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MYTHS, MISSIONS, AND MISTRUST: THE FATE OF CHRISTIANITY IN 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY JAPAN

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This article examines accepted opinion regarding the persecution and demise of Christian/Catholic missions in 16th and 17th century Japan. Many of the key issues associated with the encounter of European missionaries and Japanese feudal systems of authority and power resonate with contemporary interest in transculturalism, semantic slippage, personal agency, and the intimate interplay between religion, politics, and economics. Burdened with rigid standards of belief, heresy, and race from European inquisitions as well as Mesoamerican conquests, the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries made numerous strategic blunders that contributed to their fates, both as recipients of expulsion orders and, finally, on the execution grounds.

Keywords: Missionaries; Christianity; evangelism; Japanese feudalism; persecution; religion and politics

On a hot September day in 1622, a newcomer to the port of Nagasaki in the far west of Japan would have witnessed a strange sight. That a number of fishing boats should return empty was odd enough, given the rich fecundity of the sea. But that they should be met by high-ranking samurai who then ordered the crews to wash themselves, their gear, and the boats themselves bordered on the bizarre. How could anyone coming from the sea, known for its purifying powers in Japanese religious practice, have become so defiled?

We can imagine the mystery was partially solved when the newcomer turned in puzzlement to one of the onlookers and, after making his inquiry, heard the hushed reply, “Krishitan!” Well aware of the sporadic purges going on since the government’s ban of the religion and its practitioners in 1614, our visitor could have deduced the fishermen were obviously not Christians (they would have been arrested immediately) but had been in contact with some particularly contaminating element of the religion to rate such attention from the officials. Within minutes he would have learned what everyone in Nagasaki was still discussing—the grim details of an event singular in its thoroughness. . .

> . . .after thirty (Japanese) Christians were beheaded and twenty-five others, including nine foreign priests, roasted to death . . .all the bodies, with images, rosaries and all the objects of religion seized among the Christians were cast together into a great pit, as pestiferous objects. They threw into this pit the stakes and the ashes, a layer of bodies of the decapitated, a layer of wood, and then piled on all the objects of religion and set fire to the mass. It burned for two days. Then they collected the ashes, and even the earth soaked with the blood shed. The ashes of this earth were put into straw sacks and they were sent to the open sea and scattered. Afterwards the boatmen were made to strip and bathe, to wash the bags and even the boats, so that no dust or any vestige might remain of this great holocaust (Tames 1983: 95).

To comprehend what appears a brutal attempt to eliminate all traces of a foreign religion demands considerably more than a tracing of people (who was burned or beheaded?) and historical events (what conjunction of intent and circumstance brought them to that place at

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that time?). A Mediterranean-based Christianity is often said to have failed as an institution in Japan because of persecution by the Japanese rulers. Yet, the paths leading to this grim destination were, for the most part, determined and traveled by the foreign missionaries themselves. Acting on cultural beliefs and ideologies formed in and transported from Europe, they made serious mistakes in both understanding Japanese priorities and in choosing appropriate strategies for their missionizing. As a result, Christianity came to be seen as a subversive, socially disruptive religion with ties to military opportunism and colonialism—all highly threatening to an emerging political order in Japan.

During the late 15th and 16th centuries Europe's monarchies achieved a wider control of political unity and stability, allowing their leaders to devote resources and personnel to the systematic exploration of new trade routes and the establishment of colonies. Profound alterations of the basic cultural environment had been hastened by the Reformation and Counter-Reformations, by surging populations after the Black Death's devastation, by exponential changes in technology, and by the advent of wars between nations separated by oceans (Grossinger 1976: 76). In effect, the 16th century's achievements and failures are still part of the way we draw the world map, and not only for the Western hemisphere. The export of religious, military, and trade representatives during that period from their sources in Europe and the Mediterranean to South, Southeast, and East Asia had a profound impact on social organization but also on cultural and even religious identities. Asia becomes in the 16th and 17th centuries "...a *site* for examination of how locality emerges in a globalizing world, (and) how global facts take local form" (Appadurai 1996: 18). Influential without being determinative, the ways in which foreigners are perceived in Japan, notions of Japan as a "land of the gods," and the symbiosis of politics and religion can be traced in part to the dramatic events of this period.

THE TRADITION OF THE MISSIONARIES: BAGGAGE OLD AND NEW

It would seem a tragic turn of events that sent elite priests, educated at some of Europe's finest academies, to execution at the hands of the Japanese civil and military authorities in 1622. Among those attaining the status of "martyr" at Nagasaki were members of three religious orders: the Jesuit Carlo Spinola, the Dominican Luis Flores, and the Spanish Augustinian Pedro de Zuniga, son of a former viceroy of Mexico. Yet to assume they all shared common interests as Christians proselytizing among the Japanese is to ignore a half century of evidence to the contrary. We must also not ignore some of the first and most dramatic transcultural and truly global webs of contact—where Japan became an arena in which policies and ideologies formed some 12,000 nautical miles away attempted to hold their own. Although the missionaries consistently underestimated the resolve of Japan's rulers to maintain control and authority and misread the strategies and reasoning behind these moves, they did share a basic goal of converting "heathen" populations.

It would be convenient to merely mention the dates of each religious order's arrival in Japan—the Jesuits in 1549, the Augustinians and Dominicans in 1556, and the Franciscans in 1590—and how they fared according to the political winds blowing in Japan at the time. But to do so misses some of the most interesting influences of all, many of which appear contemporary to the eyes of a modern reader: strategies in the production and reproduction of knowledge, the advent, growth, and subsequent loss of religious faith, or the inter-cultural slippage of language and rhetorical intent. Even lifestyles, fashion, and choice of drink caused misunderstandings, envy, stereotyping, mistrust, and resentment. I hope to show how the fates of these early Catholics were shaped as much by the policies and ideologies of their

royal and religious institutions in Europe and New Spain as they were in response to the policies of various Japanese warlords.

CONQUEST AND EVANGELIZATION

After the middle ages, the Catholic Church turned on "the infidel" still occupying large areas on the Iberian Peninsula. Augustine had written in his treatise *City of God* (*c*. 410) that an infidel's free will must be considered in preaching the gospel, but the practical application of this was ignored as the Spanish crown expanded and reconquered Granada in 1492. It had become politically essential to change the populations' sentiments from Islam to Christianity as quickly as possible and to do this an inquisitorial instead of missionary model of conversion were established (Wright 1982:31). After the Moors had been subdued militarily, the large Jewish population in Castille was subjected to forced exile, conversion to Catholicism, or imprisonment. These policies eventually led to the firm grasp of the Catholic church upon that region's battle-scarred economic and political terrains.

The Church's first overseas opportunity to exert its doctrines came with Columbus' good fortune in colliding with the Americas, and the subsequent establishment of Spanish trading posts, missions, and garrisons in what is today Cuba. The Church not only wanted to convert pagan populations but also to influence the replication of European civilization and economy in its favor by working closely with (and, when necessary, leaning heavily upon) the Spanish administrators. In spite of the views of men like Las Casas, a Dominican who had earlier defended the rights of native Indian populations in a treatise of 1512, the fact is that mission work was a new endeavor, one not fixed by methodology.[1] What was predetermined were certain deep sentiments among these first missionaries, foremost being a horror of heresy. Jews and Moors who had converted but were charged with insincere faith were still being tried and executed back in Spain. It was only logical that the phobia which raged in Spain about heretical practices and beliefs should be exaggerated in Mexico among missionaries who were in contact with "genuine" pagans (Ricard 1971/1933: 36).[2]

It has been argued that the conquistadors and missionaries could find few "intelligible" customs or social patterns within the cultures of the Aztecs that might render them more human (de Alva 1983: 4), but a closer examination shows this not to be the case. While the people were dark-skinned and thus seen as racially inferior to the Spanish, they were nonetheless highly organized into distinct social classes and had fashioned cities and villages around central plazas similar to European patterns. More importantly for the missionaries' work were a number of religious beliefs potentially resonant with Christianity. The great god of the Aztecs, Huitzilopochtli, was said to have born of a virgin, plus there were beliefs in the immortality of the soul and eternal life. The Aztecs were not only familiar with the shape of the Christian cross, they represented the cardinal points of the words via this symbol. Finally, ceremonies similar to baptism, confessions, and communion were essential aspects of Aztec religious obligations (Ricard 1971/1933).

