The Han-San-Wei-l

( 凾 三 爲 一 )

(Three Religions are One)

Principle in Far Eastern Societies

by David Chung

[page 95]

**The Ham-Sam-Wei-l(凾三爲一) (Three Religions are One) Principle in Far Eastern Societies**

The “national religion” of Korea seems to have puzzled not a little the early Western visitors to the land who tried to find some counterpart to the organized religions of the West in this peninsula. Opinions differed:

“from those who think that Koreans have no religion, to those who would say... that they are very religious. If you were to ask the average non-Christian Korean about his religion, he would say ‘no religion’’’1).

“He (a Korean) personally takes his own education from Confucius; he sends his wife to Buddha to pray for off spring; and in the ills of life he willingly pays toll to Shamanist ‘Mootang’ (sorceress)”2).

“As a general thing, we may say that the all-round Korean will be a Confucianist when in society, a Buddhist when he philosophises, and a spirit worshipper when he is in trouble”3).

“Korea’s is a strange religion, a mixing of ancestor worship with Buddhism, Taoism, spirit cults, divination, magic, geomancy, astrology, and fetishism. Dragons play a part, devils or natural gods are abundant; ‘tokabi’(elfs, imps, goblins) are legion”4).

A missionary even tried to give this “religion” a name: Sin’gyo or the “Doctrine of the Gods”5). Such syncretic phenomena seem to have left very strong impressions on visitors who observed this “religion without a name” in action, as is evidenced in the quantity of literature they produced6).

1) Rhodes, Harry A. (ed.)：*History of the Korea Mission*. Presbyterian Church USA 1884-1934. Seoul. 1934. p. 47.

2) Jones, G.H.: “*The Spirit Worship of the Koreans*”, Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Socitey Transactions, vol. II, Part II, 1901. p.39.

3) Hulbert, H.B.: *The Passing of Korea*, New York, 1905. p. 403

4) Gale, J.S.: *Korea in Transition*. New York, 1909. p.70.

5) Underwood, H.G.: *The Religions of Eastern Asia*. New York. 1910. p94.

6) cf. Underwood, H.H.: “*A Partial Bibliography of Occidental Literature on Korea from Early Times to 1939*”. TKBRAS vol. XXIV. Seoul, 1935.

[page 96]

In Korean funerals, for instance, to single out a typical case among the host of bizarre practices, it is confucianism that dresses the mourners with sack-cloth, while the buddhist monks chant their sutras for those departed to the Western Paradise, a buddhist heavenly kingdom. It is a shaman who exorcises the evil spirits, which may annoy or harm the departed on his journey, while taoistic geomancers engage thenselves in supervising the digging of the grave on the site which they believe to be the most profitable location.

Each religion plays different notes here, but in a strange harmony. Confucianism provides the religious etiquette; Mahayana Buddhism the ritual and the vision of future life. Taoism ensures the safe journey of the deceased to the spirit world, while keeping an eye on the expected prosperity of the bereaved conformists to the rites. A shaman is needed to deal with the several souls of the dead directly.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Western observers should be confused when confronted with a tapestry of such extremely complicated designs and colours. They did not know what to make of it.

To be sure, there were independent confucian buddhist and taoist religious organizations functioning separately in society. Shamanists did not incorporate themselves into any organization, but, none the less, shamanism was a religious institution.

Furthermore, it would be entirely erroneous if one should suppose that the attitude of one religion to another was basically indifferent. Especially after Confucianism ascended to the position of a state religion in the early years of the Yi Dynasty, it never hesitated to persecute other faiths as “superstitions, “abominable deeds embroiled with heretic sacrifices”, or “evil causing heresies”.

This confucian persecution was only checked by [page 97] the fact that Confucianism itself was the exclusive religion of the *yangban* (兩班) class. Women as well as well as commoners were excluded from the rituals. On the other hand the suppressed religions were not entirely silent in their protest. It is not surprising to find that the revolts of Hong Kyŏngnae (洪景來 1811), the Paek kŏndang (白巾黨) of Chinju (1863) and the Tong hakdang (東學黨) (1894) were all coloured with taoist and buddhist beliefs though basically they were movements of the oppressed people against the ruling class.

Hong Kyŏngnae, the leader of the revolt named after him, had assumed the role of a taoist mystical general who was believed to have possessed supernatural power. Some five years after his death in the abortive rebellion, some of his followers in the southern provinces still believed him alive and they organized another series of unsuccessful revolts on the strength of this belief. The Tonghak revolt in later years definitely took the course of a religious war against the rulling class. Ch’ŏndogyo (天道敎) and the host of similar indigenous religious sects in this group are off shoots of this rebellion.

The most outstanding feature in all this complexity is that an ideal type Korean could always give his allegiance to all of these religions at the same time. This situation made a student in Upsala exclaim: “Die Religion Koreas ist synkretistisch”7).

