

The Provisional Reception of Patristic Authors in 16th-Century Japan

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Introduction

Japan's first encounter with Christianity started with the arrival of Francis Xavier (1506–1552), one of the founding members of the Society of Jesus, at Kagoshima (鹿児島) of Satsuma (薩摩), the southernmost part of Japan in 1549. He and his followers preached the message of Christian faith to a country ruined by civil wars from the middle of the previous century. The rapid growth in popularity of Christianity among people had promoted the activity of Christian missionaries: Jesuits, Franciscans and other mendicant orders. In particular, the Jesuits founded institutions for higher education, brought a printing press from Europe, and engaged in publishing activities in a seminary. Yet, despite the successful diffusion of Christianity, its end came quickly with the strict governmental decrees in the first decade of the next century. Japanese Christians and all missionaries were expelled, martyred, and swept away from the island country. Until the end of the Edo period, in 1865 when those called Kakure Kirishitan (Hidden Christians) met with a member of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris in Nagasaki (長崎) of Hizen (肥前), they had kept alive the faith and survived over two hundred years of underground existence. In this paper, I shall deal with different types of writing and consider the way in which the Jesuits approached the spiritual interest of the Japanese converts. In particular, I will argue how the references to patristic literature could point out the feature of the mission work and the realities of cultural accommodation.

The Jesuit mission in Japan and the emergence of Kirishitan-ban

The missionary endeavour following Xavier's arrival in 1549 was not easy by any means. After his departure from Japan in November 1551, Xavier's followers wrestled with the utter foreignness of Japanese customs, language, and culture. They engaged and persisted in the propagation of Christian truth. After thirty years of mission work, in the late 1570s there were well over 100,000 Christians. But indeed, some Jesuits were highly critical of the status quo: because of the lack of Jesuit workers, they were tired out from their work and, in particular, getting irritated by the policy directed by Francisco Cabral (1529–1609). Cabral was sent to Japan in the spring of 1570 to succeed Cosme de Torres (1510–1570) as superior of the Japanese mission. In the period between 1570 and 1581, Cabral served as a policy maker in Japan and did not hide his contempt for the Japanese and their culture, which was governed by prejudices. He had steadfastly insisted that the Portuguese Jesuits should not adapt themselves to Japanese traditions and circumstances. He rejected and resisted any kind of cultural accommodation in the process of mission activity. Things did not change until another policy maker checked the malpractices of his method to the mission of Japan.

Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) landed in Japan in 1579. He had already been appointed as the *Visitor* general for the Jesuit missions from Africa to Japan by the Superior General,

Everard Mercurian (1514-1580), in August 1573. Before arriving at the port of Kuchinotsu (口之津), located in the southern part of the Shimabara (島原) Peninsula, therefore, he learnt much about the current state and problems of the mission work from the reports he received from Japan. In spite of the achievement of the missionary enterprise, he maintained that there was much to improve upon. Indeed, Valignano landed to see a frustrated group of Jesuits and a growing gulf between them and the Japanese. The unfortunate situation had been exacerbated by Cabral's patronising attitude towards the Japanese. His contempt was the most crucial threat to the mission in Japan. Hence, Valignano was to challenge the cultural accommodation of the Jesuits to Japanese culture. Before ending his first visitation of Japan in 1582, he relieved Cabral as mission superior and focused on the work of formulating new policies towards accommodation as the basis for the next thirty years of the mission. The setting up of educational institutions was followed by the first Jesuit conference held in Usuki (臼杵) of Bungo (豊後) in 1580: for primary education, *seminario*, for higher learning, *collegio*, and for religious candidates, *noviciado*, were established. With regard to his educational plans, along with the project of sending a delegation of young Japanese converts to Europe, Valignano tried to bring a printing press with movable type from Europe. His plans were completely executed. Attendants of the Japanese envoys had learnt printing techniques in Lisbon and, immediately after their return to Japan in July 1591, they started printing books in a seminary at Kazusa (加津佐) of Hizen (肥前). The Jesuits continued its work during the period when the political pressure on their activities had been gradually and irreversibly increasing. Until 1614 around 100 publications, known as Kirishitanban, were produced and only half of them are now extant.

