

Chapter 1

The Encounter That Brought Me Back To My Roots

What Togasaki Kikumatsu taught me

At the end of World War II, General Douglas MacArthur made an appeal to the American people for 10,000 volunteers to come to Japan and help with its rebuilding. My father was one of those who heeded the call, and came to Japan right after his 22nd birthday.

While on the ship going over, he was seated across from an elderly gentleman at the dinner table. Togasaki Kikumatsu was the owner of the "Japan Times" English newspaper, and he had an air of aristocracy about him.

Speaking to my father, he asked, "Why are you going to Japan?"

"Oh, I'm responding to the appeal of MacArthur and I'm going to help Japan rebuild. I'm a pastor and I'm going to tell them about Jesus."

"Really? That's impressive. By the way, where are you from?"

"I'm from Chicago."

"Oh? Well, where were you parents and your ancestors from?"

"We are Assyrians. Both my mother and father came from Assyria."

To this answer, Togasaki san gave a most surprising reply. "Since you are going to Japan, let me explain something to you. You think you are going to Japan to help her and to preach Christianity, but there is one other thing that is really important and deep."

My father had just graduated from college knew very little about Japan then, and so he simply said, "Oh, really?"

And so Togasaki san continued, "Actually, your people came to our country some 1400 years ago and the brought us three treasures."

"Are you kidding?"

"The first treasure was 'freedom and democracy', the second was 'welfare and medical care', and the third was the 'Christianity' you just mentioned. Our country has now lost everything because of this war, and it has almost completely lost those three treasures we once had. As an old man, I hesitate to make this request, but once you get to Japan, please resurrect those three treasures we have lost."

That is what my father recalls Togasaki san to have said, but all he could say was, "Thank you. I'll do my best." And so he went to Japan without understanding much of anything.

The Letter To The Editor

Several years passed, and my father had pretty much forgotten about the incident. But one day, as he remembered back on what Mr. Togasaki had said, he decided to write a letter to the editor of the Mainichi Shinbun (Newspaper). In it, he explained what Togasaki san (who was by then deceased) had said to him on the ship to Japan.

Lo and behold, letters began arriving from all over Japan confirming what Mr. Togasaki had said. One of those letters was from former Waseda University professor and Tokyo Bunri University president Saeki Yoshiro. He was well-known for his research into "Keikyo", the "Nestorian" branch of Christianity that had spread into Asia in ancient times.

I should mention that much of the information I have gleaned on this subject came from Professor Saeki's books, along with the writings of one other researcher, Ikeda Sakae, professor emeritus at Tokyo University. Prof. Ikeda concentrated his research on the followers of "Keikyo", together with the "Hata" people who immigrated into ancient Japan. This tribe of people immigrated in mass to Japan and had a great impact on Japan. In fact, Prof. Ikeda was so enthralled with the Hata people and Keikyo, that he even attempted to resurrect Keikyo churches in Japan.

My father still holds very dear those first letters he received from professors Saeki and Ikeda, and over the years, our three families have maintained a deep relationship. In fact, without their cooperation and encouragement, this book would never have been written.

Most people are under the impression that Christianity was first introduced into Japan by Francisco Xavier (1506 - 1552) in the 16th Century, but this is true only in the sense that he was the first to bring western Christianity to Japan. Christianity, in the form of eastern Christianity, had entered Japan long before Xavier and had a profound impact on Japanese culture. In fact, the remnants of that influence can be seen in numerous places around the country and even within Japanese culture itself—something I will document in this book.

In ancient Japan, it was not only Buddhism that came in from India and China. There were also a variety of other religions and cultures that entered in as well. Likewise, it was not only Mongoloid peoples that crossed over into Japan, but other Asians (including Caucasians) as well.

Keikyo, that is ancient Eastern Christianity, likewise entered Japan. Togasaki san had said that it first came in some 1400 years ago, but further research indicates that Christianity likely first entered Japan by way of the Silk Road Japan by about 1800 years ago!

Since my childhood, my father had been telling me these things, but I was skeptical and thought that couldn't possibly be true. My father just loved to talk about Christianity having come not just 450 years ago, but 1450 years ago. When guests were at our house, he delighted in telling them about how in ancient times numerous peoples had crossed over into Japan bringing with them not only religions but medical knowledge and concepts such as concern for social welfare. He particularly enjoyed telling how his own Assyrian people had transversed the Silk Road and crossed over in boats to Japan as early as the 4th century.

I would say to him later, "Dad, enough is enough! Can't you forget about this stuff when people are over?" But he wouldn't quit.

Then one day, I had a serendipitous encounter that changed me.

Remains of the "Kirishitan" (Catholic Christians) Wherever You Go

Once when I was overseas, a friend gave me a book about Japan, saying, "Have you ever read this? You're interested in Japan, and this is a book that tells about ancient Japan."

It was a book by Richard Henry Drummond entitled, "A Christian History of Japan." I glanced at the back cover, and one sentence literally jumped out at me. "In 1600, the single largest organized religion and the one most widely spread throughout Japan was Christianity."*

I was shocked by this statement and said to myself, "You've got to be kidding! Japan is a Buddhist country. This just can't be!" But at the same time, I was thinking, "If this is true, then how come we haven't known about it?!" So I expectantly read through that book.

At about this time, I got involved in founding volunteer organizations designed to help people. These included "Agape House", "Japan Help Line", "Nihongo 110 ban" (which roughly translates "Japanese 911"), and "Japan Emergency Squad" (which sends teams of volunteers to disaster locations). Along with the notoriety that came with this, I was frequently invited to give talks all over Japan.

As I travelled to numerous locations from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south, I made a point of asking local people a number of questions, including "Do you know of any artifacts or remains of the Kirishitan or other ancient Christians in this area?"

I was really surprised, as almost everywhere I went, I discovered there were such remains close by. In one place, there would be a small Kirishitan museum in a local church, and in another place Buddhist temple that had Kirishitan artifacts. Likewise, there were Keikyo artifacts that were pre-Xavier.

I also discovered that even things I formerly had understood to be strictly Buddhist, in fact, had remnants of ancient Christianity within them. I really found all of this quite mind-boggling.

Once, after giving a lecture in Kumamoto, I called up my father and told him about the various Christian artifacts and influences I was discovering. I told him I wanted to come back to Kumamoto and do some more research. But my father didn't sound the least surprised, and he simply said, "So you finally are getting around to checking things out, huh? Greenhorn, don't you know that the Catholic missionaries were the late-comers? Our own ancestors came here a thousand years before them. Don't you remember me telling you about them?"

That's when it hit me. I remembered that when I was

young, my father had often told me that ancient Christians had already been in Japan long before Xavier showed up. "That's right! Now I remember! I used to get sick of hearing about that as a kid. Okay, dad, where are the places our ancestors, those ancient Christians, first arrived at in Japan? When I finish this job I'm on right now, I want to go check them out, one by one."

So, at my first opportunity, I went on the information my father had given me to a small town in Hyogo Prefecture. This was the place that these ancient eastern Christians from between the first and fifth centuries had purportedly arrived in Japan.

The Hata People Who Came To Sakoshi

Sakoshi is a port in the city of Akou in Hyogo Prefecture. According to Prof. Takakusu Junjiro, it was here that a tribe called the "Hata" arrived in Japan from the Asian continent.* (*The character 秦(hata) is defined as "name given anciently to naturalized foreigners" (Nelson's Japanese-English Character Dictionary, p. 666), and thus was apparently later applied to all such people.)

On the train to Sakoshi, I happened to sit next to an elderly couple. As we conversed, I discovered to my surprise that they were descendants of the Kirishitan. They still had artifacts in their home that had been handed down through the generations. Moreover, they lived very near where I was planning to go.

"Our daughter is coming to pick us up, and so we'd be happy to take you to the place you want to go. It's really quite close to us."

So after arriving in Sakoshi, they took me to an ancient Shinto Shrine named "Ohsake Jinja" (大避神社). This was the place my father said was where our ancestors had first landed in Japan and where they built a Christian church.

I was told that this was a port where many groups of people had arrived as they came into Japan in ancient times, as it was right at the entrance of the Inland Sea. I thought this would be a good chance to test out dad's story, about which I was still rather skeptical, and put it to rest. And so I gathered my courage and proceeded to ask the priest there about it.

"Excuse me, my ancestors are from Assyria, and I've been told that about 1400 years ago, people from Assyria came to Japan bringing with them ancient Christianity and that they built a church right here. Do you know anything about that?"

I fully expected to receive a cold response and be ushered out with, "Don't be ridiculous! There was no such thing!" But to the contrary, the priest said, "What an interesting thing you say. Actually, this shrine is closely related to the "Hata" people, and to be honest with you, it is really an unusual shrine." He continued to share with me the history of the shrine and the "strange" objects that were enshrined there, including the items that were worshipped by the Hata people.

Among these objects was a mask used in "gagaku" (ancient court music) that was said to have been carved by the leader of the tribe, Hatano Kawakatsu. (Note: The surname Hatano was written with the same character 秦 as the name of the clan, which was simply read "Hata.") The face on the mask had deeply inset eyes and a very large, hooked nose, along with what looked kind of like an angel sitting on top to symbolize protection. The priest said, "Actually, the gagaku music traditions all came from the Ancient Near East."

As I looked at the mask, I blurted out, "Hey, this face looks just like my father!"

The priest continued, "The number 12 is used very often here at this shrine. You give 12 offerings, and there are 12 stones, and other such things having to do with 12."

I was thinking as I listened to him that the ancient Israelites set up 12 pillars because they were made up of 12 tribes, and the number 12 appeared in numerous other contexts as well, including the number of disciples Jesus had. In fact, the number "12" in the Bible was a symbol for "redemption" and "salvation". Thus, 12 was also important to the followers of Keikyo and other eastern Christian sects.

The priest also said that even though the Ohsake Jinja enshrined Hatano Kawakatsu as a person, originally, it was that which Hatano Kawakatsu had worshipped that was enshrined. So what was it that he had worshipped?

In order to understand that, the priest suggested that I ought to go to Kyoto. He said that there is an unusual Buddhist temple there by the name of "Kouryuji" (広隆寺) that from ancient times had a

special relationship with the Ohsake Shrine. "I'll even write a letter of introduction for you," he offered.

I felt as though I'd won the lottery! My father had always said, "After our ancestors built the first Christian church there, they moved on to Kyoto and began their evangelistic work there."

Another clue I discovered is that this port is a part of the city of "Akou", and it occurred to me that this very name may have a relation to the Mediterranean port city of "Akko". At any rate, I left the city of Akou thrilled with what I had found out and headed on to Kyoto.

Kyoto: A City Built With The Help Of Foreigners

The next day, I visited the temple in Kyoto the Shinto priest in Sakoshi had told me about. Kouryuji is a temple located in the Sakyoku ward of Kyoto in a place known as "Uzumasa" (太秦). I later found out that this temple was also originally built by these immigrants known as the "Hata."

Unfortunately, the temple priest was out at the time, and so I handed the letter of introduction from the Shinto priest to his wife. Again, when I asked her the same questions I had asked at the shrine in Sakoshi, I frankly expected her to tell me to "get lost." Or if not that, then I thought that it was likely that I would find out things that would poke holes in my father's theories. Thus, it was again with considerable fear and trepidation that I asked her my questions.

Again, I was in for a big surprise. She said, "You know, there are a lot of strange things about this temple. It would probably be difficult to prove that people related to your ancestors built a church right here, but there are some things here that would make that a possibility. One thing that really bothers me, however, is this slogan 'internationalization' that one hears so often these days as though it were something new. That is what ancient Kyoto was all about. It was something like modern-day Hong Kong, as people were coming from many countries to live here. There were a variety of religions here, and that is why Kyoto prospered so much in those days. Your ancestors and my ancestors worked together to build this city."

"So that's it!" I thought. Up until then, I had not

realized that so many people had immigrated to Kyoto, and that's where my problem in understanding had lain. Kyoto and Nara were at the end point of the Silk Road. Over many centuries, people groups from the ancient Near East and from central and eastern Asia travelled along the Silk Road, with many of these coming all the way to Japan to settle down.

It was here that the first waves of these groups had settled down. They had come through Korea, across the Kanmon Straights and then through the Inland Sea to this point. The fact that I shared the same ancestors with these people was a real revelation to me, and I found it overwhelming. "Wow! My distant cousins worked together with others to build Kyoto and other parts of Japan too!"

I was born and raised in Tokyo, and until I entered elementary school, I had thought of myself as "Japanese." But when I looked in a mirror, I saw that my face was different than those of my Japanese friends. So I began to realize that I wasn't Japanese, this wasn't my country and that I was just a "guest." But now, as I heard these words in Kyoto, I thought, "Ah, then this is my country after all. I'm at home here!"

Thoughts of all of those things that my father had been saying for so long were racing around in my head as I thought, "There's no turning back now!" People who were from the same ancestry as me had come to Japan, had become Japanese and had worked with the locals to build Kyoto and many other cities in ancient Japan. My soul was stirred by that thought, and I decided right then and there that I would do everything I could to follow up all leads and check this story out.

The Nation of Assyria

Both my father and I often refer to the fact that our ancestors were the Assyrians who lived in the Middle East. People often say to us, however, "I've heard of the ancient country of Assyria, but does it still exist?" It is true, of course, that no such country now exists, but there are pockets of Assyrians living in numerous places, and they still maintain their cultural identity as Assyrians. Just as the Jews gathered back together to resurrect their nation as "Israel" in 1948, so it has long been a dream of the 3 million Assyrian peoples to bring their nation back into existence as well.

Ancient Assyria was located in parts of what are now the countries of Iraq and Iran. From approximately 900 B.C. up until 607

B.C., they build a great empire in that region, as they ruled almost the entire Near East. This domination also extended to include ancient Israel as well.

After King Solomon's death, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms, with the northern portion maintaining the name "Israel" while the southern portion used the name "Judah." The northern tribes of Israel were later conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and thousands were taken back to Assyria as prisoners. As these people were from the ten tribes that comprised the northern kingdom of Israel, they became known as the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel."

The Assyrian empire came to an end in 607 B.C. when it was conquered by the emerging Babylonian Empire. This was not, however, the end of the Assyrian people. In fact, as I shall now document, some of these Assyrians had a profound impact on ancient Japan. A large number of Assyrians together with other peoples who were from that same region traveled along the Silk Road and ended up settling down in Japan.

With the recent events in the former Yugoslavia, the term "ethnic cleansing" has come to the forefront of the world's conscience. But in 1917, an even greater "ethnic cleansing" occurred when Turkish and Kurdish Muslims massacred some 180,000 Assyrian Christians and an estimated 1.5 million Armenian Christians. Both of these groups were descended from the ancient Eastern Christians, the "Nestorians" or "Keikyo" as it was called in China* (*Note: This is the Japanese reading of the Chinese characters 景教). The Turks and Kurds went from village to village giving everyone only two options—to choose between the Koran (the Holy Book of Islam) or death. "We'll give you 24 hours to choose. It's the Koran or the sword." Many of the elderly chose to die while the young ran for their lives. Large numbers of these people thus became refugees.

Among those refugees were my grandparents, Martha and Samuel Joseph. They escaped to America and became American citizens. Nevertheless, they maintained their ethnic identity as Assyrians.

My father recalls his father waking up in the middle of the night saying "They're coming!" as he awoke from nightmares. The terror of that event still gripped him. Thus, I am a descendant of those who escaped the great Assyrian/Armenian massacre.

My father often added the comment when this subject came up that the "Kirishitan" of Japan suffered even greater

persecution. Thus, as a descendent of the Eastern Christians, who became known as "Keikyo" in China and Japan, I found this of great interest.

The Close Association of the nation of Assyria to the Bible

Assyria is a nation with extremely close ties to the Bible. The likely location of the Garden of Eden was in what later became Assyria. The Mountains of Ararat, where Noah's Ark is said to have come to rest, and the Tower of Babel were also located within its boundaries. The Old Testament prophet Jonah (whose ministry took place from approximately 790 B.C. to 770 B.C.) was sent by God to the city of Nineveh (present day Mosul, Iraq), which was then the capital city of Assyria. Johan preached the word of God there, and much to his surprise, the Ninevites repented of their sins and returned to the LORD. Thus, God did not follow through on his threat to destroy Nineveh, but allowed them to prosper for a time.

My father's parents were actually born near the city that was once Nineveh. Thus, if the ancient Ninevites had not repented and God had destroyed that city, then perhaps my grandparents would not have even existed and I would not have been born either. Thus, this incident in the Bible is one that I can relate to very deeply.

The progenitor of the Assyrians was a man named Asshur, who is referred to in Genesis 10:22 as a descendant of Noah's son Shem. Thus, they are a "semitic" people, and are thus "relatives" of the Hebrews (Israelites or Jews). In fact, the patriarch of the Israelites, Abraham, was born in Ur in the land that later became Assyria.

When the northern tribes of Israel were conquered by Assyria, they were taken into captivity into Assyria and became known as the "Ten Lost Tribes". Thus, to a significant degree, the stage on which the stories of the Bible were played out on was the nation of Assyria.

The region of Assyria was the location of the oldest known civilization of human history, and numerous advances in civilization first occurred there. The Assyrians were, for instance, the first people to make glass, and they created the world's first library. They attained of a high level of civilization with great advances in the arts, mathematics and engineering.

While it is not very well known, the Assyrians were among the first peoples to adopt Christianity. After Jesus' ascension into Heaven, his disciples did not spread out only to the west to proclaim the gospel. Some of them also went to the east. One of the twelve, Thomas, is known to have gone to the east, first coming to Assyria.

According to a researcher named Baruorai (?), Thomas was evangelizing in Assyria within 2 years of Jesus' ascension. In fact, together with the Armenian people, the Assyrians were the first gentiles to become a Christian nation. The Assyrian Church of the East traditionally designates Thomas as their first archbishop.

After a period of time in Assyria, Thomas went to India. John Stewart, a missionary for 35 years in India, wrote a book entitled "The Works of the Nestorians—Church on Fire" in which he described the work of Thomas. According to the traditions handed down through the centuries, Thomas landed on the Malabar Coast of Southwestern India in 52 A.D.. Specifically, it was on the island of Marangara (?) near xxxx.

Thomas was able to make numerous converts among all classes of society, from the peasants all the way up to the king, and he baptized many people. He built 7 churches and ordained 2 priests. Next, he went over to the eastern side of India to Madras, as it is now called, and there he also met with considerable success converting the king and many citizens.

According to one tradition, Thomas traveled from there all the way into China, going through Tibet. He is said to have made converts and to have founded a church near what is present-day Beijing. After that, he is said to have returned to India, where it is reported he was martyred in 72 A.D. near Madras. The place he was martyred is still called "Thomas' Hill", and his body was buried there. In the 5th Century, a man named Theodore (?) is recorded to have told Bishop Gregory (?) of Kul (?) in France that "The grave of Thomas is in Mirapol (?) in southern India." That grave is now located in a Catholic Church and many people go on pilgrimages to commemorate the life of Thomas. Likewise, there is a Christian sect in India that calls itself the "Mar Thoma" Church, and the Christians there refer to themselves as "Thomas Christians" (?).

Former Indian President Dr. Rajendra Prasad is quoted as saying:

“Remember, St. Thomas came to India when many of the countries of

Europe had not yet become Christians, and so those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European countries. And it is really a matter of pride to us that it so happened.” (Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Former President of India, 1952-1962; quoted in S. G. Pothan, The Syrian Christians of Kerala)

In addition to Thomas, another of Jesus' 12 disciples, Bartholomew (Nathaniel), also did evangelism in Assyria. An ancient Bible scholar by the name of Hielonimsu (?) (One of the "Church Fathers, 347 - 420 A.D.) wrote that Bartholomew went as far as India and then came back to Armenia, where he died in Arbanopolis (?).

By the 6th Century, there was a Church of the East church in Cochin in Southwestern India, and it still exists today

(Something missing?)

(Good place to put in new find in China)

Assyria: The First Christian Nation

In addition to the 12 main disciples of Jesus, there was also another larger group of 70 that followed him (Luke 10:1). One member of that group was a man named Addai. In the first century, Addai went to the city of Edessa (Urhay) in Assyria (what is now the modern city of Urfa in southeastern Turkey), and there he proclaimed the gospel and founded a church. According to the writings of a 4th century historian* (name?, documentation?), he also went to the Parthia region (southeastern Caspian Sea coast). The names of other members of the 70, such as Aggai and Mari, are also mentioned as having laid the foundations of the Eastern Church.

The city of Edessa became the center of the Assyrian Church of the East, and by the year 95 A.D., there were 19 cities in the surrounding regions with a bishop in place. Likewise, a second century coin with the image of the king of Edessa wearing a crown with a cross on it has been unearthed.

Tradition claims that the first Christian church outside of Israel was an Assyrian church in Mart Maryam (St. Mary) in Urmia, in what is now northwestern Iran. The Bible records that at the birth of Jesus, "wise men from East" came to worship the infant (Matthew 2:1). These wise men are said to have laid the foundations of this

first Christian church. (Ken: According to Acts, believers were first called Christians in Antioch. Wouldn't that be the first Christian church?)

It is well-known that by A.D. 161, Christianity had spread widely throughout the Medean, Persian and Baktrian areas of ancient Assyria. Likewise, according to Bar Daisan (154 - 222), by the second century, many Turks and Tartars had become Christians.*

At any rate, the Assyrians were the first gentile people to become a Christian nation. The Armenians then learned about Christianity from the Assyrians and became a Christian people as well. By the 5th century, an Aramaic translation of the Bible was in use.

The second century thinker, Tatian (c. 110-180) called himself an Assyrian, and in his composition entitled "Address To The Greeks", he writes the following, "In Christianity we have a religion based in a fruitful Holy Book, the Bible. It came out of the Middle East and is far deeper and has far more truth than any religion or philosophy that came out of Greece."*

It also appears that even before any of Christ's disciples began to evangelize in Assyria, numerous stories about Christ were already circulating among the people. According to the Bible, on the day of the Jewish festival of Pentecost, which was ten days after Christ's ascension into Heaven, the Holy Spirit of God descended upon the disciples of Jesus as they gathered for prayer. This was, in reality, the birthday of the Christian Church. The description of the event tells us that people from numerous regions of the world were gathered there in Jerusalem, and topping the list of countries people came from were "Parthia, Media, Elam and Mesopotamia." These are countries within the region of Assyria, and so we can assume that the peoples from this area returned to their countries to tell of what they had seen and heard in Jerusalem. Thus, we can conclude that elements of the gospel message of Christ were already well-known in Assyria before Christ's disciples came.

It's also relevant to note that according to Acts 2:11 both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism were among these people. Actually, many Jews had been living in Assyria for several centuries. The Babylonian Empire had conquered the southern kingdom of Judah in 607 B.C., and the Jews were taken into exile, where they remained until the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 537 B.C. (*note, Ken, the dates in my history books are one year earlier than the 536 in the Japanese version. No big deal, and so change if you want.) With the

rise of the Persian Empire to control all of the Middle East, the Jews were allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem, but many of the Jews ended up remaining behind in their lands of exile.

Thus, for several centuries prior to Christ, Jews were living in the region of Assyria. Likewise, we can reasonably assume that descendants of the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel" that had been taken captives by the Assyrians even earlier were also living in this area. Many of these people were likely to have been among those that heard the gospel message and became Christians.

This is no doubt the reason that the Christian Church in Assyria had considerable Jewish influence. This is something that is quite different from that which resulted from the spread of Christianity into the West, which later became the Roman Catholic Church. Catholicism was a form of Christianity that took great pains to purge Jewish characteristics as much as possible. In contrast, then, the Assyrian Church of the East preserved its basic Jewish characteristics, or what we can call "primitive Christianity"—the Christianity that existed in the First Century.

The Early Trade Between the Greater Assyrian Region and China

The greater Assyrian region had trading relations with China from very early times. It has been established that from at least 2400 B.C. there were relations between this region and China (Heibonsha, World Encyclopedia, etc.). By 1200 B.C., China had an ambassador in Assyria. Also, there is a record that in 139 B.C., during the Kan no Butei (?) era, China sent its representative named Chouken to the country of Daigetsushi (?), in the region of what is now Afghanistan.

By 101 B.C., China conquered the regions of Central Asia from the Aral Sea to the countries on the south side of Baruhashi (?) Lake, Ferugana (?), Uson (?), Koukyo (?), etc. Records also show that in A.D. 67, during the Godan no Meitei (?) Era, China had formed a strategic alliance with these nations and that they had also conquered Daigetsushi (?). Finally, it records that China then controlled all of the approximately 50 countries of Central Asia.*

In A.D. 166, records show that the Roman emperor, Marcus Arelius had sent an emissary to China and thus had relations as well. Thus, these fragmentary records show that from very early times, there were significant trade relations between China and the greater

Assyrian area.*

It is therefore quite obvious that various foreign cultural influences and religious ideas, including Christianity, entered into China at a very early stage. It can be shown that even before Christ there was a Jewish community in Kaifon (?). This was well known by the Jewish communities in Assyria and India, because they had relations with each other along the Silk Road. Thus, this is no doubt why Thomas went to China when he heard about Jewish presence there, as he wanted to preach the gospel to his fellow Jews.

The Jewish merchants of that time were particularly involved in the silk trade between the Roman Empire and China, and they traveled back and forth with camel caravans. There is even a display in the museum in Beijing showing Jewish merchants traveling on camels to China. We can assume that Thomas joined together with one of these caravans to come into China.

The fact that Christianity had entered China and Tibet in very early times can be seen from a book entitled "Shinsen Kokan" (Lessons from a mountain god (?)) written by a Taoist monk named Jodou in about 1700. In it, he describes the history of China during the First Century A.D., saying that during the reign of the Emperor Kobu (?) of Gokan (?) (who reigned from 25 to 57 A.D.), the Tibetans invaded China. The Chinese were able to repulse this invasion, but he said the Tibetans left behind stories concerning a man named Jesus. According to this story they told, if one traveled for about a three year journey to the west of China, or in Chinese distance measurements, 197,000 "ri,"* one would come to a certain country. In the first year of the Shinyuu (?) Era (A.D. 1), a young maiden named Mary was visited by God and became pregnant. When she gave birth, she wrapped the child in cloth and laid him in a feeding trough. When the child was born, the heavens were filled with angels. Jodou explains that he thinks that before Thomas came to China, he also visited Tibet to tell the story there as well.* (*Note: One "ri" (里) is defined as 3.9273 km, which would result in a ridiculous figure of 773,678 km! An old usage of "ri" was, however, "300 paces", which, depending on the length of a "pace," would be something like 40,000 km. This still is several times the actual figure, but at least it is a bit more reasonable.) (kojien)

Keikyo Was Born in Assyria

If we fast-forward a bit to the 5th Century A.D., we find that Christianity was flourishing in the greater Assyrian

region. It was known as the Assyrian Church of the East, and upon its arrival in China, the Chinese gave it the name "Jingjiao" (景教 Luminous Teachings), which is read in Japanese as "Keikyo". Keikyo is also often referred to in the West as "Nestorianism," but this is not an appropriate label. While Nestorius became a leader in the Assyrian Church of the East, he was not the founder of the church. The Assyrian Church of the East, or Keikyo, was not a new denomination of Christianity, but was a branch of primitive Christianity coming out of the Apostle Thomas.

Keikyo is just one branch of the Eastern Church. There are also the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches along with other smaller churches. At one time, Keikyo was the most influential group among these Eastern churches. The Eastern Orthodox Church formally separated from the Western (Roman Catholic) Church in the 11th Century. Keikyo, however, was already split off from the Western Church long before this in the 5th Century.

The followers of Keikyo were very evangelistic, and kept pushing farther and farther east in their evangelization efforts. They had a high level of culture and were particularly well-versed in medical knowledge. They had knowledge of herbal and other natural medicines, and they were famous for their surgical skills. Because of that, they were well respected by the people they came in contact with and had considerable influence wherever they went.

The reputation of the followers of Keikyo often having a high level of medical knowledge spread throughout the ancient East. For example, in Gundeshapur (Jundi Shapur) region of the Sassanid Persia, which was known for its high level of medicine, there was a hospital whose head, Jurjis bin Bakht-Isho (c. 771) was a Keikyo believer. When the Islamic Empire took over this region (note: approximate year would be helpful), the second generation Caliph (the highest ranking leader in Islam), al-Mansur in A.D. 765, invited him into his court as his court physician. Later it was Caliph Haroon al-Rasid who appointed Jibril Bakht-Isho in A.D. 805 as chief physician of Baghdad hospital and his private doctor.*

Thus, Keikyo Christians were active and well respected in the Arab world. Hunayn bin Ishaq (808-873 A.D.) and several other Keikyo Christian scholars translated into Arabic the writings of numerous Greek philosophers and scholars, such as Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Garenosu (?) and Hippocrates, introducing their thought into the Islamic world.

The Caliph built a scientific research institute named

“Bait al-Hikma” (meaning House of Wisdom in Arabic) in Baghdad, and most of the scholars there were Keikyo Christians. It was through their efforts that the spectacular growth of science in the Arab world took place. One interesting fact that shows how advanced the society was at that time compared with Europe is that there were about 100 book stores in Bagdad alone.*

This Arabian science later had a great impact on Europe, as the father of the heliocentric (sun-centered) model of the cosmos, Copernicus, had thoroughly studied Arabian science. Thus, one cannot adequately account for the development of European civilization without taking into account the effects of Arabian civilization. In a similar way, as I will later demonstrate, the achievements of Keikyo Christians had a great influence on the development of Eastern civilization, including China, Mongolia and eventually Japan.

The Eastern Church, Keikyo, first spread in the regions of Assyria and Persia, and then from there into central and south Asia and on into Siberia and eastern Asia. Before long, a Keikyo church had been established in every major city along the silk routes between western Asia and China.*

Just like the Jews, the Keikyo Christians were heavily involved in the trade of silk and silk products. It is reported that the development of the silk industry in Europe began in the middle of the 6th Century when two Keikyo monks hid silk worm eggs in the tip of their walking sticks and then presented them as a gift to the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I. (Read Samuel H. Moffett, A History of Christianity in Asia, vol. I, New York, Orbis Books, 1998, p. 289)

*

By about 800 A.D., it is estimated that the total number of eastern Christians was greater than the total number of European Christians. Many people are surprised to learn that at that time, the Christians living to the east of Jerusalem outnumbered those living to the west of Jerusalem. This little known fact points to the importance of understanding eastern Christianity in its relationship to the history of Asia during this time (what is referred to in Europe as the "Dark Ages" and the "Middle Ages"). We now know that Keikyo had tremendously significant influences on the cultures and religions of the eastern world—far more than has been recognized by most scholars in the west.

"Yuzuki"—The Country of Origin of the Hata

The first Keikyo Christians spread out from the regions of Assyria towards the east. The Hata people, who immigrated in large numbers into ancient Japan, also originated in a region close to ancient Assyria and Persia that had become a focal point of eastern Christianity.

The Hata tribe came from an area in central Asia designated in Chinese by the characters 弓月, pronounced in Japanese as "Yuzuki" and in Chinese as "Gong-Yue". It was located along one route of the Silk Road just south of Lake Balkhash along the Ili River. (It was conquered and ceased to exist from approximately 651 - 655 A.D.) This area was beyond the Great Wall that was begun by the first emperor Shin (which interestingly is written with the same character as the "Hata" 秦). Nevertheless, this country of Yuzuki was referred to in Chinese history books.* (How to handle reference, 資治通鑑)?

According to Professor Saeki Yoshiro, this small country of Yuzuki was a Christian country. In fact, there were numerous kingdoms in Western and Central Asia that from early times had become Christianized. It appears that Yuzuki was a Christian country from as early as the second century. These people welcomed primitive Christianity and founded numerous Christian churches. As they were nomadic, they moved about over wide areas. Eventually, then, some of them ended up coming to the end of the "Silk Road", Japan, and settled there.

In the area of the ancient kingdom of Yuzuki, two ancient cemeteries have been uncovered that contain over 600 gravestones with crosses on them. The oldest in these particular graveyards was dated at 858 A.D., with the newest one coming from 1324 A.D. These people had all died as Keikyo believers. Their names were those of local people, and among the epitaphs, were the following: "This is the grave of Pasak, who lived his life for our savior the Lord Jesus," and "This is the grave of Sheriha. He filled all of the buildings and corridors with light. He was an eloquent speaker famous for his deep thoughts. When he preached the gospel, his voice rang out like a trumpet."* (other book p47) These people were from the same culture that spawned the Hata people who came to Japan.

The Hata people were really an unusual people, and many mysteries still remain concerning them. One thing, however, is certain. They had a tremendous impact on the history and culture of Japan. Among the various groups of people that immigrated into ancient Japan, they stand out both for their high level of culture as well as

their sheer numbers. (In fact, the character 秦 associated with their name came to refer to all naturalized foreigners in ancient times.) (Nelson's Japanese-English Character Dictionary, p.666)*

One Japanese who frequently went on business to Central Asia said, "If you want to understand the roots of the Japanese, you need to come to the center of the Silk Road. If you do that, you'll know where the Japanese came from."*

That is exactly where the Hata people had come from. In fact another Japanese adventurer who set out from Israel and followed the ancient Silk Road all the way to Japan said the following: "When I arrived in Central Asia, it was as though Japan was just around the corner. Geographically, I was still a long ways away, but culturally and ethnically, I had a feeling of great closeness. I thought that surely the ancestors of the Japanese had come through here."*

In the tortured history of this area, when the ancient Chinese emperors began subjugating the various peoples surrounding their kingdom, they began conscripting them to work on the building of the Great Wall. In fact, a number of these peoples ended up fleeing to other areas. According to 5th Century documents, among those who fled, a number of them drifted into the Korean Peninsula and then over to Japan (好太王の碑文、Koutaiou no Hibun, "Monument Writings of King Koutai", and 『後漢書』の東夷伝, Koukanshono Touiden, "Koukansho, Stories of the Eastern Barbarians"). The people of Gong-Yue (Yuzuki) were among those who fled from slavery to the Chinese, and coming through Manchuria, they came into Korea.

The Hata people also had a hard time on the Korean peninsula, but surprisingly it was the Japanese emperor who ended up helping them. They were seeking freedom and they found it in Japan. Thus, Japan was to them not simply the final frontier, but was a kind of "heaven." Unlike it became in later years, the Japan of that day was a land of comparative freedom. It became their promised land.

According to the "Nihon Shoki" (the "Chronicles of Japan", compiled in 720), "Yuzuki no Kimi" (弓月君, the "Lord of Yuzuki") crossed over to Japan from the Korean state of Paekche around 400 AD. He made a very favorable impression on Emperor Oujin and the emperor granted him and a large number of fellow immigrants tracks of land in Yamato Province (what is now Nara Prefecture). This was the beginning of the Hata clan in Japan.* (encyl. p1767)

According to a third century Chinese document, the Hata were "people of tall stature who kept their clothes clean, and who had

a special language and customs." Likewise, it says that "their king rode on a horse, and they were a people of high culture."*

This reference to them "keeping their clothes clean" fits a characteristic that both the ancient eastern Christians and the ancient Jews were known to possess. This was very unlike the ancient Chinese (as well as the ancient northern European tribes) who paid very little attention to keeping clean. In fact, most people of that day almost never took baths or washed their clothing.

The Hata people, however, stood in contrast to this, as they took cleanliness very seriously. Japanese, of course, have a reputation for liking to take baths and for cleanliness, but it may just be that this trait was adopted from the Hata who settled in Japan.

Japanese history books refer to the Hata as having come from China and Korea, but those were merely stations along the way for them. As is evidenced by the fact that the man who led them to Japan is referred to in the Nihon Shoki as the "Lord of Yuzuki", they had originally come from Yuzuki, which is in central Asia, and so ethnically, they were different than what we picture today for the Chinese and Koreans.

In the ancient world, it was a common occurrence for whole tribes to move to different locations—something that was more common then than in today's world. National boundaries are in most cases now clearly determined, and while international travel is relatively easy and common, it is rare for entire groups of people to immigrate to a new country.

Keikyo Christians Spoke Aramaic

While the Chinese records indicate that the Hata people had come from the "Gong Yue" (弓月, "Yuzuki" in Japanese reading) region of Central Asia, we can surmise that they actually originated even earlier from farther to the west, in what was then Assyria.

I am on the board of the Tokyo American Club, and we once had Tougi Hideki, a well-known musician of Japanese "gagaku" (court music), give a concert there. In the introduction to this musician, it stated that he was of Hata origin. After the concert, I talked at length with him, as well as with his mother and sister, who were also present.

His mother was very curious about me, asking me where I had come from and other questions about my roots. I answered everything as best I could, and then she went back somewhere in the house to get a document detailing the Hata genealogy. It indicated that in all probability, the Hata originally came from the Middle East.

"It appears that we share the same roots," she said. And then she invited me to an annual get-together of people of Hata origin that is held on one day in Sakoshi in Hyogo Prefecture followed by another meeting in Kyoto in "Uzumasa" (太秦) the following day.

One may think it very strange that I could be related to these Japanese people, as our facial characteristics are quite different. But it is now apparent that my own ethnic roots share a common ancestry with one of the streams that make up Japanese ethnicity.

That being the case, then, let's take a closer look at this ancient nation of Assyria. The language of the Assyrians was called "Aramaic." It is a language that most Japanese would be unfamiliar with, but it was the common language of the ancient near east, being particularly important to the eastern Christians and the Jews. It was, in fact, the language that Jesus spoke in daily life. It is a language closely related to biblical Hebrew, and there are even short sections of the Old Testament that are written in Aramaic. Aramaic held a similar role in the ancient Near East that English does in the modern world. It was the language of trade along the Silk Road and played a similar role in the East that Greek played in the West in the ancient world.

With the demise of the Assyrian empire, the Babylonians came to power, but the dominance of the Aramaic language remained. Even in the Persian Empire, official documents were all written in Aramaic.

When the Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians, they too began to use Aramaic, and this was maintained even after they were allowed to return to Israel. This was the reason that the native language of Jesus was Aramaic (though, of course, he understood Hebrew and in all likelihood Greek as well). Several of the words of Jesus recorded in the New Testament are simply Aramaic words transliterated into Greek. For example, "Ephphatha" in Mark 7:34 (meaning "Be opened"), "mammon" (meaning "wealth") in Matthew 6:24, maranatha in Rev. 22:20, and the word "aba" used to refer to "father" are all Aramaic words. Thus, the language spoken by Christ was the same language spoken by my own ancestors.

This language that was shared by both the Assyrians and the Jews likewise became the language used by the Christian community that made up the Assyrian Church of the East. The language of the region surrounding Edessa (Urhai), the center of the Eastern Church, was referred to as "Syriac", but this is merely a dialect of Aramaic. What we shall take up in the next section is that a number of Japanese words would seem to have their roots in this very language of Aramaic.

Another important point is that since Jesus taught in the Aramaic language using thought patterns that would be most familiar to native speakers of that language, this would make it easier for them to assimilate and understand his teachings. The New Testament represents a translation of the teachings of Jesus from Aramaic into Greek, from which it was then later translated into other languages, including English. As modern readers, we are at a disadvantage, for the problems we face in understanding the cultural and linguistic background are far greater than anything they would have faced. This could be one reason that the Assyrian Church of the East did not face internal battles over interpretation nearly to the degree that was true in the western church. Likewise, this fact also explains why it maintained its Jewish flavor while the western church abandoned it.* (other book p.62)

The Aramaic influence on Japanese

In China, there is a well-known monument that dates from the time when Keikyo was flourishing in the 8th century. It's called the "Nestorian Monument", but the Chinese name uses the same characters as is seen in the place in Kyoto founded by the Hata people, Uzumasa (大秦). The full name in Chinese is "大秦景教流行中国碑", or "Taishin Keikyo Ryuko Chugokuhi" in Japanese pronunciation. The characters "大秦" were used in China to refer to the regions to the west of China including the Roman Empire.* (Kojien) The Chinese name literally translates as "Monument in China to the Spread of Keikyo (from) the Western Regions." This monument is written in both Syrian (Aramaic) and Chinese.

The Syrian written on this monument is the language (or at least a dialect of the language) the Hata people would have brought with them into Japan. Some of the words they used appear to have worked their way into the Japanese language. For example, in ancient times, one runs across a lot of Japanese names that include "Maro" (麻呂). According to professor Saeki Yoshiro, this comes from the Syrian language. During the Yamato era, high ranking people had the term

"Maro" added to their names, such as with "Kakinomoto Hito Maro" (柿本人麻呂), a 7th Century poet, and "Abenonaka Maro" (阿部仲麻呂), an 8th Century writer). Later on, the "Maro" became "Maru", and was written with the character 丸, and is still used today with the names of ships.

Both "Maro" and "Maru" are derived from the Aramaic (Syrian) word "Mar", which means "Lord", "Sir" or "Saint" in names. The Church of South India, which was founded by Jesus' disciple, Thomas, is called the "Mar Thoma Church", or "Saint Thomas Church". Even today, the leaders in the Eastern (Keikyo) Churches found in places such as Baghdad (Iraq), Cochin (India), Tehran (Iran), Morton Grove and Chicago (Illinois, USA) are referred to with this same title, "Mar". I know personally Mar Dinka of the Assyrian Church of the East, and these titles all come from the same root.

The Aramaic word for father is "Abba," and interestingly enough, essentially this same word "aba" is used in the Tohoku dialect of northern Japan to mean either "father" or "parent". It would appear that a number of other words used in that dialect may also have their roots in Aramaic.

Once, when I was invited to give a lecture in Tohoku, I told the audience, "The dialect you speak here is not simply standard Japanese spoken with an accent. It is derived from the language of people who immigrated here long ago. So please don't let your dialect disappear." The audience reacted in laughter, but I really think there is a strong possibility this is true.

Recently, I heard something very interesting from a Jewish person. He said that the name of the ancient capital of Japan, Nara, is very similar to a word in Hebrew, *nalah*, that means the "end" or "terminus". Since Nara was the last stop on the Silk Road, it could very be that the very name Nara was chosen because it was the end of the line. Likewise, the location of the emperor's palace was given the name "Asuka" (飛鳥), which would appear to be closely related to the Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac word "hasuka" (?), which mean "palace."

Thus, it would certain appear that numerous such words were taken into the Japanese language from Aramaic. These words were, of course, foreign imports, but I can easily imagine the high class of society then showing a preference for such words—a trait very evident today as well.

Having been raised in Japan, I speak Japanese, but for a long time it seemed to be like a foreign language. English was the

language of our home, and so that was my language. But when I discovered that Japanese includes many words from the language my ancient ancestors spoke, I began to feel a special closeness to this language.

Chapter 2

The Hata People Who Came To Japan Seeking Freedom

Xavier Wasn't "The First Person To Propagate Christianity In Japan"

The Roman Catholic Jesuit missionary, Francisco Xavier, first came to Japan in 1549. Most Japanese have been led to believe that this was the first exposure Japan had to Christianity. In fact, this is explicitly stated to be the case in numerous books.

While Xavier was the first to introduce the western form of Christianity, the idea that this was the first time Christianity entered into Japan simply does not conform to the historical facts. It is apparent that Xavier himself didn't think that way. Even before arriving in Japan, it is clear that he believed certain forms of Christianity had already been introduced into Japan. While still in Malacca (a port in present Malaysia), Xavier met a Japanese by the name of Anjiro (弥次郎) and was able to ask him about the religious beliefs and customs of Japan. While he described the Buddhism present in Japan, Xavier noticed that Japanese Buddhism had many similarities to Christianity and considered the two to have been mixed together. Anjiro also mentioned that one Japanese Daimyo (feudal lord) used a cross in his coat of arms.

This information, together with what he gleaned from others, led Xavier to the following conclusion that he wrote in letters to India and Europe. In one such letter dictated through his colleague Lancilotto, he said, "It seems that the Good News was already preached there but that its light first dimmed because of their sins and false teachings. While I wrote this, an Armenian bishop came by who has spent over forty years in these regions. He told me that he had read that at the beginning of the Church, Armenians (that is, the ancient Eastern Christians or followers of Keikyo) had preached in China and had converted the country to Christ. However, it would be very good if the light of the true faith were once again brought to these countries." (From a letter written from Kochin (?) to Ignacio Loyola in Rome). *<http://www.keikyo.com/books/xavier.html>

Thus, from this excerpt, we can see that Xavier understood himself not to be going to Japan to introduce Christianity for the first time but to revive the faith that had been known there before. Indeed, we could even call him a "revivalist" in that he was attempting to rekindle the flame of Christianity that had died down.

Who Says Only Buddhism Was Propagated In Pre-Xavier Japan?

