



# The Dress of Evangelization

## Jesuit Garments, Liturgical Textiles, and the Senses in Early Modern Japan

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**ABSTRACT** The present article analyses the use of clothing in the Jesuit sixteenth-century mission in Japan by applying dress theory. It investigates Jesuit garments and other perceptible elements of dress by understanding them as nonverbal communication. Texts by missionaries such as Francis Xavier (1506–52), Francisco Cabral (1533–1609), Luís Fróis (1532–1597), and Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) are scrutinised to establish the content of the messages they meant to convey through Jesuit dress. The range of modifications that dress imposed on the bodies of the missionaries is examined to determine the limits within which the missionaries operated and how these boundaries came to be. Through an historical overview, the missionaries' strategies are examined to show how such messages were fine-tuned through the manipulation of dress, and to what extent they represented responses to the specific context of Japan. Anti-Christian polemical texts supply information on the Japanese's reception of these messages. The article explores Jesuit assumptions about the dress policies' impact on their souls through the senses and on their work of evangelization as well.

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**KEYWORDS** Society of Jesus, Jesuit missions, Japan, Early Modern Catholicism, liturgical textiles, religious dress, senses

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## Introduction

This article considers the use of textiles for evangelization in the Catholic sixteenth-century mission carried out in Japan by the Society of Jesus, focusing in particular on clothing by applying the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of dress.<sup>1</sup> It analyses Jesuit garments and textiles by framing them as nonverbal communication, establishing what type of meaning they were meant to carry. It also attempts to establish whether this message was received, how it was interpreted, and how it was then fine-tuned in accordance with the specific context in

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1 All translations in this paper are by the author, except where otherwise stated. Biblical citations are from the NRSV-CE. The edition of the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus (*Cons.*) used is Ganss (1970), that of the *Spiritual Exercises* (*Exx.*) is Ganss (1991).

which communication took place. The modifications performed on the bodies of missionaries by way of dress are examined in order to establish their effectiveness as well as the level of influence that they were held to have on the soul, through the senses.

The term “dress” is to be understood as indicating the totality of modifications carried out upon the body. Among these modifications, garments are the most common, but by no means are they the only ones: tattoos, perfumes, cosmetic surgery, and hairdos are included as well. Culture governs dress, not only through the establishment of the forms it can take, but also by attributing meaning to them. The modifications done to the body, just like the body itself, carry symbolic values. Thus, dress provides immediate information about a person, becoming an act of (chiefly nonverbal) instantaneous communication (Damhorst 2005b, 2–5; Arthur 1999, 2–3). [2]

Physically speaking, this type of communication is carried out through specific channels, corresponding to the five senses. The channels of sight and touch stand out as the most important in regard to dress; but smell and hearing, too, contribute (the sound made by heels, the smell of perfume); whereas taste ranks last in importance (Damhorst 2005a, 70). Aside from the immediate elements provided by the senses (shape, colour, texture, etc.), the other core traits of dress relevant to this study are those that fall under the rubric of the condition of the material: ripped, pristine, threadbare, etc. Surrounding the key characteristics of dress lies an array of elements that provide the context in which they can be interpreted, in a way that deeply influences communication. An example is the kinetic interaction (movement of the dressed body), but also the group association (organization, peers, etc.) that the dress highlights. All these characteristics, from the core ones to the accidental, ultimately fall in the wider framework set by culture: the rules of fashion, those of aesthetics, the trends of history, etc. As a result, the elements that compose dress, and their combinations, collected through the senses and inserted in their context, can refer to an array of meanings much wider than their material reality (Damhorst 2005a, 72–75). [3]

Due to the instantaneous quality of this type of communication as well as its implicit dependence on specific cultural contexts, its meaning is not universal. Still, this does not prevent the creation of some kind of message all the same, even if the dependence on context of appearance-based communication can sometimes go unnoticed: [4]

A wearer puts clothing, hairdo, accessories, and grooming together to produce an appearance and may assign meanings to that assembled appearance. Each observer of that appearance may agree on some meanings but may also have a unique interpretation of the appearance [...] Disagreement does not [necessarily] mean that communication stops or fails. It is the sum of how wearer and observer interact (or do not interact) on the basis of appearance that produces meanings for the wearer and the observer. (Damhorst 2005a, 69) [5]

The intersection of different meanings becomes particularly important in the case of intercultural messages, as is the case in the present study. [6]

The same attempts at control of the body exerted by religious regulators are extended to its modifiers. Thus, religion has always played its part in the creation of the meaning of dress. Regarding religious conformity, for example, Linda B. Arthur writes: [7]

Through conformance to a strict religious value system, the most conservative of the religious social bodies exert control over their members' physical bodies [...] [8]

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

From the outset, the Church's regulations of the garments are to be contextualised within the relationship existing between the external and internal aspect of the person—that is to say, the body and the soul. Early Christian teachings promulgated the idea that the appearance of a person (and therefore not only one's body, but also one's dress) mirrored the conditions of their soul (Ribeiro 2003, 13). This attitude towards garments opened the way for various rhetorical uses. For example, Paul's writings spoke of conversion to Christianity as a change of clothes (Col. 3:9–10). From this concept, Clement of Alexandria depicted baptism as the start of "a new life that is expressed in clothing both metaphorically and literally," where the catechumen, having "stripped off the garments of wickedness," can "put on the immortality of Christ" (Maier 2013, 75–76). [9]

At the same time, while the state of one's garments communicated the state of one's soul to others (making it visible, in a manner of speaking), such garments were also held to have a direct influence on it. For instance, sackcloth was not only a symbol of penance but became part of the very process of penance itself, as its harshness contributed to the mortification of the flesh. On the other hand, soft clothes were believed to make the soul "soft" (Twomey 2007, 123). If silk highlighted the sensual (rather than devotional) inclination of the wearer, this sensuality allowed the suggestion of sin to reach and imperil one's soul. It could be said, after all, that Adam and Eve fell precisely in this way (Classen 1998, 3). The debates on the status of the five senses in relation to the divine (and thus of the body in relation to the soul) therefore represent the widest context that informs the interpretation of dress. Additionally, liturgical textiles, too, as a specific category of devotional items, are characterised by these tensions. On the one hand, they are interpreted as a conduit for grace; on the other, they carry the dangers of idolatry and excess. [10]

Just as it is not possible to speak of a single Christian interpretation of garments throughout history, different bodies were restricted by different rules according to their social standing. As dress expressed the social role of the wearer (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992, 5), the rules that bounded such dress were far from homogenous; rather they were subject to different contextual needs. The social role of a priest, for example, was not that of a hermit, although they were both religious specialists, and this needed to be made manifest by their garments. Different prescriptions, in turn, created different meanings that could be recontextualised and appropriated in different ways. [11]

Considering their importance in communication and spirituality, garments became, not surprisingly, an important aspect of the Jesuit strategy of accommodation in the Asian missions. Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) adopted mandarin garments in China; Roberto Nobili (1577–1656) used the garments of Indian renunciants in the mission of Madurai; Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733) adopted the habit of Tibetan monks (Sanfilippo 1997; Pavone 2013; Brockey 2016). Among these instances, the history of garments in the Japanese enterprise is a peculiar one. Arguably due to its earlier start, greater dimensions, and longer duration, various tensions regarding garments began to surface and even shaped numerous debates that would help [12]

make explicit the missionaries' expectations, the principles governing dress in Europe, and the possibilities regarding their adaptation to Japan.

The Jesuit mission to Japan was founded by Francis Xavier (1506–52) in 1549. It survived the vicissitudes of the end of the Sengoku period (1467–1573) and the prohibition of missionary activity by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) in 1587; but it officially met its end after the Tokugawa shogunate's ban of Christianity in 1614.<sup>2</sup> Once in the country, Xavier became convinced that the Japanese showed great potential in terms of conversion as they were somehow influenced by long-lost memories of Christianity,<sup>3</sup> and hence began investigating the beliefs and practices of the Japanese infidels, as he defined them.<sup>4</sup> He painted most Buddhist monks negatively,<sup>5</sup> but attempted to relate them to Catholic religious specialists by way of their garments: "There are among these monks some who carry themselves like friars, who wear brownish-grey habits, [and are] all shaved;" others instead were dressed "like clerics," that is, with a black overgarment that covered the whole body (*koromo*).<sup>6</sup> Xavier clearly knew the importance of dress when it comes to self-presentation and, once he understood that his appearance was not conducive to obtaining permission to preach, he manipulated his dress to reach his objectives (Curvelo 2008, 112–13).

Unaware that the figure of the Emperor did not hold any political power over the country, as it had been divided by civil wars, Xavier initially attempted to obtain an official sanction from Emperor Go-Nara (1495–1557) to preach in Miyako (Kyoto). The Emperor however did not grant audience to the poorly dressed foreigner, especially since he did not bring any gifts, as was the custom. For the same reasons, the monks of the temple complex of Mount Hiei, whom Xavier had identified among the country's main religious authorities, refused to dispute with him, let alone grant him their approval (Schurhammer 1973, 4:197, 200).

Xavier then opted for a change of strategy as he came to perceive a strong inclination towards ceremony in Japanese culture. He requested an audience with the ruler of Yamaguchi, the powerful *daimyō* Ōuchi Yoshitaka, who was interested in creating a lasting relationship with Portuguese merchants. To better convey his status of ambassador to the viceroy of India, Xavier changed the manner in which he presented himself. He supported his claim with two diplomatic letters, beautifully adorned and originally destined to the Emperor. To further impress Yoshitaka, Xavier offered him many beautiful, expensive, and unusual presents. This decision not only took advantage of the appreciation his host displayed for unfamiliar and exquisite objects, but also complied with Japanese social rules of gift giving (Fróis 1976, 1:39; Pitelka 2016, 67–68).

How precisely Xavier changed his appearance is not known; the extant sources all point towards a manner of dress that aimed to be acceptable to Japanese taste and etiquette.<sup>7</sup> Xavier's

2 The most detailed publication on Francis Xavier's life is by Schurhammer (1973). An overview of the history of the Japanese mission is provided by Boscaro (2008), while a detailed reconstruction of the initial years of the mission is in Bourdon (1993).

3 Nicolao Lancillotto, "Information on Japan," Cochin, 28 December 1548 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:54–55).

4 Francis Xavier to the Jesuits of Goa, Kagoshima, 5 November 1549 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:142).

5 The term *bonzos* (*bonzes*), used by the Jesuits, is defined as "those [men] that they here have as priests" (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:145–46).

