

Japan - Her first dalliance with West

Foreword

The history of the world since fourth century CE has seen the expansionist monotheistic religions from Middle East stamping out the pagan traditions in one land after another. We, Hindus, have keenly felt the result of this monotheistic Abrahamic onslaught losing more than half of our lands. A thorough reversion of Abrahamic expansion has occurred only in one land - the land of our pagan cousins, the Land of Rising Sun. Japan is a land of Gods (kami) for the Shintoists just as Bharata is a punyabhoomi and karmabhoomi for us. Japanese have digested many Hindu devis and devatas (Sarasvati as Benzaiten, Lakshmi as Kichijo, Ganesha as Kangiten, Garuda as Karura etc.) in their pantheon through the intermediary Buddhists from China. While Japan was spared from any Islamic invasions, she had to face the onslaught of the second Abrahamism from the sixteenth century. Some missionaries even planned to use a Christian Japan to invade and subdue China as we shall see later.

Christian inroads into Japan led to severe troubles not unlike what we faced in Goa and Santhome. Shinto and Buddhist shrines were razed to the ground in the name of the Saviour. In this essay, we shall see how the Japanese handled the Christian attempts, their study/understanding of the monotheistic traditions, their view of the West and its religions and also, the reason why Japanese do not fall to Christian proselytism so easily.

Japan's first tryst with Abrahamic religions began in 16th century CE with the advent of Portuguese. We shall start our study from that time.

First Portuguese contacts

In 1549, St. Francis Xavier, the butcher of Hindus, first visited Japan with the help of a Japanese convert he gained in Malaccaⁱ. The first major break came decades later when Nobunaga allowed Portuguese to establish their church and proselytize in Japan. He had supposedly reasoned that "Buddhism had been introduced from abroad and had done good in the country and he therefore not see why Christianity should not be granted a trial" (White 2011: 225). Japanese felt that Portuguese planned to convert the masses through acts of charity like tending the sick and relieving the poor (see also: Costa 2003; we see this in India even today) paving way to make Japan a vassal state of Portugal by converting people in every one of the thirty-six provinces (Reed 2012: 191). In parallel, Spaniards in Philippines were planning for invasion of China with a force consisting of, among others, converted Japaneseⁱⁱ

The spread of Christianity seems to have been surprisingly fast in the 16th century. By 1585, eleven daimyos (warlords) were Christian (Hearn 1904: 304). Each daimyo ruled a small part of Japan as his own land – much like the Poligars and Nayaks in Southern India. About 200 daimyos were ruling various parts of Japan in the 16th century. 11 of them had converted to the western religion by 1585. Even by 1581, one and half lakh Japanese had converted to Christianity (White 2011: 226). By 1614 (when Tokugawa Ieyasu began to exterminate Christianity from Japan), the number had swelled to 3 lakhs (Brown 2012: 316).

The converted daimyos were used by the missionaries to destroy pagan places of worship in southern Japan. Turnbull (2006) gives examples. In 1578, daimyo Sorin accepted baptism and forced all his subjects to become Christian. He persecuted Shinto and Buddhist priests and destroyed their properties (temples). Another “had no greater pleasure in the world than to see them pull down idols out of the temples and houses, and bur them and throw them in to the sea”. Following account would appear familiar to those who have read about Islamic/Christian aggression against pagan temples:

As Don Bartholemeo (baptized name of Omura Sumitada) had gone off to the wars, it so happened that he passed on the way an idol, Marishiten by name, which is their god of battles. When they pass it, they bow and pay reverence to it, and the pagans who are on horseback dismount as a sign of their respect. Now the idol had above it a cockerel. As the daimyo came there with his squadron he had his men stop and ordered them to take the idol and burn it together with the whole temple; and he took the cockerel and gave it a blow with the sword, saying to it, “Oh, how many times have you betrayed me!” And after everything had been burnt down, he had a very beautiful cross erected on the same spot, and after he and his men had paid very deep reverence to it, they continued on their way to the wars.

