

## The Yasukuni Shrine Affair: Paolo Marella and the Revision of the Prohibition of Eastern Rites

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The reverence being paid by Japanese political leaders to the Yasukuni (pronounced: Yaskooney) Jinja, the Tokyo war victim shrine, has repeatedly been a cause of political controversy in Japan, and at the same time a point of conflict with other Asian nations, which had been victims of Japanese colonization or aggression during World War II. Besides the burden of its own militarist-nationalist past Japan has a further problem: such a public act by politicians would seem to contradict the religious neutrality of the secular state. This objection turns the argument of 80 years ago on its head. For the Japanese state at that time, or more exactly its Ministry of Education, argued in favor of the secular and non-religious character of veneration at the Yasukuni shrine. The ecclesiastical authorities, relying on this interpretation, permitted Catholics to venerate at the shrine, because that would be not a religious, but *only* a patriotic act.

It is well known that in the years following 1932 the question of veneration at the Yasukuni shrine led to a crisis of conscience for the Jesuits of Tokyo's Sophia University. The crisis ended with the declaration of the ecclesiastical authorities in Japan and finally with the instruction of 26 May 1936 by the Congregazione *de Propaganda Fide* (hereafter Propaganda or Propaganda Congregation). This instruction (and another document of Propaganda a year before regarding Manchukuo, which allowed the public worship of Confucius) contributed decisively to the revision of the negative Roman decisions of the 18th century regarding the Chinese rites

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controversy. The final point in this process was the Propaganda instruction of 8 December 1939.<sup>1</sup> This instruction permitted the previously forbidden rites of the veneration of Confucius and the ancestors and it abolished the oath which had been required since 1742 of every missionary to China and other countries in the Far East. The instruction certainly did not declare the former decision to be in error, for it argued that it was not Rome that had changed, but the Rites, which had now become secular in character.

There have been all kinds of publicity about these events, especially from Japanese sources and those of Sophia University, and from their echo in the Japanese press.<sup>2</sup> The hitherto classical expositions, which describe the events most in detail, are by George H. Minamiki: an article in 1980<sup>3</sup> and his 1985 monography about the Rites Controversy, the largest and most important part of which is dedicated to the settlement of the Rites Controversy in the 20th century.<sup>4</sup> In each of these publications the author describes both the history of the dispute in Japan and its connection with the revision of the Roman attitude. Above all Minamiki has emphasized the key role played by the Japanese conflict over Yasukuni, even before the 28 May document of Propaganda regarding Manchuria. This was indeed a year before the relevant document on the Shinto ritual in Japan, but it would have been inexplicable without the previous events in Japan.<sup>5</sup> New light has been shed on all this by the acts of Propaganda Congregation that only recently have become accessible for this time.<sup>6</sup> They had, to be sure, already been briefly evaluated on this point in 1976 by the then Prefect of the archive,

1 Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS) 32/1940, pp. 24-26.

2 The first contemporary and detailed exposition: Pasquale d'Elia, *Evoluzione di popoli e nuove provvidenze della Chiesa*, in: *La Civiltà Cattolica* 87/1936 III, pp. 101-108, 186-196, 279-291. Of the more recent publications in Japan, a contribution of Linda Grove (Tokyo) was sent by email to me by the author.

3 George Hisaharu Minamiki, *The Yasukuni Shrine Incident and the Chinese Rites Controversy*, in: *Catholic Historical Review*, 66/1980, pp. 205-229.

4 George Hisaharu Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy from its Beginning to Modern Times*, Chicago, 1985.

5 Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), p. 222; Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 151.

6 In particular the following files should be named here: *Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide* (APF), *Nuova Serie* (NS), doc. 1152, pp. 120-137, 252-267; doc. 1281, pp. 24-33, 495-513, 540-548, 661-708; doc. 1282, pp. 257-263; doc. 1283, pp. 53-61, 149-153, 355-361, 670-693; *Acta Sacrae Congregationis (Acta)* 307 (1936), pp. 202-212.

Joseph Metzler.<sup>7</sup> The records reveal especially the crucial role of the Apostolic Delegate and later Cardinal Paolo Marella, who, from the end of 1933, represented the Holy See in Tokyo.<sup>8</sup> Marella, as we will see, was the first to raise the question from a purely pragmatic level to one of principle, and so provide the level that made possible a fundamental revision of the question of the rites.

### **The Yasukuni Shrine Incident and its First Settlement**

The main source of information in this matter is the Kuenburg-Report. This is a detailed report of the then rector of Tokyo College (i.e. the Superior of the Jesuit community - to be distinguished from the academic rector of Sophia University), the Austrian Jesuit father Maximilian Joseph von Kuenburg. The report is dated 4 January 1933 and survives in two places: in Tokyo and, as an addition to the letter of Kuenburg, dated 5 January, to the Jesuit General Fr Ledochowski in Rome.<sup>9</sup> Minamiki relied mainly on this report and we will also use it as the basis of our exposition.

The place of the events is Sophia University, which was founded by German Jesuits in 1913. Since 1928-1929 the university had overcome its critical initial phase and was on the rise.<sup>10</sup> In 1928 it had been recognized by the State as a private university. The visitation in 1929 by Fr. (later Cardinal) Bea had led to some important and forward-looking decisions: above all, not to abandon, for short-sighted considerations, its convenient central place near the Yotsuya Station in favor of a larger area at the periphery of the town. As a result a major new construction took place in 1930-1932. The number of students rose steadily and stood at 360 in 1931-1932. At this time the university had a three-year preparatory course (correspon-

7 In his expositions in Josef Metzler (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum*, vol. III/2, Freiburg 1976, pp. 485-487.

8 His stages of life: born 25-1-1895 in Rome, ordained priest in 1918; 1918-1922 in the Congregation of Propaganda; 1922-1924 private chaplain of the pope; 1924-1933 *Chargé d'affaires* of the Apostolic Delegation in the USA; 1933 episcopal consecration; 1933-1948 Apostolic Delegate in Japan and 1948-1953 for Australia, New Zealand and Oceania; 1953-1959 nuncio in France; 1959 Cardinal in the Roman curia; 1964-1973 president of the Secretariate for Non-Christians; died 15-10-1984 (*The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, Biographical Dictionary (1903-2009)* online: <http://www2.fiu.edu/~mirandas/bios-m.htm#Marella> [accessed January 2013]).

9 *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI)*, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, III doc. 9.

10 A detailed exposition will be presented in vol. III of my history, *Deutsche Jesuiten 1810-1983*, which will appear in the middle of 2013.

ding to the American High School) and the faculties of philosophy, literature and economics. But this upward trend was put at risk by the following events, especially their echo in the press.

Since 1925 a system of pre-military training, with an officer in charge who was appointed by the army, had been introduced in all secondary schools and universities. This brought along with it privileges for the students, namely a shorter period of military service of one year (instead of three years) and their status as officer candidates. Hand in hand with these measures went, in interior policy, a growing predominance of the army and the War Ministry, and nationalistic propaganda along with an aggressive foreign policy. This began in September 1931 with the occupation of Manchuria, followed in February 1932 by the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo and culminating in 27 March 1933 in the withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations. The following events can be understood only in the context of this heated atmosphere.

Another more general part of the background was the establishment of State Shinto in Japan from the end of the XIX century.<sup>11</sup> It was the result of a compromise between two opposed tendencies of modernization. There was, on the one hand, the attempt to introduce Shintoism as the new civil religion - a plan that really could not succeed, because there was no way to integrate Buddhism within it. On the other hand, there was the inevitable necessity of accepting religious liberty and the separation of religion and politics as claims of modern times. State Shinto tried to satisfy both claims. Its aim was "to establish a type of Shinto which was to be taken out of the category of religion and was to be looked upon as a non-religious way of life acceptable to all citizens regardless of their personal beliefs. It strove to formulate a kind of patriotic cult that would unify all citizens spiritually and culturally under the emperor and clearly separate this civic way of life from all religions".<sup>12</sup> State Shinto, therefore, although not religious in the strict sense, was ideologically highly charged. Its forms and celebrations were rejected up to this time by the Catholic Church; though - and this was the problem - on account of its supposed connection with traditional religion and not because of its union with modern nationalism. That became clear in the Yasukuni incident and its consequences.

11 For these developments George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), pp. 99-119.

12 Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 112.

On 5 May 1932 the training officer in charge for the Sophia University, Colonel Kitahara, led a group of about 60 students of the second year of the preparatory course to Yushukan, a museum of military history, which was situated near the Yasukuni Shrine and about 20 minutes away from Sophia by foot. He said at the beginning that they would also visit the shrine on the way. That became a cause of concern for some Catholic students. By chance they met on campus Fr. Hermann Hoffmann, the academic rector of the university, and asked him if they could participate. His response was negative: they would not be obliged to participate.