6 On Japanese Buddhist garment *koromo*, see Matsuo (2007, 26–27). On the *kesa*, the coloured robe worn over the shoulder, see Kennedy (1989) and Riggs (2004).

7 Schurhammer (1973, 4:216–17) lists the sources that mention both Xavier's visit and his change of garments. As noted by Schurhammer, the earliest mention of Xavier's garments during this visit appears to be Valignano's 1583 *Historia del principio y progreso de la Compañía de Jesús en las Indias orientales* (Valignano 1944). However, there is another source that could have appeared earlier: a dialogue written by Edmond Auger, where Xavier is depicted donning beautiful "regalia of silk" (Schurhammer 1973, 4:216; Auger 1960, 291). As Schurhammer suggested, Auger might have collected the information for the dialogue in

use of non-verbal communication to establish his status (and by extension, that of Christianity) among his interlocutors was not limited to the physical elements of his dress alone; Xavier also manipulated his clothing context through group association. His message was supported by the presence of the retinue of merchants that accompanied him (Brockey 2016, 186). To reinforce their respect for Xavier in front of other *daimyō*, Portuguese merchants would also spread their cloaks on the floor for the missionary to sit on.<sup>8</sup>

The visit to Ōuchi Yoshitaka is also present in the *Historia de Japam*, a detailed history [17] of the Jesuit enterprise in Japan written approximately between 1585 and 1594 by veteran missionary and interpreter Luís Fróis (1532–1597). This account, however, omits mention of Xavier's garments. The *Historia* purposefully underscores not only the appreciation attributed to the Japanese for richly decorated and formal ceremonies, but also for devotional items.<sup>9</sup> The following passage highlights the early emergence of the missionaries' conclusion that Japanese culture held a special inclination towards the sensual, which extended to devotional objects and practices:

[Xavier] showed [Yoshitaka] a rather ornate and distinguished Bible, ancient and illuminated, and a very beautiful Glossa Ordinaria, new and well decorated, telling him that in those books there was the entirety of our holy Law. The King<sup>10</sup> wanted to see a garment of brocade that the Father carried with him, and then asked the Father to wear it. It looked so well to him that he clapped his hands. (Fróis 1976, 1:40) [18]

This encounter then becomes an opportunity for Xavier to catechize some monks of high status, who were assisting to the scene. The success of Yamaguchi therefore cemented for the missionaries the idea that they could open the country to evangelization by arousing Japanese curiosity and appreciation of beautiful and unfamiliar objects, including garments. Adopting appropriate dress during audiences, for the act of precious gift-giving, then, was an attempt to fit to the expectations of the Japanese regarding people of status. In Yamaguchi, the Jesuits seemed to be successful to some extent, as they received from Yoshitaka a patent for preaching, and an old temple to use as headquarters. Another accomplishment was obtaining access to the court, and therewith the possibility of preaching to the *daimyō* and his entourage. [19]

The impact of Xavier's initial strategy becomes evident when considering the approach of his successors. If Ignatius of Loyola represented the Jesuit in his perfected form, to be imitated [20] by all Jesuits (Levy 2011, 127–29), the missionaries in Japan looked to Francis Xavier as well.

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the mid-1550s, from a Japanese eyewitness, Bernardo (d.1557) (Brown 1994, 886), who travelled to Lisbon. This would explain how and when European Jesuits learnt of Xavier's change of garments. If the dialogue is a later creation and was composed around 1588–91 (Auger 1960, 249), the first printed mention of Xavier's garments would instead be Giovanni Pietro Maffei's 1588 *Historiarum Indicarum*, where Xavier has "magnificent garments" prepared for the visit (Maffei 1605, 398). Maffei's source was Valignano himself (Moran 1993, 33), who in turn quoted the *Historiarum Indicarum* word by word in his second recounting of the event, *Principio y Progreso de la religion christiana en Japón* (1601–1603) (in Biblioteca da Ajuda, 49-IV-53, 267r–268r). In time, the story acquired more embellishments and, by 1660, Daniello Bartoli's *Il Giappone* depicted Xavier wearing "a silk gown and velvet slippers" (Sciolti 2013, 85).

8 Aires Brandão to the Jesuits of Coimbra, Goa, 23 December 1554 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:496). Francis Xavier visited the *daimyō* of Bungo, Ōtomo Yoshihige, too, before leaving Japan; Xavier's wearing of liturgical garments in this occasion, as is written in some later hagiographies of his, appears to be a fictitious detail from Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinação* (Schurhammer 1973, 4:249; Brockey 2016, 186).

9 On the Japanese understanding of Christian devotional objects as invested of special powers, see Higashibaba (2001, 43–48).

10 Ōuchi Yoshitaka. The Jesuit sources refer to the *daimyō* of Japan with the title of "king."

For this reason, his change of approach in Japan, and the differences in how he was depicted by fellow Jesuits, return as central in the discussion of Jesuit dress.

This article will analyse how the dress policies of the missionaries of the Society of Jesus in Japan strove to appeal to the perceived preferences of the Japanese, and how these policies were limited by the contemporaneous European attitudes. It will show how, since the beginning, the Jesuits identified the figure of the Buddhist monk as an equivalent to that of the Christian missionary, and how they sought to imitate the dress of such monks in their own. The article will also explore the strategies initially employed by the missionaries to cope with the economic constraints on their choices in clothing, and how, once more funding was obtained, their dress was changed into silk kimono, in imitation of monks of rank. It will then analyse the ban of silk clothes by mission Superior, Francisco Cabral (1533–1609), highlighting his manipulation of the image of Francis Xavier and his creation of new knowledge on Japanese culture, to support his decision. A subsequent change of policy, initiated by Visitor Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), maintained the well-established exclusion of silk while imitating other aspects of the figure of the monk to appeal to Japanese people by promoting instead clean and presentable garments. To conclude, Japanese perceptions of Jesuit dress, as they appear in polemical texts, are analysed in the final section. [21]

## Christian Liturgical Splendour and its Denunciation

During the initial four centuries of the history of Christianity, no clothing of specific cut or material was codified for clerics to use during rituals. Some common rules regarding garments recommending modesty, simplicity, and cleanliness were requested by earlier ecclesiastical documents, in imitation of the images of the Apostles provided by the Gospels (De Santi 2004, 69–71). This use was in accordance with the perceived correspondence between the inner and outer state of a person. In the writings of Church Father Jerome (347–420), clean garments went together with moral innocence (Hillerbrand 2004, 642). [22]

While a distinction between the garments worn in church and those for everyday use was requested of all attendants, it is possible to identify tensions surrounding the introduction of specialized garments for clerics. The colour white had been favoured for ritual purposes ever since Roman and Greek cultures associated it with purity. By the fifth century, the *tunica alba*<sup>11</sup> had become a specifically clerical garment, although another century was needed before the clerical dress proper appeared (Norris 2002, 34–35; Miller 2014, 17–24). [23]

Notwithstanding the frequent denunciations against decoration, clerical garments became richer and more complex with time; meanwhile, precious objects and textiles began appearing in church buildings with greater regularity. Two reasons can be identified behind this trend: the first was the new sacrality attributed to clerical garments; the second concerned the temporal power that the institution of the Church had assumed over time. Common belief held that clerical garments dated back to Biblical times; for this reason, they were associated with relics and received similar worship. As their decoration and elaboration evolved into more complex and extravagant forms, clerical garments therefore became devotional objects themselves, endowed with sacred and mystical qualities. This connection insured a certain protection from accusations of excess, as richness was not interpreted as personal vainglory but in honour of God (Mayo 1984, 27; Van Wyhe 2013). [24]

11 The *tunica alba* was a long white shirt, probably made of linen, or wool in the case of the higher ranks (Mayo 1984, 15–19).

This was also true of the devotional objects that accompanied liturgy or that decorated holy spaces. Their refinement could be interpreted as evidence of their holiness; and their sensual, instantaneous quality was believed to affect especially the souls of illiterate devotees (Eco 2012, 45; Melion 2013, 83–84). Such devotional objects also had an economic value that contributed to the overall perception of holiness (Eco 2004, 99–104). A connection between sanctity and silk, for example, had emerged from the use of placing this cloth on relics in the sixth century. The expensiveness and rarity of this material would highlight the sanctity of such relics, while the silk itself would acquire a certain sheen of sacredness. The richness of the silk was understood to augment the faith of the people watching the rites as well, not to mention impress any non-Christians in attendance (Liu 1998, 114–18). Overall, holiness and goodness were often depicted as beautiful, while evil was considered ugly.<sup>12</sup> [25]

Despite representing an ample tradition, the interpretation of luxury as sacred was not universally accepted. Many Fathers of the Church, among whom Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, and Clement of Alexandria, adhered to the Biblical rejections of luxury (often in the form of rich and colourful garments) and proposed an ascetic lifestyle instead (Kuhns 2003, 58–61). The use of beautiful and rich objects for worship was denounced in a vitriolic manner in the High Middle Ages as well. Ornately decorated churches and their accoutrements were censured, as they were viewed to be a scorn to poverty and as distracting to the faithful from pious veneration, leading to accusations of favouring beauty over holiness (Eco 2012, 34–36). The worldly orientation of some members of the Church hierarchy created internal tensions with those elements that prioritized holy poverty, and would result in difficult contentions (Goody 2006, 342).<sup>13</sup> [26]

Exhortations against luxury were part of an already existing tradition of contempt of the world, but it was only in the twelfth century that an actual textual genre emerged. The expression *contemptus mundi* signalled a desired indifference towards worldly things. The term came to indicate a wide corpus of literature dedicated to denouncing the world and actively positing it as opposite to the Church, because it contained all that was evil, corrupted, and mutable (a category to which beauty belonged) (Howard 1966, 65–66). If this framework rejected sensual excesses as dangerous for the soul, it interpreted objects and images of worship as useful only to beginners (McGinn 2012, 192).<sup>14</sup> [27]

Garments, too, were objects of discussion in the *contemptus mundi* genre. While colours were being codified for the vestments of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the founder of the Cistercian Order, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), contested the use of luxurious and dyed garments in the Church as part of his campaign to present an appearance that was consistent with the clerics' inner devotion (De Santi 2004, 77; Jones 2013). An anonymous text, long attributed [28]

12 Jesuit churches often contained depictions of instances of the cosmic struggle between good and evil, where they were shown as beautiful and ugly respectively (Smith 2002, 32–33, 71). In the influential “Meditation on the Two Standards” of his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius Loyola depicted the armies of Satan and Christ, preparing for Armageddon: the first is “seated on a throne of fire and smoke, in aspect horrible and terrifying;” the latter “takes his place... in an area which is lowly, beautiful, and attractive” (Exx. 140; 143). At the same time, the connection was not so direct as initially presented, as illustrated by Loyola’s vision of the beautiful flying serpent, a temptation that required a more advanced spiritual experience to discern (Melion 2013, 82–83; Boyle 1997, 107–10).

