

# SACRED CULTURE AND SECULAR RELIGION

## Catholic Missionary Work in Japan

By Hoa Francisco Ngo

“Ferreira had said that his Japan was a bottomless swamp. The sapling decayed at its roots and withered. Christianity was like the sapling: quite unperceived it had withered and died. ‘It’s not because of any prohibition nor because of persecution that Christianity has perished. There’s something in this country that completely stifles the growth of Christianity.’ The words of Ferreira, uttered slowly syllable by syllable, pierced the priest’s ears. ‘The Christianity they believe in is like the skeleton of a butterfly caught in a spider’s web: it contains only the external form; the blood and the flesh are gone.’”<sup>1</sup>

This passage comes from Japanese Catholic writer Shusaku Endo’s novel *Silence*, a historical fiction about the persecution of Catholics in Japan during the Tokugawa shogunate (roughly 1603-1868). Two Portuguese Jesuits, Ferreira and Rodrigues, had just argued over the effectiveness of all mission work in Japan. Ferreira uses the metaphor of a swamp to describe Japan as an unchanging land, morphing anything and everything in it to its own image. The sapling of Christianity could not grow in such an environment and died, leaving a hollow shell of what it is supposed to be. Ferreira himself, having been there for over twenty years and faced persecution, apostatized and lives like any other non-Christian Japanese.

Missionaries often depict Japan as an open “mission field,” referring to it as “fertile ground” to plant the seeds of Christianity, quite contrary to Endo’s metaphor of the swamp. One of the main discourses as to why this nation longs for Christianity is that missionaries, along with many other Christians, herald Japan as one of the most spiritually dry countries in the world meaning it is

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<sup>1</sup> Endo, Shusaku. *Silence*, p.151

among the most secular.<sup>2</sup> But what it means for Japan to be secular is not so straightforward, for it is tied to the nation's unique development of religion. The Japanese concept is tied to an encounter with Europe, though it does not derive its understanding from a Christian genealogy. Secularism in European countries as well as the United States had developed a certain form in relation to the development of religion in the West. Secularism elsewhere, however, particularly in countries such as Japan and China, does not have the same historical development and therefore should not be presumed to be the same. Yet a missionary might not think about how they must operate within secularism; often times, they think about navigating culture. How then, a missionary asks, does one bring a foreign religion into a nation, a people, and a culture? Specifically within Christianity's case, how does one make Christianity familiar to people who perceive Christianity to be an alien concept? However, there is a need to discuss and research the relationship among religion, culture, and secularism in the field of Japan's missionary activity.

My research attempts to provide insight into Christian—specifically Catholic—missionary work, focusing on how the missionaries navigate cultural and legal boundaries in spreading the Christian faith. I observe tensions between dichotomies of what is regarded as “Western” versus “Japanese,” what is “universal” versus “particular,” and what is “eternal” versus “temporary.” I conducted an ethnographic study at Seido, an Opus Dei center in Ashiya, Japan.<sup>3</sup> For two months I stayed in their residence, and did participant observation with the members: praying with them, eating with them, talking with them, and even exercising with one resident. Through my connections with the Opus Dei in Berkeley, California I was able to get in contact with the center in Ashiya. “Seido” is legally defined as an “international language and cultural center” and stands as a secular institution despite being an Opus Dei center. Attached to the center is a language school that teaches English and Spanish as well as ethics and Catholic virtues, although they are not characteristically marketed as Catholic.

Seido is an Opus Dei center for men and hosts only men. It regularly consists of eight numeraries (two of whom are priests), a supernumerary, and a Catholic but non-Opus Dei member. Numeraries are men and women devoted to Opus Dei who give a large portion of their salaries to the center for housing, food, community, and access to the sacraments. They do not marry. Some numerary males choose to become priests who are then placed around centers worldwide, though generally within their country of origin. Supernumeraries are men and women who intend to be or already are married, so they do not necessarily give financial support to the center based on whether or not they have a family to support.

The residents at Seido are diverse in both their careers and backgrounds. The director of the center is Kohei, a graduate student in history at a nearby university. While Japanese, his family immigrated to Brazil before he was born and converted to Catholicism.<sup>4</sup> He joined Opus Dei when at age eighteen he was asked to go to Japan for college. Kohei has now been in Japan for eight years. Kenji is a numerary who manages the center's finances, and he is a doctor for multiple hospitals in the Hyogo prefecture. He was born and raised in Japan but converted to Catholicism after finding himself unable to understand the difference between killing and eating fish; and killing and eating humans. Yoshi, born and raised in the United States, is a numerary who teaches English at another nearby university. His parents had been part of Opus Dei, so he joined as well. After graduating from college Yoshi was asked to go to Japan, and he has now been

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2 Kisala, Robert. “Aum Alone in Japan - Religious Responses to the ‘Aum Affair,’” p.19

3 Opus Dei will be further elaborated on in the Analysis portion of this thesis. For short clarification, Opus Dei is a Catholic organization; a society composed of laity and priests who are considered part of the secular world and do not operate in the space of a parish.

4 Fieldnotes 17 July, 2014

living in Japanese Opus Dei centers for several decades. Shoya was born and raised in Nagasaki, the historical center of Catholicism in Japan. He teaches earth and space science to elementary and junior high students and is an absolute master at story telling. Hikaru is currently the sole supernumerary and, along with a numerary named Yuta, works as a businessman. Yusuke is not an official Opus Dei member but is somewhat of a cooperator to Opus Dei, working as a caretaker. Father Akira is highly active in the diocese of Osaka and often celebrates mass for local parishes whenever the other priests are away.<sup>5</sup> Father Takeshi was born and raised in Mexico, though he is ethnically Japanese as well.

Analyzing literature on the Japanese conception of religion and religion's relation to both law and culture has been imperative to this study. Understanding perspectives of both the Japanese government and the Catholic Church has helped extract themes of culture and religion when translations, practices, and beliefs have become sites of contention in both the literature examined and the ethnographic experience at Seido. In addition, I will explore these themes within the context of my time with Seido. I will provide a brief overview of the historical development of religion in Japan as well as the religious perceptions of some Seido members. The historical contingency of religion in Japan will then be examined under the concreteness of Japanese law on religion. Following this examination will be an analysis of how the government and Seido reads these laws as well as how the former enforces the laws while the members of the latter inhabit them. and how these histories influence the reading and execution of laws, both on the side of the government and on the side of Seido. Seido's legal status as a secular institution provides leeway in missionary work as well as hindrances. Also, though being part of the Prelate of Opus Dei, the members' practices take on a particular form by virtue of being in Japan and needing to "adapt to local culture."

Missionary work is one of the various practices of Seido. The section following the literary analysis is an exploration of what proselytization looks like as well as the meanings ascribed to these activities by Seido members. I will analyze Seido's conception of religion and culture while paying attention to the stakes involved in declaring something as part of religion or part of culture. Then, the overlap of the concepts of religion, culture, and the secular will be explored in the discourses of enculturation and Japanese identity. I will then proceed with other elements discussed by Seido members on how they go about living out their Catholic faith and spreading the religion among people they encounter, both Opus Dei and non-Opus Dei. Finally, the internal conditions of what a person needs to convert, as seen by both the Church in Japan and Seido, will be analyzed, paying attention to what the Japanese need in order to cultivate a relationship with Christ.

## I. Concepts

### A. Religion

In modern Japanese, the word used for "religion" is *shūkyō* (宗教). The current legal categories for classifying organizations as religious are: Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, and "other," where "other" can refer to schools of Islam, Judaism, "new religions," etc. Legally, they are all recognized

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<sup>5</sup> Fieldnotes 14 July, 2014

as *shūkyō*. But how is it possible that the government regards all of these traditions as religions? What do they all share in common that makes them religions, as opposed to philosophies, superstitions, or cults?

Rather than asserting a universal definition of religion, I will build on scholar Jason Ānanda Josephson, who follows Michel Foucault and Talal Asad in generating a genealogy of religion for a particular area.<sup>6</sup> Unlike many other countries, Josephson argues, Japan did not have religion imposed onto them as if they were colonized, but had the ability to debate what constituted a proper religion (*shūkyō*) over a superstition (*meishin* 迷信). After Japan's initial contact with Christianity, the nation banned Christian teachings in 1614 for being heretical, *jashūmon* (邪宗門), which was a separate act from banning it because Christianity was a foreign religion.<sup>7</sup> The Tokugawa Shogunate, the government that officially banned Christianity, created governmental institutions out of Buddhist temples to monitor heresies and mandated that all Japanese register with their local temple. In 1853, Japan extended its international trade beyond the Dutch and Chinese to other countries, including the United States and France. These nations demanded "religious freedom" for their Christian traders and missionaries, since Christianity was still illegal in Japan. The island nation had never encountered the concept of religion before; Western demand for freedom of religion, translating *shūkyō* for religion instead of the traditional Japanese *shūmon* (宗門), could have many implications, including cultural practices, a certain form of education, and worship of a foreign god.<sup>8</sup> The government decided to permit sect freedom, which includes the practice of Christianity as a sect of Buddhism, but not doctrinal freedom in order to prevent proselytization. Soon after the shogunate allowed sect freedom, the Meiji modern state (1868-1945) overthrew the warrior government and started social projects to modernize Japan. Among these social projects was the desire to cut out that which was regarded as superstitious, *meishin*. State Shinto became the standard organization for measuring whether or not something was superstitious. If a group taught in contrary to State Shinto, the government could justify intervening into the group on the basis of being a threat to society by spreading superstition. Josephson argues that Japan considers the remaining groups, purged of superstition, religions; this includes Christianity, specific forms of Buddhism, as well as certain practitioners of Shinto.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, Josephson talks about the creation of the Japanese Secular, a concept intricately linked with religion. He calls the Japanese Secular the Shinto Secular, because State Shinto determined how the Meiji state defined and regulated religion. According to Josephson, the Shinto Secular aimed to create a "particular Japanese subjectivity or Japanese-ness, formulated in terms of a nation-state and modern European science, articulated in relation to the person of the emperor, and mediated via a particular constellation of higher-order ideographs."<sup>10</sup> The particular Japanese subjectivity refers to a specific kind of Japanese experience: one that is neither Christian, nor Buddhist, nor atheist, but rather State Shinto. Modern European science acts as a benchmark whose principles are imitated by certain religious practices, or else they are condemned as superstitious. The emperor is the focal point of State Shinto, acting as a mediator of the Shinto cosmos and the world.<sup>11</sup> The constellation of ideographs is the unique Shinto cosmology which

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6 The historic section and much of my theoretical framework is heavily indebted to Jason Ānanda Josephson and his book *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (University of Chicago Press, 2012).

7 Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (University of Chicago Press: 2012) p. 30.

8 Ibid p. 79

9 Ibid p. 260

10 Ibid p. 255

11 Fujitani, Takashi. "Inventing, Forgetting, Remembering" from *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia* -

combines modern science with Shinto cosmology and *kokutai*, a spirit of Japanese nationalism. These elements compose the Japanese secular and have been institutionalized since 1889 with the signing of the Japanese Constitution.

When the constitution was signed a legal category of religion was created. Now that Japan created religion as a category it could identify itself as a secular nation. The State needed to reclassify pre-existing institutions as being properly religious or not, be they Buddhist, Christian, Shinto, or *shinshūkyō* (new religions). Any religion's existence in Japan came to depend on how harmoniously it could sit with State Shinto.

## B. Religion and the Law

With the signing of the Japanese Constitution in 1889, religion became a legal category in response to international politics, the French and Americans demanding “religious freedom” for its traders, as well as the centralization of government into a modern state (Meiji). Pushing for a certain kind of national citizen, the modern government needed to discern true religion from false religion so that it could grant religious freedom to those religions which deserved the state's protection. In this section, I will cover the establishment and exercise of the laws regarding religion in Japan, in regards to how they legally recognize a religious institution and distinguish religious institutions from cultural sites, by examining the deployment of law on religion from the Constitution (both 1889 and 1946) and through its further development in the Religious Corporation Act in 1995.

By emphasizing *shūkyō* (the now-accepted translation of religion) as essentially a set of beliefs, the Japanese Constitution was able to protect religious freedom as well as promote the ends of State Shinto. The article on religious freedom (Article 28) seemed contradictory to the third article of the Constitution, assuming State Shinto was a kind of State-induced religion.<sup>12</sup> While the common word for religion at the time was *shūkyō*, the Constitution explicitly stated there was freedom not of religion, but of religious beliefs, *shinkyō*. The concept of belief as central to religion was fairly new since no Buddhist or Shinto sect had defined itself in relation to a credo or body of belief. It was necessary for the government to split belief from practice in order to promulgate its own form of ritual while arguing that the government itself maintained a distance from religion's true essence.<sup>13</sup> Despite officially distinguishing belief from practice the Japanese government still had the power to coerce belief through the regulation of practice. Also, while belief was recognized as the core of *shūkyō*, an individual who professed a certain belief was not sufficient to be recognized as a leader of a religion, even if they acquired followers. However, within the context of an institution, belief can be externally recognized as being part of a larger organization acknowledgeable as religion.<sup>14</sup> Thus when the Meiji State came into being, it reconfirmed already socially accepted religious institutions, particularly the Buddhist temples which were extensions of the Tokugawa state, and excluded organizations which fostered “superstition.”

Freedom of religious belief (*shinkyō*) was distinguished from superstition (*meishin*)

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*Representation and Identity* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley p. 88).