- Luís Fróis (1532 – July 8, 1597), a Portuguese Christian missionary giving an eyewitness description of non Christian shrines being destroyed by Japanese converts. (Turnbull 2006: 96)

Japanese revulsion and initial attempts to curb Christianity

No wonder that Oda Nobunaga regretted his decision to allow these Christians into his country. While not a contemporary source, being written more than a century after Nobunaga’s death, the Ibuki Mogusa seems to imply regret on the part of Oda Nobunaga for permitting the introduction of Christianity. The passage also suggests that the Jesuits were using money to lure converts (a common accusation by Ming &

Qing sources on missionaries in China) just as missionaries do in contemporary India. It is helpful to quote the passage in its entirety to give the readers some idea of viewpoint of Japanese from later generations on Nobunaga's change of feelings in regards to Christianity:

"Nobunaga now began to regret his previous policy in permitting the introduction of Christianity. He accordingly assembled his retainers, and said to them: - 'The conduct of these missionaries in persuading people to join them by giving money, does not please me. How would it be, think you, if we were to demolish Nambanji [The "Temple of the Southern Savages" - so the Portuguese church was called]?' To this Mayeda Tokuzenin replied. 'It is now too late to demolish the Temple of the Namban. To endeavour to arrest the power of this religion now is like trying to arrest the current of the ocean. Nobles, both great and small, have become adherents of it. If you would exterminate this religion now, there is fear that disturbance should be created among your own retainers. I am therefore of opinion that you should abandon your intention of destroying Nambanji.' Nobunaga in consequence regretted exceedingly his previous action in regard to the Christian religion, and set about thinking how he could root it out." (Hearn 1904: 305)

Nobunaga's unexpected demise seems to have postponed the final solution. His successor, Hideyoshi, gave immediate priority to unification of Japan and peace.

Hideyoshi seems to have been favorable, or at least neutral, in regards to Christian missionaries to begin with and this may be attributed to his desire to continue the Macao trade as well as more pressing concerns in regards to the power struggle after Nobunaga's assassination by Akechi Mitsuhide. The Jesuit policy of purchasing approval for their activities through his wife, Kitanomandokoro, also helped them. In 1586, Kitanomandokoro obtained permission from Hideyoshi for the Jesuits' activities (Kitagawa 2007: 16 quotes Frois):

"With regard to the bateren in Japan, I permit them to reside wherever they want to, and I waive some duties such as requiring them to allow soldiers to stay in their church, and those that are mandatory for Buddhist temples. Do not be violent to or disturb the bateren when they propagate their teachings."

Kitanomandokoro had many Christian women as her lady attendants. Though initially she was opposed to Christianity, it seems the influence of these attendants changed her mind. The domination of Christianity among her attendants was so high that only one woman was a Buddhist and even she was known by a Christian name (Kitagawa 2007: 13). She even pleaded to Hideyoshi that he should not treat the Jesuits harshly, a year before his anti-Christian decree. Post that she got the approval quoted above. Her exact words to Hideyoshi were (Kitagawa 2007: 15 quotes Frois):

"I have been very worried about how you treated the bateren [padres] today. They are foreigners, and how you treat them could demean their religion and honor. Besides, they have sent me messages asking me that they want to be treated well when they see you. So, I have been wishing in my heart that they will be treated well."

We do not find any indications from missionary letters that they suspected him of harboring any intention to persecute Christians and yet it happened. The reasons for Hideyoshi's change of mind to which we now turn are illuminating and have relevance for contemporary India.

In our view, there is no one reason why Hideyoshi made a u-turn in regards to his policy towards Christianity. Instead a number of events which took place at this time may better the change that took place. To begin with, in 1587, Hideyoshi received an assurance from Padre Coelho, who was accompanied by Luís Fróis (the same missionary who wrote the eyewitness description of destruction of a pagan temple cited before), that they could arrange for Christian daimyos of Kyushu to assist Hideyoshi in his power struggle with the other daimyos for the control of Japan as well as arrange Portuguese naval assistance (including forces from India) for Hideyoshi's plan to invade Korea and China (Boxer 1951:141). Several historians have noted that this may have created the germ of suspicion in Hideyoshi's mind about missionary intentions because they had shown a willingness to interfere in internal Japanese politics. Later, a daimyo openly rejected to follow Hideyoshi's order to apostate from Christianity rather preferring that he be stripped of all lands and titles. This was a test to verify whether the Christian daimyos' foremost loyalty was to him or not. Hideyoshi seems to have decided that he was not the true recipient of their loyalty through these incidents.

