

JAPANESE MONOTHEISM

by Jacques H. Kamstra

Nowadays the first Christian encounter with Japan is considered as something of the past which only survives in some distant areas and in the Kakure-kirishitan. Important issues of that encounter are left for what they have been and all attention is focussed on a philosophical approach of Christianity with Zen-Buddhism, which is raised to the central point of the dialogue of Buddhism and Christianity. Are there no other objects of dialogue in the encounter of Japan's religions with Christianity? What has been for instance the impact of Western theism on the religious developments of the Edo period which inter alia also finally led to State Shinto? To what degree did Christian theism exert its influence on the intellectuals who during the Edo period shaped new forms of Shinto? How was this possible in a period during which Christianity was denied and forbidden. This question is the subject of this paper. First I will try to look at the history of Western spiritual indoctrination during the Edo period until 1868. Then I will try to describe the process of incubation of the idea of western theism in the minds of some Japanese intellectuals. Finally I will try to determine to what extent these ideas are incorporated in the so called Shinkoshukyo and Shin shin-shukyo, which came into existence since the beginning of the nineteenth century. What kind of Christian concept of God influenced these Japanese? The concept which was preached in the 17th century by missionaries in Nagasaki or which is described in the Chinese books written by Italian Jesuits and reached Japan secretly by means of Chinese smugglers? I hope to prove that Christianity was absorbed by the Japanese concept of oku, which is the centripetal power which absorbs all kinds of thoughts from outwards, soto, and turns them inwards, uchi, into something typical Japanese. The history of Japanese religion describes these incessant dynamics of absorption and transformation, which not with some dedain should be disposed of as syncretism. I hope to prove that Western ideas and even the central Christian concept of God being the focus of Christian religion has to pass this whirlpool in order to become uchi or oku or really Japanese.

1. The West in Japan

Thirty years ago a sick Japanese journalist whom I visited in a shabby village-hospital somehow shamefully gave me a manuscript. He felt guilty because he feared that I would not agree with his writings. His manuscript written in 1950 in Sasebo and still owned by me contains a phantastic story about the origin of the Japanese people and the arrival of the first emperor in Japan. The Japanese people should have originated from one of the twelve tribes of Israel, which roaming overland from Judea via Persia and China finally should have reached Kyushu as the tribe which in the West was considered to be lost

somewhere in Asia. The first emperor Jimmu should have been none other than Jesus Christ, who after his Ascension should have landed on the small islet of Aoshima a few miles away from the western shores of the Nagasaki prefecture. He should have been the divine founder of the imperial dynasty. Some maintain that in one of the mirrors, which adorn the takamikura, the imperial throne, used by emperor Akihito on 12 November 1990 on occasion of his solemn inauguration, should contain the Hebrew letters for Jahwe: I am who I am. These doubtful facts could explain why the Japanese people always should have believed in one God and should have been monotheists. Nowadays nobody believes these stories which before World War II have been made up in order to persuade Christians to participate in the rites of State Shinto. Monotheistic belief and the concepts of creation and creator became manifest in Japan since the first Europeans embarked on the shores of Kyushu. So Western influence to some extent modified Japan's polytheism into monotheism. How did Japan and the West become acquainted with each other? It was Marco Polo who in the second half of the 13th century made Japan known in the West in his book »The description of the world« when he wrote: Cipingu is an island to the sunrising which is on the high sea 1500 miles distant from the land of Mangi. It is an exceedingly great island. The people of it are white, fairfashioned, and beautiful, and of good manners ... Moreover, I tell you that they have gold in very great abundance, because gold is found there beyond measure.... Therefore I tell you that they have so much gold that it is a wonderful thing, and I have told you, so that they do not know what to do with it. Three centuries later the details about the superabundance of gold in this country enticed the first Europeans to the shores of Nagasaki prefecture. Western influence began in the 16th and the 17th centuries with the arrivals of the Portuguese (1549–1639), Spaniards (1593–1624) and the Dutch (1609–1854). Western indoctrination of Japanese intellectuals also was realised by Western books which had been translated into Chinese and secretly had been smuggled into Japan.

1.1 The Portuguese and the Spaniards

In September 1543 three Portuguese mutineers Antonio de Mota, Francesco Zeimoto and Antonio Peixoto, landed on the island of Tanegashima S. of Kyushu. The Japanese were very pleased with them and the shots of their rifles in particular drew peculiar interest. Four years afterwards in December 1547 the Jesuit Francisco Xavier while travelling from the Molucca islands to Goa in India met three young Japanese guided by a samurai from Kagoshima named Yajiro who had been sued for murder. Xavier sent this Yajiro to Goa where he became baptized as Paulus. In June 1549 Francis himself departed from Malacca together with two other Portuguese and three Japanese. In August 1549 he arrived in Kagoshima. One month afterwards the daimyo of Kagoshima received him in audience and gave him permission to preach the Christian faith. He travelled overland from Kagoshima to Hirado. His companion brother Fernandez was the first missionary in Japan to baptize hundred Japanese. Xavier travelled to Hirado, Hakata, Yamaguchi, Iwakuni, Sakai and in January 1551 he arrived in Kyoto. Here he stayed eleven days. Disappointed for not having been invited to an audience by the emperor he returned to Hirado. After a final visit to Yamaguchi and Hirado he left Japan for ever.

