A Failing Mission?

Salvation in the Jesuit Mission in Japan Under Francisco Cabral

Linda Zampol D'Ortia

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Abstract

This monograph sheds new light on the tensions that surrounded the early modern idea of Catholic mission by using, as a case study, the perceived breakdown and failure of the Jesuit mission in Japan under the Portuguese Superior Francisco Cabral (1533-1609). The problem of salvation in the missionary field came to the fore during the Japanese mission, forcing the Jesuits to confront their expectations and jeopardising the paradigm of mission itself. In the 1570s, the efficacy of the religious vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, which guided the life and work of the Jesuit missionaries, appeared at risk, threatened by the rising tensions between the salvation of the missionaries and the salvation of their flock of Japanese Christians. Perceiving the mission as more and more spiritually polluted, Francisco Cabral faced a deep crisis that made him question the viability of the whole enterprise. This study considers the clashes between the Superior and his fellow Jesuits as Cabral attempted to identify a possible policy that could steer the great growth of the mission in the 1570s while managing its systematic funding woes. Feeling deserted by his superiors in India and Europe, distrustful of his brethren, and disillusioned with the Japanese Christians, Cabral struggled to find any sign that his sacrifices held divine approval. When he came to the conclusion that even God had abandoned the mission, Cabral's only solution to maintain any hope for his own salvation was to leave for India, whence he opposed with vigour the Japanese mission and its new head, Alessandro Valignano.

Keywords Early modern Catholicism. Early modern Jesuit missions. Catholic soteriology. History of Catholicism in Japan. Japanese Jesuit mission.

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I wrote the final form of the present text as I was part of the Gender and Women's History Research Centre of Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. I am indebted to all its excellent scholars, particularly towards Susan Broomhall and Jessica O'Leary, for their continuous support and kindness.

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Introduction

Overview

The year is 1549, and Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506-52), the "Apostle of the Indies", has been in Japan for approximately three months. Between the harsh crossing he recently experienced to reach the archipelago, and the difficult journey that awaits him to reach the capital of the country, his thoughts still linger on the tense situation he has left behind in the college at Goa, where the effervescent spirituality of some missionaries is causing disharmony and disorder among the ranks of the Jesuits.[1] He therefore takes advantage of a short reprieve in Kagoshima to write numerous exhortations to his brothers; one passage of this "Great Letter from Japan" reads:

> Look carefully after yourselves, brothers mine in Jesus Christ, because there are many in hell who, when alive, were cause and instrument, with their words, of the salvation and acceptance into the glory of heaven of others.[2]

1 The situation is detailed in Županov 2005.

2 Francisco Xavier to the Jesuits in Goa, Kagoshima, 5 November 1549, in Ruiz-de-Medina, *Documentos del Japón* (henceforth: *DJ*), 1:150. All translations, except where otherwise indicated, are mine.

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In other words, Xavier is clarifying for his brethren that bringing about the salvation and conversion of others does not assure the same outcome for the missionary.

This paragraph opens a window on a question that is not usually raised in the writings of Xavier, who was often preoccupied with directing the development of the Jesuits' recently founded enterprise in Asia and would have taken this soteriological understanding for granted. Simultaneously, the fact that Xavier had to explicitly state this suggests that not all missionaries had the same approach to salvation and mission. What exactly is the relation between the salvation of the soul of the Jesuit and that of the people he aims to save, either new converts or old Christians? And, so, how does a missionary ensure his own salvation? How does this preoccupation tie into the policies that surround the missionary enterprise? These queries allow us to reframe the stance of early modern Jesuit missionaries on the issues they confronted in their ministries and shed light on their attitudes and decision-making regarding the entirety of their evangelising activity.

This monograph applies these considerations to the work of the Portuguese Jesuit Francisco Cabral (1532-1609) while he was the head of the mission in Japan (1570-79), with a particular focus on his decisions for the governance of this enterprise. The figure of Cabral emerges from the historiography of the Jesuit mission of Japan as a sort of embarrassing accident in an otherwise stellar enterprise. He is dwarfed by the charismatic action of the Japanese mission's founder, the enterprising administration of the later Visitor, Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), and the systematic policymaking of Bishop Luís Cerqueira (1552-1614); he also lacked the skilful proclivity for writing of Luís Fróis (1532-97), the inventive resilience of Gaspar Vilela (1526-72), and the extensive knowledge and appreciation of Japanese culture of João Rodrigues Tçuzzu (1561-1633). In general, Cabral's missionary work is similarly ignored, as historiography either follows the Xavier-Valignano-Cerqueira order of (supposed and desired) progression or focuses on specific periods of the mission that fall outside his superiorate (1570-79).[3] The one trait of Cabral that emerges clearly from the literature is that he did not show any love for Japanese people nor their culture. He considered them sensual, sinful, and treacherous. His writings after he left Japan to evangelise in India are particularly aggressive on this point: in the 1590s, his opposition to Valignano's political and spiritual work results in a vitriolic attack against Japan, the latter's favoured mission, in which

3 A representative of the first group is Boscaro 2008. To the second, focusing on specific periods or missionaries, belongs Schurhammer 1973; Bourdon 1993; Moran 1993; Brockey 2014. A thematic approach on the theology of the post-Valignano period is taken by Üçerler 2022.

Cabral exaggerated all the negative traits he could attribute to the Japanese, just as he had exalted the positive ones of virtuous Japanese Christians when the mission was under his tutelage. The figure of Cabral is thus flatly returned as nothing more than a "fidalgo y muy fidalgo",[4] a Portuguese medieval *conquistador* who stood in the way of the "modern […] pliable, perspicacious" (Elison 1988) Italian missionaries who had understood the *real* strategy to bring the Gospel to Japan.[5]

This monograph aims to complicate this narrative by making Cabral's case a "telling failure".[6] Cabral's writings, spurred by his desperation and fear of not being saved, say a lot, about various topics that were generally considered not edifying enough to appear explicitly in missionary correspondence. By looking at the reasons why Cabral considered the Japanese mission as failing, this research aims to reveal the expectations and worldviews that Cabral brought with himself from Europe and Goa. It will analyse the manner in which Cabral's imagined missionary glory shattered, together with his plan of evangelisation, upon contact with a multi-layered enemy: his own brethren, accused of refusing to obey; his superiors, who appeared to ignore the mission; the Japanese people, who rejected Christianity regardless of the what Cabral held to be his sacrifices; and the Japanese Christians, whose piety is described to be much more pleasing to God than Cabral's own. This approach sheds light on why this enterprise of Japan, often hailed as the most important among those of the Society of Jesus and depicted as one of their most successful ones, at a certain point of its history had been considered on the brink of failure by one of its superiors. In this way, the figure of Cabral is returned to the relevant contexts in which he lived and that produced his worldview, while an analysis of the tensions that surrounded his work in Japan contributes to the challenging of the traditional portraits of the Society of Jesus that describe it as a highly homogeneous and orderly organisation.[7] A close reading of his correspondence, often against the grain, shows the centrality of discourses of salvation in the missionaries' narratives. Refusing to see the Jesuits just as pioneers of intercultural contacts (and one would be hard-pressed

4 A *fidalgo* was a man of the Portuguese military aristocracy. The expression, originally by missionary Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo, was made famous by Elison 1988, 20.

5 The frequency of this narrative as it appears in historiography is discussed in Brockey 2014, 102-3.

6 I am following the approach delineated in the collection by Keevak, Hertel 2017.

7 Numerous studies present critically the different aspects of the traditional image of the Society in different periods. Historical outlines up to the present are O'Malley 1999. Mitchell 1980, 7-12. A brief explanation of why the stereotype of uniformity persists in academic studies is in Brockey 2014, 19. For a more detailed overview of the literature of Jesuit stereotypes, see Aveling 1981, 18-48.

with Cabral), this text aims to avoid what historian Luke Clossey has described as the "unspoken but widely lurking prejudice of the Europeans as the 'same' [as modern researchers]" (Clossey 2008, 6-7). For the same reasons, it also strives to avoid falling into a "no true Jesuit fallacy" by considering the figure of Cabral always in relation to other influential members of the Society of Jesus, such as Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier; although Cabral's contrast with Valignano on the missionary policies for Japan of 1580-81 falls outside the scope of this study, references to the Visitor and his writings are necessary to understand the period before his intervention in Japan.

Luke Clossey researched the extensive bulk of the letters *Indipetae*,[8] the petitions of young Jesuits who wished to become missionaries, to examine the impact that the aspiration for their own salvation had on petitioners' yearning for the Indies. Contrary to the myth of the altruistic Jesuit who was worried primarily about his flock, Clossey's findings highlight a balanced desire to save both themselves and others (121-3). If this was the double intent of the Jesuits who wished to work in extra-European lands, the question of how to save oneself ceases to be a small addendum to the key question of missionary policy proper and instead takes centre stage, alongside the desire to save others, in the preoccupations that surround missionary activity. As stated by Clossey, soteriological worries were indeed a central feature of early modern Catholicism (246-7).

What, then, is meant by Xavier's suggestion to "look after oneself"? Faith in God, unsurprisingly, appears in his writings as the most important feature in a missionary;[9] humility too, as the best instrument to know one's own sinful tendencies and to obtain a more complete abandonment to God.[10] These passages are peppered with references to Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, the guide to find God's will that compelled Francis Xavier to enter the group that would later become the Society of Jesus, and on which he relied while a missionary in Asia.[11] The constant reference to the understanding of God's will, through the *Exercises*, and the unconditional acceptance of it are therefore one of the ways to look after one's spiritual wellbeing. How, though, ought a missionary to avoid a too personal reading of God's will, and the excessive zeal of some enthusiasts,

8 For a general introduction on the *Indipetae*, see Maldavsky 2012. See also the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, *Digital Indipetae Database* (https://indipetae.bc.edu/).

9 Francisco Xavier to the Jesuits in Goa, Kagoshima, 5 November 1549, in *DJ*, 1:148.

10 "There is nobody in hell who, when alive, worked to obtain the means to reach this interior humility". Francisco Xavier to the Jesuits in Goa, Kagoshima, 5 November 1549, in *DJ*, 1:150.

11 Ruiz de Medina highlights the passages in question in the critical apparatus of *DJ*.

which is "arranged by the Devil to upset [them]" (*DJ*, 1:151)? The other principal tool against the temptations of religious excesses is obedience (*DJ*, 1:153). An often-controversial topic,[12] the conceptualisation of Jesuit obedience indeed presents the orders of the superior as an interpretation of divine will. In this world-oriented religious order, obedience comes to be a substitute for more traditional (and extreme) forms of mortification, which Loyola believed to be a gateway for egotistic temptations. In the most radical interpretations of this concept, obedience came to represent, in its total abandonment to God's will as interpreted by one's superior, the last hope of salvation for a Jesuit who had lost his path.

Obedience emerges from Xavier's letters as a most important aspect of the soteriological path because it was part of a wider structure, encapsulated by the first Jesuits in the *Formula of the Institute*.[13] "The defence and propagation of the faith" appear as the main objectives, but subsequent lines betray the characteristic preoccupation with salvation identified by Luke Clossey in early modern Catholicism: "let [the aspirant Jesuit] take care […] first of all to keep before his eyes God and then the nature of this Institute which he has embraced and which is, so to speak, a pathway to God" (*Cons.*, 67). As was common in religious orders from the twelfth century (Riches 2010; Strieder 2001, 51-75), the Society of Jesus adopted the solemn vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, to be taken by spiritual coadjutors and professed members (O'Malley 1993, 347. See also Alden 1996, 12-13). In addition to the three solemn vows, some professed Jesuits swore a fourth vow, one of special obedience to the Pope regarding missions ("Exposcit debitum" [4], *Cons.*, 68). Taken by the original companions of Paris as a possible substitution in case their pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not successful, on this vow represented for Loyola "the principal foundation of the Society" (quoted in O'Malley 1993, 298). Regardless of its name, however, the fourth vow had little to do with the Pope himself, as the General and even people outside Jesuit hierarchy could be invested with this authority as well, such as the King of Portugal (O'Malley 1993, 299-300. See also Foresta 2012, 334-40). In this sense, it was mostly a manner to support the itinerant nature of the ministry of the Jesuits, that is, their missions. Francisco Cabral's work in Japan will therefore be

12 On the creation and perpetuation of the stereotype of complete Jesuit obedience, see Burke 2001.

13 This document, incorporated in the papal bulls that approved the Society of Jesus, and corresponding to the Rule in older orders, states explicitly the main aspects of the Jesuit way of proceeding. The Formula of the Institute and the papal bulls are generally collected at the beginning of the Constitutions; the edition used for this dissertation is *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* edited by George E. Ganss (henceforth: *Cons.*, followed by the entry number if between square brackets).

analysed in relation to the path of salvation prescribed by the Formula, and other subsequent readings of the traditional vows through Jesuit lenses. The specificities of the Catholicism promoted by the Society of Jesus thus intersected with the peculiarities of the mission to Japan, creating an uncommon situation, which still spoke to the wider context of early modern missionaries.

Periodisation

The first step to approaching the world as it was understood by the Jesuit missionaries, and more specifically Francisco Cabral, and reducing the inevitable approximations is to consider the context in which these men were moving, and which produced their worldview. This is a particularly important step, as the Jesuits had often displayed a tendency to hyper-awareness of the contexts they came across through their casuistry and their attempts at adaptation to other cultures (Burke 2002, 164-5).[14] As Peter Burke points out, in an outline of the history of the concept of 'context', it is most fruitful to consider multiple contexts at the same time (164). When dealing with people and ideas interacting on a global scale, if on one side the multiple contexts are a tangible reality, then, on the other, the problem of identifying the more relevant ones becomes particularly pressing in light of the sheer number of possibilities, if nothing else. Being aware of the multiplicity of possibly relevant contexts, how is it possible to delineate them with sufficient precision? Burke, at the end of his essay, defines a context as "phenomena that are not in focus at a given moment: especially, perhaps, those that are just out of focus" (174), that is, an essential part of the matter at hand that is lying at the margins.

To navigate the numerous possibilities, it is thus necessary to hypothesise a hierarchy of possible contexts (Shōgimen 2016, 245-7). Once a pertinent context is identified for a specific statement, the validity of said context can be tested on other assertions. The initial context can then, in turn, call to other relevant contexts. To give a pertinent example from Chapter 2, the preoccupation of Cabral with silk is linked with the soteriological consequences of poverty; this in turn recalls the importance of salvation in early modern Catholicism, but also the importance attributed to fine garments in *sengoku* Japan; or to the apostolate of Francis Xavier, and to the textual tradition that sees the latter mediating the two; or, finally, it can inform a discussion on the financial status of the mission. A verification of these contexts with other utterances by Cabral highlights how the

14 For a discussion of the sixteenth century's lack of concern with universalism, see Toulmin 1990. For casuistry, see O'Malley 1993, 144-52.

connection with the Japanese *milieu* was present, but mostly superficial in nature, while the necessities of early modern Catholicism emerged more solidly as the source of Cabral's preoccupations. By treating the context as a hypothesis, therefore, it is possible to discriminate among Burke's nested contexts to identify those that are "just out of focus" from those which just appear to be significant.

One of the wider contexts that inform Cabral's writings therefore, not even particularly out of focus, is the sixteenth-century Catholic milieu, that is, early modern Catholicism, which introduces a question of periodisation. Attempting to find a historical label for the period following the Protestant schism, Hubert Jedin's ground-breaking 1946 essay, "Katholische Reformation oder Gegenreformation" (translated as Jedin 1999), proposed to refer to it as both "Counter-Reformation" and "Catholic Reformation",[15] and recognised that some phenomena, such as the Council of Trent and the Society of Jesus, could fall under both names (Jedin 1999, 44). Jedin's approach has since been widely adopted by historians and scholars of religion (O'Malley 1991, 178), with some important exceptions.[16] More recently, John W. O'Malley has suggested the name "Early Modern Catholicism" to replace all the previous labels (193). In doing so, he links the many aspects of sixteenth-century Catholicism with the wider historical period ("Early Modern") in which they were set, instead of focusing only on the changes in religious structures. The adoption of this term also allows the elements that the traditional descriptions left stranded to be captured, such as many of the activities of the Society of Jesus (O'Malley 2002, 8).

However, the "Early Modern" label has not been accepted by historians as bland and faceless, as O'Malley purports (140). In addition to its chronological vagueness, its link to the contested idea of "modernity" highlights the risk it carries of levelling, by assuming that the world was on its way to modernisation (Goldstone 1998). The history of non-Western countries, especially, can fall victim to an approach that interprets differences as development aberrations by bringing

15 The difference is due to the perception of the "Counter-Reformation" as a merely reactionary movement, nearly without a will of its own. The idea was clearly not appealing to Catholic scholars, interested in describing a true renewal of the Church. Protestants, on the other side, tended to see the Reformation as the "true restoration" or as a positive movement towards a more modern disposition of religion ("modernity" having, for them, a clearly positive connotation). See Jedin 1999, 21-2.

16 Reinhard gives another possible perspective by highlighting the affinities between Catholic and Protestant reforms, with his Confessionalization (*Konfessionalisierung*) approach (1989). Another perspective, the "Tridentine", from the Council of Trent (1545-63), purported this event as central in the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church While admitting its importance in restructuring the life of both lay and clergy and in delineating the general policies that ruled the Church in the following centuries, the name is far too specific to be really useful as a wider context for such a complex situation. See, for example, Bossy 1970.

it continuously into comparison with the West (Trouillot 2002, 847; Parr 2001, 407).[17] Moreover, the tendency to understate a period's internal differences, in an effort to find common traits, and to exalt dissimilarities with other periods, can obfuscate the connection that transition moments have with the preceding centuries. The narrative is made linear, so that the result appears homogeneous and inevitable (Goody 2006a, 23). When inherited by the Early Modern period, this outlook can limit the possibility of historians to see past the teleology of modernisation, and to understand and describe the past on its own terms. This danger affects especially the sixteenth century as it was an early moment of transition, at the periphery of many of the systematisations and developments that would characterise the following centuries of the early modern period. As historians debate periodisation and potential new labels,[18] these considerations are necessary for a study that proposes to focus on a mission perceived as failed, and to make it speak in valuable ways. The early modern contexts will therefore be analysed in Chapter 1, as other, specific influences on Cabral's spirituality and worldview will be analysed when relevant.

The sixteenth century was a period of great changes in Japan as well. After the national unification around the sixth century, and the blooming of Japanese imperial culture during the Heian period (794-1185), political power was concentrated in the hands of the military class, whose head was considered the shōgun. During the Ōnin civil war (1467-77), the Ashikaga shōgunate, which had ruled the country by controlling imperial power, had emerged weakened and unable to maintain mastery over its nominal vassals. Approximately a century of civil war followed, the so-called *sengoku jidai* (the Warring States period) (Hall 2001, 13),[19] conventionally ending with the deposition of the last Ashikaga shōgun in 1573, or later, in 1600. It was characterised by the rapid rise and fall of military leaders, the *sengoku daimyō*, who rejected central control, carved territories for themselves through armed conflicts, and ruled independently over them (Sansom 1961, 249). However, due to the quick urbanisation and economic development of the country, various new social forces were emerging alongside the daimyō; the great Buddhist complexes, village communes, regional communes, egalitarian leagues of warriors and peasants (*ikki*), and local landowners – they all fought among

17 The label of "modernity" thus facilitates the assignation to the West all the "positive" qualities, finding their opposites automatically in the non-Western world (inaction, backwardness, disorder, etc.) and creating the traditional dichotomies found also in Orientalism. On this latter topic, see also Goody 2006a, 304; Mignolo, Schiwy 2002.

18 Such as "early-modern", suggested in Clossey 2005, 593-4.

19 Another common end date is 1568, the year when Nobunaga entered Kyōto.

themselves for dominance, and against the warlords (Souyri 2002, 182-200; Lamers 2000, 16-19). The instability of the country's political situation, often lamented by the missionaries, heavily marked the initial decades of Jesuit presence in Japan, like the subsequent unification would. For this reason, the present study will use the *sengoku* label when discussing sixteenth-century Japan.

Scope and Sources

From a chronological point of view, this study covers the years of Cabral's superiorate of Japan, from his landing in Japan in 1570 to the arrival of Valignano in 1579. Soon afterwards,[20] Cabral left the office of universal superior of Japan, even if he still maintained a prominent position in the mission as superior of the house of Bungo (Ōita). The extremely detailed study penned by Josef Franz Schütte, *Valignanos Missionsgrundsätze für Japan*, available in English with the title Valignano's *Mission Principles for Japan*, delineates the events of the last years of Cabral in Japan in a still relevant manner, considering extensively Cabral's reaction to Visitor Alessandro Valignano's reforms in Japan. However, I argue that historiography's focus on the disagreement between the two men as the reason behind Cabral leaving the Japanese mission fails to consider that Cabral's perception of the failing of the mission predates by years the Visitor's arrival. It is my objective to provide the analysis of a case study of a failure of a sixteenth-century mission, and I hope that such analysis can provide additional background information on the famous clash between Valignano and Cabral, by focusing on the latter's own understanding of the mechanisms and development of the Japanese enterprise.

The primary sources used to analyse the theme of salvation during this period are mostly comprised of Jesuit correspondence from Japan, focusing especially on Cabral's letters. Most of these sources belong to the period of Cabral's superiorate; these manuscripts are mostly found in the Archivum Romanorum Societatis Iesu (Rome), the library of the Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid), and the Ajuda Library (Lisbon). Prior or subsequent letters are used as well, such as those printed in the collection of Evora (1598)[21] or those present-

20 It is not clear when exactly Cabral was removed from his position of universal superior of Japan and nominated superior of Bungo, but by August of 1580 this decision had already been implemented.

21 *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus escreuerão dos Reynos de Iapão & China aos da mesma Companhia da India, & Europa des do anno de 1549. até o de 1580 […] Impressas por mandado do Reuerendissimo em Christo Padre dom Theotonio de Bragança, Arcebispo d' Euora* (henceforth: EVORA). Another relevant collection of sixteenth-century printed Jesuit letters is *Cartas que os padres e irmáos da Companhia de Jesus, que andao nos Reynos de Iapáo escreueráo aos da mesma Companhia da*

ed in the critical editions of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, to shed further light on the topics involved in the analysis. Additional Jesuit-produced documentation is used to shed light on the events, such as Luís Froís' *Historia de Japam* (1580s) (henceforth: *Historia*). Texts composed to support the evangelisation efforts, such as catechisms and reports, are considered as well. Chapter 3 provides ample information about Jesuit letter-writing, especially that between missionaries and their superiors who lived in other parts of the world. It delineates the importance of the correspondence that connected the centres and peripheries of the early modern Jesuit global network and how it sustained the governance of the Society. During his superiorate, Cabral strove to maintain contact with the nodes of Jesuit presence that were most relevant to the mission in Japan: Goa, Lisbon, and Rome. As will be delineated, Cabral concluded that this tool of governance and support of the union among Jesuits was not as efficient as earlier Jesuits had hoped.

The analysis of the themes present in these documents takes priority over the narration of the history of the Japanese mission, to enable the reconstruction of the contexts that inform Cabral's missionary policy and judgements on the successes and failures of the mission. Perhaps most evidently, Japanese people appear most often as Cabral's rhetorical tools, to support his argumentations, showing his approach to Japanese people and their culture. In this sense, this study is an exercise that aims to reconstruct the forma mentis of a Jesuit missionary of the sixteenth century.

Structure

This monograph is composed of five chapters, an introduction, and brief concluding remarks.[22] It is guided by the analysis of two interdependent subject matters: Catholic salvation and (missionary) failure. The first, being the missionaries' explicit preoccupation and final objective of their enterprise, is more starkly discussed by both sources and analysis. The second, a very unedifying topic, appears rarely in an explicit form in the sources, and when it is present, it appears woven tightly together with salvation. As the tools Cabral had to obtain salvation, for himself and for the Japanese people, seem to fail

India, e Europa, des do anno de.1549 ate o de.66. […] Impressas por mandado do Illustris. e Reuerendiss. Senhor dom Joáo Soarez, Bispo de Coimbra (henceforth: COIMBRA).

22 Part of the research presented in this monograph has been previously published as "The Dress of Evangelization: Jesuit Garments, Liturgical Textiles, and the Senses in Early Modern Japan" (2020). *Entangled Religions*, 10; and "Purple Silk and Black Cotton: Francisco Cabral and the Negotiation of Jesuit Attire in Japan (1570-73)" (2016). Maryks, R.A. (ed.), *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness*. Leiden: BRILL, 137-55.

one after the other, the idea that Japan is a failed mission coalesces in his letters in a more solid manner. The relation between the two, salvation and missionary failure, sits at the centre of this study, which strives to ask the question, when does a Catholic mission fail? Of course, it is not possible to answer such a question in general terms. Taking the point view of a sixteenth-century Portuguese Jesuit missionary, this study follows his point of view to focus on the spiritual dimension of failure; although economic, governance, and practical causes all appear in his correspondence, Cabral's worldview brings them all back to Providence and God's will for the world.

To facilitate the analysis that follows it, the first chapter offers a historical background on the Society of Jesus, its missions, and its relation to the Portuguese Empire in Asia, and introduces the figure of Francisco Cabral and his life until his arrival in Japan. Aiming to illustrate how Catholic salvation worked both in its theoretical and practical forms in the Jesuit mission of Japan, the thematic chapters consider each specific tool for salvation, following the loosely chronological order in which they come into focus in Cabral's correspondence. Chapter 2 focuses on the Jesuit vow of poverty and the debate that surrounded the use of silk Japanese garments by the missionaries. Chapter 3 analyses the vow of obedience and how it operated within Japan and the mission's connections with the Jesuit headquarters in Goa and Rome. Chapter 4 uses conversion as the leading theme and focuses on its conceptualisations in relation to the Jesuit attempts to bring the Japanese people to salvation. Finally, in Chapter 5, all these matters, which could be deemed 'small' failures, culminate in the perceived collapse of the mission by Cabral, who foresees its doom and abandons it.

1 Early Modern Jesuit Missions in Asia

Summary 1.1 The Sixteenth-Century Societ(ies) of Jesus. – 1.2 Early Modern Portuguese Presence in Asia. – 1.3 Francis Xavier's Mission in Asia. – 1.4 The Example of Loyola and Xavier. – 1.5 The Life and Character of Francisco Cabral.

1.1 The Sixteenth-Century Societ(ies) of Jesus

The Society (or Company) of Jesus officially saw the light in 1540, but its history started earlier. It was founded by ten men, who met in Paris in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century,[1] and among whom Loyola was recognised as the main founder. It is, however, the role he soon acquired as a model for all Jesuits that makes discussion of his life necessary (Durand 1992, 24). Ignatius de Loyola (1491-1556) was a Basque nobleman and soldier[2] who, after being wounded on the battlefield and inspired by reading Christian texts such as the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacopo da Varagine and Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi*, experienced a religious conversion and abandoned

1 They were Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier, Diego Laínez, Pierre Favre, Alfonso Salmerón, Simão Rodrigues, Nicolás Bobadilla, Claude Jay, Paschase Broët, and Jean Codure (O'Malley 1993, 9).

2 On the specific meaning of "nobleman" and "soldier", see Aveling 1981, 57; 62. Loyola's duties as both are exemplified in Martínez Millán 2012.

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his mundane life. After trying different paths provided by the spiritual milieu of the time, including severe self-discipline, he concluded that those austerities were not the answer to the travails of his soul, and he strove to instead obtain an inner path of dialogue with God (O'Malley 1993, 23-5). This initial stage of his spiritual journey was later defined by Loyola himself as a pilgrimage. In 1523, he travelled to Jerusalem; since he was not allowed to remain there for long, returning to the city remained one of his objectives for a long time (25-6).[3] His understanding of himself as a both spiritual and physical pilgrim would become a reference image for the Society as a whole, as well (Coupeau 2008, 33-4).

Having decided to obtain an official religious education, he was already enrolled at the University of Alcalá de Henares by 1526. The university, recently founded, promoted Humanism and a climate of academic and religious openness; its "hybrid form of erasmianism and *alumbradismo*" exerted lasting influence on Ignatius (Pastore 2005, 160). Loyola also began guiding people in an early form of the *Spiritual Exercises*, a series of meditations he had developed during a year-long penitence in the Catalan city of Manresa, based on his own spiritual tribulations (Pavone 2004, 4). These activities, together with his public catechising, landed him in three processes and an arrest by the Inquisition in Toledo, charged with *alumbradismo*.[4] He was acquitted of all charges but decided to move to Paris in 1528.

During the following seven years, Loyola attracted a group of six likeminded students, whom he guided in the Exercises. On the day of the Assumption of 1534, on the hill of Montmartre, they took three vows: poverty, chastity, and to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Although they were welcome in Rome when they asked for a blessing for their journey, in the end going to Jerusalem proved impossible, and they decided instead to put themselves at the service of the Pope (O'Malley 1993, 32). It was during this period that they gave themselves a name ("Company of Jesus", that is, companions united in the name of Jesus) out of the necessity to define themselves to the people they met. In 1539, Loyola submitted to Paul III the draft of the *For-*

3 For an analysis of the interiorised understanding of the pilgrimage of Ignatius, and its contextualisation in the European premodern spiritual milieu, see Mollat du Jourdin 1992.

4 Considering the numbers of religious figures who were accused of such heresy in this period (such as Juan de Ávila, Teresa de Jesús, and Juan de Valdés), *alumbradismo* is probably better understood as an umbrella term for all sorts of heterodoxies which saw internal prayer as central to the relation with God and were defined more by their otherness than by their identity. See García-Arenal, Pereda 2012, 118-19. See also Pastor 2004. Pastore notes that it is difficult to understand the connection between *alumbradismo* and the Society of Jesus, because the latter strove to mask all accusations of heresy (2005b, 86). Broggio describes Loyola as "dangerously hanging in the balance", together with other Spanish religious figures of this period (2004, 36). On the other side of the spectrum, Mongini takes Loyola's affinity with *alumbradismo* for granted (2012).

mula of the Institute, and the Pope officially recognised the Society with the 1540 papal bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*.

Comparable to the Rules that regulate life in other Catholic orders, the *Formula* started out as a short text in five paragraphs, which listed the so-called *consueta ministeria*, that is, the pastoral activities in which the Jesuits engaged regularly:

> public preaching, lectures, and any other ministrations whatsoever of the Word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments. Moreover, the Society should show itself no less useful in reconciling the estranged, in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons and hospitals, and indeed in performing any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good. (*Cons.*, 66-7)

The people who would be the objective of this activity were "infidels" (i.e., non-Christians), "heretics", and Christians. In the draft of this document, the management of schools had not been considered yet, and liturgical Hours were rejected in the name of an itinerant life and a special vow to the Pope, which would allow him to dispatch them anywhere. These latter characteristics were considered to be what distinguished the Society from older orders, and the Jesuits fought against their abolition regularly at the beginning (O'Malley 1993, 5-6).[5]

Following the indications of the *Formula*, the original companions, now eleven, voted Ignatius as Superior General in 1541 (35-7). In this same year, Loyola started working on the *Constitutions* requested by the papal bull with the crucial help of his secretary, Juan de Polanco (1517-76). The preliminary version would not be ready before 1552, however, when the work would pass for promulgation to another important member of this period, Jerónimo Nadal (1507-80; O'Malley 1993, 7). In this second period of the group's existence, their activities were understood as those of "pilgrims". Their own best example was Francis Xavier, who had been called the year before to go on a mission to India, by Dom João III, King of Portugal. Carrying out a wide variety of ministries, the Jesuits avoided being tied to a fixed abode (364-6). They began to make their presence felt in society at large, if on a small scale: they preached, taught the tenets of the faith publicly, and encouraged frequent communion and confession. Three

5 On the contrasts between Loyola and Pope Paul IV due to their different approaches to the reform of the Church and to the regiment of religious organisations, see Quinn 1981, 386-7.

of the original companions participated as theologians in the Council of Trent (1545-63), arguably the most important event of the century for the reform of Catholicism.[6]

Although they made Rome their centre, their numbers started to grow especially in Portugal where, in 1549, there were already seven professed houses. By 1550, the Provinces of Portugal, Spain, and India had been founded. In the following six years, their number would increase to twelve.[7] Each province had a head in the figure of a provincial, and each residence in the province had its own superior (or rector; O’Malley 1993, 52-4). In 1548, the Jesuit first school was opened in Messina. After its success, the foundation and direction of colleges became one of the main enterprises on which the Society concentrated its efforts (366). The Collegio Romano would be created in 1551, followed by the Germanico in 1552. Quite suddenly, therefore, the Jesuits became the first order who made teaching a key element of their vocation (O’Malley 2000), finding themselves tied to fixed places in a way that they had initially tried to avoid. From this moment onwards, the search for balance between the life of the pilgrim and that of the teacher would be one of the themes at the centre of Jesuit identity.

Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* were printed with papal approval in 1548. The intention of Ignatius was that all novices should do them upon entering the Society, even though most of the members of the order had never done them by the time of Mercurian. Composed of “directives, meditations, prayers, declarations, procedures, sage observations, and rules” (37), their aim was to help Christians order their affections through a meditation on the life of Jesus so as to interpret God’s will for their lives. Composed loosely of a four-week structure and adaptable to the circumstances, one of their essential elements was the general confession at the end of the first week. The *Exercises* were mainly aimed at the elites, as the lower classes mostly learnt from catechisms (37-9; 127-33).

In 1550, ten years after the original promulgation, Pope Julius III’s bull *Exposcit debitum* issued a second edition of the *Formula*. In the section on the aims of the Society, “propagation of the faith” was now preceded by “defence” of it, and a renewed emphasis was placed on the Pope as “Vicar of Christ”; both elements indicate the consolidation of the challenge posed by the Reformed churches.[8] The years between the promulgation of this second edition of the formula and

6 They were Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón, and Claude Jay.

7 They were Andalusia, Aragon, Brazil, Castile, Ethiopia, France, India, Italy, Lower Germany, Portugal, Sicily, and Upper Germany.

8 Maryks 2008, 14-17. On the changing context, and the relationship between the Society and Lutheran Germany in these years see O’Malley 1993, 272-83.

1557 were a turbulent period for the Society of Jesus. Important figures of Catholicism, such as the Spanish theologian, Melchor Cano, and the faculty of theology of the University of Paris, condemned it as a "danger to the faith", a censure that would echo widely in Europe (O'Malley 1993, 287-90). Internally, the Society had to face a series of struggles. The head and founder of the Province of Portugal, Simão Rodrigues (1510-79), led it to adopt religious practices considered extreme by the Jesuit Curia in Rome (Wright 2004, 55-6). Ignatius' call to obedience did not obtain the desired results, and Xavier blamed Rodrigues for the unruliness and excess of religious zeal displayed in India by some missionaries from the college of Coimbra (O'Malley 1993, 330-3; Županov 2005, 114). As the Society strove to delineate a Jesuit "way of proceeding", practices that were held as incompatible with it came under attack, including fasting and self-flagellation. More general complaints denounced the structure as too rigid, the power of some members as too great, and the emphasis put on obedience as too stifling.[9] The presence of members of Jewish descent (*conversos*) was also contested, mostly by Iberian elements (Maryks 2010, 1-39). Discontentment of this kind would persist for a long time, aggravated by other issues related to essential aspects of the Society, such as its place in Christendom after the confirmation of the policies of the Counter-Reformation, and the creation of a specific policy of the Holy See regarding the extra-European missions (Fabre 2013, 347-8).

Opened in 1558, the first general congregation elected Diego Laínez as new General and approved the final version of the *Constitutions*. Although fulfilling a similar role, the *Constitutions* are rather different, both in organisation and substance, from the rules of other religious orders.[10] They established the Society as a ministry-oriented organisation, presenting active life as a path to mature spiritually and to achieve salvation (O'Malley 1993, 337). The process of routinisation and institutionalisation of the Society, therefore, continued under Laínez as it had done under Loyola, with a strong generalate that was not appreciated by all (Pavone 2004, 13). The Society at this point numbered some 3,500 members and, in Italy alone, it managed 30 colleges (O'Malley 1993, 2; 207).

9 See for instance the so-called "conspiracy of Bobadilla", O'Malley 1993, 308-9; 333-5.

10 Together with the *Formula*, the *Constitutions* occupy a central place in the *Institute*, which collects the documents that regulate the Society and the way in which the members live and work. Their aim was to expand the theoretical aspirations of the *Formula* into practical policies. It begins by describing the ideal person who would join the Society, and then regulates this person's life inside the order through its ministries and activities, adapting to the spiritual growth the individual was supposed to go through. A description of the characteristics proper to the General and the Society ends the document (O'Malley 1993, 6-8; 335-8). On the relationship between the *Constitutions* and texts guiding other religious orders, see Brieskorn 1992.

The second General Congregation reunited in 1565 to elect Spanish nobleman Francisco de Borja y Aragon (Francis Borja), third Duque of Gandía and great-grandson of Pope Alexander VI, as third General.[11] For the occasion, the Congregation reviewed the work of the previous two generalates to assess the success and growth of the Society. Among other decisions, it implemented the creation of a novitiate in every province, where future Jesuits could be trained for two years, and it decided to not open any more colleges unless enough staff could be guaranteed for them (O'Malley 1993, 232; Scaduto 1972, 141-2). It is possible to identify, during Borja's generalate, a tendency towards reduction to norms, to the detriment of the knowledge of the *Constitutions*, which were much broader. As the Society of Jesus grew into a large, international order, the rules that were suitable to a small group of people, who considered themselves chosen by God, were not fitting anymore (Scaduto 1972, 169-74).

Under Borja, the relative freedom of the colleges' curricula was brought under stricter control: the so-called *Ratio Studiorum Borgiana*, a comprehensive series of suggestions on a much stricter discipline for the students and numerous regulations for the life of the colleges, was published in 1569 (Duminuco 2000, 83-4). Regarding the missions, the generalate of Borja saw the beginnings of the vast movement of petition of the *Indipetae* (Fabre 2013, 345). Under Borja, the Jesuits entered the Spanish Americas in 1566, with a series of unfortunate missions to Florida. In 1572, they established a mission in New Spain (Mexico) and reached Peru (Spanish South America) the following year (Dalmases 1991, 192-200; Scaduto 1992, 122-9). Borja also made extensive use of visitors, who were his direct representatives in the provinces to which they were sent. The regulations for this new office were set in the document *Officium Visitatoris* of 1566, giving them full power over local superiors but also tasking them with the consolation of the community.

The fourth generalate, held by Walloon Everard Mercurian (elected 1573-80), can be considered a bridge of sorts between the rule of the "first (Spanish) companions" and the more defined shape the Society reached under the long rule of his Italian successor, Claudio Acquaviva, because Mercurian was the last General to have personally met Ignatius (Ruiz Jurado 2004, 399). His rule was characterised by a continuous operation of defining and shaping the way of proceeding Jesuits against what was considered alien to the Ignatian tradition (Fois 2004, 30-1). At the same time, nationalistic tendencies, with

11 Borja (or Borgia, following the Italian spelling), who would be canonized in 1617, had been viceroy of Catalonia. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1546. He had helped Loyola found many ventures, both through direct funding and by finding patrons, which extended to Spain, Portugal and the Vatican. On his life (with a varying degree of hagiographical leaning), see Dalmases 1991.

anti-Spanish and anti-converso sentiments, came to the fore during Mercurian's election and set the theme until the turn of the century (Padberg 2006, 26. See also Catto 2009, 101-44).[12]

Mercurian's generalate overall experienced a rapid growth in the number of Jesuits. By 1579, the Society counted 5,165 members in 199 communities, of which 144 were colleges (Fois 2004, 25). Mercurian strove to make the Exercises a conforming tool for every Jesuit, starting with the novices (Endean 2004, 36-41). In parallel, he supported centring the Jesuit self-understanding on an active life and the *consueta ministeria*. He promoted the education of young Jesuits, striving to have a more homogeneous preparation; to this end, he started a process of producing a curriculum for the colleges of the Society, which would end with the establishment of the *Ratio Studiorum* (Ruiz Jurado 2004, 399-406). Mercurian fought against nationalistic centrifugal forces, underlining the importance of the obedience the provinces owed to Rome, and chose Alessandro Valignano as his Visitor to the Province of India to evaluate the possibility of establishing a missionary region in Asia outside the control of the Portuguese *Padroado* (Witek 2004, 822).

