

東北に於けるキリシタンの世紀について

The *Kirishitan* Century in Tōhoku

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This paper provides a brief history of the 16th and 17th Century presence of Christianity in the Tōhoku region of Japan. The paper describes aspects of the 16th and 17th Century Catholic missions to Japan which are unique to Tōhoku, whilst simultaneously exploring potential issues associated with studying the history of Christianity in the region.

Keywords: Kirishitan, Martyrdom, Sendai, Franciscans, Jesuits

1. Introduction

The *Kirishitan* Century (J. *Kirishitan no Seiki* キリシタンの世紀) is the period of Japanese history from the arrival of Francis Xavier (1506–1552) in 1549 to the death of the last Christian missionary in Japan, Mancio Konishi (*Mansho Konishi* マンショ小西, 1600–1644) in 1644 (Miyazaki, 2003). Studies of the *Kirishitan* Century have overwhelmingly taken a Kyūshū and Kansai-centric focus, overlooking the histories of Christianity in other areas of Japan. In spite of this post-*Kirishitan* Century sources suggest that over 10% of *Kirishitan* were from the Tōhoku 東北 region, the second largest population after Kyūshū's 71.9% (Shimizu, 1986). Several Japanese studies have focused on *Kirishitan* history in the Tōhoku region most notably Urakawa Wasaburō's *Tōhoku Kirishitanshi* (1968) and Takagi Kazuo's *Tōhoku no Kirishitan junkyōchi o yuku* (2001), however, there is a sparsity of English language research on the area. This paper explores some of the history of the *Kirishitan* presence in the Tōhoku region, and describes and assesses potential problems with the study of this history.

2. The Arrival of the Kirishitan in Tōhoku

The earliest suggested dating for the arrival of Christianity in Tōhoku follows the arrival of the Senmatsu brothers (Senmatsu Daihachirō 千松大八郎 and Senmatsu Kohachirō 千松小八郎) in the village of Ōkago 大籠 (in modern day Ichinoseki 一ノ関) in 1558 (Fujisawa Machi Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai, 2007; Nishida, 1995; Urakawa, 1968; Tadano, 1990; Kubota, 1987; Numakura, 1996; Miyagi Kenshi Hensan Īnkai, 1961; Shitō, 1968). These brothers are said to have moved from Bitchū 備中 (where they had been converted to Christianity) in order to work in Ōkago's iron industry (Fujisawa Machi Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai, 2007; Urakawa, 1968). This dating provides several issues. Firstly, documents such as the *Saizōbō Monogatari* 裁増坊物語 which attest to these events are rather late in composition. The text's author, Saizō 裁増 (also 才三), is said to have lived from 1611 to 1750, becoming a monk at the age of 93 and subsequently writing the text (Nishida, 1995). The problem of this impossibly large lifespan aside, it appears that the text was therefore composed in the early 18th Century. It is noteworthy that other documents from the area corroborate that

Christianity arrived during the *Eiroku* 永祿 period (1558–1570) (Miyagi Kenshi Hensan Īnkai, 1961; Tadano, 1990). However, documents such as the *Ōkago Fūdoki* 大籠風土記 whilst referring to the Senmatsu brothers, date the large scale appearance *Kirishitan* communities to the *Kanei* 寛永 period (1624–1645) (Miyagi Kenshi Hensan Īnkai, 1961; Shutō, 1995). These documents are also late in composition with the *Ōkago Fūdoki* for instance dating from 1775 (Shutō, 1995). Other oral accounts and documents from the area date the arrival of Christianity to the 1610s (Nishida, 1995; Urakawa, 1968; Tadano, 1990). The late dating of these sources is not necessarily grounds to doubt the testimony of the documents on its own, as they recorded older oral traditions. However, as noted by Saitō Koichi the date of 1558 provides a potential issue as whilst the *Saizōbō Monogatari* and other documents attribute the beginning of iron manufacturing in the area to the Senmatsu brothers in 1558, documents from elsewhere in the region provide the date of 1606 for the beginning of the iron industry there (Saitō, 1996; Shitō, 1968). Nevertheless, the most important indicator that the story is likely legendary is the lack of contemporaneous reference to the existence of *Kirishitan* in the area by the Jesuits. Perhaps, this is to be expected as the Senmatsu brothers were not the wealthy, high-profile converts which Jesuit letters tended to place at their centre. Indeed, as ordinary *Kirishitan*, it may have even been the case that the Jesuits were unaware of the existence of the Senmatsu brothers and the community in Ōkago. Conjecture aside, if the dating of 1558 is accepted another problem arises, namely what form the religion took. There were no missionaries or mission staff present in the north of Japan, let alone the Ōkago area. Beyond the act of engaging with new symbols and in new rituals as was defining of new converts elsewhere (Higashibaba, 2001), it is difficult to imagine what form the religion took, how the Senmatsu brothers proceeded in spreading the religion, and how converts understood it.

