

SEIJO CGS WORKING PAPER SERIES

No. **1**

GLOBALIZATION AND RELIGION:

**SOME ASPECTS OF THE GLOBALIZATION
AND GLOCALIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY
AMONG THE KAKURE KIRISHITAN IN JAPAN**

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INSTITUTE OF FOLKLORE STUDIES
SEIJO UNIVERSITY
TOKYO
2009**

Seijo CGS Working Paper Series

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Cover design by KUBOTA Satoshi and MAEDA Mizuho

ISSN 1883-7670

ISBN 978-4-904605-01-1 C3039

First published in 2009.

Published by:

Center for Glocal Studies

Institute of Folklore Studies

Seijo University

6-1-20, Seijo, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, 157-8511, JAPAN.

E-mail: glocalstudies@seijo.ac.jp

URL: <http://www.seijo.ac.jp/research/glocal/index.html>

Globalization and Religion:
Some Aspects of the Globalization and Glocalization
of Christianity among the Kakure Kirishitan in Japan ⁽¹⁾

Dorothea M. FILUS

1. Globalization

Globalization is a process by which people of all countries and cultures are unified into a single social unit, the so-called 'global village.' The term 'globalization' has been used by economists since the early 1980s. Globalization has been spurred by major advances in technology, which led to lower production and trading costs. Globalization has been driven by international trade and investment, aided by a free market economy, and catalyzed by information technology. Business people, economists and politicians are the major proponents of globalization, as they recognize in it economic profits and political advantages.

As globalization intensified in the 1980s, the 1990s saw an emergence of anti-globalization movements which climaxed in the September 11 attack. Opponents of globalization argue that globalization is but a cover for Westernization and particularly for Americanization, and link it to earlier attempts to dominate less developed countries and to colonization. The critics of globalization see it as a process in which Western capitalism is expanding and dominating the world economy. Such critics argue that as globalization progresses, the Western countries will be richer at the expense of many disadvantaged countries where poverty will deepen (Christian Research Association 2001).

In the 1980s and 1990s, globalization tended to be defined in economic and/or political terms, where religion played a minor role that was largely limited to the role of ideological support for the expansion of Western economy and politics. However, events such as the September 11 attacks which were conducted by Islamic terrorists have revealed the importance of religion in the globalization process. The attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was a protest against the Western (and particularly American) economic and commercial domination and against American military power. But it was also interpreted as a protest against the globalization of Western/American culture and the imposition of the American value system, morals, and lifestyle on less privileged cultures/countries, which they feared would result in the destruction or even extinction of their cultural/religious traditions and identity. Thus, the events of September 11 put the globalization of culture, and religion as one of its major components, high on the agenda.

If one thinks of globalization in more than economic or political terms and considers it a process by which a new global culture is emerging, then religion plays a crucial role in many respects. Globalization creates interdependence and a new global consciousness. This global consciousness demands new explanations of meaning and calls for new value systems, ethics and morality. Consequently, the role of religion in providing meaning and ethical systems is crucial. Let us now examine shortly the role of religion in society.

2. The Definition of Religion and Its Functions

It is doubtful that there will ever be any complete agreement on the definition of religion. The analysis of religion is not limited to a single approach and various approaches have naturally given birth to a wide variety of definitions. As scholars formulate independent and sometimes conflicting definitions, it seems that a universal definition of religion will never be

possible. In the words of Yinger (1967:18), 'Any definition of religion is likely to be satisfactory only to its author.'

There are two major types of definitions of religion: (1) substantive definitions—what religion is, its essence, and (2) functional definitions—what religion does. As my approach to the study of religion is sociological, I am predominantly concerned with the social functions of religion. I distinguish two major types of such functions: politico-economic and philosophico-psychological functions, each with two subfunctions (Filus 1999).

The politico-economic functions contribute to (a) the maintenance and legitimization of the status quo and thus stability and social control. By the same token, they also contribute to the perpetuation of the culture of injustice. However, the politico-economic functions also contribute to (b) social change, protest, reformation, and liberation. Religion is able to fulfill these two seemingly contradictory functions because religion is not one entity, but consists of established and usually conservative churches; protesting, reformatory, and revivalist sects; and novel cults.

Religion also fulfills two philosophico-psychological functions: (a) providing meaning and values, which become the basis for morality in society, and (b) providing a system of belief to help social actors to deal with suffering and frustration, such as death, deprivation and injustice (cf. Bellah 1970).

In this era of globalization in which a new consciousness is born, it is crucial for religion to contribute positively to social change and provide a new corpus of relevant explanations of meaning, new value, and belief systems suited to global society where many religions will coexist. In order to live in peace, religion must teach tolerance and non-violence. Therefore, all religions must examine their teachings and should dispose of any references to violence, intolerance and discrimination in them, and of violence in their rituals.

Religions cannot preach peace if they have teachings referring to violence which may become justification or seeds of violence.

3. The Globalization of Culture through the Diffusion of Religion

Although the term 'globalization' is considerably new (first receiving broad acceptance in the 1980s), it may be argued that the process of globalization began thousands of years ago. For example, the empire of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC which reached from Greece to India, the Roman Empire from the 1st century BC until the 5th century AD which incorporated much of Europe as well as the Middle East, the consequent Christianization of Europe under the banner of Christian unity, trade and cultural exchange along the Silk Road, or the 'Age of Discoveries' which resulted in colonization of Asia and Africa, all may exhibit a certain aspects of what has now come to be referred to as globalization.

