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Paintings by Japan's Hidden Christians, 1640-1873

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Surrender or Subversion?
Contextual and Theoretical Analysis of the Paintings by Japan's Hidden Christians, 1640-1873

A thesis submitted to
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Abstract

My research analyzes the complexity of a hybrid style used in the paintings of the Hidden Christians of the Ikitsuki Island during Japan's anti-Christian era (ca. 1640-1873). Approximately one hundred years after the Jesuits' introduction of Christianity to Japan in 1549, the Japanese government issued numerous bans on Christianity followed by a series of persecutions and deportations. Some devotees resisted the government decrees and chose to disguise themselves as non-Christians to survive. Known today as Hidden Christians, these people continued to practice their faith while altering their religious expressions. Often thought of as a symbol of defeat and compliance to the government, the paintings of Hidden Christians of the Ikitsuki Island diverged from the conventional Christian images created by the missionary studios established in Japan and incorporated some of the local visual elements and symbolisms. This thesis applies the postcolonial theory of mimicry to shed light on the elements of resistance and subversion found in the Hidden Christian icons. In addition, it examines the Jesuits' missionary approaches and the use of their *Spiritual Exercises* in Japan to demonstrate the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians' ability to appropriate their faith through their unique visual expression within the context of their reality.

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Introduction

A female figure crowned with a gold cross and clad in a green kimono with red floral patterns holds an infant in her arms (Figure 1). Surrounded by celestial figures, she seems to float on a moon as indicated by the billowing sash on her dress. Created as a Christian painting after the late seventeenth century, this painting depicts the Virgin Mary disguised in what appears to be a conventional image of a Japanese woman in the traditional flat, calligraphic styles with stylized facial features, *hikime-kagibana* (dashes for eyes, hooks for noses) (Figure 2). The picture thus breaks away from contemporary European Christian art in terms of its appearances and styles that incorporate three-dimensionality and realism. Titled *The Virgin of the Rosary with the Child Christ,* this painting demonstrates the intentional ambiguity and inherent hybridity in the works produced by the Japanese Christians on Ikitsuki Island during the nation's severe religious persecution from the end of the sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century.

Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portugal and Spain launched voyages of exploration accompanied by merchants and member of various religious orders. On the Portuguese ships were Jesuit missionaries seeking to save the souls of new nations. They sailed to Asian countries and eventually arrived in Japan in 1549. At first, the Japanese welcomed Catholicism, especially some of the local feudal lords (daimyô) and their retainers. Missionary activities were initially prominent in western Japan, especially on the southernmost island of Kyûshû due to the geographical proximity to the

Portuguese route in Southeast Asia, and they spread to the rest of the country at the turn of the seventeenth century.

However, as the nation during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568-1603) began its political reunification after a century-long Warring States Period (1467-1573), the government feared the Christian invasion of the country. In 1587, shôgun Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98), the de-facto leader of Momoyama Japan, issued a ban of Christianity. Following Toyotomi's rule, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616), who had declared himself shôgun or generalissimo, reinforced the anti-Christian policy in 1612, first targeting South Japan. This operation then spread to the rest of the nation in 1614, deporting missionary priests. In 1637, Christian-led peasants in southern Kyûshû revolved against the local government due to heavy taxation, resulting in the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-1638). This triggered the government to issue an isolationist policy in 1639 expelling Portuguese merchants. In the following year, the government established the Christian Suppression Office (1640), enforcing the nation-wide search for Christians and their persecution, as well as destroying any religious documents and materials. While 400,000 people who were or were suspected to be Christians were executed,[1] some Christian communities renounced their faith or disguised themselves as non-Christians. Known today as *kakure kirishitan* or Hidden Christians, they practiced faith secretly until the ban on Christianity was finally lifted in 1873 when the Tokugawa regime was dissolved.

The majority of the Hidden Christians resided in western Kyûshû, including Ikitsuki, which is located on an island near the coast of Nagasaki (Figure 3). Due to the

[1] Satoru Ohara, "Supiritsuaru Shugyô to Zezusu no Conpania," in *Supiritsuaru Shugyô*, ed. Arimichi Ebizawa (Tokyo: Kyôbunkan, 1994), 510. Note: English translations of the Japanese sources will be given in the bibliography.

absence of Jesuit priests, the community eventually created and adopted their own version of the Catholic doctrine and a unique form of aesthetic expression, which combined Christian beliefs with indigenous folk beliefs and visual culture.

Over the years, both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars have studied the history and the culture of the Japanese Christians before and during the anti-Christian era. *Kirishitan* (1999) is an encyclopedic book that covers various subjects from the beginning to the end of the Jesuits' missionary activities in Japan, while the publications by scholars such as Kentarô Miyazaki, Kôya Tagita, and Shigeo Nakazono focus on the Hidden Christians mostly after the ban of Christianity. However, there have been very few studies on the *paintings* of the Hidden Christians. The Christian paintings discussed in Gauvin Alexander Bailey's *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America* (1999) primarily focuses on the works produced in Japan prior to the Christian ban, notably the works of the Seminary of Painters supervised by the Italian Jesuit painter Giovanni Niccolo (1560-1626). Those paintings by the Niccolo School are highly praised and considered valuable Japanese Christian art (Figure 4), some of which have been kept in museums all over the world and even sold at the prestigious auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's.

The study of the paintings by the Hidden Christians, on the other hand, has been scarce and tends to see them in a negative light. As art historian Yôichirô Ide has commented in 1978, objects left by the Hidden Christians have been appreciated in the fields of socio-theology and anthropology, but they have been ignored in traditional art history since they were not created by trained masters.[2] The study of the Hidden Christian

[2] Yôichirô Ide, "Kakure Kirishitan no Icon," in *Kirishitan Bijutsu to Shiseki wo Tazuneru Tabi*, ed. Murata Fumikazu (Tokyo: Taiyô Publication, 1978), 55.

paintings has therefore remained humble in the hierarchy within Japanese art history that has privileged other art styles, such as the Kano and Tosa schools. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Ken'ichi Tanikawa, Shigeo Nakazono, and photographer Tadashi Nakajô collaborated to publish *Sacred Paintings of Hidden Christians* (1999). This book offers a thorough survey of the history and tradition of the Ikitsuki Christians and introduces their paintings, all of which were photographed by Nakajô between 1962-1970. However, as pointed out by Nakazono, one of the authors and the curator of Ikitsuki Museum, the studies on the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians have focused on preserving intangible forms of tradition, such as ceremonies that are rapidly changing and/or disappearing, and consequently, a through research on tangible objects such as painting is yet to be completed.[3] As a result, the current scholarship remains within formal analysis and related historical accounts with the assumption that the ambiguity and hybridity found in these images are merely the result of the historical predicament faced by the Hidden Christians. These images are therefore often treated as folk art or ethnographic art but not Christian art, because they no longer contain the characteristics of conventional Christian paintings.

It is true that the Japanese Christians during the anti-Christian era had to camouflage their faith in order to avoid persecutions and had few, if any, European textual or visual references to maintain the artistic traditions established before the ban on Christianity. However, the effect of their hybridity is complex; it is more than simply a reflection of their compliance and surrender to the government. Subtly but consistently,

[3] Because of these circumstances, there are no official documents describing the precise dates, medium, and dimensions of the Ikitsuki paintings. I, therefore, refrain from providing such data in the list of illustrations. Shigeo Nakazono, "Kirishitan no Okake-e ni tsuite," 15 January 2010, personal email to the author (18 January 2010).

the paintings also exhibit their resistance as well as Christian expressions that are coherent only to those in the community of Hidden Christians.

This thesis investigates how the hybridity in the paintings of the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians also incorporates a sense of subversion and evokes Jesuit theology. Chapter One provides the historical background from the introduction of Christianity in Japan to its subsequent religious ban. It addresses the brief history of the Japanese political system of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the formation of the Jesuits and their strategic agendas in Japan, the fall of their missionary activities toward the mid-seventeenth century, and the Christians of Ikitsuki Island. Chapter Two discusses the role of visual art in the Jesuit missions, the establishment of the Jesuit art studio in Japan, and the artistic tradition and practice of the Japanese Jesuit studios before 1640 in comparison to the anti-Christian era as a way of examining how the Hidden Christians' works diverged from European works to the hybrid styles. Chapter Three then investigates how the hybridity actually functioned among the Ikitsuki Christians during the anti-Christian era through contextual and theoretical analysis. It first examines hybridity as a means for deception and mimicry and how the Ikitsuki paintings could also be seen as a sign of subversion of the government rather than as an act of surrender. It also examines the Jesuits' missionary stance in Japan as well as their religious exercise to demonstrate how the Ikitsuki Christian paintings illustrate Jesuit characteristics despite their visual divergence from European art.

The current scholarship on the Hidden Christians remains inadequate because of its one-dimensional interpretation that the visual culture among the Ikitsuki Christians is merely the result of their tragic history of religious persecution. Through this research, I

hope to reveal how the predicament of religious persecution and their visual ambiguity, in fact, helped them survive, sustain their forbidden Christian faith, and produce highly powerful and original Christian art.

Chapter One
History of the Jesuit Missionary and Christianity in Japan

> These Japanese are more ready to be implanted with our holy faith than all the nations of the world. They are as prudent as can be imagined. They are governed by reason as much as, or more than, Spaniards. They are more curious than all the nations that I know…. They are men of very keen and lofty understanding, and they let themselves be governed by reason. For if they are given to understand through reason that there is no one who can save their souls except Him who created them….
>
> Juan de Torres, 1551[4]

During the so-called Christian period (1549-1640), Japan was drifting from the latter part of medieval era (1185-1600) to the early modern era (1600-1868) with constant political shifts and upheavals. During the Warring States period (1467-1573), the country was sharply divided into many fiefdoms, leading to numerous wars among the ruling local daimyô. In the following Azuchi Momoyama period (1573-1603), powerful daimyô Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) began unifying the nation as well as expanding foreign trades. In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) took over power and established the Edo period (1603-1867), finally stabilizing the nation. In 1640, this hereditary regime also enforced *sakoku*, or the national isolation policy, which limited the foreign diplomacy to the Netherlands and other Northeastern Asian nations, such as China, Korea, and Ryûkyû (modern Okinawa Prefecture).[5] Christianity in Japan underwent its ups and downs in the midst of these political shifts from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. This chapter introduces the formation of the Jesuits within the

[4] Excerpt from a letter written by a Franciscan Missionary Juan de Torres in 1551. Georg Schurhammer, S.J. *Francis Xavier, His Life, His Times*, Vol. IV, Japan and China 1549-1552, trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S. J. (Rome: The Jesuit Historical Institute, 1982), 269.

[5] These nations were allowed to settle at the trading posts in Dejima, an artificial island off the Nagasaki Harbor, only for the trading and diplomatic purposes. The Dutch were permitted to stay in Japan with the agreement that they were not going to conduct any missionary activities.

context of European history, their mission to Asia, and their acceptance and ban in Japan during the first one hundred years of its "Christian century."

Jesuit Formation in Europe and the Overseas Mission

During the fifteenth century, European nations began to seek sea routes to Africa and Asia. Christopher Columbus (1446-1506) discovered South and Central Americas in 1498 and 1502, respectively, with the support of Spanish Queen Isabella I (1451-1504). Vasco da Gama (1469-1524) found a sea route to Calicut, India in 1498 with the support of King Emmanuel (1460-1524) of Portugal. At its peak during the sixteenth century, the great era of exploration brought not only wealth and prosperity through trading, but also Christian missionaries to those new lands. The Jesuits, with support from Portuguese kings, dispatched many missionaries to those trade cities. After the successful missionary activities in India and China, the next destination was Japan.

