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Racing with Secularisation: Protestant Missions in Japan, 1900-1930

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Abstract

The chapter focuses on the viewpoints of foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians in 1900-1930 to analyse how they explained the meagre success of Christianity in Japan. Three factors in particular caught the attention of the missionaries. Japanese nationalistic politics and patriotism and local religious systems formed the basis of cultural resistance against Christianity, that was, in turn, weakened by its foreign character and fragmented outlook, especially in the case of Protestant churches. In addition, according to the missionaries, western secular ideologies, such as materialism, appealed to the Japanese in a way that made them adopt Christianity only outwardly, if at all. In the actual cultural encounter with the Japanese the missionaries tended to undermine local cultural features which hindered the contextualisation of Christianity and its success in Japan.

Japani on ollut viimeisen 150 vuoden ajan kristillisen lähetystyön kohteena, jossa länsimaiset lähetysjärjestöt eivät ole säästäneet inhimillisiä eivätkä taloudellisia resursseja. Siitä huolimatta vain pari prosenttia japanilaisista (noin 3,4 miljoonaa) on nykyään kristittyjä. Lukuisat lähettisukupolvet ja kristityt ovat vuosikymmenien kuluessa pohtineet sitä, miksi Japani on ollut kovaa maata kristinuskolle. Artikkelissa selvitetään, miten protestanttiset lähetystyöntekijät ymmärsivät kristinuskon tilanteen 1900-luvun ensivuosikymmeninä. Erityishuomiota kiinnitetään siihen, miten lähettien käsitykset selittävät ulkomaalaisten lähettien ja japanilaisten kulttuurista vuorovaikutusta kyseisenä aikana. Aineistona on protestanttisten lähetysten Japanissa julkaisema vuosikirja Japan Mission Year Book, joka heijastelee noin 1000 maassa toimineen lähetin yleisiä mielialoja. Ruohonjuuritason näkökulmaa kulttuuriseen vuorovaikutukseen puolestaan selvitetään yhden eurooppalaisen lähetyksen aineistolla. Kyseessä on Suomen Luterilaisen Evankeliumiyhdistyksen Japanin-lähetys, jonka dokumentit ja julkaistu materiaali ovat olleet artikkelin kirjoittajan käytössä.

1900-luvun alun niin sanotun lähetystyön kultakauden katkaisi I maailmansota. 1920-luvulla lähetykset olivat Japanissa vielä myötätuulessa mutta optimismiin ei ollut enää aihetta. Erityisesti kolme ilmiötä nousi esiin protestanttisten lähetystyöntekijöiden hahmottaessa kristinuskon mahdollisuuksia Japanissa vuosina 1900–1930. Nouseva

japanilainen nationalismi korosti kristinuskon ulkomaalaisuutta. Yhdessä paikallisten uskonnollisten traditioiden, ennen muuta shintôn, kanssa patrioottisuus korosti japanilaisten yhteisöllisyyttä tavalla, johon yksilön uskonratkaisuja painottava kristillinen lähetystyö ei kyennyt vastaamaan. Lähetystyöntekijöiden taipumus tulkita paikalliset rituaalit ja perinteet "pakanallisiksi" vaikeutti entisestään kristinuskon kontekstualisoimista.

Kolmas uhkatekijä kristinuskon menestykselle Japanissa olivat lähettien mielestä länsimaiset maalliset aatteet kuten rationaalisuus ja marxilaisuus. Erityisesti materialismi näytti vetoavan japanilaisiin, joiden sanottiin omaksuvan kristinuskon vain ulkoisilta muodoiltaan. Kun protestanttinen kristillisyys lisäksi hajaantui lukuisiin kirkkokuntiin ja lähetyksiin, siitä ei ollut kilpailijaksi Japanin oman henkisen ja hengellisen perinnön sekä ideologisen kehitysvaiheen kanssa. Kulttuuriselle vuorovaikutukselle taas oli leimallista, että lähettien joustamattomuus työn luovuttamisessa japanilaisten kristittyjen käsiin hidasti kristinuskon kontekstualisoimista ja leviämistä Japanissa.

Just two percent (3.4 millions) of the Japanese people are Christians today, despite the heavy investments of human and financial resources by missions during the last 150 years[1]. Why and how have the Japanese, and the majority of Asian peoples, mostly rejected Christianity? This question has puzzled numerous generations of Christian proselytisers. The meagre success of missions in Christianising the Japanese has been discussed by scholars of Japanese society and religions, as well as by the religious and mission bodies themselves. Or it could also be that the whole question is misleading. Why should we expect that the transfer of one religious system to another cultural setting could at all be successful? After all, it is not just about building churches, training pastors and forming parishes in order to enable individual conversions and spiritual life. The history of Christian missions in Japan (and in other countries and cultures) demonstrates that Christianising involved much more than channelling individual spiritual aspirations into institutionalised communities.

In this chapter I look at things from the point of view of Protestant missionaries, more precisely at how they explained the progress of Christianity in Japan during the first decades of the 20th century, and how their conceptions and attitudes help explain the nature of cultural encounter between foreign missionaries and the Japanese people[2]. For missionaries the meagre success of their work in converting the Japanese has been a focal question. It affected decisions about the scale of the work, its geographical distribution, the number of missionaries and local workers, and the work forms (direct gospel, educational gospel, social gospel, and medical gospel). Success, or the lack of it, at least a form of success that could be measured by the number of converts and communicants, did not cause them to doubt the justification of the missionary call of the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 28: 19-20) but it urges a researcher of Christian missions to analyse the contents and forms of missionary work, the different cultural and historical contexts as well as the missionaries' interest in taking these into consideration and ability to do so. Three factors arise in particular when the missionaries portray the development

of the Christian endeavour in Japan in 1900-1930: nationalism, local religious systems and western ideas. My analysis of the encounter between Protestant missionaries and Japanese society within the context of rapid political and cultural change in both the West and Japan during the time in question focuses on these issues. Naturally, the theological character of Christianity has also been used by missionaries (and the Japanese) to explain the difficulties in Christianising Japan. In this study, however, I shall concentrate on how abstract religious doctrines and institutionalised forms of religion with specific cultural origins were transferred and presented in another cultural context and in relation to the factors that were regarded as the challenges to these transfers.

