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THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF KYŪSHŪ

A Perusal of Jesuit Sources

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I

One of the missionary strategies delineated by the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) consisted of the establishment and development, whenever possible, of close relations with the dominant socio-political powers in the sites where the Jesuits established their presence. In Portugal, in addition to the trust that Portuguese monarchs personally reposed in some Jesuits, this line of action resulted in the fact that the Jesuits quickly began to discharge important offices and functions in the court such as those of confessors, spiritual directors, masters and preceptors of the royal family and diverse prominent figures in the court. Simão Rodrigues de Azevedo (1510-1579), the first member of the Society of Jesus to work uninterruptedly in Portugal was not just a confessor and close confidant of various figures from the upper echelons of the Portuguese nobility – such as Dom António de Ataíde, the Count of Cantanhede, and Dom João de Lencastre, the Duke of Aveiro – but was also appointed by royal instructions to be the tutor and confessor of the heir to the Portuguese throne, Prince João (1538-1554), the son of João III. According to Loyola’s directives to Rodrigues de Azevedo, which would later be repeated to other members of the order, the Jesuits were not to aspire to high offices, functions or religious posts, but were likewise not to refuse them when offered by sovereigns. In this case however, they...
were prohibited from soliciting favours or benefits from the ruling authorities for the Society or themselves. With this policy of close ties with ruling powers, Ignatius of Loyola intended to carry out a profound religious reform of various social groups, starting from and working in close collaboration with the elite. Thus, alongside this task of assisting and accompanying the ruling classes, the Jesuits began to work amongst the Portuguese population, with the development of missionary, charitable and educational initiatives.

In Japan, one can discern the development of an evangelical strategy that focused on the ruling elite. From the very outset, when Francis Xavier (1506-1552) delineated some broad guidelines for missionary action in the archipelago, the Jesuits realised that a significant part of their success with some social groups depended on the kind of welcome and facilitation they received from the warrior elite, the buke, the only class that wielded de facto power in Japan during the mid-16th century. The context of the civil war (sengoku) that prevailed in the archipelago when the Jesuits arrived in 1549 and the fact that their message (which propagated an exclusivist and universal religion) clashed with the local religious system made it essential to seek out protectors amongst the warrior aristocracy.

The Jesuits’ model of action was thus delineated according to the specific political, social and military realities they faced and induced them to favour close relations with the warrior aristocracy. Their labours amongst the buke should not, however, be understood as an end in itself. If in an initial phase of the missionary process in any given territory the missionaries focused upon working with local lords, this was to ensure their acquiescence to the establishment of general missionary activities amongst the local people. On the other hand, as Neil Fujita has noted, they also sought to take advantage of the warriors’ influence and capacity for persuasion with regard to their respective vassals, thus benefiting from but also depending upon the feudal social structure.

3 Cf. ibidem, pp. 213-228.
4 With regard to the establishment of the Jesuits in Portugal see Dauril Alden, The Making of an Enterprise. The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire and Beyond, 1540-1750, Stanford, 1996, pp. 3-38. For the Jesuits’ activities developed from their religious centre at Évora see the work by Federico Palomo del Barrio, Fazer dos campos escolas excelentes. Os jesuítas de Évora e as missões do interior em Portugal (1551-1630), Lisbon, 2003.
6 Cf. Neil Fujita, Japan’s Encounter with Christianity. The Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan, New Jersey, 1991, pp. 249-250. Years later, during the early decades of the 17th century, the Tokugawa shogunate used the same social system to progressively put an end to the Jesuit mission. Just like the missionaries, the shogunate initially concentrated its efforts on the nobility, forbidding its members to convert to Christianity or eliminating socially and politically those who did not renounce the religion.
The baptism of the lord of a particular territory was often followed by the baptism of local populations, if circumstances permitted it. The inverse also demonstrates the validity of the theory: in areas where the Jesuits did not convert the ruling politico-military powers, or did not acquire the sympathy and benevolence of local authorities, the mission withered away and/or disappeared, as happened, for example, in Yamaguchi (in the province of Suō in Southern Honshū) and Kagoshima (in the province of Satsuma, in Southern Kyūshū). This process of winning over the local elite was a slow and lengthy one. For many years it proved impossible to convert them, a fact that considerably hindered the Jesuits’ work with the rest of the population. An exception took place in Hirado (in the province of Hizen, in North-Western Kyūshū) where, by the late 1550s, the Jesuits had baptised members of the Koteda lineage and all their vassals.

The missionaries’ strategy for action – winning over the ruling elite – included taking advantage of kinship networks that linked warrior families. Depending on the circumstances, namely the local politico-military scenario and/or the desire of the warriors, the missionaries succeeded or failed in their attempts.

An analysis of Jesuit documentation reveals that these kinship networks could have distinct consequences on the missionaries’ work. Ties between Christian and non-Christian lineages could result in the propagation of Christianity to new families and areas, with the evangelisation of the dominions of these new converts, or could simply result in the Christianisation of new lineages but not their territories. Both scenarios represented situations of religious expansion that were dear to the Jesuits. However, the opposite could also result from ties between Christians and non-Christians: a convert could abandon Christianity or, in extreme and rare cases, a mission could be closed. In a middle-ground, there were situations in which the Jesuits, despite their best efforts, were not able to benefit from these kinship networks but neither were they harmed by them.

Another kind of union brought together two lineages that were already Christian. From these unions, the missionaries hoped for the establishment or reinforcement of politico-military ties between the parties involved and, from a religious point of view, the strengthening of Christianity at the heart of these families and amongst the populations of their dominions. Since these unions established and/or consolidated ties between Christians they were greatly desired and whenever possible encouraged by the Jesuits.

