

The Transformation of Biblical Myths in Japan

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Many systems of thoughts have migrated to Japan from abroad – Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, natural science, Marxism; all were transmitted to Japan and stopped there. It is said that Japan has been the terminus for imported thoughts. However, during the process of taking root in Japan almost every idea has been transformed within the Japanese mind. I would like to discuss a typical example of how Christianity has been changed within the Japanese mind.

The Hidden Christians in Japan

Christianity was initially brought to Japan in 1549 by Francisco Xavier, a Jesuit and co-worker of Ignatio Loyola. In 1547, Xavier met a Japanese refugee, Yajiro in Malacca, and he became very interested in learning about Japan and its highly cultured society. After a long journey, Xavier reached Japan on 15 August 1549 with two other Jesuits and Yajiro. Because of their extraordinary efforts and insights, they were able to spread the Christian faith to the Japanese. Xavier was especially impressed with three aspects of Japanese society: its highly ordered political and social system, its excellent schools (which he called universities), which were equal to the good European universities; and the high literacy rate. Consequently, Xavier thought that Japan was a promising land in which to sow the seeds of the Gospels.

I do not have the space here to go into detail about the Jesuit missionaries' endeavors in propagating Christianity, and will limit myself to pointing out two important things the Catholic missionaries did during the first stage of spreading the faith. One was the translation into Japanese of their teachings, with the help of the Japanese believers who could understand Portuguese or Latin.

The other was the importing of a printing press from Europe, which enabled them to print the Japanese translation of their teachings. For the first time, the Japanese were able to have printed books, which also facilitated the spread of Christianity. However, they had extreme difficulty with the translation of Christian concepts. At first Buddhist words were used, but this caused great misunderstanding; so they finally decided to use some basic Portuguese and Latin words, which they explained to avoid any confusion. The Catholic missionaries were also very active in establishing primary schools in which they taught not only Christian thought but also letters and calculus. By 1580, about two-hundred schools were established in the western part of Japan, and everything was progressing fairly well. However, in 1587, Hideyoshi Toyotomi, the most powerful person in Japan at the time, suddenly ordered the expulsion of the foreign Catholic missionaries. Hideyoshi, who had been rather sympathetic to the Catholics, became suspicious and feared that Christianity would put dangerous ideas into the minds of his people, whom he ruled with absolute power. In spite of Hideyoshi's edict, many foreign Catholic priests secretly remained in Japan and people were relatively free to believe in Christianity.

After Hideyoshi's death, the Tokugawa shogunate was established and the government enforced the prohibition of Christianity. Finally, in 1614, Tokugawa decided to prohibit the Christian religion completely, and many Christians were tragically martyred in Japan. The government found a clever way, called *Efumi* (stepping on a picture) to discover Christians: each year everyone had to step on a medallion bearing an image of the crucifix before the government officials. No Catholic priests remained in Japan, and it was believed that there were no Christians in Japan. However, the Christians survived secretly and pretended to be Buddhists or Shintoists in the north western part of Kyushu Island near Nagasaki. During the Tokugawa era, Japan closed its doors to the outside world to prevent any Christian influence entering the country. Holland was the only nation allowed to have contact with Japan through Nagasaki, and only on the condition that Christianity would not be spread.

However, about two centuries later, Japan was forced to open its ports by the strong foreign fleets that came to its shores. After

that, Catholics came to Japan to serve their own Western followers but the Japanese were still forbidden from adhering to in Christianity. One day in 1865, when father Pettitjean was in a church in Nagasaki, a few Japanese approached him and whispered, "We believe in the same God that you worship." Utterly surprised he announced to the West that he discovered had Hidden Christians (Kakure Kirishitan) in Japan. In 1873, the Japanese government finally lifted the prohibition of Christianity. After two hundred and fifty years in the underground, many Hidden Christians appeared, and a little more than half of them became Catholics. The rest kept their own faith, which they believed to be the old religion as opposed to what they saw as the new one. We will call them secret Christians. The numbers of secret Christians continued to decrease, and nowadays it is said that they number about two to three thousands and have great difficulty in keeping their beliefs because of the indifference of the younger generations.