In regards to Hideyoshi's own views about Christianity, we may get some inkling of the matter by looking at his questions to Padre Coelho (Fujita 1991: 112) in the aftermath of aforementioned incident:

- 1. Why do you missionaries so anxiously, even forcefully, try to make converts?*
- 2. Why do you destroy Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and persecute monks instead of being conciliatory to them?*
- 3. Why do you do such unreasonable things as eat useful animals like horses and cows that serve people? (Note: Similarity with 'right to beef' in today's India)*
- 4. Why do Portuguese buy many Japanese and take them back to their country as slaves?*

Finally after careful consideration, Hideyoshi decided to expel the missionaries and issued his famous edicts of 1587 which read as follows (Bary 2005: 167-8) (Lu :196-7):

Decree 1: Limitation on Propagation of Christianity

- 1. Whether one desires to become a follower of the padre is up to that person's own conscience.*
- 2. If one receives a province, a district, or a village as his fief, and forces farmers in his domain who are properly registered under certain temples to become followers of the padre against their wishes, then he has committed a most unreasonable illegal act.*
- 3. When a vassal (kyunin) receives a grant of a province or a district, he must consider it as a property entrusted to him on a temporary basis. A vassal may be moved from one place to another, but farmers remain in the same place. Thus if an unreasonable illegal act is committed [as described above], the vassal will be called upon to account for his culpable offense. The intent of this provision must be observed.*
- 4. Anyone whose fief is over 200 cho and who can expect two to three thousand kan of rice harvest each year must receive permission from the authorities before becoming a follower of the padre.*
- 5. Persons holding fiefs smaller than the aforementioned: It being a question of the Eight Sects or Nine Sects, each head of the house may decide individually as he pleases. (Note: These are sects of Buddhism - nothing to do with Christianity)*
- 6. The sectarians of Bateren, it has come to His Highness' attention, are even more given to conjurations with outsiders than the Single Minded sect. The Single-Minded sect established temple precincts in the provinces and districts and did not pay the yearly dues to the enfeoffed recipients. Moreover, it converted the entire province of Kaga into its own sectarians; chased out Togashi, the lord of the province; turned over the fiefs to priests of the Single-Minded sect; and beyond that, even took over the province of Echizen. Everyone knows that this was harmful to the realm.*
- 7. The priests of the Hongaji sectarians had temples built on every cove and inlet. Although they have been pardoned, His Highness no longer permits them to run their temple precincts as they did before.*
- 8. If a daimyo who has a fief over a province, a district, or a village, forces his retainers to become followers of the padre, he is committing a crime worse than the followers of Honganji who assembled in their temple [to engage in the Ikko riot]. This will have an adverse effect on [the welfare of] the nation. Anyone who cannot use good judgment in this matter will be punished.*
- 9. Those among the common people who freely choose to become sectarians of the Bateren may do so, it being a question of the Eight Sects or Nine Sects.*

10. *It is illegal to sell Japanese people to China, to the South Seas, or to Korea [as slaves]. Henceforth, sale of persons in Japan is forbidden. [Note: Compare it with abolition of slave trade by Chhatrapati Shivaji]*

11. *To buy or sell cattle and horses for slaughter and consumption shall also be considered miscreant.*

The above shall be strictly prohibited. Any transgressor shall swiftly be brought to justice for his offense.