Martyrdom literature: Sanctos no gosagveo no vchi nvqigaqi

The first work published by the printing press in Japan was *Sanctos no gosagveo no vchi nvqigaqi* (*Excerpts from the Acts of the Saints* 『サントスのご作業のうち抜書』). It consists of two volumes, printed in roman alphabet in Kazusa in 1591, and compiled from various sources: in particular, gathering from *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1229-1298) and also adapting passages from the books of the lives of saints, *Flos sanctorum* by Alfonso de Villegas (1533-1603/5) and *Flos Sanctorum* by Pedro de Ribadeneira (1526-1611). It is very likely that these materials were easily accessible in Japan, for indeed Melchoir Nunes Barreto (ca. 1519-1571) arrived in Kyushu (九州) in 1556 and brought with him a large collection of around 100 books from which the Jesuits had started to construct a library functioned as the indispensable resource for the mission work.

The Jesuit brothers Paulo Yoho-ken (1510-1596) and Vincente Hoin (b. 1538, son of Yoho-ken) devoted themselves to the compilation and translation of “many of the lives of the saints,” with the collaboration of some Padres and Irmãos. This hagiographic collection is intended not only for the education of new clergy in Jesuit schools but for the propagation of Christian faith for new converts. In comparison with *Dochirina Kirishitan* (*Christian Doctrine* 『ドチリナキリシタン』), the first Christian catechism known to be published in Japan (1591/92), which deals with the teaching of Christianity through rational arguments, *Sanctos no* focuses on the historical events described in the Gospels and various hagiographical texts. By doing so, the compendium

enables the audience to be familiar with the spirit of martyrs of the early church, in which one can find some passages taken from patristic authors.

[Andrew's martyrdom] Meanwhile the Apostle uttered this prayer to Christ, as St. Augustine says: "Lord, do not let me come down alive from the cross! It is time to entrust my body to the earth. I have borne it so long, and now I wish to be relieved of this most burdensome garment. I think of how I have laboured to carry its weight and to control its unruliness. I think of how often it has struggled to draw me away from the purity of contemplation and take me far away from the repose given to my soul from you, how many and how grave pains it has inflicted on me. Lord, I have resisted the assaults for so long, and with your help I have mastered it. I beg of you not to leave it any longer in my care! I will not have to take care of it, thirsting as I am to come freely to you, the source of joy and consolation." (*Sanctos no*, "Acts of St. Andrew the Apostle," 177-177v)

[Christ's entrusting to John of his mother] He [John] was beloved by Christ above the other apostles, because he was chosen as a virgin and [the Lord] commended his mother to the Apostle. As St. Jerome says, after the ascension of the Lord, a virgin mother was entrusted to John's care until her death. When he went to Asia where he conversed and converted much people and there founded many churches in the christian faith. (*Sanctos no*, "Acts of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist," 179)

[Vincent of Saragossa] St. Augustine says of this holy blessed martyr that Blessed Vincent was victorious in words, victorious in his confession of God, victorious in tribulation, he overcame the fire and overcame the water, he vanquished death and vanquished life. A wondrous play was staged before our eyes. A wicked and cruel judge, a martyr not conquered. A contest between raving madness on this side and on the other a splendid piety. St. Ambrose says of him that St. Vincent is racked, beaten, scourged, and burned but unconquered and that his stance for the name is unshaken, the fire of zeal heats him more than the hot iron and the fire, and he is more bound by the fear of God than of the world, he is determined to please God than the judge, he longs to die to Jesus Christ and died. (*Sanctos no*, "Acts of St. Vincent," 167-168)

In *Sanctos no*, Augustine and Jerome become the most cited in the patristic literature. Others are John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Isidore of Seville, Anthony the Great, and Ireneus of Lyons. While there are brief references to these authors, this compendium sometimes quotes some passages from their writings. In the citations mentioned above, the first (Andrew's martyrdom) is taken from a pseudo-Augustinian treatise, *De uera et falsa poenitentia* (until the sixteenth century attributed to Augustine: PL 40,1122, and exerted a wide influence on the treatment of sin, penance, and confession); the second is from the "prologue of St. Jerome" to the *Commentary on John*, yet its authenticity is doubtful (it would be traced back to the sixth century and has been attributed to Jerome during the mediaeval period); and the third is quoted directly both from Augustine's *Sermones* 274 (On the birthday of the martyr Vincent) and 277A.1 (On the birthday of saint Vincent) and from a passage inserted in the preface of the Mass of St. Vincent in the Ambrosian Missal (*Corpus praefationum latinarum*, CCSL 161C,1057). Due to the difficulty involved in a theoretical treatment, Jesuit Fathers and Brothers would rather draw the attention of Japanese neophytes to the acts of the saints and the meaning of martyrdom. This approach opens a new perspective for the heart of Christian faith, that is, the revelation and salvation realised in Christ, in the world of the early Church. These quotations are carefully paraphrased by the collaboration of those who make an effort to foster the faith and piety of the community. Through the variety of patristic quotations, they would provide them with a solid ground for Christian moral life.

