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The Monk and the Heretics: A Reappraisal of Sessō Sōsai's Anti-Christian Documents (Mid-Seventeenth Century)

Martin NOGUEIRA RAMOS*

By examining the dynamic interactions between the authorities, the Buddhist clergy, and the hidden Christians, this article aims to deepen our understanding of the Tokugawa anti-Christian policy in the aftermath of the Shimabara-Amakusa revolt (November 1637–April 1638), a period of international tension for Japan as the Iberian threat was not over. It focuses on Sessō Sōsai (1589–1649), a Rinzai monk who was summoned by the authorities of Nagasaki in mid-1647 to preach to the populace. Some of his writings and his working papers have survived. These firsthand sources enable us to bring together fields that previous scholarship has generally tackled separately: intellectual, institutional, and social history.

This essay argues that around 1640, Sessō Sōsai and his patrons in Nagasaki felt that the religious inquiry had reached a deadlock as the alleged apostates could suddenly (and violently) return to their previous faith. They understood that, in order to be more efficient and obtain sincere apostasies, their fight against the forbidden cult should focus more on the actual beliefs of the hidden Catholics. They paid particular attention to the belief in miracles and in the omnipotence of God.

Keywords: Catholicism, Zen Buddhism, Nagasaki, Kirishitan, Westerners in Japan, Edo Japan, Shimabara-Amakusa revolt, Heresy, Religious inquiry (*shūmon aratame*)

Introduction: A Reinterpretation of Sessō's Anti-Christian Documents in their Sociopolitical Context

A brief look at a chronology of early modern Japan gives the impression that at the end of the 1630s, the history of Christianity suddenly accelerated. In spring of Kan'ei 寛永 15 (1638), the shogunal armies defeated the rebel peasants of Shimabara and Amakusa who had openly "come back to Christianity" (*tachikaeri Kirishitan* 立帰りキリシタン).[1] In Kan'ei

* I would like to thank the editor of *Japan Review*, John Breen, his staff, and the two anonymous peer-reviewers for their very constructive criticisms. In September 2018, Tafukuji abbot Seki Yasunori showed me his temple's treasures and shared his in-depth knowledge of Sessō Sōsai and early modern Rinzai Buddhism. With his permission I reproduce here some of the pictures I took on that occasion. Jorge Welsh allowed me to reproduce the map of Nagasaki, the existence of which I learned from Alexandra Curvelo. Simon Hull copy-edited my

16 (1639).7.5, the bakufu's Council of Elders (*rōjū* 老中) released the final Sakoku edict that put an end to the Portuguese presence in the archipelago. In the summer of Kan'ei 17 (1640), the representatives of the bakufu in Nagasaki executed the members of an embassy sent by Macao to restart the Portuguese-Japanese trade.

Other events that immediately followed indicate that the Japanese authorities had not wholly settled the "Christian issue." Around 1640, they centralized the fight against the remnant Christian communities scattered in Japan under the guidance of Inoue Masashige 井上政重 (1585–1661), one of the four Great Inspectors (*Ōmetsuke* 大目付), the "eyes and ears" of the bakufu. From then on, Inoue would often travel between Edo and Nagasaki, and act as a trusted intermediary for the shogun in Kyushu. The missionary threat was also not over. In 1642 and 1643, the Society of Jesus sent two groups of priests, brothers, and catechists to Kyushu (the Rubino groups), whose aim it was, among other things, to revive the Japanese mission and make contact with the apostate Jesuit Cristóvão Ferreira (ca. 1580–1650). Last but not least, on the other side of the world, the Iberian Union ended in December 1640, and the King of Portugal decided to send an official embassy to the bakufu; it arrived in Nagasaki in July 1647.

This article focuses on the struggle of the authorities against Christianity in the mid-seventeenth century, a period of tremendous upheaval, not only for the Catholic Church in Japan but also for Japan's domestic and foreign policy. Generally, scholars have viewed this topic from the perspective of either intellectual history or institutional history. Concerning the first approach, Buddhist studies specialists have thoroughly examined the arguments of the anti-Christian treatises written in the 1640s by the Zen monks Suzuki Shōsan 鈴木正三 (1579–1655) of the Sōtō 曹洞 sect and Sessō Sōsai 雪窓宗崔 (1589–1649) of the Rinzai 臨済 sect, locating them within the context of seventeenth-century Japanese religious thought.[2] The former penned *Ha Kirishitan* 破吉利支丹 (Christians countered) in the 1640s (published in Kyoto in Kanbun 寛文 2 (1662));[3] the latter wrote *Taiji jashū ron* 対治邪執論 (A refutation of the evil teachings) in Shōhō 正保 5 (1648).[4]

Kiri Paramore, in his study of anti-Christian discourse in early modern Japan, has emphasized the political nature of such discourse and argued that it was primarily aimed at asserting the legitimacy of the Tokugawa. For him, the link between anti-Christian treatises and the fight against the "foreign creed" is dubious since the majority of authors wrote their texts when the Christian threat was supposedly over, that is to say, after the revolt of Shimabara-Amakusa.[5] I consider this stance problematic as it downplays the impact of the revolt. Since the 1980s, much Japanese scholarship has reappraised earlier research that

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English. I learned much from Rômulo da Silva Ehalt about Jesuit preaching in Japan. Gaétan Rappo checked my translations of Buddhist terms, and deepened my understanding of the "rhetoric of heresy." Critical comments from Cyrian Pitteloud and Alexis Lycas enabled me to improve the accessibility of my article. This research was partially supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers JP17H02392.

1 For a convenient chronology of the history of Christianity in Japan, refer to Nihon Kirisutokyō Rekishi Daijiten Henshū Iinkai 2006. Below, I give a more detailed consideration to the events briefly touched upon in the first two paragraphs.

2 For recent studies, see Baskind 2014, Ōkuwa 2015, pp. 275–298, and Nishimura 2018, chapter 3.

3 None of the manuscripts supposedly written in Amakusa by Suzuki Shōsan during the 1640s are extant. Note that much uncertainty remains surrounding both the length of his stay in Amakusa and the origins of *Ha Kirishitan*. See Miura 2013, pp. 82 and 155–164.

4 Both texts are reproduced in Ebisawa 1970 (pp. 450–457 for *Ha Kirishitan*; pp. 460–476 for *Taiji jashū ron*).

5 Paramore 2009.

overstressed the economic factors behind this event. Thanks to the pioneering work of Irimoto Masuo 煎本増夫 and the unearthing of an impressive number of primary sources by Tsuruta Kurazō 鶴田倉造, studies have increasingly highlighted the religious features of the uprising.[6] In this regard, the works of Kanda Chisato 神田千里 and Ōhashi Yukihiro 大橋幸泰 have particularly attracted the attention of Japanese specialists in early modern history.[7]

Historians who focus on the institutional aspects of the fight against Christianity have generally been swift to point out the impact of the Shimabara-Amakusa revolt. Indeed, in the years following the revolt, the bakufu systematized, on a national scale, the religious inspection system centered on Buddhist temples (*tera'uke* 寺請) and the "five-household groups" (*gonin-gumi* 五人組). Some studies have examined the implementation of the *tera'uke*-system in different domains.[8] Also, as we shall see, scholars have recently devoted much attention to the effects of the revolt and the plausible return of the Portuguese on Japan's foreign policy and its contacts with the Dutch, the control of its maritime borders, and the surveillance of commoners in the 1640s.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the Buddhist clergy was not only involved in the bureaucratic inspection of people's religious affiliation; many high-ranking monks were also recruited by domainal and shogunal authorities to refute the teaching of the Christian missionaries publicly. The research of Murai Sanae 村井早苗 has highlighted the personal connections of these men. She has made explicit the ties that bound some of them to the imperial court and to the governor of Nagasaki (*Nagasaki bugyō* 長崎奉行).[9]

This article aims to reinterpret in their sociopolitical context a set of texts that past scholarship has usually approached from the perspective of intellectual history to advance our understanding of the revolt's impact on Japan's anti-Christian policy. It argues that the bakufu was convinced that the enforcement of formal control over religious affiliation was not alone sufficient to solve the "Christian issue." Instead, what was now required was a better understanding of Christian tenets. For both the first and last time during the Edo period, Baba Toshishige 馬場利重 (?–1657; governor of Nagasaki from 1636 to 1652) and the aforementioned Inoue Masashige endeavored to use their knowledge of Christianity to influence directly the inner beliefs of the remaining hidden Christians. The two men had, after all, witnessed Christianity's messianic and even apocalyptic quality in the form of the revolt of Shimabara-Amakusa.

This study builds on the arguments of George Elison (Jurgis Elisonas) regarding the psychological aspects of the anti-Christian measures adopted by the bakufu during the 1640s. However, since the 1980s, Japanese scholars have uncovered a number of new documents and radically revised their assessment of the impact of the Shimabara-Amakusa revolt. Therefore,

6 Irimoto 1980 and Tsuruta 1994.

7 Kanda 2005, Ōhashi 2008. Even if both authors agree on the main facets of the revolt, their understanding of the economic impact (several years of poor harvests and the maintenance of high rates of taxation by the lord of Shimabara) slightly differs. Kanda argues that the insurgents linked their worldly distress to their apostasy: they considered it as a punishment sent by God for being weak in their faith. Ōhashi, meanwhile, has emphasized the heterogenous motivations for the revolt: it not only consisted of Christians fighting for their salvation, but also of people seeking economic relief. Elsewhere, I have argued that the revolt should be reexamined within the broader context of the religious anxiety provoked among the Christians by the promulgation of the ban on their religion (Nogueira Ramos 2019).

8 For a domestic perspective, see Ōhashi 2001, pp. 100–131.

9 Murai 2000, chapter 7.

some of my conclusions differ from those of Elison, the author of *Deus Destroyed*. The main difference between us lies in our perceptions of the bakufu authorities. For Elison, they were all-powerful and seemingly implemented the anti-Christian measures according to an established plan.[10] By contrast, I will argue that they were far from sure about the effectiveness of their policies, and remained wary about the possible reaction of the hidden Christians.

To support my stance, I will mainly focus on sources related to Sessō Sōsai. The Nagasaki authorities summoned him to preach in front of the port town's inhabitants around the fifth month of Shōhō 4 (June 1647) and entrusted him with documents to bolster his case. Tafukuji 多福寺 in Usuki 臼杵 (Ōita Prefecture), a temple of which he was the second abbot, has kept these documents for more than three centuries. For the other authors of anti-Christian treatises like the one written by Suzuki Shōsan, we do not have such background material.

In 1984, a team of Buddhist studies specialists led by Ōkuwa Hitoshi 大桑斉 transcribed and published these documents. They added commentary regarding their origin and structure, and demonstrated, in particular, that Sessō Sōsai utilized them as a source of information for his anti-Christian activities. For Ōkuwa, these documents were of value for the light they shed on Sessō's intellectual background. However, in what follows, I will argue that, when read and analyzed alongside other anti-Christian texts, these documents also illuminate the objectives of the authorities, as well as the beliefs of hidden Christians who were alive during the 1640s.