The Silk Road facilitated the movement of many peoples along its routes. Not only did the Eastern Church and Keikyo believers enter into China and East Asia in ancient times, but also believers in such diverse beliefs as Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism (a form of Zoroastrianism with some Christianity and even Buddhism mixed in) and Buddhism likewise travelled along its length. There were 3 main land routes that were used along which goods and peoples frequently travelled.

The Silk Road, which runs from regions in the Middle East into East Asia, was developed in pre-Christian times. The peoples who were most instrumental in its development were the Jews and later the early Christians and the Keikyo believers. They walked or rode camels for thousands of kilometers, and when it came to the Keikyo adherents, they were particularly prone to move as entire tribes.

The final station along the Silk Road was Nara. If you go to the Shosoin Temple in Nara, you can see numerous artifacts that came over from Asia as far back as the 3rd Century, with the peak time being in the 8th Century. Many of these items are of Persian (Assyrian) origin. Numerous items have camels, peacocks, elephants and other such Asian animals drawn on them. Likewise, there are Persian musical instruments and Middle Eastern faces as well. These artifacts are a good indication of the degree of commerce that traveled along the 9000 kilometers of the Silk Road. Looking at it from this angle alone, is it really plausible that only Christianity failed to enter Japan prior to Xavier in 1549 when so many other things were coming in from the Silk Road trade?

Some time ago, I attended a lecture given by a well-known professor of a Buddhist University. In his talk, he said, "Before Xavier, Buddhism was the only (foreign) religion to have come into Japan." In the Q&A session, I asked him the following question:

"Isn't it true that long before Xavier, numerous people groups with various religions and cultures came along the Silk Road into China? For instance, in the city of Chouan (present-day Xian in the Chinese reading), you can see where various temples for a variety of religions coexisted. It was a city with considerable cultural interchange between numerous cultures. Thus, in China at that time, there were not only Buddhists, but also Christians, Muslims,

Zoroastrians, Manichaeans and followers of other religions as well. At that same time, many peoples and cultures were coming into Japan as well. If you go to the Shosoin Temple in Nara, you can see numerous artifacts that came from Persia, etc., and people obviously came with them. Isn't that true?"

He acknowledged that that was true, but when I pressed the point further by saying, "How then can you say that only Buddhism came in?", he still maintained that it was only Buddhism that entered Japan at that time.

I then replied, "It is an established fact that there was active trade between China and Japan during this era. Thus, a variety of people with a variety of religions and cultures obviously were entering Japan. Are we to believe then that as soon as they landed on Japan's shores they suddenly said, 'Okay, from now on I'm a Buddhist'?" While the speaker still refused to budge from his dogma, the laughter in the audience indicated that the audience understood the point.

The idea that the only religion to enter into Japan back then was Buddhism has been the dogma taught in Japanese schools, and so the typical Japanese historical understanding is just that. While they acknowledge that numerous peoples of various cultures entered into Japan, they still maintain that when it came to religions, only Buddhism came in. I'm certainly not denying that Buddhism did enter then, but only that it came in along with a lot of other cultures and religions as well.

Some time ago, I had an interesting conversation with a former prefectural governor. He was saying that one day as he was walking through the Ginza, he saw a woman coming from the other direction that looked just like his mother. But he later found out that she was Chinese. And then he saw a man who looked very much like his father. And it turned out that that man was from India. This is just one story showing how in the past Japan was a melting pot of various peoples and cultures. The variety of facial characteristics present in Japan attest to that fact.

I have also met with the Japanese artist, Hirayama Ikuo, who was famous for his drawings of Buddhist pilgrims walking along the Silk Road. I was curious about that, and asked him, "Why is that there are so many paintings of Buddhists on the Silk Road? They weren't the only people to travel along that road." He readily acknowledged that and said, "That's true. The Buddhists were only a small part of the total." He continued, "If you really want to learn more about that, you

should talk to Egami Namio," and so he made arrangements for me to go see him. As it turns out, Mr. Egami was a student of professor Saeki Yoshiro, and so my father and I went to find out what he could tell us.

The Early Christians Who Came In Mass To Japan

Professor Saeki had previously written that according to ancient documents, the first Christian contact with Japan came no later than 199 A.D. In a document entitled "Shinsenshoujiroku" (新撰姓氏録), written in the 8th year of the 14th emperor Chuai (仲哀), Koman (巧満), the king of the nation of "Yuzuki" (弓月) paid an official visit to the throne. As mentioned in chapter 1, Yuzuki was located in Central Asia, and it was a Christian country. They were "primitive Christians", dating from before the time the Eastern Church (or Keikyo) was formally organized. (Ken: confirm this) As will be described later on, the people that came from Yuzuki had many characteristics commonly associated with Christians.

The fact that these people came from Central Asia in the "8th year of Chuai" means that according to the traditional way of reckoning, they came in either 198 or 199 A.D., right at the end of the Second Century. It should be mentioned, however, that many historians now date the "8th year of Chuai" as being in the late 4th Century. One theory put that date at 356 A.D.. At any rate, for the emperors prior to about 500 A.D., there is considerable uncertainty as to their actual dates, with quite a gap between the traditional view and more recent scholars.

Even taking the latest date, however, this means that some Christians had entered Japan by the late 4th Century at the latest. Likewise, it is very likely that there was even earlier contact for which we have no records. The recent finds near Shanghai of Christian relics dating from 86 A.D. are proof of very early contact that far to the east. Thus, it is quite likely that at least some very early contact would have been made in Japan as well.

Now, it is said that Buddhism first entered Japan in 538 A.D., but again, it is likely that it also entered at an earlier date. What is important here, however, is that it was not just Buddhism but also Christianity that entered Japan at an early date. Likewise, it appears that Christianity had a far greater impact in ancient Japan that most people realize.

Approximately 84 years after King Koman came to Japan,

in what was the 14th year of the reign of the 15th emperor, Oujin (応神), King Koman's son led a large-scale migration of people from Yuzuki to Japan. According to the traditional reckoning, that would have been in 284 A.D., or according to the more recent understanding, sometime in the first half of the 5th Century. The document referred to above ("Shinsenshoujiroku"), a census of these people was made by the emperor Yuuryaku (雄略) in the late 5th Century, and there were 18,670 of them.*

Close to 20,000 people was a considerable number of people in those days. Thus, this could be considered quite a large migration of people. These people came into Japan in large numbers and settled down to become part of the Japanese people. This fact is attested to in both Chinese historical documents as well as the "Nihon Shoki" (Chronicles of Japan).

The saga of this clan of people known as the "Hata" coming over land and sea from so far away is truly a dramatic story indeed. One important detail that can be gleaned from the historical records is that the majority of these people were connected to the silk industry. Likewise, we now know that it was people of Jewish descent and the Keikyo Christians that were particularly active in the silk trade along the Silk Road.

The word used in Japanese for "weaving" is "hataori" (機織り). The character機 is most often used in words having to do with machinery, such as the word "kikai" (機械, machine). A "loom" is a kind of machine used for weaving, and in this context, the Japanese reading that was given to this character was "hata", the same as the name of the people to whom this new industry was associated.

After the Hata people had become established in Japan, they became associated with areas of government, particularly with what would be known today as the "Finance Ministry", the "Foreign Ministry" and the "Ministry of International Trade and Industry". They were a people with great ability who were trustworthy and honest, and so they were entrusted with these duties.* Thus, they became active players in a wide variety of fields in Japan. Today's Japanese have a reputation for being diligent, but it just may be that it was the influence of the Hata people that influenced the Japanese to develop this way.

Other areas where the Hata contributed greatly to the developing Japanese nation included engineering the challenging system of water works in Kyoto. Likewise, it is likely that they were the first to develop the paper industry in Japan. Ancient documents indicate that the Hata were dominant among artisans making "Washi" (和紙), traditional Japanese paper.*

Numerous members of the Hata clan also excelled in the arts. Famous artists included Hatano Kuma (秦久麻), Hatano Murajinamura (秦連稻村), Hatano Inamori (秦稻守), and Hatano Katauo (秦堅魚). Likewise, the name "Hatano" appears frequently in the famous literary work, "Manyoshu" (万葉集), including Hatano Imikiyachizuru (秦忌寸八千鶴), Hatano Ta Maro (秦田麻呂) and Hatano Kohe Maro (秦許遍麻呂).

The Manuscript That Almost Didn't Get Published

Some time back, when I put together a manuscript claiming that Christianity first came into Japan at least 1600 to 1800 years ago, the publisher commented, "Now, we can't put this in. There is no historical basis for such a claim." The publisher, along with most other Japanese, had this preconceived notion that Xavier was the first Christian to propagate his faith in Japan. But as I had confidence in my claim, I stuck to my guns and tried to convince him of my facts. He then said to me, "Well, if you're that sure of yourself, then let me call up Professor Egami Namio. He was my professor when I studied at Tokyo University."

After explaining to Professor Egami what I had claimed, the professor answered him with, "There are some minor differences between Ken's ideas and mine, but I certainly cannot deny what he says. Also, tell Ken that the Christianity that entered Japan in the second century was not yet Keikyo, but was primitive Christianity that came directly in." Needless to say, this was a great encouragement to me, and it certainly saved my manuscript.

In addition to the prevalent preconception that Christianity did not enter Japan until Xavier, there is also the idea that ancient Japan was quite isolated with little contact with the outside world. But this likewise is untrue, as more than a thousand years before Xavier, numerous migrating peoples came into Japan. During the Tokugawa period, it is true that Japan did isolate itself from the rest of the world. During more ancient times, however, it is apparent that Japan was very open, with numerous peoples coming in and bringing with them their cultures and religions. This fact, then, is crucial to the understanding of the roots of Japan.

Once, when I was invited as a lecturer at a university in Kyoto, I challenged the students to do some research on their own into when Christianity first entered Japan. I have discovered that when students get into such an investigation, they are not nearly as apt to

be restricted by preconceived ideas as their elders. They began with the premise that much of the early history of Japan is not very reliable. They also expanded their research to include aspects outside of Japan, including the Silk Road and other ancient trade routes with Asia. This is the report I got:

"Some of Christ's disciples were in India by 52 A.D. and into China by 64 A.D.. During that period, there was a great deal of traffic of both goods and people between the Middle East and eastern Asia. That being the case, it seems rather odd to assume that Christianity took some 1500 years to reach Japan. Even saying that the first contact was in the second century seems to be too late. While there are no existent records, it doesn't seem unreasonable to assume that Japan's first contact with Christianity was in the first century, perhaps around 70 A.D.."

Even if this assesment is a bit over-optimistic, this nevertheless confirmed my conviction that people who are not restricted by preconceived ideas are much more likely to find the truth quickly.

The Christian Faith of the Hata Clan

Let's take a further look into the records we have concerning the Hata Clan. As mentioned earlier, the Hata clan immigrated into ancient Japan from the central Asian kingdom of "Yuzuki". They possessed a high level of technology and were a very diligent people. Thus, after they became established in Japan, many of them played key roles in the financial affairs of ancient Japan along with industries, construction and such things as foreign affairs.

According to an ancient document called "Shinsenshoujiroku" (新撰姓氏録), meaning "New List of Surnames", the almost 20,000 people of the Hata clan were divided up into 127 "agata" (written with the same character used today for "prefecture" 県, "ken"). In other words, the clan was made up of 127 groups. What's of special interest here is that ancient Persia, which the kingdom of Yuzuki was a part of, was also made up of 127 "prefectures" (or states). According to the opening words of the Old Testament book of Esther, "This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush:" (Xerxes was the king of Persia and "Cush" is known by its modern name as Ethiopia.) One wonders if there was some symbolic meaning in the Hata dividing themselves into this same number of groups.

The Christian faith of the Hata people was an ancient, rather Jewish form of Christianity. One line of evidence supporting this conclusion is from the writings of the Italian Catholic priest, Mario Marega, who did some research into the pre-Xavier Christianity that existed in Japan. He made his presentation in 1952 to a gathering of historians at the Asia Society (Touhou Gakkai) in Tokyo. Marega reported that the temple that was built in the Kadano section of Kyoto between 603 and 622 A.D. under the direction of the leader of the Hata clan, Hatano Kawakatsu, was originally a Christian church and not a Buddhist temple. According to Marega, the original building was of simple design with no windows and only one large entrance. It was reported to have had one black cross on it (something that was common to Keikyo and the other Eastern churches).*

This original church was destroyed in a fire in 818 A.D., and was rebuilt in a location several kilometers distant in the section still known today as "Uzumasa" (太秦). It is presently known as "Kouryuuji" (広隆寺) (with the additional names of "Hachiokadera"(蜂岡寺), "Uzumasadera" (太秦寺) and "Hatano Kimidera" (秦公寺)), with the "ji" or "dera" (tera)寺, referring to a Buddhist temple. The present Kouryuuji, however, does not retain any of the original buildings. In fact, a Confucian scholar of the late Edo period, Ota Kinjo (1765 - 1825) commented about Kouryuuji, "This temple has the name of a temple, but it is not a Buddhist temple." He even said in this work "xxxxx" (p.64) that the architecture of Kouryuuji must have been based on the Keikyo churches (大秦寺, Daishinji in Japanese pronunciation) of Chouan (長安) in China. Likewise, he said that the unusual shape of the statue of Buddha in the temple was probably based on the icons in Keikyo churches.*

The characters used for "Uzumasadera" (太秦寺) are almost the same as the "Taishinji" (大秦寺) Keikyo churches of China, with the only difference being the extra "dot" in太(a character that means "great" as opposed to大, which means "big"). Ancient records, however, indicate that the other name for Kouryuuji, "Uzumasadera", was also sometimes written as大秦寺. It's also important to note that the characters大秦were used in China to refer to the areas west of China, particularly the Syrian (Assyrian) region of the Roman Empire, from which Keikyo had come.* (other book 131)

How "Messiah" became "Miroku"

Kouryuuji contains the famous "Miroku" (弥勒) Bodhisattva* (*Bodhisattva, or "Bosatsu" (菩薩) in Japanese, refers to a Buddhist

saint who postpones nirvana in order to assist suffering mankind. "Miroku" comes from the Sanskrit "Maitreya", which means "The Benevolent One") statue that is considered a national treasure. I have been to see this art treasure for myself, and it certainly does have an expression of beauty and tranquility. The smile on the face is said to be an "eternal smile," and with this, I could certainly concur. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers wrote upon viewing the statue, "The Miroku at Kouryuuji is truly a full representation of the highest expression of human nature. ... In my several decade-long career as a philosopher, I have never seen any other work of art that so completely expresses a feeling of true peace."* (Ken. Is there an English version this comes from?) There just seems to be a mystical attraction to this statue that appeals to our longing for peace and tranquility.

Since this statue is in Kouryuuji, a Buddhist temple, many simply assume that its roots are in Buddhism. A careful study of the statue, however, reveals something very interesting about the right hand. When I first looked at it carefully, I realized that there was something familiar about that pose. The right hand is raised up with the thumb and one finger touching together to form a triangle. The other three fingers are extended out more or less straight. Actually, this same pose is one that was commonly used in Keikyo churches, and examples have been found in the ruins of ancient Keikyo churches. For instance, in Tonko (敦煌) in western China, a wall painting of a Keikyo bishop was discovered by Count Orel Stein in 1908 (see picture on pg. xx). This picture of a Keikyo bishop was found together with other Keikyo artifacts in a cave that had been sealed in the year 1036. A cross can clearly be seen in the restored picture in three locations, on the tip of the rod, on the forehead and on the chest.

When the painting first came to light, more than half of it was no longer present, and from the pieces that remained, many just assumed that it was a painting of the Buddha. However, modern technology has enabled scholars to determine what was in the missing areas, and it was discovered that it contained 3 Keikyo crosses. Even without the enhancement of modern technology, however, the shape of the right hand was clearly visible. The bishop held the tip of one finger against his thumb to form a triangle and the other three fingers were extended in a style practically identical to that of the Miroku Bodhisattva.

The followers of Keikyo were known for using a variety of symbols. They also believed in the orthodox doctrine of Christianity known as the "Trinity" (namely, that the one God exists in three entities, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Researchers into Keikyo history tell us that the finger and thumb forming a triangle

with the other three fingers held out form a double symbol that represents this central tenet of their faith.

In modern times, we often see people holding up two fingers in a "V" sign signaling either victory or peace. This way of holding their fingers is similar to that and was the way Keikyo believers signaled their faith to others.

Let's take a look now at what "Miroku" means within the Buddhist context. Miroku is considered to represent the coming savior and certainly resembles the Second Coming of Christ in Christian terms. In the Buddhist writings "Miroku Geshokyo", it says that when the "Miroku" comes to earth, robbers and other evil people will be no more and that floods, fires, wars, famine and disease will disappear. Needless to say, this is very similar to how the "Millennial Kingdom" that is ushered in by Christ at his Second Coming as described in the Bible.

The Buddhist concept of Miroku (Maitreya) first appeared in India in the 4th century A.D.* (kojien) This was well after the introduction of Christianity into India in the middle of the 1st century. Already by the 2nd century, the idea of a "Savior Buddha" had been imported from Christianity. Buddhism had begun to decline in popularity, and by the 4th century, Buddhism was in sharp decline. Thus, it was in desperation that Buddhists sought something to counter the promise of a Savior Christianity offered.

During this same period, Persian religion in the form of Zoroastrianism also was exerting a strong influence in India, and it too had this concept of a coming savior. Thus, this combination of Persian and Christian influence became manifest in Buddhism as the "Maitreya" concept in India, which later became the Miroku of Japan. The well-known scholar of comparative religions, Elizabeth A. Gordon, based her conclusions on a wealth of evidence, saying, "The Maitreya of India became the Mirefu (?) of China and later the Miroku of Japan. These words are equivalent to the Messiah of Hebrew and the Christos of Greek."*

Professor Ikeda Sakae of Kyoto University stated that the Christ (Messiah) of the Keikyo believers of China and the Miroku of Japan were of common origin. In other words, the fact that the Miroku statue is from a temple founded by the Hata clan is of great importance. It would appear that the Hata people did not dismiss Buddhism outright, but instead saw the Messiah Jesus in the Miroku statue.

This Temple Was Dedicated To "Uzumasa"

There is a group of idols in Kouryuuji that are called the "Twelve Idols". These "gods" are in the form of humans, but they do not look like Chinese or Indians at all. In fact, their appearance looks very much like the ancient Romans. Thus, here too we see a vestige of the Silk Road.

As mentioned above, Kouryuuji was established by Hatano Kawakatsu, the leader of the Hata clan, who was a person highly revered in Japanese society. He was recognized by Shoutoku Taishi (聖徳太子, Prince Shoutoku) and had achieved the second rank in the "Twelve Ranks of the Crown" system set up by Shoutoku Taishi.

Records indicate that Hatano was not ethnically the same as the typical Japanese of that day, and "His countenance was not that of a typical person." (Hayashi Razan, "Honcho Jinja Ko", 17th century). Hatano's name also appears in the "Nihon Shoki" (Chronicles of Japan). According to the Chronicles, in the 7th century, during the reign of Emperor Kogyoku (from 642 to 645 A.D.), people sang Hatano Kawakatsu's praise, saying, "Uzumasa has the reputation of a god among the gods, because he can put down the gods of this world." It would appear that in this context "Uzumasa" was the name of the god enshrined in the temple. The name "Uzumasa" still remains to this day as the name of the district in Kyoto where Kouryuuji is located, and it seems that the people of that day understood "Uzumasu" to be referring to Hatano Kawakatsu. To the Hata people themselves, however, it had a special meaning.

In fact, according to Professor Saeki Yoshiro (as well as other scholars, such as Teshima Ikuro), "Uzumasa" was probably derived from the Aramaic or Syrian words for Jesus, the Messiah, which was "Ishu M'shekha" (Ishu Masha) (Ken: The katakana rendering seems quite different from the Aramaic. Is it right? p.70) It is easy to imagine this Aramaic rendering of the name known in English as Jesus Christ being transformed into the Japanese phonetic system and coming out "Uzumasa". I can just picture the Hata people calling out the name "Uzumasa" during their religious services. Upon hearing that, the local people, who didn't really understand the meaning, then associated that name with the people who used it. Likewise, the characters that were chosen to represent this name were 太秦, with the 秦 being the same character as "Hata". Practically these same characters are what are found in the Keikyo churches of ancient China (except with 大 instead of 太), again, pointing to their Christian origins.

A similar thing occurred later during the "Kirishitan" times when the Latin phrase "Deus" (God) was heard as "Daiusu". As there were numerous "Kirishitan" Christians in a certain section of Kyoto, that section became known as "Daiusu Machi", a name that is still used today. Thus, Daiusu and Uzumasa both still remain as place names in Kyoto to this day.

Within the grounds of Kouryuuji, there is an ancient well that goes by the name of "Isarai". This well is referred to in records from the temple dating to 873 A.D. as being an old well, and so it dates back long before that even. It appears that the Hata tribe used the well not only for drinking water, but also for holy water to be used in their religious ceremonies.

My father took a picture of "Isarai" to the Ashurbanipal Museum in Chicago to a scholar of Aramaic named Homer Assurian. The answer he received to his inquiry was that "Isarai" probably comes from the Aramaic phrase meaning "Jesus is (my) shepherd." "Isa" is Jesus, and "rai" is "shepherd." Thus, it is likely that the name is a reference to the 23rd Psalm.

My father and I have met Mr. Honma, the present owner of this well. He invited us into his home and showed us the geneology of the Hata people that had been handed down from his ancestors. When we told him about what we had discovered concerning the name, "Isarai", he was really excited about it.

In passing, however, we should mention one other theory of the origin of this name. In Chinese records, the nation of Israel is referred to by the name 一賜樂業, which is given the reading in Chinese "Isurae". (Ken: confirm) Thus, some have supposed that Isarai comes from the name for Israel. It's interesting to note that "Jacob's Well" played an important role in biblical history, and the new name that God gave Jacob was "Israel". Thus, that well could also be referred to as "Israel's Well". Therefore, both of these theories point to the biblical roots of this name.

The "Dabide" (David) Shrine Of The Hata Clan

There is a Shinto Shrine very close to Kouryuuji that goes by the name of "Oosake Jinja" (大酒神社). This was apparently at one time included within the boundaries of Kouryuuji, and it was also established by the Hata clan. On the pillar at the gate are inscribed

the characters 太秦明神, which are read "Uzumasa Myoshin", indicating that this is the name of the deity enshrined there. The characters 明神 literally mean "Brilliant God", and of course, "Uzumasa" is the same name that was used to refer to Jesus Christ.

The historical records of this shrine indicate that the "sake" part of the name was originally a different character, and was in fact 大辟神社. Included within the range of meanings of this character 辟 is "son of heaven", and thus 大辟 could be referring to the "Great Son of Heaven" Jesus Christ. Thus, it would appear that this shrine was originally a place where Jesus the Messiah was worshipped.

Also, within the Keikyo translations of the Bible into Chinese, the biblical name David was rendered with the characters 大關 (pronounced "Dabui"). You'll notice that the internal part of the character 關 is 辟, and thus it is quite possible that 大辟 is a simplification of the Chinese name for David. It is actually rather common for the names of ancient shrines to maintain the same pronunciation while changing the characters with which they are written.

According to the Bible, David was an accomplished lyre player and dancer. On the gate of this jinja, we find the following characters, "機織管絃樂舞之祖神" (Hataori kangengaku mai no soshin). (Ken: We need to confirm on the pronunciation here.) "Hataori" refers to the weaving for which the Hata clan was famous for, and the next four characters refer to music (specifically string instruments) and dancing. The last three characters indicate that the shrine is dedicated to the "ancestral god(s)" of these things. Thus, there could very well be a relationship to the memory of David here as well.

This shrine, of course, is not a shrine dedicated to King David of ancient Israel. In actuality, as the Hata people where Keikyo believers in Jesus Christ, the allusions to David should be considered prophetic in nature. The coming Messiah in the Old Testament was often referred to as "David" (e.g. Ezekiel 37:24-25, Hosea 3:4-5), but as these are with reference to the promised Messiah, these prophecies are in fact referring to Jesus Christ. Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the "Son of David" (meaning a descendant of David).

While Oosake Jinja would at first glance seem to be just a rather unimportant Shinto shrine along the side of the road, a careful analysis of the data shows that it originally was a place where Jesus Christ was worshipped. It was, in fact, an ancient church, and hints of its past still linger today. It did not, however, come from

the West and so it didn't look anything like a European-style church. There was no pipe organ or stained glass windows, for the eastern Christians who had come to ancient Japan built their places of worship in the native Japanese style.

While Kouryuuji was one of the few places of worship founded by the Hata clan that later took the form of a Buddhist temple, there were numerous places that became Shinto shrines. The historian Hirano Kunio writes in his book "Immigrants and the Ancient State," "Even though they were immigrants, the Hata clan were surprisingly closely tied to things relating to Shinto."* This was perhaps because the form of Shinto worship lent itself more easily to the expression of their own religious faith.

The Descendants Of The Hata People In Modern Japan

With such a large immigration of Hata people into ancient Japan, a significant portion of modern Japanese would be expected to have Hata blood in their geneology. Japanese have far more surnames than other Asian societies, and the name "Hata" has taken on many forms. A few have maintained the name as is, using the character 秦, while numerous other characters or combinations of characters have also appeared on the scene with the same or related readings. After the reforms that took place in 645 A.D., many new family names appeared. Until the Edo era, only upperclass Japanese had surnames in addition to individual names. The general population only received surnames much later. The following are a few of the varieties of surnames that came from the original 秦: 畑, 端, 畠, 波田, 波陀, 羽田, 八田, 半田, and others as well that are read "Hata" or "Hada." Likewise, numerous surnames to which characters such as 野(field) and 山(mountain) have been added to "Hata" also developed.

秦野 and 波多野(Hatano), 畠山(Hatayama), 畑川(Hatagawa), 畑中(Hatanaka), 廣幡(Hirohata), and 八幡(Yahata) are just a few examples. A friend of mine is named 畠田(Hatakeda), but he told me that his surname used to be pronounced "Hatada" in ancient times.

There are likewise numerous other names that scholars have traced back to Hata roots. Representative of these are: 服部(Hattori), 羽鳥(Hatori), 林(Hayashi), 神保(Jinbo), 床(So), 惟宗(Koremura), 田村(Tamura), 島津(Shimazu), 長田(Nagata), 長蔵(Nagakura), 辛島(Karashima), 小松(Komatsu), 大蔵(Ookura), 依智(Echi), 三林(Mitsubayashi), 小宅(Kotaku), 本間(Honma), 高尾(Takao)

,高橋

(Takahashi),原(Hara),常(Jo),井手(Ide), and赤染(Akazome). Likewise, famous people in Japanese history, such as the ruler of Shikoku during the Waring State Period,長宗我部(Choso Kabe), and the ruler of Kyushu,島津xx (Shimazu xx) were also descended from the Hata clan.* (Asuka Akio's reference goes here).

The Three Pillared Torii Gates And Their Relation To The Trinity

Within the Uzumasa section of Kyoto is a district known as "Mototadasu no Mori" (元糺の森) in which there is a Shinto shrine that goes by the names "Kaiko no Yashiro" (蚕の社, Silkworm Shrine) and "Konoshima ni Masu Amateru Mitama Jinja" (Ken: That's not read Amaterasu?) (木島坐天照御魂神社, Shrine to the Spirit Shining From the Heavens in Konoshima) (Ken: We need to check this meaning). Both of these shrines originated with the Hata clan. Within this shrine is a very unusual torii gate called the "Mihashira Torii" (三柱鳥居) which consists of three ordinary torii gates arranged in a triangle so that they share pillars. The "Mihashira Torii" that stands there presently is actually a fairly recent reconstruction of what existed previously, but it has been maintained from ancient times and is referred to in ancient documents.

This unusual torii is included as one of the "Three Great Torii Gates of Kyoto." Even though it is called a "gate", it isn't one in the usual sense. It was, in fact, placed in the middle of a pond as kind of divine symbol. It is a "sculpture" that symbolizes some sort of "trinity," with three vertical pillars tied together at the top with dual horizontal beams. As with all such symbols, there must be something it symbolizes. Professor Ikeda Sakae wrote that the "Mihashira Torii" in all likelihood was a symbol of the Trinity as understood within the primitive Christianity practiced by the Hata people.*

It's interesting to note that in Japanese mythology, gods are counted using the term "pillar" (hashira), as in "Hitobashira no Kami" (一柱の神, "one pillar god"), "Futabashira no Kami" (二柱の神, "two pillar god"), etc. The use of pillars of stone or wood to symbolize God was likewise common in ancient Israel. It is thus plausible that the Hata people adopted that symbolism and then represented their belief in the Triune God by putting together this three-pillared torii.

The pond in which the "Mihashira Torii" stands,

"Mototadasu no Ike" (元紘の池) is an idealic setting, with pure spring water welling up from beneath. It is reported that once a year, the Hata people, along with the Yamashiro people, performed purification ceremonies there.*

The characters元紘, which are read "mototadasu", are equivalent to the modern Japanese元を正す(moto wo tadasu), meaning to "straighten out (one's) foundations." Thus, when people came to do the purification ceremonies, it was to set things right with their spirit and soul. As the shrines in Kyoto that were closely related to the Hata clan (particularly "Kamigamo Jinja" (上賀茂神社) and "Shimokamo (?) Jinja" (下鴨神社)) were closely allied to the Imperial family, it is likely that the emperor himself participated in these purification ceremonies.

This pond clearly had deep religious significance, and as it was closely related to the faith of the Hata people, it is also quite likely that Christian baptisms were held there as well. It is as if the "living water" described in such passages as John 4:10 is welling up there from the Triune God symbolized by the "Mihashira Torii" in the center of the pond!

There are even steps leading down into the water, thus resembling the baptismal sites along the Jordan River in Israel where steps lead down to the river. Many people still today receive baptism at these sites along the Jordan, and so given this evidence of correlation between the two, it is not difficult to imagine that similar baptisms were performed at this pond in Kyoto in ancient times. After all, baptism is a kind of purification rite in itself, and so a yearly purification from the standpoint of the Hata people could easily be considered a renewal of their baptismal vows.

With this background in mind, it is clear that the "Mihashira Torii" in "Mototadasu no Ike" has deep significance, and yet people going to that shrine today usually have little awareness of its real meaning. They don't attach any special significance to it and for the most part know very little about the history of the Hata people. Nevertheless, on the historical plaque erected at the shrine, it clearly states, "Here the Hata clan introduced Keikyo (Nestorian Christianity) into Japan, and this shrine still contains vestiges of that time."

There is also a "Mihashira Torii" in Tokyo at the "Mimeguri Jingu" (三囲神社) in Mukoujima of the Sumida Ward. What's particularly interesting about this torii is that under it is a well. Thus, it likewise is closely related to water. A little research into its origins revealed that this shrine is also related to the Hata

clan through the Mitsui family, which is famous for Mitsukoshi Department stores among other business ventures. The Mitsui family was related to the Hata clan not only through blood ties but also by way of business accumen.

I also located other "Mihashira Torii" on Tsushima Island in Kyushu. The "Watatsumi Jinja" (和多都美神社) actually contains two "Mihashira Torii", one of which is very similar to the one in Tokyo. It is about 2 meters high. The other one has in its midst a turtle-shaped stone that is called "Turtle," along with a spring. This particular torii is also a relatively recent reconstruction based on ancient records. According to the priest at that shrine, there are many more such ancient mihashira torii here and there around Japan, though many or them have not be maintained.

The symbol of a turtle reminds me of another shrine build by the Hata clan named "Matsunoo Daisha" (松尾大社) in which we find a "turtle well." Likewise, after the death of Shoutoku Taishi, an artist related to the Hata clan made an embroidery entitled "Tenjukoku Shucho" (天寿国繡帳, Embroidery of Long Life in Heaven) which features a turtle. Also, the famous "Nestorian Monument" in China itself includes the symbol of a turtle, with the monument riding on top of it. Thus, it is apparent that the symbol of a turtle was important to the Hata people. Therefore, it very likely that this shrine in Tsushima was also originally an Eastern Christian church.

Returning to the "Silkworm Shrine" (Kaiko no Yashiro) that was build by the Hata clan in Kyoto, it states that it is dedicated to the worship of "Amenominakanushi no Kami" (天之御中主神), and that the spirit of this god descends into the center of the three-pillared torii. In Shinto mythology, the first god to appear is "Amenominakanushi no Kami," and he is described as ruling the heavens and earth from his throne in the center of the universe. This god is said to be the central god who is without form and who never dies. One Shinto scholar, Watanabe Ikarimaru (渡辺重石丸), even went so far as to state that "Amenominakanushi no Kami" is the equivalent of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament.*

It is also important to note that Shinto mythology alludes to a "trinity" of sorts that goes by the name of "Zoke Sanshin" (造化三神, literally, "Creation Three Gods"). This trio of gods appear in the beginning and are followed by "Kamiyo Nanayo" (神代七代, literally "God Ages 7 Ages"), which would appear to have some relationship to the 7 "Creation Days" of Genesis.

One other "Mihashira Torii" of significance can be found

in the ancient capital of Nara, in what is known as the "Oomiwa Jinja Oomiwa Kyokai" (大神神社大神教会, literally, "Great God Shrine, Great God Church"). According to the explanation given at this shrine, this three-pillared torii represents the "Zoke Sanshin" as "Mihashira Ittai" (三柱一体, "Three Pillars, One Body"). Many scholars believe that this "Oomiwa Jinja" likewise had close ties with the Hata clan. Thus, putting all of this evidence together, it appears highly likely that the Hata clan's worship of "Amenominakanushi no Kami" as a "trinity" was an adaptation from the biblical faith they brought with them to Japan.

Keikyo Was Not Heretical

Keikyo, the variety of Christianity that developed in the East, came into Japan not only in the version that was followed by the Hata people, but it also accompanied other peoples that came into Japan as well. These Christian believers all had a great impact in ancient Japan. Nevertheless, this same Keikyo was viewed in the West as a heresy from the 5th Century onward.

Some people today still view Keikyo as just one of the various heresies of Church history, saying that it (Nestorianism) was specifically labeled such at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.. This, however, is not a fair assessment.

By that time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, the tradition of referring to Mary as "the Mother of God" and praying to Mary had already begun. The bishop of Constantinople at that time was a man by the name of Nestorius, and he publically criticized this practice. "It is correct to say that Mary is the mother of Christ. But she is not the mother of God. God has no mother."*

He believed that there was a grave danger of this practice developing into a kind of goddess worship, and so he lobbied for its discontinuence. Thus, in this regard, Nestorius' view was similar to that of the later Protestant movement. In fact, in his book "On Foot To China," John M. L. Young wrote that the faith of Nestorius was essentially the same as that practiced by modern Protestants.*

What Nestorius said concerning the practices then developing in the Roman church were basically the same as what later Protestants said. Likewise both believed in such basic Christian tenets as the Trinity and the dual nature of Jesus Christ being both fully God as well as fully human. Thus, the label of "Nestorianism" as heretical

is not accurate.

Tezuka Masaaki, a pastor in the United Church of Christ in Japan who has studied "Nestorianism," stated in a message at the Japan Bible Forum (2001) that "Nestorius' views were thoroughly biblical" and that his being labeled a heretic for basically political reasons resulted in great losses for the Christian movement. There are, in fact, numerous theologians who are reevaluating Nestorius and his views.

After Nestorius was banished from the West, he was accepted in the Assyrian Church of the East. This action, then, cemented the rift that had developed between the Eastern and Western churches. As with all such splits, there was much pain involved. Looking for the silver lining in the clouds, however, this rift with Europe caused the Assyrian Church of the East to focus its efforts further to the east, and so "Keikyo" spread explosively to the east.

While long overdue, at the end of the 20th Century, a reconciliation is taking place between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the East. In 1997, the Pope met with the prelate of the Assyrian Eastern Church, Mar Dinkha in Vienna, where he made apologies for the sinful attitudes of the past. These apologies were heartily welcomed, and the two shook hands as brothers in Christ. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church no longer labels the Eastern Church as "heretical".

At the time the split between the Eastern and Western Churches took place in the 5th Century, the West put the label of "Nestorianism" on the Eastern Church as a sign of derision. Those in the Assyrian Church obviously did not use this label in referring to themselves. After all, Nestorius was not their founder. Their faith was based solely in Jesus Christ, and their first bishop was Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples.

Thus, Keikyo, or the Assyrian Church of the East, was not some new sect begun by Nestorius in the 5th Century, but dated back to the very beginning of Christianity. Professor Ikeda Sakae described the situation thusly, "The very name 'Nestorianism' is a misnomer for the Assyrian Church of the East. The Assyrian Church of the East, or Keikyo, has existed from the 1st Century, long before Nestorius."*

Samuel H. Moffet wrote in his book, "A History of Christianity in Asia" that the reason for the split between Western and Eastern Churches in the Fifth Century was principally due to cultural

and racial, rather than doctrinal, reasons. The Western Church was basically Caucasian while the Eastern Church was principally people of color. Thus, it was more a matter of the white Europeans distancing themselves from non-whites. The result, of course, has been that Western Christianity came to be perceived as the "white man's religion."*

The Eastern Church, then, reached out further into the Orient to form a basically Asian Christianity. Professor Saeki Yoshiro described their missionary efforts as follows: "This movement was completely self-generated and self-supporting. They did not send out individual missionaries as kind of 'commandos' for God, but instead moved about as tribal units. Among their ranks were carpenters, teachers, architects, doctors, nurses, evangelists, tutors, pastors and scholars, along with their animals. These caravans emanated from their theological schools in Edessa and Bagdad and traveled through India, China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Tibet, the Philippines, Mongolia and other Asian countries."*

(Quotations for pictures) From 431 A.D. onwards, the Roman Catholic Church referred to Keikyo ("Nestorianism") as heretical, but on Nov. 11, 1994, the two churches were reconciled.

Mar Dinka Pope John Paul II "Let us forgive each other and be reconciled."

Keikyo believers as drawn on the walls of a temple in "Kosho" (?) in Central Asia. (Or is that the name of the temple itself?) It shows 3 ministers with each holding holy water in his right hand and an incense burner in his left hand preparing to perform the rite of baptism. (Berlin, Museum of India ?)

The Keikyo That Came To China

Following the rift between the Assyrian Church of the East and Rome, the Eastern Church spread rapidly to the east, soon reaching into China. It was in China, that the term "Keikyo" (as pronounced in the Japanese reading of the Chinese characters 景教) came into being. Keikyo literally means "Luminous Teaching", with the character 景 referring to the luminous light of the sun.

When did Keikyo believers first enter China? History books record that in 578 A.D., Mar Serugisu (?) came "from the west" into China with his family and settled in Rintao (?) about 500 kilometers to the west of Chouan. We now know, of course, that pre-Keikyo Christianity had come in much earlier, but this is the earliest confirmed date we have for Keikyo.

The first mention of Keikyo leaders formally visiting the Chinese emperor was in 635, when the priest Alopen (written 阿羅本 in Chinese, the name used to translate the biblical name Abraham) paid homage to the emperor in Chouan with his entourage of 21 followers. The capital Chouan was at that time one of the largest cities in the world. Alopen presented Emperor Taisou (太宗) with the Bible together with commentary on its teachings written in Chinese. The emperor was deeply impressed by what he read, and is recorded to have said, "The truths presented here are far more than I see in Confucianism or Buddhism. I have believed, and so to my subjects, I say, 'Follow my example.'" Through this, then, Keikyo received official sanction from the emperor and for the next 200 years flourished in China. The first Keikyo church was erected in Chouan in 638, and branch churches were founded throughout the kingdom.

If Alopen had come to the emperor 10 years earlier, the results might have been very different. The previous emperor Kao-tsu (高祖) (618-626) was partial to Confucianism and had followed the counsel of Confucianist leaders to label Buddhism as a "foreign religion" from the West. From China's point of view, India was in the west, and so Buddhism was a "western religion". So, it is likely that Keikyo would have been similarly treated and rejected. Emperor T'ai-tsung (626-649), however, was much more open-minded than his predecessor, and so Alopen found receptive ears in this emperor.

Among the first things the Keikyo believers translated into Chinese were the Bible (entitled literally, "The Book of Jesus Messiah"), and a book entitled "The Doctrine of Monotheism." While these ancient translations no longer exist (Ken: Is that right?), one item that does give us a window into this era is the famous "Nestorian Monument" discovered in Seian (西安= Xian) (formerly Chouan (長安)) that was erected in 781 A.D. Professor Saeki Yoshiro has done a great deal of research into Keikyo and even wrote a classic book in English entitled "The Nestorian Monument in China," a work that is frequently quoted even today in other historical works.

This book has received high marks from other researchers, including the Syrian scholar, Professor A. H. Sayce, who

sent in a commentary on the book, as well as Sir William Cecil(?), and Professor Hattori (Name?), a professor at Tokyo Imperial University and regent of the Oriental Society. The popularity of Saeki's book is testified to by the fact that both the first and second printings were sold out within the first year.

Professor Saeki was a prolific writer, authoring 55 books during his lifetime. My father and I got to be good friends with his family, and they showed us numerous handwritten and typed manuscripts on Keikyo along with photographs of various relics and impressions taken off the monument, etc. Not only did they show them to us, but even gave us many of them for our work, encouraging us to carry on the work. This was a great encouragement to us, and we have used many of those items in the public exhibitions we have held.

Following in the footsteps of the Keikyo priest Alopen, numerous other Keikyo believers also came into China. Chinese historical records indicate that a priest named Gabriel (also known as Chilieh as appears on the Nestorian tablet and in T'ang dynasty documents) came into the port of Canton by boat in 713 (or perhaps even earlier). At that time Canton was an important trading port with foreign nations. Gabriel lived among the merchants and artisans of Canton learning their language, and then began to evangelize in that part of China. Records also show that a priest named Gewargis likewise came in 744 A.D.

Keikyo churches were soon built in all 10 provinces in China. This had a profound influence on the society as a whole. For instance, as the Keikyo households did not hold any slaves among them, this witness encouraged Chinese to begin to call for the abolishment of slavery. Thus, as Keikyo's influence spread, Chinese society began to change.

One section of the Nestorian Monument tells of a member of royalty who used the wealth he had attained not for himself but for charity and evangelism. Every year he would fund a retreat for Keikyo believers that lasted 50 days. They would gather together and read the Scriptures and pray. Hungry people who came to the "Holy Meeting" would be fed and the naked clothed. The sick were given medical treatment and those who had died were buried in dignity. Outside of this time frame, of course, he continued to lead a selfless life, doing much good and positively influencing many people.*

Another interesting episode is recorded in the 13th century, when a local Chinese politician by the name of "Ma" (馬, horse) became a Keikyo believer. In his geneology, it was written, "The

descendants of Ma had the same faith as the house of the great Nestorius from the West." Once, on a flight to Macao, I noticed that the stewardess who was serving me had the same name as Mr. Ma. She was quite a beauty, and her features were a bit different from the typical Chinese, with what looked like a bit of European influence. I asked her if she knew who her ancestors were. She said she didn't have any idea, and so when I told her she was likely descended from the famous Nestorian believer Ma. I told her about the records concerning the entire Ma family showing how dedicated they were to the gospel and to acts of charity to help others. Needless to say, she was overjoyed to hear that, and her face was glowing with excitement as she asked me numerous questions about what I had learned about her ancestors. This was an example of how people change when they learn about their ancestors, for one gains understanding about one's roots.

In his books, Professor Saeki notes that even some of the religious ceremonies practiced in China at that time, along with much in such diverse fields as medicine, trade, the legal system and astronomy came into China from the Middle East by way of the followers of Keikyo. He also noted that it was especially during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) that Keikyo had a profound influence in China. During this era, Japan sent envoys to the Tang court and had its representatives study in the capital city, Chouan. In fact, until the practice ended in 894, 500 to 600 scholars were sent at a time to stay for periods of 2 to 3 years.*(koujien, kentoushi) Thus, Professor Saeki concluded that these emissaries were influenced by more than things that were purely of Chinese origin. They were also influenced by a great deal of Chinese culture that itself had been strongly influenced by Keikyo and the ideas its followers had brought with them.