12 Article 3 of the Japanese Constitution: the Emperor is Sacred [*shinsei*] and inviolable; Article 28 of the Constitution: Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief [*shinkyō*] – Ibid, p. 231

13 Ibid, p. 233

14 Ibid, p. 235

where the former could take the public form of *shūkyō* while the latter was outlawed. A certain belief or practice was demarcated if it was related somehow to demons, miracles, or fraudulent charismatic leaders.<sup>15</sup> Although evil beings were not to be believed in and addressed, ancestral spirits, bodhisattvas, angels, and other positively associated beings well connected with a religious establishment were permitted to remain. The first state-sponsored textbook banned a list of creatures and rites it deemed imaginary and ineffective. The list included spirit foxes, winged goblins (*tengu*), curses (*tatari*), holy water, and belief in divination (through oracles, astrology, etc.) as well as omen (*engi*), and it went so far to actually ban belief in such things.<sup>16</sup> These regulations intended to purge Buddhist and Shinto practices of those elements considered superstitious to the State because they were contradictory to State Shinto principles.

Freedom of religious belief became contingent on judicial authorization, without which organizations would be considered illegal congregations and arrested for spreading superstition. In 1898, Article 34 of a newly passed civil code permitted associations and foundations for the purpose of religion, science, charity, and the arts to become recognized as legal entities.<sup>17</sup> A year later the Home Ministry issued an ordinance requiring religious preachers to register themselves in a local office before building a church or place of congregation in the area. Those who did not register were arrested and imprisoned. In 1907 this law was expanded to explicitly prohibit the usage of what was regarded as superstitious artifacts such as talismans, holy water, magic (*fujū*), and the obstruction of medical treatment via spells, rituals, and charms.<sup>18</sup> A couple months after the revision of the law a woman named Mikami Haru was arrested for performing healing prayers and distributing magic charms. She was accused of fraud and obstructing medical treatment by her performance of faith healing. In 1909 another woman named Miura Soyo was detained for seventeen days because she began to promote herself as a faith healer after a divine encounter.<sup>19</sup> Institutionalized religions were not spared from scrutiny either. The Aomori police prohibited the establishment of a shrine by a branch of a religious sect on the basis that the branch was a fraud and did not represent true religion.<sup>20</sup>

When the American occupation took hold in 1945 State Shinto came to be recognized as one in the same with Sect Shinto, its suppressed and superstitious counterpart. The Americans demanded that Shinto be separated from the State and that it be treated as all other religions, including Christianity and Buddhism. Before the American Occupation, Western scholars did not think of Shinto as a religion. Religious scholar Leon de Rosny excluded Shinto from the category of religion because it was merely a form of patriotism; everyone could potentially practice Shinto, including the Japanese Christians.<sup>21</sup> However, those attitudes had changed when U.S. occupational forces issued the “Shinto Directive” and made the emperor renounce his divinity, incorporating Shinto into the legal and intellectual category of religion.<sup>22</sup> The new Constitution of Japan circumscribed new relationships between the Japanese State and religion under the impression that it needed to prevent another “theocratic” regime from emerging. Article 20 of

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15 Ibid, p. 243

16 Ibid, p.242

17 Ibid, p.244

18 Revised penal code number 17: [It is a misdemeanor] to deceive people through the unauthorized performance of divination, prayer, magic, or by conferring on them magical talismans; revised penal code number 18: [It is a misdemeanor] to obstruct medical treatment through the performance of spells, prayer rituals, or magic for sick people, or otherwise distribute charms or holy water - Kawamura, *Genshisuru Kindaikūkan*, p. 39

19 Ikegami, “Local Newspaper Coverage of Folk Shamans in Aomori Prefecture”

20 Ibid. The branch in question is Sujin Kyōkai of Ontakekyō.

21 Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (University of Chicago Press: 2012) p. 192

22 Kasahara, Kazuo. *A History of Japanese Religion* (Kosei Publishing Company 2001: p. 542)

the 1947 Japanese Constitution explains the parameters of religion and the State, reading:

“1. Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. 2. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. 3. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.”<sup>23</sup>

“Freedom of religion” translates religion again as *shinkyō*, and so the government continued to conceptualize religion as essentially rooted in belief, though all other references to religion in this article translate religion as *shūkyō*. The second part of the first clause referred to the secularization of the State and emperor since they both played major roles in State Shinto, but it was now considered a privileging of a religion instead of national ideology. The second clause of Article 20 prohibits the mandatory rites State Shinto required Japanese citizens to perform, including emperor veneration. The final clause refers to the propagation of State Shinto textbooks that educated children about the divine lineage of the emperor to Amaterasu as well as the relevant Shinto pantheon to the Shinto Secular order.

The revision to Article 34 in a civil penal code of 1898, which permitted the formations of religious groups into legally recognizable entities, was conceptually expanded in the installation of the Religious Corporations Law (*shūkyō hō jin hō*) in 1951. Following the precedent from the revision, religious organizations that wished to be legally recognized needed to register under the restrictions of local or national authorities as a “corporation with public interest.”<sup>24</sup> Article 84 of the Religious Corporations Law grants protection of traditions and customs of religious corporations, and Article 85 explicitly states that the government cannot interfere with religious organization in religious matters.<sup>25</sup> Article 86, however, allows the government to intervene if a religious corporations acts “contrary to public welfare.”<sup>26</sup> If the court recognizes a religious corporation’s acts to be in violation of any laws or harmful to the public it has the ability to dissolve their legal standing.

In 1995 the Religious Corporations Law was revised in light of the activities of a religious corporation which behaved “contrary to public welfare” in the prior year. A religious group called Aum Shinrikyo detonated sarin gas bombs within a Tokyo subway, creating widespread panic and igniting a strong public reaction against anything related to religion<sup>27</sup>. The government responded with a heavy investigation of Aum Shinrikyo and arrested relevant involved members. The Religious Corporations Law also underwent revision with the hopes of preventing another Aum Shinrikyo incident. Existing religious groups thus became concerned about the increase in government control over religious corporations<sup>28</sup>.

Of all the changes to the *shūkyō hō jin hō*, Article 25 and Article 78 No. 2 hold the most controversy. Article 25 requires the disclosure of a yearly financial record, which before had been

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23 Constitution of Japan 1947

24 Hirano, “Secularization and Religious Law in Japan,” p.11

25 Article 85: “No provision of this law shall be construed to give the government or the court of justice competence to mediate or interfere in any form in regard to religious matters such as faith, discipline, usages, etc. of religious organizations, or to give competence to recommend, induce or interfere with appointment and dismissal or other changes of religious personnel.” – Religious Corporations Law 1951

26 Article 86: “No provisions of this Law shall be construed to prevent application of the provisions of the other laws and ordinances in case a religious organization has committed acts contrary to public welfare” - Ibid

27 McLaughlin, Levi. “Did Aum Change Everything?” p.52

28 Lobreglio, “Revisions to the Religious Corporations Law: An Introduction and Annotated Translation,” p.41

optional, and it grants members of the religious corporation access to major records (including financial ones) in case they have “related concerns.”<sup>29</sup> Article 78 no. 2 allows legal authorities to demand a report or investigate a religious corporation in case they violate other elements of Article 78.<sup>30</sup> This revision is concerned with whether or not a certain religious corporation is engaging in “actual religious activity,” which could be related to public welfare as opposed to some private gain.<sup>31</sup> The government holds the authority to define a certain practice as religious or not, though the law does grant some power to the religious corporation’s council, allowing for their opinion on the matter of violation. At the same time the government also holds the right to disregard the council’s opinions.<sup>32</sup> Although the Japanese State may not be concerned with threats to state power as it was in its emergence, Aum Shinrikyo’s ability to jump through legal loopholes, such as withholding financial records and not needing to register all of its branches with the local authorities, certainly was a threat to the Japanese public. Certain religious practices, which had long standings as “religious” practices, were reevaluated in light of these laws.

The Japanese State must make the difficult decision in differentiating between what is religious and what is cultural. In the following chapter, I will flesh out a case in which the State justifies its activities at a legally recognized religious site by navigating between the concept of culture and religion. Accused of violating Article 20 of the Constitution, the government protects its participation at the site by defining it as a cultural act instead of a religious one. But before I discuss how the State distinguishes the two, the concept of culture must be discussed first.

### C. Culture

The vagueness of the word “culture” constitutes both its usefulness and its problems. Within everyday use, culture can refer to the entirety of some social reality and can be manifested in physical, mental, and even spiritual forms that can be viewed as defining examples of culture or specific expressions of culture. There are several presumptions with the usage of the word ‘culture,’ one being that anything and everything can be classified under a certain culture, and another being that cultures are specific to people, geography, and time.<sup>33</sup> Since the concept of culture is rather abstract, it will be useful to draw from the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz.

In Geertz’s essay “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” he follows in the tradition of Max Weber, defining culture as “webs of significance” man “himself has spun.”<sup>34</sup> These webs of significance need to be studied not to determine the laws which govern human behavior, but rather the meaning and value assigned to them. Behaviors do not have inherent cultural value, but they are imposed and interpreted by people who can recognize certain gestures as having a meaning. Geertz quotes the famous example of differentiating between a wink and a twitch. Both consist of a fluttering of the eyes, but a wink can only be interpreted as a wink in cultures where the action of fluttering one’s eyes signifies a responsible gesture. Interestingly, regardless of intent, a twitch can incorrectly be interpreted as a wink if one’s eye twitches in a culture that can interpret an eye flutter as a signal for something. This interpretation of a twitch as a wink is possible because of two characteristics of culture. The first, Geertz argues, is that

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29 Ibid, p.42; see Appendix 1 for the text of the law articles

30 Ibid, p.43; see Appendix 1 for text

31 Ibid

32 Ibid, p.48

33 Masuzawa, Tomoko. “Culture” from *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (University of Chicago Press, p. 70)

34 Geertz, Clifford. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” from *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books Inc., p. 5)

culture is “public.”<sup>35</sup> Since it is public, anyone within a culture can read a particular action in the same way another person within the culture can because there is a shared understanding of what that action is. The second attribute of culture is its composition of symbols. For Geertz, a symbol is vehicle for conception, a transmitter of meaning.<sup>36</sup> The symbol itself is an object distinct yet linked to what it signifies. Geertz’s web of significance is constructed on the basis of public, symbolic interpretation; anyone within a specific culture can interpret a certain symbol in the same ways as anyone else being in the same culture. Culture is public, thus it remains consistent because no one individual has the power to change culture. But therein lies one of Geertz’s shortcomings: how do symbols, which are the foundation of culture, become recognized as having any meaning?

Geertz is useful to the extent of framing culture as a matter of interpretation of social relations embedded in symbols, but his characterization of culture does not (at least explicitly) acknowledge the stakes in determining what symbols will elicit what meaning. With my interlocutors at Seido, the origin of practices, translations, and concepts become an important factor in determining whether or not they are appropriate to transmit to the Japanese. The problem of whether or not Roman Catholicism is “too Western” arises as a question of how flexible the religion can be in maintaining its universal claim while accommodating local, cultural affiliation. Certain gestures and ideas are read as cultural symbols of the West and need to be changed to reflect what is regarded as a more Eastern, Japanese religious sensibility.<sup>37</sup> Studies about Japanese missions should not only be concerned about how those certain gestures and ideas carry engendered “cultural” values, but also with the logic in determining what is of the West, what is more Japanese, and, the most at stake for Seido, what parts of Catholicism can be changed.

The association of and distinction between culture and religion is fairly modern. In an essay titled “Culture,” Tomoko Masuzawa notes that the modern usage of the word culture comes about during the same time as the modern usage of the term religion.<sup>38</sup> Conceptualized as an all-encompassing lifeway, culture is often regarded as circumscribing religion in a way where religion is merely an aspect of culture. On the other hand, culture and religion could be used more or less like synonyms, applicable to a people’s entire way of life and prevalently employed when speaking about non-modern or theocratic societies.<sup>39</sup> Masuzawa quotes scholar Raymond Williams on his genealogy of the word ‘culture’ within western European nations. The earliest roots of our understanding of culture date back to the seventeenth century, starting with the notion of “tending to natural growth,” and likened to a cultivation of personhood.<sup>40</sup> Then culture came to be understood as a development of human intellect or societal achievements. Third, culture came to refer only to a body of fine arts. Finally, it came to represent the entirety of a way of life, encompassing material, intellectual, spiritual, and behavioral signs.<sup>41</sup> Culture became hermeneutical, where details of the everyday were depicted as transmitters of layered meaning. Theologians began to appropriate this form of culture as a holistic system and applied the concept to religion, resulting in works revolving around “religion and” some other topic, such as “religion

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35 Ibid p. 10

36 Geertz, Clifford. “Religion as a Cultural System” from *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books Inc., p. 91)

37 What that even means will be addressed in Chapter 2, “Religion and Culture.”

38 Masuzawa, “Culture,” p. 71

39 Ibid p.70

40 Here, Raymond Williams cites various 17<sup>th</sup> century authors and the year of their usage of “culture,” such as Francis Bacon (1605) and Thomas Hobbes (1651).

41 Williams, “Culture” from *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, p.87)

and music” or “religion and culture.”<sup>42</sup> Clifford Geertz conceptualized both religion and culture to be a complex system of symbols to be recognized and interpreted, going so far as to state their equivalence in function in the title of his essay “Religion as a Cultural System.” However, Culture did not just conceptually expand so innocently; rather, its deployment by people such as anthropologists and politicians allowed the exercise of colonial power by categorizing aspects of the lives of those colonized.