I have divided my article into two parts. In the first part, I seek to contextualize and analyze the argumentation employed by Sessō Sōsai during the sermons he delivered in Nagasaki. A record penned by him one month after, in the summer of 1647, has survived. This is the sole detailed testimony we have at our disposal of this kind of sermon. A close reading of this source reveals that in the tense international and domestic context of the 1640s, the bakufu leaders considered the ordinary citizens of Nagasaki, a majority of whom were apostate Christians (*korobi Kirishitan* 転びキリシタン), as a potential threat that needed to be tamed. They were unsure about the real feelings of Nagasaki's citizens towards the forbidden religion.

In the second part, I will outline the nature of the documents still held by Tafukuji, and consider their relation to Sessō Sōsai's sermons and writings. These documents reveal that he and, by extension, the officials in Nagasaki, were not overly interested in sophisticated doctrinal issues, but more in aspects of religion that we tend to label as "popular," especially the veneration of saints and the belief in miracles. In order to reveal the falsehood of Christianity, they resorted to a counter-narrative of the history of this religion, and concentrated their attacks on God's alleged omnipotence.

1. Preaching before the Return of the "Southern Barbarians"

At the request of the governor of Nagasaki, during the fifth and sixth months of Shōhō 4 (June and July 1647), Sessō Sōsai gave several sermons to the local populace at Kōfukuji 興福寺, ahead of the imminent arrival of the Portuguese embassy already mentioned.[11]

10 Elison (1973) 1988, chapters 7 and 8.

11 Chinese merchants residing in Nagasaki built the temple in Kan'ei 1 (1624). Later, it would become part of the Ōbakushū 黄檗宗 temple network. Concerning the foundation of Kōfukuji, see Baroni 2000, pp. 31–34.

1.1 The Context and Aims of the Sermons

We know the content of Sessō Sōsai's sermons thanks to the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki* 長崎興福寺筆記 (Record of the sermons delivered in Nagasaki at Kōfukuji temple).[12] According to the preface, he wrote it in the seventh month of Shōhō 4 (1647). The *Sessō oshō gyōjō* 雪窓和尚行状 (The deeds of Master Sessō), a biography written by Sessō's successor as abbot of Tafukuji in Kanbun 13 (1673), reveals that the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, like the other works of the Rinzai monk, was not intended to be read by a broad audience, but rather by a limited number of monks.[13]

The single extant Tafukuji manuscript is seventy-six pages long. In their edition of the text, Ōkuwa Hitoshi and his team divided it into four sermons (*seppō* 説法). The first and the third mostly attack the tenets of Christianity; the second and the fourth concern the exclusivist stance of Pure Land Buddhism. I believe these two seemingly anti-Pure Land sermons should be read as responses on the part of Sessō Sōsai to monks from the Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 and Jōdoshū 浄土宗 sects who were critical of his teaching.[14] Indeed, both feudal domains and the bakufu had implemented various measures in the previous decades to prohibit disputations (*shūron* 宗論) between Buddhist sects, so it would be surprising if commoners were their intended audience.[15] Moreover, they are no more than a few lines each and hardly merit the term "sermon." Sources do not reveal the number of those who attended the sermons, if any.[16]

How the anti-Christian sermons were organized is not known in detail. The *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki* only suggests that due to the impressive numbers attending the third sermon, the audience was divided from the start into several groups according to the neighborhood (*machi* 町).[17]

Those who attended Sessō's anti-Christian sermons also took part in mass lay ordination ceremonies (*jukai-e* 授戒会) centered on the reception of the "threefold refuge and the five precepts" (*sanki gokai* 三帰五戒).[18] According to the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, 1,520 people received the precepts after the first sermon and 21,300 after the third one.[19] In other words, if these figures are accurate, a majority of the thirty thousand or so inhabitants of Nagasaki took part in these sermons and the ceremonies that followed them.[20] The *jukai-e* developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in order to provide commoners with a substitute for *zazen* 坐禅. They helped Sōtō Buddhism gain support among large

12 For a transcription with annotations of the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, see Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 67–87.

13 The *Sessō oshō gyōjō* is reproduced in Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 5–12. The biographer mentions the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki* on p. 11.

14 For contextual information about the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, see Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 304–310.

15 On this subject, see Kanda 2010, pp. 147–168. Kanda also asserts that one of the main reasons for the ban on Christianity was its disruptive impact on the Japanese religious landscape.

16 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 78–79, for the second sermon and p. 86 for the fourth.

17 Ōkuwa 1984, p. 79.

18 These five precepts are: 1. Abstention from killing living beings; 2. Abstention from theft; 3. Abstention from sexual misconduct; 4. Abstention from falsehood; and 5. Abstention from intoxication. The three refuges are the Buddha, the Law, and the Buddhist community. See Buswell and Lopez 2014, pp. 616–617, for the five precepts, and pp. 924–925 for the three refuges.

19 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 78 and 86.

20 We only have estimates of the size of the Nagasaki population in 1640. See Kimura 2016, p. 12.

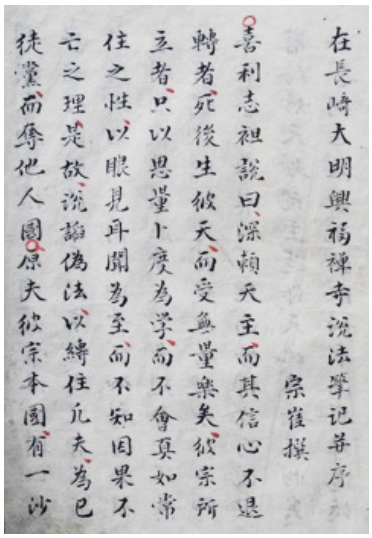

Figure 1. First page of the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*. Courtesy of Seki Yasunori, abbot of Tafukuji.

sections of the population.[21] In the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, Sessō presents them as a powerful means to achieve relief in this world and salvation in the next.[22]

The few studies that exist of the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki* have not pointed out that, although Sessō wrote the majority of the text in *kanbun* 漢文, about ten pages are in Japanese. The parts in *kanbun* deal mainly with sophisticated doctrinal issues that concern Zen, Nichiren, or Pure Land Buddhism. The pages in Japanese all relate to Christianity; Sessō penned them in an easy-to-understand style so that, read aloud, they would be perfectly intelligible to anyone. I hypothesize that Sessō wrote the parts in *kanbun* for the benefit of the monks close to him, and those in Japanese reflect some aspects of the actual sermons. Therefore, we should not consider this source as an exact record of the sermons Sessō delivered.

Moreover, the few existing testimonies we have on the sermons indicate that the reason for Sessō Sōsai's presence in Nagasaki was precisely to convince its population to abandon Christianity. This is what we read in both the *Sessō oshō gyōjō* and in the office diary (*Dagregister*) kept by the Dutch in Deshima. According to the latter, on 17 July 1647, Sessō visited the ship of the Dutch East India Company.[23] The entry provides valuable firsthand information on him:

> [Sessō] declared that our ships were neat, well-made, and sturdy. The ships of the Spaniards, conversely, were dirty, offensive, and not as sturdy. The governor and everyone else show him great respect. He reviles all other papists [Buddhist monks] as philistines and money-grubbers. He has come to Nagasaki to dissuade any remaining followers of the Pope. He preaches [*predict*] every eight days and draws extraordinarily

21 On these mass ordination ceremonies organized by Zen monks, see Bodiford 1993, chapter 13, in particular pp. 179–184.
22 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 83–84.
23 Ōkuwa 1984, p. 10.

> large crowds [*zonderling toeloop*]. He is a fat man, smooth, with a large head, and is a spectacle among men. His earlobes stretch across his cheeks and the community considers him to be an exemplary man and a sage. When he is at court, he preaches to His Majesty.[24]

Here, four elements, in particular, merit attention. First, Sessō Sōsai's fame, credentials, and close connections with the highest echelons of Japanese society were evident to the Dutch at Deshima. Second, his presence in the port was unmistakably linked to the anti-Christian fight. Third, he seems to have been in contact with Spaniards (and thus Christians) before 1647. And fourth, a large number of residents attended his sermons. Given the references to his physical appearance and distinctive aura (he must have seemed like a living Buddha), we may speculate that the authorities chose him because they believed he would impress his audience.

Sessō was, for sure, no ordinary monk.[25] Born in Bungo in Tenshō 天正 17 (1589), he initially trained in the True Pure Land tradition in the town of Usuki, but became dissatisfied with the exclusivist stance of his sect. In Keichō 慶長 18 (1613), he joined the Rinzai sect temple, Tafukuji. From the first year of Genna 元和 (1615), in order to complete his training, he started to travel around Honshu beginning with Edo. There he met monks like Suzuki Shōsan, and promised to strive for the revival of Zen Buddhism. He became abbot of Tafukuji in Kan'ei 8 (1631). At that time, his fame was already established. He not only had contacts with prestigious monks but also with important figures like Hoshina Masayuki 保科正之 (1611–1672), the daimyo of Aizu 会津 domain from 1643. In Kan'ei 17 (1640), the imperial court even summoned him to preach to the retired emperor Gomizuno'o 後水尾 (r. 1611–1629), probably the "Majesty" mentioned in the office diary of Deshima.

He undoubtedly got access to the governor of Nagasaki through the intervention of his friend Suzuki Shōsan.[26] The latter had been preaching for several years in Amakusa, a shogunal territory closely monitored by the governor of Nagasaki. In the early 1640s, the bakufu had entrusted the administration of Amakusa to Shōsan's brother, Suzuki Shigenari 鈴木重成 (1588–1653). Shōsan advocated for an "inclusive" Zen, which shared features with Pure Land Buddhism, and he was the author of several texts written in accessible Japanese for commoners.[27]

1.2 Christianity as Buddhist Heresy and Conquering Religion

Sessō sets out the gist of his sermons in the preface of the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*.[28] He composed the preface in *kanbun*, and divided it into two parts, roughly equal in length. The

24 For the original text in Dutch, see Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo 2003, pp. 164–165. I quote here the English translation (*The Deshima Dagregisters* 2001, p. 289). I have slightly modified it following the Dutch version. All subsequent translations of documents in Japanese or *kanbun* are my own.

25 For a detailed biography of Sessō Sōsai, see Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 284–319.

26 On the links between these two monks, see Murai 2000, pp. 153–155. For the activities of Suzuki Shōsan in Amakusa, see pp. 135–140.

27 This tendency to adopt Pure Land practices like the *nenbutsu* 念仏 (the invocation of the Buddha Amida) is observable among other prominent seventeenth-century Zen monks. On this point, see Ibuki 2001, pp. 259–261.

28 The preface is reproduced in Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 68–69.

first part constitutes a summary of his attacks on Christianity. The second concerns what he considered a problematic tendency within mid-seventeenth-century Buddhism, namely the exclusive reliance of some sects on unique practices and/or unique sutra. He is here referring implicitly to Nichiren and Pure Land. Like Suzuki Shōsan, he stood for a trans-sectarian style of Zen. The first part of the preface merits particular scrutiny, as it contains the core of Sessō's anti-Christian argumentation.