The Jesuits, also known as the Society of Jesus, emerged in response to the Protestant Reformation movement during the sixteenth century. The Roman Catholic Church was bitterly criticized and abandoned by its followers in the early sixteenth century for its abuse of religious authority such as the selling of indulgences. The Protestant Reformation movement was initiated in large part by the German monk Martin Luther (1483-1546), who wrote *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517. Although Luther was excommunicated, the demand for reform spread and affected other countries in Western and Central Europe. In response, the Roman Catholic Church held the Council of Trent (1545-63) to take action against abuses and amend its practice.

In 1534, in the midst of the Protestant Reformation movement, Spaniard Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) vowed with six others to form the Company of Jesus. Loyola was

inspired to take this vow in large part by books such as *The Life of Christ* (1474) by Ludolph of Saxony, the lives of saints, or the *Golden Legend* (1275) by Jacopo de Voragine (1230-1298), which he read while recovering from foot injury that he sustained in the Battle of Pamplona in 1521. Between 1522 and 1523, he wrote *Spiritual Exercises,* a series of meditations, which became one of the most important texts of the Society. In 1540, Pope Paul III acknowledged the Company of Jesus as a potential agent of the Counter-Reformation and approved the Society of Jesus as a new mendicant order.

With the support of King John III of Portugal (1502-57), the Jesuits began sending missionaries to Asian countries. Loyola summoned his colleague Francisco de Xavier (1506-1552), one of the founders of the Society, to perform missionary work in Asia. On his thirty-sixth birthday in 1541, Xavier left for India with two other Jesuits and converted over 10,000 people there.[6] He then traveled to Malacca in 1547, and during his stay, Xavier met Anjirô, an ex-murderer and escapee from Japan. After training Anjirô to be his interpreter, Xavier and his party set sail for Kyûshû Island of Japan in July 1549.[7]

The Jesuits in Japan: Their Approaches, Acceptance and Decline

Over the next twenty-seven months, Xavier introduced Christianity and proselytized a large number of the Japanese in Kyûshû and the western part of the main island Honshû with very systematic approaches. They brought about trading opportunities to daimyô (local feudal lords), established standardized Christian schools, and provided welfares to those in need. Roman Catholicism was initially welcomed by daimyô and their people, even though some lords simply found an interest in Christianity

[6] Hisashi Kishino, "Xavier no Nihon Kaikyô," in *Kirishitan,* eds., Hulbert Cieslik and Yoshiko Ôta (Tokyo: Tokyo-dô Shuppan, 1999), 59.
[7] Accompanying Xavier were the Father Cosme de Torrès (1510-1570), Brother Juan Fernández (birth date unknown-1567), Anjirô, two other Japanese, and two servants.

assuming that it was a sect of Buddhism.[8] Others gave the Jesuits permission to preach Christianity in uninhabited temples in exchange for trade opportunities and various gifts from Europe such as watches, music boxes, eyeglasses, as well as Christian paintings they had never seen before. Francisco Xavier reported that one of the local daimyô of Kagoshima, Shimazu Takahisa (1514-1571), showed much admiration and even wished to obtain a painting of Christ and the Virgin Mary for himself.[9]

The Jesuits also established two levels of academic institutions for the new Japanese Christians in the capital Kyôto and Kyûshû region. First introduced as s*eminario* by the missionary Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) in 1580, this preparatory seminary provided students with dormitories and education in literature, history, philosophy, geography, as well as Latin for an average of six years. They also learned music, sports, and art in order to help cultivate their aesthetic sensibilities.[10] After the completion of the curricula, students who wished to be admitted to the Jesuit order for priesthood entered the *collegio*. In this higher education facility, they studied philosophy and theology. The introduction of the printing press in 1592 allowed the schools to publish the Bible, books on theology, and dictionaries, all of which were available in Latin and Japanese.[11] These schools, combined with the introduction of printed materials, helped spread Christian teachings in Japan.

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[8] Yajirô, Xavier's interpreter, translated "God" as *Dainichi Nyorai,* "Buddha of the Great Illuminator," and the "Virgin Mary" as "Kannon," or Bodhisattva of Compassion. Thus, people misinterpreted and called Christianity "Tenjiku Sect of Buddhism" until 1551 when Xavier learned about Buddhism and finally realized that those figures could not be regarded as the same. Kishino, "Xavier no Nihon Kaikyô," 57 and 59.

[9] Suzanne L.Stratton-Pruitt, "Nossa Senhora no Ultramar Portuguese," in *Crowing Glory: Images of the Virgin in the Arts of Portugal*, (exhibition catalogue, Newark: Newark Museum, 1997), 81.

[10] Chieko Kataoka, "Seminario: Kirishitan no Chûtô Kyôiku Kikan," in *Kirishitan*, 136.

[11] Satoru Ohara, "Collegio: Bunkateki Igimo Ôkii Kôtôkyôiku Kikan," in *Kirishitan*, 139.

Christianity also arrived in Japan at a crucial time when the Japanese needed "another spiritual means of coping with life's hardships and the political situation of the time."[12] Although sixteenth-century Japan was ruled by the Muromachi government (1392-1573), the nation was still sharply divided into smaller fiefs ruled by local daimyô. As explained above, many battles broke out between those daimyô who sought to supplant their superiors to attain more power and control during the Warring States period (1467-1573). The unstable condition of Japan especially during the Ônin War (1467-1477) left much of the country in disharmony.[13] The souls of the Japanese were as desolate as the capital of Kyôto. People sought peace and spiritual relief. The missionaries who arrived with Xavier touched the hearts of many Japanese by dedicating themselves to the economic, social, and spiritual needs of the people at the time. Since numerous wars devastated the country and took many lives, many fiefdoms required people to pay higher taxes in order to readjust their finances. Life was severe especially among the old, sick, poor, and homeless. Farmers and fishermen had to give their scanty harvest as annual tribute to their feudal lord, which impoverished them further. During the mid-sixteenth century, Jesuit missionaries established and supervised hospitals, childcare institutions, orphanages, and nursing homes near their churches in Kyûshû, which were also open to non-Christians.[14] Although Mahayana Buddhism, the basis of Japanese Buddhism, stressed compassion for all beings, many of these unfortunate people did not receive sufficient care until the Christian missionaries initiated and developed an

[12] Hiro Saito, "Hinmin, Byôshaeno Shien," in *Kirishitan*, 146.
[13] The war broke out in 1467 caused by the succession disputes among the members of the Ashikaga family and lasted for ten years until 1477.
[14] Saito, Ibid.

organized social welfare for the first time in Japanese history.[15] Jesuit missions, therefore, capitalized on the domestic, political, and social turmoil in Japan.

Missionary activities first flourished in western Japan, spreading to the rest of the country by the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1551, Xavier traveled to Kyôto to arrange an audience with the emperor with a belief that converting the monarch and residents of the capital was the most efficient way to proselytize Japan. However, due to the aftermath of the Ônin War, the city was in a state of disarray. Many people had fled the city, and what used to be a flourishing and prosperous capital was nearly abandoned. Realizing that he would not be able to conduct missionary work in this desolate place, Xavier then moved to Yamaguchi, a prosperous region that was believed to be the "western capital," located in the southwestern part of the mainland.[16] Despite the failure of his original plan to meet with the emperor in Kyôto, he was still able to convert over seven hundred people by the time he left Japan in 1551.[17] The number of conversions rose rapidly in the next half century with the arrival of other orders between 1590 and 1600s: Augustinians, Dominicans, and Franciscans.[18] Most of the Japanese converts did not distinguish between the different orders but simply acknowledged their doctrines as uniform teachings of Christianity. Thus, the term *kirishitan* (Christians) applied to all who believed in the teachings of the Christian God. By 1603, the number of Japanese Christians reached over 300,000.[19] If one applies William Wayne Farris's demography, which estimates roughly fifteen to nineteen million inhabitants in 1600 Japan,

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[15] Ibid.
[16] During the war, many aristocrats from Kyôto escaped to Yamaguchi and establish courtly culture there. Kishino, 58.
[17] Ibid.
[18] J.F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1993), 2.
[19] Gen Aoyama, "Iesuzu-kai, Takuhatsu Shûdôkai no Nihon Fukyô," in *Kirishitan*, 55.

approximately one-and-a-half to two percent of the nation's estimated population were Christians.[20] The Jesuits thought of Japan as the "land of promise," which they clearly envisioned as a Christian nation.[21]

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, however, this vision began to fade due to the government's suspicion of the Christian invasion and the cultivation of new secular foreign diplomacies with other European nations, such as England and the Netherlands. Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98), the de-facto leader of the country, was very lenient towards the Christian missionaries at first, largely because of their connection to trade. Although his Deportation of Pastor Act (Bateren Tsuihôrei) in 1587 demanded the missionaries to leave Japan within twenty days, the government could not issue a strict ban on Christianity since the Jesuits monopolized the Portuguese trade with Japan.[22] Towards the end of his reign, however, Japan opened diplomacy with the Philippines, which was then under the Spanish rule. This allowed other orders, such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians, to enter the country, making missionary activities more complex and intimidating to the nation. In 1598, one of the first public executions was administered under the government. Known as "The Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan," the twenty Japanese, four Spaniards, a Mexican, and a Portuguese of the Jesuit and Franciscan orders from Kyôto and Osaka were executed in public in Nagasaki.

The regulation became even more severe during the Edo period (1603-1867), when the Tokugawa family ruled the country. By the early seventeenth century, Japan had opened diplomatic relationships with the Netherlands (1609) and England (1613),

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[20] William Wayne Farris, *Japan's Medieval Population: Famine, Fertility, and Warfare in a Transformative Age* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 164.
[21] Felix Alfred Plattner, *Jesuits Go East* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1952), 55.
[22] Sanae Murai, "Touitsuseiken no Seiritsu to Kirishitan," in *Kirishitan*, 184.

which conducted trades without any missionary associations. In 1612, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616), who had declared himself shôgun in 1603, issued the Ban of Christianity (Kirisutokyô kinrei), which first targeted Southern Japan. Then in 1614, Ieyasu's son Hidetada (1579-1632) issued Deportation of Pastor Act, which helped spread this policy throughout the nation. Foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians now had to be deported to Macao or executed. In 1630, the government also forbade the importation of Christian books. In response to the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-1638), which was a protest led by the Christian peasants against heavy taxation, the government finally implemented the isolationist policy in 1639 and established the Christian Suppression Office in 1640.[23]

After the anti-Christian bans were enforced, Christians throughout the nation began to hide their religious identity in order to avoid any ruthless persecutions that the government began to use to detect the remaining Japanese Christians. While anyone who discovered a Christian received a reward, those who were suspected to be Christians were brought to trial, and forced to prove their innocence by treading on an iron relief of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ or swallowing a small piece of the Buddhist text. Anyone who refused to attest or renounce their faith was arrested and buried alive, crucified, burned at the stake, or beheaded. In 1657, for instance, 411 Christians out of 600 suspected civilians in the Ômura Fief were beheaded.[24] In central Japan, more than 2,200 Christians from Owari and Mino Provinces were executed between 1660 and 1670.[25] While many Christian communities disappeared or abandoned their faith under the rigid

[23] Ann Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), 27.
[24] Hiroji Harada, "Ômura Ryônai ni Fukiareta Dan'atsu no Arashi," in *Kirishitan*, 258.
[25] Owari and Mino Provinces were old provinces covering the western part of present day Aichi Prefecture, and the southern part of Gifu Prefecture, respectively. Gen Aoyama, "Chûbu no Kirishitan," in *Kirishitan,* 96.

persecution policy, residents of some communities began to disguise themselves as non-Christians to securely maintain their Christian faith. Later known as *kakure kirishitan* (Hidden Christians), their long struggle against brutality and isolation lasted more than 250 years, until the ban on Christianity was finally lifted in 1873 under the Meiji government, which overthrew the Tokugawa rule in 1868.