The potential arrival of *Kirishitan* in Ōkago in 1558 can only be explored conjecturally. There are several issues which make accepting the account as anything more than legendary problematic. There is a higher probability that documents dating the arrival of *Kirishitan* in the Sendai 仙台 area to the 1610s are accurate, as missionaries existed in the area at the time and persecuted *Kirishitan* were migrating to Tōhoku from elsewhere. If the Senmatsu brothers were involved in the iron trade, they likely arrived during the early Edo period following the genesis of Tōhoku's iron industry in 1606. Despite all this, accounts providing a 1558 dating point to two important historical truths. Christianity was likely first brought to Tōhoku by ordinary *Kirishitan*, and the religion likely spread primarily through the social networks of ordinary *Kirishitan* rather than at the hands of the missionaries.

A less problematic dating for the arrival of Christianity in Tōhoku, and the one which in lieu of other evidence must be accepted as the genesis of the *Kirishitan* presence in the region, is the arrival of *Kirishitan daimyō* キリシタン大名 Gamō Ujisato 蒲生氏郷 (1556–1595) in Aizu 会津 in 1590 (Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006; Takagi, 2001; Cieslik and Ōta, 1999). Ujisato was granted Aizu domain (*Aizu han* 会津藩) in 1590 following faithful service to Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598) (Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006). He had been baptized in 1584 by the Jesuit, Gnecci-Soldo Organtino (1530–1609), having been informed about the religion and persuaded to convert by his friend Takayama Ukon 高山右近 (1552–1615) (Urakawa, 1968). Following the contemporaneous mores of *cuius regio, eius religio* Ujisato's vassals were also brought to the religion and encouraged to spread it amongst their subjects (Takagi, 2001; Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006). Ujisato requested that Visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) send missionaries to his domain, however, due to contemporaneous persecution against the *Kirishitan* under Hideyoshi, these failed to materialize (Urakawa, 1968; Takagi, 2001). Alongside this Ujisato's

long absences in Korea and elsewhere in Japan make the effects he had on spreading Christianity in Aizu unclear. The subsequent rulers of Aizu were not *Kirishitan*, however, through neither encouraging nor discouraging the spread of the religion Christianity could grow in popularity in the region (Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006). Around 2,000 *Kirishitan* are thought to have existed in the domain by 1612 (Ibid.). The spread of the religion at the hands of *Kirishitan daimyō* or through a relaxed domainal policy vis-à-vis *Kirishitan*, were other important means through which the religion was disseminated. However, as with the example of the Senmatsu brothers, the lack of missionaries in Aizu following the arrival of Christianity raises questions about the form that the religion took.

Traditionally scholars have tended to focus on the lives and narratives of missionaries rather than ordinary *Kirishitan* (Higashibaba, 2015). In Tōhoku, this occurred in 1611, when the first Franciscans were invited to Sendai domain (*Sendai han* 仙台藩) by *daimyō* Date Masamune 伊達政宗 (1567–1636) (Tadano, 1990; Takagi, 2001). The Jesuits followed shortly afterwards in 1615, whereas the Augustinians and the Dominicans both arrived in 1626 (Takagi, 2001.). The missionary groups had a different, but overlapping geographic spread but covered the areas of Sendai, Aizu, Hirosaki 弘前, Kubota 久保田, Nanbu 南部, Shōnai 庄内, Shirakawa 白河, Yamagata 山形, and Yonezawa 米沢 (Cieslik and Ōta, 1999). The presence of missionaries provides a further means through which the religion spread in the region, however, as they were absent from the area for more than twenty years following the genesis of Christianity there, the religion must have spread primarily through the aforementioned and other means.

