CHAPTER FIVE

ENDO’S TRANSFORMED IMAGE OF CHRIST


In the second stage of his literary work (1966–1980), Endo himself overcame his earlier view of a conflict between East and West where he saw Japan as inferior to the West. In the third stage of his literary development, Endo’s scope expands from Japan to the world. In finding a new identity as a Japanese Christian in a wider, harmonious, perspective, he became more convinced that Christianity is not the possession of the West, and that the scriptures can be interpreted from wider perspectives other than the West. He became convinced that a mutual understanding between East and West was possible. From this new framework a transformed image of Christ emerged. One of the factors behind this change is the increased internationalization of the world, but there are also links to his personal development. In addition, Carl Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious played a part. 1

In this chapter, I primarily examine Endo’s last great work of pure literature, Deep River (1993). 2 I shall examine his christological analysis in the third literary stage against the global background, but also in

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1 “I read many books these days (Feb.–Oct.), especially on Jung. I learned a lot. I myself think I studied a lot.” Endo 2003: 83 (Oct. 9, 1981).

2 According to his diary, Endo had been working on the novel since 1989. He started to write it in January 1992 and finished at the end of September of the same year. The title was River in the beginning, but he changed it to Deep River after listening to a Black spiritual. Endo 1997(c): 326 (Nov. 9, 1992). Cf. Mainichi Shinbun July 16, 1997.

Deep River: “Deep river, my house is over Jordan, Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground, Don’t you want to go to that gospel feast, That promised land where all is peace? I want to cross over into campground. I’ll go up to heaven and take my seat, And cast my crown at Jesus’ feet; I want to cross over into campground.”

The Black spirituals are born out of the suffering of black slaves and their longing for deliverance. Their history and the history of Christianity in Japan both share in stories of suffering. Therefore, the title of the novel suggests salvation for humanity, beyond national distinctions. The title symbolizes God’s un-boundless love for everyone, regardless of race, gender, age, social status, or religion. The search for the love bestowed on human kind is the theme of the novel. Ref. Endo interview with Kaga Otohiko in Miyajima (ed.) 1999: 119.
relation to Japanese thought. Finally I shall explore his method of inculturation during the period.

Contents and Inculturation Perspectives

Here I present *Deep River* and introduce perspectives which I consider important in order to understand Endo’s transformed image of Christ. I begin with a brief summary of the novel.

*Deep River* (1993)

I began to think that God, like a magician, can turn any situation to the best advantage. Even our weaknesses and our sins. [Endo 1993/98: 102 (63)]

The novel describes several Japanese men and women who have different reasons and aims for going to India on a tour of Buddhist holy sites. All the characters are in deep personal need, and they hunger and thirst for the meaning of life. As Endo did in his other novels, he investigated various themes through the protagonists.

Isobe is an ordinary Japanese man who has lost his wife. In order to find his wife, who might be reborn in the world, he decides to join the tour. Mitsuko is a girl who led a Japanese Christian man, Ootsu, to abandon his faith because she believed in a God that she did not care about. Years later, through rumor, Mitsuko found out that he had returned to God and was living in India. She joins the tour to find Ootsu and the God that she was subconsciously attached to. Numada is a writer of children’s books. He joins the tour in order to find and release a black hornbill, because he cannot help thinking that he owes his life to the bird while he was hospitalized. Kiguchi belongs to the war generation. After returning from the war and living a peaceful life with his wife, he finds that his friend Tsukada who once saved him during the war has been suffering ever since with a guilty conscience—he had eaten the flesh of a dead comrade in order to survive. Tsukada’s feeling of guilt over this act took over the rest of his life. However, on his death-bed Tsukada met a foreign volunteer worker, Gaston, to whom he is able to confess his sin. Kiguchi joins the tour to India in order to make a personal memorial service for all his war comrades. Sanjo is an aspiring cameraman who joins the tour on his honeymoon. He only thinks about taking good pictures to further his career. He tries