The relations that existed or were established between noble houses could thus have an impact on the process of evangelisation in Japan. Apart from ties of consanguinity, matrimonial ties and adoptions (which were liable to unite or reinforce ties between two houses) were privileged means of realising this
strategy. In reality, matrimonial alliances and adoptions were practices that were widely used in order to establish politico-military alliances between the lineages of the bushi. The context of the civil war that wracked Japan until the late 16th century, with the innumerable and interminable conflicts between various military houses made these alliances, which were frequently unstable and fluctuating, even more pressing.

In this article, which seeks to analyse the warrior aristocracy of the island of Kyūshū – the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands – one will attempt to identify the way in which the missionaries benefited or not from kinship networks amongst the local nobility. The choice of this geographical area was due to the enormous importance that the island of Kyūshū had in the context of Luso-Japanese relations during the 16th and 17th centuries. In effect, it was in the ports and harbours of this island, namely, the port of the city of Nagasaki, that the Portuguese trading ship (kurofune) docked during the period in which merchants were allowed to operate in Japan. At the same time, it was in Kyūshū that the presence of the Jesuit missionaries, protected by the warrior aristocracy and various other members of their clans, was felt most intensely or lasted the longest. Kyūshū was the first island where the European missionaries established a presence and, during the period in which the Jesuits were officially present in Japan (1549-1614), it was the main focus for the propagation of Christianity.

II

The ties between the Koteda and Ichibu lineages of Hirado are an excellent example – amongst many others – of how the missionaries did not neglect kinship ties between military houses. Simultaneously benefiting from

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7 An artificial tie of affiliation, adoption was used to ensure the perpetuation of a house. Unlike in Europe it was used quite frequently in Japan as an alternative hereditary strategy. The most common practice was to adopt a son-in-law or a member of the extended family (a grandson or collateral relative, for example). For adoption in Japan, I have used Patrick Beillevaire, "O Japão, uma sociedade do lar", in História da Família, André Burguière et al., 2nd vol., Tempos Medievais: Ocidente, Oriente, Lisbon, 1987, pp. 209-210.

8 With regard to Christian Nagasaki, in addition to the brief and already outdated study by Carlos Francisco Moura, see the recent work by Helena Rodrigues who, based on a wealth of information gathered from the Jesuit collections at the Ajuda Library in Lisbon, the Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu and the Royal Academy for History in Madrid, has studied the origins and development of the city until the expulsion of the Jesuits. Cf. Carlos Francisco Moura, "Nagasáqui, cidade portuguesa no Japão", in Studia, No. 26, Lisbon, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1969, pp. 115-148 and Helena Rodrigues, Nagasaki Nanban. Das origens à expulsão dos portugueses [Nanban Nagasaki. From Its Origins to the Expulsion of the Portuguese], Lisbon, 2006, polycopied Masters thesis in the History of the Discoveries and the Portuguese Expansion (15th-18th centuries), presented at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the New University of Lisbon.
a favourable politico-military conjuncture, in this case the Jesuits managed to expand Christianity to a new lineage and missionary space.

Although Jesuit documentation does not prove this, it is plausible that the initial contacts between the missionaries and some members of the Koteda family took place at the same time that the missionaries began contacts with Matsuura Takanobu (1529-1599), the daimyo of Hirado, in late 1550. With this daimyo’s consent, the Jesuits founded a mission in his dominions. However, from the late 1550s (1558), the expansion and maintenance of this mission passed definitively into the hands of another military house, which was a vassal of the Matsuura family, the Koteda family. Descendants of a collateral branch of the Matsuuras, the Kotedas held a prominent position in the small court of the lords of Hirado.9

The first members of the lineage to be baptised, in 1553, were two brothers: Koteda Yasutsune António (?-1582), heir to the house, and João Koteda. The only information available about the latter is the name he adopted when he was baptised.10 Five years later, in 1558, the rest of the house joined them in their faith while their vassals, scattered throughout Ikitsukijima and Takushima, were simultaneously the first examples of mass baptisms in Japanese history.11 The Portuguese Jesuit Gaspar Vilela (1526-1572), leading a team of missionaries, was responsible for this missionary endeavour. As is known, the propagation of Christianity in Japan was almost always accompanied by attacks upon local religious systems, especially Buddhism. Whenever local lords allowed it, Buddhist temples and Shinto monasteries were destroyed and local priests were expelled or converted. Vilela’s actions in Ikitsukijima were no exception and, during the time he was there, he transformed three Buddhist temples into churches.

Except for a short period between 1558 and 1564 when the Jesuits were not authorised by Matsuura Takanobu to work in Hirado, a small mission that served to support local Christians functioned in Hirado until the late 16th

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9 The first member of the Matsuura family to adopt the surname Koteda was the third son of Matsuura Toyohisa who, in the late 15th century, was granted what would constitute part of the Koteda dominions. In 1541, after the death of the daimyo Matsuura Okinobu, it was Koteda Yasumasa who looked after the interests of the house of Matsuura while the heir, Matsuura Takanobu, was a minor. With the rise of Takanobu, the Kotedas were rewarded with a substantial increase in their territories. Cf. Stephen Turnbull, The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan. A Study of Their Development, Beliefs and Rituals, Avon, 1998, p. 28 and Alessandro Valignano S.J., Sumario de las cosas de Japón (1583), José Alvarez-Taladriz (ed.), Tokyo, 1954, pp. 94-95, note 102.

