A CHAMELEONIC ICON: QUESTIONING THE UNDERGROUND CHRISTIAN

IDENTITY OF AN EDO-PERIOD AMIDA SCULPTURE IN THE NYOIRIN

KANNON-DŌ, KAWAGUCHI CITY

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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In 1956, a statuette of a female deity and crucifix were discovered inside of a seventeenth-century Amida Buddha statue enshrined in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, Kawaguchi City, Saitama Prefecture, Japan ("Kawaguchi Amida"). This thesis problematizes the methodology currently employed in the study of Japanese Christian-related objects. Thus far, research on the Kawaguchi Amida has considered it exclusively as a rare Christian artifact, connecting it to a local woman who escaped the 1623 martyrdom in Edo. No studies have yet focused on its role within a Buddhist context. This thesis first of all identifies the female statuette—presently attributed as a "Maria Kannon"—as Kishimojin. It then examines the nested configuration of the Kawaguchi Amida, including the votive shrine that contained it and the caches found inside, through preceding Japanese Buddhist sculptural practices, providing a more nuanced analysis of its identities as a variegated Underground Christian and Buddhist statue.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1956, a hall caretaker of the Buddhist Nyoirin Kannon Hall (Nyoirin Kannon-dō, 如意輪観音堂) in Shiba-mura, Kawaguchi-shi of Saitama Prefecture made a remarkable discovery inside a votive shrine (*zushi*, 厨子) (Figure 1.1). After removing the head of a seventeenth-century statue of Amida Nyorai (阿弥陀如来, S: Amitābha), which neatly plugs the entrance of a hollowed-out, rectangular cavity inside its torso, a crucifix and a figurine of a maternal deity cradling an infant were revealed (Figures 1.2 through 1.5). Nothing quite as unusual as the crucifix had been discovered inside of this quiet neighborhood Buddhist hall before.

A report published by the Kawaguchi-shi Department of Social Education and other local historians connected the statue to the so-called "Underground Christians" (*senpuku kirishitan*, 潜伏キリシタン), a population of Christians who clandestinely practiced their illegal faith during the Edo period (1603-1868).[1] The figurine of the female deity discovered inside the Amida icon was named as an example of what are popularly known as "Maria Kannon," (マリア観音) statues of the bodhisattva Kannon (観音, S: Avalokiteśvara) incorporated into Underground Christian practice for Marian worship in western Japan.[2] Saitama Prefecture designated this Amida statue (hereafter

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[1] Uchiyama Yoshikazu 内山善一, Chizawa Teiji 千沢楨治, and Nishimura Sada 西村貞, *Kirishitan no bijutsu* キリシタンの美術 [Christian Art] (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1961), 140-141

[2] I will problematize the term "Maria Kannon" in Chapter II, but I will use this term here for the sake of convenience.

"Kawaguchi Amida") and its contents as prefectural cultural properties in 1959, in large part due to their status as extraordinarily rare early-modern Christian objects in the Kantō region, the area in eastern Japan that includes modern-day Tokyo and Saitama Prefecture.[3] While placing one or more sculptures inside of a statue was a common Buddhist practice in Japan, the presence of a crucifix, an undeniably Christian object, set the Kawaguchi Amida apart from other known Buddhist or Underground Christian sculptures.

The discovery of the crucifix and "Maria Kannon" sparked scholarly research in an effort to connect the Kawaguchi Amida to the history of Underground Christians in and around the city of Edo. Proposed first in the same report published by the Kawaguchi-shi Department of Social Education in 1958, by the 1960s the Kawaguchi Amida was associated with a young Christian convert, Lucina (ルヒーナ, b.1606), who, scholars argued, entrusted the statue to her great-granduncle Kanshō (寒松, 1545-1636), the high priest of Chōtokuji (長徳寺) of Shiba-mura, and her father Lord Kumazawa Tadakatsu (熊沢忠勝, d.1644) of the same village.[4] In the last ten years, Honda Sadahiko revived scholarship on the Kawaguchi Amida and its Christian origins after a decades-long pause, reiterating the possible connection between the Kawaguchi Amida and the extended Kumazawa family by conducting a thorough examination of Kanshō's diaries, among other related documents (Figure 1.6). His study also hypothesizes that this piece

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[3] Honda Sadahiko 本多定彦, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu-- Kirishitan ibutsu Amidanyorai-zō ni kakawaru" 長徳寺寒松和尚の考察--キリシタン遺物阿弥陀如来像にかかわる [An Investigation of High Priest Kanshō of Chōtokuji--His Involvement with the Christian Artifact the Seated Amida Nyorai Image], *Kenkyū Kirishitangaku* 研究キリシタン学 8 (2005): 1, 3.
[4] Uchiyama, et al., *Kirishitan no bijutsu*, 140-141.

was created by a Buddhist sculptor for a European Catholic missionary to conceal holy objects for proselytization and mass.[5]

The associations drawn by previous studies between the Kawaguchi Amida to Lucina and her extended family are plausible, particularly when considering their connections to local and regional Buddhist institutions. However, significant gaps in historical documents make it challenging to definitively identify the statue's provenance. Honda himself admits that the individual who inserted the crucifix and figurine into the Amida statue remains unknown.[6] More significantly, due to the lack of documentary evidence and comparable examples in the Kantō region dating to both the Christian Century (1549-1613), the period when Catholic missionaries proselytized in Japan, and the underground years of the faith, there are two methodological issues at hand in the present discourse on the Kawaguchi Amida.

First, many scholars of the Kawaguchi Amida turn to Christian practices and material culture in Kyushu, home to the largest population of Christians during and after the Edo period and a wealth of material evidence, because of a dearth of Christian objects from the Kantō region. A common equivocation some scholars make is of the female deity figurine found inside the Amida icon to the category of "Maria Kannon" statues popularized in western Japanese Christian practice.[7] However, these comparisons of Kantō to Kyushu Christians are misleading because a lack of evidence prevents the

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[5] Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 24-27.

[6] Ibid., 4-5, 41.

[7] Uchiyama, et al., *Kirishitan no bijutsu*, 140; Yajima Hiroshi 浩矢島, "Musashi no kuni no Kirishitan" 武蔵国のキリシタン [The Christians of Musashi Province], *Kirishitan kaihō* キリシタン会報 (February 1969): 81; Junhyoung Michael Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary: The Jesuit Adaptation and the Visual Conflation in Japanese Catholicism after 1614," *Church History* 80, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 15-17.

effective evaluation of the similarities and differences of practices in the two regions. Due to the language barrier between missionaries who spoke Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish and their Japanese audience, and in later years because of the nature of the hidden religion, the establishment of Christian faith in Japan was largely a regionally-isolated phenomenon. Unless further archival or object-based evidence justifies it, Kyushu Christian practice and belief should not be used as a model to study the Christian establishment of the Kantō region.

Additionally, a historical study shares similar limitations to one grounded in Christian material studies. As convincing as Honda's hypothesis is, the scholar himself addresses the current limitations in documentary evidence to understanding the history of the Kawaguchi Amida or the presence of Christians in eastern Japan.[8] Concerning the Amida icon, no documents nor material evidence definitively identifies its provenance or ownership, even though Honda proposes a probable origin. As for the Christian history of Musashi Province, present-day Saitama Prefecture, and the Kantō region, little is known about their presence in eastern Japan beyond the first two decades of the Edo period. After the Great Edo Martyrdom of 1623, the secondary martyrdom of 1630 in Shiba-mura, and another martyrdom in Edo in 1630, virtually no other documentation about the existence of Christians in the region survives.[9] Until further documentation about Christians in Shiba-mura and the Kantō region or the Kawaguchi Amida's provenance

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[8] Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 33, 41.
[9] Hubert Cieslik, S.J., "The Great Martyrdom in Edo 1623: Its Causes, Course, Consequences," *Sophia University* 10, no. 1/2 (1954): 21-27, 35; Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 31-35.

arises, a historic approach to fully understanding the connection between the Amida

statue and the local Christian population is incomplete.

Considering the limitations in terms of historic documents and comparable

examples, a variety of questions about the Kawaguchi Amida remain that are difficult to

answer. What was the intent of the one or more individuals who inserted the crucifix and

"Maria Kannon" statuette, and did they also donate this sculpture to the Nyoirin Kannon-

dō? Beyond the person who inserted the objects inside of the Kawaguchi Amida, did

anybody else know the nature of its contents? What are the identities of the individuals

who commissioned and sculpted the icon, and did either party have a connection to

Christians in Japan?

Although the identities of whom inserted the cache into the Kawaguchi Amida or

who had the knowledge about them prior to their discovery in 1956 remains unknown,

the fact remains that at one point in history, one or more individuals placed a statuette of

a female divinity and crucifix inside the statue, either together or in separate instances,

and these objects remained enshrined together until their discovery in 1956. By shifting

the focus from devotional intent of the hypothetical owner and person who arranged its

enshrinement in a Buddhist hall, neither of which we can know for certain at this

moment, to the Kawaguchi Amida and its contents at the moment of their discovery,

other meaningful questions arise. First, how did the presence of an ideologically-charged

and unconventional object such as the crucifix affect the religious nature and significance

of Buddhist works of devotion that it contacted? Second, how did the finding of the

crucifix shape, and even restrict, the production of what one might call the mythohistory of the Kawaguchi Amida after its discovery in 1956?[10]

In this thesis, I investigate how the Japanese Buddhist practices of inserting of relics and sacred objects (*zōnai nōnyūhin*, 像内納入品) and enshrining "secret buddhas" (*hibutsu*, 秘仏) inside votive shrines informs the public understanding of the Kawaguchi Amida's existence and religious significance. I argue that the Kawaguchi Amida's multivalent identity is defined by the exterior *zushi* and interior crucifix both interpreted within the context of Japanese Buddhist sculptural practices.

First, I will look at the contents of the Kawaguchi Amida and understand how they informed the contemporary conception of the icon. With the current body of evidence, the intention in planting the crucifix and statuette of a female divinity remains unknown. However, their insertion inside the Amida sculpture as *zōnai nōnyūhin* reflects that of caches in "sheath buddhas" (*saya butsu*, 鞘佛). Buddhists place caches, which include Buddhist prints and sculptures, relics, objects of a personal significance, and lists of donors, inside statues amplify the presence of the deity that a sculpture represents.[11]

As relic caches enforce the lively qualities of the *saya butsu* that contain them, the awareness of the crucifix's presence redefines the Amida icon as a Christian artifact. The charismatic power of the crucifix is such that it identifies the statuette as a Maria Kannon and Christianizes the Kawaguchi Amida's mythohistory and total existence.

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[10] In using the term "mythohistory," I am referring to the amalgamation of what is considered history, the events and figures verified by archival evidence, and mythology, elements that are mythical or fantastical and origin and are not verified by archival documents, in the modernist senses of the terms.

[11] Helmut Brinker, *Secrets of the Sacred: Empowering Buddhist Images in Clear, in Code, and in Cache*, University of Kansas Franklin D. Murphy Lecture Series (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 2011), 6-7, 10.

Because the Kawaguchi Amida was not known as a Christian object until the discovery of its cache, we must also examine it in the context of its role in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō from the Edo period to the first half of the Shōwa period (1926-1989) in order to understand its layered identities. The icon's placement in a votive shrine indicates its existence as a *hibutsu* until the discovery of the crucifix.[12] Using Buddhist images behind the closed doors of a votive shrine as an object of worship or mental contemplation is a Buddhist practice exclusive to Japan dating from the late-Heian period (794-1185). As images rarely, if ever seen, but understood to have a presence, secret buddhas share similar attributes with Buddhist divinities, which Fabio Rambelli argues contributes to their potency.[13] Conversely, it is because of their great power that some *hibutsu* are rarely seen because they will inflict their wrath (*tatari*, 祟り) on those who reveal them.[14] Therefore, to the different groups of people that encounter and have encountered the Kawaguchi Amida, the religious identity of the statue depends on what they know about it, their understanding of Buddhist sculpture, and the Amida's configuration in a ritual context. The Kawaguchi Amida is truly a chameleonic icon, its religious identity shifting to the cultural, religious contexts surrounding it.

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[12] Uchiyama, et al., *Kirishitan no bijutsu*, 141; Yajima, "Musashi no kuni no Kirishitan," 81.

