

The Diversity of Japanese Churches:

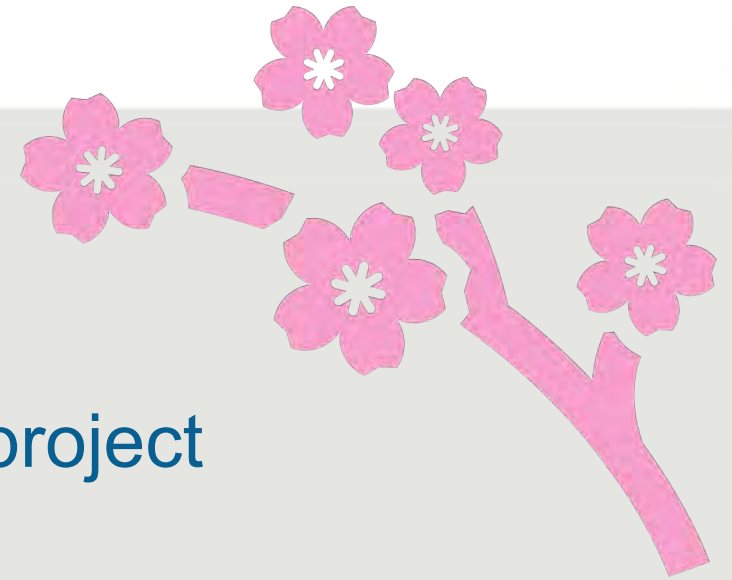
Examining Differences and Similarities in their Socio-Spatial Arrangements

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6. Comparison of the socio-spatial arrangements
7. Conclusion



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

What's my dissertation about?

- (1) Contemporary Japanese Christianity
- (2) Christian spaces / worship halls
- (3) Atmosphere understood as “realised sensory, affective and semantic potential of socio-spatial arrangements” (cf. Radermacher 2018, 2020)



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

(1) Contemporary Japanese Christianity

- Looking back on a history of successful mission and persecution since 16th century
- Navigation of claiming agency in a Shintō/Buddhist dominant society
- Development of “imported” and “indigenous” Japanese Christianity (Mullins 1998) starting with the *kakure kirishitan* 隠れキリシタン and rise of Christian charismatic intellectuals in the 20th century



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

(1) Contemporary Japanese Christianity

- Only about 2% registered Christians, many not mono-religious / exclusively Christian
- Christianity understood as *shūkyō* 宗教 (religion), which has negative connotations in Japanese society (see e.g., McLaughlin 2013)
- Many imported churches still connected to “home churches” abroad (Europe, North-America, Korea etc.)
- Japan still considered an “unreached land” by mission organisations (e.g., OMF) that regularly recruit missionaries



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

(2) Christian spaces / worship halls



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<https://harumari.tokyo/spot/888/>

- Japanese Christian churches have high architectural diversity (Löffler 2011)
- Size, designs and liturgical notions lead to variety of "set ups" at the churches
- Contribution of the study of *material religion* (see e.g., Vasquez 2010)

1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

(3) Atmosphere understood as “realised sensory, affective and semantic potential of socio-spatial arrangements” (cf. Radermacher 2018, 2020)

- Religious spaces often ascribed a “special” atmosphere
- But “atmosphere”, vibe, mood, *kūki* 空気, *fun'iki* 雰囲気 = vague concepts
- *Ba no kūki o yomu* 「場の空気を読む」 (reading the air) is very important in Japanese society





1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

(3) Atmosphere understood as “realised sensory, affective and semantic potential of socio-spatial arrangements” (cf. Radermacher 2018, 2020)

