

Globalization and Modern Japanese Religion within the Context of Sect Shinto's Policy toward Christianity

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Globalization and Modern Japanese Religion within the Context of Sect Shintō's Policy toward Christianity

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modernization for Japan can be approached as a process of advancing globalization.¹⁾ I want to discriminate the term "globalization" here from the concept of so-called "internationalization." If the term internationalization is premised on units of nations or ethnic groups, and is used to discuss the widening or deepening of their mutual interrelationships, then I propose to use the term globalization as a means of grasping the advance of a new situation within which the significance of those units themselves must be reconsidered. In this context, the following two points can be taken as representing the primary aspects of globalization:

1. Rather than individual nations, ethnic groups, etc., the source "group" involved is the world as a whole, and the determination of sub-units therein is extremely fluid.

2. An "open-market" mechanism of free competition often operates between the various units of the group.

1) With regard to my understanding of the term "globalization" (*gurōbaruka*), I have been influenced to some degree by Roland Robertson's usage. I have not, however, adopted the term as a translation of his concept, and my own understanding of the term differs somewhat from his. I do agree with Robertson in the sense of proposing "globalization" as a concept to deal with phenomena which cannot be properly understood under the rubric "internationalization." See Robertson's paper "Globalization and the Further of Religion," in Chūō Academic Research Institute, ed., *Conflict and Cooperation between Contemporary Religious Groups*, (Tokyo: Chūō Academic Research Institute, 1988).

At the same time, I do not particularly wish to insist that these kinds of problems have not been argued before within the framework of the "internationalization" rubric. But even if they have been so argued, it will be sufficient for my purpose to state that I wish to use the term globalization as a concept to discriminate that special kind of internationalization as defined above, from other more general concepts of internationalization.

Globalization always proceeds most quickly in the areas of technical culture. That is because, no matter by whom the technology is invented, and no matter what culture it is a product of, it is nonetheless easily conceivable that the technology will be adopted and used by differing societies and cultures. On the other hand, there are also cultural phenomena, like language, which are fundamentally difficult subjects for globalization. Globalization proceeds only with great difficulty with regard to items erected on the traditions of specific group, within those areas which are indivisible from the continuity of the group's culture.

Putting aside for a moment the issue of the rationale on which it was based, the globalization process in Japan had begun already at the end of the Edo period (1603-1868) within areas of science and technology. Globalization was stimulated by the opening of the country, and thereafter it proceeded at accelerating speed. And it is certain that the advance of globalization within technological culture is one behind Japan's present economic success. Namely, Japanese corporations and research organization have now become a member of those groups which share the cutting edge of technological culture throughout the world.

In contrast, it can be generally said that globalization proceeds slowly in areas of spiritual culture (*seishin bunka*). And to a certain extent, that generalization applies to Japan's modern period as well. The reason that globalization is difficult to produce within spiritual culture is due, first of all, to the fact that it is relatively difficult to observe the traditions of spiritual culture when they are dissociated from the overall culture of the group which fostered and created that spiritual culture. Second, in contrast to technical culture, there is no fixed standard of "value" for spiritual culture, and some would argue that it is impossible to fix such standards. It is most difficult directly to study the effects of the choice of a given spiritual culture on other areas of life. It is generally thought that the differences in various areas of life brought about by spiritual culture are not reflected as sharply as those brought about by technology. Within such areas it is difficult for the competitive market mechanism to operate between the units involved. And as a result, it is difficult for globalization to occur in such regions of culture. In short, one characteristic of globalization is its differential effects on different areas of culture.

Compared to the other various areas of spiritual culture, religion can be generally characterized by a relatively large proportion occupied by tradition. This can be stated in other words by saying that the systems transmitting religious culture are generally characterized by conservatism. Moreover, most religious systems are also relatively elaborate, due to the plurality of the media through which they are transmitted, from families to local societies, nations, and specific religious groups

or sects. The religious culture transmitted through families, local societies or nations exhibits a great resistance to globalization. And while those religious systems transmitted through sects are not without the potential to become instigating sources for the promotion of globalization, they are normally considered, on the contrary, to serve as sources of opposition to such globalization.

