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This map stems from Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), royal geographer of Philip II of Spain. The collection’s original Latin edition of 1570 was entitled *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. Until 1612, forty-two ever updated and enlarged editions of this work appeared. The one reproduced here is an early hand-colored German edition of 1573, entitled *Theatrum oder Schawplatz des erdbodems, warin die Landtafell der ganzen welt, mit sambt aine der selben kurte erklärung zu sehen ist*.

The map carries the title “Tartariae sive magni chami regni” (Tartary or the empire of the Great Khan). Japan (which is still hardly explored and ends not far north of Osaka) is squeezed between America and the huge yellow landmass of Tartary. The severe underestimation of the distance between Asia and the American West coast is of Ptolemaic origin; among other effects, it led Columbus to think that he had found Japan when he was actually approaching Cuba. The identity of Marco Polo’s “Cathay” (Cataio; on this map near Tibet) and of “China” (on this map South of the Yangtze river) with “Tartary” is not yet realized.

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St. Francis Xavier’s Discovery of Japanese Buddhism

A Chapter in the European Discovery of Buddhism

(PART 1: BEFORE THE ARRIVAL IN JAPAN, 1547–1549)

URS APP

Introduction: Conversions

On a stopover in Malacca on the way to Japan, reports by Portuguese traders greatly encouraged expedition leader Francis Xavier and his fellow Jesuit missionaries. Some Portuguese men, the report said, had been offered to stay at a ghost-infested house in some Japanese town. Having managed to chase away one ghost by means of a cross, servants installed crosses at various places, especially near doors. When the neighbors got wind of this new and powerful exorcist technique, crosses made of paper, wood, and other materials popped up at the doors of almost every house in town. Spurred on by such good tidings, Xavier exclaimed: “Thus I hurry [to Japan] in joyful hope, and my soul jubilates in trusting anticipation of the bountiful harvest that awaits us there.”

Indeed, if the sole sign of the cross could sweep a whole town, the Good News was surely destined to sweep the country!

Not long after their arrival in the Southern Japanese city of Kagoshima on August 15 of 1549, Xavier’s interpreter and assistant Anjirō


2 Since “Anjirō” sounds a little strange as a Japanese name, this man has been renamed in various ways (Yajirō, Kanjirō, Hanshirō, etc.). In the Western sources he appears as “Angero” (Xavier and Lancilotto), “Angiroo” (Mendez Pinto) and “Anjirō” (Frois). See Paul Gen Aoyama, Die Missionstätigkeit des hl. Franz Xaver in
visited the nearby castle of the ruler of Satsuma, Shimazu Takahisa. The daimyo was delighted to meet Anjirō, a unique source of information on the customs, firearms, and trading potential of the Portuguese. The researcher of Xavier’s life, Georg Schurhammer, describes this meeting as follows:

When Anjirō showed him a very touching altarpiece of Mary with the Christ Child [...] Takahisa was greatly taken with it. He knelt down and reverenced it with much respect and ordered all those present to do the same.3

The daimyo’s mother was so struck by the image that she requested a copy of it and a written account of the teachings of Christianity. After several days’ work, Anjirō sent her an abstract of Christian doctrine. After September 29, Xavier went with Anjirō to pay a visit to the castle. This happened to be the day of Michael, the archangel, under whose wing Xavier put the whole missionary venture in Japan. Xavier’s keen eye quickly discovered the coat of arms on the daimyo’s belongings; as he had earlier heard from his interpreter Anjirō, it clearly showed a white cross in a circle. Was this a sign of the Lord, a proof that at some point in the past, Christianity had been brought to Japan?6 Interested in the treasures of the foreigner, the daimyo did not fail to impress the daimyo, as Xavier reported to Europe:

On the day of St. Michael we spoke with the duché of this land, and he honored us greatly by saying that we should very well guard the books of the Christian law and that the devil would have to suffer much through this law, if it were true

7 Xavier furnishes “this very joyful news” at the end of his letter “for your consolation and that you may thank God our Lord.” Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/48, vol. 2, pp. 210-211.
10 The Portuguese word “bonzo” stems from the Japanese bōzu (坊主 or 僧主). This term was originally employed for the monks’ dwelling (Jap. sōbo 僧房, Skt. vihāra), but gradually the meaning that is current to this day, i.e., that of “Buddhist monk” or “Buddhist priest,” became prevalent. Since European monks had similar robes and tonsure, the term bōzu was, after their arrival in Japan, also used for European missionaries.
11 The Chinese from early times called India Tianzhu 天竺, which is a translation of Sindhu, Hindhu or similar words that all have their origin in the name of the river Indus. See Akira Sadakata, Buddhist Cosmology. Philosophy and Origins, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1997, p. 193. See also my remarks below.
13 On the use of the word buppo 佛教 by Christians see Georg Schurhammer, Das kirchliche Sprachproblem in der japanischen Jesuitenmission des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, Tokyo 1928, p. 81. In the early years of their Japan mission, the Jesuits often used this word as an equivalent of the word “religion.” See my remarks in the second part of this article on the important Daidōji 大道寺 document of 1551 where the word is used in just this way.
14 The Teppoki, a Japanese history of the introduction of firearms into Japan, places the first arrival of a Portuguese ship on the island of Tanegashima on September
Japanese Anjirō, who had returned home on the same boat, had become the talk of the town in nearby Kagoshima. He was reported to not only speak the language of the monks from Tenjiku but also to be able to read their o-kyō 談經 and to translate their buppo. So the ruler invited Anjirō to his castle to learn what all the fuss was about. He questioned him about his travels and wanted to see some of those fascinating objects everybody raved about. Having foreseen this, Anjirō obliged by showing him an image of the Virgin with child that had so struck him when he first saw it. Sitting on his knees in the formal posture and leaning forward to see the object up close, as one does for example when admiring a precious tea bowl, the ruler was stunned: though this was a picture painted on wood, it looked so very real! The daimyō’s mother immediately wanted to own this image of Kanon, the bodhisattva of mercy, and she was determined to find out more about this new transmission (shū 宗) of the buppo from Tenjiku. The abstract of this teaching, written by Anjirō, explained that the monks were bringing the new buppo of Dainichi 大日, the maker of all things who is also called butsu or hotoke 佛, and that they were transmitting the law of the eternal tamashii 魂 which will either go to jōdo 純土, the Pure Land, or to jigoku 地獄 where it is going to be tortured most horribly by the tengu 天狗.


15 Sūtras, holy scriptures.

16 See Aoyama 1967, p. 67.

17 Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, p. 62, suggests that “Takahisa probably took the painting for a representation of Kanon.”

18 Until the summer of 1551, the word “God” was translated as Dainichi (see Schurhammer 1928, pp. 24–33); from then on, the Latin term Deus or its Portuguese equivalent was preferred. However, even after 1551, the word hotoke (which is written with the same character as butsu) was employed in the meaning of “God” (see Schurhammer 1928, p. 86).

19 On the use of the word hotoke for “God” until Baltazar Gago’s language reform of 1557 see Schurhammer 1928, pp. 69–73.

20 On the use of this word for the anima or eternal soul of the Christians see Schurhammer 1928, pp. 69–73.

21 On the use of the missionaries of the terms jōdo and jigoku see Schurhammer 1928, pp. 73–75.

22 Until Gago’s language reform and beyond, the Japanese word tengu 天狗 was used for the Satan of the Christians. See the example from Diego Collado, Ars Gram-
wishes, protection by invisible tennin 天人， healing of illnesses, and especially eternal pleasures with the tennin and hotoke in the jodo after death!

This might seem to be a pretty farfetched interpretation of a minor event in the Japanese discovery of Christianity. However, before we discard it, we might consider the report of Luis d’Almeida who next visited this lonely flock of baptized Christians thirteen years later. While preaching, he was suddenly interrupted: “Is the Dios of which you speak the same as Dainichi about whom Father Magister Francisco [Xavier] taught us and whom he told us to worship?”

Now the worried reader might ask: what on earth has this to do with Francis Xavier’s discovery of Japanese Buddhism? Well, it so happens that the Japanese discovery of Christianity and the European discovery of Japanese Buddhism have an identical set of protagonists. Furthermore, they constitute discoveries of a very similar kind. So their stories might actually have quite a few things in common. Let us look at another story:

Xavier had mixed feelings for Zen. His first reaction was negative: ‘Among the nine sects, there is one which maintains that the souls of men are mortal like that of beasts [...] The followers of this sect are evil. They were impatient when they heard us say that there is a hell.’ However, Xavier’s respect for Zen increased after his encounter with the abbot of the Fukushōji, ‘Ninjirō’.

This account contains fragments of the biography of St. Francis Xavier by Schurhammer—probably the greatest scientific hagiography ever—and lines them up in the wrong order. Xavier met Ninjirō in 1549, shortly after his arrival in Japan. The “first reaction,” however, represents his feelings about Japanese religion in 1552, i.e., after having left Japan. This simple fact suggests that we are here in the fascinating realm of fiction. To allow more conscious juggling of fact and fiction, I will in this two-part article present some of the available evidence pasted on a bit of background information and supplemented by a concise chronology.

_The Report by Jorge Alvares_ (1547)

Stories of the Jesuits’ encounter with Buddhism usually start with the meeting between Xavier and the Japanese refugee Anjiro in Malacca around December 7 of 1547. However, at that time Anjiro spoke little Portuguese and could hardly furnish much information. Moreover, Xavier had already around April of 1547 met the Portuguese captain Jorge Alvares who had informed him that Japan would be a much more fruitful soil for the Christian faith than India “because its people is superior to others on account of its willingness to learn.” Although Xavier had gained some earlier information on Japan from the Spanish captain Pero Diez, who had visited Japan in 1544, the missionary’s first detailed impressions of the country’s religions are likely to stem from a report that Alvares wrote on Xavier’s request in the first half of December of 1547 and sent to Rome on January 21, 1548, a week after his return to India. Alvares was the captain of the ship that had saved

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26 Until replaced in Gago’s language reform by the Portuguese anjo, the word tennin was the term for “angel,” Schurhammer 1928, p. 106 lists anjo among the words from the confessionary Salvator Mundi of 1598.

27 Schurhammer 1928, p. 27.


30 For information on the namesakes of this man and on available sources see Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 260.

31 This date is established by Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 269, note 2.

32 Aoyama 1967, p. 38 quotes his statement from *Documenta Indica* 339: “Ya antan entendía alguna cosa de portoges y hablava alguna palabra” [I already understood some Portuguese and spoke some words]. Anjiro was probably more aware of his knowledge than Xavier who in his letters to Europe often exaggerates others’ linguistic knowledge. He wrote about Anjiro: “He can speak Portuguese rather well, so that he understood everything what I said to him and I what he said” (Schurhammer 1928, p. 14). Schurhammer’s study contains many examples of Xavier’s exaggerated portrayals.

33 See Haas 1902, pp. 59–60 for discussions about the date and place of this meeting.

34 Ibid., p. 59. Xavier wrote this in a letter to Rome dated Cochin, 21 January, 1548.

35 Kapitza, Peter (ed.) *Japan in Europa. Texte und Bilddokumente zur europäischen Japankenntnis von Marco Polo bis Wilhelm von Humboldt (Band 1)*. München: Iudicium, 1990, p. 61. See also Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 265. Diez, who had also been in China (ibid., p. 264), noted that the Japanese “were pagans like the Chinese and employed the latter’s script” (ibid., p. 265).

36 Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 273, note 1 furnishes detailed information on the ex-
Anjiro37 from his pursuers in Japan and had initially brought him to Malacca; he was thus crucial in spurring Anjiro’s interest in the Christian faith.38 However, during that first trip, Anjiro’s insufficient knowledge of Portuguese makes it unlikely that he passed much information to Alvares about Japanese religion.

Alvares reports39 that the Japanese are very devoted to their idols; they even have some in their house40 and pray to them every day for worldly benefit and protection. They use rosaries both at home and at pious houses, of which there are two kinds.41 Each padre (called bonzo) has his own cell and his books.42 In addition to rosaries, the padres use many Chinese books. During their daily prayers (midnight, Matins, Vespers, and Compline) and rituals they strike drums that Alvares had already observed in China, leading him to the conclusion that this religious order must have its origin in China. These padres are by threat of execution required to be celibate but engage in sodomy with boys. They do not eat meat or fish and are mendicants; however, they also are the people’s doctors and command such high respect that even kings obey them. They can offer asylum for a limited time to criminals with the exception of robbers.43

The pious houses have great and well-kept gardens. Their prayer hall is empty in the middle, with cushions arranged on the sides where priests line up for prayer. Lay people come too, particularly on Tuesdays. The idols are covered in gold, and “the head of their god is like that of a Kaffir,”44 ears pierced like those of the idols of Malabar,45 and diadems. Other idols resemble Catholic confessors and martyrs such as St. Lawrence or St. Stephen.

