

34 Ishin Sūden: *Statement on the Expulsion of the Missionaries* (1614)

Introduced and translated by Katja Triplett

Introduction

The text, written in classical Chinese and composed by Zen monk Ishin (Konchiin) Sūden 以心金地院崇伝 (1569–1633) in early 1614, is a notification to the daimyo (local rulers) under shogun Tokugawa Hidetada 徳川秀忠 (1579–1632, r. 1605–1623). The initiative to stop the Catholic mission in Japan ultimately came from Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康, however; the former shogun had retired from office, but nevertheless strove to firmly establish his family as the hegemonic ruling military power of Japan. The Tokugawa clan had sworn loyalty to the heir of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, young Hideyori 秀頼 (1593–1615), but they had nonetheless been trying to remove Hideyori and his allies from the political arena – if not from life itself. Ieyasu and his successor were well aware of the confessional and trade wars between England, the Dutch, and the Portuguese and Spanish. So, when the civil war between the Tokugawa and the Toyotomi factions intensified, Ieyasu and his counsellors decided to enter into a strictly regulated interaction with the Protestant powers of Europe and, as a consequence, demonstrate – particularly to the English – that they would weaken the stance of the Catholic Iberian missionaries in Japan, by taking drastic measures against the missionaries. The shogunate intended to thereby secure supplies of natural resources and fire weapons.¹ Against this background, it becomes clear why, in contrast to the short 1587 *Decree on Banishing Christian Missionaries*, the *Statement* no longer encourages free trade and commerce.

Sūden compares the incorporation of Buddhism – a foreign religion that arrived from China – into Japanese society to the arrival of Christianity, yet another religion foreign to Japan. He then contrasts true religion – i.e. Buddhism or Confucianism – and false

I I follow the argument presented by Screech and Kouamé: Timon Screech, “The English and the Control of Christianity in the Early Edo Period,” *Japan Review* 24 (2012): 3–40; Nathalie Kouamé, “Sūden’s Anti-Christian Edict (1614),” in *Encyclopédie des historiographies: Afriques, Amériques, Asies*, Vol. 1: *Sources et Genres Historiques*, ed. Nathalie Kouamé, Éric P. Meyer and Anne Viguier (open edition, 2020), 1760–79: <https://books.openedition.org/pressesinalco/31744?lang=de>, accessed 3 May 2023. Kouamé also provides a translation of the *Statement on the Expulsion of the Missionaries* into English, based on the Japanese version provided by: Ebisawa Arimichi 海老沢有道 et al., eds. *Kirishitan-sho, Haiya-sho* キリシタン書; 排耶書 (*Nihon shisō taikai* 日本思想大系 25) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 491–92.

Katja Triplett, Leipzig University, Faculty of History, Art and Area Studies, Institute for the Study of Religions

doctrine – i.e. Christianity – pointing out how Christians undermine local authority, and plan to take over Japan. By citing Buddhist sūtras and Confucian classics, Sūden means to illustrate orthodox religion. He also mentions the alleged un-Japanese behaviour of Christians, such as worshipping criminals on their way to be executed – clearly alluding to the Catholic concept of martyrdom. ‘Japanese’ lawfulness is shown to be incompatible with what is taken to be ‘Christian’ lawfulness. Similarly to the arguments put forward by the 1587 *Decree*, the *Statement* points out that Christianity is to be regarded as fundamentally illegal as a religion or law. Buddhism, revering the *kami* and adhering to Confucian morality, are all that is needed in Japan, according to the *Statement*. The text propagates thus the unity of *ōbō* 王法 (secular law) and *buppō* 佛法 (Buddhism), with *buppō* including several ‘traditional’ religious systems, here seen as being in perfect accord.

Bibliographical Information

Ishin Sūden 以心崇伝. *Ikoku nikki: Konchiin Sūden gaikō monjo shūsei: eiinbon* 異国日記: 金地院崇伝外交文書集成: 影印本, edited by Ikoku nikki kankōkai 異国日記刊行会. Tokyo: Tōkyō bijutsu, 1989; 33–34, fols. 63 left, 64 right.