It is syncretic; but in what sense? What is the structure of this version of syncretism? Looking at its history, the syncretic attitude of the people has a long standing. Ch’oe Chiwŏn (崔致遠), the great scholar of 9th century Silla, wrote of the “national religion of his age, which “embraces three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism), grafting them to its own body and nourishing the divergent understandings therefrom

7) Beyerhaus, Peter: *Die Selbstandigkeit der Junger Kirchen als Missionarisches Problem*. Barmen, 1956. S. 216

[page 98]

in harmony...8). This clearly shows that already in his century the Han-San-Wei-I (凾三爲一) of Chinese origin was rooted deeply in the Korean soil.

The Tan’gun legend itself, a mythological account of the foundation of the nation by Tan’gun (擅君), a descendant of the heavenly deity Hananim or Hanin has a syncretic setting. The Koryŏ Dynasty’s 13th century versions of the legend recorded in *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事) and *Chewang Un’gi* (帝王韻記) are thickly coloured with taoist and buddhist mythology and terminology.

If one is inclined to accept the hypothesis of Kim Che wŏn9) in the face of the much disputed problem of the origin of the Tan’gun legend, one will find the Tan’gun mythology set already in a syncretic framework with strong taoist influences when it was recorded on the stone slabs of the Wu Liang Tz’u of the Chinese Han Dynasty.

If Dr. Kim is right the Han dynasty stone slab version could be dated safely around the second century A.D. The northern part of the peninsula was under the occuption of Han previous to that date.

If one is inclined to apply the time depth measurement of the *Kulturkreisemethode*10) prepared by Wilhelm Schmidt, the Austrian anthropologist, on this Korean legend, he will find the origin of the syncretic attitude in the story could be pushed further back. The legend depicts a marriage between Han Ung, the son of the primitive monotheistic deity Hanin or Hananim

8) *Silla Pon’gi* IV, *Sam guk Sagi* vol. 4.

9) Kim, Che-won: “*Han Dynasty Mythology and the Korean Legend of Tan, gun*”, Archives of tie Chinese Art Society of America. III 1948-49. pp.43-48.

10) cf. Schmidt, W.: *Handbuch der Vergleichenden Religionsgeschichite*. Munster. 1930. XIV Kapitel. SS. 213-243; Schmidt, W.: Ursprung der Gottesidee. Bd. I. Munster. 1926, SS. 752-766.

[page 99]

and the bear woman Kŏm, a deity widely worshipped by the North Asiatic tribes of Manchuria and Siberia11). If this marriage means the hybridization of two societies of different cultural and religious background (one patriarchal and nomadic with a monotheistic male deity, the other matrilineal and agricultural with a totemic female deity) we may be able to trace the lost memories of the people into the realm of prehistory. Even in that stage, free from taoist or buddhist influences, it is not difficult for us to infer that the legend was also a syncretic form: the marriage of the two deities.

Despite the fact that these ideas, individually, are but hypotheses, one thing is clear. The religious attitude of the people has been syncretic for a long long time.

In what sense, in what character and structure? Kraemer introduced this pre-Christian oriental syncretism as a fitting example of his own thesis12). He supposed that it was the relativism of the oriental religions based upon an “inherent natural monism” that gave rise to such a strange phenomenon. He observed:

“The religious allegiance of the average (Chinese) is not related to one of the three religions. He does not belong to a confession or creed He participates, unconcerned as to any apparent lack of consistency, alternately in Buddhist, Taoist or Confucian rites. He is by nature a religious pragmatist. Religiously speaking we find him *prenant son bien ou il le trouve*... We are repeatedly told especially of the Chinese and Japanese that they have a deep-rooted indifference

11) Hallowell, A.I.: *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere*. Philadelphia. 1926. Korean kŏm (bear) may have been derived etymologically from the common linguistic stock from which the Ainu kamui (bear-god) or Japanese kami (god) also originated.

12) Kraemer, Hendrik: *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. New York. Reprint. 1947. p. 156 and *passim*.

[page 100]

towards dogma and doctrinal differences”13).

But, on a closer view, Kraemer’s interpretation is misleading on several accounts. Firstly, the “average” far easterners, including Koreans, are not “relativists”. They do not philosophize in terms of the “Absolute”, of course, but, they believe that they know the absolute norm with which they must conform. They did not develop doctrines of revelation as such, but they have indeed elevated the norms to absolute height attributing them to the will of a heavenly being. It was the voice of Heaven that spoke to them through the wise men whom they canonized as their saints. They were by no means progress-minded relativists. On the contrary, they were conservative absolutists oriented in archaism.

Secondly, they were not pragmatists, religiously speaking. Their devotion and piety did not allow impartiality in their religious duties. The “*prenant son bien ou il le trouve*” attitude is psychologically contradictory even to sincere idolators. If it were not, why was Christianity, for instance, not accepted in those countries without undergoing tragic persecutions? It was not xenophobia alone that caused the persecution. They were first of all religious persecutions.

