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St. Francis Xavier's Discovery of Japanese Buddhism

A Chapter in the European Discovery of Buddhism
(PART 2: FROM KAGOSHIMA TO YAMAGUCHI, 1549–1551)

URS APP

The Master Plan

WHILE FRANCIS XAVIER was the acting secretary of the still unapproved Society of Jesus in 1540, one of the first two missionaries destined for India fell ill, and Xavier had to leave for India at a moment's notice as his substitute. In the period of barely three years after his arrival in India, the pale secretary had turned into a phenomenally successful mass producer of Christians.¹ He edified his brethren in Europe with descriptions of the art of putting infidels under the "sweet yoke of the Lord"² and informed them of the unspeakable joys of the missionary:

When I have finished baptizing the people, I order them to destroy the huts in which they keep their idols; and I have them break the statues of their idols into tiny pieces, since they are now Christians. I could never come to an end describing to you the great consolation which fills my soul when I see idols being destroyed by the hands of those who had been

¹ Xavier boasted of being able to single-handedly baptize as many as 100,000 Indians per year. See Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/46, letter 48 from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Rome, January 27, 1545. English translation by Joseph Costelloe, *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992, p. 120.

² Francis Xavier was fond of this expression that stems from Matthew 16.26; see for example Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letters no. 63 and 90.

idolaters. [. . .] After I have done this in one village, I go to another; and I thus go from village to village making Christians, and this with great consolations, greater than what I could write to you by letter or describe to you in person.³

However great those joys must have been, after a few years of producing tens or even hundreds of thousands of ready-made Christians in India and Indonesia, doubts were gnawing at the heart of Xavier, and he was longing for a change. But to a man acutely conscious of his own failings, the decision to leave the Indies had not come in a flash. As his advice to another missionary proves, he was conscious that the very desire for a change might be a ruse of the devil:

Think of the number of children whom you, since your arrival in this kingdom, have baptized, who have died and are now in the glory of paradise and would not be enjoying God if you had not been there! [. . .] It is a practice of the devil to suggest greater services of God to those who are serving Jesus Christ, and he does this with the evil intent of disturbing and troubling a soul that is in a place where it is serving God in order to drive it away and expel it from a land in which it is rendering service to God.⁴

Long undecided whether to take the fateful step toward Japan, he finally convinced himself that the Enemy, instead of wanting to drive him out of India, wanted to prevent him from entering Japan according to God's will:

After I had received information on Japan, I was for a long time undecided as to whether I should go there or not; but after God our Lord wished to grant me to feel within my soul that it would be to his service for me to go to Japan to serve him in those regions, it seems to me that I would be worse than the infidels of Japan if I failed to do so. The enemy has worked hard to prevent me from going there. I do not know

³ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 48, from Cochin to the Society of Jesus in Rome, January 27, 1545. Translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 118.

⁴ Letter to Father Francisco Henriques in Travancore. Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 68, from Punicale-Cochin, October 22, 1548; Costelloe 1992, pp. 211-212.

what he fears about our going to Japan.⁵

His meeting with Anjirō and his two companions in Malacca was certainly a major factor in abandoning the dire prospect of saving more primitive, illiterate souls:

After seeing the attitude of the Indians in these regions, who, because of their great sins, are not at all inclined to the things of our holy faith, but rather despise them and are greatly offended by our speaking to them about their becoming Christians, and because of the abundant information which I have received about Japan, which is an island near China, where all are pagans, without Moors or Jews, and are a very curious race, eager to obtain news about God and natural things, I have, with much interior satisfaction, decided to go there.⁶

The first part of this article⁷ showed how Anjirō's explanations had planted the seed of a gigantic plan in Xavier's heart: the conversion of Japan, China, and at last of the fabled land from which their idolatries all originated: *Tenjiku*, the country that Anjirō, baptized as Paul of the Holy Faith, could not find on the Portuguese maps.

Paul says that their law was brought from, and had its origins in, another land by the name of *Tenjiku*, which is, from what Paul says, beyond China and Tartary; and it takes three years to travel from Japan to *Tenjiku* and return. I shall write at length to your Charity about their customs and writings and also about what is taught in the great university of *Tenjiku*, since, according to Paul, in all of China and Tartary no other doctrine is held except that which is taught in *Tenjiku*.⁸

Since Anjirō had admitted his ignorance of the writings of this doc-

⁵ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 85, from Malacca to the Society of Jesus in Europe, June 22, 1549. Translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 279.

⁶ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 71, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 14, 1549. Translation by Costelloe 1992, pp. 225-226.

⁷ *The Eastern Buddhist* vol. xxx No. 1 (1997), pp. 53-78. Since this second part turned out too long for publication in a single issue, a third part will appear in the next number of this journal (vol. xxxi, No. 1, 1998).

⁸ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 71, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 14, 1549. Translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 226.

trine, Xavier promised to conduct his own research into these matters:

This information which I am sending you on the island of Japan and the customs of its people was given to me by Paul, a man of great truth. This Paul does not understand their writings, since these are among them as Latin is among us; but I shall send you a report on what they contain when I get there.⁹

The doctrines outlined by Anjirō¹⁰ sounded less contrary to reason than anything Xavier had encountered in the Indies with their grotesque pantheons; in fact, they sounded so similar to Christian doctrines that Xavier suspected that the true faith had somehow found its way to the end of the world.¹¹ Had not Lancilotto mused in his report on Japanese religion that was based on Anjirō's information: "It seems probable that the Gospel was brought into those regions and that the light of faith was darkened by their sins or through false leaders such as Mohammed"?¹² Was it possible that a false leader such as the "Xaqua" (Shaka, Shakyamuni Buddha) whose life Anjirō had described,¹³ had cast a net of lies over the kernel of truth? At any rate, Xavier was full of hope and hammered concrete plans out of Anjirō's uneducated guesses:

I have great hopes, and all these in God our Lord, that many will be converted to Christianity in Japan. I am determined to go first to the residence of the king, and after this to the

⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁰ See first part of this article, pp. 67-75.

¹¹ Proof of this is found in the following passage contained in a long letter to his companions in Europe after having left Japan: "I made great efforts in Japan to find out if they had ever received tidings about God and about Christ. From their writings and from what was said by the people, I discovered that they had never received tidings about God. In Kagoshima, where we were for a year, we discovered that the duke of the land and his relatives had a white cross as their coat of arms; but this was not because of a knowledge which they had of Christ our Lord." Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Europe, January 29, 1552. Translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 338.

¹² Schurhammer, 1982, vol. 3, p. 573. This report was written in January of 1549, i.e. in the same month as letters no. 70 and 71 which contain Xavier's detailed plans for Japan.

¹³ See part 1 of this article, pp. 72-74.

universities where they pursue their studies, with great hopes in the assistance of Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul tells me that their law was brought from a land called *Tenjiku*, which is, according to him, beyond China and Tartão.¹⁴

The first step in Xavier's master plan for the Christian conquest of East Asia was thus Japan, where conversion was to start with the king and with the universities. This would open the door to China, and finally *Tenjiku* itself would be put under the sweet yoke of the Lord.

In time it will please God that many of the Society should go to China, and from China to those great universities that are beyond China and Tartary in *Tenjiku*, according to the information which I have received from Paul, who says that all of Tartary, China, and Japan keep the law that is taught in *Tenjiku*.¹⁵

This is the last time Xavier mentioned *Tenjiku* in his letters—and for good reason: Once he arrived in Japan, people called him and his companions “*Tenjikujin*,” men from *Tenjiku*,¹⁶ which must have forced the realization upon him that he had somehow mixed up his goal with his point of departure.¹⁷ While this may be “one of the greatest ironies

¹⁴ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 70, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 12, 1549. Translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 219.

¹⁵ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 79, from Cochin to Simão Rodrigues, February 2, 1549. Translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 243.

¹⁶ While Mendez Pinto's overall portrayal of Francis Xavier is a splendid example of historical fiction, many details are more trustworthy than Schurhammer (1926) would have it. One of these details is the use of “*Tenjikujin*” 天竺人 (“men from *Tenjiku*”) for the Portuguese (*Peregrinação* chapters 133–135, 209, 211, 218, 223, and 225) and specifically also for Francis Xavier. Various spellings such as “Chengicogim,” “Chenchicogi,” “Chem ahicogim” are used. The hilarious letter of invitation by the king of Bungo in chapter 209 (Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*, tr. by Rebecca Catz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 472) calls Xavier “Father Bonze of the Chem ahicogim”; in chapter 211, a bonze comes “to see the father of the Chenchico” (Catz tr., p. 480); and in a letter the king of Bungo supposedly sent to the “lord viceroy of the lands of India,” Xavier is called “Father Francis Chenchicogim” (chapter 218, Catz tr., p. 503). The third letter by Torres from Yamaguchi (October 20, 1551 to Francis Xavier in Bungo) shows that for ordinary people, too, the missionaries were Indians: “[. . .] we met heavily armed people ready to use their bows and arrows and lances. They called us Chensicus.” See Schurhammer 1929, p. 63.