Several kinds of padres are distinguishable by their dress,46 but all go shaved with a razor. They wear a stole (kesa) held by a wooden ring over their breast. All have the same beliefs and read and write Chinese but do not speak it. The padres perform marriage ceremonies47 and elaborate funeral rites.48 Women have their own nunneries and have no intercourse with men; they often come from good families, dress like their male counterparts, and also shave their hair.

There is also another kind of padres with other idols; this appears to be the indigenous order.49 These padres are called Sho. They store their personal cells with books, etc., as Alvares writes. His description of four prayer times is also inspired by European monasticism.

37 See the dramatic account of this by Mendez Pinto in Haas 1902, vol. 1, pp. 51–52.
38 During this first visit to Malacca, Anjiro wanted to be baptized, but the bishop’s vicar Martinez made the salvation of his soul dependent upon his renunciation of further intercourse with his heathen wife—a condition Anjiro would not accept. He decided to return to Japan unbaptized, but a storm near the Chinese coast and his meeting with Alvaro Vaz led to his return to Malacca where he met Xavier in December of 1547. See Haas 1902, pp. 58–59.
40 Presumably, Alvares refers to the butsdan 神殿 or kamidana 神棚 that he observed in Japanese homes.
41 Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 278, equates these two kinds of pious houses with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. However, the report is somewhat confusing in this respect; while it mentions this distinction, it is not entirely clear which items of the description belong to each kind. Alvares may have wanted to distinguish between monasteries (with cells occupied by monks) and community temples that were often occupied by a single priest.
42 In contrast to their Chinese counterparts, Japanese monasteries usually have no individual cells with books, etc., as Alvares writes. His description of four prayer times is also inspired by European monasticism.

small idols in tabernacles in groves outside of town and take them out only on festive occasions. Alvares describes the attire of these priests and their ritual implements in detail; his description of these "great magicians" fits what we call Yamabushi rather than Shinto priests. However, the rituals for the sick and dead that Alvares also describes feature dances by women priestesses (miko) that hold spindles with bells.

In sum, Alvares thus informed the Jesuits of two reigning heathen cults in Japan, one probably imported from China with numerous and large idols and various pious houses, and the other an indigenous cult focused on magic with small idols in tabernacles in the countryside. In both cults, funerals are said to be important. In the course of the year 1548, while this report was on its way to Rome, Xavier reached the decision to travel to Japan in order to propagate his faith. While the report by Alvares might have played some role in this decision, the observation of Anjiro and the knowledge gained from this first native informant about Japanese religions appear to have been a major inspiration.

Anjiro's Bearings

For Europeans, the second earliest source of information about Japanese religion was the Japanese refugee Anjiro whom Xavier met in December 1547 in Malacca and then sent on to India. He received intensive instruction from the Jesuits both before and after his baptism on the name of Paulo de Santa Fé (May 20, 1548). He reportedly had quickly gained considerable knowledge both of the Portuguese language and the Christian faith. In an introduction to his report on the information gained from Anjiro, the Jesuit missionary Lancilotto explains:

Even though he [Anjiro] did not receive higher education in the religion of his country and it appears that he relates things which stem from the views of the common man rather than their texts, I send this report because it contains many things worth knowing.

Xavier blamed Anjiro's ignorance not just on his lack of higher religious education but on his inability to read religious scriptures when he wrote on February 2 of the same year:

The religions of the Japanese are handed down in certain recondite letters unknown to the vulgar, such as among us are the Latin. On which account Paul, a homo idiota [uneducated man] and quite plainly unschooled in such manner of books, states that he is not equipped to give evidence on the religions of his native land.

The Jesuits should have believed Anjiro's confession of ignorance. But instead they pressed on, and Anjiro informed Xavier that the law...
The word Tartão ("Tartary") is a symptom for a problem whose dimensions will soon become clearer. Of course, Japanese geography does not know any such region; and even for the Europeans it was still a hardly explored wonderland. The famous Typus cosmographicus universalis world map of 1532—which features Zipangri (Japan) as an island just to the West and about one-third the size of the Terra de Cuba (North America)—situates Tartaria Magna in the vast expanse Northwest of the Regnum Cathay (China). Its frontiers are unclear, but it roughly corresponds to today’s East Siberia, Mongolia, and Northwestern China, while it possibly may reach as far south as what we now call the Taklamakan desert or even Tibet. On this map of 1532, "behind Tartão" would mean some region in central Siberia where, at the time, the huge expanse of Scythia was located.

For the Europeans of the Middle Ages, Tartary had been the fabled land of Prester John, the king of enormous masses of Christians that, it was hoped, would help defeat the Saracens (Muslims). For the Japanese, on the other hand, Tenjiku was the land of origin of the buppo (仏教, the Law or Teaching of the Buddha). Corresponding roughly to what we call the Indian subcontinent, Tenjiku had been described in detail by Chinese pilgrims such as Xuanzang. But such descriptions tugged: ley) of the Japanese was imported from a land called Chengico (Tenjiku 甜甜) which is "situated beyond China and behind Tartão."57

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APP: FRANCIS XAVIER’S DISCOVERY

were out of Anjiro’s reach since they formed part of the Chinese Buddhist Canon and thus of the ley62 that he felt unable to explain in detail. So, while standing right in Tenjiku,63 poor Anjirō had to somehow locate this important land on the maps of the Portuguese. Since everybody was telling him that they were now in India oriental and the maps showed not the slightest trace of Tenjiku, he simply put it in some place that his mentors were also unacquainted with, somewhere "beyond Tartão." Unaware of such problems, Xavier reported back to his superiors in Rome:

According to the report of Paul [Anjiro], the ley that is taught in Tenjiku is also prevalent in the whole of Tartao, China, and Japan. But since he does not understand the language in which the ley is written, which his countrymen possess written in books, and which corresponds to our Latin, he is also unable to give us complete information about that ley as it appears en sus libros de impresion [in their printed books].64

Anjirō was probably less concerned about the exact location of Tenjiku than his Jesuit teachers. But, while he learnt soon after his return to Japan that he had actually been in Tenjiku, it would take the know-it-all Europeans another 300 years until they finally realized that the Buddhist religion had originated in India.65 Meanwhile, Xavier and An-

58 Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 474 correctly notes that Tenjiku refers to "India, the land of the Buddha"; but the following assertion that "Tartar is the Japanese form of Tartary" is of course only true on the level of pronunciation and thus does not signify more than the statement that Tartar is the Spanish form of Tartary.
59 Johann Huttich & Simon Grynaeus, Novus orbis regionum, Basel 1532.
60 The fact that even many decades later, in 1626, the Jesuits could still stage a publicity coup by portraying Andrade’s discovery of Tibet as that of “Grand Cathay” shows how hazy Central Asian and Far Eastern geography still was for the Europeans. See Hugues Didier, Les portugais au Tibet. Les premieres relations jesuites (1624-1635). Paris: Chandeigne, 1996, p. 13. In this respect, the Typus cosmographicus universalis was far ahead of its time, as it clearly identifies Marco Polo’s ‘Cathay’ as China with the city of ‘Cambala’ (Cambaluc; today’s Beijing) as its capital.
61 Indeed, this is the conclusion that Lancilotto came to in his third report. Schurhammer (1982, vol. 3, p. 574) summarizes: “Cencico, the homeland of Shaka, Lancilotto suspected was in the neighborhood of Scythia.”

62 Portuguese for “law” (Jap. ほ てみ, Skt. dharma). Since this paper is, on one level at least, about words and their meanings, the reader will excuse the occasional strange word from a strange world.
63 It is likely that Anjirō only realized that he had been in the fabled Tenjiku when educated inhabitants of Kagoshima figured this out after the arrival of Anjiro and the Jesuits on August 15, 1549. This discovery must have greatly enhanced his status; being the first Japanese to visit India oriental was of course incomparably inferior to being the first to have been in Tenjiku, the homeland of Buddhism.
64 Schurhammer & Wicki 1944/45, vol. 2, p. 39. Book printing in Asia is far older than in Europe, where, at the time of this letter, printed books were still quite costly and comparatively rare. In the Far East, the earliest woodblock prints of Buddhist prayers date from the mid-8th century, and from the 9th and 10th centuries more and more Buddhist texts were distributed in printed form. In the 12th and 13th centuries, various large-scale publication projects of Buddhist texts were carried out. Over 80,000 double-sided printing plates of one of these projects, the mid-13th century printing of the Chinese Buddhist Canon in Korea, are still stored at the Haeinsa monastery in Korea.
65 While there were earlier indications and guesses, this fact was for the first time co-
Jiro assumed that Tartio and Tenjiku were two large pieces of a single puzzle that we call “the world.” Little did they know that they were not dealing with one but rather with two puzzles: two world views so fundamentally different that conflicting codes such as Tartio and Tenjiku were just the tip of the iceberg: at stake were not just some countries on a rapidly expanding globe, but rather the whole universe with sun and moon, paradise and hell.

Anjiro had lost his bearings in more than just the geographical sense. Having murdered a man prior to his escape from Japan, he was extremely interested in redemption. Xavier reported the following observations about Anjiro and his servant to the founder of the Jesuit order on June 22, 1549:

I often asked them what they found best in our ley. They always replied that it was confession and communion, and it seemed to them that nobody in his right mind could refuse to become Christian. And after our Holy Faith was explained to them, I heard Paul of the Holy Faith [Anjiro] say with many sighs: “O ye people of Japan! You unfortunate ones, worshiping creatures as Gods that were created by God to serve man!” I asked him why he said that, and he told me that he said it because his countrymen prayed to the sun and the moon, ignorant of the fact that the sun and the moon are, as it were, just servants of those who know Jesus Christ, since their only function consists in lighting up days and nights so that men can, bathed in their light, serve God by praising his son Jesus Christ on earth.

Xavier related such events with pride to Rome, explaining that these Japanese were not only very devout but also unbelievably rational. Indeed, they did not simply learn the ten commandments by heart in order to recite them like some stupid Indian mantra: rather, they kept asking questions and did not accept anything unless it satisfied their sharp intellect.

For Anjiro and his teachers, language instruction was the vehicle for the most important things man ought to know: the creation of the world in six days by an almighty God, man’s fall from paradise, the great deluge, the Tower of Babel, the salvation through Jesus, the mystery of trinity, and of course the existence of an anima that arises with each person and is eternal, either to rejoice in heaven or fry in hell—that horrible place deep below ground. Unlike in modern language instruction, the process had a certain one-way nature: since there were no dictionaries and no third languages to resort to, everything depended on Anjiro’s capability of grasping the ideas correctly. His adaptation seems to have been quite thorough; two extant letters of Anjiro are “completely Christian both in expression and conception” and show hardly any trace of the heathen Japanese.

While the Jesuit padres were surprised and enchanted by the fast progress their Japanese disciple made with regard to the Christian world view, the enthusiastic adoption of it by this Japanese Paulus might also have made them wonder whether there was, so to say, anything left of Saulus... In concrete terms: in view of the surprisingly large regions that purportedly adhered to the ley that had its origin in Tenjiku and was also prevalent in Japan, the Jesuits were of course interested in reliable and detailed information about it. Now let us examine what they learnt from Anjiro, the first native informant about the ley from Tenjiku, during the instruction before the baptism between January and May of 1548.

Information on Japanese Religion Gained from Anjiro (1548–49)

During this instruction period, the Italian Jesuit Lancilotto questioned Anjiro on Japanese religion, custom, and the country in general. From

66 Quoted with slight changes from Schurhammer 1928, pp. 18–19.

67 Also, Xavier was quite disappointed with progress in India; on January 12 of 1549 he wrote to Ignatius of Loyola that the Indians, on account of their great sins, were not at all inclined to become Christians. See Aoyama 1967, pp. 40–41.