De Groot provides us with more acceptable explanation on the matter. According to him,

“in reality the three religions are the branches of a common stem which existed from the most ancient time. This stem is the religion of ‘Universismus’...... Universism, as I will call it from now on, is the one religion of China in which the three religions only partake as its integrated parts14)”

13) *op. cit*. pp. 201-2.

14) De Groot, JJ-M.: *Universismus, Die Grundlage der Religion und Ethik, Staatswesens und der Wissenschaften Chinas*. Berlin. 1918 S. 2.

[page 101]

“The Chinese religious system is a universalistic animism”15). In short, the Han-San-Wei-I is a coherent system even though it looks on superficial observation like a chaotic conglomeration of heterogeneous and bizarre elements. This interpretation we support, in view of the following historical facts.

Regardless of their very much exaggerated doctrinal differences Confucianism and Taoism maintained a close propinquity throughout Chinese history. In spite of their antithetic ontological theories of the universe and ethical attitudes, and in spite of their roots in different social strata, they were inseparably united by the fact that they shared the same animistic ideologies as well as identical religious vocabularies.

It is very interesting to note that the *Chung Yung* (中庸), a book hitherto believed to be one of the most important documents of Confucianism has been thoroughly analysed recently by competent scholars and considered rather to be a book of taoist origin.16)

Buddhism was a religion of foreign origin to China, but it was accepted into Chinese society having been acculturated successfully through various stages of syncretism. Today the term Chinese Buddhism has become the denotation of a branch of Buddhism that is peculiarly Chinese.

To be more specific, Mahayana Buddhism in China came to occupy an integral part in the religious life of the people through syncretistic processes. And we believe that a study of the processes of this integration will bring us one step further towards understanding the hidden structure of the *Han-San- Wei-I*.

When Buddhism was introduced into China it was

15) op. cit. S. 12.

16) Chang, Carsun: *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*. New York 1958.p.48.

[page 102]

accepted on the merits of its equivalence to Taoism. This Chinese version of Buddhism as accepted in the later Han Dynasty was a religion of Taoist *Shen-Hsien-Fang-Shu* (Occultism and Magic).

There are many opinions as to the date of the introduction of Buddhism into China. Some even maintain that Confucius himself knew of Buddha, in a book popularly attributed to Lieh-tzu one finds a high official asking Confucius:

“Who is the saint? Fu-tzu (Confucius) solemnized his expression and kept reverent silence a while and then spoke: Ch’iu (Confucius), that is, I heard that there is in the West a saint who does not rule, but the world is not rebellious. He does not inculcate but the people believe in him. He does not propagate yet the people gladly follow him”17)

However, conclusive evidence shows that the said document is the latter day fabrication of a confucian-buddhist in either the Wei or the Chin dynasty18).

Other early accounts of the “mysterious” introduction of Buddhism are also bewildering. The relative documents could be graded according to their degree of exaggeration19). But, they all seem to agree that Buddha revealed himself (circa. 63 A.D.) to the Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty in a dream with a golden statue in luminous manifestations varying in size according to the various accounts. This Chinese Buddha could fly over the Emperor’s court freely as though he embodied in himself all the magical power that the taoists of the age could hanker after.

17) Hung Ming Chu, *Epilogue; Kuang Hung Ming Chu* vol. I.

18) cf. Tang, YungT’ung: *History of Buddhism in the Han, Wei, Liang, Chin, and Nan-Pei Dynasties of China* 湯用形: 漢魏兩晋南北朝佛敎史 vol. 1. 2nd ed. Peking, 1955. pp.4-5.

19) In chapt. 20, *Li Hui Lun*, 理惑論 Mo-tzu 牟子 graded his contemporary documents relatively according to the degree of exaggeration.

[page 103]

Documentary evidence shows that most of these accounts are later additions by over-zealous Buddhists. But that is the very point we are interested in. Buddha was deliberately made in to a taoistic deity. It is not surprising at all, under such circumstances, that the myth of Lao-tzu’s visit to India, that is, Hua-Hu-Ching, should appear and make strong appeal to the age.

By 166 A.D. Hsiang K’ai reported to his Emperor Huan that:

“Some people say that Lao-tzu went to the the barbarian country and became Buddha. In *Tai Ping Ching* it was only mentioned that Lao-tzu went to the West and stayed there for eighty years and lived through the Yin and Chu Dynasties. But another Taoist-Buddhistic document, *Hua Hu Ching* amplified it and declared: “Lao-tzu was made an official of the Government during the reign of Yu Wang. But again with Yin Hsi he went to the Western country and became Buddha. He gave the king of the barbarian country *Hua Hu Ching* which consists of 640, 000 words. After he came back to China he wrote the *Tai Ping Ching*20)”.