Tensho 15.VI.18 (July 23, 1587)

Decree 2 (the very next day)

1. *Japan is the Land of the Gods. That a pernicious doctrine should be diffused here from the Kirishitan Country is most undesirable.*

2. *To approach the people of our provinces and districts, turn them into [Kirishitan] sectarians, and destroy the shrines of the gods and the temples of the Buddhas is something unheard of in previous generations. Whereas provinces, districts, localities, and fiefs are granted to their recipients temporarily, contingent on the incumbent's observance of the laws of the realm and attention to their intent in all matters, to embroil the common people is miscreant.*

3. *In the judgement of His Highness, it is because the Bateren amass parishioners as they please by means of their clever doctrine that the Law of the Buddhas is being destroyed like this in the Precincts of the Sun. That being miscreant, the Bateren can scarcely be permitted to remain on Japanese soil. Within twenty days from today they shall make their preparations and go back to their country. During this time, should anyone among the common people make unwarranted accusations against the Bateren, it shall be considered miscreant.*

4. *The purpose of the Black Ships is trade, and that is a different matter. As years and months pass, trade may be carried on in all sorts of articles.*

5. *From now on hereafter, all those who do not disturb the Law of the Buddhas (merchants, needless to say, and whoever) are free to come here from the Kirishitan Country and return. Be heedful of this.*

That is all.

Tensho 15.VI.19

Actions taken were as follows: public notices were put up stating that missionaries were expelled by Hideyoshi's order, samurai were told to remove any outward signs

of Christianity like crosses/rosaries, Jesuit properties confiscated in various places and Jesuit strongholds were taken over by Hideyoshi's emissaries. The inhabitants of Nagasaki, Christian headquarters of Japan, were asked to pay a huge fine. Christians were asked to recoveert or face exile/death though no attempt was made to enforce the last point (Boxer 1951: 148-9). Padre Coelho seems to have planned for invasion of Japan by fortifying Nagasaki, the Christian stronghold in Japan, with Spanish help and use it to rally the Christian daimyo of Kyushu against Hideyoshi. But higher authorities did not support this idea (Boxer 1951: 312). On the other hand, the edict was not strongly implemented as only 3 out of the 120 Jesuits left the country and remaining dispersed to territories of Christian daimyos. Hideyoshi's emissaries only extracted some fines levied on the population of Jesuit strongholds and closed down the churches only temporarily rather than destroying them permanently (Boxer 1951: 150).

However proclaiming something and implementing it are two very different things which is more than true in discussing events that took place after the edict. Initially, we do not see much implementation. But the famous San Felipe incident took place and this seems to have further heightened Hideyoshi's suspicions. The incident involved the shipwreck of a Spanish galleon named San Felipe off the Japanese coast which was seized by the Japanese. The Spaniards then dispatched a request to Hideyoshi to return the cargo which was refused. It is said that upon this refusal, the Spanish Pilot Major, Francisco de Olandia was said to have boasted about the might of the Spanish empire and their possessions in the New World. When his Japanese audience questioned how they could have achieved this, the Captain was said to have replied that the Christian missionaries acted as the vanguard for the Spanish army by making local converts and using them as a fifth column against the local rulers (Boxer 1951: 165-66). This at least is the contemporary Jesuit view of the incident which their Franciscan rivals rejected as calumny.

This resulted in the famous martyrdom of twenty-six men - Franciscans and their men - at Nagasaki Bay whereby a number of missionaries (including a half-Indian one named Gonsalves Garcia venerated as a saint at Vasai in India) and their Japanese followers were crucified in public (it may be noted that crucifixion was an established punishment in Japan predating the introduction of Christianity). In response to Portuguese complaints about persecution of Franciscan, he drafted the following reply which is also instructive in regards to his views:

That the Japanese were by no means so ignorant of the state of affairs in Europe, as the Jesuits sometimes seem to have imagined, can be seen from Hideyoshi's correspondence with the Governor of the Philippines, Don Francisco Tello. The governor had sent an envoy, Don Luis Navarrete, to claim the confiscated cargo of the San Felipe, and to ask why the Franciscans had been executed. Hideyoshi in his reply, drafted in a spirit more of sorrow than of anger, explained that Shinto (there is no mention of Buddhism, be it noted) was the pith and core of the Japanese social structure. He went on to point out that the friars, threatened to upset the whole national fabric with their

subversive Christian propaganda, "and if per-chance, either religious or secular Japanese proceeded to your kingdoms and preached the law of Shinto therein, disquieting and disturbing the public peace and tranquility there-by, would you, as lord of the soil, be pleased thereat? Certainly not; and therefore by this you can judge what I have done." (Boxer 1951:169)