One such Christian community in the Kyûshû region was Ikitsuki, a 6.4 square-mile island near Hirado Island off the western coast of Nagasaki in South Japan.[26] Ikitsuki was a territory of Hirado Fief ruled by the Ichibu and the Koteda families, dividing the territory in north and south. Since the arrival of Xavier, the Jesuit missionaries had been relatively active in this area. In 1553, Koteda Yasutsune (?-1582), the lord of southern Ikitsuki, and Ichibu Kageyu (?-1563), the lord of northern Ikitsuki, converted to Christianity, and under their protection and supervision, 800 of the 2,500 residents on this island converted by 1561.[27] However, after the Deportation of Pastor Act in 1587, Matsu'ura Shigenobu (1549-1614), lord of Hirado Fief in the mainland who had not been in favor of Christianity, began to persecute the Ikitsuki Christians. Koteda Yasuichi and Ichibu Masaharu, sons of previous Ikitsuki lords, led 800 of their people to escape to the Ômura Fief in Nagasaki in 1599,[28] which eventually resulted in their execution in 1657. After Ikitsuki lost leaders of both regions, the island fell into direct control of Matsu'ura, who continued to oppress the Christians. Despite those systematic persecutions, some Christians survived by disguising their faith.

In only one hundred years between 1549 and 1640, Christianity flourished in Japan under the Jesuits who linked their missionary activities with economic trade,

[26] See the map (Figure 3).
[27] Shigeo Nakazono, *Ikitsukijima no Kakure Kirishitan* (Kita Matsuura: Ikitsuki Museum, 2002), 3.
[28] Ibid., 7.

engaged in philanthropy, and as will be shown in Chapter Two, established a unique visual culture through religious objects, paintings, and prints. After the Deportation of Pastor Act in 1614, however, Jesuit missionary activities declined and were eventually followed by the ban on Christianity, affecting the expression, production, and interpretation of Christian art produced during the subsequent anti-Christian period.

Chapter Two
The Development of Christian Painting in Japan, ca. 1583-1873

During the Anti-Christian era (1640-1873), Japanese Christians underwent severe persecutions and, as a result, some disguised themselves as non-Christians to survive. Known as *kakure kirishitan*, these Hidden Christians lost not only their churches and priests but also material references to the Christian doctrine, all of which were destroyed by the government, leaving us with "a handful out of the tens of thousands of objects that once existed."[29] Due to the lack of material resources, they fused their recollected memories of the scripture with indigenous traditions, creating a unique expression of the Christian faith. Among those examples are the manuscript *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth* (*Tenchi hajimarino koto*), a reinterpretation of the Bible found in the western coast of Kyûshû, stone lanterns with reinterpreted inscriptions "Patri" ("father" in Latin) found throughout Japan (Figure 5), and religious paintings of the Ikitsuki Christians.[30] In Japan, the production of Christian paintings flourished at the Seminary of Painters established by the Jesuits in 1583, and this medium of religious expression continued in the hands of the Ikitsuki Christians even after the government ban on Christianity. The Ikitsuki Christians amalgamated Christian art with their own cultural aesthetics and unique symbolism to reflect their life. As I will discuss in more detail, they modified the execution and idiomatic expressions of their images to stay hidden and connected with

[29] Shin'ichi Tani and Tadashi Sugase, *Namban Art: A Loan Exhibition from Japanese Collections* (New York: International Exhibition Foundation, 1973), 14.
[30] For more details on the study of *Tenchi hajimarino koto* and the Christian stone lanterns, see Kôya Tagita, *Showa Jidai-no Senpuku Kirishitan* (Tokyo: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, 1954); Shigeo Matsuda, *Kirishitan Tôrô no Shinkô* (Tokyo: Kôbunsha, 1988). For English translation of *Tenchi Hajimarino koro*, see Christal Whelan, trans., *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth: The Sacred Book of Japan's Hidden Christians* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996).

the forbidden faith. This chapter charts the development of Christian paintings in Japan before and during the anti-Christian era, analyzing them in terms of their roles, production, subject matter, and stylistic approaches.

The Seminary of Paintings: Its Objective and European Influences

At the turn of the seventeenth century, Christian paintings and their production in Japan served both religious and practical roles for the Jesuits. When the Jesuits initially presented themselves to the Japanese officials, they offered gifts from Europe such as watches, music boxes, eyeglasses, and Christian paintings. Aesthetically and thematically unfamiliar to the Japanese, these paintings intrigued and fascinated contemporary Japanese artists[31] and piqued the people's interest in Christianity. Shimazu Takahisa (1514-1571), lord of Kagoshima, wished to obtain a painting of the Virgin Mary and Christ for himself, but he was not the only one who showed much admiration. The religious objects were presented to the local lords as official gifts and used as decoration inside the churches for the newly converted Christians to worship. These paintings became important instructional materials as well. Although the communication between the missionaries and the locals improved, the Jesuits acknowledged that translating highly sophisticated thoughts to the Japanese remained extremely difficult.[32] Just as the arts played a significant role for the illiterate during the Counter-Reformation during the sixteenth century in Europe, the Jesuits were aware of the importance of the visual arts in

[31] Traditional East Asian approach to paintings was different from that of the West. While Western art valued empirical observation as a means to represent visual reality, the Japanese paintings were non-ocular, traditionally emphasizing the inner spirit or meaning of an object, not its physical appearance. The Western art thus introduced the new application of perspective and realism to the Japanese artists.

[32] It was noted in San Martin…y…Ribadeneira's *Relaciones e Informaciones* (1973) that Fray Jerónimo de Jesús wrote, "This language is for young men only…" (1596), and Valignano also commented that "We still sound like children compared to them" in their letters to fellow missionaries in Europe. J.F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth-Century*, 178 and 222.

their activities and thus used paintings and engravings to initiate and educate people about Christianity.

The production of Christian paintings in Japan initially emerged as a result of redirecting the mission policy and activities in the nation during the1580s, and it eventually became a major studio workshop. During the 1570s, the missionary activities in Japan were supervised by the Portuguese Mission Superior Francisco Cabral (1529-1609), who did not believe in educating the Japanese. Cabral was convinced that the Japanese converts did not possess an adequate qualification to be admitted to the Society and that these "haughty, avaricious, unreliable, and insincere" individuals should remain as domestic assistants.[33] In fact, he expressed in his confidential letter to Father General Claudio Acquaviva (1543-1615) in 1598 that people outside Europe had little "talent to govern or penetrate deeply into things of religion."[34] Organtino Gnecchi (1530-1609) and Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), on the other hand, valued higher education among the indigenous and dedicated themselves to the establishment of the educational institutions. During their extended stays in Japan, Organtino and Valignano established several *seminario* and *collegio* between 1580 and 1583.[35] As a part of such education reform, Valignano founded the Seminary of Painters in 1583 and appointed an Italian Giovanni Niccolo (1560-1626) as its first director of the school. This seminary studio

[33] Trans. Josef Franz Schütte, S.J., *Valignano's Mission Principles for Japan, 2 Parts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980–85), 1:242–47. This quote was included in the article by Takao Abe, "What Determined the Content of Missionary Reports? The Jesuit Relations Compared with the Iberian Jesuit Accounts," in *French Colonial History* vol. 3 (2003): 73.
[34] Gauvin A. Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Mission in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 61.
[35] Organtino arrived to Japan in 1570 and stayed until his death in 1609, while Valignano made several visits between 1579-1603. They established *seminario* in Azuchi (1580), Arima (1580), Funai (1581), and Osaka (1583), and *collegio* in Azuchi (1580).

became an essential educational institution and also a production workshop, eventually growing into "the largest mission art academy ever founded in Asia."[36]

At the seminary studio, the newly converted Japanese Christian students were given the opportunity to paint as part of their religious exercise and for the purpose of reproduction workshop. As Evonne Levy points out in *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque*, their belief in educational merit derived from the Jesuits' unique philosophy that paintings could facilitate the spiritual conversion of the indigenous because the works were rendered by hand, which was considered to be "the intelligence of the body and as our oath-taking limb" that "will not betray one's inner belief."[37] Valignano also believed that "indigenous painters of devotional images would be capable of manufacturing images suitable for Japanese sensibilities."[38] Thus, training the natives to create religious imagery was considered an effective method of facilitating the non-Christians' conversion to Christianity.[39]

Due to the successful missionary activities, the Jesuits needed to request more works from Europe, as well as to summon Jesuit painters who could produce works on site. In the early missionary era, most of the Christian paintings were imports from Portugal, Portuguese territories in Asia, and Rome.[40] In 1584, the Jesuits had to ask Rome to ship 50,000 more paintings to Japan.[41] However, since Japan was geographically the farthest of all the missionary sites in Asia, most of the religious objects did not make it to the country. The Jesuits' request in 1584, for example, took nearly eight years, only to

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[36] Ibid., 66.
[37] Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 203.
[38] Bailey, 66.
[39] Levy, 202.
[40] Bailey, 60.
[41] Suzanne L.Stratton-Pruitt, "Nossa Senhora no Ultramar Portuguese," in *Crowning Glory: Images of the Virgin in the Arts of Portugal* (exhibition catalogue), (Newark: Newark Museum, 1997), 81.

find out that most of the items had been supplied to other locations in Asia before they could reach Japan. The Jesuits often hired Italian and Spanish painters for overseas missions, but in Asia, they began apprenticing newly converted Christians, which was rarely seen in any other orders.[42] The Seminary of Painters was thus suited to "produce art cheaply on site rather than shipping them from Europe."[43] Until the Ban of Christianity of 1612 and Deportation of Pastor Act in 1614 forced Niccolo and a few other students to flee to Macao, the Jesuits journeyed, transferred, and escaped throughout various cities in Kyûshû while producing works and training many young Japanese students.[44]

At the Seminary of Painters, Niccolo exposed the young Japanese artists not only to the new medium such as oil, but also to the European style and techniques which were distinctively different from those of the traditional Japanese painting. The stylistic difference between the two cultures lay in the attitude towards reality. While European Renaissance painters valued optical reality, traditional Japanese artists honored the essence of the objects. In *Christ Giving the Key to St. Peter* (Figure 6), for example, Pietro Perugino (1446-1524) incorporated linear and atmospheric perspectives to create a three-dimensional view of the buildings and to convey the distance between the foreground and background. He delivered an accurate optical reality with his attention to details in the buildings, creases of the dress, facial expression of the figures, and foreshortening.

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[42] Bailey, 51.
[43] Ibid., 66.
[44] He traveled to approximately ten cities such as Arima (1583), Urakami (1587), Nagasaki (after 1588), Hachirao, Katsusa (1589), Kawachinoura (1591), Arie (1596), Amakusa (1600), Arima (1601), and Nagasaki (until 1614). Ibid, 67.

Traditional Japanese paintings, on the other hand, consist of flat, stylized, and calligraphic qualities and depict idealized beauty as interpreted by the artists. *Amida Descending from Heaven to Welcome the Believer's Soul* (Figure 7) depicts Amida Buddha with highly stylized slit eyes, small rosebud lips, and the waves of his mustache, as well as his delicate fingers and repetitious patterns of the draperies. In addition, clear contour lines and the lack of foreshortening also give the image a very linear quality. Furthermore, Japanese artists utilized poetry and tales to capture and idealize the essence of the objects. In the Heian period (794-1192), many *yamato-e*, or the classical Japanese style paintings, depicted landscapes and story narratives inspired by the classic poems and literature such as the *Tale of Genji* (Figure 8). In *meisho-e*, or paintings of famous places, artists often used literature as an inspirational guide to represent the actual place (Figure 9). A sixteenth-century pair of six-fold screen paintings, *Plum Tree and Pine Tree with Mynah Birds* (Figure 10) by Kaihô Yûshô (1533-1615), expressed his inner character as well as his attempt to investigate the invisible meaning of nature through his expressive calligraphic strokes, soft washes, short thrusting lines, and throbbing speckles.