The process of institutionalisation that had started with Loyola but had not evolved systematically concluded during the long generalate (1580-1615) of Acquaviva. This period was thus a watershed between the old Society of Loyola and the successful Society of the seventeenth century, which was the basis of the traditional image of the order (Pavone 2004, 33-4).[13]

1.2 Early Modern Portuguese Presence in Asia

As mentioned above, nationalistic tensions traversed the early Society of Jesus in different shapes. The Assistancy of Portugal, and its depending Provinces, was one of the sectors where this strain was particularly felt, as the status of the Society there was intertwined with the *Padroado Real* (Royal Patronage). Defined by historian Charles R. Boxer as "a combination of the rights, privileges, and duties, granted by the papacy to the crown of Portugal as patron of the Roman Catholic missions and ecclesiastical establishments in vast regions of Africa, of Asia, and in Brazil" (Boxer 1978, 77-8), the Padroado system authorised the King to appoint bishops and collect Church tithes, which would then become funds for religious enterprises in the re-

12 On the relationship between Italian and Spanish spirituality in Italy in the context of the influence of the Spanish Crown and the Vatican, and also in relation to the election of Mercurian, see Jiménez Pablo 2013.

13 For the analysis of the history and historiography on Acquaviva, see Broggio et al. 2007. A study of the disunity of the Society under Acquaviva is Lecrivain 1998.

gion (Guimarães Sá 2007, 257-9). It follows that the missionary landscape of Asia was profoundly influenced by the imperial enterprises that surrounded and supported it: for instance, Jesuit missionaries would need permission from the Crown to travel to and reside in its extra-European possessions, and they often had to rely on its alms to fund their enterprises (Boxer 1978, 78-9).[14]

Born out of the so-called *reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal obtained the status of kingdom in 1147 after the conquest of its capital city, Lisbon, and strengthened its political structure under the dynasty of the Avis in the fourteenth century (Birmingham 2003, 1-24). The martial cultural milieu that characterised the court and nobility during their initial years of existence is often seen as the cause behind the beginnings of its imperialistic enterprise, generally identified with the occupation of Ceuta, on the Moroccan coast, in 1415. Gold, slaves, pepper, and ivory were some of the commodities the Portuguese sought as they descended along the African coast (Russell-Wood 1992, 126). A viceroyalty of India was set up first in Kochi (Cochin) in 1505 and then in Goa in 1530. In time, a network of fortified ports was organised along the coasts of south and south-east Asia, such as Socotra, Hormuz, Cannanore, and Melaka. Various “spheres of influence” were developed as well, such as the areas around Goa, Salsette island, and much of Sri Lanka (49). The Portuguese specialised in the trading of cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, cloths, precious stones, pepper, and other commodities (Subrahmanyam 1993, 67-71).[15] The network functioned through the system of the *carreiras*, by which the Crown provided a vessel (generally a *nao*),[16] a stipend, and a percentage of the cargo-hold for its captain (*capitão-mor*), while maintaining the rights of the route and the profits. These captains, who often were fidalgos with royal patents, could also perform the functions of ambassadors.[17]

This was the network that Francis Xavier and the other Jesuits who followed him to Asia used extensively, and their principal missions, especially west of Melaka, tended to coincide with the most

14 Still, exceptions to this rule existed, such as when Spanish Franciscans travelled from Manila to Japan in 1584, during the period of union of the Iberian crowns (Tamburello 1997, 343).

15 See also Boyajian 1993, 40-50; Pearson 2007.

16 A *nao* (carrack; modern spelling *nau*) was a large ship that generally had four decks, which could reach 1,600 tons. The *naos* were the standard vessels used in the *carreira da India* until the seventeenth century, when English and Dutch privateer activity forced them to be replaced by smaller vessels (Russell-Wood 1992, 28).

17 The upper echelons of nobility (*nobres*) were referred to as *ricos homens*, meaning “powerful men”. All the other noblemen, generally belonging to the military aristocracy, were called *fidalgos* (Disney 2009, 1: 103). On the *capitães-mor* of Macao, see Hesselink 2012, 18.

important ports of the Portuguese. Indeed, in addition to the aforementioned trade opportunities, Portugal's push towards the oceans displayed religious elements as well (Bethencourt, Curto 2007, 198). Dom Manuel's desire to present himself as the advocate of the Christian cause against the infidel and gain papal bulls to support his expeditions in Africa had been the main cause behind his ban against Muslims in Portugal.[18] Messianism, present at his court in forms influenced by millenarian theologian Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), and his desire to find and join forces with the fabled Prester John were also engines of the explorations.[19]

However, the context and organisation of the Portuguese ports on the China Sea differed profoundly from that of the Estado da India and the Indian Ocean. Once the Strait of Melaka was crossed, the influence of the Crown and its representatives was so weak that the main European actors in the area were the merchants and the missionaries (Russell-Wood 1992, 44; Disney 2009, 2: 181-2). A large number of settlements were developed by private Portuguese subjects too, parallel to the royal network, despite the attempts made to bring them somewhat under control (Subrahmanyam 1993, 71-2).[20] Among these was the city of Macao (Cidade do nome de Deus de Macau). This port had been founded on the Pearl River estuary in approximately 1555, after the Portuguese had been prohibited from entering China but allowed to participate in the trade fairs of nearby Guangzhou (Canton). The prohibition of Chinese merchants from dealing with Japan had allowed the Portuguese to insinuate themselves as a third party in the silk commerce (Disney 2009, 2: 183; Bethencourt, Curto 2007, 209).[21] In time, the Jesuits would make Macao one of their most important centres in Asia, endowing it with a college and a monumental church.

In the 1560s, Macao's trade with Japan rose in importance, making it a key port city in the Portuguese network. Contacts with Japan had started in a private manner, when a Chinese junk carrying Portuguese men foundered on Tanegashima, an island south of Kyūshū.[22] After 1571, most of Macao's trade was done with Nagasaki, a small, recently founded harbour that was given to the administration of the Jesuit missionaries. Within a decade, this Japanese port had de-

18 It can be argued that his expulsion of the Portuguese Jewish population was instead a capitulation under the pressure exercised by the neighbouring Catholic Monarchs (Soyer 2008, 58-9).

19 On Manueline messianism, see Subrahmanyam 1993, 50-1.

20 On the decentralisation of the Portuguese empire, see Bethencourt, Curto 2007.

21 Some hypotheses on the events that led to the founding of Macao are found in Russell-Wood 1992, 44.

22 On this event and its historiography, see Lidin 2004, 1-35.

veloped into a fortified, bustling centre, rich from the silk trade; although the population was nearly all Christian by the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese were never a solid presence aside from the missionaries (Disney 2009, 2: 195; Gunn 2011, 174). The trade with Macao was organised as part of a wider exchange with Goa. From the Estado, European and Indian goods were shipped to Macao, where they were traded for silk, which was then exchanged for Japanese silver in Nagasaki (Disney 2009, 2: 184). In the decade of the 1580s, the investment of the Macao trade amounted to approximately 300,000 cruzados[23] and would often guarantee a profit of 100%.[24] The Macao–Nagasaki trade prospered longer than the rest of the Portuguese network. The cessation of the trade with Japan was, ultimately, caused by the expulsion of all Portuguese from the country by order of the shōgun in 1635 and then by the edicts of country closure (*sakoku*).

1.3 Francis Xavier's Mission in Asia

The founder of the Jesuit missions is traditionally identified as Francis Xavier (1506-52, canonised 1622).[25] Born in Navarre as Francisco de Jassu y Xavier, he became a member of Loyola's group after they studied theology together in Paris. In 1540, the same year in which the Society of Jesus received papal approval, Xavier was chosen to travel to Goa as Dom João III of Portugal had requested some preachers for "converting the heathen" in India.[26] Arriving on 6 May 1542, he set to work in the royal hospital of the city. In the evenings, he preached to the Portuguese settlers, to reconcile them with the Church and to their Indian families, who were often considered Christians in name only (Schurhammer 1973, 2: 204-11; 224-9). Xavier used Catholic pedagogical texts by João de Barros that he had brought from Portugal to preach, modifying them to better suit the specific Indian contexts he worked in.[27]

23 The golden Portuguese coin *cruzado* had already exited circulation in the sixteenth century but was kept for accounting and was worth 400 réis (reais). The real was the main unit of account both in Portugal and in the Estado da India. In Portugal, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, its value corresponded to 1/2340 of one mark silver (229.5 g), but by 1588 it had been devalued to 1/2800. However, the *real* was coined in India with less silver, so that it corresponded to 1/4398 of one mark silver. For an historical overview, see Steensgaard 1974, 417-18.

24 The annual value of the Goa-Macao-Nagasaki trade in these years was approximately 600,000 cruzados (Boyajian 1993, 60; 64; Gunn 2011, 173-4).

25 The most detailed recounting of Francis Xavier's life is still Schurhammer 1973.

26 João III to Pedro Mascarenhas, ambassador of Portugal in Rome, 4 August 1539, quoted in Schurhammer 1973, 1: 544; 728.

27 Schurhammer; Wicki 1944, 1: 94-5.

It was Xavier's work in the Pearl Fishery Coast that set the tone for his activities as a missionary outside Goa. The local population, the Parava, had converted to receive Portuguese protection from raiding Muslims but, in 1542, they were yet to receive any teachings on Christianity. Here, Xavier imparted baptism to those who had not received it yet. He taught the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and other articles of faith he deemed important, translated into Tamil, by having the community repeat them out loud. He took a stand against practices that he identified as idolatrous, destroying idols and punishing adultery (Schurhammer 1973, 2: 295-310; 337). Returning to Goa in November, he received new companions and letters there: the famed correspondence system of the Society of Jesus, which will be analysed in detail in the following chapters, was already taking shape.

Continuous movement characterised Xavier's missionary activity in Asia. After a stop in Kochi, he returned to the Fishery Coast in 1544; the following year, he did a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas in Chennai (São Thome) and then to Melaka (2: 588). In 1546, he moved through the Maluku islands (Moluccas), visiting and preaching in Ambon, Ternate, and Morotai (3: 3-207).[28] In July 1547, Xavier returned to Melaka and there, at the beginning of December, he met a Japanese man he called Anjirō (3: 268). It seemed that the man had fled his home in Satsuma, in southern Kyūshū, after committing murder; looking for someone who could help him spiritually, he had been directed to Xavier (3: 268-72). Xavier baptised Anjirō and his group in Goa, and interviewed them extensively on the qualities of their fellow Japanese and their country, while he was collecting information from a Portuguese merchant who had visited it.[29] These attempts to translate Christian concepts into Japanese, and elements of the Japanese religious milieu into Portuguese, resulted in the Jesuit concluding that the Japanese believed in a form of Christianity that had degenerated over time and, thanks to this, they would quickly convert to the 'correct' Christianity preached by the Jesuits, like Anjirō had done.[30] Anjirō had become a mould for the missionaries to create an ideal image of the Japanese, by generalising two aspects that they attributed to him – interest in religious matters and rapidity in learning them.

28 See also Županov 2005, 55-6.

29 The interview makes up two reports, written by Lancillotto (*DJ*, 1: 44-69 and *DJ*, 1: 69-76). For an analysis of the reports written by the merchant, Jorge Álvares, see App 1997a, 59-62.

30 Urs App calls these attempts to understand the unknown by interpreting it through already familiar categories, the "Arlecchino mechanism". Both sides, the European and the Japanese, were victims of this process, with the result that their dialogues to try to understand each other often became two monologues (App 2012, 11-14). More details are available in App 1997a, 62-76.

Xavier then decided to travel to Japan together with Father Cosme de Torres,[31] a Valencian man he had met on Ambon Island and who he had just admitted into the Society, and Cordovan Brother Juan Fernández, who had arrived in Goa from Portugal in 1548.[32] When they finally landed in Kagoshima (in the Satsuma domain) in 1549, they found a comparatively rich domain in a country divided by civil war. The local daimyō was Shimazu Takahisa, head of the Shimazu family, from whom Xavier obtained a permit to preach. As he had done in India, he composed a new catechism, adapting the text he had used in Goa to refute elements of Japanese Buddhism, and had Anjirō translate it into Japanese. The resulting translation lacked style and depth, attracting the scorn of the listeners, and suffered from a very liberal approach to Christian tenets, to the point that it translated the word God as Dainichi Nyorai, the name of the Cosmic Buddha of the Shingon school (Schurhammer 1973, 4: 107-9).[33]

After being expelled from Satsuma for not granting the arrival of the Portuguese carrack and antagonising Buddhist monks, Xavier travelled to Miyako (modern-day Kyōto), having left Torres and Fernández in Hirado with a small group of converts. This voyage to the capital and back is generally evoked in Jesuit letters and narratives as the most difficult heroic feat of Xavier in Japan, which describe him crossing snowy mountains, barefoot, with very little to eat (4: 166-8). During this travel, Xavier also came into contact with common complexities of negotiating with Japanese culture that would become topos of Jesuit literature, such as when he attempted to obtain access to the complex of Enryaku-ji, the headquarters of the Tendai school of Buddhism on Mt Hiei. His aim was to debate with the monks, convert them, and have their influence facilitate the conversion of the country. However, since he did not bear any gifts, he was refused entry (4: 191-7). When he returned south, after understanding that Imperial court was in a state of economic and institutional ruin, he stopped in Yamaguchi to obtain an audience with a daimyō whose power and influence he was sure of, Ōuchi Yoshitaka. To make clear his own status and impress the daimyō, Xavier introduced himself as ambassador of the governor of the *Estado da India*, possibly dressed himself in silks, and presented to Ōuchi an impressive array of precious gifts (4: 218-19).[34] Xavier had also visited the region of Bungo and its capital Funai (modern-day Ōita), invited by its daimyō Ōtomo Yoshishige (later baptised as Dom Francisco, 1530-87;

31 On Torres, see Schurhammer 1973, 3: 392-34.

32 On Fernández, see Schurhammer 1973, 3: 503n58.

33 See also App 1997b, 219.

34 As will be considered below, there is no agreement among the retellings on how Xavier was precisely dressed during the audience.

also known by his Buddhist name, Sōrin) after the Portuguese carrack had landed there. Ōtomo was friendly with the missionaries and would, some years later, adopt Christianity, becoming one of its main supporters in Japan.

In the meantime, Xavier and his group had realised that the monks who worshipped Dainichi Nyorai had no knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that Dainichi was not a working, nor acceptable, translation of the word God (4: 225). They abolished the 'translation' of God with Dainichi and decided to use instead the Portuguese word 'Deus'. Xavier then instructed Torres and Fernández to carry out extensive interviews and debates with lay people and monks, who visited them in their house in Yamaguchi. The two Jesuits collected and reorganised their knowledge about Buddhist schools (*seitas*), which they then used to create arguments in favour of Christianity. It was at this stage that they concluded that Buddhism was a creation of the Devil to enslave the country, a notion that influenced most of its later depictions by other missionaries (Zampol D'Ortia, Dolce, Pinto 2021).

For the duration of his stay in Japan, Xavier had not received a single letter from his confreres, either from Asia or Europe. No letter reached the mission from 1550 to 1555, either. Jesuit Baltasar Gago explained this fact, stating that "Japan lay at the end of the world" (Schurhammer 1973, 4: 123). Indeed, this lack of contact with the Jesuit centres was anticipating a problem that would plague the Japanese mission until at least 1579. Still, worried about his confreres in India and ready for the next destination in his pilgrimage, Xavier decided to leave for China.[35] While the extent of his appreciation for the Japanese people is difficult to measure, especially in its fluctuations over time, it is inarguable that Xavier harboured great hopes for the conversion of the country.

Xavier left for India in November 1551, with four Japanese Christians: Mateus (who died in Goa in 1552), Bernardo (who died in Coimbra in 1557), Joane, and Antonio (Schurhammer 1973, 4: 297). From Goa, Xavier set sail again for Shangchuan, landing there at the beginning of September 1522. He fell ill as he was attempting to smuggle into China and died on 3 December of the same year (Schurhammer 1973, 4: 641-2).

35 According to Xavier, the Japanese were perplexed by the fact that, even if Christianity proclaimed the true God, the Chinese had never heard of it. Xavier knew that Buddhism had come to Japan from China (even if he ignored the role of Korea in this process), and therefore understood the cultural influence the China had on it. He thus presented converting the Chinese was as a necessary step for the conversion of Japan.

1.4 The Example of Loyola and Xavier

Among the causes of internal tension in the Society of Jesus in its first half-century of existence, it is possible to find the various interpretations of the figure of Loyola, with his spirituality and his religious practices, as embodiment of the ideal Jesuit. The image of Loyola had been initially circulated in some informal texts and his autobiography, which was transcribed and interpreted by his secretary, Portuguese Jesuit Luís Gonçalves da Câmara.[36] These elaborations were retired in 1572, when Pedro de Ribadeneira's life of Loyola was published under the order of Borja (Mongini 2011, 40-1). This latter biography would not enjoy much success, since Mercurian soon commissioned another one from Giovanni Pietro Maffei (O'Malley 1999, 6-7). The quick succession of biographies about the founder can be interpreted as a symptom of both their importance to the order and the Society's changing self-image (De Certeau 2003).

The figure of the founder indeed held a key role in the creation of the image of the Jesuit, and thus of the Jesuit way of proceeding. As defined by Markus Friedrich, this expression was a

> shorthand for everything that made up the Jesuits' common spiritual orientation and what distinguished them from other orders [...] a formula that could be used to practice spiritual identity politics. One could justify rejecting something by arguing that it was incompatible with 'our way of proceeding'. (Friedrich 2022, 72)

The above overview of the beginnings of the Society has already suggested that the way of proceeding was a work in progress, especially during the years before the generalate of Acquaviva, which would strive to solidify the image of the exemplary Jesuit. That the correct way to be a Jesuit was still debated in the 1570s is shown by an accident that occurred to Alessandro Valignano during his stay in Lisbon on his way to India. In a letter to Mercurian, Valignano informed the General that Portuguese Jesuit Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, at the time confessor of King Dom Sebastião I, held excessive power over the province. Câmara's way of proceeding was based not on love but on fear, according to Valignano, who quoted him saying that "[governing with love and gentleness was] a disposition contrary to the spirit of Fr. Ignatius".[37] This debate on what was Loyola's preferred manner of gov-

36 The first text on the life of Loyola circulating in the Society had been the handwritten *Epistola de Patre Ignacio*, a letter written in 1547 by Laínez which gave some basic information, mainly on Loyola's spirituality, to the small community of the time. Following that, another influential text would be the 1548 *Summarium Hispanum* by Polanco. See Mongini 2011, 35-8.

37 Valignano to the General, 12 January 1574, quoted in Cueto 2004, 889.

ernment had been going on for some time, tied to the aforementioned tensions between the Portuguese Jesuit leadership and Loyola. Nadal himself had tried to disprove Câmara's opinion; it had proved useless, since the latter drew authority by his direct witnessing of Loyola.

Furthermore, for the Society, Loyola's life prefigured its existence and confirmed its cosmic importance and uniqueness (Motta 2005, 6-7). The initial refusal to commit his biography to paper was permitted by the fact that "the story of Ignatius… was [understood as] already contained in the Gospels" (Mongini 2011, 36). Loyola had then transmitted his purported privileged position in God's plan for humankind to the Society as a whole, by teaching its members how to understand divine will through the Exercises and how to execute it in the world through the way of proceeding. Emerging from the late medieval Spanish milieu, elements of his spirituality reflected the tenets of *devotio moderna*: as proposed by Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, practices such as regular confession, communion, quotidian examination of conscience, consolation, and adaptability of spirituality were transposed directly into the Exercises; Jesuit appreciation of the encounter with Christ as a personal experience, distinct but not opposed to the institutional Church, and the need to adapt the message they had received for all audiences highlight the influence of *The Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony (O'Malley 1993, 265-6; Shore 1998, 3-5).[38] Enhanced by Loyola's personal ability to adjust to his environment, these were the basis of the purposefully built-in malleability of the *Institute* (O'Malley 2005, 6-7).[39]

It goes without saying that Loyola had a profound impact on Francis Xavier. He understood mission through the lens of Ignatian spirituality and used *Spiritual Exercises* as a way to understand which place had been chosen by God as his next destination (López-Gay 2002, 249-57). The fact that Xavier had left Europe when the Society had only just stopped being a "charismatic band" (O'Malley 1993, 364) is also evident in his less-than-structured approach to missionary activity and his continuous search for more people to (attempt to) convert. As the first Jesuit missionary to travel outside Europe, Xavier mirrored Loyola's self-understanding as a pilgrim. The image of the road was always present in the Society's understanding of Jesuit life, and it filled their literature with small episodes of travelling Jesuits. "The way of proceeding was by foot", wrote Nadal (quoted in Scaduto 1974, 324),[40] in an interesting conjoining of physical trav-

38 For a general introduction to *devotio moderna*, see Goudriaan 2009.

39 The Society's ability of becoming localized, as Loyola's textual inspirations suggest, was obviously not an Ignatian prerogative. For a similar concept applied to Christianity and the Reformation at large, see Christian 1981, 180.

40 On the importance of the "road" in general in the first Society, see 771-85.

el and more general Jesuit activity; he promoted the framing of the Jesuits as new Apostles, understood as men sent out by St. Peter to convert the world.[41] This conceptualisation certainly fuelled Francis Xavier's fervent and restless pilgrimage through Asia, which was understood as both physical and spiritual movement. As will be considered below, Francisco Cabral too imbued the descriptions of his travels and visitations with a similar spiritual dimension.

Just as Loyola set the example for the Jesuits at large, Xavier would become a mirror for Jesuit missionaries. Xavier's time in Japan, his experiences there, and his approaches would be transmitted to subsequent generations of missionaries, upheld as exemplary, and used in debates both in favour of and against specific decisions regarding the mission. Different narratives of his life would be presented to support different policies, especially against norms implemented after the first generation of Jesuits, an example being the debates regarding garments in Japan that are considered in the following chapter. His correspondence would offer a framing for the concept and practice of the Jesuit mission, which was still in its infancy at the time. It prescribed an interpretation of the hardships of mission as a gift from God that facilitates the salvation of the missionary.[42] While he would later come to condemn a direct, continuous connection between the conversion of gentiles and the salvation of the missionary who brought them to the faith, Xavier exhorted himself and others to find consolation in the difficult life of a missionary, which made them closer to Jesus Christ by fostering humility (López-Gay 2002).[43]

41 On Nadal's "apostolic mobility" see O'Malley 1984.

42 See for example Francis Xavier's letter to his confreres in Rome, Goa, 20 September 1542, in *DJ*, 1: 158.

43 The edifying nature of these comments becomes even more evident in later years, making them part of what Županov called the Jesuit "package tour brochure" (2005, 55) written to interest potential missionaries in the Indies, and identified in some of the more public writings of Xavier.

1.5 The Life and Character of Francisco Cabral

The information available on Francisco Cabral’s life before his arrival in Japan is scarce. The catalogues of the Indian Province provide short profiles of his character, while his brethren supply rather polarised accounts of his virtues and faults. Among the most relevant remaining sources, the rather hagiographic obituary[44] “Da vida, e morte do Padre Francisco Cabral, que foi o segundo superior universal de Japãm” appears to have been compiled with information collected directly from Cabral’s statements.[45] In these documents, we learn that Cabral was born around 1530 on the island of São Miguel in the Azores archipelago.[46] His family, based in Covilhã, which is in today’s Centro region, was well-known and belonged to the lower nobility. They claimed a mythical relation to the first king of Macedonia and were probably descendants of the Castilian family of the Cabreiras (McClymont 1914, 1). The Portuguese branch of the family can be traced back to the thirteenth century. Alvaro Gil Cabral supported King Dom João I against the claims of Castille to the throne and was governor (*alcaide-mor*) of Guarda and first lord of Azurara. From 1397, the family held the role of governor of nearby Belmonte (2-7). The most notable member of the family was Pedro Álvares Cabral, who went down in history as the first European to reach Brazil.

Francisco’s father, Aires Pires Cabral, was administrative magistrate of the Azores archipelago and a member of the *Desembargo do Paço* (AJUDA, Jesuítas na Ásia 49-VI-8, 103*r*), the central tribunal of justice of the Kingdom of Portugal; this position put him among the highest judicial authorities in the country. Francisco grew up in Lisbon (ARSI, Goa 33, I, 293*r*) and went on to study humanities at the University of Coimbra, probably grammar and rhetoric. He then left Europe to follow Afonso de Noronha, who was sailing to Goa to become viceroy of India. On this occasion, Cabral fought in the battle of Hormuz against the fleet of Sultan Suleyman and its famed commander, Piri Reis (Ahmet Muhiddin Piri), when he is said to have displayed good soldierly qualities (Bourdon 1993, 559). It was on this

44 For instance, the text states that before Cabral’s arrival the missionaries in Japan were not used to openly preach the Christ cruficied and conflates it with the use of the Jesuit cassock (AJUDA, Jesuítas na Ásia 49-VI-8, 108*v*).

45 “Of the life, and death of Father Francisco Cabral, who was the second universal superior of Japan” in Jesuítas na Ásia 49-VI-8, 103*r*-111*r*. The nature of the text is such that it gives little information about Cabral’s work in India or Japan but provides an interesting picture of how he spent his retirement. A shorter obituary is found in the annual letter of 1609 in ARSI, Goa 33, I, 293*r*-4*r*.

46 Jesuítas na Ásia 49-VI-8, 103*r*. The two dates commonly proposed are 1528 and 1533. The latter seems more probable, if just because his father became *desembarcador* of the Azores only in 1529 (Drummond 1850).

occasion that he met Jesuit Antonio Vaz and decided to petition to enter the Society of Jesus, where he was accepted in December 1544 (Schütte 1980, 1: 189).

In the *Catalogus Sociorum Provinciae Indiae*, compiled in December 1555, Cabral appeared as a *Logicus* (that is, student of logic) in Goa (Wicki, *Documenta Indica*, henceforth: *DI*, 3: 409). At the beginning of 1555, Baltazar Dias, vice-provincial of India, informed the Provincial of Portugal that he had accepted Cabral as novice: "I have received a youth, son of Airez Pirez Cabral, *desembarcador*. His name is Francisco Cabral, well-known in Coimbra to the Fathers and Brothers. He knows Latin reasonably well. He is now doing the Exercises" (*DI*, 3: 210). In December of that year, a general letter stated that Cabral was studying under Antonio de Quadros, future Provincial. The writer took care to emphasise Cabral's prominence among the students, mentioning again his previous studies in Coimbra and the position of his father.[47] In 1556, the *Catalogus Sociorum Provinciae Indicae et Puerorum Collegii S. Pauli* confirmed him as a brother who had already pronounced three vows, his novitiate completed (*DI*, 3: 786). Cabral defended his thesis on 18 October 1556[48] and then studied theology for two years. In 1558, he was sanctified a priest and, later that year, became master of novices.[49] He wrote his first letter to the General the following year, as consultant of the Provincial; it does not seem that he ever introduced himself, as many others did. In his second letter, in 1560, Cabral stated that the General did not know him, as it was proper for somebody "so full of imperfections and so useless" as him; he explained then that the reason behind this missive was the request for a mass for a soul in Purgatory, as he understood it was a customary grace to missionaries. Again, he did not provide any information about himself, but this early text already established his tendency to follow the custom of debasing oneself in front of one's superiors.[50]

Thanks to some reports on personnel sent to the General by the superiors of India, it is possible to have an idea of the character of Cabral. In 1559, the rector of the College of St. Paul, eminent theologian Francisco Rodrigues (1515-73), wrote to Rome as follows:

> Francisco Cabral is of maybe 25 or 26 years of age. He entered [the Society] here. He was ordained last year and is in charge of

47 Aires Brandão to the Jesuits in Portugal, Goa, 15 December 1555, in *DI*, 3: 375.

48 Aires Brandão to the Fathers and Brothers of Portugal, Goa, 19 [?] November 1556, in *DI*, 3: 574. See also Luís Fróis to the Jesuits of Coimbra, Goa, 30 November 1557, in *DI*, 3: 704.

49 Antonio da Costa to the Jesuits in Portugal, Goa, 26 December 1558, in *DI*, 4: 186.

50 Cabral to the General Lainez, Goa, 2 December 1560, *DI*, 4: 756.

> the novices. He has very good feeling for the things of the Society, loves the virtues, and has proceeded very well and firmly in the Society. He is of good judgement and, from what is possible to see of him, with age and experience he will be one of the men that Our Lord will use for the Society, and worthy of trust; he understands fairly well the humanities and theology. He has little bodily strength and is often sick.[51]

The same month, Antonio de Quadros also reported back to Rome about his pupil as follows:

> Father Francisco Cabral, sick but not weak, is very firm in the Society. He is rich in religious virtues, but is somewhat wilful. He is knowledgeable of the Society and its ways and spiritual matters. For somebody who has studied here, he has good knowledge of the humanities and theology, and seems to be budding as a good preacher. He is prudent and of a choleric nature[52] and sometimes hasty. We still don't know how he will do with social interactions with others, but it seems well, because he has always presented himself well. We here have great expectations for him, so he is now master of novices.[53]

Melchior Nunes Barreto, the following year, added that

> [Cabral] preaches fervently, is obedient, loves to pray. He is very sick of the head and lungs, among the brothers received here he seems the most inclined to studies and virtues. He seems slightly contentious.[54]

Therefore, Cabral seemed to be attentive to Christian virtues, although of a choleric character, hasty and contentious. He also appears to have had a weak constitution.

Cabral was master of novices until 1560 and spent the following year teaching theology. He was considered a skilled preacher: he is recorded preaching at the Church of St. John the Baptist, in the village of Carambolin in the north of Goa, during the Lent of 1559; in

51 Francisco Rodrigues to General Lainez, Goa, 17 November 1559, in *DI*, 4: 382.

52 Following Galenic temperamental theory, "just as the body and the soul are tightly connected, the temperament of a body also determines one's character. According to this theory, temperaments were either choleric or bilious (the yellow bile was also called *choler*), melancholic (in Greek, black bile), sanguine, or phlegmatic. Each temperament makes men inclined to specific moral actions" (Casalini 2016, 197).

53 Antonio De Quadros to General Lainez, Goa, November 1559, *DI*, 4: 400.

54 Nunes Barreto to General Lainez, Kochi, 15 January 1560, in *DI*, 4: 505-6.

1560, he spent it in the Church of Misericordia and in the Cathedral, while preaching in the latter during the year.[55] In February 1562, he became rector of Vasai (Baçaim) (*DI*, 5: 242n25), where he preached on Fridays, "complying with the Constitutions".[56] He returned to Goa in 1566, where he taught cases of conscience in the college.[57] A catalogue entry dates of the same year reads: "Father Francisco Cabral [...] proceeds well in virtue and is naturally honest. He has a proud nature, and it is difficult to change his opinions" (*DI*, 7: 74).[58] The following year, he was briefly rector of the house of Kochi and then of the college of Goa (Schütte 1980, 1: 192). Echoing Cabral's obituary, Schütte highlights how his fast-moving career was due to the fact that he was held "in high esteem [...] for his mature grasp of religious life and his talent in guiding others" (1: 189).[59] While Cabral displayed from the beginning his religious zeal and his scrupulous attention to his vows, his distinguished name and the lack of other qualified people in the mission certainly contributed to his quick rise to positions of prominence.[60]

The same year of 1567, the Provincial, Antonio de Quadros, proposed him for the fourth vow and, in April 1568, nominated him as Visitor to Japan (Bourdon 1993, 559). Worrying news had arrived from the archipelago that the mission there was creating a scandal by wearing inappropriate garments. Quadros had tried to visit Japan for some time, with little success, and had finally decided to send Cabral to investigate. He was supposed to be local superior there until joined by the new Visitor of the Province, Gonçalo Álvares. This arrangement meant that the first three years of Cabral's superiorate in the archipelago were focused on the issue of the irregular dress, waiting for the Visitor to

55 Luís Fróis to the Jesuits in Europe, Goa, November 1559, in *DI*, 4: 282; Luís Fróis to the Jesuits in Portugal, 1 December 1560, in *DI*, 4: 728; Luís Fróis to the Jesuits in Europe, Goa, 8 December 1560, in *DI*, 4: 791;

56 Melchior Dias to the Jesuits in Portugal, Vasai, 1 December 1565, in *DI*, 6: 559.

57 Gomes Vaz to the Provincial of Portugal, Leo Henriques, Goa, 29 November 1566, *DI*, 7: 50-1.

58 The texts is attributed to Quadros, possibly with the help of Francisco Rodrigues (*DI*, 7: 71).

59 Original from Goa 33, I, 293*r*.

60 Many years later, Valignano still lamented the little preparation of the Jesuits accepted in India, generally former soldiers (Valignano to the General Acquaviva, Goa, 17 November 1595, in *DI*, 17: 189). This might have been a dig towards his longtime opponent, but Cabral had had the privilege of studying in Europe before entering the Society in Goa, which many other candidates had not. While Antonio de Quadros agreed about the mediocre quality of Cabral's knowledge (*DI*, 5: 242), he also commented that "for somebody who has studied here, he has good knowledge of the humanities and theology". Although Valignano does not explicitly refer to it, the purported detrimental effect that Indian climate had on virtue was another reason identified behind this issue (see for example *DI*, 15: 420-1).

solve other, more mundane, problems. Álvares, however, died at sea in 1573, and it was only from then that Cabral began to devote more attention to the general direction of the mission (Schütte 1980, 1: 216).

Cabral, therefore, left Goa in April 1568, with patents that appointed him Visitor of Melaka, Macao, and Japan. Once in Macao, he had to unexpectedly wait there for another year before leaving for Japan. This brought him into conflict with Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo,[61] who arrived there after him as the Visitor to the houses of Melaka and Macao, also bringing written, detailed orders from Visitor Álvares. A dispute on precedence ensued, as both men considered themselves Visitors (Schütte 1980, 1: 193). The animosity between the two was exacerbated by an accident with that year's capitão-mor, Manuel Travassos. While Cabral entered the latter's circle of friends, Organtino denounced him as "an exploiter and a bully who […] had harassed the people of Macao and the foreign seafarers" (1: 193). The rift between the two had then spread to the rest of the mission. This led Organtino to write a strong letter to the Provincial, asking for Cabral to be removed from his position of superior of Japan. He judged Cabral to be proud, obstinate, and lacking self-knowledge, simplicity, and any real spirituality, as he did not understand "the true spirit of the Society" (1: 194-5).

Schütte attempts to give a balanced view of this quarrel. He suggests that Organtino had written these words while upset and that, being Italian, was not best equipped to understand the details of Portuguese India. Organtino was also of modest origins, while Cabral belonged to the minor nobility of the country. This probably exacerbated their contrasts, even if it put Cabral in a better position to both navigate the relationships with other people of a similar socio-cultural background and excuse their prevarications. Travassos had been a knight of the Order of Christ since 1548 and had excellent connections both at the Portuguese court and in the Estado da India. Cabral certainly was aware of the importance of fostering links for the Society of Jesus in a territory that was, overall, hostile to them. His good relationship with Travassos paid off in later years, when the trade of the capitão-mor proved vital for the successful survival of the Japanese mission (1: 196-7).[62] At the same time, the profile of Cabral that emerges from Organtino's writings confirmed Cabral's

61 Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo (generally known by his first name), Italian, born near Brescia in 1532, entered the Society in 1556, already ordained. He studied theology at the Collegio Romano and was then rector of the college of Loreto. General Borja personally chose him to be sent to India. Organtino landed in Goa in 1567, where he was briefly rector of the college; he moved then to Melaka and Macao. In 1570 he sailed to Japan together with Francisco Cabral; he was based at the Miyako mission for the next 30 years. Organtino died in Nagasaki in 1609 (Cieslik 2001).

62 Travassos later rendered important services to the Japanese mission (Hesselink 2012, 11).

negative traits as they appeared in the descriptions by his superiors in India – proud, quick to anger, precipitous in action, and stubborn in his decisions. He showed a certain disregard for people below his station, preferring to prioritise those he felt were his equals. These traits would inform his leadership of the Japanese mission too, where he arrived there on 18 June 1570: he would suffer from the less familiar context, no longer facilitated by his ability to navigate the complexities of the Portuguese society and its Asian networks.

A letter written by Gaspar Vilela when he returned to India in 1571 provides some comments on how Cabral was perceived at his arrival in Japan by a veteran of the mission.[63] The first issue highlighted is his age: Japanese people, Vilela informed Borja, naturally had more respect and a better opinion of older missionaries, so "the rector of Japan should be closer to fifty than to forty" (JapSin 7, III, 87*v*). Although Vilela presented his memorandum as a general commentary, this certainly is a reference to Cabral who, at the time, was not even forty years of age. The writer justified this necessity by referring to the character of the Japanese, but it might as well be that he perceived Cabral as too young for the important role. Cabral's own consultor when he was superior in Vasai in 1565 had suggested the same, stating that it was prudent to keep with him an older missionary to offer counsel.[64] Vilela's note indicates that, in the following five years, Cabral had not matured enough for the much more difficult position of superior of Japan.

Another quality to make a good impression on the Japanese, according to Vilela, was affability; humility and patience would help the new superior face the many difficulties. His attitude should be more that of a brother than a father, so that "with suavity all could make an effort to sustain what has been started" (JapSin 7, III, 87*v*). Vilela continued suggesting that the superior should provide guidance so that missionaries who commit infractions could mend their behaviour in Japan without being sent away; an office held for life would help the superior to appreciate his subordinates and care more for the converts, so that a mutual understanding and knowledge could be reached (JapSin 7, III, 87*v*-88*r*). These admonitions, grown from Vilela's experience with Cosme de Torres,[65] suggest that the new superior left a lot to be desired.

Unsurprisingly, considering his role in the adoption of silk garments, Vilela's letter also condemned sudden changes in missionary policies, "both in the dress and in the food, things that are not im-

63 Gaspar Vilela to General Borja, 23 January 1572, in JapSin 7, III, 87-90*v*.

64 Melchior Dias to the General, Vasai, 10 December 1565, in *DI*, 6: 635.

65 Although Torres held his office for life, and therefore his dedication to the Christians was arguably the positive evidence backing Vilela's argument, he treated the European brothers with harshness (Melchior Nunes Barreto to General Laínez, Kochi, 15 January 1560, in *DJ*, 2: 259; 261).

portant [but] cause scandal when changed". According to him, Jesuits living in colleges and houses in European-held lands could not understand many aspects of the life of "those who work in the conversions" and imposed many rules on them, which he held, implicitly, were useless if not damaging. It was essential, in his opinion, that the superior conformed his behaviour to the fathers and brothers who had many years of experience in the land and that his decision-making was subjected to a consultation with the missionaries with the most experience in the country (JapSin 7, III, 88*r*). Otherwise,

> It is very [damaging] when the superior does what he wants, like the one who went now [Cabral] does, and the first Father who went after him as visitor of China. This path will lead to the demise of the mission, as Father Cosme de Torres used to say, weeping […] because there was nobody who would help Japan, nor take pity on it… (JapSin 7, III, 88*r*-89*r*)[66]

The best option would have been, according to Vilela, to free the Japanese mission from the control of the Province of India.[67]

The picture that Vilela drew of the Japanese mission was rather bleak; lack of certain funding, workers, and support from the Province had led it to the brink of disaster (Hesselink 2016, 5). Visitor Álvares's intention to govern Japan through "the papers with many annotations that [Cabral] had brought"[68] and, most importantly, Cabral's inability and unwillingness to navigate and negotiate the rules of obedience, would prove fatal to his relationship with his brethren. As it were, Cabral's letters would soon start echoing Torres' cries for help. The distance of Japan from the centres of the Society of Jesus proved disastrous for Cabral due to the difficulties he had keeping in contact with his superiors and the exacerbation of the chronic lack of funds caused by this separation. Both were major hurdles in the implementation of his reform of the mission. As will be analysed below, the anxieties surrounding mass baptisms and the mounting tensions regarding what he felt was his role in the plan of Providence contributed to his dreary outlook. He believed his own salvation was in jeopardy, feeling abandoned by the Society and God. His leadership style became increasingly rigorous, particularly with the Japanese mission-

66 The second Jesuit mentioned in this passage is probably the Visitor, Gonçalo Álvares, although technically the first to visit the Chinese mission after Cabral was Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo.

67 On the complex matter of the separation of the missions of India and Japan due to different needs, see Friedrich 2017.