Sessō begins with a statement on the importance in Christianity of God and heaven: "[Missionaries] preach that those who believe fervently in the Lord of Heaven (*Tenshu* 天主) and do not regress in their faith (*shinjin* 信心), will be reborn in heaven (*ten* 天) after death, where they will enjoy unlimited bliss." Missionaries, he affirms, do not understand the eternal nature of the *Tathātā* (*shin'nyo* 真如)—the ultimate reality—or of the karmic law (*inga* 因果). Therefore, they mislead ordinary people (*bonbu* 凡夫) with a counterfeit doctrine (*gihō* 偽法), and the converts end up helping the missionaries to conquer new lands.

Sessō then explains that the founder (*shoso* 初祖) of Christianity, Jesus, learned the Buddhist Law (*buppō* 仏法) from a monk (*shamon* 沙門), but intentionally changed its nature to accomplish his plots (*keiryaku* 計略). Christianity, argues Sessō, is rooted in the teachings of the Six Heretical Masters (*Rokushi gedō* 六師外道).[29] These masters and thus the missionaries, too, are at fault for "not understanding the principle that the Three Worlds are [the emanation] of one's heart," and for inciting their followers to believe in things exterior to them such as a wondrous heaven (*shōmyōten* 勝妙天) or a creator.

The ideas expressed in the preface are similar to those in *Ha Kirishitan*. Sessō Sōsai and Suzuki Shōsan both contend that Christians perceive the phenomenal world as the single reality and thus search outside themselves for the means of salvation. For these monks, however, only the improvement of one's mind (*kokoro* 心) and the detachment from material reality can bring relief in this world and lead sentient beings to salvation. What is more, in seventeenth-century Japan, a growing number of Confucian literati and Zen monks also partook of the discourse on the perfection of the mind.[30] Nor is the idea of Christianity as a deviant law (*gedō* 外道), or a Buddhist heresy, an invention of Sessō Sōsai. Suzuki Shōsan also devotes a long passage to this topic.[31] In this regard, Sueki Fumihiko 末木文未士 has argued that the two monks denied Christianity its distinctiveness, and transformed it into a familiar and easy-to-refute doctrine.[32]

The originality of Sessō Sōsai's sermons on Christianity lies in an aspect overlooked by previous scholarship, namely his use of what amounts to a counter-narrative of Christian history. This counter (or alternative) history concludes a long passage written in Japanese contained within the first sermon. Let us now turn to the structure of this sermon, which sheds light on the logic of the arguments Sessō made before the Nagasaki populace.

Sessō starts his first sermon with an explanation of how missionaries and their catechists generally proceed "when they convert people to their religion." He maintains they deliver sermons over seven days, which they divide into two parts: the first day and the six

29 The six masters were contemporaries of the historical Buddha, Prince Gautama; they epitomized views like fatalism, amorality, or materialism, which were deemed to be opposed to the main tenets of Buddhism. On these heretical masters, see Buswell and Lopez 2014, p. 849.

30 Tajiri 2011, pp. 57–58.

31 Ebisawa 1970, pp. 453–454.

32 Sueki 2010, pp. 74–75.

others.[33] The missionaries call the first day "sermon to the gentiles" (*zencho dangi* ゼンチョ談義), when they rebuke the various teachings of the Buddhist sects.[34] Their main targets are the Zen sects, the sects that advocate the chanting of Amida's name (Nenbutsushū 念仏宗) and the Nichiren sect (Nichirenshū 日蓮宗). The missionaries do not consider the Six Nara Sects (Nanto rokushū 南都六宗) and the two sects of Esoteric Buddhism (Tendai Shingon 天台真言) as dangerous opponents: the former are not widely practiced, and the latter are only concerned with reciting prayers. The missionaries criticize Zen for its lack of a creator, and Nichiren and Pure Land Buddhism for the fact that "the Pure Land of the West and the blissful Land of Tranquil Light are part of the lower world, and that [A]mida and Shaka are [mere] humans."[35]

Sessō then sets out, in very broad terms, the content of the missionaries' sermons on the other six days, which are devoted to explaining the tenets of Christianity.[36] Showing a good command of Portuguese vocabulary, the Rinzai monk first mentions the attributes of God (*Deiusu* デイウス): a spiritual body (*suhiritsu no tei* スヒリツノ体) living in the Eleventh Heaven (*jūichi tenme* 十一天目), and the creator (*sakusha* 作者) of all things between heaven and earth (*tenchi banbutsu* 天地万物).[37] He refers to the original sin committed by Adam and Eve; he says the missionaries link it to the descent of Jesus Christ (Zezu Kirishito ゼズキリシト) into the lower world (*gekai* 下界) for the salvation of humans (*shujō* 衆生). He contends that the church manipulates the minds of ordinary people through its discourse on Paradise (*Haraizo* ハライゾ), Hell (*Inuheruno* イヌヘル野) and Purgatory (*Furukatōriya* フルカタウリヤ). Sessō's understanding of Christianity is accurate so far as it goes.

Sessō then switches to *kanbun* to digress on the inefficiency of the bakufu's anti-Christian measures: "Even if those who have listened to the [Christian] law can change the name of their religious affiliation, they do not alter their feelings. [Furthermore], they do not understand that the deviant law is inferior and useless, and that the teaching of the World-Honored [Shaka] is superior and beneficial."[38] For Sessō, formal apostasy is not enough; the monks have to convince people that Buddhism is the most suitable religious law and that Christianity is wicked. He argues that the ineffectiveness of Buddhist preaching is due to the Buddhist clergy, and in particular to two kinds of monks: those who are not

33 I would like to thank Rômulo da Silva Ehalt for this information. Further research is needed on the topic, but it seems that Sessō was well aware of the content of missionaries' sermons. Indeed, in the *Historia de Japam*, Luís Fróis (1532–1597) talks about seven introductory topics in 1565 for the Japanese catechumens (Fróis 1981, pp. 16–17); Fukansai Fabian (1565–1621), in his anti-Christian pamphlet *Ha Daiusu* 破提宇子 (*Deus Destroyed*; Genna 6 [1620]), also refers to the same number of steps (*dan* 段), and his refutation is in seven parts. *Ha Daiusu* is reproduced in Ebisawa 1970, pp. 424–447. For an English translation, see Elison (1973) 1988, pp. 259–291.

34 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 69–70. *Zencho* derives from the Portuguese word *gentio*. It was a word commonly used by Japanese Christians and missionaries to refer to Buddhists.

35 One can read about the main arguments used by the Jesuits against the Buddhist sects in the *Catechismus Christianae Fidei* (1586) of Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) and the *Myōtei Mondō* 妙貞問答 (Myōtei Dialogues; Keichō 10 [1605]) by Fukansai Fabian. For the former, see App 2012, chapters 5, 6, and 7; for the latter, refer to the articles and the translation in English in Baskind and Bowring 2016.

36 Ōkuwa 1984, p. 70

37 As confirmed by various books diffused by the Jesuits in Japan, such as the *Myōtei Mondō* or the *Giya do Pekadoru* ぎやどぺかどる (1599), this is actually what the Jesuits preached about the location of heaven during Japan's so-called Christian century. See Pinto dos Santos 2003, pp. 438–440, for a list of the mentions of the Eleventh Heaven, the Empyrean, in the Jesuit mission press, and more generally, see Hiraoka 2013, pp. 42–55.

38 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 70–71.

able to explain the Law and who only harass and exploit lay people (*zaikenin* 在家人), and those of the Pure Land and Nichiren sects who argue about which teaching is the best. These monks are not worthy of teaching the "correct law" (*shōbō* 正法) of Shaka; they are thus useless or even harmful in the campaign against Christianity. It is highly unlikely that the authorities in Nagasaki allowed Sessō to take such a stance during his preaching to the general populace. These lines were most likely intended as a warning to the few monks who had access to the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*.

Next, Sessō again reverts to Japanese to discuss the "true" origins of Christianity:

> The origins (*hongen* 本源) of Christianity are as follows. In a country called Itariya [Italy], there was a woman whose name was Santa Mariya [Saint Mary]. She was a descendant of the kings (*aruji no mago* 主之孫) of this country. She had a child whose name was Zezusu [Jesus]. In this country, there was also a monk (*shukke* 出家). Zezusu took him as a master. He learned with him the Buddhist Law, and, with this law, he preached to the people, and he gained their support as a means to conquer different countries. As he was preaching here and there, in a land called Judeya [Judea], [the authorities] heard about the plot (*hakarigoto* 謀) he was premeditating. Zezusu was arrested and crucified. Then, his disciples had to hide in different places. Everywhere, they talked in secret about Zezusu; they encouraged people [to join them]. Finally, they seized Rōma [Rome]. After, they conquered various countries with the help of the conspiracies that this religion allows. Later, on four or five occasions, they even tried to seize Japan. I read in detail about these facts in the texts that the missionaries addressed to the shogunal authorities (*kubō* 公方). The Christian religion was born around 1600 years ago. At that time, in India (Tenjiku 天竺), the Buddhist Law had entered into decadence. The teaching provided by the monk [to Zezusu] combined the way of the Buddha and the deviant way. [Zezusu] was not able to distinguish the two ways; he learned the surface of the Buddhist Law but did not understand its quintessence […].[39]

The following four elements are important to keep in mind as they also appear in other documents consulted or written by Sessō: 1) Jesus and Mary were the descendants of kings; 2) they used religion as a means to conquer other lands; 3) following the death of Jesus, the "founder of Christianity," his followers have continued his devilish work; and 4) Jesus distorted the real meaning of Buddhism to forge his creed.

For this last reason, Sessō holds that Christianity is no more than a failed copy of Buddhism. For example, he points out that the spiritual body (*suhiritsu no tei*) of God resembles the *Tathātā*, and protests that God, Mary, and Jesus are the names of Buddhas, but not real ones. The Eleventh Heaven (Paradise) is similar to the "ten trillion lands of Buddhas" (*Jūman'oku-do* 十万億土) situated between our world and the Pure Land of Amida. Excommunication (*Ezukumokāto*) is similar to the *shakujō* 錫杖 of Brahmā (Bonten 梵天), a ringed staff often used as a weapon for protecting the Law.[40] Finally, Sessō

39 Ōkuwa 1984, p. 71.

40 This somewhat surprising juxtaposition originates in one of the Tafukuji documents. Sessō Sōsai's anti-Christian argumentation is generally known for its depiction of Christianity as a copy of Buddhism. This is one of the most salient features of the *Taiji jashū ron*. On the latter treatise, see, for example, Pinto dos Santos 2002.

returns to his main accusation: Christians, ignorant of the karmic law, search outside of themselves—that is, they rely on God—for their means of salvation.

The first sermon then slips back into *kanbun* in order to criticize once again both Nichirenism and Pure Land Buddhism, and to demonstrate the superiority of Zen Buddhism, drawing on an array of sutras. It concludes by claiming that 1,520 citizens, aspiring for enlightenment (*hotsubodaishin* 発菩提心) thanks to the sermon, received the five precepts. It is highly doubtful that Sessō preached on these complex matters to the citizens of Nagasaki; the parts in Japanese are surely closer to the actual sermon. His main argument in these sections is that Christianity is a copy of Buddhism that inspired the disciples of Jesus to conquer new lands. Sessō's enemies were undoubtedly the missionaries.