3. Conversion and the Spread of the Religion

The study of conversion in the *Kirishitan* century is problematic when modern and sometimes older theories focusing on individual, epistemological

change take centre stage. The contemporaneous term *Kirishitan ni naru* きりしたんになる provides few clues to what conversion actually meant, however, that one became a *Kirishitan* following *Bachizumo* バウチズモ/ばうちずも (Baptism) is clear (Ebisawa, 1954). Indeed, amongst the ordinary Japanese population, conversion was principally communal (*Shūdan kaishū* 集団改宗), and although baptism was expected to be followed by periods of further instruction and ensuing epistemological changes, these did not necessarily materialize (Cieslik, 1997; Ryan, 1997; Muldoon, 1997). As noted, conversion adhered to the logic of *cuius region, eius religio*, so that it was often based on political factors, and personal and familial allegiance, rather than belief or doctrine (Knobler, 1996). Simply put, the conversion of ordinary Japanese often followed the conversion of their *daimyō* or another local political or familial leader. None of this means to imply that epistemological and personal change were absent from the conversion process. In many cases, they were present (Ross, 1994), however, these were usually post-conversion changes rather than pre-conversion push factors. It is impossible to discuss the full complexities of *Kirishitan* Century conversion in this paper; however, a few general patterns may be explored. Three such patterns were noted in the foregoing section, all of which appear to have taken place throughout Japan. These were likely responsible for the majority of conversions in Tōhoku, however, the religion spread to the Tōhoku region in at least one relatively unique way which will be explored below.

The *bakufu* 幕府 proscribed the religion in 1614 through the *Bateren tsuihō no fumi* 伴天連追放之文 (also called the *Hai Kirishitan bun* 排吉利支丹文). One of the results of this edict was the voluntary and involuntary exile of 71 noble *Kirishitan* to the Tōhoku region (Cieslik, 1954; Ross, 1994), where *tozama daimyō* 外様大名 such as Date Masamune refused to instate the law (Takagi, 2001; Urakawa, 1968). These *Kirishitan* nobles taking their own families, vassals and servants

into exile with them spurred the creation of sizeable *Kirishitan* communities in the north of Japan which the missionaries were desirous to preach to (Ross, 1994). As the traditional strongholds of Christianity in the south of Japan came under greater persecution, Tōhoku undoubtedly offered short-term relative safety for both missionaries and *Kirishitan* making it an important region in the mission field during the 1610s and beyond. Elsewhere, I argued that the migration of *Kirishitan* from the Aizu region, likely meant that *Kirishitan* communities existed throughout Tōhoku even prior to the migrations of the 1614 (Morris, 2015). This sort of migration mirrors the earlier movement of *Kirishitan daimyō* such as Gamō, and had precedent during the Sengoku period (J. *Sengoku jidai* 戦国時代) when migration was used to avoid the consequences of unwanted domainal decisions (Elisonas, 1991). The 1622 Jesuit publication, *Maruchiriyō no kokoroē* マルチリヨの心得 (E. Instructions on Martyrdom), even permitted migration in order to avoid arrest (Higashibaba, 2001). Nevertheless, the scale of the migration to Tōhoku and the fact that it spurred the genesis of widespread *Kirishitan* communities there makes it particularly significant. Indeed, the scale of the migration is part of the reason that Tōhoku gained the second most numerous *Kirishitan* population behind Kyūshū.

The aforementioned refusal of *tozama daimyō* in the region to enact anti-*Kirishitan* legislation or their refusal to enact it rigorously was another unique facet of the Tōhoku-context. Elsewhere in the country, anti-*Kirishitan* persecution had existed sporadically from the genesis of the mission in 1549, but became an almost universal phenomenon from 1614 onwards. In Tōhoku, on the other hand, beyond a lone exception when a family of six were executed in Mizusawa 水沢 in 1602 (Kataoka, 1979), anti-*Kirishitan* persecution didn't begin until the 1620s. Masamune banned the religion in his domain in 1620 (Gonoi, 2003). Three years later the third Shōgun, Tokugawa Iemitsu 徳川家光 (1604-1651), took control of the country. Under Iemitsu 'the Tokugawa

regime was able to reach its final stage of evolution...all, from the Emperor to the last samurai and simplest citizen, were ruthlessly subjected to the regime' (Cieslik, 1954). Anti-*Kirishitan* persecution was also intensified. As such, following the rise of Iemitsu, refusal to implement anti-*Kirishitan* policy became untenable and persecution thereby spread to the Tōhoku region. Despite this, from 1614 to the early 1620s, the lack of anti-*Kirishitan* persecution in Tōhoku encouraged *Kirishitan* migration to the area, and ensured that the potentiality of conversion was not restricted by legal factors.

