

**PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS
DIALOGUES IN POST-WORLD WAR II JAPAN:
IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPARATIVE STUDIES
WITH NUSANTARA'S RELIGIOUS
LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT

The aftermath of World War II significantly impacted dialogue and understanding between cultures, educational perspectives, and religions in Japan. This period saw widespread destruction and psychological trauma, leading to a sense of powerlessness and discouraging Western settlement. This paper aims to reintroduce Plato's philosophy within the context of Japan's post-war dialogue (*Risō/理想*), highlighting the country's philosophical contributions and its openness to religious institutions, including the participation of Christian congregations in government. Using a qualitative literature review of primary and secondary sources, this study finds that philosophical dialogue has positively influenced both the government and the populace. The intersection of various religions and Christianity in post-war Japan facilitated the survival and growth of Christianity, demonstrated by the enduring presence of the Way of the Cross and the pervasive influence of Christian values in Japan's religious, political, and cultural spheres.

Keywords: Christianity Survival, Interfaith interaction, Philosophical dialogue, Post-war Japan, Religious Literature.

ABSTRAK

Setelah Perang Dunia II secara signifikan berdampak pada dialog dan pemahaman antara budaya, perspektif pendidikan, dan agama di Jepang. Periode ini menyaksikan kehancuran yang meluas dan trauma psikologis, yang mengarah pada rasa ketidakberdayaan dan mengecilkan hati terhadap penyelesaian dari Barat. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk memperkenalkan kembali filosofi Plato dalam konteks dialog pascaperang Jepang (Risō/理想), dengan menyoroti kontribusi filosofis negara tersebut dan keterbukaannya terhadap lembaga-lembaga keagamaan, termasuk partisipasi jemaat Kristen dalam pemerintahan. Dengan menggunakan tinjauan literatur kualitatif terhadap sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa dialog filosofis telah memberikan pengaruh positif terhadap pemerintah dan masyarakat. Persinggungan antara berbagai agama dan kekristenan di Jepang pasca perang memfasilitasi kelangsungan hidup dan pertumbuhan kekristenan, yang ditunjukkan oleh kehadiran Jalan Salib yang bertahan lama dan pengaruh yang meluas dari nilai-nilai Kristen dalam bidang agama, politik, dan budaya Jepang.

Kata kunci: *Dialog Filosofis, Interaksi Antar Agama, Jepang Pasca-perang, Kelangsungan Hidup Kekristenan, Keterbukaan Agama*

INTRODUCTION

The background of this research is characterized by the emergence of new religions in Japan, which can be interpreted as a positive sign that religion is becoming more sophisticated. This is evidenced by the fact that these new religions have developed in a way that allows them to absorb knowledge and even understand each other. This is demonstrated by their shared rituality, simplicity of doctrine and language. These new religions include those founded by Tenri-Kyo, Miki Nakayama, Sekai Kyuseikyo, Mokichi Okada, Tensho Kotai Jingu-kyo, and Sayo Kitamura. Furthermore, the advent of these novel religious movements (traditional religions) was a promising development for Christianity in Japan.

The historical background to the Japan-Nusantara religious dialogue on the subject of literacy reveals the interwoven depth of history and culture. This is especially evident when considering the religious texts themselves, together with the accepta-

bility of philosophies and oral narratives on religious spirituality, and the art scene, which has developed independently in different geographical locations.

This was due to the emergence of a constructive dialogue between these new religions and Christianity, which focused on key concepts such as salvation (*Duhkha-Nirvana*, derived from Buddhism) and messianism (eschatology). Additionally, there were instances where these new religions incorporated elements of Confucianism and Taoism. The elevated status of the Emperor in Japan serves as a testament to the existence of a figure of salvation within Christianity. Furthermore, Japanese philosophy (*Risō/理想*), which is replete with participatory optimism, has the potential to serve as a forum for dialogue between Christianity and other religions and cultures in Japan, including the participation of Christianity in government institutions.

The aftermath of World War II, which appeared to cut off access, intercultural discussion, education, viewpoint, and religion, served as the inspiration for this piece.¹² Property destruction, Japanese psyche, and loss come to define the present. It is nearly impossible to observe the growth of Christianity there. This drive also leads to loss and fear.

Christianity (Kyodan, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church) has been one of the few religions to survive and remain faithful throughout Japan's history, including during the stress and events of World War II. The theological position at that time was, among other things, that suffering is the nature of God, culminating in Golgotha.^{3;4} This was when the Japanese

¹ K A Steenbrink and J S Aritonang, "Chapter Nineteen. Chinese Christian Communities In Indonesia," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Brill, 2008), 903–23.

² Karel Steenbrink and Jan Aritonang, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Brill, 2008).

³ Muhammad Heno Wijayanto and I Made Suparta, "Symbolical Meanings Of Aji Saraswati Text In Javanese And Balinese Shivaismâ€™™ S Tradition: A Comparative Study," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 20, no. 2 (2022): 383–412.

people suffered in the aftermath of World War II with the assumption that God also suffered from the logical consequences of the war. The influence of other religions in Japan during the Meiji Restoration did not necessarily make Japan feel oppressed and hinder the dialogue between other religions (Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity) including Communism and *Shintō*. The Iomante and Bear Festivals mark the Ainu's acceptance of anything that enters Japan.

