Santos Pinto dos, José Miguel
Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Lisboa, Portugal

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17. Ibid., p. xxv.
20. Ibid., pp. xv and xxxviii.
26. Ibid., p. 383, n. 7.
27. Ibid., p. 383, n. 7.
28. Ibid., p. 21, n. 4 and n. 6.
29. See ibid., p. 33.
30. See ibid., p. 13.
31. See ibid., p. 28.
34. João Rodrigues Tçuzu SJ, Breve aparato para a historia de Japam melhor se entender, MS La Real Academia de la Historia, Jesuítas 7237, ff. 6v-16.
35. See João Rodrigues’s Account…, p. xxx.

William J. Farge


The Japanese Mission Press was created to help the Japanese Church educate its own members
and to assist in her efforts to propagate Christianity. From the time the printing press arrived in Nagasaki on 21 July 1590 to its dismantling, packing and return back to Macao in 1614, an estimated one hundred titles were published, thirty-two of which have survived flames, floods and an assorted host of other human and natural enemies of the printed word. The books produced included catechisms, devotional works, sacramental guides, dictionaries, and eastern and western profane literature selected “to imbibe [into its readers] simultaneously Christian precepts and virtue and to abhor vices”. As far as we know, the Mission Press lived up to what can be considered its mission statement, as defined in 1583 by its founder, Alessandro Valignano: “Since in Japan there is no knowledge of any of our authors or our books … it would seem meet and necessary to compose for the Japanese special books in all sciences, in which would be taught simply the gist of the matters at hand and the pure truths, well-founded and with their proofs, without referring to other divers and dangerous opinions…”. Besides its commercial success, the Press was a technological accomplishment, not so much in the safe handling of the delicate yet heavy components of the printing machinery all the way from Lisbon to Nagasaki via Goa and Macao, but principally in the successful production of new printing types of very high quality in Japan. More importantly, even though the literary, intellectual and artistic value of its printed works has been evaluated in the range from “superb” to “exceptional”, its main cultural contribution lies in the presentation of Christianity and European culture, until then an unknown world, to the Japanese.

The study of the Japanese Mission Press started with Satow and Anesaki and has, at least in Japan, grown into an industry of some proportions, where Ebisawa and Obara have been, until quite recently, the leading researchers. The work done outside of Japan, unfortunately, has not attained either the volume or the quality of that done inside of it. Thus the publication of The Japanese Translations of the Jesuit Mission Press, 1590-1614, by William Farge, S.J., whereby the author analyzes the language employed in the Japanese translations of two European religious books, the De Imitatione Christi and Guia de Pecadores, is a most welcomed development.

The main body of the book consists of two parts. In Part I, the two Japanese translations of De Imitatione Christi are analyzed and compared with the Latin original. The first translation was published at Amakusa in 1596, written in Roman script under the title of Contemptvs mundi jenbu. The second one, a much abridged version of the Latin original, was published in Kyoto in 1610 in Japanese characters, mainly hiragana, as Kontemutsusu munji. Farge,
through his excellent translations of selected passages of the Latin and of the two Japanese versions into English, demonstrates beyond doubt that while the 1596 version is a faithful, if somewhat crude, translation of the original, the one made in 1610 demonstrates the initiative and creative judgment of the Japanese translator, who, after examining the meaning of the original treatise, re-expressed it in his own language and cultural idiom. He also argues persuasively that the translators of the Kyoto version had to choose those aspects of Christianity presented in the original *Imitatione* which would have greater appeal to a wider audience of non-baptized readers whom they were trying to reach.

In Part II, the Japanese translation of *Guia de Pecadores*, printed in Nagasaki in 1599, is analyzed and contrasted with the Salamanca version of 1573. This work of Fray Luis de Granada was first published in Lisbon in 1556 as *Gvia do pecador*. Despite being momentarily included in the *Catalogus librorum prohibitorum* in 1559 for unknown and unfathomable reasons it immediately gained a broad readership. It was translated several times into Spanish, and was reprinted numerous times in this language in the course of the following decades. The Japanese translation, *Giya do peka
doru*, was made from the revised and abridged Salamanca edition of 1573, but there is some evidence that the Latin translation (Colonia, 1587) was also used. Exemplifying with very precise translations from both the Japanese and Salamanca versions, Farge argues convincingly that the Japanese translation was accurate, yet not slavish to the original. He elaborates by describing the work as "a phrase-for-phrase translation", in "the European medieval tradition of imitation", whereby the "editors and translators attempted to recompose the book in Japanese on the exact pattern of the original, while remaining free to adapt or revise the content and modify the authorial intention for their own purposes" (p. 79).

