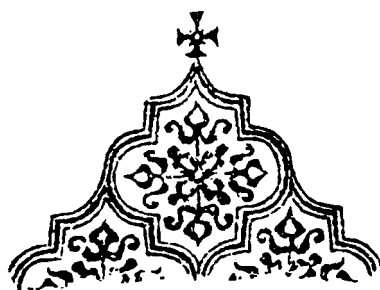




St. Francis Xavier with his Japanese interpreter, Yagiro.
Oil on canvas by André Reinoso, c. 1619.
Museu de São Roque, Lisbon.



Revisiting the First Jesuit Library in Japan

An Analysis of the Purpose of Nunes Barreto's Library in Kyushu (1556)

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In 1554, three years after arriving in India, Melchior Nunes Barreto set sail for Japan. Once rector of the Goan Jesuit College, Barreto took with him a large collection of about one hundred books, and a list of all the titles included in this small library survived. In 1960, Jesuit historian Jesus López-Gay discussed for the first time the contents of these books, in the now classic article 'La Primera Biblioteca de los Jesuítas en el Japón (1556). Su Contenido y su Influencia'.¹

López-Gay's article was intended 'to check exactly the place where the texts brought by the missionaries were printed, printing year etc.' He also classified the books in seven groups according to its field and nature, i.e. 'Holy Scriptures', 'Holy Fathers and Theology', 'Morals and Canons', 'Philosophy', 'Liturgy', 'Spirituality' and 'Various'. Such classification focused on the contents of the books and their relations with some of the ideas present in Japan at the time.

This article will try to go one step further and cast some light on the objectives of Barreto's library in Japan. One main reason we can consider is the training of new clergy. For that matter, we separated the books in two major distinct groups: practical books and teaching books, as those needed to teach new priests and to be used by new members of the Order.

Practical books are all those used in the liturgy and by missionaries on an everyday basis: Bibles, confession manuals, breviaries, diurnals, psalm books and guides to herbs. Aside from these, we have a list of supplies written by Alessandro Valignano in the beginning of the 17th century which includes other books which, as Valignano says, were intended to be used by the increasing number of priests that were being ordained in Japan. Crossing the information on Nunes Barreto's list with Valignano's, it is possible to identify not only liturgical books such as Bibles, breviaries, diurnals and confession manuals, but also another two: first, the so called *Summa Silvestrina*, written by Silvestre Mazolini, which was a comprehensive commentary on Thomas Aquinas' works and the first openly public criticism to Martin Luther; second, the *Meditations*, by Saint Augustine.²

It is also interesting to note that Valignano's list points out three other works that don't appear in Nunes Barreto's. The reason may be because these titles did not exist back in the 1550's. One is referred only by the author's name, Friar Luiz de Granada, and could indicate any of his works, such as *Introducción del*

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Símbolo de la Fe (Introduction to the Symbol of Faith), or *Libro de la Oración y Meditación* (Book of Prayer and Meditation), or even the famous *Guia de Peccadores* (Sinner's Guide).³ The second work is *La Vanidad del Mundo* (World's Vanity), by Diego de Estella. A last name is also included, Montoya, but it is not yet possible to identify a single possible author.

The second category here is the teaching books, or teaching materials. Here we follow the analysis given by Jesus López-Gay in his original article, as well as his comments about them. However, unlike the practical books that were chosen for clerical work and missionary needs, it is necessary first to analyse the criteria that led the choices of Nunes Barreto when constructing his library before setting sail for Japan.

To understand how the formation of the library can relate to the education of new priests in Japan, one has to understand the general guidelines of Jesuit thought during its first years as an Order. One of the

