

Modernization, Anti-Modernism, and Modernity: The Failure of Catholicism in Japan 1865-1925

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パリの海外布教協会のフランスカトリック教の宣教師は、ひじょうに大きな期待を抱いて1860年代に日本における宣教活動を始めた。しかしながら、1920年代にはこれらの期待は幻想であって、宣教活動は相対的に失敗であったことが明らかになった。この論文は、フランスと日本におけるこれらの失敗の理由を検討する。教会は、日本政府にとっても十分魅力を持ちうる、近代化と近代性の分離に関する明らかなモデルを提示した。しかしながら、そのモデルは、最終的には、適用に失敗したフランスそのものに近すぎたことと、日本における土着性の弱さという欠点をもっていた。

The French Catholic missionaries from the Société des missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) began their mission in Japan in the 1860s with high hopes which appeared to be justified. By the 1920s it was obvious that these hopes were illusory and that the mission was a relative failure. This article looks at the reasons why this was the case finding reasons both in France and in Japan. Though the MEP presented a clear model of the separation between modernization and Modernism, which could have been attractive to a Japanese government wanting to do the same, it was in the end flawed by its being too closely tied to France (where it had not succeeded) and by its non-indigenous nature in Japan.

In December 1864, Pope Pius IX solemnly issued the "Syllabus of Errors" composed of a list of eighty widespread errors which were to be condemned by all right thinking Catholics. Many of these are of relevance to the MEP¹ mission in Japan, but perhaps the last one summarizes many of them: (it is an error to say that) "The Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and adapt himself to progress, liberalism, and the modern civilization".² Just a few months after this (in March 1865) a group of poor Japanese approached Father Petitjean in his newly built church in Nagasaki. Their words astonished him: "The hearts of all of us here are the same as yours".³ It was on the dual basis of these two events that the MEP mission set out to promote Catholicism in the newly "opened" Japan. The purpose of this paper is to analyze what this meant and why the mission failed.

The Missionaries

The MEP missionaries were, like the Society of Jesus, explicitly linked in direct obedience to the papacy. Unlike the Society of Jesus however, they were also very much of a national society not an international one. Their personnel were exclusively French (except for a very small number of other European francophones) and they were very much tied to the French Catholic Church, in fact to the Ultramontane party of this church.⁴ Their origins lay in the combined enthusiasms of Tridentine Catholicism to expand the faith and of the French

¹ Société des missions étrangères de Paris.

² Henricus Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 35th edition. (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 258.

³ Francisque Marnas, *La "Religion de Jésus" Ressuscitée au Japon* 2 vols. (Paris: Seminaire des missions étrangères, 1931), 530.

⁴ Austin Gough, *Paris and Rome: The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign 1848-1853* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

monarchy to expand its areas of influence overseas, in this case in Asia.⁵ Under the Bourbons this partnership had been a relatively easy one. Though the Catholic Church in France remained largely Gallican in outlook and practice, the papally oriented MEP was a suitable and willing partner in promoting these dual enthusiasms. Though not a numerically large society its work in China and Southeast Asia was appreciated by both Paris and Rome, especially after the problems of the Society of Jesus with the “Chinese Rites” issue.⁶ The MEP enjoyed the easy relations of church and crown in France in the eighteenth century, though the weakness of this easiness is perhaps revealed in the small size of the society reflecting a certain lack of enthusiasm in the contemporary French church. Of course, alongside the party of the “dévots” of which the MEP were a part, the very tendencies denounced by Pius IX (Deism, Naturalism, Rationalism, etc) were growing at a far greater rate. The relatively cozy existence enjoyed by the French Church and the MEP was dramatically terminated by the French Revolution.

The impact of the Revolution on the French Church is a well-studied subject. For the MEP, the importance of this impact was largely two-fold: one on the MEP directly and two on the French Church as a whole which then in turn shaped the MEP in both attitudes and actions. In terms of the MEP alone, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1791 was rejected by them (as it was by the Pope) and they refused to preach the required sermon supporting the state. The priests of the MEP left their seminary in Paris in 1792 to shelter with their families or in exile from France. The seminary became the property of the state and was used as a barracks until it was bought in 1796 by an ex-nun who held it in trust for the MEP. The rise of Napoleon brought better times. The chapel was re-opened in 1802 and the seminary itself was reestablished by Imperial Decree in 1805.⁷ Both of these actions reflected Napoleon’s dawning realization of the importance of French missionaries overseas and the new climate created by the Concordat between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII in 1801.⁸ The reestablishment of the seminary remained largely theoretical in these troubled times as did its second closure in 1809. In 1815 however, with the return of the Bourbon monarchy, the seminary and the MEP were once again firmly established as if nothing had happened. But a great deal had happened to the church in France that would shape the MEP and its missionaries in the years to come.