Diverging from the concept and techniques of the traditional Japanese paintings, seminary students learned how to reproduce Christian paintings. In *Holy Family with St. John the Baptist* (Figure 4), the anonymous Japanese artist applied shadow on the left side of the Virgin and the angel's contour, as well as the bottom contour of the Child Jesus, which enhances roundness of the flesh. As St. Joseph leans forward to see Child Jesus over the Virgin's shoulder, the strong shadow on his left shoulder gives a sense of distance between two figures. Their faces do not appear stylized but demonstrate their emotion through their soft gaze and gently curled lips in their adoration of the Child

Jesus. Although the actual European paintings used in the studio do not exist today, a few studio paintings by Japanese students reveal certain stylistic influences from Italian Renaissance, as Niccolo himself had been an apprentice and worked in Naples and Rome prior to his mission.[45] For example, Niccolo's *Madonna and Child* (Figure 11), which was one of the most popular subject matters copied by the seminary students,[46] displays a quintessential Italian Renaissance composition. It depicts the Virgin Mary praying with her palms put together in front of her chest. Her gaze gently falls down onto the Child Christ, who lies on his mother's lap with his eyes fixed directly to the viewers. In the distance appears a European landscape with a hill and buildings. Although one cannot conduct side-by-side comparison of the seminary paintings and the non-existing European originals, Bailey points out that the composition of the "full-length image of the seated Madonna adoring the child on her knee," its "classical stability and grace," and the rocky landscape resemble the works of the Italian Renaissance master, such as Raphael (1483-1520) and Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) (Figures 12 and 13).[47] In addition, half-figure images of the Virgin Mary by anonymous artists from Niccolo's studio (Figures 4 and 14) indicate another Renaissance influence. Painted on a small portable oratory with side panels inlaid with pearls, these works depict various subject matters, ranging from the Virgin Mary with Child Christ to the Holy Family. The arrangement of the half-figure image of the Virgin Mary and her tender gaze to the Child Jesus is reminiscent of Italian Renaissance art (Figure 15).

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[45] Ibid., 66.
[46] According to the letters and reports from the missionary priests, the paintings of the Virgin were some of the most frequently exported works from Europe, as Francisco Xavier brought with him paintings of the Annunciation and the Virgin Mary with the Child on her knee. John E. McCall, "Early Jesuit Art in the Far East. I. The Pioneers," *Artibus Asiae* 10, no. 2 (1947): 123.
[47] Bailey, 67.

Despite new European techniques and style, the Japanese studio artists dutifully duplicated works rather than demonstrating their own creative expression. It was due to the fact that copying images was an essential part of religious exercise and a characteristic of workshop production; it was also a common practice among the European and East Asian painters as well. In Europe, young apprentices polished their skills by copying the master works, and "copying masters" was an essential tradition in East Asian cultures for training as well as showing respect for predecessors.[48] Although the original European models no longer exist, the high level of their duplicating skill was evident. The Portuguese Jesuit father Luís Fróis (1532-1597) described the seminary activities and their works in his letter to Rome in 1596: "…The other three classes are for the purpose of other *dôjuku* [students] who occupy themselves in painting images in oils, in watercolours, and in ink, with such exactitude and beauty … or they are busy engraving plates with the burin, in which they draw and copy very well various prints which come from Europe."[49] Those copied paintings and prints were often highly praised by many other Jesuits, and the works from the studio not only met the demands in Japan but also other missionary sites such as China[50] and Latin America.[51] At the same time, the absence of originality was also evident in them. A Spanish Jesuit Pedro Gomez (1533–

[48] Xie He (fl. 490 A.D.), an artist and art critic, wrote in his influential *Guhua pinlu* (Criticism of Painting) that one of the six principles of painting was copying the works of antiquity. This theory was observed long afterward not only by Chinese artists but also by many Japanese artists. For example, *Gadô yôketsu* (Secret Keys to the Way of Painting, 1680), a painting treatise written by Kanô Yasunobu (1614-1685) for the workshop of the Kanô family, stresses copying the old masters as one of the methods. Lin Yu-T'ang, *The Chinese Theory of Art; Translations From the Masters of Chinese Art* (New York: Putnam Sons, 1967), 34-38; Karen M. Gerhart, "Talent, Training, and Power," in *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets: Talent and Training in Japanese Painting,* eds. Brenda G Jordan and Victoria Louise Weston (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 28.
[49] *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu,* Jap/Sin 52, f. 193a. Excerpt in Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 69.
[50] Mitsuru Sakamoto, "Kirishitan to Kaiga: Seiga Kôbô, Nihon Jesuit Gaha," in *Kirishitan*, 155.
[51] Bailey, 72.

1600), in his Annual Letter in 1594, pointed out that the Japanese painters were dedicated but limited themselves solely to producing copies of European paintings, leaving the works lacking in creativity.[52] In order to respond to the ever-increasing request, the artists were not required to express their interpretations in their works but to manufacture the copies of works with almost exact composition and execution, which was one of the prominent characteristics of the Japanese Christian paintings at missionary studios.

Ikitsuki Paintings: Their Circumstances, Styles, and Hybrid Characteristics

The production of the Christian paintings on Ikitsuki Island, which emerged during the anti-Christian era, was different from that of Seminary of Painters in terms of its circumstance, purpose, and style. The mission activities in Ikitsuki began around 1558, following the conversions of its rulers Koteda Yasutsune and Kageyu Ichibu in 1553. The Jesuits were granted to conduct sermons and masses at two of the major churches built in Ichibu and Yamada regions in the northern and southern parts of the Island. The religious paintings from Europe were accessible to the Ikitsuki residents before the government's anti-Christian persecutions became severe in the early seventeenth century. Friar Luis d'Almeida (1525-1583) reported in 1561 that one of the churches in Ikitsuki was big enough to accommodate six hundred people,[53] and another report from Jesuit lay brother Juan Fernandez (d. 1567) in 1563 confirms that there was a painting of the Virgin Mary in the Ikkaidô Chapel.[54] In addition to the Christian paintings at churches, there were also images kept at a communal level, which were maintained by the assigned members from

[52] McCall, 133.
[53] Shigeo Nakazono, *Ikitsukijima no Kakure Kirishitan*. ed. Tomio Torikai (Ikitsuki: Ikitsuki-cho Museum, 2002), 3.
[54] Yoshitomo Okamoto, *The Namban Art of Japan* (New York: Weatherhill, 1972), 16.

each district of the island.[55] The missionary activities then began to wane after 1599 when the heads of the two ruling families of Ikitsuki took exile to Nagasaki with 800 of their people. A series of government bans and persecutions in the early seventeenth century, such as the demolition of the church in Yamada in 1602,[56] the Ban of Christianity in 1612, Deportation of Pastor Act in 1614, and the ban on importation of Christian-related books in 1630, eventually left the humble farmers and fishermen with no material references.

Thus, the purpose of the painting production in Ikitsuki was to recreate the devotional items solely for private use - more specifically, for rituals. Often referred to as *nando gami*, or "closet god," those scroll paintings were not for public displays but were hung only on ceremonial occasions, but otherwise stored in a wooden box and hidden in *nando*, which in a typical Ikitsuki residence at the time was a small storage room ranging from 35 to 70 square feet with no windows.[57] There have been forty-two paintings found in Ikitsuki as of 2000,[58] some of which are now kept at the Ikitsuki Museum. The creators of those paintings were not trained artists, as the Seminary of Painters did not exist on the Ikitsuki Island. To create religious items that they could quietly express and camouflage their faith, they assembled collective memories, existing artistic styles, and cultural references. Though the works may not reveal technical refinement, they display the creators' original creativity rather than the direct institutional influences of European paintings.

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[55] Nakazono, "Ikitsukitô no Kakure Kirishitan," in *Kakure Kirishitan no Seiga,* 115.
[56] This chapel was demolished, and a Buddhist temple of the Shingon sect was built at a very site. Ibid., 116.
[57] Kôya Tagita, *Showa Jidai-no Senpuku Kirishitan*, 260.
[58] Nakazono, *Ikitsukijima no Kakure Kirishitan,* 35.

The Ikitsuki Christians had to establish styles that did not reveal their Christian faith. In order to keep those paintings from appearing conspicuously Christian, they fused Christian paintings with conventional Japanese aesthetics in their compositions, iconographies, and symbolisms, deceiving the eyes of outsiders. While their subject matter was Christian, various visual characteristics of Buddhism, Shinto, and other cultural references that were widely accepted in Japan were present in them. In effect, this visual ambiguity made the images relevant to hidden Christians to maintain their faith while camouflaging others. These bicultural aesthetic and cultural hybridity are particularly obvious in the works depicting the Virgin Mary and the Child Christ, St. John the Baptist, and the Ikitsuki martyrs.

Christian Figures in Japanese Aesthetic

It has been frequently noted that t*he Virgin Mary and the Child Christ* (Figure 16) was modeled on the Iberian iconography of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary fused with conventional Japanese aesthetics and Buddhist iconography. The painting depicts the Virgin Mary, with the Child Christ in her arms, standing on the crescent moon. This composition and the iconography of the Virgin on the moon are based on the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary produced in the Iberian countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as seen in the works of a Portuguese painter Bento Coelho Da Silveira (1630-1708) (Figure 17) and the Spanish artist Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1617-1682) (Figure 18). In Europe, the Virgin's immaculacy at birth and its visual iconography existed as early as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Figures 19 and 20), following the passage in the *Book of Revelation:*

> …And the great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried out in her birth pangs and in agony to be delivered…(12:1-2) [59]

During the time of the Great Exploration, the moon and its effect on tides linked the immaculate iconography with nautical culture, transforming the Virgin Mary as the guiding light or "the central tool of navigation."[60] Instead of the Italian-influenced seminary studio works, the Ikitsuki paintings resemble images from "the first period (1549-1583) of the missionary art," many of which were brought from Portugal and its territories in Asia .[61] A cast medal of the Immaculate Conception (Figure 21), brought by the Jesuits to Ikitsuki, demonstrates its Iberian influence and iconography.

Despite the iconographical similarities to Iberian paintings, the Ikitsuki Christians were still able to disguise their religious identity by imitating the conventional Japanese aesthetics and Buddhist iconographies. Although *The Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus* (Figure 16) contains a few Christian symbols such as the moon, her cross-shaped hairpin, and the color scheme of the white robe with red and blue cloak, the Ikitsuki Virgin still appears as a traditional Japanese beauty. She is depicted in her traditional *kimono* robe with *hikime-kagibana* (dashes for eyes, hooks for noses), fine brows, small rosebud lips, and a neatly knotted hairdo, conventions of female beauty found in a woman as painted by an Edo printmaker Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770) (Figure 22).

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[59] Excerpt from Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation: A Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 135-139.
[60] Marina Warner, *Alone in All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage Books 1983), 267.
[61] McCall, 123.