By the beginning of the 20th century Japan had become a target for zealous mission work by over 40 Protestant mission organisations as well as the Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches. Altogether these employed over 1100 missionaries who cooperated with some 1700 Japanese spiritual workers[3]. The Protestant enterprise was dominated by missionaries from the United States, Canada and Great Britain, which provided two thirds of the missionaries in Japan. Practically every denomination and religious group was represented in the mosaic of Protestant missions active in Japan. However, Christian missions and their history in Japan have been studied to a much lesser extent than missions in many other areas, and research has typically focused on one denomination or organisation, or on specific lines of missionary work (e.g. girls' schools)[4]. Mission materials tend to be so extensive that it is difficult to cover more than one organisation or mission field in one study. In addition, the Protestant mission enterprise has typically been a dispersed phenomenon, contrary to, for example, the mission activities of the Roman Catholic Church.

Nonetheless, my aim here is to analyse one source in particular which offers an insight into broader views and sentiments of the vast mission body in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, namely *The Japan Mission Year Book* (JMY)[5]. It was begun in 1903 as the annual publication of the Federation of Christian Missions in Japan (established in 1902). The federation acted as "an instrument for counselling, fellowship and voluntary cooperation" as missionary and historian Charles W. Iglehart has described it[6]. The federation was careful not to adopt a position of authority over its member organisations. Each volume of the JMY constitutes of a general survey of events in Japan during the year in question, articles on current topics by missionaries and Japanese Christians and a review of the annual activities of Christian associations and coalitions[7]. Some volumes also include reports of surveys conducted among the missions and churches in Japan, as well as reports of special events like the anniversaries of Christian missions in Japan, and extensive statistics of missions and their work force, forms and activities. The yearbook can therefore be regarded as the collective discussion forum and a channel of spreading information and ideas of Protestant missions in Japan, although it seems to have been dominated by North American editors and writers[8].

To grasp the ways of thinking and practices at grass-root level in the everyday life and work of the Protestant missionaries, I refer to one particular European mission, that of the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF, in Finnish *Suomen Lu-*

terilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys). The Finnish mission with its seventeen missionaries in 1900-1941 was one of the smallest in Japan of the day[9]. It emerged as the foreign mission of the Evangelical revivalist movement in Finland. In mid 1890s doctrinal disputes had led the movement into isolation within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, which ended the evangelicals' support for the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission's (FELM, in Finnish *Suomen Lähetysseura*) work in Southwest Africa[10]. To maintain mission activity among its adherents LEAF launched a mission of its own in Japan. The small size of the mission resulted from its being only one line of activity in the Evangelical Association which acted as the central organisation of the revivalist movement. Today LEAF still carries out mission work in Japan, nowadays as a partner of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC, in Japanese *Nihon Fukuin Rûteru Kyôkai*). LEAF also sends missionaries to Kenya, Cameroon, Zambia, Estonia and Russia. In their teaching, the LEAF missionaries have emphasised biblical and Lutheran doctrine that centres around the salvation offered by God through the death of Jesus on the cross[11]. Within the religious context of Finland this doctrinal quality has been described as the "happy confidence in salvation".

In the early decades in Japan the LEAF mission adopted a policy of avoiding cooperation with other missions in practically everything else except in generating interest towards Christianity in the 'heathen'. LEAF missionaries never actively collaborated with other Lutheran missions either, despite their almost similar doctrinal interpretation, their regular contacts and a shared policy of "maintaining brotherly love". The geographical distance between the American Lutheran missions in Kyushu in southern Japan[12] and the Finns in Nagano mountain area in central Japan and later in Sapporo in the North was an obstacle to close cooperation in times of slow mail and travel but it was not the only reason for the lack of collaboration. Despite a constant shortage of resources, the Finnish missionaries proceeded to educate the Japanese evangelists and pastors by themselves instead of enrolling them in the theological school of the American Lutherans in Tokyo.

By 1900, when the first LEAF missionaries arrived in Japan, the conditions of mission work had greatly improved. Until the previous year foreigners were required to have a special passport in order to travel and settle inland[13]. Without these regulations the whole country seemed open to Christianity. Many also nourished the idea that Japan was the leader of Asian nations and its conversion to Christianity would lead to the Christianization of the others as well. In 1859, when foreigners were allowed to enter Japan freely for the first time in over 200 years, traders and diplomats had been quickly followed by missionaries[14]. Mission work and the practice of Christianity were, however, banned until 1873. The early missionaries in Japan were nominally taking care of their fellow countrymen's spiritual needs but in practice tried to Christianize the Japanese who were keen on learning foreign languages, especially English and French[15]. The number of Protestant missionaries in Japan grew from 55 in 1873 to 502 in 1900, and to 616 in 1939[16].

Despite an increasing missionary force and expanding activities, the heyday of missions in Japan was over by the beginning of the 20th century. The enthusiasm that had pre-

vailed in the 1870s and 1880s still existed but the prospects and fruits of the mission work were no match to it. The Japan of the early 1900s differed greatly from the recently opened nation of the late 1860s that had striven to learn from the West to become *fukoku kyôhei* [a rich country with strong military]. In the Meiji restoration of the 1868 young samurai, members of the Japanese military and elite class, raised the Emperor as the figurehead of the nation in order to create national unity and legitimize their own authority. To avoid the fate of China, humiliated by western imperialist powers in two Opium wars (1839-42 and 1856-60), the Meiji government declared that Japan should learn from the strong in order to become strong itself. Therefore it recruited numerous western experts to modernise the key institutions and elements of society from civil codes, educational systems and army to transport, navigation and industry, to name just a few. In this fervour the Japanese were encouraged to turn to things western. One of these was Christianity. The most optimistic took for granted that Japan would become a Christian nation within a generation[17]. The westerners for their part were eager to interpret Christianity as the core value of western civilisation and society, which at the time translated in their minds into the basis of western superiority compared to non-western cultures. Japan avoided the fate of many other non-western countries and never became a colony, but instead became a coloniser of Formosa (Taiwan, in 1873), Korea (1910-45) and Manchuria (1931-45). Nevertheless, if we compare Japan with numerous other mission fields where Christian missions came simultaneously and sometimes hand in hand with colonial power we could actually speak of a form of mental self-colonisation, so great was the extent to which the nation adopted western models and used them to reform the society. In spite of this, as the missionaries were about to see within decades, Japan was neither leading other Asian nations to Christianity nor converting itself. Instead the foreigners witnessed a counter-reaction to western influences.