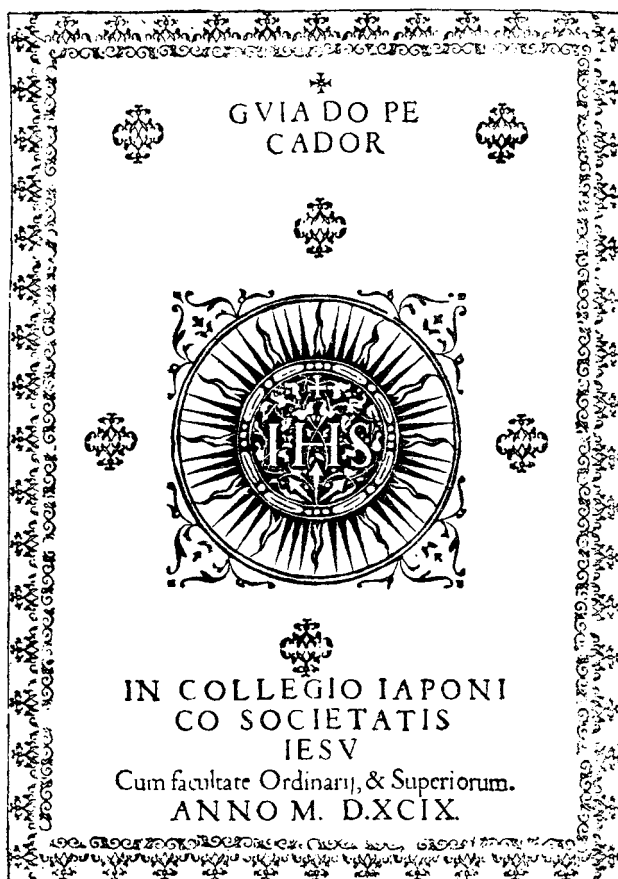
crucial principles found in Jesuit thought and speech during the mid-16th century was the exemplar model. The major exemplar model for the Society of Jesus in this time was Loyola's conversion. The strong imagery of the knight who devotes himself earnestly to God was essential for the rise of the Jesuits as a military-like order in its activities and organisation, in contrast to the medieval monastic orders.

The close connection between the founder's biography and the order's history reveals yet the central role played by books in the Jesuit culture. When the knight Íñigo de Oñez y Loyola retreated to his castle in order to recover from the wound suffered on the battlefield against the French, two books are responsible for instigating him to put the sword away and follow the steps of the saints. It is definitely not a coincidence that these two titles can be found on Barreto's list: *Vita Christi*, written by Ludolph of Saxony, and *Flos Sanctorum*, by Jacobus de Voragine. These hagiographies are the most essential books in Loyola's personal history and which inspired the basics of the Jesuit ideology.

Another work found both in Barreto's list and Loyola's biography is the *Imitatio Christi*, by Thomas a Kempis, a book to which Loyola 'remained faithful for the rest of his days'.⁴ In the list it is registered as 'the works of Thomas a Kempis', but it most certainly included the *Imitatio*. This book would affect Loyola's interpretation of Christian philosophy during the time when he started writing his Spiritual Exercises, in 1522.⁵

Loyola came to know a new form of scholasticism a few years later, when studying in the University of Salamanca, centered on Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of the bible in his *Summa Theologica*.⁶ The strength of Aquinas's exegesis inside the Society of Jesus can be identified in the list as we see books like the *Four Parts of the Summa Theologica*, the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Opuscula Divi Thomae*. The Thomism is present also in the past biographies of many Jesuits who would take part in the Japanese mission, such as Cosme de Torres. One of Xavier's companions on the original journey to Japan, Torres studied under the guidance

Guia do Pecador (Sinner's Guide), vol. 1, by Friar Luis de Granada. Nagasaki: Society of Jesus College, 1599.



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an abbreviated Japanese version of the 5th part of
Introducción del Símbolo de la Fe by Friar Luis de Granada.
Amakusa: Society of Jesus College, 1592.

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Go xuxxe yari M. D. L. XXXXII.

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of the famous Dr. Calaya and Master Peris, authentic Thomists and defenders of Aquinas in the University of Valencia.⁷

Besides corresponding with Ignatius' experience, the list contains work of a purely pedagogical nature, real textbooks that were in use in European universities. Here we can detach works such as those by Franz Titelmans or Tilmans (like *Titalmano Super Cantica*, and *Philosophia de Titalmano*) for their clarity and simplicity; Jean Gagne (listed as *Guanheo in Epistolas Pauli*) for its unpretentious contents, simple language and accessibility, reasons for its popularity among Portuguese students who graduated from the College of Navarre; last but not least we have the *Concordantiae Bibliorum et Cononum*, by Hugo de Colonia, that was so used in schools during the 16th century. The great number of didactical books shows us an interesting

characteristic of this library, and as we can see from the great amount of books intimately connected to the Jesuit culture, it was more than just religious or Catholic teaching, it was Jesuit teaching.