But after this event, the efforts to expel the missionaries tapered off and eventually the missionaries even resumed their conversions during the initial years under the next shogun, Ieyasu. We have no way of knowing the exact reasons for Hideyoshi's loss of interest in the matter but we can reasonably speculate that it may have had something to do with his fear of losing the Macao trade with the Portuguese, his reluctance to engender further conflict (similar to Nobunaga) when Japan itself was embroiled in his major undertaking viz the invasion of Korea known as Imjin War which occupied his final years. The vulnerability of Japan to economic sanctions during this time of war was well known to the missionaries as they had advised for imposing economic sanctions against Japan in retaliation. Coelho and Bishop Martin urged King Felipe to cancel annual trade between Macao and Nagasaki in order to bring about overthrow of Hideyoshi through economic crisis in Japan or induce him to accord official recognition to Christianity (Boxer 1951:168-9). Hideyoshi seems to have understood the peril that he might face and thus, he did not attack the Jesuits who were essential for trade with Macao (Boxer 1951: 166).

Hideyoshi's failure to follow through on his edict is similar to the India of today where many anti conversion laws are passed with much fanfare only to be flouted openly by the missionaries and never actually implemented. So much so, Hideyoshi married off his adopted daughter, Gō, to a Christian family a year after his anti-Christian edict. Said daughter converted to Christianity in 1606; the effect of Christian lady attendants at her father's place as well as Christian influence at her in-laws' household seem to have made a great impact on her mind (see Kitagawa 2007: 22). Just as Hideyoshi wanted the Macao trade, our politicians too seem to suffer from the thought of "What would the American government say or do in regards to call centers or software outsourcing?" whenever someone brings up protecting our civilization from the murderous assault of Christians. He also suffered from an inability to keep his household uninfected. His devout Buddhist wife, Kitanomandokoro had become so thoroughly exposed to Christian theology that in 1595, she is supposed to have stated (Kitagawa 2007: 20 quotes Frois):

...Kitanomandokoro replied [to Maria], saying, "it seems to me that Christianity has great rationale. And it is superior to any other religion, and it is more plausible than many existing Japanese religions." She continued to make a point that Deus is the only God, and kami and Buddhas are not Deus, but they are all human. Then, she turned to one Christian lady, Joanna, and said, "is that right, Joanna?" Joanna said, "that is correct. Kami is a Japanese creation without any rationale, and humans gave them mystical positions and honor. Thus, kami are not different from human beings."

Kitanomandokoro continued and said, "Every Christian agrees on one truth, and claims that to be true. That makes me believe that [Christianity tells] the truth. Japanese religions never agree, and are never the same."

Thus, while Hideyoshi had issued an edict opposing Christianity being adopted by daimyos, his own wife was praising it years after the edict and her lady attendants must have also had a great freedom to practice their religion. His son-in-law, Hideie openly supported Christianity immediately after Hideyoshi's death and Bizen had several converts in the year after, in 1599. His own daughter converted in 1606 as we saw earlier. We see the same practice of socializing with Abrahamists being practiced by many so-called staunchly Hindu families. There is an important lesson for us here. Luring entire families to Christianity by attracting the women of the family is a tactic which is used in India even todayⁱⁱⁱ

Be that as it may, Hideyoshi's reluctance to follow through on his edict meant that the task of dealing with the issue of Christianity now fell to Ieyasu and his successors.

