

# **Martyrdoom in Japanese Christianity, with special reference to the persecutions of the Orthodox Church in Japan at its beginnings<sup>1</sup>**

PhD candidate Rev. Alexandru Nicodim\*

## **Abstract:**

This article contains a few references to the beginnings of Christianity in Japan and the first persecutions suffered by Catholic Christians in Japan. It focuses on the challenges and restrictions the Orthodox mission and its first believers suffered in Japan at its beginnings. Orthodox Christians did not suffer in Japan a real persecution, but rather was the victim of prejudices of Japanese related with this new believe. Some Japanese Christians and missionaries were imprisoned, and the mission faced several restrictions and burdens which could not stop the grow of Orthodoxy in this country.

## **Keywords:**

Christianity in Japan; Russian-Orthodox mission in Japan; Persecution of Christians in Japan; St. Nicolas Cathedral in Tokyo;

## **The beginning of Christianity in Japan**

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portugal dominated the seas of the world by its naval power, laying the foundations of a vast commercial empire,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Article written as a part of doctoral programme, under the advice of Jun. Prof. Daniel BUDA who also gave his approval for publishing.*

\* **Phd. Candidate Rev. Alexandru NICODIM** studied Orthodox Theology in Bucharest and serves presently as Parish priest at St. Nicholas Brosteni Church, Archdiocese of Bucharest. He served between 2008-2013 as Parish priest of the Romanian Parish in Tokyo, Japan and was, at the same time, official representative of the Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the Autonomous Orthodox Church in Japan. He writes a doctoral dissertation on the history, present situation and future perspectives of the Orthodox Church in Japan.

especially in Asia. *"Vasco da Gama's journey to India in 1497 paved the way to the country that produced the spices that were so appreciated in Europe and laid the foundations of the Asian Portuguese Empire. This empire had the particularity of not being a territorial one, but commercial - a big chain of commercial centers, placed in strategic points where important maritime routes met."*<sup>2</sup>

Spain's dream was to become a great territorial empire, focusing its eyes on South America. The Spanish conquistadors have remained in the history of the world through a sad memory, of the conquered territories sealed by the blood of locals. Both Portugal and Spain were Catholic kingdoms and promoted the official believe of their nations in the new world.

Christianity appears in Japan when the Jesuit monk Francis Xavier (1506-1552), one of the great Christian missionaries of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century arrived at Kagoshima harbor, on the island of Kyushu. His missionary work covered vast territories in East Asia: India, China and Japan.

In Japan, he arrived in 1549 as a delegate of the King of Spain and Portugal, Philip II and the vice-king of India, coming from Goa (India), the regional center of the Catholic mission in Asia. *"The missionary handed him an official message from the vice-king of India, as well as a letter from the bishop of Goa (India), whose diocese Japan depended on. He also gave him many valuable gifts. The Daimiyo accepted the letters and the gifts, being convinced that this Jesuit is the representative of a Buddhist sect coming from Tengiku (India), giving him a temple where the missionary could live and make new followers by his preaching"*<sup>3</sup>

Between 1549 and 1551, Francis Xavier organized the Catholic mission in Japan. The first conversions took place. The city of Nagasaki was founded by the Jesuits, on the land given to them by the first *daimiyo* (local military leader) converted to Christianity, named Omura Sumitada.

At the time of the arrival of Christian missionaries, Japan was struggling in anarchy. Many wars were worn for supremacy between local *daimiyos*. Over time, the shoguns gained the supreme military power. Three of these shoguns strongly influenced the young community of Christians. The first of them was **Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582)**.

*"During the reign of Nobunaga, Christianity flourished with its approval. It is said that Nobunaga was motivated in this attitude, not of love for Christianity, but rather of the hatred of Buddhism. Nobunaga, in his attempt to unify the country politically, saw the great Buddhist communities as political and military*

---

<sup>2</sup> Sylvie Morishita, „Histoire de l'Eglise au Japon”, *La Nef* 289 (2017), p.17.

<sup>3</sup> Mayeur, J.M., Ch. Pietri, A. Vauchez, M. Venard. *Histoire du Christianisme, Le temps des confessions (1530 – 1620)*, Vol. 8. Desclée, 1992, p. 823.

threats. Several times, Nobunaga punished Buddhist fortresses by armed intervention. In 1571, for example, he completely devastated the fortress of Mount Hieizan belonging to the Tendai Buddhist sect, massacring on this occasion monks, laymen, even women together with children."<sup>4</sup>

Nobunaga's successor, **Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1582 – 1598)**, became a persecutor of Christianity. The reason why he showed such a radical change from his predecessor was his belief that Christian missionaries want to seize power in Japan. The trade with the Portuguese, however, was encouraged by the shogun. The number of Christians grew during this mild persecution.