Luis de Granada's writings translated into Japanese

A remarkable feature of the Kirishitan-ban is that its considerable portion was directly or indirectly affected by the treatises of the Spanish Dominican friar Luis de Granada (1505-1588). He was an influential preacher and theologian in early modern Iberian world. Throughout his large corpus of writings, Granada was considered as an emblematic figure of the Catholic Church after the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Undoubtedly the most popular book at the time was his *The Book of Prayer and Meditation* (*Libro de la oración y meditación*, Salamanca, 1554; revised in 1566) and the second was his *The Guide for the Sinner* (*Guía de pecadores*, Lisbon, 1556; revised in 1567). It is therefore reasonable that the latter was translated and introduced to the Japanese reader in 1599 and that some of his other writings were translated and adapted from Latin and Spanish into Japanese: *Fides no doxi* (1592), *Contemptus Mundi* (1596 in romanised Japanese and 1610 in Japanese characters), and *Fides no quio* (1611).

Granada was repeatedly engaged in composing the catechism and exposition of the orthodox faith. In later years from 1579 to 1581, he wrote *Introduction to the Symbol of the Faith* (*Introducción del Símbolo de la Fe*) that was printed for the first time in Salamanca in 1583. Then he revised it and added the fifth part to this book. It was entitled as *Compendium of the Introduction* (*Compendio de la Introducción*) and published in Salamanca in 1584. This catechetical instruction was translated into Japanese respectively: first, under the decision of the second Jesuit conference held in Kazusa (加津佐) in 1590, *Fides no doxi* (*The Guide to Faith* 『ヒイデスの導師』) was published as a paraphrased version of the *Compendium*, that is, the fifth part of the *Introduction* in Amakusa (天草) in 1592; second *Fides no quio* (*The Book on Faith* 『ひですの経』) was translated and adapted from the first part of the *Introduction* in Nagasaki (長崎) in 1611. It is noteworthy that the second *Fides* had been considered lost until a copy was discovered in the Houghton Library of Harvard University in 2009. Resulting from the identification and availability of the document, we can search and evaluate the references to patristic authors in these complementary writings.

In both *Fides*, there are many references taken from patristic literature: it is in *Fides no doxi* around seventy times and in *Fides no quio* around thirty times. With regard to these citations, there is not much dissimilarity between these *Fides*: Augustine is the most quoted author. In *Fides no doxi* both John Chrysostom and Jerome are in second place and in *Fides no quio* Ambrose is in second. Others are as follows: Gregory of Nazianzen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Anthony the Great, Cyprian, Ephrem the Syrian, Maximus the Confessor, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, Cyril of Jerusalem, Leo the Great, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite. Whereas in some places both *Fides* refer only to them by name, in other places they give the actual passages from their writings.

In part two of the *Compendio*, Granada deals with the elements of true religion and enumerates the characteristics of Christian faith. In chapter 17 entitled “sixteenth excellence of our holy faith and religion, which is the testimony of the holy doctors,” he defines the Church Fathers as those “of superior talent and of the greatest holiness” (décimasexta excelencia de nuestra santísima fe y religión, que es el testimonio de los sanctos doctores). In *Fides no doxi*, this chapter is covered by the same number and heading.

The holy doctors are men of the greatest holiness and excelled in sciences, and it were as if a gate and solid wall of the Catholic Church. Among many doctors, but first of all, as were St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St.

Jerome, and St. Gregory. St. Augustine confesses himself that he learned and distinguished in all sciences alone without teachers (*Conf.* 4.16.30: *I read by myself all the books on the so-called liberal arts, and understood all that I read*). The more holy and the more distinguished in all sciences these doctors are, the more profound knowledge of the spiritual and divine things they are. They are well prepared to be a master of the humble and teach them in detail about the Lord and the spiritual truth, to whom He communicates his secrets. These doctors, after studying philosophy, spend their life in the study of theology which concerns itself with our faith. It approves and defends the truth and falsehood of heretics, thereby showing the dignity and excellence of our faith. (*Fides no doxi*, pt. 2, ch. 17: 222-223)

