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THE JESUIT MISSIONS IN JAPAN AND IN CHINA: TWO DISTINCT REALITIES

Cultural Adaptation and the Assimilation of Natives

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One of the better known aspects of the evangelization carried out by the Society of Jesus in its missions is that of the model of cultural accommodation. As long as divergent viewpoints continued to prevail within the Society's ranks, this model was developed and widely utilized by an important group of Jesuit missionaries who, in this manner, thwarted the tendencies of the post-Tridentine school of thought, which was dominated by a profoundly eurocentric vision. In this way, this group attempted to oppose the simple imposition of a liturgical model that had been developed in Europe throughout the centuries¹.

This method, which did not conform to predetermined principles, eventually assumed different forms, which varied according to the specific characteristics of the populaces that the missionaries intended to proselytize. Or rather, it duly adapted itself to the missionary territory in which the Society established itself.

The most famous examples of this policy were the cases of China and Madurai, which were the missions in which the fathers formally adapted themselves the most, and these were also the missions which incited the most bitter controversies. However, it was in Japan and in Brazil that, around 1550-1551, due to the initiatives of the founders of these missions, Francisco Xavier and Manuel da Nóbrega respectively, the first experiments with this method took place, although the process was still in an as yet undefined form².

¹ See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão e o Episcopado de D. Luís Cerqueira*, [Christianity in Japan and the Episcopacy of D. Luís Cerqueira] Lisbon 1998. (Doctoral thesis in the History of the Discoveries and Portuguese Overseas Expansion, presented at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, New University of Lisbon) p. 123.

² See *Ibidem*, p. 124.

1. Japan

The Japanese mission was a watershed in the evolution and development of this new method of evangelization. In effect, it was in Japan that Francisco Xavier perceived the lacunae of the traditional model of the *tabua rasa* method, based on a pattern of europeanization, that had until then been utilized by the vast majority of missionaries, namely by Xavier himself.

The particular characteristics of Japanese society obliged the missionary to comprehend the need to change the Jesuit stance, and made him inclined towards a more receptive attitude with regard to the relationships between christians and heathens and also in the context of respect for local customs³.

In effect, when his visit to Miyako - where he went as a humble priest, dressed as befitted the role and neglected to take presents for the dignitaries with whom he intended to meet - proved to be a total failure, he perceived how such a stance discredited the Jesuits. Consequently, during a subsequent visit to the court of Yamaguchi, Xavier would present himself as the Ambassador of the Viceroy of the *Estado da Índia*, richly dressed and bearing rare and sophisticated gifts⁴. In this way, he managed to both impress and please the local *daimyô*, who authorized the missionaries to establish themselves and preach within his territory⁵.

The image of a clergyman in the context of European sensibilities was thus substituted by another image which was adapted to Japanese sensibilities, for the purpose of procuring the interest and respect of the Japanese.

This move by Xavier towards the delineation of the model of adaptation, despite being a hesitant step which was structurally not very revolutionary, represented the first blow to the eurocentric bias.

The direction of activity which was inaugurated by Xavier was continued by other Jesuits in Japan who, with each experiment made slow but steady progress. Nevertheless, there was no clear definition of the method to be followed up until the arrival of the Visitor Alessandro Valignano S.J. to the Archipelago in 1579. Xavier's successors, Cosme de Torres S.J. (1551-1570) and Francisco Cabral S.J. (1570-1581), who later guided the fortunes of the mission, were unable to establish a definite model of action.

Torres supported the pattern of accommodation, being the chief protagonist responsible for its development and initial systematization. However,

³ See *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁴ Namely, a clock, a triple barrel rifle, a pair of spectacles, two telescopes, crystal glass and textiles from India and Portugal.

⁵ See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão*, pp. 124-125.

he strove to ensure that the experiments did not get out of hand and multiply in an uncontrolled manner. Cabral, in his turn, was a diehard opponent of these innovations⁶.

Thus, when Valignano arrived in the Archipelago, in 1579, there coexisted two positions with respect to the methods of evangelization: that propagated by Francisco Cabral, who was an unabashed apologist of the Europeanizing model and belittled local social customs, and another viewpoint which enjoyed support from the vast majority of the missionaries and advocated a greater degree of openness with respect to the mores of the Japanese civilization.

It was the latter viewpoint that would eventually prevail with the arrival of the Visitor. In effect, it was at this juncture that the method of accommodation was officially adopted and was codified by Valignano himself in his famous *Advertimentos*⁷.

Based on the intention that the missionaries should adapt themselves as much as possible to the Japanese way of life, the *Advertimentos* essentially constitute a code of conduct. In his writings one can discern an overriding preoccupation with the outward behavior of the missionaries and with the appearance of their houses and churches.

In their attempts to adapt themselves to local customs, the missionaries sought to conform with the sacerdotal model, imitating their robes and conduct.

This adaptation took place on various levels. The case of the liturgy was one of the areas in which important steps were taken from very early on. From amongst the myriad examples, one can cite the instance of the Eucharistical celebration. In the course of the ceremony, the followers remained seated on their feet, in the traditional Japanese position, and did not rise while listening to the Gospel as this act was not considered respectful⁸.

