

## Introduction

It was my first day in the “Introduction to Catholicism” class on Thursdays at Our Lady of the Assumption Church<sup>1</sup> in central Tokyo. I carefully approached a vacant seat that was located near the back of the room so that I could see the entire room. The class was to begin at 10:30 a.m., and there were about forty or so women and a few men present. Surprisingly, the room was full of older people. I was hoping that I was dressed nicely enough to blend in with the people here, who I anticipated were from the affluent strata of Japanese society. Before taking up an empty seat, I asked a woman next to me whether it was okay to sit there. She appeared to be in her sixties or early seventies, wearing her permed hair short. Like so many people in Japan, her hair was dyed, making it darker than it would be naturally. She pleasantly told me that the seat was empty, and when I sat down next to her, she asked whether this was my first day of class. Upon hearing that I was there to conduct ethnographic research on the Japanese Catholic community, she was intrigued and whispered to her neighbor: “Did you hear? She came all the way from Canada to study Catholicism in Japan!” Without being prompted, my neighbor went on to share her story with me.

“Once I started praying, you know, so many wondrous things [*fushigi na koto*] happened around me! They are such trifling things that nobody would care, but I know those things are happening not randomly but as a response to my prayer. This is something I cannot explain with words. You cannot see it, but there exists something that we cannot see with our eyes. They are like, you know, magic! One thing after another, things would happen! I can’t explain how fun it is!”

As if she were a sixteen-year-old, she could hardly contain her excitement. After saying all this, with an expression of slight embarrassment on her face, she stole a peek at me as if to check my reaction toward her candid confession to a complete stranger. This encounter was not within the range of my expected scenarios for fieldwork. My research proposal, prepared in Canada, outlined how I had planned to study, using the contemporary Roman Catholic community in Tokyo as a window, the influence of recent globalization in Japan, as well as the many historical layers of Westernization discourses that have impacted the Japanese people. Gradually, however, it became apparent to me that at the heart of the experience of becoming Roman Catholic in Tokyo lies the matter of submitting one's will to a new authority, the Christian God. Although this might not sound particularly novel to readers who are familiar with the Christian worldview, accepting a new authority has unique and significant implications for the idea of personhood, one's sense of self, and agency in the Japanese context.

As George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer (1986) have pointed out, the study of personhood<sup>2</sup> can potentially be the most fertile area of investigation in revealing how cultures differ from one another. The study of personhood counters the "subtly ethnocentric assumptions about human agency embedded in the frameworks with which anthropologists have represented their subjects" (1986, 45). Since Marcus and Fischer's evocative question, scholars have made various attempts to question and complicate the analytical categories of individual, agency, and the self (Mahmood 2005; Ortner 2006; Robbins 2004). The current study of Japanese Roman Catholic people in Tokyo is my attempt to enrich ongoing investigation of these categories.

In contemporary Tokyo, members of the Roman Catholic Church are exhorted to surrender to divine will. When these Japanese members of the Church become successful in trusting in the divine, they often simultaneously leave behind the popular Japanese virtue of striving hard to fulfill one's social roles. For these Japanese Catholics, this decision to submit to divine will rather than to live up to society's expectations is often validated by extraordinary mystical experiences or signs, such as communication with the unseen through prayers or being surrounded by the sudden, unexplained scent of roses. I argue that through this process of surrendering to divine will, converts<sup>3</sup> experience a new power structure in which human authority is significantly diminished. This restructuring of authority results in a sense of liberation and elation for these Japanese Catholics, whose sense of self has previously been shaped by social obliga-

tions and by the Japanese<sup>4</sup> emphasis on the social order and the authority of human beings. Furthermore, I suggest that Neo-Confucian values and idioms that have repeatedly been mobilized within Japan's discursive processes underpin a relational sense of self so salient in Japan. As the laity deepen their understanding of the Catholic worldview, the culturally sanctioned, relational sense of self that is constructed based on one's social context is often realigned to accommodate the non-human divine. With this reconfiguration of authority figures, the relationship with the divine is awarded the most prominent position. As a result, this Catholic sense of self finds an inner compass from which one can act, giving rise to a more integral sense of self.