68 Vilela does not mention explicitly the origin of these papers, however, these are likely the same annotations that Cabral received from Organtino in Macao, sent from Álvares (JapSin 7, I, 23*v*).

aries. By the end of his stay in Japan, he wished to be removed from the situation. His desire was finally granted by Alessandro Valignano, the new Visitor of the Indian Province, who would then go on to revolutionise the Japanese mission's policies with the hope of salvaging it from the damages inflicted by Cabral's superiorate.[69]

Literature often erroneously suggests that Cabral was opposed to his own removal (Boxer 1951, 73; Hesselink 2016, 107; Ross 1994, 64; Elisonas 1997, 332). As this study will show, Cabral was instead keen to leave the mission, both Japanese Christians and Jesuit alike. He felt that this enterprise was a burden for his soul and that it had become a cause of spiritual contamination instead of a source of growth and elevation. While certainly he and the Visitor did not see eye to eye, Valignano's innovations simply represented the last straw for him. Believing he saw the final ruin of the mission looming ahead, Cabral moved to Macao in 1582 to be head of the Chinese mission until 1586. Then, he moved to India, where he had the role of superior of the professed house of Goa as of 1587. In 1592, he was nominated Provincial of India (Schütte 1980, 1: 242n233). His protestations on this occasion were similar to those he had made in the past against his role as superior of Japan. When promotion announcements like these were received, the content of the recipient Jesuits' answers often clash between tendencies of modesty and requirements to display obedience; Cabral's was not an exception to these rhetorical propensities, which appear also in his request to be dismissed from Japan. Nonetheless, the fact that he dedicated an entire letter to the General on this matter suggests that he was genuine in his request to be relieved of any role of authority.[70] He wished to be allowed to focus on the salvation of his own soul and believed it incompatible with offices of command, which will be illustrated in the following chapters. Unfortunately for him, it was only after his second tenure as superior of the house of Goa that he was able to dedicate himself to penance and prayer to his heart's content. In the last part of his life, it seems that he could find a certain spiritual peace, freed from administrative duties. His obituary supplies (again, rather hagiographically) a description of his activities in retirement. His devotion is described thus:

> [Cabral] had his stations [of the Rosary] in the Jesuit House, which he walked every day, kneeling in front of all the images of Our Lady. Like a second Prophet Daniel, who in Babylonia prayed in the

69 The study of the clashes between the two missionaries in Japan are outside the scope of this dissertation; the interested reader can find them in the precise analysis by Schütte (1980).

70 The letter in question being that by Cabral to General Acquaviva, Goa, 25 November 1591, in *DI*, 15: 633-4.

> direction of the temple of Jerusalem, he also visited from the windows the Churches of Our Lady of the Candles, of the Rosary, of the Mother of God, and of St. Francis [of Assisi], to whom he was very devoted. For this reason, he treated with great reverence [the Franciscans]. When he was Provincial, he had in his cubicle of [the college of] St. Paul a devote image of the Seraphic Father, at whose sight he became inflamed and burst into fervorous acts of love. When possible, he imitated [St. Francis'] heroic virtues: […] he walked barefoot in procession to the churches during the Holy Week, even if he was already old; he was particularly devoted to the Discalced friars, among whom he found often spiritual consolation. (Jesuítas na Ásia 49-VI-8, 104*r*)

He died in Goa on 16 April 1609, after two months of sickness (Jesuítas na Ásia 49-VI-8, 103-4*v*).

2 The Tail of the Devil: The Vow of Poverty

Summary 2.1 A Visitation to Japan. – 2.2 The Religious Dress. – 2.3 Tensions Surrounding Silk. – 2.4 Debates on Silk Garments. – 2.5 Devilish Presences and Absences.

2.1 A Visitation to Japan

After Xavier left in 1551 intending to open missionary doors to China, the new head of the Japanese mission became Father Cosme de Torres.[1] Torres' managing of the Japanese mission met with the approval of the Indian Provincial Melchior (or Belchior), Nunes Barreto, who did not introduce any major changes to the missionary policy when he visited Japan in 1556. In the following years, however, things took a turn for the worse. Regardless of Torres' attempts to

1 Unlike most of the Jesuits working in Asia at the time, Cosme de Torres had arrived in India via Manila; he therefore did not receive the education, given in Lisbon and Coimbra, to make all Jesuits destined for the Asian missions more familiar with Portuguese Jesuit culture. Born in Valencia in approximately 1510, Torres, after being ordained, sailed for New Spain in 1538, but spiritual disquiet made him cross the Pacific in 1542. He met Francis Xavier in Ambon and decided to follow him to Goa. After doing the *Exercises,* he entered the Society in 1548. His main activities in the following year were guiding devotees in the *Exercises,* and teaching children in Kanyakumari. In 1549 he followed Xavier to Japan and became the head of the mission when the latter left the country in 1551.

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subsequently maintain contact with both Goa and Europe,[2] a lack of correspondence between Japan and India seems to have characterised this period; the official catalogues of the mission are similarly scarce (Schütte 1968, 43). Contacts were mostly maintained by the Jesuits and Portuguese merchants who moved between the two missions and allowed a flow of information, as well as an exchange of objects and gifts.[3]

Regardless of the extent to which Torres was successful in maintaining contact with Goa and Rome, by 1565, he felt that they needed better manpower: he requested to the General and to the Provincial a "learned and virtuous Father, to elevate the Law of God to its place", who was neither too old nor too young, who could inherit the supervision of the mission.[4] His task would be "to rule and govern and harmonise (*pôr em concerto*) the Fathers and Brothers who reside here [in Japan], and this new Christianity too, which has great need to be arranged with virtuous Fathers now at the beginnings, but also with Fathers whose work won't need to be undone later" (*MonJap*, 77). From this passage emerges Torres' worries about the Japanese Christians, the Jesuits who lived in Japan, and the future of the mission in general.

On the one hand, the passage "harmonise… this new Christianity" confirms that the Jesuits were struggling with identifying a common policy to govern the Christian communities of the country that could grant a solid foundation for the future.[5] Seeking an authoritative opinion, Torres asked for help, at least twice, from Francisco Rodrigues and Antonio de Quadros, the first time in April 1559, the second between 1563 and 1568. Many questions deal with the accommodation of the officiation of sacraments to Japanese culture but matters of the Christian community's daily life are discussed as well (Ehalt 2019; Pinto, Pires 2005).

On the other hand, Torres also mentioned the need to reach harmony among the missionaries. This statement brings to the fore the importance of conformity in the mission in the mind of Torres, who clearly found it lacking. This echoes a common Jesuit stance. It is possible to identify two elements of the mission behind these internal tensions: Father Gaspar Vilela and Father Baltasar da Costa;

2 "Every year we send letters", Torres states in his letter to the General, Yokoseura, 20 October 1563 (Schütte 1968, 42). The same idea is repeated later in 1566 (*MonJap*, 75.)

3 Many Jesuits left the Japanese mission to return to India in this period (Schütte 1968, 43-4), enabling a certain connection. For a statistical analysis, see Costa 1999, 20-31. On the exchange of gifts, see Gonoi 1997, 101.

4 Torres to the General Lainez, Kuchinotsu, 20 October 1565, printed in *MonJap*, 69-70.

5 In this period, the missionaries were also looking for a safe port to make it the destination of the Macao carrack, which may have been another reason for the recall of Vilela (Hesselink 2016).

perceiving two priests out of six as escaping his control could have been enough for Torres to lament a state of emergency. Arriving in Japan in 1556 with Barreto, Vilela was described by the latter as "innovative"[6] even before landing in Japan. By 1566, Vilela had accrued five years of experience in the mission of Miyako, apparently having scarce news from Torres.[7] He was pushing adaptation to the Japanese culture too far for the liking of his superior, who recalled him to Kyūshū in 1566. In 1570, Visitor Gonçalo Álvares called him to Cochin, officially to provide an eyewitness report on the Japanese mission; and later to Goa, where he died in 1572 (Boscariol 2012). Another disrupting figure could have been Father Baltasar da Costa, in Japan since 1564 and responsible for the mission of Hirado. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, before leaving the country in 1576, Costa not only broke the vows of poverty and chastity but also stole from the mission. He appeared to have been engaging in this behaviour regularly at the beginning of that decade, which suggests that it had already begun under Torres' superiorate.

Both Rome and Goa were already aware that some troubles plagued the Japanese mission in the early 1560s: in 1563, General Laínez suggested Provincial Quadros send someone to investigate;[8] Francis Borja allowed Quadros to proceed in his visitation to Japan in 1565 to solve the "grave necessities of those parts".[9] Recalled to Goa mid-voyage, Quadros designated Spanish Father Pedro Ramírez as his delegate, to be initially Visitor and then superior of Japan, but he died *en route* (*DI*, 6: 15*). Thus, in 1568, it was Francisco Cabral who was nominated for the role.

Cabral demonstrated his typical reticence when he hesitated to commit to paper the specific reasons behind his mission to Japan; the most detailed recounting of the events is found in his letter dated 6 September 1571,[10] written in Nagasaki and addressed to the Assis-

6 "Decretista", as described in Barreto's 1560 letter (*DI*, 4: 511), in Ribeiro 2007, 22.

7 "I have news of Fathers Torres and Froís only once a year; I wish very much to see them, but it is not possible, due to the many difficulties [of organizing this]". Gaspar Vilela to the Fathers and Brothers in Goa, Miyako, 17 July 1564, in *EVORA*, 1: 139*v*.

8 As communicated by Juan Alfonso de Polanco (Trent, 4 December 1563), in *DI*, 6: 66.

9 General Borja to Antonio de Quadros, 29 November 1565, in *DI*, 6: 527.

10 Other two letters return on the topic, both sent to the General: the first is written in Macao, on November 20, 1583 (JapSin 9, II, 186-8*v*), is transcribed in Correia, "Francisco Cabral and Lourenço Mexia", 72-7. The second, written in Cochin, on December 15, 1593, is transcribed in *DI*, 16: 547. Both these texts aim to oppose the reforms introduced by Valignano in Japan, presented as too expensive and as promoting the return to silk garments, and to depict a positive image of Cabral's work in Japan while remaining vague on the details: "the superior of Japan […] could not deal with [the problem of silk], to the point that it was necessary to inform the Father Provincial of what was happening" (JapSin 9, II, 187*r*).

tant of Portugal in Rome, Diego Mirón (JapSin 7, I, 23*r*–24*v*).[11] Here, Cabral purports that he had been sent to do a visitation to Japan following some rumours that had arrived in Goa.[12] Even if it was not explicitly stated, the text suggests that the source of this news were the Portuguese merchants, who were reputedly scandalised by having been rudely welcomed in the country by Jesuits dressed in purple silk and waving golden fans. While it appears that the Indian Provincial already held some knowledge about the Jesuits' silk garments, according to Cabral, the gravity of the matter had not been clear due to the standing orders of writing only about edifying topics (JapSin 7, I, 23*r*-*v*).[13] Some news of this question had reached Rome, too, although in how much detail is not clear (Schütte 1980, 1: 215). In the end, after being forced to stop in Macao, Cabral had been reached there by Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo, who had informed him that the newly appointed Visitor, Gonçalo Álvares, had ordered a complete ban on any interactions of the mission with silk.[14]

One topic that Cabral does not elaborate upon in his initial correspondence is the Jesuit practice of selling a share of the silk brought by the Portuguese merchants from Macao.[15] This trade, begun with a donation by merchant Luís de Almeida at the time of his admission into the Society in 1556, was identified by Cabral as the cause for the flourishing economics of the mission and the consequent abandonment of customs of poverty. This minimal reference to it could be

11 Spanish Jesuit Diego Mirón (Mirão, Miró, or Miro) held important positions in the Society: he had been rector of the colleges of Valencia and Coimbra, Visitor to the Provinces of Aragon and Portugal, and Provincial of Portugal in 1552-55 and 1563-65. During this period, he had close contacts with the court, and was asked by Dom João III to be his confessor. From 1569 he was in Rome as Assistant of Portugal to General Borja. He was therefore an important reference for the Jesuits in the Asian mission.

12 Cabral states that the personal use of silk by the missionaries had started six or seven years before 1571, which puts it around 1564-65. This timeframe corresponds however to Antonio de Quadros' push to visit Japan, so it indicates more probably the date when the news reached Goa.

13 Cabral mentions that there was a standing order to prioritize only edifying events when writing from the missions but avoids saying that it had been given by Francis Xavier himself. Ignatius Loyola warned of the perils that this practice could entail (Torres Londoño 2002, 23). Valignano too reported this inadequacy of the Jesuit correspondence, even as late as 1579 (JapSin 8, II, 243).

14 This decision was rather extreme, considering that Álvares had no first-hand knowledge of Japan to be able to take such a decision (Schütte 1980, 1: 212-13.) However, it seems that, according to Quadros, the Visitor had displayed a tendency to ignore the context completely and try to apply the *Constitutions* inconsiderately. Considering that he ordered the whole mission in India to wear mid-length trousers and boots all year round when outside the residencies, he might as well be a case of extreme obtuseness.

15 An overview of the silk trade as a manner to finance the mission is presented in Vu Thanh 2021. For a discussion of the trade of silk by the Jesuits in China and Japan, its moral implications, and the solutions suggested in the following century by Visitor Palmeiro, see Brockey 2014, 228-9.

because Cabral believed that the ban on trade by the single missionary houses, which had been common until that point, was more relevant. Álvares’ orders on the silk trade were to limit it until alternative resources were found and it could be halted (JapSin 7, I, 21*r*). To this end, Cabral had sent the capital of the Japanese mission to India, to be invested in lands that could provide rent and support to it; the funds deriving from this rent, however, were never forwarded to Japan, as will be considered in more detail in Chapter 5. With no other income available, the use of the totality of the proceeds from the silk trade was legitimate in Cabral’s eyes as long as the missionaries ceased their personal use of silk and other luxuries. In later correspondence, indeed, he would refer to it as the “alms from the carrack”. Thus, he could justify the Jesuits’ investments in the trade as a necessity in the service of God; such understanding did not prevent him from criticising Valignano, years later, for not suppressing it.[16]

As Cabral had been appointed Visitor to Japan in response to a crisis, in the first years of his stay there, he focused on solving specific problems, conditioned by the instructions he had received from the Indian Visitor in written form. Álvares’ intentions, before his death in 1573, were to take control of the mission personally after his arrival, possibly leaving Cabral free to return to India. For the first three years of his stay in Japan, Cabral remained dedicated to this plan, and his correspondence attempted to demonstrate to his superiors how he was following orders and disposing of the silks.[17] Even later, when it became clear that this plan would not come to fruition and Cabral had to undertake a bigger role in governing the mission (Schütte 1980, 1: 216), he still shows signs of being psychologically dependent on instructions from his superiors on major decisions.

2.2 The Religious Dress

To fully understand the scandal that was threatening the Asian missions of the Society of Jesus, and the relevance of the garments their members were wearing at both a social and spiritual level, it is fruitful to digress about the relation between religion and clothes.

Garments have always occupied a position closely connected with the building and performance of identity. The (gender-neutral) dress, defined as “an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human

16 Cabral censured Valignano on this matter because he did not consider the expenses of the Japanese mission as legitimate anymore, believing that the missionaries had return to a life of luxury. See Chapter 5.

17 His letters might be considered even redundant on the silk affair, if not considering the chance that they might not reach their destination, a danger Cabral was aware of.

beings" (Eicher, Roach-Higgins 1992, 15),[18] engages all senses to communicate the social identities and positions of its owner, often anticipating other types of communication (Roach-Higgins, Eicher 1992, 5. Barnes, Eicher 1992, 3; Eicher, Roach-Higgins 1992, 17). The twelfth-century technological evolution caused a slow change in Europe in the understanding of the body and augmented its social importance: "public appearance and behaviour established and maintained identity". The new shape of clothing also modified the way in which people moved and felt, strengthening the control it imposed on the body (Rublack 2010, 7; 16-18).[19] During the Renaissance, the regulation of social divisions was supported by sumptuary laws that limited the spending and public flaunting of luxury clothing items (Heller 2004, 318; Paresys 2006, 252-3). Public denunciation of fashion trends were also connected to morality and were part of the social construction of gender and class (Heller 2004, 313). In a moment of perceived social change, sumptuary laws facilitated the identification of the other and the presentation of the self (Hunt 1996, 7-13).

> 'Fashion' can be '*deeply* put on' or, in other words, […] clothes permeate the wearer, fashioning him or her within. This notion undoes the opposition of inside and outside, surface and depth. […] To understand the significance of clothes in the Renaissance, we need to […] understand the animatedness of clothes, their ability to 'pick up' subjects, to mold and shape them both physically and socially, to constitute subjects through their power as material memories. […] Clothing is a worn world: a world of social relations put upon the wearer's body. (Jones, Stallybrass 2000, 2-3)

Clothes are, therefore, an integral part of the person on all essential levels; they could contaminate the wearer in the depths of their soul, with spiritual and moral consequences (Rublack 2006, 261; Ribeiro 2003, 15).

Regulation of dress in Christianity can indeed be traced to its origins, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Calls for distinct (but not specific) clothing for clergy began in the third century, even if resistance to giving importance to dress over pious behaviour was strong until at least the pontificate of Celestine (422-32 CE). In time, officially sanctioned dress became richer and more complex, while

18 They based their work on Stone's theoretical framework (1962) which incorporated "communication via appearance (which he defined to include dress as well as gesture and location) and highlighted the fact that dress, because it may be seen in social encounters before conversation can be initiated, has a certain priority over discourse in the establishing of identity".

19 On the psychological influence of materiality of clothes on performances of identity, see also the considerations in Eco 1987, 191-5.

its connection with sanctity grew in the form of relics and mystical characterisation; still, dedicated to divine service, it was not considered a sign of vanity (Mayo 1984, 15-27). Regardless of the theological appreciation Christianity displays towards poverty, there was a direct, if uneasy, connection between this sacred luxury and the earthly power of the Church (Goody 2006a, 342).

The secular clergy’s dress began to be regularised in the Middle Ages, even if it was common to disregard it in favour of more worldly, colourful, and luxurious clothing, against which there were many attempts at regulation by the same ranks of the Church (Hume 2013, 16; Ribeiro 2003, 32-5). Even if it had debuted as the official garment of the clergy in 572, the cassock[20] took some time to be actually normalised as such, and its colour was regularised for the lower clergy only in the thirteenth century.[21]

Regular clergy presented a different but parallel situation; debate on their dress was mainly centred on colour, shape, and the material used to produce it. The specific dress required by religious orders had a social role, just like all garments, and communicated the belonging of the wearer to a specific religious group and with it their personal faith. However, religious dress was also deeply influenced by the idea of the permeability of the soul by clothes. In the tradition of the *contemptus mundi*, “clothes are called soft because they will make the soul soft” (Twomey 2007, 123). Religious dress, holy in itself, consecrated the wearer’s body, marking their abandonment of the world (Kuhns 2003, 45). The monastic habit thus has its historical roots in the penance and mortification of the self, such as that practised by desert ascetics. The main aim of this type of dress was to cause discomfort in the wearer, who would be reminded of the suffering of Jesus and incited to conquer worldly inclinations (61-2):

> The internal body is controlled, in that emotion is restrained, voices and laughter are muffled and appetite for food, knowledge and sex are constrained. The external body, however, is more visibly restrained. Strict dress codes are enforced because dress is considered symbolic of religiosity. […] While a person’s level of religiosity can not be objectively perceived, symbols such as clothing are used as evidence that s/he is on the ‘right and true path’. (Arthur 1999, 1)

20 The cassock is “an ankle-length sleeved tunic which can be held at the waist by a narrow belt, or buttoned from neck to foot […] It is universally worn by clergy underneath the Eucharist vestments and all other liturgical garments but it is not in itself a vestment; although worn as an undergarment in services, it is also an overgarment for wear indoors and outdoors; further the cassock is not an exclusively clerical garment and may be worn by servers, choristers and vergers. […] The general look of the cassock has not altered very much although the full cassock with a train was fashionable for prelates in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries” (Mayo 1984, 140.)

21 See Hume 2013, 13-17; Hollander 1993, 369; Mayo 1984, 73.

This dedication could be endangered if this dress was abandoned or even if the wearer was exposed to other people's luxurious clothes (Kuhns 2003, 122).

Still, it was quite rare for religious orders' rules to describe in detail the dress of their members. Generally, they stressed uniformity and poverty of dress; specific shape and colour were often ignored (Warr 1999, 80-4). At the same time, if opinions on colour varied through the history of the church (Kuhns 2003, 5; Pastoureau 2009, 60-1; Pleij 2005, 63-6; Gage 1993, 79), by the fifth century, there was a tradition of monks dressing in black, and by the ninth century, it was the most common dye of monastic garments (Harvey 2013, 75).[22] Being the colour of mourning, it was considered apt for monks, whose role included grieving and doing penance for the death of Jesus and the sinful state of humanity. Since deep, permanent black was extremely expensive, the colour is to be understood as symbolic and approximating more a grey or blue in reality (Harvey 2013, 42; 54; 68-76).[23]

Symptomatic of what would become the modern Western chromophobia, coloured garments had assumed a negative characterisation by the Renaissance, "unworthy of a good Christian" (Pastoureau 2009, 98). Black was now often found in clothing: the priestly black cassock and cape had already expanded to the secular world around the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the clergy had become the managerial structure of the new nation-states and the teaching staff of universities. Students wore similar gowns and kept using them after graduation if they became lawyers or physicians. This black dress thus assumed the new meaning of professionalism, austerity, and virtue (Pastoureau 2009, 95; Harvey 2013, 97). By the time of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528), the splendid blacks and stiff forms of the Spanish Crown had prevailed over Europe's nobility as well (Harvey 1995, 71-8).[24]

This was the context in which Ignatius of Loyola lived. Having spent the first thirty years of his life among courtiers and nobles, he was certainly conscious of the social importance of proper dress. He must have also been aware of the specific significance of dress in relation to religion:[25] he marked the beginning of his conversion by donating his rich, colourful garments to a beggar. He then decided to

22 See also Johnston 2000, 309.

23 For various examples of the connection between black and evil or sin, see Bloch 1986, 157-8. Pastoureau 1988, 17-18.

24 For the influence of Spanish dress on European courts, see Boucher, Deslandres 1987, 224-7.

25 See the incident in which clerical immunity was denied to him as he did not have the tonsure (Brodrick 1998, 45-6).

imitate the models offered by the lives of the saints in the *Legenda Aurea* even more closely, embodying them by letting his nails and hair grow unkempt (Mongini 2014, 50-3; 62).[26] His clothes too were used to signify his conversion and, like his body, he treated them following the *contemptus mundi* philosophy. His spiritual search brought him to ascetic extremisms that had a heavy impact on his health, until he concluded was that this behaviour was harmful to his soul as well, being a form of vainglory (Levy 2011, 138). The *bigello* garments he wore during his activity as preacher (Mongini 2014, 67),[27] while studying theology at the University of Alcalá de Henares, attracted the attention of the Inquisition more than once, and he was ordered to wear the same clothes as the other students (Loyola 1904, 74). As explained above, all students, both clergy and laity, wore the same dress, similar to a cassock (Glorieux 1984, 117). After his first companions joined him, they would move through Paris and travel in Reformed French regions wearing the same dress (O'Malley 1993, 32).

When it came to writing the *Constitutions*, Ignatius never gave a description of the Jesuit dress aside from the fact that it should be proper, conformed to the place, and poor (See *Cons.*, [577-9], [18], [19], [81], [296], [297]). The first is given in Latin as *honestus*, meaning anything from 'respectable and dignified' to 'decent and appropriate' – basically, nothing that would cause scandal, in a similar vein to the second characteristic. At the same time, religious dress attributed new meanings to the religious body, and Loyola maintained a specific idea of how the Jesuit body should appear. A collection of miscellaneous rules illustrates how a Jesuit needs to control his body's movements: do not turn the head on one side or the other, but lean it only slightly forward; keep your eyes down, do not stare at your interlocutor's face; keep your lips closed but not too tightly, nor too loosely; keep your hands still, etc.[28] Loyola was indifferent towards dress,[29] as long as garments followed the rules for modesty and humility written for the body, whose appearance needed to follow stricter guidelines, reflecting the seriousness and spirituality of the Jesuit himself and of the whole Society of Jesus.

Loyola also recognised some additional benefits of having dress guidelines, as quoted above: garments fostered the sense of

26 See also Glorieux 1984, 116.

27 The word *bigello,* to indicate a rough wool of greyish colour, comes from *bigio* (Italian for 'grey'); it probably assumed a negative connotation when associated to the *beghine*, female members of grassroots movements of Christian reform, who were found in most of central Europe since the thirteenth century, and who wore the same dress, supporting the more extreme section of the Franciscans.

28 As cited in Câmara 1992, 53-4.

29 On Ignatian indifference regarding clothes in mission, see Menegon 2020.

community, belonging, and solidarity of the Society; they permitted instant recognition of the Jesuit as such, performing an important social role. At the same time, it was not so distinct as to set the Jesuit apart from the secular world, as had the greyish habit Loyola worn in Alcalá. This facilitated the Jesuit goal to become "everything to everyone", an aim helped by the rule that the dress should blend in with local use (Levy 2011, 140-1). Loyola's choice was the black cassock of the secular clergy, similar to the student dress of his days in Paris; no distinctive white collar was yet in use. To cover their heads in the house, a black beret cap, or *biretta*, was generally used.[30] Aside from this common dress, however, there were some local variations in the early years: for example, the Spanish Assistancy's was a brown robe, except in Aragon, where they wore fine black robes until 1630 (140).

2.3 Tensions Surrounding Silk

Cabral did not judge the state of the mission positively when he reached Japan in 1570. His initial impressions of the country and of the mission are unfortunately lost, as the first letter he sent after landing is not extant anymore.[31] Nevertheless, a brief description of the situation of the Japanese mission by Cabral can still be found in his 1571 letter to Mirón:

> With the capital growing, the commerce too grew, until seven or eight years ago they started introducing colourful silks and clothes, together with the couple of servants they had now. As this required eating well and sleeping well, even some bed pillows and cushions were made of silk; a father I saw even had a mattress in damask. (JapSin 7, I, 23*r*)

Thus, the degeneration of the missionaries, in Cabral's eyes, included more than the use of silk for their garments: the clothes were colourful, which was not proper for religious men; the Jesuits had personal servants, who looked after their needs and after the house; they ate rich food and owned rich cushions of silk. Cabral does not need to write explicitly that none of these were the markers of a holy life and that the spiritual state of the mission was in shambles.

30 "[A] biretta is stiff square hat […] Birettas have three or four semicircular peaks attached on top […] diocesan clergy [wears a] black [one]. Some religious orders such as the Jesuits (Society of James [*sic*]) and the Congregation of the Oratory of Saint Phillip Nero also wear black birettas with no pompon" (Chico 2013).

31 He mentioned a description of his visitation that was sent the previous year in his 1571 letter to the General (JapSin 7, I, 21*v*); in the latter, too, it is possible to find Cabral's first impressions of Japan's geographical and political landscape (Cabral to the General, Francis Borja, 5 September 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 20*r*–22*v*, transcribed in Schütte 1958, 461-8.)

While making a show that his hands were tied by Álvares' orders, Cabral's correspondence never suggested that he did not agree with the principles behind them. He presents the use of silk as an "excessive licence", a habit "based on vanity" (JapSin 7, I, 20*r*). He expressed no hesitation about the necessity to dispose of the silk clothes and to return to the black cassock that was in use in the Portuguese Assistancy and went on to demonstrate it in his letters to Rome. On the one hand, he meant to show that he was of one mind with the Visitor, which represented the highest form of obedience. On the other, he was aware that some important elements of the mission held different opinions and that they might themselves write to the General, as was their right, to attempt to persuade him that silk clothes were a necessity in Japan. To support his reform, Cabral provided three points against these excesses, as he understood them: that the coloured silk clothes were not in accordance with the poverty and humility of the Society; that this pomp caused major expenses that the mission could not afford; and that the subsequent self-centred behaviour prevented the good care of the Japanese Christians (JapSin 7, I, 21*r*).

Unfortunately for Cabral, these considerations were not accepted by his brethren, who refused to change back into the cassock. As described by Cabral, the rationale behind the missionaries' opposition was that:

> to remove the silks was to close the doors to the conversion of these lands, because the Japanese only look at the exterior.... And if we wore black not only no gentile lord would pay us any attention, but not even the Christians [would]. (JapSin 7, I, 20*r*)

Although superior of the mission, Cabral's lack of experience with the Japanese context meant that his interpretation carried less weight than his senior brethren's opinions. Still, this defiance came also from missionaries who were not veterans of Japan and for whom the use of silk was not a habit, such as Organtino. According to Cabral, initially Organtino had declared that he could not believe that fathers of the Society were wearing silk and, after landing in Japan, had headed to Miyako to convince Luís Froís to stop the practice. However, even before reaching his destination, he had changed his mind, donned a colourful silk *kimono* and written a strong letter to Cabral against the reform.[32] Moreover, Froís, Melchior de Figueredo, and Baltasar da Costa (the protagonist of the above-mentioned purple robe accident with the merchants) were discovered still wearing silk in 1571. This excess was not limited to the clothes used outdoors: during his

32 The accident is dramatically described by Cabral in both JapSin 7, I, 21*v* and 23*v*: "in which [Organtino and Froís] gave me a [verbal] beat down and treated me as I deserved".

visitations to the Jesuit residences, Cabral had had to destroy silk pillows and a green sleeping gown made of Chinese damask (JapSin 7, I, 23*v*).[33] Due to these incidents, Cabral perceived the refusal as coming from the mission at large:

> I would not be able to describe to Your Paternity the work I had to do for this, and the temptations, because, aside from Father Cosme de Torres and Father João Baptista [Giovanni Battista de Monte], to whom also it did not appear a good thing, most [of the Jesuits] were against [changing clothes]. (JapSin 7, I, 20*r*)

The heavy rhetoric found in these letters ("I would not be able to describe"; "gave me a beat down") shows how Cabral was deeply troubled (and, considering his irascible character, quite possibly angered)[34] by the whole ordeal. The lack of respect for obedience that he observed in his brethren, together with his inability to control them, were not compatible with his understanding of what it meant to be a member of the Society of Jesus.

As a result, Cabral's feelings of isolation,[35] and his fear for the future of the mission, intensified, as he suggested in a letter written in 1571 to Juan Batista de Ribera. After rejoicing at the "particular love" the recipient had shown him in writing and how much this had consoled him, Cabral lamented the envy he felt reading of the quiet and consolation that Ribera enjoyed, exercising his saintly virtue in the college where he lived and hoped that he himself could be part of it before dying.[36] He also dramatically referred to the metaphorical "waves and storms" he had been weathering (JapSin 7, III, 36*r*). This letter shows how dearly Cabral missed his college life in India and in lands where Portuguese customs were the norm. Lacking the cultural milieu and the tranquillity to which he was accustomed, Japan was not congenial to his idea of Jesuit life.

Still, Cabral remained convinced of the righteousness of his mission and that the justifications given in support of the wearing of silk

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33 When recounting the matter in 1593, Cabral mentioned the opposition of Father Baltasar Lopes (*DI*, 16: 545-6); it is probable however that he meant Baltasar da Costa who, as will be discussed below, left the mission with much scandal; Melchior de Figueredo was sent back to India in 1591, where Cabral was not happy to receive him (*DI,* 16: 81).

34 He is evidently irritated while writing the overview of the problem that he gives in his 10 September 1573 letter to the General (in JapSin 7, I, 166A*r*–166B*v*); this might be related to the fact that it was a report of the death of Álvares and the loss of all the human and economic capital he was bringing to Japan.

35 A rather common emotional state among early modern missionaries, as shown by Strasser 2020.

36 At this stage, Cabral could not know that Ribera had been expelled from the Society and he was still waiting for him to join the Japanese mission.

were worldly tools taken up by his brethren, in the wrong belief that they could facilitate the evangelisation of Japan. What Cabral hoped for was, instead, to obtain divine support for the mission through the upholding of the vow of poverty. Firm in his opinion on the incompatibility of the latter and silk garments, he set to work to rebuff the missionaries' justifications by demonstrating that they were not grounded. According to the many pages written by Cabral to detail his efforts, two were the occasions when the missionaries especially insisted that the standard black cassock could not be used: when their personal safety risked being compromised, and for reasons of prestige among Japanese people.

While not explicitly linked to the matter of Jesuit dress by Cabral, the use of luxurious garments during church rituals is worth considering to shed light on his understanding of the works of divine providence and the Jesuits' interpretation of certain Japanese practices. Since the beginning of the mission, with the growth of different Christian communities, the Jesuits had to assume the role of local secular clergy, in addition to that of missionaries.[37] As pastors of their flock, they would represent the Church during special occasions by being at the head of the religious processions or when visiting Japanese authorities. How they presented their bodies was part of the efforts to augment the solemnity of these occasions, and this was reflected in their garments.[38] Some instances that illustrate this attitude are linked to Gaspar Vilela and his "innovative" approach. Vilela put his ingenuity to use as head of the mission of Miyako and exploited systematically the pomp of public rituals to attract the interest of possible converts. For instance, on the occasion of the first public funeral of the local Christian community, to highlight the solemnity of the occasion, he headed the procession donning a brocade cape and riding a red litter (*Historia*, 2: 104).[39] Instructed by his fellow missionaries, Japanese brother Lourenço, and two *dōjuku*,[40] Damião and Diogo, he was aware of the importance of funerals specifically and of the impact they would make in the eyes of the wider Japanese public (Vu Thanh 2014, 121). In his *Historia de Japam*, conscious

37 "We are forced to spend our whole lives like secular clergy", lamented Valignano analysing the setbacks affecting the Japanese mission in a letter to the General of the 27 October 1580 (1954, 134*).

38 The process is not dissimilar to the one described by Roach-Higgins and Eicher: "Leaders in a political structure like a monarchy take on public identities as representatives of their state when they present themselves in rituals with robes, crowns, and scepters" (1992, 6).

39 Translated in Vu Thanh 2014, 121.

40 The *dōjuku* were Japanese lay auxiliaries, whose help ranged from menial tasks to preaching and proselytising. An overview of the evolution of their tasks is found in Brockey 2014, 364-6.

of the possible criticism an excessive display could raise, Froís explicitly pointed out the reasons and context of this kind of behaviour: "[Vilela was] intrepid and zealous for the honour of God and knew how important this [ceremony] was, since it was the first public funeral done with solemnity" (*Historia*, 2: 104). This practice continued until the beginning of the seventeenth century, as can be seen in the grandiose funerals and memorial masses for the Christian lady Hosokawa Tama Gracia (Nawata Ward 2009, 235; 281-5; 324-5). The importance attributed to death rituals in Japanese Buddhism was such that it seems that initially many had refused to convert because they believed Christians did not have funerals (López-Gay 1970, 208-9).

The missionaries noted that these beautiful, foreign objects proved very successful with the Japanese Christians, and solemn rituals made thus common use of silks, gold, silver, and colours as decorations, not limited to the body of the priest. For this reason, decorative objects such as silk banners, used during funerals, were often imported from Europe (Vu Thanh 2014, 116-18). A funeral officiated by Giovanni Battista de Monte in the 1570s in Bungo, for instance, used a casket covered in damask, carried on floats decorated in golden damask with small painted windowsills; on its top was a reproduction of Mt Calvary made in gold and silver, together with a golden cross; on each side, a long silver processional candlestick (*cirial*), with a golden candle; and in front, twelve banners made of white silk, each with the depiction of one of the instruments of the Passion (*EVORA*, 1: 291*r*).

Solemnity was considered a key element in baptisms as well. In his *Historia*, Froís described a curious episode that aimed to demonstrate to the European public the relevance that, according to the missionaries, ritual opulence had in the eyes of the Japanese: in 1574, while Cabral was baptising some noblemen in the fortress of Takatsuki, an old Christian approached him, asking to be baptised again. When rebuked that he should know one receives baptism only once, the man replied that when he had been baptised by Vilela, the priest had just thrown some water at him, without all the pomp and luxury Cabral was displaying, so he was not sure if that was actually a valid baptism:[41]

41 The same event, described by Froís in a letter dated 9 September 1577 (*EVORA*, 1: 392*v*) has instead Cabral wearing a surplice, which is a simpler white garment derived from the *tunica alba*, worn over the cassock (Mayo 1984, 174-5). This letter downplays the luxury described by the old Japanese man and highlights instead the solemnity of the rite, probably aiming to giving priority to the edification of the readers.

> Seeing this altar so ornate, this cope[42] you are wearing, and these pieces for the baptism that are so lustrous and rich, I was envious of these gentlemen and I wondered if, because of the poverty in which the Father found himself, lacking all these things, I was baptised or not; but now that you calmed my fears, I am very thankful to God Our Lord to have let me live long enough to see these solemnities in these parts of Gokinai. (*Historia*, 2: 415)

The opulence of the rituals, described to liven the often-repetitive list of sacred exploits of missionary literature, was rhetorically justified by the approval expressed by the Japanese for the luxurious ornaments: on the occasion of the Easter procession of 1580, "everything was so perfect, and well organised, that everybody was impressed by the order, and the ceremonies, and by the rich ornaments [that Valignano] had brought […], all of them decorated so that the Christians were happy and very satisfied with what they saw".[43]

In keeping with both European and Japanese traditions,[44] therefore, the use of luxurious items and cloths on special religious occasions appears to have been widespread since the 1550s. This aspect of the activity of the Jesuits in Japan appears to have been accepted in good order by Cabral, who seems to have never censored it. The fact that he himself was part of a rite that made use of luxurious instruments, decorations, and garments suggests that he understood both the role of the Jesuits as secular clergy and pastors of the Japanese flock, and the deep connection found between luxury and holiness in some Catholic traditions.

2.4 Debates on Silk Garments

The missionaries had therefore perceived a connection between the richness of their ritual clothes and decorations, and their success with the Japanese. However, while liturgical luxurious garments, among which some were made of silk, had been implicitly approved by Cabral as a tool for the greater glory of God, the same could not be said about the use of silk for other activities and social rituals.

42 A cope is a "ceremonial version of an outdoor cloak worn during the latter days of the Roman Empire. It is basically a semi-circular piece of cloth held together at the front by a clasp or a 'morse'. The cope is worn at non-Eucharist ceremonies (i.e., baptism, marriage, and procession) in the place of the chasuble […] In the West the cope is a general ecclesiastical robe of splendour and has never been a distinctive clerical vestment" (Mayo 1884, 146).

43 Lourenço Mexia to the General, Japan, 1580 (*EVORA*, 1: 465*v*).

44 Jesuit descriptions of Japanese Buddhist funerals, with specific attention given to the clothes of the monks officiating, can be found in López-Gay 1970, 197-208.

Cabral held in contempt the garments the missionaries used to disguise themselves for reasons of personal safety, for instance, both because they were a trickery that hid their identity as Christians, and because, by the time Cabral arrived in Japan, the Jesuits could afford to have them made of silk. Lack of faith in the protection of God and vanity were the charges that Cabral moved against this practice.

The introduction of silk kimono[45] had been caused by the dangerous situation of Japan, which at the time was characterised by a nearly continuous state of war. The roads were often unsafe, and the political situation could change drastically and suddenly, which often left the missionaries no other solution than escape, leaving behind their belongings and their communities. To try to blend in more easily, they soon started the practice of disguising themselves as poor travelling monks. It was precisely during an emergency caused by the civil war that a record of a disguise appears for the first time, creating a curious precedent. Father Baltasar Gago and Brother Guilherme had been kidnapped in Hakata (Fukuoka) and, to enable them to escape from the city undetected, the local Christians had them disguised as *bikuni*, that is, Buddhist nuns.[46]

Gago emerged too traumatised from this experience to carry on his work in Japan. Keen to reopen the mission in the capital city, in 1559, Torres opted to send Gaspar Vilela in his stead. For this trip, Vilela states he was "not going [dressed] as a father, but as a house brother, and to be more secretive he [wore] the clothes of a Buddhist monk" (*DJ*, 2: 224).[47] Froís' *Historia* explains that the group:

> left for that new and strange peregrination […] without taking with them the ornaments for the mass, to pass more freely among the gentiles, because they just went to explore the territory. They all went, as is the custom in the land, with shaved heads and beards, wearing their poor *kimono*, conforming to the intent of their pilgrimage. (*Historia*, 1: 137-8)

While the image of the pilgrim is used here by Froís to link these Jesuits to the Ignatian tradition, at the same time, it is the figure of Francis Xavier that he evokes: in the first preserved description of Jesuit dress in Japan, Xavier's clothes were said to be too light for the cold Japanese winter and rather poor in appearance; he would wear a

45 This is the word that Cabral's letters and other sources used to identify the Japanese dress used by the missionaries in this period; kimonos are not, of course, the only Japanese garment made of silk.

46 Luís de Almeida to Melchor Nunes Barreto, Funai, approx. 20 November 1559 (*DJ*, 2: 224). Not surprisingly, both *COIMBRA* and *EVORA* omit the reference to clothes of religious women, arguably not considered very edifying.

47 This whole passage too is omitted in *EVORA* and *COIMBRA*.

Siamese *biro* (a kind of hat) but no shoes (*Historia*, 1: 35-6).[48] By creating a connection between Vilela and Xavier, Froís could validate and justify the travellers' decision to dress in this way, regardless of the general consensus on the matter at the time of writing or reading.

