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The religious situation in Japan during Tokugawa dynasty (1603-1867)

During the reign of Tokugawa Buddhism lost the role of the official ideology of the ruling circles. Tokugawa shoguns headed for the eradication of Shintoism since he was associated with the emperor. Christianity was destroyed. Konfuntsianstvo became the official ideology in interpreting Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi.

Key words: Tokugawa, Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity

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Токугава әулетінің билігі кезіндегі Жапониядағы діни жағдай (1603-1867 жж.)

Бұл мақала Жапониядағы Токугава дәуірінің діни жағдайын зерттеуге арналған. Сонымен бірге, буддизм, синтоизм, конфуцийшілдіктің хал-жағдайы қарастырылды. Діни синкретизм формалары таныстырылды. Жапониядағы христиандықтың жүзжылдығына және оның жойылу себептеріне ерекше мән берілді.

Түйін сөздер: Токугава, Синто, Буддизм, Конфуцианство, Христианство.

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Религиозная ситуация в Японии в период правления династии Токугава (1603-1867 гг.)

Данная статья посвящена изучению религиозной ситуации в Японии периода Токугава. Изучено положение буддизма, синтоизма, конфуцианства. Показаны формы религиозного синкретизма. Особое положение уделено христианскому столетию в Японии и причинам его уничтожения.

Ключевые слова: Токугава, Синто, Буддизм, Конфуцианство, Христианство.

The period from mid-XVI to the first half of the XVII century in Japan defines by the race for the country's association and the political consolidation of the Tokugawa house. Feudal lords from the central part of Honshu – Oda Nabunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu – took the lead of the country's association.

In the year of the internecine feuds the position of the Buddhist church (Buddhism spread to Japan from India through China during VI-VII centuries) changed. The church, which had formerly been a secure foothold first for the imperial, then for military-feudalistic power, began to oppose its monasteries to laical feudalists for the friaries to be large landowners. Having considerable armed forces in disposal, they took an activate part in the internecine struggle, keeping the union of the country

under. In his association movement Oda Nabunaga countervailed the Buddhist church militant, burning monasteries and temples and sequestering church lands. Sustaining his line Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu also opposed the Buddhist church, and by the time of association's completion the Buddhist clergy didn't pose a threat to the central administration. The clergy's political position was almost eliminated. The Buddhist church became an obedient tool of the central administration in its state consolidation.

In that period the savor to Shinto was also intensified as it could be an impetus to unify the country, but it never lasted long since Tokugawa shoguns set a course for extirpation of Shinto as an independent religion. The reason was that Shinto was closely related with the Emperor, and

the shogunat forced him back and turned into an honored prisoner [1, 30]. Essentially there were only ritual functions left to the Emperor, because such practical affairs as ruling the country were entirely run by the shoguns (who were officially considered to be the loyalist of the Emperor) and their far-reaching officialdom[2, 8].

As a matter of fact, the Emperor was respected as the lineal descendant of gods, so he was devotion in Shinto, which happened to be the original religion of the Japanese. But by that time not Shinto but Buddhism became the official religion of Tokugawa Japan, and Buddhism was already divided by different sects and schools. The fact is that after the prohibition of Christianity, which was called "devilish and destructive" teachings and "the enemy of the state" in the shogun's decree of the year 1614, Buddhism happened to be Japan's only integral and methodic doctrine (with its own cosmology, nomism, canon, stable church and congregational system), which could in all respects contradistinguish Christianity[3, 8-9].

To subvert Shinto it was chosen to dissolve it in Buddhism. In accordance with the regulation of Tokugawa administration, Shinto shepherds had to register as churchgoers in the Buddhist temples according to the place of residence and they had to obey the Buddhist rituals in full. Many Shinto temples were turned into Shinto-Buddhist ones, notably with predominance of Buddhist elements in the architecture and the interior. It was commonly used to put on the Buddhist deities as relics in Shinto temples, and it was widespread for talapoints to administer there[1,30].

Buddhism picked up after the jolts done by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. Tokugawa Ieyasu even brought some of the confiscated riches back to monasteries. But Buddhism had already lost the position of the official ideology of the establishment, the role of the state's intellectual and spiritual power. By that time the Confucianism became the official ideology.

It was the Confucianism in the interpretation of a Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi to become the new official state ideology. The Confucianism teachings apparently were very convenient for the government of the state, which hadn't recovered from the effects of a civil war by the moment; they were also very practical for maintaining the order and discipline, which could guarantee the safety for the authorities. The main idea of the Confucianism was what the

certain hierarchy was settled by the Kwoth, which justified the supremacy of the privileged strata due to the fact that according to that system the younger should own up to the older, and so did the subordinate to the senior. There was the concept of bonds and the loyalty of the inferior to the superior at the bottom of those teachings. Those conceptions were represented in the following five forms of human relationships in the state and in family: the relationship between the regent and the subordinate; father and children; husband and wife; elder and younger brothers; friends. Neo-Confucianism added a philosophical underpinning to the basics of Confucianism, which was expressed in emphasizing two principles in things, namely "li", an intellectual creative power, and "qi", a passive matter; those principles consequently corresponded to the inwardness and orexis of the men. Herewith the inwardness was considered to be affirmative and to inspire the progress, while the orexis was regarded as negative and retarding the progressive advance [1, 31]. Neo-Confucianism was an absolutely humane teaching, exceptionally intellectual and meant for the social needs. It didn't have any elements of metaphysics or mysticism, which was hardly acceptable by the pragmatic Japanese people. So it was mainly the philosophical-political aspect of the teaching to evolve, whereas it didn't become the religion. There were still Buddhism and slightly superseded Shinto to remain the religion of the nation.

Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism and Shinto were amicably coexisting in that period, and that fact promoted the synthesis of borrowed religious and philosophical systems and local minhags and faiths. The synthesis was carried out in different forms. One of them was the idea that represented Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto as different developmental stages in the life of the man and the society, in which connection Shinto was considered to be the Past, the ethnogeny and the origin of State, Confucianism was regarded as the Present, the moral compass of the government, and Buddhism presented the Future as the afterlife. Different Buddhist sects adhered to the diverse forms of the syncretism.

It is used by Japanese historians to call the period from the mid-XVI to the first half of the XVII century "the Christian Century" as it was the meeting of Japanese and European cultures, which happened to be the biggest event in the spiritual

life of the country. The first contacts between Japanese and European cultures date from the mid-1500s. In the year 1543 the Portuguese merchants appeared on the Kyushu, and then it was for the Jesuit Missionaries to put in appearance. Francis Xavier was the first Spanish Jesuit to arrive in Japan for the evangelical preaching, and following him other missionaries, who represented different catholic orders such as Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinian Hermits, began to come in. The homiletics of the missionaries was successful. By the end of the XVI century the population of Christian people in Japan had been numbered by hundreds of thousands. The most cautious historians define the maximum number of Christians in that period as 600 000, while the majority reckons the population as more than a million [4, 83]. General population of Japan had come up to 26 millions of people by the beginning of the XVII century [5, 45]. If only the energy of the Europeans hadn't met with strong opposition, the situation could have changed; but it was the other activity of the foreigners that attracted the attention of the shogun authorities. Trade relations with foreign countries, the apparition of the firearm and many promises of the European merchants and missionaries enlivened the conation to the separation from the central government of the Kyushu feudal lords. The secession movement began. In 1637 the rebellion Shimabara took place in Japan, when thousands of Christianity adherents in Hizen province on Kyushu clamored against the shogun's oppression. As the result of their actions a close supervision of Christianity was set, the import of Christian literature, the expatriation of Japanese and their homecoming were strictly prohibited. The rebellion was stifled. The country which went through decades of feudal contentions, united under the aegis of Tokugawa shoguns with fire and sword, was now faced with the danger of breakdown and turning into the dependency of the European powers. Thereat the central authority shut the door and closed Japan for the contacts with any foreigners. Upon penalty of death the entrance of foreigners to Japan was prohibited, and so were the advocacy and confession of Christianity, leaving abroad by Japanese and foreign going ship-building. It was only a penurious trade saved with China and Holland through the built Nagasaki factories. Thenceforth there was no longer mercy. Christianity was annihilated with fire and sword, and its adherents were put to death if

not abnegating faith. In 1639 Christianity in Japan was completely exterminated, 80 years on it found its following there. But another point of view also exists. According to that opinion the circumstances of savage persecution of Christianity, missionaries' expulsion and the discretionary decision of country closing are a very tempting way for the explanation of Christianity's failure in Japan with only historical facts. Nevertheless, as the following contour confirms, the situation was much more complicated. Even under the conditions of freedom of conscience (it was partially set right after the Meiji Restoration in 1867 and completely established after the World War II) Christianity hadn't managed to provide any secure foothold inland. Therefore the problem laid not so much in the particular historical facts as it did in the general cultural circumstances. Many cases against Christianity declared in the XVII century stay on being relevant at the present time.

The main cases against Christianity could be divided at least into three groups:

1. Christianity being the system of values incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Japanese culture;
2. Inner contradictions of the Christian dogmatic theology;
3. Disregard of nomism by the Christians (generally by missionaries) [6, 47].

In the present article let us consider only the first case as it being the quintessence from the point of view of the emersed cultural abruption's nature comprehension.

The reason for inconvenience of the Japanese statist was their settled conviction that the spread of Christianity undermines stability inland since the main thing in Christianity is the obligation to God, and not the commitment to bureaucratic-military and family hierarchy. Namely the ignorance of such a fundamental Shinto and Confucianism principle as filial piety had repeatedly brought to the change of the dynastic lines in Europe, which Japan fortunately managed to avoid. For this reason the Japanese were ill-disposed to the passages from the Writings where the kindred's importance was diminished. The preaching practics were acknowledged destructive for the social order. According to the Japanese people's opinion the administering absolution by the priest led to crime wave and shattered the morale of the society. The Christian concept of monotheism came under massed criticism for the reason that, by Japanese notions, the sky and the Earth weren't created and, as such, therefore, they had neither beginning nor the end. As a result, the Christian

cosmological model was repudiated. One more stumbling stone for the Japanese was the Christian theory of anthropocentrism. The opposition of the animal world and a man was represented not so

distinctively in the Japanese culture as it was in the Western. By the mode of the Japanese culture the human being was considered to be only a special consequence of the universal life stream [6, 47].

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