Missionaries never got to see mass conversions in Japan. Still the number of baptisms and communicants rose steadily. The membership in Protestant denominations grew from 59 in 1873 to some 50,000 in 1901, and 194,000 in 1939[18]. With the population of Japan reaching 60 millions, the mere 200,000 communicants were only a marginal factor. Some forms of work proved more successful than others. From early on Christianity in Japan developed into an urban and rather middle-class phenomenon, and one might add that it was, as in other Asian societies, also a highly gendered enterprise. Girls' schools were a particular success story in Protestant missions in the 1870s and 1880s. The Japanese government was at first reluctant to invest in girls' higher education, which left the stage open for missions, where half of the workforce comprised of women by the turn of the century. They established mission schools to answer the needs of female education with Christian ideology and western pedagogical innovations. By the end of the Meiji era[19] (1912) half of the 100 higher girls' schools originated from missions. Once the government began to promote female education the 39 mission schools represented a minority among the 540 girls' schools altogether in 1926[20]. With the Imperial Rescript on Education issued in 1890 tides had turned against Christian education. Not only has the rescript been considered the beginning of national con-

sciousness and policy in Meiji Japan, it also articulated the place and role of the ideal woman in a rapidly modernising Japan. Society expected women to be *ryôsai kenbo* [good wives, wise mothers], where the latter was the more important element. Girls were to be educated in subjects that would help them raise wise citizens for a strong nation.

Challenge by nationalism and traditional religions

One of the biggest problems Christianity faced in Japan is related to its origins. It was an imported religion with a western character. It could even be identified with 'non-Japaneseness', as historian Janet E. Hunter says[21]. Although the Japanese were by the late 19th century experienced adopters of cultural traditions, mostly from mainland Asia, they made use of the cultural loans in a way that best suited them[22]. Amidst the growing nationalistic sentiment foreigners with strange appearances, talking about a foreign god and life after death seemed not only exotic but also increasingly alien. When Finnish missionary Jenni Airo first came to inland town Shimosuwa in 1907, the local people mocked her by shouting *Ijin kita* [the alien came], or *Iya ijin* [the dirty alien][23]. In small towns people were not used to seeing foreigners, but even in Tokyo children sometimes sang mockingly *Ijin papa, neko papa* [alien old hag, cat pooh][24]. Ordinarily the Japanese called Christians *yaso* [followers of Jesus]. Ethnic features emphasised the foreign appearance of the missionaries who seldom wore Japanese clothing. They neither thought that western clothes would alienate them from the Japanese nor believed that their work would be more successful if they wore native dress, like some missionary women did in China in order to reduce the suspicions of the local people[25]. Western-style houses could cause bigger problems. Since Japanese houses were cold and draughty, missionaries preferred to build their own quarters in western style. The houses underlined their foreignness and created an image of the alleged wealth of the missionaries. In Shimosuwa the Finnish missionary Vihtori Savolainen wanted to move out of the mission house "that seems like a court to the eye of the Japanese working man and the farmer"[26]. At times the missionaries also received threatening letters but would not submit to their demands[27].

Attires and buildings were, however, only outward differences that not only distanced but also attracted the Japanese. A more serious threat to the popularity of Christianity was its incompatibility with the indigenous Japanese religion, Shintô, particularly the State Shintô, which was one of the many branches in existence prior to the surrender of Japan in 1945[28]. According to a legend written down in the 8th century, the Japanese Emperor was a descendant of the supreme Shintô deity, sun goddess Amaterasu Ômikami. Thus the Meiji Emperor was revered as the 122nd ruler in a direct line beginning from the mythological first Emperor Jimmu who allegedly ruled Japan in 7th century BC. In the Meiji constitution (1889) State Shintô was invented "as a national moral and patriotic cult" by the government[29]. Religious freedom was nominally guaranteed but the laws on religion applied only to Buddhism and Christianity. When religious

instruction in schools was forbidden by law in 1899 Shintô, which was not defined as religion at all, maintained its status as a the basis of expressing loyalty to the Emperor and his nation[30]. For many Japanese the Emperor was superior to all deities, including the Christian God. If Japanese Christians wanted to express loyalty as citizens and the missionaries wanted to stay on good terms with the Japanese they had to follow suit, even if acts of loyalty to the Emperor meant revering him as a deity, which in the eyes of the missionaries was mere 'heathenism'.

The missionaries were well aware that rigid opposition to local cultural practices added to their unpopularity among the non-Christians, but they were often disinclined to reconsider their views. The boundary between opposing and yielding had to be constantly negotiated. For example, in 1915 the crowning ceremony of Emperor Taishô (ruled in 1912–26) was celebrated throughout Japan. In the inland town Akaho the Finns reluctantly allowed local authorities to decorate the front of the mission house. According to the missionary Kristian Tammio even the decorations looked 'pagan'. On the other hand, the ceremonies gave missionaries a chance to invite people to Christian gatherings and pray for their Emperor[31]. The unresolved contradiction of which was the highest authority, Christian God or the Japanese Emperor could thus be eased and Christians were able to say that their religion in principle allowed them to pay tribute to the Emperor as a great leader.