Christian Figures in Buddhist Iconography/Style

The painting is also reminiscent of the styles of Japanese and Chinese Buddhist art. The Japanese Buddhist paintings of the eleventh century incorporated a concept known as *mappô,* or "the latter day of the law." According to the Japanese monk Saichô (767-822), the year 1052 marked this last of the three Buddhist stages, in which individuals were no longer able to reach an enlightenment on their own effort for the following 10,000 years. Amida Buddha, or the Buddha of Infinite Light, was thus often portrayed in the style of *raigô*, descending from the clouds to guide the deceased into the heavenly pure land (Figure 7). Many centuries later, Amida was still the object of much devotion. It is apparent that *The Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus* (Figure 23) in Ikitsuki and Kannon Bodhisattva in *Descent of Amida Across the Mountains* (Figure 24) share similar facial features, hunched back, wrinkles around the neck, arms extended low-down, slightly bent knee, and coiled clouds on which the figure stands. Furthermore, the Ikitsuki Virgin appears to be descending like Amida, rather than ascending to the heaven as in the Iberian Virgin (Figure 18).[62] This Buddhist disguise was also enhanced by the Chinese Guanyin Bodhisattva figure (Figure 25). Associated with mercy, compassion, and fertility in Mahayana Buddhism, the Guanyin Bodhisattva holding an infant was specifically known as *Jibo Kannon* (Guanyin of Loving Mother) in Japan, and Ide Yôichirô points out that the Japanese Hidden Christians in fact used this imported

[62] The Virgin Mary by the Iberian masters typically looks up to the sky from which her body is bathed in soft light. She also appears above the cloud in the vast sky, revealing her sacred status as if "she belongs more to the mind of the Creator than to the earth." Maurice Vloberg "The Iconographic Types of the Virgin in Western Art," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 569.

Chinese Guanyin statue to worship as the Virgin Mary.[63] It was the perceptible iconographical and compositional affiliates that helped artists disguise these images and make them pass as conventional Japanese paintings.

Christian Figures and Japanese Cultural Symbolism

In the painting of *St. John the Baptist* (Figure 26), the Ikitsuki Christians not only camouflaged themselves but also exhibited remarkable bicultural hybridity by adapting a Japanese cultural symbolism in their unique visual interpretation of the biblical account of Christ's Baptism. The Baptism of Jesus often depicts John and Jesus in the Jordan River with angels and God, in the form of a dove, hovering over the sky (Figure 27). Depicted as a Japanese male figure with his topknot, *kimono*, and *tabi* socks, John in Ikitsuki's paintings also stands by the river in the presence of God in the form of a gold cross on a small bank of cloud. However, there are significantly unconventional characteristics about this Ikitsuki painting beside John's Japanese disguise, which are the omission of Jesus and inclusion of the sun, the moon on which John stands, and a camellia tree.

These are not random acts. Rather, the painting shows the Ikitsuki Christians' profound memory of the biblical narrative and expresses their sentiment about their lives in turmoil. Although it is possible to argue that the moon, on which John the Baptist stands, has a visual influence from the Iberian Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception, I argue that a close attention to the biblical narrative reveals another

[63] In 1856, one of the Hidden Christian communities in Nagasaki was captivated. After searching the house of those captivated, the local government office discovered some statues of Guanyin Bodhisattva. Ide, *"Kakure Kirishitan no Icon,"*58.

potential correlation of the moon and the sun with John the Baptist and Christ.[64] The New Testament describes the account of the baptism of Jesus:

> It was by him that life came into existence and that life was the light of mankind. The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out. There appeared a man by the name of John, with a message from God. He came to give testimony, to testify to the light, so that everyone might come to believe in it through him. He was not the light; he came to testify to the light. The real light, which sheds light upon everyone, was just coming into the world (John 1:4-9).[65]

From this passage, the sun, the real light, could symbolize Jesus while the moon, on which the sun sheds its light, may represent John the Baptist, who witnesses and testifies to the light.

A camellia tree, in contrast, symbolizes the life of the Ikitsuki Christians during the Anti-Christian era. While Tadashi Nakajô suggests in his research that the camellia tree in Ikitsuki symbolizes the executed Christians,[66] Eiko Yotsuyanagi's analysis of camellia in Japanese history, especially during the Edo period, presents another interpretation.[67] Camellia was praised for its beauty in various classical writing, such as *Kojiki* (The Record of Ancient Matters) (712) and *Manyôshû* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves). However, by the Muromachi period (1336-1573), the treatise of flower arrangement *Sendenshô* mentioned camellia as an ominous flower because of the way it drops its calyx at the end of its life, which had a symbolic similarity with a severed samurai head. Nakajô's interpretation is rooted in this symbolism. However, despite its sinister symbolism since the Middle Ages, Yotsuyanagi argues that the camellia during the Edo period was widely admired for its physical beauty and also as a symbol of

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[64] Nakajô points out in his book that it is possible to interpret that the sun represents Jesus Christ but does not provide further discussions. Nakajô, *88*.
[65] Excerpt from Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation: A Commentary*, 135-139.
[66] Nakajô, 94.
[67] For more details, see Eiko Yotsuyanagi, *Tsubaki to Nihonjin: Edo Jidai o Chûshin to Shita Sono Bi'ishiki* (Kanazawa: Noto Publication, 2000).

fortitude evoked by its botanical characteristics. A camellia tree is capable of maintaining its evergreen foliage throughout the year and producing flowers that radiate with vivid red color during the wintry season. Yotsuyanagi points out that this perseverance for survival and subversion against harsh climate give the camellia a sense of vitality. Therefore, Ikitsuki's *St. John the Baptist* illustrates their ability to interpret and visualize the biblical accounts, while incorporating their own struggles and determination in the time of religious persecution.

Ikitsuki's Original Christian Figures in Buddhist/Shinto Iconography

Unlike *the Virgin Mary and Child Christ* or *the St. John the Baptist* that are conventional Christian themes with visual hybrids of Europe and Japan, the paintings of the Ikitsuki martyrs are based on their own experience on the island and perhaps show the least European visual references. Since the end of the sixteenth century, Ikitsuki Christians, along with many others throughout the nation, suffered a series of persecutions. The brutality is evident in one of the accounts in 1620s, which took the lives of the three sons of Joan Sakamoto after head bagging, stuffing them in a straw bag, and tossing them into the ocean. Their mother and the youngest brother were then executed after witnessing the death of the three sons.[68] The paintings of the martyrs, thus, represent their own lives, as well as consecrating those fallen Christians.

Danjikusama, which can be interpreted as a combination of *danjiku* (bamboo grove) and *sama,* (honorific suffix used to show great respect), is a name used to describe the Christians Yaichibei, his wife Maria, and their son Joan. The family was in their exile in the bamboo grove but eventually captured when the officials caught the little Joan

[68] Kentarô Miyazaki, *Kakure Kirishitan no Shinkô Sekai* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1996), 18.

playing out by the shore. While Figure 28 depicts the family having a meal in the bamboo grove, Figure 29 portrays them as holy figures, applying Buddhist and Shinto compositions and iconographies. Although the pictorial hierarchy of the primal figure in the upper position with its attendees on each side is a common composition seen in Christian paintings, such as *the Holy Trinity* (Figure 30), its composition, their cross-legged sitting lotus position, as well as their garments and facial features, are reminiscent of Buddhist paintings (Figures 31) and sculptures. Maria's plump cheeks, her hairstyle, and garment in this painting particularly evoke a Buddhist-influenced wood statue of a seated female Shinto goddess from the Heian period (794-1185) (Figure 31).

Another painting of martyrs, a pair of *Chaya-no-Jisan Basan* (Figure 33) appears to be camouflaged as Shinto deities. It depicts an elderly man and woman (*jisan* and *basan*) from Ichibu region whose Christian identity was exposed by an officer disguised as a seller of the teahouse (*chaya*). An elderly couple was portrayed simply standing in their Japanese dress with a cross on their head. Shinto, which primarily centers around worshipping and expressing awe for nature, also extends its devotion to ancestors and even historic figures for their distinctions. The paintings and sculptures of Shinto deities are rendered as Buddhist deities as in Figure 32, but they can also represented as more secular figures, such as a hunter in *Kariba myôjin* (Figure 34) or a young male attendant (Figure 35).[69] Thus, *Chaya no Jisan Basan* is disguised as local Shinto deities. This may cause the confusion that they were actually perceived as Shinto deities. However, while the historical figures, such as Tokugawa Ieyasu, were deified (Figure 36) "in respect of

[69] Victor Harris, *Shinto: The Sacred Art of Ancient Japan* (London: British Museum, 2001), 32.

their having an extraordinary talent or having done great deal for the nation,"[70] *Chaya no Jisan Basan* exhibits a sense of sorrow and sympathy. Thus, it is plausible to link the painting much closer to the Christian martyrs.

Thus, the styles and iconographies of the paintings by the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians diverged from the European prototypes, which helped them conceal their Christian identity. In addition, their living struggle formed distinctive subject matter of their own martyrs, which is exclusive to their community. The new iconographies and symbolisms exhibit their creative appropriation of the local beliefs and aesthetics while retaining some of the Christian traditions. The Ikitsuki Christians fused the norm in the larger Christian community and symbols of their own faith and tragedy in a very innovative manner. Their paintings mimic what the conventional Japanese paintings should look like to outsiders, while deceiving them with ambiguity at the same time. This visual ambiguity makes the Ikitsuki paintings seem naïve to many viewers and even devoid of merit to qualify as Christian art today. However, it is also this visual hybridity that helped them survive and became a tool to subvert the government control, as well as to express their surrender to Christian faith.

[70] This applies to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who became Toyokuni Daimyôjin (Great Illuminating Deity) at Toyokuni Shrine, and the Shôgun Tokugawa Ieyasu, who was deified as Tôshô Daigongen (Great Illuminating Deity of the East) at Nikkô Tôshôgû. Ibid., 16-17.

Chapter Three
Surrender or Subversion? The Elements of Hybridity in Ikitsuki Christian Paintings

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage…. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human nature.
>
> Jacques Lacan[71]

> The Second prelude regards the mental re-creation of the place, which consists of an imaginary viewing, as if the entire extension of the whole earth, inhabited by so many different people, were offered to the eyes. Then, the vision should focus on a specific part of the world, on the little house of the Blessed Virgin in Nazareth, in the province of Galilee."
>
> Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercise* [72]

During the anti-Christian era from the late sixteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, the Ikitsuki Christians chose not to renounce their faith but to maintain it while making every effort to conceal it. As discussed in Chapter Two, the paintings of the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians diverged from the European style emulated by the Seminary of Painters, adopting instead the Japanese-European hybrid style. However, the element of hybridity in the Ikitsuki paintings has been misunderstood and underappreciated. The formal analysis of the hybridity tends to emphasize the visual dissimilarities from the European-influenced seminary works. A common Eurocentric response to the Ikitsuki paintings that lost the conventional Christian appearance has been to assume that those images lacked religious significance and authentic Christian doctrine, and to put them in the category of folk art. Because the paintings made after the disappearance of the

[71] Jacques Lacan as quoted by Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85.
[72] Excerpt from the First Meditation of the First Day in the Second Week of *The Spiritual Exercise*. Pierre Wolff, *The Spiritual Exercise of Saint Ignatius* (Liguori, Mo: Triumph, 1997), 31.

Seminary of Painters depicted both European figures in Japanese styles and indigenous Japanese figures, Yôichirô Ide has raised a question about whether "these are [Christian] art based on proper Christian doctrines or ethnographic art [by people who had] forgotten their Christian faith."[73] With such a speculation, he expressed that "relics" of the Hidden Christians symbolized the defeat of the Catholic Church's Mission in Japan.[74] Kôya Tagita also argues that the Hidden Christians' spirituality was nurtured by local folk tradition, and icons were secretly worshipped in closets and bedrooms, where they developed an aura of mystery. He stresses that their spiritual potency remained, but the original cultural context was lost.[75] These scholars thus posit hybridity as a submissive act that explains the lack of "Christian appearances" in hidden Christian icons, implying the Ikitsuki Christians surrendered to the authoritative oppression and abandoned Catholic traditions. In order to subvert the hitherto dominant argument, the study of the Ikitsuki paintings has to shift from the formal analysis of hybridity to the investigation of the contextual history, which demonstrates that the hybridity in Ikitsuki paintings in fact symbolizes the local residents' resistance and continuation of the visual culture sponsored by the Jesuits.

