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The Oppressor’s Dilemma

How Japanese State Policy toward Religion Paved the Way for Christian Weddings

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Abstract

For the last thirty-five years, the majority of Japanese wedding ceremonies have involved Christianity, but scholars have struggled with Christianity’s increasingly prominent place within the Japanese religious landscape. The tendency has been to refute the religiosity of Christian weddings and embrace the rhetoric of Japanese essentialism. However, following its prohibition in 1612, the ongoing “eradication” of Christianity defined the very nature of Japanese subjecthood, made Christianity indispensable to the Japanese state, and entrenched ritualized acts of disassociation from the religion within the lives of every individual. Modern arguments, too, continue to assert Christianity’s foreignness, portraying it as the religion of colonialism or contending that “foreign” conceptions of religion are inappropriate within the Japanese context. However, the popularity of Christian wedding ceremonies within the context of postwar Japan owes much to prewar and wartime Japanese state policy where the Japanese government adopted policies toward religion that helped set the stage for the later acceptance of the Christian marriage rite.

Keywords

Japanese Christianity – state policy – nonreligious – Catholic Church of Japan – *mushūkyō* – *hishūkyō*

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1 Introduction

Japan is host to one of the largest Christian movements in the modern world. According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, there have been over 630,000 weddings per year since 1995.[1] The Christian wedding ceremony became the ceremony of choice for the majority of Japanese beginning in the mid-1990s (Ishii 2005) and Christian weddings continue to be the most popular form of wedding service in Japan today (Zexy 2019). By even relatively conservative estimates, that means between 1994 and 2019, there were 9.5 million Christian wedding ceremonies. And, with each wedding being attended by roughly sixty-seven guests, Christian weddings were attended by at least 636.5 million guests—enough for every living person in Japan to attend a Christian wedding roughly five times during that same period (Zexy 2019). Today, Japan has thousands of spaces devoted to the performance of Christian weddings and nearly every major Christian Church in Japan participates in their production. Taking an early lead, Catholic and Protestant organizations continue to provide the religious professionals, hymns, bible readings, religious messages, and prayers for the majority of Japanese weddings (LeFebvre forthcoming). However, Christian wedding ceremonies could never have achieved this level of popularity and acceptance in postwar Japan without the unique set of prewar and wartime state policies undertaken to ensure Christianity's compatibility with the imperial cult through the rhetoric of nonreligiousness.

The early popularity of Christian weddings and the subsequent development of Christian practices and institutions are unique to Japan's postwar decades, and exist as part of a larger modern history of "nonreligiousness" that can generally be broken into two phases of development. Christian wedding ceremonies were able to establish a foothold and, ultimately, achieve dominance in the second of these phases, in an environment where the majority of Japanese claim to be "without a religion" or *mushūkyō* 無宗教. This religious identity provides individual Japanese a great deal of flexibility when it comes to interpreting their engagements with individuals, groups, spaces, and practices they understand as "religious," including Christian weddings (LeFebvre 2015). However, this postwar attitude toward religion has its roots in prewar and wartime "nonreligiousness" or *hishūkyō* 非宗教. *Hishūkyō* literally means "not religion" and developed as religious groups sought to articulate their identity at the same time that the Japanese state sought to (re)negotiate its relationship to various special interest groups while retaining or expanding control over Japanese subjects through enforced behaviors, mandatory acts of patriotism, and the cultivation (or limitation) of certain beliefs.

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[1] The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare collects, summarizes, and publishes comprehensive information on marriage trends in Japan in its *Kon'in ni kansuru tōkei* (Statistical Report on Marriage) every ten years. See Kōsei Rōdōshō (2016).

Scholars are prone to conflate these two types of "nonreligion" but, as I will demonstrate, the rites and practices covered under the two terms are frequently quite different and, in some cases, even diametrically opposed. Even though these two negations of "religion" differ greatly in many respects, the prewar and wartime discourses of "not religion" (*hishūkyō*) were influential in the formation of postwar attitudes of "nonreligiousness" (*mushūkyō*) and the formation and transformation of religious institutions. *Hishūkyō* helped to solidify certain ambiguities in regard to religious spaces, practices, actors, and identities. With the increasing militarization of the Japanese state in the early 20th century, *hishūkyō* narratives allowed Japanese people the "freedom" to rationalize their ritual obligations to the state and the imperial institution while demonstrating that any religious identity would not interfere with the state's program for the cultivation of Japanese subjects. This cultivation required individual Japanese and religious organizations to participate in acts of an increasingly recognizable religious character while simultaneously leaving no choice but to consent to the "nonreligiousness" (*hishūkyō*) of those acts. Early on, the state engaged in a process of winnowing out "religious" elements of the state cult to preserve its legal status as "not religious." These attempts, however, were also designed to preserve some religious aspects of the state ideology. Furthermore, by retaining rituals, prayers (*norito* 祝詞), shrine priests, and certain shrines as key elements of the state ideological and ritual apparatus, the state also created a space for religious "nonreligion" and actively "assisted" Christian groups in the reformulation of their doctrines and practices so as to conform to this ambiguously religious set of "nonreligious" beliefs and practices. More importantly, in the first half of the 20th century, the Japanese state undertook policies to not only to preserve elements of the state ritual and ideological apparatus, but also worked to end any process whereby such policies might be further exposed to consideration or negotiation by religious or other consistencies.

As with past narratives of *hishūkyō*, contemporary expressions of *mushūkyō* also allow individuals to present themselves as normative within the context of the Japanese religious environment, albeit with some important differences. For one, although *mushūkyō* may also involve distancing of oneself from certain religious practices that are perceived to be too foreign or strange (LeFebvre 2015), unlike *hishūkyō*, individuals who espouse such nonreligiousness (*mushūkyō*) may opt out of any religious practice, event, or relationship they desire, at any time, and without fear of state retribution or interference. In other words, *mushūkyō* is not a state mandated obligation, as *hishūkyō* was.

The irony of this situation is that, ultimately, it was prewar and wartime policy that enhanced Christianity's compatibility with state religious ritual and ideological programs equipping Christian institutions with many of the features that facilitated the broader acceptance of Christian weddings in the postwar period. Christianity is frequently discussed as a menacing foreign threat—in both state propaganda at the time and in a number of academic works today—but the fact is that Christian success in Japan is as much a product of domestic movements as it is foreign influence. As a minority religion often exposed more directly to the mechanisms of state power throughout Japan's early modern, modern, and contemporary history, Christianity and the success of Christian weddings present a unique opportunity for exploring key developments in the Japanese religious landscape and for exploring scholarly conceptions of religion in Japan. With the discursive turn in Japanese religious studies, it has become increasingly fashionable to emphasize the "Western" character of "religion" and its various conceptualizations but, as we will see below, to embrace such a position may obfuscate the fact that Japan has been—albeit in a variety of ways—a society with an intimate relationship with Christianity for hundreds of years.

2 Scholarship on Japanese Christian Wedding Ceremonies: From Conspicuous Consumption to "Nonreligious" Religion

Preceding scholarship has largely focused on the increasingly commercial or sensory character of Christian weddings in Japan, discussing them as scenery (Inoue 2004: 85–89), conspicuous consumption (Goldstein-Gidoni 1997: 43), or simulation (Fisch 2001), thus rendering the Christian aspects of such wedding ceremonies irrelevant in the face of more fundamental expressions of secular pageantry. More specifically, Inoue Nobutaka, Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, Michael Fisch, and others have viewed Christian weddings as nothing more than a byproduct of capitalism or, in the case of Fisch (2001), also a kind of soft colonialism. In this line of research, Christian wedding ceremonies serve as a prop that merely accompanies what should otherwise be understood as consumer spending within globalizing markets. Instead of exploring the intersection of profit and religion, the presence of bridal industry agents and profits are used as reasons to look elsewhere for "serious" or "authentic" religion. As a result, scholars of religion have often ignored the proliferation of Christian wedding ceremonies because these events lacked the requisite religiosity to serve as worthy topics for investigation.