Japanese patriotism could make some missionaries, especially those who came from small countries like Finland, feel inferior. Young reverend Kaarlo Salonen, who had recently arrived to Japan, complained in 1912 that "our little Finland is not a suitable evangelist to this proud and self-righteous people who despise other peoples"[32]. The Finnish missionary regarded himself as a representative of only a minor grand duchy of Russia[33] compared to Japan that had a long history and ancient civilisation. Still he was unwilling to negotiate cultural traditions that he interpreted as 'paganism'. In 1914 the inhabitants of Iida city prepared to celebrate a local religious *matsuri* [festival], which is typically a social gathering, and wanted to decorate the houses on the main road. Kaarlo Salonen forbade the decorating of the mission house, because to his mind it would have been "denying Christ" and "submitting to paganism"[34]. In consequence the neighbourhood people stopped coming to meetings and prevented their children from attending Sunday school. Only ten out of hundred children continued to come. Salonen himself thought that the result was both a victory and a loss but the most important thing was to "refrain from idolatry"[35].

In general, there were not that many Japanese cultural features or practices that would lead the missionaries into conflict with local authorities or with Japanese Christians, if we compare Japan with Southwest Africa where Finnish missionaries had to formulate mission policy in relation to polygamy, initiation rites of young girls and wedding traditions, all of which laid heavy social obligations on local people and were hence difficult to oppose and, as the missionaries thought, impossible to Christianise[36]. The geographical and cultural contexts of the missions are significant factors in how the missionaries and local people related to each other. In culturally less developed coun-

tries the status difference between the 'white' missionary and the non-white 'pagan' or Christian sometimes blinded the missionary to seeing the individual behind the cultural stereotype. Missionaries often thought that being a Christian equalled adopting 'the right kind' of way of life, i.e. keeping Sunday holy, baptising children, attending parish gatherings, and letting go of the practices that were defined 'heathen' by the missionaries. In Japan the practice of honouring deceased family members in front of Shintô and Buddhist home altars turned out to be particularly problematic in terms of Christian ideals. In rural areas especially, Christian family members were pressured to guard the family traditions, and sometimes they voluntarily performed the rituals in front of the altars thus combining Christian and non-Christian traditions. That resulted in continual negotiations between the missionaries and the Japanese Christians. Thus the missionaries entered many culturally sensitive areas by way of doctrinal principles. In mission history the boundary between civilising and proselytising has been a thin line. Christianity was closely tied to the historical development of western societies and religious communities. Therefore, what seemed like a 'proper' Christian lifestyle to the missionaries, appeared foreign influence to the Japanese. Although many Japanese were attracted to the foreignness of the missionaries and their religion, they saw fit to decide for themselves where the boundary between faith and cultural adaptation ran.

The inflexibility of the missionaries in the case of cultural practices, and their reluctance to contextualize Christianity derives largely from their religious background, the missionary movement of the 19th and early 20th century. The majority of the Protestant missions derived from Pietistic movements where emphasis was placed on individual religious transformation. The dynamics behind Pietistic revivalism in Europe was the need to argue for individually experienced faith in contrast to the control of institutionalized religion in the Protestant churches. In trying to convert individuals the missionaries failed to understand the basics of Japanese religiosity, namely the difference between communal and individual religiosity, and the basically very pragmatic and profane orientation of the Japanese to religious issues.

As religious studies specialists Keiihci Yanagawa and Yoshiya Abe have claimed, understanding the relationship between individual and communal is the key to understanding Japanese religiosity. Communal religiosity means organizing and mobilizing people into rituals within their natural communities[37]. In these rituals people do not express their individual faith but rather represent their community in the ritual. For example the household head might be expected to participate in a ritual to honour the memory of death soldiers. If he cannot attend he is allowed to send a replacement, for example his wife. The Shintô priest or Buddhist monk carrying out the rituals is not the leader of the event but more likely an invited quest. Individual religiosity on the other hand signifies personal commitment to certain doctrines and religious community. For example conversion to Christianity is an expression of individual faith. Attending rituals does not have an implication of communal representation. One cannot send a replacement to communion; instead a person attends the sermons because of his/her own spiritual needs. In these rituals the priest as a

religious specialist of the community plays the key role[38]. Historically the communal religiosity was more central in Japan prior to 1945.

As the Japanese were expected to adopt the communal forms of State Shintô as an expression of loyal citizenship, Buddhism and Christianity were left rivalling each other. Being in a weaker position than Shintô, the two eventually entered in dialogue[39]. Whereas Shintô was deeply rooted in the Japanese national identity and everyday life, surviving centuries without written doctrines, Buddhism and Christianity were mission religions. Buddhism had come to Japan in the 6th century and in the course of centuries intertwined with Shintô into a syncretistic tradition according to which most Japanese are both Buddhists and Shintoists. Meiji politics severely weakened institutional Buddhism by countermanding many of its former privileges[40]. Protestant missionaries and Christians soon realised that Buddhist sects were adopting Christian forms of religious work to compete with them. In 1916 a Buddhist central tabernacle was erected in Tokyo where the Christians already had two. In addition, the editor of the 1917 JMY accused Buddhists of imitating Christians in every sense, borrowing the concept and forms of Sunday school being only one example[41]. A few years earlier Rosa Hytönen, who had established the first kindergarten of the LEAF mission in Iida city, had noted that the local Buddhist temples were challenging the Protestants with their own weapons. Soon after the Lutheran kindergarten began its work a similar Buddhist institution was also opened[42]. Occasionally the missionaries complained that Buddhist school teachers denied their pupils entrance to Christian Sunday schools[43].

The missionaries in general considered Buddhism, which was treated as an ancient, universal Asian religious tradition, a powerful rival to Christianity. Reporting on the religious situation in Japan in 1928, R.C. Armstrong gave credit to Buddhism for taking an active role in social reforms such as anti-alcoholic and anti-vice campaigns. On the other hand he rejected the claim that Mahayana Buddhism was capable of giving "an unconditioned stimulus to the individual and to society". According to him Buddhist stimuli were metaphysical rather than religious. Armstrong nonetheless claimed that Buddhism in Japan was undergoing a change that was largely due to its competition with Christianity[44].