The previous research first looked at and offered liturgical inculturation in social practice/behavior and ethnic uniqueness through Masao Takenaka or 竹中正夫 while contextualizing it in the midst of the minority Christian population (one percent) in Japan.⁵ I see this offering more to non-Christians to see Christ through liturgical inculturation. The contextualization in this study seems to invite people of other religions to substitute their religion for Christianity. The second previous study, I explored the work of Sergey Vladislavovich Chugrov who questions the existence of non-western politics. Chugrov—through Inoguchi Takashi—answers that not only did the term politics itself actually emerge in the 20th century, the origin of politics itself comes from the ancient philosophies of Greece, China and Egypt as the birth of science. It even came first after the West.^{6:7} For example, talk of the differentiation of zero with one. Takashi sees that Christianity, through the Abrahamic tradition focuses on standardization and unification. Meanwhile, *Shintō*, Buddhism

⁴ Muhammad Daffa and Syahreen Nurmutia, “Tracing The Nation’s Identity Through The Diversity of Content and Language of Ancient Manuscripts of Sumedang Larang Palace,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 2 (2023): 527–60.

⁵ Saya Ojiri, “Rice, Ritual, Relationship: Towards Japanese Ways of Christian Worship,” 2022.

⁶ Sergey Vladislavovich Chugrov, “Is There a Non-Western Political Science? (‘political Theory’ by Takashi Inoguchi),” *Polis (Russian Federation)*, no. 4 (2016): 182-191, <https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2016.04.14>.

⁷ Almunauwar Bin Rusli, “Sejarah Jaringan Hidayatullah Di Minahasa: Pesantren Dan Politik Dakwah,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 18, no. 2 (2020): 275–302.

and Taoism in Japan are more about embracing and honoring diversity.

The first study speaks of dialog but in the form of coercion through Christian liturgy. The second study, the dialog is in the form of philosophy by conflating religions in it. It is then connected to politics. Both the first and second previous studies, although they both speak to my topic, I found differences between them.

The difference with the first study is that I see that the historical process of Christianity in Japan is more of an open dialog that is not necessarily at the level of acceptance and coercion. The second difference to the first previous study is that I see that the process of dialog is not only at the level of religious conversion, but more broadly, the dialog extends to the level of art, the participation of Christians in the world of government and education and in the fusion of western and eastern philosophies.

The difference between my paper and the second previous study is that the study talks about philosophy in the space of conversation before and after World War I and II. However, there is still a difference in direction. The direction of the second previous research is more about the origins of philosophy and politics. Meanwhile, my research is on the openness as well as the acceptance of the Japanese people and government of Western philosophy which then melted into the eastern philosophy that was already in Japan. In addition to this fusion, I then clash it with Christianity and the openness of dialogue.

METHOD

This research employs qualitative research methods, specifically a literature review, to explore the development of philosophical discourse, dialogue, and the acceptance of Christianity in post-World War II Japan. Primary sources include seminal works by Hiroo Sekita, Robert M. Fukada, Joseph M. Kitagawa, Kazoh Kitamori, Jan Sihar Aritonang, Yusak Soleiman, and Andreas Anangguru Yewangoe. These sources provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical and philosophical context.

Secondary sources are drawn from international journals indexed in the Scopus database and other reputable publications. The selection criteria for these sources included relevance to the study's themes, the credibility of the authors, and the impact of the journals in which they were published.

The literature review was conducted through a systematic search of academic databases, focusing on peer-reviewed articles, books, and conference papers that discuss the philosophical and religious dynamics in Japan post-World War II. Key search terms included "Christianity in Japan," "philosophical discourse," "religious dialogue," and "post-war Japanese culture."

Data analysis involved thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns and themes within the literature. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the intersections between Shintōism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and the political and cultural changes during Japan's demilitarization and democratization periods. Additionally, the study examines the influence of interactions with the Korean Peninsula, America, and China on Japan's religious and philosophical landscape.

By combining primary and secondary sources, this study provides a comprehensive examination of the role of philosophical and religious dialogue in shaping modern Japan.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Historicity of Christianity, *Shintōism* and the Emergence of “New” Movements

Before the post-World War II years, Japan was a relatively prosperous country that had tremendous economic power in the world, aligned with European countries and the United States to a certain extent. That is why, in 1905, Japan became the leader of Asia, the patron of Asia, and the light of Asia (3A). However, on the other hand, Japan was still seen as causing much suffering in Asia. Taking in to account Japan's neighboring countries, Hiro Sekita said that they have suffered a lot of damage and spiritual devastation and destruction compared to other Asian countries. Tsutomu Shoji confirms this when looking at the situation in the Philippines, where ten Japanese companies are doing business, but there is a gap between low-wage workers and their employ-

yers.^{8,9} Robert R. Fukada further characterized this as a symptom of alienation from one another that threatens human community.¹⁰ M. Tkayer called it *Nihon-Byo*, the Japanese disease.¹¹ This is also illustrated by Kazoh Kitamori, who said, "The mind of this nation is very clearly represented by the general public, who expressed themselves through literature, especially the classic dramas."¹²

Apart from the Japanese economy, Japan also has a state religion. Japanese people already believe in religious phenomena characterized as polytheistic, animist, and mysterious. Joseph M. Kitagawa, for example, characterized these beliefs as "*Minzoku Shintō*" which can be traced to the fourth millennium BCE.¹³ A form of ancient *Shintō* which still exists today allegedly appeared in the religion of the *Ainu*, which according to Sugai Taika, this religion is a combination of *Shamanism*, called *Tsusumekul* in the language of the *Ainu* and animism.^{14,15} As in Ancient *Shintō* religion, the rites also play an important role in this religion. One important rite called *Iomante* - namely, bear festival. *Iomante* means "let bears go". The bear festival has an important meaning

⁸ Hiroo Sekita, "Jesus Christ in Asian Suffering and Hope," *Northeast Asia Journal of Theology* 18 (1977): 33–37.

⁹ Sukron Kamil, Rizqi Handayani, and Abdurrosyid Abdurrosyid, "Semiotics As a Standard For Interpretation of Islamic Texts: Studies Based on Science of Balagah and Exegesis," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 2 (2023): 493–526.

¹⁰ Robert M Fukada, "A Theology in Search for Human Community: Directions for Our Theological Task in Japan in the 1980s," *Northeast Asia Journal of Theology* 24 (1980): 60–73.