The issue has been further complicated by Japanese expressions of nonreligiousness (*mushūkyō*). For most scholars, there was simply no way to consider the religiosity of Christian weddings when Japanese couples themselves did not espouse a Christian or religious identity before or after the ritual.[2] Scholars were right to be cautious. There is always a chance that one might be speaking on the behalf of informants and making pronouncements that obscure, ignore, or even replace informant perceptions and understandings. In the case of Japanese Christian weddings, the fact that Japanese participants continued to assert their own "nonreligious" (*mushūkyō*) identity meant the discussion was over before it started. No matter how religious the role of ministers, acts of prayer, or ritual spaces might seem, numerous scholars felt that in the absence of statements that affirmed an explicit religious identity, no good-faith investigation could take place. Conducting an inquiry in the absence of such affirmations was often taken as a violation of ethnographic norms, preempting any further investigation. In other words, if Japanese individuals chose to identify as "nonreligious," who were researchers to insist that religious studies might have something to contribute to the discussion? Without any Japanese Christians, how could there be any Christianity?

Ironically, in an effort to avoid the imposition of alien values upon informants, some researchers have done just that. To varying degrees, scholars sought from informants only explicit, cognitive-heavy, exclusive statements of religious identity before permitting any investigation of affective dispositions, practices, and spaces. Despite the fact that the study of Japanese religion continues to contribute to the development, flexibility, and versatility of definitions of religion, the prerequisite for investigation was decidedly "Protestant"—or, rather, more of a caricature of Protestant statements of faith. As numerous studies have shown, statements of faith (even those of Protestants) are also notoriously ambiguous and require interrogation of their own.[3] This "one and done" approach to Japanese religiosity has failed to take into account developments in the field of religious studies or the manner in which Japanese themselves thought of and *with* religion.

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[2] The debate between Ian Reader (1991bc) and Richard Andersen (1991) captures quite succinctly the character of this debate over statements of nonreligiousness. A similar debate also occurs between Tim Fitzgerald (2003, 2004ab) and Ian Reader (2004ab).

[3] Abby Day (2011) demonstrates that statements of religious faith are rarely straightforward statements of affiliation or belief but, rather, part of a part of a more complicated process of understanding, negotiation, and response.

However, in the wake of my previous investigation (2015) into the phenomenon of Christian weddings, it is now possible to disaggregate Japanese attitudes toward Christian weddings, which are perceived as religious, and the nonreligious identities of the Japanese themselves. Nonreligious Japanese can comfortably engage in a wide variety of practices they believe to be religious, including Christian weddings, without jeopardizing a nonreligious identity.[4] Statements of nonreligiousness are usually employed to convey a normative stance toward religion and not to reject religion wholesale. Moreover, nonreligious individuals do believe that certain rites and ceremonies are religious and expect the religious professionals who oversee such rites to also be religious, as demonstrated by the statements of faith, appearance, decorum, and proficiency in religious rites of said professionals. In addition, nonreligious individuals also have a decided adversity toward "fakes"—religious professionals who, despite a lack of faith or religious expertise, still conduct religious rites merely for personal gain or profit.

As my earlier study (2015) demonstrates, statements of nonreligiousness are not straightforward negations of religion but, rather, descriptions of one's interaction with religion and, although they may conceal a great deal of diversity, these statements also share general patterns of understanding and problem solving. One of the general patterns of understanding most relevant to the current study takes the following form: 1) Christian weddings are acceptable and normative events, 2) Christian weddings are religious and include religious elements, and 3) because they are normative religious events, nonreligious Japanese can comfortably participate in them without feeling the need to forfeit a nonreligious identity. Although this understanding is not necessarily uniform in character or shared by all Japanese, it appears to have the widest currency.

This particular constellation of behaviors, identities, and understandings raises a new set of issues that problematize some of the major assumptions of Japanese religious studies. What would it mean if the majority of Japanese identify as "nonreligious" *and* marry in Christian ceremonies? If, in the Japanese case, normative nonreligious identities are constructed in opposition to Christianity, as is the general scholarly consensus, what happens when that identity is now, in part, Christian? For my interviewees, statements of nonreligiousness were frequently their solution to managing their complicated and complex interactions with other individuals and various religious traditions, supernatural agents, and religious professionals. However, for some scholars, the fact that Christianity has found a home within the "nonreligious" religious outlook of many Japanese is nothing less than an identity crisis.

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[4] My argument is based on a series of in-depth interviews with sixty-eight different individuals, each of whom has had a Christian wedding or was planning a Christian wedding at the time of the interview, and twenty single individuals who have either attended the ceremony of a friend or family member, or were considering marriage. These interviews also include statements from six chapel ministers, one Catholic priest, ten choir members, ten musical performers, and the owner of a company that is subcontracted by venues to provide ministers, vocalists, and musicians who conduct Christian wedding ceremonies. For details of these interviews and their results, see LeFebvre (2015).

3 "Nonreligiousness" as a Solution to the "Problem" of Christianity: Tales of a Future's Past

My investigation into nonreligious identities was intended to facilitate a robust interaction with the contemporary Japanese religious landscape in relation to statements of nonreligiousness (*mushūkyō*). Following a methodology similar in many respects to that of Abby Day (2011) in her study of Christian identities in the United Kingdom, this study presented one possible way forward that offered the potential for better communication with Japanese informants. I demonstrated that "thinking with religion" did not mean discarding the category "religion,"[5] but rather, in providing an outline of the key features of the nonreligious identity, I proposed a methodology that considers the issue of religion as one where various actors understand and relate to what they perceive to be "religious" (or not) on an ongoing basis. Naturally, for investigations to be meaningful to scholarly discourse, scholars must continue to employ and interrogate "second-order" categories such as "religion."[6] However, some recent scholarship on Japanese weddings has continued in the tradition of obfuscation—suggesting that scholars abandon "religion" even if the Japanese themselves have not.[7]

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[5] Reader and Tanabe (1991) have demonstrated the ongoing importance of "religion" as a category for Japanese and scholars of Japanese religion.

[6] Ugo Dessì (2017a) provides an excellent discussion and summary of religion's role as a second-order category.

[7] For example, Horii Mitsutoshi (2018), following in the footsteps of Tim Fitzgerald, advocates the disposal of "religion" as a category despite the fact that his ethnographies demonstrate that the Japanese themselves utilize the term readily to understand their behaviors and place in society. In general, studies advocating the disposal of "religion" are fraught with inconsistencies and plagued by the inability to distinguish between emic and etic forms of understanding. Josephson (2012) is another example of this tendency. He asserts that "religion" is a simply a kind of "universalization" of Christianity and, thus, limited in terms of application to

Fujiwara Satoko (2019) has recently minimized the religious nature of Christian wedding ceremonies. However, in contrast to previous scholarship wherein the religiosity of Christian weddings was simply not worth the attention of scholars of religion, Fujiwara has embraced a slightly different line of thinking, arguing that Christian wedding ceremonies do not deserve the attention of scholars of religion because Japan has moved into a "post-Christian style wedding" era. She suggests that a handful of wedding advertisements and newspaper articles support this view. In her estimation, these advertisements and articles reveal the true essence of wedding ceremonies in Japan. Namely, they indicate that Japanese weddings are actually about "relationships" (*tsunagari* つながり). Claiming these "weddings that bring people together" (*tsunagarikon* つながり婚) are more representative of *newer* fads in the wedding industry than are Christian weddings, Fujiwara also contends that these same weddings are simultaneously representative of *older* trends that span all of Japan's premodern history. As a result, *tsunagarikon* are at once evidence that Christianity no longer matters in the world of Japanese weddings and proof that it never truly did.