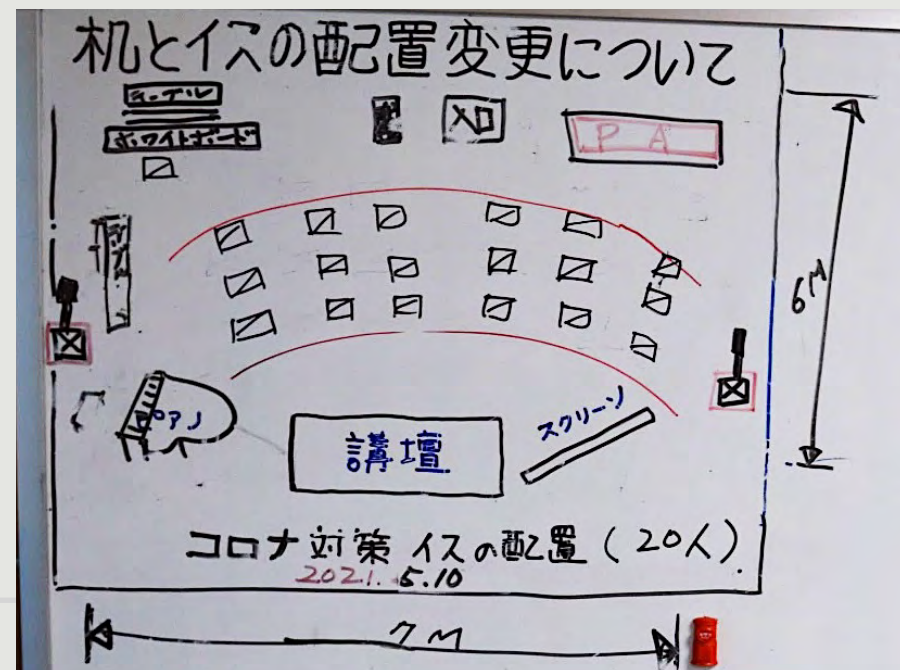
- There are studies, theories and approaches from different disciplines such as architecture, philosophy (phenomenology), sociology/social science... (see e.g., Schmitz 1969, Yamamoto 1977, Böhme 2007, Schwitalla 2015)
- Many still hold on to a rather phenomenological approach → hard to operationalise in empirical research due to subjectivity and lack of methods



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

(3) Atmosphere understood as “realised sensory, affective and semantic potential of socio-spatial arrangements” (cf. Radermacher 2018, 2020)

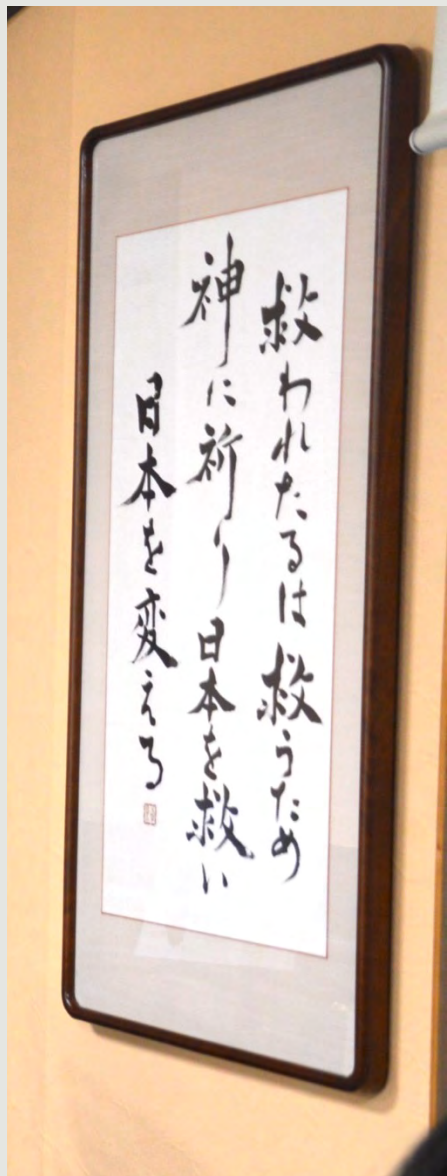
- I aim at contributing to a **new conception of an academic term of “atmosphere”** understood as “realised sensory, affective, and semantic potential of a socio-spatial arrangement” (Radermacher 2018, 2020)
- Working with 3 dimensions (material, psychological, social) and 3 perspectives production, reception of atmosphere and the socio-spatial arrangement itself



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

Research interest & design

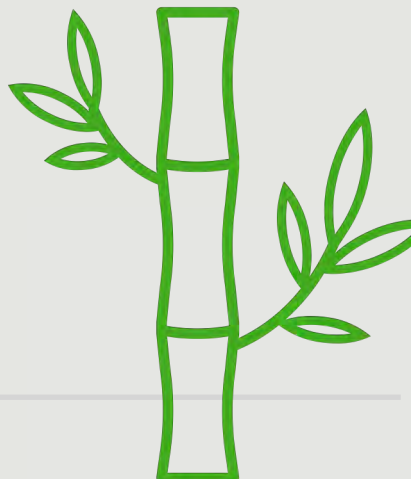
- What are the **constituents of atmosphere** in Japanese Christian spaces?
- How do these constituents **interact during religious practice**, e.g. worship service?
- Focus on **material & social dimensions** by studying 3 perspectives:
 - # *production of atmosphere: interviews with pastors/priest;*
 - # *reception of atmosphere: interviews with participants;*
 - # *socio-spatial arrangement: pictures, videos, livestreams, participant observation; grey literature)*
- *Evaluation method: objective hermeneutics (Oevermann 2014, Betz/Kirchner 2016, Radermacher 2017, Krech/Radermacher 2021)*