68 Schurhammer 1928, p. 23.

69 The information from this report that is in the following thematically arranged and presented in abbreviated form is drawn from Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, pp. 480–
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Lancilotto’s letter we can gather the context in which this information was gained:

He [Anjirō] has been instructed thoroughly in the mysteries of our faith and subsequently became Christian. In a brief compendium he translated the main tenets of our faith into his language. He diligently devotes himself to prayer and meditation, calling and sighing to our Lord Jesus Christ, and his attitude is indescribably good. When we asked him at the time of catechism instruction, he reported to us [. . .] about the religions of his land. 70

This information about Japanese religion 71 made its way to Europe in a variety of forms and languages. On the basis of extensive research of all traces of extant and lost copies, Schurhammer established that Lancilotto wrote three different Japan reports. 72 Lancilotto’s first Japan report contains sixteen sections and was written for Goa governor Garcia de Sá; 73 the second adds ten sections; 74 and the third rearranges the

entire information while adding a single section at the end. 75 Only the third report is extant in its original Italian from Lancilotto’s hand. 76 The fact that all translations by Anjirō are lost makes these reports by Lancilotto even more valuable.

When reading Lancilotto’s reports, the context in which they were gained must not be overlooked: Anjirō was answering questions posed by the Jesuit Lancilotto, one of his teachers of Christian doctrine, who was of course familiar with Alvares’ report and surely focused on some of the points raised in it. This may explain, for example, Anjirō’s confusing attempt to distinguish between Japanese padres by the color of their dress—a distinction appropriate for European monastic orders with their distinctive garbs but hardly for Buddhist monks who often wear robes of different colors and designs depending on occasion and status. Furthermore, these questions and answers were part and parcel of Anjirō’s preparation for baptism. Anjirō was trying very hard to understand Christianity in preparation of this rite—an effort that involved translating what was unfamiliar into something familiar—for example, Christian hell into Japanese jigoku, or more generally, Christianity into Japanese religion. At the same time, Anjirō was also aware

same work (pp. 572–573). According to Henri de Lubac, La rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l’occident, Paris: Aubier, 1952, p. 53, a copy of this second report got into the hands of Guillaume Postel who then translated and published it together with his commentary in his Des Merveilles du Monde, 1552 of which a single copy is extant at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Postel’s book thus was the first avenue by which information about Japanese religion reached the common European public.

75 See Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, pp. 480–481 (notes 1 & 2) as well as pp. 634–637 on all lost and extant sources. The information which was only included in this “second Cochín” report is summarized in Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 574, where an interesting additional paragraph on the death of Shaka is also translated.

76 Bibliotheca Nazionale in Rome, manuscript Fondo Gesuitico No. 1384, n. 2.

77 Schurhammer 1928, p. 22, mentions four such translations: 1) a brief catechism with the major prayers and teachings such as the ten commandments, probably finished before Xavier arrived in Japan; 2) a compendium of the Christian faith, written by Xavier for the mother of the daimyō of Satsuma shortly after his arrival in Kagoshima; 3) seven psalms for the Friday service, a litany (probably the litany of all saints); some other prayers, a baptism instruction, and a calendar of church festivals; 4) an extensive compendium of Christian faith which Xavier wrote during the winter of 1549/50 in Kagoshima. This compendium took over one hour to read and was the main means of instruction. Xavier and his helpers read from it in the streets and also during meetings with notables and interviews of curious people.

APP: FRANCIS XAVIER’S DISCOVERY

488 and 573–574. Haas 1902, pp. 280–300 was also consulted. Only information on Japanese religion is mentioned, and topics that concern Buddhism are captured in somewhat greater detail than customs of folk religion or Shintō.

70 Schurhammer 1918, p. 16.

71 See the next two footnotes.

72 See the stemma in Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, pp. 634–635. Schurhammer calls the different reports “drafts,” which could lead to speculations about a “final” report. In order to avoid unnecessary confusion, I will simply call them Lancilotto’s first, second, and third Japan reports.

73 Lancilotto wrote this report in Italian on the basis of Anjirō’s Portuguese words. It was then translated by Xavier into Spanish and from there into Portuguese, since it was compiled for the Portuguese governor of Goa. Xavier’s Spanish version was fitted with an introduction and a conclusion by Cosme de Torres who sent it from Goa to Europe on November 25, 1548. See references and additional information in Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 480.

74 Two copies of the lost Italian original as well as a Latin translation with corrections and an Italian abstract are extant. Another Latin translation with many errors became rather popular and forms for example the basis of the German translation of Haas (1902, vol. 1, pp. 280–300). Xavier sent his Spanish translation of Lancilotto’s “first Cochín report” to Simon Rodriguez in Portugal (Cochín, January 1, 1549); this was from 1553 used for reading in Jesuit refectories. These and more references are found in Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 480; the added sections are translated in the
of his mentors’ plan to missionize Japan—which was the reason for Lancilotto’s questions. This necessitated a translation in the other direction: just as Tenjiku needed to be translated into a place found on a European map, Japanese religion had to be translated into Christianity. This latter translation defines the overall character of Anjiro’s report.

Anjiro mentions three kinds of Japanese padres who all conform to the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and live in monasteries situated in towns or forests. Those in towns do not marry, live on alms, shave hair and beard, and refrain from eating meat. Their cassocks look almost like those of the Jesuits, and like them they eat in refectories and fast many times. They observe five regular prayer times, one of which is at midnight when they get up to pray and sing. The padres that are dressed in black are selectively admitted, very learned, obedient to their superior, and enjoy a good reputation; but though they praise chastity, they commit dreadful sins with boys whom they teach in their monasteries.

Other priests wear robes of ashen color; they also stay celibate. But next to their monasteries are those of nuns who are dressed in the same way and devoted to similar practices. They are rumored to have intercourse with the monks while preventing conception by some means. A third kind of padres is also dressed in black and follows severe ascetic practices. They pray three times per day. On one mountain there are 5,000 very rich padres with servants and nice clothes who observe chastity so strictly that no woman must approach closer than 3,000 feet.

Describing how the Japanese people do penance, Anjiro gives a detailed description of some austerities that we now associate with the Yamabushi.

Anjiro told his questioners that the Japanese believers pray with folded hands like Christians, cued by bells and using rosaries with 108 beads representing the 108 sins; those who can read also use small booklets. In the morning they pronounce nine words and make signs in the form of the Andreas cross to protect themselves from demons. The padres pray in a language the people do not understand, just like the Latin of Christian priests. They preach often and move their audiences to tears. So far so good. But what is the essence of the teaching of these Japanese monks?

They preach that there is only one single God, the Creator of all things. They also preach that there is a paradise, a place of purification, and a hell; and they say that all souls when they depart from this world, go to the place of purification, both the good and the bad; and from there the good are sent to the place where God is and the evil to the place where the devil is. They also say that God sends the devil into this world to punish the bad.

When reading this explanation, one might think that missionizing such people might not be worth the risk of a long and dangerous journey; but, probably cued by a question about the custom of sexual intercourse with boys at these god-fearing Japanese monasteries, Anjiro volunteered another proof of his flawless adoption of Christian values:

He said that these religious would be leading a very good life except for the fact that they are known for that most ugly of all sins: they have, that is, many boys for instruction in the monastery, although they preach to the people that this is an
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extremely serious sin, and they praise chastity. 85

Anjiro’s explanations of Japanese religious rites thus have distinct Christian hues: the faithful pray for redemption of sins, give alms, make pilgrimages, and fast at different times of the year. 86 They sing and pray in front of an altar and ring bells to call for worship, prayer, and sermon. When a child is born, it is immediately washed; if it dies before that, the parents think they have committed a grave sin. When someone dies, they assemble with burning candles to bury or cremate the corpse. Priests burn incense on an altar-like stone while reciting prayers. The prayer-houses have sculpted or painted images of saints of both sexes, adorned with halos and crowns. One image, called Quaneuoa (Kannon 観音), represents a woman with a child. Although people pray only to one God, namely, Dainichi, 87 the creator of all things whom they represent with one body and three heads, they also address prayers to the saints in order to make them intervene with God.

Anjiro also told his Jesuit mentors the story of a man called Xaqua (Shaka) who is revered like a saint. Born in a country to the West of China called Chengico (Tenjiku) in miraculous circumstances which are explained in some detail, the baby boy could already walk after three months. Advancing three steps he pointed one hand toward heaven and the other toward earth and said: “I am the only one in heaven and the only one on earth.” From age 18, instead of marrying according to his father’s wish, he led the life of a hermit for six years and subsequently preached to the people. He became so revered and influential that he changed the laws of the country and taught the people how to pray to God. His 8,000 pupils imitated his way of life, and some of them went to China where these teachings were also accepted. When the teaching of Xaqua was introduced from Chengico (Tenjiku) via Tartary and China to Japan 500 or more years ago, idols were destroyed, so that to this day fragments of old idols are found like in Rome. But what was this very influential man’s teaching? Lancilotto explains:

This Shaka taught all these peoples to worship one single God, the Creator of all things; and he ordered that he be painted, as has been said above, with one single body and three heads. 88

Apart from that most important teaching, he also gave five commandments: 1) Thou shall not kill; 2) Thou shall not steal; 3) Thou shall not fornicate; 4) Thou shall not get aggravated over things that cannot be changed; and 5) Thou shall forgive insults. 89 Furthermore, he wrote many useful books about virtues and vices, wherein he taught that people should behave according to their status. He prescribed frequent fasting and taught that castigation of the body is very pleasing to God and powerful for the absolution from sins. He also taught that the souls of people were tortured in hell by devils and roasted in eternal fire; and he spoke of a purgatory and of angels in paradise who are busy adoring the glory of God. Japanese people believe that angels, created from a different substance, protect them, which is why they carry pictures of these angels on them.

Anjiro’s mind set while he divulged all of this information to Lancilotto is described as follows:

He says it seems to him that the whole of Japan would be glad to become Christian, for they have written in their books that at some time there will be only one law, and none can be imagined better than ours. And he is therefore very happy, since

85 Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 483. Of course, just having boys at monasteries is not what this sin is about. The sin in question is often called “unspeakable,” but Lancilotto’s third report spells it out. Schurhammer (ibid., p. 483) chastely cites just the Latin version: “Omnes notantur de turpissimo Sodomorum vitio, nam omnes nobilres dant illis filios suos instruendi gratia, quibus sine freno abutuntur.” The theme of the bonzes not doing what they themselves preach was to become an often evoked one; but in this case, inspection of the premises in Japan revealed that the bonzes did not preach against this sin but rather were quite unashamed of it.

86 The second report states: “To obtain the remission of sins for the living and the dead, they make use of prayers, alms, pilgrimages, and fasts, and this many times during the year; and when they fast, they eat at the time we do, but their fast is stricter than ours.” Schurhammer 1982, vol. 3, p. 572.

87 This name is spelled variously, for example, Doniche or Dinicho or Denychy.
it seems to him that God is granting him a great grace in that he will be the means for bringing people to Japan to preach this holy law. And although he is married, he has offered to go from two to four years in the company of the priests who will sail there, until Christianity has made a good beginning in that land and the priests have learned the language very well.

Indeed, Lancilotto's report paints the picture of a religion that is surprisingly similar to Christianity in many respects, particularly in the fundamental belief in a God (Dainichi) who is represented as a kind of trinity. This faith was preached by a saint from Tenjiku by the name of Xaqua and introduced a long time ago from Tenjiku to China and Japan, eliminating the old idols that were previously venerated. The teaching of Xaqua looks rather like a thin carbon copy of Christian doctrine, comprising everything from a creator God to the devils and from the purgatory to angels. In the third report, the founder of the religion of Shaka even gets his well-deserved resurrection and ascension to heaven:

This Shaka, who gave laws to these people of China and Japan, ended his life as follows. He called all of his disciples and the people in general together and preached to them and said at the end that he would soon die. And he stepped into a marble tomb which he had ordered to be built and died before the eyes of all. His disciples then burned his body, and as they were placing his ashes in the same tomb, Shaka himself, in the presence of all, appeared in the air above a white cloud with a cheerful countenance and a marvelous aspect and thus went up to heaven and was seen no more. He was ninety years old.

As described by Anjirō, the Japanese ritual also bears major marks of Catholicism: bells and rosaries, monasticism and veneration of saints, baptism and candle-lit burial. Judging from this report, one can conclude that the knowledge of Buddhist doctrine of Anjirō and his two Japanese companions was hardly commensurate with their fervor to become good Christians. Only the biography of Shaka and some Yamabushi rituals are described in any detail. No Buddhist sect is mentioned by name, and of the myriad buddhas and bodhisattvas, etc., only Kannon and Dainichi appear—though in rather strange roles.