10 The baptism of these samurais is poorly documented since most of the correspondence pertaining to 1553 was lost. With regard to the reasons that led one to believe that this was the year they were baptised, see Madalena Ribeiro, A Nobreza Cristã de Kyūshū..., pp. 23-24, note 13.

century (1599), when the Kotedas went into exile. In 1565, the number of local Christians grew with the baptism of the inhabitants of Ichibu, a small fiefdom in Ikitsukijima that was under João Koteda at the time. Due to the fact that he was a second-born son, João was, in principle, excluded from succeeding as head of the house and inheriting the patrimony of his forefathers.\(^\text{12}\) Thus in the early 1560s, he joined another local clan via the dual ties of matrimony and adoption: he married the daughter of the lord of Ichibu and was adopted as his heir by his father-in-law.\(^\text{13}\) He was now called Ichibu Kageyū João. Shortly thereafter, in 1565, Christianity expanded to Ichibu with the baptism of the local population.\(^\text{14}\) Baltasar da Costa (c. 1538-?), who had been the superior of the residence in Hirado since 1564, and Juan Fernández (1526-1567) were responsible for the catechism of the inhabitants of Ichibu.

Henceforth, the Kotedas and the Ichibus were the main patrons of the missionaries in Hirado, responsible not just for the expansion but also the continuance of the mission in this area of the province of Hizen. Later, relations between the two houses would be reinforced by another marriage, that of João’s heir, Baltasar Ichibu, to a granddaughter of António Koteda.\(^\text{15}\)

After these two phases of expansion – first with the conversion of the Koteda vassals (1558) and then of the population of Ichibu (1565) – Christianity in Hirado underwent a second stage, characterised by low numbers of baptisms, practically limited to the children of converts, and constant efforts to train and assist Christians. This work with individuals who had already been baptised allowed the Christian community to survive, decades later, when the missionaries were expelled first from Hirado (1599) and later from Japan (1614). The support of these families was all the more important since the Jesuits’ relations with the local daimyo were always punctuated with some tension and occasional conflicts. As Cosme de Torres (1510-1570) stated in 1565, Matsuura Takanobu was “not favourably inclined towards the Law of

\(^{12}\) The period of the \textit{sengoku jidai}, characterised by intense conflicts and politico-military instability, induced heads of military houses to prefer to transmit all their properties to a single successor so as to strengthen the domestic institution and stabilise the landholding structure. Cf. Patrick Beillevaire, “O Japão, uma sociedade do lar” in \textit{História da Família}, p. 198.


God nor us”. In reality, the political authority in Hirado did not favour the expansion of the mission. Although the Matsuuras tolerated the Jesuits, to the point of authorising their presence, their attitudes ended up by hindering the missionaries’ work, which remained practically confined to the dominions of the two military houses mentioned above.

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The case of the Kotedas and Ichibus is a clear example of how ties between lineages could result in the widening of the Jesuits’ sphere of action. In other cases, however, the benefits afforded by family ties were limited to the Christianisation of relatives since, due to diverse reasons, the local scenario did not allow missions to be opened in their lands. This was what happened with the Itō lineage of the province of Hyūga (in Eastern Kyūshū). Linked via matrimonial ties to the Ōtomo family of Bungo – headed by the Christian daimyo Ōtomo Yoshishige Francisco (1530-1587) – several members of this house were baptised in a conjuncture that was extremely favourable to the Jesuits, in which Christianity experienced a moment of expansion at the heart of the warrior elite of Bungo. In effect, by the late 1570s and early 1580s, not only had Ōtomo Yoshishige already embraced Christianity (in 1578) but several of his family members, namely his descendants, and other members of the local nobility had been baptised or were in the process of converting. Having sought refuge in Bungo since 1578, the Itōs were no exception.

In early 1578, fleeing the expansion of the Shimazu family in Hyūga, the Itōs abandoned their province and sought refuge in the territories of the Ōtomos, to whom, as has been mentioned, they were related. In effect, the old chief of the clan, Itō Yoshisuke (1513-1585), had married one of Ōtomo Yoshishige’s sisters. During the period in which they lived in Bungo,


17 For the circumstances that preceded the baptism of the daimyo of Bungo, see Arcadio Schwade, “D. Francisco de Bungo e o projecto de fundar uma cidade cristã em Hyūga”, in Revista de Cultura, 2nd series, No. 17, October/December 1993, Macao, pp. 41-48.

18 The Shimazu expansion in Kyūshū was thwarted only in 1587, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) invaded the island and subjected its lords. At the time, the Shimazus enjoyed a virtual hegemony in Kyūshū.

19 Cf. letter from Luís Fróis to the Jesuits in Portugal, Usuki, 16/10/1578 in Cartas..., tome I, f. 420; letter from Luís Fróis, Arima, 20/2/1588 in Cartas..., tome II, f. 189; and Luís Fróis S.J., Historia de Japam, vol. III, pp. 17-18. Although the missionaries do not provide a complete list of the identities of the exiles it can be inferred that they went to Bungo, at least those who were later baptised.

20 Cf. Alessandro Valignano S.J., Sumario..., pp. 102-103, note 2. Itō Yoshisuke was responsible for the military supremacy of his family in Hyūga during the mid-16th century. However, from
between 1578 and 1587, the Itôs were in contact with the Jesuits – who, since 1553 had been working there in a series of missions – and many of them ended up by embracing Christianity. The first members of this family to be baptised, in 1581, were two cousins, grandchildren of Yoshisuke: Itô Sukekatsu (c. 1567-1593), who took the name Jerônimo, and Itô Sukemasu (c. 1570-1612), henceforth known as Mâncio. While Jerônimo was sent by Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) to the seminary of Azuchi, where he lived for a short while, Mâncio was part of the famous Japanese delegation sent to Europe, as a substitute for his cousin Jerônimo. Their respective mothers and some siblings also converted shortly thereafter.