Often, the globalization of culture was achieved through or facilitated by the diffusion of religion. Such was the case when Buddhism or Christianity arrived in Japan and these religions acted as a means of globalizing Chinese or European culture, respectively. In this sense, it may be argued that globalization or more precisely Sinicization started in Japan in the 6th century with the arrival of Buddhism and Confucianism from China via Korea.

3.1. Globalization and Glocalization of Buddhism in Japan

As this paper is concerned with globalization, our analysis will benefit from introducing another related and important term, 'glocalization.' The term 'glocalization' is a hybrid amalgamation of 'globalization' and 'localization.' Glocalization is a process by which global or universal ideas or institutions are indigenized and adapted to their local counterparts. In other words it is a process by which foreign and irrelevant becomes familiar and relevant.

Globalization can never be successful unless global becomes local, and thus germane to a particular locality. In short, there is no globalization without glocalization.

The spread of Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan is an example of the globalization of Chinese culture (Sinicization). Buddhism arrived in Japan in 538 or 552. Buddhism was both a component of and vehicle for the transmission of Chinese culture. At the time Buddhism arrived in Japan, Japanese society was a relatively unadvanced society with nearly complete illiteracy. However, Chinese characters (*kanji*) revolutionized Japanese culture and education in particular. Furthermore, according to Tamaru (1996: 58), the Japanese syllabaries (*goju onzu*), were apparently modeled on Sanskrit. Additionally, Buddhist temples served not only as religious institutions but also as centers of learning, especially of philosophy, medical science, and astrology. Japanese education has its roots in formal instruction as provided by Buddhist priests (Dore 1983)⁽²⁾. Also, printing techniques were mastered and diffused by the Buddhist temples.

Similarly, green tea, widely associated with Japanese culture, came to Japan with Buddhism. It is Eisai, founder of Rinzai Zen Buddhism, who is credited with bringing tea to Japan which was regarded as a tonic for alertness during Zen meditation. In this same way, the Buddhist influence on the Japanese arts, such as painting, sculpture, music and *No* theater, where Buddhist motives are apparent, is indisputable. Also, popular art forms, such as the tea ceremony (*sado*), and flower arrangement (*ikebana*), have been inspired by Buddhist aesthetics.

Buddhist philosophy enriched the simplistic worldview of the ancient Japanese. Buddhist ideas, such as transmigration of souls, or *samsara* (*rinne* 輪廻), karma (*go* 業, *innen* 因縁), salvation, non-ego (*muga* 無我), nirvana (*nehan* 涅槃), emptiness, world-denying and transcendental orientation (as opposed to the traditional Japanese this-worldly orientation) exposed the Japanese mind to more universal values. The Buddhist teachings of

suffering and impermanence contributed to the development of a more philosophical sense of spirituality and the sensibilities often characterized by *mono no aware* (もののあわれ), or the aesthetic sense of beauty and its evanescence. Sentiments associated with impermanence and transience are often expressed in Japanese poetry and literature.

But just as Buddhism has contributed to Sinicization of Japanese culture, Buddhism itself has changed under the influence of that culture and particularly under the influence of the Japanese sense of spirituality and religiosity. Buddhism in Japan transformed itself from a world-denying religion into a world-affirming religion (Tamaru 1996).

Any foreign religion, to be accepted in a new country, must accommodate itself to that new environment and assimilate itself to the religious needs of the local people, and thus globalize. First, we must establish what the essence of Japanese religiosity is. I would like to argue that the two main features of Japanese religiosity are this-worldly benefits and ancestor worship, which in a way are interrelated: ancestors must be worshipped according to proper funeral and memorial rituals so that they do not turn into malevolent angry spirits and do not interfere with the living. The safest way to keep the ancestors satisfied is to send them to the paradise known as the Pure Land (*Jodo* 浄土).

Shinto, a traditional Japanese religion, in accord with the this-worldly orientation of the Japanese people and with its abhorrence of blood and death, was badly equipped to provide proper care for the dead. This opened up an opportunity for Buddhism to develop funeral and memorial rituals, and thus be widely and eagerly accepted by the Japanese as a superior religion for ancestor worship. The Jodo (Pure Land) sects with their easy access to the Pure Land paradise—simply chanting the name of Amida (*nembutsu* 念仏)—had the obvious capacity for ancestor worship, and funeral ceremonies started with the Jodo sects. However, the Soto Zen sects, which were originally preoccupied with meditation and therefore were not

very popular among the masses, elaborated the funeral ceremonies to their present state and in the process gained many followers.

Another aspect of Japanese religiosity involves the pursuit of this-worldly benefits. Magic is utilized to achieve tangible rewards. Therefore, to be popular among the masses, religions in Japan have to provide funeral and memorial services for the dead and/or incorporate magic to provide tangible benefits. The Pure Land sects rejected magic and concentrated on funeral services. Soto Zen adopted both funeral services and magic. Also, Nichiren sects adopted both practices, although magic probably plays a more important role in Nichiren sects than funeral services. Only Rinzai Zen managed to remain considerably faithful to its founder's emphasis on meditation. Rinzai gained the support of the high-ranking *samurai* 侍 class during the Kamakura period and after securing financial privilege, Rinzai did not have to adjust to the needs of the masses.

The Jodo, Nichiren, and Zen sects—the sects typically referred to as the sects of Kamakura Buddhism—are credited with the popularization of Buddhism, which until then was the religion of the aristocracy. Thus, the Jodo Shin and Jodo sects were especially widespread among the peasantry, and Soto Zen gained popularity among the lower ranking *samurai* and the peasantry. The townspeople, merchants and some lower ranking *samurai* found affinity with Nichiren's teachings. Rinzai, as explained above, became popular among the upper *samurai* classes (Tamaru 1996; Watanabe 1970).