Whatever the Jesuits might have thought about all this: it certainly fit right into their world view and plans. Almost everything Anjirō reported about the religion of Japan indicated that these people must once have been in the possession not just of faith in God—which of course all people of Asia originally embraced since, according to the European view of history, all are descendants of Noah's son Sem—but even of the true Christian faith. Anjirō gave further evidence supporting this idea when he reported, as mentioned in the introduction, that a ruler of Japan had a cross in his coat of arms. So the conclusions to the report are hardly surprising:

The Japanese do not distinguish between foods and do not have circumcision. It seems that the Good News was already preached there but that its light first dimmed because of their sins and then was removed entirely because of a heretic like Mohammed. While I wrote this, an Armenian bishop came by who has spent over forty years in these regions. He told me that he had read that at the beginning of the Church, Armenians had preached in China and had converted the country to Christ. However, it would be very good if the light of the true faith were once again brought to these countries.
pared themselves not so much for slashing and burning, as for example in Central America, but rather for gently interrupting the slumber of the True Faith in Japan and even studying its holy scriptures with a glance toward China. This might involve some problems with the clergy of the false prophet Shaka, true, but the basis was already laid through the apostle Thomas or Armenian missionaries or some unknown other route. The task of formulating the wake-up call, however, was destined for the author of all this information, Anjiro.

A Glimpse of Zen

Before setting out from Malacca to Japan, Anjiro, who had undergone the severe meditations reserved only for the hardier characters in Jesuit seminaries, volunteered a piece of information to Xavier that was of such great interest to him that he included it in a letter to Europe. This information shows that Anjiro (and possibly his companions) was to some extent familiar with the practices at the large Sōtō-Zen temple called Fukushōji

Paulo de Santa Fee, the Japanese, our companion, told me one thing which consoled me much; and what he told me is that in the monastery of his land, where there are many frades and a school, they have among them a practice of meditating which is as follows: he who has charge of the house, their superior, who is the most learned, calls them all together and addresses them in the manner of a sermon; and then he says to each one of them that they should meditate for the space of an hour on the following: When a man is dying and cannot speak, since the soul is being separated from the body, if it could then speak in such a separation and withdrawal of the soul, what things would the soul say to the body? And also, of those who are in hell or purgatory, if they would return to this life, what would they say? And after the hour has passed, the superior of the house examines each one of them on what he experienced during that hour when he meditated; and if he says something good, he praises him; and, on the other hand, he reproaches him when he says things which are not worth remembering.
lates this report into Spanish and Portuguese (SH 1982, vol. 3, p. 480; Portuguese title as published by Pires is "Informação sobre Japão" [Bourdon 1993, p. 128])


1548/12/26 Lancilotto sends his third Japan report in Italian to Europe (SH 1982, vol. 3, p. 480). This report is extant (Bibliotheca Nazionale Roma, Fondo Gesuitico 1384, no. 2).

1549/01/01 Xavier sends a second copy of his Spanish translation of Lancilotto's first Japan report to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome (copy of this extant in Bibliotheca Nazionale Roma, Fondo Gesuitico 1482, no. 32 (SH 1982, vol. 3, p. 480)

1549/01/01 Xavier sends his Spanish translation of Lancilotto's second Japan report to Simon Rodrigues in Portugal (SH 1982, vol. 3, p. 480)

1549/01/12 Xavier sends Lancilotto's second Japan report to Ignatius of Loyola (Bourdon 1993, p. 127; Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii II, p. 12)

1549/04/15 Voyage of Xavier, Torres, Rodrigues and three Japanese incl. Anjiro from Goa to Malacca (SH 1982, vol. 4, p. 3)

1549/05/31 Arrival in Malacca

1549/06/22 Xavier sends to Europe information gained from Anjiro about meditating frades in Japan (SH 1982, vol. 4, p. 68)

1549/06/24 From Malacca on a Pirate junk to Japan (SH 1982, vol. 4, p. 68)

1549/08/15 Arrival in Kagoshima; soon afterwards, Anjiro visits the daimyō Shimazu Takahisa in Ichuji castle near Kagoshima

1549/09/29 Visit of the daimyō at Ichuji castle by Xavier and Anjiro

1552 A French translation of Lancilotto's second report with a curious commentary is published in Guillaume Postel's Des Merveilles du Monde, 1552 and thus becomes the first publicly accessible report on Japanese religion in the West.
These are the two rightmost segments of a famous twelve-part Japanese byōbu (screen) from the Momoyama period, painted by Kyoto artist Kanō Naizen (1570-1616) and reproduced here with the kind permission of the Kobe City Museum. In the center of the twelve-foot-long screen are portrayed two Portuguese nāo, or galleon-type ships, moored in a harbor (probably Nagasaki). From these ships, seamen and traders with their colored and white servants head for the Christian church. In front of a Japanese shop underneath the church, the missionaries with their friends and sympathizers as well as a Western-style dog await the exotic visitors who are led by a Portuguese captain underneath a huge silk parasol. The group is announced by the gentleman speaking to a Jesuit brother on the lower right of our reproduction. The missionaries in black robes are Jesuits (arrived in Japan in 1549), those in grey hooded robes Franciscans (in Japan since 1593).

In the temple that has been transformed into a Christian church by a cross on its roof, a priest in brocade robes reads mass at an altar adorned with the Virgin. In the building on the top left, a Jesuit missionary is seen reading instructions from a book.
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.

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.³

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

what he fears about our going to Japan.5

His meeting with Anjiro 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 Anjiro’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 Anjiro, 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 Anjiro had admitted his ignorance of the writings of this doc-

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).

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 Anjiro10 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 Anjiro’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 Anjiro 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 Anjiro’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.
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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 Tartar. 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.

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, which must have forced the realization upon him that he had somehow mixed up his goal with his point of departure. While this may be “one of the greatest ironies of buppo,” 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 Anjrō, Dainichi Nyorai (the Great Sun Buddha, from the Sanskrit Vairocana, “Illuminator”) represents the source of the entire universe.

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 純土, 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.

APP: XAVIER’S DISCOVERY OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM (2)

in the history of the missions,” 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, Anjrō’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. The basic assumption of a single puzzle (as with Tenjiku and Tartar) 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, Anjrō 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 Anjrō, Dainichi Nyorai (the Great Sun Buddha, from the Sanskrit Vairocana, “Illuminator”) represents the source of the entire universe.

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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 Anjrō was aware of Christianity as a different religion rather than as a different form of buppo.

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.
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(1222–1282) which called itself Hokke-shū  法華宗, the rapidly growing True Pure Land sect (Jōdo-shinshū  净土真宗 or Ikko-shū  一念宗) 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, Ouchi Yoshita-

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

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.

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 Carvalho 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.
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 Kyushu 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).20 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


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.


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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 Rinzaizen temple of the Bukkō-line called Kōsaiji, a Shingon monastery called Dajiōin, and a Jishū-monastery known as Jōkōmyōji. Most prominent among Kagoshima’s religious institutions was a Sōto/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 曹光寺, or votive temple for the well-being of emperor and state. At the time, this monastery was the mother institution of over 1,400 subtemples in Southern Japan 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-


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 & Wicki 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 teisho 講斎, the problems to solve koan 鬼門, the meditation zazen 坐禅, and the interviews with the master about these problems sanzen 参禅.
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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. 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.

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.” 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. However, they appear no less fictitious than the much-maligned account of religious debates by Mendes Pinto in which Xavier put Buddhist priests to terrible shame.

We will thus ignore such later information, including Frois’ report that Ninshitsu “preferred to miserably and unfortunately land in hell,” 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.

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,” 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.

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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 Anjiro 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 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 Anjiro, 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 [Anjiro], 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. 227.
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Buddhism. 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," 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, and more than two hundred residences for bonzes and for others, like friars, who are known as Gixu, and for nuns, who are called Amacaras. 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.

5) 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 Xavier (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 Simao Rodrigues in Portugal; Costelloe 1992, p. 377.

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

5) This may refer to the "Five Mountains" (gosan 五山), i.e. five major Rinzai-Zen monasteries of Kyoto: Tenryuji 天龍寺, Shokokuji 神倉寺, Kenninji 建仁寺, Tofukuji 東福寺, and Manjuji 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 Colcutt, 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 (jishu 時宗), a line of Pure-Land Buddhism founded by Ippen Shōnin in 1276. "Like friars" compares the adherents of this sect to European friars.

55) From ama (nun) and kata (person).

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are as follows: Coya, Negru, Fieson, and Omy. 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. 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. 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. 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
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 Anjiro’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 Anjiro’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 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 Anjiro 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 Tenjiku:

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-

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62 Ibid., p. 298.
63 Presumably, this refers to monks and nuns of the Jishu 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).

ous meeting with the local ruler Ouchi 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 Kyushu 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
O Duque do Reino de Zao, de Reino de Nagato, de Reino de Buncho, de Reino de Chuzeko em cujo nome foi assinado o presente diploma.

Raja da Ocidental que viera declarar a lei de fazer Santos occidentis qui venerunt ad declarandam legem faciendi Sanctos.

Conforme a sua vontade até a morte do mundo que está dentro juxta ipsorum voluntatem ad finem usque mundi, is est locus positus intra.

A grande cidade Amangutium magnam urbem, cum privilegiis utnemo possit occidi nee apprehendi.

In ilia Atque ut sit testatum meis sucessoribus do illis hoc diploma,

Que em nenhum tempo os tirem desta posse ut nullo tempore eos deturbent ex hac possessione.


The Duke Daidiquibozat, 8. do Dux Daidiquibozat.

De Reino de Iwami, Reino de Bingo, Reino de Chikuzen concedo.

Dux Regni de Zao Regni Nangati,


The Duke a/the kingdom a/Suo kingdom a/Bingo kingdom of Buzen kingdoms of Chikuzen and Aki.

The Great Way of Heaven magnum do cielo aditum caeli patribus.

Do mosteiro o padre que reside nella Sigilli. [Last four characters omitted in Maffei's Latin version of 1573]

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

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-

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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 1598 77 with its interlinear Portuguese translation as a basis for an easily readable edition, adding Maffei's Latin interlinear translation of 1574 78 and my own literal English translation of the Portuguese text for the convenience of the reader (fig. 2). The rather straightforward message that author "Suo no suke" (Ōuchi Yoshinaga) in my opinion intended is the following:

Regarding the Daidō monastery 道大寺, province of Suō 周防国, district Yoshiki 吉敷郡, Yamaguchi prefecture 山口県:
The bonzes who have come here from the Western regions 從西來東之僧 may, for the purpose of promulgating Buddhist teaching 仿佛法綱隆, establish their monastic community 修寺家 [at the Daidō monastery].
In witness, following their wish and request 其請願之旨所令, this document of permission was issued 決許之狀如件.
Tenbun era, 21st year, 8th month, 28th day 天文二一年八月廿八日.
Suō-no-suke 周防介.
Seal 御印.

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

Fig. 3: Daidōji permit by Ōuchi Yoshinaga

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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
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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 Alcâçova’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 a transcription of its text are found in the Japanese translation of Schurhammer 1928 by Kamio Shōji 神尾重治: Yama-guchi no tōron 山口の対論, Tokyo: Shinseisha, 1964, p. 123.

80 “Quanto as licenças para pregar em Bungo, são como essas que la vão de Yamaguch, nas quaes vereis como nosso Senhor se quer comunicar nesta terra.” Cartas que os Padres e Irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreuerão dos Reynos de Iapiio 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 Alcâçova who left Japan on October 19 of 1553. A permit in Bungo would necessarily have 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 buppo 大寺 of Dainichi and urged people to pray to the hotoke whose glad tidings they had brought from Ten-}

APP: XAVIER’S DISCOVERY OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM (2)

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 buppo 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 remaining 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.

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They were reading from Anjiro'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.

Rev. Haas suggests that the missionaries used the problematic translation of the Daidoji 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. 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 daimyo of Yamaguchi:

[Francis Xavier:] "It is not money that we want, but your permission to preach and to baptize." It was granted.
Moreover, the daimyo 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 daimyo's way of covering himself against the bonzes.

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 Daidoji permit was absolutely unambiguous for its author and the populace as well as the 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 buppo that reigned in the whole world known to them, while for the Jesuits "our buppo" meant nothing other than "our religion," 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.

86 Haas 1904, p. 58.
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As Cosme de Torres was going to put it delicately, “great labyrinths had revealed themselves” 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 *buppo* first appear in Jesuit sources as a common reference to Buddhist sects. 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 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.

APP: XAVIER’S DISCOVERY OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM (2)

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 Ichiju castle near Kagoshima.
1549/09/29 Visit of *daimyō* Shimazu Takahisa at Ichiju 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 Shofukuji Zen temple in Hakata and travel to Yamaguchi.
1550/11-12 First stay of Xavier in Yamaguchi; preaching in streets, meeting with *daimyō* Ouchi 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
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 Torres and companions arrive in Yamaguchi.