In 1587, the shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi "gave a law banning the Jesuit order (at that time, the only order authorized by the Pope to carry out evangelistic work in Japan). The Japanese Christians had to choose between exile and death. The law was not followed entirely, but it existed from now on. Ten years later, at the order of Hideyoshi, 26 Christians (twenty Japanese and six foreign missionaries) were crucified in Nagasaki. In 1614, Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first of the Tokugawa shoguns, gave an edict to complete the annihilation of Christianity in Japan."<sup>5</sup>

The third ruler, **Tokugawa Ieyasu (1600 – 1616)**, went further than his predecessor, expelling Christian missionaries. In his personal life he was influenced by Buddhist piety, and his leadership relied on Confucian ideals. After his death, he was deified by the descendants as the *Sun God of the East*, being buried at Nikko. The Decree of Banning and Deportation of Christian Missionaries, dating back to 1614, marked the beginning of the actual persecution of the Christian Church.

His followers did not hesitate to shed the blood of martyrs who refused to obey to Shogun`s decree. The toughest tortures were invented to make Christians give up their faith.

After 1650, Christians hid themselves. Their faith was hidden under various Buddhist or Shintoist forms or rituals, so that the authorities cannot discover them. Hidden Christians (in Japanese language: "*kakure kirishitan*") lived this way, passing their faith and Christian customs orally without the help of the clergy. They were discovered after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when the freedom of faith was again given to the Japanese people.

When talking about martyrdom in Japan, we need to consider two periods of time.

---

<sup>4</sup> Byron, Earhart H., *Japanese Religion: Unity and diversity*, Dickenson Publishing Company INC., Encino, California, 1974, p.79.

<sup>5</sup> *Japanese Religion. A survey by the Agency for Cultural Affairs*, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1981, p. 76.

- The martyrs from the beginning of Christianity in Japan, that is from 1597 (when the first 26 Christians were crucified) and until the 1650s when Christianity went underground.

- A second period, marked by the martyrdom of Christians, at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration (1868), when both Catholic and Orthodox believers had to suffer the ordeal. In this second period, the number of martyrs not so high, but a certain type of persecution was endured by all Christians at that time. Christianity was regarded as a religion worthy of criminals and wizards, which the authorities persecute. From this point of view, we can understand why the Japanese population was so reluctant about the new faith.

To exemplify some ways in which Christians were martyred, we can remember that the Japanese authorities were particularly inventive when they wanted to make Christians deny their faith. The way they were martyred varied, depending on the rank of the person to be killed, but also the location they were living in.

The case of Christian samurai is a special one, for the samurai used to prefer to kill themselves doing “*seppuku*,” a ritual suicide, in order to die with honor. Given the fact that they accepted Christianity, they could no longer take their own lives, so they refused to do *seppuku*, even if it was an order. From the point of view of the samurai mentality, this was considered a lack of honor, which was unimaginable. Eventually, after confessing Christ, the samurai were killed by cutting their heads. For example, we can see the case of *Leon Saisho Shichiemon*, a Christian samurai who received the martyrdom in 1608 in the city of Satsuma:

*"I want to be crucified like Jesus!"*

*Desiring to follow Christ, Leon Shichiemon wanted to be crucified, but his desire was rejected. An officer ordered them to do seppuku as it was expected from a samurai.*

*Leon replied: "I know very well that seppuku is a sign of a fighter's dignity. I'm not afraid of it. But as a Christian I cannot commit suicide[...]"<sup>6</sup>* On the morning of November 17, 1608, the martyrdom of Leon Shichiemon took place, by cutting the head.