A Variety of Religions and Cultures

It is obvious to anyone who looks at the evidence that far more than Buddhism entered into ancient China and Japan. In addition to primitive Christianity, numerous other peoples with a variety of worldviews also immigrated in. Those that are mentioned in existant records are, of course, only the tip of the iceberg. A good example of one that can be indirectly confirmed is a note in an ancient work called徐福伝説(Jofuku Densetsu in Japanese pronunciation). This account dates from long before the Hata clan and Keikyo and is not mentioned in any existant Japanese record. The account is found in a Chinese work called史記(Shiki) written by a man named司馬遷(Shibasen in Japanese pronunciation) who lived from approximately 145 to 86 B.C.. According to this account, the first emperor Shin (written with

the same character as Hata 秦) was looking for some potion of eternal youth. At his order, a man named 徐福 (Jofuku) led a group of several thousand men and women to "a land across the sea." This "land across the sea" was apparently Japan. There is, however, no mention of this group of people ever returning to China, and so they apparently ended up settling in Japan. The timing is interesting in that this coincides with a sharp increase in the population of western Japan and the beginning of the Yayoi Culture. It would seem that these people found a good life in their new land and just stayed where they were. It also implies that the Yayoi culture that quickly developed then was sparked by the immigration of these people into Japan.

There is other indirect evidence of such migrations into Japan for which no direct references can be found in existent records. One of note is that myths recorded in the ancient annals of Japan (Kojiki and Nihon Shoki) indicate influence from Greek mythology, with the implication that people who had adopted the myths of ancient Greece also came into the Japanese archipelago. For instance, when a woman was about to be eaten by the monster snake "Yamata no Orochi", the hero "Susanoo" drove the giant snake away, saving her, and then they got married. While the names are, of course, different, this exact same scenario is found in the older Greek mythology.

Likewise, such themes as "Izanagi" going into the land of the dead to try to bring back his wife from the dead and the goddess "Amaterasu" getting angry at the violence inflicted on her by her younger brother "Susanoo" hiding behind a rock, which plunged the world into darkness are also found in the same form in ancient Greek mythology. These same themes are found in the cultures existing all along the Silk Road, and so it is obvious that these themes were transmitted from their origin in Greece along the Silk Road all the way to Japan. This doesn't mean that Greeks themselves necessarily made it all the way to Japan. But it does mean that peoples who had at least adopted that aspect of Greek culture did come that far.

Another example of this sharing of themes is found in the concept of the 天孫降臨 (Tenson Kourin, the coming down of the descendants of Heaven). The descendants of the gods were said to have come down to earth, and this was the beginning of the Yamato (Japanese) people. The exact same theme is found in Korean mythology as well, and so we can conclude that it is likely that people immigrating over brought that idea with them.

Japanese mythology also includes stories that may very well be reworkings of stories found in the Old Testament of the Bible. The names of people and places are entirely different, but the

overall scenario is very similar. Examples of this are listed in a book entitled "Nihon, Yudaya Fuuin no Kodaishi" (The Ancient History of Japanese and Jewish Seals) by Tokuma Shoten (p. 212).

The conclusion is that while many records of early migrations were lost, the indirect evidence for numerous peoples with a variety of cultures migrating into Japan is very strong. Sugiyama Jiro, head of the oriental archaeology section of the National Museum in Tokyo and regent of the Oriental Society said in his book "Tenbin no Perujajin" ("The Persian With the Scales", Seidosha), "The evidence that an encyclopedic mixture of knowledge and technologies from the Greek and Roman cultures, along with the Mesopotamian, Hebrew, Iranian, northern Eurasian, Indian and Tibetan cultures flowed directly into ancient Japan along the Silk Road can clearly be seen."* (p. xx)

Cultures obviously don't enter into a new region without people who practice them bringing them with them. My own ancestors were Assyrians who practiced the Keikyo religion. To my Japanese readers I would say that if you could trace back your own ancestors, you might even find that far back you have a Greek, Assyrian, Persian, Jewish or Armenian ancestor.

Those ancestors might have been Buddhist, but they also might have been Muslims or Zoroastrians. And, of course, many of them would have been Christians of the Keikyo variety. At any rate, without a doubt there would have been some connection with the Silk Road. Yes, a wide variety of people immigrated into ancient Japan. In this sense, the Japanese are not simply a monoethnic group. Japan is multiethnic.

DNA Speaks: Japanese = Multiethnic

DNA expert Horai Satoshi has a very interesting report on his research in his book "DNA人類進化学" (DNA Jinrui Shinkagaku, DNA and the Study of Human Evolution) (Iwanami Kagaku Library). Dr. Horai took DNA samples from 5 groups of people, Chinese, Koreans, Ainu, Okinawans and mainland Japanese. Of the mainland Japanese group, 24% showed genetic characteristics that were particularly common in Korea, which 26% matched those found in China. Eight percent had markers that were indicative of Ainu roots, and 16% had Okinawan characteristics. The remaining 26% had characteristics that did not match any of these four other groups. Of that remaining 26%, about 5% had a special characteristic that appears to be unique to Japanese, and is almost never found among the other Asian groups.*

This research demonstrates conclusively that the Japanese have multiethnic roots, and that while it is not surprising to find large Chinese and Korean contributions to the gene pool, there are many other strands intertwined as well. Dr. Horai has thus demonstrated that the genes that make up the Japanese population is a mixture of a number of contributions that came in as waves of different ethnic groups moved eastward along the Silk Road until they had nowhere else to go and thus settled in Japan.

Another research group at Tokyo University investigated the DNA of a virus called the "JC virus" that has the unusual property of only being passed on from mother to child and can't be passed on from another person. The Tokyo University group analyzed this virus in samples taken from numerous ethnic groups from around the world to see what that could tell us about the roots of the Japanese. They found that there were 12 basic strains of this virus around the world, 4 of which were found among Japanese. These 4 strains were as follows: "Type common on Korean Peninsula", "Type common from the Korean Peninsula into Northern and Central China", "Type common in Southeast Asia", and "Type common to Europeans and the Turks" (EU type).

This "EU type" is unique to the Caucasian groups of Europe and Asia Minor, and yet it was found in between 10 and 20 percent of the population of the Tohoku region of Japan. This variety is almost never found in any other Asian country. As a rough generalization, the "Type common on Korean Peninsula" was most prevalent in northern Japan, while in western Japan, it was the "Type common from the Korean Peninsula into Northern and Central China." Okinawa and the southern portion of Kyushu showed a preponderance of the "Type common in Southeast Asia."

The Tokyo University research group concluded from this line of evidence as well that the modern Japanese are descended from numerous groups of peoples migrated into Japan in ancient times. This includes the likelihood that a significant influx of Caucasians also settled in ancient Japan.

As Japan is at the eastern edge of the Asian continent and faces a vast ocean to the east, it is clear that all ancient ancestors of the Japanese migrated in from the west. These peoples moved eastwards across Asia, finally stopping at the Pacific Ocean, as they could go no farther.

I have visited with the Ainu in Hokkaido on several occasions. I recall noticing how similar some of their facial characteristics were to my own, with their sharp, Caucasian-like

features. Of those whose recent ancestry includes enough Japanese blood to make their features more oriental still sometimes have blue eyes. Likewise, the Ainu do not have the "blue spot" at the top of their buttocks at birth, which is characteristic of Mongoloid peoples. They more easily fit into the "Caucasoid" group.

Another interesting tidbit of evidence is in a traditional Ainu food that is identical to a snack eaten in the Middle East from ancient times. It's a kind of wrapped cracker somewhat analogous to the "norimaki" (seaweed wrapped) rice crackers popular in Japan today. This same snack is eaten today by the Assyrians in the Keikyo Churches that exist in America. (Ken: a bit more explanation as to what kind of snack this is would be helpful)

Pictures;

I was surprised to see the Ainu eating a traditional snack food that is identical to the "Doluma" (rice and lamb meat wrapped in grape leaves) eaten in the Middle East. I also saw it being eaten in a Keikyo Church in the U.S.

Tokita Irenka and the author dressed in traditional Ainu clothing.

The face of Akibe Hideo, a full-blooded Ainu. His sharp features are similar to that of a Caucasian.

Sugano Shigeru (?) of the Nifutani (?) Ainu Museum shows off an Ainu flag. Notice the symbols on the triangle in the center. They look very similar to the Menora, the special candlestick holder used in Jewish synagogues.

Chapter 3

The Other Japan

Keikyo Believers Came To Japan

In this section, we will be looking a bit deeper into pre-Xavier Christianity in Japan. Let us begin by looking at some evidence found on the mainland just north of the Korean Peninsula, which was along the main route for entry into Japan. Near the city of Anshan (鞍山) in southern Manchuria, a Keikyo gravesite has been excavated. The remains of seven people were found there, and a cross was found near the skull of each of the bodies. Among the other items found in the graves were coins minted between 998 and 1006 A.D.. Likewise, there was also a Keikyo cross found carved in the grave of the king of that region, King Nayan (Naian).*

Keikyo relics have also been found in southern Korea in the Keishu (慶州) region. In the famous Buddhist temple, Bulguksa (仏国寺, Bukkokuji in Japanese reading, literally meaning "Buddhist Country Temple"), a Keikyo cross dated between 677 and 935 A.D. was found. Even more importantly, writings of Keikyo doctrine entitled, "The Book of Jesus Messiah" were found in a stone cave in Keishu along with Buddhist writings.*

When I went to Korea, I saw these relics for myself. It may seem strange for Keikyo artifacts to be unearthed in a Buddhist temple or to be found together with Buddhist writings, but we now know that Keikyo writings were also read by priests in such temples in Japan as Kouyasan and Nishi Honganji. I will return to that subject later.

Dr. John M.L. Young, a scholar born and raised in Korea, is convinced that the basis for the Korean script known as "Hangul," was first developed by Keikyo missionaries in Korea more than 1000 years ago. This early work, then, was revived by a Korean king some 500 years ago to develop the modern Korean "alphabet" that came into general use in the early 20th century during the Japanese occupation. (Ken: this should be documented. Do any Korean scholars recognize this? Also, I find it a bit surprising to learn that its use spread under Japanese rule. I would think it would be suppressed! Need to clarify)

(pictures)

This portion of a Keikyo Bible was found together with Buddhist scriptures in a cave in Korea. This indicates that there was interchange between the two faiths.

A stone Keikyo cross unearthed in 1956 in the Buddhist temple Bulguksa (仏国寺) in Korea. This likewise points to Keikyo having been in Korea.

These Keikyo believers also came to Japan. According to an 8th Century document known as "Shokunihongi" (続日本紀), a Persian by the name of Ri Mitsui (李密医, also known as Ri Mitsuei, 李密翳), who was both a doctor and a Keikyo missionary, came to Japan in June of 736 AD.* (*Note: terms such as "missionary" and the Gregorian Calendar date are, of course, not in the original, but are implied or can be calculated from the ancient Japanese dating system.) This ancient record also indicates that persons referred to as "Keijin" (景人), who were apparently leaders of the Keikyo church, accompanied him.

The term "Keijin" refers to Keikyo believers, and it is recorded that in November of that year, they were given a special "rank" (recognition) by Emperor Shomu (聖武). The fact that they received such recognition after being there only 6 months likely indicates that they had made a deep impression on the emperor and had developed a close relationship with him. As Ri Mitsui and another figure named Koho (皇甫) were in effect "missionaries", they no doubt tried to communicate their faith to the imperial family. It appears that they met with some success, as a term formerly unseen in the imperial household records, "keifuku" (景福), a Keikyo term literally meaning "bright happiness", suddenly becomes prominent. For example, in a prayer entitled "Kokubunji Konryu no Mikotonori" (国分寺建立の詔, prayer for the founding of Kokubunji) written in 741 by Emperor Shomu, we see the phrase "seeking universal keifuku", a term that was used by the Keikyo church in China. Likewise, in this prayer, the Kokubunji Temple is referred to as a temple of "Bokke Metsuzai" (法華滅罪, flourishing the (Buddhist) way and destroying sin). The use of term "tsumi" 罪(sin) and the consciousness of sin was not originally a part of Buddhism. Thus, it is apparent that the adoption of this word 滅罪(metsuzai) at this time points to the influence of keikyo thought.

It is also interesting to note that the Keikyo leader Koho who came into Japan with Ri Mitsui was an accomplished musician who apparently left his mark on "gagaku", Japanese traditional court

music. Every year, when this esoteric music is played in the imperial court, the president of the Japan Gagaku Association, Oshida Hisaichi (?) (押田久一) states that the music entitled "Etenraku" (越天楽, music from the heavens) is "Keikyo music that came from Persia." Thus, we can see that Keikyo left its influence in rather surprising places.

The Effect Keikyo Had on Empress Koumyou

It is apparent that the wife of Emperor Shomu, Koumyou Kougou (光明皇后, Empress Koumyou, 701-760 A.D.), was also greatly influenced by Keikyo. My father did quite a bit of research into this and he often mentioned it to me.

"Ken, according to ancient Japanese tradition, the empress' child, who was in line to become the next emperor, was dying of a blood disease that appears to have been something like leukemia. Researchers say that when the Keikyo medical missionary Ri Mitsui saw this, he read Bible portions to the empress. He didn't have the entire Bible with him, but only Matthew's gospel and the Ten Commandments. The bible he used was written in Assyrian and Chinese, and so he had to go through an interpreter.

"He read to her from Matthew chapter 8 about Jesus healing sick people. He then asked the empress, 'Do you believe Jesus Messiah could heal your son?' She answered, 'I can't make a public announcement of it, but I believe.' They both prayed to Jesus to heal her son, and he miraculously recovered. The empress was so full of thanksgiving that she became very pro-active in doing works of mercy for the poor. After gaining permission from her husband the emperor, she built an institution called 'Hidenin' (悲田院) in the capital Nara to serve the destitute, sick and orphans. Likewise, she built another institution called 'Seyakuin' (施薬院) to dispense medicine to those who couldn't afford it and an additional hospital for the poor named 'Ryoubyouin' (療病院).

"Not only did she build these institutions, but she went to serve as a nurse in them herself, in spite of her rank. I've seen an ancient painting depicting her doing just that. In the Hokkeji Temple (法華寺) in Nara, there is still preserved a bath where she washed the backs of patients even going so far as to suck the puss out of wounds and spitting that out.

"Ken, when do you think this all took place? It was in the 8th Century more than 1200 years ago! So, here we have an example

comparable to the work of Florence Nightingale and Mother Teresa taking place in ancient Japan!"

It wasn't just my father who told me this. I also read professor Ikeda Sakae's account of this where he affirms that the background for her life of love was the influence of the Keikyo believer Ri Mitsui. (Ken: add name of book) Japan's popular press usually portrays this famous empress as being a devout Buddhist believer whose acts of mercy were based in Buddhist thought. An historical analysis of the Buddhism of that day, however, shows that such acts of mercy were not a part of typical Buddhist thought. Buddhists of that day sought "enlightenment" and "higher knowledge," and thus were not inclined towards works of mercy as these would not further their purpose. Likewise, the Buddhism of that era was closely tied to the state and to maintaining public order. These are facts recognized by Buddhist scholars.*

On the other hand, among the Keikyo Christians, such acts of mercy were taken for granted. All along the Silk Road from ancient Assyria eastwards Keikyo Christians performed deeds similar to what Empress Koumyou did. This history would no doubt have been told to the empress by Ri Mitsui.

In fact, one of the primary reasons Keikyo Christianity spread throughout Asia was the high level of medical knowledge and skill many believers had along with their public service and acts of mercy. It was for this reason that they gained the deep respect of people wherever they went, and it is what opened the door for many to accept their message. For example, in China, a Keikyo Christian by the name of Abraham began a medical mission and his descendants carried on that work for 15 generations. He provided free medical service for the local people and preached to them the good news of Christ.*

Keikyo Christians had been establishing institutions such as those set up by Empress Koumyou in numerous places, and thus what she did was not something brand new. The great work she did was something Keikyo Christians had been doing all along. In fact, the posthumous name "Koumyou" (光明) that she was given after death is itself a Keikyo term. It literally means "bright light" and Keikyo was also known as the "Bright Light Religion" (光明の宗教, Koumyou no shuukyo).

Empress Koumyou and Her Act of Sucking Out Puss >From Patient's Wounds

There is an ancient tradition that holds that Empress

Koumyou at one point sucked out the puss from lepers' skin. This, of course, is in stark contrast to the way lepers (or those suffering from Hansen's disease) were treated in Japanese society. The normal procedure of that day was to gather any lepers and herd them into an open area outside of town and have them sit on straw mats. After feeding them a last meal, a Buddhist priest would preach to them and then they would be burned alive to cleanse the area of the dreaded disease.

On the other hand, Keikyo Christians were known for building special care facilities for lepers in a variety of places across Asia. This was similar to the work done in Europe by groups such as the Franciscans who worked sacrificially to bring dignity to the lives of these outcasts. Saint Elizabeth (?) of Hungary was also known for self-sacrificing care of lepers. Thus, what Empress Koumyou did in Japan was of an equal caliber.

A literary work written some 500 years afterwards records the way her story had been handed down through the generations.

"The Empress Koumyou had a bath-house built to which people could come irrespective of the rank in society. She also decided to serve as a nurse in that facility pledging 'to wash the bodies of 1000 patients.' Those around her tried to dissuade her, but her mind was made up and she forged ahead with her plan.

"After the 999th patient, the time came for the final patient to come forward to be served. He was a leper far along in the progression of the disease. As he entered the bath, a bad smell soon permeated the room. The empress was taken back by this, but she thought to herself, 'This is the last one to fulfill my pledge,' and so she began to wash his back. The leper then said to her, 'I have a very bad disease and have suffered much from these boils. A doctor once told me that if someone would suck the puss out of the boils I would become well, but there is no one in this world who is so merciful. So, my condition has become progressively worse. You, however, O Empress, are a person of great mercy and have saved many people on an equal basis. Can you perhaps save me as well?'

"Needless to say, this was not an easy request to grant, and so the empress had a difficult time mustering up the courage to do this. But she thought that since this was her last patient, she would do it no matter what, and so she began to suck out the puss from each boil over his entire body, spitting it out from between her beautiful teeth. After she finished, she said, 'There, I've sucked the puss out

of each one for you. Go now, but please don't tell anyone about this.' As the patient left the room, his face was shining and everyone who saw him was amazed."

This is how this ancient story is related in the book, "Genko Shakusho" (元亨釈書, literally, "origin receiving Buddhist writings"). This book was written in 1322 A.D. and tells of various historical personalities and events that related to Buddhism in Japan. It was authored by a monk named Kokan Shiren (虎関師錬) at the Nanzenji (南禅寺) Temple in Kyoto. After he relates this story about the Empress Koumyou, he then proceeds to criticize what she had done.

"It was alright for the Empress to have the bath built. However, for her to have washed the bodies and suck out the puss was going too far. Without doing that sort of thing, if she only had sincerity, she could have worshipped Buddha anywhere. The Empress' acts of mercy simply defied common sense." In other words, this Buddhist monk is saying that the actions of Empress Koumyou were "un-Buddhist" in their nature.

It is easy, however, to understand how her acts of mercy could come out of Christian thought. For instance, the Belgian priest, Father Damien (1840 - 1889) did something very similar when he volunteered to go to the leper colony on Molokai Island in Hawaii. He served both the physical and spiritual needs of some 800 lepers who had been sent there, and he served them until he himself joined their ranks as a leper and died. The Empress Koumyou showed a similar attitude to that of Father Damien.

In the Bible too, we see Jesus touching lepers and saying, "Be clean!" And after the person was healed, Jesus says to him, "Listen! Don't tell anyone..." (Matthew 8:4), and thus it would seem likely that Empress Koumyou's words to the leper, "Go now, but please don't tell anyone about this," has as their background these words of Jesus.

Empress Koumyou also wrote some "waka" poems that appear in the famous "Manyoshu" (万葉集), an ancient collection of Japanese poetry and songs. The section one of her poems appears in (scroll 8) is entitled "Songs before the Buddha." Nevertheless, Professor Watsuji Tetsurou (和辻哲郎) says of this poem, "We are very surprised that in this poem she doesn't express any emotion at all towards Buddha."

Concerning another of her poems found in scroll 19, it is significant that the prayer she expresses is addressed not to Buddha but to God (although, of course, "kami" (神) in Japanese is rather vague

and does not necessarily refer to "God" with a capital "G").

During the Taisho Era (1912 - 26), the Empress Teimei (貞明) gained a reputation similar to that of her ancient counterpart Empress Koumyou, as she too demonstrated considerable compassion. Likewise, she contributed greatly to efforts to help those suffering from leprosy, and because of her influence, her birthday was later designated as "Kyurai no Hi" (救癩の日), or "Save the Leper Day."

Another parallel with Empress Koumyou is that Empress Teimei likewise was influenced by a Christian activist, Goto Shizuka (後藤静香), whose work among the feared lepers of that day was what inspired her to get involved. She summoned Goto to have an audience with her and then she gave him a large sum of money for his work.

Empress Koumyou had the Keikyo medical missionary Ri Mitsui (李密医) and his entourage at her side, and they no doubt told her of the love of Christ. Thus, I feel that the evidence supports the conclusion that it was their influence that was behind her acts of compassion. In fact, I don't think it stretching things at all to conclude that she herself became a secret Keikyo believer, somewhat like Nicodemus in the New Testament.

It is interesting to note that Empress Koumyou's niece became a follower of Keikyo and entered life in a monastery. There she wove together a large tapestry that depicted what she envisioned Heaven would be like. This beautiful tapestry is still on display in Kyoto to this day.* (where?)

Empress Koumyou's husband, Emperor Shomu, is famous for having built the temple in Nara that houses the famous "Daibutsu" (大仏, "Great Buddha") statue in Todaiji (東大寺) Temple. Within the temple complex is a structure called "Nigatsudou" (二月堂, February Hall) that hosts an important religious ceremony called "Omizutori" (お水取り, "water taking") that is performed every year. Roman Catholic scholar, Mario Marega, in his investigation of pre-Xavier Christianity in Japan described in Chapter 2, included in his report his observations that this ceremony had numerous parallels with Keikyo ceremonies.*

These evidences add up to the conclusion that by the Eighth Century, Keikyo had a strong influence in Japan. When one compares that with what was going on in Europe during this same period, the images are reversed from what people in the West have typically held. Europe was in the "Dark Ages" full of oppression and wars, while at that time, on the other side of the world, Japan was enjoying a

bright and glorious era.

The Legends of Shoutoku Taishi and Keikyo

There are numerous facts that point to the conclusion that Keikyo followers were found among both the common people as well as the upper class and that parts of the Bible were being read by the educated. One area of evidence comes from the stories about Shoutoku Taishi (聖徳太子, Prince Shoutoku) (574 - 622 A.D.), son of Emperor Youmyou (用明), who became famous for going to China and then introducing what he had learned to Japan. He is thought of as a convert to Buddhism who then built many temples in Japan, but there is much that remains a mystery concerning him. By the time the Heian Era rolled around several hundred years later, his reputation had blossomed to where he was held in deep respect by all and numerous legends had grown around him.

The legend of his origins is particularly interesting, and the parallels with the story of Christ's birth seem too close to just be chance. It was said that Prince Shoutoku was born in a horse stable (even though he was the Emperor's son!) and that he was called "Guze Bosatsu" (救世菩薩, literally "Bodhisattva who saves the world"), and was thus viewed as a savior figure. He was also referred to by the name "Umayadono Miko" (厩戸皇子), where the "厩" is read "umaya" and means a "barn". Professor Kume Kunitake (久米邦武) concludes that the Bible story of "Mary giving birth to Jesus in a stable" was transferred over to the legends that developed concerning Prince Shoutoku.*

Other aspects of the legend of his birth also seem to have come from the biblical story. For instance, his mother Hashihito Kougou (間人皇后, Empress Hashihito) is said to have been visited by the "Kyusei Kannon" (救世観音, with "Kannon" referring to a "goddess of mercy" and "Kyusei" meaning "savior") in a dream to tell her of the coming birth of this special son. Needless to say, that is very similar to what the Bible records concerning the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus.

The story continues with a man named Nichira Shounin (日羅聖人) calling Prince Shoutoku "Kyusei Kannon" and worshipping him. This same man is then said to have been assassinated. Again, this parallels the story of John the Baptist calling Jesus the "Savior of the world" and then later being killed by Herod.

In his book "Buddhism and Keikyo in Japanese History", Tomiyama Masanori (富山昌徳) (Ken: check reading of name) writes the following concerning the legends that evolved around Prince Shoutoku, "In the 13th Century book 'The Life Story of Prince Shoutoku', not only is there a story about Prince Shoutoku dying and then coming back to life, the whole book can be viewed as an imitation of the Gospel of John."*

Likewise, in the "Nihon Shoki" (日本書紀), the oldest book of "history" still existant in Japan, there is the story of Prince Shoutoku "providing food and clothing for the starving man on Kataoka Mountain" and that later "this starving man died and was buried but then several days later was raised to life with only the clothing remaining on top of the casket." Anyone who knows the Bible would surely think, "Boy, this sure sounds like the Bible!" Christ taught that giving the poor food and clothing would be rewarded in Heaven and that such actions were the equivalent of them giving the food and clothing to Christ himself. Likewise, there is the story of Lazarus coming out of the grave to leave his grave cloths behind as well as Christ himself being resurrected from the grave leaving the shroud laying where his body had been.

Prince Shoutoku is also looked up to as the "founder (ancestor) of carpenters" (大工の祖, daiku no so) and is even worshipped as the "protector god of carpenters" (大工の守護神, daiku no shugokami). It seems no coincidence that Jesus too was a carpenter by trade. There is even a ceremony held every January in some Buddhist temples (including Kouryuuji) called "chonna hajime" (チヨンナ初め) were Prince Shoutoku is still referred to as the "founder of carpenters."

It is quite apparent that generations following Prince Shoutoku took themes that were originally Christian and wove them into the legends of the prince. Professor Ikeda Sakae wrote concerning this, "During the time of Prince Shoutoku, it appears that a variety of Christianity was present in Japan and that they propogated the stories of Christ. Because of that, it would seem that the Buddhists developed a kind of conglomerate story to harmonize the two." (Should we add here about similar things happening in China with Jizzo and India with Hare Krishna?)

Christianity was certainly in Japan from early times. Perhaps to compete with the stories these immigrant Christians brought with them, Buddhists then took numerous themes from those stories and even turned Prince Shoutoku into a messianic figure. Through this, then, the legends of Prince Shoutoku spread through the population.

Shinran Also Read the Keikyo Scriptures

The "Pure Land" sect of Japanese Buddhism (浄土真宗, Jodo Shinshu) has as its headquarters Nishi Honganji (西本願寺) in Kyoto. It was founded by Shinran (親鸞), who lived from 1173 to 1262 A.D., and as one of its prized treasures, it has the very book Shinran read and studied, called "Seson Fuseron" (世尊布施論, literally, "Essay on the Offerings of 'Precious Life'"). This, however, is not some sort of Buddhist scripture. It is, in fact, a book of Keikyo doctrine that was translated into Chinese in the 7th Century in China that was later brought into Japan.

The "世尊" (Seson), which is made up of the characters "世", a character with a broad range of uses, including "world", "generation", "life", and "尊", meaning "valuable, precious." This "Precious Life", however, does not refer to the Buddha. It refers to Jesus Christ, and the book begins with the teachings of Jesus in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5 - 7) and also describes the life and teachings of Jesus along with Christian salvation. For instance, well-known sayings of Jesus, such as the following, are found there: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them! ... So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

I actually went to Nishi Honganji to ask about this "Seson Fuseron." I asked attendants at the temple, "I have read in a book that Keikyo writings are stored in this Temple. Do you have any and can I see them?" Everyone I asked denied it saying, "There is no such thing here." So I showed them the book saying, "But there is a picture of such writings in this book." They still said, however, that they had no idea of what that was supposed to be.

As I persisted a bit more, however, an old gentleman came out from the back and said that there were indeed such writings stored there. "They are carefully stored away as they are so old and fragile, and so we don't normally show them to anyone. But I can show you a picture taken of them." It was the same picture that was in my book! Thus, it was really true that Shinran himself, the founder of the Pure Land Sect, had read and studied these ancient Chinese writings

about Jesus! They were no doubt very important to him, since the scroll had been carefully preserved after his death.

In founding the Pure Land Sect, Shinran was the one who first propagated the idea of "chanting the holy invocation", "Namu Amida Butsu" (南無阿彌陀仏), as a way of showing and developing one's faith in Buddha. The characters used to write this phrase are in themselves simply phonetic equivalent characters with no relationship at all between their literal meanings and the idea being conveyed (except for the last character 仏(butsu), which applies to Buddhism). The phrase as a whole, however, means "I sincerely believe in Amida Buddha" (or as it is often written in English from the Sanskrit equivalent, "I sincerely believe in Amitabha Tathagata").

The concept behind this is that calling upon the name of Buddha is sufficient for one to be saved. This idea of calling on the name of Buddha for salvation is, however, not something that is found in primitive Buddhism. It is clearly an import from Christianity, as calling upon the name of Jesus is a central teaching of Christianity. "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21).

This is also the conclusion of an authority on Buddhist History, Professor Artie (? use full name), who said, "The doctrine of Amida Butsu ... was not something that originated in India. Chinese Buddhism came through Kashmir and Nepal, and this concept first surfaced in that region, where they had been influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism and Christianity."*

The name "Amida" came from the Sanskrit "Amitabha" or "Amitayus", which were written in Chinese characters as "無量光" (Muryoukou) and "無量寿" (Muryouju) respectively, which mean "limitless light" and "limitless life." Shinran went around preaching the message, "Believe in the無量寿仏(Muryouju Butsu, or Buddha of limitless life) and convert to his mysterious light." Thus, Amida Buddha was portrayed as the source for eternal light and life.

This indeed sounds familiar to Christian ears. A former Pure Land Buddhist priest turned Christian pastor, Michihata Taisei, states that this comes right out of John 1:4 ("In him was life, and that life was the light of men"). This, along with numerous other verses, teaches that Christ is the source of "limitless light" and "limitless life." Thus, the faith Shinran preached was in reality a faith that had incorporated Christian thought into Buddhism.

Likewise, Shinran taught a form of "salvation by faith"

as is opposed to "salvation by works" (ascetic training). This too is a Christian import foreign to original Buddhism. Thus, as he developed his system of thought, it is clear that he would have been able to resonate with Keikyo writings in the Chinese "Seson Fuseron," which he had in his possession.

In 16th Century Germany, the reformer Martin Luther discovered the biblical doctrine of salvation by faith, and began preaching it to others, emphasizing "salvation by faith" as opposed to "salvation by works." As Shinran did something similar with Japanese Buddhism, the two reformers are often compared.

It was, in fact, just 32 years after Luther began his crusade that Xavier landed in Japan. In Japan, Xavier encountered followers of the Pure Land Sect, and there is recorded a comment by Xavier to the effect that he was surprised by how similar this variety of Buddhism was what Luther taught.*

It is interesting to note that in the Nestorian Monument of China, Keikyo is referred to with the characters 真宗 (Shinshuu, literally "true religion"), and so one wonders if it was purely coincidental that Shinran chose for his new movement the name 浄土真宗 (Joudou Shinshuu, "Pure Land True Religion"). Given the fact that Shinran was familiar with Keikyo and its writings, there very well may have been a connection. Certainly the fact that Shinran and other ancient Buddhist leaders in Japan were conversant in the teachings of Keikyo means that it is not at all surprising that we find so many similarities to Keikyo within Buddhist legends and writings of that era.

In the book referred to earlier, "Buddhism and Keikyo in Japanese History", Tomiyama Masanori points out the relationship between stories of the Buddhist monk Hounen (法然), who lived from 1133 to 1212, and the Bible. In the ancient work that was the main source of material concerning Hounen, there is a section that takes the same themes in the same order as that recorded in Matthew 17 of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, and explains these in detail.*

Incidentally, Hounen's mother was of the Hata clan, and Hounen was the primary teacher for his prize student, Shinran. Hounen had entered into the faith through the writings of the Chinese monk 善道 (Zendou in Japanese pronunciation) (613 - 681) who was the founder of a movement in Chinese Buddhism that has clear links to Joudou Shinshu. The same Jodo (浄土) characters were used to describe this movement, and it basically taught the same main point, namely that it is not "salvation through ascetic training (works)" but through

"faith in Amida Butsu." In other words, one's "enlightenment" came not from one's own efforts in performing self-denying ascetism but through one's expectations of entering into the Pure Land of Amida and Buddhahood (Nirvana). (Ken: That is how it is explained in the dictionary under Jodokyo. What we need to do is to confirm whether Zendou called it Jodokyo then or whether that is a later name given to it) This "Pure Land" faith that first appeared in China in the 7th Century coincides with the Nestorians (Keikyo believers) who were enthusiastically preaching "salvation by faith in the savior, Jesus" instead of self-salvation through works. Thus, there is a clear historical connection between Keikyo in China to the Buddhist monk Zendou and from there some 400 years later to Hounen and Shinran in Japan. So it is no wonder that there are so many parallels between Pure Land Buddhism and Christianity.

Kuukai and Keikyo

Another well-known founder of an ancient Buddhist sect in Japan is Kuukai (空海, 774 -835), who founded the "Shingon" sect, also referred to as "Shingon Mikkyou" (真言密教). Like Shinran and Hounen, Kuukai likewise had close ties to Keikyo. In 804 A.D., he went to China and studied there for two years, returning in 806 to found this new branch of Buddhism.

My father and I, along with another research, Jann Hollingsworth of UCLA, have been to the headquarters of the sect he founded, Kouyasan (高野山) in Wakayama Prefecture to learn what we could about him from the monks there. These monks did not at all deny Kuukai's connection with Keikyo. In fact, were very open about it, telling us many things of their own accord. We found it a very interesting situation indeed, as so little is known in the modern Christian community in Japan about this ancient form of Christianity called Keikyo and its great influence in ancient Japan. It was kind of a wierd feeling asking these Buddhist monks about Christian history!

>From their perspective, the fact that Kuukai would have incorporated into his own thought so much from this great world religion called Keikyo was a sign of his greatness and was not at all something they were trying to hide. In fact, at the head temple Kouyasan, they had even erected a replica of the "Nestorian Monument" discovered in Xian (Seian) in China. Its erection there was the result of efforts by the Keikyo researcher, Elizabeth A. Gordon. There is also a replica of it at Kyoto University.

It is very curious that while we find no such replica of a Keikyo monument in any Japanese Christian church, there is one erected at the head temple of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. Needless to say, this was something we had to see for ourselves. Not only did we see this replica of an ancient Christian monument there, but there was even a helmet worn by the famous Christian Daimyo (feudal lord) Takayama Ukon (高山右近, 1552-1615). There was a cross clearly present on the helmet. So, why is it that these Christian relics had been so carefully handed down from generation to generation in a Buddhist temple? It was to answer this question that I began my own research into Kouyasan.

The first thing I did was to ask one of the priests there to explain the contents of the Keikyo monument, and he gladly took the time to read and explain the Chinese written there. I asked him about Kuukai, and one thing he said that really surprised me was the family name of his household was Saeki (佐伯), the very same surname as Professor Saeki Yoshiro (佐伯好郎), whose research on Keikyo had been so very helpful to me. That is probably mere coincidence, of course, but it added to the thrill of all that I was finding out. After enthusiastically telling me so much about Kuukai, he told me that I could find more materials in the library at the Kouyasan University, and so off I went.

I decided to look for materials on Elizabeth Gordon, but I couldn't find them anywhere. When I asked the clerk at the counter, he said there was no such thing there. He was very insistent, and the way he said it made me a bit suspicious. I had had experiences before when looking for such evidence where people were trying to hide it, and so I suspected that there really was something, though I don't know why he would try to hide it (as everyone else was so cooperative).

So I sat down in a chair nearby and just waited for awhile while I thought about what to do. Suddenly, I realized that an old man was sitting beside me, and he whispered into my ear, "The book you're looking for is on shelf x in row y." Thanking him, I went back to the desk and asked the man to show me the book on Gordon located there. He was visibly upset and demanded to know who had told me that. I turned around and started to say "That gentleman over there," but he wasn't there any more.

At any rate, I insisted that he show me the book, and it was an English manuscript written by Elizabeth Gordon herself, where she tells of her experiences in studying the Shingon sect, including the process leading up to the setting up of the copy of the Nestorian Monument at Kouyasan. That manuscript, by the way, was placed in a spot

where I would have never been able to find it myself.

Gordon had first come to Japan from England in relation to her husband's work in the early 1900's, and upon arriving, she took up the challenge of learning about Japanese Buddhism, particularly the Shingon sect. As she was doing a detailed study on the history and teachings of the sect, she began to notice something she thought was very strange, and that is how she got interested in doing research on Keikyo as well.

She visited Kouyasan to talk with the priests there and tell them about her findings. They were thrilled that this foreigner would spend so much time becoming knowledgeable about their sect. When she first broached the subject of Keikyo and the apparent relationships she saw, she was concerned as to how the priests would react. Expecting a negative reaction, she was startled by how matter-of-factly they said, "Yes, our sect came from Keikyo." In fact, one even said, "We are nothing more than an evolved form of Keikyo." Perhaps it was because she was a foreigner that they could speak so frankly and even disparagely about themselves. Needless to say, however, these were startling revelations indeed.

(Ken, we should give a bit more info about Gordon)

Kuukai and His Contact With Keikyo

Previously I had talked with a well-known scholar in the field of ancient history about Kuukai's relationship to Keikyo. He, however, denied any such connection, saying, "There was no borrowing from Keikyo in the teachings of Kuukai." After all, in his thought, Keikyo was Christianity and Kuukai taught Buddhism. Thus, the two systems of thought are completely different. In academic circles, this sort of crossover was apparently not part of the accepted theory of things.

The priests at Kouyasan, however, who well understood the things Kuukai taught, freely admitted, "Yes, our sect came from Keikyo." Thus, I went to Kouyasan myself to inquire about this. "Is it true that Kuukai studied Keikyo in China?" "Yes, he did. In fact, even today here at Kouyasan, we begin our ceremonies by making the sign of the cross."

"Really? Making the sign of the cross? Would I be allowed to see that? Actually, I myself am a Keikyo believer. My

Assyrian ancestors were also believers, and so am I." The priest seemed delighted that I would say that and his face seemed to glow. It was as though he were thanking me for the great favors shown by those descended from the same ancestors as mine. "Yes, please do come. In fact, we have a memorial service tomorrow morning at 5:30, and so if you come then, you can witness it." The next morning, as I observed the service, the priest began it by signing the cross with his hand.

One distinctive feature of ancient Keikyo was that its important ceremonies, such as baptisms, were always begun with a signing of the cross. Customarily, they would sign the cross either in front of their chests or with an outstretched hand cutting the sign of the cross in the sky.*

This custom, then, was adopted into Shingon. In fact, the priest said that the signing of the cross at the beginning of the memorial service "came from Keikyo." Also, there are crosses on the stone lanterns in front of the mausoleum at Kouyasan. Of these, Tomiyama Masanori says in his book, "These are undoubtedly Keikyo crosses."*

Well, how is it that Kuukai came in contact with Keikyo? Kuukai went to China during what was called the Tang (唐) Dynasty (618 - 907 A.D.). Even before he went to China, however, it is apparent that he had contact with the Hata clan and through them to Keikyo. Kuukai grew up in the region of Sanuki in what is now Kagawa Prefecture on the island of Shikoku, and this was a region in which a large number of Hata people had settled. Thus, there surely must have been some Keikyo believers present in the area. In fact, Kuukai's teacher was a Buddhist priest named Gonzo (勤操) (758 - 827), but his original family name was Hata.*

Some researchers have reached the conclusion that Kuukai expressed an interest in learning more about the Keikyo faith, as he was impressed with its power, and that as a result, he went to China, the center of Keikyo, under the encouragement of Japanese believers he was in contact with.* (Ken: Is this info to be attributed to the Kouyasan priests?)

The priests at Kouyasan told me that Kuukai went to China with a group of scholars that included a man named Saichou (最澄), who later became the founder of the Tendai (天台) sect. When they returned to Japan, Saichou had a copy of the Old Testament while Kuukai had the New Testament. It seems that they had received a copy of the Chinese translation of the Bible that was used in Keikyo. These two, however, had a dispute, the net result of which was that they each returned to Japan with only a part of the Bible. The priests explained

that this fact alone explained the differences there are in the two sects today. This same conclusion is backed by professor Okamoto Akirou (岡本明郎) of Okayama University, who has studied this period extensively.

I was told that there was even a copy of the gospel of Matthew still existant that Kuukai had brought back with him and that he had read it. Elizabeth Gordon made a thorough investigation of that, and it was this that helped convince the authorities at Kouyasan to cooperate with her in erecting the copy of the Nestorian Monument there. This manuscript is stored in the Nishi Honganji temple. (Ken: is this the same as the "Seson Fuseron" mentioned above that includes part of Matthew?)

The standard view of history is that Kuukai went to China to study Buddhism and then returned to Japan to spread that message. The brand of Buddhism Kuukai brought back was referred to as "Mikkyou" (密教), which is a contraction from the words "Himitsu" (秘密, secret) and "Bukkyou" (仏教, Buddhism), and is translated into English as "esoteric Buddhism." This stream of Buddhist thought came into Japan in two forms, as the Shingon and Tendai sects, and while there are obvious relationships with the primitive Buddhism that Buddha himself taught, there are also major differences.

Numerous scholars recognize that this variety of Buddhism is an amalgamation of original Buddhist thought with Keikyo Christianity. While Kuukai was in China, he would have absorbed considerable information about Keikyo teachings. In the Tang Dynasty capital of China, Chouan, there were at least four Keikyo churches, the remains of one that had just recently come to light. (details?) Kuukai's location while in Chouan was near one of these churches.

It has been reported (by who?) that while in China, Kuukai even met with the Keikyo monk景浄(Keijou in Japanese pronunciation), the very person that was responsible for erecting the original "Nestorian Monument" in 781. It's very likely he met with other Keikyo leaders as well and discussed theology at length.

On his death bed, Kuukai reportedly said, "Don't be sad for me. It is for the purpose of serving the Miroku (Messiah) Bodhisattva (see page xx) that I die, but in 5 billion 670 million years, I will come back to earth with Miroku." (While the actual figure given for the time frame is ludicrous, it is the literal meaning of what is taught concerning the "Second Coming" of Miroku.) (Ken: Let's confirm that figure. Do they understand it symbolically or literally?)

The concept of "Miroku" coming again in the future to save resurrected people was certainly not a part of original Buddhism. It is, however, an integral part of the Christian faith. As mentioned earlier, faith in "Miroku" was a concept developed in Buddhism from the influence of Keikyo and Zoroastrianism. Thus, I believe that the original form of the Miroku preached by Kuukai was none other than Jesus Christ himself.

Was Kuukai Himself a Keikyo Believer?

While it seems obvious that the Shingon Mikkyou faith that Kuukai spread was a form of Buddhism with a lot of Keikyo Christianity mixed in, some scholars have even taken it further, proposing that Kuukai himself became a Keikyo believer in Japan. According to this theory, in his youth, Kuukai was exposed to Keikyo by members of the Hata clan or others and became a believer. Then, to study his new faith further, he went to China, where Keikyo was centered. After gathering a lot of materials on Keikyo, he then returned to Japan and founded a kind of Keikyo monastery at Kouyasan.

Later followers, however, began to pass down the stories of Kuukai in the form of Buddhism, portraying him as a "great Buddhist figure." Nevertheless, they did not simply transform everything he said into a Buddhist format. They maintained the basic essence in its original form and only tweaked things here and there into Buddhist-like expressions. After all, their reverence towards Kuukai was great, and so Kuukai's teachings were passed down from generation to generation.

Many, of course, think this theory goes much too far. Nevertheless, as I will also demonstrate later in relating additional information on Prince Shoutoku, things that are not Buddhist have been made out to be Buddhist on numerous occasions in Japan. Thus, I feel that this more radical theory is at least a possibility.

Among the ceremonies of the Shingon sect, signing the cross is not the only Keikyo tradition that was incorporated. Other aspects of their ceremonies likewise come from Keikyo. For instance, they have a ceremony entitled "kanjou" (灌頂). Kuukai himself received this "kanjou" as a sign that he was making a full commitment to his faith. "Kanjou", however, is a ceremony that did not exist in Buddhism prior to Shingon Mikkyou. It involves a symbolic pouring of water over the head, and was, therefore, simply an adaptation of Christian baptism. When Kuukai received his "kanjou", he also received a new

"kanjou name", "Henjou Kongou" (遍照金剛), which literally means "everywhere shining, golden strength". The "everywhere shining" part would appear to have been taken from the Chinese translation done by the followers of Keikyo of Matthew 5:16, "let your light shine before men." I was told that Kuukai received from his teacher Keika Wajo (惠果和尚) a metal bowl used in the "kanjou" ceremony that was very similar to those found in Persia. Likewise, the use of an incense burner (called "kourou" (香炉)) was a part of the Keikyo tradition, and this too is found in Shingon in a similar form called "kasha kourou" (火舎香炉).