Along with the development of the conception of culture itself, the term has also been deployed for political ends in order to include and excluding certain practices, ideas, and populations. The idea of a pure culture, Masuzawa highlights, is an “ideological fiction” which has been historically used to differentiate European and non-European civilization.<sup>43</sup> Within the context of Japan, culture, like religion, was not a term imposed onto them by anthropologists (though they certainly were studied by anthropologists, especially post-WWII). But also like religion, culture was among a number of concepts imported to Japan during its time of modernization. Of course, Japan has a history of encountering an “other,” be it China, the Ainu, or the Europeans, which made impacts on the concept of a Japanese self-identity. Scholar Harumi Befu argues that as Japan became a growing economic player in the world, it needed to define itself and its culture in light of the influx of foreigners and the presence of historically foreign practices.<sup>44</sup>

I would like to return to Masuzawa and her essay “Culture,” since she brings up the often-overlooked point that the everyday and political usage of the word ‘culture’ serves to perpetuate the ideologies of modernity.<sup>45</sup> Although culture often encompasses religion, culture itself is seen as secular, therefore defining religion as a product of the secular despite the secular being a residual of religion (if secular is understood as what is not religious). Following this logic, since all peoples have a culture and all culture is secular, all people are essentially secular and then become religious through their cultural environment. All culture is also particular in origin and influence which leads to the claim that all religions are relative to their cultural backgrounds, yet secularism is not seen as having particular cultural boundaries. For the Catholic Church, the privileging of secularism as a human universal creates a tension between religion and culture rather than religion and secularism; a universal religion must navigate the constraints of peculiar cultures. The tension between religion and culture emerges within discussions about missionary activity. Before my departure to Japan, several priests and Catholic lay friends with whom I’ve spoken about their own thoughts and experiences in Japan have all noted more or less the same message: “the Japanese practice religion culturally” and “Christianity has too much Western culture for it to grow in Japan.” What they are saying is that the Japanese practice religion as a secular activity, and that Christianity has too many foreign (read: secular, non-religious, or cultural) elements that prevent the true essence of the religion to enter the hearts of the Japanese.<sup>46</sup> Of course, these priests have a rather particular understanding of culture and religion, but an understanding which is prevalent in all modern tasks of the mission to spread Christianity.

For the modern missionary, it is imperative to recognize culture and even revere it. Culture enters the discourse of missionary activity and they must now be attuned to a certain culture’s

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42 Masuzawa, “Culture,” p.80

43 Ibid p. 90

44 Befu, Harumi. “Nationalism and Nihonjinron” from *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia - Representation and Identity* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley p. 120).

45 Masuzawa, “Culture” p. 71

46 In the following chapter, I will clarify the logic behind how they distinguish the two.

“spirituality.”<sup>47</sup> Seido has adopted this sensibility, and changes its approach to evangelization in light of how a Japanese Catholic should be. Yet there are high stakes to interpreting something as cultural rather than religious, and wanting to appeal to both Japanese spirituality and the Catholic Church’s traditions is not an easy matter of weeding out cultural baggage from theology.

## II. Analysis

### A. *Culture and Religion*

The rejoining of State Shinto and Sect Shinto after 1945 has created divergent positions on matters related to Shinto within the Catholic Church; whereas the former was not recognized as a religion by officials, the latter was. Because State Shinto was not a religion, participating in national rites such as those at Yasukuni Jinja was not in violation of religious freedom; religion was configured in terms of belief and these Shinto practices were seen as necessary in producing not a Shinto believer but a Japanese citizen. This section will explore the distinction between culture and religion as expressed in the Japanese State, the bishops of Japan, and Seido.

Yasukuni Jinja is a Shinto shrine which draws out the concept of religion, culture, and imperial politics. Located in the Chiyoda ward of Tokyo, it was established by Emperor Meiji as a place to commemorate those who died serving the Japanese Empire.<sup>48</sup> There are about 1,000 war criminals from WWII enshrined at Yasukuni, ranging from Class C to Class A.<sup>49</sup> Shrine visits by government officials are highly controversial because they are perceived as venerating said criminals.<sup>50</sup> In 1981, the Diet passed a bill which nationalized the shrine, causing the Catholic bishops of Japan to speak out against the legislation.<sup>51</sup> If the shrine becomes a national landmark, they argued, officials such as the prime minister would be allowed to worship there and would give the image of publically endorsing a specific religion. Thus the visits would be a violation of the Japanese Constitution’s laws on the separation of Church and State and freedom of religion.<sup>52</sup> The bishops also feared that once the shrine became nationalized the government could mandate Yasukuni rites just like the Meiji State during pre-World War II Japan. The Diet paid little to no attention to the bishops’ arguments and the bill was passed. Interestingly enough, the Japanese bishops had dissented from the Vatican on the issue of Yasukuni Jinja; the former rejecting its official usage and the latter supporting the usage of the site.

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47 Both “Introduction-Catholicism, Modernity, and Japan” and “Between Inculturation and Globalization: the Situation of Catholicism in Contemporary Japanese Society” from *Xavier’s Legacies* write about how the Church is attempting (or failed) to meet the needs of the Japanese Church.

48 <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp/english/about/index.html> Accessed: 23 November, 2014

49 The criminal classes were determined at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the trials for the leaders of the Empire of Japan for war crimes committed during WWII. “Class A” crimes were reserved for those who participated in a joint conspiracy to start and wage war, and were brought against those in the highest decision-making bodies; “Class B” crimes were reserved for those who committed “conventional” atrocities or crimes against humanity; “Class C” crimes were reserved for those in “the planning, ordering, authorization, or failure to prevent such transgressions at higher levels in the command structure

50 <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304483804579281103015121712> Accessed: 23 November, 2014

51 Breen, John. “Popes, Bishops and War Criminals: Reflections on Catholics and Yasukuni in Post-War Japan” p.3

52 Ibid

Despite the Japanese bishops' disapproval of the shrine visits, the Vatican had permitted the visitation of Yasukuni Jinja ever since pre-war Japan and renewed its stance in 1951 during occupation. In 1932, Catholic students of Sophia University, a prestigious Jesuit college in Tokyo, refused to participate in Yasukuni rites in commemoration of soldiers involved in the Manchurian Incident in September of the same year. The students protested that participating in such rites would be a compromise of their beliefs as Catholics—in response the army withdrew its attaché from the school, an act that damaged the reputation of the university. The archbishop of Tokyo quickly asked for the opinions of the other Japanese bishops on how to handle the situation and eventually propagated the *Pluries Instanterque*, not only approving of the participation at Yasukuni but encouraging it since it signified “love of country.”<sup>53</sup> Later in 1951 the Vatican reapproved of *Pluries Instanterque* in allowing Japanese Catholics to participate at Yasukuni.<sup>54</sup> The Vatican did not find any problems with the commemoration at Yasukuni Jinja; only the Japanese bishops had a problem with commemoration. The bishops are more concerned with the threat of breaking the State-Religion division than they are with veneration of the war criminals, however, since they did not express any concerns over the war criminals enshrined there until 2000.<sup>55</sup> The Diet ignored the bishops' concerns since they did not see it challenging Japan's claim to be a secular nation. Although historically State Shinto did not function religiously, the context in which the bishops argue against its nationalization is one in which the State legally recognizes Yasukuni Jinja as a religious corporation.

Despite the argument that Yasukuni rituals are more related to customary practice than religious belief, the government acknowledges the shrine as a legitimate religious institution. Along with legal recognition, the shrine is inhabited by Shinto priests who perform religious Shinto rites, including apotheosis of the dead into *kami*, as well as propitiation: the appeasement of *kami* through offerings in exchange for blessings. The shrine itself is a *chokusaisha* (勅祭社) which means it is a shrine “privileged to receive imperial offerings,” reconnecting the now only human emperor to the religious site.<sup>56</sup> From the Confucian notion of ritual as a means of forming character, Yasukuni Jinja also serves as a site which induces a veneration of those killed in war, criminal or not, orienting those who participate towards rhetoric similar to that used during the Japanese Empire. Those at Yasukuni address the *kami* as *eirei* (英霊), or great/glorious spirits, which undoubtedly includes the war criminals within the pantheon.<sup>57</sup> Participating in these rites, therefore, is not as neutral as simply expressing a desire to venerate the dead but rather embodied a political agenda which was highly militarized and imperialistic. The bishops' fear of the divisions between religion and state being dissolved is based on a misunderstanding of how State Shinto functioned during pre-WWII Japan. But perhaps their concern with how religious freedom, freedom of *shinkyō*, is not unwarranted since belief is fundamentally tied with practice. Participating in Yasukuni rituals would not foster a belief in Shinto, but rather an orientation towards Japan's imperialist rhetoric. Because these practices are less tied to the religious Sect Shinto and more with the secular State Shinto, the usefulness of the word ‘religion’ to describe this type of relationship between practice and practitioner comes into question.

Scholars such as Miura Shumon argue that participating in Yasukuni rites is not religious because the participation “transcends religion” and expresses a human desire to venerate the

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53 Ibid

54 Doak, ‘A religious perspective on the Yasukuni Shrine controversy’, pp. 49-51

55 Breen, John. “Popes, Bishops and War Criminals: Reflections on Catholics and Yasukuni in Post-War Japan” p.4

56 Ibid p.7

57 Ibid

dead<sup>58</sup>. It is important to note Miura's point about expression of what he considers universal through a specific, cultural practice. For Miura, religion too is bound to particular contexts, most easily the context of its practitioners. The specificity of religion is not a welcomed idea in the orthodox Catholic Church. Rather than preaching particular truth claims, it sees itself as pronouncing the Truth to all of mankind, which then takes on the specific cultural adaptations to "more appropriately" bring more people into the Church.<sup>59</sup> For theologians, culture is preceded by religion, at times being synergetic or possibly dissonant.<sup>60</sup> Modernity introduced the distinction between culture and religion not only within everyday language, but also into the theology of the Church.

### B. *Fitting into Japan*

In the historical context of Japan, the Catholic Church did not adapt its practices to fit local expressions of religion until 1969. In the seventeenth century, the premier missionaries were the Jesuits, sponsored by the Portuguese monarchy. Although the Jesuits were fairly adept in determining what could or could not be Christianized in certain cultures, Japan posed a different problem because the priests had become associated with Buddhist heresy. Originally, the Jesuits were happy to use Western technologies and products to win over Japanese interest. They brought items such as muskets, red meat, instruments, and alarm clocks, which intrigued the Japanese and could be used to attract possible converts.<sup>61</sup> Although the Jesuits knew the materials they brought were foreign, they did not see themselves as suppliers of foreign religion but rather the only religion. The category of Western religion and Eastern religion did not exist; the missionaries were bringing not a particular flavor of something called religion but the only religion there was: Catholicism. This is not to say that Catholic Church had no perception of distinctions within communities; on the contrary, it understood itself as being composed of various traditions, referred to officially as rites, such as Syro-Malabar in India, Melkite in Syria, and of course the Roman (Latin) Rite in Rome. Because of the Roman Rite's entwinement with Europe during the Protestant Reformation, the Rite needed to take on different forms of conversion when expanding to non-European areas. However, the particular forms which were spread within the Roman Rite were strictly Latin: all prayers, theological concepts, and gestures derived from the Latin Rite. This uniformity in tangible religious practice was the catalyst which allowed the *kakure kirishitan* to recognize the prayers of a French priest in a church in Nagasaki after Japan had reopened its ports to other nations.<sup>62</sup> While such an event could only happen with homogeneity in religious practice, the value of having a standardized language and practice throughout the Latin Rite began to diminish in the twentieth century, especially in terms of missionary work for the Japanese bishops.

The notion of adapting missionary activity to something called "Asian spirituality" surfaced in the 1997 in response to a synod called by Saint Pope John Paul II.<sup>63</sup> The first opportunity to adapt was with Saint Francis Xavier; now, the Japanese bishops had an opportunity to regulate how Japanese culture was to be approached by missionaries, both local and foreign. In February 1997

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58 Miura, *Yasukuni Jinja: Tadashiku rikai suru tame ni*

59 This point will be expanded upon in the section *The Sacred and the Secular*

60 Masuzawa, "Culture" p. 80

61 Cooper, *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1640*, p.100

62 Clement, *Christianity in Modern Japan*, p.46

63 The synod came after the liturgical reforms in 1969, though the Japanese bishops did not mention anything called Asian spirituality.

the Japanese bishops rejected the pope's agenda (the *Lineamenta*) to speak about evangelization in Asia and asserted that they would speak about their own issues. They claimed that the topics of discussion for the synod had been "composed in the context of Western Christianity" and were therefore "not suitable" to evaluate how missionary activities were doing since the Japanese Church did not necessarily reflect the same problems or solutions proposed in the *Lineamenta*. Instead, the bishops emphasized, the Church needed to cater to the "spiritual level of the people who live in Asia."<sup>64</sup> One of the points of this Asian spirituality was the de-emphasis of Jesus Christ as the Truth; while the bishops concede that Christ is certainly the Truth, they prefer to instead emphasize Him as being the Way and the Life before the Truth, or else Catholicism will seem too exclusive and there can be "no dialogue, common living, or solidarity with other religions."<sup>65</sup> The bishops' reply started a period of tension between them and the Vatican. A number of theologians, most notably then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, wrote against the idea of "Asian spirituality" since it implied a limit to the scope of Catholic dogma to being acceptable to only certain peoples.<sup>66</sup> Asserting Christ as the Truth for all mankind is not a matter determined by a specific culture one lived in, Ratzinger wrote, but a matter of Catholic, indeed generally Christian, orthodoxy.<sup>67</sup> The question of orthodoxy was raised again when another set of Catholic doctrine, the teachings on the Eucharist, was disputed for its universal applicability.