1551/09/09 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.
St. Francis Xavier’s
Discovery of Japanese Buddhism

A Chapter in the European Discovery of Buddhism
(PART 3: FROM YAMAGUCHI TO INDIA 1551-1552)

From Brawn to Brain

In India and Indonesia, Francis Xavier had baptized entire villages of heathens after having them repeat a few prayers and the principal tenets of the new faith:

After preaching to them, I ask all, both large and small, if they truly believe in each article of the faith; they all answer that they do. I then recite each article in a loud voice, and at each one of these I ask them if they believe; and they, folding their arms over their breast in the form of a cross, answer that they do. I then baptize them, giving to each one his name in writing. The men then return to their homes and send their wives and families, whom I then baptize in the same way as I had baptized the men.¹

He urged his fellow missionaries to go for lots of babies: “Constantly keep moving from village to village, baptizing the newborn infants.”²

Since the missionaries usually did not speak the local language and simply read their instructions and prayers from a booklet that had previously been translated, there was no need for rhetorical gifts or a brilliant mind but rather for good legs and an ample supply of virtue:

Individuals who have no talent for hearing confessions, preaching, or doing things pertaining to the Society, after they have completed their Exercises and have served in lowly offices for some months, will do great service in these regions if they have physical as well as spiritual strength. For in these pagan lands there is no need for learning beyond what is required for the teaching of prayers, the visiting of villages, and the baptizing of newborn infants, many of whom die without baptism for want of one to baptize them, since we cannot reach all the villages. […] There is no need for learning for those who are to go to the infidels.³

In Indonesia, a land peopled by tribes that are at best “very barbarous and full of treachery” and dotted with islands “where they lend each other their aged fathers when they wish to have a feast,”⁴ there was even more need for well-developed muscles. Racked by earthquakes and dotted with volcanoes, these islands seemed to Xavier to be the very entrance to hell:

For want of one to preach the torments of hell to the infidels of these islands, God lets the lower regions open up for the confusion of these pagans and their abominable sins.⁵

In Christian cosmology, hell was located right under our feet in the boiling entrails of the earth. When the natives asked Xavier about the volcanoes, he explained: “I told them that it was a hell to which all those who worship idols go.”⁶ In the same letter that reported this, Xavier raved about his meeting with Anjirō and the prospect of bringing

¹ Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 47, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 27, 1545. Translation by Joseph Costelloe, 1992, p. 117. When no translator is mentioned, the translation is by the author.
² Letter from Negapatam to Francisco Mansilhas on the Fishery Coast (April 7, 1545), Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 50; translation by Costelloe 1992, p. 125.
⁵ Ibid., p. 143.
the good tidings to a people with more civilised cravings than the arms
and legs of their neighbors' father or the odd member of the missionary corps:

If all the Japanese are as eager to know as is Anjiro, it seems
to me that this race is the most curious of all the peoples that
have been discovered. This Anjiro [ . . . ] is a man who is
very eager to know, which is a sign of one who will make
much of himself, and who will in a short time come to a
knowledge of the truth. 7

When justifying his decision to go to Japan without prior approval,
Xavier again emphasized that the Japanese are "a very curious race, eager
to obtain news about God and natural things." 8 Since the Christian
God is the creator of all natural things, including human reason, Xavi­
er foresaw the opportunity of a lifetime:

I asked Anjiro if the people of Japan would become Chris­
tians if I went with him to his country. He replied that those of
his country would not immediately become Christians but
would first ask many questions and would see how I answered
them and what I believed and, above all, if I lived in accor­
dance with what I said. If I did two things well, that is, if I
spoke well and replied satisfactorily to their questions, and
lived beyond reproach, within half a year after they had come
to know me, the king and the nobility and all the other pru­
dent people would become Christians, since they are, accord­
ing to him, a race ruled solely by reason. 9

After almost three months in Japan, Xavier saw some of his expecta­
tions confirmed: "They are a people of great good will, very sociable,
and eager to know" 10—in fact, those whom he had met "are the best
that have as yet been discovered; and it seems to me that no other pa­

gan race will be found that will surpass the Japanese." 11 However,
Anjiro's half-year timetable turned out to be less than accurate. When
Xavier left Japan about two years later and wrote his reports from India,
his requests sounded very much as if the task of missionizing Japan
had only just begun. The proud mass-producer of Christians suddenly
sounded almost humbled, begging his European brethren to send him a
very different breed of assistants:

There is a need for trained scholars, especially for good artystas, 12 to answer their questions, and for those who are sophystas 13 to catch them up as soon as they contradict themselves.

These bonzes are deeply ashamed when they are caught in con­
tradictions, or when they are unable to reply. 14

While the healthy young missionaries in Indonesia had to be prepared
to run away from poisoned arrows and earthquakes, the artystas and
sophystas destined for Japan would have to face some rather more pro­
tracted and sophisticated forms of torture:

They will suffer greater persecutions than many think; they
will be pestered by visits and questions at all hours of the day
and during part of the night; and they will be called to the
homes of important people who cannot be gainsaid. They will
have no time for prayer, meditation, and contemplation, or
for any spiritual recollection; they will not be able to say
Mass, at least in the beginning; they will be continuously occu­
pied with answering questions; they will lack the time to recite
the office, and even to eat and sleep. These people are very
demanding, especially with strangers, whom they hold of lit­
tle account and are always ridiculing. 15

Such words do not carry the perfume of piety and edification; rather,
they exhibit the hard edge of real missionary experience in Yamaguchi.

7 Ibid., p. 177.
8 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 72, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola
9 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 59, from Cochin to the Jesuit compan­
10 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 90, from Kagoshima to the Jesuits in
11 Ibid., p. 297.
12 These are Masters of Arts, i.e., University graduates.
13 "Sophystas" are people trained in the art of dialectics and rhetoric.
14 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 97, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola
15 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit compan­
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Clearly, the Japan mission had hit a snag of such proportions as to confound the "Apostle of India and Indonesia"—a snag that, under circumstances devoid of miracles, could even have thrown him out of the race to become the canonized "Apostle of Japan"...

Grandes Laberintos

While researchers and writers of fiction are understandably fascinated by the dramatic stories of Luis Frois—for example, Xavier's sudden enlightenment as to the difference between Dainichi and God that led to the use of the word Deust—and are fond of citing the edifying ramblings of the missionaries, the "business" parts of the letters from Yamaguchi, Cochin, and Goa tell a more sober story. If passages about the deeds were often designed to generate pious feelings, those about the needs were pretty hard-nosed: they aim at concrete assistance rather than torrents of sympathetic tears, and thus inform us about the real problems the mission was facing: ignorance of language (thus the call for interpreters), harsh climate (thus the call for weatherproof Flemish or German missionaries), and above all the lack of educated men able to understand the enemy, stand up to the bonzes, defeat them in dispute, and explain not just heaven and hell but also the natural world:

They must also be learned in order to be able to answer the many questions that are posed by the Japanese. It would be well if they were good Masters of Arts, and it would certainly be no loss if they were dialecticians, so that they could catch the Japanese in contradictions when they dispute with them. It would also be good if they knew something about the celestial sphere, since the Japanese are delighted with learning about the movements of the heavens, the eclipses of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, and how rain, snow and hail, thunder, lightning, comets, and other natural phenomena are produced. The explanation of such matters is a great help in gaining the good will of the people.

Such goodwill, of course, was extremely important in the given circumstances—hampered by their insufficient command of the Japanese language and startled by questions that did not even steer clear of doubts about God's goodness, the impressive results of Greek, Arab, and modern European research were welcome aids to convince the idolaters of tenets of faith (such as the purgatory) that were hardly secure from attacks of reason, that most important virtue of the Japanese. In the letters written just after Xavier's departure from Yamaguchi, Cosme de Torres sounds similar notes:

Those who will come to these regions must be very knowledgeable in order to be able to respond to the very elevated and difficult questions which they pose from morning till into the night. They are so exigent that from the day Father Magister Francis came into this town, which is now five months ago, not a single day has passed where priests and laymen have not

16 Appropriately, miracles attributed to Xavier patched up some of his shortcomings. In 1556, Captain Antonio Perreira, who had known Xavier personally, testified under oath that "wherever Father Magister Francisco went, he learned and spoke the local language in very few days, as was the case in Malabar, Maluco and Japan." When canonization was approaching in 1614, the thirteenth witness of the information proceedings in Lissabon informed the authorities that he had personally heard from his cousin, a captain in Japanese waters, that when Xavier preached in Japan and China, he spoke Portuguese, but that the audience all heard him speak in their own mother tongues. See Schurhammer 1928, p. 6.


18 For example, Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 92, from Kagoshima to Father Paulo in Goa, November 5, 1549. Costelloe 1992, p. 315 speaks of the need to educate Japanese and Chinese boys to later serve as interpreters, and the same letter (p. 316) orders the education of two Japanese bonzes for this purpose.


20 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 110 to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, written in Goa on April 9, 1552; Costelloe 1992, p. 385.

21 According to Torres, the Japanese "let themselves guide by reason as much as the Spaniards or even more." Torres, first Yamaguchi letter (September 29, 1551, to the Jesuit companions in Valencia); Schurhammer 1929, p. 47 (original edited in Schurhammer 1929, p. 94).
asked all sorts of questions from the morning through the major part of the night, for example how God is and where, why one cannot see him, how it is that souls have a beginning but no end, and other extremely difficult questions. It is most necessary for those who come to these regions that they know all spiritual teachings in order to be able to teach them how wrong and mendacious their meditations are and to rebut them. Having tried and failed to answer questions such as that about the reason why souls have a beginning but no end, Torres was very aware of the fragility of the missionary enterprise in Japan. He openly acknowledged that at the outset the missionaries had “lacked experience,” adding cryptically that since then “they had learned something of the language [alguna cousa da linguoa], and great labyrinths had revealed themselves.”

What did Torres mean by grandes laberintos? Did he allude to the Dainichi-mix-up that had pretty much erased most achievements that the missionaries had fought for in their first two years in Japan? Or was it dawning on him and his fellow missionaries that what they had run into here was not just a simple cul-de-sac—a wrong word, a bad interpreter, a simple slipup to be righted in one fell swoop—but rather an extremely confusing array of laberintos, each one of them capable of causing years of wasted effort?

For the Japanese in Yamaguchi, literally the whole world with its heavens and hells had broken loose in 1551. Was it really round, as the Jesuit fathers tried to prove to their startled Yamaguchi visitors, and encircled by a number of spheres containing the moon, the sun, the planets, and the fixed stars? Were the stars really moved about by Dainichi a.k.a. Deus alias hotoke? Was there really a continent unknown to the Japanese that was peopled exclusively by negroes? Was the whole universe really created in just six days? Was there a region called Europe, the richest in the world, where the pope, the most powerful man on earth and representative of hotoke, was residing? The visitors, we are told, asked about anything from the stars to hailstones and from Tenjiku to Europe, and of course the Europeans had much to recommend themselves and their creed: the missionaries’ belief in paradise and purgatory stood on equal ground with their spherical earth circled by sun and moon. If the Tenjikus knew so much about the seas and the sky, foreign countries and customs, guns and lenses, etc., why not also about the earth and history, man and his soul, heaven and hell?