During his stay in Japan he did not score mass-conversions: only 800 Japanese had been baptized. In 1585 the pope in his letter *Ex pastorali Officio* assigned Japan to the Jesuit order. In 1592 the Spanish governor of the Philippines was permitted to send Spanish Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans and also quite a few businessmen. Within ten years many Japanese were baptized. The figure of one million or 750.000 baptisms between 1605 and 1614 seems to be grossly exaggerated. Nevertheless in 1614 the number of christians was at the most 300.000 by Vos estimated as still more than 10% of the population. The increasing number of Christians and the radical rejection of Japanese religions by the foreign missionaries in other words the preaching of a religion which did not tolerate any compromise with these religions upset many Buddhist monks. They had an enormous influence on the political leaders of Japan who in addition were very concerned about the close ties of the missionaries with the political leaders of Spain and Portugal. They were afraid that Japan would share the fate of the Philippines which Legazpi after his arrival in Cebu in 1565 turned into a Spanish colony. This fear was increased by the Spaniards and the Dutch. In 1611 a Spanish delegation submitted to shogun Ieyasu a number of demands aimed at the colonisation of Japan. In 1611 the Dutch on the other hand in order to meet their economic aims were not afraid of forging a letter of the Dutch Prince Maurits to Ieyasu in mentioning that the Spanish and Portuguese businessmen and missionaries were engaged in stirring up the Christians against the government. In 1617 they overwhelmed a Portuguese ship and produced letters which describe how the Nambanjin (>the southern Barbarians<, the Japanese designation of Portuguese and Spaniards) incite the Christians to revolt. According to Kaempfer the Japanese Christians should have asked the king of Spain to overthrow the Japanese government. Otis Cary is of the opinion that these letters never existed. Thus Japan became confronted with the European discrepancies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the neighbourhood of Nagasaki also became the site of the Eighty Years' War between Holland and Spain. All this led in 1624 to the expulsion of Spaniards from Japan and in 1636 to the confinement of all Portuguese merchants to Deshima: a small fanlike islet in the Bay of Nagasaki which was separated by a canal from the city of Nagasaki. In 1638 the revolt of Christians and farmers who were squeezed out by taxes was crushed also by 426 shots of the guns of the Dutch ship »De Rijk«. More than 70.000 people died. In August 1639 the last Portuguese were expelled from Japan. A number of severe measures were designed in order to put an end to Christianity. All districts of the country were divided into groups of five or more households: the gonin-gumi. Its leaders were obliged to inform on Christians. The detection of a Christian implied the punishment of the group. Other measures consisted in religious investigation (shumon aratame), imposed by law on all parts of the country and the obligation of every family to become registrated in Buddhist temples (danna tera). Every one was obliged to keep a temple certificate. In 1659 this registration was made compulsory for everyone. Since then all changes in the families became registrated in the temples. Another measure consisted in the so called efumi, the trampling of an image (of Jesus Christ). Since 1631 this measure came into effect. In 1640 it became obligatory for everybody. At first these efumi consisted in paper images which were used in house to house calls in areas where the presence of Christians was presumed. In 1669 the paper images were replaced by 20

copper plates, made by the coppersmith Hagiwara Yuza. The copper images were installed in the pavement of the temples. Eleven of these plates still are preserved in the National Museum of Tokyo. A special prison for detected Christians and missionaries was built: the Kirishitan-yashiki, the 'Christian settlement'. In spite of their short-lived stay in Japan, the impact of Spain and Portugal in particular on the material and spiritual culture of Japan was enormous. Several works on the Christian doctrine written and printed in that time on a Western press in Amakusa are still extant. So in 1599 in Amakusa a book of Fray Louis de Granada was printed which was based on the philosophy of Aristoteles. Even in Kyoto they had established an academy of natural sciences and installed there several astronomical and optical instruments. Hundreds of Portuguese loan words still betray that influence: pan (bread), casteira (castella:famous Nagasaki cake), ananasu (ananas), arukoru (alcohol), banko (bank), barusamu (balsamo), etc., but also Afurika (Africa), Ajia (Asia), Ejiputo (Egypt), Igrisu (England) and even Olanda (Holland). Many latin words were somehow preserved in the Nagasaki area by the hidden Christians, the kakure-kirishitan.