Naturally, all weddings are about bringing people together and it would make little sense to suggest that the most fundamental element of any wedding is anything but the "union" (*tsunagari*) of certain parties through the establishment of relationships. As with the English word "wedding," the Japanese word for "marriage" (*kekkon* 結婚) contains the character for "*musubu*" 結ぶ that is to "to tie," "to bind," "to form relations." Despite Fujiwara's claim on the relevance of a new kind of *tsunagari* wedding in the 2010s, *tsunagarikon* have not, in fact, replaced Christian weddings in terms of popularity as a competing style of wedding. *Tsunagarikon* are not considered a type of wedding ceremony by the bridal giant Zexy in any of its major surveys at any point since Zexy began to conduct such surveys decades ago.[8] In contrast, the Christian wedding cere-

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the Japanese case. However, he does nothing to hide the fact that his theory of "hierarchical inclusion" is little more than a "universalization" of theories of *honji suijaku*. This is not to say that it is wrong to generalize and draw comparisons, quite the contrary. I simply wish to point out that "religion" is a product of the exact same process of comparison, generalization (not universalization), and application. In extrapolating from theories of *honji suijaku*, Josephson is not asserting the supremacy and universality of Buddhism (I would hope). The same can and should be said of "religion" which is not merely code for "Christianity" any more than "hierarchical inclusion" is merely code for "Buddhism."

[8] Zexy identifies four types of wedding ceremonies—Christian, Shinto, Buddhist, and Secular. As recently as 2019, Christian weddings account for nearly sixty percent of weddings when overseas weddings are also included. In total, religious weddings account for at least seventy-five percent of all weddings. The last several years have seen a slight decline in both Christian

mony was the ceremony of choice for the majority of Japanese throughout the 2010s and has maintained that position up until the present day (Zexy 2019). As of now, the majority of Japanese still marry in Christian ceremonies and the vast majority of weddings are still religious (Christian, Shinto, or Buddhist). In light of these facts, what does Fujiwara's proposal concerning the creation of "bonds" (*tsunagari*) as the most fundamental aspect of marriage imply?

In an attempt to come to terms with new conclusions concerning the issue of Japanese identity (nonreligiousness) and Christianity (religion), Fujiwara proposes the creation of a transhistorical Japanese identity that is both rooted in Japan's premodern past and in contemporary events, such as *tsunagarikon*. In striving to uncover something more fundamental to the wedding ceremonies of contemporary Japan than any "religious styling," her article introduces *tsunagarikon* as a practice that is more fundamental to Japanese behavior (and, thus, more religious), and at the same time less religious (not Christian, Buddhist, or Shinto). This position is not without its problems.

As the English expression "tying the knot" attests, forming relationships through marriage is hardly unique to Japan. Rather, the formation of relationships through marriage is fundamental to marriage as a social act everywhere in the known world and in all historical accounts. As such, it seems ill advised to equate a unique Japanese religiosity with something as universal to the human condition as "social relationships." Fujiwara does not opt for a definition of religion that embraces an interaction with entities or forces of an empirically unverifiable nature, but instead suggests that any social practice undertaken by Japanese is "authentic Japanese religion." Seeing in this light, it seems that cutting cakes together or passing wedding rings as a group constitutes Japanese religion because, for the Japanese, "society is God" and any time the Japanese interact with one another it is an expression of unique Japanese religiosity (Fujiwara 2019: 146). Here, Christianity, Buddhism, and Shinto are to be understood as products of "Western scholarship" based on a "World Religions model" and, thus, to be understood as exceptions to this rule regarding Japanese social practice (i.e., religion) and therefore should not be Japanese religion. The irony of using Durkheim to make such a claim notwithstanding, such a position would lead to the conclusion that Japanese religion is any social act undertaken by the Japanese other than those identified as religious by "Western scholars" of Japanese religion.

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and Shinto weddings, but there are no serious challenges to the status quo or the introduction of a rival *tsunagari*-style wedding.

Let us consider Fujiwara's definition of Japanese religion (i.e., nonreligion): "it is impossible to articulate how the contemporary *tsunagari* wedding is different from the premodern weddings in Japan" (Fujiwara 2019: 130). The suggestion is that it is advantageous for scholars to embrace the impossibility of historicizing Japanese weddings or their transformations (religious or otherwise) and that nonreligiousness is the best way to achieve this result. In effacing the relevance of religion, it becomes possible to recuperate a timeless Japanese identity that can be excavated from the practice of Japanese individuals forming relationships with one another (or through the desire to do so) in both the pre-Christian (premodern = pre-religious) past and post-Christian (*tsunagari* = nonreligious) present. By overlooking the historical context, "religion" can be reformulated as the foreign—whether through imported religions or imported discourses on religion—veneer that hides the fundamental unity of the nonreligious Japanese religious experience that pervades all time.

As with previous studies, such an approach obscures certain potential objects of study, rendering them invisible to scholars of religion. In targeting certain "Western" approaches to religious studies, leveraging colonial discourse, and accepting a timeless "nonreligiousness," scholars may inadvertently contribute to the exoticization of Japanese religious culture by affirming a mystical, transhistorical Japanese essence at the expense of historical fact. As a wave of new studies—many dealing directly with the issue of Japanese religion—have confirmed, a more nuanced picture of Japanese history is precisely what the field needs.[9] This is also true for the issue of nonreligiousness. In the investigation of nonreligiousness below, I will explore the reluctance to accept "foreign" discourses in regard to religion—especially, vis-à-vis Christianity—that has appeared in scholarship on Japanese religion. Such narratives occasionally bear more of a resemblance to anti-Christian narratives of early modern Japan and the development of the mystical nationalism in modern Japan than they do to expressions of *mushūkyō* in contemporary Japan. That is because during Tokugawa rule, state sanctioned familial, corporate and legal entities such as the *ie* 家 or household system were constructed around state monopolies on official Christian rituals, icons, identities, and narratives.

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[9] See Ugo Dessì (2017b) for an analysis in the role "Christianity" plays in the manufacture of narratives concerning religion and the secular in Japan. Caricatures of Christianity continue to play a prominent role in the articulation of Japanese religiosity in Japanese scholarship. Despite the warnings of Dessì and others, uncritical depictions of "Christianity" (and, by extension, "religion" or "the West") have come to serve as a kind of straw man for those who research Japanese religion and, at times, to exoticize both Japan and the West.

An officially sanctioned legal (i.e., not Christian) identity of the "Japanese" subject, and the embodied cultural and social formations that developed in conjunction with this subject, are inseparable from the acts of religious association and disassociation of which it was constituted.

In the following, I will explore the historical development of discourses on Christianity and nonreligiousness (*hishūkyō*) and begin to place them into conversation with contemporary statements of *mushūkyō* and the rise of Christian weddings. After briefly discussing the role of Christianity prior to the foundation of the Meiji state, I will address the role of *hishūkyō* narratives in creating ambiguities in the understanding of religious identity in prewar and wartime Japan. I will also show that *hishūkyō* policies prepared Christian Churches for their later adaptation to the postwar *mushūkyō* religious environment. Far from being the fundamental essence of an unchanging Japanese religiosity, discourses of nonreligiousness, too, are products of history and change with time and context.

4 New Associations for the Japanese Subject: From Anti-Christian to *hishūkyō*

The idea that Japaneseness is essentially antithetical to Christianity began as a state policy that initially took shape during the first half of the 17th century, starting with Christianity's official prohibition in 1612 at the hands of the Tokugawa shogunate. In time, anti-Christian policy came to form the backbone of a massive state surveillance program that led to strict government control of trade and immigration. These policies also defined the limits of citizenship and rights under the law for Japanese subjects as well.