The Myth of Hidden Christians

The Hidden Christians kept their religion in complete secrecy until religious and folklore researchers began to investigate their lives and faith. In 1931, Koya Takita, a researcher in religious studies, discovered that the Hidden Christians had their own myth called "The Beginning of Heaven and Earth" ("*Tenchi Hajimari-no-koto*"). A ninety-one-year-old man recited the entire myth to him, and later he gradually uncovered the nine copies of the written materials concerning the myth. The oldest one was dated 1827 and the newest 1926, and their contents did not differ much. It can be supposed that in the long period of seclusion, the Hidden Christians successfully transmitted their myth orally, and it was written down to preserve it in their memory. It is possible that the myth was changed during the course of time but this is not clear. Other books used by the Hidden Christians were found. Among these was one called *Dochirina Kirishitan*, (*Doctrines of Christianity*) which contained the orthodox teachings of their faith, whereas the myth, which will be examined later, was quite different from the original stories of the Bible.

The region where the copies of the myth were found is rather restricted and people there have chosen to keep their secret religion rather than becoming Catholics. Recently they have come to

rely more on their prayers (called *oratio*) and rituals. Although the myth had been very important in sustaining their hidden religion, nowadays the faithful do not know when and how the myth was recited.

It has been said that in the early stages of Christianity in Japan, part of the book of Matthew was translated but not the entire Bible. Consequently, the myth was based on the oral teachings of the Catholic missionaries and took its present form during the time of concealment. The myth consists of fifteen chapters. The first two chapters concern the Creation, and the following nine chapters relate the life of Christ starting from his birth to his resurrection. The next three chapters are about some stories not found in the Bible and stories about judgments and the final judgment. The last chapter about the fire in the next world was added at a later date.

From the orthodox Christian point of view, the myth can be criticized because of its distortions and errors. Actually, one of the Hidden Christians submitted a copy of the myth to Father Pettitjean. Solomon, who was present, said to his Japanese colleagues later that the myth contained strange legends and was not worth keeping, and it must have been discarded by him.

However strange it may have seemed to the European Christians, I think that "The Beginnings of Heaven and Earth" has value in helping us to understand the religious attitude of the Japanese. By investigating how the myth was changed, it is possible to learn about the religious thoughts and sentiments of the Japanese people. My discussion will be based on that point of view. Although their prayers and rituals would help us to understand the religious life of the Japanese Hidden Christians, I will limit myself here to treating only the myth.

The Creator God

The first sentence of the myth will be translated as follows: "The one whom we worship as Deus is the Lord of Heaven and the Earth and is the parent of human beings and all other things." The word Deus was used to denote the Christian God. In Japan, there was no concept of a creator God. The Japanese had a word, Kami, which was often translated into English as god; however Kami in

Japanese signifies something that arouses numerous feelings within people and includes human beings, animals, things, and natural phenomena. Moreover, the Japanese (and also the Chinese) do not differentiate the singular from the plural, so if the Catholic priests used the word *Kami* when talking about their God, the Japanese would have had a completely different image.

In Japanese mythology, the beginning of the world is described as a kind of spontaneous generation. It is very difficult for the Japanese, even now, to imagine a God who has a persona. Initially Xavier borrowed the Buddhist word "*Dai-nichi*" ("*Vairocana*") as the translation for God. Actually, *Dai-nichi* is the central figure of the Shingon Sect to which Yajiro, the Japanese refugee, had formerly belonged. However, it has a different meaning from "*Creator*". For example, *Dai-nichi* appears in *Hua-en* sutra with many *Bodhisatva* who speak one by one, surmising what *Dai-nichi* might want to say. The silent *Dai-nichi* is in the center, and throughout the voluminous sutra, he utters no words. Because it caused so many misunderstandings, Xavier finally decided to use the word "*Deus*" instead of *Dai-nichi*.

In the beginning of the myth of the Hidden Christians, *Deus* is mentioned as the Lord of heaven and the earth, which shows at least that they had retained the image of a monotheistic God. However, some Buddhist influences can already be seen in the second and third sentences. These say that *Deus* has 200 ranks and 42 special marks, while Buddhism claims that Buddha had 32 marks in his outlook. By saying that *Deus* had 42 phases, the Japanese Christians wanted to show his superiority. The myth goes on to say that God divided himself and part of him became the sun. This corresponds to God's creation of light in the Bible. It must have been difficult for the Japanese to think of God as creating the sun, so they said that God and the sun were originally one.