The virtual lack of concrete data about the conversions of Jerônimo and Mâncio is in stark contrast to the innumerable references to the baptism of the deposed heir of Hyûga – “brother of Jerônimo and cousin of Mâncio” – Itô Yoshikata Bartolomeu (c. 1564/65-1593), which apparently took place at the same time that Ôtomo Chikamori Pantaleão, a son of the daimyo of Bungo, converted in 1582. A final reference to baptisms in this family appears in 1586, when one of the sons of the former daimyo of Hyûga, called Itô Suketake – who had participated in the campaign to subject the island headed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), in order to try and recover his father’s erstwhile dominions – embraced Christianity. Kuroda Yoshitaka Simão (1546-1604), who had been baptised in 1585, similarly at the behest of other warriors, played an important role in Suketake’s decision to convert.


21 The work by Diego Yuuki S.J., Os quatro legados dos dãimios de Quiuxu aps regressarem ao Japão, Macao-Japan, 1990, still continues to be a seminal work about the Japanese delegation that went to Europe.

22 One of these new converts was Justo, a brother of Itô Sukemasu Mâncio, who, due to the latter’s influence, frequented the seminary. However, unlike Mâncio, who was ordained as a priest in 1608, he did not embrace the life of a man of the cloth.

23 “Irmão de Jerônimo & primo de Mâncio”, annual letter from Japan for 1582, Luís Fróis, Kuchinotsu, 31/10/1582 in Cartas..., tome II, f. 56.

24 Ôtomo Chikamori Pantaleão was baptised by Francisco Cabral sometime before September 1582, the date of the letter in which the missionary mentions this fact, which was cited by Luís Fróis. Cf. annual letter from Japan for 1582, Luís Fróis, Kuchinotsu, 31/10/1582 in Cartas..., tome II, f. 56.


26 Kuroda Yoshitaka was the son of Kodera Noritaka, lord of the castle of Chogaku in the province of Harima, situated on the island of Honshû. From 1577 onwards, Yoshitaka and his father began to support the campaigns of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and, subsequently, those
Until this military campaign, the Itós lived in Bungo, which enabled the Jesuits to further train and assist converts who so desired. Subsequently, in 1587, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi handed over a small dominion in Hyūga (Obi) to Itō Suketaké, part of the family returned to their original province. In effect, both Bartolomeu as well as Jerónimo had been placed at the service of their uncle Suketaké. About two years later (c. 1589), the former, Bartolomeu, married Regina, a daughter of the late Ōtomo Yoshishige, a union that for the Jesuits signified the hope of being able to penetrate an area that until then had remained out of reach despite the Christianisation of local elites.

In reality, despite the conversion of Itō Suketaké and the fact that several of his relatives were Christians, the Jesuits had never been active in this warrior’s territories. It is plausible that one missionary or another might have visited the area in order to assist Christians; but residences and churches were never established, nor did they undertake missionary activities amongst the people of Obi. The marriage between Regina Ōtomo and Bartolomeu Itō did not change this situation. It appears that after the promulgation of the Hakata Edict (25 July 1587), the newly-baptised Itō Suketaké chose to maintain a cautious attitude with regard to Christianity. There is no mention of whether he abandoned the religion, which the missionaries might have naturally omitted from their missives, nor are there references to itinerant missions to Obi, excluding the mention of a visit realised during the Korean war during which, however, Itō Suketaké was absent from his lands.

28 Bartolomeu and Jerónimo were nephews and simultaneously brothers-in-law of the new daimyo of Obi since the latter had married (in c. 1576) one of their sisters (cf. Alessandro Valignano S.J., Sumario..., pp. 102-103, note 2). In reality, Toyotomi Hideyoshi had given Itō Suketaké a territory in Hyūga, to the detriment of the natural heir to the province, Bartolomeu, who the new daimyo ended up by adopting (cf. annual letter from Japan for 1588, Gaspar Coelho, Katsusa, 24/2/1589 in Cartas..., tome II, f. 256v).
29 Cf. annual letter from Japan for 1588, Gaspar Coelho, Katsusa, 24/2/1589, in Cartas..., tome II, f. 256v.
III

These ties between aristocratic Japanese families did not always prove favourable for Christianity. Sometimes, the missionaries tried to benefit from kinship networks and were unsuccessful, which shows that family ties could not always be relied upon to further missionary activities. On other occasions, the expansion of Christianity clearly suffered setbacks: sometimes due to the abandonment of the faith on the part of individual members of Christian families or due to the abandonment of Christianity on the part of an entire clan and the closure of missions in their territories, which was far more detrimental to missionary activities.

The marriage that linked the Ōmuras and the Ryūzōjis, two established families of the province of Hizen, is one of the few cases mentioned in Jesuit missives that resulted in the abandonment of Christianity on the part of a convert. The fact that it is a rare case – clearly mentioned in an indirect manner – in Jesuit correspondence should not lead one to think that it was an exceptional situation. As is known, the didactic and propaganda objectives of letters penned by members of the Society of Jesus, which would later be published and circulated, conditioned the kind of information that these epistles contained. Thus, any news that might harm the image of a successful mission or that was less edifying for readers was omitted. Moreover, in this case, apart from the probable abandonment of Christianity on the part of one of Sumitada’s daughters, there were no other serious repercussions for the missionaries’ work. In these cases, the Jesuits clearly chose to keep silent.