The influences of such policies on Japanese religious institutions were equally profound. With the expansion of systems for certifying one's non-Christian status (*terauke seido* 寺請制度), the entire Japanese population was drawn into a customary but legally enforced "parishioner registry" (*danka seido* 檀家制度).[10] The Tokugawa shogunate framed its anti-Christian policies as a means of protecting the "divine land" (*shinkoku* 神国) from potential foreign invasion and, indeed, the anti-Christian policies led to expulsion, exile, and execution of foreign and Japanese Christians by the tens of thousands.[11] The brutality of shogunal government campaigns to search out and destroy Christians—replete with martyrs, chiliasts, apostate Christians (*korobi kirishitan* 転びキリシタン), and Christians forced into hiding (*kakure kirishitan* 隠れキリシタン)—are well known and well documented.

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[10] Although laws did mandate the acquisition of "temple certification" (*terauke*), the *danka* system was originally only customary. However, the shogunate rarely granted permission to conduct funerals outside the parishioner registration system of the temples. For more on these policies see Hur (2007).

However, this "eradication" of Christianity did not result in its complete disappearance or expulsion. Rather, "Christian" rites and discourses were institutionalized and maintained through a shogunal monopoly over Christian symbols and bodies. This "state Christianity" would, for over two hundred years, vaguely define the boundaries of Japanese subjecthood.[12] The most famous of these rites was developed in 1628 by Mizuno Morinobu, a magistrate of Nagasaki with a certain genius for exposing and torturing Christians, and involved trampling upon Christian images, known as *fumie* 踏絵 or *ebumi* 絵踏 (Hur 2007: 55–56). It was not enough to simply trample over the Christian images. Local officials functioned as inquisitors who carefully recorded the slightest signs of incriminating hesitation or embarrassment. Beginning first as paper prints, *fumie* images were soon produced in more durable wood or bronze. These images were the only legally permissible Christian icons and their use was gradually expanded to all areas of Tokugawa Japan.

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[11] For information on the anti-Christian policies of the Tokugawa regime see Hur (2007). For the bloody suppression of Christian groups see Hur (2007) and Elison (1988).

[12] Josephson (2012) promotes two complementary theoretical frameworks for coming to grips with the interactions between competing religious ideologies during this period of Japanese history. The first of these is "hierarchical inclusion" whereby he means "an operation for dealing with alterity that works by subordinating marks of difference into a totalizing ideology, while still preserving their external signs." The second, already discussed here, is "exclusive similarity" that excludes on the basis of "similarity" and represents an "incomplete othering" where rival ideologies are rejected as "representing aberrant imitation." Josephson presents these as a complementary binary, but they are in fact one and the same. When two ideologies make contact, there can only be various forms and degrees of hierarchical inclusion. As I show below, rejection is an extremely potent form of inclusion. In order to clarify the issues at stake in discussing Christianity during the Edo period, I use a system of (perceptual) association and (perceptual) disassociation. As for Josephson's discussion of Christianity's role in Japan during this period of prohibition in terms of "exclusive similarity," he suggests that Buddhist and state authorities decided on exclusion after determining that the "evil twin (i.e., Christianity)" simply "cannot be absorbed into the existing Buddhist Sangha or even into the state." Josephson is correct in identifying language that treats Christianity as a demonic, foreign "heresy" (*jakyō* 邪教) but, during the first half of the 17th century, Christianity found a home in Japan as the exclusive property of the state and Buddhist establishment and, by extension, in the life of every single Japanese subject.

Through immigration policy, censorship, inspection, exile, and execution, the Tokugawa shogunate—along with assistance from the Buddhist establishment—produced and maintained control of an official, state sanctioned "Christianity," which the *bakufu* employed to define the boundaries of Japanese subjecthood. The state's official monopoly over Christianity created a "Japanese" subject who was required by law to ritually disassociate from "Christianity" at least once a year during public annual inspections. Failure to properly disassociate resulted in the forfeiture of all legal rights due a subject of Japan—most notably, the right to live.[13] The authorities were well within their rights to execute or otherwise punish Christians as national enemies in any number of ways. To be "Japanese"—or, rather, to stay "Japanese"—one had to publicly disassociate with Christianity. This was a time when Japanese identity was articulated and maintained through a state monopoly over Christianity—its interpretation, its property, its institutions, and its people. Thus, the anti-Christian policies of early modern Japan, and the violent mechanisms by which they were enforced, did in fact contribute to a situation where to be "Japanese" was, by legal definition, antithetical to being "Christian." However, such is not the case in modern Japan.

Discourses of nonreligiousness (*hishūkyō*) were the result of an expanded understanding of Japanese subjecthood that was forced to include, among other things, Christianity. *Hishūkyō* narratives appeared first as a byproduct and later as a solution to failed attempts by the Meiji government to promote a state-mandated association with Shinto and disassociation from Christianity. Forced to make certain concessions, the Meiji government utilized "nonreligiousness" as a way to preserve certain Shinto rites as an instrument of subjecthood while simultaneously hoping to reduce friction between Christian (and other religious) organizations and the state. In effect, the state's "rejection" of "religion" promoted the inclusion of a diverse number of officially recognized "religious" constituencies (Christianity included) while simultaneously promoting and protecting the religious practices and understandings that existed at the heart of state ideology through jurisdictional differentiation as "not religion." As the state lost its monopoly over "religion," it sought to maintain its monopoly over what was "not religion."

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[13] By disassociation, I mean perceptual disassociation because there were indeed Christians who practiced in secret during this entire period. There were also individuals who were punished or lynched as Christians but the actual character of their "Christianity" is sometimes questionable. In creating perceptual associations, "Christianity" could be weaponized.

With the fall of the *bakufu* and "restoration" of the Meiji Emperor, the new government quickly instituted a series of policies designed to encourage Japanese subjects to associate with Shinto. Buddhist resistance to an exclusive and comprehensive system of state Shinto resulted in the application of the terms "religion" and "not religion" (*hishūkyō*), creating new discourses of "nonreligiousness" for the first time. A detailed description of the breadth of policies is beyond the scope of the current investigation but, in time, the state's trial-by-error method of implementation and inconsistent application of "nonreligion" created a situation where many Japanese could no longer meaningfully distinguish between "religion" and "not religion." Serving increasingly as tool of the state, discourses of "nonreligion" are paradoxical in that they represent a series of concessions made to "religious" constituencies while simultaneously preserving certain state religious prerogatives and extended state oversight and control of "religion."

Under the Meiji government, the symbols of Shinto saturated Japanese experience first in a wave of anti-Buddhist violence (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) and then through education, state policies, and Shinto rites (Josephson 2012). In 1871, the government nationalized Shinto shrines and priests in order to indoctrinate the population and as a prophylactic against the perceived threat of Christianity. The Meiji government experimented with a new system of certification (*ujiko shirabe* 氏子調 or *ujiko aratame* 氏子改), separating Buddhists from their traditional role in this process and making use of Shinto priests and Shinto funerals for the first time. The role of shrines and priests was supplemental to the family registry (*koseki seido* 戸籍制度) system established under the administration of public officials on the local level. Understaffed and unprepared, Shinto shrines and priests could not rise to the challenges of the national registry. Eventually, the government implemented its own registry system instead. Even so, the government continued to promote Shinto funerals and provide public space for Shinto burial sites.

In a renewed effort to mobilize the nation, the government built a more inclusive system of recruitment that drew more broadly from the larger cultural traditions of Japan and was not limited to Shinto alone. Shintoists, Buddhists, Confucians, and others were invited to participate as "proselytizers" (*senkyōshi* 宣教師) in this "Great Promulgation Campaign" (*taikyō senpu undō* 大教宣布運動).[14] In March 1872, the Meiji government abolished the Jingishō (Department of Divinity) and established the Kyōbushō 教部省 (Ministry of Doctrine) in its place. In April, the Kyōbushō launched a nationwide program of "edification" (*kyōka* 教化) designed to spread the "Great Teaching" (*taikyō* 大教) to all Japanese subjects. Although originally designed to create broader support among Buddhists for a similar, failed program of proselytization that was overseen by Shintoists only, the privately-funded, government-approved Taikyōin 大教院 (Great Teaching Institute) soon became embroiled in a controversy that laid the groundwork for the discourse of "nonreligion" (*hishūkyō*).