Then *Deus* created twelve heavens (the influence of Japanese Buddhism) including the moon, stars, and angels. *Jusuheru* (*Lucifer*) had 100 ranks and 32 marks within his figure. After creating the earth, water, and many other things, *Deus* created the body of a man and breathed into this body and called him *Adan* (*Adam*); *Adan* had 33 marks. Thereafter *Deus* made a woman and called her *Ewa* (*Eve*). In the Bible, *Eve* was created from *Adam*'s rib, but it seems that the Japanese Hidden Christians could not

accept this and related that Adam and Eve were created independently. It was possible that they felt that the biblical story overemphasized the male principle.

Since it was difficult for the Japanese to understand the Creator God, strange as it may seem, the Catholic missionaries in the sixteenth century relied on natural science to explain this concept of God. At that time, the natural sciences of the West were completely unknown to the Japanese. They were awed by the experiments conducted by the missionaries and by the technology and scientific principles that the missionaries imparted. The latter explained the scientific rules of cause and effect and then proceeded to explain the existence of the *prima causa*. This kind of explanation was utterly new to the Japanese, and many considered Christianity to be the best religion since it was so rational and logical compared to the Eastern religions. Xavier was aware of this and guided his followers to "Teach mathematics but not astrology to the Japanese." Because of this, they were able to succeed.

I would like to mention here a story concerning the Creator that is found further on in chapter six of the myth. The story relates that when Jesus became twelve years old, he went to a Buddhist temple to study under Gakujiuran, a learned priest who had read many Buddhist sutras. Gakujiuran said to Jesus that "anyone reciting the Namiamidabutsu [prayer to Amida Bodhisatva] can surely go to heaven." Christ asked him about paradise and hell as found in the Buddhistic teachings and said: "It is incomprehensible if you only claim that one can go to paradise for certain without giving any reason. Could you tell me how heaven and earth, the moon and human beings were created?" Gakujiuran replied: "You are so young but say such great things. Do you know about these things?" Whereupon Christ said: "I will tell you about it." Gakujiuran descended from his chair and submitted himself to Jesus.

This story stresses the image of rationally-minded Jesus who says it is not comprehensible to give assurances of something without giving a reason. It is interesting to note that Jesus asked a question that was concerned with the primal cause.

The Original Sin

Among other things, the idea of original sin is very difficult for the Japanese to understand. I would like to tell a story taken from

Japanese mythology in order to illustrate how different the Japanese mentality is from that of the West. The first parents, Izanagi and Izanami, were married, and the mother goddess, Izanami gave birth to the mountains, rivers and all things. Then she died by being burned after giving birth to fire. If this is compared to the Greek story of Prometheus who was punished severely after he stole fire from the gods, one can understand the generosity of the Japanese gods. At the cost of her life, the great goddess gave fire to human beings who received it without doing any work. Considering this difference in mentality, let us now consider the myth of the Hidden Christians regarding the transgression of God's commandments by Adan and Ewa.

Ewa (always mentioned first in the Japanese stories) and Adan had a son and a daughter and lived together in the realm of Koroteru. (The author was unable to find a source for this place.) Although it was different from paradise, it was easy to get to Paradise from Koroteru, and Ewa and Adan went there everyday to worship Deus. One day when Deus was away, Jusuhuero deceived the angels, saying that they should worship him because he was equal to Deus. Some of the angels worshipped him, as did Ewa and Adan. When Deus appeared, they regretted what they did and recited Konhirisan, the confessional prayer. Deus replied that even though they had worshipped Jusuhuero, they should never eat the fruit, *masan* (apple in Portuguese). After Jusuhuero heard this, he tempted Ewa to eat the fruit, saying that if she ate it, she would attain the same rank as Deus. After Ewa ate the fruit she offered it to Adan who also ate it. Deus appeared suddenly and said, "Adan, why did you eat the fruit of evil?" He was surprised and tried to regurgitate it, but it was stuck in his throat.