In Kyoto, there is a "seminary" for the training of priests of the Shingon sect called "Touji" (東寺). In the home of one of the head priests there, a friend of mine claims to have witnessed a kind of festival where they used an actual cross. Likewise, in Touji, there is a decorative piece of artwork depicting an angel that is very similar to those used in ancient Keikyo Christianity. It is drawn on cow hide and dates from 1086 A.D.. There is a similar "keman" (華鬘, hanging decorations) in the Chuuson Temple (中尊寺) in Iwate Prefecture. Both are very similar to those found in the ruins of Keikyo churches in central Asia.

Another feature of Shingon Mikkyo is its use of prayers for the healing of people's ailments. Called "kaji kitou" (加持祈祷), it consists of prayers said over those suffering from illness or injury invoking the power of Buddha for healing. This practice is one of the reasons for the popularity of Shingon Mikkyo among the masses, and thus it was adopted by other sects as well.

This concept of praying for healing, however, did not exist in early Buddhism, which was concerned only with "escaping from the wheel of suffering." When Keikyo entered into China, however, its followers made it a regular practice to pray to God for healing. It was this fact that provided the initial stimulus for Buddhists to copy this practice.

The Relationship Between Keikyo and the "Daimonji" Fire

My father once had the opportunity to meet with a high ranking priest at Kouyasan, a descendant of the household of Kuukai's mother. His name was Ato Hirofumi Soujou (阿刀弘文僧正), where the "Soujou" is a title roughly equivalent to "bishop". He was very interested in doing research on the relationship between Keikyo and Shingon Mikkyo, as well as how Keikyo related to traditional Japanese Shinto. He has

since passed on, but in that meeting with my father, he said, "Mrs. Gordon told me that she believed the Daimonjibi on Daimonjiyama was a tradition begun by Koubou Daishi (弘法大師, the name given to Kuukai in his role as a priest), and that he got his idea for it from Keikyo."

Daimonjibi (大文字火) refers to the fires lit on the side of Daimonjiyama (大文字山, the name of a mountain on the northwest side of Kyoto) to form the shape of the character for "big"大. This event occurs on the last day of "Obon", the Buddhist festival of the dead, when it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors that were visiting during Obon were sent off again to their place of abode. Incidentally, Obon itself was not part of early Buddhism, as nothing like it is referred to in the Sanskrit Buddhist writings. It began in China with the Sokudo (?) people who had originated in Persia, and they had been influenced by Keikyo. Kuukai then brought that tradition with him back to Japan and began the tradition in Kyoto.* (Put the book referred to here in a footnote with a page number.)

The priest then continued his story, "Mrs. Gordon often climbed up Daimonjiyama, as she found it an exhilarating experience. One time, while walking right along the spot where the fires were lit, she stumbled on an interesting layered stone that was roughly in the shape of a cross. It was as though it were a sign from God, and she was inspired by that to offer to make copies of the Nestorian Monument and put them up in Kouyasan and Kyoto University.

"I have that very stone here in my house, and every August, I set it up on the altar as part of my worship. Ever since then, I have had this special interest in Keikyo. ... When I told the famous Keikyo researcher, Saeki Yoshiro, about this, he was overjoyed, and he sent me this Keikyo (picture) frame. (Ken: I'm not clear exactly what it was.) He encouraged me to continue looking into Keikyo, and it was from that point that we began our exchanges."

Concerning the relationship between Keikyo and Shinto, this priest made the following observation: "Eight years ago, the Mainichi Newspaper published an article that said that when the Keikyo medical missionary Ri Mitsui came to Japan, he brought with him a translation of the Gospel of Matthew. He was on one of an entorage of 21 boats that came to Japan via Chejudo, a Korean island. It says in the ancient records that Ri Mitsui was given a special status by the Emperor (somewhat analogous to being knighted in British tradition). It doesn't say, however, for what great deed that was given as a reward.

"It is said that Japan is "kami no kuni" (神の国, the "land of the gods"). ... Now, this is not something that people would

normally apply to themselves on their own accord. There had to be someone to plant that idea in their heads. In Japanese Shinto, there is a kind of "trinity" called "Sansha Takusen" (三社託宣, literally, "three gods oracle"), the central figure of which is "Amaterasu Oumikami" (天照大神, literally, the "great god who lights up Heaven"). On the left, then, is "Hachimansama" (八幡様, literally "eight flags" plus the honorific ending, but referring to the "god of war") and on the right, "Kasugasama" (春日様, which is short for "Kasuga Daimyoshin" (春日大明神, literally "spring day" (but referring to a place in Nara) "great, bright god"). These make up a kind of trinity, but from where did the idea come that these three were really one? This kind of "Sansha Takusen" is not like anything found in Buddhism or Confucianism. It cannot be explained by either of them. But if we allow for the influence of Keikyo, it can easily be explained.

"In the "Manyoshu" (万葉集), we find numerous poems referring to the 'shimobe' (僕) or 'servant.' This likewise is not a concept that could have come out of Buddhism or Confucianism. (can't translate this poem) But this concept of a 'servant' is easily explained from Keikyo influence. Likewise, the Gion Matsuri (祇園祭) (see page xx) and the 'Naginata' (薙刀, halbert or ceremonial battle ax) custom both also have their roots in Christianity, just as the Daimonji Fire Festival."

Buddhism is a Syncristic Religion

As is clear from these numerous examples, when it comes to religious traditions and customs in Japan, what Japanese typically have regarded as "purely Buddhist" ceremonies and concepts are in many cases not that at all. In many instances, such traditions are a mixture of Buddhist ideas with Keikyo Christianity and other non-Buddhist concepts.

It is my contention that this is a characteristic of Buddhism itself. It is not that Buddhism is simply influenced by other traditions (something that happens in all religions including Christianity), but that Buddhism is a faith that simply takes into its very being a variety of other teachings. In other words, it is syncristic.

When I went to the United States some time ago, I visited a "Keikyo" church. Yes, there is even a denomination in America with hundreds of churches that is the equivalent of what we know as

Keikyo in Asia. Those present in worship were almost all of Assyrian decent, and the entire service was conducted in the ancient Aramaic language.

As I observed what was going on, I was thinking to myself, "Gee, even though this is America and this is a Christian church, there is something about it that reminds me of a Buddhist temple in Japan!" For example, contrary to most churches where the clergy faces the congregation for the most part, the Assyrian Church of the East (Keikyo) service is conducted with the priest facing the altar along with the congregation, just as in a Buddhist memorial service. Likewise, in both cases, there is a kind of altar that is reverently covered with a curtain (Ken: do I have that right?)

Likewise, while in churches in the West -- particularly Protestant churches -- the sermon takes up a large portion of the worship time, in a Assyrian church, much of what the priest does is a liturgical reading that is rather similar to the way Buddhist priests recite their sutras. This may go on for an hour or more, and their recitations have a peculiar cadence and intonation that make them sound rather similar to a Japanese Buddhist priest reading his sutras at a memorial service.

When people visit a Buddhist temple in Japan, one thing that everyone notices is the smell of the incense being burned on the altar. This same use of incense is also a primary characteristic of Assyrian churches, as the smell of the incense fills the sanctuary. The worshipers there even fan the smoke of the incense onto their bodies as a symbol for receiving blessings, and this too is what you will observe at most Buddhist temples.

Most people just assume that the use of incense and incense burners is an integral part of Buddhism, but the evidence is that this too was not a part of original Buddhist tradition. On the other hand, it was a part of the Eastern Church from its inception as it moved out to the East through India, China, Korea and finally Japan. It was also a part of the even older Jewish tradition as least as far back as the Exodus, where such use is described in the tabernacle worship led by Moses and Aaron.

In Japan, Buddhist believers carry a string of beads, and this too, I observed in the Assyrian church. Most people would think that "juzu" (数珠) is something that was devised in Buddhism, but this isn't so either. Just as the Roman Catholic believers have used "rosaries" from ancient times, the Eastern Church likewise had this custom from its earliest times as well. It is generally believed that

"juzu" were first used by the Buddhist monk 道綽 (Doushaku in Japanese pronunciation), who lived from 562 to 645 A.D.. This, however, is the same period of time that Keikyo began moving into China in a big way. Thus, it seems highly likely that this too is a custom adopted by Buddhists from Keikyo.

Assyrian churches also feature the use of candles and candle stands. A worshiper who desires to say a prayer buys a candle and puts it in the stand as he or she begins to pray. This too is similar to what one sees in a Buddhist temple. In the Keikyo worship service, at the points where the worshipers stand up or sit down, a bell is rung—another thing reminiscent of a Buddhist memorial service. Even the garb worn by an Assyrian priest reminds me of a Buddhist priest.

While visiting the Assyrian church in the U.S., I also observed an older woman dressed in a beautiful native dress (see picture) that was strikingly like the way the "Kannon" (観音, "Goddess of Mercy") statues in Japan are decorated. Perhaps the dress portrayed on these statues actually find their roots in this ancient dress of the Assyrians.

Some time ago, when I visited the Amakusa Shiro Museum in Nagasaki, I noticed something interesting about the bronze statue of Amakusa Shiro (天草四郎), who was a famous "Kirishitan" (Christian) from the 17th Century. If you look carefully, you can see that there is a cross hanging from his neck, but as his hands are held together closely in front of his chest, the cross is difficult to see. The face of Amakusa Shiro is portrayed in such a way that it looks rather similar to the typical "bosatsugao" (菩薩顔, face of a bodhisattva statue). Depending on how one looks at it, one might conceivably even begin referring to it as "Amakusa Shiro Bosatsu" or "Amakusa Shiro Kannon."

The thought even occurred to me that if we were to imagine the flow of history going on for another few hundred years into the future along the same lines it has taken in the past, then perhaps Amakusa Shiro would begin to be worshiped as a Buddhist saint by such future generations. I thought, "So, this is what has been happening all along in Japanese history." Something that was originally Christian became, through the passage of time, a part of Buddhism. It's more than just Buddhism being affected by Christianity. It's that Buddhism is a religion that borrows from others in wholesale fashion. What we typically have associated with Buddhism was often originally part of the eastern Christian tradition.

There is in Japanese Buddhism little of what was originally Buddhist. I read of an account of the World Congress on Buddhism held in Kyoto where monks from Southeast Asian countries commenting upon observing Japanese Buddhism, "This is Buddhism?" It was just that different from the Buddhism they were familiar with. Thus, the remarkable differences between the Buddhism one sees in Thailand, etc. (which is much closer to early Buddhism) and Japanese Buddhism represents what Japanese Buddhism has absorbed into itself from the outside during its long history.

I don't say these things as a criticism of Japanese Buddhism. If I'm criticizing anything, it is the modern Christian Church in Japan, as these observations are more representative of what the Japanese Church has lost. Japanese Christianity today, both in its Roman Catholic and Protestant forms, is basically a western church. Its theology and traditions have evolved through history so that many of these aspects are considerably different from primitive Christianity. It's my belief that the traditions maintained in Keikyo are much closer to the Middle Eastern roots of Christianity. It's ironic that we actually see much of those original forms preserved in Japanese Buddhism.

What Xavier Preached Was Not A "New God"

The Buddha that Kuukai preached, he called "Dainichi Nyorai" (大日如来, "he who comes 来 in the likeness 如 of the great 大 sun 日"). Within Japanese Buddhism, there exists the concept of there being three kinds of Buddha. First of all, there is the "Dainichi Nyorai" (shall we list here the Sanskrit equivalent? Great Vairocana Buddha?), which is thought of as being at the center of the universe as truth itself. In this form, it is referred to as "Hosshin Butsu" (法身仏, literally, "Buddha 仏 in the form 身 of law 法").

Next, as is seen in "Amida Butsu" (阿弥陀仏), this abstract and formless principle of truth is "incarnated" to us in concrete form as "Hojin Butsu" (報身仏, literally, "Buddha 仏 in the form 身 of reward 報"). Lastly, there is the Buddha as he came in historical form as Siddhartha Gautama (563? - 483? B.C.). This concept of Buddha is referred to as "Oojin Butsu" (応身仏, literally, "Buddha 仏 in the form 身 of answer 応").

Buddhists have come to view these not as three different Buddhas, but as one unified entity. They use the word "Isshin

Sokusanshin" (一身即三身, "one person based on three persons") or "Sanshin Sokuichi" (三身即一, "three persons conforming to one"). This, of course, is a concept totally foreign to primitive Buddhism.

When Keikyo was developing in China, the term chosen to translate the "Trinity" was "三一妙身" (San'ichi Myoshin in Japanese pronunciation), with the characters for "three", "one", "marvelous/clever" and "person/body" making up the term. Likewise, the three members of the Trinity were translated with the terms "妙身" (Myoshin, or "marvelous person") for God the Father, "応身" (Oojin, or "answering person") for God the Son, and "証身" (Shoshin, or "witnessing person") for God the Spirit. The "三一妙身" of Keikyo and the "三身即一" of Japanese Buddhism certainly do seem to have more than a coincidental relationship. Also, the characters used for the incarnated Christ were identical to those used to describe what amounted to the "incarnated" being of the "eternal Buddha." The parallels between the three aspects of "Dainichi Nyorai" and the Christian Trinity are strong, with the "Hosshin Butsu" being analogous to God the Father, the "Hojin Butsu" being somewhat like the Holy Spirit, and the "Oojin Butsu" paralleling the Christ of history, Jesus of Nazareth. Some scholars recognize this, claiming that the "trinity" of Buddhism is simply a Buddhist version of the Christian Trinity. (Ken: Do we have any info on specific scholars?)

As mentioned previously, prior to arriving in Japan, Francis Xavier had been asking Anjiro about Japanese religions, and Anjiro told him about the 3 types of Buddha being worshipped there. As reported in a letter written in 1548 by the Jesuit Rankiro (?), Anjiro also indicated that these three were considered to be of one essence. Likewise, after learning about the ceremonies, etc. of Shingon Mikkyo, Xavier began to think that Japanese Buddhism had a number of similarities to Christianity and was perhaps even a mixture of the two.

As the Buddhist term "Dainichi" was so similar to the Christian term "Deus" (God), Anjiro even translated "Deus" as "Dainichi" and when Xavier began preaching about God, that is the term he used. Some apparently at first mistook his message as simply another new sect of Buddhism, but Xavier's approach was to begin his message by stating, "I have not come to tell you of some new God. I have come to show you the true nature of Dainichi, the God you already believe in."*

Xavier began his ministry in Yamaguchi, an area where there were many believers in Dainichi. It was an area that was referred to as "Little Kyoto" (Ken: need to add "because it was so cosmopolitan" or whatever to explain why). And it was here that the Christianity Xavier preached began to spread. People responded with "Oh, so that's

what the God we've believed in is like!" It was as though they were returning to their roots. Thus, Xavier had the foresight not to deny all that was in the religions already there, but instead built upon them by proclaiming the true nature of "Dainichi."

Many Japanese have been led to believe that Japanese religious history is only about Buddhism. But as we have seen, this simply isn't true, as Buddhism in both China and Japan became closely linked with Keikyo Christianity from very early times. Buddhism simply absorbed numerous Keikyo customs and concepts dressing them up Buddhist style.

I feel strongly that Japanese should learn more about their true history. Everything is not Buddhist. Everything is not Shinto. If Japanese do not recognize their true history, then they cannot come to know their true roots. There were many religions present in ancient Asia. It was not limited to Buddhism, Hinduism and Brahmanism. There was also Keikyo, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Manichaeism. There was an Asia that wasn't Buddhist. There was a China that wasn't Buddhist. And there was a Japan that wasn't Buddhist.

It is true, of course, that Buddhism played an important role, but there were other players as well in Asian and Japanese history. I truly believe that a true understanding of this is a prerequisite for Japanese to be able to understand their ethnic and cultural roots. It is in knowing our roots that we can understand our present and get a sense of where we should go in the future.

The Japan That Isn't Buddhist

Recently, I had an opportunity to speak with a Shinto priest at the Tokyo office of the Ise Shrine. As I described my findings on the Japan that isn't Buddhist, he nodded in agreement saying, "That's exactly right." Shinto is a religion that takes history seriously. (Ken: this doesn't jive with what's later said.) Christianity likewise puts great emphasis on history. It, along with Judaism and Islam, is based in history, and if it played foot loose and fancy free with real history, its very teachings would be at risk.

The same is not true of Buddhism. One Buddhist scholar put it this way: "In Buddhism, there is no historical consciousness." For example, whether or not there was even an historical figure behind Amida Buddha is not a subject of interest to Buddhists. In Buddhist scriptures, Amida Buddha is said to have lived

"15 'ko' ago", with a "ko" (劫) being defined as a "very long period of time". In fact, the ludicrous number of 4.32 billion years for one "ko" is given in some references. 15 "ko" would make the Buddha some 4 times older than the universe! Interestingly, this number of 4.32 billion years is the exact same number given in ancient Hindu writings for their proposed cycle of time for the reincarnation of the universe.* (Ross book) What the connection was exactly, I was not able to determine, but there obviously was one.

This obvious inconsistency, however, is of no importance to a Buddhist, as Buddhism shows little if any interest in historical fact. It is enough if such a personage simply exists in one's mind through faith.

Such a concept would be unthinkable in orthodox Christianity (though some forms of modern, liberal Christianity do attempt to set up a similar distinction between the "Christ of faith" and the "Jesus of history"). Likewise, the Jewish and Islamic faiths also would not contemplate making such a dichotomy. For instance, in the New Testament, when referring to the Resurrection of Christ as a literal historical event, Paul says, "if Christ has not been raised (from the dead), your faith is futile" (I Cor. 15:17).

In this and numerous other places, the Bible makes it clear that the events it refers to are real historical events that can be objectively tested. Unlike religions based in myths, the very veracity of the Christian faith depends on the reality of Christ in history.

This is in sharp contrast to the way history has been handled in Japan. In China, there are numerous historical documents that record history from very ancient times. But the same is not true for Japan, as there is little in the way of reliable historical writings. At one point in early Japanese history, it appears that this was not the case, as numerous historical documents were gathered into a library of the imperial court. In 645 A.D., however, it was burned to the ground by a Buddhist, thus destroying all of the existing documents.*

The "Nihon Shoki" (日本書記, "The Chronicals of Japan", completed in about 720 A.D.) reports that "before those who had not submitted to Soga (蘇我, a powerful warlord) were killed, all of the imperial records, national archives and treasures were burned." The oldest existing historical record in Japan, the "Kojiki" (古事記, "The Record of Ancient Matters") was written some 67 years after the burning of the imperial library (712 A.D.), and it is written with obvious

mythology included in such a way that it is difficult to discern real history from mythology. It is obvious from the way it is written that "history" was being told to benefit the rulers of that day. In fact, both the "Nihon Shoki" and "Kojiki" contain numerous references to things that pertain to ancient Korea. So much so, that one American scholar doing research in ancient history commented, "This sounds an awful lot like Korean history."*

This propensity to rewrite history is rampant throughout Japanese history. Sometimes, it was from the standpoint of Shinto; at other times from the standpoint of Buddhism. But the common thread has been a rewriting of events to support particular ideologies. Thus, I feel that Japanese as a whole do not know their true history, and thus they don't know their roots. If Japan is to become a truly great country, it is mandatory that a true history be revealed. Japanese must come to realize that there is a Japan that is not Shinto or Buddhist.

There are numerous ancient tombs in Japan unopened and not yet studied, as well as numerous archaeological sites that haven't been revealed to the public. If the evidence contained in these sites were made known, a much clearer picture of true history could be obtained. The 5,000 members of the Imperial Household Agency (the governmental agency in control of affairs of the emperor, who is the chief high priest of the 70,000 Shinto shrines) actively suppresses such investigation.

I once had the opportunity to interview professor Egami Namio, who first proposed the theory of "subjugation by horsemen" (Ken: It would be good to elaborate a bit more here). He told me that every year he made requests to the Imperial Household Agency to allow him to do these investigations, but they have consistently refused. Needless to say, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the situation saying that there were far too many taboo subjects like this in Japan.

Professor Egami also told both me and my father that in his investigations in China from 1935 to 1941, he had turned up numerous artifacts of Keikyo origin. He said he had brought back on the order of 10 thousand such artifacts, but that they had all been lost in the confusion that surrounded the war. He said the occupation troops took them to a Yokohama warehouse. He petitioned the U.S. embassy but has gotten no response. He also said that he had located the remains of Keikyo churches in China and that he had hoped to be able to go back and do more research on them before he died. But, unfortunately, he was never given the opportunity to do that.

Interestingly, this archaeological research in China was

begun by the Roman Catholic Church hoping to find relics relating to Catholicism. Egami was quoted in the Japan Times as saying that he was funded by some \$3 million in donations by Catholics desiring to find such artifacts.* The vast majority of items recovered, however, were of Keikyo origin. Wherever they dug, they found black Keikyo crosses. They even found local children who were using such crosses for play.

I certainly hope that future investigations will uncover new information that will clarify numerous historical questions, but we have much to go on already, and so let's now turn to the roots of the Japanese.

Chapter 4

The Roots of the Japanese = The Silk Road

Japanese Roots Along the Silk Road

It is widely recognized that the "Silk Road" played an important part in Japan's ancient history. This fact is alluded to in Japanese textbooks, where it is pointed out that the development of Japan in ancient times up through the middle ages depended heavily on its exchanges with China and Korea.

It is my belief, however, that it even goes beyond that, as the deep ties of ancient Japan to the Silk Road lie beyond China and Korea. While much that was truly Chinese and/or Korean came into Japan, the Silk Road itself went far beyond those boundaries, and so China and Korea also served as conduits for influences from countries even farther to the west.

When the subject of the Silk Road is broached, most Japanese think in terms of Buddhist artifacts and ancient temple ruins. When one looks at the various publications and programs on the Silk Road produced in Japan, the impression given is that the Silk Road was the path taken only by Buddhists as they spread to the east.

In reality, however, Buddhism was only a small portion of what passed along those ancient routes. Numerous other religions, peoples and cultures traveled those routes in both directions. In addition to Buddhists, there were Christians, Jews, Muslims, Manichaeans and Zoroastrians among others. There were, in fact, at least 7 waves of major movements than can be discerned, and it is to these we now turn.

The First Wave: The Spreading Out of Humanity

The first wave that came along what would much later be called the "Silk Road" was the initial spread of humanity from the ancient Near East. This, of course, was many thousands of years ago.

The human species is roughly divided into three main racial groupings, the mongoloid (yellow), the caucasoid (white) and the negroid (black). While this overall division of humanity into races is

generally accepted, the scientific evidence unambiguously points to a common ancestry for all humans. Thus, even though we think of the ancestors of the mongoloid races being from Asia, those of the caucasoid races being from Europe and those of the negroid races being from Africa, this in no way means that these human groups somehow came onto the scene separately. They all came from one common ancestor—one human couple, and this is the conclusion that has been reached from a variety of scientific fields. Rutgers University anthropologist Ashley Montague (?) said, "Even though humanity contains variations, they all belong to only one species, and they all have come from one ancient but common ancestor. This conclusion is based on all of the evidence available from comparative anatomy, paleontology, serology and genetics."* (get exact quote)

Thus, all of humanity has a single origin and therefore began in a single place from which they dispersed across the globe. All human beings can trace their ancestry back to a single man and woman who lived in a specific place at a specific time. While many scientists have stated their belief that the first humans lived in Africa, the basis for that conclusion rests solely in the fact that there is more genetic diversity among Africans than among people in any other place. Also, since the oldest forms of bipedal primates from which modern humans are supposedly evolved were found in Africa, the "out of Africa" theory has been the reigning paradigm. The most recent evidence, however, conclusively proves that there is no direct genetic link with any known supposed "human ancestor", and so the conclusion that humans first appeared in Africa has no hard evidence to back it up.* (Ross)

Even those scientists who back the "African Eve" hypothesis, however, recognize that the Middle East would also have been inhabited by humans from a very early time, and from the standpoint of logistics, it would seem to be the most logical place of origin as it is at the point where the regions in which the three main groupings of humanity have traditionally lived are in direct contact. It is where Asia, Europe and Africa meet.

It is also where the Bible claims that humans originated. Not only did the first human couple live somewhere in what was to become known as the Middle East, but the story of the "Tower of Babel", where humans finally were forced to spread out across the earth, also took place in this region. In fact, the story seems to be commemorated in the Chinese character for "tower"塔, which is made up of five parts. The three parts that make up合(go), a character which by itself means to "unite", are人(hito, person or people),一(ichi, one), and口(kuchi, mouth or words). In this context,口 can be thought of as

"language", and the character as a whole can be thought of as a pictographic representation of the idea of "unity" in the "Tower of Babel" story. The people 介 (blank out bottom lines) all spoke one language 一 and were thus united 合. To 合, then, two other characters are added: that for "soil, dirt" 土 and the "grass radical" 艸 (kusa), written in its radical form 艾 (blank out bottom lines). These, of course, would be the materials with which the sun-baked bricks were made, and with these bricks, then the tower 塔 was made. The makeup of numerous other characters as well as much other circumstantial evidence point to the conclusion that the ancient Chinese scribes who first devised the characters still in use today constructed many of them around ancient tales of their beginnings. The fact that the associations of meanings seen particularly in the earliest forms of these characters fit extremely well with the biblical stories likewise points to a common origin. (For further information on this subject, see "Biblical Stories Hidden In Chinese Characters" by Timothy D. Boyle.)

Pre-war textbooks in Japan claimed that the Japanese had lived in Japan from the time of their creation. It seems that even today, some Japanese still think more or less the same thing. But the evidence is clear. The Japanese are a people descended from a variety of peoples who transversed along several routes as they entered into the Japanese islands.

Recently, Japanese scientists have determined from studies of blood types and other such genetic characteristics that the ancestors of the Japanese came to Japan from the Middle East and central Asia. Most Japanese do realize that their distant ancestors came from China and Korea, but if you take it back further, then you end up further to the west in central Asia and the Middle East. It was from those regions that peoples began migrating further east across the Asian continent, with some then ending up in the Japanese archipelago. While the "Silk Road" as such did not yet exist then, those same routes they must have taken in the beginning later became the trade routes we know as the "Silk Road." There are three main overland routes of the Silk Road, as well as the sea route along the coast, and the peoples that make up the ancestors of Japan at one time or another would have used all of these routes.

In my travels around Japan, people often comment, "You sure do speak Japanese well. Where did you come from?" I make it a practice to say, "You speak Japanese really well too!" To which the response is, "Well, of course! I'm Japanese! It's my native language." I then say, "But you too are an immigrant." "What?!" "Yes, your ancestors came from somewhere way over to the west here to Japan. What kind of Japanese are you?" After all, there are

"Mexican-Americans", "Japanese-Americans", "Armenian-Americans" and a whole host of other ethnic-Americans. In a similar fashion, if you go back far enough, everybody in Japan was an immigrant and therefore a "someplace-Japanese."

The Second Wave: The Dispersion To The East Of The Ten Lost Tribes Of Israel

While other groups of migrating peoples would obviously have been present prior to this second wave we take up here, the next important wave of migration along the routes of the Silk Road that relate to our subject was that of the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel." These "lost tribes" have been the subject of much speculation over the years, and their fate was for the most part unknown. Bits and pieces of evidence, however, have allowed us to put together a general picture of what happened to them.

The "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel" refer to the northern ten tribes out of the original 12 tribes of ancient Israel that were taken away into captivity by the Assyrians upon their defeat in 721 B.C. From there, they dispersed and their fate was unknown. Where did they go? Recently an excellent book on this subject was published by Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, "Japan and the The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel." According to this book, the ten tribes of Israel that had been conquered by the Assyrians later dispersed, mostly going to the east along the Silk Road. They went into the areas that now makeup Assyria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Kashmir, Myanmar, China, etc.—everywhere along the routes of the Silk Road. Even today, peoples who can trace at least part of their ancestry back to these ten tribes still live there. For instance, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, there are tribes known as the Yusufusai and the Pashtun. The "Yusufusai" take their name from what would mean the "descendents of Joseph", and they maintain traditions with obvious links to the ancient Israelite tribes.*

Likewise, in Kashmir, there are numerous hints pointing towards a connection with these lost tribes of ancient Israel. Many local place names appear to be related to ancient names in Samaria, where the Ten Lost Tribes were from. There is even a local legend that specifically states that they are the descendants of these lost tribes from Israel.*

In Myanmar (Burma), there is a tribe known as the "Menashu" (?), a name that is very close to one of the lost tribes, the

tribe of Manasseh. This tribe also maintains numerous traditions closely related to those of ancient Israel.* Also, in China, there is a tribe called "Chan Min"(?) who from ancient times have believed in only one God—a God they called "Yawei."* This is essentially the same name God gave Moses in his "burning bush" experience—the name by which the ancient Israelites knew God. This Chan Min tribe claims that their ancient ancestor had 12 sons, and they also maintain similar traditions to the "Law of Moses" recorded in the Old Testament.*

Descendants of the Ten Tribes also went into other regions, but it appears that the great majority of them went to the east along the Silk Road into central, southern and eastern Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Kashmir, Myanmar and China). As they traveled, certain portions of the group decided to settle down along the way while others pushed on further to the east, eventually into China. This Silk Road, however, does not end in China, as it continues on until it ends in Japan. In fact, it is Rabbi Tokayer's conclusion that some of these people came all the way to Japan. He points out that within the ancient myths of Japan, along with religious observances, customs, language and history, there appear to be numerous points of contact with ancient Israel.

Another important point he raises is that many of these same Assyrians who had conquered the northern tribes also later scattered into many lands. Assyrians do not now have their own country as such, but approximately 4 million people of Assyrian descent live in countries around the world. Most are concentrated in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the United States, but groups also live in Russia and Iran, along with some being in European nations and other places as well.

The Third Wave: The Eastern Jews (check for accuracy)

The next wave that interests us is that of the "Eastern Jews"—those Jews that did not return to Israel from the Babylonian captivity, but remained in Persia. The Babylonian Empire extended their control over the remaining two tribes of Israel—the kingdom of Judah—in 607 B.C., and deportations of the Jews began shortly thereafter, culminating in the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 586 B.C.. When Babylon was conquered by the Persians in 539 B.C., King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild. Nehemiah led many of them back to rebuild Jerusalem, but many others did not return to their ancient homeland, instead remaining behind entrenched in their new lives. The Old Testament books of Ezra, Daniel and Esther indicate that

this was the case.

These people were known as the "Eastern Jews", and many of them became traders along the Silk Road. As the remnants of their former countrymen of the northern tribes of Israel had settled here and there along the Silk Road, it is highly likely that they would have come in contact with each other and even blended in together as one people again.

The Fourth Wave: The Missionary Activity of the Eastern Christians

The next wave of interest is the early Christian mission activity that followed the Silk Road. Christ commanded his disciples "to go into all the world and make disciples," and that is exactly what his followers did.

As we look at this "wave" to see its effects, it's important to realize what the world of that day was like. It was essentially a world made up of tribes living in small towns and villages separated from each other, with little in the way of the finely meshed network we see in most of today's world. Travel and communication in today's world is facilitated by the tremendous advances in the technology of transportation and communications. In the world of that day, however, the connections between the towns and villages that dotted the landscape were tenuous at best.

A second factor of importance to this discussion is that there were numerous Jewish communities spread throughout the world. This was a fact well-known to Christ's disciples. Just as Paul first went to the Jewish communities in the Roman world, so too did the disciples who went to the east. The early disciples did preach the gospel to the "Gentiles" as well, but first, they went to the Jewish communities. At that time, Christianity was still thought of more in terms of a new sect of Judaism, and so their fellow Jews were always their first target audience.

One of the activities I am involved in is a ministry called "Nihongo Hyaku Touban", with the "Hyaku Touban" (110) being taken from the local Japanese emergency call line number (roughly equivalent to 911 in the U.S.). Its purpose is to help Japanese who have gotten into some sort of trouble while overseas. We enlist the help of overseas Japanese communities, and it is in that context that I have frequent contact with overseas Japanese.

These communities are typically rather complex, with long-term residents mixed in with newcomers and a variety of those in between. When a newcomer from Japan shows up, people will ask, "Say, what brings you to this part of the world?" Likewise, others will ask newcomers what the news is from Japan or what the latest trends are, etc.

With the tremendous advances in telecommunications, it is rather easy to get current information about Japan even when overseas. That was not the case, however, in ancient times. When I was attending university in the United States, I often went to "Little Tokyo" to look at the latest magazines from Japan and talk with Japanese tourists.

I can easily imagine that a similar dynamic occurred in the communities scattered along the Silk Road. Travelers from the home country far away would be warmly welcomed, and the news they brought would be eagerly sought after. News of the latest big event or who the new king was would certainly have brought people together to listen and ask questions. It was in this context that the stories surrounding the life of Christ were first shared. It would not have taken very many years before news of the monumental events that took place in Israel around 30 A.D. would have spread to the far reaches of the Silk Road.

Christ's Disciples Also Went To The East

As was mentioned earlier, at least two of Jesus' twelve central disciples, Thomas and Bartholomew, together with other followers whose names we don't know, made mission journeys to the east from Jerusalem. During the years 40 to 60 A.D., the Christian gospel spread rapidly through the regions of Assyria. As many Jews (Israelites) were living in that region at that time, it is safe to assume that a considerable number of them embraced the new faith as well.

I had an opportunity to ask Rabbi Tokayer about that. This is a rather touchy subject, as a Jewish rabbi is not normally inclined to speak about fellow Jews converting to Christianity. To the Jewish way of thinking, for a Jew to embrace the Christian faith is a betrayal of their faith. Such a person is no longer a Jew but is now a Christian. The idea of being a "Messianic Jew" is something many Jews cannot readily accept.

When I mentioned to Rabbi Tokayer about large numbers of

Jews in the regions of Assyria accepting the Christian faith, he readily admitted it, saying, "Yes, there were quite a few such people." An example of that can be seen in the records of the Persian Church of the 6th Century, where it is recorded that the prelate Mar Aba (?) was himself converted to the faith by the witness of a "Jewish Christian."*

The fact that there were many Jews in the East that embraced Christianity is an important point, because this meant that the eastern church maintained a Jewish flavor to a far greater extent than the western church, which actively purged itself of its original Jewishness. Thus, the Hata clan that came to Japan had a Christian faith that still contained strong Jewish influences. This is the reason why the various remnants of Keikyo influence still discernable in Japan today have such a Jewish flavor to them.

As the Christian gospel spread east through the regions of Assyria and beyond, a number of "Christian countries" were formed. The homeland of the Hata clan, Gong Yue (弓月, or Yuzuki in Japanese reading) was one such country. In fact, while Christianity underwent periods of severe persecution in the Roman Empire until 313 A.D., when it finally gained official sanction, there were already a number of small countries in the East that had become Christianized.

These early eastern Christians continued to evangelize farther to the east, and by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., they had already reached India and even into China. As Christianity entered into India, it began to exert a considerable influence on the religious tradition that were already there. For example, in the Indian epic poem "Bhagavad Gita" that dates from the first or second century, the concept of "bakuti" (?), which means "faith and love towards God," appears for the first time. This term refers to complete commitment to and love for a personal God that is similar to that for one's one kin. It is essentially the same as the Christian concept of "faith in God."

Likewise, in the "Bhagavad Gita" there are numerous aspects that appear to be borrowings from the gospel of John. The sun god of Hinduism, Vishnu (which became the basis for the Birushana (Vairocana Buddha) is said to have been incarnated in Krishna (the second god of the Hindu "trinity"), and the stories that surround him are very similar to those of Jesus Christ. Historian Mikami Takeru says, "Krishna in the Indian language is really the same word as 'Kristos' (Christ) in Greek."

(include here about Mahayana Buddhism?)

By at least the end of the third century, primitive Christianity had spread to most of the areas that bordered the Silk Road routes, and in a variety of ways it had significant impact on the religions and cultures of all of those areas.

The Fifth Wave: The Jewish Diaspora

The next wave of interest was that brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. As a result of this total destruction, many of the Jews who survived left their homeland and dispersed in a variety of directions, mostly to the east and north. To the west was the center of Roman power, which certainly would not have encouraged migration in that direction, and to the south was mostly desert.

Those who went to the north mostly went in to Russia and the eastern European countries, while those who went to the east went into the Assyrian regions and on further east along the Silk Road routes. Presumably, these peoples would have met up with the descendants of the "Ten Lost Tribes" of ancient Israel as well as those of the "eastern Jews" who hadn't returned from the Babylonian captivity, who no doubt welcomed and took in their newly found cousins. In this way, then, Jewish communities in a variety of places along the Silk Road grew in repeated waves of immigration.

A famous artist named Hirayama Ikuo wrote an article in the newsletter of "Agape House", a volunteer organization I operate. As a friendship ambassador for UNESCO, he often made trips to the Middle East, and on one trip to Afghanistan, he was able to view some ancient relics. Concerning these, he said, "Some ancient scriptures were found in some ruins in the same valley where the Bamiyan Buddha is located (the one destroyed by the Taliban in 2001). They are thought to date from some time between the 3rd and 7th Centuries A.D., and are written in ancient Sanskrit. Their contents, however, are similar to the Old Testament and appear to be Jewish scriptures. These may provide an important clue as to how religions spread into east Asia." (Ken: It literally says "They were Jewish scriptures written in ancient Sanskrit that were similar to the written characters of the Old Testament", but that doesn't make any sense.) Thus, some of the Jews of the Diaspora followed the routes of the Silk Road to the east seeking freedom and prosperity. While engaging in trading, they searched for a better place

to live in peace.

I have a friend who has an office in the Roppongi district of Tokyo. I normally only go there in the daytime, but recently I had a need to go to his office at night. As I stood at the main intersection, a thought occurred to me as I watched the crowds that included many foreigners. I had heard that the yakuza (gangsters) control this area and that their main partners were the Iranians, Chinese and even Israelis among others. Recently, a number of Africans have appeared on the scene as well. I thought, "The flow of people along the ancient Silk Road must have been like this." That flow has not stopped from ancient times but has followed the same pattern. People will migrate anywhere in search of greener pastures, and when they find people that will accept them, they tend to settle down there and prosper.

When the ancient Jews were forced to disperse, many flowed into Asia bringing with them an advanced civilization. This helped open up numerous societies around the world in a somewhat similar way that modern high tech civilization has done in the developing world. Thus, Middle Easterners who had to flee for their lives ended up in bringing new impetus to the development of numerous societies in ancient Asia. While a cursory look at important aspects of traditional cultures all over the world might seem to indicate independent development, a closer look often reveals important influences from outside that stimulated sudden developments. This was certainly true concerning the cultures scattered along the Silk Road.

The Sixth Wave: The Eastward Movement of Keikyo

The most important wave of migration along the Silk Road for our study here is, of course, that of the ancient eastern Christians. This particular wave, however, has not been given much attention in Japan. I have looked at works published in Japan on the Silk Road, and there is very little mention of the Keikyo Christians. This is unfortunate, as the effect this wave of migration had on Japan was very large indeed.

The Assyrian Church of the East, or Keikyo as it was known in China, prospered greatly in its early days in Assyria, Persia and elsewhere. According to the 5th Century historian Socrates (not the Greek philosopher of a much earlier era), once, when the Persian king was suffering from a severe headache, he called on his Zoroastrian priests to heal him. They were unable to help him, but a Christian

named Marta (?) prayed for the king, who was then healed instantly. Needless to say, the king was impressed and from that time on treated the Christian believers very well. As a result, that region became a center for Christian mission outreach both locally and abroad. This included social welfare projects as well as an effort to provide mass education.*

The net result of this effort was the development of the most advanced civilization of that day—a civilization based on the educational system set up by the Christians. Thus, eastern Christianity flourished in western Asia at this time, and from that base it launched dynamic evangelization efforts to the east. In time, its members spread to nearly all of the regions adjacent to the routes of the Silk Road, and at its peak, there were churches in at least 27 major metropolitan centers in the Orient. There were more than 200 bishops alone, with countless believers among their ranks. Thus, there were numerous ethnic groups represented. By the end of the 9th Century, almost all of the Uighur people had converted over from Manichaeism, and the majority of tribes such as the Kerait, Naiman, Ongut and even the Mongols likewise embraced Christianity.

While this was going on in Asia, in Europe, society had entered what became known as the "Dark Ages". The church had become completely intertwined with the political powers and in the resultant corruption had essentially lost its mission. Thus, during this period of history, it was the church of the east rather than that of Europe that was flourishing and healthy. An outside observer looking at the overall picture at this time would have concluded that the center of Christianity was in Asia rather than in Europe.

A good example of the influence Keikyo had on the societies of that day can be seen in its effect on the Uighur people. Keikyo missionaries devised a system of writing for their language and taught them how to read and write. They also developed a public education system for them, and thus had a major impact on the society. This same writing system was later imported into Mongolia and became the basis for their writing system as well.*

To facilitate their educational mission outreach, the eastern Church built a language research center in the central Asian city of Merubu(?). There they studied a variety of Asian languages in order to translate the Scriptures into them.* One Uighur manuscript from that era describes the results of their efforts: "This land that used to be full of cruel customs stained with blood is now a land that produces vegetables. A land of massacres has been transformed into a land of charity."*

Keikyo believers also contributed to important new inventions that came out of that era. Three Chinese inventions that literally changed the world of that day were wood block printing, the magnetic compass, and gun powder. Keikyo researcher Dr. John M. L. Young claimed that all three of these important inventions developed within the context of the Keikyo Christian culture that flourished at that time.*

(Ken: At some point we need to address why it is that Keikyo went into decline and disappeared from so many areas.)

The Advanced Civilization Transmitted By The Keikyo Christians

In historical terms, one of the most important empires ever established was the Mongolian Empire. A little known fact is that Keikyo Christianity flourished within this great empire. Speaking on the importance of the Mongolian Empire, historian Nishio Kanji used a bit of hyperbole in his book "国民の歴史" (Kokumin no Rekishi, A History Of The (Japanese) People), "World history began with the Mongolian Empire."* (Ken: I'm wondering if we should even include this. If we do, we at least need to qualify it as a rather obvious exaggeration! (p.158))

Not only did the Mongols create the largest empire the world had ever known, but they also succeeded in bringing together the western and eastern worlds for the first time. Within this context, Keikyo Christians contributed greatly in a variety of ways. They developed the first postal system; they printed the first paper currency through wood block printing; and they recorded history through the writing of chronicles.* (Ken: I've added "the first", but we need to confirm that.)

In 1215, Beijing (Peiking) also came under Mongolian control. Under the orders of the Mongolian king, Genghis Kahn, Keikyo Christians founded an astronomical observatory.* Likewise, there were many such believers involved in running the government and the courts. Many of the king's advisors and some of his wives were also believers, and they had a positive influence on him.

Among the other achievements of the Mongolian Empire was the great improvements made to roads, through pavement and the planting

of trees along the sides of the highways. In areas where trees wouldn't grow well, they erected stone pillars along the roads. They dug canals where feasible, and in general greatly improved the transportation system. (Ken: I've extrapolated a bit here. Is it accurate?)

In the capital city (name?), there was even a daily newspaper printed—certainly far ahead of its time.* Additional Keikyo influence can be seen from the social welfare projects that existed, including giving medical assistance and distributing food and clothing to the needy through organizations founded for this purpose. (I've added medical assistance) These institutions were similar to those in Japan founded by Prince Shoutoku and Empress Koumyou that we discussed earlier.

The finances necessary to do these things were acquired through a 10% "tithe" on trading in wool, hemp, and other such products. It was in many ways a civilization ahead of its time. The Mongolian king encouraged his subjects to believe in the one Creator God, but religious freedom was nevertheless respected.*

One significant event in the history of the Mongolian Empire that helps us understand the biblical faith that the king had at that time was when a certain group of rebels tried to make a revolt under the banner of a cross. Their use of a cross to represent their desire for God's favor in the battle, however, proved to be an empty promise as they were soundly defeated. As many people were still thinking in terms of gaining special favors from God through such manipulative use of symbols and prayers, doubts naturally arose in the common people. "It seems the Christian God doesn't grant us favors after all." In Marco Polo's annals of his travels (The best English translations of Marco Polo's travels are A. C. Moule and P. Pelliot, "Marco Polo: The Description of the World," 2 vols., London: Routledge, 1938), he records the words of the Mongolian ruler Kublai: "The God of the cross did what was right, because the rebels were rebelling against God and were traitors to Mongolia."* Thus, he exhibited the understanding that God always does what is right and good and isn't coerced into granting special favors due to manipulative prayers. This, of course, is an important aspect of the Christian understanding of God.