From the many textbooks in the library, it is possible to infer that one of the main purposes of this library was exactly to help the education of native clergy in Japan. Beyond that, it is noted that the intellectual content of the library would serve to form not just clergy, but Jesuit clergy. The new priests ordained in the Far East would be offered a whole package of Jesuit philosophy from the moment of their first contacts with western books.

Until Xavier met with Japanese in Malacca, he did not believe in priests ordained in Asia and their capability. New members were not be taken in the Company in India unless to perform domestic and

Arrival of St. Francis Xavier in Japan. 18th century glazed tile panel. (Convento da Encarnação, Lisbon).



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administrative functions, as Xavier insisted that the rhythm of studies in Asia was too slow.⁸ The father-master was quick to criticise Jesuits wannabes in India, claiming that many of them knew no better than to read and write.

In Japan, however, Xavier changed his mind. He declared that the Japanese Christians seemed to be good enough to perpetuate by themselves the fruits that the Jesuits would bear in life. This opinion diverged from the one he had about Christians in other parts, where he considered that there would be no way of perpetuating the religion by them and it would last only as long as the Jesuits lasted among them.⁹ The image of Japanese Christians as better than other converts in Portuguese Asia would remain strong over centuries. Boxer noted that in 1579 the fourth Jesuit General, Everard Mercurian, firmly closed the door preventing the admission of Asians and Eurasians to the order, although an exception was soon made in favour of the Japanese, later extended to Chinese, Vietnamese and Koreans.¹⁰

It is necessary, though, to analyze the process that took Barreto to Japan in 1554 carrying a whole library. Melchior Nunes Barreto was born in Oporto in the 1520's. He arrived in India in 1551, carrying letters from Simão Rodrigues indicating him as rector of the Jesuit College in Goa. As we can see in this letter from Xavier to Gaspar Barzeo written in April 1552, the job was extremely important both within the Jesuit missions and in the Portuguese *Padroado*.

Trusting I, Xavier, of thou, Gaspar, to be the rector of this college of the Holy Faith, and of the Portuguese priests and brothers of the Company of the name of Jesus from the Cape of Good Hope until here (Goa), and of those that are in Malacca, Moluccas, Japan and every other part, and of those who come from Portugal as from any other part in Europe to these parts to follow my will.¹¹

One can notice that being the rector of the college meant much more, as the rector had the powers of a vice-provincial and superior of the missions in India. There is no doubt that the rectorship was one of the key posts in the administration of the Jesuit missions in the East.

When Nunes Barreto arrived in India as the new rector, however, he faced resistance from Jesuits of Goa. The problem was that when the former rector António



Japanese convert. Painting on wood, artist unknown, 1621. (Museu do Carmulo, Portugal).

Gomes resigned, the Jesuits had chosen a new rector, the Italian Paulo de Camerino. Gaspar Barzeo, recently arrived from Ormuz, tell us more about the deadlock in this letter from 1551:

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Coming from Ormuz, called by Father Francisco to Japan, I found Father Paulo substituting as rector of this college of Goa after Father António Gomes, who was previously rector resigned. And that by choice of all the brothers in this house, even though another one (rector) was sent from Portugal by Father Simão Rodrigues as provincial, who is called Melchior Nunes Barreto. To whom they did not want to obey until Father Francisco comes back from Japan, telling me that it was his will, to give the post to no one until he was experienced enough for some time.¹²

The Goan Jesuits refused to accept Nunes Barreto, claiming that the letters he brought were only from Simão Rodrigues, not from the general of the order, Ignatius de Loyola.

Trying to mend things up until a definitive solution arrived from Rome, Xavier appointed Gaspar Barzeo as the new rector, while Nunes Barreto was sent to be the rector of the college in Baçaim. In 1553 Barzeo passed away, and the rectorship was finally taken by Nunes Barreto, in accordance with instructions left by Xavier. The final solution to this standstill was given by a letter in 1555, when a new rector, Baltasar Dias, was appointed by Loyola from Rome.

In view of this situation, Nunes Barreto decided to go to Japan in 1554. But his journey wasn't just to follow the example of Xavier and go preach in distant lands. According to Nunes Barreto himself, beside his will to leave Goa, where he was 'having an easy life', and follow the example of the Apostle of the Indies, Xavier himself left instructions to Gaspar Barzeo for him to send Barreto to Japan, as we can see in the following excerpt from a letter written in April 1552.