1.2 The Dutch

Since the departure of the Spaniards and the Portuguese only the Dutch were left in Japan. The first Dutch ship arrived in April 1600. In August 1609 the Dutch were permitted to erect a trading post in Hirado. From 1613 until 1623 the English shared with them this post. In 1641 the Dutch settlement of Hirado was torn down and transferred to Deshima in Nagasaki after the Portuguese and the Spaniards left Japan in 1639. They were allowed to stay on one condition: they should not exert any form of religious propaganda. Upon their arrival in Deshima their ships were combed for religious articles. This is described by the German historian and son of a minister Engelbert Kaempfer, who stayed in Deshima from 1690 to 1692: 'As soon as we discovered this land, every one was obliged pursuant to an order from above, and ancient custom, to give his prayer-book, and other books of divinity... to the captain, who...packed all up in an old cask, and hit it from the Japanese till our return. The aims of the Dutch were not religious but economic as is described by Kaempfer in 1692: 'so great was the covetousness of the Dutch..that they...chose to remiss in performing divine office on sundays and solemn festivals, to leave off singing psalms in public, entirely to avoid the sign of the cross, the calling upon Christ in presence of the natives and all outward marks of Christianity. The Dutch kept these regulations and seemed to be indifferent in religious matters. According to Pagès they should have testified to the Japanese authorities: 'we are no Christians but Dutchmen'. On several occasions they handed over Roman Catholic missionaries detected by them as stowaways on their ships to the Japanese authorities. Thus between 1639 and 1854 the Dutch were the only Europeans who were allowed to enter Japan. They owed this privilege to the fact that they — contrary to the Portuguese and the Spaniards — confined themselves to trade and refrained from any kind of religious matters. They even cooperated to detect Christians and to assist as interpreters in the interrogations of suspected persons. So in 1643 and in 1708 Adrianus Douw assisted Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725) in the interrogation of the Italian priest Sidotti. On that occasion Arai interrogated also the Dutch captain Herman Mënsing, who had handed over Sidotti

to the Japanese. Everyone who with the Dutch ships came ashore in Nagasaki in advance thoroughly had to be body searched by the so called Japanese »voeldermannen«, body-searchers. Weapons, gunpowder, and bibles, preserved in a »bijbeltonnetje«, a bible-casket, were handed over to the Japanese authorities. They were returned upon departure from Deshima. Lists of books were drawn up by the »boeken-commissaris«, the book-commissioner, and in Edo submitted to the »Keizer«. This word »emperor« referred to the shogun, who resided in Edo. Only the captains of the ships were not covered by these regulations. In going ashore three times a day they looked very corpulent: their coats and trousers being so ample that they could carry ashore quite a lot of smuggled goods. Sometimes the burden was so heavy that sailors had to support them. This came to an end since Japanese officials kept the keys of the storehouses under trust, held the access-bridge of Deshima under control, and allowed the Dutch to enter Nagasaki only twice a year. It is obvious that the introduction of religious and philosophical literature into Japan not could be expected from them. This would endangered their trade monopoly, the export of copper, silver and sulphur and the import of Dutch merchandise and silk from China and Macao. All this required many hardships as there are the troublesome journey to Edo, the creeping around on hands and feet and the performance of western dances in order to amuse the shogun. Religious or spiritual influence could not be expected from them. So Paul writes: »On reading accounts of the Dutch on Deshima during the Tokugawa period, one get the impression that, despite their long residence of more than two hundred years the Hollanders cared little about the culture and history of their host country. They are sometimes portrayed, in fact, as dull-witted merchants concerned only with their ledgers, inventories and schnapps. The Europeans who did show interest in Japan were foreigners in Dutch service, such as Engelbert Kaempfer and Philipp Franz von Siebold; the Dutch merchants, so the story goes, were so many »economic animals« whose only concern was trade and commerce'. The best reports on Japan are written by these foreigners: the German Kämpfer, the Swede Thunberg and the German von Siebold. There is one exception, however, the »Opperhoofd« of Deshima Isaac Titsing. Since Yoshimune's permission of 1720 the Japanese interpreters of Dutch books introduced into Japan translations of books on Western natural sciences: anatomics, biology, law, politic science, astrology and last not least the art of weaponry. For centuries all these sciences together as far as described in Dutch books were called rangaku, Dutch learning. This study to many became an obsession: rampeki, Dutch Craze. Sansom: »It was a craze which affected such practical persons as Tanuma Okitsugu, who encouraged Dutch studies, perhaps not so much as a policy as out of curiosity and a desire for rare objects'. So Otsuki Gentaku writes: »The beginning of the study of Dutch meant the arrival of the benefactions of modern civilisation. The Dutch nation is well up in science especially astronomy, medicine and mathematics«. In spite of the popularity of Rangaku in Japan the Dutch culture which reached Deshima was a material one which is apparent in many Dutch loan words still in use today: biiru, beer; dansu, dance; dokku, dockyard; garasu, glass; gasu, gas; inki, ink; kanfuru, sulphur; karan, tap; pisutoru, pistol, rampu, lamp; supoito, squirt; pompu, pump; randoseru, knapsack; buriki, tinplate; koohii, coffee; etc. There are no Dutch loan words, however, which indicate religious or philosophical values.