¹¹ Fukada.

¹² Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God: The First Original Theology from Japan* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005).

¹³ Joseph M Kitagawa and R Spencer, "New Religions in Japan: A Historical Perspective.," *Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia* (University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis, 1971).

¹⁴ TAIKA Sugai, "The Soteriology of New Religions," *Japanese Religions* 6, no. 2 (1969): 23–46.

¹⁵ David N. Gellner and Richard Gombrich, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2015.

for the Ainu people (one of the oldest in Japan) because—the bear is the main food for them.

In addition to the Ancient *Shintō*, Confucianism and Buddhism was introduced to Japan respectively at the beginning of the fifth century and the middle of the sixth century. At this time, Japan had a close relationship with the kingdoms in the Korean peninsula, which was culturally influenced by China.¹⁶ Therefore, many aspects of Chinese culture were introduced to Japan. In the course of its history, *Shintōism* was exposed to various influences from the outside.¹⁷ *Shintōism* absorbed elements of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Taoism influence seems to appear in magic and witchcraft, and ascetic practices. Meanwhile, as the influence of Confucianism, the stimulus will appear in ancestral worship and ethical systems, which serve as guidelines for social behavior of the Japanese people and the foundation of the feudal society.

Shintōism is a modern form of the State *Shintō*, especially since the so-called Meiji Restoration (1868-1912). *Shintōism* is combined with Japanese nationalism.¹⁸ Meiji Restoration can be regarded as one of the greatest events in the history of Japan that happened not just as restoration of the rule of Emperor, but also the transformation from a feudal nation into a modern nation. Meiji government welcomes western culture, technology and the art of political administration. All of these elements is necessary to establish a strong and rich country.¹⁹ Acceptance of western

¹⁶ David W. Kim and Won Il Bang, “Royal Religiosity: Confucian Thoughts in Joseon Jongmyo Shrine,” *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2021): 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1970426>.

¹⁷ *Religious Dynamics under the Impact of Imperialism and Colonialism*, *Religious Dynamics under the Impact of Imperialism and Colonialism*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004329003>.

¹⁸ Ernest Edwin Best, *Christian Faith and Cultural Crisis: The Japanese Case* (Brill Archive, 1966).

¹⁹ Lars De Wildt, “Opening My Shinto Box: The Mixing of Religions, Traditions and Fictions in Japanese Role-Playing Games,” in *Replaying Japan 2020: The 8th International Japan Game Studies Conference*, 2020: 1-5.

science will also be based on the belief of the adherents of Confucianism in Japan that *Li* or reasoning is universal.²⁰

In addition to traditional religions, in Japan there are also the so-called “new” religions. The emergence of a new religion is seen from the reaction of the people against the traditional religions. So, when the religion's structure belongs to the clergy, philosophers or theologians, then the common people did not show their interest. The people often react in their own way and create the formation of new movements. Many of these religions came from the end of the period of 1603-1867 CE. In the eighth century. The Point of Eighth century here according to Piryns explained that -- the religions that emerged after World War II, it is not really a religion really “new”, but rather the decomposition back of combined elements that can be traced back to the whole religious history of Japan.²¹ For example, there are groups of Buddhist *shamanistic* developed by *Saico* (767-822) and *Kukai* (774-835); *Tenri-kyo* (Religion of Truth and Wisdom of Heaven) which was founded by Miki Nakayama (1798 to 1887) in 1872; *Kyuseikyō Sekai* (World Messianism Church) founded by Mokichi Okada (1882-1958) in 1934; *Tenshō Kotai* (Jing-kyo (teachings of all the worlds of God Almighty), founded by Sayo Kitamura (1990 to 1967).²²

Although many emerging “new” religions, but they have the same characteristics. First, these religions are rituals and spontaneous, and does not have the advantage of a sophisticated system of doctrine. Doctrines are disaggregated and simple. Secondly, their assessment on the problems are simple and unrealistic, tends to resolve the problems of the present complex with solutions of yesterday. Third, they do not separate religion

²⁰ James M Phillips, *From the Rising of the Sun: Christians and Society in Contemporary Japan* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011).

²¹ L. B. Karelva, “Japanese Philosophy: Approaches to a Proper Understanding,” *Russian Journal of Philosophical Sciences*, no. 8 (2018): 7-22, <https://doi.org/10.30727/0235-1188-2018-8-7-22>.

²² John A. Price et al., “Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change,” *Ethnohistory* 18, no. 4 (1971): 382-383, <https://doi.org/10.2307/481078>.

from politics. Despite of this, when many Japanese people are tormented by uncertainty and anxiety after World War II, these “new” religions quickly and easily reach large numbers.

Christianity in Post-War Years

In August 1945, Japan was defeated and occupied by the Allied forces. The United States occupation authorities urged the Japanese government to pursue a policy of demilitarization and democratization. The new constitution of 1946 affirmed human rights, and renounced the way of war and the use of military force. Although the American presence played a significant role in its formulation, its spirit reflected the desire and will of the vast majority of Japanese people to build up a new nation on a democratic basis. The constitutional guarantees, however, were not necessarily effective. Partly because of the emerging political realities. In the next few years, America had to face a world situation of cold war, the division of Korea into North and South, and the emergence of Communist China. In these circumstances Japan was urged to arm so that Japanese forces could be made use to guard the free nations of Asia. In 1951 Japan signed the United State – Japan mutual Security Treaty that gave the United States the right to the continued use of bases in Japan.²³

The Japanese ordinaries of the Roman Catholic Church established the National Catholic Committee in Japan as the legal corporation of fifteen dioceses in the country. With the support of the world-wide Catholic bodies and religious orders, the reconstructed institutions resumed their ecclesiastical, educational and social work with considerable success. Bishop Yashiro Hisuke (1990-1970), the primate of the holy Catholic Church in Japan, let the former local churches to declare the canon reconstituted. The Church considered the issue of the standing of six bishops consecrated by the two bishops who had joined the Kyodan during war-time. The Episcopal authorities, finally, in

²³ T. K. Thomas, “Toward Asian Confessions of Hope,” *International Review of Mission* 67, no. 266 (1978): 141-146, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1978.tb01251.x>.