The bishops of Japan disputed with one another about the translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church over whether or not certain doctrines could fit into Japanese culture. One of the contested teachings was how to translate the Eucharist into Japanese. The Catholic Church teaches the Eucharist as the Holy Sacrifice on Calvary, referring to the sacrifice of Christ the Son to God the Father on the cross to redeem all of mankind.<sup>68</sup> For the Catholic Church, the Eucharist holds the highest theological importance and it regards the Eucharist as the "source and summit of the Christian life," since it is so key to the Catholic notion of salvation.<sup>69</sup> The terms which were difficult to translate were "sacrifice," "Eucharist," and "Eucharistic sacrifice;" several bishops wanted to translate sacrifice as *hoken* while others wanted to use *ikenie* as the translation.<sup>70</sup> The word *hoken* (offering), along with other suggested words for translation like *sasagemono* (present) and *sonaemono* (offering to a deity), suggests a different kind of relationship between the giver and the receiver than the relationship expressed in *ikenie*. *Ikenie* (生け贄) and *gisei* (sacrifice, 犠牲) are the words used historically by the initial Jesuit missionaries during the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>71</sup> *Hoken* and *sasagemono* are used when the giver offers inanimate objects to another person, usually of higher status, and often comes in the form of money, rice, jewelry, and silk clothes.<sup>72</sup> Even *sonaemono*, while it is used when "offering to a deity," due to its historical use in non-Christian settings, suggests the usage of non-living objects as sacrifice. Both *ikenie* and *gisei* are used to refer to offering animals as sacrifice, which theologically corresponds to Christ being called the Lamb of God. One liturgist asserted that the notion of animal sacrifice was foreign to the Japanese because they were an agrarian people and that the concept of sacrifice

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64 Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, "Official Response of the Japanese Church to the *Lineamenta*"

65 Ibid

66 Doak, "Introduction: Catholicism, Modernity, and Japanese Culture" p.24

67 Ibid

68 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Paragraph 1330

69 Ibid, Paragraph 1324

70 Fukushima, Francis Mutsuo, "Why here is no Catechism in Japan" p.3-4

71 Ibid p.4

72 Ibid

in Catholicism historically developed in hunter and nomadic societies.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, they argue, the Eucharistic sacrifice should be addressed as an offering of thanksgiving, *kansha no hoken*, instead of its historical translation as *goseitai* (ご聖体), which translates directly into “holy/sacred body.”<sup>74</sup> Another liturgist argued that the Japanese indeed have a concept of sacrificing and eating animals, bringing in a Shinto priest who confirmed animal sacrifice had been part of Shinto tradition and therefore had a historical grounding in Japanese custom.<sup>75</sup> Eventually the Catechism was produced after eight years of debating which terms to substitute and the historical translations of the Eucharist, *ikenie* and *goseitai*, continued to be used.

Within these debates, the concept of culture is used to distinguish what is considered historically specific as opposed to divinely inspired. Two traditions, which view themselves as being historically continuous, cross in these debates. The first is that the Japanese have derived their current culture and sensibilities from their agrarian roots, and anything veering from them would be too alien to comprehend. The second is the Roman Catholic Church having specifically translating the teaching of the Eucharist in a way which conveys it as the sacrifice on Calvary. The liturgist who argued that sacrifice was a concept associated with nomadic and hunting societies disassociated the traditional understanding of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross from the required doctrines for all Catholics to believe in, marking the event as a historically specific interpretation of what happened. However, they still keep the understanding that Christ has atoned for their sins; they argue that the Japanese would not be able to understand *ikenie* because sacrificing living animals for deities was not historically precedent, but an offering to a deity or person of higher distinction with material goods could be understood much easier. That liturgist gives preference to the historical specificity of *hoken* which would make spreading Catholicism easier, as the argument goes, because it would be more harmonious to a certain conception of the Japanese: one of agrarian origin. Those who argued for the historical continuity in Catholic teaching do not see the teaching as being bound to geographic or cultural contingencies, or even if they do, they do not see a reason to privilege the image of an agrarian Japan over the traditional teaching. The debates between the usage of old and new translations were not kept among those within the hierarchy of the Church, however; certain catechized laity were also invested in the preservation of the traditional understanding of the Eucharist.

Despite not being part of the clergy, Seido took a position within the debates of translation. Kohei expands on the issue of translation when he brings up another debate on the words used during the consecration of the Eucharist. During mass at the consecration the priest reads from the missal, which quotes Scripture, the words of Jesus Christ when He transforms the bread into His body. At Seido the priest takes his consecrated index fingers and his thumbs to raise the wafer above the altar, slowly reading “Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you,” in Latin. The word for “body” in Latin is *corpus*, which translates as body, collection, flesh, and corpse. In local parishes, the priest also recites the words of consecration though it is in Japanese. The word in Japanese used to translate from Latin is *niku*, which translates as meat or flesh. He says there was “some discussion” about the usage of the word *niku* for the translation of “flesh” into Japanese. Some priests were arguing that *niku* was too suggestive of a word, having sexual connotations and so the usage of *niku* would be scandalous.<sup>76</sup> Kohei does not agree with that argument, siding with those who argue to keep using *niku*. Kohei says in many languages the local translation for *corpus* has sexual connotations, but that does not matter because those “were

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73 Ibid p.5

74 Ibid

75 Ibid

76 Fieldnotes 17 June 2014

the words that Christ used.”<sup>77</sup> Where some liturgists want to change the historical translation of Latin terms to better suit an idea of Japanese agrarian identity, Kohei privileges the traditional understandings and translations since they seem to him more authentic. The authenticity of the words lies in the authority of the Scriptures; Christ had used those words to consecrate the bread and so the sacrament would be invalid if the words were not said. The sacraments play an essential role in Catholicism as the standard vehicle to transmit the grace of God so Seido does not regard them as appropriate sites to reflecting local culture. It is imperative for those who argue for the continual use of the historical translation, and for those at Seido, that the form of the consecration be preserved or else the consecration will not take place.

For Seido, the matter of translation is not a matter of preserving historical continuity for the sake of affirming a cultural identity, such as being Western as opposed to Japanese, but a matter of legitimizing the ritual of consecration. The notion that Christ’s usage of “flesh” is too suggestive for Japanese culture is not convincing to Kohei. Indeed, the tone of his voice slightly harshened as he said that “flesh” was the word Christ used and therefore should be translated as thus.<sup>78</sup> In accordance to official Church teaching, Seido understands the words of Christ to be transcendent of time and space and thus cannot be compromised in order to fit specific social environments, lest the Church forsake its Catholicism. These universal claims are essential in categorizing something as religion for Seido, which is seen as boundless to physical limits and is dichotomized with culture, which is tied to specific expressions and understandings by particular people.

Not everything the Roman Catholic Church propagates is considered a-cultural; however, there are many instances of flexibility and allowance for enculturation. The sites of adapting to Japanese culture take the forms of changing practice, language, and proselytization (referred to as evangelization and apostolate work). Beginning with Opus Dei protocol, Seido proceeds to sanctify its daily works within the Japanese context to God. This sanctification requires them to navigate between what is considered cultural (and therefore permissible to change) and what is religious.

The Catholic Church in Japan is invested in the distinction between culture and religion in order to apply its conception of universal religion across its conception of particular cultures. To the Church, culture is bound to a specific people and history and can only be understood by humans who can read certain practices and concepts. Religion, on the other hand, is not limited to a particular group of people and can be shared with all others. Religion adapts to the specific cultural interpretations and expressions yet is able to retain its universality when translated properly. As an Opus Dei center in Japan, Seido maintains the concept of religion as a trans-historical, trans-cultural phenomenon and translates theological concepts such as the Eucharist in the same historical manner as the pre-Vatican II missionaries did. Cultural continuity is not something Seido has in mind when preferring a certain translation; rather it is concerned with the legitimacy of translation and how well it reproduces the original intention of Christ, who has no historical/cultural boundary. Yet the concept of culture still pervades the tangible practices which make up the material life of the Catholic faith in Japan.<sup>79</sup> This cultural penetration is not seen as invalidating Catholic practice but rather changing what is unnecessary. The dichotomy between religion and culture is related to an older, medieval binary of the distinction between the sacred and the secular.

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77 Ibid

78 Ibid

79 Specifics to where culture enters practices will be discussed in the chapter “The Acts of the Apostles.”

### C. *The Sacred and the Secular*

In the previous section, I wrote about how members at Seido can distinguish between what is cultural and what is religious. As addressed by Kohei, adapting the Church, and specifically Opus Dei, to particular cultural environments is encouraged and indeed has a long history in the Catholic Church. However, figuring out what is the product of culture versus a theological truth is not as easy as referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. There are fundamental theological doctrines at stake in determining what practice or element of Catholicism can be placed in either category. The first concern is enculturation: how can Seido manipulate parts of Roman Catholicism to make it more accessible to the Japanese? The second concern, and arguably more important to them, is the legitimacy of their practice and ritual. Discernment of something as cultural rather than religious is paramount in maintaining what is considered the true substance of Catholicism while editing what is not necessary so that the true substance can be more easily accepted. I would like to explore this division of “religion” and “culture” by bringing into conversation the notion of the Secular, though more specifically the medieval *saeculum*: a secular which is not antithetical to the Sacred but is coexistent. The *saeculum* becomes culture and retains the characteristics of temporality and non-divinity.

Within Medieval Latin Christendom, the religious and secular were in reference to one another through the aspect of divine time. The “religious” referred to those who resided in the monasteries and related to eternal/divine time.<sup>80</sup> Edicts such as the Rule of St. Benedict are regarded as unchanging and therefore part of the religious. Other aspects of Catholicism such as the Holy Trinity and the Eucharist are Sacred since they are part of Eternity, or sacred time. On the other hand, the secular referred to the space “in the world,” or the temporal, changing, non-sacred/profane.<sup>81</sup> Within the secular realm were food, money, craft, and physical location. In these senses of the terms, there could be both religious clergy (i.e. Benedictines) and secular clergy (priests who live and work with laity). Seido, and more broadly the Catholic Church, continue to use these conceptions theologically and in practice, though they are not referred to directly as sacred and secular.

The deployment of “religion” and “culture” by Seido and the Catholic Church at large is a continuation of the medieval understands of the “sacred” and the “secular,” respectively. The former, religion, has the same characteristics of the sacred: being eternal, a-historic, and unchanging. Thus, the consecration of the Eucharist is a matter of religion instead of culture because by *correctly* reciting the words of consecration within the context of the mass, the priest reaches into divine time and joins the Eternal Sacrifice on Calvary. Since Christ instituted the words, thus did God Himself, and so they are part of divine time. The liturgists who argued for a supposedly more Japanese-friendly translation to the consecration understand “sacrifice” as a concept tied with a specific cultural background and thus unnecessary to the essence of the Eucharist. They are highlighting the notion of “sacrifice” as a temporal, inessential concept. Here, the medieval *saeculum* becomes rebranded as culture; anything cultural or coming from a specific culture (that is, for these liturgists, not Japanese) is not eternal since it is not connected to divine time (like religion) and is temporal. If it is temporal, it can be changed; thus there are these debates over consecration. The neutrality between *saeculum* and sacred remain too. If the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is temporal, simply changing the words of consecration does not make the ritual invalid, especially since the translations would have received bishop

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80 Taylor, Charles. “Western Secularity,” from *Rethinking Secularism* (2011): p.32

81 Casanova, Jose. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” from *Rethinking Secularism* (2011): 56

approval thus legitimizing the translation for Japanese missals. The essence of the Eucharist (the Body of Christ) is preserved in sacred time; changing the words of consecration would only be acknowledging the temporary nature of language and specific origins of concepts. The recognition of culture as part of the *saeculum* allows the entire Church in Japan, let alone the mass, to be reformatted to reflect the secular or the culture of Japan. Thus, the theological politics of enculturation emerge.

While the Roman Catholic Church always had an interest in the enculturation of the religion for its spread, the material or non-doctrinal aspect of it had been standardized for a long period of time since her medieval period. However, in 1962 Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council which, among many concerns, addressed the modern concept of culture.<sup>82</sup> In the Apostolic Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, the Church recognizes culture as the context to where humanity “develops a diverse manner of using things, of laboring, of expressing oneself, of practicing religion, of forming customs, of establishing laws and juridic institutions, of cultivating the sciences, the arts and beauty.”<sup>83</sup> The Church, in this constitution, reifies the concept of culture and sees all aspects of life, no matter how little connection there may be, to be linked in some way to it. This understanding of culture is quite similar to an anthropological notion of culture where culture has come to encompass the entirety of a life, including the practice of religion. It is from within a culture, *Gaudium et spes* describes, that man acquires his sensibilities of how to exhibit virtues like piety: sensibilities which must be acknowledged and incorporated into how a specific culture practices Catholicism. There is a subtle yet important distinction in general anthropology and the Church’s usage of culture, however; while the former conceptualizes religion as an extension of culture, the latter does not see religion, as a matter of doctrine and dogma, to be an extension of any particular culture but boundless.<sup>84</sup> It is not belief that is circumscribed by locale but rather practice. *Gaudium et spes* proceeds to recognize the possible conflict between the Catholic faith and culture, to which it prescribes theologians to find more “suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times” and that the “Deposit of Faith,” that is the teachings of the Catholic Church, and Truth, are “one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in the same meaning and understanding, is another.”<sup>85</sup> Thus, in order to avoid conflict between culture and religion, *Gaudium et spes* endorses, benignly put, better enculturation of Catholic concepts.