They are so curious and importunate in their questioning and so eager to know that they never ceased asking us questions and telling others the answers which they had received from us. They did not know that the world was round, nor did they know the course of the sun. They asked about these and other things, for example, about comets, lightnings, rain and snow, and similar phenomena. They were very content and satisfied with our replies and explanations; and they deemed us to be learned men, something that was of some help in gaining credit for our words.24

There were plenty of additional reasons to pay a visit to the missionaries at Daidōji: the first dark-skinned Indian in these regions, Xavier’s servant Amador; the stunningly ornamented o-kyō called glossa ordinaria, penned on animal skin instead of paper; the brocade ceremonial robes; the image of Kannon painted in perspective; the magic holy water that cures illnesses;27 the powerful spells and mantras; the bless-

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22 Torres, first Yamaguchi letter (September 29, 1551, to the Jesuit companions in Valencia); Schurhammer 1929, p. 52 (original pp. 96-97).
24 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Europe, January 29, 1552. Costelloe 1992, p. 334. The fact that of these explanations by Xavier probably only that about the spherical earth would hold up today shows how relative the Jesuits’ superiority of knowledge really was.
25 Since the term seisō (Bible) is a much more recent invention, it is likely that the missionaries used the term o-kyō for their sacred scriptures—the very word that the Japanese use for the Buddhist sutras that are supposed to relate the words of the Buddha.
26 See part 1 of this article, The Eastern Buddhist XXX, 1 (1997), p. 56.
27 The importance of the hope for healing in these early days can only be guessed. But in a letter of September 23, 1555 from Hirado the Jesuits in India, Baltazar Gago
ings by the magic sign of the cross; the strange shoes and clothes; the sight of people eating with their bare hands; the large noses; the colored eyes behind eyeglasses; the clock; the exotic spices from Tenjiku; and so on. Such wonders from an unknown world may get little mention in the missionaries’ letters, concerned as they are with more spiritual fare, but to the Japanese all of this was utterly sensational.28

It was in this city of Yamaguchi, where the “monks from the Western regions” had received official permission “to establish their monastic community [at Daidoji] for the purpose of promulgating their Buddha Dharma,”29 that an invaluable door to the understanding of the rival sects of Japan was opening up during the spring and summer of 1551. Though Brother Juan Fernandez had during the first two years in Japan made some progress in understanding and speaking Japanese and was serving as Xavier’s and Torres’ interpreter, what he said and what he understood was—like the instruction materials from which the missionaries read—still set in Anjirō’s terms. But having learned “something of the language” was not the only reason for the laberintos to reveal themselves. The second, and arguably more important one, was the help from educated Japanese sympathizers familiar with the intricacies of Buddhist doctrine and organization. Back in India, Xavier was to reminisce:

Many of those who became Christians were nobles; and after they had become Christians, they were such great friends of ours that I could never end writing about it. And they thus gave us a very faithful account of all that is contained in the laws of the pagans.30

reported that in Funai almost all converts were poor or sick. Cartas que los Padres y Hermanos de la Compañía de Jesús, que andan en los Reynos de Japon escrivieron a los de la misma Compañía, Alcalá 1575, p. 38 ff. See Schurhammer 1928, p. 59.

28 Japanese Nanban (Southern Barbarian) screens feature such details beautifully; stunning examples are found in the Kōbe Municipal Museum, the Tokyo National Museum, etc.

29 This is the text of the official permit by the ruler of Yamaguchi from September 16 of 1552 that was affixed in the streets of Yamaguchi for all to read. See part 2 of this article series.

30 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Europe, January 29, 1552. Costelloe 1992, p. 333. Of course, Xavier and his

APP: FRANCIS XAVIER’S DISCOVERY (3)

The “great friends” of the new sect were, true to the Japanese tradition of sectarian competition, happy to inform the reformers from Tenjiku about the shortcomings of the rival sects:

Many revealed to us the deceits of the bonzes and of their sects. If it were not for them, we would never have become familiar with the idolatries of Japan.31

A Japanese scholar so disenchanted with traditional Buddhism as to leave the priesthood had turned into a particularly important source of information to the Jesuits:

A man who had studied many years in Bandu and was deemed to be very learned became a Christian in the city of Yamaguchi. Before our arrival in Japan, he had ceased to be a bonze, had become a layman, and had married. He says that when he ceased to be a bonze, it was because it seemed to him that the laws of Japan were not true. He consequently did not believe in them and always adored the one who created the world. The Christians in Yamaguchi were very happy when this man was baptized, since he was considered to be the most learned man in the city.32

However disparate the intentions of the informers and of the recipients might have been: they converged in letting the Jesuit missionaries finally put a foot into the door to a startlingly different religious universe.

The Torres Letters

Before leaving Yamaguchi, Xavier had ordered Cosme de Torres and Juan Fernández, whose Japanese was just two years old,33 to try to find out more about the laberintos that had revealed themselves. Xavier was aware that neither of them was really equipped to stand up to the companions just caught a peek and were, as the remainder of this article will show, very far from being informed about “all that is contained in the laws of the pagans.”34

31 Ibid., p. 335.

32 Ibid., p. 340.

33 On various opinions about the degree of Juan Fernández’ language proficiency see Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, pp. 280-281.
These sects whose central scripture is the Lotus sutra. The exclusive worship of that equally refers to Arimta Buddha, the Buddha of Pure Land teachings. (Avalokiteshvara), the bodhisattva of great compassion. That is usually called "worship of Shaka and all the demons." "I put my faith in Amitabha Buddha".

In his letters, Torres distinguishes between four major groups of idolaters in Japan. The first group worships a man called Xaca. There are some who worship an idol called Xaca. They say that he had been born eight thousand times before he was born of a woman; and before he was born of his mother, he

Torres explains that among the sects that worship Shaka, there are those who worship him exclusively, called Foquexo, and others "who worship him along with all the demons."

The second group consists of worshipers of an idol called Amida, who is "sometimes painted as a man and sometimes as a woman".

They say that when he was very old, he said to himself that the good had no need of him or anybody else for saving themselves; but for the wicked, no matter how wicked they might have ever been, he revealed to them a very great remedy for their salvation, and this is that whoever in the hour of his death pronounces with a stout heart this word "Amitabhu" will be saved.
The Eastern Buddhist XXXI, 1

This group has, according to Torres, a great number of members because it promises salvation to all, good and evil, and is divided into two branches: the Yéczos, and those who worship "both him and the demons."\(^{44}\)

A third group is said to "worship the sun and the moon," calling them Dios because they "create all things," and all the things created by God are God himself.\(^{45}\) Because even el demonio is God's creature, they worship the devil, too. Among them are "very great magicians" [grandes hechizos] that earn much money. They "are very ignorant, and it does not take much to refute them because of the many stupidities which they maintain and believe."\(^{46}\)

The fourth group mentioned by Torres consists of the Jenxus\(^{47}\) of which there are also two branches.

One kind says that there is no soul, and that when a man dies, everything dies, since they say that what has been created out of nothing [crió de nada] returns to nothing [se convierte en nada]. These are men of great meditation [grandes meditações], and it is difficult to make them understand the law of God. It is quite a job [mucho trabajo] to refute them.\(^{48}\)

\(^{43}\) Ikko-shū 一唐宗 (also called Jōdo-shinshū 净土真宗) founded by Shinran 眞言 (1173–1262).

\(^{44}\) Ibid. Presumably, this second branch bundles other variations of Pure Land Buddhism.

\(^{45}\) Schurhammer 1929, p. 49 and 1982, vol. 4, p. 268, thinks this group refers to Shintō. However, this would leave out the Shingon sect completely—the sect with which the missionaries probably had most dealings until they found out about the Dainichi problem. To me, the identification of all particular things with their source (Dainichi?), the sharp attack at the end, and the link with "great magicians" (see next note) all suggest that Torres here refers to the Shingon sect whose teachings were also used in Shinto movements such as Ryōbu Shintō 勇猛神道 which held that the deity enshrined in Ise is Dainichi. This is supported by a later letter of Torres (Cartas 1598, 75r); see Haas 1904, p. 367.

\(^{46}\) Ibid. The "great magicians" probably refer to the Yamabushis 山伏, the members of the Shugendō 移ろ道 mountain ascetics associated with the esoteric Tendai 天台 and Shingon 眞言 sects.

\(^{47}\) Zen-shū 真宗: the Zen sect. The two branches are the Rinzai sect 禅宗宗 and the Sōtō sect 曹洞宗.


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APP: Francis Xavier's Discovery (3)

Since there is no follow-up, it is unclear whether this description of the teaching of "one kind" only refers to one branch of the Zen sect, or to both. At any rate, the "Zen" view that there is no soul at all is contrasted with two different views held by "others":

There are others who say that souls [las animas] have existed and will exist forever, and that with the death of the body each of the four elements returns to its own place, as does the soul that returns into what it was before it animated that body.

Others say that after the death of the body, the souls enter different bodies and thus ceaselessly are born and die again.\(^{49}\)

This is the first discussion of two basic conceptions of transmigration that were to play an important role in the European discovery of Buddhism.\(^{50}\) In his second letter, written on the same day, Torres compresses the information about the Zen sect and transmigration as follows:

There are others that they call Jenxus of which there are two kinds; they are men of great meditations, which is why it is necessary that the padres coming to these regions be scholars [letrados], in order to lead them out of their errors and to refute them. There are others who say that when the bodies have died, the souls return into other bodies and that in this manner they would always be born and die.\(^{51}\)

\(^{49}\) Ibid., Schurhammer 1929, p. 50 (original p. 95). The four elements (shidai 四大; skt. mahá-bhūta) are the four components that constitute material objects; earth (firmness), water (fluidity), fire (heat) and wind (movement). What "animates" these elements (here called "soul") would point to Buddhism's "consciousness" that carries a much broader meaning than "personal soul"—a doctrine which could hardly be reconciled with the basic Buddhist teaching of the absence of a permanent self or soul (anātman, jap. muga 無我).

\(^{50}\) About three centuries after Torres, Schopenhauer was to call the first one the "esoteric" conception of transmigration or palingenesis where another consciousness is formed on the basis of the same elements. The second one he called the "exoteric" idea of metempsychosis where an individual soul migrates into another body. See Arthur Schopenhauer, Parerga und Paralipomena vol. 2, §140. Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1977, (Collected Works vol. 9, pp. 299–300).

\(^{51}\) Cartas 1598, p. 17 v. German translation in Schurhammer 1929, p. 58.
Torres does not mention any specific number of sects, but he appears to mention seven:

1) Worshipers of Shaka (Hokkeshū = Nichiren sect)
2) Worshipers of Shaka and other demons (Tendai?)
3) Worshipers of Amida (Ikkō-shū = Jōdo-shin sect)
4) Worshipers of Amida and other demons (Pure Land?)
5) Worshipers of sun and moon, magicians (unnamed; Shingon/Yamabushi?)
6) Zen (unnamed first branch)
7) Zen (unnamed second branch)

As is to be expected, Torres criticized the clergy for the “vice of sodomy” in which these “very carnal” clergymen indulge “while saying that this is no sin.” They are also chided for introducing in these regions “many other things which are very great insults to God; which is why they are so irritated when they hear us preach our holy catholic faith.” This remark would indicate that it was primarily the missionaries’ criticism of the Buddhist clergy’s morality and behavior that created tensions in Yamaguchi. With regard to the ways in which the Buddhist clergy supports itself, Torres raises serious and quite detailed charges:

The priests of this land spread many other heresies in order to make money from the believers. They make the people believe that if they give to the priests much money in this life, the priests will give it back to them in the other; thus the people give donations only to the priests who are rich, in order to provide them with the funds to pay them back after death in the other world. They also let the demons know that whoever takes a piece of paper [cedula] by the priests from this world to the other world will be proceed unharmed by the demons. And these pieces of paper cost a lot of money, and most secular people buy them before they die.

These “pieces of paper” refer to religious documents called kirigami or kechimyaku which are also mentioned several times by Mendez Pinto and played an important and interesting role in the expansion of Sōtō-Zen and its funeral rituals in Japan. Of course, the idea of a clergy taking money with the promise of ameliorating the fate of a person after death was all too familiar to the missionaries: the rampant sale of indulgences by Christian clergy was after all an extremely successful as well as controversial enterprise of the Catholic church. What the missionaries found reprehensible here was that the Buddhist clergy would claim to have any influence at all in the afterlife. The afterlife was controlled by the Christian God alone; thus it was a preposterous lie to claim that a clergy other than the Christian one would have any influence in the “other world.” If Christian priests were the only ones who could open the door to Paradise through baptism, they also had the monopoly of goods and services in the netherworld.

Torres notes that though the priests of the Japanese sects are highly respected by the populace—in part because of their claim not to “eat anything that has blood”—they do just that on the sly and indulge in...
“many other evil things in secret or in public.” Such attacks on the clergy were designed to appeal to a public with a fine sense of morals:

They are people who are very edified by the good and even more irritated by evil—and it is for this reason that they are disgusted by the priests of this land because of their evil habits.58

But the clergy's moral decadence is only a symptom of a far more compelling reason for their powerlessness in the other world, namely, the supreme blasphemy of the founders of these idolatrous creeds. Amida and Shaka had dared to violate God's first commandment, just as Lucifer once did, with terrible results that still haunt mankind:

When one uses reason to convey to them that those whom they revere as Saints could not save themselves and therefore could even less save the souls of others, that they are in hell because they portrayed themselves as God and as able to save souls, and, since they fail to find out who the Holy One [el Santo]59 really is that they ought to worship, that those who they worship will go to hell, and that the things the priests do against reason are false and untruthful—at that very hour these priests and laymen admit defeat and say that we are right.60

In the third Torres letter which, instead of edifying potential mission-

aries, informs Xavier of the latest events in Yamaguchi, some glimpses of a more sober reality peek out of the missionary's triumphalist tale:

Among [the visitors to Daidōji] there were some shave-pated nobles [fidalgos rapados] who could not be refuted without special assistance by our Lord. Because they are people who engage in great meditations they posed questions which neither St. Thomas [Aquinas] nor [Duns] Scotus could have answered to satisfy people without faith.61

Luckily, we have a rare alternative account about the Yamaguchi discussions: the notes that interpreter Juan Fernández took in (romanized) Japanese during the disputations at Daidōji in the month after Xavier's departure. Fernández' letter with a Spanish version of these notes reached Xavier in Bungo before the Portuguese ship took him back to India.