Just as he did when superficially describing Xavier's clothing, Froís followed the normal consuetude of Jesuit writings to not mention the colour or any other feature of Vilela's *kimono*, only its poverty. An exception to this tendency to avoid details that sheds light on the nature of the garments is the description by Luís de Almeida of his 1562 travelling *kosode* in northern Kyūshū:[49]

> The way in which I travel through this land, and I speak with these noblemen is in the manner of their monks: with shaved head and beard, which you have to do every time you go to speak with a nobleman, in lands where we are not well known. The clothes [I wear] are like a gown, a bit shorter, except for the fact that they have much larger and very short sleeves. Everybody wraps themselves with their belts and, on top, they wear a black veil. I dress like this when I see it is necessary, because when the local people see our clothes, which they never saw before, they never leave you [alone] nor have that regard [that is] proper of those who enjoy receiving the law of God from you. In this manner we go among friends and enemies preaching the law of God in every place we find ourselves. And they respect this habit so much that everywhere the laity makes way for you.[50]

While he did not specifically mention safety as a reason behind the use of monk's attire, Almeida wrote that the travel clothes used by the Jesuits allowed them to pass "among friends and enemies". Furthermore, he highlighted the connection between the prestige conferred by the habit and the safety to travel anywhere.[51]

A similar reasoning is found in Francisco Rodrigues' answer, in the second half of the decade of 1560s, regarding the propriety of adopting a completely shaved head:

48 As mentioned above, during his later travels Xavier created the precedent for wearing better clothes, possibly silk (since it was rather common), when in audience with daimyō or other authorities.

49 The *kosode* was the model of all Japanese dress. It was a short-sleeved, loose robe that could be made of different materials (silk for the richer classes, rougher cloth or cotton for the poor). Perez 2002, 89-90.

50 Luís de Almeida to the Jesuits in Europe, Yokoseura, 25 October 1562 (*DJ*, 2: 565-6).

51 The occasions of these trips, connected to the funding of the first Jesuit port of Japan, are described in *DJ*, 2: 533-4. Cf. Hesselink 2016, 19-21. The paragraphs quoted here have been edited out of some manuscript copies and printed editions, highlighting again how the matter was considered delicate.

> Question 44: Can a Father have his head and his beard shaved, as he seems to be conforming to Buddhist monks by doing so?
>
> Answer: Considered that it is not just monks who are shaved in this manner, but also many honoured merchants, medics, and kings, and princes, and finally all those who refuse all honours and things of the world, and signal it in this way; and considered that all those who are shaved in this manner have more freedom to speak with the lords and with others about the things of God, and can travel more freely; and considered that those people of Miyako have little respect for men who are only tonsured, because among them it is a sign of being lowly people, and for this reason they do not accept the doctrine from them […] I think there can be no doubt that a Father can have his head and his beard shaved, when he believes this is for the service of God…[52]

The previous authorisation obtained from Goa's theologian might be the main cause behind the insistence of the missionaries on this point of safety and liberty of movement, when defending their use of silk kimono to Cabral, even if neither the question nor the answer in this case mention garments.

However, Cabral was never convinced by this argument. It is possible to individuate two causes behind his refusal: the first was that he did not believe his brethren when they argued that Japan was a dangerous country for missionaries or, in other words, that no place was dangerous if one travelled with God's protection. Describing his visitation to Miyako of 1571, Cabral wrote to the Indian Provincial:

> They tried to frighten me, and importuned me with reasons for changing my dress, and leave behind the cassock and the cape, and cover my tonsure so that I would save my life [by being] anonymous. But since I already had experience of fears and difficulties that were fantasies of faithless people, I trusted God, who can make fierce lions meek as lambs when He so wishes, and the virtue of the holy obedience which was the reason why I was undertaking that voyage. I decided that neither I nor the [Japanese] brother [João de Torres][53] would change the garments of the Society, and so, without any silk or insignia of monks, we went on our voyage,

52 "Resposta de alguns cazos que os padres de Japão Mandaram perguntar", transcribed in Pinto, Pires 2005.

53 Japanese Brother João de Torres was Cabral's interpreter during this visitation and many others more. He had been baptised as an infant by Cosme de Torres around 1550 and had been dōjuku in Miyako in the 1560s (*Historia*, 2: 107). He entered the Society in 1569 or 1570 (*MonJap*, 113), but appears in the official catalogues of Japan only from 1576 (*MonJap*, 106). He was dismissed from the Society some time before 1612 (*MonJap*, 1313).

> always declaring myself a Father of the Society, even if unworthy. And my hope was not misguided, and when we boarded the ship we started feeling the Lord’s mercy, because not only the sailors and the heathen passengers did us no offence, but they treated us with politeness and courtesy.[54]

Cabral thus believed that his use of the cassock and his visual statement of being a Jesuit had had specific positive effects on the success of his missionary endeavours, as these actions granted divine protection. He states this explicitly in a later letter to a layman: both the Shōgun Ashikaga Yoshiaki and Oda Nobunaga had showed him favour, even if he was “dressed so poorly”; some important men converted, thanks to his poor appearance; and others asked to be sent a preacher.[55]

Cabral characterises his garments by pointing out two elements: they were not made of silk, and they did not have any “insignia of monks”. The latter feature is not mentioned often, and it does indeed seem secondary in the discussion on the propriety of missionary garments. Years later, when commenting on the adoption of Buddhist garb by Jesuit missionaries Michele Ruggeri and Matteo Ricci in China, Cabral wrote: “As for the dress, there was no change, they went like before, in a completely proper way, following the uses of the land”.[56] The cause of this acceptance is probably to be found in the similarities between the Jesuit cassock and the Chinese Buddhist garb.[57] The second element of import in Cabral’s garments was the lack of silk, which suggests that the clothes used by his brethren to travel were no longer like the poor kimono used by Vilela. It is therefore possible that, in the intervening years, there had been a change in the garments that the missionaries could afford when travelling, probably around the mid-1560s, coinciding with the beginning of the use of silks decried by Cabral.

If the materiality of the disguises used by the Jesuits during their travels appears to be less important in these discussions, it is arguably because Cabral saw it as the initial cause of the sinful behaviour of his brethren. He appears to hold the worry over personal safety as a worse error because it was a demonstration of lack of faith. Framing his wearing of a cassock as evidence of his own zeal,

54 Cabral to Antonio de Quadros, Nagasaki, 23 September 1572, in Cortes 9/2663, 85*r*-v.

55 Cabral to a man outside the Society [Stephanus Laurantis], 29 September 1572, in JapSin 7, III, 99*r*.

56 Cabral to Valignano, Macao, 5 December 1584, in Cortes 9/2663, 412*v*.

57 These garments were only “slightly different” from the usual black cassock, according to Ruggeri (Brockey 2007, 33), while Ricci stated that they “dress[ed] in the manner of [Chinese] Fathers, which is a little different from ours” (Rienstra 1986, 37). Ricci will change into the silk clothes of the literati only in 1595, after realising that Buddhist monks did not enjoy social prestige in China (Brockey 2007, 43).

instead, Cabral strongly implied that Nobunaga, the Shōgun, and all the other lords honoured him not despite his clothes, but thanks to them. This perspective was made explicit in a much later letter to General Acquaviva:

> And God Our Lord helped with this matter, so that immediately his law started to gain reputation, and the Fathers were honoured more by king[s] and lords of Japan when they were dressed with black cotton [*canga*][58] cassocks, than when they wore silk clothes and carried all that paraphernalia.[59]

The Japanese favour and the many conversions were therefore interpreted as a direct intervention of Providence (just as it had been before, in the form of kindness from other travellers: "we started feeling the Lord's mercy"). For Cabral, thus, regardless of the danger, the only proper way to live as a Jesuit was to announce oneself as such and to preach fearlessly the name of Jesus Christ while travelling. [60]

Another frame of reference in Cabral's narrative is obedience: "I trusted God […] and the virtue of the holy obedience which was the reason why I was undertaking that voyage". The specific workings of Jesuit obedience will be the focus of the next chapter; for now, it suffices to say that it linked Cabral's actions to the structure of the Society of Jesus and, through it, to God's will. In his eyes, wearing non-conforming garments meant abandoning this structure. Instead, by choosing his cassock and following his superiors' orders, Cabral meant to uphold his vows and to reaffirm his belonging to the chosen group of the Society of Jesus. His narrative presents thus earthly favour and conversions as a divine boon, given as a reward for his actions. These kinds of interpretations show that Cabral's understanding of the work of Grace was influenceable by human action.

Cabral thus interpreted the Jesuit custom of travelling disguised as a lack of faith in God, in holy obedience, and finally in the Society. This faithlessness was particularly worrying because it also took the shape of a dangerous Nicodemism, both when refusing the cassock and when using a monk's attire. This camouflaging would push the Society in Japan too far asunder from its origins and core values. Cabral instead believed that the correct way to show faith was to openly declare oneself a Jesuit, to dress like a Jesuit and, in so

58 *Canga* (or *ganga*): heavy cloth made of cotton, often from China (Golvers 1999, 521).

59 Cabral to General Acquaviva, Kochi, 15 December 1593, in *DI,* 16: 546.

60 Far from being a universal opinion, his interpretation contrasted, for example, with that of his contemporaries in England, who dressed as laymen to avoid being persecuted in Protestant lands, and who were forbidden by the General even to own a cassock that could identify them (McCoog 1996, 137). See also Tutino 2006.

doing, to become "a true servant of this saintly Society of Jesus". In Cabral's view, this attitude, understood as following the way of proceeding, appeared to be the most important element in the creation of a successful mission, one where God granted many conversions.[61]

Cabral's point of view is further clarified in his response to the second instance in which the missionaries would use silk clothes: to gain social prestige among the Japanese. This was articulated through two different but correlated aspects: the possibility for conversions and the Jesuits' relationship with the higher classes. The first was a problem of prestige in the wider community:

> Father Organtino and the Japanese Brother Lourenço came visiting me dressed in silks. Before changing clothes, they gave me some reasons, even [crossed out: telling] [overwritten: suggesting] me that we should not change. Summarizing their reasons: the hindrance it would be to the growing of Christendom for the ridicule we would be subjected to, since we wore a viler habit than [Japanese] monks. However, since I had experience that these were human fears and wrong persuasions, I wanted to see how many stones they would throw at me, and I went out in the streets of Sakai to sightsee, with my cloth garments, and Brother João [dressed] in the same way. Lourenço came with us with his silk dress, while Father Organtino stayed in the house. And walking through the main streets of the city, only in one some children followed me, without doing anything worse than looking at me as if frightened by a new thing, and sometimes they would call me [Deus]. (RAH, Cortes 9/2663, 90*r*-v)

The fact that this was a very limited experience, since Sakai had an established Christian community and was relatively safe, did not stop Cabral from drawing the conclusion that the Jesuits would not be ridiculed in the streets of the whole of Japan, and conversions would not suffer. To further support his position, Cabral asked for counsel from "some of the most important citizens of Sakai" who, it stood to reason, would know the Japanese context better. They all concurred that it would take some time for the Japanese to become familiar with the cassocks but that in the end they would accept them (Cortes 9/2663,

61 The maintenance of the spirit of the Society as one of the keys for successful missions was not just Cabral's interpretation. For instance, Luís Goncalves da Câmara expresses the same opinion in one of his letters of 1561: "Many souls depend on [the Portuguese Province], as many as are in the East, to whom nothing lacks to convert, except to send from here many people well taught and brought up in the spirit of the Society" (*DI,* 5: 18*).

90*r*). Some days later, in Sanga, Cabral also consulted Sancho Sanga[62] on this matter:

> Before leaving Sanga, I asked for Sanga-dono's opinion about this matter, since he is an old man of much experience, and also with much prudence and good sense. I asked him to answer me explicitly, with no reticence, for the obligation he had towards the things of God and His Church, what he thought about the change of clothing. If leaving the silks meant a difficulty for the service of God and the expansion of His Law, I would suspend this change until informing our superior in India. He answered that he believed that we should abandon the silks and let ourselves be known as religious [of the Society of Jesus], and we should not pay attention to the scorn we feared the gentiles would have towards us. (Cortes 9/2663, 94*v*–95*r*)[63]

This exchange is rhetorically construed to display, on the one hand, the willingness of Cabral to recognise the authority granted by direct experience to his brethren (both present and past) and to allow for an extension to consider further their objections. This fell within the acceptable practices of obedience of the Society of Jesus. On the other hand, the adoption of Sanga as a mouthpiece to present Cabral's point of view aimed to lend it credibility based on the deeper knowledge of Japanese culture and greater authority held by this venerable, high-ranking Christian. In the following lines, Cabral even uses Sanga's voice to rebuke his brethren ("If we, who were gentiles yesterday […] wanted to be recognised as Christians, even if we are mocked, the more you, who are religious, and whose example we have to follow, should not refuse your specific clothing and to be recognised as such", Cortes 9/2663, 95*r*). Cabral was thus free to conclude that the assumption that the missionaries might lose their reputation with the population had no real foundation. As he had done with the concern about safety, he attributed it to misgivings and lack of faith.

The Jesuit relationship with the cultural elite of Japan, however, was a different matter. Regardless of their political decline, Miyako and its courts were still considered the cultural heart of the country, and to maintain a presence there was important for the prestige of Catholicism.[64] Public recognition by the city's authorities, expressed

62 Sancho Sanga, head of the Shirai family who served in the nearby fortress of Iimori (Kawachi Province), was one of the oldest converts of the country.

63 The missionaries often used the suffix '-dono' (from *tono*, lord) to address men in position of power.

64 Miyako was also considered one of the most important cities for Buddhist institutions, and it was vital for the Jesuits to know how to move in the political landscape of the city to avoid being defeated and eradicated by their religious rivals. See Zampol mostly through the granting of audiences, would facilitate proselytising among the higher classes, in the region and through the country. Francis Xavier’s failure to obtain an audience with the emperor, due to his lack of gifts and poor appearance, had revealed the missionaries’ initial inability to navigate the complex cultural milieu of the capital city, aggravated by the impossibility to summon there both the Portuguese carrack and the key support of its commerce.

It is therefore not surprising that it was in Miyako, away from the control of the Bungo superiors, that most of the cultural experimentation of the missionaries took place (Ribeiro 2007, 22). Luís Fróis gave a detailed explanation of the problem about clothes that arose there:

> Aside from the common obligation that existed [to visit the Shōgun for the New Year], the gentiles would not have a great concept of the law of God, nor regard the fathers with esteem, if they saw them defrauded or excluded from this visitation, that is so honourable and solemn to them. And also because the Japanese commonly do not esteem foreigners more than their exterior and the dress they wear, because even the monks in these days work to make a great display of themselves: therefore, the old Christians of Miyako, following whose experience the father [Vilela] had to behave, insistently begged the fathers to allow as much [flexibility] as possible in the clothes, since these great lords were proud, and would be affronted and insulted if the fathers had appeared in front of them with common and ordinary clothes. [Good clothes] would reflect better credit and reputation on the Christians, at least in those initial origins, when the gentiles did not know yet the dignity of the clergy and of Christian religion. (*Historia*, 2: 13)

If this passage, as the one quoted above on zeal, is structured to exonerate Vilela’s actions in the eyes of the reader, the impact that the Japanese converts’ requests would have had on the missionaries cannot be underestimated. There was, however, another problem to overcome before complying with court etiquette: the mission of Miyako was very poor (2: 415). Since Vilela did not have enough funds to buy silk Japanese clothes, he used what he owned already: clerical and liturgical vestments. The mission had recently been endowed with rich Western clothes that Barreto’s group had brought to Japan with them. A 1554 list shows how among them there were many pieces made of brocade and other rich materials and colours

D’Ortia, Dolce, Pinto 2021. Moreover, the people of Miyako were regarded as the most apt to convert to Christianity because they were the most refined (Cortes 9/2663, 106*v*).

(white and crimson velvet, blue camlet, etc.).[65] Thus, on his first visit to the Shōgun, Vilela wore a surplice and a stole; then a mantle and a new cassock of cloth of Portugal; for his third visit, in 1565, he wore an open cassock made of camlet,[66] an old cope with orphreys,[67] made of brocade of Hormuz,[68] and his hat. On this same occasion, Froís wore a mantle, a cassock, and Chinese slippers of twisted sewing silk (*chapins de retroz*). They both were riding in a litter, with a retinue of fifteen or twenty Christians each, carrying precious gifts for the Shōgun, among which there was a European wide-brimmed hat (*sombreiro*) (*Historia*, 2: 13-14). Once new funds were acquired, however, it seems that the Jesuits preferred to use local silk clothes. It is possible that the belief that "[good clothes] would reflect better credit and reputation on the Christians" prompted them, later, to commonly use silks when outside the residences, instead of only when visiting upper-class people, which would be then extended also to incognito travel, slowly substituting the poor monks' disguises.

Miyako was the main destination of Cabral's visitation of 1571. There he called for a consultation on the matter of the silk garments, together with fathers Organtino and Froís, and brother Lourenço. When they expressed their reticence, Cabral decided to do the same experiment he had done in Sakai and walked out in the middle of the festivities for the Gion *matsuri*, the major festival of the capital. Since nobody appeared to react negatively, even when he showed up among the people waiting to see the Shōgun, he went back home and had cassocks made for all his brethren in the area. Cabral's satisfaction is evident as he describes the other missionaries accepting his orders "as obedient children [in the Lord]" (Cortes 9/2663, 95*r*).

The Jesuits' new clothes were the cause of some friction during the visit they made to the Shōgun, since some of his attendants did

65 "Rol do fato que o Padre Mestre Melchior levou pera o Japão o anno de 1554", in *DI*, 3: 196-205. The most luxurious pontifical set was returned by Torres to India, because the small dimensions of the Japanese Christian community did not justify its use in Japan (Cabral to the General Mercurian, Usuki, 15 October 1578, in JapSin 8, I, 203*r*).

66 An open cassock (*loba aberta*) is an "old scholastic dress; composed by an open tunic, which overlaps at the front, sleeveless, and a cowl", in Silva, "Loba aberta". As for the material (*chamalote*), "camlet was originally 100% mohair [silky material made of hair of Angora goat], warp faced, and with a distinctive glossy finish [...] Camlets woven in Europe always contained at least some fiber other than mohair" (Jirousek 2008).

67 An orphrey (*savastros*) is a "highly elaborate embroidery work, or a piece of such embroidery. More specifically orphrey is an ornamental border, or embroidered band, especially as used on ecclesiastical vestments. Orphreys often utilized cloth of gold, gold trimming, or gold and silk weft, or filling. They were frequently woven several bands wide and then cut apart" (s.v. "Orphrey").

68 Brocade (*borcado* in the text) is a "woven fabric having a raised floral or figured design that is introduced during the weaving process [...] usually made in a satin or twill weave. The background may be twill, satin, or plain weave. The rich, fairly heavy fabric is frequently used for evening dresses, draperies, and upholstery" (s.v. "Brocade").

not consider them fit to be admitted in the presence of their lord. However, in the end, the Shōgun welcomed them with "many compliments". Cabral attributed this success too to divine favour: "the virtue of holy obedience and the poverty of Christ were more powerful", he wrote, than any "secular silk" (Cortes 9/2663, 95*v*).[69] In any case, the Shōgun was very interested in the form of the European clothes, particularly the sleeves, which seemed better suited to the cold than the larger sleeves of the *kimono*. In a scene that would in time become rather common, [70] he had Luís Fróis remove his cape, to better see his cassock, and studied its buttons attentively.

After briefly discussing their tonsure, the Shōgun asked why, during his previous visits, he had his head shaved and was wearing different clothes. Fróis replied that had been a strategy not to shock the people, in the manner of "a hunter dressed in green to catch his prey". The Shōgun then commented that he did not think that was the reason; rather, it was that, since their superior was present, the Jesuits had not dared to dress differently from him. While this remark shows a less friendly aspect of the conversation, the visit was presented as a great success in Cabral's letter, who attributed its favourable outcome to the "great honour Our Lord wanted to bestow upon our new poor clothing, to show that it is only He who can move the hearts, not the silk" (Cortes 9/2663, 97*r*).[71]

The party (without Organtino) then moved on to Gifu (in Mino), to visit Oda Nobunaga, who had just recently burned to the ground the nearby complex of Enryaku-ji, one of the main Buddhist institutions of the country.[72] Nobunaga too received them in a friendly way and showed interest in their change of clothing.[73] Cabral himself had just discovered that Nobunaga too wanted his retinue to be dressed in rough clothes, instead of the more common silk, an order that appears to be in line with Nobunaga's renowned disregard of

69 It is possible that the gifts the Jesuits brought with them also helped: ten quires of paper, a golden fan, an oxtail, a piece of damask, and a small trinket made of gold. While the abundance of the presents is due to the rank of the host and to the fact that it was Cabral's first visit, it is interesting to note that with time the Jesuits would greatly reduce the quantity and quality of their gifts, under the orders of Cabral himself.

70 The scene is strongly reminiscent of Shōgun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi asking VOC merchants to take off and put back on their outerwear to show him the use of the buttons (Carlotto 2013, 11-12).

71 The Shōgun's comment on not wanting to dress differently from their superior is struck through in the manuscript, as are most unedifying elements.

72 The visit to Nobunaga is described also in *Historia* (2: 359-63), where it is specified that he had everybody dressed finely on this occasion, in honour of the guests "from India".

73 In the *Historia*'s narrative, instead, Nobunaga makes only a passing comment on how he cannot give them silk clothing as a present, since it does not agree with those who wear black cloth (2: 362).

social norms.[74] As Cabral's letter put it, Nobunaga believed that, if his generals and soldiers wore clothing that was too fine, they would become effeminate. Far from being a casual statement, the fact that no additional comment is given to it hints that Cabral shared Nobunaga's assumptions about the negative effect of silk garments. This connection was not unknown in Europe, where for example foreign items of clothing were seen as jeopardising the "valour of the Spaniards" by making them effeminate (Juárez Almendros 2006, 22-3). This connection added a troubling element to the Jesuit association with silk because femininity was held to be more corruptible by the Devil and more easily persuaded to sin (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006, 83). In any case, coming from the highest authority in the country, whom the missionaries at the time believed to be guided by Providence, such an opinion was reported in Cabral's letters to lend support to his reform of Jesuit dress as well. Indeed, the meeting with Nobunaga sealed Cabral's opinion on the matter: if the local elites were amenable to the cassock, and the supreme authorities of the country agreed with the principles behind it, the other missionaries had clearly exaggerated the importance of fine appearance.

Cabral's decision to change the garments that the missionaries had adopted, either to disguise themselves during voyages or to respect local etiquette with sumptuous clothing, would be definitive until the persecutions forced them to hide and use disguises. The rules regarding garments that were established during the Jesuit first consultation (1580) in Japan read:

> the ordinary and common garment should be the cassock and the dobuko with a raised collar in the manner of cloaks, with a round cap and tabi,[75] for this is commonly our habit and is accepted in Japan. (Valignano 1954, 247)

It is still possible to still see the full dress of the Jesuits in Japan in some *biombos nanbam*,[76] Japanese folding screens that depicted scenes with European characters. In these screens, the missionaries wear a black cassock, which almost completely covers the undershirt, as per the regulation. Both garments are heavier than the light ones used in India, since Japan's climate is colder, and are made of heavier cotton (*ganga*). The most interesting detail is possibly the head

74 On Oda Nobunaga's rather eccentric character, see Lamers 2000.

75 A tabi is "a sock with a separate section for the big toe" (s.v. "Tabi"), worn with *shikirei* (sandals).

76 In Japanese, *nanban byōbu*. See, for example, the untitled piece held at the Museu de Arte Antiga in Lisbon, attributed to the Kano school and dated between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century (description and photographic reproductions available in Curvelo 2024).

covering: the Jesuits of the Assistance of Portugal wore a *barrete redondo*, or *pileus rotondus*, that is, a rounded "cap which resembled in form a hat from which the brim had been removed" (Borges 1994, 31-2). Originally used by university students, it substituted the biretta in India (Osswald 2011, 507) and Japan. However, when they were travelling and visiting people of importance, the missionaries would also wear a long black cape and a wide brimmed black hat, which often appear on the Japanese depictions.

2.5 Devilish Presences and Absences

On 10 September 1573, Francisco Cabral sombrely informed the General in Rome that the ship of Visitor Gonçalo Álvares had sunk near the port of Nagasaki, with immense loss of missionary lives and funds. Despite this tragedy, at least the state of the Japanese mission seemed to finally be improving:

> Thanks to God's goodness, there is no small improvement, especially in the matter of the silks that the Fathers wore, and the other luxuries they had, under the pretext that this was the better service of God and the preaching of His law; this was the cape that the Devil was using, to cover up the evils that [this practice] entailed. Now thanks to God's goodness they finally all wear clothes of black cotton with cassocks. (JapSin 7, I, 166Av)

By 1573, Cabral thus considered the matter of the silk garments closed. His narrative of the whole affair, summarised in this letter, interpreted it as a trick orchestrated by the Devil, who had insinuated himself in the mission and convinced the Jesuits that the grave sin they were committing was in service of God. Fortunately, it was implied that Cabral's heroic intervention had saved the mission from the attack of the cosmic enemy and allowed it to regain God's favour, granting its redemption.

The figure of the Devil appeared frequently in the mise-en-scène of missionary literature of the early modern period.[77] It was a flexible and effectual device in the missionaries' interpretive toolkit of extra-European cultures and landscapes. It allowed them to explain their familiar and unfamiliar elements alike and return them to a known, and vaguely consistent, framework. If violent weather and habits perceived

77 European literature of the years from 1550 to 1650 made ample use of the figure of the Devil as a way to interpret the many destabilizing events of the period, from the Reformation to the uncertainties caused by European expansion (Muchembled 2003, 151-2). See also Torres Londoño 2002, 23. For examples of the Devil's presence in early modern missionary literature, see Cañizares-Esguerra 2006; Goddard 1997; Sweet 2008.

as strange could be attributed to the Devil's malign influence over foreign peoples and lands, it was also true that the enemy of mankind could imitate, sometimes in a perfect opposite, the work of God. Religious practices, then, if similar enough to Christian ones, could be explained away by evoking the figure of the *simia dei*, God's ape (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006, 102-3; 124). The trope of the Devil as an imitating ape dates to the twelfth or thirteenth century, although it is traditionally attributed to the Church Fathers, in whose writings already appear fundamental elements that compose the trope (Zwi Werblowsky 1972; Rudwin 1929). The European encounter with new peoples in the early modern period reinvigorated it, making it an interpretative strategy that facilitated the condemnation of other religions and their discursive subjugation by assimilation into a Christian worldview.[78]

In Japan too, after a brief attempt at interpreting local religious practices as a long-lost memory of Christianity, the Jesuits established that they were instead an imitation created by the Devil: Francis Xavier believed Buddhas to be demons; in 1555, Baltasar Gago confidently wrote: "the devil [in Japan] has sustenance from ten sects he brought from China". By the following year, the so-called *Sumario de los errores*, a manual composed by a team of dedicated missionaries to denounce Buddhist doctrine, firmly established Buddhism as the work of the Devil (Zampol D'Ortia, Dolce, Pinto 2021, 73-8).

Cabral too perceived the country as being held in the clutches of the Devil. His letters often describe it as a physical presence, which needed to be exorcised by priests or by faithful Christians. Cabral positioned himself as a Christian hero who was fighting in the cosmic battle of Good against Evil, saving the mission from the influence of the Devil, with the help of God. This is, however, where this tendency ends. Contrary to the descriptions of other non-European peoples that appear in this century (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006, 84-6), Cabral does not appear to perceive the Japanese as slaves of the Devil, nor as generally under his influence. This does not mean that, overall, he described their national character positively: he considers them "very barbarous" in their manner of government due to the liberty he attributes to the masters to kill their servants without consequences. "They pride themselves of the fact that nobody can understand their hearts, and of deceiving others. Among themselves they use many praises, and always smile, and are very sly" (JapSin 7, I, 20*v*). Cabral thus felt that, excluding possessions, the influence of the Devil on Japanese people mostly related to Buddhism.

The whole debacle on garments took on, in this way, a cosmic dimension in Cabral's narrative: the enemy of humankind had found

78 As such, it can be described as an act of exclusive similarity, as it "represent[s] diverging positions as aberrant imitations" (Josephson Storm 2012, 24; 28-9).

a way into the mission through the European missionaries. He had tempted them through the softness of silk, and their woman-like weakness had allowed them to discard their vow of poverty. Their sinful lust of the eyes, caused by their appreciation of silks, had led to proud behaviour, a search for vainglory, and a lack of humility: "[their] excuses seemed immediately to be founded on pride" (JapSin 7, I, 23*v*). This, in turn, had eroded their ability to respect their vow of obedience.[79] The negative influence of the world, in the specific form it took in Japan, had contaminated the missionaries, and they had lost sight of the way of proceeding of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits, as Cabral presented them, had become fearful and lost faith in God, and chose to carry out the work of evangelisation using human means, such as Japanese garments, rather than trusting in Providence. They had let themselves be tricked by the Devil.

In this context, the imposition of the black cassock was supposed to grant success for the future of the mission. However, Cabral's smooth narrative of success in his fight against the Devil met a hitch when the Visitor died:

> I believed that, this year, I would write to Your Paternity again with better news on the abundant harvest that I was sure God Our Lord would do [through] us of the Society, who live in these lands. And [also] about the conversion of the gentility of this land, with the coming of the Father Visitor Gonçalo Álvares, and the fathers who were accompanying him, with whose arrival I hoped some of the need for workers in this land would be fulfilled. But since the reasons of God cannot be understood, and His secrets are so profound that there is nobody who can reach them, He wanted that everything was capsized, so that the only thing one can do is to close one's eyes to understanding and say, with the prophet, *judicia dei abissus multa*.[80] […] God executed the sentence he had pronounced against the [Visitor's] carrack […] pushed the carrack underwater, and killed those who sailed in it, among them the Father Visitor and all his five companions […] we never found anybody, praise be to the Lord.[81]

Cabral's narrative, in this passage, explicitly indicates this disaster as willed by God. There is no suggestion that behind it there might be the Devil, who was known to cause natural disasters, especially deadly tropical storms (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006, 124). Still, Cabral,

79 On the sins of lust of eyes and pride of life, and their connection to the religious vows, see Howard 1966, 45-55.

80 "[God's] justice is like the great depths of the sea". *Ps.*, 36:7.

81 Francisco Cabral to Francis Borja, 10 September 1573, in JapSin 7, I, 166Ar.

reticent as he often was, did not follow his own reasoning to the end and did not yet describe this as a divine punishment for the breaking of the vow of poverty. God's "sentence against the carrack" was a judgement that could not be understood by reason and could only be accepted. Cabral trusted God to provide for them still, after the loss of most of their funds, if they complied with their obligations (JapSin 7, I, 166Av). This sentiment appeared again in a missive to the Provincial of India on 8 September 1573:

> I hope in the Lord that, if we labour to be as we are supposed to be, and build our foundations in humility, poverty, and obedience (me especially, as I need this more than anybody else), God Our Lord will make use of us, even if unworthy, as tools for the conversion of many thousands of souls.[82]

Cabral, however, did not know yet that Quadros had died the previous year and that his own hope would be short-lived.

82 Cabral to Antonio de Quadros, Provincial of India, 8 September 1573, in JapSin 7, I, 159*r*.

3 Failed Correspondence: The Vow of Obedience

Summary 3.1 Jesuit Obedience. – 3.2 Obedience through Written Correspondence. – 3.3 Rhetoric of Obedience. – 3.4 Cabral's Strategies of Control. – 3.5 Baltasar da Costa, the Disobedient Jesuit. – 3.6 Conclusions.

As discussed in the previous chapter, before founding the Society, Ignatius Loyola had already had some disagreements with Church authorities. While he had opted to capitulate, he had not managed to harmonise his spiritual convictions with the commands of the Church.[1] As the common narrative goes, Loyola's initial belief that sanctity had to be measured by the penance he inflicted on his body underwent a change when he understood the importance of "calm indifference:" after Inquisition judges imposed a different dress on him, he decided that he would always want to do what he was ordered to do, "because the habit has little importance" (Câmara 1904, 219-20). The tendency to extreme austerities, characteristic of older religious orders, was thus interpreted as a dangerous impulse that needed to be fought, both in himself and in the other Jesuits. To do so, Loyola resolved to prioritise obedience above his own desires of mortification. This attitude evolved with time to become one of the pillars on which the Society of Jesus was based.

1 For more details on the topic, see also Bonora 2006.

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The sixteenth-century spread of Reformed ideas throughout the continent meant that tensions surrounding the concept of obedience in Europe were heightened. Loyalty to the Pope and the Catholic hierarchy was held as paramount and, at its most extreme, obedience was equated with orthodoxy and all independent thinking with heresy (Mostaccio 2014, 44-5; 57). Obedience to secular authorities was likewise intertwined with religious obedience, as the principle of the "cuius regio, eius religio" illustrates (Christin 2004, 431).[2] Exalted and criticised in turn, even by members of the Society, Jesuit obedience came to be one of the fundamental elements of self-understanding for Society members. Therefore, it is not surprising that depictions of heroic obedience and instances of sinful disobedience appear in Francisco Cabral's descriptions of the unsatisfactory state of the Japanese mission.

This chapter will first consider the defining characteristics of Jesuit obedience in the sixteenth century and how they were transformed in long-distance correspondence when it came to the governance of missions. The reception and development of this concept in the Japanese mission is the focus of the following section, in addition to how it appears in the rhetoric of Cabral's correspondence. The chapter will then analyse Cabral's proposed strategies to solve the problems that he perceived were related to obedience, which were continuous visitations by the superior and building a house of probation. The last section will briefly describe the tensions created in this junction by the behaviour of Jesuit Baltasar da Costa and consider Cabral's strategy for bringing it under control.

3.1 Jesuit Obedience

The character of the vow of obedience was illustrated at length in the *Constitutions*, but it is the numerous letters by Loyola and his secretary, Juan Alfonso de Polanco, that have expounded its meaning in detail (O'Malley 1993, 352). According to the principle of blind obedience, there were three manners of obedience; the most basic of these, obeying an order by an action, could barely be called such. The other two were aspects of virtuous obedience: the obedience of will, in which there was adherence of will with the superior (he recommended to "undress yourself of your will and wear the divine will interpreted by him", Espinosa Polit 1940, 42); and the obedience of judgment, in which there was total agreement with the superior.[3] Loyola only con-

2 For an example of the spread of Reformation ideas, including the refusal of obedience, see Firpo 2004, 174.

3 "Un sentir mesmo con su superior" (Espinosa Polit 1940, 43).

sidered the latter as perfect blind obedience; through it, man made himself a complete sacrifice to God (Moreno 2013, 66).[4] According to the Jesuit way of proceeding, obedience to the superiors was the correct manner of practicing self-denial, in contrast with other practices common at the time among both the religious and the laity (O'Malley 1993, 352). The superior was to be obeyed because he was experienced, prudent, and, most importantly, because he could interpret God's will for those under him (Friedrich 2014, 131). Indeed, Divine Providence would guide his decisions. In his letters, Loyola suggests several methods to develop this kind of obedience in oneself, among which is trying always to find reasons to support the decisions of the superior (Espinosa Polit 1940, 42). The spiritual aspect of obedience (which marked it "holy") emerged clearly in the consultations that Loyola engaged in with God every time he had to make an important decision (Friedrich 2014, 125). The provincials and other superiors were supposed to foster the connection between him and the Society, aiming to move like a single body towards the greater good (131-3). Therefore, through obedience a Jesuit could achieve a better understanding of divine will and exercise a manner of asceticism (O'Malley 1993, 353).

Some provisions were made in case the subject felt the orders he had been given were damaging:

> [627] *I. For someone to propose the motions or thoughts which occur to him contrary to an order received, meanwhile submitting his entire judgement and will to the judgement of his superior who is in the place of Christ, is not against this prescription.*

This clause, intimately connected to the Spiritual Exercises with its reference to the "motions",[5] was to become a key feature in the relationship between a superior and their subordinate. It also represented a fertile terrain for the creation of new answers to the problems of the missionaries' changing world, as the process of dialogue between obedience and the subject's feelings had the potential to be the basis of decision-making in a mission (Mostaccio 2014, 68). However, it was also Ignatius' wish that all the Society members should strive for the indifference that he had reached: a state of suspended judgment regarding all decisions made by the superiors. This would allow Jesuits to report the doubts emerging from their spiritual motions without being too invested in the outcome.[6]

4 See also *Cons.*, [550].

5 "Motions" here is used as "a technical term. It can mean either inclinations arising on the natural level or spiritual experiences produced by good or evil spirits" (*Cons.*, 279n6).

6 "[The subjection of judgment] does not mean that you should not feel free to propose a difficulty, should something occur to you different from his opinion, provided you pray

Even with the complex mechanisms that governed obedience, internal dissension often unsettled the Society. [7] The Province of Portugal was at the centre of scandals that shed some light on the importance many of its members attributed to blind obedience. In 1553, Simão Rodrigues, the first Provincial of Portugal, was accused of encouraging irregular practices (such as extreme asceticism and general laxity) and, later, of disobedience to the General. The incident caused the province to fracture and the loss of many members, who left the order. It was in response to this crisis that Loyola wrote his 1553 letter on obedience, probably following a request by Luís Gonçalves da Câmara,[8] who at the time was the confessor of King Dom João III. He requested that the General write to the members of the province about "abnegation, mortification, and obedience, and about the rigor that must be maintained by the superiors […] because here we do not lack people who can tell [this] truth, but we lack its credence",[9] which highlights the elements he believed should be central to the Jesuit way of proceeding. Câmara had developed a specific point of view on Ignatian obedience by virtue of his position as his personal secretary, as delineated in Chapter 1.[10] Câmara, described recently as "apprehensive, impulsive, prejudiced", believed that nothing less than rigorous discipline would keep the Portuguese Jesuits following the way of proceeding, convinced as he was that they were spiritually weak and prone to heresy (Carvalho 2004, 425).[11]

Although it appears that Câmara's influence over the Assistancy of Portugal has never been the focus of any modern study, it was certainly extensive during the third quarter of the sixteenth century.[12] His rigorist approach was influential in terms of the development of

over it, and it seems to you in God's presence that you ought to make the representation to the superior. […] you must maintain indifference both before and after making this representation […and] go so far as to be better satisfied with, and to consider as better, whatever the superior shall ordain" (Espinosa Polit 1940, 48-9; translation from Young 1959).

7 For instance, the controversy *de Auxiliis*, on the relationship between free will and justification. Started with a debate at the University of Salamanca in 1582, it was ended in 1607 by the Pope without reaching an official conclusion. Jesuits and Dominicans were intensely involved during the first stage of the controversy, on both side of the debate (Matava 2016, 16-23).

8 On the incident, see Carvalho 2004.

9 Luís Gonçalves da Câmara to Ignatius Loyola, Lisbon, 6 January 1553, in Agustí 1900, 41.

10 Friedrich points out that "even [Loyola's] closest friends did not always know what to expect" because sometimes he "insisted strongly on obedience, sometimes he was mild and gentle" (2014, 134).

11 More on Nadal's visitation and Câmara's fears is in Bangert 1992, 242-4.

12 For a short biography and additional information on his authority at court, see Alden 1996, 81-5, where he is also compared to Francis Xavier when it came to austerities. See also Wicki 1967, 252.

the concept of obedience in the Portuguese Province, to the point that it is possible to identify a "rigorist party" (Palomo 2012, 223) that supported a government characterised by

> superiors leading their subjects, along the road to perfection […] by punishing their defects and imperfections and by exercising them in mortifications and humiliations of all sorts. […] Firmly persuaded of man's weakness, his inclination to evil, his flight from heroic effort, they sought to lead souls to the ideal of self-renunciation and with God by a continual subjugation of the passions and by guidance from without, if necessary. (Schütte 1980, 1: 70)

Câmara's leadership presents a certain affinity with that of Francis Xavier (Alden 1996, 82), whose initial approach to government was charismatic. Xavier purported a leadership based on love and kindness for subordinates, but his behaviour leaned towards authoritarianism, requiring total obedience. In February 1552, when he had to deal with the defiance of a group of missionaries headed by Antonio Gomes, a charismatic and zealous Jesuit, Xavier's solution was to order his substitute, Gaspar Barzaeus, to dismiss all who would not obey him, even if they were gifted missionaries (Schurhammer 1973, 4: 531). Xavier appears to reject any charismatic authority among the missionaries in India, except for his own. Behind the "great zeal" that made the missionaries desire new apostolic fields instead of following their orders, he saw the machinations of the Devil (Županov 2005, 75-6). As was the case with the Society in Europe, the governance in Asia also slowly became more bureaucratic, and the process of institutionalisation of the Society of Jesus drastically reduced the acceptance of uncontrollable zeal and increasingly focused on hierarchy (Mostaccio 2014, 65). Overall, this rigorous leadership style, which had characterised some periods of the Portuguese Province, had influenced other parts of the Assistancy, and its influence could be felt in Asia as well.