1948, accepted them into communion as bishops with no diocesan jurisdiction. The Church revised its constitution, declaring again the quadrilateral as the basic of the Church in 1950, and published an entirely new edition of the Book of Common Prayer in 1956.²⁴

The Orthodox Church had faced an internal dispute over the question of its subjection to the patriarchate. Bishop Nicolai Ono attempted to restore relations with Moskow. But those who opposed this moved requested, by action of the national synod, that a bishop be appointed for the Japanese church by the synod of North American Bishops. In this way, the major Orthodox Church in Japan came within the spritual jurisdiction of the Metropolitanate of New York in 1947. Later, in 1954, the church split into two sections, one of which restored jurisdictional relation with the patriarchate of Moskow in 1969 and was recognised as an “autonomous” church within the Orthodox communion. The mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in Japan has been commonly regarded as a phase of the eastward expansion of the Russian Empire within the nineteenth century, and as such has often been misunderstood in Japan.²⁵

However, more than the case with the other branches of Christianity, the establishment and growth of this church is quite largely due to versatility and devotion of the man, i.e. Ivan Kasatkin (Archbishop Nicolai). He first came to Japan as a Russian consular chaplain in 1961 and subsequently devoted himself to missionary work for fifty years, seeing his beloved church grow from nothing to more than thirty thousand members.²⁶²⁷

²⁴ Thomas.

²⁵ Donald E Hoke, *The Church in Asia* (Moody Press, 1975).

²⁶ Kenneth Scott Latourette, “A History of the Expansion of Christianity/3 Three Centuries of Advance, AD 1500-AD 1800,” *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 1939.

²⁷ Alan Strathern, “Immanent Power and Empirical Religiosity: Conversion of the Daimyo of Kyushu, 1560-1580,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 47, no. 2 (2020): 247-278, <https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.47.2.2020.247-278>.

The *Kyodan* was not dissolved into its former denomination when the Religious Bodies Law was abolished. Protestant Christians in this country were now prepared to view it as the fruits of their church union movement. A deputation representing foreign mission boards and the churches in the United States arrived in Japan soon after the war; they agreed that the *Kyodan* had an important roles as a united church, and promised cordial support through finance and personnel. “The Christian boom” after the war. Until 1954, the United Church continued to reform itself institutionally and to evolve as an organization. Its Confession of Faith consisted of the Apostles’ creed followed by a preface reflecting evangelical doctrinal positions. But such former groups as Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Salvation Army, and people of fundamentalist position, not satisfied with the manner in which the *Kyodan* had been developing, withdrew from it during 1946-1950, and resumed their separate identities.²⁸ Their separation was largely stimulated by the return of missionaries who established contact with the former churches and ministers.

There are many Christian activities during Post-War Years. The damage caused by the war was so severe that the Japanese people were in very severe circumstance when it was over. Enormous consignments of material for daily use were supplied to them by American Christian agencies and relief was provided without reference to the religious background of people. A considerable amount of financial support was also provided by both Catholic and Protestant bodies, for the rebuilding of churches and for special projects in evangelism and other church activities. In this period of physical devastation and spritual confusion, most Japanese people appeared to have lost their life’s moorings. For those who were impressed by the norms and practises of American democracy Christians represented their religion of a victorius nations; they often wanted to know more about the Christian faith. The Churchmen and women undertook evangelistic work among such enquirer and provided pastoral care.

²⁸ Charles W Iglehart, “A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan,” 1960.

Theological leaders were busy presenting the Christian faith as a spiritual basis indispensable for promoting democracy in the new Japan. It was difficult, however, for them to answer convincingly the question as to how they could change their point of view from that of defending the pre-militaristic imperialism into one of championing peace and democracy.

Many intellectuals were attracted to communism. Here they found a persuasive analysis of and a blue print for a revolutionary way of change from the old regime to a new structure of society. Akaiwa Sakae (1903-1966) announced his decision to join the Japan Communist Party in 1949, without giving up his ministerial work in the local church. He maintained that the Christianity and Communism did not militate against each other and he could, therefore, accept both of them as equally true. Though he could not bring himself to join the party, later he wrote his *exodus from Christianity* (1964), in which he declared his emancipation from the traditional understanding of Christology, explaining his relation to the historical Jesus in existential terms.²⁹ The government policy of rearmament, the signing of Peace Treaty with the Allied Forces (except Russia), and the military pact with the United States in the beginning of the 1950s brought Japan back into the world of power politics.

Opposed to these government policies, there emerged various kinds of movements for peace. Christians also took part in these. They organized associations and conferences, regional and national. They called for the protection of the so-called Peace Constitution, and undertook many activities to educate the churches in temporary issues. Divisions within the movement were inevitable, with differences in theological understanding and in Christian attitudes toward the Communist-inspired movement for peace. As those young pastors and theologians who participated in the movement assumed leadership positions in the church, they urged their ecclesiastical institutions to work for the

²⁹ Ahmad Yunani, "Gereja Hati Yesus Yang Maha Kudus-Katedral (Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Sulawesi Selatan dan Tenggara)," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 15, no. 1 (2017): 125â – 148.

movement. For example, the Kyodan supported the Peace Constitutions in 1962, and made the public confession of guilt in 1967 over the responsibility of the Kyodan during World War II.