2. RELIGIOUS FERMENT IN THE LATE EDO AND RESTORATION PERIODS

The “opening” (*kaikoku*) of Japan had a great impact on all areas of culture in early modern Japan, but it gave birth to a variety of reactions, particularly within the area of religion. In that area of culture, the greatest issues occasioned by the opening of Japan were the policies regarding Christianity. It is generally said that the fear of Christians by the Japanese rulers was a constant throughout the Edo period, and in the late Edo period there was an additional fear of renewed missionary activity by Western nations, backed by military might. As a natural result, there was debate among certain segments of politicians regarding how to limit the influence of Christianity to a minimum. The fear Christianity also spread among proponents of National Learning (*kokugaku*), Shintōists, Buddhist priests and other people in the field of religion, as well as the general populace. And this was an entirely natural reaction when considered in light of the essential nature of the systems supporting religion. In short, the religious lines of defense, so to speak, were actualized on a wide range of levels, from the family, to local society, religious organizations, and the nation.

But the orientation of the Meiji government toward a “Christian policy” underwent change at a surprisingly rapid pace. As international pressure increased, the occasion of the Iwakura mission to Europe in 1871 was utilized by the government to switch suddenly from a policy of prohibition to one of recognizing Christianity. This change can be considered part of a process whereby the leaders of that time adapted their overall international perspective, and at the same time, it also indicates that the world of politics was undergoing a process of globalization. In other words, it illustrates that there was a posture of selective introduction with regard to the policies and particular laws observed in other countries.

Of course, not all persons related to government took the position of recognizing Christianity. As seen in the institution of “religious instructors” (*kyōdōshoku*), there was a government policy at least until the early 1880s which was conscious of the advance of Christianity, and which operated to indoctrinate the common people against it. But the move to a system of “sect Shintō” (*Kyōha Shintō*) indicated the government’s gradual shift to a policy of avoiding direct intervention in religious issues. In this way, Japan was on its way toward achieving its own sort of separation of church and state, one which involved a severing or isolation of Shrine Shintō and imperial rites from other religious activities. This exerted at least an indirect influence on the later incipient globalization of religious issues in Japan.

On the other hand, from the perspective of Shintōists and Buddhists, the policy regarding Christianity related directly to their own basis for survival. Such religious leaders and thinkers experienced the very practical concern that the number of Christian converts would increase, and some began to take positions of opposition based on religious doctrine. Further, and not with respect to the Christian problem alone, there was a situation of continuing progress in what might be called the “reorganization” or “realignment” (*saihensei*) of the religious world of the time. No matter to what degree people were conscious of that fact, in terms of its results, the period comprised of the late Edo and early Meiji eras can be called one of the great turning points in Japanese religious history. And this change formed the prologue to the appearance of a string of religious movements thereafter.

First, the claims of those thinkers in the movement generally summed up under the title “Restoration Shintō” (*fukko Shintō*) were used not merely as convenient slogans, but as the principles for a kind of revolution. The activities of the National Learning scholars of the Hirata Atsutane line, and the ideals of the more recently noted National Learning advocates of the Tsuwano domain had a tremendous impact. The influence of the thought of National Learning scholars during the period surrounding the Restoration was evaluated excessively during the pre-World War II period, and it has been devaluated excessively in the post-war period. When viewed fairly, however, it must be admitted that influence can be seen to have extended, directly or indirectly, to a very wide range of areas. There were also a number of Shintōists who, while accepting the strong influence of Restoration Shintō, worked anew to lead religious movements.

On the other hand, the group of popular religions generally subsumed today within the category of “new religions” had a kind of dynamism which was divorced from international issues. Kurozumikyō continued to extend its power primarily in western Japan during the Restoration period. Misogikyō likewise attained a considerable influence, even while undergoing continual repression from the Tokugawa government. Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō were still local movements at the end of the Edo period, but they took on increasing significance nationwide following the Meiji Restoration. And there were some groups, like Maruyamakyō, centered close to the capital, which expanded rapidly in the first year of Meiji (1868).

Since the period surrounding the Meiji Restoration was undergoing this kind of realignment of the religious world, there were likely many people involved in religion who were primarily concerned with domestic issues and did not have the luxury of directing their attention to the influence of Christianity. But on the other hand, the Christian problem was extremely critical, and while perhaps a bit of exaggeration, there were some people who even believed that the continuing existence of the nation was at stake in the issue. Those groups who promoted strong warnings against Christianity can be broadly divided into Buddhist priests and those people who had been influenced by National Learning. In the remainder of this paper, however, I want to place my focus on the latter group.