The first royal convert to Buddhism was Prince Ying of Ch’u,who was definitely a syncretist. The Emperor Ming himself testified that “Prince Ch’u believes in the mysteries of the Emperor Huang-ti and Lao-tzu and worships Buddha and goes into mystical union with gods”21). Lao-tzu and Buddha may have even shared an altar together in the reign of the Emperor Huan. According to one record the Emperor Huan worshipped Lao-tzu at a temple called Yueh-lung-ko or Leaping Dragon Hall in 166 A.D. The name of the temple, Leaping Dragon Hall, may have come from a taoist source. It was reported to have been renamed previous to the

20) Hou Han Shu 72, Biography of Ch’u Wang Ying

21) Hou Han Shu 72, Biography of Ch’u Wang Ying

[page 104]

emperor’s worship with a more buddhist one: Temple of Admiration for Nothingness or Ch’ung hsu-su22).

Such a taoist-buddhist syncretism seems to have been approved not only by the prince and the emperor, but by the average devout buddhist of that early age. The “*Biographies of Famous Monks*” of Hui Kiao of the Liang Dynasty made An Shih-kao (Lokottamer), the missionary from Parthia, and the translator of the buddhist texts, a highly competent taoist occultist. The famous monks of the Wu Dynasty, K’ang Seng-hui and Wei Chih-nan, and the Wei dynasty’s Dharmakala were among those who were pictured as accomplished taoist magicians. The composite picture of Buddha himself found in the biographical literatures of the Han and Three Kingdom periods is definitely that of a *da hsien* or “Great Taoist Immortal” (大仙) from India. This is how “equivalence” has taken its place in the syncretic phenomena of the Chinese scene.

In the process of the translation of buddhist literature into Chinese, we find one clearly syncretic phenomenon gradually emerging on the scene. Anyone who is familiar with the taoist literature and Chinese buddhist texts of the early period will be able to indicate without serious difficulty how many identical words are used on both sides with different meanings. A careful comparative study on this extremely interesting problem is beyond the scope of the present paper. Nevertheless, we shall be able to pick up a few fundamental common words which had distinctly different semantic features from the view of the respective religions. One is *tao*. The second is *wu*.

Tao (道) in the early Buddhist texts was the translation of *bodhi*. A keen observer will immediately see the fundamental disagreement between the two terms

22) cf. Tokiwa, Daijo: *The Relationship of Buddhism to Confucianism and Taoism in China* 常盤大定 ： 支那に於け る佛敎と 儒敎道敎, PP. 512-3.

[page 105]

which were paronomously joined. Taoist *tao* is the principle of inaction *wu-wei* (無爲), or naturalness *tzu- ran* (自然) while *bodhi* is an inspiration and goal of aspiration. One may “return” to *tao* while he has to “strive forward” to *bodhi*. It was Hsien Juang who gave new translations. He translated *marga* as *tao* and *bodhi* as *chueh* (覺).

*Wu* in the early buddhist texts was the translation of *nirvana*. The latter is an absolute negation while the former is the principle of *Ursein* (ultimate being).

Under such linguistic limitations and the ambiguity involved in symbolic communications, Taoism and Buddhism were propitiated in their early contacts, and were made to be religions of the same principle. A syncretic writer even wrote:

“The Tao of Yin and Yang created with their harmony everything in the world. Tao, being born in the East, became a tree (Lao-tzu’s family name is Li, an apricot tree) of Yang. Fu (Buddha), being born in the West, became Golden Yin. Tao is the father, Fu is the mother. Tao is heaven, Fu is the earth. Tao leads one to live peacefully, while Fu leads one to die peacefully. Tao’s causality and Fu’s corollary are like Yin and Yang and therefore could not be separated”23).

The benefit of this syncretism was mutual. Buddhism found a secure place in society through this process, while Taoism equipped itself with the newly introduced doctrinal, ritual and institutional refinements from the West. As its position in society became more and more secure Buddhism expanded itself into a whole gamut of Buddhism, eliminating as far as possible its previously assumed role as a concilliatory partner in syncretism.

23) 老子序:陰陽之道. 化成萬物. 道生於東爲木陽也. 佛生於西爲 金女也. 道父佛母道 天佛地. 道生佛死. 道因佛緣並一陰ᅳ陽. 不相離也.

[page 106]

But, the effort of purifying Buddhism from its syncretic condition was the business of experts or specialists whose work effected only their faithful followers. The *religio publica*24) of China remained virtually unchanged regardless of the unceasing efforts of the leaders of both camps, who tried to clarify their respective positions.

We can repeat the same story with the syncretism between Confucianism and Buddhism. However, in this case the mutual influence between them following the initial translation period is more interesting.

It is only natural that from the buddhist camp the spirit of fraternity should have appeared Its early representative is Sun Ch’o who identified the buddhist seven *tao-jen* with the confucian Seven Wise Men in the Bamboo Forest in his conciliatory *Tao Hsin Lun*. In his other thesis, *Yu Hsien Lun*, he solemnized the unity of the two religions saying:

“Confucius of Chu is Buddha. And Buddha himself is Confucius of Chu. For these two (names) are nothing but the foreign and native names of one person. Confucius saves (humanity) from the ultimate calami¬ties, while Buddha enlightens and teaches the ultimate causes. They are the beginning and the end. Their fundamental truth is not inconsistent Therefore, a radical inquirer may find them to be two, but a man of comprehensive understanding finds them not to be two”25)

On the other hand, there were not a few in the confucian camp proper who were ready to embrace the conciliatory spirit, though they did not bother to mention explicitly their indebtedness to the alien doctrines. What they tried to do was to show the confucian contextual equivalences with Buddhism

24) cf. Otto Rudolf: *Vishinu Narayana*. Passim.