These tensions between obedience and autonomy can be traced back to the Jesuit way of proceeding itself. Jesuit education prepared men to be "active in the world", and their training was not likely to produce workers who would base their behaviour on blind obedience (Martin 1973, 35).[13] Even if Loyola himself called for blind obedience, he undermined it both with his actions and his words (Evennett 1968, 130). He also favoured the quality of discretion, especially in his brethren who had decision-making power. Together with experience and prudence, discretion was exalted by Loyola as the correct tool to direct zeal and charity and considered a necessary quality for all Jesuits,

13 See also O'Malley 1993, 351-2.

especially superiors, as it allowed them to be trusted to independently make the correct decisions.[14] The instructions of the *Spiritual Exercises* and *Constitutions* also contributed to these tensions, as they made it the duty of the Jesuit to inform the superior of any scruple he might have regarding any order, provided said scruple had been subjected to the discernment of the spirits (Mostaccio 2014, 75-6). Generally speaking, the multilayered nature of the way of proceeding made a bureaucratisation process necessary for the Society of Jesus and its concept of obedience, which stabilised under Acquaviva (Rurale 2005).

3.2 Obedience through Written Correspondence

In the first years of the Society, attempts at maintaining unity took different forms, as Loyola understood the importance of connections that could surpass differences and distances. Obedience was one of them, as it reaffirmed the ties among the members of the Society and encouraged unity of action (Friedrich 2014, 132). The practice of holy obedience was thus a cornerstone of the Society of Jesus in more than one way. When personal interaction was not possible, it was substituted by a methodical epistolary exchange between the Jesuit Curia in Rome, the secondary centres in Europe, and the various peripheries of missions.[15] Historian Markus Friederich has named this correspondence "lettered governance" (Friedrich 2014, 135). Written correspondence quickly became an important vehicle of obedience, facilitated by the itinerant ministry that was one of the Society's staple activities. The practice of the Curia, to circulate the most important and interesting letters in all provinces, made correspondence a connecting element that went beyond the simple organisation of the practical aspects of the missions; letter writing facilitated a spiritual union in the communal search for the will of God, becoming praxis unto itself (Torres Londoño 2002, 17; Palomo 2005, 59).

The Jesuit letters could be either public and edifying, or administrative and for the internal use of the Society (*hijuelas*).[16] The first

14 Discretion is to be understood here in its political connotation of "discern[ing] flexibly what to do in certain and highly specific circumstances" (Friedrich 2014, 133-4.)

15 According to regulation, the European rectors and other relevant figures were to write at least a trimestral letter to the General and a weekly letter to their father provincial; the provincial was supposed to reply every three months, and the General every six. Correspondence between the provincials and the General was monthly, while the answer was supposed to be bimonthly. The situation in the extra-European provinces depended on the availability of ships for mailing, and, while initially less regulated, with time it was subjected to increasing numbers of rules. It was understood, however, that the Asian provinces were different from their European counterparts and were allowed more elasticity. See Ferro 1993, 140-3.

16 "Annexes [to the main letter]". For more information, see Friedrich 2014, 138.

were written with extreme attention to the content so that they could be printed and read by the public. Aiming to be edifying and attract patronage for the activities of the Society, letters from the extra-European missions were often copied in volumes made for the Jesuit houses and colleges and read during meals, to build and reinforce the collective image the Jesuits had of themselves. By contrast, the hijuelas were less elaborated and not focused on edification. They contained the practical concerns of the mission, specific requests regarding the ministries or other matters that could not be publicly divulged. In doing this, the Society was imitating existing forms of control exercised by metropolitan kingdoms on their colonies and building similar archives and networks of information (Torres Londoño 2002, 19-22; Palomo 2005, 58-9). However, the practice of letter writing differed from its theoretical underpinning in more than one aspect. The well-organised bureaucratic machine of the Society was put to the test with the extra-European missions. Loss of letters was common due to deterioration during travel, shipwrecks, sequestration by authorities, and piracy (Ferro 1993, 147; Alden 1996, 45-50).

Moreover, even if it suffered no accidents, correspondence needed extended time to travel between Asia and Europe. For instance, in East Asia, a letter could take two years to reach its recipient, and four to receive a reply. A letter leaving Goa in December or January would arrive in Lisbon, providing it did not have a delay somewhere along the route, between June and September of the following year. The reply could depart in March at the earliest, and arrive between August and October, still assuming it caught the monsoon and did not need to winter in Mozambique, delaying its arrival by one year. In addition to such long timing, it must be included the frequent possibility of the correspondence being lost, in both directions. A system of copies was instituted to try to limit the impact of such events: a letter was often sent in multiple copies and through different routes (*vias*), generally three. Even so, the missionaries often lamented the lack of replies to their missives.

Among the consequences of these difficulties was a strain on obedience due to the lack of response to the missions' problems by the European headquarters. The provincials and local superiors connected the General and the Society but were also supposed to find the best solutions to problems that could not be solved by the central authority, whose inability was generally attributed to a lack of information on the precise context in which the dilemmas arose (Friedrich 2014, 131-3). While waiting for instructions that were not forthcoming, the superiors could take matters into their own hands. Indeed, the fixed residence of the General in Rome, in contrast to the mobility of the heads of other orders, such as the Dominicans, did not allow him to make visitations to control the state of the provinces personally. This made him reliant on his subordinates to select the men who would fulfil the most important roles in mission and reduced his authority in decision-making, often obligating him to delegate (Clossey 2008, 56-8; Rurale 2005, 29-38). Some form of control could be taken back by sending an inspector, called a visitor, who would act on the General's behalf, outranking all the other Society members in the province where he was carrying out his visitation.[17] The appointing of visitors to the extra-European provinces was not uncommon. Even they, though, needed to report back important matters to the General, which could make for painfully slow exchanges, delays in taking action, and frequent changes in policies.[18]

3.3 Rhetoric of Obedience

While preserving the link of obedience between Asia and the European headquarters of the Society was not easy, relations among the missionaries of the Indian mission did not fare any better. The South Asian seas were difficult to navigate, and often ships were sunk or dragged off-course by storms, carrying with them the missionaries and their correspondence. The difficulty of travel also hindered the visitations that the Provincial was expected to undertake. Additionally, in the initial years of evangelisation, the tension between the obedience expected from the Jesuits and their missionary zeal and charisma proved to be difficult to manage.[19] In Loyola's understanding, too much zeal caused the growth of self-importance and therefore represented an obstacle to perfect obedience. It made the subjects unable to exercise indifference towards the orders of the superiors. While these fervours had common roots in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Loyola believed they could push some practitioners towards a dangerous social and psychological instability (Županov 2005, 141-3).

From the point of view of obedience, the narrative presented by the Jesuits in Japan did not stray much from an edifying ideal. This virtue was mentioned often when a Jesuit wanted to exalt the character of his brethren, signalling that they were proper Jesuits and missionaries. To state and describe how they were acting under holy obedience meant to underline the religious abnegation of the missionaries' exploits. Obedience was so central to Jesuit self-understanding that, for instance, the dōjuku Damião was not an official

17 On the figure of the visitor, see also Brockey 2014, 11-16.

18 See, for example, the discussion on Japan's missionary policy between Acquaviva and Valignano, in Moran 1993, 23-4.

19 While the problem was particularly acute during Xavier's superiorate, it did not completely disappear with time; some examples of later, similar contrasts are in Brockey 2014, 103-12.

member of the Society of Jesus but, according to Juan Fernández, he seemed one in his behaviour and, most importantly, “in his virtue of obedience”.[20] A similar, dramatically rendered example comes from Gaspar Vilela at the time of his visit to Enryaku-ji:

> Since the Lord allows it, and holy obedience orders me, I lower my head, offering my soul and body to death, cold and injuries and many adversities that are assured, over land and sea. I put much hope in your prayers, dearest [brothers.] Following both my orders and my will, I will go straight to […] Hiei-no-yama, which means ‘hillock of fire’ […] So don’t be negligent in recommending me to God, because I have trusted the holy obedience with hope and faith, [so] that the Devil will be revealed for who he is, and the law of God will be manifested and received among [the monks].[21]

This attitude was common in missionaries of different religious orders deployed around the world; among the Jesuits, who attributed so much importance to correspondence, it evolved to become a literary topos of their letters.[22] Francisco Cabral did not escape this trend. He often emphasised how he closely followed the orders of his superiors and the rules of the Society, such as those that expected him to do regular visitations. This tendency is particularly evident in his correspondence after he left Japan, when he changed his narrative about his years in the country, making it also more cohesive.

An example is Cabral’s 1583 letter to the General, written while overseeing the mission in China, with the main aim to criticise Alessandro Valignano’s reform (JapSin 9, II, 186*r*-188*v*). The latter believed that the previous superiorate had been a failure and held a negative opinion of Cabral’s leadership.[23] While Cabral admitted to not being fit for government any longer,[24] he was still keen to defend

20 Juan Fernández to the Brothers of the Society of Jesus, Bungo, 8 October 1561, in *EVORA*, 1: 77*v*.

21 Gaspar Vilela to the Jesuits of Goa, Funai, 1 September 1559, in *DJ*, 2: 148-50.

22 Županov 2005, 52. This tendency to display the respect for holy obedience, however, did not always obtain the desired outcome of edifying the reader. Congruent with Francis Xavier’s opinion that it was better to be blindly obedient than right (142) Melchior Nunes Barreto, future Visitor of Japan, commented in 1555: “I wanted more to err by being obedient, than to be right following my own will”. This statement, printed in a letter, caused the strong reaction of a fellow Jesuit in Spain, Diego de Santa Cruz, who believed it was evidence that the Society was full of “Pharisees” who did not understand that complying with an order that went against their conscience was heretical (Moreno 2013, 70-1).

23 Alessandro Valignano to the General, Usuki, 27 October 1580, in Jap-Sin 8, I, 298*rv*, transcribed in Schütte 1958, 487-90.

24 Francisco Cabral to the General, Kuchinotsu, 30 August 1580; originally in JapSin 8, I, 283*r*–5*r*, transcribed in Schütte 1958, 497-502.

his past actions. His focus on the initial years of his superiorate is a sign that he felt much more secure about his work then, compared to the second half of it, which he meaningfully changed the interpretation of in the 1580s.

Cabral’s narrative established that his work in Japan was undertaken for obedience’s sake; he described his own success in this impossible endeavour as evidence to support this interpretation: “If God had not assisted me in this obedience, I am not sure I would have any hair left on my head” (JapSin 9, II, 187*r*). Cabral presented his will on the matter of silk as secondary and himself as practising indifference on the outcome; his only aim being to carry out his orders as he had received them. It is not difficult to see where he stands, with his agitated indignation and strong belief that the way of proceeding he had learned in Goa would be apt universally. As he describes it, his indifferent position, together with the regard for holy obedience and the awareness of the elasticity of Jesuit decision-making, makes his actions technically unassailable from a formal point of view. Cabral’s visitation to Japan thus becomes an exercise in blind obedience. Moreover, the juxtaposition of his determination to follow obedience and the disregard of it by the mission at large contributes to aggrandise his virtue, while highlighting the unreasonableness of the other missionaries. With this stance, Cabral possibly aimed to avoid accusations of insubordination as he moved against Valignano. In the same vein, while protesting Valignano’s decisions, Cabral reassures the General on the qualities of the Visitor. He states that Valignano simply lacks experience with Japan and that he personally does not carry any grudge against him:

> Believe, Your Paternity, that I am not saying this to condemn the Father [Visitor], because really his [nomination to the position] gratifies me, [because of] his [respect of God’s] laws, his virtue, his prudence, and in the many gifts that Our Lord has given him […] but the love and obligation that I have for the Society requires me to inform Your Paternity. (JapSin 9, II, 186*v*)

This statement also follows the prescribed attitude that a subordinate should have towards his superior, as presented by Loyola when he suggested different dispositions that would aid one in being obedient. Cabral thus frames his attempt to influence his superiors as enabled by the *Constitutions*’ imposition to report one’s feelings on any order received, as long as they were born from prayer and the discernment of the spirits. Cabral, however, does not explicitly evoke any superior power, preferring to leave that implied; what he mentions various times, instead, and uses to support his authority on the matter, is experience of the missionary field, either his or the people he consults. How much this affection and respect for Valignano might correspond to Cabral's feelings in 1583 is impossible to ascertain. The relationship would certainly worsen in the following decades, when the two were locked in long-distance arguments on various issues.

The narrative Cabral built in his 1572 letter to Provincial Quadros also strove to present his own virtues as a Jesuit. It went without saying that Cabral was powerless to force any brethren of his to obey: his attempts at persuasion fell flat, he could not afford to expel them, and he had no alternative way of controlling them. Moreover, he was forced to take into consideration the objections of the other missionaries, on the basis that they had more experience with Japanese culture than him. To Quadros, however, he framed his behaviour as a practice of obedience on his part. Cabral had to build his arguments from different sources of information: he thus conferred with Japanese men of authority, rhetorically neutralising his brethren by presenting opposing arguments from sources endowed with more knowledge and experience. In the episode with Sancho Sanga, the Japanese Christian lent his authority to Cabral's argumentation, but also his prudence, a virtue Loyola found desirable in superiors.[25]

The narrative highlighted Cabral's prudence during his meetings with Nobunaga and the Shōgun, as well. The opinion of Nobunaga, in particular, is taken into consideration not only because it would have been a political blunder to ignore it, but also because he could hold authority over the local daimyō who, according to the other missionaries, would not have agreed with the new policy. The narrative of the events surrounding the change of garments is built to display the qualities of Cabral as superior: his capability to consider the feelings and doubts of his brethren; his indifference towards the outcome balanced with his desire to obey the Visitor; his prudence in acquiring the correct information when he lacked direct experience; and finally, his discretion in making a decision after considering the whole affair.

25 He introduced Sanga as "an old man of much experience, [...] prudence and good sense" (Cabral to Antonio de Quadros, 23 September 1572, Nagasaki, in RAH 9/2663, 94*v*).

3.4 Cabral's Strategies of Control

At the beginning of their enterprise in Asia, the members of the Society of Jesus expected correspondence to effectively substitute personal interaction and therefore foster an efficient system of communication.[26] Initially, Cabral did not explicitly negate the usefulness of writing letters even if he realised that the information transmitted from Japan to India was lacking. For instance, he appeared alarmed that news on the use of silk had not arrived in India through the proper channels, which would have allowed maintenance of the connection of obedience. However, he attributed this lack of information to an order that prescribed the writing of edifying things only (ARSI, JapSin 7, I, 23*r*v). While this was "a good thing [when writing to] the fathers and the brothers, [Cabral believed that] one should write the truth about the good things and the bad to the superior, so that he would be able to order according to the greater glory of God Our Lord" (JapSin 7, I, 23*v*). Although some extant examples show that Cabral still kept in contact with his brethren throughout Japan through letters,[27] as time went on and he was confronted with the open disobedience of some of them, he began mistrusting their willingness to be truthful in writing. In his quest to keep the Japanese mission free from temptations, Cabral came up with two solutions to ensure that obedience was respected: continuous visitations, and a house of probation.

3.4.1 Visitations

Visitations were, for Cabral, the most obvious answer to the problem of obedience: compared to other solutions, they were allowed by the *Constitutions* and were not particularly expensive. While it was the Provincial's duty to visit the residences under his jurisdiction, to improve both discipline and edification, the geographical and political specificities of certain provinces allowed for a change of this rule, as it happened in the Indian province. The much smaller Japanese mission still was affected by the country's political instability and the consequent difficulties and unsafety when travelling.

While he had not yet grasped the difficulties of conveying information in writing, Cabral had already understood that a written

26 Valignano's defence of his policy for Japan, for instance, was based on disproving this expectation of the Jesuit Curia (Friedrich 2017, 14).

27 Many examples are extant of this internal correspondence: for instance, *EVORA* (1: 428*r*-430*v*) contains a letter from Froís to Cabral, dated October 1578, from Usuki to Hyūga; a letter by Cabral (Francesco Caprale), written in Kuchinotsu on the 23 September 1577 and addressed to Giovanni Battista de Monte (Giovambattista Montano), is reproduced in Italian in Maffei 1589, 397*v*-399*v*.

correspondence between the different residences of Japan was not going to grant him the order and obedience he desired. As Pedro Lage Reis Correia argued,

> Cabral saw itinerancy as a fundamental concept for exercising the office of Superior. In 1571 he immediately wrote to Rome stating that: 'the superior in these parts should not stay in one house but should visit all the residences every year.' In Cabral's opinion, direct contact with the missionaries was vital for renewing the internal life of the Society. (2007, 53)

Cabral had experienced first-hand how difficult it was to control missionaries from a distance and was aware that his predecessor, Cosme de Torres, had encountered the same complication. The Miyako mission had proved particularly hard to guide: the complex nature of its cultural and political milieu combined with its distance from the main Jesuit centres in Kyūshū meant that local missionaries had both reason and occasion to change their evangelisation policies. The independence shown by the Jesuits in Japan, both during Torres' period and under his own superiorate, had impressed Cabral with the necessity of continuous control. He was troubled by the disregard that met his orders. As he emphasises again the need for a strong leadership, Cabral echoes Luís Gonçalves da Câmara's preoccupations with the lack of virtue among his brethren.[28] Cabral found in visitations the solution to this problem: he had apparently concluded that, if the Provincial could not visit Japan, and the visitor appointed in Rome was not forthcoming, it fell to the universal superior of Japan to do the visitations. He carried them out with zeal and, in the end, managed to bring the use of the silks mostly under control, apparently. He kept this habit after leaving Japan, too; during his time as Macao's superior, the difficulties in entering China did not prevent him from making a visitation to the mainland mission. He upheld his duty of visitation even in his old age, and he visited (or attempted to) both the south and the north of India at various times, because the visitor was, according to him, ineffective.[29]

Indeed, Cabral's conviction that visitations were the most immediate solution to any problem of disobedience in the Society became stronger in time. In 1583, he presented this practice as vital:

28 His suspicions against his brethren worsened in time and he left Japan with a very negative opinion of them, as this 1583 passage shows: "even if some virtuous ones do not enjoy them and do not want the honours [bestowed on priests by Valignano's reform], others, who **are imperfect**, and **are generally the majority**, find in this a reason to become proud" (JapSin 9, II, 187*v*; emphasis added).

29 Francisco Cabral to General Acquaviva, Goa, 20 November 1595, in *DI*, 17: 221-2.

> One of the most important things for the growth of Christianity and the spiritual wellbeing of ours, is that the viceprovincial of Japan did not live in a specific house, but was always visiting the houses and residences. You need to know, Your Paternity, that nothing is so important as this [practice], for the great goods that come from it, and for the evils that it thwarts. (JapSin 9, II, 187*r*; 188*r*)[30]

This passage not only reiterates Cabral's belief that the only way of obtaining precise information and understanding it correctly was to be present in person, but also his wish to persuade the General of it. He assured the General that he himself had tested this practice, never staying in the same residence for more than two months, and that his experience corroborated his idea. Just as he had done with missionary activity, he presented his continuous travels for visitations as a sacrifice of holy obedience. Then, using the same strategy he had adopted with the matter of silk, to back up his assertions, Cabral presented the testimony of an unnamed Japanese man of Shimonoseki:

> [One of the] principal lords […] asked one Christian who travelled with me, "where does the Father reside?" The Christian answered, "the Father does not have a particular house, nor residence, but is always visiting the Christians and the other fathers". Hearing this, the gentile was silent for a while, nodding. In the end he said, "tell the Father that, even if it is a hard labour, if he wants to propagate his Law in Japan, he needs to always keep doing it. Because if the Laws of Japan are now destroyed and corrupted as he can see, he needs to know that it is because of that (?). As long as the bonzes lived well, were zealous of the Laws and had superiors that controlled this and visited them, the Laws thrived. But since the bonzes became more and more disordered in their lives, and there was nobody who did visitations, and looked after them, immediately they also forgot the Law. So, slowly, the Laws of Japan degenerated into the bad state in which they are now. This is the reason why I always strive to visit the Churches and believe me, Your Paternity, when I say that it is exactly like this". (JapSin, 9, II, 188*r*)

In this long passage, Cabral did not, for once, attribute the disordered behaviour of the monks to the fact that they were Buddhist. The idea he is keen to illustrate here is that any religious would fall into a state of sin and confusion if there was not a superior to control them. Again, this kind of reasoning worked in his favour, adding a

30 The ARSI pagination swaps *recto* and *verso* of folio 187; this sentence therefore starts at the bottom of folio 187*r* and ends at the top of folio 188*r*.

Japanese support to the experience Cabral had accumulated to make his point stronger. The fact that the idea is elaborated by a Japanese nobleman gives it the weight of authority, but since the speaker is not Christian, it would be easy to justify whether it draws an unwanted parallelism between Jesuits and Buddhist monks.

3.4.2 House of Probation

In 1571, Cabral suggested founding a special "college" to General Mercurian, where the disobeying missionaries could be restored to conformity. Even if he used the term "college", the institution that he proposed had little in common with the colleges of the Society of Jesus at large (Correia 2007, 54). Of the three official types of Jesuit buildings,[31] it resembled more a house of probation.[32] Cabral's description of a place "for three or four fathers to always reside, and as many brothers, to live in poverty and obedience, and respect the rules of the Society" (JapSin 7, I, 23*v*), evokes some practices of the Jesuit probationary house.[33]

Cabral's correspondence sometimes stated that he longed for a life in a calmer place, such as a college. His longing in this case had less to do with the wish for asceticism and refusal of the world[34] than the desire for the familiar (i.e., Portuguese and Jesuit) way of life offered by a college situated in a safer land, where the authority of a superior would not be challenged. The desired house of probation would be the correct place to re-establish and perfect Jesuit virtues in disobedient subordinates.

In Europe, the Society had devised different solutions to deal with those who deviated from the norms. The punishments included fasting, menial tasks to increase humility, being transferred to other residences or colleges, being sent on pilgrimage, and, if the infraction was serious enough, even dismissal from the Society. In Japan, however, it was not easy to follow this general example. The lighter

31 They are the professed house, the probation house, and the college.

32 Cabral's use of Jesuit technical vocabulary often lacks clarity; he seems to care little for the difference between colleges and houses in other letters. It is also true that at the beginning the function of the house of probation was carried out by the professed houses and the colleges (*Cons.*, 76n8; 165n18). Still, when possible, they were not supposed to be one and the same (*Cons.*, [289]).

33 These practices do not seem particularly extreme, at least when compared to the early Society in Portugal. Before 1555, for example, Portuguese "novices generally between the ages of 14 and 20 were being put through a thirty-day retreat immediately following a brief first probation; during the retreat, they did not leave their cubicles except to go to Mass. Not surprisingly, they often emerged from the experience 'sick in the head' and incapable of the Society's ministries" (Endean 2001, 51.)

34 As suggested by both Elison (1988, 20) and Correia (2007, 54).

punishments required a supervisor, who was not always available. Sometimes, missionaries were sent back to Macao or India, as had happened to Vilela. Apparently, Valignano was fond of this method of reassignment, to the point that Cabral complained to the General about it in 1593.[35] Outright dismissal in Japan in those years was practically impossible, as the missionaries were too few, and thus there was the risk of leaving the mission without manpower. As the usual solutions applied by the Society, therefore, were not effective, Cabral felt that a house where the Jesuits could repeat their probation would be more functional for the context than other solutions.

Cabral's hope was that living in a community would counteract the isolation and independence in which the missionaries generally worked and reinforce their *esprit de corps*, conformity, and obedience. In this way, the house of probation would complement the visitations, when disobedient Jesuits could be kept under control, and not simply return to their habits once the superior left. It would also limit the arrogant behaviour that Cabral perceived from some of his brethren (with all probability, Baltasar da Costa), attributed to their lack of fear of consequences:

> Even if I am present, there is little consideration for [the obedience and poverty of the Society] even if I command it in *virtute sanctae obedientiae* […] because they know that I must suffer their presence for the need we have [of them] and for being so scattered. They know that they cannot be expelled because there is nobody who can substitute them, and if they are removed […] the Christians risk many dangers and scandals, being alone. If there was this house, when they did not do what they are supposed to, they could be sent there, where they would exercise their obedience and poverty, and the respect of the rules of the Society until they amended their ways […] in this way, those who do not want [to be obedient] for virtue, at least will do it for fear of being sent to this house.[36]

The final lines of this paragraph reiterate the proximity of Cabral's opinions on his fellow Jesuits to those of Luís Gonçalves da Câmara.

35 Cabral to General Acquaviva, Kochi, 15 December 1593, in *DI*, 16: 522.

36 Cabral to the Provincial, Antonio de Quadros, 20 October 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 319*r*.

3.4.3 The College and the Seminary

This initial idea of Cabral to build a house of probation evolved to the point that, in 1573, this "manner of college" had become an institution that not only corrected the behaviour of unruly missionaries but could teach young European Jesuits the Japanese language.[37] Cabral was indeed vexed by what he described as the "lack of cleanness and tendency to other abominations" of the Japanese dōjuku and wished to train the European Jesuits so that they could preach: "If we could have some brothers, to learn well the language, even if they will not be useful soon, they will be in seven or eight years, and we'll be able to clean this foulness" (JapSin 7, I, 319*v*). Although he used this very negative language to refer to the Japanese members of the mission, in the following paragraph, he requested permission to accept one of them in the Society of Jesus:

> Among the Japanese of the house, there is one who has been here for six years, and in all of them he has given a very good example and has served much Our Lord. Among his good qualities, he is chaste, which for Japan is a miracle. The others cannot drag him [down] to their [sinful practices], but he even loathes and reprehends them. He desires very much to become a Jesuit brother, and take his vows, and we desire it as well [...] I do not have a licence to admit anyone in the Society [...] but if Your Reverence believed it could be of service to Our Lord, I believe the superior of Japan should have this power. (JapSin 7, I, 319*v*)

Cabral then specified that this would be allowed for a limited number of brothers, which he identifies as special cases, while the rest he demeaned. He added that when the Japanese were not allowed to take vows and become Jesuits, even if they were good missionaries, they became disillusioned and left. Therefore, due to its own restricting policies, the mission lost more than one good worker. For this reason, Cabral wished to have the power to accept those Japanese who were deemed worthy of it.[38]

After some consideration, Cabral had concluded that some Japanese dōjuku needed to be accepted into the Society and trained. Although Cabral was never very precise when using technical terms of the three types of Jesuit buildings allowed by the *Constitutions* and it was not uncommon to use the expression "manner of college" to

37 Cabral to the Provincial, Antonio de Quadros, 1573, in JapSin 7, I, 319*v*.

38 It might be that Cosme de Torres had already requested this permission, as Diego Mirão had exhorted the missionaries via letter to work to prepare the Japanese helpers to be received in the Society, probably in reply to one of Torres' letters (JapSin 7, I, 319*r*).

simply refer to a college, the following wording here seems more intentional than that and suggests that Cabral did not want the new building to be fully a seminary; that is, he was not keen to allow the Japanese to study theology. In 1575, even as he started using the term "seminary", he justified his idea for this institution in this way:

> I remind Your Paternity that in no way will things proceed if a house is not made here that is like a seminary for those of the land, without whom we can do little, because it is they who preach and catechise. Those few whom we have are sick for the continuous travails, and some die. If this [problem] is not solved, soon nobody will be left. So it is necessary that Your Paternity, if believing it [good] *in Domino*, gives the authorisation to build this seminary, for sufficiently good youths to be received, reared in virtue, and instructed for the needed purpose; and with this, I have no doubt that everything will proceed well. (JapSin 7, I, 264*v*)

As another letter to Goa explained, the "needed purpose" to which he referred here was being interpreters ("lenguas"). In the same seminary, he wrote to the Indian Provincial, it was possible to train the Japanese brothers in this manner and that the European brothers, "fifteen to eighteen-year-old" young men, could learn the Japanese language.[39]

In the same 1576 letter in which he celebrates the arrival of Valignano in Asia, Cabral keeps pitching his idea to the General:

> My conscience now compels me to remind Your Paternity of this, for the experience I have of many years spent in these parts: seeing during them how much service of God Our Lord is lost and how many thousands of souls are not saved [for the] lack of preachers, who are not raised among the natives. Your Paternity should know that, among the fathers who came from Europe and are here, there can be not even two who could preach to the gentiles in so many years. Even if some know the language it is already much if they can preach to the Christians and confess them, but not to the gentiles who have some culture. So, if we don't take native people, we cannot maintain the gentiles well, nor they can be catechised properly. To this end, it is necessary that, at least, there was a college in these parts, with a probation house that could also accept [students]. […] I have been crying out about this for eight years now, both to India and Europe, and nothing has been done about it. (JapSin 8, I, 12*rv*)

39 Cabral to the Provincial, Manuel Teixeira, in JapSin 7, I, 321*r*.

As this passage illustrates, the way Cabral presented the situation implied, every time, that he did not believe he could decide on the matter by himself and simply proceed with the creation of the institution, even if the fervour that characterises his pleas gives the impression that he was invested in the project. Moreover, while he had a general idea of the kind of pedagogical institution he wanted to create, he displayed a certain lack of coherence on the specific roles that the Japanese brothers would then be called to carry out. Another sign of this uncertainty was that by the time Valignano arrived in Japan, Cabral changed his mind again and, according to the Visitor, declared that it was impossible for the Europeans to learn Japanese and that the dōjuku should not be admitted in the Society (Schütte 1980, 1: 246). As will be seen below, once back in India, Cabral also declared that he had always been opposed to the idea of admitting Japanese members to the Society of Jesus. Cabral's inconstancy in this matter has been recorded by Schütte, while Alexandra Pelucía has pointed out, in her profile of Cabral, "[his] ideas […] on this matter were not always coherent" (Schütte 1980, 1: 246; Pelucía 1994).

3.5 Baltasar da Costa, the Disobedient Jesuit

As he began to consider the future of the mission more broadly in 1573, Cabral admitted that, although it appeared to be in a better state, the situation was still dire; in May of the following year, he wrote to Quadros:

> Compared to the past, there is a reasonable improvement; compared to what Your Reverence has ordered, there are many faults […] about which I do not know what to do, except to recommend ourselves to Our Lord.[40]

At the end of his three-year long work to extirpate the silks, Cabral had interpreted the perseverance of his brethren to keep them as a temptation into which they had fallen. In his view, the luxuries, be it silks or servants, were "the cape that the Devil was using, to cover up the evils that silk garments entailed".[41] But if this intervention of the Devil caused the Jesuits to forego humility and therefore obedience, it was not just in relation to the use of kimono. Cabral also mentioned officially sanctioned luxury and honours, such as the provision of two servants who were supposed to escort every Jesuit when he went visiting Christians. As there were seldom enough servants to accompa-

40 Cabral to the Provincial, Antonio de Quadros, 20 October 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 320*r*.

41 Cabral to Francis Borja, [Kuchinotsu], 10 September 1573, in JapSin 7, I, 166Av.

ny each missionary, Cabral believed that this was used as an excuse to refuse to go out on missionary endeavours when sent by superiors (JapSin 9, II, 187*v*). Therefore, by directly boosting their vainglory with honours and luxury, the Devil had overridden the missionaries' wish for the salvation of other souls as well. In Cabral's perception, the Devil was trying to sabotage the entire mission, making it not only lose internal cohesion and God's approval by jeopardising two Jesuit fundamental characteristics: the vows of poverty and obedience, but also persuading the missionaries to abandon their aims of converting people to Christianity.

Francisco Cabral appears to have carefully followed the rules of lettered governance, not just those regarding frequent writing but also those on content. After having recognised that it was necessary to inform their superiors about the problems of the mission if there was any hope to solve them, he tried to follow his own advice in his correspondence with Rome and Goa. If anything, he sometimes overshared, in the few letters addressed outside the Society.[42] Most of his surviving letters are private and directed to the General, the Indian Provincial, or various superiors in Europe. They tend to be similar to the hijuelas – in spirit, if not in name. In these documents, Cabral wrote details that are generally lacking in more public correspondence, specifying names and places, providing interpretations of the events he witnessed, and suggesting solutions to standing problems.

Still, a certain reticence with Rome is detectable in Cabral's letters at various points of his career, especially between the years 1573 (the death of Álvares) and 1576 (before receiving news from Rome for the first time since landing in Japan). Specific information about the situation of the mission in these years is provided only by his letters to the Indian superiors. It was Valignano who had partial copies made of these missives and sent to the General, possibly worried by their content.[43] This bundle of badly preserved letters gives a good overview both of Cabral's tendency, in his correspondence, to skirt what he deemed the worst offenses of the mission, and of his slow descent into anguish regarding its future. As time went on and he received no answer from Goa, Cabral's depiction of the same problems became more and more detailed in the hopes of letting his superiors understand the gravity of the situation. This cry for help, however, went mostly ignored, as both provincials had died by the time the

42 See for instance his 1572 letter to the layman, Estevão Lourenço da Vellar, a man close to capitão-mor, Manuel Travassos, where Cabral boasted about his zeal during the debacle of the silk kimono (JapSin 7, III, 99*r*; printed in *EVORA*, 1: 338.)

43 Two copies are available of these letters: the first in JapSin 7, I, 319-22*v*; and the second in JapSin 7, I, 323-6*v*. I am very grateful to Mr Dario Scarinci, administrative assistant at for his help in procuring a high-resolution copy of these manuscripts.

missives had reached India, and nobody else appears to have taken any action in its regard.

Among other matters, this correspondence returns a vivid, if short, portrait of missionary Baltasar da Costa. A brief analysis of his activities helps shed some light on the internal issues of the Japanese mission. Costa had already appeared in Cabral's previous letters in a negative light: in one case, he had greeted the incoming Portuguese carrack wearing a purple kimono and a golden fan; he had then refused the invite to embrace one of the merchants, adducing that the familiar Portuguese practice would have caused scandal among his Japanese entourage. In another, together with Melchior de Figueiredo, he had attempted to hide a Japanese sleeping gown of green damask and some silk pillows at his residence in Hirado (JapSin 7, I, 23*rv*).[44] These events dated back to 1571. Valignano's copies accused him of further straying from the way of proceeding already in 1572:

> Father Baltasar da Costa came here this year without permission, with some luggage that he had prepared to leave [for India]. Even after seeing the letters from Your Reverence and from the Visitor, he nearly left. I dissimulated[45] with him and did what he wanted […] because I have no other recourse, so I leave him be so that he does not leave the Society, until the Father Visitor [Álvares] arrives.[46]

Cabral admitted therefore his inability of finding a solution when one of his few workers determined to leave the mission: the missives of the superiors were useless as a tool of obedience. The only solution Cabral felt he had left was to disassemble and persuade Costa not to leave because the need for workers was so great that an unruly priest was better than no priest at all. This compromise worried Cabral, as he wrote the following year:

> [my] power to dismiss [Jesuits from the Society] seems very insignificant to me in these parts: I wish Your Reverence would take it away because […] I would rather not use it, even if there were great culpabilities, to not take upon me such great weight.[47]

44 One cannot help but wonder if Cabral mentions them together in relation to this scandal because they were probably of Indian descent (Hesselink 2016, 36), of which Cabral held a negative opinion.

45 Early modern Jesuits had various tools at their disposal to navigate "the distance between words and things, between truth and reality", among which dissimulation; Cabral here might be referring to a verbal form of the latter, mental reservation. This practice was deemed licit by Jesuit theologians as long as it was for the greater glory of God (Tutino 2017.)

46 Cabral to the Provincial, Antonio de Quadros, 1572, in JapSin 7, I, 319*r*.

47 Cabral to the Provincial, 1573, in JapSin 7, I, 319*v*.

He also lamented that Costa persisted in wearing silk garments, and sometimes a gold ring; he was not only risking his own salvation but the work of evangelisation by causing scandal. The mission at large apparently believed that the only solution was to dismiss him and send him back to India (JapSin 7, I, 319*v*-320*r*). No action in this sense was taken, however, possibly due to the drowning of the Visitor the following year and the chaos it generated in and outside the mission. In the missive of 1574, Cabral's morale was worsening. He could see no solution to the problems of the mission except praying to God to help them: he believed that his efforts to do more were proving useless (JapSin 7, I, 320*r*). As he lamented his "lack of talent and strength to carry out [his] obligations" and begged to be relieved of his responsibilities towards the mission, he added: "It is not possible to say everything in letters" (JapSin 7, I, 320*v*).

The conclusion of Costa's story comes in the copy of Cabral's 1575 letter, addressed to the new Provincial of India, Manuel Teixeira. The disobedient missionary was caught putting aside a small treasure to escape Japan, and his refusal to follow the expected Jesuit lifestyle was evident in his breaking all three of the religious vows. He allegedly had money, silver, clothes, and rich pieces that he had stolen from the Church and gained in trade, and hid them in the houses of the Christians "to their great disedification".[48] Regarding obedience,

> he upheld it only when he wanted, and openly declared he had no superior in Japan; he said what he wished about his superior and his brethren to the Japanese, and worked to discredit them […] he threatened the Father who was his superior, scandalizing [outsiders]. Regarding the other vow [i.e., the vow of chastity], he abandoned it, as he was living together with a woman who had a husband in China, and this was publicly known among those inside and outside the Society. He also made use of boys for the wicked sin [i.e., sodomy] and, among them, one was even from the [Jesuit] house. It was them who informed us of this. (JapSin 7, I, 321*rv*)[49]

Costa apparently denied the accusations, but many eyewitnesses testified against him. Cabral referred in passing to other transgressions, but still he did not lay them out: "I have seen some Jesuits thrown out the Society, but I have never seen anyone who carried half his offences, nor who was so obstinate", he wrote as explanation. Once more missionaries arrived, in 1575, Costa was sent back to Goa, where Va-

48 Cabral to the Provincial, Manuel Teixeira, 2 September 1575, in JapSin 7, I, 321*r*.

49 The passage regarding the vow of chastity appears materially different from the rest of the copy; it is written by a different hand, in smaller and disordered letters. It might have been added later to avoid exposing the copyist to such disedifying news, which would suggest that breaking this specific vow was considered particularly sinful.

lignano ordered him to Rome, unofficially expelling him; he apparently died during the voyage (Schütte 1980, 1: 216).

In this situation, the Jesuit missionaries in Japan agreed that somebody needed to go to Rome to inform the General of the needs of the mission, especially funds and manpower (JapSin 7, I, 321*v*). Lettered governance had failed them, the lack of funds and manpower was jeopardising the whole enterprise; Cabral, lacking strength and resources to carry out his reform, could only recommend them to God and request to be recalled to India (JapSin 7, I, 321*r*).

3.6 Conclusions

Under the influence of its founder's philosophy and life experiences, the Society of Jesus developed a complex practice of obedience, evolved in a context of perceived threats to orthodoxy. The enterprise of the Society of Jesus was organised to depend on the hierarchical structure that had been built from the premises laid down in the *Constitutions* and Loyola's writings. The Jesuit extra-European missions did not escape this process of bureaucratisation that pushed obedience to the forefront, starting already in the 1540s. The Asian missions were also shaped by the example of Francis Xavier, who was a charismatic leader but who, at the same time, required perfect obedience from his subjects. These two different approaches caused tension in both India and Japan between religious zeal and hierarchical organisation. Additionally, the missions under the Portuguese Assistancy were influenced by the strict interpretation of obedience that had emerged in Lisbon and Coimbra, under figures such as Luís Gonçalves da Câmara.

The relevance of obedience in the Jesuit self-understanding is seen clearly from the sixteenth-century Jesuit letters from Japan, where it was mentioned often and used to build edifying depictions of the missionaries. However, this was especially true of the public letters, to be read by people outside the Society. The private letters for the superiors display the internal tensions and cracks in the works of the mission. Distance created continuous difficulties that worked as loopholes for a missionary who felt inclined to follow his own impressions instead of blind obedience. One of them was familiarity with the field; the deeper the experience that a Jesuit could claim, the stronger the argument he could make against the decisions of the headquarters.

Francisco Cabral, like Xavier and Luís Gonçalves da Câmara, expected perfect obedience from his subordinates. When persuasion did not work, he elaborated two solutions for the Japanese mission: the first was to control the single residences through continuous visitations; the second was the creation of a house of probation, where the disobeying missionary could live until he saw the error of his ways. Cabral always maintained that visitations were the most effective tool against disobedience and also applied it to the Indian province when he became its Provincial.

The way Cabral presented his actions aimed to create an unassailable defence of his actions. He displayed a knowledge of the process of the negotiation of obedience that had been developing in the Society, both in Europe and in the missions, and worked to fill any possible loophole that might be found in his actions. He often highlighted his obedience to orders from above but also worked to collect reliable information that could supplant his lack of experience in the first years of his permanence in Japan. He then used it to block any attempt at negotiating by his subordinates, applying a strict understanding of obedience. When he moved back to Macao and India, he still tried to influence the decisions of his superiors about Japan, presenting his long experience in the missionary field as a credential.