In some cases, the missionaries studied the style of the sermons of the bonzes, to be able to preach in the same manner. A letter dating from 1565 substantiates this, when it refers to the fact that Father Gaspar Vilela attended a discourse given by a bonze in Kyoto, from which he had learned valuable lessons on how to proceed with the local Christians and sermons, in accordance with their tastes and the nuances of the language⁹.

In the same way, the funerary ceremonies were adapted to the Buddhist model. Although Valignano authorized this in 1582, as early as 1555, the obsequies were used as a means of attracting followers¹⁰.

6 See *Ibidem*, pp. 125, 126, 129.

7 See *Ibidem*, p. 130.

8 See *Ibidem*, pp. 131, 132.

9 See *Ibidem*, p. 132.

10 See *Ibidem*, p. 132.

The translation of the Bible, although very problematic, was another area in which some interesting adaptations took place. The principal theological concepts remained untranslated, and instead, the portuguese or latin words were made more japanese. This was the case with, for example, the word *Deus* (God), which was transformed into *deusu*. Nevertheless, some other curious adaptations also took place like, for example, the centurion became the samurai and the wine of the commemoration of Canaa was substituted with *sake*¹¹.

As for the churches, the first examples were built in conformance with the local architectural style, as opposed to what happened in America and India. In his *Advertimentos*, Valignano cited the Buddhist temples as a model to be followed by the Christians. In this way, in both the external as well as internal aspects, the profiles of the churches were therefore distinctly Japanese. With regard to the characteristics of the interiors, despite the lack of extant examples, it is known that the temples generally had a place to light a fire in the centre of the church where water was heated for tea, which was drunk in the course of the meetings that took place amongst the community after the celebration of mass. It is known that in a church in Funai, local elements intermingled with elements of Western influence: the baptismal font with a turtle, a Japanese symbol of eternal life, and a pine tree, a symbol of happiness coexisted with Western altarpieces¹².

One can further highlight that the internal structure itself of the mission was arranged with a view to respect local etiquette. In this context, the missionaries surrounded themselves with a large number of servants. Thus, this proved to be the mission that proportionately had the largest number of servants per missionary¹³.

In this way, the policy of accommodation that developed in Japan was fundamentally based on social and ritualistic aspects.

2. China

In China too, the process of evangelization likewise adhered to the model of cultural accommodation. The Society of Jesus formally established itself in China in 1583, with the foundation of the first missionary residence in the city of Zhaoqing (Guangdong). However, in contrast to what happened in Japan, this model was imposed as the sole method from the very beginning

11 See *Ibidem*, p. 133.

12 See *Ibidem*, p. 133.

13 See *Ibidem*, p. 131.

of the mission's history. Alessandro Valignano had a fundamental role to play in this process.

The initial strategy adopted in this mission was based on the Japanese experience. But in spite of the initial similarities, the process of adaptation in China rapidly developed its own singular characteristics, so much so, that it would, in fact, prove to be a unique dimension in the context of Jesuit evangelization, both with regard to its extent as well as the profound controversies that it caused.

It is important to note that in the case of China, from very early on, the implementation of a linguistic policy was established, that dates back to a period prior to the foundation of the mission itself.

Mastery of the local languages constituted a fundamental aspect of the strategy of accommodation. Initiated by Xavier, the linguistic policy was especially important in the case of the Chinese empire, where the use of a foreign idiom could be seen to have anti-social connotations and provoke the expulsion of those who spoke these foreign tongues. Thus, the study of both written and spoken Chinese proved to be of vital importance. Aware of the indispensability of this aspect, Valignano, as early as 1579, decided that some fathers in Macau would dedicate themselves to learning and mastering the language, thus initiating in this way the preparations for the establishment of the mission. When he arrived in Macao in the same year, Michele Ruggieri S.J. (1543-1607)¹⁴ immediately dedicated himself to this venture, an undertaking in which he was joined, three years later, by Matteo Ricci S.J. (1552-1610)¹⁵¹⁶.

In a continuation of the Japanese experiment, in China, the missionaries began by adopting the sacerdotal model, using the nomenclature of the Buddhist clergy, *heshang*, and dressing and behaving like them.

In this context, in the first catechism in Chinese characters, *Tianzhu Shilu*, which dates from 1584, and is attributed to Michele Ruggieri, the Christians were bonzes from India, the *seng*. Four years later, in the context of a project of a letter in Chinese, written by Matteo Ricci to the Emperor

14 For Ruggieri's biography see Joseph Dehergne S.J., *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*, Rome-Paris, 1973, p. 235; *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644* (L. Carrington Goodrich & Fang Chaoyong), 2 vols., New York-London, Columbia University Press, 1976, pp. 1148-1149.

15 For Ricci's biography see Joseph Dehergne S.J., *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220; *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 1137; Jonathan Spence, *Le Palais de Mémoire de Matteo Ricci*, Paris, Payot, 1986; Henri Bernard S.J., *Le Père Matthieu Ricci et la Société Chinoise de son temps (1552-1610)*, 2 vols., Tianjin, 1937; Fernando Bortone S.J., *P. Matteo Ricci, S.J.: Il "Saggio d'Occidente"*, Rome, 1965.

