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Between two paradises: Impressions of Brazil and Japan in the chronicles of their 16th century Visitors

Entre dois paraísos: impressões do Brasil e do Japão nas crônicas de seus visitantes do século XVI

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ABSTRACT: With globalization a reality that the Web helps bringing forth everyday, it may be difficult to imagine that more than five hundred years ago religious men, traders and adventurers hopped into the first transoceanic vessels and sailed into the unknown. Sponsored by either the Portuguese or Spanish crowns, they had the double goal of discovering new lands to expand their commercial enterprises while guiding any lost souls to the warm embrace of the Catholic Church. The discoveries - or the very late European understanding that the world was a lot bigger and more varied than expected - opened the doors of West and East to the Old Continent. And after reading the tropical tales of the then Land of Santa Cruz, and the wonders of the Land of the Rising Sun written by missionaries, it became obvious that knowledge as defended by them was also relative. Consequently, their beliefs had to be adapted to different realities in order to be understood and eventually followed. The difficult

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paths undertaken by these men, members of a young religious Order, the Society of Jesus, have been largely studied ever since. But the official summaries of their first impressions of Brazil and Japan were never fully compared. Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), the Asian Visitor, and Fernão Cardim (1548-1625), secretary of the Brazilian Visitor, are the authors of these chronicles. Thus, analyzing their interpretations and their decisions regarding the future of both Jesuit missions, as written in the *Sumario de las Cosas de Japon* (1583) and the *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (1583/85), may help understanding the famous accommodation methodology better.

Key-words: Jesuits. Accommodation. Brazil. Japan. 16th century.

Resumo: Com a globalização sendo uma realidade que a Internet ajuda a trazer à tona diariamente, pode ser difícil imaginar que mais de quinhentos anos atrás homens religiosos, mercadores e aventureiros pularam nos primeiros navios transoceânicos e navegaram pelo desconhecido. Patrocinados tanto pelas coroas Portuguesa quanto pela Espanhola, eles tinham o objetivo duplo de descobrir novas terras e expandir o comercio, ao mesmo tempo que guiariam almas para o abraço caloroso da Igreja Católica. As descobertas - ou a atrasada realização européia de que o mundo era bem maior e mais variado do que o esperado - abriu as portas do Oeste e do Leste para o Velho Continente. E depois de ler as histórias tropicais da então Terra de Santa Cruz, bem como as maravilhas da Terra do Sol Nascente escritas por missionários, tornou-se claro que o conhecimento defendido por eles também era relativo. Consequentemente, as crenças tiveram que ser adaptadas para as diferentes realidades a fim de se fazerem compreender e serem eventualmente seguidas. Os caminhos tortuosos seguidos por esses homens, membros de uma jovem Ordem religiosa, a Sociedade de Jesus, tem sido largamente estudados desde então. Mas os sumários oficiais das suas primeiras impressões do Brasil e do Japão nunca foram propriamente comparados. Alessandro Valignano, o Visitador Asiático, e Fernão Cardim, secretário do Visitador Brasileiro, são os autores dessas crônicas. Suas interpretações e as decisões com relação ao futuro das missões como escritos no *Sumario de las Cosas de Japon* (1583) e no *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (1583/85), podem ajudar a compreender melhor a famosa metodologia de adaptação dos Jesuítas.

Palavras-chave: Jesuítas. Acomodação. Brazil. Japão. Século XVI.

1) The Chosen Ones:

The Society of Jesus was formed in a very important period in the Catholic Church's history, especially because of its well-known struggle with the rise of Protestant ideas in the early 16th century. The Catholic Reformation that came with it, however, was not something completely new and historians still seem to discuss if the Catholicism was renovated, revived or reformed after the Council of Trent. These were a series of assemblies that happened between 1545 and 1563 to revitalize the Catholic life and denounce heretic abuses while still reacting to the Protestant rise.

For their part, the Jesuits seem to have strongly supported both campaigns.

The Order's initial goal, however, already clear during its first years, was not necessarily to fight Protestantism. As Jonathan Wright explains, to the early missionaries, the disorders of that period were due to a generalized moral crisis, so they envisaged a spiritual renovation, a purification of souls, correcting the ignorance of the Catholic doctrine and freeing it of sins and superstitions. Therefore, they were to be spiritual doctors, curing Catholic souls and, at the same time, discouraging Protestants.

In that sense, the Order and the activities of its members around the world cannot be studied without a brief understanding of the life of its founder, Ignatius de Loyola (1491-1556), and the guiding texts organized by him. Especially during the first 50 years after the Jesuits' birth, the time period of the present article, when Loyola's example and experiences were a vivid part of every member's imaginary.

The man behind the Order was born in a Basque territory in the North of Spain around 1491. He was educated according to his noble class and sent to be trained in the military arts by the chief of the treasure of King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452-1516) when he was only 14 years old. In 1517, while serving Navarra's viceroy in his war against the advance of the French in Pamplona, young Ignatius got hurt in battle and saw his whole life change. While recovering, he read famous books about the life and works of saints, such as *Vita Christi*, by Ludolph of Saxony and *Golden Legend*, by Jacobus de Voragine.

This period seems to have been the beginning of his own conversion, when he meditated and found comfort on the possibility of following these holy men's steps.

Eventually, Loyola abandoned his sword and went to a Benedictine monastery in Catalonia. There he wore the mendicant tunic and started his new life as a novice. This initial period in Manresa was used to read the famous work of Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, as well as to fast, to pray and to make use of whipping and other severe austerities that were typical of the religious devotion of the period. Kempis' book would eventually become dear to the Order as a whole in the future,

especially because of its general message of reflexion and self-knowledge. During his meditations, according to scholars, Loyola began to find answers to his questions and to take notes of his own mystical experiences, beginning the first drafts of what would later become the Spiritual Exercises.