There are conflicting reports about precisely what then happened in the visit to the shrine. According to the Kuenburg report, two catholic students refused to salute the shrine by military presentation of arms. According to another version two (or three) did not bow their heads to the shrine (the rite of the *sampai*).<sup>13</sup> It is certain that they avoided any provocation and kept their distance unobtrusively. In any case their behaviour and the advice given by Fr. Hoffmann corresponded to the then current norms of the Catholic Church. Visits to the shrines with reverence (*sampai*) was forbidden to Catholics, as P. Kuenburg emphasized in his report: although since the 1920's in internal considerations - e.g. in the provincial synod of Tokyo in 1924 - a more differentiated position was emerging.<sup>14</sup> This had led to no small number of conflicts of conscience. For in the 1920's several higher government officials were ready for conversion, but did not take this step because paying homage to Jinja was part of their office; only their wives were baptized.<sup>15</sup> Only for soldiers it was usual, as later reports affirm, to turn a blind eye. Nevertheless there was initially no complaint about the conduct of the Catholic students. But two days later the issue must have been brought up in a conversation between Colonel Kitahara and Fr. Hoffmann, on which occasion Fr. Hoffmann tried to explain the Catholic posi-

13 For these different versions: Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), p. 210 n. 16, and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 294 n. 59.

14 For the position of the Catholic Church regarding State Shinto until the Yasukuni Shrine incident: Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), pp. 121-138.

15 d'Elia, *Evoluzione* (n. 2), p. 282.

tion to the colonel.<sup>16</sup> In any case it is certain that Colonel Kitahara reported the incident to the Ministry of War, either immediately, as the Kuenburg report suspected, or after that conversation.

On the very day of the inauguration of the new university building on 14 June, Fr. Hoffmann received a phone call from the Ministry of Education. The latter was informed by the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of War that “the spirit of the University Jochi [Sophia University] does not correspond to the principles of national education”. Hence the training officer would be withdrawn. That would have meant not only the loss of former privileges for the students, but in the long run also the end of Sophia University. The Ministry of Education was opposed to this measure, as they informed Fr. Hoffmann, also for reasons of their own prestige which was at stake because this ministry had given the university national recognition.<sup>17</sup>

So the Ministry of Education was basically willing to cooperate, and also Fr. Hoffmann had the good fortune to be able to offer a bridge of reconciliation. For on the evening of the same day he could inform the Ministry of Education, in another telephone call, that a revision of the hitherto clearly negative position of the Church was imminent. The revision came from the Apostolic Vicar John Ross of Hiroshima,<sup>18</sup> who was in Tokyo at that time, probably for the celebration of the inauguration of the new university building. He had himself been repeatedly confronted with the problem of veneration at Shinto shrines and had drawn up a document about it.

16 ARSI, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, III doc. 9: “Am 7. Mai hatte er dann, im Beisein des Sekretärs der Schule, eine (japanische) Unterredung mit dem Direktor, bei der er großen Mangel an Verständnis für religiöse Gesichtspunkte zeigte. So fragte er, ob P. Hoffmann etwas dagegen hätte, daß die Studenten eine Verbeugung vor dem Kaiserpalast machten, um ihre Ehrfurcht vor S. Majestät auszudrücken. Aber schließlich versprach er, die kath. Lehre und die Schule genauer zu untersuchen. Man gab ihm dafür ein Buch, das er als Beleg für seine Akten dem Kr[iegs-].M[inisterium]. einsandte”.

17 ARSI, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, III doc. 9: “Das Kr.M. wollte dafür die *Zustimmung* des U[nterrichts-].M[inisteriums]. Dessen Beamte sagten, sie könnten einen solchen Brief gar nicht beantworten, da er für das U.M. selbst, das die Schule genehmigt hatte, eine schwere Beleidigung enthalte; sie verlangten daher Zurücknahme des Briefes” (underlining in original here in italic).

18 The Apostolic Vicariate of Hiroshima (then with the see in Okayama), which included the southwest of Honshu (the Prefectures of Okayama, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Shimane and Tottori) was entrusted to the Lower German Province of the Jesuit Order in 1922.

This document of Ross was initially decisive for the provisional ecclesiastical tolerance of the *Sampai*. It does not yet depart from the assumption that the ceremonies before the shrine are a purely civil and patriotic matter, but it also presupposes the primarily religious or at least mixed character of State Shinto. Somewhat modified in its later version of October 1932 after the official declaration of the Ministry of Education,<sup>19</sup> it relies on Canon 1258 CIC, which regulates the participation of Catholics in non-Catholic religious ceremonies. In this Canon it was stated that active and formal participation is forbidden in any case; but a *passive* or purely *material* participation at funerals, weddings or similar ceremonies of non-Catholics could be tolerated by reasons of courtesy or civic duty. In cases of doubt the decision belongs to the bishop, and the danger of apostasy or of offence must be excluded.<sup>20</sup>

That the ceremonies before the Jinja also have at least a religious aspect continued to be Ross's opinion in the October version, after the declaration of the Ministry of Education. But with regard to the religious aspect, the bow before the Shinto shrine is, according to him, only passive participation, since active participation is only what belongs to the ceremony itself.<sup>21</sup> In addition, such participation by soldiers had until now been tolerated by the ecclesiastical authorities. Finally, the same conclusion could be drawn from the practice of Catholic schools in the missions and in Europe, where even non-Catholic and non-Christian students are obliged to attend Mass, to kneel etc., which could never be

19 We know from the Kuenburg Report that the June version of Ross was based on Canon 1258 (CIC). The October version, identical with the text cited in Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), pp. 218-220, and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), pp. 146-148, exists also as an appendix in the relation of the Apostolic Vicar Everard Mooney of 20 January 193 (APF, NS 1152, ff. 127-132). There Ross writes that he had composed a first version of the document in May or June, but then he had waited for the imminent declaration of the Ministry of Education and after that declaration he had revised his text. In his October text he refers repeatedly to this declaration, mostly in the sense of reinforcing his arguments. But basically the October version allows us to reconstruct also his arguments in the June version.

20 Canon 1258 (CIC) § 2: "Tolerari potest praesentia passiva seu mere materialis, civilis officii vel honoris causa ob gravem rationem ab Episcopo in casu dubii probandam, in acatholicorum funeribus, nuptiis, similibusve solemnibus, dummodo perversionis et scandali periculum absit".

21 The principle of *passive participation* was first applied in Japan in 1868. At this time (when Christianity was still forbidden and persecuted) it was the problem of the Buddhist priest who came to exercise his ceremonies for the deceased and whether it was permissible to be present (Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 124).

allowed if it were *active participation*. After the declaration of the Ministry of Education in October, he could add that according to this declaration, just the bowing of the head is considered only as a gesture of patriotic commitment. Furthermore this official declaration would eliminate the danger *perversionis et scandali*.

In any case, on this same June 14 feverish activity began. On that day, Ross spoke with the archbishop of Tokyo Chambon (1927-1938). The archbishop was convinced by his arguments and at first allowed orally, provisionally, and for that particular case, the participation of the Catholic students at a common celebration in front of the Yasukuni Shrine. This provisional permission was announced to the students on 5 July, and on the following day Colonel Kitahara was informed of it in writing by the secretary of the university. According to reports from the Ministry of Education, it now seemed to be satisfactory to the Ministry of War.<sup>22</sup>

However the concern now was to get an official and written declaration from the Ministry of Education that bowing before the Yasukuni Shrine (and also before the shrine of the deceased Meiji emperor) "is not an expression of religious worship, but is only a witness of patriotism and allegiance. Orally that had been assured at different times, but only unofficially. However what was wanted was an official and, if possible, written statement that would justify to the faithful the changed attitude of the ecclesiastical authority, in order to avoid scandal".<sup>23</sup> Archbishop Chambon and the Apostolic Delegate Everard Mooney worked together on this. On 22 September Archbishop Chambon sent a formal request regarding this issue to the Ministry of Education.<sup>24</sup> The statement finally came in the form of a letter from the Vice Minister Awaya to Chambon on 30 September. The crucial passage read: "The visit of the national shrines (Jinja) is required from the students of secon-

22 ARSI, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, III doc. 9: "Die nächsten Wochen vergingen in den Verhandlungen zwischen den beiden Ministerien, die schließlich dazu führten, daß uns im U.M. (mit dem wir als unserer vorgesetzten Behörde allein zu verkehren hatten) inoffiziell mitgeteilt wurde, das Kr.M. sei jetzt zufriedengestellt und der Oberst, der von vielen für etwas sonderlich angesehen wurde, werde mit Juli abberufen werden. Dies geschah aber nicht u. er arbeitete weiter gegen uns".