Postcolonial Theory in the Analysis of Hybridity

The hybridity in the Ikitsuki Christian paintings sheds light on the active imitations of "Japanese-ness" as a means of deception, which I contend is an act of mimicry. It is an act of subversion, not obedience. In order to discuss the effect of

[73] My translation from the original quote, "果たしてこれはキリスト教の教理を正式にふまえた芸術なのか、それともすでにキリスト教である事も忘れてしまった民俗信仰の芸術なのか、という問題が未だに私は解決できずにいる。" Ide, "Kakure Kirishitan no Icon," 57.
[74] "…日本におけるキリスト教の挫折を思う時、隠れキリシタンの遺品は、パアデレたち教会側の敗北のシンボルであり…" Ibid., 58.
[75] Kôya Tagita, 278.

mimicry between those who mimic and those who are being mimicked, it is pertinent to use Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, which argues about an ambivalent effect found in the British evangelization of the India during the colonial period. When the British authority imposed its ideology upon the indigenous people, the colonized often imitated the culture of the colonizers to comply with and to obtain equal privilege of authority. According to Bhabha, mimicry, though it may be seen as an act of obedience or compliance, is;

> …the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Others as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledge and disciplinary powers.[76]

In the case with Colonial Latin America, for example, the Iberian conquerors and the missionaries were actively engaged in evangelizing the indigenous population by imposing Christian education and artistic trainings.[77] However, while the Church demanded and "dictated certain forms and styles," "the indigenous culture of the regions permeated Christian images," turning some of the Christian paintings into a *trompe-l'œi* that contained a sign of subversion.[78] One example is *the Virgin of Quito* (Figure 37), a popular image of the winged Virgin Mary of Immaculate Conception in Ecuador. It shows the winged Virgin, who raises her arms up towards the heaven while treading on a serpent under her feet. In the Iberian tradition, the Virgin treading on a serpent implies

[76] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.
[77] By the early seventeenth century, the Indians were receiving artistic trainings at the workshop established by the Franciscan friar Juan de Torquemada (1388-1468) and Pedro de Gante (d. 1572). Marjorie Trusted, *The Arts of Spain, Iberia, and Latin America 1450-1700* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 171.
[78] Ibid., 172.

her triumph over evil, which is disguised in the form of a serpent.[79] *The Virgin of Quito*, on the other hand, does not have the same symbolism. Marjorie Trusted points out that among the indigenous, the serpent, or *amaru,* was referred to as the last Inca emperor Atahualpa (1503-1533) escaping the Spanish rule that was symbolized in the statue of the Virgin Mary.[80]

Although the Ikitsuki Christians did not share the same historical context as Latin America, their intent and outcome are similar. Japan was never colonized by Portugal, and the Jesuits were well adapted among the Japanese. The Ikitsuki Christians were not afraid of the foreign control but of domestic authority that imposed the ban on their religious freedom. What the Ikitsuki Christians shared with the indigenous people of colonized Latin America was the sense of resistance against the authoritative control that was embodied in the act of mimicry. The Ikitsuki Christians mimicked the images of Guanyin or Shinto deities as if they were complying with the government's anti-Christian law, while worshipping them as the Virgin Mary and Ikitsuki martyrs. They did not produce those paintings as Buddhist or Shinto images, and the inclusion of the Ikitsuki Christians' symbolisms such as the cross and camellia was not accidental or random but

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[79] It is referenced in the Genesis:

> Because you have done this
> Cursed are you among all animals,
> And among all beasts of the field;
> On your belly shall you crawl,
> Dust shall you eat,
> All the days of your life.
> I will put enmity between you and the woman,
> Between your seed and her seed;
> He shall crush your head,
> And you shall lie in wait for his heel
> Genesis 3:15

The Vulgate, a Latin Bible translated from the original Hebrew text by Saint Jerome (347-420), mistranslated the gender and thus renders the same passage: "*She* will crush your head, and you will lie in wait for *her* heel." Sarah Jane Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," in Sarah Jane Boss, ed. *Mary: The Complete Resource* (London: Continuum, 2007), 224.

[80] Trusted, 174.

intentional. They appear partially Japanese, but not completely. Jacques Lacan argues that the act of mimicry does not harmonize "with the background, but against a mottled background."[81] Such implementation of "partial presence" or the quality of "almost the same, but not quite" is repeated in various subject matters in Ikitsuki paintings. It subtly yet consistently emphasizes that what the paintings were really representing is in fact different from what they were mimicking. In the postcolonial theory, this "*partial presence,* which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority."[82] In the same manner, the hybridity seen in Ikitsuki's paintings is an indirect and subtle yet powerful testament to their resistance to the government.

Hybridity in the Context of the Jesuit Principles

In addition, the hybridity in Ikitsuki Paintings needs to be examined in the context of the Jesuits' missionary stance and religious ideology. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Ikitsuki Christians' paintings incorporate active imagination and creativity that resulted in an ambiguous expression not seen in European iconographies. However, the formal similarity or dissimilarity cannot itself be the only gauge to define faith as was the case with *the Virgin of Quito.* By analyzing the Jesuits' *Constituitions* (1558), the humanism brought by the Italian missionaries, and *The Spiritual Exercises*, it becomes evident that Ikitsuki's visual innovation in fact represents the Jesuits tradition.

Since the early times of their foundation, the Jesuits took a relatively lenient stance on adapting and blending in with other cultures. This idea was shared by Ignatius Loyola and his confidant Jerónimo Nadal (1507-1580) in their *Constituitions*, so that the

[81] See the opening quote of this chapter and note 71.
[82] Bhabha, 88.

missionaries should be allowed to freely dress and adapt to a local culture in order to easily adjust themselves to and gain acceptance by the new people.[83] This approach was carried out by other Jesuit members, such as Francisco Xavier, Alessandro Valignano, and Organtino Gnecchi. During his stay in Japan, Valignano insisted that other members show high respect for Japanese culture, such as clothing, food, or habits of bathing, while Organtino reported in his letter in 1589:

> Any Jesuit who comes to Japan and does not foster a love for his bride of wondrous beauty, not caring to learn her language immediately, not conforming to her ways, deserves to be packed back to Europe as an inept and unprofitable worker in the Lord's vineyard.[84]

Although Ignatius pointed out that the external forms could help foster the "Jesuitness," he was also convinced that the basis of the religious unity was set on spiritual affiliation. He expressed in the *Constituitions* that "chief bond to cement the union of the members amongst themselves and with their superiors, is on both sides, the love of God the father."[85] This concept could suggest that it is not an issue whether John the Baptist looks like a Japanese male figure, or the Virgin Mary is dressed in a Japanese *kimono.* Their religious tie with God may not stem from their appearance but well resides within their faith.

It is also evident that the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians' hybrid and creative expressions also reflect the Jesuit's *Spiritual Exercises* (1523), a set of meditation exercises composed by Ignatius Loyola. Divided into four sections for a four-week spiritual retreat, it guides people, through active meditation, to pray and reach a deeper understanding of the religion. In each section, Loyola encourages individuals to be first

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[83] Andrew C. Ross, "Alessandro Valignano and Culture in the East," in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Science, and the Arts, 1540-1773,* John W. O'Malley et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 346.
[84] The passage as quoted by Ross, Ibid., 344.
[85] *Constituitions*, Part VIII, Chapter I, specifically 671-678. The passage is excerpted from Levy, 203.

involved in an active imagination of the spiritual world in their minds. Whether contemplating on *the Kingdom of Jesus Christ* or *the Last Supper*, the practitioner is engaged in the mental re-creation of the scene. It does not ask one to recall what the scene looks like but instead to visualize and ultimately to encounter the setting through one's perception, which varies depending upon his or her own mental and spiritual connection with God. Thus the individuals have total freedom as:

> we make in ourself our own Holy Land with one we see…. There we meet Jesus who is our own, His God has become our own, the Spirit we house. …The evangelists and Paul described the same Christ, but through their own perception. Painters. Sculptors, and other artists have done the same.[86]

As the Jesuits believed that the "artistic forms were invested with one's system of belief,"[87] the *Spiritual Exercises* became very influential to many artists. For example, Howard Hibbard points out that the several frescoes in the Jesuit Church of the Gesù in Rome have direct inspirations from certain sections of the *Spiritual Exercises*.[88] This phenomenon also occurred in New Spain, such as *Virgin of Sorrows* (Figure 38) painted by Juan Correa (1646-1716). According to Clara Bargellini, this 1678 painting incorporates sentiment of the biblical account and of the contemporary event, such as the Indian rebellion against New Mexico in 1680 and the food riot in Mexico City in 1692. Behind the Virgin are the dreary landscape and architecture, which symbolize the partially destroyed royal palace.[89] The artist superimposed the historical event in the religious context, as if the Virgin is weeping for the political crisis of New Mexico.

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[86] Wolff, Appendix, 223
[87] Levy, 203.
[88] Howard Hibbard, "Ut picturae sermones: The First Painted Decoration of the Gesù," in *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution,* ed. Rudolf Wittkower and Irma B. Jaffe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 29-49.
[89] Clara Bargellini, "Jesuit Devotions and *Retablos* in New Spain," in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Science, and the Arts, 1540-1773, 690-691.*

In Japan, the text of *The Spiritual Exercises* was available to the missionary priests, and it was also translated into Japanese for local students. With the approval of Francisco Pasio (1554-1612), the translated *Supiritsuaru Shugyô* became available in February 1607. Just as in *The Spiritual Exercises,* it stresses the merit of the meditation and visualization based upon the explicit understanding of the Bible.[90] For example, one of the first steps for its meditation is to memorize whatever the assigned scene, leading to visualize as if one sees it in front of the eyes. It also emphasizes the importance to understand the Biblical account of Christ's life through the writings of the Evangelists.[91] Thus, Ikitsuki's *St. John the Baptist* implements the method and creativity discussed in *the Supiritsuaru Shugyô.* As I argued in Chapter Two, the work appears to be a direct visualization of the biblical writing of John. In addition, just as in the painting by Juan Correa, it also superimposes their biblical account with the historical context and sentiment symbolized in the camellia. Though they may appear ambiguous today, these expressions reflect the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians' strong reactions of sorrow and yearning for the spiritual guidance during one of the darkest periods in Japanese religious history.

Are those paintings still to be considered as folk art or perceived as an expression of their surrender? If interpreted as an example of mimicry, the hybridity in the Ikitsuki

[90] "…されば面々の信心によって異なる観念の勤め様を求め得られるべけれども…" Arimichi Ebizawa, ed., *Supiritsuaru Shugyô* (Tokyo: Kyôbunkan, 1994), 97.
[91] "…第一の観念の仕様といふは、ごパッションの在り様の面をそのままに観ずることなり。それと云ふは、観ずべきと思ふ理の句面をよく知りて確かに覚え、さてその時の在り（様）を今目前に見るが如く（に）観ずることなり…この観念の風体を勤むるためには、ごパツツヨンの在り様について四人のエワンゼリシタス書き給ふことと、数多の信者の書かれたる書を折々読み、または談義に聴聞せしことをも修し習ふべきものなり。いづれもこれらの理をよく覚え持ちて、正しく今目前に見るが如くに思ひ出し、幾度も繰り返し観ずるを似て…" Ibid., 97-99.

images reflects the true intention of the icons. In addition, the Ikitsuki's paintings demonstrate the Jesuits' emphasis on "adaptation to local circumstance" as emphasized in both the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constituitions*.[92] The Jesuits' flexible attitude towards adaptation to other cultures, belief in religious unity through the universal devotion to God, and tolerance to the freedom of visual expression could no longer make the formal resemblance the only reference to measure the religious authenticity or significance of an icon. The hybridity in Ikitsuki's works no longer symbolized the surrender but testified to the Hidden Christians' resistance to and subversion of the government control, while placing their innovative expression within the realm of the Jesuit tradition.