After visiting Jerusalem in 1523 and pilgrimaging through all the sacred places of the Christian faith, Loyola began to study the Latin Grammar in the University of Alcalá one year later. There he read another important book that would help creating the concepts of his own Order in the future, the *Handbook of the Christian Soldier*, by Desiderius Erasmus. The passion inspired by all these works, as well as the always present desire of helping others seems to have made him preach openly while still learning, which caused trouble with the Dominicans and the Franciscans. He moved to Paris some time later where he got the title of Master of Arts in 1535 and met his future companions and co-founders of the Society: Francisco Xavier (1506-1552), Pierre Favre (1506-1546), Diego Laínez (1512-1565), Alfonso Salmeron (1515-1585), Nicolas Bobadilha (1511-1590) and Simão Rodrigues (1510-1579).

Loyola wanted to go back to Jerusalem, this time with his friends, to work and help and maybe also have an audience with the Pope Paul III (1468-1549) to offer their services and put them under his command. Together they made the official vow on August 15th 1534, but there still wasn't a wish to create a new religious Order. Six were ordained priests in 1537 by the Pope, and by that time they already called themselves members of the Society of Jesus because they claimed Christ as their only superior.

However, the term seems to have designated only an assembly, a union. It did not seem to have had the military meaning that some researchers, Charles Boxer included, would defend in the future (O'MALLEY, 1993: 34)

While in Rome they attracted attention and rumours that they were *alumbrados*, Protestants in disguise, threatened the young fellowship, until Paul III approved the Order in September 27th 1540. By that time other companions had adhered to the small, initial group, but only those friends that left Paris were mentioned in the Papal Bull. They voted for Ignatius as their first superior one year later, in 1541.

1.1) *The Spiritual Exercises*:

Initially printed in 1548, this manual was already one of the two main documents of the Society even before the official approval. They guided the new members and helped them in their pious activities, and by order of the Pope, in 1608 it should be practiced by all Jesuits once a year. Thus, it is no wonder that throughout

the second half of the 16th century this text was always serving as reference to Jesuits around the globe, including in their Brazilian and Japanese missions. No other Order, according to O'Malley, had any similar document until the Society was born (O'MALLEY, 1993: 37) and Wright says that it was probably one of the most important and lasting contributions to the Catholic tradition (WRIGHT, 2006: 26).

As the original text explains in its introduction, the Spiritual Exercises are not to be read. They should be used as a guide to a person helping another to find the path of spiritual enlightenment. Its main goal is to clean the soul and prepare it to understand the will of God by organizing the life of the person practicing it. In this sense, it is more similar to a manual, a textbook for a Professor to help his Student, and it obviously presupposes mutual respect and trust between the two parts.

Scholars also argue that the Exercises are difficult to be read because it contains many different literary genres in its text. It is not continuous and it does not have any literary appeal for a reader who does not intend to use it to reach its goal.

Nevertheless, to anyone studying the activities of the members of the Society, it's an important source of information. It can help understanding the minds behind the activities of the members around the globe, since all Jesuits were continuously practicing the Exercises in one another to keep the members faithful to their original vow.

According to the text, not everybody should follow all the phases of the Exercises; they should be adapted to the different circumstances and realities of those practicing it. And here we may find the roots of the *accommodation* principle that guided its members in their missions (MOTTOLA [trans.], 1964: 48).

1.2) *The spinal cord of the Order - the Constitutions*:

O'Malley also explains that during the second half of the 16th century the Society of Jesus had more than three thousand Jesuits spread around the globe. They were trying to save people's souls by teaching the Catholic faith and, at the same time, as members of an Order, they had to be faithful to the original beliefs that guided them. Therefore, it seems fundamental to any study about these men's activities understanding the Order's norms and the ideals that guided its members. And these are well explained in the Constitutions, one of the founder texts.

However, the experience in each region demanded changes, or better, *adaptations* in these rules, so that they could suit all the different realities.

For starters, the concept of Province and Vice-Province, administrative centres, was established already in the first decades after the Society's birth and it was an idea borrowed from other Orders. But soon the Jesuits differed from these

mendicant and monastic institutions when abolishing, for example, the members' traditional assembly, known as "chapters". The Order also eliminated the liturgy hours to try and not disturb the missionary work of its members. After all, they were guided by the goal of imitating or reviving the lifestyle of the first apostles of Christ.

Thus, and as most studies in the area point out, differently from the monks - who usually escaped from social relations, the Jesuits were in constant search for this contact with the people they intended to serve. And as Jonathan Wright explains, they were priests in the world and for the world, not secluded or distant religious men (WRIGHT, 2006: 16). They even deliberately tried to build their churches and communities close to popular streets, and not in the cities' surroundings, as was typical at the time.

But of course, the structure of the Society evolved in number and administration. When Ignatius died in 1556, there were twelve provinces and the distribution of the Jesuits in them varied. Still, most of them were in Rome, headquarters and centre of training. The Spiritual Exercises were an excellent instrument to recruit new members, but they also made use of questionnaires and counselings to make sure the candidates had physical strength to face the missions abroad, for example. It was a very demanding task, after all, so it should be well considered.

1.3) *The Jesuit correspondence*:

To recruit and keep the members united, not only the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions were important, but also the correspondences. Some specialists even consider them as the key of the whole Jesuit system (HUE [trans.], 2006: 14). Even though they also don't forget to mention that researchers should always read them carefully since they followed a pattern: they had the goal of edifying religious men and commoners alike, therefore, they do not represent the whole truth if read by themselves.