The religious thought of persons influenced by National Learning was based on

Restoration Shintō, a body of thought which centered on a concept of Japan as an imperial nation, while also forming the first mass-oriented Shintō was not something which arose in response to the advance of Christianity, but the “imperial-nation” (*kōkoku*) thought which formed its nucleus was, in its effect, used to a degree as a kind of conceptual bludgeon in the fight against Christianity, and this made a strong impact on the government’s religious administration in the first year of Meiji. At that time, National Learning was introduced as one of the ideological pillars of the Meiji government, and the fact that the institutions of religious “propagandists” (*senkyōshi*) and “instructors” (*kyōdōshoku*) were instituted indicates the importance being given then to the topic of thought policing. And since the doctrines of Restoration Shintō were available to function as myths for the modern nation, they were capable of serving as aids in the struggle against Christianity on a local provincial level, even if only for a brief time.

On the other hand, while the several religious movements which would come to be referred to jointly under the rubric of “sect Shintō” shared a certain degree of mutual agreement with the basic orientations of the government’s religious administration, that fact in itself was a reflection of the combination of features in the religious movements of early modern Japan. Rather than a full-fledged movement toward globalization, it was a substantially more complicated process which appeared.

In the following, I want to consider—from the perspective of globalization—the policies toward Christianity espoused by a number of the founders of groups in sect Shintō, and in the process attempt to elucidate one aspect of the characteristics of religious movements in early modern Japan.

3. POLICIES TOWARD CHRISTIANITY BY THE RESTORATION GOVERNMENT

The stance of the Tokugawa Bakufu (warrior government) toward Christianity can be summed up in the single word “suppression.” The desire to eliminate even the most insignificant influence of Christianity was characteristic, common not only to the central government, but to the local domains as well. In contrast, the government of the Meiji period exhibited a somewhat more complex set of stances toward Christianity. Initially, the government merely continued the stance of the Tokugawa Bakufu, and a policy of suppression was the ruling attitude, but as Japan initiated foreign relations with various Western powers, it found that it was virtually impossible to maintain that policy of suppression. The problem was not merely the political standpoint of a difference of strength vis a vis foreign powers; at that time the acceptance of any Western culture—even without the specific element of Christianity—was virtually inconceivable, and that because it was impossible to conceive of Western culture overall apart from the more general influence of Christianity.

At the very earliest period, the general policy was not to allow any dissemina-

tion of Christianity, and on the fifteenth day of the third month in 1868, the Supreme Council of State (Dajōkan) had notice boards set up with the message that "The pagan religion Christianity is to be firmly prohibited." The fact that Christianity was viewed here as a "pagan religion" immediately caused diplomatic complaints, with the result that the government was forced into the casuistic position of arguing that "Christianity" and "pagan religion" were here to be interpreted as different things. But the fundamental policy of prohibiting the dissemination of Christianity continued without change.

The first modification of this policy occurred at the time of the Iwakura Mission to Europe, 1871, when the members of the mission were subjected to foreign criticism for the Japanese policy against Christianity. In fact, however, some members of the government had, even before that date, begun to realize the limitations of a simple prohibition policy. By 1871, opinions had emerged within the government to the effect that there was no alternative but to change the policy toward Christianity from one of simple exclusion, to one of "opposing one teaching by means of another teaching." Some Buddhists had actually proposed this position as early as the late Edo period.

On February 24, 1873, an order was given for the removal of the notice boards banning Christianity, and the Christian believers of Urakami (near Nagasaki) held prisoner since 1868 were released. From that time, the main current moved toward a liberalization of Christian propagation. The change which occurred in 1873 is frequently called a switch from a policy of state religion to one of indoctrination. While there is room for debate regarding whether the policy to that time can be adequately understood as "state religion,"²⁾ there were certainly various currents of movement after that date, and ultimately, the central drift of opinion flowed toward a legal recognition of Christianity.

But although the basic policy line became one of recognizing Christianity, a full-fledged policy change did not occur overnight. For example, on the twenty-eighth day of the sixth month in 1872, the Dajōkan issued an order banning private funerals. While this appears at first glance to have been matter only of funerary practice, it in fact was designed as a deterrent to Christian propagation. And Christian believers indeed were caused grief over the funeral issue.³⁾ Eventually, in October 1884, verbal instructions were issued by the Home Affairs Department rescinding the prohibition of private funerals, stating that "the prohibition of private funerals will automatically be rescinded, with the result that henceforth when a funeral is requested, it shall be performed according to the chief mourner's wishes in

2) For example, see Sakamoto Koremaru, "Nihongata seikyō kankei no keisei," (The Formation of Japanese-style Church-State Relations) in Inoue Nobutaka and Sakamoto Koremaru, eds., *Nihongata Seikyō Kankei no Tanjō (The Birth of Japanese-style Church-State Relations)*, (Daiichi Shobō, 1987).