The church in France had been violently exposed to assault not only in terms of property, personnel, and its relationship to state and society but also to a fundamental challenge to its ideas and the very basis of its existence. Property could, in some measure, be reclaimed or replaced. New personnel could be recruited and at least some of the losses could be transformed into martyr-role models. A viable relationship between church and state could also be re-achieved, though the Concordat remained a source of dissatisfaction for many Catholics. What was not possible was an acceptance of philosophies and resultant practices that clearly appeared to question the Catholic faith itself. The Catholic Church in France had been rudely awakened to the power of these new ideas and was resolved to confront them.⁹ In doing so, the trajectory of the revolution itself gave cause for some confidence. Not only had the revolution appeared to burn itself out in bloodshed and self-destruction, but it had also been directed and propagated by only a small group defined clearly along social and even geographic lines. For these individuals, the revolution and its ideologies represented an irreversible break from the past. The gulf between present and past could never be re-crossed. This realization is a good definition of what it means to be modern. Arguably, a large portion of France had never truly experienced this feeling of an irreversible break and therefore was not (yet) modern. Certainly this was the

⁵ Jean Guenno, *Missions étrangères de Paris* (Paris: Fayard, 1986).

⁶ George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1985).

⁷ Guenno, 235.

⁸ Bernard Ardura, *Le Concordat entre Pie VII et Bonaparte* (Paris: Cerf, 2001).

⁹ John McManners, *Church and State in France 1870-1914* (London: SPCK, 1972).

case for much of rural France (which means most of France in 1815) and for the people who lived there.¹⁰ The ideas of the French Revolution were truly modern in this sense, but it was a modernity which was not a product of the majority of French society. Neither was it a product of modernization, which can be defined as a change in material things which may (or may not) lead to modernity as exemplified by the ideas of the French Revolution.

The Catholic Church in France, along with Pope Pius IX, rejected the package of ideas associated with the revolution, the basis of which would subsequently be condemned by his successor as "Modernism".¹¹ As yet it had little or no experience of modernization. In France, modernism was the precursor of modernization but in other places the sequence could be reversed. The MEP following the restoration of the Bourbons was recruited from those very areas of rural France in which modernization had not happened and in which Modernism was seen as an alien and disruptive set of ideas. It would be a mistake, however, to consider them as merely reactionaries or conservatives. The point was not the rejection of "merely" material change or modernization but the rejection of Modernism, the MEP were not Amish in soutanes. They could not accept the existence of an uncrossable gulf between the past and the "modern" because it was not truly possible. If history represented (as they believed) the story of the unfolding of man's relationship with God, then such a gulf was both morally unthinkable and theoretically impossible. They basically believed in separating Modernism from modernization (and maintaining the separation) and in rejecting the former while accepting (or taming) the latter. In post-revolutionary France, this seemed far from an impossible ideal. With the advent of the regime of Napoleon III it gained additional credence.

The Concordat Church was divided between those who truly expected a return to the "status quo ante" and those who wanted something new, between Gallicans and Ultramontanes. The MEP was clearly on the Ultramontane side, as its constitutional allegiance to the Pope would dictate. The two sides contested for control of the Catholic Church in France from 1815 onwards, but it was a fundamentally lost cause for the Gallicans. In 1822, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was founded in France, which united the Ultramontane party to the missionary effort. With the restoration of the Empire in 1852, this became a more and more fruitful union for the church in general and for the MEP in particular. The new emperor was concerned both with maintaining a good relationship with the papacy and with furthering French overseas interests. These in turn meant favoring an increasingly Ultramontane church and hierarchy and encouraging the MEP. The results of all of these factors can be seen in the significant increase in recruitment to the MEP reliant, as always, on specific geographic and social milieus.¹² MEP missionaries were trained in a fervently Ultramontane environment that was also fervently French as were most Catholic priests in France.¹³ While strongly rejecting what would later be labeled as Modernism, they were lacking in experience of modernization. However, their rejection of Modernism was based on the principles of the Ultramontane Catholicism in which they had been schooled while their hesitancy about modernization was based on the social conservatism of the geographic and social groups from which they were recruited. Their rejection of an idea of progress that represented an irreversible rupture with the past made them favor as much continuity as was possible. Their rejection of "traditional" Gallicanism made them favor ordered and hierarchic change and modernization. The experiences of the revolution had molded the MEP as a society and its individual members. It was this group of men who arrived in Japan in 1859 to commence their mission.

¹⁰ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1976).

¹¹ Henricus Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 35th edition. (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 668, 675, 688.

¹² Míchéal Thompson, "The Geography of Recruitment to the Missions étrangères de Paris 1891-1941" *Comparative Culture* 7 (2001): 1-22.

¹³ Marcel Launay, *Les séminaires français aux XIXe et Xxe siècles* (Paris: Cerf, 2003).

The Beginnings of the Mission to Japan¹⁴

For most Europeans and Americans, Japan in 1859 and for years afterwards was an exotic and unknown country.¹⁵ To the extent that some elements of Japanese society seemed familiar, it was because they seemed like Europe in the Middle Ages. In the age of Walter Scott this could only add to their exoticism and romantic appeal. Japan was not only culturally and geographically distant, but possibly existed on a different chronological plane as well. Alongside this sense of the otherness of Japan went some hard-nosed calculations by some hard-nosed men. Japan was “opened” as part of the ongoing creation of a global and imperialist system and no amount of feudal mystique should be allowed to stand in the way of “progress”. Walter Scott’s Highlanders were romantic because they were imaginary creatures from the past and they were expected to remain there. A large proportion of the real Highlanders were economic migrants on their way out of Scotland as the new elite of Scotland dressed themselves in tartan to celebrate the progressive nature of the United Kingdom and its burgeoning empire.¹⁶ Neither the Highlanders nor the Japanese could oppose the inexorable laws of development and both would have to pay the price of modernity.