The Jesuits in Brazil, for example, were criticized by Ignatius de Loyola's secretary in 1553 because they were mixing personal information in their main correspondences. However, the final rules on how to write these letters were only published with the Constitutions in 1556, same year the latter reached Brazil, and were immediately put into practice, as noted by José de Anchieta (1534-1597)[2].

Also, most of the missives were written in the vernacular, not in Latin. They

[2] Letter from Piratininga, December 1556. In: José de Anchieta, *Cartas – Informações, fragmentos históricos e sermões (Cartas Jesuíticas III)*, (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia, 1988), page 105.

were not very elaborate works, but had the tone of a dialogue between friends to facilitate communication. However, the letters written in Asia seem to have been the most anticipated ones in Europe since they brought news from exotic lands that had been present in the Old Continent's mind for centuries, many years before America was incorporated into their reality.

The main goal of the letters was to exchange precise and regular information with the Jesuit Curia in Rome and the Portugal Province about their work while, at the same time, it was a way of connecting the missionaries and encouraging them in their difficult activities. But the fact that they were forced to write these letters and had to follow guidelines to do so, makes it clear that the writing system was a way of controlling the members of the Order, many living far away from the centre and thus susceptible to an autonomy that was probably not seen with good eyes by their superiors.

Nevertheless, in their letters the missionaries had to describe in as much details as possible the lands, the people and the cultures visited, but always having in mind that the documents were to be read by other members, so they had to bring hope. And they were also to be published and read by common people in Europe, curious and eager to understand these distant territories, so they couldn't contain personal information. Since travels between lands were made by vessels and they could get lost by natural accidents or by the attacks of corsairs, the strategy of the Order was to write several copies of the same letter and to send them in different ships to try and guarantee at least one arrival.

2) The Jesuits and the world:

When sent in missions around the globe during the 16th century, as previously explained, the Jesuits wanted to save souls; they wanted to guide non-Christian populations to find a better way of living because, according to their beliefs, Christianity was the only path to salvation in this world and in the next one. But they also believed that they were ambassadors of a superior culture and way of living, no matter where they were and with what people they were dealing. As Charles Boxer pointed out, only a few of these missionaries cared enough to study profoundly the native cultures of the places where they were preaching their faith, such as Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in China (BOXER, 2007: 55).

Most of them were sons of societies that did not favour curiosity while trying to understand the peculiarities of other people. Nevertheless, while dealing with different realities, they not only imposed their own culture; they were influenced by the locals too, even if unconsciously. And they were also able to admire, particularly

the Far Eastern Asian cultures. This influence brings forth once more a very important concept, often related to the missionaries and their work with other societies: the *adaptation*.

But not all areas of religious activity allowed them to do so easily. For example, in Brazil the adaptation seems to have been more subtle, focused especially on daily activities. They were still living in poverty, caring for the sick, teaching children, just like in Europe. However, as members of a religious Order, one of the biggest challenges was to try and keep their chastity while working alongside the voluptuous native women. They also had to create a new method of conversion, exclusive to the Brazilian mission, to better force the European culture and Christian principles in the natives' lives - the *aldeia*, or villages.

In Japan, a kingdom in war, with a culture that rivaled the European in their eyes, they were forced into a much more significant level of adaptation as individuals – or so their letters suggest. They couldn't make use of force to convert when the whole land was in civil war, a period known as the *Sengoku Jidai* 戦国時代, Warring States Period (1467-1615). Besides, it was very far away from Europe, so they tried to incorporate parts of the Japanese culture that would help them with being better received.

For instance, from the very beginning, Jesuits in Japan had to take better care of their hygiene and dressing, as well as to incorporate some of the Japanese traditions into their daily activities, such as that of the Tea Ceremony 茶の湯 [3].

In both cases, they also focused on studying the local languages to help on the adaptation process and to better preach their faith. But due to the difficulties - including the fact that the Brazilian natives did not have a single written system and the Japanese language, with its thousands of characters, could not be mastered in a couple of years -, most of the first missionaries never really learned anything and always made use of interpreters or manuals to communicate and confess.

The Jesuits' efforts to decipher the local languages are well known, especially when they published so many works on the linguistic area, including catechisms and other Christian compendiums, grammars, dictionaries and vocabularies. The *tupi* grammar written by José de Anchieta in Brazil and published for the first time in Lisbon in 1595, for example, is still used to study the language of the original Brazilian coastal tribes. Just like Japanese specialists use the Japanese grammars written by João Rodrigues (1561-1633) in 1604-8 and printed by the famous press brought by

[3] Juan Rodríguez Tsuzu S.J. (J. L. Alvarez-Taladriz), *Arte del Cha*, Tokyo: Monumenta Nipponica Monographs (no. 14) Sophia University, 1954.

Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) on his second visit to Japan in the 1590s.

In their road to adaptation, the missionaries also tried to insert the discovered cultures into their own reality, always comparing them to the European people or with each other, and classifying them according to their concepts of intelligence or barbarism.

A letter written by a brother Pero Correia in Brazil in 1551, to a father Nunes Barreto, in Africa, explains it very well:

> *Write to us from Africa in details how you do everything, so that we can understand here what to do in face of other similar things, because it seems to me that the gentiles resemble in various points the Moors. For example, the fact that they have many women, the fact that they pray during the good hour of the morning, and the sin against nature - which it is said to be very common in Africa -, it is also in this country*[4].