The Second Vatican Council opened a space for the emergence of the Mass of Blessed Paul VI, which allowed for further enculturation of the mass and the possibility to change the canon of the missal. While there were local forms of piety, everything liturgical was in Latin. The uniformity of the use of Latin in prayer and in documents gave the impression that the Church was indeed the single Body of Christ. Latin, along with rituals that comprised the mass, *was* part of the sacred: it was indispensable to the practice of Roman Catholicism since those elements were what made it Roman and sanctified to be part of eternal time. Even today, the Church holds the position that Latin is the official language of the Church.<sup>86</sup> While the Church still

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82 As one would suspect, the Second Vatican Council was a fairly complicated ecumenical council lasting from 1962-1965. Like other councils, the council was in reaction to contemporary movements in order to figure out the Church’s official position on the ideas currently circulating within the institution. One of the highlighted movements was a type of Catholic Modernism which aimed to embrace post-Enlightenment modernity and incorporate said ideas into the Church. Among these modern concepts discussed is “culture.”

83 *Gaudium et spes* Section 53

84 This is not to say the Church sees itself without roots in Judaism, but rather it is spreading universal Truth as opposed to Judaism.

85 Ibid section 62

86 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* section 36.1

endorses Latin, the language has fallen out of use outside of high bureaucratic business within the Church.<sup>87</sup> Latin as part of the sacred had become recognized as being historically specific to the development of the Catholic Church in Europe and therefore loses its affiliation with divine time. It is recognized as being part of culture, the culture of Medieval Europe, and its usage is not necessary for the Church to fulfill its religious duties. Latin becomes part of the *saeculum* and is replaced with the vernacular, in this case Japanese.

Although conceptually the sacred and *saeculum* are neutral towards one another, the emergence of the concept of culture and its association with temporality has increased the space that the *saeculum* circumscribes. What once was considered part of divine time is now recognized as the production of human history. In an effort to salvage the sacred from being conceptualized as completely culturally specific, the sacred has been trimmed of some of its “nonessential” elements after seeing parts of it as a result of culture and not God’s institution. What remains as sacred is essential to the Catholic religion, while the secular elements, understood to be cultural, are up to the discretion of bishops who decide if their congregations will get exposed to them.

Although the Catholic Church has its understanding of the secular, it is not the only entity to use that concept. Legally speaking, in Japan, it is not God who is above the Catholic Church but the Japanese government with its own conception of the secular. While the liturgists debated back and forth between what is cultural and what is religious, the government defined all religions to be part of culture, managing them under the Agency of Cultural Affairs.<sup>88</sup> For the government, culture acts to de-politicize religion, so that the various religions, especially Shinto, would not antagonize one another. Given the creation of “religion” in Japan, it is evident that this categorization of religion under culture is a form of taming religious institutions. The Catholic Church in particular, with its history in Japan, had posed both heretical and political threats to the shogunate as it grew in Japan within the sixteenth century. However, now that it is classified as a religious institution, and more specifically now a religious corporation, it poses no threat to Japan instead of being removed from the nation again.

Culture also de-politicizes when applied specifically to Shinto, as explained with the Yasukuni Jinja, since it preserves the government’s relationship with these sites and permits not only maintenance, but also participation. The importance of the argument that State support for these sites is not only distinguishing religion and culture, but also in the establishment of what is *Japanese* culture. The State does not support any other religious site, despite them all being considered cultural.<sup>89</sup> It creates an essential idea of the Japanese citizen: one where Shinto plays a predominant role in that image. The continual patronage of Shinto sites as a form of cultural support masks how the Japanese State creates and reinforces the notion of Shinto being central to the Japanese subject. Deviation is tolerable; one could be a Christian if they so choose to be. However, citizens are not fully Japanese unless they partake in Shinto rituals since they are so emphasized as being culturally significant. It may be useful to draw parallels to the dichotomy of sacred and *saeculum* again, but instead of applying it to the Church’s distinction of culture and religion, it could be used as an analytical tool on the concept of Japanese identity.

#### D. Sacred Identities

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87 As I write this, the current pope, Pope Francis, has since been less of an advocate of the traditional use of Latin, evident in the variety of languages used during the first meeting of the Synod of the Family in October 2014.

88 The development of the relationship between law and religion has been discussed in the Concepts section.

89 Yasukuni Jinja was founded in 1869. There are countless older Buddhist sites which have contributed to what could be referred to as “Japanese culture,” such as Kōryū-ji.

In the context of modern Japan, there is another conception of a-temporal besides the sacred within the Catholic Church: the Japanese people. The idea of a Japanese people consists of creating an essence of what can be considered “Japanese.” This idea adopts qualities which are shared by the sacred, most notably eternity and being unbounded by space.<sup>90</sup> The eternal aspect of Japanese identity refers to the perception that the identity is an unchanging essence, which is not contained nor created within or by a specific, temporal environment. Catholic missionaries encounter a paradox when attempting to enculturate the faith into the context of modern Japan: while trying to translate the eternal Truth of Catholicism to the Japanese people, they must also take into account the eternal truth of Japanese culture. Such a conception of culture is, of course, one which strips the concept of its historical formation. However, this masking of the origins of what is regarded as Japanese culture is not without political ends and is heavily invested into by the Japanese State. Though the construction of the Japanese citizen is beyond the purview of this essay, it is worth mentioning the efforts of the State as well as Japanese scholars to create a normative subject.<sup>91</sup>

A case to look at is the circulation of articles named *Nihonjinron*, which translates to “literature about the Japanese people.”<sup>92</sup> A complicated and varied set of works, *Nihonjinron* in summary was a study of the uniqueness of Japanese people. Its topics range from the ecology of Japan to the subsistence economy, its social structure, and psychology. While those themes are rather broad, *Nihonjinron* often writes in comparison to the West. For example, the existence of wet rice cultivation in Japan necessitated more corporate communities, leading to Japan’s more communal structures. At the same time it has also led to what Japanese anthropologist Ishida Eiichiro calls Japan’s animism, as opposed to the monotheisms from Europe and the Middle East, which, he argues, come from their pastoral ecology and reflect the “core personality of Europe.”<sup>93</sup> *Nihonjinron* itself is not a body of literature created by the government, but the State has formatted its policies based on *Nihonjinron* writings by awarding cultural medals for those who exemplify the Japanese aesthetic as well as establishing national museums that showcase the uniqueness of Japanese culture.<sup>94</sup> The Japanese State also propagated the *Nihonjinron* classics abroad, translating them to English for the consumption of other people.<sup>95</sup> Not only does *Nihonjinron* help define notions of “Japanese” within the nation, but it also helps the construction of the notions of Japanese outside. It prescribes normative models for Japanese citizens and characterizes what their supposed essence should be. A Japanese person cannot be truly monotheistic because they are by their nature animistic; they are behaving non-Japanese if they convert to Christianity or Islam.

In contrast to the continuum of the Japanese identity, the social environment of Japan itself is characterized as temporal. In this regard, the land of Japan is quite like the *saeculum*. Japan itself can modernize, become occupied by the United States, get into an economic boom, have that monetary bubble burst, and yet still remain internally all the same because all those factors were temporal. Regardless of the change in scenery, the true identity of the Japanese, prescribed by select scholars and reinforced by the State, remains everlasting, starting with the

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90 Debatably, the Japanese citizen can be associated with the divine too if connections are drawn via mythic origin tales.

91 The aspect of Shinto being crucial to the Japanese subject has been covered in the Concepts section.

92 *Nihonjinron* in kanji is 日本人論, 日本人 translating to “Japanese people” and 論 translating to “literature”

93 Befu, “Nationalism and Nihonjinron” from *Cultural Nationalism from East Asia* (1993) p.110

94 Ibid p.119 Two museums mentioned in Befu’s work are the Historical and Folklore Museum in Miyajima as well as the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka.

95 Ibid p.120

beginning of Japan until the end of the Japanese people.<sup>96</sup> In this regards, the Japanese State is not the only factor that secularizes the Church in Japan, that is, regulates the religious to better fit the vision of Japanese. Liturgists and bishops, too, secularize the Church. In the debates over consecration, the desire to change the historical translation to reflect a more “Japanese sensibility” is the recognition of an essence-meaning timeless and essential character-of the Japanese as agricultural people. The traditions of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, are considered as the temporary.

A more concrete example of privileging the constructed, yet naturalized Japanese identity over the historic, cultural practices of the Western Church is the replacement of genuflection for bowing. It is not considered Japanese to bend one’s knee to the ground and so the Japanese bishops have exchanged the action of genuflection for one of bowing. The practice of genuflection has its origins in Europe; with one of the earliest records of genuflection found was a command for Alexander the Great to his court.<sup>97</sup> The practice was solidified in Catholic liturgy during the medieval ages when genuflection was directed towards royalty with the theological reasoning being that since Christ is King of Kings, one would have to bow to Him. However, since genuflection does not have a continuous history in Japan, it is not considered a Japanese practice despite being part of the Japanese Church when St. Francis Xavier first arrived to the re-discovery of the *kakure kirishitan*. Bowing was adapted so that the Japanese would have a more familiar form of giving reverence. Yet the citation of culture again hides the institutionalization of practices, particularly bowing, in Japanese identity. Bowing, along with certain forms of seating, was practiced by the samurai class as well as the imperial court of the Tokugawa era. When the Meiji government was formalized, local modes of showing respect to a higher authority (be it religious or official) was restructured to have a more uniform public etiquette. Justifying itself as the restoration of the Imperial Court to its rightful place, Meiji taught its subjects to bow through its national education system, conditioning the Japanese to bow to one another as the proper, Japanese form of showing reverence.<sup>98</sup> The word ‘culture’ masks the use of State power in creating “the Japanese” as well as hides various local forms of reverence. In instigating national culture, forms of practices such as genuflection or even concepts such as the Eucharist become alien and an incorporation of foreign practices and concepts would be supposedly tainting the purity of Japanese identity.

Even though the *saeculum* has been transformed into the theological conception of culture, Opus Dei still acknowledges the *saeculum*. *Saeculum*, or the secular, is the very space in which Seido dwells and wants to sanctify. It is within their daily, profane work that they see the possibility of living out their Catholic virtue. In the next section, I will expand on this point of the secular being the site of sanctification as well as the space to spread Catholicism.

### III. The Acts of the Apostles

Although I came to Japan originally to study Catholic missionaries, I soon realized that to call members of Opus Dei “missionaries” was to mislabel them. They did not refer to their work as “evangelization,” which is the common Christian word used to describe the act of converting someone else. The key to understanding Opus Dei attitude of how they go about missionary work

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96 Thus the common notion of Japan being a nation which allows both modernity and tradition to exist

97 Genuflection existed before this, but my point was that it did not originate in Japan; Chugg, Andrew, *Alexander’s Lovers* 2006 p. 103

98 Naimushō Keishikyoku, *Keishi Ruijū Kisoku* Vol 2, 1879 p.385-6

is that they have no intention that they themselves will convert anyone in their conversations or even their acts. Rather, it will be God who converts those who with whom Seido comes in contact through the members. It will be up to Seido to create the conditions which invite conversion, especially when Catholicism is often depicted as a religion for Westerners. In this section I will go over the spirituality of Opus Dei, paying specific attention to the emphasis on laity. Then I will compare how Seido sees the task of evangelization with how the duality of “faith and reason” becomes a signature characteristic for the Church in Japan to address. Lastly, I will analyze the concept of silence as a condition, spelled out by both Seido and the Japanese bishops, for the cultivation of a relationship with Christ.

### A. *Opus Dei*

By virtue of their baptism, the members of the prelature of Opus Dei (also known as the Work) are inherently missionaries.<sup>99</sup> Doctrinally, being baptized makes one a member of the Catholic Church and places the obligation of being a missionary to non-believers so in this regard, those in the Work are not unlike every other Catholic in regards to mission.<sup>100</sup> Like all Christian missionaries, they undergo the task of enculturating the faith when trying to proselytize a non-Catholic. Opus Dei has a particular method of transmitting the faith, which is related to their positions as laity. Opus Dei sees itself residing in the *saeculum*, within the temporary nature of the material world. The Work centers on the laity, specifically the numeraries and the supernumerary who work outside the institution of the Church and have regular, non-religious obligations. The professed mission of Opus Dei is the sanctification of the everyday (secular/*saeculum*) through a sense of professionalism and excellence in quality of work. They are oriented in mission to be within the temporal world in order to bring a religious significance to every action they perform, be it teaching elementary students or washing bowls after dinner.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Seido is under the diocesan authority of the Bishop of Osaka and regulates their practices in accordance to the approved missal of the Catholic Conference of Japanese Bishops.

Opus Dei condones what it refers to as a “unity in life” which rejects the modern distinction between “religious” and “secular.”<sup>102</sup> They do not want to distinguish between religious action and secular action because they see both actions as being worthy of offering to God. Thus, Opus Dei has a different understanding of the secular, which is not simply “the non-religious.” Their strong emphasis on being lay and in the temporal matters of the world (the non-sacred matters such as work) suggests that the secular to Opus Dei should be understood as the *saeculum* rather than secular in the modern sense. Since both religious and secular practice can be offered to God, I argue that it would be most useful to analyze Opus Dei with the duality of sacred and secular in the medieval sense because just as in the medieval period, they do not conceptualize anything outside of the sovereignty of God, including whatever is recognized as secular.

Because Opus Dei operates within medieval duality of sacred and secular rather than modern duality of religion and secular, its image in the public eye is often one of controversy

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99 Opus Dei is a prelature for its members, the numeraries and supernumeraries, who are distinguished from the average laity in their vocation through Opus Dei. While non-members can do the same thing they do (sanctifying work), members themselves get priority in spiritual formation and direction.