Yet it is hardly surprising, given the cultural baggage regarding fears of heresy the missionaries brought with them from Europe, that they did not see local institutions as foundations to build upon, as the early Church had done in Europe (Kertzer 1988: 177). Instead, these practices were viewed as "demonic parodies from which the missionaries recoiled in horror" (Ricard 1971/1933: 33). The Christianity of New Spain could not be a perfecting or fulfilling of native religions—it required a radical break with the entire past. So, just as the Aztecs burned the temples of those tribes they had subjugated, the religious and civil authorities likewise had destroyed more than 500 temples and 20,000 idols by June of

1531 (letter of Zumarraga, first bishop of Mexico, in Ricard, 1971/1933: 37). The slate was now "wiped clean" and ready for strategies, sometimes sincere and, to our eyes, sometimes rather ruthless, for the large scale conversion of the masses.[3]

This is not to imply a passive acceptance of mission activities by the Aztecs. On the contrary, they belong to those dominated groups world-wide that have maintained distinct identities even while changing radically in response to colonial expansionism (see Comaroff 1985; Simmons 1988). And yet, so rapidly did the Spaniards supplant the Aztec administration with their own, establishing themselves throughout the country with tremendous economic benefits to both royal and religious regimes, it is little wonder that their neighbors and competitors the Portuguese were scurrying to match this "success" on the other side of the globe.

THE SOUTHERN BARBARIANS

A quick glance at a map of the world and the considerable distance between Europe and Japan (12,000 nautical miles) would seem daunting enough to inhibit transplanting the roots of the Church. But by 1606, the Jesuits, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Dominicans counted some 150,000 converts by conservative estimates and 450,000 by more liberal ones (Boxer 1951:78). The Church seemed well on its way towards a permanent place in Japanese society. Let us briefly retrace, then, the events behind the Portuguese and later Spanish presence in the Far East and the initial reception of the foreigners.

After expelling the Moors and recovering former territories, the overseas adventurism of the Portuguese began in 1415 with the capture of the port of Ceuta on the coast of North Africa. Since their geographical position conveniently prevented them from taking an active part in the conflicts of the European continent, at a purely pragmatic level they were anxious to outflank the Islamic powers of North Africa by sailing down the west coast of the continent in search of gold. By circumventing the Arab merchants who enjoyed a monopoly on supplying spices to Europe, they also hoped to establish their own spice route. As a matter of course, they would also fulfill their duties to spread Christianity throughout the pagan areas at the edge of the known world (Cooper 1971:20).

Highly coveted as a destination were those islands off the coast of China known as "Zipangu" (Japan). Here, according to Marco Polo, ". . .columns of gold could be seen in the palaces, and windows were decorated with golden ornaments. So numerous were valuable pearls that one could be put into the mouth of each person when he was buried" (Smith 1964: 84). There was also the legendary kingdom of the Christian king Prester John who, if located, would provide an important base for not only trade but also the spread of Christianity among those creatures which, while having a human form, were considered hardly above the realm of beasts.[4] The Portuguese rounded the tip of the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, taking Mozambique in 1490, Goa in 1510, and Malacca the following year, establishing the commercial and military bases that were to remain the center of their empire in Asia for more than four centuries (with the important addition of Macao in 1555). This created a complex organization of interlocking centers and peripheries which, in spite of pirates, typhoons, and disease, dominated its rivals from roughly 1510–1637.

Accounts vary whether it was a violent storm or a calculated plan which first brought three Portuguese adventurers into Japanese territory in 1543 aboard a Chinese vessel. (Strictly speaking, there was no "Japan" at this time existing as a sovereign state. I will use the term for convenience to refer to the physical place rather than the political complexities during a period of warring feudal states). With their harquebuses (matchlock rifles) and other goods, they impressed the Japanese by an obviously superior military technology. But they could

also be seen as exotic manifestations of a semi-divine being called a *marebito*: a stranger, such as a peddler, blacksmith, or itinerant priest, who appeared suddenly in a village. In spite of strange outward appearances, and obvious differences in language and social customs, this individual might be a deity in human guise and thus beneficial if properly and respectfully treated (see Yoshida 1981 for examples of the range of this folk tradition). It is likely this concept was based on the dual character of Japanese deities called *kami*— benevolent one moment and destructive the next—as well as a long continental tradition of bodhisattvas in disguise. Nonetheless, it served as a convenient model for interpreting outsiders as well as marginals in pre-modern Japan (Ohnuki-Tierney 1987: 237). Since the seventh and eighth centuries, Chinese and Koreans had been the predominant foreigners in Japan, bringing with them Buddhism, tea, a writing system, medicine, and metallurgy to name but a few of the imports. However, despite these many significant contributions, it was important they remained foreigners since by not sharing local sociocultural norms, they could manifest their unruly and disruptive side at any moment with negative consequences (Ohnuki-Tierney ibid: 146).

When the Portuguese appeared, this conceptual structure was one of the cultural tools on hand to cope with their strangeness. But as Marshall Sahlins has shown in a Hawaiian context (Sahlins 1981), a prolonged contact slowly transforms cultural and social boundaries. Over time, the content of these interactions fashions new relationships, often based on pragmatic material benefits (firearms in the Japanese case) between the categories of inner/local and outer/foreign. The Portuguese "barbarians" were powerfully Other but also attractive (because of the advanced technology of their weaponry) to a land torn by civil wars. What other magical devices or benefits might they be induced to reveal? Had early contact with the Portuguese been limited to only commerce and technology instead of an exchange mediated by representatives of the Catholic Church, events might have transpired quite differently.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF FIRST CONTACT

Radical social changes, which fostered the activities of the Spanish in Aztec Mexico, were likewise underway in Japan when the Portuguese established their first contacts. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries were a period when local barons, or *daimyô*, recognized no effective central political authority, not even that of the emperor's Imperial Court. They enjoyed absolute power in their own domains, fighting and feuding among each other to increase wealth and territory. Buddhism too added a wild card to the general atmosphere of tension and unrest. Great monasteries of certain sects—like the Tendai on Mt. Hiei outside Kyoto, the Jôdô Shinshû at Ishiyama Hôganjii near Osaka, or Shingon on Mt. Koya south of Nara—had established formidable garrisons of armed "monks" who raided the countryside and entered into pitched battles with the daimyô's forces, furthering their own agendas for political control of a region's resources.