Others were burned to the death, as in the case of the eight Christians from Arima, Kyushu Island, on October 7, 1613: *"Naozumi [governor of Nagasaki] ordered 8 representatives of the Christians to be burned. [...] Three samurai who did not obey Naozumi's orders to give up their faith were chosen to be martyred with their families. These were: Adrian Takahashi Mondo, Leon Taketomi*

---

<sup>6</sup> *Full sail with the wind of grace, Peter Kibe and 187 martyrs, Don Bosco, Japan, 2008, p. 36.*

*Kanemon and Leon Hayashida Sukeemon. Then was Takahashi's wife - Ioana, the son of Taketomi - Paul, Marta - Diego's mother, Magdalena's sister and Diego.*"<sup>7</sup>

In Shimabara and Arima, 37 Christians were martyred. Sixteen of them, including children aged five and older, have suffered from cutting their fingers. Later, they were thrown into the sea to be drowned. Among them was also *Ignatius Uchibori* (5 years old) who was tortured under the eyes of his parents and killed together with his brothers. His parents were part of the remaining 21 Christians and were killed a week later by being thrown into the boiling thermal waters of Mount Unzen, Nagasaki Prefecture. They were led by the Uchibori family, from Shimabara village, Kyushu.<sup>8</sup>

Many Catholic martyrs in Japan were sanctified such as:

- "26 martyrs from Nagasaki, crucified on February 25, 1597, on the order of the shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi and canonized in 1862
- 205 martyrs, killed between 1617 and 1632 and canonized in 1867
- 188 Japanese Christians, killed between 1603 and 1639 and canonized in 2008"<sup>9</sup>

Among these martyrs are samurai, simple people, women or children. The Japanese authorities did not consider the age or gender of those who were blamed of being Christians.

After the reopening of Japan to the world, following the *Treaty of Friendship and Commerce*, Christian missionaries were again allowed to enter Japan. From the point of view of the Catholic Church, "*the priests from Les missions étrangères de Paris, were the first to resume the evangelization of Japan. An apostolic vicariate was set up by Pope Pius IX in 1866. Despite a new period of persecution, which lasted from 1866 to 1873 (and which gave nearly 2,000 martyrs), the Catholic Church did not disappear*"<sup>10</sup>

### **Persecution in the Orthodox Church.**

Regarding the Japanese Orthodox Church, the persecutions were not bloody, but they existed. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Japanese saw Christians as animals or criminals. The missionaries who walked on the street were very often beaten by people or they could easily be thrown stones on them. These things were common at that time.

In 1861, the young missionary Nicholas Kasatkin arrives in Japan to serve the Orthodox Church of the Russian consulate, in the city of Hakodate, Hokkaido

---

<sup>7</sup> *Full sail with the wind....*, p. 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> *Full sail with the wind....*, p. 96-102.

<sup>9</sup> Anouil, Regis. „Juste Ukon, un daymio chretien beatifie”, *La Nef* 289 (2017), p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Chiron, Yves. „La hierarchie ecclesiastique au Japon”, *La Ne* 289 (2017), p. 22.

Island. There were many challenges that Nicholas had to overcome, in order to adapt to the life in Japan. First of all he had to overcome himself, to be patient and fulfill the mission entrusted to him by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Depression gradually took hold of him: *"I was young and overwhelmed by imagination, which made me see crowds of listeners and then followers of the word of God coming from all directions. Imagine my disappointment when I arrived in Japan and I was received with the exact opposite of what we hoped"*<sup>11</sup>

A meeting with Innokentie Popov Veniaminov (St. Innokentie of Alaska) changed Nicholas view and raised his morale. This meeting took place after a shipwreck put him on the island of Hokkaido, where he was taken to the Russian consulate in Hakodate. Seeing the particularly difficult situation of the hieromonk Nicholas, he advised him to leave aside what he had learned in Russia, the things he used to do there, but also the memories of his family and his native places to fully dedicate himself to the studying of the Japanese language and to the translation of liturgical books in Japanese.

The Japanese population was very reluctant to foreigners and especially to Christian missionaries. Thus, Nicholas 'attempts to learn Japanese language were not seen as a good thing by the authorities. Nicholas hired three Japanese-language teachers whom he paid from his salary that he received from the consulate. In his spare time, he went to Hakodate school where he studied with the students.