Buddhism became widely accepted in Japan as a “family religion” (Shinto is considered a “community religion”). In this way, the globalization of Buddhism in Japan was successful because of its efficacious assimilation to the Japanese religious matrix—glocalization. This is in opposition to Christianity, which I will now discuss.

3.2. Globalization of Christianity in Japan

Christian affairs in Japan in the 16th-17th centuries consist of an attempt to globalize Christian teachings, ethics and values, and European culture in general. It was part of a larger enterprise of global integration that included the expansion of European trade, economy, and politics.

Christianity was introduced to Japan in 1549 by Saint Francis Xavier, a Spanish Jesuit, during the Country in War Period (*Sengoku Jidai*). Japan was in anarchy and impoverished by civil wars during this period. The success of Christianity in Japan was predominantly determined by the material needs of the Japanese rather than by their religious needs. Christianity presented a religio-economico-political system to the Japanese, especially to the Japanese *samurai* class, in whom the Jesuits were interested. It was a religion, but attached to it were economic and political benefits, especially the foreign trade in silk and armaments, so important in periods of war.

Christianity brought with it European science, medicine, naval and military technology and the printing press used for publishing Christian and language books. Christianity was accompanied by European philosophy and Christian ethics of equality, which was particularly attractive for women and the less privileged, and love and freedom, which liberated converts from Buddhist karma. Missionaries pioneered institutionalized social welfare in Japan, founding hospitals, orphanages and almshouses (Ross 1994; Suzuki 1996)⁽³⁾. They also established schools and seminaries. Christianity also introduced European fine arts, such as music, painting and sculpture into Japan.

The missionaries chose to focus their evangelization efforts on the nobility with the assumption that the lower classes would follow suit. Missionaries became go-betweens for European merchants and the Japanese nobility. While some *daimyo* (feudal lords) became Christians because of conviction, most became converts out of self-interest and the lure of

foreign trade. In either case, their vassals were ordered to become Christians. Profits from the trade were so attractive that some *daimyo*, not converts themselves, protected the missionaries and permitted the conversion of their subjects. Few *daimyo*, if any, became Christians out of conviction. Christian concepts, such as a transcendental god, ethical requirements (equality, love for others, humility, the non-killing of others, and the non-exposure of one's own life to risk) were in conflict with their warrior ethic. According to Elison (1983: 306), the Japanese feudal lords 'pursued their own interests before those of their church. They were *daimyo* first, and Christians second,' and when their interests required it, they fought other Christians, and with very few exceptions, they forsook their faith when it proved politically favorable.

Oda Nobunaga, who succeeded in reuniting central Japan, had no personal inclination towards Christianity, but did not oppose Christianity mainly for economic and political reasons. Actually, he favored the missionaries and granted them generous concessions. Nobunaga and the missionaries had a common enemy in the Buddhist monks, who opposed Nobunaga's quest for power. After Nobunaga's death in 1582, Toyotomi Hideyoshi succeeded in unifying the whole country under a central government after over a hundred years of civil wars. During the first few years of his rule, Hideyoshi continued Nobunaga's favorable policy towards the Jesuits as he also shared with them common enemies, the Buddhist monks. The sudden change of Hideyoshi's attitude to the missionaries in 1587 was influenced by the intrigue of an ex-Tendai monk, Seyakuin Hoin who was Hideyoshi's physician. The intrigue led to the Edict of Banishment of 1587 in which Hideyoshi ordered all missionaries to leave Japan within twenty days, but as no ship was scheduled to leave for the next six months, the missionaries were allowed to stay for six months. Ultimately the Edict of Banishment was not enforced and the missionaries were tolerated until Hideyoshi's death in 1598 (Boxer 1951; Jennes 1973).

It seems that the main threat to Hideyoshi was the loyalty of the Christian *daimyo* to the foreign missionaries and authorities, and the constant meddling of the missionaries in Japanese politics. Hideyoshi feared that even at best, Christianity would become another political power, such as militant Buddhism had, and at worst it would turn Japan into a foreign colony. Hideyoshi's suspicion that the missionaries' ultimate goal was to colonize Japan was confirmed for him in 1596 when a Spanish ship, the *San Felipe*, bound from Manila to Acapulco (Mexico), was driven off course and ran ashore in Shikoku. The pilot of the ship is said to have shown a map of Spain's vast colonial holdings and to have admitted that missionaries had been instrumental in acquiring them. This incident infuriated Hideyoshi to such an extent that he ordered the crucifixion of twenty-six persons in Nagasaki in 1597. He also issued a decree ordering all Jesuits to leave Japan.

After Hideyoshi's death in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu succeeded him in 1600. Like his predecessors Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, Ieyasu had no personal interest in Christianity. However, he treated missionaries as indispensable mediators between the Japanese and the Europeans, namely the Portuguese traders (the Spaniards had stopped sending ships after the *San Felipe* incident). The Macao trade, controlled by the Portuguese, was the most profitable and the major source of income for Ieyasu. The first six years (1600-1606) of Ieyasu's regime were the most fruitful for Christianity in Japan and Boxer (1951: 187) estimates that in 1606 there were 750,000 Christians in Japan. Thus as long as Christianity served the political and economic goals of the feudal rulers, they gave support to it. The same policy was applied toward Buddhist sects.

The early Tokugawa period saw the revival of older beliefs. Buddhism, which had lost much of its influence under the rule of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, gradually recovered prestige and power, and started its attacks on Christianity. Ieyasu himself was an ardent adherent of Jodo Buddhism. Also neo-Confucianism propagated by some Japanese scholars

began to assert itself against Christianity. Confucianism emphasized the virtues of loyalty and filial piety, and thus presented the ideal ethical guidance for the *samurai* and was perfect as an ideology for the Tokugawa regime. Shinto, as an indigenous socio-religious system, was supported by Ieyasu in order to aid the unification of the country under the Tokugawa government.