The Theological Themes as Meeting Safety and Suffering

Since the end of World War II, till this day, theological reflection in Japan seemed to be more in touch with the problems of suffering and salvation. Its connection with the problems of suffering and salvation, many works that appeared just after World War II ended. However, here the author limits only two, namely Kazoh Kitamori and Masatoshi Korogi. Kazoh Kitamori: The theology of suffering God - suffering as God's nature. Kazoh Kitamori was born in 1916 in a non-Christian family, later baptized in the Lutheran Church. He was influenced by the Japanese experience during World War II, in which many people are exposed to tremendous suffering and misery, but especially he was touched by the events of the fall of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August, 1945). Kitamori tried to contextualize the Gospel message to the situations that life in Japan's Christianity. So, on the one hand Kitamori seriously considered the Buddhist concept of *Dukkha* and the efforts to solve the problem of suffering, and on the other hand about *Tsurusa* which has special understanding of Japan.

Kitamori's main thesis is that suffering is God's nature.³⁰ Kitamori is against the traditional view, which acknowledges God as can't suffer. Suffering God is the essence of the Gospel. Kitamori personally translated Jeremiah 31:20 as experience to the depth of God's love. Furthermore, Kitamori explained that God is not just suffering hardship because of sympathy or empathy with human suffering.³¹ This is more of suffering in the presence of God as God; suffering the portion, which helped to shape the character of God.

³⁰ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God: The First Original Theology from Japan*.

³¹ Bong Rin Ro, "Contextualisation: Asian Theology," *Asian Perspective* 3 (1976).

To make his point, Kitamori used two verses of the Bible, Jeremiah 31:20 and Isaiah 63:15. The second verse, he said, in Hebrew the same word is translated as "touched my heart" and "love". Kitamori says that God's burning point tussled with God takes place at Golgotha. So, for Kitamori, the cross, where the Son of God died, is not an event that happens outside of God. On the cross, God Himself turned off and thus solved the problem of our own death. It is clear that in the view of Kitamori, God is love. But his love was and is centered in a special way, in a way that is unique and exclusive and that the cross of Christ. On the cross, God's love is revealed in the deepest sense, indeed even in the real sense this is the only and final.³²

The fact of God, the suffering, said Kitamori, can only be understood within the meaning of the cross.³³ Furthermore, this means that it can be understood through the historical Jesus Christ, His birth, life, suffering and death on the cross. Noting the historical Jesus, without paying attention to the suffering of God, will generate the knowledge of Christ "in the flesh" only. On the other hand, when the suffering of God emphasized to him that historically excluded, it will lose sight of Jesus "in the flesh". What is needed, Kitamori said, is concurrent continuous movement of the historical Jesus to the "suffering God", and of the suffering of God to the historical Jesus."³⁴

When Kitamori wrote his *Theology of the Pain of God*, Japan has been involved in World War II. Kitamori said that the people of Japan's suffering caused by this war is the symbol of the suffering God. Thus, suffering is not merely in the sense understood by Kitamori as individualistic, but also (always) in the sense of collectively. Kitamori argued that Japanese society, as believers, are asked to participate in the torture of this world—understood as a symbol of the suffering God. This is the ethic of suffering that can be realized through the suffering God. There-

³² Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God: The First Original Theology from Japan*.

³³ Kitamori.

³⁴ Kitamori.

fore, a true ethics may be formed only when the suffering was so profound.³⁵ The depth of this suffering, as well as the depth of love (because love is rooted in suffering, which can be expressed through unity with God's suffering), can be a real suffering among the beloved late. Kitamori is a fellow by both believers and non-believers. Precisely at the point of awareness are people who do not believe that must also be viewed as an object of our love is very painful, and once again it is clear that God accepts them completely *although* unacceptable.

Masatoshi Korogi: Security as an "*Exodus*". Korogi is Professor of Old Testament at the Theological Seminary in Rural Tsurukawa outside Tokyo. He served as secretary of the Association of Theological Education of Japan.³⁶ He noticed the similarity between the events of the exodus experienced by the people of Israel and the exodus of Christians in Japan. He mentioned two important events which, he said that contains a specific meaning that is very important for Christians in Japan is the Meiji Restoration and the defeat of Japan in World War II. In relation to the first incident, Korogi viewed that Catholic Christians are hiding in Japan, an event that has a meaning almost similar to the exodus from Egypt to Israel; before the Meiji era, these Christians had been persecuted for three hundred years.

The defeat of Japan at the conclusion of World War II holds a particular significance for Protestants in Japan, according to Korogi. This event led to the rise of a cult of the Emperor, which exerted totalitarian pressure to revive militarism and to establish Shintōism as the official state religion. These developments compelled the church to adopt a conformist stance. For Protestant Christians in Japan, this is an *Exodus*. The task of Christians in Japan according to Korogi is to listen and obey the law of God and deepen their perception of God and uphold the idea of peace, just as the people of Israel, after being freed from

³⁵ Kitamori.

³⁶ Andreas Anangguru Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis in Asia: Asian Christian Views on Suffering in the Face of Overwhelming Poverty and Multifaceted Religiosity in Asia* (Rodopi, 1987).

slavery in *Egypt*, was given the Torah at Sinai and warns that they have to stick on it. Korogi warned that it is returning back to "Egypt" through the revival of a new form of militarism in Japan nowadays. Christians must rise up against this Neo-Militarism.³⁷

The Development of a Period of Japanese Philosophical Thought

The fundamental distinctive difference of-and-through Japanese philosophy when engaging through forms of intercultural dialog throughout its history.³⁸ For example, through the encounter with Plato's philosophy with the *risō* or 理想 of the ideal in everyday life before and after World War II. This search through dialog in the form of philosophy led to an ideal communal spirit as a substitute for destructive war.³⁹ In addition, the existence of trade routes allowed Western missionaries, including those who brought Christianity to Japan to have the opportunity to develop Christianity or キリスト教 *Kirisuto-kyō* through the openness of the Japanese people. Such openness was later evidenced through the placement of some Christians as educators in higher education.⁴⁰ In addition, Christians have served in the government, for example the Prime Ministers of Japan (Taro Aso, Shigeru Yoshida, and Hara Takashi) who were Catholics. Protestants have also served in government as leaders. These leaders include Yukio Hatoyama, Ichirō Hatoyama, Masayoshi Ōhira, and Tetsu Katayama). This openness, I believe

³⁷ Yewangoe.