Overall, the book is both a pleasure to read and its reasoning is easy to follow. The translations are very precise and their presence makes it easy, even for those not familiar with medieval Japanese, to read through without losing the gist. Those who are taking their first steps into medieval Japanese will find this book especially interesting and its careful reading remarkably rewarding. However, this work is not without its peccadillos.

Firstly, it should be pointed out that Farge is not immune to some damaging popular misconceptions, here and there. This happens, for example, when he alludes to the very interesting question of why "the Jesuit mission press did not attempt to produce a Japanese version of the Bible" (p. 7). On this issue, he is not able to go further than to inform us that "in contemporary Catholic
Europe, the translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible into another language was forbidden” (p. 7). Regrettably, the explanatory power of such prohibition is nil and indeed serves only to complicate matters when one wants to understand the widespread and active efforts that where made by Catholics to translate the Bible into different national languages during the sixteenth century. But if such a prohibition is alleged at all, then one would appreciate more details on the more fundamental whys and hows: why such an interdiction? How could it be so widely ignored? Why did Church authorities append their nihil obstat and imprimatur in the forbidden translations? Or, at the very least, one would appreciate an explanation as to why so many “contemporary Catholic” Bible translations have survived to this day. In Valignano’s mother tongue there are extant, to name just a few, the translations of Nicholas de Nardo, O.P. (1472), of Marine de Veneto, O.P. (Venice, 1477), of Santes Marmochini, O.P. (Venice, 1538), and the two noteworthy translations of the New Testament made by Zaccaria Florentini, O.P. (Venice, 1542), and Domenico Gigli (Venice, 1551). In the language of Alberto Mezchinski, there is the Cracow Bible (1561). In that of Cosme de Torres, and in spite of an alleged prohibition by the Inquisition, besides the earlier Biblia Alfonsina, there is in the sixteenth century, at least, the Bible of Gaspar Quiroga, a cardinal inquisitor. In the vernacular of Luis Exarch Bertran, there is the translation of Boniface Ferrer. In the tongue of Guilhelmo Courtet, there is the work by Lefèvre d’Étapes. In the parlance of Theodor Mantels, there are the extant labors of Nicholas van Wingh, Peter de Cort, and Godevaert Stryode O.P. In addition, let us just remember Germany’s Dietenberger Bible, as well as, the translations into the local languages by Stephen Szántó, in Hungary, and by John Pytlík, in Bohemia – all in the sixteenth century and all by Catholics. Arguably, hardly any Japanese in the late sixteenth century or any Japanese in the early twenty-first century could have heard of any of these vernacular Bibles. But, what about Yajiro’s translation of the first book of the New Testament? It certainly was a translation into Japanese, and Xavier’s spiritual son surely can be called Catholic. How bad it was we will never know, but since when do Catholic Bibles have to be good translations in order to be Catholic? However, it must be conceded that one New Testament book does not one Bible make, but Yajiro’s translation does show that, even before arriving in Japan, the Japanese Mission already had taken the first steps in translating the Good Book. Thereafter, there were several other attempts to produce a Bible in Japanese. These resulted in the two abbreviated translations of Juan Fernandez (1552) and of Luis Frois and others (later than 1563), and in
the complete translation of the New Testament of the Colégio in Kyoto (no later than 1613). It is most unfortunate that the nefarious influence of the Index of the Spanish Inquisition can be felt even today; half a millennium latter, it still had the power to impair Farge’s awareness of these works, and prevent his inquiry into the translations of Holy Writ made by the Japanese Mission.

Another venial sin of this work is that in analyzing the contents of *Giya do pekadoru*, what passages are missing and what passages are presented and in what order, a comparison is made only with the abridged Salamanca edition, not with the original Portuguese from which the Japanese title was transliterated, nor with the Latin translation the missionaries had in their hands, nor with one of the unabridged Spanish translations. And, what is more damning from a scholarly point of view is that there is not even a reference to the existence of these other editions. Thus, the question of why the Salamanca version was preferred by the Press over the others that were available is not addressed at all. This seems to be a basic question to examine, without which the analysis presented gives the impression of being without proper foundations. Extra spice could also have been added by addressing the related, if unimportant, question of why to transliterate the Portuguese title of the book for a rendition made from a Spanish edition.