Under the influence of his advisors, Ieyasu's aversion to Christianity gradually grew stronger. One incident which resulted in Ieyasu's increasing hostility towards Christianity was the affair of the Portuguese ship *Madre de Deus* (also known as the *Nossa Senhora de Graca*) in 1609-1610. Its captain, after unsuccessful negotiations with Ieyasu, blew up his ship with its precious cargo. This incident resulted in the suspension of Portuguese trade for two years. In search for new possibilities of trade, Ieyasu began negotiations with the viceroy of New Spain (Mexico) who sent his envoy, Sebastian Vizcaino in 1611. However, when Vizcaino started to survey the East coast of Kanto, allegedly in order to find an appropriate harbor for a port, Ieyasu became suspicious of the probability of Spanish invasion (Boxer 1951).

Other proposals for trade came from the Dutch and the English. The Dutch first arrived in Japan in 1600 and were allowed to open trade in 1605. The first Dutch factory was established at Hirado in 1609. The English ships started to arrive in Japan after June 1613. The Japanese red-seal ships (*shuin-sen*) also increased their activities. These Japanese-owned ships operated under a special license, which permitted them to engage in overseas expeditions and trade. Thus gradually the monopolistic Portuguese trade was supplanted by the Dutch, the English and the Spanish, as well as the Japanese red-seal ships. The role of the missionaries as go-betweens was also drastically reduced, and their role as interpreters was usurped by the Europeans who settled in Japan, and by the Japanese themselves. Each of the factors discussed above played its role in Ieyasu's final decision to ban Christianity in

1614. Under this edict, foreign missionaries were ordered to leave Japan and all Christians were to apostatize and convert to Buddhism (Boxer 1951; Jennes 1973; Nosco 1996).

The edict was followed by bloodshed. It is difficult to establish how many people gave their lives for Christianity. It is estimated that some 3000 to 5000 persons were martyred (seventy-one Europeans among them) between 1614 and 1643, when the last European missionary was executed. According to Kataoka (1967: 35), approximately fifty-six percent of all Japanese martyrs died by decapitation, some twelve percent were burned at the stake, two percent were crucified, another twelve percent were tortured to death or died in other violent circumstances, and eighteen percent died in prison as a result of wounds, torture, and privations. The persecution of Christians also forced many to abandon their homes and emigrate to escape persecution and to save their lives. Boxer (1951: 335) claims that the population of Nagasaki decreased by 20,000 between 1613 and 1615. He estimates that a number subsequently moved northeast, some as far as Hokkaido. By 1630, the northeastern provinces gained 26,000 Christians (Boxer 1951: 358).

Those who died in the Shimabara Uprising (1637-1638) are also regarded as victims of anti-Christian persecution. The insurrection, although not overtly religious in character, had millenarian overtones. The majority of the insurgents were Christians. The rebellion made it convenient for the *bakufu* (shogunate) to get rid of many Christians in a very short time. The Shimabara Uprising lasted for four months and resulted in the massacre of 37,000 persons. The failure of the authorities to annihilate Christianity, as evident in the constant discovery of Christian groups, and especially the incidence of the Shimabara Uprising which required a *bakufu* army of more than 100,000 men to defeat the insurgents, led to the policy of national seclusion (*sakoku*) in 1639. The policy forbade commercial relationships with foreign countries except for the Netherlands, China and Korea (Elison 1988; White 1995).

The goal of the national seclusion policy was to put an end to foreign (mainly Spanish and Portuguese) influences, both religious and political, and to divest the Christian *daimyo* of gains from their relationships with missionaries. The policy was also directed towards monopolization (by the *bakufu*) of the foreign trade (which in fact increased in volume after the national seclusion policy was introduced), and towards the monopolization of information on European countries, their politics, science, discoveries, and major events (the annual reports on world progress and developments were prepared by the Dutch).

Another measure taken by the *bakufu* to eradicate Christianity and to control religious affiliation in Japan was the introduction of the *terauke* 寺受 system which required every Japanese household to register at their local Buddhist temple, and receive a certificate verifying their affiliation with Buddhism (*terauke-jo* 寺受状). Through this compulsory registration, the government controlled the entire population as well as the temples. The shogunate also introduced *fumie* 踏み絵 (a tablet inscribed with Christian figures or a crucifix, to be trodden on to prove oneself to be a non-Christian), resident spy system, *gonin-gumi* 五人組 (collective responsibility system), and mutual observation. Surveys of religious affiliation (*shumon aratame-cho* 宗門改め帳) were conducted every year (Kataoka 1967; Nosco 1996).

3.3. The Glocalization of Christianity in Japan: The Case of Kakure Kirishitan

After Christianity was proscribed in Japan and amidst the subsequent persecution and martyrdom, many Christians in Kyushu went underground to protect their lives. Sotome, situated some thirty kilometers northwest of Nagasaki (see the map below), where I conducted extensive field research for almost a year, is one such place where Christianity survived until the present day in its clandestine form of Kakure Kirishitanism (Hidden Christianity) which had acculturated to Japanese conditions.



MAP 1. Location of Sotome

In 1563, Omura Sumitada, lord of the Omura domain (*han*) in which Sotome was situated, became the first *daimyo* to convert to Christianity. This was followed by the Christianization of Sotome, a conversion of the populace completed by 1577. At the time of the 1614 edict prohibiting Christianity, the entire area of Sotome was Christian. However, in the years immediately following, approximately half of the region's Christians apostatized, converting to Buddhism. History has shown that the apostates proved to be the worst persecutors. The area had a well established spy system and witnessed many incidents of persecution and martyrdom. Thus the need for concealment of Christianity was very strong in Sotome.