For the MEP, on the other hand, Japan was perhaps exotic (they too shared in some of the cultural enthusiasms of their age) but it was not a truly alien place. They were not bent solely on claiming Japan for the Catholic Church but on reclaiming it. The MEP priests had been trained in the history of the Catholic missions among which the mission to Japan stood out. The earlier mission in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been an outstanding numerical and they believed spiritual success.¹⁷ The mission had only been terminated by the violence of hostile rulers and the machinations of Protestants. All priests and missionaries had been banned as had Christianity itself. The remaining Christians were subjected to violent punishment and execution and the Catholic communities established by the missionaries faded from sight.¹⁸ But not from mind, they had left a legacy or at least a memory in the seminaries of Europe of spiritual fervor and even martyrdom for the Catholic faith. Japan was thus a subject of great interest and great hope for the Ultramontane and missionary movements and the MEP considered itself fortunate to have been chosen to be the sole missionary society for Japan. This interest was widespread in the Catholic Church and the MEP took considerable strength from Pope Pius IX’s own support of the mission. This was most obvious in his decision to canonize the “Twenty Six Martyrs” of Japan in June 1862, the first canonizations of his papacy. The church in which Father Petitjean was approached by his potential converts in Nagasaki was consecrated to the “Twenty Six Martyrs”.

The initial intentions of the MEP were then to find the inheritors of the first mission, could any be found, and to replicate its successes. What had been done before could be done again¹⁹. However, the terms of operation of the MEP mission at its beginnings were not favorable to either venture. The French government (in the person of Baron Gros) had signed a Treaty with the governing Tokugawa Bakufu (徳川家幕府) in October 1858 which was the

¹⁴ Marnas, 1:359-380.

¹⁵ Patrick Beillevaire, *Le voyage au Japon: Anthologie de textes français 1858-1908* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2001).

¹⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 15-42.

¹⁷ Neil S. Fujita, *Japan’s Encounter with Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

¹⁸ George Elison, *Deus Destroyed* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹⁹ Michéal Thompson, “Father Jules Renaut and the French Catholic Mission to Meiji Japan” *Comparative Culture* 6 (2000): 1-18.

basis for the MEP presence in Nagasaki.²⁰ It followed earlier treaties with the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands and contained basically the same provisions. Despite Baron Gros' personal wishes and those of the Emperor Napoleon III, this treaty with France contained no permission for missionary activity in Japan. Such priests as were allowed on Japanese soil could not move beyond the treaty ports and were restricted solely to serving the spiritual needs of the Europeans. The prohibition against Christianity was still firmly in place. If the treaty was a source of dissatisfaction for the MEP, because it didn't go very far towards allowing them to fulfill their goals, it was a source of far more than dissatisfaction for many Japanese. The Tokugawa Bakufu had come into existence as a result of an overwhelming show of strength on the part of the Tokugawas who had ended a period of civil wars by defeating their enemies and then ruthlessly removing any subsequent dissent (including Christianity and most foreign influence). After more than 250 years the treaties seemed to demonstrate that this strength was now gone. This gave heart to their long term opponents, largely in the "Han" (藩) of western Japan, but also seemed to augur a return to foreign "interference" in Japanese affairs. Small but politically significant numbers of younger men from these western "Han" were familiar with Europe and North America and with their roles in the world.²¹ They were also aware of modernization as a process and of some of the ideas of Modernism with which it was frequently linked. While they were accepting of the need for modernization, in some cases reluctantly but in most cases not, their attitude to Modernism was far more varied. Some believed that modernity necessitated Modernism and favored democracy and the cult of the autonomous individual that underlay both. Others clearly viewed Modernism with distaste and wished to conserve tradition at the same time as accepting and "taming" modernization.²² In this they were not dissimilar in their outlook it would appear from the MEP.

In the twilight years of the Tokugawa Bakufu these issues were discussed and fought out through a number of proposals. The Tokugawas were caught in an impossible situation: to concede to the westerners showed weakness, to concede to the rebellious "Han" showed weakness; to accept change showed weakness and to try to stop it showed the same. In the end they tried to concede to all sides and pleased none of them. The Bakufu collapsed under the weight of internal criticism backed up by external support especially that of the United Kingdom and the United States. As internal support for the Bakufu evaporated, the only external support came from France. No doubt there were elements of "Big Power" competition involved as France did not wish to cede still further influence to the "Anglo-Saxons" in Asia, but the Tokugawas attempt to conservatively manage change and to accept modernization with Modernism had undoubted resonance not only for the MEP and the milieu from which they sprung but also for the increasingly beleaguered Napoleon III.²³

In hindsight, the results may seem inevitable but, in overthrowing the Tokugawa, the western "Han" had adopted an important tactic symbolized by their slogan "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians" (尊皇攘夷). The way chosen to remove the Tokugawas was to advocate not a break with the past, but a return to the essence of a more distant past before the Tokugawas, the world of the Emperors. Of course the partisans of the new government realized that a simple return to the past was neither possible nor desirable, they had read their Romantic novels too, what was possible was to use (or reinvent) the past to manage change in the present.