³⁸ Karellova, "Japanese Philosophy: Approaches to a Proper Understanding."

³⁹ Noburu Notomi, "The Platonic Idea of Ideal and Its Reception in East Asia," in *Journal of Philosophical Research*, vol. 40, 2015: 137-147, <https://doi.org/10.5840/jpr201540Supplement18>.

⁴⁰ Takeo Matsuda and Juha Hämäläinen, "Launching Paul Natorp's Sozialpädagogik in Japan in the Early Twentieth Century," *History of Education* 50, no. 3 (2021): 291-312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2020.1826056>.

ve, is grounded in Japanese philosophy, which has upheld philosophical dialogue throughout history.⁴¹

I have found it interesting that Christian leaders in Christian-minority countries have the opportunity to lead, almost like nowhere else. Although, as time goes by, the space for the church to fully operate becomes limited, it still exists as a logical consequence of loyalty. In addition, the Japanese philosophy of openness through dialog, Japan was able to generate *Otaku* culture. This philosophy brings the openness of human dialog into the development of technology.⁴² In addition to *Otaku*, Wook Dong Kim mentioned philosophical ideas derived from the fusion of Japan and China in East Asia. For example, Fudoshin's philosophy in the development of *Zen* Buddhism, Budo in martial arts and Kazantzakis' conversation on literature.⁴³ Lacan's philosophy, according to Xavier Blondelot et al. often refers to Japan in terms of the openness of *Nishida Kitarō's* philosophical dialog with *Zen*.⁴⁴

Japan absorbed Western philosophical frameworks and applied them to eastern philosophical praxis. Eastern philosophy here is a philosophy that is connected to experience and survival: security, art, and well-being.^{45,46} Art by *Moho-Ha* artists in Japanese philosophy during the 1960s grew in artistic and poetic forms. This development is inseparable from the influence of *Zen*

⁴¹ Karellova, "Japanese Philosophy: Approaches to a Proper Understanding."

⁴² Hiroki Azuma and Yuk Hui, "Homo Animalis, a Japanese Futurism A Dialogue between Hiroki Azuma and Yuk Hui," *Philosophy Today*, 2021: 401-408, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday2021412395>.

⁴³ Wook Dong Kim, "Kazantzakis's Zorba the Greek: East Asian Influences from Zen Buddhism to Daoism," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 2018: 243-265, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mgs.2018.0023>.

⁴⁴ Xavier Garcia-Duran, "Hommage to René Girard," *Comprendre* 21, no. 1 (2019): 91-104.

⁴⁵ Ryoko Kose, "Just Keep Going - Polyphony. Gentle Activism for Collective Survival," *The Journal of Public Space*, no. Vol. 5 n. 4 (2020): 323-338, <https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v5i4.1422>.

⁴⁶ *Rashomon Effects*, *Rashomon Effects*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315738741>.

when contrasted with Husserl's phenomenological model.⁴⁷⁴⁸ The philosophy associated with dialog has spread to the world of education. For example, when talking about learning, cooperation, and teacher professionalism, it is referred to as Jugyou Kenkyuu.⁴⁹

In addition, the West also absorbed critical discourse on aesthetics from Japanese philosophy developed by Nakai Masakazu. This critical discourse in the form of a dialog brings together Heidegger's discourse with Japanese philosophy.⁵⁰ This philosophical development involving dialogue continues to develop faithfully until now. These philosophical developments are not only at the level of daily life and education, but also at the political, gender and social levels.⁵¹⁵²⁵³⁵⁴ For example, Zhu Xi

⁴⁷ Pasquale Fameli, "Uomo e Materia. Mono-Ha Tra Zen e Fenomenologia," *Aisthesis (Italy)* 11, no. 2 (2018): 279–286, <https://doi.org/10.13128/Aisthesis-22941>.

⁴⁸ Bi qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick, and Poonam Trivedi, *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel*, *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315442969>.

⁴⁹ Jongsung Kim et al., *Lesson Study-Based Teacher Education: The Potential of the Japanese Approach in Global Settings*, *Lesson Study-Based Teacher Education: The Potential of the Japanese Approach in Global Settings*, 2021: 1-240, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036852>.

⁵⁰ Michael Lucken, "The Limits of Ma: Retracing the Emergence of a 'Japanese' Concept," *Journal of World Philosophies*, 2021: 38–57, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jourworlphil.6.1.04>.

⁵¹ *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook Of: Contemporary Japanese Philosophy*, *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of: Contemporary Japanese Philosophy*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474232715>.

⁵² Masatsugu Murase, "History and Theory of School as Learning Community," in *Lesson Study and Schools as Learning Communities: Asian School Reform in Theory and Practice*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315690322-2>.