Marco Polo also visited China and the coastal cities that were under Mongolian rule. He records that he met many eastern Christians in those locations, actually giving the figure of 700,000.* Some of these people claimed to have maintained their faith of their ancestors all the way from the 7th century, or for some 700 years.*

Other things of special interest that Marco Polo wrote include his description of pictures displayed in their churches of three men that were said to have been members of the 70 evangelists sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1). Their names were given as Addai, Aggai and Mari, and they are said to have played a major role in the evangelization of the East.* Also, Marco Polo reported on his travels up into "Inner Mongolia" (the area north of the Yellow River that includes present-day northern China). He said he met a tribe called the Ongut, who were herdsmen of Turkish descent. They were almost entirely Keikyo believers and had established a Christian nation of sorts. This was the same area that archaeology professor Egami Namio (see page xx) reported he had found remains of Keikyo churches along with numerous gravesites with Keikyo crosses.

Eastern Christians also went as far as the Philippines, where they taught the locals how to read and write and begin to form a nation state. In fact, it is recorded in Spanish annals that when they colonized the Philippines in 1569, they were very surprised to see the locals already reading and writing in their native language of Tagalog to an extent that was greater even than that of Europe. It was recorded that the majority of towns in the Philippines had high levels of literacy in which no child was left unable to read and write.*

These facts have led historians to state that such ideals as universal education, orderly government, fair politics and religious toleration were values that first arose not in the West, but in the Orient. Thus, the idea that "all good things were western" simply isn't true. The culture and civilization that Keikyo believers helped to bring about were at the time superior to anything found in the West. Marco Polo reported upon his return to Europe that he was astounded by the high level of civilization he witnessed while living in Mongolian ruled China for 17 years.

In some respects, it is appropriate to compare the situation in the Mongolia and China of that day with the ideals associated with the founding of America several centuries later. The "New World" of the United States and Canada was viewed as a place where oppressed and persecuted people could go to seek freedom and a new life. Historically, that resulted in a great deal of raw talent flowing into North America and providing the impetus for its rapid development. In a similar way, during this "golden age" in East Asia, many people seeking freedom from oppression flowed along the routes of the Silk Road into Mongolia, China and Japan. This brought many highly qualified people together, and when the world's best brains come together, it is only natural that a great deal of creativity is sparked

and new things are invented and old ideas improved upon. During this period of history, this was what was going on in East Asia. But how many people are aware of this history today?

Keikyo's Effect on Belief in "Jibo Kannon" (Goddess of Motherly Love), "Jizou" (Guardian Deity of Children), and the Giving of Posthumous Names

Another example of the influence Keikyo had on other religious belief systems in Asia include the development in China of the "Jibo Kannon" (慈母觀音), a Buddhist style statue of a mother lovingly holding her child to her breast. This same statue in Japan is known as a "Koyasu Kannon" (子安觀音) or "Koyasugami" (子安神, Goddess of Easy Childbirth). Needless to say, this statue bears a striking resemblance to a Christian Madonna statue of Mary and the infant Jesus.

This statue (or anything similar) was, however, unknown in Indian Buddhism and first appeared in China during the time when Keikyo was wielding considerable influence. The Buddhists merely transformed their already prevalent usage of Bodhisattva statues into one that incorporated the image of mother and child to counter the popularity of the upstart Keikyo use of the Madonna.

In early forms of Buddhism, the teaching concerning women was that they could not reach Buddhahood as women, but would first have to be reborn into the higher state of manhood first. This was referred to as "Henjou Nanshi" (變成男子, changing into a man), and it was the standard Buddhist teaching. Thus, in original Buddhism, the concept of having a female statue as an object of faith would have been unthinkable. In original Buddhist thought, all Bodhisattva idols were male, and since Kannon statues are a form of Bodhisattva, this could not have arisen from Buddhist thought alone. When looking at any of the "Kannon" statues, however, they are obviously meant to portray a female image, and thus the only logical conclusion is that this change was to counter the introduction from Christianity of statues of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

(Picture) The circumstantial evidence is strong that the faith portrayed in the "Jibo Kannon" or "Koyasu Kannon" is an adaptation of the Christian Madonna imported into Buddhist thought.

Another related phenomenon that developed in close association with the "Jibo Kannon" was belief in "Jizou" (地藏, literally, "ground/earth" "possession/warehouse"), a kind of "guardian deity" of children. These "Jizou" were thought to represent Bodhisattva that would help children in the world of the dead who had died early in life. Likewise, people believed that by calling out the names of these Jizou Bodhisattva, they could be saved from distress.

This too would seem to be the image presented in Christianity of concern for children being grafted onto the stock of Buddhist faith. Jesus had embraced the children saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Christ welcomed little children into Heaven. Likewise, the Bible taught that anyone who called out in faith upon the name of the Lord would be saved, and thus these elements of Christian thought were apparently incorporated into Buddhism in the forms of "Jibo Kannon" and "Jizou."

Another feature of Japanese Buddhism is the use of "ihai" (位牌), which are small, wooden memorial plaques with the posthumous Buddhist name (戒名, kaimyou) and the date of death written on them that are placed on the altar to the deceased. According to Prof. Saeki Yoshiro, this is also a custom that is based on the previously existing Keikyo custom of writing the baptismal name and date of death on two hinged pieces of wood that they used in commemorating the dead.* This custom is likewise not something that was originally a part of Buddhism.

Even the concept of giving a posthumous name—the "kaimyou"—is something that was adopted from Keikyo Christianity. There is nothing like it in the more original Indian version of Buddhism, and likewise neither is it found in other versions of Buddhism such as exist in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Viet Nam, China and Korea. It is a unique characteristic of Japanese Buddhism. Even in Japan, it was in its earliest usage something given only to the living and not to the dead as is the case now. In the present, self-serving system, the deceased's family pays the Buddhist temple holding the ceremonies a very large sum of money in order to receive an "auspicious" name for their loved one, but originally, "kaimyou" were free of charge.

It was common practice among Keikyo Christians to give a newly baptized person a "baptismal name", something that is also common in certain western Christian traditions. When this idea was incorporated into Buddhism, it was likewise a new name that was given

to those becoming Buddhist monks, and it was, of course, free of charge. But as Japanese Buddhism evolved into its modern form of what is called "Soushiki Bukkyou" (葬式仏教) or "Funeral Buddhism", this practice was changed into a money-making scheme by applying the posthumous name to those who had died and charging a hefty fee for the service. This transformation took place during the Edo Period when Buddhism was used as a tool by the feudal government to stamp out Christianity.*

Keikyo Recognized Religious Freedom

During its long history in Asia, there were two periods in which Keikyo became the dominant religious force, namely during the 9th and 13th centuries. Nevertheless, even during these periods, Keikyo never attempted to ban other faiths, but always maintained a policy of religious freedom. For instance, during the 7th century under the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Taisou (太宗) was deeply impressed by the Keikyo writings he read and he encouraged his subjects to embrace the faith saying, "From now on Keikyo evangelism will be freely allowed." He did not, however, force the faith upon his subjects. During his reign, as well as during those that followed, religious freedom was maintained.*

Likewise, in 1259, at the beginning of the Ilkhan Kingdom, the first king Kublai (the grandson of Genghis Khan) was deeply influenced by Keikyo, but he as well declared "All of my subjects are guaranteed religious freedom."* At no point, in fact, is it recorded that Keikyo religious leaders ever tried to take over political power. Kyoto University professor Ikeda Sakae said, "The Keikyo Church...was quite different from the Roman Catholic Church in the sense that it never insisted on political power. It 'rendered unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's' and concentrated only on its ecclesiastical authority."* Keikyo did not try to create a state church with which to force its will on others. To its credit, it didn't want to create nations made up of nominal believers, and this was one of its strengths.

This is certainly in marked historical contrast to many other religions. There are, for instance, numerous Moslem countries in which essentially everyone is a follower of Islam. This does not mean, however, that the people truly believe in the way of Islam from their hearts. It is simply the requirement of their Shari'a Law that was imposed upon them, and thus they "believe." This belief, however, may very well be based more on fear of the consequences for not obeying the requirement to submit to Islam than from any personal faith exercised within the right to freely choose one's beliefs. I personally have many

Islamic friends, but when I discuss such issues with them, I often run into a problem. Many of them do not really believe what they are supposed to believe. Islam's Shari'a Law requires Muslims to pray while kneeling with heads bowed towards Mecca 5 times each day. This requirement is often not followed, and even when it is, it seems to be done more in fear of the consequences of not doing it than out of true reverence for Allah.

Religions such as Islam and Hinduism are religious systems based on the establishing of an all-encompassing religious system that requires those under its control to obey numerous rules. This creates followers who are in effect "surface believers," since their motivation for belief is based in the negative emotion of fear of the consequences for not obeying the imposed rules. This was also true within the state church structures of medieval Europe as well, as "faith" was often imposed upon people from the political powers that utilized religion as a means to exercise its will upon the people.

Keikyo, however, was different in this respect. While there were no doubt instances of abuse where Keikyo believers did not live up to their own ideals, as a whole, Keikyo recognized religious freedom and did not try to impose faith on others by force. Any system that tries to impose its belief system on others will find that in the end it only creates followers with a surface-level faith.

I believe most of the followers of Keikyo understood this principle and they thus tried to set up societies that utilized Christian principles as the framework within which society functioned but always allowed individuals to choose their own personal beliefs. If the social systems are within the framework set forth in the Bible, then society can prosper even if individuals freely choose to have a divergent worldview. I believe the evidence shows that overall, this is how Keikyo believers functioned, because they had confidence in their own faith—a confidence that didn't cause them to feel the need to impose it on anyone else. For to do so, would be a contradiction of the very things they believed in.

The Seventh Wave: The More Recent Exchanges

These "seven waves" of influence and exchange along the Silk Road are divided up somewhat arbitrarily, of course, and are to a certain extent overlapping. I have divided them more or less on themes and not on length of time, as, indeed, the sixth wave has represented

quite a long time frame. This seventh wave is likewise rather diffuse, as I am including the various exchanges that have occurred since the decline of Keikyo influence in East Asia.

When the Mongolian Empire was at its peak during the 13th Century, it extended from East Asia through western Asia and into parts of eastern Europe. This was up until that time the largest area under one empire in history, and it was during this age that trade along the Silk Road routes was likewise at its peak. It was during this time that adventurers such as Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, Purano Karupini (?), and William of Rubruck traveled from Europe and West Asia to East Asia. Their diaries and instructional books in international trading resulted in educated people in Europe and western Asia becoming far more knowledgeable about East Asia than ever before.

It was also during this period that Italian merchants came to the fore and made giant strides in increasing trade with almost all areas of the great Mongolian Empire. This resulted in great wealth being accumulated in Italian cities and was a critical factor in allowing the Italian Renaissance to flourish. In fact, without that increase in wealth, the Renaissance would not likely have even gotten off the ground.

Muslim traders also plied their trade along the Silk Road. Their trade with China was an important element in the development of Islamic culture. Within its center in Baghdad, this flourishing Islamic culture spread eastward, also developing strongholds in such cities as Samarkand and Herat (in present-day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan).

However, as this new Islamic empire strengthened and spread, the net result was a severe restricting of the trade routes between the Orient and the Occident. As the flow of information between the two was reduced to a trickle, the mutual stimulation each had received from the other was also cut off.

The main factor that turned this situation around was the discovery at the end of the 15th Century of the sea route around the southern tip of Africa that allowed European traders to reach the orient by ship. This opened up the trade routes once again to southern and eastern Asia. It also opened the way for European powers to vie with each other for new colonies in Asia, with England, Holland, Spain, Portugal and France conquering vast areas of south and southeastern Asia to set up their various colonies.

The superior technology and the scientific advances of

the Europeans began to flow again into China, but also knowledge of and interest in Chinese culture began to increase in Europe as well. This even resulted in what was termed the "Chinese hobby" (?) in the Parisian court during the 18th Century, when such interest in things Chinese became especially high.*

Another interesting effect of this renewed cultural exchange was that French intellectuals such as Montesquieu and Voltaire utilized information on the Chinese and other Asian civilizations for a comparison with European civilizations, and from that base began their criticisms of the European power structures. This was an important factor in leading to the modernization of the European states, and thus in this round about way, Asia also contributed to the modernization of Europe itself.

>From the standpoint of Christian mission within Asia, the Catholic Jesuits led a new effort to bring the gospel again into the lands that had formerly been reached by Keikyo missionaries. Among the leaders of this new movement was, of course, Francis Xavier, who finally arrived in Japan in 1549 after spending many years in India and Southeast Asia. He was the first of many, and during the last half of the 16th Century, prior to Japan's closing itself off from the outside world, a great deal of interchange took place, including even the sending of a Japanese representative to the Vatican.*

Chapter 5

Various Effects That Immigrants Had On Japanese Culture

"The Grave Of Christ" Originated With the Graves of Ancient Immigrants

In the small town of Shingou (新郷) in Aomori Prefecture, there is a monument that is called "キリストの墓" (Kirisuto no Haka, "The Grave Of Christ"). A cross stands there, and the local tradition claims that Jesus did not actually die on the cross in Jerusalem, but escaped and came to Japan where he died at a ripe old age.

When I heard about this old legend, I was naturally very curious as to how it could have arisen, and so I spent several days in Shingou to see what I could find out. I questioned several people, "It's said that this is the grave of Christ, but what is it really?" Most said they had no idea really, but one thing I found out was that this "grave" was located on private land. I was able to talk with the owner, an old man, and I asked him the same question. "It's said that this is the grave of Christ, but what is it really?"

"It really is the grave of Christ," he insisted.

"Well, if that is the case, why not dig it up and prove it. It would be the discovery of the century, and you would have people coming here from all over the world!"

"But we can't do such a thing as it would bring on us a curse."

I tend to be rather obstinate, and so that part of my personality came to the fore as I insisted, "You don't really believe in such a curse, do you? You're just saying that because you know there really isn't anything there anyway."

Finally, after I continued to pester him, he finally admitted the truth. It seems that from ancient times, there were 7 graves of foreigners located there. A local tradition had developed that they must not be disturbed or a curse would come upon the one who tried to open them. But in the prewar years, his grandmother had decided to open up a grave anyway, and she brought out some artifacts. Some things did happen, but it all culminated with the military police coming and digging up all of the graves and taking their contents off to Osaka. It seems that these graves were the graves

of ancient Christian settlers.

This village was a very poor place economically, and so they were trying to come up with an idea to attract some attention and bring in outside money. Someone came up with the idea of claiming that this grave site was the grave of Christ and using that to draw tourists. As a result, they now are selling various souvenirs, such as "Grave of Christ Wine" and "Grave of Christ Cookies." He told me that was all they had in that small town.

Anyone hearing that the "Grave of Christ" was supposedly in a obscure village in northern Japan would certainly think that this was just about as ridiculous a claim as could be made. Nevertheless, while the claim itself is ludicrous, there has to be some point along the way where such a connection was made. It wouldn't have just surfaced out of nowhere. It would certainly appear likely that the legends surrounding the graves of these ancient Christian foreigners served as the basis out of which this whole story of the "Grave of Christ" arose.

I was not able to find out what the military police confiscated or where they took the contents of the graves they dug up. Perhaps they were destroyed or maybe even one day they will come to light again. Whatever is the case there, it would seem highly probable that this "Grave of Christ" story is yet another vestige of the imprint left by ancient immigrants to Japan.

One other interesting point is that I was told that in this area there were people with some very interesting surnames, such as "Yohane" (written与羽根), which is the same reading as the name for "John" in the Bible, and "Yakobu" (written弥古部), which is "Jacob" (also James in the New Testament). When these biblical names in the Hebrew and Greek are transliterated into Japanese, they come out as "Yohane" and "Yakobu", and then Chinese characters were chosen with those sounds in mind. This again is a tantalizing tidbit of information pointing to some sort of connection with ancient Christians or Jews coming into the area.

(Ken: Let's add a picture of a Daruma Doll here)

The "Daruma" Dolls and Their Connection With Legends of Saint Thomas

"Daruma" (達磨) Dolls represent a rather unique and unusual part of Japanese tradition. They are round-faced, long-nosed,

bearded figures with a red head covering, and they don't look at all Japanese. Their overall shape is round, and so the term has come to be used for such figures. For instance, a "snowman" is referred to as a "yuki (snow) daruma." They are often used at victory celebrations in political campaigns, with the winner of a particular election painting in the black center of one eye that has been left blank to symbolize the victory. Ordinary people also will sometimes buy a daruma doll and paint in one eye as a kind of good luck charm and then paint in the other eye when they have been successful at whatever it is they wished for.

Daruma are designed with weighted bottoms somewhat like a punching bag toy, and so these dolls right themselves automatically when pushed over. The phrase that is associated with this characteristic is "nana korobi ya oki" (七転び八起き, "fall down 7 times, get up 8 times"), an expression used to indicate a dogged determination not to quit but to try again after a failure. It is also used as an expression to indicate the ups and downs of life in general. When judged from its history and apparent connection with Christian thought, it seems likely that this phrase is a paraphrase of Proverbs 24:16, "though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again."

The Daruma legend is associated with Zen Buddhism, and indeed, the founder of Zen is said to be a man by the name of "Bodai Daruma" (菩提達磨), who is said to have been born in South India and then to have gone to China where he developed this new sect of Buddhism. In the 8th Century work "Kaigen Mokuroku" (開元目錄, literally "Opening Origins Catalogue"), however, there is a reference to apparently the same person (a person named "Shamon Bodai Daruma" (沙門菩提達磨)) as being "a Persian" from the "Western Regions" (西域, "seiiki", which to the Chinese included all of the Middle East).* (Being from India, of course, this individual's name would not have been written in Chinese characters originally. These are the characters that were used to transliterate his name into Chinese (or perhaps even as an entirely new name), with the reading above being the Japanese reading of those characters.)

In Zen tradition, the Day of Purification for Daruma is Oct. 5, but since this type of day of fasting and reflection in Buddhist tradition is normally done on the day before the anniversary of death, that would mean that Daruma supposedly died on Oct. 6. This, however, is the same date that is commemorated for the death of St. Thomas.

Thus, the clues pointing towards a connection are that the Daruma tradition came out of South India, the same place that Thomas had done his main mission work, that their deaths were on the

same day, the Chinese reference to Daruma being a "Persian" from the Middle East, and the "nana korobi ya oki" ("fall down 7 times, get up 8 times") tradition that parallels the Bible. Added together, these would seem indicate a strong possibility that various stories concerning the Apostle Thomas were adopted by Buddhists and transformed into the "Daruma" legends. The very name itself may be related, as Thomas was pronounced "Toma" in India and the Japanese pronunciation "Daruma" was in the original Chinese "Tamo" or "Damo."

Recently, I visited a museum in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture that is dedicated to this "Daruma" Doll. It has on display a variety of dolls that come from each area of Japan. Daruma dolls from different regions of Japan have the same general shape and characteristics, but have differing shades of color. Darumas from some areas have very white skin, while others include tints of brown, red and black. As I viewed these varying traditions of skin tone, I couldn't help but wonder if this was representative of the varying origins of peoples who immigrated into ancient Japan to settle in different areas. These ancient immigrants certainly would have had to survive many hardships during their migration along Silk Road routes as they came into Japan. I can well imagine that "nana korobi ya oki" was an expression that fit their experience very well.

You Can't Fool DNA

Sometime ago, a friend of mine came to Japan for the first time, and while I was showing him the type of shows we have on Japanese TV, he said to me, "Is that fellow there a Japanese of Middle Eastern origin?" That kind of threw me, as it was just an ordinary "pure Japanese" on the screen. I answered, "Well, I suppose there is a bit of a resemblance there isn't there?" But nevertheless, I was taken aback by his observation. It was his first time in Japan and he knew very little about Japan. The flip side of that, however, is that he therefore could look at things without any preconceived ideas.

As I thought about that I remembered taking a trip with my father to the Middle East a few years earlier. I remember seeing an old man and saying half jokingly, "Gee, that old man sure likes the guy we met in Touhoku!" That is when it dawned on me that just like the Daruma dolls, facial characteristics in certain localities in Japan contain a clue to the past history of that region. In regions such as Touhoku and Kyuushuu, people whose ancestors have lived there for generations tend to have certain facial characteristics.

In a previous section of this book, I described one of the shrines that the Hata clan had built (Konoshima Jinja). When I met with the head priest there, I noticed that his features were rather middle eastern, with relatively deep-set eyes and a large nose. In the course of the conversation, that came up, and so I joked with him saying, "Your ancestors are speaking through your face." His name was "Hattori", a rather common name in Japan, but the characters used were quite unusual (神服 instead of the usual 服部). "Hattori" comes from the name "Hata" together with "ori" (weaving). As names changed in time, "Hataori" became "Hatori" (another fairly common name) and then into "Hattori." Both of these are names of people descended from the Hata clan.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, DNA studies prove conclusively that Japanese have genetic input from several groups of people, including significant numbers of non-orientals. One's facial characteristics, along with family names, provide clues to one's ancestral past. People may be able to rewrite history to their liking, but they cannot blot out the "history book" that is in their genes.

The Discovery of a Keikyo Cross and "JNRI" in Gunma

At this point, I would like to again take up the subject of the influence Keikyo had in early Japan. We have already discussed the official visitation of Ri Mitsui and his entourage to the court of Emperor Shoumu and Empress Koumyou (p.xx). It is apparent, however, that there were many other Keikyo believers who came in unofficial capacities.

One archaeological discovery that supports this conclusion was the discovery in Gunma Prefecture of a Keikyo cross and the Roman letters "JNRI" written on the walls of a grave site. (Ken: It's not clear where the letters were written. I'm just guessing it was the walls. Need to clarify) These were discovered in the Edo Period and described in a document written by Matsura Seizan (松浦静山), the chief of the Nizen Hirado (肥前平戸) clan. (Ken: Is a specific date known?) "Last year, a 'sekkaku' (石槨, an underground stone-lined grave for interning a casket) was unearthed next to the Tago (多胡) Monument, and in it were seen the western letters 'JNRI.' Someone who had seen some foreign literature recalled seeing these same letters in an illustration of the execution of Christ. Thus, we sought out the opinion of a scholar familiar with the West, but he did not have any knowledge of this. What's more, a cross had previously been discovered beneath the Tago Monument, and thus, it would appear to have some relationship."*

This Tago Monument was erected in 711 A.D. and still exists in the town of Yoshii in Gunma Prefecture. It's important to note that this was even before Ri Mitsui's official visit in 736 A.D. While the "JNRI" letters are no longer visible (Ken: I'm assuming that. Confirm), they clearly were in (date). "JNRI" is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase "Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum" meaning "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." This is what was written above the Cross in Aramaic, Greek and Latin, as is recorded in John 19:19-20, "Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek." The "JNRI" is also seen in some paintings (such as this sample from the 15th Century) as "INRI" due to the fact that the transliteration into Latin of Jesus was sometimes written as "Iesus."

While it is true that the Eastern Christians would normally have used Aramaic (or its dialect Syrian), there was nothing to prevent them from using this Latin phrase. Since they would have had considerable contact with the Roman world through trade along the Silk Road, they would certainly have had some knowledge of Latin. Moreover, since it was found in such an ancient tomb built long before Xavier, it could not have been of Catholic origin.

There Were Hata In Gunma Too

The Tago Monument described above has a very interesting history. The monument describes the establishment of "Tago County" (多胡郡, Tago Gun), saying that it was ruled by "Hitsuji" (羊, literally "sheep"), apparently referring to the name of the person. Needless to say, this is a rather unusual name, and would appear to be connected with literal "sheep" as well. Whatever the case there, this monument also went by the name of "Tago Hitsuji Dayuu" (多胡羊大夫), with the "大夫" (Dayuu) literally meaning "great husband", but in this context, simply meaning the leader of the clan.

The name "Tago" (多胡) itself is significant as the character胡 means "foreign." For instance, in ancient times, when combined with国(kuni or koku, meaning "country"), it referred to the "North China barbarian nations" (胡国, kokoku).* (Nelson p. 743) Thus, the place name多胡 indicates that when the area was named in ancient times, there were many多 foreigners胡 living there.

In fact, in the Shousouin (正倉院) building located in the Toudaiji (東大寺) temple complex in Nara, there is an ancient folding screen with the artist's inscription reading "上野国多胡郡山部郷戸秦人" (Kouzukeno Kuni Tagogun Yamabe Gouko Shinjin) (?) (Ken: I'm not sure of the readings of the last 3 words as there was no furikana written there. Please check). The first part of the phrase (上野国多胡郡) refers to the area where the Tago monument is located, and the last two characters (秦人) is apparently a reference to the Hata clan. The Hata people were centered in Kyoto, but they also moved into numerous other regions of ancient Japan. Thus, they were undoubtedly a part of the mix of foreign immigrants who made up ancient Tago.

Another interesting point is that this region, which is included in present day Gunma Prefecture, was known in ancient times as a sheep-raising region. In the areas around present-day Maebashi and Kiryuu, sheep were raised until about the 8th Century.* Thus, the "羊大夫" (Hitsuji Dayuu) referred to above likely was referring to the head shepherd. Also, the very name "Gunma" (群馬) contains the character for a "herd of sheep" (群) (with the other character meaning "horse"), and this would also appear to be related to its roots as a sheep-raising region.

Sheep were not native to Japan, and thus they had to have been brought in by someone at some point in Japanese history. One scholar by the name of Kawase Isamu, who served as the honorary vice chairman of the Japan-New Zealand Friendship Association, has done research into the various breeds of sheep. He was able to determine that a breed referred to in Japanese as "寒羊" (Kan'you, literally "cold sheep") was virtually identical to the breed raised in ancient Israel called "Awashi" (?). He is convinced that the breed raised in ancient Gunma was this same breed.* Incidentally, Prof. Kawase claims to be descended from the "Kirishitan" (Edo Period Christians). Thus, his research is related to his search for his own roots.

The discovery of the characters "JNRI" along with the Keikyo cross in Gunma, together with the indications that middle-eastern sheep were being raised there, show that there must have been quite significant numbers of Keikyo believers in ancient Japan. Some scholars have admitted that there were probably a few Keikyo believers who made it all the way to Japan, but they typically say that their numbers would surely have been very small. The evidences we have seen, however, indicate that it must have been far more than just "a few."

One other indication of this can be seen in the works of an Edo Period scholar named Murai Masahiro (村井昌弘), who quoted from some ancient work that in the 12th Century, during the Heian Period, there were Christian missionaries who came to Japan. These would no doubt have been Keikyo Christians. His reference specifically says, "They came to Japan in black boats and lived here proclaiming their teachings as they went from place to place."* (Yaso Tenchuu Zenroku, "A Record of Jesus' Punishment From Heaven" (which could be taken either as that given to Jesus or given by Jesus)) (need to confirm). Some of these missionaries presumably returned home, but surely some of them would have remained. These references represent only brief anecdotes of history, and so it is reasonable to assume that many other such Keikyo believers who were not recorded in any historical reference would have come to Japan. As this particular reference is to the 12th Century while others we have looked at are several centuries earlier, it is apparent that such missionaries kept entering Japan over a span of many centuries.

Heiankyou Was Built By The Hata Clan

As previously mentioned, the Hata people were known for their construction skills. They, in fact, played a key role in the construction of the Heiankyou (平安京) in Kyoto at the end of the 8th Century.* This was the capital of Japan for over 1000 years until it was moved to Edo (Tokyo) in 1868. They brought together their best technical people and they offered their labor in putting together this grand project.

Prior to this, they had been involved in the construction of the "kofun" (古墳) gravesites (huge mounds holding the crypts of the emperors) and numerous other major construction sites. For example, the Yodogawa River plain in Osaka frequently flooded, causing considerable damage. Members of the Hata clan guided the project of constructing a dike system to alleviate the flooding problem.* They likewise were involved in a similar project to divert the Kamo and Katsura Rivers in the Kyoto basin to reduce the frequent flooding that occurred there.*

Records indicate that the very land that both the Heiankyou and the emperor's palace (Kyoto Gosho) was previously owned by members of the Hata clan or their branch families, the Kamo (賀茂), Yasaka (八坂), Haji (土師), Kurita (栗田) and Ibata (茨田) families.* Likewise, the funds necessary for moving the capital from Nara to Kyoto were also raised by the Hata clan—specifically by Hatashima Maro (秦島麻呂). Thus, it

is no exaggeration to say that the building of the Heiankyou capital was the work of the Hata clan itself.

It has also been pointed out that the very name "Heiankyou" has essentially the same meaning as the Hebrew meaning of "Jerusalem." Both of them mean "capital of peace." Given the Keikyo faith that the Hata clan had brought with them to Japan, this choice of names certainly would seem to have a deep symbolism to them. They no doubt longed for this new capital to be kind of a "new Jerusalem."

Together with the foreign immigrants who came to their shores, the ancient Japanese banded together to accomplish this great project of building a new capital. The Kyoto of the Heiankyou era was a place where numerous peoples, cultures, religions and traditions blended together to form a new culture and civilization.

One of the central festivals of Kyoto, the "Gion Matsuri" (祇園祭), developed sometime shortly after Heiankyou was established, and has spread throughout the country. It is associated with the "Yasaka Shrine" (八坂神社) (the name of one of the branch families of the Hata), and branches of this shrine are located nationwide. The character 祇 is made up of 氏 (uji) and 示 (the "god" radical, written 示 in its radical form) and is equivalent to "ujigami" (氏神), meaning a local clan god. The beginnings of this festival was as a petition to the gods to protect the people from infectious diseases. The main festival lasts for 7 days and is held from July 17 to July 24, for a total of 8 days.

While the "Gion Matsuri" in its present form is vastly different from anything found in the Hebrew scriptures, there are some interesting parallels that point to a relationship in its beginnings. In ancient Israel, there was a similar festival of the same length that likewise took place during this same period. It was associated with the dedication of the temple built during King Solomon's reign as recorded in II Chronicles 3 - 7. Included in Solomon's prayer of dedication, was an appeal to God to protect the people from plagues. After the dedication ceremony, they had a 7-day festival followed by an eighth day assembly, which ended on "the 23rd day of the seventh month" (II Chron. 7:10).

Associated with the Gion Matsuri, there are also important festival days on July 1 and 10. Interestingly, these likewise are dates that were important in ancient Israel. As recorded in Lev. 23:23-27, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: "On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the LORD by fire.'" The LORD said to Moses,

'The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire.'" For these and other reasons, it certainly appears that various aspects of the Gion Matsuri were borrowed from the Bible as filtered through Keikyo.

(Shall we add more about Gion. persian rug. relation to "Zion"?)

Another interesting point is that just over the mountain from Kyoto lies Japan's largest lake, Lake Biwa. Lake Biwa is of a similar shape and size to the Sea of Galilee in Israel. The ancient name for the Sea of Galilee was "Lake Kinnereth" (or "Lake of Gennesaret" as it comes to us in the Greek, cf. Luke 5:1), which was derived from its shape, that is, being shaped like a harp. "Biwa" is the name of a similar ancient harp and thus has basically the same meaning as "Kinnereth" in Hebrew. By itself, of course, this could be pure coincidence, but in light of all of the other parallels, it is would appear to be likely that the parallel was intentional.

The Relationship Between the Hata Clan and the Inari Shrines

Among the various types of Shinto Shrines in Japan, what are known as the "Yahata Jinja" (八幡神社) are the most common. The second most common are the "Inari Jinja" (稲荷神社), and the Hata clan played a role in the development of this particular tradition. The head shrine of the Inari Jinja is the Fushimi Inari Daisha (伏見稲荷大社) in Kyoto. This shrine was built by the head of the Hata clan at the time, Hatano Kimiurogu (秦公伊呂具), and it served as a shrine to their "ujigami" (氏神, the clan god).

Inari Jinga stand out among the various types of shrines for their bright red torii gates and flags lining the way to the shrine. Another unique feature is the symbol of stone foxes instead of the usual lions as "guardians" at the gates, as is standard for other shrines.

I believe that these foxes are something not originally associated with Shinto, but were later added in under the influence of Buddhism. Foxes held a special reverence in a Buddhist tradition called "Dakiniten" (荼枳尼天, which comes from a Sanskrit word), and this apparently became later associated with Inari Shrines, particularly as the followers of Kuukai (Shingon Mikkyou) were very active in spreading the "inari faith".* No doubt, the original Inari Shrines of the Hata were different than their descendents became. (Ken: we need to check on

the accuracy of this point)

The word "inari" is written in characters as 稻荷, two characters that literally mean "rice plant" 稻(ine) and "freight, burden" 荷(ni). As is common with such words that existed before Chinese characters were adopted in Japan, these characters are what is called "ateji" (当て字), that is characters used phonetically irrespective of their actual meanings. Why a character presently pronounced "ni" was used for "ri" is unclear, and, in fact, the origin of this word "inari" is unknown. There are several theories, including that it is an abbreviation of "ine nari" (稲稔), "ripening rice", since Inari Jinja are also associated with the rice harvest.* (Ency. p598) Another interesting hypothesis, however, is that it actually comes from the acronym "INRI" mentioned earlier, namely the letters that were written on the Cross standing for "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". Given the Hata's association with Keikyo, that is, at least, a plausible explanation (though, of course, that may well be reading too much into it).

The god worshipped at Inari Shrines, the "Inari Oogami" (稻荷大神, Inari Great God), actually has an official name that is much longer, namely "Uka no Mitama Oogami" (宇迦之御魂大神, Honorable Soul of Heaven Great God). This is considered to be the same god as "Toyouke Oogami" (豊受大神, Bounty Receiving Great God), the one enshrined in the outer shrine of Ise Jinju (伊勢神宮), the most important shrine in all of Shinto.* It is also considered to be the same god as is enshrined in the "Kaiko no Yashiro" (蚕の社, Silkworm Shrine), the "Ame no Minaka Nushi no Kami" (天之御中主神, literally "From the Middle of the Heavens Ruling God").* Thus, this same "Great God" is viewed as having many names.

As to the origin of all of this, a historian by the name of Mikami Takeru, who is a personal friend of mine, told me that before the "Toyouke Oogami" was moved to Ise to be enshrined there, it was worshipped at the Kono Shrine (籠神社) in the town of Tango (丹後) north of Kyoto. He said that the priest at that Shrine made an amazing admission by saying, "Toyouke Oogami is the God of Israel. The Inari Oogami was apparently originally the absolute God Yahweh, that is, Jesus Christ."*

That is quite a statement indeed. And it is additional evidence in support of my thesis that travelers and immigrants into ancient Japan brought with them both ancient Judaism and Christianity. These concepts later degenerated into a variety of gods with different names, but originally, it was all one God.

Another interesting connection is that very close to the

town of Tango, where the god "Toyouke Oogami" was enshrined prior to being moved to Ise, is the famous "Ama no Hashidate" (天橋立, literally, "Heaven Bridge Standing"), a narrow, pine-covered sand bar that stretches 3.3 km across Wakasa Bay. It is such an unusual feature that legends developed as to its origins. According to the myth, it was once a bridge reaching from earth to heaven, but it fell over to form this narrow sand bar.

While the character for "bridge" is used, such a structure that would ascend from earth up to heaven would in reality be a ladder of sorts. In fact, in ancient times, a ladder (hashigo, 梯子) was called a "hashidate" (梯立), and so it was only a matter of transposing one character with the same pronunciation for the other.

The connection this may have with the Bible is that there is the famous story of "Jacob's ladder" found in Gen. 28:11-12. In his dream, Jacob sees a ladder (or staircase) reaching up to heaven with angels ascending and descending. By itself, such a similarity would likely be considered pure coincidence. But in the context of this wholesale adoption of biblical themes in ancient Japan and their transformation into their own traditions, it is at least plausible that there is a connection.

The Hata Clan and "Yahata Kami"

In this section, we will take a look at the relationship between the Hata clan and religious faith in a Shinto deity referred to as "Yahata Kami" (八幡神). References to this particular type of deity, a type that is very different from what existed before, first appear in ancient records around the end of the Nara Era (710-784 A.D.).

Among the approximately 110,000 Shinto shrines in Japan, the type of shrine that is most prevalent is that of the "Hachiman" deities, with more than 40,000 shrines dedicated to them. The term "Hachiman" is simply a different reading given to the same 八幡 characters as in "Yahata" (and even has other alternate readings of "Yahada" and "Yawata"). The literal meaning of the characters (八 is "eight" and 幡 is "flag" or "fluttering in the wind") appears to have little if any relation to the meaning of the term as a whole. As is frequently the case in ancient times for characters chosen to represent some foreign or new concept, these characters were chosen for their sounds alone.

The origin of the term "Yahata" appears to have its roots in the Usa (宇佐) region of Oita Prefecture in Kyushu, where the

term was pronounced "Yahada no Kami" (the god(s) of Yahada). Even today, there is a famous shrine there by the name of "Usa Hachimangu" (宇佐八幡宮) that dates from the 8th century. It is historically significant for what was known as the "Doukyou Jiken" (道鏡事件, the Doukyou Incident), which took place in the year 769, when a Buddhist priest by the name of Doukyou (道鏡) conspired to overthrow the emperor and take the throne for himself. According to the legend, however, a man named Wakenokyo Maro (和氣清麻呂) received a revelation from the god "Usa Hachiman" about this plan, and he was able to prevent the coup from taking place. It's a well-known story, and even today, guides giving tours of that shrine tell visitors, "The Yahada Kami (god) gives blessings in a wide variety of areas, including the acquiring of wealth, education, traffic safety and giving birth safely. The only request he will not entertain is a request to become the emperor."

This region of Usa was, in fact, the first area in which the Hata people settled after coming over from the mainland. The priests of the Usa Hachimangu Shrine have all come from one of three families, the Usa (宇佐), the Ooga (大神) and the Karashima (辛島) families. All three of these families trace their roots to the Hata people. Ancient records indicate that a similar shrine to the Yahada Kami, the Hakozaikigu (笥崎宮) in Fukuoka city, also had head priests from the Hata clan. Thus, it is only logical that the "Yahada (Yahata) God" of these shrines was, in fact, the same god worshipped by the Hata people when they arrived in Japan.

Another interesting clue pointing to this deep relationship with the Hata clan is the fact that the mountains located just outside of Usa are called the Tenzan (天山, "Heaven Mountain") Mountains, the very same characters used to write the name of the Tenshan (sp?) mountain range next to the ancient homeland of Yuzuki from where the Hata clan had come. It seems likely that this name was given to the mountains outside of Usa by the Hata as a remembrance of their ancient homeland.

When one visits the Usa Hachimangu Shrine today, the explanation given is that "the Emperor Oujin (応神) is deified here." This emperor Oujin is the one who was on the throne when the Hata people first arrived, and he welcomed them. Thus, it is only natural that they had close ties. In fact, scholars generally are of the opinion that Emperor Oujin himself was an immigrant into Japan who later became emperor.*

One wonders what sort of religious faith this emperor had. It is clear that this shrine was not originally dedicated to the

worship of the Emperor Oujin, but to the worship of the "Yahada (Yahata) God" alone. It appears that the same dynamic that occurred at the Oosake Shrine in Hyogo Prefecture (cf. page xx) happened in Usa as well. The head priest at the Oosake Shrine told me that while the shrine there is now dedicated to the worship of the person Hatano Kawakatsu, it was originally dedicated to the diety worshipped by Hatano Kawakatsu. Thus, the implication is that the Emperor Oujin worshipped the god enshrined there in the beginning, namely the "Yahada God", and it was only much later that he himself became deified there along with the "Yahada God."

While this concept of deifying important people may seem strange to those brought up in a monotheistic culture (the idea of a Jewish temple dedicated to the "God of Abraham" later becoming a temple dedicated to the worship of Abraham would be unthinkable), it is a natural step in a polytheistic worldview, since it is the ultimate form of showing respect—namely, making that person into a god to venerate and even worship.

Among the various shrines dedicated to the Hachiman or Yahata deities are shrines that have legends surrounding them that resemble those found in the Bible. For instance, a shrine in Kyoto by the name of Iwashimizu Hachimangu (石清水八幡宮), which was founded in 860 A.D., has a legend associated with it that would seem to have come right out of the pages of Scripture.

According to the story, a military leader by the name of Minamoto no Yoriyoshi (源頼義) was leading his troops in a battle when they became very thirsty. He then prayed to the Iwashimizu Hachiman god ("Iwashimizu" is written with the characters "rock"石, "pure"清and "water"水) to give them water. While praying, he struck a rock with a stick and out came fresh water. This sounds very similar to what Moses did while the Israelites were suffering in the desert from thirst. Praying to God, he struck with his staff the rock God had led him to, and a spring of water suddenly appeared from beneath the rock (Exodus 17:1-7).

Why is it that such a legend would develop in the first place? It seems likely that the priests who came up with this story based it on something they had heard. While it is always possible that someone thought up such a scenario purely independent of the Bible story, it is only natural that people use something they have heard or seen before as a basis for developing their own legends. Thus, given that these people would have had access to these biblical stories at the time these legends developed, it is more likely that there is a connection.

This conclusion is backed up by the fact that it is not just this one legend with apparent biblical roots, but there are many. For instance, the 大隅正八幡宮 (Ken: where is it and what is the proper reading?) has a legend that parallels the Virgin Birth, as they say that a certain virgin received a revelation from an unnamed deity and becomes pregnant by the spirit of that god, later giving birth to a child she named "Yahada". Needless to say, this sound very similar to the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus. Folklorist Yanagita Kunio states that "this is not something unrelated to the ancient teachings of Israel."*

Other Examples of Ancient Stories in Japan that Appear Related to the Bible

Not only in the Hachiman shrines but also in numerous other Shinto shrines it is not uncommon to find stories that sound very similar to stories found in the Bible. For instance, at both the Sumiyoshi Jinja (住吉神社) in Yamaguchi Prefecture and the Mekari Jinja (和布刈神社), there is an ancient ritual performed called Mekari no Shinji (和布刈神事). It is a ceremony where "Wakame" seaweed is harvested and dedicated to the shrine. The description of this "shinji" (神事, literally a "god thing") that was sung in a chant tells of a time when the waters of the sea were driven back by a strong wind and clouds so that the waters stood walled up like a folding screen. The sea floor became dry land and then sometime later flowed back in to become the rough sea again.

This story is certainly reminiscent of the scene described in Exodus 14:21-31 of the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. Again, it is possible that this story developed unrelated to the biblical story, but it is far more likely that the ancient priests who concocted this story had heard the biblical account and simply borrowed from it. Another example of this can be seen in a 13th century story called "Heike Monogatari" (平家物語) where we see a story included that is very similar to the story found in Ezekial of the "valley of the dry bones."*

During the persecution of the "Kirishitan" (Christians) during the self-imposed isolation of Japan during the Edo period (1603-1867), Christian artifacts and anything else directly related to the history of Christianity in Japan were sought out and destroyed in a deliberate effort to wipe out all traces of Christian influence. The result was that on the surface, it made things appear as though there

had been no such influence, but a careful reading of the various evidences that remain clearly show that such influences must have been great indeed.

Were "Kana" and the "Iroha Poem" Composed by the Hata?

In addition to using imported Chinese characters, a dual syllabic "alphabet" was also developed in Japan to express the language in writing. Known as "hiragana" (平仮名) and "katakana" (片仮名), these scripts have a very interesting history. The standard explanation is that in order to adapt the use of Chinese characters to the Japanese language, additional simplified symbols that were for sound only were developed from certain Chinese characters. Prior to their development during the Heian Period (794-1185), Japanese was written with Chinese characters alone, with the roots of words being written in characters used for their meaning and word endings, etc. being written in characters used for their sound alone. Thus, while the written text would superficially look like Chinese, it would have been essentially unintelligible to someone trying to read it as Chinese.

Katakana is said to have been developed by taking a part of a character with the desired pronunciation ("kata" 片 means "a part of"). For example, リ (ri) is said to have come from the right-hand side of 利, which is also pronounced "ri", and イ (i) supposedly was derived from the left-hand side of 伊 (i). On the other hand, each hiragana character is said to have been developed from a simplification of a specific Chinese character as a whole. For example, い (i) is thought to be derived from the cursive writing of the character 以 (i), while よ (yo) supposedly came from 与 (yo). This system of explanation makes sense in isolation, and even in light of the apparent relationship there is with the Hata clan and the Aramaic language they would have been using as their ancestral language, the truth may be that it is a combination of both.

This apparent relationship with ancient Aramaic (which uses a script that is essentially the same as Hebrew) was pointed out by a Jewish scholar by the name of Joseph Eidleberg in a provocative book published in Japan under the title of "Yamato Minzoku wa Yudayajin Datta" (大和民族はユダヤ人だった, "The Yamato People (of Japan) were Jewish"). As he learned Katakana and Hiragana, he was struck by how similar so many of them are in both sound and shape to Hebrew characters. The following is a list of some of the more obvious similarities.