But according to their documents, the East Asian cultures, precisely China and Japan, were higher on their standards, just below the Europeans and sometimes even on a similar level. The great civilizations of the American continent, passionately defended by Bartolomé de las Casas (1474-1566), were second on the list. Bellow them were the African and the Indians of the so-called New World, which included the Brazilian natives described here.

In this sense, it is important to observe that the Jesuits ended up helping to develop prejudices or racial barriers based on European concepts that survived until nowadays. Most races, for lack of a better word, were not only judged by how they lived if compared to the Old Continent cultures, but also by their skin colour. The Brazilian natives, for example, were not black like the Africans, thus they were mostly defended by the missionaries against enslavement, especially after the promulgation of the Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus*, in 1537, which established that these people were human beings and rational creatures.

The Japanese, as Francisco Xavier (1506-1552) wrote in the 1540s, were white, therefore automatically not barbarians. This idea becomes more evident when the subject of discussion was the acceptance of natives in the Order. While in Japan Francisco Cabral (1539-1606) and Alessandro Valignano discussed extensively the advantages or not of accepting Japanese as Jesuits, in Brazil to accept Indians in the Order, as the local natives were being called, did not even seem to have been an issue. They accepted men of mixed blood because they were the best interpreters of

[4] Letter from brother Pero Correia, in Porto Seguro, June the 20th 1551. Jean-Claude Laborie, trans., *La Mission Jésuite du Brésil – Letters & autres documents (1549-1570)*, (Paris: Editions Chandeigne, 1998), page 179.

the native language, but not natives themselves.

This shows that the missionaries tried as much as possible to keep their religious roots away from the cultures they were dealing with, so, in general terms, they were more willing to give than to receive in this exchange. Also, the European principles spread by them, since seen as superior, were censured. Only the best of it was taught, as observed in Valignano's precise descriptions of what the Japanese Embassy of boys should learn and see in the Old Continent at the end of the 16th century (MORAN [trans.] 2012). They hoped to present them to an immaculate and Christian Europe, pacified and unified.

Nevertheless, the cultural exchanges initiated by them, as defective as they were, seem to have been the beginning of what is now known as globalization. Through their activities, different societies became aware of each other, admiring the differences, condemning their eccentricities and even getting inspired by their adventures.

Most of these Jesuits sent to distant lands were attracted to the perspective of a missionary life of difficulties in unknown and exotic places. It symbolized the fourth vow a professed member of the Order had to take: to be at the Pope's disposal to go wherever he ordered them to and spread the Christian faith. This is particular significant when we read the letters they wrote in Brazil describing the deaths of companions in the hands of the natives: the sadness of the loss is somehow overshadowed by an almost unnatural glee for the chance of dying a hero's death in the name of their God.

Perhaps the same kind of religious fervour that inspired them to die during the Tokugawa regimen's 徳川幕府 persecutions in the 17th century Japan, as romanticized by Shūsaku Endo 遠藤周作 in his book *Silence* 沈黙, famously adapted to the big screen by Martin Scorsese. Jonathan Wright even ponders if these missionaries didn't know that Europe needed their enthusiasm just as much, when it suffered with the ignorance of its own people, "lost in sin and falling into the dangers of witchcraft and superstitions" (WRIGHT, 2006: 81).

3) The search for Paradise on Earth:

According to the religious texts that the Jesuits followed, God was the architect of the universe, starting it from nothingness, and the sole power responsible for its mould and social division. Men were put as the lords of all God's creations on Earth, and everything that was created before came into existence for them. Thus, the natural world was seen as serving humans' necessity and without them nature had

no meaning.

The original sin broke this harmony; after falling from God's grace, men were sent to the wild and started to fear it. The Flow would explain it well: water was a necessity created to serve men, but it was also a purifying agent for their sins. So, nature always had a double meaning in the Christian mind: it brings life and death at the same time. Consequently, after the Fall, men should work to re-establish harmony with nature by overpowering it while also fearing it (ASSUNÇÃO, 2000: 25-40).

Material difficulties experienced during Medieval Times, such as hunger, plagues and wars, pushed them to search for Paradise on Earth. It was that European mind, eager to see the fantastic abroad (perhaps even as a form of escapism to their rash reality), with the help of a visionary geography, that tried to recreate what this place would look like, with trees, fruits, rivers of clear water and a greenery full of the singing of exotic birds. To the men behind this line of thought, Paradise was real, but it clearly wasn't in Europe, so it had to be found elsewhere.

And because Earth was seen as a divine creation for the benefit of humans, it had to be explored by men.

With all this in mind the Maritime Exploration during the fifteen and sixteenth centuries began. Portugal and Spain were the pioneers and their goal, apart from finding this sacred land, was to spread Christianity as a way to thank God for His mercy and greatness in creating the world. And the missionaries chosen to the vanguard of such task were exactly the Jesuits. To them, Christianization of the world was necessary, especially in the areas that still hadn't had the opportunity to be saved.

But it didn't mean it was a discovery of the other, on the contrary, it was a re-discovery of a world so far occult to them, but created by one single Hand. The necessary material support for such a great adventure was given by D. João III (1502-1557), king of Portugal, who wanted them to work on his overseas domains and to help protect them from other powerful nations.

The European contact with Asia began back in the 13th century with travels, sometimes secret, sponsored by kings who wished to establish military and diplomatic alliances. But due to a series of problems, including plagues in Europe and the dominion of China by the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the Asian continent remained mostly an unknown land until the Iberian expansion in the 16th century. It was then the perfect setting for narratives that helped forming the European imaginary of those times: a mix of reality and fantasy. So, the East was both scary and compelling, a region of monsters, but at the same time, financially promising.