⁵³ Ueda Shizuteru, "Contributions to Dialogue with the Kyoto School," in *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with The Kyoto School*, 2011: 19-32.

and Ito Jinsai's thoughts on philosophy and the current dialog between Japan and America. Although, the goal is not necessarily to reconcile different ideas, it is still on the path of open and democratic dialog.⁵⁵⁵⁶⁵⁷

Democratic conversations do not always go smoothly. There were times when dialogue was hampered by the emergence of the Mahayana Buddhist Soka Gakkai movement, led by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, from the 1930s to 1970, which alienated the official religion at the time.⁵⁸⁵⁹ Such tensions, I think, did not diminish the spirit of openness to something as opposed to the Buddhist (*Zen*)-Christian dialog. In fact, at that time, the number of religious believers exceeded the population of Japan.⁶⁰ As a result, I see that despite the tensions, Christian leaders were still given the freedom and right to become leaders in the government in Japan, which at that time embraced religion as a pragmatic instrument. Such tensions, I think, did not diminish the spirit of openness to something as opposed to the Buddhist (*Zen*)-Christian dialog. In fact, at that time, the number of religious believers exceeded the population of Japan. As a result,

⁵⁴ Delphine Soulard, "The Reception of Locke's Politics:," in *Politics, Religion and Ideas in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 2019: 201-218, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfrxr4.17>.

⁵⁵ Kira Hall, Rodrigo Borba, and Mie Hiramoto, "Thirty-Year Retrospective on Language, Gender and Sexuality Research," *Gender and Language* 15, no. 3 (2021): 394-395, <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.21125>.

⁵⁶ Weijin Chen, "The Intersection of Zhu Xi and Ito Jinsai in Public Philosophy," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2017: 83-117, [https://doi.org/10.6163/tjeas.2017.14\(1\)83](https://doi.org/10.6163/tjeas.2017.14(1)83).

⁵⁷ B. Stephens, "Severally Seeking Sartre," *French Studies* 69, no. 1 (2015): 109-220, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knu248>.

⁵⁸ Suzana Ramos Coutinho, "Soka Gakkai," in *Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions*, 2019: 1496-1500, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-27078-4_114.

⁵⁹ Vincent Carretta, "Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia," *The Scriblerian and the Kit-Cats* 52, no. 2 (2020): 213-214, <https://doi.org/10.5325/scriblerian.52.2.0213>.

⁶⁰ Agus Iswanto, "Keraton Yogyakarta Dan Praktik Literasi Budaya Keagamaan Melalui Media Digital," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 17, no. 2 (2019): 321-48.

I see that despite the tensions, Christian leaders were still given the freedom and right to become leaders in the government in Japan, which at that time embraced religion as a pragmatic instrument.⁶¹

A Comparative Study of Minority Literacy Traditions in Japan and the Indonesian Archipelago: Adaptation and Survival

The diversity of literary texts in Japan, including the *Kojiki*, *Nihon Shoki*, and the Zen work *Shōbōgenzō*, is significant when considering literature that addresses inter-dimensional harmony. Furthermore, Indonesian archipelago also exhibits a tradition of literacy that serves as a conduit for the transmission of diverse religious and philosophical values. To illustrate, the Batak tribe employs an oral tradition or narrative in the Batak language to convey religious beliefs. From my own observations, it would appear that the Batak tribe is not the only group in the region that employs the use of the *Hata Batak* language. Indeed, it is also utilized by members of the Pentecostal-Charismatic community, the majority of whom are of Batak descent. *Hata Batak* is not only useful in geographical locations in *Bona Pasogit*, but is also able to meet in metropolitan areas. In other words, I contend that *hata Batak*, as an oral tradition that encompasses both informal and formal activities, continues to serve as a vital component, or can be integrated into a harmonious whole, facilitating introspection and becoming a cultural and religious unifying force for Batak Christian groups.

The historical context and cultural diversity provide evidence that religious literacies (including minority religions in Japan and Hinduism in Java, as exemplified by *Sewaka Darma* literature, and Christianity in Sumatra) have flourished and become vibrant as a result of their capacity to adapt and survive. Adaptation is not merely an act of acceptance; it is also a response to internal and external social pressures within Japan and

⁶¹ Yoshimi Fujimura, "Dialogues between Christians and Buddhists: From Japan to the World," *Danubius* 32 (2014): 119-135.

across the archipelago. Another literature review that connects religion and Christianity in Japan and the archipelago is at the level of metaphor (whether collective or individual imagination) as a depiction of God's relationship to humans and to nature. Such works may take the form of poetry, which allows the imagination to contemplate, express, and feel the complexity between transcendental dimensions and immanence. Alternatively, they may be of a Sufi nature.

Hindu literature, exemplified by the *Serat Sutasoma*, which espouses *Moksha* as spiritual liberation and gave rise to the philosophy of Unity in Diversity, serves as a repository of Old Javanese tradition, manifesting in the art of *Wayang* and classical literature. Christian Batak (which includes the transliteration "*hata Batak* with all *lapatanna*," for example, in Sumatra) has demonstrated a capacity to integrate Christian literature, culture, and social values in a manner that is faithful to the diversity of these elements. It can be argued that both Hinduism in Java and Christianity in Sumatra, particularly among Batak Christians, share a certain affinity with Christianity in Japan. This is evidenced by the narrative of the survival of the Christian community in Japan to the present day. In my view, the foundation for this was laid during the Meiji era, when Christian schools became the primary source of education. Furthermore, Christian literature developed in Japan was utilized as a means of prayer (as an oral tradition) through language or the imposition of symbols or disguise codes, in order to avoid detection by the Japanese government.

Nevertheless, there are notable divergences between the religious literature of Japan and that of various ethnic groups or provinces within the country, particularly with regard to Christianity. To illustrate, in Japan, the evolution of religious literature is oriented towards the advancement of general spirituality, as exemplified by the emergence of Zen and Shinto literature. It is not merely a form of literature; it is also a spiritual practice (such as meditation) and a significant aspect of Japanese national identity. In contrast, the development of Christianity in Sumatra and Indonesia frequently employs oral traditions, with structured documentation being relatively uncommon. Such literature may

be utilized in academic studies or serve as a repository of written narratives for guidance.

