

The Legacy of Peter Yoshirō Saeki: Evidence of Christianity in Japan before the Arrival of Europeans

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ABSTRACT

Peter Yoshirō Saeki was an eminent Japanese scholar who devoted much of his career to the study of Nestorian/Syriac Christianity in China. One overlooked aspect of his work is the development of the concept that Nestorians had both missionary and secular contacts with Japan throughout its premodern history. These controversial theories were taken up by his peers, transported into Western scholarship, and have trickled down to this day in historical, theological and conspiratorial works that are riddled with confusion, truth, and untruth. This paper provides a chronological and contextual history of the genesis and development of Saeki's theories throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries within his own work and in the work of others. It is argued that such theories have been utilised in three broad schools of thought; historical, religious and pseudo-historical. Furthermore, it is suggested that to develop more rigorous theories on a Nestorian presence in Japan it is essential for contemporary scholars to abandon Saeki's paradigm to address the topic with greater clarity and historicity, and to shift away from a reliance on an inherently erroneous set of theories.

INTRODUCTION

The first Christian-Japanese encounters and the first Christian mission to Japan are almost universally dated to the 16th Century. Beginning with interactions between the Portuguese and Japanese *Wakō* (倭寇 also *Kairagi* - 海乱鬼 - Pirates) or traders in the Pacific and continental Asia during the early 16th Century,¹ it was not until the beginning of the 1540s that Europeans landed in Japan,² and 1549 when the first Christian mission was established.³ Despite this, some scholars fleetingly mention at the beginning of their histories on Japanese Christianity that theories indicating a pre-European arrival of Nestorian Christianity (景教 J. *Keikyō*, C.

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¹ On Portuguese-Japanese interaction in the Pacific and Continental Asia refer to: Charles R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1993), 1-40. Charles R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953), xxiv-xxvi. For a more general overview of Japanese presence in and activity on Continental Asia, see: Tanaka Takeo with Robert Sakai, "Japan's Relations with Overseas Countries," in *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, John W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 159-178. Kawazoe Shoji and G. Cameron Hurst III, "Japan and East Asia," in *The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 3: Medieval Japan*, ed. Kozo Yamamura (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 396-446. Jurgis Elisonas, "The Inseparable Trinity: Japan's relations with China and Korea," in *The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 4: Early Modern Japan*, ed. James L. McClain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 235-330. And: Nobuko Adachi, "Emigrants from Japan," in *Japan at War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Louis G. Perez (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 77-78.

² There are difficulties with precise dating. The traditionally accepted account of Mendes Pinto who claimed to have "discovered" Japan in 1542 or 1543 is problematic, however it does appear that he was one of the earliest Europeans to set foot on the islands, see: Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, 14-27.

³ The canonical texts for studying the history of the mission are: Ebisawa Arimichi 海老沢有道 and Ōuchi Saburō 大内三郎, *Nihon Kirisutokiyōshi* 日本キリスト教史 [The History of Christianity in Japan] (東京: 日本基督教団出版局, 1980). Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*. George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973). And: Otis Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Protestant Missions* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1976).

Jingjiao)⁴ exist.⁵ A lengthy discussion feature in Nakamura Satoshi's *Nihon kirisutokyō senkyōshi: Sabieru izen kara kyō made*,⁶ however in most other works on the history of Christianity in Japan these theories are quickly dismissed without critical discussion. Some of the theories continue to feature as accepted truth in works on the history of *Jingjiao*,⁷ whilst others are developed in popular works on the topic of Ancient Japan.⁸ This paper provides an overview of the theories that Christianity came to Japan before the arrival of Europeans, arguing that they lack a historical basis on the whole. Furthermore, it attempts to suggest that whilst these theories are best understood as imaginative thought experiments leading out of the work of the scholar Peter Yoshirō Saeki (佐伯好郎) and other early 20th century scholars, which through a lack of critical engagement have become established as fact in some fields, the concept that Christians arrived in Japan prior to the 16th Century is plausible. Therefore, it is argued that to develop future theories of a pre-European arrival of Christianity; there is a need to abandon reliance on the disproven theories of earlier scholars. In the paper, the

⁴ There are issues with the terms Nestorian and Nestorianism, more appropriately referred to as the “Church of the East,” the “Apostolic Church of the East,” (an abbreviation of the “Holy Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East”) or the “East Syriac Church.” See: Wilhem Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (Abingdon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 3-5. Here the terms *Jingjiao* and *Keikyō* commonly translated as the “Luminous Religion” or “Religion of Light” will be used. This term is derived from the Nestorian Stele (*Dàqín Jingjiao liúxing Zhōngguó bēi* 大秦景教流行中國碑) erected in Xī’ān (西安) in 781CE, and has since been used to refer to the Nestorianism in China, Korea and Japan.

⁵ See for example: Atsuyoshi Fujiwara, *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context: A Believers’ Church Perspective* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 161. Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 12. Notto R. Thelle, “The Christian Encounter with Japanese Buddhism” in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 227-228. Hiyane Antei 比屋根安定, *Kirisutokyō no Nihonteki tenkai* 基督教の日本的展開 [The Japanese Development of Christianity] (東京: 大空社, 1980), 3-5.

⁶ Nakamura Satoshi 中村敏, *Nihon kirisutokyō senkyōshi: Sabieru izen kara kyō made* 日本キリスト教宣教史：サビエル以前から今日まで [A History of Japanese Christian Missions: From Before Xavier until Today] (東京: いのちのことは社, 2009), 20-33.

⁷ See for example: Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 360-361. Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 459-460. Alexander Toepel and Ju-Mi Chung, “Was there a Nestorian Mission to Korea,” *Oriens Christianus*, Vol. 88 (2004): 29-35. Alexander Toepel, “Traces of Nestorianism in Manchuria and Korea,” *Oriens Christianus* 89 (2005), 77-85. Alexander Toepel, “Christians in Korea at the End of the Thirteenth Century,” in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang eds. (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2009), 279-289. John C. England, “The Earliest Christian Communities in Southeast and Northeast Asia: An Outline of the Evidence Available in Seven Countries Before A.D. 1500,” *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 1st, 1991), 209. John C. England, *The Hidden History of Christianity in Asia: The Churches of the East before 1500* (Delhi: ISPC, 2002). John. M. L. Young, *By foot to China: Mission of the Church of the East, to 1400* (Lookout Mountain, GA: Grey Pilgrim Publications, 1991). And: Mar Aprem, *Nestorian Missions* (Trichur: Mar Narsai Press, 1970).

⁸ See for example the following recent publications on the topic: Ken Joseph Sr. ジョセフ・ケン・シニア and Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Kakusareta jūjika no kuni · nihon · gyakusetsu no kodaishi* 隠された十字架の国・日本・逆説の古代史 (東京: 徳間書店, 2000). Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Ushinawareta aidentiti: uchi to soto kara mita Nihonjin: kakusareta rekishi motomete* 失われたアイデンティティ：内と外からみた日本人：隠された歴史を求めて (東京: 光文社, 2005). Ken Joseph Sr. ジョセフ・ケン・シニア and Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Kakusareta seisho no kuni · nihon* 隠された聖書の国・日本 (東京: 徳間書店, 2008). Samuel Lee, *Rediscovering Japan, Reintroducing Christendom: Two Thousand Years of Christian History in Japan* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2010). Sugiyama Haruo 杉山治男, *Heian Jidai ni Nihongo kasareta Keikyō kotoba: Shiawase no rikai suru kurosu wādo* 平安時代に日本語化された景教言葉：幸せを理解するクロスワード (東京: 幻冬舎, 2015).

primary focus is to provide a chronological history of the development of theories regarding a pre-16th Century Christian presence in Japan so that future scholars may interact with these theories, which are often presented in a confused way more easily.

PETER YOSHIRO SAEKI AND THE GENESIS OF THEORIES OF THE PRE-EUROPEAN ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY

The earliest instance of a theory regarding the possibility that Christians came to Japan is found in the work of the first Christian missionary, Francis Xavier. He believed that Nestorianism or another branch of Christianity might have come to Japan before him and discovered a white cross amongst the belongings of a family.⁹ However, he was unable to conclude that this cross had a Christian origin and therefore appears to have abandoned the idea¹⁰ which was likely grounded in a mixture of premature hope and the Jesuit tendency to view the Japanese as highly civilized, something perhaps contradicting their lack of Christian belief. It was not until the Meiji period (*Meiji jidai* 明治時代, 1868-1912CE) some three hundred years later that the concept re-entered scholarship, although there was no direct connection between Meiji conceptions and Xavier's thoughts. The end of the Edo period's (*Edo jidai* 江戸時代, 1603-1868CE) defining *Sakoku* (鎖国) policy, which had restricted Japan's interactions with other countries and prohibited Christianity,¹¹ influenced the genesis of these theories in several ways. Firstly, as a direct result of the end of *Sakoku* and the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新) of 1868CE, increasing interaction with Western scholars and scholarship, as well as the development of Western scholarship on Japan led to some changes within Japanese academia. Meiji Japan was marked with the political desire to extend influence internally, peripherally and externally, and to create a wealthy state and strong military through industrialization and political centralization.¹² Traditionally viewed as a turning to the West,¹³ within this context, scholars sought to discover a renewed vision of Japanese history around which to build the new Japanese societal and political systems.¹⁴ The process of rediscovering Japan's past took the form of a criticism of her Imperial records and

⁹ Henry Venn, *The Missionary Life and Labours of Francis Xavier, Taken from His Own Correspondence: With a Sketch of the General Results of Roman Catholic Missions Among the Heathen* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1862), 185.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Traditionally *Sakoku* has been viewed as an irrationally xenophobic closed country policy, but it is not necessarily true to suggest that the country was completely closed. The Japanese maintained relations with the Dutch, Ryūkyū, Ezo, China, Korea and for a time the British, it was only Catholic countries with which foreign relations were prohibited. See: Michael S. Laver, *The Sakoku Edicts and the Politics of Tokugawa Hegemony* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2011), 159-192.

¹² Mark E. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea: 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 20.

¹³ Hirakawa Sukehiro and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, "Japan's turn to the West," in *The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 5: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 432-498.