Ewa and Adan recited the prayer, *Salve Regina*, and were deeply repentant, but it was too late. This was the first prayer of confession. Then they pleaded with Deus. "Please let us enjoy the pleasure of paradise again." Deus relented, saying that if they remained repentant for more than four hundred years, he would allow them to return to Paradise. Then he cast Ewa off to become a dog in chuuten (the middle-heaven). Deus said that the children of Ewa had to live with remorse in the world below, eating the meat of animals, and worshipping the moon and stars. Jusuhuero was ordered to live in the middle-heaven as Thunder and was

lowered to the tenth rank. The angels who worshipped Jusuhuru became "Tengu" (a Japanese monster), and they also had to live in the middle-heaven.

This is their story of the Original Sin – but one cannot really call it so. What Deus did after the sin was quite different from what the Biblical God did. Throughout the Japanese story, one cannot help but be impressed by the merciful attitude of Deus. He accepted the fact that some angels had worshipped Jusuhuru. Ewa and Adan lost the paradise but not forever, as Deus promised to let them return after they had spent over four-hundred years in repentance. Even Jusuhuru was not labeled as completely evil. He still had the tenth rank, even though that was less than before. He became Thunder of the middle-heaven and lived with Tengu who had worshipped him. Although I cannot discuss Tengu in detail here because of lack of space, I will say that he is a monster, but not an evil one. Tengu is a trickster who is sometimes good and sometimes bad. Generally for the Japanese, the distinct division between good and bad is not an important concern, and this was also true for the Hidden Christians even though they worshipped the one God, Deus. In the stories of the Hidden Christians, forgiveness is more important than punitiveness.

Let us consider here the kind of life the Hidden Christians had to live at that time. Once a year, they had to commit a great sin, that is, they had to deny in public that they were Christians by stepping on sacred pictures. If God did not consent to their sin, they could not live. Moreover they did not have access to a priest to whom they could confess, so they needed to have an image of a merciful Deus, who even permitted them to commit (original) sin. Because there were no priests, the Hidden Christians had to rely on their prayers and rituals which became very important. In the region called Sotome, they retained the Bastian Calendar which was supposed to have been inherited from the legendary figure, Bastian. The calendar recounts in detail what days were good or bad, and also what they should do or not do on certain days. Such things showed that their lives revolved around a cycle of one year, starting from the committing of sin (Efumi, denying their faith) and then spending the following months repenting for their sin by the recitation of prayers and the performance of rituals in everyday life. After a year, this cycle would be repeated. This gives us

an idea of their lives which were quite different from those of the first Christians who were saved by Christ after the Fall and who could reach by their own efforts. In the case of the Hidden Christians, they had to repeat the yearly cycle over and over.

There are two ways of experiencing time – progressively from past to present or in a cyclical movement. Of course, no one can say which is better. For those who experience time in the former way, the important thing is to make progress; for those who experience it in the latter way, what matters is to deepen their experiences.

If we consider the faith of the Hidden Christians from the perspective of cyclical time, we must acknowledge that the *Efumi*, although it was a source of great suffering, became a very important “ritual.” It helped them to experience “original sin” annually which gave meaning to the whole cycle of rituals and prayers and their myth. My hypothesis regarding the Hidden Christians is that it was hard for them to retain their faith after they no longer had to perform the *Efumi*. It is a kind of irony that when the persecution was abolished, the Hidden Christians were in danger of losing their faith. Even though one can say that, generally speaking, young people nowadays have lost interest in traditional religions, one of the reasons for the deterioration of the faith of the Hidden Christians was that they no longer had to subject themselves to the *Efumi*.

Japanese Stories

Karl Kerenji has said that mythology does not explain offers a reason for (*begündet*) things. Some stories, not found in the Bible, were necessary for the Japanese Hidden Christians while some biblical stories, that are important for other Christians, were not. It is possible that the story of Cain and Abel was not taught by the early Christian missionaries because all of the Hidden Christians lived farming and fishing. Instead we have the following story preserved in the myth: When the children of Ewa came down to this world, a sword descended from Heaven, and it was believed to be a miraculous lesson given to them by Deus. Then a woman threw a needle she held to a man and he gave her his comb. In doing so, they severed their blood ties and were no longer siblings. They became married and had intercourse imitating the birds and produced many children.