The director wanted to forbid him from attending the classes for he was concerned about the presence of a Christian cleric and the fact that his school could be associated with Christian doctrine. Yamagita Tokichi, the school principal wrote:

*"One day, the Russian preacher Nicholas, who was living at that time in Hakkodate, came at the school. He entered the classroom quietly and listened carefully to what the teacher was telling his students. Daily, then, he started to attend classes. The presence of the Russian preacher in our school has led to rumors that Yamagita School teaches Christian dogmas, so I forbade Mr. Suzuki to accept him to classes anymore. The director informed me that the preacher doesn't listen to the ban on not taking part in classes. I was very upset. [...] The next day, when he came to school, I decided to stop him. Nicholas objected with a smile:*

*- What is the reason for being so strict? I cannot stop coming to school!*

---

<sup>11</sup> Doreen Bartholomew, „Hieromonk Nikolai (Kasatkin)”, *Divine Ascent – A Journal of Orthodox Faith*, 6, Holy Monastery of Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, 2000, p. 23.

- "But it is my building," I said, "and I ask you not to come anymore. Otherwise, we will be forced to use violence against you.

- If you have a moral satisfaction in striking me, I will ask you to do it. But I will not stop coming to this school. [...] I do not do any harm coming to school. And more, I have never tried to preach my religion here. In any case, outside of this school, I go to Shinshu Buddhist Temple daily, where I listen to the sermons of the Buddhist priest [...]

After juggling all the possibilities of convincing Nicholas to stop coming to our school, I asked the English Teacher, Breakstone, to write on a sheet of paper: "The entrance forbidden to the Russian priest". I put the paper on the school gate. Yet even this test proved to be useless, for Nicholas came, read the paper on the gate, took it down and put it into his pocket, then went in as if nothing had happened. [...] I was so amazed by his attitude that I had not forbidden him to come to our school anymore. <sup>12</sup>

Nicholas Kasatkin studied for seven years the Japanese language. In this time, he was in touch with the Japanese people from which he learned the customs and the way of speaking. Four years after his arrival, the first converts appeared.

The one who was his first apprentice was Tacuma Sawabe. He was a samurai and a Shinto priest at the same time. He had been hired by the Russian consul to teach Kendo (the Japanese art of using the sword) to the persons in the consulate. One evening, Sawabe armed with a sword, came to kill the young missionary. His intention was to remove from his country any foreign influence and especially Christian religion.

"- Are you familiar with my teachings? Nicholas asked him.

- No, Sawabe replied.

- All you do then, is to judge something you don't know. Can you condemn and threaten somebody without listening him? First listen and then judge!

Sawabe, could have been full of hate for the missionary, but he was also a samurai and hence had honor. <sup>13</sup>

As Sawabe listened to Christian doctrine, his heart opened to what the young missionary explained.

In 1866, Sawabe brought two of his friends to Nicholas Kasatkin. Soon after this, the three were baptized behind locked doors of the Russian Consulate in Hakkodate, in April 1868. The name that Takuma Sawabe received at his baptism

---

<sup>12</sup> Bakulevski, A. „A short History of the Japanese Orthodox Church”, unpublished translation by Fr. John Bartholomew, p. 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Bartholomew, Doreen. „Hieromonk Nikolai (Kasatkin)”, *Divine Ascent – A Journal of Orthodox Faith*, 6, Holy Monastery of Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, 2000, p. 28.

was Paul. His friend Sakai was named John, and Uranus received the name of Jacob.

These three were to be the ones from whom the Orthodox Christianity would spread in Japan.

The Orthodox faith they received changed their lives completely. They had to give up their jobs, and to devote themselves to preaching the good news of the Gospel to the Japanese people. For example, Paul Sawabe, who was a Shinto priest, completely gave up what he had done before. He left his son as head of the temple to secure an income for his family. He dedicated himself to the preaching of Orthodox Christianity.

Between 1869 and 1871, hieromonk Nicholas Kasatkin went to Russia to establish an Orthodox Mission in Japan and to have the blessing and material support of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church approved the establishment of the mission and Nicholas was made archimandrite. An annual amount of money was to be given each year to the Orthodox Mission in Japan.

At his return from Russia, Archimandrite Nicholas was pleased to see that the young Orthodox community increased in number, many Japanese persons being converted by the preaching of his three apprentices. Thus, in the winter of 1871 were baptized: John Ono, Peter Sasagawa, Jacob Takaya, Matthew Kageta, Paul Tsuda, Andrew Yanagawa, Paul Mayama, Tit Kamatsu, Paul Okama, Peter Otateme and Paul Oita.