¹⁴ Stefan Tanaka, *New Times in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 22.

historical documents¹⁵ and the adoption of Western scholarly methods, which resulted in the related use of foreign languages and the targeting of foreign audiences in the publication of scholarship.¹⁶ In this context, the first texts on *Jingjiao* were imported,¹⁷ and Japanese scholarship on the topic emerged by the late 1890s.¹⁸ Simultaneously, Western scholars such as Norman McLeod in his 1879 monograph *Japan and the Lost Tribes of Israel*¹⁹ began to extend the commonly accepted histories of Japan's interactions with the Abrahamic faiths developing the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory (*Nichiyu Dōsoron* 日ユ同祖論/日猶同祖論).²⁰ Finally, despite the newfound Meiji period religious freedom, the growth of anti-Christian sentiment in the 1890s led to the “Japanization” of Christianity through an emphasis on Japanese traditions and patriotism.²¹ Within this complex Meiji period context, Peter Yoshirō Saeki developed the first theories that Christians had come to Ancient Japan.

In 1908, Saeki published a paper entitled *Hata wo satosu* 太秦を論ず in the journal *Rekishi Chiri* 歴史地理,²² wherein he developed a version of the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory, which was not directly related McLeod's earlier work.²³ McLeod had conceived that Japan's imperial line and the Japanese more generally were descended from a lost tribe of Israel, noting similarities in certain cultural and religious practices, and in appearance.²⁴ Saeki, on the other hand, sought to affirm that the members of *Hata* clan (*Hata uji* 秦氏) who began immigrating to Japan in the 3rd to 5th Centuries common era²⁵ were not of Chinese or Korean descent as indicated by the historical records but rather were of Jewish ancestry.²⁶ This was grounded mostly in philological argumentation, particularly relating to sites in the Uzumasa 太秦 area of Kyoto where the *Hata* had settled. First was the concept that the name of a shrine, Ōsake Jinja (大酒神社 or 大辟神社), set up in the *Hata* temple

¹⁵ Ibid. 69-70, 76-82, 117-126.

¹⁶ Hirakawa and Tadashi Wakabayashi, “Japan's turn to the West,” 432-498. And: Nobuya Bamba and John F. Howes, *Pacifism in Japan: The Christian and Socialist Tradition* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), 12-15.

¹⁷ Saeki notes that texts were first imported in 1817CE but were banned as part of the anti-Christian prohibitions, see: P. Y. Saeki, “Preface,” in *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究, by Saeki Yoshirō 佐伯好郎 (東京: 三省堂, 1911), 1.

¹⁸ Ibid. 2-3.

¹⁹ Norman McLeod, *Japan and the Lost Tribes of Israel* (Nagasaki: The Rising Sun, 1879).

²⁰ Ben Ami-Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1991), 135-136.

²¹ Thelle, “The Christian Encounter with Japanese Buddhism,” 234-235. And: Notto R. Thelle, *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1854-1899* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 174-177.

²² P. Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎, “Hata wo satosu” 太秦を論ず [Discussion on the Hata], *Rekishi Chiri* 歴史地理 Vol. 11, No. 1 (1908), 168-185.

²³ Ami-Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*, 136.

²⁴ Ibid. 135-136.

²⁵ See: *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀, Bunken-name 10, Ōjin Tennō, Page 632. University of California at Berkeley, Japanese Historical Text Initiative, accessed 11th February, 2015, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/jhti/Nihon%20shoki.html> And: *Shinsen Shōjiroku* 新撰姓氏録, accessed November 21st, 2015, <http://miko.org/~uraki/kuon/furu/text/mokuroku/syoujiroku/syoujiroku.htm>.

²⁶ Saeki 佐伯, “Hata wo satosu” 太秦を論ず [Discussion on the Hata], 168-185.

complex of *Kōryūji* 広隆寺 referred to King David.²⁷ Saeki argued that Ōsake was originally written using the characters Ōsake 太關 meaning “large opening,” the same characters used in Chinese for David.²⁸ Second, he argued that the names of small wells existent in the Uzumasa area known as *Isarai* (伊佐良井・いさら井) relate to the Chinese word *Yīcìlèyè* 一賜樂業, meaning Israel.²⁹ Although some commentators have suggested that he did, Saeki did not refer to the *Hata* as *Jingjiào* adherents in the paper.³⁰ Nevertheless, David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa note that in a later revision, Saeki argued that the word Uzumasa derives from a corruption of Aramaic or Semitic words *Ishu* and *masa* (*Iesu-meshia*) meaning Jesus and Messiah respectively.³¹ Although not explicitly stated in the original, it would appear that Saeki was partially motivated by his conception that the *Hata* were Christian as well as of Jewish ancestry. His concept became the basis not only for further developments of the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory but also for scholars seeking to identify ancient Christian sites in Japan.³²

Suffice it to say; his argument can be easily dismissed. The historical records clearly describe the *Hata* as having emigrated from Korea (百濟, K. *Baekje*, J. *Kudara*)³³ an origin accepted by contemporary scholarship,³⁴ and furthermore claimed to have been descended from Qín 秦 Emperor, Qín Shǐ Huáng Dì (秦始皇帝).³⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that the Jews were present in China before the 8th and 11th Centuries³⁶ which makes Saeki’s theory that the descendants of Jews arrived in Japan before this contentious. Similarly, DNA evidence disproves the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry.³⁷ As for Saeki’s philological arguments, whilst the characters 大關 (and not the characters 太關 present in the name of Ōsake Jinja) can be used to render the personal name David into modern Chinese,

²⁷ Ibid. 183.

²⁸ Ibid. 182-183.

²⁹ Ibid. 184.

³⁰ For example: Ami-Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*, 136.

³¹ David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype, Expanded Edition* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000), 65.

³² Ibid. And: Norimoto Yoshihiro (ed.) 法本義弘, *Saeki Yoshirō ikō nami den* 佐伯好郎遺稿並伝 [Saeki Yoshirō’s Posthumous Manuscripts and Biography] (東京: 大空社, 1996), 327.

³³ *Nihon Shoki* 日本書記, Bunken-name 10, Ōjin Tennō, Page 632.

³⁴ William H. McCullough, “The Capital and its Society,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 2: Heian Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 98-99.

³⁵ *Shinsen Shōjiroku* 新撰姓氏録, accessed November 21st, 2015,

<http://miko.org/~uraki/kuon/furu/text/mokuroku/syoujiroku/syoujiroku.htm>.

³⁶ Jonathan Goldstein ed. *The Jews of China: Historical and Comparative Perspectives Volume 1*, (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000). And: Tiberiu Weisz, *The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions: The Legacy of the Jewish Community in Ancient China*. (New York: iUniverse, 2006).

³⁷ Jon Entine, *Abraham’s Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of the Chosen People* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2008), 162-163.

contemporaneously the characters *Duō huì* 多惠 were used.³⁸ Similarly, there is no evidence in contemporaneous Japanese historical records that the shrine ever used the version of the characters provided by Saeki.³⁹ Saeki's linking of the word *Isarai* to the Chinese *Yīcìlèyè* is also problematic, as the latter was not in use until the appearance of Jewish communities in China after the 8th Century.⁴⁰ Finally, his suggestion that the place name Uzumasa means Jesus Messiah fails on two counts. Firstly, according to the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書記 the earliest appearance of the word Uzumasa took the form of a title given to the *Hata* leader Sake no Kimi 秦酒公 in the 15th year of Emperor Yuryaku's 雄略天皇 reign (471CE).⁴¹ The text states that this title was chosen because Sake no Kimi filled the court with silks as payment of taxation.⁴² The text, therefore, suggests that there is a link between the term *Uzumasa* (originally written 禹豆麻佐)⁴³ and *Utsumori masa* 禹豆母利麻佐, the appearance of all being piled up to fill.⁴⁴ Secondly, there is no evidence to suggest that Christians were present in China in the 5th Century,⁴⁵ and therefore, it would be highly unlikely for the name of a place associated with the *Hata* clan to have a Christian connection.

Hata wo satosu was included as an appendix to his 1911 work *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究,⁴⁶ which was translated into English and published in 1916 under the title *The Nestorian Monument in China*.⁴⁷ *Hata wo satosu* was not included in the English translation. In this text, Saeki developed in some asides from his main topic, the Nestorian Stele (C. *Dàqín Jǐngjiào liúxíng Zhōngguó bēi* 大秦景教流行中國碑), the idea that *Jǐngjiào* had come to Japan from China during the *Táng* period. The presence of *Jǐngjiào* in China,⁴⁸ and the

³⁸ James Harry Morris, "The Case for Christian Missionary Activity in Japan prior to the 16th Century," *Oriens Christianus*, Vol. 98 (2015), 123-124, n. 104.

³⁹ See the *Engishiki* (延喜式) which renders the shrine's name using the characters Ōsake 大酒 with a note stating that formerly the characters were written Ōsake 大辟 *Engishiki* 延喜式, Bunken-name 9, Book 9, Page 5, Paragraph 1. The *Engishiki* is available in full from the University of California at Berkley, Japanese Historical Text Initiative, accessed 11th February, 2015, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/jhti/Engi%20shiki.html>

⁴⁰ E. A. Gordon dates its existent in China to the 17th Century, see: E. A. Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1920), 50.

⁴¹ *Nihon Shoki* 日本書記, Bunken-name 14, Yūryaku Tennō, Page 876, Paragraph 1. University of California at Berkley, Japanese Historical Text Initiative, accessed 11th February, 2015, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/jhti/Nihon%20shoki.html>

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Originally pronounced: *Utsumasa*.

⁴⁴ *Nihon Shoki* 日本書記, Bunken-name 14, Yūryaku Tennō, Page 876, Paragraph 1.

⁴⁵ Whilst there is some textual evidence that Christians arrived in China prior to the 7th Century, these references appear later than the period, and the arrival of Christianity cannot be accurately dated prior to the *Táng* 唐 dynasty (618–907CE): Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 265-267.

⁴⁶ P. Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎, *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究 (東京: 待漏書院, 1911).

⁴⁷ P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916).

⁴⁸ The presence of the religion is well recorded in contemporaneous Chinese and Christian documents, however, it appears to have remained the monopoly of immigrant populations; in early Chinese documents *Jǐngjiào* is referred to as Persian (*Bōsī jīngjiào* 波斯经教) and her temples as *Bōsī sì* 波斯寺, later these terms were revised to reflect the Syrian origin of the

strong tendency in Japan through its relations with China to adopt all Chinese ideas, politics, and culture could offer as a model for the formation and maintenance of the Japanese nation,⁴⁹ certainly made the spread of Christianity to Japan a possibility.