With time and a better knowledge of the Asian regions, they transferred to the Atlantic Ocean most of their myths. The exploration of that area put the land that would later become Brazil in the world map in 1500. And the Portuguese believed that they had reached that rich land through Divine Inspiration, so it was their duty to explore it and to convert its people to thank God for His mercy.

According to them, the natural beauty actually emphasized His greatness and the documents written there, either by missionaries or travelers helped to transform the region in a new Eden, as well as its habitants in good, but savage people who should be conquered and taught the right, Christian way. Laura de Mello e Souza argues that the Jesuits in the New World were the main responsible for spreading ignorant ideas and assumptions concerning the local culture and the Brazilian land (MELLO E SOUZA, 2002: 46).

But is it that easy to blame?

As previously explained, of course that they described the locals and the nature based on their own European standards. But should the missionaries be completely blamed by our own contemporary standards when they were the ones trying to understand the local cultures and adapting themselves to some of their customs? Not to mention that, as praised scholars at the time, if they couldn't do any better when analyzing the native Americans and their habitat, it is possible that no one else in Europe could have done differently at the time.

But the praised author also explains that finding a certain monstrosity in everything that was not part of that European reality had helped defining their own normality since the Middle Ages. Thus, what she calls the 'demonization' of the American Indian by the Jesuits helped supporting the whole colonization enterprise. Nevertheless, the correspondences of missionaries such as Manuel da Nóbrega (1517-1570), José de Anchieta (1537-1597) and Azpilcuerta Navarro (1491-1586) also hint at something else.

First, this was not a general opinion concerning the natives. While their polygamy, cannibalism and other rituals were condemned, they were also seen as potentially good Christians, eager to learn and, when properly converted, even better than the colones themselves. And in Japan, where the local culture was generally very praised and the people highly admired, the Jesuits could find problems too. A natural reaction when dealing with a different society, even nowadays, as I have observed amongst foreigners living in Japan throughout the years.

4) The Brazilian Visit during the 1580s and the settlement of the mission's methodology:

Sending a representative from the Motherhouse of the Order, the Roman Curia, to a mission abroad had the goal of controlling what happened there, of adapting the main rules to local circumstances. Therefore, in the Society of Jesus' hierarchy, the Visitor was a representative of the Central power, designated to analyze, as well as to organize distant missions.

It was necessary to resort to Visitors when the normal system of correspondence between the headquarters in Rome and its provinces didn't work, or when there were local problems that could not be solved by mere letters. In this sense, these representatives followed pre-established rules, but they could also write others to be later approved by Rome if the local circumstances required.

As previously explained, the Constitutions and Spiritual Exercises, in which all activities were based, created a Jesuit identity that was extremely faithful to its origins while, at the same time, offering some flexibility. There was always the possibility of different actions if they were, of course, regarded as acceptable by the Institution. This adaptability to local circumstances, a characteristic that is the main theme of the present article, was part of the Order's original rules, as explained in its Constitutions[5].

But, of course, adapting to local circumstances should come after a detailed analysis of the local realities.

It was with the task of changing the main rules of the Order to the Brazilian reality that the Portuguese fathers Cristóvao Gouvea (1542-1601), the second Visitor in Brazil, and his secretary, Fernão Cardim (1548?-1625), arrived at Bahia, already capital of the Province, in May 9th 1583. Cardim's famous writing, *Narrativa de uma Viagem Epistolar*, concluded at the end of the visit in 1585, was a text ordered by Rome to better understand the Brazilian province. It is a text similar to some of Anchieta's letters, with descriptions of fauna, flora, organization of the Jesuit Colleges, details about the Indians and information about the missionaries' work amongst them (CARDIM, 1817).

During that Visit, Brazil had one hundred and forty Jesuits (including brothers), while by 1587 Japan only had ninety four (CASTELNAU-LÉSTOILE, 2006: 51). It had three Colleges - Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro; and five

[5] "[136] (…) But over and above these two, which deal with matters that do not change with time or place, directives will be required that are **adapted to the diversity of residences and colleges, and offices in the Society, whilst generally safeguarding uniformity as far as possible**. Nothing will be said here about such directives or rules beyond the remark that where they are operative they must be observed by everyone, according to the mind of his superior." In: Ignatius de Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus – annotated and complemented by General Congregation 34*, (India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1996), 56. Emphasis mine.

Residences - Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, Espirito Santo, São Paulo and São Vicente. The Provincial of the whole mission was then José de Anchieta, described by Cardim as an old saint, so adapted to the local reality that he could be found walking barefoot and carrying a big knife on his waist (CARDIM, 1980: 148).

CARDOSO, Armando. *Cartas de Sto. Inácio de Loyola (Vols. 1-3)*. São Paulo: Loyola, 1994.

Bahia had the main College and so good in its activities that it was compared to many European institutions when it came to quality of teaching (CASTELNAU-LÉSTOILE, 2006: 53). Therefore, it had received a bigger sum of financial help from the Kingdom if compared to the other two. The Residences survived on donations from these Colleges, and the missionary villages depended on those, a method of administration that was specific to the Brazilian enterprise.

But the Jesuits' activities focused on missionary work when distant from the Residences and Colleges. And just like all other Portuguese colones, these religious men were also established in the coastal area, only adventuring into the wild, unexplored lands when required.

Although the Portuguese had been colonizing the Brazilian lands for nearly a century by the time of this second Visit, the world was still regarded as exotic, surrounded by the same unknown and rich nature carefully described by the first missionaries years previously. So it is no wonder that even by the end of the 16th century, Cardim's descriptions of Brazil are as full of fascination and fear as Nobrega's were at the beginning.

The expectations and methods of the mission, however, had changed.