(Figure)

Needless to say, there is no record of exactly who designed the first "kana." Unlike China, where the characters developed around the spoken language and were thus suited to that language, when they were adapted for expressing the Japanese language, the need for symbols without meaning but only used to indicate pronunciation was apparent. Using Chinese characters that ordinarily had meaning simply to indicate sounds for use in writing verb endings and other grammatical structures was cumbersome to say the least. Thus, it is only natural that a better solution would be sought.

While the "standard" explanation that the kana characters were entirely developed from either parts of characters with the desired pronunciations or from characters that were greatly simplified from their cursive styles can account for all of the kana characters that were developed, is it purely coincidental that so many of them are similar to ancient Hebrew? For those grammatical sounds that were previously represented by certain characters, if it can be shown that, for instance, one part (or "radical") of that character later became the katakana symbol for that particular sound, then obviously that would be the preferred explanation for its origin.

When it comes to certain sounds that are not normally part of grammatical constructions, etc., the choice of which Chinese character a certain kana symbol was likely derived from becomes somewhat arbitrary. After all, there are a large number of characters to choose from that can have a particular reading (sound), and so it is not surprising that a likely candidate could be found. For instance, the katakana symbol ケ (ke) is said to have been derived from 介, a character presently pronounced only as "kai". The similarity of this symbol with the ancient Hebrew letter for a "k" sound is obvious. So which is the true origin of ケ? There is, of course, no definitive answer to that question.

(Ken: I don't have the resources to check out which of the characters the standard explanation says were used to derive specific kana were actually used in the Kojiki, Man'youshuu, etc. to represent that sound. I suspect it was only some, and that the rest were just arbitrarily chosen as the likely source of the kana. I can't back that up, however, without more research. Any way of doing that? It would be particularly effective if we could show that the ones similar to Hebrew were ones where the character used prior to kana to represent that

sound wasn't an obvious candidate for the kana's origin.)

In considering the probable relationship of the Hata people to the development of "kana", the following points need to be considered. As previously mentioned (pg. xx), Keikyo missionaries working among the Uighur people developed a writing system adapted from the Aramaic script to teach them how to read and write their own language. This script later became the basis for both the Mongolian and Manchurian scripts.

Likewise, it can be shown that Keikyo missionaries developed other scripts as well as they sought to teach formerly illiterate peoples reading and writing as they spread the gospel. This was true in India, where a variety of scripts were developed, including the Karoshuti (sp?) script still in use today.* Even the Arabic script in which the Islamic Koran is written traces its roots to the Aramaic and its related Assyrian scripts and was already in use long before Mohammed was born. In fact, an Assyrian Christian priest taught him how to read and write. As Keikyo (that is, the Assyrian Church of the East) was widespread in that region when the Arabic script was developed, it is likely that Keikyo believers were involved in its development as well.

Given this history of active involvement in developing simple writing scripts in which ordinary people could be taught to read translations of the Bible into their own languages, it would not be at all surprising if Keikyo believers who had settled in Japan would be involved in the process of developing a simplified script suited to the needs of the Japanese language. The timing of the development of kana certainly fits with the period in which there was such strong influence from the Hata clan immigrants.

Another apparent relationship can be seen from the development of what is known as the "iroha poem" (いろは歌, iroha uta), which likewise seems to have been developed by a Keikyo missionary linguist. I'll explain the rationale for this conclusion below, but first an explanation as to what the "iroha poem" is. Instead of having a type of "alphabet" in which letters represent both individual consonants as well as vowel sounds, Japanese kana are a type of "syllabic" alphabet with separate symbols for each syllable used in the language, of which there are 47 (plus a separate symbol "ン" in katakana and "ん" in hiragana for the sound "n" used at the end of some syllables, such as "kan"). This "iroha poem" uses all 47 sounds without repeating a single syllable and it has a deep meaning as well. Roughly translated, the meaning of the poem comes out in English as: "The colors blossom, scatter and fall. In this world of ours, who lasts

forever? Today, let us cross over the remote mountains of life's illusions and dream no more shallow dreams nor succumb to drunkenness."*(pp.624-25, encycl.)

To attempt to write such a poem today using each kana sound only once would be quite a challenge indeed, and it would be impossible in a language like English, as we would have to repeat certain letters to make any sense of it. The closest we can come to doing something like that is a short non-sense sentence using all 26 letters, such as "The quick red fox jumps over the lazy brown dog," and, of course, several letters are repeated.

The order used in this "iroha poem" was formerly used to determine the order dictionaries were written in (analogous to the "abcde...xyz" order in English), but it is seldom used that way any more. In fact, it is not taught in schools any more other than in a historical sense, and thus most modern Japanese could not repeat this poem.

There is no direct evidence as to whom to attribute the composition of this poem, but a hint can be detected in the way the poem was written from ancient times. It was written in lines of 7 characters each except for the last line, which contained only 5. Converting that order into the Roman alphabet, it went like this:

I ro ha ni ho he to

Chi ri nu ru (w)o wa ka

Yo ta re so tsu ne na

Ra mu u (w)i no o ku

Ya ma ke fu ko e te

A sa ki yu me mi shi

(W)e hi mo se su

Reading the last syllable of each line in order, it comes out "Toga nakute shisu" (Note: "ga" and "ka" are simply voiced and unvoiced versions of the same sound and are distinguished in kana by adding two dots to the voiced version, カ or か(ka)→ガ or が(ga).) This makes up a sentence that means "(He) died without sin." Likewise, taking the first sound of the first and last lines together with the last syllable comes out the same in pronunciation as "Jesus" (Iesu in

Japanese). (Note: the symbol used for the second syllable (w)e is now obsolete, but is pronounced the same as a regular "e".) Could it be that this is a kind of "code" in which the originator left an imprint of his faith? Admittedly, it is subjective on our part to choose the last syllables of each line as opposed to the first syllables or some other significant combination. Nevertheless, the probability that any such non-random ordering of syllables in the poem coming out to mean something significant by chance is very small indeed.

Thus, I feel that this is strong evidence that Keikyo believers were behind the development of the kana characters and the "iroha poem."

Chapter 6

Nara and Kyoto: Cities of Immigrants

Nara and Kyoto Once Had Large Numbers of Immigrants

As mentioned previously, ancient Japan was a land to which large numbers of immigrants from the Asian mainland came. It was the end of the Silk Road, and thus there was no land "beyond" to which to migrate to without remaining on these same islands or returning to the mainland.

One Japanese historian (name?) claims that at one point (approx. year?), 70 to 80% of the population of Kyoto was made up of foreign immigrants and naturalized Japanese of foreign descent. Among those of recent foreign descent, the Hata people were particularly numerous.* (Ken: we need to confirm what the concept of a "naturalized" Japanese meant in those days. Is "kikajin" the actual term used in the Nihon Shoki?)

Ancient records show that big influxes of such immigrants occurred from the 7th century on, with particularly large influxes in the Nara and Kyoto regions. The "Nihon Shoki" (Chronicles of Japan), which was compiled over a period of years prior to its completion in 720 A.D., gives rather detailed accounts of events of this period. For instance, for the year that is equivalent to 608 A.D., it says, "In this year, a large number of people from Shiragi (新羅, an ancient name for part of Korea) were naturalized." Likewise, for the year corresponding to 611 A.D., it says, "In this year, many arrived from Kudara (百濟, another kingdom on the Korean peninsula) longing for Japan."

There are frequent and detailed references in the Nihon Shoki about foreign immigrants visiting the Imperial Court, but very little about the "regular folk" who didn't merit such visits. Likewise, it is logical to assume that there were many others who would have come over in boats from the mainland to settle in Kyushu or other regions far from the Imperial Court that are not mentioned in the Nihon Shoki.

In the records for the year equivalent to 663, it tells of the fall of the Kudara nation on the Korean peninsula and the large numbers of refugees that escaped over to Japan. One scholar (who?) estimates that the number was in the range of 4,000 to 5,000 people.* Likewise, the section referring to 668 states that another

wave of refugees fled to Japan from Koukuri (高句麗, a third ancient kingdom on the Korean peninsula).

These "toraijin" (渡来人, a word referring to ancient immigrants from the Asian mainland) are generally thought to have come from Korea and China, and in the direct sense, that is, of course, true, as very few if any could likely have come to Japan without having crossed over from China or the Korean peninsula. The assumption by most people today has been that such people would have been made up entirely of the same mongoloid peoples that today makeup the Koreans and Chinese.

The various kingdoms of that day that were located in present-day China and Korea were actually much more "international" than what we conceive of today. For example, in the Nihon Shoki, it refers to the Hata people as "having come from Kudara." While in the immediate sense that might be true, as was discussed earlier, this particular tribe of people had originally called the kingdom of Yuzuki in central Asia their home, and thus Kudara was merely a way station for them in their journey to Japan.

Another bit of evidence showing the mix of people then is recorded in the Nihon Shoki for the year equivalent to 661 A.D., where it mentions that the armies of a people called "Tokketsu" (突厥) had invaded the Korean peninsula. This particular tribe was a nomadic tribe of Turkish origin, and thus, over time, they had come all the way from western Asia to Korea.

Numerous other references to peoples from the Middle East and western and central Asia having been present in China and Korea during this era exist. They validate what the wife of the head priest at Kouryuuji in Kyoto I mentioned earlier (pg. 5) told me in our interview. She said,

"Many people have the wrong idea in mind when they hear of the immigrants having come over from China and Korea. They think in terms of them all having the same facial characteristics as what we see in the typical Chinese and Koreans of today. But that wasn't the way it was. The China and Korea of that day were really internationalized.

"Think of it this way, Ken. If you and I were to leave on a vessel from a Korean port bound for Japan, it would be recorded in the logs that these two people had come over from Korea. So, in historical records, there would be recorded that, for instance, 8000 people had crossed over from Korea to enter Japan during a certain year. But Ken, your face and mine are very different and we have

different colored hair. I think it was very much like that back then. While the records may state that so many thousands of people came over from Korea, they were in reality a mixture of different peoples."

A Variety of Immigrants

By the later half of the 9th century, trading ships regularly travelled between Japan, Korea and China. So many people were coming and going that the need for the "kentoushi" (遣唐使, emissaries sent to the Tang Dynasty to study Chinese civilization) system gradually waned, and the entire system was done away with in 894 as civil unrest in China made it difficult to continue.* (kojien under "kentoushi")

In fact, there was a period of religious persecution prior to these troubles that led to the end of the Tang Dynasty in 907. In 845, the Tang emperor武宗 (Busou in Japanese reading), became very angry at the corruption and violence he witnessed within the Buddhist community. He concluded that religions in general were bad for his kingdom, and so he instigated a severe oppression on all such organized religions, including Keikyo. While no direct references still exist to Keikyo believers escaping in significant numbers to Japan as a result of this, it is highly likely that that was the case.

As mentioned in chapter 1 (p. xx), there are numerous artifacts in museums dating from this period that clearly came into Japan from the outside. Among some of the notable items, the Ueno National Museum in Tokyo has on display some pieces of "aromatic" wood dating from the 7th century. Two of these pieces have burned into them impressions written in Sogdian script as well as Pahlavi (Middle Persian) script. These are both scripts derived from Aramaic that were used in Persia and other areas of central Asia in the 7th century.* (Sogdian is in kojien but not the other)

This type of wood is of tropical origin and so could not have grown in Japan or China. Thus, these burned-in impressions are thought to indicate the name of the trader who brought the wood to Japan. As can be seen in the picture below, there is the symbol of a cross under the characters that are inscribed above. These pieces of wood were kept in Houryuuji (法隆寺) Temple near Nara from ancient times, though originally they are thought to have been in Enryakuji (延暦寺) on Mt. Hiei outside of Kyoto.

Another item of importance that was kept in Houryuuji

from ancient times is the statue of the "Kuse Kannon" (救世観音, literally, "saving-the-world god of mercy"), which is said to have been modeled after Prince Shoutoku. At the very top of the intricate crown adorning the statue is a crescent moon symbol that is identical to that worn by the kings of Persia.

These and numerous other artifacts and other vestiges of foreign influence testify to the fact that a wide variety of peoples were entering Japan in ancient times. Kyoto and Nara were built with the intention of imitating the Chinese capital of Chouan (長安, Xian in Chinese pronunciation), and this resulted in them also being like Chouan in the sense of being great international cities where peoples of many different religious and cultural backgrounds rubbed elbows.

Put in modern terms, they would have been something like present-day Hong Kong and Singapore. I can just picture in my mind what it must have looked like. On this corner would be a Keikyo church and over there would be an Islamic mosque, while down the street would be a Buddhist temple. I can also picture a scene of the people with various facial features and skin tones from light to dark. I imagine that a typical street scene would not be unlike something one could see today in a town in a place like Tajikistan. In this stall, a Persian man is selling carpets, while a bit farther on, a Chinese man is selling handicrafts. Next to him, then, is a Jewish person selling accessories. What a variety! Having visited such places, I can imagine that is what ancient Kyoto and Nara were like. That is how the ancient people of Japan must have lived! It was what made them great.

The Kyoto That Was Not a Buddhist City

These are facts that most Japanese are unaware of. I used to be oblivious to them as well, thinking that Kyoto and Nara were essentially Japanese and almost exclusively Buddhist cities (with a few Shinto Shrines thrown in). When I was visiting Kyoto some time ago, before I had learned about these things, I was talking with a local about the city, and said something like, "Kyoto is really a Buddhist city, isn't it!" He looked at me rather indignantly and said, "It may seem that way now, but that certainly wasn't the case in ancient times."

"Really? What was it like in ancient times?"

"I'm not really certain about that, but the one thing I do know is that it wasn't Buddhist."

That was one conversation that spurred me on to do research in this area, and how surprised I was to learn that Kyoto used to be a city of freedom with people from many areas of the world. Mixing with many other recent immigrants, the Hata clan made Kyoto their base of operations and in its atmosphere of relative freedom were able to practice their faith.

As this situation was developing in the 7th century, Prince Shoutoku developed Japan's first statutory law in the form of the famous "Constitution of 17 Articles" (十七条憲法, Juunanajou Kenpou). It is generally assumed that this constitution was based on Buddhist principles, but as Prince Shoutoku was rubbing shoulders with numerous immigrants from a wide diversity of peoples and cultures, it is likely that there were many influences involved. "Buddhist principles" were certainly not the only concepts involved in its development. In fact, the "mutual respect and harmony" emphasized in the text was necessitated precisely because there was such a mix of peoples.

In today's Japan, Japanese tend to divide humanity into two main divisions—namely, "Japanese" and "foreigners". That was, however, not the case in ancient Japan. In fact, "Japanese" as a nationalistic identity is a rather recent phenomenon, one that only really solidified during the Meiji Era of the late 19th century. In ancient Japan, the basic division was between "old-timer" and "new-comer". According to an ancient document called "Shinsenshoujiroku" (新撰姓氏録), meaning "New List of Surnames" (written in 815), with the exception of the royal family, people were put into one of two categories—"people who were here before" and "people who have come recently." This was apparently the concept employed in that day.

Judged by the standards of that time, Japan was a land with a considerable amount of freedom and was a kind of "New World" somewhat analogous to what America became in recent times. When life got difficult due to warfare or persecution, I wonder if there was even a phrase that went something like, "Go east, young man, go east!" I don't mean to imply, of course, that Japan was an absolute paradise, as the reception newcomers got no doubt varied, depending on the place. The Japan of that day—and to a certain extent even up until the modern state was crafted in the later part of the 19th century—was a land fractured into numerous "kuni" (国, literally "countries", but meaning feudal states), and there were considerable differences between them.

Nevertheless, particularly during the latter half of the first millenium, it is apparent that much of Japan attracted new

immigration that brought in a wide variety of peoples. This was the world of Prince Shoutoku, who worked to bring harmony to the diversity. In fact, many scholars today conclude that Prince Shoutoku himself would have been classified as a relative newcomer in the sense that the much of the imperial family had recent Korean roots. It was Japan's ability to assimilate and harmonize these numerous newcomers that directly contributed to the rapid development of its civilization in a kind of "golden age."

Keikyo's Apparent Effects on Prince Shoutoku

It appears that Prince Shoutoku had extensive relationships with members of the Hata clan. Some scholars hold that the leader of the clan, Hatano Kawakatsu built Kouryuuji in 603 at the suggestion of Prince Shoutoku in order to venerate a "Buddhist statue" given to him by the prince.* (kojien) As stated in chapter 2 (p.xx), however, the "Miroku" statue was not really Buddhist and Kouryuuji was originally a Keikyo church.

According to Prof. Ikeda Sakae of Kyoto University, "Prince Shoutoku can be considered to have attempted something similar to the founder of the Tang Dynasty in China in that he tried at the same time to be both a believer in Buddhism and in Keikyo. He was followed in that by the Empress Koumyou."* Since the term "Keikyo" is technically the name given to the eastern Christianity that became well established in China at a slightly later date (Alopen's official visit to the emperor was in 635), professor Ikeda's usage here is in a broader sense, namely the stream of Christianity flowing out of the Assyrian Church of the East.

Concerning Prince Shoutoku's uniqueness, a distinguished British scholar, Prof. Lewis Bush, claimed that the Prince was in a sense the first "democrat."* Prof. Bush was a member of the occupying forces immediately following World War II, and in 1947, he stated, "Shotoku Taishi was essentially a democrat: ...Indeed, had it not been for the complete indifference of the Japanese to this great man, the world would know more about him today."*

In this context, "democracy" is not referring to a modern voting system but to a basic commitment to the human rights of all the people. Under Prince Shoutoku's leadership, freedom, public welfare and human rights developed. He was in effect the originator of public welfare projects in Japan. In Osaka, he had the "Shitennouji" (四天王寺) Temple built with 4 welfare institutions connected to it. One

was named "Kyouden'in" (敬田院) and had to do with religion and the arts, and the other three were more specifically for the poor and infirm. They were "Seyakuin" (施薬院), which dispensed free medicines, "Ryoubyouin" (療病院), which gave free medical care, and "Hiden'in" (悲田院), which housed the indigent.*

While the evidence that all four of these institutions were begun under Prince Shoutoku is unclear, it is at least possible, although some scholars attribute Seyakuin and Hiden'in to Empress Koumyou about a century later.* (kojien) (Ken: if there is a clear reference authority for above, then perhaps we can leave this sentence out.) These innovative institutions were publically financed, and so in providing this kind of organized public help to the disenfranchized, much hope was given the poor.

This sort of public welfare institution was not something that naturally came out of Buddhist or Hindu thought. After all, the down and out were merely receiving their "karma". Thus, such public welfare institutions were not found in Buddhist societies of that day. Likewise, other faiths of that time, including Japanese Shinto, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and somewhat later Islam were likewise not involved in such activities. Thus, since no other Buddhists were doing such works in those days, Buddhists scholars often praise Prince Shotoku for accomplishing such great things.

It should be noted, however, that during this period in various locations along the Silk Road where the Eastern Christians had settled, they were setting up such welfare institutions. Professor Ikeda states, "Prince Shoutoku's project really became possible because there was already a model for it located within the Uzumasa district of Kyoto where Keikyo believers were already performing acts of mercy."*

As mentioned earlier, Keikyo believers were already active in China well before Alopen's official visit to the Chinese emperor in 635. Likewise, the same can be said of their activity in Japan. Even though the official visit of Ri Mitsui and his entourage to the Japanese emperor did not take place until 736 A.D., Keikyo believers were active in Japan by the beginning of the 7th century at the latest. Prof. Ikeda records that a man going by the name of "Mar Toma" was present with Prince Shoutoku in about 600 A.D.* Mar Toma is an Aramaic title and name that is exactly the same that Christ's disciple Thomas was referred to by (with "Mar" meaning "lord" or "teacher"). He was apparently a leader of the Keikyo community at that time.

Where had he come from? No records were left of that,

but obviously he and those with him had come along the Silk Road. These people were Christians of the same stream of Christianity that my own Assyrian ancestors were part of. That faith led them to follow Christ's example in "doing unto the least of these," and it must have been that spirit that influenced Prince Shoutoku to do likewise.

My research led me to a deep appreciation for the greatness of that age in Japan. Japan was able to enfold within itself a variety of peoples, cultures, religions and ideas, and that is what led to the development of a civilization that was far ahead of where the West was at that time.

While Keikyo churches disappeared in China and Japan long ago, their equivalent still exists in the tradition that goes by the name of the "Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East." This church has a flag that reminds me of the "Hinomaru" (日の丸, "Circle of the Sun") flag of Japan. It shows a rising sun with a Bible and a Cross contained within the circle of the sun. The character chosen by the Chinese to represent this faith (the "kei" of Keikyo) was 景, the basic meaning of which is the "light of the sun." Thus, in their conception, the "circle of the sun" was a symbol for the Messiah, the "light of the world."

To many people in Asia, the sight of the "Hinomaru" flag of Japan brings up very unpleasant images from Imperial Japan's past. Such feelings are, of course, the impetus behind calls for Japan to change its flag (as well as its national anthem) to symbolize a clean break with that shameful past. Postwar Germany did change both its flag and anthem, but Japan kept theirs intact. It is not my purpose to go into the various historical reasons behind either country's decisions, but the reality is that Japan's flag will remain as is, and feelings against it are, I feel, gradually disappearing as the older generation dies away.

Symbols are in themselves neutral, and even the Nazi Swastika was originally an ancient Sanskrit symbol meaning "happiness", the very opposite of what the Nazis turned it into when they usurped it for their evil purposes. (The ancient Chinese used a very similar character 卍 (manji) to mean the same thing, and it is still used on maps as a symbol indicating a Buddhist temple!) Likewise, the symbolism in the Japanese flag is in reality a very beautiful one, and one I especially feel close to because I associate with the Keikyo (Assyrian Church of the East) flag.

In the past, Japan was like a beacon of shining light, and that is what the symbolism of the "the rising sun" should really

be. I truly believe that Japan has the potential to become what its flag was to be a symbol of. It all depends on how Japanese think from now on and the actions they take. I pray that the "Hinomaru" flag will one day symbolize in people's minds the freedom, prosperity and harmony the "rising sun" should symbolize. I pray that one day, the "Land of the Rising Sun" will become the "Land of the Risen Son!"

When Buddhism Was Used As A Tool To Take Over Japan

In looking at the religious landscape of Japan, there is much in its history that Japanese can take pride in. Within Japanese Buddhism, a number of great men have appeared on the scene. We have referred to several previously in this book, including Kuukai, Dougen, Nichiren, Hounen, and Shinran. There were many others we could mention as well. (Ken: For the English version, do you want to list all of the others listed in the Japanese too? It seems superfluous) The personalities of these men were, from a human standpoint, shining examples of the human spirit that shine beyond their religious affiliations. They represent aspects of history that all Japanese can take pride in.

There are many other aspects of Japanese history, however, for which no one takes pride in. Buddhism first entered into Japan from Korea during the 6th century, but in its early days, there was much opposition to it. One of the leaders of those opposed to the introduction of Buddhism was Mononobe no Moriya (物部守屋). His forces went to battle against his political enemy, Soga no Umako (蘇我馬子), who took on the cause of Buddhism as a political tool. This was, in a sense, the first "religious war" in Japan. In most such religious conflicts, the religious labels mask the political or ethnic conflicts that they in reality are, and it was no different with this conflict. In fact, it was the death of Emperor Youmei in 587 that set off this power struggle in which the religious affiliations were used as rallying points.

Soga no Umako was the second of 4 generations of the powerful Soga clan that served as the chief minister of the imperial court. Through marriage, the Soga family had ties with several members of the imperial court. In this battle, the Buddhist faction won and thus decisively took the reigns of power. A period of violent instability ensued, and the feudal lord Soga went so far as to assassinate the emperor Sushun (崇峻) in 592 A.D. Emperor Sushun was the uncle of Prince Shoutoku, who was then 16. Soga no Umako was now in power, but he was not directly in line to become emperor himself. His sister, however, was the wife of the former emperor, and so Soga

manipulated things so that his own niece could ascend to the throne to become Japan's first female "tennou" (emperor). Suiko Tennou (推古天皇) was thus a kind of "puppet" in Soga's hands. This, then, was the beginning of the use of Buddhism as a political tool and the beginning of its entrenchment at the seat of power.

This use of religion as a political tool was somewhat similar to what happened in Europe, when church and state became essentially synonymous. Christianity was likewise used as a political tool and many who labeled themselves "Christian" likewise used violence to control others. The main difference, however, is that in Japan, Buddhism was not made into a mass religion until much later. It was a religion of the elite and didn't become a religion for the masses until the late 12th century.

The beginning of Buddhism in Japan, thus, was not a peaceful propagation with the local people freely choosing to accept this new faith. It began in a violent way, and was used as a political tool to be made into a kind of "state religion".

Prince Shoutoku judiciously avoided coming in conflict with Soga, and he pursued various projects with great wisdom while showing great respect for Buddhism. In 593, at the ripe old age of 19, Prince Shoutoku was appointed regent by Empress Suiko, and she in effect delegated her powers to him. *(encyc. p1414) Under his leadership, a period of peace and development was achieved, but the peaceful coexistence between him and Soga fell apart shortly before he mysteriously died in 622.

After Empress Suiko's death in 628, a dispute arose concerning who should be the next emperor, with Soga's son, Soga no Emishi (蘇我蝦夷) and grandson, Soga no Iruka (蘇我入鹿) conspiring to keep their stranglehold on the imperial throne. While Shoutoku's son Yamashiro no Ooe no Ou (山背大兄王) was in line to claim the throne, the Sogas threw their strong support behind Prince Tamura, thus preempting Yamashiro's claim to power. Prince Tamura finally ascended the throne the following year as Emperor Jomei (舒明), and when he died in 641, the Soga duo intervened again to keep Yamashiro off the throne by conspiring to get the widow of Emperor Jomei installed as the new emperor (empress).

As Yamashiro continued to be a threat to their control, however, in 643, Soga no Iruka forced him into the act of ritual suicide along with all of the members of his family. It was, in effect, a planned massacre. The tyranny of the Soga family had reached its peak, and soon an uprising took place with Soga no Iruka being

assassinated in 645 and his father being forced to commit suicide the following day.* (encyc. p1442)

Throughout this period of upheaval, Buddhism was incorporated into the imperial cult with Buddhist rituals being included in the imperial ceremonies. Likewise, Buddhism became increasingly associated with the political power structure and thus became a kind of "state religion". It was not, however, a religion of the people until long after this, and thus was a social construct by the state.

As is always the case when religion and politics are combined into a state religion, the result is the decay and decline of that religion. This was certainly true in Christian Europe, as the church within the "Holy Roman Empire" became a corrupt institution. Likewise, just as this situation in Europe finally resulted in the Protestant Reformation, so too, there were later reformations within Japanese Buddhism, with several sects being formed that refused to conform to the political will of the state.

When the capital was moved from Nara to Kyoto in 794, there was still considerable freedom of religion, with numerous peoples and cultures being welcomed. Gradually, however, the Buddhist power structure began to take over more and more until it held a virtual monopoly over the city. The result was that many people of other persuasions decided to leave Kyoto for other areas of Japan. (Ken: It would be helpful to include an approximate date for this.) The city to which the largest number of these people migrated to was Yamaguchi near the southwestern end of the main island of Honshu. It was these people who developed the so-called "Little Kyoto" of Yamaguchi.*

It is interesting to note that many years later when Xavier came to Japan, the first area in which he evangelized was none other than Yamaguchi. These people were the descendents of the people who had known Kyoto before it was taken over by the Buddhists, and so it is likely that some of that influence was still around and was perhaps a factor in Xavier's initial success.

>From the time that Buddhism began to reign supreme, many beautiful temples and Buddhist statues were built, and so in this aspect the Japanese civilization continued to progress. Development of the more important areas, however, such as freedom, human rights, social welfare and social institutions, essentially came to a halt. This is basically what happens when any such institution gains a monopoly on power, since the interaction between differing concepts and cultures gets cut off. Thus, when any single worldview becomes the only

one allowed, further development is stifled since there is no competition and little innovation. It's the same whether in the business world or in the religious world.

When Japan was open to many peoples, cultures and religions coming in and making their contribution, it was a time of great development of culture. But when it began to close itself off and became ingrown, it went into decline. As I look at Japanese history, I believe that Japan is a country that has experienced a series of such openings and closings where its culture advanced and declined in several successions.

Why Were Prince Shoutoku's Family All Killed?

Let's take another look at what happened when Buddhism began its rise to power. When most Japanese think of Prince Shoutoku, they think of him in terms of being a man with a deep Buddhist faith who worked diligently to spread Buddhism. That is what is taught in the history books. After all, wasn't he the one who directed the building of famous Buddhist temples such as Houryuuji (法隆寺) and Shitenouji (四天王寺)?

But is this perception of him really true? After all, his family was all wiped out by the Soga clan which also supported Buddhism. If Prince Shoutoku was really the "patron saint" of Buddhism as he is portrayed in history books, why would this be the case? Part of the answer, of course, surely lies in the politics of the situation, but when we look at the circumstances surrounding the death of Prince Shoutoku himself, other doubts arise.

First, in 621, the prince's mother died, and that was followed 2 months later by his beloved wife. On the very next day, then, the prince himself died at the relatively young age of 49. While no direct evidence of foul play has been found, the proximity of those deaths certainly does sound rather suspicious—especially when the way Prince Shoutoku's funeral was handled is considered.

The normal practice for handling the death of a member of the royal family was to lay the body in a temporary shelter for a rather lengthy period during which a series of ceremonies were performed to placate and console the spirit of the deceased. Some contemporary examples of the length of time of this "mogari" (殯) period that are recorded in the "Nihon Shoki" (Chronicles of Japan) are 5 months for Emperor Kinmei (欽明天皇) and 6 months for Empress Suiko (who

had appointed Prince Shoutoku as her regent and died some 7 years after him). However, when it came to Prince Shoutoku, it says that this period was bypassed. Apparently he was buried within a very short time of his death. His death is recorded to have been on Feb. 5, and the Nihon Shoki uses the phrase "within that month" to describe how quickly he was buried.

It doesn't record how many days he lay in state, but one would have expected that for such a great man who had contributed so much to his country, a particularly long period of mourning would have been called for. That, however, was not the case. It is even recorded that the prince's brother, Kume no Miko (来目皇子) was given these memorial rites at his death. But it doesn't record any "mogari" rites being given for Prince Shoutoku. Interestingly, the Nihon Shoki records that when Emperor Sushun was assassinated, the normal protocol of mogari rites was skipped over and that he was buried immediately. Apparently those who murdered him (namely Soga and his cohorts) wanted to cover up their deeds as quickly as possible.

There is even a record of a scroll having existed up until the Edo period in a temple in Osaka by the name of Daishoushougunji (大聖勝軍寺) that contained a drawing showing Prince Shoutoku being poisoned to death.* Thus, the evidence points to the fact that not only were his family later murdered, but it is highly likely that Prince Shoutoku himself was murdered as well. So the question remains as to why it was thought necessary to eliminate both him and his offspring if, indeed, he really was the kind of "patron saint" of Buddhism that is portrayed.

One logical hypothesis is that the image of Prince Shoutoku being a man who did so much for the cause of Buddhism was a greatly exaggerated or even erroneous picture of him contrived by later writers for political or religious purposes. In order to evaluate this hypothesis, we need to first consider the source of our information for his traditional image. Prince Shoutoku is hardly even mentioned in the "Kojiki" (the "Record of Ancient Matters") that purported to be a record of events from the mythical age of the gods up through Empress Suiko, the very time when Prince Shoutoku would have been giving his "great meritorious service."

The writings upon which the image of Prince Shoutoku are based are found almost exclusively in the Nihon Shoki (Chronicle of Japan), which was completed in 720, almost 100 years after Prince Shoutoku died. The process of compiling and editing took many years, having been begun under the direction of Emperor Temmu (天武) in 681.

Many of today's scholars are of the opinion that while the person directly responsible for the deaths of Prince Shoutoku's family was indeed Soga Iruka, there were others in the background who were really behind it all. Historian Kobayashi Yasuko states in her book "Shoutoku Taishi no Shoutai" (聖徳太子の正体, "The Truth About Prince Shoutoku") that Soga Iruka was "manipulated by the members of the royal family who later became the emperors Koutoku, Tenji and Temmu."* She specifically states that these three were the "leading characters" in the plot to kill Prince Shoutoku's family.* The soon-to-reign Emperor Koutoku was, in fact, present at the scene with Soga's army.

When Koutoku became emperor in 645, he became a great benefactor for Buddhist temples and he was also the first emperor to actually include Buddhist rites directly within the imperial cult. By the time of emperor Temmu a few years later (his reign was from 673 to 686), such Buddhist rites had been incorporated not only into the ritual life of the court but also within general society. Thus, these people were instrumental in making Buddhism into a type of national religion.

The political intrigue going on during this period was quite complicated, as those who had backed Soga in his killing of Prince Shoutoku's descendents later turned on him, and in 645, the future Emperor Tenji killed Soga Iruka and Koutoku took over the throne from the Empress Kougyoku (皇極, who, interestingly, actually became empress again after Koutoku's death in 654, and served under a different name, Saimei (齊明) until her death in 661).

What is important to our thesis here, however, is that following the demise of the Soga clan, the emperors Koutoku, Tenji and Temmu solidified their power base and took over the reigns of political administration far more than their predecessors Emperor Temmu, then, instigated the compilation of the Nihon Shoki, and thus, if he was one of those who were actually behind the massacre of Prince Shoutoku's family, one wouldn't expect that the later writings concerning these events would be accurately portrayed. In fact, it is only logical that anything that would not serve the self-interest of those in power would be rewritten to make sure that it did.

Exalting Prince Shoutoku as a Way to Placate His Spirit

Why is it that these people exalted Prince Shoutoku as a "Buddhist saint"? I believe that it had something to do with the concept of "onryou" (怨霊), a "vengeful spirit." The ancient Japanese

(and even to a certain extent their modern counterparts) had the notion that when a person was killed unjustly, or even when a dead person had no descendants to remember them in religious rites, they became "onryou" whose vengeance could be wreaked on the living through various natural disasters, etc.

This belief in vengeful spirits is claimed by some scholars to have originated some 200 years after Prince Shoutoku during the reign of Emperor Kammu (桓武)* (some reference should be given here), but it would seem clear that it is much older than that. It is even referred to in the Nihon Shoki under the reign of Emperor Sujin (崇神), the 10th emperor listed among the "legendary" emperors, which would put him several hundred years earlier. According to the story, during the reign of Emperor Kammu, the "onryou" of the Shinto deity Oomononushi (大物主) brought on a plague. In order to quell the plague, his "descendants" performed rites to remove the curse that he had brought on the people.* (reference in the Nihon Shoki)

There is also a reference in ancient China dating back more than 2000 years of the descendants of some conquered people who had been massacred being ordered to perform such religious rites out of a fear of their vengeful spirits.* Thus, at least by the time of Prince Shoutoku, it would seem that this view that spirits who had no living descendants to perform placation rites would become "onryou" was wide-spread.

Prince Shoutoku was only one rank below the emperor, and yet all of his descendants had been killed. It is therefore only seems logical that people would think that he would become a vengeful spirit. And if he himself had been murdered, this would be even more reason to fear his vengeance from the spirit world. So, it is only natural that the political leaders would think that top priority should be given to placating all of the spirits of Shoutoku and his family through this kind of "exaltation" or "deification." Given their worldview, that was the thing to do. "Matsuriageru" (祭り上げる) uses the same character as a "festival" "matsuri", but with a quite different meaning. To utilize "matsuriageru" to its full effect, it was thought necessary for shrines and/or temples to first treat the deceased with great respect in burial, and then to exalt him or her as a saint. In its ultimate form, such "matsuriageru" would make that person into a kind of savior god. We can thus surmise that in doing this to Prince Shoutoku, they would have been thinking that this would placate his spirit and that he would thus not take revenge on the living.

In Prince Shoutoku's case, it appears that the exaltation of him into a "patron saint" of Buddhism, together with the

developing cult of worship that surrounded him, first began during the reign of Emperor Temmu, at about the same time that the process of compiling the "Nihon Shoki" began. It was also at about this time that Houryuuji (法隆寺), a temple said to have been built under Prince Shoutoku's direction, was rebuilt after being destroyed in a fire in 670. It was built even bigger than before and was made into the focal point of the Shoutoku cult.* (ency. 564) Tanaka Tsuguhito states in his book "The Origins of the Shoutoku Taishi Cult", that both the rebuilding of Houryuuji and the establishment of the cult of worship surrounding Prince Shoutoku were developed at the instigation of Emperor Temmu.*

So the picture that develops from this is that it was Emperor Temmu who instigated the ultimate exaltation of Prince Shoutoku and it was his sons that were the compilers of the "Nihon Shoki." Thus, it would be no surprise that the image of Prince Shoutoku that was portrayed in the "Nihon Shoki" would be one that suited their purposes.

A few years ago, there was quite a stir in the popular press when a philosopher by the name of Umehara Takeshi publicised his findings that the real purpose behind the rebuilding of Houryuuji was "to placate the 'onryou' (vengeful spirits) of Prince Shoutoku and his family."* Likewise, the author Izawa Motohiko wrote in his book, "The Paradox of Japanese History", that the actions taken by political leaders of that era centered around their belief in the principle of "onryou".*

Thus, my conclusion is that it was these political leaders who were responsible for the deaths of Prince Shoutoku and his family, and that they decided to rebuild Houryuuji and exalt Prince Shoutoku there as the "patron saint of Buddhism" in order to prevent his spirit and those of his family from taking revenge by bringing on some kind of divine retribution.

The Relationship of Prince Shoutoku to the Hata Clan

According to the official geneological records, both of Prince Shoutoku's parents had Soga clan blood in them. The official line, however, is not accepted by all scholars. For instance, historian Kobayashi Keiko claims that Prince Shoutoku himself was an immigrant, having come from overseas at about the age of 20.*

While such a radical claim as this would be disputed by many, it is an accepted fact that Shoutoku had many immigrant

associates among his immediate cohorts. Probably the most important among these was Hatano Kawakatsu (秦河勝), the leader of the Hata clan (see pages xx and xx). Hatano served as Prince Shoutoku's "right-hand man", and since he was the head of the large and important Hata clan, that would imply that Shoutoku had the backing of the entire clan. Likewise, Shoutoku's own son, who went by the name of Yamashiro no Ooe no Ou (山背大兄王) (or just Yamashiro Ouji, 山背王子 for short) took his name from the region in southern Kyoto the Hata clan made their base of operations. It appears that Shoutoku's son was raised within the community of the Hata there in Yamashiro.* Thus, this too points to the very close association that Shoutoku had with the Hata people. The conclusion I would draw from this is that Prince Shoutoku likely shared similar beliefs and ways of thinking with the Hata people.

Previously, in my exposé on the Hata people in chapter 1 (pg xx), I mentioned the port city of Akou, in Hyogo prefecture. While doing research there, I ran across an ancient legend to the effect that Prince Shoutoku himself was of the Hata clan.* (Ken: I'm extrapolating a bit here. Is this accurate? Also, I'm adding a bit here I got from Trent on this subject) Since in the ancient concept of "clan" (氏. uji), one could align oneself with a specific clan without having any actual blood ties, it does not necessarily follow that Prince Shoutoku would have been descended from the Hata people either in Japan or on the Asian mainland. I personally think, however, that he probably did have such blood ties or at least blood ties with other peoples from central Asia or the Middle East.

An interesting little sideline to this discussion is that the city of Akou figures prominently in the famous story of a much later age—that of the "47 Rounin Warriors", who were also called the "Akou Roushi" (赤穂浪士). These 47 warriors, who gave up their lives in utter loyalty to their master, were revered in Japan as the ultimate example of such loyalty, and up until WWII, they played a prominent role in Japanese education as a means of inculcating loyalty to the emperor in the minds of the people. This city where they came from, Akou, was a region that had a very high concentration of Hata people in ancient times. And as the Hata were known as a people who displayed great loyalty, I can't help but wonder if the spirit of loyalty found in the 47 warriors had its roots in the Hata. (Ken: let's put this paragraph in a footnote as it is a digression.)

Returning to the issue of Shoutoku's lineage, since the "official" lineage was compiled by the same imperial court that was putting together the Nihon Shoki, the evidence that can be brought to bear against the image of Prince Shoutoku as the "patron saint of Buddhism" likewise applies at least indirectly to the credibility of

his lineage. It seems at least highly plausible that this too is a construct of the late 7th or early 8th century and is part of the conspiracy to present Shoutoku as a Buddhist saint. Wherever the truth lies concerning his physical lineage, however, it seems safe to say that the religious and conceptual worldview of Prince Shoutoku and the Hata clan must have been the same or at least very similar.

As the general oversight of the country had been delegated to Prince Shoutoku by Empress Suiko, it necessarily follows that Hatano Kawakatsu and others of the Hata clan were heavily involved as well. Together, they pursued a policy of relative tolerance and freedom, and while such a free society is a noble goal, it does operate from a position of weakness. In the environment of that day, its roots were shallow, and so those to whom it would be a threat, such as the Soga clan, used their clout to marginalize Prince Shoutoku and to finally get rid of him.

After the demise of Prince Shoutoku, Hatano Kawakatsu escaped back to Sakoshi (part of Akou) in Hyogo Prefecture. He died there and his grave still exists there to this day.

In presenting this picture of Prince Shoutoku that is vastly different from the standard image, people will likely protest, saying, "But isn't there lots of evidence directly tying Prince Shoutoku with Buddhism?" It's my opinion that there really isn't, and so let's now take a closer look at the evidence used to make this connection.

Prince Shoutoku Wasn't a Buddhist?!

It is clear that in numerous fields other than Buddhism, Prince Shoutoku did leave quite a legacy. That is not what is in dispute here. What I am questioning is his supposed legacy of Buddhism. There are three main pieces of evidence supporting his deep connection with Buddhism that are listed in the Nihon Shoki. They are as follows:

- 1). The second article of the "Constitution of 17 Articles), which states, "Show deep respect for the 'Buppousou' (仏法僧, the "treasures" of Buddhism, namely the Buddha, his teachings and his followers, the priests)."
- 2). The claim that he alligned himself with the "Buddhist faction" that was fighting against the "Shinto faction" of Mononobe no Moriya (物部守屋)

and had performed formal prayers for their victory.

3). The claim that he himself lectured on the Buddhist scriptures and wrote a three-fold commentary on them entitled "Sankyō Gisho" (三經義疏).

If there were independent evidence to back these claims up, that would be one thing, but all we have to go on are the claim made in Nihon Shoki, which amounts to a kind of circular reasoning. With respect to the first point, the only article among the 17 that contains Buddhist concepts is this 2nd article. Scholars such as historian Kobayashi Keiko state that while the basic outline of this constitution was composed by Prince Shōtoku, by the time it was actually recorded in the Nihon Shoki, it apparently had been added to and modified significantly.* Thus, it is entirely possible that Shōtoku had nothing to do with that particular article.

The 2nd point about Shōtoku allegedly aligning himself with the Buddhist faction to fight against Mononobe, we need to see what evidence there is that Shōtoku actually had an adversarial relationship with Mononobe. In (location), there is a temple named "Daishōshōgunji" (大聖勝軍寺) that commemorates Prince Shōtoku. What is particularly relevant to our discussion here is that Mononobe no Moriya's grave is located within the temple compound and he was apparently buried there with honors. At the gravesite, a wooden statue of Mononobe is revered there and behind that statue, we find a statue of Prince Shōtoku himself. That would seem to be rather inconsistent with the picture of enmity we get from the Nihon Shoki, wouldn't it? Rather than an adversarial relationship, it would appear from this that Shōtoku mourned Mononobe's death and desired to protect his memory.

In her book, "The Truth About Prince Shōtoku", Kobayashi Keiko states, "The first explanation that comes to mind for the relationship seen in the placement of the two statues is that when they were placed there, the people in charge did not consider the two to have been enemies. ... It would appear highly likely that the "Taishidō" (太子堂, the "Prince Hall" within the temple complex) was not originally erected as an act of prayer for victory at all, but as a shrine in memory of Mononobe."*

The "official storyline" also has Prince Shōtoku having prayed to the Buddhist deities "Shitenno" (四天王, the "protector gods of the four directions") for victory in the battle with Mononobe and having the temple Shitennoji (四天王寺) built to commemorate the victory he won. Here too, there is no independent evidence that this is true. In fact, there is a theory that this temple was originally not

even a Buddhist temple at all but was in fact a type of Shinto Shrine called "Tamatsukuri Inari Jinja" (玉造稻荷神社). (Ken: We need to confirm the Inari Jinja part, as the kojien states that the first Inari Jinja was in 711, and started by Hatano Kimiuroku, which is well after Shoutoku) According to the story handed down within that Shinto tradition, Prince Shoutoku visited the "Tamatsukuri Inari Jinja" to pray for victory. Thus, this version of the story has him praying not to Buddhist deities but to the Shinto "Inari" deities.*

It is claimed that he broke off a branch from a chestnut tree and plunged it into the ground saying, "If we are to win the battle, let new buds sprout from this branch." Interestingly, this sound very reminiscent of a scene out of the Old Testament, where Aaron's staff sprouted buds (and even produced almonds) as a sign that God was with him. (Numbers 17:5-8). While not quite as dramatic as that, according to the Shinto story, the stick did produce new buds. At any rate, these two ancient accounts of Shitennouji are clearly at odds and cannot both be true.