3) For information regarding the way in which Christians of this period reacted to the problem of funerals, see Ozawa Saburō, *Nihon Purotesutanto-shi Kenkyū (The History of Japanese Protestantism, Tōkai Daigaku Shuppankai, 1964)*.

matters of religion.” This announcement can be interpreted as signaling, in effect, lifting of the ban on Christian propagation. During that interval, it is likely that there was resistance within the government to equalizing the conditions for Christian propagation with those for other religions. But since the basic policy of the Meiji government became one of freedom of belief, they were able to avoid taking a position toward Christianity which would be incompatible with that basic, liberal policy orientation. The abolition of the *kyōdōshoku* which preceded the liberalization of private funerals likewise represented a dissociation of the government from religious activities, and can thus be thought of as another part of the Meiji government’s own version of policy of separation of church and state. Accordingly, the policy of opposing Christianity on an administrative level finally reached its end in the early 1880s.

When one considers the elements which went into producing the fear of Christianity felt around the time of the Restoration, one can detect a clear sense of concern that it represented a danger to Japan’s ethnic culture. There were of course some people who did not perceive any menace from the opening of the country, but on the other hand, there were also a substantial number who experienced a distinct threat to their cultural identity from that opening, and that perception was certainly not misdirected. Within that context, the Meiji government’s early, direct intervention in the realm of religion in adopting an anti-Christian policy was only a natural reaction.

The government’s felt need to interfere in matters of religion grew steadily weaker. As a result, the determination to ban Christianity changed and eventually shifted securely to a posture of recognizing the religion. One additional comment is necessary at this point. Namely, what was important about the various policy reversals which occurred during this period was not simply the fact of moving in the direction of a more liberal policy toward Christianity. Rather, it was the fact that, with the exception of the emperor and Shintō, the government began adopting a looser style of policy which rejected direct intervention in religious matters.

On the other hand, the rising influence of Christianity became an increasingly pressing concern within the religious world from the time of the Restoration onward. To the same degree the government dissociated itself from religious matters, the issues confronting the religious world itself increased. In the following, I want to raise the cases of three Shintōists as examples of the ways in which these issues were faced.

4. POLICIES TOWARD CHRISTIANITY TAKEN BY SHINTOISTS

From the perspective of religious leaders in the late Edo and Restoration periods, the advance of Christianity was one of the most pressing issues. If such leaders were to halt Christianity’s advance, it was necessary that both Buddhists and Shintōists accept that they were passengers in the same boat, and it was “imperial-nation” thought which was frequently adopted as a rallying point against

Christianity. This line was adopted not only by Shintōists and scholars of National Learning, but even by some Buddhists, and it joined with Confucian morality in a variety of ways as a protective shield against Christianity. During the last days of the Edo period, this form of thought was proclaimed with a certain rigidity, but once Japan actually inaugurated diplomatic relations with foreign countries, changes corresponding to those relations could also be observed. Even within the thought of Shintōists and scholars of National Learning—who would appear at first glance to have formed an extremely conservative opposition—there were elements showing signs of incipient globalization.

Here, I want to consider such changes in the following three concrete examples of founders of Shintō religious groups: Hirayama Seisai, founder of Taiseikyō; Nitta Kuniteru, founder of Shintō Shūseiha; and Sano Tsunehiko, founder of Shinrikyō. While there are substantial differences in the personal histories of these three men, and in the processes whereby they came to establish their respective sects, they shared the common element of defense against Christianity as one of their primary founding rationales.

Hirayama Seisai

Hirayama Seisai (1815–1890) was high official of the Tokugawa government in the last days of the Edo period. Since he served as “magistrate of foreign affairs” (*gaikoku bugyō*) and had frequent dealings with foreigners in Japan, he must be relatively more familiar with overseas affairs than other Japanese of the time. From around 1852 he was given the responsibility of dealing with foreign relations, and he was assigned to the post of magistrate of foreign affairs in 1866. During that period, he held interviews with the American Commodore Matthew Perry, the French ambassador Leon Roches, Adam, and others. He also was responsible for dealing with the issue of the Urakami (Nagasaki) Christians. These experiences strengthened Hirayama’s wariness of Christianity.