[92] Ross, 348.

Conclusion
Hybridity: The Reflection of Reality

The icons made by the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians do not resemble the Christian paintings originally produced by the Seminary of Painters. Subtle Christian symbols fused with conspicuously Japanese appearance camouflaged their faith, resistance, and unyielding devotion during the anti-Christian era. Given the lack of historical documents on those paintings, and the well-known tragedy of the Japanese Christians, one could easily interpret the Ikitsuki paintings as symbols of defeat. In order to dispel such misconceptions, this thesis has revealed the complexity of the Ikitsuki paintings through theoretical and contextual analyses of their hybridity.

The visual dissimilarities between the studio paintings of the missionary period and the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians are remarkable and, inevitably, reflect the unusual circumstances in which they were produced. The Seminary of Painters in Japan, which became one of the largest Jesuit art studios in Asia, met the needs of the rapid Christian conversions in Japan at the turn of the seventeenth century. A number of paintings were "copied" from European works to accommodate the growing needs for religious instructions, church decorations, and private devotions. As missionary activities and studio workshop increased, so did the government suspicion of Christianity, which eventually caused the official Christian ban by 1640. Ironically, the government used the images produced in the Seminary of Painters to detect Christians. Those suspected to be Christians were required to tread on the icon, which became known as *fumie* or "treading pictures."[93] An "authentic" Christian iconography, hence, became the symbol of tragedy

[93] Bailey, 81.

as the inspection of Christian using *fumie* continued until the US-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed in 1858.[94]

The paintings of the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians reflected their predicament during the anti-Christian period. While some Christian communities vanished (described as *kuzure,* or crumbled) or renounced their faith (described as *korobi*, or tumbled) through a series of interrogations and executions, the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians "chose" to carry their faith and even produced tangible religious objects. Indeed, their paintings reflect their devotion. Though often thought simply as the result of inaccessibility to material resources, they *intentionally* diverged from the conventional Christian images and combined Christian and Japanese visual traditions. The intention for such amalgamation was to resist the government and appropriate their faith and its expressions under the given circumstances.

In this thesis, I applied postcolonial theory to the Hidden Christian icons to shed light on the element of resistance and subversion in them. It is apparent that the Ikitsuki paintings appropriated figures, iconographies, and compositions of various Japanese, Buddhist, and Shinto images. *The Virgin Mary and the Child Christ* looks like Guanyin Bodhisattva holding a baby, and the martyrs of Ikitsuki appear in the iconographical and compositional manners similar to *Buddha Triad* or Shinto deities. All these were calculated acts of mimicry that were meant to "deceive" outsiders. According to leading theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Homi Bhabha, mimicry does not completely represent what is being mimicked, and through such "partial resemblance" the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians fooled the government and showed their resistance.

[94] In the Article 8, the American Consul General Townsend Harris (1804-1878) discussed religious freedom of American visitors but also requested the abolition of the *fumie* practice. Yoshiko Ôta, "Kaikoku to Kirisutokyô," in *Kirishitan*, 279.

In addition, the hybridity of the Ikitsuki paintings reveals strong Christian characteristics in the context of the Jesuit tradition. Although some scholars find it troublesome to relate these unorthodox images to Christianity, the Jesuits, in theory, did not impose any predetermined forms of expression but encouraged adaptability and creativity. Ignatius Loyola in the *Constituitions* assured a spiritual tie between the members through their faith, not necessarily through external forms. The Jesuit missionary priests in Japan, such as Alessandro Valignano, constantly advocated cultural adaptations.[95] But above all, it was the Jesuit's *Spiritual Exercises* that allowed an active imagination and interpretation of the spiritual realm based on their own life circumstances. Therefore, the Ikitsuki Christians adapted a folk symbol of camellia and reinterpreted *St. John the Baptist* as a Japanese man. They did not depict their images as conventionally Christian so they could safely practice their faith during the anti-Christian era.

Religious images can be reinterpreted, transformed, and re-associated with various historical or cultural conditions over time. Once thought of as symbols of defeat, the paintings of the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians reveal their subversion of the government and devotion to the Christian faith within the context of their reality. It is also a symbol of their solidarity and survival. Even after the Christian ban was lifted, the Ikitsuki Hidden Christians did not reunite themselves to the Catholic Church. They chose to stay within the community that they protected over centuries. Today, the community has been shrinking and rapidly losing its rituals and ceremonies. Researchers are now focusing on

[95] This phenomenon was rather unique in Japan and did not occur in other places, such as Latin America. According to Andrew C. Ross, it was mainly due to the differences in the approach between the Italian and the Iberian Jesuits. While Organtino Gnecchi, Alessandro Valignano, and Giovanni Niccolo, the three major figures contributed the Jesuit education reform in Japan, were Italians who brought Catholic humanism, Valignano was concerned with some Iberian priests trained in *conquistador* spirit. Ross, 345.

preserving these intangible forms of traditions, which in turn delays the studies on tangible objects such as paintings. The significance of the Ikitsuki paintings, however, cannot be ignored. This thesis offers a new approach to examine the Ikitsuki paintings and encourages other scholars to continue in similar avenues of exploration.

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Figure 1

Figure 2

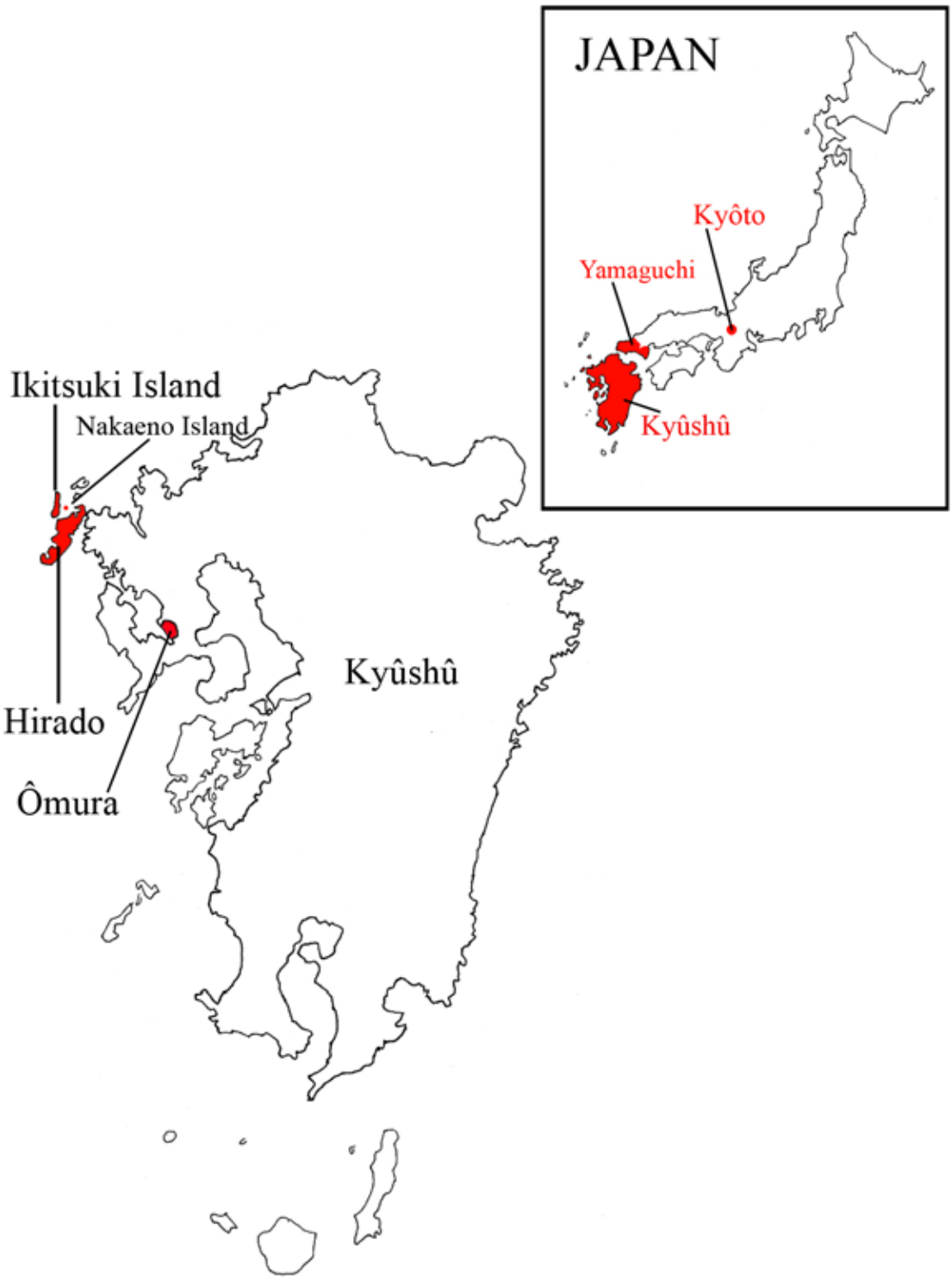
JAPAN
Kyôto
Yamaguchi
Kyûshû
Ikitsuki Island
Nakaeno Island
Kyûshû
Hirado
Ômura