13 The excesses of the clergy, according to some, could prompt God to chastise them and their people, such as the eighth-century Viking rides through Northumbria, interpreted as divine punishment of the kingdom for the rich and pagan-influenced garments of the local clergy (Ribeiro 2003, 32).

14 The faithful were divided, spiritually speaking, into beginners, proficient, and perfect; each category needed distinct manners of teaching (Cfr. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, as referred to in the prologue of the Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*).

to him, accuses soft clothes of having a direct effect on the soul of the wearer whereby the soul came to take on a deleterious softness itself (Twomey 2007, 123). Soft clothes were associated with a courtly environment,<sup>15</sup> and were made from refined, and therefore expensive, textiles. A further influential condemnation of soft and colourful garments (“mollibus vestimentis et coloratis”) as used by religious practitioners comes from the 1223 *Regula* of the Franciscans (Rouchon Mouilleron 2014, 3). This points to the fact that the suspicion with which luxurious clothing was viewed was broad.

The theology that underpinned *contemptus mundi* influenced the Society of Jesus, too, as it shaped important moments of Ignatius of Loyola’s life. When leaving the courtly environment of his youth to dedicate his life to religion, Loyola imitated the lives of saints by donating his garments to the poor. In the attempt to rid his soul of sin, he engaged in the mortification of the body by wearing a rough sackcloth, eating poor food, and letting his hair and fingernails grow. Even with such a harsh life, he only felt the scruples of conscience grow and grow; only when he refused this behaviour as vainglorious and moved onto a life of moderation did he feel his spiritual growth to begin in earnest. A book that helped him in this process while in Manresa was *De Imitatione Christi*, a text in the genre of the *contemptus mundi*. [29]

Still, Loyola and his few companions soon came under the suspicion of the Inquisition for the reason of their garments of sackcloth, among other things. Loyola obeyed their injunction to dye his clothes black; after that he adopted the black attire used by the students of Alcalá de Henares where he was studying. When the time came to decide what garments the newly founded Society of Jesus would use, Loyola did not dwell too much on colour or its shape<sup>16</sup> but defined it as: proper [*honestus*]; “conformed to the usage of the region where one is living;” and not breaking the Jesuit vow of poverty, as would any silk or other expensive cloths (*Cons.*, [577]). [30]

“Honest” (intended to mean decent, proper) was a term that expressed the idea, already mentioned, of a necessary correspondence between the interior piety of the cleric and his external appearance. According to this definition, a clerical garment needed to be long enough to cover the clothes underneath it, and not richly lined down to the hem. Silk and use of colours were similarly banned. Overall, this garment should edify whoever gazed upon it (De Santi 2004, 81–82). From this point of view, it held a role similar to that of devotional objects. [31]

The black cassock, used already in the twelfth century as common clerical dress, answered the Jesuits’ needs.<sup>17</sup> It had proved so successful that it had been adopted by various categories of workers (lawyers, physicians, clerks, teachers, and students) to indicate their sobriety and professionalism (Harvey 2013, 97). As the Jesuits planned to work among the laity at all levels of society, the popular acceptance of this garment, whether secular or clerical, arguably helped its adoption. Jesuit garments, therefore, while changeable according to the context, in practice tended towards the cassock, made of simple cloth (generally wool) and cheaply dyed to “honest” black (O’Malley 1993, 341–42). [32]

15 This is an allusion to Matthew 11:8, where Jesus quotes hermit John the Baptist: “What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.”

16 The exact appearance of the habit might seem a secondary question in the establishment of a religious order, but to contextualize their importance in the early modern period, consider the nearly contemporary debates on this topic in the Franciscan order (Elbel 2010).

17 The cassock was “an ankle-length sleeved tunic which can be held at the waist by a narrow belt, or buttoned from neck to foot [...] the Roman Catholic cassock or soutane is usually single-breasted with a row of many buttons down the centre front” (Mayo 1984, 140).

## Japanese Monks and Jesuit Missionaries

Francis Xavier had already determined in 1550 that, if their message was to be welcomed, the Jesuits should aim to obtain the same (if not greater) respect afforded to Buddhist monks (Schurhammer 1973, 4:156–57). The years after his death saw different attempts by his fellow missionaries to follow his instructions<sup>18</sup> through different approaches that aimed to imitate elements of the monks' visual presentation while keeping themselves distinct in the eyes of the Japanese.<sup>19</sup> [33]

As shown, Buddhist monks (and nuns) had been linked by Xavier to Catholic religious orders through their garments, starting with his first observations on Japan. During the initial years of the mission, the Jesuits exploited this visible connection by adopting the monks' dress. The unfortunate state of their finances prevented the missionaries from replicating the Buddhist style of luxurious garments and ceremonies,<sup>20</sup> so they chose a less expensive option. The following passage from a letter of Brother Luís de Almeida (1525–83)<sup>21</sup> describes his travel *kosode*: [34]

The way in which I travel through this land and I speak with these noblemen is in the manner of their monks: with shaved head and beard, which you have to do every time you go to visit a nobleman, in lands where we are not well known. The clothes [I wear] are like a gown, a bit shorter, except for the fact that they have much larger and very short sleeves. Everybody wraps themselves with their belts and, on top, wears a black veil. I dress like this when I see it is necessary, because if the local people see our clothes, which they never saw before, they never leave us [alone], nor have that regard [that is] proper of those who enjoy receiving the law of God from us. In this manner we go among friends and enemies, preaching the law of God in every place we find ourselves. And they respect this habit so much that everywhere the laity makes way for you.<sup>22</sup> [35]

Imitating the clothing of Buddhist monks allowed the Jesuits to communicate instantly to the Japanese their belonging to the category of religious specialists; this granted them access to people of status even when wearing inexpensive garments. The missionaries thus capitalized on the widespread misconception among the Japanese that they were Buddhist monks from India (App 1997). Such attire therefore gained them the “regard [that was] proper” for people of their (religious) station, and additional safety, while having the advantage of catering to the Jesuits' spiritual needs, thanks to its inexpensive cloth. [36]

In 1559, tasked with the founding of a new mission in the capital city, Father Gaspar Vilela [37]

18 Aside from gaining the cooperation of Japanese rulers, Xavier planned to send some of his best men to study in the most famous Buddhist temple complexes, so that they could debate and win the monks (and their religious authority) over for Christianity. Xavier also decided to fund a mission in China, since the Japanese wondered why the Chinese had not heard of Christianity (Zampol D'Ortia 2016a).

19 They were often not successful; on the roots of this misunderstanding, see App (1997).

20 On the poverty that characterised the beginnings of the mission, see Bourdon (1993, 374–76). An overview of the relationship between Buddhism and splendour is in Covell (2005).

21 Luís de Almeida was born in Lisbon to a Jewish family who had converted to Christianity. He travelled to India in 1548, and then on to Japan where he entered the Society of Jesus in 1555. He worked in the Jesuit hospital as a surgeon until 1560, while also being responsible for the mission's finances. He covered Torres' duties, too, when the latter became too old or sick to perform them. Almeida sailed to Macau in 1579 to be ordered as priest and died in 1583 in Japan (Hesselink 2016).

22 Luís de Almeida to the Jesuits in Europe, Yokoseura, 25 October 1562 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 2:565–66).

(1526–72)<sup>23</sup> travelled to Miyako disguised as a poor Buddhist monk on pilgrimage; he shaved his head and his beard, and wore a poor kimono (Fróis 1976, 1:138). However, the capital city's distance from most Jesuit residences, located in southern Japan, gave Vilela the possibility to purposefully reimagine his evangelisation, including his clothes. Already in the fifth century, Pope Celestine I had noticed that clerics of isolated parishes had a tendency of taking liberties with their garments (Miller 2014, 20). In this case, though, Vilela's aim was to better fit into Japanese society: answering to the perceived needs of Japanese culture could be a means to obtaining access to its centres of power, a necessary step to enact the Jesuits' top-down conversion strategy. Dress represented an important part of this process (Ribeiro 2007, 22).<sup>24</sup>

For example, the missionaries learnt that the official visits to one's social superiors for the New Year (*shōgatsu*) represented an important moment of the Japanese year, especially in the capital city where the monks could have access to the Shōgun. The local converts counselled Vilela to respect this tradition, and to wear appropriate garments (Fróis 1976, 2:13). However, since the missionaries in the capital were isolated from the support of the Portuguese merchants who traded in the south, they had very little funding. Wishing to display his status in front of the Shōgun yet unable to buy silk clothes, Vilela wore liturgical vestments such as a stole and a cope (Zampol D'Ortia 2016b, 153). When Luís Fróis joined him in the capital, they both rode in litters, each with a retinue of fifteen or twenty Christians carrying precious gifts for the Shōgun, including a European wide brimmed hat (Fróis 1976, 2:13–14).<sup>25</sup>

The financial state of the mission improved in the mid-1560s thanks to the investment of the sum Almeida had donated when entering the Society in the silk trade with Macao (Hesselink 2016, 54). The Jesuits seemed now to prefer avoiding liturgical garments other than for the officiation of rites, a practice that had attracted Papal censure already in the fifth century (McCloud 1948, viii).<sup>26</sup> Their dress of choice became instead the silk kimono. A later testimony by some Japanese Christians and Spanish merchants confirms that:

at the beginning the [Jesuit] fathers, to please the Japanese, wore the [Japanese] habit [...] Some of the undersigned [...] saw them about with the habit of Japan, but inside their houses they wore the habit of the Society (Valignano 1954, 231n10)

The belief that “[fine clothes] would reflect better credit and reputation on the Christians” (Fróis 1976, 2:13), contextualised into the wider interpretation of Japanese culture as being inclined towards luxury and pomp, prompted the Jesuits to begin to use silks when outside the residences instead of reserving them for visits to rulers. This would explain the widespread

23 Gaspar Vilela was born in 1526 near Evora, Portugal. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1553, and the following year left for Japan. There, he was the founder of the mission of Miyako and others in the region, consecrating the first church of Nagasaki in 1569. In 1570, recalled by the Visitor, Gonçalo Álvares, he left for India, and later died in Goa (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:41\*).