The general behaviour of Cabral in this first part of his stay in Japan, and the way he proceeded to solve the problems of the mission, show how his way of proceeding was to prioritise faith in the Grace of God. Human means and their solutions came second, as they represented an inferior solution that could fail at any time in a land like Japan that was characterised by sudden changes. In this sense, Cabral dutifully heeded Francis Xavier's exhortations to always put one's faith in God first.

4 Saving Souls in Japan

After expounding on the issues faced by Francisco Cabral during his initial years as superior of Japan, the following two chapters will analyse the second half of his stay in the country, through the lenses of salvation. After 1573, the morale of Cabral, as illustrated in the previous pages, took a turn for the worse. This anguish for the future of the mission can be attributed to different, concomitant causes, but at the root of it was his belief that God had forsaken the mission. This chapter will look at the causes behind this conviction of Cabral's; it will examine the conversions of the Japanese people and, more specifically, the relationship that Cabral's writings attributed to them and the salvation of the missionaries.

Based on the number of conversions made, the 1570s was a successful decade for the Japanese mission. Nevertheless, tension is detectable in Cabral's correspondence that focuses on the future of the enterprise. Instead of understanding the mission's growing size as a sign of God's favour, his letters express an apparently counterintuitive anxiety, and discouragement, due to the quality he attributed to the Japanese converts and the way they had converted. To contextu-

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alise Cabral's reading of the events, this chapter will define the concept of conversion in early modern Catholicism, and in the Society of Jesus more specifically, and look at how divine grace was understood to work during conversion. The missionary point of view and the native response to the Christian ideas surrounding conversion will then be considered to show how these different understandings were often at the root of the perceived low spiritual quality of the converts. Subsequently, this chapter will trace the history of mass conversion that characterised the Japanese mission in these years, Cabral's implementation and support of these methods, and the anxieties that they caused.

4.1 Jesuit Missions and Salvation

Since its beginning, on the basis that "mission trumps asceticism", the Society of Jesus was characterised by spreading beyond Catholic lands (Mooney 2009, 195). In the early modern period, the Society built its presence outside Europe on the Iberian empires and, more specifically, created its own Asian network by building on the Portuguese seaborne empire. The Jesuits in Asia in the second half of the sixteenth century did not employ, as a general rule, the term "mission" to indicate their activities; they spoke of "the enterprise of Japan", or "the work of the conversions", or similar expressions, as examples in this study have shown. Moving towards the seventeenth century, however, these activities, not necessarily limited to extra-European countries, came to be referred to as "mission". The usage of this term by Jesuit missionaries influenced the evolution of the word's general meaning, which before had been mostly understood as closer to its Latin etymon, *mitto* (to send). In the *Constitutions* and Ignatian spirituality, alongside personal (the call to be sent) and territorial (the specific location) connotations, the word "mission" carried an operative meaning as well: it indicated the sum of the activities carried out in a location (Sievernich 2010, 255-7). For instance, "mission", when used in the fourth vow, indicated a mobile ministry whose objective was the "greater help of souls", that is, people (O'Malley 1993, 299). It follows that these activities were numerous and varied, evangelisation being one of many (Mooney 2009, 201). They were all considered acceptable as Jesuit work because, regardless of their specific nature, their common aim was understood as the "help of souls": the original objective behind the creation of the Society.

A crucial point for the contextualisation of the behaviour of the missionaries in the field, however, is understanding whose souls exactly are the object of salvation. There is a tendency in historiography to depict Jesuit ministry in a way that prioritises the Jesuits' aspiration to save other people's souls, a characterisation stemming from the Society's predisposition to engage with the world. However, Thomas V. Cohen has shown how, in the sixteenth century, a great incentive for applicants to the Society of Jesus was the salvation of their own souls. In the self-descriptions of its members, this personal salvation appears more important than the desire to save souls in the Indies, the fight against the Reformation, or other objectives that have been presented as central in the historical depictions of the order (Cohen 1974).[1] Luke Clossey builds on Cohen's findings to refute the stereotype of the Jesuit dedicated only to the salvation of others, but he also shows how most of those who displayed extreme interest only in their own salvation left the Society for the Carthusian order. The greater part of the remaining group displayed a balanced concern for their own souls and for those of others (Clossey 2008, 121-3). This is also true of missionaries: since the ministries trying to save other people's souls could, simultaneously, bring about the perfection and salvation of the worker's own soul, the mission was considered a perfect ground for obtaining both, thanks to the possibilities for martyrdom and hard work in the name of God it offered (123).

Still, the number of conversions he brought about was not a criterion on which the missionary could base the certainty of his salvation. Francis Xavier's so-called Great Letter from Japan provides an indicator of the ideal Jesuit attitude when he states:

> Look carefully after yourselves, brothers mine in Jesus Christ, because there are many in hell who, when alive, were cause and instrument, with their words, of the salvation and acceptance into the glory of heaven of others.[2]

In other words, just because a Jesuit had won many conversions did not mean that his soul would necessarily be saved. Xavier exhorts his fellow Jesuits to focus on the long path towards interior perfection, where the number of converts obtained is secondary. If missions are understood as an especially efficient tool to facilitate the missionary's salvation, it is because they force him to abandon any hope for earthly help and put all his faith in God:

> God did us a great and distinguished mercy by sending us in these parts of infidels, so that we would not be distracted from ourselves. Because this land is full of idolatry and enemies of Christ, and there is nobody we can trust and have faith in, except for God [...] and for this reason we are forced to put all our faith, hope,

1 See also Alden 1996, 36-8.

2 Francisco Xavier to the Jesuits in Goa, Kagoshima, 5 November 1549, in *DJ*, 1: 150.

> and confidence in Christ Our Lord, and not in living creatures, because due to their unfaithfulness, they are all enemies of God.[3]

In typical Jesuit fashion, obedience appeared here as a crucial tool to oppose the sin of hubris that a bountiful evangelisation might incite in the missionary, who was encouraged to find support against this sin in his superiors. Cabral, conscious of this danger but unable to find solace in obedience himself, strove to attribute any evangelisation success to divine intervention, which caused unexpected downsides.

4.2 The Vocabulary of Conversion

Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian, in their introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Conversion*, suggest that "[p]erhaps the most straightforward, even if insufficient, way to understand conversion is as 'change' or 'transformation'". As they consider a wider context than that of Western (modern) Christianity, they specify that the meaning of "conversion", and even its essence, changes not only from religion to religion, but also diachronically (Rambo, Farhadian 2014, 9). This section will therefore examine the use the sources make of this word and the concepts connected to it.

With the Christianisation of most of Europe in the early medieval period, the initial idea of conversion as an adoption of Christianity by a pagan person (or a whole people) slowly lost its meaning. It came to indicate a deepening of piety in someone who was already a Christian, and in time it was linked to the idea of *metanoia* (*paenitentia* or *conversio*). This latter word indicated "a change that affects the direction, conduct, and shape of one's life – a deep moral and spiritual change"; it was also translated with "penance" (Finn 1997, 22-5).[4]

The first Jesuits understood themselves as having undergone this same process of changing one's life by turning it towards God, when entering the Society. The *Spiritual Exercises*, whose general objective was indeed metanoia, were one important tool to achieve this conversion (Starkloff 1974, 154-5). The guiding example was also provided by Ignatius Loyola's change of heart in 1521. The transformation instigated by Loyola's repudiation of his old knightly values and his acceptance of more pious ones allowed his followers to refer to this as "conversion", an act that "turn[ed] one's life and will over to the care of God" (O'Malley 1993, 19). This influenced the Jesuit understanding of conversion, which they identified as a choice based

3 Francis Xavier to the Jesuits in Goa, Kagoshima, 5 November 1549, in *DJ*, 1: 158.

4 See also Kling 2014, 598-9.

upon spirituality (Chakravarti 2013, 524), which was not necessarily true of all interpretations of the event of conversion.

The term 'conversion', as used in the sixteenth century in religious contexts, is therefore to be understood in a broad sense. It indicated a change or a renewal of the relationship between a person and God (as is the case of Loyola); this could include a change of religious affiliation, as long as it comprised a movement towards God (such as the members of the Jewish or Muslim communities of Europe). This second meaning of conversion still implied the acceptance of God in one's life but acted on people who were not Christian. It follows that such a broad range of meanings attributed to this word comes with an important limitation: contrary to its modern, more comprehensive meaning, in the sixteenth century, 'conversion' was used only to refer to a person becoming a Christian.[5] This included, in the divided religious landscape of sixteenth-century Europe, becoming the desirable kind of Christian, Catholic or Reformed depending on the religious affiliation of the speaker. This restriction (as it appears from a modern-day point of view) was arguably due to the word's original meaning of "turning towards God", which prevented, by definition, a turn towards any divinity who was not held to be a true God.

Some examples can illustrate how this use of conversion was the most commonplace in the early modern period, both from Europe and the Mediterranean area. A change of allegiance to a different confession of Christianity was considered a conversion by the members of the faith that received the neophyte: a Protestant who became Catholic had converted only from the point of view of other Catholics; for the Protestants, they had apostatised.[6] However, most conversions to Judaism remained secret, given the dangers that discovery could cause. The most common phenomenon of this kind was the reversion of Jewish people, who had previously converted to Christianity, in Spain and Portugal. Christian authorities generally referred to these as "Judaizers" (Mulsow, Popkin 2004, 6-9).[7] As Islam underwent a taxonomic change from paganism to heresy, Muslims were held to be apostates from Christianity as well (Moran Cruz 1999, 56-66). Christians who had become Muslims were instead referred to as "renegados" who had "mahumetised" or "turned Turk" (Matar 1998, 22-3; Krstić 2011, 20-1).

A similar situation is found in the Jesuit Asian missions in the second half of the sixteenth century. A perusal of correspondence from or about Japan suggests that the main instance in which the term of

5 The modern common usage of the word can be defined as "a formal change of adherence from one religious system to another" (Smith et al. 1995).

6 Examples can be found in Luria 1996.

7 See also Segal 2014, 595.

"conversion" was correlated to a local religion was when the boundaries of the religion and Christianity were not yet defined. A prominent example is Nicolao Lancillotto's 1548 report on Anjiro's description of Japan. At the time, the Jesuits had not yet reached the archipelago and misunderstood Buddha Shakyamuni as a representative of the Christian God (Zampol D'Ortia, Dolce, Pinto 2021, 70-2). Lancillotto writes,

> In that land [India], many gods were worshipped. This Sciacca preached that there was only one God, creator of all things. He preached so efficiently this truth that he *converted* all the people to the worship of a single God, and had all the idols of that land destroyed.[8]

Elsewhere in the same document, all of China has reportedly converted to these beliefs of Sciacca, which include "worshipping a single God, creator of all things" and praying to "the saints, who pray [to] God" on behalf of the worshippers, "like [Catholics] do" (*DJ*, 1: 60-1). The desire of finding long-sought Christians in Asia completely overcomes Lancillotto's text, making it possible for the idea of "conversion" to be applied to Asian religions.

Aside from this exception, writings on Asia present a similar concept of conversion, exclusively for a new affiliation to the Catholic faith. For example, Alessandro Valignano's *Historia del principio y progresso de la Compañía de Jesús en las Indias orientales* (1583) speaks of the conversion to Christianity "of the gentiles" (Valignano 1944, 7) and "of the infidels" (53). Previous and subsequent written production of the Japanese mission follows this usage as well. Aside from the innumerable mentions of the "conversion of Japan" and similar expressions, some examples can be found in the description of the overall objective of the mission by Froís: "this great enterprise that was the objective of the Fathers – the conversion [*conversão*] of the souls" (*Historia*, 1: 42). On an influential Buddhist monk who became Christian, Luís de Almeida writes, "thanks to his converting [*comverter*], many others became Christians".[9] Lamenting the errors committed by the first preachers in Japan, Melchior Nunes Barreto writes of "the beginning of the conversions",[10] without fearing that anyone might misunderstand the new religious affiliation that this expression implies.[11]

8 Nicolao Lancillotto, Kochi, 28 December 1548, in *DJ*, 1: 53; emphasis added.

9 Luís de Almeida to Antonio de Quadros, Funai (Oita), 1 October 1561, in *DJ*, 2: 381.

10 Melchior Nunes Barreto to Diego Lainez, Kochi, 13 January 1558, in *DJ*, 2: 109.

11 It is possible to see, from the use of these expressions, that the word "mission" was not yet in use with its contemporary meaning, as stated above.

Correspondence from Japan provided a description of the process of transitioning from one Buddhist school to another, albeit rarely, probably because the topic was not considered edifying to European readership. Froís narrates the religious questioning of a Japanese man in this way:

> As a youth, he first *entered* the religious order of the Tendai school, at the university of Mt Hiei. After learning the Chinese letters, since he was of clear and delicate intelligence, he could not find peace in the way of proceeding of that school. [So] he *became* of another called Jōdo, which worships Amida. But since it seemed ridiculous and unworthy of his knowledge, he *passed* to another one that is called Shingon, where they worship a Buddha called Dainichi […] As this sect too seemed full of confusion and sooty darkness, he left it as a lightless thing and *moved on* to Shintō, which is the sect of the *kami* […] But since he did not find what he wanted there, he *became* [an affiliated of] Zen. (*Historia*, 1: 174-5; emphasis added)

Changing religious affiliation, therefore, when not related to Christianity, was not understood as a conversion. The words used to describe this process do not appear to have a strong religious connotation. "Entering" (*entrou*), "becoming" (*se fez*), "passing" (*passou*): the narrative lists these actions as mundane (and thus superficial) decisions that bring no satisfaction to this bright man looking for salvation.

Francisco Cabral also followed this common usage. He described mass conversions to Buddhism using terms such as "follow…a law" or "take another [law]:"

> If [their lords] order them to follow a specific law they do it easily, and they leave the one they followed. If the lord does not authorise them to take another one, however much that they desire it, they don't do it.[12]

As was commonplace at the time, particularly before Valignano, Cabral uses the word "law" to indicate the various religious affiliations of the Japanese in this passage. Japanese laws could indicate the worship of Buddha or Kami, but could also refer to specific schools, such as Jōdo (Pure Land Buddhism) or Shingon. Often, however, they were also those of God: "our holy Law". When it came to Christianity, though, the Japanese were not "taking another law" anymore; God, instead, makes "much fruit in the conversions" (JapSin 7, I, 20*r*), a term that Cabral used exclusively for Christianity.

12 Cabral to the General, Nagasaki, 5 September 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 20*v*.

4.3 Practices of Conversion and Baptism in Japan

Tied as it was to Christianity, the idea of conversion as conceptualised by Europeans was often alien to the Asian cultures with which the Jesuits came into contact. This led the missionaries on the field to criticise most forms of Christianity that they did not recognise as true conversions (Gerbner 2015, 135).[13]

Discussing the reception of the concept among non-European cultures, Ananya Chakravarti points to the lack of clarity regarding the process of conversion, even among the missionaries, as a reason for the emerging of "local interpretations" (Chakravarti 2013, 508). The resulting difference in understanding often caused a deterioration in the relations between the missionaries and those they wished to convert. One example presented by Chakravarti shows how these misunderstandings could have serious consequences in the long term, such as when the Jesuit missionaries condemned the Brazilian Tupi as irremediably inconstant in matters of faith (115n32). Alan Strathern finds a similar situation when considering South-East Asian conversion to Islam. He highlights a tendency of conversion to be a process not of leaving behind old rites but instead of adopting new ones alongside them, and he suggests it was a "more gradual process in which quite superficial signifiers of Islam were merely added to an existing repertoire of sacrality".[14] Christianity in Japan was in a similar situation (Morris 2022).

Even as the Catholic Church was engaged in debates on justification with the Reformed Protestants, the exact way in which conversion worked seems to have been difficult to parse even to Catholic missionaries. In the early sixteenth century, the popular understanding of grace was that it could be swayed by good works, in a sort of "quid-pro-quo" relationship; the Council of Trent (1545-63) attempted to find a balance between this belief (accused of Pelagian inclinations) and a total dependence on God's grace (which was the Reformed position) (O'Malley 2002, 47; 104; 113-15). Knowledge, will, and acceptance of the basic tenets of Catholicism were held as necessary to salvation, but, as a Christian mystery, their relationship to divine grace was complex to grasp. Because conversion was considered a necessary step for salvation and was conceptually very close to it, the uncertainty surrounding the nature of grace muddled the understanding of the mechanisms of conversion as well. While the characteristics of an ideal candidate could be considered self-evi-

13 On this matter, Higashibaba, (2001, xvi-xvii) highlights the problematic trend of historians to accept uncritically the category of "convert" as defined by the missionaries.

14 Strathern 2013, 40-1. A similar process is delineated in North America by Gerbner 2015, 139-40.

dent (they had "the motivation, the sincerity, and the doctrinal comprehension", Strathern 2007, 114), the minimum conditions that had to be met for conversion were not similarly clear.

The sacrament of baptism had been held mandatory for salvation since the fourth century because it endowed "the soul with the gift of the holy spirit", in addition to signalling the admission of the person in the community of the faithful (Muir 1997, 20-1). The mass baptisms carried out in Iberian colonies in America and similar episodes suggest that, at the beginning of the European expansion, willingness to receive baptism was considered enough to make a person a Christian. This impression had emerged from the perceived lack of opposition to this sacrament that the local cultures had shown the missionaries, possibly when compared to Jewish and Muslim people in the Iberian Peninsula. By the mid-sixteenth century, Catholic authorities realised that baptism alone was not conducive to the desired change in the converts' lives, adding to the anxiety that had been surrounding this rite since the forced conversions in Portugal and Spain had failed to produce "good Christians" (Prosperi et al. 1998, 19-22).

Debates on the internal workings of conversion also broke out in Asia, if more moderately.[15] Jesuit missionaries had conducted mass baptisms in Portuguese India since 1555, finding justification in the practices of the primitive Church, making them commonplace by 1559 (Alberts 2013, 134; López-Gay 1966, 165). Even as the ecclesiastical council of Goa confirmed that grace was an essential element of conversion, in 1568, the archbishopric established that no catechumen could be baptised without having received some religious instruction beforehand, in their own language. The depth of this instruction was not specified; after baptism had been received, a betterment of the recipient's spiritual state could be achieved by additional learning and receiving other sacraments (Strathern 2007, 114-15; López-Gay 1966, 42). Cabral's preoccupations about mass baptism suggest that even missionaries who supported this practice were doubting its efficiency, complicating their perception of the manner and circumstances in which divine grace would intervene.

Mass baptism with little or no education stopped being considered viable by the end of the seventeenth century, especially by the Society of Jesus. Already mid-century, missionaries of the *Missions Étrangères* had taken a stand against this procedure in Southeast Asia, signalling the growing concerns of the Catholic Church on the matter; they required proof that the catechumens were ready for baptism and could demonstrate their faith, their consent, and their

15 For an overview, see Strathern 2007, 113-20.

contrition over their past sins.[16] Overall, the Church strove to develop a teaching system that could support a religious change that came closer to its expectations by focusing on the liturgical forms of rites (Prosperi et al. 1998, 22). With time, this stance would heighten the necessity to strive for "converts of quality", even in missionary reports. Mass baptism was an instance that brought to light the tensions that characterised the concept of conversion. Baptism was meant to operate as a channel for grace and was not correlated to the convert's knowledge of the articles of faith. It made a person a Christian but not necessarily a Christian who knew the tenets of Christianity well; while in Europe there were also many Christians considered such "in name only", this tension put the ideological structure that upheld the idea of mission under stress.

Mass baptism was not a new phenomenon to the Society of Jesus in Asia: for example, in 1545, guided by Xavier, in one month the Jesuits baptised more than 10,000 Indian people (Abé 2011, 84-5). Group conversions were also common in Japan and generally took place with the support of the local authorities.[17] Missionaries Vilela, Almeida, Organtino, Froís, Cabral, and Japanese Brother Juan Torres, were all advocates of this practice. Before the superiorate of Cabral, when the mission started to grow quickly in numbers, there had been some instances of mass baptism: they include Antonio and Juan Koteda, who led the baptisms on the island of Hirado, and two noblemen of the area of Miyako who are indicated with the names of Yamashiro and Geki (López-Gay 1966, 94-6). However, mass baptisms became a distinctive feature of Japanese Christianity under Cabral's guidance. An early example is the conversion of Amakusa Shigehisa (Dom Miguel) in 1571, which prompted the baptism of his family and the workers of his fief.[18] This event might have cemented Cabral's idea that "the [Japanese] lords were [the] best apostles" (JapSin 9, I, 20). His correspondence did not make a secret of the daimyō's wish to attract the carracks of the Portuguese to their ports and benefit from the trade with Macao. In the same year, he wrote to the General:

16 Tara Alberts 2013, 134-5. Spanish Jesuit José d'Acosta, too, extensively critiqued the Franciscans' approach to the mass conversion of the Indios in South America. Still, his own brethren were operating in a similar manner in India, finding justification in the practices of the primitive Church. Acosta's debate was brought to Japan by the Franciscans, and repeated by Valignano against them (Correia 2001, 101-2).

17 For examples, see Abé 2011, 166.

18 Amakusa Shigehisa (?-1582) was the head of one of the five families that governed Amakusa in southern Kyushu. His family was a strong supporter of the Christian presence and facilitated the conversion of the other warrior families. His brother Tanemoto (Dom André) and his son Hisatane (Dom João) were baptised, respectively, in 1571 and 1576, after which his domain underwent complete Christianisation (Turnbull 2012, 196-7; Elisonas 1997, 333).

> The main reason why these lords want the Law of God and the Fathers in their lands is their temporal interests. [Those who have these interests are] particularly the ones who have harbours, where the carracks can enter, bring [money from] the concessions and frequent visits of merchants, and enrich their lands; and some who live in the interior, who want the Fathers to favour them in the trade and in things that are related to the carracks, so they desire to have them in their land and request them. (JapSin 7, I, 20*v*)

Mass baptism went hand in hand with the cultivation of relationships with important political players, something Cabral devoted himself to. In this, the missionaries followed the example of Francis Xavier and his understanding that the protection of the daimyō was needed to preach successfully.

Cabral's hopes in the daimyō started coming to fruition in 1574, when Ōmura Sumitada began the conversion of his fief in Kyūshū. He had been baptised with the name Dom Bartolomeu in 1563, as the first major sengoku daimyō to do so. He wished then to have the Macanese carracks come to his port of Yokoseura, but he had subsequently faced attacks from his neighbours and rebellion in his lands. He spent the following years regaining his territories with the support of Portuguese weapons. To cement their alliance, he ordered the Christianisation of his domain: it is estimated that the total number of converts amounted to 35,000 people. Some of them had previously been Buddhist monks, who then often transformed their temples into churches and maintained spiritual leadership over them and their communities.[19]

Dom Bartolomeu was not the only sengoku daimyō who had his domains converted to Christianity during Cabral's superiorate. Takayama Ukon (Dom Justo), baptised in 1563, ordered the conversion of his newly acquired fief of Takatsuki (Ōsaka) in 1574.[20] Arima Yoshisada (Dom André, 1521-76) also saw that, in the few months between his conversion and his death, 20,000 people of his domain were baptised. Ōtomo Yoshishige was baptised in 1578, and in his domain of Bungo, mass conversion was also common.[21]

19 Elison 1988, 90-2; Higashibaba 2001, 14-15. Froís' version of the events posits that Gaspar Coelho, the local Jesuit, was simply allowed to preach freely in the domain and that the locals to whom he talked, due to their "natural intelligence" ("naturalmente […] de vivo engenho"), proceeded to burn down a nearby temple (*Historia*, 2: 424-5).

20 On this influent Christian daimyō, see Laures 1942.

21 See additional examples in Higashibaba 2001, 15; Elisonas 1997, 333; Miyazaki 2003, 7.

4.4 Mass Baptism and its Anxieties

If, therefore, becoming a Catholic Christian was a long process that needed to be followed and encouraged throughout the life of the convert (Ballériaux 2016, 47; 64), then baptism did not need to be preceded by very extensive teaching. Even in the event that it produced unsatisfactory Christians, at least it provided a chance to avoid eternal damnation, something they would be condemned to if they had not been baptised at all (Strathern 2007, 115). A pervasive belief of the missionaries was that, even if the first generation of converts would be forced into the faith, subsequent ones would be more familiar with its practices, and therefore be Christians of better quality. This logic could easily help justify mass baptism in many missions. It is also why, in Japan, the Jesuits strove to follow their communities closely, fostering their religious practices and taking upon themselves the work that in a different situation would have been for the secular clergy. Indeed, they expressed surprise when a community left to itself for many years was discovered still maintaining the faith. Therefore, it was standard practice to try to provide a basic evangelical preparation for all catechumen, before or after baptism proper. For example, a sixteenth-century Franciscan list, compiled in Mexico, called for the knowledge of these articles of faith as required:

> a single omnipotent God, eternal, all-good and all-knowing, the creator of everything; the holy virgin; the immortality of the soul; the demons and their perfidies. (Strathern 2007, 115)

The anxiety that surrounded the practice of mass baptism can be evinced in the writings of the Japanese mission, where it was particularly acute. As mentioned above, the Jesuits considered the Japanese as particularly rational people. When, in their writings, rational acceptance of the tenets of Christianity was compared to other evangelising methods, it emerged as the best option (López-Gay 1966, 89). The purported superiority of the Japanese over other extra-European people, therefore, attributed them a higher potential to become good Christians. This was the reason behind the Jesuit missionaries' identification of Japan as the "most profitable" of all their missions.[22]

This positive depiction of Japanese people, however, jarred with the mechanics of the mass baptisms that were taking place in the country, eventually becoming a cause of tension. If the Japanese had so much potential, why was there a need for compromises with tools of conversion that were held to be inferior to rational persuasion? The

22 While the same idea emerges in different forms throughout the history of Jesuit presence in Japan, this definition was given at the 1580 General Consultation in Bungo (López-Gay 1966, 90).

missionaries attempted to smooth over this contradiction by pointing to the need to adapt to Japanese culture and thus framing their policy of top-down conversions as an accommodation. They insisted that it would lead to successful conversions because it was a practice understood by and common among the people of Japan. Among the purported characteristics of Japanese society that were given as an explanation for the strategies of conversion that were being used was the control the daimyō had over religious matters in his domain, which made his patents necessary. Additionally, the total obedience of the inferior towards the superior, which in turn made people favour the opinion of the daimyō, allowed him to directly impose Christianity on the common people. This devotion of the Japanese and the great power held by the daimyō were both aspects that were underlined time and time again by the missionaries trying to defend the practice to their superiors in Europe (López-Gay 1966, 91-4). I would argue that these recurring apologetics also highlight an undercurrent of uncertainty that surrounded mass baptisms.

Another matter that emerges at the centre of this discussion on mass baptisms is the priority of expanding the number of the converts versus the catechisation of those already baptised. This was not a problem unique to Japan; some missions, such as those of Latin America, suffered fierce internal debates on which practice deserved precedence (Broggio 2004). These controversies depended on different interpretations of the process of conversion and were aggravated by a chronic lack of resources: missions often struggled to sustain these two activities that supported conversions. Under Valignano, after a prolonged period of debate, the expansion of Christendom was given priority in Japan.[23] Unfortunately, the *Acta* of the Consultations when these resolutions were taken do not provide the opinions of specific missionaries on this question, as they do for some others. They are limited to a mention of long debates on the topic, with reasons for and against territorial expansion. Even if Cabral's opinion in the matter was not made explicit, the importance that he placed on trusting Divine Providence suggests he had a hand in, or at least supported, the fourth reason in favour of expansion: "to stop [it] only for the fear of costs and lack of workers is to lack faith in Divine Providence" (JapSin 2, 7*v*-9*r*). Even if

23 The reasons behind this decision, as discussed in the 1581 Nagasaki Consultation, were: even if there are too few workers to properly follow all converts, a weak Christian can always find help for salvation, while a gentile cannot; there are too few Christians, and they live mixed with the gentiles which makes them lose fervour, so the only way to help them is to increase their numbers; even though there are many costs related to the expansion, with time Japanese Christianity will be able to sustain itself; to stop the expansions only for the fear of costs and lack of workers is to lack faith in divine Providence; based on experience, the more the number of Christians grows, the more the reputation of Christianity grows, and with it the number of (Japanese) workers (López-Gay 1966, 24-5).

an agreement was reached in the end, the fact that the topic was the object of long discussions suggests that the approach that favoured expansion still caused uneasiness.

Cabral, therefore, appears accepting of the missionary policy implemented by Xavier and speaks of it in positive or neutral terms. When discussing these events, his focus is often on the elite person whose conversion has led the others. He creates narratives of God's grace triumphing over the sinful nature of humankind, the divine element being the only active force present:

> We went to another fortress of [Amakusa Shigehisa], where he usually resides; after being here for two or three months without doing anything (because the dishonest [captain of the fortress of Hondo] together with some monks hindered us), when we had lost hope, after suffering much cold and labours, it pleased God Our Lord [that] the lord became Christian, with nearly all the other people of the fortress and others.[24]

The elements of the narrative that Cabral favours appear starkly when compared to the same event as it appears in the *Historia*:

> During this time, Father Francisco Cabral was already superior of Japan and visited Amakusa-dono many times, until [the latter] was completely sure and, having understood the things of God, asked the Father to be baptised. The Father did so, giving him the name Dom Miguel, and with him were baptised a couple of relatives of his. (*Historia*, 2: 230)

Although both have edifying purposes and downplay the group baptism aspect, these two retellings focus on different aspects of the conversion of Dom Miguel. Cabral highlights the intervention of divine grace when the missionaries thought all was lost; Fróis accentuates the intellectual process of the catechumen, who, after understanding the "things of God", asks for baptism. The number of his retinue members who followed him into the new religion is also downplayed by Fróis and centred on the elite instead of the inhabitants of the fortress.

While not necessarily conflicting, the two narratives could not be more different in their presentations of the workings of conversion. These differences highlight a necessity, in the text that was supposed

24 Francisco Cabral to Juan Batista [de Ribera], Kuchinotsu, 23 September 1571, in JapSin 7, III, 37*r*. This is one of the many Italian manuscript copies extant of this letter; the Portuguese version in EVORA might be closer to the (lost?) original when, at the end of the paragraph, it adds: "after [the conversion of Amakusa Shigehisa], many places became Christian" (EVORA, 310*r*).

to become the official recounting of the history of the mission, to present the events so that they catered more closely to sensibilities that Cabral seems to ignore.[25] In these elements, it is possible to detect the influence of the controversy on missionary methods with the Franciscans in the writing of the *Historia*, which appears more concerned about the will and preparation of the catechumen, as well as the need to confirm them explicitly. Both these elements are lacking in Cabral's text. In the latter, coherently with its author's beliefs on the mechanics of conversion, God's grace is the only important actor, and its influence reaches "nearly all" the inhabitants of the fortress, after touching their lord.

The strategy used by Cabral to support his case for mass baptism is similar to the one he employed to discuss Jesuit garments. He refers to the specificities of Japanese culture in order to contextualise, explain, and justify how the Society of Jesus was operating in Japan. As he explains the political situation of the country in relation to religion, as he perceives it,[26] he also presents himself as an authority on the subject, thanks to his status as an eyewitness. As he describes the manner in which common people follow the orders of their daimyō when it comes to affiliating or disaffiliating with Buddhist schools, he writes:

> I saw this well, thanks to the experience I accumulated in some place where I was this year, where Our Lord did much fruit in the conversions. (JapSin 7, I, 20*r*)[27]

The mission-wide acceptance of the practice of mass baptism enabled Cabral to skip the collection and presentation of additional evidence to support his claim. He deemed that stating his experience was sufficient, regardless of the fact that he had been in Japan for little more than a year at this stage. He attributes this behaviour of the Japanese to the poverty of their country, which makes farmers entirely dependent on the land provided by their daimyō, to the point that "they do not know any other god" (JapSin 7, I, 20*v*). However, according to Cabral, this could also impose severe limitations on evangelisation:

25 Ironically, of the two texts, in the end it was Cabral's letter that was printed and distributed through Europe (*EVORA*, 1: 309*v*–311*r*), while the *Historia* was never published in Froís' time.

26 Cabral is often too simplistic in his descriptions of Japanese politics (López-Gay 1966, 93).

27 Correctly, López-Gay notes that Cabral had been in Japan only a year, in 1571, making his insistence on his direct experience quite a stretch (López-Gay 1966, 94n92).

> It is enough that the lord orders them to hear preaching, for everybody to immediately become Christian; on the other hand, if somebody has heard the things of God and, enlightened by them, desires extremely to be Christian, they ask me to obtain the licence from the lords, and without it they declare they cannot [be Christian]. And even this licence is not enough, if they are not sure that the lord was at ease with it. (JapSin 7, I, 20*v*)

Despite how peculiar and unpredictable this procedure might have appeared, Cabral either believed that sometimes it had good outcomes, or felt compelled to frame it so. Even if the majority of Japanese farmers abandon Christianity when ordered to do so, "among them there are always some chosen ones who prefer to lose their farm and their lives before renouncing [it]" (JapSin 7, I, 20*v*). Mass baptisms, therefore, seemed to be a functional strategy even when the same powers that initially backed it happened to withdraw their support.

4.5 Exemplary Poor Christians

Even if Cabral was accepting this situation as a reality of the missionary field, in certain occasions he still appears critical of the conversions obtained through this approach, mostly because they were applicable just to the lower socio-economical class:

> Very easily they order the lowly people (*jente baixa*) to become Christians and with difficulty they allow the elite (*honrados*) to do it. This is because the common people, when ordered to leave Christianity, leave it. Instead, it is more difficult to make the honoured ones go back, since they generally have a better understanding of the things of God, and accept them more deeply, and it is also for them a point of honour. For these reasons, the lords give licence to the elite with difficulty, and to the lowly born with ease. (JapSin 7, I, 20*v*)

This paragraph sheds light on Cabral's opinion of the common people as converts of inferior quality. Mass conversions are thus described as less stable in nature than those of the upper classes, not displaying a rooted understanding of the faith nor an ability to resist in it. Cabral identifies better catechumens, who live up to the expectations set for "the best people ever discovered" in the upper classes, to whom he attributes a deeper understanding of Christian tenets for both natural and cultural causes. He appears to distance himself from mass conversions whenever possible, leaving them to the care of other Jesuits, to dedicate his efforts towards the elites or areas not yet reached by evangelisation.[28] Attesting to Cabral's dissatisfaction with the situation is how little space he dedicates to the actual mass conversions. Still, he had frequent contact with lower-class converts during his travels for visitations. His narrations of these travels contain various pages illustrating the conversions and piety of extraordinary lowly-born Japanese. These Japanese assume the role of the *casos particulares* that Ananya Chakravarti identifies in the annual Jesuit letters from Brazil and India. She defines them as

> edifying examples to lend color to the dry accounting of mission activity—the numbers of baptisms and catechumens which the missions conscientiously reported. (Chakravarti 2013, 516)

These "special cases" thus brought more edification to the readers (and, I would argue, to the writer as well) and provide a sketch of Jesuit ideas on conversion at that time. However, even making for a consoling read, the existence and activities of these exemplary Christians opened a second front in Cabral's difficulties with the Japanese mission.

The 1574 letter to the General, written on 31 May in Miyako, presents numerous instances of Christians whom Cabral met in his second visitation to the capital that year. The Christian community of Yamaguchi, which had suffered persecutions and had been left on its own since the time of Xavier, presents an interesting case to illustrate the expectations of the missionaries. Mass conversion was supported in part by the belief that subsequent generations would produce better Christians, since they were raised "in the faith". In this scenario, key roles were played by the support of the community and the guidance of the priests. Lacking these, the missionaries were therefore expecting that the Christians of Yamaguchi had returned to their old religious conduct, just as those in Hakata (Fukuoka) had done: they compared this latter city, without the teachings of a missionary, to "an untamed forest" (JapSin 7, II, 208*v*).[29] Instead, Yamaguchi provided a trove of exemplary converts, as Cabral writes at length about the many pious Christians he found there. While it is not possible to discuss all his edifying examples, some are particularly interesting for the framing and comments he provides to their stories. The first is Catarina:

28 An example is the conversion of the fief of Ōmura, which he leaves to carry out the baptism of the second son of Ōtomo Sorin (JapSin 8, I, 73*r*, see next section for more details).

29 This is an image that contrasts with the ideal of mission as the "vineyard of the Lord", as the edited text makes explicit (*Lettere del Giapone*, 6).

> I found here an old woman who is eighty years old and lives a league away from the city of Yamaguchi, in a village called Miyano where there are a hundred, or a hundred and fifty Christians. This old woman, called Catarina, converted most of them, and both gentiles and Christians believe her to be saintly, and I believe it too. (JapSin 7, II, 210*rv*)

The letter then proceeds to describe the devotion of this woman, who came to Mass before sunrise, even with the snow, the cold, and the dangers of the wolves, and had scruples about falling asleep after her morning prayers. The reader is given to understand that Cabral, who had thought he was doing a great sacrifice getting up in the cold to pray, was very surprised and humbled to find her already in the church to hear Mass (JapSin 7, II, 210*v*).

The second example from Yamaguchi is Maria, also baptised by Xavier. She was the only Christian of her village, situated just outside the city:

> Truly in her I saw how much better catechised are those whom God catechises with his grace and the light of faith, than those whom we catechise through preaching and natural reasons. This woman only had sixty measures of rice, and she gave them to us to do with them what was best for her soul, and returned to her village without even knowing the Pater Noster well, nor the Ave Maria. [However,] in twenty days she came back with a *kojimoto*,[30] who is the head and preacher in a sect called Ikkō-shū […] and another three, […] whom she converted. After hearing preaching and being baptised, they went back with her. (JapSin 7, II, 211*r*)

The letter proceeds to list and describe with many details cases of Japanese converts bringing others to the faith and maintaining their own through difficulties, despite the lack of guidance.

Through these examples, Cabral wished to illustrate the way in which God operated on the souls of the converts, regardless of the work, or even presence, of missionaries. This includes considerations on the efficacy of baptism in the absence of a priest. An ex-monk called João, for example, had led some people whom he had converted to the Jesuits to receive additional teachings and then baptism. Since not all of them could leave their town, Cabral taught João how to perform baptisms so that he could do it himself. A similar case happened when travelling towards Yamaguchi:

30 "People running an ikkō-shū dōjō in the general area of Western Japan", (Kinryū 2006, 77).

> I understood from a Christian called Jacobo […] that in a nearby kingdom […] there was a Christian, baptised by Father Master Francis [Xavier]. As he was the only Christian present in that kingdom, he still persevered with great faith. Knowing that Jacobo was a Christian, […] he sent his son to see him and beg him to tell a Father […] that he was a Christian, and so were those of his house, although not baptised yet because there was nobody who could do it. Since he desired much their baptism […] as that kingdom was very far, I asked Jacobo […] to console him and baptise his family. For this, I had him *write down* the baptismal formula and I taught him how to baptise them.[31]

Baptism was a sacrament that could be taught and performed by anyone.[32] However, the fact that the 1578 printed edition of this letter excised the passage that suggested a hasty teaching of the formula to what amounted to a virtuous but otherwise unprepared Japanese Christian suggests that this practice was not seen in a positive light, or at least not considered ideal. Indeed, in 1598, the mission was accused of laxity regarding baptisms; by the end of the following century, the ecclesiastical authorities of Asia had put the practice under strict control, making the presence of a priest necessary for a proper performance of the ritual (López-Gay 1966, 146-53; Alberts 2013, 134). These examples illustrate how Cabral could not afford to be touched by this type of concern about the form and administration of the sacraments. He worked in a decade in which they were not yet prevalent and also lacked the manpower to answer all the requests for baptism the mission received, as he often lamented. In this case, when he could, he baptised the neophytes himself after meeting them on the road; otherwise, he allowed them to be baptised without even seeing them, as long as they had expressed the desire for baptism. The fact that Cabral entrusted people external to the Society with the task shows that he was not merely performing an exercise in rhetoric when he wrote that he believed that grace would intervene when human means failed.

Although Cabral was adept at the use of *casos particulares* in his letters, a certain current of uneasiness can be detected in his words. While successful in heightening the edifying effect of his letters, the way he described these episodes suggests that not all was as well as he wanted to portray. For example, after his 1574 list of special converts, he notes:

31 Cabral to the General, Miyako, 31 May 1574, in JapSin 7, II, 209*v*; Emphasis added, on the part expunged in an Italian printed edition (*Lettere del Giapone*, 9-10).

32 Among the Jesuit literature produced in Japan, there was a booklet with instructions on how to conduct baptisms (López-Gay 1966, 145).