100 Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 1270. This is not to say that every Catholic upholds this duty, but rather that each Catholic has this duty as taught by the Catholic Church.

101 Allen, John L. Jr. *Opus Dei: An Objective Look Behind the Myths and Reality of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church* (Double Day: 2005, p. 78)

102 Ibid p. 91

for violating so many modern sensibilities. The most incriminating aspect of the Work work is its secrecy. It is not so much that Opus Dei attempts to keep its works secret, though, but rather they do not announce and advertise their affiliation with a religious organization the same way a religious order does through the public wearing of habits or the abbreviation at the end of a name.<sup>103</sup> Since they emphasize their lay nature, it would be against the spirit of Opus Dei to announce their activities so publically because they do not see what they do as being out of the ordinary. The urge to have groups such as Opus Dei identify themselves as “religious” seems to be an irritation of the modern secular idea of what religion is in relation to self-identification. To practice religion as if it was part of the everyday life is to naturalize it as essential to their identity, which disrupts a secular narrative of the secular being the natural state of humanity before a religious element is placed on top. At English Dinners at Seido prayers and the visitation are not excused for non-Catholics and their normalcy is actually capitalized as a point of intrigue for non-Catholics.<sup>104</sup> Opus Dei stresses that they are not a religious order, which also creates confusion even to other members of the Church.

Opus Dei’s focus on laity is nonconventional because it rejects a distinction between the laity and ecclesial authorities. Opus Dei has a concept of spiritual formation, referring to the spiritual disciplines its members and participants go through, which on the surface seems quite monastic. The work prescribes the norms of piety, which are a set of practices to be done every day to continually develop one’s spirituality. They are referred to as the “norms of piety” because they should be done with such regularity that they will be internalized and one would become ordinarily pious. The norms include a morning offering, which is a prayer offered first thing in the morning upon awakening; mental prayer for thirty minutes in the morning and thirty minutes in the afternoon; daily attendance of mass; spiritual reading, which refers to reading a part of the Gospel as well as some other spiritually enriching book; visiting the Eucharist; a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary via daily rosary, reciting the Angelus, and ending prayers with the incantation of her title as “Our Hope and Seat of Wisdom;” an examination of conscience, which will be explained in a later section; and frequent use of the sacrament of confession, often once a week even if one is not in the state of mortal sin.<sup>105</sup>

Along with the norms of piety, there are weekly meetings with a group called a circle, based on one’s relationship with Opus Dei. A numerary would attend the circle of St. Peter and St. Michael; a supernumerary would attend the circle of St. Paul and St. Gabriel, and a young person or one not affiliated with Opus Dei would go to the circle of St. John the Apostle and St. Raphael. The circles last about an hour and begin in prayer, asking for the intercession of the patron saints (the ones listed above). Following is a reading of the Gospel (often the reading of the day) and commentary, a talk on a subject such as temperance or the Holy Spirit, an examination of conscience, spiritual reading, and a closing prayer.<sup>106</sup> Also once a month there is a recollection instead of circle, where all members or participants come into an Opus Dei center for a meditation in the chapel on a Gospel reading led by one of the center’s priests. After meditation, there are forty-five minutes of silence and an allowance of prayer, spiritual reading, and confession around the center. Once the forty-five minutes are over, everyone recollects in the chapel for benediction

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103 The abbreviation refers to the letters attached to the name of a member of a religious order. For example, Saint Thomas Aquinas’ name, when written, would be “Father Thomas Aquinas OP,” with the OP referring to *Ordo Praedicatorum*, Latin for Order of Preachers, or the Dominican Order. Opus Dei members simply go by the same name as when they join the Work, not having to change it to a saint’s name or adding any abbreviation.

104 In a section below, I will clarify what an English Dinner and visitation is.

105 Ibid p. 30-31

106 Field notes 1 July, 2014

and the recollection ends with a talk, often in the center's living room, by one of the Opus Dei members.

What might be seen as intense spiritual practice more readily observed in a religious order is what Opus Dei wants to bring to the laity. For Opus Dei, saintliness is not reserved for the clergy and that it is possible to integrate the religious practice of monasteries with a life of everyday work. Whereas religious orders develop a specific spiritual gift known as a charism in order to spread Catholicism in a form appropriate to their charism, Opus Dei cultivates the ordinary life so that Catholicism can be spread through ordinary means. While clergy can preach from the pulpit, Opus Dei preaches from outside the walls of a church; not to a congregation, but to an apostolate of family, friends, co-workers, and colleagues.

### B. *Apostolate*

Proselytization is not an activity in which Seido members engage and a word I would not use in order to describe what they are doing. Members often avoid bringing religious motives into conversation, preferring to keep the conversation flow "natural." If there is an opportunity to bring a Catholic view on an issue or event like having a new child then they will make a small Catholic comment like "I will pray for you and your baby," but there is usually no premeditated agenda of turning any conversation with someone into an opportunity for proselytization. Seido refers to their work and web of relationships as an apostolate, referencing the work of the apostles. Depending on one's position in society, the apostolate ranges from a circle of friends to their work colleagues to a classroom full of junior high school students. The purpose of an apostolate is not to explicitly spread Catholicism to everyone in contact with them but to be a limited space for each person to "share the love of Christ" with others. Those who are affected do not have to be non-Catholic either; the most immediate apostolate for those at Seido is other Seido members.

Seido also de-emphasizes the label of "missionary" when referring to themselves. Although they are missionaries theologically, they characterize a missionary as someone who devotes their entire life to solely and explicitly bringing the Gospel to others. This vocation is not what Seido does. Instead they focus not on spreading Catholicism to everyone they can but to the apostolate immediately in front of them. With a stress on laity and the development of certain kinds of virtue, Seido orients itself to preaching Catholicism through the sanctification of the *saeculum*, with an understanding that one does not have to be clerical to be saintly.

In an interview with Kohei, he discusses how having an apostolate is more like having a passive attitude one has with everyone rather than a constant, conscience choice to do apostolate work:

"I don't usually think 'Let me do apostolate now,' so it's just a natural thing. That's one thing I learned from St. Josemaria...apostolate through friendship. I'm just with my friends and, if I'm real friends with somebody, sometimes we will talk about other things. It's usually in my daily conversations with my friends. I talk about my faith, or as I talk about my personal things like my family, or my hobbies, or whatever. Since faith is part of my life, whenever I talk to friends about my own life, naturally it comes out with topics related to my faith."<sup>107</sup>

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107 Interview with Kohei 17 July, 2014

He describes it as a “natural” thing, taking forms in relationships he has with others. Kohei mentions specifically his friendships and how natural it is for him to express it with his friends since it is an intimate part of his character. He visibly keeps a crucifix on his desk at work in Kyoto, which signals his faith to observers and invites inquiries. Kohei also intentionally adds a spiritual dimension to his work by offering up the work he does in glory to God. Work becomes a form of prayer for his family and his friends though he notes that the labor he does is not that significant. To increase the strength of his prayer, he offers up his intentions during the mass in the morning.<sup>108</sup> However, Seido is but a single Catholic organization; the majorities of Catholics in Japan do not have that kind of depth to their spirituality and do not share the naturalness of sharing the faith as Kohei does. Seido members characterize Japanese Catholics, as well as the Japanese in general, as being quite reserved and unwilling to engage in serious dialogue about such a “personal matter.”

### C. *Apostolate and Culture*

One of the biggest obstacles Seido members note about Japan is that the culture is not conducive to receiving charity from others. In the context of Seido, charity refers not just to almsgiving, which they say is quite difficult in Japan because there is no (visible) homelessness, but also to acts of generosity and good will for the benefit of another person.<sup>109</sup> At the end of a camping trip with the Yoshida Opus Dei Center’s and Seido Opus Dei Center’s Boys Clubs, campers had the opportunity to be blindfolded and spun around for a few seconds and then attempt to split a watermelon with a stick while dizzy and blindfolded. There were two rather large watermelons and we managed to strike both of them open, but only consumed one and a half. I asked if we could offer the other half to any other family or group around but Sasuke shook his head. He explained that if we offer something to someone, it would be an act which demanded exchange and therefore they would reject since they would not give anything back to us. He elaborated that Japan did not understand the concept of free charity since it did not have a Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>110</sup> During lunch, after we had returned from the camping trip, I relayed what I thought of the trip to Shoya and Takeshi. I mentioned what Sasuke said at the end about charity being an alien concept, and Shoya remembered at the beginning of the trip when a boy offered me some of his lunch when I forgot to bring mine. Shoya noted that those on the trip were good boys for showing kindness. Takeshi added that sort of behavior was rare for people in Japan because they tend to get hesitant (遠慮する, *enryo suru*) and that they did not want to start any drama. This hesitation often leads to an ignoring of foreigners, says Takeshi.<sup>111</sup> Not wanting to engage with foreigners can be a problem in terms of apostolate work because within the social imaginary of the Japanese, Christianity is understood to be a foreign religion and only practiced by non-Japanese.

In his interview, Kohei mentions that there is a lack of young, Japanese vocations, by which he means more Japanese clergy.<sup>112</sup> He states that if there are more Japanese vocations, it would “help destroy the image that Christianity is a Western religion” and that they would signify the possibility that Japan could also be a Christian nation since “there are many Japanese like

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108 Kohei refers to it as the Sacrifice on Calvary so he can add the work he did with the work Christ did.

109 The “good of the other” is defined in relation to the positions of the Catholic Church.

110 26 July, 2014

111 28 July, 2014

112 Vocations often refer to the vocation of priesthood within the Church. It is not a common word used by laity.

them [who are Christian].”<sup>113</sup> The idea of culture appears once again, performing a similar type of labor as before when issues of translation were brought into question. In this circumstance, culture once more circumscribes religion as a product of specific historical developments; but instead of molding religion into a more harmonious concept with Japanese culture, it is rejected entirely as being non-Japanese.<sup>114</sup> The more Japanese Catholics (or at least Christians) there are, the more likely it would seem that Christianity has a place in Japan and that the two identities could coincide.

Although the Western association of Christianity is often seen to be detrimental in Japan, Seido members are able to use the foreign impression of Christianity to their advantage. Yoshi always advises his students to study Christianity whenever they want to learn about Western culture in order to learn about “its influence in Western society.”<sup>115</sup> In Hayato’s interview, he revealed that his conversion to Catholicism started with advice from his father, telling him to study Christianity to better understand Western culture. He traveled to Spain after his undergraduate where he lived near an Opus Dei center and started attending events. After repeated exposure, he decided to get baptized and eventually joined the Work.<sup>116</sup> At that point, Catholicism did not register as a Western religion but as the true religion.

A noteworthy point in Hayato’s interview is his parents’ reactions to his conversion. His family is historically linked with a Buddhist temple through being patrons and so there is a rupture in the tradition of passing on a Buddhist icon from generation to generation. Since Hayato is a numerary, he will also not marry and therefore not continue the family name. Most alarming to his parents is the fear that Hayato will grow distant from Japanese customs and will eventually abandon them while they are old.<sup>117</sup> Hayato’s conversion is understood to be a complete break from his pre-Christian life; he has stopped the Buddhist icon passing, the name passing, and the care of parents.<sup>118</sup> All of these practices are associated with the Japanese identity and the threat of ceasing all of them cuts Hayato from being able to identify himself Japanese. Culture behaves as a normative model for Japanese citizens and deviation elicits a fear of alienation and inability of understanding. There is not mention of “cross-cultural” exploration, but to claim even that would presume an essence to any cultures being crossed. Hayato’s parents exhibit the attitude Kohei talked about when he described the need for more Japanese vocations. Since Japanese Catholics are still a minority in Japan, Hayato’s conversion was seen being quite contrary to a multitude of societal norms, not just being a Catholic in a heavily non-Catholic nation. Yet the increase in Japanese Catholics is stunted by another attitude the Japanese have towards religion, this time among practitioners themselves.

Seido members talk about apathy among Japanese Catholics in spreading their faith to others and how a true Catholic needs to realize their religious duties as a believer in preaching the Gospel.<sup>119</sup> Kohei mentions that while some of the parishioners at local parishes can be quite devout, that sense of piety is only present on Sunday when they go to mass. He uses an analogy to describe the laity as “customers in a shop” who “take what they want at weekly mass, and then they go home.” They are not willing to be more like “shop clerks” who are “willing to serve others”

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113 Interview with Kohei 17 July, 2014

114 This rejection is exactly the reason the liturgists wanted to enculturate to the extent that they did.

115 Interview with Yoshi 16 July, 2014

116 Interview with Hayato 15 July, 2014

117 Ibid

118 I mean only to list these, not to say that Hayato will indeed abandon his parents as they are elderly.

119 Apathy is neither a Japanese specific problem nor a modern problem to the Church but it has been highlighted by Seido in discussions of what they think the Church in Japan has problems solving.

and are “committed to the Church.”<sup>120</sup> Channeling both the spirits of Vatican II and Opus Dei, Kohei then stresses that the laity needs to be in service to the Church since the institution is not only run by the clergy. However, Seido knows the Church in Japan is not completely without those willing to serve. Most notable is the local priest in Shukugawa, who is often telling the parishioners to come to catechism classes and to bring friends to mass and classes as well.<sup>121</sup> Yet the hesitation to participate in church duties is supported by a certain Japanese stigma of what religion (*shūkyō*) is.