[13] Fabio Rambelli, "Secret Buddhas: The Limits of Buddhist Representation," *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 3 (October 1, 2002): 275, 282-283.

[14] Sarah J. Horton, "Chapter 6: Secret Buddhas, the Veiled Presence," in *Living Buddhist Statues in Early Medieval and Modern Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 161-162.

CHAPTER II

A FALSE HYBRIDITY: THE MISIDENTIFICATION OF THE KISHIMOJIN

STATUETTE DISCOVERED INSIDE THE "KAWAGUCHI AMIDA"

The compassionate face of a cypress female deity cradling an infant greeted the

hall caretaker who discovered it inside the Kawaguchi Amida in 1956. She has lunette

eyes, a triangle for a nose, thin lines curving together to form a brow, and a small line for

a mouth that smiles at the viewer. Rounded facial features contrast with the sharp,

blunted lines forming the crown on top of the deity's head. The folds of robes cascade

down her shoulders and arms. Her right hand, poking out from a hanging sleeve, clenches

in a rounded fist, reaching out towards the viewer. Her left hand cradles an infant with

abbreviated features slung in the folds of her robe. Below the deity's left hand trail the

triangular folds of her robe, in slight relief, and a hint of rounded legs. Two small raised

triangles form her feet, which stand on a square rectangular pedestal, chipped with age.

As abbreviated as her features are, the wisdom and motherly compassion of the deity are

apparent.

From the time that the Kawaguchi-shi Department of Social Education deemed

this statuette an example of an Underground Christian "Maria Kannon" in 1958, scholars

have supported this identification for two major reasons.[15] Primarily, because it was

discovered with a crucifix: any image of a child paired with a maternal deity is generally

assumed to be the Virgin Mary through their Christian association. In the case of the

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[15] Kawaguchi-shi Shakai Kyōiku-ka 川口市社会教育課, "Kawaguchi-shi Shiba no Kirishitan kankei shiryō" 川口市芝の切支丹関係資料 [Materials Related to the Christians of Shiba, Kawaguchi-shi], *Saitama Shidan* 埼玉史談 4, no. 4 (1958), as cited in Honda (2005).

Kawaguchi Amida, the two objects found inside seem to complement each other perfectly. In the most literal sense, the crucifix is the image of Christ in the moment of death, while a maternal deity cradling an infant hearkens back to the moment of his birth. Secondly, the statuette's appearance and facial expression matches those of other Maria Kannon statuettes owned by Underground Christians in Kyushu (Figures 2.1-2.2).[16]

Yet interestingly, no research has been conducted on the statuette within a Buddhist context to identify that it is indeed an image of the bodhisattva Kannon. In fact, as this chapter will demonstrate, once this statuette is compared to the standard iconography of Buddhist deities, it becomes clear that is not of Kannon at all but rather of the heavenly deity and demoness Kishimojin (鬼子母神, S: Hārītī). Since the identity of the original owner of the Kawaguchi Amida or the time of the insertion of the caches remains unknown, this new label for the statuette unfortunately cannot clarify the original devotional context of this ensemble. Nevertheless, it does underscore the key issues surrounding the present discourse on Underground Christian practice, particularly relating to Marian devotion.

The statuette's re-identification as Kishimojin problematizes the terminology "Maria Kannon" as used in current scholarship on the Underground Christian appropriation of Buddhist imagery for Marian devotion. "Maria Kannon" —a term retroactively applied to statuettes used by Underground Christians— creates a false sense

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[16] Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary," 11; Jeremy Clarke, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 24. In fact the Kawaguchi Amida statuette fits into the general archetype of a maternal figure in Christianity and Japanese Religions. Stephen R. Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: A Study of Their Development, Beliefs and Rituals to the Present Day* (London: Japan Library, 1998), 105.

of hybridity that the present discussion of Underground Christianity perpetuates uncritically, which as a result misrepresents its devotional practices and aims.

Re-identifying the Maria Kannon Statuette as Kishimojin

A comparison of the statuette found inside of the Kawaguchi Amida to other images of maternal Buddhist deities reveals that the "Kannon" holds a greater resemblance to the Buddhist deity Kishimojin. Kishimojin, like Child-Granting Kannon, is always represented with at least one child. Moreover, the iconographical tradition in Japan typically depicts the deity and other female demons in the loose robes donned by women of the Tang and Song courts.[17] The flowing, draping sleeves and triangular-shaped fold in the front of the robe in the statuette found inside the Kawaguchi Amida more closely aligns to Chinese court robes, as those worn by two other Kishimojin statues (Figures 2.3 and 2.4), both contemporary to the approximate time of the statuette's creation. In iconographical terms, this "Maria Kannon" statuette bears more similarities to Kishimojin than the bodhisattva to whom it is attributed.

However, before determining whether the statuette discovered inside of the Kawaguchi Amida is of Kishimojin, it is imperative to look to the significance of this deity in the general Japanese Buddhist landscape. Kishimojin, the "Mother of Demons," is the Japanese name of the Hindu deity Hārītī that was appropriated into the Buddhist universe. The *Hārītī Sutra* chronicles the story of her literal conversion to Buddhism after

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[17] Nicole Fabricand-Person, "Demonic Female Guardians of the Faith: The Fugen Jūrasetunyo Iconography in Japanese Buddhist Art," in *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, ed. Barbara Ruch, Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies; no. 43 (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2002), 349, 372; Julia K. Murray, "Representations of Hāritī, the Mother of Demons, and the Theme of 'Raising the Alms-Bowl' in Chinese Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 43, no. 4 (1981): 254.

the Buddha kidnaps one of the demoness's children and she repents for kidnapping and devouring other mothers' children. As the deity's popularity spread from India to China, writings by monks expanded on her story. Introduced to Japan during the Heian period, Kishimojin served as a model for laywomen as one who remained devoutly loyal to the Buddhist precepts without giving up her life as a mother. In Japan the deity served as a popular protector of mothers, children, and Buddhist temples.[18]

During the Edo period, Kishimojin acted as a widely popular child-rearing and protective deity in the Kantō region, the location of the statuette's recovery. The Zōshigaya Kishimojin-dō (雑司ヶ谷鬼子母神堂), a hall erected on the grounds of Hōmyōji (法妙寺) in Toshima, Edo in 1561, attracted crowds of pilgrims hoping to ask the image of Kishimojin, which miraculously surfaced from the temple site, for her protection against smallpox.[19] Images of the demoness featured as one of the most popular deities displayed in *kaichō* (開帳), the unveiling of secret buddhas or temple treasures at their home sites or which traveled to other temples. According to Miyazaki Eishū, the ubiquitous references to and parodies of Kishimojin in popular literature produced in Edo speaks to the locally-shared knowledge about the deity. To understand the satirical poems (*senryū*, 川柳) about the demoness whom paradoxically protects and

[18] Fabricand-Person, "Demonic Female Guardians of the Faith," 371-2; Murray, "Represe ntations of Hārītī, the Mother of Demons, and the Theme of 'Raising the Alms-Bowl' in Chinese Painting," 255; Reiko Ohnuma, "Mother-Love and Mother-Grief: South Asian Buddhist Variations on a Theme," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23, no. 1 (2007): 110, 114.
[19] Toshima Mirai Bunka Zaidan としま未来文化財団, "'Omoshiro Toshima-shi'「おもしろ豊島史」" ["Interesting Toshima City"], http://www.toshima-mirai.jp/eiko/history_09.html (accessed March 7, 2016); Tanoshii goshuin meguri 楽しい御朱印めぐり, "Edo san dai Kishimojin goshuin meguri 江戸三大鬼子母神御朱印めぐり" [The Edo Sandai Kishimojin Red Seal Pilgrimage], http://www.gosyuin-meguri.com/special/493.html. (accessed March 6, 2016)

devours children and their references to the popular local sites of Zōshigaya and Iriya (入谷) affiliated with the deity, one had to be a local of the Edo area where Kishimojin served as a popular guardian deity.[20] The popularity of Kishimojin in Edo likely radiated to Musashi Prefecture as well, the location of the Buddhist hall that enshrined the Kawaguchi Amida, due to its proximity to the capital and the large number of pilgrims that famous Kishimojin sites attracted. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to infer that an image of Kishimojin could exist in Shiba-mura of Musashi Province.

Due to the greater resemblance of the statuette discovered inside the Kawaguchi Amida to Kishimojin and the deity's cult in the Edo area during the early-modern period, I hypothesize that the Maria Kannon statuette is actually of the demoness Kishimojin. By taking a step back from its archetypal maternal appearance and returning to the time before its insertion in the Kawaguchi Amida, we can affix a label that does not only match the proper identity of the deity, but which is also more contemporary to the early-modern period than Maria Kannon, an appellation dating from the nineteenth century.

Having established this, I would now like to expand my critique to the terminology of Maria Kannon as a category of Buddhist statuettes appropriated into Marian veneration. The discussion to follow clarifies that the misidentification as "Kannon" (in "Maria Kannon") fundamentally impacts the present discourse on this statuette, and ultimately the Kawaguchi Amida as a whole, to the point that it detracts us from actually learning about this work or the Buddhist or Christian practices it might have served. Understanding the correct identification of the Kishimojin statuette is not

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[20] Miyazaki Eishū 宮崎英修, *Kishimojin shinkō* 鬼子母神信仰 [Kishimojin Belief], Minshū shūkyōshi sōsho; no. 9 民衆宗教史叢書; 第 9 巻 (Tokyo: Yūzankaku shuppan, 1985), 143, 146-149, 165, 168-169.

simply a manner of semantics. By uncritically deeming this statuette as another example

of a Maria Kannon, scholars have inadvertently neutralized any potential self-

identification of the initial devotees that this statuette might have reflected, while

implying a sense of syncretism that may have not been present at any point of the

statuette's history.

Marian Figures in the Study of Underground Christianity

      When scholars identified the statuette of a standing female deity as an example of

a Maria Kannon, they connected the statuette to a larger category of objects with

Buddhist and Shintō origins used by early-modern Christians in Kyushu to camouflage

their practice. The conflation of Christianity with Buddhism and Shintō began early in the

history of Christianity in Japan. Faced with the initial difficulty of the barrier between the

Portuguese and Japanese languages, Jesuit priests in the beginning years of the Japan

missions (1549-1580) distributed holy objects to converts, including crosses, rosary

beads, and relics. While most Japanese Christians desired these objects for their healing

properties, missionaries for the most part did not mind this interest, seeing it as a gateway

for future Christian study and devotion. However, as Ikuo Higashibaba observes, even

after the quality of the teachings about Christian precepts improved in the latter half of

the missions, holy objects as sources of divine, healing power remained popular among

many Japanese Christians.[21]

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[21] Ikuo Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice*, Brill's Japanese Studies Library; v. 16 (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2001), xvii, 32-35.

While laypeople and missionaries continued to practice a hybridized Christianity, the end of the missions to Japan marked the beginning of a major anti-Christian persecution. The feudal lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1536?-1598) issued an edict in 1587 to banish all missionaries. To Hideyoshi, the sway of missionaries over Christian daimyo (feudal lords, 大名) to a Christian God rather than a central leader deterred Hideyoshi's goal for a reunified and centrally-controlled Japan. While he ordered the execution of twenty-six Christians in Nagasaki in 1597, he otherwise did not strongly enforce the ban against missionaries. After Hideyoshi's death, the reestablishment of the central *bakufu* (幕府) government in 1603 exacerbated his legacy of anti-Christian persecution. A 1614 edit banished all missionaries from Japan, and Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada (徳川秀忠, 1579-1632) ordered the arrests and executions of Christians and destruction of Christian objects and texts several years later. Finally in 1639, Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (徳川家光, 1604-1651) completely banished all foreigners from Japan, with the exception of Dutch and Chinese traders.[22]

During the years of persecution, Underground Christians complied with the *bakufu* law to register their families at local Buddhist temples, a system devised to reveal any practicing Christians. Buddhist in legal terms only, Christians held clandestine meetings to worship and support one another.[23] They modeled their groups after the sodalities and confraternities established by Catholic missionaries to help Japanese

[22] Jurgis Elisonas, "Christianity and the Daimyo," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 360, 364, 367-369; Calvin L. French, *Through Closed Doors: Western Influence on Japanese Art 1639-1853* (Kobe: Kobe City Museum of Namban Art, 1977), 1, 9.