4. The *Keichō* Embassy

One of the most important achievements in the history of the mission to Tōhoku was what is now known as the *Keichō* Embassy (J. *Keichō shisetsu* 慶長使節). The embassy (which returned to Japan in 1620) was dispatched by Date Masamune in 1613 and was headed by his retainer Hasekura Tsunenaga 支倉常長 (1571-1622) (Kashiyama, 1993; Gonoi, 2003; Hamada, 2012). The embassy travelled via Mexico to Spain, France and Italy, returning via Mexico and the Philippines, and consisted of some 180-people including tradespeople, a small number of Europeans amongst whom were members of the Franciscan Order, and representatives of the Shōgun's navy (Gonoi, 2003). The purpose of the embassy is debated; however, modern scholars tend to agree that Masamune's desire to expand his trade network and introduce Western methodologies and technologies to his domain were the main impetuses behind the embassy (Gonoi, 2003; Hamada, 2012). Due to the 1614 ban on Christianity which followed the departure of the embassy, and the intensifying anti-Christian climate, the objectives of the embassy became untenable. In 1616, Tokugawa Hidetada's 徳川秀忠 (1579-1632) *Nikō seigen rei* 二港制限令 made any hopes Masamune might have had in conducting Sendai-Mexico or Sendai-European trade impossible. The edict outlawed foreigners from staying

in major cities and confined foreign trade to the ports of Nagasaki 長崎 and Hirado 平戸 (Ebisawa, 1971). As such the embassy was ultimately a failure, and in Japan remained forgotten for over two centuries until the reopening of Japanese–European relations in the 19th Century (Gonoi, 2003).

Despite this, the embassy produced some unusual outcomes. Embassy members remained in both Mexico and Spain with families being able to trace their lineage even today (Kudō, 2014). More profound was the fact that the embassy fostered a deeply positive impression of Masamune in Europe increasing the Church's focus on Tōhoku as a suitable area to proselytize. Following Masamune's ban on the religion in 1620, missionary letters to the Pope in 1621 assured him that Masamune was acting only out of fear of the *bakufu* (Gonoi, 2003). Despite the ban, the number of missionary personnel and conversions in Tōhoku increased throughout the 1620s (Takagi, 2001; Ross, 1994). A 1622 Jesuit letter notes for instance that two missionaries in the region had converted some 966 people (Gonoi, 2003), whilst Franciscans reported 1500 converts in Yonezawa in 1626 (Urakawa, 1968). Charles Boxer estimates that between 1614 and 1629 a total of 26,000 converts were made in Tōhoku (Boxer, 1951). Moreover, some embassy members (all of whom had converted during the journey) provided safe havens for *Kirishitan* in their own portions of Sendai domain (Kashiyama, 1993). Following his return Tsunenaga's own family and servants converted, some of whom were executed for adherence to the religion during persecutions in the late 1630s (Gonoi, 2003; Hamada, 2012). Nevertheless, the increased focus on Tōhoku may have reflected little more than the relatively greater intensity of persecution (and therefore danger) elsewhere in Japan (Morris, 2015).

5. Persecution and Hiding

Hubert Cieslik and Ōta Yoshiko note a total of 990 martyrs in Tōhoku over 12 domains (Cieslik and Ōta,

1999). Estimating the number of martyrs is a difficult task. National figures often refer only to named martyrs, whereas the Tōhoku specific figures produced by Cieslik and Ōta are conservative when compared to the estimations given by local historians. For instance, in the village of Ōkago (part of Sendai domain) alone it is estimated by local historians that over 300 *Kirishitan* were martyred (Fujisawa Machi Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai, 2007; Numakura, 1996).