¹⁷ Another possibility that might have crossed his mind is that *Tenjiku* could point

in the history of the missions,'¹⁸ it was only the foreplay to a far greater one: Saint Francis Xavier driving out Japan's devils by means of Beelzebub.

A New Buddhist Sect

What had in India been the cause of so much admiration and praise, Anjirō's quick and total immersion in Christian teachings, came back to haunt his teachers in Japan. In his report on Japanese religion, he had portrayed Buddhism in Christian terms; and in Japan he simply did the reverse.¹⁹ The basic assumption of a single puzzle (as with *Tenjiku* and Tartão) led to a process of renaming pieces: now each piece of the puzzle had to get, in addition to its (Christian) Portuguese or Latin labels, a Japanese (Buddhist) one. Thus the Christian soul became the Japanese *tamashii*, the Christian hell Japanese *jigoku*, etc. Most importantly, however, Anjirō named the Christian God "*hotoke*" (Buddha), or more specifically "Dainichi." Dainichi Nyorai is the chief object of reverence of the Japanese Shingon sect that was introduced from China to Japan by the famous founder Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi; 774–835). For Shingon adherents such as Anjirō, Dainichi Nyorai (the Great Sun Buddha, from the Sanskrit Vairocana, "Illuminator") represents the source of the entire universe.²⁰

In 16th century Japan, a number of Buddhist denominations were competing for the support of the populace. Apart from the older "Nara-sects" and the Tendai 天台, Shingon 真言, Pure Land 浄土, and Zen 禅 denominations, there were some rather militant 13th-century additions to the sectarian landscape of Japan: the sect of Nichiren 日蓮

to Europe, in which case it would also be—banned be the thought—the home of these idolatries.

¹⁸ Costelloe 1992, p. 219, note 21.

¹⁹ See part 1 of this article for some of the crucial terms in this effort. Calling it a "translation" effort, as I have done in part 1, may lead to the wrong conclusion that Anjirō was aware of Christianity as a *different religion* rather than as a *different form of buppō*.

²⁰ As the supreme Buddha, Dainichi's characteristic gesture is the mudra of the six elements in which the index finger of the left hand is clasped by the five fingers of the right hand. This symbolizes the union of the five material elements (earth, water, air, fire, ether) with consciousness. One of its most celebrated images of Dainichi in Japan is the 16-meter-high bronze Buddha from the year 752 venerated at Tōdaiji in Nara.

(1222–1282) which called itself Hokke-shū 法華宗, the rapidly growing True Pure Land sect (Jōdo-shinshū 浄土真宗 or Ikkō-shū 一向宗) founded by Shinran (1173–1262), and one more flavor of Pure Land teaching founded by Ippen Shōnin (1239–89), the Ji sect (Jishū 時宗). Intra-Buddhist sectarian conflicts were so common that in 1522 the ruler of Yamaguchi decreed:

Since recent times there are people who in their sermons keep slandering the other sects, startle the populace through their tirades against these sects and incite the sect members and their relatives to rise [against other sects]. We severely prohibit such sectarian strife. Whoever does not comply with this order will, in the case of clergy, be evicted from our territory, and in the case of ordinary citizens, merchants or hooligans, receive severe punishment.²¹

It is therefore hardly surprising that, after the initial shock of the arrival of representatives of one more sect from, of all places, *Tenjiku*—a sect preaching exclusive faith in Dainichi and thus potentially boosting Shingon fortunes—some jealousies and sectarian bickering would follow. During Xavier’s stay in Japan, no conflict is mentioned by the missionaries that could not be explained either by disappointed trade interests, intra-Buddhist sectarian strife, or a combination of both.²² The Japanese sources, unfortunately, are not very prolix; but the information they contain is consistent with the view that, for the Japanese, the teaching of the missionaries during Xavier’s stay was seen as a Buddhist teaching from *Tenjiku*. Just around the time when Xavier left Yamaguchi to return to India, for example, the Zen abbot Gyokudō was summoned to the court of the ruler of Yamaguchi, Ōuchi Yoshita-

²¹ Naganuma Kenkai 長沼賢海, *Nihon no kaizoku* 日本のお海賊, Tokyo: Ibundō, 1966, p. 197.

²² Wherever the missionaries set foot—Kagoshima, Hirado, Yamaguchi, Funai—the local rulers smelled the opportunity of attracting Portuguese ships to their harbors. When no ships arrived, as at Kagoshima in the year after Xavier’s arrival, the *daimyō* concluded that the problems arising from sectarian rivalry were not offset by gains in trade. In Kagoshima, this resulted in the prohibition of new memberships of the *Tenjiku* sect—while members who had already received initiation into the sect (baptism) were not harmed at all. Rather than persecution, this constituted a limitation of membership designed to have the monks move elsewhere while leaving the faithful untouched.

ka, in order to summarize the teachings of the various Buddhist sects of Japan. Speaking about the Shingon sect, Master Gyokudō stated: “In India, only the Shingon sect is prevalent.”²³ The only sensible explanation for this puzzling remark is that Gyokudō regarded Xavier and his companions—who were together with Anjirō the sole source of information about *Tenjiku*—as representatives of Shingon Buddhism. We will see below that the decrees issued by Yoshitaka and his successor Yoshinaga in 1551 and 1552 as well various passages from Jesuit letters confirm the view that during the first years in Japan the Jesuit missionaries were seen as rival Buddhists or Buddhist reformers rather than as representatives of a hitherto unknown religion.

Sources

Before we examine what these “Buddhist missionaries” found out about Buddhism, a word must be said about the available sources. Usually, studies about the first few years of the Jesuit mission in Japan, and about Francis Xavier, make liberal use of the edifying stories of the Jesuit Luis Frois, written decades after the fact, and of many letters that date from after 1552. Particularly with regard to the views that the early Jesuit missionaries held about Japanese religion, such sources are inadmissible since they reflect the advances in knowledge that were made after Xavier had left Japan. Such materials may be enlightening about their authors’ views at the time of writing or about later reactions and reminiscences of the populace; but in order to find out what Xavier and his companions thought and discovered, we must rely on sources from before 1553.

Xavier wrote only five letters from Japan. All were written in Kagoshima on the same day, November 5 of 1549.²⁴ A letter by Anjirō to the Jesuits in Goa carries the same date.²⁵ After these six *Kagoshima letters*, written almost three months after the missionaries’ arrival in

²³ Hanao Hokiichi 塙保己一, ed., “Ōuchi Yoshitaka-ki 大内義隆記” (History of Ōuchi Yoshitaka), in: *Gunsho Ruiju* 群書類従 (vol. 394), Tokyo 1959–60, p. 425.

²⁴ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, vol. 2, letter no. 90 to the Jesuit companions in Goa; letter no. 91 to Fathers Gaspar Barzaeus, Baltazar Gago, and Brother Domingos Carvalha in Goa; letter no. 92 to Father Paulo in Goa, letter no. 93 to Father Antonio Gomes in Goa, and letter no. 94 to Dom Pedro da Silva in Malacca.

²⁵ *Cartas* 1598, 16 recto. English translation in Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, p. 80.

Japan, there is a blank of almost two years in relevant contemporary Jesuit sources until the fall of 1551, after Xavier had left the city of Yamaguchi and was waiting for his departure to India in Bungo on the East coast of the Kyūshū island. Before his departure, he received four letters from Yamaguchi. Three of them were from the hand of Cosme de Torres (two of September 29, 1551, and one of October 20, 1551), and the last one from Juan Fernández (October 20, 1551).²⁶ Xavier learned much from these four *Yamaguchi letters* while taking them to India, and part of their content is woven into a batch of Xavier's letters written in Cochin at the end of January, 1552²⁷ that I will call the *Cochin letters*. The last relevant group, here called *Goa letters*, was written in Goa at the beginning of April of 1552.²⁸ By contrast, the Japanese sources regarding Xavier are scarce and stem for the most part from a much later period. Of the two dozen Japanese sources listed by Ebisawa, only half a dozen date from within one century from Xavier's arrival. The most pertinent are the local histories of the Ōuchi and Ōtomo clans.²⁹

Rather than trying to present a pseudo-historical account in which

²⁶ See Georg Schurhammer, *Die Disputationen des P. Cosme de Torres S.J. mit den Buddhisten in Yamaguchi im Jahre 1551*, Tokyo: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens (Mitteilungen vol. 24a), 1929. An edition of the original text of the first Torres letter is given on pp. 89–98, and of the Fernández letter on pp. 98–111.

²⁷ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, vol. 2: letter no. 95 to Father Francisco Pérez in Malacca, written in the Strait of Singapore around December 24, 1551; letter no. 96 to his Jesuit companions in Europe, written in Cochin on January 29, 1552; letter no. 97 to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, written in Cochin on January 29, 1552; letter no. 98 to Father Simão Rodrigues in Portugal, written in Cochin on January 30, 1552; letter no. 99 to King John III of Portugal, written in Cochin on January 31, 1552.