[23] Ruben L. F. Habito, "Maria Kannon Zen: Explorations in Buddhist-Christian Practice," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 14 (January 1, 1994): 145.

Christians pray, receive indulgences, and observe the laws necessary for their salvation. Confraternities served missionaries in Japan to properly teach converts the Christian sacraments in an environment less conspicuous to anti-Christian authorities. After the Christian Century and banishment of missionaries, the organization of confraternities helped Underground Christians congregate into small communities to evade detection.[24]

Notably, during the final years of the missions, when discrimination and violence ravaged Christian communities, the small size of their objects of practice helped Christians hide and retain their beliefs. The so-called "closet gods" (*nandogami*, 納戸神) included objects and images either repurposed or resembling those from Buddhist and Shintō tradition, such as the *otenpensia* (オテンペンシャ, Port. *pentença*), a hemp rope bundle resembling the *ōnusa* (大幣) used for Shintō purification ceremonies, and objects of Christian origin, such as the *omaburi* (オマブリ) paper crosses popular on Iwatsuki Island (Figure 2.5).[25] Buddhist and Shintō elements not only helped conceal Christian faith for devotees, but they provide clues to understand how Japanese Christians understood Christianity to align with the logic of the preceding religious system for scholars today.

As one type of *nandogami*, Underground Christians appropriated statues of the bodhisattva Kannon for Marian worship. In modern scholarship, these statuettes are collectively known as "Maria Kannon," and the emphasis in the research and discourse

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[24] Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 121-122; Peter Nosco, "Secrecy and the Transmission of Tradition: Issues in the Study of the 'Underground' Christians," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 20, no. 1 (1993): 6-8.

[25] Ann M. Harrington, "The Kakure Kirishitan and Their Place in Japan's Religious Tradition," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, no. 4 (December 1, 1980): 319-321; Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 85-89.

about them centers predominately on their hybridity. Chelsea Foxwell and Jeremy Clarke remark that the dissemination of new, hybrid Christian and Buddhist images produced during the second period of Christian missions to China influenced the religious hybridity of the missions in East and Southeast Asia. The reintroduction of Madonna and Child images to China by Franciscan missionaries in the thirteenth century promoted the development of Songzi Guanyin ("Child-Granting Avalokiteśvara," 送子觀音) typically represented as a feminized Guanyin holding an infant (Figure 2.6). The mass production of white ceramic and porcelain Songzi Guanyin images, traded and distributed across East and Southeast Asia, introduced the maternal type of Kannons to Japan, where Buddhists deemed them Seibo Kannon ("Holy Mother Kannon," 聖母観音), Komori Kannon ("Child-rearing Kannon," 子守観音), and Koyasu Kannon ("Child-bearing Kannon," 子安観音).[26]

Some scholars attribute the adoption of maternal Guanyin/Kannon statuettes in Japanese Christianity to the presence of the Virgin Mary in materials distributed and practices taught by missionaries.[27] *Christian Doctrine* (*Dochiriina Kirishitan*, どちりいな・きりしたん), a catechism published in 1591 and 1600 by the Jesuits in vernacular Japanese, taught Christians across Japan that the Virgin Mary was human, albeit a remarkable one because she was born free of sin and had ascended to Heaven in her body. The *Translation of Prayers* (*Orasho no hon'yaku*, おらしょの翻訳), published in

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[26] Clarke, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History*, 25-27; Chelsea Foxwell, "'Merciful Mother Kannon' and Its Audiences," *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 330

[27] Foxwell, "'Merciful Mother Kannon' and Its Audiences," 330; Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary," 11-13.

1600, describes Deus Filio ("The Son of God" or Christ) as the savior of humanity and "true human" born from the power of Deus and the Virgin Mary. The Jesuit *Essentials of Contrition* (*Konchirisan no ryaku*, コンチリサンの略) of 1603 proclaimed the intercessory powers of the Virgin Mary. Dominican and Jesuit missionaries alike heavily promoted the recitation of the Prayer of the Rosary, the fifteen narrative themes from the lives of the Virgin Mary and Christ. As an oral and kinesthetic form of rote memorization that could be performed on Buddhist rosaries, the prayer remained one of the best retained Christian teachings during the underground years of the faith.[28]

According to the interpretation of scholars such as Junhyoung Michael Shin and Stephen R. Turnbull, the Virgin Mary's comforting, forgiving nature may have earned her more popularity among Japanese converts in contrast to God, taught by missionaries as the judging and damning father.[29] In addition, the Virgin Mary may have fit into a preceding general maternal archetype in Japanese religion in her accessibility to laypeople, established through figures such as Amaterasu-ōmikami (天照大神), the goddess of the sun, Kannon, Kishimojin, and Lady Maya (麻耶, S. Māyādevī), the mother of the Buddha. This may have further encouraged the conflation.

Although we can see that statuettes of Buddhist female deities were important to Marian devotion, several elements of their existence in a Christian context remain obscured, including the name that Underground Christians gave these images. Faced with a dearth of evidence, scholars have continued to call the category of images "Maria

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[28] Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary," 17-19; Higashibaba, Christianity in Early Modern Japan, 54, 64-65, 118, 176; Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 143-144.
[29] Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 104-105; Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary," 13, 17.

Kannon." However, as the following section will discuss, two key issues remain in its terminology. First, did the term Maria Kannon derive from an Underground Christian source? Second, by including "Kannon" in their title, are we assuming that Underground Christians understood these images to be of the bodhisattva as well as the Virgin Mary?

Problematizing Maria Kannon Terminology

First and foremost, early Underground Christians may have never used or coined the term "Maria Kannon." Kataoka Yakichi affirms that while Underground Christians and their modern-day successors, the Kakure Kirishitan ("Hidden Christians," 隠れキリシタン) of Kyushu, used and continue to use images of Buddhist deities for Christian practice, Underground Christians themselves did not use the term "Maria Kannon" to refer to these statuettes. He explains that the exact origin of the term remains obscured, but he concludes that it only appears in the lexicon of scholars of Underground Christianity.[30] According to Stephen R. Turnbull, "Maria Kannon" may have originated among Kakure Kirishitan during the late nineteenth century, after the ban against Christianity was lifted.[31] Therefore, the labeling of statuettes incorporated into Underground Christian Marian practice may be ahistorical.

Nevertheless, as early as the 1950s, the term began appearing in the works of Underground Christian scholars such as Furuno Kiyoto.[32] Furuno explains that these

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[30] Kataoka Yakichi 片岡弥吉, "Kakure Kirishitan" かくれキリシタン [Hidden Christians], in *Kinsei no chika shinkō* 近世の地下信仰 [Underground Belief of the Early-Modern Period], (Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1974), 44-45.

[31] Turnbull states that in Kakure practice, Buddhist and Christian terms are used to discuss their devotional images, including "Maria Kannon," whereas no conclusive evidence can affirm whether their ancestors referred to these images in the same way. Turnbull, The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan, 98.

[32] By the time of publication, Furuno's *Kakure Kirishitan* (1959) was the earliest work containing the term "Maria Kannon" that the author was able to secure. Matsunaga Reihō's (増永霊鳳) article "Mariya Kannon

Christians referred to images of Santa Maria as "Maria Kannon," but does not provide documentary evidence affirming this. Yet the scholar makes an observation that unintentionally undermines this statement. In a description of the types of Maria Kannon statuettes, Furuno includes Seibo and Gyoran Kannon ("Fish Basket Kannon," 魚籃観音), which are of the bodhisattva Kannon. However, he also includes images of "solely Maria" (マリアだけのもある) as an example of a Maria Kannon, which are definitively not of Kannon.[33] While Furuno's observation does not indicate that Underground Christians regarded these images as Maria Kannon, it does reveal that they included images of Buddhist and Christian deities in their practice. Kataoka remarks that a nineteenth-century document written by the Nagasaki Magistrate office, *Ishū ikken* (異宗一件), provides an inventory of objects confiscated from local Underground Christians, including those of Buddhist and Christian deities, such as Hanta Maruya (ハンタ・マルヤ), the Japanese pronunciation of "Santa Maria."[34] In knowing that Underground Christians incorporated images of Buddhist deities and of the Virgin Mary for Marian worship, the term Maria Kannon here seems unsuitable, particularly for the latter category of images. It is unlikely that Christians would refer to images created as Hanta Maruya for the purpose of Marian worship as the bodhisattva Kannon.

The modern scholarly use of "Maria Kannon" may superimpose what is perceived as a hybridity of deities while obscuring Underground Christian practice. The term Maria

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no yurai マリヤ観音の由来," published in the journal *Daihorin* 20 (9) in 1953, appears to be the earliest use of this term, but the author could not secure this article in time.

[33] Furuno Kiyoto 古野清人, *Kakure Kirishitan* 隠れキリシタン [Hidden Christians], Nihon rekishi shinsho 日本歴史新書 [New Books of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1959), 261.

[34] Kataoka, "Kakure Kirishitan," 45.

Kannon assumes that Underground Christians also regarded these images to be both the Virgin Mary and Kannon. Shin argues that rather than regarding statuettes of Kannon as substitutes for the Virgin Mary, Christians understood the images to be of both deities. Due to the two deities' shared attributes, the prevalence of Kannon in the Japanese religious landscape, and the "Universal Gate" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, which describes the bodhisattva's ability to take on many forms to rescue sentient beings in times of hardship, Shin hypothesizes that Underground Christians may have seen the Virgin Mary as a manifestation of Kannon.[35] This theory alludes to some of the intriguing parallels between the Buddhist and Christian deities, but it does not account for how Underground Christians regarded the images they appropriated for Marian practice. With the current body of evidence, scholars cannot assert that early-modern Christians understood these statuettes as the conflation of the Virgin Mary with another deity, as it is inherent in the modern term "Maria Kannon." This term, in short inserts into Marian practice an additional deity, Kannon, which Underground Christians may have never understood to have been present. In addition, the term Maria Kannon creates an association with the preceding Japanese religious concept known as *honji suijaku* (本地垂迹), in which Shintō *kami* are understood to be the manifestation (*suijaku*, 垂迹) of the original Buddhist deities (*honji*, 本地).[36] Because in *honji suijaku*, the manifested *kami* is understood to be the illusory expedient means to the original Buddhist form, this

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[35] Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary," 11-12, 14.

[36] For instance, Christal Whelan explains that because of the *honji suijaku* precedent, Underground Christians saw a similarity between Buddhist and Christian deities. Shin agrees with Whelan's argument that for Underground Christians, the Virgin Mary as the manifestation of Kannon would have fit into the concept of *honji suijaku* as can be seen in Maria Kannon. Christal Whelan, trans., *Beginning of Heaven and Earth: The Sacred Book of Japan's Hidden Christians* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 28; Shin, "Avalokiteśvara's Manifestation as the Virgin Mary," 14.

association inevitably places Kannon and Mary in a hierarchical relationship, where Kannon is the *suijaku* of the Mary *honji*.

As demonstrated by these issues, the term "Maria Kannon" necessitates a reevaluation by scholars of Underground Christian material culture. "Maria Kannon," in its conception, is still appropriate for statuettes incorporated into Kakure Kirishitan Marian reverence in western Japan, but it should be avoided in labeling statuettes found in eastern Japan or those used during the Edo period. The identification of the Kishimojin statuette found inside of the Kawaguchi Amida as "Maria Kannon" emphasizes the dearth of Underground Christian evidence in the Kantō region because scholars had to look at material evidence from Kyushu. A greater effort to uncover more Underground Christian material and documentary evidence should be undertaken to see if any comparable examples to the Kishimojin statuette survived. If other images of Buddhist deities surface, several questions to guide future research will arise. Did the eastern Underground Christian use of Buddhist statues compare to their counterparts in western Japan? If many of these images are of Kishimojin, did these images play a role in Marian practice as statuettes of Kannon did in western Japan?

Finally, the issue of applying the modern term "Maria Kannon" to images used in the Edo period still remains. Rather than using the anachronistic and misleading term Maria Kannon, Buddhist statues appropriated to the Marian practices of Underground Christians might be called "Maruya" (マルヤ), the Japanese transliteration of "Mary" as used by missionaries and converts alike.[37] Her appearance in *Tenchi hajimari no koto*

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[37] I would like to thank Dr. Akiko Walley for initially proposing the term "Maruya" as a substitute for "Maria Kannon."