23 Kuenburg Report (ARSJ, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, III doc. 9).

24 The text is found as a French translation of the English original in the appendix of the report of the Apostolic Delegate Everard Mooney of 20-I-1933 (APF, NS 1152, f. 133). The decisive passages are also found in Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), p. 216 and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 145.



dary, middle and elementary schools owing to their educational program. In this case it is demanded from the students of the secondary, middle and elementary schools to pay reverence for no other reason than an expression of patriotism and loyalty".<sup>25</sup> After this declaration Archbishop Chambon allowed students such as soldiers, when they are guided there in closed groups and cannot absent themselves without grave inconvenience (*sine gravi incommodo*), to make the bow together with the non-Christian students; in this case that would be for them only a civil act, because only as such is it required.<sup>26</sup>

This seemed to settle the matter. But such was not to be. Since October 1 there had begun a press campaign against Sophia University and Catholic schools in general, which were accused of a lack of patriotism. It was the Ministry of War and especially younger and more radical circles, who were behind this campaign. In the University of Sophia it was decided in a general assembly of the professors on 22 October not to go on the offensive with public counter-statements, since the press depended entirely on the army for news from Manchuria and would not dare to defend the Jesuits. This campaign of nationalist circles did not remain without consequences. By the middle of 1934 the number of students dropped from 360 to 196. This created, together with the lack of leadership of the already 70-year-old Fr. Hoffmann, a certain mood of resignation and depression.<sup>27</sup>

But the controversy had lasting effects for the attitude of the Church toward the Rites. This attitude remained first on the pragmatic level of *passive* participation, based on the statement of the Ministry of Education. In this sense the Apostolic Delegate Mooney issued a declaration in January 1933: paying homage at the *Jinja*, i.e. the national Shinto shrines, which are monuments both of patriotism and of pagan religion could be tolerated (*tolerari potest*) for serious reasons since, on the basis of the authentic declaration of the state authority it is understood only as a manifestation of patriotism and loyalty to the emperor, as long as it is clear from the circumstances that the faithful

25 Appendix of the report of the Apostolic Delegate Everard Mooney of 20-I-1933 (APE, NS 1152, f. 134); d'Elia, *Evoluzione* (n. 2), p. 196; Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), p. 216 n. 37 and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 145.

26 This permission, no longer only provisional, is not reported in the Küenburg Report, but in a letter of Fr. Küenburg to the Jesuit General on 6 October 1932 (ARSI, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, II doc. 26).

27 Report of Fr. Küenburg to the Jesuit General dated 3 July 1934 (ARSI, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, IV doc. 34).

are not participating in non-Christian religious cult.<sup>28</sup> Mooney then sent the crucial documents to Rome, including the October paper of Ross and the declaration of the Ministry of Education.<sup>29</sup>

But among these documents there was also a clearly negative opinion of the Apostolic Prefect of Formosa and Apostolic Administrator of Shikoku, Thomas de la Hoz OP.<sup>30</sup> He argued from the moral unity of the Shinto cult and its inner connection with the worship of the gods and protective spirits of the empire.<sup>31</sup> Therefore as long as the prototype is presented as gods or protective spirits, the bow would be forbidden. Only when they are presented as national heroes or examples, could it be tolerated. Mooney remarked that Thomas de la Hoz obviously had no knowledge of the statement of the Ministry of Education.<sup>32</sup> That is certainly true, because he never mentions it. On the other hand it seems questionable whether the statement of the Ministry of Education would fulfil Thomas de la Hoz's requirements because he (de la Hoz) refers not only to the bow (for which the explanation of the Ministry of Education had given a merely civil-patriotic interpretation), but also to the whole context of the Shinto cult in the Jinja, for which he (de la Hoz) desired a

28 d'Elia, *Evoluzione* (n. 2), p. 283; Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), p. 220 and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p.148.

29 Report of 20-I-1933 (APF, NS 1152, ff. 120-126) with the Appendix.

30 APF, NS 1152, f. 135.

31 The central passage is: "Cum actus humani naturam propriae moralitatis sumant praecipue ab obiecto seu fine operis ab istisque specificentur, et in casu obiectum et finis inclinationis capitis sit venerare tamquam *deos seu numina protectores imperii* prototipa, quae in praedictis templis coluntur, debemus dicere actionem inclinationis capitis ab *ipsis prototipis seu diis aut numinibus suam propriam naturam moralem* sumere ab ipsisque specificari; id est talis inclinatio capitis, quia fertur ad deos, sumit characterem adorationis et secumfert sensum divinitatis, cuius proprius venerationis actus, si Deus verus est, dicitur adoratio, si non veri sed falsi, actus venerationis istorum denominatur *idololatria*, quam numquam licet praebere" (italics indicate underlining in the original, APF, NS 1152, f. 135).

32 "Animadversio: In praedicto argumento exponendo nulla videtur haberi ratio declarationis gubernii quae tamen vim videtur habere in determinando praecise obiecto quo specificatur actus; unde argui posse videretur: Hic actus (inclinatio capitis in visitatione "Jinja") ex vi declarationis Gubernii intelligitur dirigi in illa entia in quorum honorem "Jinja" erigitur prouti merentur venerationem ratione amoris patriae et fidelitatis erga Imperatorem (v.g. quatenus talem virtutem exemplificant vel qualitercumque in mentem venire faciunt). Atque hoc idem est ac dicere illa entia vi declarationis Gubernii proponi ut venerentur veneratione quae est ordinis civilis tantum. Ergo ille actus prouti specificatur ab obiecto per illam declarationem praecise determinato est ordinis civilis tantum et non religiosi" (APF, NS 1152, f. 136).

purely secular national-patriotic interpretation. In fact isolating the question to the bowing of the head was the weak point in the argument. For the time being it allowed a pragmatic arrangement, but in the long run it could not satisfy. Only with the next delegate Marella was the problem approached in a more fundamental way.

### **Marella and the *spirit of Nagasaki***

The new Apostolic Delegate Paolo Marella took office in December 1933. In his first report of 8 January 1934<sup>33</sup> he informed the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Congregation, Fumasoni Biondi, in a general way about the change of atmosphere in favour of the Catholic Church, but also that he would neglect nothing to admonish the missionaries to use extreme caution, adding that especially the German fathers suffered heavily from any suspicion of a lack of national loyalty.<sup>34</sup> But for him the German Jesuits counted among those missionaries who at least had understood the signs of the time. What he attacked again and again was the *spirit of Nagasaki*, that is the paternalistic attitude of many of the French missionaries of the Paris *Société des missions étrangères*, who had been almost exclusively responsible for the mission in the country since the opening up of Japan,<sup>35</sup> combined with the conservative mentality of the old Christians held in immaturity by these missionaries and reinforced in their narrowness and isolation from the national culture.

33 APF, NS 1152, ff. 253-256.

34 "...sentendosi specialmente i Padri di nazionalità tedesca, gravemente umiliati e feriti nell'animo, per aver dovuto sottostare alle condizioni di cui parla nei Memorandum. Li ho compatiti, ho detto loro parole di lode e d'incoraggiamento, ma li ho pregati al tempo stesso che facessero ben comprendere ai loro Religiosi che nel servizio della Chiesa non v'è scelta di sacrifici, ma occorre fare quei che il Signore domanda per la sua gloria e per la propagazione del suo Regno nel mondo" (APF, NS 1152, f. 254). In the report of 24-X-1937 to the Cardinal Prefect (APF, NS 1284, ff. 738-749), almost four years later, Marella tells how he had found the German fathers coming to Tokyo in December 1933: "i Padri erano non soltanto avviliti, com'era da aspettarsi, ma irritatissimi, pieni di risentimento e collera: né mancava chi avrebbe voluto, contro ogni regola di prudenza, combattere a spada tratta, e chi insisteva per andarsene tutti e farla finita...Non ci voleva molto infatti ad accorgersi che in quei cuori non aveva mai albergato un sentimento di affetto per quella che era in fondo la loro patria di adozione: da buoni intellettuali tedeschi si sentirono offesi nel più vivo della loro dignità e non riuscivano ad umiliarsi, se non davanti agli uomini, almeno sub potenti manu Dei!" (APF, NS 1284, f. 741).

35 Only the region of Niigata on the West coast was missionary area of the Fathers of the Divine Word (SVD); the isle of Shikoku, of the Dominicans; and - since 1922 - the Southwest of Honshu (Hiroshima Mission), of the German Jesuits.