There are various reasons for the survival of Christianity in Sotome. Portions of Sotome became the property of Lord Nabeshima of the Saga domain at the end of the 16th century, and it is mainly in these Saga hamlets of Sotome that Christianity survived. These communities were some eighty kilometers away from central Saga. Because they were small, poor and isolated (known as *tobichi*, or detached estates), Saga authorities were not greatly concerned with them. In this sense, political, geographical, and economic factors contributed to the preservation of Christianity. However, the most important factor is its indigenization, i.e., the adaptation of Christianity to the Japanese religious ethos and its amalgamation with folk religion based on Buddhist and Shinto beliefs and rites. Because of the necessity of concealment, Buddhist and Shinto practices, originally used as camouflage, became part of Kakure Kirishitanism and are no longer distinguished as non-Christian.

To avoid persecution which intensified since the 1620s, Christians of Sotome nominally apostatized, affiliated themselves with local Buddhist temples, and rendered their religion essentially invisible. They recited their prayers in silence, and disguised their objects of worship, such as statues of Jesus and Virgin Mary as the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, *Kannon* (観音), or as mountain deities, *Yama no Kami* (山の神). More obvious Christian objects of worship, such as rosaries, crucifixes, and holy pictures were hidden in the roofs and walls of their houses. Contacts with the outside world were avoided. This was aided by the fact that they lived in remote mountainous areas. They tended to marry close relatives, and if the bride or groom happened to be non-Kirishitan, he or she converted to Kakure Kirishitanism upon marriage.

Thus Kakure Kirishitan (Hidden Christians) practiced their religion in concealment and without missionary supervision for over 250 years. Upon the return of Western missionaries to Japan in the second half of the 19th century, many Kakure Kirishitan converted to Catholicism. However, some rejected Catholicism and continue to practice Kakure

Kirishitanism to the present day. Throughout the centuries, this religion has undergone a process of indigenization, becoming an eclectic amalgamation of Christian, Buddhist, Shinto and folk beliefs and customs, and they are now inseparable. The Kakure Kirishitan, however, were not aware of this process. It is significant that Christianity in the West, and more precisely, Catholicism, itself was subject to many changes in teachings, observances, and rites during those 250 years. So it is not surprising that many Kakure Kirishitan consider their religion to be true Christianity, and regard Catholicism as a new religion.

In a way Kakure Kirishitan are justified in their belief. For example, old taboos, such as fasting or abstinence from certain foods or from work, were the core of the Catholic faith in the 16th century. These diet and work restrictions remain an important part of Kakure Kirishitanism, while contemporary Catholics have changed their focus from diet to more ethical concerns. Thus Kakure Kirishitan abstain from consuming meat including poultry and eggs every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and during the forty-six-day Lent before Easter, which they call *kanashimi-no kan* 悲しみの間 (period of sorrows). In the past when meat (with the exception of fish and whale) was eaten rarely in Japan and in Kakure Kirishitan communities of farmers and fishermen, this restriction did not cause much friction. After World War II, however, the Japanese diet changed, and foods, such as meat and products of Western cuisine made of eggs such as cakes, mayonnaise, etc., have become a part of the Japanese diet, and so old taboos have become a real burden.

As explained above, ancestor worship and this-worldly benefits are considered the most important aspects of the Japanese religious ethos; therefore it is not surprising that they also play the core role in Kakure Kirishitanism. During the forty-six-day Lent, memorial services for the ancestors (*hoji*) are performed almost every day. Kakure Kirishitan say their prayers and use Christian terminology in a distorted version of Latin which they do not understand. These prayers act as magical incantations. When asked why they say prayers, Kakure

Kirishitan reply: ‘For our ancestors.’ Most of them add: ‘Also for health and safety.’ When asked why they continue their religious practices, the most common reply is: ‘It would be inexcusable towards our ancestors if we renounced the faith for which they suffered so much.’ Their response to my question as to why they do not renounce their relations with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines was: ‘The temples and shrines protected our ancestors during persecution so it would be unfaithful and ungrateful towards our ancestors as well as towards the temples and shrines.’

Ancestors in Japan are commonly referred to as *hotoke* 仏, or Buddhas. Each person receives a posthumous Buddhist name, which denotes his or her status in the afterlife; the more expensive the posthumous name, the higher the status. Kakure Kirishitan do not need to buy posthumous names for their ancestors, as the dead Kakure Kirishitan’s Christian name, which they called *arima* in distorted Latin (from *anima*, the soul), received at the baptism ceremony, serves in this capacity. After one’s death, the title San or Santa (Portuguese/Spanish ‘saint’ for the male or female respectively) is attached to the deceased person’s Christian name. For example, Basuchan (Sebastian) and Kachirina (Catherine) are posthumously addressed as San Basuchan and Santa Kachirina. Thus all Kakure Kirishitan dead not only go to heaven, but all become Saints.