²⁸ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, vol. 2: letter no. 107 to Father Simão Rodrigues in Portugal, written in Goa on April 7, 1552; letter no. 108 to Father Simão Rodrigues in Portugal, written in Goa on April 8, 1552; letter no. 109 to King John III of Portugal, written in Goa on April 8, 1552; letter no. 110 to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, written in Goa on April 9, 1552. One might add letter no. 128 to the Japanese Joanne in Malacca, written in the Strait of Singapore on July 22, 1552.

²⁹ Arimichi Ebisawa, "Japanese Documents relating to St. Francis Xavier," *Shigaku (Journal of the Mita Historical Society, Tokyo)* 1 (1949): 61–109. The two most important among them are: Hanao Hokiichi 塙保己一, ed., "Ōuchi Yoshitaka-ki 大内義隆記" (History of Ōuchi Yoshitaka) in: *Gunsho Ruiju* 群書類従 vol. 394, Tokyo 1959–60, pp. 407–432, and the same collection's "Ōtomo-ki 大友記" (History of the Ōtomo family), *ibid.*, vol. 397, pp. 554–607.

sources from various dates are woven into a sequential narrative, I believe that Xavier's and his companions' view of Japanese religions must be drawn from these letters, respecting their chronological order.

Kagoshima Letters

When the Jesuits arrived in Kagoshima, the town housed several Buddhist monasteries and temples and thus was a good location to find out more about the heathen creed. There were, for example, a Rinzaï-Zen temple of the Bukkō-line called Kōsaiji, a Shingon monastery called Daijōin, and a Jishū-monastery known as Jōkōmyōji. Most prominent among Kagoshima's religious institutions was a Sōtō-Zen monastery of the Keizan-line called Fukushōji 福昌寺. Founded in 1394 by a relative of the ruling Shimazu family, it was the funerary site of the Shimazu clan and had just three years before Xavier's arrival been elevated by Emperor Go-Nara to the rank of *chokuganji* 勅願寺, or votive temple for the well-being of emperor and state.³⁰ At the time, this monastery was the mother institution of over 1,400 subtemples in Southern Japan³¹ and housed, if we are to believe Frois, more than 100 monks.³²

Some time after their arrival on August 15, 1549, Francis Xavier and his indispensable interpreter Anjirō visited the very aged and respected abbot of the Fukushōji monastery—the abbot who, according to Anjirō's explanations had been sent to Rome in June of 1549, held sermons, gave his monks abstruse problems to solve in meditation, and then judged their answers.³³ In his long letter from Kagoshima dated November 5, 1549, Francis Xavier wrote full of enthusiasm to his fel-

³⁰ Ijichi Moshichi 伊地知茂七, *Shimazu Takahisa kō* 島津貴久公, Kagoshima: Matsubara jinja sanbyaku gojūnen saiten jimusho, 1920, p. 97 ff. See Aoyama 1967, p. 55.

³¹ See *Zengaku daijiten* 禪學大辭典. Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1977, p. 1065, and Aoyama 1967, pp. 51–52 and 75.

³² Luis Frois, *Die Geschichte Japans (1549–1578). Nach der Handschrift der Ajudabibliothek in Lissabon übersetzt und kommentiert von G. Schurhammer und E. A. Voretzsch*, Leipzig 1926, p. 5.

³³ This information is contained in the passage presented at the end of part 1 of this article (*The Eastern Buddhist* 30, no. 1 [1997], p. 76). The original Portuguese letter is dated June 22, 1549 and addressed to the Society of Jesus in Europe (Schurhammer & Wicky 1944/45, vol. 2, pp. 152–153; letter no. 85). The given translation stems from Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, pp. 68–69. The “sermons” are in Zen parlance called *teishō* 提唱, the problems to solve *kōan* 公案, the meditation *zazen* 坐禪, and the interviews with the master about these problems *sanzen* 參禪.

low missionaries in India:

I have frequently spoken with some of the most learned of these bonzes, especially with one who is highly esteemed by all in these regions for his learning, his life, and the office which he holds, and also for his advanced age, since he is some eighty years old. He is called Ninjitsu, which means “heart of truth” in the language of Japan. He is like a bishop among them; and if his person was in keeping with his name, he would be blessed.³⁴ In the many conversations which I have had with him, I have found him hesitant and unable to decide if our soul is immortal, or if it dies together with the body; at times he has told me that it is, and at other times that it is not. I am afraid that it is the same with the other scholars. This Ninjitsu is an amazingly good friend of mine. All, both laymen and bonzes, are delighted with us; and they are greatly astonished to see that we have come from lands so far away as Portugal is from Japan, more than six thousand leagues, for the sole purpose of speaking about the things of God.³⁵

In the account of Xavier’s dealings with abbot Ninshitsu that Luis Frois wrote more than three decades *post facto*, information is added that had at the time totally escaped Xavier. Frois explains, for example, that the monastery of Ninshitsu belonged to the Zen sect “which believes that there is nothing other than birth and death, but neither another life nor punishment for the evil or reward for the good, nor a creator who reigns the universe.”³⁶ Frois’ further explanations about 100-day periods of seated meditation called “Zazen” and some conversations that Xavier supposedly had with Ninshitsu about meditation etc. are often taken as historical facts.³⁷ However, they appear no less

³⁴ In fact, this explanation of the name is wrong and Ninshitsu’s character was indeed in keeping with his name: *nin* 忍 means “patience,” and *shitsu* 室 “room,” and the man did patiently listen to Xavier’s ramblings about Dainichi in his room.

³⁵ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in Goa (India). Costelloe 1992, p. 300.

³⁶ Frois 1926, p. 6.

³⁷ See for example Michael Cooper, “The Early Jesuits and Zen,” *The Month* (May 1962): 261–274; Jeff Shore, “Japanese Zen and the West: Beginnings,” in: *1990 Anthology of Fo Kuang Shan International Buddhist Conference*, Kaohsiung: Fo Kuang Shan, 1990, pp. 438–460; Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History* (Vol. 2:

fictional than the much-maligned account of religious debates by Mendes Pinto in which Xavier put Buddhist priests to terrible shame.³⁸ We will thus ignore such later information, including Frois' report that Ninshitsu "preferred to miserably and unfortunately land in hell,"³⁹ and concentrate on the data furnished by Xavier himself three months after his arrival in Japan.

Instead of relating intricate metaphysical discussions, Xavier repeatedly sighs about the lack of communication:

If we knew their language, we would have already gained much fruit. [. . .] May it please God our Lord to grant us a knowledge of the language so that we can speak to them of the things of God, for we shall then, with his grace, favor, and assistance, produce much fruit. We are now like so many statues among them, since they speak and talk much about us, while we, not understanding their language, are mute. We are now learning the language like little children, and may it please God that we may imitate them in their simplicity and purity of mind.⁴⁰

Having observed that Japan is "filled with idolatries and enemies of Christ," exhibits no trace of "any Christian piety," and teems with "enemies of him who created the heavens and the earth,"⁴¹ Xavier was even expecting persecution:

It seems to me that we shall not be opposed or persecuted by the laity on their own account if they are not greatly importuned to do so by the bonzes.⁴²

Japan), New York: Macmillan, 1990, p. 262 ff.; Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 16 ff., etc.

³⁸ Mendez Pinto (tr. Catz) 1989, p. 471 ff. On the value of the *Peregrinaçam* as a historical source see Georg Schurhammer, "Fernão Mendez Pinto und seine 'Peregrinaçam'," *Asia Major* 3 (1926): 71-103 & 194-267. A critique of Schurhammer's view regarding the Bungo disputations is found in Aoyama 1967, pp. 158-166.

³⁹ Frois 1926, p. 7. For more accurate information on the death of this man see Johannes Laures, "Notes on the Death of Ninshitsu, Xavier's Bonze Friend," *Monumenta Nipponica* 8 (1952): 407-411, and Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, p. 85.