However, the only serious reservation this reviewer has is with the lack of historical perspective that shapes this work. Given the nature of the topic, even if we were to consider that this was not a book about one episode in the history of intellectual transmission, but rather an exercise in translation studies, insufficiency of historical treatment would render inadequate the handling of the subject matter. As a study on one aspect of the cultural interaction between one of the most complex belief systems and one of the most self-possessed of all civilizations, this deficiency proves fatal. Nowhere is this weakness more apparent than in the discussion, in the last few pages of Part I, of how the Eucharist is presented in the Japanese versions of *De Imitatione Christi*. Farge’s conclusion that “the editors of the Jesuit mission press exhibited not only exceptional literary talent and editorial skill, but also an ever-growing awareness of the sensibilities and feelings of their Japanese readership” (p. 70) seems judicious enough. But his statement that during the time elapsed between the 1596 and the 1610 editions “the Jesuits gradually came to realize the difficulty which the Japanese had in conceiving of eating or sacrificing the flesh of a deity” (p. 67; emphasis mine) is far-fetched and the reasons adduced in its support seem most unconvincing. The Jesuits must have been quite slow-witted, a hypothesis against which we have enough evidence, if they had not fully realized this by the time *Contemptus mundi*...
jenbu was published. Most likely they would have figured that out in the first few months of the Mission, and certainly, by the time of Vilela’s arrival in Japan. Probably, they were told bluntly, and repeatedly, by the Japanese themselves, thus being spared the effort necessary to figure out on their own the difficulties the locals might have with the Eucharist. To assume that by the forty-eighth year of the Mission they had not yet become aware that the Japanese might take offence at eating the flesh of a man, to say nothing of a God, is not tenable. And on top of this, to hypothesize that from the forty-eight to the sixty-first year of the Mission, that then they gradually grew more sophisticated in the appreciation of the problem seems implausible.

The lack of historical perspective is made more poignant by the absence of any hint that the solutions adopted by the Mission translators fit in a tradition that was by then already fifteen centuries old. The Principle of Economy, advised by the Rabbi to His disciples (Mathe 7, 6), and remembered by the Apostle to his converts and friends (1 Corinthians 3, 2; Hebrews 5, 12-14), has had a long and rich history in the theory and praxis of Christian proselytism and apologetics. Its most well known formulators were Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodoret and, more recently, John Henry Newman. One can even find anti-Christian Buddhist monks in seventeenth century Japan that were aware and willing to digress on this point of Catholic practice, as Sessō Sosai in his Taiji jashū-ron. This principle states that, in the first stages, the missionary should adapt his exposition of Christian doctrine to the level that the hearer is able to bear. In other words, it is the principle that says you should not start the catechesis of a Calvinist by speaking about Mary, or that of a Muslim by exposing the Trinity, or of any unbeliever, for that matter, by trying to acquaint him with the chewing of the Deity by its believers. By not bringing the techniques of the Jesuit Mission into a wider historical context, the author appears to believe that the missionaries were innovative in their ways of presenting traditional and orthodox Christianity to the Japanese, whereas, in fact, they were just following the pedagogical tradition of their Church.

Thus, the application of the Principle of Economy in this particular case would have allowed Farge to avoid becoming “puzzled by the fact that direct references to the meaning of the Eucharist are almost always glossed over through Book IV of the 1610 variant” (p. 64) and would free him up to pursue other avenues of inquiry, probably more fruitful, as to the secondary reasons behind the different treatment of this topic in the two Japanese translations. One of which, albeit not the more important, is that probably the avoidance of the word kotsuniku (or cotnicu) in the 1610 version might have more to
do with the inappropriateness of this term to express the body of the one God made Man than with the legitimate and orthodox desire to de-emphasize the meaning of the Eucharist in a book directed in a large measure to a non-Christian audience.