According to Kataoka (1967: 118) orthodox Christian doctrine was well preserved by Kakure Kirishitan until the end of the Tokugawa period and it was indigenized only since the Meiji period. It seems, however, that the process of acculturation began much earlier, presumably from the time of the very introduction of Christianity in the 16th century. Christianity, as an element of the European culture, comprises certain dogmas, values and norms which are alien to the Japanese socio-religious tradition. The knowledge of Christian doctrine among Kakure Kirishitan is limited to the facts that Jesus died on a cross and Maria was his mother. The Kakure Kirishitan explained to me that the god (*kami*), they believe in,

is *Zezezu*, otherwise called *Kirisuto*. He is the *kami* who was crucified. The concept of God the Creator is unclear. When Kakure Kirishitan were discovered in Amakusa in 1806, the government officials reported that their ‘principal object of veneration is Deus, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, and that his mother is a Buddha called Santa Mariya’ (Jennes 1973: 206). Thus the concepts of Deus, pronounced *Dedusu* by Kakure Kirishitan, and Jesus, pronounced *Zezezu*, became one.

Kakure Kirishitanism makes no pretense of being monotheistic. The 16th-century Catholicism with its concept of the Holy Trinity and its multitude of saints, was most likely not conceived of as monotheistic by the Japanese. Presently Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the saints, the Japanese martyrs, and one’s distant ancestors (those who died long ago) are all venerated as *kami*. Objects of worship, particularly the relics of the martyrs—pieces of martyrs’ clothes stained with their blood, old crucifixes, medallions, rosaries, holy pictures, images of saints, etc.—are also venerated as *kami* and are believed to possess supernatural properties, such as healing powers. Like Shinto *kami* whose symbol is concealed in the *honden* (main hall of the shrine) and is never allowed to be seen, so too are the Kakure Kirishitan objects of worship. They are usually hidden in the roofs or walls of Kakure Kirishitan houses. During some important holy days these sacred objects are taken out, put on a tray and held up to the believers’ foreheads so that the spiritual properties of these objects can be absorbed into the believers’ bodies. The Kakure Kirishitan apply these objects to affected body parts for curing illnesses. These objects were not shown to me by practicing Kakure Kirishitan, but only by those who had given up the religion. The faithful believe that these objects lose their powers and healing properties when revealed to non-believers, and that heavenly punishment will be incurred (*bachu kaburu* 罰かぶる).

Some natural objects such as trees, rocks, and stones are believed in Japan to have divine properties. Kakure Kirishitans of Sotome share this belief. The Kakure Kirishitan

when sick or in trouble visit Karematsu Jinja, a shrine built over the tomb of San Jiwan, an unidentified foreign priest who was active in the Sotome area after the prohibition of Christianity. There they rub their bodies with small stones which are in the shrine, or take a stone home as a charm. Informants told me that during the Second World War almost all the stones disappeared from the Karematsu Shrine, as they were taken either by the Kakure Kirishitan soldiers or by their wives and mothers to serve as protection amulets for the men. The spot has been a sacred place for the Kakure Kirishitan since the death of San Jiwan, most likely in the 1640s. In the vicinity of the tomb there is a big rock under which Kakure Kirishitan used to study their secret Latin prayers, especially during Lent. As the place is on a hill far from the village of Kurosaki, they were not in danger of being overheard.

It was not until 1937 that a shrine was erected there, and because Shinto was by then the Japanese state religion, this became a *jinja*, i.e., a Shinto shrine. Apparently a non-Kirishitan local shaman (*kitoshi*) ordered the shrine to be built to appease San Jiwan's spirit, which had allegedly become a *muen-botoke* 無縁仏 (literally a Buddha with no relatives). It is believed in Japan that those who die an untimely death and have no families to pray for them and care for their graves become *muen-botoke*. As such persons' lives were in some sense not completed and they had unresolved problems in this world, their souls are believed to be still attached to this world. Such spirits may become malevolent and cause harm to the living (Hori 1968). San Jiwan, the foreign missionary who died young in tragic circumstances, with no descendants to pray for his ascendance to heaven, allegedly became such a Buddha.

As in Japanese folk beliefs, taboos also play an important role in Kakure Kirishitanism. On Sundays, feast-days and on the so-called *sawari no hi* 障りの日 (days of 'impediment' or 'ill effect') all work, even needlework, is taboo. These taboo days are observed on the 20th and 23rd day of each month, commemorating the day when Basuchan, the most celebrated

leader of Kakure Kirishitan in Sotome, was arrested and the day he was beheaded. I heard criticism from Buddhists that the major reason for the poverty of the Kakure Kirishitan is that they have so many holy days when they do not work, and that they use religion as an excuse for their laziness.

Kakure Kirishitan also had a sacred tree (in Shinto called *shimboku*), which they relate to the legend of Basuchan. Basuchan learned his priestly skills as a disciple of San Jiwan, and acted as a substitute priest in the Sotome area after San Jiwan's death. Basuchan was arrested in 1657, during the Kori Persecution (*Kori Kuzure*), was imprisoned for three years, tortured and finally beheaded (Kataoka 1967). He is said to have carved a cross on the trunk of a *tsubaki no ki* (camellia or Japanese rose tree). Local authorities learned of the tree and decided to cut it down in 1856 during a persecution known as the Third Persecution at Urakami (*Urakami Sanban Kuzure*), yet they were forestalled by the Kakure Kirishitan, who felled the tree at night and divided it among themselves. Pieces of the tree are venerated as household treasures (*takara-mono*), and chips of it are still put in head-bands placed on the deceased to protect them in the afterlife.

Kakure Kirishitan, like other Japanese, abhor blood and death, due to the Shinto tradition, where sin is understood not in ethical terms, as is the case in Christianity, but as pollution (*kegare* 穢れ). Because of the fear of blood pollution, no females, except for the very young and very old, are allowed to enter the main hall of a Shinto shrine (*honden*), or a hall where religious rites are performed (*heiden*) due to the possibility of menstruating. After giving birth, women must undergo a purification ceremony (Filus 1999). The abhorrence of blood and death is shared by Kakure Kirishitans. The Kirishitan leader must give up his post upon the death of his wife (Furuno 1959).