(*The Beginning of Heaven and Earth*, 天地始之事), the Underground Christian retelling of the Bible in western Japan, illustrates one example of how early-modern Christians perceived the deity. Maruya's manifestation here combines Christian teachings by missionaries about the Virgin Mary, with Shintō and Buddhist imageries.[38] Her depiction in *Tenchi* may not entirely reflect the beliefs of Christians outside of Kyushu, therefore further research is necessary; but at least in this scripture, Maruya is just Maruya and not Maruya/another deity.

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[38] For instance, her ability to make snow fall from the sky is reminiscent of the Italian Virgin of the Snows, while her portrayal in the scene of her marriage to a mortal king reminds one of a Buddhist celestial maiden (*tennin*, 天人). Whelan, *Beginning of Heaven and Earth*, 47, 89-90.

CHAPTER III

ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE "KAWAGUCHI AMIDA" MYTHOHISTORY

The misidentification of the Kishimojin statuette reveals the reality of scholarship on the Kawaguchi Amida: the statue was not intriguing enough as an object of study within the parameters of Japanese Buddhism or Buddhist art history. This oversight concerning the Buddhist identity of the female deity is due in part to the fact that scholarly attention given to the Kawaguchi Amida originates from the studies on local history or Japanese Christianity. This lack of interest for the Kawaguchi Amida as a Buddhist object not only impacts our perception of the inner statuette, but also the research on the history of the Kawaguchi Amida as a whole. As this chapter will clarify, the current research on the provenance of the Kawaguchi Amida statue is focused solely on identifying the original Christian who owned it and the circumstances that secured its placement in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō. This is despite the fact that the statue, at least on the surface level, is unmistakably Buddhist, and it was venerated as a "Buddhist" deity during its enshrinement in a *zushi*. Current scholarship hypothesizes that Lucina, a young woman who survived Christian persecution, owned the Amida icon. Although the events surrounding this individual's escape to her native village have been well-documented, scholars have not found the missing link that directly connects her to the Kawaguchi Amida.

Reviewing the scholarship on this icon reveals that the present narrative surrounding the Kawaguchi Amida is more akin to a mythohistory—an *engi* (縁起) —

rather than a modernist definition of history, and it is predicated upon selective information and missing steps in logic.[39]

Current Discourse of the Kawaguchi Amida

The effort to trace the Amida's origin begins with the report produced by the Kawaguchi-shi Department of Social Education, as cited by Chizawa Teiji, Uchiyama Yoshikazu, and Nishimura Sada (1961).[40] They confirm the report's conclusion that the Kawaguchi Amida was made before the Edo period while the crucifix and what they refer to as the "Komori Kannon" were produced during the early-Edo period. Filling in the gaps of the timeline to its discovery, the three scholars explain how a young Christian woman named Lucina donated the Kawaguchi Amida to Manzōji (萬蔵寺) of present-day Saitama-shi after high priest Kanshō and her father Lord Kumazawa Tadakatsu rescued her from martyrdom in 1623, according to Kanshō's diaries. The two authors explained the icon's relocation to the Nyoirin Kannon-dō by referencing the fire at Manzōji and a local myth about the *zushi* containing the Kawaguchi Amida blinding anyone who attempted to open it.[41]

This information about the Amida icon's relationship to a local Christian girl, the relative of two locally-prominent and charismatic figures, resulted in other attempts in the

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[39] *Engi* are stories that document the founding of a Buddhist temple or miracles performed by a temple's main icon (*honzon*, 本尊). One can classify *engi* as an example of a mythohistorical document. *Engi* include such historic information as the dates and founders of a temple and miraculous events associated with the future site of a specific temple or its main icon. As Horton remarks, many temples sponsored the writing of *engi* as a means to attract pilgrims and donations. Sarah J. Horton, "Chapter 1: Introduction," in *Living Buddhist Statues in Early Medieval and Modern Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 17.
[40] During my time conducting research in Saitama Prefecture, I could not access a copy of the initial report written by the Kawaguchi-shi Department of Social Education. *Kirishitan no bijutsu* is the earliest source I have obtained that discusses the Kawaguchi Amida.
[41] Uchiyama, et al., *Kirishitan no bijutsu*, 140-141.

1960s to develop a historical narrative of Christians' involvement with the Kawaguchi

Amida and research the presence of Christians in Musashi Province. Honma Masayoshi,

a committee member of the Saitama Prefecture Cultural Properties Investigation Group,

and Yajima Hiroshi provide several theories for the origin and survival of this Buddhist

sculpture appropriated by Christians. The former writer praises the Amida icon for its

unique status as a Christian artifact in Saitama Prefecture. Attributing its survival to

Tadakatsu, Honda hypothesizes the local lord had the financial means to commission the

Kawaguchi Amida and ensure its protection.[42] Yajima expands upon Honma's writing

about the icon's historical significance, observing that the horizontal and vertical bars on

the *zushi* containing the Kawaguchi Amida make a cross when the doors are closed.

Yajima does not further explore the implications of this statement, but his hypothesis of

what he identifies as a Christian design is related to his earlier remarks and Leon Pages's

research about Christians living in Musashi Province.[43]

In the following decades, scholarship and governmental documents about the

Kawaguchi Amida remained dormant; however, transcriptions of Kanshō's diaries by

Numaguchi Shin'ichi in 1988 prompted Honda Sadahiko to investigate the statue's origin

and expand its modern historic narrative. His 2005 article is connected to earlier scholars'

hypotheses about the Christian status of the Kawaguchi Amida and hypothesizes

Kanshō's involvement with its relocation. Interpreting the cryptic entries of the *Kanshō

higoyomi* (寒松日暦) and *Kanshō-kō* (寒松稿), Honda further develops the history of the

high priest's relationship to his great-grandniece. He concludes that Kanshō and several

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[42] Yajima, "Musashi no kuni no Kirishitan," 80-81.
[43] Ibid., 80-81.

other relatives of Lucina clandestinely worked together to hide and move the Kawaguchi Amida. What is even more intriguing is the scholar's hypothesis of the Amida's origin as a vessel to transport Christian objects commissioned by missionary Fr. Jeronimo de Angelis, S.J. (1568-1623) and sculpted by a member of Kyoto's prestigious Shichijō workshop of Buddhist sculptors (*bussho*, 仏所). Honda bases this hypothesis on the research by Hubert Cieslik on the Great Edo Martyrdom. The former scholar argued that Fr. de Angelis may have entrusted the Amida icon to Lucina while she and her husband Takegoya Leo (1602?-1623, 竹小屋レオ) hid the missionary from Edo authorities intending to arrest him.[44]

Honda's hypotheses are well-researched and plausible when considering the atypical construction of the Kawaguchi Amida and the political and financial resources accessible to the greater Kumazawa family that could secure the icon's enshrinement. Considering that Lucina was raised as a Buddhist and only converted to Christianity after her marriage to Takegoya, it is also reasonable to consider that she owned both Buddhist and Christian icons and objects.[45] However, Kanshō's diaries from 1623 onwards include no references to the Amida statue, nor does any conclusive evidence affirming its ownership by Lucina, Fr. de Angelis, or Kanshō exist.[46]

Local Perception of the Kawaguchi Amida

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[44] Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 7-8, 24-30, 35-37.
[45] Ibid., 18-19.
[46] Ibid., 30. Although a lack of evidence itself is not unusual for a Buddhist or Christian-related statue from the pre-modern period, it nevertheless still significantly weakens Honda's hypothesis.

Following these investigations, Kawaguchi-shi and Saitama Prefecture residents accepted the Kawaguchi Amida and its contents as Underground Christian. The "chat" label for the statue and its contents, in their current residence of the Saitama Prefectural Museum of History and Folklore, describe the influence of Christian imagery on the designs adorning its halo.[47] A plaque at the Nyoirin Kannon-dō today reiterates the story of a brave young Christian woman smuggling a "Maria Kannon" and crucifix inside an Amida image and how her great-granduncle and father protected the both of them.

The enthusiasm within the community towards the discovery of an Underground Christian object in Saitama prefecture has also prompted amateur local historians to research and designate other alleged Underground Christian artifacts in the Kantō region, using the cross as a crucial and sole piece of evidence. For example, Kawashima Junji wrote a several-thousand page volume about his colleagues' and his own investigations of miniscule crosses carved into gravestones around the Kantō region in the wake of the Kawaguchi Amida discovery.[48] Using these findings and the Cultural Properties Report as evidence, the local historian writes that the cross certainly indicates the presence of Underground Christians in Kawaguchi-shi and Saitama Prefecture.[49] For a sculpture that would likely face destruction if someone discerned its Christian status one hundred-and-

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[47] As cited by Honda (2005), the January 30, 1963 report "Saitama bunka shite hōhokusho dai san (Saitama Cultural Property Report: 3rd Volume)" by the Saitama Prefectural Board of Education describes the barley heads on the Amida's halo as skillfully adapted from a Christian design. Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 1-2.

[48] The main issue with these hypotheses is methodological. Included in their data are shapes of "crosses" that are, for instance, part of a radical within a Chinese character, which may or may not have been initially intended to be a Christian cross. Due to the "hidden" nature of the Underground Christian belief, there is at the moment no method to either prove or disprove these claims.

[49] Kawashima Junji 川島順二, "Saitama-Ken ni wa mottomo ooku Kakure Kirishitan ga ita" 埼玉県には最も多く隠れ切支丹がいた [There Were a Great Number of Christians in Saitama Prefecture], in *Kantō heino no Kakure Kirishitan* 関東平野の隠れキリシタン [The Hidden Christians of the Kantō Plain] (Saitama: Saitama shuppan-kai, 1998), 1162-1163.

fifty years prior, the Kawaguchi Amida today is an icon of local pride as a Cultural Property of Saitama Prefecture and rare Christian object in the Kantō region, driving a regional interest to unearth Musashi Province's history of Underground Christians.

The presence of the crucifix and effort of historians to trace the Amida statue's ownership have constructed an appealing, fascinating history of the Kawaguchi Amida. This origin story of the icon, continuously expanded through scholarship, connects major events and individuals in the Kantō region to the sculpture and introduces the possibility of Christians living in Musashi Province throughout the entirety of the Edo period, ultimately reshaping the current understanding of the past. However, no evidence from the Edo period exists to validate its origin, use, or how it arrived to the Nyoirin Kannon-dō. All of the individuals in the Kawaguchi Amida mythohistory resided in Shiba-mura or the vicinity of Edo, but only calculated theories, rather than definitive evidence, ties Lucina, Kanshō, Kumazawa Tadakatsu, and Fr. de Angelis to the icon. Other theories are grounded in assumptions; for example, the cross formed by the closing doors of the *zushi* containing the Kawaguchi Amida as proof of the existence of Christians in Musashi Province. The anomalousness of the crucifix is so captivating that it has directed scholarship on the Kawaguchi Amida and Musashi Province Christians for the past sixty years.

While the "history" of the Kawaguchi Amida proposed by previous studies is not strictly an *engi* in a traditional sense, it functions similarly to one in that it unfolds a narrative of the remarkable historic figures and events that resulted in its enshrinement at the Nyoirin Kannon-dō. The Kawaguchi Amida mythohistory does not chronicle the miracles performed by the icon, but the circumstances of its survival resemble miracles in

of themselves. Two other aspects that differentiate the Kawaguchi Amida mythohistory from other *engi* is its authorship by scholars who continuously modify and supplement the narrative. Beginning with the icon's discovery and tracing it back to its theorized origin as a sculpture created by a Buddhist image maker and commissioned by a Christian missionary, scholars have chronicled its story in reverse. This, as a result, creates a new narrative of its existence as an Underground Christian icon both in the present and in the Edo period of the past, despite the fact that devotees and those who attended the Nyoirin Kannon-dō for a long period had no knowledge of its contents, or even necessarily of the Buddhist identity of the statue, which was hidden behind the closed doors of a *zushi* as a *hibutsu* until 1956.

Problems with the narrative presently constructed around the Kawaguchi Amida aside, some facts do exist about the Kawaguchi Amida's existence before the discovery of its cache. It is a Buddhist statue that was enshrined in a Buddhist temple with a crucifix inside of it, which is undeniably a Christian object. One of the tasks of a scholar, therefore, must be to find a new approach that reconciles these facts without falling into the traps of the false hybridity of the Maria Kannon or the selectivity of information in the construction of the Kawaguchi Amida mythohistory.