Kirishitan facing persecution could make one of three choices; apostasy, practicing the religion in hiding, and martyrdom. Several scholars concur that the number of converts nationally could not have exceeded 300,000 at the peak of the mission in 1614 (Boxer, 1951; Nosco, 1993; Lares, 1954). Around 50,000 *Senpuku Kirishitan* 潜伏キリシタン came out of hiding at the end of the Edo period (Cary, 1976), however, some estimate as many as 150,000 entered hiding in the 17th Century (Nosco, 1993). As such, it appears that the majoritarian response to persecution over the Edo period was apostasy. In popular consciousness *Senpuku Kirishitan* were a phenomenon unique to Kyūshū, however, groups and individuals also entered hiding in the Tōhoku region. *Shūmon aratame yaku* 宗門改役 (E. Inquisitor), Inoue Masashige 井上政重 (1585–1661), a former *Kirishitan* vassal of Gamō Ujisato (Elison, 1973) recorded the discovery of *Kirishitan* from the *Kanei* to the *Meireki* 明暦 Period (1655–1658) in his *Kirishitan ide mōsu kunitokoro no oboe* 吉利支丹出申国所之覚 (Shimizu, 1986). The text records a minimum of 231 *Kirishitan* discovered in Tōhoku, including 6 missionaries and 29 members of the warrior classes (Ibid.). These figures too appear conservative when compared to other sources, Takagi for instance notes the arrest of between 150 and 160 *Kirishitan* in Motoyoshi 本吉 in 1632 (Takagi, 2001).

Whilst Masamune had banned the religion in Sendai in 1620, widespread persecution did not begin until 1623 and 1624 (Takagi, 2001; Urakawa, 1968). Even then large scale martyrdom events could be avoided through migration to neighbouring domains where

persecution had failed to take full effect. For instance, a prominent local *Kirishitan* in the area of Iwaigun 磐井郡, Gotō Juan 後藤寿庵 (1575-?), led 100 *Kirishitan* to Kubota domain in 1623, before fleeing to Nanbu the following year when persecution began in Kubota (Takagi, 2001; Urakawa, 1968). Nevertheless, 1624 saw the genesis of major martyrdom events including the infamous martyrdom of nine people by the method of *mizurō* 水牢 (torture with water) in the Hirose River (J. *Hirosegawa* 広瀬川) (Urakawa, 1968; Kataoka, 1971). National statistics show a lull in the ferocity of the persecution in 1625 and 1626 with a total of 29 martyrdoms over the two-year period (Boxer, 1951), two of which occurred in Tōhoku (Kataoka, 1971). This was a time when the *bakufu* was changing its approach by aiming to create apostates rather than martyrs (Cieslik, 1954). By 1627, new methodologies to persecute the *Kirishitan* had been developed and wide scale persecution resumed (Kataoka, 1971). Between 1627 and 1629, the overwhelming response by those arrested in Tōhoku appears to have been apostasy (Takagi, 2001). However, in 1629 major martyrdom events also resumed, in Yonezawa where *Kirishitan* had still been able to find asylum, 62 were martyred (Urakawa, 1968; Takagi, 2001). There were also martyrdoms in Aizu and the following year, some 400 to 500 *Kirishitan* there were imprisoned (Takagi, 2001), whilst 50 people were also martyred in Akita 秋田 (Kataoka, 1971). Although the early 1630s brought no wane to the persecution, it was the second half of the decade following the events of the Shimabara Rebellion (J. *Shimabara no ran* 島原の乱) in 1637 and 1638, when it reached its climax. In 1639, prominent missionaries including Petro Kasui Kibe ペトロ・カスイ岐部 (1587-1639) were captured in the Sendai area (Tadano, 1990; Cieslik 1971; Takagi, 2001). And, between 1639 and 1641 some 300 are said to have been martyred in Ōkago (Fujisawa Machi Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai, 2007; Numakura, 1996).