1. Introduction: About my dissertation project

Today's plan:

- Presentation of socio-spatial arrangements (*not the “realised potential” thereof*) of two indigenous churches
- Small comparisons (between indigenous and foreign church) to show similarities and differences
- *Get other researchers excited for the topic! ;)*



2. Overview: my case studies

(1) Sekiguchi **Catholic** Church, Tokyo



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<https://harumari.tokyo/spot/888/>

(2) Friends Church, Tokyo (**evangelical**)



(3) All Saints Chapel, Tokyo
(**Anglican**)

2. Overview: my case studies

(4) Izumi **Lutheran** Church, Fukushima



Izumi Lutheran Church on FB

(5) Harisutosu **Orthodox** Church, Shizuoka



6) Tamba Shinsei Church, Sonobe
(**Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan**)

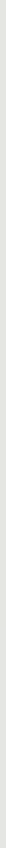


2. Overview: my case studies

(7) Kyōdō Midorioka Church, Kyōdō (**Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan**)

(8) Sei Iesu Kai, Oiso (**indigenous**)

(9) Iesu no Mitama Church, Kyoto (**indigenous**)



(7) Kyōdō Midorioka Church

(8) Sei Iesu Kai Kokofukai

Iesu no Mitama Church (Kyoto) twitter



3. Japanese “Indigenous” Churches

Social Origins (cf. Mullins 1998)

- Developed from 1901 on
- Result of discord between later Japanese founders of indigenous movements and Protestant missionary movement
- Japanese criticised the approach of Protestant American/European missionaries in 19th century and Evangelical missionaries in the Post-war period: Christianity > Japanese culture, no understanding of or interest in Japanese culture; no reflection of one's own nation's influence on Christianity

“Many Protestant missionaries operated as though their transplanted churches and traditions were the normative expression of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Transplanted missionary cultures, which included creeds, confessions, polity, and the missionary way of doing things, were the authentic expression of Christian faith.”

– Mullins 1998, 35

3. Japanese “Indigenous” Churches



Social Origins (cf. Mullins 1998)

- Furthermore: Japanese Christians became more equal to missionaries
- Understanding of Christian doctrines vs. national/denominational quarries and influences grew
- Possibility of Japanese interpretation and expression became imaginable
- Much criticism was voiced by Japanese Christian leaders like Uchimura Kanzō (Mukyōkai), Kawai Shinsui (Christ Heart Church) or Teshima Ikurō (Original Gospel movement)
- Aside from growing nationalism and anti-Western climate in Japan, “Charismatic” (Weber, Blasi 1991) personality of foundery important for a successful formation



3. Japanese “Indigenous” Churches

Social Origins (cf. Mullins 1998, 42)

- Just as **New Religious Movements** build on existing religious concepts, so do the indigenous Christian movements