The following two chapters propose two approaches that examine interrelated aspects of the Kawaguchi Amida statue: the impact of having an anomalous yet powerfully charismatic and sacred object such as the crucifix on a Buddhist ensemble and the devotional significance of the nested format of this statue. Because the study on Underground Christian material is newer as a scholarly discipline than its Buddhist counterpart and predominately centered on practices in Kyushu, the methodologies for

analyzing works from the Kantō regions are not yet as firmly established. The following

case studies thus adopt preceding studies on comparable Buddhist practices of inserting

caches within a statue (*zōnai nōnyūhin*) and the "secret buddhas" (*hibutsu*) and their

effects on devotion in order to analyze the Kawaguchi Amida.

CHAPTER IV

THE POWER OF THE CROSS: THE CRUCIFIX "RELIC" AND ITS IMPACT ON

THE "KAWAGUCHI AMIDA"

In his book about the Zenkōji-style Amida triad (Zenkōji-shiki Amida sanzon, 善

光寺式阿弥陀三尊), Donald F. McCallum refers to the "icon-myth" complex; the

inability to examine a Buddhist icon as detached from the history that enhances its

magnetism and charisma, no matter if this history is fabricated for benign or malicious

reasons.[50] What McCallum refers to as the "icon-myth" complex can best describe the

inseparability of the Kawaguchi Amida from its Underground Christian identity in the

scholarly and popular discourse surrounding the statue.

The singular source of and justification for the statue's mythohistory is of course

the crucifix. The crucifix has dominated the development of the Kawaguchi Amida

mythohistory. Even though its problematic and selective nature has been addressed,

untangling the icon from its provocative and sustained mythohistory proves to be a

difficult task. The way in which the crucifix defines, even "stigmatizes," the current

perception of the two other Buddhist elements of the Kawaguchi Amida—the Kishimojin

statuette and the Amida statue itself—can be considered in the Buddhist practice of

inserting caches inside of hollowed-out Buddhist statues, commonly referred to as *zōnai

nōnyūhin* (caches within statues). Objects inserted into a Buddhist statues varied from

personal items of the dedicators, printed and copied scriptures, smaller Buddhist statues

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[50] Donald F. McCallum, *Zenkōji and Its Icon: A Study in Medieval Japanese Religious Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 185-186.

and paintings, precious jewels, and relics of the Buddha. Some of these objects exude a potent life force, particularly at the moments of their initial insertion and of discovery, to define the statue that holds them either spiritually, politically, aesthetically, historically or otherwise.[51]

In Buddhism, in addition to objects touched by the historic Śākyamuni Buddha (contact relics), the bodily remains of the Buddha and Buddhist scriptures that recorded his words were also considered to be his relics, but not images of the Buddha. For example, although a standing statue of Śākyamuni Buddha at Seiryōji (清凉寺), Kyoto, hereafter Seiryōji Shaka (清凉寺釈迦), is not a relic in of itself, the relics inside of its hollowed-out cavity animate the exterior statue into what was believed to have been a living image of Shakyamuni Buddha. Renowned as an icon that traversed through three nations (*sangoku denrai Shaka*, 三国伝来釈迦), the Shaka icon moved from India to China and finally arrived to Japan with a Japanese monk named Chōnen (奝然, 938-1016), who on a pilgrimage to China met the statue. The monk requested that a copy of the original image be made to bring back to his homeland, and the night before Chōnen's returning voyage, the original Shaka statue appeared to him in a dream, expressing his desire to go with him. According to the Seiryōji Shaka *engi*, either the monk swapped out the copy for the original statue or the icon switched places itself, but it was believed that the Indian original, not Chōnen's copy, arrived to Japan. Chōnen enshrined the icon in Seiryōji, where it has continued to attract pilgrims for more than a millennium. The

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[51] Whether or not the caches inserted inside of a statue can project the same kind of authority once their presence is forgotten by devotees is a point of debate. For instance, see Horton's argument that the markings or caches inside of a statue do not determine the treatment of statues as "living images." Horton, "Chapter 1: Introduction," 10.

discovery of more than two-hundred objects in the Seiryōji Shaka in 1953 uncovered a tooth relic embedded in the sandalwood icon's head. An inserted document written by Chōnen, records that when the tooth was inserted, a drop of blood appeared on the statue's back, demonstrating the intense enlivening power of bodily relics.[52] In other words, the statue needed to be animated by a relic before it became a living image, rather than the image itself acting as a relic.

On the other hand, in certain instances, images do exhibit qualities akin to relics in both Christian and Buddhist contexts. European Christians debated whether or not images in the likeness of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints themselves were endowed with the presences of holy figures. Regardless, by the late-medieval period, Christians understood that images materialized a holy being rather than display a sign for one.[53]

Similarly, in a Buddhist sense, while images of deities and holy persons differ from the corporeal bones or Dharma hymns regarded as relics, they are also understood to possess miraculous powers and to generate the presence of a sacred being as in the case of an image of a Buddhist deity inserted into a larger sculpture, or the manifested form (*suijaku*), to represent its "true form" (*honji*).[54] For instance, a bronze statue of the bodhisattva Kannon, standing on top of a rock-shaped pedestal supported by a turtle, representing the Daoist mountain of immortality, Hōrai (蓬莱, C. Pénglái, 蓬萊山), was

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[52] Sarah J. Horton, "Chapter 2: Sakyamuni: Still Alive in This World," in *Living Buddhist Statues in Early Medieval and Modern Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 26-30, 42-44; Brinker, *Secrets of the Sacred*, 16-18, 33, 41.

[53] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 52; Elisabeth Benard, "The Living Among the Dead: A Comparison of Buddhist and Christian Relics," *The Tibet Journal* 13, no. 3 (1988): 40.

[54] Robert H. Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics," *Representations*, no. 66 (1999): 80-82; Brinker, *Secrets of the Sacred*, 9.

found in a late Heian-period (794-1185) sculpture of Shōtoku Taishi (聖徳太子, 574-622) enshrined in the Shōryō Hall (Shōryō-in, 聖霊院) of Hōryūji (法隆寺). The legendary prince-regent Shōtoku is credited with the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, and in later devotion, he was believed to be an incarnation of Kannon. In this piece, the statuette of the bodhisattva is elevated to the chest area of the seated prince-regent that enshrines it, indicating the true form of Shōtoku as Kannon.[55]

In addition to the bodily relics of the Buddha, the Seiryōji Shaka also included personal objects such as Chōnen's umbilical cord wrapped in a note written by his mother, the bracelet of an infant girl, and strips of cloth from monks' robes.[56] According to the Buddhist definition of the term "relic," a sacred object imbued with the life force of a deity or sacred being remaining after their death or physical absence, the objects inside of the Seiryōji Shaka are quasi-relics because they empower the exterior icon with the liveliness of their former owners. Buddhist literature conceives of *paribhāvita* (*shokun*, 所薫) as the life force that animates living people and inanimate objects alike. Relics are also "invigorated," as Robert H. Sharf aptly describes, with the presence and powers of a deity, allowing the faithful to access the being's powers even after his or her physical absence or death.[57]

The way in which the crucifix, as a decisively Christian object, restricts how a modern viewer (either a devotee or scholar) perceives the Kawaguchi Amida can be

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[55] Chari Pradel, "Shōkō Mandara and the Cult of Prince Shōtoku in the Kamakura Period," *Artibus Asiae* 68, no. 2 (2008): 218-219.
[56] Horton, "Chapter 2: Sakyamuni," 43-44.
[57] Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 153-155; Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics," 78, 89.

understood as a particular form of activation not dissimilar to the caches inside a *saya butsu*.[58] Similar to the personalized objects defining the Seiryōji Shaka as a living image of Shakyamuni, the crucifix defines the Christianness of the outer shell.

The Empowerment of the Crucifix on the Kawaguchi Amida

One must note that once they are inserted into a statue, caches become physically and visually inaccessible to devotees. The only individual or group who knows of an icon's contents are those who inserted it, witnessed or heard about the event, or one way or another handled the statue whether it is for repair or more malicious forms of violation. The question then becomes, if the knowledge of the caches inside of a statue is lost, do they lose their function to activate or enliven the outer *saya butsu*? The Seiryōji Shaka in particular demonstrates how one can conceive of relic deposits inside of images as a personal act of affirming a deity's presence. As Horton notes, those who inserted the objects inside of the Shaka never intended for others to discover them, but nevertheless, the inclusion of incredibly personalized objects speaks to their enlivening purpose. The actual presence of a relic cache inside the Seiryōji Shaka was not publically known until 1953. However, devotees did not treat the Seiryōji Shaka as a living icon for a thousand years nevertheless because they were familiar with the statue's *engi* that describes its miraculous origins.[59] The level of knowledge about a Buddhist statue affects how a

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[58] While medieval European Christians also used reliquaries to store relics, some of which include hollowed-out reliquary statues that are similar to Buddhist *saya butsu*, other sculptures or figurines were not inserted inside of reliquaries. See Barbara Boehm, "Chapter 10: Grist for the Mill: A Newly Discovered Bust Reliquary from Saint-Flour," in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, et al. (London: The British Museum, 2014), 75-76; Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 88-89.
[59] Horton, "Chapter 2: Sakyamuni," 44.

devotee interacts with the image, but regardless of whether or not a devotee knows of their existence, relic caches still covertly empower an icon.

In a Buddhist icon, inserted relics and images impregnated with a sacred or personalized life force work outwards to animate an icon with lively presences and transform it into a gateway for worshippers to directly contact the deity of the sheath buddha's likeness.[60] Even if one cannot see every part of a Buddhist icon, which in some cases included the *saya butsu* and its *zōnai nōnyūhin*, the liveliness of the interior relics still continued to empower and affirm the liveliness of the singular exterior statue.

The crucifix functions similarly to *zōnai nōnyūhin* because it defines the Christian identity of the exterior Amida icon. In this case, did the crucifix's presence function in the same way to the Underground Christians who inserted it or knew about its presence inside of the Kawaguchi Amida? The crucifix, like most of the *zōnai nōnyūhin* that invigorate the Seiryōji Shaka, appears to originally have been an object of personal devotion. Its size no larger than the hand of an adult and the small hole on the top (Figure 4.1) suggest its use for private devotion, possibly strung as a pendant or nailed to a wall. If the latter was the case, it bears similarities to the crosses drawn on paper hung or placed near entrances to the homes of Christians during the Christian Century.[61] When the object of personal devotion was inserted into the Kawaguchi Amida, it charged the exterior shell with its devotional energy. To the one or more persons who inserted the cache or were informed about its presence, they would have prayed to the Kawaguchi Amida knowing that the crucifix and Kishimojin were present. Perhaps in their devotion,

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[60] Brinker, *Secrets of the Sacred*, 6-7, 10; ibid., "Facing the Unseen: On the Interior Adornment of Eizon's Iconic Body," *Archives of Asian Art* 50 (January 1, 1997): 42.
[61] Higashibaba, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, 31.

Underground Christians conceived of the icon as *suijaku*, concealing the true Christian nature (*honji*) inside. The identities of a religious image, particularly those with nested configurations such as the Kawaguchi Amida, vary significantly among those who encounter and continue to encounter it based on their level of knowledge about its configuration, caches, mythohistory, or anything else beyond what is directly related to the nature of the deity it represents.

CHAPTER V

LAYERS OF SECLUSION: PHYSICAL AND METAPHORICAL *ZUSHI* AND THE

"KAWAGUCHI AMIDA"

The previous chapter considered the crucifix inside the Kawaguchi Amida in the

context of the Buddhist practice of inserting caches of relics and objects within a statue.

For the modern audience, the crucifix has the power to define the religious identity of the

Kishimojin and Amida statue in a manner similar to relics of the Buddha and other

objects of personal devotion within a Buddhist statue. It is true that the presence of the

crucifix was forgotten for much of its history until 1956. I argued, however, that

theoretically speaking, this Christianizing power of the crucifix continued to affect the

Amida *saya butsu* (as well as the Kishimojin statuette), even if no devotee remembered

its presence.