1.3 Preaching amid a Tense International Situation

Sessō's main argument was, in all likelihood, a response to the feared return of the Portuguese and the impact it could have on any remaining hidden Christians. As it turned out, on 26 July 1647 (Shōhō 4.6.24), nine days after the Dutch mentioned Sessō Sōsai in their office diary, two carracks sent by the Portuguese crown arrived in Nagasaki bay seeking to reopen trade with Japan.[41] Around four hundred people were on board. This was the first time a Western country sent an official embassy to Japan. Gonçalo de Siqueira de Souza (?–1648), a nobleman who had fought alongside his father during the 1610s in various parts of Asia, led the embassy. The new king of Portugal, João IV (r. 1640–1656), had appointed him as ambassador in December 1643. His journey to Japan was delayed several times. In the fall of 1644, the fleet of the embassy encountered a storm between the islands of Java and Sumatra; the fleet received Dutch assistance and remained in Batavia for four months. (A ten-year truce signed between the two countries in 1642 enabled this unusual situation.) After arriving in Macao, Siqueira de Souza had to deal with the reluctance of the authorities in Macao to risk such an enterprise after the bloody ending of their own attempt in 1640.[42]

In 1645, the Japanese authorities became aware of the existence of this embassy. They were concerned to learn that the Portuguese and the Dutch were now at peace. The relevant Dutch sources have already been studied extensively by scholars, and these indicate that the leaders of the bakufu interrogated, on many occasions, the chief (*opperhoofd*) of the trading post at Deshima about the Portuguese and their intentions. [43] Their questions concerned Portuguese overseas territories, the number of Portuguese soldiers and vessels in Asia, the state of the Spanish empire, the distance between different ports (Goa, Macao, Batavia, and Manilla) in the possession of the Europeans, and the possibility of a Portuguese-English coalition.

After executing the envoys sent from Macao in 1640, the Japanese authorities expected retaliation from the Portuguese.[44] This led to an increase in the surveillance of Kyushu's

41 To this day, the most detailed studies of this embassy remain those by Charles R. Boxer. For a convenient overview of the primary sources and the main events related to this episode, see Boxer 1939.

42 For a general presentation of the history of Portugal and its empire in the mid-seventeenth century, see Ramos (2009) 2015, part 2, chapter 5.

43 See for instance Blussé 2003 and Matsukata 2010, pp. 44–60.

44 On this first embassy sent by Macao, see Boxer (1951) 1993, pp. 384–385.

maritime borders.[45] Moreover, as Yamamoto Hirofumi 山本博文 has pointed out, prior to the arrival of the envoys, the bakufu had already adopted several measures aimed at forestalling or limiting the impact of a second Shimabara-Amakusa revolt. For example, a memorandum (*oboe* 覚) sent by the bakufu elders to the governor of Osaka in the sixth month of Kan'ei 17 (1640) explicitly stated that the arrival of Portuguese vessels (*kareuta* かれうた) could incite Japanese Christians to organize themselves and take action (*Kirishitan no totō* 切支丹の徒党). The memorandum also advised feudal lords to deploy troops in their domains in the event of the arrival of a Portuguese vessel in order to monitor their subjects' reactions.[46]

The arrival of the embassy on 26 July 1647 triggered one of the largest mobilizations of troops in the entire Edo period. According to estimates by Matsuo Shin'ichi 松尾晋一, the bakufu gathered around fifty thousand soldiers in and around Nagasaki. In August, the governor even closed the bay with a "bridge of boats."[47] One of the first steps taken by the Nagasaki governor was to forbid local citizens from leaving their houses and to ask the Portuguese to conceal the Christian symbols displayed on their vessels. These preventive measures did not have the desired effect: the population of Nagasaki panicked, and crowds started to flee to the surrounding hills.[48]

It seems the authorities were uncertain about how the population of Nagasaki would respond to the return of the Portuguese. A later document confirms this fact. In Manji 万治 1 (1658), the governor of Nagasaki wrote to the bakufu elders in Edo stating his intention to refuse any future entry by a Portuguese vessel beyond the island of Iōjima 伊王島, which sits a little outside the entrance of Nagasaki bay. By adopting this policy, the governor hoped to prevent people from setting eyes on the Portuguese. He was afraid that the mere sight of the Portuguese might cause the inhabitants of the port, "who were all apostate Christians," to turn "mad" (*kichigai* 気違い).[49] In other words, twenty years after the revolt of Shimabara-Amakusa, the governor still questioned the sincerity of their attachment to Buddhism.

The Portuguese remained aboard their vessels in anticipation of an answer from the bakufu regarding the reopening of the Macao-Nagasaki trade. It arrived on 28 August and, as is widely known, it was negative.[50] All of the bakufu elders had signed the official response, which criticized Christianity on two accounts: the propensity of its followers to plot revolts on the one hand and its imperialist tendencies on the other. In the eyes of the elders, the Portuguese used this religion as a pretext to conquer foreign lands; the elders pretended to understand it thanks to the "confession" (*hakujō* 白状) of the "Southern barbarian apostate priests." This might be a reference to the apostate Jesuit Cristóvão Ferreira or to the members of the two Rubino groups, the majority of whom renounced

45 Regarding the reinforcement of Japan's borders in the 1640s, see Matsuo 2013, chapter 1. These measures might appear somewhat extreme when one considers the actual situation of Portugal after the recovery of its independence. However, it is uncertain whether the Japanese authorities, who had to rely on the information being provided by the Dutch and the Chinese, fully understood the military weakness of Portugal and its actual relations with Spain (both countries were at war from 1640 to 1668).

46 This document is quoted in Yamamoto 2017, pp. 142–143.

47 On the mobilization of Kyushu's lords, see Matsuo 2013, pp. 33–40.

48 The chief of Deshima vividly described the reaction of the population in his office diary. See *The Deshima Dagregisters* 2001, pp. 290–301.

49 This document is quoted in Kimura 2016, p. 35.

50 For a transcription, see Shimizu 1977, p. 328.

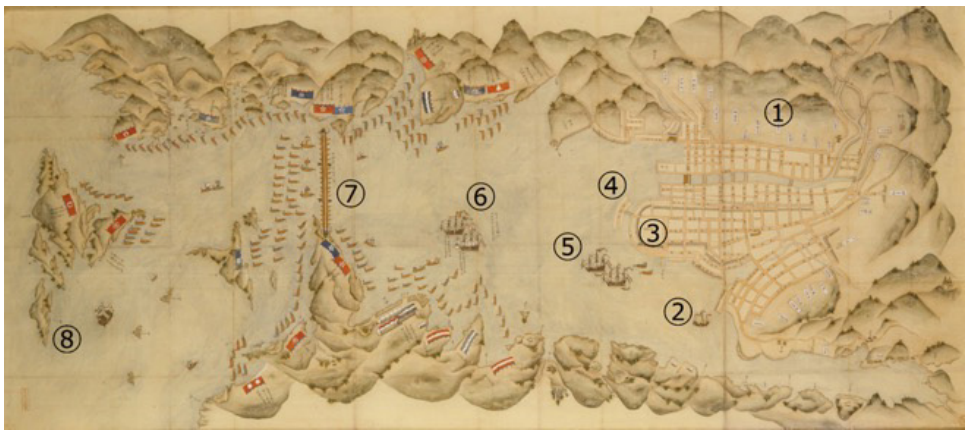

Figure 2. A map representing the situation of Nagasaki bay in August 1647 (seventeenth century; unknown artist). ① Kōfukuji; 2 A Chinese ship?; ③ The Nagasaki governor's office; ④ Deshima trading post; ⑤ Dutch vessels; ⑥ The Portuguese embassy; ⑦ The blockade of the bay; ⑧ Iōjima. ©Jorge Welsh Works of Art, Lisbon/London.

their faith under torture.[51] On 4 September, the governor of Nagasaki instructed Gonçalo de Siqueira de Souza and his men to leave Japan.

2. Restoring the Truth: The Anti-Christian Documents at Tafukuji Temple

Sessō Sōsai was a monk of renown who had contacts in the highest reaches of both the Edo bakufu and the world of Zen Buddhism. His sermons, whose exact organization and content remain somewhat unclear, attracted large crowds. It appears that Sessō resorted to a counter-narrative of the history of Christianity. He did so to convey the idea that Christianity was a Buddhist heresy prone to wicked deeds, in particular the seizing of foreign lands. By clearly unmasking the Christian threat, his objective was to ensure that the Nagasaki populace would not come to the aid of the Portuguese in the event they launched an attack in retaliation for the execution of the envoys they had sent from Macao in 1640.

As mentioned earlier, some of the sources Sessō drew upon when preparing his arguments are extant and can be consulted today at Tafukuji in Ōita Prefecture. In what follows, I will begin by outlining the content of these documents before attempting to draw explicit connections between the arguments they contain and Japan's anti-Christian fight in the 1640s.

2.1 A Heterogeneous Collection

At Tafukuji, there is a wooden box that is slightly bigger than a shoebox. One side of the lid is dated Hōreki 宝暦 11 (1761). On the other side, there is the following sentence: "The secret books (*hisho* 秘書) of Tafukuji should not leave this site," with a list of the texts the box initially contained. These were three books (*satsu* 冊), namely *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, *Taiji jashū ron*, and *Kirishitan kanagaki* 喜利志祖仮名書 (Stories about Christianity written

51 Concerning Cristóvão Ferreira and his apostasy in 1633, see Cieslik 1974. On the mission named after Antonio Rubino (1578–1643), the Jesuit who supervised it, see Shimizu 2012, chapter 8.

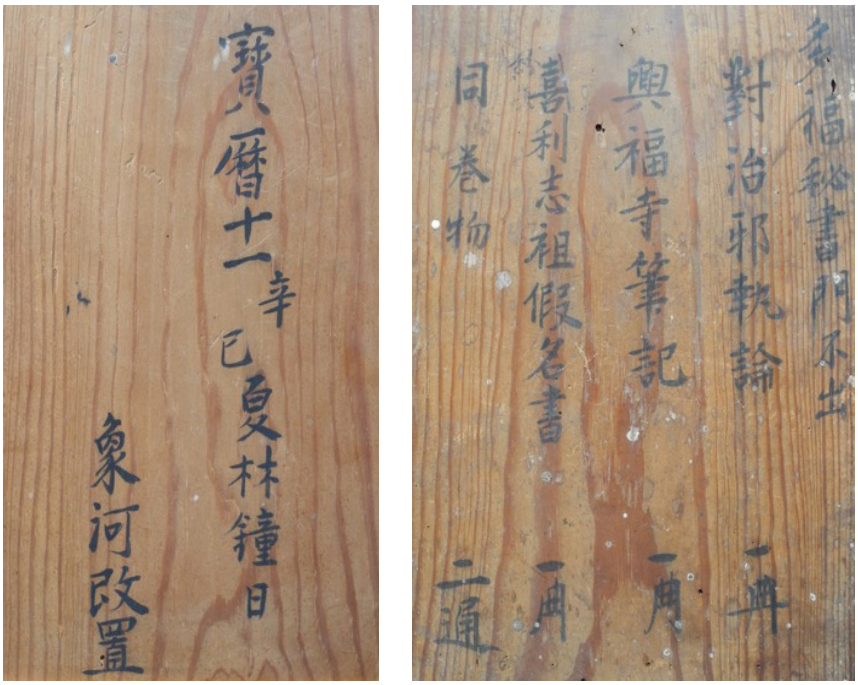

Figure 3. The lid of the box which contains the anti-Christian documents of Sessō Sōsai. Courtesy of Seki Yasunori, abbot of Tafukuji.