The main point of this story is to prevent fraternal marriages so the brother and a sister had to sever their blood ties. However, it is noteworthy that they were not concerned about the marriage between Ewa and Adan, who must have been siblings and who even had children before they were driven from Paradise. The stories may be interpreted as follows. In Paradise or Koroteru, even a marriage between a brother and a sister was allowed because of the strong tie existing between them. However, in this world the rule was different and siblings had to learn to distance themselves from each other. They could not become united and needed to be separated in order to become adults. I suppose that because of the strong family ties of the Hidden Christians, they were always afraid of the possibility of their children loving each other, and because of this fear, they needed a myth to proscribe it. There is a casual but noteworthy reference about human beings learning about sexual intercourse from the birds. This is also mentioned in ancient Japanese mythology when the first parents got married; however, I have no idea why they borrowed the episode from the Japanese myth and inserted it here.

The myth next tells us that prior to the flood, Deus provided seeds for planting. I will discuss the flood in the next section but would like to mention one story, which relates that after several couples were saved from the flood, the women began to shave off their eyebrows and to dye their teeth black – which were customs of that time. This shows how human beings want to have myths to justify their practices.

We have already noted that Deus in the myth is more merciful than God in the Bible. It is also true that the Japanese tale focused more upon the image of Mary than that of Christ and related many miraculous stories concerning Mary, while almost none of the biblical stories of the miracles of Christ were included. Other important stories found in the Japanese myth will be treated later. But I would like to mention a story about the crucifixion of Christ, which is difficult to interpret. When Christ was crucified, the soldiers tried to kill him but were unable to do so because they were paralyzed. When a blind person came by, the soldiers promised to give him money if he would kill Jesus; so he agreed and stabbed Jesus. When the blood of Jesus fell upon his eyes, he could see, but Jesus said: "The Blind cannot be saved in the next life." As soon as the blind man received the money, he became blind again.

A Japanese scholar, Takehiro Kamiya, interpreted this story in the following way. In Kyushu Island during that time, many blind people went from house to house telling stories while playing the Biwa, a musical instrument. The style of the story of "The Beginning of Heaven and the Earth" resembled somewhat the stories told by the blind men. It was therefore necessary for the Hidden Christians to show how different their myth was from the blind men's stories. This also explains why so much bitterness was shown toward the blind. Kamiya's opinion is worth mentioning, but I have my reservations.

A Child with Weak Legs

Let us return to the myth of the flood. After reaping a good harvest, the hearts of men became evil and greedy. As they continued their evil deeds, Deus said to Pappa-Maruji, a king, that when the eyes of the Koma-inu (the stone-sculptured pair of guardian dogs standing in front of a temple) became red, the world will be destroyed by a *tsunami* (tidal wave). Then the king visited the temple every day, and a child, knowing about it, mischievously painted the eyes of the Koma-inu red. Pappa-Maruji was surprised when he saw this and he got a boat for his six children. One of his children could not walk because his legs were weak, and although the father felt sorry for him, he left his child behind. A huge wave struck and in an instant the place deluged. The wave receded at three o'clock and Pappa-Maruji and his children landed on an island. Meanwhile the child with weak legs was carried on the back of the Koma-inu over the sea waters and was able to join his family. Many other people were drowned and went down to the realm of Bembo (limbo).

The most interesting motif of this story is the child who could not walk well, an episode that is thoroughly Japanese. The reason for my interest in this story is that there is a story in Japanese mythology of a child who could not stand, called the Leech child. In Japanese mythology, there are three important gods – the Sun Goddess, the Moon God, and the Storm God. While the Sun Goddess and the Storm God performed many important works as counterparts, the Moon God did nothing. Relying on other materials found in Japanese mythology, this formation can be called the structure of the hollow center. The center within the structure of

the Japanese pantheon does nothing and has no power of principle. However, all the gods balance each other, creating a kind of harmonious co-existence in a hollow-centered balanced system. In the Bible, God is at the center ruling everything, a system I have called “power-center integrated”. I will not discuss these systems further; I offer these images to show how different the two mentalities are.