1.3 The Chinese and the West

All this does not imply that during the Edo period apart from what the Portuguese and Spaniards did no spiritual literature at all should have reached Japan. In this respect also in Nagasaki the Chinese played an important part. In spite of the general edict of 1630 which forbade the import of Christian books written by Jesuits in China, yet they succeeded in smuggling this literature into Japan including also works on arithmetics, astronomy and other sciences. In 1658 by special decree a Chinese merchant was condemned to death for importing this kind of books including works on mathematics, astronomy and other sciences. In 1658 the shuffling of foreign missionaries and of Chinese books on Christianity into Japan were explicitly forbidden to the Chinese merchants. Every year they also had to perpetrate *efumi* though at the end of the 18th century this precept became limited to castaways put ashore by them in Japan. In 1685 the Japanese authorities found out that the Chinese tried to sell the Christian books smuggled by them into Japan. Since then the annual number of Chinese ships to board in Nagasaki was restricted to 70. The cargo of the ships became placed under austere censorship on books. In 1688 the Chinese also — like the Dutch in *Deshima* — were confined to a separate settlement in Nagasaki: *Tojin-yashiki*, ›residence for Chinese‹. *Tojin-yashiki* consisted of more than 100 houses along a long street and includes also temples for Chinese divinities and especially for *Kuan-yin*. It is preserved until today. In 1720 the banning order on the import of books also on profane Western studies became lifted after the Japanese physicist *Nakane Genkei* (1662–1733) had pointed to shogun *Tokugawa Yoshimune* (1684–1751) that the prohibition of Christian authors seriously would hamper profane Western studies. Upon this *Yoshimune* made an exception for 11 Chinese translations of European books on the philosophy of *Cicero*, geometry, arithmetics and astronemics, mostly written by the Jesuits *Ricci* and *Sabbatino de Ursis*. The ban on Christian literature, however, remained enforced. Yet the Chinese tradesmen secretly continued to import into Japan Chinese translations of many Jesuit books on Christianity: books of *Matteo Ricci*, *Giulio Aleni*, *Alphonse Vagnoni* and *Didaco de Pantoja*. Their works circulated in secret and were read all over Japan by famous Japanese scholars like *Honda Toshiaki* (1744–1821), *Hirata Atsutane* (1776–1843), *Koga Toan* (1788–1847), *Sato Nobuhiro* (1769–1850), and *Mitsukuri Gempo* (1799–1863). *Hirata Atsutane*, the last of the ›great men‹ of *fukko shinto*, ›restoration Shinto‹, and populariser of this Shinto used Christian arguments in defense of this Shinto. He did not mention, however, the Chinese sources of his knowledge.

1.4 The Introduction of Western Spiritual Values

Who had the largest impact on these and other Japanese intellectuals? The works of the missionaries who were expelled from Japan or those of the Jesuits in China who never had seen the shores of Japan? Here I have to point out that there is a big difference between the introduction of Christianity in China and in Japan. Due to that difference the Chinese form of Christianity was more plausible to many Japanese intellectuals than was the Japanese form. The Portuguese in spite of the fact that until then all other foreign religions reached Japan after a centuries old incubation in China introduced Christianity

into Japan via their factories of Goa and Macao and not by way of other Chinese cities. The Portuguese and Spanish missionaries in Japan while introducing their *doctrina kiristana*, i.e. Christian doctrine, did not take into account this Chinese incubation process. They even bragged about their Portuguese descent and the support of the Portuguese government. They preached Christianity in a cloak of Portuguese and Latin words and unlike their confreres in China they refrained from any Chinese translations and ideas. The advantage of their method is that the religion preached by them did not become identified with any Japanese religion. The disadvantage was, however, that many Portuguese and Latin words remained obscure. In other words in Japan Christianity was preached as something new and completely different. In China on the other hand Italian Jesuits like Ruggieri, Pasio and Ricci maintained that they and their religion came from *Tianzhuguo*, i.e. India. Why did they act like this? Is it because their motherland Italy did not have any identity yet and consisted of a great number of small states and cities? The Jesuit Valignano who has been active in China as well as in Japan, explained this with the argumentation that what is known of India also goes for Europe: both being countries with water fit for the ablution of sins. Thus they rather contrasted with the Portuguese and the Spaniards in China who maintained to have been originated in *Folangji* (= France). The Italian Jesuits in China presented themselves to the Chinese as *heshang*, Buddhist monks, in 1592 they replaced it by *daoren*, a man of learning, and in 1600 by *shenfu*, spiritual father, still in use today. They gave God the Chinese name of *tianzhu*, lord of heaven, written by a Chinese christian on a wooden tablet and placed on the altar erected by the fathers Ruggieri and Pasio. In naming God *Tianzhu* they intended to promote him into the first divinity of the Chinese. Chinese Buddhists, however, translated *tianzhu* with the sanskrit *Devapati*, lord of the *devas* or *tian*, gods of heaven, another name for *Indra*. *Devapati* is believed to be the highest degree of karmic beings and hence inferior to *Buddha*. Ricci named God also *Tiandi*, heavenly sovereign. He justified his choice of *Tianzhu* and *Tiandi* in saying that the Chinese considered *tian* as the highest divine being. Hence *Tianzhu*, lord of heaven, should indicate the superiority of God to heaven. Contemporary buddhist monks as *Sanhuai* and *Zhuhong*, saw in *Tianzhu* only an inferior god under an immense multitude of higher Buddhist divinities. They called Mary *Tianzhu shengmu niangniang*: i.e. >the holy lady and mother of the lord of heaven<. After they had discovered that the Chinese identified Mary with the *bodhisattva* *quanyin*, they replaced the picture of Mary with that of Jesus Christ. Thus they tried to prevent the Chinese from seeing in Mary the main divinity of Christianity. In Japan on the other hand Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits guided by the same Valignano confined themselves to transliterations from Latin and Portuguese. To that end they introduced a new style of writing: *romaji*. In the first books printed at their printery of *Amakusa* they used words as: *Deusu Patere* (*Deus Pater*), *Deusu Hiiryo* (*Deus Filius*), *Ekerejia* (*Ecclesia*), *Hiidesu* (*fides*), *orasho* (*oratio*), *Apostolo*, *martyrio* or the days of the week in Portuguese or Latin, with one exception, however, the devil being identified with *tengu*: >the long-nosed goblin of the Japanese legends<. In Japan God became known as *Deusu*, since *Xaverius* did not succeed in replacing the Latin *Deus* with Japanese equivalents as *Dainichi* (*Mahavairocana*) who is the principal buddha in esoteric Buddhism. Even the Latin word *Deus* had its problems being understood as *dai-uso*: big