Accordingly, Marella wrote to the Cardinal Prefect on 5 April 1935<sup>36</sup> that in his policy of avoiding any confrontation he stood between two fires: the ultra-nationalist and xenophobic military circles on the one hand; and, on the other hand, many Catholics, missionaries and Japanese priests in the south (Kyushu), who, brash and ignorant of the delicate situation, constantly demanded stronger action and accused him of timidity and weakness.<sup>37</sup> Just then, he reported, was published *The spirit of Japan and Catholicism* by Fr. Wachida, pastor of Sasebo near Nagasaki, attacking sharply the Japanese nationalism and militarism. He (Marella) and the archbishop were unpleasantly affected by this imprudence. He gave explicit instructions to look, in the ecclesiastical censure of books, not only to orthodoxy, but to avoid anything that could appear as an attack on the national spirit. But in this case the bishop of Nagasaki (Hayasaka) was ill and the *imprimatur* was given by an 80-year-old censor. The book was, according to Marella, a typical example of the old mentality of Nagasaki, "which sees no other way for the Christian penetration of Japan than the way of opposition".<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the *mentality of Nagasaki*, Marella narrated to the Cardinal Prefect in detail in his letter dated 25 November 1934: "Until recently the missionary believed that Christians must be kept humbly and submissive to the missionaries, with an idea - to say it bluntly - of racial inferiority, ready to believe everything the priest said, and to do whatever he wanted. Even today there are entire villages in the diocese of Nagasaki, where the Japanese priest, heir of the missionary and his methods, is the absolute master and bullies the people who fear him rather than love him. I have read articles in the newspapers of Tokyo that repeatedly reported about travellers

36 APF, NS 1281, ff. 24-33.

37 "Due o tre di questi, e tra i più intelligenti, in una recente Riunione per la Commissione della stampa e Azione Cattolica, tenuta qui alla Delegazione, accusarono di debolezza il nostro modo di procedere: vorrebbero protestare, combattere all'ultimo sangue, mentre danno prova di non conoscere a fondo le condizioni attuali del paese. Parlano e agiscono a base di sentimenti, come del resto i loro compatrioti militari, e sarebbero capaci di qualsiasi eccesso, sempre credendo di aiutare la santa causa. E ci vuole molta pazienza per persuaderli e calmarli" (APF, NS 1281, ff. 24-33).

38 As positive example he mentions an article of H. Noll in "Actio missionaria" of March 1935 (Fasc. 16), which demands positive departure from Japanese national sentiment and its myths. At any rate Marella would disapprove of attacking venerable institutions and myths, however unhistorical they may be, and so violating the sensibilities of such a cultivated, but also irritable people.

who were amazed to see, so to speak *European oases* in Japan, where people live in complete ignorance of the Japanese traditions. All that harms the very reputation of the Church, confirming the accusation of anti-patriotism, and exposing us to the danger of losing our Christian youth. The old missionaries were overzealous, and, as a missionary of MM.EE. [Missions Étrangères] said to me, not without a touch of Jansenist rigor, fanatically destroyed without building up. They have destroyed what was superstition, and what it was not, without respect of such great traditions, and above all, without substituting it by any public Christian ceremony which would make it clear since the first years of re-opening of Japan that the Church inculcates love and loyalty to the native country and the emperor. The Frenchman, who is very patriotic himself, does not understand this noble feeling in others. Year on year he has unwisely ridiculed Japanese things and has not done anything on the great national festivals and on the great occasions of joy or mourning of the nation. Only three years ago a prayer for the Emperor has been formulated which will be read at certain occasions after the Mass, but I must even confess that it is prayed coldly and without heart. So, as Msg. Roy<sup>39</sup> said, they have accustomed the Christians to live on the margins of Japanese society, in a completely off-side position, and with a malformed conscience in many ways, glad to have "true Christians", "all of a piece", but in fact "de-japanized". Even today, after such a long time, this tendency of the missionaries is dangerous. Although cautious, they do nothing to teach Christians the better; even catechisms and prayer books are in many points so worded that they give rise to suspicion and need to be revised. In short, all of our past positions have to be revised, which have been left unchanged in the past years, within a decade in which one could and should have done something".<sup>40</sup>

Marella insisted consistently on acknowledging in some way the national celebrations. The German missionaries also understood this, but not the French, and on 23 November, the day of beginning of the rice harvest, the archbishop of Tokyo had congratulated him by phone regarding *his* festival. He had meant it jokingly, but he did not see that it was a joke with fire. Similarly, even on the part of Archbishop Chambon, there was an aversion to mo-

39 Archbishop of Tokyo 1912-1927.

40 Copy in APF, NS 1281, p. 541.

dern *missiology*; practice should be all, and with an old missionary, the study of the culture of the country was not necessary.<sup>41</sup>

Bluntly, as a lasting legacy of the Rites Controversy, Marella considered that this mentality, after the Roman decision of 1936, had struck a breach in the ban of the Rites. On 1 October 1937 he wrote to the Cardinal Prefect<sup>42</sup> that during his four years in Japan he had found only a few missionaries who understood the sense of the right adaptation to the mission land. Most of them would live as “perpetui stranieri”: they speak the language, know the customs, are ready for each sacrifice, but did never come in contact with the Japanese soul.<sup>43</sup> This would be a disastrous legacy of the Rites Controversy, which had the consequence that *adaptation* belonged more or less to the heretical dictionary. The great tradition of Ricci and Nobili was ignored and forgotten. The most orthodox were considered those who simply introduced European customs. Such a heritage of traditions and mentalities, jealously guarded and handed down from the Superiors, remained with newcomers like a lead coating. It was only recently, since the mission encyclical of Benedict XV *Maximum illud* in 1919, that a new spirit was coming. As an example of this past mentality, which sensed *paganism* everywhere, Marella mentions the prohibition against entering temples or even passing through a *torii*. Still worse than with the missionaries was the situation of the sisters, whose mentality was fixed and who, instead of japanizing themselves, europeanized their candidates. Although there were plenty of native sisters, the European sisters are not ready to be governed by them.

41 “Essi, dicono, sono la missionologia vivente, i loro sacrifici, la loro esperienza e non le teorie dei professori. Che non è necessario per i missionari studiare in patria circa i popoli che vanno ad evangelizzare; che lo studio si fa sul posto e alla direzione del vecchio missionario, proprio come si fa dalla Società delle MM.EE. E così si spiega la immobilità; il giovane arriva ignorante di tutto ed è subito circondato e istruito senza che abbia opportunità di formarsi idee da per se stesso, se non quando è troppo per tardi” (APF, NS 1281, p. 541).

42 APF, NS 1283, pp. 670-673.

43 “Vogliono portare anime a Cristo, senza però immedesimarsi nella cultura, nella mitica, negli interessi, nelle aspirazioni di questa grande nazione; anzi, ciò che è grave, senza smetterla talvolta di rilevare difetti, lasciandosi anche sfuggire ironie sui modi di fare e di pensare. Non c’è insomma, Eminenza, quella “unio animarum”, che è appunto, se non erro, la definizione dell’amicizia” (APF, NS 1283, pp. 670-673).

### On the way to the Roman decision

As long as Rome had not spoken, doubts could not entirely disappear despite all the declarations of ecclesiastical authorities in Japan and the insight of most missionaries that circumstances had changed.<sup>44</sup> Marella therefore requested the Cardinal Prefect on 8 May 1935, in an extensive letter, for a decision from Rome.<sup>45</sup> This letter is important for his general view of the problem.

Marella explains the background of State Shinto: the efforts to have an *official cult*, which ties in with the ancient Shinto rites, should be seen as part of the effort to defend the country against a total Westernization on the one hand, and against communism on the other. Public authorities assumed that, after the secularization of the State and the introduction of religious freedom, this would no longer appear as religious coercion. State Shinto is now clearly separated from religious but private Shinto. And here one must ask whether the mission has not been too much outside this process of national consciousness and so exposed itself to accusations of lacking patriotism. Especially the French missionaries had certainly brought the faithful to an intense religious life, but in their pastoral practice there had been some rigorism, to the point that they had sometimes refused to pay homage to the imperial image. But Marella refused to reduce the whole problem only to the formal bowing of the head, as required for students and soldiers. Apparently this facilitated the problem. One must, however, see the official state cult as a whole, as it is understood. On this occasion, Marella suggested, the precise meaning of words and gestures, which can have a religious significance (e.g. *Kami*, which can mean gods, but also heroes or simply symbolic figures), is fluid and therefore it is inappropriate to approach the terminologies of Japanese thought through the scanning of our Western concepts, and for Japanese feeling the formal element has an enormous importance.