24 Vilela displayed a tendency for excessively showy behaviour, judged later by his superiors in Goa to be unworthy of a Jesuit. This attitude, eliminated from the printed editions of his letters, together with his use of silk might have been the reasons behind his recall to India (Hesselink 2016, 53, 234).

25 See *Cartas* (Fróis 1598, 1:178v), where Fróis is described wearing a *kimono* in 1565 instead of a cassock with Chinese slippers of twisted sewing silk.

26 They would still show Western liturgical garments to powerful *daimyō*, such as Fróis did in 1569 during his visit to Gifu castle, when Oda Nobunaga requested to see him wearing a cope of brocade of Hormuz (Fróis 1976, 2:281).

use of silk in quotidian situations, incognito travel included, substituting or coexisting with the poor monk's disguise such as that described by Almeida.

That a certain level of uneasiness surrounded this practice becomes evident particularly in texts written after the silk ban of 1570. On occasion of their celebrated visit to Gifu castle in 1569, warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–82) gifted to Fróis and Japanese Brother Lourenço (1525–1592) a colourful lined kimono made of silk (*awase*), a translucent white linen garment, and a fine white tunic. Nobunaga, famously in conflict with Buddhist organizations to obtain control of the country, was pleased to notice that the missionaries wearing his presents appeared on level with the most important monks of Japan (Fróis 1976, 2:312). On their side, by wearing the garments gifted to them, the Jesuits communicated their appreciation of Nobunaga's efforts to welcome and support them, and their willingness to respect his rule. Still, it is possible to deduce from the long passage in question Fróis' uneasiness with the frequent contact with the court and its gifts. Additionally, Nobunaga's court, being gentle, could arguably soften the soul even more easily than the courts of Christians. The enjoyment of courtly things by the Jesuits, "who are men who profess the disdain of the world, the true imitation of Christ, and the abandonment of all honours and temporal things," is interpreted as a specific necessity of Japan where it would be impossible to create a thriving mission without the support of the *daimyō*. This concise description of the Jesuit policy for Japan attempts to grapple with the contradictions and tensions that some of the missionaries perceived and anticipated in their readers. The use of "human means" is thus justified by the specific context of Japan, the Japanese disposition towards ceremonies, and the militancy of Buddhist monks and other so-called enemies of Christianity (Fróis 1976, 2:313–14).

[42]

Meanwhile, the use of liturgical garments during rituals was a different matter. With the growth of the Christian communities, the Jesuits indeed strove to assume the role of local secular clergy (Valignano 1954, 134\*), and they dressed as required when carrying out such duties during worship and religious processions. The liturgical garments represented the institution of the Church and highlighted this further social role of the Jesuits (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992, 5–6). The opulence of their clothes demonstrated the Church's spiritual and earthly powers (Goody 2006, 342; Renne 2010).

[43]

Ecclesiastical garments were generally provided to Japan by Goa (Fróis 1976, 1:60). In 1554, the mission received a good amount of them: a full set of pontifical vestments of gold cloth (comprising a dalmatic, chasuble, stole, maniple, and high collar), with rich brocade orphreys;<sup>27</sup> another set of vermilion damask; a "very rich" set of liturgical garments made of brocade, and one of white velvet; a cope of crimson velvet,<sup>28</sup> with orphreys and a cowl of brocade, and another made of silk from Mecca.<sup>29</sup> The first set was specially made so that

[44]

"in Japan, not only with inspiration and grace Our Lord will move the hearts of those peoples, not only with the example [of the missionaries] and the doctrine, but with the veneration of the visible divine cult as well, they will be invited to

[45]

27 Orphreys are a "highly elaborate embroidery work, or a piece of such embroidery. More specifically orphrey is an ornamental border, or embroidered band, especially as used on ecclesiastical vestments. Orphreys often utilized cloth of gold, gold trimming, or gold and silk weft, or filling. They were frequently woven several bands wide and then cut apart" (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2014).

28 Also known as pluvial, a cope is a "ceremonial version of an outdoor cloak worn during the latter days of the Roman Empire. It is basically a semi-circular piece of cloth held together at the front by a clasp or a 'morse.' The cope is worn at non-Eucharist ceremonies (i.e. baptism, marriage and procession) in the place of the chasuble" (Mayo 1984, 146).

29 "Inventario del bagaje de la expedición de 1554 a Japón," Goa, April 1554 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:480).

accept the truthful Law. And [the Japanese] are so attentive to these matters that they are very much moved by fine appearance.”<sup>30</sup>

As was shown in the previous section, “moving the hearts” through the use of sacred beauty [46] was not a concept exclusive to the Asian missions, but again the Japanese appeared as especially influenced by it. Lavish devotional objects were used to sensually enhance rituals and to provoke pious emotions in those in attendance; such feelings were considered the work of divine grace upon their hearts (Melion 2013). In this way, the Jesuits hoped to edify the Christians and attract the Japanese whom they wished to convert. The devotional weeping that would accompany these ceremonies was interpreted as the visible sign of such work. The missionaries indeed recorded the converts’ (actual or rhetorical) tears as an external confirmation of conversion given the impossibility of ascertaining it in other ways (Vélez 2016; Száraz 2017). This confirmation was particularly important in the case of the Japanese who were believed to keep their feelings and thoughts secret.<sup>31</sup>

In order to better meet and adapt to their own purposes the expectations of the Japanese, the [47] Jesuits incorporated aspects of Buddhist rituals and aesthetics. There was also the perception on the part of the missionaries that funerals, being especially meaningful in Buddhism, needed special consideration (Vu Thanh 2014b). For example, when a Christian nobleman of Miyako died in 1565, his status made necessary in the eyes of the Japanese “a very solemn burial and a funeral of grandiose ceremony.” Vilela, therefore, attended in a red lacquered palanquin,

“[wearing] a cope of brocade and [accompanied by] many shaved Christians who [48] looked like monks, some with surplices, others with albs;<sup>32</sup> some, instead of the stole worn by monks over the shoulder,<sup>33</sup> wore a superfrontal.<sup>34</sup> To make a greater display, they carried a raised cross<sup>35</sup> with torches, a small ringing bell, the missal with its cover, a small aspersorium of holy water, an aspergillum, another small cross for the tomb, a reredos<sup>36</sup> of the Saviour with lit candlesticks in front, many silk banners with scenes of the Passion, and other similar things that, placed at a certain distance one from the other, created a great display along the streets [...] Since Miyako is very keen to see novelties, there was a great turnout of men, women, children, and monks [...] The Christians prayed, declaring the doctrine with loud voices, which amazed even more the gentiles, because hearing prayers recited so well in Latin was for them such a new and extraordinary thing. (Fróis 1976, 2:104–05)

The keenness “to see novelties” of the Japanese was another trope of Jesuit literature. Won- [49]

30 Melchor Nunes Barreto to the General, Ignatius Loyola, April 1554 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 1:448).

31 See, for example, Luís de Almeida to Antonio de Quadros, Funai, 1 October 1561 (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 2:380); Giovanni Battista de Monte, Miyako, 1 September 1580 (*Cartas* 1598, 1:480r); and Valignano (1954, 30).

32 The alb and the surplice are white tunics worn over the cassock during mass, both deriving from the Roman *tunica alba* (a white long shirt, probably made of linen or wool) (Mayo 1984, 15–19, 174–75).

33 This “Buddhist stole” is the *kesa* (derived from the Indian *kāshāya*), a coloured robe worn over the left shoulder, over the *koromo* (Kennedy 1989).

34 “A covering for the top of the altar, which commonly hangs down about six inches all round, and is fringed. It is ordinarily made of silk velvet, satin, or damask, and is placed over the three white linen cloths which customarily cover and preserve the altar slab” (Lee 1877, 390).

35 A cross raised on a pole, generally at the head of a religious procession (Ruiz de Medina 1990, 2:431).

36 A reredos is “an ornamental screen or partition that is not directly attached to the altar table but is affixed to the wall behind it” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2014).

der was one of the emotions that the missionaries hoped to use to further evangelization, as it was considered “the best way to grab the attention of the soul” already by Thomas Aquinas (Bynum 1997, 10). Certainly, the Japanese appeared very curious towards exotic objects of European production, including liturgical garments, as is demonstrated by the passion for wearing European clothes displayed by the elites as early as 1577 (Simões 2012, 58).

Whenever possible, the practice of organizing such rituals, that were as rich in complexity and preparation as they were in paraphernalia, was followed until the ban of Christian evangelization.<sup>37</sup> The Jesuits used liturgical garments as part of the ritual splendour to their full extent. An Easter procession of 1580, for example, is described thusly: [50]

All the Christians participated with paper lanterns, painted and very well made, which testified to the happiness of that day and of the glorious Resurrection of the Lord. Everything was organized so perfectly, and beautifully, that everybody was amazed by the order, the ceremonies, and by the rich ornaments of the Father [Alessandro Valignano]. They were of carmine velvet, with orphreys made of silk, gold, white satin; others were purple with their copes, and capes, altar clothes and canopies, all of them decorated so that the Christians were happy and very satisfied with what they saw.<sup>38</sup> [51]

Although it was part of accepted Catholic practice and considered efficient in the specific context of Japan, liturgical luxury still created a certain tension with Catholic beliefs on the relationship between the bodies and the souls of the missionaries,<sup>39</sup> and came under scrutiny, for example, during the General Consultation of the Jesuit Vice-Province of Japan of 1590 (López Gay 1970, 4–5). Overall, though, since the use of dress during liturgy was codified, the missionaries’ rich garments did not meet intense resistance from other Jesuits, nor from other Christians. As the next section will consider, the same cannot be said for their silk Japanese clothes. [52]

## The Ban on Silk

The use of silk kimono by the missionaries did not go unnoticed among the Portuguese merchants whose “whisperings” reached Goa some time before 1566.<sup>40</sup> In that year, a visitor, Pedro Ramírez, had been dispatched with orders to send the funds of the Japanese mission back to India where they could be invested in purchasing land to rent. This was a more traditional way of economic support and it would avoid giving the impression that “the missionaries [in Japan] were living off trade.”<sup>41</sup> Ramírez, however, died in a shipwreck near the [53]

37 See, for example, *Cartas* (Cartas 1598, 1:291r), Fróis (1976, 3:271–72), and the detail (top right corner) of the mass from the *nanban* screen of the Kobe City Museum, with a priest in rich liturgical garments and the decorated altar (<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/nanban-screens-right-hand-screen-kan%C3%B4-naizen/CAEfKzD1vqAV8A>).