I (Xavier), would be more pleased if Master Belchior (Melchior Nunes Barreto) went there (to Japan), for his education, because there it would be better used than here (Goa).¹³

Nunes Barreto also quotes Xavier in one of his own letters to Loyola in 1554, while travelling from Goa to Cochim:

(Xavier) left written to Father Gaspar Barzeo to send me to Japan, saying that there my education would be better used than it is here, being the Japanese people who in everything ask for reason.¹⁴

But what Nunes Barreto meant with 'ser gente que em todas as coisas pede razão?' [Being people who in everything ask for reason]? This seems to be one of the key sentences to understand what took Barreto to sail off to Japan taking a whole library with him.

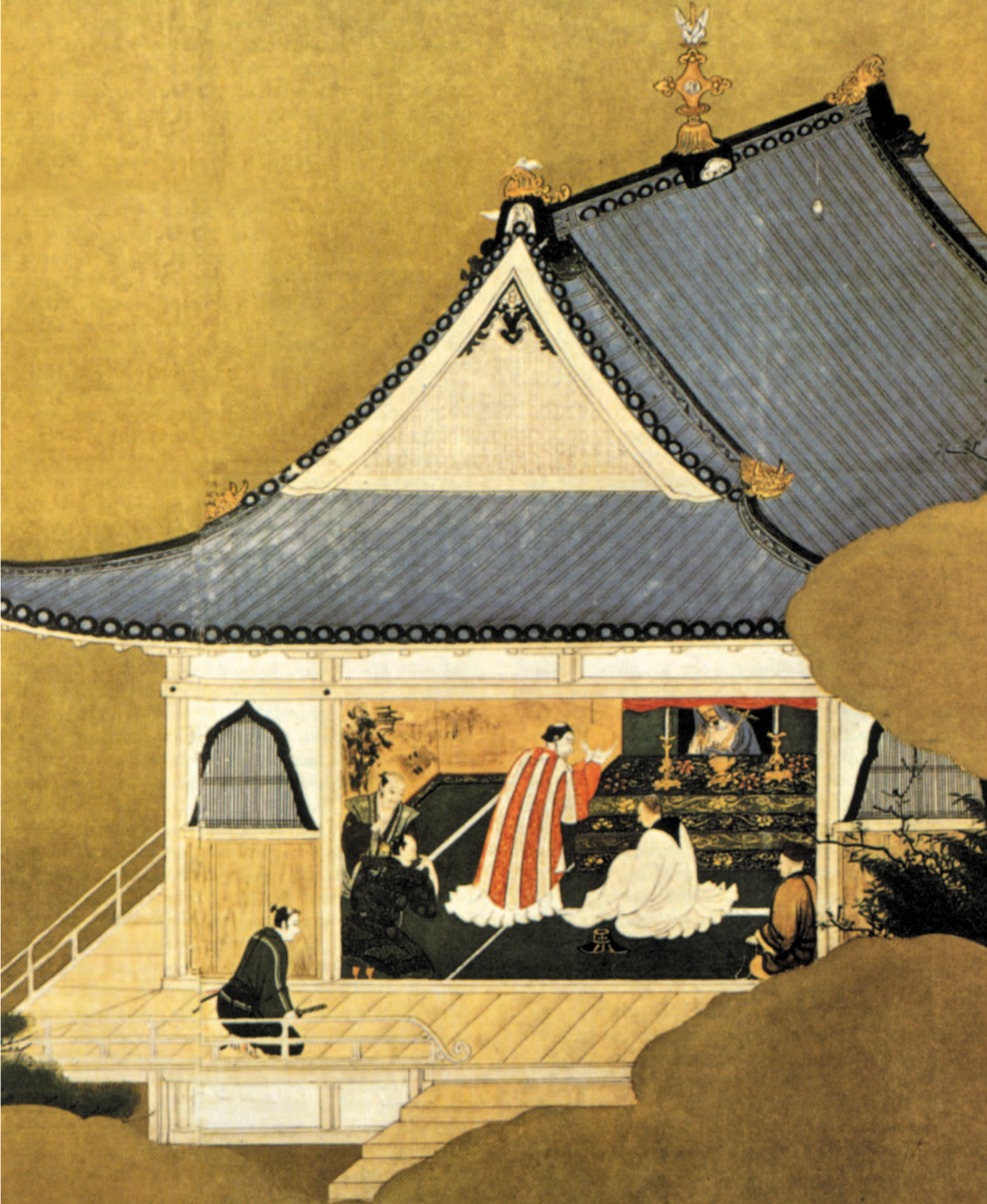
Jesus López-Gay says that this mission led by Nunes Barreto was scientific, and affirms that the 'ask for reason' part indicates that the Japanese when confronted with the Christian doctrine would be naturally curious and inquisitive, and it triggered the formation and transport of the library to Japan. In other words, the books would serve as a tool in the conversion of the Japanese people in general.

