Christian Causation to Persecution in Shoku-Ho & Edo Period

: How Japanese Rulers Encountered with Christianity?*

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Abstract

This article is an overview of the Pre-modern history in Japan when Kirishitans were severely persecuted and martyred in 17th and 18th century. The primary focus is on how three Japanese rulers, Nobunaga Oda, Hideyoshi Toyotomi and Ieyasu Tokugawa encountered with Christianity that led to the atrocious persecution of Kirishitans and seclusion of the nation. Nobunaga’s generous permission to missionaries for their propagation was related to his interests in and appreciation for their sincere faith and the trade benefits through them. However, Nobunaga was never converted to Christianity, rather, at his last moment he deified himself and demanded worship from his people. The next...
ruler, Hideyoshi, succeeded Nobunaga’s favorable relationship with missionaries, and he granted permission for the missionaries to propagate Christianity with the conditions that missionaries would provide military ships. The missionary Coelho did not fulfill the negotiation. Hideyoshi also found out that many daimyos in Kyushu area became Kirishitans and dedicated Nagasaki to Pope. Knowing these Christian influences in Japan, Hideyoshi changed his attitude toward missionaries and expelled them. The public questionnaire given to Jesuits were about their exclusive teaching and aggressive propagation as well as the slave trade mediated by missionaries. Thus, Hideyoshi banned missionaries and arrested 26 missionaries and Kirishitans to martyr in Nagasaki as the first persecution. Ieyasu, the third ruler, was clearly aware of the missionaries’ political agenda and observed the internal conflicts among the missionaries. Ieyasu had shifted the trading partners from Roman Catholic missionaries to the ones from Protestant nations, Dutch and England, who did not emphasize religious propagation. However, he realized the resilient missionaries’ activities by Roman Catholic missionaries and believers, Ieyasu and his successors in Tokugawa Dynasty took atrocious nationwide campaign of Christianity and the seclusion policy against Christianity.

Six points for analysis are observed. (1) Christian mission, which was intertwined with political and economic agenda, damaged the genuineness of the Gospel and Mission, (2) Christian