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[14] For a discussion of these policies in relation to the origins and development of "nonreligion," see Nitta Hitoshi (2000).

Although there were no imperial Shintoists lurking oversees who were capable of threatening the state monopoly on restored "indigenous" Shinto, the proposed Shinto monopoly proved vulnerable to imported concepts of religion. Upon his return from Europe in July 1873 and armed with a new understanding of "religion," the Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 Buddhist cleric Shimaji Mokurai 島地默雷 (1838–1911) launched an attack on the Taikyōin.[15] The Taikyōin had close connections with the anti-Buddhist Satsuma bureaucrats of the Kyōbushō and had effectively fallen under the sway of a powerful pro-Shinto lobby. Shimaji believed that the Taikyōin was not only devoted to propagating pro-Shinto propaganda, but was also part of a larger plot to eradicate Japanese Buddhism by transforming Buddhist temples into Shinto shrines and Buddhist clerics into Shinto priests. Shimaji moved not only to extricate Jōdo Shinshū priests from the projects of the Taikyōin, but also to permanently establish the independent identity of Buddhism. In so doing, Shimaji and others demanded recognition for Buddhism as a "religion" under the law.

One crucial aspect of this approach was the rejection of Shinto as "not religion" (*hishūkyō*). There is no space here for a full articulation of this debate, but those who adopted Shimaji's position argued that Shinto was "not religion" in that it did not possess a robust set of doctrines capable of addressing death, the afterlife, morality, or faith. In the words of Ōuchi Seiran 大内青巒 (1845–1918), an official with the Department of the Left and a supporter of Shimaji, "If you insist on calling this Shinto a religion—we should really call it not merely polytheistic religion, but a rag-bag religion" (Nitta 2000: 255). According to Ōuchi and other like-minded Buddhist advocates, Buddhism—not Shinto—was uniquely qualified for the designation "religion" as it was Buddhism that could provide a robust doctrinal discourse and ritual program necessary for handling the affairs associated with death and morality. Funerals were an indispensable source of income for Buddhist temples, and Shimaji and his supporters employed the rhetoric of "religion" to retain control of both a Buddhist identity and this lucrative enterprise.

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[15] For more on Shimaji Mokurai's discursive practices of legitimation see Krämer (2015).

Against this backdrop, Shimaji and other advocates of Buddhist rights were ultimately successful in mobilizing opposition to certain state policies that seemed to unfairly support the creation of a potential Shinto monopoly on religious identity as well as the economic implications of such a monopoly. With the loss of Buddhist support, the Taikyōin was shuttered in 1875 and the Kyōbushō was dissolved in 1877. Buddhist groups would go on to declare their right to conduct funerals and proselytization activities in the name of "religion." State proselytizers, on the other hand, were officially barred from having any involvement in funerals or proselytizing in 1882 and the ban on "private" (i.e., Christian) funerals was lifted in 1884. In a very short period, funerals went from state supported rites undertaken by Shinto priests who were state officials to a private "religious" act from which state actors were barred—at least in terms of the law. These sorts of oscillations in the coding for "religion" and "not religion" would contribute to confusion in distinguishing between the two.

It should also be mentioned that the "not religion" (*hishūkyō*) discourses of Buddhist advocates did more than simply demean Shinto's "religious" potential—it created a space for designating certain practices "not religion." Ōuchi himself warned of the danger to the state if the Shinto rites were categorized as "religion." "Religion" was first promoted as a matter of belief and choice. If Shinto were to be treated a "religion," then the Japanese would have a choice in whether or not they believed in it. The Japanese would also have choice in whether or not they adhered to the new ideology of the nation. Ōuchi and others wished to spare the fledging Japanese state such a fate and, therefore, went on to propose the state take direct control of the performance of certain rites and beliefs so that they would not become optional or, even, the object of consideration (Nitta 2000: 255). From its inception, the discourse of *hishūkyō* included a stipulation concerning the mandatory participation in certain rites and the protection of certain beliefs—many perceived as ambiguously (or even overtly) religious in character as time went on and understandings of religion evolved.[16]

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[16] The process by which the conceptualization of religion developed is sometimes offered as evidence of its limitations. There is, of course, some truth to these claims and they merit investigation. That being said, these arguments generally rely on a kind of textualism that fails to distinguish between imperfect but valid attempts to describe or understand, and purely politically motivated ideological discourse. As I will demonstrate, a growing consensus would continue to challenge claims of *hishūkyō* as elements of state ritual and ideology appeared to look more and more religious to an increasingly diverse set of actors and groups—foreign and domestic. The rhetoric of *hishūkyō*, on the other hand, was increasingly employed (with the threat of varying degrees and forms of legalized violence) to neutralize questions concerning what is or is not religion over time.

A draft constitution prepared by Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897) contained an article concerning the freedom of religious practice in regard to veneration at shrines stating, "the rites conducted at indigenous shrines are intended to recompense benefits received and to manifest virtue; they are not an instrument of belief. Each individual is free to offer [such rites] or not" (Nakai 2013: 119). However, Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution never came to include such a statement, stating only: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief." The Meiji Constitution contains only an incomplete guarantee for the freedom of religious practice in that it does not ensure the right to abstain from state-mandated religious rites. Among the "nonreligious" (*hishūkyō*) practices reserved for the government were prayers and rites at Shinto shrines, the belief in the divine sanctity of the emperor, the divine providence of the imperial person through the line of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, and the deification of heroes from Japan's history and wars. Importantly, mandatory shrine visits (*jinja sanpai* 神社参拝) for schoolchildren and, following the completion of Meiji Shrine in 1920, rites of "reverence from afar" (*yōhai* 遥拝) were included among those practices coded "not religion" and, therefore, not optional.

The simultaneous maintenance of these aspects of Shinto at the core of the state ideology as something other than "religion" required a considerable amount of maneuvering as time went on. Beginning with Buddhism and Christianity in the 1870s, the state not only began to allow certain religious groups to develop religious identities under the law, it actively engaged in the designation of new religious groups, participating in their creation under law. Over the course of the next several decades, the government continued to whittle away some of the more conspicuous (i.e., less integral or more problematic) "religious" elements of the formally secular, "nonreligious" state.[17] One consequence of this was the creation of "Sect Shinto" (*shūha shintō* 宗派神道) in the form of different Shinto "churches" (*kyōkai* 教会) or "confraternities" (*kōsha* 講社). Ironically, the "rag-bag nonreligious" aspects of Shinto were some of the first to be recognized as "religion." The state also privatized local and regional shrines and enacted a plan to withdraw funding from most national shrines as well—Ise 伊勢 and Yasukuni 靖国 being the major exceptions. Calibrating *hishūkyō* resulted both in a streamlining of locations, concentrating some practices officially associated with the state, but it also served to facilitate a broader diffusion of Shinto elements into the educational system and society at large—albeit not without contention.[18]

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[17] Yijiang Zhong (2016) explores this history of splitting off certain elements of Shinto from those that remained at the core of state ideology.