In 1570, seven years after the baptism of Ōmura Sumitada Bartolomeu (1533-1587), his wife and descendants also embraced Christianity.\(^{31}\) The fragility of the political and military position of the lord of Ōmura with regard to some vassals and neighbours is generally pointed out by historians as one of the reasons that induced him to support the religion of the Nanbanjin. The Jesuit missionaries were a potential link between the warrior and the Portuguese merchants who came to Japan every year, who could supply him with military materials and simultaneously afford some commercial prosperity for his lands by trading in a series of other products.\(^{32}\) Ōmura Sumitada was

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\(^{31}\) With regard to these baptisms see the letter from Juan Fernández to the Jesuit brothers in Bungo, Yokoseura, 17/4/1563 in Cartas..., tome I, f. 117v; letter from Luís de Almeida to the Jesuit brothers in India, Yokoseura, 17/11/1563 in Cartas..., tome I, f. 126; letter from Luís Fróis to the Jesuit brothers in Europe, Ōmura, 14/11/1563 in Cartas..., tome I, ff. 133-134; and letter from Melchior de Figueiredo to the Jesuits in Portugal, Ōmura, 21/10/1570 in Cartas..., tome I, ff. 297-297v.

\(^{32}\) With regard to Nagasaki, the lord of Ōmura and the Jesuit missionaries see Jurgis Elisonas, “Conversions and Contradictions: Symbolic Trade in the Jesuit Colony of Nagasaki” in Portugal e...
quite successful in this regard, since it was in his dominions that the main Japanese base for Portuguese merchants, i.e. Nagasaki developed and prospered. However, historians are also unanimous in affirming that, irrespective of the reasons that resulted in his baptism, Sumitada remained close to some Jesuits - namely the Portuguese Afonso de Lucena (1551-1632), the superior of the mission in Ōmura for several decades, and the Japanese Nicolau de Yamaguchi (c. 1522-1599) who, after being admitted into the Society, almost always lived in this area.

Jesuit correspondence abounds in references, some of which are quite long and detailed, to Ōmura Sumitada’s military weakness and the threats, conspiracies and conflicts that involved other warriors such as Gotō Takaakira, Saigō Sumitaka and Matsuura Takenobu, to cite only a few of his traditional enemies. With the military and logistical help of the Portuguese, the lord of Ōmura gradually defeated these warriors. However, the support of the Europeans was not enough to check the military expansion of Ryūzōji Takenobu (1529-1584), the daimyo of Saga, who, by defeating, intimidating or allying with various daimyos and kokujin in Hizen had acquired control of the province in the late 1570s.

33 Gotō Takaakira was the natural heir of Ōmura Sumiaki, Sumitada’s adoptive father. In his turn, Takaakira had been adopted by the Gotōs, another family from Hizen who were neighbours of the Ōmuras. He never reconciled with the idea of having been superseded by Sumitada and waged war against him or incited Sumitada’s vassals to revolt. Cf. Jurgis Elisonas, ‘Christianity and the Daimyo’ in Cambridge History of Japan, John Whitney Hall and James L. McClain (eds.), Cambridge, 1991, vol. IV, p. 324.

34 Saigō Sumitaka, lord of Ishaya, a small dominion wedged between Ōmura and Arima, was Ōmura Sumitada’s brother-in-law (cf. Luís Fróis S.J., Historia de Japam, vol. II, pp. 378-379). At this time, by means of wars and alliances, he sought to expand his territorial base at the cost of the Ōmuras and Arimas.

35 The conflict in which Ōmura Sumitada was involved a few weeks after his baptism, which extended until Autumn 1564, is but one example. Internal revolts promoted by some vassals supported by Gotō Takaakira, the occupation of his dominions, the destruction of the city of Ōmura and the port of Yokoseura and Sumitada’s own exile were some of the more visible aspects of this conflict. Cf. letter from Luís de Almeida to the Jesuits in India, Yokoseura, 17/11/1563 in Cartas..., tome I, ff. 129-131; letter from Luís Fróis to the Jesuits in Europe, Ōmura, 14/11/1563 in Cartas..., tome I, ff. 135-136v; letter from Luís de Almeida to the Jesuits in India, Bungo, 14/10/1564 in Cartas..., tome I, ff. 154v-155; and Luís Fróis S.J., Historia de Japan, vol. I, pp. 333-341.

36 In December 1579, Francisco Carréon (c.1552-1590) summarised the hegemony of the daimyo of Saga in the province of Hizen in the following terms: ‘At this time [...] the greatest lord of all of Hizen who is already lord of almost this entire realm, is a heathen, called Ryūzōji, who from a very low level raised himself so high that all the lords of Hizen recognise him as superior either voluntarily or by force’. [‘Neste tempo [...] o maior senhor de todo o Figêm, [Hizen] que he ja quasi senhor de todo este reino, he hum gentio, chamado Riusóji [Ryūzōji], o qual de muito baixo ser se aleuantou em tam alto que todos estes senhores de Figêm, ou por amor, ou
In 1580, after some incursions by Ryūzōji Takanobu in Ōmura, Sumitada, unable to defeat him, ended up by submitting and swearing vassalage to him. In that same year, accompanied by various vassals and family members, Sumitada went to the castle of Saga in order to establish a peace agreement between the two houses. The pact was sealed with the marriage of one of Sumitada’s (Christian) daughters to a son of the daimyo of Saga, called Ryūzōji Ietane.