While on the surface, this sense of self among Japanese Catholics resembles an oft-discussed sense of individuality associated with the conversion to Christianity found in many non-Euro-American cultural contexts (Robbins 2004; Keane 2007), I suggest that perhaps it is more fruitful to look at this Japanese Catholic sense of self as a "realigned self" that is relational. This realigned self is a subjectivity positioned in relation to the non-human divine. As the Christian deity is invisible, however, the person who espouses this sense of self appears independent, as his or her relationship with the divine is invisible to others.

As the reader will find in subsequent chapters in this ethnography, Roman Catholics in Tokyo welcome this change in one's self and enjoy their relationships with the divine. It is perhaps right to situate these joyous converts in the context of the post-Vatican II era of the Roman Catholic Church. Although I also depict many Roman Catholics in Tokyo hiding their Christian identities from their peers at work and some even from their own family members (Omori 2014), many Catholics stay for hours in the church after Sunday masses, organizing talks by guest priests, transcribing sermons for distribution over the Internet, and actively involving themselves in various church activities. A significant number of Catholics cherish the notion of God as love and talk about their relationships with the unseen with fondness. It can be said that, in the twenty-first century, Catholics in Tokyo are enjoying the fruits of the various debates and changes devised and implemented through the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. I should also caution the reader that I do not extend this claim to describe Roman Catholics in other parts of Japan, such as in Nagasaki, as I did not have many opportunities to spend time with the parishioners of other areas.

Before I turn to the discussion of the ways in which laypeople in Tokyo undergo changes in their sense of self, I first turn to further

theoretical orientations to set up the framework for my discussion of Roman Catholics in Tokyo.

### Theoretical Orientations

This work is largely inspired by a Foucauldian insistence on examining historical processes to understand the “mode by which [. . .] human beings are made subjects” (Foucault 1984, 7). In his search for the mode in which distinct subjectivities are produced, Foucault emphasizes notions of truth and power. In his introduction to Michel Foucault’s work, Paul Rabinow points out that Foucault is “highly suspicious of claims to universal truth” (4). He approaches a claim to a universal truth by historicizing the category in question. By doing so, he eventually unmasks its claim to authenticity and as a result dismantles its power. Foucault insists that “truth isn’t the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves” (72), but that truth is “produced” through various processes of sanctioning. He claims that “[e]ach society has its regime of truth” (73), and the current work is my attempt to discern it in the context of Japanese society.

Following a Foucauldian model, the present study explores the historical processes through which contemporary Japanese and, in particular, Roman Catholics are shaped through various discursive processes. In historicizing my own subjects, I adapt the approaches taken by the French *Annales* school of history. In particular, my work uses the *Annales* ideas of the *longue durée* and the conjuncture<sup>5</sup> (Braudel 1980) in discussing various historical periods that differently, and sometimes simultaneously, have shaped the lives of contemporary Japanese Roman Catholics. According to this scheme, I discuss the era starting with the Edo Period (1603–1868) and ending at the Pacific War in 1945 as a *longue durée* in which certain values were propagated and inculcated among Japanese people using Neo-Confucian idioms. I also consider another era from the Meiji Period (1868–1912) to the end of the Pacific War as a conjuncture, or a shorter period of social development, in which the state pursued an intense application of similar ethics using Confucian ideas, with the Japanese emperor as the pinnacle of the Confucian hierarchy. Furthermore, I look at several historical periods in which governmental policies had a significant impact on the lives of the laity in order to analyze aspects of lay religious practice and the self-consciousness of lay Catholics. Most notably, I look at anti-Christian discursive process at another conjuncture,

when, in the early seventeenth century, the Tokugawa government banned Christianity altogether<sup>6</sup> and, at the same time, ordered all residents of the Japanese islands to maintain a Buddhist altar in the home (Hur 2007). Along with other anti-Christian decrees of the Tokugawa government, these policies had a long-lasting impact on the populace, both making the domestic sphere a cultic domain (Takeda 1976) and transforming Christianity into a symbolic, anti-national villain.<sup>7</sup>