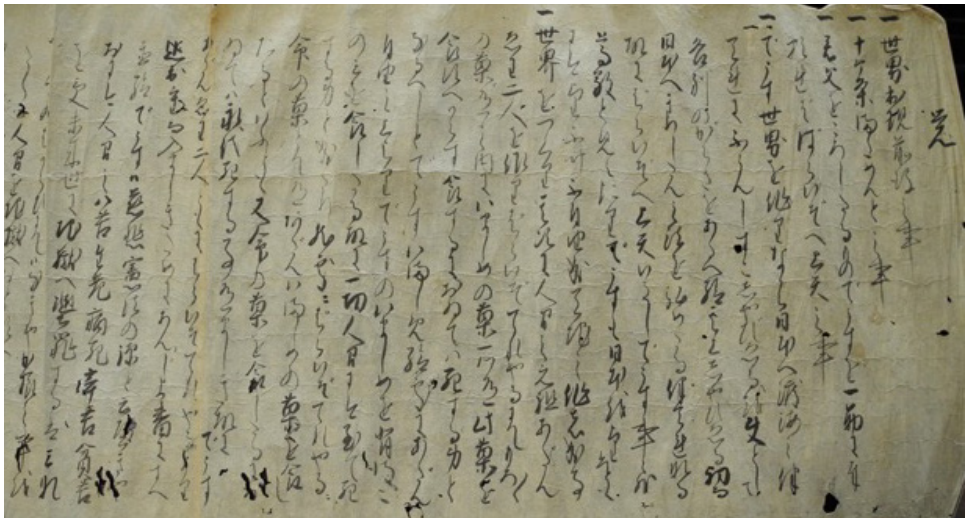

Figure 4. The beginning of the memorandum. Courtesy of Seki Yasunori, abbot of Tafukuji.

in Japanese), and two scrolls (*makimono* 巻物).[52] Of these documents, only the *Taiji jashū ron* is missing, but we know it anyway thanks to late Edo copies.[53]

As demonstrated by Ōkuwa Hitoshi and his team, Sessō consulted the two scrolls and the *Kirishitan kanagaki* while preparing both his sermons and the *Taiji jashū ron*.[54]

One of the scrolls is a memorandum (*oboe*).[55] It contains a list of fifteen very concrete arguments against Christianity, outlining its contradictions. The author fully developed ten of them; they concern God primarily and, to a lesser extent, the cult of the martyrs and saints.

The second scroll has no title.[56] Its first part narrates the life of Marcello Mastrilli (1603–1637), a Neapolitan Jesuit who died as a martyr in Nagasaki in the fall of Kan'ei 14 (1637). Mastrilli, who believed he had recovered from a severe wound thanks to the intervention of Francis Xavier, made a vow to reach Japan and preach the Gospel there like his eminent predecessor.[57] The author of the scroll saturates his story with reports of divine interventions and miracles; it seems to be a Japanese translation of a hagiography compiled by Mastrilli's fellow Jesuits after his death.[58] The second part, which is incomplete, claims that Mastrilli's story is a lie propagated by the Jesuits. The author explains that the four catechists (*dōjuku* 同宿) and the brother (*iruman* いるまん), who had accompanied the priests of the two Rubino groups in 1642 and 1643 before apostatizing under torture, testified to this fact.

The *Kirishitan kanagaki* is, in many respects, the most intriguing document that Sessō Sōsai had at his disposal.[59] To my knowledge, it is the most extensive anti-Christian text written in the seventeenth century and yet one of the least well-known among scholars. The manuscript, 230 pages long and a little over fifty thousand characters, bears annotations: someone wrote comments in the upper margins, rectified characters, added punctuation, and sidelined words. Like the well-known *Kirishitan monogatari* 吉利支丹物語 (Tales of the Christians; Kan'ei 16 [1639], reprinted in Kanbun 5 [1665] with illustrations), it amounts to a compilation of short stories on the (wicked) deeds of the Christians.[60] It deals almost

52 The characters used for *Kirishitan* 喜利志袒 are those used in the *Taiji jashū ron*, and so the title on the box suggests that it was chosen by either Sessō Sōsai or by someone who had his anti-Christian treatise in mind.

53 Regarding the different manuscripts of the *Taiji jashū ron*, see Ebisawa 1970, p. 640.

54 As noted in Ōkuwa 1984 (pp. 405–412), Sessō certainly made use of other sources too, such as *Ha Kirishitan* by Suzuki Shōsan, *Kengiroku* 顕偽録 (Deceit disclosed; Kan'ei 13 [1636]) by Cristóvão Ferreira, and other documents held by Inoue Masashige. Around 1660, his successor, Hōjō Ujinaga 北条氏長 (1609–1670), incorporated some of the latter into a document called *Kirisuto-ki* 契利斯督記 (Notes on Christianity). Regarding the *Kengiroku*, see Cieslik 1974, pp. 36–40. For the original text, see Ferreira 1927. For Inoue Masashige and the *Kirisuto-ki*, see Murai 1987, pp. 45–67. A transcription of one of the manuscripts can be found in ZGR, pp. 626–668.

55 The memorandum is reproduced in Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 171–174. For a commentary, see pp. 392–394.

56 The transcription of this scroll is reproduced in Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 168–170 (for a commentary, see pp. 388–391).

57 On Mastrilli, see Elison (1973) 1988, pp. 197–199. This author considers that the Society of Jesus allowed the "suicidal" journey of the Neapolitan in order to restore its prestige, which had been eroded by the apostasy of Cristóvão Ferreira.

58 The *Kirisuto-ki* contains a very similar biography of Mastrilli, in addition to comparable testimonies (compiled in Meireki 明暦 4 (1658)) by apostate priests and catechists. See ZGR, pp. 652–654 for the testimonies and pp. 654–655 for the biography of Mastrilli. It appears that Inoue Masashige considered it vital to refute the stories that had spread concerning this Italian Jesuit.

59 The *Kirishitan kanagaki* is reproduced in Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 175–259.

60 For an English translation, see Elison (1973) 1988, pp. 329–374. Elison has argued that the *Kirishitan monogatari* was part of a propagandist strategy on the part of the Tokugawa regime to instill the idea among the lower classes that Christianity represented a foreign threat. On the contrary, Jan Leuchtenberger has defended the theory that this text was linked to the blossoming commercial publishing

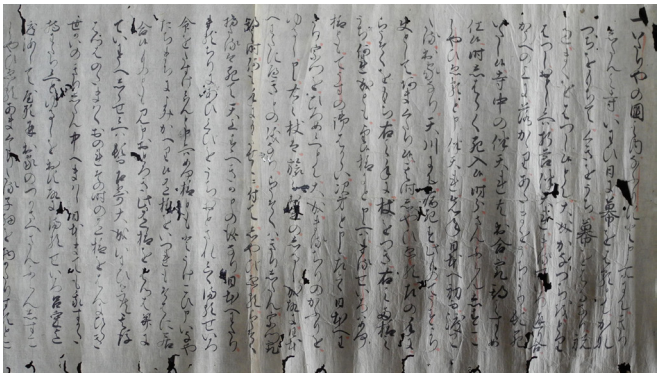

Figure 5. The beginning of the scroll related to the life and death of Marcello Mastrilli. Courtesy of Seki Yasunori, abbot of Tafukuji.

exclusively with the successful and failed attempts of missionaries to conquer new territories. Virtually no scholarship exists on the full manuscript.[61]

Before Ōkuwa Hitoshi's discovery of the Tafukuji documents, scholars only knew and had studied the last third of *Kirishitan kanagaki*, named *Bateren-ki* 伴天連記 (Chronicle of the priests) after nineteenth-century manuscripts. Jan Leuchtenberger, who has translated the *Bateren-ki* into English, regards it as a seminal document in the literary construction of a "*Kirishitan* other," and as a tool to undermine the position of the missionaries in Japan.[62] Sakamoto Masayoshi 坂本正義 considers the text, despite its fictitious elements, as a more or less reliable source on the Jesuit presence in Japan, as well as evidence that Christianity projected a negative image there in the early seventeenth century. For him, it is proof that many Japanese saw missionaries as the forerunners to a territorial invasion by the "Southern Barbarians."[63]

The *Kirishitan kanagaki* manuscript held by Tafukuji is in three parts. Only the second bears a title: *Kirishitan jūni monpa no koto* きりしたん十二問派之事 (About the twelve orders of Christianity).[64] The first and the third parts recount, chronologically, both fictive and actual events related to Christianity, from Adam and Eve to the first decade of the seventeenth century.[65] It contains long passages on the life of Jesus, Mary, the apostles (Peter, Paul, John, James, and Matthew), and finally saints (Lucy, Clare, and Lawrence, for example). After describing four fictive attempts by the missionaries to conquer Japan—note that the same number occurs in the first sermon of the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*—the manuscript ends by mentioning the ban on Christianity in Ōmura in Keichō 11 (1606).[66]

industry of the mid-seventeenth century and thus reflected the image of Christianity in Japan at the time (2013, pp. 45–49).

61 See, however, Elisonas 2000 and 2007, and Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 394–405.

62 See Leuchtenberger 2013, pp. 32–44, for the author's analysis of the *Bateren-ki*. For the English translation, see pp. 137–160.

63 Sakamoto 1981, chapter 3.

64 On the structure of the *Kirishitan kanagaki*, see Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 394–405.

65 For a more detailed discussion of the stories in the *Kirishitan kanagaki*, see Elisonas 2000, pp. 35–45.

66 According to the author of the *Kirishitan kanagaki*, the Christians attempted to conquer Japan four times before they finally succeeded in setting foot there. The first time, they used trade as a means to achieve their

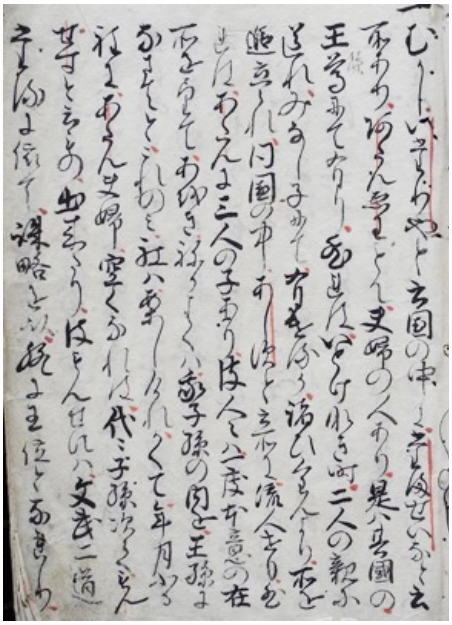

Figure 6. First page of the *Kirishitan kanagaki*. Courtesy of Seki Yasunori, abbot of Tafukuji.