The story of the Leech child, called Hiruko in Japanese, follows after that. He could not walk even when he was three years old; so his parents (who were the parents of the three important gods mentioned before) put him in a small box and set him adrift on the seas. The Japanese pantheon, which accepted any of the gods who contributed to the balance, could not accept the Leech child, who was an exception. As the name Hiruko suggests, he might have been a Sun God, a god standing in the center with the power to integrate the gods, in which the sun goddess had assumed an important place, equal to the Christian God. The Japanese pantheon could not accept him. One Japanese legend says that Hiruko returned to Japan secretly and became a god of business called Ebisu. Interestingly, there is a legend in Kyushu Island concerning Ebisu and the story of the flood. In the legend, there is a shrine called Hiruko where Ebisu is enshrined. It was said that if the face of Ebisu turned red, the island would sink under the sea. When a young man painted Ebisu’s face in mischief, a *tsunami* struck the island, which sank into the sea. This legend shows that there must be some connection between Hiruko (Ebisu) and the story of the flood in the myth of the Hidden Christians. It is therefore possible that the child who had weak legs in our story is a disguised form of the Leech child, who this time was rescued and accepted by his family. It saved the life of the Leech child, who was rejected by the Japanese gods.

The Image of Mary

As explained before, Mary was very important to the Hidden Christians. However, as they could not have any Christian statues or pictures, they worshipped the images of Kannon (sometimes with a child) as Mary, later called Mary Kannon. In the myth, many stories were related about Mary, some of which are not to be found in the Bible or in the stories of the Christian saints. The following are some of the important stories found in the myth.

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After most of the people were killed by the *tsunami* and went down to Benbo (limbo), Deus felt sorry for the human beings and decided to divide himself in order to save them, and part of him became his son Hiiryō (taken from the Portuguese Filho).

Mary was born in the country of Roson (Portuguese Lucon). When she turned twelve years old, she believed that the most important thing for human beings was to receive salvation in the life after death. Then she heard a voice coming from heaven telling her that she would be saved if she preserved her virginity, and so she decided to do that. Meanwhile, the king of the country, Sanzenzeieus, was seeking a wife, and he wanted to marry Mary. But she refused and rejected all the treasures he offered her. When she prayed to heaven, it began to snow although it was June (according to the lunar calendar which is August in our calendar). Everything was covered with snow; a flower vehicle descended from heaven, and Mary got on it and ascended to heaven. Sanzenzeieus looked everywhere for Mary but there was no way to find her, and he finally died of a broken heart.

Mary ascended to heaven and when she met Deus, she related how she came there. Deus rejoiced and bestowed upon her the title of Saint Mary of the Snow. After that Mary returned home. Meanwhile San-Gamura-Arikanjo (St. Gabriel) came down to Mary to tell her that the Lord would descend to this world and so would like to use Mary's body for that purpose. She obeyed with joy, and as St. Gabriel told her, in February, a butterfly flew down and entered her mouth, impregnating her.

Mary's parents were angry when they found out about her pregnancy. They were unable to understand why she chose to have a child whose father was unknown while refusing to become the wife of the king. They drove her from the house, and Mary had to keep walking until she arrived in the country of Beren (Portuguese Belem), where she bore the child. It began to snow heavily, and it was very cold, so the horses and cows breathed on the baby to warm. The baby was bathed in a manger on a Wednesday. Since then the Hidden Christians could not eat meat on Wednesday, because the horses and cows were so kind to Jesus. Three days later, after Mary had bathed her baby, she told the woman living there that she could use the same hot water for her child. The woman refused, saying her baby was about to die from

a skin disease, but as Mary insisted, the woman bathed her child in the same bath water, and her baby was miraculously cured.

King Yoroutetsu (Herod) of the country of Beren heard about the birth of Jesus and desired to kill him. When Deus warned Mary, she escaped with Jesus and met San-jiwan (St. John) on the way, and Jesus was baptized by him. After that, the myth tells us that Jesus studied very hard until he turned twelve years old. During those years Saint Mary wove her own clothes using the thread of spiders.