16 One notes that throughout the duration of the Jesuit presence in China, the importance of knowledge of the language remained unaltered. The study of the language, begun initially in Macao, was carried out in the residences in which the missionaries were placed, wherever possible with the guidance of a Chinese master. Nevertheless, there were innumerable difficulties and the personal degree of success varied considerably.

Wanli, in the name of Pope Sixtus V, the Pontiff is represented as a great bonze, *daseng*, or the “head of the bonzes”, *duseng*¹⁷.

Carried away by the Japanese experiment, and also due to an as yet imperfect knowledge of the Chinese reality, the missionaries did not immediately comprehend the low social status of the bonzes and, consequently, the inadequacy of their model to attain their desired objectives¹⁸.

The initial years of the mission's existence in the Empire soon resulted in the rapid perception of the error that had been made, as well as the knowledge that the model of the literati was the most appropriate alternative, given that, in the words of Father Fernão Guerreiro S.J., they were the recipients of all “honour and riches”¹⁹. The missionaries realized that it was of vital importance to seduce precisely this elite class, who controlled the administration of the Empire. The approximation to this group of Confucian intellectuals determined the course of the process of adaptation in China.

Transforming their appearance in conformance with the model of the scholars, the missionaries sought to put an end to their association with the bonzes, so as to acquire a greater authority and obtain the facilities of access that were conceded to the upper classes of society.

Informed as to the necessity for this change, Valignano officially authorized it on 15th November, 1594. The missionaries then began to let their hair and beards grow long, to dress in silken robes and to use the title of “enlightened preachers” (*daoren*)²⁰ or even “Western man of letters” (*xishi*)²¹. And in this way, as Father Fernão Guerreiro reported, the missionaries began to “hold their heads high and gain a reputation”²².

This alteration in approach was, undoubtedly, fundamental for the progress of the mission, as was testified by Father Lazzaro Cattaneo S.J. (1560-1640)²³, when he stated that “in this way, the mandarins can associate with us with the very same courtesies that they extend to guests, and in the

17 See Jacques Gernet, *L'Intelligence de la Chine, Le social et le mental*, Bibliothèque des Histoires, Éditions Gallimards, 1994, p. 217.

18 The lowly status of the bonzes was a characteristic peculiar to Chinese society, and is not evident in Japan, Indochina, or even Tibetan and Mongol societies. See Jean-Pierre Duteil, *Le mandat du Ciel, le Rôle des Jésuites en Chine, de la Mort de François-Xavier à la dissolution de la Compagnie de Jésus (1552-1774)*, Paris, Éditions Arguments, 1994, p. 86.

19 *Relação Anual das coisas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas missões...*, new edition edited and prefaced by Artur Viegas, Book II, Coimbra, 1930, p. 124.

20 See Jacques Gernet, *L'Intelligence*, p. 222.

21 See Idem, *China and the Christian Impact*, New York-Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 16.

22 Fernão Guerreiro, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

23 See ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 25, Cat. Tertius Sinensis, 25/1/1604, fl. 79; Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50; *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 32.

other way, as we were of such a lowly stature, it was difficult for us to even find lodgings²⁴.

The alteration of the model followed by the missionaries had profound consequences in Jesuit policies, which were not limited to a mere change of robes or titles, as notes Jacques Gernet. In effect, from then on, Christianity assumed (especially in the eyes of the upper strata of society) a less religious aspect, and instead came to be represented fundamentally as a moral and philosophical doctrine based on reason²⁵.

In this context, Matteo Ricci, the great strategist of the policy of adaptation in China, considered that, in an initial phase, only the fundamental principles of Christianity, which were liable to be rationally understood, should be expounded. These included the existence of a God who was the creator of the Universe, the immortality of the soul, the rewards for the just in Paradise and the punishments for sinners in Hell. All the other theological concepts should wait, the explanation of these concepts being reserved for those who had already been prepared to receive this, i.e. for the Christians and the catechumens²⁶.

It was in conformance with this strategy that Ricci prepared his catechism *The True Meaning of the Master of Heaven, Tianzhu Shiyi*, which was begun in 1593 and published for the first time at the end of 1603 or early 1604. In this work, Ricci limits the general aspects of Christianity in such a manner that they end up having very few similarities with a real catechism. As an example, one can note that there appears only one brief allusion to Jesus²⁷.

Nevertheless, this work, which is essentially a moral treatise, achieved a remarkable degree of success amongst the scholars. It was, in fact, written in very elegant Chinese, made many references to the Classics and attacked Buddhism and Taoism²⁸.

The change in the strategy of conversion was accompanied by a process of approximation to Confucianism and by an avowed hostility with regard to Buddhism and Taoism, that had initially been the object of a certain attachment.

Dedicating himself to the study and interpretation of the Chinese

24 Letter of Lazaro Cattaneo to the General, Macao, 12/10/1599, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 13 II, fl. 319.