Ieyasu's initial years - Tiger waiting to pounce

Initially, Tokugawa Ieyasu did not initiate any action against the Christians. He even allowed some breathing space to Christians after Hideyoshi's death. Such that, Christians felt that they could hope for a better future and more harvest under his reign (Dominguez 2012: 315). Tokugawa Bakufu was properly set up in 1603 and Ieyasu channeled his efforts towards establishing a strong system which can withstand for centuries. He built the great castle at Edo, let his son and successor become the nominal ruler even when he was alive - in order to ensure a smooth transition to power though he retained actual power (reminds us of Chola practice where the Crown Prince ruled jointly with father). Ieyasu also understood the importance of Macao trade to the Japanese economy. So, while he took steps to strengthen the economy so that it might survive without the Macao trade, he waited for the most opportune time. By 1612, Macao trade was not considered as absolutely essential for Japanese economy (Boxer 1951:308-9). (Boxer 1951: 310-11) also captures how Ieyasu utilized information from the English about the Catholic padres and their expulsion from England to decide upon a proper course of action. A Spanish navigator, Sebastian Vizcaino, obtained permission from the bakufu to survey the east coast of Japan - so that it can be utilized by the Spanish ships to enter Japanese ports safely while travelling to Mexico from Manila. This captain insulted Ieyasu by not adhering to Japanese customs and also tried to force Ieyasu to accept friars into Japan freely. He stated that the King of Spain wished to spread Catholic Faith to all nations (Boxer 1951: 312-13). Ieyasu's tolerance for the Christians was waning with every such incident.

The tipping point was a fraud committed by a Christian daimyo, Arima Hanurobu, with the help of two other Christian officials to restore some lands lost by his family in the previous century. Said daimyo was sentenced to death. Ieyasu also found that there were Christians who worked within his household by hiding their religious affiliation. He had them recant or exiled. Also, when some Christians were burned alive by the son of the daimyo (who had deposed against his fraudulent father) for refusing to give up their faith, 30000 Christians attended the so-called 'martyrdom' and recited prayers (Boxer 1951: 314-5). Another daimyo was found to have indulged in fraud. He died in 1613 and it was found after his death. It was suspected that he had planned to support a Christian uprising/invasion. His sons were killed and the sixth son of Ieyasu, who had contact with the dead daimyo, was disgraced. When a notorious Christian coiner was crucified, Christians again recited prayers. (Boxer 1951: 315-6).

Hasegawa Sahioye sent a memorial to the bakufu stating (Boxer 1951: 317)

- 1. The Christian doctrine teaches that believers should obey the padres as their spiritual pastors, rather than the daimyo as their temporal lords.*
- 2. The Christians sacrifice everything in favor of their law, and worship criminals who have been justly condemned as evil-doers and rebels; they carry their relics as amulets.*
- 3. In order to imitate Jesus Christ, who died crucified between two thieves, the Christians glory in dying such a death, and for such a cause; hence they are a fanatical and pernicious sect, dangerous to the Empire, and ripe for any mischief.*

Cleansing the Land of Kami and Buddha

When Ieyasu published his edict ordering expulsion of all missionaries from Japan and banned the Christian religion in the Land of Kami and Buddha, there were an estimated 3 lakh Christians in Japan out of a total population of 2 crores - about 1.5% (Boxer 1951: 321). There were no Christian daimyo in 1614 to help the Christians (Boxer 1951: 329). While some missionaries left Japan, others went underground. Japanese understood this fact and began to quarantine foreign traders to specific port cities and denied access to rest of the country (Boxer 1951: 328). Ieyasu's successor, Hidetada, restricted the foreign trade to Nagasaki and Hirado (Cary 1996: 191).

In their campaign to suppress Christianity, the Japanese authorities had realized an important point regarding the Christian psyche, this being the Christian fetish for martyrdom. The initial public executions of captured Christians resulted in the veneration of the executed people as martyrs. The astute men in charge of the eradication of Christianity realized this and decided that henceforth the official policy should be geared towards securing apostasy with execution being a final resort. We can glean this from the order given by Hasegawa Sahioye Fujihiro, the chief Governor of Nagasaki (the Christian center in Japan):

"The Christians desire death in order that they may be honored as martyrs. Hence it is not desirable to slay them, but rather to prolong their lives, subjecting them to such severe punishments as will finally overcome their resistance. The most effective trial will be to enslave their woman, sending the most beautiful of them to the houses of prostitution in Kyoto. If the people will renounce the religion of Christ, they shall be exempted from imposts and other obligations; moreover, Chinese ships will be induced to come to their ports for trade, and this will be for the great enrichment of the country." (Cary 1996: 184)