In June 1928 Buddhist, Shintô and Christian leaders met in a "Three Religions Conference" to discuss four topics of common interest to all religious communities in Japan at the time: 'thought problems', 'world peace', 'religious education', and 'social problems'. The section on world peace recommended that the religious leaders support the League of Nations by reminding their governments of international principles. The section on religious education encouraged the Japanese government to include religious education in school curricula, whereas the section on social issues reminded the government of temperance, the eradication of leprosy, child welfare, the abolition of prostitution, and encouraged shrines, temples and churches into social work in their surroundings[45]. The fourth section of the conference dealt with "thought problems" and it emphasised the responsibility of religious leaders "for opposing communistic and anarchist ideas which are a menace to national order"[46]. The conference delegates thus adopted national inter-

est as a point of reference when they were in fact advancing religiosity. When there were greater rivals like secularist ideologies to fight against, the representatives of Shintô, Buddhism and Christianity could find common ground despite their mutual rivalry and unequal positions.

The menace of secularisation and materialism

In early 20th century Japan the marginal Christian and mission community was facing new kinds of challenges in addition to the traditional religions of the country. Ironically these too, came from the West[47]. At the world mission conference held in Jerusalem in 1928 the Japanese delegation reported among other things on arrival of western ideas, such as Marxism and rationalism. Spiritual aspects had given way to modern secularism that, according to the JMY, made people indifferent to all religions. Instead, some were motivated by ultra nationalism and "narrow racialism"[48]. In the eyes of the Christians secularisation and indifference towards religion were far greater threats than non-Christian religions. If people were religious to begin with they would be open to religious propaganda, whereas the indifferent ones were hard soil for any form of spirituality.

Evangelising the entire world was for a long time expressed as the main goal in the core of missiological thinking. Through a two-phased process missionaries aimed at bringing about profound change in the peoples they worked amongst. In the initial stage they struggled to convert individuals in order to promote religious change, which would be followed by the building up of a 'Christian character', and eventually, when there was a large enough number of Christians, a change in the whole people would result[49]. Only some of the multiple needs and aspirations of the people which Protestant Christianity encountered in Japan resonated with the missions' aims at contributing to a profound individual change. In the 1909 *Japan Mission Yearbook* Japanese writer Sakunoshin Motoda had classified the Japanese attitudes towards Christianity in the following way. First, there were anti-Christians who opposed Christianity "from a nationalistic or scientific point of view". Second, there were non-Christians who were completely indifferent towards Christianity. The third attitude was pseudo-Christian, for there were people who sympathised with the ethical side of Christianity but knew "nothing of spiritual Christianity". The fourth group consisted of 'proper' Christians, the ones who believed in God and lived according to this belief[50]. According to Motoda, Japan could be called "an anomalous Christian" or "an unbaptized Christian country", because it was enjoying the benefits of Christianity. He maintained that "[t]his transformation has been wrought through Christianity but under the name of modern civilization. In adopting Western civilization, Japan is really adopting Christian principles and ideals"[51].

The Finnish missionary Rosa Hytönen made similar observations: "it was fashionable to give only one's mind to Christ, whereas the heart was left to the old gods or kept to oneself, namely adopting Christianity only externally"[52]. She argued that even the government was in favour of Christianity in order to come to better terms with

western countries. The educators of the Japanese youth had, for their part, realised "the character of Christianity in improving the morals of the people", said Hytönen[53]. For the Pietistic missionary the pragmatic attitude of the Japanese towards religion was unacceptable. She resented the practice of regarding Christianity as just another instrument of strengthening the economy, the military and the moral backbone of the nation.

When S.H. Wainwright described the seven decades of Christianity in Japan in 1929 he concluded that the decade of 1910-19 had been marked by the war in Europe. It had enhanced Japanese industry and expansion in continental Asia. The next decade, 1920s, was in turn characterised by huge economic progress that redirected the nation's attention towards prosperity and foreign questions. According to Wainwright, "Japan herself has become her own great problem"[54]. In Wainwright's mind overt enthusiasm about secular good threatened religiosity. Finnish missionary Vihtori Savolainen specified Japanese patriotism as the cause of the peculiar religiosity of the Japanese. He claimed that for the Japanese the most important element of Christianity was what "contributes to earthly good, makes Japan better, brings her honour, beside these things the treasures of heavenly fatherland [...] remained secondary"[55]. He continued with the common complaint of the missionaries that the Japanese admired everything big and fancy. Church buildings had to be imposing if they wanted to attract people. Some missionaries referred wryly to the Catholic churches that were striking enough to the Japanese eye. In Vihtori Savolainen's mind the Japanese people's enthusiasm for things big had made Christianity a fashionable issue: "today admired, tomorrow slandered". Big evangelistic campaigns, like that of 1914-16, as well as revivalist meetings, came and went with short-term fervour but shortly afterwards things returned to their former quietness, claimed Savolainen[56].

In addition to nationalism and secularisation, Protestant Christianity in Japan was threatened by its own incoherence. Japanese Christians were scattered in small church bodies, isolated from each other by doctrinal differences that largely derived from historical evolution of the western denominations. Thus Protestantism in Japan was a miniature of the ecclesiastical situation of the missions' home countries. The average size of a Protestant parish membership in Japan was around 50[57], which mirrored the size and extent of the denominations and the missions. Small parish size resulted in poor finances, which in turn kept the churches dependent on the missions' financial support[58]. The divisions within the Protestant community in Japan raised doubts as to whether the western Christians themselves lived up to what they were teaching. This idea was reinforced by World War I, which as a European conflict created an unfavourable image of the Christian West[59]. It seemed as if brotherly love in the biblical sense was far from Europe in the mid-1910s.