A jingoist among *bakufu* ministers, Hirayama was ordered to enter permanent house arrest (*eichikkyo*) following the Restoration, and he retired to Shizuoka to follow the last shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu. Due in part to a lack of qualified personnel in the new government, however, Hirayama was pardoned, and in 1872 he was ordered to serve in the Ministry of Religious Instruction (*kyōbushō*). He then became a “religious instructor” (*kyōdōshoku*) and subsequently served as chief priest of the Hikawa Shrine, and priest of the Hie Shrine. On the other hand, he also had a hand in the forming of Shintō sects, and in 1876 he became general director of Misogikyō. Then in 1879 he organized the Taiseikyōkai (which became Taiseikyō in 1882), and he was appointed as its first chief director.

The organizational structure of Taiseikyō clearly had as its main purpose a response to Christianity. Even compared to other groups of sectarian Shintō, Taiseikyō was extremely weakly organized as a religious body. In contrast to religions like Tenrikyō or Kurozumikyō, Taiseikyō did not come into being as a group of believers banding together in response to a founder’s teachings. It should instead be considered a “cartel” type of arrangement within which a variety of

religious groups were incorporated under the single umbrella of Taiseikyō. This development did not occur spontaneously, but was the result of Hirayama's deliberate design. Hirayama tried to link together a plurality of religious groups as a means of preventing their being consumed by Christianity.⁴⁾

Hirayama accumulated a wealth of negotiating experience during his period of tenure as a *bakufu* minister, but rather than disposing him to view Christianity favorably, the result of that experience was to turn him in the direction of increased wariness of the foreign religion. Several characteristics emerge when one views Hirayama's own proselytization methods and organizational techniques. One gets the impression of an extremely syncretic teaching, and his method of drawing other groups under a single umbrella appears almost without any conscious design, but it was just there that his real motivation can be seen. One might say that Hirayama applied the principle of "Western technology and Eastern Spirit" (used by the Meiji government in its move to absorb Western culture) to the realm of religion. Hirayama strongly felt the need to absorb Western culture, but underlying this impetus was an equally clear rejection of Christianity. In essence, his acceptance of religious syncretism within Japan was based on an opposition to Christianity, while on the other hand he felt that the other material aspects of Western culture should be adopted aggressively. For example, within the "Aims of the Incorporation of the Taiseikyō" of 1885, he wrote as follows:

Since the Restoration, the imperial court has given preferential treatment to Shintō, but the contents of teaching have not yet been established. If things are allowed to remain in this condition, Japan will become a nation without religion, and it is to be feared that the people will enter mistaken ways due to the influence of foreign religions. Shintō is the most superb way for humanity to follow, and its fundamentals, the stimulation of good and the correcting of evil, promoting patriotism, and an ethical morality. Since its original beginnings, Japan has been founded on that Shintō which is coeval and continuous with heaven and earth, and the policy of "unification of worship and rule" (*saisei itchi*) has been established since the time of the descent of the heavenly grandchild.

The need to inculcate the people [with Shintō] has been a matter of much recent discussion, but as a result of the national spirit of refraining from dissension, Shintō indoctrination has not been systematized and realized in concrete detail. The Confucian *Analects* and the teachings of Buddhism have been used as aids to indoctrination. With the coming of the current emperor, old customs have been swept away, and knowledge has been brought from superb places around the world in order to enhance the foundations of imperial rule. In particular, the learning and material things of the West have been adopted, and their superior aspects have been utilized. To go without knowledge of the

4) For details regarding the process whereby Hirayama Seisai began his religious activities, see my "Bakushin kara ishinki shintōka e—Hirayama Seisai no zahyō tenkan" (From Shogunal Vassal to Shintoist of the Restoration Period—Hirayama Seisai's Shift of Coordinates), in *Nihongata seikyō kankei no tanjō* (see above note 2).

world and merely preserve old traditions would be only to invite backwardness.

As a result, we have established Taiseikyō, combining the teachings of Confucius, the Western spirit of natural law experimentation, and Japan's theories of the promotion of the public good.