Table 3. Selected Minor Founders and Indigenous Movements

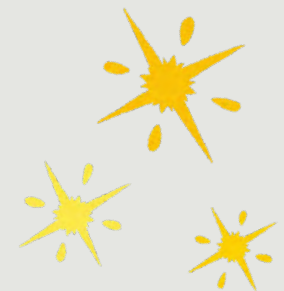
MINOR FOUNDER	MOVEMENT	DOMINANT WESTERN INFLUENCES	DOMINANT NATIVE INFLUENCES
Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930)	Nonchurch Movement (1901)	William S. Clark, Professor and lay Christian, Sapporo Agricultural College, Amherst	Confucianism <i>Bushidō</i>
Matsumura Kaiseiki (1859–1939)	Church of Japan (1907) The Way (1907)	James Ballagh, Dutch Reformed Church, Yokohama Band, New Theology, Darwinism	Neo-Confucianism (Yōmeigaku), Shinto
Kawai Shinsui (1867–1962)	Christ Heart Church (1927)	Tōhoku Gakuin College (German Reformed Church)	Confucianism, Buddhism, mountain asceticism, Kyōkenjutsu
Murai Jun (1897–1970)	Spirit of Jesus Church (1941)	Aoyama Gakuin College (Methodism), True Jesus Church, Taiwan, Unitarian Pentecostalism	Folk religious traditions and the ancestor cult
Ōtsuki Takeji (1906–)	Holy Ecclesia of Jesus (1946)	Dispensationalism, Holiness tradition, revivalism, Roman Catholic spirituality, Jewish traditions, Zionism	<i>Nembutsu</i> , ancestor cult
Teshima Ikurō (1910–1973)	Original Gospel or Tabernacle (1948)	Zionism, Jewish traditions	Uchimura Kanzō and Nonchurch movement, folk religious traditions, mountain asceticism
Nakahara Masao (1948–)	Okinawa Christian Gospel (1977)	Plymouth Brethren Missionary influence, Dispensationalism	Okinawan shamanism

3. Japanese “Indigenous” Churches

2 Case Studies

- 村井ジュン Murai Jun’s イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church (1941)
- Charismatic features according to Mullins (1998, 49): Continuing revelation, spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, healing and/or exorcism

- 大槻武二 Ōtsuki Takeji’s 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus (1946)
- Charismatic features according to Mullins (1998, 49): Continuing revelation, spirit baptism, healing and/or exorcism



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church





4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Murai Jun (*1897-1970)

- born into a Methodist family → student of theology at Aoyama College → report of a spiritual experience (started to speak in tongues) → started preaching → pastor at *Japan Bible Church* (today: Japan Assemblies of God) → went to Taiwan and in 1941 received baptism at True Jesus Church (Chinese ND Church) that is known as Charismatic → upon a revelation by his wife Suwa stating that the church should be called “イエス之御霊教会” he founded the denomination (see e.g., Mullins 1998; Matsuno 1984)
- Revelation continuously important, e.g. as seen with the hymn book:

“Rei sanka (Spirit hymns) is a collection of 166 hymns all said to have been received from heaven by Tsuruhara Tama, a woman who was active in the early years of this church. The preface to this hymnbook states that no changes in the contents are permitted since the hymns were given in a direct revelation from God.”

4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kyoto Iesunomitama Church

(1) Doctrines & activities (an insight) – the Social

- Water baptism in Jesus's name (and re-baptism)
- Spirit baptism (prayer in tongues to receive the spirit)
- Vicarious baptism of ancestors
- Speaking in tongues
- Holy Communion: Wine is blood, bread is body of Christ

(according to the Agency of Cultural Affairs' 2016 report; Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor of the Kyoto branch; group's website; participant observation)



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church



Socio-spatial arrangement of Kyoto Iesunomitama Church

(1) Doctrines & activities (an insight) – the Social

- Very active mission in e.g. Kenia, Congo, Tanzania, America, Korea, Indonesia..., also amongst refugees
- About 147 churches, 103 in Japan alone; 80 missionary spaces
- Current Bishop is 三戸富夫 Mito Toshio

(according to the Agency of Cultural Affairs' 2016 report; Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor of the Kyoto branch; group's website; participant observation)

4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kyoto Iesunomitama Church

(1) Doctrines & activities (an insight) – the Social

- Kyoto church has 15-20 weekly attendees
- Strong family line (mother, father, wife & son of pastor all very engaged; pastor's family used to be pastors too)
- Worship consists of: prayer in tongues (seems to happen controlled in the beginning, middle and end of service), songs (*rei sankā*), bible reading (together) and sermon on verses of the bible)

(according to the Agency of Cultural Affairs' 2016 report; Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor of the Kyoto branch; group's website; participant observation)



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

**Socio-spatial arrangement
of Kyoto Iesunomitama
Church
(2) Church & design –
Materiality**



(Google View)



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church



**Socio-spatial arrangement
of Kyoto Iesunomitama
Church
(2) Church & design –
Materiality**

4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Socio-spatial arrangement
of Kyoto Iesunomitama
Church