25 See Jacques Gernet, *L'Intelligence*, p. 215.

26 See *Ibidem*, p. 226. As John Young highlights, before focusing on doctrinal problems of the Christian Trinity or other sophisticated concepts it was, according to Ricci, imperative to make the Chinese comprehend the existence of one God in the Universe. See John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity, The First Encounter*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1983, p. 28.

27 See Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, pp. 17-34.

28 He accused Buddhism and Taoism of being based on emptiness and refuted the transmigration of souls. Ricci did not understand the complexity of the Buddhist concept of *Samsara* and viewed this only as a mere invocation of Pythagoras' theory. See *Ibidem*, pp. 9, 214, 229.

Classics, particularly of the *Four Books*, Ricci advocated the existence of points of contact between Confucianism and Christianity, refuting any opposition between the two doctrines. In Ricci's opinion, these texts confirmed that the ancient Chinese had had knowledge of a unique divinity who was the creator, and which closely resembled that of Christianity. In the words *Tian*, Heaven, and *Shangdi*, Sovereign on High, which he found in these works, the missionary claimed to recognize allusions to God.

In this way, Ricci paved the way for a series of exaggerations and confusions between the principles of Christianity and the meaning of the Classics. The most ancient Chinese ideas were thus considered by many Jesuits to be similar to those of the Bible, some even going to the extreme of attributing such an occurrence to some descendents of Noah having gone to China in the aftermath of the great Flood²⁹.

However, Ricci alluded to an "original Confucianism". The Neo-Confucianism of the Ming dynasty refuted this and, by disparaging the ancient traditions had resulted in a phenomenon of profound atheism on the part of the scholars - Ricci attributed the introduction of superstition and atheism and the corruption of the true doctrine of the ancients to Buddhism. Apart from this pernicious influence, some missionaries also propounded the belief that the tradition itself had some lacunae, deriving in large measure from the orders of the first Emperor, Qin, in 213 BC, to burn all books. It was precisely in these lost texts that the theories of an all-powerful, creator God, the existence of Heaven and Hell and the immortality of the soul were to be found³⁰.

As for the Christian terms which had, as we have seen, simply been adapted to Japanese based on the Portuguese or Latin word, in the case of China, these were adapted to pre-existing concepts in the Chinese language.

In the initial stages, while still in Zhaoqing, Ruggieri began to utilize the expression *Tianzhu*, Master of Heaven, to designate God. However, with the approximation to Confucianism, the aforementioned terms, *Tian* (Heaven) and *Shangdi* (Sovereign on High), taken from the Classics soon gained currency. Ricci's Chinese literati friends advised him to use these expressions as equivalents for *Tianzhu*. And according to the missionary himself, when one read the ancient texts, it was clear to see that the Sovereign on High and the Master of Heaven (of the Christians) differed only in name³¹.

29 See *Ibidem*, p 29.

30 See *Ibidem*, p 28.

31 See *Ibidem*, p. 26.

The accommodation to the Chinese civilization was also characterized by the acceptance of rituals that were an integral part of Chinese tradition. In fact, Ricci permitted converts to continue to participate in ceremonies honouring their ancestors and Confucius. Ricci and the other missionaries viewed these ceremonies as mere symbols of Filial Piety, denying that they had any religious or superstitious connotations³².

It is also important to note that the change in the direction of the method of accommodation had consequences at the level of the churches themselves. In fact, the similarities with the Buddhist temples induced Ricci to oppose the opening of new public churches, contrary to what had happened initially in Zhaoqing. In his opinion, the best course of action for the objectives of the missionaries was, in an initial phase, the creation of preaching houses or academies, *shuyuan*, following the example of the most famous preachers of the time. There, philosophical debates could take place, which according to him was the best way to communicate with the elite scholars, given that the missionaries achieved better results and evangelized better through conversations than through sermons³³.

One notes that, it was only in 1610, shortly before Ricci died, and almost three decades after the foundation of the first residence, that a small public church was constructed in Peking. As opposed to the Japanese case, this church, as well as the church that was constructed the following year in Nanking, were built in an European style³⁴.

3. The admittance of natives in Japan and China

Parallel to the development of the model of cultural accommodation, and in the same context, during the second half of the sixteenth century the Jesuit missions in Japan and Brazil were the setting for the first experiments in integrating natives in the ranks of the Society. This process which, once again, took place almost simultaneously albeit in a completely unconnected manner, was a success only in the Far East, which proved to be an exception in this regard.

32 See John D. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

33 See Jacques Gernet, *L'Intelligence*, p. 210-211; Idem, *China and the Christian Impact*, p. 17.

34 In April 1610, while Ricci was still alive, construction of a church built in an European style began in Peking. According to Jean-Pierre Duteil, it was not a simple chapel, but a public church, the first in China apart from that of Macao. (See Jean-Pierre Duteil, p. 92). See Letter from Alfonso Vagnone to Manuel Dias Sênior, Nanking 15/8/1611, ARSI, *Jap.Sin* 151, fl.30; Letter from João Rodrigues Tçuzu to the General, Canton, 25/1/1612, ARSI, *Jap.Sin*, 151, fl. 99v.