In last section of the stories concerning Mary, her maternal qualities are emphasized; but we must remember that Mary had already decided to remain a virgin after considering her life after death. The myth relates that Mary practiced Viruzen-no-Gyo. Gyo is a religious practice or exercise, and Viruzen means virgin; so preserving one's virginity was considered to be a religious act. Virginity may have been emphasized because the Japanese Buddhist priests could not keep their vow of celibacy even though the rule of celibacy was very strict in the original form of Buddhism. The Christian missionaries used the failure of the Buddhist priests to censure them. Therefore the purity of Mary was all the more important, and Saint Mary of the Snow was a beautiful image expressing a popular ideal at that time. It is also interesting that her strong will was shown when she refused the kins's offer and left her home when her parents did not accept her pregnancy. In Japan, there are many fairy tales in which the heroine suffers after leaving home, but is able to find happiness in the end. In almost all of the stories, the heroine is driven out by a step-mother. In such fairy tales, the mother-daughter conflict is stressed. Mary, however, had no step-mother and in a sense her spiritual sufferings were brought about by the call she had received from Deus. This type of a figure is rather rare in Japanese stories. The image of Saint Mary who was a spiritual virgin and a benevolent mother at that time must have been quite appealing to the Hidden Christians.

Redemption

As discussed before, the story of original sin was transformed in the Hidden Christians' myth, and they had no concept of original sin. What yhen is the meaning of the redemption of Christ? The following stories will make this clear.

When Jesus turned twelve years old, he was intelligent enough to persuade the Buddhist monks that Christianity was superior to their religion, as seen in the episode mentioned above. The twelve Buddhist priests became his disciples, which is a shortened version of the story about Jesus and his twelve disciples. King Yoroutetsu (Herod) tried to capture Christ and finally decided to kill all children, from the newly born to age seven, and a total of 44,444 children were killed. Deus said to Jesus that many children had to die for his sake. Deus was afraid that Jesus would not be able to gain the life of Paradise and said to him, "you will be persecuted and tortured and will die to save the children so they can gain life after death." Then Jesus went to the temple of Santa-Ekirenia (Portuguese, Santa Igreja) in Rome and readied himself to be killed by evil men.

In this way, the concept of the redemption was completely changed. The Hidden Christians had an image of a benevolent God who allowed Adam and Eve to enter Paradise again. They could not understand the meaning of original sin, and so the death of Jesus was interpreted as described above.

The betrayal of Judas was also told. He was called Judatsu and he had received money in exchange for informing the enemies who and where Jesus was. Jesus, knowing about it beforehand, said to his disciples that there was a betrayer among them. Asked who this betrayer was, Christ answered that he was the one who ate the rice with soup poured over it every morning. The story created a taboo forbidding pouring soup over rice.

After Judas received the money, his face changed: his nose and tongue became longer. The other disciples accused him, and finally Judatsu committed suicide. Then Yoroutetsu's aides came to capture Jesus. Jesus asked everyone where Judatsu was, and the disciples replied that he had betrayed Jesus and committed suicide. Jesus said that he was ready to submit to torture and to die. He said: "Even though Judatsu betrayed me, I could have saved him if only he had not committed suicide. I feel sorry for him." This meant that committing suicide was a sin, and it also showed the merciful attitude of Jesus.

After the capture of Jesus, King Yoroutetsu insulted and tortured him and ordered his death. He was placed on a cross with

two criminals, one of whom complained that he was being tortured because of Jesus. The other replied that they were criminals but Jesus was without sin, so he felt sorry for him. This criminal had been the infant who was cured of his skin disease by being bathed in the same water used by Jesus.

There followed the episode of the blind man outlined above. When Jesus died, he ascended to heaven, taking the repentant criminal with him. The merciful attitude of Jesus was always recounted as in the case of the infant with skin disease or even in the story of Judas; he was severe only to the blind man.

Mary, his mother, cried when she saw the dead body of Christ. Yoroutetsu asked who she was and when he realized that she was the Jesus's mother, he said that he could understand her sorrow and allowed her to express her grief at having to part from her son. Yoroutetsu must have changed a little after seeing Mary's sorrow. After Jesus's death on Friday, he remained in the earth until Sunday. Then he was resurrected and ascended to heaven three days after his death, but later returned to this world. He remained here for forty days teaching about salvation and for ten more days to talk with the Apostles, and then ascended to heaven again. Mary also ascended on July third.