My analysis often focuses on the geopolitically bounded notion of Japan as a nation-state so that I can direct my attention to policies to govern its internal subjects. Like Foucault, I am interested in the question of how certain subjects are made; not the outcome but the process of producing them. In this line of inquiry, I realize the state and other influential leaders within the state have often played major roles in shaping certain discourses. To trace state-led discourses that contributed in noteworthy ways to forming subjects in this study, I need to use the adjective “Japanese” frequently. I am aware that this emphasis on the unit of “Japan” may create the impression that my work belongs to the line of scholarly and popular discourses labeled as *nihonjinron* or the study of Japanese uniqueness. I would like to clarify that I do not assume that the Japanese are a single “race” that has a peculiar ability and unique qualities, as many writers whose works belong to the genre of *nihonjinron* tend to assume. My necessary usage of the term “Japanese society” and the adjective “Japanese” should be understood, instead, as referring to those people who are affected unevenly by various regulations and constraints imposed by the state through taxation, law, freedom of speech, and freedom to practice religion, among other constraints. Historically, the state also controlled the languages used within the Japanese archipelago. Although minor languages such as Okinawan and Ainu existed in the periphery of Japanese society, these languages have never become a dominant language of the media. As a result, the Japanese language played a vital role in shaping the discourse of the populace. Now, having laid down the framework for this study, I turn to my central topic: the sense of self among Japanese members of the Roman Catholic Church in Tokyo.

### The “Relational” Sense of Self and Neo-Confucian Values

Describing the sense of freedom that she gained through baptism, Hashimoto-san, an older female convert to Catholicism, compared the experience of baptism to being liberated “as if the barrel hoop had come off” (*taga*

*ga hazureru mitai*). This phrase, “the barrel hoop had come off,” is an idiomatic expression used in the modern Japanese language to describe an ungoverned state of being that should be regulated by a proper set of rules. In other words, this idiom normally describes a negative condition. Hashimoto-san, however, deliberately used this idiomatic expression in a contradictory and playful way. In Tokyo, many members of the laity find that the experience of espousing the Catholic worldview is a liberating experience precisely because of its difference from social ideals that dictate appropriate behaviors. As the normal usage of the term “barrel hoop” indicates, there are socially sanctioned rules and ideals that one ought to adhere to in becoming a “mature” member of Japanese society. As I show in chapter 2, the constant effort to keep up with societal ideals is often a taxing experience for many people and is frequently a source of emotional and psychological difficulties. These socially conceived sets of rules and ideals, however, can be relegated to secondary importance once one completely immerses oneself in the Catholic worldview.

There are two dissimilar worldviews at play in many of my interlocutors’ narratives. Before converting to Catholicism, they often strived hard to be dutiful daughters-in-law, ideal wives, and caring mothers. Later on, through their conversions to Catholicism, they leave behind this emphasis on their social roles and conceive of who they are in terms of the Catholic worldview. In this latter worldview, the Christian God plays a central role in interpretations of one’s position vis-à-vis other human beings. For example, the experience of sitting right next to somebody could be the work of God<sup>8</sup> according to the Catholic understanding of the world. This same person, however, might rather quickly change seats if he or she were concerned with seating order according to the Confucian-based understandings of the social hierarchy. Whereas it is a norm to defer to the social order and human society as the voice of moral authority, by converting to Catholicism, it becomes possible instead to defer to the Christian God as one’s absolute moral authority.

The emphasis in Japanese society on one’s social role as the center of one’s subjectivity has received much scholarly attention among anthropologists of Japan in the recent past (Borovoy 2005; Kondo 1990; Lebra 1984; Rosenberger 1992; Smith 1983). Going back even further, the Japanese sense of self has enjoyed significant scholarly attention since the inception of Japanese Studies (e.g., Benedict 1974 [1947]; Doi 1971).<sup>9</sup> After Japan’s rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, there were numerous scholarly inquiries into the economic sphere of Japanese society. Kondo

argues that the Japanese sense of self centers on the self's "relational" character as compared to that of the typically American, and more individualistic, sense of self (Kondo 1990). Kondo maintains that "contextually constructed, relationally defined selves are particularly resonant in Japan." In her seminal work *Crafting Selves* (1990), Kondo eloquently depicts the ways in which one is "defined by obligations and linked to others" and is thus "'always already' caught in webs of relationships" (Kondo 1990, 26).