In Japan, the integration of natives, a policy which was discreetly begun by Cosme de Torres, progressively continued to gain a foothold. In 1577, Alessandro Valignano already noted the uniqueness of the Archipelago, and according to him the Japanese mission was the only one in which natives should be received. By the turn of the century, approximately half of the effective missionaries were Japanese³⁵.

This situation was a sharp contrast to the other missions in Asia, America and Africa, in which there were practically no native clergy. In fact, it is important to note that, in the sixteenth century, the Church's stance was vehemently opposed to the forming of a native clergy in the overseas missions. This was, in part, due to the prevailing spirit of the Counter-Reformation with its eurocentric vision and disparaging attitude with regard to overseas heathen populations as well as the fact that, in the vast majority of the missionary centres, the Europeans were sufficient to cater to the needs of the small Christian communities which had been established there.

However, the rapid propagation of Christianity in Japan combined with the small number of Westerners who were present there, from very early on resulted in the acceptance of collaboration with Japanese, some of whom were admitted in the Society³⁶.

This policy, which was initially limited to Japan, was transposed to China from the very early stages of the mission there. In China, however, it assumed its own unique characteristics and developed in a much more restrained manner, both in numerical terms as well as in terms of the impact achieved and the opposition which this policy provoked

If one can establish a clear parallel between the Chinese and Japanese missions in terms of proportions with regard to their native recruits, in absolute terms the two contexts are completely distinct realities.

In fact, with reference to Japan, in the thirty year period between 1581 and 1611, the number of natives admitted touched 98. In China, in almost fifty years between 1583 and 1630, the number of Chinese who were admitted was limited to a total of 13³⁷.

These differences obviously reflect the dimension of the two Christian communities discussed here. The Japanese community which, with its 300,000 strong followers at the dawn of the seventeenth century, constituted the largest Christendom of the Portuguese *Padroado*³⁸, and the Chinese community that, in the same period, twenty years after its foundation, was limited to a mere 400 converts³⁹.

35 See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão*, p. 141.

36 See *Ibidem*, p.72, 135 - 142.

37 All of whom were from Macao.

38 See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão*, pp. 94-95.

39 See Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-328. It was only after 1630, with the arrival of new orders to the mission, that Christianity gained adherents rapidly. So much so, that in 1637 there were already 40,000 Christians and in 1650, 150,000.

The levels of penetration that the policy of integrating natives achieved in Japan was also a reflection of the vast dimension of Japan's Christian community. The pressing need for priests, who could cater to the requirements of such a large number of followers, undoubtedly played an important part in the process of ordaining natives, which was carried out from 1601 onwards⁴⁰.

This route was not followed in China. Here, the natives were only admitted as lay brothers, and access to priesthood continued to be interdicted to them. Contrary to Japan, the admission of Chinese always took place at a very slow pace throughout the course of the fifty year period referred to above. It was only in 1591, eight years after the foundation of the residence at Zhaoqing, that the first two Chinese were accepted⁴¹. And one reminds the reader once again that, till the 1630's, only 13 natives were admitted.

In this manner, the contingent of brothers in China, during this half century, always continued to be fairly small and inferior to the fathers. Never was one to find more than eight brothers at the mission at the same time, and this figure itself was achieved in the period between 1608 and 1610 - years in which between 13 and 16 European priests, respectively, were to be found at the mission⁴².

In the initial phase, the activity of the Japanese brothers and clergy was essentially considered to be exemplary. However, the rapid growth of this group soon resulted in a phenomenon of profound atrophy and unleashed a series of criticisms in its wake⁴³.

On the contrary, in China, the limited number of brothers continued to be very effective and constituted an essential factor in the dynamics and viability of this mission, which, in large measure depended upon them.

One notes that the areas of activity of these elements extended to the most varied spheres: apart from the apostolic functions, a sector in which they made a remarkable contribution, they also served as interpreters and helped instruct the missionaries in the language. In addition, they helped the fathers in their interaction with guests, took care of domestic chores, assisted the fathers and accompanied them in their travels and missions, served as messengers, carrying correspondence from one residence to another, painted, and participated in religious debates with the non Christians, a field in which some were well versed.

40 See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão*, p. 369.

41 These were Zhong Mingren (Sebastião Fernandes) e Huang Mingshao (Francisco Martins).

42 See *Ánua da China de 1608*, Manuel Dias Sênior, Nanchang, 3/11/1608, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 113, fl. 75; *Ánua da China de 1609*, Niccolò Longobardo, Shaozhou, 21/12/1609, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 113, fl. 108; Letter from Niccolò Longobardo to the Padre Geral, Shaozhou, 23/11/1610, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 141I, fl. 353.

43 See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão*, p. 569.

Apart from these activities, the brothers were entrusted with other tasks, some of which were of a particularly sensitive nature like, for example, the garnering of finances for the mission, an aspect in which they proved to be of fundamental importance. They were sent to Macao to procure funds, and later distributed them amongst the residences. They were also the figureheads for the fathers in certain dealings in which the missionaries could not be directly involved like, for example, the purchasing of silk and gold from the interior of China, and the transport and eventual sale of these commodities in Canton (Guangdong)⁴⁴.

