on Japanese Religion* 4, Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, 1998.

5 Jan Van Bragt, cicm, “Inculturation of the Gospel Values in Buddhist Countries”, *The Japan Mission Journal*, vol.52/4(1998) 229.

6 J.Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, New York: Harper&Row, 1974,7.

As underlined by Endo Shusaku's *Deep River*, in Asia, besides a strong wind of inculturation in some countries, "the great religious traditions which are older than Christianity look at us and ask: What can your Christian faith and its tradition offer us that we do not yet have?"⁷ But unlike Endo Shusaku and Prof.Emi who overemphasize the need for a new world order and a process of purification through which Christianity has to pass to cease being the religion of the Holy Roman Empire, Western Culture, and Euro-American Capitalism⁸, I would like to stress with Marc R.Mullins that "the clash between Christianity and Japanese religious sensibilities was rooted in the fact that the missionary carriers of the New Religion came from a culture that gave primacy to the nuclear family and to short-term separation rites for the dead. The Japanese receivers of the New religion came from a culture that gave primacy to the ie system and to long-term liminal rites for the household dead".⁹ Therefore, it is then clear that Christianity is both a gift of faith and an imported religion that must still be rooted in Japan to the extent that it is no longer perceived as an alien or deviant phenomenon.¹⁰ Aloysius Pieris brings a good contribution to this debate. According to him Christian Church must be humble enough to be baptized in the Jordan of Asian religiosity and bold enough to be baptized on the cross of Asian poverty.

To be more precise, in the above perspective of inculturation and religious pluralism outlined in Endo Shusaku's Novels, let us say that inculturation cannot be seen any longer as "a strategic means", used to bring all Japanese individuals into the bosom of the Church. In this way we must be animated by the strong conviction that Christianity needs Japan, and Japan equally needs Christianity. Christianity needs the unique sensibilities of Japanese people for a fuller understanding of Christ's gospel; Japan needs Christianity because its people have religious needs which can be met only by Christianity.

7 J.Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God*, Manila: Divine Word Publ., 1974,XIV.

8 See for details, Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, Malden, Massachussts: Blackwell, 1997.

9 Mark R.Mullins, *Christianity made in Japan*, USA: University of Hawaii's Press, 1998,136.

10 Cf.Ibidem, 170.

Reports from the Centres

NANZAN INSTITUTE FOR RELIGION & CULTURE

Nanzan University
18 Yamazato-cho, Showa-ku
Nagoya 466, Japan
tel: (81)52-832-3111
fax: (81)52-833-6157
e-mail: nirc@ic.nanzan-u.ac.jp
Director: Paul L. Swanson

RECENT EVENTS

Bob Kisala and Jim Heisig attended the Inter-Religio conference held in Thailand from 2-5 March.

PUBLICATIONS

Victor Sogen Hori, Zen Sand: *The Book of Capping Phrases for Koan Practice*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.

James Heisig, *Dialogues at One Inch Above the Ground*. New York: Herder and Herder, 2003.

The latest issue of the Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture includes an overview of main events in the world of religion in Japan during 2002.

NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS

On 1 April 2003 Yamanashi Yukiko, a specialist in the theories of interreligious dialogue, joined the staff of the Nanzan Institute as a junior research fellow.

OKUYAMA Michiaki attended the 3rd congress of European Association for the Study of Religions, held in Bergen, Norway, 8-10 May. This is a regional association of the International Association for the History of

Religions, which is planning to hold their 19th world congress in Tokyo, March 2005.

§ § §

NCC CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS

Karasuma-Shimodaciuri
Kamikyo-ku, Kyoto 602, Japan
tel/fax: (81)75-432-1945
studycen@mbox.kyoto-inet.or.jp
Director: Dr. Yuki Hideo
New website at <http://www.japanese-religions.org>

RECENT EVENTS

30 May, Public lecture by Prof. Kuribayashi about Japanese theology from below. Focused on the early 20th. Century layman Tanaka Shosho, who identified God's presence among the devastated and unemployed dwellers in Yanaka, in Northeastern Japan. Accordingly, Tanaka argued for the need to revise the theology from the west.

In March, five of us participated in the Interreligio meeting in Pattaya - a very comfortable and inspiring event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our annual residential seminar will likely be focused on the early Japanese kirishitans, as Christians were called in the 16th through the 19th centuries. Please check our website for more information.

ONGOING PROGRAMS OR EVENTS

The Interreligious Studies in Japan Program started its second semester in April. Two participants benefit from our learned lecturers and the fieldtrips to religious institutions in and around Kyoto.

The study group on Faith and Society is meeting regularly. It aims at bringing researchers and practitioners together, and combine lectures with visits to places of practice. In February we therefore visited the daylaborers' area and a camp of homeless in Osaka.

The study groups on ecumenism and 'comics and religions' are also active.