A deceased Kakure Kirishitan must be buried in a white robe. In the village of Shitsu (in Sotome, see the map), the local leader's wife prepares the robe. However, his mother will

prepare the robe if the wife is still young, because of the possibility of menstrual contamination. In the village of Kurosaki (also in Sotome) it is believed that the more women sew the robe, the happier the deceased will be in the afterlife. However, pregnant, menstruating, and divorced women are excluded. The Kakure Kirishitan leader avoids contact with the body of the deceased, but must pray for the departed for a period of one week. He does this in the room next to where the body lies in state, or in his own house. The leader never walks to the cemetery with the mourners.

One exception was the leader of a Kakure Kirishitan group from Kurosaki, Murakami Shigeru, who broke with this tradition and began to walk to the cemetery in 1984 (he became the leader in 1983), following the Catholic custom. However, Murakami was rather unusual, since at heart he was a Catholic who did not wish to officially convert to Catholicism. During the walk to the cemetery he also recited Kakure Kirishitan prayers out loud, using a microphone, another innovation. Kakure Kirishitan traditionally recite prayers in silence. His son continues his father's reformed Kakure Kirishitan tradition.

The abhorrence of pollution and the preoccupation with purification is also evident in Kakure Kirishitan baptism rituals. For a week prior to baptism, the leader may not touch a night-soil bucket or cattle. Neither may he work nor have sexual relations (Furuno 1959; cf. Yanagita 1957). He bathes before the ceremony. In the past, if the leader was on his way to the baptism ceremony and happened to meet a 'polluting' non-Kirishitan (a person symbolizing sin), he was required to return home and bathe again. The ritual has been rationalized, and nowadays the leader bathes at the place of baptism.

Yet another example of indigenization of Christian ritual is in Holy Communion during the Kakure Kirishitan mass, wherein *sashimi* is substituted for the host, and *sake* for the wine.

4. Lessons to be Learnt from the Fate of Christianity in Japan

Sotome is an interesting case to study in terms of the outcomes of globalization. There are some lessons to be learnt from the fate of Christianity in Sotome. Its history demonstrates what happens when globalization is abruptly halted. In the 17th century, globalization failed; it created hatred, persecution, exclusiveness, and bloodshed. The history of Christianity in Sotome also shows in a way that globalization cannot be stopped, as in spite of cruel persecution, Christianity survived underground. However, global unity should be based on tolerance, inclusiveness, diversity, and pluralism, meaning that the equality of all religions must be recognized. In the 16th and 17th centuries and again in the 19th century when Japan was reopened and Christianity allowed, globalization was attempted and unification achieved at the expense of diversity. At that time both religious and political authorities, namely Christianity, some Buddhist denominations, the Tokugawa regime, and the Imperial regime demonstrated a high level of intolerance.

Sotome has witnessed not only the violent history of Christianity but also socio-religious conflicts as created by Buddhist denominations and other religions (for more details see Filus 1997, 1999, 2003). Kakure Kirishitan have traditionally lived in isolated communities. The amalgamation of a few villages of different religious composition into Sotome town in 1955 created a situation wherein people of various and often antagonistic religions could no longer avoid each other but had to learn to cooperate. Sotome is a place where followers of thirteen religions now coexist. Inter-religious marriages have become a reality of life with which not only the concerned couples but their families and communities have to cope. The local administration often has to deal with conflicting religious interests. The analysis of the local administration in the past fifty years reveals the importance of religion in politics, an importance which in Japan is often underestimated and relegated to the past.

The people of Sotome, though they live in a mountainous rural area, have been exposed to foreign culture and foreign visitors. Sotome is in a sister-city relationship with the French town of Vaux Sur Ore in Normandy. A French missionary, Father Marc de Rotz, who was born in Vaux Sur Ore, lived and worked in Sotome from 1879 until 1914. He is renowned for his extensive welfare activities in the area, such as establishing five schools for girls and boys, an orphanage, a hospital, a home for the elderly, a maternity clinic for women, a refuge for women, and several business enterprises, such as a bakery, a macaroni factory, textile and sewing factories, in order to elevate the standard of living of the local people.

Because of the sister-city relationship, many people of Sotome, including members of the local government and school children, have visited France and other European countries. As a visit to the Vatican is usually on the itinerary, many Buddhists of Sotome have been exposed to European Catholic culture. It is interesting to observe how the encounter with foreign culture and religion changed their consciousness. Tourists and students from all over Japan and from overseas come to Sotome to study its history and folklore and to visit local museums and memorials, especially the Endo Shusaku Literary Museum. Himself a Catholic, Endo wrote his masterpiece novel *Silence (Chinmoku)* inspired by the tragic history of Christianity in Japan and his personal experiences. *Silence* is set in Sotome.

Interestingly, ancestor worship, the most significant aspect of Japanese religiosity, serves as an important unifying factor for all antagonistic religions in the area, even Catholicism. Buddhist members have to attend Catholic funerals and memorial services, and Catholics have to participate in Buddhist funeral ceremonies. Memorial services for the war dead organized by the local government are performed by Buddhist monks and Catholic priests who have to cooperate during the ceremonies. It is only in the twenty-first century that the effects of globalization have borne fruit as is evident in growing mutual understanding and respect arising between the religiously differing communities in Sotome.