The missionary effort of the Orthodox Community was strengthened by the arrival in Japan, on December 7, 1871 of Hieromonk Anatoly Tihai. He was from Bessarabia and studied Theology in Kiev. He became a monk in Holy Mountain Athos, Greece. His arrival gave Archimandrite Nicholas Kasatkin the opportunity to go to Tokyo, the capital of Japan, and to set up there a new Orthodox mission. His departure took place in January 1872 and he arrived in Yokohama harbor in February. In his place, Hieromonk Anatoly became the head of the mission in Hakkodate.

Soon after, Nicholas was known among the people of Tokyo as a good preacher and an exponent of Russian tradition. He becomes acquaintance of many Japanese influential people, such as Count Soejima, Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the same year – 1872, through the unceasing and fervent sermons of the Russian and Japanese missionaries, the Orthodox community in Japan counted a few hundred people.

*"Since its inception, Orthodoxy, like other Christian confessions, has not escaped persecution or other forms of oppression, but there have been no Orthodox martyrs. They were not punished with death. The persecution did not*



prevent the spread of Orthodoxy. On the contrary, it strengthened the community."<sup>14</sup>

### **The persecutions in Sendai**

On November 14 1871, after their departure from Hakkodate, Paul Sawabe, John Ono, Peter Sasagawa and Iacob Takaya arrived in Sendai. They were catechists and they came with the mission of preaching God to Japanese people living there. The houses they lived in were used for prayer and catechism. A temporary church was arranged in the house inhabited by John Ono. As the number of converts grew fast enough, authorities became aware of it. Therefore, on February 13 1872, Paul Sawabe together with more than 40 people were arrested. Another catechist, Iacob Takaya, voluntarily surrendered, confessing he was a Christian. Under interrogation he said, *"If you consider me a criminal for becoming a Christian, then I am ready to die for my faith!"*<sup>15</sup>

In total, in addition to those who were sentenced to imprisonment, more than 140 people were home arrested for guilt of being Orthodox Christians or showing sympathy to Christianity. Among these were the families of those in the prisons, even children aged four years and over.

### **The persecutions in Hakkodate**

After the four missionaries left for Sendai, John Sakai, Paul Tsuda, Matthew Kageta and others, along with the Hieromonk Anatoly Tihai, remained in Hakkodate, in order to preach the Gospel to the Japanese people.

At the great feasts, when the church bell from the chapel of the Russian consulate beat, curious Japanese people were gathering. They were addressed by the missionaries, which explained them about Orthodoxy. Then they were invited in for more information. They followed the prayers together with the missionaries and soon after people converted to Christianity. In this way, many Japanese people accepted to receive the baptism.

At the beginning of 1872, on Easter holidays, the authorities decided to arrest the Orthodox Christians that were in Hakkodate. John Sakai was imprisoned. Pavel Tsuda and Matthew Kageta have been summoned to the police station to explain their behavior. *"Kageta was silent, but Tsuda defended his Christian faith, denying that he had committed a great mistake. The authorities considered their*

---

<sup>14</sup> Bakulevski A. „A short History of the Japanese...”. p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Bakulevski, A. – „A short history of the Japanese Orthodox Church” (unpublished translation of Rev. Fr. John Batholomew), *Divine Ascent – A Journal of Orthodox Faith*, no.6, Holy Monastery of Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, 2000, p. 36.

*mistake to be a big one and asked the Ministry of Justice for guidance how to act*<sup>16</sup>

The news about the arrests reached Archimandrite Nicholas Kasatkin at the end of February, 1872. Telegrams from Sendai and Hakkodate continued to arrive on Surugadai Hill, where the leader of the Orthodox Mission in Japan was. Nicholas sent letters to Paul Sawabe, who was in the prison of Sendai to encourage him. At the same time, he sent letters to all the official diplomats in Japan, urging them to put pressure on the Japanese Government for the Orthodox community, that they be released from prison.

Finally, the Government succumbed. Three months later, in May 1872, the Orthodox Christians in Sendai and Hakkodate were released. However, some of them (those in Hakkodate) were deported to other parts of Japan. The exile of John Sakai has been for one year (until May 1873), when he returns to his city, Hakkodate. In 1874, he was again imprisoned and then deported from his city.

John Sakai's attitude in prison was similar to that of the Apostle Paul who used every occasion to confess Christ. Here is what the prison guard said about those moments: *"In prison, Sakai used his spare time after returning from work to preach Christianity among the prisoners. At the place where he was working, he also spoke about Christ to all who surrounded him. That is why I think that putting him in jail is not useful."*<sup>17</sup>

In 1872, Archimandrite Nicholas managed to acquire a piece of land in Tokyo, on Surugadai Hill. It was on Count Toda's property. That specific place was taken with a purpose. Surugadai Hill was the highest point in the city. Father Nicholas Kasatkin wanted to build a great cathedral in the most visible place in the city, as well as buildings that will serve as the administrative center of the Orthodox mission in Japan.