Itinerant in its origins, the Jesuit mission in Brazil became fixed when it started to focus on the teaching activity. And by the time the Visitor arrived, those thirty years of experience had led the Jesuits to create a very specific way to better control the already baptized natives: the missionary villages. Without much will to live in a restrictive, Catholic way, the Indians needed a more present, forceful assistance from the Jesuits, transforming them almost completely. Because to fail in the task of saving the natives' souls was more than a simply failure of the mission – it was to fail saving their own souls as well.

This missionary village was presented as the solution to the Brazilian mission problems by the end of Nobrega's *Diálogo da Conversão do Gentio* (1557), where he summarized all their difficulties and hopes in the form of a dialogue between natives. But, of course, the idea of gathering baptized natives in one place to be guided by religious men was much older.

Father Nóbrega himself had mentioned in some of his early letters that it was

the best way to Christianize[6] and by 1560 Anchieta defended the same[7]. But the idea was only truly accepted in 1557, with the arrival of Mem de Sá (1500-1572), and by 1584 the missionary village was the Brazilian mission itself. Therefore, it is no wonder that the apogee of the Jesuit mission in Brazil can be traced back to between 1557 and 1562, when these villages were firmly established.

To the Indians, however, these spaces were not so good. It meant that they had their lives completely changed, with different tribes (and therefore customs) being put together to live in an environment that was under the missionaries constant surveillance. As a natural reaction to it, there were several Indigenous insurrections, the most important - studied in detail by Ronaldo Vainfas (VAINFAS, 1995) - happened precisely during father Gouvêa's visit. Their way of resisting, a modification of the Catholic teachings to better suit their own native culture, shows how frail were the Jesuits' methods of evangelization in Brazil as well.

Also, working in a fixed place when you were intended to be a peregrine, and having material possessions, such as slaves and animals, when you had embraced poverty as a rule, was to get further away from the initial ideals of the Society and its Constitutions. But this was the reality of the Brazilian mission and the reason behind Gouvêa's regiment to guide the Brazilian mission, composed after two years of visit – from March 1583 to April 1585. It is a perfect example of the Jesuits' accommodation technique because it inserted the missionary village – and with it all the Brazilian particularities, including the methods used to proselytize until his arrival – into the original hierarchical methodology of the Order.

And the Visitor prescribed rules for the missionaries working there too. First, he noticed that the native culture was that of the eloquence; their *pajé* or sorcerers, had the power of speaking well and convincing. So the learning of the local language had to be institutionalized. And the best way to learn Tupi was by living amongst the natives in the missionary villages, not in the Colleges where they were being taught until then. Also, not everyone would be able to learn it, so he limited the studies to the novices who were not so young or so old and who had already completed two years of novitiate (CASTELNAU-LÉSTOILE, 2006: 171).

These were a portion of the men though, the specialists in the language, the missionaries par excellence, living with the Indians. The elite of the Jesuits, those with the four vows of the Order, remained mainly in the Colleges. And since knowing Tupi was still the most important aspect taken into consideration for the mission,

[6] Letter to Simão Rodrigues, 1550. In: Manuel da Nóbrega, *Cartas do Brasil 1549-1560*, ibid, 103.
[7] José de Anchieta, *Cartas – Informações, fragmentos históricos e sermões (Cartas Jesuíticas III)*, ibid, 160.

even the mandatory years of the Jesuit education were modified to better suit the Brazilian situation: they didn't require twelve years of studies to form a Jesuit to go in mission in Brazil, but only five.

However, to avoid the dissolution of the Jesuit precepts while living far away from their houses, the missionaries living with the Indians had not only to keep the regular writing of correspondences. They also had an annual and obligatory visit to the House or College to which their village depended on to strengthen their ties with the rest of the Society. Thus, once a year they had to renew their vows, confess and practice the Spiritual Exercises. They also couldn't live alone in the missionary villages, but with at least one companion to avoid falling into sin – particularly sexual, as the native women still represented their biggest temptation.

By the 1590s, Brazilians (people of mixed blood) were already being recruited as missionaries because of their linguistic skills with the Tupi. But they were still regarded by Rome and by the European Jesuits working in the Colleges as inferior because of their poor education and mixed origins. They were mainly accepted because they were specialists in the local language and their faults were tolerated because of the lack of personnel in the Province. Eventually, the number of Jesuits going to Brazil from Europe fell, as most of them were being sent to the East, especially China and Japan, with the latter already being considered as the main mission by the Roman headquarters.

5) The Asian Visitor and the settlement of the Japanese mission:

Just like Christóvão Gouvêa who visited Brazil by the end of the sixteenth century, Alessandro Valignano, the praised Asian Visitor, had powers similar to those of the Superior of the Order. His task was to form a very accurate picture of the material and spiritual needs of the visited regions, starting in India, to remove abuses, to find the origins of the difficulties and to solve them, as well as to make sure that the work in all regions was going on according to the Constitutions and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius de Loyola.

He arrived in Japan for the first time in 1579, having studied the local situation through letters of missionaries who worked there since the Jesuits first arrived in that distant land in 1549. The tales of men such as Francisco Xavier, Cosme de Torres, Francisco Cabral and many others described a high society of white, intelligent people, of conversion amongst the lords and of considerable expansion of the Christian faith in those thirty years. Naturally, this generated high hopes in the Visitor even before he arrived in the already famous Land of the Rising Sun.

Despite the disappointment when faced with a slightly different reality,

Valignano was very careful of the Japanese mission. Already in December 1579, only a few months after his arrival, he wrote a long and detailed letter to Claudio Aquaviva (1543-1615), then General Superior, to inform of all the news he had been able to gather about their activities. According to the Visitor's own words, he was afraid that people were not being very clear in their missives to Europe and so the mission could suffer if they took the wrong decisions[8].