Saeki formulated two theories regarding this spread. Firstly, he noted that according to the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 in 736CE (*Tenpyō* 8 - 天平 8 年) a Persian (波斯人, *Hashibito/Perushajin*) named *Rimitsui* (李密醫)⁵⁰ or *Rimitsuei* (李密翳)⁵¹ depending on spelling came to Japan as part of an envoy.⁵² In *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* he argued that the use of the word *Bōsī* 波斯 with the addition of various suffixes to refer to *Jīngjiào* and the Church in contemporaneous China illustrate that the term *Bōsīrèn* 波斯人 as used to describe *Rimitsui* should be translated to mean “an adherent of *Jīngjiào*.”⁵³ In the English version of the text, his argument differs considerably, perhaps indicating a change in Saeki’s thought or perhaps acting to add additional evidence. Here he argued that the name of *Rimitsui*⁵⁴ has been transcribed incorrectly because this was a Chinese rather than a Persian name.⁵⁵ Instead, he suggested the characters should be reversed in order to create the Persian name *Milis* (密李 or *Mili*).⁵⁶ He then sought to question whether or not this character could have been the *Milis* mentioned on the Nestorian Stele, a priest and the father of *Yazdbōzīd/Yazdbōzēd*, the Chorepiscopos,⁵⁷ a conclusion he later accepts without further evidence.⁵⁸

His second argument concerns the possibility that Japanese visitors to China saw the Nestorian Stele or interacted with *Jīngjiào* adherents.⁵⁹ Saeki argues that the Stele stood for sixty-four years from 781CE to 845CE, and therefore that all visitors from *Gyōga* (行賀) in 784CE to *Ennin* (圓仁- posthumously *Jikaku Daishi* 慈覺大師 – 793/794CE-864CE) who

religion becoming *Dàqín jīngjiào* 大秦景教 and *Dàqín sì* 大秦寺 respectively. Furthermore, high ranking priests were drawn from Persian rather than Chinese areas. See: Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2012), 242-243. Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History*, 47. David Wilmhurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East and West Publishing Ltd. 2011), 124. Gillman and Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500*, 268. And: Aubrey R. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches: A Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from The Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians* (London: Independent Press Ltd. 1937), 132.

⁴⁹ Ryusaki Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary and Donald Keene, *The Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 52.

⁵⁰ In Chinese pinyin, *Rimitsui* is pronounced *Lǐ Mìyī*.

⁵¹ In Chinese pinyin, *Rimitsuei* is pronounced *Lǐ Mìyì*.

⁵² *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, Chapter 12, accessed February 9th, 2015, <http://www.j-texts.com/jodai/shoku12.html>

⁵³ Saeki 佐伯, *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究, 16.

⁵⁴ Rendered as Li-mi-i by Saeki.

⁵⁵ Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, 62.

⁵⁶ Contemporarily rendered as *Milis* or *Miles*.

⁵⁷ Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, 62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 142.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 82-92.

returned to Japan in 841CE had the opportunity to view it.⁶⁰ Saeki argues these interactions led to Christianity having an influence on Buddhism in China and Buddhism as transported to Japan.⁶¹ For example, he identifies a Kashmir monk said to have taught *Kūkai* (空海 - posthumously *Kōbō Daishi* - 弘法大師 – 774-835CE) in a Japanese tradition, to the Indian Buddhist, *Prajñā* (般若 – *Bō Rē*) who alongside the Christian composer of the Nestorian Stele, *Jīngjìng* (景淨, also known as Adam) had translated a number of Buddhist texts.⁶² Nevertheless, this second argument is not original to Saeki's work, and he draws here particularly on the work of Junjirō Takakusu and E. A. Gordon, whose papers are included in the appendix of *Keikyō hibun kenkyū*.⁶³

Again, Saeki's arguments are problematic. The theory that *Rimitsui* was a Christian cannot be maintained for a number of reasons. Firstly, whilst the religion and church are referred to as Persian, there are no examples in which the term *Bōsīrèn* describes the Christian religious identity of the person in question.⁶⁴ Similarly, the religion itself was referred to as Persian (*Bōsī jīngjiào* 波斯经教), not because of the high number of Persian Christians, but because this was where the religion was perceived to have originated. Once this error was realised, from as early as 745CE Chinese documents began to refer to the religion as Syrian (*Dàqín jīngjiào* 大秦景教), a title also used self-referentially by the Church.⁶⁵ It would also be odd in a text where the members of the envoy are referred to by nationality and name alone to have a single character marked out by his religious identity.⁶⁶ And, therefore, as all we can affirm is that *Rimitsui* was from Persia, an area where

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid. 118-161. And: Saeki 佐伯, *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究, 93-117.

⁶² Ibid. 74-75. On the translation project see: J. Takakusu, "The name of 'Messiah' found in a Buddhist book; The Nestorian Missionary Adam, Presbyter, Papas of China, translating a Buddhist sutra." in *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究 [Research on the Nestorian Stele] ed. P. Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎, (東京: 三省堂書店, 1911), Appendix, 1-8. Originally published: Junjirō Takakusu 高楠順次郎, "The Name "Messiah" Found in a Buddhist Book; The Nestorian Missionary Adam, Presbyter, Papas of China, Translating a Buddhist Sūtra," *T'oung pao*, 7 (1896), 589-591. For a modern interpretation refer to: Max Deeg, "Ways to Go and Not to Go in the Contextualization of the Jingjiao Documents of the Tang Period," in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang eds. (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2009), n35, 144. Deeg's source text is: 大唐貞元續開元釋教錄 (*Dà táng Zhēn yuán xù Kāi yuán shì jiào lù*). Takakusu's paper uses a different source text to Deeg: 貞元新定釋教目錄 (*Zhēn yuán xīn dìng shì jiào mù lù*). These two sources were written by the same author (*Yuán zhào* 圓照), and are more or less the same, although Deeg's source was written five years earlier.

⁶³ See: J. Takakusu, "The name of 'Messiah' found in a Buddhist book; The Nestorian Missionary Adam, Presbyter, Papas of China, translating a Buddhist sutra." 1-8. And: E. A. Gordon イー、エー、ゴルドン, *Kōbō Daishi to Keikyō to no kankei* 弘法大師と景教との関係 [The Relationship between Kōbō Daishi and Nestorianism] in *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* 景教碑文研究 [Research on the Nestorian Stele] ed. P. Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎, (東京: 三省堂書店, 1911), Appendix, 51-67.

⁶⁴ Confirmed through email correspondence with Max Deeg, 20th October 2015.

⁶⁵ Wilmhurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East*, 124.

⁶⁶ See for example the figure *Kōho Tōchō* 皇甫東朝 (sometimes rendered *Kōfu*, or *Huángfū Dōngcháo* in Chinese), who is referred to only by his nationality *Tōjin* 唐人, refer to: *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, Chapter 12, accessed February 9th, 2015, <http://www.j-texts.com/jodai/shoku12.html>

Christianity was present but not the exclusive religion,⁶⁷ the question of his religious identity remains open. The concept that a transcription error took place and Saeki's associated linking of the *Milis* of the Stele and *Rimitsui* cannot be proven due to a scarcity of evidence. There is a possibility they are the same person as both were present in the *Táng* capital of Cháng' ān 長安⁶⁸ during the same period,⁶⁹ but this cannot be affirmed in any conclusive sense. For Max Deeg the concept that *Jǐngjiào* influenced Buddhism is a completely decontextualized reading of the religion in the *Táng* period.⁷⁰ Much of the evidence provided by Saeki and his contemporaries illustrates little more than coincidental similarity so that direct or indirect influence has proven impossible to affirm.⁷¹ Moreover, the joint translation project of *Prajñā* and *Jǐngjìng* was criticized in the edict promulgated by Emperor *Dézōng* 唐德宗 in 786CE illustrating their illegitimacy, the proscription of official Christian-Buddhist interactions and the waning of Imperial support for *Jǐngjiào*.⁷² This reduces the possibility that Japanese Buddhist visitors interacted with the religion, and means that only *Gyōga* (行賀) in 784CE would have visited at a time when *Jǐngjiào*-Buddhist interaction was acceptable. Finally, it must be noted that no references to *Jǐngjiào* are found in the work of Japanese visitors to China.

Saeki's early theories lack detail but nevertheless spurred the genesis of discussion on the possibility that *Jǐngjiào* had entered Japan. Throughout the development of each theory, his thought is marked by the Meiji period context; he works primarily with imperial documents, which he seeks to readdress as false. In *Hata wo satosu* this is a complete rejection where he comes to rely on philology and archaeological remains, whereas in *Keikyō*

⁶⁷ See: Gillman and Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500*, 109-152. As well as a number of chapters in the *Cambridge History of Iran*, notably: M. Schwartz, "The Religion of Achaemenian Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, I. Gershevitch ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 664-697. Carsten Colpe, "Development of Religious Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 817-865. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "Zoroastrian Religion," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 866-908. J. Neusner, "Jews in Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 909-923. J. P. Asmussen, "Christians in Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 924-948. R. E. Emmerick, "Buddhism Among Iranian Peoples," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 949-964. G. Widengren, "Manichaeism and its Iranian Background," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 965-990. Ehsan Yarshater, "Mazdakism," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 991-1024.

⁶⁸ Modern day Xi'an 西安.

⁶⁹ It is likely that *Rimitsui* held some rank in Cháng'ān, to warrant both his mention in the *Shoku Nihongi* and due to his inclusion in the envoy. Similarly, as *Milis*'s family had the financial means to pay for the erection of the Nestorian Stele, it can be assumed that they also held rank in the capital.

⁷⁰ Deeg, "Ways to Go and Not to Go in the Contextualization of the Jingjiao Documents of the Tang Period," 143.

⁷¹ Gillman and Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500*, 360.

⁷² Deeg, "Ways to Go and Not to Go in the Contextualization of the Jingjiao Documents of the Tang Period," 143-145.

hibun kenkyū the documents are not rejected but reread as containing transcription errors or hidden knowledge such as the concept that the term *Bōsiren* connotes Christian religious identity. These are imaginative theories, with some limited historical possibility given the presence of *Jingjiao* in *Tang* China, grounded in Saeki's attempt as a Christian to extend the influence of the religion to every point in Japanese history. In doing so, he seeks to illustrate that Christianity is something thoroughly Japanese, having arrived contemporaneously to Buddhism.