25) Yu Hsien Lun, *Hung Ming Chi* III. 喻賢論 ： 弘明集三. 周孔 即佛佛即周 孔……蓋外內之名耳……周孔救極弊. 佛敎明其本. 其爲首尾其致不殊……故 逆尋者毎見其二. 順通者無往不ᅳ.

[page 107]

On the model of Buddhist dogma on emotions and desires as defilement (a strong contradiction of traditional Confucianism), Li Ao for instance, maintained that the essence of human nature is tranquillity25) and evil comes from the disturbance of emotions. Of course, Li Ao’s terminology as well as his concept has its origin in the traditional Confuciam text. But, the more important thing is that such expressions and ideas were newly taken from hitherto neglected contexts and revised in meaning under the new stimulus of Buddhism.

This kind of contextual equation becomes clearer with the Sung dynasty Neo-Confucianists. They were supposedly anti-buddhists. But, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that “if there had been no Buddhism there could have been no Sung philosophy, i.e. Neo-Confucianism (無佛學即無宋學)26).

The founders of the Sung philosophy which was destined to rule the minds of intellectuals during the following six centuries, until the end of the Ch’ing dynasty, established a school mainly with their counterproposals to Buddhism that provided Neo-Confucianism with the doctrinal framework which the Sung philosophers tried to fill with materials drawn from ancient sources as well as some fresh interpretations of their own. Their interpretation is what Matteo Ricci and Leibniz, the early western sinologues, were against, because they believed it to be a serious materialistic deviation from pure Confucianism under the influence of Buddhism27).

In spite of the anti-buddhist attitude of the

26) Chou, Yu Tung: *Chu Hsi*. 周豫同朱熹 Shanghai, p.5.

27) cf. Bernard-Maitre, Henri: *Sagesse Chinoise et Philosophic Chretienne*. Paris, 1935; Bettray, I; *Die Akkommodationsmethode des P. Matteo Ricct S.I. in China*. Rom. 1955; Chung, David: “*The Problem of Analogy Between Christianity and Confucianism*”. Koreana Quarterly,vol I, No.2. 1959. pp.115-130.

[page 108]

philosophers of the school, the doctrine of *t’ai-chi* (太極), the Supreme Ultimate, of Chou Tun-i (the founder of the southern branch of the school) and the doctrine of *t’ai-hua* (太和), the Great Harmony, of Chang Tsai (the founder of the northern branch) came into being by positing confucian equivalents to the idea of emptiness in Buddhism.

Chou Tun-i’s *Tung Shu*, especially, clearly reflects traces of the influence of Ch’an Buddhism in its ideas as well as its vocabulary. Though Chang Tsai’s *Cheng Meng* contains radical criticisms of Buddhism, it is also full of counter-proposals to buddhist doctrines which make the book’s real contents a confucianist reflection on buddhistic teachings. His *Tae Hua* or Great Harmony, which nourishes the principles of action and inaction as well as their reciprocal harmony seems to have been treated as the equivalent of the buddhist One Mind. This includes the two aspects, *Sui Yen* (隨綠) (result from conditioning causes) and *Pu Mieh* (不滅) (*anirodha*). His Great Void (虚) and Temperamental Energy (氣質之性) seem to reflect equally the relationship of the *bhutatathata* (眞如) and *alaya-vijnana* (阿賴耶識) of Buddhism.

It is rather amusing to see that that vehement critic of Buddhism, Chu Hsi, attacked Buddhism for several reasons, but especially for the resemblances to Confucianism and Taoism that Buddhism has in its doctrines. He enumerated the resemblances and insisted that they were due to borrowing and stealing by Buddhism from wisdom of Chinese origin28).

With an effort, of course, they could bring out some distinctive features of Confucianism in contrast to the contextual equivalences or counter-parts in Buddhism. But, what they actually accomplished in the public mind was not the idea of Confucianism as an absolute religion, but rather the relative validation of

28) Tokiwa, D.: *op. cit*. pp. 374-376.

[page 109]

Buddhism in the light of the traditional truth in China. The *Han-San-Wei-I* as a consensus gradually crystallized itself and took its permanent place in the religous life of the people.

To sum up, what strongly impresses us in the whole complicated process which took place in the capillary system of society is:

*On the part of the giver the affecting religion had:*

1) An effective challenge suitable to stimulate an eager native response (pre-condition).

2) An ability for voluntary or involuntary compromise with the environment to produce the effective-ness of the challenge (selectivity in action).