An important background for Marella was the threat of Communism: Communist Japan would be more dangerous than the Soviet Union, even more dangerous than the Chinese Communists under Mao (in early 1934, after *the Great March*, they were establi-

44 So in the letter of Marella cited in the following text: "Inoltre gli Ordinari e gran parte dei Missionari, specialmente non francesi e non legati perciò da antiche tradizioni, sono convinti che una reale evoluzione è avvenuta tanto nel governo che nel popolo: ma nessuno osa prendere una decisione generale apertamente e su tutto il problema se non è sicuro che la sua attitudine sarà ben vista dai Superiori".

45 APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708.

shed in Yenan), who are basically no more than pure bandits.<sup>46</sup> And just when things are still in flux, it is necessary to support the government the government in this process of secularization of political Shintoism. Otherwise, if one insists on the religious character of the rites, it would serve only as tools of the ideologues of the opposite side who want to transform Shinto into a universal nature religion. It would be important, "to collaborate in this great work of moral union of the people around the venerated person of its emperor". Here the missions could not remain absent. The political leaders of Japan would know well that the Catholic Church makes no concessions on principles. But they would expect from the Church that she participates in the work of building up the nation without raising objections against the Jinja, which are an unavoidable instrument.

Furthermore, Marella made a reference to a decree of the Council of Nagasaki in 1890, which declared that customs and manners, which had a superstitious origin, but in the actual general convention have it no more, can be safely practised. If these rules would have been observed, the present fears would be without foundation. But in Kyushu, partly, even bows before the photograph of the emperor and all participation in national festivals were banished. Marella referred also to the ancient Roman imperial cult that survived in a modified form in Byzantium.<sup>47</sup> He mentions only the refusal of the sacrifice to the emperor by the early Christian martyrs, but does not take into account the full diversity of the historical situation, especially that today's Church as a worldwide Church with a global network has a much greater possibility and security to react in a differentiated manner. As to the parallelism with the Chinese rites, drawn by the rigorists, he denies the parallel without

46 "E non bisogna poi dimenticare che la Russia è vicina, vicinissima al Giappone, e che il pericolo del comunismo non è poi soltanto una chimera. Solo l'attaccamento all'Imperatore può salvare questo paese dal bolscevismo che cerca d'infiltrarsi nelle classe intellettuali. I "Rossi" della Cina non sono in fondo che briganti; ma se il fuoco attaccasse il Giappone avremmo un bolscevismo organizzato con a capo degli studenti per leaders e sarebbe più terribile di quello russo nella sua opera di distruzione di tutto un passato. Che Iddio ce ne salvi per la salute dell'Asia!" (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

47 One mentions only the publications of Louis Brehier and especially Pierre Batifol, *Les survivances du Culte Impérial Romain. A propos des rites Shintoïstes*, Paris 1920, which he enclosed. For the importance of the work of Batifol, which was motivated directly by the Japanese problems, see Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), pp. 131-134.



entering into the question itself. That the Church in the last decades made so little progress, in spite of the favourable constellation of the 1920's, is attributed by him to this defensive posture against Japanese patriotism. In particular, this posture had left an unpleasant impression when his predecessor Giardini, after he had been present in 1927 at the funeral of the emperor Taisho, later in 1928 on the occasion of the coronation of Hirohito, in which the entire diplomatic corps was present, excused himself by a long absence from Japan, but really because a bow to the imperial regalia, which were connected with the divine origin of the Empire, was required. All the more, when one thinks of regular diplomatic relations and the establishment of a nuncio, it was imperative to clarify such questions in advance, and in principle how the authorities now understand these rites. The behavior of Mooney, Marella's predecessor, had set here a practical solution and had brought the issues to light, but it was still too timid and insufficiently fundamental.<sup>48</sup> However without it our schools would have been closed and the military would have won.

But that was not enough. Why did Archbishop Chambon permit, for example, the collective visits of students in the Jinja, but not individual visits? This can be understood only as a transitional situation, opening a gap at first and then the whole door. But a gap was already opened in so far as the visit to Jinja by (Catholic) soldiers was tolerated and not considered a *status confessionis* – the necessary consequence of an *intrinsice malum*. Because the rigorists brought again and again this comparison, we must clarify that this case has nothing to do with the Chinese rites: this controversy was totally different. Nevertheless the slightest fault could have disastrous consequences.<sup>49</sup> If one says that certain decisions should not be taken in a situation of pressure, in order not to yield to force, then previously the contrary had been stated: that some decisions should not be precipitated, as long as there is no pressure to deci-

48 "Evitava il problema nel suo complesso e non osava domandarsi se la laicizzazione degli Jinja era tale da rendere accettabile il culto ai fedeli giapponesi alla stessa guisa della tomba del soldato ignoto in Occidente. Si limitava soltanto a considerare se le circostanze esteriori erano tali da giustificare una cooperazione da parte dei cattolici, senza timore di scandalo, e per obbedire al governo" (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

49 "Nell'atmosfera attuale, e la S.C. ben lo comprende, il minimo sbaglio può sollevare una violenta persecuzione generale in tutto il Giappone, senza che il Governo, anche volendo, possa trattenerla: e noi ne porteremo senza dubbio la responsabilità" (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

de, but give time. How, therefore, could any problem be tackled?<sup>50</sup>

While Marella's predecessor Giardini held the view that such a development of Shintoism is a development of centuries, Marella himself perhaps would have judged so 10 years ago, but the time was running out and in any case one could not stand idly aside in such a process. Marella therefore proposed to answer the following *Dubia*:

1) Does Japan belong to those countries where the oath of the Rites must be taken?

2) As the ceremonies at the Jinja - according to the repeated official declarations of state authorities and in view of modern mentality - have a purely patriotic sense, can the faithful attend them without scruple?<sup>51</sup>

An answer to these questions, negative to the first and affirmative to the second, would be of great importance for the progress of Catholic christendom in Japan. Catholics could thus confess without reservation their patriotism and Catholicism could make its contribution to the work of national renewal. The government would recognize that there is no gap between *Catholic* and *Japanese*, and it would increase its respect for the spiritual power of the Catholic Church.

In addition, many family rituals on occasion of weddings, funerals etc., although they had their historical origins in Buddhism or other religions, have lost this connection long ago and now are generally understood as normal formulas of courtesy, which cannot be disregarded lest one should violate all social conventions. But even here Catholics could be led into unnecessary conflicts of conscience. So it happened that a Catholic girl was about to be disinherited because she refused to wash, together with her sister, the gravestone of her mother. Ultimately everything depended on the narrowness or farsightedness of the missionary.<sup>52</sup> How many intelligent Christians in Tokyo had asked Marella to put an end to this confusion! Many missionaries were farsighted,

50 "Quando allora, possiamo domandarci, dovranno affrontarsi certi problemi, mai?" (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

51 "Cum cultus, qui a gubernio Japonensi apud monumenta Jinja sustentantur, tam ex ipsius gubernii declarationibus pluries iam repetitis, quam ex evolutione idearum in Japonia modernizata, significationem mere patrioticam habeat, scilicet filialis reverentiae erga familiam imperialem et venerationis erga patriae benefactores, utrum fideles in participatione huic cultui civili a gubernio desiderata sicut ceteri cives agere possint, sine ulla conscientiae dubitatione?" (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

52 "Vi è insomma anche oggi una tortura di coscienze che fa veramente pena: tutto dipende se prendono consiglio o da un vecchio Missionario, che vede paganesimo in ogni cantone, o da un giovane o da una Suora, che non ha chiare idee su queste materie" (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

but everything would be paralyzed by the fear of a negative decision of Rome.

3. Then one could formulate the third *Dubium*. Can the faithful participate at funerals, weddings and other social events, which, although they have a religious (“superstitious”) origin, in the general belief have become conventional forms of polite social interaction?<sup>53</sup>

Shortly afterwards there came from Rome, although not yet the required decision regarding the Shinto rites, the decision on the veneration of Confucius for Manchukuo. It was the first major revision of the Roman Rites decisions of the XVIII century. And the decisions and developments in Japan and Manchukuo were closely interlinked.<sup>54</sup> In the Manchukuo Empire established in 1932, generally traditional Chinese values and especially the worship of Confucius served as the ideological foundation of public order and particularly as the common link of the different ethnic groups. This raised scruples of conscience among the Catholics. But through the Japanese example, they had before them a precedence to solve the conflict. Also here Bishop Ernest Gaspais of Kirin had requested an explanation from the government that the required acts of worship of Confucius would only have a patriotic memorial character and no religious significance. The requested declaration was given on 5 March 1935 by the Ministry of Education of Manchukuo. After a week the issue was deliberated in a reunion of the Manchurian bishops. Here not only Canon 1258 but also a document that was sent confidentially by the Propaganda Congregation about Shintoism in Japan played a role.<sup>55</sup> The decisions of the bishops which

53 “In funeralibus, matrimoniiis, vel aliis ritibus privatis in vita sociali japonensi usitatiss, quum caerimoniae quae ab omnibus fiunt, quamvis a superstitione originem forte duxerint, ex circumstantiis locorum et personarum et ex communi aestimatione non actualiter retineant nisi sensum urbanitatis et mutuae benevolentiae, utrum fideles in talibus casibus sese habere possint sicut ceteri adistentes?” (APF, NS 1281, pp. 661-708).