When Father Francis Xavier and a small group of Japanese converts from Macao landed in southern Kyushu in 1549, Portuguese ships had already made several trips to various southern ports of the country. Ostensibly, they were trading Chinese silks but were capitalizing mainly on the local wars to run firearms from Macao and supply gunpowder and saltpeter for those daimyô attempting to manufacture firearms on their own. It was obvious from these early reports and encounters that the Japanese were highly organized around military exploits and possessed the temperament, manpower, and technical means to repel any foreign effort attempting to mimic the Spanish success in Mexico. But they were also an alluring opportunity for the Church, as Xavier points out in this enthusiastic letter in the year of his arrival:

> "...the people whom we have met so far are the best who have yet been discovered ...we shall never find among heathens another race to equal the Japanese ...All, both laity and priests like us very much, and are greatly astonished to see how we have come from such distant lands as from Portugal to Japan, which is more than six thousand leagues, only to speak of the things of God (cited in Boxer 1951: 401–405).[5]

For the early Jesuit missionaries, the political chaos in Japan meant that if they lost favor with one daimyô or his power base shifted radically they could simply move to another's realm. Xavier wrote that, "Japan...is always revolving like a wheel; for he who today is a great lord, may be a penniless nobody tomorrow" (Boxer 1951: 74). So great was Jesuit success in converting members of the upper classes in Europe, Xavier and his assistants had targeted initially the elites near the impotent Imperial Court and its administrative branches in central Japan. Rebuffed by the court (more for a lack of propriety it seems), Xavier left in 1551 to return to India. His successor, Cosme de Torres, tried on numerous occasions to establish a church in the traditional capital of Miyako (now Kyoto), but was forced to flee the dangerous political instability and periodic destruction. He turned his attentions instead to the relatively stable southern regions where the majority of growing international trade was being conducted and where some of Japan's most powerful daimyô resided.

The commerce created by the so-called "Black Ships" was both the lifeblood of the Jesuits and, paradoxically, a prime reason leading one of their elite members to the execution grounds at Nagasaki. The very success or failure of their nascent church—with its satellite schools, infirmaries, and orphanages—rested heavily upon the profits skimmed from the ships' cargo.[6] Since profits could be so high, the Kyushu daimyô were in constant competition among themselves for the right to receive the Black Ships in harbors they controlled. Beginning in the 1560's, the Jesuits leaned heavily on the captain-majors to land in only those places where the local daimyô was friendly to the Christian faith or had become converts. In one example, a lord on a small island in the Amakusa chain required the wholesale Christianization of his subjects and, according to Jesuit records, some "ten to twelve thousand souls" were baptized in quick order (Elisonas 1991: 333). These group conversions were the rule rather than the exception, enhanced a great deal, according to Murai, by the Japanese attitudes of respect and submission for those in a position of power (Murai 1987: 14–16). Thus, it seems an overstatement to ask rhetorically, "Where or when have Christian missionaries in less than one hundred years produced a Christian community approaching half a million people in a culture already technically advanced and literate?" (Ross 1994: 115–116). The missionaries certainly did not "produce" this community but were simply capitalizing upon an opportunity presented by the local hunger for international trade.[7]

The merchants and daimyô of Kyushu watched Portuguese and Jesuit activities with intense interest and participated whenever possible in the 1550's and 60's. At the same time, far to the north, another keen observer had been keeping track of the burgeoning trade. Oda Nobunaga, lord of Owari (located in what is today Nagoya and Gifu), had ordered 500 matchlock rifles from the Portuguese in 1549 and then utilized his knowledge of these weapons and their inability to function in a downpour to attack his similarly armed foe and win his first important victory in 1559 (Asao 1991: 54). Ten years later, after a series of quick victories, Nobunaga had positioned himself as an ally of the nominal figurehead of state, the Ashikaga shogun, and occupied the strategic center of the country at Kyoto. Even though the reigning emperor had banned foreigners from the capital five years earlier at the urging of the militant Tendai monks on Mt Hiei, Nobunaga's power was such that the edict was completely ignored. Partly out of curiosity but mostly with political and economic motives in mind, in 1569 he permitted the introduction of Father Luis Frois, who had waited six years in a nearby city for such an opportunity.

This meeting (following Boxer 1951: 57–64) had far-reaching effects for the future of the Jesuits. The feared and haughty Nobunaga, who reduced his vassals to quivering submission, was met by the disciplined, military bearing of Frois, a Jesuit "captain." Nobunaga liked this show of character but he liked even more the priest's anti-Buddhist attitude. Shaped in part by the Counter-Reformation's drive to stem heretical doctrines wherever and whenever they were encountered, Frois' stance was also influenced by Spanish precedent set some thirty years earlier in dealing with the native beliefs of the Aztecs, as well as the fact that even among Christian sects themselves there was little notion of tolerance.

Nobunaga, on the other hand, hated the repeated tendency of certain Buddhist sects to support his rivals. The remoteness of their monastic fortifications and Nobunaga's sweep through the fertile plains kept them largely apart until 1571 when the Tendai monks on Mt Hiei near Kyoto hired themselves out as mercenaries to his prime rivals, the Asakura and Asai clans. Nobunaga responded by storming the mountain fortress on September 29th (the Feast of the Archangel Michael, as Frois noted) and massacring most of the 1500 monks as well as half the inhabitants of a small village near the temple complex (Boxer 1951: 71).

In spite of the severity of this punishment, the eminent historian George Sansom argues that Nobunaga had no loathing of Buddhism or religion in general—only of its interference in political matters and its use of military tactics and force. He thought that monasteries should be places of worship and institutions of learning (Sansom 1961: 295), an attitude that in many ways accounts for his favor of the early Jesuits since they appeared to know their place. As we will see later, certain Buddhist sects, who from then on warned against the Christians as potential rivals of the state, remembered this painful lesson concerning the alliance of church, state, and trade. The Jesuits, however, did not. They took Nobunaga's attack on the Mt Hiei monastery and the favor they enjoyed in his court as license to do what they pleased, even to the point of echoing Spanish practices in Mexico by inciting their converts to burn Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, practices particularly rampant in and around Nagasaki. Elisonas observed that in order for Christianity to take root, local religious institutions, images, and shrines had to be destroyed (Elisonas 1991: 328).[8]

By 1580, hardly thirty years after their arrival in a country whose difficult language was now accessible, where income was growing from a share in the silk and weapons trade, and where hostility from local Buddhist/Shinto leaders had been subdued by Nobunaga or regional daimyô, the Jesuits were proud of their accomplishments. Churches and residences for priests and their trainees had sprouted in numerous locations, the number of adherents was estimated at 30,000 and growing, and they had control of the port of Nagasaki where the Black Ships could safely dock. From this limited lease agreement, they garnered around 1000 ducats a year in income, while 3000 went to the daimyô Ômura who initially ceded the land (Pacheco 1971a: 317, 319). What the Spaniards had achieved by heavy-handed military might in New Spain, the Jesuits matched by careful diplomacy, patience, and the skillful focusing of their energies on activities certain to produce tangible results.[9]

Even with the rapid growth that the missionaries were able to nurture, it is doubtful they ever really trusted their converts' religious beliefs. Just as the Jesuits preached a faith in the one merciful God, the popular Jôdô Shinshû sect believed that only the mercy of Amida Buddha could bring salvation. Adherents also held that all ceremonies, charms, and worship of other deities (akin to the Catholic saints) were in vain (Bellah 1957: 68). Francis Xavier, speaking very little Japanese, relied heavily at first upon a former pirate-turned-translator (Yajirô) who rendered Christian terms and concepts via the vocabulary of Buddhism. For the first two years, Christianity was seen as just another Buddhist sect, this one worshipping Dainichi, "...the ultimate reality that is identical with the total functioning of the cosmos..." (Elisonas 1991: 308). After the mistake was realized and the heretical terms purged from missionizing activities (Dainichi was "...an invention of the devil, as also were all the other

sects of Japan" [Elisonas 1991: 309]), it is still debatable whether it was the message or the messenger the Japanese found appealing. On the one hand, age-old concerns with healing and release from poverty were no doubt addressed via the missionaries' emphasis on providing medical care and that the kingdom of God was salvation from poverty. Holy water in particular was a highly-sought after elixir among rich and poor alike, even among non-believers, as it was thought to cure all kinds of ailments (Takase 1993: 127).