However, the fact that people had forgotten the existence of the caches inside of

the Kawaguchi Amida, or that the Amida statue itself was kept hidden behind a *zushi* that

denied any access, necessitates a further investigation into the devotees' engagement with

the Kawaguchi Amida ensemble in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō. The configuration of layers

of enclosures, from the *zushi* enshrining the Kawaguchi Amida to the Kawaguchi Amida

enshrining the crucifix and Kishimojin, also produced layers of exclusive knowledge.

Today, scholarship has peeled back those layers of the Amida sculpture, but for now,

their original stratigraphy must be considered.

Regardless of the gaps in its provenance, what is known about the Kawaguchi

Amida's origins is that at some point in history, someone (or some people) inserted a

statuette of Kishimojin and a crucifix both dating from the Edo period into the seated

statue, the construction of which was clearly designed to contain a cache inside of its

torso. The building of the Nyoirin Kannon-dō of Shiba-mura in 1810 indicates that the

Amida icon was enshrined in a votive shrine there at a point after the hall's construction

but before the end of the Edo period.[62] Even though current documentary evidence cannot

confirm whether the one or more individuals who inserted the objects inside the

Kawaguchi Amida also enshrined the larger statue in the plain wood *zushi*, the effect of

their configuration in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, a nesting of receptacles, can be analyzed.

Additionally, there is a layering of knowledge about the contents inside of the plain wood

votive shrine: those who knew about the crucifix and Kishimojin in the Amida, those

who knew the *zushi* enshrined the Amida, and those who knew that the *zushi* contained a

powerful *hibutsu* behind its doors.

Turning to the tradition of enshrining secret buddhas inside of *zushi* elucidates

how this nesting of enclosures and of knowledge cloaked the Kawaguchi Amida for a

significant period of time. While one can easily open a *zushi*, some votive shrines are

rarely, if ever, opened because of the wrath a *hibutsu* will inflict on a person if he or she

reveals the image in inappropriate circumstances.[63] Ultimately, *zushi* create what

sociologists Jane Bachnik, Charles J. Quinn, and Takie Sugiyama Lebra call "inside"

(*uchi,* 内) and "outside" (*soto*, 外) groups, in which the *uchi* is an individual or cohesive

group and *soto* are the people outside of and separate from the in-group.[64] *Zushi* establish

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[62] Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 10.
[63] Horton, "Chapter 6: Secret Buddhas,"161-162.
[64] Jane Bachnik and Charles J. Quinn Jr., *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society, and Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3; Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), xxi, 38-40.

an *uchi* group, the *hibutsu* and occasionally the few individuals who can physically view the image, and a *soto* group, the people who cannot see the object. Through this definition of *zushi* protecting and concealing objects, only revealing them to the correct audience (*uchi*) on appropriate occasions, one can also think of other container-like objects and even people as metaphorical *zushi*. Metaphorical *zushi*, like their physical counterparts, seclude their contents or secrets from outside individuals (*soto*) in order to prevent unnecessary or undesirable contact.

Layers of secrecy enshrouded the Kawaguchi Amida through *zushi*, both as a physical object and as a metaphorical concept. As a physical object, a plain wood *zushi* contained the Kawaguchi Amida before its designation as a cultural property. The Amida statue itself functioned as a metaphorical *zushi* because it concealed the crucifix and Kishimojin statuette from the public until their 1956 discovery. Additionally, the one or more persons who inserted the objects inside of the Kawaguchi Amida as *zushi*. Disclosing the nature of the Amida's interior contents during the years of anti-Christian persecution proved to be a dangerous enterprise that could potentially result in imprisonment or torture. Therefore, the persons who inserted the crucifix and Kishimojin would have either kept this knowledge to themselves or shared it only with the correct people: those whom they absolutely trusted. In thinking about the physical and metaphorical *zushi* that protected the Kawaguchi Amida, these layers of exclusivity and secrecy are what contradictorily enabled the Amida icon to participate as a meaningful object of Buddhist worship in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō.

The Nyoirin Kannon-dō Plain Wood Zushi

Compared to the other *zushi* displayed in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, the one that

contained the Kawaguchi Amida is rather modest; however, its discreetness may have

prevented an earlier discovery of the statue's contents. On the west wall of the hall, three

zushi sit on top of a platform. From the perspective of a visitor, the votive shrines on the

left side and in the center of the platform are plated in gold leaf and have ornate, rich

carvings on their double-closing doors and bow-shaped (*karahafu*, 唐破風) gabled roofs

(Figure 5.1). Carved-out recesses imitating alternating rows of concave and convex tiles

line the *zushi* roofs, carved in the *irimoya* (入母屋) roofing style associated with

Buddhist temples, with triangular dormer gables surrounded by hipped ends on four

sides.[65] *Nyoi hōju* (如意宝珠) motifs, three tear-shaped wish-granting jewels engulfed in

a bulb of flame conventional to the design of *zushi*, adorn both doors on the left-hand

votive shrine containing a statue of Yakushi Nyorai (薬師如来, S. Bhaiṣajyaguru).[66] The

zushi to its right and resting on the center of the platform enshrines a seated Nyoirin

Kannon image, its double doors carved with intricate flowers and plant motifs and the

register on top of the door decorated with a bird motif. The layered beams beneath the

irimoya roof of the central svotive shrine add an ornamental touch. Together, the

decorations and motifs of the two *zushi* produce a sense of decadent sacredness and

authority.

Although the plainness of the *zushi* enshrining a copy of the Kawaguchi Amida

and a statuette of Jizō bosatsu (地蔵菩薩, S: Kṣitigarbha) sets it apart from the two

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[65] Aisaburō Akiyama, *Shintō and Its Architecture* (Tokyo: Tokyo News Service, 1955), 73; H. Batterson
Boger, *The Traditional Arts of Japan: A Complete Illustrated Guide* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1964),
146.
[66] Merrily C. Baird, *Symbols of Japan: Thematic Motifs in Art and Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 2001), 225.

ornate votive shrines in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, common symbols of authority incorporated in its design similarly advertise the power of the secret buddha within. Unpainted and nearly absent of ornamentation, the style and appearance of the *zushi* is different from the other votive shrines in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, which appear to have been made by the same hand or shop. Though smooth and free of ornamental carvings, the *karahafu* gables on the plain wood *zushi* recall the decorative *karahafu* popularized in castle architecture and the roofs of *karamon* (唐門) entrance gates, adding a sense of grandeur to the otherwise sober *zushi*.[67] Keeping in mind the function of *zushi* to separate a secret buddha from its visitors, the use of *karahafu*, which as Coaldrake describes as to "greet the visitor and warn the intruder," seems particularly apt.[68] The *kirimon*, a paulownia-shaped crest, bisected through the center flat beam of the *karahafu* is also an authoritative symbol, as one derived from Heian-period imperial family imagery and later adopted by samurai and commoners.[69] Together, the *kirimon* motif and *karahafu* gable crowing the plain wood *zushi* create a subdued authority, emphasizing the greatness of the deity's likeness present inside and intimidating the unworthy from entering.

The symbols incorporated into their design emphasizes the authority of *zushi* as protectors of Buddhist images. Such an authority was important because in some cases—as with the Kawaguchi Amida— the icon enshrined within it was believed to be so powerful that it was necessary for it to be concealed in a *zushi* at all times. Heian-period Esoteric Buddhists regarded the presence and powers of some images to have been so

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[67] William Howard Coaldrake, *Architecture and Authority in Japan*, Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 135; Akiyama, *Shintō and Its Architecture*, 109.
[68] Coaldrake, *Architecture and Authority in Japan*, 166.
[69] Baird, *Symbols of* Japan, 58-59.

potent that they had to be concealed, a possible origin of *hibutsu*.[70] Although not all

hibutsu are considered to be living buddhas, the influence of Esoteric Buddhism requires

a level of decorum and behavior on behalf of the worshipper around all secret buddhas so

as not to offend them, in danger of provoking their wrath.[71] When a novice attempts to

engage a deity present in an image, he or she often does not know how to non-visually

interact with it. This untrained sight defiles the image and the image in turn will also

harm the novice.[72] Therefore, for both the *hibutsu* and the engager to benefit from one

another, the engager must only view the *hibutsu* at appropriate times or use non-visual

means to access the statue.

It is with this creation of a physical barrier between worshipper and *hibutsu*

through the plain wood *zushi* that secured the Kawaguchi Amida. This division between

uchi (*hibutsu*) and *soto* (worshipper) ultimately prevented either party from harming one

another. In the case of the Kawaguchi Amida during the Edo period, any person who

dared to open the *zushi* and the Amida's body and discover the crucifix inside faced the

possibility of execution or torture.[73] Additionally, the Amida sculpture and its contents

would have also surely been destroyed due to the crucifix's stigmatizing presence.

However, when an individual knows how to properly engage with a *hibutsu* such

as the Kawaguchi Amida, it creates a relationship beneficial to both parties. Lebra's

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[70] Horton, "Chapter 6: Secret Buddhas, the Veiled Presence," 167; Rambelli, "Secret Buddhas," 275.

[71] Uchiyama, et al., 1962 and Yajima 1969 write that it was locally rumored that opening the *zushi* containing the Kawaguchi Amida would instantly blind anyone who did so. The scholars do not provide a source or date verifying when this rumor began. Whether or not this rumor existed or was documented, the fact remains that the Kawaguchi Amida's contents were not discovered until 1962, which indicates its treatment within the general etiquette for *hibutsu*. Uchiyama, et al., *Kirishitan no bijutsu*, 141; Yajima, "Musashi no kuni no Kirishitan," 81.

[72] Horton, "Chapter 6: Secret Buddhas, the Veiled Presence," 161; Rambelli, "Secret Buddhas," 277, 291-292.

[73] Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 32.

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model of a "double hierarchy" in *uchi*/*soto* relationships, when the *soto* is subordinate to the *uchi*, can be applied to understanding the relationship between *hibutsu* and those who access them in the appropriate environment and circumstances. The superior *uchi* allows the subordinate *soto* to express "operative power" while restricting his or her own authoritative power.[74] In this model, the *hibutsu* indulges the worshipper who properly engages it by holding back its harmful powers while granting the worshipper its beneficial powers. Furthermore, in this dynamic, the *uchi* depends as much on the *soto* as the *soto* depends on the *uchi*.[75] A *hibutsu* is present as long as others acknowledge its existence through offerings and prayers. As an object rarely or never seen, the knowledge of a *hibutsu*'s presence is lost unless it is remembered and properly used by worshippers,[76] which forces the *hibutsu* to rely on those physically detached from it. During its time in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, the Amida statue benefited from offerings presented to it, assuming worshippers presented offerings in such a fashion similar to how current worshippers present candles to the Kawaguchi Amida copy (see Figure 1.1). Reciprocally, through the *zushi*, the Amida image participated in the religious environment of the hall, bestowing its powers to those whom prayed or gave offerings to it. The creation of an *uchi/soto* relationship through the plain wood *zushi* as a mediator between the Kawaguchi Amida and visitors to the Nyoirin Kannon-dō assisted both parties without compromising either's security.

Kawaguchi Amida as a Metaphorical Zushi

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[74] Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic*, 17.
[75] Ibid., 17.
[76] Rambelli, "Secret Buddhas," 292.

This section examines the Amida image itself as a metaphorical *zushi* used to seclude and protect the crucifix and Kishimojin statuette inside. By calling the Kawaguchi Amida a "metaphorical *zushi*," I do not mean to infer that whoever created or possessed the image regarded it as a *zushi*. Rather, in thinking of the characteristics of votive shrines as devices that contain and conceal objects and can only be accessed by proper individuals, whether physically or contemplatively, the Kawaguchi Amida acted as a *zushi* to its cache of objects. Additionally, the Amida sculpture created *uchi*/*soto* dynamics both inside and outside of the image and, as I will investigate later, between those who knew of its contents and those who did not. This seclusion of knowledge and visibility, like the plain wood *zushi* of the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, enabled the survival of the Amida image through the Edo period. Therefore, the Kawaguchi Amida acted like a *zushi* in its application, entrusted with a secret and objects both dangerous in their natures.