PUBLICATIONS

Deai Vol.14 no. 1 (Dec. 2002)
Contents:

Polytheism and monotheism-
Shojun Bando

Concerning interreligious dialogue-
Shozen Kumoi

On the East West Spiritual Exchange
Program-Seiko Hirata

Interreligious Dialogue and Rissho
Koseikai-Tadao Amaya

The emperor System in the Meiji
Period with Special Attention to the
Rule of the Elder Statesmen
(genro)-Tadakuma Iwai

The Controversy Among Concepts
of the Emperor in Modern Japan:
Taking the "Organ Theory"
incident as a Clue-Takeshi Nishida
State Shinto and Christianity-Hideo
Yuki

Japanese Religions Vol.28 no.1
(Jan. 2003), Articles:

Transmission Problems: The
Reproduction of Scripture and
Kukai's "Opening" of an Esoteric
Tradition-David Gardiner

Translation of Kukai's Kanensho-
David Gardiner

The Body as Location of Oneness-
On the Symbolic Representation of
Bashoron-Yagi Seiichi

A Response to Yagi Seiichi-James
W. Heisig.

NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS

In commemoration of the
Centennial of the Japanese
Immigrants to the Philippines and
the 450th anniversary of Lord
Takayama Ukon (a Japanese
Christian hero of the 1600s and
exiled to the Philippines), a joint
Japan-Philippin Opera is staged in
Tokyo, Kyoto, Manila and other
places in Japan and the
Philippines-(see the website
<http://www.tokyo-opera.gr.jp>).

§ § §

INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE/ORIENTAL RELIGIONS

Sophia University, 7 Kioi-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102, Japan
Tel: 81-3-3238-3190
Fax: 81-3-3238-4145
Director: Koji Matsuoka S.J.

EVENTS

From June 5th to 7th 2003, the
director Koji Matsuoka S.J.
attended the Liaison Conference of
the 'Institute of Christian Culture in
Japan Catholic Universities', which
was held at Kagoshima Immaculate
Heart University. Now he is also
the chairman of this conference
(until June 2003).

Upcoming Events : Open Lecture
Series - The Main Theme "Our

Mind and Body in Religions”, held on June 21th, 22th, 2003

Speaker and Theme: “Mind and body in Christianity” – Shun’ichi Tkayanagi, Honorary Professor of Sophia University.

“Mind and body in Ethic-Religion” – Yasuo Yuasa, Honorary Professor of Obirin University.

“Mind and body in Shinto” – Fumihiko Katayama, Guji of Hanazono-shrine.

“Mind and body in Chinese Thought” – Akira Oshima, Professor of Sophia University.

“Mind and body in Buddhism” – Fumihiko Sueki, Professor of Tokyo University.

“Mind and body in Vitalism” – Susumu Shimazono, Professor of Tokyo University.

ONGOING PROGRAMS OR EVENTS
Bible Seminar—The Main Theme, Ps.81:6 is in preparation.

PUBLICATIONS
Institute of Christian Culture:
Orient Religions : Bulletin 21, 2003, 3.
“This will be written down for the future generations (Ps.102:19): The World of the Minor Prophets and the Letters of John and Peter”, now in preparation.

§ § §

TAIPEI RICCI INSTITUTE
Hsin-hai Road, Section 1, No. 22, 3 Fl
Taipei 100 Taiwan, roc
tel: (886)2-2368-9968
fax: (886)2-2365-4508
e-mail: riccitpe@seed.net.tw
Director: Rev. B. Vermander S.J.

EVENTS

Elise deVido and Brian Lawless attended the Inter-Religio conference held in Pattaya, Thailand, from 2nd to 5th March, where Elise presented a paper on “New Funeral Culture in Taiwan”.

The conference was organized by the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Society with the assistance of Edmund Chia of FABC-OEIA for site logistics.

In all, 18 participants from 6 East Asian countries attended:

Indonesia: Zakaria Ngelow, Theological Seminary, Makassar, and Nurman Said, Alauddin State Institute of Islamic Studies, Makassar.

Japan: Mukengeshayi Mata, Oriens Institute for Religious Research; Cyril Veliath, Institute of Asian Cultures Sophia University; Bob Kisala and James Heisig of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture; Martin Repp, Tomomasa Teramoto, Emi Mase-Hasegawa and Christian Hermansen of the NCC Study Centre; Miyai Rika of the Saitama Institute of Technology.

Korea: Kim Seong Nae of the Institute for Religion, Sogang University.

Philippines: Jose Mario Francisco of the East Asian Pastoral Institute and Gemma Cruz of Assumption College.

Thailand: Pratoom Angurarohita, Dept. of Philosophy, Chulalongkorn University and Edmund Chia of the FABC-OEIA.

Taiwan: Elise deVido and Brian Lawless of the Taipei Ricci Centre.