This may be not the only reason for the whole enterprise. One factor that López-Gay didn't take into consideration was one of the most resounding aspects of Xavier's experience in Japan, the philosophical disputes with Buddhist monks. As far as we can read in his letters, Xavier himself regarded the philosophical disputes as an important front in the battle for the Japanese souls, and thought Jesuits should be prepared to deal with the monks. Writing to Simão Rodrigues and Loyola in January 1552, Xavier clarified the main points to be observed when choosing and sending new missionaries to Japan.

First, the priests coming from Europe should go to the so called Japanese universities, the Buddhist schools in Japan, to engage in disputes with the monks. Second, they needed to be experienced in hard works, as they would have to deal with persecutions done by the monks. Third, these priests would face extremely harsh and cold weather conditions, and would have little to eat, so Xavier suggested Germans and Flemish from the



Christian church.
Detail of a Japanese namban screen.



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St. Francis Xavier preaching in the court of the prince of Yamaguchi. Oil on canvas by André Reinoso, c. 1619. (Museu de São Roque, Lisbon).

colleges in Spain and Italy, as they were well-built and fluent in Portuguese or Spanish. Fourth, they must not be too old, because of the physical difficulties, or too young, for the temptations in a far off land. Last, they needed to be well-trained in arts and sophistry, that is to say, Philosophy and Dialectics. For Xavier, it was crucial that these priests should be able to get the monks in contradiction, as they would be really ashamed when they didn't know how to reply to the Jesuits.

In contrast to the priests coming from Europe, priests and brothers who already were in Asia should be sent to the Jesuit house in Yamaguchi, southern Japan, where they would study the language and Buddhist philosophy. By doing so, when the priests came from Europe, these priests and brothers would be able to act as interpreters during disputes with the monks.

These philosophical arguments were an attempt to convert the monks to the Christian faith through rational convincement. This makes the Xavierian idea of mission in the monasteries perfectly consistent with Aquinas' teachings, according to which the believer must be induced to faith, not through coercion but through persuasion¹⁵.

Convincing and converting the monks to the Christian faith would have a direct impact on the missionary work in the whole archipelago according to Xavier, who believed that all monks in Japan went to the so-called universities to study. Xavier tells Loyola that the 'seculars excuse their mistakes claiming that they also have their scholars and education, and that they justify their acts'. The conversion of these monks would have a great impact on the population because, first, it would eliminate their excuses to live in sin and second, it would spread the knowledge that they live in sin throughout Japan. Buddhist monasteries would serve as centers of expansion for the Christian ideology. The work of the missionaries



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and its expansion would depend on this intellectual war. In Xavier's eyes, the Jesuits should use these pre-existing Japanese religious organisations to conquer more souls for Christianity.

In Xavier's plans, the Jesuit house in Yamaguchi would become a centre for adaptation to those who came from Europe and a training center for interpreters and new clergy. For that to happen a certain number of tools were needed to train the brothers and priests in Japan to translate faithfully everything that they were told. They would work with highly educated priests from Europe, so they should be familiar with the newest philosophical trends and all the depth that these priests would bring to discuss with the Buddhist monks. Thus the library brought by Nunes Barreto seems to have met the needs of the mission, so now we have a purpose of bringing these books to Japan.

Through these books, Japanese, European, Euro-Asian and Japanese brothers and priests would have the necessary tools to study Christian philosophy in the

midst of the Counter Reformation and the challenges found during overseas expansion. It is also possible to understand the reason behind the authentically Jesuit nature of the library:¹⁶ the missionaries coming from Europe would be none other than Jesuits. Shielded by the *unum ovile et unum pastor* ideal (i.e., one flock, one shepherd), which guided the missionary work on lands beyond the sphere of royal influence, there was no need to train interpreters and new priests in any other way than the Jesuit way.