As early as 1881 the Home Minister Matsukata Masayoshi 松方正義 (1835–1924) lamented the confusion created by inconsistencies in policy toward "religion" and "not religion." There seemed to be no clear distinction between rites and religion or between religious teachings and education (Nitta 2000: 265). The government considered funerals "religion," but imperial funerals were designated "not religion." Although nominally state employees, shrine priests made a living conducting "religious" rituals. Shinto prayers (*norito* 祝詞) read at a state rite or compulsory shrine visit were "not religion"; however, when performed for private individuals, the same prayer was "religion." Shrines were "religion" in some contexts and "not religion" in others. Rites and proselytization at shrines were occasionally "religion" and on other occasions "not religion." Talismans were "religious" when obtained privately, but served as "nonreligious" symbols of patriotism when obtained for mandated ceremonies. Rapid changes in designating certain things as "religion" and "not religion," coupled with the arbitrary, incomplete, or inconsistent labeling, only served to exacerbate the confusion "on the ground" where serious ambiguities remained. I should clarify that this is not an argument for the *sui generis* purity of the "religious" and the "secular" but, rather, a statement that shows how state interference designed to bring the debate over what is or is not "religion" to a conclusion that preserved its own privileges created serious confusion.

The compulsory participation in the "nonreligious" (*hishūkyō*) activities that served as the outward expression and validation of Japanese subjecthood frequently took place through an engagement with religious spaces or agents. Culturally postulated supernatural agents and their representatives were everywhere. The difference between shrine rites and religion was, understandably, frequently lost on the population. In a 1911 article in the journal of the Shrine Association (Jinja Kyōkai 神社協会), the Home Ministry official Tsukamoto Seiji 塚本青治 (1872–1945) lamented the fact that, despite the clear jurisdictional demarcation of shrines and religion, people were unable to make the distinction (Nakai 2013: 115–116).

Hishūkyō policies blurred the lines of distinction between Japanese identity and religion in profound ways, which would in turn impact later developments in the postwar *mushūkyō* environment. Government policies had contributed to the creation of a discourse that allowed and often forced the label of "not religion" upon certain moments of engagement with beliefs, rites, actors, or spaces that were likely perceived as religious. Those who refused to participate were "not Japanese" (*hikokumin* 非国民). In this way, participation in religious activities that were "not religious" in order to retain one's Japanese identity was to become a key ingredient in the *mushūkyō* religious identity of postwar Japan (LeFebvre 2015).

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[18] See Josephson (2012) for a description of this diffusion in the form of what he refers to as the "Shinto Secular."

5 Christianity in a "Nonreligious" World: The Catholicism *hishūkyō* Built

With the arrival of the Western powers and the establishment of the unequal treaties, the Tokugawa shogunate could no longer unilaterally control the narratives of Christianity and, more critically, the mechanisms of force required to exact the perpetual "eradication" of Christianity as the defining feature of Japanese subjecthood.[19] Beginning in the late 1850s, and following closely the decision to end the practice of *fumie*, a number of Western powers successfully forced the shogunal government to officially protect the religious rights of foreign nationals in Japan, including stipulations for unimpeded worship, burial, and the erection of religious edifices. The religious extraterritoriality guaranteed in treaties such as the United States-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce (also known as the Harris Treaty) served as a watershed. Within a year, the first American missionary arrived in Nagasaki. Within seven years, there were Catholic churches in Yokohama and Nagasaki, and within nine years, hidden Christians began to practice openly, defiantly holding Christian funerals in public. Native Christians in Urakami even negotiated the successful return of confiscated Christian images and artifacts by falsely claiming that they had been borrowed from foreigners.[20] Increasingly, Japanese religious groups successfully leveraged diplomatic religious extraterritoriality domestically to secure rights of their own. From its very inception, Japanese "religious freedom" was, in part, a product of international diplomacy—both transcending and preceding citizenship.

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[19] In addition, Hur (2007: 334–346) demonstrates that in certain locations hidden Christians could exercise their local majority in order to protect their customs from official scrutiny to a limited extent. It was not until the arrival of the Western powers that such groups began to make their practices public.

[20] In an amazing turn of events, hidden Christians convinced the authorities to return their icons and ritual implements, claiming that they were not Christian contraband but actually the property of foreign Christians (Hur 2007: 339). The fact that authorities conceded to these demands foreshadows subsequent developments in leveraging international and diplomatic forces and rhetoric against the impunity of state authority. As both the site for hidden Christian and, later, emergent Christian communities, Urakami remains a site characterized by the complex crisscrossing of religion, Japanese, and foreign influence (McClelland 2016).

As can be seen with the discussion of Shimaji Mokurai above, this trend only intensified with deepening diplomatic relations with the West and the establishment of the Meiji government. At the outset, the Meiji regime perpetuated the *bakufu* stance toward Christianity—one of its earliest edicts renewed the ban on the "alien religion." The government also instigated a crackdown on Christians who had come out of hiding in Kyushu in 1869. A program of "total banishment" (*sōhairu* 総配流) scattered thousands from these Christian communities throughout Japan (Hur 2007: 341–342). However, in contrast to the early modern period, the threat of Christian hostility from overseas was a reality the Meiji government could not afford to dismiss. The brutal treatment of native Christians hampered negotiations to undo the "humiliation" caused by the unequal treaties. Eventually, the Meiji government issued a proclamation in 1873 that allowed for a "freedom of belief" and removed the official prohibition on Christianity. Under these new circumstances, Christian communities were gradually redefined. Japanese Christians went from being ungovernable enemies of the state (i.e., individuals totally exposed to the mechanisms of state power based on their perceptual religious associations) to a recognized religious minority during the Meiji period (Maxey 2014: 214–215). As a legal and a rhetorical category, "religion" was instrumental in negotiating concessions and influencing Japanese state policy toward Christianity. However, with the turn of the century, imperial ideology and Christianity were once again on a collision course.

A few days prior his departure for Europe and the United States in 1871, Iwakura Tomomi 岩倉具視 (1825–1883) had a meeting with British acting foreign minister F.O. Adams. During this meeting, Iwakura conveyed the essence of the state ideology espoused by the Meiji government as follows: "It was absolutely necessary that the people of Japan should believe that His Majesty the Tennō was descended in an unbroken line from the Goddess Tenshōkō Daijin and was therefore of divine origin. The Christian religion was directly opposed to this article of faith because it taught its disciples not to believe in any God save one" (Hur 2007: 347). This statement encapsulates rather concisely the Meiji government's position on the perceived incompatibility between the religious ideology of the state and the exclusivity of the Christian faith. The rhetoric of *hishūkyō*—and the special administrative structures it served to inform—seems to have alleviated a certain amount of the friction between religious coalitions and the state by revising the legal designation of various religious actors, rites, beliefs, and spaces into "religion" (private) and "not religion" (state). Thus, the state came to recognize Christianity and accepted its participation in these structures.

However, by the 1930s, legal maneuvering and rhetorical assertions were beginning to prove insufficient in disguising the religious character of rites associated with state ideology. Christian missionaries and foreign nationals were among the first to notice that the state system of compulsory rites seemed oddly "religious" in character.[21] At the conclusion of a two-year study, a special committee of the National Christian Council of Japan issued a public statement regarding shrines. Their conclusion can be summarized as follows: "To treat the Shintō shrines, which from of old have been religious, as non-religious, has been unreasonable. The shrines of Shrine Shintō are actually engaged in religious functions" (Holtom 1965, 297). In the relatively new field of religious studies, a number of scholars also began to reach the conclusion that Shinto could and should be described as "religion."[22] Even Shrine priests themselves also seemed to be in agreement that shrines should be considered religious. In 1930, the Tokyo Shrine Priest Organization (Tōkyō-fu Shinshoku Sōdai 東京府神職総代) issued a statement suggesting that to ignore the existence of the divine spirits who resided at shrines and deny those divinities the "awesome reverence" they deserve would ultimately "rob shrines of the source of their miraculous efficacy" and destroy "shrines' true meaning" (Nakai 2013: 117; McMullin 2012: 65). There was a growing consensus among diverse groups that shrines and their rites were "religious."