Page numbers given in square brackets refer to this edition.

Another English translation can be found in:

J.S.A. Elisonas. “The Evangelic Furnace: Japan’s First Encounter with the West.” In *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. Vol. 2, 1600 to 2000, *Abrided, Part One: 1600 to 1868*, 2nd ed., edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, 143–84. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006; 149–51.

Translation by Katja Triplett

Heaven is the Father, Earth is the Mother, and the Human is born in between them. These are the Three Powers. From its origin, Japan is the land of the *kami* (gods). The unfathomable character of yin and yang is what we call the *kami*. The sacredness of the sacred, the wondrousness of the wonders: who would not wish to revere it? If one is given life, it is because yin and yang have willed it to be so. The five parts of the body and the six sense fields, as well as any action from waking up to going to rest, are never for an instant far from the *kami*. The *kami* must not be sought for elsewhere, as they are what humans are provided with, and manifest perfectly – which is, in other words, the essence of the *kami*. Moreover, [Japan] is called the land of the buddhas. This is not without good reason. For it is written that: “It is the land where the buddhas appear in the form of the *kami*; it is the original land of the Great Sun [Buddha].” In the *Lotus Sutra*, it says: “The buddhas save the world by means of their great divine capacities. They manifest limitless divine powers to give joy to all living

beings.”^I These are the wondrous words from the golden mouth [of the Buddha]. The names “kami” and “Buddha” make them seem different from each other, while their meanings are one and the same: it is as if two halves of the same document were joined. In the distant past, monastic and lay people, blessed with the assistance of the kami, crossed the ocean to faraway China, where they assiduously sought out the Buddhists’ law and the followers of the Way’s teaching of humaneness. In this manner, they managed to bring back books with outer and inner teachings [i.e. Buddhist scriptures and non-Buddhist classics]. Later scholars have passed on their teachings from master to master, transmitting the teachings from generation to generation. Here, the Buddhist law prospers, wholly surpassing other countries. How can we not see in this the progressive eastward advancement of the Buddhist law! And now this pack of Christians has all of a sudden come to Japan. They were not content sending their trading ships, and peddling their goods, they also wanted to disseminate their heretical law (*jahō* 邪法), disrupt true religion (*shōshū* 正宗), and, in this way, overturn the government of our country and take it over. These are early signs of a great disaster. So, they must be banned.

Japan is the land of kami and the land of the buddhas, where we revere the kami and venerate the buddhas; we devote ourselves to the Way of humaneness and rightness; we strive to perfect the laws regarding good and evil. Any perpetrators are subjected to the Five Punishments – tattooing, cropping the nose, cutting of the legs, mutilating the genitals, and capital punishment – in proportion to the gravity of their crimes. In *Rites*, it says that “there are many ways of mourning, but only five types of mourning dress; there are many kinds of crimes, but only five types of punishment.”^{II} Those who are suspected of having committed a crime will take an oath before the kami witnessing the act. The exact categories of the crimes and the punishments are established, and the distinction between innocence and guilt are determined, without the slightest shadow of a doubt.

Those who have committed one of the Five Heinous Crimes or Ten Unwholesome Kinds of Behaviour^{III} are loathed by the buddhas and the kami, by the Three Treasur-

I KT: *Lotus Sutra*, chapter 21: 諸佛救世者 住於大神通 / 爲悅衆生故 現無量神力, “The buddhas, the world saviours, reside in their great divine capacities / To bring joy to all living beings, they reveal their limitless divine powers” (T 09, no. 262, p. 52, a29–b01).

II KT: *Record of Rites (Liji)*, chapter 33:20: 傳曰罪多而刑五喪多而服五上附下附列也, “The Directory of Mourning says, ‘Crimes are many, but the punishments are only five. The occasions for mourning are many, but there are only five varieties of the mourning dress. The occasions must be arranged, according as they are classed in the upper grade or in the lower.’” Confucius, “The Lǐ Kǐ,” in *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism*, trans. James Legge. The Sacred Books of the East 28, ed. Friedrich Max Müller (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1885), 384.