She further discusses the structure of the Japanese language and says that "awareness of complex social positioning is an inescapable element of any utterance in Japanese, for it is utterly impossible to form a sentence without also commenting on the relationship between oneself and one's interlocutor" (1990, 31). For example, there are a variety of male pronouns for "I," including *watakushi*, *watashi*, *washi*, *boku*, and *ore*, that can be used in conversation. However, one needs to choose which pronoun to use depending on the context (Kondo 1990, 27). This choice demands an instant judgment on the part of the speaker who initiates the conversation as to which individual should be located in a higher position in a given social hierarchy and who is to be located lower. For example, no employee should use *ore* in describing himself when talking to the president of his company. It is proper to use *watakushi* or *watashi* in this context. *Ore* is an informal expression that allows the speaker to talk to his peers and possibly to his girlfriend and wife. In addition to the pronouns, one needs to decide which mode of speech to use in conversing with an interlocutor, as the verbs also change depending on social relationships. Many other scholars have pointed out that one's sense of self in Japan is often constructed through interactions with others (Kuwayama 1992; Ohnuki-Tierney 1990, 2001). Jane Bachnik has called this constantly shifting idea of the self the "sliding scale" of the self and other (quoted in Kondo 1990, 26). In Japanese society, the mastery of language reflecting proper social relationships is considered to be a sign of maturity. It is common practice in the hospitality industry to train the newly employed in the proper usage of the language so that they will not offend their customers. It should be noted that Kondo emphasizes selves *in the plural* and their relationship to power. Using her ethnographic data, she depicts the ways in which selves are constructed and reconstructed according to context. She emphasizes the relations of power in complicating this process of self-construction in various Japanese contexts.

Scholars have agreed that there is a pronounced gender divide in Japanese society (Brinton 1993; Kelsky 2001; Lebra 1984; Rosenberger

1992, 2001). Many have argued that this gender divide further reinforces the prescribed role-playing aspects of the Japanese sense of self (Allison 1991, 1994; Borovoy 2005; Ogasawara 1998; Rosenberger 2001). Although I did not exclude men from my investigation of Japanese Roman Catholic communities in Tokyo, this research is, to a large extent, concerned with women, women's lives, and their religious expressions in contemporary Japan.

This focus on women was not intentional, but is rather an artifact of my empirical research. In addition to the fact that my position as a woman facilitated my rapport with research participants of the same gender, approximately 90 percent of those who attend church activities during the daytime in Tokyo are women. As a result, my data reflect more on the experience of women than those of men.<sup>10</sup> While this study is not motivated by a feminist agenda such as a discourse on gender equality in religious traditions (cf. Kawahashi 2006; Yamaguchi 2003), I hope that by depicting the concerns and practices of women and describing their lives, I have produced a culturally sensitive account of notions of selfhood in contemporary Japan.<sup>11</sup>

Although the scholars referenced here have emphasized the importance of contexts in which people define themselves, the dynamic roles that Neo-Confucian idioms played in shaping and reshaping the Japanese sense of self have not been explored to a large extent. Confucian-derived values have often been used as symbols or, the model of, and model for, reality. In this book, I link Neo-Confucian values to the "relational" trait of the sense of self in Japan and point to two discursive periods in which Neo-Confucian idioms became deeply embedded in Japanese society. As previously mentioned, I identify the era starting with the Edo Period and ending at the Pacific War in 1945 as a *longue durée* in which Neo-Confucian ethics became one of the important intellectual currents of the state. Second, I identify another era from the Meiji Period to the end of the Pacific War as a conjuncture, or a shorter period of social movement, in which the state pursued an intense application of Neo-Confucian ethics, with the Japanese emperor as the pinnacle of the Confucian hierarchy. Using both ethnographic examples and historical documents, I illustrate various efforts to instill Neo-Confucian values, such as the importance of social hierarchy, fulfilling of one's social roles, the subordinate position of woman, and filial piety. By juxtaposing Japanese renditions of Neo-Confucian idioms in historical contexts with the present-day experience of Roman Catholic laypeople, I demonstrate the dynamics of the discursive processes whereby the Japanese elites shaped and reshaped their subjects.