The Fernández Letter

To the Yamaguchi missionaries, the teachings of the Japanese sects were only of strategic interest: they had to know some things about them in order to show their inconsistency and basic falsehood, leading to the defeat and conversion of both the clergy and the faithful. The Fernández letter contains a number of questions that the missionaries had developed for specific sects. For the Japanese, these discussions must have been a crash course in Aristotelian and scholastic logic:

“No thing that is not alive can move by itself without a mover. Since sun and moon are not alive, they cannot move by themselves. Who then has moved them and moves them from one side to the other?” They did not know how to answer this.62

The missionaries focused on the question of the creator God, the eternal soul that can choose between good and evil, and on eternal dam-

58 Torres, first Yamaguchi letter; Schurhammer 1929, p. 52 (original p. 97).
59 As Schurhammer (1929, p. 51) suggests, the Japanese word used in this discussion probably was hoôteke, i.e., “Buddha.” Thus the argument would get a slightly different twist since the question is not which God ought to be worshiped but rather which Buddha.
60 Torres, first Yamaguchi letter; Schurhammer 1929, p. 51 (original p. 96). The second letter (Schurhammer 1929, p. 60) contains a similar instant conversion story: this time, the Japanese who “are guided by reason” are totally convinced that only the one who has created their souls can save them, and that the souls have a beginning but no end. Hearing this, they immediately “abandon their idols, which they worshiped from childhood, and their fathers and mothers too, and become Christians.” That the conversions were not so easy is indicated by the fact that a little later in the same letter Torres mentions the inquiry about the souls with a beginning and no end as one of the “extremely difficult questions” (Schurhammer 1929, p. 52, original pp. 96-97).
61 Torres, third Yamaguchi letter (October 20, 1551 to Francis Xavier); Schurhammer 1929, p. 62 (original Cartas 1598, p. 18 v). The Cartas 1575 text is more heavily edited here; see Schurhammer 1929, p. 62, notes 4 and 6.
62 Fernández, Yamaguchi letter (October 20, 1551 to Francis Xavier); Schurhammer 1929, p. 74 (original pp. 103-104).
nation in hell for those who make the wrong choice. However, the Japanese discussants seem to have given back in kind, focusing on the almighty and good creator God and his defective products (hell, the devil, people incapable of keeping his commandments). Since our focus here is on information about Buddhism rather than Christianity, we must be grateful that the missionaries made no mention at all of the mysteries of their faith such as the son of God from Nazareth, the Holy Ghost, the Trinity, etc., that could have caused logic to falter, and chose to concentrate instead on some aspects of Buddhism that offended god-given reason.

The discussion notes of Fernández are arranged by sects. By far the most voluminous part consists of discussions with Zen priests and laymen. The rest is made up of some sections on unspecified "other" questioners, the worshipers of Shaka, and a small final section on the worshipers of Amida and the Hokke sect.

The questions to the worshipers of Shaka follow a set path: they probe the reasons for the worship of Shaka, eliciting some biographical information that then is attacked for inconsistency:

When we asked why they worshiped him, they replied that Xaqua always was and will be; and from the beginning of the world to the time that he was born of a woman, which is now some 2500 years, he was born 8000 times. We asked them from whom he was born those eight thousand times, and why he was born, and when he was born. They replied that they knew no more than that Xaqua, after he had been born a man, at the age of seven years lifted up a dear hand to heaven and placed the other upon earth and said: "I am alone in heaven and on earth." And after this he preached many lives of former Saints, for example, the life of Amida so that those who worshiped these former Saints might be saved.

APP: FRANCIS XAVIER'S DISCOVERY (3)

To the missionaries, Shaka thus appeared as a blasphemous reformer who violated the first of the commandments that God had communicated to Moses and also targeted the followers of Amida, a "Saint" who had lived long before him, with his promise of salvation. Shaka, the missionaries were told, had written books so that his followers would pray to him and be saved. However, at age 49, he completely changed his mind:

At the age of forty-nine, he contemplated and said that so far he had been ignorant and therefore had written so many things. But now he stated that one who wished to be saved should learn by self-contemplation what his end would be, and those who did not know this would be condemned, since he had now learned this through contemplations.

These books, the missionaries learned, are nevertheless of some use to those who are unable to perform such meditations and are saved by praying to Shaka and his saints. Torres immediately jumped on the obvious contradiction:

If that is so, why has Shaka said when he was 49 years old that he did not know anything when he wrote those books, and that only one who meditates can be saved? Thus this was a lie, and if he had been a true saint without beginning or end he could not have lied since in the creator and saviour of the world there cannot be any deceit. And since he lied then, one can see that what he said at age seven about being alone in heaven and on earth also was a lie, and that those who pray to him and do what he taught will not be saved since it was all lies.

The representatives of the "religion of Amida and the Hokke-shū" are chided because of their stupid customs:

63 Schurhammer 1929, pp. 67-80.
64 Ibid., pp. 80-82 (sections 45-46).
65 Ibid., pp. 82-83 (sections 47-51).
66 Ibid., p. 83 (section 52).
67 Since we are here interested in information about Buddhism, little mention will be made of the usually predictable questions and arguments of the missionaries.
68 Ibid., p. 82 (sections 47-48); original p. 108. English translation from Schurhammer 1982, vol. 4, pp. 289-290. The word Fernández noted for "saint" was probably hōtōke, i.e., buddha. See the Daidōji permit in part 2 of this article and Schurhammer 1929, p. 66, note 2.
70 Ibid., pp. 82-83 (section 49); original p. 109.
71 Ibid., p. 83 (section 51); original p. 109.
We reproached them especially for the things which they did and their silliness, particularly the padres because they had women and laymen present offerings to the wooden idols of Amida, and also because they offered food to the souls of the departed.72

The major part of the discussions with the Zen representatives turned around problems that the missionaries set up in order to drive home major points of their faith: a first principle or Creator God (sections 4-5), an anima or eternal soul that distinguishes man from animals (sections 6-12 & 16-26), the nature and location of heaven and hell (sections 13-15), the nature and location of God (sections 21-29), and those of the devil (sections 30-32 & 39-44), the goodness and compassion of God (sections 33-34, 38-41, 45-46), and morality and sexual customs (sections 35-37).

Since many of the questions or answers are set in terms whose meaning the missionaries did not yet realize, the interesting problems we discussed in part 2 in connection with the Daidōji permit are pervasive. The first question of the missionaries to the representatives of Zen may serve as example: "How do you go about becoming a saint [se fazerem Santos]?” The expression “fazer santos” was also used in the Daidōji document where it appears to stand for buppo, the teaching of the Buddha,73 and Schurhammer notes that in Japanese Fernández here probably asked about the way to become a hotoke or Buddha. In the answer to this and to other questions, the Zen representatives essentially press their point that to look for saints or buddhas outside is useless, and that no way will lead to that which is neither this nor that, neither lives nor dies, and is thus often called “nothing.” The answer to the first question goes:

They laughed and replied that there are no saints; thus there

was no need to look for one's way; since what had come into existence from nothing could not help returning to nothing [que de nada foi echo, não pode deixar de se convertir em nadie].74

Concerning the “first principle” from which all things arise, they said:

This is a principle from which all things arise: men, animals, plants: every created thing has in itself this principle, and when a man or animal dies, they return to the four elements, into that which they were, and this principle returns to that which it is. This principle, they say, is neither good nor bad, has neither glory nor pain, does not die and does not live, so that it is a no [de manera que es hum nó].75

The Jesuits tried to turn this principle into a springboard towards the admission of an eternal soul (sections 6-13), ending up with the soul's choice of heaven or hell. However, the Japanese told them that hell and the punishment of evil are not in the yonder but rather right here:

They replied that there is no hell after a man's death and that hell is in this world. And when through death we are liberated from these physical miseries by leaving this hell, we shall be at peace.76

A topic of the Jesuits around which much of their argument turned, the eternal soul, shows how these discussions often ran on parallel tracks. Using an image familiar to Buddhists, that of a jewel buried in dirt, the missionaries argued that as long as the soul is “confined in this dirty body” it cannot see hotoke (God). To their surprise, the Japanese agreed, and how:

They said that this is so, and that the souls of men are God because they do not have any body and therefore are neither born nor die.77

72 Ibid., p. 83 (section 52); original p. 109. See also Torres’ remarks in the same letter on the Bon-festival (p. 80; original p. 107):

As your Reverence knows, they have many ceremonies in this regard. They say that souls come here every seven days to eat, and they prepare very good food for them, and in August they put, for 15 days in a row and with much festivities, food on the graves while saying that they come.

73 See part 2 of this article.
The agreement and the following reasoning remain puzzling until one translates the statement back into Japanese: the Kokoro, the soul of man, is nothing other than Hotoke, Buddha, because it does not have any form and therefore is neither born nor dies. Or, to put it into Zen words: Mind is Buddha, and Buddha is Mind. For the Jesuits, the statement "the souls of men are God" was of course unacceptable—after all, there are bad guys—which is why they replied:

We replied to this by asking them if among men there were those who were good and those who were evil. They replied that there were. We said: "The Saint" (Hotoke) who created the world and such beautiful things and rules over them never thought nor did anything bad; he is most holy and totally good. Thus it is clear that the souls of evil people are not God but rather creatures of God.78

As this is the end of this particular discussion, one can imagine the puzzled look on the Japanese faces . . . However, if one considers that these totally different spiritual universes were discussed through an interpreter with barely two years of Japanese, no dictionaries, hardly any knowledge of Buddhism, and a set of Buddhist terms that carried different meanings for each side, the amount of information that actually came through is surprising. What came through best were a series of sharp questions from the Japanese concerning various facets of theodicy—questions which produced embarrassingly dull answers that, for better or worse, cannot concern us here. They indicate that the Yamaguchi discussions may have failed to convey even the First Commandment as formulated by Fernández:

Therefore the First Commandment: Every man who has intelligence and uses it, will immediately know that there is a Creator who created his soul.79

The Cochin and Goa Letters

After his return to India, Xavier informed the European Jesuits in detail about the idolatries of Japan. In addition to his own memory, he was relying on the new information obtained just before his departure from Japan through the letters of Cosme de Torres and Juan Fernández. Three letters of Xavier from Cochin—the long letter to the Jesuits in Europe80 and the shorter ones to Ignatius of Loyola81 and Simão Rodrigues82—summarize the knowledge Xavier had gained about Buddhism.

Xavier was immensely surprised and impressed by the great number of professional clerics and monastic institutions in Japan:

There are in the land a great number of men and women who make a profession of religion. [ . . . ] There are a very great number of these men and women bonzes in Japan: it is something that has to be seen before it can be believed. Persons of great veracity have told me that there is a duke in Japan whose lands contain eight hundred monasteries of friars and nuns, and that each of these has no less than thirty individuals; and that in addition to these eight hundred monasteries, there are others of four, six, and eight persons. From what I have seen of Japan, I believe this to be so.83

Xavier distinguished "nine kinds of doctrine, each one different from the others."84 He fails to mention any of them by name, but we may assume on the basis of the above-mentioned information by Torres that he means the Tendai, Shingon, Jōdo, Jōdo-shin (Ikkō), Hokke (Nichiren), Ji, Rinzai-Zen, Sōtō-Zen, and probably the Yuzu-nembutsu sects.85

78 Ibid., p. 72 (section 25); original p. 103.
79 Ibid., p. 81 (section 45); original p. 108.
80 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Europe, January 29, 1552; Costelloe 1992, pp. 326–343.
81 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 97, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 29, 1552; Costelloe 1992, pp. 344–348.
82 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 98 to Father Simão Rodrigues in Portugal, written in Cochin on January 30, 1552; Costelloe 1992, pp. 349–351.
83 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Europe, January 29, 1552; Costelloe 1992, pp. 327–328.
84 Ibid., p. 328.
85 The Yuzu nembutsu sect 興福念仏宗 was founded by Ryōnin 良忍 (1071–1132). Yuzu means "permeating," referring to the all-pervading faith in Amitābha-Buddha. In Japan, one usually speaks of thirteen major Buddhist sects; in addition to those mentioned, they include the so-called Nara-sects (Kegon 華厳, Hosso 行相, and Ritsu 玄宗) as well as a third flavor of Zen imported later from China, the Ōbaku 黄檗 sect.
The teachings of all of these sects are, according to Xavier, believed to come "from a mainland near Japan by the name of China." They believe their objects of worship are men rather than gods, and the most important are called "Xaca" and "Amida;"

They have writings of men who performed great penances, that is, for a thousand, two thousand, and three thousand years, whose names are Shaka and Amida. They also have many others, but the most important of these are Shaka and Amida.