I think that Farge has the key to the resolution of this fascinating problem when he very precisely translates "gocotnicuno Eucharistia" of the 1596 version as "Eucharist of the flesh". This translation could be supported with any good dictionary from the 1603 Vocabulario to the 1985-2001 Jidai Betsu Kokugo Daijiten: Muromachi Jidai. The next better way to translate this expression into English would be "Eucharist of the bones and flesh". For example, in the entry for Cotnicu in the Vocabulario, we find "Fone, xixamura. Ossos, & carne" (fl. 59v), or "bones and flesh". If this is a good image for what one can find in a butcher’s shop it hardly seems an appropriate term to describe what Catholics understand by the Eucharist: the living and whole body and blood, soul and divinity of the second person of the Trinity. For sure, when first introducing the Eucharist to his disciples, the Rabbouni used the flesh word (John 6, 51). However, when instituting the sacrament (Mathew 26, 26), He used the term “body” and it is this term that has been used by the vast majority of ecclesiastical writers for twenty centuries. The exceptions are many, but most of these are glosses on John 6, and many authors revert to “body” as soon as possible. There are several reasons, which we do not need to delve in detail, for this nearly unanimous preference of “body” over “flesh” when referring to the Eucharist. It suffices our purposes to notice that “flesh” has two basic meanings. The first one, which ecclesiastical writers have in mind when referring to the Eucharist, refers to the soft tissue of a body, but does not refer to the whole and living human being. The second one, the physicality of the human body as opposed to the mind or the soul, has acquired from an early age in Church history connotations with sin and the concomitant spiritual death. The contamination by this second sense seems to render this word unfit to describe the venerabili mysterio, the source of everlasting life, in the eyes of many church writers. Significantly, the Vocabulario adds the following illustration of the usage of this term: "Cotnicuno nozomi. Desejos da carne", that is to say "urges of the flesh". It adds some other examples, none making this Japanese term more appropriate to describe the essence of the Eucharist. The usage “cotnicuno Eucharistia” is non-existent in the Vocabulario. This is not natural, and thus would require some explanation, in a dictionary written by “alguns Padres, e Irmaós da Companhia de Iesv” so that “os Padres, & Irmãos que vem de nouo cultuar, & augmenter esta Christandade, terem algüa maneira de guia, & ajuda pera aprender esta lingoa” if “gocotnicuno Eucharitia”
was a common expression in the Japanese Mission. Not to risk overdoing this argument, I will just point out further that kotsoniku was widely used in seventeenth century Japanese scientific treatises in ways that show that "bones and flesh" are just part of a body, not the whole of it, and do not even imply that this part of the body is alive by itself. For example, in the commentaries written by Mukai Gensho, a Confucian medical doctor, in the Kenkon Bensetsu, a cosmological work written by Cristóvão Ferreira, a former member of the Japanese Mission, we can read that "the bones and flesh (kotsuniku) of a person are in the category of earth, [his] blood is in the category of water, [his] respiratory movements are in the category of air, [his] bodily heat is in the category of fire, and beside these four in the human body there isn’t any other thing". 「人の骨肉は土の類也、血水は水の類也、気息運動は風の類也、身體温暖なるは火の類也、此の四つのも外に人の身體有物なし」 (Book I, Chapter 1). Farge is well aware that, in most instances, cotnicu was used in both Contemptvs mundi jenbu and Kontemutsusu munji to "refer to physical desire or that part of the person that was opposed to soul or spirit" (p. 65) and that thus "the later [1610] translator eliminated it from the text to avoid the physical, fleshy image that was implied by the word kotsoniku" as being "unsuitable in a discourse in the Eucharist" (p. 66).

However, the problem with the use of "gocotnicuno Eucharistia" in Contemptvs mundi jenbu is not that cotnicu is a good translation for the Latin word caro, flesh, nor is it that cotnicu might be less than suitable (even less than "flesh" in English) when referring to the Eucharist, though certainly it was quite inadequate. The problem is that cotnicu is a mistranslation for corpus, body, the word which appears in the corresponding extracts in the Latin original of the Imitatio that are translated by Farge. This, I think, explains better than anything else why kotsoniku was expunged from Kontemutsusu munji in those passages that deal with the Eucharist. Although nobody would be very surprised had Yajiro chosen, in his translation of Mathew 26, 26 ("Accípite, comédite: hoc est corpus meum"), to translate corpus as kotsoniku, such word choice in a translation made in 1596 cannot but remind us of the difficulties and problems the Jesuits had in mastering the language, even after being in Japan for so long. The warranted conclusion, unfortunately not drawn by Farge, seems to be that the translators of Contemptvs mundi jenbu made a mistake in their choice of the word for body, an error that the translators of Kontemutsusu munji skillfully avoided. Better Japanese words for corpus than cotnicu, half a dozen of which would appear some years later in the Vocabvlario, were available. If their use in the 1610
version is parsimonious it is because the editors were being economical.

In summary, this study is an exceptionally competent linguistic analysis of the translation techniques and literary styles of three publications of the Jesuit Mission Press. Regrettably, the exceptional development of this leg in this work is associated with the atrophy of that other that would stand for historical angle.

José Miguel Pinto dos Santos

Hiroshima University