ACCEPTANCE AMONGST CONTEMPORARIES

Saeki's theories received acceptance amongst his peers and especially in the Anglican community, resulting in their repetition and development by other scholars. Simultaneously, the claims almost entirely disappeared from Saeki's work throughout the 1920s. These scholars were, for the most part, Western missionaries present in Japan who were already working on the topic of *Jingjiao*-Buddhist interaction. Like Saeki, they sought to show the all-encompassing influence of Christianity on Asian history,⁷³ from their grounding in European scholarship, which tried to illustrate explicitly or implicitly that European, Christian "culture" and knowledge was superior to other forms of knowledge or was even the only form of knowledge.⁷⁴

In 1910 and 1911, Arthur Lloyd, in his works *Shinran and his work: Studies in Shinshu Theology* and *The Creed of Half Japan: Historical Sketches of Japanese Buddhism* accepted Saeki's conclusion that *Rimitsui* was a Christian.⁷⁵ This acceptance was matched in the same year by Elizabeth A. Gordon in her, *The Lotus Gospel, or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*.⁷⁶ Relying on the final character of *Rimitsui*'s name *i* 醫, which refers to medical practitioners⁷⁷ and the concept that Nestorians were famous for their roles in medicine,⁷⁸ Lloyd argued that *Rimitsui* was a doctor active in Emperor Shōmu's 聖武天皇 (701-756CE) medical reforms.⁷⁹ Moreover, he suggested that Christianity influenced Emperor Shōmu's consort, Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 (701-760CE), due to her work nursing lepers, which he

⁷³ Ibid. 136.

⁷⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 32.

⁷⁵ Arthur Lloyd, *The Creed of Half Japan: Historical Sketches of Japanese Buddhism* (London: John Murray, 1911), 223, n. 1. And: Arthur Lloyd, *Shinran and his work: studies in Shinshu theology* (Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1910), 171, n2.

⁷⁶ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 294-296.

⁷⁷ Noted by Saeki in his 1916 text: Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, 62.

⁷⁸ He draws on the work of Junjirō Takakusu, Kunitake Kume and Saeki, see: Lloyd, *The Creed of Half Japan: Historical Sketches of Japanese Buddhism*, 223, n. 1. And: Lloyd, *Shinran and his work: studies in Shinshu theology*, 171, n2.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 222-223. And: Lloyd, *Shinran and his work: studies in Shinshu theology*, 171-172.

viewed as an exclusively Christian work.⁸⁰ Unlike Lloyd, who argued that the involvement of both Buddhists and Christians in these medical reforms marked a point of Christian-Buddhist collaboration in Japan,⁸¹ Gordon, who expanded upon the development of the medical system at length, did not explicitly link these developments to a Christian-Buddhist collaborative project although this is implicitly accepted.⁸² Gordon also extended the theory of possible Christian influence in the period by likening the mandala created by the niece of Empress Kōmyō, Chūjō Hime 中将姫 to Christian renditions of heaven.⁸³ However, as *Rimitsui*'s religious identity remains unproven, and as there are no archaeological finds to suggest that Christians were present under Emperor Shōmu's rule, the concept forwarded by Lloyd and Gordon that there was a Buddhist-Christian collaboration or that Christianity influenced Empress Kōmyō cannot be maintained. The idea that *Rimitsui* was a medical practitioner could strengthen the claim that he was a Christian due to the link between *Jingjiao* and medicine, as noted by the two scholars.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, medicine was not the monopoly of *Jingjiao* as present in *Tang* China; rather, it was influenced and practiced by some groups, including Buddhists, Manicheans and native Chinese.⁸⁵ Similarly, this concept is problematic as in some versions of the text, *Rimitsui* is called *Rimitsuei*, with the final character of his name *ei* 翳 lacking medical connotation. Although there is an absence of agreement in reprints of the *Shoku Nihongi*, modern copies favor this latter character,⁸⁶ and Saeki Ariyoshi

⁸⁰ Ibid. 222. And: Lloyd, *Shinran and his work: studies in Shinshu theology*, 171.

⁸¹ Ibid. And: Lloyd, *Shinran and his work: studies in Shinshu theology* 171.

⁸² Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 294-296.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ A number of texts deal with *Jingjiao* influence on medical practice, the transmission of medical knowledge, and the role of adherents as medical personnel, some useful studies include: H.D. Modanlou, "Historical Evidence for the Origin of Teaching Hospital, Medical School and the Rise of Academic Medicine," in *Journal of Perinatology*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (April, 2011), 236-239. R. Le Coz, "The "Nestorian" Doctors from the VIth to the VIIIth Century," in *Histoire Des Sciences Médicales*, Vol. 31, No. 3-4 (Oct-Dec, 1997), 327-31. F. P Retief and L. Cilliers, "The Influence of Christianity on Medicine from Greco-Roman Times up to the Renaissance," in *Acta Theologica*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2006), 259-276. L. R. Angeletti, "Transmission of Classical medical Texts Through Languages of the Middle-East," in *Medicina Nei Secoli*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1990), 293-329. Louis Fu, "History of Orthopaedics: Hippocratic Medicine in China: Comparison with a 9th Century Chinese Manual on Bone Setting," [希波克拉醫學與中國 - 第九世紀的中國跌打手冊與希波克拉醫學文獻庫之比較], in *Journal of Orthopaedics, Trauma and Rehabilitation*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (December 2014), 128-135. And: Louis Fu, "Medical Missionaries to China: the Antecedents," in *Journal of Medical Biography* (2013).

⁸⁵ Refer to: Mine Chen, "Foreign Medicine at Khotan during the Han and Tang Dynasties," in *Historical Research/Lishi Yanjiu*, Issue 4 (2008), 17-39. C. Pierce Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 23-43. Jason David BeDuhn, "A Regimen for Salvation: Medical Models in Manichaeism," in *Semeia*, No. 58 (1992), 109-134. John Kevin Coyle, *Manichaeism and its Legacy* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2009), 101-121. Fan Ka Wai, "Migrating Physicians: Origin of Medicinal Science in the Tang Dynasty," in *Hanxue Yanjiu*, Vol. 18 (2000), 143-166. And: Chen Hao, "The Imperial Medical office and the Transformation of Identities of Aristocratic Physicians from the Late Six Dynasties through the Early Tang," in *Hanxue Yanjiu*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, (2014), 73-98.

⁸⁶ Kokushi Daikei Henshukai 國史大系編修会, *Shoku Nihongi: Mae Hen* 続日本紀：前編，(東京：吉川弘文館，1979)，141. Imaizumi Tadayoshi 今泉忠義, *Kundoku: Shoku Nihongi* 訓読：続日本紀(京都：臨川書店，1987)，294. And: Dainippon Bunko Kokushi Hen 大日本文庫國史編, *Shoku Nihongi: Jōkan* 続日本紀：上卷(東京：大日本文庫刊行會，1938)，273.

argues that this character was used in the original text.⁸⁷ Of the two oldest versions of the text that I have been able to locate, both the 1648⁸⁸ and 1657⁸⁹ version use the character to denote medical practice, *ei* 醫. However, the 1648 version contains a note written in 1777, noting the usage of the other character.⁹⁰

Unlike Saeki, who desired to establish that Christians came to Japan, Lloyd and Gordon are more concerned with a general historic Christian-Buddhist influence and interaction. Whilst the acceptance of Saeki's theory regarding *Rimitsui* and his inclusion by the Lloyd and Gordon in a Christian-Buddhist collaborative medical project illustrates this concern; their primary focus is a Christian influence on Japanese Buddhism. Such concerns are indicated by Lloyd's argument that Buddhist texts influenced by Christianity were transported to Japan and had great influence there;⁹¹ an argument he juxtaposes with his discussion of *Rimitsui*. Or, in the case of Gordon, her overall focus on *Kūkai* as highly influenced by *Jīngjiào*,⁹² based on work she had begun to formulate in pieces included in the appendix of Saeki's *Keikyō hibun kenkyū* and earlier.⁹³ The argument that Christianity influenced Buddhism, however, like Saeki's approach relies on the decontextualization of *Jīngjiào* in China, and continues to remain unproven.

Unlike Lloyd, Gordon made greater attempts to develop the theory that *Jīngjiào* came to Japan. Her interaction with Saeki led to her acceptance of the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory, which she developed in her work during the early 1920s,⁹⁴ and to some extent in *The Lotus Gospel*.⁹⁵ Whilst, she accepted the basic hypothesis of Saeki, that the *Hata* were Jewish, based on the existence of the *Isarai*⁹⁶ and Ōsake Jinja,⁹⁷ she provided further evidence for the Judeo-Christian origins of the group. She argued that the characters *Uzumasa* 太秦 are the same as *Dàqín* 大秦 as appears on the Nestorian Stele,⁹⁸ a

⁸⁷ Saeki Ariyoshi 佐伯有義, *Zōho Rikkokushi 増補六国史* (東京: 名著普及会, 1988), 259.

⁸⁸ *Shoku Nihongi* (京都: 出雲和泉掾, 1657), Book 6 (no page numbers given).

⁸⁹ *Shoku Nihongi* (Waseda Scanned Documents Collection 10, Image 39), accessed February 9th, 2015, http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ri05/ri05_02450/ri05_02450_0021/ri05_02450_0021_p0039.jpg

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Lloyd, *The Creed of Half Japan: Historical Sketches of Japanese Buddhism*. 224. On the influence of Christianity on *Shāndào*, see: Lloyd, *The Creed of Half Japan: Historical Sketches of Japanese Buddhism*, 164, 195-196, 208-224.

⁹² Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 193-211.

⁹³ Gordon ゴルドン, *Kōbō Daishi to Keikyō to no kankei 弘法大師と景教との関係*, Appendix, 51-67.

⁹⁴ Ami-Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*, 137-139.

⁹⁵ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 50, 65, 127-128, 132-133, 206, 281.

⁹⁶ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 50, 65, 128.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 127.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 128.

lexicographical error perhaps stemming from Saeki. Furthermore, she contends that the Hōkan Miroku 宝冠弥勒, the representation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya (C. 彌勒菩薩, *Milè Púsa*, J. 弥勒菩薩, *Miroku Bosatsu*) presented to the *Hata* leader Hata no Kawakatsu 秦河勝 in 603CE and housed in the temple *Kōryūji*,⁹⁹ is an image of a messianic figure as understood in Mahāyāna Buddhism,¹⁰⁰ and linked explicitly to Christ.¹⁰¹ She also suggested that statues kept there with a single body and three heads represent the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁰² To confirm the Israelite origin of the *Hata* beyond the exploration of Saeki, she refers the reader to a story recorded in the *Nihon Shoki* which reports the killing of a man named Ōu Be no Ō 大生部多, who had been inciting people to worship an insect, by Hata no Kawakatsu, thereby ending the religious cult.¹⁰³ Although outside of a juxtaposed biblical quote on idolatry, she fails to convey how this story confirms the *Hata*'s origins.¹⁰⁴ Gordon's arguments regarding a *Jingjiào* presence in Japan are indebted to Saeki's theories on the *Hata* clan, and although she attempts to provide further evidence, in reality, she does little beyond noting coincidental similarities such as the presence of messianic figures in both Buddhism and Christianity.