38 Lourenço Mexia to the General of the Society of Jesus, Japan, 1580 (*Cartas* 1598, 1:465v).

39 For some context, see Vu Thanh (2014a) and Marino (2014). Even before the Reformation, the relation between the divine and the senses had been controversial (de Boer and Göttler 2013, 8–9).

40 Francisco Cabral to the Diego Mirón, Nagasaki, 6 September 1571, in *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu* (hereafter cited as ARSI), *Jap.Sin.* 7, I, 23v.

41 Gonçalo Álvares to General Borja, Goa, [December] 1568 (Wicki 1948, 7:578). While this trade could certainly be a source of scandal, it is also true that it had been a necessity for many missionaries in India before the arrival of the Jesuits who, thanks to the better support received from the Crown, could afford to avoid it (Borges, Costa, and Menezes 2016).

gulf of Thailand (Romo 2002, 1063) and, in his stead, Provincial Antonio de Quadros sent Portuguese Francisco Cabral.

Cabral was born around 1533 in São Miguel (Azores), to Aires Pires Cabral, a royal judge [54] (*desembargador do Paço*), and Francisca Nunes de Proença. He studied Humanities in Coimbra before leaving for India as a soldier in 1550. In 1554, he petitioned to enter the Society of Jesus in Goa, where he studied Logic under Quadros. After two years of Theology, he was sanctified a priest in 1558. Cabral rose fast through the ranks of the Indian Province, purportedly thanks to his leadership qualities and virtues (and probably to his birth, too): he was master of novices until 1560, preacher and teacher of Theology in Goa, then rector of Vasai (Baçaim) from 1562 to 1566. That year, he became rector of the house of Kochi (Cochim), and later of the college of Goa. In 1568, Provincial Quadros ordered him to make a visitation of the Jesuit missions of Malacca, Macao, and Japan (Schütte 1980, 1:188–92).

As mentioned above, Cabral's task was to return Japan's funds to Goa and reduce the profit [55] from the silk trade to an acceptable level until the mission could fully sustain itself on the Indian rent. Likely during his long voyage to Japan (where he arrived in 1570), he received the additional order to ban all use of silk from the first Jesuit Visitor to Asia, Gonçalo Álvares (1527–73).<sup>42</sup> This instruction, issued without having any knowledge of the country, confirmed Álvares's tendency of following the Institute of the Society of Jesus without reflection (Schütte 1980, 1:213).<sup>43</sup> He displayed a similar attitude when, for instance, he ordered all the Jesuits in India to always wear knee-length socks and boots outside the house, a regulation that clearly did not take into consideration the local climate (Osswald 2011, 506).

Upon landing in Japan in 1570, Cabral called the missionaries of southern Japan to [56] Amakusa for a conference to inform them of the policy changes that would be implemented (Schütte 1980, 1:203–04). Although Cabral presented the banning of silk as an order coming from above, and over which he had no control, it was evident that he supported it out of concern not only for the spiritual repercussions he believed silk had on Jesuits, but also for the loss of reputation it was causing among the Portuguese merchants whose support was crucial to the Indian mission as a whole. Still, his reform was met with resistance from most of the missionaries in Japan, who maintained that he lacked practical experience of Japan and thus was not qualified to take such a drastic decision. This represented a strong point against him that, had it reached the General, could have compromised the reform of the missionary policy.<sup>44</sup> Thus, in Cabral's eyes, an equally strong counterpoint to present to the General and other superiors was needed. To collect enough evidence to support his position, Cabral carried out some small experiments that, in his mind, should have answered the objections raised. So if the missionaries feared for their safety, Cabral would take a stroll through a crowded city dressed in black to show that the cassock would attract, at most, the curiosity of passers-by (Zampol D'Ortia 2016b, 143–44, 150–51).

Additionally, regarding the concern that the Japanese of status would avoid them, Cabral [57] interviewed a number of eminent old converts on the matter. Once they confirmed their acquiescence, he used this support to buttress his own argument. For instance, he conferred with the “most important Christians of Sakai,” and they all concurred that it would take some

42 Francisco Cabral to the General, Nagasaki, 5 December 1571 (Schütte 1958, 1, Teil 2:465). This plan did not come to fruition because, as Cabral later claimed, the Indian mission kept for itself the rent of the four villages of Vasai that had been bought with Japanese funds (Francisco Cabral to the General, Everard Mercurian, Kuchinotsu, 1 September 1577, in ARSI, Jap.Sin. 8, I, 136v).

43 As seen above, the *Constitutions* of the Society explicitly forbade wearing silk (*Cons.*, [577]).

44 On the authority that experience granted in matters of policymaking in the Japanese mission, see Zampol D'Ortia (*forthcoming*).

time for the Japanese to become familiar with the cassocks but that in the end they would accept it.<sup>45</sup> In Iimori (Kawachi), Cabral also consulted with a very old convert:

I asked [Sangadono]<sup>46</sup> to tell me explicitly [...] what he thought about the change of clothing, because if leaving the silks meant a difficulty for the service of God and the expansion of His Law, I would suspend it until informing our superior in India. He answered that we should leave the silks and let ourselves be known as religious [of the Society of Jesus], and we should not pay attention to the scorn we feared the gentiles would have towards us. He justified this by saying that he and the other Christian gentlemen cared very much to be recognised by everybody as Christians: for this [reason] they searched for the biggest bead rosaries they could find, and wore them in front of their lords, even if they were scorned and ridiculed. He added: 'If we, who were gentiles yesterday, did this and want to be recognised as Christians, even if we are mocked, the more you who are religious, and whose example we have to follow, should not refuse your specific clothing and to be recognised as [Jesuits]. And about your fears that it could be an obstacle to [evangelization], because the Fathers could be honoured less than [when they wore] silks, there is nothing to fear, because you have already seen how Miyoshidono<sup>47</sup> and the other lords honoured you, even if you wore cloth, more than any father dressed in silks, and any monk.' He also gave me other reasons that supported my intentions.<sup>48</sup>

[58]

The image of Jesuit missionaries that appeared in Cabral's correspondence was therefore of men who hid behind the excuse of imperilling the acceptance of the Gospels, when in truth they simply feared being mocked for Christ. By returning to the black cassock, the Jesuits would instead show their dedication to the diffusion of Christianity above their concerns for their lives, and would not refuse to submit to being humbled or mocked if that was God's will. Regarding Buddhist monks, Cabral added that not all wore silk; and those who chose to wear black or white cotton or linen were respected all the same (Zampol D'Ortia 2016b, 145).

[59]

The second major point expounded by Cabral was that silk represented a betrayal of all missionaries who had come before them. Unsurprisingly,<sup>49</sup> in his writings, Francis Xavier's change of garments during his visit to Yoshitaka does not appear. Cabral's account was this:

[60]

with much effort and poverty, many hungers, colds, and persecutions, [Francis Xavier and his companions] founded the mission [...] they were much persecuted by the gentiles, and suffered poverty, because they did not have more than the alms given to them by the [Portuguese] carracks that came here, which were one or two at that time.<sup>50</sup> And in this poverty, Our Lord granted them much mercy,

[61]

45 Francisco Cabral to Antonio de Quadros, Nagasaki, 23 September 1572, in Real Academia de la Historia (hereafter cited as RAH), *Cortes* 9/2663, 90r.

46 Sanga Sancho, the head of the Christian community of Iimori.

47 Miyoshi Yoshitsugu, *daimyō* of Kawachi province.

48 RAH, *Cortes* 9/2663, 94v–95r.

49 As mentioned, the earliest written reference to this fact appears to be by Valignano in 1583. Even in the event that Xavier's change of garments might have been known in the form of oral history, as it did not fit the image sketched by Cabral of the founder of the mission living in poverty, it would have made little sense to include it.

50 Cabral would refer to the profits of the trade with Macau as "the alms of the carracks" even when speaking about his own tenure as superior, without showing much concern on the topic, probably in the understanding that the profits were destined for augmenting the glory of God.

and thanks to Him many were converted. [...] [the other Jesuits refused to] accept [my] reasons, and trust in the virtue of obedience that ordered it; and in the path that Christ taught, of humility and poverty; and [to believe] that he who had the hearts of men in his hands would change them and propitiate them, if only we would conform to the rule that he taught and we profess; and to consider the thousands of Christians converted by the Apostles and other saints, without wearing silks, but instead torn [clothes] and in indigent poverty.<sup>51</sup>

According to Cabral, therefore, wearing silk represented a break with tradition that could not be easily justified especially once he recruited to his side influential Japanese to serve as witnesses to his opinions. He believed instead that it would be the respect of holy poverty, in imitation of Francis Xavier and of Christ, that would assure missionary success and the long-awaited conversion of the country. [62]

As he himself informed the General, Cabral's expectations were realized in 1571. During a meeting with the Shōgun, Ashikaga Yoshiaki (1537–1597), the Jesuits presented themselves dressed in black cassocks. Initially, as described in a letter by Cabral, their new clothes were not considered fit to be admitted into the palace. However, in the end the Shōgun was very respectful since, in Cabral's words, "the virtue of holy obedience and the poverty of Christ were more powerful," than any "secular silk."<sup>52</sup> Cabral also recounted the following scene: asked by the Shōgun why he had changed his shaved head and silk clothes, Luís Fróis replied that that had been an initial strategy to avoid shocking the Japanese in the manner of "a hunter dressed in green to catch his prey." The Shōgun commented that it was more probable that since their superior was present the missionaries did not dare to dress differently from him.<sup>53</sup> This remark shows a less friendly aspect of the conversation.<sup>54</sup> Still, the visit was presented as the pinnacle of Cabral's strategy, who attributed its favourable outcome to the "great honour Our Lord wanted to bestow upon our new poor clothing, to show that it is only He who can move the hearts, not the silk."<sup>55</sup> Cabral here reiterated an idea that he often expounded, namely that human means could only support divine intervention, not substitute it. [63]

During the same trip, Cabral visited Oda Nobunaga who at the time held the capital. The *daimyō* was a somewhat peculiar and volatile character whose disregard for the rules of etiquette saw him ban all silk from his court. He himself preferred to wear a tiger skin tied around the waist—which was used as a carpet when he sat (Fróis 1976, 2:244). Cabral attributed Nobunaga's silk ban to the latter's fear that if his generals and soldiers wore clothing that was too fine they would become effeminate.<sup>56</sup> While he did not comment on the matter, [64]

51 Francisco Cabral to the General, Nagasaki, 5 September 1571 (Schütte 1958, 1, Teil 2:465–66).

52 RAH, *Cortes* 9/2663, 95v. It is possible that the gifts the Jesuits brought also helped them gain access to the Shōgun: ten quires of paper, a golden fan, an oxtail, a cloth of damask, and a small trinket made of gold. While the worth of the presents is due to the rank of the host and to the fact that it was Cabral's first visit, it is interesting to note that with time the Jesuits would greatly reduce the quantity and quality of their gifts, under the orders of Cabral himself.