54 Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), pp. 221-223, and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), pp. 159-181.

55 So in the letter of Bishop Gaspais to the Cardinal Prefect Fumasoni Biondi of 25-III-1935: “...nous nous sommes également inspirés de la lettre qui m’a été confidentiellement communiquée par la S.C. de la Propagande sur le Shintouisme au Japon” (first published in *l’Osservatore Romano* of 2-VII-1936; then in: *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 26/1937, p. 90). Which *letter* is meant here? The abovementioned extensive letter of Marella was written later, that is on 8-V-1935. Probably, therefore, the instruction of Mooney of January 1933 is intended.

allowed the Catholics to participate in the rites of public worship of Confucius were confirmed in the instruction of Propaganda on 28 May 1935.<sup>56</sup>

Obviously this encouraged Marella to go further ahead. In a letter to the Japanese bishops on 10 August 1935<sup>57</sup> he referred, on the one hand, to the difficulties especially of the French missionaries, who saw everywhere the religious interpretation of Shinto rites, and on the other, to the tendencies of Japanese chauvinistic circles to give, for the sake of the ideological unity of the nation, a religious meaning of the rites.<sup>58</sup> The solution could only be that on each occasion the purely patriotic significance of the rites will be made clear to the Christians. It would be important that the Ordinaries clearly inform the missionaries as well as the sisters, who were often not well informed, and that they make clear that the Apostolic Delegation was fully aware of the situation and remained in constant contact with Propaganda.

On 8 December 1935 followed a letter to all religious superiors of male and female Orders in Japan.<sup>59</sup> It concerned primarily the ecclesiastical schools and it dealt at the beginning with the attitude towards national-patriotic manifestations. As a basic rule it claimed a broadminded comprehension of everything that is not against the faith. Therefore religious schools should participate in all manifestations which do not carry a specific religious character, as other Japanese institutions do. That would mean, concretely, the raising of the Japanese flag at all national festivals. In no case should it be hoisted together with another national flag, such as the homeland flag of the missionaries, except on the occasion of the visit of an official representative of the country. In cases of manifestations of mixed character, all that permits a non-religious interpretation should be allowed. In cases of doubt, it should be said in principle to the faithful that all is allowed which in the public mind is not considered as confession of religious creed, but as a traditional expression

56 *Sacrae Congregationis* (n. 7), pp. 786-788; *Periodica* (n. 55) p. 96.

57 APF, N.S. 1281, p. 499.

58 "On the other hand, I am well aware that certain parties are striving, through the papers and other means, for a complete unification of national thought regarding this matter, and that, in their efforts to attain this end, no respect is paid to the guarantees for freedom of conscience and religious belief, so that they endeavor to inject a real religious significance" APF, N.S. 1281, p. 499.

59 *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 25/1936, pp. 88-100; Minamiki, *The Yasukuni* (n. 3), p. 223, and Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 152.

of natural feeling, leaving it to the conscience of individuals to draw the appropriate application. This would not contradict the earlier attitude of the Church because the meaning of many traditions had changed, sometimes within two decades. Marella then moved on to specific issues of school and religious education, repeatedly insisting that Christianity does not mean a radical rupture with the values of the past.

Propaganda Congregation accepted the proposals of Marella and prepared a relevant document. Marella himself was involved in the drafting of the text. The draft was sent to him twice, in November and December 1935. Because of his corrections, there was cited at the beginning, instead of a mere general reference to the repeated declaration of state authorities, the extensive declaration of the Ministry of Education in 1932 and the law of 1899, by which religious acts in public or state-accredited schools (even religious instruction in private schools) was forbidden.<sup>60</sup> The crucial session was the General Assembly of Propaganda Congregation on 18 May 1936.<sup>61</sup> Amazingly, the draft was unanimously adopted in substance, although the divergent vote of the Dominican de la Hoz was known and notice was taken of it. But the Consultors proceeded on the assumptions that, on the one hand, it was vital for the spread of the Catholic faith in Japan to come to a clarification, and that on the other hand the culture of East Asian nations was in radical turmoil.<sup>62</sup> Only a few modifications were decided upon.

1) It was decided to quote at the beginning the passage of the Propaganda Instruction of 1659 to the Apostolic Vicars Pallu and de la Motte, in which it was declared that the missionaries should not in any manner induce East Asian nations to alter their culture and customs, provided that such were not against the faith. They should only preach the Christian faith, which would in no way destroy the customs of the peoples, but conserve them, if they are not intrinsi-

60 APF, N.S. 1281, pp. 508 and 510.

61 Protocol in APF, Acta 307, p. 202.

62 "Gli Eminentissimi Signori Cardinali...considerato il carattere pratico dell'Istruzione, e l'urgenza di definire una questione dalla quale dipende in gran parte l'espansione della fede cattolica nel Giappone, rilevata la rapida e radicale evoluzione del pensiero e dei costumi dei popoli orientali...approvarono unanimamente il senso dell'Istruzione proposta..." (APF, Acta 307, p. 202).

cally bad.<sup>63</sup> This repeatedly quoted passage became, especially in the XX century, more and more the *Magna Carta* of missionary adaptation. Obviously it should indicate - given the undeniable change in the question of the Rites - a higher continuity, and that despite the fact that Propaganda, despite its adaptive strategy (which however was somewhat different from the former Jesuit strategy), had belonged already in the XVII century to the opponents of the Jesuits in the Rites controversy.<sup>64</sup>

2) It should be emphasized that the Catholic faith does not diminish the love for one's motherland.

3) A third modification was related to the still (until 1939) existing oath regarding the Rites. Here the conscience was growing progressively that the existing norms were fluid and in the long run could no longer be maintained. In the first draft of the instruction it was simply declared that in relation to the Rites oath nothing should be changed ("nihil immutetur"). However this was modified in the text which had now been presented; now it was said "in praesentia nihil immutetur". So one expected a fundamental revision within the near future.<sup>65</sup> But were they not already in the process of change? So the decision was taken, to avoid any unpleasant controversy, to leave only the exhortation to obedience to the current instruction.<sup>66</sup>

The new draft declared repeatedly that Propaganda Congregation had been requested for some standards of behaviour for Catholics in Japan, if laws or customs demand acts from them which

63 This text in: *Collectanea Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu decreta, instructiones, rescripta pro apostolicis missionibus*, Rome 1907, I, p. 42; *Sacrae Congregationis* (n. 7), p. 702.

64 For the reasons: Klaus Schatz, *Jesuiten und Propaganda-Missionare. Zwei unterschiedliche Wege der Akkomodation*, in: Martino Martini SJ (1614-1661) und die Chinamission im 17. Jahrhundert, ed. Roman Malek und Arnold Zingerle, Nettetal 2000, pp. 51-64. The cited passage seems to be used first in 1668 in the Canton Convention (a consensus between Jesuits and Dominicans, which later broke) as an argument for the toleration of the Chinese Rites (Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites* (n. 4), p. 34).

65 Already in the plenary council of Shanghai in 1924, the question of the Rites was consciously excluded because the participants were aware that they would come into a "nest of hornets" and because the whole question needed to be examined anew and this must be done in Rome (Joseph Metzler, *Die Synoden in China, Japan und Korea 1570-1991*, Paderborn 1986, p. 211 ).

66 "Si ritocchi il terzo punto dell'Istruzione concernente il giuramento contro i riti cinesi, per modo che i missionari sappiano di dover seguire *in subiecta materia* le norme dell'Istruzione".

seem to have originated in non-Christian religious rites. Then a reference is made to the passage about the missionary adaptation in the instruction of 1659 and it is stated that the Catholic faith does not diminish the love of one's own country. In this matter it is a question of acts which, though they have a pagan religious origin, are not intrinsically bad in themselves, but indifferent and whose performance is not demanded in a religious sense, but as expressions of civic patriotic loyalty.<sup>67</sup> This is justified in detail by official declarations of the state authorities, namely: 1. The distinction between State Shinto with its Jinja, and the religious Shinto, which are also subordinated to different authorities; 2. The official declaration of the Ministry of Education in 1932; 3. The law of 1899, which forbade religious instruction or religious ceremonies in state or state-recognized schools. This would apply to official acts that take place in the national Jinja as well as to customs at weddings and funerals, which, although they had a religious origin, were now considered, according to general convention, as mere gestures of politeness, with the consequence that Catholics, who refused these acts, were regarded as unpatriotic or rude - something that should be absolutely avoided.<sup>68</sup> Then the following statements were made:

1) The ceremonies that take place in state shrines have a purely civil and patriotic sense. Consequently, Catholics can take part in them.