> In truth when I see what God Our Lord operates through these Christians, and how one who has converted today, tomorrow is converting others without even knowing the prayers, on the one hand I am very consoled, on the other very confused. I am very consoled to hear how God Our Lord communicates with these poor, humble, simple Christians who, removed yesterday from gentility and their idolatries, with the grace received in the holy baptism, today they already are preachers of the greatness of God. We should not receive small consolation from this, because we clearly saw how much God Our Lord remembers and cares for these souls of Japan: He supplements the lack of Fathers and Brothers who can take care of them in the church, taking these simple and poor as the preachers of his Gospel. (JapSin 7, II, 212*v*)

The devotion of these model Japanese Christians and their combined accomplishment in converting other Japanese are framed as a direct divine intervention on the field and as proof of God's favour towards them. However, the way Cabral describes them, while acting as a reminder that God helps the underprivileged, also stresses their ignorance in the matters of faith: they were "removed yesterday from gentility and their idolatries", they do not even know the prayers. This could be just a rhetorical statement to show the enormous power of grace and make the Japanese's newfound piety more striking by comparison, but the passage that follows immediately after suggests that the central issue is the Japanese Christians' ability to convert others regardless of their knowledge, experience, or spiritual prowess. Cabral strove to put a positive spin on it, attributing their newfound capacity to a divine intervention to supplement the lack of European preachers, but the explicit comparison that follows reveals how the situation was slowly creating tension around his own role as missionary. Indeed, before continuing to discuss the general state of the Yamaguchi mission, Cabral explains the second part of his opening statement, that is, his bewilderment:

> It confounds me greatly to see how a Catarina from Miyano, or a Maria of Mine, or any of these poor Christians, simple and humble, is well capable, with unpolished, badly composed words, to move the hard hearts of the gentiles. And [on the other hand] with many efficient and well-composed reasonings, I manage at most to make them admit that [Christianity] is a good thing, and they go away gentile and unmoved just like they were before. (JapSin 7, II, 212*v*)

The edifying objective of this paragraph is to show the writer as rightly chastened, reminded of his own human limits. However, the way it is presented raises doubts as to how much Cabral was humbled and edified, and how much he was, instead, starting to lose hope in the face of his own ineffectiveness.

Cabral's lack of success is illustrated in detail soon after, in an event that "scared him and made him understand clearly of what little use preaching is if God does not move" (JapSin 7, II, 213*r*) the hearts of the listeners. The missionaries organised, as a final attempt to make converts, a whole week of preaching; the weather was miserable, but many gentiles came to hear the sermons. They are explicitly described as enjoying it very much and listening attentively; the attendance was such that they could not fit in the church. Their feedback was so positive that Cabral thought they would all convert, but in the end, "only two men became Christians, and all the others remained as gentile as they had been before" (JapSin 7, II, 213*r*). Not even the hardship suffered through the subsequent strenuous travelling towards Sakai appeared to gain the missionaries any merit. After Cabral fell very sick, the group risked being killed for preaching, were attacked by pirates, and only then did they manage to take shelter in the Christian community of Sakai. What should be the ensuing triumph, twenty-four new converts, was perhaps rather meagre when Cabral compared it to the previous adversities. The implicit rhetorical point of glorious suffering for Christ is not followed by its expected consequence of tangible success.

These portrayals of the workings of grace underscore not just the importance attributed to it in the narratives of conversion, but the inability of the missionaries to understand or influence them, as well. Such interpretations of events thus risked jeopardising the "quid-pro-quo" understanding of the relationship between human actions and grace that, as demonstrated by the debacle on the black cassock, influenced Cabral's approach to evangelisation. The confidence he initially displayed regarding his work, in time, disappeared from his correspondence and was substituted with a pervasive confusion that is addressed explicitly only on occasions. These later letters are characterised by a difficulty of mapping grace's interventions, or lack thereof: some Japanese converted when the missionaries had lost hope (as in the case of Amakusa Shigehisa), some did not embrace Christianity regardless of Cabral's efforts, and some nurtured their relationship with God by themselves and brought others to the faith. As will be considered in the next section, the first cases could be interpreted as a sign of divine favour in response to Jesuit exertion, and the second could be justified with a negative interpretation of Japanese nature (e.g., "gentile and unmoved"). However, it was the third group, composed mostly of exemplary Christians, who seemed to be the most difficult for Cabral to justify, as they provided a living example of maintaining hope in the face of adversity. Upon returning to the man whose family had been baptised by Jacobo, Cabral wrote:

> I received his [letter] of three or four pages, where, after many thanks, he recounted his life, his labours [210*r*] and the persecutions he suffered. Truly this letter seemed to me as coming from a very spiritual holy man, instead of a Christian who had not been nurtured, and I clearly understood how much closer God is to the humble, who search Him with faith and simplicity, than He is to a superb person *like me*, who believed I had already found Him.[33]

Even allowing a rhetorical aspect to the latter declaration and its value as a practice of contrition, I would argue that Cabral is concerned, as he expresses his growing perception of God as distant from himself: God is "much closer to [this Japanese man] than He is… to… me". This perception might be amplified by Cabral's own praising of the intervention of grace on the Japanese, a recurring trope in his writings. The importance of his missionary work is weakened by the text itself; it highlights how much less efficient human evangelisation was compared to the divine. Identifying God as the only source of any success obtained, in an effort to bring about edification from both the divine action and the humility of the missionaries, has the consequence of diminishing the value in the missionaries' efforts. This was generally intended, but it was rhetoric that risked working against the activities of the mission. Moreover, the narrative of the cases of Catarina and Maria states explicitly that even unlearned Japanese women could be more efficient channels of grace than Cabral himself. In this manner, the spiritual excellence and effectiveness attributed to the exemplary Christians jeopardised Cabral's status as a missionary, in his own eyes.

4.6 Catechising Elite Christians

When the occasion arose, Cabral was keen to spend long passages on the conversion of elite Japanese. For instance, he started the letter written on 9 September 1576 by updating the General about the conversion of the fief of Ōmura Sumitada.[34] Although the operation was a major success when measured in numbers of new Christians,[35] the focus of the letter was one single, unrelated person: the second son of Ōtomo Sōrin, Ōtomo Chikaie (1561-1641). Cabral nar-

33 Cabral to the General, Miyako, 31 May 1574, in JapSin 7, II, 209*v*-210*r*; emphasis added, on the parts excised in *Lettere del Giapone*, 10.

34 Cabral to the General, Kuchinotsu, 9 September 1576, in JapSin 8, I, 73*r*-82*r* (a note on the manuscript dates it erroneously 6 June 1577).

35 The Jesuits count 15,000 converts, to be added to the 20,000 of the previous year (JapSin 8, I, 73*r*).

rates how he personally oversaw the catechisation of the newly converted Dom Sebastião, whose allegiance improved the standing of Christianity among the people of Bungo, leaving behind its association with poverty and sickness that derived from the presence of the Jesuit hospital. These events are presented as very edifying and reveal the hope that Chikaie might be an influential asset for Christianity and evangelisation in the future.[36] In comparison, little space is dedicated to the 15,000 new converts in the fief of Ōmura. Although the strategy of top-down evangelisation did not necessarily include the conversion of a daimyō and his family to be effective, since obtaining their favour was generally enough, the baptism of the elites was an important step to guarantee a future for Christianity in the fief. It has already been shown that Cabral considered these upper-class conversions as superior in both quality and stability; it follows that he wished to supervise the elite's catechisation in person, whenever possible, and was keen on it being more exhaustive than that of the lower classes.[37]

If it differed in length and effort, in this period the catechisation of all Japanese people was in theory carried out through the same catechism; the Jesuits' insufficient knowledge of the Japanese language meant that they were generally dependent on a dōjuku to carry out the teachings, especially towards those who had not yet been baptised. No copy of the didactic composition used in the 1570s, often referred to as "Cabral's catechism", is still extant in its entirety.[38] This text was modified a number of times during that decade and was circulating in different versions of varying length to adapt to the depth of the catechisation needed by the catechumens (Valignano 1954, 140*).[39] Regardless of these varying redactions, the text was probably dependent on the *Doutrina Cristã* by Marcos Jorge, which had been translated into Japanese in 1568 and was printed by the Christian Press in 1591 as *Dochirina Kirishitan* (Higashibaba 2001, 57).[40] A polished version of the 1570s catechism, in Japanese written in Latin

36 "Because everything on this shore depended on [Chikaie's father]" (JapSin 8, I, 73*r*).

37 Unsurprisingly, this was a common practice for the duration of the mission, although it seems Cabral dedicated even less time to the lower classes than average (López-Gay 1966, 42-3).

38 José Luís Álvares-Taladriz shows how some of this catechism survived as passages of the 1586 *Catechismus Christianae Fidei*. In a rather surprising statement that was mostly ignored by subsequent Western historiography, Álvares-Taladriz measures Cabral's and Valignano's contributions to the *Catechismus* as approximately equal (Valignano 1954, 141*). However, it has now become impossible to identify which parts were taken specifically from "Cabral's catechism".

39 Adapting catechisation to the social status and perceived ability of the catechumens was a common practice in Asia (López-Gay 1966, 42).

40 On the use of Jorge's *Doutrina Cristã* in Japan, see Pinto dos Santos 2016.

characters, is referenced in 1578, when Brother Juan Torres used it to catechise Ōtomo Sōrin and his last wife, Justa (*Historia*, 3: 15-16).

The content of these instructions was similar to those imparted later to the Ōtomo heir, Yoshimune, who also expressed his interest in Christianity and requested Torres for himself and his wife. The topics considered in this instance can be inferred from the discussion they generated: "at the end of the preaching, [Yoshimune] asked questions on the doubts he had, both about the matter of the soul, and its immortality, and about the creation of the angels, and about most topics he had heard".[41] Another day, he heard from Cabral and Froís about "the deceits of the Laws of Japan, and the falsities of the Kami and Buddha, and of the truth, justice, and integrity of the Law of God", which they read from either the 1570s catechism in one of its late forms or an auxiliary text (*Historia*, 3: 15n11).[42] While no Japanese translation of this text seems to have survived, [43] a fragment of the Portuguese manuscript is still extant, written in the hand of Froís. The production of a collaborative effort between the dōjuku, the European missionaries, and their Japanese informants,[44] the fragment is comprised of 20 pages (Fondo Gesuitico 724/3, third document).[45] Its contents, similar to those mentioned by Yoshimune, suggests that it was used for the catechisation of the elites, as does its complexity. The surviving section describes at length the creation of the world, the soul and its immortality, and the creation of Adam, plus a missing section that must have discussed the original sin; the manuscript then resumes with the creation and fall of the angels and how this led to the creation of Japanese religions, behind which was identified as the work of the Devil.

The catechism was therefore an attempt to concretely support the Jesuits' efforts to understand Japanese religions and refute them. The approach is tailored to the higher ability to understand the faith rationally, which was attributed to the elites. However, the importance Cabral attributed to the connection between the actions of the Jesu-

41 Luís Froís to the Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Jesus in Portugal, Usuki, 16 October 1578, in EVORA, 426*r*.

42 Froís might be making a distinction between Cabral's catechism and this auxiliary work when he calls it a "treatise" that will be translated together with the catechism (EVORA, 426*v*). Cabral does not seem to differentiate the two works when, in 1574, he mentions the text composed with the help of Kenzen João, which "not only contained the mysteries of our Holy Faith, but also negated punctually the books of Japan [i.e., Buddhist sutra] and showed their lies" (JapSin 7, II, 209*r*).

43 Cabral and Froís were certainly reading from a Japanese copy in Latin characters, as Yoshimune later requested one to be made into "Japanese letters" (EVORA, 426*v*).

44 Such as Kenzen João, who provided the missionaries in Miyako, among whom Froís, with information about the Lotus Sutra (Valignano 1954, 139*).

45 A transcription has been published in *Historia*, 4: 542-64.

its and divine favour towards the evangelisation of Japan reappears in this passage describing his reaction to receiving news of Yoshimune's interest:

> So that [Yoshimune's conversion] could be better obtained, Father Francisco Cabral immediately ordered to the dearest Fathers and Brothers of Funai, and of this residence of Usuki, to say masses, and to do special prayers, disciplines, and fasting. (*EVORA*, 426*r*)

As he had done previously, Cabral hoped to enlist God's assistance with sacrifices of various kinds. He also looked for and interpreted signs of Providence in the world. Still, it is possible to detect a shift in the narratives he built around these events. A striking example is the baptism of Chikaie, Yoshimune's younger brother. The fact is reported as being followed by an assorted collection of exorcisms and healings. The standard Catholic interpretation of this event, together with the exemplary behaviour of Chikaie's group of converted young men, should present them as positive signs that God is favouring the work of evangelisation. Cabral's framing of the event tends instead towards bleakness:

> I came to feel some bitterness in my spirit, and I declare it my fault, because I feared that many of these conversions were false, and that these neophytes would not be firm in the faith, and in the life they took for themselves. The reason was that I knew that these people of Japan are the most libertine and sensual that I have ever seen. […] So every time I baptised any of these gentlemen, I always had scruples, because it seemed to me that they did it as a formality, and to enter the good graces of the King, and that they would return to their vomit. Therefore, I would hold them back many days with sermons, describing to them the ugliness of sin, etc. But God our Lord demonstrated well how much more grace can, than the perversion of nature, or than my little faith. Because these courtiers, most of them being between seventeen and twenty-five years old, and very rich, and lords of vassals, and of very bad habits, after receiving the water of the Holy Baptism, they had such a great, and sudden mutation, that they surprised everybody who knew them.[46]

The immediate effect of grace on the convert, implied by Cabral's belief in the effectiveness of mass baptism,[47] becomes visible in this

46 Cabral to the General, Kuchinotsu, 9 June 1576, in *Lettere del Giapone*, 55-6.

47 "Mass baptism privileged the salvific potential of the sacrament [of baptism], the fact that the rite made a real and indelible mark on the soul of the convert" (Alberts 2013, 135).

passage, which doubles as another exhortation to the reader to not doubt its power. The virtuosity of the neophytes can be read as a sign that the evangelisation of the country is supported by divine will. The narrative follows a familiar progression: Cabral's attempts to teach the tenets of Christianity to a group of neophytes appear to be a useless endeavour, but the enterprise is saved at the last second by divine intervention, which is followed by portentous signs; Cabral is rightly humbled and declares his sinfulness and then his contrition. While the example of Chikaie's groups does not focus extensively on the work done by Cabral (as did, instead, that of Amakusa Shigehisa), here too appears the suggestion that God has accepted his efforts and repaid them with pious converts, even if Cabral himself lacked (or had lost) hope in the endeavour. The edifying and consolatory interpretation of the events aims to reinforce the belief in Providence, just as the dress debacles did.

However, this same framing allowed Cabral to admit his "little faith" and his low expectations in the ability of the Japanese to behave according to his standards. The text identifies explicitly the cause of this as the bad nature Cabral attributes to the Japanese as a whole. They are "the most libertine and sensual [people] that I have ever seen… they would return to their vomit", he writes, comparing them derogatorily to animals. Years of describing the surprise he felt regarding the virtuous among them did little to ease Cabral's assumptions regarding the low probability of success of evangelisation. Moreover, he accused the elite Japanese of requesting baptism for worldly benefits and not out of belief and will to convert. No similar accusations were made towards the lower classes, for whom it was purportedly acceptable to receive baptism following an ultimatum from their daimyō, justified by the missionaries as something allowed in Japanese culture. It emerges therefore that, by 1576, Cabral is also losing hope for the "genuine" conversion of the upper-class Japanese, whose understanding of Christianity was supposed to be deeper and more solid. Their purportedly perverse nature could be overcome only by divine intervention. In this sense, Cabral's efforts to catechise them are effective just as a sacrifice to God, not to reach their rational understanding. This letter makes explicit the fact that, even if the cases of pious Christians among the elite were not few, he thought of them just as he did of those among the lower classes: exemplary converts, rare examples onto which the focus of his missives could be shifted when he was despairing of his ability to make an impact on the country.

4.7 Conclusion

Because the Japanese mission under Cabral was expanding and there were plenty of new converts, his reports give the impression that he believed that God was not showing particular favour to him. He fell violently ill and feared for his life various times during his travels; he worked hard, preaching for days in the cold but making very few converts. Some of the Japanese Christians displayed amazing piety, against all his predictions. Perhaps most importantly in Cabral's narrative, God seems to favour the newly converted poor as a means to do missionary work instead of the Jesuits. They reportedly barely knew the Pater Noster but still managed to be examples of Christian virtue and bring many others to the faith.

Cabral was careful, in his presentation of the events, to always put a positive spin and to aim for the edification of the general reader (and possibly, by the act of composing the letter, of himself), especially when he wrote to Europe. The descriptions of the exemplary converts help him in this sense. The importance of presenting himself as a humble worker does the same. There is, however, a certain anxiety that appears between the lines of his letters, connected to the uncontrollable way grace operates on the conversions, which leaves doubt behind.

From this point of view, Cabral displays a relationship with grace of the kind that O'Malley describes as "quid-pro-quo". The signs he received after 1573, however, starting with the fateful sinking of the fleet of Visitor Álvares off the port of Nagasaki, did not seem easy to read or understand. With the situation difficult to interpret, Cabral's writing loses certainty. When he arrives in Japan, he frames his actions and his decisions to show his obedience to the orders of Álvares. However, after Álvares' death, Cabral suddenly inherits the guidance of the mission and loses the possibility of simply obeying. In the years that follow, even in the face of the supposed success of his work of conversion, he shows less and less certainty about the rightness of his path. He perceives a change in the way Providence acts, which suggests that God might not be favouring him any longer.

5 Jesuit Salvation in Japan

A major consideration that informed the previous pages is that early modern mission was considered an efficient tool to save both the soul of the missionary and the souls of those he was converting. Chapter 4 provided an overview of the manner used by the Jesuits during the 1570s to save the souls of other people through conversion and cultivation of the faith among their communities. This chapter will consider the other half of the enterprise, that is, the salvation of the souls of the missionaries themselves; it will also focus on the material solutions that Cabral proposed when it became clear that spiritual means would not be enough to save the mission in his eyes.

Starting in 1573, the conditions of the Jesuits in Japan steadily worsened due to the isolation, both internal and external, that the mission suffered. When Cabral attempted to obtain permission for some projects that, he believed, would have mitigate the mission's problems, he was not able to obtain it, due to the difficulties of lettered governance, and refused to take on himself the responsibility of the reforms and their expenses. The latter half of his stay in Japan was characterised by a general feeling of helplessness, which in turn dragged him into a spiritual crisis. Regardless of the numeric success of the conversions, he felt that God had abandoned the mission and pleaded to be allowed to leave.

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This chapter will consider how internal and external elements affecting the mission contributed not only to the administrative failure but also to the personal crisis that Cabral suffered. It will expand upon the organisational weaknesses of the Jesuit mission, the solutions suggested by Cabral, the possible reasons behind his inability to implement them, and the structural collapse that threatened the whole enterprise at the end of the decade. It will then look at Cabral’s attempts to save his vow of obedience and, when this failed, to at least save his soul.

5.1 Organisational Weakness

The state of the mission when Valignano arrived in Japan in 1579 was, in his view, very worrying. Writing in 1580 from Usuki to the General, he stated that he felt “sad and disconsolate” to see how the Society of Jesus would certainly “lose itself” (“se yva perder”) in the country if immediate solutions were not implemented.[1] Valignano listed numerous causes that were, in his opinion, behind this imminent collapse. Among other things, he identified Cabral’s governing style as a major contributor:

> The first [reason for the ruin of the Society in Japan] was the manner of governance, because the totality of the Society and Christendom in Japan was governed by the will of only one, whoever was the Superior of Japan. All the spiritual and temporal rule of the Society was in his hands, and therefore it could easily collapse. […] There were no houses nor ordered colleges, nor stable and sure rent, nor it was possible to follow the *Constitutions* and the rules, nor was any order of the Institute known […] It was governed by the sole will of one man, without having any knowledge of the *Constitutions*, nor of the offices of the Provincial or of the Rector, nor of the order of the Probation house, nor other rules. Considering this, it was clear that, with time, the Society would fall into ruin […] And how could one man by himself care for the necessities of so many residences, assess the expenses and deal with the business, according to his will, especially since everything was mostly governed without consultations and with much arrogance. Due to this, it was already shown, so many and tremendous disorders arose that it was a great grace and mercy of Our Lord that the Society survived until now. (JapSin 8, I, 298*r*)

1 Valignano to the General, Usuki, 27 October 1580, in JapSin 8, I, 298*r*, transcribed in Schütte 1958, 487.

As Valignano described it, the Japanese mission had operated, until his visitation, with a remarkably simple internal structure, to which the *Constitutions* and the rules that applied to a different, more organised reality could barely be applied. This problem of governance was not unique to Cabral's superiorate: the Japanese mission had never undergone a substantial reorganisation of its structure. Therefore, by European standards, it was highly unregulated and displayed little of the Jesuit complex system of regulations that had become common by the end of the generalate of Loyola. This situation stemmed from various reasons. It was partially due to the personal attitude of Xavier, who was often too invested in future projects to support the missions he had founded properly (Županov 2005, 55-6). He also never had the opportunity to see the *Constitutions*, living in a period when charismatic governance of the Society was still common, and he had directed his missions according to the same principles. His successor as head of Japan, Cosme de Torres, was not particularly familiar with the Jesuit way of proceeding, since he had lived among other Society members for only a year while in Goa and then briefly with Xavier in Japan. The abnormalities of the mission under his guidance were such that Torres pronounced his three solemn vows only twelve years after becoming superior, and only his death prevented his recall to India to answer regarding his missionaries' deviation from the norm (Hesselink 2016, 29, 53).

This superficial knowledge of the Jesuit Institute combined with the reduced dimensions of the workforce and the isolation of the mission were all factors that had favoured the underdevelopment of the mission's structure. The superior of the house of Bungo was considered the superior of the whole mission, but he held no precise official position that could, in turn, be supported by the standard advising figures. The absence of institutional locales, other than Jesuit residences, made for a lack of other figures of official relevance. As Valignano pointed out, this caused the concentration of power to be in the hands of the superior. Cosme de Torres' and Cabral's governments suffered the same problem; an individual residence was headed by a single missionary (often the only priest in residence), but the power had always rested in the superior's hands. This facilitated the emergence of despotic behaviours, such as those exhibited by Cosme de Torres, in relation to the brothers who worked with him,[2] or Cabral's tendencies to pretend absolute obedience.

It was only in 1581, when it was declared a vice province, that the Japanese mission's internal structure of governance was created anew, following the rules of the Society more closely (Costa 2000, 245). Still, considering that Vice-Provincials Francesco Pasio and Valentim

2 See Torres' behaviour as described by Melchior Nunes Barreto in 1560 (*DJ*, 2: 259).

Carvalho both faced similar accusations of despotism, it would seem that these reforms were not necessarily efficacious. The lack of organisational evolution of the Japanese mission, which should have taken place during the bureaucratisation of the rest of the Society of Jesus, can be attributed to its distance, both geographical and psychological, from the other Jesuit centres. This isolation was also behind the longer-than-average periods of power for each superior and the resulting concentration of influence in their hands (Costa 1998, 74-5). After 1573, Cabral began realising just how much this isolation was a threat to the Society's existence in the country and confronted his inability to find an adequate response to it.

5.2 External Isolation

Previous chapters have shown how Cabral was devoted to the respect of obedience. This is not surprising, when considering the importance that obedience held in the formulation of salvation for the members of the Society of Jesus. Having exchanged more traditional forms of asceticism for it, following Loyola's will to engage more efficiently with the world, obedience had assumed a key role in helping the Jesuit to exercise the humility necessary to save his soul. Obedience was therefore at the forefront of Cabral's mind, when it came to making decisions. However, the problems of the Japanese mission had long escaped the Goan and Roman headquarters. The last visitation from India (excluding Cabral's) dated back to 1556, with Melchior Nunes Barreto. What doomed Cabral's attempts to obtain support, however, were arguably the serious organisational difficulties suffered by the Indian Province at the beginning of the 1570s. Especially after the death the Provincial, morale was low and there was little interest in matters so distant from India.[3] It would take another five years for the intervention in Japan by Valignano, who was the highest Jesuit authority in India after 1574.

One of the problems that Cabral had to face during his stay in Japan was therefore nearly complete isolation from the upper echelons of the Society. Initially, he did not seem to be keeping track of the precise correspondence that the Japanese mission received. He mentioned some letters for Cosme de Torres that had arrived in 1571, including one from Diego Mirão, the Portuguese Assistant.[4] He also referred to another letter, received in the same year, possibly from

3 See Valignano's 1574 comments on the matter in *DI*, 9: 484.

4 Francisco Cabral to Diego Mirão, Nagasaki, 6 September 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 23*r*.

Juan Baptista de Ribera.[5] The letters coming with the 1573 fleet, if any existed, must have sunk off the coast of Nagasaki. In October 1575, Cabral mentioned receiving written orders from the new Provincial of India, Manuel Teixeira, which suggests he received a missive from him, possibly with the news of the death of Quadros. In the same year, at the beginning of the letter to the General, Cabral wrote:

> Even if I have not received an answer in these past years to many letters I sent your way, and it is easy for them to be lost, nevertheless, to not fail to keep my obligation, I write when I have opportunity to do so.[6]

As will be detailed in the sections below, between 1573 and 1576, Cabral was convinced that God was actively punishing the mission, and he interpreted the lack of correspondence as part of such discipline. In 1576, although he received a letter from the Visitor, Cabral still lamented Rome's lack of response: "It has been eight years that, each year, I have always written [letters], through two or three routes [*vias*], to our past Father General of good memory, Francisco de Borja; I never received any reply until this year of 1576".[7] It was only in 1577 that a letter from General Mercurian finally reached Japan, and Cabral reported the consolation it brought to him and his brethren, stating it gave them "not a little spirit to push forward the works in this vineyard of the Lord with more fervour".[8] This letter, brought to Japan by a group of thirteen missionaries sent ahead by Valignano, would not have been an answer to some of Cabral's recent pleas but to those sent in or before 1572.[9] Since in those years Cabral was still focusing on the problem of dress, this last missive probably did not contain much in the way of orders relating to other policies.

Correspondence formed the backbone of the governance of the Society; it allowed, at least theoretically, the central administration to maintain contact with and guide the various provinces. The observance of holy obedience itself was often based on the works of this network of letters. Cabral's correspondence reveals that, to govern

5 Francisco Cabral to Juan Batista [de Ribera?], Kuchinotsu, 23 September 1571, in JapSin 7, III, 36*r*.

6 Francisco Cabral to the General, Yamaguchi, 13 September 1575, in JapSin 7, I, 263*r*.

7 Francisco Cabral to General Everard Mercurian, Kuchinotsu, 21 October 1576, in JapSin 8, I, 12*r*.

8 Francisco Cabral to General Everard Mercurian, Kuchinotsu, 1 September 1577, in JapSin 8, I, 134*r*.

9 In 1580, for example, Cabral mentioned receiving an answer to a 1575 missive (Francisco Cabral to General Everard Mercurian, Kuchinotsu, 30 August 1580, in JapSin 8, I, 283*r*).

the Japanese mission, he tried repeatedly to make use of the network that connected him to his superiors in India and Europe, regardless of the dangers posed to this manner of management by long distances and frequent shipwrecks. So, following the rules demanding frequent reports, Cabral wrote yearly to Goa and Rome, at least for a period. He was assiduous in this endeavour, particularly when compared with his predecessor, Cosme de Torres. It appears that he either stopped writing to Goa in 1575, after learning of the death of Quadros, or that the missives composed after this date were not forwarded to Europe and are now lost. Cabral wrote at least three times to the Assistant of Portugal,[10] and sometimes to the Visitor, but the bulk of his remaining correspondence was directed to the generals. Nevertheless, it emerges clearly from Cabral's letters that he had lost faith in lettered governance by the end of his tenure in Japan. In 1576, when he received the message from Valignano, Cabral was ready to give up, according to his own writings:

> I never received any reply until this year of 1576, even if the matters I wrote about were not of little substance, but important to those of the Society who live here in Japan, and for the growth of these conversions and Christianity. So I was about not to [write anymore] this year, because it seemed to me that either the letters were not reaching [Rome], or that nobody was doing much about these matters because they were not important there. However, this year, through three fathers, the Father Visitor Alessandro Valignano sent us the good news of the election of Your Paternity, and of the care and desire you immediately showed to help these parts. (JapSin 8, I, 12*r*)

There is a sense of helplessness in these lines, that letter-writing was a useless endeavour and that Cabral felt forsaken by his superiors. The accusation that they had abandoned him is only thinly masked by his allowing that his letters might have been lost ("not reaching Rome"). While Cabral certainly tended to over-dramatise when complaining, the fact that he dared to pen explicitly his protests suggests that the matter had profoundly upset him. He also showed awareness that his hopeless attitude was sinful by expressly repenting of his pessimistic feelings in a later letter.[11]

The intensity he displayed when he wrote about his state of mind suggests an ongoing feeling of abandonment that preceded its first

10 Cabral to Diego Mirón, Nagasaki, 6 September 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 23*r*-24*v*; to Pedro de Fonseca, Usuki, 4 September 1581, in JapSin 9, I, 23*r*-24*v*; and from Kuchinotsu, 30 August 1580, to either of them, in JapSin 8, I, 286*r*-8*v*.

11 See Cabral to the General, Kuchinotsu, 12 November 1579, in JapSin 8, I, 231*r*.

mention in 1575, probably dating back to the death of Álvares. Cabral felt strongly about the accident of the 1573 shipwreck, even as he indulged in a dramatic description of the fact (JapSin 7, I, 166A).[12] He did his rhetorical best to transmit the magnitude of the disaster to the General, strengthening his catastrophic tone with a (thematically relevant) biblical citation that framed the accident as a divine punishment for the sins of the Japanese mission: *judicia dei abissus multa*.

The consequences of the shipwreck were not limited to an economic loss, although it was significant;[13] it also meant the death of the arriving reinforcements. With eighty churches and many Christians to look after, the nine fathers (*MonJap*, 96) that worked in Japan were simply not enough. At this time, Cabral had already concluded that the Indian mission would not be able to offer support to its Japanese branch, even if the Provincial was willing. Thus, he looked at the General to provide for Japan and implored him to think of the territories "that are asking, with their mouths open, for somebody to break the bread of preaching, when nobody can" (JapSin 7, I, 166A*v*). The effects of the shipwreck on Cabral's manner of government can be detected also in the letter's following section: he asked for a dispensation from the Pope to allow Christian Japanese to marry gentiles.[14] He believed this would greatly help the propagation of Christianity in Japan, notwithstanding the lack of missionaries. The topic is not a new one: Cabral had already mentioned it in 1571.[15] In that letter, though, he left the decision-making to the General, while this time he opted for a direct suggestion. The problem was of significant dimensions: the tradition of the country did not permit people to marry outside their social classes. Due to their small number, the possibility of securing appropriate matches for upper-class Christians was therefore limited if they were to choose only among baptised people; according to the missionaries, if they were not allowed to marry outside of their faith, often, they recanted. Instead, if they were allowed, often their spouse would convert to Christianity. It would therefore have been convenient for evangelisation to obtain this blanket dispensation, concluded Cabral, without having to ask to the bishops in India or Melaka every time the problem arose (JapSin 7, I, 166A*v*). As he began to consider wider matters in the direction of the mission, Cabral attempted to find mitigations to the isolation

12 See Chapter 2 for an extract.

13 Valignano confirmed this in a letter to Mercurian, Goa, 25 December 1574, in *DI*, 9: 521. In 1578, Cabral put the sum lost in the accident at approximately 12-15,000 cruzados (JapSin 8, I, 203*r*).

14 Coutinho Silva 2021. Valignano's wrangling with this problem is discussed in Moran 1993, 110. The Asian context is presented in López-Gay 1964, 45-52.

15 Cabral to the General, Nagasaki, 5 September 1571, in JapSin 7, I, 21*v*.

from Christian authorities and other Christian communities, which plagued the Japanese mission.

The lack of contact with the headquarters also seems to mean that Cabral did not feel free to implement the policies he desired and considered most important. Although he was responsible for the evangelisation of the country, he did not hold an official leadership role because Japan was not an autonomous vice-province. This left his position ambiguous: not powerful enough to make major decisions and support them economically, but too powerful in relation to the local brethren due to the lack of the appropriate advisors and delegates. An official role may have granted more space for manoeuvring in policymaking, if not necessarily greater efficiency. Accordingly, to implement significant changes, Cabral was keen to obtain permission from the General, at least in his own opinion: Cabral's post-1573 letters are characterised by the repetition of the same problems and requests, which went unanswered time and time again. While the problems remained constant, however, the solutions he proposed often changed, suggesting that he was always reconsidering his views (or second-guessing himself) in light of the new insights he gained working in Japan. A significant example of this tendency is Cabral's conceptualisation of the "college" for the mission, provided in Chapter 3. His hesitation in carrying out his own ideas for improving the situation of the mission can be attributed to several reasons, the most evident being economical and spiritual.

During Cabral's superiorate, the mission was always in dire need of funds, even without having to support any institution of learning and the attached student body. So, it would have been very difficult to maintain a college with the resources available. [16] In theory, 1,000 cruzados were granted by the Portuguese crown; 1,300 cruzados were supposed to come from the rent of four villages in Vasai (India); and finally, there were the profits that came from the silk trade with Macao.[17] However, most of the expected funds were never received, making the preservation of the silk trade all the more central to the survival of the mission. In the years Cabral had been in the country, the Japanese mission appears to have received only a fraction of the rent from the Indian villages, which should have financed the development of the mission.[18] Cabral lamented, in 1577,

16 Cabral mentioned specifically the college when, in 1577, he considered the reasons to petition the King for alms (JapSin 8, I, 136*v*, translated below).

17 Costa 2000, 238. See also Alden 1996, 351. The trade brought, according to Cabral, around 8-10,000 cruzados (JapSin 8, I, 203*r*).

18 These details are found in the letter from Cabral to Pedro de Fonseca, in JapSin 9, I, 23*rv*.

that the Indian mission was using the rent of Vasai for itself (JapSin 8, I, 136*v*).[19] According to Valignano, on the request of Antonio de Quadros, in 1570, Cabral had sent part of Japan's funds to Goa for safekeeping from the upheavals of the Japanese civil war. However, he came to deeply regret this and "still cries about it nowadays", in Valignano's words, since the college in Goa invested only 5,000 cruzados in lands and kept the remaining 13,000 for its own necessities. Since the rest of Japan's funds had sunk in 1573, the Provincial of India wanted to send them 1,000 cruzados, but upon his death, they were used in Kochi instead. The alms for the mission, as well, were never received in their entirety, even after Cabral's departure. The donations the king of Portugal had sent to Japan were systematically held by the mission of Melaka. In 1583, of the 4,000 cruzados sent by the Pope, only 1,500 arrived in Japan because 2,500 were spent by the Procurator to buy necessities for the college at Goa.[20] Overall, the distance of the mission from the rest of the Society made funds practically impossible to obtain from the headquarters in a timely manner, resulting in the implementation of any important policy that required monetary support to stall. This lack certainly represented part of the problem, even if Cabral never mentioned this explicitly in the letters before 1578, arguably fearing being perceived as too antagonistic or disdainful of the vow of poverty.

On the other hand, keeping in mind the centrality of holy obedience in Cabral's spiritual path, it seems plausible that he was also not keen to do anything that might go against the wishes of the General and, by extension, God. To support his suggestions, he often referred to his long experience of the mission field, but he left the final decision to his superior. Cabral frequently looked for (supernatural) confirmation that he was correctly obeying his superiors' will, earthly or divine. The use of admittingly stereotypical expressions such as "[if you] believe it [good] *in Domino*"[21] in his letters allowed him to underline this urgency on the matter to the General as well. As his correspondence first suggested, and later admitted, he was convinced that the deaths of Álvares and Quadros were a punishment from God. The lack of positive divine signs compounded his conviction that the mission was contaminated by sin, a deeply troubling belief that, if Valignano's early writings from Japan are to be believed, was shared by the mission at large, who perceived that each good development was followed by a disaster of some sort (Schütte 1980,

19 The following year he bitterly accused the college of Goa of damaging the Japanese mission (JapSin 8, I, 203*v*).

20 Valignano to General Acquaviva, Kochi, 28 October 1583, in *DI*, 12: 852-4.

21 For instance, "So it is necessary that Your Paternity, if believing it [good] *in Domino*, gives the authorisation to build this seminary" (JapSin 7, I, 264*v*).

I, 295-6). Thus, understanding God as systematically punishing the missionaries, Cabral did not take responsibility for any relevant action. These anxieties framed the stagnation of the mission in the second half of the 1570s, as Cabral's writings showed hints of the major crisis he would suffer in later years. His doubts regarding the suitability of his ideas within the plan of Providence help explain Cabral's insistent suggestions to Rome and his desperation at not receiving replies, and his concomitant passivity when facing important choices can thus be read as symptoms of a wider problem. Cabral was torn between the need to find human means and solutions to propel the mission forward, since Divine Providence did not seem to intervene consistently in his favour, and the fear of the sin of disobedience by accidentally going against his superiors' orders and making decisions that could have initiated a negative change. The result was that economic constraints and a lack of workers prevented the efforts of the mission from developing in a manner that seemed fitting for the great achievements that were foreseen for Japan. However, even if he had enforced various small policy changes, Cabral did not carry out any critical development in the organisation of the mission itself, as Valignano later decried.

5.3 Internal Isolation

Cabral met the arrival of the new missionaries, sent by Valignano, with great relief (JapSin 8, I, 135*v*). The lack of workers had been a problem in his mind since at least 1573, forcing him to dissimulate with undesirable Jesuits to keep them working in the mission.[22] In 1575, at the height of his feeling of abandonment by his superiors, he linked the low numbers of missionaries to the general lack of efficiency of the enterprise, both on an earthly level and on a spiritual one:

> Many kingdoms ask to be visited by preachers of the law of God, but I can only reply with tears and pain, seeing so many souls being lost for the lack of [those] who might help them. I recall Jeremiah's words, "Young children beg for bread, but no one gives them any" [*Lam*. 4:4]. […] I will at least implore you, for the wounds of Jesus Christ our Lord, to send workers to this vineyard, where so great a harvest is made. There are so few [workers] here, and they are regularly scattered everywhere, generally alone, and far away from one another, because in Japan there are sixty-six kingdoms.

22 In 1573, the Jesuits in Japan amounted to nine fathers and nine brothers; they grew to a total of 20 in 1576, and more than doubled the following year. In 1578, they were 50, and by the time Cabral left Japan in 1582, they totalled 75 missionaries (Costa 1998, 646-8). For a detailed list of the missionaries present in Japan, see Costa 1999, 22-4.

> This cannot be not detrimental to our spiritual gain, on which too depends the success of the conversions, since according to how a person is united with God in themselves, so they operate outside on the souls. So, I beg Your Paternity, for the love of God, to assist us. (JapSin 7, I, 264*v*)

According to this passage, the first consequence of a lack of workers was the prevention of the conversion of many fiefs that asked for missionaries, causing innumerable souls to be lost to hell, a fact that Cabral evidently considered a major issue, even if the number of converts was already high ("so great a harvest is made").

The lack of manpower had been an ongoing problem for the Japanese mission since its inception and finding a solution had been slow-going. In theory, Xavier's initial plan for the country necessitated only a handful of missionaries, who should have been handpicked by Loyola to attend what the missionaries called the "Japanese universities". This group, in the intentions of Xavier, would have been enough to convert the main Buddhist institutions of Japan; this newly converted religious elite would then persuade the rest of country to follow suit. In the following year, a small but constant stream of missionaries moving back and forth kept the numbers of Jesuits in Japan rather low. The sudden growth of converted fiefs and requests for preachers in the 1570s had made the question more pressing for Cabral. Overall, in light of its aim to convert the whole country, the mission was obviously perpetually understaffed. Cabral's solution for this problem was to train more Japanese missionaries in the pedagogical structure he proposed to build and then accept them into the Society of Jesus so that they would see their efforts recognised and be content. However, it was evident by the study plan he wished to implement that he did not envisage the possibility of letting the Japanese missionaries ever achieve autonomy and wanted them to work under European authority.

When the lack of manpower was somewhat eased in 1577, Cabral was relieved, but he deemed the helpers still insufficient and, in the same letter in which he announced their landing, he asked for missionaries from New Spain (JapSin 8, I, 136*v*). What he had not anticipated was how this increase in the number of the workers, as the 1580 letter of the Visitor complains, burdened the already weakened structure of the mission. There seemed to be too many new missionaries to be managed by Cabral's centralised, authoritarian governing of the mission. Instead of being a solution, therefore, the new workers became an additional problem, which, according to Valignano, proved nearly fatal.