²⁰ Alain Cornaille, *Le premier traité Franco-Japonais* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1994).

²¹ Hirakawa Sukehiro, "Japan's turn to the West" in *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 5 of *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 435-498.

²² Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure* (New York: Noonday Press, 1975), 217-275.

²³ Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan 1854-1895* (London: Japan Library, 1998).

The same applied to the second half of the slogan. They realized, at least most of them did, that “expelling the Barbarians” wasn’t realistic or desirable either. What was realistic and indeed necessary was taking on board foreign “things” while not accepting (expelling) foreign ideas. In other words modernization without Modernism. If a traditional Catholic could operate a factory lathe and fire a machine gun (as the MEP believed) then so could a traditional Japanese.

For the MEP the changes were something that happened to them rather than something they were directly involved in. The stance of Napoleon III with respect to the Tokugawas would no doubt have met with their approval but their concerns were much more immediate. If the Tokugawas had reiterated the condemnation of Christianity then they must be persuaded otherwise and the same would apply to any other subsequent regime. The western “Han” (all around them in Nagasaki) seemed to offer little hope of being easily persuaded if you took their slogan at face value. However, the problem was a very immediate one because, as we have seen, in 1865 survivors of the earlier mission were indeed found. The MEP appeared to be on the brink of the successful mission for which they had been prepared but whose reality must have seen at times illusory. The group of Japanese who approached Father Petitjean were seen by him as, in spiritual terms, the sign of God’s providence but also, in practical terms, as the tip of a possible missionary iceberg. Who were they? How many were they? Where were they? Were their hearts (and beliefs) really the same as his? What should be done next?

The answer to the last question was the easiest and in some ways answered all the other: they had to be sought out and attached to the MEP mission. This putative attachment would inevitably (at least eventually) mean going beyond the stipulations of the Treaty of 1858. Gingerly the missionaries of the MEP started to do so. Following the revelatory visit of 1865, the MEP missionaries discovered a considerable number of descendants of the original mission (called “Hidden Christians” or just *kirishitan* (隠れキリシタン) who still considered themselves to be Christians in the Urakami district of Nagasaki. They were also led to the discovery of similar groups in the Goto Islands off the coast of Nagasaki.²⁴ Within three years, three small chapels had been established in Urakami for these Christians and a strong start had been made on regularizing their religious lives, i.e. bringing them into conformity with the Catholic faith as taught and practiced by the MEP. A start had also been on contacting the Christians on the Goto Islands and establishing a regular community there. In July 1867, the Shogunate officials in Nagasaki enforced the Treaty and existing Tokugawa legislation and pillaged and closed the chapels in Urakami leaving the Nagasaki church (allegedly reserved for Europeans) untouched. By 1868 the persecution had spread to the Goto Islands and there were some deportations of Christians from Urakami to prisons in other parts of Japan. With the Meiji Restoration (明治維新) and the overthrow of the Tokugawas the local administration paused but then, in 1870, deportations resumed with allegedly “all” the Christians being deported. Following remonstrations from the foreign consuls (especially the American and British consuls) and the adoption of a more positive approach to the new government of Japan by the government of France (reinforced by the overthrow of Napoleon III) these deportations were reversed. Despite a high mortality rate, the remaining Christians were back in Nagasaki and Urakami by 1873.²⁵ Though the reproaches of foreign consuls were important, of more importance was the realization of the new Japanese government that its actions were seen as being retrograde and “anti-modern” from outside of Japan. They wished to create a good impression of Japan in the outside world and had accepted the need for modernization. What the controversy had underlined (in the person of Napoleon III) was the weakness of a position that tried to manage modernization but exclude Modernism when it was confronted by strong external forces. To achieve this goal the new Japanese government had to minimize the impact of such forces and

²⁴ Ann M. Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1993).

²⁵ Marnas, 2:169-275.

one way to do so was to deny them the semblance of a right to intervene in Japanese affairs. The other, and more important, way was to construct a policy which would allow them to foster modernization without Modernism in their own right. The MEP shared this goal but they were to learn that theirs was not the only way.

The Changing Environment of the Mission

Managing change of any magnitude is never easy and accepting a rapid, full-blown process of modernization represents a considerable magnitude of change. The Meiji Oligarchs or Genro (元老) were clear about their long-term goals from the beginning, to modernize in such a way as to limit the destructive political and social elements and ideas (Modernism) which they had encountered in the West and which modernization could so easily bring in its train. The primary mechanism they used to do this was contained in the first part of their slogan, the Emperor was to be firmly placed at the center of the Japanese polity and the people were to be firmly attached to him and to the imperial house. The legitimacy of the emperor's right to rule was largely unquestioned; the Oligarchs wanted to make sure that it was unquestionable. On the success of this policy rested the success of managing the process of modernization. The emperor's centrality both insured that modernization would be accepted as a manifestation of the imperial will and that Modernism, which was antithetical to the maintenance of the imperial institution, would be rejected. These goals were implemented in two principal ways: creating a modern emperor centered state in which the people were trained to feel part of a national polity or kokutai (国家) linked organically to the emperor; and a range of policies instituting concrete changes and the process of modernization. These two were inextricably linked however, how they were accomplished and especially which policies would be implemented could and did change over time.