Jesuit missives are totally silent with regard to this daughter of Sumitada – they do not even mention her Christian name – and the reference to Ryūzōji Ietane as Sumitada’s son-in-law appears in an indirect allusion by Luís Fróis (1532-1597) while enumerating the warriors who accompanied the daimyo of Saga during the battle of Okidanawate in 1584. Everything points to the fact that Sumitada’s daughter was baptised with the family in 1570 and that this fact was later suppressed by the Jesuits. One hypothesis that explains this
silence is that she abandoned the Christian faith when she married Ietane. On the other hand, the marriage that linked the Ōmurás to the Ryūzōjis was too inconvenient from the point of view of the Jesuits to be mentioned in their correspondence, especially the missives that would later be circulated. How could they explain to a European public that was eager for news from Japan, but one that was also completely ignorant of local realities, that the daughter of one of the main Christian lords was marrying the son of a figure described as the “greatest enemy of Christianity”\(^\text{41}\)? The missionaries’ strategy was quite understandably silence.

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A situation that had different contours and consequences was the case that involved the Arimas, a military house from the province of Hizen, and the Tokugawa shoguns. An alliance between the two lineages was established in 1612, at a time when the Tokugawas had already consolidated their military and political hegemony in the archipelago — via the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, in which they defeated the supporters of Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s successor, and the establishment of a new shogunal house in 1603. At this time, the Tokugawas were developing a web of kinship relations with the main Japanese seignorial houses in order to consolidate their supremacy in the archipelago.\(^\text{42}\) The Church’s presence in Japan also faced a process of radical restructuring with the rise of this new shogunal lineage.\(^\text{43}\) Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) accepted and tolerated the presence of the Jesuits until 1614, due to the role they played as intermediaries in the trade with the Portuguese.

baptised, there was no reason for her not to have been baptised as well. Via the sources cited above, it is known that this marriage was envisaged only in 1580.

41 “Mayor inimigo que tem a Christandade”, annual letter from Japan for 1583, Luís Fróis, [Nagasaki], 2/1/1584 in Cartas..., tome II, f. 91v.


of Macao. However, he progressively implemented a set of legislation that sought to impede the expansion of Christianity and minimise the influence of the missionaries in some Christian communities. In 1603 he issued a decree that prohibited the baptism of nobles; a similar diploma was also promulgated three years later. The pressure on the Jesuits was maintained even at the end of the decade, as is mentioned by João Rodrigues Girão (1558-1629) in the annual letter for 1608.

The alliance that was established between the Tokugawas and the Arimas, coupled with an extremely unfavourable conjuncture for the missionaries – namely the discovery of a case of corruption that harmed the interests of the Tokugawas and involved two Christians, Arima Harunobu Protásio (1567-1612) and Okamoto Daihachi (?-1612) – resulted not only in the fact that part of the Arima family abandoned Christianity but also caused the closure of the mission in the Takaku Peninsula and the first persecutions of Christians, promoted by the daimyo who had apostatised. The events that culminated in the closure of this mission – the only mission in Kyūshū with some "antiquity" that was still active – began in the early 1610s.

In 1612 a fraud was discovered that had been engineered by Arima Harunobu Protásio with the active assistance and participation of Okamoto Daihachi – secretary to Honda Masazumi (1566-1637) – who the daimyo of Arima bribed with presents and money.

44 In 1614, the year when the edict expelling the Jesuits was promulgated, the Tokugawas felt they had found preferable alternatives to the Portuguese merchants – the Dutch. In 1610, after the incident involving the ship Nossa Senhora da Graça (or Madre de Deus), João Rodrigues Tçuuzzu was removed from the shogunal court and Ieyasu chose William Adams, an Englishman working in the service of the Dutch, to replace him. Prior to this, in 1609, the establishment of a Dutch factory in Hirado had already been authorised. Around 1612, the route of the ships of the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC, the Dutch East India Company) bound for Hirado seems to have been definitively regularised and, in 1613, another group of Europeans, the English, also established an emporium in Hirado. For an overview of VOC activities in the Far East during the first half of the 17th century see Ernst van Veen, "VOC Strategies in the Far East (1605-1640)” in Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies, Lisbon, vol. 3, December 2001, pp. 85-105.


46 Cf. annual letter from Japan for 1608, João Rodrigues Girão, Nagasaki, 14/3/1609 in ARSI, Japonica-Sinica 56, f. 3v.

47 Masazumi served the Tokugawas. In 1607, when Ieyasu retired to Sumpu, he was appointed as his minister. This warrior was one of the masterminds behind the plan that resulted in the end of Toyotomi Hideyori in 1615. Seven years later he was disgraced and was exiled to Dewa, where he subsequently died. From the very outset of Ieyasu’s administration the Western ecclesiastics found an important protector and patron with regard to Tokugawa Ieyasu in this figure. Honda Masazumi was also one of the great promoters of Japanese foreign trade. Cf. "Honda Masazumi” in Dictionnaire Historique du Japon, vol. I, pp. 1043-1044 and Arcadio Schwade, “O Cristianismo no Japão...” in O Século Cristão..., pp. 463-464.
Harunobu’s objective was to expand his dominions via the possession of two territories, Isahaya and Kôjiro. Moreover, the latter territory, which was situated in the northern part of the Takaku Peninsula, had been part of the Arima’s territorial patrimony until very recently; in 1587, in the aftermath of the territorial redistribution of Kyûshû, Toyotomi Hideyoshi had removed it from Arima control. Daimyo Harunobu did not desist in his attempts to recover these lands and bribed Okamoto Daihachi to obtain the necessary letters and deeds from the retired shogun (ôgosho) in order to once again take control of these dominions.

