

Alessandro Valignano, *Catecismo da fé cristá, no qual se mostra a verdade da nossa religião e se refutam as seitas japonesas*, António Guimarães Pinto and José Miguel dos Santos, eds., Lisbon, Centro Científico de Macau, I.P., Fundação Jorge Álvares, 2017, 384 p.

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Catecismo da fé cristá is the translation into Portuguese of the book, *Catechismus Christianae Fidei*, written by missionary Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), Jesuit Visitor to Asia.² This volume is edited by António Guimarães Pinto and José Miguel Pinto dos Santos, who cowrote the introduction, and produced, respectively, the translation of the original Latin, and the annotations to the text. The main body of the book is composed by a translation of the *Catechismus*, which follows its original subdivisions (two volumes, with a prologue each, and twelve lessons in total, 23–182), and an anastatic reproduction of the volume present in the library of the Liceu Passos Manuel (183–384).³ No index of names or places accompanies the book.

The text of the *Catechism* was originally printed in Lisbon in 1586, in a certain rush, so that its copies could be taken back to Japan together with the entourage of the Tenshō embassy.⁴ The still extant copies are listed as present in the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, in the Biblioteca de D. Manuel II in Vila Viçosa, in the Biblioteca Municipal of Lisbon, and (apparently) in the library of the Liceu Passos Manuel in Lisbon.⁵ An additional copy, bound in two separate volumes, is owned by the Biblioteca Universitária in Salamanca (10–11). A second edition of the *Catechismus* was printed as part of Antonio Possevino's *Bibliotheca Selecta* (1593, reprinted in 1607), whose difference with the original text are briefly detailed in Guimarães Pinto and Pinto dos Santos's introduction (19–21).

Written between 1580 and 1581, the *Catechismus* was one of the most influent texts composed by Valignano. In it, he organized and presented the knowledge on Japanese religions collected by the Jesuit mission since the arrival in the country of Francis Xavier, in 1549 – Valignano is indeed identified in the first volume as editor, and as an author only in the second one (13). Among the most important sources of information of the *Catechismus*,

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2 Reference to the reviewed work are given between parenthesis in the text.

3 An anastatic copy of this edition was also published in 1972 by Tenri Central Library, in 200 copies (21–22).

4 On this embassy, organized by Valignano, see for example Derek Massarella, "The Japanese Embassy to Europe (1582–1590)," *The Journal of the Hakluyt Society*, February 2013.

5 The editors were not able to confirm the continued existence of this copy, which was used as basis of the Japanese translation by Ieiri Toshimitsu (18n22).

on Buddhism particularly, it is possible to find Jesuits of the previous generation, such as Cosme de Torres and Juan Fernandez, and their notes on the debates with Buddhist and Shintō representatives; the collaborative *Sumario de los Errores* (1556); and the reports of Japanese converts Paulo Yohō and Vicente Tōin from a number of Chinese texts.⁶ By building on and reorganizing previously collected elements, the *Catechismus* represents the peak of elaboration of information on Japanese religions of Valignano's first visit to Japan.

Guimarães Pinto and Pinto dos Santos identify the intended primary audience of the *Catechismus* as the Japanese students of the Jesuit colleges, more specifically that of Funai (modern-day Oita). The lessons were planned to guide them through the refutation of Japanese religions and the explanation of the basis of Catholicism (13-14).⁷ The provided blueprint also granted a coherent structure to the arguments that would be proposed by the Jesuits during their debates with the representatives of Japanese religions. It therefore facilitated the projection of ordered uniformity and unity by the Society of Jesus. In this sense, the *Catechismus* operated jointly with other texts written by Valignano during his first sojourn, to reorganize the work of the mission, to create a new missionary approach, and to present a renewed Jesuit image to the Japanese.

Although the text was developed to answer the needs of the Japanese mission, it also had a major influence on the European context. The General of the Society of Jesus, Claudio Acquaviva, after approving the text, had it published in Lisbon. Valignano's later statements to Acquaviva, that he had never meant for the *Catechismus* to be printed, and that it had been done without his knowledge, represents, according to Guimarães Pinto and Pinto dos Santos, simply token protestations. The reproduction of the text in Europe, they expound, was a propagandistic move on the part of the Visitor, with the aim to circulate it among the aspirant Jesuit missionaries for Japan (17). Another consequence of the dissemination of the *Catechismus* in Europe, which Valignano arguably might have not anticipated, was the influence it had on the European understanding of Asian religions. It is especially in its edition by Antonio Possevino, according to the reconstruction made by Urs App, that the text had a wide and lasting influence on representations of Eastern philosophies made by Westerners.⁸

Guimarães Pinto and Pinto dos Santos's book therefore, composed by the Portuguese translation of the *Catechismus*, its apparatus, and anastatic copy of the Latin original, represents a useful instrument for historians of early modern contacts between Europe and Japan, for scholars of early modern representations of religions other than Christianity, and Orientalism in general.

⁶ Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy*, Rorschach, Switzerland: UniversityMedia, 2012, 56.

⁷ The aim of Portuguese early modern catechisms was indeed to convince the audience, not yet Christian, of the truth of the religion; a deeper knowledge of Christian tenets could be reached through a different type of text, the doctrine (*doutrina*). See José Miguel Pinto dos Santos, "Illustrations of Doutrina: Artwork in the Early Editions of Marcos Jorge's Doutrina Cristã," *Bulletin of Portuguese / Japanese Studies*, II.2 (2016): 150-52.

⁸ App, *Cult*, 56-57.