About the cathedral, Fr. Dimitrie Balaur wrote in 1936: *"The majestic Orthodox cathedral from Tokyo is one of the largest buildings in the city. Its` bell tower can be seen from every part of the city – the Japanese people can be proud with it."*<sup>18</sup> The bells of the Cathedral amazed the Japanese people and they call their sounds *"heavenly music"*. The church got the nickname: *"the Castle of the Phoenix"*<sup>19</sup>, being able to receive 5.000 people inside.

---

<sup>16</sup> A. Bakulevski, „A short history of the Japanese...”, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> A. Bakulevski, „A short history of the Japanese...”, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Rev. Dimitrie Balaur, „The religious life in Japan”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 54 (1936), no. 3-4, p. 217.

<sup>19</sup> Idem, „Castelul Fenixului. Caracterul activității misiei ortodoxe din Japonia”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 54 (1936), no. 7-8, p. 622.

When they saw the height of this cathedral, the Japanese authorities refused to accept it and even proposed its` demolition. The reason was that they were afraid that in the eventuality of an earthquake, its fall would affect the imperial palace (placed more than 1 km away). Another fear they had was that the bell tower of the church could be used as an observation point to spy the emperor and his palace.

### **Conclusions**

Christianity, although it`s a small minority in Japan, has succeeded in imposing itself over time, being now a religion respected by most of the Japanese. It has succeeded in imposing certain changes in Japanese society: the monogamous system where the family is made by the communion between a man and a woman is based on Christian influence. Another aspect where Christianity changed the Japanese society is imposing Sunday the rest day of the week.

Although there is a great difference between Japanese Christians, whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant, they had to cooperate in helping the people in need by creating schools, hospitals and retiring houses. For example, the Catholic Church, although representing only 436,505 people, or 0.34% of the Japanese population, owns 24 hospitals, 524 kindergartens, 286 schools and 19 Universities.<sup>20</sup>

The Orthodox Church was famous for its schools in the period when it was led by St. Nicholas Kasatkin. It had Sunday schools, a Theological Seminary that educated clergy and catechists to be sent as missionaries to different parts of Japan. On the Surugadai hill, there was also a Russian Language School. Among the pupils that studied at his school were the sons of the Tokyo and Yokohama mayors and countless Japanese diplomats who were to leave for Russia.

St. Nicholas set up a publishing house in Tokyo, called Aiai-sha (Agape Publishing House).

In the last period of his life, the fruits of a lifetime struggle began to appear, in the sense that he was able to form a group of translators, from the students of the Tokyo Seminary, who knew Russian. These, under the coordination of some Japanese theologians who studied in Russia (Fr. Simeon Mii and Ioann Senuma), were able to make translations from the Holy Fathers of the Church such as St. John Chrysostom, Saint Isaac the Syrian, Saint John of Kroonstad, St. Theophan etc ...

In a report of the Japanese Orthodox Church from 1904, Saint Nicholas says: *"There are 9 people in the publications department who are engaged in translation work. Apart of these, there are also three editors of church magazines*

---

<sup>20</sup> Rev. Olivier Chegaray, „Un potentiel de la foi”, *La Nef* 289 (2017), p. 22-23.

*and literature. We have the official church magazine - Seikyo Shimpo. Then there is Seikyo Yowa, a monthly magazine dedicated to preaching and religious education of Christians. Then we have Uranishiki, a monthly magazine for women.*"<sup>21</sup>

Although one cannot speak about a real persecution against Orthodox Christians in Japan at the beginning of the Russian-Orthodox mission, Saint Nicholas and his missionaries faced a multitude of treats, imprisoning and they were the victims of prejudice and hate. This was the way Japanese society related with Christianity at that time. St. Nicolai did not hesitate to use the diplomatic lobby for liberating his missionaries and the Japanese believers. Their attitude regarding treats and potential martyrdom was in many ways similar to the one of the Christians in the Early Church.

---

<sup>21</sup> Otis D.D Cary, *A history of Christianity in Japan, Romano Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Protestant Missions*, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, 1976, p. 420.