## The Christian God as an Anchor

When I trace the conversion of Japanese individuals to Roman Catholicism, or the deepening of Catholic faith among people who received infant baptism, a similar pattern emerges. As I stated earlier, Catholics in Tokyo shift their allegiance from human authority to that of the Christian God when espousing the Catholic faith. By placing the Christian God at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of the moral authority, these Catholics are able to create a central position within themselves, an anchor or center of gravity, which roots their otherwise constantly shifting contextual sense of self defined by social hierarchies based on Neo-Confucian values. As Kondo puts it eloquently in her work, Japanese contexts constantly demand one to locate oneself in a social hierarchy. As we will see in this ethnography, Christianity, in particular Roman Catholicism, enables individuals to break away from the constant demands of positioning in Japanese society. When embraced by a Japanese person, a Roman Catholic identity functions as an anchor for one's positioning in a world otherwise dictated by human hierarchies. As one is able to develop a center of gravity, a stable position from which one can see the world, this enables the person to embrace a solid standpoint.

This allegiance to a new authority generates tremendous relief for many converts and devout Catholics in Tokyo. It also creates a sense of liberation and elation. As noted above, many Catholics whom I encountered in Tokyo were jubilantly exultant and cheerful about being Catholic, in stark contrast to numerous lay Catholics whom I encountered in North America. Many lay Catholics in Canada have been embarrassed by the scandal associated with pedophile priests and express ambivalence toward the Church. On the contrary, Tokyo Catholics have maintained their sense of reverence towards priests<sup>12</sup> and see Jesus and the Christian God as their personal center of gravity.

Perhaps because of its strong presence in the West, anthropology has had a complex relationship with Christianity as the subject of investigation (Bialecki et al. 2008; Canell 2006). It did not attract much scholarly attention, especially during the discipline's infancy. This situation has changed over time, for example, when scholars turned their attention to the study of popular Catholicism and peasant society (Badone 1989, 1990; Christian 1996; Taylor 1995). In recent years, the study of personhood has been invigorating theoretical discussions in the field of anthropology of Christianity (Bialecki and Daswani 2015; Mosko 2010; Robbins 2010).

As Bialecki and others have put it, “in cultures that have recently adopted Christianity, conversion often triggers a partial abandonment of social and cultural forms oriented toward the collective in favor of individualist models of social organization” (Bialecki et al. 2008, 1141). Several scholars have associated conversion to Christianity with the development of a more bounded, individualistic sense of self (Barker 2007; Keane 2007; Robbins 2004) as opposed to the pre-conversion “relational” or “dividual” sense of self. These discussions are partially built on the works of Dumont (1985, 1986), who argues that Christianity has been a cultural force contributing to the rise of a Western notion of individualism (see also Mauss 1985). In Melanesian contexts in particular, this pre-conversion personhood is characterized as “dividual” (see Mosko 2010 for a summary). My work on conversion to Roman Catholicism in Tokyo adds to the discussions generated by several anthropologists who have observed the development of a more bounded, individualistic sense of self as a result of conversion to Christianity. While some anthropologists question the wisdom of seeing too much of a clear division between the two models (Chua 2012; Elisha 2011; Ikeuchi 2017; Mosko 2010), for my part, I attempt to complicate this binary model of personhood by depicting the “realigned sense of self” among Roman Catholics in Tokyo, which is still relational, but the relationship formed is that with the divine.