For centuries, the Emperor had never left the imperial capital and had never been seen by most Japanese people. The Meiji Oligarchs changed this in two important ways, first by moving the emperor to the old Shogunate capital of Edo now renamed Tokyo or "Eastern Capital" (東京) while retaining the imperial residences in Kyoto. This gave the Emperor two capitals, one in the west and one in the east and linked it with all aspects of Japan's past and its future. The second way was to start a series of "Great Imperial Tours" (大巡幸). There were six of these from 1872 to 1885 taking the Emperor from Hokkaido to Hiroshima.²⁶ In each of them the Emperor could see his people but, more importantly, they could see him and thus the feelings of reverence and solidarity which the policy of the Oligarchs was designed to create were cemented. As part of the overall policy goal of creating a modernized nation which at the same time was firmly linked to a pre-modern past, or perhaps more correctly an "anti-Modernist" present and future the imperial tours were an undoubted success. However, they also raised the possibility of misinterpretation and of seeing the Emperor as cast in the role of a modern or modernizing monarch along the lines of the British monarchy. This they were determined to prevent and they believed, at least initially, that the primary way in which this could be achieved was the creation of State Shinto (惟神之道) which would bind the nation together around the Emperor in a religious or at least quasi-religious way.

State Shinto was a new formation of the Meiji Oligarchs, though founded on an assemblage of traditional texts and various cultic and local practices dating far back into Japanese history.²⁷ The Tokugawas had established Buddhism as the state religion, though permitting choices within Buddhism for personal and familial practices. This official role for Buddhism had been enforced even in those western "Han" which were relatively

²⁶ T. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998).

²⁷ Kuroda Toshio, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion" in *Religion & Society in Modern Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins et al (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1993), 7-30.

unsympathetic towards it. The Meiji Restoration had abruptly severed links between Buddhism and the state. However, many of the oligarchs were aware of the potential of religion to act as a binding force in society especially in times of change. What they wanted was an Emperor centered cult which went along with their other policies. As one of the Genro (Ito Hirobumi then Private Counselor to the Emperor Meiji) noted in 1888: "The Constitution needs an axle to turn on. For the western nations this is given by religion. In Japan, Buddhism and (popular) Shinto can't provide it. The only axle for this nation is the imperial house".²⁸ Protestant Christianity, then considered as perhaps a force to be reckoned with in Meiji Japan, was of course unacceptable not only because of its foreign support from the Anglo-Saxon nations but also because it was widely perceived as favoring not only modernization but Modernism as well.²⁹

State Shinto was thus founded as a cult for political purposes to manage modernization and to provide an alternative ideology to Modernism which was both manifestly autochthonous and seemingly rooted in the past and yet was experienced as being "modern" by Japanese at the time. The centrality of the Emperor was, in practical terms, modern and a response to modernization. So too was the cult that accompanied it and gave it a spiritual dimension. This applies whether State Shinto is viewed as truly a religion or as a set of cultural practices as many of its exponents argued. State Shinto was actively propagated by the government from 1868 until the 1880's and again, with renewed force, from 1905. Even in the "slump years" of the middle Meiji period (1880-1905), the national and prefectural governments continued to sponsor the building of new State Shinto shrines spreading the cult throughout Japan and even overseas into the new Japanese Empire.³⁰

It took a long while for many people to realize the nature of the modernization project envisioned by the government and the role of State Shinto within it. Many people rejected elements of State Shinto for some time, which accounts in part for its "slump years" in the 1880's and 1890's. While the explicit fostering of modernization by successive Japanese governments met with diminishing opposition from more conservative elements in Japanese society, its rejection of Modernism was opposed by other more "progressive" elements especially those associated with Socialism and many groups of Protestants. The position of the MEP in the beginning was, in a sense, more nuanced and more hopeful for an accommodation. As State Shinto built up its strength and its compulsory character this changed and the Protestant groups largely accepted the "non-religious" nature of State Shinto ceremonies and thus reached an accommodation with the state. The Catholic Church in Japan however became one of the principle opponents of State Shinto.³¹

Two versions of "Modernization without Modernism" collide.

The MEP's main missionary strength was from the beginning its stronghold in Nagasaki Prefecture especially in the Urakami district of the city of Nagasaki and in some of the islands off the coast, especially the Goto Islands. Following the initial contact, the MEP had succeeded in finding and reconciling a significant number of descendants of the first Catholic missions. However, by 1880, it was becoming apparent that there was no longer a pool of such potential church members waiting for reconciliation. Though unreconciled descendants remained, they had every intention of remaining unreconciled. The phenomenal growth in the MEP mission in Nagasaki slowed to be largely reliant on natural increase. The early converts were mainly from the rural and semi-rural proletariat, as were the MEP missionaries themselves. Work with them was still culturally challenging in many ways, but of all the populations of

²⁸ Pino Cazzaniga, "Il tempio Yasukuni e lo Shintoismo di Stato" *Sette Religioni* 31 (2002), 122.