But there were detractors as well. From the perspective of wandering Buddhist monks as well as Buddhist priests serving as advisors to the shogunate, Christianity was "a diabolical religion" (*jakkyô no shisô*), akin to black magic. In some parts of the country, Catholic priests were rumored to be little more than demons who "ate children, disemboweled people to make poisons, and possessed the power to wither trees and grass just by touching them" (Okada 1955: 159). The fact they ritually consumed "human blood" (red wine) further added to their cannibalistic reputations (Takase 1993: 158). And, since the Japanese were primarily centered on the communities in which they lived—where local deities were attentive to specific petitions concerning livelihood, political stability, or family life—the Jesuit message of a nonlocal, transcendent kingdom of God must have seemed even stranger than the men who espoused it. For farmers to consider themselves somehow independent of their neighbors and then to fashion this independence into an autonomous spirituality would have been impossible from a conceptual point of view (Endo *et al.* 1977: 217 ff).[10]

So deeply enculturated was the missionaries' evangelical conditioning and purpose it is likely the fundamental ontology of native beliefs eluded them entirely (Cauti 1988: 148). Nor were they ever encouraged to investigate these perspectives, either in their spiritual training, their previous encounters with other cultures and social orders, or, more locally, by the man who assumed command of the Japan mission from 1570–1581. Francisco Cabral wrote that "the Japanese would have to adapt themselves to the Portuguese Jesuits and not vice versa" (Elison 1973: 15). He was particularly adamant about not ordaining Japanese as Jesuits, noting much later in his life that this practice would be "the reason for the collapse of the society, nay! of Christianity in Japan..." (Elison 1973: 16).

His colleague and eventual successor, Father Visitor Alexandro Valignano, practiced a kind of accommodation during his initial tenure in Japan (1580–1583). He insisted on language study for the missionaries, directed the Jesuits to adapt themselves to the Japanese lifestyle in dress, cleanliness, diet, rank and dwellings, and wanted as well to incorporate Japanese into the priesthood. He even adapted the Church's teaching on baptism, making it possible for almost anyone to administer the sacrament in the absence of a priest (Harrington 1993: 16). He initially praised the Japanese as "white...simple pious folk" and "...the best and most civilized of all the East, with the exception of the Chinese..." (Boxer 1951: 76). However, after his second (1590–1592) and third periods of residence (1598–1603), he wrote that the Japanese were instead "the most dissembling and insincere people to be found anywhere" (Spence 1984: 42). "Better to have no Christians than Christians of that type!" he exclaimed in one of his more vitriolic later letters (Spence 1984: 79). Is this a case of good intentions thwarted by reality, or could the intentions themselves, along with the institutions and cultures that shaped them, also be suspect?

FIN DU SIÈCLE SHIFTS IN POWER

The Jesuits were rocked by the deaths of two key political allies near the end of the sixteenth century. First, their beloved King Sebastian, a pious supporter of the Jesuit missions, died at the disastrous Moroccan battle of Alcazarquivir in 1578, leaving no heir and resulting in the dual monarchy of Portugal and Spain in 1580. In spite of pledges to maintain separate

empires and honor the Portuguese right to the exclusive supervision of missionary activity in Asia (as set out in Papal bulls and royal decrees), the Spaniards in Manila immediately set out to gain their share of the rich China–Japan–Macao trade. The second shocking event was the assassination of Nobunaga in 1582. Gaspar Coelho, the Jesuit superior arrived only two years earlier, expected the country to again disintegrate into civil war. But fortunately, a strategic series of moves by one of Nobunaga's lieutenants, the leader who would be known as Toyotomi Hideyoshi, maintained a centrality of power and even strengthened it within only four years.

When it became evident that Hideyoshi was the undisputed ruler of the country (in spite of continued resistance in southern Kyushu, which Hideyoshi eventually crushed), Coelho went to pay his respects in 1586 aboard his own vessel, constructed in Nagasaki. While to all appearances the visit was a success, with Coelho showing Hideyoshi his gunship and Hideyoshi reciprocating with a tour of his castle and its many sumptuous treasures, he heard the priest make two unbelievable promises. The first was an assurance of Portuguese naval aid in Hideyoshi's forthcoming assault on the Korean peninsula—intimating the Jesuits were linked so closely to the military they could command its deployment from far off Macao. The second was an even more astounding promise to secure the collaboration of the Christian daimyô around Nagasaki in the campaign to subdue several unruly fiefdoms in southern Kyushu. What for Coelho were mere verbal affirmations of support for Hideyoshi's initiatives—devised on his own as a way he thought guaranteed positive benefits for the Church—were seen by the ruler as suspicious alliances between the missionaries and the Kyushu daimyô (Pacheco 1971b: 60). The priest was like a blind man striking a match in a gunpowder factory, completely misunderstanding obvious Japanese signs of what was considered dangerous, and how anything perceived as threatening had to be neutralized or eliminated.

It took a year for the fuse to finally reach its charge. Hideyoshi's government issued an edict in 1587 accusing the Jesuits of (1) preaching a devilish law in the "land of the *kami*" (2) maintaining an independent base in Nagasaki (3) acting as gold and silver brokers for Kyushu military leaders (4) trafficking in silk shares of the Black Ship and (5) inspiring raids on native Japanese religious sanctuaries (See Boxer 1951: 145 for a full discussion of this incident, also Berry 1982: 92). Hideyoshi also wanted to know why force was employed to make conversions, why Buddhist and Shinto buildings were destroyed, and why useful animals such as horses and cattle were killed and eaten? (Takase 1993: 148, Pacheco 1971b: 63).[11] All of the questions and charges were responded to with a great and vigorous defense, but the Jesuits had been transformed from favored subjects to propagandists of a subversive creed. They were given twenty days to leave the country. The edict's timing, however, happened to follow the Black Ship's departure for Macao, with no other means of transport available for the next six months. This period allowed Hideyoshi to become occupied by other things and, to all effects, never enforce his order. But the link had been forged in the minds of the Japanese leaders that there was much more to the missions than their professed goal of saving souls and facilitating trade.

Further complicating the Jesuits' maneuvers were the inroads made by the Spanish Franciscans and other orders in their own goals of church and state expansionism in Japan. Due largely to his shrewd business sense in seeing the Spanish as competitors against the Portuguese, the Franciscans soon won Hideyoshi's favor as he hoped for cheaper prices than the Macao–Nagasaki trade and increased revenues for his expensive invasion of the Korean peninsula (Boxer 1951: 162).[12] Encouraged by Hideyoshi's support and their successes in Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, and Brazil, the Franciscans enacted what they believed was a superior spiritual authority that transcended local politics and customs. Although the expulsion order was officially still in effect the new missionaries preached as if it were the

end of the world. They inspired their converts to demolish or burn Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines (following their own tradition in Mesoamerica, and Jesuit Precedents in Japan as well), and showed utter disregard for established Jesuit tactics aimed at the upper classes.[13]

But this was not a time to antagonize any part of the samurai elite. When a Spanish ship, the San Felipe, floundered in 1596 off the coast of Shikoku, its captain tried to threaten his captors by intimating the Franciscan friars were the first phase of the crown's strategy for conquest. Burdened by an unsuccessful war in Korea, deteriorating health, and a series of powerful earthquakes which destroyed his elegant new palace in Kyoto, Hideyoshi acceded to his advisors' allegations that the San Felipe incident presented conclusive proof that a conjunction of religious, economic, and political interests belonged to a "martial Catholic church" (Berry 1982: 225).