*On the part of the receiver the affected society had:*

1) A keen receptivity to the particular challenge (pre-condition).

2) An ability for active participation with its own resources to exploit the maximum benefit from the alien stimulus by acclimatizing or acculturating (selectivity in action).

The whole thing looks as if it were a partial absorption or assimilation between the meeting religions, with the price of metamorphosis paid to some extent by both sides. With the price paid Buddhism was accepted by the Chinese public as an integral part of their national religion. This is the general picture of the oriental *Han-San-Wei-I.*

This same process can be well illustrated again with the coming of Christianity, a religion of an absolute truth, with well systematized doctrines and militant organization. It is a matter for serious discussion whether Christianity contains any animistic aspects in its spiritual hierarchy or not. Nevertheless, actually a crude understanding of the concept of the Trinity, hosts of heaven, devils, souls, and other spiritual beings [page 110] in Christian teachings may have helped to impress this new religion on the public in animistic Far Eastern societies as a kind of western variation of their own belief. Whatever the case may have been Christianity easily became involved with syncretism in Far Eastern societies. We have three examples, one in each of three countries: China, Japan ana Korea.

On the grand scale, we have an important example in the the Taiping Rebellion 1851-1864 of China. In this shocking incident there were, of course, many factors involved: political, economic and religious. It was first of all the Han people’s movement of revolt against the ruling Manchus. Recent communist press reports from Peking with some justification portrayed the movement as the first organized movement of the Chinese proletariat against the ruling class.29) But the battle was fought in the name of Christianity in a “strange compound of Christianity and Chinese beliefs and practices”.30)

The victorious army was led to occupy Nanking under Christian banners. Hung Hsiu-chuan, the leader who fanatically believed himself to be the brother of Jesus, ruled his “Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace” as a heavenly king with a strongly legalistic administration based on the Holy Bible.

The special feature that attracts us in this movement is the understanding of Christianity by the rebels. The Taipings “declared that their doctrine was not new but that the ancient classics had taught it in part and later generations had departed from it”31) This claim, we find, is in perfect coincidence with what the Riccian

29) Lo, Erh Kang: *Pictorial History of Taiping Tien Kuo* 羅尔綱 ： 太平天國 裹史 Nanking, 1956; Lo: *Collection and Notes on the Historical Documents of the Taiping* (太平天國史科考釋集) Peking 1956.

30) Latourette, K.S.: *The Chinese, Their History and Culture*. New York. 3rd Rev. ed., 1947. p. 356.

31) Op. cit. p. 290

[page 111]

Jesuit missionaries had tried to announce in the seven-teenth century China32).

It may be said that the Taiping religion “still was not Christianity”33). But we have strong reasons to infer with Latourette that

“had it had the immediate contact through missionaries with Christian communities in other lands, it is possible that in time, it might have developed into a movement which， while preserving many peculiarly Chinese features, would caught the meaning of Jesus and have become a church which would have deserved both the adjectives Chinese and Christian. As it was, it is quite clear that even the leaders had never really understood the Christian message”34).

Let us turn to Japan. As Buddhism was once the stimulus in China that made Taoism and Confucianism plunge into their own organized systematic actions, Jesuit Catholicism gave the same impetus to awaken Shintoism and to make it leap into the action of proclaiming its own independence over against its long-time partner Ryobu Shinto-Buddhism. The ingenuity of Neo-Shintoist theologians such as Hirata Atsutane and Ota Nishiki successfully accommodated the Riccian christian theology into their own Shinto doctrinal system.

Hirata’s theological contribution could be summarized into two points.35) Firstly, he elevated the three creator deities in the Shinto mythology (Master-of-the-August-Producing-Deity *Amenominakanushinokami*, High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity *Takamimusubinokami*, Divine-

32) Chung, D.； op. cit. pp. 115-123.

33) Broadman, E.P.: *Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion* 1851-1864 (a doctoral dissertation submitted to University of Wisconsin). Madison, 1952. p. 114#

34) Latourette: op. cit. pp. 285-6.

35) Muraoka: *History of Shintoism* (村岡典嗣 ： 神道史) Tokyo, 1956.

[page 112]

Producing-Wondrous-Deity *Kamumimusabinokami*) and made them transcendental deities of a Judeo-Christian type.

He elaborated the first sentence of the *Kojiki*: “The names of the deities that came into being in the Plain of High Heaven when Heaven and Earth began......” with a new expression apparently under the influence of the Book of Genesis as follows: “At first before Heaven and Earth were born there were deities in the Plain of High Heaven. The names of these deities were......”36).

He also changed the spirit-producing Izanagi, male, and Izanami, female, deities into the mankind-producing Adamu (阿陀牟 Adam) and Enba (延波 Eva)respectively37).

Secondly, Hirata enlarged considerably the domain of the Master-of-the-Great-Land-Deity *Ohokuninushinokami*, the deity of the Land of Dead, into a comprehensive spiritual world including heaven and hell, so that separate accommodation could be provided for the departed according to their deeds on earth.