In this particular letter, Valignano went into more details about the situation of the conversion in several lands and of all the difficulties the missionaries were facing in Japan as a whole. The frustration must have been so great to those working there that he informed his superior that, sometimes, they believed God was undoing all the things they had done with so much effort, work and time. Despite this very typical exaggerated rhetoric, Valignano wrote that what had been done until that point was already a lot and he hoped that with the right adjustments a lot more could be achieved[9].

At the time, the main doubts concerning the Japanese mission were two: 1) if the way the Japanese Christianity was created was correct and according to the wishes of their Lord and, 2) if they should go any further on the conversion when they did not have enough workers to keep the converted people firm in the new faith[10].

Concerning the first point, Valignano explained that, according to their experience up until then, most of the Japanese converted did not search for their salvation nor had the disposition or virtue in the faith, or even will to guard the Christian Law. But they were being converted to benefit their own intrigues.

He also stated that, at the beginning, if the missionaries could see that they did not have the right disposition to become good Christians, they should probably not be baptized because it is a sacred vow[11]. So, they should be properly taught in the faith before taking it[12]. Coincidentally or not, a very similar way of thinking was observed amongst the Jesuits working in Brazil during the same period.

Despite all this, the Visitor did not fail to present a positive view of the mission

[8] ARSI Jap. Sin. 8I 244-247v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, from December the 10th, 1579, lines 5 to 8.
[9] ARSI Jap. Sin. 8I 244-247v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, from December 10th, 1579, lines 9 to 23.
[10] ARSI Jap. Sin. 8I 244-247v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, from December 10th, 1579, lines 73 to 82.
[11] ARSI Jap. Sin. 8I 244-247v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, from December 10th, 1579, lines 87 to 92.
[12] ARSI Jap. Sin. 8I 244-247v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, from December 10th, 1579, lines 99 to 102.

to his superiors, even defending the way things were done until his arrival. He explained that, for example, many of the lords inspiring the conversion of their vassals were good men, therefore served as good role models. And also, there wasn't another door in Japan for Christianity to enter - the only way was through the appeal of these lords, through the very complex net of their interests and favours which guided the Japanese society.

6) Ideas and expectations for the future of the mission:

Valignano admitted, after his first visit (1579-1582), that he considered himself a 'dumb statue' during that time, only absorbing information without acquiring enough knowledge to form his own opinion of the mission[13]. It was after those first three years and a more profound contact with the culture – so different from everything else he had seen – that he truly learned to appreciate it.

This is proved by his very precise and detailed views of what should and should not be done there in the future, which can be read in a letter written to Claudio Aquaviva, dating from October 28th 1583. The ideas present in this long missive seem to have guided the whole mission until the end of his third stay in Japan in 1603 and is a compact version of the famous *Sumario de las Cosas de Japón*[14], the Japanese version of Cardim's *Tratado*.

As he wrote to his superior, Valignano was determined to go back to Europe to meet the General of the Order and explain in person the situation of the Japanese mission. According to him, the amount of important information was so great and the whole mission was so different from everything else they had ever dealt with that it was impossible to be clear and precise about it in letters that were usually written in a rush whenever the ships were sailing.

Because of that, and considering the order he received to remain in India as Provincial, the Visitor decided to translate his famous Summary (*Sumario*) about Japan, divided in 35 chapters, and send it to Rome together with the letter presently discussed[15].

Valignano's *Sumario* follows Cardim's *Tratado* idea as if they had discussed those writings in person. It begins describing Japan, its people, customs, qualities, religions and the situation of the Colleges and Residences, such as those in Bungo

[13] ARSI Jap. Sin. 9I 35-36v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Everardo Mercuriano, October 7th 1581, lines 109 to 115.
[14] Alejandro Valignano S.J., (Trans. José Luis Alvarez-Taladriz) *Sumario de las Cosas de Japon (1583) & Adiciones del Sumario de Japon (1592)*, (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1954).
[15] ARSI Jap. Sin. 9II 173-176v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, October 28th 1583, lines 51 to 56.

and Miyako (current Kyoto). He emphasizes the importance of the Japanese mission to the Society, but also states that the difficulties they had to face, such as the cultural differences, the persecution of the Buddhist monks, the lack of workers and money, and the Japanese political situation in constant civil war prevented a bigger growth of the mission.

According to those three years of observation and indirect contact with the locals (Valignano did not learn Japanese), he also proposed solutions and explained how the mission could grow, focusing on Miyako, the capital, for example, and the higher classes. He also specifies how the native helpers should be taught and treated, always politely and gently, for the Japanese are men guided by honor and do not easily accept reprimands and differences in treatment. It is also in this famous *Sumario* that Valignano defends that they should form a native clergy, for they would be the best ones to spread Christianity not only because of the language, but also because the Japanese weren't very keen on contact with foreigners.

Nevertheless, he was absolutely convinced that he needed to go back to Europe to explain everything in person. Only by doing that the General of the Order would be able to take the right decision and the Japanese mission could flourish in the future. So, the problem was not the fact that the letters sent to Japan before his arrival did not tell the truth - as some authors seem to believe. But the fact that the letters were not detailed enough to the Visitor's standards, even those written by him. And by going back to Europe he wanted to make sure that everything written until that point would be rightfully interpreted (according to his own standards) by his superiors[16].

He also wanted to find a solution for the temporal needs of the Japanese mission. In other words, its lack of money. According to his writing, he wanted to talk not only with the Pope and the Portuguese King about this matter, but also with the cardinals because, without a solution, the whole Society living in Japan, as well as the Christians who depended on them, were in grave danger.