²⁹ Yamaji Aizan, *Essays on the Modern Japanese Church*, trans. Graham Squires (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999).

³⁰ Helen Hardacre, *Shinto and the State 1868-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1989).

³¹ Minamaki, 121-158.

Japan they were obviously most reminiscent of the missionaries own origins. Though this conversion activity had happened at the same time as the government had started to foster State Shinto, it had happened far from the Japanese mainstream and the campaigns of State Shinto were considerably muted by the time that they reached northwest Kyushu. The MEP had concentrated much of their efforts, understandably, on this promising mission field and had been far less successful in the major urban areas. Additionally, the restrictions on missionary work and travel were far more daunting in these areas.

Beginning in the late 1870s, with substantial augmentation in the 1880s, missionaries were granted freedom of movement and action. This presented the MEP with the challenge of deciding on a new mission strategy. Obviously, they would continue to nurture the Nagasaki mission including the training of Japanese priests for the mission. However, equally obviously, Nagasaki was a mission that involved deepening and consolidation but not expansion. There were basically two choices: to attempt to missionize the major population centers of Japan (especially Osaka and Tokyo) and/or to find new and more promising mission fields. The first represented a major set of challenges to the MEP at a wide variety of levels. In the 1880's the two metropolitan areas, already on their way to being major conurbations, had already been the site of extensive missionary activity by various Protestant groups funded and staffed from the "Anglo-Saxon" countries. By 1880 there were 26 such groups operating in Japan, by 1900 the number was 45,³² the focus of their efforts was the major cities. The social groups attracted to these missions varied widely but included the mercantile and ruling classes who were most directly involved in implementing the processes of modernization in Japan. For them, as for most Japanese with an understanding of the modern world system, America and Britain were the principal engines and exemplars of modernization. Acceptance of Protestant Christianity meant emulating the religious aspects of these cultures alongside developing a way to interpret and cope with the changes of modernization. Catholicism had naturally little appeal to these groups with its rejection of Modernism and reliance on conservatism. The equivocal role of France in terms both of modernization and of its attitude to Japan underlined this. Perceived as a weak power after the fall of Napoleon III and its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, France was not the economic giant that the other two powers were and, if that was not enough, the support of France for the Tokugawas was still remembered. To establish themselves in these areas, the MEP would have to contest the ground with the Protestant missions and it would be a very unequal contest.

Protestantism was not the only challenge to be faced; two more major opponents for the MEP could be identified. The first, which was all too familiar to the MEP, were those people who had wholeheartedly embraced modernization and Modernism as well. The whole panoply of Modernism (Liberalism, Agnosticism, Atheism, etc), much of which ironically had French origins, could be found in these areas and in other industrializing areas of Japan as well. Socialist societies, associations of "Free Thinkers" and many others had become popular with different social groups in Meiji Japan.³³ While the MEP was as willing to do battle with them in Japan as the Catholic Church was in France, it was obvious that the MEP lacked both numerical strength and the support base it enjoyed in France. The crucial years in which the MEP had concentrated on Nagasaki and had, in any case, had to face serious restrictions in the major cities were also the years in which these Modernist associations had begun to flourish. The only viable possibility was to convince the government, which was already convinced of the evils of Modernism, that Catholicism offered a viable way of combating Modernism while assisting the process of modernization. The equivocal role of France, the sole patron of the Catholic missions, made this unlikely in any case. So too did the attitudes of the Protestants. What made it impossible was the rise of State Shinto which offered everything that the government needed, an anti-Modernist movement which could still accommodate or even foster modernization. More

³² Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1998), 14.

³³ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1985).

importantly, it was a movement without foreign ties. Even in the “slump years” the major urban areas (especially Tokyo) were at the center of the creation of State Shinto. The prospects looked increasingly bleak for the MEP. While the MEP would valiantly attempt to further the cause of Catholicism (and France) in the metropolitan districts, they also started to look for other potentially more viable mission fields in Japan. Though they could not expect to find any more communities descending from the first mission, they did look, they could hope for some success in other areas which “fitted the profile”—that is, areas which were little (or perhaps) negatively affected by modernization and which were conservative enough to reject Modernism. On the other hand, such an area also had to be at least moderately open to limited contact with the “modern” (i.e. foreign) culture that the MEP represented. In the 1860s there were potentially many such areas, by the 1890s this was no longer the case.

Initially the MEP had high hopes for the major island of Yezo (蝦夷) now called Hokkaido. Their hopes were not unreasonable, but the negative resolution of these hopes is contained in the name change itself. While Hakodate was one of the “Treaty Ports” in which the MEP were allowed from the beginning of the treaty regime, the mission was not well staffed compared with Nagasaki. Very soon after the Meiji Restoration, Hokkaido was the object of extensive population migration from other parts of Japan. It was also the subject of a great deal of government interest. In effect, it was the Japanese equivalent of the American West. As such the early MEP initiatives to the Japanese population of Hakodate, which capitalized on their feelings of isolation, was rapidly superceded. The other focus of the mission, the native Ainu (アイヌ) became irrelevant with even greater rapidity. In 1896, the MEP had encouraged the Reformed Cistercians (Trappists) from France to establish a monastery outside of Hakodate with an attached Ainu settlement and school. By the time that the monastery (the Abbaye de la Phare) was in place, there were no longer any Ainu to settle in the region. Migration of Japanese from other parts of the state had pushed most of them out and numerically swamped the residual population. The pace of change had proved too rapid for the Ainu as it had for the MEP. Hokkaido was rapidly moved from the periphery to the center of government managed modernization and the MEP were confronted with the same challenges there as they were in Tokyo.