#### D. Fear

Hikaru had a day off from work so he and I went shopping at a local mall. It was not in Ashiya so in order to get there and back we needed to take a train. On the way home to Seido, we were discussing what groups I was involved with as an undergraduate. He was rather surprised to learn that I was part of some religious groups and even willing to tell people that I was religious if they asked me. He said that people in Japan have an aversion to the religion. If he would tell people that he was a Catholic, they would think he was part of some cult trying to get money from them somehow.<sup>122</sup> In Hayato’s interview, he also mentions the stigma *shūkyō* has by being associated with groups trying to “scam people,” making them “believe in strange things to get [their] money.”<sup>123</sup> Both Kohei and Taisei affirm that the threat of a multitude of scammers is a threat to the Church in Japan since no one wants to talk about religion. Apostolate work becomes difficult when no opportunity presents itself for a discussion on religion.

Because of the historical development of the term *shūkyō*, Catholicism in Japan is grouped with an overwhelming number of other religious corporations (*shūkyō hōjin*) and they therefore share the stigma of possibly being a cult. What was most impactful to this understanding was the Aum Shinrikyo bombing in 1995 which caused the reworking of the Religious Corporations Act (*shūkyō hōjin hō*).<sup>124</sup> The reformatting of the law also caused Seido, the International Language and Culture School (legally identified as a corporation known as the Seido Foundation), to reformat itself into a secular institution both to avoid paperwork and to avoid the heavy scrutiny the State would have over Seido Foundation if they were to identify as a religious corporation. Being recognized as a secular institution may not have been a setback to Seido’s Catholic mission, however, since Opus Dei already situates itself in a secular environment (both in the medieval understanding and the modern). “Secular” provides a cover for Seido which eliminates both State and social pressures of being affiliated with cultish activities and in an interesting way, legally recognizes Opus Dei’s work as part of the *saeculum*. But like Kohei, the majority of Seido’s apostolates are within a group of friends, not necessarily Seido the school.

#### E. Razón y Fe (Reason and Faith)

It was early summer in Japan and the cicadas were loudly whistling in the trees across from Seido. There were only four of us in the house at the time (Akira, Takeshi, Kohei, and myself) since everyone else had gone to work. At noon we all collected in the dining room to

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120 Interview with Kohei 17 July, 2014

121 Interview with Yoshi 16 July, 2014

122 Interview with Hikaru 21 July, 2014

123 Interview with Hayato 15 July, 2014

124 The changes in the law are explored in the Law section of this thesis.

eat lunch together and made conversation about how my work was going. Food was already laid on the table by the Administration and we sat at the end of the table, with Kohei at the head in the director's seat.<sup>125</sup> Before we eat, we make the sign of the cross and pray in Latin for blessing over the food: *Benedic, Dómine, nos et haec tua dona quae de tua largitate sumus sumpturi. Per Christum Dóminum nostrum. Amen.*<sup>126</sup> While eating, Akira and Takeshi asked about what I was trying to research, to which I replied "the Church in Japan" and how they would try to spread the faith. When we finished our meal, Kohei starts the Latin prayer after our meal: *Ágimus tibi gratias, omnípotens Deus, pro universis beneficiis tuis, qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculórum;* to which we reply "amen," and the second section: *Deus det nobis suam pacem;* to which we reply: *Et vitam æternam.*<sup>127</sup>

Following lunch, we ascend to the sanctuary for a few moments of silent prayer.<sup>128</sup> We dip our fingers in holy water next to the door and make the sign of the cross, touching our forehead, our stomach, and both shoulders. As we pass in front of the altars to get to our kneelers, each of us bows before it and the tabernacle, which sits behind the altar on its own pedestal. The wooden kneelers creaked as we rest our knees upon them, taking a couple of minutes of silence to pray before Kohei breaks the quiet by praying: "Mary, our hope and Seat of Wisdom," and we reply: "pray for us."<sup>129</sup> We four proceed to stand up and leave the sanctuary one by one, bowing towards the altar as we pass by on our way out.

We all gather in the living room, sitting spaced out in some sort of circular shape. Akira brings up again the notion of spreading Catholicism to the Japanese. He says that the Church must "evangelize with reason" because the Japanese "have no faith."<sup>130</sup> He references St. John Paul II who wrote an encyclical letter titled *Fides et Ratio*, calling it in Spanish: *Razón y Fe*, emphasizing how faith and reason can be coherent. Takeshi agrees, though his position is a little different in that he says that the Japanese believe in "something" since they engage in "traditional practices" but they did not have a position of having belief or spirituality. I ask Takeshi if he has faith, to which he chuckles and says "of course!"

Despite being Japanese themselves, Takeshi, Akira, and Kohei did not come into the Catholic faith due to reason. In a later interview, Takeshi explains his religious background and how he came to be Catholic because of his family upbringing. Takeshi's father was orphaned during World War II and was often taken care of by a Jesuit priest. His father later converted after being with the priest for some time in Kobe. His mother also converted to Catholicism after she married his father, who spoke to her about considering becoming Catholic.<sup>131</sup> At least in Takeshi's circumstance, faith was not won over by reasoning out why Catholicism was the true religion or through determining that there is an all-powerful creator of the universe; rather, it was developed through an act of charity from one person to another. Kohei also became a Catholic because of his upbringing in the Church, and was even exposed to Opus Dei since childhood as his family is a supernumerary

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125 In Opus Dei centers, there is a special seat at the table for the director to sit. If the director is not present, the next person in charge will sit in their place.

126 Translates to: Bless us oh Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

127 We give you thanks, for these thy gifts which we have received through Christ our Lord; May the Lord grant us peace; and life everlasting.

128 Kohei refers to these as "visits" which are done after lunch and dinner whenever members are home.

129 *seimaria, watashitachi no kibō, eichi no za; warera no tameni inori tamae* (聖マリア、私達の希望、英知の座; われらのために祈りたまえ)

130 These discussions were in English.

131 Interview with Takeshi 14 July, 2014

family.<sup>132</sup> Kohei's grandparents were not Catholic when they arrived in Brazil from Japan but were later baptized as adults. His mother was baptized when she was born, but Kohei's father was baptized when he was ten with the rest of his family. His exposure and adherence to the faith was developed in his attendance of Opus Dei activities while living in Brazil, such as going to a Boy's Club, spiritual direction, and meditations.<sup>133</sup> Reason does not seem to play a role in Kohei's faith; it was not even that largely in play with the conversion of his grandparents, who became Catholic overtime after wanting to become more localized in Brazil.<sup>134</sup> Kohei, at least according to his interview, did not emphasize a rational approach to his adherence to Catholicism, even though the priests had spoken about its importance to the conversion of the Japanese. One member of Seido, though, at least began the process of conversion with reason when he started to question his dietary habits. Kenji could not justify eating fish while being a Buddhist but instead of going vegetarian like Buddhists are instructed to do, he found himself converting to Catholicism. Save for Kenji, none of the members of Seido highlighted reason as the main factor in their or their family's conversion. Yet the harmony of reason and faith is stressed whenever Seido members engage in a conversation about religion to a non-Catholic.

Since Japan is diagnosed as country with little to no faith, Seido members at times attempt to give rational arguments in defense of God or of the Catholic Church's position on a social issue. During one of the circles, Yoshi spoke about occasions when he would speak to a Japanese colleague about God rationally. Their reply, however, was not one of acceptance but one of indifference. Often they would respond along the lines "oh I see, but I think of it this way..." and proceed to explain their own stance. Similarly with the case of explaining a social teaching of the Church, they would respond "that's a nice ideal, but in reality..." to Yoshi.<sup>135</sup> While Yoshi says the stances he gives are reasonable, they seem to fall on deaf ears and the person he converses with remains unchanged. He is a little upset about the stagnant position of the other, but he stresses that the primary form of evangelization is not reason anyway, but prayer. Since prayer is a communication with God, it is religious, therefore having the ability to cut through not just deaf ears but also cultural boundaries. Seido members pray for more than just acquaintances and colleagues, most often praying for their friends.

On Wednesday evenings, Seido hosts an event called "English Dinner," which consists of opening the center to non-members to participate in a night of food and conversation in English. It costs 500 yen for the meal and is open to only males since Seido is a men's center. Before the meal, someone blesses the food with a prayer in English and after dessert and some conversation, the same person ends in an English prayer as well.<sup>136</sup> Just like all dinners, everyone proceeds to the sanctuary after eating, cleaning, and setting up for breakfast for a visitation. Someone leads three sets of Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory Bes, ending with the Spiritual Communion prayer and the title of Mary as Our Hope and Seat of Wisdom all in English. Regardless of whether those who attend the dinner are Catholic or not, everyone is required to participate in kneeling and reciting the responses to the prayers written on prayer cards in English. By observance, non-Catholics also replicate the bowing done before the altar as one passes by it before kneeling. Afterward, we head down to the living room for a get together where we continue speaking in

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132 His mother and father are supernumeraries

133 Interview with Kohei 17 July, 2014

134 Field notes, 16 July, 2014. The compatibility of reason and faith has become a popular topic of discussion for Catholics, especially after the rise of the New Atheist movement which opposes the two. As cited above, Pope John Paul II has written about reason and faith (*Fides et Ratio*, Faith and Reason) as well as his successor, Pope Benedict XVI (*The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* co-authored with Jurgen Habermas).

135 Field notes, 8 July, 2014

136 Since I was the "English native" that someone was me every Wednesday during my time at Seido.

English. Some nights are thematic if there is a special guest who will be presenting something during the get-together so the food may reflect what they are going to present. Seido hopes that people will come regularly enough that they will start asking questions about what the prayers they are reciting are and what Seido even does besides host dinners on Wednesday nights.

Seido uses English as a tool to attract people to the Church. In many instances, male students from Seido's English School would be invited to an English dinner in order to befriend Seido members, who would expose them to the Catholic practices they do during the night. Conceptually, there is a parallel between the international usage of English with the international practice of Catholicism: both have origins in the West and yet both have crossed geographic and ethnic boundaries. However, the difference in Seido's conception of them is that they do not want to keep Catholicism associated with the West. For Seido, learning English is only a gateway into Catholicism, a condition which makes conversion easier. In the view of Seido, English is a specific cultural expression of a universal truth, a local adaptation so that Catholicism would be easier to understand. After conversion, the new Catholic would not see themselves as part of a Western religion but the universal religion, like in Hayato's case. Conversions are often rare, though, since regular attendance is not very common. However, there was at least one high school student by the name of Koki who continued to go almost each Wednesday.

At one particular English Dinner, Kohei approached Koki to inquire about an interest Koki had about religion. Kohei had previously mentioned to me that Koki showed some interest in Catholicism and might be willing to play with the idea of taking Catechism classes so he decided to actually intently engage in a conversation with religious motive to foster the thought of conversion. While Koki was getting some food, Kohei approached him and asked him what he thought about religion.<sup>137</sup> Koki replied that he wonders about proof of God and that it seems as though science has yet to yield any evidence. Kohei said that this was a false expectation and that trying to find God through physical or scientific means was a categorical error. Koki seemed a little surprised, uttering an "aaaah," after Kohei's characterization of God as non-physical/scientific. I found myself participating in this conversation when I brought up points about the Catholic Church's institutional support of scientific endeavor. The matter of discussion ended with another "aah" but the act of conversion did not end for either Kohei or me. After dinner, Kohei asked if I could pray for Koki so that God may convert him. Even though there was an intentional move to get Koki to be interested in Catholicism, Kohei is not the agent to who converts in the end, but he is more of an embodiment of the "love of Christ." Although friendship is the predominant form of apostolate, prayer is the predominant form of evangelization. While prayer takes vocal form, all personal prayer comes in the context of silence.

## F. *Silence*

The bishops and Seido emphasize silence as a necessity for the cultivation of a relationship with Christ. During my stay at Seido, the bishops worldwide were preparing for the first part of the Synod on the Family to take place in October. The Vatican sent out questionnaires to each council of bishops for them to discuss and answer. The Catholic Conference of Japanese Bishops released their answers to the questionnaire while I was in Ashiya and so I had the privilege in reading it when it just came out. One question related to the family prompted an answer relating to silence: what critical situations in the family today can obstruct a person's encounter with

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<sup>137</sup> Kohei specifically says "religion" and not Catholicism or Christianity.

Christ?<sup>138</sup> The bishops had multiple replies, depending on the agents involved. They first point to an “information overload and the spread of consumerism, hedonism, and individualism.” Second, they say parents can be overworked in daily life and do not have enough “emotional leeway” to find time to “encounter God in tranquility, silence, and prayer.” Children suffer a similar problem, being oversaturated with information during and after school to the point that they do not “even have enough time to get enough sleep or play” so they “lack the interior silence which to encounter their true self” which results in their lack of prayer.<sup>139</sup>

The bishops say the biggest problems for the Family in Japan are the material demands which take away the attention and time people need to give to God. They diagnose parents as being overburdened in work and kids as being overworked with school, constantly needing to study. Hikaru agrees that parents are overworked, citing his father as an example of a parent who could not spend a lot of time raising him and developing his own or Hikaru’s faith life. Kohei and Yoshi confirm that kids spend too much time on academics, citing that as the number one problem for the Japanese children in the development of their faith since they would go to cram school (*juku*) instead of mass on the weekends. Yet Seido manages to cultivate a spiritual life within each of its members, despite all of them holding rigorous jobs. They are able to balance work and religious cultivation, devoting at least two and half hours to prayer every day and using silence as a space for a relationship with Christ.