The Visitor also wanted to go in person to look for appropriate personnel to work in the Asian missions, especially Japan and India. In this important matter he wrote:

> *And even if for some years now Your Paternity and our father of holy memory, Everardo Mercuriano, have been doing more than we could expect in these parts - and we do believe Your Paternity will do whatever you can in the future - however,*

[16] ARSI Jap. Sin. 9II 173-176v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, October 28th 1583, lines 66 to 72.

> *since the government of India and Japan are so different of the works done by ours in Europe, and here there are such different activities in which ours occupy themselves, and the land and the way of proceeding are so contrary to everything in Europe, it happens many times that those who are seen as very good to this government, after arriving here, do not know* [how to proceed]*; and they are seen as unfitting by everybody. And other times, even if it is rarer, those who didn't seem good to Europe, here are very good.*[17]
>
> (Transcribed from 16th century Spanish and adapted to modern English by me)

Valignano was very honest when stating that, after arriving in Asia and facing the freedom and its many distractions, religious men seen as trustworthy in Europe by living in an appropriate environment were not only in danger of losing themselves but, more importantly, of causing scandals[18]. And differently from what happened in Brazil, where the danger was put on the sexualization of the figure of the native women, in Japan the danger was a refined lifestyle of silks that went straight against one of the Order's vows - poverty.

In the *Sumario* that Valignano was sending to Europe ahead of him together with this missive, he also wrote that he considered the Japanese mission as the most important of all, so it is no wonder that he was so very careful about the smallest details. After his famous trip back to the Old Continent, together with the Japanese embassy of Christian boys, he not only brought back a Press to Japan, which printed catechisms and grammars until the final expulsion of the Christians by Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543-1616) in 1614.

He seems to have settled the mission's methodology according to his observations during that first visit, even though not all solutions envisioned were well received in Rome, according to J.F. Moran. Nevertheless, the Japanese mission seems to have followed its course according to the turmoil of those last years of the 16th century. They still lacked money and missionaries, and the battles between Japanese lords were making life in Japan even more insecure.

But after Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (1536-1598) edit of expulsion in 1587, for example, which was promulgated but not precisely put into general practice, Valignano defended even more vehemently still the importance of an adaptation to the local customs and the learning of the local language.

[17] ARSI Jap. Sin. 9II 173-176v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, October 28th 1583, lines 132 to 138.
[18] ARSI Jap. Sin. 9II 173-176v. Letter from Alessandro Valignano to Claudio Aquaviva, October 28th 1583, lines 138 to 145.

7) Final Considerations:

The French Historian Jacques Le Goff, one of the main collaborators of the *revue Annales*, explains that the Historian nowadays has three duties: to research, to teach and what he called to vulgarize. According to him, History is written based on documents and if we do not try to understand the context in which they were written, we cannot do much on the area. This contact with a document and its critic study are inseparable, and they should be guided by a main question.

Thus, as Historians, our job is to tell what happened in a specific period of time based on these documents; but we shouldn't write only for the sake of writing. We should work with documents to reconstruct the past by trying to answer a problem.

In the case of this article, by reading some of the missives and official documents written by the first missionaries who arrived in Brazil and Japan, the goal was to understand what kind of changes the Jesuits were forced to make in the rules of their Order for those two different missions to work properly. Also, what were their guiding ideas, what parameters they used to create methods that would suit each case. And my research shows that they were sons of a humanist mind-set, scholars educated in classics that, according to specialists, had the main purpose of opening their minds to a better way of living. So, this completely European ideal, together with the religious fervour seen during the Christian Reformation, guided these men in a quest for salvation.

As explained, it was their goal to save their own souls and those of other people who hadn't had the chance to receive the word of the Christian God yet. So it was a quest with noble principles, even if financed by the greed of kingdoms hoping to expand their economy. Nevertheless, it was also a quest that brought already in its roots the notion of the European mindset (including their religious thought) as the superior one. So every society outside its boundaries would be judged by its principles and the more distant they were from the European ideals, the more inferior they would be considered.

Then, it shouldn't be surprising that the methodology applied by the Jesuits in Brazil to Christianize the natives was different from that used in Japan. The first were barbarians without law or king, who lived naked in the wild, like beasts, ate one another and did not even had a writing system to distinguish them from other animals.

And even though the missionaries admired their freedom and often compared them to children in their innocence and relative passivity, they imposed their principles more than tried to adapt them to the native reality. Judged inferior, most

of the Indians' culture had to be eradicated. So I would risk saying that the Jesuit methodology in Brazil was that of rebuilding the native culture in European patterns. It was almost a reverse kind of accommodation, where the Indians were the ones changing the most to reach the Jesuits' standards.

Japan, on the other hand, had a culture which rivaled theirs. The people were guided by reason, and their faults – as Xavier pointed out at the beginning – were caused by ignorance, not inferiority. The Japanese were always admired for their customs, even if some of them, like the *nanshoku* 男色, male homosexuality, were quite shocking for those religious men. And even though that land seemed to be the complete opposite of everything in Europe in most of its aspects, as Alessandro Valignano pointed out repeatedly, it still had the prospects of becoming a great Christian kingdom.

Also, Japan was powerful and had been living a period of internal turbulence, so the missionaries could not, in any way, impose their own culture with the same strength that they did in Brazil. They had to adapt to Japanese ways in order to see their work flourish. Therefore, understanding exactly how they perceived these local cultures and, consequently, what they had to change in their methodology were the main aspects that I wished to point out with this article.

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