### Are These Changes Only Seen among Roman Catholics?

Some readers may wonder if the transformative processes in one’s sense of self that I describe in this book are specifically Roman Catholic. More specifically, would people change their sense of self through other means? This is an important and interesting question. Specialists on Japanese religion may notice that there are some similarities between the descriptions of religious expressions of Roman Catholics and those of personal experiences recorded in the study of so-called new religious movements in Japan (Davis 1980; Shimazono 2004; Young 1993). Mullins has noted in the case of what he calls “indigenous Christian movements” that these groups resemble new religious movements (1998). It is also possible to see similarities between Roman Catholicism in Tokyo and other new religious movements.

Furthermore, other readers may wonder if transformative processes one undergoes through deepening of a Catholic faith may be similar to what

some Japanese people may feel through other practices outside religious spheres. For example, would practicing a tea ceremony bring a similar effect? How about those who are in the world of the arts? By deepening one's involvement in a creative world of artistic expressions—such as painting, playing musical instruments, and dancing—can one be able to transcend the mundane and bring about changes in one's relational selves?

It has been a long time since the expression *jibun sagashi*, or “the search of one's self,” became a buzzword in Japan (Cave 2007, Rosenberger 2001). Scholars have studied various ways in which people attempt to maintain socially ascribed roles while continuing their exploration that may go beyond such roles. Postponing marriage (Rosenberger 2013), looking toward opportunities relating to the “West” through emotional and physical intimacy (Kelsky 2001), and taking dance lessons such as ballet (Ono 2015) are some of the avenues through which they try to go beyond the socially ascribed narrow sense of self imposed on them. The kind of changes that I describe in this book may resemble some of the cases discussed by these researchers. However, a clear realignment of values Japanese Roman Catholics undergo as well as the discovery of ultimate authority outside the human sphere, in my mind, departs from these examples.

Take a tea ceremony, for example—somewhat of a favored topic among cultural anthropologists of Japan. Through practicing the tea ceremony, many middle-aged and older women were reportedly gaining cultural and symbolic capital with which they feel they can stand on an equal footing with their male family members (or even daughters) who have other social and symbolic capital such as higher education (Chiba 2011; Kato 2004). According to these researchers, these women feel empowered through their involvement in the world of the tea ceremony. It seems to me, however, that this empowerment occurs because they all subscribe to the values popular among members of Japanese society at large. In other words, these women take a yardstick created by the society at large and measure themselves against that yardstick.

On the contrary, metaphorically speaking, Japanese Catholics decidedly exchange their yardstick with that created by the Roman Catholic Church, whose values in many ways are contrary to popular values found in Japanese society. In this way, Japanese Roman Catholics' transformation seen in the sense of self is at a different level from at least those who practice the tea ceremony. Whereas the tea ceremony practitioners continue to remain within the spheres dictated by the authority of humans, Roman Catholics can find their source of legitimacy outside

human spheres. Admittedly, it is difficult to compare the cases of Roman Catholics with those who practice other art forms, such as painting and music. It is interesting, however, that I met many musicians and artists who became Roman Catholics at Our Lady of the Assumption Church. This is something that can be pursued by later research.

### A Vantage Point

In her article “Dissolution and Reconstitution of Self,” Kondo (1986) writes about a few key moments in which she, as a third-generation Japanese American, realized that her sense of self was fragmented, pushed around by the expectations of others, and eventually collapsed. She discusses being torn between her American sense of self and the Japanese sense of self. Through these difficult experiences, Kondo explains, the main focus of her research on the sense of self in Japanese society emerged. She further discusses the epistemological implications of her position(s) in her research. In my own case as a Japanese woman born and culturally trained in Japan but who has also spent more than ten years in North America, my background came with its own set of privileges, disadvantages, and questions.

As a Japanese native using English as a second language for many years, I have frequently wondered about the precise meaning of the word “integrity.” When I look up the word in the *Kenkyusha’s New College English-Japanese Dictionary*, there are two different entries. The first entry lists the following Japanese words: *kōketsu*, *seijitsu*, *seiren*. Here are the English translations of each word in the *New College Japanese-English Dictionary*:

*kōketsu*—high minded, principled, noble (minded), a person of noble character

*seijitsu*—good faith, reliability, fidelity, reliable, faithful, trustworthy

*seiren keppaku*—absolute honesty, upright

The second entry gives me the following concepts: a perfect state, no damage. In a square bracket, the dictionary says integrity means “perfect” and “healthy” in Latin.