Seido members begin and end their day in silence. When they wake, it is Opus Dei tradition not to speak until after mass; they get dressed, eat breakfast, and shuffle into the sanctuary without a word coming out of their mouths. The only speaking done is by the person who reads a passage from St. Josemaria during the thirty minutes of silent prayer or possible priestly meditation given at that time. Another thirty minutes of silent prayer is prescribed in the afternoon, and every day the final event in which Seido members participate is the examination of conscience, which is silent from the reading until the end of mass.

The examination takes place in the sanctuary. All members enter the sanctuary, bless themselves with holy water, and stand in one of the pews. A member reads a short passage to reflect on or says “daily examination” and everyone sits down for about five minutes to reflect on their day. I am told the minimum is to reflect on what one did well, what one did wrong, and what one can improve on. Another type of examination of conscience occurs in the circles where the numerary or supernumerary in charge reads a set of questions and allowing a period of silence in between each question to reflect on the answers. Questions focus on bringing God to the ordinary, placing Him out of the church and into the world with each reflector. Several examples of questions include: “Do I try to make it to daily mass? Do I remember that God is always present? Am I dedicated to my studies, if study is my obligation?” These questions also attempt to cultivate a person who works with intention and “excellence,” offering even the smallest details of work and upkeep to God.

For Seido, the practice of silence is an effective tool in cultivating the spiritual lives of Japanese Catholics who, according to the bishops and Kohei, are overwhelmed with the amount of information they are required to process and the stress from the busyness of everyday life. During the camping trip, at the end of each night, Shoya assigned the eldest boy to lead the examination of conscience to the rest of the boys while we sat quietly around a lamp. All boys,

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138 Response to Secretariat of the Extraordinary Synod, Section 8 Question B

139 One can read Buddhist meditative undertones in this statement, but I would argue the assertion of having a “self” is not Buddhist; Answers 1-3 from the Response to Secretariat of the Extraordinary Synod, Section 8 Question B

Catholic or not, had to sit and listen to the oldest boy read off the questions and were told to reflect on their answers. The questions of this examination were tailored to the boys and the camping trip, emphasizing thanksgiving to God, praying a rosary every day, and being a good friend to others.<sup>140</sup> Despite having a full day of activities, ending with an examination of conscience is supposed to help the boys orient their day towards God. Silence entails a personal connection since only they can think their thoughts. Yet the development with their relationship with God is not entirely up to them since the questions in the examination were included specifically to bring into mind certain practices the kids may or may not do.

An intriguing point about praying in silence is that it is portrayed as an a-cultural practice. Silence as a practice was propagated to the Benedictine monasteries during the mid-eighth century; there was no emphasis on silence in what would later be regarded as the Greek, or Eastern Orthodox, church. What is also interesting to note is that laity were presumed to be different than the religious in the evening since the former was expected to be loud and chatting while the latter was expected to be quiet and in contemplation.<sup>141</sup> Despite coming from a specific, monastic origin, Seido and the bishops regard silence as a practice possible for anyone. The bishops' address to the questionnaire regarding the Synod did not specify that it was just for Japanese Catholic families but for Japanese families all over the nation. Kohei agrees with that stance, though it does not seem that Seido often uses silence to invite conversion but instead to further cultivate a relationship with God for those who are already believers.

Silence is a condition which allows a believer to make God personal. While Seido members have their apostolate through friendships, God has His apostolate in quietness. It is useful to examine silence as a space in relation to a re-examination of ritual as a form of bodily discipline. According to Talal Asad, ritual is a spiritual discipline which forms the practitioner by replicating the behaviors of exemplars, which in the case of Catholicism are saints. This discipline is an exercise in the development of virtue as to grow in saintly behavior, with the end goal of becoming a saint after death.<sup>142</sup> The replication of these actions produces sensitivity to saintly virtue, that is, an orientation more towards what is regarded as holy and away from what is regarded as sinful. When virtuous practice becomes habitualized, Seido members will be more disposed to acting in a saintly manner in whatever situation. Thus, Kohei could "naturally" speak about deeper, more personal topics such as his faith with his friends after he had the consistent opportunity to talk about it with others, presumably with other Opus Dei members. According to Asad, ritual as a form of spiritual discipline was the connection of bodily practice and internal motive so the repeated rituals of the mass, rosary, confession, spiritual reading, and other daily practices at Seido would be part of a spiritual crafting project.<sup>143</sup> Asad also notes that rituals can be divided for pedagogical reasons, but not in practice because specific rituals were to be practiced with others in order to develop fully the Christian life. The act of going into silence and praying/meditating is a ritual practiced within the context of the norms of piety to develop a contemplative spirituality.

Practices also develop a specific form of spirituality, which is why regulation and adherence to tradition is a necessity for preventing what would be seen as unorthodox or at the minimum non-Opus Dei in terms of spirituality. The development of Opus Dei spirituality takes place in the practice of the norms of piety as to be conditioned similarly to St. Josemaria. The pursuit of secular (within the *saeculum*) activities and work are also regarded as cultivating Opus

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140 Field notes 27 July, 2014

141 MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Silence A Christian History* 2013 p. 94

142 Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* 1993 p. 63

143 Ibid p. 64

Dei spirituality because it is a focus on the sanctification of the lay apostolate, which is not the same for a religious order such as the Dominicans. Emphasizing living within the secular, silence introduces a sacred time into the everyday, a sacred time which Seido and the Japanese bishops emphasize as much needed in the daily lives of the Japanese.

#### IV. Conclusion

One late afternoon in Seido, Shoya was working in the computer room while I was there. I decided to take advantage of this opportunity and ask him what he thought the Church in Japan needed. He responded that the Church needs an “apostolate for young people” and emphasized Seido activities as being an opportunity to reach out to young men, who are absent in the Church.<sup>144</sup> Currently, he says, they have to choose between studying and going to church and do not learn the value of attending mass. Shoya suggests, though, that the boys should study at Seido so that they can get their school work done as well as being able to meet and talk to the numeraries, learn virtue, and perhaps learn about Catholicism as well.

During the part of summer I was in Ashiya, junior high students were in the final weeks of instruction. As my time in Japan neared its end, so too did their school year. With their final exams coming around the corner, Seido set up study halls for the children both in the actual residence of members and in the English teaching school. Study halls typically lasted the entire afternoon until dinner time at Seido and are split up into sessions by stretch and snack breaks. During one break one of the members gives a talk on a certain virtue and why it is important to try to cultivate good behavior, though they do not mention any theological purpose. Kohei gave a talk during one of the study sessions and taught on the importance of service. He showed a Thai video of a man who performed acts of service towards people in need consistently for weeks. In the end those whom the man was kind to went through life changes and Kohei explained how beneficial it is to everyone if everyone regularly served others but stayed clear from referring to any Christian significance of service. In speaking to Kohei about these talks, he says some of the kids really appreciate them. He mentions that some families do not have a strong bond because parents do not have the time to raise their children since they have to work so often. This statement resonates with what Shoya speaks of when he answered my question about what he thought the Church needs. It is both their hopes, and indeed Seido’s, that these children come into the Church by learning what they consider universal virtue, which would make it easier to receive the universal religion. These acts of building virtue are not tied with debates about discerning culture and religion, but rather developing what Taisei calls a “natural foundation for the supernatural.”<sup>145</sup> Taisei said he was quoting St. Thomas Aquinas, a doctor of the Church who developed Aristotelian models of theology.

While Taisei’s statement of the natural foundation preceding the supernatural can be interpreted as a statement of the primacy of a secular identity, what he is referring to is the primacy of virtue. For Taisei, the development of virtue, even though it is not inherently Catholic, creates dispositions to the faith. Just as the rites at Yasukuni Jinja predispose citizens to a more nationalistic, pre-WWII ethos, the learning and practicing of what Seido considers virtue will predispose the kids to Catholicism, since they hope the kids will see a resonance in the good of which they practice in the goodness of the Church.

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144 Field notes 27 July, 2014

145 Field notes 10 June, 2014

I ended the last chapter with a section on silence partially because it was an important aspect of the Japanese Church and partially in reference to Endō Shūsaku's novel, *Silence*, which became the most popular piece of literature people referred me to when discussing the Catholic Church in Japan. Like the novel, my non-Japanese informants would always go into a discussion of the cultural elements of Catholicism and how its theology can be too euro-centric. I hope this essay would be enough of a commentary because it is peculiar to see that all responsibility of change, enculturation, and tolerance get assigned to the Church. What is not disputed is Japanese culture or the Japanese government: they are givens. Yet, to focus solely on the Church as the site of dispute not only reveals the internal politics of Catholicism in regards to missionary efforts, but also to depoliticize and essentialize the subjects whom it proselytizes. Missionary activity becomes a matter of avoiding Western imperialism by enculturating Catholicism.

I would like to point out the flexibility of practice in opposition to the orthodoxy of doctrine. The emphasis on doctrine or the belief in them, as the fundamental element of Catholicism does not stem originally from the Church itself but an effect of modern secularism. Practice, which is not seen as being necessary to religion but only an outward expression of interior beliefs, is free to change. Japanese secularism in particular has in mind the crafting of Japanese citizens who perform certain practices which give them sensitivity not to saintly virtues, but to what would be defined as Japanese values. Practice is also seen as being universally accessible, regardless of any individual's or organization's belief. The accessibility of practice allowed the Japanese State to mandate all citizens to shrine visits even if they were not Shinto practitioners, as opposed to the particulars of belief. Catholicism, though, having adopted modern concepts such as culture, emphasizes a universality of belief as distinct from particular practice. When Taisei speaks about creating a natural foundation, he places practice before belief, an ancient Christian principle which is expressed in the Latin phrase: *lex orandi, lex credendi* – the law of praying is the law of believing.

William Johnston, professor at Sophia University in Tokyo and translator of *Silence* into English, remarks that Japan is “not indifferent to Christianity, but looking for that form of Christianity that will suit its national character,” (Endō, end of preface, xviii). But rather than look for a Christianity to fit into its national character, Seido seeks to propagate practice to transform Japan into a virtuous society.

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## VI. Appendix 1

Revised Article 25: "A religious corporation must draw up an inventory of its assets at the time of its incorporation (including incorporation by merger), and within three months after the close of every fiscal year it must draw up an inventory of its assets as well as an account statement of revenue and expenditure.

2. A religious corporation must at all times keep in its office the following documents and ledgers: (1) its regulations and certificate of authentication; (2) A record of the names of its officers; (3) An inventory of its assets, an account statement of revenue and expenditure, and a balance sheet of debits and credits in cases when such a balance sheet is drawn up; (4) Documents pertaining to precinct buildings (with the exclusion of those recorded in the inventory of assets); (5) Documents pertaining to the proceedings of the responsible officers and

other organs prescribed by the regulations, and records of the conducting of affairs; (6) In cases when an enterprise as described under the provisions of Article 6 is undertaken, the documents pertaining to that enterprise.

3. A religious corporation must allow its members and other persons with related concerns to inspect the documents and records listed in each item of the provisions of the preceding paragraph, and which according to those provisions are kept in the office of the said religious corporation, when there are legitimate interest for such an inspection, as well as when the request for inspection comes from one whose purposes are determined to be not unjustified.

4. A religious corporation must submit to the competent authority copies of the documents mentioned under the provisions of paragraph 2 as being kept in the office of the said religious corporation and described in that paragraph in items numbered 2 through 4, as well as number 6, within four months after the close of every fiscal year.

5. When handling the documents submitted in accordance with the provisions of the preceding paragraph, the competent authority shall respect the distinctive religious features, as well as the customs, of the religious corporation and must pay special attention so as to avoid any interference with the freedom of belief.

6. Authority exercised in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 shall not be interpreted as taken for the purpose of a criminal investigation.

Revised Article 78 no.2: When the competent authority considers there to be suspicions corresponding to one of the items below concerning religious corporations, it shall demand a report from the said religious corporations, within limits necessary to enforce this law, concerning matters of that religious corporation's management of its operations and enterprises; or, the official representative, responsible officer or some other related person of the said religious corporation case, when the concerned staff member wishes to enter the facilities of the said religious corporation in order to ask questions, he or she must obtain the consent of the official representative, the responsible officer, or another related person of the said religious corporation.

In cases when the said religious corporation is in violation of the provisions of Article 6, paragraph 2, concerning the conducting of enterprises other than public welfare enterprises.

In cases when authentication has been granted according to the provisions of Article 14, paragraph 1 or Article 39, paragraph 1 and the requirements listed in Article 14, paragraph 1, item 1 or Article 39, paragraph 1, item 3 are lacking for said religious corporation.

In the case that one of the conditions falling under Article 81, paragraph 1, items 1-4 applies to the said religious corporation.

In cases when, in accordance with the provisions of the previous paragraph, the competent authority requests a report or is considering having a staff member make an inquiry, when the said competent authority requests a report or is considering having a staff member make an inquiry, when the said competent authority is the Minister of Education, he or she must consult in advance with the Religious corporations Council and ask its opinion: when the said competent authority is the prefectural governor, he or she must communicate in advance with the Minister of Education and ask for the opinion of the Religious Corporations Council.

In cases according to the previous paragraph, the Minister of Education must present the facts and reasons for its request of a report or for an inquiry made by its staff members to the Religious Corporations Council, and must ask for its opinion.

In cases when the competent authority requests a report or has a staff member make an inquiry in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1, it shall respect the distinctive features as well as the customs of the religious corporation and must pay special attention so as to avoid

any interference with the freedom of belief.

The competent staff member making the inquiry in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 shall carry an identification card and present it to the official representative, the responsible officer, or another related person of the religious corporation.

Authority exercised in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 shall not be interpreted as taken for the purpose of a criminal investigation.