The JMY regularly discussed the topic of denominationalism as an obstacle to the progress of Christianity in Japan. For example, in 1921 H.V.S. Peeke dealt with aspirations to Protestant unity. There were half a dozen representative groups amongst the Protestant churches in Japan, but to his mind no more unification was at sight. The

denominations did not rival each other although their doctrines differed. However, there was denominationalism among the Japanese Christians, although not of an aggressive sort[60].

The attitude of a Japanese Christian was, however, stricter, and reflects the ambition of the Japanese to contextualise Christian theology and reformulate Christianity along indigenous lines. According to reverend K. Matsuno

> [t]he desire is in general to get rid, as soon as possible, of the denominational divisions brought in from foreign lands and to form a large and united Japanese body for the Christianization of the country, both spiritually and economically[61].

Matsuno was ahead of his time although Japanese Christian leaders were increasingly advancing the idea of Japanese Protestant churches led by the Japanese. In addition to denominational churches there were examples of social gospel that avoided institutionalised Christianity. The most noteworthy of these was initiated by Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960), who began his social work in the slums of Kôbe and later became one of the leading social thinkers of the day and an spokesman for the poor and needy. In 1926 he launched "the Kingdom of God Movement", a nationwide evangelistic campaign that lasted until 1934. During this time over 1,5 million people heard Kagawa speak. Despite his ability to engage Christians from different denominations to the movement and to encourage them to approach classes and groups the Japanese churches and foreign missions had previously been unable to reach (factory workers, farmers, and other labourers), the campaign did not significantly add to the membership of the churches[62].

By the end of the 1920s the development of the Protestant church and missions in East and South Asia had evidently come to a point when indigenous currents and mission realities paved way for assessment of the situation. In 1930-31 seven American Protestant denominations commissioned a survey of the missions in India, Burma, China and Japan. The most notable recommendation of the report, the American Laymen's Foreign Missions Enquiry, entitled *Rethinking Missions* (1932), was that the missionary of the 1930s should see the best in other religions and to cooperate with them and their adherents. "Conversion – the drawing of members of one religious faith over into another – or an attempt to establish a Christian monopoly" was not the primary goal, as mission historian Stephen Neill has summed up the commission's recommendations[63]. Instead of aggression the report called for cooperation and fellowship. These were clearly new kinds of missiological ideas both in relation to other religions and to the missionary task – and they were in general applied only after World War II when churches in mission fields gained independence, often simultaneously with the political independence of the former colonies[64].

The report stated that cooperation between religions was necessary because of ”the emergence of world-culture", a new kind of religiosity. This was simpler and more universal, ”which might be called the religion of the modern man, the religious aspect of the coming world-culture"[65]. Another significant change was the rising nationalism in Asia. In the years following World War I the Westerness of Christianity had been a

matter of prestige but now Christianity needed to be detached from its western history and instead emphasis was to be laid on its universal character in order to respond to the evolving 'world culture', materialism, secularism, naturalism and even hostility towards religions[66].

Asian nations seemed more resistant than before to western Christianity in the early 20th century. The heyday of Christian missions had coincided with imperialistic expansion and colonialist regimes. An interesting exception to the overall slow progress of Christianity in Asia is Korea where Christianity spread faster than anywhere else in the area[67]. In present-day South Korea some 25-30 % of the people are Christian. Christianity did not come to Korea hand in hand with western expansion but rather turned out to be a unifying and emancipating force against the rigid Japanese colonialism[68]. Within the whole Asian context the number of Christians remained small, even minimal in proportion to the vast population. According to the Laymen's Foreign Missions Enquiry there was no point in increasing the number of missionaries but rather emphasis should be laid on giving way to indigenous Christians who would be more qualified and efficient in spreading the gospel among their own peoples. Missions and missionaries were left with the cold comfort that conversion and baptism statistics did not tell the whole truth

> partly because the influence of the Christian mission far outpasses the showing in church membership. [...] The presence of Christianity in any land, as a subject of discussion, affects the thought of many who never enter the church. [...] Christianity is, in brief, a powerful ferment in any community. [...] It continues to bring into Oriental life legitimate aspects of western civilization which, because of their different mental pattern, still stir constructive social thinking[69].

Ultimately the missionary agents had only their faith to rely on since no one knew when "an idea is going to bear fruit: its effect is necessarily invisible and may be long latent"[70].

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the perceptions of Protestant missionaries and Japanese Christians both on general level and on grass-roots level. In general Japan as a mission field in the early part of the 20th century appears as a crossroads of manifold indigenous and western currents. It was hard soil for Christianity because of traditional religious systems and nationalistic politics, and because of western influences that reflected secular and rational worldviews and were as such uncontrollable and in contradiction with the kind of Christianity the missionaries wanted to nourish as the basis of a Christian society. Therefore, the cultural encounter between the missionaries and their target people involved undermining the local religious traditions and the western influences unacceptable for Christians or incompatible with the Christian point of view. The difficulties in winning a foothold for Christianity in Japan resulted partly also from the fragmented Protestant mission enterprise that was no match for state control in intellectual, religious and ideological sense.

Notes

[1] D. Barrett, G. Kurian, T. Johnson (eds.), *World Christian Encyclopedia, Second edition: A comparative survey of churches and religions in the modern world, Volume 2: The world by segments: religions, peoples, languages, cities, topics,* Oxford 2001.

[2] The period under study here is 1900-1930, which preceded the turbulent 1930s when ultra nationalistic and militaristic state politics considerably altered the religious and mission circumstances in Japan and eventually forced most of the foreign missionaries to leave Japan or withdraw to the background by 1941. For example Ion has studied this period; see A. Ion, *The Cross in the Dark Valley: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1931-1945*, Waterloo, Ontario 1999. Of women's educational activities in missions in the 1930s, see S. Jalagin, *Education or Christian Education? Missionary Girls' Schools in Japan in the Transition Years of the 1930s*, in K. Hallencreutz (ed.) *Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement. A report from a research conference in Uppsala, May 6-8, 2002,* Uppsala 2005, pp. 185-202.