2) Similarly, Catholics can participate in the private rites of funerals or weddings, which, although they had a pagan religious origin, now according to general convention, are mere gestures of politeness.

3) Concerning the oath of the Chinese rites, it is now declared simply that one should adhere to the current instructions.

The text was presented to Pope Pius XI by the Cardinal Prefect in an audience on 25 May. The pope clarified and tightened up the

67 "Agitur de illis actibus, qui, quamvis ab ethnicis religionibus primitus orti, non sunt intrinsece mali, sed per se indifferentes, neque iubentur ut religionis signa, sed tantum veluti civiles actus ad pietatem manifestandam et fovendam erga patriam, omni intentione remota compellendi sive catholicos sive non catholicos ad significandam quamlibet adhaesionem religionibus a quibus ritus illi orti sunt".

68 "...catholici qui renuant huiusmodi caeremoniis interesse, facile incusantur, et facile ab hominibus vel non inimicis doctrinae catholicae creduntur esse frigidi erga patriam vel ingrati et inurbani erga familiares et amicos. Valde propterea optandum videtur ut removeantur causae existimationis huiusmodi falsae et iniuriosae, quae non tantum fideles japonicos multum afflictat, sed etiam animos avertit a via salutis ingredienda".

text on two minor points. Instead of the general reference to “*publicae auctoritates*”, which had been mentioned on several occasions, there was now substituted “*Hoc ipsae imperii Japonici auctoritates...*”. Further the pope insisted that the application of this instruction was not left to the discretion of each single bishop. Therefore at the end, where it was said that the ordinaries of Japan could follow safely these norms (“*tuto posse sequi*”), it should be added “*et debere*”.<sup>69</sup> In this sense the instruction was published on 26 May 1936.<sup>70</sup>

Thus the way was basically prepared for the more general instruction of December 1939, which referred not only to Manchuria and Japan but to the whole Far East and which abrogated the Rites ban also regarding the critical question of the worship of ancestors. The key themes and arguments which emerged in this later instruction can be found already here in the instruction of May 1936: that rites, even when they have a pagan religious origin, could be accepted, when they had become a common social convention; that in the recent decades a fundamental shift had taken place; and the references to the official statements of governments.

### A Fragile Alliance

Thus the step was completed from “*tolerari potest*” in the sense of merely *passive participation*, according to Canon 1258, towards acceptance in principle. The basis for this was the view of State Shinto as a secular national ideology and not least, according to Marella, as a bulwark against Communism. Accordingly, emphasis was placed on ensuring that during the first visit of a cardinal to Japan, Cardinal Dougherty, archbishop of Philadelphia, who was received by emperor Hirohito on 18 February 1937, visited also the Meiji shrine and the Yasukuni shrine and rendered his respect to them. The visit was presented also in the newsreel in Japanese cinemas.<sup>71</sup>

But Marella had to recognize that the agreement in defence against Communism became apparent only when the Encyclical against Communism *Divini Redemptoris* of 19 March 1937 was promulgated in Japan, and then only with restrictions as he wrote to Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi on 15 May.<sup>72</sup> The reason was that

69 Protocol in APF, Acta 307, p. 212.

70 AAS 28 /1936, pp. 406-409; Sacrae Congregationis (n. 7), pp. 789-791; Periodica de Re Morali Canonica Liturgica 26 (1937), pp. 103-108.

71 For the report of Marella about the visit: APF, N.S. 1283, pp. 53-61.

72 APF, N.S. 1283, pp. 149-153.



especially militaristic circles proceeded on the assumption that the Japanese principle of *kokutai* (i.e. the genealogical unity of the Japanese nation on the basis of the divine origin of the lineage of the imperial family) was the only remedy against Communism, which, as Marella noted, would come near to the racism of the Nazis.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless Marella kept his optimism. One must recognize, he argued, the merits of *Kokutai* which had maintained the unity and independence of Japan for 2000 years; and also the Church had recently approached Japanese patriotism.<sup>74</sup> Also a recent pamphlet of the Japanese Ministry of Education about the *Kokutai* distributed in schools contained nothing directly against Christian teachings.<sup>75</sup> In this sense he had written a letter to the ordinaries and missionaries: saying that the more the extremists attack us on religious grounds, the more it is important to separate clearly the supernatural religion from patriotic beliefs, "which we do not condemn". This distinction was admittedly still new, so the military had not yet understood it fully. Perhaps it would be understood in the future when they will realize that the basis of *Kokutai* is not sufficient to save Japan from Communism. This time would probably come when the current economic crisis in Japan is over and a quiet time of rethinking will enter.

The encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* against Communism offered at least a common bridge. But it was much more difficult to create understanding for the almost simultaneous encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* against German National Socialism in a government which was,

73 "Benchè non paragonabile alle degenerazioni del neo-paganesimo tedesco, che ripudia espressamente il Cristianesimo, ci troviamo anche qui di fronte ad una ideologia razzista di antichissima marca, che fa del Giappone una sola ristretta ma potentissima famiglia" (APF, N.S. 1283, pp. 53-61).

74 "Anche la Chiesa, da parte sua, è venuta incontro in questi ultimi tempi, con mirabile comprensione, al patriottismo giapponese, approvandone anche le forme esterne tradizionali, che per sè, nei giorni in cui viviamo, e con le ripetute dichiarazioni ufficiali, non urtano contro la dottrina rivelata e il sentimento cristiano" (APF, N.S. 1283, pp. 53-61).

75 "Nonostante la vaghezza della lingua, difficile per gli stessi giapponesi, nulla vi è contro il Cristianesimo; si asserisce soltanto in generale, che le "ideologie occidentali", che prescindono dal Kokutai, non possono attecchire in Giappone. Dell'Imperatore chiaramente si dice che, nel considerarlo come "Kami" (essere superiore), non si vuole affatto intendere il Dio trascendentale, onnipotente, onnisciente etc. delle religioni, ma solamente l'espressione vivente e veneranda di quella ininterrotta serie di Imperatori, come un tutt'uno, secondo le antiche tradizioni giapponesi che formano appunto lo Shintoismo di Stato" (APF, N.S. 1283, pp. 53-61).

since 25 November of the previous year, associated with Germany in the Anti-Comintern Pact. Marella discharged this task with some skill, but also through a minimalist interpretation of the encyclical, separating *National Socialism* from *neo-paganism*. When he presented to the new Japanese foreign minister, on 21 June 1937, the English text of both *Divini Redemptoris* and *Mit brennender Sorge*, he did this with an explanatory pro-memoria about the latter.<sup>76</sup> There he argued that the encyclical was misinterpreted and that a political sense was falsely read into it. The Church did not reject a certain political system; the best proof for that would be the agreement between the Church and the Fascist State in Italy, which showed that Catholic life could be very well adapted to a totalitarian state if it respected the autonomy of religion. National Socialism and neo-paganism were not directly connected.<sup>77</sup> Anti-Christian movements existed long before. Their tendency is to exclude the Church from any public affairs and so suffocate it gradually. Accompanying this is public anti-Christian propaganda and the exploitation of financial manipulations and of sexual abuse to denigrate indiscriminately the Church and the clergy.

However Marella could not avoid admitting that the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* contained sharp attacks against the religious policy of the government and its systematic disregard of the Reich Concordat. Since diplomatic measures in this regard had no success, the Holy See was left with no other option than to appeal to the public. At the same time the German government exploited German-Japanese friendship to set Japan against Christianity and Catholicism. However, the elites of Japan had understood that the Catholic Church and the Holy See do everything possible to accommodate a healthy patriotism; and he himself would be firmly convinced that the Japanese government would not be seduced by any propaganda to deny the sincerity of this attitude.

## Conclusion

The change from a pragmatic *modus vivendi* in the sense of “*tolerari pos-*

76 The copy of his letter of 22 June to the secretary of Cardinal Pacelli: APF, N.S. 1283, p. 355; the French Pro-memoria, APF, N.S. 1283, pp. 357-361.