While the secret negotiations between Harunobu and Daihachi were taking place, Tokugawa Ieyasu gave one of his great-granddaughters, Kunihine (the granddaughter of Tokugawa Nobuyasu, Ieyasu’s first-born son) to the daimyo of Arima’s heir Naozumi Miguel (1585-1641) in yet another political manoeuvre aimed at linking leading Japanese daimyos to his house and thus enabling him to control them. This union implied a rupture with the Church on the part of Naozumi, a split about which Tokugawa Ieyasu was undoubtedly aware when he promoted the alliance. By marrying Kunihine, the Arima heir was violating an important Christian precept since he was already married to Marta Konishi, daughter of the late Konishi Yukinaga (c. 1556-1600), who had been defeated in Sekigahara.

The subsequent discovery of the fraud engineered by Arima Harunobu further aggravated the situation. Mateus de Couros (1569-1632) mentions the hypothesis that Naozumi, having fallen out with his father since the latter was delaying in handing him control of the house of Arima, denounced or had others denounce the fraudulent negotiations in which Harunobu was involved. Be that as it may, the two conspirators were sentenced to death: Okamoto Daihachi was burnt alive in April 1612 and the daimyo of Arima was executed two months later by a retainer after he refused to practice seppuku.

The fact that the main protagonists of this case of corruption were Christians further exacerbated the central authorities’ animosity towards the
missionaries. A series of measures were taken against the Jesuits and Christians in the following months, which culminated in January 1614 when the European missionaries were expelled from the archipelago. As for Arima, the mission was closed even before the expulsion edict since, in 1612, Ieyasu only authorised Arima Naozumi to return to his dominions on the condition that the daimyo would abandon the Christian faith. The mission was closed upon his arrival in June 1612: the daimyo confiscated the Church’s properties and expelled the missionaries. At this time, the first pressures upon Christians began, targeting the local nobility above all. One of the daimyo’s brothers (André) was entrusted with overseeing the operation, along with two other local figures. Mateus de Couros admits that many nobles did not resist the pressure and ended up by abandoning Christianity; those who resisted left Arima, some of them probably heading for Nagasaki. The following month witnessed the first death sentence given to a Japanese, the first in a long series of martyrdoms promoted by the daimyo with a view to eradicating Christianity from his territories. Unable to successfully implement a policy aimed at exterminating the religion, Arima Naozumi was transferred to Nobeoka in the province of Hyūga in 1616.

IV

If the unions between families that afforded the expansion of Christianity into new noble houses and the opening of new areas for missionary activities were one of the Jesuits’ great trump cards, the same can be said of the links established between Christian houses, which enabled the establishment or reinforcement of ties between brothers in the Faith. One of the best examples of this, as described by the Jesuits, was the marriage between Ômura Yoshiaki Sancho and Catarina de Arima that took place in 1588/1589. The groom was the heir to the aforementioned Ômura Sumitada Bartolomeu; Catarina, in her turn, was a sister of Arima Harunobu Protádio. In reality, this union was part of a longstanding strategy of alliances between the two houses. As an example, Arima/Ômura Sumitada, who was a member of the Arima family by birth, was adopted by Ômura Sumiaki (?-1551), who also married an Arima.

53 Cf. Francisco Pires, “Pontos do que me alembrar” in Monumeta Historica Japoniae, p. 422.
54 Cf. annual letter from Japan for 1612, Mateus de Couros, Nagasaki, 12/1/1613 in ARSI, Japonica-Sinica 57, ff. 199v-202.
Despite these alliances, it is known that there were some conflicts and friction between the two families, both between Ômura Sumitada and his brother Arima Yoshisada, as well as later with his nephew, Arima Harunobu.

One of these conflicts took place in 1586, on the eve of Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s invasion of Kyūshū, and was caused by a clash between the two houses over possession of a parcel of land. In that year, Ômura Sumitada Bartolomeu invaded Uchime-Hokame, territories that were traditionally part of the territorial patrimony of the Ômuras but were controlled at the time by his nephew, Arima Harunobu Protásio. The Jesuits, namely the vice-provincial Gaspar Coelho (1531-1590), were not in favour of the war, which implied that Christians would be fighting each other on opposite sides of the battlefield for control of a territory that was likewise populated by Christians. At this juncture, the vice-provincial sought to unite the Christian lords in a military alliance aimed at defeating the Shimazus of Satsuma, who were rapidly conquering Kyūshū and thus threatened the future of innumerable missions.

A few years after this war the Ômuras and Arimas reinforced their relations with the marriage between Ômura Yoshiaki and a sister of the daimyo of Arima, a union that was engineered and negotiated by the Christian daimyo Konishi Yukinaga Agostinho. In this regard, Gaspar Coelho wrote: “Dom Sancho Võmûrandono filho de dom Bertalameu that Deos aja primo de dom Protasio casou agora com huma irmã do dito dom Protasio, parecendo mui bem isto ao padre Vice...”

Understanding Jesuit documentation is virtually silent with regard to this war. To the best of my knowledge, Luís Fróis does not devote even a line to it in his monumental work and the missives included in the well-known Évora edition also ignore the event. Only Afonso de Lucena and Francisco Pires provide some information about the conflict. Cf. Afonso de Lucena S.J., Erinnerungen aus der Christenheit von Ômura., pp. 112-114 and Francisco Pires, “Pontos do que me alembrar” in Monumenta Historica Japoniae. 1972, pp. 397-398.
This statement clearly reflects the missionaries’ notions, which were reinforced over time, of the close ties and mutual dependence between the territories of the Arimas and the Ómuras. Their geographical proximity, kinship ties between the governing families – at the time, the daimyos of these territories were simultaneously cousins and brothers-in-law –, the same politico-military alignment at certain moments – although, as has been mentioned, they often clashed with each other – and the protectionism extended to the missionaries all contributed towards the Jesuits’ views.