A. H. Sayce also attempted to develop Saeki's theories providing new evidence for the presence of Christianity in Ancient Japan, namely two beams from the temple Hōryūji 法隆寺 containing crosses and Syriac inscriptions.¹⁰⁵ Saeki notes that these "beams" are blocks of incense.¹⁰⁶ The language has now been identified as Sogdian and Middle Persian, by the Tokyo National Museum (*Tōkyō kokuritsu hakubutsukan* 東京国立博物館) where they are held.¹⁰⁷ The cross-like brand is, however, obscure, and it is a step too far to suggest that the presence of Persian writing indicates a Christian origin. Rather, the blocks affirm the existence of Silk Road trade with Japan and maybe even the presence of foreigners, as

⁹⁹ *Nihon Shoki* 日本書記, Bunken-name 22, Suiko Tennō, Page 1272, Paragraph 1.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 128.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 206.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 281.

¹⁰³ *Nihon Shoki*, Bunken-name 24, Kogyoku Tenno, Page 1411, Paragraph 1.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 132-133.

¹⁰⁵ A. H. Sayce, "Preface," in *The Nestorian Monument in China*, by P. Y. Saeki (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916), vi.

¹⁰⁶ Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, 62.

¹⁰⁷ Tokyo National Museum Image Search, 「白檀香」 [White Sandalwood Incense], accessed 10th February 2015, <http://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/C0051367> And: Tokyo National Museum Image Search, 「梅檀香」 [Sandalwood Incense], accessed 10th February 2015, <http://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/C0051365> Tokyo National Museum Image Search, 「白檀香」 [White Sandalwood Incense], accessed 10th February 2015, <http://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/C0051366> And: Tokyo National Museum Image Search, 「梅檀香」 [Sandalwood Incense], accessed 10th February 2015, <http://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/C0051364>

corroborated by the *Nihon Shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi*.

Lloyd, Gordon, and Sayce fail to provide the evidence needed to strengthen Saeki's claims. Nevertheless, they developed the theories by adding further details, suggesting, for instance, that Christians influenced society and the Imperial Court during the rule of Emperor Shōmu. Alongside Saeki's original formulation, their work would become the cornerstone of future theories supporting a *Jingjiao* presence in Japan. However, for these scholars, it was not the presence of Christians in Ancient Japan, which was important, but the influence of the religion of Asian and Japanese Buddhism more generally.

SAEKI'S RETURN

Saeki returned to the topic of *Jingjiao* in Japan with his publication of *Keikyō no Kenkyū* 景教の研究 in 1935, and the more restricted English translation *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* in 1939, where he forwarded a new theory that adherents of *Jingjiao* came to Japan from *Yuán* 元 dynasty China (1271CE-1368CE).¹⁰⁸ Here references to the *Hata* and *Rimitsui* are absent. Samuel Hugh Moffett suggests that Saeki wisely decided not to include these items in his publications of the 1930s.¹⁰⁹ However, Kenny Joseph suggests that this was the result of censorship within Imperial Japan.¹¹⁰ It is certainly apparent from photographs in his biography that Saeki, and the curriculum he taught in small cultural classes during later life,¹¹¹ that he still believed in his original theories during old age. Moreover, the inclusion of theories of a Christian encounter through *Yuán*-Japan relations, and his focus on the joint translation project of *Prajñā* and *Jingjing* and the transportation of these translations to Japan¹¹² illustrates that he still desired to show Christian influence on ancient Japan. Saeki's silence on the topic did not mean that his theories had vanished from scholarship; Gordon had continued to publish works on the subject in the early 1920s,¹¹³ and in his 1928 *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church of Fire*, John Stewart included a number of

¹⁰⁸ P. Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎, *Keikyō no Kenkyū* 景教の研究, (東京: 東方文化学院東京研究所, 1935), 975-983. And: P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* (Tokyo: The Maruzen Company Ltd. 1951), 444-447.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 468, n. 80.

¹¹⁰ Kenny Joseph, "Japan's Jizo and Jesus," *Hayama Seminar Annual Report*, 1999, 7.

¹¹¹ Norimoto (ed.) 法本, *Saeki Yoshirō ikō nami den* 佐伯好郎遺稿並伝[Saeki Yoshirō's Posthumous Manuscripts and Biography], 314-315, 320-321.

¹¹² Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 35-36.

¹¹³ For example the reprint of *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity* in 1920, but also the following: E. A. Gordon, "Heirlooms of Early Christianity Visible in Japan," *The Tourist* Vol. 8 (July 1920), 19-41; (September 1920), 113-120. And: E. A. Gordon, *Symbols of "The Way" – Far East and West* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1922).

references to Japan,¹¹⁴ whilst the topic also received attention in journal publications.¹¹⁵ Regarding content little was added to the scholarship; however, already defined positions were strengthened, for instance, Empress Kōmyō and Chūjō Hime became viewed more explicitly as converts.¹¹⁶ Moreover, as the topic moved out of the hands of scholars with the ability to use Japanese and Chinese, the multiple ways of rendering names led to confusion in the scholarship of the late 1920s. Such a confusion caused Stewart and J. C. Pringle to divide *Rimitsui* into two separate characters, the one named Li-mi (the English rendering given by Saeki), and the other *Rimitsu* (the rendering provided by Gordon) who they claimed was an independently verified medical practitioner who may or may not have been the same person as Li-mi.¹¹⁷

Saeki formulated two points of encounter between Christians in *Yuán* China and Japan. The first was the historical find of a helmet, explored at great length in *Keikyō no Kenkyū*, but to which he donates only a paragraph in *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*.¹¹⁸ Despite the discrepancy in length, the argument can be summarised in both texts as there is a cruciform shape on this helmet; therefore, it belonged to a Christian.¹¹⁹ However, the poor photographic evidence provided by Saeki, and the lack of mention of the cross by other scholars, problematizes the existence of the cruciform shape.¹²⁰ Similarly, the helmet's style is not indicative of the *Yuán* period. Rather it appears to have dated from the 16th Century, with a design typical of *nanban kabuto* 南蛮兜 featuring silver inlay patterns, a 360-degree brim, a plumage holder on the front rather than the peak, and the general shape of a Cabasset influenced design.¹²¹ Online photographs from the *Genkō Shiryōkan* 元寇史料館 where the helmet is held concurs with this conclusion.¹²² In short, it is not possible to affirm that this artefact is evidence of a pre-16th Century Christian encounter in Japan. Second was

¹¹⁴ John Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1928), 167-196.

¹¹⁵ For instance: J. C. Pringle, "Japanese Buddhism in Relation to Christianity," *Church Quarterly Review*, Vol. LXXV: 312.

¹¹⁶ See: Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire*, 188-189. And: Pringle, "Japanese Buddhism in Relation to Christianity," 312.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Saeki 佐伯, *Keikyō no Kenkyū* 景教の研究, 975-982. And: Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 444-445.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ See: Saeki 佐伯, *Keikyō no Kenkyū* 景教の研究, 975-976. And: Zhōu Wēi 周玮, *Zhōngguó Bīngqì Shigǎo* 中国兵器史稿 (天津: 百花文艺出版社, 2006), 306.

¹²¹ B. W. Robinson, *Arms and Armour of Old Japan* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1963), 12. Morihiro Ogawa (ed.), *Art of the Samurai: Japanese Arms and Armor, 1156-1868* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 24, 68, 97. And: Bashford Dean, *Handbook of Arms and Armor: European and Oriental including The William H. Riggs Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1915), 127.

¹²² This can be seen on a picture which includes a short information board included here: "Genko Historical Museum, Fukuoka, Photographs," Trip Advisor, accessed November 29th 2015, http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g298207-d7266548-r297482213-Genko_Historical_Museum-Fukuoka_Fukuoka_Prefecture_Kyushu_Okinawa.html#photos

the concept that a Uyghur by the name of Guǒ 果 (also 果) present in one of the *Yuán* envoys was a Christian, based on the idea that Christian Uyghur's monopolized scribal positions during the Mongol period.¹²³ Similar to his argument regarding *Rimitsui*, this is effectively an attempt to suggest that nationality indicates religious identity. However, Guǒ is referred to by his nationality in only one historical document, as a person from Xūnwèiguó 薰畏國, an obscure term without obvious meaning which Saeki attempts to link to Uyghur lands.¹²⁴ He is absent from other historical mentions of the envoy, apart from its description in the *Xīn Yuán Shǐ* 新元史 (1920CE) which provides a different name for Guǒ (Dǒng Wèi 董畏) reusing characters from the country name Xūnwèiguó,¹²⁵ which thereby suggests that rather than a country the term Xūnwèiguó found in the *Kamakura Nendaiki* 鎌倉年代記¹²⁶ is a corruption of the name of the character in question. A number of religions were practiced by Uyghurs,¹²⁷ and although both Christians and Uyghurs, and Christian Uyghurs existed in secretarial and scribal roles in the Mongol administration,¹²⁸ it would not be historically truthful to suggest that these roles were the monopoly of Christians only. In summation, like the character of *Rimitsui* it is possible that Guǒ was a Christian; however, this cannot be affirmed beyond speculation, and some issues regarding Guǒ's personage make such a conclusion questionable.

A second edition in *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* was published in 1951. However, Saeki had fallen silent on the topic, still publishing works on Nestorianism but primarily acting as mayor Hatsukaichi-shi 廿日市市 in Hiroshima Prefecture. He died in 1965, yet his work alongside the additions made by Lloyd and Gordon and the mistakes of Stewart and Pringle continued to find acceptance and development in post-war scholarship.

DIVERGENCE – HISTORY, RELIGION AND CONSPIRACY

Post-War scholarship on the topic diverged into several approaches. The model developed here for understanding the development of the theories after Saeki, is not perfect, as there is cross-over between the approaches. The concept that the field is marked by these different

¹²³ Saeki 佐伯, *Keikyō no Kenkyū* 景教の研究, 982.-983. And: Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*. 445-447.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 982. The term is likely related to the terms *Wèi wù er* (畏兀兒, 畏吾兒, 畏午兒 etc.) referring to Uyghur's from the Kingdom of Qocho (C. *Gāochāng Huihú* 高昌回鶻) shares a character in the term.

¹²⁵ Ké Shàomǐn 柯劭忞 (ed.) *Xīn Yuán Shǐ* 新元史 (台北: 艺文印书馆, 1992), Chapter 250.

¹²⁶ See: Takeuchi Rizō 竹内理三 (ed.), *Kamakura Nendaiki, Buke Nendaiki, Kamakura Dainikki* 鎌倉年代記; 武家年代記; 鎌倉大日記, (京都: 臨川書店, 1979), 53.

¹²⁷ Michael C. Brose, "Yunnan's Muslim Heritage," in *China's Encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the Fiery Frontier Over Two Millennia*, James A. Anderson and John K. Whitmore (eds.) (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 143.