In May 1932, the "true meaning" of shrines was put to the test. Three Catholic students of Sophia University failed to confer upon the newly enshrined *kami* of Yasukuni Shrine the "reverence" that appears to have been their due. Army officers had led students from some of Tokyo's universities to Yasukuni but the three students in question decided not to attend on religious grounds.[23]

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[21] There is a tendency to see Christian advocates as agents of colonialism and imperialism—in other words, anti-Japanese agents or the unwitting accomplices to western imperial projects. However, this fails to account for the fact that Christians are a frequently persecuted minority in the Japanese context. In fact, religious minorities are more likely to be exposed to the mechanisms of state power and are, therefore, a valuable source of information when it concerns the operation of that same state power, especially in regard to religion.

[22] See Scheid (2013: 14–16) for a list of some of the most prominent scholars, Japanese and foreign nationals. These individuals represent a wide variety of political leanings (including some quite bigoted), however, they are all one way or another convinced that state mandated "nonreligious" Shinto can and should be understood as religion.

[23] See Nakai (2013 and 2017) for a treatment of the Sophia University-Yasukuni Shrine Inci-

The school, the Catholic Church, the Ministry of Education, and the Japanese Army quickly became embroiled in a debate over mandatory acts of obeisance at shrines. The years leading up to this incident had seen a more intense promotion of "reverence at shrines" and "reverence from a distance" by officials at every level of the government, and this was not the first-time confusion over the religious character of shrine visits had become an issue. However, unlike earlier incidents, this incident produced a prolonged engagement that threatened the continued existence of the Catholic school system in Japan. The Ministry of Education—which housed the Bureau of Religion—worked closely with the university authorities to produce a compromise that would secure Catholic student participation in "nonreligious" shrine veneration, but the Ministry of Education's reluctance to order a general directive to enforce shrine veneration roiled officials in the Japanese Army, who had received the reports of the incident from their subordinates. The Army dismissed the compromise reached by Ministry of Education and decided to withhold its military liaison, denying students of Sophia University access to various forms of postgraduation advancement. Student enrollment plummeted and those students still enrolled led protests against the university's leadership. Although the exact conditions of agreement remain unknown, the Army did eventually yield and the military training officers were restored to Sophia in November 1933.

One of the architects of the Army's brinkmanship during the Yasukuni Incident was Araki Sadao 荒木貞夫 (1877–1966). Araki had been appointed Minister of War by Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅 (1855–1932) in December 1931 and was no stranger to escalating conflict. In May 1932, when ultranationalist naval officers assassinated Inukai for resisting the Army's war demands, Araki (who had supported them) praised these assassins as irrepressible patriots. In one sense, Sophia University never stood a chance—their adversaries in the Army Ministry had proved willing to murder the opposition over ideological differences when it suited them. Considering the fact that Catholics had been butchered in mass in Mexico, Spain, and the Soviet Union at this time, the Catholic Church undoubtedly saw the threat of ideological violence as a totally plausible outcome in the Japanese case as well. As a founding member of the *Kōdōha* 皇道派 (Imperial Way Faction) within the Imperial Army, Araki would support another rebellion in 1936. This time the rebellion ended in failure and Araki, along with a number of *Kōdōha* generals, was purged from the Army. He was, however, tapped to serve as the Education Minister in 1939 under Prime

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dent and a general overview of the experience of private Christian schools in modern Japan, especially regarding conflicts over compulsory acts of veneration at shrines.

Minister Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿 (1891–1945) who considered Araki a useful counterpoint to more moderate forces in the government. Under Araki's leadership, the Ministry of Education would force the Catholic Church to restructure its doctrine and serve as a coauthor and editor of the final results.

Doctrinally speaking, reverence at shrines was seen as a potential violation of the First Commandment prohibiting the worship of other divinities and engagement in "superstition." In the years leading up to the Yasukuni Incident, Japanese Catholics such as Yamamoto Shinjirō 山本信次郎 (1877–1942) had consulted with Vatican officials concerning the potential for conflict over shrine rites. With the assistance of Pierre Batiffol (1861–1929), an authority on early Christianity, it was concluded in 1920 that if the Japanese government made a pronouncement that explicitly stated the "nonreligious" character of shrines, then the Church would be in a position to recognize the participation of Catholics in such ceremonies. Oddly enough, despite the amount of discussion over the topic, no such definitive formal government pronouncement could be found (Nakai 2013). The absence of such a statement reveals that the legal jurisdiction of "not religion" was, in fact, not designed to refute the religious character of shrine rites and imperial ideology, but rather to preserve certain prerogatives and useful ambiguities.

One thing is clear from the Yasukuni Incident and the uncompromising stance of the Army: certain actors within the state had reached a point where they were no longer willing to disentangle and legally distinguish additional elements of state ideology or ritual as either "religion" or "not religion" for benefactors, whether domestic or foreign. *Hishūkyō* was no longer simply compulsory; it was now also nonnegotiable. But that did not mean that other negotiations would not to take place. The conflict forced authorities within the Catholic Church to work very closely with officials in the Ministry of Education to craft statements and responses that satisfied both parties (Nakai 2013: 141). Ignoring most of the more blatantly religious elements of shrine rites, the Catholic Church and the Ministry of Education agreed to focus on the act of bowing undertaken during visits. This created a kind of neutral zone that facilitated compromise. These acts were then described in a single statement that could be read to define the bow as "an act that is none other than an expression of patriotism," or "nothing more than an expression of patriotism" (*aikokushin to chūsei to o arawasu mono ni hoka narazu* 愛国心と忠誠とを現はすものに外ならず). The fact that the Ministry of Education applied this technique of obscurist language points out the routinized character of such protocol in handling the problems of *hishūkyō*. Sophia University and Ministry of Education also claimed that the problem stemmed from foreign leadership within the university and Catholic Church because foreigners simply did not understand

Japanese religion and could not, therefore, understand that shrine visits were not really religious. However, in this instance, the Army defied precedent and rejected the proposed solution.

Fearing that the position of Catholics in Japan might be in jeopardy, the Vatican stepped in to recognize the "nonreligious" status of "National Shintō." Through the Office of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide at Rome, Vatican authorities issued instructions to Catholics in Japan in 1936 recognizing "National Shintō" as "nonreligious" and urging Japanese Catholics to demonstrate their patriotism and willingness to abide by the law by participating in rites at shrines (Holtom 1938: 297–299). Thus, through intense "cooperation" under the potential threat of force, *hishūkyō* could be established from the outside in. In this showdown, the Japanese state had essentially negotiated a kind of "extraterritoriality" within the Catholic Church for Japanese citizens who were allowed to behave differently from other Catholics in other countries. Japanese Catholics were Japanese first and Catholic second, not only under Japanese state law but also within the Catholic Church's own instructional bylaws as well.[24]

Following Araki's appointment to Education Minister, the interaction between the Catholic Church and the Japanese government intensified considerably. The crisis over veneration at shrines helped to cement a relationship between the Ministry of Education and the Catholic Church that would lead to significant changes in Church doctrine, especially with the former Army minister at the helm. As his attitude toward the Yasukuni Shrine Incident demonstrates, Araki would not tolerate any behavior deemed even potentially "harmful to the state," but he also believed that the greater threat to the Japanese Empire was not religion, but communism. With successful integration, religions could prove useful against the increasing popularity of communist ideology. In the case of the Catholic Church, integration was experienced more intensely with the passing of the Religious Organizations Law (*shūkyō dantai hō* 宗教団体法) in 1939, which gave the state the right to disband any religious group whose teachings were in conflict with the "Imperial Way."