lie. Yet the Christians until 1868 and the Kakure-kirishitan until now maintain the word Deus for God. After Xaverius became convinced that in Japan the twin concepts of creator/creation were completely absent the essence of God and his quality of creator was emphasized in the Dochirina Kirishitan, an original catechism, which in Amakusa in 1592 in Roman and earlier even in Japanese writing (hiragana) had been printed. European catechisms based on these concepts were not considered to be appropriate for Japan. Hence the Dochirina Kirishitan introduced the idea of God as creator of the universe by refuting the concept of god in some Buddhist sects and rectifying it with Aristotelean arguments. Since 1868 Catholicism was preached in a different way. The old names for God, church and sacrament became replaced by equivalents some centuries earlier developed in China. Deus became tenshu, Ekerejia (Ecclesia) kyôkai, Hiidesu (fides) shintoku, orasho (oratio) kitô etc.. Thus it revived a discussion which previously took place under shinto-intellectuals and was incited by the inventors of these words: Ricci and his followers.

2. Soto in Uchi: The West in Japanese Religion: Japanese Monotheism

2.1: Hostile Reactions: Hayashi Razan

How did Japanese religions react to all these Christian influences? The negative reactions are well known. The publication of many libels against Christianity, however, had also positive effects. Unwillingly they promoted Christian ideas and continued the dialogue with Christianity. The dialogue of Ricci with Chinese religions in particular thus was continued on Japanese soil in these libels. I do not intend to discuss these works. I will confine myself to those topics which still play a part in the Japanese dialogue with Christianity. These topics are discussed in Ha-Deus of Fabian Fukan, Hai-Kirishitan of Suzuki Shosan and in Hai-Yaso of Hayashi Razan. They compare the Christian idea of God with its Buddhist and Confucianist counterparts. Most influential was Hayashi Razan (1583–1657). As a member of the Neo-Confucian shushi school, founded in China by Chu Shi (1130–1200) he became an influential advisor to the Tokugawas: Ieyasu, Hidetada and Iemitsu, who adopted the ethical system of Confucianism on behalf of the samurai-class and the feudal society. Famous is the discussion of Hayashi Razan with the Christian Fabian Fukan of 1606 in a Christian church of Kyoto. In the dispute Fabian Fukan read his explanation of the Christian faith from his book: Myotei Mondo which consists in a discussion of two nuns Myôshû and Yûtei. Hayashi Razan dismissed this work as banal and vulgar Japanese. Hereupon both discussed the highest principles of Neo-Confucianism and Christianity: what is higher: Deus or ri? In which consists Hayashi's Neo-Confucianism? His Neo-Confucianism replaced the idea of a personal god with the idea of a personal abstract being. Yet it kept a deep respect for nature, the reality of the invisible world, and its connections with the visible world. The ›Great Absolute‹ has its origin in the ›Great Absolute Nothingness‹. The most profound *raison d'être* of everything is the taikyoku, the great pole, the primeval pole, the absolute. The taikyoku is without any form, phenomenon, or sensual quality. The universe is under control of two

principles: ri and tai. Ri has to be identified with reason, the eternal principle of unity of the world, and tai with matter, substance, the principle of individuation, subject of change. The taikyoku is tai, eternal substance. Yô on the other hand is the use, the functional motion, the disclosure of matter. Tai is primary, yô secondary. Clarity is tai, shining is yô. Tai in motion constitutes yô, yang, tai in rest on the other hand is in, ying. As manifestation yin-yang comes under taikyoku and belongs to the category of instruments or vessels. The discussion of Fukan and Hayashi Razan is based on this Neo-Confucian terminology, and of the book T'ien Chu Shih I, written by Mateo Ricci in 1596. So Hayashi asked Fukan: »God created the universe, but who created God?« Fukan: »God has no beginning and no end and the universe has been created by him.« Hayashi: »Is there in God ri and an earlier and later?« Fukan: »God is tai, ri is yô. Tai is first, thereupon follows ri.« Fukan: »The alleged taikyoku of confucianism is no match to God and young greenhorns cannot understand at all the true meaning of God. I understand taikyoku very well«. This remark made Hayashi bitter towards Christianity and turned him into an enemy of it. It contributed to the oppression of Christianity by those whose advisor he was. Hayashi stuck to his Neo-Confucian idea of taikyoku. Yet in this discussion the twin concepts creator/creation seemed to be familiar to Hayashi though they were rejected by him. Thus Western monotheism became introduced to Japanese intellectuals be it in a negative way.