Notice of New Course

INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES IN JAPAN PROGRAM (ISJP)
AT THE NCC CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS KYOTO, JAPAN

RATIONALE

Western countries that were predominantly Christian have recently changed into multireligious societies. Along with Islam, Asian religions such as Buddhism (Zen, etc.) and Asian religious practices (Yoga, Reiki, Fen hsui, etc.) are exerting considerable influence. Multireligious societies must learn to understand and accept people of different religions. The religiously inspired terrorist attacks on the subways in Tokyo (1995) and on the World Trade Center in New York (2001) underscored the urgent need for interreligious communication and understanding. The example of Asian churches, which have been in a religiously plural world for a long time, can help to better respond to this challenge. They can offer experience and wisdom through study centers which are dedicated to research on Asian religions and interreligious dialogue. One of these institutes, the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, an institute of the National Christian Council of Japan (NCCJ), has established the "Interreligious Studies in Japan Program" (ISJP) in order to assist church and theology to be better prepared for meeting the new challenges.

PURPOSE

The ISJP offers the following learning opportunities:

1. Convey a solid basic knowledge of religions in Japan
2. Introduction to Japanese culture and spirituality
3. Exposure to the situation of churches in a religiously plural environment
4. Experience interreligious dialogue
5. Introduction to problems of enculturation
6. Introduction to theology of religions

TARGET GROUP

Students of theology (all denominations); students of education who intend to become school teachers in religion; graduate and postgraduate students of theology, education, Japanese studies and religious studies. – Students are expected to be open to new learning experiences in a foreign culture (cross-cultural communication). Solid knowledge of English is required for the classes.

CURRICULUM

The ISJP offers the following courses:

1. Introduction to Shinto and Folk Religion
2. Introduction to Japanese Buddhism (history, teaching, and practice of the different schools)
3. Introduction to Japanese New Religions

4. Introduction to Japanese Christianity and theology
5. Introduction to theology of religions and theories of interreligious dialogue
6. Introduction to basic Japanese language

The courses are held over the period of one semester (April – July, September – December).

EXPOSURE PROGRAM

- Fieldtrips to Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, headquarters of new religions, and Christian churches.
- Dialogue meetings with representatives of other religions.
- Special lectures by scholars on selected themes.
- One week fieldtrip to Tokyo organized and financed by the Tomisaka Christian Center (Tokyo) (fall semester)

TEACHING STAFF

The teachers of this program are experts in their field; they are selected by the advisory and executive committees.

LIBRARIES

In addition to the NCC Study Center's library, the following institutions offer their libraries to the participants of this Program:

- The Italian School of East Asian Studies (Kyoto)
- The Japan Foundation (Kyoto)
- L'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient (Kyoto)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Prof. em. Jan Van Bragt (former Director of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture)
- Prof. Fujimoto Kiyohiko (Bukkyo University)
- Prof. Maejima Munetoshi (Kwansei Gakuin University, former General Secretary of the NCCJ)
- Prof. em. Mizugaki Wataru (Kyoto University)
- Prof. Takada Shinryo (Ryukoku University)
- Prof. em. Yuki Hideo (Doshisha University; NCC Center, Director)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Prof. em. Hayashi Tadayoshi (Kwansei Gakuin Univ.)
- Rev. Higuchi Susumu (Kyodan/ United Church of Christ: Board of Trustees, NCC Center)
- Prof. Katayanagi Eiichi (Kyoto University)
- Prof. Miyasho Tetsuo (Doshisha University)
- Prof. Mizutani Makoto (Doshisha University)
- Prof. Nakamichi Motoo (Kwansei Gakuin Univ.)
- Prof. Robert Rhodes (Otani University)
- Dr. Martin Repp (NCC Center, Coordinator of ISJP)

Rev. Teramoto Tomomasa (Nishi Hongan-ji [Pure Land Buddhism], Secretary of ISJP).

The NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions is an ecumenical research institute of the National Christian Council of Japan. Since its foundation in 1958, it is pursuing studies of religions in Japan, research in enculturation of Christianity, and interreligious dialogue. It is located in central Kyoto next to the Imperial Palace park and houses a library (in English and Japanese) on religions in Japan, as well as on history, culture, etc. The Center also publishes the journals *Japanese Religions* and *Deai* (Encounter). It cooperates with similar research centers in the Ecumenical Group for the Study of Interreligious Dialogue (EGSID) in Japan and the network *Inter-Religio* in East Asia, as well as with research institutes of various religious groups and universities in Japan.

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATION

Application form (to be filled out in English); CV (including university studies, hobbies and volunteer activities); a letter of recommendation by a professor, photocopy of passport (validity minimum one year, for visa application); two passport pictures; letter of guarantee for sufficient financial support (e.g. scholarship).

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

March 31. for fall semester, October 31. for spring semester (in certain cases exceptions acceptable).

Application is to be sent to the coordinator of the program.

LIVING COSTS AND TUITION

Living costs and accommodation: minimum Y 100.000 per month (estimate)

Tuition: Y 100.000 per semester

INQUIRIES AND APPLICATION:

NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions
Interreligious Studies in Japan Program
Dr. Martin Repp, Coordinator
Karasuma Shimodachiuri, Kamigyo-ku
Kyoto 606-8011, Japan
Tel. & Fax + 75-432-1945
studycen@mbox.kyoto-inet.or.jp
<http://www.japanese-religions.org>