53 The Shōgun also showed interest in the features of the new garments of the missionaries: he had Luís Fróis remove his cloak to better see his cassock and studied its buttons attentively. The scene is strongly reminiscent of a late seventeenth-century Shōgun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, asking VOC merchants to take off and put back on their outerwear to show him the use of the buttons (Carlotto 2013, 11–12).

54 The words are censored in the copy of the College of Alcalá de Henares conserved in the RAH, that was likely read for edifying purposes during meals.

55 RAH, *Cortes* 9/2663, 97r.

56 *Ibid.*, 99r. Cabral does not mention that, to honour him during his visit, Nobunaga ordered his attendants to dress with their best garments (Fróis 1976, 2:360–61).

the simple fact that Cabral mentioned it suggests that he saw some sort of connection with the problems he himself was facing. If Nobunaga kept his generals distant from the negative influence of silk, it is understood by reading between the lines that Cabral could not be wrong in doing the same thing regarding his Jesuits. In this picture, the powerful warlord served as another witness to Cabral's reform; he also provided evidence for the idea that not all Japanese people of status approved of silk.

Regardless of how many achievements Cabral listed in his letters, including a steep rate of growth in the number of Christians in the country, in the end he believed that silk was the undoing of the mission. In his reading of events, the senses were the origin of that dangerous temptation. Fine cloth had softened the souls of the missionaries, and this had made them capitulate to sin: "[the use of silk garments and bedclothes] required, for conformity, [also] abundant food, a couple of servants, little work and prayer, etc. [...] In Japan a priest resembled more a lord, than a Jesuit of the Society." Thus, according to Cabral, silk had opened the way for lust to pollute the mission through exaggerated love of clothes, of eating, and laziness. In time, this suggestion of the senses had become a desire for power. The refusal to respect holy obedience demonstrated that it had then developed into the worst of sins, pride.<sup>57</sup> The Jesuits were breaking their three solemn vows by ignoring the basis of *contemptus mundi*.<sup>58</sup> Their bodies, lacking the required restraint provided by honest garments, became evidence that they had left "the right and true path" (Arthur 1999, 1). [65]

In Cabral's understanding, the missionaries' desire for the greater glory of God, which was the reason adduced by the Jesuits to wear these garments, was only a pretext (or, better, a cloak), with which the devil hid the terrible consequences of the use of silk.<sup>59</sup> This manner of operating by the enemy of Christianity was detailed by the Fourth Rule of the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* (*Exx.* 332): "[the evil angel] brings good and holy thoughts attractive to such an upright person and then strives little by little to get his own way, by enticing the soul over to his own hidden deceits and evil intentions." Cabral hoped to implement the solution prescribed in *Exx.* 334: "examine immediately the whole train of the good thoughts which the evil spirit brought to the soul [...] and finally brought it to his evil intention." Reasoning such as this was arguably behind his first deed as superior of the Japanese mission as he led all missionaries in doing the Exercises. [66]

Still, Cabral had already shown his favour towards liturgical splendour in India (Schütte 1980, 1:191). A curious incident indirectly points to how he maintained such an attitude in Japan, too. In 1574, in the fortress of Takatsuki, after the baptism of a number of noblemen, an old convert approached Cabral to ask to be baptised again. When rebuked that he should know that baptism was received only once, the old man replied: [67]

Now that I see this altar, so ornate, this cope you are wearing, and these items for the baptism that are so lustrous and rich, I was envious of these gentlemen and I wondered if, because of the poverty in which the Father [at the time] found himself, lacking all these things, I was baptised or not; but now that you calmed [68]

57 In addition to the explicit refusal to obey the ban of silks, Cabral identifies another cause of disobedience in the officially sanctioned luxuries and honours, such as the provision that two boys were to escort each Jesuit when he visited Christians. Since there were often not enough boys for this task, the missionaries had a justified reason to refuse going on mission endeavours when sent by their superiors (Francisco Cabral to the General, Macao, 20 November 1583, in ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 9, II, 187v).

58 On the evolution of the doctrines on process that leads to sin, to arrive at *contemptus mundi* and a possible link to the three traditional vows of religious life, see Howard (1966, 43–70). Arguably, the fourth vow (obedience to the Pope regarding missions) was compromised together with obedience.

59 Cabral to Francisco de Borja, September 10, 1573, in ARSI, *Jap.Sin.* 7, I, 166Av.

my fears, I am very thankful to God Our Lord to have let me live long enough to see these solemnities (Fróis 1976, 2:415).

While this instance is arguably retold to highlight again the fundamental importance of ceremonial beauty for the Japanese,<sup>60</sup> Cabral is here represented as rebuking the old convert and curbing his apparent inclination of overestimating the importance of luxury. At the same time, this incident confirms that Cabral officiated at least some important rituals with a certain pomp—with rich liturgical garments to match. It is likely that this aspect of the public face of Jesuit activity is what led the Japanese to stereotype them as extremely rich.<sup>61</sup> [69]

## Cleanliness as a Solution

The second Jesuit Visitor to Asia, Alessandro Valignano, reached Japan in 1579. Born to a distinguished family of Chieti (Italy), Valignano had studied law in Padua and entered the Society of Jesus in 1566. In Rome he studied Philosophy and Theology and held the post of master of novices, later becoming rector of the college in Macerata. While still relatively young, in 1573 he was chosen for the role of Visitor by General Everard Mercurian and left for India the following year. He arrived in Japan six years later only to find the mission there in an unsatisfying state (Moran 1993, 20–23). Cabral too never felt that his missionary policy was successful; and in time, defeated by practical problems and his own spiritual aridity (or “thinness,” as he put it), he came to believe that the enterprise was doomed (Zampol D’Ortia 2017, 281–86). However, among the causes of the mission’s setbacks, Valignano identified Cabral’s refusal to adapt to Japanese culture. This had estranged not only the Japanese workers of the mission, but the powerful converts among the *daimyō*, too, as they felt offended by the Jesuits’ refusal to abide by Japanese etiquette (Schütte 1980, 1:251–60; Valignano 1954, 235–40). [70]

Valignano took the matter into his own hands by completely reorganizing the missionary policy for Japan. He promoted an approach of generalized accommodation towards Japanese culture according to which the missionaries learnt the etiquette of the country, adapted their daily life to that of the Japanese, opened colleges for European Jesuits to learn the language, and accepted Japanese novices in their novitiates and, later, in the Society of Jesus. These points were discussed in a number of consultations held between 1580 and 1581 that highlighted the many problems of the mission and suggested solutions (Schütte 1980, 1:369). Given liberty by Mercurian to decide if the silk trade with Macao was necessary, recognised as essential if regrettable by all missionaries, Valignano chose to continue the practice (Valignano 1954, 42\*–50\*). A similar consensus was recorded during the First General Consultation in regard to Question 19 (“On the garments we must use”): [71]

The second point, on which everybody agreed, was that our dress should be all black and without silk [...] The third point, and everybody concurred again, was [72]

60 The same event, described by Fróis in a letter dated 9 September 1577 (*Cartas* 1598, 1:392v), has Cabral wearing a surplice, and possibly a stole, instead. This printed version of the letter downplays the luxury described by the old man and highlights instead the solemnity of the rite, probably following the custom of giving priority to the edification of the readers.

61 This was a common Japanese perception, as will be seen below. To avoid the same problem in China, Matteo Ricci was ordered to limit the use of rich liturgical objects and substituted his silver chalice for one in lead and tin alloy, see Matteo Ricci to the Visitor, Alessandro Valignano, Shaozhou, 9 September 1589 (Ricci 2001, 146).

that the ordinary and common garment should be the cassock and the *dobuko* with a raised collar in the manner of cloaks, with a round cap and *tabi*,<sup>62</sup> for this is commonly our habit and is accepted in Japan.<sup>63</sup> (Valignano 1954, 247)

It appears, therefore, that at the beginning of the 1580s the missionaries unanimously supported the banning of silk in regard to their garments. Although he did endorse a policy of accommodation towards Japanese culture, it would have been difficult for Valignano to support a return to silk clothes even if he had wanted it.<sup>64</sup> He therefore approved of those clothes as described by the Consultation; this ensured that the Jesuit dress in Japan remained the black cassock.<sup>65</sup> [73]

Still, Valignano managed to delineate rules that would result in a different manner of control over the dress, and, by extension, the bodies of the missionaries. His approach is reflected in the way in which he presented the figure of the founder of the mission, Francis Xavier, which differed from that of Cabral. Valignano summarized in this way Xavier's breakthrough in Yamaguchi, framing the change of garments with skilful attention towards the potential problematic association of a religious man with luxury: [74]

[Xavier] had discovered through experience that presenting himself so badly dressed and worn out, and behaving with such contempt of himself, not only did not help, but even hindered what he aimed to do in Japan for the glory of God. This because the Japanese were so inclined to many ceremonies and visible pomp, that they did not know modesty, nor similar mortifications. He thus decided to dress and behave in a different way in the future, demonstrating in this that he truly despised himself, and that with his actions he only desired the glory of God, for which he made use, at the appropriate times, of honours and scorn [alike]. And in this way, dressed better and accompanied by two or three servants, they returned immediately to Yamaguchi, with the letters of the Viceroy and the Bishop and the gifts [...] The King, seeing the Fathers visit in another dress, with so many gifts so novel and worthy, showed his happiness with the presents, expressing to his councillors that the Fathers were men of higher regard than what they had believed until then, and treated them with more respect than before. (Valignano 1944, 176) [75]

The change from the depiction of Xavier made by Cabral, while not extreme, is certainly evident. While Xavier's clothing is referenced, not one detail of it is made explicit, not even the type of fabric. Instead, the attention is placed mostly on his behaviour and his gifts. This [76]

62 A *tabi* is "a sock with a separate section for the big toe" (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2014), that the Jesuits wore with *shikirei* (sandals).