Xavier guessed that the color of the clergy's dress indicates which of these two men they worshiped:

The male and female bonzes who wear grey habits are all attached to Amida, and the majority of the people of Japan worship Amida. Many of the male and female bonzes who wear black habits, though they worship Amida, have Shaka as their main object of worship, and many others.

Since Amida and Xaca appeared to be the main objects of worship, Xavier attempted to gather information about them. But in spite of the help of those informants in Yamaguchi who gave him "a very faithful account of all that is contained in the laws of the pagans," what he learned was rather predictable:

I tried to learn if these two, Amida and Shaka, had been men dedicated to philosophy. I asked the Christians to make an accurate translation of their lives. I discovered from what was written in their books that they were not men, since it was written that they had lived for a thousand and two thousand years, and that Shaka will be born eight thousand times, and

many other absurdities. They were thus not men, but pure inventions of the demons.

The original master plan to defeat the teachings of these "pure inventions of the demons" at the great universities of Japan did not advance beyond the impression that the Ashikaga-gakko in Bandô may be important:

In this land of Japan there is a very great university by the name of Bandu, where a great many bonzes go to study the teachings of their sects. These sects, as I have already said, come from China, and their writings are written in Chinese letters, even though the writing of Japan is much different from that of China.

So, after more than two years in Japan and in spite of that very learned graduate of Bandô in Yamaguchi who became a "Christian," Xavier could hardly report anything new about the primary targets of his overall missionary strategy beyond what he had known at the outset:

Bonzes from almost all of Japan go to study in Bandu; and, when they return from Bandu, they teach in their own lands what they have learned there. From what I have been told, Bandu is a very large city inhabited by many noblemen. The people are reputed to be very hardy, though there are said to be some good men among them. This is the information which I have obtained about Bandu, and the same would be true about the other universities.

But what did he find out about the teachings of these sects? As is to be expected, the missionary focused on the topics of strategic importance for his enterprise:

In the teachings of their sects, the Japanese have no knowledge [ . . . ] about the creation of the world, the sun, moon, stars, heaven, earth, sea, or anything else. It seems to them that the world has had no beginning. What they felt the most

86 Ibid., p. 328.
87 Ibid., p. 328.
88 Ibid., p. 337. Xavier's confusion as to who worships whom is not only due to the fact that, unlike in Europe, Japanese monks and nuns sometimes wear robes of different colors for different functions (grand ceremonies, funerals, etc.) and ranks, but also to his hazy picture of the relationship of Shaka, Amida, and those "many other" buddhas, bodhisattvas, eminent monks, and founders of sects.
89 Ibid., p. 333.
90 Ibid., p. 337.
91 Ibid., p. 340.
92 Ibid., pp. 349-350.
was to hear us say that souls have a Creator who created them. Almost all were astonished by this.

With regard to sectarian consciousness, Xavier noted a strange mixture of nonchalance and fanatic fervor in people's attitudes:

Both men and women, each one according to his or her own wish, choose the doctrine which he or she desires, and no one is forced to belong to one sect rather than to another. The consequence of this is that there are homes where the husband belongs to one sect, the wife to another, and the sons to still another; but this does not seem to be strange to them, since each one chooses what he or she wishes. There are differences and quarrels among them, since they deem some to be better than others; and there are wars because of this.

However, on some most important points, all the sects appeared to be in agreement:

None of these nine sects say anything about the creation of the world or of souls. All say that there is hell and paradise; but no one explains what paradise is, and even less by whose order and command souls go to hell. These sects simply maintain that the men who founded them performed great penances, that is, for a thousand, two thousand, and three thousand years; and that they performed these penances because they were concerned about the perdition of many people who did not do penance for their sins.

For Xavier, the main feature of the teaching of Japanese sects consisted in the possibility of getting saved simply by prayers to the founders of the sects without doing penance or holding the commandments. These commandments are very numerous—"three hundred and five hundred commandments, and others besides"—yet all sects agree that only five are necessary: not killing or eating anything that has been killed; not stealing; not fornicating; not lying; and not drinking wine.

However, realizing that ordinary people are too weak even to observe these five commandments, the clergy offered the public a deal: if you give us money, food, and housing, we keep the commandments in your place, and you can sin as you like.

And this is why both the grandees and the people, in order to be free to sin, granted the male and female bonzes what they asked; and these priests and nuns of theirs are consequently held in very high esteem in Japan. The people themselves are fully convinced that these bonzes and nuns have the power to save souls that are going to hell, since they have bound themselves to keep the commandments and to recite other prayers in their stead.

As a matter of fact, this "power to save souls that are going to hell" became the real bone of contention. Xavier realized this, stating: "All the quarrels that we had with the bonzes were over this question of hell." Thus he warned future missionaries:

Many [bonzes] will become furious when they hear this about

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93 Ibid., pp. 333-334.
94 Ibid., p. 328.
95 In fact, Xavier contradicts this statement in the same letter (p. 335). Though he does not mention the sect by name, it is clear that he here condemns the Zen sect for not believing in one of his religion's central features:

Among the nine sects there is one which holds that the souls of men are mortal, exactly like those of animals. All the others, those who are not of this law, think this is a very wicked sect. The members of this sect are evil; they have no patience to hear it said that there is a hell.

However, possibly without realizing that he speaks of the same sect, he also wrote in the same letter (p. 340):

These bonzes have great and very subtle talents. They spend much of their time in contemplating, in thinking about what will happen to them and the goal which they must reach, and other contemplations of this sort.
hell, that there is no remedy for it. Others will say that we know nothing, since we cannot rescue souls from hell. They have no knowledge of purgatory.\(^{102}\)

Apart from excluding the poor and the women, who have "more sins than those of all the men in the world because of purgation,"\(^{103}\) the deal offered by Japanese clergy—which included various means of making money such as taking money in this world and promising to pay it back tenfold in the beyond\(^{104}\)—was of course rotten at the very core:

We, however, proved to them that those who go to hell cannot be rescued by the male and female bonzes, giving them reasons that made it seem to them that it was as we said, telling them that they had up till then been deceived by the bonzes. It pleased God in his mercy that even the bonzes said that it was true that they could not release the souls of those who had gone to hell, but that if they did not preach this, they would not have anything to eat or to wear.\(^{105}\)

This struggle over who can really save souls from hell reminds one vividly of the heated discussions that took place in Europe during the Reformation, where the very same issues were of central importance. There as in Japan, the established clergy was attacked by reformers who claimed that the promises of help in the afterworld were just scams for making money. However, in Japan the roles were reversed: the European shock troops of Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits, were unwittingly carrying the mantle of Buddhist reformers. Just as Luther had taught disenchanted Catholics that the true Christian hell had no waiting room or purgatory, the Jesuits now taught the Japanese that their view that "even though they were in hell, they would be released from it if they were summoned by the founders of their sects"\(^{106}\) was a lie because the founder of the true teaching did not let anyone out of hell:

The Christians of Japan are afflicted with sadness, and the reason for this is that they feel keenly what we have told them, that there is no remedy for those who go to hell. They feel this because of their love for their fathers and mothers, wives, children, and others who have died in the past and they feel pity for them. Many weep for their dead, and they ask me if there is any remedy for them through alms and prayers. I tell them that there is no remedy for them.\(^{107}\)

For people accustomed to compassionate figures such as the bodhisattva Jizō who does not shy away from stepping right into hell in order to rescue the damned and lead them to the Western Paradise, the Christian Deus, the creator of all mankind, seemed coldhearted:

Before their baptism, these people of Yamaguchi had great doubts about the supreme goodness of God, saying that he could not be merciful, since he had not revealed himself to them before our coming; if it was true (as we said) that those who did not adore God all go to hell, God had had no mercy on their ancestors, since he had let them go to hell without having given them a knowledge of himself.\(^{108}\)

Of course, the fate of their ancestors was and is of great concern to the Japanese, and Buddhism provided the ways and means to deal with this problem. The teaching about hell by the monks from Tenjiku was thus a terrible shock to the Japanese audience. However, Xavier also saw a good side in all their pain:

They feel this sadness; but I am not disturbed by this, only that they do not become careless about themselves and go to suffer with their ancestors. They ask me if God can rescue them from hell, and the reason why they must ever remain in hell. I give them extensive answers to all this. They do not cease to weep when they see that their ancestors cannot be

\(^{102}\) Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 97, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 29, 1552; Costelloe 1992, p. 346.

\(^{103}\) Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 96, from Cochin to the Jesuit companions in Europe, January 29, 1552; Costelloe 1992, p. 329.

\(^{104}\) Ibid., p. 330.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., p. 336.

\(^{106}\) Ibid., p. 334.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., p. 341.

\(^{108}\) Ibid., p. 335.
helped. And I also experience some sadness when I see my friends, so loved and cherished, weeping over things for which there is no remedy.109

Apart from such sadness, Xavier derived even more joy in Japan than he had felt in India and Indonesia:

I can truthfully say that I had never before in my life received so much pleasure and spiritual consolation as I did in seeing that God our Lord confounded the pagans through us and the victory which we were constantly gaining over them.110

Just as communist news programs used to report the “victory of communism” along with targets such as getting a refrigerator into every private home by the year 2000, Xavier’s declaration of “constant victory” came with an order for people who could actually bring it about: men “well trained in the artes and sofisteria” who could “through their disputations defeat the bonzes” and “catch them when they contradict themselves.” For this purpose, Xavier devised a two-pronged strategy: one group, stationed in Japan had to acquire “a very good knowledge of the [Japanese] language” in order to “master the errors of the sects.” They could then serve a second group, the “reliable people from Europe,” in defeating the bonzes.111 It was all too clear to Xavier that during his two-year stay in Japan, the effort to “master the errors of the sects” had hardly begun. The one missionary who could speak intelligible Japanese, Juan Fernández, was unable to read any texts of these sects; and, having burnt his fingers badly with Anjirō, Xavier knew well what risk reliance on Japanese informants entailed.

Reflecting on his efforts in Japan, Xavier admitted to his superior that they were far from perfect:

I would never be able to describe the great debt that I owe to the people of Japan, since God our Lord, through respect for them, gave me a great knowledge of my infinite iniquities; for, being apart from myself, I did not recognize the many evils that were within me until I saw myself amidst the toils and dangers of Japan. God our Lord made me clearly feel the great need which I had of one who would take great care of me.112

But Xavier had once again left the consequences of his iniquities to others while setting a new goal for himself: China! Trying to calm his pangs of conscience, he asserted that his leaving of Japan would actually benefit the troubled Japan mission rather than harm it, “for, if the Japanese learn that the Chinese have accepted the law of God, they will more quickly lose their faith in their sects.”113 This idea had been formed on the basis of repeated Japanese doubts about the legitimacy of Christian doctrines because they were not known in China:

It seemed to them that there could not be a Creator of all things, since this Creator is never mentioned in the teachings of their saints; and, even more, if all things in the world had a beginning, the people of China, from whom they had received their own laws, would have known this.114

However set the case that the Japanese had realized that the creed of Xavier is a religion from Europe and entirely different from Buddhism, why would then the presence of this teaching in China be an issue at all? Had the Great Enemy again played a trick on the pious Spaniard, conjuring up another fata morgana that enticed the missionary to a faraway land?

109 Ibid., p. 341.
110 Ibid., p. 343.
111 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 98, from Cochin to Simão Rodrigues in Portugal, January 30, 1552; Costelloe 1992, p. 349.
112 Schurhammer & Wicki, 1944/45, letter no. 97, from Cochin to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome, January 29, 1552; Costelloe 1992, p. 347.
113 Ibid., p. 347.
114 Ibid., pp. 333–334.