Macao was to play a unmistakable role in the policy of admission of Chinese. The entire contingent of natives who were admitted to the Society in the course of the half century being analyzed here were, without exception, of Macanese origin. This aspect, likewise, distinguishes the Chinese case from that of Japan, as the latter never received similar support.

The obvious preference for “Chinese, sons of Macao, born and raised there”, as compared with their counterparts from “China itself, born and raised in the interior of China” resulted in a more profound connection between the former component and the Jesuits⁴⁵.

Second generation Christians, “baptized in the font”, raised in “Christian territory” and educated by the Society from a tender age, “as in any other part of European Christendom”, quite naturally encouraged a greater trust and credibility. These aspects, in combination with their ethnic origins, made the Chinese of Macao the ideal element of cooperation in this phase of the establishment and consolidation of the Society in China. With regards to admittance of the other Chinese, this could be postponed to a distant future, and would have to wait until a “greater awareness of the law of God and the Society itself” would spread throughout the Empire⁴⁶.

44 Although the involvement of the missionaries in commercial dealings was a sensitive issue from the moral point of view, and thus rarely mentioned in Jesuit sources, there are, however, some explicit references to its functioning in which the role of the assistant brothers is clearly evident. Letter from Gabriel de Matos to the General, Macao, 1/11/1622, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 18 I, fls. 14,15; Letter from André Palmeiro to the General, Macao, 14/5/1628, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 161 II, fl. 99v.

45 “Informação dos Irmãos Chineses naturais de Macao”, Niccolò Longobardo to the General, Hangzhou, 4/10/1617, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 17 fl. 91.

46 *Ibidem*, fl. 91.

4. Confrontation

Given the fact that the policy of accommodation, as well as that of the admission of natives, had proceeded along different routes and were the results of singularly different existing realities, there soon developed misunderstandings and sometimes violent confrontations between elements of the two main Jesuit missions in the Far East.

As already mentioned earlier, the largest Christendom of the Portuguese *Padroado* in the Orient flourished in the Japanese Archipelago, a region which the missionaries had managed to penetrate rapidly and resulted in the almost immediate success of Christianity. Here, the accommodation was more superficial, and assumed a fundamentally social and religious aspect. The need for a more profound theological approach, as was to be experimented in China, was not considered necessary. As João Paulo Oliveira e Costa notes, if, in 1614, the Church had not been banned by the governing political authority, there would not have been sufficient cause in the Japanese mission for the outburst of the controversy about rituals with the same proportions of the altercation that rocked the Chinese mission⁴⁷.

In the latter case, the difficulties that the Jesuits encountered were far more evident. The attempts to establish themselves in the Chinese Empire lasted approximately thirty years. They had to cultivate the imperial bureaucracy, eliminate the persistent and pernicious identification of the missionaries with the bonzes, and conversions took place at an exceedingly slow pace. In China, the adaptation followed the route of a form of theological complexity that had no parallel in Japan.

The clash between the Jesuits of China and Japan thus proved to be inevitable. The latter were of the opinion that the Chinese mission had gone too far. This confrontation became particularly evident in the second decade of the seventeenth century, when the missionaries who had been expelled from Japan in 1614 returned to Macao.

João Rodrigues Tçuzu S.J. (1561-1633)⁴⁸, who had been obliged to abandon the Archipelago in 1610, as a result of intrigues which concerned his participation in the silk trade, proved to be one of the principal protagonists in this controversy. Having visited the Chinese mission between 1612 and 1615, he was perplexed by the excessive degree of accommodation that he witnessed there. From then on, he became a diehard opponent of the model advocated by Matteo Ricci.

47 See João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Cristianismo no Japão*, p. 551

48 See Michael Cooper S.J., *Rodrigues, o Intérprete, um Jesuíta no Japão e na China*, Lisbon, Quetzal Editores, 1994; Jacques Bésinau, *Au Japon avec João Rodrigues (1580-1620)*, Paris, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1998.

According to a letter he wrote in November 1626, addressed to the General, the terms chosen by Ricci for Christian concepts were “manifestly wrong”, as was the similarity that Ricci proclaimed existed between Christianity and Confucianism. This, affirmed Rodrigues, had given rise to a series of important errors and misunderstandings. This was substantiated, he continued, by the book of a christian mandarin where more than forty extremely serious errors were to be found along with many grave heresies, “not out of malice, as [he] is very simple and zealous, but for sheer ignorance of the Faith, due to the doctrine he heard from our [fathers] that our holy faith was the same as that which their forefathers professed”⁴⁹.