He even went further. He wrote a book of two volumes entitled *Hon-Kyo-Guai-Hen* which may be rendered in a free translation: Significant Doctrines Originated Outside Shinto. This remarkable book opens with two hymns quoted without an acknowledgement from the eight “Hymns with Musical Accompaniment” by the Jesuit missionary to China, Matteo Ricci, published in his *Ten Paradoxes*.

In fact, there was no harm done if they were used, for the purpose of exalting Shintoism, because no Christian proper names were used in them. The pious words used in the hymns were by no means a monopoly of Christianity. Christianity was the borrower, in the first place, of these religio-poetic terms from oriental literary expression.

36) Hirata, A.: *Ko Shi Sei Bun*, I.

37) Hirata: Op. cit. I.X.

[page 113]

He devoted a good portion of his first volume to a Shinto adaptation of Ricci’s *T’ien-Chu-Shi-I* (天主實義) or The True Doctrine of the Lord of Heaven. The original dialogue between the Chinese and Western literati became a conversation between a confucian and Hirata himself. Hirata had put himself into the position which was originally taken by the Jesuit Ricci. It is a remarkable feat. With only slight alteration Ricci’s words are placed in a Shinto theologian’s mouth without scruple or hesitation.

One finds among the alterations a passage which reads:

“Blessed are those who have endured persecution for their uprightness, for the Kingdom of Heaven is already theirs and they will never die. For this is the mystery of Shinto which is beyond man’s wisdom”.38)

The next large section of the book is dovoted to a literary adaptation of Matteo Ricci’s *Ten Paradoxes.* Ricci’s ten conversations in the book with ten Chinese literati are made into a very long conversation between Hirata himself and a confucian.

The entire second volume is a somewhat abridged copy of another Jesuit missionary Diego Pantoja’s *Ch’i K’o* seven books. In contrast to the first volume, in which Ricci’s words were translated into Japanese, the abridgement in this second volume was made entirely in straight classical Chinese, quoting the original directly. Hirata may have thought that there was virtually no need to alter the ethico-religious life, which the christian writer advocated, in order to transplant it into the new Shinto soil.

We do not believe, of course, that this was an

38) Hirato Atzutane’s Complete Works. Vol. 2., p. 13.

[page 114]

exemplary case of straightforward syncretism between Christianity and Shintoism. Yet, it seems to indicate an undeniable fact that a favourable condition for friendly contact between the two religions did exist in Japan that time.

In view of this fact, had missionary methods been effective enough it would not have been impossible for Christianity to gain a stronger foothold in Japan. It would have been more effective if the Jesuit missionaries had been a little more willing to accommodate native responses such as were shown in the Hirata theology within the Christian fold at that historical juncture.

There was an incident to prevent this. A disastrous thing had happened to Francis Xavier, the father of the Jesuit Mission in the Orient, who preached about “Dainichi” upon arrival in the Japanese islands in 1549，misunderstanding it as an appropriate Japanese equivalent to God in the Christian sense. He had been misinformed by one Yajiro or Nanjiro, a Japanese of little education and an escapee to India, where they had met.39)

Sometime later Xavier discovered the horrifying fact that the “Dainichi” or Great Sun was but a syncretistic Buddhist deity whose name also signified something very vulgar to the Japanese who were the audience of his preaching.40)

Alarmed and dismayed the Jesuits in Japan hastily, perhaps a little too hastily, stopped the use of translated words and initiated the work of transliteration from

39) cf. Schurhammer, Georg: *Das kirchliche Sprachproblem in der Japanischen Jesuitmission des 16 u. 17 Jahrhunderts*. Tokyo, 1928, SS. 25-33.

40) The words of Schurhammer were paraphrased and translated by Bernard-Maitre in his *Sagesse Chinoise et Philosophie Chretienne*, p. 96. It reads: “II crût pouvoir employer le terme “Dainichi” pour désigner Dieu en japonais... Ce terme était absolument déplacé puisqu’entre divers sens, il signifiait la materia prima, le grand soleil ou la divinité du grand soleil... même les organes sexuels de genre humain. Des... que des gens scandalisés l’en eurent averti, il se remit à parcourir les divers endroits ou il avait prêché en disant: Ne priez pas Dainichi.”

[page 115]

Portuguese or Latin terms and produced the bizarre series of the remarkable Kirishitan terminology. Accordingly, Dainichi was substituted by Deusu which was a transliterated name from Portuguese Dios or Latin Deus.41)

And the new vocabularies thus made were presumably inflective when used for the purpose of evangelism unless they were supplemented by explanations. When the supplementary explanation was lacking or forgotten we suspect that the word Deusu may have actually meant almost nothing to the people. Likewise, we suspect that most of the transliterated words were ineffective to convey Christian ideas to the native. It must have been a difficult experience for the missionaries who were forced to teach these entirely new words to the Japanese in order to convert them.42) Some of the remnants of these Japanese Jesuit Catholics who had been pushed underground during the long three-century persecution (1587-1873) and who had yet preserved some traces of Catholic rituals not knowing what they were, provide us with a painful illustration of the syncretic process that actually took place.