The outcome was harsh but perhaps not unexpected, considering the coincidental convergence of goals, conflicting world views, and disciplines of constraint. Six Franciscans, seventeen of their Japanese neophytes, and three Japanese Jesuits (included by mistake, according to Boxer) were paraded from Kyoto to Nagasaki and there crucified in February of 1597. The Jesuit's holdings in Nagasaki were confiscated (although residence was still permitted) and throughout the country, some 120 churches were destroyed and priests ordered to move to Nagasaki. However, as in the 1587 expulsion order, the Christians knew time was an ally in their dealings with Hideyoshi—and with only eleven Jesuits departing out of 125, further evacuations were rendered unnecessary by Hideyoshi's death in 1598.

The Franciscans in particular but also the Jesuits, with their aggressive trade policies, had minimized or forgotten the social contexts behind the earlier expulsion order ten years earlier. Perhaps Hideyoshi's desperate need for income culled from duties and investments in the still prosperous silk trade rendered the 1597 executions more as a crackdown against lawbreakers meddling in concerns of the state rather than a final solution against the Christian missions (Berry 1982: 227). The struggle for succession after Hideyoshi's death also diverted officials from fully enforcing the letter of the law, so that in only one short year, the head of the entire Order of Jesuits in Asia, Father Visitor Valignano, was received with due respect by Jesuit allies in Kyushu and the missions' activities were allowed to resume.

THE LAST DANCE

The turn of the century found new faces in the continuing waltz of the Church with its partners in the Japan. Tokugawa Ieyasu—the founder of the dynasty that would rule Japan for 250 years—had just gained supreme power in 1603 and issued a magnanimous decree: "Japan should be an asylum for people of all nations. No man who has taken refuge in my dominions and conducts himself peaceably, shall be compelled, against his will, to abandon the empire" (Tames 1983: 36). Naturally, everyone wanted a dance with such an attractive partner and the Jesuits were, as usual, first in line, followed by the anxious Franciscans.

But there were also two recent arrivals to the party: the English and Dutch, both trying to break up the monopoly of the Portuguese and Spaniards by pirating their trading vessels. Ieyasu had been watching the variously adept and faltering steps of the missionaries since his days as an ally of Nobunaga and was now fascinated in particular with the captured English pilot Will Adams, especially after the Jesuits begged for the pilot's immediate execution without trial after he was shipwrecked in 1600. His Protestant descriptions of a new world view portrayed the Spaniards and Portuguese as "papist pirates," the Pope as "a thief," and warned in no uncertain terms that the Spaniards were set on nothing less than world conquest

based first on the conversion of subjects of foreign princes (as had already happened in the Philippines) after which an armed invasion would follow (Tames 1983: 36). It all sounded very familiar to threats heard during the San Felipe incident in 1597.[14]

The work of the missions might have continued unabated, making Japan the "Rome of the Far East" had it not been for their privileging of commerce and missionizing over the newly established law of the land. The relative and rather tenuous peace of the early 1600s was the first in the Japanese islands for over 250 years, and it was one of exceptional coercion and compliance among all the feudal domains.

Thus, with heightened surveillance, enforcement, and vigilant punishment for those flouting the law, Christian interests were rocked by two incidents which created indelibly negative accusations and associations. The first was the discovery in 1612 of a scandalous court intrigue involving an aide to Ieyasu's senior councilor and the family of Arima, the main supporter of Christianity in Japan at the time. Lord Arima had been encouraged to think that he could add certain properties to his domains by the payment of gold to Okamoto Daihachi, the senior aide. When discovered and arrested, Okamoto denounced Arima as also plotting to assassinate the shogunate's commissioner in Nagasaki. Shocking to the government was how the value of land, whose right of control was at the heart of the feudal relationship between a subject daimyô and his overlords in the Tokugawa regime, could prove to be so conditional (Elisonas 1991: 366–7). And, to make matters worse, both Okamoto and Arima were Christians! Both were executed, with Okamoto having the distinction of being burned alive (Ôhashi, 1996: 62, n. 7).

The perceived instability of the southern regions of Japan was further enhanced by old antagonisms that surfaced in Nagasaki in 1614 between Jesuit and Franciscan superiors over the contested vicarage of the diocese. Their followers took sides and, in a rivalry of religious sentiments, filled the streets with passionate and dramatic penitential processions that appeared to government officials as a city in open revolt (Pacheco 1971b: 80). For all these reasons (and with the Englishman Will Adams no doubt offering "disinterested" advice), Ieyasu issued the final expulsion order in 1614, scripted by the influential Zen monk Sûden. It expelled all missionaries, required all churches to be closed, and imposed a strict prohibition on the practice of Christianity by any Japanese (Anesaki 1930: 1). It was reiterated forcefully that "Japan is the Land of the Gods" and that the Christian religion requires believers to "contravene governmental regulations, traduce Shinto, calumniate the True Law, destroy righteousness, corrupt goodness" and thus qualifies it as *jahô*, a "pernicious doctrine" (Elisonas 1991: 366–7).

The Jesuits must have reeled from *déja-vu* because this order, like the ones in 1586 and 1597, was stayed temporarily by mitigating circumstances—the outbreak of the critical Osaka campaign to dislodge Hideyoshi's son from his father's castle and thus end the Toyotomi clan's claim to power. After winter and summer sieges, 30,000 defenders (many of whom were masterless samurai from Christian daimyô whose lands had been confiscated by Ieyesu) fell to the Tokugawa forces, ending the last hope of the missions for a favorable political ally near the top of the feudal other. Even then, though Ieyasu died the next year and his son Hidetada took charge, many priests were able to go underground and remain effective throughout Kyushu and even in the capital, due largely to the tolerance of Christian sympathizers within regional Tokugawa administrations. Trade was restricted for the Portuguese and Spanish to Nagasaki and for the Dutch and English (who were successful in convincing the authorities they had a different God than the Catholics) to the port of Hirado, leaving the foreign merchants of Nagasaki little choice but to indirectly support the anti-Christian proclamations. Still, they smuggled missionaries back into the country and surreptitiously provided shelter and

assistance, a practice which eventually resulted in their own expulsions as well (Pacheco 1971b: 89).[15]

Oddly enough, it was not a systematic crackdown on these feuding communities (an event the English and Dutch had been anticipating gleefully) that marked the beginning of systematic persecutions in 1617.[16] Instead, the ever-impatient Franciscans began to openly flaunt their faith, courting the mythology, veneration, and heavenly rewards of martyrdom. The Jesuits had never shied away from what was perceived as the glory of martyrdom, but in this instance they were well aware of the explosive consequence for their entire operation in Japan. The Franciscans' increased proselytizing forced the hands of local administrators (always under the watchful eye of the military government), and resulted in numerous arrests and executions (of Jesuits as well as Franciscans). To enhance compliance with the edicts, rewards were offered for informing on Christians:

To the Informer on a Priest: 300 pieces of Silver
To the Informer on a Brother. 200 pieces of Silver
To the Informer on a Retrovert: same
To the Informer on a Catechist or lay Christian: 100 pieces of Silver (Endo 1976: 292)

A decisive incident at this volatile time unfolded in 1620, when an English man-of-war intercepted a Japanese ship traveling between Manila and Nagasaki, and found in its hull two Spaniards hiding among the cargo of deer skins (Pacheco 1971b: 91). Suspected of being missionaries, they were taken to Hirado and there shut up in the prison of the Dutch factory, where not even torture would force them to reveal their identity. At the ensuing trial, every conceivable foreign and domestic interest was assembled: Japanese, English, and Dutch accusers (who wanted more than just the cargo), Portuguese and Spanish merchants from Nagasaki (who wanted to protect their diminished yet still substantial trade interests), the local, regional, and national magistrates (some of them Christian sympathizers who wanted to pass a light sentence, while others wanted strict enforcement of the expulsion edicts), a Jesuit, a Dominican, and an Augustinian brought from prison to confront questioning by foreign and Japanese apostate priests, and of course, the Japanese crew of the ill-fated ship.