To say that Shintō is the most superb of all teachings was only natural for a Shintōist, but it is interesting that there is also here a recognition—resulting from contact with foreign nations—of the need to establish a systematic doctrine and thus promote religious indoctrination combining the teachings of Confucius, the natural science of the West, and the Japanese concern for the public welfare. In sort, the document is saying that the methods of natural science will be adopted from the West, while simultaneously promoting the thought of Japan and China. As a somewhat ironic result, Western scientific thought was to be used within the doctrinal system of Taiseikyō as merely another bulwark against Christianity. Here the operation of the market mechanism can be seen, even if only in a limited form.

Nitta Kuniteru

Nitta Kuniteru (1829–1902) was a former warrior (*bushi*) from the Awa domain. In his youth he presented a petition urging the *bakufu* to strengthen Japanese defense against foreign countries, but since his petition was not received, he turned his back on the *bakufu* and from the mid-1850s began promoting the restoration of imperial rule. Following the Restoration, he threw himself into religious activities, centering on a coterie of disciples he had assembled from the late Tokugawa period, and in 1873 he organized the Shūsei kōsha. Together with Kurozumikyō, the Shūsei kōsha became independent in 1876 under the new name Shintō Shūseiha. This independence signaled the beginning of the sectarian Shintō system. Traveling to various areas in search of converts, Nitta expanded the size of his group considerably during the first half of the Meiji period.

Nitta consistently taught the necessity of establishing a body of thought that would check the advance of Christianity, and that orientation can be seen already in the transcripts of his lectures given in the mid-1850s. During his youth he came to hold firmly to the concept that Japan was the “divine land” (*shinkoku*), that the people of Japan were the descendants of the divinities (*kami*), and on that basis he attempted to inculcate Shintō teachings among the people. The logic he used against Christianity was extremely simple, and was composed of the following elements: Christianity is a religion produced by foreign nations, and while it may be appropriate to those foreign nations, Japan has had its own unique religion since ancient times. It is not right to cast off that old religion and convert to Christianity. Japan's traditional religion is foremost and without parallel.

That these concepts were based on imperial-nation thought goes without saying. Nitta himself denied he had been much influenced by the National Learning school, but his attitudes toward Christianity and Buddhism were extremely similar to those of Hirata Atsutane. He was perhaps not in fact very conversant with the doctrines of Christianity, one finds no examples of arguments based on detailed study and refutation of Christian doctrine. On the contrary, he actually

warns it is dangerous for believers even to attempt to know the contents of Christian doctrine.

I wish particularly to highlight the following two points regarding Nitta's attitude toward Christianity: (1) his advocacy of an eclectic blend of Shintō and Confucianism as an imperial-nation teaching to be used to combat Christianity; and (2) that his evaluation of Christianity as a religion appropriate for foreign nations included a hidden sense of a kind of competition between Christianity and Japan's own indigenous religion. In short, a consciousness of conflict appears here with remarkable clarity, and he felt that a proper opposition could not be fielded using Shintō beliefs alone. By his adoption of Confucianism as an ally, he was attempting to construct a teaching which would not be inferior in doctrinal terms. To use a simile here, he can be interpreted as advocating a rigidly protectionist trade policy.

Sano Tsunehiko

Sano Tsunehiko (1834–1906) was born in Kokura domain, and in the last days of the *bakufu* he developed his own form of medicine called *kōkokuidō*, or the “imperial-nation way of healing.” On the other hand, he also simultaneously studied National Learning under Nishida Naokai. He traveled to Nagasaki in his youth and there received information regarding Christianity, and apparently came to feel the need to counteract the religion. His orientation toward the central government seems to have been a bit weak compared to Hirayama and Nitta, but he shared their sense of need for a national policy of religious indoctrination. He began proselytization following the Restoration, organizing a group called Shinri Kyōkai in 1880. This group was initially contained within the religion Shintō honkyoku, and after switching to Misogikyō in 1888, it became an independent sect in 1894.

Sano worked fervently to develop Shintō's theology and doctrine, and he apparently believed that the teachings of Shintō could be used alone to restrain the advance of Christianity. He wrote voluminously, and one can clearly sense his efforts to systematize the Shintō religion. While he claimed merely to have received the traditional teaching of his family, his thought contained extracts from the *I-ching* and Confucian ethics. He loved debate, and his opponents ranged widely from Buddhists to Shintōists and folk-religious practitioners. In 1884 he even visited the Russian Orthodox missionary Nicolai and addressed religious questions to him.⁵⁾ When one looks at the contents of that interrogation, it is clear that Sano felt substantial confidence in his own doctrine, and that he could defeat Christianity in a frontal encounter.