Finally, I would like to argue that from the analysis of the process of indigenization of Christianity in Japan some analogies can be drawn regarding how Christianity was indigenized and assimilated in Europe. Christianity, originally a Judaic sect, evolved in Europe by assimilating many pagan beliefs, rites, and practices. There seem to be great similarities between the impact of European paganism on Christianity and the impact of Japanese folk religion on European Catholicism in Japan. In the 19th century, Catholic authorities rejected Kakure Kirishianism and, correspondingly, the Kakure Kirishitan rejected Catholicism. The mutual rejection created hatred and isolation. Most researchers of Kakure Kirishitanism claim that the religion, as it is now, is a Japanese folk religion, rather than Christianity. I would like to argue to the contrary that it is 'Japanized Catholicism,' or paraphrasing Mark Mullins (1998), it is 'Catholicism made in Japan.' Any religion in order to be widely accepted in society needs to be indigenized and popularized. Otherwise that religion is perceived as alien and remains marginal, as is the case with contemporary Catholicism and Protestantism in Japan. It is time Catholic authorities give some recognition to Kakure Kirishitanism and learn lessons regarding the religious needs of the Japanese people.

5. Conclusion

As stated above, in order to be successfully globalized, any culture or religion must be globalized, indigenized, and assimilated to the local cultural values and/or local religious needs. However, I would like to argue that there is one more important condition for successful globalization: namely, the support of the local political authority. Such was the case with Christianity which was originally persecuted in the Roman Empire and was able to flourish only after Emperor Constantine the Great removed the ban on it in 313 (Edict of Milan), began its patronage, and made it Roman state religion in 325. Then Christianity

became successfully globalized throughout all of Europe primarily because the local kings converted to Christianity and imposed it on their subjects. Only then the process of its assimilation into the local religious matrix in Europe began and took centuries before glocalization was finally accomplished. Similarly, the popularization of Buddhism began with King Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism. He made Buddhism the state religion of his kingdom in approximately 260 BC and soon began to propagate Buddhism in India and beyond.

Looking at religious history in Japan, it is clear that both Buddhism and Christianity flourished when they were supported by the political authorities of aristocracy, emperor, feudal lords (*daimyo*), or *shogun*. The complete glocalization of Buddhism was achieved with introduction of the *terauke* system, forced conversion to Buddhism and Buddhist temple registration, which was ordered by the *bakufu* to eradicate Christianity, as discussed above. This led to the *danka seido* 檀家制度, where all Japanese became parishioners of their local Buddhist temples. Thus, ironically, it may be argued that Christianity unconsciously and unwillingly contributed to the final glocalization of Buddhism in Japan.

Unfortunately for Christianity, the political support for the religion or, rather, its toleration, was limited and at best lasted for merely sixty years. The severity and cruelty of persecution which followed resulted in almost total eradication of Christianity. Only a handful of uneducated peasants dared to continue to practice the forbidden Christian faith. Consequently, Christianity was adapted to the needs of these uncultivated Japanese farmers. Like in Buddhism, ancestor worship began to play a major role in Kakure Kirishitanism. But to claim that Kakure Kirishitanism is not Christianity is to say that Japanese Buddhism is not true Buddhism.

Another important aspect of the glocalization of religion is the role played by the religious authorities. Japanese Buddhist denominations, especially those of the Kamakura

period, established their headquarters in Japan and even if they had Chinese Buddhist roots, like Jodo or Zen Buddhism, they became independent of the Chinese religious authorities. This is in contrast to Christianity, especially Catholicism which is centrally controlled by the Vatican. Even though some religious authorities who had worked locally in Japan, such as Father Valignano, Visitor of Jesuit Mission in Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries, understood and supported the adaptation of Christianity to Japanese culture, in large part, his efforts were contradicted by other missionaries working in Japan, and were eventually brought to an abrupt end by the Edict of Prohibition of Christianity in 1614 (Ross 1994).

Moreover, it is noteworthy that Buddhism did not arrive to Japan directly from India, but from China and Korea, where it was successfully assimilated to East Asian religious needs. Therefore, only minor adjustments were required for Buddhism to further fit into the religious matrix of Japan. Christianity on the other hand arrived in Japan in its pure European form, badly equipped to suit the Japanese religious and ethical values.

Finally, it must be remembered that Buddhism arrived in Japan 1000 years prior to Christianity. The processes of globalization and glocalization take a very long time. History will show whether Christianity is totally unsuited to the Japanese religious and ethical needs, or whether these needs will change (in the process of progressing globalization) to the extent that Christianity will fit them. Or perhaps globalization, especially ‘globalization from below’ and its reverse flows, will change Christianity to such an extent that it will become acceptable to the Japanese people.

Notes

- (1) This paper is based on the talk given by the author on December 11, 2008 at Seijo University called ‘Kakure Kirishitan (Hidden Christians) and Globalization.’ The talk

was sponsored by Seijo University Graduate School of Literature and Center for Glocal Studies (CGS).

- (2) Hakeda (1972: 56-57) describes Kukai's contribution to Japanese education for all, irrespective of social class, as follows:

Kukai opened the School of Arts and Sciences (*Shugei Shuchi-in* [綜芸種智院]) in 828... The School of Arts and Sciences was a private school open to all students, regardless of their social status or economic means. It was the first school in Japan to provide for universal education. Behind it was Kukai's conviction of the oneness of humanity, his ideal of equal opportunity in education, and his belief in the intrinsic value of each individual.

- (3) For example, Luis d'Almeida, a wealthy businessman and an accomplished surgeon, entered the Society of Jesus in Japan in 1555 and donated all his money to the Jesuit Mission. With that money, he established a hospital and an almshouse/orphanage in Funai, Bungo province in Kyushu, where he provided services for the poor and the outcasts free of charge. Franciscans also built two hospitals in Kyoto (Ross 1994).

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