According to Kataoka Yakichi, the persecutions in Tōhoku created both martyrs and apostates, and consequently a particularly harsh system of religious surveillance was imposed upon the area expunging the seeds of Christianity planted there (Kataoka, 1971). Despite this, it appears that some *Kirishitan* continued to practice their religion in hiding after 1640. Masashige's aforementioned *Kirishitan ide mōsu kunitokoro no oboe* provides some evidence for this, however, other pieces of evidence mostly archaeological in nature have also been offered by historians. Shitō Masataka notes that some of these findings need to be viewed with caution and are not necessarily evidence for the continued existence of *Kirishitan* communities (Shitō, 1968). One such piece of evidence is the discovery of *Maria Kannon* マリア観音 (Buddhist *Koyasu Kannon* 子安観音 used as images of Mary usually containing a hidden cross) in the area (Shitō, 1968; Numakura, 1996; Kubota, 1987). Hubert Cieslik laments that there has been a tendency to identify all *Koyasu Kannon* containing a cross (a common troupe) as *Maria Kannon* (Cieslik, 1997). For Cieslik it is the origin of the statues which is important. He argues that if they were discovered on altars in *Kirishitan* or once *Kirishitan* households they are likely *Kirishitan* in nature, however, if found at temples or elsewhere then they do not constitute evidence for the existence of *Senpuku Kirishitan* (Ibid.). Many such statues and similar Buddhist items in Tōhoku appear to have been discovered at Buddhist temples (Miyagi Kenshi Hensan Īnkai, 1961; Shitō, 1968; Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006) or their origin is left unrecorded in the major works on the topic, and therefore following Cieslik's line of argument the majority must be rejected as evidence for *Senpuku Kirishitan* presence in Tōhoku. A famous piece of evidence from the Tōhoku area are hanging scrolls portraying *Fudō Myō-ō* 不動明王 on whose body can be seen the hidden letters of "S" and "J" (Shitō, 1968). It is claimed that these letters are an abbreviated form of *Societas Iesu* (the Society of Jesus)

(Cieslik; 1997). Cieslik argues that links between such images (common in mountainous areas and areas linked to mining in both Kyūshū and Tōhoku) and Christianity have not been proven (Cieslik; 1997). The existence of crosses etched onto other objects both religious and mundane has also been used as evidence for the presence *Senpuku Kirishitan* (Miyagi Kenshi Hensan Īnkai, 1961; Shitō, 1968; Numakura, 1996; Kubota, 1987), however, as with the foregoing examples these are also problematic. Cieslik notes that crosses have a variety of meanings not only related to Christianity, but also to Chinese religion (Cieslik, 1997). They may even lack meaning altogether. Congruent with Cieslik's thesis, such items cannot be presented as evidence for the existence of *Senpuku Kirishitan* without pertinent information regarding the origin of such items, the crosses thereon, or their historical usage. Indeed, as the majority of archaeological finds appear to have been discovered in the precincts of Buddhist temples (Shitō, 1968; Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006) it is difficult to assert that they point to the existence of *Senpuku Kirishitan* communities in Tōhoku until further information regarding their origin and usage is discovered. None of this means that there is no archaeological evidence for the existence of *Senpuku Kirishitan*. The discovery of medallions and other devotional items (Numakura, 1996; Fujisawa Machi, 1996) used in the *Kirishitan* Century and by *Senpuku Kirishitan* elsewhere (Turnbull, 1998) suggests ongoing underground *Kirishitan* practice. Man-made and natural caves containing *Kirishitan* artefacts also constitute concrete evidence (Numakura, 1996; Kroehler and Kroehler, 2006; Fujisawa Machi Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai, 2007). Regardless of the unreliability of many archaeological finds, the fact that *Senpuku Kirishitan* continued to exist is attested to by post-*Kirishitan* Century outbreaks of persecution. Endō Shūsaku reports on one such event between 1716 and 1732, when some 200 *Kirishitan* were executed in Yonekawa 米川 (Endō, 1992; Shigematsu, 1996). As such the continued existence of *Kirishitan* in Tōhoku

following the close of the *Kirishitan* Century can be affirmed. Nevertheless, these *Senpuku Kirishitan* communities in Tōhoku do not appear to have survived to the modern period.

6. Conclusions

This paper has provided a brief overview of the history of the *Kirishitan* religion in Tōhoku. It has sought to explore potentially contentious points in said history and aspects of *Kirishitan* history which are unique to the region. The topic is an interesting footnote in history about which there are still ongoing debates and uncertainties. It is my hope that this paper has contributed to some of those debates. Towards the end of his seminal work on the *Kirishitan* Century, George Elison writes of the missionaries; 'Seen in strict terms, the sum of their cultural contribution to Japan was nil' (Elison, 1973). Such a conclusion holds true for the mission to Tōhoku and the history of the *Kirishitan* religion there. As interesting as it may be, the contributions of the *Kirishitan* to Tōhoku were destroyed alongside its martyrs, and the political and religious consequences that the period set into motion were swept aside with the coming of the *Bakumatsu* 幕末 (1853-1867).

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