If Hokkaido had proved the costs of delay, the MEP had other possibilities which were both closer to “home” (i.e. Nagasaki) and more commensurate with both their goals and their means. In the 1890s, one of the veteran MEP missionaries (Father Emile Raguét) was given permission to explore other areas of the island of Kyushu (the same island as Nagasaki) for prospective mission sites. Father Raguét, unusually for the MEP, was not French but Belgian but he fully shared the approach of the MEP to both modernization and Modernism. He had been a missionary in Japan for some years and believed that, with the implosion of state supported Buddhism; there was a vacuum that Catholicism could fill. He also believed that Shinto was largely moribund and therefore could not expand to fill the “gap” that Buddhism had left. He was certainly aware of the challenge of the rival Protestant missions but, especially in southern Kyushu, he believed that their efforts would be minimal. Rather than confront their superior numbers and finances in the major metropolitan areas, it made some sense to create missions where the Protestants were largely absent. In addition, in southern Kyushu, which had been dominated by the Shimazu family of Satsuma Han throughout the Tokugawa Shogunate, Buddhism had been restricted and so had little popular support.³⁴ So, it was southern Kyushu that was to be the new focus of Father Raguét and his supporters in the MEP. The story of this mission underlines, to some extent, the accuracy of his judgement but it also underlines its fundamental weakness.

Southern Kyushu during the Tokugawa Shogunate had its center in Kagoshima, the capital of the Shimazu family domains. Father Raguét eventually settled there but, following in the footsteps of the traditional Satsuma policy of exclusion, it was not a receptive city to

³⁴ Torao Haraguchi, *The Status System and Social Organization of Satsuma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1975).

foreigners whatever their attitude to things modern. It was decided in 1892 that the focus of the mission would be on the fringes of the old Shimazu lands in the city of Miyazaki that lies in southeast Kyushu midway between Kagoshima to the south and Oita to the north. However, in the same year, another MEP missionary (Father Joseph Ferrié) was invited to visit the island of Amami Oshima by a Catholic craftsman who had recently moved to the island. Amami Oshima is the northernmost island in the Ryukyu chain but it had been separated from the Kingdom of the Ryukyus in 1609 and had been ruled directly by the Shimazu. As such, Buddhism was virtually non-existent on the island, its only practitioners were the small group of merchants and their families from Osaka who arrived in the 1890s and were not well liked by the local population.³⁵ In addition, it was even more outside the Japanese mainstream than Miyazaki. In both places the population were interested in modernization but wary, desirous of change but basically conservative. In other words, both places seemed to be potentially receptive to the MEP's brand of modernization without Modernism. Sadly for the MEP, they were to be only half-right in the short term and completely wrong in the longer term.

The first disappointment for Father Raguet (and his successor Father Joly) in Miyazaki was the fact that the Protestant groups were very far from neglectful of the area. In fact they were sufficiently active for Father Joly to consider them as his main rivals for the spiritual allegiance of the populace.³⁶ Their better access to funds and their reliance on lay (Japanese) leadership assisted their growth and provided an attractive access route to modernity for some. Though he doubted the strength of their conversions, it was disconcerting to realize that Miyazaki was perhaps more like a provincial version of Tokyo than had been anticipated. However, worse was yet to come for the MEP. As part of the political consolidation of Meiji Japan, Miyazaki City had been made the capital of a new prefecture, which attracted and trained bureaucrats who were in tune with the government and so less than open to Catholicism. This was dramatically heightened in 1906 with the decision to (re)create a major Shinto Shrine in Miyazaki dedicated to the Emperor Jimmu the putative founder of the Japanese Imperial line. Virtually overnight Miyazaki had moved from the fringes to the center of the movement to promote State Shinto.³⁷ The population was mobilized emotionally and financially to support the project and, in turn, it attracted more people to Miyazaki. All of these newcomers and visitors were caught up in the fervor of State Shinto. The MEP mission faltered and its small numbers went into permanent stagnation.

If Miyazaki was not able to live up to the hopes of the MEP for a thriving mission; the same was definitely not true for Amami Oshima. In stark contrast to Miyazaki, the MEP mission in the even more remote area of Amami-Oshima had started, as an historian of the Catholic Church in Japan has noted, "a movement of conversions that has had no equal in the modern apostolate of Japan."³⁸ The initial MEP mission met with noticeable success. By 1893 there were 914 Catholics on the island and within ten years this number had nearly doubled to 1767.³⁹ It was a rate of conversions that compared favorably with that of Nagasaki and without having a base in existing Kirishitan families to explain it. The pace continued after this too. By 1915, when Miyazaki had 162 Catholics (many originating outside of the prefecture), Amami Oshima had 3,659 most of whom were from the local community.⁴⁰ The sole mention of non-Amami natives converting to Catholicism is a reference to a family of merchants from Nagasaki

³⁵ *Missionary Correspondence* [Hereafter *MC*] 571 (1900)

³⁶ *MC* 571 (1893) and (1895)

³⁷ *MC* 571a (1906).