2.2 A Positive Counterpart of Hayashi Razan: Nakae Tôju

Conspicuous and respected by many is the person of Nakae Tôju (1608–1648), the sage of the Omi province, and contemporary of Hayashi Razan. He is considered to be the founder in Japan of the Wang Yang-ming school, another Neo-Confucian school, founded in China by Wang Yang Ming (1472–1529). He is also notable for his special form of religiosity and theism, which distinguishes him from the same Wang yang-ming school. This specific element is described by Julia Ching as follows: »... where Chu Hsi speaks of the Great Ultimate (T'ai-chi) as the source and principle of all goodness and being, and where Wang Yang-ming speaks of hsin or liang-chih in near absolute terms, Tôju prefers reverence for a supreme and personal being, a God to whom he gives many names, but whom he honors especially as Lord-on-high (Chinese: Shang-ti; Japanese: Jôtei). This is not to say that either Chu Hsi or Wang Yang-ming was religious in his thinking. It is not to say that Nakae Tôju's religiosity, despite whatever it has received from either Chu Hsi or Wang Yang-ming, remains distinctive and unique, claiming inspiration indeed from the Chinese religion and its personal theism'. The several names with which he calls God point at many movements which influenced his thoughts: the Neo-Confucian name ›Lord in heaven‹, or ›heaven‹ was used in the Chu Hsi and the Wang yang-min schools in a pantheistic meaning. Toju relates the Lord, ti, to the creation of heaven and earth and to the reward of good and evil. The Taoist name taiitsu sonshin, the ›Great and Sublime being‹ is ›the supreme and invisible Godhead, who is made ›manifest‹-represented, if one wishes — by the many ›ghosts and spirits,‹ including especially the spirits of the ancestors'; the other Taoist name ›Lord in heaven of great emptiness‹ refers also to the highest ancestor of mankind. Nakae: ›According to this

religious understanding, sages and worthies, the Buddha and Bodhidharma, Confucians and Buddhists, myself and others, all the peoples and visible things of this entire world are all descendants of the Great Lord-on-high and the spirits of heaven and Earth...<; in choosing the Shinto name of Amaterasu Nakae Toju uses Shinto polytheism as a point of departure towards monotheism. With this choice he tried to extend the ancestorship of Amaterasu to mankind and to change it into theism and even into monotheism. His God, however, is and remains an ancestorgod. The Buddhist name of a God of Mahakaruna absorbed the main Buddhist ideas: >The pure and compassionate mind is what Confucians call the virtue of humanity (jen) and the Buddhist teachings call Buddha-nature ... Such a pure, compassionate, and humanely virtuous Buddha-nature is the root of all happiness.< Where is in all this Christian influence? Did in 1626 the Jesuits point at him as a man of religion and morality who had been converted to the Christian faith? Or did he become influenced by his wife, being a daughter or grand-daughter of the famous Christian daimyo and waka-poet Kinoshita Chôshôshi (1596–1649)? Did he as a Christian affix symbols of the cross to the gravetomb of his father? Or did the persecution of Christians witnessed by him turn him into a Christian? Or was his so called Christianity made up by Hayashi Razan who tried to discredit him? Christian influences can explain his theistic devotion all the more since his Neo-Confucian contemporaries believed in a kind of impersonal pantheism. It is beyond any doubt, however, that his Christian contemporaries would have rejected his eclectic monotheism. There are probably in the anti-Christian ideas of Hayashi Razan and the positive thoughts of Nakae Tôju starting points towards further developments of what I would call: Japanese monotheism.

2.3 Hirata Atsutane: *Ame-no-minaka-nushi*

It is a well known fact that 150 years afterwards the disciple of Motoori Norinaga Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) propagated Motoori's nationalistic ideas under Shinto priests and at the imperial court and that 45 years after his death his ideas became generally accepted as official statereligion. Yet — as Devine points out — he was much broader acquainted with other developments than his master: >Hirata's intellectual pursuits were extremely wide-reaching — Chinese literature and medicine, yomeigaku, neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, Shinto, Western astronomy and physics, and more<. To that >more< we should count Christianity and its literature. His first encounter with Christian writings dated from the first years of his carrier as appears in his writing *Honkyo Gaihen*. In his argumentations against Confucianism and in favour of Shinto he was guided by the Chinese translations of Ricci, Aleni (San Shan Lun) and Pantoja. In his *Honkyo Gaihen* he summarized several Jesuit works. Even his style of argumentation: presentation of the argumentation of the opponent preceding his refutation (*sed contra*) seems to be derived from Jesuit writings and Thomas of Aquino's *Summa Theologica*. It is an arguable question whether he plagiarized the writings of Pantoja, Ricci and Aleni, yet it is an established fact that he introduced Christian ideas in his Shinto. One would do him wrong by approaching him in an apologetic manner and by rejecting his concept of god which is unique for Japan and which is akin to that of Nakae Tôju: an ancestor god