(2) Church & design –
Materiality



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kyoto Iesunomitama Church

(2) Church & design – Materiality

- Former owner built it as practice room for kabuki (with a stage, hanamichi etc.)
- Bought by the church 21 y. ago
- Very traditional style with tatami, a garden with a pond and a stone lantern, paper sliding doors etc.
- Reasoning “we’re in Kyoto, it’s ok”
- Differs greatly from other churches (“not ‘normal’ church look”)
- Use of technology during the service
- Benches, chairs, and zabuton – seems like an assemblage of different kinds of styles, designs and means to respond to whatever need the churchgoers might have



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kyoto Iesunomitama Church (2) Church & design – Materiality

- Pastor, visitors/participants wear chic-casual clothes (not significantly different from other churches)
- *Rei sanko* were still rather traditional (piano music in the background, usually played by a woman, led by the pastor)
- The chairs / sofa-chairs were comfortable, resembled a living room (similar to mission churches they showed online)



4. イエス之御霊教会 – Spirit of Jesus Church

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kyoto Iesunomitama Church Summary

- Japanese style of church is not important theologically, but might constitute a feeling of “belonging” to Japan
- Symbols like the cross and bible verses designate the place as Christian place
- The community is tightly-knit, but tries to acquire more members (e.g., fierce wish to evangelise me and baptise me right away) → as an outside, you have limited range of freedom and might feel alienated by the strong commitment?
- Focus of gatherings is the joint worship in prayer and songs
- Constant reminder of the “spiritual gifts” as means to set them apart as the “right” church → prayer in glossolalia as unifier
- Community goes beyond Kyoto → many references to churches abroad (also: Zoom call allowed online participation from abroad)



5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus





5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

Ōtsuki Takeji (*1906–2004)

- Born into Buddhist family practicing Nembutsu (recitation of Amida-Buddha's name) → Conversion to Christianity while in Dōshisha middle school in Kyoto → joined the Holiness Church in 1930 due to dissatisfaction with more liberal and supposedly socialistic approach to Christianity at Dōshisha → Holiness Church's Bishop/leader Nakada Jūji had supposedly received a vision (to pray for Israel's salvation) and the Church suffered a tremendous loss in popularity → Ōtsuki finished theological training at the Holiness Bible seminary → 1936 missionary in Manchuria → 1938 revelation of God (reported of having seen JC & a light entered his body) → 1946 vision to establish independent church "Holy Ecclesia of Jesus" → establishment of Seiesukai with a small number of followers

(according to Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor at the Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa)

5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

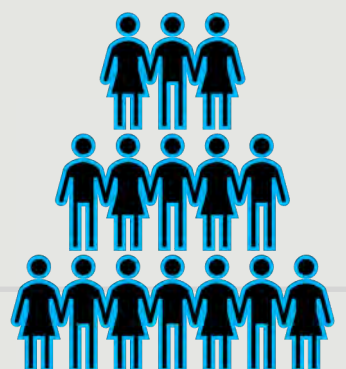
Socio-spatial arrangement of Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa (Seiiesukai)

(1) Doctrines & activities (an insight) – the Social

- Desire to revive apostolic Christianity
- More than 100 churches scattered all over the Japanese archipelago
- Strong connection to Israel (continuous prayer for Israel & Jewish people)
- Spirit baptism, continuing revelation, healing, miracles
- “calling on God’s name” (e.g., 神は愛なり kami wa ai nari) → similar rhythm and sound as recitation of Buddhist Nembutsu practice

(according to Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor at the Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa)

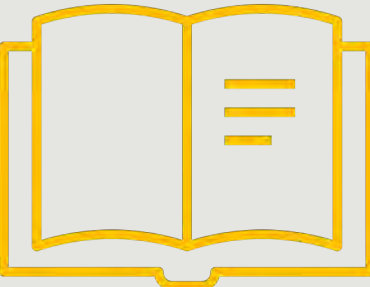
“The center and climax of worship services in the Holy Ecclesia of Jesus comes when the entire congregation, following the direction of the minister, chants in unison one of the names of God—for example, Kami wa ai nari (God is love). In worship services a small bell is rung to mark the end of the chanting.”