⁴⁰ Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in Goa (India). Costelloe 1992, p. 306.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

The bonzes from whose side Xavier expected such harsh opposition were greatly respected both by the general public and the rulers:

There are many bonzes, and their houses have very poor incomes. I think that the reason for the high regard in which they are held is their continuous abstinence, their refraining from intercourse with women under a penalty of death, especially on the part of those bonzes who are dressed in black like clerics, and their ability to give some accounts—or better, to tell fables—about their beliefs. Since our tenets with respect to the knowledge of God and the salvation of men are so opposed to theirs, it is quite likely that we shall be severely persecuted by them, and not merely in words.⁴³

However, much to Xavier's surprise, the foreign faith that was expected to unleash persecution hardly met any resistance. On the contrary: "They take great delight in hearing about the things of God, especially when they understand them," he wrote—without apparent irony—almost three months after his arrival in Kagoshima,⁴⁴ and they "are not offended by others becoming Christians."⁴⁵ His trusted interpreter Anjirō expressed similar feelings in his letter to the Jesuits in Goa from the same day:

They are happy to hear me when I speak to them about the things of Jesus Christ. Even the priests of Japan are not offended; on the contrary, they are much pleased when I speak to them of the law of the Christians.⁴⁶

Though understanding little of the teachings of Xavier,⁴⁷ Zen master

⁴³ Ibid., p. 308.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 298. Of course, the "things of God" were, for the Japanese hearers, the "things of Dainichi" until, probably some time between spring and autumn of 1551, the word Deus took its place. However, even that foreign word appears to have changed little, as the testimonies of Gyokudō (see above) and Yoshinaga's permission (see below) indicate. In the vast pantheon of Mahāyāna Buddhism, peopled by figures like Dainichi, Amida, and Maitreya, there was plenty of room for more emanations, especially if they hailed from *Tenjiku*.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 306.

⁴⁶ Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, p. 80; letter of Paul of the Holy Faith from Kagoshima, dated November 5, 1549.

⁴⁷ Frois (1926, p. 122)—who mixes the man up with Ninshitsu himself—reports that

Ninshitsu and other bonzes had welcomed him with all the friendship and respect that is due to a fellow representative of Buddhism hailing from *Tenjiku*. Even Anjirō, the murderer who had been obliged to flee, was suddenly bathing in the glory of the new transmission of Buddhism:

In the city of Paul of the Holy Faith [Anjirō], our good and faithful friend, we were received with great kindness and love by the captain of the city and the mayor of the land and also by all the people, who were much amazed at seeing priests from the land of the Portuguese. They were not at all offended by the fact that Paul had become a Christian, but rather had a high regard for him; and all, both his relatives and those who were not, were happy that he had been in India and had seen things which those here had never seen.⁴⁸

Of course, for them, Paul had not become a Christian but rather a follower of the creed of the bonzes from *Tenjiku*. We need to read such accounts “Rashōmon-style.”⁴⁹ Thus, if Xavier repeatedly mentions bonzes “who have studied in the universities of Bandu and Miyako” and wish to go to India together with “many Japanese to learn our law,”⁵⁰ we may regard them as potential pilgrims to the motherland of

Brother d’Almeida encountered in 1562 a disciple of Ninshitsu by the name of Shunka, then the abbot of the Sōtō-Zen monastery called Nanrinji in Kagoshima. This man told d’Almeida that “he would have very much liked to understand what Father Magister Francisco preached but remained due to the lack of an interpreter [por falta de interprete] unable to understand him.”

⁴⁸ Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in Goa; Costelloe 1992, pp. 305–306. Of course, the reason for their pleasure and respect was not related in any way to Portugal, as nobody had ever heard of any such place, but rather to *Tenjiku*.

⁴⁹ In Akira Kurosawa’s film *Rashōmon*, a sequence of events is shown from various perspectives. This “multi-perspective” approach to the story of the introduction of Christianity to Japan and the intertwined discovery of Japanese religions by the missionaries seems to me far more fruitful than the “single-perspective” historical fiction that one finds in most accounts of these events.

⁵⁰ Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in Goa; Costelloe 1992, p. 306, p. 312. In letter 92 (Kagoshima, November 5, 1549, to Father Paulo in Goa; Costelloe tr., p. 315) and in letter 93 (Kagoshima, November 5, 1549, to Father Antonio Gomes in Goa; Costelloe tr., p.

Buddhism.⁵¹ Unaware of such debilitating differences of perspective, Xavier held on to his determination to “free the souls which for more than fifteen hundred years have been enslaved to Lucifer,”⁵² and set out to gather information about Japan’s institutions in order to carry out his sacred plans. Used to no more than a few universities and maybe a few dozen monasteries per country, what he heard was awe-inspiring:

We have been told great things about this city [Miyako, Kyoto], which is said to have more than ninety thousand dwellings, a large university with five main colleges,⁵³ and more than two hundred residences for bonzes and for others, like friars, who are known as Gixu,⁵⁴ and for nuns, who are called Amacatas.⁵⁵ In addition to this university of Miyako, there are five more leading universities, the names of which

319), Xavier again writes of two bonzes sailing to Malacca and Goa. Xavier also announced to the governor of Malacca, Dom Pedro da Silva, that “many Japanese” will go to Malacca “because of the good news which Paul is sowing here about the many virtues of the Portuguese,” Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 94 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to Dom Pedro da Silva in Malacca. Costelloe 1992, p. 322.

⁵¹ Only four such pilgrims arrived in Malacca. See Georg Schurhammer, *Die zeitgenössischen Quellen zur Geschichte Portugiesisch-Asiens und seiner Nachbarländer zur Zeit des hl. Franz Xaver (1538–1552)*, Leipzig 1932, source 4540. In Yamaguchi, Xavier was again hoping that both bonzes and “Christians” would join him on his journey back to India—a hope that was to remain unfulfilled. See Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 108, dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Goa to Simão Rodriguez in Portugal; Costelloe 1992, p. 377.

⁵² Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated April 8, 1552, from Goa to the Jesuits in Goa; Costelloe 1992, p. 310.

⁵³ This may refer to the “Five Mountains” (*gosan* 五山), i.e. five major Rinzai-Zen monasteries of Kyoto: Tenryūji 天竜寺, Shōkokuji 相国寺, Kenninji 建仁寺, Tōfukuji 東福寺, and Manjūji 万寿寺 (plus Nanzenji 南禅寺 in a special category). Though these monasteries housed a number of monks with literary and philosophical interests, they were and are institutions specialized in monastic training rather than “universities.” See Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains. The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 1981.

⁵⁴ These “Gixu” do not refer to “*jisha* (servant), the lowest order of the bonzes,” as Costelloe 1992, p. 310 asserts, but rather to the Ji-sect (*jishū* 時宗), a line of Pure-Land Buddhism founded by Ippen Shōnin 一遍上人 in the year 1276. “Like friars” compares the adherents of this sect to European friars.

⁵⁵ From *ama* 尼 (nun) and *kata* 方 (person).

are as follows: Coya, Negru, Fieson, and Omy.⁵⁶ These four are in the vicinity of Miyako, and we are told that each one of them has more than 3,500 students. There is another university many leagues from Miyako that is called Bandou.⁵⁷ It is the largest and most important in Japan, and it has more students than any other. [. . .] We have been told that in addition to these main universities there are many other small universities throughout the realm.⁵⁸

Xavier did not know that universities were a thoroughly European invention and that therefore these Japanese institutions had very little in common with the 16th-century centers of learning in Europe. When Xavier studied in Paris, universities had come a long way since their origins in monastic centers: several centuries of development, boosted and fertilized by Arab and Greek science, financed by state and church funds, and protected by custom-made laws.⁵⁹ The Japanese “universities,” by contrast, were much more akin to the predecessors of universities, the early medieval European monastic centers where learning took place in a setting resounding with prayer, and where libraries were filled with monks copying and studying sacred scriptures and their commentaries. Even the Ashikaga school concentrated on somehow “sacred” scriptures, namely, the divinatory classic *Yijing* (“Book of

⁵⁶ Xavier refers to monastic headquarters rather than universities. They are: 1) the headquarters of the Shingon sect on Mount Kōya 高野山; 2) the headquarters of the Sōhei negoroshū 僧兵根来宗 first established 1130 in Mount Kōya and moved in 1288 to Negoro 根来; 3) the headquarters of the Tendai sect 天台宗 on Mount Hiei 比叡山 north-east of Kyoto, at the time a very large complex of monastic institutions with many sub-temples and learned monks; and 4) possibly the center of Jōdo-shin Buddhism in Kibe 木戸 called Kinshokuji 錦織寺.

⁵⁷ This refers to the Ashikaga-gakkō 足利学校 in Bandō 坂東 (today's Ashikaga city, Tochigi prefecture). It was established in 1432 as a state institution of higher learning but was at the end of the Muromachi period directed by Zen masters and mainly peopled by Buddhist monks from all over the country. Laymen who studied there also had to take tonsure and wear monk's robes. In Xavier's time, this “university” was mainly devoted to the study of the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and other Chinese classics; its graduates were expected to perform divination for combatants in the civil war.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 310–311.

⁵⁹ See for example Edward Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, and Toby E. Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Changes'') and the texts that the Chinese government required its mandarins to be familiar with.