Another consequence of the low numbers of workers was their dispersion. They were too few to constitute significant communities in the fiefs where they preached and were generally forced to live far apart from one another. This situation, aside from preventing the control of the mission by the superior, weakened the *esprit de corps* of the Jesuits and caused disedification and was "detrimental to [the Jesuits'] spiritual gain" (JapSin 7, I, 264*v*). The buildings that Cabral wished to build, intended for preparing a body of local missionaries and aiding the spiritual and physical rest of those already in the field, would help solve the problem of exhaustion and allow the Jesuits to fulfil more requests for preachers. If Valignano's institutions appeared successful towards this latter endeavour (JapSin 8, I, 283*r*), they seemed less able to supply the places of encounter and communal life that Cabral desired. Indeed, in 1581, the latter lamented that the missionaries were still dispersed throughout the country (JapSin 9, I, 23*r*-24*v*).

Cabral's idea of a retreat had quickly become central to his missionary plan for Japan, supported by his belief that "from [the Jesuits' spiritual gain] too depends the success of the conversions, since according to how a person is united with God in themselves, so they operate outside on the souls", as previously quoted. As he said in 1576:

> [A college] would also work for our [spiritual] maintenance, in addition to [helping] the Japanese, and from time to time those of us who continuously travel through the kingdoms alone, without confession or other helps, and among many [dangerous] events, could come to this college to refresh ourselves. (JapSin 8, I, 12*v*)

The following year, he returned to the matter with the General, stating that "if there is no house where, every two, or three, years, we could [reside] to restore ourselves, it will be difficult to maintain virtue and spirit" (JapSin 8, I, 135*v*). Spiritual dryness was thus imperilling conversions and the other activities of the mission, and Cabral identified it as the root of all problems faced by the Japanese mission. Aside from the practical complications it could cause, such as inducing missionaries to give up and leave the already depleted mission (as Cabral himself would do years later), it also had supernatural consequences. From this point of view, Cabral's missionary policy of giving priority to otherworldly concerns never changed throughout his stay in Japan.

At the same time, these worries suggest that physical exhaustion was a common state for the missionaries. References to the sicknesses that ailed them are often found in the sources, probably because they were considered as edifying sacrifices to the greater glory of God. Fatigue, on the other hand, was mentioned rarely, probably because it was not deemed heroic enough to find a place in reports. Luís Froís offers some exceptions to this trend; in 1565, having just landed in Japan and meeting his fellow missionaries for the first time, he perceived Cosme de Torres as "already very old, and tired, and [he] had been in crutches just until few days ago".[23] Brother Juan Fernández, as well, was "so worn out and wasted by his work that, when [he] saw him, [Froís] often imagined that he would end up with his soul ripped from him" (*EVORA* 1: 131*r*). Physical exhaustion was, quite plainly, not experienced only by the Japanese mission. Other examples abound in Jesuit mission history: between 1670 and 1690, the seriously understaffed Jesuit Chinese mission found itself exhausted and barely able to care spiritually for its flock, let alone convert new people (Brockey 2007, 138-9). Missionaries to the fishery coast around 1580 were in a similar situation, dying of exhaustion (Županov 2012, 435). The Jesuits in New France did not fare much better in the 1630s.[24]

The situation of the Japanese mission, and particularly of Cabral, appears to have been aggravated by various factors that were not limited to physical weariness but that, due to their specific characteristics, come close to a burnout *ante litteram*. Probably due to the characterisation of burnout as a modern malady, the term is very rarely applied to the early modern period,[25] although similar afflictions that share the feeling of helplessness can be found through the centuries (Frijda, Parrott 2011, 411-12): acedia in late antiquity,[26] Renaissance melancholy (Gowland 2006), neurasthenia in the nineteenth century.[27] The early Japanese mission appears to share many aspects of burnout, such as fatigue, overextension, loneliness, lack of structure, the impossibility of living in a stable community (Kammer 1978, 3-8), as well as a feeling of alienation caused by the perception that fellow workers (in Cabral's case, Jesuits in India and Europe, but possibly even in Japan) were not supporting them adequately. The enormity of the task at hand could also have been a cause of burnout: the sixteenth-century Jesuit missionaries in Japan were attempting to convert a whole country with an understaffed, underfunded, and dispersed mission.

By linking the situation of the Japanese mission, and especially its superior, to the condition of burnout, the reasons for Cabral's fall into

23 Luís Froís to the brothers in Europe, 14 November 1563, in *EVORA* 1: 131*r*.

24 See, for instance, the descriptions of mission Superior Paul Le Jeune quoted in Parkman 1867, 19.

25 One of the few scholars who seems to have used the term to refer to the pre-modern period is Magone, who used it when discussing the consequences of the Jesuit early modern missions having limited resources in relation to their gargantuan objectives (the conversion of China in this case) (2012, 24).

26 "Acedia connoted a feeling of melancholy or spiritual dryness, which one recent author has compared to modern-day feelings of burn-out. This was often associated with monks and monastic houses. By the Carolingian period, the meaning of acedia shifted from spiritual dryness to the more modern usage of the word, sloth" (Williams 2012, 21).

27 Neurasthenia was "mental fatigue in its pathological form" (Arnetz, Ekman 2006, 9).

misery become clearer. Feelings of helplessness seem to have characterised many years of his stay in Japan; his inability to take any step to better the situation of the mission caused his proclaimed hopelessness in the face of the too arduous goals of the enterprise. It also says something about his interpretation of the situation. As analysed in the previous pages, Cabral's understanding of the work of grace was that it could be swayed by the effort and sacrifices of the missionaries. His later hopelessness suggests that he now believed that this link was no longer functional and that work in the Japanese mission was futile. This notion would have been aggravated by the impression he appeared to have harboured; the best converts among the Japanese often were so without his mediation, and his own actions had a minimal impact. The low morale of the whole mission is confirmed by Cabral's comments at the arrival of the Visitor in 1579: "I trust in God our Lord that not only will there be much fruit in the conversion of this gentility, but also that those of the Society who live here will be helped and consoled much by him in the spirit" (JapSin 8, I, 231*r*). Valignano's presence lifted an enormous weight from Cabral's shoulders. However, this does not mean that he had not previously considered some alternative solutions to save the mission, especially in case the Visitor, like his predecessor, did not make it to Japan.

5.4 Abandoning Japan

As soon as he had news of the new Visitor's arrival in Asia, Cabral's new objective became to leave Japan. In 1575, he had already pitched the idea of travelling to Rome to the General, although he admitted to being tied to Japan by his responsibilities:

> And verily, I tell Your Paternity, that if I could leave this land in good conscience, and come to you, I would do it. I would beg you, with many tears, to have pity on so many souls who die in Japan, only for lack of who can save them from the jaws of the hellish wolf. (JapSin 7, I, 264*v*)

In this instance, Cabral was lamenting the insufficient workforce to answer the requests of evangelisation from the fiefs of central Japan. Here, he identified the cause behind this lack of missionaries as the inability of Rome to understand the importance of the Japanese mission, and therefore their unwillingness to provide both workers and funds to support it. He was not so desperate to accuse the General of having willingly abandoned the mission yet and thus framed the problem as one of ignorance while conveying the idea that he was available to travel to Rome if ordered to do so. Still, since the year before he had already been asking the Provincial to be allowed to return to India in 1574, due to his lack of strength to continue evangelisation (JapSin 7, I, 320*v*). This paragraph appears a rework of the same request, presented instead as a sacrifice he was willing to undertake for the mission.

When, in 1576, Cabral received the information that Valignano was in India and planned to visit Japan, he interpreted this as meaning that lettered governance was about to be reinstated in Asia. This left only the link between Japan and Europe to be restored, and Cabral suggested he could be the one to do it. Although not explicitly stated, Cabral believed that Valignano's presence could free him from the obligation of staying in Japan by substituting him as superior, just as Álvares would have. Moreover, if Valignano never made it to the country, as Cabral feared after he had seen the previous Visitor shipwrecked just off the coast (JapSin 8, I, 13*r*), Cabral might have already received permission to go to Europe and therefore been able to hand over his post to any missionary and leave. Appealing directly to the General, Cabral seemed prepared to work around Valignano's orders to hold on to his post as superior of Japan and to keep his hope.[28] Starting from that year, then, Cabral rationalised various times his wish to be allowed to travel to Rome, framing his leaving of the mission as the best help he could offer it. In 1576, he tried to be as persuasive as possible, using emotional language to move the General, and again spoke of the travel to Rome as a sacrifice on his part:

> If I could, or I received permission from Your Paternity, for the pain I feel to see [the mission] suffering these necessities, I would throw myself at Your Paternity's feet and cry so many tears, to move you to help this land […] This would also help Your Paternity to obtain real information about it, because I have visited twice not only the kingdoms where Christian communities are present, but also many where the law of God has not been announced. And I could also inform you about the Province of India, because I have dealt with the matters of almost all the colleges of India, and I have lived in all of them for some years. If Your Paternity believes it is in the service of God and for the good of the Society in these parts, I can go there and give you this information, because I consider the suffering of so many necessities to be much worse than all the trouble and the dangers of such a voyage. (JapSin 8, I, 12*v*)

He proposed a similar idea the following year, taking instead a more practical approach. He presented in detail the actions he could take in Europe to support the Japanese mission:

28 There is no extant copy of the letter that Valignano sent to Cabral, which was received in 1576, but from Cabral's reply to it, it is evident that the Visitor ordered him to endure (Cabral to Valignano, 1576, in JapSin 8, II, 13Ar).

> Japan is so large and so important that, looking at how little attention is given to it in India I have understood that not only in Europe, but even in India, only half of it[s importance] is understood. [There is] much that could be done in Japan for the service of God, and it is not. So, it being for the greater service of God, I wished very much to go to inform Your Paternity about these parts, and at the same time, negotiate with the King so that he would give [alms, in the form of] a rent for a college for Japan, where many locals could become workers […] If I went to give this information on this land to Your Paternity, I could also give that of all parts of India and the workers there […] In four years I could go and be back, if Your Paternity thinks it is good. (JapSin 8, I, 136*v*)

In a manner, Cabral anticipated some of the roles that the mission procurators would have in later years within these lines; while this position had been created for the Indian Province in 1565, Japan at the time did not have a procurator. It would not be proposed until the Bungo consultation of 1580, where most consultors (including Cabral) agreed that Japan needed a direct way to report to Rome that did not depend on Goa nor on correspondence (Schütte 1980, 2: 34).[29] Still, his previous letters show that reporting on the Japanese mission was a secondary objective for Cabral.

Still, even if not his primary motivation, Cabral seemed confident that travelling to Europe was a direct solution to the problems mentioned through the years in his letters, which were never properly addressed by the Curia. He planned to speak personally with religious and temporal authorities alike to explain to them the importance of the mission to Japan and beg them to intervene to help it. In his eyes, this meant receiving both economic support for the creation of a college and a residence, and assistance in the form of manpower. As much as his problems remained the same, though, what had changed was Cabral's disillusionment with lettered obedience. He had left behind the possibility of overcoming distance through correspondence, and to provide "real information" about Japan by this means, now considering letters an insufficient tool.

On the other hand, Cabral was careful not to mention explicitly what appears to be one of his major concerns once his correspondence is considered in its totality. Leaving Japan was his best chance to save his own soul. The spiritual state of the mission was so disedifying that, by now, he likely already considered it a danger to his soul and was attempting to take precautions in this sense. As often happened in his correspondence, he would not mention the problem explicitly until it became too

29 For a later example, see missionary Nicolas Trigault's work for the Chinese mission (Clossey 2008, 41).

much for him to bear, but he had already expressed his wish to leave the country strongly enough that this reason can also be suspected.

Indeed, if the missionaries were edified in 1576 by the news of the arrival of the Visitor, Cabral's optimism was short-lived. Valignano took another three years to reach Japan, and there were fears that he had met his death at sea.[30] As shown by the Visitor's first letter from the country, in the meantime the state of the mission seriously worsened, as its economic complications were still unsolved: in 1578, Cabral wrote an extensive, urgent letter to Europe to ask that no more missionaries be sent "because they cannot be maintained".[31] In the same letter, he explicitly accused the Goan Jesuits of abandoning Japan:

> We are at the edge of the world among gentiles and ministers of the Devil who would gladly eat our livers, and we do not have rents nor Viceroy at our doors… I cannot help but being very disconsolate, not so much for the great work I have to do… [but because] we are forgotten by everybody and, as they have everything in abundance, they forget their brothers, so miserable without anything… as soon as Father Antonio de Quadros died, in Japan we started feeling the absence of his charity, because everything that belonged to Japan and was in India, became property without an owner. (JapSin 8, I, 203*v*)

Instead of the improvements Cabral had been hoping for, the structural problems of the mission came to the fore due to the new arrivals. Although he admitted it only in 1580, the mission's overly simplistic manner of government was becoming too strained and, as both Valignano and Organtino pointed out (Schütte 1980, 1: 361), this meant more stress on Cabral, since the power was centralised in his hands. The fact that some new Jesuits were enough to destabilise the mission in this manner suggests that the financial situation was indeed strained and Cabral's hesitation to divert the mission's funds to the creation of a new institution, the college, was somewhat founded. At the same time, his inability to foresee the near collapse of the mission once the desired help was obtained does not speak highly of his competence as superior. Still, unfortunately for him, he was one of the few senior Portuguese missionaries left in Asia, and the Visitor did not grant him permission to leave the country.

Precipitated by the aggravating situation, Cabral's pleas took a more drastic form in this letter of 1578 to the General, when he asked straightforwardly to be relieved from his position of superior:

30 In 1578, Father Antonio Prenestino (c. 1543-89) wrote that the missionaries in Japan were worried for the fate of the Visitor (JapSin 8, I, 209*r*).

31 Cabral to General Mercurian, Usuki, 15 October 1578 (JapSin 8, I, 203*r*).

> I have decided to write this, in this [explicit] manner, to Your Paternity, to unburden myself, and to inform you of the reality of what is happening here, since you are the universal Father of the Society, and you carry on your shoulders the problems of Japan [too]. This that I have pointed out to you, I also write to the Father Visitor Alessandro Valignano, asking him very much, for the love of God Our Lord and his five wounds, to send somebody from there, or to appoint somebody [else] among those here, as superior of these parts. Because in truth I do not dare anymore, nor can I, with so many troubles and turmoil, like the ones I have endured until now. And it is reasonable […] after so many years that I am so distracted […] If I never was more forward [in asking this] it was because I was waiting every year for Our Lord to bring the Father Visitor here, who could personally give me this charity, after seeing my insufficiency and need. Since his arrival is so delayed, it became necessary for me to write this. (JapSin 8, I, 203*v*-4*r*)

This document contains no references to his previous intention of informing the General by going to Rome in person. Physical and psychological fatigue was, instead, the cause explicitly stated to support his drastic request. The daily managing of the mission, an already taxing task, was doubtlessly aggravated by Cabral's controlling tendencies, which led him to carry out continuous visitations to the numerous churches and outposts of the mission. His initial worry with the possibility of sin among the missionaries seems to have deteriorated in intense fear when he started seeing divine punishments in the disasters that befell the mission. The few remedies taken by Cabral to alleviate the problems of the mission caused his physical exhaustion. By pointing out that he had been "distracted" for many years, he was referring to earthly preoccupations that damaged his soul, provoking his spiritual fatigue. Far from being a new preoccupation, the previous letters mentioned above hint that this had been an ongoing problem for some time. Cabral had been hoping to leave Japan possibly since 1574 and had been explicitly showing concern for his soul since at least 1577. That he stated explicitly his request to leave only in 1578 simply shows that, by that point, Cabral was too desperate to be edifying or restrained in his writing ("if I never was more forward [in asking this] it was because I was waiting […] it became necessary for me to write this").

In 1579, after the arrival of the Visitor, Cabral wrote confidently that "[Valignano's] virtue, prudence, and charity, and the other gifts that Our Lord granted him, assure me that all his orders regarding these parts will be the best and most conformed to the divine honour and glory" (JapSin 8, I, 231*r*). Cabral seemed to hope that the Visitor would not only replenish the finances of the mission, but also reinstate proper holy obedience, and the connection with God that had been lost: Cabral writes that the missionaries would receive spiritual help and consolation, too, from Valignano. Even as he was writing this, either considering himself too disconsolate and weary to be helped or not actually holding much hope for the mission to be saved, Cabral was still planning to put as much distance as possible between himself and Japan.

The beginning of the decade of the 1580s seemed to have reduced Cabral's faith in Valignano's abilities and worsened his own crisis of hope. An examination of a letter written in 1580 helps to clarify his intentions and his state of mind.[32] Because the Visitor had named him superior of the house of Bungo instead of letting him leave, Cabral appealed to the General for help, listing seven reasons that explained why he needed to leave all manner of command to other Jesuits. Among them, again, were physical and spiritual exhaustion: his heart had been "reduced" by the many difficulties, he wrote, meaning that he had lost his courage, and he was thus unfit to lead the Japanese mission any further. The most important points for the present discussion, however, are reasons number three and seven.

> The third is because, as Your Paternity knows well, for as much of an angel a man is, if he is Superior for a long time, due to the distractions of the business on the one hand, and with the liberty that came with the position on the other, not only does he not develop, but instead mostly diminishes his spirit and humility. And if this happens to those with much spirit, what will it do to those who never had any, and have lived for many years with liberty and distractions? Because I have been in the Society for nearly 29 years, and of these I was subordinate for only three, and for most of the rest I always took care of others. In these 25 or 26 years that I have been Superior, I never had an interruption, only once, for a month, and another time for three. Now, Your Paternity can understand what my state is after 16 years [of being] a Superior. (JapSin 8, I, 284*r*)

Aside from being an attempt at justification in the face of Valignano's criticism,[33] this passage expresses a yearning for a more orderly structure of command, where a direct connection with his own superiors would have helped him to exercise obedience to some extent. Overall, it is the salvific effects of holy obedience that Cabral declares to yearn for, hoping to gain the humility and spiritual proximity to God that this practice should foster in Jesuit understanding:

32 Francisco Cabral to the General, Kuchinotsu, 30 August 1580; originally in JapSin 8, I, 283*r*-5*r*, transcribed in Schütte 1958, 497-502.

33 See above, Valignano's 1581 letter.

> The seventh [reason] is because since God Our Lord in his mercy showed me many favours, in the preservation and increase [in numbers] both of the converts and of those of the Society, I wish now to leave this obligation. Because until now we made more in poverty and need, because it was a necessity, both for the inner and exterior self (?), and for the growth of conversion. However, since three or four years ago we proceed with more liberality and expenses, and with people who are not very used to the works and necessities of the land, nor to its many temptations and freedoms. So that "I foresaw the coming storm, as it were from a watchtower".[34] So I desire very much to get out of these labours. And I would enjoy not to write this to Your Paternity, if I could find some solution here with the Superiors. However, it is many years that I requested this to the Provincials, and to the past Visitor, and now I have requested to the Father Visitor, Alessandro Valignano, without obtaining it from any of them. So that, considering on the one hand my shortfalls, and on the other how little help I had from the visitors and the provincials, I am forced to ask Your Paternity for aid, and to ask you to have mercy on me. Since it is 26 years that I have continuously taken care of other people, now allow me to do it only for myself and to get ready to die, to recollect myself from how much preoccupied I am, even if I fear that when I will receive Your Paternity's reply on this, it will be so late, considering how much one wears oneself out here, that my life will already be ended, together with these labours. (JapSin 8, I, 284*v*)

Cabral in this passage repurposed the narrative of abandonment of spiritually fruitful poverty that he often used to condemn the decade of the 1560s to describe the events of the mission after 1577 or 1578.[35] In this letter, the extreme poverty he decried precisely in 1578 was transformed into a virtuous state instead of the cause of the mission's impending demise. Cabral would keep this interpretation for the years to come, when he clashed again and again with Valignano: excessive spending would always be the main grievance he levelled against him.[36]

In the end, after ascertaining that Cabral had no intention to maintain his position in the Japanese mission, Valignano allowed him to return to Macao. Mercurian had wanted him to become vice-provincial of Japan, but Valignano overruled this appointment, officially

34 Cic., *Fam.* 4.3.1. (*Perseus Project*, `https://perseus.uchicago.edu`).

35 It is not clear to what event Cabral is referring to, that happened "two or three years" before 1580, although it could be the arrival of Valignano in East Asia.

36 See for example, Cabral to General Acquaviva, Kochi, 15 December 1593, in *DI*, 16: 510-51.

because Gaspar Coelho had just been nominated, and Cabral had demonstrated an inability to govern the Japanese mission. Although Cabral obtained his wish to leave Japan behind, he was still appointed superior of the Chinese mission, a role he would keep until he left for India in 1585.

5.5 A Lost Mission and the End of Hope

Cabral's 1580 letter finally made explicit his wish to sever all ties with the Japanese mission, which, according to him, had compromised itself too much and was therefore condemned to fail. This was not a sudden decision, nor it was prompted solely by his dislike of Valignano's policies. Cabral's opinion that the success of the mission depended entirely on its ability to follow the Jesuit way of proceeding (or at least his interpretation of it) and therefore God's will returned in full force in this letter. For Cabral, this meant that the mission contaminated every one of its workers with sin and imperilled their souls. This interpretation imperilled the main aims of the mission, as understood in the early modern period, and therefore the concept itself. As Cabral saw it, the Japanese mission, instead of being a way of saving the souls of the Japanese people and of the missionaries, had become a source of corruption for the latter. The Japanese, on their part, were either not reached by the Jesuits' proselytising efforts, were not the excellent converts they were supposed to be or saved themselves without the guidance of the missionaries.

The perception that the Japanese mission had forsaken the spirit of the Society, which Cabral had when he landed in 1570, never really went away. According to his view, this distance from God had a complex fallout, and the spiritual dryness and loose cohesion of the Society were both causes and symptoms of it. Cabral's correspondence suggests that he believed something was irredeemably wrong with the mission, as shown by the general exhaustion and lack of edification among the missionaries, the perception of which was probably worsened by Cabral's own state of burnout. It appeared that everything had been going downhill, regardless of the triumphant numbers of conversions: if the Jesuits had renounced their vows, and therefore God, God in turn had abandoned the mission.

Unsurprisingly, Cabral identified the first sign of divine punishment as the accident that claimed the life of the Visitor in 1573. "Father Gonçalo Álvares […] was coming to visit these parts but Our Lord was served when he did not reach them and everything remained in disorder until now", he wrote in 1576 (JapSin 8, I, 13*r*). This event broke the direct connection of obedience that existed between the Japanese mission and the rest of Asia and is explicitly identified as the reason why various catastrophes were befalling the mission. In another missive of the same year, Cabral made explicit his belief that God had seen fit to punish them: "When I learned that Our Lord had punished us taking away all the heads of this Province, and leaving it with so many necessities, I lost hope" (JapSin 8, II, 13Ar). Creating a link between the sinking of Álvares' carrack and the death of Antonio de Quadros the year before, he believed to be reading and interpreting the signs of God. Cabral did not mention, in this instance, the exact reason behind this castigation, but his previous correspondence points to the actions of the missionaries. The continuous scorn he perceived for the vows of poverty and obedience marked the mission as sinful. He might have considered himself culpable as well, having nearly given up between 1573 and 1576. After all, he believed that "those who have [lost hope] not only do nothing, but are a hindrance to the other's good proceeding" (JapSin 8, I, 205*r*). The loss of hope, one of the theological virtues together with faith and charity, had consequence on more than just morale. It was a reprehensible attitude itself, connected to the loss of faith in God and in God's intervention on behalf of the Jesuits, which was a grave sin in Cabral's eyes. He regretted having despaired, as he wrote in 1576 referring to the new arrivals: "Our Lord in our time of greater need showed us His mercy, because if He punished us as a judge, He consoled us as merciful Father" (JapSin 8, II, 13A*r*). However, it does not seem that he was able to acquire again hope for Japan. The years 1576 and 1577 represent a slight improvement over the bleakness that had engulfed Cabral since 1573, and he felt he had finally received a sign from God, after years of doubting if his work was truly following the divine plan or if he was committing some irreparable error that would condemn his soul. At the same time, however, he still desired to be freed from Japan. His uneasiness about the lack of contact with Rome, accentuated by the long wait for Valignano, let him fall again into despair by 1578.

This meant that there was another ramification of the mission's lack of proximity to God: it endangered the salvation of the souls of the missionaries. According to Cabral's descriptions, missionary activity put them in danger of losing themselves, with too little structure to help them recover. This situation made it "difficult to maintain virtue and spirit", as he wrote, probably referring to both himself and his brethren. Cabral thus ended his period in Japan suffering from a crisis of faith. With the worsening of the condition of the mission, his boldness in facing the problems of the field had faded; he did not "travel more confident in God and in the obedience for which [he] was doing that travel" (JapSin 7, III, 99*r*) anymore, as he had in the past. He instead grew weary of the perils of moving frequently, as he did while following his policy of continuous visitations. In 1581, Cabral requested to the General a personal plenary indulgence at the moment of death, since he travelled among dangers, without a companion who could hear his confession if needed (JapSin 9, I, 24*r*). Even the glory of martyrdom, which held its appeal earlier on and could have been an expedited road to salvation, was not assured anymore when God's favour was removed from missionary work. Such a negative attitude towards the work of evangelisation was reflected in some documents written by Valignano in this period as well, suggesting that it was widespread in the community. In 1579, for instance, he wrote to the General:

> [the Jesuit missionaries of Japan] are exposed to many spiritual dangers; the enemy does not sleep, and temptations press them hard. They left the world and entered religion [i.e., the Society of Jesus] in order to ensure their salvation; and are they now to be exposed to all these perils in the name of religious obedience, and be laden with burdens which are really beyond their strength to bear? That surely would be expecting too much.[37]

Overall, the situation of the mission of Japan did not favour a climate of edification and hope for the future. The missionary work, instead of lifting them to the imitation of the apostles, seemed to drag them to the depletion of their physical and spiritual energies; not only was it not helping them save their own souls, but it was also imperilling them by exposing them to temptations and sin. Contextualised in this dangerous situation, Cabral's wish to leave became a desperate last attempt to save his soul. The unsatisfactory quality of the Japanese converts made the objective of the mission, saving other people's souls, unattainable, and thus not a good way of reaching salvation for the missionaries. At least two of the solemn vows had been broken, and the Jesuit community was dispersed, making it impossible to restore the proper way of proceeding in the mission itself. Cabral therefore decided to reach outside it with the same objective.

The reinstating of obedience appears therefore as Cabral's last resort. Even if God had abandoned the Japanese mission, surely the same had not happened to the rest of the Society. Returning to Europe would have allowed him to rekindle the contact with God through his superiors and at the same time distance himself from the sinful context of the Japanese mission. Cabral's attempts to leave the country show again how central obedience was in his understanding of salvation and how, once he believed the Japanese mission was hindering it, he wished to reinstate its connections to save himself.

37 Translated in Schütte 1980, 1: 300.

5.6 Conclusions

As shown in Luke Clossey's study, the salvation of the missionary's soul and those of the people to whom he preached were the two main objectives of mission, the latter being often understood as a manner of bringing about the former. This system was not successful in the Japanese mission in the decade of the 1570s. The years between 1573 and 1579, with their highs and lows, provide in the end a good example of how these ideal objectives of the mission could not materialised.

Numerous issues, as seen, had fostered Cabral's belief that the way of proceeding had been abandoned by the Jesuits in Japan. The manner of government he maintained in the mission caused low morale among his brethren. It was, however, his inability to overcome the isolation of the missionaries, who were dispersed within Japan and distant from the other missionary centre of Asia, let alone of Europe, that contributed to the mission's generalised perception that the Society was destined to doom in the country. The salvation of the Jesuits as an order was found in the Institute, and if this was not upheld, the possibility of being contaminated by the (gentile, in this case) world and losing oneself was very high.

Obedience, in this sense, had ceased to be a way to salvation for Cabral because of the remoteness of his missionary field and the consequent difficulty in keeping in touch with his superiors. Due to this isolation, Cabral's letters also expressed a sense of abandonment by the rest of the Society and a lack of worth in his mission. This was another element that heightened his impression of his growing distance from and abandonment by God. The fear that he might die in such conditions and not be saved was such that he asked for a personal confirmation of plenary indulgence at the moment of death and appealed to both the Visitor and the General to be allowed to leave, a wish that was granted in the end.

6 Concluding Remarks

The year is 1593, and Francisco Cabral, Jesuit Provincial of India, feels vindicated. Writing to the General from Kochi, he describes how, just as he had foreseen so many years before, the Japanese mission is doomed and forsaken by God, because of their lack of faith. He points an accusing finger at the Visitor, Alessandro Valignano, whose sin is "to want to take the control of everything into his hands, and leave nothing to God".[1] Cabral believes that there is now the very concrete possibility that God might agree with this, and abandon the Visitor for good. After all, Valignano is squandering the funds of the Asian missions to help the Japanese enterprise, which has been hit with a ban on Christianity by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. However, even offering extremely expensive gifts, he is not managing to convince the shōgun to reverse it.[2] The intentions of the Visitor are surely saintly, writes Cabral maintaining the fiction of Jesuit brotherly love, but he has understood little of what it means to be a missionary. Some human means are acceptable, but the real path towards the expansion of the faith lies in the imitation of the apostles and of the first Jesuits: humility, poverty, a great trust in God and distrust in one's own human means (*DI*, 16: 544). Cabral continues:

1 Francisco Cabral to General Acquaviva, Kochi, 15 December 1593, in *DI*, 16: 542.

2 On Hideyoshi's prohibition of Christianity, see Boscaro 1973. Additional information is in Elison 1988, 132-41.

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> I say this because, from what I saw in Japan, I am convinced and I believe it certain, that the more we follow our rules and *Institute*, and the more we conform to the humility and poverty of Christ, then the more he will be propitious to us and will have to help us in this work of conversion. (*DI*, 16: 545)[3]

Then, just in case the General is not familiar with Cabral's own exploits in Japan, he presents again the narrative he created in 1580 on the mission's virtuous poverty, and on the consequent growth of Christianity in the country. Cabral now adds a fitting conclusion: once the Visitor allowed expensive gifts for Hideyoshi, the Japanese "tyrant" concluded that the Jesuits were rich, powerful, and subtly converting his daimyō to Spain's political cause; for this reason, he decided to ban Christianity from the archipelago (*DI*, 16: 547-8).

As delineated in this study, this new narrative contrasts with that presented by Cabral during most of his years in Japan. Before 1580, he lamented the damage that the lack of funds was inflicting on the mission. After, he affirmed that Jesuit poverty and humility always obtained excellent conversions and that, now that the Vistor had abandoned, he foresaw the doom of the mission "ab aliqua alta specula". The latter expression, together with the other main points of this new narrative, returns in his 1593 letter. If the idea that it was God who moved the hearts of the people to cause conversions, instead of secular prudence (*DI*, 16: 547), was always present in Cabral's vision of mission, his new recollection of the events shows no doubt about his own role in it: it was his own work that moved God to help the missionaries. To support his bid for the removal of Valignano, Cabral gets to recast his story as one of success, where the Jesuit way of proceeding, as interpreted by him, had converted hundreds of thousands of Japanese. Implicit in this interpretation, of course, is the idea that Cabral never feared for his own salvation, nor of being abandoned by God.

His letters from two decades before depict a different reality, as this study illustrated. The mission was first plagued by conflicting opinions on missionary policy: the refusal of the Jesuits in Japan to leave behind what had become the norm of silk clothes and adapt to another custom left deep marks in the mission in the form of distrust between its superior and its workers – to use a Jesuit expression, the union of the hearts was compromised. Obedience represented, in that moment, the only sure path to salvation for Cabral, who forced it harshly on his brethren and especially on the Japanese dōjuku. Initially proposing the construction of a house of probation to return the Jesuits to the correct way of proceeding, Cabral later focused on

3 It is interesting to note that Cabral is using the importance attributed in Europe to the *Constitutions* and the *Institute* to defend his argument here, arguably trying to counter Valignano's accusations of ignorance on the matter.

the expansion and amelioration of his workforce with the suggestion of an institution where Europeans could study the Japanese language, and the Japanese could learn enough of preaching to be admitted in the Society of Jesus. Cabral proposed this latter project to avoid too much dependence on the local collaborators, and to stop the drain of dōjuku who left when it became clear that they would never be allowed to take religious vows, nor to be more than helpers.

Still, no letter was forthcoming from Europe, and Cabral, not desiring to act on his own (and answer to God for his decisions) and limited by the lack of funds, made no substantial modification to the workings of the mission. The hierarchical structure was particularly obsolete, concentrating all the power and the responsibilities on the superior. Troubled by the lack of replies from Rome and the lack of signs that God was favouring their mission (if not the other way around), and overworked due to the continuous visitations and the insufficient workforce, after six years in Japan Cabral had lost his courage. The connection that regulated the Society through obedience, after been broken within the Japanese mission, had shattered with his own superiors as well; feeling abandoned and unsure of his own salvation, Cabral lost hope in divine succour and in the structure of the Society. This meant that, when the new Visitor of the Indian Province reached Japan, Cabral was deeply concerned with his own salvation. Understanding that the future policy of the mission did not follow his precept of prioritising spiritual preoccupations and worried that it might be the final straw for the mission's spiritual wellbeing, Cabral pushed to be allowed to finally leave, predicting doom for the whole enterprise. Valignano lamented Cabral's more negative traits (anger, stubbornness, and haughtiness) and acquiesced, hoping that, once Cabral was removed from the Japanese context, such faults would improve.[4]

Based on the pictures that were subsequently provided by other missionaries, this did not happen. For instance, in 1589 the superior of Chaul, Christóvão de Castro, illustrated Cabral's character and manner of government in this recognizable way:

> [Father Francisco Cabral] is esteemed for his virtue and prudence, very pious and fond of all those who are so; therefore, everybody in the house [of Goa] is pious with spiritual recollection. However, it is possible to say correctly of all superiors here that nothing is altogether blessed, because in the manner of governance all of them (except Father Valignano) have their imperfections. Father Cabral behaves harshly, admonishes very irately and sometimes

4 See the letter written by Valignano to Acquaviva, Kochi, 12 December 1584, in *DI*, 13: 669-70.

> uses disgraceful words with the Fathers and Brothers. […] I think nobody dares to communicate their troubles to the Father Superior for the little sweetness there is to be found in him. […] For any defect, he thinks everything is lost […] Moreover, Father Cabral is very stingy […] He is rather opinionated and there is no recourse against what he feels is best. Discussing about a certain penance he wanted to give to one of the brothers, he first gave his sentence and, as the consultors mitigated that penance, he answered angrily: "It can't be what you want", although in the end he reduced it. […] He lacks zeal [for the Christian community and] I believe the cause is having dealt with the Christianity of Japan which is different from that of these parts of India, as are the people.[5]

Castro's insightful description picks up both on the pessimism Cabral held towards his brethren ("For any defect, he thinks everything is lost") and on his perception that pastoral care of the local Christians (probably Indian) was not a priority when compared to his responsibilities towards the spiritual lives of the Jesuit community, and his own. Castro's letter points to the time Cabral spent in Japan as the reason behind his behaviour.

Indeed, Cabral's already mixed opinion of the Japanese was exacerbated after he left the archipelago (Schütte 1980, 1: 242-6). The idealised depictions made by missionaries before him, which had informed his initial opinion, clashed with the difficulties of work in Japan. As he became more disillusioned with the mission, Cabral built a narrative that shifted the blame onto the supposed innate traits of the Japanese and began describing them as "insincere" and "unreliable" (1: 243). This helped him to move the focus away from his own inability to reach the far-fetched goal, set by Francis Xavier, of rapidly converting the "best people ever discovered", even when he was carrying out mass baptisms. Furthermore, after leaving Japan, there was no need for him to compose edifying texts on that mission anymore, nor to acquire the support of Jesuit and lay authorities alike by underscoring the Japanese propensity for Christianity. Having put some distance between the Japanese people's salvation and his own, it might have become easier for him to disregard the country's exemplary converts as exceptions. Finally, the opinions he expressed became more negative during his attempts to boost the primacy of the Indian mission in the eyes of the General, as part of a concerted effort by some influent Jesuits to have Valignano deposed and to curtail his

5 Christóvão de Castro to General Acquaviva, Vaipikotta, 26 November 1589, in *DI*, 15: 424-5.

actions that they perceived as damaging to India.[6]

On the topic of Cabral's perception of Japanese people, the perusal of his correspondence from Japan carried out in this study shows that, in later years, Cabral even denied his own policy decisions. For instance, in 1572 he explained at length that he understood the importance of prioritising the dōjuku's satisfaction, if evangelization was to continue and dangerous divisions avoided, even if he did not particularly care for it. He requested permission to fulfil the Japanese helpers' desire to be accepted into the Society of Jesus, and to build a special structure to educate them. Nevertheless, in a 1596 letter from Goa to the Portuguese Assistant, he declared that he was always opposed to the idea. He framed this purported position of his as a conscious policy born from his keen observation of Buddhist practices of secrecy and of the immoral character of the Japanese people.[7] This change in opinion, which follows his attempts to depict negatively the people of Japan, can be attributed to the aim of this latter missive from India: denouncing Valignano's admission of the Japanese in the Society and further weaken his role as Visitor of China and Japan, after having obtained his discharge from that of Visitor of the Indies (Schütte 1980, 1: 243). The new narrative Cabral created adopts the vitriolic language he was known for, to depict himself as the defender of the correct policy for the Society, while using his purported knowledge of Japan to undermine Valignano's work.

Cabral's different interpretation of the events of his time in Japan helps putting into focus his shortcomings as a superior and administrator, who was characterised by an inability to implement his decisions with confidence. The frequent changes in the policies he proposed to the General through the years of the 1570s already suggested a lack of competence and experience with a leadership role so complex. Even if Cabral seems to mostly ascribe these changes in opinion to the mercurial political situation of the country, some of his contemporaries' letters show that they had anticipated similar problems due to his inexperience. By the end of Cabral's stay in Japan, it becomes evident that he does not have the resolve to see the mission through a needed radical reform; as he wrote to the General, his heart had been "reduced" by the hardships of the enterprise. Indeed, his perceptions of the degeneration of his brethren from the perfection of the first missionaries and his ensuing expectations about divine punishment in the early years of his superiorate paralysed his missionary activity. Considering the sum of his correspondence about

6 An overview of Cabral's clashes with Valignano in relation to the mission of Japan in the 1590s is in Zampol D'Ortia 2020.

7 See Cabral's letter to Portuguese Assistant João Alvares, Goa, 10 December 1596, in *DI*, 18: 603-26. A translation is available in Schütte 1980, 1: 245-6.

Japan, this study shows how Cabral never had the confidence to carry out any major reform and, in his own words, "trust God".

Studying Francisco Cabral's work in the Japanese Jesuit mission through the lens of failure, however, tells us much about the mission's wider contexts as well. It highlights the differences existing in the interpretations of the Jesuit way of proceeding, over against the depiction of the Society of Jesus as an immutable and unmovable tradition. Instead of being an isolated case, to be repudiated, Francisco Cabral appears as the product of the various contexts that he inhabited and as an expression of the Society to which he belonged, regardless of the actuality of his vision of mission. This study also considers the instability of the depictions of non-European peoples in sixteenth-century texts written by Europeans, confirming how they could be based on the political necessities of the day.[8] By considering the trajectory of the opinions expressed by Cabral on the Japanese people, it provides an example of how they could become rhetorical tools in European and Eurocentric debates about matters that could appear rather removed from the issues at stake, such as Jesuit salvation. This could happen regardless of how positive or negative their overall depiction was, as shown by Cabral's initial positive impressions. In this way, the evolution of Cabral's opinions is analysed in a manner that negates the more common, one-dimensional depictions of this missionary, underscoring how Eurocentric attitudes could grow and develop in the missions, rather than being just brought in from Europe, and could change over time. Moreover, the case study presented here illustrates some of the many reasons why Jesuit reports could contradict one another, including obfuscation and outright revisionism by the writer, reiterating how these documents need to be considered in their totality and in relation to one another.

For all these reasons, Francisco Cabral's failure can be considered a telling failure. At the core of it, there are the complex workings of the sixteenth-century Catholic idea of salvation, especially the relationship between the salvation of the non-Christian people and that of the missionary. In this instance, the concept of mission, which had promised to provide a fertile terrain for the salvation of many souls, suffered a crisis when these two objectives could not be integrated together. These internal tensions caused Cabral's perception of failure of the Japanese mission and, concurrently, loss of hope in Divine Providence.

8 On this matter, see for instance Watson 2015, 15.

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The Jesuit textual production from the sixteenth century leaves no doubt that the Japanese evangelising enterprise was publicised as the epitome of success. Francisco Cabral, third superior of the mission, who had initially shared this judgement, in time began fearing that the mission was, instead, doomed to failure. As he perceived the loosening of the internal ties of the Society of Jesus, and the salvation of the catechumens as more and more independent of that of the Jesuits, Cabral concluded that God had abandoned the mission. This study, using little-known manuscript sources, examines Cabral's attitudes towards his confreres and the Japanese people, to illuminate how particular salvation mechanics could define early modern Catholic missions.

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