Eventually the Spanish priests confessed and were charged as subversives, then thrown into prison. When a poorly planned escape attempt failed, they were then sentenced to death along with the ship's unfortunate crew, captain, and all the other Christians in prison, some fifty-one individuals. From the perspective of what must have been an exasperated government, considerable tolerance had been granted the foreigners—a lax enforcement of the bans and expulsion orders, a willingness to look the other way regarding their doctrines and beliefs (which had been proven in the Arima/Okamoto scandal to subvert the feudal order), and a policy that allowed viable economic interests to be compromised by religious ideology. And yet time and again, the priests' zealous expressions of righteous defiance, their infiltration of the country's borders, and their willingness to die rather than admit wrongdoing or recant indicated the policy towards foreigners was too forgiving. Perhaps it is now less surprising that, after executing these troublemakers at Nagasaki in 1622 before a large crowd which sang hymns, prayed, and intoned the *Te Deum Laudamus* around the killing grounds (if we are to believe the accounts of other missionaries), their remains were treated as "pestiferous objects" and not only burned but neutralized by the purifying powers of the sea.

A new Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu, took power the following year. Unlike his predecessors, he had from the beginning a very clear notion of what his policies towards the Christians would be. At his investiture, a mass execution of Japanese believers was conducted in Edo (now Tokyo), and specific methods of torture became

part and parcel of the official policy to create apostates. In 1633, he and his advisors developed the policy of *kaikin* or "prohibition to go overseas" following a Ming dynasty model in China. This effectively closed the ports and the country, although the term *sakoku* (for "closed-country") was not used until 1801 (Takase 1993: 210). The first directive of 1633 ordered that any Japanese returning from overseas was to be put to death, while a second order of 1635 extended capital punishment to those trying to leave as well. All foreign residents and commercial activities were now restricted to an artificial island in the Nagasaki harbor known as "Dejima," but, amazingly, trade still continued, even though forced to operate in a repressive and increasingly hostile environment. Takase reports that there was considerable local interpretation of these draconian measures, with regional daimyô turning away ships rather than entrapping and executing their passengers and crew (Takase 1993: 219).

FURTHER TRIALS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

For all the long experience of the Jesuits in Japan, it is interesting to note that their converts among the upper classes, save for a few notable exceptions, quickly apostated when their lives and beliefs were increasingly on the line after 1614. On the other hand, the lower castes and classes of the Franciscan faithful showed a remarkable willingness not only to die or be exiled for their beliefs but also, after 1623, to endure gruesome tortures. They had little property or money to lose, were promised a glory in heaven surpassing anything the Buddhists had to offer, and, perhaps most critically, were able to express in their very public deaths a defiance of feudal oppression they had suffered silently for centuries. Those who went into hiding or who practiced their faith in secret used many of the same tactics employed by the Aztecs and other dominated peoples—putting their own objects of worship within or behind the officially recognized one, amalgamating cherished religious images with those imposed by the authorities, and meeting in places of difficult access to conduct prohibited ceremonies (see Ricard 1971/1933: 264 ff.; Turnbull, 1998 also Comaroff 1985).

But also like the Aztecs, who revolted openly in 1541, 1547, and 1550 in Mexico, Japanese peasants in Shimabara near Nagasaki, one of the poorest regions of the nation, finally rebelled in 1637. Angered by excessive taxes and harsh retribution if they failed to pay, religious overtones soon provided the revolt's central themes since many of these peasants were Christians. Alliances were formed with masterless Christian samurai (lumped together in the category known as *bateren*, derived from "padre") as well as other peasant communities from the nearby Amakusa islands. They seized an abandoned castle and held out against repeated attacks from December 1637 to April 1638, with an estimated 20,000 people dying in the final assault.[17] Though often portrayed as a Christian revolt or great martyrdom, the event is more accurately a peasant rebellion given cohesion by Christianity (Ôhashi 1996: 60).

Though restricted to the confines of Dejima island, trade had continued all during the years of the persecutions. Now, however, with the shogunate furious about the Shimabara revolt, the sorry state of their armies after twenty years of inaction, and the intransigence of the peasantry to abandon their faith, a final expulsion order was issued in 1639. Portugese vessels were banned from all Japanese ports. The continued arrival of foreign priests, the alleged formation of anti-government leagues and local assistance in hiding priests and their converts were the reasons behind the ban. "Should this order be disobeyed, the offending vessel will be destroyed and its crew and passengers put to death" (Sansom 1963: 38).

Whereas Spanish Manila could survive without the Japan trade, the ruling Portugese families of Macao felt they could not. So completely did they misunderstand what was now at

stake for the Japanese leaders—nothing less than the undermining of the new state order by foreign "barbarians" and their evil creeds—their delegation sailed unarmed into the hands of the authorities at Nagasaki in 1640. On the same execution grounds used for the missionaries, the delegation and crew was summarily beheaded, with only thirteen out of seventy-four men spared (just enough to pilot a ship) to carry the grisly news back to Macao (Pacheco 1971b: 95). The Portuguese tried again in 1647, sending two heavily armed galleons into the harbor, but were met by 2000 small craft and 50,000 hastily assembled troops (ibid).

Ever since 1570, the Buddhist clergy had been warning that decisive action was crucial to expel the foreigners. After the Shimabara rebellion and the incident just described, one of the leading monks advising the government, Hayashi Razan, wrote:

> Christianity is a false doctrine. It resembles foxes and badgers that devour young women, and then assume their forms. How horrible! Will not some hero arise to smite this monster and take its head? Christianity renders children thieves and subjects rebels. To seduce the minds of women what does Christianity teach? Men ought neither to keep concubines, not to commit adultery, fornication nor rape. It is for this reason that women embrace this religion in such numbers. These Christians hate the open day and love the dark . . .in public they put a restraint on themselves but in private they do no such thing. Is there no one with pluck enough to stifle its voice and arrest its progress? (Murdoch 1926, vol. 3:123n.)

Though economic interests had always taken precedence for the shogunate, there was no denying by 1630 that the Buddhist argument was gaining credibility even among those who advocated continued trade. Economic historian Oda Shinji argues that the Japanese administrators knew very well of Church involvement in trade. But what they simply could not fathom was subjecting trade to Church-related directives, even to the point of sacrificing economic gain and political relations for the sake of religious ideology (Oda 1992: 32). To blunt those ideologies and their institutional expressions, additional churches were seized and destroyed, with temples and shrines rebuilt under state sponsorship. Additionally, where whole populations were earlier forced to convert to Christianity in order to attract trade, they were now required to register as parishioners of a Buddhist temple, and trample or spit on sacred images of Jesus or Mary (an ordeal called *fumie*). I was told by a proud descendent of these early Christians that even bodies were exhumed and reburied as Buddhists if individuals and their families wanted to escape reprisals.

Finally, to keep everyone—from high ranking samurai to itinerant peddlers—firmly in their place and politically powerless, a strict neo-Confucian hierarchy of classes and occupations was more rigorously enforced. The *mibun-sei* system ranked samurai at the top, followed by farmers, artisans, and finally merchants, with little class mobility permitted. Temples were used as administrative outposts for the government, with many priests coerced to keep a watchful eye on their parishioners. To use Sahlins' terms, the "contextual values" which evolved from dealing with the missionaries and their agendas worded back in a very direct way on the "conventional values" of the entire society, shaping it into an autocratic but generally stable system that prevailed for more than 250 years (Sahlins 1981: 35).