Whenever I look up this word in a dictionary, I halfheartedly say “okay” to myself. I have pretended for many years that I know the word

“integrity,” making a mental note of these ostensibly equivalent ideas, such as “high-minded” (*kōketsu*) and “faithful” (*seijitsu*). According to the aforementioned two dictionaries, “a person of integrity” would be somebody who is high-minded. I was, however, unsure of whether the dictionaries produced by Japanese academics provided an adequate understanding of this word. After all, my translation of “integrity” has often failed to explain specific situations in Canada or the United States. It was only when somebody pointed out the word’s association with the idea of an “integer”—a number that cannot be divided further—that I finally put my finger on the meaning of this word. “Aha!” I nodded. A person of integrity is reliable because she would be grounded in certain moral values or/and committed to her position, and therefore would not waver. Similar to an integer as a numeric value, you cannot divide this person’s allegiance in two or three. This concept was rather new for me as a Japanese person and seemed as foreign and novel as Tibet’s polyandry or Sudan’s female circumcision. I added a mental footnote to the English word “integrity” in my head: in English-speaking cultures, singular allegiance and a determined, committed attitude are positively sanctioned. When I started feeling confident about my understanding of the concept of integrity, several questions emerged. How could people always view integrity in a positive light? Wouldn’t integrity hurt people’s feelings, as it would in Japanese contexts? Was maintaining integrity always good in English-speaking cultures? Why is this concept not so popular in Japanese contexts?

In situating myself as an investigator into the sense of self in Japanese society, I follow the position advocated by Neni Panourgía (1994), who studied her own grandfather’s death in Greece. Although I am not as intensely “native” as Panourgía—she studied her own family—I share her experience of the complexity and difficulties of being both the studied and the student simultaneously. I agree with Panourgía when she states: “humanity deserves the right and the privilege to be communicated, perhaps translated (sometimes even interpreted), from every possible angle, that of the native included, so that we will finally attain the ever-elusive heteroglossic and polyphonic texts we desire” (Panourgía 1994, 48).

### Notes on Fieldwork and Chapter Outline

This is a qualitative ethnographic study. Specifically, I conducted participant-observation fieldwork over a twelve-month period in Tokyo from September 2006 to August 2007 by attending regular masses, other Catholic

gatherings, and small weekly study groups led by priests and members of religious orders. I also attended weekly Catholic charismatic meetings.<sup>13</sup> The majority of my field data come from three major sites, all located in central Tokyo: two popular, yet different parishes and one Catholic Charismatic Renewal group. In each of these three research sites, I had approximately twelve to eighteen people—hence altogether roughly fifty—with whom I could regularly talk and ask questions. They also helped me to reach out to other segments of the Roman Catholic Church in Tokyo and surrounding areas.

The two parishes differ in institutional setup; one parish is entrusted to a religious order that has its headquarters in Rome, and the other parish is overseen by local priests who belong to the Archdiocese of Tokyo. The third site, a Catholic Charismatic Renewal group, is what I call a supra-parish organization that attracts people from many different parishes. Interestingly, this group does not enlist any individual as a leader. The details of these three sites are discussed in the next chapter. Through my fieldwork among parishioners in Tokyo, I was able to participate in two pilgrimages to Nagasaki and the Gotō Islands in the Kyushu region.

In addition to participant observation, data for my project come from in-depth interviews, the collection of life histories, and the study of material culture. I conducted thirty structured interviews that each lasted between one and four hours. The age of interviewees varied. They ranged from those in their twenties to eighties, but the majority of them are women in their forties and seventies. Outside the official contexts of the churches and meetings, I spent many hours with my respondents talking about their faith experience and personal situations over cups of tea, and occasionally over glasses of beer or wine. My close relationships with respondents often involved text messages, and it was not unusual to receive text messages on my cell phone until midnight.