5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa (Seiiesukai)

(1) Doctrines & activities (an insight) – the Social

- 
- Sacraments are taken seriously
 - Baptism requires at least 6 months long attendance prior, confession of sin (letter), basic course of introduction, personal experience of spiritual baptism
 - Communion is very special (4x a year), leaders are encouraged to write confessions periodically
 - Practice of responding to Shinto festivals like Shichigosan or Seijinshiki by creating Christian versions of it
 - Strict hierarchical structure, training of priests very important (inclusion of Japanese arts such as calligraphy (men), ikebana, tea ceremony (women)); marriage of priests only allowed within the priesthood (but: more women than men)

(according to Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor at the Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa)

5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

Socio-spatial arrangement of
Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa
(Seiiesukai)

(2) Church & design – Materiality



5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus



**Socio-spatial arrangement of
Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa
(Seiiesukai)
(2) Church & design –
Materiality**

5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

**Socio-spatial arrangement
of Kokufu Kyōkai in
Kanagawa (Seiiesukai)
(2) Church & design –
Materiality**



5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus



**Socio-spatial arrangement of
Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa
(Seiiesukai)
(2) Church & design –
Materiality**



5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa (Seiiesukai)

(2) Church & design – Materiality

- Church building resembles “typical” churches in Japan (Western-style architecture, usage of white/dark brown/brown; sanctuary with altar; benches; backroom for parents/children with glass window)
- Worship place is the central room of the building (accessible from three sides from within the building)
- Religious symbols such as the seven-pointed star point toward connection to Israel
- Altar decorated with the menorah (candle holder), oil flask, bible, candles, fresh flowers



(according to Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor at the Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa), participant observation)



5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa (Seiiesukai)

(2) Church & design – Materiality

- Altar to honour the memory of the deceased to be found in many people's homes
- Healing spring in Ayabe (close to Ōtsuki's birthplace) as place for pilgrimage
- Tea room to welcome guests and for quiet meditation
- Usage of Apostle's creed (as only indigenous Japanese church)
- Theologically, church sanctuary understood as "sacred", enabling encounter with God

(according to Mullins 1998; interview with the pastor at the Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa, participant observation)

"The movement regards the sanctuary within church buildings as the "sacred space" for an encounter with the living God. Protestant mission churches in Japan, they feel, have largely failed to appreciate the need for buildings that create a sense of the sacred and an atmosphere for worship. As one pastor observed, 'it is hard to distinguish many Christian churches in Japan from classrooms or a gymnasium—with their bare walls and folding chairs. Japanese need more symbols and atmosphere in order to sense that they are in a religious place.'"

5. 聖イエス会 – Holy Ecclesia of Jesus

Socio-spatial arrangement of Kokufu Kyōkai in Kanagawa (Seiiesukai) Summary

- Mixture of Japanese and Western-style practices → accommodation of Christianity to Japanese culture
- Architecture designed to hold a sacred space
- Focus seems to be on ministry within the church (bible studies for members) and spiritual cultivation central to membership → more difficult to access as non-member (I was asked to refrain from taking pictures during the sermon)
- “Calling upon the Lord” understood and framed as “specialty” of the church → first time visitors are invited to join
- Music is reminiscent of many traditional Protestant churches (organ/piano)



6. Comparison of the socio-spatial arrangement

Differences of indigenous and “foreign” churches (first observations)

- Theology/doctrines (not important for my analysis)
- Focus on prayer in tongues / calling the name to set them apart from other denominations → marker for self-identification
- Jewish symbolism (Holy Ecclesia of Jesus); sabbath worship (Spirit of Jesus church) → Supposed long-lasting connection between Japanese Jewish people
- Indigenous churches felt rather shocked that I chose them as case studies

6. Comparison of the socio-spatial arrangement

Similarities of indigenous and “foreign” churches (first observations)

- Architecture: indigenous churches’ architectures do not particularly stand out from other churches such as small Protestant churches
- Difficulties with reaching younger generations (not too many junior pastors/priests etc.)
- Liturgical traditions maintained
- Hierarchical structure: pastors/priests as main leaders
- Soundscape: piano, organ, choirs; communal singing; pastor/priest’s leading voice
- More women than men (also in leading positions), rarely open towards LGBTQ issues (some exceptions such as Kyōdō Midorigaoka Kyōkai in Kyōdō)

7. Conclusion

... or some sort of it

- Christianity in Japan is recognised as small, but highly diverse
- The socio-spatial arrangements of Japanese churches don't seem to differ as much as probably their theology
- Although theologically different, many practices, ways of prayer, liturgical aspects as well as social situation (e.g., demographics, finance) seem similar
- Indigenous churches want to be recognised as churches, albeit trying to incorporate Japanese cultural aspects into their traditions (e.g., Holy Ecclesia of Jesus)
- However, how that influences what sensory, semantic and affective potential is realised (i.e., what atmosphere there is) in each church, is intriguing

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