Before examining how one may have used the Kawaguchi Amida similarly to a *zushi*, we must investigate the construction of this sculpture. The exact circumstances of its construction remain unclear, including the identity and motivation of the patron. However, by turning to the statue itself, one can argue more affirmatively that a professional Buddhist image maker (*busshi*, 仏師) or another technically-gifted sculptor crafted the Amida statue because of its aesthetic beauty and masterful application of Buddhist sculptural techniques. We can also assert the Kawaguchi Amida was devised to enshrine objects such as relics inside of its torso because of the design of its interior and "stopper" to its entrance.

Buddhist sculpture techniques can clarify how the Kawaguchi Amida was designed to at least hold smaller objects. For example, the carving of the interior chamber

was informed by the technique of multiple-block sculpture (*yosegi zukuri*, 寄木造). To prevent wooden sculpture from splitting down the middle, sculptors developed *yosegi zukuri*: carving multiple blocks separately and assembling them together. This resulted in lightweight images and prevented cracking.[77] The use *yosegi zukuri* here also permitted the interior carving, or *uchigiri* (打ち切り) technique, of the four blocks that make up the Amida's body. Not only did carving away portions of interior blocks make the whole sculpture lighter, but it also created the space for a small chamber (Figure 5.2). Additionally, the construction of a rectangular chamber and its interior adornment in gold leaf (Figure 1.4) indicate the intention to contain objects or enshrine relic caches. As previously discussed in Chapter III, the insertion of relic caches serves to enliven and identify *saya butsu* with the presence of a deity, and the application of gold leaf to an icon's interior further invigorates them.[78] Therefore, this evidence confirms that a sculptor designed the Kawaguchi Amida to contain objects inside of it.

Furthermore, the construction of the entrance to the Kawaguchi Amida's interior chamber deceitfully conceals the opening, increasing its efficacy for hiding objects. The sculptor designed the Amida icon so that one could easily remove the Amida's head, attached to a long wooden shaft, from a tunnel extending into the body's torso,[79] revealing the entrance to its rectangular chamber (Figures 1.3-1.4). When the head fits into the torso's neck, the sculptor carved it in such a skillful manner that one cannot

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[77] Irie Tagachi and Aoyama Shigeru, *Buddhist Images*, trans. Thomas I. Elliott (Osaka: Hoikusha, 1970), 115-116; John M. Rosenfield, *Portraits of Chōgen: The Transformation of Buddhist Art in Early Medieval Japan*, Japanese Visual Culture; v. 1 (Boston: Brill Publishers, 2011), 129, 131.
[78] Brinker, "Facing the Unseen," 43.
[79] Yajima, "Musashi no kuni no Kirishitan," 81.

easily distinguish the head as a separate piece from the body (Figure 5.3). As a result, by merely looking at the Kawaguchi Amida with its head "stopper" in place, one would likely not know about the interior chamber without someone else sharing the knowledge of its existence. Therefore, because of the design of a masked entrance to the Amida's hollowed-out area, the Kawaguchi Amida could come to function as a *zushi*.

Conceiving of the Kawaguchi Amida as a device that can be easily opened but is only done so in appropriate conditions, the unusual design of the image functions like a metaphorical *zushi*, even if the sculptor did not intend to create one.[80] Like the authoritative exteriors of traditional *zushi*, its exterior as a Buddhist image belies the nature of the contents inside. Its appearance demands treatment as a Buddhist image to those unaware of its secret, forming a *soto* group. In addition, knowledge of its interior contents and physical access to them was limited to those worthy of engaging with them, creating an *uchi* group. While opening this metaphorical *zushi* did not incur its wrath, a member of the *soto* group could turn in the discovered Christian objects and the person associated with the Amida, guaranteeing both of their destructions. The creation of these *uchi*/*soto* groups, represented by the interior/exterior of the image and those who knew the true Christian nature of the image/those who did not, was a necessity for the survival of the Kawaguchi Amida, its contents, and those entrusted with its secret.

The creation of an *uchi*/*soto* group within the Amida sculpture extends to a group of people outside of it: the one or more individuals who inserted the Kishimojin statuette and crucifix.

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[80] The hollowed-out interior of a statue does not have to have the shape of a rectangular compartment. In fact, more typically, a sculptor carved away the entirety of the sculpture's interior, leaving a large and irregularly-shaped cavity.

People as Metaphorical Zushi

The previous section used the construction of the Kawaguchi Amida as a case study for a metaphorical *zushi*. Due to the near invisibility of the entrance to its interior chamber, one would likely not know about its existence, let alone the nature of its contents. Therefore, because of the hazardous nature of its contents, this knowledge of the crucifix and the location of the Amida's opening was likely restricted to a few individuals who closely guarded it. Therefore, the one or more persons whom inserted the Kishimojin figurine and the crucifix can also act as metaphorical *zushi*. That is, they internalized a powerful, dangerous secret, the possession of at least one definitively Christian object inside the Amida icon, and could choose whether or not to share that knowledge with others. If the inserters of the Kishimojin statuette and crucifix chose to confide in others, those entrusted with the secret also acted as metaphorical *zushi*.

If this system of people acted as metaphorical *zushi* through the *uchi*/*soto* dynamic, the exclusivity of the group ensured not only the survival of the Kawaguchi Amida but also those aware of its secret. The people who inserted the objects formed the *uchi* group while those who did not were in the *soto* group. However, one could transcend the boundaries from *soto* to *uchi* after a member of the *uchi* group revealed the existence of the crucifix inside the Amida icon. This exclusivity protected the Kawaguchi Amida and all of the people entrusted with its secret. However, this system of people as metaphorical *zushi* only functioned if its members mutually agreed to a vow of silence or only shared the Amida's secret to those who were undeniably trustworthy. For one member to surrender the Kawaguchi Amida, share information about its Christian

connection, or reveal the identities of those who physically possessed it dismantled not only the *uchi*/*soto* dynamic but the bonds of loyalty between its members. The transfer of responsibility, possession, and knowledge of the Kawaguchi Amida required those entrusted to take on the role of metaphorical *zushi*: protect the image and only reveal its secret to the right people at the appropriate moments.

Having explained how a small group of people could act as metaphorical *zushi* to the Kawaguchi Amida, I would like to apply it to Honda's theory of the greater Kumazawa family safekeeping the icon. While no documentation explicitly links the extended Kumazawa family to the icon itself, Honda's theory acts a case study for how a system of people acting as metaphorical *zushi* would function. According to Honda's interpretation of Kanshō's diaries, Lucina first exposed the icon to her great-granduncle when she fled to his residence in fear of her arrest, ultimately involving the high priest in the icon's protection because he knew it was somehow related to Christianity. This *uchi* group expanded after Tadakatsu and Kanshō rescued Lucina from martyrdom, and the woman entrusted the Kawaguchi Amida to her distant cousin Chinshū Myōju (椿秋妙寿)[81] or Matajūrō Tadamasa Tokurin (又十郎忠昌徳林), the heir to Myōju's late father Suga Shin'uemon (須賀新右衛門). In 1630, Myōju asked her cousin Kanshō to take the statue after reports of arrests of Edo Christians spiked. Finally, High Priest Tenpo Shōen (天甫昌円), as a final act for his pupil Kanshō promised to arrange the image's enshrinement in Manzōji.[82] In spite of Kanshō and Myōju's hesitation toward accepting

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[81] The Kuki-shi branch of the Saitama Prefectural Library kindly gave me the readings for the Buddhist names of the female members of the greater Kumazawa family.

[82] Honda critiques his predecessors' theory that the Kawaguchi Amida was enshrined in Manzōji before it moved to the Nyoirin Kannon-dō because it relies on undocumented evidence. Honda (2005): 3, 10.

the sculpture, Honda writes that the bonds of loyalty between the members of the Kumazawa family and dharma lineage obligated each person aware of the Kawaguchi Amida's Christian nature to protect it and its dangerous secret.[83] The theory of the greater Kumazawa family concealing the Kawaguchi Amida illustrates how the icon could have been protected by a confined group of individuals before its enshrinement in a *zushi*.

Navigating the Layers of Secrecy

The previous sections considered the physical and metaphorical *zushi* that sheltered the Kawaguchi Amida and its contents. These three types of *zushi* together surrounded the icon in layers of secrecy. However, with what little is known about the sculpture's provenance, one cannot argue that the separate levels of protection were designed to exist together. For example, those who enshrined the Kawaguchi Amida in a *zushi* did so knowing about the crucifix or Kishimojin inside of it, nor can one prove that the persons who inserted the cache or were aware of its existence arranged its placement in a *zushi* or the Nyoirin Kannon-dō. For this reason, scholars should discuss carefully the system that ultimately protected the Kawaguchi Amida until the discovery of its cache in 1956. After all, the arrangment of these layers may be a product of coincidence rather than conscious design until further evidence proves so otherwise. Nevertheless, the physical and metaphorical *zushi* functioned as a system, possibly unintentional in their configuration, within the context of a Buddhist hall. They successfully concealed the Kawaguchi Amida's dangerous secret until they were unveiled at a more appropriate time, ensuring its protection from an unwanted gaze.

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[83] Honda, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu," 18-20, 22-24, 27-29, 35-39.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I argued that precedents in Buddhist sculpture have informed the multivalent identity of the Kawaguchi Amida, from its enshrinement as a *hibutsu* behind the closed doors of a *zushi* in the Nyoirin Kannon-dō to the discovery of the crucifix and Kishimojin statuette inside redefining it as an Underground Christian artifact. First, I reconsidered the influence of the crucifix on the identification of the standing female deity statuette and proposed that it is Kishimojin. Second, I argued that the charismatic powers of the crucifix deemphasized the Kawaguchi Amida's Buddhist identity in contemporary discourse, and I advocated for examining the icon's variegated identities across its total existence. Having established this, I examined the Kawaguchi Amida's enshrinement before the discovery of its cache, and explained how the layering of physical and metaphorical *zushi* protected the icon while providing it a meaningful role in Buddhist practice.

This examination of the Kawaguchi Amida presented few key issues in the present studies of Underground Christian material culture, and proposed alternate approaches to the research of its practice outside of Kyushu. The close analysis of the female deity found within the Kawaguchi Amida led to the question of the appropriateness of the appellation of "Maria Kannon" to Christian Marian devotion. It is not only that the term was likely never used by Edo-period Underground Christians, but that "Maria Kannon" also seems to assume that these statues were viewed as equally Kannon and the Virgin Mary. Reconsidering the Maria Kannon terminology necessitates

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a reevaluation of how, or if, Christians during and after the Christian century conceived of the Buddhist statues they appropriated into their devotion as Buddhist at all.

Such an examination of the Japanese Christian artifacts through Buddhism may have a wider application. For instance, I have encountered at least two statues from Nagasaki which are presently considered to be Maria Kannons, but in the case of the statues' iconography, hold a greater resemblance to other deities in the Buddhist pantheon; the first, in Tang-style robes and holding a child, to Kishimojin and the other—a childless deity with a crown decorated in heads with the iconography of Eleven-Headed Kannon (*Jūichimen Kannon*, 十一面観音) (Figures 6.1 and 6.2). If not all Buddhist statues used in Underground Christian Marian worship are of the bodhisattva Kannon, then it is imperative to also direct our critical gaze to the "Maria" in "Maria Kannon" because the conception of the Virgin Mary, complicated by the language barrier between missionaries and converts, differed in the Japanese Underground Christian tradition than in Europe.

With regard to this thesis's attempt to examine the Kawaguchi Amida's nested configuration through the function of Buddhist *zushi*, it may be applied to the study of *nandogami* or the "closet" or "cabinet" deities.[84] Here the concept of a *zushi* is particularly applicable not only because they are both cabinets that conceal objects but also because they can only be accessed by a proper individual or group of people.

These new approaches to studying Underground Christian material culture bring a more nuanced view of the history of Christianity in Japan. Through recognizing these

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[84] Harrington, "The Kakure Kirishitan and Their Place in Japan's Religious Tradition," 319; Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan*, 5.

objects both within the context of Edo-period Japanese Christian practices and their relation to the influences of Shintō and Buddhism, we realize that these objects carry with them a valence of religious meanings. Certainly, scholars should avoid the polarity of viewing Underground Christian objects as solely Christian or as completely-hybridized Shintō, Buddhist, and Christian objects. In doing so, scholarship reduces the fluidity of Underground Christian objects to assimilate with the material culture of mainstream religions and be compatible with Underground Christian devotion. Rather than gravitate towards either pole, the religious roles of Underground Christian objects can be acknowledged as in flux: shifting to meet the needs of those who used them and adapting to the religious context of their environment, more chameleonic than scholarship previously conceived.