A few months after his arrival, Xavier still expected an easy victory without much resistance of the Enemy:

The land is very well disposed for producing fruit in souls; and up to the present there have been no objections to the people becoming Christians. They are a race open to reason; and even though they live in many errors because of their ignorance, they have an esteem for reason, which would not be the case if they were ruled by malice.⁶⁰

Since reason was entirely on the side of the Christians whose God had created it, Xavier's scenario was a smooth one:

After we shall have seen the disposition of these regions for producing fruit in souls, it will be easy to write to all the leading universities of Christendom to relieve our consciences and to burden theirs, since with their great virtues and learning they could remedy this great evil by converting so much unbelief into a knowledge of their Creator, Savior, and Redeemer.⁶¹

But what teachings would these European storm troops have to defeat? In the first three months, Xavier had, with Anjirō's help, found out almost nothing about the doctrines current in Japan. The only passage with doctrinal details reads as follows:

They do not adore idols in the shape of animals; most of them believe in men of ancient times who, according to what I have learned, were men who lived like philosophers. Many of these worship the sun, and others the moon.⁶²

Given the language problems and Anjirō's inability to read Buddhist texts, this dearth of information should not surprise us. But since these doctrines were about to be erased by the religion of reason, there was

⁶⁰ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 94, from Kagoshima to Dom Pedro da Silva in Malacca, November 5, 1549. Costelloe 1992, p. 320.

⁶¹ Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in Goa (India). Costelloe 1992, p. 311.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 298.

not much point in learning about them. Instead, Xavier turned his attention to the moral makeup of the idolatrous clergy. As we have seen in part 1 of this article, earlier reports by Alvarez and Anjirō had already introduced the questionable distinction of religious orders by the color or their dresses and raised accusations against members of them because of various sexual transgressions. Between August and November of 1549, Xavier did not substantially add to this, reporting mostly hearsay:

Among these bonzes there are some who dress like friars: they are dressed in a grey habit;⁶³ they are all shaved, and it seems that they shave both their head and beard every three or four days. These live very freely: they have nuns of the same order and live together with them; and the people have a very bad opinion of them, since they think that so much converse with nuns is bad. All the laymen say that when one of these nuns feels that she is pregnant, she takes a drug which immediately expels the fetus. This is something that is very well known; and from what I have seen in this monastery of monks and nuns, it seems to me that the people are quite right in their opinion of them. I asked certain individuals if these friars committed any other sin, and they told me that they did, with the boys whom they teach how to read and write. These bonzes, who are dressed like friars, and the others, who are dressed like clerics, are hostile to each other.⁶⁴

While the laity in Xavier's eyes had "fewer sins" and was "more obedient to reason," the Japanese clergy was "inclined to sins abhorrent to nature" for which it was duly chided by the reformers from *Ten-jiku*:

We frequently tell the bonzes that they should not commit such shameful sins; and they condescend to everything that we tell them, since they laugh at it and are not the least ashamed at being reproached for such a hideous sin. These bonzes have many boys, sons of noblemen, in their monaste-

⁶³ Presumably, this refers to monks and nuns of the Jishū sect.

⁶⁴ Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 90 dated Nov. 5, 1549, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in Goa (India). Costelloe 1992, p. 299.

ries, whom they teach how to read and write, and they commit their abominations with them; and this sin is so common that, even though it is deemed evil by all, they are not surprised by it.⁶⁵

In spite of such sins manifest to all, the very numerous bonzes “are greatly obeyed,” a fact which Xavier attributes to their vegetarian and moderate eating habits and—especially in the case of “black” clerics⁶⁶—their “refraining from intercourse with women.”⁶⁷

The Kagoshima letters thus reflect Xavier’s major preoccupations during the first months: finding some ways to discredit the rival clergy that enjoyed broad support; learning some Japanese in order to convey the Christian teaching and to defeat the bonzes; and getting information about the universities of the land where the real work was to be achieved.⁶⁸

The Yamaguchi Permission

After a full year in Kagoshima with maybe a hundred converts, a brief stop at Hirado, and a trip via Yamaguchi to Kyoto that yielded nothing except for hardship, Francis Xavier returned to the city of Yamaguchi near the southern tip of Japan’s main island, the town called “Little Kyoto.” More than one and a half years had now passed since the missionaries’ arrival, and they had very little to show for all the hardships they had suffered: a few hundred baptized Japanese—peanuts to a man who had boasted a few years before of having baptized more than 10,000 souls in a single month.⁶⁹ Having learned from his brief previ-

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 299.

⁶⁶ At this point, Xavier probably hardly knew about the different sects; after his return to India, he tentatively had “grey” clerics worship Amida and “black” ones Shaka. See part 3 of this article.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 308.

⁶⁸ At this point, Xavier was fully expecting to settle in Kyoto after about five months (Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letters no. 91; November 5, 1545, from Kagoshima to Gaspar Barzaeus, Baltazar Gago, and Brother Domingos Carvalho in Goa; Costelloe 1992, p. 313), and no. 94 to Dom Pedro da Silva in Malacca (Costelloe 1992, p. 320). He thought the Jesuits would be established at the Japanese universities within three years (letter 93; November 5, 1545, from Kagoshima to Father Antonio Gomez in Goa; Costelloe 1992, p. 317).

⁶⁹ Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, letter no. 48 from Cochin, dated January 27,

ous meeting with the local ruler Ōuchi Yoshitaka and his disastrous Kyoto trip that poverty and humility did not impress powerful men, he dressed up and decided to meet the *daimyō* as official envoy of the governor of *Tenjiku* (India),⁷⁰ bringing along the appropriate documents and a number of stunning presents originally destined for the emperor of Japan. After his return to India, Xavier was to reminisce:

The duke was delighted with the present and the letter. He offered us many things, but we refused to accept any of them, even though he tried to give us much gold and silver. We then told him that if he wished to grant us a favor, all that we wanted was that he would give us his permission to preach the law of God in his lands and that those who wished to accept it might do so. He very graciously granted us permission for this and then ordered placards in his name to be set up in the streets of the city stating that he was pleased that the law of God was to be preached in his lands, and that he gave permission to those who wished to accept it to do so. He also gave us a monastery, like a college, so that we might stay there.⁷¹

Some months afterwards, Xavier got news of the arrival of a Portuguese ship in Funai in the Bungo region on the island of Kyūshū that could be reached in about a week's time. He immediately ordered Father Cosme de Torres, who manned the mission in Hirado, to Yamaguchi in order to have him form a team with Brother Juan Fernández, Xavier's young interpreter. Xavier left for Funai around the middle of September of 1551 where he sojourned for two months before leaving for India, his heart already full of plans to put China under the sweet yoke of the Lord—a strategy that he deemed useful also for leading the Japanese masses to the Christian faith because they have enormous respect for the Chinese.

Just when he was about to leave for India, news reached him from Yamaguchi that their patron Yoshitaka had been forced to commit suicide. Torres and Fernández, who along with this terrible news sent

1545, to his Jesuit companions in Rome. Costelloe 1992, p. 117.

⁷⁰ See Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, p. 217.

⁷¹ Schurhammer & Wicky 1944/45, letter no. 96 (January 29, 1552, from Cochin to his Jesuit brethren in Europe). Costelloe 1992, pp. 332–333.