³⁸ Joseph Van Hecken *The Catholic Church in Japan Since 1859* (Herder: Tokyo, 1963), 53.

³⁹ *MC* 571 (1893) and (1903).

⁴⁰ *MC* 571a (1915).

who had formerly been Methodists who joined the Catholic Church in Nazé.⁴¹ Such a spectacular growth in membership was reflected in buildings as well. By 1915 the MEP had 8 mission stations/churches on the island built with local subscriptions. One of these, Chinazé, had become something of a local tourist attraction and a source of considerable pride to the residents of the town whether Catholic or not.⁴² This local pride goes some way to explaining some of the success of the mission, it also helps in understanding the problems they experienced later which were perhaps not so obvious in the first heady days of the mission.

The initial response to the MEP mission did indeed involve strong elements of local pride in Oshima as opposed to the mainland. Clearly, many in Oshima felt that in accepting Catholicism they were embracing a form of modern life that put them ahead of the Osaka merchants in this area. However, it was also clear that much of the interest in Catholicism stemmed from a desire to put one community on the island ahead of others for reasons not so much of religious conviction as of hoped for personal and community advancement. Even in Chinazé, despite their pride in the church building itself, religious indifference was paramount.⁴³ While in others, such as Kuji, the missionaries were invited because of material interest (they hoped to get money) rather than any interest in the religion itself.⁴⁴ As time moved on, a more dangerous enemy for the MEP that either apathy or greed was to begin to appear. By the early years of the Twentieth Century, a reaction in favor of conservatism had started. Initially a movement to “save the traditions of Oshima” it had gained in strength by its links with what the MEP report calls “the dissipated youth element”.⁴⁵ It seems apparent, by the popular support they obviously found on the island, that this movement went beyond a mere combination of insular reaction and youthful rebelliousness. Amami-Oshima, though still distanced from the Japanese mainstream in many ways, was increasingly coming to know of and incorporate the ideas of the Japanese State. The people were in contact with events on the mainland and in the world in a way that they had not been before. As a missionary noted during the First World War, “the people seem to be waiting to find out how the war in Europe will finish” and what that would mean for both Japan and France and, by extension, Catholicism.⁴⁶

One thing that did follow the end of the war was the grudging acceptance that, in the new spirit of nationalism that animated the growth of State Shinto, the Diocese of Nagasaki would have to be consigned to the indigenous clergy. While some of the missionaries were unhappy with this and saw it as a concession to nationalism, it was clearly a concession that the Pope himself wished to make.⁴⁷ Following protracted negotiations and direct papal involvement, a number of decisions were made in 1924 and 1925 to be implemented quickly. In 1927, the MEP lost control of Nagasaki and the first Japanese bishop was consecrated. The MEP also realized that they no longer had the manpower to sustain a number of their other missions as well. In the same year, Amami Oshima was reassigned to the Canadian Franciscans. In the following year, Miyazaki was handed over to the Italian Salesian Fathers. The only foothold left for the MEP in Kyushu was the unpromising new diocese of Fukuoka, which only had 7,000 Catholics when it was erected.⁴⁸ The MEP experiment in promoting modernization without Modernism had failed.

⁴¹ MC 571a (1908).

⁴² MC 571 (1899).

⁴³ MC 571 (1899).

⁴⁴ MC 571 (1897).

⁴⁵ MC 571a (1909).

⁴⁶ MC 571z (1916).

⁴⁷ MC 571a (1921).

Conclusion: Anatomy of Failure

One reason for this failure was simple, a lack of personnel to put it into practice. But there were other reasons that were more crucial. Perhaps, in the case of Miyazaki, the MEP had missed their opportunity by waiting until the 1890s to establish themselves there. However, such an argument clearly could not apply to Amami Oshima. What finally accounted for the failure of the MEP mission was the unacceptability of the MEP program to most Japanese people and especially to the Japanese government. The attractiveness and utility of the State Shinto model of modernization without Modernism (or without westernization) was far stronger than that of the MEP even though it had many parallels to it. The MEP were clearly westerners even if they were very far from being westernizers. State Shinto suffered no such burden. State Shinto provided an effective (and indigenous) answer to the problem of how to separate modernization from Modernism. The government had no need of another. The program of the MEP was not only non-indigenous but was intimately linked to France. As the Japanese government was well aware however, the program of the Catholic Church was rejected by substantial segments of French society. It had failed to prevent the spread of Modernism in France or anywhere else in Europe. The military defeats of Napoleon III both in the Franco-Prussian War and in his futile efforts to protect the Papacy from Italian nationalism was hardly a role model that the increasingly militaristic Japanese governments wished to emulate. The body of thought represented by the MEP in Japan was seen as a failed attempt to hinder the advance of Modernism. If the Japanese government shared this goal, they did not believe that Catholicism was an effective way to achieve it. State Shinto was effective in this regard and rapidly came to dominate Japanese society until Japan's defeat in 1945.

⁴⁸ MC 571a (1928).