63 See the group of Jesuits depicted in the *nanban* screen of the Kobe City Museum, in the lower right corner (<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/nanban-screens-right-hand-screen-kan%C3%B4-naizen/CAEfKzD1vqAV8A>, accessed April 19, 2020). The Jesuits seem to be wearing the dress of important occasions (black *dobuko* or cloaks over their cassocks, round cap, and slippers instead of *shikirei*), while some possibly hold a stole. The light-coloured clothes might indicate *dōjuku*, who wore light blue garments and black garments.

64 In addition to this factor, and the necessity to avoid scandal among the Portuguese merchants, Valignano's regulations were to be submitted to Rome, and often General Claudio Acquaviva asked for additional restrictions or clarifications that had significant impact (Valignano 1946, 37–55). As a result of these exchanges, for example, the use of fans was forbidden among the missionaries (Valignano 1946, 75n2).

65 He also specified that gowns and *kimono* could be used interchangeably as long as the latter had long sleeves and the correct neck (Valignano 1954, 248).

depiction of Xavier came close to the image that Valignano had for the Jesuits and their evangelization policy in Japan; it also served as a support to Valignano's reforms, centred as they were on etiquette.

The strategy implemented by Valignano is delineated in a substantial corpus of rules for the mission. The *Sumario de las cosas de Japón* (1583) contained a general outline of the courtesies that needed to be followed by the missionaries to avoid offending the people among whom they worked.<sup>66</sup> Among them, the disgust that the European diet provoked in the Japanese came through: not only did Buddhist monks not eat meat or fish, Jesuit houses were dirty with live animals and grease from the meat. Therefore, the Japanese apparently held the opinion that the Jesuits were "dirty, lowly, and vile," which reflected negatively on the Christian religious message (Valignano 1954, 243). To correct this problem, Valignano ordered his fellow Jesuits to adapt to Japanese food and table manners, banning Western high tables and meat (1954, 243). Dietary restrictions commonly coincide with modesty of dress, for both have as their aim the control of the body and soul (Arthur 1999, 1; Campbell 2017, 138). Still, meat remained a common staple of the diet in those Jesuit colleges of Asia that could afford it (Osswald 2011, 505).<sup>67</sup> Valignano also instructed the Jesuits to keep their houses and garments clean at all times:

[77]

The first [guideline] is to live with cleanness,<sup>68</sup> acting cleanly, in [the Jesuits'] houses, in its furniture, in eating, in their garments and in the clothes of the people of the house, and in all the house's utensils, following in everything the cleanness and the neat manner used in Japan. This is so necessary that nobody tolerates its lack [...] it is offensive to [the Japanese who come to visit] not to present the house very clean and ordered in their manner, and not to receive them with clean and fresh clothes [...] Since they love cleanness very much, and the monks especially take great pains with it, it is not possible to ignore it. And for this reason, at the beginning, [the missionaries] dressed in silk to gain some acceptance among the Japanese, but later abandoned it, and now they wear a cassock and a cloak (or *dobuko*), which is a kind of long robe with sleeves, as it is used in Japan, all black, without any silk, although it must be clean and fresh. (Valignano 1954, 230–32)

[78]

Together with the directive to model the manners of behaviour on Buddhist monks, the text also reiterated the reasoning that, while the possible humiliation of the missionaries by the Japanese was not a preoccupation in itself, it would mean a loss of prestige for the mission and with it their message. Valignano took advantage of the greater leeway granted to Christians regarding cleanliness (of bodies, garments, and buildings) over the rules surrounding expenditure for cloth and decorations.<sup>69</sup> In this manner, according to Valignano, being clean

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66 Valignano explained it thus: "If everywhere it is necessary to make converts and be esteemed, to be able to accommodate to the manner of life of the land, so it is much more so in Japan, where it is not possible to live at all without respecting their rules. Because without respecting them we either humiliate and insult them, which they cannot suffer; or it is [the Jesuits] who are offended and downcast which results in the offence and reduction of our Christian religion, and in the loss of credit of our [religious] Law and of the converts. And for these reasons the [missionaries] need necessarily to adhere, in their lifestyle, to these guidelines" (Valignano 1954, 230).

67 As seen above, the serving of "abundant food" had been one of the criticisms that Cabral moved against the Japanese mission, together with silk garments and servants.

68 *Limpieza* also holds the meaning of "honesty" of the spiritual kind. As Valignano is discussing objects and dwellings, though, he is likely talking of the external appearance of the Jesuits and the monks rather than their spiritual and moral standing.

69 For instance, washing one's body was not considered negative (Archibald 2012; Wogan-Browne 1994, 29). Still, Valignano's allowance for washing every fifteen or eight days (in winter and summer respectively)

in one's daily life achieved the same objective that the use of silk garments had previously; it made the Jesuits socially acceptable in Japanese eyes. What is more, it represented a far more workable option.<sup>70</sup>

Efforts to create equipollence between Catholic missionaries and Buddhist monks are found [80] in another of Valignano's rulebooks, the *Advertimentos e Avisos acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappão (1581)*. This text established the correspondence of rank between the abbots (*chōrō*) of the Zen Gozan temple system and the Catholic priests for purposes of etiquette:

Initially, one has to know that, among both monks and laity, there are different [81] degrees of status and dignities [...] For this reason, for the Fathers and Brothers to know how they have to behave, a first step is necessary: to determine and know well which is their dignity and at which level it corresponds with the dignities and honours of the monks, so that they can deal with them and the Japanese lords. Due to this, it seems that it is convenient, for the Fathers and Brothers, who are the monks of the Christian religion, to be at least at the rank of the monks of the Zen sect, which among all is considered principal, and has the most communication with all kinds of people in Japan. Among them, the principal heads are called Tōdō or Chōrō, which is the same thing; and even if they are many, among them there are the Chōrō of the five temples of Gozan, which are in Miyako, and among these five, there is one more important and who is like the head of all, called Nanzenji no Incho. So all the Fathers will be the same rank of the Chōrō, and those who are Universal Superiors will be the rank of the five Chōrō of Gozan, and the Superior of Japan will be the rank of Nanzenji no Inchō. (Valignano 1946, 123–26)

Although this explicit standardizing of the ranks of monks and Jesuits worried Cabral, who [82] from his new post in Macao feared the re-introduction of the use of large retinues, litters, and silk clothes among missionaries,<sup>71</sup> these elements of the dignity of *chōrō* were not permitted to the missionaries (or limited to special occasions). The Visitor's regulations were very explicit that no Jesuit was to wear silk (Valignano 1954, 232–33). Moreover, while creating an equivalence between a monk and a missionary was convenient when delineating the rules of etiquette regarding the latter, Valignano insisted that “there is no comparison between the monks [...] and us regarding the truthfulness of the Law and interior virtue” (Valignano 1954, 246).

The matter of garments came under scrutiny once more during Valignano's second visitation [83] to Japan in a manner that is worthy of attention. The acts of the Second General Consultation (1590) discussed, for example, the matter of the cloth of Portugal (*pano de Portugal*). This material, while cheap in Europe, acquired greater value in Asia and was “deemed precious in Japan.” Some young missionaries with rich families had cassocks made of this material; older or poor Jesuits wore cassocks of *canga*, a simple Chinese cloth made of heavy cotton, such as canvas. Inexpensive in Europe, the cloth of Portugal was not subjected to any restrictions under the regulations of the Society. However, in Japan “it was possible to reasonably say that it [was] precious and not convenient to our profession and to the order of our *Constitutions*.”

was much less than the Japanese common daily use of the bath (Valignano 1954, 231n8). Additional preoccupations, such as the concern for decency, were cause for the complete ban on swimming in India (Osswald 2011, 508).

70 In 1592, however, he was worrying about the great costs of maintaining the Jesuit houses in line with Japanese standards (Valignano 1954, 462–63).

71 Francisco Cabral to the General, Macao, 20 November 1583, in ARSI, Jap.Sin. 9, II, 186r–188v.

Additionally, its use highlighted differences among the missionaries in a way that was not acceptable (Valignano 1954, 621–22). The decision of the Consultation to ban a cloth that had been considered “honest” in Europe shows how the concept of *honestus* could, and would, be adapted into the Asian context.

## Polemical Representations of Garments

The distance that the Jesuits strove to create between themselves and the monks, while at the same time imitating their hierarchical structures and their countenance, becomes evident in Luís Fróis’s “*Tratado em que se contem muito susinta e abreviadamente algumas contradisões e diferenças de costumes antre a gente de Europa e esta provincia de Japaõ*” (1585; henceforth: *Treatise*).<sup>72</sup> Many of the couplets of this text deal with garments, highlighting again their importance during intercultural encounters: the first chapter is titled “Concerning men, their persons, and their clothing” and the second “Women, their persons and customs.” [84]

The *Treatise* does not linger on many details or explanations regarding Japanese culture since it was as a small reference book for new missionaries. It presents its information on everyday life as matter of fact, and mostly avoids judgements or commentary (Fróis 2014, 18). An example from the chapter on men is: “In Europe it would be considered effeminate for a man to carry and use a fan; in Japan a man always carries a fan in his belt and he would otherwise be considered base and wretched” (Fróis 2014, 51). [85]

The relatively balanced presentation of Japanese culture ends abruptly with the chapter on Buddhist monks. This section presents a very idealised picture of the religious people of Europe, and a very negative picture of those in Japanese. In Fróis’s couplets, it is suggested that the moral deficiency of the Buddhist monks is made evident by their garments: “Among us, religious do not wear silk clothing out of contempt for the world; all the bonzes who can, wear silk to better display their pride and vanity before the world” (Fróis 2014, 95). In the text, wearing silk was the concrete antithesis of the Christian precepts of *contemptus mundi*. It represents a window through which the worldly sins of arrogance and vainglory could be “seen” in the wearer (the monks). [86]

The *Treatise* provides more specific examples of these sins. The monks in the text do not shy from using liturgical garments to obtain worldly benefits. “Our priests wear a stole to administer the sacraments;” writes Fróis, displaying a somewhat selective memory. “The bonzes wear one as a refinement when they go out to make their visits” (Fróis 2014, 104). When the practices of Catholicism and Buddhism regarding the sanctity of clothes and their efficacy in the afterlife are too similar to find any substantial difference to call attention to, Fróis accuses the monks of being interested only in their own profit: [87]