In his diary Sano frequently expressed displeasure and irritation with the indolence of most Shintōists of the time, unaware of the dangerous situation before them. One can say that of the three men I have introduced here Sano expressed the strongest sense of opposition to Christianity in the form of a coherent doctrinal

5) For information regarding what kind of interrogation Sano made of the missionary Nicolai, see my “Sano Tsunehiko to Nikorai” (Sano Tsunehiko and Nicolai), *Kokugakuin Daigaku Nihon Bunka Kenkyūsho Kiyō*, 61 (1988).

system. During his questioning of the missionary Nicolai, he said at one point that he would not subject Christianity to abuse, but hoped that its proselytizing activities would actually increase throughout Japan; in return, he would double his efforts to oppose it. There is room to debate whether this represented a continuation of his younger attitudes, but at very least, it is clear that he had the will to confront Christianity head on at that point in time.

When reading his *Shinri zukai* (An explication of divine truth), which expresses the core of his doctrine, or his other doctrinal works, one finds that his teaching was not particularly complex, and was essentially based on the same tenets as the "Eleven Subjects" or "Seventeen Subjects" (*Jūichi kendai* and *Jūshichi kendai*) used by the government-appointed religious "instructors" (*kyōdōshoku*) of the time. His uniqueness lay in the fact that he did not use those concepts as teaching materials, but viewed them rather as a literal explication of "divine truth." He appears to have believed, at least superficially, that Japan's ancient traditional religion was not inferior to the doctrines of Christianity. He felt that Shintō had sufficient strength to contest Christianity on an equal footing and win. In this sense, one can detect here a posture oriented toward a kind of free competition.

5. NEO-SYNETICISM

While it is possible to orient all of the three men discussed above within the category of "Shintōist," they developed their own unique movements and demonstrated substantial differences in thought. What I wish to focus on here, however, is the fact that while Shinto was, in contrast to Buddhism, a religion exhibiting fundamentally weak doctrinal systematization, these men consciously constructed "syncretic" bodies of doctrine as a means of overcoming that weakness.

While there is substantial debate about the precise meaning of "syncretism,"⁶⁾ it has been most characteristically used to attribute a negative evaluation of the phenomenon in question. But at the same time, a syncretic doctrinal structure may in some cases demonstrate elements in common with globalization. Namely, I am referring to that kind of syncretism which is the result of a positive choice, based on a principle of competition. Accordingly, this kind of syncretism differs in some respects from that occurring within popular religion. This kind of "self conscious" syncretism can be observed frequently in the new religious movements of Japan's early modern period. And in order to differentiate it from the more generally encountered kind of syncretism, I want to call it "neo-syncretism." Neo-syncretism is unlikely to appear in religious traditions with strong doctrinal structures, or in sects which give a high place to dogma. It also does not appear in cases where there is insufficient information available about other religious traditions. In short, I want to call neo-syncretism that phenomenon in which elements considered desirable are

6) A collection of recent articles dealing with the problem of syncretism can be found in *Bunka Jinruigaku* 3 (Cultural Anthropology), 1986.

selected from multiple religious traditions and fused to form a single religious ideal, or body of ritual, thought, or doctrine.

While the Shintō sects around the time of the Meiji Restoration period appear at first glance to express an extremely reactionary or revivalist trend, it should be noted that they also contained elements of neo-syncretism. The neo-syncretic tendencies of the Shintō sects of this period can be called the product of the unique religio-historical conditions of that time. While restoration Shintō rejected Buddhist and Confucian thought, it also developed a posture which attempted to view multiple religious traditions on the basis of a principle of competition. In short, it unconsciously took the position of comparative culture vis a vis religions of different origins. Further, revivalist Shintō also attempted—even though only partially to be sure—to make a comparison of Shintō and Christian thought.⁷⁾ Shintō was caught between Buddhism and foreign Christianity, both of which possessed developed doctrinal structures. Within those conditions, Shintō was forced to adopt a strategy of neo-syncretic doctrinal formation or face the virtual certainty of disappearing as a sectarian religion.