[3] Statistics in O. Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan: Protestant Missions,* vol. 2, First edition 1909, Rutland 1987.

[4] A general survey of Christianity in Japan is R.H. Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan,* Grand Rapids 1971. The Lutheran Church is covered in B.P. Huddle, *History of the Lutheran Church in Japan*, New York 1958. A.H. Ion's two monographs study British and Canadian Protestant missions in Japan: A.H. Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1872-1931*, Waterloo, Ontario 1990, and A.H. Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun: The British Protestant Missionary Movement in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, 1865-1945*, Waterloo, Ontario 1993. One American mission is covered by F.C. Parker, *The Southern Baptist Mission in Japan, 1889-1989* Lanham 1991. My own work studies a Finnish Protestant mission in Japan between 1900-1941: see S. Jalagin, *Disciples, Sisters or Companions? Japanese and Finnish Women's Mutual Encounter in Mission* in "Le Fait Missionaire, Social Sciences and Missions", July 2005, 16, pp. 43-70; S. Jalagin, *Japanin Kutsu: Suomalaiset naislähetit Japanissa 1900-1941*, with an English summary: Answering the Call: Finnish Missionary Women in Japan, 1900-1941, Helsinki 2007. A. Lande's *Meiji Protestantism in history and historiography*, Uppsala 1988, looks at the way the Protestant Church and faith have been dealt with in historiography in 1868-1912. The following books examine the indigenisation of Christianity in Japan: M. Mullins, *Christianity: Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* Honolulu 2003; D. Reid, *New Wine. The Cultural Shaping of Japanese Christianity*, Berkeley 1991.

[5] The yearbook was originally titled *The Christian Movement in Japan.* The title changed according to Japan's expansion: Korea and Formosa and even "Japanese Empire" were included in the name. *Japan Mission Year book* was in use as a general title. In 1932 the name was changed to *Japan Christian Year Book*. Similarly the association that published it was known first as the Standing Committee of Co-operating Christian Missions, 1903-10, then the Fellowship of Christian Missionaries in Japan, in 1911-20, the Conference of Federated Missions in Japan, and in 1921-36, Federation of Christian Missions in Japan. From 1933 onwards the *Japan Christian Year Book* was published jointly by the Federation and the National Christian Council of Japan.

[6] C. Iglehart, *A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan*, Rutland 1960, p. 145.

[7] The average volume between 1907 and 1939 was 200-300 pages. In addition to Western denominations and their missions of Western origin there were a number of Japanese Christian organizations. The biggest and most informal ones were the Federation of Churches (est. in 1911) that changed its name to Japan National Christian Council in 1923, and the Conference of Federated Missions and its publishing branch, *Kyô Bun Kan* [the Christian Literature Society]. In addition there were the Japan Sunday School Association, the Kindergarten Union, The Women's Temperance Union, YMCA and YWCA, Salvation Army, The Purity Society, and The Temperance Society.

[8] In addition to the yearbook annual gatherings of hundreds of missionaries in Karuizawa, a mountain-area summer resort also gave an opportunity to meetings with like-minded colleagues from other missions.

[9] The following account of the LEAF mission in Japan is based on my book S. Jalagin, *Japanin kutsu: Suomalaiset naislähetit Japanissa 1900-1941*, with an English summary: Answering the Call: Finnish Missionary Women in Japan, 1900-1941, Helsinki 2007. This research makes extensive use of the LEAF archival sources (in Helsinki), such as minutes of mission board and missionary meetings, annual reports, large correspondence, mission publications, and individual records of the missionaries (diaries, letters, memoirs), and photographs of the LEAF mission in Japan.

[10] FELM had begun mission work in the Ovamboland, in present-day Namibia, in 1870, and launched a new mission field in inland China in 1902. There are several studies on these in Finnish; the latest on in English is K. Miettinen, *On the Way to Whiteness: Christianization, Conflict and Change in Colonial Ovamboland, 1910-1965*, Helsinki 2005.

[11] J. Jussila, M. Oinonen, J. Unkuri, O. Vatanen (eds.), *Aamenesta öylättiin. Kirkon ja uskon sanakirja,* Helsinki 2004, pp. 75-76.

[12] There were three American Lutheran missions by the following churches: United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South, General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. B. Huddle, *History of the Lutheran Church in Japan,* New York 1958, p. 102.

[13] On the basis of the 1858–59 treaties between Japan and the western powers foreigners could settle in a handful of port towns, e.g. Nagasaki, Yokohama and Hakodate. J. E. Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History since 1853,* London 1989, p. 18.

[14] The Tokugawa *shogunate* [military government], had closed the country almost completely in 1639. Only a handful of Dutch traders were allowed to settle in a tiny island in front of Nagasaki. The voluntary seclusion ended Japan's "first Christian century" when Catholic brotherhoods had baptized several hundred thousands of Japanese. Christians were persecuted and what was left of Christianity became a hidden phenomenon. G. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan: A study in the interaction of European and Asiatic cultures,* Tokyo 1987, pp. 173-178.

[15] C. Iglehart, *A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan*, Rutland 1960, pp. 34-44.

[16] Statistics in O. Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan: Protestant Missions,* vol. 2*,* First edition 1909, Rutland 1987, pp. 357-359.

[17] M. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements,* Honolulu 2003, pp. 17-18.

[18] *Ibid.,* p. 18.

[19] In Japan calendars are marked with the ruling periods of the Emperors. Thus the Meiji era ranged from 1868 until the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912.

[20] D. Schneder, *The General Educational Situation,* in *The Japan Mission Year Book. The Christian Movement in Japan & Formosa* (JMY), Tokyo 1928, pp. 45-54.

[21] J.E. Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History since 1853,* London 1989, p. 191.

[22] The Japanese forms of Buddhism as well as the Chinese writing system adopted in the 8th century are only a few examples of these.