without beginning and without end. ›God, Taigen Kôsochin, that is, the first ancestral god, is in all creation. This god's name is Ame-no-minakanushi no kami. This god has no beginning and no end. He is in heaven, and possesses sufficient virtue to give birth to all creation. But although he permeates all, he rules creation in silence.‹ Takami-musubi and Kami-musubi should have emanated from this god and further have shaped the earth and their offspring. The name of Ame no minakanushi, the lord of the center of heaven, has much in common with the Christian tenshu: the lord of heaven. Thus he copied Giulio Aleni's *San shan lun hsüeh chi* of 1625 in writing: ›For example, if you look about, it is as if the heavens and earth are a palace, and this palace certainly has a ruler who made it. All the more so, if this earth does not have a ruling god, how could nature come about? For this reason it can be understood that the ruler of heaven and earth existed prior to creation. From the beginning there was a god who had no beginning, and of course it was under these circumstances that all creation was made; he is the ruler of all creation and, so to speak, the founder of the country. If god had not existed before the heavens and the earth, if god is said to have appeared after the creation of the world, then how was this world made? And if he came later, where did he come from? And what is more, who made him the ruler? This just can't be explained.‹ His choice of Ame-no-minaka-nushi to be that preexistent deity is clear, the figure of this deity in Japan's oldest writings, however, does not confirm his theistic thesis. Who is Ame-no-minaka-nushi? In the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Kogo-shûi* (807/8) mention is made of him being together with Taka-mi-musubi and Kami-musubi as one of the gods who came into existence ›when heaven and earth became separated‹. Together with these two musubi, who are believed to realize the creative intentions of the lord of heaven he can be considered as the focus of a Japanese trinity. In the *gobusho* (12e eeuw) Ame no minaka nushi became amalgamated with two other gods: Kuni-Tokotachi-no-Mikoto and Toyouke-Daijin into one deity: Daigenshin: the deity of the great origin. In the collective god Inari he became amalgamated as the principal of four other gods. Even now in many shrines he reveals himself in other gods. In the *honden* (main shrine) of the Kono-jinja e.g. Toyo-uke and Amaterasu are considered to be two manifestations of Ame-no-minaka-nushi-no-kami. Hayashi Razan we have met before believed that this god dwells in every one: ›The Deity is the Spirit of Heaven and Earth. The human mind partaking of divinity is a sacred abode of the Deity, which is the Spiritual essence. There is no Ame-no Minakanushi-no-kami (the Divine Lord of the Very Centre of Heaven) apart from the human mind.‹ Deguchi Nobuyoshi (1616–1693), another contemporary of Razan taught in his own *Tokai Shinto* that Ame-no-minaka-nushi, Kuni-toko-tachi and Toyo-uke-no-kami were three aspects of one and the same god. After the Meiji restoration Ame-no-minaka-nushi became under Chinese and Buddhist influence identified with the Pole star (Jap. *Myôken*, skt. *Sudarsana*). In spite of the polytheistic developments I just mentioned Hirata Atsutane turned Ame-no-minaka-nushi into a monotheistic god by ascribing to him the creative qualities which are peculiar of the Christian tenshu. He pointed at the existence of this — as the apostle Paul calls it — unknown god in the Japanese sources. It is beyond any doubt that Hirata was very influential. His ideas modified Shinto and determined other religious developments in Japan: they were well known at the inner circles of the imperial court being propagated there by his disciple Mutobe Setsuka and

his son Yoshika. His 533 disciples and his son in law Hirata Tetsutane with even 1330 followers disseminated his ideas all over the country. In the so called Hirata-Shinto the mythical parents Izanagi and Izanami were made equal to Adam and Eve.