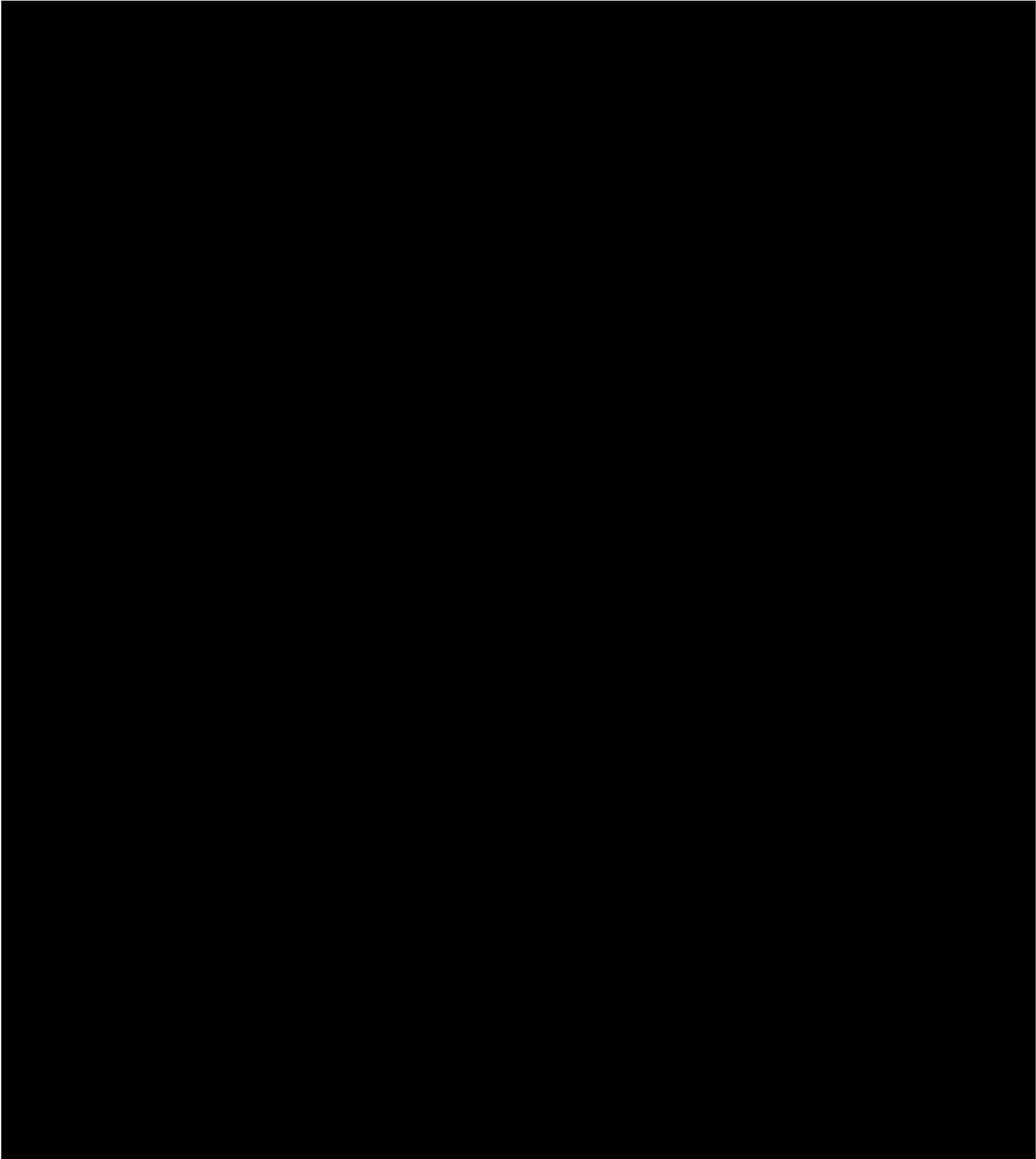


Figure 1: The Daidōji Permit with interlinear Portuguese translation as it appears in the *Cartas de Japão* (Evora, 1598, 61 *recto* & *verso*).

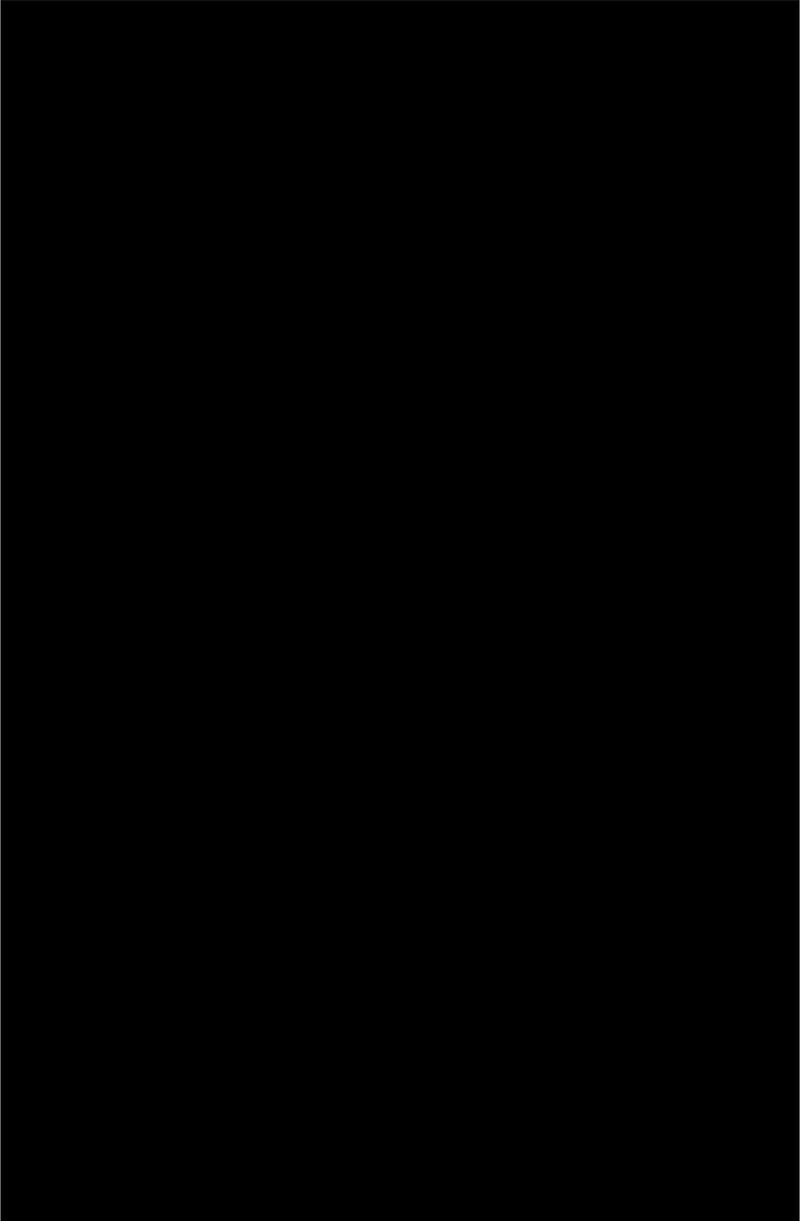


Figure 2: New edition of the Daidōji Permit with interlinear Portuguese text (*Cartas de Japão*, Evora, 1598, 61 *recto* & *verso*), Maffei's Latin translation, and the author's English rendering of the Portuguese interlinear text.

some detailed reports about their latest discoveries regarding the idolatries of Japan, had to fear for their lives. But luckily, the brother of the *daimyō* of Bungo was chosen as new ruler of Yamaguchi, and Xavier could finally leave for India in good conscience:

This duke of Bungo promised me and the Portuguese that he would see to it that his brother, the duke of Yamaguchi, showed great hospitality to Father Cosme de Torres and Juan Fernández, and that he would assist them; and his brother promised us that he would do the same when he reached Yamaguchi.⁷²

After his departure from Japan, Xavier had only one more year to live; he died at the beginning of December of 1552 on Sanquan Island near Canton, failing to realize his plan to missionize China. However, a few months before his death, his intervention in Bungo bore fruit: On September 16 of 1552, Ōuchi Yoshinaga, who ruled over Yamaguchi since April of that year, issued an edict which appears to be “only a renewal of a gift and permission granted by his predecessor Yoshitaka.”⁷³ It survived as a trophy of the success of the Christian mission in Japan. It was first published with a Portuguese interlinear translation in both editions of the *Cartas de Japão* of 1570 (Coimbra); and the Europe-wide dissemination took off soon afterwards with a Latin interlinear version by Maffei (Napoli 1573) that was also published in Cologne (1574, 1583). This document became the object of widespread interest not only because it was read and reread in monastery refectories and schools all over Europe but also because it was the first document in Chinese characters to be printed in Europe.⁷⁴

Since scholars began the study of this document, the discrepancy of the interlinear translation—that is, the text that the Europeans could read—with the original Japanese text has provoked heated partisan-

⁷² Schurhammer & Wicky 1944/45 vol. 2, letter no. 96 (January 29, 1552, from Cochinchina to his Jesuit brethren in Europe). Costelloe 1992, p. 339.

⁷³ Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*, Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1982, vol. 4, p. 271.

⁷⁴ For an overview of the versions of this document see Georg Schurhammer, *Das kirchliche Sprachproblem in der japanischen Jesuitenmission des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Tokyo: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, 1928, pp. 76–77.

ship. Some, such as Hans Haas,⁷⁵ have taken it as a proof of a “pious ruse” by the Jesuits that consisted in passing themselves off as Buddhists in order to infiltrate Japanese society more easily. Others, among them Schurhammer, defended the Jesuits from such slander by pointing out that their letters contain sufficient proof of strong opposition to the heathen creeds, to the point of early expectations of Buddhist persecution.⁷⁶

Since the printed version (see Fig. 1) is rather hard to decipher due to the strange form and arrangement of the Chinese characters, I used the Evora version of 1598⁷⁷ with its interlinear Portuguese translation as a basis for an easily readable edition, adding Maffei's Latin interlinear translation of 1574⁷⁸ and my own literal English translation of the Portuguese text for the convenience of the reader (fig. 2). The rather straightforward message that author “Suō no suke” (Ōuchi Yoshinaga) in my opinion intended is the following:

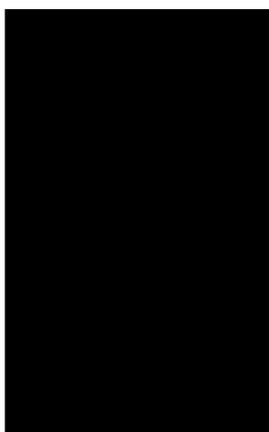


Fig. 3: Daidōji permit
by Ōuchi Yoshinaga

Regarding the Daidō monastery 大道寺, province of Suō 周防國, district Yoshiki 吉敷郡, Yamaguchi prefecture 山口縣:

The bonzes who have come here from the Western regions 從西域來朝之僧 may, for the purpose of promulgating Buddhist teaching 為佛法紹隆, establish 創建 their monastic community 彼寺家 [at the Daidō monastery].