The Jesuits were highly successful there in the latter part of the sixteenth century, winning the conversion of its lord, Ōmura Sumitada 大村純忠 (1533–1587), who subsequently spread the new faith among his retainers and subjects.[67] The author also explains, with some accuracy, certain doctrinal aspects of Christianity, like the creation, the redemption, and the seven sacraments.

The second part concerns, as its title suggests, various real and fictive religious orders or religious organizations within the Church. Among those which exist in reality are the Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, and the brotherhood system. The orders of Saint Michael (*San Mikeru*), Saint Lawrence (*San Rorenso*), and a certain *Santa Narisha* are however, fictitious. In comparison with the first and third parts, the second is mostly imaginary.

The author of the *Kirishitan kanagaki* is unknown. Jurgis Elisonas attributes its authorship to Chijiwa Seizaemon 千々石清左衛門 (1569–1633?), better known as Miguel Chijiwa, one of the four envoys of the Tenshō embassy, sent to Rome and the Iberian Union by three Christian feudal lords of Kyushu under close Jesuit supervision.[68] Unlike the other envoys, Miguel left the seminary and renounced his faith at the beginning of the

aim, but they failed to arouse the interest of the Japanese. The second and third times, they resorted to force but a combination of Japan's army and storm winds repelled them. The fourth time, Rome sent missionaries but their ships floundered before reaching Japan. For the part of the original text which describes these fictive events, see Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 244–252. For an English translation, see Leuchtenberger 2013, pp. 147–153.

67 Concerning the conversion of this feudal lord and his domain to Christianity, see Kudamatsu 2002, chapter 2.

68 Regarding this embassy, see Elisonas 2007. For his arguments attributing the authorship of the *Kirishitan kanagaki* to Miguel Chijiwa, see Elisonas 2000, pp. 45–50.

seventeenth century.[69] However, none of the evidence Elisonas provides is decisive, and there remains no consensus among scholars about the authorship.[70]

Whatever the identity of the author, we can say with certainty that he possessed an extensive knowledge of Christian doctrine, its hagiography, and the Portuguese language. The *Kirishitan kanagaki* mimics the hybrid style of the Jesuit press in Japan (*Kirishitan-ban* キリシタン版) brilliantly.[71] Furthermore, the author knew the names of many Jesuits active in the Japanese archipelago, from the pioneers of the mission such as Francis Xavier (1506–1552) and Cosme de Torres (1510–1570) to Japanese priests and brothers like Lourenço Ryōsai (1526–1592), Vincente Tōin (1540–1609), Sebastião Kimura (1565–1622), and Fukansai Fabian.[72]

2.2 Exposing Christian Deception and Legitimizing the Anti-Christian Measures

It is interesting to note the importance of narratives in the collection of texts Sessō Sōsai had at his disposal. He mainly borrowed from the *Kirishitan kanagaki* to construct his arguments against Christianity. This tactic suggests that we should reassess the distinction that is usually drawn between "doctrinal" and "popular" anti-Christian texts. Indeed, in the *Taiji jashū ron*, a treatise written entirely in *kanbun*, presumably as a *vade mecum* for the monks close to Sessō, a significant part of the text consists of narrative elements related to an "alternative" history of Christianity and the life of Jesus.[73] The *Taiji jashū ron* thus differs from Suzuki Shōsan's *Ha Kirishitan*. The latter does not explain the wicked nature of the forbidden religion by invoking historical facts; it arises, so to speak, *ex nihilo*. By contrast, Sessō connects all the alleged evils of Christianity to the "original sin" of Jesus, who wilfully transformed the teaching of the Buddha in order to engage in his misdeeds. Previous scholarship, in focusing predominantly on the text's doctrinal aspects, has largely overlooked the narrative aspect of the *Taiji jashū ron*.

The text begins with the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in Japan and their first successes. This opening represents a summary of the information found within the *Kirishitan kanagaki*, including its mistakes.[74] According to the *Taiji jashū ron*, at the end of the Tenbun 天文 era (1532–1555), two priests (*bateren* 頗姪連) and one brother (*iruman* 由婁漫) arrived in Bungo from the capital (*kyō*/*miyako* 京) of Rome. The priests were San Furanshisuko Shabieru (Francis Xavier) and Gasuparu (possibly Gaspar Vilela (1526–1572),

69 On Miguel's life, see in particular Hesselink 2016, pp. 161–167.

70 The feelings of Miguel Chijiwa towards Christianity were possibly more complex than a simple rejection (Ōishi 2015). Indeed, in 2004 a team of archeologists found what appears to be the Buddhist grave (Nichiren sect) of Miguel Chijiwa and his spouse in Ikiriki 伊木力, a village situated ten kilometers north of Nagasaki. Their children had placed many Christian objects within it, implying that Miguel may have remained Christian in his heart until his death in Kan'ei 9 (1633). For the latest research on this grave, see Chijiwa Migeru Bosho Hakkutsu Chōsa Jikkō Iinkai 2019.

71 The author uses Portuguese words and phrases like *Escritura*/*Ezukiritaura* (scriptures), *circumcisão*/*shirikurisan* (circumcision), *inocência*/*yunosensha* (innocence), *excomungado*/*esukumokāto* (excommunicated), *filósofo*/*hiroseho* (philosopher) and even *encanto bruxa*/*inkanto furūsha* ("a witch [who casts] spells").

72 For a list of both the lay Christians and members of the Society of Jesus who appear in the *Bateren-ki*, see Sakamoto 1981, pp. 139–140.

73 As I noted in my introduction, many Buddhist monks went to Kyushu after the revolt of Shimabara-Amakusa in order to preach against Christianity in former missionary strongholds. Murai Sanae has shown that some of them had deep connections with Sessō Sōsai and Suzuki Shōsan (Murai 2000, pp. 133–155).

74 Ebisawa 1970, pp. 460–461. For the corresponding passage in the *Kirishitan kanagaki*, see Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 252–254.

a Jesuit who arrived in Japan in 1556).[75] The brother was a certain Rorenso, probably the blind *biwa* player Lourenço Ryōsai, the first-ever Japanese to join the Society of Jesus. Sessō depicts him as a man born in the Kinai 畿内 region who studied the teaching of the Lord of Heaven (*Tenshukyō* 天主教) in Rome.[76]

After that, Sessō leaves aside Japan to focus on the life of Jesus (Zezusu 是寸須) who, after having learned the doctrine of Shaka, transformed it into a deviant law (*gedō*) and a set of evil views (*jaken* 邪見) to steal foreign countries.[77] Sessō claims that he bases his knowledge on the evil books (*jasho* 邪書) he has consulted.[78] Then, in a long passage, he introduces some of the essential doctrinal elements of Christianity: the creation by God, the fall of Lucifer, the original sin of Adam and Eve, the incarnation of Jesus, the betrayal of Judas, the death and resurrection of Jesus.[79] Finally, Sessō emphasizes that creation is a groundless theory (*okusetsu* 憶説) preached by Jesus, and that the extraordinary deeds (*kimyō* 奇妙) he allegedly performed are the ingenious inventions (*kōken* 巧見) of Ewanzerishita 恵椀是利志多 (John the Evangelist?).[80] As we shall see, this is precisely the view held by the author of the *Kirishitan kanagaki.*

This reliance on narrative features affords essential insights into Christianity and, more broadly speaking, religious mentalities at the beginning of the Edo period. Two elements in particular merit our attention: (1) miraculous or supernatural stories seem likely to have exerted a significant influence on the Japanese; and (2) Buddhist and Christian priests considered narratives and counter-narratives as an effective means to convey religious ideas and to attack one another's religion.

Historians of Christianity in medieval and early modern Europe (until at least the seventeenth century) have highlighted the wide diffusion and use of the lives of the saints, first, by the mendicant orders and, later, by the secular clergy and the Jesuits, for the edification of the populace.[81] The most famous collection of lives is the *Golden Legend,* composed by the Dominican Jacobus da Varagine (ca. 1230–1298). Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was the most copied manuscript in Europe after the Bible. The Dominican built his book around the liturgical year; it served as a pool of edifying examples for preachers. However, this compilation did more than simply outline models of behavior for believers to imitate: it offered a pedagogy of the sacred and contained the essence of Christian dogma.[82]

As Jonathan E. Greenwood has shown, the *opus* of Jacobus da Varagine and subsequent similar compilations were central to the proselytizing activities of the missionaries in the world outside Europe. In the early stages of evangelization, they propagated the lives of saints, whether they be in South America, India, or Asia.[83] In Japan, before the introduction of the printing press in Kyushu, the Jesuits had spread among their flock accounts of saints'

75 Francis Xavier arrived in Kagoshima on 15 August 1549 (Tenbun 天文 18).
76 In fact, he was originally from the island of Hirado in the province of Hizen and never left Japan. On his life, see Yūki 2005.
77 Ebisawa 1970, pp. 462–463.
78 Ebisawa 1970, p. 467.
79 Ebisawa 1970, pp. 467–470.
80 Ebisawa 1970, p. 474.
81 For an overview of this literature, see Bartlett 2013, chapter 13.
82 For a complete study of the *Golden Legend*, refer to Boureau 1984.
83 Greenwood 2018.

lives in handwritten copies. And, in 1591, the first book they printed was a collection of saints' lives, in the Roman alphabet: *Sanctos no Gosagueo no Uchinuqigaqi / Santosu no gosagyō no uchinukigaki* サントスの御作業の内抜書 (Abridged version of the acts of the saints).[84]

In Japan, the use of narratives to transmit religious dogma to the populace was by no means unique to the missionaries. For centuries, Buddhist priests had used short tales (*setsuwa* 説話) to edify (and entertain) their audience. Tsutsumi Kunihiko 堤邦彦 has shown that throughout the seventeenth century, the mandatory affiliation of the populace to Buddhist temples increased the diffusion of such stories. At the very beginning of the Edo period, the Buddhist clergy printed vast numbers of manuals for preaching (*kange-bon* 勧化本), which included many edifying tales.[85] Whether Buddhist or Christian, these stories were replete with miraculous deeds. They strove to show the superiority of a specific creed or religious organization. They were testimony to the ultimate truth of either Buddhism or Christianity. Both the authorities in Nagasaki and Sessō Sōsai were well aware that if they wanted to convince Japanese Christians to abandon their faith, they needed to disclose the falsehood of the lives of the saints and martyrs.