The library was then one of the main tools for the Jesuit mission to update their knowledge, train new members and new interpreters for the mission. Just as there was a great concern with language and faithful translation, there were also great concerns about the transmission of faithful ideas. The library functioned as a barometer for these isolated Jesuits, in an attempt to avoid losing their ideals and philosophies in the process of translation and transmission of Christianity to the newly-converted Japanese souls. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 Published in *Monumenta Nipponica* (Tokyo), vol. 15, no. 3/4, 1959-1960, pp. 350-79.
- 2 It is unclear if these *Meditations* are an excerpt or just an alternative name for the *Confessions* of St. Augustine.
- 3 Pedro R. Santidrián, *Breve dicionário de pensadores cristãos*. Aparecida, SP: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1991, p. 243.
- 4 John W. O'Malley, *Os primeiros jesuítas (The First Jesuits)*, 1993). São Leopoldo, RS: Editora UNISINOS; Bauru, SP: EDUSC, 2004, p. 48.
- 5 José Eisenberg, *As missões jesuíticas e o pensamento político moderno*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2000, p. 29.
- 6 Ibid., p. 30.
- 7 Jesus López-Gay, 'La Primera Biblioteca de los Jesuítas en el Japón'. In *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 15, no. 3/4, p. 362.
- 8 Juan Ruiz-de-Medina, S. J., *Documentos del Japón, 1547-1557*. Rome: Institutum Historicum da la Compañía de Jesús, 1990, p. 329.
- 9 Xavier to Loyola, letter written in 12 January 1549 in Cochín. In *Cartas y escritos de San Francisco Javier*, edited by Felix Zubillaga. Madrid: BAC, 1996, pp. 268-9.
- 10 Charles R. Boxer, 'The Problem of Native Clergy in the Portuguese and Spanish Empires from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries'. In *Studies in Church History*, vol. VI: *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith*, edited by G. J. Cuming. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 89.
- 11 'Confiando eu, Francisco [Xavier], ..., de vós, Gaspar [Barzeo], ..., que sejas reitor deste colégio de Santa Fé, assim dos padres e irmãos portugueses da Companhia do nome de Jesus que estiverem do Cabo da Boa Esperança para cá (Goa), assim dos que estão em Malaca, Molucas, Japão e em todas as outras partes, assim dos que vierem de Portugal como de outra qualquer parte de Europa a estas partes para estar à minha obediência'. Juan Ruiz-de-Medina, *Documentos del Japón*, p. 337.
- 12 'Vindo de Ormuz, chamado pelo padre mestre Francisco para o Japão, achei aqui o padre micer Paulo [de Camerino] substituído por reitor deste colégio de Goa na desistência do padre Antonio Gomes, que antes fora reitor. E isto por voz de todos os irmãos da casa, sem embargo de ser chegado outro de Portugal pelo padre mestre Simão [Rodrigues] ser provincial, que se chama o padre Melchior Nunes [Barreto]. O qual não quiseram obedecer até vir recuado de Japão o padre mestre Francisco, dizendo-me que esta era a intenção dele, não dar a ninguém cargo até ser experimentado na sua suficiência por algum tempo'. Ibid., p. 275.
- 13 'Eu [Xavier] falaria mais que fosse mestre Belchior [Melchior Nunes Barreto], por causa de suas letras, porque lá [Japão] seriam melhor empregadas do que são cá [Goa]'. Ibid., p. 341.
- 14 Xavier] deixou por escrito ao padre mestre Gaspar [Barzeo], que me enviasse ao Japão, dizendo que minhas letras mais poderiam lá [se] aproveitar [do] que cá, por ser gente que em todas as coisas pede razão'. Ibid., p. 446.
- 15 Angel Santos Hernández, S. J., *Las misiones bajo el patronato portugues (I)*. Madrid: Publicaciones de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1977, pp. 105-6.
- 16 'Al fijarnos en los volúmenes de esta sección de "espiritualidad", lo primero que nos sorprende es ver lo auténticamente Jesuíticos que son muchos de ellos. Bastantes libros, estan intimamente relacionados con aquellos hombres que formaron el espíritu de la Compañía'. Jesus López-Gay, 'La Primera Biblioteca de los Jesuítas en el Japón'. In *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 15, no. 3/4, p. 372.