Today, it is hard to imagine the ways in which Christianity and its messengers in Japan enriched, empowered, and affected so profoundly hundreds of thousands of individuals. Unfortunately, the most long-lasting message conveyed by its missionaries was how a religious ideology of foreigners could influence Japan's international trade, how it could alternately enhance or subvert established social relationships, and how it could motivate behavior that came to be perceived as directly threatening to the state. Radically protective efforts to control encounters with dominant foreign powers, which effectively closed Japan for over 250 years, has led to a lingering impression that Japan remains marginal in international arenas despite its economic clout. Whether economic restructuring or committing to global trade agreements, politicians continue to approach cautiously any policy preached by foreigners as beneficial for Japanese society.

While there has been a proliferation of Christian denominations from the 1870s to the present day, the Church can claim as members less than one percent of the population. Christianity seems unable to communicate to average Japanese its messages of social equality and transcendent, universal truths. This may be due to the inability of Christian doctrines and leaders to make a case for exclusivity in a religiously pluralistic society, or because the post-war constitution prohibits teaching religion in public (but not private) schools. And yet, from Christmas shopping to the wedding industry, the religion does have a social presence. Especially for many young women, their standard civil or Shinto marriage ceremony may be followed by a romantic appearance of the bride in a white lace wedding gown, marching down the "virgin road" of a hall designed to look like a chapel. Rings are exchanged, hymns play in the background, and a minister blesses the union, but it is the atmosphere of ritual that matters rather than the message or messenger. Though its historical roots evoke the tumultous events of the 16th and 17th centuries, the trappings of Christianity today seem for most Japanese just another accessory for modern consumer life.

NOTES

1. Among the missionaries' guiding paradigms was a considerable body of apocalyptic and millenarian beliefs that had survived into the 16th century. Among these was emphasis on a directive from Jesus to preach a gospel to every creature that "shall be . . .a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). Many missionaries believed that the discovery of new lands was an affirmation of the coming end of the world, therefore their duty was to preach to as many pagans as possible, regardless of the reaction they provoked (Davidson 1987: 59–60). Even their military vanguards, such as Hernando Cortés, were under explicit instructions from the Pope by way of the Spanish crown: ". . .the first aim of your expedition is to serve God and spread the Christian faith. You must not, therefore, permit any blasphemy or lewdness of any kind, and all who violate this injunction should be publicly admonished and punished. You must neglect no opportunity to spread the knowledge of the True Faith and the Church of God among those people who dwell in darkness." (Ricard, 1971/1933: 16) An injunction like this not only provided Cortés with the rationale for waging a just war, it guaranteed that the destruction of temples idols and humans would not compromise his or his officers' personal chances for salvation. They were, after all, on a divine mission sanctioned by the highest authorities in civilization. Due to Cortés decimation of initial native resistance and ensuing plagues of diseases, the missionaries were by and large unhampered by worries of violent reprisals.
2. These zealous evangelicals, according to Ricard, (1971/1933: 27), found social and political conditions particularly propitious for spreading the "True Faith" in New Spain. Not only were there apocalyptic prophesies circulating in both Aztec Mexico and Yucatan, there was also a social transformation occurring at the time of the conquest by which inheritance laws were becoming family rather than clan-centered. Perhaps the central Aztec administration on the Anahuac plateau (now Mexico City) thought this innovation, which weakened powerful clans, a way to increase control over the recently subjugated areas of Jalisco, Tlaxcala, Zacatecas, and Sinaloa. But it also undermined the ability of local villages and regions to band together and repel the Spanish. Further, the Aztec rulers had facilitated communication between themselves and their new allies by the imposition of Nahuatl as the official language of the empire. With state power having already formed a means for discourse, the missionaries had only to learn one language to begin preaching instead of the many regional tongues and dialects.
3. Among these converstion tactics was the Augustinian and Franciscan legitimation of breaking, entering, and subsequent theft of native religious sacred objects by Indian boys who had themselves been forcibly removed form their families. They were kept as hostages by the priests as a means of

forcing conversion of their natural fathers, as well as to remove young warriors from the surrounding tribes (see Trexler 1982).

4. For more on Prester John, the internet has numerous accounts, including one with picturesque fables attributed to "Sir John Mandeville," written circa 1366, at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/mandeville.html. Concerning the Portuguese attitude towards other peoples they encountered, the vicar-general of the Jesuits, Father Visitor Valignano, wrote as late as 1592 of continued difficulty with the Portuguese attitude treating all Asiatic races with contempt, calling even highly civilized people like the Chinese and Japanese, "niggers" (Boxer 1951: 84).
5. Portuguese access to Japan was further facilitated as the centralized control originating in Lisbon over the Indian spice and Chinese silk trades shifted to a string of semi-autonomous colonial bases. John Law has pointed out that what began as a well-orchestrated system designed to exact compliance from seamen, merchants, masters, and envoys evolved into policy-making outposts responding to their own social and political situations (Law 1987: 256). As the size and complexity of the settlements grew in Goa and Macao, there was simply too much at stake locally to continually defer to the faraway crown. To be sure, the huge carracks, or "black ships" as the Japanese called them, continued to ply the routes from East to West (with 112 vessels lost between Portugal and India alone during 1550–1650 [Cooper 1971: 22]). But even if a decision had been made to wage war to subdue Japan, there was no feasible way to transport sufficient mean and material capable of extended armed conflict, so completely had the Portuguese "envelope of fidelity" been restructured (Law, ibid), and so distant were the Japanese islands.
6. Barring shipwreck, enormous profits were guaranteed to the Portuguese "fildagos" captaining a Black Ship. Since China used silver as the dominant metal of exchange whereas Japan favored gold, a 30–40% return on investments was commonplace by buying silk in China with silver obtained in Japan, then shipping this silk back to Japan for resale. Secondly, the Ming dynasty had prohibited direct trade with Japan due to the powerless Ashikaga government's inability to curb Japanese pirates (*wakô*) who terrorized Chinese coastal villages and shipping. Most Japanese merchants were pleased to deal with the Portuguese, who were well-situated to act as middlemen from their base in Macao (Spence 1984: 174, see also Boxer 1969).
7. In fact, after several abortive attempts in Hirado and Yokoseura, the Jesuits succeeded at Nagasaki in actually having a harbor and land ceded to their control. But with no great landholding to bring them revenues as in Latin American, nor with a major mercantile base backed by shipbuilding and regular dues as in Goa and Macao, reliance on outside help was critical. Boxer notes that Francis Xavier's early mission in 1549 was possible largely because of the generosity of a captain of Malacca, which inspired other wealthy fidalgos to contribute to the cause after Xavier's effusive letters circulated the possibilities for Christianity in Japan as well as trade. Rich novices, such as the Jewish convert Luis d'Almeida, donated their worldly belongings to the Order upon joining (d'Almeida's 4,000 ducats were invested in the silk trade) but for the most part it was highly sporadic papal and royal largesse which financed the missions during those years when ships failed to arrive. Even with this money, and that gained in the trade of fine of fine cloth, gold and silver, spices, scented roots, incense, medicines, malachite, and opium between India, Malacca, and Europe, the missions' ability to make ends meet was compared by one of its administrators to the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Boxer 1951: 118).
8. We find numerous examples of this tactic, reaching back as early as 1557 with the Jesuit Gaspar Vilela's method of evangelization in Kyushu included book burning and the destruction of Buddhist images (Matsuda and Kawasaki 1977–80: 188–91). In 1574, in the fief of Omura Sumitada that would later include ceding the port of Nagasaki to the Jesuits, some sixty thousand of his subjects were "converted" and local religious sites destroyed. In 1580, the new Jesuit leader Valignano notes that during three months spent in the Arima region, "all the temples of their *camis and fotoques* [gods and Buddhas] were broken up and destroyed—more than forty of them, large and small, among them some of the most beautiful and renown in all Japan..." (Elisonas 1991: 334).
9. The missionaries had demonstrated again that since the minds of people do not spontaneously move to religion, they could be made to do so if power imposed the conditions for experiencing it (Asad 1983: 243). And so they focused on converting the upper samurai classes and, when the promise of trade was too lucrative to ignore, an occasional daimyô. The priests also knew that if their religious knowledge was to have authority, it must be intrinsically related to material