¹²⁸ George Lane, "Whose Secret Intent?" in *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China*, Morris Rossabi ed. (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2013), 20.

schools of thought has neither been recognized in scholarship nor by the scholars involved in developing the theories. Nevertheless, this model provides insight into the motives of scholars and the way these theories have been understood and formulated in the post-War world.

This paper proposes the existence of three general approaches, as follows:

1. The historical approach. This approach is home to the largest range of scholars, and the other two approaches lead directly out of it. The acceptance, rejection, or development of Saeki, Gordon, Lloyd, Stewart and Pringle's claims is unimportant; rather, this approach is defined by the scholars' primary involvement in writing history. The histories they develop are not necessarily accurate but are formulated in the context of acceptable historiographical practice as is common at the time of writing. In this sense whilst Saeki's work is a history, as history was understood in the Meiji and Showa (*Shōwa jidai* 昭和時代) periods, it does not have a historical basis. If a scholar were to repeat Saeki's claims in the 21st Century context, their method would not be grounded in current historiographical practice, and therefore, they would be better understood as members of the third approach of pseudo-history. All scholars dealt with thus far are part of the historical approach.

2. The religious approach. The religious approach often has close links with the historical approach; however, the motive or goal of the work or scholar is oriented primarily to creating a theological rather than a historical narrative. Whilst the work of Saeki and his contemporaries certainly had a theological element and implication, they primarily sought to write history, hence their inclusion in the first category. Nevertheless, in the post-War period, some scholars developed the theories for religious rather than academic purposes.

3. The pseudo-Historical or conspiracy approach. This approach is defined as the attempt to write history whilst lacking concordance with accepted historical method. Indicative of this approach is a reliance on pseudo-historical or outdated evidence and conspiracy for explanation. The growth of popular works on the topics in the 1990s and 2000s has caused this school to grow, competing in terms of size with the historical approach, and risking bringing the whole concept into disrepute in mainstream academia.

The first major post-War development came with the work of Ikeda Sakae.¹²⁹ Following the Takigawa Incident (*Takigawa jiken* 滝川事件) in 1933, Ikeda was one of the

¹²⁹ A detailed exploration of Ikeda's work can be found in: James Harry Morris, "The Presence of Jingjiao in Japan as explored by Ikeda Sakae," *The Japan Mission Journal*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Winter, 2015), 255-266.

few staff members to remain in Kyoto University's law department, and therefore in 1936 he received a promotion, continuing to teach there until 1946.¹³⁰ He left his position that year, during the post-War reshaping of Kyoto University,¹³¹ joining Kansai University in 1952 and retiring in 1963.¹³² It was during his period of unemployment when he began developing his theories on *Jingjiào*. Between 1949 and 1951, his letters appeared in the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East's publication *Light from the East*.¹³³ Therein he claimed to have discovered sites where chapels belonging to the Church of the East had been located.¹³⁴ These appear to have included Ōsake Jinja and a shrine called Konoshima Jinja 木嶋神社¹³⁵ originally referred to by Gordon.¹³⁶ Moving away from the work of his predecessors, however, he attempted to establish that Christianity had arrived independently of the *Hata* clan during the reign of Empress Suiko 推古天皇 (554-628CE), he provided no evidence for this other than the widespread nature of the religion in China.¹³⁷ Such a stance was bold, ridding the topic at once from its association with the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory. Rather than being transported by the *Hata*, Christianity he argued, was transported by a Chinese immigrant.¹³⁸ Despite this, his position was equally fallacious as the presence of Christianity in China contemporaneously cannot be affirmed. Similarly, his acceptance of Ōsake Jinja and Konoshima Jinja as Christian sites must rely on Saeki's association of the location with King David and his exploration of the *Hata*. A final discovery was the likeness of an Assyrian missionary known as *Mar Toma*, who died in Japan in 601CE.¹³⁹ Having had a significant influence on Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (574-662CE), Ikeda argues that the Prince built the statue with his hand but that the statue has been revered

¹³⁰ Matsuo Takayoshi 松尾尊兌, "Takigawa jiken izen – kyōto daigaku hōgakubu saiken mondai" '滝川事件以後 – 京都大学法学部再建問題' [After the Takigawa Incident – Problems of Rebuilding Kyoto University Department of Law], 京都大学大学文書館研究紀要 Vol. 2 (2004), 11.

¹³¹ Ibid. 10.

¹³² Sasaki Kenichiro 佐々木 研一朗, *Kyōtō Teikoku Daigaku Hōgakubu Josho ni Kan suru ikkōsatsu – Seijigaku kyōiku kenkyū no ikkan toshite* '京都帝国大学法学部助手に関する一考察 - 政治学教育研究の一環として' [A Study of the Research Associates at Kyoto Imperial University Faculty of Law; As Part of a Study of Political Education in Japan], 政治学研究論集 36, (2012), 227.

¹³³ A reprint made by the self-publishing company Lulu is currently available: Patriarchal Council, Inc. of the Church of the East, *Light from the East*.

¹³⁴ Ikeda Sakae, "Ancient Assyrian Christian Churches in Japan," *Light from the East*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (June-July. 1949), 10.

¹³⁵ Ikeda Sakae, "Japanese Believers turn to Ancient Shrine of David," *Light from the East*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April-May 1951), 4.

¹³⁶ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 128.

¹³⁷ Ikeda Sakae, "Prof. Sakae Ikeda Named Resident Commissioner for Japan," *Light from the East*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Feb-Mar. 1950), page numbers not given.

¹³⁸ Ikeda Sakae, "Japan Opens Arms to Church of East," *Light from the East*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (Oct.-Nov. 1949), 11.

¹³⁹ Sakae Ikeda, "Likeness of Early Assyrian Bishop Revered in Great Buddhist Temple near Tokyo," in *Light from the East*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (June-July 2015), page number not given.

as the Buddhist figure *Bodhidharma* (菩提達磨 - *Bodaidaruma*)¹⁴⁰ since 1738. This appears to be linked to the work of Gordon, who equates *Bodhidharma* or at least representations of him with the Apostle Thomas.¹⁴¹ Ikeda's story which does not appear in the work of other scholars cannot be verified, due to a lack of evidence, as far as I can find there is no *Mar Toma* in the historical record, and therefore this claim must be rejected unless further evidence comes to light.

Ikeda's publications in *Light from the East* point to interesting developments; however, his claims that these are independent discoveries of his own appear to be untrue, as he draws directly on the arguments of Gordon at several points. Similarly, although he seems to have abandoned the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory, later correspondence recorded in other works suggest that he eventually came to rely on the theory.¹⁴² Whilst the publication of his book on the topic entitled *Nestorianism and Japanese Culture* is recorded in the journal,¹⁴³ modern scholars have been unable to locate a copy. The interests of Ikeda's publisher *Light from the East* and the author differ radically. There is a stark contrast between the work of the editor and the inclusion of excerpts from Ikeda's letters and newspaper articles. The former is focused more on Ikeda's mission to Japan, the establishment of an organization (Association for the Reinstatement of the Church of the East – ARICE) to facilitate this and the acquirement of converts, the latter focuses on the discoveries.¹⁴⁴ In this way, whilst it appears through Ikeda's extracts that he belonged to the historical approach, his work is used for religious purposes; it is inextricably linked to his temporal religious mission so that he sits astride the two approaches. Similar to the Meiji period context of Saeki, Ikeda's work was positioned in a post-War context. Christianity had failed to establish a role for itself in post-War politics; the Church sought to recover from wartime declines in membership, but factors of social upheaval, the establishment of religious freedom, and the need to rebuild Japan were also at play.¹⁴⁵ In such a context, it could be suggested that Ikeda was seeking not

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Gordon, *The Lotus Gospel; or Mahayana Buddhism and its Symbolic Teachings Compared Historically and Geographically with those of Catholic Christianity*, 234.

¹⁴² See for instance correspondence with Ikeda recorded in the work of Ken Joseph Sr. and Ken Joseph Jr.: Ken Joseph Sr. ジョセフ・ケン・シニア and Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Kakusareta jūjika no kuni · nihon · gyakusetsu no kodaishi* 隠された十字架の国・日本・逆説の古代史 [Japan: Country of Hidden Crosses – Paradoxical Ancient History], (東京: 徳間書店, 2000), 16, 69, 75-76.

¹⁴³ Ikeda Sakae, "History of Church in Japan Published by Resident Commissioner Sakae Ikeda," *Light from the East*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (June-July 1950), 5.

¹⁴⁴ See: Ikeda, "Japan Opens Arms to Church of East," 2-3, 11. And: Sakae Ikeda, "Japanese Christians Eagerly Await Day of Baptism in Church of East," *Light from the East*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April-May 1950), page numbers not given.

¹⁴⁵ M. William Steele, "Christianity and Politics in Japan," in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 361. And: Joseph M. Kitagawa, *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 280-283.

only to “re-establish” the Church of the East in Japan but also Christianity more generally, by suggesting like his predecessors that Christianity was a Japanese religion or had in the least an established indigenous Japanese history. Ikeda continued a personal mission following the end of these publications, but the Church did not have the resources to supply the mission with the personnel or funds it needed,¹⁴⁶ and he did not continue to publish on the topic. There is no record that the 800 people awaiting baptism in the Church ever received it or that congregations were organized,¹⁴⁷ yet his influence on the scholars who followed him perhaps matches that of his predecessors.

In 1963, Church historian and Jesuit, Mario Marega presented a paper on the topic in which he strengthened previously made claims. Grounded squarely in the tradition of Saeki, and referencing him in his paper, he argued that *Kōryūji* was originally a Church, but after its destruction in a fire in 818CE became a Buddhist temple with the Syrian *Hata* people being absorbed into Tendai Buddhism. Marega views Tendai Buddhism as a combination of Buddhism, Manicheism, and Christianity.¹⁴⁸ The elements of his predecessor’s theories are all present in his argument; however, as in the case of Ikeda, they are repurposed. The *Hata* here are not viewed as Jewish, but as Syrians, who brought Christianity to Japan.¹⁴⁹ Regardless of this, no new evidence is provided to make his claim, rather the work of Saeki and others, which this paper has already problematized, were accepted with the word “Jewish” substituted for “Syrian.”