The *Compendium* was translated by Pedro Ramón (1550-1611), the head of *noviciado* in Usuki (臼杵) at the time. It was carefully paraphrased by him, perhaps in collaboration with the Japanese and Portuguese Jesuits. The case is the same in the passage quoted above. With regard to the enumeration of patristic authors, however, there is a significant difference between the original and the translation. In *Compendium*, when he makes the list of the “holy doctors,” Granada refers first to “St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, and Duns Scotus,” second to “St. Basil and his contemporaries Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom, Theodoret, Damasceno,” then to “St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, Boethius, ... and St. Augustine.” In contrast, in *Fides no doxi* Ramón and his colleagues revise the list and fix it to the “four Doctors” of the Western church. A possible reason for the omission is that this work was not printed for the professional reader but for the Japanese convert and the student of educational institutions. At the early stage of the Japanese mission, most potential readers would have had no background of the history of Christian thought. Thus, they might have shortened the list and expected them to direct their attention to the matter in question.

Another point of interest to note is that *Fides no quio* has also an altered section of the original text. In *Fides no quio*, chapter 29 is entitled “On the intellectual soul and its functions” (あにまいんてれきちいわの体、并徳用を論ずるの序), which is translated into Japanese from chapter 34 in the first part of the *Introduction*. Compared with the original with its translation, it is quite clear that the anonymous translators of *Fides no quio* translate only the first paragraph of chapter 34 and that they omit both the following six paragraphs and chapters 35, 36, and 37. Instead focusing on the scriptural explanation of human soul and the *imago dei* (*semejantes á Dios*), they add in detail the exposition on a philosophical view of the soul.

And, according to the functions, the intellect (いんてれきと) is designated by proper names. A part by which all things are known at once is named the intellect. A part in which one discerns and distinguishes between things is named the judgment (じゆぢしよ). A part in which one thinks and deliberates is named the reason (らあしよ). A part where the species (ゑすべしゑ) of things already known and acknowledged is stored and from which one recalls those things if needed is named the memory (めもりあ). In this regard, St. Augustine says that the understanding (智弁) is the offspring of memory (cf. *De trin.* 11.7.11). (*Fides no quio*, chap. 29 § 4, “The intellect is spiritual,” 78)

Besides the intellect above mentioned, there is another function of the human soul. It is designated as the will (おんたあで). It is also named the intellectual appetite (あべちいといんてれきちいを). [...] Human will is attracted to a feeling of deep affection with love and is eager for the acquisition. In this regard, St. Augustine says that *Amor meus pondus meum, illo feror quocumque feror*. My weight is my love; by that love I move in whatever direction I move (*Conf.* 13.9.10). And he says that *Sicut corpus pondere, ita anima mea amore fertur*. For the body is carried by its weight, just as the soul is carried by its love (*De civ. dei* 11.28). (*Fides no quio*, chap. 29 § 6, “On the will,” 82-82v)

In the additional sections (§§ 1-8), anonymous translators use many philosophical terms which were transliterated into Japanese: form ほるま, matter まてりや, sense せんしちいハ, reason らあしよ, species ゑすべしゑ, and appetite あべちいと. While their attempt to formulate an Aristotelian theory of the soul is explicit from both these terms and the concise explanation of the functions of human soul, it turns out that quotations from Augustine's three important works are found: *On Trinity*, *Confessions*, and *The City of God*. In fact, there is no other reference to Patristic authors there. Hence, as some scholars have suggested, it may reflect the fact that translators themselves are well informed about the works of Augustine and that these passages are chosen as a source text for the functions of humans soul in its spiritual and material aspects.

Concluding observations

In the view of the Jesuit missionaries in Japan, it was indeed difficult to give a high degree of the conformity of people from different cultural backgrounds. After the seeming success during the first three decades of the mission work, a new stage was inaugurated by Valignano and his fellows. His emphasis on Jesuit accommodation to Japanese culture led to the realisation of his plan: the establishment of schools, the sending of a delegation to Europe, and the Kirishitan-ban produced by a printing press brought to Japan. In a series of the publications, we find interesting evidence of a cultural phenomenon. Examination of the references to Patristic authors and citations from their works reveals the fact that a close team of European and Japanese Jesuits carefully edited and translated some texts into Japanese, in which the originals were sometimes revised, added, and removed. These works were intended to be used as a catalyst for the cultural adaptation of Christianity in Japan. It also may be observed that the Jesuits offered a detailed, contextualised view of the Christian faith that suggested their appreciation for both Japanese culture and the intellectual milieu of contemporary Europe. Further survey of the reception of Patristic authors in the Kirishitan-ban will enable us to study their role and the realities of cross-cultural adaptation in pre-modern Japan.