2.4 Ame-no-minaka-nushi in Shinto studies and the new religions

Japanese monotheism concentrated on Ame-no-minaka-nushi is also apparent in more recent Shinto-studies. Genchi Kato for instance must have delighted father Wilhelm Schmidt, the supporter of Andrew Lang's idea of primitive monotheism, in writing in 1926: ›We have good reasons to believe from the standpoint of a comparative study of religion that Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-Kami is really the Deity of Japanese primitive monotheism, and I made public my own view on this point in detail in a paper published in the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan nearly two decades ago, which the reader may well do to consult.‹ He enumerates several arguments in favour of his opinion. So he points out that in the Engishiki (976), Japans oldest register of gods and shrines, no shrine is mentioned related to this god. So it is appropriate to argue that Ame-no-Minakanushi was an ›unknown god‹. Kato also tries to refute the opinion that this god should have been a recent fabrication or Chinese import. Therefore this god should be evidence of Japan's extremely own monotheism. It goes without saying that Hirata's ideas also deeply influenced the ideas of many new religions. In 1947 the Shinto-shinkyo was founded by Mrs. Unigame Itoko (*1876) It worships Ame-no-minaka-nushi as its chief divinity. The Omotokyo founded in 1892 considered Tenchi kane no kami to be the creator of the universe. Afterwards other names of this god came into use. Shortly after 1952 the third foundress, the Sandaisama, Naohi said: »Nous, adeptes de l'ômoto, nous croyons en un seul vrai Dieu, Créateur de l'univers. Et si l'on insiste pour que nous disons que Il est, nous ne pouvons répondre que ceci: il est à peu près impossible d'exprimer en langage humain le juste concept de Dieu, car sa Divinité ne connaît pas de bornes, et elle est plus merveilleuse qu'on ne peut le dire. Ce Dieu ›unique‹ a cependant, pour en dire le moins, plusieurs aspects différents. Le Dieu qui a créé le monde est un. Il s'appelle Ame-no-minaka-nushi-no-mikoto.« It is obvious that the creative qualities of Ama-no-minaka-nushi also became ascribed to other divinities. Further research is needed in order to discover parallel developments of theism in shinto which could explain why for instance in the oldest shin-koshukyo preceding the introduction of Christianity in the second half of the nineteenth century theistic ideas of god became developed. It is out of the question that these developments were due to modern Christian denominations. I also cannot agree with Thomson and the church-historian Drummond that the kakure-kiristan living and hiding in distant areas of the Nagasaki prefecture or the questionable ›theism‹ of the Buddhist Jôdô sect should have procured these ideas to the oldest shinkoshukyo: ›Mention has been made that popular memories of Christianity, or perhaps accounts from even more direct sources, possibly influenced the leaders of the three most prominent new religions of the common people founded during the nineteenth century, Tenrikyô, Konkôkyô and Omotokyô. It is impossible to prove or to disprove this thesis, but the virtual monotheism, or at least strongly theistic position, which emerged in the case of each of these religious movements suggests some such influence. Theistic faith had been

known in Japan before the advent of Christian missionaries, most notably in the Pure Land sects of Japanese Buddhism, but the national experience with Christianity had created a new religious climate. Furthermore, the home district of Kawate Bunjirô, who founded Konkôkyô in 1859, had contained numerous Kirishitan in the Catholic period. In general, the ethical level of these religions was high. They emphasized purification from ethical failure and social responsibility and had universalist perspectives far beyond those of the older Shintô. It is the most natural conclusion that several monotheistic tendencies in Shinto contributed also to the reduction of myriads of gods to one monotheistic god in these shinkoshukyo, namely Tenrikyô, Konkokyô and Omotokyô. In Tenrikyô Tenri o-no-mikoto, the lord of divine wisdom(1837) »is the sole deity of all, the creator of all things, and the gracious sustainer of life. He is also referred to as Oya-gami. God first revealed himself as Kami, which here means the creator of this world and all human beings, or the original true God. Later God revealed himself as Tsuki-hi (Moon-sun God)«. In spite of the polytheistic atmosphere in which this sect originated yet the monotheistic character of Tenri o-no-mikoto is obvious. The Kurozumikyô was founded by the Shinto-priest Munetada Kurozumi (1780–1850). In his Kurozumikyô the sun-goddess is considered to be the supreme deity: Amaterasu-o-mikami, who according to Tomsen »is regarded as the absolute deity of the universe, the creator of heaven and earth.« One God is embodied in a million gods, and a million gods are found in one God. All is ascribed to One God.« The word kami should be derived from the word kakuremi, the hidden and first cause of the universe. In the Konkokyo founded by Kawate Bunjiro, Tenchi kane no kami, the great golden god of the universe(1859) has monotheistic qualities. The name of this god is unknown in Shinto. The Meiji government urged the sect to add three other gods who henceforth were considered as manifestations of Tenchi-kane-no-kami. After world war II the Konkokyo abandoned these three additional deities. All these different forms of Japanese monotheism, however, are not limited to these three shinkoshukyo only. The concept of god of the Konkokyo is also maintained in the Omotokyô, the P.L.Kyôdan and in the Seichô no ie, which considers God to be the: »Creator of the whole Universe« and in other further ramifications of these religions as there are the Sekai kyuseikyo and many more recent new religions which originated from this: the Mahikari movement in particular.

Conclusion

I hope to have pointed out that many monotheistic tendencies in Japan came into existence due to the incubation period of these ideas in China and the interest of several Neo-Confucian intellectuals in the Chinese translations of Ricci and others which were smuggled into Japan by Chinese sailors. Monotheism became embedded in Japan's polytheistic developments and changed its course. On the other hand this process turned Western monotheism into uchi: Japanese monotheism. These and other analogous developments in Shinto deserve further detailed research. It is clear that Japan's monotheism, though differing from Christian monotheism, became established in more than a third of Japan's population, a figure forty times larger than the total amount of

Christians in Japan. Why does the dialogue of Christianity with Japanese religions not start at this point?

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