The myth of the Hidden Christians tells what Jesus did after his ascension, though nothing is mentioned in the Bible. He brought to Paradise all the children who were killed by Yoroutetsu and many others who appeared in the myth. Deus saved Sanzenzeieus as Mary requested, and they were married in Paradise, which is also quite different from the biblical story. I think that these stories were necessary to give everyone a proper place and are based on the idea of balancing or maintaining an equilibrium rather than on integration. The episode of the infant, cured of skin disease, who became a criminal later and was saved by Christ in the end may also be based on the same idea.

The Trinity

In the myth of the Hidden Christians, Mary ascended to heaven and became the intermediary, and Jesus, the savior. "The parent Deus is pateru [Father], Jesus is Hiilio [Son] and the Mother is Suherut-Santos [Spiritus Sanctus] and thus Deus became three

personae although the three are originally one." The Hidden Christians believed that the Trinity consisted of Father, Son, and Mother (Holy Spirit), which is of course different from that of orthodox Christianity. However, in the "Dochirina Kirishitan" ("Doctrines of Christianity") of the Hidden Christians, the Trinity is described as follows: "The real Deus is only one, namely the Father, Son, and Spirit Santos. We Kirishitans must realize that Deus is one even though he has three personae." Then a student said: "I cannot understand that Deus is one while he has three personae." The master answered: "It is really the mystery of Trinity. It is the highest rationale of our faith. Deus is so great that no one can measure him. Our intellect is limited insofar as we cannot understand him. Even though you cannot understand, you can believe it as the truth."

The last sentence reminds me of the conversation C.G. Jung had with his father when he was a child. When he asked about the Trinity, his father said: "Don't try to understand, just believe it!" Jung could not be content with that and developed his idea of the quaternity. It is not necessary to explain his idea except to say that he stressed the importance of the female principle. According to Jung, the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is too one-sided, relying excessively on the male principle; so he suggested the quaternity, which included the feminine.

From Jung's point of view, what was it that was lacking in the Trinity of the Hidden Christians' myth, the Father, Son, and Mother (Holy Spirit)? I recall a story about the Trinity that I heard in the Philippines, where ninety percent of the people are Catholics. I realized that many Filipinos believe that the Trinity consists of Christ, Maria, and Apo Dios, who was supposed to be a wise old man. Their Trinity reminds me of the Japanese triad, which often appears in fairy tales and consists of grandfather, mother, and her son, all related by blood. In the Christian Trinity, the members have spiritualities. Considering this, the Trinity of the Hidden Christians may have consisted of Deus (grandfather), mother Mary and her son. What is lacking in quaternity is the Father Spirit, but if we include Sanzenzeieus, who married Mary in heaven, there would be a quaternity that would be closer to the one Jung suggested. In Christianity, the male principle is stressed first, with the feminine added later to form a quaternity, whereas

in the myth of the Hidden Christian, the female principle comes before the masculine principle in the formation of the quaternity. Although they are not the same, they are quite similar. Looking over the entire myth of the Hidden Christians, it is possible to see that it has a different outlook compared to that of the Bible. However, on the whole, their image of God was not so different from the image of the Christian God.

Notes

Sources

The text of *Tenchi Hajimari-no-koto* (The Origins of Heaven and Earth) may be found in its Japanese version in : H. Cieslik, D. Tadai, O. Mitsunobu, eds., *Kirishtan sho, hai-ya sho* (Christian and Anti-Christian Texts) (Tokyo, 1970). An English translation is provided in T. Koya, *Study of Acculturation among Secret Christians of Japan* (n.p., n.d.)

See also K. Furno, *Kakure Kirishtan* (Tokyo, 1957); A.M. Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago, 1993); T. Kamiya, *Kirishtan no Shinwateki Sekai* (Tokyo, 1988); K. Tagita, "Kirisuto kyo no Nihonteki bunka henyo," in: *Shukyo Kensyu*, 155 (1958), 438-61.