In witness, following their wish and request 任請望之旨所令, this document of permission was issued 裁許之狀如件.

Tenbun era, 21st year, 8th month, 28th day 天文廿一年八月廿八日.

Suō-no-suke 周防介.

Seal 御判.

[To the] occupant of the said temple 當寺住持.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Hans Haas, *Geschichte des Christentums in Japan*, Tokyo: Ostasiatische Gesellschaft, 1904, vol. 2, p. 52 ff., especially pp. 58–60.

⁷⁶ Schurhammer 1928, p. 82.

⁷⁷ *Cartas* 1598, 61 recto and verso.

⁷⁸ The given Latin text follows Schurhammer 1928, p. 79.

⁷⁹ The reproduction of the Daidōji document whose original is now in Lissabon and

Obvious additions in the interlinear translation (such as “the privilege that no one may be killed or seized in it and that it be known to my successors” in Fig. 2) may stem from the original document issued in 1551 of which the present one constitutes a confirmation. Relying on Brother Pedro de Alcáçova’s testimony, we may assume that the content of this document also corresponds to the posters which adorned the roads of Yamaguchi and Bungo:

Regarding the documents which allow us to preach in Bungo: they are like the included ones from Yamaguchi, by which you will see how our Lord in this land deigns to address us.⁸⁰

Aoyama asserted that the interlinear translation “in spite of some discrepancies from the original text, rendered the gist of the document correctly”⁸¹—the gist being, for him, that Yoshinaga gave the missionaries official permission to proclaim their faith. But he made at least one good point: the term *jike* 寺家 indeed does not mean, as Haas and most other translators assumed, “temple and house” but rather is a technical term for Buddhist monastic institutions or communities.⁸² *Sōken* 創建, “to establish,” can therefore be taken in its ordinary sense rather than to be bent into something like “founding and building [a temple and a house].”⁸³ The document written by Yoshinaga thus is no more and no less than an official permit issued to the monks from the West to

a transcription of its text are found in the Japanese translation of Schurhammer 1928 by Kamio Shōji 神尾庄治: *Yamaguchi no tōron* 山口の討論, Tokyo: Shinseisha, 1964, p. 123.

⁸⁰ “Quanto as licenças para prêgar em Búngo, sam come essas que la vão de Yamánguchi, nas quaes vereis come nosso Senhor se quer comunicar nesta terra.” *Cartas que os Padres e Irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreuerão dos Reynos de Iapão e China*, Evora 1598, 27v (letter dated 1554 from Goa; Tokyo: Yūshōdō, 1972 [reprint of the Tenri University Library original]). This letter was taken to India by Br. Pedro de Alcáçova who left Japan on October 19 of 1553. A permit in Bungo would necessarily have had a rather different text since there was no Daidōji in Funai.

⁸¹ Aoyama 1967, p. 162.

⁸² See for example Nakamura Hajime 中村元 et al., *Iwanami Bukkyōjiten* 岩波仏教辞典, Tokyo: Iwanami, 1989, p. 346. Members of such a community were called *jikenin* 寺家人.

⁸³ Léon Bourdon, *La Compagnie de Jésus et le Japon, 1547–1570*, Lisboa / Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian / Centre Culturel Portugais, 1993, p. 213, even speaks of two permits, one conferring the land and the other allowing construction of a residence

establish on the grounds of the Daidō temple their monastic community for the purpose of promulgating the Buddha Dharma.⁸⁴

But what is at stake here is of course the meaning of the word *buppō* which Aoyama renders as “their faith.” Yoshinaga allowed the monks to “promulgate the Buddhist teaching,” while the Jesuits proudly trumpeted to Europe that they were accorded the right “to preach the law that produces Saints”—which, especially in the age of Reformation, was not a bad way to describe Catholicism. But this is a problem that could not simply be solved by a more able translator. Certainly, it appears as though Juan Fernández and Cosme de Torres were unable to read Japanese characters except for some very simple ones, for example some numbers and the characters for year, month, and day at the end of the document. The remainder of the interlinear “translation” seems to follow the explanations of some literate Japanese who explained each character to the missionaries; for example, the explanation that “*dai* 大 means great” appears in the translation as “the Great Dai.” The rest of the characters have, with some exceptions in the last three lines of our edition, nothing to do with the Portuguese words that they are coupled with. The first character of the document, 周, appears twice and is consistently mistranslated as “duke,” but this feeble attempt at consistency breaks down with the genitival particle 之 which appears four times and is supposed to carry three totally different meanings.

The most common mistake in interpreting the Daidōji document is the injection of later knowledge into the minds of the protagonists. In spring of 1551, when they settled in Yamaguchi, Xavier and his companions were still insisting with fervor that they had come to Japan in order to teach its inhabitants the *buppō* of *Dainichi* and urged people to pray to the *hotoke* whose glad tidings they had brought from *Ten-*

⁸⁴ The rules of Chinese grammar which must be applied in this translation indicate that the phrase “for the purpose of promulgating Buddhist teaching” specifies the purpose of the establishment of a monastic community rather than the bonzes’ motive for coming to Japan. Thus the translations by M. A. Steichen (*Mélanges Japonais* 7, 1910, p. 329: “les bonzes venus des pays occidentaux pour développer la loi du Bouddha”) and Schurhammer 1928, p. 80 (“Die Bonzen, die von den westlichen Ländern hierher gekommen sind, um das ermächtigt Heiligen [buppō] zu entfalten”) or Bourdon 1993, p. 213 (“sō vednus de l’Ouest pour développer le *Buppō*”) are wrong. Schurhammer’s rendition of *buppō* as “das ermächtigt Heiligen” (sic) is a contortion on all levels, from meaning to German grammar.

jiku. They were reading from Anjirō's translations—the only instruction material they had—and were blissfully ignorant of what they read with so much energy. They could not possibly know that the Japanese vocabulary was not some neutral medium whose elements could be used to name the pieces of the Christian world view puzzle. This of course gives the lie to Schurhammer's portrayal of the Dainichi mix-up as a problem that Xavier had discerned from the outset, leading him to make a conscious choice between the use of Latin or Japanese words:

In spite of all qualms, Xavier chose the second way [the use of Japanese words], always ready to become everything to everybody and to adapt himself to the capacity and imaginative world of his audience, as much as Christian faith permitted this.⁸⁵

Rev. Haas suggests that the missionaries used the problematic translation of the Daidōji document for the purpose of hiding from the Europeans the “pious ruse” of posing as Buddhists that they had employed in order to gain better access and protection in Yamaguchi.⁸⁶ In contrast to Schurhammer's “informed choice,” Haas' “accommodation and cover-up” scenarios, a catholic writer of fictitious history turns the tables by letting Xavier bow to an accommodation by the *daimyō* of Yamaguchi:

[Francis Xavier:] “It is not money that we want, but your permission to preach and to baptize.” It was granted.

Moreover, the *daimyō* put a large deserted monastery at their disposal, “In order to develop the law of Buddha.”

Francis winced when he heard it, but he understood: it was the *daimyō*'s way of covering himself against the bonzes.⁸⁷

As an alternative to such deeply felt explanations, a considerably more sober view without any ruses and plots is advanced here: At the time of its first issue in spring of 1551, the content of the Daidōji permit was absolutely unambiguous for its author and the populace *as well as* the

⁸⁵ Schurhammer 1928, p. 26.

⁸⁶ Haas 1904, p. 58.

⁸⁷ Louis de Wohl, *Set All Afire. A Novel about Saint Francis Xavier*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1953, p. 260.

Jesuit missionaries. In my view, both a “ruse” and a “cover-up” at this time were impossible on either side simply because there was no awareness of any occasion for misunderstanding. To appreciate a joke, one must be aware of some sort of discrepancy, and the same is necessary for a ruse, a choice, a lie, and of course a cover-up. But in the spring of 1551, such a discrepancy had not yet raised its ugly head on either side: For the Japanese, the foreign creed was part of the same *buppō* that reigned in the whole world known to them, while for the Jesuits “our *buppō*” meant nothing other than “our religion,”⁸⁸ just as *Dainichi* for the Japanese signified the Great Sun Buddha of Shingon Buddhism while for the missionaries it meant nothing other than “God.” Thus we can be quite confident that Xavier did not “wince and understand” but rather smiled in blissful ignorance. Only in the months after the permit could a wince appear on the saintly face when, due to the progress of Juan Fernández’ Japanese ability and the information gained from sympathizers and rivals in Yamaguchi, the realization dawned on the missionaries that *Dainichi* was not exactly the appropriate word for the Christian God. After all, they were not members of the Shingon sect! From then on, they called God *Deus* or *hotoke*, which is a more generic term for Buddha.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Schurhammer 1928, pp. 82–83, was thus right in stating that Yoshinaga regarded the Jesuits “as representatives of some Buddhist sect that was hitherto unknown in Japan.” However, his assertion on p. 83 that—in contrast to Yoshinaga “who might not have heard of Xavier’s actions against the Shingon monks”—“the opposition between Buddhism and Christianity had for a long time been no secret” for the Christians of Yamaguchi contradicts all the evidence that Schurhammer himself furnished, especially the Nunez report cited in the preceding note. Of course, criticisms of other sects—even much harsher ones than those invented by Frois which Schurhammer seems to believe—were very common in Japan and, if anything, may have convinced the Japanese that the Jesuits were indeed a real Buddhist sect.