Figure 3

Figure 4

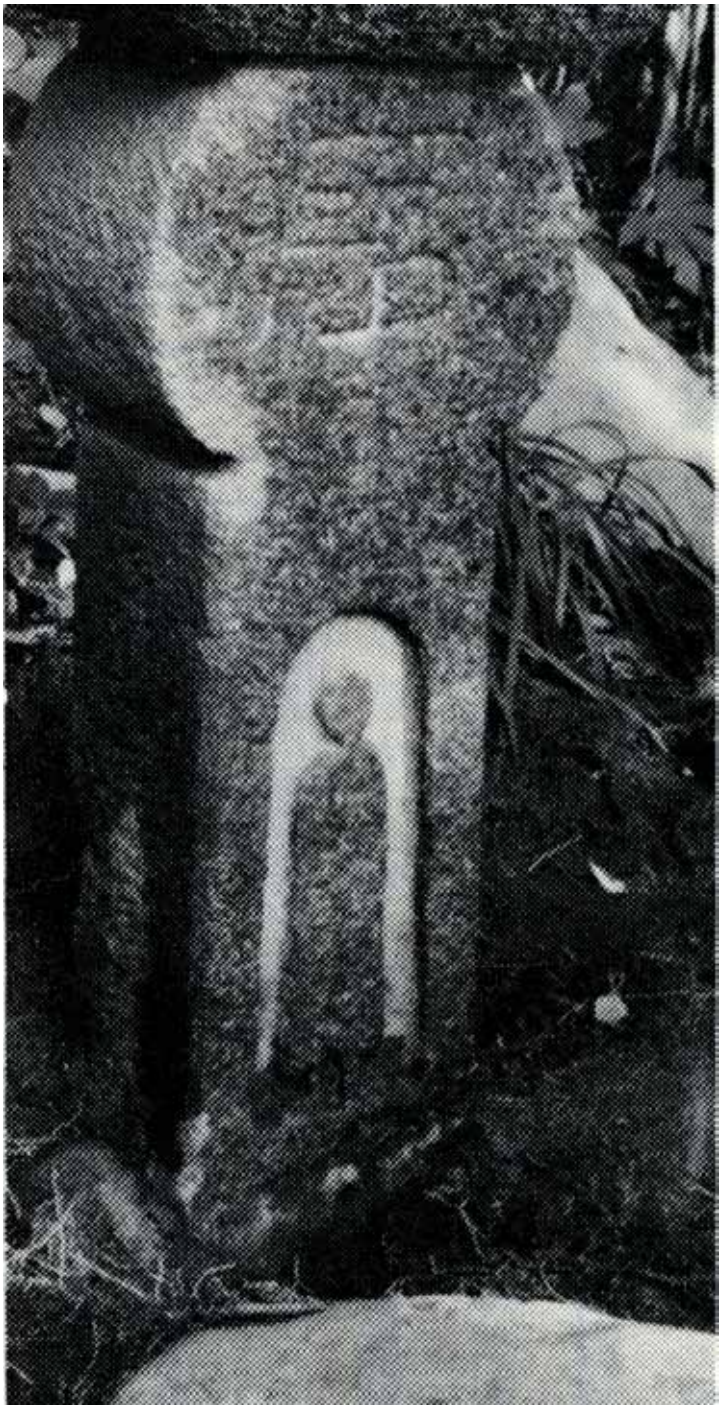

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

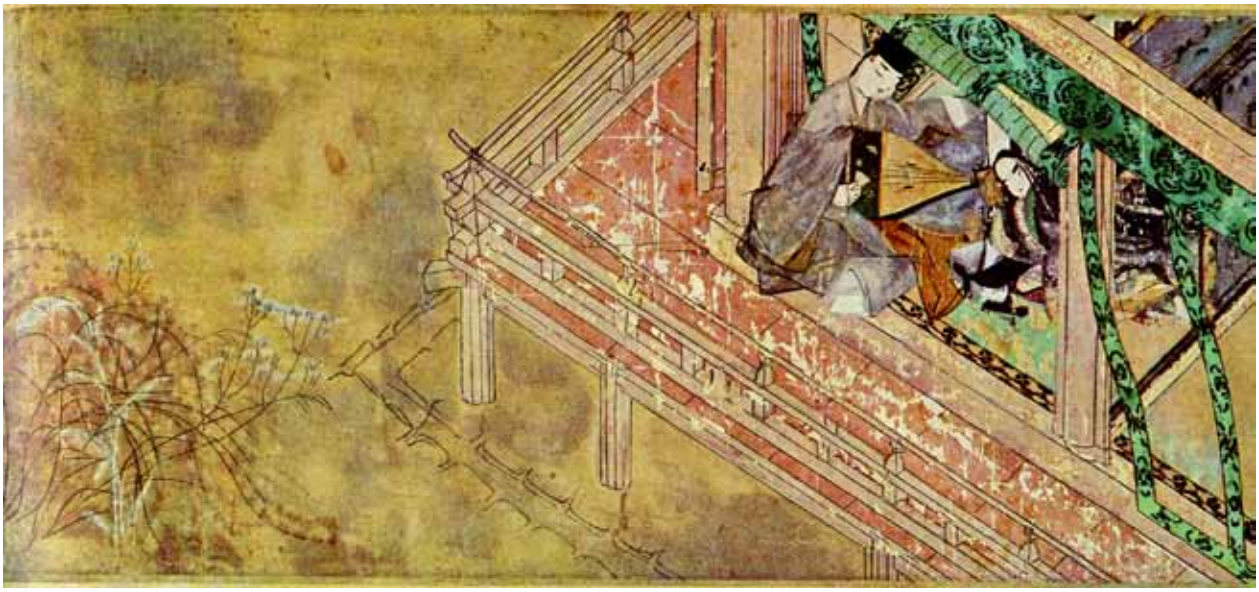

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

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Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 18

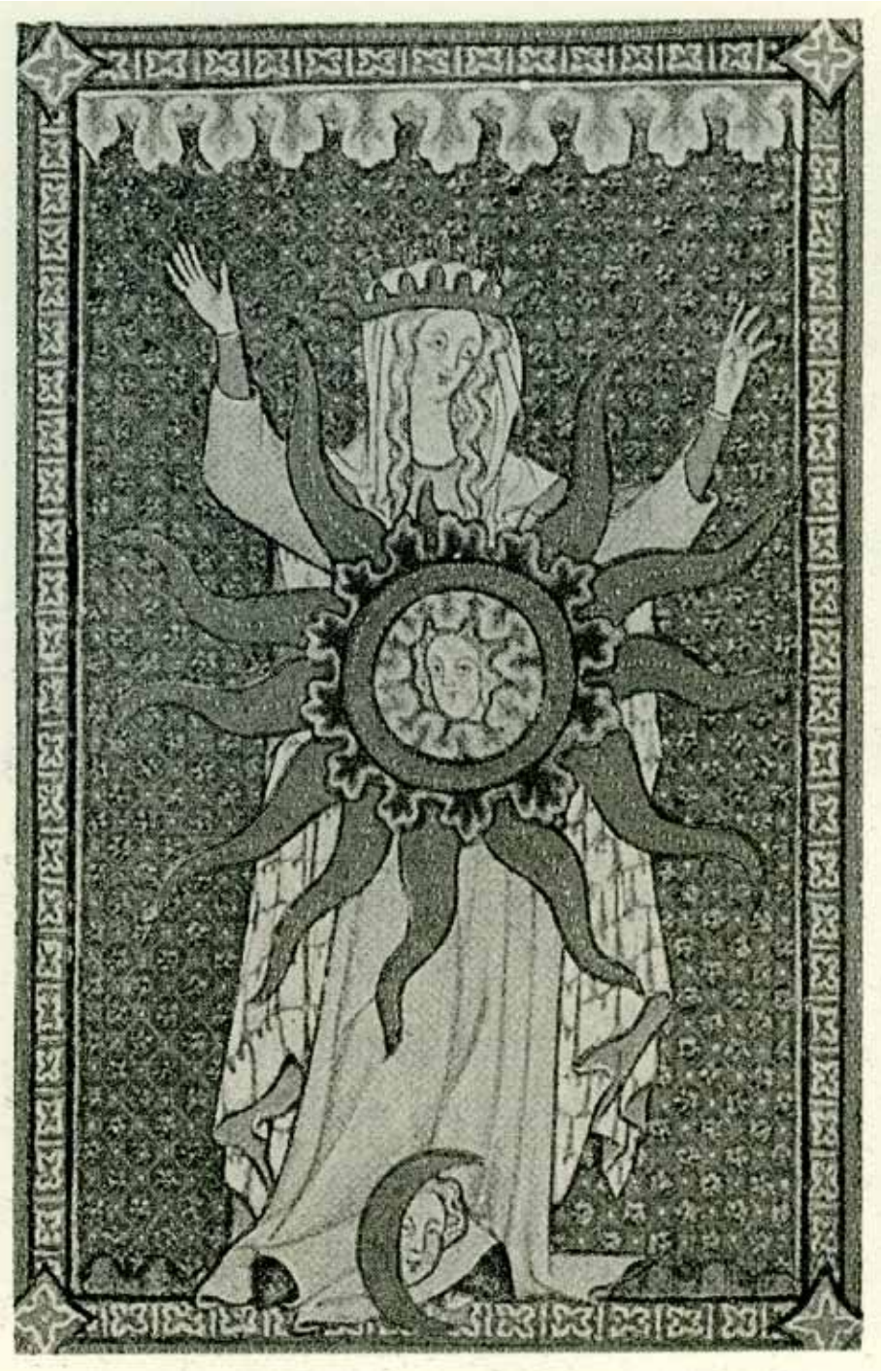

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 24

Figure 25

Figure 26

Figure 27

Figure 28

Figure 29

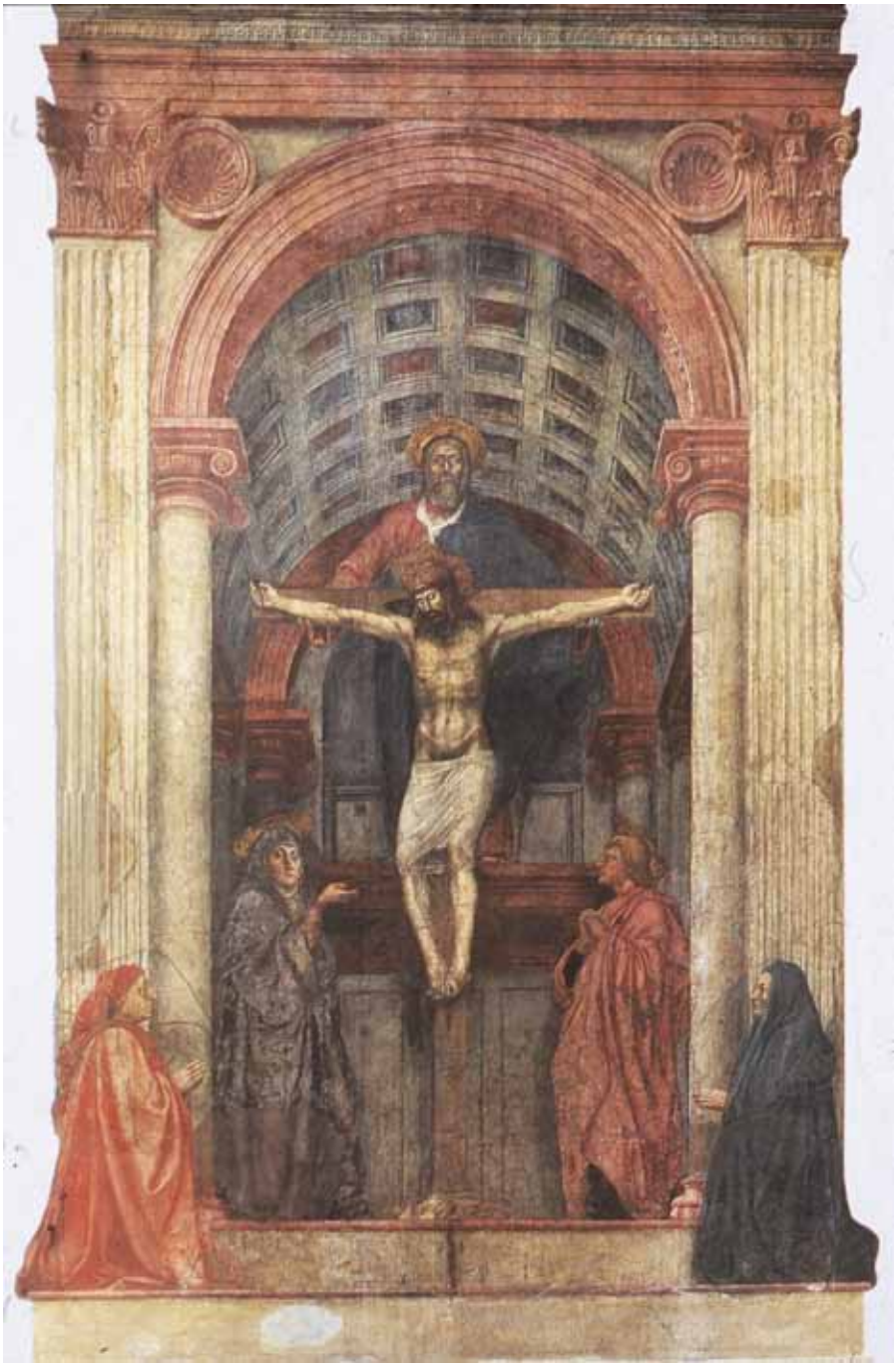

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

Figure 34

Figure 35

Figure 36

Figure 37

Figure 38