Following Marega little new was added to the theories as described by those of the historical approach for upwards of thirty years. They were repeated first by Mar Aprem, a Church historian, and leader in the Church of the East in his 1970 publication *Nestorian Missions*. Here he repeated aspects of Saeki, Gordon, Ikeda and Marega’s work, as well as repeating the mistakes of Stewart and Pringle, limiting himself to pre-*Táng* and *Táng* transmission.¹⁵⁰ He added one new theory, namely that in the Constitution created by Prince Shōtoku, Nestorians were given full liberty and personal rights.¹⁵¹ However, like the majority of claims made by the theorists explored here, there is no mention of this in the Imperial Record. In 1980, Hiyane Antei devoted several pages to the topic in his 1980 *Kirisutokyō no*

¹⁴⁶ Mar Aprem, *Nestorian Missions* (Trichur: Mar Narsai Press, 1970), 81.

¹⁴⁷ See: J. F. Coakley, “The Church of the East since 1914,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* Vol. 78 (1996), 190.

¹⁴⁸ Mario Marega, “Pre-Xaverian Christians in Japan,” *Kokusai Tōhō Gakusha Kaigi kiyō* 國際東方學者會議紀要 [Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan], 1963, 43-44.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Aprem, *Nestorian Missions*, 76-82.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 78.

Nihonteki tenkai, drawing exclusively on the work of Saeki and accepting the conclusion that Nestorianism arrived at three historical points.¹⁵² Hiyane's work draws solely on Saeki's Japanese publications, and therefore avoids the confusion and development by English scholars of later periods.

A substantial addition was made in 1971 by Teshima Ikurō, who published the first monograph on the topic. However, the text dealt mostly with the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory rather than the concept that Christianity came to Japan.¹⁵³ Nevertheless its use by his successor John M. L. Young who shaped the topic in the 1990s makes this text an essential part of the discussion. Teshima's work is indebted to and inspired by Saeki, as he notes in the preface, and accepts all the claims made thus far, including the concept that the *Hata* were Christian, the presence of *Rimitsui* and the evidence of a helmet.¹⁵⁴ He added some new concepts such as noting similarities between Hebrew and Japanese folk songs,¹⁵⁵ claiming that the *Hata* God (八幡人 *Hachiman jin/Yahata no kami*) was derived from the term Judah (Yehudah) and that therefore, this religion was Jewish in origin.¹⁵⁶ He also argued that the three-pillared *torii*¹⁵⁷ at *Konoshima Jinja* is a Trinitarian symbol,¹⁵⁸ saying that Uzumasa is, in fact, the name of the Christian Godhead worshipped by the *Hata*,¹⁵⁹ and he noted some legendary accounts. Still, his work does not depart greatly from that of his predecessors. He argues like Marega and Aprem that *Kōryūji* was a Church and that the religion vanished through syncretism with Buddhism by the 12th Century, made possible due to the Jewish origins of the religion.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, he notes in passing the existence of a *Jīngjiào* text, *The Lord of the Universe's Discourse on Almsgiving: Part III* (世尊布施論第三 J. *Seson fuse ron, dai san, C. Shizūn būsūhī lùn dì sān*)¹⁶¹ housed in the Temple *Nishi-Honganji* 西本願寺 and supposedly transported to Japan by Shinran 親鸞.¹⁶² The importance

¹⁵² Hiyane Antei 比屋根安定, *Kirisutokyō no Nihonteki tenkai* 基督教の日本の展開 [The Japanese Development of Christianity] (東京: 大空社, 1980), 3-5.

¹⁵³ Ikuro Teshima, *The Ancient Jewish Diaspora in Japan: The Tribe of the Hada: Their Religious and Cultural Influence* (Tokyo: Tokyo Bible Seminary, 1971).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 3-6, 60, 79.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 20-23.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 37-39.

¹⁵⁷ Known as *Mihashira Torii/Mitsubashira Torii* (三柱鳥居) or *Sankaku Torii* (三角鳥居).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 53.

¹⁵⁹ Teshima, *The Ancient Jewish Diaspora in Japan: The Tribe of the Hada: Their Religious and Cultural Influence*, 59-60.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 53.

¹⁶¹ For a translation and commentary, refer to: Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 206-247. Matteo Nicolini-Zani, *La via radiosa per l'Oriente. I testi e la storia del primo incontro del cristianesimo con il mondo culturale e religioso cinese (secoli VII-IX)*, (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2006), 246-263. And: Li Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christians in China and Its Literature in Chinese. Together with a New English Translation of the Dunhuang Nestorian Documents* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), 168-181.

¹⁶² Teshima, *The Ancient Jewish Diaspora in Japan: The Tribe of the Hada: Their Religious and Cultural Influence*, 60.

of Teshima's work is not, however, his minor additions to the theories or the fact that he wrote the first complete text dealing with the topic. Rather, this book marked the beginning of the pseudo-historical approach. Ikeda, Marega, Aprem and Hiyane had more or less abandoned the pseudo-philology of Saeki. However, this feature returned as the primary method of Teshima's work. Similarly, his work lacked the academic referencing expected of mainstream scholarly work, with only a handful of sources provided, which, combined with unusual translations and transliterations, make his theories extremely difficult to trace. Whilst he began the pseudo-historical approach to the topic, Teshima is squarely located in the religious approach, and whilst his work acts as theological narrative, it is masqueraded as history and at no point is it made clear to the reader that this is a theological text. Teshima was the founder of the *Makuya* (幕屋)¹⁶³ Christian denomination, which split from the non-Church movement (*Mukyōkai* 無教会) in 1949, after the inclusion of Pentecostal elements in his Bible study group.¹⁶⁴ The movement sought to recover an authentic apostolic Christianity, and after Teshima's visit to Israel in 1961, the movement began to develop Zionist and pro-Israel tendencies.¹⁶⁵ Mark Mullins notes that of primary importance for Teshima were the religious traditions of Ancient Japan, which led to a focus on Japan's early imperial documents to aid in the understanding the ancient Japanese spirit.¹⁶⁶ Mullins argues that much like Saeki, Teshima sought to Christianize Japan's pre-Christian past.¹⁶⁷ In this context, Teshima's text attempts to foster positive Japanese-Israeli relations and provides Teshima's religion with a historical precedent in Japan.

Following Teshima, in 1984 John M. L. Young, a Presbyterian missionary, produced a more accessible text focusing on Nestorianism in Asia with some references to Japan.¹⁶⁸ His references to Japan therein continue in the tradition of Saeki, and repeat the confusions created by John Stewart, but for the most part, he draws on the work of Teshima as his base, repeating the majority of claims in the form that Teshima developed them. Following his predecessors, Young attempts to establish that the *Hōkan Miroku* was linked to Juedo-

¹⁶³ Three important surveys of the denomination and its beliefs are as follows: Carlo Caldarola, *Christianity: The Japanese Way* (Leiden: Brill, 1979). Ikenaga Takashi 池永孝, *Nihonteki Kirisutokyō no tankyū: Nijijima Jō • Uchimura Kanzō • Teshima Ikurō no kiseki* 日本的基督教の探究：新島襄・内村鑑三・手島郁郎らの軌跡 [Research on Japanese Christianity: The Traces of Nijijima Jō, Uchimura Kanzō and Teshima Ikurō] (大阪: 竹林館, 2008), 64-84. Nagasawa Makito, "Makuya Pentecostalism: a survey," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (July, 2000), 203-218.

¹⁶⁴ Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*, 120.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 120-122.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 123.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 124.

¹⁶⁸ John M. L. Young, *By foot to China: Mission of the Church of the East, to 1400* (Lookout Mountain, GA: Grey Pilgrim Publications, 1991).

Christian messianic figures and that the statue has Semitic features and contains Nestorian artistic themes.¹⁶⁹ The concept that there is an indirect Christian influence on the statue is, however, inconclusive and the majority of scholars concur that the statue is indicative of contemporaneous Korean art.¹⁷⁰ Young also appears to be the first scholar to note the existence of the Tomb of Christ (キリストの墓) in Shingo 新郷村, Aomori 青森県 which he claims is the tomb of a Nestorian missionary.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, the linking of this tomb to Christianity cannot be traced before 1936,¹⁷² and as such most scholars believe the site to be a fake.¹⁷³

At the same time, these developments were carried back into the historical approach by John C. England in a 1991 paper,¹⁷⁴ and a section in his 1996 work *The Hidden History of Christianity in Asia: The Churches of the East before the year 1500*.¹⁷⁵ Therein, England draws exclusively on the work of Saeki, Stewart, Aprem, and Young, but abandons philological arguments to focus only on possible archaeological finds and textual evidence, noting the difficulty of ratifying some of these claims.¹⁷⁶ The appearance of these concepts in modern peer-reviewed texts thereby established them as historical. Nevertheless, it is apparent that England was unable to turn to the primary documents to explore the truth of these claims more thoroughly, and therefore, he fails to notice the lack of historical basis for these claims. He repeats Stewart's mistakes and mistakenly attributes to Saeki a quote taken from Young arguing that a man who travelled alongside *Rimitsui*, *Kōho Tōchō* 皇甫東朝¹⁷⁷ was a Christian.¹⁷⁸ His argument follows Young closely, and therefore, despite its lack of mention, due to Young's reliance on Teshima, many of the theories England takes from

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 18.

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan Best, "Image, Iconography and Belief in Early Korean Buddhism," *Korean Art Society Journal*, No. 3 (2011), 82-83. Lena Kim, "Early Korean Buddhist Sculpture," *Korean Art Society Journal*, No. 3 (2011), 88-94. Junghee Lee, *The Contemplating Bodhisattva Images of Asia, with Special Emphasis on China and Korea* (University of California: Doctoral Dissertation, 1984). Junghee Lee, "The Origins and Development of the Pensive Bodhisattva Images of Asia," *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 53, No. 3-4 (1993), 311-357. And: Anna Maria Quagliotti, "'Pensive' Bodhisattvas on 'Narrative' Gandharan Reliefs A Note on a Recent Study and Related Problems," *East and West*, Vol. 46, No. 1-2 (June, 1996), 97-115.

¹⁷¹ Young, *By foot to China: Mission of the Church of the East, to 1400*, 18.

¹⁷² Horio Kōji 堀尾幸司, *Kirisuto koroshi no shinsō* キリスト殺しの真相 [The Truth of Christ's Death] (東京: 文芸社, 2007), 179-180.

¹⁷³ Okamoto, Ryōsuke 岡本, 亮輔, *Feiku ga umidasu shinseisei: Aomori Shingon mura 'Kirisuto no Haka' no seichi kankō* フェイクが生み出す真正性: 青森県新郷村「キリストの墓」の聖地観光 [Authentic Fake: The Case of 'Tomb of Christ' in Shingō Village] 哲学・思想論集 [Tetsugaku・shisō ronshū], No. 39 (2013): 59-77.