The Franciscan friars bestow their order’s habit on some deceased [non-members] at no charge; the bonzes compel men and women, while they are living, to acquire some light paper garments [catabiras] with the Lotus Sutra [Hokkekyō] written on them, so that they can be worn when they die, in order for the bonzes to thereby profit. (Fróis 2014, 106) [88]

Fróis illustrates the link between the concept of “honesty” and the clothed body of the [89]

72 “Treatise containing in very succinct and abbreviated form some contrasts and differences in the customs of the people of Europe and this province of Japan.” All translations of the *Treatise* are taken from Fróis (2014).

religious as well:

Our religious place great value on decency [*honestidade*] and setting a good example; the bonzes always walk around with their legs exposed, and during the summer they wear robes that are so thin that they show everything, which they do not find the least bit embarrassing or shameful.<sup>73</sup> (Fróis 2014, 100) [90]

According to the Jesuits, the evil nature of the Buddhist monks could not be masked; in the same way, in the *Treatise* the monks' body parts that the Europeans regarded as shameful would not be hidden by their clothing. Whenever the monks were successful in presenting a façade of decency and beauty, it was considered a thin disguise of their true character. This interior ugliness was made a foil to the interior honesty of the Jesuits, which was considered more important: "Our religious focus their principal efforts on interior purity and cleanliness; the bonzes keep their dwellings, gardens and temples extremely clean, but keep their souls abominable."<sup>74</sup> Given this formulation, it follows that in the Jesuits' understanding, by imitating Japanese cleanness the missionaries were finding an external expression of their own real, inner cleanness, not just expressing a preoccupation with external and impermanent beauty, like the monks were. [91]

Although less systematically than in Fróis' *Treatise*, clothing appears in Japanese polemical descriptions of Jesuit missionaries, too. After the ban of Christianity and the final expulsion of the Jesuits from the country by the shogunate, there emerged a substantial genre of popular anti-Christian literature that, while not directly supported by the shogunate, furthered its propaganda with exotic narratives of "blood, brocade, and gold" (Elison 1988, 213).<sup>75</sup> Not much remains of Jesuit visual clues in these *Kirishitan Monogatari* of the mid-seventeenth century. The missionaries (*bateren*) are depicted as monstrous creatures, similar to *tengu*, incredibly tall and with long noses (Elison 1988, 321). The first of them to land, Urugan (a name fashioned after Italian Jesuit Organtino Gneccchi-Soldo), is described as "dressed in a garment called *habito*, which looked somewhat like a piece of felt carpet; it was mouse-grey in color, with long sleeves and the skirts slit. Wearing this garment he looked for all the world like a bat spreading his wings" (Elison 1988, 325). The name and description of the clothes suggests more a Franciscan habit than a Jesuit cassock. [92]

Two elements define the characters of the *bateren* in these texts, and in so doing come to define Christianity as well: their use of magic and their riches. Urugan, in his poor and ugly dress, brought rich presents to Oda Nobunaga: "ten muskets, far-seeing and near-seeing spectacles, [...] some thirty yards of *oragoutang* [red woolen cloth]" (Elison 1988, 327).<sup>76</sup> His assistant, Fabian, carried out debates dressed in magnificent garments; his defeat came at the hands of a Buddhist hermit, in pious hempen clothing (Elison 1988, 215, 341). The ample funds of the *bateren* are said to come from the King of South Barbary, ostensibly because he pitied the Japanese, who did not know Deus, but with the actual objective of conquering the country (Elison 1988, 337, 355). Special amulets with small images of Deus and one in the form of a cross are given to their followers. The splendour of the *Kirishitan* temple is dazzling, with many icons. A Room of Mystery contains "an image of Deus, fashioned in the [93]

73 See also number 37, which condemns them for the use yellow, an "indecent colour" (Fróis 2014, 107).

74 It is rather probable that Fróis, by calling the monks' souls "abominable," is referring to the accusations of sodomy that the Jesuits often held against them (Fróis 2014, 98).

75 All translations of the *Kirishitan Monogatari* are taken from Elison (1988).

76 See the depiction of the rich gifts (but not the bat-like dress) in the *Kirishitan Taiji Monogatari* (Main Library, Kyoto University): <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/item/rb00012882>.

most gruesome manner, hanging upon a cross. This appears to be a device to extract tears of emotion from their sectarians, by showing off this figure of agony and mortification” (Elison 1988, 329).

These *monogatari*, while polemic in nature, present information that gives insight into how the Japanese saw the missionaries. They confirm what the Jesuits had already realized, that the popular perception was that the mission was extremely rich: “Not only are we not known as poor among the Japanese, both gentile and Christian alike; but we are considered to be very rich, and cannot afford to put an end to this impression” (Valignano 1954, 461).<sup>77</sup> The Christian use of rich liturgical and devotional items and images, especially those gifted to eminent Japanese converts, had certainly not escaped the attention of the Japanese. By the same token, they had not failed to notice the expectations of the Jesuits with regard to the ability of such items to produce emotional reactions in the faithful.

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## Conclusions

This article has analysed the nonverbal communication that the Jesuit missionaries engaged in through the use of dress in Japan. Their experimentations and the considerations they made about clothing were interrupted by the 1587 ban on evangelization. Eventually, the expulsion of the missionaries from Japan in 1614 put an end to most of the visible signs of Christian presence. Most Jesuits left the country and those who remained went underground with their communities of converts. Just as they had to abandon and destroy their devotional objects in Nagasaki (Hesselink 2016, 156–61), the Jesuits left behind their cassocks as well. In 1618, a missionary in Nagasaki informed Rome that

[95]

the common dress that we now use here is what is considered most accommodating to help Christians in such troublesome times. Some of the European Fathers go about the city [dressed] like the Portuguese who come with the carrack from China and many others, who live here and are married, but do not carry swords. Some of the same Fathers, all the Japanese Fathers from here and other places, and I wear the dress of the Japanese shaved [monks]. This is: shaved head and beard, and some clothes down to the knee, proper (honestos) ones. Some Fathers too, in other kingdoms, dress like the secular Japanese, with their sword, and sometimes even a sabre, at the belt, according to the use in the land.<sup>78</sup>

[96]

As the presence of the Society of Jesus in Japan came to an end and the support of the Portuguese trade waned, the persecuted missionaries again sought refuge in the safety that Japanese garments purportedly granted, both “proper” garments of monks and less so those of secular Japanese. Already in the 1590s, Rome had granted exceptions to the use of the black cassock during persecutions (Valignano 1946, 76n2).

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Since the arrival of Francis Xavier, the Jesuit mission of Japan had been engaged in finding the most successful way to communicate their religious message to the Japanese. Dress represented an important element of the nonverbal aspect of this dialogue since it conveyed

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77 Valignano had established an expensive policy of gift-giving that peaked with the 1591 embassy to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, organized with the aim to lift his ban on Christianity, and cost approximately six thousand *ducados* (Massarella 2005, 347–49; Hesselink 2016, 88–89). Their links with the trade of exotic and expensive wares and foods also made them appear wealthy, as seen in the polemical descriptions in the seventeenth-century biography of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the *Taikōki* (Valignano 1954, 55\*).

78 Matteo Couros to the General, Nagasaki, 25 February 1618 (in Schütte 1975, 773).

important information about the wearer and his social status; and, as the missionaries soon realized, correctly manipulated it could help obtain the desired reactions in the interlocutor. Although the initial economic hardships of the mission restricted the type of clothing that could be used, the similarities perceived between Christian priests and Buddhist monks facilitated the imitation of the latter's garments among the Jesuits.

Gaspar Vilela and Francisco Cabral represent two different understandings of beauty and luxury, but also of the relation between human and divine means in the success of missionary endeavours. For Vilela, manipulating his dress to make a statement of prestige was a way to obtain access to people of rank and to further the evangelizing project of the mission. Cabral, in contrast, believed that clothing should be used to foster closeness with holiness, and that only God's favour, obtained through the respect of the vows of the missionaries, would grant the conversion of the whole country of Japan. Notably, each party provided witnesses that declared each approach compatible with Japanese customs.

Following a different approach, Alessandro Valignano preferred to adopt a regime of control of the religious body in a manner intelligible to both Europeans and Japanese. He ordered the use of garments that, according to European perceptions, were proper for a religious practitioner, avoiding silk, bright colours, and revealing clothes. The experience gained by the missionaries regarding garments, as expounded during the consultations, was likely a critical factor in this decision. At the same time, Valignano's strategy held as essential the mission's cultural context. This meant adopting the same attitudes that the Japanese held towards the religious body. He implemented not only Japanese standards of cleanness and tidiness for the garments; he restrained the missionaries' movements and emotional expressions as well, which are elements of the kinetic interaction of dress.

The Jesuit missionaries whose work has been analysed in this article appear aware of the importance of the role of dress in nonverbal communication. At the same time, not all of them granted it a particularly important function in the intercultural contacts of the mission. Vilela's mission of Miyako displayed an innovative approach to dress combining whatever was available to create a suitable appearance. Cabral, too, in his effort to have the mission return to the black cassock, displayed an understanding of dress by not dismissing the problem outright but going instead to some lengths to interview Japanese Christians on the matter. In Cabral's case, however, the spiritual role he attributed to clothing in the end prevailed over their human, communicative aspect. Valignano, acute observer and organizer, focused on those elements of dress that went beyond the materiality of the garments. Together with other aspects of the daily life of the Jesuits, these elements were regulated to communicate the missionaries' honesty and respectability to their Japanese interlocutors.

This research shows not only that dress is a direct and immediate form of nonverbal communication, but that it is an unavoidable one as well. Dress appears to always be in the act of communicating something to both the wearers and their interlocutors. The debates internal to the Japanese mission highlight the Jesuit efforts to regain control of the messages conveyed by their own dress, whose meaning became altered when it was translated into the Japanese context. The analysis of such Jesuit strategies displays the range of potentiality held by dress in creating and transmitting meaning. The materiality of dress is just one element of this process, as its group association, kinetic interaction, and other characteristics contribute to the creation of meaning as well. The study of intercultural encounters can contribute significantly to bringing the various elements that compose creation and conveyance of meaning by dress to the fore, making explicit its inner workings, and analysing its geographical and temporal

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variations. In turn, the study of dress can significantly enhance the understanding of intercultural encounters by contributing to the analysis of nonverbal manners of communication, translation, and miscommunication.

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