Although the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy constitute a part of my study, my primary research focus is on the laity. I am particularly interested in the ways in which laypeople form their sense of self. For this reason, the Church and clergy provide the context rather than the content of my study. Furthermore, I seek to examine the construction of Japanese historical consciousness through the lens of Japanese Catholicism, and thus my study is not primarily concerned with lay Catholics who immigrated to Japan from foreign countries. Because there has been a recent influx of Roman Catholics from overseas that has doubled the Catholic population in Japan (Mullins 2011; Terada 2010), it may seem

unreasonable to ignore this segment of the Roman Catholic Church in Tokyo. My fieldwork among Japanese members of the Church, however, did not lead me to the domain of these migrant Catholics in any significant way. In my attempt to integrate with the majority of Japanese Catholics in the metropolitan Tokyo area, I unintentionally kept a distance from “foreigners.” These members of the laity are approached indirectly from the perspective of Japanese Catholics, my primary subjects, whose historical consciousness is situated within the geopolitical boundaries of Japan.

The data collected through these methods are analyzed, and the construction of identity and personhood among Roman Catholics is discussed in six chapters. In depicting the transformation in the sense of self that the laity experience, it is necessary to describe two almost opposing social ideals upheld by these individuals at different stages in their lives: a Japanese social ideal on the one hand and a Roman Catholic ideal on the other hand. Before discussing this transformation, however, I first set the stage for my research in chapter 1, discussing the environment and population of Tokyo and providing a brief history of Japanese Catholicism, as well as a bird’s-eye view of Japanese religious life after World War II. By discussing the distinctly urban lifestyle of metropolitan Tokyo, where consumers almost always have a wide variety of products to choose from, chapter 1 argues for a notion of the parish that is urban, individually oriented, and in a sense uniquely post-Vatican II with an abundance of resources for individuals to explore their spirituality.

In chapter 2, I depict the conventional values emphasized in contemporary Japanese society. These values include the importance of social hierarchy, fulfilling one’s social roles (such as wife, daughter-in-law, and caregiver), and the virtue of striving hard or *ganbaru*. I discuss these values using Confucian teachings expressed in historical contexts. I also provide ethnographic examples in which we learn how these values are understood and manifested as governing ideas in the daily lives of contemporary Japanese. In addition, I analyze the notion of *seken*, according to which human beings and society are invested with ultimate moral authority.

In chapter 3, using the previous chapter as a foil, I depict the ways in which Roman Catholics consider themselves liberated when they find ultimate moral authority in the figure of the Christian God. This chapter illustrates how the laity understands the Catholic faith vis-à-vis Japanese social ideals. Whereas the Neo-Confucian-based worldview is dictated by person-to-person relationships, the Catholic worldview introduces a new “third person”: God. By examining popular Catholic notions such as

entrusting, “rejoice always,” and God as love, I characterize Tokyo Catholics as embracing a new identity marked by a joyous attitude.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the issue of gender within the Church. In exploring the female-dominated nature of parish life, I contextualize Tokyo Catholics in the background of the political economy of Japanese society. Having been designated by postwar governments as the backstage supporters of full-time male workers and as the caretakers of children and the sick (Allison 1991; Lebra 1984; Rosenberger 2001), women can afford to use their leisure hours during the daytime for spiritual pursuits. Men, on the other hand, often convert on their deathbed or in their retirement.

Chapter 5 deals with the issue of concealed identity among Roman Catholics in Tokyo. Many converts decide not to reveal their Christian identity, even to their family members. This chapter situates contemporary Catholics within the context of Japan’s genealogy of religion, in which Christianity was represented both officially and unofficially as a villain for centuries. The chapter explores the ongoing implications of the anti-Christian decrees issued in the seventeenth century, whose legacy is still felt through the strong ties maintained between local Buddhist temples, especially with their graveyards, and Japanese households. In the conclusion, I summarize the arguments made throughout the book and extend my discussions to implications on the historical relationship between religion and the self (or the individual).