According to Gaspar Coelho’s ambitions, this marriage – which involved the two houses that controlled the main Christianised areas of Hizen – was a step towards the reinforcement of political ties between these lords in an area where Christianity was not in decline, despite the promulgation of the Hakata Edict in 1587 and the subsequent temporary abandonment of Christianity by the lords of Arima and Omura. In fact, the contrary was true. In truth, despite the adverse circumstances the Jesuits faced in the aftermath of the Hakata Edict, Christianity witnessed some waves of expansion in the Western and North-Western regions of the island of Kyūshū. 63

In conclusion, one can see how the Jesuit strategy of cultivating close relations with and converting the ruling Japanese elite, the warrior aristocracy, included the utilisation of kinship networks that connected various families. Via these bonds, the Jesuits sought to expand their sphere of action or, when the parties involved were Christians, to strengthen ties between converts. In fact, when associated with a set of favourable circumstances, these family networks proved to be effective channels for the diffusion of Christianity, not just by penetrating new families but also by opening up new

63 In effect, in the archipelago of Amakusa, South of Arima, the conversion of local elites took place with renewed vigour from late 1587 onwards and petered out only three years later. Southern Higo, to the west of Amakusa, was handed over to a Christian, Konishi Yukinaga in 1588; in North-Western Hizen, the mission in Hirado still survived, despite the closure of the residence and church in the city of Hirado in 1587. Even the eternal anti-Christian enclave in Isahaya, between Arima and Omura, was about to disappear from the map with a promise to convert from the local lord, Saigō Sumihasa. For all this, see Madalena Ribeiro, A Nobreza Cristã de Kyūshū..., passim.
areas for missionary activities. This was what happened in the case of the Itōs (of Hyūga) and the Ichibus (of Hirado).

However, the Jesuits were also aware of the fact that these ties were a double edged sword: if on the one hand they could facilitate the diffusion of their religion, on the other hand they could likewise result in setbacks for Christianity. When this happened, in the best of scenarios, it only resulted in the abandonment of Christianity on the part of one convert or another, as happened, very probably, with one of Sumitada's daughters; in the worst case, it resulted in the abandonment of the Christian faith by an entire family and in the closure of missions, as happened in Arima.

If, for the Jesuits, unions between Christians and non-Christians could result in the diffusion of Christianity, alliances between converts could be a way of reinforcing the religion at the heart of the families involved. On the other hand, from a political point of view, they were a step towards homogenising the secular interests of the Christian lords, with a view to creating a Christian politico-military block to serve the interests of Japanese Christendom.

After observing the diverse nature of the consequences that kinship networks had in the context of missionary activities in Japan, the question that is raised is whether, despite everything, it is possible to ascertain if they tended to be beneficial or prejudicial in terms of the missionaries’ activities. By means of an analysis of Jesuit documentation, it would seem possible to conclude that, on the whole, they tended to be beneficial. The predominance of descriptions of situations that were favourable to the missionaries can be understood if one keeps in mind that the aim of these reports was to provide an account of the propagation of Christianity in Japan. However, as one has seen, it is also always possible to find various cases in these sources in which the establishment of these ties proved detrimental to the activities of the missionaries.
Abstract

From the very outset, the Jesuits’ strategy for missionary activities in Japan implied focusing especially on the warrior aristocracy (the *buke*), the only class with *de facto* power in a country devastated by a civil war. Winning over the *buke* for the missionary cause involved using kinship networks that linked these warrior families. Depending on the local conjuncture and the will of the warriors, the Jesuits achieved varying degrees of success. Based on a reading and analysis of Jesuit documentation, this article seeks to identify the way in which these links influenced the process of missionary activities in Japan. In short, these ties could result in the expansion of Christianity, the reinforcement of links between Christian converts or could even cause setbacks.

Resumo

A estratégia de evangelização dos jesuítas no Japão implicou, desde os inícios, uma atenção especial à aristocracia guerreira (*buke*), a única com poder *de facto* num país assolado pela guerra civil. A conquista dos *buke* para a causa missionária passava pelo aproveitamento das redes de parentesco que ligavam as linhagens dos guerreiros. Dependendo da conjuntura local e da querença dos guerreiros, os jesuítas foram bem ou mal sucedidos. Neste trabalho, partindo da leitura e análise do *corpus* documental jesuíta, procurámos ver a forma como estas ligações influíram no processo de missãoção do Japão. Resumidamente, estas ligações podiam resultar na expansão do cristianismo, no seu retrocesso ou, no reforço dos laços entre baptizados.

要約

イエズス会の日本での布教戦略ではその当初から、内戦状態の国内状況にあって事実上の権力を有した唯一の存在である武家にとりわけ注目していた宣教手段として、武家の獲得には武家間の血脈を繋ぐ血縁関係を利用することとなった。その土地の状況や武家の意思にイエズス会士の成功は左右された。この論文では、イエズス会の文書の分析によって、これらの繋がりが日本布教の過程にどのような影響を与えたのかを探る。簡潔にいえば、このような繋がりはキリスト教の拡大、あるいは衰退、あるいはキリスト教信者間の結束を結果として生じさせたと考えられる。