For instance, the memorandum held at Tafukuji indicates that Sessō and others relied upon their memory of Mastrilli's execution to demonstrate that Christian discourse was, as a whole, mendacious. One entry argues that, since no extraordinary event actually occurred during his execution in Nagasaki, contrary to what Christian documents affirm about him, "the deeds (*sagyō* 作業) of the past [which the Church propagates] are all fabricated lies (*itsuwari* 偽)."[86]

One of *Kirishitan kanagaki*'s aims is clearly to debunk some of the core narratives of Christianity. The word *itsuwari* itself appears in multiple passages, especially in the early sections on the life of Jesus. The author dismisses the Annunciation as "an unbelievable lie." The birth of Jesus, which was marked by the coming of angels, "is also a real lie." [87] The star of Bethlehem, proof of Jesus' coming for the Three Wise Men, is a deception: "[What they say about] this star is, as with other things, only a lie."[88]

However, merely affirming that all Christian claims, both past and present (especially those relating to the martyrs), were mere lies and fabrications was not, in itself, sufficient. Sessō and his patrons in Nagasaki needed to expose the hidden motives of the Church so as to explain why Christianity was such a deceptive religion, and to justify its prohibition. The explanation, outlined briefly by Sessō Sōsai in his *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki* and *Taiji jashū ron*, is fully developed in *Kirishitan kanagaki*.

I have translated the first pages of the text, which concern the origin of Jesus' family. They may have sounded familiar to the ears of late medieval and early modern Japanese who were accustomed to stories of warriors thirsty for conquest or fighting to retrieve what they deemed to be the rights or the domains of their ancestors:

84 For a general presentation of such literature in early modern Japan, see Obara 1996, pp. 383–411.
85 Regarding the use of *setsuwa* in early modern Japan, see the articles in Tsutsumi 1996. See the first chapter for a general overview of the *kange-bon*.
86 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 172–173.
87 In the Gospel of Luke (2:1-20), the birth of Jesus was announced by angels to shepherds nearby.
88 The three passages are in Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 176–177, 179.

> In the past, in Itariya [Italy], there was a place called Tamaseina [Damascus?], where Atan [Adam] and Ewa [Eve] lived. They were descendants of the kings (*ōson* 王孫) of this country [Itariya].[89] However, their parents died when they were young; they became orphans. They were expelled [from Tamaseina] and exiled to Ashisu [Assisi?], a place situated in the same country. After, Atan had three sons. His sons wished ardently to retrieve their home country. [One day,] they declared: "We are only concerned with the fact that one of our descendants shall rise again to the throne." Then, months and years passed, and Atan [and Ewa] died; generations of descendants followed until a certain Monsesu [Moses?] appeared. As he was skilled in the literary and military arts, he finally ascended the throne (*ōi* 王位) thanks to a plot (*bōryaku* 謀略). Some six thousand years after Atan, there was a royal descendant called Jōchin [Joachim], and his wife's name was Anna. At that time, the people of this country considered that those who had no children contravened human relations. Thus, Anna and Jōchin, since they had no children, were not allowed to succeed to the throne (*teiō* 帝王). They were exiled to a place called Zeruzaren [Jerusalem]. Soon after that, a man named Seizaru Agusuto [Cesar Augustus] inherited the throne. At that moment, Jōchin prayed the Way of Heaven (*Tendō* 天道), saying: "I was blessed to be born in a royal family (*ōin* 王院). Nevertheless, since I had no children, I was exiled. Here is my wish: whether a boy or a girl, give me a descendant." He addressed his prayer with such dedication that his wife Anna soon became pregnant. In the ninth month, she gave birth. They discovered that the child was a daughter. They called her Santa Mariya [Saint Mary].[90]

Tracing the origins of Jesus' family, the author recounts his birth, his early life, and, then, a turning point that happened when he was nineteen. He met a monk (*shukke*) who gave him the idea of forging a sacred text (*kyō* 経) to gain popular support for his plot to overthrow Seizaru Agusuto. I cite extensively from this passage as the incident underpins, for the author, all the lies of the Church:

> When he was nineteen, something happened in Jesus' life. An unknown monk came [to his village]. Jesus heard his sermon (*seppō*) and judged it venerable. He became the disciple of this monk, and, for three years, he traveled to other countries. At the age of twenty-two, he returned to his home village. He reflected a lot [and said to himself as follows]: "Although I am a descendant of kings, it is highly regrettable that [my place in society] is so low because of the poor karmic retribution I have inherited from my ancestors. However wide is my knowledge, I will not be able to wipe out Seizaru Agusuto only with military strategy or bravery in battle. Here is what I will do: I will fabricate a sacred text and tell everyone that I am Heaven's emissary (*Tendō no tsukai* 天道の使); then, I will exhort them to believe in me, and I will gain the support of high and low people. After that, it will be easy for me to wipe out Seizaru Agusuto; I will become the king of this country (*kokuō* 国王) [of Rome]." Following this plan, on

89 Later in the text, it becomes clear that Italy designates Rome.
90 Ōkuwa 1984, pp. 175–176.

> the eighth day of the eighth month of his twentieth year [sic], Jesus started for the first time to fabricate a sacred text.[91]

Sessō undoubtedly drew on the first pages of the *Kirishitan kanagaki* to prepare the first sermon as recorded in the *Nagasaki Kōfukuji hikki*, where he treats the origins of Christianity. In addition to the lexical proximity between the two texts, he employs the same ideas concerning the royal status of Jesus, his thirst for conquest, and his malevolent use of religion. The parts of the manuscript version of the *Kirishitan kanagaki* concerning the life of Jesus bear many annotations (*shugaki* 朱書き). For instance, regarding the encounter of Jesus with the monk, we read in the upper margin the following comment: "Jesus learned the law with a monk."

The *Kirishitan kanagaki* goes on to discuss some of the key elements of Jesus' "fabricated sacred text": the Trinity, the creation, the angels and Lucifer, and the story of Adam and Eve. As for Jesus' condemnation to death and his resurrection, the author protests that these were inventions of one of his disciples, John the Evangelist (Juwan Ewanserishita 寿庵ゑわんせりした).[92]

For the author of *Kirishitan kanagaki*, Christians are nevertheless more than liars who take advantage of fools. Indeed, although he depicts Christ and John the Evangelist—and, more broadly speaking, the clergy—as conspirators with very mundane goals, he also portrays them as men who can control the sacred to unleash extramundane powers. As we witnessed in the previous two passages, Joachim successfully addresses prayers to the Way of Heaven (*Tendō*), and Jesus studies with a monk.

In other passages, the wording is more trenchant. The author depicts the followers of Jesus as sorcerers who use magic (*mahō* 魔法) to gain the support of malevolent divinities (*kijin* 鬼神). In other words, they are practitioners of an evil way or law (*jadō* 邪道; *jahō* 邪法) and, therefore, possess the vices typically attributed to such people in medieval and early modern Japan. They also engage in the same wicked deeds: necromancy, sexual perversion, and the manipulation of the demons. Drawing on Elisonas' research, Jason A. Josephson considers the rhetoric of *Kirishitan kanagaki* as a perfect example of "heretical anthropology," or, put differently, a discourse that primarily aims to discredit religious adversaries by blaming them for all of the world's evils.[93]

2.3 The Last Step: Defeating God and the Belief in His Miracles

For Sessō Sōsai and his patrons in Nagasaki, this denial of Christian claims was linked to a grander objective: obtaining the *sincere* apostasy of any remaining Christians. Scholars of anti-Christian measures in Tokugawa Japan tend to overlook the difficulty for the authorities (and therefore for historians) of evaluating their efficiency. However, both the documents held at Tafukuji and the *Kirisuto-ki*, a compilation of documents written by (or under the guidance of) Inoue Masashige, indicate that the shogunal authorities cared deeply about the impact of these discourses on popular beliefs.[94] They deemed, in particular, that

91 Ōkuwa 1984, p. 181.
92 Ōkuwa 1984, p. 200.
93 Concerning the discourse on heresy in medieval and early modern Japan, see Josephson 2012, chapters 1 and 2. For his comments on *Kirishitan kanagaki*, see pp. 46–49. For a representative case study related to medieval Shingon, see Gaétan Rappo (2017) on the monk Monkan 文観 (1278–1357).
94 On the *Kirisuto-ki*, refer to note 54 above.

the rebuttal of both the idea of God and of his capacity to cause miracles was a matter of urgency. Ten years after the revolt of tens of thousands of supposed apostates in the Shimabara-Amakusa uprising, memories were still vivid.

The content of the memorandum held at Tafukuji attests to the centrality of God in the anti-Christian fight during the 1640s. Indeed, out of the ten developed arguments, eight are aimed at attacking God's omniscience, omnipotence, mercy, and creative power. Entry 4 ridicules God's alleged incapacity to rule over Japan. Entry 5 questions his mercy for having expelled from heaven Adam and Eve, and for allowing a majority of people to fall into hell. Entry 6 emphasizes his sadism for having created backward people as the "equal of beasts" (*chikushō dōzen* 畜生同前). Entries 7, 13, and 14 touch on the perceived inconsistency between God's mercy and the theology of predestination.[95] The last entry points out the contradiction between God's omnipotence and his incapacity to convert more than one person out of a hundred (*hyakubu ichi* 百分一) .

Even if the rhetoric in some parts of the memorandum is original, the arguments are not new. We encounter them in virtually all the anti-Christian texts, from *Ha Daiusu* by Fukansai Fabian to Suzuki Shōsan's *Ha Kirishitan*. All the authors devote some of their arguments to attacking the Christian idea of God. However, despite its lack of originality, the memorandum merits our attention for two reasons. First, its unoriginal content itself suggests that for both the authorities and for Sessō Sōsai, one of the most critical tasks was attacking the idea of God. Second, in *Kengiroku, Kirisuto-ki,* and *Taiji jashū ron*—three documents penned by men of the bakufu or close to the bakufu—we encounter, almost word for word, the same argumentation.[96] In other words, we can consider the memorandum as a set of officially-sanctioned arguments against Christianity in the 1640s.

Nishimura Ryō 西村玲 has shown that Sessō was conscious of the Buddhist clergy's need to propose an alternative to God and to offer a convincing means to salvation for ordinary people. The refutation of Christian tenets was not enough. She argues that Sessō developed the notion of the "Great Way" (*daidō* 大道), drawing on the anti-Christian treatises penned by Chan monks in the 1630s, which he certainly read in one of Nagasaki's Chinese temples. The *daidō* is an impersonal principle that encompasses the whole of creation, inheres in every sentient being, and links enlightenment to the self.[97]

The idea that the Japanese have a pantheistic or immanent perception of the world incompatible with Western transcendentalism is a cultural stereotype. It is epitomized in the famous novel *Chinmoku* 沈黙 (Silence; 1966), by Endō Shūsaku 遠藤周作 (1923–1996). However, we should not forget that from the beginning of the mission, the Jesuits strove to propagate the notion of a unique creator deity as a source of salvation. Though this exclusivist stance provoked criticism,[98] the idea of *Deus* as the organizer of the universe

95 We tend to consider predestination as characteristic of some Reformed traditions. However, in the early modern Catholic Church, there were many doctrinal debates surrounding the relevance of God's grace in individual salvation. In Japan, the Jesuit missionaries considered this too confusing a topic for their converts. The authorities in Nagasaki were surely informed about this subtle theological idea through the apostate priests. For more on this issue, see Orii 2015, pp. 201–203.