In João Rodrigues’ perception of the situation, Ricci’s choices could only be understood if one considered them in the context of a lack of experience combined with ignorance of the Chinese reality. Corroborating his own position, Rodrigues noted that “the oldest and most important fathers” of China were to be found here, who, he affirmed “insist that under no circumstances could one use such names, and manners of speech, as these were contrary to the Faith”. With regard to the defenders of Ricci’s model, in the same letter, he only mentions the name of Manuel Dias *Sénior* S.J. (c. 1561-1639)⁵⁰. Rodrigues also hastened to stress the ignorance of this individual, stating that “he has not studied anything at all about these things, and skips over [many things]”. In Rodrigues’ opinion, it was also important to note that Dias could only count on the support of “other modern [fathers] who are still learning the language, and imitate the natives”⁵¹. Rodrigues’ sectarianism is evident by his omission of fathers such as Alfonso Vagnone S.J. (c.1568-1640)⁵² and Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582-1649)⁵³, both of whom supported Ricci and had a remarkable knowledge of Chinese culture and language.

The criticism of the Jesuits who had been expelled from Japan with regard to Ricci’s model appears, in large measure, to have given rise to the division that emerged between the fathers in China during the 1620’s that resulted in the clear delineation of two distinct hostile groups in the very heart of the mission. The aforementioned Dias *Sénior*, Vagnone and Aleni were amongst the defenders of Ricci’s model, and its opponents included fathers such as Niccolò Longobardo S.J. (1565-1655)⁵⁴, Manuel Dias *Júnior* S.J.

49 Letter from João Rodrigues Tçuzu to the General, Macao, 21/11/1626, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 18 I, fls. 72-72v.

50 See Car. Tertius Sinensis, 25/1/1604, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 25, fl. 82 ; Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

51 Letter from João Rodrigues Tçuzu to the General, Macao, 21/11/1626, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 18 I, fls. 72-72v.

52 See Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7; Dictionary of Ming Biography, pp. 2-4.

53 See Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, p. 278; Dictionary of Ming Biography, pp.1132-1133.

54 See Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154; Dictionary of Ming Biography, p. 986.

(1574-1659)⁵⁵ and Gaspar Ferreira S.J. (1571-1649)⁵⁶. The Jesuits from Japan assiduously fomented these internal divisions.

It is important to note, however, that this bitter controversy that instigated so many accusations amongst the Jesuits, till the 1630's, remained limited within the Society. The so called "Controversy of the Rites" would only take place after the entry of the Mendicant Orders in China.

5. Lay brothers

A controversy, albeit of a lesser degree, also arose between the fathers of China and Japan due to the integration of natives in the ranks of the Society.

In contrast to the high level of prestige that the Chinese brothers enjoyed within the mission (where, in the opinion of the Jesuit fathers, not even the European brothers could surpass them in terms of attributes and advantages⁵⁷), in Japan, criticism of the native element progressively intensified and spread.

In compliance with this, in 1614, in the Nagasaki congregation, a document was prepared with regard to the native assistant brothers, where Japanese and Chinese were included on equal terms. Intended to be presented in Rome, by Father Gabriel de Matos S.J. (1572-1634), the *Procurador* of the region at that time, this document sought to limit the admission of natives in the ranks of the Society.

When the Jesuits in China became aware of this stance, they were quick to defend their Chinese brothers. In this context, Niccolò Longobardo, seconded by the other missionaries, prepared a "Informação dos Irmãos Chineses naturaes de Macao" [Report on the Chinese brothers, natives of Macao], which was dated October 1617 and was addressed to the head of the Society⁵⁸.

In this report, the comparison between Chinese and Japanese brothers that had been established in Nagasaki was considered to be unreasonable and without foundation, and this document clearly reflects the consensus of the fathers in China with regard to the native assistants.

Longobardo stressed that the Macanese origins of the brothers ensured that they were completely different from the Japanese, and were far superior to the latter in many respects namely, in the fortitude of their Faith, their

55 See Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, p. 76; Dictionary of Ming Biography, p.414.

56 See Joseph Dehergne, *op. cit.*, p. 91; Dictionary of Ming Biography, p.461.

57 "Informação dos Irmãos Chineses naturaes de Macao", Niccolò Longobardo to the General, Hangzhou, 4/10/1617, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 17, fl. 91.

58 *Ibidem*, fl. 91-92.

“profound hatred” of idolatry, their obedience to and respect for their hierarchical superiors and in their perseverance to the calling, which was clearly evident in the fact that, till date, no Chinese had desisted⁵⁹.

In the same regard, in the following year, Manuel Dias *Júnior* sought to highlight the fact that the Chinese brothers who were natives of Macao could not be compared to the Japanese, and for this reason one should not “reduce everyone to the same level with regard to admittance in the Society”, as they were very different⁶⁰.

Longobardo, in the aforementioned report of 1617, classified the brothers as “very worthy of the Society and very necessary” to the mission, eloquently calling them the “right hand men of all of us, without whom we could not function⁶¹”. Manuel Dias *Júnior* also affirmed that nothing could be done in China without these elements and repeated the words of his superior in calling them “our right arm”. He stressed that “not even the Fathers can do the tasks they do, and nor can these be entrusted to local Chinese, as they are very different from the brothers from Macao”. Dias *Júnior* further reiterated their great loyalty and integrity, and guaranteed that in no way did they bring discredit to the Society⁶².