The third point about Shoutoku having composed a three-fold commentary on Buddhist scriptures and giving public lectures on the subject is likewise of dubious credibility, as the evidence for this is again what is recorded in the Nihon Shoki. Among the inconsistencies that can be demonstrated is that the "Hyakkou" (百行, literally, "100 acts", but referring to all actions) that is quoted in one of the three parts of the "Sankyō Gisho" called the "Yuimakyō Gisho" (維摩經義疏) was something that had not yet been composed in Shoutoku's day. Likewise, in this context, the first large Buddhist temple in Japan "Asukadera" (飛鳥寺, or "Gankōji" (元興寺)) is referred to in a time frame it did not yet exist.* (Ken: my encyclo says that the name gankōji was given to the temple when it was moved to Nara in 718, but it was first called Asukadera when built in 596 by Soga Umako. So, is this saying that Nihon Shoki talks about Gankōji in Shoutoku's time when that name wasn't used yet, or is it referring to the temple existing before 596?) Thus, many scholars have concluded that the "Sankyō Gisho" was composed by later authors using Prince Shoutoku as a pseudonym.

It is apparent that the "Sankyō Gisho" was not the only pseudographic work attributed to Shoutoku. This phenomenon of writing some document and putting the name of a well-known deceased person on it to gain credibility was common in ancient times. One famous example is the "Gospel of Thomas", that was supposedly written by the Apostle Thomas, but which clearly came from a later age (and contradicts what Thomas would have believed!). Another example of this is the "Sendai Kujō Hongi" (先代旧事本紀), purported to be a record of the past put together

by Soga Umako and others under imperial degree. It included a preface attributed to Prince Shoutoku, but the entire work has been shown to be a fraud from the early Heian period (8th Century).* (kojien under Kujiki)

Likewise, the copy of the "Hokeyou Gisho" (法華經義疏, another of the triad), which is said to be the only surviving document written in Shoutoku's own hand, can only be traced back to the year 737, over 100 years after Shoutoku's death, when a priest attached to Gankouji by the name of Gyoushin (行信) brought the document to Houryuuji saying that it was written in Shoutoku's own handwriting. There is no actual proof that that is the case, and it is rather doubtful it wouldn't have surfaced much early if really authentic.

Concerning this point, historian Inoue Mitsusada states in his report entitled "Research into the Development of the Sankyō Gisho," "The concept that the Sankyō Gisho was personally written by Prince Shoutoku dates from the 8th century, when the religion centering around the worship of Prince Shoutoku was well established."*

The conclusion that can be drawn from a careful analysis of all of the evidence is that there is in fact nothing definite to even link Prince Shoutoku with Buddhism. The oldest evidence all comes from the Nihon Shoki. Likewise, the numerous other stories about the Prince being the founder and "patron saint" of Japanese Buddhism were written by even later authors. Thus, all of the evidence pointing to this purported status are based in the writings of later authors writing under the influence of the contrived cultic faith that had developed around Prince Shoutoku, and are thus totally circular.

Spreading Buddhism As a Way to Quieting Buddha's Wrath

During the battle between Mononobe and Soga, there was an incident in which numerous statues of Buddha were burned, and it would appear that this incident likewise played a role in the "beatification" of Prince Shoutoku. The understanding people had was that the spirit world directly affected the physical world, and so while "Buddha" would not be concerned with some minor affront of dignity, burning a statue of Buddha on purpose would be considered a major offense demanding a vengeful response. Examples of this way of thinking include two times when the great hall holding the giant Buddha at Toudaiji (東大寺) in Nara was burned down. In 1180, Taira no Shigehira (平重衡) and his men attacked Toudaiji and burned it down, and this was followed in 1567 when another war lord Matsunaga Hisahide (松永久秀) did

the same thing. Both of these men later died violent deaths and people interpreted this as divine retribution for their acts of irreverence towards Buddha.

Given this worldview, it would be logical to assume that because many such statues were destroyed in the conflict between the forces of Soga and Mononobe, the political leaders would likely conclude that they were in danger of divine retribution because of that. Likewise, they would also have concluded that Prince Shoutoku had become an "onryou", or vengeful spirit, and thus there would be a felt need to somehow placate the spirit world on both accounts. The way they could "kill two birds with one stone" would be to exalt Shoutoku into the posthumous position of being the "patron saint of Buddhism" and to also diligently spread Buddhist teachings throughout Japan.

Prince Shoutoku's Deep Relationship to the Hata Clan

So, what was Prince Shoutoku's actual religious belief system? I believe that it was most likely the same or at least very similar to that of the Hata clan, namely, a kind of "Christianized Shinto." The Hata clan had amalgamated Japanese Shinto thought with Christian faith to produce their own unique worldview. This can be seen in such things as the "three-pillared torii" at the Konoshima Jinja that they built and the "Uzumasa Myoushin" (太秦明神, referring to Jesus Christ) of the Ousaka Shrine referred to in Chapter 2 (see pgs. xx and xx).

With respect to Prince Shoutoku, among his accomplishments were the establishment of the "Kan'i Juunikai" (冠位十二階) system indicating court ranks with headgear colors, the "Daijousai" (大嘗祭, "Great Food Offering Ritual") that is performed at an emperor's enthronement, the system of giving Imperial names, and even the formal naming of Japan as "Nippon" (日本= "Nihon"). (Ken: Have I understood "Nihon no kokugou" (日本の国号) correctly?) It's important to notice that these all have to do with governing the nation within the context of Shinto and with related systems. Empress Suiko, whom Shoutoku served, made the following decree, as is recorded in the Nihon Shoki, "During my reign, we must not neglect the worship of "Jingi" (神祇, dieties of heaven and earth). All my retainers must worship the "Jingi" with all their hearts."*

This concept of government under the "gods" would presumably be something Prince Shoutoku would have been working towards as well. Within this context, it is hard to imagine him working

tirelessly to establish a "Buddhist state". He would have been aiming towards a centralized government centered around the emperor as the "chief priest" of the land. On top of this, then, he would have been aiming at a government that respected the human rights of the people.

The concept of a government centered around the chief priest was in essence the same as what ancient Israel, as well as the later Assyrian Church of the East had. The Hata people as well were people who desired to serve the "governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1). It would seem that Prince Shoutoku's understanding was similar to this and that his actions were based in this same principle, namely this "Christianized Shinto" worldview that the Hata clan exhibited.

Prince Shoutoku lived in a palace he had designed and built in 601 called "Ikaruga no Miya" (斑鳩宮). This palace was destroyed by fire in 643 and the grounds were later incorporated into Houryuuji, which Prince Shoutoku had originally built next door. Recent excavation has shown that a Shinto "torii" gate was a part of that compound.*

Likewise, within the Shitennouji Temple which was also built under Shoutoku's leadership, there is even today a torii gate, and it is apparent from ancient records that it has been there from ancient times.* Moreover, this old-style Shinto gate is not something off in a corner somewhere, it is at the very entrance of the temple. This main entrance of the temple faces the west so that those worshipping there would enter from the west, the direction of the Silk Road. Why is it that there would be a prominent Shinto torii gate at what is supposed to be a Buddhist Temple? Many of those who visit no doubt wonder at this as well, but it certainly does make one wonder whether this "temple" was not originally intended to be a Shinto Shrine.

The Acts of Mercy at Shitennouji Temple

Shitennouji in Osaka, a temple founded by Prince Shoutoku, was the location of the first large-scale public welfare institutions in Japan. As described briefly above (see pg. 89), there were 4 institutions collectively referred to as "Shikain" (四箇院, the "four institutions"). They consisted of a school having to do with religion and the arts, and three others more specifically focused on the poor and infirm, namely one which dispensed free medicines, one which gave free medical care, and one which housed the indigent. People in need who came to these institutions were served free of charge.

The question that arises, however, is what influenced Prince Shoutoku to undertake these projects of mercy. It's my opinion that without the influence of Christian concepts, such acts of mercy would not have taken place. I think it is not an overstatement to say that these institutions at Shitennouji were expressions of the spirit of the love of Christ.

Other bits and pieces of evidence that don't fit the "Buddhist" mold for Prince Shoutoku include his having directed his cohort Hatano Kawakatsu (秦河勝) to build "Uzumasadera" (太秦寺), the present-day Kouryuuji in Kyoto. In ancient times, this temple was likewise referred to by the name of "Taishinji" (大秦寺), with the only difference being in the first character (with大(large) instead of太(great)). The characters 大秦寺 are identical to the characters used in China to refer to Keikyo churches. Thus, it is apparent that the supposedly "Buddhist" Prince Shoutoku had the leader of the Hata clan build a Keikyo Christian church.

Another mold-breaking bit of evidence can be seen in the "Yumedono" (夢殿, "Hall of Dreams") that is part of the temple complex at Houryuuji. Within that building is displayed what is described as a "Persian" painting said to have been produced in Japan around 600 A.D.. In the picture, one can see 4 knights dressed in Persian clothing riding horses around the "Tree of Life". They have bows and arrows and are aiming at lions (see picture). This work of art is claimed to have been there from the beginning, when the temple was built under the direction of Prince Shoutoku. (Ken: confirm. Is the description accurate? Is it on cloth? Is it painted or woven?)

According to the records of the temple, this item was produced in Japan as a "battle flag designed in Japan during the regency of Prince Shoutoku for the subjugation of 'Shiragi' (part of what is now Korea)." (Ken: I can't find any reference to Japan "subjugating" part of Korea during this era. Please confirm.) There would appear to be little if any Chinese or Buddhist influence in this picture. In fact, it implies that there were Persians among Prince Shoutoku's circle of allies and that he was familiar with Persian culture. Persia, at least in the broader sense of western Asia, was where the Hata clan and Keikyo had originated.

After Prince Shoutoku's death, Princess Tachibana no Ooirasume (橘大郎女) (Ken: Is this his wife?) desired to pay tribute to him and had a weaver from the Hata clan named Hatano Kuma (秦久麻) to weave a hanging mural depicting him entering "Tenjukoku" (天寿国, a word made up of the characters for "heaven", "long life" and "country"). This mural

originally hung in Houryuuji, and the small portion of it that still remains is now stored in a nearby temple named Chuuguuji (中宮寺).

Concerning this term "Tenjukoku", it is apparently not originally a Buddhist term at all, and the nature of the picture itself is rather non-Buddhist. In fact, a researcher by the name of Tomiyama Masanori (富山昌徳) claims that this term "Tenjukoku" is in reality a term referring to the Heaven that Jesus taught.*

A letter written by Prince Shoutoku to the Chinese emperor begins with the phrase, "From the Tenshi (天子, "Son of Heaven") where the sun rises to the Tenshi where the sun sets. How are you these days?..." This is rather reminiscent of a common biblical phrase, such as is found in Psalm 113:3, "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised." While, of course, such a similarity may be coincidental, it is at least plausible that a certain familiarity with biblical thought would have inspired Prince Shoutoku to use such imagery.

The Ancient Globe in Ikarugadera

In a temple in Hyogo Prefecture by the name of Ikarugadera (斑鳩寺), a temple that has ties with Prince Shoutoku, there is a very interesting little globe that is obviously very ancient. The fact that it is representing the earth as a sphere is surprising enough, but it also has engraved on its surface the continents of Europe and Africa along with and Asia, including India and China. Their shapes are not surprisingly rather distorted, but they are recognizable. Japan is likewise featured off the coast, but without the island of Hokkaido.

The globe is carved out of stone, with the land masses raised in relief above the oceans. As to when the globe was carved, we have no clear evidence other than that it was many centuries ago. In the Europe of the middle ages, the spherical nature of the earth was denied, and so it has only been in more recent times that spherical globes have been made. Nevertheless, in ancient Greece, the spherical nature of the earth was understood, with even a quite accurate estimate of the circumference of the earth being determined. The first globe that is recorded to have been made was in 150 B.C. by Kuratesu or Marosu (?).*

The Islamic cultures of the Middle East were influenced by Greek science and apparently they made globes as well from very

early in their history. The earliest record of a globe existing in China was not until 1267, but it is likely that with the robust trade taking place along the Silk Road that such globes were brought from western Asia much earlier. Thus, even if the globe at Ikarugadera is 1000 or more years old, it would not be surprising.

Some have speculated that it was introduced during Prince Shoutoku's time from western Asia, while others have said that he himself had it made. It is referred to at Ikarugadera as "Prince Shoutoku's Globe." (Ken: this is stated in the caption but not in the text. Confirm) Whatever the case is there, it is at least plausible that it had some relationship to Prince Shoutoku, especially since it belongs to an ancient temple closely associated with Shoutoku.

We know from a variety of lines of evidence that the Japan of Prince Shoutoku was far more international than was true during later periods in Japanese history, with various recent immigrants from the Asian mainland, including many Keikyo believers. From what we know about ancient Buddhism, it is unlikely that the kind of knowledge represented in the globe would have come from that source, and so it is more likely that it had Christian or Islamic roots.

Making Buddhist What Was Not Originally Buddhist

In chapter 3, I mentioned the various stories surrounding Prince Shoutoku that were written long after he lived and how they incorporated numerous themes that would seem to have come from the Bible. Primary among these was Prince Shoutoku's having supposedly been born in a stable (even though he was of such noble birth, unlike Jesus!). What is particularly paradoxical about this is that while these stories are meant to paint Prince Shoutoku as a great Buddhist leader, they apparently draw heavily on stories from the Bible. What this indicates to me is that this aspect of him being somehow connected to the Bible represents the truth about him while his image as a Buddhist saint is a false image. Just like what the evidence points to for the Hata clan, it appears that Prince Shoutoku's actual worldview was a sort of Christianized Shinto.

This twisting of actual history for political goals is a phenomenon that is certainly not limited to Prince Shoutoku's image. Numerous other examples of history being rewritten to serve the political ends of those in power could be cited from not only Japan, but in numerous other cultures as well. If minor distortions are

included, we could probably say that every culture has done this to a certain extent. Nevertheless, the degree to which Japan has engaged in this practice is greater than most, and even today, the way Japan's history is being taught in schools continues to be a big issue, as official textbooks clearly distort events related to Japan's recent militaristic past.

With respect to this time period, we can see how Buddhism was used as a tool of political control and how things that were not Buddhist were later made to appear to have been Buddhist in order to serve that goal. One interesting episode my father related to me was what an art dealer once said to him concerning an ancient picture of a sitting Buddha. Using an advanced imaging device that can detect original paint below paint that has been added on later, he was able to determine that this painting had been modified sometime after it was originally painted. The present form showed this sitting figure holding in his hand a round object with a flame coming out of the top, but what was underneath that was instead of a flame coming out of the ball, a cross! Likewise, the figure had a cross on his chest. (Ken: not having a picture to look at, I'm not sure this a good description). It was originally a Christian painting, but now it was being passed off as a Buddhist painting. Unfortunately, I was not able to get the art dealer to show me the painting or document anything else about it because, as he said, he would get in a lot of trouble. Apparently, there are those who still want to hide the truth about the past.

I have even heard that there has been a concerted effort by a wealthy Japanese man to buy up various Keikyo relics along the Silk Road in order to make sure they aren't available for study. This again, seems to be part of the pattern of cover-up to hide facts that are deemed inconvenient. (Ken: We need to either document this particular point or drop it.)

Why Is It That The "Hokekyou" Became So Popular In Japan?

Since ancient times, the Hokekyou (法華經) has been particularly popular within Japanese Buddhism. As stated above (see pg.xx), the official storyline is that Prince Shoutoku regularly lectured on this Buddhist scripture. The Tendai Sect of Hieizan has specialized in its study, and the Buddhist reformers who formed the various new sects during the Kamakura Era (1185-1333), such as Hounen, Shinran, Dougen, and Nichiren, all studied its words.

This being the case, one would think that it would have

been important among Buddhist writings in India, where it originated, but that was not the case. It was of rather minor importance there.* Nevertheless, it became so prominent in Japanese Buddhism that it was a kind of "Buddhist Bible".

One Buddhist scholar gave a report at the Society for the Study of Japanese Religions on "Hokekyou Juryoubon" (法華經壽量品, number 16 of the 28 sections of Hokekyou that describes the "eternal Amida Buddha"), entitling his talk "The Concepts of Hokekyou Juryoubon and the Gospel of John." (Risshou University, 1935 *Ken: His name should be given) He said in his report that the concepts employed in Hokekyou Juryoubon are very similar to those found in the Gospel of John in the Bible. Another researcher, Tomiyama Masanori, said, "It is likely that the Juryoubon is nothing more than a reworking of the Gospel of John in the New Testament."*

One theory on how this apparent similarity arose is that when Christianity first entered India through the preaching of Saint Thomas and those with him some time in the later half of the first century, Hokekyou was composed by Buddhist leaders (late 1st century or early 2nd century) to meet the competition. Apparently, they desired to create a picture of the Buddha that could compare favorably with Christ.

In the Hokekyou, Buddha is described to have existed from all eternity in a very similar way to the "the Eternal Christ" of John. Likewise, the Hokekyou teaches that anyone can reach Buddhahood by following its teachings (a concept totally foreign to early Buddhism), and thus this is similar to the teaching of John (as well as the rest of the Bible) that anyone can become a child of God through simple faith in Jesus.

For these and numerous other reasons, the Hokekyou, among all of the many Buddhist writings, is the closest to the concepts revealed in the Bible. My personal opinion is that this is a major factor in its popularity in Japan. After all, prior to and concomitant with Buddhism being transformed into a tool of the state for control, many people in Japan had become familiar with Keikyo and its concepts. And in a later age, when Xavier brought a great revival of the smoldering embers of Keikyo and established Catholic Christianity, even more people were influenced by Christian thought. And so when religious organizations that did not tow the official line were suppressed, people had to outwardly comply. Nevertheless, as this Buddhist scripture had many parallels with Christian thought, it seems only natural that people would gravitate to it.

The various new branches of Buddhism that began during and after the period when Keikyo was prevalent in Japan (basically the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries) were begun by priests who were at least somewhat familiar with Keikyo teachings and who had a love for the Hokekyou, and each of those sects holds the Hokekyou in deep regards. Even among those sects that have been founded in recent times, this same trend can be seen, as many of them use the Hokekyou as a basis for their teachings.

As to why the acceptance of the Hokekyou in Japan would be so different from how it was received in its native India, I can only speculate. While its composition is clearly related to the introduction of Christian thought into India, my guess is that it didn't resonate particularly well with the prevailing Hindu mindset of the time. The cultural and historical background into which it was introduced in Japan was entirely different. If my thesis is correct that the introduction of Keikyo had greatly influenced the climate into which Buddhism was introduced and then used as a political tool, then when it became difficult for people (particularly the elite in power centers) to follow anything other than Buddhism, the Hokekyou became the focal point because it was most similar to Keikyo.

Recognizing Diversity

In the above analysis of how Buddhism was used as a political tool of control, I do not mean to imply that Buddhism or religion in general is bad in itself. It is the joining together of religion and political authority that is bad, no matter what the religion. No matter how good a particular religion is, when it allows itself to become part and parcel with the governing authority, it will be abused. That is just the nature of the beast. As long as fallen people are governed by other fallen people who combine political and religious authority into one, bad things are bound to happen. This is the story of human history, whether it be Christianity in medieval Europe or Islam in modern Arabic states.

It is basically the same as what happened during several periods of Japanese history, when Buddhism was used for political control or more recently, when State Shinto was likewise so used. Freedom was suppressed and societal progress was stopped and even reversed.

Ancient Japan had periods when diversity was recognized and celebrated, and it was during these periods that great progress was

made. Present-day Japan is in many respects at a crossroad. Will it embrace diversity once again? Or will it revert back to a nationalism that suppresses diversity? My prayer is that it will return to the principle taught by Prince Shoutoku in the "Constitution of 17 Articles" he wrote where he emphasized "harmony and mutual respect."

It is when diversity is suppressed and people are forced into the same mold that little forward progress is made. For when diversity is celebrated, we stimulate each other with different thoughts and something new and better can emerge.

As we look back at Japanese history, there is one age in particular when progress was stopped in its tracks, and that is the "sakoku jidai" (鎖国時代, literally "chained country age"), when the "Kirishitan" (Christians) were ruthlessly persecuted and Japan cut itself off from the outside world. It is to that era that we now turn to.

Chapter 7

Rekindling the Fire

Why is it that the "Kirishitan" Multiplied So Fast?

During the 50 years or so following Francis Xavier's landing in Japan in 1549, large numbers of Japanese embraced the Christian faith. When compared to the slow progress of Christian mission in modern Japan, where slightly less than 1% of the population are baptized believers, the rapid acceptance of the Christian faith was truly phenomenal. Why was it so different then? It is my belief that one significant factor in that difference was that remnants of the effects Keikyo Christianity had left in Japan provided for a receptive soil into which western Christianity (Catholicism) could quickly take root.

Traders coming along the routes of the "Silk Road" brought the first traces of Christianity as early as the late 1st century, though, of course, large numbers of Christians did not come until much later, with the coming of the Hata people and other followers of Keikyo. As documented above, Keikyo penetrated even into the Imperial household as well as the general society and remained in various syncretized forms, including several Buddhist sects. Thus, when Xavier came to preach the gospel, he found what were in effect "smoldering embers" of a centuries-old fire that he was able to rekindle into a rapidly expanding movement.

Several letters Xavier wrote to Rome remain, and they provide insights into the conditions he worked in. He said that whenever he preached about the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus, the Japanese were deeply moved and would listen intently with tear-stained faces. They would come day and night to listen to him preach, and so he recorded that he was so busy he didn't have time to eat properly and get enough sleep.* Other missionaries who came later described their experiences similarly.

Xavier described in glowing terms the way the Japanese were responding to the gospel more than any other people he had worked with. As described in chapter 2, through his encounters with a Japanese named Anjiro in Malacca and others, Xavier realized that the gospel had already been preached in Japan but had been mixed in with other religious worldviews, such as Buddhism. Previous to coming to Japan, Xavier had spent several years in India where there were still numerous

pockets of Nestorian Christians from ancient times. He would have been well aware that the Eastern Church had penetrated far into Asia, and so he no doubt would have considered it likely that they had reached Japan even without the information he had gleaned from Anjiro.

Thus, when he landed on Japanese shores in 1549, he knew that he was not bringing something totally new to Japan. He desired to build upon what was already there and to rekindle the embers that still remained. And that he did, as over the next 50 years or so, it is estimated that somewhere in the neighborhood of 3 million Japanese became "Kirishitan".* As the total population of the Japanese archipelago was approximately 14 million, that would mean that somewhat over 20% of the population identified themselves with Christianity.

This great success, however, became a prime factor in their downfall, as the Tokugawa Shogunate perceived the Kirishitan a threat and decided to ruthlessly stamp out Christianity and all foreign influence. When faced with the choice between death and denying their faith by stepping on the "fumie" (踏絵, "stepping picture"), a representation of Christ that all were required to step on to declare their rejection, many gave in and apostized. Thousands of others, however, chose martyrdom or were killed in various uprisings, with estimates of up to 1 million Christians being killed in total.* Others escaped death by fading away into the hills where they became "hidden Christians" or by escaping from Japan all together.

One of the destinations many such Christians escaped to was Macao. In 1999, shortly before Macao was to be handed back over to Communist China, I was told that unless something was done quickly, numerous relics of the Japanese Kirishitan would likely be lost forever. So I made a trip to Macao to see what I could do to preserve at least some of them. (Ken: unless this is expanded on a bit, I'm wondering if we shouldn't drop this. Perhaps it could be tied with your trips to China.)

A recent issue of (name of "English magazine") reported that one group of the Datehan (伊達藩, a feudal clan) left Sendai in a ship that was able to cross the Pacific to one of Spain's colonies, and from there, they were transported all the way to Spain. They were never able to return to Japan, and so they spent their remaining days in Spain.* The vast majority, of course, remained closer to home in various parts of Asia, and quite a few of them went north into the frontier island of Hokkaido, which did not become a part of Japan until 1868. I've been able to visit numerous sites where these fleeing Kirishitan settled, and it is clear that there were many.

Whatever the actual figures were, the point that is clear is that by 1600, the organized religious faith in Japan that had the largest number of believers was none other than Christianity.

Kyoto Became a Kirishitan City

In 1596, almost 50 years after Xavier arrived in Japan, a powerful earthquake struck Kyoto. Many people were killed in the destruction, and in the aftermath, when survivors went to Buddhist temples seeking funeral services, the monks told them that they would only do so for a fee. As the people had lost so much in the destruction, most could not afford the going price for funerals.

In the midst of this, however, the Kirishitan were offering to do funerals for no charge at all. Now, the average person does not care so much for theological hair-splitting, and so for the most part, whichever religious group is meeting a felt need, that is where people will go. The result was that the Kirishitans performed a lot of funerals and people were exposed to their message, with large numbers of them coming into the Kirishitan fold.

Up until that time, Buddhist temples had a stranglehold on the religious "business", and were charging "customers" hefty sums for their services. The idea that "God should be free" was new to the people, and so they came in droves into the burgeoning Kirishitan churches. I would imagine that a typical conversation of the time went something like this: "Just think! If God is supposed to be free, that means we don't have to pay some fee for every little service. So, what difference does it make which God it is? I can't afford the Buddhist God!"

As the result of the tremendous witness the Kirishitan gave during the crisis, a great "people movement" occurred, and practically overnight Kyoto became a kind of "Kirishitan city". In fact, people began to refer to various sections of the city as "Daiusu Machi" (ダイウス町, Deus City), the "Daiusu" coming from the Latin "Deus" for "God", the term the Catholics used at that time. One of these sections was given the nickname, "Los Angeles" (the angels), a rather familiar term today. The name "Daiusu Machi" remains even today as the name of a section of Kyoto.

The Kirishitan Spread All Over Japan

When Japanese hear the word "Kirishitan", most will immediately associate that with Nagasaki, where the Catholic shrine dedicated to the memory of 26 Christians who were martyred there on crosses is located. But as the map below (above) shows, the Kirishitan were spread all over Japan. Moreover, the greatest concentration of Kirishitan appears to have been in the area in and around Kyoto. Even the 26 martyrs in Nagasaki were not actually from that area, as they had been marched down to Nagasaki from the Kyoto area, with 17 of them having been taken from the "Daiusu Machi" part of Kyoto.*

Likewise, the famous Christian daimyou (feudal lord) Takayama Ukon (高山右近, 1552-1615) was the lord of the castle of Takatsuki (高槻), which was in what is now located in the northeastern part of Osaka Prefecture, just south of Kyoto. During that era, Takatsuki, Kyoto and Azuchi (安土) had so many Christians in them that they were practically "Christian countries" for a time. When a modern Japanese thinks of Kyoto today, the first thing that would come to mind would likely be "Buddhist temples." But that imagine would not have fit the Kyoto of this era. If anything, it would have been more accurate to call it a "Christian city."

The Kirishitan spread to practically every area of Japan. I recall my surprise when I first saw a map made by Prof. Anesaki Masaru of the distribution of the Kirishitan in 1600. It was displayed in the Nanban Culture Hall in Osaka, and it showed towns that were completely Kirishitan. These towns dotted the landscape from southern Hokkaido to Kyuushuu. The facts revealed in this map completely blew away my previous preconceptions that the Kirishitan had been limited to just a few isolated areas of Japan.

Defects in the Jesuit Mission

One major difference between the mission activities of the Jesuits and those who came earlier involved the financial backing of the venture. The Hata clan and other followers of Keikyo and perhaps even primitive Christianity who came to Japan had no practical means of maintaining any formal contact with their home countries. They were entirely on their own without any financial or other assistance from "back home." In fact, they primarily came to Japan seeking safety and freedom from oppression. While some were no doubt traders who returned back to mainland Asia, most were immigrants who planned to stay and make their contribution to society as permanent residents.

The Jesuits, however, came with the backing of European powers. Xavier received financial backing from the king of his home country Portugal as well as the "rights" to do proselytizing in Asia. Likewise, the mission activities of the Jesuits and others had an almost unavoidable link with the colonial ambitions of European powers such as Spain and Portugal.

That doesn't mean, of course, that Xavier himself was motivated by such worldly ambitions. He and the other missionaries really were motivated by their love for God and their desire to see the salvation of the people they served. While nobody's motivations are 100% pure, for the most part, their motivations were based in faith and not political ambition.

However, when missionaries have financial and other support from the state, then there is always the danger of their work being used for the purposes of the state. In fact, in practice, it would seem to be unavoidable. Thus, it is only natural that their work would become viewed by some as merely a precursor to European aspirations to colonize Asia. Even though the Jesuits seemed to be having spectacular results in Asia, it was only a matter of time before virulent resistance to their work would arise. This was particularly the case in Japan, where other factors conspired together to bring about the horrific persecution that later ensued. Primary among these other factors was the general fear on the part of authorities of allowing people to have ultimate allegiance to something beyond their temporal rulers. Christians became the primary target of such persecution, but they were not alone, as others who refused to give absolute allegiance to the feudal lords were likewise persecuted.

Unlike the earlier Keikyo believers who came to Japan, the Jesuit missionaries were quite intollerant when it came to doctrines of the faith. In their interactions with Keikyo (Church of the East) followers they encountered in India and other places, they were quick to label as "heresy" any beliefs that did not conform to their own, and they put tremendous pressure on such Christians to convert over to their Catholic faith.

The Church of the East, however, as it spread across Asia was far more tolerant in its approach. They had dialog with leaders of other religious faiths, and "forced conversion" was not their approach. In fact, much of the blame for the disappearance of Eastern Christianity in Central Asia was the forced conversion of Christians to Islam, which was primarily spread "by the sword."

The Beginnings of the Persecution of the Kirishitan

As mentioned above, during the years following Xavier's arrival in Japan, huge numbers of Japanese embraced the Christian faith. While the Kirishitan flourished, however, their chief competition, the Buddhists were quickly waning in influence. Temple income declined drastically, and the priests began to complain bitterly to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1537-1598), the shogun leader who had recently successfully united Japan.* (*While the normal practice would be to refer to someone by their family name, with the shoguns, it is common practice to refer to them by their individual and not family name, in this case, Hideyoshi.)

At this point in his career, Hideyoshi was favorably inclined towards the Christians, though that hadn't been the case a few years earlier when he had conquered Kyushu. In 1587, he denounced the Christian daimyo of Kyushu for their forced conversion of their subjects, and he ordered the Jesuit missionaries to leave. This, however, was temporary, and had no major effect on the continued rapid spread of the Kirishitan.* (Ency. pgs. 41, 1617)

By 1596, however, Hideyoshi's view of the Kirishitan had mellowed considerably—so much so that he even is reported to have said he might become a Kirishitan himself. So favorably disposed was he at that time that he even ordered the building of a church for the Kirishitan in Kyoto.* With the way that the Kirishitan had handled themselves in the great earthquake in Kyoto in 1596, he became even more favorably inclined towards them, and so when the Buddhist priests began to complain to him about their plight, he didn't pay any attention to them. The conversation between them is reported to have gone something like this: "It's just terrible! No one comes to us anymore!" To which Hideyoshi answered, "It's only natural that people don't come anymore given the bad things you have done."* (Ken: clarify. Is this actually recorded somewhere or are you surmising what the gist of these conversations was from more general information?)

The priests, however, would not give up so easily, and so they persisted in coming to Hideyoshi to try to find a way to put a brake on the Christians. "Lord, this great earthquake we experienced is the retribution of the Buddha due to the Kirishitan having spread throughout the land. The 'bateren' (missionaries) are really spies for 'Isupania' (Spain)!" Hideyoshi, however, didn't fall into their trap and criticized them saying, "Natural disasters like this happen in any age. You are all hypocrits who say black is white and white is black."*

It was shortly after this, however, that a very unfortunate event occurred that completely changed Hideyoshi's positive attitude towards Christianity. On Dec. 7, 1596, the Spanish galleon San Felipe lost its mast in a storm and was beached on the coast of what is now Kouchi Prefecture. As the ship carried numerous weapons, Hideyoshi had them confiscated. The Spanish captain resisted, and in an effort to scare off the Japanese, he bragged about how Spain would one day capture Japan and make it a colony. It appears that he even threw in a statement about how the missionaries were just the preliminary force to soften up the people so that the way would be clear for the military to come in and conquer.

Needless to say, Hideyoshi was incensed by this rash statement, and given the fact that the Spanish had already taken control of the Philippines, it was only natural that he would become highly suspicious of the colonial aspirations of the Spanish and other European powers. If the Jesuit missionaries had from the beginning made it clear that they were independent of any colonial aspirations and would in fact try to prevent any such foreign invasion, then they might have been able to allay such fears even with such an incident as this. But it was clear to Hideyoshi that this was hardly the case. Likewise, the internal bickering between the Jesuits and the Franciscans, together with the political intrigue between different European powers further exacerbated Japanese suspicions. Thus, Hideyoshi came down hard on the Kirishitan, beginning with the forced march to Nagasaki of 9 missionaries and 17 Japanese laymen who were executed on crosses in Feb. 1597.

The history of Christian mission from western countries to Asia and Africa has been one in which for the most part missionaries have maintained close ties with their home countries, receiving financial support and sometimes even military protection. Thus, particularly during the colonial era, missions had close, de facto ties to colonial policy whether it was sought after or not. In such situations as that, it is practically impossible to avoid the label of "foreign religion."

In contrast to this, the history of mission outreach in the early church, as well as that of the Church of the East, was one of financial and political independence, where missionaries made their own way and blended in with the local people. In the case of Keikyo, for instance, while it became closely allied with the Tang dynasty in China, it never acted as an agent of foreign powers. Its close ties with the Tang rulers, however, likely did play a significant role in its later decline when a new dynasty arose (somewhat akin to "the

pharaoh who knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8)). Thus, this approach is not without its pitfalls either.

The Japan That Turned In Towards Its Own Little World

The anti-Christian edict promulgated by Hideyoshi was carried over into the Tokugawa Era, with new and increasingly severe edicts being issued. By 1633, the situation had worsened to where the shogunate government issued an isolation policy that cut off almost all trade and intercourse with the outside world.

While there was certainly much more to these drastic measures than the regrettable San Felipe incident, I can't help but think of how that one misunderstanding played such a pivotal role in turning Japan from the open society it once had been into one of the most closed societies the world has ever seen. The old Japan, with its comparative religious liberty and openness to the outside world, was now a closed Japan under the rule of despots. The Japan that had once so readily accepted various peoples with their assorted cultures, religions and ideas, and then adapted those into a new and progressive civilization had now become a country of exclusion, oppression and persecution.

The first martyrs of the great persecution of the Kirishitan were the 26 who were crucified in Nagasaki. As I studied deeply into the events surrounding these 26 saints, I was deeply moved, and I found myself changed by that experience. Three of these first martyrs were just children! All but two of the 26 were arrested in Kyoto, with the other 2 being added along the way in the long journey to Nagasaki.

After being forced to walk for some 3 months (about 800 km) they finally arrived in Nagasaki to find 26 crosses that had been prepared for them on a hill overlooking the city. After a short rest, the preparations began for their execution upon the crosses. One of the officials there, however, could not stand it any more and he took aside little 12-year-old Ibaraki (茨木), and said, "Son, this is just too much. I beg you. Don't die like this. I'll take care of you. I don't have a fumie with me, but I'll just draw an outline of one in the sand here. All you have to do is step on it and you won't have to die."

I can imagine how difficult it must have been for this official. No matter how wrong he thought the beliefs of the Kirishitan were, this was just a 12-year-old kid. "How can we kill mere

children? What is this world coming to?!"

But how did this penniless child, Ibaraki answer? "Mister, if I did that, then it would mean I couldn't go to Heaven."

"What? You shouldn't think like that! Now, please, just step on it."

I still recall how deeply moved I was when I first heard how Ibaraki responded. "Mister, can I ask you something?"

"Sure, go ahead."

"Mister, which one is my cross?"

The official was astounded. "What are you saying!"

"Mister, which one is it?"

"Ah, I guess it is that small one over there."

"Thanks, mister." And he quickly ran over to his cross—the very cross he was to die on. It is hard for us modern-day people to imagine a 12-year-old boy being able to do this, but he knelt down at the base of that cross and put his arms around it in an embrace.

This story of little Ibaraki was told all over Japan and became well-known. After a few minutes, the executioners came up behind him, took him and then strung him up on his cross. From his cross, then, Ibaraki called out in his pain to the others. "It's going to be alright. Pretty soon, we're going to be in Heaven!" This child was encouraging the others, and within a short time, that is indeed where their spirits went.

"Which one is my cross?" He hadn't been coached as to what to say. It was just his unshakeable faith and that of the other 25 who died for their love of Jesus. This certainly had nothing to do with any colonial policy. It was just the pure faith of these simple people. They had something they were willing to die for.

When we think of our own lives today, can we say that we too have something we look forward to so much that we will lay our lives on the line? I wonder if we haven't lost that. This seems to be something modern Japanese for the most part have lost. But in times

past, it was not only the Kirishitan, but others as well who valued their ideals more than their lives.

Was the Shimabara Uprising Really a Revolt?

The increasingly severe repression of the Kirishitan reached a climactic point in 1637 with what has been termed the "Shimabara (or Amakusa) Uprising". This event, in which 37,000 Christians were massacred, has generally been portrayed as a revolt against repression, where the Kirishitan took up arms to try to overthrow the repressive government. Led by a charismatic teenager known by the nickname of Amakusa Shirou (天草四郎), these simple peasants valiantly defended their position on the Harajou Castle grounds for several weeks in the face of a huge army sent by the shogun. When their defenses were breached on April 12, 1638, all—including women and children—were slaughtered.

Before I actually visited the area in Kyuushuu where these people lived, namely the Shimabara Peninsula east of Nagasaki and the Amakusa Islands just to the south of that, I had been under the impression that this uprising was simply a taking up of arms by oppressed peoples. I found out, however, that it was really very different from that. Amakusa Shirou was just 9 years old when he was sent off to Nagasaki to study in an underground church-sponsored school that had still managed to survive. There he studied the Christian faith, and it wasn't until he was 15 years old that he was able to go back to his home.

While he was away, the persecution in his region became very severe, and the vast majority of the Kirishitan in that area had submitted to the required stepping on the fumie. When he first arrived in his hometown, he immediately sensed that something was wrong, as everyone seemed so depressed.

"What's wrong with everybody?"

"Shirou, while you were away, it was just awful. You have no idea how bad it was!"

"What happened? You don't mean to tell me you stepped on the fumie!"

"But we had no choice!"

"Oh, no! How could you?"

And so Shirou went around town, from place to place. "Did you all do it too?"

"Shirou. There was just nothing else we could do."

"What's with you people? We all truly love Jesus, don't we? What are you going to do now that you've stepped on the fumie?"

But as Shirou learned more about what went on, he began to understand why they felt they had to give in. The local feudal lord (daimyou) had become a truly evil man. He demanded unbearably high taxes, and whenever the local girls turned 13, he would have his officials come around to take them away, and he would then sell them around Japan and even overseas. In that way, many of the local people had been forced to give up their daughters.

When Shirou heard what they had done, he challenged them saying, "Don't you care that they've taken your daughters away? Don't you realize what that means? We are meant to go to Heaven, but if you allow them to do that, then we may just not be able to go at all. If they are going to take your daughters away, then wouldn't be so much better to let them take our lives so that we can go to Heaven?"

"Yes, you are right!" One after another, the townpeople began to think like young Shirou. To the people of that age, the concept of the difference between life and death wasn't the same as in our modern world. Since life was more like a living hell, accepting death as a ticket to Heaven was relatively easy.

So when the next official came to town to demand one family's daughter, that father stood his ground and said, with tears in his eyes, "I will not turn her over to you."

As he was the first to ever refuse, the surprised official said, "What did you say? I'm going to ask you just one more time. Bring your daughter here!"

"I'm sorry, but she is staying with her family."

Others in the village followed suit, and none of them would turn over their daughters to the official.

The Heroic Deaths of the Townspeople

It wasn't long before the soldiers of the Daimyou returned, and they killed everyone in that village with the intention of it being an example to others. That it was, but in the opposite way to which it was intended. This tragic event actually spurred a great revival among the Kirishitan who had at least outwardly abandoned their faith. They came together to rebuild a church that had been destroyed almost 40 years earlier. The word they used to describe this was "tachikaeri" (立ち返り, literally, to "stand and return"), meaning to come back to one's proper place. In other words, they were trying to return to the faith they once had and rekindle its flame.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to interview the former mayor of the town of Amakusa. He described what had taken place there some 360 years ago, and he used this key word "tachikaeri" numerous times. "Tachikaeri was their theme," he said. This former mayor was not himself a Christian, but he had taken a great interest in learning what he could about that tragic era of local history. As I listened to him describe all that he had learned, his repeated usage of "tachikaeri" was what stood out so forcefully in my mind.

This concept of "tachikaeri" is central to the whole purpose of my writing this book. I believe it is critical for the Japanese Church to learn this history if there is to really be revival. For the word "revival" to have real meaning there must be something to "return" to. One of the fundamental reasons for a lack of revival is that there is little understanding of what it is we should "return" to. When Amakusa Shirou called for "tachikaeri", he was calling for what we would call in the Western Church "revival." It was a call to return to a faith that once was.

In the context of modern Japan, I like to think of this concept of "tachikaeri" in three ways, with each definition applying to different audiences. For the Christian audience, "tachikaeri" is the work of God's Spirit in the lives of believers to bring them back to a right relationship with their Creator when they drift away. It is "revival", which means to bring something back to life. Thus, in the true sense of the word, one can only "revive" something that has previously been alive. Once faith has been born in someone, it can be revived if it later has become cold.

When referring to a person who has not yet experienced that initial spiritual birth—what Jesus referred to as being "born again"—it is not proper to use the word "revival" in reference to his or her experience. Nevertheless, I still use the Japanese term

"tachikaeri", but in a slightly different sense. For large numbers of Japanese who are descended from the Kirishitan and Keikyo believers, "tachikaeri" can represent a return to the faith of their ancestors.

One's ancestors are, of course, usually a mixed bunch, and so using the terms "returning to the faith of one's ancestors" or "returning to one's spiritual roots" can be a bit problematic. One obviously has to choose which "roots" to return to. And herein lies the third way I am using this term "tachikaeri"—namely as a return to a proper understanding of true Japanese history. This, then applies to all Japanese, irrespective of whether any of their ancestors were Christians or not.

I believe that a true understanding of Japanese history will free people from the tyranny of the politically motivated myths of racial and religious homogeneity. The Japanese did not arise from just one ethnic group, but are an amalgamation of many people who brought with them numerous religious and cultural understandings, including ancient Christianity. If Japanese society can "tachikaeri" to this true understanding, then people will be freed to choose to follow the truth instead of living a lie, albeit a "convenient" one for some people.

Returning to the "tachikaeri" of Amakusa Shirou, he sparked a revival among the downtrodden Kirishitan with a vision of the glory that awaited them in the next world beyond the misery of their present lives. If they could not live out their faith free of the tyranny of the daimyou and his cronies, then it was far better to die for their faith and receive the glory that awaited them in Heaven. This is what sparked the incredible bravery they displayed in the face of the military might arrayed against them. They had something to live and to die for.

As the might of the daimyou began to press in on them, 37,000 Kirishitan barricaded themselves in the grounds of the Harajou Castle. Most of them were women and children, and they were led by this same Amakusa Shirou.

The former mayor of Amakusa showed me many artifacts that had been unearthed from Harajou. It appears that the Kirishitan shot arrows tipped with messages out onto the troops laying seige to their fortress. Some of these are preserved, and as the mayor described to me the contents, it brought tears to my eyes.

He continued, "The introductory words of this one says, 'Under Heaven, the peasants, soldier and even the daimyou are all equal.' The basic message that follows, as it is addressed to the

military leaders, is, 'Please don't misunderstand us. We are not trying to fight against the system itself. We are willing to pay our taxes to the daimyos. But there is one thing that we cannot compromise on. We cannot betray Jesus. We cannot turn our daughters over to you. And if we cannot even be allowed to pray, then it is far better for us to simply go to Heaven.'"