APPENDIX

FIGURES

Figure 1.1 The plain wood *zushi* containing the replica of the Kawaguchi Amida (1959), a Jizō image, and a box of replicas of the crucifix and Kishimojin statuette. Nyoirin Kannon-dō, Shiba-mura, Kawaguchi-shi, Saitama Prefecture. To the left is a *zushi* enshrining a sculpture of Nyoirin Kannon. Photographed by the author.

Figure 1.2 "Seated Amida Nyorai" (*Amida Nyorai za-zō*, 阿弥陀如来坐像) (known as "Kawaguchi Amida"), early 17th century. Japanese cypress, lacquer, gold leaf, pigment, 63.5 cm (total height). Saitama Prefecutral Museum of History and Folklore, Saitama-shi, Saitama Prefecture, Japan. Photographed by the author.
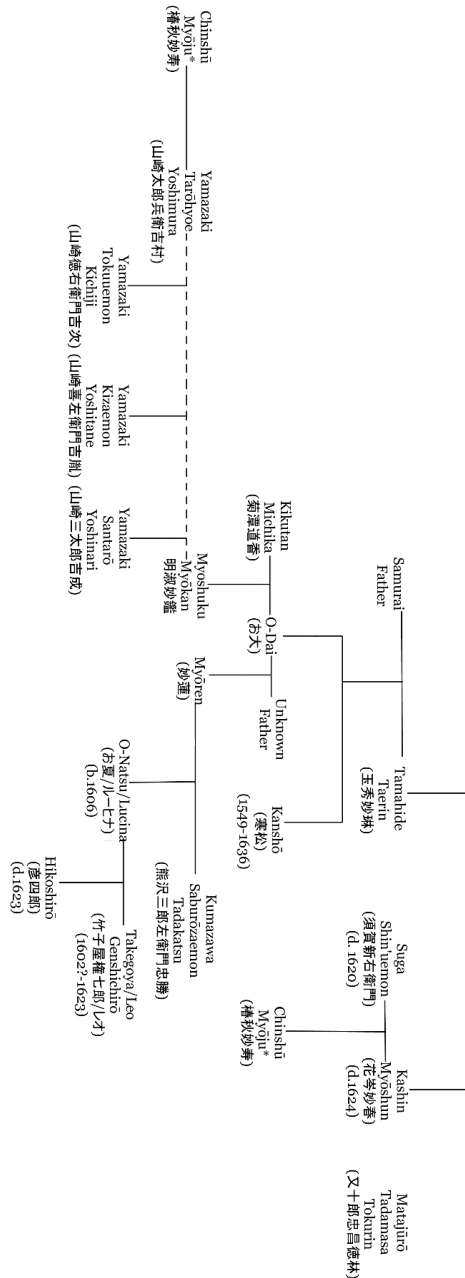
Figures 1.3 and 1.4 (1.3) Removable head with extended shaft and (1.4) hollowed-out, rectangular chamber inside of the Kawaguchi Amida torso. Photographed by the author.

Figure 1.5 Kishimojin (鬼子母神) statuette, known as "Maria Kannon" (マリア観音), and "Crucifix," early 17th century. Kishimojin: cypress, Crucifix: bronze, Kishimojin (including pedestal): 13.2 cm, Crucifix: 8 cm. Saitama Prefectural Museum of History and Folklore, Saitama-shi, Japan. Photographed by the author.

Chinshū
Myōju*
(椿秋妙寿)

Yamazaki
Tarōbyōe
Yoshimura
(山崎太郎兵衛吉村)

Yamazaki
Tokuuemon
Kichiji
(山崎徳右衛門吉次)

Yamazaki
Kizaemon
Yoshitane
(山崎喜左衛門吉胤)

Yamazaki
Santarō
Yoshinari
(山崎三太郎吉成)

Kikutan
Michika
(菊潭道香)

Myōshuku
Myōkan
(明渥妙鑑)

O-Dai
(お大)

Myōren
(妙蓮)

Unknown
Father

Samurai
Father

Kanshō
(寒松)
(1549-1636)

O-Natsu/Lucina
(お夏/ルーヒナ)
(b.1606)

Kumazawa
Saburōzaemon
Tadakatsu
(熊沢三郎左衛門忠勝)

Tamahide
Taerin
(玉秀妙林)

Suga
Shin'uemon
(須賀新右衛門)
(d.1620)

Chinshū
Myōju*
(椿秋妙寿)

Kashin
Myōshun
(花岑妙春)
(d.1624)

Hikoshirō
(彦四郎)
(d.1623)

Takegoya/Leo
Genshichirō
(竹子屋権七郎/レオ)
(1602?-1623)

Matajūrō
Tadamasa
Tokurin
(又十郎忠昌徳林)

*Chinshū Myōju is the same person.

Figure 1.6 The family tree of the greater Kumazawa family, many of whom play key roles in the Kawaguchi Amida mythohistory. Prepared by the author based on information from Honda Sadahiko 本多定彦, "Chōtokuji Kanshō-oshō no kōsatsu-- Kirishitan ibutsu Amidanyorai-zō ni kakawaru" 長徳寺寒松和尚の考察--キリシタン 遺物阿弥陀如来像にかかわる [An Investigation of High Priest Kanshō of Chōtokuji-- His Involvement with the Christian Artifact the Seated Amida Nyorai Image], *Kenkyū Kirishitangaku* 研究キリシタン学 8 (2005) and the Kuki-shi branch of the Saitama Prefectural Library.

Figure 2.1 Dehua Kilns "Maria Kannon" (マリア観音), 17th century. White porcelain. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan. Photographed by the author.

Figure 2.2 Dehua Kilns "Maria Kannon" (マリア観音), 17th century. White porcelain. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan. Photographed by the author.

Figure 2.3 Nichigo, "Kishimojin (鬼子母神)," 17th century. Daiunji, Kyoto, Japan. Reproduced from Patricia Fister, "Sanmi no Tsubone: Ashikaga Wife, Imperial Consort, Buddhist Devotee and Patron," *Japan Review*, no. 23 (2011): 11.

Figure 2.4 "Kishimojin (鬼子母神)," Muromachi period? (Kishimojin-dō established in 1561). Kishimojin-dō, Kōmyōji, Toshima Ward, Tokyo. Reproduced from Tanoshii goshuin meguri 楽しい御朱印めぐり, "Edo san dai Kishimojin goshuin meguri 江戸三大鬼子母神御朱印めぐり" [The Edo Sandai Kishimojin Red Seal Pilgrimage], http://www.gosyuin-meguri.com/special/493.html. (accessed March 6, 2016)

Figure 2.5 "Otepensia (オテペンシャ)," Date unknown. Reproduced from tunagu--
kokoro, "Oratio No gazō|Ekisaito Burogu Oratio の画像|エキサイトブログ" [Oratio's
Images|Exciting Blog], *Oratio*, last modified February 1, 2013,
http://medai.exblog.jp/iv/detail/?s=19215140&i=201302%2F01%2F62%2Fc0254062_21
104557.jpg. (accessed May 12, 2016)

Figure 2.6 Dehua Kilns (德化窑), "Songzi Guanyin 送子觀音," Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Palace Museum, Beijing, China. Reproduced from SINA Corporation, "Běijīng Gùgōng Fójiào Cángpǐn: Dé Huà Yáo Bái Yòu Sòng Zi Guānyīn Xiàng Shǎngxī 北京故宫佛教藏品：德化窑白釉送子观音像赏析" [Beijing Palace Museum Collection of Buddhist: Dehua Kiln White Glaze Songzi Guanyin Appreciation], http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_769fb5f30101j288.html. (accessed May 12, 2016).
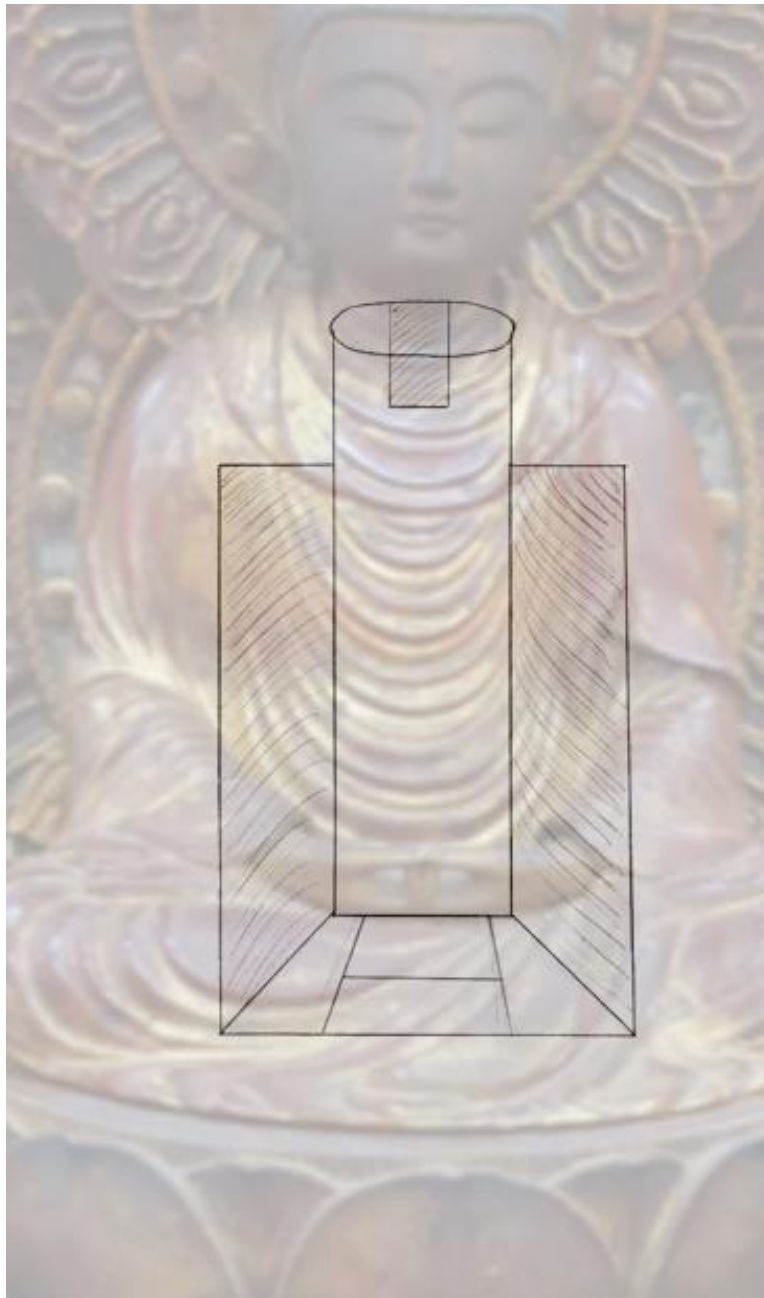
Figure 4.1 Close-up of the crucifix inserted inside of the Kawaguchi Amida.
Photographed by the author.

Figure 5.1 The *zushi* on the left contains an image of Yakushi Nyorai and the one on the right enshrines a Nyoirin Kannon image inside the Nyoirin Kannon-dō, Kawaguchi-shi, Saitama Prefecture. Photographed by the author.

Figure 5.2 Diagram of the Kawaguchi Amida interior chamber, where the "Maria Kannon" and crucifix were discovered. Image by the author.

Figure 5.3 Close up of the Kawaguchi Amida head and upper torso. Photographed by the author.

Figure 6.1 "Nagasaki Maria Kannon," Edo period (1603-1868), bronze. 15 cm. Urakami Cathedral, Nagasaki, Japan. Reproduced from Uchiyama Yoshikazu 内山善一, Chizawa Teiji 千沢槙治, and Nishimura Sada 西村貞, *Kirishitan no bijutsu* キリシタンの美術 [Christian Art] (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1961), 186.

Figure 6.2 "Nagasaki Maria Kannon," Edo period (1603-1868), bronze. 21 cm. Urakami Cathedral, Nagasaki, Japan. Reproduced from Uchiyama, et al., *Kirishitan no bijutsu*, 186.

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