In order to secure apostasy, persuasion was tried first and if this was unsuccessful torture followed. The most ingenious of the torture techniques was the *tsurushi* which the Japanese refined with practice on Christians. The contemporary Christian sources testify that it was by far the most effective of the torture techniques as the following shows:

At last they found a more hellish and exquisite way of torturing than before; they hung these sufferers by the heels, their heads in pits, which to give the blood some vent, they slasht lightly cross-waies, (but they do that now no more), and in this posture they live several daies, ten or twelve, and speak sensibly to the very last: The greatness of this torment surpasseth all other, being beyond all humaine strength to suffer and be undergone; but by such who are extraordinarilie strengthened from above. This extremitie hath indeed (by reason of its continuance) forced many to renounce their religion; and some of them who had hung two or three daies, assured me that the pains they endured were wholly unsufferable, no fire nor no torture equalling their langour and violence. (Turnbull 2000: 15)

A famous victim of *tsurushi* was the Portuguese missionary Cristovao Ferreira who became an apostate after a few hours and was well utilized by the Japanese authorities. As he was high in the church hierarchy, the Japanese realized they scored a major propaganda coup and treated him rather well. He was given a Japanese name, an allowance, became a Zen Buddhist at least for official purposes, and was married to a Japanese woman. Ferreira was subsequently used in the trials of other captured Jesuits to try to persuade them to become apostates as well and even wrote a tract exposing Christianity as a fraud (Turnbull 2000: 27-29).

To summarize, the Japanese were the only pagans to have understood the Abrahamic fetish of martyrdom and come up with an effective way of countering it. As Michael Laver explains:

As mentioned before, the preferred result was when Christians were captured was that they would renounce their faith and live their lives as Buddhists. According to George Elison, Inoue Chikugo-no-Kami Masashige "wants not martyrs, but apostates. Apostates better than martyrs attest the impotence of a religion, especially when those apostates had been apostles of the faith and priests." After they renounced their faith, priests were forced to take wives as part of their new lives and were constantly monitored by the authorities. If renunciation was not forthcoming through torture, however, the final act would be execution. (Laver 2011: 73)

To be noted that even during these trying times, Portuguese printed Christian texts in Japanese characters and smuggled them to Nagasaki. In 1622, a printed biography of Loyola had become available among the Christians of Nagasaki and there was a growing devotion for Loyola in the city (Costa 2007: 75). Given that, we can understand the proliferation of Christian literature in India today as we have an open door policy for them.

An Edict was promulgated in 1635 to the Joint Bugyo of Nagasaki to ordering closure of Japan (wherein Japanese were prevented from travelling abroad) and strict surveillance to ensure there was no spreading of Christianity (Lu 1997: 221):

- 1. Japanese ships are strictly forbidden to leave for foreign countries.*
- 2. No Japanese is permitted to go abroad. If there is anyone who attempts to do so secretly, he must be executed. The ship so involved must be impounded and its owner arrested, and the matter must be reported to the higher authority.*
- 3. If any Japanese returns from overseas after residing there, he must be put to death.*
- 4. If there is any place where the teachings of padres (Christianity) is practiced, the two of you must order a thorough investigation.*
- 5. Any informer revealing the whereabouts of the followers of padres (Christians) must be rewarded accordingly. If anyone reveals the whereabouts of a high ranking padre, he must be given one hundred pieces of silver. For those of lower ranks, depending on the deed, the reward must be set accordingly.*
- 6. If a foreign ship has an objection [to the measures adopted] and it becomes necessary to report the matter to Edo, you may ask the Omura domain to provide ships to guard the foreign ship, as was done previously.*
- 7. If there are any Southern Barbarians (Westerners) who propagate the teachings of padres, or otherwise commit crimes, they may be incarcerated in the prison maintained by the Omura domain, as was done previously.*

Japanese were soon forced to take cognizance of the fact that Portuguese were smuggling missionaries (and literature) to Japan to propagate the Christian religion. Thus, an edict was issued in 1639 stating the following (Lu 1997: 222):

1. The matter relating to the proscription of Christianity is known [to the Portuguese], however, heretofore they have secretly transported those who are going to propagate that religion.