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[24] Nakai (2017) and Krämer (2011) tend to view the relationship between the Japanese state and the Catholic Church as a kind of "corporatist" compatibility between two institutions of hierarchical structure. However, asymmetries of power (along with a shared hatred for communism) clearly dictated the character of this relationship. The Japanese state not only secured concessions from the Catholic Church, but the structures of power even converted Catholic publishing into outreach for official state positions. Catholic publications such as *Koe* 聲 included Catholic positions on the argument of "nonreligion," but new publications such as *Monumenta Nipponica* turned the Sophia University publication into a forum for disseminating the "truth" about Japan (Nakai 2013: 147–148). Here again, the conversation over what is or is not religious was forced to end with the state dictating the terms and content for both its own position and the position of the Church.

From this point on, the Ministry of Education became a coauthor in the Church's catechism in order to eliminate discrepancies between Catholic teachings and imperial myth.[25] Following the submission of the 1936 version of the catechism, the Ministry of Education began an extensive intervention that changed terminology and, at times, altered doctrine. Institutional changes that created a unified point of contact with the state were encouraged in order to facilitate communication and oversight. Doctrinal alterations consisted mostly of an elimination of terms that might be shared with the imperial ideology and in an effort to reduce statements of exclusivity. When compared to early versions, the 1942 catechism drops language that suggests that Catholicism is the one true religion, but instead only asserts its uniqueness (Krämer 2011: 196–197). The Ministry of Education even went so far as to oversee the production of a new translation for the First Commandment, partially rewritten so as to state that "Only the Christian God shall be worshipped as the Christian God" (*tenshu nomi o tenshu to shite reihai suru koto* 天主のみ天主として礼拝すること) (Krämer 2011: 194–195). As these other changes demonstrate, the government's involvement in the production of the new catechism was motived by a desire to create a greater distinction between the Catholic Church and imperial ideology while simultaneously facilitating their increased compatibility.

Krämer (2011) argues that these changes were largely either welcomed by Christian groups or simply sped up change that was already underway. There is some truth to the fact that Catholic Church did not reverse course on all of the changes postwar; however, as Krämer's own study demonstrates, Christians were by no means pleased with the changes they were forced to make at the time. Taguchi Yoshigorō 田口芳五郎 (1902–1978), the priest charged with the task of working with the Ministry of Education, illustrates that point quite succinctly, stating, “the Ministry of Education … interfered with various issues, even the substance of our doctrine” (Krämer 2011: 192). Thus, Krämer’s argument that the retention of certain changes was proof of wartime satisfaction is to read history in the reverse. Some changes were retained because they proved useful in the postwar environment facilitating Christian acceptance among non-Christian Japanese, and the most invasive changes concerning behavior (e.g., participation in shrine rites) were indeed reversed.

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[25] The Ministry of Education offered "assistance" with updating archaic, foreign sounding translations and in making the catechism more compatible with "Japanese feelings" (Krämer 2011: 192). However, these modifications frequently enhanced the foreign-sounding character of the translation. For example, "God" was no longer rendered as *kami* 神 but as "Lord of Heaven" (*tenshu* 天主). Paradoxically, this resulted in a new Japanese Catholicism that sounded more foreign. As with some other changes I discuss here, this change was maintained as a useful feature in postwar Japan. See Krämer (2011) for an extensive analysis of the changes in institutional structure and complete breakdown of alterations made to Catholic catechisms in transwar Japan.

6 Early Modern Anti-Christian Policies, *hishūkyō*, and *mushūkyō*: Revisiting the Question of Japanese Identity and “Western Religion”

The state effort to induce greater flexibilities in Catholic doctrine in order to achieve compatibility with ideological pronouncements in regard to the divinity of the Japanese emperor, and ensure the participation of Japanese Catholics in the state cult, was to have some rather ironic consequences in the postwar period. The *hishūkyō* state had equipped the Catholic Church with some of the features that would ultimately make it more competitive in postwar Japan (LeFebvre forthcoming). Nonreligiousness (*hishūkyō*) was the key ingredient in creating a uniquely Japanese Catholic experience that was more flexible and forgiving of other common practices in Japan. In addition, the Ministry of Education had also helped cultivate an environment wherein Christian Churches and professionals regularly cooperated with secular parties to achieve goals (religious and otherwise) that were mutually beneficial. In prewar and wartime Japan, this largely meant limiting Christian influence in key respects but, in postwar Japan, Christian Churches learned to build partnerships with commercial institutions in order to popularize Christian weddings. Decades of cooperation with the Japanese state likely paved the way for this development as well.

There is also another important point to highlight. *Hishūkyō* policies led to the blurring of lines between spaces, rituals, and professionals that were considered religious and those that were not in such a way as to make it difficult to meaningfully distinguish between the two. Discourses of *hishūkyō* created a framework where certain religious behaviors were simply Japanese and did not lead to the establishment of an alternate religious identity. In the postwar period, this aspect of *hishūkyō* culture was inherited and transformed. In contemporary Japan, the state no longer mandates the shared “nonreligious” practices necessary for the maintenance of a Japanese identity; rather, individual and group perception determines which religious practices are "Japanese enough" to be considered "nonreligious" (*mushūkyō*). This environment provided Christian Churches new opportunities, in the form of wedding ceremonies and the wedding industry, to capture customers by creating visually convincing Christian environments that are satisfyingly religiously despite the fact that they are not legally recognized churches. Nonreligious Japanese do not distinguish between a traditional church and a wedding chapel in most cases—they are both religious and Christian, and thus largely synonymous (LeFebvre 2015).

Ultimately, as with the identities of the individual Japanese themselves, there is no single law, pronouncement, or discourse that can simply settle the matter of religion once and for all. It is an ongoing debate as people attempt to express, disguise, or understand a complicated and complex set of relationships and situations. As such, it is important to remember that the tendency to suggest that "Western theories of religion" simply do not apply to the Japanese case, without first considering the implications of such a statement, is a problematic one. What does it mean to argue that Japan is without a Christian past (or future) when it has a roughly five hundred-year relationship with the religion, much of that time spent under state control? And what happens when one accepts the proposition that Japan is in possession of a unique religious experience that defies all description in "Western terms"? Does this not bear some similarity to early modern practices that crafted the Japanese subject around a perceptual disassociation with Christianity and the language of power that oppresses domestic diversity and excludes foreign influence? Does it not also resemble the decision made by Sophia University to blame their foreign leadership for their inability to understand that they are not permitted to "mislabel" state rites and jeopardize the standing of those rites with the label "religion?"

If one were to accept these arguments, there would of course be important implications for the potential for scholarly exchange, but I would suggest there is a more serious problem. To accept an unchanging history is to lose one's history altogether. Christian weddings and the discussions around them deserve our attention for many reasons, but especially for the way their history helps to articulate human histories of oppression, acceptance, and change. As mentioned earlier, many scholars of Japanese religions have recently embraced the position that religion is best understood as a foreign invader with only very limited capacity to contribute to the discussion of the Japanese context, but I would argue that it has come to serve as more of a *fumie* in many cases. In order to be allowed to discuss the Japanese case, scholars are first obliged to trample upon religion without hesitation but, in so doing, they may well lose sight of the fact that some forms of hegemony, along with much of society itself, were often established through the perceptual disassociation from religion (especially Christianity) within the Japanese context.

The result is that—as with *fumie*—it is entirely possible for scholars to engage, often unintentionally, in approaches that unquestioningly reaffirm Japanese narratives of power, with their brutal histories now disguised and out of view but legitimized by an ill-conceived textualism that is more concerned with words than exploring historical truth. The change in addressing the popularity of Christian weddings—product as they are of domestic religious policy, international influence, capitalist spending, human emotion, and religion, etc.—is, perhaps, the challenge intrinsic to the exploration of accepted narratives of identity and power and the transformation of perceptual associations and disassociations as they shift over time. However, if the investigation of religion still has the power to draw our attention to the complex realties of our entangled histories and identities, then perhaps the tool of religion is still worth keeping around even when the object of investigation is "not religious."

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