Syncretic elements soon crept in among them from the moment when the influence of the missionaries

41) Transliteration had been employed for a long time by the translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese. Therefore, there was no need for the Jesuits to invent a new system. They simply adopted the Buddhist model. From Dios pame the 提宇子 De-u-shi, which was intended for the pronunciation of De-u-su or Deus. However, in Buddhistic semi-transliteration in China proper the Bodhi seeds were rendered into 菩提子 which resembles the Japanese Jesuit 提宇子 to a remarkable degree. In any rate, the general flavour of the entire Kirishitan vocabularies, as a whole, was unmistakably Buddhistic. They might have sounded like Buddhist words to the Japanese ears, but they were strange words of which they could make no meaning whatsoever until they have learned from some one who knew.

42) cf. Buhlmann, Walbert: *Die Christliche Terminologie als Missionmethodologishes Problem*. Schoneck-Bechenrid. 1950; Nida, Eugene: *God’s Word in Man’s Language*. New York. 1952.

[page116]

began to ebb under the persecution, permitting the tropical jungle to reclaim the city now abandoned. The jungle-like results are still seen among these remnants who have totally alineated themselves from the Catholic church and prefer rather to remain Shintoists.43)

We still have a third example to review. In Korean society Christianity gave a subsidiary impetus to the syncretic religion Ch’ ŏndogyo (天道敎), the Religion of the Heavenly Way, which placed itself in an artificial opposition to Christianity. The founder Ch’oe, Cheu, (崔濟愚) declared when he began to preach in 1806 that his religion was the Eastern Way or Eastern Doctrine in a contrast to the Western Way or Western Doctrine, that is, Christianity as it was known in Korea. But, Ch’ ŏndogyo, the Eastern Way, seems to have acquired not only its theological framework from Christianity but its institutional aspects as well. In his P’odŏngmun (布德文) or “Declaration of Propagating Virtuous Words” he wrote:

“Ever since the beginning of time there has been no change (in order) in the revolution of spring and autumn in history and of the four seasons’ rise and fall. This is the trace of creation and economy of the Heavenly Lord. The evidence of divine providence is visible everywhere in the world. Yet the foolish do not understand from where the grace of rain and dew come. And they ao not know what the divine economy is.

“After the ages of the five (legendary) Emperors the Saints were born who deliniated the courses and degrees of the movements of the sun, moon, and stars. And these books proved the permanence of the Heavenly Way. Every success, every failure, every movement and every silence is governed by the Commandment of Heaven. This is the reason why

43) cf. Tagita, Koya: “*Transformation of Christianity in a Japanese Farming Village*”, The Japanese Journal of Ethnology 民族學研究 vol 18., No. 3, 1953, pp. 1-32 (with an English Summary).

[page117]

one must worship the Commandment and the Principles of Heaven

“But in recent years men in the world seem to have decided not to obey the Heavenly Principle nor the Commandment of Heaven. Accordingly they have no peace in mind. And yet they also do not know where to turn (to be saved) from this unrest. In the year *kyŏng sin* (庚申) I heard of westerners who willingly forsake their wealth and power and abandon the world in order to follow the will of the Lord of Heaven. They build their temples and practise what they believe. We know the same principle. Therefore, there is no room to doubt it to be so (for the Westerns) also.

“In the last fourth moon I suddenly felt cold in my mind and trembling in my body. Nobody knew what disease it was and the suffering was beyond description. When I was overwhelmed by the pain divine words came to me from nowhere. Astonished. I sprang up from my bed and looked around. The voice spoke to me: Be not afraid neither be fearful. The world calls me Shang-ti (The Catholics in China used the same word to denote God). Do you not know me, Shang Ti?

“I answered the voice and asked the reason for its sudden visit; It said ‘ ......I sent you to the world to teach the people this doctrine. Wonder not nor doubt’. Then I asked: ‘Shall I teach mankind through the Western Learning (Christianity)?’ The voice said ‘No’......”44)

The voice said “No.” But the new indigenous Korean religion made good use of the Korean terms and concepts which the Western Way, that is Christianity, had already very successfully accommodated for its energetic evangelism under the influence of the Riccian Jesuit missionwork in China in the 17th Century.

44) Podongmun, in the *Tonggyŏng Taejŏn* History of the Founding of Chon do gyo 天道敎創建史, Seoul, 1944, p. 56.

[page 118]

So Hananim or Hanallim or the Lord of Heaven (天主) or Shang-ti (上帝) came to be worshipped by both religious groups in the land. Furthermore, we have reason to believe that the very phraseology of the Eastern Way received some direct influence from western way documents written in Chinese.

These historical facts may give us some insight into the Han-San-Wei-I principle of the Far East.