2. If those who believe in that religion band together in an attempt to do evil things, they must be subjected to punishment.

3. While those who believe in the preaching of padres are in hiding, there are incidents in which that country (Portugal) has sent gifts to them for their sustenance.

In view of the above, hereafter entry by the Portuguese galeota is forbidden. If they insist on coming [to Japan], the ships must be destroyed and anyone aboard those ships must be beheaded. We have received the above order and are thus transmitting it to you accordingly

When a Portuguese ship from Macao violated the above edict in 1640, the ship was burned and its principal ambassadors along with their companions were summarily executed - putting an end to Portuguese interference in Japan. It was done as an example to show determination of the Shogun to ensure that their territorial rights and privileges were respected by others. (Lu 1997: 223).

No pagan civilization to our knowledge ever went to the lengths that the Japanese did in crushing Christianity. Others such as Qing China may have indulged in sporadic persecutions but the Japanese went to much greater lengths and devised many policies specifically designed to crush Christianity. The idea that force does not work or is counterproductive when dealing with Abrahamic religions seems laughable after studying the Japanese experience. In the following paragraph, we have summarized some of the methods the Japanese employed and urge the readers to read the more detailed article cited in the next paragraph to get an idea of Japanese thoroughness in dealing with Christianity.

In addition to their policy of no martyrs, the Japanese authorities employed a variety of techniques to catch hidden Christians and to prevent relapse of apostates. Financial rewards were announced for providing information on priests and other missionaries in hiding. The Shogunate instituted an annual test in Christian centers like Nagasaki whereby the entire population was required to trample on Christian relics such as a picture of Mary holding Jesus. Servants and even prostitutes were required to sign an oath saying that they were not Christians before they could be hired. Public announcement boards were erected throughout the country announcing the prohibition of Christianity which was declared as jashumon ("the evil doctrine"). The entire Japanese population was required to register at their local Buddhist temple and were put into groups of five households (called the gonin gumi

system) which functioned as mutual assistance groups but also involved spying on the other households in the group to make sure there were no hidden Christians or law breakers of any other sort. If a member of the group knew of hidden Christians but failed to inform the authorities, the entire household group was usually punished. These were just some of the measures that the Shogunate formulated to stamp out Christianity and many of them were upheld throughout the 250 years of Shogunate rule, long after Christianity ceased to be a viable threat. For more information on these and other measures, one may consult the online article "How Japan dealt with the Christian Threat"^{iv}.

Result

The result of such sanctions can be gleaned from the devil's own mouth. So thorough were the Japanese in their eradication of Christianity that a Christian apologist was forced to declare:

Although we often recall Muslim/Christian conflicts, it was the Shinto/Buddhist nation of Japan that perpetrated one of the most thorough extirpations ever recorded of a church. The Japanese exceeded any Muslim successes in how totally they destroyed once-booming Christian communities. This movement had significant long-term effects for the direction of the Christian movement, as the annihilation of the Japanese missions decisively prevented Christianity resuming its movement towards global status, striking a dreadful blow against its progress in Asia. By eliminating potential rivals, both these campaigns contributed to maintaining the near-total European monopoly of Christianity.^v

For good measure, the Christian apologist is also forced to admit that:

Although we naturally pay most attention to the spectacular acts of mass martyrdom, such violence in its own right need not be absolutely destructive. We remember the saying that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church." Much more effective in the long term is systematic repression associated with intense surveillance and police work, which really does ensure that a crushed church cannot rise again. The Japanese were brilliantly successful at such policies. Much like modern-day totalitarian regimes, they ran a superbly effective mechanism of repression and thought control. They offer a terrifying model of the means by which a faith - any faith - truly can be destroyed.^{vi}

Indeed after receiving that crushing blow, Christianity has never again managed to make significant headway in the Land of the Rising Sun though there were periods of optimism and growth such as the early Meiji period or in the immediate aftermath of WW2.

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