⁸⁹ It is unclear when exactly the missionaries began to use the word “Deus” instead of “Dainichi.” Schurhammer’s assertion (1928, pp. 35–36) that this change was due to their realization that the Christian God was unknown in Japan is questionable; Frois’ general argument (1926, p. 15) of suspicion because of excessive friendship by Shingon monks makes more sense, even if one does not take his beautiful story of Xavier’s sudden illumination about the difference between *Dainichi* and God seriously. In view of his numerous historical inaccuracies, Rodriguez Tçuzzu’s story, written in 1634, that has the missionaries use “Deus” during their first visit to Yamaguchi (November to December of 1550), is hardly a historical fact, as Schurhammer (1928, p. 37) thinks. It is much more likely that Xavier’s realization was due to the Japanese informers that he

As Cosme de Torres was going to put it delicately, “great labyrinths had revealed themselves”⁹⁰ in Yamaguchi, and only with this revelation could an awareness arise that would make ruses or informed choices possible. After Xavier’s departure from Japan this awareness increased, and the missionaries began to realize how complex these *laberintos* were. As a result, one Buddhist term after the other was expelled from the missionaries’ vocabulary until, fifty years after the Jesuits’ arrival, the Japanese catechism teemed with Portuguese words and was purged of many traces of the idolatrous creed. Thus not even a “cover-up” by the translator(s) in the summer of 1553 appears likely. In fact, only four years later did the word *buppō* first appear in Jesuit sources as a common reference to Buddhist sects.⁹¹ The interlinear translation was thus hardly more misleading than ordinary letters from the missions that were meant to edify as well as inform—not unlike the news programs of the communist era.

The Daidōji document thus presents in a nutshell the fascinating play of illusion that characterizes the beginning of the European discovery of Japanese Buddhism as well as the intertwined Japanese discovery of Christianity: a phantom cabinet in which, unbeknownst to the viewer, the same could appear in the guise of the different, and the different in the guise of the same. Missionaries of Christianity might thus appear as the only true Buddhists, their Christian teaching as the secret heart of Buddhism, or Shingon teaching as the essence of the creed from *Tenjiku*. The “battle of giants” that the “Apostle of

lauds so highly and thus happened between spring and summer of 1551 during his stay in Yamaguchi. At any rate, the first unmistakable sign of the use of “Deus” is found in Xavier’s letter of January 29, 1552, from Cochin to the Jesuits in Europe (Schurhammer & Wicky 1944/45, letter no. 96; Costelloe 1992, pp. 337–338) where he writes that the Japanese told him that “*Deus* and *daiuzu* [*daiuso*, “great lie”] are one and the same thing.” This means that the word *Deus* was used before Xavier’s departure from Yamaguchi, i.e., before September 15, 1551. The fact that Xavier uses not the usual *dios* or *dyos* but the Latin word *Deus* 78 times in this letter while not mentioning the *Dainichi* mix-up at all also indicates a painful awareness of this problem at the time of writing.

⁹⁰ *Cartas* 1598, 16 verso (letter dated September 29, 1551). German translation in Schurhammer 1929, p. 54. More about these *grandes laberintos* in part 3 of this article (*The Eastern Buddhist* xxxi, No. 1, 1998).

⁹¹ This was in Baltazar Gago’s *Sumario dos Erros* of 1557. Schurhammer 1928, p. 87.

Japan'' supposedly unleashed in East Asia thus looks more like a dance of phantoms. Through calling it by both of its names, such a phantom could be forced to reveal its identity and show its Janus face, thereby losing its power and opening the way for damage assessment. The *Dainichi-God* phantom revealed itself to Xavier while he was in Yamaguchi; it had wiped out almost two years of effort. But, luckily, his own Janus-face remained hidden to him.

Concise Chronology of Events

- 1547/12/07 Xavier meets Anjirō in Malacca.
- 1548/05/20 Anjirō is baptized in Goa.
- 1549/06/22 Xavier reports Anjirō's information about monastic communities, meditating monks to Europe, promises detailed reports.
- 1549/08/15 Arrival in Kagoshima; soon afterwards, Anjirō visits the *daimyō* Shimazu Takahisa in Ichiuji castle near Kagoshima.
- 1549/09/29 Visit of *daimyō* Shimazu Takahisa at Ichiuji castle by Xavier and Anjirō.
- 1549/11/05 In a long letter from Kagoshima, Xavier reports his first impressions of Japanese religions, including his meeting with Zen master Ninshitsu and announcement of many Japanese that plan to go to Malacca and Goa. He writes four more letters on this day; these are his only letters from Japan.
- 1549/1550 Anjirō translates the instructions out of which Xavier, Torres & Fernández read to the Japanese public.
- 1550/08 Xavier and companions leave for Hirado, leaving Anjirō behind.
- 1550/10 Xavier, Fernández and Bernardo leave Hirado; Torres, servant Amador and the Japanese Joane and Antonio stay in Hirado.
- 1550/10-11 Xavier and companions visit Shōfukuji Zen temple in Hakata and travel to Yamaguchi.
- 1550/11-12 First stay of Xavier in Yamaguchi; preaching in streets, meeting with *daimyō* Ōuchi Yoshitaka. Little success.
- 1550/12/17 Xavier, Fernández and Bernardo leave for Kyoto.
- 1551/01 Xavier and companions arrive in Kyoto; fail to meet emperor or visit "university" on Mt. Hiei (Tendai sect headquarters).
- 1551/01 After only eleven days in Kyoto, they leave again for Hirado.
- 1551/03 Xavier arrives in Hirado, meets Torres, picks up gifts.
- 1551/04 Xavier and companions arrive in Yamaguchi, audience with the

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- daimyō*, hands over letters and gifts; gets permission to establish a monastic community on the grounds of Daidōji.
- 1551/05-08 The Jesuits receive many visits at Daidōji. Begin to use the word *Deus* for God instead of Dainichi. Educated sympathizers furnish information about Buddhist doctrine, sects.
- 1551/08 Xavier gets news of the arrival of a Portuguese fleet, calls Torres.
- 1551/09/10 Torres and companions arrive in Yamaguchi.
- 1551/09 Xavier instructs Torres for a few days, leaves for Bungo with Joane as interpreter and Matheus & Bernardo.
- 1551/09/15 “Yamaguchi Disputations”: for about one week, visitors dispute with Torres; Fernández interprets and takes notes in Japanese.
- 1551/09 Rinzai Zen abbot Gyokudō explains to Ōuchi Yoshitaka that Shingon is the ruling religion in India.
- 1551/09-11 Xavier meets the *daimyō* of Bungo, Ōtomo Yoshishige.
- 1551/09/29 Torres writes the first two Yamaguchi letters.
- 1551/09/30 Suicide of Ōuchi Yoshitaka.
- 1551/10/06 Torres begins writing his third letter with reports about Yamaguchi disputations; finishes letter on 10/20.
- 1551/10/20 Torres finishes third Yamaguchi letter, Fernández writes fourth.
- 1551/10 The Yamaguchi letters arrive in Bungo (four letters by Torres and one by Fernández).
- 1551/11 Xavier leaves Japan with four companions and an ambassador of the *daimyō* of Bungo.
- 1551/12/24 From the Strait of Singapore, Xavier writes the first letter after more than two years of silence.
- 1552/01/29 Xavier writes a long letter from Cochin with a report on his experiences in Japan, information on the idolatries of Japan. First mention of nine Japanese sects (though without names). Says hell was at the center of the disputes with Buddhist monks.
- 1552/01/29 Xavier writes to Loyola about need to send educated missionaries, dialecticians to Japan.
- 1552/04 In the first ten days of April, Xavier writes a number of letters announcing his plan to go to the Chinese imperial court.
- 1552/04/14 Xavier leaves India for Malacca.
- 1552/07 Xavier leaves Malacca for China.
- 1552/08/14 Baltazar Gago, d’Alcáçova and Antonio arrive in Japan.
- 1552/09/16 The Daidōji permit is renewed by Ōuchi Yoshinaga.
- 1552/12/02 Xavier dies on Sanquan island near Canton.
- 1553/10/19 D’Alcáçova leaves Japan, takes the Daidōji permit to India.