Nusantara Religious Literature: Contemporary Contributions of Christianity and Philosophy in Japan

Twenty-first century religious acceptance in Japan is reflected through a wide variety of religions. Christianity, *Shintō*, new religions and Buddhism, for example, claim a membership of more than 150 percent of the total Japanese population. The religion, which is similar to shamanism in northeast Asia (*Shintō*), even though it had experienced conflict due to segregation with Buddhism—at that time the two were still in one entity—ultimately, the government made a policy so that there was reunification through the dialog space of the government and *Shintō* religion followers. This means, I see, that the various upheavals from within Japan itself did not stop interfaith dialogue and even gave space to the government. In addition to the dialog that emerged in the tension between *Shintō* and Buddhism, dialog also developed for developments throughout the history of Christianity in Japan.^{62;63} For example, the Russian Orthodox Church first began its work in Hokkaido and then expanded towards Tokyo. Today there are an estimated 130 congregations with around two million members, including Roman Catholics.⁶⁴ Today Christianity in Japan is growing despite pressure from the Japanese government. This development

⁶² Juljan Biontino, “Changes in Funerary Rites and Burial Practices in Modern Korea (1876–1945),” *Contemporary Japan* 32, no. 1 (2020): 6-24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2020.1717131>.

⁶³ Nurman Kholis, “Vihara Avalokitesvara Serang: Arsitektur Dan Peranannya Dalam Relasi Buddhis-Tionghoa Dengan Muslim Di Banten,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 14, no. 2 (2016): 327â – 346.

⁶⁴ Rachel Miller, “From ‘Apostle of Japan’ to ‘Apostle of All the Christian World’: The Iconography of St. Francis Xavier and the Global Catholic Church,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 9, no. 3 (2022): 415-437, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-09030006>.

can be seen through the influence of Christians from the middle class of Japanese society itself.⁶⁵

Establishment of Doshisha University as one of the most powerful Christian universities in Japan indicates an openness to progress on the part of the Japanese themselves. On the other hand, I see that Christianity's contribution is mostly directed towards the government to improve Japan. Whether through education (with around 70 educational organizations), or Christians engaged in philanthropy/*Jōhrei*.⁶⁶ In addition, I trace and suspect that the contributions of western philosophy through Herbert Spencer, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, John Stuart Mill, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Spinoza brought a breath of fresh air to conversations about religion beyond the schoolroom.⁶⁷ As far as I can see, I see no barriers to such conversations as far as teaching morals, education and something patriotist to the Empire. The author also highlights the faithfulness of Christianity in Japan through literary works (Japanese grammar, Latin-Japanese confession of faith, and Latin-Spanish-Japanese dictionary through the Dominican missionary congregation of Diego Collado).⁶⁸

It appears that Buddhist Socialism's perspective on the nature of suffering is aligned with Christian teachings that seek to avoid experiencing suffering internally. However, it should be noted that even to this day, Indonesia adheres to and embodies the understanding that religion is in the landscape of harmonization between religious communities and Aliran Kepercayaan.

⁶⁵ Garrett L. Washington, "(Re)Introducing Christianity in Modern Japan," in *Church Space and the Capital in Prewar Japan*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1mssw9f.5>.

⁶⁶ *Handbook of Christianity in Japan, Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047402374>.

⁶⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Japan | History, Flag, Map, Population, & Facts | Britannica," Land use policy, 2019.

⁶⁸ Jan Odstrčilík, "Between Languages, Genres and Cultures: Diego Collado's Linguistic Works," *Medieval Worlds* medieval worlds, no. Volume 11. 2020 (2020): 117-151, https://doi.org/10.1553/medievalworlds_no11_2020s117.

Although Zen Buddhism is inwardly focused, or in other words, mystical, Zen Buddhism espouses the view that social reality in the world is of significant importance and should be fought for.

From a historical perspective, this concept becomes particularly relevant when examining the evolution of Christianity in the Indonesian context. While Christianity has traditionally been regarded as a private, internal affair, many Christian organizations in Indonesia have demonstrated a commitment to upholding human values by opposing any actions that could potentially reduce human value and by providing support to vulnerable groups.

The most intriguing aspect of the dialogue between Japan and the Emperor was the admission of guilt and apology to the Japanese colonies in Asia for the invasion and militarism perpetrated by Japan. This admission was made in the context of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which caused immense suffering and devastation. Japan bears responsibility for this transgression.

In other words, it is my contention that any transgressions or consequences of past actions will be regarded as valuable if the state openly acknowledges culpability and assumes responsibility for them. The concepts of confession and responsibility are not exclusive to Japanese religions or faiths. This phenomenon is also observed in Indonesia, including among Christians.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the profound impact of post-World War II philosophical openness and dialogue on the survival and integration of Christianity in Japan. The rejection of militarism by many countries, including Japan, provided a fertile ground for philosophical and religious dialogue. Plato's philosophy, in particular, played a significant role in softening post-war tensions through its emphasis on dialogue (*risō*/理想).

Philosophical contributions, including the integration of Zen with Husserl's phenomenology and the dialogues of Zhu Xi and Ito Jinsai, facilitated the absorption of Western philosophical mindsets into Eastern philosophy. This fusion of ideas contri-

buted to the development of art, aesthetics, and popular culture, such as *Otaku* culture, which embraced foreign influences.

Despite its small number, Christianity in Japan managed to produce influential figures who contributed to government and education, demonstrating the nation's openness to diverse religious and philosophical perspectives. This openness is crucial for understanding Japan's socio-political landscape, where economic strength does not necessarily equate to the absence of social issues such as poverty and discrimination.

Theological reflection in Japan continues to engage with themes of suffering and salvation, as exemplified by Kitamori's work on the nature of God and human suffering. The persistent presence of Christianity, despite historical challenges, highlights its role in promoting social responsibility and providing a moral framework for addressing contemporary issues.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of philosophical and religious dialogue in fostering a more inclusive and open society. Japan's experience shows that embracing diverse perspectives can lead to cultural enrichment and social progress, even in the face of historical adversities.

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