It is for this reason that he never referred to this incident by the usual term of the "Shimabara Uprising" ("Shimabara no ran", 島原の乱). Instead, he referred to it with terms such as "the fight for justice" and "the martyrdom of Shimabara." They were simply seeking freedom of religion and freedom from repressive measures that violated their faith. Thus, it was hardly a "rebellion" in the usual sense. In fact, excavations of the grounds of the former castle have turned up little in the way of weapons. But a large number of crosses have been unearthed.

The remains of these martyrs lie scattered about in the weed-infested grounds where they fell. As I stood there on the very spot where they were martyred, I couldn't help but think that while these people may be forgotten, nameless people of the past, they are very much alive and in the glorious presence of God. They had been called back to their "roots"—both in a physical sense as they returned to the dust of the earth, but also far more importantly in a spiritual sense. They had first returned to their faith, and now, as creatures of infinite worth created in the image of God, they had returned to the very root of their being, to God himself.* (*True to their principle of trying to prevent the spirits of these martyrs from coming back to haunt them, the people living there (or should we say the officials?) built temples at the site in an attempt to placate the spirits.)

Human beings don't experience true happiness just by having a long life. True happiness comes from knowing why we have been given life in the first place. It comes from knowing one's Creator. These peoples' physical lives were taken from them at the hands of their persecutors, but in a spiritual sense, they found true happiness as they received their eternal reward.

In Shimabara, there is a memorial hall dedicated to the memory of Amakusa Shirou and the rest of the 37,000 martyrs. In addition to various artifacts, they put together a historical reconstruction of this event on video, which is played continuously for visitors to watch. The actor that plays Shirou has the following lines that he speaks to the audience. "We sacrificed our lives in the struggle for freedom and equality. Can you now say that you live in a world where freedom and equality has been achieved? If not, then our

struggle continues on."

Christian Influences on the Tea Ceremony

In spite of the severe repression of Christianity, a large number of "Kakure Kirishitan" (Hidden Christians) were able to maintain their existence throughout the entire period of Christianity's prohibition. They used numerous methods of keeping themselves hidden from detection by the authorities. One of the more interesting was the adoption of the tea ceremony by at least some of the Kakure Kirishitan.

The "Tea Ceremony", "Sadou" (茶道, also pronounced "Chadou", literally, the "Tea Way"), is considered to be a representative part of traditional Japanese culture. It's development, however, was closely tied to the rise of the Kirishitan and their later persecution. The ceremonial use of tea, of course, predates the Kirishitan by many centuries, having been imported from China. Many of the features we see in the ceremony today, however, came directly from the Communion Service of Christianity.

While the "Tea Ceremony" can be seen in a variety of settings today, it traditionally was held in a special tea house with a very low entrance. Each aspect of the setting and of the ceremony itself had a symbolic meaning. The low entranceway meant that all who entered had to humble themselves by bowing down low to enter. Samurai warriors would have to remove their swords in order to enter. In fact, once in the tea room, all social class distinctions were temporarily suspended and everyone was of equal status.

Tea houses were typically located in a garden setting, with stone steps leading up to the entrance. These, along with the water basin and stone lantern, also had symbolic significance, each indicating a willingness to serve: the stones to be tread upon; the water to remove dirt from one's hands; and the wick of the lantern to be consumed that a little light might fall.

The serving of the tea was done in a way highly reminiscent of the Christian communion service, with the sweet rice cake being like the bread and the bitter tea being like the wine. The tea cup was passed around to all present, with each sipping from the same cup in a highly ritualized way.

These elements were brought together by Sen no Rikyuu

(千利休, 1522-1591), who is considered the founder of the Tea Ceremony. The popularity of the Tea Ceremony soared during the later part of the 16th Century, and Sen no Rikyuu served as the tea master for the ruling class, including the shogun Hideyoshi. He was headquartered in the Buddhist temple Daitokuji (大徳寺) in Kyoto, but there are several indications that during the Kirishitan period, this temple became closely associated the Kirishitan. (Ken: fill this out a bit more. I can't remember the details) Zuihouin, a monastery within the larger Daitokuji temple grounds where Sen no Rikyuu lived, contains a rock garden where the stones are purposely aligned so that when viewed from the main side of the garden they appear as a cross. This stone garden is next to the rooms Sen no Rikyuu used and where he died. Likewise, next to the garden is a "Kirishitan Tourou" (キリシタン灯籠), a stone lantern that is subtly altered from the standard form so that its base has a buldge that makes it look like a "fat" cross.

It is unclear whether or not Sen no Rikyuu himself was formally baptized into the Christian faith, but it is clear that he was closely associated with people who were, such as the famous Christian daimyou, Takayama Ukon (高山右近, 1552 - 1615), who became one of the tea masters of the school he established. In fact, all seven of the tea masters of his school were known to be Kirishitans. For some unknown reason, Sen no Rikyuu ran afoul with Hideyoshi and was forced to commit harakiri suicide in his room next to the cross garden. Being in 1591, this was well before the main persecution of the Kirishitan began, and thus it would appear unlikely that the Kirishitan controversy had any significant role in that event.

The main branch of the school founded by Sen no Rikyuu is called "Urasenke" (裏千家), and I have visited their headquarters in Kyoto. I decided to ask them about the relationship of "Sadou" to the Kirishitans, and as I often do in such situations, I used the negative form of questioning.

"Excuse me, I recently heard a ridiculous theory about Sadou having come out of the communion service of the Kirishitan. There isn't any truth to that is there?"

The receptionist naturally looked a bit surprised, and said, "Please wait a minute," and she went in an office in the back. A few minutes later she came back and said, "While Urasenke doesn't officially endorse that theory, the head of the school said that he thinks it is true." She was kind enough to show me a number of historical documents, and in one there was a very interesting note concerning the eleventh in line of succession of the head of the school, Gengen (I'm not sure of the proper reading) (玄玄齋宗室), who it

says "preferred the use the 'Mitsu Torii Futaoki' (三つ鳥居蓋置, a lid holder in the shape of a three-pillared torii gate) patterned after the Mihashira Torii (三柱鳥居) of Konoshima Shrine." As described previously (see p. xx), Konoshima Shrine and its famous three-pillared torii were originally built by the Hata clan, and was thus related to their Keikyo faith.

It was even more clearly stated in the English explanation of the tea ceremony put out by Urasenke. The 15th in the succession from Sen no Rikyuu, Sen Soushitsu (千宗屋) (Ken: when would he have been alive?) said, "The Tea Ceremony is generally connected with Zen Buddhism. ... Actually, it not only received influences from Zen and Buddhism, but during the 1500's, when Sadou was being established as an art form, it was also influenced by Christianity (Catholicism)."*

He also described the stone wash basin next to the entrance of the tea room saying that it was similar to Holy Water in the Christian Church, symbolizing cleansing and purification. Likewise, concerning the low entrance of the tea house, he said that no matter who one was, he could not enter the tea room without bowing down deeply. A warrior could not carry his sword into the tea room, and this was, he said, to teach humility. He quoted Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Concerning this, he said, "I believe that the 'narrow gate' of Jesus and the narrow entrance into the tea house is the same teaching."*

Some time ago, I visited the Gotou Islands of Nagasaki and observed a communion service as it is still practiced by the descendants of the Kakure Kirishitan, those who did not go back into the Roman Catholic Church. Even though they could have changed their ritual back to its original form of bread and grape wine, they chose to maintain their use of fish and Japanese rice wine. During the persecution, through the use of these symbols, they could disguise the service as being simply an ordinary meal in the same way one could do with the tea ceremony. If somebody came to investigate what was going on, they could quickly conceal any evidence that it was anything other than a simple meal or an innocuous tea time.

Another of Sen no Rikyuu's disciples was named Furuta Oribe (古田織部), whose name became associated with the Kirishitan stone lanterns. One thing about these Kirishitan Tourou (stone lanterns) that really intrigues me is that several are located in the gardens of the Katsurariyuu (桂離宮) in Kyoto. This was a place of retreat for the

Imperial Family that was built between 1615 and 1624, within a few years of the beginning of the persecution. Once, when I visited the site, as I was following along according to the guide book, I came to a lantern labeled as a "Kirishitan Oribe Tourou" (キリシタン織部灯籠). A figure of Mary was carved into the base of the lantern with only the top portion being above ground.

As I was really surprised by this, I asked a guard who was close by about it. He said that there were 7 such lanterns within the garden complex and that they had been there from the time the gardens were constructed some 380 years ago. This really peaked my interest and without thinking I blurted out, "You mean to tell me that there were Kirishitan among the Imperial Family?" I guess that thought had never occurred to him, and he couldn't bring himself to give me a clear answer. With a look of desperation on his face, it was as if he were saying, "Please don't force me to say something like that!" I wasn't able to find out any more about these particular lanterns, and so I am still wondering what that is all about. But it is certainly intriguing that such Christian symbolism would have been included in an imperial garden during the height of the persecution of the Kirishitan.

Other Indications of the Spread of the Kirishitan

An interesting tidbit of folklore from the age of the Kirishitan is the story of the "sekimen" (石麵), or literally, "rock noodles." It comes from the area of what is now Fukui Prefecture, and is a story that is strikingly similar to the Old Testament story of manna from heaven. It is recorded in the annals of a man named Kiuchi Sekitei (木内石亭), who lived during the middle of the Edo Period from 1724-1808. He was an avid collector of rocks and travelled the country looking for unusual rocks. As part of his passion for rocks, he recorded all of the stories he heard in his travels concerning rocks.

Among the various legends he recorded was the story of the "rock noodles." "Long ago in Kaganokuni (加賀国, present-day Ishikawa Prefecture), there was a great famine. The farmers gathered together at the shrine to pray for their lives, and suddenly, the sky clouded over and white stones began to rain down. When they picked them up, they found that they were soft and sweet to the taste like honey. Several thousand people were thus saved from starvation. This continued to happen frequently, and when a lot of the sekimen fell, they understood that to mean that the harvest would be bad. And so they would store it up. During years when sekimen did not fall, they interpreted it to mean a good harvest, and they rejoiced."*

Needless to say, it is pretty obvious that this legend incorporated the basic themes of the story of God providing manna, a white, sweet substance that fell from above, to feed the Israelites in the wilderness during the Exodus (Exodus 16:1-36). Apparently, Kiuchi heard this story while visiting the area. While we can be certain that he wasn't able to add one of these edible stones to his rock collection, the very fact that such a legend would arise there indicates that people in that area were familiar with the biblical story. While this could have even been from some earlier Keikyo believers, it probably indicates that there were Kirishitan in that area as well.

(Ken: a short section follows here that claims that Nakae Touju and Matsuo Bashou were both kakure Kirishitan. What sort of evidence do the people who claim they were Kirishitan present? Something should be added here to give an indication of the evidence or these should probably be dropped.)

Despite the Persecution, the Kirishitan Survived

The prohibition of Christianity lasted about 270 years, and when Japan finally was forced to end its self-imposed isolation, overseas Christians had pretty well given up hope that there were any Christians left in Japan. But finally, the time came for the prohibition to end, and Christian missionaries once again began to come into Japan.

One church delegation from France came in the early days, before the prohibition had officially ended, (Ken: do you have a date for this?) to see if they could find any remnants of the Kirishitan. Perhaps it would just be some indication that their influence was still around, even though all the churches had long ago been destroyed. "Perhaps the spirit of Christianity might still be alive in the people," they thought. "Let's fall off a horse or something and see if anyone will come to our aid." However, several attempts at setting the stage to see if the selfless spirit of love that is taught in Christianity still existed all ended in failure. The Japan that had utterly crushed the Kirishitan had also crushed the spirit of the people, and to these foreign visitors, Japan seemed a dark and fearful land.

They were just about to give up and return to France with the report that there were no more Christians in Japan, but on the

day before they were to leave, they had an encounter that changed everything. They were standing at the site where a church had once stood when an old woman came walking by.

As Christianity was still officially banned, the delegation from France and their translators were under close scrutiny. The equivalent of "plain-clothes policemen" were always present, and people could still be arrested for even talking to foreigners. And so it was under these conditions that the old woman walked by. As she was just about to pass in front of where members of the delegation were standing, she said in a quiet voice without turning her head to look at them, "Do your hearts beat as our hearts beat?" (Ken: The book says, "Are your hearts the same as our hearts", but this is how you said it on the tour. By the way, how did the Frenchmen know what was said, as presumably, they wouldn't have known the local dialect or even "standard" Japanese? I would assume that they would have had to have had a translator, but would there have been any neutral translator (that is, not under bakufu control) that would have been free to make this connection? Can you clarify this?)

The old woman continued walking on without pausing, leaving the members of the delegation who heard her puzzled as to what these words could mean. The leader of the group happened to be elsewhere at the time, and when he returned, the others told him about the incident. Surprised to hear that someone had actually said anything to them, he said, "What on earth did she say?"

"Well, that was the really strange thing about it. She just said, 'Do your hearts beat as our hearts beat?', and went right on walking past. We couldn't figure out what it meant."

Having thoroughly studied the records of the Kirishitan from some 250 years earlier (Ken: I'm surmising this part. Confirm), he couldn't believe his ears. "But that just can't be! We've been searching all this time for any clue that something survived, and we've found nothing. It's been over 250 years since the churches were destroyed and the terrible persecutions began. They're shouldn't be anyone left!"

The others still couldn't figure it out, and said, "But what does it mean?"

The leader said, "That was a greeting the Kirishitan used to use among themselves!"

Thus, the delegation decided to stay an extra day to see

if anything else might happen. The next day, about noon, an old man walked in front of where the delegation was waiting and he did the same thing the old woman had done. Speaking in a low voice while looking straight ahead, he said, "Do your hearts beat as our hearts beat?"

They excitedly answered him, "Yes they do! Ours beat just as yours!"

The old man just said, "Oh!" and walked quickly away. But an hour or so later, people began to come, and within an hour, some 500 people had gathered. By evening, the number that had gathered at the ancient church site swelled to about 3000 people! They were crying with joy, saying, "We did not step on the fumie. They did so many terrible things to us, but we never stepped on it!"

The story of what happened there that day was reported around the world as big news.* (Ken: In addition to clarifying the language issue, we need to give some documentation of where this was reported. It would be good to include the date of this event and the name of the delegation leader as well.) In spite of having endured such horrendous persecution for so long, the Japanese Christians had not totally perished after all.

It's In Your Blood

Some time ago, I was on a TV program in the U.S. While the interviewer didn't say so directly, his attitude concerning Japan came across like, "Japan is really a strange place isn't it! People their don't seem to have any real faith, do they?"

I responded by saying, "Do you know what Japan was like when this country was just being founded in 1620? They were in the midst of the great persecution against the Christians, which was the most severe and longest-running of any such persecution in history. So think of it from that perspective. Those who had the strongest, most uncompromising faith in the world then were the Japanese!"

While it's true that these people were persecuted by fellow Japanese, these Japanese Christians were showing the deepest, most glorious faith of anyone in the world. So, the Japanese have this wonderful legacy in their roots as well.

Recently, while on a trip on the Shinkansen bullet train, I happened to be sitting next to an elderly gentleman. We struck

up a conversation, and I asked him where he was from. He said he was from Ikitsuki Island in Nagasaki. I had learned from my studies quite a bit about that region, and so I said to him, "Do you know that your ancestors there were all Kirishitan?" He was really shocked by that, and he began relating various experiences he had had as a child, such as things people said and being bullied, etc. Somehow, he had never understood that, and so now he began piecing things together, saying, "So that's why I experienced that!" With tears in his eyes, he thanked me profusely as we parted.

Why is it that he was so deeply moved? It's because he plugged into his past, and when you learn who your ancestors were and what they experienced, it helps you to understand yourself. In a sense, your ancestors thoughts and feelings are resurrected again in you.

I witnessed another similar experience when I held an exhibition of Keikyo and Kirishitan artifacts at the American Club in Tokyo recently. Among the people who stopped to look was a well-known Japanese entrepreneur. When he looked at the "fumie" (representation of Christ that the Kirishitan were forced to step on to renounce their faith or be killed), he was strangely moved. "I don't know why, but when I looked at the fumie, I was deeply moved in my spirit," he said.

I answered, "That must be because there were Kirishitan among your ancestors. Actually, the family name "Masuda" is a Kirishitan name. The famous Amakusa Shiro himself bore the family name of Masuda. I think you were somehow connecting with your ancestors there as you viewed the fumie. Your ancestors are there in your blood, in your genes. That is why you felt as you did and were so moved."

He had no idea that his family name had come from the Kirishitans. But when he learned that, he wept openly there before us. He thought of their great courage in the face of suffering and realized that all he was today had come through them. When one learns of one's ancestors and their trials and tribulations, your own problems are put in perspective.

Exactly how this connection is made in one's spirit with one's ancestors, nobody really knows. Is it in our physical genes themselves? If our genes truly determine everything about us, then it would seem to have to be. And yet, our spirits are not determined by our genetic makeup. We don't receive half of our "spirit" from each of our parents, as we are each a unique creation of God. Nevertheless, we do have a spiritual legacy we somehow receive from our ancestors. Perhaps it is through their prayers for us or in some other way that they make connection. Whatever it is, however, these examples

and many others demonstrate that their witness can have a powerful impact on our lives today. The testimony of their lives somehow crosses over the barriers of time and space and connects with our lives today.

When I first began going to a sports club for exercise, I recall feeling a special bond with that place even though I thought it was my first time there. Later, I found out from my father that when I was a child, he had taken me there often to play. I had no direct memory of that, but those fond experiences were still there buried in my subconscious. While that's obviously different from the spiritual bonds we can make with our ancestors, it is still a similar dynamic.

The "Museum of the Eastern Cross" which we have opened up in Tokyo will no doubt trigger other such responses in the lives of Japanese who come to explore their own roots.

Where Are You From?

Once while riding in a taxi in Kyoto, the driver asked me, "Where are you from?" Here I was, an obvious foreigner who could speak his language, and so he was curious to know.

I often play a little game when such opportunities arise. "Okay, here's my chance," I thought. "Well, where are you from? You tell me first, and then I'll tell you where I'm from."

He said, "Well, I'm from such and such prefecture."

"But what about before that? Where are your ancestors from?"

"My ancestors? Uh... Well, I don't really know."

"You don't? You don't even know where your ancestors came from?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't, but what's that got to do with anything?"

Playing my trump card to the hilt, I said, "Well, I don't know if I can tell a person who doesn't even know where his ancestors came from where I come from." Then after a brief pause, I said, "You know, people all over the world know where their ancestors came from. It seems that only the Japanese don't know."

I've seen it many times, but it is as though a veil is lifted when someone confronts their roots for the first time. He was really "blown away" by what I was saying. I had noticed from his last name that he was likely descended from the Hata clan. The Hata name has branched out into a wide variety of surnames, and there are literally millions of Japanese who are descended from them.

I said to him, "You know, you really do have some great people among your ancestors. Some 1600 to 1800 years ago, your ancestors came over to Japan from central Asia, which is now the countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tagikisatn and Turkmenistan. They had quite an advanced civilization, and they became leaders here in Japan. In fact, they were instrumental in building this very city of Kyoto."

"Turk...Turkmenistan?"

"That's right. Turkmenistan. Your ancestors were the Hata people, the famous immigrant community of ancient times. Some 20,000 of them came in one big migration. The former Prime Minister Hata (羽田) was one of their descendents too. He even has a family geneology at his ancestral home to prove it. While his name is written with different characters now, it was originally秦(Hata). The Hata clan was closely associated with the imperial family, and they had a very great impact on Japanese history."

"Wow! I never knew that!" He was really impressed. And when I got to my desitination, he hopped out of the cab and came around to thank me, saying, "Boy! I really learned a lot! Thanks!" He was so excited that he asked some children close by if they had a world map. "I want to see where Turkmenistan is!"

Ancient Church Sites That Are Now Buddhist Temples or Shinto Shrines

I regularly lead groups of people on tours of Keikyo and Kirishitan sites, mostly in Kyoto and Tokyo. While Kyoto has many of the more important sites, Tokyo has quite a few as well. But such sites really abound all over Japan.

Often there are temples or shrines on these sites now. For example, both the Karamatsu Shrine (?) (枯松神社) and the Kuwahime (?) Shrine (桑姫神社) in Nagasaki were both originally sites of Kirishitan churches. In the city of Mizusawa in Iwate Prefecture, there is a

cemetery called "Kurusuba Bochi" (クルスバ墓地) that is presently administered by a Buddhist temple. The name itself clearly indicates its Christian origins as the "kurusu" part of the name is from "crux", the Latin word for "cross." I made inquiry as to the origins of this cemetery and was told that in the days of the Kirishitan, there used to be a church and a church cemetery there. Since the Christians were left buried there without anyone to commemorate their memory, they were considered "muen botoke" (無縁仏, a Buddhist term referring to the spirits of the dead who have no one to "care" for them). In fact, as mentioned in the section on Prince Shoutoku (pg. xx), there was a generalized fear of the spirits of the dead causing problems for the living if they became "onryou", or "vengeful spirits." This is part of the reason why so many former Christian sites have been turned into shrines and temples.

Other examples of this abound. For instance, behind the Daienji (?) Temple (大円寺) in Hirosaki, Aomori, there are ancient graves with crosses on them. The priest there explained to me that the site where the temple now stands used to be a Kirishitan church. Likewise, in Nagoya there is a temple called "Eikokuji" (栄国寺), which literally means "Glorious Land Temple." This temple is located at the very spot where large numbers of Kirishitan were executed during the persecution. Within the temple grounds, there is a large, common grave (called a "senninzuka" (千人塚)) where those executed are buried. There are Kirishitan stone lanterns and even a museum of Kirishitan artifacts. The priest there told me that the site was not only an execution site but that there was also a Kirishitan church located there as well.

Another aspect of this phenomenon of ancient Christian sites now being the sites of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines is something that is seen the world over. The concept of "holy sites" is found in all cultures, and once a place has been designated a holy site, even if the religion associated with that site changes, it is likely to continue to be considered holy. A famous example of this is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It once was the site of the Jewish Temple, but in more recent times, it has become a holy Islamic site with the "Dome of the Rock" mosque located on the site. Many Jews hope to be able to rebuild their temple on that very site, but are prevented from doing so by the presence of this sacred mosque.

While this is obviously a special case, the same principle still applies in many other situations. The situation in India where radical Hindus destroyed a mosque because it occupied what they considered to be a Hindu holy site is a recent example. Some other spot simply wouldn't do, since it is that site that is "holy", and so

that is where they feel they must build their Hindu temple.

While the dynamic was somewhat different in Japan, of course, the principle of tending to maintain once-designated holy sites as holy still applies. A good example of this is the Amagusa Islands describe above. There were 51 Kirishitan churches there when the persecution began, and today, there are 52 Buddhist temples all dating from that period and located in the same spots. (Ken: confirm that. I'm just surmising about the dates and places of the temples).

There are thousands of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines located all over Japan that date from the 17th century or earlier. While I'm unaware of any hard figures that would substantiate what percentage of these were at one time Keikyo or Kirishitan churches, it must certainly be considerable. Given the official policy of actively trying to wipe out even the memory of Christianity in Japan, it is hardly surprising that such a nation-wide survey has not been done.

Even if such a comprehensive survey could be done, however, in many cases the evidence that a particular temple or shrine has been built on an ancient church site is inconclusive. For example, the main gate of the Koushouji temple (光照寺) in Kamakura is called "Kurusumon" (くるす門, "cross gate"). There is a symbol (pictured above) on the top of the gate that contains a stylized cross made so it could be explained away as something else. The explanation given at the temple is that this gate was donated by a Kirishitan (presumably before the persecution began), but there are also other indications of its Kirishitan background, including Kirishitan stone lanterns.

As mentioned above, the numerous Kirishitan execution sites scattered across Japan became sites for temples or shrines. This was no doubt due to the fear of vengeful spirits coming back to haunt the living, and so these temples and shrines were built in the belief that this was necessary to placate these spirits. Eikokuji in Nagoya mentioned above is a prime example of this.

The Kirishitan themselves, of course, did not believe that their spirits would become vengeful spirits intent on bringing revenge upon their persecutors. After all, their spirits are already with God in Heaven and are not wandering the earth as the Buddhists believe. Many, like Amakusa Shiro, believed that their dying for their faith would be immediately rewarded with the bliss of Heaven, and so they did not go to their deaths hating their executioners. Instead, they accepted their martyrdom out of love for God and his Word. Those who perpetrated these hideous acts, however, were no doubt frightened

by their own actions. They feared retribution from the spirit world and thus built temples and shrines on those sites. It was the same dynamic as was behind the building of Houryuuji to placate the "vengeful spirits" of Prince Shoutoku and his family.

Among the Buddhist priests of the day, some expressed sympathy for the suffering of the Kirishitan. They offered to build graves for those who were suffering martyrdom. They were purported to have said to such Kirishitan, "Don't worry about your graves. We'll make graves that include the symbols that you use among yourselves."* (Ken: What specifically is being referred to here? Have you seen such graves?)

A People Who Have Lost Sight of Their Roots Has No Future

The period of persecution of the Kirishitan was an age in which freedom and cultural development went into eclipse. It was an age in which practically anything that was recognized as Christian was destroyed. This included relics from the Keikyo period and related to the Hata clan. They were buried along with much of the memories of past Japanese history.

Thus, this dark period in Japanese history was a time in which Christians were not only massacred, but also many national treasures were destroyed in the process. If Japan is to be a great nation, these facts need to be recognized so that nothing like it can ever happen again.

Prior to Japan's persecution of the Kirishitan and its closing itself off from the outside world, it was an open-minded country. During parts of its early history, it was a land that embraced many cultures, peoples and religions and it shown like a beacon of light in the eastern world. It was once called a "golden country". That didn't only refer to there being gold in Japan (which there was), but also to the ideals it embraced. It is my prayer that Japan will one day reclaim that legacy.

I once had the opportunity to talk with Ogata Sadako, a high commissioner of the United Nations. When asked about the Japanese propensity for thinking of themselves as a "monoethnic nation", she laughed and said that this supposed "monoethnicity" was merely an illusion that Japanese like to indulge in. In reality, Japan came from multiethnic roots. All Japanese are descended from a hodge podge of ethnic groups that immigrated into Japan during its early history.

This is where Japan's vitality and cultural development originally came from. It is when a nation becomes a kind of "monotone" existence that the symphony of creativity gets shut down. When everybody is cut out of the same cookie cutter, development is stymied because little stimulation occurs when only one pattern of living is allowed. It is only when variety is encouraged that "cross-fertilization" of ideas can occur, and that is what gives impetus to development.

During the persecution of the Kirishitan, all Japanese were forced to register at Buddhist Temples in a system called "Danka" (檀家, literally, "altar house"). This system was an integral part of the attempt to wipe out all traces of Christianity by forcing everyone to in effect become Buddhists.

Prior to and during WWII, a similar dynamic was at work in the government's imposition of State Shinto. Again, a concerted effort was made to eliminate diversity and make the entire nation into one monoethnic entity.

Neither of these periods, however, represent what Japan originally stood for. At the very basis of Japan's roots one finds a multiethnic society. It is this type of open society that is the basis for dynamic and long-lasting development. I truly believe that the very future of Japan depends on its rediscovering its own true "roots."

Searching Out One's Own Roots

Not only is becoming cogniscant of one's national roots of great potential benefit, but so is searching out one's own personal roots.

I once had an interesting conversation with a coffee shop owner I'd become friends with. Compared to many Japanese, his facial features were more deep-set. His family home had been in the Fukuoka area of northern Kyuushuu, and so I asked him what line of work his family had been involved in. He said, "My family was in the weaving business."

"I had a hunch that is what you'd say. Your ancestors must have been descendants of the Hata clan. In ancient times, they brought the art of weaving into Japan. Weaving (hataori) is even named after them. The two areas where they were particularly concentrated

were in Kyoto and Fukuoka. They first came in a really big way some 1600 to 1800 years ago when about 20,000 of them immigrated into Japan at once." As I said this, his eyes lit up with interest.

I continued, "I bet you have a kind of restlessness in your personality. Is that right?" He replied, "Yah, you could say that. I seem to be moving on from one thing to another every couple of years or so."

"You've heard the expression, 'It's in your blood'. Well, I think that in your case it is. You're doing the same thing your ancestors did." I continued telling him about where the Hata clan had come from and about the great things they had done in ancient Japan. He was really excited about it and said how he would love to go see those places.

This is an example of looking for one's roots. Human beings need a sense of rootedness and the self-confidence that comes out of that. Learning about one's ancestors and the things they accomplished helps to bring out a healthy pride and the self-confidence that engenders. This is an important factor in what makes a person really able to contribute to society.

Some 25 years ago, a best-selling book entitled "Roots", along with a made-for-TV movie based on it, made a big splash in the U.S. It was based on Alex Haley's search for his African roots that had been taken away from him by the evils of slavery. American blacks in particular identified with the story. They learned that their ancestors were not just slaves with no identity, but that their people had an important history. This was an important event in the American civil rights movement, and it helped to instill a sense of pride and vitality in black Americans.

One of the purposes I have in writing this book is that you too may be encouraged to learn about your own roots. I think it's really great if you can even travel to the region where those roots were born. Or if that isn't possible, then getting to know people from that area and learning more about them will help you in your own development. It is my conviction that it is people who know their own roots who can best contribute to the future and to their own society.

One often hears in the western mass media discussions about how the western values of freedom and human rights do not seem to be able to take root in the Orient. While that may often seem to be the case in more recent times, when viewed from a historical perspective, we can see that in fact these values were embraced in the East well

before they became associated with the West. It's just that many oriental societies have forgotten the values they once had. (Ken: Do you know of specifically other Asian countries that did at one time share these same values? I got the impression that while ancient Japan did, others did not. Shall we emphasize that more?)

If there is one thing that I think Japan lacks today, it is that it has lost its true history—its true roots. In ancient times, various people groups searching for a new home travelled thousands of kilometers. They travelled to the East along the Silk Road routes. They weren't looking towards the "New World" of the Americas (which was unknown to them) but towards the "New World" that was the islands of Japan. You Japanese need to realize this and to take pride in this almost forgotten history. You need to find your true roots.

Epilog

Those Who Take Pride in Their History Have a Future

I often talk with young Japanese, and I often hear them complain about their parents, saying, "My dad is really old-fashioned," or "My mom is really out of it." (Ken: can you think of anything better for "dasai"?) It saddens me when I hear such comments, and I encourage them to realize that their parents lived through difficult times and that they worked hard so that even if their own dreams could not come true, they would try to make it so that their children's and grandchildren's dreams could be reached. In an age when people were just barely scraping by, they worked hard to raise their children as best they could.

So I tell them, "Take pride in your parents' old-fashionness." It is because of that that they were able to bring you up and allow you to pursue your own dreams. Our parents and our ancestors have a greatness about them, for it was they that bequeathed today's Japan to us.

If the Japanese could only recover the historical roots they can be proud of, I believe Japan could really become a great nation. Japan has had an inferiority complex towards the West, even thinking that "all good things come from the West." But it didn't used to be that way. The people that first developed Japan put together a civilization that in many respects was far ahead of anything in the

West at that time. Values such as freedom, human rights, democracy and ethnic harmony are thought by many Japanese to have developed in the West. While western nations have taken leadership in promoting these values in modern times, in ancient times, in many respects it was the East that took the lead in these areas.

This is especially true of Japan, as numerous peoples seeking the freedom to follow their dreams came to Japan to escape persecution in various parts of the Eurasian continent. In many respects, ancient Japan was like America was some 200 years ago. Seventh Century Japan already had a constitution that promoted these values, while something similar in the West didn't appear until the Magna Carta in 1215 in England.

These values of freedom, human rights, democracy, ethnic harmony, etc. were recognized in the "Constitution of 17 Articles" first developed by Prince Shoutoku. Thus, Japan doesn't need to just learn these from the West. It can return to its own roots to find them, and in the process develop a healthy pride in its own history.

This island nation of the Far East was a haven for persecuted peoples from the mainland. Japan was truly a "special country." Today, however, we often hear people saying they want Japan to become a "regular country." They want to become like other countries and emulate what they have. While certain aspects of this may be good, I'd rather Japanese recover their sense of being a "special country"—at least in the good sense of that term anyway.

In addition to my historical research activities, I also am very active in volunteer rescue missions. One group I began is the "Japan Emergency Assistance Squad" (What's the official English Title?). It is a relief organization that began as a result of a speech I made at Chuuoo University in Tokyo concerning the San Francisco earthquake of 1989. (Ken: is that detail right? It's not in the book.)

In 1991, as part of these volunteer activities, I accompanied a group on a Japanese government chartered flight to Jordan to help with the refugees resulting from the Gulf War. While there at the camp, one Jordanian said to me, "We would like to become like Japan someday." In what sense was he saying this? That they wanted to become a rich country with lots of consumer goods? That's what I thought he meant at first, but as the discussion developed, it became clear that he meant "becoming a nation that renounced war in its constitution." To him, Japan was a "special country." And that was something our team could take a special pride in. That pride can, however, be applied to much more than just the present. We can also

take pride in what Japan accomplished in its ancient past.

This is why I don't want Japan to stoop down to become a "regular country." It reminds me of ancient Israel clamoring for a king so that it could be like "regular countries." Prior to that, they were governed by judges in a special relationship with God. They were definitely a "special country," but they wanted to become a "regular country" with a king, and in the end, God allowed them to choose their first king, King Saul, much to the detriment of their nation. While there is a bad sense in which Japan's uniqueness can be emphasized (which was one factor that led them into the disaster of war), there is a good sense as well, and it is this that I hope Japan can maintain. (Ken: How does this paragraph sound? I've replace a short section in the book that isn't really logical with this, which I think is what you are trying to say.)

Coming Back to Our Senses as a Result of a Crisis

In January 1995, I was in Hachinohe in Aomori Prefecture in northern Japan working on a relief project and had just gotten back from a tiring night to get some needed rest. Then the news of the great earthquake in Kobe reached us. As I began watching the coverage on TV, my first reaction was a sigh of resignation, "Here we go again." I immediately got up to make arrangements to travel to Kobe as quickly as possible. (Ken: How long did it take to get there? It sounds like that would take at least most of a full day.) I met with the Kansai regional director of our relief agency, and we immediately went to the scene of the disaster. We were actually the first team into that particular area, and we immediately pitched in trying to rescue people.

The next day, foreign news teams from CNN, BBC, etc. began arriving, and so I was heavily involved in dealing with them. For the first 5 days, the communications link between the local emergency response headquarters and the outside world was limited to the cell phones we had with us.

When things finally began settling down, I witnessed the scene of a middle-aged couple walking among the ruins. The husband had his arm around his wife hugging her tightly and they held hands as they walked along. Their expressions registered the sense of relief that each felt due to the fact that they had survived. "It's been 28 years since we've held each other like this." "Yes, everything will be okay as long as we have each other."

Now, in Japan, it is very unusual to see an older couple like that hugging each other as they walk along. In a different context, anyone seeing something like that would probably think, "What do these people think they're doing out in public like that?" But in this context, as I looked at them, I felt a sense of joy. They had lost everything in the disaster, but because of that, they had returned to their starting point for a new beginning. They had rediscovered something very valuable they had almost completely lost sight of. Going through such crisis points is a difficult experience indeed, but often something good can come out of such events, as they often serve as a catalyst to bring us back to a new beginning.

In many respects, Japan has been facing a series of crisis points, and is becoming like someone lost in the forest not knowing which way to go. What is the cardinal rule to keep in mind when you get lost? It is to return to your original point where you became lost. Japan has lost its way, and so it needs to return to its original roots in order to pick up the trail again.

As mentioned earlier in this book, when I was talking with the wife of the head priest at Kouryuuji Temple, we were talking about where Japan needs to go in the future. She said, "What would be best is for us to return to what Kyoto was like during the time of Prince Shoutoku." During that time, Kyoto's population was made up of something like 70 to 80% recent immigrants. There were people from a wide variety of backgrounds ranging from those with light complexions all the way to quite dark complexions.

It is my belief that as Japan contemplates its future, rather than simply copying what other countries are doing, it would be best for it to move back towards the ideals it once held. Japan needs to rediscover its roots and to pick up the trail again where it got lost so many years ago. It would be kind of like the movie, "Back To The Future", where you first go back into the past, and then move ahead into the future with new direction.

Searching For One's Own Roots

I do a lot of counseling in my ministry, and generally speaking, the people that are the most difficult cases are those who never knew their parents. For one reason or another, when these people were young children, their families were split apart, leaving psychological scars on the children.

For instance, I once was counseling a girl who had been separated from her father at a very young age. It seemed, however, that she just couldn't move forward and everything I tried to do to help her was to no avail. Then, serendipitously, she was able to finally meet her father again. It was that meeting that transformed her and changed her outlook from a very depressed state into a far more happy state of mind.

It wasn't that her father was some sort of great man. In fact, it is not so important what one's father was able to accomplish in life. It is just coming to know one's roots that is the crucial factor.

Many of my readers have probably never thought about it before, but in general, most people groups in the world have a pretty good idea of their ethnic history of where they came from. Here in Japan, however, when you ask, "Where did your ancestors come from?", the answer one almost always gets is, "I don't know," or "I've never even thought about it."

It is my conviction, however, that for Japan to be able to take a leadership role on the world stage, it is imperative that as a nation, as well as individually, Japanese need to learn where they have come from. For it is in learning one's roots and true identity that the possibility of real change is greatly strengthened.

A primary motivation for writing this book has been to encourage my readers to learn about your own roots. For without knowing that, it is very difficult to understand your present. And without knowing where you are and where you have come from, you have little to guide you into the future.

The very research that went into writing this book has involved a personal search for my own roots. As I searched my own roots, I discovered how they were crosslinked so beautifully with Japanese roots via the Silk Road. That has been a life-transforming experience for me personally, and so it is my hope that the people of Japan will experience something similar. I pray that a veritable boom of learning about Japan's true history and finding one's roots will take place.

Japan is in a Position to Become a World Leader

As I bring this book to a conclusion, let's think

briefly about what role Japan should play on the world stage in the future. Japan's utter defeat in WWII has left deep scars in the psychology of its people. One of those scars is the masochistic notion that it was only Japan that did evil things prior to and during that war. That understanding, however, is in error. It wasn't only Japan that committed evil acts during that tragic period. Many other countries and individuals are likewise guilty. In fact, it wasn't so much that Japan itself started the war. It was the complicated circumstances that involved many countries that set the stage for Japan's aggression.

No one country is solely to blame. What is to blame is the very institution of war itself. There is no truly righteous war. War itself causes people to become more evil. During the war, Japan may have done some very evil things, but so did citizens of other countries. (Ken: I'm a bit troubled by this section. I have even toned it down a bit here, but I'm wondering if this is really how you want to say it. Is this just Kubo speaking here? For one thing, many Japanese that I know or know about don't seem to have much self-reflection about the war at all. In fact, they basically say this same thing and don't have the notion that only Japan was bad. That is the very issue with the history textbooks, as they try to remove Japan's responsibility all together and paint their aggression as "liberating from western domination" or whatever. I think we need to be careful here. We need to put our heads together on this point and make it flow so that the really good section that follows flows in naturally without us stating this rather dubious analysis here.)

Following the war, Japan renounced all acts of war and dedicated itself to economic recovery. In fact, Japan became one of the few countries in history that has become economically successful while cutting its dependence on military might. (Ken: even here, it could be argued that it was the very dependence on US military might that allowed Japan to prosper.) It is the only nation yet to have experienced nuclear destruction, and partly because of that, its people have come to hate war and love peace.

Other countries, however, have not renounced war and some continue to be involved in "war crimes" either through direct actions or indirectly by producing and selling the weapons people use to commit such crimes.

We often hear the mantra these days, "The present Peace Constitution of Japan was imposed upon us by the Americans, and so we need to change it." But this is not really true. In fact, after the war ended, the American occupation forces gathered together various

Japanese leaders and had them prepare a draft for a new constitution. What they came up with at first, however, was just a somewhat revised version of the old Meiji Constitution.*

As this was unacceptable, a new committee was set up with the mandate of drafting an entirely new constitution. This committee went back to the spirit of the ancient 17 Article Constitution of Prince Shoutoku and also looked at the constitutions of various other countries, adopting appropriate parts from them to write a draft of a brand new constitution. This, then, is what became the present Peace Constitution of Japan.

While it is true that the Americans ordered the Japanese to write a new constitution, it was the Japanese themselves who returned to the spirit of the ancient 17 Article Constitution of Prince Shoutoku and included the 9th Article renouncing participation in all wars. It was simply a reiteration of the principles of Prince Shoutoku's constitution to emphasize "harmony and mutual respect," and was thus not something forced onto Japan in order to make it weak.

I once saw a documentary program about MacArthur and the new Japanese Constitution. I was deeply moved by what MacArthur said concerning his own thoughts on it. He described his own personal background and even said that in one sense he thought his life was a failure. This was because as a soldier he was forced into killing people and bringing sadness into many peoples' lives as a result of war. He said, however, that if there was one redeeming factor in his life, it was being able to announce this new constitution of Japan, because it clearly placed sovereignty in the hands of the people. This constitution also renounced war, and while he realized that some people would probably think that this just isn't being realistic, he said that he believed that one day the spirit of this constitution would become the ideal of all the world and that it would lead the world into peace.* (Ken: Do you have any direct quotes available? Or are you just stating the gist of it from memory?)

He viewed Japan as a "special country." He thought that Japan was a country—perhaps the only country—that could do that. He was hoping that Japan would eventually be able to take the lead in accomplishing this lofty goal.

It is my view that the direction Japan should take in the future is not a military one. It is not even participation in "PKO" (Peace Keeping Operations). It is what I call "PDO" (Preventive Diplomacy Operations)—in other words, a foreign policy that uses diplomacy to prevent conflicts. It is not just trying to do something

after armed conflict begins. It is making every effort to prevent such conflicts from flaring up in the first place by diplomatic intervention which seeks dialog to further mutual understanding and to reach compromise agreements without war. Likewise, it is encouraging grassroots peace efforts through cultural and economic exchange and other such ventures. This is what the Bible teaches when it talks about becoming "peace makers" (Matthew 5:9).

Japan already has a presence in practically every country of the world, as they are a country in a position to do that. Their ancient ancestors who immigrated into Japan sought to bring peace, civilization and prosperity through grassroot efforts to that land. Therefore, if Japanese will only look at those roots within their own history, they will see what route they should take.

Japan is the only advanced nation in the world that does not export weapons. I recall an elderly gentlemen saying to me that when he was young, he thought the ideal was to become like America, but now he views things differently. America is a country that exports weapons all over the world, and so are other countries such as Russia, China and the various European powers. In fact, with the exception of Japan, all of the countries that attend international "summits" are countries that export weapons.

Such countries may extol the virtues of peace with their lips, but if wars actually did cease, their vested interests would be threatened. As long as it is "somewhere else", wars are good for their economies (as long as it doesn't disrupt their oil supplies), and so they don't really want to see an end to all wars. Thus, they cannot take the lead in bringing about world peace.

Such a country that "likes war" is what I call a "regular country." A "special country" in this context is a country that loves peace, and I mean by that a "true peace." In Japanese, there are two words for "peace", "heiwa" (平和) and "wahei" (和平), which both use the same characters but in opposite order. "Wahei" is "passive peace", in the sense that it is simply an absence of active warfare. On the other hand, "heiwa" is an active peace. The difference between the two is similar to the difference between "peace keeping" and "peace making". "Peace keeping" is rather like trying to keep the lid on a pressure cooker, while "peace making" is turning off the fire underneath the pot. That is the kind of role that Japan has the potential of playing. It can be a truly "special country" if it will only return to this aspect of its roots.

If it gives up this ideal that is at least partially

espoused in its Peace Constitution, it will degenerate into a "regular country," and if it does that, I fear the consequences. But if it lives up to its potential, Japan can be a country that leads the rest of the world into peace and prosperity. It is my prayer that Japan will rediscover that rich heritage that is hers and return to her original ideals. (Ken: These last 2 paragraphs express the same general ideas that are in the book, but they're my own composition and rather different from the Japanese.)

I would like to close with a short prayer:

God, I don't really know you.

I don't really know if you are even there.

I don't yet know the past or who my ancestors were.

But if you really exist, I do want to come to know you.

I pray that you will reveal the truth to me.

If you reveal yourself to me, I will believe in you and I will follow you,

if Christ really did die for my sins on the cross.