77 “L'établissement du régime national-socialiste et le mouvement anti-chrétien n'ont aucun lien interne; leur coexistence s'explique par des circonstances historiques tout-à-fait indépendentes. Le programme politique et culturel du nazisme comme tel n'implique aucunement la négation d'un Dieu créateur, de l'âme immortelle, de la divinité du Christ et de l'autorité spirituelle de l'église, qui sont les bases de la vie catholique”.

se", as it was reached in 1932-1933, to a principled acceptance and thus to a real revision of the ecclesiastical position in the question of rites is closely connected with Marella and his missionary policy. But this has, from today's point of view, a double face. On the one hand it is a clear departure from the Europeanism of the past and a disposition to *inculturation*, which starts from an appreciation of cultural values and traditions of the country and tries to present Christianity not in an outside position and opposition, but as positive perfection of the native traditions. It is the continuation of the missionary tradition of Ricci and de Nobili. On the other hand this option of Marella carried with it sometimes a very naive view of Japanese nationalism, even if he saw clearly – for example, in his interpretation of *Kokutai* - the difference from the Christian world view. However P. Küenburg in his report recognized more sharply the unbridgeable abyss especially in morals and values.<sup>78</sup>

Consequently, in the light of wartime and postwar history, the Ya-

78 ARSI, Pr. Iaponicae 1005, III doc. 9: "Die Ursache des *Kampfes* ist aber in der extrem-nationalen Geistesströmung zu suchen, deren Anhänger (von manchen als japanische Fascisten bezeichnet) in der Wiederbelebung des altjapanischen Nationalgeistes das Heil des Landes erblicken. Nur dadurch könne man Japan vor dem Kommunismus und Bolschewismus bewahren. Diese Geistesrichtung wird von den im öffentlichen Leben Japans ja von jeher sehr einflußreichen Militärkreisen gefördert...Ahnen- und Kaiserkult gehören nun gewiß zu den charakteristischen Bestandteilen altjapanischer Sitte und es ist auch klar, daß jener Kern darin, der als *religiöser* gelten muß (und über dessen Abgrenzung vom Profanen man verschiedene Ansichten hören kann), der christlichen Glaubenslehre und einer monotheistischen Philosophie widerstreitet. Wenn daher die Anhänger jener Nationalpartei unter "altjapanischem Geist" das geschichtlich gegebene Ganze verstehen, so sehen sie richtig ein, daß ein Katholik nie ein "guter Japaner" oder ein "guter Patriot" in *ihrem* Sinne sein kann...Eine ähnliche Schwierigkeit objektiver Natur ist auf dem Gebiete der besonderen Sittenlehre vorhanden. Wir lehren, daß die Gebote des natürlichen Sittengesetzes *dieselben* sind für alle Menschen und Völker, daß folglich die von uns vorgetragene Ethik auch für die Japaner paßt; sie hingen halten an einem eigenen, japanisch-nationalen Sittenkodex fest und wer diesen preisgibt, gilt ihnen als schlechter Staatsbürger. Zu dieser jap. Nationalmoral gehört z.B. die Erlaubtheit, ja heldenhafte Lobwürdigkeit des Selbstmordes unter gewissen Umständen, z.B. um zu zeigen, daß man für einen Vorgang skandalöser Natur die Verantwortung" auf sich nehme oder um nicht als Soldat lebendig in die Hand des Gegners zu fallen u.ä. Man sagt den Studenten im militärischen Unterricht, ein jap. Soldat dürfe sich unter keinen Umständen lebendig vom Feinde gefangen nehmen lassen; eher müsse er sich umbringen. Wenn unsere katholischen Studenten uns dann über diesen Punkt fragen, dürfen wir die Wahrheit doch nicht verleugnen. Unser Urteil in der Sache wird aber selbstverständlich bei vielen bekannt und kommt auch dem Offizier zu Ohren und wird getreulich dem Kriegsministerium reportiert. Die Offiziere haben davon begreiflicherweise eine Stütze für ihr Urteil, die christliche Moral "passe nicht zum japanischen Nationalgeist" (underlining in original here in italic).

sukuni Shrine incident, the ecclesiastical acceptance of homage to the shrine, and generally the circumstances of the revision of the former ban of rites, produce a bad feeling, especially in today's Japan, but also in the countries which have been victims of Japanese colonialism or aggression. Was it not perhaps the mistake of asking only if these rites were *religious* or *patriotic* (and if *patriotic*, to accept them) and thereby refrain from the question of whether they stood in the context of an albeit secular but nationalist and ultimately totalitarian ideology of state? In more radical form one could ask whether the much-vaunted revision of the ban of rites by Rome in the years 1935-39 was not in the concrete political context of the time a very problematic homage to Japanese imperialism (the more so since the Vatican was the first to recognize the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo)?

On the other hand it is difficult to show realistic alternatives for that time. The continuation of a paternalistic missionary policy of *aloofness* could not be a wise option. If one wanted to pursue resolutely the path that was basically followed in the encyclical *Maximum illud*, it was impossible to do it halfheartedly in a country which technically, politically and militarily was equal to the European nations and considered itself as leader and teacher of Asia. Often it is so in history. If one realizes a particular option, the implications and specific circumstances are not in one's own hand, but are dictated by the situation. Later and retrospectively they can turn out to be problematic. Moreover, a critical distance towards the foreign policy of one's own country, which Catholics could not realize in any European nation (not least due to the classical doctrine of "presumption for the authority", which practically neutralized the critical moments of the doctrine of *just war*), was impossible to expect from the miniscule Christian minority in Japan.

### Summary

The question of homage to the Yasukuni shrine (Yasukuni Jinja) in Tokyo confronted, since 1932, the ecclesiastical authorities with the problem if this reverence would be of religious or patriotic-civil nature. Already Minamiki has emphasized in 1980 and 1985, that these controversies played a key role for the revision of the Roman Rites prohibitions of the XVIII century, first for the Propaganda instruction of 26 May 1936, which refers to Japan, and finally for the instruction of 8 december 1939, which permitted the previously forbidden rites of worship of Confucius and the ancestors. This contribution sheds new light on the whole context, based on the documents of the Propaganda archive, which are available only recently for the pontificate of Pius XI. These sources reveal especially the crucial role of the Apostolic Dele-

gate and later Cardinal Paolo Marella. The first documents and permissions of ecclesiastical authorities in Japan (especially of the Apostolic Vicar Ross in Hiroshima and of the Apostolic Delegate Mooney) presuppose the (at least also) religious character of the State Shinto and remain on the pragmatic level of *passive* cooperation. It was Marella who firstly has raised the question from a purely pragmatic level to one of principle, by which a fundamental revision of the question of the rites should be possible. But that was made by him in the context of a (from our perspective) problematic political option: a positive valuation of State Shinto as a secular national state ideology, which would form a bulwark against communism. So, with a disposition to a fargoing *inculturation* there is connected a very naive view of Japanese nationalism.

### Zusammenfassung

Die Frage der Verbeugung vor dem Yasukuni-Schrein (Yasukuni Jinja) in Tokyo konfrontierte seit 1932 die kirchlichen Autoritäten mit dem Problem, ob diese Reverenz religiöser oder patriotisch-ziviler Natur sei. Bereits Minamiki hat 1980 und 1985 herausgestellt, daß diesen Auseinandersetzungen eine Schlüsselrolle für die Revision der römischen Ritenverbote aus dem 18. Jahrhundert zukommt, zunächst für die Propaganda-Instruktion vom 26. Mai 1936, die sich auf Japan bezieht, dann schließlich für die Instruktion vom 8. Dezember 1939, die die bisher verbotenen Riten der Konfuziusverehrung und der Ahnenverehrung erlaubte. Dieser Beitrag wirft neues Licht auf diese Zusammenhänge aufgrund der Akten der Propagandakongregation, die für die Zeit Pius XI. erst seit einigen Jahren zugänglich sind. Aus ihnen geht vor allem die entscheidende Rolle des Apostolischen Delegaten und späteren Kardinals Paolo Marella hervor. Denn die ersten Gutachten und Erlaubnisse der kirchlichen Autoritäten in Japan (insbesondere des Apostolischen Vikars Ross in Hiroshima und des Apostolischen Delegaten Mooney) setzten noch den (zumindest auch) religiösen Charakter des Staats-Shinto voraus und blieben auf der pragmatischen Ebene der *passiven* Mitwirkung. Erst Marella hat die Frage aus der rein pragmatischen Ebene des "tolerari posse" ins Prinzipielle gehoben und damit den Hebel geliefert, durch den eine grundlegende Revision in der Ritenfrage möglich wurde. Dies geschah freilich im Rahmen einer (aus heutiger Sicht) problematischen politischen Option: einer positiven Sicht des Staats-Shinto als säkularer nationaler Staatsideologie, die ein Bollwerk gegen den Kommunismus bildet. Mit einer Bereitschaft weitgehender *Inculturation* verbindet sich so bei ihm eine sehr naive Sicht des japanischen Nationalismus.