The obstacles that the Jesuits of Japan, based on their experience, intended to create with reference to the admission of the brothers, came in for harsh criticism from the fathers in China, who feared that “grave difficulties” would result from any such measures. Longobardo hastened to point out precisely this, noting that it was equally difficult for the brothers from Macao to live in the residences of the mission in China, “in terms of their aversion to dealing with the Chinese since their childhood, as well as the effort involved in learning the language, that it is almost as difficult for them as for the Europeans”. He further added that “it is certain that they will not go through this ordeal” if they did not have the possibility of being accepted in the Society⁶³.

In the same way, Manuel Dias *Júnior* warned that these obstacles would ensure that it would be hard to find anyone in Macao who was inclined to assist in the mission, and the fathers would thus be “irretrievably harmed”⁶⁴.

It is important to note that both in the document that criticized the brothers, as well as in the report of 1617, one finds diametrically opposite responses that emerged in periods of crisis in the two missions.

59 *Ibidem*,” fl. 91-92.

60 Letter from Manuel Dias *Júnior* to the Portuguese Assistant, Macao, 12/1/1618, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 17, fl.131.

61 “Informação dos Irmãos Chineses naturaes de Macao”, fl. 91v.

62 Letter from Manuel Dias *Júnior* to the Portuguese Assistant, Macao, 12/1/1618, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 17, fl.131.

63 “Informação dos Irmãos Chineses naturaes de Macao”, fl. 91v.

64 Letter from Manuel Dias *Júnior* to the Portuguese Assistant, Macao, 12/1/1618, ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 17, fl.131.

That is to say, in Japan, as the difficulties intensified, in 1614, it provoked a harsher criticism and a strong aversion with regard to a group that was increasingly discredited and atrophied. In China, the crisis of 1616/1617, which was the first instance in which the central authority was involved directly in the campaign against Christianity⁶⁵, ensured that the activities of the brothers were even more necessary and, thus, resulted in a vigorous defense of their position. The importance of the brothers as well as the missionaries from Macao, which had already been established before the persecution of 1616/1617, became even more obvious in the course of this crisis. The collaboration between the brothers and the missionaries proved to be of critical importance in ensuring the viability of the strong counter offensive that was set in motion at that time by the Society and its supporters.

Given the undeniable effectiveness of the brothers, which was particularly accentuated during periods of crisis, such as in 1616/1617, and their vital role in the functioning and dealings of the mission, it was therefore only natural that the fathers in China would unite to defend their position against the threat posed by Rome to obstruct their admission.

Thus, we find two Jesuit missions whose strategies, although based on common principals, ended up following very different directions due to the conditions and specific characteristics of the Empires in which they established themselves. This situation ensured that a clash between the fathers of the two missions was but inevitable.

⁶⁵ This crisis formally began in the summer of 1616, when the vice-minister (*shilang*) of the Nanking Ministry of Rites presented a memorandum to the Emperor, denouncing the Jesuits. For approximately six months, the court at Peking was the stage for an intense battle between the opponents and supporters of the missionaries, until an imperial edict was promulgated, in 1617, that expelled the Jesuits from China. Subsequently, the five missionary residences were shut down and the four missionaries who were at the residences in Peking and Nanking returned to Macao. Four brothers voluntarily remained at the mission, along with eight priests, who had received explicit orders from the Visitor, Francisco Vieira, not to abandon the mission. However, they had, perforce, to become more prudent and discreet in their activities as they were subject to greater scrutiny. At any rate, from the beginning of the 1620's, between advances and setbacks, there was a gradual change in the direction of events, which progressively became more favourable to the interests of the Society.

Abstract

The missionary strategies employed by the Society of Jesus in their two largest missions in the Far East, namely in Japan and in China, from very early on proved to be two totally different realities.

Despite the common origins of both these missions, once they began to adopt the policy of accommodation and, for the very same purpose, also adopted a policy of admitting natives into the ranks of the Society, the specific characteristics of each of these two empires caused the missionaries to follow divergent strategies. These differed so widely that it resulted in a conflict between these two missions, particularly after 1614, when the Jesuits who had been expelled from Japan established themselves in Macau.

This article deals with the ways in which the process of adaptation to local cultural mores evolved in the two missions and, later, focuses on the policy of the integration of natives into the Society. Finally, it also traces the confrontation that developed between the Jesuits of China and Japan.

Resumo

As estratégias missionárias seguidas pela Companhia de Jesus nas suas duas maiores missões extremo orientais, a do Japão e a da China, cedo se revelaram realidades totalmente distintas.

Apesar do ponto de partida ter sido comum, uma vez que em ambas as missões se adoptou o método de acomodação e, no mesmo âmbito, se procedeu a uma política de admissão de nativos nos quadros da Companhia, a especificidade de cada um daqueles Impérios levou os missionários a enveredar por caminhos de tal modo diferentes que conduziram ao choque de posições entre os de uma e de outra missão, sobretudo a partir de 1614, quando os jesuítas expulsos do Japão se instalaram em Macau.

Aborda-se, no presente artigo, as vias que seguiu a adaptação nas duas missões, foca-se, posteriormente, a política de integração de nativos e, finalmente, observa-se o confronto que grassou entre os jesuítas da China e do Japão.