[23] R. Hytönen*, Iida 20.1.1912*, in "Autuus Pakanoille" [LEAF mission journal] 1912, 4. See also M. Westén, *Japanitarten parissa,* Helsinki 1916, p. 54.

[24] S. Uusitalo, *Sendagaya* 8 *November 1911*, in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1912, 1. *Papa* should actually be *baba*.

[25] J. Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China,* New Haven 1984, pp. 135-138.

[26] V. Savolainen's letter to K.H. Ekroos, 2 August 1911. LEAF archives, Helsinki.

[27] For instance in summer 1911 Finnish missionaries in Shimosuwa received letters like this. K. Salonen, *Shimosuwa 1.8.1911*, in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1911, 11.

[28] It is important to notice that State Shintô never replaced or penetrated the everyday Shintô rituals carried out by the Japanese in shrines and in front of home altars. J. E. Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History since 1853*, London 1989, p. 197.

[29] J. E. Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History since 1853*, London 1989, p. 189. For a special study on the issue, see H. Hardacre, *Shintô and the State, 1868-1988*, Princeton (NJ) 1989.

[30] For religious instruction in Meiji education, see P. Shew, *Historical Motivations for Christian Education in Japan: An historical analysis of the purposes and goals of Christian education in Japan from the Meiji through Showa eras,* originally published in *Seigakuin University General Research Institute Bulletin* Nov. 2000, 18, pp. 52–77, *The Study of Christianity in Japan*; Electronic document: http://christianityinjapan.com/research/articles/2001.04Shew-Xtn-education.html (cited 24 April 2002).

[31] K. Tammio, *Akahosta,* in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1916, 3.

[32] K.E. Salonen to LEAF board, 5 March 1912. LEAF archives, Helsinki.

[33] Between 1809 and 1917 Finland was a grand duchy of imperial Russia, albeit with considerable autonomy until the early years of the 20th century. Finland became an independent country in 1917.

[34] K. Salonen, *Iidasta* in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1914, 6.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] K. Miettinen, *On the Way to Whiteness: Christianization, Conflict and Change in Colonial Ovamboland, 1910-1965*, Helsinki 2005, pp. 314-333.

[37] K. Yanagawa, Y. Abe, *Cross-Cultural Implications of a Behavioral response,* in "Japanese Journal of Religious Studies", 1983, 10, 4, pp. 301-2, 305-7.

[38] D. Reid, *New Wine: The Cultural Shaping of Japanese Christianity*, Berkeley 1991, pp. 33-34.

[39] N. Thelle, *Christianity Encounters Buddhism in Japan: A Historical Perspective* in J. Breen, M. Williams, *Japan and Christianity: Impacts and Responses,* Houndmills 1996, pp. 97–105.

[40] J.E. Hunter, *The Emergence of Modern Japan: An Introductory History since 1853*, London 1989, p. 189.

[41] E. Iglehart, *Religious Survey* in JMY, Tokyo 1917, pp. 14-15.

[42] *Nykyinen lähetystilanne Japanissa* [Present situation of missions in Japan], in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1938, 2.

[43] LEAF annual reports: *Suomen Luterilaisen Evankeliumiyhdistyksen vuosikertomus 1914*, p. 26; 1915, p. 27.

[44] R. Armstrong, *The State of Religion in Japan in 1928*, in JMY, Tokyo 1929, pp. 50-60.

[45] *Ibid.,* pp. 66-67.

[46] *Ibid.,* p. 66.

[47] B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries,* Leicester 1990, pp. 135-136.

[48] *Findings of Delegation to Jerusalem: The Christian Life and Message in Relation to the Non-Christian Faiths,* in JMY 1929, pp. 309-310.

[49] In the beginning of the 20th century mission enterprise was more abundant than ever in terms of human force and financial means. S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Harmondsworth 1986, pp. 332-334.

[50] S. Motoda, *Attitude of the Japanese people towards Christianity,* in JMY, Tokyo 1909, p. 146.

[51] *Ibid.* p. 147.

[52] R. Hytönen, *Iida 20.1.1912* in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1912, 4. Also Hytönen's colleague Mandi Westén wrote about the same phenomenon, see M. Westén, *Japanitarten parissa*, Helsinki 1916, p. 54.

[53] R. Hytönen, *Iida 20.1.1912,* in "Autuus Pakanoille", 1912, 4.

[54] S. Wainwright, *Seven decades of Christian Progress in Japan,* in JMY 1929, p. 181.

[55] V. Savolainen, *Nousevan päivän Japani,* Helsinki 1924, p. 221.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] C. Iglehart, *A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan*, Rutland 1960, p. 179.

[58] *Abstracts from Reports of Commissions Preparatory to Continuation Committee Conferences,* in JMY, Tokyo 1913, pp. 227-228.

[59] J. Dearing, *General Survey,* in JMY 1915, pp. 28-29. WWI also ended the British missionary dominance to the benefit of the American missions. B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries,* Leicester 1990, p. 135.

[60] H. Peeke, *Union and co-operative Christian movements in Japan,* in JMY, Tokyo 1921, pp. 34-35.

[61] K. Matsuno, *The Future Program of the Japanese Church, in Organization,* in JMY, Tokyo 1926, p. 96.

[62] R. Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan*, Grand Rapids 1971, pp. 228-239.

[63] S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Harmondsworth 1986, p. 419.

[64] New ideas had already been noticeable in the Jerusalem World Mission Conference in 1928 but the conference reports did not articulate them as strikingly as did the Laymen's Foreign Missions Enquiry. S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Harmondsworth 1986, p. 418.

[65] W. Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years*, New York 1932, p. 21.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 23. The commission mentioned YWCA and YMCA as favorable examples of universal undenominational Christianity. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[67] An almost completely Christian country was Philippines, converted to Roman Catholicism by the Spaniards by mid-19th century. S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Harmondsworth 1986, p. 177.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 433-434.

[69] W. Hocking, *Re-thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years*, New York 1932, p. 14.

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

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