¹⁷⁴ John C. England, "The Earliest Christian Communities in Southeast and Northeast Asia: An Outline of the Evidence Available in Seven Countries Before A.D. 1500," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 1st, 1991), 209.

¹⁷⁵ John C. England, *The Hidden History of Christianity in Asia: The Churches of the East before the year 1500* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 105-107.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 107 n. 12.

¹⁷⁷ Sometimes rendered Kōfū, Kofu or Kohfū.

¹⁷⁸ England, "The Earliest Christian Communities in Southeast and Northeast Asia: An Outline of the Evidence Available in Seven Countries Before A.D. 1500," 209. And: Young, *By foot to China: Mission of the Church of the East, to 1400*, 19.

Young's work are intimately linked to the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory, for instance, the concept that sites in the *Uzumasa* area are related to Christianity.

Following England's work, the theories increasingly became the topic of short excerpts in longer histories of Japanese Christianity. Notably, Mark Mullins accepted that there was some evidence for a *Yuán* period interaction, and Atsuyoshi Fujiwara provided short rebuttals of the claims but did not deal with the sources critically.¹⁷⁹ Samuel Hugh Moffett similarly explored the claims without much critical discussion. He incorrectly argued that Saeki had never postulated a Nestorian mission to Japan and that he had only indicated the existence of Nestorians in Japan through *Yuán* period interactions, interactions Moffett accepts as truthful.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, he dismisses the apocryphal stories included in modern scholars as pure speculation; however, mistakenly believes these stories to be modern inventions not linked to the work of Saeki.¹⁸¹ Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit provide a more positive summation of the claims, accepting the concept of Christian presence in the Mongol interactions, and the idea that Rimitsui was a missionary.¹⁸² They reject the existence of a sustained mission, or that there was a Christian influence on Japanese Buddhism.¹⁸³ Notto R. Thelle concluded that these theories currently lacked the evidence needed to ratify them, but that they were strong estimated guesses to be proven true in the future.¹⁸⁴ The first lengthy exploration appears to be that of Nakamura Satoshi in 2009, who concluded that there was a probability that Christians came to Japan before Xavier, but that there was only limited evidence with scholarship difficult to trace.¹⁸⁵ He decried the fact that the topic was often grounded in the Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory, and noted the need for the use of more historical methodology, whilst also arguing that the theories should not be ignored in mainstream scholarship.¹⁸⁶ Yet all these scholars added nothing new to the topic, other than much-needed commentary on the theories.

Development came in the field of *Jǐngjiào* scholarship, although this was limited due to the general rejection of the theories. Perhaps the most significant contribution is that of Alexander Toepel, who illustrated without reference to previous arguments and theories that

¹⁷⁹ Fujiwara, *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context: A Believers' Church Perspective*, 161. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*, 12.

¹⁸⁰ Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500*, 459-460.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 460.

¹⁸² Gillman and Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500*, 360-361.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Thelle, "The Christian Encounter with Japanese Buddhism" 227-228.

¹⁸⁵ Nakamura 中村敏, *Nihon kirisutokyō senkyōshi: Sabieru izen kara kyō made* 日本キリスト教宣教史：サビエル以前から今日まで, 32.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Christians had come to Japan during the *Yuán* invasions. He based this argument on evidence during the second invasion in 1281CE, the northern forces under the control of Korean *Hong Dagu* 洪茶丘, a direct subordinate of the Mongol Christian Prince Nayan, were drawn from the areas under the control of Nayan and his high number of Christian vassals.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, he illustrated that there was a possibility that one of the commanders of the invasions, *Xīndū* 忻都, was a Christian, based on the fact that this name was only borne by Christians and Muslims and that Muslims did not hold military office at the time.¹⁸⁸ Although he references Saeki's discovery of a helmet as further evidence, his argument, which appears to be historically accurate does not hinge on this concept. In this way, Toepel's work marks an important move away from the problems of this area of study, establishing the truth of one of the claims concerning new evidence.

The pseudo-historical school was rife with activity during the late 1990s and early 2000s, matching the increasing number of explorations in academic publications. Kenny Joseph and Ken Joseph, a father and son team of evangelical missionaries of Assyrian descent, wrote prolifically on the subject although their major works are more or less identical in content and often form.¹⁸⁹ Their expansion of the theories effectively pools all previous work on the topic but does so using an outdated approach with a focus on philology, a lack of reliable sources and reliance on legend recorded conversation and conspiracy. Reasons for rejecting the theories include, that it is unacceptable to argue the Japanese bloodline is not pure;¹⁹⁰ that they have not been fully published due to pre-War censorship;¹⁹¹ that a Buddhist conspiracy to take credit for the medical work of Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō means that their Christian motivation has been forgotten;¹⁹² that the Ministry of Education dictates what can and can't be written;¹⁹³ and that Buddhists have

¹⁸⁷ Alexander Toepel, "Christians in Korea at the End of the Thirteenth Century," in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang eds. (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2009), 282-283.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 281, n11.

¹⁸⁹ See: Ken Joseph Sr. ジョセフ・ケン・シニア and Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Kakusareta jūjika no kuni · nihon · gyakusetsu no kodaishi* 隠された十字架の国・日本・逆説の古代史 [Japan: Country of Hidden Crosses – Paradoxical Ancient History], (東京: 徳間書店, 2000). Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Ushinawareta aidentiti: Nai to gai kara mita Nihonjin: Kakusareta rekishi wo motomete* 失われたアイデンティティ: 内と外からみた日本人: 隠された歴史を求めて [Lost Identity] (東京: 光文社, 2005). Kenny Joseph ジョセフ・ケン・シニア and Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, 隠された聖書の国・日本 [Japan: Country of Hidden Scripture] (東京: 徳間書店, 2008). Kenny Joseph ジョセフ・ケン・シニア and Ken Joseph Jr. ジョセフ・ケン・ジュニア, *Irasuto shinpan: Seisho no kuni Nihon* 「イラスト新版」聖書の国・日本 [Japan's Christian Roots] (東京: 徳間書店, 2010).

¹⁹⁰ Joseph, "Japan's Jizo and Jesus," 5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 7.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 8-9.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* 11.

made a concerted effort to erase the presence of crosses on archaeological artefacts.¹⁹⁴ It is not only conspiratorial claims which mark the work of the Josephs; the theories undergo a great deal of development. However, this development lacks verifiable sources and often involves blatant lying. To name a single example, they argue that the term *kejijin* 景人 (adherent or priest of *Jingjiao*) came into common usage following the arrival of *Rimitsui* in the Imperial documents. However, such a term does not feature in Japanese Imperial documents nor contemporary Chinese texts of *Jingjiao* or non-*Jingjiao* origin. In fact, it appears to be an entirely new term, the creation of the authors. Samuel Lee has since repeated their claims¹⁹⁵, thereby aiding to popularize them in Western research also. Whilst the Josephs have fallen silent in recent years; the pseudo-historical approach continues to be popular with Sugiyama Haruo having published work in 2015, attempting to link Japanese with Hebrew, Syrian and Western languages.¹⁹⁶ Most of the time, however, his claims are simply nonsense, for example, he forwards the idea that *Inarizushi* 稲荷寿司, commonly believed to be named after the Shintō God *Inari* 稲荷, is related to the Latin acronym INRI and developed as the Japanese version of unleavened bread to be used in the Eucharist.¹⁹⁷

In the post-War years, therefore, the theory that Christianity came to Japan before the Jesuits, has undergone a great deal of development under three separate approaches. After the early work of Ikeda and Marega, who sought to remove the theories from their Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory baggage, historical approaches towards these theories lacked progression. Nevertheless, Teshima's development of the theories for use as a theological narrative in his religious denomination *Makuya* spawned a pseudo-historical approach that continued to rely on outdated historiographical methodology and pseudo-linguistic comparisons combined with limited reference to academic sources as the basis of claims. This pseudo-historical work was carried back into mainstream peer-reviewed scholarship, where the philological method was dropped, and only textual and archaeological evidence explored. For the most part, these claims were rejected in mainstream scholarship; however, scholars such as Alexander Toepel were able to provide new verifiable evidence for some of the theories, establishing, for instance, Christian presence in the *Yuan* invasion forces. Such advancements were matched by the growing pseudo-historical approach, which

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 12.

¹⁹⁵ Samuel Lee, *Rediscovering Japan, Reintroducing Christendom: Two Thousand Years of Christian History in Japan* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2010).

¹⁹⁶ Sugiyama Haruo 杉山治男 *Heian Jidai ni Nihongo kasareta Keikyō kotoba: Shiawase no rikai suru kurosu wādo* 平安時代に日本語化された景教言葉：幸せを理解するクロスワード (東京: 幻冬舎, 2015).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 40.

relied on conspiracy and legend as evidence, risking the reputé of the topic more generally.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of *Jingjiào* in Japan is, as framed in 20th Century scholarship, more or less fictional. The theories belong to a different time, context and historiographical methodology but cannot be affirmed to be true. In the early 20th Century, they were grounded in the disproven Japanese-Jewish Common Ancestry Theory but became the subject of development and confusion once they entered the realm of Western scholarship, where scholars were unable to work with the Japanese and Chinese languages. The beginning of the post-War period saw an attempt to rid the field of its reliance on theories of common ancestry, but all this involved was the substitution of the term “Jewish” with “Syrian.” The theories themselves underwent little substantial change, other than the addition of further sites possibly related to *Jingjiào*, mostly based in the Uzumasa area. Under Teshima, the theories were repurposed for theological use, and as a by-product of this, the pseudo-historical approach was created marked by a reliance on outdated methodology. Nevertheless, the work of Teshima found its way into the mainstream, creating an unusual situation in the 1990s in which academics attempted to wrestle with these ahistorical theories which had entered peer-reviewed publications.

Today, it is only the concept of an encounter with *Yuán* Christians, which is widely accepted, although some scholars have also refused to rule out the idea that *Rimitsui* was a Christian. Whilst some scholars repeat claims that there was interaction during the *Táng* dynasty, this is the result of an inability on the part of those scholars to return to the historical documents. Moreover, despite attempts to the contrary, these theories still rely on the work of Saeki to establish their “truth.”

Notwithstanding the fact that 20th Century and 21st Century formulations fail to establish these theories as truth, there is a real possibility that interactions took place. In a way, the attempts of Ikeda, Marega and England are inspiring as they try to rid the field of its ahistorical baggage. Nevertheless, it is only Toepel who has been able to do this effectively as the former three scholars still very much rely on the work of their predecessors. Much work is needed on the topic to affirm the truth of the theory that Christians came to Japan before the Jesuits, and this paper, rather than forwarding new conceptions, has only sought to clarify the genesis of certain theories and to dismiss them.