When one considers the fact that most of the other new religious movements which arose later also strongly demonstrate this tendency toward neo-syncretism, it is not impossible to interpret it as a policy chosen by popular religions within a condition of advancing international influences. This is possible because, since most popular religions are relatively free from the fetters of tradition, they can be assumed to be more flexible toward the eclectic incorporation of elements selected from a diversity of religious traditions, including those of foreign origin. The three movements I have discussed here are not normally considered under the rubric of “popular religious movements” (*minshū shūkyō undō*), but it is certain that they drew a sharp line of demarcation vis a vis the established religious sects. And it is for this reason that one should not be surprised to find that the religious movements of the early modern period in general shared most features of organizational and doctrinal formation.

Neo-syncretism can also be considered one path leading toward globalization. Prerequisites for neo-syncretism included an open exchange of information and freedom of choice. And if these lead to an expansion and restructuring of the primary organization, then one can say that globalization has seen a genuine advance.

Within the context of continual inflow of Western culture, the dominant position adopted by those concerned with how to respond to that inflow was to discriminate the spiritual and material aspects of Western culture, and thus move to accept only the elements of material culture. When one reads the texts of the “Eleven Subjects” or “Seventeen Subject” used by the early religious “instructors,”

7) Regarding this issue, see my “Fukko Shintō no keisei katei ni okeru gairai shisō e no taisho” (Coping with Foreign Thought in the Process of Formation of Revivalist Shintō), in Nakamaki Hirochika, ed., *Kamigami no Sōkoku* (Conflict among Deities), Shinsensha, 1982.

it becomes clear that this technique of discrimination and selection was an accepted principle of the time. And within the area of religion, the principle went on to allow the collection of useful items from a broad inventory of domestic religious culture, and to make those elements serve as a counter to Christianity. From this perspective, even the policy of joint Shintō-Buddhist propagation centered on the College of the Great Teaching (*Daikyōin*)—which was criticized from both Shintō and Buddhist camps and abandoned after only a short time—must be considered as one possible response.

Within the response of Restoration-Shintōists to Christianity, one can detect a clear design aimed at using available means to minimize the effects of Christianity. If one narrows the field of view to that point alone, the thought and behavior of those Shintōists appears merely conservative and reactionary, but when one examines the structure of propagation activities which emerged as a product of that thought, one can detect a limited inclusion of elements which, even without conscious design, were conducive to globalization.

6. PROSPECTS

Considered on the conceptual level, the advance of globalization can be expected to result in a variety of reactions within the religious world. One such reaction involves the problem of identity. If the primary organization is magnified to refer to the entire globe, it will represent a threat to religious movements premised on particularistic ethnic groups, or local communities and societies. The fact that a nativist coloration appeared within some of the religious movement of the period around the Meiji Restoration can, in fact, be considered due precisely to a reaction to the continuing advance of globalization in the religious realm.

In addition to neo-syncretism, several other phenomena within modern Japan, such as the continual emergence of new religions and the multinational characteristics of some recent religions, can be understood as phenomena produced within the process of advancing globalization. The basis for the successive appearance of new religious movements can be assumed in part to be a principle of free competition between religious groups. The fact that many religions wish to become multinational in nature means not only that they have exceeded the frameworks of nation and ethnic group, but that they have entered into the international marketplace. From this perspective, the propagation of Christianity as well has actually been a facilitating factor in the recent trend toward globalization.

Finally, I wish to assert that there is a need to attempt studies regarding whether there might not be some kind of relationship between this kind of globalization of religious culture, and the globalization of science and technology. The globalization of science and technology is proceeding steadily within present-day Japan, but we must ask what kind of mutual relationship this kind of globalization has with the globalization of other non-material areas of culture. Some people feel that the globalization produced within the areas of science and technology is a

phenomenon unique to those areas, and that it has little influence on other areas. But it would also seem appropriate to consider the possibility that, granting some difference in speed or degree, globalization is a phenomenon which basically proceeds in parallel within all areas of culture.

I have raised these particular examples in order to show that phenomena presaging globalization existed during the period of the Meiji Restoration, and that such globalization occurred even within the area of religion, an area generally considered unresponsive to the globalization process. Further, such globalization can be observed within persons normally considered oriented toward "revivalism." Subsequent new religions exhibited even stronger tendencies toward neo-syncretism, and there the market mechanism can be seen operating in earnest. This element of "flexibility" within Japanese religions has customarily been evaluated negatively, as something indicating an inconsistency in doctrines or shallowness of historical background. But from the perspective of globalization, it is, on the contrary, something which should be reconsidered as one characteristic of Japan's modernization.

Translated by Norman HAVENS

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