conditions (churches, infirmaries, orphanages, training as well as trading centers) and social activities (conducting mass, ministering, healing, giving gifts). The frequency with which they celebrated mass and communion drew upon one of the aspects of ritual proven time and again to hold true regardless of culture: that it is possible to create solidarity without consensus or a homogeneous rationality of belief (see Kertzer 1988: 69). By including whoever wanted to participate, the Jesuits sought to evoke an emotional involvement in the Japanese which might lead to feelings of allegiance and sympathy, not to mention personal empowerment. Once these essential sentiments were in place, an entire range of disciplinary activities—upon the person and how the faith was reproduced in that person—could be enacted through the churches and other institutions they attempted to build. The problem was not so much in changing people's consciousness but in the production of an accessible and publicly visible Christianity via institutional, economic, and political expressions of power (seeFoucault 1980: 133).

10. Additionally, the priests' solicitation of young boys (girls did not qualify for education) in order to instill the message of the Church at an early age was also problematic. Homosexuality between Buddhist monks and the young boys under their tutelage, or among the monks themselves, was a matter of course in Japan. "They said that committing sodomy with a boy did not cause him any discredit or his relatives any dishonor, because he had no virginity to lose and in any case sodomy was not a sin" (Cooper 1965: 47). Even as late as 1596, after forty-six years of socialization practices, Father Visitor Valignano wrote: "Their abominations of the flesh and vicious habits were regarded as quite honorable; men of standing entrust their sons to the bonzes to be instructed in such things, and at the same time to serve their lust" (Spence 1984: 225). It was a cause of chagrin for the celibate Jesuits, with their young servants and novices, to be cast in a similar view by the common person.
11. Christian efforts to sabotage existing religious Buddhist and Shinto institutions was pronounced in Nagasaki long after the much later expulsion order of 1614 went into effect. For example, a small Shinto shrine that had been demolished by the Jesuits was now incorporated into a new shrine that was to serve as a model for "traditional" Japanese religious values in Nagasaki. And yet, due to harassment, it was not until 1624 that a head priest was installed, with full governmental sponsorship providing for a main building in 1634, a year after the most rigid closed-country edict was first enforced (Nelson 1996: 19).
12. As Wright has pointed out (Wright, 1982), Franciscan rivalry with the Jesuits was based in part on the latter's cozy relationship with the Pope. After all, the Society of Jesus had dared and been permitted, from their very inception, to utilize the divine name of "Jesus." Their vow of absolute obedience to the Pope placed the Jesuits between the orders of friars and the Church hierarchy, and permitted them to establish colleges in Italy which maintained a constant supervision of pupils in a way which the old universities did not. The Council of Trent greatly added to this Franciscan/Jesuit competition in 1545 because it attacked the privileged positions of the monks and thus exacerbated the internal divisions in the Catholic Church among bishops and regular priests who competed for limited financial resources. As a result, these divisions were exported to the overseas missions with often disastrous consequences (Wright 1982: 16–31).
13. Crucifixion, for example, was a death reserved for criminals of the lowest sort in Japan. Yet the Franciscans emphasized the passion of Christ, proudly flaunting their crucifixes and thus limiting their effectiveness among the elites (Davidson 1987: 59). As we saw in Mexico, they felt no need to make concessions of their faith to the existing order, scoffing at the Jesuits who occasionally dressed like Buddhist monks and generally avoided the inhabitants of city slums and rural villages. The upper classes' association of disease, poverty, and dirt with the lower classes mattered little to the Franciscans, who would take their souls any way they came.
14. In spite of such accusations, the first few years of the Tokugawa regime were among the best ever for the Jesuits and Franciscans. Although Ieyasu was a practicing Buddhist (unlike Hideyoshi), he tolerated missionary activities as long as they were restricted to the middle and lower classes, as "the conversion of merchants was all to the good, since this would foster trade with the Portuguese and Spaniards" (Boxer 1951: 184). He began a trade route of his own between Macao and Manila, with the red seal of the shogun smoothing the ships' passage and lessening Japanese dependence on the Black Ships. The success of the Jesuits fostered more residences of foreign merchants in

Nagasaki who married Japanese, learned the language and taught their own, and thus created even grater autonomy for the peripheries of Portuguese trading routes.

15. At a time when we might expect a closing of the ranks and coordinated strategies of survival and cooperation, the Franciscans and Jesuits remained at each others throats. Both were still smarting from arguing about the debacle of the San Felipe in 1597, the Franciscans' defiance of a Papal bull excluding them from Japan, and another Vatican edict forbidding their strategies of ministering to the outcastes or displaying the crucifix. Now, new controversies arose about the Franciscans confirming their own converts without having permission from the absentee bishop of Japan. Jesuits would not hear confession from these converts and so, tit-for-tat, neither would the Franciscans minister to members from Jesuit congregations.
16. It should be remembered that with less than seventy foreign priests and some two to five thousand Japanese killed from 1614 to 1643, "persecution" is of a more limited scale than what it meant in Europe. In no way do I mean to diminish the terror of systematic searches, prosecution, and the severe punishment of Christians in Japan. But at all times it seems there were ample opportunities to apostasize, if not at the time of arrest then up to and including the final moment before execution. In Spain, however, heretics, Jews and Moors were killed at night by vigilantes, imprisoned or executed without trials, and were rarely given a chance to revoke or amend their faith. Even families whose Christian faith was less than two generations old were killed by the thousands. Similarly, French Protestants were murdered in systematic attacks and English religious battles saw a century of persecutions and civil war (Matsubara 1983: 148). Cieslik's account of the execution of fifty Christians in Edo in 1623 mentions that even at the stake, the ring of wood surrounding the prisoner was far enough away to give them an opportunity to recant their faith even after the fire was lit (Cieslik 1965: 28, note 43). While it is tempting to see the situation in Japan as motivated by politics rather than religious doctrine (as in Spain and other parts of Europe), this designation would create artificial boundaries for "religious" and "political" realms of influence. In practice, the situation was highly complex and involved many different players, though what mattered most was an outcome of increased control and empowerment, however it was reached.
17. Anesaki shows clearly the importance of passivity in qualifying for becoming a martyr. Citing from the *Cautions on Martyrdom*, a Jesuit document in circulation among Christian communities, "when one is persecuted on account of being *Kirishitan*, it is forbidden to fight in defense. In case one fights in defense and is killed, one is not a martyr, because one did not die voluntarily for the sake of Deus. " (Anesaki 1931: 252 n. 1). Cieslik's account of the "great Edo martyrdom" of 1623 shows these principles in action. Priests working underground such as the Jesuit Jerome de Angelis, seemed as if suddenly possessed to give up their lives for the sake of the faith. One day working closely with local communities and the next day in prison, Cieslik's depiction of the suffering and horrible conditions of incarceration made the day of execution seem a welcome relief (Cieslik 1965: 16).

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