III KT: There are several sets of “five heinous crimes” found in Buddhist writing. A common set includes matricide, patricide, the killing of a holy person, the wounding of a buddha, and the destruction

es,^{IV} and by the multitudes of humans and celestial beings. It is difficult for them to escape from the excessive ill fortune resulting from their accumulation of evil acts. Either decapitation or ordeal by fire: this is what they get as punishment for their crimes. This is the way to encourage good deeds, and discourage evil deeds. We want to suppress evil, but evil accumulates easily; we want to spread the good, but the good is preserved with difficulty. How is it wrong to give a clear warning: If the present world is like this, then what of the future world? Even the buddhas of three worlds^V will struggle to protect us from the agonies imposed on us by Enma, the king of the after-world. Not even the succeeding generations of ancestors can do anything about it: how very dreadful!

Everyone from this pack of Christian missionaries deviates from the above-mentioned government ordinances; they malign the way of the kami (*jindō* 神道), and slander the right law (*shōhō/shōbō* 正法); they destroy rightness and derange the good. When they see some people about to be executed, they are delighted and bustle after them. They give reverence and pay obeisance to them in person. They make out [the execution] to be their religion's most cherished aim (*shū no hongai* 宗之本懷). If this is not heresy, then what is? These are truly the enemies of the kami, and the enemies of the buddhas. If they are not instantly banned, the state will surely have cause to lament in the future. Above all, we need to control them with ordinances. If we do not check them, we will be subjected to divine punishment. Let us cast them out quickly! Leave them neither an inch of earth nor a yard of land in Japan where they could stretch their limbs! We will punish those who dare to disobey the orders.

Fortunately, the place illuminated by the sun [i.e. Japan] has, for some years now, been ruled by the recipient of the imperial command who secured the land. [p. 33/34] Outwardly, he manifests the cardinal virtues that are the Five Constants;^{VI} inwardly, he takes refuge in the great teachings found in the Buddhist scriptures (*zōkyō* 藏教). This is why our country is prosperous, and our people are at peace. In the [*Lotus*] *Sutra*, it says, “in this life, peace and tranquillity, and in the next, a birth in good conditions.”^{VII} And Confucius says, “our body – every hair and bit of skin – is received by us from our father and mother, and we must not presume to injure or wound it: this is the beginning of filial piety.”^{VIII} Keeping our body perfectly whole means honouring

of harmony in the sangha (Buddhist community); the “ten unwholesome kinds of behaviour” are acts committed by physical action, speaking, and thinking – such as killing, stealing, lying, and flattery.

IV KT: The three treasures are Buddha, Dharma, and sangha.

V KT: The three worlds are the three periods of past, present, and future.

VI KT: These five are humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trust.

VII KT: The passage 現世安穩後生善處 is found in commentaries to chapter 5 of the *Lotus Sutra*, e.g. in the *Fahuaqing yiji* (Jp. *Hōkekyō giki*) 法華經義記 by Fayun 法雲 (467–529) (T 33, no. 1715, p. 649, a10–1).

VIII KT: The quote is taken verbatim from the *Xiaojing* (*Classic of Filial Piety*), chapter 1; English translation slightly revised from: “The Hsiao King,” in *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism* Part 1, trans. James Legge (The Sacred Books of the East 3, ed. Friedrich Max Müller), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1879, 466.

the kami. Rejecting this heresy without delay, our true law will flourish. Although the world has already entered an age of decline [of the Dharma], we have a good government which continues to help foster the way of the kami and the teaching of the Buddha. Let the entire world know of this! Let no one dare to make an error!

Keichō 18, constellation of the dragon, year of the water ox, twelfth lunar month, [number missing] day [by external evidence: 1 Feb. 1614]

Vermillion seal [of Hidetada]