96 For the main attacks on God, see Ferreira 1927, pp. 6–10; ZGR, pp. 650–652; Ebisawa 1970, pp. 472–474.

97 Nishimura 2018, pp. 130–141.

98 Concerning the reaction of the Zen clergy to the notion of God during the first stages of the Jesuit mission, see App 2012, chapter 2.

seems to have had an impact on literate people interested in cosmology.[99] Kawamura Shinzō 川村信三 has argued that monotheism was appealing to the populace during the sixteenth century (towards the latter end of the "warring states" period).[100] Moreover, for many inhabitants of Kyushu in the seventeenth century, Christianity had been the dominant religion for decades. In its strongholds like Nagasaki, Shimabara, and Amakusa, belief in God the creator and God the savior had been taught for more than half a century.

For Japanese Christians, God was not an abstract being remote from everyday life. He continually acted in the world. This fact is evident in *Kirisuto-ki,* where the reader frequently encounters words such as *meiyo* 名誉 or *fushigi* 不思議, which refer to something extraordinary or, put simply, miraculous. In a section of the text entitled "Shūmon sensaku kokoromochi" 宗門穿鑿心持 (Things to keep in mind when you scrutinize [the Christian] religion), Inoue Masashige reports that apprehended Christians hoped that miracles (*meiyo*) would save them. However, "since [the Church] only preaches lies (*itsuwari*), nothing extraordinary (*fushigi*) happens."[101] The Great Inspector was undoubtedly aware that in Christian hagiography, God used to act when Christians were on the verge of suffering for their faith:

> The priests teach [their flock] that, when interrogating Christians, even wise commissioners (*bugyō*), able to distinguish truth from falsity, have their judgment blurred and lose their eloquence. [They] also teach that, thanks to the miracles which Deus provides [to those who believe in Him] (*Deusu no meiyo* デウスノ名誉), those who are devoid of intelligence and eloquence become intelligent and can express themselves clearly. Since [the priests indoctrinate Christians in this way], the latter say that such things happen.

He then adds that some Christians, convinced that God would protect them and reward them with salvation, tried to imitate Christ and the "holy martyrs" by showing excessive emotional detachment and even politeness towards their persecutors when facing them.[102]

In a section devoted to the apostasy of priests (which he may also have intended to apply to Japanese lay Christians), Inoue writes that if God is the "creator of Heaven and Earth (*tenchi no sakusha* 天地ノ作者)" and free to act at will (*jiyū jizai* 自由自在), he should have used miracles to come to the aid of his flock in both the Shimabara-Amakusa revolt and the executions in 1640 of the members of the Macao embassy. The Great Inspector took God's silence to be proof of either his inexistence or, at least, of his powerlessness, but the sharp emphasis which the *Kirisuto-ki* places on the idea of God suggests that many hidden Christians had not drawn the same conclusion.[103]

God's apparent silence after the beginning of the ban on Christianity was a cause for anxiety among both the missionaries and their flock. As has already been shown, anti-Christian polemicists used God's impotence as an argument to rebuke Christianity. The missionaries were aware of this seeming contradiction between an omnipotent creator

99 Hiraoka 2013, chapter 1.
100 Kawamura 2011, chapter 5.
101 ZGR, p. 636.
102 ZGR, p. 637.
103 ZGR, p. 650.

and their wretched condition in Japan. In their writings, they explained to their flock that persecution was a means chosen by God to distinguish good and bad Christians, and, in the long term, to strengthen the position of the Church within Japan: the blood of the martyrs would become the seed of its triumph. This rationalization was not specific to the Japanese context: Christian apologists had used the same arguments at the time of the Roman Empire.[104]

For historians, it is difficult to evaluate the feelings Japanese Christians may have had towards these ideas. Previous research has shown that repression wherever it happens tends to fuel messianic expectations among oppressed religious groups. In other words, coercive measures can, at times, have an effect opposite from that desired. For instance, in some communities of hidden Jews (Marranos) in the early modern Iberian Peninsula in the wake of their forced conversion, in Protestant villages of Southeast France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, or, in a non-monotheistic context, in the Peruvian Andes at the time of the Taky Unquy (1564–1572) movement, millenarian sentiments increased in response to the repressive interference by the state in the religious practices of forbidden groups. [105]

In seventeenth-century Japan, at least until the late 1650s, some Christians, who had formally denied their religion, renewed their allegiance to God and announced, to the secular or religious authorities, their "return" to faith. The sources generally describe this attitude as *tachikaeri* 立帰 ("return to a former position"). The most famous (and violent) episode of *tachikaeri* was the uprising of the peasants of Shimabara and Amakusa at the end of Kan'ei 14 (1637). Kanda Chisato has argued that the "rebels," who believed that God was speaking to them through miracles, were moved to make a public declaration of their return to Christianity and even to attack temples and shrines to obtain forgiveness for their apostasy.[106]

Recent research has revealed that even before the revolt, the authorities in some domains were already aware of the limits of the anti-Christian measures since former apostates could, at any moment, return to Christianity. In his biography of Tokugawa Iemitsu 徳川家光 (1604–1651; r. 1623–1651), Nomura Gen 野村玄 has argued that such was the case with the shogun, as well as with figures like the daimyo of Kumamoto Hosokawa Tadatoshi 細川忠利 (1586–1641).[107] Case studies of the implementation of the *tera'uke* system in different feudal domains testify to this anxiety. For example, in Kan'ei 10 (1633), following the arrest of a priest (*bateren*) nearby, the inhabitants of Takahama 高浜 village in Amakusa had to swear an oath confirming that they would not return to Christianity "even if, in secret, they had received [the sacrament of] forgiveness (*yurushi* ゆるし) from the priest [in question]." The following year, in Kumamoto, the authorities asked officers to

104 For more details on the documents written by the missionaries on persecution and martyrdom, see Satō 2004, part 1, chapter 2.

105 On the Jews, see Muchnik 2014, chapter, 7; on Protestants, see Joutard 2018, pp. 241–244, 267–276; on indigenous reactions to the Spaniards in sixteenth-century Peru, see Wachtel 1971.

106 For a vivid depiction of the first weeks of the revolt, see Kanda 2005, pp. 25–38. There are also known examples of *tachikaeri* before the revolt. For example, in the 1620s Christians within the Shimabara Peninsula even handed oaths to the authorities affirming their resolve to openly practice the forbidden religion. See Nogueira Ramos 2019.

107 Nomura 2013, pp. 220–227.

double-check suspicious apostates by ordering them to tread upon a sacred image (*miei* 御影) with "the shape of the Way of Heaven [i.e., God] (*Tendō no katachi* 天道の形)."[108]

After the revolt, such fears only increased. Inoue Masashige made various recommendations to his successor regarding how to uncover the remaining practitioners of the prohibited religion. For him, Christianity was an invisible threat because, in most cases, external evidence did not reveal the real religious feelings of the people: as the *Kirisuto-ki* records, the hidden Christians concealed their objects of piety and buried their true emotions when facing the authorities.[109]

Conclusion

In this article, I have aimed to shed light on Tokugawa anti-Christian policy in the aftermath of the Shimabara-Amakusa revolt, a time of radical change for the Japanese Christian community, as well as for Japan itself in terms of both its domestic and foreign engagements. To this end, I have adopted an approach that seeks to engage intellectual, institutional, and social history, by utilizing sources related to the three main actors in this struggle: the Nagasaki authorities, the Buddhist monks, and the hidden Christians.

I have predominantly drawn on documents either written or consulted by Sessō Sōsai, an essential figure in early modern Zen Buddhism. Until now, scholars have generally focused on his definitive work on Christianity, the *Taiji jashū ron*, and largely overlooked the working papers he received from Inoue Masashige and Baba Toshishige, as well as the sermons he delivered in Nagasaki in mid-1647. A close examination of the content of these texts and their argumentation has allowed me to form certain hypotheses which may be summarized as follows:

1. In the 1640s, the representatives of the bakufu in Nagasaki felt that the anti-Christian measures had reached a deadlock, because of the very real potential for alleged apostates or "neo-Buddhists" to return suddenly to their previous faith. The revolt of 1637–1638 was still vivid in their memories. The return to Japan of the Portuguese undoubtedly increased the anxiety of the bakufu representatives, as they were unable to predict the reaction of the apostate Christians (*korobi Kirishitan*). However, it is difficult to judge whether the anti-Christian sermons which the authorities organized for the general populace were merely a sign of caution or whether they signaled genuine fear of a new uprising in Kyushu.

2. Whatever the extent of their fear, it seems probable that Sessō Sōsai and his patrons had deeply reflected on the lived experience of the hidden Christians. In doing so, they concluded that the aim of religious inspection was not merely to require any remaining hidden Christians to adhere to the law by publicly renouncing their religion, but also to convince them *truly* to abandon their Christian faith. They also identified key aspects of their faith, such as the belief in miracles and God's omnipotence, the better to attack them. I argue that they propagated a counter-narrative of the history of Christianity as a means to weaken the legitimacy and credibility of the Church. I cannot pretend that within the span of a few pages, I have fully exhausted the topic addressed. At present, I see three issues that demand further investigation.

108 These examples are quoted in Shima and Yasutaka 2018, p. 139 and pp. 141–142.
109 See, for instance, ZGR, pp. 635, 637.

First, it is necessary to determine more precisely the scope and impact of the documents written, or consulted, by Sessō Sōsai. Were they only used in the geographical setting and timeframe focused on in this article? Or did they reach a wider audience? Aside from the institutional aspects of religious inspection, the concrete interactions between the authorities (both secular and religious) and the populace remain virtually unknown.

Second, it is vital to examine the impact of these discourses on the hidden Christians, both in the short and long term. Although we cannot know with certainty what was in their hearts, there remain many sources still to investigate, because domainal and shogunal authorities arrested more than two thousand of them during the latter half of the seventeenth century. The best-documented case is the dismantling of the community of Kōri (*Kōri kuzure* 郡崩れ) in Ōmura domain between 1657 and 1658.[110]

Third, from a broader perspective, the cooperation between the bakufu and the Buddhist priests in the struggle against Christianity raises new questions about the perception of the world and the role of religion in Edo Japan. For instance, Inoue Masashige, on the one hand, and the two Zen monks, Sessō Sōsai and Suzuki Shōsan plus the author of *Kirishitan kanagaki*, on the other, regarded miracles differently. While the former denied their possibility, the latter instead questioned their origin (black magic) and aim (of deceiving people). Of special relevance here are the reflections of Sueki Fumihiko on how Japanese have historically viewed the relationship between the phenomenal world (*ken* 顕) and the unseen world of the divinities (*myō* 冥).[111]

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110 For a survey of estimates on the number of arrests, see Shimizu 1981, pp. 214–223. For a brief discussion of the *Kōri kuzure*, see pp. 218–219.

111 Sueki 2010, pp. 16–18.

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